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University governance and academic freedom in Nigeria: Mainstreaming of clannishness and ethnoreligious hate in two young Nigerian universities (2016-2021)

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Abstract

This paper examined the institutionalisation of ethnoreligious and clannish sentiments in the administration of two young national universities in Nigeria, between 2016 and 2021. The paper deployed a mixed-methods approach, involving interviews with ten participants, and archival materials, to establish the entrenchment of radical religious sentiments, ethnicity, and cronyism in the two focal universities. Contrary to global best practices in universities, characterised by academic freedom and collegiality, findings revealed that the chief executive of one of the focal universities micromanaged the institution using an authoritarian approach. The chief executive of the second focal university, intentionally localised and indigenised the university through an ethnoreligious hate campaign. In both cases, academic freedom and collegiality were sacrificed on the altars of personality cult syndrome, clannishness, and cronyism in the universities. The paper concluded that, as long as clandestine processes, alien to the extant laws establishing public universities in Nigeria, were used to install university administrators, academic freedom and collegiality will continue to suffer, while the universities become extremely localised and abused.

Keywords: Nigeria, university, freedom, clannishness, cronyism.

Introduction and background

University education in Nigeria emerged from the British university system. This started with the establishment of the University College, Ibadan, in 1948, operated as the satellite campus of the University of London in Nigeria (<https://ui.edu.ng/>). The campus grew into what is today known as the University of Ibadan, after it became an autonomous university in 1962 (<https://ui.edu.ng/>), making it Nigeria's premier university. Shortly after Nigeria's independence from Britain in 1960, the University of Nigeria Nsukka was established the same year, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria in 1962, University of Lagos in 1962, University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) in 1962, and the University of Benin in 1970. They formed what was later christened Nigeria's First-Generation universities (National Universities Commission [NUC], 2024). More universities were established every other decade after 1970, representing younger generations of federal universities in Nigeria (Okoli & Orinya, 2020). Today, there are 62 federal universities in Nigeria, comprising of conventional, specialised, and military universities (NUC, 2024).

The Nigerian University System has undergone some evolutions over the years, occasioned by policy changes. Since its history was rooted in state ownership, much of the transformations were influenced by the core civil service culture in Nigeria (Babalola, 2014). The post-independence era of university education in Nigeria, fell within military regimes in the country, from 1966. With all public institutions coming under regimentation, percolated from the military's centralised command and control culture, universities were not exempted (Ogbette, Eke, & Ori, 2017). This marked the beginning of the erosion of academic freedom in Nigeria's universities, because the military was wary of the ideas that came from them. This frosty posture of the government towards academic freedom, grew more visibly from the 1970s

(<https://asuu.org.ng/history-struggles-of-asuu/#>). It was within this context that the radical apex trade union of academics in Nigerian universities, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), was birthed in 1978, in response to state suppression of academic freedom, collegiality, and democratic culture in Nigerian universities (ASUU, 2024). ASUU extended its struggle to the larger Nigerian society for the restoration of political democratic governance in the country (Ogbogu, 2013). During this period, all universities in the country were owned by either the federal government or state governments, with the latter emerging only from 1979 (Arikewuyo, 2013). Before long, corrupt tendencies – nepotism, tribalism, religious bigotry, cronyism, and clannishness – which festered in the core civil service, largely traceable to the military governments, gradually crept into the university system, eroding collegiality and academic freedom (Babalola, 2014). These were reflected in the processes of appointing the governance structures of the universities (Arikewuyo, 2013). Part of the military's influences in the university system, was the installation of traditional chiefs as chancellors of public universities. Although, there is no Nigerian law which prohibited or approved it, the appointment of traditional rulers as ceremonial heads of public universities, has remained a convention till date (Author's personal observation).

The trappings of political patronage and clannishness in Nigeria's public universities, could only be matched by the injurious Brenton Wood neoliberal agenda in the universities, which negate the principles of collegiality and academic freedom (Oke, 2019). This paper observed the questionable antecedents of some of the personae appointed as vice chancellors of Nigeria's public universities. It drew from literature, interviews, and sundry sources, to examine and establish the reign of clannishness, ethnoreligious hate, and mediocrity in two federal universities, classified among the Fifth-Generation universities in Nigeria, between 2016 and 2021.

Collegialism: An ideological framework

Collegial relations in a university refers to the collaborative, respectful, and professional relationships that exist between faculty members, administrators, and other stakeholders of the university (Okoli, 2024). These relationships are products of centuries of experimenting different models of relationships and management in the university system. Collegiality is essential for creating a positive and productive academic environment, comradeship, and the elimination of vertical modes of interactions within the university, reflected in master-servant and top-bottom models. Faculty members and administrators treat each other with mutual respect, dignity, and professionalism as their relationship is built on openness, transparency, and timely communication (Okoli, 2024). Faculty members and administrators collaborate and work together to achieve common goals, share resources, and support each other based on trust, reliability, and fair behaviour by members.

Collegial relations produce enduring benefits for the university, its stakeholders, and the host community through the fostering of collaborative innovation, and excellence in teaching, research, and service. Positive collegial relations create a supportive and inclusive learning environment, benefiting students' academic and personal growth (Weinberg & Graham-Smith, 2012). These promote a positive work environment, leading to increased job satisfaction, reduced turnover, and improved well-being among faculty and staff. Collegial relations facilitate collaborative decision-making, ensuring that diverse perspectives and expertise are considered. A sense of belonging, camaraderie, and shared purpose among faculty, staff, and students, would not have to be touted, but would visibly speak for themselves. Despite these virtues associated with collegiality, some factors constitute hiccups to collegial relations. Communication breakdown and poor communication can lead to misunderstandings, mistrust, and conflict among faculty members

and stakeholders, which will make managing diverse perspectives and interests in large or complex institutions, challenging (Okoli, 2024). This is worsened by power dynamics and hierarchies. Collegial relations can be influenced by power dynamics and hierarchies, which can create barriers to collaboration and communication. It might appear that cultural and personal differences are significant challenges to collegiality because of the biases they create. Cultural and personal differences can create challenges for collegial relations, particularly if not addressed through inclusive and respectful practices. These were the hiccups this paper identified and established with the focal universities reviewed. The examination of the universities revealed enormous voids in management staff relationships, alien to the collegial relations, typical of a university in the 21st century.

Fifth Generation federal universities in Nigeria

This was a set of 12 federal universities established by the administration of former Nigeria’s president, Goodluck Jonathan, in states which previously had no federal universities, between 2011 and 2013 (Table 1).

Table 1: List of 12 federal universities established between 2011 and 2013

S/No	University’s name	State located	Year established
1.	Federal University Ndufu-Alike (now Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike)	Ebonyi	2011
2.	Federal University Wukari	Taraba	2011

3.	Federal University Kashere	Gombe	2011
4.	Federal University of Lafia	Nasarawa	2011
5.	Federal University Otuoke	Bayelsa	2011
6.	Federal University Oye-Ekiti	Ekiti	2011
7.	Federal University Lokoja	Kogi	2011
8.	Federal University Dutse	Jigawa	2011
9.	Federal University Dutse-Ma	Katsina	2011
10.	Federal University Gusau	Zamfara	2013
11.	Federal University Gashua	Yobe	2013
12.	Federal University Birnin-Kebbi	Kebbi	2013

Source: NUC (2024)

These universities were to create greater access to university education, reduce the pressure on older universities, provide employment opportunities, and give citizens of those states a sense of belonging (Nwakunor, 2023). Other pundits saw it as a political calculation by the former president, to curry their way back to power, in an unsuccessful reelection bid (Eziukwu, 2014). Due to the peculiar nature of the 12 new universities, the government gave them special attention for their quick takeoff and stabilisation of their academic activities (Vanguard, 2011). The government scouted for experienced university administrators, from existing universities in the country (Okoli & Orinya, 2020), some of whom had been vice chancellors before, and appointed them as sole administrators. Takeoff grants of NGN1.5billion was provided for each of the universities (Vanguard, 2011). They commenced administrative and academic activities without governing councils, bypassing bureaucracies associated with having the full complement of a university governance structure (Okoli & Orinya, 2020). With this, the highest decision-making

body of the 12 universities were their senates, chaired by the vice chancellors. This arrangement continued for the first four years of their existence, until President Jonathan, being the Visitor to all federal universities in Nigeria, inaugurated governing councils for them in 2015. However, after former president, Muhammadu Buhari, took over in May 2015, he dissolved the few-months-old councils, returned the universities to sole administrators, by appointing new vice chancellors in February 2016, following the expiration of tenures of the pioneer VCs (Channels TV, 2016). Since the councils were dissolved, the VCs were appointed by fiat, in disregard to extant laws. Some of the VCs had been professors for only a few years before they were appointed to the offices (Oluwagbemi, 2016), to the chagrin of stakeholders like ASUU. President Buhari's administration set aside the laws establishing the universities, to enable it reward political loyalists, who allegedly facilitated APC's takeover of power in 2015 (Oluwagbemi, 2016). Politicisation of education put ASUU at loggerheads with the government, over the proliferation of public universities, when existing ones were hardly well taken care of (Babalola, 2022). Party loyalists, some of whom included academics, were rewarded with appointments as pro chancellors, members of governing council, vice chancellors, etc., for their various roles in delivering electoral victories to the political party in power. Others were rewarded with juicy contracts, to provide infrastructure in the universities, which ASUU and other keen observers have noted sharp practices in some of the processes and quality of services delivered (Osuji, 2024).

In what seemed like provocation, President Buhari's administration replied ASUU's protest against proliferation of universities in Nigeria, with more proliferation of universities (Olorunsola, 2018). Some states had two or three federal universities, in addition to those owned by the state governments. Establishing new universities soon became the new constituency project of Nigerian political office holders, especially those at the federal level. The Nigerian parliament is inundated

with many bills, sponsored by several legislators, for the citing of one specialised federal university or the other, at their ancestral homes (Atungwu, 2022).

Data analysis and discussion

The paper used a qualitative mixed-methods approach to collect and analyse data. The methods used were interview and archival materials, drawn from literature. While the interview served as primary data, the literature materials made up the secondary data. For strategic and ethical reasons, the names of the two universities, with those of the vice chancellors in the period under review, were anonymised. Portions of pictorial data, obtained from a newspaper report, were blurred, to further conceal the identity of the entities under examination. However, accounts of real events were presented from real sources, with the universities categorised as Fifth-Generation universities established between 2011 and 2013. The paper used ‘Index One’ and ‘Index Two’ to identify and describe the universities and their chief executives, for the purposes of distinction in the study. Interview participants were coded R (meaning ‘Respondent’). Ten participants were interviewed in total from both universities, with five interviews conducted in each. Again, for ethical reasons, the identities of participants were anonymised. The first respondent was coded R1 while the last respondent was coded R10. Data were qualitatively generated and analysed qualitatively too. Relevant portions of the interviews were extracted, transcribed, presented as direct quotes, indented between regular paragraphs, and analysed qualitatively.

Index One: Family and friends to the plunder; rule by an iron fist

Index One was a former vice chancellor of a Fifth-Generation federal university established by the government. The VC was in office from 2016 to 2021, and their administration was fraught with allegations of ‘high-handedness, nepotism, witch-hunting of dissident voices, and disregard

for due process' (R9). Index Two's tenure was allegedly characterised by corruption and placing cronyism above the University's interest. According to accounts by R10:

The former VC's cronies and close allies enjoyed employment opportunities, promotions, and juicy contracts. Other staff members were aggrieved for delayed or non-promotion, and delay in payment of promotion arrears. Many university projects were contracted to [their] cronies from [their] home state. Even the national body of ASUU had accused the former VC of suppressing union activities using divide-and-rule tactic.

Members of the community hosting the university, were reportedly unhappy with the VC, because they were allegedly denied menial and janitorial job placements, usually reserved for members of the communities hosting public universities in Nigeria (Universities Establishment Acts, 2011). R7 said that during the last recruitment exercise before the VC's exit:

Several members of the host community, who were qualified for employment, were denied the opportunity. But a politician from VC's home state, displayed over 14 appointment letters on the social media, of jobs they secured for members of their constituency at the university. The recruitment saga was one of the biggest crises the VC faced while in office.

The end of their tenure was celebrated with a mock obituary poster, carrying their picture, and the sweeping of the University environment by staff of the institution, after their exit march from the campus, to symbolically rid the university of memories of them. R6 said the university was going to get relief from the burden of 'diversion of funds into private use. Many funny things went on in the last five year of [their] administration that should be investigated'. Excerpts from media coverage of the event, which served as secondary data for this paper, put the development in perspective. Adeyemi (2021) said that:

Some of the placards carried read: "No more diversion of funds." "Bye bye (sic) to corruption." "Day of reckoning is here." The workers also carried brooms and ostensibly swept away [their] footprints from the university. Sources said the send-forth party was put to an abrupt end as [they] had to be smuggled out of the campus to escape being attacked (Adeyemi, 2021, para. 4).

Bizarre send-forth



Rapheal

4 years ago



Staff celebrating VC's exit

Fig. 1: University staff celebrating vice chancellors exit

The climax of the event was the display of mock obituary, bearing their face and name while they were alive. Again, Adeyemi (2021) stated that:

With mock obituary pictures and placards, the protesters, in a frenzy, danced and booed [them] in the glare of personalities who came to witness [their] exit [They] helplessly watched [their] obituary pictures being displayed by the same people who had trembled at [their] mere presence (para. 2).

The mock obituary pictures read: "Obituary. Transition to hell!! With gratitude to God, we announce the successful passing into hell of the tyranny personified, whose happy end occurred on February 12, 2021. [They are] survived by confused children and hate speech grandchildren." "End of tyranny has come. Hallelujah, Alhamdulillah (para. 3).

These quotes showed intense hate toward the former VC from their staff, whom until hours before their final exit, trembled at their presence. Their reaction was personal, reflected in the mock obituary posters of the VC they displayed, to symbolise the end of their tyranny, hate, and 'Transition to Hell!!' (Adeyemi, 2021, para. 3). This was staged before the guests invited to witness their exit and handing over to the next VC, while they helplessly watched the performance of their own obituary. The staff were confident that the former VC could not hurt them anymore, so, they had to use that last chance to humiliate them before their guests and the world. The staff had

probably waited long for this moment of catharsis to express the disdain they harboured toward the VC. The two words of closing in the obituary poster, adapted from Christianity and Islam, respectively, ‘Hallelujah, Alhamdulillah’ (Adeyemi, 2021, para. 3), indicated that the staff did not allow religious division to get in the way of their collective resolve, because they were already united under one person, whom they all considered was a tyrant. It might also appear that the staff were prepared for a showdown if their demonstration was met with force by security agencies, since the VC was whisked from the venue (Adeyemi, 2021). Such a development fell short of the tenets of collegial relations espoused by Okoli (2016) and Okoli and Orinya (2020). Executive authoritarianism was the model adopted by Index One, to administer the university, which created tension, toxic top-bottom relations, and truncated collegiality and academic freedom significantly. Rather than mutual respect, trust, shared understanding, and inclusivity, fear and excessive flexing of authority, were mainstreamed, to bring the university community under the former VC’s control. Staff did not take ownership of the process and the university, but were subjects under the weight of an iron fist.



Obituary poster

Fig. 2: Mock obituary of VC’s exit (blurred by author)

Sweeping the ground after someone is not a new practice within cultures in Nigeria. It was done as a shaming performance by people in a community to publicly express their disapproval and displeasure towards a person or their conduct (Ogala, 2014). It is usually accompanied by gyrations, musical instruments, dances, chants, and excitement, while following the tracks of the person behind, sweeping every spot their feet trod. It is a mob activity which could easily degenerate if met by any resistance. In rural Nigerian settings, this was usually done to shame a thief, a promiscuous person, or anyone who committed any act considered shameful by the customs and values of the community. Dramatised sweeping with brooms within the Nigerian cultural corps, has different mystical interpretations attached to them. Sweeping the ground behind a person is believed to rid the place of bad omen, which the community believe the individual represents. It is the community's way of saying that it does not desire the presence of that individual in or around it anymore. In the case of Index One, this message was reinforced with a phony obituary poster of them, which stated that they were survived by 'confused children and hate speech grandchildren.' Whether the children and grandchildren referred to in the poster were their actual children or were only used as metaphors for their character or attitude, was not clear as per the poster.

Unusual send forth



Rapheal

4 years ago



Fig. 3: Staff sweeping and jubilating after rector's exit from office

The former VC might have understood the interpretation and import of the performance the university staff put up on their exit, as it indicated a strong message of *persona non grata*. This also was not the only time a chief executive of a higher institution of learning in Nigeria exiting office, was openly booed and shamed by their former employees. Media reports documented similar incidents at the University of Ibadan in 2020 and the Lagos State Polytechnic, following the expiration of their chief executives' tenures at that time (Dike, 2020). The act of sweeping the ground after a high-profile person, has not been treated as public nuisance in Nigeria, because it is an expression of a civil opinion. It is humourously considered to be an act of community service, since the sweepers literally rid the physical environment of dirt (Author's personal observation).

Index Two: Radical ethnoreligious agenda to localise and indigenise a national university

Index Two was a former vice chancellor of a Fifth-Generation federal university in Nigeria, who was in office from 2016 to 2021. They were considered to be a beneficiary of an illegal process which led to their appointment as vice chancellor of that university. They took over the office with a radical ethnoreligious agenda, to flush as many as they could from the university who were not members of their religious or ethnic group. Data from interview R4, who was close to the corridors of authority during the period under review said that:

The former VC claimed [they] took over a university which did not reflect the indigenous religion and culture of [their] home state, but almost entirely an alien one, created by [their] predecessor. [Their] target was to rework the staff and student mixes, in terms of ethnicity and religion, to favour [their] ethnic and religious constituencies, since according to [them], too many outsiders were in the university.

The account above showed that the former VC embarked on a hate agenda to victimise those they considered as outsiders. They were dragged before kangaroo disciplinary panels on trumped up or the flimsiest allegations, and summarily dismissed from the university (see Aota, 2016; Unini, 2024). Some were denied promotions, while others were stagnated. Files of

individuals whose cases were difficult for the VC to deal with, ‘mysteriously disappeared from the university’s Human Resources unit’ (R8). On the flip side, the VC flooded the university with new recruits, drawn from their ethnic and religious group, even when many of them evidently had nothing cerebral to offer to the system. They employed their children, in-laws, and relations of their cronies into the university, whether they qualified for the positions or not, especially those of the academic cadre (Aota, 2019).

Further, the VC’s involvement in partisan politics, even as an academic, was legendary. R5 said that:

The VC made it open for the world to know that [they were] a card-carrying member of the ruling APC at the national and local levels. [They had] openly supported the election campaigns of the party while [they were] in office and even after leaving. This was against the civil service rule. But the VC demonstrated that [they] owed the APC government [their] allegiance. The VC was adamant about this because [they] felt [they] could get away with anything.

This was a development the government was cautioned about, where it bows to parochial pressures to appoint indigenes of certain communities, to head academic or other federal government establishments, located in their home communities. There was no law that said indigenes could not be appointed to head such establishments, as such individuals have the right to be employed and engaged in any state of the federation, if they qualified for the position. But to guard against the temptation of ‘indigenising’ and ‘localising’ a national asset for the undue advantage of a few or section, and the systematic disadvantaging of ‘non-indigenes’ (R5), it has been argued that such appointees should be engaged in neutral settings for ethical reasons. From R1, an administrative staff of the university, who happened to be an indigene of the community hosting the university, this data was obtained:

We were happy when one of ours was made vice chancellor of this university in 2016. It was our yearning and the government granted it. It was because of [their] appointment as VC that myself and several other indigenes of this town and state were employed by the university. Ensuring that we were employed by the university was [their] own way of empowering [their] kith and kin. But after a while, we began to observe that [they] became power-drunk and ran an administration that sharply divided the university along religious and ethnic lines. Many non-indigenes, who could have contributed to the development of the university and its host community, got frustrated and left while [they] made sure that those who remained were very uncomfortable. We became uncomfortable by the excesses of our relation who was the VC. We, the people of this community are known for peace and hospitality. We are welcoming people. We do not discriminate visitors on the basis of their religion or tribe. When we saw the VC doing the contrary, openly pursuing a religious and ethnic agenda in the university, we were too embarrassed to associate ourselves with it. Attempts by our respected elders and leaders of thought to advice the VC fell on deaf ears.

Meanwhile, some other individuals and groups within the university community did not only patronise the leadership style of Index Two, they benefited significantly from it. By supporting the VC's ethnoreligious and localisation agenda, they were rewarded with appointments as heads of critical academic units and directorates in the system. All that qualified them were their religious persuasion, ethnicity, and catchment links to the university's host community.

Data from another participant, R3, who was a staff within the top managerial circle of the university, said that Index Two planted spies in academic departments, units, and lecture halls, with the mandate to tell on people who said unpalatable things about [them]. According to R3:

Commissioned gossip groups took phone recordings, screen grabs of social media chats, posts on group pages, and verbal accounts, to [them] about what was discussed about [their] administration. Individuals accused of speaking ill of [them], suffered delayed or denied promotion, missing documents, or put on a close monitoring. This continued for the five years [they were] in office. Taxpayers' resources, which should have been committed to research and community development, were wasted on pursuing personal vendetta on imagined and real adversaries.

The VC reduced the university to an oligarch setup, such that talebearers and gossips, made up of loyalists from their ethnoreligious circle, were commissioned to monitor other staff's conversations, and report same to them. Serious punitive actions were taken on staff who spoke ill of the administration in private conversations, including dismissal and threats of it. Insights from another staff, reinforced those experiences to be:

...the darkest days of this university. For the five years of that administration, there was no international presence in the university, no partnerships, no international conferences, and no visiting by foreign scholars. Rather, the administration preoccupied itself with infighting, fault-finding, intimidation of staff, partisan politics, religious fanaticism, and spying on staff (R3).

Critical committees were suspended. Those that were allowed to operate, were mere rubber-stamps of the former VC. Committees that were meant to look at issues critically and offer advice, were the same ones the VC chaired. The VC forced decisions out sentiments and malice (R2).

The administration of Index Two may be described as one characterised by gross inequality on the grounds of religion, ethnicity, intellectual opinion, and clannishness. The import of the account by R3 was that individuals' right to free comment, right to personal opinions, right to association, and academic freedom, were taken away, through intimidation, masqueraded as corporate managerialism (see Okoli, 2016). These were against the provisions of Chapter 1, subsection A, Article 3 of the Kampala Declaration on Academic and Intellectual Freedom, which stated that: 'No African intellectual shall in any way be persecuted, harassed, or intimidated for reasons only of [their] intellectual work, opinions, gender, nationality, [and] ethnicity' (Kampala Declaration, 1990, Chapter 1 (A), 1). One of the repercussions of Index One's abuses was a judgement given by the National Industrial Court, sitting in Makurdi, Benue State, in favour of a staff of the university, who was wrongly dismissed in 2019 by the university (Unini, 2024). Damages with huge financial implications in thousands of US dollars, were awarded in favour of the staff, in addition to an order for the university to reinstate and place the staff on the rank they

would have been on up till the time of the judgment, were they not dismissed. Despite the undemocratic processes that have overtaken public universities in Nigeria, most of the litigations against them by aggrieved staff and students ended up embarrassing them (Unini, 2023). Even though the cases were usually protracted, the universities usually lost colossally. The University of Ilorin (Azeez, 2024; Edukugho, 2009; Olasanmi, 2024), Ahmadu Bello University (NICNADR, 2022; *Premium Times*, 2023), University of Abuja (Okeke, 2024; Wahab, 2024), Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (NICNADR, 2021), Ambrose Ali University (Adedipe, 2024), Lagos State University (Edema, 2024; Jibueze, 2024), and University of Uyo (Ukpong, 2024), are some examples to cite in this respect.

A vice chancellor is an officer who should be receptive to diversity, have integrity, and open to all areas of knowledge (Establishment Act, 2015). A vice chancellor should network, integrate, and without resentment. When they allow personal sentiments to override objective analysis, they undermine the investments they have put even in their own personal development, which brought them to such exalted pedestal. Basically, being a proper academic entail separating emotion from evidence, and sentiments from reason. If they infuse religious biases into academic discourse, it will erode the objectivity needed for scholarship, community service, and the overall development of society. They will struggle to maintain equilibrium between personal beliefs and professional responsibilities. They will find it difficult to embrace the benefits and strengths inherent in individuals' diversity. Even though the focal universities considered by this paper have since moved from those dark years under those vice chancellors, those years left scars on them. Data analysed suggested that the universities' developments were either stagnated or regressed between 2016 and 2021. From the forgoing, the individual employed to be vice chancellor, would sooner or later become a vice to the system. The diversity at their disposal, which they could have

harnessed for the development of society, soon becomes their albatross. These realities about the university are too complex for a narcissistic university administrator, who was appointed to the office by concession.

Conclusion and recommendations

The two cases examined presented scintillating scenarios of two extreme approaches to university administration. While Index One was a ‘non-indigene’ in the community which hosted the university, Index Two was an indigene and member of their university’s host community. Index One was accused of favouritism towards their cronies from their home state while members of the university’s host community were denied perceived concessionary benefits. Index One instituted a hate regime between the administration and staff of the university through a radical top-down approach. Index Two on the other hand, was accused of excessively favouring members of their own religious circle and their kith and kin, who were members of the university’s host community. Rather than invest those five years in the future of the universities, they were wasted on personality cult syndrome, witch-hunting, sycophancy, petty vendettas, and executive rascality. From the forgoing, the paper recommends the following:

1. Universities in Nigeria should be allowed full autonomy to determine their governance structures.
2. Sole administration of universities in Nigeria should be shamed by the academic community. Academics should boycott universities with oligarchic authoritarian structures.

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