

THE NATIONAL



SCHOLAR

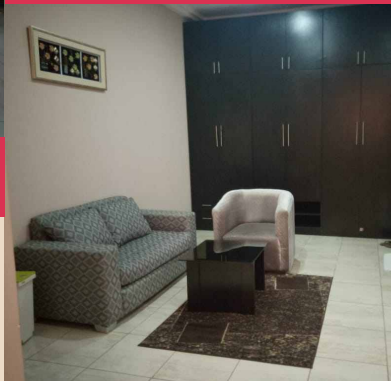
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OUR MISSION

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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Festus Iyayi Secretariat Complex
University of Abuja Permanent Site, Giri, Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nigeria
Email: thenationalscholar@asuu.org.ng

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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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EDITORIAL

Welcome!

Fraternal greetings from the National Scholar to all our readers. It is a great pleasure to share with you the 3rd Edition, Volume 15 of The National Scholar (TNS). In the last one (1) year, TNS, has become a stable publication of our union. We have covered and reported events of the union and interviews, that serve not only the interest of our members, but the journey the union has traveled over the years, especially the interview with our Past Presidents Comrade Asisi Asobie, and Comrade Nasir Isa Fagge.

In this edition, you will find our coverage of the recently conducted National Conference on the state of nation, titled: Nigeria in a State of General Crisis: The Search for a New Path to Development. The conference attracted venerable leaders like Prof. Adele Jinadu, Maj. Gen. Ishola Williams, Prof. Attahiru Jega, Veterans of the Union and indeed, all the leadership structure of the union. Due to technical challenges, we were unable to listen to Prof. Toyin Falola (TF), but we will feature him in our subsequent publications.

At the conference, the chairman, Prof. Adele Jinadu drew attention to what he described as ‘*diabolical politics*’ and averred that, the concept of multidimensional poverty is misleading, stating that poverty is deepening in all aspects of the life of our nation. Rather than alleviating the suffering by the working class, Prof. Jinadu maintained that our leaders have chosen to politicize our sufferings through their ‘*diabolical politics*’. He proffered a profound counter position to the state of our politics and the dominant economy the politicians are driving our nation towards. The rising cost of living, adherence to prescriptions by World Bank and other multinationals, continue to dominate decisions in our nation. Other speakers at the conference included Prof. Akpan Ekpo, Prof. Hauwa Yusuf, Prof. Jideofor Adibe, Prof Jimoh Amzat, and Bar. Malachy Ugwummadu.

The fundamental facts that emerged from the conference challenged us to commit to understanding the socio-economic forces working against us that we often ignore. At 64, our nation is reminded of the question Marx asked about the struggle for the Liberation of the working class, he said “the question is not what goal is for the time being by this or that member of the proletariat or even the proletariat as a whole. The question is what is the proletariat and what course of action will it be forced historically to take in conformity with its nature”. As you read, remember, the fundamental point is that our Union, through the conference is challenging us to understand ourselves and commit to the struggle required to liberate our country.

I invite you to sit back, and enjoy this edition.

Solidarity forever ...

Christopher Piwuna
Vice President/Convener
Research/Publications.

ASUU HOLDS STATE OF THE NATION CONFERENCE

KANANG AMOS AKIMS



ASUU President, Victor Osedeke welcoming guests and participants to the 2024 ASUU State of the Nation Conference

In the face of uncontrolled deteriorating living standards of the Nigerian populace, and the abysmal performance of the country in achieving great potential, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) organized the State of the Nation Conference for intellectuals and technocrats to plot the compass for a consequential navigation towards realizing the country's developmental aspirations. This year's conference represented the fourth in the series of state-of-the-nation conferences organized by ASUU, following the inaugural event held in April, 1984. The 2024 Edition held from the 3rd - 4th October, 2024 at the Idris Abdulkadir Auditorium of the National Universities Commission Abuja had the theme 'Nigeria in a State of General Crisis: The Search for a New Path to Development'. The event brought together thinkers from different walks of life including academics, civil society leaders, union leaders, heads of government agencies, heads of political parties, and students across the country.

The ASUU President, Victor Osedeke while welcoming guests and participants to the 2024 ASUU State of the Nation Conference noted that the conference was “convened to address the present hopeless state of our country as part of ASUU's patriotic contribution towards recovering our country back to the Nigerian people.” He further stated that the organization of the conference is in tandem with the union's objectives which “extends beyond the pursuit of the conditions of service and welfare of its members to include protection and advancement of socio-economic and cultural interest of the nation.”

Comrade Osedeke firmly believed that the National Conference would yield the expected outcomes needed to "liberate Nigeria from the grip of foreign intruders and imperialist exploiters." He charged government to take seriously recommendations that would arise from the National Conference, as they would serve as crucial ingredients for addressing the nation's issues and granting Nigerians the freedom to thrive and access the abundant natural resources provided by God.



R - L: Chairman of the State of the Nation Conference, Prof. Liasu Jinadu and NLC President, Joe Ajaero

In his remarks, the Chairman of the State of the Nation Conference, Prof. Liasu Jinadu observed that Nigeria has reached a critical crossroads hence, the need for a turnaround. He noted that the nation has become captive to what he referred to as '*Diabolic Politics*', one which comprises moral decadence and perpetuates ethnic hate. Accordingly, poverty in the country is not just multidimensional but, deepening. Thus, he stated that the main challenge before ASUU is to rise above such and provide an alternative in line with the letters of Chapter 2 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. He also believed ASUU should link up with other groups to 'talk truth to power' in their quest for a better society as the fight is not a lone one.

The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Rt. Hon. Abbas Tajudeen who was represented by the Chairman of the House Committee on University Education, Hon. Abubakar Fulata acknowledged ASUU's persistence in advancing the cause of national development of Nigeria through commitment to advocacy and research. Hon. Tajudeen observed that in the light of economic instability and the security challenges faced by citizens of the country, inadequate funding of our educational institutions, and disillusionment among the populace ASUU as the intellectual backbone of the nation, must take the lead in providing solutions to address the daunting challenges of the nation. He used the opportunity of the National Conference to call on ASUU to shelve any plans for another round of strikes. He promised to utilize the instruments available to him as Speaker of the House of Representatives to facilitate meaningful interventions towards resolving outstanding issues affecting the universities.



Representative of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon. Abubakar Fulata

Maj. Gen. Ishola Williams Rtd. in his keynote address during the State of the Nation conference titled 'Necessity obliges ASUU and its Products to be Re-inventors of Nigeria: publish for development, stay alive not perish' called for synergy from primary, secondary and tertiary schools to ensure that good products transit through the different levels of education in Nigeria. He urged teachers from primary to university levels of education to "always have a unique character like salt. Its presence is not felt but its absence makes everything tasteless". This way they will be treated with importance. He counselled the conference to proffer solutions for enhanced technological education and technical skills training for circular economy and strengthened research for leapfrogging development and not basic research.



Maj. Gen. Ishola Williams Rtd. delivering his keynote address at the State of the Nation conference.

Goodwill messages were received from President of the Nigeria Labour Congress, Joe Ajaero; the Executive Secretary of National Universities Commission, Mr. Chris Maiyaki; the Executive Secretary of Tertiary Education Trust Fund, Sunday Echono; Chairman Committee of Pro-Chancellors of Nigerian Federal Universities, Dr. Yayale Ahmed; and Presidents of Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities and College of Education Academic Staff Union, Mohammed Ibrahim and Smart Olugbeko respectively. Other goodwill messages came from the Acting National Chairman of PDP, Umar Damagum, and the National Chairman of the Action Democratic Party, Yabagi Sani. In their separate remarks, they commended ASUU for organizing the National conference and noted the importance of intellectual prowess to development. They all expressed their willingness to partner with ASUU in charting the way forward for Nigeria's development.

Lead papers presented at the conference included 'Capacity for Development' by Prof. Hauwa Yusuf; 'Distorted and Dependent Model of Capitalism' by Prof. Akpan Ekpo; 'Leadership, Politics and (Mis)Governance' by Prof. Jideofor Adibe; and 'Citizenship, National Vision and Nation Building' by Prof.

Toyin Falola. Other lead papers presented were 'National Security and Socio-Economic Development' by Prof Jimoh Amzat; 'Class Conflicts, Egalitarianism and Social Justice' by Bar. Malachy Ugwummadu; and 'Patriotism, National Interest and the Future of Nigeria' by Mr. Femi Falana.

When prompted at the sidelines of the conference, Ene Obi, a frontline civil society activist congratulated ASUU for organizing the State of the Nation Conference especially, that it came at a time when citizens in the country are wondering 'what next'. She noted the unfortunate kind of repression citizens go through even though, the country is operating a democracy. To her, bad leadership, insensitive leadership; the kind of leadership without compassion and the primitive accumulation of wealth is

the greatest ills bedevilling Nigeria's development. Obi was however elated by the quality of people that attended the conference and with the issues discussed. She was optimistic that the outcomes from the conference would help the country to move forward. Obi outlined unity of focus by citizens to defend the country, and the love for the country as necessary if the desired level of development is to be achieved.



Cross section of guests and participants at the State of the Nation Conference

Attendees at the conference noted the value of bringing scholars from across the country together to discuss the way forward. They viewed the State of the Nation conference as a positive step, particularly in light of the significant challenges facing the country. The insightful discussions held at the conference were seen as potentially making a substantial contribution to Nigeria's development.

NIGERIA NEEDS TO LOOK INWARDS TO ACHIEVE GREAT POTENTIAL- EMMANUEL VICTOR OSODEKE

Amidst increasingly challenging economic conditions affecting the Nigerian populace, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) recently convened a National Conference on the State of the Nation tagged 'Nigeria in a State of General Crisis: The Search for a New Path to Development'. This gathering of intellectuals aligns with ASUU's relentless commitment to advancing the socio-economic and cultural interest of the nation. In this exclusive interview, ASUU President, Professor Emmanuel Victor Osodeke discusses what gave birth to the conference, and the obstacles hindering Nigeria's development as well as the current impasse between the Union and the government.

Excerpts...



Emmanuel Victor Osodeke

TNS: *Comrade President we are happy to have this conversation with you. We would like to know what informed the union's decision to organize the national conference on 'the state of the nation'.*

EVO: Well thank you very much. When you look at our Union and its objectives, one of the things ASUU does is to fight for the socioeconomic interest of the nation. If you look around in Nigeria today, everybody is tired of the way things have gone wrong. There is crisis and catastrophe everywhere. So as a union, we believe that at this time, it would be

good for the nation if ASUU brings together thinkers to deliberate on the current state of the nation and make their feelings known as well as put together recommendations/resolutions to the public that will help the country solve the present problems inhibiting it from achieving the expected development. ASUU organises this kind of conference every 10 years. The first one was organised in 1984. So this year's event was in continuation of the union's tradition in this regard.

TNS: *we would have asked you next if the State of the Nation Conference is the first of its kind to be organized by ASUU but, you have answered that already.*

EVO: No, this is not the first time. Like I said, the first one was organised in 1984, then the second and third in 1994 and 2004 respectively. However, the previous ones had different focus. While the 2024 National Conference is focused on the 'state of

the nation' the previous one was an education summit, though addressing similar issues, it was sectional. This year's conference has a more general theme.

TNS: Looking at our country and the myriad of problems facing it; there is insecurity virtually everywhere in the nation and rising cost of living, what does it say about our democracy?

EVO: Well, in my opinion, this democracy has failed us. Going through the history of Nigeria, especially from 1999, starting from Obasanjo, Goodluck, Buhari and the present administration, you will realise that it has just been the same thing. Our leaders have not prioritised the interest of the people, and they have not resolved the problems of the people. People just come to power and seek how to be comfortable without looking out for the national interest. You can imagine the problems that the nation is grappling with despite the fact that it has all the human and natural resources it needs to grow! For instance, consider the petroleum sector, we have been producing crude oil since the 1950s and 1960s but, as of today, not one refinery of the government is functional. The military built the refineries but we have not been able to maintain them and we are still busy importing refined petroleum products. The country sells its crude oil cheaply and goes around to buy one segment of the refined products at exorbitant prices. So, are you surprised that we are where we are today? Our leaders have not been able to harness our God-given-resources for the interest of the country, rather, they do it for their selfish interest. To worsen the situation, during election for example, political parties sell their nomination forms as high as N100 million therefore, a certain

percentage of Nigerians are cut off from this process.

TNS: How will you describe the effects of the current economic hardship on the functioning of our Universities in Nigeria, staff, and students?

EVO: Like I said during the opening day of the National Conference, if nothing is done in two to three years' time, Nigerian Universities will close down. This is because the government is not funding the Universities adequately. We recently did a survey of allocations to education in West African countries and found out that the least allocation by a West African country is 15% but, Nigeria is devoting less than 8%. This shows that the government is not interested in our Universities. The situation is even worst now. You will be surprised that the operational cost given to University of Ibadan for example, is less than what is given to the Government College Ibadan. The unity colleges get more money for running cost than the Universities. The government is just not interested in funding universities. While University of Ibadan gets just N15 million a month as running cost, the University spends up to N400 million on diesel for electricity!

For our colleagues, who earn like N120,000 per month and do not have the opportunity to live in the staff quarters, spend a lot on transportation to and fro work. Moreover, house rent, food prices and electricity tariffs have been jerked up. Something has to happen and the government needs to listen if they want the Universities not to shut down and if they want this system to grow and the lecturer to teach with an open mind. When you are hungry, you cannot teach properly, when you are angry, you cannot function properly either, neither can you give in your best as a teacher under such circumstances. This is not limited to lecturers alone but even the teachers in secondary schools, because as a teacher, you must teach and as a lecturer, you must lecture but not like the civil servants that will go to work someday and there may be nothing to do and they just come back home.

For our students, when I look at them, I wonder how they survive. For a student that is given N10,000 or N20,000 for upkeep, only transportation will take a chunk of that money. It is better when he/she resides close to the University. I really wonder, how a student will live on just N10,000 in a month? The implication of this is that many of the students will end up as drops out and some will even go into doing things they are not supposed to do, either going into cultism, prostitution or several other vices which are not good for the country. You could have a first class candidate dropping out of school due to some of these challenges. Such a student often becomes easy prey for cultism and banditry because they would be angry with the Nation and they would vent that anger on the ordinary man on the street.

TNS: You have mentioned some of the implications of the rising cost of living on the functioning of our universities, the staff and students. Insecurity is another issue that may spring up due to the rise in the rate of drop outs from school. In not too distant past, there have been reports of adoption of staff and students from university campuses in the country and sometimes deaths have been recorded from such incidents. What is ASUU doing to address this challenge?

EVO: As a union, we do not have access to security gadgets, so what we do is advocacy. For the case in the North West of the country, we wrote to the Chief of Army staff and the brigade commander covering FUDMA. There is actually a limit to what we can do. We just advocate and do hope that the Nigerian government will handle security issues properly because it is the fundamental responsibility of the government but, they are not doing it. When you drive on the road, you see many security check points. However, in the towns and villages, you hardly see a police man. I once had a discussion with a DPO and he told me that what he gets to run the district in a month is N50,000. That is grossly inadequate! How could he be able to fuel the police van?

TNS: Do you see the current administration in Nigeria as having the will to change the fortune of this country?

EVO: Honestly, I have not seen any seriousness, there is no sign. For every little thing you see government officials traveling out of the country 'looking for solutions'. Challenge our universities, we have the capacity to provide all the solutions that would be needed to run the system and to ensure that it works. We have our solution right within us. When the president was sworn in, we put up a committee to come up with a blueprint on how we believe the economy would work and submitted it to the government. But, up to this day, we have not gotten a reply from them. We should look inward and not outward because no country will want you to develop. If we develop, we will stop their countries from growing. They want us to keep importing from them thereby, boosting their own economy. Meanwhile, we have all it takes to stand on our own as a country; both the natural and human resources we have in abundance but, I do not see the sign that things are going to change, not even in the nearest future.

TNS: In your opinion what is responsible for the dearth of leadership that we have in Nigeria?

EVO: Well, I will ascribe it to a number of issues. One is the comfort in being in administration. The leaders in Nigeria get everything for free. But, when you go to other countries like the US where we copied our democracy, except there is a state function, the president feeds his family from his salary, he pays for entirely everything. But here, everything is free. Two, if you buy a nomination form for N100 million to get to power, you

must find a way to get that money back. In fact, the salary for that office in four years is not up to that amount. In essence, all I am saying is that there is so much comfort in being in power, which is why everybody wants to do everything to be there. So what is there is that if the opulence of being in power is reduced, honest people will begin to come out to contest elections. The national assembly should also be a part-time thing, such that you are only paid for the days when there are sittings. When you consider what is obtainable in the United States, not all the states operate a full time legislature. We should make ours part time; this way, many people will not be interested in it. Only honest people who truly want to serve will contest. If it is made that way, it will go a long way to



Emmanuel
Victor Osodeke

limit some of these excesses we face today as a nation. Three, as a people, we are more interested in ethnicity and religion. So we have not gotten our leadership right yet. We hope that someday we would have a leader who has not come to be served but to serve.

TNS: You have mentioned that the way out is for us to reduce the opulence associated with political office. Are there any other measures that we could take as a nation to get the the right kind of leadership?

EVO: Well, for me, where we are now it's a time for the people to take over their country, the man on the street should take back his country. In the next election, we will insist and look at those who are qualified to lead us so that they are elected no matter what party they belong. We should go beyond that because all the leaders we have gone for in the major political parties are all the same people. We need to go out and be on the lookout for people who can lead this country, who are not selfish, and those who are not looking for money. That is what we need to do and if they do not act as expected, the people should express their views by going on peaceful protest because we elected them to represent us. Despite the threat, the government is dishing handouts here and there, the people have the right to peacefully protest and should be allowed to do so.

TNS: Why is our government averse to local solutions? For instance, it refused to go with the proposed UTAS for Universities?

EVO: Leadership today is controlled by the agency of the World Bank and IMF. For example, IPPIS which is being used to pay workers' salaries was developed by them. They pushed it into the system through Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala.

They do not want it (IPPIS) to go, there were two options. The first, was for a banquet (bouquet) to be bought for a nation and paid. The second, was for it to be bought for per individual. They opted for the second so that as more people join, more money would be made by them. They are now doing everything they can to keep us in it even with the directives of the federal executive council to remove us. They have remained adamant because when they do, they will lose a lot of money. We are in October 2024 already, the decision to exempt universities from IPPIS was taken in December 2023.

TNS: The National Conference is definitely a noble idea. How does the union intend to sustain this initiative?

EVO: We have done our own part as a union and as a body of intellectuals by organising the conference. We will have the resolutions arising from it and send them to the government. We will also publish them in the newspapers and see how we can put pressure on the government to implement them.

TNS: Are there any expectations arising from this conference?

EVO: Yes, resolutions will be made which we will share with the government who is supposed to implement them. If there is need for us to put pressure on them to Implement, we will do so.

TNS: Our interaction will not be complete if we do not ask you about the current impasse between ASUU and the government.

EVO: Talks are still ongoing with the government. Our 14-day ultimatum ends on Monday 7th October 2024 and we are going to have a meeting tomorrow morning to look at the issues and what to do next. We have a confirmed report that they have set up negotiation committee and to that effect, we are waiting for the letters so when we get it, then we will begin from there.

TNS: Comrade President, we are grateful for your time with us.

EVO: Thank you so very much.

ON THE FLOODS THAT RAVAGED MAIDUGURI CITY

KANANG AMOS AKIMS



*An aerial view of submerged houses in Maiduguri during the floods.
Photo Credit: Channels Television*

Monday 9th September 2024 was a black day for the residents of Maiduguri, the capital city of ancient Borno State in the Northeastern Nigeria. The devastating flood swept through both channels and the streets of Maiduguri, forcing many residents to desert their homes for higher plains. The areas most affected by the floods were Bulabulin, Fori, Gwange, and Galtimari. The main cause of the flooding was the collapse of one of the spillways of the Alau dam in the neighbouring Konduga LGA of Borno State. The Alau dam receives water from the Yedzram and Gombole Rivers. The two rivers meet at the Sambisa Forest and flow through the Ngadda River into the dam. The Alau dam was built in 1986 to aid irrigation farming in Maiduguri. The dam also serves to control flooding from the Ngadda River, which sometimes gets higher-than-normal inflows from water sources from Lake Chad. Though, the about 40 years old dam had previously overflowed its banks in 1994 and in 2012, the incident of the September 2024 was accompanied by great devastation never witnessed in the history of the state.

The floods extensively destroyed infrastructure, crops, and shelters, severely affecting livelihoods and displacing many households. It was alleged that about one million people were affected by the floods in Borno State including, 37 deaths and 58 injured people. More so, lots of property whose values are yet to be ascertained, were lost to the floods. During the incident, access to hospitals, markets and other essential places were limited. In addition, schools were closed; as so many of them served as temporary shelters for the victims. The damage to

infrastructure also included two major bridges in Maiduguri; the Gwange and Lagos Street Bridges. Hospitals in the capital city, including the 1,305-bed capacity of the University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital were also badly flooded.

The floods also had dire implications on hygiene and public security. Broken septic tanks and flooded graveyards raised concerns about the spread of infectious diseases. Government officials as well as health care personnel scrambled for shelter for those affected by the floods. Owing to the danger of the spread of infections on grains and other consumables as a result of pollution, members of the public were warned to desist from selling, buying, processing or consuming contaminated grains or other food items that were salvaged from flooded stores as foods that came in contact with the flooded water constitute serious health risks.

Further danger associated with the floodwaters included the wild animals that were swept away from the Sanda Kyarimi Park Zoo in Maiduguri town. Official statement from the zoo indicated that the flood either killed or washed away 80 percent of its housed animals. The zoo authorities confirmed that dangerous animals (like crocodiles and snakes) had escaped from confinement. Nonetheless, a good number of the said animals were rescued at the end of the day.

Another concern from the floods was the escape of prisoners from the



Aerial view of submerged houses in Maiduguri and people walking through flood water. Photo Credit: Channels Television

Maiduguri medium security custodial centre. It was said that no fewer than 281 in-mates escaped when flood cut through the city. Information on the missing in-mates was confirmed after the evacuation of the remaining prisoners to a safe and secure facility. This poses additional risk to the state that has had to grapple with challenges of insurgency over the past 15 years.

Hundreds of thousands of people living in internally displaced persons camps that were flooded had to be evacuated and moved to the few ones that were not flooded. Others had to be moved to safer places like schools, churches and mosques.

The effect of the floods on the people of Maiduguri was worsened by the biting economic situation in Nigeria. Many in Borno State were already suffering from a grueling food emergency occurring side-by-side with rising inflation. Additionally, malnutrition cases had before now surged in the northeast region. The World Food Programme estimated that over four million people are in danger of food insecurity in northeastern Nigeria of which, three million of them are in Borno State

alone. Estimates by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on the flood situation indicated that 14 per cent of farmlands in the assessed locations were completely destroyed as a result of the flood. While 36 per cent of farmlands in the assessed locations were partially destroyed as a result of the flood. With crop/vegetable farming being the primary source of livelihood of 41 per cent of the people; the full economic impact of the flooding can only be best imagined.

Given the colossal consequences of the collapse of the Alau dam, a question maybe asked, were there warning signs of any impending danger by the relevant agencies of the government? Even though the government had insisted that the dam did not collapse, and rather attributing the overflow to climate change and excessive rainfall, experts attributed the recent incident to negligence and corruption in the maintenance culture on the part of the relevant agencies of government. For instance, there are claims that research conducted by students of Ramat Polytechnic, Maiduguri in 2015 raised alarm suggesting negligence in the management of the dam. The research recommended carrying out de-sedimentation and expansion of the dam in addition to regulating its management. It is thus nine years since the Alau Dam had been in distress. It has also been publicized that the Federal Ministry of Water Resources had budgeted over 432 million naira for the rehabilitation of the Alau dam between 2020 and 2024. Though it cannot be said if all the budgeted monies over the years were released for the rehabilitation and maintenance of the dam, there was also no evidence to show that repairs were done on the dam either.

Nigeria has had its fair share of floods in the past. It can be recalled that in 2022, the country witnessed a devastating flood around River Niger Bridge which connects Lagos to Onitsha and the rest of eastern Nigeria. The floods then, submerged

substantial portions of the surrounding communities. The incident caused over 600 deaths and displaced 1.3 million residents from their habitations. Additionally, over 200 thousand houses and 266 thousand acres of farmland were either completely damaged or partially destroyed. Then, a similar number of people were displaced and a death toll under 500 was reported. In the past two decades, annual floods in Nigeria have been estimated to cause 1,763 deaths and damaged about \$1 billion worth of property.

Similar threats to livelihoods that may arise from floods abound in Nigeria. For example, seasonal floods have been associated with the release of excess water from Cameroon's Lagdo dam usually in the middle of September. Nigeria lacks a buffer dam to prevent the flow from the Lagbo dam. Other causes of floods in the country include inadequate drainage, building on waterways, and dumping of refuse on waterways. Thus, there is a dire need for concerted efforts by the authorities to avert further floods that may likely result from natural or anthropogenic causes. Nigeria as a nation should not only resort to disbursement of relief items whenever floods occur but must rather put adequate measures on ground to prevent their occurrences. In the absence of adequate preventive measures to curb flooding, Nigeria would have no choice but to succumb to its devastating damage to people's livelihoods.



Residents of Maiduguri fleeing to higher plains during the floods. Photo credit: The Africa Report

ASUU UNIJOS PRIORITISES MEMBERS' FITNESS

KAYIT SIMON AND LOKTA SOLOMON

The well-being of an employee has a direct relationship on his/her job performance. When an employee is healthy and mentally sound, his/her motivation, focus, and job satisfaction would certainly increase, resulting in fewer sick days and enhanced job performance. It is in realization of this that the Executive Committee of ASUU UNIJOS Branch under the Chairmanship of Comrade Jurbe Molwus constituted a Standing Committee named ASUU UniJos Sport and Fitness Committee. The committee is saddled with the responsibility of organizing and coordinating the sports and physical fitness activities for members in the branch as well as making recommendations that will improve physical fitness of members in the branch.

The ASUU UNIJOS Sport and Fitness Committee which has Kayit Simon as its convener has since commenced work by first obtaining the health and fitness profile of members in the branch. This inaugural activity of the Committee (involving 163 persons surveyed) led to important revelations on the fitness levels and general health conditions of academics in UniJos. About 60 per cent of the academics in UniJos were shown to be overweight, and for a little over 28 per cent of the academics, obesity is a concern. Although close to 56 per cent of the academics do not suffer from major health issues, they had other common problems including shortness of breath, enlarged



prostate, prostate cancer, spondylitis, fatigue and eyesight deterioration.

The insight from these disclosures highlights the need for more regular exercise and greater participation in sporting activities by members to address the health concerns. Having a good number of members exercising daily while the majority exercise two to three times a week is quite encouraging. However, encouraging members who engage less frequently and those who do not exercise at all to do more would not be out of place. Exercising on a regular basis has many health benefits defense against high blood pressure and cardiovascular diseases.

On the strength of its findings, the ASUU UNIJOS Sport and Fitness Committee is poised to plan and structure various sporting and fitness activities to meet the needs of members in the branch. This will be done in such a manner that the overall well-being of ASUU UNIJOS branch members will be improved upon. The Committee is confident that consistent physical activity will stem the rising rates of hypertension, obesity, and other health issues among academic staff.

Kayit Solomon is from the Department of Physical Health Education, UNIJOS. Lokta Solomon is from the Department of Chemistry at UNIJOS

POLITICS, ECONOMICS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN A HETEROGENEOUS POLITY LIKE NIGERIA

EZE A. EZE

Introduction

Currently, the template for development is the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, 2030). In today's interconnected global economy, sustainable economic development is often held as a key goal for both developed and developing countries. However, achieving this goal is not a matter of just crafting and implementing sound economic policies. Particularly, in heterogeneous states – characterized by ethnic, religious, linguistic or cultural diversity – the role of robust political institutions is paramount. In such societies, political instability, conflict and lack of trust among different groups can hinder progress and undermine economic development efforts. Hence, it is imperative that political institutions be fixed first before embarking on any significant economic developmental undertakings, as only through stable governance can long term sustainability be achieved.

Understanding Heterogeneous States

Heterogeneous states are characterized by a diverse population where citizens often have different cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic backgrounds. Examples of such states include Nigeria, India, Belgium, Sudan just to mention but a few. In these societies, people's identities are often closely tied to their cultural or ethnic groups, which can lead to competition for resources, political representation or power. These divisions, if not properly managed, can lead to marginalisation of minority groups, social unrest, and even violent conflict, all of which are detrimental to the socioeconomic fabric of the state.

In heterogeneous states, social cohesion is often weaker compared to more homogenous societies. As a result, ensuring fair representation and equal access to resources becomes a complex task. If these challenges are not addressed through well-designed political institutions, the ensuing political instability can create an environment where sustainable development may be hampered.

Role of Political Institutions

Political institutions are organisations that structure political, social and economic life. They play a critical role in defining the relationship between the state and its citizens, determining how power is distributed and ensuring the accountability of political leaders. In heterogeneous states, political institutions are particularly important because they must manage diversity, mediate between conflicting interests and foster a sense of

national unity. A functioning political system in a heterogeneous state must be inclusive, representative and flexible enough to accommodate different interests of its diverse population. This is where institutions such as federalism, consociational democracy or decentralization come into play. These systems are designed to ensure that different groups have a voice in governance and that no one group dominates to the detriment of others; a desideratum in Nigeria's first republic that contributed to the failure of her regional federalism.

Without functional political institutions, a heterogeneous state risks descending into ethnic or sectarian conflict, which can derail any attempt at sustainable development. In Nigeria, for instance, years of political instability, driven by ethnic and religious tensions, have hindered economic growth and exacerbated poverty despite the country's abundant human and natural resources.

The Nexus between Political Stability and Economic Development

The link between political stability and economic development is well established in economic and political theory. Stable political environments foster investors' confidence, provide the security necessary for long term planning and facilitate the efficient functioning of markets. In contrast, political instability creates

uncertainty, discourages investment and often leads to capital flight. It also hampers the effective implementation of economic policies as governments are often too preoccupied with maintaining power or quelling dissent to focus on long term development goals.

In heterogeneous states, political stability is even more crucial for economic development because these states are often more prone to conflict. Ethnic or religious tensions can quickly escalate into violence as seen in countries like Sudan and Rwanda or even 1960s Nigeria, where ethnic conflict has led to devastating civil wars. Even in less extreme cases, such as Belgium or India, ethnic and linguistic tensions have periodically disrupted economic activity particularly in areas where local populations feel marginalised by the central government. Moreover, political instability often leads to corruption and poor governance, as leaders focus on short term gains rather than the long term wellbeing of the state. This has been the case in many African and Latin American countries, where political leaders have exploited ethnic divisions to maintain power, leading to economic mismanagement and underdevelopment. In such an environment, sustainable economic development is not possible because the foundations of good governance – accountability, transparency and the rule of law – are lacking.

Why Political Institutions Must Be Fixed First

Fixing political institutions is a prerequisite for sustainable economic development in heterogeneous states for several reasons. Firstly, inclusive political institutions help prevent the

marginalisation of minority groups and reducing the likelihood of conflict. In states with diverse populations, exclusion from political power or access to resources can lead to resentment and unrest. By ensuring that all groups are fairly represented in government, political institutions can foster social cohesion and prevent conflict.

Secondly, functional political institutions provide the stability necessary for economic planning and investment. Investors, both domestic and foreign, are more likely to invest in a country with a stable political environment where property rights are protected, contracts are enforced and the rule of law is upheld. In contrast, countries with weak or dysfunctional political institutions are often seen as too risky for investment, limiting the economic growth potential.

Thirdly, political institutions play a key role in ensuring that economic development is equitable and sustainable. In many heterogeneous states, economic resources are unevenly distributed, with certain regions or groups enjoying more wealth and opportunities than others. This inequality can fuel resentment and conflict as marginalised groups demand a fair share of the state's wealth. Political institutions that promote decentralisation or federalism can help address these inequalities by ensuring that wealth is more evenly distributed across the state. For instance, in India, the federal system has allowed for significant regional autonomy, enabling states to pursue their own development strategies while still being part of a larger country framework. This has helped mitigate some of the tensions between the country's diverse linguistic, religious and ethnic groups contributing to relative political stability and economic growth.

Finally, strong political institutions help create a culture of accountability and good governance which is essential for sustainable economic development. In many developing countries, corruption is a major impediment to development. When political leaders are not accountable to the people, they are more likely to engage in corrupt practices that benefit a small elite group at the expense of the broader population. Political institutions that promote transparency, accountability and the rule of law can help combat corruption and ensure that economic development benefits all citizens, not just a privileged few.

To better understand and underscore the importance of fixing political institutions in heterogeneous states, it is useful to examine a few cases where the presence or absence of strong political institutions has had a significant impact on economic development; Rwanda's catastrophic genocide of 1994 was the result of un-inclusive political institutions between the Hutus and Tutsis post-independence experience. But with power a

sharing arrangement to avoid a domination of one group by another, came political stability which has led to a remarkable economic growth for over two decades making her a shining star in East Africa. This notwithstanding the benevolent civilian dictatorship of Paul Kagame, the Dutch speaking Flanders as well as the French speaking Wallonia share power in an inclusive consociational political system of a fragile balance in Belgium mediating conflicts, preventing violence and ensuring that the country remains a relatively rich and developed country.

Nigeria's unitarism masquerading as federalism has failed to create a truly inclusive political institution which has led to a widespread corruption, underdevelopment and periodic bursts of violence in the Niger delta, the predominantly Muslim North and separatist resentment in the South East. Consequently, having failed to perform in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs2015), Nigeria is lagging far behind in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs2030) despite her vast human and natural resources.

In conclusion, heterogeneous states, fixing political institutions is a prerequisite for sustainable economic development. Political institutions that are inclusive, representative and accountable can help prevent conflicts, foster social cohesion and create the stability necessary for long term economic growth. In contrast, weak or dysfunctional political institutions can lead to political instability, corruption and conflict, all of which undermine economic development.

As the cases abovementioned show, addressing political grievances and ensuring fair representation for all groups is not just a matter of justice, it is a fundamental requirement for economic progress and development. Thus, fixing political institutions should always be the first priority in any effort to achieve sustainable development in heterogeneous societies.

Consequently, Economists and Development Scholars can do better than being mere policy advisers but engage actively in institutional policy advocacy because fixing political institutions, the most strategic of which is a legitimate constitution capturing the essence of true regional federalism in Nigeria, is not only too important to be left to the whims and caprices of selfish professional politicians but also constitute the first order condition necessary for policy planning and execution to have the fighting chance of successfully providing solutions to the sustainable development challenges of Nigeria.

Eze A. Eze is from the Department of Economics, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

UNDERSTANDING THE OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE TO ACADEMIC STAFF IN UNIVERSITIES THROUGH TETFUND

PANSHAK YOHANNA

Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), which originated from Education Trust Fund (ETF) is a federal government interventionist agency formed by parliament through the TETFund Act No. 2011. The agency is responsible for providing effective and transformative interventions to all public tertiary education institutions in Nigeria. Since its inception, the Fund has strategically positioned the nation's higher education institutions by providing deliverable critical physical infrastructure and content-based programs for effective teaching, learning, research, and innovation to ensure global competitiveness.

The main source of income available to the Fund is the 2 percent Education Tax paid from the assessable profit of companies registered in Nigeria. However, the Tax was reviewed upwards to 2.5 percent by the Finance Act 2021 and further increased to 3 percent by the Finance Act 2023 effective September 2023.

Given its robust foundation, the Fund provides a range of opportunities and interventions specifically designed to support the professional development and research endeavours of academic staff in Nigerian tertiary institutions. These interventions aim to improve the quality of education and research in the country with the goal of rehabilitating, restoring, and consolidating Tertiary Education in Nigeria.

TETFund Desk Officer(s): to ensure that there exist seamless, effective



TETFund Headquarters Abuja

communication between the Fund and beneficiary institutions, Desk Officer (s) with relevant qualifications, competences, and experience in the various aspects of the intervention lines is (are) appointed. For instance, the Desk Officer (in charge of training) appointed by the Head of institution such as the Vice Chancellor in the university system is required to work with the Bursary Department and Procurement Department for the rendition of accurate and complete records of financial transactions on all interventions of the Fund. The officer ensures that all guidelines and checklists for all submissions are complied with. The Officer constantly liaises with TETFund for categories of intervention as outlined by the Fund.

Academic staff has the chance to benefit from various intervention lines (content-based and training) provided by the Fund.

1. Instructional Materials and Equipment

To provide opportunities for Nigerian Public Tertiary Institutions to remain competitive globally and adopt international best practices, the Fund's Board of Trustees established a number of academic content-based intervention programs that centre on capacity building and the provision of learning materials, including books, journals, periodicals, and e-resources that lecturers can benefit from. The goals also included addressing the dearth of indigenous academic textbooks and unique national research issues. The two crucial intervention strategies that are ingrained in the success of educational materials are:

- i. Academic Manuscript into Books (AMB)
- ii. Academic Research Journal (ARJ)

I. Academic Manuscript into Books

This intervention's primary goal is to provide funding to academics at Beneficiary Institutions so they can turn their manuscripts into books.

Qualifications

The following criteria must be met for academic staff manuscripts to be eligible for this intervention:

- a). text from a Beneficiary Institution at the tertiary level.
- b). Forwarded for funding by the Lead Author's institution where contributions are from different institutions.
- c). Submitted to and accepted by a reputable publisher/Academic Publishing House approved by TETFund for the purpose of publishing.
- d). Publishers Proforma Invoice should contain detailed cost breakdown strictly related to only the cost of publication of the books to be paid to the publisher.
- e). A copy of the manuscript (manuscripts in languages other than English should be submitted with an abstract in English).
- f). Evidence of issuance of ISBN from National Library of Nigeria.
- g). Implementation plan indicating the expected dates of commencement and completion of projects.
- h). Copy of the institution's Book Development Committee's Minutes of Meeting with list of members and their designation where the proposed manuscript(s) were approved.
- i). Copies of the invoice and acceptance letter from a reputable publisher.
- j). Evidence of favourable External Peer Review Report on a letterhead from an expert in relevant field of study or the Academia.
- k). Resume(s)/CVs of the author(s).

II. Academic Research Journal (ARJ)

The purpose of this intervention is to shore up the establishment and/or publication of scholarly journals in the Beneficiary Institution.

Qualification

It shall be an existing Academic Research Journal in the Beneficiary Institution. Requirements for accessing first (1st) tranche of funds under (ARJ) Intervention, the proposed journal for publication shall be submitted with the following documents:

- a). Evidence of a properly constituted Editorial Board with at least two-thirds of the members not in the employment of the Beneficiary Institution (provide list of members and their affiliation).
- b). Submission of a copy of the Guide to Authors, including editorial policy, house style, copyrights, and permissions.
- c). Submission of evidence of registration with relevant abstracting and indexing services for journals older than three (3) years.

d). Evidence of registration of the journal title with the National Library of Nigeria as an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN).

e). Evidence of availability and accessibility of the journal to be supported on at least one major knowledge gateway.

2. Institution-Based Research (IBR)

The objective of IBR intervention is for the resuscitation and support of small-scale research projects in public tertiary institutions. A maximum amount of N4,000,000.00 and 5,000,000.00 only for social/humanities and sciences respectively is approved per project. The approved funds are disbursed in two tranches (1st and 2nd) of 60% and 40%, respectively.

Qualification

To be qualified for the award of the IBR grants, applicant shall fulfil the following:

- i. The lead researcher shall reside in Nigeria.
- ii. Be a full-time and confirmed academic staff (Individual/Group) of Beneficiary Institution.
- iii. Demonstrate an independent capability to undertake and lead research projects.
- iv. At least one co-researcher shall meet the requirements of the lead-researcher and should be able to take over from the lead-researcher if need be.
- v. The proposal for this intervention shall pass through internal assessment process
- vi. A scholar shall not benefit from more than one IBR grant concurrently.

3. Academic Staff Training and Development (AST&D)

AST&D was introduced to build local capacity of teaching and non-teaching staff of Public Tertiary Institutions through staff training

and conferences.

I. TETFund Scholarship for Academic Staff (TSAS)

Academic staff can enjoy the sponsorship of TETFund in Nigerian Public Tertiary to pursue their PhD and Master's Degree programmes in both local and foreign Institutions. Lecturers can as well enjoy sponsorship for their Bench Works, which are for scholars pursuing PhD programmes in Sciences in Nigerian Universities, to carry out research work in foreign institutions with advanced facilities.

TETFund does not support Online and part-time Masters and PhD degree programmes. In addition, it does not support inbreeding i.e. Scholars would not be sponsored if they are to study in their home Institutions

Qualification

To be eligible for TETFund scholarship under its TSAS intervention a nominee must:

- i. Be a full-time Academic Staff in a Beneficiary Institution, working at and nominated by his/her home institution.
- ii. Have secured admission to pursue a full-time programme of study in any university that satisfies the prescribed guidelines.
- iii. Not be applying to study for a second Master's degree or a second doctorate degree.
- iv. Be bonded by the institution
- v. Be a nominee for doctorate scholarship who has benefitted from the Fund's scholarship for Master's degree and must have served out the bond period before applying to be sponsored for the doctorate study.
- vi. Must not be in receipt of any other scholarship.
- vii. Provide evidence of medical fitness from a public hospital (not

health centres).

II. Conference Attendance Intervention

TETFund sponsors both teaching and non-teaching staff of Nigeria's public tertiary institutions to attend academic conferences, professional conferences and workshops locally and internationally.

Qualification

Nigerian Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff shall be considered for sponsorship to participate in a Conference that meets the under listed criteria:

- i. It must be an Academic conference organized by Academic Institutions, learned societies, and/or recognized and reputable professional bodies.
- ii. The registration fee for the conference must not exceed One Hundred and Fifty Thousand Naira (N150, 000.00) for local conferences, and Five hundred US dollars (\$500) for foreign conferences.
- iii. The duration of the conference must not exceed five (5) days.
- iv. Participation in conferences/workshops arranged by local organizers to be hosted in a foreign country shall not be considered for sponsorship.
- v. Participation in conferences arranged by third party Predatory Conference Organizers (PCOs) must not be recommended for sponsorship.
- vi. Participation in online/virtual conferences/workshops shall not be eligible for sponsorship.

4. Postdoctoral Fellowship Intervention

The Postdoctoral Fellowship is designed to offer opportunities for outstanding early career researchers to strengthen their experience in research and teaching.

Qualification

To be eligible for the TETFund Postdoctoral Fellowship, a nominee must:

- i. Be a full-time Nigerian teaching staff of a Beneficiary Institution.
- ii. Must have completed a PhD programme within the last five (5) years.
- iii. Priority shall be given to scholars who acquired their PhD locally.
- iv. The duration of the Programme shall not exceed one (1) year.
- v. Funds will only be committed to individual researchers that meet the previously stated conditions.
- vi. Evidence of offer of fellowship by the foreign institution.
- vi. Funds will only be committed in an instance where institutions offer fellowship jobs to researchers who have access to individual funds and whose research interests also align with the school's research priorities.
- vii. Funds will only be committed when external funding are not available in some institutions, which implies all that is required

by a prospective fellow is to apply while all his/her expenses for the duration of research will be taken care of by TETFund.

viii. The Fund's financial support for the postdoctoral fellowship would cover salary of the postdoctoral fellow to work full-time on the fellowship, small-scale research expenses and costs towards the time of a supervisor, equivalent to one hour per month for the entire duration of the fellowship host institution's estates and indirect costs, in line with the Fund's approved rates.

Other lines include: National research fund, Support for bench work, development and digitalization of thesis/dissertations among others.

By means of consistent education tax collection, careful allocation, and responsible administration by the Fund and its recipients, along with backing from the federal government, the TETFund remains one of the most viable entities that provide lecturers in the universities and other tertiary institutions with massive opportunities to advance their knowledge and expertise. The Fund is striving to achieve the standing of an elite education interventionist organization and establish itself as the principal source of funding for educational research initiatives in Nigeria.

Note: This work is largely an excerpt from TETFund intervention guidelines to inform academic staff of the opportunities available at TETFund.

Panshak Yohanna is from the Department of Economics, Plateau State University, Boko. He is also the TETFund Desk Officer (Training) at Plateau State University, Boko.

LEADERSHIP AGILITY AND MANAGING TALENTS WITHIN THE WORK SPACE.

VIKTOR KUCHILI

“Be comfortable being uncomfortable.” - The Navy Seals

The world is becoming increasingly complex. Technology has played a major role, but globalization, regulation and a host of other factors, have also contributed to greater levels of complexity in business. Additionally, the speed with which transactions are expected to occur in *light years* requires a leader to understand and embrace the ever-increasing complexity of modern business especially, powered by technology. A leader must adapt to the nature and demands of modern business with an eye on the future, demonstrating capacity for continuous learning. This lies the requirement of agility as an attribute for impactful leadership that thrives in an increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) landscape.

Leadership agility is the ability to effectively lead organizational change, build teams, and navigate challenging organizational engagements. An agile leader is one with the capacity to assess risk, decide courageously, and act quickly to meet the rapidly changing environment, while producing results and developing the capacities of others. Key drivers of agile leadership include integrity, innovation, pro-activeness, team spirit, and goal oriented. Agile leaders are of great essence to their organizations as they create a culture based on shared organizational values that align to the general objectives of the systems in which they operate.

For a forward looking organization, recognizing talents and managing them for high performance are equally important for its sustainability. In this regard, Learning and Development should be top priority for all organizations. Learning & Development (L&D) is a timeless and invaluable resource for building employee skills, enhancing their motivation, and contributing to productivity and engagement. It is particularly invaluable when the learning activities are linked to the employees' developmental goals.

A L&D strategy is a vital tool for organizations to align corporate training with their business objectives. It ensures that staff learning and development needs are effectively met. The core of a L&D strategy should be meeting the organization's performance needs through the development of its employees. In practice, it may focus on those identified as high-performing

or high-potential individuals ('talent'), who are critical to long-term success. This can typically include mentoring programmes with senior leaders, in-house development programmes and project-based learning.

The starting point for an effective L&D strategy is to recognize the internal and external context of the organization. This includes the industry, business needs and the rationale that drives overall organizational strategy. An example might be, the unique business the organisation offers and its competitive advantage and the need to change and adapt to different economic circumstances. The organization that imbibes the culture of L&D would attract and retain talent, develop employee capabilities, create a values-based culture, motivate and engage employees, and build employer brand. These key functions of L&D are summarily discussed below.

Attract and Retain Talent

Traditionally, learning is focused solely on improving productivity. Today, learning also contributes to employability. Hence, over the years, employment has shifted from staying with the same company for a lifetime to a model where workers are retained only as long as they can add value to an enterprise. Therefore, workers are now interested in their personal and professional growth —one reason that people list (opportunities for learning and development) among the top criteria for joining an

organization. Conversely, a lack of L&D is one of the key reasons people often cited for leaving a company.

Develop People Capabilities

Human capital development requires ongoing investments in L&D to retain its value. When knowledge becomes outdated or forgotten—a more rapid occurrence today—the value of human capital declines and needs to be supplemented by new learning and relevant work experiences. Companies that make investments in the next generation of leaders reap impressive returns. It has been suggested that companies in the top quartile of leadership outperform other organizations by nearly two times on earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization. Moreover, companies that invest in developing leaders during significant transformations are 2.4 times more likely to hit their performance targets.

Create a Values-Based Culture

As the workforce in many companies becomes increasingly virtual and globally dispersed, L&D can help to build a values-based culture and a sense of community. In particular, millennials are particularly interested in working for values-based, sustainable enterprises that contribute to the welfare of society.

Motivate and Engage Employees

The most important way to engage employees is to provide them with opportunities to learn and develop new competencies. More so, lifelong learning contributes to happiness. When highly engaged employees are challenged and given the skills to grow and develop within their chosen career path, they are more likely to be energized by the new opportunities at work and satisfied with their current organization.

Build an Employer Brand

An organization's brand is one of its most important assets and conveys a great deal about the organization's success in the market. Investments in L&D can help to enhance company's brand and boost its reputation as an 'employer of choice.' When large segments of the workforce prepare to retire, employers must work harder to compete for a shrinking talent pool. To do so, they must communicate their brand strength explicitly through an employer value proposition.

For a successful L&D strategy, its alignment with the organization's overall business strategy is key. This is because an organization's learning and development needs are unique. For example, if the organization's priority is brand marketing then, its L&D strategy should incorporate marketing courses.

Also, resource use considerations are important for a successful L&D strategy in order to create an effective corporate training package as well as leadership development programs. It is important to consider whether better gains will be gotten from in-house training management courses and workshops or by accessing business classes from top business schools. The former may offer advantages such as team unity and speed of program delivery; the latter enables you to tap into leading-edge business expertise; and a mix of both may prove to be the winning L&D strategy.

Furthermore, a successful L&D strategy would undertake internal stakeholder assessment to identify the various stakeholders and understand their expectations from a particular L&D programme. In addition, the best corporate learning tools and technique should be considered. Some of today's best tools for integrative corporate learning include leadership exercises, leadership coaching, guided case study analysis, and flexibly balanced distance and campus learning, and real-world learning in global business hot-spots

Establishing a strong leadership agility and talent management within the work space requires an ongoing investment of time and resources. When built properly, it would be more than worth the cost as it would serve as a talent magnet. A strong leadership agility and talent management would ensure the motivation of employees, and fostering of long-term commitment to the organization. They would guarantee the nurturing of in-house talent and create a strong leadership bench, enabling more promotion from within and facilitating simple succession planning.

*Viktor Kuchili is an Author and Development Consultant.
08038646671 vkuchili@gamil.com*

NIGERIA @64: THE INCONGRUENCE OF AGE AND EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

OGO OGO

As Nigeria marks her 64th year of political independence, a stark reality looms over the nation's educational landscape. The country's age as a sovereign state stands in sharp contrast to its stunted educational development, revealing a troubling incongruence that threatens the future of Africa's most populous nation. This disparity is largely attributed to decades of governmental neglect and chronic underfunding, flying in the face of international standards and the country's own aspirations.

When Nigeria gained independence in 1960, education was seen as a cornerstone for national development. Indeed, the country's founding fathers envisioned a nation where access to quality education would be a fundamental right and not a privilege; a vision which aligned with global recognition of education as a critical driver of socio-economic progress. However, 64 years later, the reality witnessed by well-meaning Nigerians tells a different story. Nigeria's educational system is in crisis characterized by dilapidated infrastructure, inadequate facilities, and a growing number of out-of-school children. Disappointingly, this decline is not for lack of resources but a result of misplaced priorities and unapologetic failure of successive governments to adequately invest in the sector against international benchmark.

For instance, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural

Organization (UNESCO) recommends that countries should allocate at least 26% of their annual budget to education. However, Nigeria, has consistently fallen short of this target. Over the past two decades, the country's budgetary allocation to education has hovered between 5% and 7%, a far cry from the UNESCO recommendation and when compared to other African countries such as Ghana (which consistently allocates over 20% of her annual budget to education) and Kenya (with increasing budgetary allocation to education up to 17% in recent years). This chronic underfunding has had far-reaching consequences on the quality and accessibility of education in Nigeria. Disturbingly, successive Nigerian governments, spanning various administrations and political parties, have paid lip service to the importance of education. Campaign promises and national development plans have routinely highlighted education as a priority sector, yet these commitments have rarely translated into concrete action or adequate funding for the development of her most critical asset - the human capital. The pattern is distressingly familiar: grand pronouncements are made about educational reform, policies are drafted with fanfare, but implementation falters due to insufficient financial backing. This disconnect between rhetoric and reality has eroded public trust and hindered meaningful progress in the sector with huge consequences.

The impact of this persistent underfunding is evident across all levels of Nigeria's educational system: From basic education where primary schools, particularly those in rural areas lack essential infrastructure and many children study under trees or in dilapidated buildings, without access to textbooks or basic learning materials; through secondary education that often witness overcrowded classrooms, outdated curricula, and inadequate laboratory facilities, to tertiary education where universities and polytechnics grapple with insufficient funding for research, outdated equipment, and poor welfare conditions for staff, leading to frequent industrial disharmony with consequent disruptions in academic calendars. More worrisome is the unenviable position being held by the giant of Africa as the country with the largest population of 18.3 million out-of-school children aged 6 – 14 (UNICEF, 2024).

The flagrant neglect of the education sector has far-reaching implications for Nigeria's overall development. This systemic

failure casts a long shadow across various aspects of the nation's progress, creating a ripple effect that touches every facet of society. At the economic level, a poorly educated workforce severely hampers productivity and stifles innovation. Without a solid educational foundation, Nigeria's labour force struggles to compete in an increasingly knowledge-based global economy. This limitation on human capital development directly translates to constraints on the country's economic potential and its ability to compete on the global stage.

The societal impact is equally profound. The lack of access to quality education exacerbates existing social inequalities, creating a widening gap between the haves and have-nots. This disparity fuels social unrest and undermines the fabric of national unity, as opportunities for advancement become increasingly tied to one's educational background. Healthcare outcomes are also intrinsically linked to education levels. Poor education correlates strongly with poorer health outcomes, as individuals lack the knowledge and resources to make informed health decisions. This relationship places additional burden on Nigeria's already strained healthcare system, creating a vicious cycle of poor health and limited educational attainment.

Additionally, the quality of governance is not spared from educational neglect. An undereducated populace is less equipped to participate effectively in democratic processes, from understanding complex policy issues to holding leaders accountable. This deficiency potentially compromises the quality of governance, as the electorate's ability to make informed decisions is diminished. Perhaps most alarmingly, the security implications of educational neglect are stark. The large population of out-of-school youth presents a vulnerable demographic, easily swayed by extremist ideologies or drawn into criminal activities. This ready pool for recruitment by nefarious groups exacerbates Nigeria's already challenging security situation, threatening stability and progress across the nation.

As Nigeria marks 64 years of nationhood, there is an urgent need for a paradigm shift in the approach to education funding. The time has come to move beyond rhetoric and implement concrete, transformative measures that can revitalize the nation's educational landscape. At the forefront of this transformation must be a significant increase in budgetary allocation and transparent utilization. The government must make a concerted effort to progressively increase education funding to meet the UNESCO benchmark of 26% while putting in place robust mechanisms to ensure that allocated resources are judiciously used, with strict accountability measures to prevent misappropriation and waste. This commitment should be unwavering, recognized as an investment in the nation's future rather than an expenditure. In addition, public-private

partnerships through incentives and collaborative frameworks must be encouraged to incentivise private sector participation educational renaissance. These partnerships can help bridge the gap between academic learning and industry needs, creating a more relevant and dynamic educational experience. Also, Nigeria needs to develop and adhere to comprehensive educational plans involving substantial investment in teacher training, welfare, and continuous professional development that transcend political administrations, which should be seen as the most potent legacy to bequeath to generations yet unborn.

By implementing these interconnected strategies, Nigeria can begin to bridge the gap between its age as a nation and its educational development. This holistic approach addresses not just the symptoms but the root causes of educational underperformance. It represents a shift from lip service to action; from short-term fixes to sustainable solutions.

The path forward requires commitment, resources, and the political will to prioritize education, which Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) is relentlessly championing.

As Nigeria stands at this critical juncture, the choices made today will shape not just the educational landscape but the very future of the nation. It's time for Nigeria to match its educational aspirations with concrete action, ensuring that the next generation has the tools and opportunities to build a prosperous, equitable, and knowledge-driven society.

2010.

Don't tell us about Growth in Nigeria

If Growth crumbles, then that is what we should talk about.

We watch ourselves grow into poverty,

yet we were richer than yesterday,

every year we had more, and every year we grow poorer

Tell us about promotion,

Tell us about salary increment then,

Of what use is it for us when we keep getting poorer

We get promoted with a crown of poverty

Our salary increased when we can no longer afford to buy the food.

What about the masses without any job?

What about the masses who are constantly denied promotion?

What about those with the same salary for decades?

Nigeria is getting better you say

If this is Growth, we rather go back to 2010

Allison Andrew Shallangwa

THE FIRST STRIKE IN GOMBE STATE UNIVERSITY: A 20TH ANNIVERSARY GIFT?

SHEIKH KUBENUBU SATI

The past two decades of the existence of Gombe State University (GSU) have been a period of seamless run of uninterrupted line of academic activities. However, this does not mean that the University has not had its fair share of controversies with the governments of the day. Therefore, it did not come to keen observers as a surprise when the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) branch of Gombe State University decided to embark on a total, comprehensive and indefinite strike to press home its demands. ASUU-GSU is demanding among other things that government takes responsibility for its university in line with standard practices.

Contrary to public opinion about universities and strike actions, strikes are usually the last resort when all effort at amicable resolution of disputes between the University management, Government and ASUU. This indeed is the unfortunate outcome of the Wednesday morning of 11th September, 2024 when the Academic Staff Union of Universities GSU Branch (ASUU-GSU) resolved to embark on a TOTAL, COMPREHENSIVE and INDEFINITE strike to press home its demands so that the University management and Government can do the needful.

Industrial harmony is not just broken because the staff feel like it. There are always unattended underlying issues that warrant such actions. The issues in the case of Gombe State University are as follow:

1. Non implementation of the 2021 Memorandum of Action (MoA) between the Union and Gombe State Government on:
 - i. Increased funding for the University In January 2021, following agitations by ASUU GSU on increased funding of the University, the Government and the Union reached and signed an agreement that the University monthly subvention should be increased with additional N10,000,000 and this is subject to further increase once the financial profile of the State government improves. Unfortunately, the additional N10,000,000 was only paid in January and February of 2021 and was abruptly withdrawn without explanations. The attendant consequences that followed were that the University began to struggle to meet its obligations



and subsequently led to the introduction of payment of departmental dues by students ranging between N7000 naira – N50,000, depending on the departments and faculties. This is in addition to the school fees paid. This has adversely affected a good number of students who cannot afford the additional charges. The Union believes that with increased funding, some of these challenges can be sidestepped.

ii. Non Payment of the accumulated Earned Academic Allowances (EAA)
Following the signing of the MoA by Government and the Union, it was agreed that the government would pay the arrears of EAA for 2015/2016, 2016/2017, 2017/2018, 2018/2019 and 2021/2022 sessions in instalments as well as mainstreaming the EAA into staff salaries in 2022 to prevent further accumulation. Unfortunately, in the character of the government, it has not lived up to expectations.

iii. Non-Institutionalization of training fund for sponsorship of Academic staff for higher degrees.

The Government also agreed in the 2021 MoA to provide the sum of N50,000,000 naira per annum to the University for the purpose of staff training to help boost the University staff capacities. It is unfortunate to report that almost four years on, the government is yet to give a single kobo in this regard. This has, to a large extent, dampened the morale of staff who want to pursue higher degrees. This has led to overburdening of the TETFUND allocation for staff training to GSU.

2. Other issues which have remained unaddressed outside the MoA:

i. Non-implementation of the consequential adjustment in minimum wage of N30,000 naira.

ii. Non-Implementation of the 35% and 25% wage award for academic staff.

iii. Non-release of white paper on the 2023 visitation to the University.

A visitation panel to the university at the instance of ASUU-GSU was constituted and it carried out its assignment in 2023. However, up till date, the government is yet to release the white paper on the report of the panel.

It is rather unfortunate that when two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers. Our dear students and their parents are those who are bearing the brunt of this unfortunate situation. We however believe that there will be light at the end of the tunnel since the state government has set up a committee to negotiate with relevant stake holders and come out with an amicable solution to imbroglio.

Sheikh Kubenubu Sati is from the Department of Political Science, Gombe State University.

The Pillars of Governance

In the heart of every nation, where dreams and hopes reside,
Lies the strength of good governance, a beacon and a guide.
With justice as its cornerstone, and fairness as its creed,
It nurtures every citizen, fulfilling every need.
Transparency and honesty, the pillars strong and true,
Build trust within the people, in all they say and do.
Leaders with integrity, who serve with open hearts,
Create a land of unity, where every dream can start.
In the halls of power, where decisions shape our fate,
Good governance ensures that love will conquer hate.
It listens to the voices, of the many and the few,
And charts a course of progress, for me, for them, for you.
So let us strive for governance, that's wise and just and kind,
For in its light, we all shall find, a future well-defined.
With courage and with vision, let us build a land so grand,
Where every soul can flourish, in this, our promised land.

Uju Ezenekwe

NAU Awka

Fears

I have my fears,
I feel it in magnitude,
I treat it as ulcers penetrating down to my stomach
Restraining my freedom and my happiness
But I show it in my calmness
And maybe you think I'm mature and upright
Or you think I am the free bird in the air with no worries
Toss it,
I am just an abhor to depressing things that cripples and makes one wander
I prefer to be the voice that comforts you in anguish
wilderness yet cry out in my closet
I prefer to walk in a smile of fear than wear the crown of worries
I have my fears

Allison Andrew Shallangwa

Raging Sea

We sail on a raging sea;
Tossing our Souls to calmness
Our hearts echo the swirling wind
Our Farewell's Fair wind turns stormy
The storm ripped off our anchor
Our following sea follow furiously
Our hands tremble against our Wheel
We toss out our fear and pray to our master
Our shipmates pray to be tossed on the shore;
We sail on a raging Sea

Allison Andrew Shallangwa

THE JOURNEY OF KNOWLEDGE

In the tranquil halls of learning, where ideas ignite and radiate,
Lies a path of boundless wonder, where eager minds can flourish.
Books are gateways to uncharted worlds, where dreams take flight and soar,
Each page is a stride toward greatness, each word an open gateway.

In the pursuit of enlightenment, in the quest for truth and illumination,
Education is the guiding light, piercing through the darkest night.
With every lesson absorbed, with every obstacle confronted,
We lay the groundwork for the future, with knowledge intertwined.

The seeds of curiosity firmly planted in our hearts,
Blossom into fields of brilliance, where every journey begins.
For in the realm of learning, there are no bounds to the skies,
Each question is a compass, each answer a revelation.

So let us embrace knowledge, let us endeavour, search, and discover,
For Education is the treasure, the richness of humanity.
With open minds and eager hearts, we will conquer every trial,
For in the world of learning, we manifest our utmost potential.

However, the path is not always smooth, with obstacles in view,
Doubts and fears may obscure the way, and dim the guiding beacon.
Yet perseverance is our comrade, and resilience our ally,
For through the tribulations of learning, our spirits remain unyielding.

Uju Ezenekwe
NAU Awka

NIGERIAN VOICES OF HOPE AMIDST HARDSHIP

KANANG AKIMS & OGO OGO

As citizens of the Africa's most populous nation grapples with soaring living costs and economic challenges, their resilience shines through, harboring dreams of a brighter future. In an attempt to capture the pulse of the nation, the National Scholar took to the streets, engaging with everyday Nigerians from all walks of life. We asked a simple yet profound question: "What is your vision for a better Nigeria?" The responses we gathered paint a vivid picture of a people yearning for change, brimming with ideas, and unwavering in their hope for their beloved country. Get the feeling.....



Patience Toscanini
(Civil Society Activist)

"My vision for a better Nigeria is where people are upheld with integrity, have the freedom of speech, and where human rights are respected. A Nigeria where every citizen is considered a critical stakeholder; and can vote and be voted for freely and fairly."



Dayah Jason
(Student)

"I wish for a Nigeria where the gap between the rich and the poor is closed so that both the elite and the poor will have equal access to necessities of life. I desire a Nigeria where I would not wake up every morning and wish that I was in a different country."



Isa Mohammed
(Private Security Operative)

"At the moment there is economic hardship and the cost of living is very high. I desire for a country where I will be able to go to the market and buy provisions for myself at affordable prices."



Janet Memucan
(School Teacher)

"I hope for a Nigeria where school age children will have access to affordable and quality education. A country that supports agricultural production and encourages entrepreneurial activities, and where there will be better medical services available for the people."



Daniel Chinemerem
(Student)

"I wish for a Nigeria where there are equal rights and all diversities are recognized. A country that enables young people and where technological advancement drives the growth of the economy."



Salisu Garba
(Trader)

"I wish for a Nigeria that caters for the needs of the masses. I desire a country where education is accessible to young people, and traders are empowered to earn honest living. I wish for a country where businesses thrive."



Franca Okoh
(Trader)

"I want a Nigeria where everything works perfectly; where there are good roads, affordable healthcare, and every other social amenities. I desire that we have a country that benefits all and not where a few hijack the wealth of the nation. I pray to God that one day we will get there."



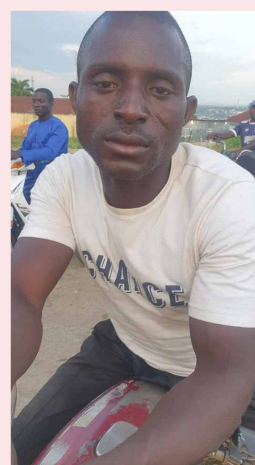
Amin Maori
(Civil Servant)

"I wish for a Nigeria where there is equal access to education and health care services by all, and the poor are able to feed themselves. A country where there is minimal gap between the rich and the poor."



Ikpe Angella
(Petty trader)

"I want a country where prices of things will come down. Presently, the country is not good because we are suffering too much so I want change."



Jerry Albert
(Motorcycle rider - popularly called Okada)

"Oga, this country is very hot now. I am doing okada because I no get job. I wish that we have a Nigeria where Government will provide job for everyone and also reduce prices of fuel."

IS THE CURRENT EDUCATION SYSTEM THE CAUSE OR ARE WE THE CAUSE?

UDEDI COLLINS

Nigeria possesses undeniable potential for productivity, yet recent policies, initiatives, and programs such as Universal Basic Education (UBE), National Education Summit, and TETFUND have failed to provide effective solutions. In his renowned novel 'The Problem with Nigeria', Chinua Achebe attributed this issue to leadership. However, this challenge extends beyond leadership, as every country ultimately receives the leadership it deserves. Therefore, it is imperative to look beyond leadership, and even if leadership is the root cause, education should serve to shape, reshape, and uplift society. The pivotal question remains: why has Nigeria's recent education system failed to yield productivity?

Before Nigeria was created by the British in 1914 through colonial rule, the indigenous form of education was based on apprenticeship and passed down through generations. This system had positive aspects such as community-based learning and practical skills development, which were communicated in languages that the locals understood. This model contributed to an impressive GDP growth of 25.0% in 1970, following a 24.20% growth in 1969. The transformational role of education was significant, with increased access to universal primary education (UPE) introduced in 1955 and the establishment of universities (University of Nigeria in 1960, University of Ibadan in 1962). Literacy rates improved from 34% in 1960 to 55% in 1970, leading to

increased human capital development and economic diversification.

During this era, there was a sense of pride in being educated, even in the absence of financial resources. The education system at that time played a significant role in driving productivity in Nigeria. Despite Nigeria's economic growth being 2.5% in 2022, it is a far cry from the 25% growth in 1970. The pre-colonial education model, however, had its drawbacks, such as limited accessibility, lack of standardization, and an emphasis on rote memorization. In contrast, other countries that have integrated their indigenous educational systems with foreign educational cultures, such as China, Germany, India, and Japan, seem to be more productive than Nigeria. One common feature among these countries is the integration of their cultural and social backgrounds into their education models, with language playing a key role. This raises the question of whether Nigeria's current education system is responsible for its lack of productivity, or if there are other metaphysical or supernatural factors at play, such as geographical influences.

Learning is considered to have taken place when there is a lasting change in behavior resulting from an individual's interaction with their environment (J.P. Guilford). This notion prompts the investigation into whether the issue lies in the methods and means of imparting education or in the cultural and political environment. The introduction of Western education, without consideration for cultural diversity and social behaviors, led to a shift in culture, increased access to global knowledge and opportunities, and the emergence of educated elite. However, it also disrupted traditional systems, imposed foreign values and beliefs, and fostered reliance on external systems, ultimately contributing to the unproductive state of Nigeria witnessed today.

In my view, the issue with education in Nigeria lies not in Western education itself, but rather in the educational system, which prioritizes producing certified individuals over skilled ones. This system faces various challenges that have contributed to Nigeria's lack of productivity. In recent times, it has been generating students of low quality due to inadequate infrastructure, outdated curricula, ineffective teaching methods, language barriers, insufficient funding, and a shortage of trained teachers. According to the 2023 World Bank report, 20% of adults and 30% of youths in Nigeria lack basic literacy



skills. There are approximately 10.5 million out-of-school children, and the allocation for education falls below the UNESCO-recommended 26% of the national budget.

The emigration of educated individuals due to a lack of opportunities, leading to brain drain, is becoming increasingly prevalent in the country. This has resulted in a rise in unskilled labor, an increase in the unemployment rate, and a growing poverty rate, with approximately 87 million Nigerians living in multidimensional poverty.

Education should serve as a catalyst to inspire Nigerians to have confidence in their ability to harness the abundant resources available to them, to conquer nature, and to shape their own future. Many Nigerians and other African countries have reservations about the effectiveness of the current education system in bringing about transformative change or empowering individuals to master nature and shape their own future. However, the reasons for these doubts are not difficult to discern.

In my high school days back in 2011, I used to hang out with my friends. After our usual banter and occasional playful scuffles, our conversation took a more serious turn. Obi was passionate about music and aspired to become a superstar, considering it his birthright. I, on the other hand, had dreams of becoming a medical doctor, a goal that I proudly shared with my friends, who enthusiastically cheered me on, affectionately calling me "dokii, dokii," a playful reference to my future profession. When it was Ebo's turn, I anticipated him choosing a career in a prestigious field like engineering or law. To my surprise, he announced his ambition to become a politician, emphasizing that formal education was not a priority in that path. Kene, meanwhile, aimed to become a lecturer and eventually a law professor. However, his aspirations were met with mockery, particularly from Ebo and Jaja. While Ebo's choice had been unexpected, Jaja's declaration was truly startling, as he expressed his desire to become a motor park chairman. I couldn't fathom any parent encouraging their child to pursue such a path, which made Jaja's revelation all the more bewildering.

On the 4th of October, 2024, I received a call from Ebo informing me that he has been appointed as the chairman of our local government. He now holds a prestigious office, owns valuable properties in prime locations, and resides in luxurious homes both in the city and our village. It's astonishing to see how Ebo, who struggled to form a coherent sentence in our school days, has risen to such prominence and is now freely spending money without restraint. My heart aches for Nigeria, witnessing such disparities.

While I did not fulfill my aspirations of becoming a medical

doctor, I have found myself working as a teacher in a federal university. Unfortunately, I often have to resort to strike actions to receive my modest salary. The total sum of my earnings, including entitlements and benefits, is less than what Ebo receives as allowances in just one year. Once again, I am left disheartened, for both myself and my beloved country.

I found myself seriously contemplating Nigeria's education system after reflecting on why my friends lost faith in it back in 2011. It seems that our current education model may have lost its ability to drive transformation and productivity in Nigeria. Several factors could have contributed to this perception:

The model of Nigeria education

The Nigerian education system is designed to produce graduates for employment rather than fostering entrepreneurship, which sets it apart from the educational models of Europe, Japan, China, and India. Despite both Nigeria and China following the 6-3-3-4 system, they yield different results. While Nigeria's system produces certified graduates, China's system focuses on producing skilled graduates. Although both countries use the same 6-3-3-4 model, their educational objectives diverge. While China prioritizes STEM education, Nigeria's model emphasizes theoretical knowledge over practical skills, with a primary focus on English language, mathematics, and social studies.

A Glaring Funding Gap

Regardless of the quality of the education model, achieving substantial progress in Nigeria's education system is nearly impossible without adequate funding. Insufficient funding has

unfortunately become characteristic of our education system. In 2020, Nigerian universities experienced an 8-month setback due to inadequate funding. In 2016, despite the government's publicized commitment to improve the education sector, less than 7% of the N12.2 trillion budget was allocated to education, falling short of the regional average of 15.9% spent by sub-Saharan African governments in the same year. This trend of underfunding is not exclusive to the federal government but also extends to state governments. Inadequate funding results in deficient school infrastructure, including substandard classrooms and poorly equipped laboratories, which in turn demotivate teachers. While money may not solve all the issues in the education sector, it is undeniable that without adequate funding, finding solutions will be an uphill battle.

Quality Teachers: An Overlooked Concern

In 2018, the governor of Kaduna State, Nasir El-Rufai, made headlines by testing the quality of Nigeria's education system. He took the bold step of dismissing over 21,000 public school teachers in Kaduna after they failed a test designed for primary four students. Shockingly, some of these teachers held NCE certificates and degree certificates in education. This incident not only reflects the state of education in Kaduna but also serves as a mirror to the broader challenges facing the Nigerian education system. Governor El-Rufai's decision undoubtedly sparked discussions about the necessary reforms needed to uplift the education sector in Nigeria.

The Importance of Supportive Ecosystems

In their influential 1994 book, "Emotional Contagion," psychologists Elaine Hatfield, John Cacioppo, and historian Richard Rapson discuss the contagious nature of positive emotions and foresight. They explain how individuals, especially during their developmental stages, effortlessly absorb and adopt the emotions prevalent in their surroundings. In the right context, these positive emotions are considered environmental privileges. For instance, when individuals receive discipline from their educators, access quality education, and are guided by good values, they are more likely to take their education seriously. Conversely, the absence of these factors can lead individuals to unwittingly become victims of their circumstances.

There will always be individuals who manage to overcome extreme conditions. These individuals do not possess extraordinary abilities; rather, they have been able to take advantage of unique opportunities through hard work and consistency. These opportunities may stem from their upbringing, mentorship, or other forms of privilege. While it's true that some people will succeed despite adversity, the strength of a system should not be judged solely by those who survive it. It's more meaningful to assess the average opportunities provided by the system. The success of one out of every 100 or 200 individuals is far from indicative of overall success within the system.

The stories of success and progress in education are not solely attributed to Nigeria's educational environment or its education model, but rather to the combination of both. Merely having a strong education model, well-developed infrastructure, and competent teachers is insufficient to foster academic dedication in students. This does not imply that everyone's success is contingent upon obtaining a degree or certificate; rather, it emphasizes the importance of an enabling educational environment that offers students the opportunity to explore the boundless possibilities in education and make informed choices for themselves. For instance, my friend Ebo aspired to become a politician, influenced by Nigeria's environment where politicians are revered as "demi-gods."

The current education system lacks the ability to motivate most students, leading to a lack of willpower among them. This calls for a reevaluation by the authorities to reshape Nigeria's education system in a way that produces more self-reliant graduates and fosters a more dynamic and egalitarian Nigerian society, where education is seen as a key driver of societal progress.

Udedi Collins is from the Department of Economics, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

A REFLECTION ON THE 2024 DEMOCRACY DAY

PWAKIM, JACOB CHOJI



Nigeria's Democracy Day. Photo Credit: Daily Trust

A few months ago, precisely on the 12th of June 2024, Nigeria commemorated what it calls "the Democracy Day". A reflection on Nigeria's democratic experience over the past 25 years reveals mixed feelings similar to those of Independence Day celebrations. Many Nigerians feel that the past 25 years of uninterrupted democracy in Nigeria has not impacted positively on their lives. High level corruption, looting, high costs of governance, and nepotism have led some anxious minds to believe that military rule would have been a better alternative; and for the military to sit idly by, it is a clear sign of ineffectiveness. For these crops of people, the country's over reliance on internal and external borrowing, while at the same time the politicians continue to feed fat by receiving huge entitlements regularly, makes no sense. They believe that the cost of maintaining the supreme military council or the armed forces ruling Council cannot be compared to what politicians use as salaries, allowances, estacodes, and other retirement



Voter Apathy is often recorded in elections in Nigeria. Photo Credit: Premium Times Nigeria

benefits for the executive council, legislators, aides and other appointees of government.

But in my own opinion, a military option would only amount to administering a "sedative medication" which may only suppress the pains just in the immediate without a permanent solution. In fact, some of those clamouring for a military takeover are too young to know what it means to be led by the men in the khaki. A whole lot usually happen: Lecturers will be scared to teach, there will be worker suppression, and all union activities will be strongly threatened and workers' welfare will be undermined. Sooner than later, everyone will become an activist clamouring for the return to democracy again. I am not sure of any group of the civil society organisations that can face the military juntas headlong in a bid to force them to return to a democratic rule.

In all honesty, democracy has failed largely to meet the expectations and yearnings of the ordinary citizens which in turn has led to voter apathy and other electoral crimes, but at the same time, we cannot say that we have not made any progress at all. Yes, Nigerians are envious of other nations whose democracies are embedded in the principles of the rule of law and fundamental human rights as against what we have in Nigeria where even the elections of class representatives in the

universities and other tertiary institutions cannot be said to be transparent and credible. The same crop of people who practiced election malpractices in schools in the yester years are the crop of people perpetrating crooked electoral process today; they kill, they maim and rig our elections through the electronic channel as well as the court platform as it is usually said *if you are not satisfied go to court*.

It will be heartwarming to see our democracy grow to the point that it can guarantee dividends to the electorates. However, this will never happen when we do not come out to vote during elections and when we refuse to ask fundamental questions about the management of our common wealth simply because the person that is at the helms of the affairs a tribe's man or woman. Some of you will chastise us when we talk about bad governance and how politicians are being actively corrupt and extravagant simply because you look forward to when the crumbs will fall from their table for you to pick.

We can celebrate selective justice when it serves our interest. But when we do not allow the rule of law to prevail in all circumstances, the whole essence of democracy is defeated. In essence, if we truly want our democracy to succeed, we must allow it to work on the basis of *free, fair and credible process*. In addition, we also need to kill all forms of parochial sentiments in looking at governance. For instance, how would one explain a situation where seven members of the Plateau State House of Assembly who were duly elected have not been sworn-in up till today while their counterparts who benefited from the frivolous

judgment of the appeal court are already functional in the House?

While some people complain that democracy has not worked thus far, I personally feel that we have made some progress in certain areas which will set the basis for the 2027 elections. With the exception of the Presidential election which is believed in some quarters to have been compromised, almost all those who are representing the people at all levels are considered to be duly elected by the people. Therefore, by 2027, with all the policy judgments secured at the supreme court in 2024, whether wrongly or rightly, court rooms are likely to be decongested in future elections as there may not be many litigations again.



Democracy should not be murdered. Photo Credit: The Conversation

Some of us, especially in the civil society, are interested in government transparency and accountability mechanisms in managing state fortunes. This will help us in de-incentivizing governance so that it will not be for the privileged few but for *all those willing to serve humanity*. In many cases, people struggle to lead not because they want to serve but because there are booties to share in the process (appointments, contracts e.t.c).

Our current crop of politicians should note that a new generation of enlightened voters is already here and things will not remain the same any longer. This is the quality of electorates that will be coming out to vote by 2027. They may not understand party politics nor government policies but they are bothered about the common agenda which is to eliminate unscrupulous politicians that have caused them untold pains and unending hardship.

In conclusion, while democracy in Nigeria has its flaws, progress has been made. Active citizen engagement and a focus on transparency and accountability will help build a more effective and fair political system for both the politicians and the electorates.

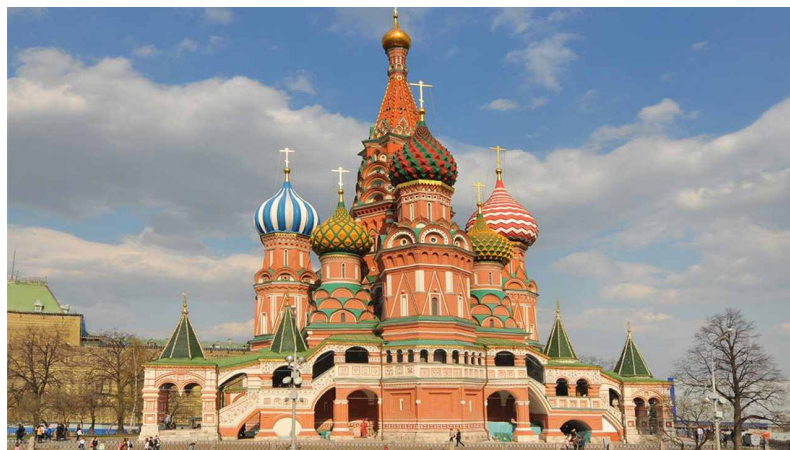
Pwakim. Jacob Choji (twakimiacob@email.com)

WHAT HAS RUSSIA GOT TO DO WITH IT?

JEFF GODWIN DOKI

To restate the obvious: Russia was conspicuously absent when European powers gathered at Berlin to partition Africa into different territories in the last twenty years of the 19th century. Present at that event were countries like Britain, France, Portugal, Spain, Germany, Belgium and Italy. But that event, undoubtedly, formed the basis for modern African History because since the partition, modern African History has been marked by European rule and the struggle by various African countries to regain independence from colonial rule. Besides, one of the highlights of the partition was that it brought the African continent into the modern world, even though most African countries remained under colonial rule until the late 1950s.

Let me historicize this point. Almost all the European powers that partitioned Africa had a different pattern of colonial development and for Britain (which colonized Nigeria), the official objective of British policy in Africa was to guide the colonial territories to responsible self-government within the Commonwealth. Of course, underlying this was the economic factor namely: the prospect for the discovery of large mineral deposits in Africa. As a parenthetical remark, it is this economic factor, more than anything else that has continued to draw international attention to Africa till date. Small wonder that it is also a major cause of rivalry between super-powers. Russia and



the US are no exception.

I hasten to add also that Britain deserves some credit because more than any other colonial power, it was preoccupied with the idea of self-rule, and it did so much to give it reality. Evidence is that in Nigeria, independence was delayed not so much by British resistance as by regional and tribal divisions within the colony meaning that even before independence, Nigeria as a colony, had persevered under the burden of religious, social and ethnic strife.

It is no surprise therefore that the nationalist movements that emerged under colonial rule in Nigeria were tribal and regional in nature. In the Western Region, Chief Obafemi Awolowo founded the Action Group in 1953, drawing its chief support from members of his Yoruba tribe. In the Eastern Region, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, an American-trained Ibo man became the dominant leader of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons founded in 1947, and supported mainly by members of the Ibo tribe. What made these two movements puerile was that they were flamingly antagonistic to each other. Then, there also emerged a third political movement known as the Northern Peoples' Congress from the more populous Northern Region of Nigeria founded by the Sardauna of Sokoto, a religious and political leader from the dominant Hausa tribe. Apparently, tribal and ethnic rivalries continued to run so high that it took seven more years after the 1953 London conference before Nigeria became independent on 1st October, 1960.

Lamentably, post-independence Africa is nothing but a series of

tragedies; tragedies in which African leadership has played a deleterious role. Soon after political independence was won, disillusionment quickly set in on the continent as the citizens of most African countries had to confront a millipede of problems occasioned by bad governance. Some of these problems include galloping inflation, lilliputian growth, structural adjustment, outright theft and embezzlement of public funds, mounting external debts, skill flight, crumbling infrastructure, border conflicts, religious/sectarian clashes, impatient armies and self-seeking *coup de tats*. Of course, this means that the ruling elite in post-independence Africa is more interested in conserving its own dominance and monopolizing the continent's natural resources than improving the abject conditions of the poor man. As it is to be expected, what was happening in these newly-independent African states had made a profound impact on the United Nations and on international life generally.

Outside Africa, and on the international scene, the hope of a new era which had dawned so bright with advances in science, transport, communication and technology began to dim with the scourge of war. The First World War (1914-1918) ended with more than 8 million people dead. The Second World War (1939-1945) killed some 45 million more. And a long 'Cold War' followed (1945-1990) in which two superpowers, the United States, a democracy, and the Soviet Union, a totalitarian state, have continued to threaten each other (and the survival of the planet) with nuclear weapons of awesome destructiveness. So, here we are in Africa confronted with superpower rivalry. Many superpowers have shown tremendous interest in Africa in recent times. While Russia's involvement in Africa lag behind other powers, it is increasingly tapping into anti-western sentiments to bolster its influence on the African continent amid geo-political competition with the west. A long time ago Russia had begun to pursue various goals in Africa. Evidence of this was in seeking trade access to Indian Ocean ports and spreading the influence of Russian Orthodox Church.

But Russia's involvement in Africa became more pronounced during the 'cold war'. During this period, the Soviet Union had passionately sought to pull newly independent African countries into its orbit. And Russia did this in several ways. One, Soviet foreign policy became more focused on building relationships with sympathetic socialists or non-aligned countries across Africa. Two, and by far the most important, is sending weapons, advisors and other aids to allies, political parties and military insurgencies. Russia did this successfully in Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Russia also did this by moving close to Egypt all in an attempt to influence the Libyan conflict. It has also given diplomatic support to countries like Ethiopia and Uganda, two countries facing international criticism over human rights abuses.

Furthermore, Russia has inked military cooperation agreement with about 19 African countries since 2014. These agreements include supplying arms and equipment, providing military training, intelligence-sharing and other forms of cooperation. Besides, apart from historical ties with South Africa, both Russia and South Africa belong to the BRICKS, a group of emerging economies established by Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. It is left to be said that the BRICKS is a negotiating block that seeks to build a diplomatic alternative to western-dominated institutions.

But more than that, since the war between Russia and Ukraine in February 2022, Russia has doubled its efforts in making friends with African countries. Adopting the theory of Memory Diplomacy, Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov has made several visits to African countries since 2022 all in an attempt to tilt Africa in its favor. And during such visits, the foreign minister had shown great concern and sympathy with Africa as an isolated continent. The obvious implication is that Russia conceives both itself and the African continent as people caught in the same inescapable network of mutuality; Russia conceives of itself and the African continent as a people tied in one single garment of destiny. As things stand now, the strategy of Memory Diplomacy has worked effectively for Russia. In Africa and Latin America, Russia has presented itself as an anti-colonial agent that never colonized any African state nor participated in the brutal slave trade. In this regard, Russia has the advantage of shared positive memories among African countries. And Nigeria is no exception.

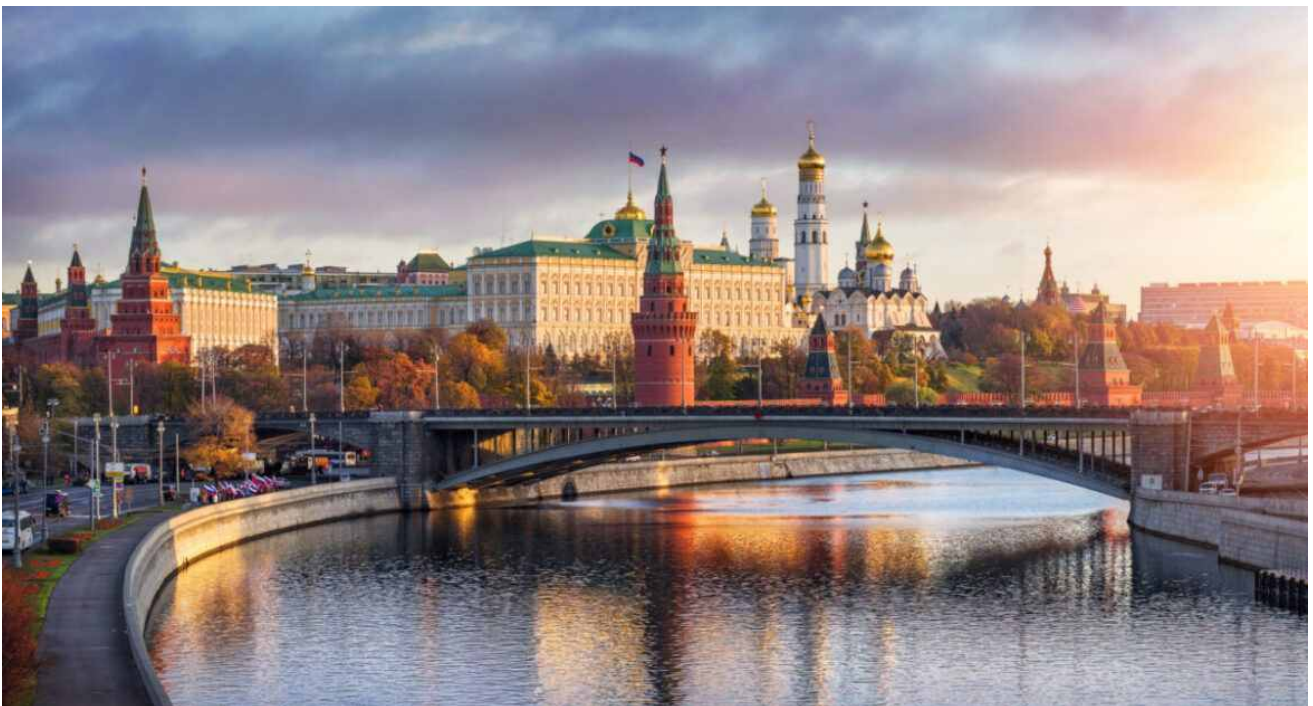
Closely related to the above is the theory of neglect. I must concede that most African countries like Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger show unwavering support for Russia at the United Nations because of their conviction that they are marginalized or neglected by the international community. It is no longer news that Russia has supported regime change in these African countries. Added to this is the fact that Russia has over the years been a major supplier of grains and fertilizer to many African countries. Small wonder that Russia launched a Russian-African summit in 2019 and convened the same summit in 2023.

It could be perceived that Russia's present foreign policy especially in Africa is becoming more robust and popular. It is also becoming

apparent that Russia has profound sympathy for Africa. It is becoming clear too that Russia wants to tell African countries that colonialism and capitalism are twin brothers whose duty is to exploit the material wealth of the people. Russia intends to demonstrate that it has similar objective aspirations with Africa: to be free from capitalist exploitation. In other words, Russia is willing to spread the communist message like a gospel.

It is against this background that poor African countries flying the Russian flag could be judged. The protesters in Nigeria who flew the Russian flag recently, in Kano and Kaduna states, were demanding for a Russian alternative. They were demanding for freedom from the shackles of European imperialism and its changing manifestations: slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism. Although flying the Russian flag in Nigeria may seem unpatriotic, it should be understood that the protesters were using the Russian flag as a metaphor for liberation. The Russian flag in Africa becomes a call on African leaders to provide good leadership; leadership that will have the interest and welfare of the people at the center of its policies and actions. A leadership that will listen to the cries of the citizens.

Jeff Godwin Doki is a writer, conflict manager, Professor of Comparative Literature and head, Department of English, University of Jos, Nigeria.



TRANSFORMING YOUTHS FROM CRISIS TO PEACE BUILDING

DAVID JAMES BUORO



People (including youths) displaced by violence. Photo Credit: the Punch

Young people are often at the epicenter of both conflicts and peace-building efforts. They are frequently portrayed as either victims or perpetrators of violence, hence, employing measures that utilise them as agents of positive change is important. In conflict-ridden areas, young people face specific challenges, including interrupted education, unemployment, and social isolation. These factors, if unaddressed, can lead to youth involvement in criminal activities. However, when equipped with the right education, skills, and opportunities, the youth can become instrumental in peace building processes.



Youth at the centre of election violence. Photo Credit: Daily Trust.

For young people to become active agents of change within their communities especially with regards to peace-building certain strategies would need to be incorporated within the engagements with young people. First, it is important to provide the youth with training in conflict resolution, leadership, and

ethnoreligious harmony. This will equip them with the essential tools necessary for peace-building. Second, the establishment of national and regional youth peace networks would allow young people to collaborate, share knowledge, and mobilize their communities for positive change.

Third, gender inclusion is necessary for effective youth participation in peace-building. Encouraging the participation of young women in peace-building ensures that peace efforts are inclusive and reflective of diverse perspectives. Addressing patriarchal attitudes and gender biases is crucial for empowering all segments of society. Lastly, economic empowerment is crucial if the youth are to be agents of positive change in their communities. Providing youth with alternative livelihoods, particularly in areas affected by conflict would help to stabilize their economic prospects and reduce the risk of involvement in criminal activities.

To successfully empower the youth, deliberate efforts are required from government and civil society organizations to train and empower young people through vocational programs, entrepreneurial training, and leadership development. Economic empowerment through grants and contracts can provide youth with the resources needed to create sustainable livelihoods. Entrepreneurship offers a low-cost pathway to self-empowerment and economic independence. By encouraging youth to pursue



Youth March for Peace. Photo Credit: carmenmccain.com

entrepreneurial ventures, societies can foster innovation and create a more peaceful and stable environment for development.

The youth can be engaged as a vital strategy for promoting sustainable peace and development in societies. By equipping young people with the necessary knowledge, skills, and opportunities, they can play a central role in addressing the socio-political challenges bedeviling communities. Empowering young people for positive impact is not only a moral imperative but a practical necessity for creating more peaceful, prosperous, and harmonious societies.

David James Buoro is the Team Lead of Netaccess Foundation, located in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria. Netaccess Foundation is a registered non-governmental organization dedicated to the development of humanity and the preservation of human dignity.

FG EXEMPTS DIESEL, COOKING GAS AND OTHERS FROM VAT

KANANG AMOS AKIMS



Wale Edun

The Federal Government has removed Value Added Tax (VAT) from a range of key energy products and infrastructure, including Diesel, Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), Feed Gas, Compressed Natural Gas (CNG), Electric Vehicles, Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) infrastructure, and Clean Cooking Equipment. This was done via the Value Added Tax Modification Order (VATMO) 2024. The Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Mr. Wale Edun, unveiled the exemptions on Tuesday 8th October 2024.

According to a statement by the Director, Information and Public Relations, Federal Ministry of Finance, Mohammed Manga, the exemption of some goods from VAT was designed to lower the cost of living, strengthen energy security, and accelerate Nigeria's transition to cleaner energy sources. The statement further stated that, with the new incentive, “Nigeria is firmly on track to reclaim its position as a leader in the global oil and gas market. These fiscal

incentives demonstrate the administration's unwavering commitment to fostering sustainable growth, enhancing energy security, and driving economic prosperity for all Nigerians”.

Meanwhile, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation Limited (NNPCL) has increased the pump price of fuel. The new pump price was announced on Wednesday 9th October 2024. The product is now sold in Abuja for N1,030 per liter, up from the previous price of N897 in the nation's capital. This is coming at the heels of NNPCL's exit as the middleman in the Dangote Refinery purchase deal. Hence, NNPCL will no longer cover the price gap between what is obtained at the facility and the selling price to retailers.

Dangote Petroleum Refinery is a multi-billion dollar 650,000 barrels per day facility located in the Lekki Free Zone near Lagos, Nigeria. The Refinery's capacity can meet 100% of the domestic requirement of all refined products and have surplus of each of the products for export. NNPCL, on Sunday 15th September 2024, commenced the first loading from Dangote refinery.

In a related development, the President of Independent Petroleum Marketers Association of Nigeria (IPMAN), Abubakar Shettima, while speaking on Channels TV 'Sunrise Daily' programme asked the NNPCL to sell petrol, to its marketers at the Dangote Petroleum Refinery's rate or refund the oil marketers' money. Shettima noted that their monies have been with NNPCL for about three months, and even though NNPCL got the products from Dangote refinery at a rate lower than N900 per litre, they were asked to buy the products at over N1,000 per litre. He further stated that NNPCL had directed that IPMAN members should “buy the product from them at the rate of N1,010 in Lagos, N1,045 in Calabar, N1,050 in Port Harcourt, and N1,040 in Warri.” According to Shettima, independent marketers had already made payment to NNPCL for petrol orders equivalent to N15 billion.



Trucks loading petrol at Dangote refinery. Photo Credit: The Punch

DANGOTE REFINERY: A FACADE OR A DREAM COME TRUE?

GERALDINE NZERIBE AND MODESTA AKUNEDE



Dangote Refinery Photo Credit: The Guardian

In September 2013, Aliko Dangote unveiled plans to build a refinery, announcing that he had secured about 3.3 billion dollars in financing for the project. The refinery was estimated to cost about 9 billion dollars with the Dangote group investing 3 billion dollars while the balance will be sourced externally. However, the construction did not commence until 2016 with planned completion slated for 2018. Therefore, since 2013, Nigerians in their usual nature have patiently waited, hoped and anticipated that the refinery would commence operation and put an end to fuel and other petroleum product crises.

The refinery eventually commenced operation after receiving its first cargo of 1 million barrels of crude oil from Shell International Trading and Shipping Co (STASCO) on the 7th day of December 2023. It was said that at full capacity, the refinery will process about 650,000 barrels of crude oil per day and it was equally articulated at the inauguration of the project on the 22nd day of May 2023 that the investment is worth over 19 billion US Dollars. It was hoped that this investment would alleviate the PMS shortage in Nigeria and reduce the price of PMS and other petroleum products.

However, we now have what can be described as trouble in our anticipated paradise as we have experienced increased and unstable PMS pump prices, shortages, scarcity and long queues at PMS pump stations all over Nigeria. End users and Nigerians in general have not received any succinct explanation as to why we are weeping when we should be celebrating. Rather, the Federal government, the NNPC and the Dangote group have engaged in what is best described as blame games, accusations and counter-accusations while the recent pump price worsens the standard of living, leaving Nigerians to languish in the face of a deteriorating economy where high PMS pump price and scarcity stifles economic activities

and productivity. People now find it difficult to report at their place of business as they can barely afford PMS and the cost of transportation.

The lawmakers had anticipated this pump price doom and had through the House of Representatives Committee on Petroleum Resources (Upstream) demanded the reversal of fuel to the old price when NNPC Ltd directed its fuel sales outlets to increase their pump prices from the average of ₦617 to ₦897 in September, a development that spiked prices of market commodities and transportation, urging the Federal Government and the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Ltd. (NNPCL) to comply. But just as we have always had it in Nigeria, the worst was yet to come. The Nigerian presidential committee while announcing the commencement of the loading of the first batch of petrol from the Dangote refinery added that PMS from the Dangote refinery will only be sold to the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC Ltd) which will then sell to various marketers in the short term. This was equally disclosed in a statement posted on the X handle of Bayo Onanuga, the Special Adviser to President Bola Tinubu on Information and Strategy. By this arrangement, the NNPCL aims to monopolize the distribution of locally refined fuel and stand as a middleman between the Dangote Group and other petroleum marketers. This arrangement is detrimental to the marketers and end users and contradicts the deregulation of the downstream oil sector by the government and has led the marketers to appeal to the government to either allow them direct access to Dangote's petrol or support their interest to import PMS. It has also contributed to the

high price of PMS. The establishment of the Dangote refinery will not yield the expected results if the foreign exchange is still being lost as a result of fuel importation.

The Conference of Nigerian Political Parties (CNPP) on the first of October DAILY POST described NNPCL's interference in the distribution of locally refined PMS as an economic sabotage and urged NNPCL to immediately cease its meddling and allow Dangote refinery and other local refineries to operate freely to ensure competitive pricing and supply. However, the Federal Government and the NNPCL have remained adamant and hell-bent on the exploitation of the poor masses by stating that from the 1st of October, NNPCL will commence the supply of about 385k barrels of crude per day to the Dangote refinery to be paid for in naira while the Dangote refinery will supply Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) and diesel of equivalent value to the domestic market to be paid for in naira. But while Diesel will be sold in naira by the Dangote refinery to any interested off-taker. PMS will only be sold to NNPCL who will then sell to various marketers.

It is anticipated that the high cost of locally sourced crude, the bottlenecks created by NNPCL in their attempt to further exploit end users and the general low supply of crude as a result of underinvestment and poor maintenance in the sector will drive the Dangote group into largely importing crude for the refinery and further drive the Nigerian economy into being import dependent. The president of the Dangote Group, Aliko Dangote described the situation to the AFRICAN REPORT as thus; "There is a bit of a problem for us to source the entire volume of crude that we're looking for [domestically] because we need different types and mixes. Unless [crude] production improves – which we pray and hope for – we need to go elsewhere to reach full refining capacity by the end of the year". A country with the second largest crude oil reserve in Africa, a reserve of about 36.9 billion barrels and a country which led the export of crude from Africa in 2023, exporting nearly 1.5 million barrels per day according to the World Energy Balances has now been reported as being unable to supply crude oil to a local Refinery. Nigerians are therefore currently in doubt as to whether the Dangote refinery will make an anticipated impact on the Nigerian economy or further deteriorate it.

Consequently, the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) thinks that the inability of the NNPCL to provide the needed quantity of crude to the Dangote Petroleum Refinery and Petrochemicals could jeopardise Nigeria's economic recovery and put additional pressure on the naira. The research and analysis division of the Economist Group is convinced that the importation of crude by Dangote refinery is expected to have significant economic repercussions for Nigeria, potentially worsening the already strained relationship between public finances and the management of the country's currency and

added that the already ongoing crude oil and fuel imports would reduce the current-account surplus from the 1.9% of GDP currently projected for 2025, which will potentially lead to lower foreign reserves and the return to a more rigid and unstable foreign-exchange system. The unit equally articulated that the failure of NNPC to supply the needed quantity of crude to the refinery is because a large quantity of crude oil has

But today, the Dangote group has been given express permission to import crude oil, a mineral resource which Nigeria has in abundance which if given the attention it requires through skilled exploration, investment and maintenance will sufficiently provide the required quantity of crude oil feedstock to the refinery at appropriate prices. PMS marketers are equally gearing up to resume the importation of PMS, having expressed their displeasure at the arrangement the Federal Government made which allows NNPC to monopolize the supply of locally refined PMS. The government through the NNPC has constantly lamented that crude production is currently low and the reason provided for this situation is very laughable. While the government promised to deliver 450,000 b/d of oil to Dangote refinery through the NNPC in a pilot scheme, the NNPC has declared that it is not in a position to make the arrangement reliable or permanent because crude oil production in Nigeria is stubbornly low as a result of oil theft and underinvestment, explaining that crude oil production was 1.31m b/d in July, against an OPEC+ target of 1.38m b/d of which the NNPC receives a varying minority share while a sizable quantity (about 90,000 b/d) is being committed as loan collateral.

Sources close to the Dangote group revealed on the 2nd of October VANGUARD NEWS that the volume supplied to them by the NNPC remains low when compared to the installed refining capacity of the 650,000 barrels per day plant. While the crude oil requirements of Nigeria's refineries, including the Dangote refinery in the last quarter (October – December) of 2024 are still unknown, as



Price of petroleum products. Photo credit: The Hope Newspaper

been committed as loan collateral and is being used to pay off outstanding loans. It is therefore appropriate to infer that Nigeria's problem is both multi-faced and multi-layered. Just like the Onion, peeling off one layer of a problem only reveals a brand-new replacement.

Different patterns of protectionist policies have been implemented in Nigeria since the mid-70s. In the past, the Nigerian government had blocked imports of a long list of products from neighbouring countries including food such as live poultry, pork, beef, refined vegetable oils and fats, and sugar, as well as many other items like medications and used cars. As of 1986, approximately 40% of agricultural and industrial products were covered by import prohibitions. Between 1980 and 1991, affected countries including Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Norway, and the United States lodged GATT and/or ECOWAS complaints. In response, the World Bank, with the support of the IMF, initiated a trade liberalization program to provide technical and policy advice to Nigeria. But the flare for protectionism in Nigeria never subsided as the Nigerian government claims these policies promote import substitution, boost employment, and improve its balance of payments. Smuggling activities however intensified, food inflation continued to shoot up at an amazing speed, poverty, hunger and an overall miserable state of the economy persisted but the Nigerian government still maintained that import prohibition is one of the gateways to the country's economic salvation.



disclosed in the National Bureau of Statistics “Petroleum Products Distribution Statistics” the government put the requirements of all Nigeria's refineries, including Dangote Refinery, in the second quarter (Q2'24) of 2024, at 597,700 barrels per day, indicating an increase of 114,700 barrels per day, from 483,000 bpd in the first half of the year. The Q2'24 estimate also indicates that the NNPC may have booked the crude oil needs of Dangote Refinery at less than 50% of the installed production capacity. The fact that a country which in 2023, exported an average of 1.5 million barrels of crude per day as published by Statista Research Department (2024) could not provide about 650,000 barrels of crude per day to her very own indigenous refinery remains very questionable. The reason for this massive misalignment as usual could be deeply rooted in corruption, selfishness in leadership and its related vices.

The Dangote refinery, considered a transformative development, is expected to resolve the contradiction of Nigeria being a major crude oil producer yet still dependent on PMS imports as it can eliminate the need to import PMS and shield local fuel prices from exchange-rate fluctuations. However, this expectation and aim are largely defeated with the current pump price of PMS pegged at above a thousand (₦1,000) Naira per liter, the need for the Dangote group to still import crude oil, the artificial scarcity occasionally created by NNPC, as well as the agitation by petroleum products marketers to be permitted to freely import PMS.

As always, sufferings for the ordinary Nigerian, aggravated by the new pump price still persist, lack, hunger, high cost of living and the inability to make ends meet intensifies, making the Dangote refinery project, the relief and restoration it promised Nigerians and the economy in general seem like a façade, a mirage- an unattainable hope.

Geraldine Nzeribe and Modesta Akunede are both from the Department of Economics, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka.

NUPEMCO CELEBRATES 2024 CUSTOMER SERVICE WEEK

OGO OGO, MARIA UZONWANNE & KANANG AKIMS

The Nigerian Universities Pension Management Company (NUPEMCO) kicked off its annual Customer Week celebration across her regional and branch offices, highlighting the organization's commitment to its stakeholders. The event, marked by a festive atmosphere, brought together NUPEMCO staff and customers for a brief interphase cum fun fare. The highlight of the event was a symbolic cake-cutting, representing enviable success in partnership between NUPEMCO and its valued customers across many branches. This gesture underscores the company's dedication to fostering strong relationships with the academic community it serves. In this photo splash, NUPEMCO describes her customers across different regions and branches.



Awesome customers @ GSU



Elegant Customers @ ATBU Bauchi



Ever smiling Customers @ UNIJOS



Supportive Clients @ MAUY



Excited Customers @ UNIMAID



Accommodating and charming clients @ NUC



Loyal and friendly clients @ FUAM



Loyal and understanding clients @ FULAFIA



Inquisitive and observant customers @ UNEC



Clever and impressive customers @ NAU



Inquisitive and interesting customers with NUPEMCO staff @ BSU

THE RISE OF NIGERIA'S NATIONAL DEBT. SHOULD THE CITIZENS BE ALARMED AND WORRIED?

ZUHUMNAN DAPEL AND SANTOS LARAB

Within half a century, Nigeria's total external debt stock (due but unpaid foreign loans plus accrued interest arrears) rose from less than 1 billion dollars in 1970 to over 70 billion dollars as of 2021. More than two-thirds of this is owed to multilateral institutions: the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the African Development Bank - and less than 10 per cent to China, while the rest is to other bilateral lenders.

A caveat on the Chinese credit: according to information from Nigeria's debt management office, loans from China are wholly tied to 15 infrastructure projects ranging from transportation, water and telecommunications to electricity. At 2.5 per cent interest rate, the debts are expected to be fully paid back within 30 years: 20 years' maturity plus seven years grace period.

The nation's current foreign debt level, in addition to raising the risk of sovereign default (that is the failure of the government to pay its debt), is also absorbing and sucking up the entire government budgetary space such that the country has little room to spend on other pressing national needs.

Concerning resolving the debt crisis, the situation raises two pertinent questions. First, what are the forces at the root of shaping Nigeria's debt profile? Second, what can be done to reverse the government finances from sinking deeper into the red? Before addressing these questions (in the later part) in detail, we proceed by laying out a context as follows.

In a setting of zero public sector corruption (practically impossible), who benefits the most from government spending? **And who losses out whenever the government cuts its spending? Both questions share the same answer: the poor.** This is because state-owned, state-funded, and state-run public goods such as schools, hospitals, dams, electricity, roads, etc are substantially relied upon by the poor as a means of raising welfare levels in that the rich can afford or buy education and healthcare services from private schools and private hospitals, respectively. However, in the presence of corruption – the reality on the ground – the primary beneficiaries of government budgets in addition to the poor are typically the elected and the unelected corrupt government officials and bureaucrats. Given that they wield the levers of power, government budgets are often used as tools (instead of instruments of delivering public goods and services) to leak away resources from public tills to private tills, thus providing more grounds for borrowing and mounting



public debt to finance and grease the greed of corruption. There is therefore no question that government spending is strongly connected to the national debt.

Like other nations, Nigeria borrows from the rest of the world. Its budget is significantly tied to changes in world oil prices, hence, in periods of falling oil revenues, the government usually rushes to lenders for loans to finance deficits otherwise, the decline in revenues will always come at the expense of investments in infrastructure – accumulation of physical capital stock such as roads, new schools, hospitals, dams etc. This is because the government must pay its workers and fund its operations including providing national security. In other words, the government chooses to borrow in periods of negative shocks to oil prices so that its recurrent expenditure will have to hold up so that workers are not shaded off from public employment.

The forces at the root of rising Nigeria's foreign debt

In our opinion, two main forces are driving the rise of the external national debt. First, the rate at which the country borrows. According to the World Bank's International Debt

Statistics, for the past 50 years, Nigeria was on average withdrawing at the speed of more than \$2 billion a year from its loan commitments. However, the significant rise in the debt stock is attributed to disbursements on external loans within the last decade. In the lead-up to the 2015 general elections, about \$9 billion – five times the average initial withdrawals – was pinched in 2014. Similarly, in the two years (2017 and 2018) preceding the last general elections, close to \$25 billion was drawn. This pattern could be linked to the incidence *voracity effect* – a notion that the absence of strong political and legal institutions, combined with the presence of multiple powerful groups fosters the mismanagement of public finance, possibly to finance political campaigns in attempts to reinforce their hold (tighten their grip) on power as both presidents, in the case of Nigeria, were incumbents seeking re-elections before the massive debt accumulations.

The second reason behind Nigeria's expanding debt stock has been the debt management strategy, especially how the debt was serviced by various regimes. Please note that to service debt is to pay down the debt stock. That includes paying back part of the principal and the accrued interest arrears. For instance, for the past five decades, Nigeria has been servicing its debt at an annual average rate of roughly 15 per cent (roughly \$2 billion) of its total external debt. More so, between 2007 and 2014 – when world oil prices hovered around \$100 per barrel, offering an opportunity for Nigeria to significantly lower its debt level – debt service payment was ironically at its lowest: an average of less than \$1 billion per year.

Shedding more light on this via a 2005 CGD [note](#), Todd Moss aptly captured how Nigeria's poor management of its debt in the past swelled the nation's debt level:

“Unlike many indebted poor countries, Nigeria's debts are not from massive over-borrowing and then wasteful spending. The initial loans to Nigeria were fairly small amounts and undertaken by the civilian Shagari government in the early 1980s. The subsequent escalation of debt stock is primarily the result of accrued arrears, interest, penalties, and export credit defaults accumulated by the military governments that ruled the country from 1984-99.”

However, in fairness to the military juntas, they built some of the major projects housing the current democratic system in the country such as the parliamentary building, the presidential villa or Aso Rock (Nigeria's equivalent of the US White House and the UK's 10 Downing Street), the federal capital and the creation of the country's 36 states and over seven hundred local councils. Other notable infrastructure projects executed by the military governments include the country's three national refineries, dams, universities, roads, airports, major bridges, and more.

Should the citizens feel a sense of danger?

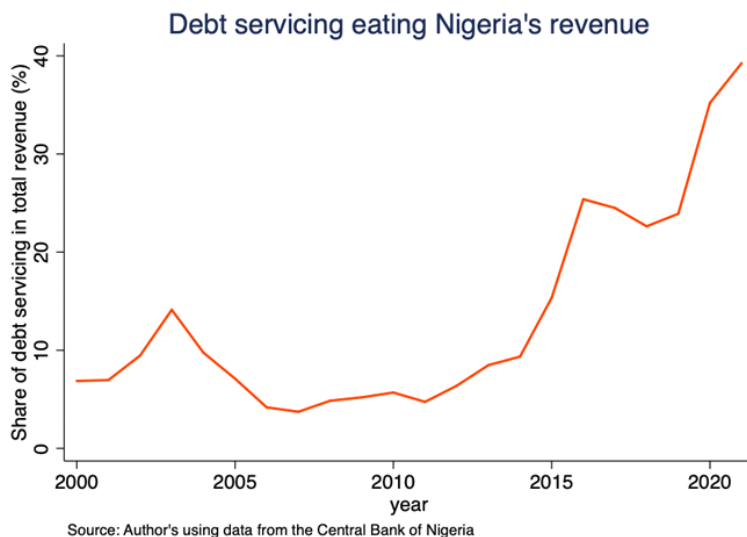
Rising debt levels should not raise immediate concerns if that comes with a falling debt-to-GDP ratio. The ratio, defined as the total debt stock divided by the size of the economy, tells us the fraction of the economy being eaten up by debt and the extent to which the debt benefits the economy. If a nation's debt stock is rising and at the same time its debt-to-GDP ratio is declining, it means the country is making the most of its debt and that should not be a cause for alarm.

However, a nation can offset part of its debt and still have a high debt-to-GDP ratio. For instance, if the country uses part of its capital expenditure or all of it to write down part of its debt, that will no doubt slash the debt stock and the country's balance sheet will look cleaner than it otherwise would have been. But diverting and spending capital expenditure on the debt has stripped the nation of the desperately needed resources to grease the engine of growth. As a result, growth will shrink and the ratio of debt to GDP will rise, a sign of an unhealthy economy. Nonetheless, incurring more debt in the short run and using that to invest in high-return infrastructure projects will potentially lower the debt to- GDP ratio in the long run.

The early 1980s collapse in world oil prices coincided with soaring Nigeria's debt to GDP ratio. It rose from about 4 per cent in 1981 to a peak of more than 90 per cent in 1993; and then within two decades, it fell back to roughly 4 per cent as of 2012. However, it is firmly rising again. Between 2013 and

2020, it ballooned by over 250 per cent: more than 14 per cent in 2020. But should this be a concern? To find an answer, a [debt study](#) by two Harvard professors of economics (Carmen Reinhart and Kenneth Rogoff) of over 40 countries spanning 200 years established that a debt-to-GDP ratio of 90 per cent and above is considered bad for economic growth.

Drilling this to Nigeria paints a different picture. Debt servicing highlights not only the potential cost of mounting the debt burden but also the risk of government finances dipping deeper into the red. The message here is clear: when a nation continues to pile its debt, servicing the debt deprives the country of the badly needed financial resources to fund government operations and power economic progress. For instance, our analysis of Nigeria's debt-expenditure shows for every \$1 that is embedded in the nation's budget towards debt servicing, government spending on pro-poor projects is lessened by less than a dollar, 56 cents. In other words, the more money is allocated for debt



Another downside of Nigeria's debt servicing obligation is that it is ill-timed: coinciding with a period the country needs foreign exchange earnings to revive, defend and stabilise its falling currency as substantial parts of the foreign exchange earnings are now being used to meet debt service obligations. For instance, in 2020 alone, more than 40 per cent of the country's oil rent went into debt servicing.

Dealing with the debt

How can Nigeria be freed from the clutches of debt – clear its books, and restore normal conditions? Are there hopes for a cleaner external sector balance sheet?

Currently, Nigeria's outstanding external debt stock is less than the country's oil revenues and external reserves, combined. That means Nigeria can instantly write down its total external debt stock but doing so will come at a significant economic cost for the country: its external balance sheet will be close to empty, with almost no foreign currency left for settling imports bills and maintaining economic relationships with the rest of the world. This is not a feasible option.

Nigeria's debt was never forgiven, cancelled, or forgotten, it was bought back. Can this happen again?

In 2006, Nigeria [struck](#) a debt buy-back deal with its Paris Group of Creditors – buying a dollar-debt by roughly 20 cents, thus paying \$12 billion upfront to slash its debt by over \$30 billion. The Center for Global Development (a Washington, D.C.-based think tank) led by Todd Moss and Nancy Birdsall provided the technical leadership but much of the debt relief praise goes to the then Nigerian finance minister, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, who provided policy leadership and served as the bridge between a Nigerian government, the deal makers, and the creditors.

The debt relief conferred a couple of benefits – improve the economic landscape of Nigeria

Following this move, consistent with the notion of debt relief, was a significant improvement in the

economic landscape of the country. There was a recorded rise in Nigeria's credit rating in that the country was able to access an additional \$2 billion a year from the global lending market and a supplementary \$5 billion in foreign direct investments. Nigeria saw its debt fall from 110 per cent of GDP in 1993 to just 5 per cent in 2006. Correspondingly, the economy rose from a negative growth rate of 2 per cent per year to a growth rate of 15 per cent in 2002 before falling to roughly 6 per cent in 2006. Average living standards measured in terms of GDP per capita rose by about \$1000. Consequently, over 10 million people were lifted out of poverty.

Given that these benefits were preceded by falling debt levels, then rising debt levels are a pointer to what may, in terms of development outcomes, be eluding Nigeria in the future should the country continue to accumulate more debt.

The possibility of additional debt relief for Nigeria

Contrastingly, the economic conditions, political climate, and Nigeria's creditors in the early years of their return to democracy in the country are significantly different from the current realities on the ground. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that what worked then (the 2006 debt successful debt relief) may not work now. Then, Nigeria used its oil proceeds – what it was able to bring to the table – to negotiate a debt relief package with predominantly European

and North American creditors. Will its current leading creditors – the World Bank, the IMF and AfDB – heed Nigeria's plea in this regard after years of COVID-induced Debt Service Suspension Scheme? We doubt it but it's worth giving a try.

Zuhumnan Dapel is a Nigerian economist and Santos Larab is from the Department of History and International Studies, University of Jos

BALANCING COMPETING PRIORITIES: NNPCL-DANGOTE REFINERY IMPASSE AND THE FUTURE OF NIGERIA'S OIL SECTOR

ANTHONY UZODIQWE



NNPC and Dangote Refinery. Photo Credit: Daily Trust

The Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL) and Dangote Refinery have been at the centre of a lingering impasse that has far-reaching implications for Nigeria's oil industry and economy. The Dangote Refinery, a monumental \$19 billion investment with a capacity to process 650,000 barrels of crude oil per day, was anticipated to revolutionize Nigeria's oil sector by significantly reducing the country's dependence on imported refined products. This refinery, the largest in Africa, was expected to enhance local refining capacity, create jobs, and contribute to economic growth. However, its operations have been hindered by ongoing disputes with the NNPC, the state-owned entity responsible for managing the country's oil resources. These disputes have centred on critical issues such as crude oil supply agreements, where disagreements over pricing and supply terms have created significant

operational challenges for the refinery.

One of the primary issues in the NNPC-Dangote Refinery impasse is the supply of crude oil to Dangote Refinery. The refinery's success depends on securing a steady supply of crude oil at competitive prices, but NNPC's efforts to balance domestic obligations with international financial commitments have caused major disputes over pricing and supply terms. These differing priorities have created challenges in reaching an agreement that benefits both parties

These disagreements have broader implications for the Nigerian oil sector. The Dangote Refinery, with its substantial capacity, was expected to reduce Nigeria's dependence on imported refined products and stabilize local fuel prices. However, the ongoing supply and pricing disputes will hinder these potential benefits. NNPC's control over crude oil distribution and its pricing strategies are critical factors that could either facilitate or obstruct the refinery's operations.

Another contentious point in the NNPC-Dangote Refinery impasse is the distribution of refined products. NNPC's involvement in this process has drawn significant criticism from various stakeholders who argue that it constitutes economic sabotage. These critics contend that NNPC's control over the distribution network undermines Dangote Refinery's capacity to operate freely and competitively. By maintaining a dominant



NNPC Filling Station. Photo Credit: Premium Times Nigeria

position in the distribution chain, NNPC can influence market dynamics in ways that may not always align with the interests of private sector players like Dangote. This control can lead to inefficiencies and market distortions, ultimately affecting the availability and pricing of refined products in the domestic market.

The implications of this control are far-reaching. For Dangote Refinery, the ability to distribute its products efficiently and at competitive prices is crucial for its financial viability and operational success. However, NNPC's grip on the distribution process can create barriers to market entry and expansion for the refinery. This situation not only hampers the refinery's potential to contribute to Nigeria's energy security and economic growth but also raises broader questions about the role of state-owned enterprises in a market-driven economy. Addressing these distribution challenges requires a re-evaluation of existing policies and the establishment of a more transparent and competitive framework that allows private refineries to thrive alongside state-owned entities.

The impasse between NNPC and Dangote Refinery carries significant economic implications, particularly concerning fuel availability and prices in Nigeria. The refinery's potential to supply a substantial portion of Nigeria's refined petroleum products could stabilize local fuel prices and reduce the country's dependence on imports. However, the ongoing conflict disrupts this potential, leading to uncertainties in the market. Fluctuations in fuel prices can have a cascading effect on the broader economy, influencing transportation costs,

inflation rates, and overall economic stability. Unless these issues are resolved the refinery's capacity to contribute positively to the national economy will be undermined.

Politically, the impasse highlights broader issues of governance and the delicate balance of power between state-owned enterprises and private-sector initiatives. NNPC's dominant role in the oil sector reflects the challenges of transitioning from a state-controlled economy to one that encourages private investment and competition. The conflict underscores the need for clear and transparent policies that delineate the roles and responsibilities of state and private entities. It also raises questions about the effectiveness of regulatory frameworks and the government's ability to foster a business environment conducive to private sector growth. Addressing these governance issues is crucial for ensuring that both state-owned and private enterprises can coexist and contribute to Nigeria's economic

development in a balanced and sustainable manner.

Addressing this crisis would require implementing policy reforms that clearly delineate the roles and responsibilities of NNPC and private refineries. Such reforms should focus on establishing transparent and equitable crude oil supply agreements, ensuring that both state-owned and private entities have fair access to resources. In addition, creating clear and consistent distribution policies would prevent market distortions and foster a competitive environment. These measures would not only enhance operational efficiency and market stability but also build trust among stakeholders, paving way for a more collaborative and productive oil sector in Nigeria.

Furthermore, engaging in mediation and negotiation processes that involve key stakeholders including

the government, NNPC, and Dangote Refinery is essential for reaching mutually beneficial agreements. These processes can facilitate open dialogue, allowing each party to express their concerns and priorities while working towards common goals. This approach not only aims to resolve the immediate conflict but also sets a precedent for future cooperation, ultimately contributing to a more stable and efficient oil sector in Nigeria. A more sustainable solution is to embrace economic diversification and reduce over reliance on oil revenues. By investing in other sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, technology, and renewable energy, Nigeria can create a more resilient and balanced economic structure. Promoting sustainable development initiatives further ensures long-term growth and stability, reducing the vulnerability of the economy to fluctuations in oil prices and sector-specific disputes. This holistic approach not only fosters economic stability but also enhances job creation, innovation, and overall national development.

Anthony Uzodigwe is from the Department of Economics at the Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.



A FICTIONAL CONVERSATION

ZUHUMNAN DAPEL



Former Head of State: Young man, how are you? I hope you're doing fine.

Current Head of State: Welcome, Senior. I am doing well, thank you.

Former Head of State: What's going on? I've had lots of complaints from your fellow countrymen and women, and I thought I should touch base to check on you and possibly offer some encouragements and advice on how to move the nation forward.

As you know, after ruling for nine years, I left this office about 50 years ago. Then, the currency was exchanged for about \$2 and £1+, so that with roughly N700, one could get a round trip ticket from Lagos to London. But now this amount cannot buy a large tuber of yam in the country. What did you do to the Naira?

Current Head of State: Senior, GEJ & PMB destroyed the Naira before passing it over to me. I've been working hard to redeem its value.

Former Head of State: No! No! I don't expect to hear this from you. Because the other day GEJ told me he handed over the Naira to PMB when it was about N200 to the dollar and PMB to you at N1,000 now it is over N1,600 to the dollar.

Current Head of State: OK. I will take the blame, but I will pass it on to three things: crash in oil price, corruption in previous regimes, and the scarcity of dollars to defend the naira.

Former Head of State: Come on, we all had our challenges. I had a three-year civil war. Was that not more serious than your three excuses combined? Yet, I kept the naira in good shape for the space of nine years such that it was accepted on the streets of London as a medium of exchange.

Please do something about the current situation. I will be back to check on you again. Also, please feel free to reach out to me should you need my advice. I will be praying and rooting for you. And by the way, how good is your economic team? Do you listen to them?

Current Head of State: I appreciate your coming to see me and to express your concern over the state of the nation. As always, the doors are open to you. This is your house. Thank, you!

2025 AFCON QUALIFIERS: CAF AWARDS SUPER EAGLES OF NIGERIA THREE POINTS AND THREE GOALS

KANENG AMOS AKIMS

The Confederation of African Football (CAF) in a statement on Saturday 26th October 2024 awarded three points, and 3 - 0 victory to Nigeria for the deserted game against Libya. The statement also contained punitive measures against Libya; the Libya Football Federation (LFF) is to pay a fine of \$50,000 within a 60-day period from the date of notification. The decision by CAF followed an investigation into the abandoned October 15, 2024 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) qualifier in Benghazi by the CAF Disciplinary Board. The Libya Football Federation was found to have breached Article 31 of the AFCON Regulations and Articles 82 and 151 of the CAF Disciplinary Code. With this ruling, Nigeria now has 10 points from 4 games and remain at the top of Group D in the 2025 AFCON Qualifiers with 2 matches left to play. Benin and Rwanda with 6 points and 5 points are placed second and third respectively in the same Group. Libya with 1 point in 4 games are in last place in Group D.

The 5 - point decision by CAF reads:

- The Libya Football Federation is found to have breached Article 31 of the African Cup of Nations Regulations as well as Articles 82 and 151 of the CAF Disciplinary Code.
- The match No.87 Libya v. Nigeria of the CAF African Cup of Nations Qualifiers 2025 (scheduled to be played on 15



Super Eagles of Nigeria

October 2024 in Benghazi) is declared lost by forfeit by Libya (by a score of 3-0).

- The Libya Football Federation is ordered to pay a fine of USD 50,000.
- The fine is to be paid within 60 days of notification of the present decision.
- All other and further motions or prayers for relief are dismissed.

Nigeria had won the first encounter with Libya by a 1 - 0 margin in Uyo on October 11, 2024. The reverse fixture was billed to take place in Benghazi four days later. However, Nigeria's Super Eagles were ill-treated on arrival at the Al Abaq airport in Bayda, almost 250km away from Benghazi. Nigerian players and officials were kept locked in the airport for over 20 hours with no access to food or water. During the episode, there was no contact from the Libyan officials. This led to the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) withdrawing the Super Eagles from playing the match in Benghazi and arranging their return home. The Libya Football Federation had said that the diversion and prolonged delay of Nigeria's team were not deliberate, adding that their team faced similar travel difficulties when they played the October 11 2024 match in Uyo. The LFF stated that their



Super Eagles left stranded at an airport in Libya

players and officials on arrival in Nigeria endured long travel delays and commuted for hours to the match venue. CAF has however dismissed any further appeals or motions from Libya in this matter.

The ruling from CAF in favour of Nigeria came few days after the country soared in the October 2024 FIFA Rankings. The latest FIFA Rankings published on October 24, 2024 saw Nigeria jump three spots to 36th in the world. This upward movement has reflected positively on the team's continental position. Nigeria is back into the continent's top five teams; ranked fourth behind Morocco, Senegal and Egypt, an improvement from the sixth spot the three-time African champions occupied in September 2024.



Austin Eguavoen, Head Coach of Super Eagles

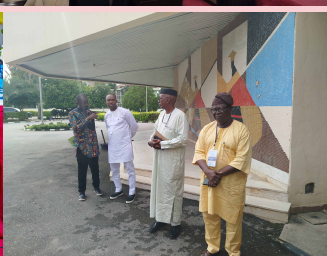
PICTURE GALLERY OF ASUU STATE OF THE UNION CONFERENCE



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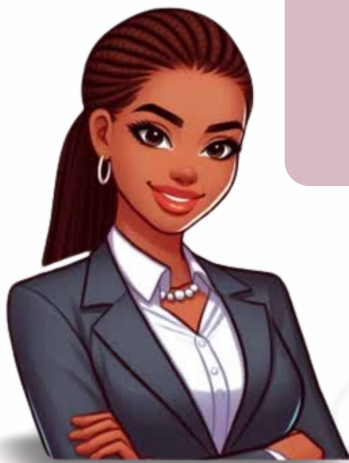
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