



Review Article – Humanities

Academic freedom and autonomy in the Universities: Past and present

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Abstract

Academic freedom and autonomy have since mediaeval times been considered the hubs around which critical and independent thinking revolved. Men like Socrates, Copernicus, Galileo and Bertrand Russell suffered many indignities in defence of these ideals. Hiring and firing Vice-Chancellors always raise the issue of academic freedom in universities to choose their teachers and operate within their ivory towers without any interference. Besides observations, the work relied on literature review. The paper defines academic freedom and autonomy, carefully details how university councils, academic boards and other committees have resisted outside intrusions into these cherished ideals. Unsuccessful onslaughts at the freedom and autonomy of universities have only called for more consultations and collaboration between governments and university leaderships. This ideal relationship is to harmonise scholastic pursuits with national goals and aspirations. While one cannot expect the government, as financiers of public universities, to look on unconcerned about what happens inside its universities. An appreciation of each other's expectations and roles can harness national development without any players feeling traumatized and befuddled. Increased participation of academics in partisan politics and scrupulous regard for merit and committee work in universities will not only improve government understanding of universities, but also create peaceful industrial atmospheres in universities to render both interference and censure unnecessary.

Keywords: Academic Freedom, University Autonomy, Academic Excellence, Universities, Governance.

Introduction

Academic freedom and autonomy were and still remain cherished ideals since the first university came into being. These ideals have been supported and defended by senior administrative and academic staff as central to the lives of universities. Attempts by some governments to curtail the freedom and rights of university staff and students and also to determine the nature and structure of academic pursuits brought several governments to ruins (Edward, 1977). Thus, academic excellence in a global world calls for the defence of these ideals which have been cherished over the years.

Nicol (1972) observed, attempts to influence the conduct and career progression of university staff appear to be due partly to the censoriousness of dons and the failure by outside bodies to appreciate the roles of universities in national development. The many retired Vice-Chancellors and Professors elected or appointed to the Council of State to advise the President in Ghana clearly point to the recognition of highly educated persons as being in better positions to make the right choices in our national endeavours.

Theoretical Framework

Academic freedom

Kallen, and Dewey (1941) observed in McGee case suit to prevent Professor Bertrand Russell from being appointed to teach at the City College of New York, said in his ruling that: "Academic freedom does not mean academic license. It is the freedom to do good and not to teach evil.... It does not involve shielding their actions between a complete and

absolute immunity from judicial review." According to Ojo (1987), a former Vice-Chancellor of Fourah Bay College, Davison in Edwards (1977) also remarked that; "Academic freedom cannot be regarded as implying exemption from the laws of the land as far as libel, slander, keeping the peace and sedition are concerned. But a wise government will overlook the apparent transgressions of scholars if it is obvious that their intent is objectively critical and not maliciously subversive" Ojo (1987) further noted that universities should have the liberty to engage in "constant dialogue, querying the known, demolishing existing ideas and venturing into the unknown". To advance the frontiers of knowledge through research and publications as widely as possible looks impossible if someone else will determine what books, journals, subjects or courses should be taught without any reference to those engaged in such knowledge creation and dissemination (Adamolekun, 1981). It would appear therefore that a clear distinction has to be arrived at between what constitutes restraint or censorship in a university from what governments consider as a wider national obligation to harness the energies of staff in the universities. Governments' attempts to influence the course of scholastic pursuits are not frowned upon and considered as denial of academic freedom when consultative approaches to foster national research interests are employed. Every government has interest in its public universities. Governments exercise control through pushing funding into areas compatible with their party and national development goals.

Having said what academic freedom may not be, Nicol (1972) postulates academic freedom, "as the freedom of the

university to select its teachers and students, to set the contents and standards of its curriculum and research to provide a favourable atmosphere where professors and students are free to be involved in creative processes leading to the discovery of new truths and the confirmation of old ones". This definition essentially captures the functions of most academic boards of universities. Ayendele (1981) observed, in the name of academic freedom, boards appoint, promote, dismiss, admit, create new departments, close others and expand some as seen fit without recourse to instructions, commands or decrees from any outside body or bodies. University Councils make statutes which guide the members as they seek to achieve the aims of any university. This paper attempt to deal with some instances of breach of academic freedom which academics frown upon.

University Autonomy

University autonomy, according to Ojo (1987), may be defined as "that freedom granted to each university to manage its affairs without undue interference from outside bodies, persons, governments..." By this definition, autonomy deals with how outside persons, agencies or governments affect a university as one collective body. Autonomy has nothing to do with individual staff agreements with outside agencies even if such agreements could affect other colleagues not directly involved in such social arrangements or contracts. According to Barzun (1969), lack of autonomy entails some outside persons or body interfering with capable internal governance structures in their policy formulation, interpretation and implementation process. The executive, legislature and judicial arms of government need not interfere with policies, decisions and omissions in universities as universities often have their own internal mechanism for conflict resolution in their statutes.

Materials and Methods

Besides observations, the study relied on literature review to discuss the findings.

Discussions and Findings

Leadership and University Politics

Universities are generally very difficult organizations to manage successfully. This has never really been seriously contested. Very thorough character and reference checks are made when a search party is looking for someone to recruit as Vice-Chancellor or Registrar. Ojo (1987) observed that successful candidates need to have tough skins, high tolerance for dissenting views from convocation and as well, respect for collegial values in the universities. Conflicting and overbearing demands from within a university's internal publics and those of the external publics as important stakeholders often put considerable pressure on sitting Vice-Chancellors. As chairmen of almost every conceivable statutory committee, every Vice-Chancellor has to master committee procedures at his/her fingertips, be a good negotiator and know his/her lecturers very well.

Ayendele (1981) posited, it would appear that ever since the first university came into existence, there have always been conservatives and progressives on all academic boards, convocations and councils (Ike, 1987). Teaching and non-teaching staff may lie together like a lion and a lamb but deep seated distrust of each other has continued to deepen and occasionally erupts like a subterranean fire whenever

economic benefits to the constituent groups come up for discussion or debate. Building teams from such groups is often a daunting task.

Of the latter challenges of a Vice-Chancellor, the paper can only recommend Chukwuemeka Ike's "The Naked Gods" for all university staff for an insight into politics among senior staff in universities. Even though Ike wrote it as a fiction, anybody working in a university will recognize that it is a masterpiece from a very keen observer. Over a simple matter like whether a resident engineer, an administrator, could be a chairman or co-opted or standing member, Okoro in Ike (1987) observed rather sarcastically that "A man does not happen to be on the administrative rather than on the academic staff. This is yet to be confirmed when a staff could be appointed to the academic opted for a job that involved the routine perusal of files and dishing out of irrelevant and time-consuming circulars and memoranda".

On realising that according to Bogue (1985), no sign of even a mild protest was coming from the administrators present, the paper continued thus; "The University must nip in the bud the tendency for administrators to lord it over academics, forgetting that administrators should not normally be a constituent part of a university". To Ike (1987), the Registrar, in seeking to bring some "home truths about bloated academics" had replied that: "I take very strong exception to various remarks made by the last speaker. This is not my first university appointment, as it is for him and for some others who have spoken today. One of the first things learnt as an administrator is that higher learning inculcates qualities of humility in all but university dons". According to Ike (1987), before the chairman could bring proceedings to order, Okoro had fired back that: "Without wishing to hurt the Registrar's feelings, it is important to remind him that he is only the secretary to the meeting and not a member. He is to record our decisions, not to contribute to them" Ike (1987). The deep mistrust between administrators and academics does not appear to be over yet and poses deep dilemmas for many Vice-Chancellors to create winsome teams within the bounds of academic freedom of speech. Out of people desiring to work together who are not willing to treat each other with respect. There is no need to stress that when conditions of university staff are bad and research funds and teaching aids are also inadequate, additional tensions easily deepen any structural cracks that already exist.

A Vice-Chancellor's job is therefore a bundle of contradictions due to the many varied skills expected of him (Ojo, 1987). While many good candidates cannot bear to allow themselves to be insulted calculatingly at meetings, there are others who will visit oracles for spiritual assistance to overcome their more glamorous competitors for the job. According to Ike (1987), there are contestants urged on by their zealous wives who don't know the amount of heat on the job. Ike further captured one statement from Mrs. Ike saying "If you detest being a Vice-Chancellor, I do not detest being a Vice-Chancellor's wife". The big challenge is what qualities does a Vice-Chancellor need to contain externalizations at meetings to give meaning to academic freedom within universities? Kerr (1966) pointed out that "a Vice-Chancellor must be a friend of students, a colleague of faculty, a good fellow with alumni, a sound administrator with the state legislature, a friend of industry, labour and agriculture, a

persuasive diplomat with donors, a champion of education generally, a supporter of the professions, a spokesman to the press, a scholar in his own rights.... A decent human being, a good husband and father, an active member of church. Above all, a Vice-Chancellor must enjoy traveling in airplanes, eating his meals in public and attending public ceremonies.”

If this is a denotative definition, is it not too much to expect all these qualities and more in one person? A Vice-Chancellor involved in many of these issues may not have the time to go to church in as much as a man/woman involved in most of these engagements may not be a good husband or wife. If one is a good husband or wife, one may not be a good scholar. Experienced showed that faculty interests are often diametrically opposed to those of students; how can a Vice-Chancellor be a friend of both? There are yet still other character traits some will consider outrageous. Can a bachelor or spinster not be a good Vice-Chancellor because of the mere possibility of faculty and students being his sexual victims, and could childless prospective candidates probably not far better than fathers or mothers because of their childlessness? Because the requirements for the job of a Vice-Chancellor are many, varied and conflicting, some interest groups often pick on a neglected need to lambast a determined chief executive into despondency and resignation. As alluded earlier, a Vice-Chancellor stays at the top of the university bureaucracy. Moodie and Eustace (1974) observed that “the Vice-Chancellor is normally the most important single figure in any university. He may, for better for worse, affect the whole climate of the university. His actions, his personality, his strengths and weaknesses and his attitudes are a frequent topic of academic conversation and gossip”. Take the job and be prepared with your neck on the chopping board or leave it and have your peace.

Illingworth (1971) describes a Vice-Chancellor as the “high priest of teachers and students and managing director of a large-sponsored institute. In his domain, he is the final arbiter of all academic policy and in a wide field, he exercises a profound influence in the educational planning of the whole country”. Life teaches us that it is costly to be successful but safe to be a failure. Academic freedom demands a leader with no skeletons in any cupboard. While it is very difficult to become a Vice-Chancellor, it is very easy to slip and fall when anyone gets there. Vice-Chancellors certainly carry a very big burden on their shoulders. How far they go, depends on how tactical, sensitive and discerning they are with the students, senior staff, communities and politicians around them. Many lose sight of this soon after coming into office and realize this only when it is too late to make acceptable amends. The first Principal of the University College of Lagos said this which I find insightful: “Professors are on the whole an individualistic and quarrelsome lot of people; if there are officials like the Principal and the Registrar, whom they can join together in criticizing and abusing, they have at least something in common, and the shared emotion may lead to co-operation on important academic matters” (Mellan, 1958).

Similarly, a former Vice-Chancellor of the Premier University of Ghana observed during the early days of changeover from a College to an autonomous University that: “Critical independent thinking flourishes only in an atmosphere of free public expression and there is an obvious correlation between the latter and intellectual liveliness (Kwapong, 1972).

Nurturing Academic Freedom and Autonomy

The sanctity of academic freedom among staff of universities lies in their origins. The earliest universities were dedicated to seeking knowledge and disseminating it. They were hard in pursuit of seeking the truth, speaking the truth and defending the truth. According to Edwards (1977) Gordiano Bruno and Socrates paid for these with their lives, but they left a trail that lovers of freedom and truth have kept burning to date. Lerner and Goselin (1986) posits that Bertrand Russell, Galileo, Martin Luther and Copernicus dived into raving controversies with the conviction that humanity would eventually be better served if they illuminated a controversial matter at the peril of their lives. Dickson (1986) looked at issues as to whether the earth was round or flat, whether the earth moved round the sun or the sun moved round the earth, whether God was one or three persons in one God and the concept of resurrection were hotly debated. The Martyrs of Uganda in Africa were burnt alive as heretics for the sake of truth. Some present day religious controversies still have their roots in past controversies which were dealt with but are periodically revisited and challenged by others.

Bertrand (1941) argued that: “The essence of academic freedom is that teachers should be chosen for their expertness in the subject they are to teach, and that the judges of this expertness should be other experts. Whether a man is a good mathematician, or physicist, or chemist, can only be judged by other mathematicians, or physicists or chemists”. In the view of Edwards (1977), this feeling explains why universities use external assessors on interview panels when internal panelists do not have the know-how to evaluate candidate’s grasp of their areas of learning at interviews. Russell in Edwards (1977) further contended that “university teachers ...are ... men with special knowledge and special training as to fit them to approach controversial questions in a manner peculiarly likely to throw light upon them. To decree that they are to be silent on controversial issues is to deprive the community of the benefit which it might derive from their training in impartiality.” Controversies are not necessarily evil. In Ghana the NUGS pursuit of inconsistencies in the outstanding balance accruing to the GET Fund and its threat to go to court eventually compelled the Government to set up a committee which reconciled the inconsistencies to the satisfaction of most discerning Ghanaians (Kelly-Kwami, 2001). The liberty to speak on anything and everything in academia is based on the conviction that only facts are sacred; in the area of opinions, a common decision is sometimes neither necessary nor desirable. Intellectual liveliness is a healthy pastime in academia. Universities would not inspire many people if they shed their censoriousness and ability to make simple things and matters look big and complex.

History informs us in Edwards’ (1977) that one Mrs. Jean Kay, through her advocate, Joseph Goldstein, described Bertrand Russell as “lecherous, libidinous, lustful, venomous, erotomaniac, aphrodisiac, irreverent, narrow-minded, untruthful and bereft of moral fibre” and got away unscathed under the American legal system. In the instant case where Russell was prevented from teaching at City College of New York, after having successfully taught at the Universities of Chicago and California without any furors. Greenberg (2017) in Chancellor Chase of New York University (1933-1951) publicly pointed out that the

granting of the suit had dealt a blow to university autonomy in the following strong language: "The real question is now one which, so far as I know, has never before been raised in the history of higher education in America. It is whether, in an institution supported in whole or in part by public funds, a court, given a taxpayer's suit, has the power to void a faculty appointment on account of an individual's opinion. If the jurisdiction of the court is upheld, a blow has been struck at the security and intellectual independence of every faculty member in every public college and university in the United States. Its potential consequences are incalculable". In the ensuing struggle in defence of university freedom and autonomy, Harvard University employed Bertrand Russell before he was elected to return to England in 1944 (Edwards, 1977).

Academic Freedom and National Development

National governments set the tone for public universities. According to Bailey and Kennedy (1994), Acts establishing public universities and their accompanying statutes often set the boundaries, even if thinly, on what public resources can be used to promote. University curricula usually attempt to deal with pressing national aspirations so that the teacher may address the manpower and knowledge gaps necessary to bring about improved conditions of living. Universities almost always fall one step behind the needs and aspirations of industry, commerce and public interest. Makinde (1976) posited, was due to the conservative nature of universities which often recognizes the need for a change but are always keen to go through all the due processes in formulating, discussing, amending, re-discussing, recommending and finally approving anything not in tandem with their establishment acts or statutes. The committee system in universities solicits the widest possible engagement of available intellectual firepower from which enduring decisions and policies could then be fashioned (Bailey and Kennedy, 1994).

University governance via committees and faculty structures is to entrench not only democracy in the knowledge industry, but also ensure that all the committed human resources within a university can be mobilized against unwarranted restraints on the liberty and autonomy of matters that have been thought through. Kelly-Kwami (2001) posited that as teachers and administrators conduct their teaching, research, service and extension functions, they act as the bearers of the means through which ignorance can be reduced and knowledge and awareness created within the entire social fabric. Sight should not be lost that sometimes the problems retarding development may not be merely lack of resources but a failure to diagnose properly what needs to be done, and who may be helpful in untying the gordian knots that have kept poor people in chains for so long. Research conducted in the universities points teaching and the theories that are propounded inform development practitioners directly and indirectly since universities produce a significant percentage of the highly trained manpower of most nations, they are veritable tools for national development. By creating public awareness and influencing public policy prescriptions, universities also draw public attention to the misplaced expectations of the roles, capabilities and limitations of governments (Irish *et al.*, 1981).

Bailey and Kennedy (1994) cited Renald Reagan's admission of government's inability to meet the growing

expectations of the people in these words: "Government is not the solution to our problem. Government is the problem." Universities are relied upon to lead ordinary folks to the glory land. The more citizens press their claims for government to expand its functions, the greater the risk of government failing to meet such growing demands.

It is in recognition of the role universities play in national development that recent outbursts in the quality of university education have become disturbing especially to those who have benefited and can appreciate the role of vibrant universities as a national asset. Kwami (2001:14) Issues of quality, access, relevance, affordability, equity, gender, geographical spread and quota systems in universities are being raised because of their importance in promoting national cohesion or instability (Kelley-Kwami, 2001). Irish *et al.* (1981) further indicated that a nation that allows the decay of its tertiary educational system or produces persons who cannot secure jobs in the global market except within its national boundaries is heading for unemployment, social tensions and political turmoil. Similarly, when public universities fail to produce the kind of manpower that can adequately deal with its development dilemmas, then their relevance and right to subsist on the taxpayer's money is increasingly eroded until they become deadweights to be disbanded rather than national assets to be supported. The current search for quality, relevance and equity stands threatened if universities do not have academic freedom and autonomy to immerse themselves into research areas of national and global concern.

Promoting and Defending Democracy

Training large numbers of youth in the rudiments of logic, rhetoric and critical independent thinking is a necessary pre-requisite for a vibrant democracy. If we had a legislature where only a few firebrands talked away and the majority looked on in sheepish amazement or simply went to sleep, then democracy would look like pupils sitting at the feet of their teachers for instruction not in their formative years but in their adult lives. Whenever fundamental human liberties are infringed upon, university teachers and students frequently rise up as the conscience of a nation and voice of the voiceless to criticise the offending policy, law, commission or omission, thereby placing issues on the national agenda. The true mark of an educated man is to be able to stand up and resist the ills of his/her time. Academics, students and journalists act as watchdogs and demand accountability from politicians and public servants. Universities in comradeship with journalists demand social justice by striving "to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable (Irish *et al.*, 1981).

History has taught us in the view of Karr (1966) that, academic censorship does not achieve the objective of making un-favourable printed matter unavailable to the reading public. Such banished books go underground, and as those who have read them lament how much they have missed them, this whips up the appetite of those who missed them. The result is that whenever they do re-appear, and they always re-appear, there is a mad rush for copies in case they suffer the ill-fate of disappearance again on the whims and caprices of some person in power. Truth cannot be kept under lock and key for long. It is unstoppable. The right to speak freely within universities is buttressed on the principle that a wrong decision taken in error by the majority is at

least excusable as to when the majority are misled by a single man. Hedde *et al.* (1968) could not have put it better when they observed that “democracy and the system of speechmaking were born together. Since that day we have never had a successful democracy, a successful self-government, unless the leading citizens were effective, intelligent and responsible speakers”. Universities constitute a vast human resource reserve that can teach almost anything to keep a nation afloat. It is not a meaningless venture to master the art of self-defence through speech. Aristotle is reputed to have said that: “if it is a disgrace to a man when he cannot defend himself in a bodily way, it would be absurd not to think him disgraced when he cannot defend himself with reason in speech.” (Hedde *et al.*, 1968).

University Governance and Autonomy

It is prudent to cite some examples in the history of universities where interference from outside agencies and governments were resisted in areas of admissions, staff appointments, promotions, grievance procedure and other irritations for which universities believe they have legitimate mandates and capacity to deal with them internally. While many Vice-Chancellors are usually appointed on the recommendations of search parties working painstakingly through a host of qualified candidates, others are sent home through a simple radio announcement, sometimes not from the same authority that appointed them.

In some universities in the developing countries according to Ojo (1987), breaches of valid contracts are also often without regard to the rules of natural justice. To resign, to be resigned, to be forced out of office, have appointment terminated and to proceed on leave in circumstances pointing to no chance of return are only various forms of prematurely ending the careers of some academics who sacrificed tremendously to the start and growth of their universities. As prelude to the above, the Vice-Chancellor of University of Ghana was asked to proceed on leave over examination leakages in which his son was involved (Mfodwo Committee, 2005). During periods that governments interfere with university governance structures, some staff may resign in defence of intrusions into the autonomy. This affects the stability and programmes of some departments and faculties. When Prof Victor Oyenuga of the University of Ife was dismissed in 1964 after attempts to force him to resign or apologize failed, four senior academics resigned in solidarity with him, seeing no security in a place that flagrantly abused their natural rights (Ojo, 1987). When in 1961 President Nkrumah dismissed the Registrar and Provost, Messrs M. Dowuona and G.L. Smith together with four others, the sitting Principal of the College, Mr. R. H. Stoughton, resigned on grounds that the Chancellor, President Nkrumah, had overstretched his powers and interfered in matters felt to be internal (Eric and Mary, 1963).

At the premier University of Ghana, Dr. Nkrumah's dabbling in the location of the University of Ghana Medical School, detention of senior staff under the then Preventive Detention Act, interference in the appointments of heads of departments and professors, directives to the University to amend statutes in order not to breach decisions and actions taken outside the Academic Board and Council, instructions to transfer the Institute of Education at the University of Ghana to Cape Coast without prior discussion and approval of the affected Academic Board and Councils were seen as

blatant interference in the domestic affairs of otherwise perceived autonomous bodies (Kwapong, 1972).

This paper has already alluded to how an attempt to recruit Bertrand Russell to lecture in America went to court for which those in academia felt it was an unwarranted intrusion by the judiciary into the domestic affairs of the City College of New York. Similarly, at the University for Development Studies, Tamale. The National Democratic Congress government set up a committee at the Castle under Prof. Awoonor to determine the final allocation of campuses (Effah, 2018). Of concern to any reader was the fact that the Benneh Committee, the University Academic Board and its Interim Council had agreed on the final disposition of campuses as indicated in the Benneh Report. Although it was clearly the duty of the Council to settle this on the recommendation of the Academic Board. The said Castle Committee recommended that the temporary relocation of the Faculty of Integrated Development Studies at Navrongo should become the permanent home of the Faculty. The Academic Board rejected this on the grounds that political considerations should least form the basis of a well-thought out system by several experts. When the Party fell from power, the Academic Board and Council triumphed in the saga. More recently, University for Development Studies have been splatted into three main autonomous campuses to be Regional based in the three Northern Regions of Ghana. That is Wa in the upper west region and Navrongo in the upper east regions respectively (Daily Graphic, November 12, 2018).

The Judiciary and University Autonomy

It is noteworthy that the judiciary has always been careful not to entertain suits from universities probably because most of them, as alumni of universities, know that universities have internal mechanisms for dispute resolution and prefer to treat disputes within universities as domestic matters. Where the courts entertain suits from universities, they normally would wish to prove that some internal methods of resolution were overlooked or that the complainants are seeking reliefs that a self-regulatory system cannot reasonably be expected to impose upon itself.

A few cases may explain how the courts deal with suits when they feel that natural justice and all the internal rules of conflict resolution have as much as possible not been followed. In the case of the University of London vrs Thomson in 1986, Thomson sought to restrain the University from giving another Best Student prize to his graduating mate after it was discovered after two years that the use of a wrong interpretation had led to the prize being awarded to Mr. Thomson erroneously. The court threw out the suit, arguing that matters within the University for awarding of certificates, diplomas, degrees and distinctions were entirely within the purview of structures within the University, hence a high court could not adjudicate on such a matter. This pronouncement upheld the autonomy of universities for functions clearly stated for them to perform (Thompson, 2000).

Similarly, in the case of the University of Ibadan vrs Judith Assein, in 1986, Judith sought an order of mandamus to compel the University to release her results to her to enable her register for the Nigerian Law School just about to begin. The presiding judge held that it could not compel the University to grant the relief because there was no evidence of discrimination, departure from established procedure or

violation of the rules of natural justice to warrant such interference (Olenrewaju, 2015).

In another interesting test case for university autonomy, *Okonjo vrs Council for Legal Education*, Okonjo appealed to a Lagos State High Court for an order of Certiorari for the Federal Court of Appeal to set aside the ruling of the lower Court and admit him to study law. The trial judge felt otherwise. He upheld the case of the University that it had a duty to investigate the character of applicants since degrees were awarded to only those who satisfied the institution in both character and learning. By this ruling the judge upheld the autonomy of universities to deal with issues which come under Vice-Chancellors and Chairmen of Councils through the Academic Boards (Middlemiss, 2000).

In the case of one *Glynn vrs Keele University* in 1971, Mr. Glynn showed up on campus completely naked to the embarrassment of many people. The Vice-Chancellor fined him only £10 and made him a non-residential student. Glynn went to court to restrain the Vice-Chancellor from fining and attempting to change his residential status without giving him a hearing. The trial judge threw off the injunction sought since Mr. Glynn did not first contest the nudity as a punishable offence. Here again the authority of the regulatory system in Keele University was allowed to prevail. It would appear therefore that the court systems have a lot of respect for autonomy of universities. Universities have learnt to respect the natural and human rights of their employees and students, mindful that any breaches may land them in the courts for justice (Hyams, 1998).

Connor Obrien (1964) of the University of Ghana, once told off the Chairman of University Council (who was a sitting member of Parliament) as follows: Under these dispositions, the bodies which I am responsible to are the competent organs of the University, the Council as governing body and the Academic Board where academic matters are concerned. It is from these bodies, and only these bodies, that I am empowered to carry out directives.... It should not be necessary to point out that to expect the University to comply with any and every Government order immediately and without the right of discussion, consideration and, where necessary remonstrance, is not, and cannot be made compatible with scrupulous respect for academic freedom in Ghana. (Justice Ollennu Committee, 1972). Also, the decision by the Winneba High Court that declared that the immediate Government Council of the University of Education, Winneba was unconstitutional and therefore dismissed the Vice-Chancellor professor Avoke. The New Patriotic Party (NPP) Government under the leadership of President Nana Akufo-Addo went ahead and appointments and inducted a new Vice-Chancellor in the person of Rev.Fr. professor Anthony afful-Broni (Daily Graphic, December 15, 2017). The Supreme Court later dismissed the high court ruling as null and void (Daily Graphic May 2, 2018).

Similarly, a riots broke out at Kwame Nkrumah University Science and Technology on October 22, which resulted in the distraction of properties. Upon the intervention of government leads to several strike actions from the university staff. University autonomy, according to Chancellor, nothing should be done to constrain the council in the discharge of its duties to develop policies for the running of the university in accordance with its statute (Daily Graphic November 14, 2018). The above examples demonstrate that

university autonomy and freedom do not come on a silver platter. History has shown that in most countries, it has been a continuous struggle with governments over academic freedom because of the possibility of its misuse by universities to make sitting governments very unpopular.

Conclusion

The paper tried to demonstrate that over the years, academics have fought for and obtained academic freedom and autonomy for universities to reduce ignorance, seek truth, defend the truth and disseminate knowledge. Freedom and autonomy continue to be seen in the 21st century as critical for independent thinking as well as for imbibing analytical ways of solving problems at our community and national endeavours. As UN and other bodies such as the European Union (EU), African Union (AU), ECOWAS and other regional bodies seek to make governments more democratic, one can foresee a resurgence of universities as torchbearers in constructive criticism of governance mechanisms. To achieve this, universities have to purge themselves of all the deficiencies they will wish to condemn in ruling parties or governments. The increasing number of professors in active politics may lead to insights between political abstractions and partisan active politics better appreciation of the hopes and expectations of staff in decaying and vibrant universities.

The world as a globally competitive village is awakening to the reality that sloppy academic and administrative outputs anywhere are likely to affect the efficient use of scarce resources. The huge numbers of youth enrolling in universities mean many governments will watch carefully not just how their resources are being used but what types of products managers in the universities will be bequeathing to nations as their future leaders. The growth of structures like the Vice-Chancellors, Ghana (VCG), the National Accreditation Board (NAB) and the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) as advisory, supervisory and regulatory bodies to Ghana's universities will promote collaboration on burning issues and ensure that Ghanaian universities conform to state demands without losing their freedom and autonomy. The paper reiterates that systemic interventions such as building human resource capacity and strengthening information, communication and technology in selected African universities by multilateral giants like Carnegie Corporation, Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation and McArthur Foundations will eventually raise the performance levels of the beneficiary universities.

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