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**THE PERCEPTION OF THE EFFECTS OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM, UNIVERSITY AUTONOMY
AND DEMOCRATIC PROCESS IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA:
(A CASE STUDY OF STUDENTS, ADMINISTRATORS AND LECTURERS)**

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ABSTRACT

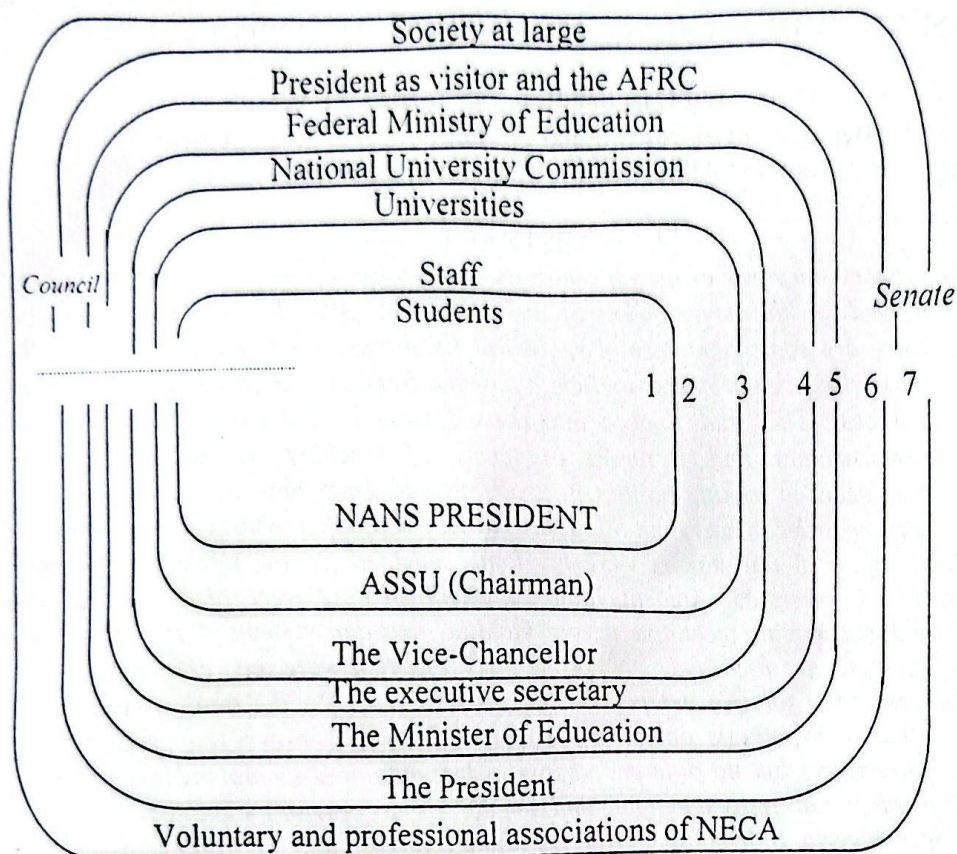
One of the primary purposes of the university is the production of effective and efficient manpower needed for the development of the nation. In order for this purpose to be actualized, there are some fundamental requirements the university needs to be able to succeed. Some of these requirements include Academic freedom, University Autonomy and Democratic process. This study looked into these factors to find out the perception of students, administrators and lecturers in terms of teaching, research/publication, participation in decision making politics in academic life, community service, democratic rights of citizen. In order to carry out this study successfully, 3 hypotheses were formulated to guide the study, 10 universities were randomly selected for the study and for each university, 250 lecturers, 50 students and 50 administrators were also selected with stratified random sampling technique across faculties and departments of the universities used. The questionnaire used had seventy-five questions that were answered on a 5 point likert scale, the t-test for two independent means was used for the analysis and it was discovered that in hypothesis one, there was a difference between the perceptions of students and lecturers but no difference between lecturers and administrators regarding academic freedom, university autonomy and democratic process in the management of the universities in Nigeria. In hypothesis two, age was considered and a difference was seen in the perceptions of students and lecturers but no difference was seen between lecturers and administrators and in hypothesis three, sex was the factor looked at, there was differences when the male and female students and male and female lecturers perceptions were compared. But that of male and female lecturers as compared to male and female administrators, there was no difference. Recommendations such as students being more enlightened on the concept of university autonomy, universities allowed to run without interference from the government, participation of the stakeholders in the running of the universities makes them feel part ownership of the university, were made.

INTRODUCTION

The university anywhere in the world is a complex organization. Every complex organization is characterized by multiple goals and objectives. In achieving these goals certain structures have to be put in place. The university also has to cope with the complex structures of formal and informal groups as well as critical and horizontal internal differentiations, there exist a number of official and unofficial interest groups whose activities in the course of promoting their private interest often function of negate the central direction and promotion of the primary purpose of the university. The formal groups are the university administrators, university teachers, various students groups, non-academic staff, religious denominations etc. Figure 1 explain better.

The Perception of the Effects of Academic Freedom, University Autonomy and Democratic Process in the Management of the Universities in Nigeria: (A Case Study of Students, Administrators and Lecturers)

Figure 1: The university community



Source: Sanders 2006

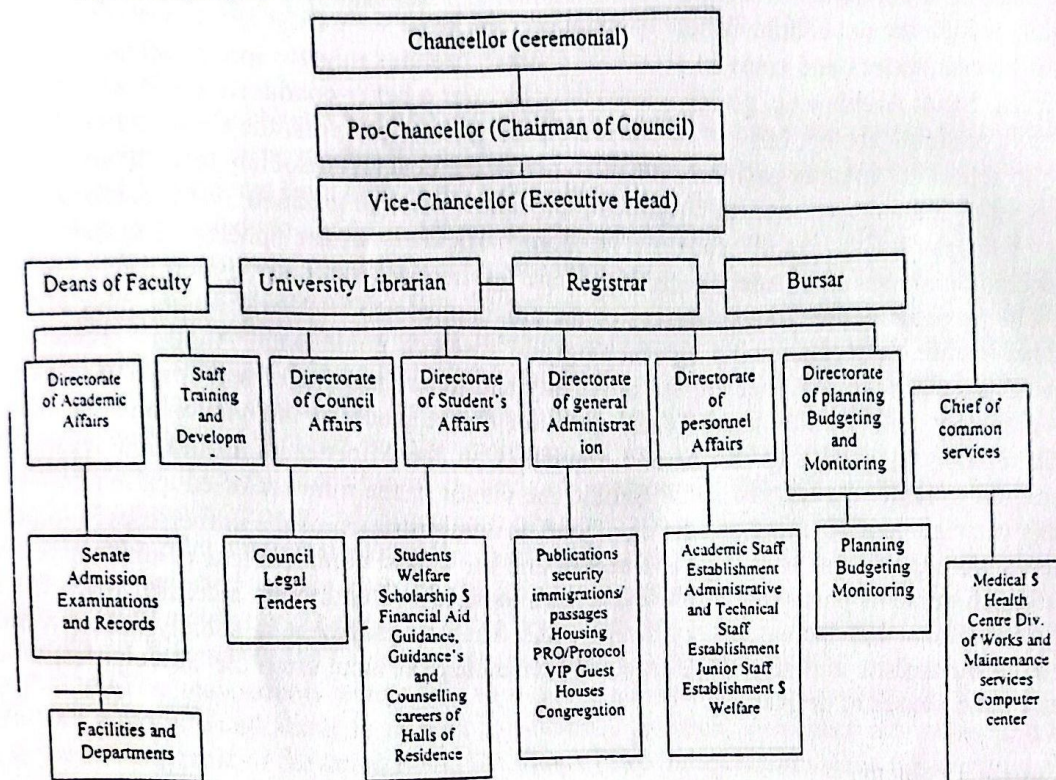
The university is microcosm of the larger society and in order to manage such a community and still maintain the quality and integrity of university education, the individual and group interests need to be consciously reconciled with the goals and objectives that a university must pursue for its students, its workers and society at large. The universal objective of the university all over the world is the pursuit of truth and the liberation of the mind through research, intellectual debates and learning (Joseph 2007). The Nigerian National Policy of Education (2004) further elaborated the specific aims of higher education in Nigeria as consisting of:

- (a) The acquisition, development and inculcation of the proper value orientation for the survival of the individual and society.
- (b) The development of intellectual capacities of individuals to understand and appreciate their environment.
- (c) The acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to develop to useful members of the community.
- (d) The acquisition of an objective view of the local and external environments. (Sections 32 and 33).

In practical and more specific terms, the tasks of admission of students, examination administration, course administration and certification of students, recruitment, retention of high quality teachers and administrators and provision of infrastructural facilities represent the targeted goals internal to the university system. All these are very often negatively affected by crisis situation in the university. The individual goals attainment within the university system are both contingent upon the existence of university autonomy, the prevalence of academic freedom, democratic process of decision making, adequate provision of human and material resources and their efficient management within the universities., on the other hand, the government's goal of total control and power over the education sector in general and in the university system in particular sets in motion relations of power conflict between the internal and the motion relations of power of the university system the figure 2 below is the structure of the university which explain the differentiation and connection of segments and divisions that work together to actualize goals of the university.

The Structure of the University

Figure 2: Organogram of the University



Source- Sanders, 2006

Background to the Study

Academic freedom has been define as: "The principal designed to protect the teacher from the hazards that tend to prevent him from meeting his obligations in the pursuit of truth", (Kirk 2005). This definition, however, appears to be in favour of the scholar. The goals of teaching, research and public service certainly requires an academic setting in which the scholar can express himself freely and without avoidable inhibitions. Sanda (2006) also defines academic freedom as the freedom that connotes freedom to organize the university, design and teach courses of subjects, associated with others, projects, imbibe, exchange and hold ideas without fears of harassment, victimization or contradictions, all in the pursuit of truth. Unfortunately this definition is yet to prevails in the Nigerian universities. What is quite often condemned is the internal bickering and discussion in the university is viewed internally as normal juxtaposition of contending views and scrutiny of examination and re-examination procedure, or admission regulations, recruitment and promotion exercise or the reigning academic ethos. All these have however, suffered severe curtailment as a result of perpetually inadequate financial subvention, with many universities receiving less than fifty percent of their projected budget, breakdown of equipment, decay and deteriorating of physical infrastructure, especially in the older universities, remunerations which are not proportional to the galloping inflation in the society, fear of premature retirement or rationalization of programmes as a result of government over-regulation of university life, including sometimes outright ban of university teacher's association. All these and more are negative development in the Nigerian university system which inadequate autonomy have birthed, (the decline in the morale of academic staff, the increasing manifestation of egoism and goal displacement and the resultant "dropping out" of many academic staff members out of

the university system is also as a result of inadequate autonomy). Perhaps, the situation is largely a consequence of other development in the political and economic environment of the universities. In spite of growth of salary which are not commensurate to inflation rate, large scale exist of many academics from the universities to private sectors and some in search of greener pastures migrate into developed societies like Europe, America, Saudi Arabia e.t.c, giving a university lecturer a better conducive environment to work he would opt for it. students are not left out in the search for greener pastures, they also prefer to developed society to go to school for greener pastures, they also prefer the developed society to go to school (Ayodele 2007). Because they learn more, better environment, they know when to graduate. What could have been the main causes of despair? The loss of academic freedom particularly in the spheres of research, teaching, learning, association and spheres (Adegbite 2006). Some teachers described as "extremists" were no longer to be heard! The perpetually precarious finances of the universities was another problem, once salaries were paid, any other matter financial, including teaching and research could wait. Another problem was the question of relevance or responsiveness of the university and its programme of teaching and research to the nation's development and fourthly there is the question of the place of the visitor and the Minister of Education in relation to university senate and council. Can the Minister of Education legally direct a university council to remove a tenured staff? Should the visitor or the minister of education be involved in the day-to-day management i.e hiring and firing of staff in administration of the universities? (Akpan 2007). These concerns were the threats to academic freedom and the almost complete loss of university autonomy in an era in which students enrolment at all levels have experienced enormous increase, when the demand for university education has increased very steeply, and when development in society required more than ever before, the humanistic and scientific, especially technological input from the universities, what could have been the main causes of despair.

Statement of the Problem

Based on the background, it would seem that the universities in Nigeria are not enjoying total autonomy, total academic freedom, and total democratic process of administration and due to this, strikes which are sometimes local and other times national, occur every now and then, these has brought untold hardship to the university administration, university calendar altered and because teaching and learning is not consisted, students have not learnt enough to be confident and competent enough to answer examination questions consequently this lead to examination malpractice which produces half baked graduates who are suppose to be the nation's developers, the worry of this researcher is that, when the nation have graduates that have not been properly groomed on the rudiments needed for them to meaningfully contribute their own quota to the development of the nation, how can the nation ever progress, technologically and be recognized in the committee of nations of the world. Transfer of technology is the order of the day and even at that, the maintenance of this technology so transferred is a problem. Undoubtedly there are other factors that has militated against the development of the nation but this study was concerned about university autonomy, academic freedom and the democratic process of administration in the university. The perception of students, lecturers and administrators of the effects of these factors to the university management was looked at, to help the researcher carry out a proper study the following research questions were asked:-

1. Is there any significant difference in the perceptions of students, administrators, and lecturers regarding the effects of academic freedom, university autonomy and democratic process to the management of universities in Nigeria?
2. Has age anything to do with the way students, administrators and lecturers perceive the situation.
3. Has sex anything to do with the way students, administrators, and lecturing perceive the situation.

From the questions above, research hypotheses were formulated thus:

1. There is no significant difference in the perceptions of students, administrations and lectures regarding the effects of academic freedom, university autonomy and democratic process in the management of the universities in Nigeria.
2. There is no significant difference in the perceptions of students administrators and lecturers regardless of age, on the effects of academic freedom, university autonomy and democratic process in the management of the universities in Nigeria.
3. There is no significant difference in the perception of students, administrators and lecturers regardless of sex, on the effects of academic freedom, university autonomy and democratic process in the management of the universities in Nigeria. The purpose of this study is to determine if there is significant difference between the

perception of students, administrators and lecturers, to find out if sex and age differences affect their perceptions of the three factors.

METHODOLOGY

As at the time of this study Nigeria had 100 universities and 10% was selected. Using the stratified random sampling, 10 universities were randomly selected across Nigeria, from each university, 250 lecturers, 50 administrators and 50 students from each of the universities were also randomly selected across faculties and department, this amounted to 3,500 subjects in the population out of which 2,200 lecturers, 350 administrators and 450 students returned their answered questionnaires which formed the sample that was used, the total 3,000 samples was used across the nation. The hypotheses were accepted at the p.05 level of significance. The questionnaire was the major research instrument which had about seventy-five questions on section "B" while section "A" was occupied with questions about respondents Biodata such as sex, age, status. The questionnaire asked the respondents, their opinions about academic freedom, university autonomy and democratic process in the management of the university as it relates to teaching, research/publications, faculty participation in decision making on students affairs problems, politics in academic life, community service and the exercise of democratic rights of citizens. The reliability coefficient was 0.86 based on a pilot study that was earlier conducted, using ten participants each from outside the study group these were selected among each of the groups respectively. The split half method was used to establish the level of reliability. The scoring of the responses was based on the five (5) point likert scale on a continuum of 1 to 5, representing (1) as strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) No opinion, (4) Agree and (5) Strongly Agree. The respondents were asked to tick the appropriate options suitable for them regarding certain factors already listed above in relation to academic freedom, university autonomy and democratic process in the management of the universities. The t-test of two independent means was used for the analysis of data.

RESULTS

The views of students, administrators and lecturers are presented below.

Table 1: Perception of students, administrators and lecturers regarding academic freedom, university autonomy and democratic process in the management of Nigerian universities

S/No	University responsibility factors	Students	Administrators	Lecturers
1.	Teaching	150 (33.33%)	100 (28.58%)	400 (18.00%)
2.	Research/publications	100 (22.22%)	50 (14.28%)	400 (18.00%)
3.	Participation in decision making on students affairs problems.	100 (22.22%)	25 (7.14%)	350 (15.00%)
4.	Politics in academic life	50 (11.11%)	25 (7.14%)	200 (9.00%)
5.	Community service	20 (4.44%)	100 (28.58%)	600 (29.00%)
6.	The exercise of democratic rights of citizens	30 (6.66%)	50 (14.28%)	250 (11.00%)
	Total	450 (100%)	350 (100%)	2,200 (100%)

Hypothesis 1: States that, "There is no significant difference between the perception of students, administrators and lecturers regarding the effects of academic freedom, university autonomy and democratic process in the management of the universities in Nigeria.

Hypothesis 1 Analysis

Table 2A: Comparison between the perceptions of students and lecturers

Respondents	N	X	SD	T.calculated	T critical	Df
Students	450	3.08	1.72			
Lecturers	2200	16.26	10.92	4.22	1.96	2,650

P =.05 level of significance

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Table 2B: Comparison between the perceptions of administrators and lecturers

Respondents	N	X	SD	T.calculated	T critical	Df
Administrators	350	12.11	6.21			
Lecturers	2200	16.26	10.92	1.45	1.96	2,550

P = .05 level of significance

It is observed from table 2a that the calculated value of 4.22 in the comparison of students and lecturers, is greater than the critical value of 1.96. This means that the null hypothesis was rejected and that there is a significant difference in the perception of students and lecturers concerning the effects of academic freedom, University Autonomy and democratic process in the management of the universities in Nigeria.

The results from table 2b however showed a difference from table 2a. The calculated value in table 2b that had administrators and lecturers as respondents is 1.45 when compared to the critical value of 1.96, the calculated value is less than the critical value, this means that the null hypothesis of "no significant difference" is retained. In other words, the perceptions of administrators and lecturers concerning the effects of academic freedom, university autonomy and democratic process in the management of universities in Nigeria are the same.

Hypothesis 2: States that: There is no significant difference in the perception of students, administrators and lecturers regardless of age, on the effects of academic freedom, university autonomy and democratic process in the management of the universities in Nigeria.

Table 3A: Comparison between the perceptions of students and lecturers regarding the effects of Academic Freedom, University autonomy and democratic process in the management of Nigerian universities taking into cognizance their age

Respondents	N	X	SD	T.calculated	T critical	Df
Students	450	1.60	1.86			
Lecturers	2,200	10.23	5.55	2.06	1.96	2600

The result here, rejects the null hypothesis when age is taking into consideration between students and lecturers in other words there is a significant difference between their perceptions because the calculated T of 2.06 is greater than the table value of 1.96.

Table 3B: Comparison between the perceptions of lecturers and administrators regarding the effects of Academic Freedom, University autonomy and democratic process in the management of Nigerian universities taking into cognizance their age

Respondents	N	X	SD	T.calculated	T critical	Df
Administrators	350	1.62	0.86			
Lecturers	2,200	4.03	1.10	1.23	1.96	2,550

The result in table 3b comparing the perceptions of administrators and lecturers showed that there is no significant difference between the perceptions of administrators and lecturers when age is taken into cognizance on the effect of academic freedom, university autonomy and democratic process in the management of Nigerian universities. This is known from the statistical data available above showing that the calculated value of 1.23 is less than the critical or table value of 1.96, the null hypothesis is retained.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the perceptions of students, administrators and lecturers regardless of sex, on the effects of academic freedom, university autonomy and democratic process in the management of the universities in Nigeria.

Table 4A: Comparison between the perceptions of students and lecturers regarding the effects of Academic Freedom, University autonomy and democratic process in the management of universities in Nigerian taking into cognizance their sex

Respondents	N	X	SD	T.calculated	T critical	Df
Students	450	2.13	1.05			
Lecturers	2,200	6.55	2.86	2.04	1.96	2650

The above table shows that the perceptions of students and lecturers regarding academic freedom, university autonomy and democratic process in the management of Nigerian universities when sex is taken into cognizance is different. In other words because the calculated value of 2.04 is more than the critical value of 1.96, the null hypothesis is rejected for the alternate hypothesis which states that there is a significant difference in perceptions when sex is taken into consideration.

Table 4B: Comparison between the perceptions of administrators and lecturers regarding the effects of Academic Freedom, University autonomy and democratic process in the management of universities in Nigerian taking into cognizance their sex

Respondents	N	X	SD	T.calculated	T critical	Df
Administrators	350	1.92	1.02			
Lecturers	2,200	4.20	2.46	1.16	1.96	2550

The above table shows that there is no significant difference in the perception of administrators and lecturers regarding the effects of academic freedom, universities autonomy and democratic process in the management of universities in Nigerian when sex is taken into cognizance, looking at the above table it is concluded that the null hypothesis is retained because the calculated value of 1.16 is less than the critical value of 1.96.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The result from this study in table 2a showed that the Calculated Value of 4.22 is greater than the Table Value of 1.96 so there was a significant difference in the perception of students and lecturers regarding the effects of academic freedom, university autonomy and democratic process in the management of universities in Nigeria. The findings in the questionnaires showed that majority of the students supported academic freedom and democratic process in the management of the universities but were against university autonomy. This may be so because of certain changes that may occur, in other words if universities were to be given full autonomy, then the school fees will be skyrocketed above the reach of the common man. They were however in full support of academic freedom and democratic process. The result in table 2B showed that the Calculated Value of 1.45 was less than the table value or critical value of 1.96 meaning that the null hypothesis was retained, in other words the perceptions of the administrators and lecturers are the same regarding the effects of academic freedom, university autonomy and democratic process. This agreed with the studies of Ehiemetalor (1985), Kirk (2005), Sanda (2006) and Joseph (2007). This study proved that each group of respondents would like very much to participate fully in the running of the university.

The results in tables 3A revealed that the calculated value of 2.06 was greater than the critical value of 1.96, therefore there was a significant difference between students and lecturers when age was put into consideration but in table 3B between administrators and lecturers, there was no significant difference with a calculated value of 1.23 as compared to table value of 1.96. The difference in age and level of understanding on the part of students may provide an explanation why the difference in perception is present, the findings of this hypothesis disagreed with the studies of Cameron (1984), Zamuto (1990) and Tawio (2001).

The results in tables 4A and 4B revealed that when sex was put into cognizance, perceptions of students and lecturers regarding the effects of academic freedom, university autonomy and democratic process in the management of Nigerian universities, was different. It was discovered that there was a significant difference between the perceptions of male and female students when compared with that of the male and female lecturers. The difference in age may have also played an important role in the perceptions of the two groups. Cole (1991), Elboim-Door (2003). This study however revealed that there were no significant differences in the perceptions of the administrators and lecturers when sex was considered. This agreed with Ehiemetalor (1985) Eloit (1996), Aaron (2005), Adegbite (2006).

CONCLUSION

The stakeholders of this study such as the lecturers, administrators and students are of the view that academic freedom, university autonomy and democratic process are essential ingredients for the effective and efficient management of the university. This has been agreed by this three groups that when these essential elements are lacking there are problems that cannot be avoided, Tawio (2001) in his study discovered that the university that is not operating in an atmosphere of academic freedom feels threatened and intimidated and the rate of workers turn over remain high. Ayodele (2007) also supported this study.

The Nigerian universities as it is today, is yet to experience an environment of total academic freedom, university autonomy and democratic process, and the study revealed that all three groups feel the same way

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except that majority of students were not in full support of University autonomy but they gave their full support to academic freedom and democratic process, although there was a significant difference in the perceptions of the students concerning the university autonomy, this study recommends that students be more enlightened about this concept, government should allow the university community a free hand to run their affairs without interferences. from them. The university should and must be given total freedom especially in the area of teaching, research, publications, participation in decision-making. politics in academic life, community service, exercising democratic rights of citizens and academic exercises without interferences. The government must understand that involving stakeholders in the running of the is important as this makes them feel part ownership of the university. The university is an integral part of the nation, a body of knowledge that can be very helpful to national development and advancement and if there are hindrances, the university will not be able to truly fulfill her purposes. Osama (2003) agrees that to be able to attain qualitative education, academic freedom and university autonomy are inevitable ingredients needed. Studies such as Major (2005), Cannon (2007), Kanayo, (2009) also support this study's findings. Further studies are recommended in this area such as soliciting for the views and perceptions of parents, students and government or her representatives.

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