
AN ASSESSMENT OF EARNED ACADEMIC ALLOWANCES COMPONENT OF ASUU/FGN 2009 AGREEMENT ON INDUSTRIAL HARMONY IN THE NIGERIAN FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES

SAMUEL OTOHINOYI¹, MUSA IDRIS², ODOH ADEJO³

Department of Public Administration^{1,2 &3}

Faculty of Administration,
Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria - Nigeria.

otohinoyisamuel2019@gmail.com

08036045571

Abstract

This study assessed earned academic allowances component of Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) 2009 agreement on industrial harmony in Nigerian University system. The aim of the study is to evaluate an aspect of collective bargaining agreement – earned academic allowances and industrial harmony in the university system in Nigeria. There is long history of industrial crisis between ASUU and FGN which usually lead to closure of government owned universities in Nigeria. There is no doubt that the situation has affected the morale of academic staff in Nigerian universities and has led to prolonged graduation year for Nigerian students. The study adopted survey research design and questionnaire was used as instrument of data collection. The hypothesis postulated in the study was tested using simple linear regression analysis with the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 25). The study revealed that earned academic allowance has positive and significant effect on industrial harmony in Nigerian federal universities. The study recommended that the stakeholders in the educational sector which include parents, students, lecturers and government should have a roundtable discussion to reach an agreement on the introduction of tuition fees of 20,000 naira per student which should be used for the payment of all allowances accrued to academics in the Nigerian Federal Universities while federal government will add up depending on the balance that will be left.

Keywords: Industrial harmony, earned academic allowances, ASUU, federal government, collective bargaining, industrial conflict.

Introduction

Trade dispute which is simply a dispute between employer and employees over certain issues concerning workers conditions of service is a common phenomenon in both advanced and developing countries of the world. Therefore, trade disputes are inevitable where people come together with the aim of achieving common goal(s) irrespective of the country. Collective bargaining is an industrial practice made to enhance harmony by mutual settlement of trade disputes between an employer and workers or their respective unions. The term collective bargaining is applied to the arrangement under which wages and conditions of employment are settled by a bargain in form of an agreement made between employers or associations of employers and workers organisations (Sylvia, 2015).

The practice of collective bargaining has long been accepted by all sides to the employment relationship. The principal purpose of collective bargaining is to settle and determine terms and conditions of employment (Okene & Emejuru, 2015). Improvements in the terms and conditions of workers employment is the chief task of trade unions (like Academic Staff Union of Universities) and collective bargaining is the major means whereby trade unions can ensure that the terms and conditions of employment given to their members are adequate. It is because of the apparent imbalance of power between the employees and employer that has necessitated the desire of workers to come together. Workers appreciate that bargaining will give them near equal relationship with their employer. They realize that against the power of employers, the individual worker has almost no bargaining power and the chance of improving conditions of work is slim. Workers can best strengthen their negotiating position by uniting and bargaining collectively with employers (Sylvia, 2015). Workers have resorted to collective action because by banding together, they are able to consolidate their strength far more effectively than they could as individuals. Nonetheless, despite the benefits of collective bargaining, industrial conflict has persisted in the Nigerian workplace, leading many to question the effectiveness of collective bargaining as a tool for ensuring industrial harmony.

In Nigeria, every worker has a right to form and belong to any trade union of his choice, for example, Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and so on. This right is guaranteed to every Nigerian by virtue of Section 40 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended) which provides that "Every person shall be entitled to assemble freely and associate with other persons and in particular he may form or belong to any political party or trade union or any other association for the protection of his interest". This provision is one of the fundamental human rights provisions in the Constitution which can only be amended by special legislative processes to ensure that no person or party in power can easily take away these rights by legislation. According to Udabah & George (2002) trade unionism in Nigeria predates independence; it started to grow in the period when the various governments in the country realized that workers Union was not necessarily conspiratorial but could be a vehicle for social benefits. Also, the enactment of social legislation to foster and promote such organisations has become an important part of labour policy and administration.

According to Bendix (2011), collective bargaining is a rational process in which appeals to fact and logic reconcile conflicting interests in the light of common interest of both parties. Within this context, the approach is seen as an essential tool of institutionalizing and containing conflicts in organisations. In dynamic establishments, where collective bargaining is done effectively and in good faith, the outcome is often an amicable resolution of joint problems resulting into collective agreement by labour and management. This implies that effective collective bargaining establishes the set rules between parties during the life-time of a collective agreement and also gives the

method of settling grievances that will occur from time to time (Appah & Emeh, 2012).

The 2009 ASUU/FGN Agreement focused on funding for revitalisation, salary package for university lecturers, Earned Academic Allowances, University Autonomy and Academic Freedom, and other issues like renegotiation of the agreement after a given period of time. For the purpose of this study, the focus will be on earned academic allowances component of the agreement. In spite the effort the various stakeholders (FGN Team and ASUU representatives) put in making the 2009 collective agreement workable, the implementation of this pact has over the years, pitched ASUU against the government over the non-implementation of the agreement. It is on the basis of this background that this research is stimulated to understanding the evolving dynamics.

Statement of the Research Problem

The implementation of 2009 ASUU/FGN agreement has over the years witnessed industrial dispute in Nigerian universities. ASUU went on strike again in 2010 over the non-implementation of collective agreement of 2009 for over 5 months and in the following years 2011/2012 ASUU went on strike for a period of 3 months over the same agreement. In 2013 the disharmony continued in the Nigerian universities for 2 months between ASUU and FGN over 2009 agreement. According to Ojeifo (2014) the reason behind the disharmony was explained by Faggae, the then ASUU President, in a chat with Channels Television Sunrise Daily on July 3rd 2013 that the union embarked on the strike because the federal government has only implemented two of the nine issues agreed on in 2009. According to him, government did nothing about the agreement until the union went on strike in 2012.

According to Faggae (2013), the two that have been implemented in the agreement are Amendment to the pension/Age of Academics on the Professorial cadre from 65 to 70 years and Reinstatement of prematurely dissolved councils. He then added that the issue that mostly has to do with adequate funding for the system for revitalizing of Nigerian Universities have not been met by government. While government is aware of the enormity of the problems in our citadel of learning, it is much unprepared to take bold steps at rectifying the suffocating challenges. So, largely, according to Fagee (2013), the crisis affecting the Nigerian education sector is the systemic failure of government over the years to redress the problems which have stymied the development of the education sector.

The Nigerian universities lost many months of learning time as a result of incessant strikes. The resultant effects of the industrial disharmony have financial and social cost implications on parents and society at large and unnecessary delay in students' graduation as a result of disruption in academic calendar (Adesulu, 2013; Ige, 2014). The strike actions also negatively affect staff productivity as a result of loss of lecture

hours, reduced motivation and increased staff turnover rate (Brahm, 2017; Fatile & Adejuwon, 2011). By implication, the situation will generally affect the primary objectives of the universities which are teaching, research and community development.

The often re-occurrences of trade dispute between ASUU and FGN over issues which are properly addressed at the negotiations table (collective bargaining) has defiled theories of conflict resolution like Thomas (1976) Conflict Management style, Follett (1940) conflict management theory and so on, which believed that integration (collective bargaining) is the best way of promoting industrial harmony in any organisation. The area of concern has attracted researchers in the field of social sciences of what may be the future of our university graduates and their ability to compete globally. Authors like Lasisi and Lolo (2018), Muhammed (2014), Olukayode and Ojeifo (2014) among others. For example Lasisi and Lolo assessed the usefulness of collective bargaining on industrial harmony in Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) which is a private establishment. Sohoh (2018) assessed collective bargaining and industrial harmony in higher institutions in Delta State. Base on the available literature on the subject matter, not much scholars have written extensively on evaluation of the implementation of the 2009 FGN/ASUU Agreement on industrial harmony in Nigerian federal universities especially on funding for revitalisation, Earned Academic Allowances, Salary package, University Autonomy and Academic Freedom, and Renegotiation of 2019 collective agreement on industrial harmony. There is a need to examine why the general believed workable agreement is not being implemented to address the industrial disharmony in the Nigerian universities. In the light of the observed gaps, the researcher is interested to fill the gap by conducting this research on the aforementioned variables.

Research question, objective and hypothesis

In view of the research problem identified above, the research will attempt to provide answer to the research question below:

- i. To what extent has the implementation of Earned Academic Allowances promotes industrial harmony in Nigerian federal universities?

The objective of the study is to determine the extent to which implementation of Earned Academic Allowances enhanced industrial harmony in Nigerian federal universities. Arising from the research objective, the study stated the research hypothesis thus:

H0: There is no significant relationship between Earned Academic Allowances and industrial harmony in Nigerian Federal Universities.

Significance and scope of the Study

Increase of industrial actions in the Nigeria universities has attracted interest of various stakeholders in the sector and researches have been conducted to investigate the occurrences of industrial actions despite constitutional provision of collective bargaining for resolving trade dispute in the country. Lastly, this research will be a ready material for the government, students of administration, trade unions, policy makers including other actors in industrial relations and it will also open up new areas of study for students of administration.

The scope of the study covers three areas namely the time scope, geographical scope and contextual scope of the study. The contextual scope of the study covers the evaluation of the implementation of the 2009 FGN/ASUU Agreement on industrial harmony in Nigerian Federal Universities with specific interest on earned academic allowances. According to National University Commission (NUC), as at 2018, there are forty (43) Federal Government owned Universities in Nigeria with several in-house unions that exist in these universities but our scope in this study is on the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). This is because both ASUU and FGN are parties to the 2009 collective agreement which is our case for analysis in this study. Therefore, the choice of the contextual scope is motivated by the incessant strike especially in Nigerian federal universities which have pose serious challenges to government; academia and researchers to find a solution that will help to mitigate the incessant strike in Nigerian universities. The time scope of the study covers 2009-2021.

Literature review

Earned Academic Allowances

Earned Academic Allowances are benefits that accrued to academic staff who worked for it and it involve seven items as stated in the 2009 ASUU/FGN agreement. President of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Professor 'Biodun Ogunyemi, in an exclusive interview with the Nigerian Tribune, January 21, 2021 stated that not all ASUU members will benefit from the Earned Academic Allowance to university workers. He said the allowances covered only seven items under the 2009 Federal Government and ASUU agreement, which he said were strictly for lecturers whose duties fell under those assignments. The items are Postgraduate Supervision Allowance, Teaching Practice/Industrial Supervision/Field Trip Allowances, Honoraria for External/Internal Examiner (Postgraduate Thesis), Honoraria for External Moderation of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Examinations, External Assessment of Readers or Professors, Call Duty/Clinical Duty/Clinic Hazard, Responsibility Allowance and Excess Workload Allowance.

According to Ogunyemi, ASUU suspended its 10-month-old strike in December, 2020 after the Federal Government had approved the release of N40 billion for payment of Earned Academic Allowances with a promise to meet other conditions. To him, the 75 per cent ASUU share from the money is meant for lecturers who teach postgraduate students, supervise postgraduate projects, involve in study leave for

sponsored postgraduate programmes, or have excess workload, among others. "So, each lecturer would earn the academic allowance based on his or her engagement under the seven items, and lecturers who are not engaging in any of the activities would earn nothing, even though each allowance is like a peanut". He further explained that the N40 billion arrived at by the Federal Government was based on calculation of the accumulated arrears of their unpaid Earned Academic Allowances over the years and not just a mere figure.

Conceptual Overview of Industrial Harmony

The term industrial harmony is made up of two words – industrial and harmony. Industrial means the process of productivity-activity in which an individual is (or a group of individuals are) engaged, while harmony is the peaceful co-existence between two parties (of opposing interests) in an organization (Raphael & Iheriohanma, 2018). According to Otobo (2000), industrial harmony refers to a friendly and co-operative agreement on working relationship between the employer and the employees intended for their mutual benefits in an organization. According to Puttapalli and Vuram (2012), industrial harmony is concerned with the relationship between management and employees with respect to the terms and conditions of employment and the work place. In effect, it is a situation where employees and management cooperate willingly in pursuit of the organisation's aims and objectives (Akuh, 2015). Awuzie (2010) believes that industrial harmony is an ideal state of peace existing between the employer and employees that will prompt them to engage in the production of goods and services in an organization. This is because employees are motivated by the existing harmonious relationship to give the best of their talents or potentials for the development and progress of the organization.

Matthew and Muhammed (2014) believed that industrial harmony is the ideal situation in Nigerian public universities where the government and ASUU are expected to work harmoniously in pursuit of the realization of the universities' mandate of intellectual and moral training of their products to acquire professional capacities for the socio-economic, political and technological development of our country. Industrial harmony therefore enhances the lecturers' satisfaction, efficiency and productivity in the public universities in Nigeria. Corroborating this view, Pamede (2007) observed that industrial harmony creates a peaceful working environment conducive for dialogue and tolerance in resolving industrial disputes between the State and ASUU in Nigerian public universities.

Empirical review

Mohammed (2014) examined collective bargaining and industrial conflict management in Nigerian Universities: A study of Federal University of Technology, (FUT) Minna. *The study employed survey and documentary methods of data gathering and the data for the study was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively with more emphasis on the quantitative data. The main findings of the study revealed that collective*

bargaining is the most effective strategy for industrial conflict management in Federal University of Technology, Minna. The above study by Mohammed is also related to this study in that effectiveness of collective bargaining as a strategy for industrial conflict management is the ultimate goal of the study but in the current study, the focus will be on earned academic allowance which is a component of the collective bargaining agreement.

Ekwoaba, Ideh and Ojikutu (2015) assessed collective bargaining: An evaluation of conflict management strategies in the university of Lagos. Stratified random probability sampling method was used to select 120 respondents. Data for the study was collected via the questionnaire, interviews and literature search. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics; frequencies and simple percentages with the aid of statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 15.0. The study reveals that effective collective bargaining positively affects productivity and that collective bargaining is a veritable instrument for the management of conflict in the university. However, the study lacks empirical analysis on how the uses of collective bargaining as an effective instrument for management of conflict in educational institutions can be achieved. The current study fills this knowledge gap by adopting both interview and questionnaire instrument of data gathering. Nevertheless, the study has contributed to the existing body of knowledge and remains a reference material.

Suleiman (2007) assessed labour union- management relations: A study of Non-Academic Staff Union (NASU) of Nasarawa State University. The thrust of his study is to determine the extent to which trade unionism promotes industrial harmony in Nasarawa State University. The study reveals that there is harmonious relationship between the management and NASU in Nasarawa State University. Besides, the study reveals that disagreement between management and NASU rarely happen in the university.

Ojeifo (2014), in the study entitled ASUU Industrial Actions: Between ASUU and Government is it an issue of Rightness? The study examined the history of prolonged industrial conflicts between the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN). The data for the study was sourced from both primary and secondary (documentary) sources. The study concludes that the incessant ASUU strike is as a result of FGN's indecision on the issues confronting Nigeria universities. The findings reveal that poor emoluments of academic staff coupled with deterioration in teaching and learning facilities contributed to the brain drain from Nigerian universities.

In a similar study Ike (2013), in a study entitled An Investigation into the root Causes of Conflict between the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), ESUT Chapter and Enugu State Government, Nigeria: 2009 – 2011. The major objective of the study is to examine the root causes of conflict between the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) ESUT chapter and Enugu State Government and to analyze why the

settlement of the conflict was intractable. The study revealed that inadequate funding of ESUT instigated the conflict between ASUU, ESUT chapter and Enugu State Government. Secondly, it was discovered that poor infrastructural facilities in ESUT equally induced the conflict between ASUU, ESUT Chapter and Enugu State Government.

Olukemi (2010) assessed collective bargaining as a strategy for industrial conflict management in Nigeria among 5 manufacturing Industries randomly sampled in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. The study administered questionnaire to 100 respondents, an empirical study of a descriptive type was carried out on the selected manufacturing industries to determine the role played by collective bargaining in the resolution of industrial conflicts and promotion of industrial harmony at the workplace. The major finding of the study revealed that the frequent eruption of industrial conflicts between employers and employees in Nigeria generally, can be effectively managed through collective negotiation and consultation with the workers' representatives.

Olabanji (2016), in a study entitled "effectiveness of collective bargaining as a tool for industrial disputes resolution". The study developed and used a questionnaire and complemented with structured interviews. The Pearson product moment correlation coefficient (r) was employed to analyse the data. While the null hypotheses developed for the study were tested at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between collective bargaining and arbitration; collaborative law; mediation and conciliation.

Research Methodology

The research design adopted is survey research design. The population of this study consisted of the Academics in Federal Universities and Government officials. Therefore, the entire population of study that the research covered is fourteen thousand, six hundred and seventy four (14,674). The choice of this population is based on the fact that ASUU and the Federal Government of Nigeria are both parties in collective agreement reached in 2009 to foster harmony in Nigeria universities. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, they are information-rich respondents. The sample size was determined using formula suggested by Taro Yamane (1963). The assumption is that the sample is representative of the population.

Sample size formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n is = sample size

N = population

e = significance level of (0.05)

1 = Constant

$$n = \frac{14,674}{1 + 14,674(0.05)^2}$$

n= 389

However, in order to take care of non-response and improper filling of some respondents to return the questionnaire, 30% of the above minimum sample size was added as suggested by Israel (2013). One Hundred and Seventeen (117) respondents which is 30% of the sample size were added to the calculated sample size of 389 which brings it to 506 questionnaires administered across Nigeria through the help of research assistants. Stratified sampling technique was used by the researcher. This technique is considered best for this study because the researcher is dealing with two subgroups that is, ASUU members and the government representatives, which may have different views or opinions about the variables under study. Questionnaires were administered using stratified sampling techniques to both government officials and ASUU members in the 10 federal universities.

The primary data employed by the researcher were obtained through the instrument of questionnaire. In order to have a high content validity for the study therefore, the questionnaire was given to various experts such as statisticians and senior academics (supervisors) in the Department of Public Administration, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria to vet and comment on. This is to ensure that all the questions in the questionnaires and interview schedules fully address the issues raised in the research questions and hypotheses and ensure that they are all relevant to the topic of study. A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.9 and above is excellent, between 0.7 and 0.9 is good. But the coefficient between 0.6 and 0.7 is considered acceptable. The reliability result shows an output of greater than 70% which means that the instrument is reliable and it has internal consistency.

Method of Data Analysis

The inferential statistics that was used in this study is simple linear regressions using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 25. Simple Linear Regression analysis was choosing for the estimation of the coefficients involving independent variable (earned academic allowances) that best predict the value of dependent variable (industrial harmony). It was used also to test the research hypotheses at 5% level of significance.

Decision Rule

The null hypothesis should be rejected if the probability value is less than 5% and if the P value is greater than 5%, you fail to reject the null hypothesis.

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Table 1 Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1					
	(Constant)	.638	.315	2.027	.043
	EARNED_ACAD_ALLOWANCES	.162	.049	.134	3.289

a. Dependent Variable: INDUSTRIAL_HARMONY

Discussion of results

The Beta value which represents the coefficient of “earned academic allowances” as presented in Table 1 stood at 16.2% which is positive. This implies that an increase in earned academic allowances will lead to an increase in industrial harmony in Nigerian federal universities. The significance of this can be judged from the P value represented as “sig”. The p-value is less than 0.05 which is 0.001 indicating that the relationship depicted in the model is significant at 95% confidence level. This implies that the study has enough statistical evidence to reject the null hypothesis. Based on the foregoing analysis, the study rejects the null hypothesis H₀, which states that there is no significant relationship between earned academic allowances and industrial harmony in the Nigerian Federal Universities. Therefore, the study has enough statistical evidence to reject the null hypothesis. The relationship depicted in this model is positive with a coefficient value of 16% which translates to mean that a percentage increase in earned academic allowances will lead to 16% increase in industrial harmony in the Nigerian Federal Universities. It can be stressed that among the major factors leading to increase in incessant strike in Nigeria, the failure of the federal government to promptly pay academic allowances to lecturers has resulted to incessant strike in the Nigerian federal universities.

The study also found that there is positive and significant relationship between earned academic allowances and industrial harmony in Nigerian Federal Universities, (refer to Table 1). This indicates that ASUU members usually embark on strike because of the failure of the federal government to pay allowances that have accumulated over the years. The interview responses revealed that ASUU was able to put pressure on the government to include EAA in the 2021 supplementary budget. The sum captured as EAA for academics in federal universities is 22.17 billion naira, but it has not been released as at 2021 that this study was ongoing. The government has not been faithful in upholding its end of the bargain by honoring the EAA. The government agreed to pay the EAA in four installments from 2019 to 2022. As of the time of this study in 2021, the government had only paid two of the four tranches. The government also agreed to include the EAA in the 2020 budget but failed to do so, promising to do so in 2021. ASUU sent 22.17 billion naira as EAA for 2021 to be mainstreamed into the

budget, but the government had not paid a dime as of November 20, 2021.

The government had paid the first and second tranches of the EAA, as stipulated in the 2019 Memorandum of Understanding. The third tranche is already on its way to Nigerian Federal Universities. ASUU is requesting that the FGN begin planning for the fourth tranche immediately. The only way to get out of the EAA is for universities to recruit enough qualified people. The government also intends to mainstream the EAA into the annual budget. The Ministry of labour stressed that the difficulty is a lack of funds, which is why the government has not paid the EAA as agreed. The federation's budget office tenders a letter stating that provision has been made in the supplementary budget for the yearly personnel costs of universities in the amount of 22.17 billion naira, which translates to 10.9 percent of the total budget of 203 billion naira. This signified that the required steps had been taken to mainstream the EAA.

The findings of the current study is in line with that of **Ike (2013); Ojeifo (2014); Suleiman (2007); Mohammed (2014); Ekwoaba, Ideh and Ojikutu, (2015)** as the studies revealed that *the poor management of industrial conflicts within the University in spite the mechanism (collective bargaining) at the disposal of the Actors (ASUU and Management)*. In the course of interaction, differences in ideas or opinions on given situation may arise which if not properly handled might result to trade dispute. However, the need for the survival and continuity of the Universities mean that conflicts need to be handled in such a way that the actors involved do not necessarily bring about severe and damaging consequences on the system. Although the compromise approach is better in trade dispute settlement, but the best of all is the integration approach.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study concluded that collective bargaining instrument between FGN and academic staff union of universities in area of earned academic allowances is very fundamental in ensuring industry harmony in public universities in Nigeria. According to Table 1, the study also discovered a positive and significant correlation between earned academic allowances and industrial harmony in the Nigerian federal universities. This implies that ASUU members typically go on strike because the federal government has failed to pay accrued allowances over the years. The study therefore recommended that:

The stakeholders in the educational sector which include parents, students, lecturers and government should have a roundtable discussion to reach an agreement on the introduction of tuition fees of 20,000 naira which should be used for the payment of all allowances accrued to academics in the Nigerian Federal Universities while federal government will add up depending on the balance that will be left. The

20,000 naira suggestion per student when multiplied by 1.2 million students in federal government universities as at 2019 NUC report will accrue to 24 billion naira annually. This will reduce the burden for federal government and ASUU members will be able to receive their earned academic allowances without delay. This will boost the morale and commitment of ASUU members and thereby reducing the rate at which federal universities in Nigeria embark on strike.

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