JHEA/RESA Vol. 21, No. 1, 2023, pp. 93-115

(ISSN 0851–7762) https://doi.org/10.57054/jhea.v21i1.6230

Bureaucracy and the Negation of Collegiality in Nigeria's Nascent Federal Universities: Insights from a Typical Instance

Albert Chukwuma Okoli*

Abstract

This article examines the erosion of collegiality in Nigeria's nascent federal universities against the backdrop of the rising bureaucratic tendencies in such institutions. From the standpoint of a vintage case of one of such universities, the article observes that there has been a sustained systematic subversion of the collegial ethos through gradual bureaucratic centralism and excess. Using a qualitative analysis that relied on a synthesis of primary and secondary data, the article highlights aspects of these bureaucratic tendencies and underscores their implications for internal institutional autonomy and academic freedom. It posits that the trend is tantamount to the emasculation and usurpation of the faculty and, in effect, negates the culture of collegiality and academic sovereignty. To reverse this trend, the article makes a case for institutional reform aimed at devolving university governance strategically in a manner that restores the functional autonomy of the faculty alongside the academic sovereignty of its academia.

Keywords: Academic freedom, bureaucracy, bureaucratic centralism, collegiality/collegialism, institutional autonomy, university governance

Résumé

Cet article examine l'érosion de la collégialité dans les nouvelles universités fédérales du Nigeria dans le contexte de croissantes tendances bureaucratiques dans ces institutions. D'un cas d'école d'une de ces universités, l'article observe qu'il y existe une subversion systématique et soutenue de l'éthos collégial par un centralisme et d'excès bureaucratiques progressifs. Par une analyse qualitative qui s'appuie sur une synthèse de données primaires et secondaires, l'article met en lumière certains aspects de ces tendances bureaucratiques et

* Senior Lecturer, Department of Political Science, Federal University of Lafia, Nigeria. Email: okochu007@yahoo.com

souligne leurs implications pour l'autonomie institutionnelle interne et la liberté académique. Il postule que cette tendance équivaut à l'émasculation et à l'usurpation des prérogatives du corps professoral et, en fait, dénie la culture de collégialité et de souveraineté académique. Pour inverser cette tendance, le document plaide en faveur d'une réforme institutionnelle qui, stratégiquement, déléguerait la gouvernance universitaire de manière à restaurer l'autonomie fonctionnelle de la faculté tout en garantissant la souveraineté académique de l'université.

Mots clés : liberté académique, bureaucratie, centralisme bureaucratique, collégialité/collégialisme, autonomie institutionnelle, gouvernance universitaire

Introduction

The university is a traditional organisation principally dedicated to the production and reproduction of knowledge as well as the interrogation and transformation of conventional episteme. It is composed of tenured and non-tenured academics, researchers and para-bureaucrats who work in clusters of faculties and establishments loosely structured into an organic and self-regulating system (Baldridge 1971; Russell 1993; Nybom 2008). The academic corps is the core of the university system. In most instances, especially in Africa, this constituent of the university system devolves from the Senate (central academic board) to the faculty and departmental boards, with critical extensions to allied academic units and associated academic staff platforms (Jowi 2018). These structures play a pivotal role in the governance of a university.

Originally, the university system was run based on academic leadership, founded on the principle of collegiality. In that regard, leadership and responsibility were laterally decentralised and determined by expertise in scholarship (Babalola 2014), while academic departments and faculties played decisive roles in the governance of the system. Although the post-World War welfarist/interventionist states promoted a bureaucratised university system, this emphasis on bureaucracy is today being widely challenged 'by a normative preference for collegiality' (Singh 2005: 11), what could be referred to as the 'collegialism redux', after Pollitt (2014: 1).

Paradoxically, most contemporary universities are still enmeshed in bureaucratic traditions and tendencies. As Babalola (2014: 9) succinctly puts it, 'Nigerian universities are weighed down by the bureaucratic demands of political correctness, reporting, and regulation that stifle productivity and capacity to innovate'. This happens in the wider context of restrictive institutional relations whereby 'Exaggerated concerns with "efficiency" and

"excellence" lead to increased regulation and surveillance of scholarly output, rendering academic freedom vulnerable to formulaic measures of performance that may be insensitive to the work of African academics' (Mama 2006: 1).

So rather than deepening the culture of collegiality, most Nigerian universities have taken to increased bureaucratisation and managerialism, with the attendant consequences on institutional autonomy in general and academic freedom in particular. Consequently, just as in most African universities, the 'prerequisites for the existence of a healthy and vibrant academia, not to mention academic freedom, are not in existence ...' (Mama 2006: 15). It is against the backdrop of the above context and observations that the study sought to investigate how bureaucratic tendencies in Nigerian universities affect the culture of collegiality as well as the prospects of proper university autonomy and academic liberty.

Extant scholarship about university governance/autonomy in Nigeria has privileged the external dimensions of university autonomy (Jonathan 2006; Ekundayo and Adedokun 2009; Arikewuyo 2013; Olorunsora 2018). In this regard, what has been emphasised is the relationship between the university administration and the wider society, including the government and industry, as well as donor agencies (Engwall 2007; Mukoro 2013). While these perspectives are important, they have, nonetheless, failed to factor into their analysis of the equally important internal dimensions of the subject. The study looks at some critical aspects of the rising managerial varsity tradition by considering the often-dialectical relationship between the bureaucratised university management and the faculty.

In the main, the study seeks to proffer answers to a set of pertinent questions:

- How does bureaucracy affect the culture of collegiality in Nigeria's nascent public universities?
- How does bureaucratisation undermine academic freedom in the faculty?
- How could centralist/bureaucratic tendencies be moderated in the interest of institutional autonomy and academic freedom?

In tandem, the study posits that the prevailing bureaucratic ambience of the university system by management tends to erode and emasculate the culture of collegiality, thereby vitiating proper institutional autonomy and academic freedom.

The remainder of the article is thematically structured into seven sections based on the underlying objective. What comes next is a highlight of the basic terms that form the conceptual thrust of the study. This is followed by an exploration of the literature on issues of university governance and

autonomy. Next is the theoretical framework, designed as an analytical anchor to the study. This is in turn followed by an attempt to situate the context, scope, and methodology of the study. Thereafter is an analysis of facets of bureaucratic tendencies in the focal university, next to which some implications of that trend for institutional autonomy and academic freedom are examined. The last section is the conclusion, alongside some recommendations.

Conceptual Clarifications

Six key terms constitute the conceptual thrust of this study: academic freedom, bureaucracy, collegiality, institutional autonomy, university, and university governance. The contextual operational meanings of these concepts are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Operational Definitions of Basic Concepts*

Term	Operational Definition
Academic freedom	The right of an academic to operate within the statutory and professional ambits without unlawful epistemic, pedagogic, ideological, or structural restrictions. It encompasses the security of tenure as well as the right of the faculty to determine the structure, content, and administration of the curriculum. Technically, the idea of academic freedom is embodied in the concept of institutional autonomy in its broadest sense. Crucial aspects of academic freedom include freedom of/from (cf. Mama 2006; Arikewuyo 2013): teaching and discussion research and publishing Institutional or political censorship Professional association.
Bureaucracy/ Bureaucratic tendencies: centralism/excess	Bureaucracy is used restrictively in this context to designate a system of large-scale organisational leadership/management characterised by hierarchical orientation, command and control, corporate ethos, etc. (see McLean and McMillan 2003). Bureaucratic centralism in the context of this study refers to the excessive bureaucratisation of the university system in such a manner that stifles the faculty and negates internal institutional autonomy as well as academic freedom. Bureaucratic excess relates to the undue and abusive incursions of bureaucracy within the academic portfolio in the faculty.

Collegiality/ Collegialism	Collegialism/Collegiality implies that the university faculty and academic committees or platforms allied to it constitute critical centres of decision-making (cf. Rabah 2015). Governance in this system is run based on collegial and peer academic leadership. Features of collegiality in the context of university governance include: - Shared leadership responsibility and governance - Fluid and non-hierarchical management structure and line of reporting (lateral devolution) - Emphasis on peer relations and consultation rather than on authority and structure.
Institutional autonomy	Institutional autonomy refers to the relationship between the university and its diverse stakeholders concerning operational (in)dependence (cf. Martini 2016). External autonomy refers to the relationship between the university and the wider society. Internal autonomy has to do with the relationship between the university authority and the faculty. It refers also to academic sovereignty in a more nuanced sense.
University/ Collegial university	An institution of higher learning specialising in research as well as teaching undergraduate and postgraduate programmes across various academic disciplines. The notion of the university here encompasses its organisational structure and community, including the students, teachers, and administrative and other staff of a university. The conception of the university in this article is biased towards the collegial model (cf. Baldridge 1971; see also Table 2, column 3).
University governance	The control and co-ordination of the various stakeholders and activities of the university towards the realisation of its purpose. The crux of university governance is to optimise institutional performance by applying the available resources to efficient use (cf. Osisioma 2012; Ogunbadeniyi and Uhumwuangho 2014).

**Author's contextual definitions, edified by insights from the various sources cited.*

Perspectives on University Governance and Autonomy: A Literature Review

University governance refers to the relationship between the internal and external stakeholders of the university system aimed at realising both the strategic and civic ends of the system (Engwall 2007). It is a multi-stakeholder process that involves the staff and students' bodies, statutory boards at the departmental and faculty level, the University Senate and Council, the university management, as well as the various governmental and non-governmental oversight structures (Mignot-Gerard 2003).

The crux of university governance is to strategically balance the imperative for institutional autonomy and academic liberty (freedom) with the demand for public accountability (Jonathan 2006; Babalola 2014). The notion of institutional autonomy is at best problematic. According to Nybom (2008: 137), 'Autonomy, in this regard, is certainly no synonym for independence; it is rather a case of the widened scope of decision-making under certain important constraints, with less local power but more responsibility.' Hence, institutional autonomy is a matter of leveraging the stakeholding capacity of the university vis-à-vis the external stakeholders (especially the government) or that of the faculty about the university administration.

Academic freedom (liberty), on the other hand, 'refers to the actual working conditions of individual faculty members' (Nybom 2008: 137), the essence of which is that the faculty member is a free career entity in an organisational context where he or she also holds a stake in collegial decision-making processes (Russell 1993; Babalola 2014). Collegial decision-making is based on consensus-seeking through lengthy discussions among academic peers. It forms a self-regulating community capable of regulating itself with little or no external hierarchical interference (Mignot-Gerard 2003).

While the collegial model emphasises 'collaborative leadership' (Mooney, Burns and Chadwick 2012: 143), whereby 'faculty members become an integral part of the leadership process' (Singh 2005: 11), the bureaucratic model favours a vertical-cum-hierarchical centralisation of powers that negates academic freedom and internal institutional autonomy (Babalola 2014). Contemporary scholarship on university governance is fraught with polemic about how and where to strike the balance between the extremes of institutional bureaucracy and collegial democracy (Singh 2005).

These are two dimensions of university autonomy: external and internal. External autonomy is concerned with the operational liberty that the university management enjoys from its proprietors and funders,

while internal autonomy refers to the degree of freedom at the disposal of academic members of the university, both as career entities and stakeholders of the system (Jowi 2018). Whereas much has been written in respect of the external dimensions of university autonomy from a variety of perspectives (Ordorika 2003; Okorosaye-Orubite, Paulley and Abraham 2012; Mukoro 2013), little is known concerning the internal aspects of the same process in respect of the Nigerian context. This study, among other things, is an attempt to address this apparent gap in knowledge by considering the bureaucracy–collegiality dialectics vis-à-vis their implications for institutional autonomy and academic sovereignty.

But to address the epistemic situation creditably, it is apposite to situate the discourse within the framework of the 'managerialism vs. collegialism' debate. Managerialism presupposes, among other things, the tendency to corporatise higher education administration (Deem 2000; Leslie-Hughes 2013). It 'involves the exercise of power by leaders and top-management figures' (Marini and Reale 2016: 6), geared principally towards reorienting the institution on the path of corporate entrepreneurism. On the other hand, collegialism refers to the underlying 'philosophy' implicit in the culture of collegiality as it applies to the organisational context of a higher institution. It is characterised by three core elements, namely: 'a process of shared decision-making by a collegial group about academic matters; mutual support in upholding the academic integrity of members of the group; and conservation of a realm of special knowledge and practice' (Harvey 2016: 2).

The managerial-collegial debate refers to the paradigmatic contestations between the cultures of collegiality and bureaucracy in the administration of institutions of higher learning, especially the university. The tension is one of virtual antagonism. As Marini and Reale (2016: 6) put it, 'the more a university is managerially led, the less it will be collegial because the increasingly top-down structure of decision-making and the strengthening of accountability will detract from the individuality and the bottom-up voice of the peers'. However, contemporary thinking on the subject matter tends to see a measurable level of mutual coexistence between the two traditions. This perspective is captured in the revisionist notions of 'new-managerialism' and 'new-collegialism' (Deem 2000; Harvey 2016).

Four traditions/regimes of university governance are identifiable in the literature. These are statism, managerialism/executivism, commercialism and collegialism (see Table 2). Statism is a situation where the state wields firm control over the university sector. In such a system, the government is deeply involved in the affairs of the university both at the level of funding

and general administration (cf. Murphy 2008). Universities under this regime lack all measures of operational autonomy. The tenets of institutional autonomy and academic freedom have no place in such a system as the universities are run as appendages of the education department of the state.

Managerialism/executivism refers to the tradition whereby the universities operate with limited autonomy under strict supervision and oversight by the state agencies. Here, institutions may exercise minimal discretion on some local matters, but the government wields an overriding stake in the entire governance process. There is much emphasis on costs recovery, hence the running of the university is modelled on corporate sector practices (Aspromourgos 2012). Here, too, academic freedom is sacrificed at the altar of bureaucratic centralism and correctness (Babalola 2014).

On the other hand, commercialism represents an outright orientation towards marketisation, vocationalisation and commodification. In this regard, universities are run not only with the intent to cover/recover costs but also to make and maximise profit. This model fits nicely into the abiding traditions of most privately owned universities in Africa, be they religious or 'corporate'. Here, there is much emphasis on entrepreneurialism and the penchant for credentialism is widespread.

Collegialism is a tradition that devolves administrative processes from the top management to the faculty, where tenured academia holds sway in governing the university (Ogbogu 2013). In this system, there is an appreciable degree of functional autonomy and academic freedom, as both the government and the university management accord with the faculty its pride of place in university governance. Contemporary neoliberal incursions into the global university sector have incidentally rendered this tradition endangered (cf. Bricks 2013). Nonetheless, elements of this tradition subsist in varying degrees in established universities.

Suffice it to note that the transformation of African universities from the colonial to developmental model has led to a sustained bureaucratic ascendancy. Similarly, the advent of the corporatised multiversity model has entrenched bureaucratic consolidation in African universities even more. In the face of these institutional changes, the collegial culture has nearly become otiose and the best of what is left of that represents a mere ideal. This collegial impasse has been aptly situated thus:

> As a mark of capitalist ascendancy, the university as corporate has, it would seem, lost its soul and its autonomy. The focus on collegiality invokes the communitarian and independent spirit which has for centuries been the foundation of university ideals, but which is presently undermined by managerialism and its profit-driven motives. A crass utilitarianism

> appropriates and 'brands' academic values to retain pseudo-prestige while impoverishing the sense of vocation without which collegiality is rendered an anachronism. (Weinberg and Graham-Smith 2012: 68)

Table 2: Three Regimes of University Governance in Africa

Regime	**Orientation**	**Illustrative Example(s)**
Statism	No institutional autonomy; abusive political interference/politicisation; lack of academic freedom (intellectual sovereignty, secured tenure, and collegial/academic leadership)	Cameroon
Managerialism/ Executivism	Bureaucratisation/corporatisation; cost recovery; clericalisation, compromised institutional autonomy and academic freedom	Nigeria
Collegialialism	The primacy of the faculty; functional institutional autonomy; academic freedom; lateral devolution	???

Source: Author.

The instances (working examples) given in Table 2 are neither exhaustive nor representative. They are merely illustrative and are designed to stimulate thinking in respect of the prevailing patterns of university governance in Africa.

In addition to being illustrative, the typologies considered in Table 2 overlap substantively. Hence, the most reasonable approach to understanding them is to think in terms of a continuum. In this regard, one could be talking of the following sub-categories: extreme managerialism/executivism, moderate managerialism/executivism, low managerialism/executivism, etc. Notice, however, that the collegial model in the table has no illustrative example. This is deliberate but indicative of the fact that that tradition has become almost crowded out by the pressures of statism, managerialism, and commercialism.

Theoretical Framework: Collegialism

This study adopts collegialism as an analytical framework. In this context, collegialism presupposes that the university faculty and staff platforms allied to it constitute critical centres of decision-making. It refers to a pattern of an organisational culture characterised by collegial relations, peer academic leadership, and academic sovereignty. The collegial precept arose in contradistinction to the rising bureaucratisation of the university system

in the West, following the advent of the welfarist state (Babalola 2014). Concerning the emergence of the model, Singh (2005: 11) notes that 'the traditional emphasis on bureaucracy is being challenged by a normative preference for collegiality'.

Collegiality is a lateral-cum-horizontal system of collaborative leadership based on the principles of peer consultation, collaboration, and participation (Singh 2005; Mooney, Burns and Chadwick 2012). It emphasises the leading-from-the-middle approach (Jowi 2018), whereby faculty members become stakeholders of the university leadership process. Singh (2005: 11) notes that it is marked by shared leadership, decision-making, vision, and values. According to Lesniaski, MacPherson, Fister and McKinzie (2001: 234), the collegial model is characterised by the following features:

- shared leadership responsibility and governance.
- fluid and non-hierarchical management structure and lines of reporting (lateral devolution).
- emphasis on peer relations and consultation rather than on authority and structure.

Applied to the purpose of the study, it is instructive to note that the university faculty and staff platforms allied to it present the institutional avenues for collegial consultation as they relate to the question of university governance. The emasculation of such avenues through bureaucratisation is, therefore, antithetical to the imperative of institutional autonomy as well as academic freedom (Rabah 2015). It is in the light of this fact that the proposed study posits that the bureaucratisation of the university system tends to erode the culture of collegiality, thereby impeding the prospect of university autonomy and academic freedom.

Context, Scope, and Methodology

The study's subject matter was the governance approaches in Nigeria's nascent public universities. By nascent public universities is meant twelve newly established national universities, created between 2011 and 2014. The focus on this category of the institution was informed by the fact that they present an atypical internal governance paradigm vis-à-vis the prevailing traditions in the established universities. These new universities share some striking semblance, which holds critical implications for the study. First, they emerged in an era when public universities in Nigeria were at the peak of crises of institutional autonomy and academic freedom. Second, they employed their administrators principally from established universities where the ethos of institutional autonomy and academic liberty largely had

been compromised and overly vitiated. Third, and more importantly, these new institutions were established with a good chunk of early-career and novitiate academics, most of whom would have to work for several years to earn their full academic tenure.

An academic taking up a first appointment in the Nigerian university system is required by law to serve a mandatory probationary period of three years before his or her appointment is 'confirmed' and therefore 'tenured'. Within this probationary period, the staff member is merely holding a provisional appointment, which could be terminated at any point by management without any recourse to due statutory procedures. The dominance of this category of academics in the new universities creates a dicey asymmetry between management and the faculty, with the former retaining the powers to 'summarily' dismiss any academic staff who may be considered a threat to its 'authority. This is more so given the prohibition of staff union platforms in those universities in the early years of their nascence. The above scenario festered in a particular institutional context where the pioneer vice-chancellor's *ab initio* operated as paramount bureaucrats amidst an overly ad hoc establishment set-up bereft of properly constituted Councils and the Senate (Okoli 2016).

The study focused on the internal structures of leadership and decision-making in one of those new universities, with an emphasis on how the workings of bureaucracy in those contexts tended to negate collegiality and, by extension, university autonomy, and academic freedom. It approached the internal dimension of the university governance problematic from the standpoint of the eroding impact of bureaucracy on faculty-level collegiality. The essence and end of the study were to generate what could be termed worst-case insights capable of forming a point of departure in subsequent efforts at analysing the eroding impact of bureaucratic centralism in Nigeria's contemporary university system.

The study was quasi-phenomenological exploratory research with a descriptive-analytical orientation. It relied on the use of a combination of primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data was sourced from personal observations as well as shared lived experiences of select mid-career academics in the focal institution, elicited through corroborated study chats. Secondary data was derived from documentary resources, viz statutory instruments, reports, literature and allied official documents. The outcome of the study was qualitatively analysed in themes, drawing selectively from the relevant library and official sources. There was a modest attempt to ground the analysis in the theory of collegialism. Analytical triangulation was applied to synthesise insights from various data sources.

The origin and substance of the study owe a lot to the proceedings of the 2019 Higher Education Policy Initiative (HEPI) Institute, held at the University of Ghana, Legon, from 20 to 30 May 2019, wherein the author participated as a laureate. The various presentations by resource-persons/facilitators and co-laureates as well as the sideline activities, such as sessional discussions/conversations, research-writing-publishing clinics and group engagements, formed platforms that shaped the study and determined its outcome herewith presented. The author is a tenured mid-career academic and a former programme co-ordinator as well as a union leader at one of the newly established public universities in Nigeria. The author's positionality in this respect is expected to leverage his lived experiences in such a manner that profits the analysis. In appropriating the author's lived experiences and personal observations, a conscious effort was made to eschew personal prejudices and stay within the bounds of analytical objectivity and systematisation. To this end, the author simulated the study *ab initio* through solicited peer discussions whereby select faculty colleagues across the academic-administrative divide volunteered valuable insights regarding his potential personal biases. Additionally, the outcome of the study was again subjected to another round of detached scrutiny by the same peer group to detect manifest author prejudices.

Bureaucracy–Collegiality Dialectics in the Focal University: An Empirical Narrative

So far in this study, our discussion on how bureaucracy affects collegiality has bordered on theoretical, if hypothetical, generics. This section attempts to reduce the discussion to some concrete specifics by way of empirical illustration and validation. To begin with, it is pertinent to observe that the university that is the locus of analysis here apparently represented an extreme case of bureaucratic centralism and ascendancy as well as collegial downturn. It may not necessarily typify the situation across the public universities in Nigeria. Even the federal universities in the same category as the one under review have diverse significant peculiarities and specificities. Hence, any attempt to meaningfully extrapolate or generalise the observations and findings arising from this illustrative case must be cognisant of its contextual peculiarity, as earlier highlighted in the contextual background.

For the avoidance of doubt, the focal university is neither a fictional nor a hypothetical case, although it has been anonymised here for ethical reasons. It belongs to the latest generation of federal (national) universities in Nigeria. Established in 2011, the university took off on a miniature campus

model with an administrative structure that was overly centralised and top-heavy. Upon inception, the university was inappropriately constituted at the faculty level with a preponderance of junior and inexperienced academics, some of whom were abusively elevated to important positions as programme co-ordinators and academic advisers (Okoli 2016). The asymmetry of management–faculty relations in the university was disproportionately skewed in favour of the management. This bred an awkward organisational culture that thrived on command and control rather than on collegial relations and fellowship. It also promoted an awkward tradition of organisational behaviour among academics that leveraged bureaucratic orthodoxy and conformism. It is upon selecting indicators of such a peculiar organisational context (see Table 3) that our analysis is predicated.

Table 3: Some Empirical Indicators of Erosion of Collegiality in the focal University

Indicator	Instance(s)
Emasculation and usurpation of faculty	Unilateral appointment of deans by the VC; top-centric student admission and staff recruitment
Over-clericalisation of academia	Lecturers' involvement in petty clerical work; use of lecturers as laboratory or class attendants
Establishmentarianist patronage/cronyism	Nepotistic appointment, placement, promotion, etc.
Excessive regulation and control	The signing of daily attendance; oath of secrecy; lecture note rule
Executive authoritarianism	VC's power is supreme, tending to autocracy; he is an overlord operating with utmost arbitrariness
Management-union tension	Union's resistance and backlashes resulting in structural victimisation and persecution of unionists and radical scholars.

Source: Author's compilation

Suffice it to note that some of the attributes observed of the focal university apply to the rest of the universities in the same generation, and even beyond. Comparative empirical narrative and anecdotes, however, indicate a more significantly dire situation in the newly established universities. What then are these significant attributes? This analytical poser forms the concern of the sub-sections that follow below, which by design focuses on an illustrative, and not necessarily a representative, case.

Over-clericalisation of academia

The professional mandate of a university academic can be compartmentalised into teaching, research, and community service (Okorosaye-Orubite et al. 2012). To do well in these responsibilities, these academics must devote the bulk of their career time more to intellectual resourcing and less to extra-scholarly engagements. But in the focal university, academics routinely were made to undertake petty clerical tasks, such as registration of students, laboratory and class attendance, and the like. An absurd situation in this respect occurred in the 2015/2016 academic session, when members of academic staff were required by the management to sign for the collection and submission of classroom keys at a security desk as part of their teaching schedule.

By signing for the keys, a lecturer undertook responsibility for the safety and security of the facilities in the class within the period of the lecture. This arcane practice was encouraged in an institution whose staff distribution was overly skewed in favour of clerical personnel. There was an outright surplusage of non-teaching staff in the system to undertake such clerical tasks. One, therefore, wonders about the rationale for the involvement of academic staff in such a lowly clerical line of duty.

The involvement of teaching staff in some administrative duties is not altogether condemnable. As a matter of need, faculties require some measure of knowledge of administrative operations to consummate their expertise in academic leadership. The worry here, however, was the tendency to excessive use of academic regular members for petty administrative tasks, especially those that were far from their original and statutory schedule of duty (cf. Okoli 2016). Again, the disproportionate amount of time those members of academic staff spent on such 'irregular' duties calls into question the rationality of the practice in a university set-up. It smacks of professional impropriety to reduce an academic staff to the status of ad-hoc clerical personnel, whatever the bureaucratic exigencies were.

Excessive regulation and control

University in general is widely acknowledged to be one of the most liberal organisations in the world. It is often and rightly acclaimed to be the quintessence of that (Babalola 2014; Rabah 2015). However, in the focal institution, there had been much structural restriction and control. In its early years, the university had operated a peculiar mini-campus system that was excessively regulated. Then, faculties were meant to scan their official identity card at the heavily policed security gate by the main entrance to

document and confirm their entry and exit. This practice was justified by management as a rational contingency policy dictated by what was then considered a volatile security situation in the state where the university was situated. Curiously, whilst this 'securitisation regime' lasted, lecturers arriving for classes, who had misplaced their identity cards, were often denied access to the campus, even in the full glare of recognition.

Lecturers were also required to sign an attendance register at the department to document their arrival and departure days. In several isolated cases, such attendance records were used to witch-hunt academics under the pretext of a punctuality rule. Besides the punctuality rule, there was a lecture-note precept that required lecturers to prepare their lecture modules in both PowerPoint and full-text versions and make the same available to students in soft and hard copy. In addition, lecturers were mandated to engage in 'smart teaching' with the aid of PowerPoint slides. This pedagogic formula, to a significant extent, reduced teaching and learning to a mechanistic process bereft of rigour and dynamism. In the advancement of this pedagogic modality, the chief executive and cohorts working for him periodically went round the classes to enforce conformity, often interrupting the teaching process.

In the 2015/2016 academic session, the management of the university produced a controversial document whereby members of academic staff were required to sign an oath of secrecy. The accompanying memoir instructed faculties to comply with the 'secrecy directive' or face drastic disciplinary sanctions. The secrecy document reads *inter alia*:

> I … do solemnly promise that I will not directly or indirectly reveal, except to a person to whom it is my duty or to whom I am authorised to communicate it, any code work, sketch plan, model, article, note, a document of information entrusted to me by any person holding office in the (university) or the public service of the Federal University of Nigeria, which I may obtain, or to which I have access, owing to my position as a staff of the (university) …[brackets are mine].

Incidentally, many were intimidated or cajoled into compliance, and acquiesced and signed the controversial document either under duress or pressure. The effort of the academic staff union to challenge the policy precipitated hostility between the management and a segment of the union leadership, which snowballed into a showdown with a few of the leaders. The secrecy policy was significant because it represented the height of affront to the principle of academic freedom.

Emasculation/usurpation of faculty

The ascendancy of bureaucracy in the focal institution led to the emasculation of the operational independence and integrity of the faculty. For instance, the authority of the faculty to initiate and lead the process of academic staff recruitment as well as student admission was eroded (cf. Ernst 2009; Nwisaka 2014). The same was true regarding other aspects of academic policy and programming. For instance, up to the 2014/2015 academic session, the administration of the semester examination had been abusively centralised. In this regard, faculties were required to generate as much as twenty-five to fifty questions (depending on the scope of the course module) and submit them to their dean, who hand them in to the office of the vice-chancellor (VC) for typing and reproduction. Here, junior members of non-teaching staff, who were serving as personal aides of the VC, took charge of the process with only limited oversight by the deans. This arcane situation resulted in a major examination leakage scandal in which the university's Central Examination Misconduct Committee indicted the office of the VC.

In such an anomalous system, unfortunately, the position of the dean remained appointive rather than elective, even in sharp contradiction to the dictate of the Staff Handbook, which stipulated that a validly constituted Faculty Board should elect the dean. With an appointed dean unilaterally selected by the absolutist vice-chancellor, the faculty became a mere appendage of the management, a management that was poised to elicit strict and 'slavish adherence to the rules from the faculties (McLean and McMillan 2003: 55). This scenario undermined the capacity of the faculty to watchdog the management but also defended its academic corps from unwarranted executive authoritarianism. More significantly, it negated the ideals of collegiality as well as academic tenure and sovereignty at the faculty.

Executive authoritarianism

The powers of the chief executive in the focal institution were immense and paramount. The vice-chancellor (VC) personified an overlord whose dictates were more dreaded than respected (Okoli 2016). With most arbitrary powers to 'hire and fire', the VC was feared as the supreme determinant of career prospects and sustainability. There were cases of irregular appointments as well as the termination of appointments by the management at the instance of the VC. Academics were summoned, questioned, or even penalised for holding critical views, especially of the university administration. There were also cases of gross mistreatment of academics by the university authority under disturbing circumstances.

In 2014, a lecturer was chastised and humiliated for trying to enforce discipline during an examination that he was invigilating. He had stirred a rush at the close of the examination by threatening students to 'hand in their articles or risk being penalised'. In the process, a female student sustained an injury. This caused a commotion, attracting the attention of the VC who was on routine executive supervision in the area. Rather than appreciating the circumstances of the incident objectively, the VC blamed it squarely on the invigilator and charged him to formally apologised to the student and foot the bill of her treatment. This bizarre occurrence signalled the vulnerability of academics in an institution that not only undermined their academic freedom but also negated their dignity.

Establishmentarianist patronage

Establishmentarianist patronage refers to the abuse of public office in the service of particularistic self-regarding interests that are personal or primordial. This tendency had manifested as nepotism and cronyism in the focal university. Nepotistic considerations often predetermined and compromised the process of staff employment, placement, and promotion. Some academics were appointed, placed, or promoted based on parochial sentiments arising from sectionalist, ethnic, religious, or clannish rationalisations. Career advancement and recognition were at best based on a fetishistic recourse to article-credentialism and nominal ranking rather than on intellectual resourcing and productivity (Okoli 2012). By this, the chief executive ensured that his cronies and support agents were mainstreamed into the regular members of academia. This practice promoted an obnoxious organisational culture where sycophancy and hypocrisy were prided as standard marks of efficiency and loyalty. Nonetheless, what was reproduced and perpetuated in such a 'spoil system' was systemic inefficiency and mediocrity.

Management–union tension

One of the critical manifestations of the abusive system under review was management–union tension and attendant industrial contestations. The endeavours of the academic staff union to resist or change the status quo often engendered backlashes whose outcomes threatened harmonious industrial relations. For obvious reasons, the management often sought to subvert the strength of the union by targeting its leaders for persecution under diverse pretexts. A system of structural inducement and victimisation was put in place to condition radically inclined scholars into acquiescence. The

consequence of this was a dialectical institutional ambience where enduring stability could not be guaranteed. The implications for institutional progress and sustainability (cf. Okoli 2016) were diversely ominous.

Of Bureau-varsity: Implications for Institutional Autonomy and Academic Freedom

An ideal university (although one is hardly found nowadays, anyway) is a collegial entity. In this system, leadership is a shared responsibility that is performed at the different committee levels, from the Senate (Central Academic Board) to the various faculty and departmental boards. Leadership in this context is based on academic tenure and expertise, peer consultation, shared governance, and collegial democracy (Taiwo 2011; Babalola 2014). Decision-making flows laterally from the faculty and allied academic platforms to management in a systematically devolved bottom-up pattern. This is not with any prejudice to the prerogative of the management in matters peculiar to the establishment. The bureaucratisation of the university in the fashion highlighted in the preceding section stifles the collegial tradition of the university. More significantly, it vitiates the tenets of institutional autonomy and academic freedom.

To reiterate and amplify what has been said earlier in this study, institutional autonomy relates to the relationship between the university and its diverse stakeholders concerning relative but functional operational 'dependence' of the university administration or its faculties (Osisioma 2012; Mukoro 2013; Abdullaheem and Muhammed 2014). It is a matter of leveraging the powers and responsibilities of the university or the faculty thereof to bolster its operational efficiency and integrity. There are two dimensions to institutional autonomy, namely external and internal/local (Martin 2016). External autonomy refers to the relationship between the university and the wider society, including the state, industry, and donor agencies. Internal autonomy has to do with the relationship between the university authority and (management/administration) and the faculty. It is concerned with the functional operational autonomy and self-determination of the faculty, especially about the academic policies of the university. The concept of institutional autonomy in this study refers discretely to its internal dimension.

What then does the 'bureau-varsity' tradition presented in this study portend for institutional autonomy and academic freedom? It reduces the faculty to a mere appendage of the management by usurping its statutory mandate. Consequently, critical decisions regarding recruitment, tenure, promotion, discipline, curriculum, and welfare are made at the managerial

level without recourse to the faculty. Rather than being a centre of excellence in terms of collegial relations and academic leadership, the faculty becomes a space for establishmentarianist politics and patronage. In this context, leadership roles are negotiated and assumed through sycophancy rather than meritocracy. This creates an abusive organisational culture that celebrates mediocrity over excellence. About academic freedom, it leaves much to be desired. The faculty has little or no control over the structure and content of the curriculum. A strict epistemic and pedagogic censorship prevails over what is to be taught and how teaching is delivered. In effect, scholarship is tightly circumscribed and reduced to exercise in deference to orthodoxy.

Bureaucratic correctness in the context of university governance is not wholly negative, and this study is not entirely averse to it. But overbureaucratisation of the university in the measure x-rayed above is tantamount to the emasculation of free scholarship. This is antithetical to the original calling of the university. It also negates one of the cardinal organising principles of a modern democratic society, the principle of liberal thought. This is instructive considering the avowed status of the university as a prime agent of modern civilisation and societal transformation. Alas, while the wider society is making incremental progress towards democratisation, African universities are relapsing into the morass of liberal retrogression essentialised by bureaucratic centralism.

Conclusion and Recommendations

University is one of the critical centres of civilisation. It is a community where the best and finest of human ideals are espoused. It is also a centre of excellence in terms of human practices and principles. Two of the most acclaimed and cherished principles of the university community are collegialism and liberalism. The former relates to the belief in peer academic leadership, while the latter has to do with academic freedom as well as tolerance of alternative viewpoints. These are operational principles in an ideal university where the faculty and academia hold a stake in institutional decision-making. The institutional dynamics in the focal university system, however, tended to make the realisation of these values at best problematic. The growing bureaucratic and centralist tendencies in the university administration occasioned management–faculty relations that negated the culture of collegiality, thereby undermining institutional autonomy and academic freedom. It is in the light of this understanding that the study examined the contours and implications of the erosion of collegiality in Nigeria's nascent federal universities.

From the illustrative standpoint of what passes for a quintessential case, the study observed that there was a sustained downturn in the collegial ethos of the university to such an extent that the faculty was undermined. The study identified the indicators of these tendencies, which included usurpation of faculty powers by the management, clericalisation of academic staff, establishmentarianist patronage, executive authoritarianism, excessive regulation and control, and management–union tension. These failures imply that the bureaucratic imperatives of management were overriding collegial concerns at the faculty. So, as the university grew in bureaucratic practice, the culture of collegiality gave way to a hierarchical institutional order where internal autonomy and academic freedom virtually constituted endangered practices.

To reverse this awkward trend, there was a need for an institutional reform aimed at devolving the university governance strategically in a manner that restored the functional autonomy of the faculty alongside the sovereignty of its academia. To be meaningful and sustainable, such reform must prioritise the revitalisation of faculty-based collegial structures, such as the faculty and departmental board, the peer committees, and relevant staff associational forum. The strength and vitality of the faculty as the nucleus of decision-making should be restored through strategic measures, such as the election of deans and heads of departments, peer-reviewed promotion and recognition, as well as strict adherence to the statutory provisions that govern official staff relations, especially in respect of discipline and welfare.

Acknowledgements

The author gladly acknowledges CODESRIA and its team of staff for funding his participation in the 2019 Higher Education Policy Initiative (HEPI) Institute at Accra, Ghana. The origin and substance of this article owe a lot to the Institute.

References

Abdullaheem, I., and Muhammed, A., 2014, Corporate Governance in Nigerian Higher Education: Issues and Challenges, *European Journal of Business and Management*, Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 221–228.

Arikewuyo, M. O., 2013, The Challenge of Academic Freedom in the Nigerian University System, *Makerere Journal of Higher Education,* Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 247–259.

Aspromourgos, T., 2012, The Managerialist University: An Economic Interpretation, *Australian Journal of Universities Review,* Vol. 54, No. 2, pp. 44–49.

Babalola, A. A., 2014, University Autonomy, and Good Governance, Text of a lecture delivered at the 2014 Conference of the Committee of Pro-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities, Shehu Musa Yar'adua Center, Abuja, 10-11 June.

Baldridge, J. V., 1971, Models of University Governance: Bureaucratic, Collegial and Political, Research and Development Memorandum, Vol. 77, Stanford University.

Bricks, N., 2013, An Overview of University Education and Administration in Nigeria, Lecture delivered to members of the Governing Council of Rivers State University of Science and Technology, Port Harcourt, 23 January 2013.

Deem, R., 1998, 'New Managerialism' and Higher Education: The Management of Performances and Cultures in Universities in the United Kingdom, *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 47–70 (https://doi.org/10.1080/0962021980020014).

Ekundayo, E. T., and Adedokun, M. O., 2009, The Unresolved Issue of University Autonomy and Academic Freedom in Nigerian Universities, *Humanity and Social Sciences,* Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 61–76.

Engwall, L., 2007, The Universities, the State and the Market. Changing Patterns of University Governance, *Higher Education and Policy,* Vol. 19, pp. 87–104.

Ernst, B., 2009, The Erosion of the Tenure System and Academic Collective Bargaining in the Academy: An AAUP Perspective, *Journal of Collective Bargaining in the Academy*, Vol. 1, No. 0, pp. 17–35 (http://thekeep.eiu.edu/jeba/vol0/iss4/17).

Harvey, L., 2016, The New Collegialism: Improvement with Accountability, Article originally presented at the 16thAnnual EAIR Forum, Amsterdam, 21–24 August.

Jonathan, R., 2006, *Academic Freedom, Institutional Autonomy and Public Accountability in Higher Education: A Framework for Analysis of the 'State-sector' Relationship*, Pretoria: The Council for Higher Education.

Jowi, J. O., 2018, Deans in Kenyan Universities: Their Leadership Styles and Impacts on Staff Commitment, PhD. Thesis, University of Twente, Enschede, The Netherlands (https://doi.org/10.3990/1.9789036545570).

Leslie-Hughes, D. H. H., 2013, English Universities: Managerial Movement from Academic Collegial Administration to Corporate Managerialism, MA. Dissertation, Hertfordshire Business School, University of Hertfordshire.

Lesniaski, D., MacPherson, K. H., Fister, B., and McKinzie, S., 2001, Collegial Leadership in Academic Libraries, Proceedings of the Tenth National Conference of the Association of College and Research Libraries, pp. 233–239 (https://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/conferences/pdf/lesniaski.pdf).

Mama, A., 2006, Towards Academic Freedom for Africa in the 21st Century, *Journal of Higher Education in Africa /Revue de l'Enseignement Supérieur en Afrique*, Vol. 4, No. 3, pp. 1–32.

Marini, G., and Reale, E., 2016, How does Collegiality Survive Managerially Led Universities? Evidence from a European Survey, *European Journal of Higher Education,* Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 112–127.

Martin, B. R., 2016, What's Happening to our Universities?, *Prometheus: Critical Studies in Innovation,* Vol. 34, No. 1, pp. 7–24.

McLean, I., and McMillan, A., 2003, *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mignot-Gerard, S., 2003, 'Leadership' and 'Governance' in the Analysis of University Organisations: Two Concepts in Need of Deconstruction, *Higher Education Management Policy*, Vol. 15, No. 1, pp. 135–164.

Mooney, D., Burns, D., and Chadwick, S., 2012, Collegial Leadership: Deepening Collaborative Processes to Advance Mission and Outcome, in *A Collection of Articles on Self-study and Institutional Improvement*, Chicago: High Learning Commission.

Mukoro, A. S., 2013, The Erosion of University Freedom and Autonomy: Nigerian Experience, *Journal of Education and Social Rese*arch, Vol. 3, No. 6, pp. 129–137.

Murphy, M., 2008, Finding the Fault-line of Accountability: Higher Education, Bureaucracy and Academic Identity, Article presented at the British Educational Research Association's Annual Conference, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, 3-6 September.

Nwasaka, K. O., 2014, Bureaucracy, and Decision-making in Public Universities in Uganda: A Comparative Survey, PhD thesis, Mbarara University of Science and Technology, Uganda.

Nybom, T., 2008, *University Autonomy: A Matter of Political Rhetoric?* London, UK: Portland Press.

Ogbogu, C. O., 2013, The Role of Committees in the Decision-making Process in Nigerian Universities, *International Journal of Business and Management*, Vol. 8, No. 16, pp. 72–77.

Ogunbadeniyi. O. and Uhunmwuangho, S. O., 2014, Strategies for Effective Governance in Nigeria: The University of Benin in Focus, *AFRREV-IJAH: An International Journal of Arts and Humanities,* Vol. 3, No. 4, pp. 157–175.

Okoli, A. C., 2016, Leadership and Institution-building in Federal University Lafia, 2011-2015, *FULafia Journal of Social Sciences* (Maiden Edition), pp. 51–62.

Okoli, A. C., 2012, Credentialism and Bastardisation of Academic Publishing in Nigeria: A Comment, *Journal of Development Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 93–98.

Okorosaye-Orubite, A. K., Paulley, G. F. and Abraham, N. M., 2012, University Autonomy, Academic Freedom and Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) Struggles in Nigeria: A Historical Perspective, *Asian Social Science*, Vol. 8, No. 12, pp. 265–275.

Olorunsola, E.O., 2018, Erosion of Autonomy: The Pitfall of Educational Management in Nigerian Universities, *International Journal of Educational Administration and Policy Studies,* Vol. 10, No. 4, pp. 33–38.

Ordorika, I., 2013, The Limits of University Autonomy: Power and Politics at the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico, *Higher Education,* Vol. 46, pp. 361–388.

Osisioma, B. C., 2012, Governance in Nigerian Universities: The Position of the University Internal Auditor, Article presented at National Conference of Committee of Heads of Internal Audit Departments in Nigerian Universities, Federal University of Technology, Owerri (https://www.academia.edu/4177504/governance_in_nigerian_universities).

Pollitt, C., 2014, Managerialism redux?, Keynote Address to the 2014 EIASM Conference, Edinburgh, 24 August (https://soc.kuleuven.be/io/nieuws/managerialism-redux.pdf).

Rabah, I., 2015, Introduction of the Collegial Model: Erosion of the Collegial Model, Shared Governance and Academic Tenure, *Global Journal of Management and Business Research*, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 25–36.

Russell, C., 1993, *Academic Freedom,* New York: Routledge.

Singh, P., 2005, Use of the Collegial Leadership Model of Emancipation to Transform Traditional Management Practices in Secondary Schools, *South African Journal of Education*, Vol. 25, No. 1, pp. 11–18.

Taiwo, E. A., 2011, Regulatory Bodies. Academic Freedom and Institutional Autonomy: Issues and Challenges—The Nigerian Experience, *Journal of Higher Education in Africa/Revue de l'Enseignement Supérieur en Afrique,* Vol. 9, No. 1–2, pp. 63–89.

Weinberg, A. M. and Graham-Smith, G., 2012, Collegiality: Can It Survive the Corporate University?, *Social Dynamics*, Vol. 38, No. 1, pp. 68–86.