

## **Contributions of Trade/Labour Unions (ASUU, NASU, SSANU AND NAAT) to the Development of Public Universities in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

The university system is a system designed to function with different professionals. The roles of these professionals in the development of universities cannot be overemphasized. These professionals are grouped into academic staff, and non-academic staff. The professionals to improve their welfare and protect their interests formed different trade unions or labour unions. In the Nigerian public universities, there are four trade union groups namely: Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Non-Academic Staff Union of Educational and Associated Institutions (NASU), Senior Staff Association of Nigeria Universities, (SSANU) and National Association of Academic Technologists (NAAT). The activities of these trade unions are to have led to fundamental development in the university system in Nigeria. This paper examined the contributions and the challenges faced by these labour unions in the public universities in Nigeria. Secondary data were used in the paper. The secondary data were sourced from the print and online literature. The paper concludes that the activities of the trade unions have contributed to the development of public universities through the release of funds, human resources developments, infrastructural development and improvement in salaries, welfare packages of both academic and non-academic staff by the government and the fight against corruption in the university system. However, some of the challenges faced by the various trade unions in the Nigerian public universities were identified to include division, political instability, corruption and poor capacity-building programme challenges. It was recommended that the government should treat the various trade unions as partners in the development of the universities, implement the agreement reached with the unions, and all the labour unions should have a national umbrella to present their problems instead of

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individual groups walking alone, effective capacity building programme for leaders of labour unions and corruptions among the union executive members should be fought and necessary actions should be taken to prevent the bad image of the unions.

**Keywords:** ASUU, Government, Contribution, University, Trade Union.

### **Introduction:**

Public universities are universities owned by the government according to Ogunode (2020) and Public universities are universities established to provide post-secondary schools for Nigerians. Public universities are universities established by the act of parliament to serve the interest of the general public. Public universities deal with the provision of teaching, research and community services (Ogunode & Ndayebom, 2022; Ogunode, Akin-Ibidiran & Ibidiran, 2022; Ogunode & Musa, 2022). The objectives of the universities in Nigerian Higher education, including professional education have the following aims: the acquisition, development and inculcation of the proper value orientation for the survival of the individual and societies; the development of the intellectual capacities of individuals to understand and appreciate environment; the acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to develop into useful members of the community; the acquisition of an overview of the local and external environments (FGN, 2013). Public universities in Nigeria are grouped into federal and state-owned universities. The federal universities are owned by the federal government of Nigeria while the state universities are owned by the various states government across the nation. The National Universities Commission supervises over 200 universities, consisting of 48 Federal owned, 54 State owned and 99 privately owned institutions. The Nigerian universities have about 2.1 million students and a staff strength of about 170,000 non-teaching and 100,000 academic staff (NUC, 2022). The federal government of Nigeria established the National Universities Commission to oversee the external administration and supervision of all universities in Nigeria.

### **Literature Review:**

The Nigerian public universities in the 1960 and 1970 were ranked among the best in the world. Ojudu (2012), by 1980, the University of Ibadan and Ahmadu Bello University earned global recognition for research in tropical health and agriculture respectively. This reputation was steadily tarnished under successive military administrations. Right now, Nigerian universities are not even recognized in West Africa. Rather, rich Nigerians go everywhere else to acquire a university education. The situation is compounded by the fact that successive governments in Nigeria have refused to make intentional or tactical investments in education. This led to various problems facing public universities. Daniel-Kalio (2019) observed that in the environment of massive corruption and mismanagement of the economy, Nigerian universities' leadership have plethora of challenges to contend with which include managerial assumption of university leaders, diminishing financial resources, problems of access and equity, lack of vision and integration of universities into national planning by political leaders, limitations on university autonomy and academic freedom, problems of ineffectiveness and inefficiency, brain-drain, limited access to technologies, limited infrastructural facilities, limited qualified teachers, lack of innovation in teaching and research, incessant industrial actions by unions, patrimonial networks among university administrators, poor leadership quality of some Vice Chancellors, centralization of

university administration, explosion of students population, absence of a standardized system that rewards hard work and productivity, high fees among private universities, non-availability of scholarships, student loans and grants, politicization of the appointment of Vice Chancellors, poor quality of education and poor students attitude to learning, inadequate research, governance and sectarianism, mobility of academics, inadequate quality assurance, etc. (Daniel-Kalio 2019).

In the bid to improve the welfare of its members and improve the quality of university education in Nigeria, various labour in the university system formed their union groups. The academic staff is the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), the non-academic staff, is the Non-Academic Staff Union of Educational and Associated Institutions (NASU), the senior non-academic staff, is the Senior Staff Association of Nigeria Universities, (SSANU) and the Technologists, and is National Association of Academic Technologists (NAAT). All these labour unions exist in the public universities and they are the human resources implementing the universities programme. Ogunode, Jegede & Musa (2021) opined that the realization of the goals of university education depends among other things on the availability and motivated academic staff and non-academic staff.

The major aim and objective of trade unions and labour unions are to improve the welfare of their members. Uzoh (2017) and Pemedede (2007) noted that the principal aim of trade unions is to promote their members' interests. They can do this only if the undertakings in which their members are employed prosper. They, therefore, have an interest in the success of these undertakings and essential contributions to them by cooperating in measures to promote increased productivity and efficiency. They also share with management the responsibility for good industrial relations. Trade unionism is concerned with the organization of the labour force which is an important element in the process of production. It is the aggregate of people that work using their capabilities or skills to render services to earn a living, and develop themselves and the economy at large. Uzoh (2017), Iyayi (2002) and Pemedede (2007) observed that the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) can therefore be seen to be a trade union whose activities are lawful and not inconsistent with the spirit and practice of trade unionism are covered by the laws of the land. ASUU may approach issues from different perspectives; indeed ASUU's liberal, sometimes radical stance more often than not, bring them into conflict with the government. ASUU's disenchantment with the government over issues of university autonomy, poor conditions of service, poor funding and a non-conducive environment for academic pursuit had been simmering for years and had been the theme for fruitless negotiations and dialogue with successive Federal Ministers of Education.

The academic staff are key members of the universities system. The roles of the academic staff in the actualization of university programmes cannot be underestimated. The academic staff are the engine room of the university system. They determine the quality of the system. The academic staff are the implementers of the school curriculum. They plan the lesson, organizes the instructional resources, prepare the note and deliver the lecture. Ogunode, Jegede & Musa (2021) opined that the academic staff is also the builder of manpower or producer of manpower for the country. Ogunode, Jegede & Musa (2021) have asserted that the job performance of academic staff is important because good quality tertiary education is an important avenue towards nurturing the teachers needed for Universal Primary Education; the experienced doctors, nurses and community workers need for better welfare and health facilities, the accountants, economists and journalists required for better private business and better governance. They also maintained that for higher education to develop the capacities mentioned, it must ensure that its staff are well motivated to contribute to the quality needed for socio-economic and political development.

Non-academic staff are those professionals handling various non-teaching services in higher institutions. Student welfare workers, secretaries, caretakers and cleaners form part of the non-academic professionals. Non-academic staff members are employees who work within higher institutions and are contributing significantly to the success of higher education. Non-academics possess a wealth of institutional knowledge, charisma and drive to ensure that the universities' missions, visions and objectives are attained. The contributions of non-academic staff highly impact the students' experience in the university environment. The cardinal programme of the universities includes producing manpower, conducting research and undertaking community service, the non-teaching staff assist with research, teaching and community development. The university system function because of the professionals who provide complementary roles other than teaching and research (Ogunode, Ahaotu & Ajape 2021; Ogunode, Jegede, Abubakar, Martina 2020). Ogunode, Bajoga, Jegede & Musa (2021) posit that the services of the non-academic staff in the higher institutions in the country include security services, library services, administrative services, maintenance services, legal services, medical services, cleaning services, planning services, financial services, etc. All higher institutions depend on these services to realize their goals. Iwuoha (2018) submitted that the non-academic departments in a university system consist of the registry, physical planning, academic planning, bursary, library, school clinic, exams and records centre, security, transportation unit, and ICT centre among others.

Uzoh and Anigbogu (2013) observed that since the 1980s, ASUU has been engaging the federal and state governments on the need to reposition the Nigerian university system to effectively deliver on its mandate. This became imperative in the face of a massive exodus of seasoned academics particularly to European and American universities; the deplorable state of facilities for research, teaching and learning; gross underfunding; and steady erosion of university autonomy and academic freedom by successive governments in Nigeria. ASUU (2013) submitted ASUU has always insisted that the virtual complete domination of Nigeria's economy and politics by the Bretton Woods Institutions (IMF and World), and the inevitable erosion of our national pride since 1960, are direct consequences of the mismanagement of national resources, leading essentially, to the virtual destruction of the economy and the educational system. However, the various unions in the public universities are still demanding funding for the revitalisation of public universities, earned academic allowances, University Transparency Accountability Solution; promotion arrears, renegotiation of the 2009 ASUU-FGN Agreement, and the inconsistencies in the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System Payment. It is important to discuss the contributions of labour unions (ASUU, NASU, SSANU and NAAT) to the development of university education in Nigeria.

### **Contributions of Labour Unions (ASUU, NASU, SSANU AND NAAT) to the Development of Public Universities in Nigeria:**

The activities of labour unions in the Nigerian public universities have led to the following contributions:

- i. **Increment in Funding of Universities:** The release of funds for the development of the public universities in Nigeria can be linked to the activities of the various labour union groups in the public universities in Nigeria especially the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). This submission was confirmed by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) which claimed that no government has released money to improve the standard of public universities without the input

of the union. ASUU explained that if the union fails to fight for a better University system, the future of the country will be in jeopardy. ASUU Chairman at the University of Ibadan, Professor Ayo Akinwale, insisted that no government of Nigeria has willingly released money for the University system without the strikes of ASUU. The Union said in the last two decades, no government of Nigeria has willingly released money for the University system without the strikes of ASUU (Daily Trust 2022a). Uzoh (2017) submitted that the Federal Government is considering the call by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) in the FGN/ASUU Agreement of 2009 to revitalize the public universities to meet national and international standards constituted by the Committee on Needs Assessment of Nigerian Public Universities (CNANU) in 2012 (IMC, 2014; NEEDS, 2014). Uzoh (2017) observed that the committee was saddled with the task of determining the actual status of Nigerian Public Universities in terms of infrastructural facilities, services and resources, staffing and enrollment, environment and utilities as well as the quality of delivery of teaching and learning; to determine the gap between existing status, skills, abilities and capacities of the universities and those that are needed for the universities to function at an optimal level; and to make the right prioritization and therefore optimize resource allocation which could lead to proper deployment of resources to get value for money, save cost while making a maximum impact, as well as improve efficiency and institutional effectiveness (IMC, 2014). The impact of the Needs Assessment Intervention Fund for Nigerian Public Universities is being felt in various ways including providing learning facilities and a conducive learning environment for students as well as staff training and development (Uzoh, 2017). The 2009 agreement led to the release of N200bn in 2013, N40bn and N30bn and N22.127bn for the infrastructural development and the payment of earned allowances amounting to N92bn (Daily trust, 2022b).

- ii. **Human Resources Developments:** The unions in the public universities in Nigeria through their struggle on effective capacity development for their members have led to the training and retraining of thousands of academic and non-academic staff in the public universities. Human resource development has been defined as empowering people by fostering the contributory capacities that they can bring to the improvement of their quality of life and that of their families, communities, enterprises and societies. Over the years, the concept of human resources development has evolved from solely focusing on individual capacity to also building institutional capacity at the national level, through socio-economic policies and development plans and strategies (United Nations, 2009). Human resources development is therefore regarded as facilitating the development of national human capacities to achieve sustainable, inclusive, equitable development and at the same time, enhance the well-being of individuals. As such, human resources development strategies are increasingly part of national development planning (United Nations, 2009). Lawal & Ogunode (2021) submitted that the different union groups in the Nigerian higher institutions especially the ASUU have through their strike actions helped the universities to improve their human capital development through the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) formerly Education Trust Fund (ETF). According to Uzoh (2017), the Tertiary Education

Trust Fund (TETFund) formerly Education Trust Fund (ETF) is a product of a challenge posed by ASUU to the Government in the early 1990s. The government then challenged ASUU to propose ‘other’ viable sources of generating funds that could be used to save tertiary education in Nigeria through interventions and extra-budgetary supports. ASUU worked out detailed policy formulation and managerial structure of ETF now (TETFund) which formed part of the FGN/ASUU Agreement of 1992 (ASUU, 2013). Although at its initial conception, the ETF intervention was intended to be a special intervention in Tertiary Education only, the Military government enlarged its scope to cover all levels of Education- Primary, Secondary and Higher Education. The intervention of the ETF did not make the intended significant changes in the educational system at any level (ASUU, 2013). In 2011, the ETF law was repealed and the Tertiary Education Trust Fund Act was enacted as a transformative intervention agency for the rehabilitation, restoration, and consolidation of tertiary education in Nigeria. TETFund had been making a visible impact in supporting tertiary education in terms of sponsoring academic staff in Nigerian universities for higher degrees, and sponsoring conferences, workshops and valuable research endeavours (Uzoh, 2017; ASUU, 2013). Recently, the governing board chairman of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund said it invested N12 billion in training researchers across twelve universities in Nigeria in the year 2021 as part of the agency’s mandate of funding the educational sector in the country. The Chairman, Board of Trustees of TETFUND, Kashim Imam, made this disclosure on Monday in Maiduguri during an interactive forum with a theme: “improving education tax collection in the post-pandemic era” organized to improve education tax remittance through the Federal Inland Revenue Service. In his welcome address, Kashim Imam stated that TETFUND has ongoing projects in 226 institutions out of the 245 higher institutions in the country. He listed some of the projects to include laboratories, engineering workshops, lecture theatres, and lecture halls among other infrastructural projects among the one hundred thousand projects being undertaken in the 2021 intervention funds. There are 226 higher institutions where TETFund undertook one hundred thousand projects from the 2021 intervention fund of TETFUND. These projects were funded from the revenue generated in the year 2021. Also, the Executive Secretary of TETFUND (2014) submitted that the fund also intervened in the procurement of books, e-journals and e-books, e-libraries, library furniture and equipment, as well as bindery accessories. In terms of academic staff training and development, he said TETFund has supported a total of 10,625 academic staff in public universities, polytechnics and colleges of education for local and foreign training from 2008- Nov 2014, adding that the content-based intervention was initiated to support institutions to increase the number of lecturers with doctoral degrees; discourage in-breeding by providing opportunities outside Nigeria, and to encourage research and development in diverse subject areas. From 2010-2014, he said the fund has sponsored a total of 20,220 teaching and non-teaching staff of tertiary institutions to conferences within and outside the country. “This programme is intended to provide an opportunity for our lecturers to interact with their colleagues worldwide and benefit from such exposure and interaction to the advantage of Nigeria’s education system” (Lawal & Ogunode, 2021).

- iii. **Infrastructural Development:** The trade and labour unions in Nigerian public universities have also helped to improve the infrastructural facilities on university campuses. Ogunode (2020) viewed infrastructural facilities refers to facilities aiding the delivery of academic and non-academic services in educational institutions. Infrastructural facilities include; libraries, laboratories, halls, offices, administrative blocks, hostels, road facilities, water, electricity, internet etc. Lawal and Ogunode (2021) and Ogunode, Ugochukwu, & Jegede (2022) Ogunode, Olugbenga, & Ezema, (2022); Ogunode, Ugochukwu & Iroegbu, (2022) observed that in term of infrastructural development in higher institutions in the country, the different union groups have done a lot to challenge both the federal and states government to improve the infrastructural level of the higher institutions across the country. For instance, libraries, highlighting some of the interventions of TETFund in public tertiary institutions in the country, former TETFund former prof. Bogoro said the fund generated has improved the teaching and learning environment through the development and rehabilitation of lecture theatres, laboratories, classrooms, libraries and workshops; it has also integrated ICT into teaching and learning. Bogoro said the Fund also intervened in the procurement of books, e-journals and e-books, e-libraries, library furniture and equipment, as well as bindery accessories. In the area of facilities, the Minister of Education, Adamu Adamu, disclosed that Tertiary Education Trust Fund has committed about N400 billion to the development of infrastructure in the tertiary institutions across the country. According to him, the N400 billion is different from the N1.3 trillion the Buhari administration has spent on capital expenditure in the nation's tertiary institutions. The Administration of President Muhammed Buhari has committed a total of N1.3 trillion of capital expenditure in our tertiary institutions,” Adamu said. “In the last year, TETFund has committed a total of over three hundred and ninety-five billion to the development of infrastructure in tertiary institutions. This is aside from some budgetary allocations and revitalization funds to universities.” The minister stated that in the last five years, Buhari’s administration has invested approximately N1.7 trillion in tertiary institutions with the universities taking two third of the total sum. It was submitted that TETFUND had ongoing projects in 226 higher institutions out of the 245 in the country. Some of the projects, including laboratories, engineering workshops, lecture theatres and lecture halls, among others, are among the 100,000 projects being undertaken with the 2021 intervention fund (Punch, 2021).
- iv. **Improvement in Welfare Packages and Salaries:** Lawal & Ogunode (2021); Ogunode, Akinjobi & Musa (2022); Adanwa & Ogunode (2022) stated that the union groups have also tried in terms of salaries increment and other welfare benefits for both academic and non-academic staff. Uzoh (2017) observed that the recent trends in wages and salaries administration in Nigeria have been necessitated by the roles of the various trade unions in the country with ASUU playing a fundamental role, especially concerning academic staff in Nigerian universities (Agburu, 2012). Perhaps, one of the most interesting features of the current trends in the wage and salary administration concerning the university system can be seen to reside in the realization by the Nigerian government that university academics represent the crucial mass of scholars in the society with the potential for transforming it. In light

of this, the government felt that academics deserve unique conditions of service which will motivate them like the intellectuals in other parts of the world to attain greater efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery, concerning teaching, research and community service and thereby stem the tide of “brain drain”. The new university salary structure indicates that the basic pay has increased considerably and all the accolades go to ASUU (Agburu, 2012).

- v. **Fighting Corruption:** The trade and labour unions in Nigerian public universities have also helped in the fight against corruption in the university system. The trade unions on different occasions have exposed corruption practices going on in their respective institutions. For example, Ufuoma (2020) reported that the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Akure zone, has accused Kayode Soremekun, the Vice-Chancellor of the Federal University of Oye-Ekiti (FUOYE) of financial misappropriation and maladministration. Also, Olawoyin (2017) reported that the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Ibadan Zone, had called on Mr Ambali to honourably resign his appointment to allow for an independent investigation of fraud allegations against him. The union had equally called on the Ministry of Education, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), and Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), to act quickly to avoid insinuation of complicity.

### **Challenges faced by Labour Unions (ASUU, NASU, SSANU and NAAT):**

Following are some challenges facing the labour unions in public universities:

- i. **Division Challenges:** Ogunode, Ahaotu & Ajape (2021) observed that the university system is designed to function as a system and team that needs one another for the realization of the universities goals. Lack of cooperation among the different union groups in the university system is a major factor responsible for the poor development of public universities in Nigeria. The various actors who are supposed to work as a team are working differently through their union. Ogunode, Ahaotu & Ajape (2021) observed that lack of support from the academic staff is another big problem facing the non-academic staff. Bakare (2020) submitted that the university is designed for teaching, research and community service. It is to transfer knowledge, acquire knowledge and market knowledge. The staff are divided into two broad categories, namely teaching and non-teaching. The two groups are supposed, partners or bedmates, working towards the realization of the university's set goals and objectives. The administration of the university is mostly centred on the Governing Council, Senate, Faculties/Departments/Units for academic decisions, and Registry, Bursary, Library and Maintenance unit for support functions. In other words, on the one hand, there are the educators, while on the other, we have the bureaucrats offering all necessary support for the good of the system. In all, the relationship between these two classes is marked by inherent tension and condescension that oftentimes heat the polity. The problem between the academic staff and the non-academic staff is concluded by Adeniyi (2009) when he said “In the beginning, all university staff were one and treated each other with respect. Today especially in Nigeria, the academic staff have largely operated in isolation from the other staff, and in reaction, other staff fought and got an identity,



thus leading to fractionalization; unhealthy rivalry; over-unionized polity and industrial disharmony at the slightest provocations. The division between the academic staff and non-academic staff is not helping the development of public universities in Nigeria.

- ii. **Political instability:** Political instability in the Nigerian government is another factor affecting the activities of the various union groups in public universities. The changes in political parties and government in Nigeria are frustrating the activities of trade unions in Nigeria. The government agreed with the unions and another government that the newly won election will claim the arrangement is invalid. Ogunode, Ajape & Jegede, (2020) posited that often, the government in power would suspend the continuity of many higher education policies and plans developed by the previous administrations. There was a time in Nigeria that the minister of education came up with a policy of one student and one laptop for all Nigerian students. That policy was stopped when the new administration came on board due to differences in political agenda. Political instability is another major problem preventing the effective implementation of educational policies in Nigeria. Political instability is one feature of third-world countries like Nigeria. Also, Odukoya (2011) concludes that politics and frequent changes in government tend to affect the implementation of the National Policy on Education negatively. He argued that the instability in the system of governance, coupled with constant changes in ministers and commissioners, led to the level of crises the national education system has witnessed over the years and the inconsistency and often contradictory nature of the educational policies and practices. Ogunode and Adah (2020) observed that many educational policies have been put to hold due to changes in government or administration from one political party to another political. For instance, Icirnigeria (2019) reported that in 2013, the federal government signed a memorandum of understanding with ASUU to release the sum of N1.3 trillion within the space of five years for the revitalisation of government-owned universities. The money was supposed to be released as follows, 200 billion in 2013, N220 billion in 2014, N220 billion in 2015, N220 billion in 2016, N220 billion in 2017 and N220 billion in 2018. The Goodluck Jonathan administration released N200 billion in 2013, but no other release has been made since, leaving a shortfall of N1.1 trillion which ASUU insists FG must be released. The new administration claimed that the federal government does not have the money to meet some of the demands of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). The Minister explained that out that the N1.3trillion revitalization fund promised to ASUU by ex-president, Goodluck Jonathan when Nigeria's finances were stable. The Minister said President Muhammadu Buhari's administration informed ASUU of its inability to honour the previous revitalization fund agreement, but promised to explore other options to fund universities.
- iii. **Corruption:** Corruption is another challenge facing some labour unions in public universities. There have been corruption allegations against some of the labour unions in the public universities. For instance, thecalbe (2019) reported that Olanrewaju Fagbohun, vice-chancellor of the Lagos State University (LASU), has accused the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) in the institution of operating an illegal bank account.

- iv. **Poor Capacity Building Programme:** Poor capacity building programme of some officials of the labour unions in the Nigerian public universities is another problem militating against effective negotiating or dialogue with the government representative. Capacity building, according to United Nations Environment Programme (2006), is building abilities, relationships and values that will enable organizations, groups and individuals to improve their performance and achieve their developmental objectives. It often refers to strengthening the skills, competencies and abilities of people and communities in developing societies so they can overcome the causes of their exclusion and suffering. It includes human resource development which is the process of equipping individuals with the understanding, skills and access to information, knowledge and training that enables them to perform effectively (Wikipedia, 2011). Philbin (1996) viewed capacity building as a process of developing and strengthening the skills, instincts, abilities, processes and resources that individuals, organizations and communities need to survive, adapt and thrive in the fast-changing world. It focuses on understanding the obstacles that inhibit people, institutions, governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations from realizing their developmental goals while enhancing the abilities that will allow them to achieve measurable and sustainable results. Union leaders need communication negotiation skills, Strategizing planning skills, Persuasion and listening skills, problem-solving and emotional intelligence and distributive negotiation skills. Some officials of labour unions that represented them in the meeting with the government lack most of the negotiating skills to lobby and strategically present their demands to the government in a way that the government would be keen on them. The government team in different fora have accused the union officials of lacking respect and courtesy. For example, Saharareporter (2018) reported that ASUU led by its national former President, Biodun Ogunyemi, staged a walkout from the meeting presided over by the Minister of Labour and Employment, Sent. The Minister of Labour and Employment Senator Chris Ngige has blamed the leadership of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) for frustrating efforts by the federal government to resolve the ongoing dispute with the university lecturers. He accused ASUU of boycotting the sitting of the re-negotiation committee set up to look into grey areas of the contentious 2009 agreement (thisday, 2022). Also, The Minister of Labour and Employment, Dr Chris Ngige, has accused the members of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) of intimidation and bullying (Nairametric, 2022).

### **Way Forward:**

Based on the analysis and discussion above, the way forward suggested is as under:

- i. The government should support the activities of the labour unions and treat them as a partner in the development of university education in Nigeria. The government should implement all agreements reached with the various union groups in the universities;
- ii. The trade unions should operate autonomously but have a national body to present their problems to the government. All the labour unions in the public universities

- would operate through that umbrella to present their problems instead of individual groups walking alone. The leadership of the non-academic staff in public universities should come together and work in harmony.
- iii. The universities administrators should provide all the working tools and office stationaries for the non-academic staff to work in their respective offices, especially the ICT facilities;
  - iv. Effective capacity-building programmes and retraining programmes should regularly be organized for the leadership of labour leaders to improve their negotiating skills at various meetings with the government.
  - v. Corruptions among the union executive members should be fought and necessary actions should be taken to prevent the bad image of the unions.

### **Conclusion:**

The activities of the labour unions namely: the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Non-Academic Staff Union of Educational and Associated Institutions (NASU), Senior Staff Association of Nigeria Universities, (SSANU) and National Association of Academic Technologists (NAAT) have brought development to the public universities in Nigeria. Specifically, the unions' struggles have led to the federal government releasing funds to public universities, human resources developments, infrastructural development and improvement in salaries, welfare packages for both academic and non-academic staff by the government and the fight against corruption in the university system. The paper contends that however, the unions still face some challenges which include division, political instability, corruption and poor capacity-building programme challenges. Given the above, the situation can be improved by the government treating the various trade unions as partners in the development of the universities, implementing the agreement reached with the unions, and all the labour unions should have a national umbrella to present their problems instead of individual groups walking alone, effective capacity building programme for leaders of labour unions and corruptions among the union executive members should be fought and necessary actions should be taken to prevent bag image of the unions.

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