CHALLENGES OF UNIVERSITY AUTONOMY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

University autonomy has become popular as a reform and change mantra through which the university can address many of its challenges as well as achieve its mission and vision. However, in practice, university autonomy is slippery, contentious and yielding itself to a variety of interpretations and criticisms, part of which is that university autonomy critically falls short of justice and social justice responsibilities to the society. Using the philosophical method, this paper discusses key challenges that university autonomy in Nigeria has introduced in the education industry, some of which are lack of fairness in access to education, academic capitalism, corporatization of the university, corruption, marginalization, inequality etc. The paper however suggests that for effective implementation of university autonomy in Nigeria, stakeholders should clarify the concept so that its operators may not invent convenient interpretations of the concept, stakeholders should develop continuous and lifelong learning skills that can encourage them to keep abreast with new demands that university autonomy triggers and Nigeria should develop its own model of university autonomy among others.

Keywords: autonomy, university, challenges, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, responsible states and their citizens hold pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education in high esteem. Pre-primary education according to Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004:11) "is the education given in an educational institution to children prior to their entering the primary school". Educational institutions that provide education to learners at this level go by different names, namely; crèche, daycare, pre-nursery, nursery, pre-primary, head start, kindergarten etc (Nwaokugha, 2016:241). Care and pre-school activities especially those that direct the young on personal hygiene and safety measures that can aid the growth and development of the young, in addition to inculcating in the young the curiosity for early embrace of formal learning are the major focus of instruction at this level. In this way, pre-primary education is beneficial to the learners, parents and the state as the vision of parents and that of the state in providing pre-primary education is to make sustainable investments in the young that can translate into laying strong and formidable foundations in the early upbringing of the child, whose sustenance can guarantee a brighter future for the child, his parent and the state.

Most states count the start of formal education from the primary school level and this level is considered as the formal and real foundation upon which the success or failure of the other tiers or levels of education depend. Consequently, its provision entails more detailed and conscious efforts that among other things target the inculcation of permanent literacy and numeracy, skills and abilities to develop manipulative and communicative

competences. The above competences are appropriate at this level as primary education according to Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004:14) "is the education given in institutions for children aged 6 to 11 plus".

After the primary school level of education comes the secondary education level and by its nature secondary education is a formal second tiers educational provision that the learner receives after primary education and before enrolment into the tertiary level of education. Whatever progress and success that is made at the primary education level is carried forward and sustained at the secondary school level where the objectives are to prepare the learner for two principal objectives namely acquisition of skills that can make the learner to be useful to himself and useful to the society and preparation of the learner for higher education.

Any educational provision that a learner receives after secondary education is categorically referred to as tertiary education. Educational institutions that come to mind when tertiary education is mention include universities, colleges of education, polytechnics and monotechnics. In this way, universities, colleges of education, polytechnics, monotechnics and institutions that run correspondence courses are institutions that are responsible for providing instructions or education at the tertiary education level.

True, every society looks up to the various tiers of education for its political, economic, moral, scientific and technological development, including the development of its human resources or human capital. Interestingly, as glaring as the above can be, the level of education that is better positioned in meeting all the above is tertiary or university education. University education meets up all the above because the university according to Altbach (2001:206) is "considered a special place devoted to the pursuit and transmission of knowledge". The pursuit and transmission of knowledge which the university concerns itself with is inclusive of all disciplines and every activity on earth and heaven above bows to the investigative and analytic scrutiny of the disciplines in the university. This accounts for why every society irrespective of its level of developmental sophistication or lack of it looks up to the university for the state of the art innovations, cutting edge research, human capital development and the development of radical, empowering, emancipating and revolutionary ideas for moving man, his institutions and society forwards. Because the university is established to meet up the various interests of different people and institutions, too much is expected from the university and too many professionals and amateurs speak and generate ideas including formulating policies on how best to run the university and in most cases, these ideas and policies clash and the clash results in complex management crises that challenge both the professionals and the amateurs to rethink their positions, so that the university, which is the subject matter of the various reflections can receive the best attention that can enable it achieve its mission and vision.

High level brainstorming by experts and laymen on how best to resolve academic, administrative, management and general issues in the university system point in unison that the solution to overcoming academic, administrative, management and general challenges in the university including achieving the mandate, vision and mission of the university is university autonomy. Consequently, university autonomy is a reform mantra, which university administrators, managers and other stakeholders in the society claim universities globally and Nigeria in particular can embrace in order to achieve their mandate, vision and mission.

As optimistic as university autonomy sounds as a change and reform mantra, there are equally scholars who maintain dissenting voices by asserting that university autonomy is not a bed of roses. In the words of Noorda (2003:4), "university autonomy is never absolute and complete". He reinforces his stand by cautioning that "autonomy may be a popular theme, it is not a cure-all", emphasizing that "university autonomy is never a steady state but rather a dynamic process, and could indeed be considered as a lifelong learning process itself for universities" (p.2). His reservations on university autonomy are further highlighted in these words:

> Yet autonomy does not make things better automatically. Autonomy by itself is no more than space and opportunity. It demands good quality players and good quality play. This is why academic autonomy should be translated into good self-governance at all levels and in all fields (p.9).

The above scholar is not alone in expressing reservations about university autonomy, for according to Yulianto (2017:41), "university autonomy is a product of higher education reform that needs a lot of improvements". He makes what can be described as a symbolic remark when he writes that "politically, universities are not autonomous" (p.41). These are revealing and at the centre of the revelation is the fact that there are bound to be challenges in the implementation of university autonomy particularly in Nigeria where corruption and general instability combine to threaten political, social, educational and economic policies. In the light of the above, this paper specifically focuses on highlighting the challenges of university autonomy in the effective administration and management of the university in Nigeria.

The approach to be adopted is basically philosophical and an approach in an academic discourse is said to be philosophical when a researcher adopts speculation, analysis and prescription. According to Aminigo (1999), speculation as a method or approach in a philosophical research attempts to find logical coherence in an entire realm of thought. What this tries to suggest is that the authenticity, rightness or correctness of a proposition depends on the orderly sequence of the ideas in a proposition or the extent in which one idea is logically connected to the other. This is the point highlighted by Nwaokugha and Danladi (2016:421) when they write that "the foundation of this method of enquiry is that the soundness or reasonableness of any proposition can be established through its rootedness in the science of logic or the various orderly sequences that leads to a conclusion". It has to be pointed out that logic is indispensable in the construction and production of knowledge and this is acknowledged by Miller (1996) when he writes that logic is a tool in mankind's and researcher's quest and curiosity for knowledge across disciplines. This fundamental role of logic in speculation as a method of philosophical research is aided by language and the combination of logic and language in speculation according to Nwaokugha and Ihuoma (2019:279) "builds up ideas and systematically links up one idea to another".

The second approach or method that is used in a discourse that employs the philosophical method is analysis and it focuses on meaning and proper use of words, concepts, terms and propositions. Going about the business of uncovering the various meanings imbedded in words, concepts, terms, and propositions start according to Nwaokugha and Danladi (2016) with the researcher or writer breaking down his subject matter into smaller forms that constitute it and at the same time shows how all are related

in attaining a specific objective". That analysis as a method of philosophical research focuses on meaning and proper use of words, concepts, terms, and propositions is symbolic and this position is taken because analysis according to Nwaokugha and Ihuoma (2019:277) "is interested in resolving conflicts that result in mankind's attempt to understand his environment or world". It is necessary and important to note that when members of the society understand the rationale for analysis very well to the point of employing it in their daily social, political, religious, environmental and economic activities, it promises to help them address, resolve and bring to the barest minimum unhealthy and inimical behaviours such as conflicts, disagreements, violence, confrontation and other instability inducing behaviours that threaten order and peaceful co-existence in the society.

In the same way as logic and language play key roles in speculation, so do logic and language play key and fundamental roles in analysis. Specifically, logic and language according to Hirst and White (2000), help to show the relationship between language and reality or relationship between word and the world. A third method that comes to mind when philosophical research method or approach is mentioned is prescription and very simply put, it is the establishment of standards, principles and criteria for making prescriptive value judgment or judging values. In reality and in practice, the act and process of proffering solutions or recommendations on how to solve, resolve and right the wrongs observed in issues or topics that have been the subject matter of a discussion falls within the frame of reference of prescription.

Globally, people acknowledge that the speed in recent times where information and knowledge explosion occur in split second and correspondingly the relentless and unceasing curiosity to break new frontiers of knowledge by every second is a credit to recent embrace of the philosophical research methods by scholars and researchers. This, interestingly reveals that there are inherent benefits that the philosophical research methods are associated with. Highlighting such benefits, Nwaokugha and Ihuoma (2019) write that the philosophical research methods enrich the knowledge industry across disciplines, sharpens the investigative skills of researchers, in addition to boosting;

> The confidence levels of researchers as researchers see every challenge in any academic discipline as solvable and resolvable. In fact, philosophical method of enquiry stimulates in scholars the desire to critically and continuously try out new academic options that can result in phenomenal improvements of scholars and the breaking of new frontiers of knowledge (p.277).

What can be considered to be an elaborate discussion of the benefits of the philosophical methods of enquiry is provided by Nwaokugha and Danladi (2016:421) when they write that the philosophical method of inquiry

> Is not restrictive and consequently does not in any way impoverish researchers and disciplines that are favourably disposed to using it. It rather contributes in ground breaking breakthroughs in the knowledge industry. All these by implication mean that the knowledge industry and mankind can be better off in terms of opportunities associated with research, its contributions to improving human condition and acquisition of knowledge.

Having set the ground rolling with the above robust introduction, we can now, in keeping with the tradition of the philosophical research method focus on the clarification of the key concept under investigation.

The Concept of University Autonomy

Globally, the university is a unique level of educational provision by the state and a unique level of educational aspiration by citizens of the state. The dream of every state is to develop morally, socially, politically, economically, scientifically and technologically and university education is the direction that the state looks at, if her dreams of sustainable development are to become a reality. The button that triggers growth and development in the life of individual citizens at the moral, social, political, economic, scientific and technological levels upon which national development begins is the quality of human capital that a state can boost of and the responsibility of developing such human capital is a core mandate that rests upon the university. Functionally, the university is structured in a way that it is the ideal destination of the best products of the other levels of the education system and strategically other less endowed members of the other tiers of the education system who are visionary, skillfully and specifically gifted in many areas of human endeavours also benefit from programmes and activities of the university. Because the university is a destination for people with diversified skills and talents, every reasonable state makes substantial investments in university education in anticipation of achieving the type of development it dreams of. The roadmap for achieving the development that is the dream of the state is quality teaching, quality research, quality provision of infrastructure and above all quality management of the resources that are available in the university.

In most states, the university exists as a hub, a catalyst and a centre for engineering cutting edge and state of the art innovations and at the same time is constantly repositioning itself in readiness for reviewing and turning old practices into new directions where they can give maximum results. This forward and constructive backward looking of the university may have accounted for Jones', Galvin's and Woodhouse's (2000:1) description of the structure and function of the university as that of "critic and conscience of the society". According to Nwaokugha (2020:199),

> An idea suggested by university functioning as critic and conscience of the society is one in which the university statutorily creates an environment that prioritizes the promotion of norms of creativity, robust generation and deliberation of radical, empowering, emancipating and revolutionary ideas as well as the enhancement of enabling environment where citizens can freely criticize and challenge the order of events in their society

Whereas universities exist in state for building and developing the state, it is the citizens of the state that are the carriers of the genes that translate into development and consequently citizens are the springboard and the foundations for the sustainable development of the state. In fact, the university offers an unlimited open access for citizens to exploit and explore opportunities for the individual development of the citizens and the collective development of their state. This is because learners who are endowed with different talents and skills embrace the university as final destination for the optimum development of such in-born potentials and correspondingly, the university responds by meeting up the needs of all the learners and other members of the university community. What makes this possible is the galaxy of experts and specialists in the university system.

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To be expected of any institution that renders the type of services the university is associated with is the influx and somersaulting of ideas from different layers of the society and university community and this naturally has inherent potential to trigger constant changes in academic, management, governance and administrative policies that easily constitute or become challenges to the effective running of the university. Globally, the university system faces serious and monumental administrative, governance, management, public relations and academic challenges and these challenges individually and collectively necessitate the need for new ways of theorizing and new way of resolving the challenges. In recent times, people irrespective of levels of developmental sophistication or lack of it speak unambiguously that university autonomy is the only hope and way forward if universities globally and universities in Nigeria are to fulfill the expectations man and society expect them to fulfill. Put slightly different, there is a consensus that university autonomy is the answer to the many reforms proposed for boosting the academic, governance, management, administrative, public relations and general operations of the university. It may be on account of the above that Estermann (2015:29) writes that "autonomy is a precondition that enables universities to achieve their missions in the possible ways"

There is a consensus that etymologically the word autonomy is derived from two Greek root words "auto" and "nomos". Whereas Danurejo (1977) cited in Yulianto (2017), claims "auto" means "itself" and "nomos" means punishment or rule, Manda-Taylor Masiye and Mfutso-Bengo (2015) claim that auto means "self" while "nomos" means "rule" or "law". What is obvious is that the two Greek root words pair together to become "autonomy" which literarily means self-regulation, self-rule or independence. From all indication, two meanings that surround autonomy as a concept are autonomy as connoting self rule and autonomy as connoting self determination. In other words, it is also right to say that an aura that surrounds the meaning and understanding of the concept of autonomy is one of self-regulation or the capacity to seek the informed consent of an individual, entity or institution in matters that relate to the institution, entity or individual and judging from this, Yulianto (2017:41) writes that "an autonomous person is fundamentally one able to act according to his or her own direction, the prerequisite for rational human action" and by extension an autonomous institution or entity is any institution or entity that is capable of regulating its own activities, operations or affairs.

Autonomy as a concept is multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary in nature and this accounts for why it is the centre of focus of scholars and disciplines and to be expected of a concept that is multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary is its ability to be contested. Because such concepts are contested, their application in any particular discipline or context may be susceptible to problems of precise interpretation. According to Manda-Taylor et al (2015:1) autonomy is a concept found in moral, political and bioethical philosophy whose meaning revolves around the capacity of a rational individual to make an informed and uncoerced decision while in the field of medicine, Singh and Hylton (2015) write that autonomy, also referred to as respect for person is a fundamental ethical principle that guides the clinical practice and research of mental health professionals in the form of allowing a health professional to grant his patient some measure of freedom to make some choices subject to critical appraisal of the potential costs and benefits of such choices by the health professional. According to Singh and Hylton (2015), the idea enshrined in respect for person is hinged on the theory of self-determination which makes a case, namely that it should be recognized as a fundamental right of a person especially when he is of a sound mind to

make choices that can affect his wellbeing in the process of his treatment. Among health practitioners, it has been established that individuals whose rights to autonomy are respected in the process of their medical treatments manifest positive emotions and consequently are more receptive to responding to treatment and conversely patients who feel their autonomy is compromised or undermined manifest negative emotions and consequently are unreceptive to treatment. On the basis of the foregoing, it can be established that institutions, entities or organizations that make autonomy a norm are closer to achieving the mission, vision and mandate of such institutions, entities or organizations.

The assumption around which the ethical principle of autonomy is built is that in as much as a human being is of sound mind, he or she has inalienable right and capacity to contribute to decisions on medical procedures, treatment and participation in biomedical research, meaning that a core exposition which autonomy brings to the fore or to limelight is the power of the individual to meaningfully contribute in the decision making process on how he or she is to receive medical treatment in the case of a situation where autonomy is discussed in the medical circle and meaningful participation and contribution of ideas in deciding the fate of individuals and institutions including the running and effective governance of institutions or entities where autonomy is discussed within political, economic, social and environmental contexts. The various meanings and senses in which autonomy is used makes more senses when it is used in context specific environment such as university autonomy.

Scholars, researchers and institutions have spilled sufficient ink in attempts to define university autonomy and such attempts range from simple to complex definitions of university autonomy. According to Yulianto (2017:4) university autonomy "means that the university has its own right to govern itself without being influenced by others". In his own contribution to the subject matter of university autonomy, Ojo (1990:67) writes that it is "that freedom granted each university to manage its internal affairs without undue interference from outside bodies, persons or most specifically from the government that in most part of Africa, that sustain it financially" while Estermann (2015:290) writes that institutional (university) autonomy refers to the constantly changing relation between the state and the universities and the differing degree of control exerted by public authorities, which are dependent on particular national context and circumstances. According to the Lima Declaration on Academic freedom and Autonomy of higher education (1988), university autonomy is defined as "the independence from the state and other pressures of the society to make decisions regarding its self-governance, finance, administration and establish its policies of education, research, extension work and other related activities". In a memorandum submitted by senate to the presidential commission on salary and conditions of service of university staff by the Uthman Dan Fodio University Sokoto in February 1981, university (institutional) autonomy implies;

(a)   The freedom of universities to select their students and staff by criteria   chosen   by the universities themselves

(b)   Autonomy to shape their curriculum and syllabus

(c)   The freedom to decide how to allocate among their various activities, such funds as are available to them.

Noorda (2013:3) writes that academic autonomy "is an umbrella concept, denoting the autonomy or self-governance of a university by virtue of its academic role and status".

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Interestingly, in his critical examination of the concepts of autonomy, he admits that autonomy can be use in a narrower and broader sense. In his narrower conceptualization of autonomy, he writes that autonomy refers to the specific freedom to design and define academic programmes and curricular and to select (categories of) students while autonomy in his broader outlook refers:

1.   To the freedom to design and execute individual, integrated strategies and services

2.   A considerable degree of independence, the freedom to make all strategic   and operational choices and decisions relevant to a university and its role in   the society.

From all indications, what is central to the concept of university autonomy is the idea of free hand and self-governance of the university by those entrusted with the responsibility to govern the university without any interference from outside forces. Free hand and self-governance is inclusive as the case canvassed by this concept according to Noorda (2013) is expected to be invoked by members of staff in the academic community, teams and departments within a university as a guide in reaching decisions and discharging any responsibility in the university system. What this tries to suggest in practice is that there should be rooms or seal of autonomy across the various constituent layers of the university system.

According to Estermann (2015), there are four major areas of focus in discussions on university autonomy and they are:

1.   Organizational autonomy
2.   Financial autonomy
3.   Staffing autonomy
4.   Academic autonomy

Organizational autonomy: This revolves around governance, policy making and management structure of the university. Ideally, there is no one size fits all organizational structure for all universities as far as the governance structures of universities are concern. What obtains is that individual states or universities are as free as air to decide on their administrative structures. The organizational arrangement in most universities tilt towards inclusion of external members in the institutional decision making body of the universities. This is usually most visible where there are dual (bicameral) governance structures. It is pertinent to note that a dual (bicameral) organizational structure of the university is important for accountability purposes and more importantly external members in the university organizational structure helps to widen the operational space of the university through linking up the university with the industry and other sister institutions that may require the services of the university. The dual organizational structure of universities spells out distinct roles or division of power between the two bodies in the effective management of the university where they exist and a typical example that comes to mind here is a council and a senate, where councils according to Gray (2017:19) "are responsible for appointments, setting fees, admission criteria, offerings, qualification mixes, developing budgets, implementing strategic plans and so on without too much interference or direction from the state" while senate focuses on academic matters only.

Financial autonomy: Issues of financial autonomy in discussions that focus on university autonomy border on funding of the university and depending on the state, funding of the university can be in the forms of grants, budgetary provisions and the collection of tuition fees and administrative charges for services rendered to students and

other classes of persons who do businesses in the university community. In public universities, fees that students pay do not in any way scale up to anything so as to constitute any significant contributions to the cost of running the university. It could be speculated that the much talked about financial autonomy of the university may be universities' creative attempts to seek additional approval from the government to allow universities to venture into income generating activities that can help them augment whatever the state gives to them as funding.

Staffing autonomy: This revolves around staff who work in the university. The trending practice according to Estermann (2015:31) shows "that universities are gaining greater flexibility in dealing with staffing issues as staff are being paid and or employed directly by the state". The truth is that a university that is ready to employ must get the approval of the regulating authority or the state before embarking on the recruitment exercise. Whereas such procedure must be followed, issues bordering on salaries for university workers are to a reasonable extent in the hand of the government.

Academic autonomy: An idea imbedded in academic autonomy is that universities are free to develop their academic programmes and correspondingly teach what they outline in their academic programmes. Critical reflections on academic autonomy in discussions that are focused on university autonomy can raise serious issues that can challenge anyone with an analytic and insightful rationality into probing the concept of academic autonomy and the practicality of what it professes. Such probing derives from the fact that approval for mounting or introducing new programmes, must be sought and secured from appropriate quarters outside the university before a university goes on to mount such programmes(s). If a university must secure approval from a regulating agency before commencing any of its academic programmes, then where is the autonomy of the university?

No reform mantra anywhere in the world is perfect that its implementation does not on its own trigger challenges. University autonomy as a reform mantra is not a cure-all or a bed of roses rather it is an innovation that has come with new challenges that require a lot of attention and improvements. Regrettably, there are increasing ovations that corporatization of the university, denial of access, poverty, promotion of academic capitalism, marginalization, inequality, unemployment, human rights abuse and inability to meet up many other social justice responsibilities easily become norms in a regime of university autonomy. No wonder scholars acknowledge that university autonomy is a contentious issue in the control and effective management of the university system. Part of the contention in university autonomy revolves around the fact that no university anywhere in the world can claim full autonomy and no university anywhere in the world can strongly say that it lacks autonomy. This position means that there must be interference from the state and its agencies in critical areas the state may drive or position the university so as to achieve its national objectives for the overall development of the state and there are areas in the affairs of the university where the university will lead in determining the direction of the university. It is on the basis of the above observations that Gray (2017) writes that not minding the popularity of autonomy as a change mantra in the administration of higher education, the state still maintains a higher degree of control over universities. This means that the implementation of university autonomy in both stable and fragile states are gripped by many challenges and the next section of the paper focuses on challenges of university autonomy in Nigeria.

Challenges of University Autonomy in Nigeria

University autonomy may be amenable to different understandings and interpretations so much that what obtains in two states that may claim to be practising university autonomy may be different. The difference in the practice of university autonomy may have its roots in the ability of the concept to be in constant flux or in movement and as a concept that is constantly in movement, university autonomy is an on-going activity, a practice that is dynamic and consistently under way with many promises that cannot finish, be achieved or realized. With this as the case, it is obvious that a state's level of cultural, political, technological and economic advancements has a lot of roles to play in the practice of university autonomy in any state. Because university autonomy manifests these features, most stakeholders in education agree that discussions that are centred on it must be context specific or contextualized. What these remarks about university autonomy show is that at the level of practice or implementation, university autonomy may be a slippery concept that is full of challenges. What makes this assertion an obvious truth is that, there is no ideal model of university autonomy anywhere in the world that can fit into the educational plans of any other state except the state that has adopted it and any attempt to superimpose any particular model of university autonomy or try a cross border application and interpretation of university autonomy can inject virus into the higher education system of the receiving state. All these point in one direction namely university autonomy at the level of practice is full of challenges.

In a regime where university autonomy is a norm, citizens are more likely to pay higher tuition fees and paying higher tuition fees means that not too many citizens can afford to go to the university, meaning that university education will become an elitist commodity that only the rich can afford. If the rich become the only class of people who can afford university education, the state can be stratified in a manner that if not well checked or taken care of, violent uprising can erupt due to the reactions of those who may not have access to university education because of its high cost. It is also important one highlights that the inability of majority of the citizens to have access to university education due to its high cost will definitely lead to denial of social positions and lack of access to other social goods in the society. Gray (2017:2) graphically presents the predicament of South Africa in a regime of university autonomy which any other state can face in these words:

> In October and November of 2015 campuses across South Africa exploded. Students across the country expressed their dissatisfaction with the institutions and the system of higher education. A major complaint was that learning had become commodified and as a result excluding the majority of poor and working class youth from participating in higher education.

University autonomy is a sure bet for commercialization of education, corporatization of the university and the non-prioritization of areas of study that may not be associated with the industry and money generation. What this means is that in a regime of university autonomy with its focus on commercialization of services, courses and researches, which the industry did not show interest may not flourish well. With this becoming the norm in university education, those courses and disciplines that instill moral consciousness and critical thinking abilities without direct attachment to immediate production of money but are popular as anyone who claims to be educated must show

certain dispositions in them may be neglected. The neglect of courses and disciplines that project qualities of educatedness in the products of universities is a dangerous and bad omen for the development of quality human capital upon which the national development of any state depends. Where it illuminates further signs of regret and pain is that the promise which advocates of university autonomy claim it can bring about easily backfires and this development dashes the hope and aspiration of many who place their hope on university education because the university education system in a regime of university autonomy continuously mounts profit oriented policies and programmes to the detriment and expense of improving quality of educational provisions. In fact, what become norms are the forms of super structures or intimidating building facilities, and the gradual and steady privatization of public education.

University autonomy stimulates in citizens the curiosity that universities will be financially self-sustaining as universities adopt corporate and entrepreneurial principles as modes of their operations. A critical look at this suggests that government will stop funding or rendering other financial assistance or support to the universities or to use the words of Yulianto (2017:46), "the burden of the state to take care of higher education can be lighter." Any serious observer can observe that in most countries where there is university autonomy, the state still funds university education. The fact that the state still funds university education despite outrageous tuition fees that students pay raises serious questions on the where-about of the tuition fees and other charges that universities demand from students in a regime of university autonomy. This development simply points in the direction that corruption perfectly triumphs to the point of becoming the norm because the present system does not allow government and its agencies to adequately exercise their oversight functions as it concerns activities of the universities. The implication is that university autonomy promotes excessive charging of fees from students and this on its own promotes corruption in the system.

The belief that there will be less interference of the state and its agencies in a regime of university autonomy is an assumption that is far from the truth as there are many areas of interferences here and there from the state in the university system. For instance, a reflection on what used to be the case in Nigeria shows that the power to admit students was vested in the senate of the various universities and the power to mount or set up new programmes also was vested in the senate of the various universities through an internal mechanism that starts from the department, to the faculty and finally to the senate. A practice or system where the senate of the various universities is responsible for admission of students, the setting up of new programmes and other governance and administrative structures of the universities can be in-line with university autonomy. Presently, where autonomy is in vogue or is the norm, there are interferences from the state through the establishment of a centralized Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board, an agency of the state that oversees the admission of students into Nigerian universities and the establishment of National Universities Commission whose approval must be sought before the establishment of new programmes in any university that is wishing to set up any new programme. What this points hand to is that university autonomy is never and must never be complete independence or absent of regulations or control from the state.

Further areas of state interference in the governance of the university in Nigeria can be noticed in the dual or bicameral organizational structure that comprises of the council and the senate. In this arrangement, the council which comprises of government appointees

wields raw political and governance power that stretches over budgets, property appointments, setting fees, implementing strategic plans and physical asserts of the universities. This arrangement confines the senate to academic policies only in which any serious observer can notice that the senate must obtain approval from agencies of the state before embarking on some of its functions. Apart from interference from the council in the governance structure of the university, there is interference from the visitor to the university who may be the President or the Governor, depending on whether a university is owned by the Federal or state government, who is entrusted with the responsibilities of making key appointments in the university. The appointees of the government into the council of the universities and the power vested on the visitor to appointment a Vice Chancellor out of the three candidates recommended to him by the council and the actions and activities of such agencies and parastatal of the government especially boards and ministries of education at the federal and state levels over the university pulps up serious questions on the reality of university autonomy as a change and reform mantra for the non-interference, self-governance, productivity and efficiency of the university system in Nigeria.

A determinant factor and a clog in the wheel of progress of autonomy of the university system in Nigeria which any serious discussion on university autonomy must not ignore is the issue of funding in the university. So far the government remains the major funder and financier of the university, it will be very difficult for the universities to exert much influence in the autonomy space because the piper dictates the tune. A judgement and a plausible remark which logically speaking is a product of critical rationality on university autonomy is that, in practice, what exists, is in conflict with the ideas of the advocates of university autonomy and consequently university autonomy in practice seems to be a vague concept, as in addition to its many interpretations, its ability to survive or be real in any state is base on the individual state's level of legal, social, political and economic emancipation, sophistication and level of awareness of the citizens of the state. In this frame of mind, practitioners and the general public must be careful in the way their actions and activities are guided by university autonomy. In other words, they must not be carried away by the euphoria of university autonomy.

CONCLUSION

Globally, people look up to the university for theoretical and practical guides and signposts for solving the problems of man and the problems of the society. The efforts of the university in this direction are directly and indirectly affected by change. Constant changes in the control and management of the university neutralize and make non-sense efforts to make the university achieve its mission and vision for members of the society. The order in which change occurs in the university and the society at large and the people's expectations concerning the ability of the university to solve all the problems of man and those of the society necessitate the call for reforms in the control and administrative structure of the university. It is strongly believed the direction for the realization of the reform upon which the mission and vision of the university can be achieved especially in Nigeria is university autonomy.

University autonomy has gained popularity so much that many stakeholders embrace it as the ideal reform and change mantra for responding to the many challenges in the university system. Be this as it may, university autonomy is a contentious issue anywhere any time that at the practical level manifests multiple difficulties beginning with the concept itself. The concept is noted to be excessively slippery and yielding itself to a

variety of interpretations so much that two states that claim to be practicing university autonomy can end up with two different practices or variants of university autonomy that can never at any point show any mark or trace of resemblance, indicating that no two models of university autonomy anywhere in the world can be the same. In the variety of differences in its operational details, a state where university autonomy is a norm may fall short of justice and social justice responsibilities to the people and society and consequently such moral, social, political and economic ills such as lack of fairness, lack of access to education, academic capitalism, corporatization of the university, adoption of business models in order for the university to strive, corruption, marginalization, poverty, unemployment and inequality may systematically become institutionalized norms. In fact in a country like Nigeria where corruption is a fantastic practice, university autonomy has inherent potentials to take corruption to the next level.

It has to be noted very strongly that whereas university autonomy is premised on self control and self governance of the university, no public university anywhere in the world can effectively, functionally and successfully exist without the support of the state and university autonomy in the right thinking cannot mean the absence of regulations from the states or financiers of the university as states till tomorrow provide standards and guidelines in the form of minimum bench mark to higher education institutions operated by public and private investors, suggesting that there is no complete or absolute independence in as much as control and administration of the university is concern.

As change is inevitable and as change in higher education tilts towards university autonomy, any state that is desirous of making university autonomy a norm should endeavour to adequately clarify the concept so that stakeholders in the education industry do not superimpose or invent a convenient interpretation of the concept that may suit or fit their purpose. Detailed clarification of what university autonomy means to a people is important to guide a people so that they do not translate or interpret university autonomy to mean the show or demonstration of behaviour as any one likes including fragrant disregard or disrespect to conventionally and globally recognized practices.

States that are willing to embrace university autonomy should develop their own models and in the process of developing their own models make provisions, where the seal of their cultural, social, religious, value systems, legal and political lives can be visible in their chosen models of university autonomy. Such models must be modeled alongside internationally recognized global best practices where the seal of such moral concepts such as equality of opportunities for all and respect for human rights, justice and social justice can be built into it to guarantee the protection of the humanity of the individuals including challenging the individuals to explore and exploit such moral concepts.

The above position is instructive and why it is so is that university autonomy on its own may not be sufficient for success, rather every state that wants to make university autonomy a norm should be receptive to change and open to further learning as the innovation and reform is a dynamic project that easily triggers new demands. In fact, the change and reform that comes with university autonomy is inclusive and its inclusiveness cuts across all the layers and practices in the university system. This is where good and quality leadership of the university comes in and leadership that has the potentials to sustain university autonomy must be spearheaded by seasoned academics with all stakeholders supporting and exercising patience because the behaviours that trigger success in a regime of university autonomy entails one that involves a lifelong learning process.

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