

THE NATIONAL

SCHOLAR



A PUBLICATION OF THE ACADEMIC STAFF UNION OF UNIVERSITIES (ASUU) AUGUST, 2025 VOL. 16 No 3. N1000



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OUR MISSION

The National Scholar is the official news magazine of Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), published with the goal of setting agenda for public discourse on contemporary issues of general interest. Our mission is multifaceted, yet unified by an unwavering commitment to upholding the principles of humanism, academic freedom, promoting intellectual discourse, and advancing the cause of higher education in Nigeria.

At the core of our endeavors lies a steadfast dedication to fostering an environment conducive to rigorous intellectual inquiry and critical analysis. We believe that universities play a pivotal role in shaping the future of our nation, and it is our solemn duty to safeguard the integrity and autonomy of these institutions. Through our pages, we strive to ignite thought-provoking discussions on contemporary issues that impact the academic realm, seeking to influence policy decisions and raise awareness among stakeholders and the general public.

Recognising the power of creative expression in shaping narratives and fostering cultural understanding, our pages are adorned with thought-provoking poems and captivating cartoons that not only entertain but also provoke introspection and critical thinking. We believe that art and literature offer unique perspectives on the human condition, complementing our academic pursuits and enriching our collective intellectual journey.

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Materials in this publication can be produced for scholarship and enlightenment purpose. However, due acknowledgment must be given to the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Nigeria.

Please note that some views expressed in this publication are those of the individual author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official stance of ASUU.

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3.	AGUORU Celestine	Investment secretary	10.	ISA Nasir Fagge	Past President
4.	UDUK Happiness	Financial Secretary	11.	ASOBIE Assisi	Trustee
5.	ADAMU Peter	Treasurer	12.	FASHINA Oladipo	Trustee
6.	BAWA Aisha	Welfare Officer	13.	SULE-KANO Abdullahi	Trustee
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REVIVING INTELLECTUAL ACTIVISM: THE IMPERATIVE FOR ASUU'S NEW PRINCIPAL OFFICERS

On May 12, 2025, the Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities at its 23rd National Delegates Conference (NDC), held at Benin elected new Principal Officers to pilot the affairs of the Union for the next two years. The helmsman of the new team is Comrade Chris Piwuna who, until his election as President, had served the Union in different capacities including that of the Vice President. In their honor, this edition of *The National Scholar* is dedicated even as we pray that they muster the strongest resolve to crush all obstructions as they negotiate the numerous mined pathways in the country in their efforts to talk to power.

It has famously been said that when you are saddled with a particular responsibility much is expected from you. Accordingly, the Comrade Chris Piwuna-led Exco cannot be an exception. To restate the obvious: What are the trials and triumphs of the union? What efforts have

been put in place to safeguard the principles and legacies of the union? What problems structural or ideological are confronting the union? Are members of the union in all branches conversant with the principles and guidelines of the union? Are members of the union aware that the university is the target of government animosity? What steps can the union take to stop the political class and other enemies of the union from breaking the ranks of the union or derailing the union from its chosen path of orderly progress into anarchy and dissension? The number of questions begging for answers is as long as a railway line. Apparently, the new Principal Officers have a huge load on their shoulders.

But one thing is clear. The first problem staring the new ASUU leadership in the face would be the absence of a university culture among our members. Lamentably, many of our members are not familiar with the values and ideologies of ASUU. ASUU members need to know that university teachers are intellectuals and it is only the intellectual that has the capacity to put Nigeria first, to

love Nigeria, to insist that education is a right and not a privilege. It is only the intellectual that has faith in the capacity of the people to change their lives, to demonstrate that people are subjects and not just passive objects of development, to insist on certain minimum professional ethics and democratic principles, to reject a society based on corruption, to reject the rule of fear, to reveal that the children of ordinary peasants and workers have a right to free education, to insist that it is the primary responsibility of any responsible government to provide education for all its citizens. But over and above all, it is the duty of the intellectual to criticize the policy of privatization of education and the whole program of looting and plundering of our commonwealth.

Closely related to the above is the fact that ASUU, as a union, is made up of a breed of university scholars who are bright, confident, original, honest and whose simple lifestyle is a stunning contrast to the dominant imported culture associated with Nigerian leaders or the oppressors. In other words, ASUU is the only body in Nigeria that fits the honest, anti-imperialist intellectual who is armed and prepared to fight, in a certain measure, for the elimination of injustice and the mass participation of the people in the ordering of public affairs. To put it differently, ASUU's struggles and principles are deeply rooted in a particular socialist ideology. And this is a fact all ASUU members must know.

The cheering news is that Principal Officers of ASUU, both past and present, are men and women who are knowledgeable about the values and principles of the union. The most recent and clearest example was the speech delivered by one of ASUU's veteran, dogged fighter and former INEC chairman, Attahiru Jega at the 23rd NDC held at Benin. His speech did not only historicize the ASUU struggles over the years, it also drew attention to Nigeria's undemocratic principles and the fact that all Nigerian leaders --- military or civilian--- have

an anti-intellectual culture. It is gratifying to note that Attahiru Jega's paper is published in this edition for your consumption.

The obvious implication of these legacies and principles is that it is only when our members act in accordance with the principles and values of ASUU that our union shall become a formidable force that can wage war against many other diversionary forces and the oppressor. For example, it is only when we act in accordance with the principles of ASUU that we can put Vice chancellors in check on our campuses. It is only when members abide



by ASUU principles that we can compel the political class to take education and the common man seriously. It is only then that we can defend our union against crass opportunism and all other forces that are pledged to dismantle our humanity.

From the foregoing argument it becomes clear that the new ASUU leadership has a onerous

task. Their first task would be to revive the culture of intellectual activism among our members. The second task of the new EXCO would be to provide training and orientation for and among all branch EXCOS and their other branch officers. It is hoped that such a move will revive not only ASUU'S culture of leftist radicalism but the creative glory of our union. Another way to achieve all these is to appeal to all branch chairmen to regularly educate their members about the principles and other ethical guidelines of ASUU. Finally, it is hoped that all these can be achieved when ASUU members imbibe the culture of attending branch meetings regularly and by studying the union's constitution and principles. In all these, one thing is certain: it is the desire of the oppressor to divide our union, once we are united the oppressor will choke on their own fear.

ALUTA CONTINUA
Comrade Jeff Godwin Doki

ASUU ELECTS NEW LEADERSHIP AT THE 23RD NATIONAL DELEGATES CONFERENCE: CHRIS PIWUNA EMERGES PRESIDENT, PROMISES RENEWED COMMITMENT AND ATTENTION TO EDUCATION AND NATIONAL STRUGGLES

KANANG AMOS AKIMS



Chris Piwuna giving his acceptance speech after emerging as ASUU President. To his right is the Immediate Past President, Emmanuel Osodeke. To his left are The Newly Elected Vice President, Austen Sado, and Treasurer, Peter Adamu.

The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has elected a new set of principal officers to steer the affairs of the Union, with Comrade Chris Piwuna emerging as President. The election took place at the Union's 23rd National Delegates Conference (NDC), held from May 8 to 11, 2025, at the University of Benin, Edo State.

Piwuna, from the University of Jos, succeeds Comrade Emmanuel Osodeke of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. Prior to his election, Piwuna served the union in various capacities namely: financial Secretary UNIJOS, Chairman UNIJOS, National Internal Auditor and as ASUU's Vice President.

In his acceptance speech, the newly elected ASUU President expressed gratitude to members for the trust and confidence

reposed in him, describing the election as an opportunity to “continue to build the union from where the array of the past leaders of the Union have brought us to.” He emphasized that the strength of the Union lies in its members, who remain “the most important part of the struggle.”

Comrade Piwuna also reaffirmed ASUU's commitment not only to the welfare of university staff but also to broader national issues, including poverty, corruption, and the persistent underfunding of education in Nigeria. “Our struggle must reflect the aspirations of the people,” he said. “We cannot isolate the collapse of the education system from the wider decay in the country.”

Other principal officers elected at the conference include Austen Sado as Vice President, Happiness Uduak as Financial Secretary, Peter Adamu as Treasurer, Aisha Bawa as Welfare Secretary, Celestine Aguoru as

Investment Secretary, and Kasim Umar as Internal Auditor.

The new leadership takes over at a turbulent time for Nigeria's public university system, amid growing frustrations over the government's failure to implement key agreements. Chief among the unresolved issues is the 2009 ASUU–Federal Government Agreement, which, 16 years after signing, remains largely unfulfilled. Besides, the renegotiation of the agreement, which began in 2017 and reached a critical review stage in 2021 under the Nimi Briggs Committee, has since stalled. The delay in implementing the agreement - which covers funding for revitalization, lecturers' remuneration, university autonomy, and improved working conditions - has been a major source of conflict and industrial disharmony in Nigeria's university system over the years.

Stakeholders across the education sector are likely to observe the transition in ASUUs leadership with keen interest anticipating that the Unions long standing advocacy for enhanced university funding, institutional autonomy and improved conditions of service will be reinvigorated under Chris Piwuna's stewardship.

Kanang Amos Akims is the Editor in Chief of TNS.

THE NEW PRINCIPAL OFFICERS OF ASUU



Christopher G. Piwuna

University: *University of Jos,
Plateau State-Nigeria.*

Academic Discipline:
Psycho-Geriatrics

Present Position: *President*

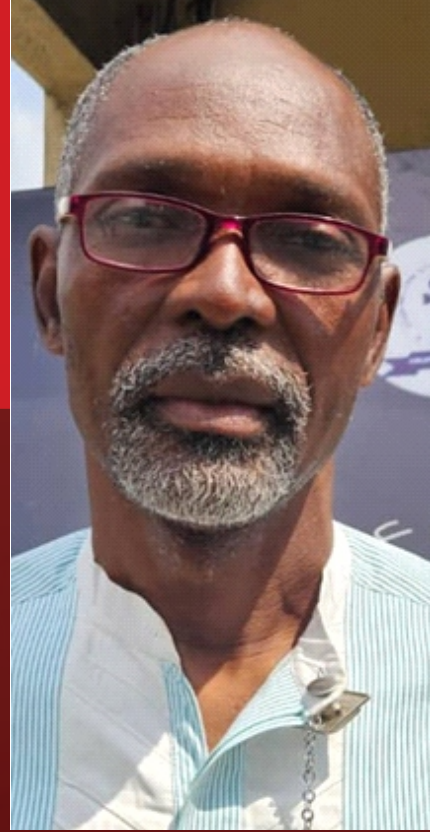
Previous Positions Held:

*Vice President (2021 - 2025);
Internal Auditor*

(2018 - 2021);

*Chairperson - ASUU UNIJOS
(2015 - 2018);*

*Financial Secretary -ASUU
UNIJOS (2013 - 2015).*



Austen A. Sado

University: *University of
Port Harcourt, Rivers
State-Nigeria.*

Academic Discipline: *Political
Communication and
Media Ethics*

Present Position: *Vice President*

Previous Positions Held:

*Investment Secretary
(2021 - 2025);*

*Chairperson - ASUU
UNIPOINT (2016 - 2021)*

THE NEW PRINCIPAL OFFICERS OF ASUU



Celestine Aguoru

University: *Federal University of Agriculture Makurdi (now Joseph Saruwuan Tarka University, Makurdi)*

Academic Discipline:
Plant Science and Biotechnology

Present Position:
Investment Secretary

Previous Positions Held:
Resource Person (2021-2025); Chairperson ASUU-FUAM (2010 -2014); Vice Chairperson ASUU-FUAM (2008 – 2010); PRO ASUU-FUAM (2004 -2008).



Happiness Uduk

University: *University of Uyo, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State - Nigeria*

Academic Discipline:
Sociolinguistics & Semantics

Present Position:
Financial Secretary

Previous Positions Held:
Zonal Coordinator, Calabar Zone (2023-2025); Chairperson ASUU-UNIUYO (2020 -2023); Acting Chairperson ASUU-UNIUYO (2019 – 2020); Vice Chairperson ASUU-UNIUYO (2018 – 2019); Treasurer ASUU-UNIUYO (2013 – 2018); Assistant Secretary ASUU-UNIUYO (2006 – 2009).



Peter Adamu

University: *Kaduna State University, Kaduna - Nigeria*

Academic Discipline:
International Economics

Present Position: *Treasurer*

Previous Positions Held:
Chairperson ASUU-KASU (2021 -2025); Secretary ASUU-KASU (2017 - 2021); Financial Secretary ASUU-KASU (2013 -2017).

THE NEW PRINCIPAL OFFICERS OF ASUU



Aisha Balarabe Bawa

University: *Usman Danfodiyo
University, Sokoto.*

Academic Discipline:
*African History, Politics
and Gender Studies*

Present Position:
Welfare Officer

Previous Positions Held:
*Welfare officer
(2023 -2025);
Resource Person
(2021 -2023).
Vice Chairperson UDUS
(2016 - 2021);*



Kasim Umar

University: *University of Abuja*
Academic discipline: *Public Administration
with Specialization in Public Policy
Analysis and Governance*

Present Position: *Internal Auditor*

Previous Positions Held:
*Chairperson ASUU UNIABUJA
(2018-2023)
Vice Chairperson ASUU UNIABUJA
(2014-2018)*

16-YEAR STALEMATE OVER 2009 FGN/ASUU AGREEMENT

In this no-holds-barred conversation with The National Scholar, Comrade Chris Piwuna, President of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), lays bare the long-running saga of the 2009 FGN/ASUU Agreement - a document that has become emblematic of government neglect and is locked in a cycle of protracted renegotiation and industrial unrest. This enduring stalemate has profound implications for the quality of Nigerian public universities, the morale of academic staff, and the future of millions of students. The Comrade President offers a blunt and uncompromising assessment, alleging calculated obstruction by key government bureaucracies, political indifference, and the influence of external financial institutions. He dissects the contentious issues: the withheld salaries from the 2022 strike, the ongoing battle over Earned Academic Allowances (EAA), the critical need for revitalization funding, the controversial Nigeria Education Loan Fund (NELFUND), and the damaging proliferation of universities.

Beyond the specific grievances, this interview explores fundamental philosophical divides: the government's perceived failure to recognize education as a public good and the essential driver of national development versus ASUU's unwavering stance on adequate funding, university autonomy, and the sanctity of collective bargaining. A time to turn around the fortunes of the 16 year struggle over the 2009 FGN/ASUU Agreement.

Excerpts ...

TNS: Congratulations Comrade President on your emergence as the new leader of ASUU. How do you feel being at the helm of affairs of ASUU?

CP: Thank you very much for the opportunity to have this conversation with The National Scholar; one of our stables. To your question, I feel humbled with a tinge of anxiety. Humbled that my

comrades were in agreement that I, along with the other elected officials, could carry on with the collective aspirations of our members, and anxious knowing the depth of the challenges

TNS: Sixteen years on, the 2009 FGN/ASUU Agreement still drags. Is this not a deliberate ploy to wear ASUU down?

CP: Yes it looks so. The renegotiation of the 2009



Chris Piwuna

FGN/ASUU Agreement is perhaps one that will go into the Guinness Book of Records. The negotiations leading to the 2009 Agreement started around 2007. Our union's engagement with government did not just take two years to yield results; it also involved a strike action and a threat of another strike to get the 2009 agreement signed.

To get the 2009 Agreement implemented was an uphill task. The union had to go on another strike together with several threats of strike to get government to implement it. The famous action that the government took on the 2009 agreement came after the 2013 strike. This led to government releasing N200 billion. It has been 16 years and we are still stuck in renegotiating that document. So what could be government's reasons for still dragging on? Do they have

any good reason for not renegotiating or for not keeping to the terms of the agreement? Certainly not. The government's actions suggest a deliberate ploy to kill that agreement. In government, there are two groups of people; The first are the bureaucrats who are hell-bent on ensuring that the agreement does not see the light of day. They have a deliberate agenda to ensure that (negotiated) agreement does not come to fruition. The second group are political leaders (Ministers, members of the National Assembly) who have failed to perform their constitutional roles. There is also an unseen hand that controls these two groups; the western financial institutions and governments, the Bretton Woods Institutions as they are called. They contribute to the delay in our negotiations. So for us in the union, it is a deliberate attempt by government to ensure that the agreement does not see the light of day.

TNS: You have mentioned that a particular segment of government is hell-bent on ensuring that the negotiations are not fruitful. What do you think they stand to gain?

CP: Well, I do not even think they understand what they are losing or what their gain is. The agencies I am referring to include offices like the National Salaries, Incomes and Wages Commission, the Budget Office, and Office of the Head of Service that are

usually represented at our negotiation meetings. These offices were clearly identified as those who frustrated the Nimi Briggs Report. Despite being part of the meeting held and contributing at the meeting, they told lies about what transpired there. They reported that we forced them out of the meeting, and that in their absence decisions were taken. Concerns like these clearly stalled us from getting across the line in this issue of renegotiating the 2009 Agreement.

TNS: Is there a misunderstanding about the gains the economy stands to benefit from if our universities perform well and lecturers in the universities are well motivated?

CP: Well, I do not know whether there is a misunderstanding, as you say, because they know what they are doing. They clearly know what their objectives are. They know what their aim is. They know what they want to get from frustrating the agreement. The morale of staff, increase in wages are things that the bureaucrats themselves benefit from yet they have had us stagnated for close to 16 years.

Since the salary table from the 2009 Agreement was adopted, we have had only ectopic increases in our salaries that are unrelated to what we have in our agreement. So the government wakes up one day and decides that they

need to do this, and they act. So they cherry-pick items that they think the union is fighting for, and they implement them. That is what they are doing up to this point and it is at variance with the concept of collective bargaining.

If you consider the issue of governance in the university. They would not obey or go by what is in the agreement in terms of running our institutions based on the autonomy act that has been passed. They will dissolve councils when they want to, withhold funding or channel the funding in the direction that they want. So they obviously have no respect for the concept of collective bargaining, which is universal principle. It is not just ASUU that is asking for it. These are principles that have been agreed to globally by all governments and the labour union. Apparently, various components of the 2009 agreement have been violated repeatedly and deliberately.

TNS: Has ASUU considered seeking redress in court for the breach of agreement, or is industrial action still the only option?

CP: Well, yes, we have. But you know that there are different courts. Some courts are manned by judges and of course there is the court of public opinion. We have taken our case to the public several times. In fact, whether there is a strike or not, ASUU has always been in the court of public opinion, trying to mould views, differentiate them, and to reflect on what our struggles are. We have drawn the attention of the public to the breaches in our agreement and the lackadaisical attitude of the

government.

The fact is that the Nigerian public has a role to play in ensuring that these agreements are kept, because ultimately it is our children, the country and our educational institutions that bear the brunt. So we take it to the court of public opinion. We have not gone to the Nigerian judicial system as well to seek the enforcement of the agreement. But it's certainly an item that we have discussed even at our National Executive Council (NEC) meetings. There would be need to register agreements we enter into with the government in a court of law so we can hold them responsible. I know it is going to be another uphill task to get the courts to enforce the rules when it comes to breaches of agreements that have been registered even in court but, it's something that we are considering. But, that should even concern Nigerians. That ASUU has not rushed to the courts to register our agreement to use the law as a basis for enforcing the different items that have been agreed to tells you a lot about the public confidence in our judicial system. It tells you a lot about the confidence we have in our judges. It tells you a lot about the processes of court in the country. But, that is something that we should consider down the line.

TNS: *At the peak of the industrial action in 2022,*

there was a court ruling that ASUU should call off its strike. How did the union take that ruling?



CP: If you remembered, we went to the industrial court and the court said we should go and call off our action before the court would listen to us. We challenged the position of the court in even listening to that case that was brought by Ngige (the former minister of labour and productivity). We challenged that at the Court of Appeal and we were asked to go back and first obey what the Industrial Court had instructed, which was to call off our strike. So it was a precondition for the court to listen to us. As a law-abiding body of intellectuals being aware that in ideal circumstances the judiciary is the pillar of the democratic norms, we had to obey the court's demand and returned to work. Even though we do not have ultimate confidence in the courts we needed to

show an example. We still believe that the system can be better. We still believe that we can work things out.

TNS: *Part of the ruling from the Industrial court has to do with payment of the withheld salaries of lecturers. How does ASUU justify the demand for payment of salaries during a strike action — especially in a climate where many Nigerians are unemployed?*

CP: You know, one of the rulings of the industrial Court was that the government has the right to withhold our salaries when we are on strike. However, the court added that it is not right. So the court left it open and that the government can decide to pay or not to pay us. That was what the court said. When we obeyed the court, lecturers went back to class, completed their curriculum for that session, set exams, marked them, and compiled the results. Senates of different universities sat and approved the results.

Students have made progress in their lives based on that work that we did. They have gone for their National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) and some have completed their service year and have gained employment. So no one, either government or the courts or anybody at all, can say that any part of that job is still outstanding. We have completed it. That is one part of this with-held salaries.

Recall also that because we discovered that at every strike action embarked by ASUU, one of the key charter of demands is the earned academic allowance (EAA). At that time, the government had not paid us about N103 billion

Naira of our outstanding EAA. And the years were still counting. So that N103 billion was going to increase and it will continue to be on our charter of demands. We reminded the government that this EAA has become an albatross and suggested to them that we were willing to forfeit a part of our EAA (over N50 billion) and suggested that the EAA should be mainstreamed into our salaries to avoid backlog. They agreed with us. So we forfeited a portion of our EAA (over N50 billion of work done) to government, in addition to going back to complete the work that they are holding our salaries for. So the most reasonable thing for government to do is actually to pay us the three and a half months salaries still outstanding. If we have made these sacrifices and still carried out the work that we are supposed to do, why would they still be holding three and a half months of our salaries? This is an argument that we are not going to give up. We will continue to push this argument until every kobo of the three and a half months is paid. If not, probably at some time, our members would ask that our EAA be paid to them in full. We have shown enough good will, we have provided a way out to government on this issue but, we may get to a point that we may have to rethink this.

TNS: *It seems government has honoured part of what it said it would do. It was on*

the news lately that N50 billion was released for EAA/EA of university staff. Even though there were some kind of confusion as to whether the amount was mainly for ASUU members or all the unions in the universities. What is your comment on this?

CP: To put the record straight, government did not release N50 billion for our EAA: They only released N40 billion. We have an outstanding of N10 billion with government. We agreed to accept N40 billion out of goodwill. We are full of goodwill. We keep bending over backwards to accommodate government. Also, we deliberately took a decision in the union that we will not engage Senior Staff Association of Nigeria Universities (SSANU), Non-Academic Staff Union of Universities and Allied Institutions (NASU), or National Association of Academic Technologist (NAAT) in this argument of N50 billion.

Government has not fully kept to the agreement. The N40 billion has reached universities. As I speak to you now, there is only one university, I think, Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University that has not received it yet. So the Federal government has not fully kept their part of the agreement as usual.

TNS: *Is there an end in sight on this EAA issue?*

CP: Well, yes. We provided an end. That was why we proposed the exit. They give us N50 billion and we exit the EAA. As I am talking to you now, we have arrears of mainstreaming from January of 2025. Nobody has received it. Government has not released the funds. So they are going back into this argument of why did you kill me? I killed you because you are poor. Why are you poor? I am poor because you killed me. It is a vicious circle. But it is all in their hands.

TNS: *Besides EAA, there is also the N150 billion for revitalization that the government has promised, which is still being awaited. What mechanism is in place to ensure this does not become another unfulfilled commitment like others before it?*

CP: Since our National Delegates Conference in May 2025, we have had just one meeting of the implementation monitoring committee on revitalization of public universities where the N150 billion was discussed. We have agreed that they will release it in three tranches of N50 billion each. In April 2025, they said they were going to release it in six weeks' time. This is almost 12 weeks and that is how it starts. Government will not do what it is supposed to do at the time it is supposed to do it. We are waiting. Revitalization is something that we hold very dear to our hearts because we all know that at the core of all the challenges that we have in the public universities is the issue of funding. And revitalization was supposed to help our institutions. Unless that is done, we will continue to falter as a nation. It appears to me that the Nigerian government has not

accepted the philosophical basis of education as the driving tool for development. Because they have not accepted that, you continue to ponder to all kinds of interests other than the issue of funding in Nigerian universities. However you want to look at it, if a country wants to develop, education is key.

Take the aviation industry in Nigeria as an example. The standards are not joked with. Do otherwise and the outcome would be disastrous. Another example is Agriculture, if you do not

there are so many competing demands/needs in the country he said, “if you think education is very expensive you should try ignorance.” They tried illiteracy and today we have Boko Haram, bandits, insurgents, kidnapping, and all sorts of criminality because government did not take that advice. To us in ASUU, the question is not whether you should invest in education. The question should be, what do you get if you do not invest in education? But government does not see it this way. That is why you have people who

than where it is now. Critically consider all the actions of government in this regards. Whether our economy will be better off or not is clear. They are not doing anything to improve education. That is why I said earlier that they have not accepted the philosophical basis of education as a bedrock for development.

TNS: But it seems the education sector has gotten some attention from the present government. We have heard of the establishment of new universities and other institutions being upgraded to universities. Is this not good for our education?



Chris Piwuna

farm at the right time, with climate change now and all sorts, you will not get a bumper harvest. If you do not use fertilizer or you do not plant at the right time you will not get the kind of harvest that is expected. Education is the only sector in Nigeria that government does not see it as a planned activity. Professor Babatunde Fafunwa of Blessed Memory commented on this: at the time that they were saying funding education was expensive, that

do not understand education at all sitting in committees and undermining agreements reached that are meant to improve education in this country.

In 2023, the country set Agenda 2050 to transform Nigeria into an upper-middle income country with significant improvement in per capita income. Ask yourself whether we are doing anything educationally to get our economy one step higher

CP: The proliferation of universities in the manner it is being carried out is a problem, and putting a halt to it is part of our demands for the industry. You will appreciate our position more when you look at how funding from TETFund has been thinning over the years. The fund's impact is no longer felt like before. The federal/state government establish universities at will. Who knows, maybe local governments will also be given the clearance to start establishing universities. Certainly, the quality of education is being undermined by this proliferation of universities. In the 60s and 70s, establishing a university emanated from a well-planned and programmed policy. They look at the country and anticipate that in the next 20 years, the population will grow by a certain percentage so food may become a problem. Hence, we need universities of agriculture. So they plan in that way. Or in the next 30 years, technology is going to become a big deal and any country

that wants to make progress must be technologically sound. So they establish universities of technology. But it's no longer so. Universities are now established based on where certain individuals in government come from. We have seen Navy / Airforce / Army establish universities/institutions in localities where the helmsmen come from. Likewise, governors establish universities in their local government areas. In fact, it is in this country that federal government funds was used to establish a university and then named after a governor. So you can see how loose we have taken this issue of establishment of universities. For as long as we continue in this direction, we are certainly not going to go anywhere.

One of the items that we are considering is to review the law establishing NUC to strengthen the guidelines and ensure that the establishment of universities are tamed through the law. But again, it is those who make the laws that are establishing the universities. So our leaders are clearly complicit, even if they are not sure of what they want.

TNS: It is glaring that funding still remains a major challenge in our public universities. Would ASUU support a public-private partnership approach to university funding?

CP: No, we will not support any public-private partnership approach.

TNS: *Why?*

CP: Because the public institutions can be run by government efficiently and effectively if adequate funds are allocated to them. Why should we want a private partnership in running universities? Of course, as a state policy, we will not support it. But we invite public, private-spirited individuals to support research grants, and endow chairs. If that is the kind of PPP (public-private partnership) you are referring to, we are not averse to it. But in terms of ownership of the universities, which is what the government wants, our answer is no. We are going to support private participation in funding programs in the universities, but not ownership.

TNS: The Nigeria Education Loan Fund (NELFUND) has been established to provide funding for students in tertiary institutions who cannot afford it. Isn't that a good thing?

CP: Our union's position is that it's not a good thing especially with our current economic state. We believe that if government has the money, they can provide it as grants or some scholarship for students. Let me tell you why. When the NELFUND Act was initiated and taken to the House of Representatives

the Speaker made it clear that education (even tertiary education), is a public good. We thought that the bill was going to be built on that philosophy. They identified clearly where funding for NELFUND will come from. I think their collections were to be from some percentage drawn from the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), and Central Bank. If they followed that through, there would have been more than enough to support Nigerian students through school without enslaving them through loans. We know that our economy cannot support them to pay back the loans. Every house or family in Nigeria has at least one or two unemployed graduates. These are people that would have taken loan. How would they repay the loan? So that is not realistic but, we are open to a grant/scholarship support for students. The loan thing is another way of trying to privatize education because to them, education is a commodity but, to us it is a public good.

TNS: With the growing prominence of private universities, what role would the union play under your leadership to ensure that fair competition is in place and standards are maintained across all tertiary institutions?

CP: You know, NUC (National Universities Commission) was established to address standards and to regulate universities, both public and private. But, are they doing what they are supposed to be doing? That answer is debatable. Are we, those academics that are called to go for accreditation, doing what we are supposed to do?

I think the answer is hopeless. Are our institutions honest in presenting standards of their departments and programs as they face accreditation? That too is an answer that is obvious to all of us. So to me, the question should be whether NUC is doing what it is supposed to do because ASUU is not the regulatory agency for universities. ASUU is not regulating programs or curriculum in Nigeria. It is the NUC that does that. And I think that NUC is not doing well. But in blaming NUC, we must take our members who go for accreditation along in the failure of NUC. We must take vice chancellors, Directors of academic planning across our universities in the failure of NUC in regulating programs and to provide a level playing field for competition.

For as long as we continue to give skewed and manipulated accreditation results to our institutions, we will never have a level playing field. And I think that this is one challenge that our union should take very seriously both at the branch level and at the national level. We cannot afford to have our members go for accreditation, churn out results that portray our programs as standard, as adequate, and yet what is on ground is entirely different. So NUC that calls us for accreditation must ensure that we do the right thing.

It is a problem that all of us must come together and agree on how we can get ourselves

out of. Recently I was involved in an NBTE (National Board for Technical Education) accreditation training. Honestly, I think that the Board of Technical Education is doing ten times better than what NUC is doing in terms of standards. NBTE is well ahead of NUC and it is because NUC is allowing those they call for accreditation to bring out reports that are not adequate.

There was a time that NUC had required our assistance that is, our union - ASUU. The union recommended persons to them the same way it did to Professor Attahiru Jega when he was in INEC (Independent National Electoral Commission), and it was better. But, they latter stopped working with us to get accreditation done. We would give specific instructions to our members when they go out for accreditation. The system got the better of us and this is where we are today.

TNS: Lately, the autonomy of public universities has been under threat particularly in the processes leading to the appointment of principal officers. What is the way forward?

CP: When we joined the university, our appointment letters clearly spelled out, that we were going to be engaged in research, teaching and community service. At that time, we had better universities when they were sticking to those three responsibilities. But now,



Chris Piwuna

even though our appointment letters do still carry research, teaching and community service as our main responsibilities, we have added on our own politics. Politics has now eroded the research, teaching, and community service. Similarly, the appointment of vice-chancellors has gone outside what it used to be. There is a lot of politics that is involved; and the politics uses ethnicity/religion/localism as a tool. So we no longer have appointment of vice-chancellors being carried out in a way that reflects the idea of a university. This has been compounded by the lack of respect for established rules. So Vice Chancellors are being appointed for everything else except academic excellence.

But like I said earlier, all of us are to be blamed. How do we appoint our Department heads/deans? You gather around those from a certain part of the state or the country and insist that someone, though

competent and senior, cannot be Head of the Department or Dean. You now carry this mentality into the appointment of Vice-Chancellor. We are the architects of this mal-governance and maladministration within the universities. So because we carry all these baggage into the processes, we have vice-chancellors that are appointed based on everything other than competence and academic excellence.

The solution lies within us and the government. But I even see it more with us. If we show our independence, if we show the government that we know what we want and we are united around it, I am telling you, people that are competent will emerge in those offices. If we are honest with ourselves I tell you that some of these problems would be solved.

TNS: *Why does ASUU believe the Nimi Briggs Report is a solid base for negotiation, given the government's apparent reluctance to adopt it fully?*

CP: From 2017 to date, the Nimi Briggs report appears to be the most comprehensive. Part of the reasons I believe, is that Nimi Briggs and his committee members were in the Babalakin Committee. They saw the failures of the Babalakin leadership of that committee. They were also part of the Munzali Jibril Committee. They also must

have observed the challenges Munzali Jibril faced with government in enforcing or pushing ahead with the agreement reached. So when they came on board, I believe they took stock of all these happenings and they avoided those challenges by finding a way around them since they knew what the issues were. It was still essentially the same committee only the head was changed.

The Nimi Briggs Committee took a different trajectory from that taken by Babalakin. Before he met with us, he went ahead to meet with all the agencies that would be involved to hear from them what their problem was with the previous draft agreements. The Committee heard from them the issues they had with ASUU as a group. So before he started, they had taken notes of all the challenges. In fact, we were told the views that some of these government agencies had about us as individuals, and as ASUU. So before we started, we knew where we were. We knew where we wanted to go. And I think that Nimi Briggs also had a very perfect understanding of where the Nigerian university system needed to be. And he had the support of his team and that is why we use that as the basis of our negotiation with government.

In addition, Nimi Briggs presented different tables to us, as is usually the case anyway. But those tables had inputs from even state

governments. If you recall, before Nimi Briggs, the federal government institutions were earning more than state universities. But by the time Nimi Briggs came on board, we had institutions such as Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye (OOUA), and River State University of Science and Technology that began to pay wages higher than federal institutions. That was what was used as a benchmark. So we always believed that Nimi Briggs committee had every input that was necessary. But, the government of Mohammadu Buhari just would not listen and something snapped and they just would not go with us.

I also think that the Nimi Briggs committee had the support of the leaders in the health and educational sectors at the time. I actually think that they contributed to that document that we very often refer to and want to use as a benchmark.

TNS: *Is there hope in getting this issue of renegotiation done with?*

CP: Yes, I think Alhaji Yayale Ahmed is a very experienced public servant. He has very wide and deep experience. We are in 2025, but believe you me, Alhaji Yayale Ahmed was part of the 1992 agreement with the Federal Government. He was a permanent secretary back then in the Ministry of Education. He had moved to different areas in the public sector. His experience is next to none. He has adopted a similar strategy to that of Nimi Briggs. He has been able to get ministers and cabinet members to attend our renegotiation meetings. I hope that



Chris Piwuna

will count. As it is now, they have submitted their report to the federal government. We are just awaiting feedback from the government. So we are hopeful.

TNS: *There are Nigerians who feel ASUU's strikes, while justified, hurt students more than they pressure the government. Has the union lost the public in this fight?*

CP: You know it is said that when two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers. That is common sense. So one cannot argue that students suffer less. They suffer more. And because they suffer more, parents feel the pinch too. Because if your children are at home, you will be feeding extra mouths all the time. Your bills increase and everything else. So I understand that perspective.

We embark on strike actions not to exacerbate the pain and suffering of students. There was an argument that was

made recently by Professor Attahiru Jega, about his time in INEC and the role academics played in electoral fraud. He came to the conclusion that no matter the downsides of having academics participate in the election, it would have been worse by far if they were not involved in the election.

No matter the pain students suffer, no matter the suffering brought to families because of ASUU strike, Nigerian students, the public and parents would have been worse off if ASUU had not taken the actions it took, including embarking on strike. The moment Nigerian parents started to insult us and attack us, the government became emboldened by the kind of support that parents and students were giving them. They introduced school fees. School charges have skyrocketed by multiple of tenths. Now, who is suffering more?

You pay higher charges for your child in school, he/she cannot get accommodation, you pay his/her accommodation that is separate from the fees charged. You feed him, you pay for your wards' field trips and other things. Their transport, because they do not stay on the campus and have to transport themselves to and fro the campus. All these have increased exponentially because parents think that we are doing the wrong thing.

In the overall assessment, we believe parents and students will realize that if it were not for us, our universities would have been destroyed beyond recognition by now. And this privatization and commodification of education would have taken full route in our country. Our universities would have been worse than where they are. Look at the Needs assessment report. It clearly tells you the state Nigerian universities were. That 200 billion Naira that was injected by the GoodLuck Jonathan administration did a lot of magic. But it took a strike to get it. Now, we are again saying, give us 150 billion Naira. You say you will do it in three installments. We have agreed to improve the university system. And yet, they are dragging their feet. Look, be it students or the system or the nation, all benefit from our struggles.

Also, academic staff have received training from the needs assessment intervention and TETFund because of our efforts. That training they have received has improved their teaching abilities. They are more exposed. Facilities have been provided. Now we have smart boards, interactive boards in certain institutions, all as a result

of the struggle of ASUU. Laboratories have been upgraded to some extent. More hostels have been built with support from TETFund's funding making learning experience better for students. TETFund has increased research grants to universities. Which country can grow without research? But we are not there yet.

TNS: *You mentioned that "when two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers." Is ASUU an equal match for the government?*

CP: We are not afraid of the government! I don't know what it means to match the government, but we are not afraid of them. And if you have no fear you can take on anything.

TNS: *Looking ahead, what would you like your tenure as ASUU President to be remembered for, and how do you envision transforming the relationship between the union and all stakeholders in Nigeria's university system?*

CP: Your question is not properly framed because it presupposes that the president of ASUU could have an agenda or plan or desire. The union does not work that way. Even by our principles, the solidarity and teamwork that we work with will not allow us to say, "This is what the president wants done." We are democratic. What I would want the union to ask me is to spearhead as president is the priority of our

members. In making our members top priority the challenges they face in their personal life and work space should be the number one item to be attended to. I would want the union to ask us who have been elected to take that as a key challenge so that at the end of the mandate they have given us, they would look back and say, we have made our members and all that concerns them key in building the union.

I would also expect that the union would ask us, those who have been elected to ensure that we protect the sanctity, the autonomy, the ideal of a university by all means. That we should make sure that this idea of a university is as universal as it should be; a place for knowledge, where you seek knowledge, and a place for speaking the truth and sharing the truth where everybody in the society is made a priority. If we are able to achieve these things, I believe very strongly that we will be remembered for good, for the opportunity given to us to serve the union.

We cannot and we will not take the option of strike off the table, but we hope we will never have to use it.

TNS: *How about the relationship between the union and other stakeholders in the university system?*

CP: Well, we have committees that relate with students. We will strengthen

our interaction with them within the two years tenure given to us to serve this union. We also hope that the gap between our union and other unions on campus will be narrowed to an extent where NASU will cry out when they feel that ASUU members are badly treated. That NAAT will cry out when they feel SSANU members are being unfairly treated in the system. And that ASUU will even embark on a strike if they feel any of these unions is being badly treated. That is the kind of relationship that I hope we can have.

As for our relationship with the government, we are always open to dialogue, we are always open to ideas, we are intellectuals and intellectualism thrives on the rivalry of ideas. So, if the government thinks they have better ideas than us, let them confront us with them. If their idea is truly superior, we will accept it. We will be humble enough to say this thing is not working, this is not the right way to go, and we will work with what they have. But if we present to them ideas that we think are different from theirs, which will engineer our development as a country to be at par with other nations globally, they should also accept it.

TNS: *Thank you so much, Comrade President, for this time with us.*

CP: Thank you, too.

ASUU TO FG:

NEGLECT OF EDUCATION,
NATIONAL SUICIDE

KANANG AMOS AKIMS



Photo Credit: Leadership Newspapers

ASUU Leaders at a Press Conference in Abuja. L-R: Financial Secretary, Happiness Uduk, Vice President, Austen Sado, President, Chris Piwuna, Immediate Past President, Emmanuel Osodeke, Past President, Biodun Ogunyemi, Welfare Officer, Aisha Bawa, and Investment Secretary, Celestine Aguoru

The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has called on the Federal Government to prioritize the revitalization of Nigeria's public universities, warning that the country's developmental prospects remain grim without urgent attention and sustained investment in education.

While addressing journalists at a press conference in Abuja, ASUU President Comrade Chris Piwuna lamented the federal and state governments' failure to honour long-standing agreements with the Union, particularly the 2009 FGN/ASUU Agreement, which remains largely unimplemented. He said ASUU members have been subjected to adverse conditions of service, a hostile work environment, and what he described as "deliberate misadventures."

Among the core demands is the immediate conclusion of the stalled renegotiation process anchored on the 2021 draft report produced by the NIMI Briggs Committee. Other

reiterated priorities include release of withheld salaries and third-party deductions, revitalization funding, and the adoption of the University Transparency and Accountability Solution (UTAS) as an alternative to the controversial integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) platform.

In his remarks also, Comrade Piwuna acknowledged that the federal government has made certain commitments such as the pledge to release 150 billion for revitalization and 29 billion for payment of 2025 Earned Academic Allowances. However, he expressed concern over the lack of concrete action, noting that this promises remained unmet months after the agreements were reached.

ASUU also decried the continued interference of the Office of Head of Service, Ministries, Federal Character Commission and National Assembly in university governance. According to the Union, such incursions undermine university autonomy and have led to persistent leadership crises in institutions such as Nnamdi Azikiwe University, University of Abuja, and

Alvan Ikoku University.

In addition, the Union condemned the persecution of its members in some state-owned institutions, particularly Kogi State University and Lagos State University, and called on state governors to reinstate all the affected lecturers and end what it termed "unconscionable victimization."

In terms of governance and other National issues ASUU president painted a bleak picture of our national life in Nigeria, citing political instability, economic hardship, insecurity, and the mass exodus of skilled Nigerians as symptoms of deep-rooted governance failure. Comrade Piwuna added that the nation's education sector, which should serve as the foundation for transformation leaves much to be desired.

Calling for a national education summit, ASUU urged the government to engage genuinely with academics in charting a sustainable path forward, and condemned the diversion of education funds, citing the reallocation of TETFund resources to the Nigeria Education Loan Fund (NELFund) as a breach of trust.

The ASUU President concluded by restating the Union's commitment to dialogue but warned that it would not remain passive in the face of what it described as a systematic erosion of members' rights and the decay of Nigeria's tertiary education system.

Kanang Amos Akims is the Editor in Chief TNS.

THE NEW ASUU PRESIDENT AND THE BODY LANGUAGE OF THE POLITICAL CLASS

ABDELGHAFFAR AMOKA ABDELMALIK

It is breaking news that a Consultant Psychiatrist, Comrade Chris Piwuna emerged as the new ASUU president. The fact that he is a psychiatrist is unsettling to the political class, who, rather than injecting the required funds to improve our education sector, decide to steal money they do not need.

The post on the Facebook page of Mahmud Jega, a media aide to President Tinubu during the campaign for the 2023 General elections, is an indication that the news of the newly elected president of ASUU is unsettling. He said, "Chris should examine the heads of ASUU members for choosing a strike as an option to make the government perform its responsibility to the university they willingly established and are still establishing." Earlier today, someone was thanking his Senator on Facebook for his bill to establish the Federal University of Agriculture, Kura in Kano State.

Whose head needs to be checked by a psychiatrist? The one fighting for the survival of public universities or the one who makes all the promises, then gets to the office, but chooses to steal public funds, an amount they cannot spend for the rest of their life. In the 21st century, we have one of the worst education and health sectors. Our people now go to Ghana and even Niger and Sudan to study. Hunger is now a pride. One of them recently acknowledged that they are aware we are hungry and called it "Hunger for Change".

Who should we take to Prof Piwuna's psychiatric clinic for a mental check? As people wonder about the cause of the massive and mindless corruption in the country, as we watch public institutions collapse, they feel that corruption within the political class may be a mental issue. According to Punch of 16th December 2016, the first person who made this recommendation over 30 years ago was Prof. Adeoye Lambo, a famous psychiatrist and a former Vice-Chairman of the World Health Organisation. He was astounded by the level of

corruption then. Well, the corruption was child's play then compared with what we have now. Mrs. Farida Waziri, the Ex-EFCC boss, was reported to have also recommended psychiatric examination for politicians for reason of grand corruption that we see in our public life is a hackneyed recommendation. So, the psychiatric test recommendation for politicians is not a new call.

Despite the fact that there is a justification for the strike over the last 2 years, and the members have voted for it in a referendum, the ASUU leadership has tried to apply diplomacy to avoid the strike. That has produced a strike-free 2 years. They have been lobbying and begging for the last 2 years. But what have academics got? Many cannot fuel their

cars to go to work. So, what is the alternative to strike? Maybe instead of strike to force the government to fund tertiary institutions they willingly established, we should just manage what we have like that till they are no longer manageable like our public primary schools. Please educate us on a practical alternative to strike.

The Nigerian university system was once a beacon in West Africa. If corruption is the reason why there are not enough funds to make our universities what they used to be, who needs to queue in their Agbada to see a psychiatrist? The people (political class) who have kept the universities in their present state, or the people (ASUU) whose fight over the years gave our universities a semblance of what a university should be?

Irrespective of our political affiliation, I think we need to set our sentiment and hatred for ASUU aside and sit back to reflect on the state of education. As a former academic, a journalist, and an associate of the political class, Mahmud Jega ought to join hands with ASUU to call on the government to do the needful for the education sector. The North is the worst hit, and coincidentally, Mahmoud Jega is from the North. We need public education institutions at all levels that

are good enough for their kids. As the immediate past president of ASUU stated in Benin recently, we cannot build a knowledge-based economy without a sound education system.

We cannot continue this way. The status quo is unsustainable. The most powerful weapon against poverty, extremism, and ignorance is not the bullet, but the book. The time to act is now. Nigeria must return to the classroom—rebuild it, empower it, and invest in it—for therein lies the salvation of the nation.

I do not like strikes, Mahmud Jega does not like strikes, but I was left with no other options than a strike. And strike is the only thing that has kept our universities functional to date. So, can Mahmud propose an alternative that will work better than strike?

The test I think we need to do for ASUU members is to find out why they are fighting very hard to ensure that public universities do not collapse. They could have chosen to be like our refinery workers who watch the collapse of the refineries and earn a fat salary without refining a drop of crude oil.

In conclusion, no matter the hatred, Mahmud Jega cannot pretend that he does not understand the situation of our educational

institutions. I want to call on him to use his pen and influence to help facilitate an education summit from this government. As Prof Attahiru Jega proposed at ASUU NDC at the University of Benin a few days ago, the stakeholders of the Nigerian project need to meet and discuss the sort of tertiary education system they want and then agree on the funding model.

Abdelghaffar Amoka Abdelmalik writes from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

NUPEMCO ACQUIRES CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS, RECORDS STRONG FINANCIAL GROWTH IN 2024

KANANG AMOS AKIMS

The Nigerian University Pension Management Company Limited (NUPEMCO) has announced the successful acquisition of its corporate headquarters located at Plot No. 722, Cadastral Zone B03, Wuye District Abuja, marking a major milestone in the company's corporate development. This was disclosed at the 6th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the company held on June 24, 2025 at the Conference Hall of the ASUU Researchers' Chalets at the ASUU National Secretariat University of Abuja.

In his address to shareholders, Board members, Representatives of the National Pension Commission (PenCom), and staff of the company, Chairman of the Board of Directors, Prof. Nasir Fagge Isa, described the acquisition as *"a landmark achievement that reflects NUPEMCO's long-term commitment to institutional growth, stability, and permanence."* He noted that the new head office will serve

as a hub for operational excellence and improve client engagement across Nigeria's university pension space. This announcement comes on the heels of a strong financial performance in the 2024 fiscal year, despite the challenging macroeconomic environment in Nigeria and globally.

The company reported a 38.67% increase in income, rising from 2.52 billion in 2023 to 3.50 billion in 2024, and a 25.05% growth in profit before tax, which rose from 1.29 billion to 1.61 billion within the same period. Further highlighting NUPEMCO's steady climb, Prof. Fagge revealed a 27.12% growth in assets under management, which moved from N167.98 billion in 2023 to N213.54 billion in 2024. The company's client base also expanded to 38,624 contributors, reinforcing its reputation as a trusted pension fund administrator in Nigeria's tertiary education sector. In the second year running the AGM approved a dividend payout to shareholders of 7 kobo per share, totaling N378.2 million.

According to the Chairman



Chairman Board of Directors of NUPEMCO, Nasir Fagge Isa

"These milestones are a testament to our resilience, professionalism, and continued focus on creating sustainable value. He reaffirmed NUPEMCO's vision to be a model fund administrator that shall remain its guiding compass. Despite facing macro economic head-wings including inflationary pressures, forex volatility, and the broader economic strain following the removal of fuel subsidies and exchange rate convergence policies, the company demonstrated what he termed *"strategic agility."* He attributed NUPEMCO's successful performance to its investment in technology, service innovation, and operational discipline which enabled the company to succeed where others stumbled.

Again, in a key regulatory

development, PenCom granted NUPEMCO approval to extend its services to Nigeria's private universities. This move is expected to significantly broaden the company's reach in the coming years, offering tailored pension solutions to a larger segment of the academic community. Changes within the leadership structure were also announced at the AGM. Following the leave of the Managing Director/CEO, Mrs Oluwakemi B. Ugwu, the Board appointed Mr. Aliyu Atiku, Executive Director, Operations and IT - and a pioneer staff member - as the Acting MD/CEO. The company also

welcomed Mr. Thomas Obadofin Emmanuel as Executive Director, Finance and Investment. It was also announced that one Independent Non-Executive Director shall be appointed in the not-too-distant future.

Prof. Fagge further stated that “as we reflect on the progress made in 2024, we are proud of the resilience, innovation, and discipline that has shaped NUPEMCO's journey.” He noted also that the company is firmly committed to upholding the trust of her clients, shareholders, and other stakeholders.

The AGM concluded with a renewed call to consolidate

the gains recorded and deepen the company's impact in Nigeria's evolving pension landscape. With a permanent corporate headquarters now secured, and a robust financial foundation in place, NUPEMCO is positioning itself as a future-ready institution in pension fund management.

Kanang Amos Akims is the Editor-in-Chief of TNS.



Group photograph of Board members, Representatives of PenCom, staff of NUPEMCO, and shareholders at the AGM

KEYNOTE ADDRESS OF PROF. ATAHIRU JEGA DELIVERED AT THE 23RD ASUU NDC

At the 23rd ASUU NDC held at the University of Benin on May 9th 2025, past ASUU President and eminent scholar, Prof. Attahiru Jega delivered a thought provoking key note address reflecting the union's 47 year journey. He repositioned ASUU as a vital force in Nigeria's nation building project, tracing its evolution from the elitist NAUT to a "popular Tribune" for academics. Jega critiqued the decline of genuine collective bargaining under democracy accusing the political class in Nigeria of having an anti-intellectual culture.

Hear from the Horse's mouth;

The Role of Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) in Nation-Building in Nigeria: Looking Back, Looking Around, and Confronting the Future

Attahiru Muhammadu Jega, OFR

A Presentation delivered at the 23rd National Delegates Conference of the Academic Staff Union of Universities(ASUU) at the University of Benin, Benin City, on Friday 9th May, 2025

Introduction

Since its formation in 1978, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has been known to have been actively engaged in struggles to protect and defend the interests of its members in the Nigerian university

system. In addition, however, it has in general, also been in struggles to protect and defend the interest of Nigerian citizens, especially the poor working peoples. These struggles are intertwined with, and inseparable from the popular struggles for nation-building. For to successfully build a



Attahiru Muhammadu Jega, OFR

nation, requires, among other things, an educated, patriotic and intellectually vibrant and cable citizenry, as well as an enlightened, visionary, competent and patriotic citizens in leadership and governance positions that could competently deploy and use societal resources appropriately to address the fundamental needs and aspirations of citizens.

When we speak of 'nation-building', most people assume that it is only in reference to partisan politics and politicians who, in the context of countries, such as Nigeria, created by colonialists, with diverse composition, not only struggled for independence but have striven after independence, in the post-colonial period, to bring about 'unity in diversity',

peaceful coexistence, harmony, and a sense of belonging by all in the newly created 'nation-state'. While this is certainly an important notion of nation-building, it is a very narrow and limited conceptualization of the concept of nation-building. There is certainly more to 'nation-building', than the mere striving to by politicians through partisan politics to create a 'nation-state' out of disparate, and historically incongruent ethnolinguistic groups.

Properly and broadly conceptualized, 'Nation-building', is a complex and multifaceted process that involves, yes, creating and shaping a nation's identity, **but also** its institutions, its social fabric, and **addressing its citizens' fundamental rights and aspirations**. In this sense, the fundamental elements, or building blocks and constituent parts, of 'nation-building' consist of: developing a shared sense of national identity, values and purpose; **building and strengthening institutions; promoting unity, reconciliation; fostering social cohesion and inclusivity; and catalysing economic growth and socio economic development, which is beneficial to the citizens.**

In all of these facets of nation-building, broadly

conceptualized, ASUU has in one way or another been involved, and actively so, in nation-building in Nigeria in the past almost half a century.

ASUU's prominent and visible role has been in the context of building institutions. Education is no doubt one of the key institutions in / of any nation. Struggles to improve education, to protect and, expand educational opportunities, provide quality education, and protect as well as defend the interest of workers in academic institutions, are in many fundamental respects, struggles for nation-building. In these struggles ASUU has made many sacrifices; its members have suffered harassment, intimidation, deprivation of rights and freedoms; it has been abused, pilloried, accused of subversion, branded 'too radical', even as an 'extremist organization'; but it has remained undeterred and focused, regardless of how it is being perceived, in making substantive contributions to education and its institutional foundations, and hence contributing to nation-building in Nigeria.

Looking Back...

The Nigerian Association of University Teachers (NAUT), which was established in 1965, which

represented academic staff in the few universities in existence at that time, and which was ASUU's predecessor, was basically an elitist, petty-bourgeois, confraternity of 'ivory tower' resident academic staff, primarily preoccupied with the advancement of the welfare and recreation of its members (for example, creating staff clubs, organizing packaged summer flights and holidays for members abroad, etc.). It was so preoccupied with its members and hardly ever took a position on national issues. Ideologically, its worldview was consistent with that of the reigning middle class superintending the post-colonial state.

By the mid-1970s, the Nigerian terrain was changing rapidly, creating new dynamics, with attendant consequences. The military had replaced civilians in governance. Awash with 'Oil wealth', they embarked upon programmes of rapid socioeconomic 'development', which included expanding the scope of tertiary education in the country. More universities were established. Authoritarian disposition of the military began to manifest themselves on campuses, whether in dealing with students' or staff welfare matters, exemplified by the Udoji Awards and its fallout, as it affected the fortunes of academic staff vis-à-vis civil servants, other public officers. In other ways, it manifested in attempts to centralize and control trade unions, interfere in university governance; and in the phenomenon of 'increasing

poverty amidst plenty', among the rest of the citizens, especially the poor masses and the working classes.

It was in this context of rapidly changing political economy and national dynamics that ASUU was formed. By the 1980's with decline in oil revenues, the increasing inability of the state to discharge its obligations to the citizens, massive squandering of national resources through **c o r r u p t i o n** and misplacement of priorities, declining funding to education, amidst almost unplanned exponential growth of tertiary education, the context was set for the transformation of ASUU from a mere petty-bourgeois middle class association of university academic staff, preoccupied with its welfare and conditions of service, to broader issues of institution building, academic freedom and university autonomy, governance, and the role of the state in addressing the fundamental needs and aspirations of citizens generally.

The transformed role of ASUU, under the presidency of Prof. Biodun Jeyifo, began to manifest in its **f o r g i n g** of close relationships with the trade union movements, and other identified progressive forces, and its agitations against

obnoxious policies of the Shagari government under the presidency of late Dr. Mahmud Modibbo Tukur. By the mid-1980s, with return of military rule and especially the acceptance of IMF/World Bank SAP by the Babangida regime, and the devastating impact that has had on the Nigerian university system, ASUU, under Dr. Festus Iyayi and my humble self, and subsequently under Drs. Asissi Asobie and Dipo Fashina, became more of a 'popular tribune' for the Nigerian working class, rather than a mere trade union of university lecturers, only preoccupied with welfare and conditions of service of its members. It joined and became active in the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), forged stronger links with the students' associations at both national and branch levels, as well as human rights and pro-democracy movements. ASUU came to the realization that it is not a mere trade union in the traditional sense, it is a union of intellectuals, and it has to bring to bear its knowledge base to support overall struggles for national socioeconomic development in a post-colonial state. Hence, for example, it institutionalized "State of the Nation" as a permanent feature on the Agenda of its NEC meetings, considering and passing resolutions on broader national issues of

concern. ASUU also recognized that success of its struggles in protecting and defending the welfare and well-being of its members, has to be conditional on linking them with the broader issues of building educational institutions as national assets and making a range of stakeholders recognize this and become involved and supportive. There is a lot to say in this regard, but no time to say it. It suffices to say that, in spite of harassment and intimidation of academic staff, even arrest and detention of some union leaders, and proscription of the union, under the Babangida military regime, the 1992 Agreement between the federal government and the Academic Staff of Nigerian Universities was signed, with the same officials and representatives of the proscribed union. And it has remained the initial, substantive point of reference on addressing the crisis in the Nigerian university system. Of course, in the nature of authoritarian regimes, few months after the agreement was signed, notwithstanding that its implementation has commenced, it was declared by a minister of education, a so-called legal luminary, as an "Agreement of Imperfect Obligation", and summarily truncated. This singular act, has since pushed the Nigerian university system into a deep and profound crisis, accompanied by a vicious cycle of strikes and instability in knowledge production and reproduction.

Looking around...

When we look around,

contemporarily, what is evident, and starkly confronts us, is the changed or changing context of collective bargaining, and not necessarily for the better! While the military may have retired to the barracks and civilians, supposedly more tolerant, inclusive and accommodative, have been back in power and in supposedly 'democratic' governance for over 25 years, the democratic space has not expanded sufficiently to nurture and nourish collective bargaining and/or give serious recognition to the primacy of building the nation, in all respects, but especially with regards to building sustainable institutions. It can be argued that the democratic space has been narrowing and constricting. Indeed, not only has governance and management of national resources worsened, given humongous corruption and personalization of public office and common resources, poverty and inequality have widened, and ethical and moral considerations in managing common affairs has significantly deteriorated. Hence, while it took four years of intense struggles to bring a suppressive military regime using draconian measures, to the collective bargaining table and extract concessions in the form of substantive agreement

(1988-1992), it took 10 years to get to begin to revisit and review that agreement the 1999 with substantive outcomes (in 1999); and another six years to sign another substantive agreement (2009). Since then, successive civilian governments have somehow dodged signing substantive collective bargaining agreements, in spite of concerted efforts by the union, including series of strikes with devastating consequences on the university system. Since 2013, the politicians in governance have been literally compelling the union to accept signed 'resolutions' issued by a government ministry, or since 2017, what came to be referred to as "memorandum of Action" (MOA), rather than Agreements, arise from, and as products of, collective bargaining, also, ironically, after impactful strikes.

Why has this been so? Could it be because, most politicians, members of the ruling and governing classes do not seem to, as yet, comprehend the true value of education for human progress and for nation-building and national development? Either for lack of education or due to ignorance, or both, they seem to perceive education as undeserving of priority, and, especially educators in the universities, as idealistic,

unrealistic ideologues, or worse, as radical, extremist opponents, if not enemies, of the state, or those in government. Being educationally insecure, they seem to become, literally, anti-intellectual and therefore obstructive of the requirement of building excellent, well-funded educational institutions for nation-building and socioeconomic development. In this sense, there isn't just a hang-over, but indeed a carry-over, of how successive Nigerian military regimes have underrated and underfunded education as if it were not a significant national priority.

Maybe it is also because, under neoliberal ideology entrenched by the World Bank and the IMF, collective bargaining is no longer seen to be fashionable, and therefore no longer taken with the seriousness it deserves in addressing employer – employee relations in both the public and private sectors of the global political economy. If so, this is a terrible misconception that needs to be corrected, through education, enlightenment and, of course, resilient struggles by workers, the employees, under their unions. It needs to be recognized and accepted by all that industrial harmony is necessary for peaceful and stable development of all sectors of the political economy. Workers are necessary for any kind of productive activity; adequate and humane compensation is required to motivate workers for improved productivity and efficiency; hence conditions of service and of work need to be

periodically reviewed, revised and enhanced, for progress and development, whether in the private profit-making ventures, or in the public sectors. And, the most tested and proven method for improved remunerations, conditions of service and of work, and smooth industrial relations, is through collective bargaining.

Looking Ahead to the Future...

As we look around, given the context and conditions under which we find ourselves in Nigeria contemporary, Unions, such as ASUU, need to reflect, revitalize and reposition themselves in primarily addressing the needs and aspirations of their members; and generally, improve their strategies and tactics for successful, positively impactful, engagements and struggles in nation-building, and national socio economic development, which address the collective needs and aspirations of our citizens. Regrettably, most members of unions of middle-class background would rather focus on matters that specifically affect them, and even in these, they wouldn't want to make too many personal and collective sacrifices to ensure success. But the bottom line is that, preoccupation with

struggles that are too narrow-minded and self-centered, isolate and distances a union from the imperative of collective solidarity and sympathetic support.

If we were to dispassionately review the state of things, with regards to the major issues that ASUU has struggled for since its formation in the late 1970s, it is clear that in spite of strenuous efforts and indeed successful struggles with positive outcomes for members, and value additions to nation-building, a lot still needs to be done, even more strenuously and diligently. Whether it is with regards to funding education in general and universities in particular, or conditions of service and of work, or infrastructure and facilities, the challenges are profound. Inadequate funding limits resources and impacts quality of education delivery. Poor infrastructure and overcrowding hinder effective learning environments. Training qualified manpower and addressing teacher shortages positively affects imparting quality education. Deployment of technology in teaching and research is necessary, and requires appropriate investment in software and hardware and in training and retraining of necessary staff.

Nigerian Government's response to the persistent education crisis has consistently been, it cannot alone fund education, private sector must come in, costs must be shared with students, their parents or guardians. Meanwhile, the private sector that has come in, has done so opportunistically; it is not being effectively regulated, its charges are extortionate, not at all commensurate with the services offered, and are mostly essentially profit-driven. For public universities, government increasingly speaks about academic and financial autonomy, meanwhile, it has lacked the political will to reintroduce fees, but is dipping its hands into the revenues internally generated by the universities. A lot of contradictory policies and other obnoxious political dynamics are at play, which only undermine the viability of public universities as institutions capable of driving good quality teaching, research, innovation, and nation-building, manpower development and national development objectives for which they were originally established.

Thus, how to peacefully, and sensibly engage stakeholders, especially government, to pay attention to these outstanding matters, as a matter of national priority, in a profoundly impactful way, still remains a major challenge in our national context. But, we must never give up hope in the quest for ways and means to address the challenge, no matter how profound it may seem. We must continue to look

for and deploy appropriate tactics and strategies in addressing this challenge.

As we look to the future, we have to be prepared to confront it, with appropriate tactics and strategies, that take into account the dynamics of the changing or changed context. Our universities must continue to strive for excellence, for quality teaching, research, innovation and community service, in the context of being competitive globally in the knowledge production and reproduction enterprise or industry. And ASUU, the union of academics, must continue to be relevant, to contribute to the appropriate revitalization and repositioning of the Nigerian university and tertiary education system. Indeed, it must perceive itself to be among those key actors and stakeholders to champion, lead and drive this undertaking. In this regard, ASUU must continue to create, nurture, and sustain appropriate partnerships, collaborations, and engagements. The context may continue to be rapidly changing, murky, and obnoxiously challenging, but there must not be loss of hope, giving up, or slacking in the task of looking for and contributing to the solutions.

Whatever tactics and strategies the union adopts for the struggles, which lie ahead, the experience and lessons of the past are worthy of contemplation and consideration. Clearly, there are good lessons to be drawn from the past, when we look back. The following are certainly key among the derivable lessons worthy of serious consideration:

Unity is strength. United we stand and divided we fall. A united, focused and disciplined union could be formidable enough to stand its grounds and succeed in its struggles on good causes, with the support of allies in the wider society.

Organize, do not agonies! Devoting time and energy to organization, paying attention to the minutest details in this regard, and to mobilization as well as enlightenment and sensitization, rather than merely agonizing over perceived challenges, is one of the strongest variables in bringing about success.

Resilience. Toughness, moderated by sensible flexibility, paves the way for success in negotiation and collective bargaining.

Perseverance. Doggedness and tenacity in the pursuit of set objectives and goals on good causes, more often than not, lead to successful outcomes.

Integrity and selflessness. Eschewing personal

comfort, embracing self-discipline, while refusing to be compromised, goes a long way to ensure respect and bring about success in the pursuit of defined objectives through collective bargaining.

ASUU as a 'popular tribune'. Given its pedigree, and accomplishments since the late 1970s, ASUU's reputation and standing as a 'popular tribune', as a union that champions not only the welfare and well-being of its members, but also generally of citizens, especially all working classes, must be maintained and enhanced.

Transparent and disciplined deployment and utilization of available resources. This is an absolute necessity if success of struggles is to be guaranteed.

Smooth and effective leadership recruitment processes, at both the branch and national levels. This must be given priority to nurture and sustain the required democratic, inclusive and participatory governance model that has served the union very well.

Concluding Remarks...

Within the next few years, indeed as soon as possible, Nigeria needs to be decisive as to, in general what kind of education system it desires, and in particular what kind of tertiary and university education system it requires. The current situation, which is characterized by neglect, indifference and 'anything-goes' mentality, is undesirable and unsustainable. For example:

- There is the need for a

clear framework of how public universities would be funded, with the political will to back it; in order to address chronic underfunding and its accompanying consequences;

- What would 'autonomy' entail in public universities;
- what obligations of proprietors of private, fee-paying universities should be, given the proliferation of these universities and the extortionate charges students are made to pay in many of these, without serious efforts at regulation and enforcement of standards;
- what the enormous deposits accumulated under the TETFund (Hundreds of trillions of naira?) would/should be used for; beyond current levels of 'interventions', while public universities have remained chronically underfunded;
- Whether public universities sitting on massive landholdings, e.g. 'second generation' universities with new campuses, could/should use these assets to

generate sustainable income for stable funding;

- Whether FG intends to set up the recommended National Research and Innovation Fund/Foundation and how soon;

general terms, and with specific reference to tertiary education.

Of course, in addressing the question of what kind of education system Nigeria desires, we cannot be unmindful of the fact that a long-established principle globally, has been that education is a fundamental right, not privilege; that no child should be left behind; and that there should be equality of opportunity in educational provisioning; and that there should be widened access to quality education.

In any case, Nigeria must stop muddling through challenges and crises, especially in the education sector, which is key to nation-building and national development; and our leaders must stop acting like the proverbial Ostrich that buries its head in the sand, oblivious of what is happening all around it. ASUU has a responsibility to keep up the struggle sensible policies and programs of action, by supposedly democratically elected civilian leaders, to become more responsible and responsive to the needs and aspirations of citizens, in

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE UNIBEN NDC IN PICTURES









ASUU UNIJOS FORMALLY WELCOMES PROFESSOR *CHRIS PIWUNA* AFTER HIS EMERGENCE AS THE UNION'S PRESIDENT, URGES HIM TO STAY THE COURSE

KANANG AMOS AKIMS

The University of Jos Branch of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) organized a Special Congress on Thursday 15th May, 2025 to formally welcome home its own, Professor Chris Piwuna, the

Chairperson, Comrade Jurbe Molwus, described the event as historic not just for the branch but, for the entire union. He highlighted Piwuna's deep roots in UNIJOS and the zone, noting his past roles as Financial Secretary and Chairperson of the branch, as

Molwus described the new ASUU President as a man of integrity, courage, and emotional intelligence — qualities he said the Union desperately needs at the current time. He charged the new President to remain steadfast in advancing the unions' core struggle for revitalized public universities and improved staff welfare.

“Our expectation is that he will continue to exemplify the values we know him for — honesty, courage, and wisdom. He must consolidate and pursue the Union's agenda with vigour. The demands that led to our 2022 strike remain unresolved, and we count on him to carry the struggle forward,” Molwus said.



ASUU President, Chris Piwuna standing (in the middle) as UNIJOS Chairperson, Jurbe Molwus presents him to congress. To the left of ASUU President is the Branch Secretary, Embugushiki Ahidjo and the Branch's Assistant Secretary, Innocent Dajang.

newly elected President of the Union. The event which held at the Unity Hall of the ASUU Secretariat was packed with both members of the branch and those from other branches in the Bauchi Zone.

In his opening remarks, ASUU UNIJOS

well as being the immediate past Vice President of ASUU.

The Chairperson of ASUU UNIJOS Branch then presented Prof. Chris Piwuna to the jubilant congress. He stated that Piwuna emerged as ASUU President at the 23rd National Delegates' Conference (NDC) held in the University of Benin.

In his response, Comrade Piwuna began by calling for a minute of silence in honour of the late Prof. Sonni Tyoden, a former Chairperson of the branch and former Vice Chancellor of UNIJOS, and Deputy Governor of Plateau State. He then emphasized unity and spiritual fortitude as

critical to the Union's success. "Unless we are united by putting aside all sentiments, we would not make any meaningful progress. We must have one name, one union, one identity." Piwuna stated. He urged members to hold him accountable and stressed the importance of collaboration with other university unions (Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities, Non-Academic Staff Union of Educational Universities and Associated Institutions, and National Association of Academic Technologist) for collective success.

The new ASUU President also provided an update on the contentious Earned Academic Allowances (EAA). He disclosed that of the N50 billion negotiated with the Federal Government for EAA, N10 billion had been diverted to other unions, leaving ASUU shortchanged. "What this means is that the government still owes us N10 billion, (20%) of the agreed sum." He said.

Comrade Piwuna further assured members that the union will continue to push for the mainstreaming of EAA as agreed with government. He concluded by expressing deep gratitude to Congress for the outpouring of solidarity, assuring members that his leadership would not waver

in pursuing the Union's ideals.

The event featured goodwill messages from branch chairpersons, zonal leaders, past executives, and members of Congress — all pledging their support and prayers for Prof. Piwuna's success. Particularly, the UNIJOS Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Tanko Ishaya thanked ASUU for choosing a national leader from UNIJOS. He resounded the call for decisive action, urging the new ASUU President to pursue a stabilizing agenda for Nigeria's ailing university

system. Tanko noted that, "the task ahead is enormous, and it will require tact focus, and strategic engagement with government and other stakeholders."

The day's proceedings was not just celebratory but reflective of the high expectations resting on the shoulders of its newest national leader. As Prof. Piwuna takes the mantle, all eyes within and beyond the union will be watching to see how he steers the ASUU ship through Nigeria's jerky academic waters.

Kanang Amos Akims is the Editor-in-Chief of TNS



Cross section of members at the special congress.

COMRADE CHRIS PIWUNA: ASUU'S NEW HELMSMAN

JEFF GODWIN DOKI

Christopher Goson Piwuna is a Professor of Psychiatry with the University of Jos, Nigeria. On May 12, 2025, he was elected as the new President of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) during the 23rd National Delegate's Conference held at the University of Benin, Benin city. Christopher Piwuna's emergence as the President of ASUU is perceived by many analysts as historic and phenomenal in that, he is the first ASUU President with a medical background. But over and above all, Piwuna seems to have possessed a good plentiful store of experience in ASUU principles, ASUU struggles, and of course, ASUU's ideology. He served as Financial Secretary of the union at the University of Jos branch in 2013. He became chairperson of ASUU University of Jos Branch in 2015. He rose to the rank of National Internal Auditor of the union in 2018. He was elected as the union's vice president in 2021, a position he held until his election as ASUU President on May 12, 2025. So, what manner of

man is Comrade Chris Piwuna?

Chris Piwuna is a man of many distinguished parts. He is an intellectual worker, an activist and a social mobilizer. He is a detribalized Nigerian and has always been involved in ASUU struggles and has always tried to shape the union's democratic direction. He is also involved in university administration and he is the current Dean of Student Affairs at the University of Jos. While he served as chairperson of ASUU University of Jos branch, Piwuna had insisted that unionism knows neither tribe nor ethnicity. Proof of this is that he fought tirelessly for the welfare of other sister unions in the university system like SSANU, NASU and NAAT. But in whatever role he had played, Piwuna has always advanced humanity through his principles, courage, uprightness and simple humility. Piwuna relates with all colleagues like comrades of equal status. He is quite cheerful and will always exude a kind of subdued humor with his trade mark, shy smile.

The new ASUU President is a fearless and bold activist who is also courageous and controversial not just for the sake of being so or to gain cheap

popularity. No! Chris Piwuna is someone who talks frankly and take actions based upon his deep convictions. He is a courageous man who does not hide his position on crucial issues. He has spent great energy and time exhorting the academic community to be upright and brave while at the same time castigating the Nigerian leadership for its total neglect of the education sector and its obsessive corruption which has made a nation, so abundantly endowed, to be wallowing in poverty.

In his acceptance speech, the new ASUU leader, in his usual detribalized manner, identified one of the problems that has kept the Nigerian nation traveling on reverse gear---disunity. The famed African literary genius Chinua Achebe had captured this reality, many years ago, in his book *The Trouble with Nigeria* (1983):

Nothing in Nigeria's political history captures her problem of national integration more graphically than the chequered fortune of the word tribe in her vocabulary. Tribe has been accepted at one time as a friend, rejected as an enemy at another, and finally smuggled in through the back door as an accomplice..... In Nigeria, in spite of our protestations, there is plenty of work for tribe.

Piwuna comes across as a man with an unquenchable commitment to fight for justice, freedom and human rights. But he will always insist that this kind of commitment can only be realized if all Nigerians join hands together irrespective of their ethnic and religious differences. In speech after speech, the new President has shown a distaste for tribal sentiments and the whole idea of 'ours and theirs' syndrome which has always been an obstacle to the development of nationhood in Nigeria. So, how do we solve the problem of national integration?

In his acceptance speech also, the new comrade President declared boldly that ASUU, as a union, transcends tribal, ethnic and parochial interests. He also called on all ASUU members to be united. But more than that, Piwuna believes in unity and a synergy between both teaching and non-teaching staff in the university system. The new comrade President believes that ASUU is a union that fits the honest, anti-imperialist intellectual who is armed and prepared to fight, in a certain measure, for the elimination of injustice and the mass participation of the people in the ordering of public affairs. This, he insists, can be achieved only when all unions on campus work for the actualization of the same goals and aspirations.

The obvious implication is that the new comrade President is an advocate of a free society where all citizens will be given priority, where Nigeria as a country will come first, where all citizens will work together sharing in their joys and griefs, their sorrows and ecstasies. The new comrade President has in mind a new Nigeria where all citizens will insist that education is a right and not a privilege; a new Nigeria where all citizens will have faith in the capacity of the people to change their lives, to demonstrate that people are subjects and not just passive objects of development, to insist on certain minimum professional ethics and democratic principles, to reject a society based on corruption, to reject the rule of fear, to reveal that the children of ordinary peasants and workers have a right to free education, to insist that it is the primary responsibility of any responsible government to provide education for all its citizens. But over and above all, the new President would want all Nigerians to unite in order to criticize the policy of privatization of education and the whole program of looting and plundering of our commonwealth. It could be perceived that Piwuna's ideas smack of a pan-Nigerian outlook.

Finally, one can say with considerable justification

that the new ASUU President has some noble ideals just like some other great Nigerian citizens before him. And this brings us to the question whether his ideals would be aspirational or realistic? Would his ASUU colleagues and Nigerian citizens be willing to stand for and speak the truth? The new comrade President has promised, in his acceptance speech, that he is very willing to tear down the veils behind which the truth is hidden. It is common knowledge that one of the cardinal principles of ASUU is to seek, to find and to tell the truth at all times even at great hazard. It is left to be said that the entire nation is waiting to see the new President engage the Nigerian leadership on issues of education and public affairs. It is also expected that Comrade Chris Piwuna will consolidate on the gains and achievements of his predecessors especially by demonstrating that ASUU is a great human exemplar. It is also hoped that comrade Chris Piwuna will stand for the truth just like he promised, and shall remain firm, bold, resolute and consistent. Only these attributes may help him to realize his dream of a truly united Nigeria as exemplified in ASUU, the union he has recently been saddled with the responsibility of steering its ship. I wish the new comrade President well and happy.

Jeff Godwin Doki is a Professor of Comparative Literature with the University of Jos.

THE IMPOVERISHED NIGERIAN PROFESSORS AND THE "*UNPOPULAR OPINION*" OF A MISINFORMED SAN

ABDELGHAFFAR AMOKA ABDELMALIK

Barristers pride themselves as "learned colleagues". I like court proceedings and love to watch movies involving them. In a discussion of national interest, I usually look forward to reading the opinion of these learned colleagues. They have a way of making you see what you can't see. But a Barrister who is said to be a SAN delves into the discussion of the situation of the academics and academia in Nigeria with a mindset.

His so-called "unpopular opinion" was that Professors are poor because they are not "productive" and have many wives and kids. But I was not disappointed with his opinion when I learned that he is an appendage of the political class. More amazing are individuals who take joy in negative opinions about lecturers. I underestimated the number of people who need a thinking cap.

It's fair enough that the Barrister conceded that the take-home pay of University

teachers in Nigeria is low. Of course, nearly everyone is not paid well in Nigeria. But to make a class of workers be on the same salary for 16 years, a lawyer should have classified that as a crime against humanity. But he won't. His sense of judgment is shrouded in loyalty. Salaries are meant to provide a minimum comfort. A sane system won't pay wages that it's obvious that it won't give that basic comfort level if they have to function properly. That's a topic his likes don't want to discuss. They would rather blame the victims for having two wives. Can the salary take care of one wife?

In 2009 when the salary of professors was raised to between 350,000 and 480,000, a professor could afford to save for a holiday in the UK. My salary for 2 months as an Assistant Lecturer in 2009 could buy a return ticket to the UK. Today, 2 months' salary of the same Assistant Lecturer can't buy a return ticket from Kano to Lagos. Professors can't fuel their cars because of the crashing purchasing power that got worse in May 2023. Who should we blame, Mr SAN? The Professors for having children?

The Barrister's poor knowledge of the University system worldwide was so very glaring from his second point. Worldwide, academics are the powerhouse of knowledge and innovation. Nobody goes into academia to be rich. Those who want to get rich avoid academia. But the academics are paid salaries that give them the basic comfort to teach and think. They write innovative proposals for research grants for the university. You can't do that if you are hungry.

It is not Nigeria, they don't eat research grants. Research grants are managed by the universities and are fully accounted for. Grants are used to hire PhD or postdoc research fellows, buy research equipment, research consumables, and travel for field work. They take care of conference attendance expenses to brainstorm. No professor is paid from a research grant. Research grants don't make professors rich.

Meanwhile, the major funders of research and development in the universities are the government, and then the industry. It is accommodated in the national budget. The UK or US government won't come to fund R&D for Nigerian universities. They have their universities and research

focus based on the needs of the country. Industry in Canada won't come and fund our universities. They would rather hire our best brains to come to their country to get their job done (brain drain).

For example, the UK government expenditure on research and development (R&D) in 2022 was £70.7 billion (\$96 billion). The US government spent \$164 billion on research and development in 2022. In 2024, the total budget for R&D in Norway was NOK 48.6 billion (\$4.8 billion). Norway is a country of about 6 million people. In the 2022/2023 fiscal year, South Africa's gross domestic expenditure on research and development (GERD) reached R28.282 billion (approximately \$1.57 billion). In 2024, China's total expenditure on research and experimental development (R&D) was 3.6130 trillion yuan (\$500 billion). Malaysia, in 2021, spent more than \$9 billion on research and development.

How much is the Nigerian government's budget for research and development? TETFund is the major funder of research in Nigerian universities. The amount approved for the 2023 NRF Grant Cycle that was released last was 5.1 billion (\$3.3 million) for a mere 185 research proposals

out of thousands of submissions. Where should over 100,000 academics access research grants? How do you blame the Nigerian academics and academia for not doing the research that provisions were not made for?

Of course, there are a few very competitive research grants from Non-Governmental Organisations abroad. That's what some academics are surviving with. The point is that we don't attract grants in Nigeria because the grants are not there to attract. The political class, which now happened to be the thinkers for the nation that we have created, made no provision for the required research grants. That's the education system that they have created for Nigeria. Since someone needs to be blamed for the crisis, it's OK if you find it easy to blame the victims, the academics. No publication in indexed journals? That's the most ridiculous of his "unpopular opinions". A simple search on Scopus would have properly informed him of the performance of Nigerian academics on publication in Q1 and Q2 journals despite poor funding but the "learned fellow" is ignorant of that. Nigerian academics are not doing badly in the publication of quality research papers. Some have featured in the World's top 2% most cited scholars.

Meanwhile, during my stay in the UK, I was a teaching assistant between 2009 and 2012. We were in Year 1 class one day and the 2 guys that I was assisting were complaining that the students are getting larger and the work is getting more difficult. I asked how many and the whole Year 1 engineering students were about 120. I told them I had taught about 1,000 engineering students in a Lecture Hall. They were like: That's crazy, how did you do it? And I said, yes! We do crazy stuff in Nigerian universities. That's the "unproductive" Nigerian lecturers.

The responsibilities of academics are research, teaching, and community services. They are meant to have a conducive environment and funds to do that. Unlike the other countries, Nigerian academics have to teach thousands of students every semester and examine them. They then still have to create time to research and publish in journals to get promoted. We should give them credit for that. Some countries pay their academics for publishing in Q1 journals. That's a motivation. But we use a part of our slave wage to do research and publish to be promoted. We should get credit for that. Yes, we publish in university journals to get promoted. For all my funded research, I was advised where to publish it. Did the Nigerian system provide the funds for the research to be published in Q1 and we didn't? Who else needs to publish with their salary to get promoted? Those in the

judiciary? No! C'mon, give us some credit for our efforts to keep the system going.

Yes! There are old professors who can't use a computer but will use pages to paper to solve Quantum mechanics. With the level of education of the supposed SAN, I thought the supposed "learned" guy would know that innovation has nothing to do with computer proficiency.

It's cowardice to bring personal life into a discussion on the education crisis. How many Nigerian lecturers have 2 wives and 10 children? Let's have the statistics. Someone who was already a professor in 2010, taking about 450,000 (3,000 USD), is now taking a bit above 500,000 (350 USD) in 2025. Is it the number of his wives and children that made the value of the salary crash and not enough for him now? Some people indeed appear smart till they talk, but I didn't see it coming from a so-called SAN.

You are very right about the news of the professor selling tomatoes and peppers in the market. The professor is from your North. There was another one who was a barber shaving heads from the North as a side hustle. There was also a professor who passed away recently in your North. He required 13 million for medical expenses

and couldn't afford it. In a country where political officeholders have access to cash to share recklessly, a professor can't afford 13m for his health? Isn't that a shame to the system? They had to raise funds for him. He passed away while waiting for the departure date. Let's jubilate over the condition of academics and academia in Nigeria. It's our fault that we are poor and the political class is rich.

In the 60s, the VC of University College Ibadan was the next highest paid after the Prime Minister. The Chief Justice of the Federation was next. Professors were the next highest-paid workers in Nigeria after the Chief Justice. The coming of the military began the problem of the education system. They began to see academics as enemies. They were accused of teaching students what they were not employed to teach; "radicalising" students. Dr Patrick Wilmot of ABU was deported in 1988, while the likes of Prof Omotoye Olorode of OAU were sacked in 1990 for "teaching what they were not employed to teach". Not sure if that was the reason the salary was pegged without an increment for several years while others' were rising, but they were out against the academics. A reasonable increment came during President Obasanjo.

In 2009, there was another improvement where professors were earning an equivalent of about 3,000 USD.

The monthly salary of a Senior Lecturer (about 250,000) in 2009 was about the same as that of a Director in the ministry. Professors were earning about twice the salary of a Director till recently. With the pegging of the salaries of academics since 2009 without improvement due to the refusal of the successive governments to renegotiate the 2009 Agreement, the legitimate salary of a Director is now about the same as that of a Professor. It is criminal to keep the salary of a particular class of workers relatively constant for 16 years while the value is on rapid depreciation mode. Let's clap for the impoverishment of our supposed thinkers. Let's see how they can think while hungry.

Disappointingly, a Barrister who is a product of a Nigerian university and who rose to the level of SAN said professors are not productive. I guess we just produced a bad product, him. A lot of professors are doing their best despite the strangulation by the political class. Our graduates are getting scholarships every year to travel abroad and they hardly come back. The "unproductive" Nigerian professors are producing feedstock for the UK, Canada, the US, Europe, etc. Our system doesn't seem to need them, and these guys are harvesting them. They are doing well there. C'mon! Give us some credit for producing feedstock for western

countries that value knowledge.

But do you agree that productivity can be influenced by remuneration and incentives? According to the SAN, his friend spent 4 years in a PhD study and did nothing because a Professor refused to do his job. How are we sure it was not his friend's fault? I have had a student who spent 3 years for his PhD and another student who has spent 7 years on his PhD. So, how will you judge me? A non-productive professor?

Meanwhile, the professor was meant to do his work by attending to his friend to make him a PhD holder. But he had bills to pay, which the salary paid for that job couldn't cover. Possibly the professor didn't have time for his friend because of the sort of education that his friends in politics have created. We were asked to go and hustle and we are hustling. His friend may have been a victim of the advocated side hustle for professors.

But then, his friend paid a lot of money, went to Malaysia to meet a Professor who is well paid to do the job, and he finished his PhD in 3 years and returned. You can't, in your narrow-minded self, justify poor pay for Nigerian lecturers and still complain those on poor pay don't do the job well. Does that make

sense to you? However, hate it or like it, the quality of some PhDs in Nigeria is better than what they brought from there.

Some people often said they feel bad for the lecturers. You had better feel sorry for the country. Just imagine a country without a functional public education system. When e reach to crash, e go crash on all our heads. The Barrister included, except he got enough to run away from the country like his political class friends.

We can't eat our cake and still have it. You can't plant cassava and expect to harvest yam. We have the system that we have created. We have broken our system. You would have expected someone in the law profession to be advocating for an educational system reform and salary harmonisation. But he is discussing what he do not understand and took side with the political class raping the country. He is blaming the victims because for an anticipated benefit from them. I am wondering why I should die for a system that the likes of such a beneficiary don't want fixed. To social media "espats" and commentators, just shut up when you have poor knowledge of the subject of discussion. You don't have to comment on everything. Dear colleagues! I commend your efforts and sacrifices to

keep the system going. But I think we need to end the lamentation here and find a way to take care of ourselves. Can we save what they want dead? I understand the commitment to sustainable knowledge transmission. But you can only do the job if you are alive. Take care of your health. A dead man can't think and develop young minds.

There are bills to pay and kids to take care of. The message from people around us is very clear. "Japa" or get involved in what you can do legitimately to take care of your family even if you have to sell tomatoes in the market. Find time to attend to the students when you can. You will what about the effect on the system? The system will take care of itself. What if the system crashes? All of us are in it and will begin to rebuild it together if we find education still important. Maybe then we'll sit down to discuss the sort of education that we want as recommended by Prof Attahiru Jega at the Benin NDC. What sort of system are we expecting to create while starving the thinkers and feeding those who can't think? We are surely on a long walk to freedom. Till then, best wishes to us!

Abdelghaffar Amoka Abdelmalik writes from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH

MOHAMMED DAHIRU AMINU

In today's academic world, whether in Nigeria or abroad, relevance is no longer guaranteed by the number of degrees you hold or how relevant your qualifications are across disciplines. What truly sustains an academic career is the ability to follow the money. In other words, the best way to remain visible, productive and valuable in the academia is to understand where research investments are going and to align your work accordingly. My experience working in the Nigerian university system showed that the conversation around research relevance rarely focuses on the flow of funding. This is perhaps because our academic environment is structurally uncompetitive. Unlike in many developed countries, hard work in Nigeria's academia does not often yield commensurate rewards. Promotions, grants or career progression are rarely tied to performance or innovation. Those who go above and beyond are often driven solely by their internal motivation to self improvement rather than

any structured incentive.

In the Nigerian system, I was once advised by a senior professor to follow a linear academic path: a bachelor's degree in geology should be followed by a master's in geology and a PhD in the same field. The advice was meaningful but outdated. The assumption was that any deviation from a strict disciplinary path would spell doom for one's academic career. But in the real world, this rigidity has no place. Take, for example, Professor U.R. Sumaila of the University of British Columbia, a world-renowned expert in Ocean and Fisheries Economics began his academic career with a degree in quantity surveying, which is a far departure from the oceans or fisheries. Today, he leads global discussions on Marine Fisheries. His success is proof that relevance is not about your starting point, but about where and how you position yourself along the way.

Academic disciplines are not static and research funding does not remain fixed. Funding is fluid. It appears in one field, gains traction for a few years and then shifts to a new area.

Climate change, artificial intelligence, bioinformatics, hydrogen energy and carbon capture are recent examples of where the money has gone, and where researchers must go if they want to stay relevant. The most successful academics and institutions understand this and move with the current, not against it. You do not need a new degree to move into a new field. What you need is intellectual curiosity and the willingness to engage deeply. Let us say a new funding wave is directed toward Geothermal Energy and Hydrogen Storage. If your current research is remotely related, say, you are a Geologist, Chemist or Engineer, you are already halfway there. What remains is for you to immerse yourself in the literature and catch up with the latest thinking. One practical approach is to download 250 to 300 relevant papers in the emerging field, read five papers daily and take notes. Within two months, you will not only understand the language of the field, you may even begin to generate original ideas and write your own papers.

There is no way you will study 300 papers in a new field and remain clueless. Quite the opposite: you will find yourself at conferences, workshops and proposal review panels contributing meaningfully. You will find collaborators. You will get

invited to contribute chapters or reviews. This is how mastery begins, not always with a certificate, but with boldness and deliberate curiosity. When I collaborated with researchers at the British Geological Survey Institute, I saw how researchers evolved with funding trends. Many began their careers as Geologists in the 1980s. Over time, they moved into geochemistry, radioactive waste management, gas hydrates, carbon capture and storage, hydrogen storage, and geothermal systems. Their titles, departmental names and institutional affiliations changed along with them. That is how dynamic researchers survive by adaptation.

In developed countries, universities themselves also evolve new disciplines of study. Departments rebrand. Faculties restructure. New centers emerge, often in response to global funding trends. Why? Because universities must stay competitive in research funding, global rankings and partnerships. It is no accident that you find research clusters today on climate resilience, AI ethics or sustainable energy. These clusters did not exist twenty years ago. Also Universities in developed countries follow the money because it is necessary for institutional survival. Researchers should do the same for professional

survival. The lesson here is simple: you cannot afford to spend your entire academic career researching in a single field, publishing the same kinds of papers you did during your PhD and expect to remain relevant. The world is moving and you must move with it. That movement may be tangential, not radical. But it is movement nonetheless. The reward is not just more publications but also more funding, more impact and more invitations to shape the future of your discipline.

Another common myth in the academia, especially in Nigeria, is that you must wait for the world to come to you. You assume that your specialty will one day attract attention and funding. But that is not how research ecosystems work. You must take initiative. You must venture out. You must show up where the money is already going and make yourself useful there. Once you establish credibility, the grants will follow you. Until then, you must follow the grants. This principle is even more critical for academics in developing countries. In countries like Nigeria, where research budgets are limited and local funding for innovation is scarce, the only way to maintain global relevance is to connect with international funding opportunities. These opportunities are not going to fund your nostalgia for a field that is no longer in

demand. They will fund what solves today's problems. The good news is that intellectual versatility is easier to develop today than ever before. With access to open-source journals, webinars, online courses and global networks, any curious academic can pivot to a new field in record time. You do not need to enrol in another university or sit through three years of classes all you need is internet access, time, discipline and a genuine desire to learn.

As academics in Nigeria, and more broadly, in Africa, we must discard the idea that a person's value in the academia is measured by how closely their degrees align. That logic made sense in the past, when information was scarce and change was slow. But we live in a dynamic era and our approach must reflect that. Your credibility comes not from the title on your certificate but from the substance of your ideas and your ability to contribute to the pressing issues of our time. So, if you are an academic who seeks for self improvement, remain globally relevant and attract funding and collaboration, remember to always follow the money. You should also stay curious, read widely and be bold. You should publish in emerging areas, partner across disciplines and develop yourself. Because in the academia, as in life, stagnation is the enemy of relevance.

*Mohammed Dahiru Aminu
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from Abuja, Nigeria.*

ASUU RESEARCHERS' CHALET: TRIBUTE TO DILIGENCE

ADEJOBI ADEJUMO

Empires, cities and monuments have grown out of the fertile loam of human minds, out of the audacious daring of the valiant and out of the never-say-die spirit of the courageous. This eloquently summarizes the story of the monument standing out elegantly at a serene location of University of Abuja within the Festus Iyayi National Secretariat of ASUU, so named to immortalize the memories of ASUU's illustrious and irrepressible past president, Festus Iyayi.

ASUU, the *Avant Garde* union of Nigerian intelligentsia, tells the eloquent story of active minds determinedly trained on building, rebuilding, branding and rebranding. This, simply is the secret behind the positive strides that the union continues to make from time to time in spite of serious travails it contends with in a government instigated unfriendly atmosphere. The National Secretariat Complex as it stands today is graphic evidence to this

claim.

The National Secretariat of ASUU is never an accident, rather, it is a product of careful conception, deliberate design and painstaking contemplation to erect a monument of functional piece of architectural maze to meet the ever-growing needs and challenges of the union. This becomes a compelling necessity given the phenomenal growth of the union in terms of branches and membership coupled with the astronomical increase in the cost of lodging our officers in hotels within Abuja metropolis.

The Researchers' Chalet, started as a modest nest where ASUU members, both on National assignment or private business could find abode at rock-bottom charges compared with what obtains in Abuja and its environs. These reduced charges were done without compromising standards in any form. The chalet comes with a galaxy of facilities and attractive services; Is it the palate-friendly and hygienically prepared meals? Is it the total assurance of safety to lodgers and their properties? Is it the serene ambience that



ASUU Researchers Chalet

insulates lodgers from the general madness in a city like Abuja? What of the superb laundry services at pocket-friendly charges? For all these and more, a visit to the ASUU Researchers' Chalet will convince even the most cynic critic.

At the commission of the extension to the chalet, apart from the installation of state of the arts facilities in the rooms, the chalet runs on both the national grid and solar power for an around-the-clock energy supply complete with uninterrupted WiFi connection. As such, there is no encumbrance on the lodgers to engage in their intellectual activities at the any time.

Beyond the bricks and mortar, beyond the breathtaking attraction of this piece of architectural maze, beyond the allure of paints, the building exudes the confident aura of a gentle giant silently communicating to visitors, "I am a safe fortress of rest,

whoever resides here has nothing to lose. You can sleep here with your two eyes closed.”

The chalet also comes with a capacious compound which affords lodgers ease of movement both for humans and vehicles. For this reason our ground is purposefully landscaped to achieve aesthetico-functional ends.

In terms of accessibility, the chalet's location offers easy access to the airport, the Abuja city and adjoining communities. In short, ASUU researchers' chalet comes with a basket of advantages; safety, comfort, Eco-friendliness and relative affordability. A visit will more than convince you. Kudos ASUU, kudos to the team of architects and engineers', kudos to the visionary leadership of the Union. The union truly makes us strong!

Adejobi Adejumo writes from LAUTECH

POEM

Ghost Orchid

Pushed onto the sidewalk of life
Forced to watch as others make their mark as I stand and stare in awe and umbrage.

Feeling all alone and wondering what to make of myself,
I create a cocoon to live in sheltered and covered while I live on in my head, a different version of me, and a seemingly better version of me
Making me one more than one

I will survive

I will thrive

I am nature's secret waiting to be unraveled I remember that you chose the earth to wrap it arms around you while you left mine empty and cold.

I remember that I envy the earth who breathes in your scent daily,
I remember that I mourn what now resides in the blind spot of my soul.
I remember that your name; Belladonna!

Hanya Dorcas Lami

POEM

Pain of the Mind

The thickest of tears and the deepest of groans;
a weakening of the body through the soul,
a state of gloom and doom from which there is no repose.

Dream forlorn, that is stranger to all things tranquil.

There is a pull to the dark that I now relax in,
for I am home, and home is starless.

And in my home, I be and let me be;
that in being me, I can more than just a being.

And though for a rebirth I hank,
I let the pangs ground me to tomorrow.

So when my back hits the cold wall,
I no longer recoil and shudder, but I remember;
that I am home, and though home be starless,
in my home, I be and let me be.

Hanya Dorcas Lami

DESIGNING NIGERIA'S FISCAL FUTURE: *A POLICY BLUEPRINT FOR INCLUSIVE GROWTH AND TAX REFORM*

BY UJU EZENEKWE

An excerpt from Taiwo Oyedele's (*Chairman, Presidential Committee on Fiscal Policy and Tax Reforms*) write-up on TAX REFORM

Context and Rationale

Nigeria's tax system has historically been plagued by outdated laws, complex administration, overlapping taxes, and a significant trust deficit between the government and its citizens. As a result, the country experiences low tax compliance, high levels of informal sector activity, and a tax-to-GDP ratio that falls well below the global standard. Additionally, past reliance on inflationary financing mechanisms, such as quantitative easing, has exacerbated poverty and inequality.

Vision of Reform

Oyedele proposes a bold, people-centric, and evidence-driven fiscal transformation that sees tax not just as a social contract, but as a socio-economic covenant. He advocates for a smart tax system designed to promote economic inclusion, national competitiveness, and sustainable development.

Key Reform Measures Introduced

- **Income Tax Exemptions:** Full tax relief for over one-third of Nigerian workers.
- **SME Support:** Higher exemption thresholds for small businesses to ease cost burdens.
- **Incentives for Priority Sectors:** Targeted tax breaks and investment-friendly rules.
- **Tax Justice & Simplification:** Elimination of nuisance taxes and establishment of a tax ombudsman.
- **Institutional Clarity:** Streamlining roles across agencies to reduce policy overlap.
- **Digitalisation & Transparency:** Use of technology for tracking, refunds, and public accountability.
- **Global Alignment:** Updating rules to support remote work, global operations, and fair taxation.

Strategic Lessons and Principles

- **Boldness with Vision:** Reform requires courage grounded in clarity of purpose.
- **Humility and Evidence:** Sound policy must rise

above rhetoric and rely on credible data.

- **Inclusiveness:** Policies should reflect national—not sectional—interests.
- **Institutional Integrity:** Reforms must outlast administrations by becoming embedded in systems.

Blueprint for Tomorrow

1. **Prioritise Inclusion:** Engage all stakeholders; put people before statistics.
2. **Data-Driven Policy:** Resist the tyranny of popular opinion when it contradicts evidence.
3. **Build Capacity:** Invest in education, innovation, leadership, and health as core drivers of reform.

Call to Action

Policymakers, elites, and citizens must treat reform as a **daily discipline**—boldly challenging outdated assumptions, strengthening public institutions, and committing to non-inflationary, efficient, and transparent governance. The future will not design itself. **We must go out and build it.**

“Great outcomes require intentionality in design and sincerity of purpose in execution.”

– Taiwo Oyedele

Uju Ezenekwe is the Business Editor of TNS

In English we say:
"Education is the key to success."
 But in poetry, we say:

I walked up to the POS lady
 The one I used to think was just lazy.
 I thought she was directionless and uneducated
 I thought she spent her time living waywardly
 in clubs and parties
 Until she smiled and jokingly said:
 "I have a First Class in Economics."

Boom.
 Just like that
 Reality slapped me in the face
 Without warning.

Because how do you graduate with 1st class...
 And end up under a sun hotter than your CGPA?

She used to solve macroeconomic problems in class,
 Now she's solving 50-naira transfer disputes
 And praying network will respond before she loses a customer.
 She learned equations that never solved her reality

School go humble you.
 They said school is the ladder to greatness
 But forgot to mention the ladder is broken and held together by strikes, sweat and silent prayers.
 She wears a degree like a perfume but nobody can smell it
 She speaks English that shakes ceilings,
 But in this economy,
 Nobody send your papa.

Welcome to my country where you study hard for 4 years and graduate after seven.
 To finally come home to nothing

She didn't fail school, but school failed her.

And the saddest part?
 She's not alone.

There are CVs rotting in Gmail folders.
 Dreams archived in University application portals.
 Brains sharper than razors...
 Now used to sell spaghetti and wipe glass at traffic stops.

So next time you pass a graduate selling recharge cards
 Look closely.
 That might be Nigeria's next president...
 If only this country gave her a chance.

We are a nation
 That gives you the key to success,
 Then forgets to build you a door.

*Written by EXJAM Benjamin A. A.
 Student of Computer Science at Gombe State University*



THE MOKWA FLOOD: AVOIDABLE OR DELIBERATE

SHEIKH KUBENABU SATI



For over a decade now, the Nigerian Meteorological Agency (Nimet) and Nigeria Hydrological Services Agency (NIHSA) have continued to supply the government and the general public with scientifically based Seasonal Climate Predictions and annual Flood Outlooks. These forecasts are globally accepted early warning systems that should help governments, policy makers, traditional rulers and individuals living in such communities to plan and take proactive actions so as to prevent the destruction and loss of lives and

property. However, past events reveal that we are a reactive people rather than a proactive people.

NiMET and NIHSA information clearly identified flood prone states and communities in Nigeria which would likely experience floods in 2025. These states include: Abia, Adamawa, Akwa Ibom, Anambra, Bauchi, Bayelsa, Benue, Borno, Cross River, Delta, Ebonyi, Edo, Gombe, Imo, Jigawa, Kebbi, Kogi, Kwara, Lagos, Nassarawa, Niger, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo, Rivers, Sokoto, Taraba, Yobe and Zamfara states. This notwithstanding that calamity that should have been averted happened in Mokwa.

The torrential rains on May 28–29, 2025, triggered severe flooding in Mokwa, a key market town in Niger State, submerging homes, markets, roads, and bridges, displacing over three (3000) thousand people and a death toll of over two (200) hundred people. Mokwa is a town largely surrounded by water. It is bordered by River Niger to the south, which flows from Lake Jebba in the west to the confluence of River Kaduna to the east. Mokwa has an estimated population of about 244,937 people according to the 2006 census and has a landmass of 4,338 square kilometers.

This unfortunate incident destroyed the means of livelihood of the entire town. Although the flood was caused by the torrential rains, it was also claimed and reported that residents also claimed that the collapse of a nearby local dam worsened the situation. People lost their loved ones, their homes and means of livelihood over a natural occurrence that could have been avoided if the government and communities were proactive.

The people now left at the mercy of hand-downs from government in the guise of relief. How do you support someone who has lost his/her loved ones? Lost

his/her entire life's work? These are the questions begging for answers because the incident could have been avoided if all parties collaborated with one another.

What can be done to prevent future occurrence?

1. Government and local community leaders must sensitize the people on local early warning systems.

2. Government should conduct flood sensitization seminars and meetings at all levels in states identified as high risk areas to include all stakeholders who will internalize their local flood response plans to include mapping evacuation routes and temporary shelters, provision of emergency supplies such as food, clothing and health emergency units.

3. Flood issues must be treated as priority to avoid a reactionary stance as is always evident in government attitude. Prevention they say is better than cure. Government must be proactive and not reactive.

Sheikh Kubenabu Sati writes from GSU

POEM

Hiraeth

I can't remember when it started, but I remember the echoing sounds in my chest, the loneliness in my accent and the shadows of the sunset behind my eyes.

I remember that my eyes only led to forbidden paths and my silence sang war songs and bore a reminder of battle wounds.

I remember the clenched fist bruises and burning taste of blood hitting the back of my throat like decades old whiskey.

I remember that when my eyes closed at night and the fear came, I embraced it as friend, for fear is a happy face, a face I know too well and pain a brother I love.

And between its gnashing teeth I found you, you whom my heart desired but kept secret from me.

I remember the yearning to arise to the depths of those blue pupils and the hope to hold your hands and bask in the freedom of invisibility.

I remember that the cruel hands of pain gave me a gift and my heart panged for home was nigh, home was you.

Hanya Dorcas Lami

ASUU-FU LAFIA CHAMPIONS STAFF WELFARE WITH CAMPUS MEDICAL OUTREACH

OGO OGO

In a bold demonstration of self-reliance and collective responsibility, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Federal University of Lafia Branch, launched a week-long medical outreach program at the university campus aimed at addressing mounting health concerns among its members. The initiative, which underscores the union's commitment to members' welfare amid challenging working conditions was officially flagged off by ASUU President, Comrade Chris Piwuna.

Welcoming participants at the opening ceremony, ASUU-FUL Branch Chairperson, Comrade Sunday Orinya painted a grim picture of institutional healthcare, noting that the situation has compelled the union to chart an independent course by organizing the medical outreach, which was self-funded through membership dues. In his words, "the inability of our employers to adequately address our healthcare needs has forced

us to take our destiny into our own hands." He charged university administrators and governments to be committed to the welfare concerns of staff including health.

The program received institutional endorsement from the university's leadership, with Vice Chancellor Professor Shehu Abdul Rahman, represented by Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) Professor Aleruchi Chuku, commending ASUU-FUL for the initiative. The administration pledged continued collaboration with the union to enhance staff welfare programs across the institution.

Piwuna delivered a keynote address emphasizing the critical importance of health prioritization for academic staff. "Given the demanding responsibilities we shoulder and the difficult terrain we navigate as academics, it is imperative that we place our health at the forefront of our concerns".

In his remarks, Chairman of ASUU-FUL Health Committee, Professor Ishaku Bako

announced that the medical outreach encompasses a broad spectrum of healthcare services involving health screenings and medical consultations. He encouraged the university community to avail themselves throughout the week to benefit from the free services.

On the whole, the initiative garnered enthusiastic responses from the academic community, with numerous members expressing appreciation for the leadership's proactive approach to healthcare provision. Participants urged the union's leadership to institutionalize such programs, ensuring continuity and regular health monitoring for all members.

The grassroots healthcare initiative represents a significant milestone in academic union advocacy, demonstrating how professional associations can bridge critical gaps in institutional support systems while prioritizing members welfare in challenging operational environments.

Ogo Ogo is the Managing Editor of TNS

PICTURES SPEAK



ASUU President, Comrade Chris Piwuna and ASUU-FUL Chairperson, Comrade Sunday Orinya at the opening ceremony heralding the medical screening and consultation exercises at FU Lafia.



Across section of participants at a medical outreach organised by ASUU-FUL branch recently



ASUU president, Comrade Chris Piwuna carrying out medical screening on the representative of FUL VC and ASUU-FUL chairperson at a medical outreach organised by ASUU-FUL branch recently.



A cross section of ASUU leaders and the representative of FUL VC at the opening ceremony heralding the medical screening and consultation exercises at FU Lafia.

Across section of participants at a medical outreach organised by ASUU-FUL branch recently

THE RISE OF FOOD FADS IN NIGERIA: NAVIGATING TRENDS WITH PROFESSIONAL GUIDANCE

MAHCIT MARGARET KAZI



In recent years, many Nigerians have become more interested in what they eat, leading to the rise of different food trends. People are now trying diets like intermittent fasting, keto (low-carb, high-fat diets), detox drinks, and plant-based eating. At the same time, local natural foods such as *moringa*, *turmeric*, tiger nuts, and herbal teas have become more popular because people believe they are good for health.

While these trends help people think more about eating healthy, not all of them are based on science. Some diets may not be good for everyone and could cause health problems if not done

properly. This is why it is important to get advice from trained professionals like dietitians or nutritionists.

Food Trends in Nigeria Today

Nigeria is a country with many different cultures, and each culture has its own way of cooking and eating. Traditional Nigerian foods such as yam, cassava, rice, maize, vegetables, and beans have fed families for many years. But with more people moving to cities and following trends on social media, many are trying new diets without knowing if they are truly healthy or suitable for them.

For example, some people stop eating carbohydrates completely, but common Nigerian foods like rice, fufu, and garri are rich in

carbohydrates. Also, detox diets that allow only fruits or juices can cause people to miss out on important nutrients, especially in places where not everyone eats a balanced diet every day.

Problems with Food Fads in Nigeria

- **Not Suitable for Local Culture:** Many food trends come from Western countries and may not work well with Nigerian ways of eating.
- **Too Expensive:** Some of the foods used in these diets are imported and cost too much for most Nigerians.
- **Health Risks:** Without proper advice, some of these diets can lead to poor nutrition or even illness.
- **Wrong Information:** A lot of advice on the internet or social media is not correct, but people follow them because it looks convincing.

Why You Should See a Dietitian/Nutritionist

Dietitians and nutritionists are trained to help people eat better in ways that suit their health and lifestyle. In Nigeria, these experts are especially helpful because they understand both global food trends and local food culture.

Correct Information: They

can explain which diets are safe and which are not.

Personalized Plans: They can help you choose foods that fit your health condition, body needs, and local options.

Healthy Habits for Life: Dietitians can teach you how to eat well in a consistent manner, not just for a short time.

Teaching People about Nutrition

To help more people understand good nutrition, there should be more public education. This can be done through schools, community programs, radio, TV, and social media with the help of real health experts. Universities and research centers should also study Nigerian foods to show their health benefits.

Conclusion

Food trends can be fun and helpful, but they must be followed with care. In Nigeria, it is important to think about culture, cost, health, and food availability before trying any new diet. With help from dietitians and nutritionists, people can make better food choices, avoid health problems, and enjoy meals that are both healthy and part of our culture. Eating well should not be a trend it should be a way of life.

Mahcit Margaret Kazi writes from University of Jos

POEM

"Chalk and Chains"

For ASUU, and the soul of Nigerian education

They teach by candlelight, not by choice,
Voices hoarse from strikes, yet firm in voice.
Books torn, halls bare, yet they remain,
Bound to duty, yoked to pain.

Chalk in hand, they draw the line—
Between collapse and a brighter time.
But each demand, a cry unheard,
Each promise made, a broken word.

They march in robes, not for fame,
But to ignite a dying flame.
In the shadows of crumbling halls,
They echo truth through silent walls.

Years go by, the cycle spins—
Empty pledges, recycled sins.
Still, they rise at every dawn,
Guardians of the minds unborn.

They face a system rigged and cold,
Trading dreams for bags of gold.
Yet plant their feet, defy the tide,
With bleeding hearts and quiet pride.

"Revive the schools!" they shout and plead,
"Not just for us, but for the need—
To raise a land with minds made whole,
To give this nation back its soul."

So, when you see the strikes and stand,
Don't curse the chalk that leaves the hand.
Look deeper at the blood and cost,
The years of service, purpose lost.

For ASUU fights, though weary still,
With battered hope and iron will.
Not for themselves alone they strive—
But so our nation's dreams survive.

Uju Ezenekwe

DECADES OF UNDESERVING POVERTY ON “PLATEAU THE BEAUTIFUL”

ZUHUMNAN DAPEL

Created close to half a century ago, Plateau State has so far been ruled by 11 appointed military administrators and governed by five elected civilian governors. The State is one of Nigeria's 36 states located in the central part of the country. It has played pivotal roles in shaping the providence of Nigeria and many Nigerians: from serving as a breeding ground for numerous professional stars to being an incubator of strategic decisions that for decades to come, will feed into the progress of Nigeria.

What is special about Plateau State and its capital city (Jos)? A guide to answering this question can be gleaned from raising another question: why, for decades, has the city been chosen to host major political events in the country? For instance, it hosted the 1993 presidential primaries that produced Alhaji Moshood Abiola as the SDP candidate, the 1998/99 maiden PDP convention that elected Olusegun Obasanjo, who to date is deemed the president

who laid the foundation of modern Nigeria. More recently two of the three leading political parties in Nigeria launched their 2023 presidential campaigns in Jos.

Additionally, the economic blueprint – National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) also known as the 2001 “Kuru Declaration” which was adopted and implemented during Obasanjo's eight years in office – was drafted and flung in Plateau State. The document was nicknamed *Kuru Declaration* for two reasons. First, *Kuru* is a suburb of Jos where the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, NIPSS – regarded as the nation's foremost and apex policy 'think-tank – is situated. Second, the document embodies the progressive firm determination of Nigerian stakeholders in building a prosperous nation. Now, back to the question: why Jos? Let's plough out the facts.

The geography, the beauty, and the fruitfulness

Plateau state is currently home to an estimated 4.5 million

people and it is endowed with substantial amounts of Tin and Columbite amongst other mineral resources. Before oil became Nigeria's leading foreign exchange earner, Jos produced over 90 per cent of the tin in Nigeria such that by 1919 there were over 80 companies and consortiums producing 8,174 tons of tin. A professor of liberal arts, Umar Danfulani, once claimed that proceeds from tin exploration from Jos was used by the British to build Manchester and Liverpool cities in the United Kingdom. Vindicating this assertion was the setting up of pre-independence colonial railroad linking the city to the coastal part of the country in 1927, primarily to transport tin from the state through Lagos (the then colonial capital) to Great Britain.

The mining activity in Jos attracted infrastructure (railroads, dams, electricity, telecommunication etc) and individuals from different parts of Nigeria and the world. During the peak of the mining, census figures reported that 44 per cent of the population of Jos Division consisted of people who migrated from other parts of the country and even beyond the borders of Nigeria. The city became cosmopolitan, and was adjudged to be hospitable and peaceful (to the extent it was phrased as the “Home

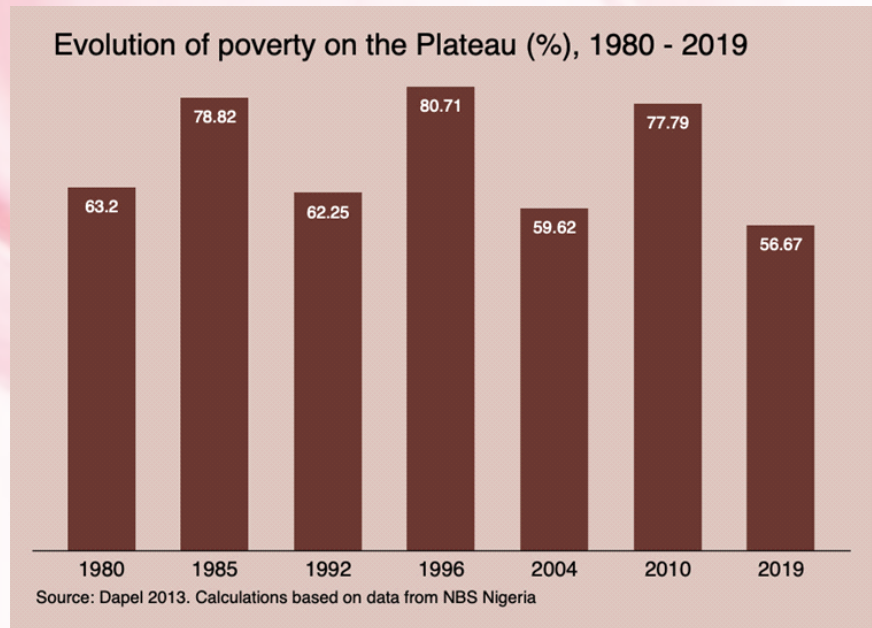
of Peace and Tourism”).

In terms of weather, Jos has low temperatures akin to those experienced in European and North American cities. The beautiful weather has provided yet-to-be-fully unleashed farming advantages. Given the favourable weather condition, the cultivation of fruits like apple and strawberry, and crops such as potatoes, as well as poultry farming are practiced.

Jos: the breeding ground

Jos, the Plateau State capital has contributed to the formative years of many Nigerian celebrities and professionals. For example, Tony Elumelu, Abike Dabiri, Deborah Ajakaiye (the first female professor of Geophysics in Africa), Innocent Idibia (2 Baba), Ali Nuhu, Sani Mu'azu, Paul and Peter Okoye (P-Square), Jude Lemfani Abaga (MI), Panshak Zamani (Ice Prince), Lawal Gwadabe, Desmond Elliot, and Saint Obi. Others are Mikel Obi, Ahmed Musa, Ogenyi Onazi, Moses Simon, Victor Obinna, Dele Aiyenugba, Chibuzor Okonkwo, Joseph Akpala, and Sam Pam, not forgetting the Canadian-based rugby player: Nanyak Dala.

Is Plateau indispensable in the leadership history of Nigeria?



The graph above depicts the picture of poverty in the land, with more than two-thirds of the population (over the past 40 years) living in economic deprivation. Poverty in this respect is measured by comparing what households spend on goods and services (expenditure) with an amount of money that is deemed appropriate for the provision of basic needs – also known as the poverty line. As of 2019, more than 2.5 million people (the population in poverty) were unable to spend N521.7 per day on basic needs – food, health, education, housing, transportation, and communication.

For about four decades – from 1966 to the early 2000s Plateau natives have been in the corridor of power in Nigeria. General Yakubu Gowon was military Head of State for nine years. Also, at the time, General Joseph Garba played an influential role in government in the 1970s. Additionally, Generals Joshua Dogonyaro, Jeremiah Useni, Domkat Bali, John Shagaya, and Muhammad Najib who were fondly referred to as the *Langtang Mafia* were key players in Generals Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha's led military junta.

The “undeservedness” in a

land of missed opportunity.

Plateau state, despite its richness across geography, agriculture, cosmopolitan nature, the birthing of superstars, minerals, and long history of residing in Nigeria's hallway of power, the livelihoods of the state's residents for the past four decades have not been in tandem with expectations as illustrated below:

Are finances the root of failure?

Within a decade, the poverty rate fell by roughly 37 per cent even though overall revenue (internally generated revenue, IGR plus monthly federal allocation) also declined by more than 30 per cent. There is a striking pattern: the rise in IGR between 2010 and 2020 coincided with a fall in poverty

numbers within the same period. Thus, higher poverty rates may be associated with higher dependence of states on federation account. Therefore Abuja-dependent states should always expect less revenue in the event of falling oil prices because a

significant fraction of their incomes is tied to Nigeria's oil revenue.

Finally, will the new administration rewrite the economic map of the state? Time shall tell but it is ultimately left in the hands of the citizens of the state,

using their voting cards, to decide when the time is ripe. Dear Plateau the Beautiful, may you one day rise like a Phoenix from the Ashes and surpass the greatness that you were once known for.

*Zuhumnan Dapel Twitter:
@dapelzg*

POEM

Eros

Love is god!

The god in cruelty whom we do not see but feel, and yet with their harsh whip they bruise our palms and hearts, but no, we keep on in worship.

And when they decide the fate of their faith-full followers, we accept it without question; and we yet follow on as they string us along and tease us with the hope of an eternal rest in arms soft and warm, for we—as men—live for hope and die in hope.

And this god is cruel and yet we serve them, like slaves and tobacco plantations; toiling for the nicotine that raises the heart above the heads of other men, above the clouds of the sky.

The god Love, does not know love as we do; but knows love as strong and broken, and fallen and silently loud; with warm palms that send chills coursing through our bodies.

god knows love as a friend and a foe that should stay but chooses to leave, pulling the mat from underneath our feet as we kneel in recitations with heads bowed and arms raised high.

And god knows that though we lament and wail, we still remain, like mindless slaves; their fate-full followers.

Hanya Dorcas Lami

POPE LEO XIV, GOD, NATURE AND LOVE

JEFF GODWIN DOKI



Pope Leo XIV concelebrates Mass inside the Sistine Chapel at the Vatican

*Are God and Nature then at strife,
That Nature lends such evil dreams?
So careful of the type she seems,
So careless of the single life* (Alfred Tennyson, 1809-1892).

On Sunday May 18, 2025, the new Pope, Leo XIV, celebrated his inauguration mass at the Vatican City. The Holy mass was attended by more than thirty world leaders including Nigeria's President, Bola Ahmed Tinubu. While delivering his homily the Pontiff condemned economic systems that exploit the Earth's resources and marginalizes the poorest. But most importantly, the Pope called on all human beings to show love to one another

emphasizing that with love every conflict would cease and peace shall return. Generally speaking, there are three salient items, among many others, in Pope Leo's homily that cannot be missed even by the most indifferent spectator or listener namely: Nature, Conflict, Love and Unity.

Let me begin with Nature. It seems clear to anybody with two eyes that Nature is not too happy with the activities of Mankind and has decided to use its scientific agents like Climate change in order to put the human

race in perpetual check. Proof: The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared that Climate Change is one of the biggest threats to global health in the 21st century. For those of us unfamiliar with the Physical Sciences, Climate Change comes in the form of higher temperatures which have the capacity to cause intense storms, droughts and other weather extremes like Ocean heating and Sea level rise. The concomitant result is increased flooding, extreme heat and more diseases.

Twenty days, after Pope Leo XIV's election, on May 28, 2025, precisely, flooding caused by heavy rainfall submerged the market town of Mokwa in Niger State, Nigeria causing severe damage. The flood killed over 200 people, it destroyed over 2000 homes and, even as I write this piece, about 500 people are still missing as a result of that tragedy. Apparently, something has gone wrong between God, Nature and Man. For example, at creation, God, the maker, 'assigned to the Sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command' (Prov. 8: 29). But today, Nature has refused to obey that command. In the present century, Nature has consistently shown itself as red in tooth and claw, threatening Mankind everywhere.

And as if the flood in Mokwa, Nigeria, was a child's play, there was another severe flood in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa on June 11, 2025 killing not less than 51 people while disrupting transport and fire networks. In a separate incident, a school bus was swept away by floods near Mthatha in the same country. The vehicle had been carrying 13 school children and 2 adults. Six people in the bus died. In April 2022, a storm on the East Coast of South Africa had killed about 400 people and left 1000 homeless. Again, on June 12, 2025, the day the political class in Nigeria was celebrating Democracy Day, a London-bound Air India plane crashed into a residential area shortly after take-off killing all but one of the 242 passengers and crew members. The tragedy of the plane crash may be justified as a mistake of science and technology but we must not forget that it is the same knowledge of the man of science which has continued to threaten the universe with nuclear weapons of awesome destructiveness from Hiroshima (Japan) in 1945 to Ukraine and Russia in 2022, to Israel and Gaza and Iran in 2025. One is left asking the question if Nature is God's agent because the Gospel gave us a promise that 'not a sparrow will fall without God's protective care' (Matt. 10: 29).

Let's turn to the international

community. One can say with considerable justification that the present century has been the most violent and destructive in human history and the international environment of the 21st century is not only frightening but also unpredictable and dangerous. From 1992 to 1994, close to one million people died because of conflict and over 84 million refugees had to flee from the effects of conflict. From 2001 to the present, the United Nations has been involved in more than thirty-two peacekeeping operations. By any conceivable standard, the presence and intensity of conflict in the present century has been remarkably high; the geographical area involved has been considerable; and the number of persons affected by conflict has been truly significant. Ethnic, communal, religious, secessionist conflicts and even violent protests have shaped the international environment and dictated the need to devise new and more effective strategies of cooperation and conflict resolution. In almost all local and international conflicts the most frequently employed method of conflict resolution is that of negotiation which involves dialogue and bargaining. Although Article 33 (1) of the UN Charter encourages states to seek recourse to negotiation first in any dispute, this method has frequently failed making the UN a toothless bulldog. The truth is that negotiations can

hardly be reached when the parties refuse to acknowledge the validity and legitimacy of the other. Rwanda 1994, Russia-Ukraine, 2022 and very recently Israeli-Gaza-Iran 2025 are good and recent examples. Again, there is the problem of strategic barriers, by which I mean a situation where there is a high level of uncertainty and mutual distrust among parties. This is the case with the Arab-Israeli conflict. The other international method of conflict resolution is peace-keeping. But here again, there is a millipede of examples to demonstrate that it is not workable in the present century. It failed woefully in Rwanda 1994, Darfur 2003, Southern Sudan 2011, Yemen 2014 and Myanmar 2017.

The obvious implication is that the United Nations has repeatedly failed to prevent war and fulfil its peacekeeping duties for which it was founded in 1945. As a matter of fact, the inability of the UN to live up to the words of its charter by preventing war crimes means that the Organization lacks the political will to bring about global peace. It is obvious that in many ways the UN is ill-prepared for the challenges thrown by the security environment of the post-Cold War system.

It is against this background that we shall consider the efficacy of Pope Leo XIV's message of love and unity as a tool for bringing about global peace. Here are his succinct words:

In the one Christ we are all one. This is the path to follow together among ourselves but also with our sister Christian

churches, with those who follow other religious paths, with those who are searching for God, with all women and men of good will in order to build a new world where peace reigns.

I am done: it remains for me to end where I began. Pope Leo XIV is preaching a message of love and unity: if Nature turns its back on us, if the international mechanisms for settling disputes fail to provide solutions to a conflict-torn society, we should come back to God. God is very willing to embrace us irrespective of our creeds, languages, race and cultures. **This is the hour of love.**

Jeff Godwin Doki is a Conflict Manager, writer and a Professor of Comparative Literature with the University of Jos, Nigeria.

POEM

"Chalk and Chains – Pidgin version

Dem promise us since 2009,
Agreement full ground like shrine.
FG sign am, smile like saint—
But na ghost promise, full of paint.

ASUU don shout, "Make una pay!"
But dem dey dodge like thief for day.
Dem go call meeting, give us tea,
But as we sidon—na story we see.

"Negotiation go start soon," dem talk,
But na treadmill—we just dey walk.
Year go pass, budget go fly,
But school still dey beg to dry.

We dey teach with broken chalk,
Inside class wey no get lock.
Rain dey beat us, sun dey roast,
Still we dey give am our very most.

ASUU strike? Na last bus stop,
Wen ear don full, and mouth don chop.
Na way to talk when dem no hear,
When leaders dey toast power with beer.

You dey talk say students dey lose?
Wetin dem gain when dem school dey snooze?
Lecturer no be magician o—
If system die, na all of us go know.

Imagine say doctor dey use torchlight
Take operate person wey get fight.
Na so we be for lecture hall—
No light, no fan, ceiling wan fall.

E no be say we like wahala,
But how pikin go read without amala?
No tools, no lab, no peace of mind—
Yet dem expect brain to shine.

ASUU na tree wey bend but no break,
Even when storm don make am shake.
We no dey fight for private gain,
Na public future we wan sustain.

So, my people, make we understand,
ASUU dey fight for this land.
Until that 2009 dem obey,
We no go comot for this delay.

Uju Ezenekwe

WHEN THE JOKE IS NO LONGER FUNNY: PELLER, OLUOMO, AND THE CRISIS OF MOCKED INTELLIGENCE

AIYEPOLA ABAYOMI

There's a new tragedy playing out across Nigeria, not the one etched in bullets and banditry, but in banter and the slow burial of thinking.

It's the rise of a culture where the uneducated sneer at education, where laughter has replaced literacy as a currency of relevance, and where the thinkers, once custodians of dignity, are now the background noise in a theatre run by jesters.

Take the case of Peller, a TikTok teen phenom who recently offered ₦500,000 monthly to hire a cameraman, with the odd twist that only holders of a Master's degree need apply. But it wasn't a job. It was a spectacle.

The applicants, educated and hopeful, were not interviewed, they were ridiculed. It was performance art of the worst kind, where education was the punchline and ignorance the standing ovation.

But Peller didn't start this. MC Oluomo, the apotheosis of Nigeria's brute-to-power

phenomenon, laid the foundation. When mocked for saying “kundus” instead of “kudos,” he didn't apologize.

He clapped back: “You wey get degree, wetin you don achieve?” Then with the final stroke of irony, he reminded us that his children are citizens of the UK and US, educated in places where “kudos” is probably on the wall. This, dear reader, is more than an irony. It is confession. They publicly mock the educational system because it does not serve them.

Yet they privately invest in education because they know it works. Just not here. Not in Nigeria.

The real problem is deeper. We have normalized the public humiliation of the educated while starving the institutions that produce them. And yet, we still expect excellence.

In his Saturday Tribune column of July 12, 2025, Farooq Kperogi exposed this hypocrisy with surgical clarity. He told the story of Professor Nasir Hassan-Wagini in Katsina who now sells tomatoes in the market to survive. He reminded

us that “no Nigerian professor earns more than ₦750,000 a month,” and that “university teaching, which should be a middle-class profession, now guarantees poverty.”

He compared this with Japan, where university lecturers earn more than engineers and are treated as engines of national innovation. He wrote from Japan itself, having toured public universities that incubate startups, license patents, and directly drive economic growth.

Japan succeeded, Kperogi argues, because it paid its thinkers and funded its thinkers. Nigeria mocks its own.

And what of the academics? Fighters of just causes. Yet also, sometimes the arsonists who light fires under the same roof they seek to save.

Recently, when the new Tinubu-backed federal universities were announced, some academics fell over themselves issuing congratulations to colleagues appointed as vice chancellors and administrators.

The same people that bemoan poor funding were now celebrating new institutions they know will lack basic infrastructure and funding from day one. How do you demand more

resources for existing universities while praising the proliferation of new, underfunded ones?

As I wrote on my Facebook wall last week in a post titled “The Thinkers Have Eaten, Now Let the Rest Keep Thinking”:

“We all know that politics abounds everywhere across all spheres of human endeavor ... so when academics dabble into politics, we shouldn't begrudge them. But as representatives of the god of knowledge, the Mbadiwe, Arikawe, and Iwelumo of

this world ought to be able to 'da ina mo ori to se ise ọpọlọ' (encouraging an intellectual) in respect of political affiliations.

These days, the craze for political appointment or vice-chancellorship has made many eggheads throw caution to the dogs. Their alignment with Bulaba, it seems, is not ideological—it's opportunistic.

To the various rewarded appointees across the nation, KUNDUS to you. I follow una thank God say the soup wey you follow cook, you dey alive to chop am. May you not choke on it when conscience comes

knocking.”

This is not bitterness. It is a call to honesty.



Academic Laughter Corner

Because even academia needs a recess!

Government Promises

Why did ASUU bring a calendar to the negotiation table?

To remind the government what a “timeline” actually means!



Campus Generator News

Our university finally got a new generator! Unfortunately, it came with a note: “Bring your own fuel.”



Weather-Controlled Timetable

Student: “Sir, will there be lectures next week?”



on the phase of the moon.”

Pidgin Joke – ASUU Palava

Student: “Oga, strike don end?”

Lecturer: We just dey observe break, government no observe agreement!”



CARTOON FEATURE: *The Endless Meeting*

Let’s take a short break while they go consult the spirit of the 2009 agreements...”



“Let’s take a short break while they go consult the spirit of the 2009 agreements.”

**WE JUST DEY
OBSERVE BREAK,
government
no observe
agreement!**

NIGERIAN FOOTBALL: IS THE FALCON MIGHTIER THAN THE EAGLE?

JEFF GODWIN DOKI



Africans have always had a philosophy of great depth and value. And they also have poetry and stories closely associated with Africa's flora and fauna. In Nigeria, like in many other parts of Africa, animal characters and names are frequently chosen from the animal kingdom, sometimes for symbolic meanings or for sheer wit and valuable didactic lessons. It is for this reason that the two national football teams in Nigeria carry the names of two big birds namely: the Super Falcons, for the female Nigerian team, and the Super Eagles for their male counterparts. Coincidentally, the falcon and the eagle have many

things in common. For one thing, both are birds of prey. For another, both birds have sharp talons. Thirdly, and most importantly, the two birds metaphorically represent strength and power meaning that they have the capacity to devour other animals. So, the question is which of them is stronger?

This is the theme of my story and let me quickly pluck its fruit.

Although folk male football existed as early as the Medieval period, the game of football began to be standardized in Britain in the 19th century and the first official football match for men was played in November, 1872. When football began, it was

considered to be a preserve of men. So, it could be perceived that the roots of prejudice against women have long been embedded in Western culture. As a matter of fact, such gender discrimination began with the Biblical narrative that places the blame for the fall of humanity on Eve, not Adam. Similarly, ancient Greek scholars and philosophers like Aristotle abetted this attitude when he wrote that 'the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules and the other is ruled'. Following Aristotle's example, religious leaders like Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine declared that women are 'imperfect and weak creatures'. It was in the 1700s that female voices began to cry out against such patriarchal opinions asking women to stand up for their rights and not to allow their male-dominated society to define what it means to be a woman. Female football, which emerged in 1881 was, therefore, one of the reactions against patriarchal assumptions that women are inferior to men. By the year 1904, it became apparent that the game of football was not to be played by men alone. And by the 1970s Patricia Palinkas became the first woman to play professional football. Moving away from the game of football, women have

played heroic roles in other aspects of human life like soldiering, governance and the fight against injustice. Perhaps a brief look at Nigeria's history would be insightful. First is Inikpi of Igala. History has it that she gave her dear life in order to liberate her people (the Igala) from the attacks of the Jukun. Second, is Queen Amina of Zazzau. It is on record that she established the Hausa Empire in the sixteenth century. Next on the line is Idia of Benin Empire. According to History books, Idia was a true soldier. Her greatest achievement was her victory over the Igala. Perhaps, it is because of her bravery that the FESTAC 77 symbol bears her face.

Again, there is Moremi the spy. She infiltrated the ranks of the Igbos and allowed herself to be captured. While she was with her captors, she learnt their tricks and tactics. It was these secrets that she divulged to her people enabling them to have victory over the Igbos. Furthermore, there is Queen Kambassa of Bonny. Just like Idia of Benin, she was a queen warrior. She was not just a soldier but she personally led battles conquering neighboring kingdoms. Besides, some Nigerian historical heroines did more than fight and win battles, they also resisted injustice and tyranny. We

find this in the precise character of Madam Tinubu. A study of Nigerian History reveals that she confronted African chiefs who were stooges of the white man. Moreover, she fought tirelessly to ensure that Oba Dosumu (the rightful heir) was enthroned. Here again, she calls to mind Emotan, who laid down her life for Ogun, the rightful heir to the throne of Benin, to be enthroned. Madam Tinubu's name is printed in gold especially in the History of Lagos. Think about the Aba Riots of 1929 in which many Ibo women came together to express their grievances against the colonial government and to assert their right, dignity and humanity. There is Funmilayo Kuti. Apparently, her role was to encourage women to participate actively in politics. And least her credentials suggest this. In the then Western region, she was the Regional President of N.C.N.C women organization. She was also President General of Nigerian Women Union and Abeokuta Women's Union. She was a dogged and staunch fighter for the rights of Nigerian women.

Hajia Gambo Sawaba, is Funmilayo's exact counterpart in Northern Nigeria. According to history books, Gambo

Sawaba broke all cultural taboos and joined active politics. Her involvement in politics was not only an achievement, it was also a feat because in Northern Nigeria, religious beliefs, barred women from participating in politics. Gambo Sawaba defied all these restrictions and became an active member of N.E.P.U. Her other counterpart is Margaret Ekpo in Eastern Nigeria. The list of Nigerian heroines is as long as a railway line. And perhaps to immortalize these women, Irene Salami Agunloye, a Professor of Theater Arts at the University of Jos, has documented their heroic qualities in a play entitled More than Dancing (2003). In other words, with their victory over Morocco at the AFCON 2025, the Super Falcons have confirmed that the role of women is more than that of dancing and by means of their winsomeness and beauty, women can turn weakness into might. Fast forward to the present. There is Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala an economist and former foreign affairs minister in Nigeria. Since March, 2021, she has been serving as the Director-General of the World Trade Organization. But more than that, she is the first woman and the first African to lead the WTO as Director-General.

Lest, I am accused of being a misandrist, I hasten to add that there is nothing too good that does not carry with it a few negative things. Nigerian women have also had their bad eggs. Take for example Hon. Patricia Olubunmi Etteh, a Nigerian lawyer and politician who served

Nigeria as the 10th Speaker of the House of Representatives from June to October 2007. In September 2007, Hon Etteh was accused of authorizing the spending of 628 Million Naira on renovation of her official residence and that of her deputy. Africa's first Nobel Prize winner for Literature, Wole Soyinka, was one of the most clamorous voices that called for her resignation and on October 30 2007, following intense pressure, Hon Etteh resigned her appointment. Very recently, there is Beta Edu, a medical Doctor, former commissioner and national women leader of the ruling APC. On January 8 2024, Beta Edu was suspended from her position as the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for allegedly diverting 585 Million Naira, meant for that Ministry, to her personal bank account. An investigation by the EFCC was to later suggest that she had diverted over 30 billion Naira to her various personal accounts. Back to football. The recent victory of the Super falcons in Morocco is an abundant testimony of the fact that there could be a major swap in gender roles. Truly speaking, the super falcons have etched their name in African foot ball history, securing their 10th

Women's African Cup of Nations title. All through the match, the girls showed uncommon determination, dedication and patriotism which is usually lacking in the Super Eagles who are only three times the winner of AFCON. The women staged a remarkable fight back in what many commentators described as 'a massive turn around' in the second half to beat host Morocco 3-2 and lift the trophy on Saturday 26th July 2025. Their latest triumph adds to an illustrious record that spans for three decades namely: in 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2010, 2014, 2016, 2018 and 2025.

Over and above all, the victory of the Super falcons is a demonstration of genuine sacrifice and patriotism. Apparently, with their latest victory, the women have made Nigerians proud. The women have made history consistently and resolutely. The women have demonstrated abundantly that the Falcon is indeed mightier than the Eagle.

Jeff Godwin Doki is a writer and Professor of Comparative Literature with the University of Jos.

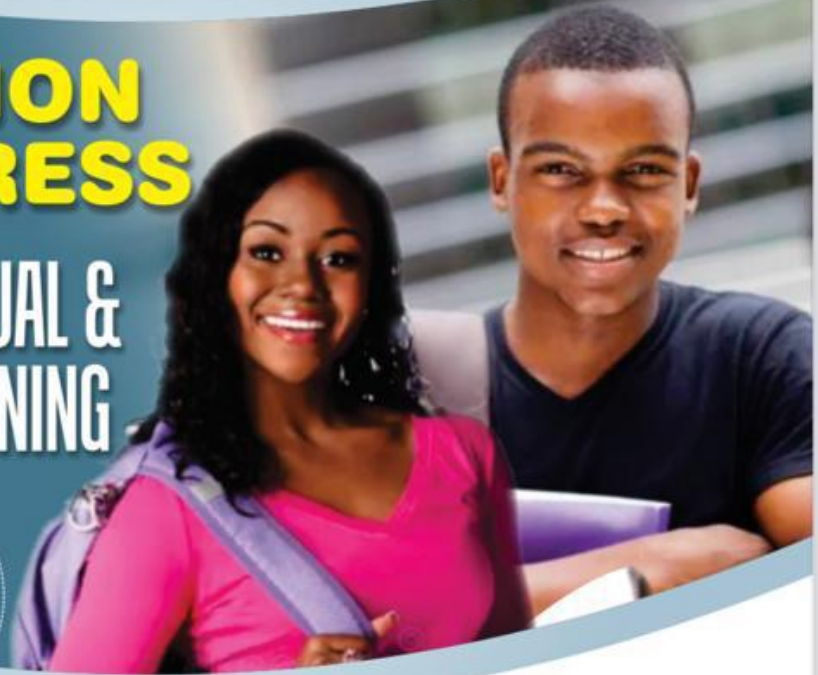


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ISSN: 1596-4868