



THE ACADEMIC STAFF UNION OF UNIVERSITIES, FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CONFLICT AND QUALITY UNIVERSITY EDUCATION TOWARDS 2030 IN NIGERIA

Evuarherhe Veronica Aboloⁱ

Dr., Department of Educational Management,
University of Lagos,
Nigeria

Abstract:

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were used to build on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in order to achieve greater global development. The study investigated the influence of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) / Federal Government conflict on the achievement of SDG4 which bothers on education as it relates to tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Three research questions and three hypotheses were raised for the study. The participants of the study consist 300 sample academics from three Federal Universities. A self-constructed questionnaire titled Sustainable Development Goal on Education Realisation and Academic Staff and Federal Government Conflict Questionnaire (SGGRASFGQ) was used to solicit data for the study. The research questions were answered by descriptive statistics while the hypotheses were tested using Chi Square. The findings showed that the federal government/ ASUU conflicts significantly influence: the universities learning environment; the realisation of the teacher management; and the quality of education targets of SDG 4 in Nigeria. Recommendations such as the government prioritising education through aggressive plans; eradicating conflicts through a final resolution strategy; overhauling the university syllabus and partnership with concerned stakeholders in education were proffered in order to achieve SDG4 in the year 2030.

Keywords: sustainable development goal four, academic staff union of universities, federal government, conflict, teacher management, quality education

1. Introduction

Education has been a means of achieving global development. This was one of the major agreements embarked upon in New York 2015 where the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were instituted in order to build on the Millennium

ⁱ Correspondence: email veroabolo@gmail.com

Development Goals (MDGs) and further work on what they did not achieve. The SDGs are a 15 year global programme based on different goals and the targets of achieving them that will culminate in agenda 2030. The SDGs were established to seek human right for all, achieve gender equality, ensure the empowerment of all and the balance of the three dimension of sustainable development of the economic, social and environmental (UN, 2015). The goals are 17 with 169 targets of achieving them. In furtherance with the associated targets that are universal and indivisible, the fourth Goal is centred on education, wherein education should be used by the world leaders as a universal policy to mobilise resources especially in the developing countries to achieve all round development. Thus SDG 4 states that by 2030 the world leaders to which Nigeria belong should ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (EFA, 2015). As part of the implementation process of the SDG 4, it was planned with various targets (programmes) that by 2030 learners will acquire the knowledge and skills needed in a peaceful and non-violence environment for sustainable development through increase in higher education enrolment and sustainable increase in qualify teachers supply.

The SDG 4 tried to achieve its objectives with all levels of education, starting from the primary, secondary, to higher education level. In Nigeria several action plans have been embarked upon by the federal government in order to implement the education agenda towards 2030 (FGN, 2017). The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme is being overhauled to enable equal access and equity in education for all (Offorma, 2013). Also, at the higher secondary level, vocational and technical subjects are being introduced to ensure sustainable development and for vocational and tertiary education to be linked with livelihood. We have the Transition State Action Plan, the Vision 20-20 Strategic Objectives and various integration into sectors and national workshops.

With all the laudable and striving implementation strategies, there lie the need to achieve the SDG 4 goal in 2030 in Nigeria through partnership with government, various stakeholders and institutions in order to meet the targets (FGN, 2017). Part of the means of achieving the SDG 4 targets which is vital to the country human capital development is to ensure equal access and free tertiary education including university; Peace and non-violence education and teacher management (Qian, 2015). The crux of SDG4-Education 2030 lies at the national level; therefore government has the foremost responsibility for implementation, supervision, feedback and review.

A thorough scrutiny of the university programmes and environment in Nigeria reveal a near to non-action as it relate to sustainable goals in the tertiary institutions. Though the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) is being utilised, much is yet to be achieved in the issue of funding. The infrastructure in the universities are still in deplorable state yet to be upgraded. Most applicants seeking admission are denied access to the universities, the universities are still fee paying while incessant strikes by the universities unions have robbed the institutions of peace and non- violence school environment. The issue is made more complex as we are now three years into the agenda plans for achieving the SDG 4 without any visible action by the federal

government on the universities. The constant strike embarked upon by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) bothering on non-implementation of agreement reached for 2009 and 2013 with the federal government, has stalled the realisation of the sustainable university education goal target towards vocational lifelong learning and livelihood. (Abolo, 2016).

The Federal Government and ASUU incessant conflicts leading to several months of learning and academic stand still, seemed to be one of the major challenges in achieving quality university education in 2030. This is more worrisome considering the reasons for the incessant conflicts. The Academic staff grouse bother mainly on infrastructure, equipping the library, quality teaching material, funding and better condition of service for the lecturers, (Adamu & Nwogu, 2014). When all the demands of the universities are met according to Offorma (2013), the higher institutions environment will be conducive to learning, more universities will be established. This gesture will pave access to university applicants and by 2030 tertiary education in Nigeria would have provided improved livelihood through technical, vocational and non-violence education tutored by well-equipped lecturers.

The constant shrike and conflict of ASUU with the federal government tend to bring into the university environment instability, mistrust, grudges, low morale and a learning environment filled with uncertainties (Abolo, 2016). The ASUU strike normally leaves in its wake non completion of syllabus, hasty teaching/ learning and turn out of half-baked graduates. This is of dire consequences considering the fact that the Nigerian government is yet to amicably resolve her conflict with ASUU. Not a year passes, since 2009 without months of disruption of universities academic calendar due to unfulfilled agreement reached between ASUU and the federal government. This has resulted in a near to unfavourable teaching and learning environment with the lecturers and students being constantly plague with the next strike action. When the universities environment is still being saddled by ASUU/Federal government conflicts sometimes resulting in solidarity rally, protests and closure of the institutions, how can the target of the SDG 4 of Peace and non-violence education in our institutions be achieved towards 2030?

One of the agitations of ASUU is to promote and sustain management of the universities towards providing high quality education to the students (Adamu and Nwogu, 2014). Thus the academic staff demand the complete revamping of the universities through upgrade of infrastructure, higher funding and better condition for the lecturers. These demands are always the bane of the conflicts that are yet to be fulfilled. If the desired quality infrastructure are yet to be met through increase funding as being canvassed for by ASUU, then the quality of education mostly targeted for in 2030 seemed a mirage. This was highlighted by Desalu (2014) that most of the requirements for attaining quality education in the universities are still unavailable thereby affecting the quality of graduates from the universities.

In order to achieve the sustainable development goals in education by 2030 and to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, the universities are meant to train and bring out highly skilled and self-reliant manpower through well-equipped and satisfied teachers (CESA 2016). According to UN (2015), each country must ensure qualified and pedagogically trained teachers for lifelong livelihood; teachers should be recognised within a lifelong learning framework be it formal or non-formal. This target at achieving the SDG 4 is one of the demands of ASUU. Over the years, ASUU has embarked on strike due to the Federal government refusal to improve the lecturers' welfare relating to upward salary review and payment of Earned Allowance. The recent three months ASUU strike in 2017 and 2018 were to press for the lecturers accumulated allowances. As at the time of writing, most lecturers are yet to access the complete payment of the Earned lectures arrears. If federal government seemed to have failed in ensuring the training and meeting the demands of the universities lecturers, how can the Nigerian teachers in the universities be well equipped pedagogically towards providing sustainable learning to students in 2030?

2. Statement of the Problem

Education has been established as the major vehicle of driving our resources, economy and manpower towards the achievement of the SDGs (FGN, 2017). Since the inception of the SDGs, it is glaring that for the three years that the Agenda Plan has been launched worldwide, the Nigerian government seemed not to be too vibrant in establishing practicable action plans towards the implementation of the SDG4 which bothers on education mostly in the area of higher institutions. The Nigerian federal government is supposed to as part of implementing the SDG 4, partner with different stakeholders in education in order to arrive at the sustainable goal of quality/ equity tertiary education to which the universities belong. This target seemed to be hampered due to the incessant strikes of ASUU based on the federal government inability to rightly fund and improve the quality of university education in Nigeria.

The kernel is that the quality of education giving to the students in the universities, the welfare of the universities lecturers and the environment meant for conducive teaching/ learning as targeted by the SDG 4 have not been aggressively tackled considering the ASUU/ Federal Government incessant conflicts.(Desalu,2014). This is vital since education according to Offorma (2013) holds the key to achieving most of the sustainable development goals by 2030. It is against this background that the researcher seeks to investigate the influence of the constant ASUU/ Federal Government conflicts on the quality of university education in Nigeria towards achieving the SDG 4 of ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all in 2030.

3. Research Questions

- 1) To what extent do federal government/ ASUU conflicts influence the universities learning environment target of SDG 4 in Nigeria?
- 2) How do the federal government/ ASUU conflicts influence the teachers' management target of SDG 4 in Nigeria?
- 3) To what extent do the federal government/ ASUU conflicts influence the quality of education target of SDG 4 in Nigeria?

3.1 Hypotheses

- 1) Federal government/ ASUU conflicts will not significantly influence the universities learning environment target of SDG 4 in Nigeria.
- 2) Federal government/ ASUU conflicts will not significantly influence the realisation of the Teachers' management target of SDG4 in Nigeria.
- 3) Federal government/ ASUU conflicts will not significantly influence the quality of education target of SDG 4 in Nigeria.

4. Methodology

The study employed the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consist all academic staff from three federal universities. The stratified random sampling technique was used based on faculties to select four faculties from each university. Thereafter, the simple random sampling was used to select 25 academic staff from each faculty (100) bringing the total sample to 300 academic staff. A researcher constructed questionnaire titled "Sustainable Development Goal on Education Realisation and Academic Staff and Federal Government Conflict Questionnaire" (SGGRASFGQ) was used to elicit responses from the participants. The SGGRASFGQ was validated with academics from the Department of Educational Management while the test re-test method was used to obtain a reliability coefficient of 0.75 of the instrument. The questionnaire contains items to be weighed on the influence of the conflict on the realisation of the SDGs targets. The research questions were answered using descriptive statistics while the hypotheses were tested with Chi Square at 0.5 Level of Significant.

4.1 Analysis of Data

Research Question 1: To what extent do federal government/ ASUU conflicts influence the universities learning environment target of SDG 4 in Nigeria?

Table 1 shows the Mean score and Standard deviation used to determine the level of the influence of federal government /ASUU conflicts on the university environment. The responses show that the influence is high with mean 2.50 and above for most of the items. This suffices that the conflicts in the universities have great influence on the peaceful environment, adversely affecting nonviolence and peaceful learning environment target of SDG4.

Table 1: Level of Federal Government/ASUU Conflicts
 on Environmental Target of SDG4

Items	Mean	SD	Remark
1. ASUU strikes make the school environment to be peaceful.	3.31	.71	High
2. ASUU strikes make lecturer to be apprehensive of more conflicts.	2.52	.81	High
3. ASUU strikes protests rob the university environment of peace.	2.53	.88	High
4. ASUU strikes often bring atmosphere of tension in the school.	3.55	.68	High
5. ASUU strikes have not prevented the environmental target of SDG 4.	2.03	.79	Low
6. Federal government inability to resolve with ASUU creates tension in the school.	3.42	.65	High
7. Environmental Target of SDG 4 will be realised due to peaceful resolve of conflict.	3.23	.73	High
8. Federal government /ASUU conflicts enable realisation of environmental target of SDG 4.	3.43	.62	High
Grand Mean	2.87		High

Research Question 2: How do the federal government/ ASUU conflicts influence the teacher management target of SDG 4 in Nigeria?

Table 2 shows that most of the responses to the items have high Mean of 2.50 and above which means that the conflicts in the universities have prevented the realisation of SDG4 Target of teacher management.

Table 2: Level of Federal Government/ ASUU Conflicts
 on Teacher Management Target of SDG4

Items	Mean	SD	Remark
1. Federal government has addressed the lecturers' grievances to realised Target SDG4.	2.63	.72	High
2. Lecturers welfare has not be addressed through the conflicts to realised Target SDG4.	3.35	.68	High
3. ASUU strikes deprived lecturers from quality lectures delivery	2.51	.67	High
4. Federal government has not taken care of teacher management in Target SDG4.	3.25	.85	High
5. Lecturers demands have been met to realise Target SDG4.	2.65	.81	High
6. Federal government inability to resolve conflict deprived lecturers of welfare.	2.61	.64	High
7. ASUU strikes enabled realisation of Target SDG4.	2.41	.65	Low
8. The conflicts have led to training of teachers as Needed in SDG4 target.	2.25	.76	Low
Grand Mean	2.71		High

Research Question 3: To what extent do the federal government/ ASUU conflicts impact on the quality of education target of SDG 4in Nigeria?

Table 3 shows that majority of the responses to the items have high Mean of 2.50 and above. This means that the constant conflict in the universities have influence on the realisation of SDG 4 Target of ensuring and maintaining quality education.

Table 3: Level of Federal Government/ ASUU Conflicts
on Quality of Education Target of SDG4

Items	Mean	SD	Remark
1. Federal government/ASUU conflicts enabled lecturer give quality teaching	3.34	.88	High
2. Students' performance is reduced due to Federal government /ASUU Conflicts	3.03	.88	High
3. Non completion of syllabus during strike lowered education standard	2.51	.76	High
4. Federal government /ASUU conflicts improved students' Performance	2.64	.88	High
5. Lecturers will put in their best to realise quality education due to conflict	2.76	.65	High
6. Federal government /ASUU conflicts lowered education Standard	3.54	.74	High
7. Incessant strikes will lead to non realisation of quality education target of SDG4	3.32	.73	High
8. Unresolved federal government/ASUU conflicts will improve education standard	1.85	.88	Low
Grand Mean	2.87		High

Hypothesis 1: Federal government/ ASUU conflicts will not significantly influence the universities learning environment target of SDG 4 in Nigeria.

Table 4: Federal Government/ASUU Conflict and Universities Learning Environment

Variable	Observed Freq	Expected Freq	N	df	X2-Cal	X2-tab	Remark
Federal Gov./ ASUU Conflict	500	200	300	1	4	3.84	Sig
Universities Learning Environment Target	350	100					

Table 4 shows the influence of federal government/ ASUU conflicts on the universities learning environment. The result is significant as X^2 -Cal 4 is greater than the X^2 -tab 3.84 at 0.5 Level of Significant. Thus the hypothesis is rejected and the alternative taken which states that the federal government/ ASUU conflicts significantly influence the universities learning environment target of SDG4.

Hypothesis 2: Federal government/ ASUU conflicts will not significantly influence the realisation of the teachers' +management target of SDG 4 in Nigeria.

Table 5: Federal Government/ASUU Conflict and Realisation of Teachers' Management Target

Variable	Observed Freq	Expected Freq	N	df	X2-Cal	X2-tab	Remark
Federal Gov./ ASUU Conflict	500	200	300	1	4.5	3.84	Sig
Universities Learning Environment Target	400	100					

Table 5 presents the influence of the federal government/ASUU conflicts on the realisation of the teachers' management target. The result is significant as the X^2 -Cal 4.5 is greater than the X^2 -tab 3.84 at 0.5 Level of Significant. The hypothesis is therefore rejected while the alternative is taken that the federal government/ASUU conflicts have influence on the realisation of the teachers' management target of SDG4.

Hypothesis 3: Federal government/ ASUU conflicts will not significantly influence the quality of education target of SDG 4 in Nigeria.

Table 6: Federal Government/ASUU Conflicts and Quality of Education Target of SDG4

Variable	Observed Freq	Expected Freq	N	df	X2-Cal	X2-tab	Remark
Federal Gov./ ASUU Conflict	500	200	300	1	5	3.84	Sig
Universities Learning Environment Target	500	120					

Table 6 shows the influence of the federal government/ASUU conflicts on the quality of education. The result is significant as the X^2 -Cal 5 is greater than X^2 -tab 3.84 at 0.5 Level of Significant. Thus the hypothesis is rejected and the alternative taken that the federal government/ ASUU conflict immensely influence the realisation of the quality of education target of SDG4.

5. Discussion of Findings

The data analysis showed that in trying to realise the SDG4, the target of conducive peaceful and non-violence environment for quality education has not been aggressively considered by the federal government. The findings showed that universities in Nigeria are plague almost yearly with strikes due to ASUU insistence on the federal government right to fulfill her agreement signed since 2009. Thus the universities staff are always apprehensive of impending strike. These strikes do not come with serenity, rallies, even though peaceful with series of meetings are held where the academic staff voice out their grievances. These protests do not augur well with the Sustainable Development goal of promoting peace and non-violence education environment to the students. The constant strike can be detrimental to peaceful learning environment which is further heightened when students out of frustration go on wanton destruction to either support the striking lecturers or make federal government fulfill her own part of the deal. When conflict keeps occurring according to (Adesulu, 2014) even after three years of inaugurating the SDGs, with no visible sign of abating, then the conducive teaching/learning environment crave for in the SDG4 might be difficult to realise. The researcher is of the view that the years of federal government /ASUU conflicts with their attendant consequences have entrenched deeply into the Nigerian educational system. This will influence government adequate quest to achieve the SDG4 target of

having schools in peaceful district where all students access knowledge in a safe and non-violence learning environment. (UN, 2015).

Result to hypothesis Two showed that the quality teacher management as designed by SDG4 is almost not being ensured. The respondents agreed that the federal government has not adequately addressed the issue of lecturers' development, better teaching environment, welfare package and upward review of salary as demanded over the years. This is even more complex at this period in the implementation of the SDGs with limited time line. This result corroborated (Qian, 2015) as the writer berated the ministries of education on the next to nothing action plan on improving teachers quality towards realising SDG4. The various stake holders meetings held so far are yet to address the foundational challenge of meeting ASUU demands which centered primarily on achieving standard education through lecturers welfare and quality teaching material. The SDG4 focused mainly on education, and the process/ tools of achieving the target are essentially the teachers. When lecturers are all disgruntled as the resultant effect of ASUU strikes, then the SDG4 target of recognising teachers within a lifelong learning framework - whether they are in ECCD, formal, non-formal, informal and tertiary education is under threat. Teachers are the drivers of the whole education system and if they are not well managed and equipped according to Adesulu (2014), the process of implementing SDG 4 will continue to be an albatross. This is quite daunting as ASUU is still fighting to get the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) reached in the 2017 conflict implemented.

The whole essence of SDG 4 is for all nations to ensure and achieve quality education by 2030. The result of the study on Hypothesis Three which bothers on quality education, shows that the incessant conflicts in the universities did not only prolong years of study but influenced the quality of the graduates turned out. The strikes according to the participants reduced the morale of the lecturers and when they are called off normally lead to non-completion of syllabus and slipshod lecture delivery. This finding is in line with that of Abolo (2016) that ASUU strikes affect the quality of graduates from Nigerian universities since time lost due to strikes is not gained after the strike. When the quality of education is affected due to ASUU/federal government conflicts, it will require a drastic resolution strategic for Nigeria to actualise the target of quality technical, vocational and free tertiary education including university that can lead to improved livelihood as clamoured for by SDG4.

6. Conclusion

The SDG4 which is premium on quality, equity and lifelong education for all has various targets towards realising the goal by 2030. The agenda is now three years into its achievement schedule. For the most part of the three years in the tertiary education level to which the universities belong, no substantive programme/ actions have been made towards ensuring the attainment of the essential targets. The study showed that the perennial ASUU/federal government conflicts spanning decades of strikes have hindered some of the foremost targets of peaceful learning environment in the

universities, excellent teachers' development and the final offshoot which is quality education. Furthermore, it is indicated through the findings of the study that the SDG4 has not be aggressively tackled by eradicating one of the major clogs in the progress of sustainable university education in Nigeria: conflict. The strikes are still pending thereby inhibiting sustainable development in tertiary education. Thus it is concluded that the SDG4 targets on university education as it relates to non-violence teaching environment, teacher management and quality education for lifelong livelihood has not be achieved due to the cankerworm of incessant ASUU/federal government conflicts. To achieve SDG 4, it will be necessary to mobilise regional, national, and global efforts that are aimed at: achieving inclusive partnerships through pragmatic policies, harnessing resources, adequate financing for highly equitable, inclusive and quality education for all (UNESCO 2014).

6.1 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proffered:

- 1) Education should be given topmost priority in Nigeria through aggressive plans in order to achieve SDG4 by 2030 since education holds the key for achieving most of the sustainable targets.
- 2) The age long cankerworm of ASUU/ federal government conflicts inhibiting most of the SDG4 targets in the universities should be completely eradicated through a final resolution strategy that will see to the complete implementation of all the agreements reached to overhaul the university system for quality education aimed by SDG4.
- 3) The SDGs is a global agenda for all countries in the world. It requires partnership with other countries for effective implementation. Nigeria should initiate collaborative ventures through the ministry of education to tackle challenges bothering on tertiary education.
- 4) Peace and moral education should be included in the universities curriculum as General Studies for peaceful teaching/ learning environment to prevail in the institutions.
- 5) The university education should prioritise the inclusion of practicals in teaching the courses to ensure technical and vocational skills development in the universities; to achieve SDG4 by 2030.

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