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TITLE PAGE

INDUSTRIAL CONFLICT IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES:

**A CASE STUDY OF THE DISPUTES BETWEEN THE ACADEMIC STAFF
UNION OF UNIVERSITIES (ASUU) AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF
NIGERIA (FGN)**

BY

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Being a Thesis Submitted to the School of Social and Political Sciences

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the prolonged industrial conflict between the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN). This thesis provides a historical and sociological account of the origins, development, primary causes, and effects of this industrial conflict in Nigerian universities. Data was sourced from both primary and secondary (documentary) sources and analysed using comparative historical analysis, theoretical analysis and secondary analysis. The thesis concludes that the ongoing industrial conflict between ASUU and the FGN can be understood as having the features of a class dispute and that it entails both economic and political factors. Besides domestic factors directly affecting the disputes (e.g. low wages and conditions of service, poor and erratic funding, rising student population and weak institutional autonomy), this study revealed that external factors (particularly the effects of Nigeria's macroeconomic policies) contributed to the intensity of the disputes. Moreover, it is argued that historical antecedents, especially the colonial legacies of ethnicity, regionalism, weak legitimacy, corruption and autocracy have helped to shape the growth and development of the higher education system in Nigeria, and therefore of these disputes. Regarding the effects of the crisis, findings reveal that the poor emolument of academic staff coupled with the deterioration in teaching and learning facilities have contributed to the 'brain drain' from Nigerian universities, that is, the migration of staff, students and other professionals from the country in search of better opportunities abroad. Consequently, this thesis concludes that the factors affecting the industrial disputes between the ASUU and the FGN have been largely propelled by historical, economic and political factors which have become institutionalised and embedded in the Nigerian polity so that the disputes will continue to be difficult to resolve.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to almighty God for his grace, love, strength and supremacy over all things.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Signature.....

Name SYLVESTER AZAMOSA ODIAGBE

LIST OF KEY ABBREVIATIONS

ASUU: Academic Staff Union of Universities

CBN: Central Bank of Nigeria

EUSS: Elongated University Salary Scale. FGN: Federal Government of Nigeria

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

IAP: Industrial Arbitration Panel

IMF: International Monetary Fund

JAMB: Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board

LDCs: Less Developed Countries

MNCs: Multinational Corporations

NASU: Non-Academic Staff Union of Universities

NUC: National Universities Commission

NUT: Nigerian Union of Teachers

OECD: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

SAP: Structural Adjustment Program

UNESCO: United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1: Background and Justification for the Study:

For more than three decades now, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the Federal government of Nigeria (FGN) have been engaged in a prolonged industrial conflict over several issues of importance to the union, including poor wages and service conditions of academic staff members in government owned universities across the country, the problem of underfunding and infrastructural neglect in Nigerian universities as well as the lack of autonomy and academic freedom which union members claim to be limiting the quality of teaching, research, scholarship and innovation. These issues represent the primary causes of the dispute. This dispute has, however, now escalated into a wider struggle with political connotations. ASUU has thus declared itself as an anti-imperialist organization, meaning that they seek to fight against the purported interference of foreign bodies in the running of the economic and political affairs of the country. The government's reaction has been that ASUU's demands are unrealistic and unjustifiable when considered alongside the needs of other sectors and sister unions. Thus the government labels ASUU as greedy, inconsiderate and a union that tends to parade itself as a political watch dog of government's actions and inactions, neglecting its primary mandate of teaching and research.

This thesis investigates the origins, development, primary causes and effects of the industrial conflict between ASUU and the Federal Government of Nigeria. Why origins? Sociological theory shows that the most important determinants of social life can be traced to history. An understanding of the trends and character of social, economic and political disputes in the Nigerian colonial and immediate post colonial times will help inform the origins and nature of some of the conflict situation in Nigerian universities. Since the beginning of the post colonial era (after 1960), Nigeria's political system has become undermined by various anomalies, including rigging of elections, perversion of constitutional laws, large scale embezzlement of public funds, significant ethnic tensions, oppression and other forms of political corruption (Ogunbadejo, 1979:91). In fact, the beginning of Nigeria's post-independence problems can be attributed to the political

system bequeathed by the British colonial rule. British rule in Nigeria operated without reference to the development of the colony, but rather their main aim was to extort the nation's rich economic resources. It can also be argued that this pattern of exploitation and authoritarianism in existence during the colonial era was handed down to the post colonial ruling class who now have the same tendency to exploit the masses and enrich themselves without committing to nation building and social advancement. The attitude of the Nigerian military officers who took power from the ruling elites in the immediate post independence era was one that encouraged the same practices of oppression and exploitation. It is against this background that one can derive an understanding of what motivates unionism and industrial conflict amongst Nigerian workers who perceive themselves as the underclass or the oppressed. According to a Marxian understanding of a class, a class is defined by the ownership of property. Such ownership vests a person with the power to exclude others from the property and to use it for personal purposes. The emergence of a new military class in Nigeria post-independence led to a gradual exclusion of some civil servants from the middle class, including Nigerian academics who had initially been highly placed, both in terms of salary and social status at the time of independence. But the union members have realised the need to push for a change in the status quo. The dispute between ASUU and the government has thus been one which has shifted from a conventional industrial relations conflict over wages and conditions of service, to one which involves a whole series of wider political questions.

The extent of this crisis in Nigerian universities can be better appreciated when considered from the point of view of the 'wider effects' of the disputes on the society more generally. The magnitude of the problem of funding and wage grievances in Nigeria's education sector has led to a series of strikes by the Nigerian Union of Teachers, Academic Staff Union of Universities, Non- Academic Staff Union of Universities and other bodies responsible for organising aggrieved workers (Ajetomobi and Ayanwale, 2009:8). Statistics from the National Universities Commission (2002) reveal that since 1992, ASUU has embarked on strikes over 23 times to drive home its demands. As with all industrial conflicts, strikes have significant wider social consequences. On a micro level, strikes by academic staff members disrupt the learning process which further damages the educational system. There is a Nigerian saying which goes: "When two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers". Students are the most affected of all stakeholders as they are the direct victims of these incessant strike actions by ASUU. The university calendar has been

constantly disrupted due to industrial actions, making learning and research difficult for students. This is one of the government's repeated claims against the union's activities.

Parents are the indirect victims of the ASUU strikes. ASUU's frequent strikes have increased the length of time during which their children or wards stay at home, leading to wastage of resources and placing further burdens on household economies which are already often overstretched. Some parents, especially those from low income families, though dissatisfied with the situation, are unable to send their children to private universities. Nevertheless, the rate of enrolment in private universities has been on the increase during the past few years (see chapter 5).

Apart from students and their parents, the crisis has affected the *quality of graduates* produced by the universities. This has been revealed by the employers of labour on several occasions. One of ASUU members from the University of Port Harcourt I interviewed confirmed that since the 1990s there has been a decline in the quality levels of graduates turned out by the university system. He, however, attributed this to the direct consequence of the government's lack of attention to the learning infrastructure in universities and this has contributed to the poor performance of the average Nigerian undergraduate.

There is a huge mismatch between the output of university trained graduates and the demands of the labour market. This has reduced the employment prospects of the average Nigerian undergraduate. While it can be argued that unemployment in Nigeria is partly attributable to the existence of a larger pool of graduates produced by the university system than the economy can absorb, there are numerous questions surrounding the quality of skilled labour. Even when some graduates are able to find a job, most employers have reservation about the quality of their education. Employers have expressed serious worries about two of the skill areas, namely 'communication' and 'technical skills'. (Dabalen and Oni, 2000:22). Many graduates lack proficiency in written and spoken English, which is evident from their inability to formulate correct sentences, or even prepare a simple report. In technical fields such as engineering and production, the story is the same. While employers can confirm that graduates are able to demonstrate considerable depth of knowledge in technical concepts, they are hardly able to apply this knowledge or skills in solving problems that enhance productivity. The major reason for this is that, because they are devoid of resources, universities tend to concentrate on theoretical teaching with little or no practical training. So the average Nigerian graduate is unfamiliar with the tools or

processes involved in the work place however conventional such equipment or processes are. Suffice to say that the combination of massive graduate unemployment and low productivity among the few employed graduates represent a poor social return on public investment.

The quality of graduates, arguably, is a reflection of the quality of academic staff, the dearth of learning facilities such as libraries, laboratories, classrooms and so on, as well as inadequate financing. Perhaps, the most critical factor is the problem of deterioration in staff quality. In fact, a direct consequence of the poor emolument and working conditions of university employees is the phenomenon of *brain drain* from Nigerian Universities. The phrase 'brain drain' is a term used by the union members to reflect the loss of intellectual capacity from the Nigerian universities and other professions. Pemedede (2007) notes:

Without an internationally competitive remuneration for university teachers in Nigeria, the mass migration of academics to both African and non-African countries where the conditions of service and facilities of academic study are much more attractive would be inevitable (361)

As this study shows, there are huge inequalities in the remunerations of university lecturers when compared with those of their colleagues in some other African universities, let alone when compared with academic staff salaries in developed countries. Similarly, prior to the 1970s, the salaries of a professor and the Chief Judge of the federation were at par. Now, the gap is very wide. ASUU has particularly focussed on the fact that this wide disparity in wages of lecturers across sectors and across countries has led to significant rates of staff attrition from Nigerian universities in favour of greener pastures overseas or in the private sector. Even those students who graduate with first-class degrees are likely to refuse offers to become teaching assistants because of the poor career prospects.

This so-called 'brain drain' is also fuelled by the underfunding of infrastructural facilities, which further exacerbates the frustration of the Nigerian academics in their teaching and research efforts. It is worthy of note that the Nigerian government is willing to expend huge sums of money on high-profile public projects, whilst neglecting the educational sector. (An example is the recently constructed National Stadium in Abuja in 2003 which cost a total of about \$360 Million). This has serious implications for the retention of a body of key academic staff. The adverse impact of these policies can be better appreciated when one considers what has happened to the health sector in Nigeria, where most of the medical

academic staff in charge of the University Teaching hospitals have gone overseas, because they are relatively underpaid. In the same vein, many African governments, including that of Nigeria, prefer to pay huge sums of money (in foreign currency) to hire expatriates as consultants, while the local intellectuals are devalued and under-appreciated. For example, taking a wider African perspective, Emeagwali (2008) notes that it is a contradiction that Africa “spends four billion dollars annually to recruit and pay 100,000 expatriates to work in Africa but fails to spend a proportional amount to recruit the 250,000 African professionals now working outside Africa” (1). In addition, African professionals working in Africa are paid considerably less than similarly qualified expatriates.

The attrition of academic staff from the Nigerian university system can be seen more clearly when the ratio of staff to students is considered. According to statistics from the Federal (2008) there were a total of 18,328 academic staff to cater for 433,871 students in Nigerian universities in 2000. But by NUC staffing norms, a total of 33,951 staff members ought to be in the system, indicating a shortfall of 15,718 or 46%. A comparison across other African countries also reveals a shortfall with UNESCO standards (see Appendix 1). Nevertheless, the 1996 figures for Nigeria (12,395 lecturers versus 236,261 students) suggest that here the situation is worse still. It reveals a lecturer/student ratio of 1:19 as against the UNESCO norm of 1:10.

A Professor of Economics and former Pro-Chancellor of one of Nigeria’s universities, T.M. Yesufu, captures the situation in the Nigerian university as follows:

The student-teacher ratios are worsening in virtually all disciplines. Laboratories are either non-existent or completely denuded of essential equipment and experimental consumables. Libraries cry out for updating with current books, periodicals and research findings. Teachers are grossly underpaid and many have had to resort to migration to other countries to seek how to keep body and soul together, and further their intellectual development. Many others have abandoned academics to the greener pastures of the private industry, the banks and consultancies. Part time jobs and moonlighting have become the rule rather than exception (Yesufu, 1996:207)

This is especially the case in critical fields such as Medicine, Pharmacy, Engineering and Computer Science. The implication of this for development is that as these professionals emigrate, intellectual capital leaves with them, exacerbating the problems of underdevelopment. Even when students enrol for graduate courses in some of these critical

disciplines, they usually have no teachers to guide their studies. Consequently, the so-called intellectual capacity required for the future cannot be built.

The president of ASUU, Professor Ukachukwu Awuzie said in a press conference in October 2009:

Our Country has lost a very significant portion of its academics to the United States of America, Europe and Africa, especially South Africa. The exodus of our young Ph.D holders and academics of other cadres to Southern Africa has intensified in the last seven years. The need to make the conditions of service, salary and non-salary, attractive enough for Nigerian scholars to stay at home even though they are not doing as well as they would do if they were in Europe and America, was the major reason the negotiating committee agreed and even insisted that Nigerian academics should be paid the African average, i.e. the level of remuneration close to what obtains in the African countries to which Nigerian academics emigrate...The Agreement which ASUU has signed with Government does not address the brain drain in a way that will significantly reduce this threat to the development of Nigeria.

All of this detail is provided because it makes clearer the wider socio-economic context of the dispute. In a very real sense, what is at stake in the struggle described here is the potential for future development in the country as a whole. Moreover, it is important to have a sense of the historical trajectory here. Nigeria's first university, University of Ibadan, which was initially one of the best universities in developing countries, has now become one of the worst even in sub-Saharan Africa. In a direct sense, the fate of Nigerian universities exemplifies the failed hopes of decolonisation. It is against this background that one can understand how the dispute has developed from that of a conventional industrial conflict, to become a significant struggle over the entire future of Nigeria.

1.2: Purpose of the Study:

I feel that it is important to be clear that my concerns in this research emerge directly from reflections on my own experience.. In that respect, the main driving force behind my PhD research does have a subjective element. In other words, it is based on my experiences in, and passion for, the development of university education in Nigeria. I see the research, in some respects, as revealing the enormous frustrations encountered by those – students and staff - working in the university education sector in Nigeria. Moreover, as I argue, the

issues in Nigerian universities are spillovers from the problems outside of the university community and demand urgent attention.

The past three decades in the history of higher education in Nigeria has been crisis-ridden with the conflict between the academic staff union of universities and the federal government of Nigeria. As a result of this dispute, the academic calendar has been constantly disrupted; I spent five years in completing an undergraduate programme (a BSc. in Sociology and Anthropology 1992 to 1997), although the course should have taken four years. I also spent almost two years in doing my Masters programme instead of one year. Moreover, during that time, I saw at first hand the state of the facilities and the conditions within Nigerian universities. My interest in this topic is directly shaped by this personal experience and is intended to enable the reader of my work to understand how this conflict has shaped university system in Nigeria and its entire society, also how the broad understanding of the historical and contemporary development of Nigeria – as reflected in its political, economic policies (especially the structural adjustment programme) – has shaped this dispute. It is my view that enabling environment for high university standard (without constant industrial action) will reflect on other sectors of the economy, to the extent that the man in the street will benefit from it, in relation to health care delivery, security, good road network information and communication technology, transport services, agriculture and housing.

ASUU was established in 1978 and has since then encountered some of the worst problems in the history of trade unionism in the country. This research investigates the origins, development, primary causes and effects of the industrial conflict between the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the Federal Government of Nigeria. The research focuses generally on the ASUU disputes since inception in 1978, but more specifically since 1992 when strike actions became much more pronounced following the effects of the structural adjustment program (SAP).

1.3: Significance of the Study:

This topic has not been well researched in the existing literature. Thus, the significance of this thesis lies in its contribution to the body of knowledge as follows:

- I. This thesis provides a detailed account of the main disputes and considers specifically some of the *historical factors* that are responsible for the underdevelopment of higher education in Nigeria.
- II. This study thus offers an original attempt to theorise the circumstances and causes of the ongoing disputes between ASUU and FGN. In particular, this study reveals that the causes of the protracted disputes can be classified as both *economic* and *non-economic*, and traces, historically, the effect of both *internal (domestic)* and *external (foreign)* factors, on the dispute.
- III. The significance of the study is also revealed in the blending of both original primary research (field work) and secondary (documentary) evidence. These approaches gives a more valid and robust analysis of the causes and effects of conflict in Nigerian universities.

1.4: Research Methodology:

1.4.1: Data Collection and Sampling Method:

This study is based on robust evidence from primary data and secondary sources including documentary evidence. *Primary data* were collected mainly through interviews with union officials (including 2 Vice Chancellors) and rank file members from 8 universities across the six geo-political zones of the country. The selection of participants was based on geo-political zones in order to reflect the social, political, ethnic and regional diversity of the Nigerian people and population. During my field trip in 2009, I attended three ASUU press conferences and interviewed over 50 union members (15 union officials and 35 rank and file members) from the following universities: University of Maiduguri (North-East Nigeria), University of Benin (South-South), University of Nigeria (South-East), University of Lagos (South-West), University of Ilorin (North Central), University of Ibadan (South-West), University of Abuja (Federal Capital Territory), and Ahmadu Bello University (North-West). On the government side, I interviewed 10 government officials from three ministries: Federal Ministry of Education (4), Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity (4, including an ex-official) and the National Universities Commission (2). I also interviewed two members of the Federal Government negotiating team.

Secondary data – key figures and statistics, analysis and commentaries were obtained or were sourced from empirical studies (including Nigerian & African authors) as well as from press releases, communiqués, reports and publications of ASUU as well as consultation documents from the World Bank, UNESCO, and OECD.

1.4.2: Method of Analysis:

The method of analysis adopted by this thesis is three-fold: Firstly, there is *historical analysis* intended to provide a clearer account of the origins and development of the disputes; secondly, there is *theoretical analysis* of the interviews and documentary evidence, in order to try to elaborate the primary causes and effects of the disputes; thirdly, there is *secondary analysis* using figures, statistics, charts and graphs. The thesis as a whole can be understood as adopting a *case study* approach which applies theoretical paradigms and models to the specific ‘Nigerian Universities’ case, and which also seeks to use empirical data to give a clearer sense of the ‘lived reality’ of the crisis in Nigerian Universities.

1.5: Structure of the Thesis:

The thesis is divided into nine chapters, including this introductory chapter, which lays out the justification and motivation for the study.

Chapter 2 concentrates more specifically on Nigeria, its social and cultural context and factors specific to the ASUU conflict. This will include a review of the historical circumstances which have led to the current socio-political situation in Nigeria, including its status as a British colony and its subsequent post-colonial problems, including the military dictatorships that have characterised its recent history as well as socio-cultural factors such as traditional notions of kinship and tribal networking. The existence of these factors is seen to highlight the need for a situational reconsideration of Western-based theoretical frameworks in relation to the understanding of Nigerian industrial relations. However, with an appropriate understanding of the contexts of ASUU strikes, it was felt that various aspects of Western theory can be transposed into a Nigerian context (Kiggundu et al. 1983).

Chapter 3 lays out the methodology used in this thesis which has been summarised above. Chapters 4 to 6 examine the main findings of the research. These chapters present evidence from both primary and documentary secondary data on the dispute, which are then analysed critically in terms of the historical, economic and socio-political factors that have fuelled and prolonged the dispute over time. Chapter 4 takes a look at the state of infrastructural facilities in Nigerian universities and tries to understand the problems which students and academic staff members in particular face in their day-to-day work experience and aims to give an 'ethnographic' sense of the reality of life in the sector today. Chapter 5 examines the economic questions surrounding the dispute. These relate to the problem of poor wages and conditions of service which have resulted in a lack of motivation and a reduction in productivity and have also exacerbated the migration of academics out of the state sector, as well as to other countries. The intervention of the military into Nigerian politics shortly after independence in the 1960s as well as the economic problems posed by SAP were among critical factors that contributed to the effective shift in the economic status of Nigerian university teachers from membership of the country's initial middle class to a position equivalent to that of the working class. Chapter 6 takes a look at the dispute in relation to institutional autonomy in Nigerian universities. Three areas of autonomy are crucial here: academic freedom, administrative autonomy and financial autonomy. These questions of academic autonomy have come to play a crucial part in the disputes, helping to explain the extent to which the disputes have taken on a wider political significance in the Nigerian context.

In chapter 7, the Nigerian government's position is examined. In particular, this chapter assesses relevant primary and secondary data collated from interviews and press conferences during my field work in order to get a sense of how the dispute has been represented and understood from the government's perspective. It has been widely argued in government circles that the national executives of ASUU have been a principal contributor to the conflicts experienced in the nation's higher education sector. The government argues, most notably, that as the union embarks upon too frequent strikes without consideration of the collateral effects on the stability of the university system, it is guilty of unnecessarily politicising the dispute.

One cannot fully appreciate how the interactions between the practice of power, economic accumulation, and conflict of various forms have shaped the Nigerian political landscape without addressing it in historical depth. Chapter 8 thus returns to historical question in

order to provide a more general and synthesising discussion and offer a sociological analysis of the wider politics of struggle over the post colonial situation of Nigeria based on the findings. Moreover, it provides theoretical discussion of both African and Western perspectives of conflict and the role of the state in post-colonial Nigeria. Lastly, chapter 9 provides a summarising and concluding account of the dispute.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORY OF NIGERIA'S SOCIO-POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT AND CLASS STRUGGLES IN THE UNIONISED HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR

2.1 Introduction:

This chapter outlines the socio-political development of Nigeria, the legacy of colonialism in the modern state and how processes such as class formation and identity, and the evolution of the ASUU as a union, have occurred. The need for situational analyses of theories generated in a non-Nigerian context will be exemplified by the phenomenon of corruption (Section 2.3), which is seen to be far more common in African than most developed economies, but also functions along far more complex lines, relating to ethno-regional issues, institutional weakness and deep-rooted social customs. In fact, corruption is a broad term which describes a form of “exploitation” of the nation’s resources by the ruling class. In the developed countries, corruption is often seen as a straightforward issue, however, in Nigeria it is related to a variety of social processes and has played a significant role in shaping the political and administrative landscape, including educational policy and practice. The example of corruption demonstrates the need for a more nuanced view of both this and other phenomena that function differently in the West compared to Nigeria. The intention in this chapter, therefore, is to provide the basis for a more nuanced and situational understanding in the subsequent discussions of Nigerian higher education and the historical development of ASUU. It is in view of this that a time line of events in Nigerian historical development has been put together (see appendix 11) in order to help in understanding the evolution of ASUU and various political developments surrounding this industrial conflict.

The legacy of colonialism is significant in many socio-political contexts in Nigeria. It is possible to say that as the rudiments of modern or developed economies were laid out in the nineteenth century and still show the institutional and discursive legacies of that era, so modern Nigerian society is still shaped, to some extent, by its experience of colonialism. Indeed, understanding colonialism and its legacy is seen as central to understanding the recurring ASUU strikes. A critical analysis describing the various ways in which the relics

of empire have shaped Nigeria's educational system and the social, economic and political structure in Nigeria is thus important. Not only did colonialism have a large hand in the evolution of the institutional structures of independent Nigeria, but it provoked a profound reconfiguration of ethno-regional identities in the country. These, in turn, have led to power struggles which have informed the political discourse in multiple ways. For this reason, section 2.2 will look at analyses of post colonialism and the chapter will conclude with three descriptive sections (2.3, 2.4 and 2.5), in which the evolution of Nigerian higher education (HE) and ASUU is discussed in light of the theoretical issues raised by the discussion.

The objectives of this chapter can be stated as:

- i. To consider the extent to which understandings generated in the context of developed countries can be applied to a Nigerian situation.
- ii. To identify and discuss historical processes which have shaped the Nigerian institutional landscape such as colonialism, political events and cultural factors.
- iii. To describe and understand the historical events and narratives that have led to the persistent strike actions by ASUU.
- iv. To establish an adequate understanding of the discourses and events surrounding the ASUU strikes which served as a platform for the primary research that was conducted by this thesis.

2.2 The Colonial and Post Colonial State.

2.2:1: Nigeria – Overview

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is a country of over 140 million people situated in West Africa. The country contains a huge diversity of ethnic groups (Otite 1990). Between 1914 and 1960, it was wholly part of the British Empire, but since 1960 has been independent. Appendix 2 provides a list of post-colonial governments, which by and large have all failed to create an institutionally secure, welfare-orientated democracy despite significant oil wealth. It is clear from this list that instability, coups and counter-coups have been the defining features of post-colonial Nigerian politics. In recent years, economic growth has

accelerated once more, but social development remains fragile in the face of corruption and violence.

Notions of kinship and tribal alliances and rivalries are a significant factor in all aspects of Nigerian life, including politics and business. One critic phrases these processes succinctly when he notes that:

In Nigeria, access to resources and strategies of accumulation were very often dependent on ties of kinship, lineage, and friendship and on reciprocal ties of clientele. Community identities were strong, shaping economic participation and conditioning social differentiation (Forrest, 1995: 24).

Before the arrival of Europeans, Nigeria was a series of individual tribal areas and kingdoms, the majority of which were united by the British in 1901. Subsequently, in 1912, Lord Lugard established a system of indirect rule in Nigeria and in 1914 he amalgamated Southern and Northern Nigeria. The differing political systems established by the colonial regime are, arguably, part of what has led to ethnic and regional conflict in Nigeria. This process of colonisation thus created the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria. Colonial rule in Nigeria was resisted in various ways, but also led to the emergence of new kinds of local political and economic elites, many of whom consolidated their position through compromise with the colonial regime. As with other colonies, the nationalist movement grew particularly in the wake of World War II and led to the declaration of formal independence in 1960. The first national election to establish independent government was held prior to this, in 1959. Democratic rule was, however, short-lived, and the military emerged on the political scene in 1966. The ethnic and regional conflict in Nigeria led to the civil war of 1967 to 1970. Nevertheless, in this early postcolonial Nigerian university lecturers were rated among the middle class and their salaries and conditions of service were very attractive. There was no problem of funding the universities in Nigeria. Military intervention in politics in Nigeria has, however, culminated in a succession of changes in military leadership, usually through coups, such as that taking place in 1976, when the then Head of State, General Murtala Mohammed was assassinated. However, in 1979 the military handed political power to civilian government of Alhalji Shehu Shagari. This second period of civilian rule was equally short lived and in December 1983, the military took power again, forming the government of General Mohammedu Buhari, who was himself overthrown in August 1985 by General Ibrahim Babangida, subsequently replaced by another military government led by Gen.

Sani Abacha. Abacha died in office in 1998, giving way to Abdusalami Abubakar's military regime that subsequently handed power to civilian government, headed by retired Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo as President (1999- 2007). In 2007 Umaru Yaradua was elected as President of Federal Republic of Nigeria. He died in office in May 2010 at which point the vice President Goodluck Jonathan took over as the President and was formally confirmed by election in 2011.

The importance of this wider context of Nigerian political development is that the conflict between ASUU and the federal government does take place against the background which defines conventional industrial disputes. It involves not just issues related to the slow erosion of the Nigerian university system, but which reflect the problems that are confronting the development of the entire country. In particular, as I will discuss in the thesis, the dispute has been tied up with struggles for democracy in postcolonial Nigeria. Under military regime ASUU was successively proscribed and de-proscribed for opposing military rule and its undue interference in university administration. ASUU union leaders were arrested and dismissed. Moreover, as I will also discuss below, the dispute was importantly concerned with challenging the policies of military rulers. ASUU members opposed the military regime and its unfavourable economic policies, such as Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and the deregulation of the economy.

A further contextual factor which is important is that ethno-regional factors in Nigerian politics are significant and many of the processes in which these factors manifest themselves are complex. One Nigerian anthropologist identifies 374 ethnic groups in the country (Otite 1990). Of these the three most populous and powerful are the Hausa-Fulani (generally considered to represent 28% of the population), the Yoruba and Igbo. Across these ethnic groups runs a further Muslim-Christian cleavage, which is roughly, but incompletely, expressed in a geographical North-South divide. In real terms, perhaps the most influential feature of Nigerian ethno-regional distribution is that different ethnicities are concentrated in different geographical areas. As a result, regional differences in policy implementation are hard to avoid. As discussed in section 2.3.2, a solidarity union movement is difficult to establish when the members of a conflict group have divergent objectives, goals or values. Thus the highly regionalised and ethnocentric nature of the Nigerian political and cultural landscape is an important feature determining the extent to which there is solidarity among a particular people engaging in conflict promoting events in the country.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, liberation swept across Africa as one by one the European powers relinquished their colonial territories. Nigeria gained full independence from the British on 1st October 1960. The 1960s were marked by a succession of coups and counter-coups, mainly carried out by various factions of the military, including a three year civil war. This ran from 1967 to 1970, but into the 1970s social and political tensions continued, with sporadic violence remaining an everyday occurrence. Nigeria's political and economic landscape was radically changed by the discovery of significant amounts of oil in the Niger Delta in the 1950s. However endemic corruption ensured that most of the benefits of this new found wealth remained within the political classes, while the social and economic development of the majority of citizens stagnated. Inequalities of wealth and opportunities led to further social fragmentation and unrest, with economic divisions superimposed over prolonged tribal and religious rivalries.

Histories of Nigerian political and civil development since 1960 make depressing reading – the tales of corruption and violence are seemingly endless (Ejiogu 2001; Suberu and Diamond 2002; etc.) Clearly, ASUU has on occasion found itself in the midst of this instability, given that it is a politically motivated organisation functioning in a country that has veered between military dictatorship and civil meltdown several times in recent decades. In this way, the history of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the causes of the prolonged disputes between it and the federal government can be seen as inextricable from the wider socio-political development of Nigeria. The strikes can be seen as an encapsulation of a range of cultural and socio-political discourses whose contexts will be discussed in the course of this chapter.

2.2.2: Colonial Education and the Nigerian State

Education was the main ideological apparatus which the British colonial administrators used to position Nigeria within a capitalist world economy, though this did not produce much internal capitalist development. Although education in developed countries started several decades before the formal establishment of the colonial state, the foreign missionary groups which brought formal education to Nigeria and other parts of Africa shared the same imperialist ideology which informed the political beliefs of many of the colonial administrators who came after them. In many ways, the activities of the missionary groups complemented those of the state administrators. While the missionary schools provided the state with some qualified personnel, the state in turn provided the

missionaries with some protection (Ekekwe, 1986:35). Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*¹ provides a good fictional exposé of the kind of social disorganisation which may have characterised the local societies in the wake of the activities of the missionary groups. The message of peace and brotherhood which the missionaries brought to Africa was intricately synchronised with the civilising mission of imperialism. British colonial interest in Nigeria was largely economic. But with the rise of the evangelical movement in the eighteenth century, they developed strong humanitarian and religious motives (Tilman and Cole, 1962:39) which nevertheless articulated, in some respect, with their economic policy.

All of this said, however, it is still worth noting the evolutionary work of the missionaries in the context of Nigeria's educational system. The most important institutions of learning today in the country both in the North and the South were founded by the British. Apart from occasional grants that the colonial state gave to some of the schools, Western-style education on the ground was largely the product of the mission schools, which aimed to provide students with a sound Christian education (Ekekwe, 1986:36). The religious teaching of the missionaries was, however, restricted to the South and was strongly resisted in the North, which came to be a key example of the British policy of indirect rule. In fact, the pattern in which Western formal education was introduced in the country was to have an enduring impact on the geo-political structure of the country. For example, in 1958, just prior to independence, the North had 2,290 educational institutions compared to the West's 7,273 and the East's 6,880 (Ekekwe, 1986:38). Table 2.1 below gives a clear representation of this information.

¹ Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* published in 1958 in Ibadan has been described as a milestone in African literature. The story in the book typifies a major shift in African social experience which was caused by the Europeans. In particular, the book paints a picture of how the British missionaries upset a seemingly democratic system of governance in the *Igbo land* of Nigeria.

Table 2.1: Number of Educational Institutions* and Pupils by Regions, 1958

Region	Number of Schools	Enrolment		Total
		Male	Female	
West	7,273	735,517	438,206	1,173,723
East	6,880	812,880	438,049	1,250,929
North	2,290	179,058	59,040	238,098
Federation	16,443	1,727,455	935,295	2,662,750

* Includes: primary and secondary schools, teacher training colleges and technical and vocational schools

Source: Nduka (1964) Adapted by Ekekwe (1986)

From the table above, it is clear that both the Eastern and Western Regions enrolled over one million persons into various categories of schools in 1958, while the Northern Region registered less than a quarter of a million persons. The table, however, does not reveal that Western education had long been in existence in Western Nigeria before it reached the East. For example, by 1859, the Church Missionary Society Grammar school was already in Lagos, but it was not until 1895 that the Church of Scotland established the Hope Waddell Training Institute (HWTI) in Calabar (Fafunwa, 1974:99). This regional imbalance had important implications for class formation in Nigeria under colonial rule as reviewed below.

2.3.3: Class Formation, Power Relations and Trade Union Movement in the Pre- and Post-Colonial Era

Although aspects of Africa's contemporary class structure can be traced to pre-colonial times (Anikpo, 1985:34), the class structure in Nigeria can be said to have been profoundly shaped by colonialism, based on the profiteering activities of the colonial states and their foreign trading partners (Ekekwe, 1986:60). Prior to the colonial era (that is, the pre-colonial times), the system of production involved independent household subsistence and the economy was primarily agrarian in nature. Thus, land and labour were central to productive activity. However, the system of land ownership varied among communities.

Anikpo (1985:36) highlights two variant forms of social formation in pre-colonial Nigeria, the first being monarchical feudal states with centralised authority and an exploited class of “tribute-paying” peasants; and second, village democracies whose social relations of production had not assumed sharp antagonistic dimensions. In the feudal system, Kings were absolute and autocratic (Nzimiro, 1981:19). Land ownership was the exclusive preserve of the King who was the accredited representative of the people. However, sometimes, certain sharing privileges were given to the chiefs. In the village or traditional system, land ownership was communal as parcels of land were held by individuals in trust for the community. Thus, in the communal system, there was an overriding concern for the generality of the interests of the people.

However, the colonial era started with the emergence of overseas trade involving West Europeans. As Claude Ake (1981) puts it: ‘the penetration of Western Capitalism into Africa (in this case Nigeria in particular) and the subsequent integration of the economy into world capitalist system’ (32), may well be argued to have started with the beginning of European trade with Nigerian communities and therefore long before actual colonization. It can be argued that this trade was not particularly disruptive until it began to undermine the autonomy of the indigenous structures by transforming mutual trade relations into an exercise in “commercial exploitation” and “monopoly capitalism” (Anikpo, 1986:39). Yet, we should remember that the central trading form in this period was the slave trade, and this had significant disruptive political and social consequences on African societies, both at the coast and in the hinterland. Subsequently, with the beginnings of formal colonisation, as Ekekwe (1986:61) points out, the expansion of the state bureaucracy and the administrative requirements of the foreign enterprises resulted in the increased recruitment of Nigerians into these institutions. One strategy which the colonial government used (Lord Lugard’s in particular) was to implement a policy of indirect rule under which the traditional elite were recruited to man several positions in the state. Another group of Nigerians (which comprised mostly educated persons) not having any links with traditional rule were also recruited. Many people from these groups were to become professionals (independent lawyers, doctors, and private entrepreneurs), while some others were small property owners. There were also those who were instrumental in enhancing the extraction of rents for the colonial governments. It was from these fractions and strata of the new petty bourgeoisie that the dominant elements, i.e. political leaders started to emerge (*ibid*: 61). The emergence of these political leaders dismantled the

regional structure of the state and challenged the survival of the existing traditional and new petty bourgeoisie classes which were not evenly spread throughout the society. However, the indirect rule did not weaken the powers of the Emirs and other traditional chieftains across the three regions of the federation (the Western, the Eastern and the Northern regions) as they were mostly involved in intense party struggles for political dominance. One important implication of the dominance of political leaders in each region, especially after 1951, was the fact that the regional governments provided them with a platform both to mobilize the masses in relation to particular issues and to press the colonial state for concessions. The working class, which was evolving at the time, was quite small, reflecting a weak industrial base. For example, the number of registered trade unions in Nigeria as at 1940 was 14 comprising a total of 4,629 members (Ananaba, 1969:252; Cohen, 1974:112). However, with the growth of manufacturing in the 1950s, the number of registered unions increased to 232 in 1955-56 with over 176,000 registered members (Ekekwe, 1986:63). Yesufu (1962:39) reports that as at 1959, union membership was only 33.3% of the total wage-earning population. Thus, even with these increases, union membership was still a relatively small fraction of the labour force before independence. By 1971, eleven years after independence, the trade union movement had grown to 873 unions with 655, 215 members. [See Table 2.2 below]

Table 2.2: Registered workers through trade unions, 1940-1971

Year	Number of trade unions	Membership
1940	14	4,629
1945	97	Not Known
1950-51	144	144,358
1955-56	232	175,987
1960-61	360	274,126
1962-63	435	324,203
1963-64	502	352,790

1964-65	551	517,911
Sept 1971	873	655,215

Source: Figures were extracted from Ananaba (1969), Cohen, (1974) and Ekekwe (1986).

An important feature of the evolving Nigerian working class in the colonial era was that it was involved in two modes of production (Gugler, 1971). Although many of the workers were factory or industrial workers, they often had links with the peasant mode of production. In other words, they could be classified as half way between proletarians and independent peasants, i.e. peasants who essentially lived in towns and cities for economic social and security reasons, but still belonged to the village community (Claude Ake, 1978:63). It was not until the 1920s that the Nigerian workers began to make their presence felt before the colonial governments. The Nigerian workers who were subjected to Western capitalist manipulations could only express themselves through strike actions. When the colonial governments discovered the extent to which workers were becoming resistant, they sought to control union activity even after this was legalised in 1939. Consequently the British government appointed Labour Advisers, many of them having no background at all in trade unionism (Woddis, 1961). The duties of the advisers, among other things, were to promote class collaboration between union leaders and their employers, to detach the union movements from nationalist struggles, and to win colonial workers to support the West in the cold war (*ibid*:50). While this was going on, the government sustained their policy of being tough on the labour movement, as was observed from the 1949 shooting of striking coal miners in Enugu (Warren, 1966:28). The colonial government would also not recognise unions if they found their leadership to be radical. An important example is the attempt of the government to banish one of the veteran labour leaders, Michael Imoudu during the 1945 general strike for an increase in the daily minimum wage and cost-of-living allowances. Other examples of union militancy include the 1950 strike against the United Africa Company (UAC) led by Nduka Eze and the 1955 strike at the tin mines in Jos.

A final, definitional point, as regards the use of the term class in this thesis. Class, according to Marxist theory, is defined by the social relations linked to the mode of production in a capitalist system, and characterised by a division between the owner of the

means of production, on one hand, and, on the other, those who sell their labour for existence. Although Nigeria has not seen a great deal of typically capitalist development, it has a clearly defined class structure, characterised by the significant economic and political power of a small, dominant elite in control of the national wealth (with reference to military dictatorship), a largely precarious middle class, and an overwhelming class of rural and urban poor. As I argue in what follows, the ASUU dispute is partly shaped by the response of academic lectures to a series of threats to their class position, particularly as a result of government unfavourable economic policies, such as Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP).

2.2.4: Pan-African Post-Colonialism.

The purpose of this section is to establish the link between analyses of the post-colonial situation and the political and industrial relations environment in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. As various critics, including Magyar (1988) have argued, there were across Africa a variety of responses to the end of colonial rule. Different states inherited different sets of post-colonial circumstances according to their colonial histories (i.e. how politically and socially stable had the country been, what structures and institutions the coloniser had implemented, etc.). On a macro level, the variety in economic performances, ideologies and social development rates of African nations has prevented the establishment of meaningful regional institutions. Thus, whereas the EU has developed in Europe, or ASEAN in Asia, Africa has been left without the means for reaching regional consensus by itself. This, coupled with the fact that many post-colonial economies are still orientated towards export and trade with the relevant former coloniser, has meant that what is called the international community has been able to impose conditionality on Africa without it having the appropriate mechanisms to respond (Bush and Szeftel 1988). This has led to calls for a new era of genuine pan-Africanism based on solidarity and understanding to promote stability and prosperity in the region (Bush and Szeftel 1988; Van Wyk 1993).

More recent analyses of post-colonialism, however, do not seek to simply attribute the blame for Africa's failings to the colonial powers, but rather, to understand the continuing effect of foreign interventions on the regional and national development of the former colonies (i.e. 'post-colonial' dependency). In this way, it is important to establish the parameters of what is understood by the term *post-colonial*. Following Ashcroft *et al.* (1989) it is used to describe not only the period since independence, but rather "the culture

affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day” (2). Thus, post-colonialism is not merely the study of history, but an attempt to understand the impact of history on the ongoing events of African development. These impacts have been widely treated in literary studies and anthropology, but have had relatively little impact on industrial relations theory. However, the two might be usefully interwoven. Post-colonial theory argues that the still dominant colonial powers maintain the repression of post-colonial societies through new mechanisms such as trade, aid and other socio-economic interventions. Post-colonial theory has focussed attention on issues of identity construction, nationalism and cultural representation, and on the way in which such representations have tended to negate the voices of post-colonial societies and cultures. One influential critic argues:

Without significant exception the universalising discourses of modern Europe and the United States assume the silence, willing or otherwise, of the non-European world. There is incorporation; there is inclusion; there is direct rule; there is coercion. But there is only infrequently an acknowledgement that the colonized people should be heard from, their ideas known (Said 1993: 58).

This argument can be related to industrial relations theory in several ways. Firstly, just as industrial relations theorists have commented on the tendency of dominant means of discourse (i.e. the media, official positions, etc.) to misrepresent the case of the working classes as a form of repression (Schwartz 1985; Fountain 1985), so post-colonial theorists argue that a similar process has occurred through the legacies of control and dependence established from the moment of colonisation. The implication of this is that the economic and political institutions and structures that were in place during colonial period were not established for the development of the colonial state (that is the periphery) but for the advancement of the interests of the colonisers (the core). The second area of impact of post-colonial theory on the present discussion occurs at an epistemological level. As discussed in section 2.4, Western critical literature has tended to develop conceptualisations of inherent African political instability, leading at times to misleading representations of problems such as corruption and institutional weakness. Post-colonial theory can help offer a critical angle here, offering as it does an explanation for the tendency of Western discourses to absolve themselves from blame for the failures of many post-colonial societies. That is, by generating a picture of failed African states as full of potential but ruined by in-fighting and individual greed, Western discourse can promote the idea that

when independence was granted, post-colonial societies were presented with, as it were, a clean slate – total autonomy over the governance and future development of a new nation-state. In reality, colonialism left deep marks on African societies, such as unstable economic and political institutions leading to poor infrastructural and educational development which meant that the colonial state was set up to serve the interest of the colonial power, in ways which continue to influence political realities to this day.

There is, however, a third and final aspect of Said's statement that merits discussion and that is the possibility for aspects of post-colonial theory to be used by corrupt African governments as a form of discursive justification for failures to stabilise the “basket case states.” That is to say, if one accepts that the former colonial powers continue to wield power over post-colonial states, then the failure of these states is easily dismissed as the fault of the Europeans, when in fact, as Chime (1977) noted above, it is often a consequence of internal mismanagement. Thus, when, as has occurred repeatedly in Nigeria and Africa, political institutions revert to “state-sponsored factionalism and the mobilisation of sentiments associated with traditional identities” (Jega 2000: 33; see 2.3.1 above), a process that can include *playing the post-colonial card*, they do so not to promote genuine change but to justify their own weaknesses and failings. Thus, post-colonial theories of discourse can help to reveal some of the symbiotic and complex ways in which the historical political relationships continue to shape the cultural, political and industrial landscape of Africa.

2.2.5: Nigerian Post-Colonialism

All the same, at a national level, it is impossible to understand the mechanisms of the independent Nigerian state without appreciating the influence of colonialism. This is due not only to the power vacuum that the departure of the British left, but also due to the strong institutional legacy that remained. Studies have repeatedly found a strong British influence in the structures of the military (Luckham 1971), the Civil Service (Balogun 1976) and the educational system (Omolewa 1975). What all of these studies reveal is the peculiar fusion of British institutional structures and Nigerian cultural practices that occurred before or after Independence, or as one critic puts it:

African universities were born away from their societies and cultures, as European models were reproduced, and they continue to tightly hold their grip on European “mother institutions”. (N'Dri 1994: 9)

However, as time progressed, rather than being filled by more socially and democratically responsible governments and institutions, Nigerian education and society at large continued to be plagued by mismanagement, infighting and violence. Military regimes ruled the country from 1966 to 1979 and again from 1983 to 1999. Thus, a period of stable consolidation and social progress has never really occurred since independence. By and large, and certainly in the period up to 2002, Nigerian institutions have remained weak and its democracy fragile.

Aronowitz's (1973) exploration of American working class identities offers a helpful framework for the industrial legacy of colonialism in Nigeria. He argues that American industrial relations inherited many characteristics from the British model, but that these processes were redistributed across new geographic and demographic lines. That is to say, the British working class in the later nineteenth century remained largely ethnically homogeneous (i.e. Native British), while in America, the working class was made up of several large ethnic groups (Italians, Poles, Japanese and Chinese etc.). A similar process can be argued to have occurred in post-colonial Nigeria, only rather than tensions being subject to the new immigrant ethno-regional factors, they were influenced by issues related to power and class identity. Aronowitz argued that there was a basic tension within American industry that undermined any attempt to organise and coordinate nation-wide class struggle in the modern age:

“The contradiction of working class struggle today is that it must recognize the demands of different oppressed groups ... and simultaneously strive for a unified class identity that transcends the prevailing system.” (Aronowitz 1973: 333-334)

The statement might be seen as equally valid for Nigeria, although the causal factors are somewhat different. That is, regional differences not accounted for by centralised political institutions based on a model generated in completely different cultural, economic and social conditions (i.e. Britain) undermine attempts at coherent, horizontal mobilisation of political institutions. Thus, one of the overarching effects of colonialism on Nigeria has been that state institutions tend to conceptualise the country as a homogeneous whole in terms of culture and practice, when this is not necessarily the case.

Some of the institutional effects of the post-colonial environment in Nigeria will be discussed in the following section. The purpose of this discussion has been to introduce some of the most important aspects of post-colonial thought to the debate and establish

how they impact upon the specific environment in which the ASUU has operated and evolved.

2.3 Higher Education in Nigeria

2.3.1. Outline of the Evolution of Higher Education in Nigeria

A significant amount of literature attempts to describe the evolution of Nigerian higher education institutions (e.g. N'Dri 1994; Aghenta 2001; Saint et al. 2003; Ifedili, and Ojogwu 2007). It is this body of literature that this thesis seeks to add to, specifically by generating new knowledge regarding the protracted ASUU disputes. So far, despite several useful and informative discussions of other aspects of Nigerian higher education or ASUU activities specifically (Jega 1994, 2000; Obasi 2008), no attempt exists to understand the events of the recurring strikes and how they relate to the wider Nigerian higher education and political discourse. This thesis is partly a response to a perceived need to contextualise this important event and develop a greater understanding of its significance.

The first higher education institution in the country was established by the colonial government in 1934 and was known as Yaba College of Education. Despite the turbulent events since that time, the country now boasts the greatest number of higher institutions of any Sub-Saharan country (NUC 2002). The root of higher education in Nigeria can also be traced to the period when some Nigerians leaders started to demand a university as a means to their own emancipation from colonial rule. It was vital for their purpose that such university should be comparable to the universities in the West. Nevertheless, in 1943 it was the British government which set up the Eliot Commission, aimed at assessing the educational needs of West Africa. As a result, in 1948, a college of the University of London was established in Nigeria but it only became a fully-fledged independent university in 1962 after two years of Nigerian independence from Britain (Ajayi 1975, 420-426). However, the new government established a number of universities in the early 1960s, followed by several more initiatives to boost the number of universities in the country.

Between 1960 and 1970, a range of government agencies at both a central and regional level, as well as missionary-led schools, community colleges with a significant degree of autonomy and even individual sponsors were all responsible for formulating educational

policy (Fafunwa 1974). This led to a general lack of coherence and integration as well as conflicts over which educational policies should be pursued, such as day or boarding schools, the role of religion in the classroom and the merits of private and state-run institutions (Aghenta 2001). However, at the end of the civil war in 1970 all schools came under the control of the government in an attempt to standardise education and, arguably, ensure governmental ideologies were privileged above other influences. Thus, in many ways, 1970 can be seen as a watershed moment in the historical development of Nigerian economic and political structures, and it is possible to trace many of the influencing factors of the recurring ASUU strikes back to it. The centralisation of government control of education in Nigeria laid the foundations of the current institutional framework as well as many of the tensions that exist within it for the reasons considered above.

Eisemon and Davis (1990) argue that the centralisation of power in this way ensured individual universities would become centres of nation-wide or regional agitation. It could be argued, however, that this view is naive. Rather than preventing manipulation of the university system, centralisation served only to extend governmental control over higher education. Saint et al. (2003) argue that the excessively vertical structures which underpin Nigerian higher education are legacies of both colonial and military rule, with institutions in the country having been largely shaped by military interventions. It should be noted that in most colonial contexts, the colonial governments precisely developed education as a means of securing their position and authority.

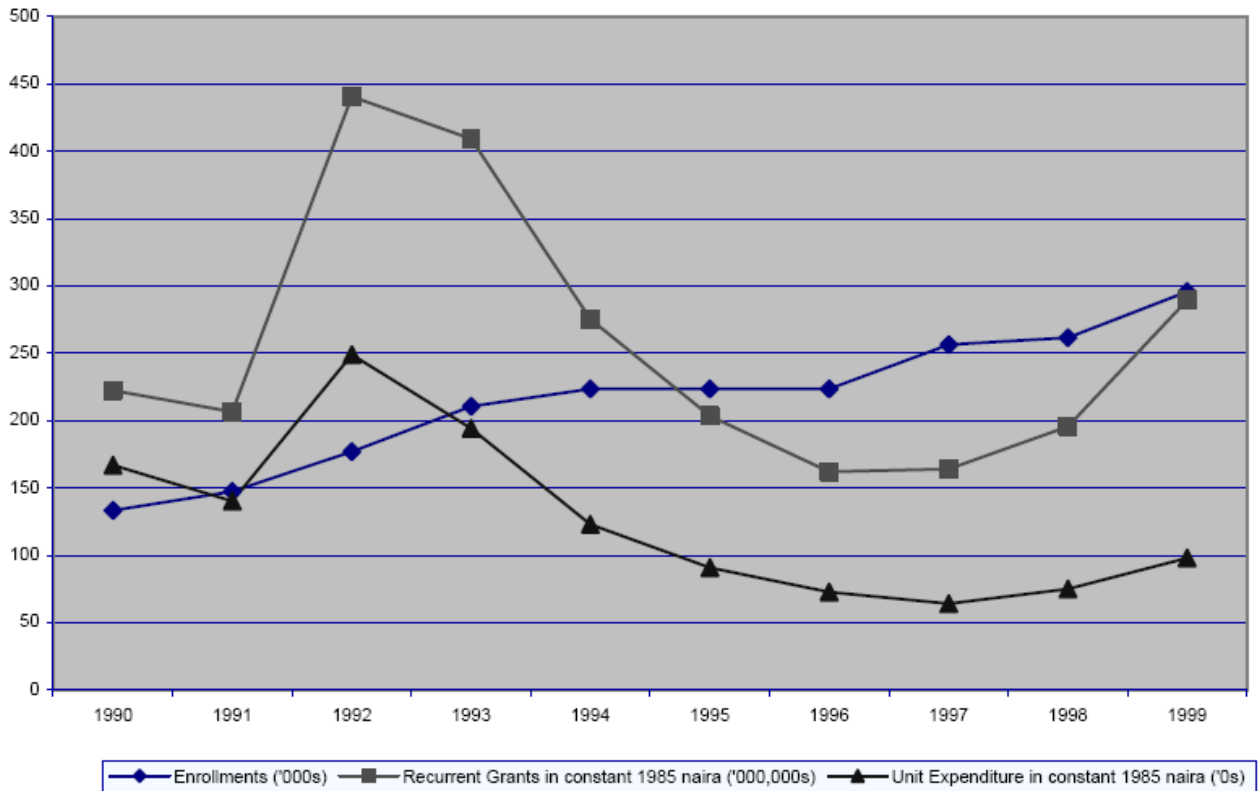
The struggle for power in the wake of independence and the civil war impacted on nearly all aspects of Nigerian life. In terms of education, the centralisation of power in 1970 effectively put all policy, funding and practical decisions in the hands of the government. Alubo (1999) argues that prolonged periods of military rule meant that many civil institutions, including universities, became militarised in Nigeria. Clearly, given the institutional weaknesses of governmental structures, this situation would almost inevitably lead to subsequent social problems – and so it proved. One of the flagship schemes of the newly-formed independent government was the Free Education programme in the South West, a programme designed to dramatically widen access to education amongst Nigerians. The programme achieved considerable success, however by the mid 1970s it became clear that the infrastructure of higher education was severely under-equipped to cope with the increases in student numbers (Eghaha 2003).

In 1976, a number of new universities were opened, however, demand still outstripped supply. In addition, the relative lack of growth in the employment market meant that graduate employment did not increase in proportion to graduate numbers, thereby leading to a certain sense of disillusionment in the academic world (Eghaha 2003). Even the graduates that are able to secure employment in bureaucratic organizations saw such opportunities as a medium for accumulating wealth for themselves. This is true in the sense that the state in Nigeria, contrary to the conventional perception in the context of developed countries, can be said to be the primary source of wealth accumulation. State positions, far more than private enterprise, are sought after as wealth making mechanisms.

As with other African nations, however, as time passed the post-colonial period did not bring about a steady improvement in either economic or social conditions for the majority of citizens. Rather, a series of political regimes came and went, each serving their own interests, each promoting their own ideologies. In the 1970s and 1980s, an almost endless array of educational plans and programmes were developed. These included: the Nigerian Education Plan (2006), the National Policy on Education (1977), the Nigerian Philosophy of Education (1969) and the Nigerian Aims and Objectives of National Educational System (2004). Within these initiatives were an equally high number of schemes such as Universal Primary Education (UPE), introduced in 1976, which planned to eradicate all illiteracy after the age of 6 in primary schools, followed by more and diverse options for vocational skills or traditional academic study thereafter.

The UPE was generally not a success. Ugah (2006) notes that money assigned to the scheme rarely found its intended target, equipment was vandalised and the system badly managed. Ifedili and Ojogwu (2007:13) argue that the scheme was badly planned and mismanaged: “It eventually failed because of insufficient funding, inadequate number of teaching personnel, limited infrastructure and equipment, poor management and uncooperative attitude of voluntary agencies etc” (sic). Despite this, the scheme limped on until it was replaced with the Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy in 1999. Chart 2.1 shows the fluctuations in enrolments and expenditure in the last nine years of the UBE. The sudden influx of educational investment in 1992 followed by a sharp fall and then relatively stagnant growth is seen as indicative of the sporadic nature of attempts to establish a solid and secure HE system in Nigeria.

Chart 2.1: Trends in Federal University Enrolments, System Funding, and Recurrent Expenditure per Student, 1990-1999.



Source: Hartnett 2000.

In 1999, the UBE was implemented and along with it came the “quota system” which was meant to ensure all tribal groups were fairly and equally represented. In addition, as part of the UBE, the private sector was to be given more of a hand in educational matters, in accordance with Nigeria's attempts to deregulate its economy and adopt an altogether more neo-liberal economic position after decades of a large state. The privileging of profit-making above educational rigour has become a contentious issue among academics in Nigeria as across the rest of the world. In this regard, ASUU is of the view that the government should be involved in providing basic amenities to the public universities as opposed to pursuing the introduction of neo-liberal policies which involve not only the deregulation of the economy, but also the withdrawal of government subvention from the educational sector. It is, of course, arguable that these reforms were imposed on the Nigerian state by the World Bank and IMF. The UBE proved largely unsuccessful, and the quota system has been widely criticised by critics for promoting discrimination, mediocrity and for a lack of due diligence with regards to appointments and promotions (Ifedili 2007).

In this way, it is possible to see the recent history of Nigerian education as a series of poorly thought through programmes which have been poorly implemented and managed, leading to a situation in which “The policy formulation and implementation in Nigerian Education is vulnerable to governmental control, propaganda, political pressure and public opinion...Often these politicians make contradictory policies” (Ifedili and Ojogwu 2007: 14). Thus, the ASUU strikes must be seen within this context, and with an appreciation of the levels of exasperation among academics, administrators and students. One ASUU member wrote that:

The federal universities are therefore over-crowded. Space meant for ten people are sometimes occupied by thirty. Lecture facilities designed for fifty now hold over three hundred. Some lecturers have stayed without office accommodation for one academic session. The students' hostels are usually overcrowded with no privacy or minimum comfort. Most of them live in squalor, in conditions that parents would otherwise object to. Some students keep away from the toilets till they get home or find a more convenient place later in the week. When ASUU goes on strike, it also calls on government to pay attention to the students that are sent to lecturers, *in loco parentis*, education and training. If the truth must be said, government has little respect for education. We can extend this to the whole society. In the public primary schools, we simply maintain a facade of education (Eghaha 2003).

I will discuss the experience of the crisis in Nigerian Higher Education in more detail in the first of my findings chapters, but from this brief description, it is already clear that the conditions under which Nigerian students, university administrators and academics were expected to operate were wholly inappropriate for academic study and learning. Thus, one possible argument is that the frequent strikes were prompted not only by these conditions, but by a catalogue of factors and a sense that very little improvement had been achieved over a significant period of time.

A final point is also significant to note, for the sake of clarity in what follows. The current universities sector in Nigeria involves a split between federal, state and private universities. Funds for federal and state universities are mainly derived from a federal government allocation and internally generated revenue from the universities. As part of principle of federalism, the state government at regional level has the power to allocate fund to university under its control. In the case of private universities, the funding is from the individual or religious organisation that established the institution in question. The tuition

fees that the students pay in private universities are very high compared to what is paid by students in federal and state universities. As I will discuss in what follows, the union members are of the view that the government should develop the state and federal universities in line with international standards, and that the private universities has been established in order to meet an elite need in Nigerian society and that these constitute a threat to the ongoing provision of a successful state sector.

The next section will look in more detail at this ASUU's development and chart the main aspects of conflict till date. It can be argued thus that the dispute within the Nigerian university system are shaped by a wider sense of social crisis, and are often understood in this sense by the relevant stakeholders.

2.3:2: Corruption and Educational Policy in Nigeria

A major challenge of this thesis is seen as adapting critical theories and paradigms developed in the context of the developed world to Nigerian industrial relations. Several factors are seen to make this process problematic, including the significant cultural differences that exist between Western and Nigerian employment structures, the major differences in patterns of social and economic development and, most pertinently in the last fifty years, the fact that where Western-generated literature does exist which attempts to understand Africa, there is a tendency to conceptualise and discuss Africa in what one critic calls “very crude ways” (Bush and Szeftel 1998: 173). For these reasons, it is felt necessary to consider afresh several important aspects of Nigerian culture and employment practices, to make clear how they differ from Western contexts, and to outline the implications of these differences for this study on a theoretical level. Ultimately, by doing this it is hoped that this thesis becomes more valid and methodologically sound as it contains a clearer understanding of how Western industrial conflict theories relate to the target subject of the Nigerian workplace. In this regard, for example, Kiggundu et al. (1983:67) conduct a discussion of the usefulness and validity of Western business theories when discussing Nigeria. They identify two starting points for the process of considering Western-generated theories and models of practice in the context of developing Africa. These are:

1. The state and variety of administrative research and practice with emphasis on the methodologies used, the topics studied, the geographical distribution of the research sites, the authors' origins and institutional affiliations; and

2. The degree of correspondence (or fit) between Western-based theory and data from developing countries, focusing on the reasons for either a high or a low degree of fit.

These two points are seen as both useful and valid to the present study as they touch upon the principal areas in which divergence could occur. These include the appropriateness of the methodologies used, social and cultural differences and potential researcher bias. In addition, Kiggundu et al. suggest that there is a considerable possibility of Western-based data on developing countries being invalidated by the failure to take local circumstances into account when researching or processing that data. Thus, one of the major problems of appropriability is related to the research process itself, in which there are several points at which cultural differences or misunderstandings may come to bear.

Perhaps the most notable example of this process can be seen in attempts to understand what in Western terminology is called 'corruption' and its manifold forms in Nigeria. Western critics, especially those espousing a neo-liberal position, tend to view corruption as 'the African disease,' a legacy of authoritarian regimes, neo-patrimonial politics and individual greed. The argument that corruption hinders Africa's development and explains to a large degree why it has failed to benefit from globalisation in the same way that Asia has is a stereotyped and rather unhelpful one (Bush and Szeftel 1998). It is important to develop a more historically grounded understanding of corruption in order to reflect its true impact on the Nigerian workplace.

Corruption has long been a major concern in both the theory and practice of the Nigerian workplace. As one critic notes,

Demonstrations of political fecklessness in the matter of the control of corruption abound in Nigeria's political history...Brazen acts of venality in the public service reached unprecedented levels under the military regimes of Ibrahim Babangida (1985-1993) and Sani Abacha (1993-1998). From the very apex of political leadership to the bottom of the ladder, public officers ... wallowed openly in corruption (Ocheje 2001: 173-174)

However, while many critics have been quick to simply condemn corruption, a small minority have adopted a more considered and ultimately more helpful view of the situation. For example, Olivier de Sardan (1991) argues eloquently that the socio-cultural mechanisms which control workplace practices in Nigeria serve to minimise negative perceptions of corruption in the Nigerian context. In this way, Western and Nigerian approaches to what constitutes corruption and normal behaviour may differ, and this

slippage will manifest itself acutely in a wide range of situations where the two cultures come into direct contact. Given the increasing activity of Multi-National Corporations (MNCs) in the Nigerian economy, as well as other foreign interventions centred on aid, education and employment, the workplace is seen as a key interface of these cultural differences. Adopting this approach, it is possible to argue that the problems associated with corruption in the Nigerian workplace stem not only from greed or self-interest, but from a basic failure of many external critics to appreciate the complex array of socio-cultural factors at work in Nigeria. At times, due to this lack of understanding, Western interventions have served to compound rather than resolve problems in Nigerian society (see the 2001 World Bank programme discussed in 2.6). In fact if it had not been for dependency, Nigeria would have had a much more balanced and rapid economic growth.

In his influential research into corruption in Northern Nigeria, Smith (1964) conceptualises the phenomenon of corruption as one that is far more complex than is generally appreciated. An indicative demonstration of this is that in the native Hausa language of the region, the English term corruption could be translated in at least nineteen ways, ranging from *Zalunci* (oppression) to *yi gaisuwa* (making greetings or gifts) (Smith 1964: 164). Thus, a huge range of concepts are encapsulated in a single English word. This is not to justify corruption or its role in various institutions in Nigeria. What this demonstrates is that the understanding of 'corruption' is in many ways in a blunt instrument for understanding the processes and mechanisms through which the phenomenon functions in Nigeria and, by extension its usefulness in conceptualising industrial relations is limited. In this light, Smith offers a more useful definition of corruption in Nigeria as "generally a mode of oppression, its product, condition or correlate" (ibid.). Corruption, then, is not simply a means by which individuals or organisations line their own pockets, but rather a mechanism for the accrument and maintenance of power and control. Significantly then, what is referred to in English as corruption in fact has a rather different impact on industrial conflict in Nigerian context than might initially be assumed. That is to say, it is possible to see a direct link here with one of the core theoretical issues of Western conflict literature on power and control. In Nigeria, corruption cannot be merely described in relation to financial greed, but also in relation to mechanisms of social control and power struggle. This is seen as a useful example of the specificity of the Nigerian situation which needs to be born in mind when seeking to understand the dynamics of the dispute considered here.

2.3.3: Corruption and Institutionalisation in Independent Nigeria.

One of the key factors that render the relationship between the nature of Nigerian industrial relations, notions of power and control and corruption so complex is the historical and political development of the country. In the immediate aftermath of independence from British colonial rule, the emergence of a power vacuum led to power struggles between various aspects of Nigerian society. These struggles occurred not only along ethnic and tribal lines, but also among other power bases such as the army, business leaders and politicians. Etukudo (1995) discusses some of the implications of these power struggles for the institutionalisation of industrial organisational structures in newly-independent African countries:

Governments in Europe achieved stability long before big business was established. Thus the subsequent rise of industrial organizations in European countries did not pose any threat to government bureaucrats. The picture was totally different in Africa where, on the eve of independence, inexperienced and in some cases fragile governments found themselves at a disadvantage in a society dominated and economically controlled by well-established foreign businesses. Most African governments were not enthusiastic about sharing decision-making functions on socio-economic matters with business groups dominated by nationals of the States from which national sovereignty had just been won. Partly for that reason, statutory tripartite bodies such as labour advisory councils or wages boards were hardly used to advance tripartite consultation, and most of them became ineffective through neglect. (pp. 51)

In Etukudo's view, then, many of the basic structures of post-colonial African industrial structures were formed during a period of institutional fragility. Governments attempted to acquire and consolidate power and in the context of a general reluctance to include foreign businesses or formalised industrial organisations such as trade unions in decision-making processes. For these reasons, trade unions have occupied an at times perilous location in the Nigerian political landscape. As such, ASUU is seen at the interface of many of the historical factors that surround Nigerian politics.

Turning the discussion more directly to the educational sector and the context for the ASUU strikes, many of the factors discussed above can be seen as directly influencing patterns of and motivations for industrial conflict. As Ifedili and Ojogwu (2007) note, the failure to develop and successfully implement a coherent educational policy in Nigeria has been a persistent cause of concern since the end of British rule. They observe that many

factors have militated against the success of Nigeria's educational policy. These range from: "poor implementation, inadequate financing, political instability on the part of the government, and corruption and dishonesty on the part of the individuals [sic]" (Ifedili and Ojogwu 2007: 12). In this context many of the recurrent themes of Nigerian politics and industrial development can be identified – institutional weaknesses, corruption, incoherent policy planning and implementation. It is important to appreciate the development of the educational sector and the history of ASUU within the wider context of Nigeria's political development. Indeed, politics may have impinged more on the educational sector than might normally be expected given that not only were many of the processes exacerbated by the way in which responsibility for developing educational policy was managed in the immediate aftermath of independence, but also the particular militancy of Nigerian educational unions since 1978.

An interesting and pertinent example of the wider political context in which industrial relations emerged could be seen in the impact of federal government attempts to disarm the Nigeria Labour Congress (which is an umbrella organization for trade unions in Nigeria founded in 1978) during the 1980s and 1990s. Jega (2000) argues that as various groups struggled for influence and power, many organisations became vehicles for "state-sponsored factionalism and the mobilisation of sentiments associated with traditional identities" (Jega 2000: 33). Thus, during the internal crises of the NLC in 1988 and 1994, the state was able to manipulate these differences in order to create internal strife to promote its favoured candidates to influential positions in the Congress and assure its subsequent docility. Similar attempts were made to 'balkanise' the ASUU along North versus South regional and ethnic divides in 1994 and 1996 (*Ibid.*).

The aim of this section has been to introduce important themes relating to Nigerian politics, business, culture and industrial relations and develop a clear and more nuanced understanding of how they operate. From this, it will be possible to outline and discuss the ASUU dispute from a more situationally aware and ultimately rigorous position, with Western theories and concepts transposed to a Nigerian context in a more suitable and effective way. The example of corruption is seen as a useful microcosm of this process – a phenomenon which is often viewed in the West as a cut-and-dried example of "big men' indulging in 'politics of the belly'" (Bush and Szeftel 1998: 174), but which in fact occurs along far more complex and intricate lines. The following section will develop these themes by looking in more detail at the impact of colonialism on Nigerian society.

2.4: Collective Bargaining and Industrial Relations in Nigeria

This section begins by attempting to examine the environment in which industrial relations and collective bargaining took place before and after political independence, and then briefly discusses the traditional union activities in Nigeria, which include collective bargaining and strikes.

2.4.1: The Industrial Relations Environment in Nigeria

It is helpful, in approaching the industrial dispute between ASUU and the federal government, to examine the legal and institutional environment existing before and after the union's formation. Generally, two regimes of industrial relations in Nigeria can be identified, the first being the Anglo-Saxon (colonial) model identified by Kilby (1969). This model, which was in operation from the colonial days through until the middle of the Civil War in 1968, was marked by the ideology of 'free collective bargaining' between the 'representatives of labour' and the 'representatives of management' (Collins, 1980:177). Although this policy is traced back to 18th century *laissez-faire* political economy and rests on concepts of free contract, free association, and the like, in the colonial context it was heavily coloured by 19th century British state paternalism (*ibid*). This ideology has it that social conditions in Nigeria tilt the scales so much in favour of the employer that there is need for control on the reputed freedom of the parties to agree on terms and conditions of employment. So far as the determination of wages was concerned, the Federal government during the late 1960s (like its colonial predecessors) laid great emphasis on their support for a system of free negotiation and collective bargaining between employer and employee (Cohen, 1974:181). The *laissez-faire* and the paternalist element in this ideology echoed dominant social ideologies in Nigeria during the transition from colonial to post colonial rule.

However, as a result of the failure of the *laissez-faire* strategy to effectively subordinate labour, a second strategy known as the *corporativist* strategy began to emerge in the midst of the civil war and was consummated in 1975. This model of industrial relations involved a more restrictive policy on trade unionism which started to be in force during the military regime of General Murtala Mohammed. Decree 1 of 1973 Wage Boards and Industrial Council provided for minimum wages to be set nationally and regionally as well as

allowing for joint industrial councils. The structure of the unions was rationalised and the minimum number of persons required to form a trade union was increased from five to fifty (Collins, 1980:182). Not only were soldiers, policemen and certain key state financial and communications employees prohibited from joining unions, there was also a provision permitting extension of this ban to other establishments as required (*ibid*). Thus it can be argued that this new model, which imposed greater control on the union, was greatly influenced by the civil war, and 1970 has been described as a period from which the Nigerian state started experiencing a steady process of militarization² (see Peters, 1997). Since ASUU was formed in 1978, its existence and operations till date can arguably be said to have been shaped by the *corporatist* industrial policy of the state.

So, in general the institutional and legal framework of bargaining that has been established in Nigeria can be seen as encapsulating the shape, rather than the substance, of meaningful industrial relations. As such it closely corresponds to the broader disagreement existing in other areas of social life between the constitutional, legal, and normative *mores* inherited from the colonial government and real behaviour patterns. The main issues that divide wage earners, on the one hand, from employers and government, on the other, have an existence far alienated from the recognized system of industrial relations, while the unions, the employers, and the government continue to give formal adherence to the system. As a response to the need to resolve issues between employers and their workers speedily, the Industrial Arbitration Panel [IAP] was established in 1976. The Act which established it vested the Panel with jurisdiction to hear and determine trade disputes between workers and employers, including inter and intra Union disputes in both private and public sectors of Nigeria. As a quasi-judicial agency the IAP is expected to serve the need of stakeholders in both the private and public sector of the Nigerian economy, and maintain a peaceful business atmosphere in all sectors of the Nigerian economy. The IAP has a mission to maintain industrial relations and harmony between workers and employers from both public and private sectors to enhance the political and socio-economic development of workers and employers in various working environments in the Nation (IAP Nigeria, 2010). As shall be discussed subsequently, the protracted disputes between ASUU and the government have been dealt with by the IAP, though to little avail.

² Militarization as used here refers to ‘the process by which norms, institutions, and other aspects of society are penetrated, dominated and influenced by the military establishment’ (Wallenstein, Galtung, and Carlos, 1985:111).

2.4.2: ASUU and Collective Bargaining:

According to ASUU's own account of its establishment, the Academic Staff Union of Universities was established in 1978 in order to protect the interest of its members and to allow academics to respond to other critical problems facing higher education in Nigeria. It is important to understand the events (as revealed below) in the dispute and the timeline of the events that shaped the dispute. In 1980, ASSU embarked on an initial industrial action arising from the need to resist the termination of the appointment of six lecturers from University of Lagos, as a result of the report of Justice Belonwu Visitation Panel Report linked to university autonomy and academic freedom. Subsequently, in 1980 and 1981, ASUU embarked on further strikes to demand funding for the universities, the reversal of the problem of brain drain, poor salaries, and conditions of service, including the improvement of entire university system. In 1983 there was negotiation on the Elongated University Salary Structure (EUSS) and this became an issue of dispute in 1988 because of the lack of implementation of this prior agreement. Failure to implement those policies which were negotiated in order to conclude previous disputes, have been a constant factor in subsequent disputes.

Over time there was been an increase in the political content of ASUU actions. Thus, in 1984, ASUU went on strike to oppose deregulation of the economy and to resist military dictatorship and again, in 1985, the union embarked on strike to resist the military regime and its authoritarian decree 16 of 1985 for allowing the National Universities Commission to take over the responsibilities of the Senate and allowing external authorities to regulate programmes in Nigerian universities. In 1986, ASUU went on strike to protest the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) by Ibrahim Babagida's administration and, at the same time, the union members opposed the killing of students at Ahmadu Bello University Zaria by mobile Police. In this period, the federal government accused ASUU of attempting to topple the Babagida regime.

In 1987, ASUU went on strike to demand the implementation of Elongated University Salary Scale and to establish a joint negotiation committee between ASUU and the federal government. The then Minister of Education, Prof. Jibril Aminu, terminated the appointment of Dr. Festus Iyayi, President of ASUU and an executive member of ASUU for his opposition to the Vice Chancellor in University Benin and ASUU was banned. A

subsequent strike occurred in 2008, against the effects of the recently imposed Structural Adjustment Programme.

In 1990 ASUU was de-proscribed and in May and July 1992 went on strike due to the failure of negotiations between the union and the federal government over the working conditions in Nigerian universities. An agreement was reached in September 1992. In 1993, ASUU was banned again because it refused the order of Industrial Arbitration Panel (IAP) to suspend industrial action and return to negotiation table.

In 1994 ASUU embarked again on a strike to demand renegotiation of agreements reached in 1992, the reinstatement of over eighty lecturers whose appointment was terminated by Prof. Isa Mohammed, the Vice Chancellor of the university of Abuja and to resist the annulment of the June 12 1993 Presidential election, widely perceived to have been won by M.K.O. Abiola. Subsequently, in 1996, ASUU embarked a on strike due to the dismissal of the ASUU President Dr. Assisi Asobie. Further strikes took place in 1999 and 2000, around both salary issues, and the issue of government support for the sector. In 2001 ASUU declared industrial action on issues related to funding of universities, but also seeking the reinstatement of 49 sacked lecturers at the University of Ilorin for taking part in previous industrial action in 2001. In 2003 ASUU embarked on further industrial action due to the non-implementation of previous agreements, poor university funding and disparity in salary, retirement age and non-implementation. There were series of industrial actions between 2003 and 2011 based on non-implementation of the above mentioned issues, especially the way the federal government has defined the ASUU dispute politically, by refusing to honour previous agreement and by attempting to change the process or framework of the collective bargaining, which means that the union members should negotiate with their University Governing Council as a result of the autonomy approved in 2003 University Miscellaneous Provisions (Amendment) Act 2003. The federal government appointed representatives to negotiate on its behalf without a mandate to sign the agreement reached in previous negotiation, which was signed in 2009 and the retirement age of university Professors increased from 65 to 70 as passed in to law by National Assembly in 2012.(Okuwa and Campbell 2011:298) More detail on the above will be revealed in section 5:2:1

2.5: The Industrial Dispute in Nigeria

This section will attempt to develop a more in depth analysis of the industrial disputes between ASUU and the government beginning with the evolution of the ASUU and the democratic process in general in Nigeria. This will involve first outlining how social pressure groups have contributed to the re-installation of democracy in the country and the conditions under which they have operated, followed by a separate section dedicated to ASUU, its emergence and development.

Strikes are shaped on many levels that range from the macro to the mundane. As such, attempts to understand strikes must understand not only the lived experience of actors in a conflict situation, but the broadest implications of the industrial relations landscape – including the basic rights of the individual in a given society. In this respect, it is clear that the nation and its troubled social and political history have worked to forge an understanding of social welfare issues as well as mechanisms for responding to them. The following section will analyse, in this respect, how the union has been perceived in Nigerian society.

Since independence, various social groups have been contributing to the democratic process in Nigeria (Abimbola 2002). Despite at times brutal repression, there is a considerable tradition of demonstration and campaign for change in the country, with students repeatedly mobilising to demonstrate against government measures and a core of union activists agitating from within the political system. One critic describes this somewhat strange arrangement between the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) and its politically active members:

Despite the decision of the Nigerian Labour Congress that its leaders should be non-partisan in the emerging political process in 1979, individual members and officers who were interested in politics were allowed to participate freely in the political process, even though they did not receive overt corporate backing from the congress. The decision to be non-partisan must have arisen out of the need to protect the new-found freedom of the congress, particularly in the face of the towering military presence in the Obasanjo administration. Consequently, many labour leaders contested and won election to various offices under the auspices of different political parties. This development notwithstanding, moves were made to pursue anti-labour policies and to introduce anti-labour legislation, though without any success (Abimbola 2002: 41)

What is clear from this situation is that Nigerian labour mechanisms were far from ideal, as it was impossible for the NLC to campaign on many issues due to their technical neutrality in the political process. In addition, NLC members were active in different parties and across different regions of the country, therefore coherent campaigns on the basis of organised labour were not always a viable option. Thus, one significant difference can immediately be made between the British and American union movement and the Nigerian labour movement, and that is the sheer influence that the two achieved in their respective countries. The Nigerian movement has never enjoyed the popular support, membership base and institutional certainties of its Western counterparts, thereby rendering comparisons particularly problematic. One might note that British and America labour movements did not begin with any institutional certainty, but with precisely the same kind of direct confrontation, and was often made illegal by the state or attacked, literally by employers. Formal industrial relations processes only came later. What does clearly seem different about the Nigerian context is the fact that it was the presence of a military state forced the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) in this neutralist position.

However, by the 1980s, the union movement had achieved some foothold in the industrial relations landscape and organisations such as the ASUU began to campaign on issues which gained popular support in the public arena, as well as engaging in covert political activities – as one critic notes, there was a realisation in Nigeria that “the economic power of labour could be used as a bargaining weapon in the political arena” (Olukoju 1997: 348). During the 1980s, social movements such as the Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO) and the Campaign for Democracy (CD) emerged which sought to bring an end to military rule. Several critics argued that such groups have had a significant role in bringing down the Babangida government (Iji 1997:74-88; Idika 1997:79-88). During this time, ASUU became a highly organised and active member of this increasing broad social movement which agitated for change in Nigeria – one critic says that “[t]he glorious era of the ASUU was witnessed during the tenure of Dr. Attahiru Jega (1988-1994) and later that of Dr. Asisi Asobie (1994-2000)” (Abimbola 2002: 42). Thus, what emerged was an almost informal, loosely connected group made up of organisations such as the ASUU, the CLO and other unions, which together formed a substantial force for social change in Nigeria. In terms of political ideology, this coalition was broadly left-wing, and ASUU was one of the most radical sections of it. One critic describes the situation when he says:

Its articulated position for a political arrangement of “socialist organization” that could bring Nigeria to the path of social progress remained the hallmark of the trade union movement’s involvement with other constituencies of democratic struggle (Abiodun 1997: 115).

Thus both for ASUU and the democratic process in general, the 1980s are seen as a something of a 'golden age' for the union movement in Nigeria, together they helped achieve democracy in Nigeria and promote a vibrant labour agenda. Since the end of military rule, the coherence of the union movement and social pressure groups in Nigeria as a whole has waned – perhaps by taking away what united them, these disparate groups were bound to become less clearly aligned. As will be discussed below, ASUU and others continued to operate in a democratic context even if, at times, the non-military regimes were just as neglectful of educational policy as the military ones. However, public support for the unions has generally waned since the 1993, and the organisations have found themselves repeatedly forced to justify their existence or redefine their ambitions in light of changing events. This has led to criticisms of rigidity across the movement, criticisms labelled at ASUU in particular. For this reason, the following section will focus specifically on the ASUU and its changing role in Nigerian society.

2.5.1: The Evolution and Struggles of the ASUU under Military and Civilian Rule

The year 2008 marked the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the ASUU. As has been seen, during these thirty years, Nigeria had experienced a great deal of political and societal unrest, and by any standards the history of the ASUU has been an eventful one. The formation of ASUU came at a time when the oil boom in Nigeria was beginning to decline and when the country was faced with the consequences of the failure of its rulers to utilise oil wealth to engender production and a credible welfare system. Military dictatorship had become institutionalised and had eroded many fundamental freedoms in the society. ASUU’s establishment in 1978 was mainly driven by the need to address the deterioration of education in the country especially under the military rule but the timing of the formation of the union is also indicative of the fact that it emerged into what was already a highly politicised environment. The forerunner of the ASUU, the Nigerian Association of University Teachers (NAUT) was a relatively less ideologically motivated and radical movement which had been founded in 1965 to represent the rights of university employees after the end of colonialism. However, many of its members quickly became disillusioned with the acquiescence of the union and its seeming desire to focus more on

mundane issues rather than adopt any firm ideological position or push for genuine and meaningful change. As one influential ASUU figure puts it:

NAUT hardly even took any noteworthy position on national issues. Ideologically, it seemed to be a middle class fraternity with viewpoints not too divergent from those of the post-colonial state. On the few occasions that it issued public statements, they tended to be conservative and sympathetic to the regime (Jega 1994: 8)

By 1978, the first Nigerian oil boom was coming to an end, and it became apparent that very little of this wealth had been directed into establishing a social welfare system in the country. Academics, therefore, felt that NAUT's docility was no longer acceptable, and a more independent, militant and proactive union was needed in order to push for meaningful change in the educational system. At that time, the funding of education including the universities started to decline rapidly while the military rulers diverted state funds towards unproductive ventures³. When the military took over the political scene shortly after independence in 1960, the status of university lecturers was very high, comparing favourably with that of top military officers and top civil servants⁴; the students had good accommodation and other teaching facilities as expected. With time, the military era eroded the university lecturers and the nation's resources were mismanaged to the detriment of higher education in Nigeria. As is discussed in more detail in chapter six, academic autonomy and university freedom were also, arguably, casualties under the military rule. All these factors informed the formation of ASUU, and the Union's determination to resist the oppressive and undemocratic policies. ASUU as a body was thus established with the following as its core objectives:

- The organisation of academic staff who are members of the union;
- Regulation of relations between academic staff and employers and between members;
- Establishment and maintenance of a high standard of academic performance and professional practice;
- Establishment and maintenance of just and proper condition of service for its members; and

³ See Chapter 5 on the underfunding of universities.

⁴ See Chapter 6 on the comparative analysis of Academic Staff Salaries and the Civil Servants

- The protection and advancement of the socio-economic and cultural interests of the union.

(Source: ASUU (2005))

From the start, however, ASUU was a more politically focussed union than its predecessor. Osoba (2008:9) recalled that the formation of ASUU was ignited, in particular, by the repressive measures taken by the Obasanjo military dictatorship in 1978 following the Uthman Mohammed Commission report on the “Ali must go⁵” students’ protest. During this protest, ASUU abandoned the NAUT’s more conciliatory approach and took a more militant position. The union’s first assignment was to resist the federal government’s usurpation of the disciplinary functions of the University Governing Council. This was the beginning of the inclusion of the issue of university autonomy in the union’s disputes. The military rulers, both at the federal and state level had started to wield their control over the universities by appointing their surrogates to Vice Chancellor positions regardless of established institutional procedures (Jega, 1995:252). Consequently, academic freedom and due process became compromised while forms of internal repression became the order of the day on campuses. Matters regarding the appointment, promotion and discipline of academic staff became the exclusive preserve of the Vice Chancellor (*ibid*). In 1980, for example, President Shehu Shagari ordered the dismissal of 6 union members from the University of Lagos following a report by Justice Belonwu and his committee. The lecturers were dismissed for adopting positions that were critical of or opposed to the government. ASUU objected to this vehemently. The case was taken to the Supreme Court in 1986 and the court ruled in favour of the UNILAG lecturers. After the government of Shehu Shagari was toppled, ASUU did not relent in its struggles towards improving university education and the conditions of service of its members. In this regard, ASUU organised a National Conference in 1984 to address issues of concern to the Nigerian academics. With funding structures in disarray and academic freedom compromised, many expatriate and Nigerian professors left the country (Ekong 2001: 2), leaving the country's academic infrastructure severely depleted. As a result, ASUU became an increasingly radical organisation, fighting not only for the basic rights of its members, but also for the very existence of a meaningful higher education system in Nigeria (ASUU 2008). It was at

⁵ The Ali-must go protest is the term used to describe the crises that swept across universities in the country in 1978 when the then Education Minister, Colonel Ahmadu Ali condoned a series of student killings by anti-riot policemen. At that time, students were protesting the introduction of school fees in the Federal university system when armed police used live bullets to quell uprisings, killing several students.

this time that the organisation developed the wider influence in Nigerian society that was discussed in the previous section. Thus, between 1982 and 1986, ASUU, under the leadership of Mahmud Modibbo Tukur, had integrated its struggles with those in the wider labour movement as evidenced in the ASUU merger pact with the NLC⁶. Through the union's membership of the NLC, ASUU started to engage in high profile debates on all major issues in the country. These developments reached a pinnacle under the presidency of Festus Iyayi (1986-87) and Atahiru Jega (1987-1993) when the then military President, Ibrahim Babangida, in an effort to stamp out ASUU, disaffiliated⁷ the union from the NLC in 1988. ASUU had in the same year embarked on its first strike which came about largely in response to increasing governmental attempts to weaken the union as an organisation and the worsening repression of academics and students alike. In 1986, a number of university students had been killed by the Mobile Police for reasons that remain unclear to this day. Then, in 1987, the then Minister of Education, Jibril Aminu, sacked Festus Iyayi, ASUU president, and Dr. B. Agbonifoh, a Branch Executive member of the union, for charges of subversion from which they had already been cleared. The likely cause of these actions was the fact that the two men opposed the appointment of a pro-government academic to the post of Vice-Chancellor of the University of Benin (UNIBEN) and had consistently opposed the Ibrahim Banbaginda regime; their removal was clearly a political operation. Another, wider factor in 1988 was the response to the government's Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), which, at the behest of the World Bank and other international institutions, attempted to use privatisation to remove education subsidies along with the deregulation of other sectors of the Nigerian state (e.g. the oil sector). As one critic had noted of this policy some years previously:

The main objective of Government policies now is to restructure the educational system. This is done by halting the movement towards comprehensive education, by downgrading the public sector in education, starving it of resources, and shifting resources to the private, independent sector. With the cuts in state expenditure, the reduction in the teaching force, the worsening of pupil-teacher ratios, the gap in relation to quality education system is getting even wider (Sarup 1982: 113).

For many ASUU members, it appeared that the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) was being used as an excuse to underfund an already financially deprived educational

⁶ NLC is the Nigeria Labour Congress, equivalent to the British TUC.

⁷ ASUU was also proscribed in 1992 during thorny negotiations between government and the union on the poor state of facilities in universities and working conditions of academic staff (Osoba, 2008:10).

system. The SAP is an avowedly neo-liberal policy, and sought to detach responsibility for education from the state and place it in the hands of the private sector. During the 1980s, then, it was clear that the ideological fault lines of Nigerian industrial relations were based on the fact that the government was moving towards a neo-liberal agenda opposed by a predominantly Leftist union movement. Opposition to the SAP from the ASUU can be seen as motivated by several factors. Firstly, there is the fundamental ideological tension – similar to that seen in the West during this period – between Leftist union movements and government-led moves towards more privatised and deregulated economies. Secondly, this tension feeds into to a latent general consensus among Nigerian intellectuals and critics at the time that the government had failed to redistribute the profits of oil wealth fairly and responsibly in civil society.

Finally, as mentioned above, in 1988, the Babangida regime disaffiliated ASUU from the NLC in an attempt to reduce the influence of ASUU. Thus the industrial action of 1988 was caused by a variety of factors, both immediate and long-term, and would become the first of four industrial actions undertaken by the union in the following eight years.

The 1988 strike had three stated principal objectives:

- i. Implementation of the Elongated University Salary Scale (EUSS)
- ii. Setting up of a Joint Negotiation Committee between the Federal Government and the University Staff Union; and,
- iii. University autonomy (ASUU 2008).

According to Jega (1994), the government's response to the action was the proscription of ASUU, the seizure of all its properties and the banning its activities. ASUU reformed as the University Lecturers Association (ULA), however, many members returned to work (under the threat of dismissal) and leading activists were arrested and in some cases, it is alleged, tortured. For the next two years, the conditions which had prompted the 1988 strike continued, while academics continued to leave the country or simply retire from the sector – the former head of the ASUU estimates that over 1000 academics left Nigeria between 1988 and 1990 (Jega 1994: 42).

In 1990, ASUU was de-proscribed, and following the 1991 delegates conference, requested once more that the Babangida regime should come to the negotiating table. In this case the

issues were related to pay and academic freedom along with attempts to improve on the process of negotiation and representation with the government. However, negotiations were unsuccessful and ASUU pulled out. Continued refusal on the part of the government to meet ASUU requests resulted in the outbreak of another strike in May 1992, this time declared by ASUU's National Executive Council (NEC). After one week, the Industrial Arbitration Panel (IAP), which adjudicates in trade union in Nigeria, called for the suspension of the strike, ordering both sides to return to the negotiating table. However, the government refused and this prompted ASUU to resume its strike (ASUU 2008). The government retaliated by proscribing ASUU once again, although in this case ASUU had widespread support both from other organisations and the general public.

Perhaps due to this groundswell of support, the government was forced to concede ground and return to the negotiating table; ironically with a union it had recently banned (ASUU 2008). In what was a significant breakthrough not just for the ASUU and the educational system in general, but for the entire union movement in Nigeria, as a result of these negotiations, the September 3rd (1992) Agreement was reached. This document, apart from its symbolic significance in terms of industrial relations in Nigeria, represented the first time the government and ASUU had reached meaningful consensus in fifteen years. It included agreements on the instigation of agreed approaches to funding, the right to collective bargaining, improved working and salary conditions and an altogether more productive approach to Nigerian higher education (*Ibid.*)

One journalist who had unrivalled access to the ASUU leadership during this period subsequently commented:

It was the first time a civil society group could bring the military regime of Babangida to its knees. It was one of the most successful strike actions by the Academic Staff Union of Universities, which left the military government with no choice than to agree to the demands of the lecturers (Okoye 2007).

Section 7.8 of the agreement stated that it would be revisited and renegotiated every three years. When this period elapsed, the government refused to return to the negotiating table. It was clear that many of the other tenets of the 1992 agreement had also been broken, such as improving pay conditions for Nigerian academics in order to stem the 'brain drain.' As was noted in one Nigerian newspaper shortly afterwards:

The SAP has affected the educational system in several regards; African regimes are increasingly over-sensitive to ideas generated in universities and tertiary institutions; infrastructures are denied higher institutions, including books and journals and the material constitution of teachers and students has deteriorated alarmingly (Sall and Momoh 1997)

When, in 1996, the government did begin negotiations, they soon broke down and the ASUU called another strike. By this time, the sense of circularity and inevitability had returned. The September 1992 agreement had been seen as something of a watershed moment as it represented a legally binding contract for the government. However, four years later it became clear that it had led to no genuine change or progress.

Hyman's (1989) conceptualisation of strike as an 'event' which also reveals a wide range of underlying factors and processes can be seen as applicable in this Nigerian context. It is noteworthy, for example, that ASUU's position was at all times informed by a clear and well articulated ideological position that encompassed not only basic beliefs about what functions an educational system should provide but also a political conviction that the systems of production promoted by neo-liberal dogmas were ultimately detrimental to the quality of their outcomes. Hyman (1989), discussing the union movement in Europe during the 1980s, observes that “the most successful of the European union movements examined are those which have sustained a close articulation between the politics of production and the politics of politics” (221). The next time ASUU would go on strike in 1996, the 'politics of politics' (with Nigerian characteristics) would become an even more high-profile aspect of the industrial landscape.

The 1992 strike was generally perceived as a success within the ASUU; however it had antagonised some other Nigerian unions and alienated some public support (ASUU 2008). That the union was calling another industrial action at the first renegotiation of the 1992 agreement could potentially have exacerbated these tensions. Many felt the ASUU's stance was unjustifiable and their militancy inhibitive to the democratic process (Federici and Caffentzis 2000: 248). The government responded to agitation from ASUU as the three year revision period became four by, predictably, proscribing the union once again.

What was new, however, was the nature of government rhetoric that appeared at this time. The then Minister of Education, Alhaji Barman, commented that he did not know why Southerners were so “mad” about Western style of education, and his predecessor Mohammed Liman labelled the ASUU “unpatriotic” (Guardian 1996). Thus, unlike

previous occasions, the government attempted to turn the ASUU strike into one deeply connected to notions of identity, both that of Nigeria as a whole but also its internal ethnic tensions. As Jega notes:

The situation in 1992 is fundamentally different from that of 1996. The mobilisation of ethno-regional symbolism to break the strike represents a distinctly new factor. One must of course situate this in what looks like a determined effort to reconstitute the civil society and purge it of all forms of dissent or oppositional activities. The same will explain the refusal to hold the NLC elections. (Jega 2000: 157)

What was seen, then, was the interaction in a far more explicit way of the ethnic and regional tensions in educational affairs than had previously occurred, at least since educational policy in governance was centralised in 1970. Interestingly, rather than moving to a more mature and productive approach, the government, perhaps cautious after its experience in 1992, chose to reduce the debate to the level of underlying cultural issues in Nigerian society, playing on deeply ingrained fear and prejudice to seek to turn popular opinion against the ASUU and weaken the union internally.

The ASUU remained a banned organisation until 1998, when a new regime led by General Abdulsalami gained power. The new leader, in a bid to restore the dignity of the military, re-instated all ASUU members that were dismissed during the Abacha regime. This led to the 25th of May 1999 ASUU agreement with the Abdulsalami regime. The agreement was only an interim measure to enhance the income of academic staff, as it did not substantively alter basic salaries, nor affect issues of funding and autonomy. It merely adjusted allowances of university workers (ASUU, 2001) with the promise of further negotiations at a later date (ASUU 2008). By the time these negotiations began, another government was in place. Obasanjo's civilian government. However, the second end to military rule did not bring an improvement of conditions in the eyes of many ASUU members, with the new government even more determined to adopt a neo-liberal stance that saw education as a private rather than state responsibility. The Obasanjo regime which ushered in democracy in 1999 had a different plan for the educational sector during its eight year span (1999-2007). Thus, during the 2000 round of negotiations, it was agreed that from 2001 the Federal and State Governments would allocate at least of 26% of the annual budgets to education, with an upward review from 2003, and half of this would go to higher education. When the 2001 budget was announced and this fund did not materialise, negotiations promptly broke down and in 2001, ASUU went on strike once

more. Subsequently, the government approached ASUU with the proposition of an informal agreement to stop the strike until more formal negotiations could be completed. Briefly, these negotiations took place, but the ASUU pulled out and resumed the strike after only one week (ASUU 2008). This led to the June 30 2001 agreement, which offered a 22% salary increase for university employees and a further assurance of university autonomy. However, shortly afterwards the University, under pressure from the government, sacked 49 ASUU members who had refused to break the strike prior to the June 2001 agreement and subsequently attempted to remove the union's right to collective bargaining in return for \$68 million dollars from a World Bank loan aimed at improving educational standards (ibid). The cancellation of central bargaining, the introduction of fees, the removal of the 49 UNILORIN lecturers and the World Bank Loan of \$68 Million under the controversial World Bank Project called NUSIP⁸, among other things led to a series of strike actions in 2002 and 2003. Further details of these events including the case of UNILORIN lecturers can be found in chapter 5.

2:6 Chapter Conclusions

This chapter has introduced some of the overarching features of Nigerian higher education and the events and discourses that inform them. Existing literature offers a range of accounts of the political and social realities of Nigeria and their effects on higher education. This chapter has drawn out in particular the issues of ethno-regional identities, the problematic nature of post-colonial society and recurrent problem of state mismanagement and corruption. These discourses have impacted on higher education and unionisation within the sector in various ways. At the same time, the potential limitations of this exercise have also been discussed, especially the need to consider the specific aspects of the Nigerian situation on their own terms.

The latter sections have offered a descriptive account of the events surrounding ASUU/FGN disputes in order to facilitate a clearer historical understanding of the dispute in question. Clearly, in any account of this kind, to a certain extent it will be a case of who said and did what when. Strike action will involve multiple realities and perceptions. However, it seems indisputable that throughout the period of 1978 to 2002, a succession of Nigerian governments reneged on both formal and informal agreements with ASUU,

⁸ NUSIP means National University System Innovation Project

during this period very little improvement in the state of Nigerian higher education occurred. The aim of this section has been to contextualise ASUU/FGN conflict within the wider socio-political history of Nigeria in order to allow a greater understanding of the environment in which these disputes arose. It is hoped that this study can generate not only a greater understanding of the protracted conflicts, but also identify how the processes and trends discussed here manifested themselves in the course of these events.

The next chapter will take a look at the methodology used to obtain and analyse the data on ASUU and FGN conflict.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0: Introduction:

The previous chapter was specifically focused on Nigeria with a view to understanding the nation's socio-political history as well as the evolution of higher education and class struggles within the unionised sector. This chapter will now consider the methodology used in this research project, at the heart of which is a *case study* of the ASUU/FGN disputes, focussed on the recurrent strike actions since 1992. The overall aim of this research is to create a new understanding about the origins, development, causes and consequences of the industrial disputes between the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) members and the Federal Government of Nigeria. Specifically, this thesis hopes to investigate how the industrial dispute has affected and been understood by the various parties involved, such as the government representatives, ASUU members, and others affected by the events.

This chapter is structured in five main sections. Section 3.1 will take a critical look at the use of case studies as a research strategy, while section 3.2 will examine the methods of data collection, which were mainly *qualitative interviews* and *documentary secondary data* collection. The sampling technique used is *purposeful* because (i) it divided the participants into strata based on their rank or level of involvement in the disputes – i.e. *ASUU officials* and *rank and file members*; (ii) its objectives covered some academic staff from universities in the six main geo-political zones in Nigeria as well as government officials in three key ministries identified [see section 3.3 on sampling techniques for more details]. The methods of data analysis are three fold: first is a comparative historical analysis (to capture the origins and development of the disputes – this is addressed especially in chapters two and eight); second is the *theoretical analysis* of interviews and documentary evidence (to capture the primary causes and effects of the disputes) and the third is *secondary analysis* of existing data sources, using figures, statistics, charts and graphs. To the extent that some quantitative characters or terms are used on rare occasions across the thesis, it might be appropriate to say that the methodology is mixed in some

sense, however, it tends almost fully towards a qualitative approach. Finally, section 3.5 takes a critical look at ethical issues surrounding qualitative research methods.

Strauss and Corbin (1998:11) provide a simple definition of qualitative research as meaning ‘...any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification’. In social research, qualitative research investigates social phenomena by interpreting and considering the meanings attached to them. In this context therefore, Strauss and Corbin (1998) see qualitative methodologies as useful for understanding the “concepts that are the building blocks of theory” (13). According to Maykut and Morehouse (1994) “qualitative research examines people’s words and actions in narrative or descriptive ways more closely representing the situation as experienced by the participants” (2). Unlike quantitative research which focuses on numeric data, qualitative research deals with non numeric data, such as words, which can come in the form of field notes, interviews, conversations, recordings and memos. Thus, the way in which people understand and interpret social phenomenon is the focal point of qualitative research.

The rationale for adopting a qualitative methodology is to create a deeper understanding of the causes and effects of the industrial conflict in Nigerian universities as discussed above, and to consider, particularly, the role of both *economic* and *political* factors in the dispute, and to assess the influence or role played by historical factors in shaping these disputes. I was also interested in establishing, in a more straightforward sense, exactly what happened in the disputes. For these purposes interviews were the most appropriate method, not just for uncovering meanings and interpretations, but also in understanding the actual course of events. The use of interviews allowed me to approach those who were actively involved in the industrial disputes face to face, with a view to finding out why and how the industrial actions took place, what the strike meant to those involved and how they were affected by it, based on their own interpretation or experiences of the events in question. The use of open-ended interviews allowed academic staff union members, federal government representatives and other stake holders to describe and reflect on their experiences, their interpretations of events, and their understanding of the industrial conflict itself.

Qualitative research methods are not without limitations. The most general criticism is that it qualitative research can lack scientific rigour. According to Mays and Pope (1995:109), qualitative research methods have been criticised on three major grounds: first, there is an

accusation that qualitative research is merely a gathering of anecdote and personal impressions of people which are strongly *subject to researcher bias*. Second, it is argued that qualitative research *cannot be easily reproduced*. In other words, the research is so personal to the researcher that it is difficult to get another researcher to reach the same conclusions under the same research conditions. Third, qualitative research is criticised for the *lack of generalisability*. It has been argued that qualitative research presents a large amount of data or detailed information regarding a small number of settings. In other words, it is too specific in nature and does not uncover underlying truths that vary from sample to sample. Thus the most fundamental strategy to ensure rigour in qualitative research is through systematic and thorough research design, data collection, interpretation and communication. The next section begins by examining more specifically the research design employed in this thesis, that is, the case study strategy.

3.1: Case Study Approach:

The use of a case study approach in this sociological research helps to broaden the understanding of the industrial dispute in Nigerian universities. Robson (2002) defines the case study as “a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence” (178). Yin (2009:18) also sees case studies as a means of studying complex modern phenomenon using a variety of sources of evidence. In other words, case studies can be useful in helping to develop an understanding of contextual realities. In an industrial relations context, Edward et al (1994) see the use of case studies as potentially very insightful means of understanding work place situations. Vernon (2000:52) argues that:

Case study may permit exploration which can aid the historical associations, whether these are between events, or levels of the social structure are necessary and which may be not. It has potential in this way to contribute to the development of understanding of the various points of intervention from which change might be pursued.

Following from Vernon’s statement, case studies are often used in explanatory and exploratory research. This is because they attempt to understand ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘why’ things happen. Such questions deal with links needing to be traced over time, rather than mere frequencies or incidence. The other advantage of case studies suggested by Vernon is the potential of analyses of specific events to shed light on the wider processes and

structures that inform them. There are other social factors that may become manifest during industrial disputes in a workplace situation (Hyman 1989). Thus, in this particular case, my concern is with understanding the strikes in question in their wider social, historical and political context.

Yin (2009), however, stresses the importance of a protocol or research design before an investigator goes to the field. Because data collection can be complex and difficult, the researcher should be adequately prepared. A case study protocol should be developed and refined. The protocol is a particularly effective way of dealing with the overall problem of increasing reliability of case studies, and I have sought to follow the kind of protocol laid out by Yin in this respect.

3.2: Data Collection Techniques:

There are various sources of potential case study evidence, including documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation and physical artefacts (Yin, 2009:101-102). However, this study is only concerned with three of these: interviews (primary evidence), documentation (secondary evidence) and, to a lesser extent, participant observation. Section 4.2.1 therefore considers qualitative interviews, while section 4.2.2 describes the use of documentary evidence.

3.2.1: Qualitative Interviews:

Interviews are one of the most important sources of case study information. Generally, case study interviews can either be ‘structured queries’ or ‘guided conversations’ (Yin, 2009:106). Structured interviews are a research interview in which all respondents are asked the same questions in the same order with the aid of a formal interview schedule (Bryman, 2008:699). Unstructured (or semi-structured) interviews are thus interviews in which the interviewer typically has only a list of topics or issues, often called an *interview guide*, that are typically covered. In the case of my research, I adopted the use of semi-structured interviews (based on open-ended questions) because of the flexibility it offers and by using this interview method, I was able to obtain elaborate answers and explanations in relation to most of the central issues with which my research was concerned. Overall, interviews are an essential source of case study evidence, because most case studies are about complex social and historical events. Well informed

interviewees can provide useful insights into such affairs or events. The interviewees also can provide shortcuts to the prior history of such situations, helping the researcher to identify other relevant sources of evidence. They also provide the key means of considering the way in which those involved understood or made sense of those events.

As Bryman suggests, interviewing is more or less a balancing act. The main ingredient is listening – that is, being attentive to what the respondent is saying or is not saying. It means that the interviewer must not talk too much (which may make the interviewee passive), and at the same time does not talk too little (which may result in the interviewee feeling he or she is not communicating along the correct lines). So, in essence, the interviewer must be active but not be too intrusive. I tried to follow this communication strategy in my own fieldwork and it helped me to elicit the appropriate responses from the respondents. Relatedly, I have sought to give heed to the problems of interpretation and to the possibility of miscommunication in interview research which Foddy (1993) discusses.

3.2.2: Documentary Secondary Evidence:

Documentary material is another important source of case study evidence. It is often used to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources. If the documentary evidence is contradictory rather than corroboratory, the researcher needs to pursue the problem by investigating further into the topic. The type of documents that can be obtained could vary and typically include, according to Yin (2009:103): (i) letters, memoranda, email correspondence, and other personal documents, such as diaries, calendars, and notes; (ii) agendas, announcements and minutes of meetings, and other written reports of events; (iii) administrative documents – proposals, progress reports and other internal records; (iv) formal studies or evaluations of the same “case” that the researcher is studying; and (v) news clippings and other articles appearing in the mass media or in community newspapers. I made use of almost all of these secondary sources because they helped in clarifying the specific course of events, as well providing information about the ways in which various parties involved in the disputes presented public accounts of the causes and meanings of those disputes. My sources here included official letters from ASUU Secretariat and Government officials, ASUU Publications, press releases, communiqués, conference papers, as well as editorials and discussions from National newspapers.

3.3: Sampling and Target Group:

The research focused on two specific subject groupings. The first target group are the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) members who have been involved in the disputes. Interviews were conducted with over 50 Union members – 15 officials and 35 rank and file members. These were contacted in their various universities. Officials and the rank and file ASUU union members were interviewed separately in order to get their respective views of the industrial disputes and to see if the responses were corroborative or contradictory. I was interested in understanding whether these different groups had differing interpretations of the dispute. The second group were *government representatives*. Here, a smaller number of interviews were carried out with ‘key informants’ among those state and regional bodies involved in negotiating on behalf of the federal government during the disputes. Access to these elite figures was relatively difficult to secure, but I managed to conduct 10 such interviews.

Location of the Study and Access: The academic staff union members were targeted in eight Nigerian universities which were purposively selected from the southern, Western, middle belt, eastern and northern parts of Nigeria. It was important to target the universities in different parts of the country because of the possible influence of ethnicity, religion and regional background on the course of the dispute, and on understandings of it (for reasons explained in the previous chapter). The field trip to Nigeria lasted a total period of nine months.

The eight universities which were considered in this research were spread across the six geo-political zones, namely:

- University of Ibadan in the South West zone
- University of Maiduguri in the North East zone
- University of Lagos in the South West zone
- University of Ilorin in the North Central zone
- University of Nigeria Nsukka in the South East zone
- University of Benin in the South-South zone
- University of Abuja in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT)
- Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in the North West Zone.

The federal government representatives were drawn from:

- The Federal Ministry of Education (FME)
- The Ministry of Labour and Productivity (FMLP) and
- The National University Commission (NUC)

The focus of this thesis, therefore, is limited to the main conflict actors, that is, ASUU and FGN. Most ASUU members who were contacted expressed their consent and willingness to participate in the study. Approaching government officials involved in the conflict was, however, a more difficult research experience which itself threw light on the wider political structures of Nigerian society. In the Nigerian political context, in which much rests on patronage relations, government officials have absolute loyalty to their employers and may not want to make any statement against the interest of their employers. My strategy, in this respect, was to make clear that it was important that the position of the federal government be presented in this research and that anonymity would be assured in the process of interviews for this research. The data gathered took the form of interview transcripts. Interviews were recorded using a digital recording device and were subsequently transcribed. Although time-consuming, this process allowed the researcher to engage with responses in a very close and detailed fashion. These transcripts were then analysed and summarised in order to identify major points of convergence and difference.

3.4: Methods of Data Analysis

As stated earlier, the methods of analysis employed in this study are three fold: (1) comparative historical analysis (2) theoretical analysis of interviews and (3) secondary analysis. These are now discussed briefly below:

3.4.1: Comparative Historical Analysis:

Comparative historical analysis has a long and distinguished history in the social sciences. According to Mahoney and Rueschemeyer (2003:3), it owes its origin to the founders of

modern social science, from Adam Smith to Alexis de Tocqueville to Karl Marx. They all pursued comparative historical analysis as a central mode of investigation. This research tradition involves an ‘emphasis on processes over time’, and the ‘use of systematic and contextualized comparison’ (ibid: 10). It is concerned with an attempt to locate the causes of important outcomes. Thus, for example, the causes of university underfunding and inequalities in the salaries of Nigerian academics viz a viz their civil service and military counterparts have been examined historically in Chapter 5. Comparative historical research also analyzes historical sequences and takes seriously the unfolding of processes over time. Thus, for example, in chapters 2, the evolution of ASUU as a union and the origins of the conflict have been traced over time. These questions are returned to and considered again in relation to the empirical findings, in chapter eight. Finally, comparative historical inquiry can also involve narrative analysis, which identifies and explains the basic story that is being told of an event or series of events that occurred over time. Narrative analysis focuses on the way an account or narrative is being constructed and systematically scrutinizes the facts and the meaning of the story. Data from interviews was, to some extent, of this kind, providing a narrative of the disputes in question, which was analysed as such. A general aim of this project, in any case, is to situate, and to seek to understand, the dispute in question within a longer historical context.

3.4.2: Theoretical Analysis:

In the qualitative analysis of the interviews and other documentary evidence, reference has been made to the theoretical models and paradigms used in the literature. Data has been analysed using a comparative approach, in the sense that models from industrial relations literature in the West have been considered and their applicability discussed. Moreover, the possibility of new research questions emerging during fieldwork or analysis was accepted – this is what is meant by an iterative methodology (Bryman 2008:459). Areas of convergence between the accounts offered in existing literature and the codified interview transcripts will be discussed along with new themes or factors that emerged during the investigative process.

3.4.3: Secondary Analysis and Official Statistics:

Data gathered from direct research was also supplemented by the analysis of other existing data sources. Secondary analysis refers to the analysis of existing data which provides the researcher with the ability to explore research questions of interest without having to go through the process of collecting the data from the field. According to Bryman (2008:295), two forms of secondary analysis can be identified: (i) the secondary analysis of data that have been collected by other researchers, (ii) the secondary analysis of data that have been collected by various institutions in the course of their business. For the purpose of my research, I used official statistics from credible institutions like the Central Bank of Nigeria (for data on inflation, GDP, budget, and so on), the NUC (for statistics on funding allocation to universities as well as information on accreditations). Other useful data were obtained from ASUU publications (especially on wages and salaries, information on the different FGN-ASUU agreements reached, amongst other statistics) and other works published by academic authors.

3.5: Ethical Issues in Social Research:

Ethical issues are crucial in qualitative research, not least because they relate directly to the integrity of a piece of research. Accordingly, full consideration was given to the ethics in this research process, and consent was requested and received from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Law, Business and Social Sciences, University of Glasgow. Two particularly pertinent aspects of ethical consideration are discussed below:

Informed Consent: This is a key principle in social research ethics. It implies that prospective research participants should be given as much information as might be needed to make an informed decision about whether or not they wish to participate in a study. For example, Saunders, et al (2007:162-202) note that before carrying out a study, the researcher should ask the following questions to assess the level of potential risk or harm that the participant may be faced with: (i) is the research likely to have any negative effect on the well-being of those intending to participate? (ii) are there any potential risks to participants that might arise during the course of the research and are the participants willing to accept such risks? (iii) are the participants free to withdraw from the study at any time and have they been informed of this? (iv) there should be no inducement (for

example, financial payments), other than reimbursement of travel expenses where applicable. Throughout the course of my research I sought to use these questions as a guide for reflection on the possible ethical considerations involved.

It should be noted that consent is not fully given if the researcher has not assured the participants of not only how the data will be collected but also how it will be used and the rights of the participant with respect to the collection and use of data. Thus, in the case of the field trip to Nigeria, all respondents were fully informed of the nature of the study and their consent was sought before any data was collected. While the subject being discussed in this case was a contentious one, and entailed the expression of strong opinions, it is well within the justifiable remit of academic investigation.

Anonymity and Confidentiality: The researcher should also provide participants with the option of anonymity and confidentiality in order not to cause conflicts of interest. The proposed conditions for anonymity and confidentiality were given particular thought, and made very clear to participants. Anonymity means, essentially, that the identity of those taking part is not known by anyone other than the researcher (Lewis, 2003:67). In the case of the interview sessions conducted in Nigeria, I agreed to keep the identity of the subjects in disguise, except where the statements or comments made were in a documentary form that was publicly available. For example, the ASUU President's speeches or press releases are publicly available in this way. Similarly, some of the interview excerpts or letters written by government officials, ASUU members, journalists or members of the government negotiating team can be found in national newspapers in Nigeria and were referenced accordingly.

3.6: Limitations of the Research:

The overall objective of this research was to generate new knowledge regarding the protracted ASUU-FGN disputes and possibly, as a longer term aim, seek to provide suggestions towards some resolution of this on-going conflict between ASUU members and the Nigerian federal government. By interviewing a range of individuals involved in the event, it has been possible to develop a deeper understanding of the events themselves

and of the perceptions around the causes of the industrial dispute. As with all methodologies, the research undertaken here has limitations.

One such limitation is seen in sample size and nature. Ideally, the opinions and perceptions of a wider range of individuals involved in the strike has been recorded and analysed. Nevertheless, the sample size here is seen as being large enough to ensure that any major themes and concepts are captured in the investigative process.

As mentioned above, the opinions and perceptions of government officials were also solicited. This, however, proved difficult for several reasons. The first was the unwillingness of government officials to take part in academic studies of this nature because of their loyalty to their managers. In addition, given the lack of a culture of accountability in Nigeria, it is possible that such interviews, even where they did take place, have yielded only limited new information; i.e. they may have become exercises in political justification. Although some government officials who had played an active part in the industrial disputes were replaced or deployed to another department, the present government officials were still very familiar with the conflict situation with the academic staff union of universities members. In the end, it seemed more important to me to include representation of the government position in this discussion, and the limited number of interviews which I was able to arrange, in this respect, proved sufficient for this purpose.

As a general conclusion, then, I would argue that the research methodology used seems valid and robust. By using this methodology, it is felt that potential limitations of a qualitative methodology such as the introduction of researcher bias are minimised.

CHAPTER 4

WORKING IN THE NIGERIAN HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR TODAY

4.0: Introduction:

My intention in this chapter is a straightforward one: to provide a sense of the everyday experience of those working in the Nigerian higher education sector today, facing the knock-on effects of under-funding, the rising levels of student enrolment, and the deplorable state of the infrastructure and learning facilities. This remains one of the major issues faced by ASUU members and represents one of the major sources of the industrial conflict between ASUU and the federal government of Nigeria. ASUU claims that the overall productivity of both teaching and non-teaching staff in Nigerian universities as well as the academic performance of students has, to a large extent, been negatively affected by the poor state of teaching and research facilities such as I will describe. What is easy to lose sight of, in the context of this issue, is the day-to-day reality of life in Nigeria's higher education facilities - what both staff and students experience on a daily basis. In this respect, my research is particularly useful in providing a more immediate sense of that daily reality which directly informs union action as well as to show the degree of exploitation of Nigerian academics by their employers. The descriptions provided below are shaped by the responses of interviewees, describing their own experiences. The chapter also provides documentary evidence from Nigerian authors (union members) who have captured the situation clearly in written works and publications. It is a known fact that many factors including remuneration, poor working environment and huge workload, among others, lead to occupational stress and job dissatisfaction. The idea of this chapter therefore is to describe how the work-place environment in Nigerian universities has impacted negatively on Nigerian academics and hence on the dispute in question.

Many of the more elaborate structures existing today in most of the federal universities were erected during the country's moments of affluence during the so-called 'oil-boom' during which period many of these institutions were established. Today, however, most of these structures and facilities have deteriorated and can no longer be maintained due to a lack of funds.

Most of the lecture theatres are dilapidated; classroom seats are broken and unrepaired; halls of residence are “eye sores” with leaking roofs; electricity and pipe borne water are in short supply, and many science laboratories are no longer functional. Due to inadequate computers and poor electricity and internet facilities, it has been very difficult for both staff and students to do any meaningful research. All these have exacerbated difficulties in teaching, learning and administration in all government owned universities in Nigeria - *Rank and file member of the union, O.A.U, Ile-Ife*

To add to the day to day stress faced by university academics in the workplace, according to union members, many lecturers have to face an enormous teaching and research work load caused partly by high student – lecturer ratios (shaped, in turn, by rising student enrolment and the ‘brain drain’) as well as partly by the poor infrastructural facilities in the universities. For ease of analysis, these inadequacies in the Nigerian University system which union members identify as having inextricable ties with the industrial conflict can be considered in more detail under six headings. Section 4.1 examines the problem of poor teaching, learning and research facilities in Nigerian universities (such as inadequate teaching equipment, poor library and laboratory facilities, inadequate instructional materials and lack of access to any e-learning platforms). Next, section 4.2 focuses on the problem of inadequate and badly maintained accommodation facilities including student halls of residence and office space. The shortage of basic social amenities such as electricity, pipe-borne water, food, transportation, communication and recreational facilities is described in section 4.3. In order to further support primary data on infrastructural deficiencies and neglect, section 4.4 briefly analyses recent empirical evidence on infrastructural problems in Nigerian Universities. Section 4.5 takes a close look at the problem of workload and occupational stress among academic staff in Nigerian universities and its bearing on the dispute. Lastly, the causes and effects of the loss of intellectual capital from Nigerian universities and the nation at large are briefly considered in section 4.6.

4.1: Poor Teaching, Learning and Research Facilities:

The lack of essential teaching and learning equipment is a major impediment to the productivity of students, researchers and scientists. The equipment and resources that are lacking range from class room equipment to instructional materials, from library and

internet facilities to laboratory equipment. This section will examine these inadequacies in detail based on the experiences recounted by ASUU union members, beginning with classroom facilities and instructional materials.

4.1.1: Inadequate Classroom Facilities and Instructional Materials:

What union members repeatedly described to me was an acute shortage of space in university classrooms and lecture theatres owing to rising student enrolment levels. It is thus often the case that lectures for a class of over 250 are scheduled to take place in a classroom facility that can accommodate only 100 students. This classroom environment, interviewees explained to me, not only affects students' academic performance but also affects the behaviour and general development of the students on campus. This is the crux of ASUU's position on the infrastructural declines in Nigerian universities. Here are the words of one academic working in Ibadan University:

Overcrowding creates unnecessary stress among students who rush to keep spaces for their friends and course mates before a lecture commences...with many students hanging outside the classrooms, in corridors and some sitting on windows...Many of them can hardly take notes under such condition, making teaching and learning a nightmare. This situation has also formed the basis for students' distractions, unruly behaviour and obscene activities, all of which have a negative effect on students' academic performance and progression - *ASUU Member from University of Ibadan*

ASUU claims that unlike their Western counterparts, Nigerian universities are lacking what they call 'basic teaching and learning facilities'. Another ASUU official from the University of Nigeria (UNN) laments:

Many of what we call classrooms are no classrooms at all. They are "abandoned buildings". The condition of our class rooms is terrible; they are not conducive for learning at all. Many of the seats are broken; the windows have completely been removed with students now sitting on top of the windows to take lectures because of the problem of space. Maintenance of classroom facilities is next to zero... It is possible to count the number of lecture rooms that have microphones and lecterns, not to talk of projector facilities, computers, CD-ROM, and other forms of visual aids which are all support facilities for delivering lectures and communicating effectively as it is the case in some private universities and in other countries. This is why we are calling on the government relentlessly to address the awful situation on our campuses.

From these accounts we can get a sense of the degree to which the difficulties affecting class room learning have transcended the issue of space to include questions relating to the availability of accompanying instructional materials and software facilities which enhance learning and skills acquisition amongst students and teachers. Several studies about students' perceptions of their academic environment have found that the environment, atmosphere, ethos and ambience of a classroom strongly influence the behaviour, attitudes and achievement of students (Frazer 1994, Okwilagwe, 2000). In addition, Paulsen and Feldman (1995) observed that the quality of teaching is directly shaped the use and accessibility of learning facilities in the classroom. In other words, the quality of a university's curriculum can be measured, in part, by the availability and supply of instructional resources. If adequate and suitable learning infrastructures are deployed in an academic environment, it can exert a positive influence on students' personal, intellectual, educational and career ambitions and opportunities. But where these are lacking or badly maintained the effectiveness of teaching, learning and career progression of students is obviously damaged.

4.1.2: Poor Laboratory Facilities:

Apart from inadequate classroom blocks and facilities, Nigerian universities also lack adequate laboratory facilities. A senior official of the ASUU local branch at the University of Maiduguri (UNIMAID) specifically described this situation in relation to the ongoing dispute:

The decay in our universities is so enormous that we can no longer watch the system come to a state of complete collapse. That is why we the union members are agitating that the federal government should fund the universities. Let's take a look at the issue of laboratory facilities for instance: When students go the laboratory to use the equipment, they need up-to-date equipment. But it is difficult for the students to get all the required equipment in the laboratory. Even the ones that are in existence are not sufficient to cater for all the students in the university to carry out their experiments. In many occasions, some of these equipments are expected to be kept at a certain temperature before they can be used to carry out meaningful tests. Yet, the problem of inadequate power supply will not make this a reality...

A chemistry lecturer I interviewed at the University of Abuja who is also an ASUU member painted the picture clearly in more technical terms:

There are no adequate laboratories to perform experiments. Many of the existing laboratories lack essential equipment and most of the equipments available are not even in good operating condition. Some have broken down, while others are beyond repair and need replacement. For example, if you take a look at the Chemistry laboratory over there, equipment such as mass spectrometer, gas chromatography units, infra-red and ultra-violet spectrophotometers and other high-performance equipment are not functioning properly. The same thing can be said of our physics department, where certain X-ray equipment, electron microscopes and even simple meters and oscillators are either lacking or malfunctioning. Even when efforts are made to provide some of them, there are no well-trained technicians to service or repair damaged equipment and so these equipments become worn-out, dilapidated and abandoned – *ASUU Member from the University of Abuja*

The consequences of ill-equipped laboratories can be seen, at least in some respects, as not only affecting the quality of teaching and learning, but also as having a wider effect on the level of academic capital provided by Nigerian universities. The poor quality of graduates, especially in the fields of science, medicine and engineering-based subjects can be seen to be the result of poorly equipped laboratories and inadequate resources for practical workshops. According to a World Bank Publication on the labour market prospects of the Nigerian graduates, Dabalén, and Adekola (2000:23) state that in a survey of medical and science graduates from the University of Benin, "... only 29% rate equipment, laboratory and workshops as very good". Okonkwo (2001:84) illustrates the incompetence of the average Nigerian chemistry graduate by taking an international perspective on the matter.

In the US universities, students are able to perform experiments, generate and analyze data using computers. They are exposed to different types of sophisticated equipment some of which they will use in the workplace. In fact, part of the requirement for graduation of chemistry students is to acquire some practical training in chemical manufacturing companies. This enables them to acquire hand-on skills in their disciplines. On the other hand, the Nigerian chemistry graduate at the present time has minimum knowledge in both skills and the core.

Apart from the unavailability of required laboratory apparatus for scientific experiments, there is also in some cases, the chemicals provided are either of a very basic kind or hazardous to their users. Hence, the poor state of chemicals often leads to risks for staff and students. ASUU's comment on this is noteworthy:

Many of our laboratories are health hazards to our students. Fume chambers are non-functional, exposing the students to toxic fumes. Students and staff are exposed to ultra violet rays when working with inoculation chambers. For example, lecturers are exposed to reagents that cause cancer and trigger mutation in genes. Students come to study and earn degrees but leave permanently damaged (ASUU, 1994, quoted in Onyeonoru, 2006: 06)

In the same vein as Chemistry and Physics laboratories, teaching hospitals are not equipped with modern technology, leading to a large number of Nigerians travelling abroad for medical treatment. This also has a huge implication for the loss of foreign exchange resources.

4.1.3: Library, ICT and E-Learning Infrastructure:

Union members described very similar problems in relation to the library facilities in Nigeria. These include the predominance of old collections, a near absence of modern books and journals, inadequate computers with limited or no access to internet and e-learning facilities, as well as inadequate attention to library education. In many libraries, according to a union member from University of Benin, illumination is very poor; many of the books are improperly displayed with cataloguing styles out of date. For example, most of the libraries still use the card system of cataloguing. There are no photocopiers for students to use, except for administrative purposes. Along with these is the unsatisfied demand for professionally trained librarians as well as an acute shortage of financial resources to fund the acquisition of books and journals. Many libraries today are still dependent on donors for the supply of academic materials. A union member from the University of Benin I interviewed on the issue of library facilities said to me:

If you finished from the University of Benin, you will agree with me that there's a heavy shortage of current journals and books. Our library facilities have been overstretched. As at the time this library was built in 1970, the university only had about less than 3500 students, but now there are over 30,000 students on this campus. The library does not have sufficient seats to accommodate the teeming student population. We are calling on the government to provide funds to build new and well-equipped libraries with cutting-edge ICT infrastructures that can support world-class research.

One cannot over-emphasize the role academic libraries play in the success of any university and the usefulness of a library is judged by how well it is stocked with up-to-date books, journals and periodicals (Ojogwu and Alutu, 2009:70). In view of the above, a

union member from the University of Lagos described how scholarly publications are either unavailable or are not up-to-date. Consequently many Nigerian researchers tend to rely on outside advice for information and research guidance. Some make use of local journals in place of international journals which are either non-existent for some fields of study or inadequate. Working under these conditions make researchers far more parochial in their approach than would otherwise be the case. Moreover, one of the effects of these constraints, especially the lack of information and adequate research infrastructure is that the duration of research, and hence the interval of publication of journal articles by academic staff is considerably increased (Ehikhamenor, 1988:231). A union member from the University of Ibadan expressed concerns about the poor incentives for research-led initiatives.

Poor funding of universities will lead to disenchantment. Lecturers will not be able to function properly... How can one get learned journals or attend learned conferences when there is no proper funding mechanism? You can only get to know the advancement in your field through conferences or by reading current journals...Many lecturers today cannot boast of doing an independent library-based research because there are little or no enabling facilities to support any meaningful research - *ASUU Member from the University of Ibadan.*

This sense of intellectual isolation is compounded by the problem of poor infrastructure such as electricity and telecommunication facilities which exist in the country (Sangowusi, 2003:128). A university is a place for disseminating useful and current information and technology helps to facilitate and accelerate this function. The union argues thus, that, in a world of increasing globalization and information technology, it is shaming that Nigerian libraries have been isolated from basic ICT resources and virtual learning facilities. Ogunsola (2004:03), a Librarian from the Obafemi Awolowo University states in his article “Nigerian University Libraries and the Challenges of Globalization: The Way Forward”:

During the ‘oil-boom era’, the libraries flourished- they were busy filling their shelves with learning materials in order to sustain the main academic disciplines established by their parent universities. Today, the story is very different. University libraries have problems even in maintaining core collections which represent their universities’ curricula and activities because of lack of fund and inflation.

While academic libraries in the developed world have switched from the traditional methods of academic exchange to newer forms of sharing and transmitting information, Nigerian academic libraries, at best, merely store books and preserve them.

However, the situation is not absolutely black and white. It is noteworthy that, despite numerous constraints to research, the use of information technology has emerged to some extent among lecturers in Nigerian universities. For example, in a survey of Nigerian scientists at the University of Ibadan, Sangowusi (2003) observed that the majority of lecturers sampled (about 77%) utilised ICT facilities in teaching, research and publications. However, many of them reported that they had to depend on business or commercial centres for word processing, checking emails, sending fax messages, surfing the internet, performing statistical analyses and accessing databases owing to the ‘epileptic’ supply of power and internet facilities in the universities. In other words, to a large extent, access to these facilities has been effectively privatised, and relies on the ability of academics themselves to pay for use.

4.2: Inadequate Accommodation Facilities:

The problems described here are not limited to the environment of the classroom specifically; they include also real difficulties in relation to the living accommodation provided to students. Here, as in the situations described above, Nigerian universities suffer above all from the problem of space.

4.2.1: The State of Student Accommodation:

Nigerian universities were heavily influenced, thanks to colonialism, by the British academic model. In that respect, many were set up to provide students with residential facilities based on the educational philosophy that in an ideal study environment, social and intellectual life should be merged together. This philosophy was borrowed, above all, from Cambridge and Oxford colleges (Amole, 2005:201). In this sense, therefore, halls of residence in Nigerian universities were designed to include facilities such as study-bedrooms, reading rooms, and meeting places known as common rooms for social gatherings and academic discussion. The idea was to facilitate both independent study as well as the exchange of intellectual ideas in less formal settings, but today, high student enrolment and living densities in Nigerian universities have made this increasingly

unrealistic. It has become obvious that many universities are no longer able to maintain the existing accommodation facilities to cater for their current students, not to mention the possibility of funding new housing initiatives to accommodate more students given the huge increase in student intake. For instance, available statistics on Obafemi Awolowo University, one of the few universities with a developed policy for providing student accommodation, reveals that only 9,604 of over 20,000 students admitted into the school during the 1997/98 academic session were able to officially gain bed space within the university's accommodation facilities (Odebiyi & Aina, 1999:11). As a result, more than double this number were found either 'pirating' with friends in these student residences, or sleeping in lecture theatres. In many other universities, the situation is the same. More recent figures from the University of Benin showed that the number of students admitted into the school's halls of residences in the 2003/2004 session were 11,237 out of about 20,000 students that requested to be admitted (Ojogwu and Alutu 2009:71). Thus, as it was expressed to me by a union member from the University of Abuja that, even where accommodation hostel exists this accommodation is simply not fit for habitation. Many of the rooms are overcrowded and facilities are overstretched. In some cases, 12 students occupy rooms meant for only 4 people.

How do we expect students to perform brilliantly when they are not living comfortably? This amounts to giving too little to them, and expecting too much from them in return. In a situation where about 7 or 8 persons share a room meant for 2 people, what kind of ambience does it provide for study and learning? Students are even exposed to hygiene and health hazards - *ASUU Member from the University of Abuja.*

Poor housing conditions, in terms of adequate space, and ill-maintained living spaces are clearly detrimental to students. This in turn affects wider conditions on campus and has led to significant levels of student unrest. The housing and welfare conditions of students play a central role in the measurement of their learning environment (Ike, 1990; Ojogwu and Alutu, 2009). The learning environment has both direct and indirect correlation with the quality of learning both for the learners and the teachers. Even the National University Commission (NUC) recognised the role of a good learning environment when it recommended in its Minimum Academic Standard (MAS) decree 16 of 1989 that newly established federal universities at the time should give special attention to the provision of community and welfare services for both staff and students (FGN, 1989).

Apart from the fact that poor living conditions affect the behaviour and academic performance of students, there are also concerns that overcrowding leads to a perceived loss of privacy among students. The situation now is such that students have adopted coping strategies for living in overcrowded rooms. According to a research survey conducted by Amole (2005:201) on 20 halls of residence across four universities in Southern Nigeria, these coping strategies include students studying away from their rooms and decorating their own personal space. The type of coping strategy adopted largely depended on the type of accommodation, on student gender and partly on the length of stay in such accommodation. Female students, according to Amole, appeared to be adopting what he called ‘territorial defining’ strategies. Territorial markings are mostly done in high density and crowded circumstances and in shared accommodation. Most students use decorations, curtains or other forms of barriers to cordon off private territories with the aim of achieving some desired level of privacy.

4.2.2: Dearth of Office Facilities:

According to ASUU union members, a similar situation obtains in relation to office spaces for lecturers and other administrative staff. Many lecturers do not have offices, and where they do, up to 4 or 5 lecturers are packed into one tiny room as an office. Available offices are bereft of basic facilities such as air conditioners and ICT facilities. Such problems are compounded, as a union member explained to me, by the general problem of an ‘epileptic’ power supply in Nigeria. When I entered the Office of the Secretary to the University of Ibadan local chapter of ASUU to interview him on this issue, the first remark he made was

What can you observe that is the problem in this office?

I looked around and saw there was no power supply and that, as a result, the temperature in his office was very high as there was no working fan or air conditioning. He responded:

How is it possible to work or learn under this condition? ...the fan is not working... the air conditioner is not working... I cannot switch on my computer without power supply. This is the problem we lecturers face every day... Let’s take it further to the library. If I cannot use the computer in my office, how can a student use the computer in the library? If the atmosphere in my office is not convenient for learning, how do I expect the atmosphere in the library to be convenient for a student to learn? These have to do with our demands. The federal government should fund the universities... The causes of the disputes have

gone beyond salaries and wages. It is not just about increasing our salaries, but more importantly, improving the conditions of service of the university workers.

A rank and file union member from the University of Lagos (UNILAG) also expressed concerns about the state of accommodation facilities in the universities:

The causes of the disputes have to do with the working conditions of the universities. It is very sad to note that about 3 or 4 lecturers share a common office. This is the result of inadequate office space. How do you expect us as lecturers to perform our duties effectively under these conditions? If the offices are inadequate, you can imagine what the situation is with the students' accommodation, where up to eight students share room space that is meant for 2 students? How do you expect the students to concentrate under this condition? ... We need more office blocks, staff quarters and more hostels for our students.

In an important sense, then, the problem of underdevelopment in Nigerian universities comes down to one of space, of access to space appropriate to academic work, and even to space appropriate for a reasonable life for staff and students alike.

4.3: Problem of Poor Social Amenities:

Those working and studying in Nigerian universities also face challenges in relation to more general social amenities such as electricity supply, water shortage, poor communication facilities, poor road networks, and a lack of recreational facilities, among other things. The absence of these facilities has posed serious problems for the running of all universities in the country. For example, as I have noted above, in many laboratories frequent power cuts and shortages of water have posed huge constraints on scientific research as most experiments that depend on the use of power and water facilities have to be halted intermittently or delayed. As electricity problem is a national issue, the use of working facilities within the universities remain adversely affected. Most universities, like many homes and industries in Nigeria, have to make use of generators to produce electricity on campus. However, according to a union official from the University of Ibadan, this increases operating costs and thus puts pressure on the university's resources. Whilst attempts have been made to resolve water problems in most universities, they have proved extremely costly. For example, Obafemi Awolowo University Ife has built its own dam, with a capacity to supply water to both staff and students of the university. However, the university spends huge sums of money treating the dam water as well as on the general

maintenance of the dam (Odebiyi and Aina, 1999:10). The same situation exists in the University of Ilorin, according to a union member from the university, where a water dam and treatment plant has just been constructed to provide uninterrupted water supply to the main campus. In addition to the very basic need for water there is question of food distribution. Since most universities no longer supply meals for students, many campuses have now been flooded with local cafeterias and canteens offering low quality meals, and characterised by an absence of price control for the teeming student population. Here again, a consequence of the crisis is that facilities that were previously provided publically become opened to a wider commercial sector.

The union members described other major problems in most universities, especially state owned universities, including the absence of a good road network within and leading to campuses. Even within university premises, students often find it difficult to access lecture rooms, halls of residence, libraries and other essential buildings, some of which can only be reached through narrow and badly maintained footpaths. Lastly, many Nigerian universities do not have adequate sporting and recreational facilities. Where such facilities are available, they are not up to standard and are badly maintained. Only a few of the first generation universities such as the University of Lagos, Obafemi Awolowo University and Ahmadu Bello University can boast a standard football pitch, a swimming pool or an indoor sports complex.

4.4: Recent Empirical Evidence on the Adequacy and Maintenance of University Infrastructure:

More general evidence of the dilapidation of university facilities, and of the wider effects of this situation on a culture of learning in the institutions, can be found in a survey conducted by Arogundade Babatope (2010:039-043) using a sample of 500 academic staff members as respondents across 10 public universities in South Western Nigeria. While this survey uncovered considerable evidence of underfunding and its effects, it also found evidence of a high rate of vandalization of existing facilities. Tables provided in appendices 4, 5 and 6 all reveal the responses from questionnaires administered by Babatope (2010:039-043). The first research question was on *financial support for the provision of facilities*. The percentage scores show that 84.7% of respondents agreed that financial support for university facilities has not been adequately provided, either by the

government, internally generated revenue or by the private sector. The second research question examined the *actual problem of facilities* in these universities. Again 78.9% of respondents agreed that there was a shortage of facilities such as those discussed here in the universities. The third and final question focused on the *maintenance of existing facilities*. An average of 82.3% of respondents agreed that there was a poor culture of maintenance, inadequate monitoring by university authorities, a lack of repairs and high levels of student destruction which all contributed to the deterioration of available facilities. This research reveals not only the lack of funding in the higher education sector in Nigeria, but appears also to show that this has made students antagonistic in their reaction to the university system.

In a similar survey, Oyeniyi (2010:01-06) investigated the availability and adequacy of educational facilities in selected southern universities in Nigeria measured against expected levels according to NUC benchmarks. The facilities observed included classrooms/lecture theatres/halls, laboratories, the volume of books in the libraries as well as computer facilities. Of the four universities sampled, the findings report the cases of only two: the University of Benin (a 1st generation university), and the University of Port Harcourt (a 2nd generation university). The results (see appendix 7) show that the levels of perception for the adequacy of all facilities studied were significantly less than expected. For example, for UNIBEN: classroom 50.52%; volume of books 0.144%; computers 5.19% and laboratories 32.19%, and for UNIPORT: classroom 64.44%; volume of books, 0.127%; computers, 10.47%. A cursory look at these figures in comparison with conventional norms gives a clear indication that facilities are perceived to be highly inadequate. In UNIBEN, for example, laboratory facilities were three times over utilised.

Summarising the above analyses, it is clear that the funds allocated to university education are scarcely adequate to provide the necessary facilities. There is a general shortfall in educational facilities across both federal government and state owned universities, irrespective of the generation in which they were established. According to the union, there is a need for the government to increase budgetary allocations to the higher education sector, whilst putting in place mechanisms for the effective maintenance of facilities provided. What comes across, however, is the extent to which the crisis in Nigerian higher education affects the situation in Nigerian universities in the most basic, material ways and has led to a general sense of disillusionment on campuses among both students and staff.

4.5: Workload and Occupational Stress Among Academic Staff in Nigerian Universities:

What emerged very clearly, then, from the research I conducted was the extent to which the working environment in which academics in Nigerian universities find themselves, leads them to experience high levels of occupational stress and job dissatisfaction. Stress can be perceived as a situation in which environmental forces, events or circumstances pose a threat to the physical, mental and emotional well-being of individuals in the society (Ofoegbu and Nwadiani, 2006; Archibong, Bassey and Effiom 2010). In the context of a working environment, stress can often result from a situation where the demands or requirements of a job are incompatible with the means or resources available to those required to meet those demands. In other words, stress occurs when workers face excessive pressure or an overload of responsibilities beyond their capabilities or the resources at their disposal. Thus Abouserie (1996) found that excessive work load and the demands of conducting research in an unfit environment constituted significant factors of stress in an academic environment. According to a union member I interviewed from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (Northern Nigeria), occupational stress among Nigerian lecturers is a function of several factors:

You see...there is an acute shortage of lecturers when compared to the number of students that we have to teach. This makes our workload so severe. For instance, I have to teach about 3 undergraduate courses and 2 postgraduate courses just this semester alone, with a total student population of about 560. I have to mark the test assessments and examination scripts for all these students. Tell me what time I have left for my own independent research...I have to invigilate in the coming exams and collate results. All these are the sources of stress that we lecturers face... We also have to face the rigour of sourcing for research grants and publishing well thought-out articles if we have to stand a chance to make career advancement. To further compound our problems, we have to run helter skelter looking for commercial centres with uninterrupted internet facilities to be able to access relevant literature...So you see that inadequate infrastructures also contribute immensely to the stress that we are going through... not to mention the poor and irregular payment of salaries and the impact of frequent interruptions caused by strike actions which off course are necessary if we will experience any change. ASUU has made it clear to the government that we are not motivated at all to work under such a stressful environment.

Besides the stress coming directly from workload and poor working environment the wider effects of the crisis in Nigerian higher education play out in the context of direct interpersonal relationships. Thus lecturers pointed out that inter-personal relationships with students, colleagues, heads of department, university management and sometimes non-teaching staff all became very tense at times.

Most of the stress we face come from our duties with respect to students. We have to attend to a high number of students in almost everything. Some come for counselling, course advising and of course for project supervision. Some lecturers can be assigned up to more than 10 students for supervision. The rising number of students enrolling to study in universities is not matched with an increase in personnel. So we have to weather the storm.... Another huge area of stress with students is in the area of marking and collating examination records. Because of the high number of scripts we have to mark, it is sad to note that sometimes, we are always in a hurry to assess students and these bring a lot of tensions and disagreements between lecturers and students who were dissatisfied with their grades. For example, I have had to mark at one time more than 500 scripts within six weeks and collate results accordingly. How do you expect me to read each script in some level of detail when I have other pressing work commitments? Sometimes, due to power outage, student records previously stored electronically cannot be accessed when it is needed. So we have to go all over again to input missing records. All these pose substantial stress to the examiner.

According to the union members, while relating the difficulties in dealing with huge number of students, interfacing with university management and heads of departments can cause further occupational stress to academic staff, especially where there is no internal telephone or communication system. As in many Western universities, there is always pressure put on academic staff to improve their performance with respect to their teaching quality, frequency and standard of publications, and other research-led activities all of which form part of the assessment of the quality of teaching staff and which in turn feed into the rating of the university as a whole. In some cases, the senior management of the university put pressure on heads of departments (middle managers), they tend to transfer such pressure on to academic staff who report directly to them (Archibong et al, 2010:221).

The sources of occupational stress among Nigerian academic staff are, thus, numerous. They include rising student enrolment and hence work overload (with respect to teaching, research, counselling, invigilation, marking, collation of results and project supervision), role incompatibilities, inadequate resources and facilities, poor office accommodation,

frequent interruption caused by strikes, poor remuneration and financial support for research, frustrated publication efforts and hence slow career progression. Other factors include insufficient holiday or annual leave, lack of training and opportunities for professional development, inadequate plans for retirees, and poor relationships with students, colleagues and expectations from management. The crisis in Nigerian higher education thus impacts not simply on 'infrastructure' in an abstract way, but in the real life relationship and interactions of those who work or study on campus.

4.6: Loss of Intellectual Capital in Nigerian Universities (The Brain Drain Syndrome):

As noted in the introductory chapter, the university is usually presented a place for producing knowledge and training manpower for innovation and national development. The technological advancement of many developed countries today such as U.S, U.K. and Germany is hinged on the productive capacity of their labour force coupled with investment in research and development to which their universities have contributed. In fact, many nations today increasingly rely on the universities for the creation and transfer of 'knowledge', 'ideas' and 'skills' (Oni, 2008:6) for solving social problems. For a university to successfully fulfil this role, it must be able to bring together individuals interacting in the process of teaching, learning and research. Sadly, however, the ugliest problem facing the Nigerian university system today, and the ultimate consequence of the crisis described here, is the acute problem of a loss of academic staff, often termed by union members as the 'brain drain syndrome'. The brain drain syndrome describes a process whereby 'highly skilled and seasoned academics decide to leave the university system' in search of better opportunities in overseas countries (Ekundayo, Esohe, Osalusi and Babatope, 2010:156). The major causes of this brain drain are predictable: poor salaries for academics, underfunding of the university system, social, economic and political upheavals in the country, poor working environment and inadequate research and infrastructural facilities.

The conflicts, disagreements and 'struggle' between ASUU and its employers, the federal government over salaries, conditions of service, funding and autonomy, amongst other issues have over the years led to the dismissal, arrest, withdrawal, exodus of valuable

academic staff from the university system - *Senior ASUU official from the University of Ibadan.*

As explained earlier, student – lecturer ratios are rising⁹ and the quality of training given to students from Nigerian universities falls short of the demands of the labour market. The problem of brain drain is thus one which affects both the quantity and quality of academic staff in the system. Other effects of brain drain include an increase in the level of dependence on foreign assistance by Nigerian universities, and the retardation of efforts towards technological advancement.

In view of the debilitating effect of the brain drain on Nigerian universities and the nation at large, urgent measures will have to be taken to redress the situation. ASUU president in a press conference which I attended during my fieldwork at the Labour House in Lagos, in 2009 articulated succinctly the efforts it has made towards reversing the brain drain:

For over two years, the Federal Government and ASUU Negotiating Teams searched for a minimum period from which the Nigerian University System could make significant progress towards reversing the brain drain that has deprived our country of a vital causal agents in national development, that is the development and sustenance of a large pool of scholars whose intellectual capacity would reposition Nigeria for greater or national development. ASUU (2009)

The union members are of the view that measures should be put in place to reverse the situation, which includes adequate funding of the university system, improvement in the learning environment, an upward review of salary packages for academics in order to attract and retain the best manpower.

4.7: Chapter Conclusions:

This chapter has examined the problems which academics and students in Nigerian universities face in their day-to-day experiences. Data collection methods were mainly primary (interviews) and secondary in nature. The findings reveal a catalogue of problems including (1) poor teaching, learning and research facilities such as inadequate and dilapidated classrooms, lack of instructional materials, inadequate and badly maintained

⁹ Recent figures from the two major higher institutions in Lagos, South West Nigeria (University of Lagos and Lagos State University) reveal a lecturer-student ratio of 1:56 for the former and 1:100 for the latter (Fabiya and Uzoka, 2008).

laboratory facilities as well as poor library, ICT and e-learning infrastructure; (2) inadequate and poorly maintained accommodation facilities for both students (residential) and staff (office space); (3) poor social amenities such as electricity supply, water shortage, lack of communication system, transportation and recreational facilities within most campuses; (4) occupational stress among academics due to excessive workload, poor working environment and interpersonal relationship problems, and lastly (and as a consequence of this crisis) (5) the problem of brain drain. The next chapter now examines more specifically the economic context of the dispute.

CHAPTER 5

THE ECONOMICS OF THE DISPUTE

5.0 Introduction:

This chapter examines the economic aspects of the dispute between the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) and the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). The principal issues here are the relatively poor salaries of the union members and underfunding of the universities. As stated in the last chapter, these inequalities have given rise to what is colloquially called the problem of ‘brain drain’ – the depletion of intellectual capital from the Nigerian University system. These issues facing tertiary institutions throughout the country, according to the union, have far reaching implications for the future of higher education in Nigeria. It is in this way that the dispute is seen as touching on more than just the question of local industrial relations.

This first section in this chapter is devoted to the discussion of the remuneration of union members. As is the case for most unions, the improvement and protection of earnings has been a central focus for the ASUU since its inception. This section will analyse data gathered from union officials and other documentary evidence on this economic parameters of the dispute. It can be shown that there is a wide disparity between the salary and conditions of service of university teachers in Nigeria and those of their counterparts in the civil service in Nigeria and in some other African universities. Taking a historical perspective on the issue of salaries in academia, it can be argued that since the immediate post-independence era, the average university teacher has seen a significant downward shift in their remuneration. The role of inflationary pressures and, subsequently, the effects of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) in reducing the purchasing power of workers’ salaries cannot be overemphasized in this respect.

The second section focuses on underfunding of Nigerian universities which has resulted in the dilapidated state of Nigerian universities as institutions of higher learning. This subsection critically assesses the debates relating to budget allocation to the educational sector more generally and its impact on the educational standard in Nigerian universities today.

5.1: Poor Salaries and Conditions of Service:

A major issue of contention between the academic staff union of universities (ASUU) and the federal government of Nigeria (FGN) in common with much trade union activity all over the world is the issue of levels of salary and of the wider conditions of service for members. After interviewing a senior official of the ASUU at the University of Ibadan on the wages and conditions of service of academic staff members of the university, he asked me to go round some offices of the staff members in the university and come back to tell him what I had observed. When I came back the next day, I told him I saw the following slogans displayed boldly on the doors and notice boards of the staff rooms I visited.

“My boss is a comedian, the wages he pays are a joke”; “My take-home pay cannot take me home”.

Then he said to me

You see what I have been telling you, the meagre wages the government pays us have brought about such slogans.

Academic staff members are poorly motivated due to poor salaries and allowances, and this has exacerbated the brain drain syndrome in Nigeria. According to Herzberg’s theory of motivational hygiene, poor workers’ pay and conditions of service lead to dissatisfaction in the workplace. Herzberg noted that an employee may decide to quit his job if he or she sufficiently disliked the working conditions. He or she will only be motivated to work harder when working conditions are reasonably adequate (Pemedede 2007:360). In Nigeria, not only are workers hardly able to satisfy other needs such as feeding, clothing, and shelter, but work – especially in government establishments – is often insecure, and the payment of salaries is irregular. The result is profound unease for those employed. Under these circumstances, workers have low morale and tend to be significantly demotivated. The average Nigerian worker has been described as follows:

The Nigerian worker is referred to as a stranded person who can neither be found at his workplace nor his home. It therefore follows that such a person or persons cannot afford to perform at efficiency level both at work and at home. The result of this kind of action leads to declining productivity not just at individual level but at corporate as well as at the level of the nation state (Johnnie 1997, cited in Johnnie, 2008: 424).

Concerns regarding adequate salaries for university teachers are thus central to the way in which they conduct themselves in the discharge of their core functions. Although, in nominal terms, the total salaries received by university workers have increased over the years, in real terms, salaries have been significantly lowered in value by inflation. Consequently, the average university worker or employee has become economically much poorer in comparison to his or her earnings in previous years. When I interviewed a university lecturer in Benin regarding the poor salaries paid to ASUU members, he replied by saying:

It is a regrettable development that university lecturers, who are some of the brightest people in the country, are rewarded with wages, that are not attractive and are subject to poor conditions of service. Nigerian lecturers are suffering from hunger, starvation, and poverty. The other day, we learnt that three lecturers died at the University of Calabar in a period of three months due to illness. Many of us are in hardship. Some staff can hardly afford three square meals a day, let alone take care of their medical bills whenever they are knocked down by illness. We are calling on the government to address the issue of wages and our conditions of service. – ASUU Member, University of Benin.

What emerges from this is a growing sense of economic desperation among union members. According to them, many university lecturers have been forced to engage in other economic (non-academic related) activities simply in order to maintain themselves. For example, many lecturers serve as consultants to government agencies and other corporate organisations; some operate private businesses/shops both within and outside the university such as printing and photocopying centres, telephone boots, cyber cafes, hair dressing salons, sewing outfits, restaurants and ‘beer parlours’. According to a study conducted by Ushie et al, there is evidence of academics running taxis after work, while some establish private schools, tutorial classes and learning centres for undergraduate students (Ushie, Ogaboh, Agba and Best, 2010:154). Moreover, the situation makes various kinds of academic corruption more likely. Lecturers may take money from students for performing normal support functions such as project supervision, proof reading and editing, performing statistical tests, etc. In addition, many lecturers sell handouts and textbooks at exorbitant prices, while awarding marks to those who patronise them the most.

Ushie’s line of argument is corroborated by evidence from my research. A lecturer I interviewed from University of Abuja comments:

If our pay package is very attractive, you cannot see lecturers engaging in other private businesses to support their income, such as running consultancy services, photocopying and printing services inside or outside the campus.

A key point emerges here: that is the fact that Nigerian academics who, at the time of independence were very effectively a part of the nation's professional middle class, find themselves increasingly in a position equivalent to that of the working class, subjected to the need for alternative livelihood strategies, working around the clock (and some times engaging in illicit activities) in order to meet their basic needs. This argument is elaborated below in the subsection on the historical perspectives of academic staff salaries and union struggles (section 5.1.2).

5.1.1: Comparison of Academic Staff Salaries with Fellow Civil Servants:

Evidence for the relative decline in the economic position of Nigerian academics, according to ASUU, can be found in Table 5.1 (below) which shows a comparison of average salaries in different sectors of the Nigerian Economy.

Table 5.1: A comparison of Average Salaries in Different Sectors of the Nigerian Economy (1997)

Sector	Average Salary per Annum in Naira	Equivalent in pound sterling using oanda historical exchange rate as at 1 st Jan.1997
Public Sector (Oil)	450,000 – 600,000	3,367.97-4,490.55
Public Sector (Iron and Steel)	300,000 - 400,000	2,245.27-2,993.70
Nigerian Economy (Average)	100,000 - 200,000	748,43-1,496.85
University Academic Salary	30,000 - 54,000	224.53-404.15

Source: ASUU National Secretariat Publication (1997) cited in Oni, B. (2008:16)

The wage disparity observed between the university subsector and other sectors of the economy is thus a major source of discouragement and frustration among the academic staff. Similarly, an open letter written by ASUU to the President of Nigeria (available on ASUU website), provided an interesting comparison between the annual salaries of senior public officers and those of university Professors as shown below:

Table 5.2: Annual Salary of Nigerian Academics versus Other Civil Servants as at 2009

Public Officer	Annual Salary in Naira	Equivalent in pound sterling using oanda historical exchange rate as at 1 st Jan.2009
Senator	36, 677, 840.00	179,599.00
Federal House Member	35, 932, 346.30	175,996.00
Federal high Court Judge	26, 875, 840.00	131,638.00
Permanent Secretary/Executive Secretary/Chief Executive of Parastatal/Vice Chancellor	22, 051, 154.30	108,006.00
Local Government Chairman	13, 865, 895.30	67,915.00
Local Government Supervisory Councillor	12, 746, 875.00	62,434.10
Professor	3, 859, 078.60	18,901.70

(Source: Adapted from ASUU's website: www.asuunigeria.org)

Moreover, even the lowest step in the cadre of elected political office holders, the local government councillor, earns about N1.29 million a month, more than a Professor's N321, 000. A lecturer from the University of Abuja makes the point clearly:

By these wages disparities, the government has made it clear the value of higher education in Nigeria. Some people have accused the ASUU of using the salaries of political office holders as a benchmark for ASUU's negotiations. This is not the case; we are only saying

that if we are important to the system, we also deserve a more decent pay package. I know it is very easy to say that politicians who have joggled their way into elected offices have to recoup their investments, but this is how far we have come in this country; the political elite class have legalised corruption and entrenched it into our wages structure, to the extent that the government does not even feel it is important to justify these discrepancies.

– ASUU member, University of Abuja.

When analysing these figures, the President of ASUU, Professor Ukachukwu Anwuzie argued in a press conference given on the 23rd of October, 2009.

What the government has offered us is untenable, at a time when each Local Government councillor earns over four times, each member of the House of Representatives over seven times, and each senator over nine times the salary of a University Professor. To say that academics who want to earn a legislator's pay should become legislators is a light headed way of missing the point. The point is that Nigerian Government does not value academic labour even though it claims it wants to compete with the best in the world in the production of knowledge in the twenty first century.

According to the union's position, then, Nigerian university teachers deserve decent pay, especially because they are the custodians of 'national intellect'. Remuneration of academics is thus linked by Union members to a wider social function, the ability of university teachers to effectively carry out teaching, research and community development. This view was reflected in the responses of a union member:

It is not motivating to see that a country where those saddled with less tedious responsibilities are excessively rewarded, university lecturers are left to hold the short end of the stick –ASUU Official, University of Maiduguri, Northern Nigeria.

Even within the university sub-sector (i.e. moving from State universities controlled by States or regional governments to federal universities), low wage packages have led to what can be called an 'internal brain drain' where many lecturers are leaving their jobs in regional, state universities in order to apply to federal universities, or to private or non-state sector institutions of higher learning who appear to be able to offer more competitive and regularly paid wages. The same ASUU official from the University of Maiduguri explained:

We are on the verge of losing about large number of our workforce because there two universities currently recruiting *enmasse*: Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi

and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. More than 50 academic staff members have submitted their applications and are currently waiting to be interviewed. This is the result of the failure of the government to agree to the demands of the ASUU's national body. It is sad to note that nothing tangible has been done for the past 9 months on the issues we have raised. – ASUU official, University of Maiduguri

This brain drain to neighbouring universities has meant that some understaffed departments or faculties risk being shut down by the NUC when they come to do their annual accreditation exercise.

A similar story emerges if we consider comparative evidence at the level of the continent as a whole (See Table 5.3 below)

Table 5.3: Academic Staff Salaries in Selected African Countries

Countries	Academic Staff Salaries Per Annum (US\$) and Pounds Sterling Value, using Oanda historical exchange rate as at 1/1/1997		
	Lecturer	Senior Lecturer	Professor
South Africa	15,000	30,000	55,000
In Pounds Value	8,756.57	17,513.10	32,107.40
Zimbabwe	12,000	24,000	48,000
In Pounds Value.	7,005.57	14,010.50	28,021.00
Ethiopia	3,600	4,800	6,000
In Pounds Value.	2,101.58	2,802.10	3,502.63
Kenya	3,600	4,500	5,400
In Pounds Value.	2,101.58	2,626.97	3,152.36
Ghana	1,800	3,000	4,800
In Pounds Value.	1,050.79	1,751.31	2,802.10

Source: ASUU National Secretarial Publication, 1997 cited in Oni, B. (2008)

From the above figures, according to the union members, it can be seen that the salary package of a Nigerian university professor is less than that of his or her peers in South Africa, Ethiopia and Ghana. While we can allow for differences in the cost of living, inflation or wage policy between countries, it is still clearly true that the remuneration of Nigerian academics is not close to the African average. This is the major reason for the emigration of Nigerian lecturers and scholars in various fields, not just to Europe, the Middle East and America but also to other African countries such as Botswana and South Africa.

Taking the evidence presented in the previous two sections together, two points emerge. What such data makes clear, on the one hand, is that the dispute has many of the features of a classic pay dispute. We can see from the evidence above how far the union is concerned to present their case in terms of a comparison with other parts of the Nigerian professional middle class. In that respect, the protection of a relatively privileged position is at stake. When the Union argues that a professor's annual salary is evidently less than those of his or her counterparts in some other African universities it is seeking to draw attention to the marginalisation of academic labour by the federal government of Nigeria when compared to their position and salary before the mid 1960s. University lecturers tend to have high expectations of what their salary levels should be, especially when they compare themselves with their counterparts in other countries and with other middle class occupations in Nigeria. It is in this context, as Oberschall (1978) explained, when workers perceive that there is a "discrepancy between what they think they are entitled to and what they actually get" (300), there is a sense of what he calls relative deprivation. A sense of relative deprivation thus explains partly what motivates the union's collective action and movement for change in their working conditions.

On the other hand, Nigerian academics have seen their social position decline dramatically, so that in effect, many now exist on the edge of a working class position. Davies (1962) and Korpi (1974) theorised that social protests or conflict actions are more likely to occur not only when people are in dire poverty but when there is some improvement in their living conditions and their expectations start to rise. But the opposite can be argued in the case of ASUU. Indeed, it could be argued, that Nigerian academics have experienced something tantamount to a growing 'exploitation'. In that respect, the growing radicalism of the union may be understood as a consequence of the degree to which Nigerian academics in the state sector have been forced out of a middle-class position and into a

situation where they are able to sympathise with the sufferings of a much wider working population in the country.

5.1.2: Historical Perspectives of Academic Staff Salaries and Union Struggles:

To understand this more clearly, it is helpful to recognise just how far Nigerian academics have seen a long term decline in their salary levels. This process has been one of long historical development; indeed, one can trace the problem of salaries and conditions of service back to the immediate post-independence era. Comparing the emoluments in the Nigerian public service with those obtainable in the university system at the time, Adekanye (1993) cited in Onyeonoru (2006) observed that:

At independence in October 1960, the salary of the Prime Minister of the Federation of Nigeria was only eight hundred pounds (£800) more than that of the Principal (that is the future Vice Chancellor) of the University College, Ibadan, while the latter certainly earned more than the Nigerian Army Commander and General. The Prime Minister's personal emolument was put at £4,500, while the Principal of the University College, Ibadan, was paid £3,750, and the Army Major General and Commissioner £3,580 (08).

Historically, therefore, university employees occupied a relatively high position when compared to their counterparts in other offices in the state civil service. However, with the emergence of the military into Nigerian politics in 1966 there was a gradual shift in the relative systems of reward in various occupational groups around the country, which led to a growing disparity. By 1966, in spite of salary reviews which were skewed positively towards the military, the annual salary of the university professor remained £3,000. This figure was still higher than a Federal Minister's salary of £2,700 and a top civil servant of the rank of Permanent Secretary who was paid between £2,500 and £2,940. During this time, the salary of an assistant lecturer was £950, while his peers in the federal civil service (i.e. those with similar academic qualifications) were offered £720. (Onyeonoru, 2006:09).

Yaqub (2007:9) confirms this point quoting the NUC (1994:3):

As at 1960s, only the Chief Justice of the Federation on an annual salary of 3,600.00 British Pounds per annum earned more than a university professor. Not only were university lecturers better paid than their civil service counterparts, fringe benefits such as housing, allowances, social status, and working conditions were very attractive, making

academics the envy of civil servants. Adequate funding of universities, attending overseas conferences every three years, and such other fringe benefits were the order of the day. The prevailing economic situation in Nigeria was such that the annual salary of a lecturer was sufficient to buy a car and so the liquidation of a car loan five years later was not a strain.

During this period of success and recognition, the union (then known as the National Association of University Teachers, NAUT) were adjudged the most passive workers' union in Nigeria. Members of the union were relatively unconcerned about the union's activities and rarely demonstrated any sign of militancy since they were among the highest paid members of the Nigerian middle class and their salaries were never delayed. Rather, the union was more interested in the discharge of good quality education (Jega 1994:7). This position of the union was challenged, first of all in 1970s, by excessive inflation which eroded the purchasing power of all workers. Thus in 1973, the NAUT went on its first strike to negotiate wage increases. However, its profile at the time was that of a very compliant and elitist union, and it took a mere threat from the military administration of General Gowon to halt the strike. The leadership of the union met immediately and called off the strike; it was directly out of this context that ASUU was established in 1978.

The subsequent synchronization of the civil service under the "unified public service", a recommendation of the Udoji & Co advisory committee of 1975, brought about a further devaluation of academic labour in Nigerian universities. Under this scheme, the university professor's salary was capped at £11,568 which placed him or her at par with a Permanent secretary of the same grade at the state level, but lower than the latter's counterpart at the Federal level. A comparison of the remuneration of the then ruling military class with the university staffers before and after the Udoji recommendation makes the matter clearer:

At Nigeria's independence in 1960, an Assistant Lecturer was paid more than both a Sub-Lieutenant and Lieutenant; a Lecturer II more than a Lieutenant Colonel, a Reader/Associate Professor more than a Colonel and Brigadier. The Major General's salary placed him a few incremental steps on top of the University Professor (Adekanye, 1993:18).

Now, the overturn was evident in the 1975 post- Udoji period:

An Army Captain was now being paid more than the university Lecturer I, a Lieutenant-Colonel more than Senior Lecturer, a Colonel more than a Reader/Associate Professor; an army Brigadier, whose salary in 1966 had been lower than that of a Reader/Associate

Professor, now earned more than even a full Professor. The salaries of both the Lieutenant General and full General out-distanced that of a Vice Chancellor (19)

It follows that, according to Onyeonoru (2006),

The reversal in the conditions of service of the university staff was to be the starting point of the implementation of a class ascendancy project of the Nigerian military class in the wider society (pp.10)

In that respect, strike actions undertaken by ASUU in 1988 and afterwards started to take on the character of a form of struggle for class survival. One of the union's demands in 1988 was the restoration of the 20% differential in the University Salary Structure (USS), which was initially enjoyed by the university staffers relative to their counterparts in the wider economy, but which had been eroded by the effects of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) of the Ibrahim Babangida administration. In a report filed to Babangida, ASUU argued that the wide disparity brought about by the unified salary structure instituted in the 1970s was causing the problem of a loss of academic staff and the erosion of status and income for academics. But the government implemented the Elongated University Salary Structure (EUSS) under the SAP which led to a situation in which private sector wages became more attractive than those of the public sector as a result of the privatisation initiative, thus defeating the entire purpose of the USS.

The ASUU has thus sought to engage the FGN since 1992 in negotiations involving collective bargaining on salary and other welfare packages for academic staff. It should be recalled that between 1993 and 2008, Nigerian universities were closed for nearly 36 months due to various strike actions embarked upon by the union. ASUU has always proposed an increase in their Academic Staff Minimum – Salary Pay Scale, such as that which is obtainable in other African countries. But the government has never acceded to such requests. As a result of this situation, as described above, many lecturers now engage in private practices (many of which are outside their scope and training) in a bid to supplement their income, thus distracting them from their core functions of teaching and research.

In recent negotiations, ASUU has been reported to be insisting on a 109% pay rise to get salaries up to what the union call the 'African average'. But this barely managed to yield 52% in the 2009 agreements with the FGN as the government pleaded fiscal difficulties. A

union member from the University of Nigeria (UNN), Nsukka, comments on the government's position:

In a disgraceful 'might is right' posture and without any mutual negotiation, they flung a 40% salary increase on us. As if the university teachers are just hungry and only need a little appeasement, government's insensitivity continued with 'the no work, no pay policy...

However, a communiqué issued by ASUU on its history and struggles (1981-2009), is revealing in that it specifically links economic and political aspects of the dispute. The statement reads:

Government thinks we are a bunch of mercenaries who are interested in mere salaries and who would jump at the sight of figures. No! Our main concern is the totality of the conditions in the Universities that affect staff and students – (ASUU, 2010:1)

Thus, disputes around wages do remain an important factor. Yet these salary demands are implicitly tied to the fact that the decline in the economic status of Nigerian academics over the years has been shaped in profoundly political ways as the foregoing historical survey reveals. In summary, the rise to dominance of the Nigerian military in the postcolonial context and the connivance of the military with processes of 'structural adjustment' which have forced limits on public sector spending, are factors which led to the economic decline in the status of Nigerian academics over the years. In this respect, the economic questions in the dispute and its political aspects are hard to separate and the dispute has become increasingly politicised over time.

5.1.3: Retirement:

One consequence of the above argument is that the dispute has involved some demands which appear, from the point of view of 'classical' wage disputes (at least in the Western context), surprising. For example, according to the union members, an issue in the dispute, which remained unresolved until 2009, was the pegging of retirement age for university professors at 65 years. ASUU members have been fighting for an increase to 70 years. The demand by ASUU for the increment in retirement age appears unexpected when looked at from the perspective of workers in some developed economies who agitate for earlier retirement ages. One can argue that the economic explanation for this difference lies

partially in the fact that in most African economies like Nigeria where policies such as unemployment or retirement benefits are limited, workers are compelled to seek to work longer in order to be able to maintain themselves in old age. Another argument often posed by the union members to justify the increase in retirement age to 70 is based on the premise that (as a result of the loss of academic staff to other contexts) there is often a huge gap between the younger lecturers in Nigerian universities and the older (more experienced) ones, especially Professorial staff. The argument is thus that professors should be allowed to stay for additional 5 years, in order to prepare the young lecturers for more senior positions, before they leave the university system. This request was granted in 2009 when the Yar'Adua administration's negotiation team agreed to ASUU's demands.

During the interviews with rank and file members of the union, it was clear that ASUU members were pushing for an increase in the retirement age for university professors because it afforded an opportunity for more experienced intellectuals to train the less experienced lecturers in the context where large numbers of professors were retiring or migrating to other countries. In that respect, retirement ages became an issue in the crisis of higher education in the country not because the union aimed at protecting lower retirement ages (as might be conventionally expected), but because the dispute occurs in the context of the profoundly politicised crisis of Higher Education in the country.

5.1.4: Salary Differentials between Federal, State and Private University Staffers:

For the same reason, according to the union members, another controversial issue which the members have been concerned about is the uniformity of the pay scale across the national university system so that agreements reached at the Federal level become binding on the state and private universities. The issue arises, in part, because some state governors have threatened not to execute any salary packages approved by the federal government for state owned universities, except if funding was forthcoming from the federal government to support such measures. ASUU members were of the view that an equalised pay structure would allow for the free movement of academic labour within the national university system (Awuzie, 2009).

A union member from University of Benin made it clear during the course of my interview that a national agreement which would require the Federal Government, the State Governments and Private universities to adhere to the same salary structure and conditions of service for all academic staff, irrespective of where they teach based on the fact that

they are all regulated by the same federal government agencies: the National University Commission (NUC) and Joint Admission Matriculation Board (JAMB). Similarly, the President of ASUU, Professor Ukachukwu Anwuzie in his October 2009 press conference, said:

ASUU has, since 1992, insisted that we should never have a multiplicity of academic standards in Nigeria. We cannot divide Nigerian Universities into low and higher standard institutions in the same structure. There should be just one system with minimum standard that will keep the system internationally competitive. This is ASUU's position. This is why we have insisted that what our Union has negotiated is a minimum benchmark for the system. State Governments that cannot fund their Universities to meet the benchmark set up in the Agreement will find that they cannot survive in the system. The minimum conditions are not only about emoluments. They are standards which must be met in the funding of facilities for teaching and research, funding of post-graduate studies, the upgrading of programmes, remedy of deficiencies in them, and for collaborating with industries in the areas of research and development of technology and staff development.

What is clear from this comment is that the union is not only concerned about pecuniary benefits but are also with seeking to defend the integrity of the state funded education sector against the threat posed by a growing private sector in the country which can be seen as one consequence of the effort towards deregulation and limited state expenditure in the structural adjustment era.

In summary, this section examined the problem of poor wages and conditions of service among Nigerian academics as well as the resulting problems: lack of worker motivation, reduced productivity and the brain drain syndrome. What emerges clearly from the research is that ASUU members believe that the decline in their wages means that they can hardly carry out their primary assignments of teaching and research without having to engage in non-academic related practices to supplement their income and meet their basic needs. In comparison with their fellow counterparts in the civil service, banking, steel, oil industries and in higher education around the world, Nigerian lecturers are relatively underpaid. The problem of poor wages for academics seems to have arisen over the years from the class struggle between the ruling military class and the intellectuals. Prior to the dominance of the Military on the political scene, Nigerian academics were well paid and enjoyed a reasonable level of affluence and social status. But with the emergence of the military, and the subsequent era of structural adjustment, the position of the academics

began to shift over time from what was effectively that of the white-collar, middle class to a position more or less equivalent to working class status. This provides, in part, an explanation as to why these disputes seemed to have become increasingly politicised, involving not just questions of economics but also questions about the general management of the economy and the distribution of the nation's resources.

5.2: Underfunding in Nigerian Universities

The sections above discuss the question of academic remuneration and conditions of service, and seek to show how these issues have developed in a wider historical context. Beyond these questions, another economic aspect of the dispute relates to the provision of funding for higher education facilities more generally. This is one of the core considerations of the union which fuels the organization's wider involvement in national and state politics and relates to wider questions of wealth distribution and the placement of Nigeria within a global context. Matters of interest here relate to that of budget allocation to the education sector as well as relatively basic issues of maintenance, teaching and research facilities, transport and accommodation already discussed in chapter 4. These can be usefully reviewed and scrutinized comparatively. Firstly, the budget allocation to the educational sector is considered below.

5.2.1: Budget Allocation to Education:

Nigeria has a population of over 140 million and significant natural resources; the country has been repeatedly described as 'Africa's sleeping economic giant' (e.g. Saint et al, 2003:260). UNESCO guidelines on educational funding suggest that for the educational sector in a developing country like Nigeria to become internationally competitive and yield the desired dividends in terms of national development, both the federal and state governments should devote at least 26% of the annual budget to funding all levels of education. However, at present, the funds allocated to the educational sector in Nigeria do not approach this level. Available statistics reveal that between 1994 and 2009, Nigeria spent, on average, 9.1% of its budget on education. (See chart 5.1). When expressed as a percentage of the GDP, the federal government's spending on education over the same period amounts to an average of less than 2%. Nigeria does not fare well in this matter when compared with other African countries for similar periods. For example Ghana

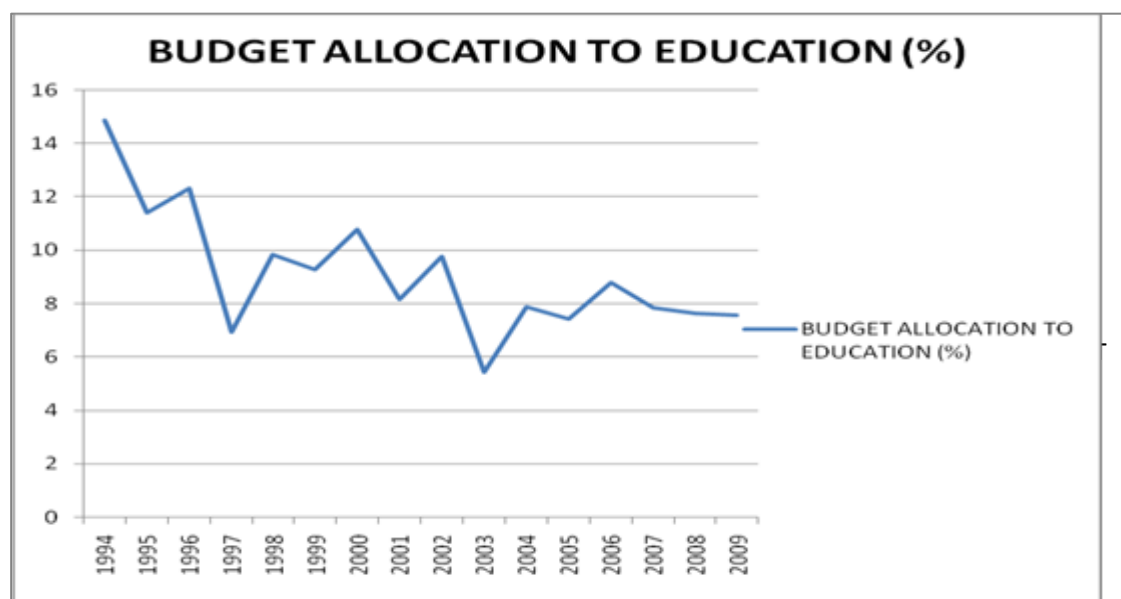
spends 3.6 % of its GDP on education, Kenya spends 6.2%, and Zimbabwe, 9.5% (Arikewuyo, 2004:17).

Countries like South Africa, Egypt and Kenya spend a high proportion of their country's earnings on education. If South Africa can spend reasonable percentage of its government revenue on education, I see no reason why Nigeria should not spend more on education in Nigeria – ASUU Official, University of Ilorin, Northern Nigeria.

Thus, one of the ASUU officials from University of Ilorin told me, the amount of money allocated to higher education in relation to the available resources reveal a lot about the value the government attaches to the sector.

The plain economic facts are thus evidence, for this union member, of a wider disregard for education among the Nigerian elite. The same union member from the University of Ilorin went on to make reference to a quote by Nelson Mandela, the former President of South Africa on the importance of education. He said (in paraphrase): *the only way to keep the people of a nation out of poverty is to give them knowledge*, which means to give priority to investing in education.. He concluded that if Nigeria is to make any significant progress as a nation, the government will have to increase the value it places on education. In short, for Union members what was at stake here was not simply the question of working conditions in the abstract but a wider one of national development more generally.

Chart 5.1: Percentage Budget Allocation to Education 1994 to 2009



Source: Figures were sourced from the Federal Ministry of Education (various years), Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Statistical Bulletin (2005), and Budget Office of the Federation (various years).

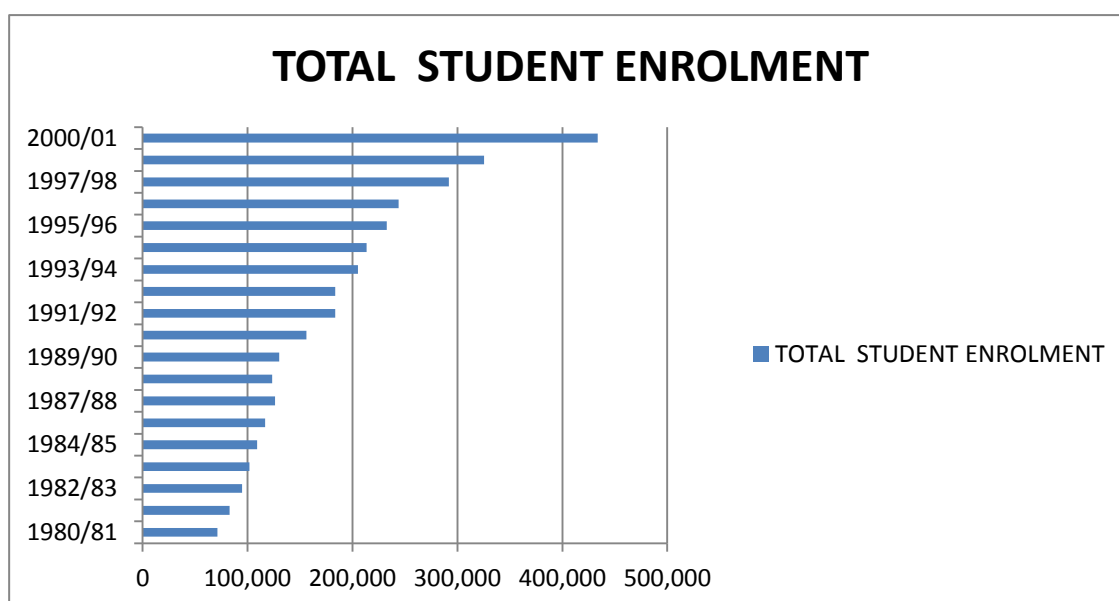
These issues, of course, are shaped also by other factors. As another union member pointed out to me, the question of the budget allocation to education has also been affected by the rising levels of student enrolment which increases the pressure on universities. The significance of funding to satisfy the growing student population in Nigerian universities was highlighted by a lecturer I interviewed from the University of Lagos:

The reason why we are on strike goes beyond salary demands. We want the government to finance education and its facilities. Will 40% increment to my own salary bring electricity and teaching facilities to the classroom? Can you please tell me! ...Just to let you know how important this matter is... I graduated from this University 16 years ago with 32 other students in my class. The classroom we were using at that time is the same one where I now lecture over 300 students. How can you reconcile this? Are you saying the government is unaware of the growing number of student enrolment each year? The university is expanding everyday both numerically and curriculum-wise, yet funding has not increased to meet up with this growth – ASUU Member, University of Lagos.

This situation is also captured by Saint *et al* (2003:17) when they stated in their article, *Higher Education in Nigeria: A Status Report*, that the government's recurrent grants to federal universities appeared to have increased dramatically from 530 million naira in 1990

to 9.6 billion in 1999, but in real terms, “total recurrent grants per student in 1999 were only one-third of the 1990 level” (17). Moreover, rising budgetary allocations have been made insignificant by the effect of rising student enrolments in federal universities. For example, enrolment has continued to increase from 71, 335 in 1980/1981 session to 433, 821 in 2000/2001 session (see Chart 5.2 below). At the same time, there is has been no commensurate increase in the level of funding. The increase in enrolment levels has placed substantial pressures on available infrastructure and facilities across various campuses, further depleting scarce amenities according to the union members.

Chart 5.2: Total Student Enrolment in Nigerian Universities (1980-2001)



Source: Figures were obtained from the FME (2003).

5.2.2: Historical Perspectives on Education Funding Problems in Nigeria:

Here too, the question of wider levels of funding for the Nigerian Higher education sector has to be seen in a longer historical context. The history of ASUU’s protest against the underfunding of universities dates back to the 1970s (Pemedede, 2007:361). Prior to this time, the first generation of universities were heavily funded by the government, with supplementary funds and donations from corporate bodies and institutes. For example, the University of Ibadan (UI), which was established in 1948 as the first university in Nigeria was initially funded from two main sources: the Nigerian government provided 70% of the funding, while the remaining 30% was supplied by the United Kingdom. Moreover, the United African Company (UAC) made donations to the school for the construction of the Trenchard Hall. In October 1960, when the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) was

established as the country's first regional university, the government of what was then Eastern Nigeria was responsible for the institution's funding. Supplementary funds also came from the Eastern Nigerian Marketing Board (Onyeonoru, 2006: 05). In the case of Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, Ukeje (2002) noticed that:

From the beginning in 1962 to 1975, there was no substantive difference each year between the amount requested by the university and the amount received from the Regional Government. In fact it was reported that there were years in which the amount received was slightly more than the amount requested.

According to an ASUU member from University of Ibadan, adequate funding meant that Nigerian Universities met international standards and could compete globally. This was evident in the fact that Nigerian graduates easily got admission into post-graduate courses in reputable universities abroad. However, the union member stated that in 1975, the Federal Government decided to establish seven more universities at Sokoto, Ilorin, Jos, Calabar, Maiduguri, Kano and Port Harcourt and, moreover, went on to take control of the four existing regional universities. Hence, while the establishment of the pre-1975 universities was based on justifiable considerations connected to need, the post-1975 universities were established more or less by military command. "The year 1975 thus marked the beginning of the problem of university funding in Nigeria" (Onyeonoru, 2006:05). After the 1975/76 session, according to a former ASUU president from University of Lagos, universities witnessed a shortfall for the first time in government funding. Since then, the funding of Nigerian universities has been on the decline. This event was followed in 1978 by the federal government's eradication of tuition fees for undergraduate studies in all universities in Nigeria. Between 1979 and 1983, the third generation of universities (both federal and state-owned) came into being through the agency of Second Republic politicians. The government thought it necessary to create more universities, especially in regions that had not been represented in the first or second tranche of university building. This union member was of the view, then, that this expansion was motivated by political factors, affected directly by the regionalism in Nigerian politics which is itself a legacy of colonial rule (as discussed in chapter 2), and went unsupported by new funding resources. Thus there was a worsening of the pool of funds available to higher education across the country. From that time onwards, universities could no longer maintain their normal standards of operation in terms of teaching and research facilities.

The federal government reached an agreement with the Union on a number of these issues in 1992 (see ASUU, 2001). Based on the agreement, the federal government acknowledged the need to take bold policy initiatives to address some of the decline in the university system and revitalise the educational sector. The agreement was to allocate a reasonable budget allocation to the educational sector on a systematic basis. The main issues addressed by the agreement were the creation of a higher education tax, provision of funds for library development, more teaching classrooms, health care facilities for staff and students, water supply and laboratory equipment. Although the government has largely failed to fulfil its part of the above agreement, there have been some improvements over time in the provision of funds for some facilities in universities. In June 2001, ASUU and the FGN negotiating team reached another consensus. This time the federal government agreed to implement the UNESCO recommendation of 26%, and that the sharing formula for these funds would be 50% to primary and secondary schools and 50% for higher education. This has not been implemented.

For the past two and half years, the FGN and ASUU have been engaging in unproductive dialogues, lobbying and negotiations. Anytime the matter is presented before the government, it is either abandoned or killed or unduly delayed. It is time for us to transform our education sector... We will no longer keep quiet and listen to the government tell us that the process and timing of the strike is unacceptable... If we must realise our goal of joining the league of the G20 by 2020, adequate funding of education is inevitable. UNESCO's recommendation for education is 26% of the annual budget. Nigeria has never attained 10%, yet we want to join the world's richest countries by 2020. We must be day dreaming! Let us stop deceiving ourselves and face reality- ASUU Member from University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Thus, according to the union, the level of funding to universities remains a major outstanding issue in ASUU's conflict and negotiation with the government as of 2009. Although recent budget allocations to the educational sector have been on the increase in monetary terms, in percentage terms, it has been erratic and far from the UNESCO target (see chart 6.1 above). It is crucial, from the union's perspective, that this target is maintained if Nigeria is serious about national development. A union member from UNN, Nsukka stated that in early 2008, there was a controversial negotiation between ASUU and the FGN, in which the government delegation dragged out negotiations over funding

agreements for almost one full year, pointing to the “global meltdown” as a reason for their repudiation of agreements reached. But the union argues that even in United States, which was badly hit by the crisis, the approach is different. President Obama has increased the budget allocation to education, expanded scholarship opportunities, and increased employment prospects. The same government is also committed to health reforms and defence, and has bailed out corporations. This according to the union goes to show that there is no acceptable excuse for not funding the educational sector. What emerges here is that, for union members, the dispute touches not just on questions of resourcing for the sector, but is seen – or presented – as one in which wider issues of national development are at stake.

It is, in this context, not surprising that apart from strictly economic factors such as budgetary allocation and inflation, there are other political factors that union members point to as having adversely affected the level of university funding. These include a lack of accountability, the misappropriation of public funds, wasteful spending, corruption, and the misplacement of priorities by the ruling (military) classes and university administrators in Nigeria. (Onyeonoru, 2006:06). These factors have militated against the growth and development of the educational sector over the years in ways that are discussed in chapters two and eight. In this respect ASUU members have increasingly used its industrial relations tools in order to fight against corruption in an increasingly explicit political fashion. An ASUU publication from 2005, for example, explicitly argues that ruling class corruption has destroyed the fabric of the Nigerian society. According to the union, the political and economic history of postcolonial Nigeria is characterised by elite corruption and that corruption is a vital component of the ruling class culture. The union claimed explicitly that within the last decade, the government had misused public funds meant for the educational sector. The decline in the Nigerian educational system is thus seen as one part of a wider social phenomenon. ASUU members have on various occasions accused the government of malpractices and fraud in the implementation of finance related programs for the educational sector such as the Educational Tax Fund, the Stabilization Fund and the NUC grants, amongst other sources of funds. For example, in 2001 ASUU discovered that 600 Million Naira had been taken from the Stabilization Fund but not disbursed to the Universities for the purposes to which it was intended according to the 2001 FGN-Agreement. The union members have also expressed displeasure with the way the NUC handles their funds, and have called into question NUC’s accountability and integrity.

They claim that the Federal Government has refused to put the NUC under the same scrutiny that universities are subject to. The same ASUU publication noted that the public were still awaiting a response from the government regarding several scandals and issues of accountability, misappropriation and corruption such as the corrupt practices of former military rulers since 1996: how the funds allocated for the refurbishment of the country's oil refineries were used, given that the refineries are still not able to function to optimal capacity; the origin of money bags passed around the National Assembly (frequently called 'Ghana must go bags' or 'banana peels') and, perhaps the most significant of all, the alleged looting of about \$12 Billion worth of windfalls from the sale of oil during the Gulf War in the early 1990s by the Babangida administration. A rank and file member of the ASUU from University of Lagos has this to say:

The anomalies that exist in this nation have to be corrected. When you have corrupt leaders, there will always be problems. What is earmarked for education is not enough. What we need is to overhaul the entire system. - ASUU Member, University of Lagos

The key point here, then, is that the way in which the union has come to present the dispute over budget allocation to the higher education sector has deliberately raised wider political questions about the role and position of the Nigerian ruling elite. In this sense, one can safely say that the disputes have gone beyond economic matters to become a much more politicised dispute concerned with the wider issue of Nigerian national development, of corruption and of the misappropriation of tax payers' funds by the political elite.

5.3: Chapter Conclusions:

This chapter has examined the economic questions surrounding the disputes between the Federal government and ASUU. First, Nigerian academics are faced with the problem of poor wages and conditions of service which have resulted in a lack of motivation and a reduction in productivity and have also exacerbated the migration of academics out of the state sector, as well as to other countries. In comparison to other civil servants in the country, especially political office holders, as well as in relation to other academics in other parts of the world (both 'developed' and 'underdeveloped'), Nigerian academics are relatively underpaid and marginalised. The intervention of the military into Nigerian politics shortly after independence in the 1960s kick-started a gradual shift in the social

position of Nigerian academics whose pay packages and social status were initially at levels which meant that they were part of the country's elite. Moreover, the economic problems caused by the SAP in the late 1980s (i.e. increased inflation, high debt profile and so on) led to a major devaluation in the purchasing power of workers' salaries. Since then, ASUU had made frantic efforts to improve the economic welfare of its members, but these have yielded only marginal results.

However, beyond the problem of poor wages, ASUU members are also struggling for an increase in the budgetary allocation to the educational sector more generally in order to improve facilities and create a comfortable environment for teaching and learning. Budget allocation has, however, been affected by rising student enrolment and inflationary pressures which increase the funding requirements of universities. When compared to other African countries such as South Africa, Egypt, Botswana and Kenya, Nigeria invests less in higher education and this, according to the union, reveals the seeming lack of value the Nigerian ruling class has placed on higher education. Other factors that have caused the problem of under funding include misplacement of priorities by the ruling class, corruption and misappropriation by political office holders.

We can thus conclude that it is not easy to separate out economic and political aspects in this dispute. This is because the decline in academic wages has seen academics lose their social position in such a way that they have become increasingly positioned as part of a wider working class in Nigeria. The politicization of the dispute can also be explained in that the question of economic remuneration for academics has been shaped by other political factors (such as the intervention of the military, the effects of structural adjustment, etc). In another sense, the wider question of funding for higher education sector in the country is seen as being an issue not just about jobs and security, but also about national development.

CHAPTER 6

THE DISPUTE IN RELATION TO UNIVERSITY AUTONOMY AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

6.0: Introduction

The third central issue in relation to the dispute under consideration here is the question of university autonomy and academic freedom, particularly as it affects the internal governance of the university and its academic staff in the discharge of their functions. This chapter is, therefore, concerned with university autonomy in all its respects, usually encapsulated in the term ‘institutional autonomy’. The International Association of Universities (IAU) policy statement defines institutional autonomy thus:

The principle of institutional autonomy can be defined as the necessary degree of independence from external interference that the University requires in respect of its internal organisation and governance, the internal distribution of financial resources and the generation of income from non-public sources, the recruitment of its staff, the setting of the conditions of study and, finally, the freedom to conduct teaching and research (IAU: 1998).

There have been intensive debates between the ASUU and the Federal Government (particularly various military governments) on the question of autonomy and academic freedom since 1978. In general ASUU argues that the Government’s undue interference in matters concerning the day to day administration of the institutions inhibits progress and distorts effective decision making (Onyeonoru, 2008:2). Such interventions include attempts to control the appointment and removal of academic staff (including Vice Chancellors), the imposition of sole administrators during the military era, the admission of students, the prescription of teaching curriculum and research content, the restriction of certain publications and the allocation of recurrent income (Ekundayo and Adedokun, 2009:62). ASUU therefore contends that political ideologies and interests should not be allowed to interfere with the smooth running of the university system. The history and struggles of ASUU on university autonomy and other matters have been documented in a chronological sequence in Chapter 2. This chapter will only refer to certain specific cases which can stand as indicative examples, for the purpose of explaining the characteristic

issues of the dispute in question. The position of the law relating to the issue of university autonomy in Nigeria and the opinion of my interviewees (including ASUU officials and rank and file members) on the subject are also considered. In the respect of the last point, it is worth stating that the statutes establishing Nigerian universities confer on them three fundamental forms of institutional autonomy as implied from the IAU policy statement above. These are namely: (1) academic autonomy/freedom, (2) administrative autonomy and (3) financial autonomy. These three aspects of autonomy are those around which these disputes have occurred and consideration of these will therefore form the basis of this chapter.

6.1: Academic Freedom:

Academic freedom is the institutional autonomy of universities pertaining to academic matters. Institutional autonomy and academic freedom are complementary. While institutional autonomy relates to the self governance of universities as a whole, academic freedom is ‘concerned with individual freedom of academic staff to impart knowledge unhindered and the freedom for students to choose what they will study’ (Ajayi and Bolupe Awe, 2008:104). Academic autonomy relates to freedom for universities to take decisions in all academic matters, such as the control of teaching, the admission of students and all issues regarding curriculum content and pedagogy. Smith (1995:680) gives what a very clear definition when he described academic freedom as a fourfold right of a university: ‘to determine for itself on academic grounds *who may teach, what may be taught, how it shall be taught, and who may be admitted to study*’. In line with this definition, a lecturer from the University of Benin explained to me in an interview the meaning of academic freedom in the Nigerian University context. In his words:

When we talk about academic freedom, we are saying that the government should allow us to admit students freely, they should not tell us what to teach or restrict us from being innovative in coming up with a sound curriculum for our students. What the government tries to do is to limit the search for knowledge to only those aspects that are in support of their perspective or that are in line with their interests. This does not work for the development of the system. We should have freedom to teach, research and publish the results of our research whether or not it is appealing to any one – Rank and file ASUU member, University of Benin.

ASUU's main concern here is that the University should enjoy traditional academic rights such as the right to select students, teach freely and determine the content of its syllabus. According to Akpomi, Amesi and Adolphus (2008:56), in order for the universities to perform their tasks effectively, they must have the freedom to teach and to 'advance the frontiers of knowledge' through research and publications. Usually, the rights to academic freedom or any other form of freedom are contained in a nation's constitution. The constitution provides for the position of the law on such matters. It can be stated that, although academic freedom is defined in the statutes establishing Nigerian universities, there is no specific *constitutional* provision on academic freedom in Nigeria. This is unlike South Africa and Ghana where the constitution expressly grants the right to academic freedom. In the Nigerian case, the concept of academic freedom can only be inferred from the provision of section 39(1) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 which provides for the freedom of expression and the press. This section specifically states: 'everyone shall be entitled to freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference'. So, while in the case of South Africa and Ghana, the constitution is clear on academic freedom, for Nigeria, the concept of academic freedom is not expressly stated, though it can be implied. So in the Nigerian case, academic freedom is rather enshrined under the broader term of intellectual freedom. Bringing this to the context of the ASUU disputes, it appears that the freedom of expression and opinions which the constitution talks about has been denied Nigerian academics, at least from the union's perspective. The union accuses the government of undue interference in academic decision making and infringement on the rights of lecturers in clear violation of the provisions of the constitution.

An indicative event in the struggle over academic autonomy in Nigeria took place in 1985 when the Buhari-Idiagbon military regime transferred the power to determine, regulate and monitor academic programs from the Senates of individual universities to the National Universities Commission (NUC). According to ASUU officials I interviewed, this action implied that the government was taking the control of the accreditation of programs away from 'professionals' and transferring it to the NUC, which was looked at as an institution that supported the government's interests. The NUC then established minimum standards that would govern all universities alike. Under the subsequent Babangida administration, ASUU was accused of disseminating critical and 'baseless' information about the government to students and the public in a manner that was capable of toppling the regime

(ASUU, 2005). Consequently, the government established a panel of enquiry, known as the Abisoye Panel which led, among other things, to the termination of the appointment of some lecturers in Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria who were accused of ‘teaching what they were not supposed to teach’ (ASUU, 2005). More recently, in 1990, a Professor of History in the University of Ibadan, Obaro Ikhime, was arrested and unduly detained in connection with statements he made from a church pulpit, which the government considered seditious. On his release from detention, his appointment with the University of Ibadan was terminated, yet no formal charges were brought against him. A professor of Botany and a senior lecturer both of the Obafemi Awolowo University were detained and relieved of their jobs on similar pretexts. In each of these cases, ASUU’s reaction to the disciplinary process was based on an insistence on the rule of law and they argued in defence of the principle of freedom of speech. According to the union, such events are evidence of the level to which the state control over academic matters was being imposed not as part of a justification regulation of academic standards, but as part of political battle over possible criticism of the state with regard to critical national issues (e.g. the union’s opposition to military rule, structural adjustment programmes, the outcome of the election won by MKO Abiola in 1993, and deregulation and privatisation in Nigeria). In the light of the above, academic freedom has turned out to entail more than simply the control of the universities; it involves the control of freedom of speech as enshrined in the constitution. With this background in mind, the rest of this section will now take a closer look at related struggles over the specific issues of the admission of students and the establishment and accreditation of academic programs.

Admission of Students: Before 1978, the Senates of the respective tertiary institutions were vested with the power to ascertain those who were admitted to higher education. However, with the establishment of the Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board (JAMB) in 1978 by the FGN Olusegun Obasanjo’s military administration, admission into higher institutions became centralised. The institutional autonomy to decide who and when to admit and the criteria to be adopted in the admission process was unequivocally transferred from tertiary institutions to this body. JAMB has also been responsible for setting qualifying examinations for students wishing to enter tertiary institutions. They have also imposed a quota system for admitting students. The board currently adopts the following guidelines as criteria for admission: merit - 40%; catchment area of institution - 30%; disadvantaged states - 20%; discretion of the institution - 10% (Ajayi and Bolu-Awe,

2008:108). This arrangement has been the source of significant controversy between the ASUU and FGN, the former arguing that it constitutes an infringement on the powers of the Senates of individual universities. An ASUU official I interviewed from the University of Ibadan explained some of the key issues arising from the quota system and other matters:

The quota system being adopted by JAMB for admission of students has brought about a lot of manoeuvres and gimmicks not just to the admission process, but to the entire running of the universities including the appointment of lecturers, funding allocation and so on. In many cases, the criteria of ‘federal character’ and ‘educationally disadvantaged states’ have been placed above merit and this has brought about significant asymmetry in the selection process. There [is] this situation where many qualified candidates is denied admission, while some others with very low scores are able to find their way through to be selected on the basis of ‘educationally disadvantaged’. I know it is a good thing to try to promote equal access to education for all regardless of ethnicity and background, but these regulations are not helpful and this is part of our struggle. The universities must be given the power to make these decisions – ASUU Official, University of Ibadan.

Clearly, for this respondent, the issue of control over admissions was to be understood as part of a wider struggle for control of the autonomous decision making powers of Universities. At the same time, there are practical effects of this policy: the implications of the quota system have been argued to be one of the key elements affecting the level of student intake in Nigerian universities:

“The Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board (JAMB) also eroded the power of the universities to determine the level of student intake and the criteria for admission. The use of population size rather than need to determine the funding of universities induced the institutions to increase student intake beyond the capacity of available infrastructure that could support quality teaching and learning” - Onyeonuru (2006:18)

Chapter 5 has already detailed the effect of massively increased student intake on infrastructure and facilities and its effect on the quality and standard of teaching and research. Although there is a general shortfall in the supply with respect to demand, the admission of students should, according to the union, correspond with the level of facilities available and the allocation of funds.

Establishment and Accreditation of Academic Programmes: Prior to the 1970s, the introduction of new academic programmes was subject to the internal procedure of the

universities. Under this arrangement, a proposal usually emanated from a department and was scrutinised by the faculty board before it was tabled for consideration by the senate. But the current system in place has shifted the approval of curriculum to the National Universities Commission (NUC) established initially in 1962, on the grounds that the commission will evaluate whether or not there are sufficient resources to support new programmes. The NUC is also in charge of the accreditation of the academic programmes and curriculum content for all universities. Despite academic representation on the commission Onyeonoru (2006:19) notes that under the military rule in Nigeria some of its roles have become more directive, and can be argued to have violated university autonomy. Initially the NUC was charged with the principal objectives of ensuring the orderly development of university education, maintaining standards and ensuring adequate funding. However, since the enactment of a new NUC decree in 1974, the government has expanded the scope and powers of the NUC over the universities. This has given the NUC a form of supervisory power which the Union alleges the government now use to centrally control the universities.

With the incremental expansion of the scope of operation of the NUC, the powers of the university senate to regulate the content and structure of curricula in the universities have been usurped by the Commission. In several areas, universities have lost their power to develop new programs, realign their courses and the content of their curricula to match labour market requirements. Changes in undergraduate programs, introduction of new degree programs and even changes in the names of university departments must attract the approval of the NUC. Where the NUC's position conflicts with that of the senate and experts in the field within universities, the opinion of NUC will prevail- no matter how wrong or unappreciative of rapid development in the field – (Adesina, 1998, 2000 cited in Onyeonoru, 2006:19)

ASUU claims that the control of the NUC over the content and structure of the curriculum does not give room for innovation in curriculum development. An ASUU member from the University of Ibadan comments:

The reason why we are insisting on academic freedom is to remove the unnecessary limits or barriers that governments tend to place on knowledge acquisition and transfer in universities...and these barriers are detrimental to scholarship, innovation and educational advancement.

Part of the union's argument, thus, is about effectiveness: in order for Nigerian Universities to discharge their duties effectively there needs to be institutional autonomy; each university must be capable of running its affairs, free to regulate itself, and free to make decisions to articulate and implement its own programs. Again, the discussion around these questions had been made, in the postcolonial context in Nigeria, in relation to questions of national development (see, for example, Oyeshile (2006)).

In summary, a major aspect of the ASUU disputes on university autonomy has been the protection of academic freedom. These academic/intellectual rights are usually enshrined in a nation's constitution. However, in the Nigerian situation, the constitution does not provide for the explicit protection of academic freedom like some other African countries, though this is implied in the constitution through the freedom of expression statement. The struggles of the union in this area have not proved to be successful as the government through its regulatory bodies such as the NUC and JAMB continue to exercise control over admissions, establishment, accreditation of courses and other academic related activities. What is revealed here, then, is the degree to which the dispute is shaped, not only by economic concerns, but by a desire on the part of academic staff to protect the integrity of intellectual decision making generally, and of their ability to define the goals of academic practice in Nigerian universities.

The next section now takes a look at the more controversial issue of administrative autonomy within Nigerian Universities

6.2: Administrative Autonomy:

Administrative autonomy is concerned with issues such as the role of the Visitor, the appointment and dismissal of the Vice Chancellor and members of the Governing Board as well as the discipline of students and staff. Before proceeding to the major debates around this area of administrative autonomy, it will be pertinent to have an understanding of the role of the parties involved in the disputes. On the union's side, the main parties involved are the ASUU members (both union officials and rank and file members), and the high profile administrators such as the Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellor, the Members of the Senate and the Governing Board. Suffice to say that the main issues in the disputes on administrative autonomy revolve around the *appointment* and *dismissal* of Vice

Chancellors. This has become a highly politicised question. This is perhaps due to the fact that the remuneration and other perquisites surrounding the office of the Vice Chancellor are now comparable to those of political office holders of equivalent status. This also gives an indication of why such positions have become the subject of fierce competition in recent times. On the government's side, the main actors are known as *the Visitors*: the President of Nigeria and the State Governors (or their equivalent positions under military rule) are referred to as the Visitors to the Federal and State Universities respectively. The Visitor has become a major feature in the legal structure of Nigerian universities as they possess both judicial and quasi-judicial powers (Ajayi and Bolu Awe 2007:10). Although significant concerns have been raised regarding the legitimacy of the role of the Visitors to Nigerian universities, the norm is that the Visitor is able to make key appointments such as that of the Pro-chancellor/chairman of Council. In some other cases, the Minister of Education or his delegated representatives (such as members of the Federal government negotiating team) also represent the position of the government on the matters relating to administration in Nigerian universities.

This section is divided into two main parts. First, university autonomy under military rule (i.e. before 1999) will be considered under 6.2.1, while the more recent debates on autonomy under democratic rule (i.e. after 1999) will be considered in section 6.2.2. In both cases, the position of the law and the appointment and dismissal of vice chancellors will be particularly examined.

6.2.1: Administrative Autonomy under Military Rule:

Since the formation of ASUU in 1978 up until 1999 and the transition to a democratic regime, the prolonged military rule helped to lay the foundation and shape what has now become a crisis of nationhood which affects not just Nigerian universities, but the entire country as a whole. Nevertheless, the years of military rule violated the academic freedom and administrative autonomy which the statutes establishing Federal and State Universities conferred on them. According to Jega (1995:252) 'they sought to control the university system and in the process virtually destroyed it'. First, the military made attempts to establish control over universities by directly appointing Vice Chancellors who were seen to be representatives of their interests. The result was the removal of institutional freedom and due process and a form of autocratic rule became institutionalised on many campuses (ibid). A union member in university from the University of Nigeria explained that:

The military regime eroded university autonomy by Decree No.23 of 1975 when the federal government took over regional universities. Before then, the power to appoint the Vice Chancellor was the sole responsibility of the Governing Council. The Decree No 23 removed the power to appoint Vice Chancellors from the Governing Council and vested the power on the Head of State or the Visitor to the universities. The military government even imposed sole administrators in some universities to take over the functions of the Vice Chancellor, Senate and Governing Council when there were situations of unrest or conflict. For example, in 1995, Major General Mamman Kontagora, a military officer at that time was appointed as sole administrator of Ahmadu Bello University, while Prof. M.I Isokun was appointed as sole administrator of AAU Ekpoma in May 1997.

There have also been numerous cases of undue direct interference in university administration according to a union member from University of Ibadan. For example, in 1978, the federal military government interfered with the powers of the senate of the University of Ibadan by requiring the Senate to explain why so many students failed in the 1977/78 academic session. Subsequently, in 1980, an internal dispute between the Vice Chancellor of the University of Lagos and six professors resulted in all of them (and the registrar) being fired by the government, without due process.

Both directly, then, in the form of straightforward interference, and indirectly, through the appointment of Vice Chancellors beholden to the government, University campuses came to mirror the wider political situation in Nigeria. Thus there were a number of cases where Vice Chancellors took the law into their own hands, and acted dictatorially toward staff members, with the support of the government. For example, in 1994, at the University of Abuja the then Vice Chancellor, Prof Isa Baba Mohammed, sacked over thirty five lecturers with the support of the military government of the General Sani Abacha regime. In this particular case, the Vice Chancellor had vandalised the houses and property of staff adjudged to be disloyal to him, disobeyed court orders, and forced an oath of allegiance on all academic staff, amongst other actions. Similar events were recorded in Ogun State University where the Vice Chancellor Professor O.Y Oyeneeye was alleged to have dismissed over 200 academic staff without due process, especially those who were believed to be critics of his administration. Some Vice Chancellors even went to the extent of inviting armed police to their campuses to prevent student demonstrations (as, for example, happened at Ahmadu Bello University on 22nd of May 1986 under the Vice Chancellorship of Ango Abdullahi). Egbokhare (2006:4) captures the spirit of these developments:

Vice chancellors appointed by the government do not feel accountable to their constituents. They are often dictatorial, corrupt and tend to misappropriate scarce resources. Because they lack popular support, they introduce ethnic and religious politics into university administration. Some vice chancellors promote cults as underground security outfits and they employ such cults to perpetrate crisis when it appears expedient. Others subvert senate and university organs.

According to the union's account, between 1992 and 1998, the Federal Military government also unilaterally appointed a new figure – the 'sole administrator' – on the following institutions: University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN), Federal University of Technology (FUT) Minna, University of Maiduguri, Ladoke Akintola University (LAUTECH) Ogbomoso. The decrees that introduced sole administrators dissolved the governing councils of these institutions and vested all powers of decision making on the sole administrator who acted with the combined roles of the Senate, Council and Vice Chancellor. Matters relating to the appointment, promotions and discipline of staff members were under the direct control of the sole administrators with no regard for established due process. Predictably, there are also reported cases where university resources meant for capital expenditure was misused through inflated contracts and dubious projects approved by sole administrators with the approval of the military governments (Jega, 1995:252). At this time, both academics and students repeatedly went to court to seek redress for perceived violations of their human rights. In many of these cases, the courts seemed helpless, due to the frequent annulment of jurisdictions by military decree (ibid: 253).

6.2.2: Administrative Autonomy under Democratic Rule:

In response to the need for institutional autonomy in Nigerian universities, and following the return of the democratic dispensation, ASUU sponsored a bill at the National Assembly known as the Universities (Miscellaneous Provisions, Amendment¹⁰) Act 2003. The bill spelt out, among other things, the provisions for autonomy, university management and reorganisation in Nigeria. Key features of the bill included the restoration of the administrative powers of the governing council over the affairs of the university, as well as

¹⁰ It is called an amendment act because it replaced the Universities Miscellaneous Provisions Act No 11 of 1993. The new bill was sponsored by ASUU with the intention enshrining democratic principles in the procedures governing the appointment of Vice Chancellors, Deputy Vice Chancellors and Acting Vice Chancellors in Nigerian universities.

the powers of the senate on academic matters. It also outlined a participative role for students in certain aspects of the university governance process. This bill was passed by both houses of the National Assembly on the 3rd day of July 2003 and was signed into law by the then President Olusegun Obasanjo on the 10th of July 2003. The two new sections introduced by this act clearly spell out the autonomy of Nigerian universities:

2AA - The powers of the council shall be exercised, as in the Law and Statutes of each University and to this extent establishment circulars that are inconsistent with the Laws and Statutes of the University shall not apply to the Universities

2AAA - The Governing Council of a University shall be free in the discharge of its functions and exercise of its responsibilities for the good management, growth and development of the university

It is the view of the union members that the aim of these provisions is to free the Universities from the control of the state and to enable the Council to exercise its powers and carry out its functions without undue external influence or interference. The other provisions of this amendment Act are implicitly or explicitly aimed at fulfilling these objectives and will be discussed as the section progresses. On the face of it, these provisions represent a victory for ASUU yet, as the cases discussed below will demonstrate, in practice the conflict over political control of the Universities has continued into the new 'democratic' era.

The Appointment of Vice Chancellor: One of the issues that have been particularly disputed by the ASUU is the power of the Visitor to appoint Vice Chancellors. Section 4 of the Amendment Act thus states that:

The Council shall select and appoint as the Vice Chancellor one candidate from among the three candidates recommended to it under subsection (3) of this section and thereafter inform the Visitor.

ASUU had particularly condemned the arrangement whereby the Visitor appoints one name from a list of three candidates nominated by the University Council for Vice Chancellorship because, in practice, the role of the vice chancellor has often been relegated to that of control and supervision on behalf of the government.

It is clearly improper for government to appoint Vice Chancellors and impose them on the academic communities in clear violation of one of the most cherished principles of university administration and its code of conduct. It is equally improper for government to

appoint its own nominees to Councils of the Universities established under laws, whether decrees or edicts, enacted by it, and then proceed to usurp the powers of these councils by arrogating to itself the right to discharge the legal responsibilities of the university councils in relation to the appointment, disciplining and removal of their staff - (ASUNU, 1979:21-22, cited in Onyeonuru, 2008:06)

My research revealed a number of indicative cases of disputed appointments of Vice Chancellors. The appointment of Professor D.V. Uza, for example, a professor of veterinary medicine and Benue State Independent National Electoral Commission returning officer in the 2007 polls, as the Vice Chancellor of the University of Agriculture, Markurdi, Benue State, raised controversy amongst University stakeholders and critics. The position in question first became vacant on 5th September, 2006 due to the expiration of the tenure of the Professor J.O.I. Ayatse. Thereafter, the governing council set in motion the process of appointing a new Vice Chancellor. The selection process began with the placement of advertisements in widely read national newspapers and the constitution of a team to look for reputable candidates from the wider academic community who met the qualifying criteria for the position of Vice Chancellor. Thus, 20 applicants were considered and shortlisted by the Joint Council/Senate Selection Board as guided by the Amendment Act of 2003. Of this figure, 11 candidates were interviewed and the report was submitted to the Governing council. The council considered the recommendation of the Board which advised that Prof D.V. Uza, Prof E.I Kucha and Prof I.I. Dafwang be considered for the position of Vice Chancellor. However, the Governing Council wrote directly to the then President (Umaru Yar'Adua) through the Ministry of Education, requesting him to appoint one of the three candidates. This led to the emergence of Prof. Uza. According to an ASUU official I interviewed from the ASUU Secretariat in Ibadan on this matter, the appointment process did not follow the provisions of the law and was clearly manipulated. In his words:

Under the provisions of the Universities (Miscellaneous Provisions Amendment Act, 2003, the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has no role in the appointment of the Vice Chancellor of a university. The President is only meant to be informed of any appointment according to the Act. The President is a visitor to the university, and as such there is a distinction between the powers of the president and the powers of the visitor for the purposes of university administration; the powers of the President are intended to be used under separate circumstances and conditions from those exercised as a visitor. In this case, the Minister of Education manipulated the recommendation of the Governing Council to

the President in favour of Prof Uza. So we have written to the Governing council of the University of Agriculture to revisit the appointment as the whole procedure is “null and void” – ASUU Official, University of Ibadan.

Similar cases have occurred elsewhere. A rank and file ASUU member from the University of Benin gave me an example of a disputed appointment in his University in 2009 when I interviewed him:

There was breach of selection procedure in the recent appointment of the UNIBEN VC. I gathered that he was earlier rated 7th, but was catapulted to the 3rd position and his name was included among the three names recommended to Council. During the final selection process, the 1st and 2nd candidates were denied the position and the 3rd candidate was appointed. How can you explain that? This appointment by the council demands an explanation. This is an academic environment and things ought to be done by merit. Council meetings are now like conclaves or supreme courts where judgements are pronounced as if they cannot be appealed. This is totally unacceptable - ASUU member, UNIBEN.

These examples show that even amongst council members, patronage in the selection process plays out through appeals to higher political authority. In another example of apparently politically motivated appointments, the then Vice Chancellor of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) was accused of manipulation in the determination of his successor who was believed to be his kinsman. An ASUU official from UNN explained to me:

We the ASUU members of UNN branch and other stakeholders have written a letter to the Vice Chancellor on this matter. How can a man that he appointed Deputy Vice Chancellor (in charge of Administration) only a few months ago be made to replace him? How did he emerge as the candidate with the highest scores and then shortlisted for selection? What parameters were used in grading the candidates? I am surprised at this development. I know that both the outgoing VC and his surrogate hail from the same place. So you see... it is clear that his emergence was not based on merit. Only the chairman of the council had the CV of the contestants while other members who are constitutionally empowered to appoint the VC were denied the opportunity of knowing details about the candidates... This sure means that the whole exercise was guided to ensure that he emerged as the Vice Chancellor. This is currently a matter of heated controversy in the council – ASUU Official, UNN.

These cases introduce the wider question of ethnicity and nepotism in university administration. As will be discussed further in chapter eight, the Nigerian higher education sector and indeed the entire political landscape in Nigeria have been deeply influenced by the politics of ethnicity and religion. The selection of university officers is not meant to be influenced by ethnic, religious or political considerations. The council's appointment of a Vice Chancellor is expected to be based on merit. The decision of a university council in appointing a Vice Chancellor based on kinship or political considerations can be (and in many cases has been) challenged in a court of law because their decision is not final and unquestionable. Moreover, though the visitor does not have the right of appointment, he has the power to appoint, remove or dissolve the University Governing Council according to the law or due process. But where the Visitor and Council members are conniving to appoint their own preferred candidates, the question of administrative autonomy still hangs in the balance.

The Removal of Vice Chancellors: In the same way that the University Miscellaneous Provisions (Amendment) Act of 2003 provides for the appointment of a Vice Chancellor, it provides also for the removal of a Vice Chancellor. Section 3, subsection 8 of the Act provides that:

The Vice Chancellor may be removed from office by the Governing Council on grounds of gross misconduct or inability to discharge the functions of his office as a result of infirmity of the body or mind, at the initiative of the Council, Senate or the Congregation after due process

There have also been recent cases of removal of Vice Chancellors which can be observed especially in local state universities. Two recent cases in particular stand out: the case of the University of Ado-Ekiti (UNAD) in Ekiti State and that of the Ambrose Alli University (AAU) in Ekpoma, Edo State. In Ekiti State, the Visitor (i.e. in this case the State Governor) removed, in 2011, all three Vice Chancellors of the state-owned universities. The biggest of these universities is the University of Ado-Ekiti (UNAD), where the former Vice Chancellor, Prof Dipo Kolawole was relieved of his duties by the Governor of the State and the Visitor of the University. The UNAD chapter of ASUU headed by the Chairman, Dr Ayan Adeleke decided to challenge the removal of Kolawole by the State government in the court of law. According to a press conference given by the Chairman the union decided to take up a legal challenge against the state government in the face of these events. In the words of Dr Adeleke:

The removal of Prof Dipo Kolawole is not our business, but the process of that removal is what we are challenging in Court. In removing a substantive VC, there are laid down rules, which we thought the government breached and this we are challenging to restore sanity and orderliness into the process. The hearing of the case is slated for June 14, 2011... The litigation is targeted at smoothing rough edges and perceived mistakes in the removal of the former VC – ASUU Chairman, UNAD (Ariyibi 2011)

The Removal of Staff Members: The violation of administrative autonomy is not only limited to the appointment or removal of Vice Chancellors according to a union member from University of Ilorin. He explained that university lecturers are affected by the seeming arbitrary powers exhibited by the government, in most cases, in concert with their close allies in the Universities. The most high profile of such cases historically was that of the removal of forty-nine lecturers of the University of Ilorin by the Vice Chancellor, Professor S. Oba Abdulraheem, for participating in a nation-wide strike which was called by the ASUU in 2001. After a series of strike actions seeking to reinstate the sacked lecturers (as well as appeals by the Yoruba Council of Elders to the then President, Olusegun Obasanjo), the union members at the UNILORIN branch resorted to litigation. Five of the 49 lecturers approached the court to seek redress on behalf of their colleagues. On July 26, 2005, the Federal High Court, Ilorin, under Justice Peter Olayiwola, ruled that the termination of the appointment of the lecturers was without fair hearing and thus was “illegal and unconstitutional”. Thus the action of the university was declared “null and void” and the court ordered their immediate reinstatement. However, the university exercised their right of appeal and challenged the judgement at the Court of Appeal sitting in Ilorin, Kwara State. The court upheld the decision of the High Court and declared that the university had acted in order in sacking the 49 lecturers because the university authority claimed that they were involved in examination malpractice. The court of appeal maintained that the lecturers were not sacked for their taking part in the strike. After about eight years and 10 months, the circuitous battle came to a close on December 2009 when the apex court, the Nigerian Supreme Court, ordered the immediate reinstatement of the 44 lecturers (the other 5 already been reinstated by the same court) and ordered the payment of all their entitlements with effect from February 2001, the date of their illegal disengagement.

In summary, administrative autonomy has to do with the internal governance of universities with respect to administrative matters. Principal issues of concern to the union are the procedures involved in the appointment and removal of the Vice Chancellor and the constitution of other administrative offices, e.g. the Senate, the Governing Council and the role of the Visitor. Under military rule, Nigerian universities did not enjoy administrative autonomy as military dictators interfered strongly with the affairs of the universities, clearly subverting the powers of the Senate and University Councils and imposing sole administrators in some institutions. Following the return of a democratic regime, the union sponsored a bill which among other things was meant to introduce safeguards into the governance processes of universities. Although the Universities Miscellaneous Provisions (Amendment) Act 2003 clearly asserts the autonomy of Nigerian universities, what seems evident in practice is the continued violation of the underlying principles of autonomy and a preponderance of lawlessness and arbitrariness in many universities, particularly with respect to the appointment and dismissal of Vice Chancellors and members of University staff. Thus, while administrative autonomy has been granted to Nigerian universities on paper, in practice it remains precarious. What can be seen, in all of this, is the extent to which the politics of control within Universities themselves come to appear like those of Nigerian politics more widely; thus local battles against Vice Chancellors and others unilaterally imposed by the state become a mirror of a wider democratic struggle within the nation. This is a further reason why the dispute under consideration here has come to be understood as involving political as well as economic questions.

6.3: Financial Autonomy:

It can be pointed out, very briefly, that besides academic freedom and administrative autonomy, there is also the question of universities' financial freedom. Prior to 1975, the government had no business with the determination of fees and charges for universities. Students were either financed by government scholarships or by their own sponsors. The abolishing of tuition fees in 1975 by the federal military government marked a significant loss of revenue for education. While the government, on the one hand, wants the universities to find alternative funding sources and become financially autonomous the universities through their union, on the other hand, argue that the government has the resources to finance the universities and should continue to take full responsibility. The

latter also want education to be free. In general, the government has been the sole source of University funding in Nigeria, making universities almost wholly dependent on the fiscal fortunes of the state. For example, available estimates from the NUC (2001) reveal that 98% of the recurrent expenditure of universities is financed through grants by the federal government. The NUC is the body vested to disburse money to universities in the country. A major part of the functions of the NUC are financial in nature: (1) advising the government and making enquiry into the financial needs, both recurrent and capital of university education in Nigeria; (2) receiving block grants from the Federal Government and allocating them to federal universities; (3) taking into account, in advising the Federal and State governments on university finances, such grants as may be made to the universities by State Governments and by persons and institutions in and outside Nigeria. For the union, the NUC is seen as a conduit of government control over University operations and this increased central control over funding questions is thus also, according to the union, detrimental to institutional autonomy.

Chapter Conclusions:

This chapter has examined the dispute in relation to institutional autonomy in Nigerian universities. Three areas of autonomy are crucial here: (1) academic freedom (2) administrative autonomy and (3) financial autonomy. Academic freedom has to do with the freedom of universities with respect to academic matters. That is, the right of universities to select their own students, teach freely and determine the content of their syllabus. Nigerian universities have not enjoyed academic freedom in its fullness. This is because the JAMB and NUC currently determine the admission of students in relation to catchment area or disadvantaged states and the establishment and accreditation of courses respectively. ASUU argues that the determination and imposition of academic standards and criteria by JAMB and NUC on Nigerian universities hinders innovation and scholarship which in turn erodes the very essence of academic work. In relation to administrative autonomy, Nigerian universities are still faced with a situation in which the politics of ethnicity, religion and nepotism reduce the principle of merit in the appointment and removal of Vice Chancellors and other academic staff members. This development questions specifically the extent to which the provisions of the Universities Act of 2003 (which, among other things, assert the autonomy of Nigerian universities) have been implemented, and raise questions more generally about the future of democracy in Nigeria.

At the same time, there is a tension here because, while ASUU wants to be academically and administratively autonomous, it wants the government to continue to fund the universities in such a way that their autonomous operation is protected. This question, of course, relates to the pressure related to privatisation and deregulation. In this case the union has sought to prevent universities from being turned into a business in the market place, and to this end it continues to ask for state support financially or with regard to funding. But, at the same time, it is not in favour of the state being directly in control of the day to day administration of higher education.

What is clear from this chapter is that the dispute under consideration is not merely a dispute about economics, but involved also a struggle over the defence of the academic field itself, as a social context protected from direct political interference. In this respect, the ASUU-FGN dispute has taken on a wider historical and political significance in the Nigerian context, related to more general social struggles against political interference. In many respects, struggles within and around individual campuses have been mirrors to a wider struggles at national level.

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CHAPTER 7

THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION ON THE INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES

7.0: Introduction

This chapter examines the Nigerian government's position in relation to the disputes under consideration here. In particular, it assesses relevant primary and secondary data collated from interviews and press conferences during my field work in order to understand more closely the way in which the Nigerian government responds publicly to the crisis in Nigerian universities. Primary data were obtained from three major government offices, namely the Federal Ministry of Education (FME), the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the Ministry of Labour and Productivity (MLP): I interviewed 4 high ranking officials from the FME, 4 senior officials from the MLP, as well as 2 NUC executives. I also spoke to two officers of the Federal Government's Negotiating team who were not necessarily officers from these ministries. Moreover, figures and statistics were collated from secondary sources and documentary evidence, in addition to other publications and press releases.

Section 7.1 presents the key positions of the government regarding the majority of the issues of contention between it and the ASUU. In section 7.2, the thesis points out the government's position on other matters in relation to the dispute. Finally, at the end of each of the sections and sub-sections, an attempt is made to draw some conclusions.

Put simply, according to government officials, the problems in Nigeria's university system cannot be blamed on the government alone. It has been widely argued in government circles that the national executives of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) have been a principal instigator of the conflicts experienced in the nation's higher education sector. The government's strategy has been to claim that, over the years, ASUU has gradually lost its focus on the promotion of better quality education, and has become a deliberate agitator through its industrial actions, ultimatums, warning strikes, sympathy strikes and counter strikes. In other words, the government explicitly argues that the union has become much more political in its approach to the disputes.

7.1 Government's Position on the Principal Issues of the Conflict:

ASUU members were described to me by various government officials as unpatriotic and self-serving. According to such officials, the union has spent a significant part of its existence in highly politicised conflicts rather than channelling efforts towards productive learning, teaching and research. This section examines the government's response to the allegations which ASUU has levelled against it, especially in relation to the primary factors that may have contributed to the protracted disputes. In general, government officials have argued that successive governments have paid more than adequate attention to the demands of the ASUU, and that the union has received more attention than any other trade union in the country. The government's position, in any case, has been that educational funding can not be considered any more important than health care, agriculture, defence, transportation, power, housing and other basic amenities, and that, thus, any solution to the educational crisis must be based on dialogue between it and the union. For example, in writing to the Chairman and Members of the ASUU in all branches of the federation, the then Minister of Education, Professor Babalola Borishade on April 2, 2001, said the following:

I need to reach you as branches and as individual academics, to enhance your further appreciation of the issues involved. You need to have the facts, maybe you will be persuaded to impress on your leaders to dialogue with the Administration in finding a lasting solution to the persistent interruption of education delivery services in the universities... On Thursday 23rd of March, 2001, I led the officials of the Ministry of Education to appear before the committee of the House of Representatives on Education to brief the members on the provisions contained in the document of resolution and initiate an effective lobbying in anticipation of the inevitable supplementary budget request consequent upon a final agreement with ASUU[...]On 3rd April 2001, I appeared before the Revenue, Mobilisation and Fiscal Allocation Commission to make a case for a stable funding of education...I had summoned the meeting of the Committee on University Autonomy and Other Related Matters,... I have written to State Governors intimating them of the implication of the agreements so that they can be prepared for its implementation in their various Universities. This is to prevent the development where because of lack of compliance by State Government, the National body of ASUU will need to embark on another round of sympathy strike – Honourable Minister of Education, Professor Babalola Borishade (April 2001)

This letter shows that the government claims that it has taken necessary steps in relation to the various aspects of the union's demands and that there exists a unified agreement

between federal and state governments. Moreover, the letter clearly creates the impression that the union appears not to be appreciative of the efforts made by the government towards resolving the disputes between it and the union. Perhaps more revealing in this letter is the claim that attempts to resolve the union's disputes entail the need to deal with the significant bureaucratic procedures which exist in the Nigerian structures of government. Decision making in the Nigerian polity does not rest on the side of the government alone, especially when it has to do with a sensitive matter such as that of salary increases or allocation of funds to certain sectors or persons. At least as it is presented here, the Minister had to carry other arms of government along - especially the legislature and the executive committee on revenue mobilisation and fiscal allocation - in his effort to meet the demands of the union. In fact the constitution provides that any such amendments to the budget can only be made through the legislature. So no matter how good the intentions of the education minister were, he still had to abide by the bureaucratic structure prevalent in the country, and thus the minister can point to the complexities of that political and bureaucratic context, and the need to "bargain and compromise with all people whose cooperation is indispensable at each level" (Crozier, 1964: 163), as part of an explanation for inaction. In the case of the ASUU struggles, at least, one should therefore not forget those institutional conditions under which such struggle takes place. They raise important questions of interests, the role of the constitution and the problem of consensus.

A related question, and one which has already been discussed above, is that of Nigeria's federal political structure. Whatever salary structure is agreed upon at the federal level has to be implemented at the state level for state universities. (As mentioned in the previous chapter, state universities mean the universities under the control of the constituent states within Nigeria, while the federal universities are those under national or federal control). This is, in itself, a major source of dispute in the current dispensation. Sometimes, the federal government acts tactically in dealing with the union's demands so as not to cause tension at the state level. An official of the NUC explained this further to me:

In the area of honouring agreement with the union, there has been a problem due to the principle of federalism. Nigeria is a federal state¹¹, which means power is shared between

¹¹ The Federal structure in Nigeria represents a blend of the American and British system of government. These various levels of government in turn have their own bureaucracies. The country's political institutions are mainly the executive, the legislature and the judiciary, while the revenue sharing formula in Nigeria takes into consideration the resource contributions of the different states of the country. However, at the Federal level, allocation of funds is made according to the needs of the various sectors from time to time, which when identified by the executive has to be ratified by the House of Assembly.

federal, state and local government. The union's central agreement at the federal government level might not be binding on the state by law of federal republic on separation of power, the union was of the view that it was against the principle of collective bargaining, as the agreement was met to serve as a bench mark or minimum standard and for the universities in Nigeria to meet international standards. The position is that all the states do not get the same revenue allocation from the government. The federal government cannot decide what the state can pay their lecturers in the universities established by the state when it comes to salary issues -- An Official from the National University Commission (NUC)

In recent negotiations, the FGN failed to sign an agreement that would compel state governors to pay their university employees the same salaries as their counterparts in the federal universities. It appears that until a consensus is reached between the federal and state governments on a unified salary formula and funding mechanisms, the state level Unions will continue to be at loggerheads with their respective state governments.

7.1.1: Government's Stance on Collective Bargaining:

One of ASUU's major grievances against the Federal Government in relation to remuneration is that successive government delegations have not always displayed fidelity towards agreements reached in the past, especially with regard to salary increases and the provision of better conditions of service. ASUU has also accused the government of repudiating collective bargaining. The leader of the Federal Government's negotiating team in the 2006 round of collective bargaining suggested the following in a press conference:

Government's position as of this moment is that because in the meantime, there is a new law in the statute books¹², which has now conferred a greater degree of autonomy on each federal government-owned universities, any negotiation between employer and employee should be at least concluded at the council of the individual federal universities and the unions [...] There is however, no doubt whatsoever as to who the employer is or who the employee is. The employer of the members of the unions who are on strike, are the councils of individual federal government-owned universities. They are strictly employers of labour; not the federal government. So, the federal government is insisting that negotiation should now be completed at the individual university level. And the unions don't seem to like that. They are saying, 'well, we started talking to you at the national

¹² This law is the Universities Miscellaneous Provisions (Amendment) Act 2003 described in chapter 6.

level,' as though federal government is the employer, let us conclude at that level - Leader of Federal Govt Negotiating Team.

Here again, the government is perceived by the union to be acting tactically as a means of evading the union's demands, and using the issue of state autonomy as a means of undermining processes of collective bargaining. The government, however, argues that since the union has called for greater autonomy within the University sector, it has responded appropriately by granting this request in area of the appointment of Vice-Chancellors as contained in the University Miscellaneous Provisions (Amendment) Act 2003. It is, therefore, according to the government officials, not tenable for the union to allege that the government is trying to repudiate the principle of collective bargaining while at the same time pushing for greater institutional autonomy. The government has granted University Councils the authority to deal with issues relating to the employment conditions of academic staff. Hence, it suggests that the councils have acquired the legal status of employer, while ASUU members are legal employees, so that the union need not turn to the government for issues relating to collective bargaining. This has become a fundamental difference between ASUU and the government, as the union continues to seek to negotiate at the national level despite these changes in university governance. From the union's perspective, it appears the government is trying to use the Union's campaign to defend academic autonomy as a means to weaken existing collective bargaining mechanisms.

The government has also expressed concerns that it cannot meet all of the demands of the union because of its numerous commitments.

The problem with ASUU members is that they never understand that there are huge implications with the federal government granting their demands for higher salaries and funding the universities. Other unions in the university like the Non-Academic Staff Union of Universities (NASU) will also demand for an upward review of their salary structure; even staff of other sectors will come up to make similar demands. Funding the universities is part of the government's national interest... Equally important is the fact that there are other critical components within the educational sector, which is the foundation level, such as primary and post primary level which are all being funded by the federal government. This means the whole budget for education cannot be channelled to the universities only¹³.

The union ought to appreciate the effort the government is making towards educational development, by creating agencies like Universal Basic Education (UBE) and Education Trust Fund (ETF) - An Official from the Federal Ministry of Education.

Thus, the government has argued that it has to fund other sectors apart from higher education, such as national security, social infrastructure, health care delivery and agriculture. According to one government official, the government is of the view that university education is vital to national development but it is also the role of the government to provide for other sectors financially.

The union is seen as part of the problem of the federal government with their re-occurring demands on increasing salary and funding, they forget that the government has to equally attend to other sectors... The union is supposed to be in the position to advice the government and provide support for educational and national development... the reverse is the case... The industrial conflict is retrogressive, and the outcome has adversely affected the students who are at the receiving end----- An Official from the Ministry of Labour and Productivity.

These claims are, in many ways, common ones from the point of view of most conflicts between a public sector union and the state. What is noteworthy here is the degree to which the government in Nigeria is able to point to specific tensions in the country's postcolonial situation, such as those around federalism, to justify its position of not having enough resources to meet the union's demands in relation to other sectors

7.1.2: The Funding Initiatives of the Government

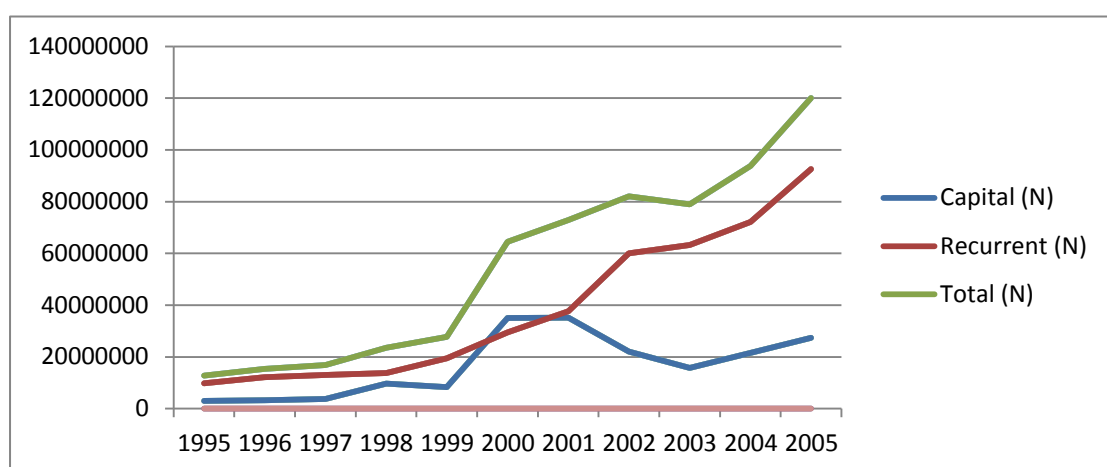
According to government officials, ASUU has always accused the government of not committing adequate funds to the nation's university system and of negligence in relation to research and infrastructural facilities. Against such claims, government officials have sought to argue that the federal government has, in fact, made significant efforts to finance education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. This section presents and describes the financing initiatives and projects the federal government has embarked upon in the tertiary education sector according to government officials.

Education funding in Nigeria comes from various sources including public revenue from taxation: income tax, petroleum profit tax, revenue from federation accounts, and centrally

collected value added tax introduced in 1996. The education sector distributes funding among the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors in the ratio of 30%, 30% and 40% respectively. Education funding in Nigeria can be separated into direct government expenditure (for teachers' salaries and instructional materials) as well as indirect expenditure in the form of educational subsidies to households (tuition fee reductions or removals, scholarships, loans and grants, etc). (Adewale, et al, 2005:12)

Government officials argue that although ASUU has lamented poor financing of education by way of budget allocation, government allocation to education has been on the increase year on year. For example, they argue that it rose from ₦= 12,816,400,000 in 1995 to ₦= 120, 030,000,000 in 2005. (See chart 7.1 below). It can, however, be argued that these figures do not take into consideration the increase in the number of student enrolment as well as the effects of inflation. For example, student enrolment in universities grew from about 340,376 in 1995 (Odebiyi, 1999:18) to over 500,000 in 2005 (Akinsanya, 2007). Moreover, the inflation rate in the immediate post-SAP period was remarkably high, reaching an all-time high of 72.8% in 1995, having risen from 63.6% in late 1994 (CBN¹⁴, 2007). By 1997, inflation had returned to single digit figures but rose again steadily to 11.6% in 2005. Thus, while nominal budget figures may be increasing, in real terms, the value allocated to the higher educational sector remains insufficient owing to rising inflation and student enrolment.

Chart 7.1: Federal Government Allocation to Education between 1995 and 2005



(N'000)

Source: Figures were sourced from Adewale et al (2005:16)

¹⁴ CBN is Central Bank of Nigeria.

Another criticism by the Union is that the government has always placed emphasis on recurrent expenditure at the expense of capital projects, intended to develop infrastructural facilities in the educational sector. The government has argued, contrastingly, that because it is the sole financier of education in the country, it has caused the universities to lean too much on government funding without recourse to alternative sources of funds when compared to other universities in the Western world. The table below shows that the majority of personnel and capital funding for universities comes from the government.

Table 7.1: Sources of Funds for University Financing

Heading	Source	Percentage (%)
Personnel	Government grant	98
	Other sources	2
Overhead	Government grants	45
	Income from user charges	49
	Income from investments	6
Capital	Government grants (NUC)	68
	Government grant (ETF)	12
	Private sector support	10
	Income from investment	4
	Others	6

Sources: NUC (2001, 2002) cited in Akinsanya (2007)

According to Donwa (2007), government support accounts for over 98% of research funding in Nigerian universities with no industry support and the rest of the funding coming from foreign agencies. However, it appears that the amount of money devoted to research is insufficient and irregular. “Whereas investments in research and development in many countries are as high as 6 to 19% of GDP, Nigeria expends less than 1%. In no year did research funding exceed 0.03%.” (*ibid*: 03-06)

UNESCO 26% Recommendation: Another issue of contention in the current disputes on funding is that of deciding an optimum level of budget allocation to education. As examined in chapter 5, UNESCO's recommendation for developing countries seeking to improve the standard of education and hence the level of innovation and economic development is to allocate a minimum of 26% of the annual budget to education. This position has, however, been admitted by the government as achievable in the long run but not in the short run considering the needs of other sectors as well. Thus, according to the government position, the state appears to be considering the wider effects of implementing this scheme, such as the impact on other sectors including the possibility of other unions embarking on similar strike actions. It is argued that is unfeasible for a country like Nigeria, where basic infrastructure, such as water, electricity and healthcare are lacking and where there is a fierce competition for scarce resources, to allocate as much as a quarter of its spending in a year to just one sector. The government is equally concerned about the cost-benefit implications in terms of utilisation of funds and the expected educational service improvements. When asked in an interview about the position of the government regarding UNESCO's recommendations, a member of the Federal Government's negotiating team said:

UNESCO is not the government of this country. I know that throwing money at a problem does not necessarily guarantee that the problem will go away. So, when you spend money, it is an input. I am interested in the output. You must relate the input and output. The efficiency of your input must be measured by the output. Simply throwing money at a problem does not necessarily solve that problem – Member, FGN negotiating team

Evidently, the government is not about to give in to the pressures of the union to increase budgetary allocations to 26%, considering the huge implications on other sectors. Rather, the government officials defend their decisions on the grounds of being concerned about the judicious use of allocated funds for maximum output. It is also interesting to note, additionally, that the reference to UNESCO by this respondent appeals very obviously to a kind of nationalist perspective. Given that the Union has increasingly accused the government of complicity with a form of imperialism (in relation to the SAP, for example), it is revealing to see the government here responding in a comparable way.

Federal Government Interventions in University Infrastructures: In order to meet the demands of the universities, the Federal Government has, over the years, intervened through various programmes, some supported by other bodies. This section reviews three

of these initiatives, pointing out the extent to which – despite figures which appear to demonstrate significant investment – they often reveal a more complicated and problematic story:

World Bank Loan Intervention, 1992-1994: According to a government official, one of the federal government’s key efforts to fund university infrastructure was the *Development Credit Agreement*, which was a \$120 Million World Bank loan initiative signed and executed between the Federal Government and the International Development Association (IDA). The loan agreement was meant to last four years with a thirty-five year moratorium period. The funds were to support federal universities with the supply of library books, journals, and equipment, staff development and the employment of expatriate personnel (see Table 7.2 below). Of the total funds, about 37.1% were set aside for the supply of library materials, 18.1% went to staff development, while 24.3 % was to be utilised for the supply of library equipment. Twenty universities were beneficiaries of the loan. They were grouped into three classes: the first generation (the six universities established before 1975), second generation (seven established between 1975 and 1976), and third generation (seven established between 1979 and 1988) (Akindojutimi, et al, 2010).

Table 7.2: World Bank Loan Expenditure Allocation in Million Dollars

Expenditure Item	1st Generation	2nd Generation	3rd Generation	Total
Library Books and Journals	17.5	13.9	5.7	37.1
Staff Development	2.5	6.7	8.9	18.1
Topping of expatriate staff salary	1.7	3.4	3.5	8.6
Maintenance of Spare Parts	11.9	10.45	1.85	24.3
New Equipment	2.2	5.8	16.2	24.3
Library Equipment	1.7	1.7	0.9	24.3
Total	37.5	41.95	37.05	116.5

Source: World Bank Project News, Vol. 1, No.1. Jan. 1994, p.16

During the administration of this scheme, the universities had control over the choice of books they required. The government only appointed agents for the supply of the books and journals. Funds were released in three tranches. Universities in each category received

\$656,907, \$447,233, and \$183,398 respectively per batch. The loan was successful in acquiring books, but a failure for journals (Akindojutimi, et al, 2010). This was due to the fact that funds allocated for the purchase of journals were solely for current issues and could not be expended on previous issues. Consequently each of the six first generation universities had to devote over \$300,000 to the procurement of journals during the World Bank loan period in order to cover the shortfall in total supply (*ibid: 03*). While the government can point to the raw figures invested in Nigerian higher education through the scheme, the full story thus reveals a lack of sustained commitment on the part of the government in relation to the procurement of current journals in particular and the development of higher education in Nigeria generally. Moreover, it reveals something about the limitations of externally funded development initiatives of this kind, which tend to be sporadic and continue to tie local development to overseas expenditure, as in the purchasing of international journals. As with most government expenditures in Nigeria, it is not clear that the funds allocated to Nigerian universities under the World Bank Loan intervention scheme and indeed other similar schemes mentioned below were expended on the appropriate projects and if so, the extent to which these projects were carried out in the interest of university education.

Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF), 2001-2002: Nigeria is one of the largest producers and exporters of petroleum in the world, with the value of its petroleum exports in excess of \$26.47 Billion annually (OPEC, 2010). The PTF was introduced by the Federal Government (then under the military regime of Sani Abacha) in March 1995, in order to manage surplus crude oil revenues accruing to it from windfalls in prices of petroleum products exported in the early nineties. The PTF intervention was intended to cover the provision of books for both federal and state university libraries. Akindojutimi, et al (2010), however, argued that university libraries were worse off under this scheme than they were during the World Bank Loan intervention. This is because universities had no control over the titles and quantities of books supplied by the PTF. This meant that books were ordered and bought on behalf of the universities without due consultation with the universities themselves regarding their needs or requirements. In some cases, the PTF officials supplied up to 100 or 150 copies of a single title. Thus, while universities experienced rapid growth in collections during this period, the items supplied were often lacking in quality, relevance or usefulness (*ibid: 04*). Again, while there is apparent

evidence of investment here, it is investment which has been of very little real value in terms of supporting the development of higher education in the country.

Education Trust Fund (ETF) 1999 – To Date: According to a government official the Education Trust Fund (previously known as Education Tax Fund) was founded as a result of the 1992 ASUU/FGN negotiations. Established under the Education Tax Act No.7 of 1993 and amended by Act No 40 of 1998, the Scheme’s objective was to improve the quality of education in Nigeria using funds accruing to it from taxes. The law requires all companies to pay 2% of their profit before tax to the ETF. This body has been managing the fund for developmental projects and library acquisitions at various educational levels in the country. In many universities, the funds were used to purchase computer equipment, laboratory equipment, library tools and books. Table 7.3 below shows a summary of the contribution from ETF intervention in higher education between 1999 and 2001:

Table 7.3: ETF Funding of Higher Education, 1999- 2001

	1999 (=N=)	2000 (=N=)	2001 (=N=)
Universities	2,041,374,962.50	466,000,000.00	184,800,000.00
Polytechnics	1,087,209,288.00	369,500,000.00	76,926,000.00
Colleges of Education	1,099,137,930.00	431,200,000.00	181,800,000.00
Monotechnics	NA	193,500,000.00	89,616,000.00
Interuniversity & Otehr Government Agencies, NECO, NMC, NFLV,>NNLAN, NERDC, NIEPA, NOU, NTI, Nigeria Law Schools	218,368,885.33	117,360,404.50	277,000,000.00

Source: ETF 2001 Annual Report (cited in Akinsanya, 2007)

A cursory look at the figures above reveal that the fund appeared to contribute significantly to the nation's tertiary institutions in 1999, but little¹⁵ thereafter. For example, funds allocated to the universities in 1999 stood at about ₦= 2 Billion. In 2000, it dropped to ₦= 466 million, and then to a meagre ₦=184 million in 2001. There seems not to be any apparent explanation for this drop, although there are indications that the funds might have been misappropriated. This, certainly, is the claim of the union, and the ASUU president claimed, in a recent paper in Lagos:

The funds are used to sponsor conferences, workshops on cultism, youth violence, etc, which it is not meant for. ASUU has called for a reform of the law. The Federal Government is promising a law to abolish the ETF. This has been another source of conflict in the system – Ukachukwu Awuzie (2010:10).

Overall, the findings of the three case-studies above (the WB loan, PTF and ETF interventions) reveal significant examples of the fact that apparent increases in funding allocation directly by the state or donations from external institutions may not have real developmental benefit. This is usually the case because external loans often only support short term and unsustainable projects (especially in relation to the WB loan). It is, moreover, clearly the case that injections of new funds to institutions were poorly supported or monitored by the federal government officials, who do not always know the situation on the ground in the education sector (e.g. in the case of PTF).

7.1.3 Poor Management of Infrastructure at the University Level:

The state's funding initiatives such as those reviewed above are what the government points to when it claims that it has sought to adequately support education in the country, and in its claim that despite its efforts, ASUU members remain dissatisfied with their salaries and with the allocation of funds to the universities. The federal government has also raised concerns regarding the provision and management of funds allocated to the universities for infrastructural development. Apart from recommending that Universities should seek alternative sources of finance in order not to lean too much on government budget allocations, the government has also expressed concerns regarding the lack of an

¹⁵ Akinsanya (2007:70) has also noted that funds from foreign donors have also been dwindling in recent years.

appropriate culture of maintenance¹⁶ by staff and students for facilities provided in the various universities. The federal government has, thus, accused the university authorities of poor administration and inadequate monitoring of existing facilities. Respondents speaking for the government also alleged that the university authorities have mismanaged funds allocated to the universities for various projects. Thus, they argued, the university authorities are themselves a part of the problem facing the university system in Nigeria, rather than being part of the solution, as they have also contributed to the falling standards in learning and research in Nigerian universities. This accusation by the government is also made in relation to the effect of incessant strike action by the union.

The regular strikes by the academic staff union members were responsible for the fallen standard of university education in Nigeria. The frequent industrial actions embarked upon by union members prevented the universities from running their normal academic calendar. Consequently, huge university funds usually kept with the Central Bank of Nigeria lies idle and under-utilised. There have been reports of lack of accountability on internally generated revenues from the universities. These funds could have been used for university infrastructural development -- An Official of the Federal Ministry of Education.

According to the government's position, the strikes embarked upon by both academic and non-academic staff unions of universities have ensured that not only are academic activities suspended, but so also is the administration of the universities. For example, in 2009, about 6 billion Naira, out of 9 billion Naira voted for capital projects in all 27 federal universities may have been returned to the treasury, in line with the country's new financial regulations (NUC Official). The rules state that any money meant for capital expenditure not spent by September every year will have to be returned to the treasury. According to a government official's claim, it is a supreme paradox that universities which claim to have been grossly under-funded have returned huge amounts to the government as a consequence of their own strike actions.

¹⁶ See Chapter 4 on Arogundade (2010)'s survey on university infrastructure in 10 public universities in South western Nigeria.

7.2: Government's Position on the Deregulation of University Ownership

The recent state policy aimed at a more liberalised university ownership system represents an attempt by the government to weaken ASUU as a national union, with significant implications for wage disputes especially in relation to national bargaining. The current position is that all government owned university employees (both federal and state) enjoy conditions of service collectively negotiated with the union. The fact that private universities are seeking to operate under a “no union clause” introduces another potential dimension of conflict into the Nigerian higher education sector (Onyeonoru, 2008:18). Many union officials have thus argued that the liberalisation of university ownership has implications for the quality of education being provided as there is a tendency for private owners to trade quality for profit (Ajayi and Ekundayo, 2008:216). Private universities have also been viewed by union members as implicit competitors with state owned universities. But government officials have a different view about this deregulation policy. First, they claim, the evolution¹⁷ of private universities in 1999 was the result of a surge in demand from students for increased access to higher education and the inability of the state-owned universities to satisfy the growing demand for higher education (Obasi, 2007; Ajadi, 2010). The government's justification for engaging the private sector was thus a desire to assist in reversing the acute shortage of places in the public universities which left a growing population without opportunities to access university education. For example, in the 1990/91 session, 287,572 students applied for university admission and only 48,504 (about 16.9%) were successful in being admitted. In 2000/2001, 467,490 students applied for admission and only 50,277 (about 10.7%) got a place (Ajayi and Ekundayo, 2008:219). This trend persisted even after the establishment of several private universities in 2007/2008 with just about 18% (194,521 out of 1,054,053) obtaining admissions into universities (Ajadi, 2010:20) [See Table 7.4 and Chart 7.3 below]

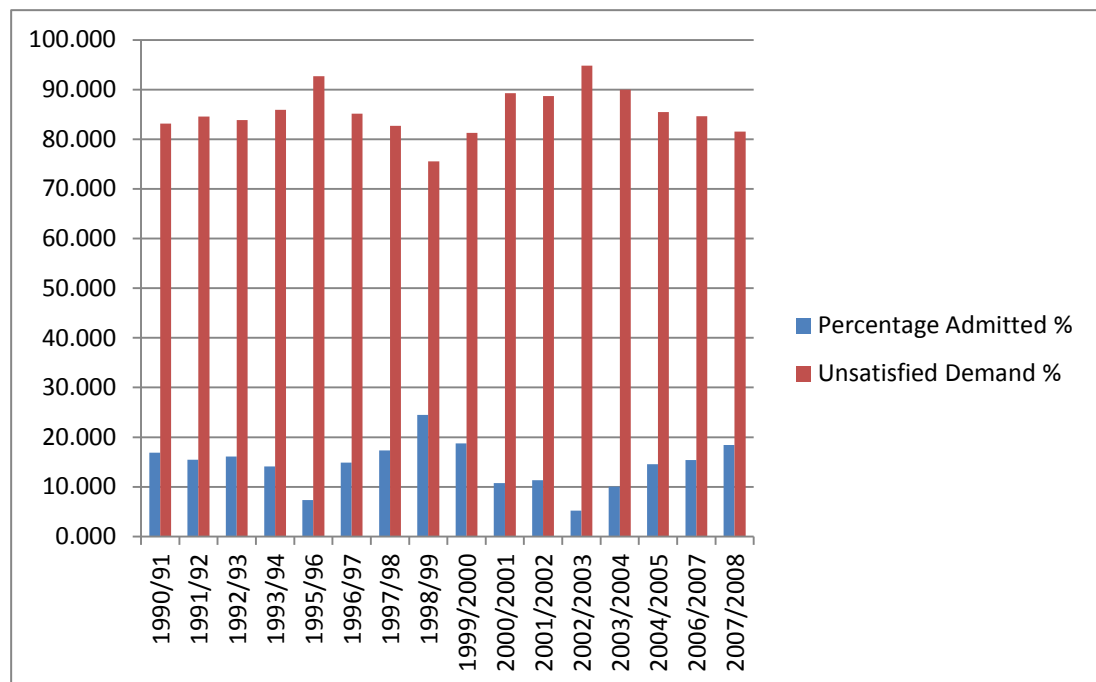
¹⁷ It should be noted that earlier attempts were made to establish private universities in military regimes, but to no avail. For example, attempts were made between 1979 and 1983 as well as in 1991 following the Longe Report. But in 1999 when a new democratically elected government came into power, the federal government vested the NUC with the powers to receive and treat applications regarding the establishment of private universities. Out of 43 initial applications, only 3 were successful- Igninedion University Okada, Babcock University Ilisan Remo, and Madonna University, Okija. These became the pioneer private universities. As at March 2009, there are now over 34 licensed private universities (see Obasi, 2007:42-43 and Ajadi, 2010:18).

Table 7.4: Trends in the Demand and Supply of University Education (1990-2008)

Year	No of Applications	No. Admitted	% Admitted	% of Unsatisfied Demand
1990/91	287,572	48,504	16.867	83.133
1991/92	398,270	61,479	15.437	84.563
1992/93	357,950	57,685	16.115	83.885
1993/94	420,681	59,378	14.115	85.885
1995/96	512,797	37,498	7.312	92.688
1996/97	376,827	56,055	14.876	85.124
1997/98	419,807	72,791	17.339	82.661
1998/99	321,268	78,550	24.450	75.550
1999/2000	418,928	78,550	18.750	81.250
2000/2001	467,490	50,277	10.755	89.245
2001/2002	842,072	95,199	11.305	88.695
2002/2003	994,380	51,845	5.214	94.786
2003/2004	1,046,950	105,157	10.044	89.956
2004/2005	841,878	122,492	14.550	85.450
2006/2007	803,472	123,626	15.386	84.614
2007/2008	1,054,053	194,521	18.455	81.545

Source: Ajayi and Ekundayo (2008); Ajadi (2010)

Chart 7.2: Trends in University Admissions (1990-2008)



Source: Ajayi and Ekundayo (2008); Ajadi (2010)

Apart from increasing access to university education, the government has justified the establishment of private universities on a number of other grounds, according to government representatives:

The reason why we are promoting the policy of deregulation of universities or the establishment of private universities is to help overcome the problem of funding and scarce educational resources. The involvement of private capital is a significant means of finding alternative ways of funding university education in the country. What we are saying is that the involvement of the private sector will allow some of these resource problems to be addressed - Government official, FME.

Another official from the NUC I spoke to said that the involvement of private universities will improve the quality of university education. According to him:

The growth of private universities in the country will no doubt encourage competition between private and state-owned universities, with the effect of delivering sound instructional curriculum and other educational activities which will enhance the production of high quality graduates.

The government has also justified its university deregulation policy by the need to align with global practices in higher education. In many parts of the world, particularly in advanced countries, the university system is operated by both private and public institutions alike, and the government argues that Nigeria cannot be an exception. For instance, the Canada National Library Report (2001; cited in Ajadi 2010:20), indicates that over 30% of students in Canada are enrolled in private institutions and 67% of students in Australia are reported to be enrolled in private schools. According to the East African Standard (2004), Kenya has also experienced a dramatic increase in the number of private universities from three (3) to seventeen (17) between the 1980s and 2004. As mentioned earlier, 34 private universities were established in Nigeria between a ten year period from 1999 and 2009 [see Appendix 10 for a list of private universities]. This number is already more than the number of federal universities which stood at 27 as at July 2009 [see Appendices 8 and 9 for the list of federal and state run universities, respectively].

It is also the state's argument that the establishment of private universities has brought about a stable academic calendar. For the past two decades, public universities have been prone to disruptive academic sessions which prolong the stay of students at home. In some

instances, students spend 6 years to complete courses that were originally meant to take 4 years to complete. The presence of private universities has brought a big challenge to public universities, and to ASUU more directly, which is now being pressurised to return back to their regular sessions from October to June (Obasi, 2007:59). One can thus argue that the deregulation of the sector has allowed the Nigerian government to use the seeming effectiveness of private universities to weaken the public university unions. Indeed, the emergence of these institutions, and the fact that they are justified by reference to practices in the Western world, adds another dimension to the dispute under discussion here; for the union it is further evidence of the extent to which the government is bent on enforcing neoliberal policies, to the detriment of the public sector in Nigeria, especially the average Nigerians that cannot pay the high tuition fees required in the private institutions. Unsurprisingly, then, despite the justifications offered by the state for the introduction of private universities, there has been significant public discussion around this development since, because private universities are profit seeking ventures, they come with a pressure to increase fees. As a result, critics say that they are established exclusively for the rich or elites (Etuk, 2005). Moreover, in this respect, private universities can be seen as reinforcing the existing gap between the rich and the poor, sustaining and even encouraging inequality. As stated earlier, there is also a tendency for proprietors of these institutions to sacrifice quality for profit in a bid to generate returns from their investments (Ajayi and Ekundayo, 2008:216). Thus, for example, private universities may offer less comprehensive courses than public institutions for reasons of cost and marketability. Ajadi (2010:21) notes that the type of courses offered in private universities are a reflection of either their commercial or religious orientation. Many of them do not offer courses that require larger infrastructural investment, such as Medicine and Engineering, while courses like Business Administration, Mass communication, Accountancy, Banking and Finance and other Arts and Social Science subjects are common courses offered by private universities in Nigeria. The latter courses tend to be offered, primarily, because come at low operational costs to the universities involved.

7.3: The Government's Position on Other Matters

7.3.1: The Union's Refusal to Embrace Dialogue:

Government officials argued that ASUU members exhibit a profoundly undemocratic attitude in relation to their demands.

ASUU has made their demands over the years, especially in the area of salary and funding of the universities. While the federal government is not totally against such demands, it is the approach to it that is the problem. It is better to resolve issues through dialogue than arm-twisting the government through strike actions. ASUU has not always followed the due process of the law. A good example is the case where the Ministry of Labour and Productivity (in 2009) had to take the ASUU disputes to the Industrial Arbitration Panel (IAP) for a speedy resolution. Both parties were required by law and order to return to the status quo, by that it means that the striking lecturers were to go back to the class room, like the last industrial dispute. The lecturers refused to obey the order of the IAP and that prolonged the industrial dispute - An Official from the Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity.

The position of the federal government is that ASUU has at several times refused to obey direct orders and appeals from credible adjudication panels to call off strike action, to resume duties or to accept the terms of negotiations in good faith in the interest of the students. In this respect, the government argues that ASUU is not law abiding and patriotic, using the language of democratic and un-democratic activity against the union itself. For its part, the union members are also quick to point to historical precedents, when the lecturers have gone back to the classroom after such orders, and the government has simply left the contentious issues as they were prior to the strike. They argued that these *'return to the classroom'* orders neither seek to address the union's concerns, nor are they beneficial to the educational system in the long run. However, the government continues to argue that a primary cause of the disputes has been the union's refusal to cooperate with it on many occasions:

I have pleaded with ASUU, the Senate President has pleaded with them, the Speaker of House of Representatives has pleaded with them, well-meaning Nigerians have pleaded with them, including the Chairmen of House and Senate Committees on education. On top of it, Mr President has granted us a concession of 40 per cent, another special concession of paying over backward. The Vice President has also talked with them. The understanding is

that they will call off the strike while discussion continues. There should be a limit to how people can be rigid about these issues – Ex- Labour and Productivity Minister.

In the process of their struggles, according to the government, ASUU should adopt a less radical or uncompromising approach with the aim of realising its objectives as a trade union, and its members should conduct themselves in a less combative manner. Thus, for example, the President of ASUU at the end of a meeting in 2009, made a radical statement:

It is better to die fighting on our feet, instead of crawling on the ground [sic] (Professor Ukachukwu Awuzie)

This declaration, in the view of government officials that I interviewed, was inappropriate from the national leader of a national union. They argued that it made clear his confrontational and highly politicised approach. The government argues that ASUU needs to present its arguments in a manner that is devoid of “threat” and in a tone that wins public support as part of its objectives. From another point of view, of course, such arguments may appear to be part of an attempt to depoliticise the strike or to return it to the status of a ‘conventional’ industrial dispute.

What is revealed here at least from the context of the union’s perspective is that the disputes between the union and the government occur outside those credible legal structures which form the backdrop of industrial disputes in the West. In other words, the role of the law in adjudicating between disputes in Nigeria is an uncertain one. We can compare the conclusions, for example, of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD 1993) occasional paper on *‘Preventing and Resolving Industrial Conflict’*, the final report of a seminar on industrial conflict settlement in OECD countries and in Central and Eastern European Economies in Transition. The discussions in this paper centred precisely on the role of the law in guiding and steering socially acceptable conduct in collective bargaining among bargaining partners in industrial conflicts. Bargaining partners, the paper argues, ought to avoid open disputes, while it is in the interest of the government to limit conflict, and use its authority to determine the legitimacy of industrial action (19). These norms seem absent in the Nigerian case and this makes any appeal to arbitration or dispute resolution processes seem unconvincing.

7.3.2: ASUU's Complicity:

There emerged another side of this dispute according to a government official I interviewed at the NUC. She argued that the disputes engaged in by university teachers, ostensibly in order to effect positive changes in the educational sector were, in fact, hypocritical. This government official accused academics themselves of complicity in the degrading of higher education in Nigeria. She also argued that ASUU has no justification in complaining about the decay in the educational institutions because of the practices engaged in by several university teachers.

ASUU members, as it were, are not productive enough to have the audacity to demand to be paid higher salaries; they blame the government official of corruption, whereas some lecturers sell hand-outs at exorbitant prices. Some lecturers even harass female students to give sex for grades. Some union members give examination question papers out to favourite students, while some give more attention to their private business than teaching and research; so some of them are not free from corruption. There is a government rule to check or reduce industrial action in the country, it is known as 'no work no pay' but most times, the university lecturers were always demanding for their salary and other entitlements, even when they did not work for it - An Official from the Ministry of Labour and Productivity.

While the union accuses the government of corruption and the embezzlement of public funds to the detriment of tax payers, the government in turn is quick to claim similar abuses on the part of the university lecturers. A senior official of the Ministry of Education told me, similarly, in an interview, that the issue of corruption is not restricted to the ruling elite, the Nigerian academics can be accused of complicity, gross misconduct and irresponsibility in the day to day discharge of their primary functions of teaching and research.

Some substantiating evidence for these claims may be provided by Omotola who, in his article "The Intellectual Dimensions of Corruption in Nigeria" (2007) undertakes a critical analysis of corrupt practices in the Nigerian academic community. He argues that there is a high degree of "intellectual corruption" in Nigeria which he defines as a "perversion of intellectual responsibilities, be it deliberately or not for personal gains at the expense of the system". He identifies the various dimensions of intellectual corruption including the following:

Nepotism in Academic Recruitment and Promotion Exercises: Those applicants who come from a particular background or region dominate the pool of successful candidates, while others are marginalised. The process of selection is thus not, in his opinion, merit-based, in that it does not recognise academic qualification or competence but rather it draws on ethnic, religious and sometimes political considerations. Closely linked to this is the circumvention of the important role of quality of teaching, research and publication in staff promotion exercises in favour of a system of “prebendal” and “neo-patrimonial” relationships. For example, it is alleged that vice chancellors and other high ranking decision makers often reward “loyal” academics by including their names on the list of those to be promoted, whereas those who are considered ‘disloyal’ are kept in one position, irrespective of whether they have performed well. This patrimonialism, he argues, has greatly undermined the integrity of academic research and publication in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Extortion of Students: Nigerian academics have also demonstrated their lack of professionalism by extorting money from students through the sale of handouts or reading notes at exorbitant prices. In many cases, Omotola alleges, lecturers tie the success of their students in the affected courses to the purchase of handouts and even threaten students who fail to comply that they will have to re-sit in the course. He reports comments such as: ‘if you don’t buy, we will be here together next year to celebrate your academic funeral’ and ‘I will be glad to teach you the course again’ (ibid: 34). Despite institutionalised sanctions imposed on such practices and efforts made to prevent the sale of handouts, this activity is far from being eradicated from the academic community in Nigeria. Beyond the sale of handouts or books, according to Omotola, lecturers also extort money from students in other ways. For example, he reports lecturers demanding money in exchange for marks. Others hide under the claim that they are offering “consultancy” services to students under their supervision, such as editing/proof reading, printing, binding, running of statistical tests or regressions and so on. All these services are sold to students at exorbitant rates, and for fear of victimisation from their supervisors, students are compelled to comply.

Sexual Harassment: The spate of sexual harassment in staff-student relations represents another facet of intellectual corruption (see also Fayankinnu, 2004). It is argued that this development has almost become institutionalised in staff-student relations. Just as money is traded for marks, sex is also traded for marks. There have been cases where those who resist the advances made by these lecturers are victimised, especially by intentionally

failing such students. Adedokun (2005) conducted a survey of selected students and staff of the Lagos State University using focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. The findings reveal that “sexual harassment is associated with the physical, unsolicited sexual advancement towards women usually by an aggressive male and in an exploitative manner” (2). Most of the discussants and interviewees variously described the act as a “form of harassment which is often preceded and disguised as friendship but more often than not accompanied by force, intimidation, disagreement and threats” (ibid). Although the forms of harassment differed, the survey showed that the most common form is that of “male lecturers to female students”. In a broader sense, then, it can be argued that the failure of the educational system in Nigeria fuels the possibility of sexual harassment in the universities.

7.4: Chapter Conclusions

What has been revealed in all of this is further evidence about the ways in which the ongoing dispute between ASUU and the Federal Government is rationalised or justified in public pronouncements within Nigeria. Certainly, the ruling elite are of the view that the academic staff union members are crossing their boundaries as a trade union and are becoming actively political in their approach beyond the conventional industrial dispute. The government officials claim that ASUU has taken upon itself the role of the mouth piece of the people and is leading the student and general public to believe that the federal government is not doing enough about their demands or about the development of university education in Nigeria. It is particularly noticeable that accusations from both government and union side often share a certain language. We have seen in this chapter, then, how the government – like the Union – deploys accusations of undemocratic practice, of a lack of patriotism, and of corruption, in this dispute. State officials also accuse the union members of failing to show understanding regarding the workings or dynamics of the political process with regard to other critical sectors; rather they are perceived as more interested in attacking the government politically instead of focusing on teaching and research. Yet the evidence presented above shows how far the dispute is inextricably linked with the wider postcolonial situation in Nigeria. Thus we have seen how funds provided or allocated to the educational sector, including the World Bank Loan, Education Trust Fund and Petroleum Trust Fund initiatives discussed above, reveal the deep

challenges of development in the Nigerian context. Similar questions are at stake in the government's efforts to deregulate the educational sector, which can be seen as an attempt to weaken the radical position of the union members and reduce the level of frequent industrial actions and criticism emanating from the academic staff union members. All of these further reveal the context in which the dispute had become politicised and made it one in which the emergence of neoliberal policies is in question.

CHAPTER 8

THE WIDER POLITICS OF STRUGGLE OVER NIGERIA'S POST COLONIAL SITUATION

8.0: Introduction:

Having conducted field research and presented empirical evidence on the nature of the industrial conflict in Nigerian universities both from the union's perspective and from the government's perspective, this chapter now proceeds to consider these findings in greater detail, and to situate them in the wider social and historical context in Nigeria. The protracted disputes between the federal government and ASUU are reflections of typical conflicts and problems that have arisen in the Nigerian political landscape. One cannot fully appreciate how the interactions between the practice of power, economic accumulation, and conflict of various forms have shaped the Nigerian political landscape without addressing these in historical depth. Moreover, the chapter provides a theoretical discussion of both African and Western perspectives on conflict and the role of the state in post-colonial Nigeria.

For ease of analysis, this chapter will discuss the politics of struggle in post-colonial Nigeria under three broad headings. First, the chapter establishes the idea of a 'colonial legacy' and analyses it for the purpose of grasping an understanding of the role colonialism played in shaping Nigeria's political landscape and the higher education sector specifically through the years. The colonial legacy is considered in relation to six areas of Nigerian social life: i) education; ii) regionalism and ethno-religious conflicts; iii) models of governance and legitimacy; iv) neo-colonialism and dependency; v) autocracy and neo-paternalism; vi) a culture of corruption, exploitation and other illicit activities.

Second, the question of class conflict and military authoritarianism in the post-colonial era is considered. The idea here is to relate the colonial administrative style, characterised by oppression and coercion, with university governance under military rule.

The third section of the chapter critically analyses the role of ASUU's struggles in relation to Nigeria's wider postcolonial situation, especially in relation to the Structural Adjustment Program accepted by the Nigerian state and the consequent inability of the government to

fund education and other vital sectors in the economy. It also takes a critical look at ASUU's struggle against neo-colonialism and imperialism and how these wider political questions have come to shape the dispute under consideration here.

8.1: Colonial Legacy and its Impact on the Post-Independent Nigerian State

As is discussed briefly in chapter 2, the legacy of colonial administration had and continues to have a profound influence on the socio-economic and political development of Nigeria and the African continent as a whole. In many respects, the post independent Nigerian state is characterised by virtually the same factors as other African countries. According to Alemazung (2010), the colonial legacy is 'the sum total of the political structure, culture and general polity handed over to the elite nationalist rulers or that which was left behind by the colonial administrators...' (64). The exploitative character of the colonial administration and the asymmetric relationship established between the African continent and the industrialised world has negatively impacted on the development of the region. A notable effect, in this respect, has been the character of political leadership in Nigeria. A key legacy of colonialism is the extent to which the postcolonial state in Africa itself represents a key opportunity for enrichment, with the effect that post independence rulers in Nigeria and indeed Africa in general run their states as if these were their personal property, and with the intention of accumulating wealth. This section attempts to analyse in greater depth the various aspects of the political and educational system that have been affected by colonial legacy.

8.1.1: Colonial Legacy on Education

It is vital to begin with the educational sector in particular, and the colonial legacy remains a fundamental element in the analysis of African higher education, not least because, throughout the post independent period, ties with the former colonizers have remained strong (Teferra and Altbach, 2004). For example, it is noteworthy that no African country has changed the language of educational instruction and communication from their respective colonial language. More significantly, perhaps, the curriculum of higher learning today was shaped and organised on the colonial model. Many of the traditional centres of learning which were in existence in the pre-colonial times were destroyed in the

colonial era (ibid). Colonial governments significantly limited the scope and access to education. In general, education was tailored to the provision of those courses which would provide the regime with the manpower to administer their colonies. Some colonial powers such as Belgium banned higher education altogether, while others like Spain and Portugal kept enrolment at very small levels. In Nigeria, before the Yaba College of Education was established in 1934, the British limited access to education because they had no intention of giving Nigerians political independence (Ekekwe, 1986:37). According to Okafor (1971:66-67), it was a report of the Phelps-Stokes Commission in the USA that encouraged the British government to develop an interest in the education of her African colonies. Consequently, in 1923, an Advisory Committee on Education in Africa was set up by the Secretary of State for the Colonies. The Advisory Committee obtained and published information regarding the state and progress of education in the Colonies, protectorates and mandated territories in Africa. It also served as an advisory body to colonial governments and education departments in African dependencies, advising on the kind of education that was best suited to the needs of the inhabitants of the African dependencies, and the best means of providing them. However, the committee had no executive powers and was only instrumental in providing a comprehensive framework which guided the actions of the various local colonial governments. The colonial model also placed limits on academic freedom and autonomy as major matters affecting education and curriculum needs were decided by the colonial governments. It is clearly possible to see a continuity here with the current problems in Nigerian education, and it is only within this context that the current state of crisis in Nigerian universities can be better understood. In essence, the key effects of the colonial legacy on the educational sector were that decisions on the educational sector tended to be determined by political elites rather than intellectuals or professional in the academic field, so that there was a general lack of autonomy in the emerging educational sector. As we have seen, such a situation continues to shape the relationship between the state and the educational sector today, and remains a key factor in the dispute under consideration here.

8.1.2: Regionalism and Ethno-Religious Conflicts

Many of the sources of social conflict in Nigeria today can also be attributed to the effects of British colonialism and Western interference historically with special reference to the

amalgamation of Southern and Northern Protectorates by Lord Lugard in 1914. Regionalism and ethnic division is a particular legacy of the impact of colonialism on the African continent. Since Nigeria obtained independence from Britain in 1960, the country has been riddled with war, political instability, ethnic and religious violence. The most famous instance of this was the Biafran war which raged for nearly three years (1967-1970) as a result of an attempted secession from Nigeria by the eastern states. In addition, Nigeria has undergone several years of military rule, which saw numerous turbulent changes of regime. Moreover, since independence, Nigeria has witnessed several violent religious crises, especially between Muslims and Christians. While all of these events have been the subject of several sociological interpretations, one fundamental problem has been that Nigerians up until now have no sense of national unity or identity. And this can plausibly be interpreted as an effect of a colonialism which changed the existing political and administrative structure prevalent in the country before their arrival. For example, Alemazung (2010:65) describes “the polarization of ethnic communities and the outbreak of ethnic violence are a legacy of colonialism which ignored cultural differences during the creation of artificial state borders” (see also Clapham, 1985:57-58; Taras and Ganguly, 2002:3). Moreover, to the extent that state creation was exogenous to the will and consent of the Nigerians, the Nigerian state lacks fundamental legitimacy in much the same way as the colonial state (see Englebert, 2000:40). It can also be argued that the British colonial government stressed the differences between ethnic groups so as to reinforce divisions and prevent them from forming an alliance to oppose the colonizers (e.g. Shillington 1989:356). It is thus important to note that ‘successive colonial constitutions’ in Nigeria embedded political power on ‘regional lines’ (Ogunbadejo, 1979:86). Where political leaders compete along regional and ethnic lines, there is likely to be conflict. This is particularly true of pluralist societies where ethnic heterogeneity has been a pervasive feature and this has often posed difficulties for mediating political conflict (Jinadu, 1985:72).

Having said this, other authors have also argued that ethnicity in Africa in particular has a class character (Ihonvbere and Shaw, 1988:37), and that ‘class interests can cut across ethnic groups’ (Markovitz, 1977:116). In other words, these authors argue that ethnicity in Africa is an identification which elites can manipulate as a basis for political manoeuvring and in order to shore up their own positions. Because of their relative success in ethnic politics, the current political leaders in Nigeria now occupy strategic positions of power

and economic influence, part of which they inherited from the colonial structures which gave rise to those politics which the current incumbents continue to reinforce. Since then, they have tended to maintain and protect this same pattern of ethnic activities and the existing political structures, both of which are inimical to inter-ethnic harmony.

Against this background it is important, for this thesis, to recognise that the idea of regionalism and ethnicity in governance and as a factor in the distribution of resources has also shaped the establishment and governance of universities in Nigeria. The formation of universities became an exercise in regional competition. Okafor (1971:128) notes that the Ashby Commission not only recognised but also reinforced the strong regional loyalties in Nigeria when it recommended that there should be four universities, one in each major region and the fourth in Lagos. Thus, for example, the University College at Ibadan which was established in 1948 was made to serve the educational needs of the Western region. Similarly, the University of Nigeria at Nsukka, another first generation university, was established in 1960 by the then Eastern regional government. Ahmadu Bello University, established in 1962 was also seen as the University of the North. Thus, universities tended to be used as instruments of regional development rather than national development, and their existence was associated with the identity and interests of particular regional groups. Clearly, then, this situation can be argued to have its roots in the colonial state's deployment of regional processes of administration and its contribution to the emergence of politicised ethnic identities.

Regionalism and ethno-religious consideration have also shaped the union's political structure and administration. It is plausible that issues raised by ASUU members are interpreted by the ruling elite as being motivated by political opponents from another or the same regional, ethnic or religious background. There have thus been situations where some universities did not join or take active part in the union's nation-wide strikes due to a regional, political or ethnic interpretation of events. This was the case, for example, in the Uni-Ilorin 49 incident discussed in chapter 6.

8.1.3: Poor Model of Governance and Weak Legitimacy

Western interference may have contributed to some of the problems faced by the Nigerian society in another sense. Nigeria cannot boast its own model of governance that is well suited to the population and capable of holding the people together. This lack of a clear cut national ideology or vision has made leadership and governance at all levels (including, in

some cases, university administration) an exercise in the pursuit of self interest and has undermined the perceived legitimacy of practices of governance and law to an extent which allows corruption to flourish. Englebert (2000) invokes the elements of colonial legacy in what he describes as a structuralist interpretation. He attributes the failings of African states to weak capacity, which is diagnosed as a symptom of limited legitimacy. This in turn can be attributed to colonialism, which divorced pre-existing political structures from the state that was inherited at independence:

In the light of the above, when compared to other continents of the world, Africa has the highest proportion of countries where the process of state creation was exogenous to their societies and where the leadership or ruling class inherited the state rather than shaping it as an instrument of its existing or developing hegemony. As a result, African states were born lacking legitimacy, meaning simply that they were not endogenous to their societies; they were not historically embedded into domestic relations of power and domination (Englebert, 2000:35)

Prior to the *coup d'état* of 15 January 1966, Nigerian politics was modelled on a Western idea of representative democracy with what were presented, at least, as open and competitive elections. Recruitment into political office was conducted in open periodic contests – the electorate, all adults of 21 years and above (with the exception of women in the Northern Region), voted for individuals from among themselves to represent constituencies (Oyovbaire, 1985:53). The electorate was itself organised into political parties. But there were numerous problems: ‘...widespread ignorance of political matters; limited horizon and political socialization of the electorate; organised deceit of workers by politicians; and the traditionalism of culture-value system in which political trust and confidence were relaxed only upon persons [sic] of one’s immediate cultural environment...’ (ibid). All of these undermined the utility and effectiveness of the competitive party system. In other words, political parties became largely the political arms of the ethno-regional groups; elections involving politicians were corrupt, while voting behaviour became compromised. Be that as it may, and notwithstanding the defects of political practice, the existence of a formally open competitive system ensured a sense of participation in the political process for citizens; a sense of being able to participate in the political community.

However, the character of Nigerian politics changed when the armed forces stepped into power in January 1966. This period witnessed the proscription of electoral contests and

organised politics in the form of parties. 'Politics became covert as elections were replaced by selection, as appointed by the ruler (himself unelected) through personal, ethnic, and cultural/regional ties; open contests became secret recommendations...' (ibid: 54; see also Ogunbadejo 1979). Thus, 1966 can be described as the beginning of a culture of large scale corruption and nepotism in post independence Nigerian politics and hence a shift from an elected system to a system of imposed hierarchy of command and obedience (Oyovbaire, 1985:53). In some respects, indeed, 1966 could be described as the year of return to what colonial governance actually looked like, in that, during that period, the political process was characterised by the selection of candidates rather than election and armed force was a significant factor in ensuring political rule. Since independence, therefore, the electoral process in Nigeria has been fraught with various anomalies which have bedevilled the system. It is against this background that we can better appreciate why the ASUU-government dispute has become increasingly politicised; it has become partly about contesting the legitimacy of the state. For example, as argued in earlier chapters, the emergence of the military on the political scene in 1966 brought about a structural shift in the class status of the academics in which their position became increasingly close to that of a wider working class. This resulted in the industrial dispute becoming increasingly political in character. As we have seen, the military governments used decrees and other forceful approaches to impose their interests on the economy and in university administration especially in relation to university autonomy, with reference to the appointment of vice chancellors. The struggle against the military regime became particularly intense from the 1980s onwards when the ASUU resolved to directly oppose the legitimacy of the military governments.

8.1.4: Autocracy and Neo-Patrimonialism

Closely linked with (and as a direct result of) this state of weak legitimacy, Nigerian politicians have maintained the governing style of the colonizers based on autocracy and neo-patrimonialism. This represents another legacy of colonialism which has affected the character of contemporary African politics (Alemazung, 2010:66). The colonizers never ruled with popular consent; they overthrew and executed traditional rulers who disobeyed their orders or failed to comply with their instructions (Shillington, 1989:354-357). This pattern of leadership based on oppression and coercion laid the foundation for the patron-client relationships (otherwise called 'god-fatherism' in Nigeria) which are a familiar aspect of politics in most post-independent African states. Moreover, Nigerian leaders have

become used to exercising forceful power since the days of the military, and this has now manifested itself in direct electoral manipulation. Most of the present day political office holders, both at the federal and state levels, did not pass through any due process to get to their various offices. Often they were selected by their godfathers or patrons and imposed on the people (see Olarinmoye, 2008). As Nugent (2010:41) notes, where a state lacks legitimacy, the ruling elites often resort to neo-patrimonial practices to garner political support and loyalty. Thus the majority of public office holders in Nigeria today are of the view that their positions were paid for before they got into office, and hence they must recoup the funds invested by their sponsors and patrons. Smith (2007) describes this in detail showing how patron-clientism and deep rooted corruption was exacerbated by the years of military rule which saw the emergence of social structures that enshrined reciprocity in terms of kinship and patronage relations. Suffice to say that the overriding effect of weak legitimacy, at least in the present context, is that it renders doubtful the possibility of the citizens challenging government actions. In this sense therefore, weak legitimacy may have partly accounted for the nonchalance and delaying tactics of the government in resolving the disputes between it and ASUU. A government that is not open to popular pressure can evade much of the leverage that otherwise a strike would exert. Is thus clear, why, in relation to the industrial dispute under consideration, issues of autonomy and academic freedom have become particularly important, and why efforts towards conventional dispute resolution have not been successful.

8.1.5: Neo-colonialism and Dependency

As stated earlier, one of the profound effects of colonialism on Africa is that of a high dimension of external dependency in major aspects of the socio-economic and political life of the continent. Thus, even after the end of formal colonialism, Nigeria still depended on the developed nations, both for development funds and for the technology necessary to achieve a higher standard of living for the Nigerian citizen. The conditions of exploitation remained: the new state was still a producer of raw materials; it still had little industry and was still a market for more sophisticated technological goods (Markovitz, 1977:72). Today, these historical effects of colonialism still have far reaching implications for the development and progress of the African continent. As is discussed in more detail in chapter 2 one of the profound effects of neo-colonialism is the economic imbalance that exists in many African economies after several decades of external exploitation of the continent's resources and accumulation of rents or wealth, leaving its people weak, poor

and economically handicapped. This asymmetric relationship between the African region and the West has left the former continually dependent on the West for political and economic hope. Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986) in his book, *Decolonising the Mind*, presents an unreserved description of the effect of imperialism in its colonial and neo-colonial phases on the African continent. According to him, the effect of imperialism is total. It controls the entire social, economic, political, military, cultural and psychological spheres of the African continent (2-4). He describes the menace of imperialism as a "monopolistic parasite" which continues to affect the lives of even the peasants in the remotest parts of the African region and which also contributed to the establishment of the current ruling elite (see also Markovitz, 1977: 204). Soon after the struggle for independence from the various colonial powers, new class cleavages began to reappear in several African states, and in the case of the British colonies, at least, the new 'native' leadership which was seen as friendly to the British was deliberately cultivated. The continued dominance of the international bourgeoisie over the African region, even after formal independence, would not have been successful if not for the collaborative efforts of these native ruling elite classes. As early as 1970 Nkrumah had argued that "Africa has in fact in its midst a hard core of bourgeoisie who are analogous to colonialists and settlers in that they live in positions of privilege – a small selfish, money minded, reactionary minority among vast masses of exploited and oppressed people" (12). This still describes the situation in many respects; there remains a ruling class who can be found in virtually all aspects of the society who are characterised by their affluence and by their conspicuous consumption - their magnificent residences from where they take decisions that affect the vast majority of the masses: "...their manner of speech... their leisure activities...their health, height and weight...the chances of survival of their children...the conversation of their wives, and their consumption patterns" (Markovitz, 1977: 205-206).

A similar account has been developed by Ihonvbere and Shaw more recently (1988:34-35). According to them, the Nigerian bourgeoisie are "irrational and underdeveloped" in their orientation. By this they mean that the Nigerian elite are individualistic and pre-occupied with personal indulgence. Rather than promoting the common interest of the people, they are concerned with promoting their own immediate and exclusive interest. They can scarcely be compared with their counterparts in other parts of the world, especially in Europe and America who have been compelled to realise the need to offer some concessions to the masses in the area of health care delivery, education, and public

transport. It is this odd irrationality to which they specifically draw attention: a situation in which luxurious cars are plied through bad roads, where corrupt politicians own private jets in a country that lacks adequate modern airports; magnificent residential houses are often surrounded by, and approached only through muddy slums. By virtue of their closeness to the Western powers, the Nigerian elite are usually the first beneficiaries of any plan or program aimed to initiate economic growth. These dominant social groups also derive rents from diplomatic and military alliances and have often diverted aid from foreign donors even if they were meant for developmental or humanitarian purposes. Thus, in relation to the dispute under consideration, one can argue, as has been discussed above, that the character of the Nigerian political elites could be interpreted as one which is shaped largely by the accumulation of rents and controlling power over the resources of the state rather than being shaped by a sense of the necessity of national ‘development’ of the country, especially with respect to the higher educational sector over which the union has been agitating. In this context, ASUU’s growing radicalism and explicitly stated anti-imperialism becomes understandable, being in part a response to the presence of a political elite which has little intrinsic interest in higher education or national development more generally.

8.1.6: A Culture of Corruption, Exploitation and Illicit Activities

The preceding section, thus, leads on to a discussion of corruption. One of the overriding legacies of colonialism is that of corruption in its variant forms, including various forms of exploitation and the flourishing of illicit activities both at the grassroots level and among Nigeria’s ruling class. Endemic corruption is, arguably, the main problem affecting the stability and development of the African continent. The structures and institutions built by the colonial masters in their colonies were essentially self-serving. The leaders that took over from the colonial masters were also more interested in how they would exploit the system and not what they could contribute to nation’s development. This part of the system they inherited culminated in the conflicts seen in the present Nigerian society, including the ASUU and federal government dispute under discussion here.

Bayart, Ellis and Hibou (1999) have thus argued in their book “*Criminalization of the State in Africa*”, that colonialism laid the foundation for the ‘criminalization of politics’, where African state leaders allied to new global forces have created unprecedented opportunities for illicit wealth extraction, which they term “extra-version”. The

characteristic political trajectory of African states has been that of exploitation by dominant social groups or actors of a whole series of rents in the form of gold, ivory, agricultural commodities, oil and other resources in collaboration with local governments in what can be described as a mode of dependence (ibid: xvi). In the words of the authors:

The criminalization of politics and of the state may be regarded as the routinization, at the very heart of political and governmental institutions and circuits, of practices whose criminal nature is patent, whether as defined by the law of the country in question, or as defined by the norms of international law and international organizations or as so viewed by the international community (16)

In a similar description, Olivier De Sardan (1999) argues that corruption has become a routine phenomenon in the functioning and day to day administration of many African governments, from top to bottom. In his words, corruption is “neither marginal nor sectoralised or repressed, but is generalised and banalised” (28).

My point in this context is that such an interpretation of corruption can be applied in relation to the current disputes between ASUU and the government. ASUU has often accused the government of a lack of transparency and accountability in handling the nation’s resources, especially in financial matters and budget allocation and implementation. According to them, public offices have become positions of economic accumulation. Contracts are inflated with the aim of looting funds and diverting national wealth to private use. In a sense, the issue of funding the Nigerian universities should not have arisen in the first place in view of the huge natural resources the nation is endowed with. Nigeria has enormous reserves of oil and gas, and like many other resource-rich African countries, rents from these can fundamentally reshape the ways in which the state relates to its population (Nugent, 2010:42). Suffice to say that the institutional structures bequeathed by the British and the long years of military rule which are characterised by the self-serving interests of the rulers have helped in entrenching corruption in the Nigeria. Moreover, weaknesses in law enforcement and the judicial system has contributed to the prevalence of corruption as some indicted political officers are seen to be ‘above the law’ so that any attempt by judges to prosecute corrupt political officers risks their jobs or even their lives.

8.2: Military Rule, Class Conflict and University Governance

A general implication of the preceding discussion is that the evolution of the Nigerian military can thus not be divorced from any attempt to understand the industrial conflicts in Nigerian universities. This section will provide a discussion of how the Nigerian military organisation rules and their approach to class conflicts, and this will help to inform a sociological interpretation of the struggle between ASUU and federal government, especially the military administrators under successive military and intermittent civilian regimes.

8.2.1: Background to the Military's Intervention in Nigerian Politics:

The Nigerian military has gone through four distinct stages of development in terms of its growth in size and influence in the political system. The years from 1960-1966, referred to as the First Republic, represent the formative years in the development of the armed forces. Nigeria was operating with political institutions inherited at independence and the military was largely shaped by what the British had left behind. But the political problems that were inherited proved to be insurmountable and led to Nigeria's first military coup in January 1966 and the collapse of the First Republic (Peters, 1997). This collapse led to a civil war and to the second phase in the military's development. This phase saw the military grow not just in size, but also in the influence it could exert on the political process including the use of decree in effecting changes in university administration as discussed in previous chapters. The overthrow of the Gowon regime in July 1975 launched the military into a third phase of its evolution which lasted until 1979, and which was used to lay new foundations both for the military and the country at large (ibid).

Another phase in the military's growth began with the overthrow of the Second Republic of Shagari administration in December 1983 and continued till 1993 when the then military president, General Ibrahim Babangida, annulled the first democratically conducted election in the country and stepped aside. In 1999, General Abdulsalami Abubakar voluntarily handed over power to civilians.

The general point here, however, is that during the various stages of its development in Nigeria, the military emerged as the most influential, and perhaps most cohesive, political group in Nigeria. Their influence on Nigeria's political life remains considerable,

irrespective of whether the government is, at a formal level, civilian or military. Indeed, Nigerian political development has not been as clear cut as may be suggested by the account or terminology above. In practice the overlap between 'military' and 'civilian' regimes has been considerable, with retired military officers taking up important political offices in a civilian administration or having significant influence on those in power. The general lack of stability here in the political context has had considerable effects in relation to the dispute under consideration. It has thus not been uncommon for one administration to renege on an agreement reached by another administration, for agreements to be reached but not enacted as law, or for regimes to refer to changes in political leadership as a reason for not implementing agreements.

8.2.2: Military Rule and Class Conflict in Nigeria

As mentioned above, the majority of the present ruling class are or were military officers. According to Peters (1997), all military organisations seek to maximise their influence in politics. This can be done either indirectly, by exerting influence on policy making from behind the scenes or by direct involvement in the running of the state. Military governments whenever they are in existence make use of civilians and civilian dexterity. In other words, they never govern alone, except perhaps in the most underdeveloped societies where the military operates as a centre of political stability and ambition. For example, according to Jega (1995:252), over the years, the Nigerian military rulers have relied to a great extent on the universities to maintain their rule. Many executive and administrative positions both at the federal and state levels were filled by academics, a majority of whom perhaps, were brought in to legitimise the regime. Thus, for example, Nobel Laureate, Prof. Wole Soyinka was appointed by the Babangida Administration in 1988-1991 to chair the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC). Similarly, Prof. Henry Nwosu, a senior academic, was appointed by the same Babangida regime to head the National Electoral Commission (NEC) during the presidential elections of 1993 which saw the annulment of the acclaimed winner, Chief M.K.O Abiola. Many of those appointed in such situations came subsequently to resign their positions, but there is, nevertheless, an uneasy relationship between the military and the academic world.

Over four decades ago, Huntington (1968:220-221) argued that the level and character of a military establishment's intervention in the political process will be dependent on the size of the middle class in any society. It is their view of what society should look like, and

their role within the system that ultimately determines the degree of co-operation between them and the political leaders, and the extent to which any deviation from the established norm can be tolerated. The conflict for the middle class, including academics, in Huntington's view, arises because they are caught between traditional and modern values. For them, the issue is how to balance their yearning for the institutions that have served them well over the years and the need to modernise so as to make them relevant to the demands of the future. However, the predicament for the Nigerian middle class goes beyond this. Whilst many do not support military rule and the tyranny that it brings, experiences under the three civilian republics since independence do not inspire any confidence in elected politicians either. Political, social and economic conflicts arise in military dominated regimes because of the existence of two mutually reinforcing conditions: a *perception of scarcity*, on the one hand, and a *general sense of distrust*, on the other (Feit, 1973:4). The most significant development that emanates from these two conditions is that expectations are not stable and, therefore, nobody is ever sure of what the future holds for him or her. In such an unstable environment, the political leaders tend to exploit their positions in two ways: they use them to seek to perpetuate themselves in office, and embezzle public funds in the likely event that they find themselves out of office without any means of maintaining themselves. Others who want to rise up the political ladder follow the political leaders sycophantically. In such societies, the key to survival is not in fighting for a just course but in blind loyalty to individual leaders. Tensions arise because of 'the winner takes all' mentality that the political process engenders (*ibid*: 5). Clearly, this was the situation in which the "Sole Administrators", appointed to a number of Nigerian universities under the various military dispensations, found themselves. Because they were reliant on the military government that appointed them, they were often willing to execute any orders which came implicitly or explicitly from these military dictators. They were thus adjudged loyal to the government and ended up governing their universities autocratically in a manner that replicated that of military dictatorship itself.

8.3: ASUU's Struggle and Nigerian Autonomy:

Finally in this section, the ongoing dispute between the union and the government can be better understood when considered in relation to ASUU's anti-imperialism campaigns, i.e. the movement against the influence of foreign bodies on the economic management and

political leadership of the country, especially through what the union describes as the “unending legacy of the IMF’s structural adjustment programme” (ASUU, 2002:16). According to the union (ibid:17), the net effect of the IMF/World Bank-inspired economic policy has been the continuing impoverishment of the Nigerian masses. In the Communiqué issued at the end of ASUU’s National Executive Council (NEC) meeting at the Federal University of Technology, Mina in September 2001, ASUU noted:

A matter that has causal relationship with the political, economic and social crisis in Nigeria is the growing influence, visibility and audacity of foreign and financial institutions (IMF, World Bank, EU, G8 etc) and governments. This is particularly true in respect of the formulation and execution of sensitive social, economic and foreign policy programmes in directions that clearly subvert the sovereignty of the Nigerian people – ASUU (2002:27)

It appears, according to the union, that the Nigerian government, particularly the military through the years have subjected the country’s social and economic policies to the dictates of the Western dominated institution and to “globalised” market forces. This is, in effect, what we have seen Bayart and his colleagues describe as ‘extraversion’: political power being dependent on the ability to access and manipulate forms of external wealth. It is certainly true, in any case, that these institutions have established their presence in sensitive federal government ministries and agencies, such as the Central Bank of Nigeria, the Ministries of Education, Health, Agriculture, Petroleum, and so on. Such bodies advise the government on what to do especially in relation to privatization and deregulation, and exercise considerable leverage in what has been described as a kind of neo-colonization. Thus the SAP left the economy with a huge debt burden and debt service obligations, at the expense of the higher education sector and its development, as large chunks of the budget had to be spent each year to service debt portfolios. The result has been a reduction in the budget allocation to education, health, agriculture and other important sectors, thus ensuring Nigerian citizens continue to wallow in poverty, squalor, deprivation, and frustration. Jega (2000) argues that “under conditions of economic crisis and subsequently structural adjustment, there has been a swift decline in the ability of the Nigerian state to provide for the basic socio-economic needs of the people” (25). In addition, through the SAP-induced policy of privatization, public wealth has been transferred to the hands of a few individuals, especially foreigners and local agents, who purchased public enterprises for less than their market value. Privatization has also increased unemployment levels as

privatised companies often cut down on staff strength. Deregulation and the removal of price control also means that consumers will have to pay huge sums of money for what they produce locally and at a time when wages are held down artificially. In essence, the effect of this attempt to liberalise the economy has been a form of underdevelopment, at least in the Nigerian context.

The growing emphasis in ASUU's campaigns against imperialism and neo-colonialism is thus a response to these developments, as well as being partly informed by one of the union's stated objectives, which is to protect the advancement of the socio-economic and cultural interests of the citizens. An official from the Federal Ministry of Education told me that ASUU claims that it is a union that seeks to protect the interest of its members. However, over the years the struggle of ASUU has graduated from union activism to more political debates, including interventions in relation to the performance of political office holders and in defence of democracy. A major distinction between the 'state' and the union is that actors in the state are precisely able to benefit from the ability to control or manipulate external sources of revenue. In this respect therefore, the union represents those who are suffering the consequences *inside* the country of these externally driven policies. Thus the union's campaigns have extended into a much wider civic role, including questioning the process in which political office holders were elected in the case of civilian administration, raising concerns in relation to electoral malpractice and the corruption of political office holders, as well as resistance to military rule. ASUU has also drawn the attention of the government to cases where public funds meant for the universities have been misused by individuals alleged to be government functionaries. Good examples are found in relation to the Education Tax Fund and the Petroleum Trust Fund, details of which have already been discussed in the previous chapter (see also ASUU, 2005:7). ASUU thus claims to be at the forefront of a wider social movement concerned with anti-imperialism and the defence of democratic values in the country. This again reveals how the disputes have significantly shifted from a more or less conventional industrial conflict to a much more politicised dispute about the future of Nigeria and about the development of the nation as a whole.

8.4: Chapter Conclusions:

This chapter tries to reflect on the findings of the empirical research laid out in the earlier chapters by considering these in the wider social and historical context of Nigeria. My general argument here is that the dispute must be understood as one part of this situation, and as shaped in important ways by this history. The historical antecedents of the colonial and military eras have shaped the contemporary socio-political landscape of the Nigerian state and the struggles over the post-colonial situation by ASUU, including the specific tensions over the education sector. The inherited political structure also emphasized the formation of political power along religious, ethnic and regional lines. Regionalism has thus shaped the way in which resources and administrative powers were distributed in Nigerian universities. The poor model of governance and weak legitimacy of the intervening military regimes also manifested themselves in the administration of universities in Nigeria. Another legacy of colonialism is the culture of corruption and illicit wealth extraction which has characterised the political trajectory of African states, including Nigeria. The misuse of public funds and the abuse of public office by self-serving rulers have entrenched corruption in Nigeria to the point that ASUU has often accused the government of a lack of transparency and accountability in handling the nation's resources, especially with respect to budget allocation and implementation. It is also worthy of note that the specific character of the political situation in postcolonial Nigeria reveals the effective separation of the interests of the elites from any project of national development. Finally, the struggle over Nigeria's post-colonial situation took another dimension when ASUU declared itself to be an anti-imperialist organisation with the desire of promoting the interest of citizens more generally. This recalls my more general argument that the dispute in question has shifted from a classical industrial relations dispute to a more politically-motivated dispute even though some union members have 'crossed over' to the side of the government on occasion. The wider concerns here relate to the future of democracy and national development in Nigeria.

CHAPTER 9

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

9.1: Preamble:

This thesis has focused on the industrial conflict in Nigerian universities. Specifically, it has considered the disputes between the Academic Staff Union of Universities and the Nigerian Federal Government. Although the situation discussed in this thesis cannot be understood as conflict simply between ‘bourgeoisie’ and ‘proletariat’, as might be suggested by a kind of Marxian approach, the analysis of the Nigerian case has used some aspects of such an approach and has argued that, in part, the issues raised in the dispute can be understood as related to the ongoing class struggle in Nigeria which can be said to have its roots in the colonial and immediate post-colonial government. Besides domestic factors directly affecting the disputes, the effects of external actors on Nigerian policy, especially the SAP policies, can also be seen as factors that have shaped the industrial conflict under consideration. The aim of this chapter is to provide a summary and review of the conclusions from the findings of the field work.

9.2: Conclusions from findings:

The conflict between the Academic Staff Union of Universities and the Federal Government of Nigeria has come to have something close to a class character, especially as academics have come to be increasingly impoverished, and forced into occupations and positions which place them closer to the Nigerian working class. However, this does not mean that the dispute was simply about economic concerns. Rather, the underlying causes of the industrial disputes between the union and the government can be classified as both *economic* and *non-economic*, and this is a central contribution of this thesis to the body of knowledge. The *economic* aspects of the disputes can be considered under four headings, namely: wages and conditions of service; funding and budget allocation; population growth and lastly unfavourable macroeconomic policies. The *non-economic* aspects of the disputes have to be understood in terms of historical antecedents and the socio-political dimensions of the conflict. These are now summarised below:

9.2.1: Economic Aspects of the Dispute

- ***Wages and Conditions of Service:***

As with any other labour union, the struggle to improve the poor salaries and conditions of service of its staff has been one of the focal points of ASUU since its inception in 1978. In the immediate post-independent era (early 1960s), university teachers were highly paid compared to their counterparts in the civil service and the military. However, with the emergence of the military government in 1966 and thereafter, Nigerian academics have become *déclassé*, that is, they have lost their economic and social status, moving from being a part of the middle class to a position in which their middle class status is profoundly threatened, and which has tended to remove them from an 'elite' perspective. This change was caused primarily by the freeze in the salaries and allowances of academic staff vis-à-vis their counterparts in the civil service and in other African Universities. Particularly with the arrival of the military dictators in the Nigerian political scene after independence there has been a gradual shift in the status of Nigerian academics and the beginning of the devaluation of academic labour in Nigeria. Although clearly some academics are able to cross over to the government side, taking up positions as advisers and aides to top government functionaries, those who do not, especially at the lecturer level, have increasingly come to see themselves as engaged in a "class conflict" with their employers (i.e. the government). It should be noted here that most class conflicts, especially in industrial relations analysis, are understood to occur between a private employer (that is, capitalist) and employees, with the state standing to one side (at least formally). In this case, however, this thesis argues that there is a form of class conflict between the state itself and the lecturers. This reflects the particular situation in post-colonial Nigeria where the state has become, in a much more direct way than in Europe, for instance, a means of the accumulation of wealth. If the staff have become to occupy a position that is close to that of the working class in the country, this is because the state has become directly part of the processes of wealth accumulation.

The current crisis in the Nigerian universities may have also been fuelled by the shift in the industrial relations policy of the government to the corporatist model since the late 1960s. This model gives enormous powers to the employers to determine wages and other conditions of service without due consideration of the total welfare and freedom of the

employees. As revealed in this research, the union leaders are agitating for an enhanced and unified salary structure across the country. It should be noted that the implementation of a unified salary package across all universities is unlikely to occur in view of the current constitutional separation of power between the tiers of government. While admitting that a unified salary structure will remove inequalities and hence unify academic standards across board, it might preclude the option that states that may be able to offer better salary packages to their university staff than their counterparts in some state universities. However, it is the opinion of this thesis that minimum salary standards across institutions should be stipulated and upheld.

- ***Funding and Infrastructure:***

Another primary cause of the disputes is the underfunding of universities and infrastructural neglect. In this sense, academics see themselves as defending not just economic conditions of work, but the very viability of the institutions of higher learning. Evidence from the research findings reveals that government budgetary allocation to education is generally inadequate, unstable and unpredictable. Government funding to education as a fraction of the GDP is still very low. Findings also revealed that although the government has implemented several projects for the development of Nigerian universities, most of these projects were not successful in achieving their stated aims. Budgetary allocations continue to exert pressure on the fiscal fortunes of the state due to competing demands, while universities are also highly dependent on government financing especially for recurrent expenditure. Physical infrastructure (hostels, classrooms, office blocks) and learning facilities (libraries and laboratories) are also inadequate while existing resources are poorly maintained. The financing of research is also insufficient. Several factors have contributed significantly to the poor financing of higher education in the country including the lack of accountability, misplaced priorities, mismanagement of resources and large scale corruption both in government and university circles. There is, as was argued in the literature review, an association between the relative deprivation of needs and the probability of industrial conflict. Linking this to Nigerian universities the effects of inadequate provision of resources in Nigerian universities have been that of a decline in services and functions, leading to a rise in industrial conflict as well as student demonstrations, boycott of lectures and violent riots. I have sought, at various points in the course of this thesis, to give something like an 'ethnographic' sense of the real experience

of the crisis in Nigerian higher education as it appears to students and lecturers in their day-to-day work.

- ***Population Growth:***

Increase in student population through rising enrolment figures has also affected the provision and maintenance of infrastructure in Nigerian universities. Growing student enrolment clearly puts pressure on the use of facilities (that is, leads to overcrowding) and drives up the student-teacher ratio. The latter problem, therefore, becomes one of inadequate manpower in Nigerian universities to cater for the teeming student population and results in an increasing workload for academic staff. Of course, the unattractive emolument of academics is a major cause of the 'brain drain' in Nigerian universities. Increasing rates of unsatisfied demand for university education has also been cited by the government as a major reason for the deregulation of university ownership in order to liberalise access to education. From year to year, the number of students being denied admission to tertiary institutions ranges between 60% and 80% of the entire demand for admission. As noted earlier, when there is competition for scarce resources such as these (in this case, among the actors within the university system, i.e. lecturers and students), there is bound to be conflict because of the inequalities that exist.

- ***Unfavourable Macroeconomic Policies:***

The crisis between the Nigerian university workers and the federal government was worsened by the unfavourable economic policies of the government. Among other things, this manifested itself in two ways: *high inflation* and a *huge external debt burden*. In most cases, it is a rise in the cost of living that forces workers to demand more wages in order to be able to increase their standard of living. If the rise in prices is not offset by a corresponding increase in wages, workers tend to lose purchasing power, and hence suffer from increasing poverty. This has been the case with Nigerian academics and indeed the average Nigerian worker since the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) in 1985 by the Ibrahim Babangida Administration. Evidence from the Nigerian situation reveals that inflationary pressures, especially during the SAP regime, significantly reduced the purchasing power of workers' salaries.

A related macroeconomic problem is that of the *external debt*. One of the profound consequences of the SAP was the huge debt servicing obligations to foreign multilateral

institutions that the government has contracted. This has had the effect of reducing budgetary allocation to critical sectors of the economy including education, health and agriculture. Over the past three decades, many African countries, including Nigeria, have experienced continuous economic decline with the build up of debts, high inflation rates as well as declining terms of trade. As a result of these massive debts and unfavourable terms of trade with the rest of the world, most African countries were largely excluded from the globalised economy, or included only on deeply unequal terms. Thus, due to economic decline governments were unable to fulfil promises of creating more jobs, enhancing wages and improving public infrastructure. In this context the working class in Nigeria, and many members of what are conventionally middle class occupations, including university teachers, became disillusioned and frustrated. In other words, one effect of the economic decline has been the collapse of much of Nigeria's middle class, which no longer has access to legitimate means of wealth creation, or simply to the means of reproducing itself; in this context, academics are increasingly proletarianized and, as I have argued above, one can see the ASUU dispute, in this respect, becoming akin to a class dispute.

This also explains why the union's fight has developed from a standard industrial dispute to become one that is increasingly presented in explicitly political terms as being 'against imperialism' and against those members of the elite seen to be benefitting from 'neo-colonial' policies, in order to protect the interest of Nigerians and the economy. This latter argument will be summarised briefly under the socio-political factors affecting the disputes. However, it should be admitted that a problem arises when evaluating the impact of SAP and other such macro policies on Nigerian higher education, and that is the 'notoriously weak' information available on how funds were allocated (Alo 1991). As such, like many areas of research in Nigeria, a lack of reliable data renders empirical investigation problematic and critics are often forced to have recourse to anecdotal evidence. Thus, as with other depictions of union activities, it is hard to really know who said what or what bargains were struck behind the scenes. This is one limitation with which this study has had to grapple by using both primary and documentary secondary data for analysis, although there are limits on what I have been able to establish with certainty in this respect.

9.2.2: Non-Economic Aspects of the Dispute

- ***Historical Antecedents***

I have argued, particularly in the context of the historical analyses provided in chapters 2 and 8, that the crisis in Nigerian universities can be understood as being related, in important ways, to the characteristics of the class struggle and experience during the colonial and immediate post-colonial era. I have noted, for example, continuities between the current situation and the colonial one: for example, the problem of higher education began in the colonial era by the British's restriction of access to higher education until 1934 when the Yaba College of Education was established, followed by the establishment of the University of Ibadan in 1948. The Nigerian government until 1998 (when the National Policy on Education was designed) had no clear-cut strategy regarding what higher education was meant to achieve except for the institutions and structures that were handed over to the Nigerian state from the colonial government. This failure of the government to develop and successfully implement a coherent educational policy in Nigeria after the end of the British colonial rule inspired union leaders in the educational sector to begin to question the commitment of the government to education (Ifedili and Ojogwu, 1997:12). The government spelt out the objectives of tertiary education in section 6 of the National Policy on Education (NPE, 1998).

Yet placing the laudable objectives outlined in this document alongside the government's treatment of education suggests that there remains a significant gap between promise and reality. Under the prevailing circumstances of rising student enrolment, poor budgetary allocation to education, brain drain, resource misallocation, politicization of scholarships and bursaries, and the wider political crisis, it becomes doubtful whether Nigeria can build the intellectual capacity of its citizens as this policy states. How well a university is able to achieve its set objectives is a function of several factors. The university exists in a socio-political, historical and cultural environment. It is not insulated from the forces that shape society or the character of those who manage its affairs. It follows, therefore, that the success or otherwise of a university is inextricably linked with forces working within, around and about it. Situating these factors in the Nigerian context, one must conclude that the crisis of the universities in Nigeria is a reflection of the crisis of the larger society.

Another specific historical factor is the colonial legacy of *ethnicity* and *regionalism*. Since Nigeria obtained independence from Britain in 1960, the country has been riddled with political instability as evidenced by several military coups (actual and attempted), by ethno-regional violence and by religious conflicts. The idea of regionalism in governance was shaped in important ways by the British presence and it has also shaped the establishment and governance of universities in Nigeria including the structure and organisation of the union's activities today. Moreover, as we have seen, the government has been able to use tensions in the federal system in Nigeria as a means of resisting calls for the implementation of national pay agreements.

- ***Government Interference in University Governance:***

The erosion of university autonomy by the military and the usurpation of senate powers were also among the effects of this crisis-bound context, and were factors which were critical to the establishment of ASUU in 1978 and which marked the beginning of the union's militancy in trade disputes (see also chapter 6). Even after the Universities Miscellaneous Provisions Amendment Act 2003 gave adequate powers to the University Council and the Senate of respective institutions, the issue of the appointment and removal of Vice Chancellors and Members of Academic staff remained highly politicised at both federal and state levels. The government through its regulatory agencies, JAMB and NUC still determines academic standards and criteria relating to the admission of students, the establishment and accreditation of courses as well as the content of university curriculum.

- ***Wider Political Struggles:***

As suggested, findings reveal that, over the years, the disputes between the union and the government took on a wider political dimension, moving from a profoundly economic one focussed on emolument and working conditions to a concern with more political and national issues that have affected higher education. ASUU's wider political position has come to include an explicit stance against neo-colonialism and imperialism. At least in some respects, the union, or at least some key activists within it, saw the government as a collaborator with Western intervention in the political and economic development of Nigeria. For example, the union, claiming to be protecting the interests of the Nigerian citizens, has constantly challenged the neo-liberal policies of the government, especially those of the SAP era which led to a massive build-up of debts, high inflation rates, currency devaluation and privatization policies that led to or promoted illicit wealth

accumulation by the ruling class. As suggested above, these events have had a directly material impact on the position of academics and this in itself has been a factor in the disputes. At the same time, these events have been part of a context in which the dispute has moved from a focus on simply 'material' issues, and has become overtly political.

ASUU's ability to contend with the government regarding its demands and those categorised as being in the interest of the public was also affected by the weak legitimacy of the inherited type of governance. Nigeria cannot boast its own model of governance. Even state creation was externally determined and occurred without consideration of differences in cultural and ethnic identities. The Nigerian state, therefore, lacks fundamental legitimacy in the process of seeking political power, not being based on the mandate of the electorate. This 'weak legitimacy' has manifested itself in several ways, including the rigging of elections, the manipulation of census figures, the imposition of candidates for political office, large scale corruption and nepotism. The point here is that the weak legitimacy of the state undermines the power and right of the electorate (including the unions) to demand certain changes in the polity should they become necessary. In essence, weak legitimacy leads to lack of commitment to the "social contract", and this may have partly accounted for the nonchalance and delaying tactics of the government in resolving the disputes between it and ASUU, and to the Union's increasingly vocal challenge to the state itself.

Another similar factor which has motivated the union's industrial action is the exploitation of oil wealth by politicians for personal use (i.e. prebendalism). ASUU has thus repeatedly argued that if a fraction of the nation's extorted resources were diverted to the educational sector, the deterioration of facilities in Nigerian universities could be arrested. But as various theorists have noted, the abundance of resources in a nation can also attract external intervention from the international community. As has been argued, ASUU's increasingly explicit anti-imperialist position has sought to challenge what the union presents as a neo-colonisation of Nigeria by organisations and companies originating in the 'developed' world. Corruption and exploitation have adversely affected every facet of the Nigerian society including university governance. Nigerian political leaders, especially those of the military regimes almost ran the state to collapse, with significant levels of corruption and embezzlement of public funds. Corruption, at least from the Nigerian perspective, has not only been the result of greed or self interest, but has been a tool which the military used to acquire and consolidate power after the British rule. Since then, such

practices have eaten deeply into the very fabric of the Nigerian society including, indeed, in academia as is suggested by the various reported malpractices of academic staff.

9.3 General Conclusions:

In summary therefore, the industrial disputes between the union and the government have been shaped by several factors, both *economic* and *political*, deriving from the wider social and historical context in Nigeria. The economic factors can be found in poor remuneration leading to brain drain, poor budgetary allocations and financial misappropriations, rising student population, infrastructural neglect as well as economic declines due to structural adjustment. The political factors affecting the disputes include the shifts in the government's industrial relations policy as well as the colonial legacies of ethnicity, regionalism, neo-patrimonialism and corruption which have further negative influences on education and the socio-political development of the country. The oppressive and undemocratic style of successive military regimes and the relationship of successive government with external agencies has also become a critical question. With the prevalence of these deep-seated factors, the dispute between ASUU and the government remains far from being resolved.

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APPENDICES:

Appendix 1: -University Lecturer/Student Ratios in Selected Countries.

Country	Lecturers	Students	Ratio
Ethiopia	1,440	26,415	1:18
Kenya	4,392	35,421	1:8
Nigeria	12,395	236,261	1:19
South Africa	13,326	380,184	1:28.5
Zimbabwe	1,618	13,045	1:8
Mexico	72,742	125,207	1:7
Brazil	172,828	1,716,263	1:10
United Kingdom	97,274	923,878	1:9
Germany	243,303	1,856,542	1:7.6
UNESCO Norm			1:10

Source: Adapted from Oni, B. (2008) 'Capacity Building Effort and Brain Drain in Nigerian Universities', *NISER-Ibadan Nigeria*

Appendix 2: Post-Independence Government Regimes in Nigeria.

Duration	Name of Head	Type	Reason for Ending
1 October 1963 to 16 January 1966	Nnamdi Azikiwe	Civilian	Deposed
16 January 1966 to 29 July 1966	Maj. General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi	Military	Assassinated
1 August 1966 to 29 July 1975	General Yakubu Gowon	Military	Deposed
29 July 1975 to 13 February 1976	General Murtala Mohammed	Military	Assassinated
13 February 1976 to 1 October 1979	General Olusegun Obasanjo	Military	Hand-over to civilian rule
1 October 1979 to 31 December 1983	Shehu Shagari	Civilian	Deposed
31 December 1983 to 27 August 1985	Muhammadu Buhari	Military	Deposed
27 August 1985 to 26 August 1993	General Ibrahim Babangida	Military	Resigned
26 August 1993 to 17 November 1993	Ernest Adegunle Oladeinde Shonekan	Interim	Deposed
17 November 1993 to 8 June 1998	General Sani Abacha	Military	Died in Office
8 June 1998 to 29 May 1999	General Abdulsalmi Abubakar	Military	Hand-over to civilian rule
29 May 1999 to 29 May 2007	General Olusegun Obasanjo	Civilian	End of Term
29 May 2007 to May 2009	Umaru Yar'Adua	Civilian	Died in Office
05 May 2009 to Present	Dr Goodluck Jonathan	Civilian	Elected

Appendix 3: Education budget as a percentage of total budget estimates 1994-2009.

YEAR	TOTAL BUDGET (IN BILLION NAIRA)	ALLOCATION TO EDUCATION (IN BILLION NAIRA)	PERCENTAGE ALLOCATION TO EDUCATION (%)
1994	69.3	10.3	14.87
1995	111.45	12.7	11.42
1996	127.47	15.35	12.33
1997	243	16.84	6.93
1998	240.5	23.66	9.84
1999	299	27.71	9.27
2000	598	64.51	10.78
2001	894.2	72.95	8.16
2002	840	82.09	9.77
2003	1,446	78.95	5.45
2004	1,189	93.76	7.88
2005	1,618	120.03	7.42
2006	1,900	166.6	8.77
2007	2,390	188	7.86
2008	2,748	210	7.64
2009	2,870	216.6	7.55

Source: FME (Various years), CBN (2005), BOF (Various years)

Appendix 4: Perceptions Regarding Financial Provision for Universities.

S/N	Items	Agree	%	Disagree	%
1.	Inadequate financial support from the government	176	88	24	12
2.	Inadequate internally generated revenue	152	76	48	24
3.	Erratic allocation of funds	167	83.5	33	16.5
4.	Lack of instructional facilities	183	91.5	17	8.5
Average %			84.7		15.3

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Appendix 5: Perceptions regarding provision of facilities in the universities.

S/N	Items	Agree	%	Disagree	%
5.	Shortage of conducive offices for academic staff	173	80.5	27	13.5
6.	Shortage of instructional materials	159	79.5	41	20.5
7.	Inadequate classrooms	176	88	24	12
8.	Inadequate laboratory facilities	147	73.5	53	26.5
9.	Epileptic supply of electricity	165	82.5	35	17.5
10.	Inadequate water supply	153	76.5	47	23.5
11.	Lack of good road network	148	74	52	26
12.	Lack of information network services	141	70.5	59	29.5
Average %			78.9		21.1

Appendix 6: Perceptions regarding maintenance of facilities in the universities.

S/N	Items	Agree	%	Disagree	%
13.	Inadequate monitoring of facilities by university authority	185	92.5	15	7.5
14.	Lack of matching facilities with students enrolment	162	81	38	19
15.	Poor administration of facilities	143	71.5	57	28.5
16.	Lack of repairs to the damaged facilities	137	68.5	63	31.5
17.	Destruction of facilities during students crises	179	89.5	21	10.5
18.	Lack of maintenance culture	182	91	18	9
Average %			82.3		17.7

Source: Babatope, B.A (2010:041-042), "Problems of facilities in South-West Nigerian universities and the way forward", *Journal of Education, Administration and Policy Studies. Vol 2 (2), pp.039-043, March,2010*

Appendix 7: Perception of the -level of adequacy of facilities in Nigerian Universities.

Universities	Facilities	Classroom	Volume of books in Library	Adequacy of computers	Adequacy of Laboratories
UNIBEN	Observed	146	721	150	
	Expected	289	500,000	2,890	
	% Adequacy	50.52	0.144	5.19	
	Chi-square cal.	175.53	1996649.95	8344.29	
	Chi-square cirt.	7.81	7.81	7.81	
	Standard dev.	25.68	301.02	167.58	
UNIPORT	Observed	154	634	250	
	Expected	239	500,000	2387	
	% Adequacy	64.44	0.127	10.47	
	Chi-square cal.	175.53	1996649.95	8344.29	
	Chi-square cirt.	7.81	7.81	7.81	
	Standard dev.	25.68	301.02	167.58	

Source: NUC Field Work (2007/2008) cited in Oyeniya, O.L (2010:01-06), ‘Analysis of the Educational Facilities in Southern Universities in Nigeria’, *Academic Leadership Journal, Volume 8, Issue 2.*

Appendix 8: List of Federal Government Universities in Nigeria as at July, 2009.

	Year
Federal Universities	Established
1 Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi	1988
2 Ahmadu Bello University Zaria	1962
3 Bayero University Kano	1975
4 Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun	2007
5 Federal University of Technology, Yola	1981
6 Federal University of Technology, Akure	1981
7 Federal University of Technology, Minna	1982
8 Federal University of Technology, Owerri	1980
9 Micheal Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike	1992
10 National Open University of Nigeria, Lagos	2002
11 Nigerian Defense Academy, Kaduna	1985
12 Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka	1992
13 Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife	1962
14 University of Abuja, Gwagwalada	1988
15 University of Agriculture, Abeokuta	1988
16 University of Agriculture, Makurdi	1988
17 University of Benin	1970
18 University of Calabar	1975
19 University of Ibadan	1948
20 University of Ilorin	1975
21 University of Jos	1975
22 University of Lagos	1962
23 University of Maiduguri	1975
24 University of Nigeria Nsukka	1960
25 University of Port Harcourt	1975
26 University of Uyo	1991
27 Usman Dan Fodio University	1975

Source: NUC Monday Bulletin, 20th July, 2009 cited in Ajadi (2010:17)

Appendix 9: List of State Government Universities as at July, 2009.

	State Universities	Year Established
1	Abia State University Uturu	1981
2	Adamawa State University, Mubi	2002
3	Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba	1999
4	Akwa Ibom State University of Technology, Uyo	2005
5	Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma	1980
6	Anambra State University of Science & Tech, Uli	2000
7	Benue State University, Makurdi	1992
8	Bukar Abba Ibrahim University, Yobe	2006
9	Cross River State University of Science & Tech, Calabar	2004
10	Delta State University, Abraka	1992
11	Ebonyi State University Abakaliki	2000
12	Enugu State University of Science and Tech, Enugu	1982
13	Gombe State University, Gombe	2004
14	Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida University, Lapai Niger State	2005
15	Imo State University, Owerri	1992
16	Kaduna State University, Kaduna	2004
17	Kano State University of Technology, Wudil	2000
18	Umar Musa Yar-Adua University Katsina	2006
19	Kebbi State University, Kebbi	2006
20	Kogi State University, Anyigba	1999
21	Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomosho	1990
22	Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos	1983
23	Nasarawa State University, Keffi	2002
24	Niger Delta University Yenagoa	2000
25	Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago- Iwoye	1982
26	Osun State University, Oshogbo	2006
27	Plateau State University, Bokokos	2005
28	Rivers State University of Science & Technology	1979
29	Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijebu Ode	2005
30	University of Ado-Ekiti	1982
31	University of Education, Ikere-Ekiti	2008
32	Ondo State University of Science & Tech. Okiti Pupa	2008
33	Taraba State University, Jalingo	2008
34	Kwara State University, Ilorin	2009
35	Sokoto State University	2009

Source: NUC Monday Bulletin, 20th July, 2009 cited in Ajadi (2010:17)

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Appendix 10: List of Licensed Private Universities in Nigeria and year established.

	Name of Private University	Year Established
1	Abti-American University, Yola	2003
2	Achievers University, Owo	2007
3	African University of Science & Technology, Abuja	2007
4	Ajayi Crowther University, Ibadan	2005
5	Al-Hikman University, Ilorin	2005
6	Babcock University, Illisan-Remo	1999
7	Bells University of Technology, Otta	2005
8	Benson Idahosa University, Benin City	2002
9	Bingham University, Jos	2005
10	Bowen University, Iwo	2001
11	Caleb University, Lagos	2007
12	Caritas University, Enugu	2005
13	CETEP City University, Lagos	2005
14	Covenant University, Otta	2002
15	Crawford University, Igbesa	2005
16	Crescent University, Abeokuta	2005
17	Fountain University, Oshogbo	2007
18	Igbinedion University, Okada	1999
19	Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji-Arakeji Osun State	2006
20	Lead City University, Ibadan	2005
21	Madonna University, Okija	1999
22	Novena University, Ogume, Delta State	2005
23	Obong Universities, Obong Ntak	2007
24	Pan African University, Lagos	2002
25	Redeemer's University, Mowe, Ogun State	2005
26	Renaissance University, Enugu	2005
27	Salem University, Lokoja	2007
28	Tansian University, Umunya	2007
29	University of Mkar, Mkar	2005
30	Veritas University, Abuja	2007
31	Wesley University of Science and Tech, Ondo	2007
32	Western Delta University, Oghara	2007
33	Wukari Jubilee University	2005
34	African University of Science & Technology, Abuja	2007

Source: NUC Monday Bulletin, 23rd March, 2009 cited in Ajadi (2010:19).

Appendix 11: Timeline of Nigerian History

Timeline of Events in Nigeria

Year	Event
Colonial Era	
1880-1905	Southern Nigeria was conquered by the British.
1901-1902	The Aro Confederacy declined after the Anglo-Aro war.
1903	British conquered most of Northern Nigeria including the Sokoto Caliphate.
1912	Lord Lugard, governor of Northern Nigeria established a system of indirect rule.
1914	Northern Nigeria and Southern Nigeria were amalgamated to form Nigeria by Lord Lugard.
1925 (March)	A memorandum on Education Policy in British Tropical Africa was dispatched to the colonies as the basis for the British colonial education policy.
1934	Establishment of the First higher education in Nigeria, Yaba College of Technology
1936	Establishment of the Nigerian Youth Movement.
1946-1960	Growth of nationalist movement.
1948	University of Ibadan was established as part of University of London (later became the University of the Western Region)
1950	The conference of northern and southern delegates held in Ibadan.
1952	Education Ordinance was introduced so as to enable each of the three newly created (Eastern, Western and Northern) regions to develop its educational policies and systems.
1953	The London conference, regarding Nigeria's federal formula, took place.
1957	Constitutional conference held in Nigeria.
1959	Nigeria held its first national election to setup an independent government.
Post-colonial Era	
1960 (October 1 st)	Nigeria gains her independence from Britain; Tafawa Balewa became Prime Minister, and Nnamdi Azikiwe became President.
1962	University of Ibadan became full university of its own.
1962	University of Nigeria, Nsukka was established as the Eastern Regional University.
1962	National University Commission was established (NUC).
1963	The First Nigerian Republic constituted.
1964	The First civilian-to-civilian national election.
1964	Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) was established as the University of the North.

1965	National Association of University Teachers was established (NAUT).
1966 (January 15 th)	Nigeria's first military coup deposed the Nigerian First Republic and Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa was assassinated along with the premier of Northern Nigeria, Ahmadu Bello, and the Finance Minister, Festus Okotie-Eboh.
1966 (January 16 th)	The Federal Military Government was formed, with General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi as the Head of State and Supreme Commander of the Federal Republic.
1966 (July 29 th)	A counter-coup by military officers of northern extraction, deposed the Federal Military Government; General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi was assassinated along with Adekunle Fajuyi, Military Governor of Western Region. General Yakubu Gowon became Head of State
1967	Ethno-religious violence between Igbo Christians, and Hausa/Fulani Muslims in Eastern and Northern Nigeria, triggered migration of the Igbo back to the East.
1967 (May 30 th)	General Emeka Ojukwu, Military Governor of Eastern Nigeria, declared his province an independent republic (Biafra) and the Nigerian-Biafran War started.
1967	The Federal Military Government of Nigeria enacted Decree No. 14 of 1967, with which it created twelve states out of the existing four regions (West, Mid-West, North and East)
1970 (January 8 th)	General Emeka Ojukwu fled into exile; His deputy Philip Effiong became acting President of Biafra
January 15, 1970	Acting President of Biafra, Philip Effiong surrendered to Nigerian forces through future President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo, and Biafra was reintegrated into Nigeria.
1970	The establishment of University of Benin
1973	The first industrial conflict in Nigerian universities under NAUT to demand salary increase.
1975	General Yakubu Gowon overthrown in a bloodless coup; General Murtala Mohammed became the Head of State.
1975	The establishment of the 2 nd generation Universities: Sokoto, Ilorin, Jos, Calabar, Maiduguri, Kano and Port Harcourt.
1975	The abolishing of tuition fees in federal universities.
1976 (February 13 th)	General Murtala Mohammed assassinated; his deputy, Lieutenant-General Olusegun Obasanjo became Head of State, and sets 1979 as date to terminate military rule.
1978	Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) was established (replacing NAUT).
1979	Shehu Shagari won the election and became the first Executive-President of the Second Republic.
1979-1983	The establishment of the 3 rd generation universities (both federal and state-run).
1980-1986	Dr. Mahmud Tukur became ASUU President
1980-1981	ASUU struggle with the Alhaji Shehu Shagari administration over salaries, funding, autonomy and academic freedom.
1983	President Shehu Shagari won reelection.
1983 (December 31 st)	President Shehu Shagari's government was ejected from power in a palace coup; The Second Republic ends; General Muhammadu

- Buhari became Head of State, and Chairman of the Supreme Military Council of Nigeria.
- 1984 (April 17th) The Buhari regime promulgated Decree No. 4, the "Public Officer's Protection Against False Accusation" Decree, which made it an offence to ridicule the government by publication of false information.
- 1985 (August) General Muhammadu Buhari was overthrown in a palace coup; General Ibrahim Babangida became Head of State and President of the Armed Forces Ruling Council of Nigeria.
- 1986-1988 Dr. Festus Iyayi became ASUU President.
- 1986 Mobile Police murder Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) students in an operation called 'kill and go'.
- 1986 Ibrahim Babagida administration accuses ASUU of attempting to topple its military regime.
- 1986 Abisoye Panel was established to terminate the appointment of some ABU lecturers who were teaching for teaching material that was not approved.
- 1987 Prof. Jibril Aminu, (Minister of Education) dismissed Dr. Festus Iyayi and Dr. B. Agbonifoh who were branch executive members of University of Benin for their opposition to imposition of the Vice Chancellor Grace Alele Williams.
- 1987 ASUU went on strike to demand for the implementation of Elongated University Salary Scale (EUSS), greater university autonomy and the establishment of a joint negotiation committee between ASUU and the federal government of Nigeria.
- 1988-1994 Dr. Attahiru Jega became ASUU President.
- 1988 Babagida administration disaffiliate ASUU from Nigeria Labour Congress to weaken ASUU as a union by Decree No. 26 of 1988.
- 1990 ASUU was de-proscribed by Decree No. 36 of 1990, which revoked the proscription of ASUU.
- 1990 (April) Middle Belt Christian officers, led by Major Gideon Okar, attempted to overthrow Ibrahim Babangida in an unsuccessful coup.
- 1992 Two political parties, Social Democratic Party (SDP) and National Republican Convention (NRC) are established as part of President Ibrahim Babangida's attempt to return to Civilian rule. Primary elections were annulled.
- 1993 (June 12th) MKO Abiola won the Presidential election; President Ibrahim Babangida annulled the election.
- 1993 (August 26th) President Ibrahim Babangida stepped down due to pressure from the Armed Forces Ruling Council. Ernest Shonekan assumed power as the Interim Head of State.
- 1993 (November 17th) Ernest Shonekan was forced to resign from office. Defence Minister, Sani Abacha became Head of State, and established the Provisional Ruling Council of Nigeria.
- 1994-200 Dr. Assisi Asobie became ASUU President.
- 1995 (March 13th) The Abacha administration arrested former Head of State, Olusegun Obasanjo for allegedly supporting a secret coup plot.
- 1995 (November 10th) Human and Environmental rights activist, Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni activists were hanged by the Sani Abacha administration.

1998 (June 8 th)	Head of State, Sani Abacha died from a heart attack; Abdulsalami Abubakar became Head of State, and Chairman of the Provisional Ruling Council of Nigeria; The Abubakar administration lifted the ban on political activities, and initiated one-year transition to return to civilian rule.
1998	ASUU signed reached a consensus with the Abdulsalami Abubakar Regime.
1998 (June 15 th)	Former Head of State, Olusegun Obasanjo was released from prison.
1999 (February 10 th)	Former Head of State, Olusegun Obasanjo won the Presidential election.
1999 (May 29 th)	The Nigerian Fourth Republic was inaugurated. Olusegun Obasanjo was sworn in as the second Executive President of Nigeria.
1999	University ownership was deregulated.
1999 (December 19 th)	President Obasanjo ordered military troops to raid the town of Odi in the Niger Delta, in response to the murder of twelve policemen by local militia; the troops razed the town.
2000-2004	Dr. Oladipo Fashina became ASUU President.
2000	Sharia law was established in the predominantly Muslim Zamfara state; Eleven other states in the north soon followed suit.
2000 (May)	Religious riots erupt in Kaduna over the implementation of Sharia law.
2000 (June 5 th)	The Obasanjo administration established the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) to tackle the human and ecological issues in the Niger Delta region of southern Nigeria.
2001	ASUU embarked on strike to demand the implementation of the 1999 agreement.
2001	49 lecturers of University of Ilorin were sacked for their role in 2001 industrial action.
2001	Education Tax Fund was established.
2002 (October 10 th)	The International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled against Nigeria in favor of Cameroon over the disputed oil-rich Bakassi peninsula territory.
2002	Religious riots erupted over the Miss World pageant hosted in Abuja; The pageant was subsequently moved to London.
2003	ASUU sponsored the University Miscellaneous Provisions (Amendment) Act 2003.
2003 (April)	President Olusegun Obasanjo won reelection as president.
2003 (May 29 th)	President Olusegun Obasanjo was sworn in for a second term as president.
2004-2008	Dr. Sule Kano became ASUU President.
2004	Ethno-religious violence erupts in Plateau State; President Obasanjo declared a state of emergency in the state.
2006 (May 16 th)	The National Assembly of Nigeria voted against a constitutional amendment to remove term limits; President Obasanjo is prevented from contesting a third term in office.
2006 (June 13 th)	President Olusegun Obasanjo met with his Cameroonian counterpart Paul Biya, and UN Secretary General, Kofi Anan in New York to resolve dispute talks over Bakassi.
2006	Nigerian troops begin to pull out of Bakassi; Bakassi became Cameroonian territory.

2007	The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) released the names of 24 candidates for the presidential elections. Vice President Atiku Abubakar was excluded from the list.
2007 (April 21 st)	Umaru Yar'Adua, Governor of Katsina State, was elected as the President of Nigeria.
2007 (May 29 th)	Umaru Yar'Adua was sworn in as President of Nigeria.
2008-present	Prof. Ukachukwu A. Awuzie became ASUU president.
2010 (May 5 th)	President Umaru Yar'Adua died in office.
2010 (May 6 th)	President Goodluck Jonathan was sworn in as President of Federal Republic of Nigeria.
2011 (April 16 th)	President Goodluck Jonathan won the presidential election in Nigeria.
2011 (May 29 th)	President Goodluck Jonathan was sworn in as the present President of Federal Republic of Nigeria.