

INDUSTRIAL ACTIONS BY ACADEMIC STAFF UNION OF UNIVERSITIES AND STANDARD OF EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

AMAEFULE, EMEKA-CHARLES

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY, FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT, NIGERIA

&

MARTIN IFEANACHO

PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY, FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT, NIGERIA

Abstract

The debate on the standard of education in Nigeria has been a long and protracted one. While, some persons feel that the standard has not changed, instead it has improved; others claim that the standard has had a free fall. Among the factors pointed out as responsible for this fall in academic standard are the frequent disruptions of academic calendar due to perennial industrial actions by Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). This study, therefore, was aimed at exploring the effects of ASUU industrial actions on the standard of education in Nigeria. Using content analysis, in its examination, the work concluded that there is no way a country can put its universities under lock and key for three (or more) out of the nine months an academic session lasts and still expect to turn out quality academic products. The study, therefore, advocates for alternative means of expressing staff grievances without resorting to industrial actions.

Introduction

Since its inception in 1978, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has been at loggerheads with its employer (government) over what it sees as the insensitivity of the employer to the plight of the university education in the country. This insensitivity of government is evident in the under-funding of the university education, neglect of the inadequate and dilapidating infrastructural facilities, poor remuneration of Teaching staff and refusal of government to honour agreements reached with the union. These, Government has attributed to lack of funds arising from dwindling government revenue due to oil price instability. ASUU, however, feels otherwise considering the ostentatious lifestyle of politicians, their huge pay package and countless allowances.

The problem of inadequate funding has also been attributed to the value Government attaches to education which is less compared to that of other sectors of the economy that bring quick returns. For instance, when the banks ran into financial

crisis in 2007, Government intervened with a huge sum of N3 trillion. The same gesture was extended to aviation industry which got N500 billion -even the entertainment industry benefitted from such Government magnanimity during Goodluck Jonathan regime (Aidelenuoghene, 2014; Umukoro, 2013). That Government had to wait until ASUU embarked on strike (in 2013) before it could remember education sector shows the level of neglect the sector is subjected to. To rouse government's sensitivity, therefore, ASUU has embarked on industrial actions as it believes that that is the only language of workers Government understands. Unfortunately, these industrial actions have become frequent and in some cases linger for a long time. The statistics from the National Universities commission reveal that from 1992 to 2013, the Nigerian university system has witnessed 23 ASUU strikes (Okpi, 2014). 1992-2013 is a period of 21 years. This

implies that ASUU had approximately marked each year with one industrial action.

A catalogue of some of ASUU's past strikes speaks volume:

1980 saw an initial industrial action by ASUU meant to resist the sack of six lecturers of the University of Lagos, following the report of Justice Belonwu's visitation panel. Subsequently, the union embarked on further strike in 1981 to demand for increased funding of the universities, the reversal of the problem of brain drain, poor salaries and conditions of service and the overall improvement of the university system, 1983 witnessed the negotiation on the Elongated University Salary Structure (EUSS) and this became an issue of dispute in 1988 due to lack of implementation. In 1984 ASUU went on strike to oppose the deregulation of the economy and the military regime's authoritarian decree 16 (promulgated in 1985) which allowed the NUC to take over the responsibilities of senate by allowing an external body to regulate programmes for Nigerian universities.

1986 academic year did not run its course without disruption as the union struck to oppose the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) by the Ibrahim Babangida regime. At the same time it protested the killing of some students of Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, by mobile police during the SAP protest.

In 1987 ASUU was at it again! This time it was demanding the implementation of EUSS and the establishment of a joint negotiation committee between the union and the Federal Government. In 1988 ASUU raised another alarm. This time, it was over the effects of SAP. Government response was to clamp down on the union and proscribed ASUU on August 7, 1988 and all its property were confiscated. Government also disaffiliated the union from the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) and made its membership voluntary. However, in 1990 ASUU was deproscribed which enabled it to return to the trenches in 1992 to fight the failure of the

negotiation with the Federal Government over the working conditions in the Nigerian Universities.

In August 23, 1992 Government again clamped down on the union with another ban. However, on September 3 of that year, there was an agreement reached with the Government which met many of the union's demands including the right to collective bargaining. That, however, did not put an end to strike as ASUU organized yet another strike to protest the dismissal of some of its members by the Abacha military junta. The exit of the military in 1999 did not reduce ASUU's militant posture in its demands as it continued to wage "war" to press home its demands using the only weapon it knows that works and which it assumes to be the only language its employer understands -strike. In 1993 ASUU was banned again because it refused to obey the order of Industrial Arbitration Panel (IAP) to suspend industrial action and return to negotiation table.

In 1994 ASUU went on strike again demanding the re-negotiation of agreement reached in 1992 and the reinstatement of over 80 lecturers whose appointments were terminated by Prof. Isa Mohammed, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Abuja. The strike was also used to protest the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election. ASUU had no rest in 1996 as it had to fight the dismissal of its national president Dr. Assisi Asobie.

The protests of 1999 and 2000 centred on salary issues and Government's support for the sector. In 2001 ASUU raised another dust protesting inadequate funding of the universities and the non-reinstatement of 49 lecturers sacked at the University of Ilorin for taking part in previous industrial action. The union declared another strike in 2002 in order to contend Obasanjo's refusal to implement the 2001 agreement his Government signed with ASUU. 2003 saw yet another strike. ASUU's grievances this time include the non-implementation of previous agreements, poor university funding and disparity in salary and retirement age. 2007 saw a three-month ASUU strike and in 2008 (May precisely) ASUU

announced a one-week warning strike to press on a range of demands. By 2009, ASUU was not done! It embarked on yet another strike (this time, indefinite) over non-implementation of earlier agreements reached. After three months of wasted academic time, the strike was called off with the signing of memorandum of understanding (MOU) by the parties. This, however, did not stop the union from yet another strike in 2011 for 2 months alleging that the 2009 agreement was yet to be implemented.

2013 saw the declaration of the “mother of all strikes” or what Adesegun (2013) described as “the most devastating and lack-luster uproars ever staged by the body”. ASUU refused to call off the strike until Government gave in to its demands. With the coming in of Muhammadu Buhari government with change mantra one thought that things would change, but neither ASUU nor the “apostles of change” (Government) has changed. So, in November, 2018, even while the nation was preparing for general elections, ASUU struck again demanding the implementation of earlier agreements the Union signed with the Government.

In the light of the above scenario, one is poised to ask: What is the effect of these frequent industrial actions on the standard of Education in Nigeria? This will be addressed looking at the issue from three perspectives: Conceptual Review, Theoretical Framework and Effects of ASUU industrial actions on academic standard.

Conceptual Review

In this section, two major concepts are examined. These are Industrial Action and standard of education.

Industrial Action

Industrial action, which is also known as job action, refers to “any measure taken by trade union or other organized labour meant to reduce productivity in work place” (Murray (2015:23). To Ajayi (2013), it is “Any action taken by workers to disrupt normal work process so as to protest (to the employer) over unfavourable working condition”.

These two definitions portray industrial action as a group action -an activity of organized workers, technically known as trade union. Trade Union according to 1976 Trade Union Act, is “Any combination of workers or employers whether temporary or permanent, the purpose of which is to regulate the terms and conditions of the employment of workers” (Iyayi, 2010:4). Industrial action is a product of inherent opposing interests of employers and employees in work relations. It is an indication of a breakdown of cordial relationship between management and labour.

Quite often industrial action is used as a euphemism for strike or mass strike, but the scope is much wider. Due to this use of industrial action as euphemism for strike, most often the two words are presented as synonymous and even used interchangeably. However, strike is only a form of industrial action which workers happen to adopt as last resort when other forms of work disruptions have been applied without yielding the desired result or when “the process of collective bargaining” has broken down.

Strike does not occur every time a union has a disagreement with management. For minor issues the union can file a grievance (following a set procedure included in the contract between the union and the employer. When it is time for renegotiation of contract both parties sit down and try to reach an agreement. Unions usually try to exhaust all available means of industrial conflict resolution before embarking on strike. Sometimes, they try lesser degrees of work place disruptions (or what Fashoyin, 1992 calls “non-strike action”), to register their grievances. All-out-strike is always of last resort. These work place disruptions inter alia include: Sick-Out (or Sick-In), Work-To-Rule, Overtime Ban, Sit-Down and intimidation.

Standard of Education

The second key concept is Standard of education. The word standard connotes a “level of *quality* especially one people think is acceptable” (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary). It also means, “The level of *quality* or excellence attained by somebody or something (Encarta Dictionary). Both

dictionaries associate standard with quality. Quality itself is defined by Advanced Learner's Dictionary as *standard* of something when it is compared to other things like it; how good or bad something is...." Encarta sees it as "the general standard or grade of something." From the above definitions you can see that both standard and quality are birds of the same feather and therefore are used interchangeably in this work.

In the field of education, Nwafor (2005:32), contends that quality connotes "standard of education, quality of physical facilities, quality of services..." Maduagwu (cited in Leissa & Abraham, 2011) saw standards in education as ranging from the suitability of the classroom instructions to all activities that enhance teaching and learning. These undoubtedly, will include the quality or standard of the running curricular, stock of textbooks, libraries, laboratories and available teachers and their pedagogy (method of teaching); instructional materials, school building and furniture, and other related educational services.

Applied to university, standard of education can be said to be the ability of the universities to meet certain criteria relating to academic matters - staff/student ratio, staff mix by rank, staff development, physical facilities, funding and adequate library and laboratory facilities (Oladipo, Adeosun and Oni, 2009). Having established that standard is the ability or degree with which a product or service conforms to an established quality and which makes it relatively superior to others, it implies that standard of education is the ability or degree with which an educational system (in this case university system) conforms to the established standard, and the appropriateness of the inputs available for the delivery of the system. In other words, the relevance and suitability of education programme to the needs of the community for which it is meant to serve. This agrees with *Teachers without Boarder* (2006, cited in Uwameiye, 2015) which sees standard of education as "how the products of schools can be measured in terms of outcome". That is to say educational standard is determined

by the quality of educational products. This is measured by how school leavers contribute to the society in terms of psychomotor, cognitive and effective domain. In other words, skills, knowledge and right attitude acquired by the graduates the country produces. Where the standard is low and the graduates get into the labour market, they will display poor knowledge, less skill and often dubious behaviour

Quality Indices in Education

According to Oladipo, Adeosun and Oni (2009) quality or standard of education can be measured in terms of quality of input, quality of output, quality of content and quality of process.

Quality of Input

Input here is in terms of human and material resources. For the human resources the teacher is key. According to the National Commission for Colleges of Education (cited in Nwokocha, 1997), "the teacher is the king-pin of quality in education". Students with bright academic performance will fail to realize their potentials if they are taught by incompetent and ineffective teachers. The teacher can only impart to the students what he has. Unfortunately, education in Nigeria is said to lack not only quality programme but also dedicated and high quality teachers. Cases abound where students attend lecture but the lecturer was not there. He had gone to do private business or part-time lecturing in a private university.

In fact, it was the erstwhile national president of ASUU, Dr. Nasir Fegge himself, who revealed that, "Due to lack of funding and adequate remuneration you find some lecturers serving on about five or so campuses as visiting lecturers, adjunct lecturers.... This is really affecting delivery...in terms of mandate of intellectuals in the university" (The National Scholar, Jan, 2013).

Collaborating with Fegge on his opinion on lack of dedication to work by the university teachers, Shettima (2013), another insider to the system, lamented that, "There are many teachers or lecturers who have debased themselves and stooped low to do anything for money... such have no business being in the teaching profession

in the first instance” (p.24).Such indeed ought to have no business being in the teaching profession but not where there is dearth of teaching manpower and high rate of unemployment. According to the Need Assessment Committee set up by Goodluck Jonathan’s administration in 2012 to investigate the alleged rot in the university system,

Out of the 37, 504 academic staff in the Nigerian public universities, 16, 127 or 43% of the Nigerian university staff hold doctorate degree. Instead of the stipulated 75% only 16, 602 or 44.0% are within the category of senior lecturers and professors. Only 7 universities -Imo State University, University of Calabar, Osun State University, National Open University, University of Port Harcourt, University of Ilorin, and University of Uyo - have up to 60% teaching staff with Ph.D. Kano State University had only one professor and 25 lecturers with Ph.D; Kebbi State University has two professors and 5 lecturers with Ph.D. 74% of the lecturers in Plateau State University are visiting (Needs Assessment of Nigerian Public Universities’ Report, 2012, cited in The National Scholar, Jan. 2013).

With this lamentable deplorable condition how can standard not fall? Apart from the quality of the teacher, the quality of the learner too matters. If the intellectual capability of the learner is low the teacher cannot do magic to improve it. This calls to question our method of university admission. According to Umeh (2013:1), “Some students...do not have the right qualifications and had been brought in through the back door by corrupt officials” (p49).

The power to admit students into any university rests on the senate but in Nigeria the JAMB act removes that power of the senate and invested it on the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB). In the exercise of this power, JAMB adopted quota system or federal character in its admission formula. This stipulates 45% merit, 20%

for educationally less developed states, 25% for catchment areas and 10% for discretion of heads of the institutions (Obaro, 2012). The implication of the above is that a candidate with a score as high as 300 from the supposedly educationally developed states may be denied admission if he does not come within the merit or catchment list while the one with as low as 200 may be given admission just because he is from less educationally developed state. This negates the principle of quality management. In the past when admission into Nigerian universities was on merit, the standard of the nation’s universities was not questionable. Quality entrants were developed into quality graduates. Today, the issue of quality entrant has been compromised in the guise of federal character and quota system thus, sacrificing meritocracy on the altar of mediocrity. Efforts by the university authorities to reverse this trend through the post university matriculation examination (PUME), is being frustrated by the powers that be.

Another aspect of input is material. The first that comes to mind here is the teacher’s remuneration. How motivated is the teacher? If his pay does not meet his needs, he may be tempted to look for additional income elsewhere or even within the system (e.g. sales of handout, or outright bribery for increased unmerited scores to students) at the expense of the job for which he is employed and paid. Then is the issue of infrastructural facilities as another material input that affects standard. How equipped are the laboratories and the libraries? Does the teacher even have convenient office to operate from? What about classroom and hostel facilities? In Nigeria, some engineering workshops operate in *batchers*. Many science-based faculties are running what is referred to as “Dry lab” due to lack of reagents and tools to conduct real experiments (Aidelunuoghene, 2014:11).

No matter the quality of the teacher and how willing and prepared to work he may be, if the materials required to do his work is not available he will still not perform.

Quality of Output

The standard of education is not only measured by the quality of resource input but also by the quality of its output. This quality of output or otherwise can be seen in students' academic achievements on tests, scores and progression and pass rate, (Oladipo, 2009). Ige (1997) revealed how he stumbled on the examination scripts of some undergraduates in one of the nation's universities and described their performance as "very deplorable". Also the NUC (cited in Oladipo et al, 2009) assessment study on labour market expectations of graduates from Nigerian universities showed that there were many unemployed graduates roaming the streets jobless and more embarrassing is that even those who got the jobs have to undergo remedial training in order to bridge the huge knowledge and skill's gap left over from university training. This, as Nzemeke (2011) reported, is the reason why reputable firms now resort to recruiting graduates from institutions outside the country. They (the firms) argue that it is cheaper to train and maintain those who read abroad than their counterparts from Nigerian universities. Is it any wonder then that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) complained that one of the reasons for the delay in the registration of voters in the general election of 2011 was the inability of the National Youth Service corps (NYSC) members recruited as ad-hoc staff to use computers effectively (Nzemeke 2011).

The *Monitoring of Learning Achievement* (MLA) project, a nation-wide study conducted between 1994 and 1996 and which report was published in 1997 by the Federal Ministry of Education with the support of UNICEF and UNESCO, named three learning areas selected for the MLA studies as numeracy, literacy and life skills (a combination of science, social science and general knowledge). The MLA study in the country gives considerable insight into the quality of educational output especially at the lower levels of education. The result of the study indicates that an average public primary school child in Nigeria can neither read nor write, nor calculate properly (Oladapo, et al 2009). This is an indictment on the products of our tertiary education for they constitute the teachers and educational administrators that run the system at the lower levels. If, as it has been established in this paper

that the quality of the teacher (input) affects the quality of the system output there is no way the pupils could have performed better.

Quality assurance in university education connotes the ability of the institutions to meet the expectations of the users of the products in relation to the quality of the skills acquired by their outputs (Ajayi & Akindutire, 2007, cited in Oladipo et al, 2009). The failure of our university products to meet the expectations of the users -employers of labour and the overall society and the nation - puts to doubt the standard of our educational system.

Quality of Contents

Another measuring parameter of educational standard is quality of content of the education system -the curriculum. In her work on "Quality Management of Universities for Enhanced Academic Performance of Undergraduates in South-South, Nigeria, Obaro (2012) observed that academic performance, among others, is determined by the quality of the curriculum content. She was of the opinion that if quality management of curriculum contents is put in place it will enhance the performance of undergraduates to a great extent.

Quality education through improved curriculum, therefore, will improve the social and economic status of the recipient. Commenting on the ability of the content of university education to transform the recipient, the great political and intellectual legend Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe observed (during his days as lecturer at Lincoln university, USA), that some matriculants, after spending a year or two at Lincoln university, became intelligently articulate and forceful in their expression, manner and quest for social justice (Historical Flash Back, 2015, April 1-5 May).

Unfortunately, this cannot be said of Nigerian educational system. The curriculum content of the system has been criticized as being overloaded and does not adequately attend to the needs of the learner (Oladipo et al, 2009). The data from the Monitoring of Learning Achievement (MLA) project showed that there is a wide gap between the intended curriculum of our institutions and the achieved curriculum. The achieved curriculum is the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are achieved or learned while the implemented curriculum is the

translation of curricula intentions into reality in classrooms, laboratories, workshops, playgrounds and other settings for learning (FGN 2004, cited in Oladipo et al, 2009). There is need to reorder the curriculum content and enrich the implemented curriculum so that the implemented curriculum will focus on relevance and functionality. This calls for a flexible curriculum. Thus, curriculum rigidity should give way to curriculum liberality. Such curriculum must be relevant to both the individual learner's need and the societal needs at large. Unfortunately, our educational system lacks functionality. People go through our educational training and come out with mere paper certificate without commensurate practical knowledge. Many graduates have remained unemployed in spite of their paper qualifications because they lack relevant skills, and even those employed performed below expectation (Effiong et al, 2014).

Employability to Hinds & Moses (2011, cited in Effiong et al 2014), is the capability to gain and maintain employment. This, of course, depends on the knowledge, skills, and abilities the individuals possess. To Hillage and Pollard (1998, in Effiong et al, 2014), employability is "a person's capability of gaining initial employment, maintaining the employment and obtaining new employment if required" (p.1246). How employable are our educational products? Ekwueme (2013), has decried too much emphasis on paper certificate and university education. He prefers the emphasis to be on vocational skills because a nation's economy is grown by its productive sector which is located in the Polytechnics, Monotechniques and Technical Schools where the graduates are technically groomed to drive the economy by producing the basic necessities of life. He is of the opinion that before people go to the university, they must have sufficient skills to grow the economy so that university education becomes the icing on their career. He does not believe that university education is for everybody because "everybody does not have the capacity to think theoretically, but most people can function technically" (p.14). He alludes to countries abroad that are highly industrialized with lowest rates of unemployment and robust economies whose university graduates rarely accounts for 10% mark of their national populations.

Example is Germany with a university graduates population of about 10%. Too much emphasis on university education by less developed states like ours only results to over-bloated student population with attendant shortfalls in training facilities.

From the above analysis it can be said that the measure of the quality of the curriculum content of educational system is the employability of the recipient which is a product of the skills, knowledge and attitude that enable him to meet his needs as well as those of his society. So, when our university graduates are unemployed or perform below expectation when employed, it means that the standard of our university education system is low.

Quality of Process

This implies teacher-student interaction; the level of learner participation and engagement in learning. Classroom exercise should not be one-sided as in our system where instruction is teacher and chalk board centred. (Sekoni, 2010). Some teachers actually talk to the chalk-board rather than the students. How will such teacher know if the students are following when he does not give them opportunity to participate in class discussion? It is when the student speaks (respond) that the teacher will know if he is understood, not understood or even misunderstood. It is observed by Ali and Akubue (1998, cited in Oladipo et al, 2014) that in our system teachers dominated the lessons and posed few open-ended questions to the students. The students are merely "sidon de look". When strike is called off and school resumes, there is rush of lectures to finish the course work and embark on examination. Consequently, not much time is available for proper classroom interaction. Lecturers only "preach" to students and are even happy if they are able to "rush through" the course outline and set their examination questions before the examination time, not minding whether the lectures were comprehended or not.

Another factor responsible for this poor quality process is method of instructional delivery. The pedagogical methodology adopted by the teacher depends on the quality of the teacher himself. Where "those who have no business with the

classroom” as earlier observed by Shettima (2013) are in the classroom, quality of instructional delivery will be low. Obaro (2012) has noted that if quality management delivery methods are put in place, there will be students’ participation in class discussion, cooperative learning and practical skills, which will enhance performance of students to a great extent.

The failure of most teachers to use the new technology of teaching and learning makes it difficult for them to motivate the students. Many of the lecturers in public universities are still not computer literate coupled with the collapse of power which affects the use of audio-visual devices. These undoubtedly affect standards.

Theoretical Framework

In this study, Conflict theory, Ralf Dahrendorf’s perspective, was adopted for theoretical analysis. Ralf Gustav Dahrendorf (1929 – 2009) is a major proponent of conflict theory. The theory helped to explain not only why there are ASUU industrial actions but why the academic hiccup has remained a recurring decimal. Conflict theorists believe in the inevitability of conflicts. This is due to growing inequalities in the distribution of scarce resources among societies and within societies as well as the fact that people who enter these relations come from different social environments with opposing and contradictory interests. (Onigu and Ogiwonwo 2016).

Ralf Dahrendorf is a Germany sociologist, philosopher, political and liberal politician. Dahrendorf in his opposition to functionalism added a new dimension to Karl Marx class struggle. To him, functionalism is useful for understanding consensus while conflict theory is appropriate for understanding conflict and coercion (Ogwulebo, 2016:410).

A vital aspect of Dahrendorf conflict theory is in the concept of authority. He sees authority in its relationship with position rather than individuals. In this way, subordination and authority are products of expectation specified by society and where roles are not adhered to sanctions are imposed (Tittenbrun, 2018). He believes that understanding

authority is key to understanding social conflict and that order comes from those who wield authority at the top.

He disagreed with Marx on the issue of homogeneity of labour and asserts that with the development of modern capitalism (which he calls post capitalism), what is now obtainable is decomposition of capital and decomposition of labour (Tittenbrun, 2018). That is to say that both labour and capital split into many classes. Thus, instead of being homogenous as Marx propounded, they are now heterogeneous. With this arrangement, he argues that the class struggle or revolution canvassed by Karl Marx will be difficult to achieve.

Conflict theory, especially Dahrendorf perspective, is best suited for this work. It explains not only why there is ASUU industrial actions but why the industrial unrest has remained perennial. The lecturers and their employers have contrary and contradictory interests and are operating from two different backgrounds. Lecturers will always feel cheated and exploited especially in the face of offensive flamboyant lifestyle of the politicians who benefit more from the unequal social relations. The efforts by the academic staff union to increase their share of the national surplus (despite the dwindling state resources) will attract resistance from the ruling class who are benefitting from the status quo and this will always generate conflict. In other words while ASUU will strive to increase labour cost, government will strive to keep it down. The later has not just authority to do this but power, hence, they could threaten the union with “no work no pay” and in some cases have used force on ASUU and its members. As long as ASUU will continue to clamour for a change of status quo, in this unequal relations, and management will want to sustain it to the advantage of the employer, the conflicts between the two, which results in industrial actions, is inevitable. Therefore, any measure adopted to address the endemic academic crisis can only be palliative and ephemeral and not permanent as

long as the imbalance remains. This is the theoretical foundation on which this study is built.

Effects of ASUU Industrial Actions on Standard of Education in Nigeria.

In the 2016/2017 global ranking of the top eight hundred universities in the world released in September, 2016 and published by the *Times Higher Education*, the only Nigerian university that made the list was the University of Ibadan at 601 position (The Data Point, 2016). In the 2018 world university ranking, no Nigerian university was found among the first 800 again. Even the University of Ibadan has gone down to 1076th position (Webometrics, 2018). This is understandable, considering the fact that academic stability is one the major indices used in global universities ranking (Mba, 2011).

Frequent industrial actions in Nigerian universities, no doubt, affect the quality of their education. According to Okpi 2011, Psychologists have identified breaks in academic sessions (caused by frequent work disruptions) in public universities, as a major factor responsible for the decline in educational quality in Nigeria). When lecturers go on strike and school is placed under lock and key, the academic calendar is disrupted. Sometimes a whole semester -even an academic session is lost. When schools finally reopened, there is a mad rush to finish the remaining academic workload before the strike and move on to a new semester (Babafaros, 2013). Consequently, either lectures are hurriedly delivered with little or no comprehension by students before they embark on examination or the scheme of work is left uncompleted and a new session begins with a new scheme of work. No wonder our students, produced under this arrangement are nick-named "half-baked" graduates!

Describing the effect of disruption of academic programme by work stoppages, Dr. Sola Aletan, a psychologist and lecturer at the university of Lagos, compared it with an athlete on a 400 meter race who was stopped abruptly when he was half-way in the race. "It would take him time to regain his speed when he resumes" (Okpi, 2011:5). Such

disruption, according to Uwasomba (2013), serves as a non-motivational factor to the students and a discouragement to learning. It is therefore, no wonder that during strike actions most students indulge in anti-social activities such as immorality, cyber scam, pool betting, unnecessary gossip and busy body; watching of blue films and pornography rather than reading their academic books. In the long run they tend to lose interest in their academic activities when school resumes. This, no doubt, has negative impact on their learning capability (Uwasomba, 2013, Aidelunuoghene, 2014).

Effective learning or an enhanced academic performance is achieved by successful and timely coverage of the course outline before examination. (Odubela (2012, cited in Aidelunuoghene, 2014).When the academic calendar is compressed or parts of the curriculum skipped (which is often the case in industrial action situation) the quality of academic product is affected. This is because when the academic calendar is adjusted or compressed some topics would be left out untreated in order to meet up examination time and move over to the next session. What happens to the topics not treated? Students will therefore, graduate without getting all the knowledge expected of men/women in their profession (Okpi, 2011).

Even the lecturers themselves are not spared of the negative psychological effects of industrial actions. They suffer what Okogie cited in Nwankwo (2012) calls, "psychological disengagement" or "psychological disconnect". "When you go on strike you have a psychological disengagement from the system. If it happens so often, you get used to not working....you can't be on the same level when you go away and come back to work" (P.47). How can graduates produced under such a decadent system boast of quality?

Each year thousands of students wear their hoods on graduation day without receiving enough training that will prepare them for the labour market (Omole 2009, cited in Isimirah, 2011).

Since graduates who are trained at indigenous universities and expected to acquire great knowledge and skills are perceived to be empty, employers of labour now prefer graduates trained in foreign institutions. The NUC (2004) assessment study on labour market showed that there are many unemployed graduates roaming the streets, and more embarrassing is that even those who got the job have to undergo remedial training in order to bridge the huge knowledge and skills gaps left over from university training (Oladipo et al, 2009, Effiong & Agboola, 2014; Obaro, 2012). For instance, multinational companies (like shell), spend millions of dollars in the retraining of indigenous graduates -even first-class graduates- before they are made full-fledged staff (Aidelunuoghene, 2014; Nzemeke, 2011). If quality is high, why are graduates of Nigerian schools treated differently (at the labour market) from their colleagues who studied abroad.

It is worthy of note that some of these students being trained abroad may not like to return home to look for job and even those already working in our unstable university system may be looking for opening to “escape” abroad for greener pasture. When the best brains leave the system (as is now the case), we will be left with mediocres. These half-baked graduates when employed as lecturers will produce half-baked graduates.

Conclusion

Though the motive of Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities may be right, their method of realizing this motive is wrong. Constant industrial actions and the resultant disruptions of academic calendar destroy the very thing they are fighting to protect which is the academic welfare of their students and the standard of University education. Industrial actions which put in the balance the academic fate of the students who are the reason d’être for the employment of their teachers and the overall educational standard on which depends the future growth and development of the nation, leave much to be desired. This work, therefore, moves for the adoption of other means of agitating for staff welfare without resorting to industrial

actions. Indefinite strikes by University staff are almost unheard of in more advanced climes where the high ranking Universities are situated. There, the mode of agitation is predominately intellectual and moral (Adesulu 2013). Critical to this non-strike approach is effective collective bargaining and keeping faith with all agreements reached. When agreements are not kept it weakens the desire to enter more and even willingness to come for another round table negotiation. A joint consultation committee (of Government and the union) should be set up to meet on periodic intervals to discuss impending matters that could generate industrial dispute.

References

- Adesegun, D. (2013). ASUU Strike and its Ripple effects. Retrieved from: <http://saharareports.com>. Accessed on: March 7, 2015.
- Aidelunuoghene, O. S. (2014). ASUU Industrial Actions: Between ASUU and Government, is it an issue of rightness?. *Journal of Education and Practice* 5(6).
- Cole, N.L. (2015). Conflict Theory Case study: The Occupy Centrals in Hong Kong, Retrieved from: <http://sociology.about.com/od/current-Events-in-sociological-context/> Accessed on: November 18, 2015.
- The Data points (2016). *World University ranking*. Retrieved from: www.timeshighereducation.com Accessed on: 26 Sept, 2016.
- Effiong, A. & Agboola, B. (2014), Nigerian Universities Outputs and their employability in the labour marketing south-south Nigeria. *American Journal of Education Research* pp.1244-1249. Retrieved from: <http://www.suepub/education/content/2012> Accessed on: March 25, 2015.
- Ekweueme, B. (2013). Leadership of the Nigerian Universities against Best Global Practices. *The National Scholar*. 9(2).

- Eriye, F. (2010, November 11). In Support of Strike Protests. *The Nation*.
- Fashoyin, T. (1992). *Industrial Relations in Nigeria*. Lagos: Longman.
- Haralambos, M. & Holborn, M. (2008). *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives*, London: Harper Collins Historical Flashback (2015, April 1-May 5), Zik's Odessey *Historical Flashback* 4(4).
- Isirimah, E. U. (2011). *Academic Staff Union and Management's Influence on Goal Achievement of Students in Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State, Nigeria, Unpublished Ph.D, Thesis of the Department of Educational Management, University of Port Harcourt.*
- Iwariamie-Jaja, D. (2001). *Social Work Enterprise: Theories and Perspectives*. Owerri: Springfield.
- Leigha, M. B. & Abraham L. N. (2011, April & November), *Quality & Standard in Public Secondary Schools in Nigeria: A focus on supervision & inspection in Nigeria. Trends in Educational Studies*, 6 (1&2). *National Scholar* (2013, Jan. Edition)
- Nwokocha, J. (1997, November 9). Exam Fraud: Fast Slide to Doomsday, *Sunday Vanguard*
- Nzemeke, V. (2011, February 24). When Graduates Fall Short of Expectation. *The Nation*.
- Okpi, A. (2011, December 11). ASUU Strike: Unplanned Breaks Affects Students. *The Punch*.
- Oladipo, A., Adeosun, O., & Oni A., (2009). *Quality Assurance and Sustainable University Education in Nigeria*. Retrieved from: aaDcice.Hiroshima-u.ac.jp/e/publications/
Accessed on: November 4, 2015.
- Onigu O. & Ogionwo W. (2006). *An Introduction to Sociological Studies*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nig) Plc
- Osonna E. & Ugwulebo (2016). *Sociology: An Inerdisciplinary Perspective*. Owerri: Cel-Bez Publishing Co. (Nig) Ltd
- Shettima, A. G. (2013, January). Who Wants to be a Teacher? *The National Scholar*
- Tittenbrun, J. (2018). Ralf Dahrendorf's Conflict Theory of Social Differentiation and Elite Theory. *Innovative Issues and Approaches in Social Sciences*, Vol.6 (3).
- Uwasomba, C. (2013, August 22). Why Does ASUU Always Go on Strike? *The Punch*.
- NUC (2015). *Nigerian Universities*. Retrieved from: <http://nuc.edu.ng/nigerian-univerisities/>
Accessed on: April 4, 2016.