UNIVERSITY AUTONOMY:
WHAT ACADEMICS THINK ABOUT IT

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ABSTRACT

University autonomy is close to the heart of academics in higher education institutions around the world. It is centered on the belief that liberalism is the essential philosophy for the freedom in exploring and expanding the frontier of knowledge in every sphere of life and civilization, without the shackles of any agency or government politics and dictates. This paper presents the findings of a study on what academics think about university autonomy, which comprises several components such as governance and management, study programs, research and development, teaching, and student development. The study employed the survey method and involved 611 academics from five premier public universities in Malaysia. This study found that, to a large extent and contrary to popular perception, public universities still do have a high degree of autonomy in several components, particularly in determining study programs to be offered, human resource development, internationalization, collaborative ventures with industries, and research priorities.

Keywords: university autonomy, university development, university management, university goals

INTRODUCTION:

University autonomy refers to the degree of dependency or independency of a university with other entities such as the government or corporations. If a university is totally dependent on the government, for example, then the university has blank autonomy; if a university is totally independent on its own, then the university has total autonomy (Soaib & Sufean, 2013). A university with blank autonomy is totally a subservient servant of its establisher which dictates the direction of governance, management, and disciplines of studies which the university must go for. On the other hand, if a university has total autonomy, then it has all the power to determine where it wants to go to and what it wants to do with respect to disciplines of studies, research, academics, and students (Sufean, 1995).

University autonomy is related to notion of 'territorial neutrality' and 'guild of artisans' as in the European tradition, which upholds independence and self-rule that repel any form of invasion and interference by bodies or governments outside a jurisdiction. Medieval universities were communities of learned men who considered themselves as a guild of learned artisans and where youth of the elite class came to receive instruction from their masters (Clark, 1983; Kerr, 1973; Veysey, 1965). The guild of scholars administered its own affairs regardless if they received public subsidies or private support, or if their public sanction came from legislative acts of provinces or states (Hetherington, 1965). This academic tradition has been defended by scholars in universities for many centuries and the surviving examples are the Oxford and Cambridge Universities in the United Kingdom. However, some argue that the ideological foundations of the university as autonomous institution have undergone fundamental changes in the last few decades.

Today, for most of the public universities, autonomy is not simply an institutional dimension but concerning relations with government that can be highly demanding in the competitive era of globalization (Roversi-Monaco, et al., 2005). Thus, some researchers asserted that university autonomy refers to the constantly changing relations between the state (or the government) and higher education institutions and the degree of control exerted by the state (or the government), depending on the national context and circumstances (Estermann & Nokkala, 2009; Sufean & Aziah, 2008). Gornitzka and Maassen (1998) make a classification of four types of university governance and autonomy, namely as follows:

- Institutional oligarchy model--autonomy of the university is based on shared norms of non-interference of external parties;
- Total state-controlled model—governance and management as stipulated by the ruling government, and research priority as determined by the government from time to time;
- Partially state-controlled model—collaboration between the state and university through democratic decision-making; and
- Market driven private corporation model—governance and management are profit driven and change according to global trends and developments.

Clark (1983) asserted that university organizations are academic organizations determined by the discipline (or profession) and by enterprise (individual institutional). Thus, universities must not merely center in disciplines, but also simultaneously be pulled together in enterprises. Disciplines impel institutions to be intellectually driven—both in academic and in research—but institutions, on the other hand, impel disciplines to be student oriented and responsive to the demands and changing trends in the market field, locally or globally, conforming to externally driven expectations. This trend has influenced the way institutions are managed and there has been an overt paradigm shift from the academia structure to managerial structure in university governance (Yielder & Codling, 2004).

Neave and Van Vught (1991) assert that the growth of "managerialism" in higher education institutions is characterized by the increasing influence of external stakeholders, particularly those that exercise influence over university's revenue and funds. The government and employers, for example, can exert powerful influences on the orientation and behavior of university management. Trakman (2008) has

articulated five models of university governance – university governance by the academics, corporate governance, trustee governance, stakeholder governance, and galvanized model of governance that remain germane to the current ebb and flow of globalization. The five models are also imperative in the assimilation extent of 'managerialism' characteristics in higher education institutions.

University governance by the academics is often linked to collegial governance, the long-established model of university governance. It is often argued that academic staffs are the grassroots of intellectuals best-suited to apprehend, determine and to achieve their university's goal and aspirations (Dill & Helm, 1988; Evans, 1999; Pfnister, 1970; Williams, Gore, Broches, & Lostoski, 1987). This can be seen clearly in the university senate's wide latitude of power in making and altering academic policies, ranging from student admission to graduation process (Jordan, 2001; Miller, 1999; Moore, 1975; Strohm, 1981). Collegial governance is reflective of the faculty as a professional body of academics, exercising their responsibilities with a strong sense of ownership to various academic programs, research works, teaching, and graduate supervision. However, collegiality may not be anymore sufficient to steer institutions to strategic goals. Yet, ignoring collegiality in the name of managerial efficiency may certainly be self-defeating.

The subsequent model, corporate governance model, is often related to the business-enterprise model. It is often predicated on the ground that the effectiveness of the university can be improved with business-oriented Board of Directors, with three important officials representing university management such as the chief executive officer, chief operating officer, and chief financial officer. University Boards are responsible for university development and accountable to different stakeholders and the public. One of the key performance indicators of the Board is revenue generation. This trend of governance follows market trends and developments.

Furthermore, the trustee model of university governance is anchored primarily on the Board of Trustees, which is given the fiduciary trust and duty to govern an estate. The Boardwould perform their roles and duties according to the interest and welfare of the stipulated beneficiary, and it must neither include their own self-interest agenda, nor the interest of a third party (Jackson & Crowley, 2006). However, the trustee model remains somewhat vague as it may give rise to ethical skepticism in times when the 'trust relationship' is being challenged.

The stakeholder model exemplifies shared governance involving considerable numbers of stakeholders comprising academics, university students, alumni members, corporate representatives or partners, minister or government representatives, the public or the industry (Baldridge, 1982; Hill, Green, & Eckel, 2001; Longin, 2002). Thestakeholder governance differs from the corporate governance because the Board of Governors is broadly represented, and the stakeholders' concerns go beyondagendas related to university's efficient management and finance (AmericanAssociation of University Professors, 1966; American Federation of Teachers, 2002).Stakeholder governance enables a wide array of stakeholders' participation in decisionmaking(Alfred, 1985; Currie, 2005; Floyd, 1994; Gilmour, 1991; Lapworth, 2004).Thus, the issue with stakeholder governance often lies in the selection of theappropriate stakeholders and the degree of power or authority vested in the governingbody. Despite of this, public universities, in general, do adopt and practice some formof stakeholder governance—with some academics, students, or representatives from thegovernment nominated as part of the governance board.

Another model is the galvanized model of governance which incorporates the strength of the previous fourmodels (Birnbaum, 1991). This model is specifically directed toward specific needs of a particular university (Dearlove, 1997). This model is inclined towardscientific and technological innovations for boosting economicdevelopment of a country, as well as to propel academics to expand the frontier of knowledge and technology. With the galvanized model of governance and the appropriate allocation andexpenditure of funds provided by the government, universities would achieve excellence in specific fields of knowledge and technology.

The history of universities in Europe and USA has revealed that, in order tosurvive, higher education systems have radically changed their governance over the centuries (Perkin, 1991). Nevertheless, tension between the need of collegiality and corporatism or other type of managerialism in some of the

modern universities remains prevalent—a dichotomy feature whereby the extent of academic freedom that influences the academics' quality of work, and thus the characteristics of a higher education institution, is often questionable (Duke, 2001).

Arguably, though university has been noted as a corporation, the existence of the bicameral system of governance in university—the Senate and the Board of Directors—remains one of the distinctive features as compared to business corporationshaving well-defined lines of authority (Soaib & Sufean, 2013). In comparison, the university management's authorities have relatively little control particularly in the academic's daily operation which is fragmented and diffused, inundated with various major facets of academics activities (Patterson, 2001). This unique characteristic lies on the fact that knowledge is the building block of university organization.

The highly distinctive factions based on knowledge expertise in the university creates a large number of highly fragmented division and independent units, whereby university organization can be succinctly characterized as loosely coupled system (Weick, 1976), a bipolar notion of autonomy and interdependence. Therefore, in comparison with other types of organizations whereby decision-making structures and governance were articulated more clearly, the university organizations as loosely coupled systems demonstrate prominent changes that generally occur at the grassroots level. Based on the organizational structure and the university constitution, university organizations can be seen as loosely coupled in some significant ways and highly bureaucratic in other ways as the political coalition between university managers and government officials still exists (Owens & Valesky, 2007).

In Malaysian public universities, the Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellors are appointed by the Minister of Education. In this regard, it has often been construed as an indirect way of the government in asserting their informal chains of command and influence over the university's affairs (Soaib& Sufean, 2013). This is because this kind of relationship somewhat distorts university autonomy to a certain degree (Ordorika, 2003). Nevertheless, although the public universities may be subjected, inevitably, to elaborate specific appointment and promotion policies, this mechanism of control however does not impose apparent restriction on the university in exercising their autonomy and freedom as an institution of knowledge.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

There is a prevalent contention that public universities suffer fromthe lack of autonomy because they are institutions established and controlled by the government. Furthermore, it is common to observe that the presidents or vice-chancellors of public universities are usually appointed by the government. In view of this context, the purpose of the study was to examine whether that contention had an empirical basis or not. This study examined and analyzed the extent of university autonomy in several specific aspects, as discussed in the following sections.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The university autonomy instrument was borrowed and adapted from the study done by Sufean and Aziah (2008). University autonomy was operationally defined as the degree of dependency or independency, in relation to some power holder, and self-determination of the necessary course of policies and actions. It measures the decision-making powers which university has over its own affairs (i.e. university development) in nine major aspects: academic program, postgraduate educational program, research and consultation, teaching and learning, management, human resource, financial, infrastructure, and student affairs—please refer to the nine tables in this paper for the related items. The survey questionnaire consisted of 79 items, all of which had a five-point ordinal scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 3 (fairly agree) to 5 (strongly agree).

A pilot study was conducted to establish the reliability of the survey instrument. In most quantitative studies, a pilot study was either to try out the instrument, or tosupply findings and adjustments for the actual study (Kerlinger, 1992). Apart from that, basically, the pilot study is to ensure that theitems in the questionnaire can be understood clearly. The pilot study was conducted in one public university,

and the responserate was at 50.2 % (225)academicsresponded to the questionnaire.

The reliability value (alpha Cronbach value) for the entire university autonomy (UA) instrument was .926, and the reliability values for the nine domains were:

    Academic programs .711
    Postgraduate academic programs .718
    Research and consultation .709
    Teaching and learning .614
    Management .704
    Haman Resource .652
    Finance .752
    Infrastructure and facilities .695
    Student affairs .712

The survey questionnaire was finalized and distributed to 2500 lecturerswho were randomly chosenfrom five premier comprehensive public universities in Malaysia. After three months and much persuasion, we managed to collect back 695 questionnaires, but after screening of outliers we only used data from 611 questionnaires for analysis using the SPSS software (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software).

RESULTS AND FINDINGS:

Some preliminary analyses were conducted based on the actual survey data obtained from a total of 695 lecturers from five premier public universities. The data cleaning process was performed. Incomplete and outlier cases were deleted, which otherwise, their inclusion would cause the data to be invalid. After deleting the incomplete and outlier cases, a total of 611 valid survey forms were used for analysis.

University autonomy in this study was not only conceptualized as the degree of dependency or independency in relation to some power holders, but it also included self-determination of a university on the necessary course of policies and actions for its own development and internal affairs. It is the ability of the universities to devise and implement their own strategies without government over-regulation and micro-management particularly in the nine major aspects of university development— academic programs, postgraduate programs, research and consultation, teaching and learning, management, human resource, finance, infrastructure facilities and students' affairs.

Table 1 shows the distribution of frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation for the responses regarding autonomy in planning academic programs. The values of the mean for all the items fall within the range from 3.90 to 4.46, indicating on average, the respondents' propensity to 'Agree' with all statements concerning university autonomy in academic programs.

Table 1: Frequency, Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses for Items Related to Autonomy in Academic Programs at the Undergraduate Level

	Items in Academic Programs	Level of agreement					Total	
		1 (n,%)	2 (n,%)	3 (n,%)	4 (n,%)	5 (n,%)	Mean	SD
AA2	The faculty/university offers academic programs to students when there are professionals/expertise available in faculty/university	8 (1.3)	24 (3.9)	96 (15.7)	269 (44.0)	214 (35.0)	4.08	0.882
AA3	Some academic programs offered are designed by the faculty specifically to enhance students' employability in the job market	3 (0.5)	14 (2.3)	105 (17.2)	291 (47.6)	198 (32.4)	4.09	0.79
AA4	The faculty/university takes into consideration of the availability of infrastructure and facilities when offering academic programs to students	14 (2.3)	32 (5.2)	130 (21.3)	260 (42.6)	175 (28.6)	3.90	0.952
AA6	Academic programs offered by the faculty/university are accredited by the relevant Ministry	3 (0.5)	57 (9.3)	205 (33.6)	346 (56.6)	3 (0.5)	4.46	0.682

Key: n is the frequency of responses.   % is the percentage of responses.

For the subsequent interpretations the results in Table 1, the scores for 'Agree' (Scale 4) and 'Strongly agree' (Scale 5) for each of the items were recoded as 'agree.' From the recoded results, a total of 483 respondents (79.1 %) agreed that their faculty and university had a high autonomy in determining the kind of programs and courses to be offered, depending on the availability expertise and professionals. Furthermore, a total of 489 (80.0 %)respondents agreed that 'some academic programs offered were designed by the faculty specifically to enhance students' employability in the job market'. This finding infers that public universitieshave the freedom to propose and plan courses that will meet the marketplace's demands. This fact demonstrates that the offering of programs and courses are largely determined by expertise in various areas of some study programs, as well as by human resource demand from potential employers which guarantee the employability of graduates produced.

Apart from that, premier public universities do not simply offer study programs without giving due consideration to the availability and quality of infrastructure necessary for the process operation of study programs, either at undergraduate level or post-graduate level. A total of 435 (71.2%) respondents agreed that their faculty or university does give this kind of priority before promoting a study program. The universities acknowledge the importance to ensure proper infrastructural facilities for their students alongside maintaining the requisite standard of study programs, i.e. all study programs and courses meet the standards stipulated by the Quality Assurance Agency, Malaysia Ministry of Education. This fact was verified by a total of 551 (90.2 %) respondents, who indicated that academic programs operatewithin the quality assurance framework.

Table 2 shows the results pertaining to responses on university autonomy in designing and offering of postgraduate academic programs. The values of the mean for all the items fall within the range from4.16 to 4.37, indicating on average, the respondents' propensity to 'Agree' with the items concerning university autonomy in postgraduate academic programs.

Table 2: Frequency, Mean and Standard Deviation for Responses by Academics Regarding University Autonomy in Offering Postgraduate Academic Programs

Items in Postgraduate Academic Programs		Level of agreement					Total	
		1 (n,%)	**2 (n,%)**	**3 (n,%)**	**4 (n,%)**	**5 (n,%)**	**Mean**	**SD**
AB6	This university internationalizes (open to international students) the available postgraduate academic programs offered	1 (0.2)	5 (0.8)	52 (8.5)	259 (42.4)	294 (48.1)	4.37	0.689
AB8	The faculty or university sets the levels of entry for the postgraduate academic programs offered	1 (0.2)	11 (1.8)	75 (12.3)	287 (47.0)	237 (38.8)	4.22	0.74
AB9	The university (or the faculty/department) is involved in the selection of students for the enrollment of the postgraduate programs	2 (0.3)	10 (1.6)	65 (10.6)	274 (44.8)	260 (42.6)	4.28	0.742
AB11	The faculty has the freedom to suggest new postgraduate academic programs which are of great potentials for the benefits of the postgraduate students	2 (0.3)	12 (2.0)	88 (14.4)	295 (48.3)	214 (35.0)	4.16	0.761

Based on the results in Table 2, if 'Agree' and 'Strongly agree' were recoded together, a total of 553 (90.5 %) respondents agreed that their university had the autonomy to internationalize (open to international students) postgraduate programs offered. This fact indicates that internationalisation of postgraduate academic programs constitutes as an integrated part of university development agenda. Also, it was found that a total of 524 (85.8%) respondents agreed that their faculty or university determined the entry criteria and prerequisites of postgraduate programs. Not only that,

a total of 534 (87.4%) respondents agreed that their department had total autonomy in the selection of postgraduate students. And, 509 (83.3%) respondents agreed that their faculty had the freedom to propose new postgraduate programs which were of great relevance and potentials to postgraduate students. All these facts indicate that the government education agency gave total autonomy to public universities in designing and expanding postgraduate programs.

Table 3 consecutively shows the results pertaining to university autonomy in the area of research and consultation. The mean values for all the items fall within the range 3.99 to 4.30, indicating on average, the respondents' propensity to 'Agree' with all statements concerning university autonomy in research and consultation.

Table 3: Frequency, Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses Regarding University Autonomy in Research and Consultation

Items in Research and Consultation		Level of agreement					Total	
		1 (n,%)	2 (n,%)	3 (n,%)	4 (n,%)	5 (n,%)	Mean	SD
AC2	University is free to carry out research and consultation works based on the professionals/experts available in the university	1 (0.2)	10 (1.6)	57 (9.3)	280 (45.8)	263 (43.0)	4.30	0.718
AC3	The university looks into the needs of the clients (students and stakeholders) and encourages the relevant research and consultation activities to be carried out in the university.	3 (0.5)	17 (2.8)	115 (18.8)	297 (48.6)	179 (29.3)	4.03	0.798
AC4	In the effort to enhance research or consultation activities, the university or faculty can develop the necessary infrastructure and facilities	7 (1.1)	16 (2.6)	121 (19.8)	299 (48.9)	168 (27.5)	3.99	0.826
AC6	The university *gives recognition* to highly competent faculty and *research* staff for their excellence in research	3 (0.5)	23 (3.8)	85 (13.9)	257 (42.1)	243 (39.8)	4.17	0.839

Similarly, if 'Agree' (Scale 4) and 'Strongly agree' (Scale 5) were recoded together, results in Table 3 show that a total of 543 (88.8%) respondents agreed that their university had the freedom to carry out research and consultation works based on the availability of professionals and experts. This fact indicates that a university usually utilizes the skills and expertise of professors for enhancing knowledge and innovations through research and consultation. In addition, a total of 476 respondents (77.9 %) agreed that their university provided grants or install the necessary facilities to encourage relevant research and consultation activities to be carried out. Universities also normally do encourage academics and researchers to bring in research grants from external sources, such as various government agencies and industries. This fact was affirmed by 467 (76.4%) respondents. Moreover, as a form of motivation, premier universities gave due recognition to highly competent faculty and research staff for their excellence in research. A total of 500 (81.9%) respondents testified positively to this point.

Table 4 shows the results for university autonomy in the area of teaching and learning. The mean values generally fall within the range 3.91 to 4.13, indicating on average, the respondents' propensity to 'Agree' with the survey items.

Table 4: Frequency, Mean and Standard Deviation for Responses
Regarding University Autonomy in Teaching and Learning

	Items in Teaching and Learning	Level of agreement					Total	
		1 (n,%)	2 (n,%)	3 (n,%)	4 (n,%)	5 (n,%)	Mean	SD
AD2	Lecturers in this university are free to choose the appropriate teaching and learning methods	9 (1.5)	29 (4.7)	101 (16.5)	276 (45.2)	196 (32.1)	4.02	0.9
AD3	The university/faculty equips the students with the needed knowledge through teaching and learning in order to meet the required standards.	2 (0.3)	9 (1.5)	92 (15.1)	315 (51.6)	193 (31.6)	4.13	0.735
AD4	The university/faculty provides the necessary infrastructure and facilities which are suitable with the teaching and learning methods chosen by the lecturers	2 (0.3)	29 (4.7)	135 (22.1)	302 (49.4)	143 (23.4)	3.91	0.817
AD5	The university/faculty prepares an environment that cultivates the usage of ICT in teaching and learning process	0 (0.0)	13 (2.1)	107 (17.5)	305 (49.9)	186 (30.4)	4.09	0.747
AD6	The university/faculty can offer a more flexible teaching and learning methods for the postgraduate students.	2 (0.3)	12 (2.0)	104 (17.0)	310 (50.7)	183 (30.0)	4.08	0.756
AD8	The university/faculty can improvise the teaching and learning methods whenever deemed necessary according to the needs of the academic programs.	2 (0.3)	13 (2.1)	125 (20.5)	318 (52.0)	153 (25.0)	3.99	0.755

Based on the results in Table 4, a total of 472 (77.3%) respondents agreed that lecturers were free to choose the appropriate teaching and learning methods in classrooms and tutorials. This refers to the lecturers' own prerogative in selectingthe relevant topics, contents, and teaching materials of courses. Also, 508 (83.2%) respondents agreed that courses in their faculty were tailored to equip students with the required knowledge content and skills. This fact refers to university's pivotal role in ensuring that graduates produced match employers' requirements. This is the pragmatism philosophy emphasized by contemporary universities and colleges. Furthermore, 491 (80.3 %) respondents agreed that the university or faculty encouraged the use of ICT (information communication technology) in teaching and learning process. Also, most respondents agreed that lecturers had the autonomy to review and redesign course contents, materials, and evaluation methods from time to time within the quality assurance framework.

Table 5 shows the results pertaining to autonomy in university management. The mean values of all the items fall within the range from3.43 to 3.73, indicating on average, the respondents' propensity to 'fairly agree'withall items on autonomy in university management. This pattern of responses is a bit different from those in previous tables.

Table 5: Frequency, Mean and Standard Deviation for Responses
Regarding University Autonomy in Management

	Items in Management	Level of agreement					Total	
		1 (n,%)	2 (n,%)	3 (n,%)	4 (n,%)	5 (n,%)	Mean	SD
AE1	In relation to the government, the university/faculty has a large degree of autonomy in the management process.	18 (2.9)	84 (13.7)	188 (30.8)	226 (37.0)	95 (15.5)	3.48	1.007
AE2	The management of the university is on *clientele* basis (e.g. students, stakeholders)	15 (2.5)	66 (10.8)	199 (32.6)	242 (39.6)	89 (14.6)	3.53	0.951
AE3	The university/ faculty improve continuously management effectiveness through the provision of necessary facilities.	4 (0.7)	39 (6.4)	194 (31.8)	283 (46.3)	91 (14.9)	3.68	0.826

		1	2	3	4	5		
AE5	The university adopts corporate management style to motivate employees to work productively, so as to enhance university sustainability/ survival operation.	17 (2.8)	71 (11.6)	161 (26.4)	261 (42.7)	101 (16.5)	3.59	0.987
AE8	The public responsibility is reflected through many academics and student activities planned by the university/faculty.	10 (1.6)	31 (5.1)	175 (28.6)	295 (48.3)	100 (16.4)	3.73	0.853

If the responses 'Agree' (Scale 4) and 'Strongly agree' (Scale 5) were aggregated, then only a total of 321 (52.5%) respondents agreed with the item that 'in relation to the government, the university/faculty has a large degree of autonomy in management process.'Also, only 311 (54.2%) respondentsagreed with the item that 'the management of the university is on *clientele* basis (e.g. students, stakeholders).'Other moderate responses were for items such as:

- The university/ faculty improve continuously management effectiveness through the provision of necessary facilities (61.2 %).
- The university adopts corporate management style to motivate employees to work productively, so as to enhance university sustainability/ survival operation (59.2 %).
- The university's top-management micromanaging activities that demonstrate public responsibilities carried out by the faculty members or student community (64.7%).The public responsibility is reflected through many academic and student activities planned by the university or faculty.

In general, academics believed that their university or faculty had a partial autonomy in management decisions and operations, i.e. the university or faculty sometimes had been subjected to certain policies and directives from the government.
Table 6 shows the results pertaining to university autonomy in the area of human resource. The mean values all the items fall within the range 3.86 to 4.04, indicating the general propensity of respondents to 'Agree' with university autonomy in human resource.

Table 6: Frequency, Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses
Regarding University Autonomy in Human Resource Management

		Level of agreement					Total	
Items in Human Resource Management		**1 (n,%)**	**2 (n,%)**	**3 (n,%)**	**4 (n,%)**	**5 (n,%)**	**Mean**	**SD**
AF3	Whenever necessary at some faculties, the university/faculty seeks the help of experts and consultants in the private sector to teach courses and conduct industrial training of students	4 (0.7)	33 (5.4)	153 (25.0)	273 (44.7)	148 (24.2)	3.86	0.866
AF4	The university determines and provides numerous courses and workshops for its staff development	3 (0.5)	11 (1.8)	121 (19.8)	295 (48.3)	181 (29.6)	4.05	0.781
AF5	The university autonomously provides scholarships to academic and management staff to pursue higher degrees in local or foreign universities	8 (1.3)	25 (4.1)	129 (21.1)	270 (44.2)	179 (29.3)	3.96	0.886
AF6	The university/faculty autonomously determine its own standards and criteria for staff promotion	9 (1.5)	17 (2.8)	110 (18.0)	280 (45.8)	195 (31.9)	4.04	0.862
AF7	The university autonomously gives rewards and incentives annually to staff with excellent performance	14 (2.3)	26 (4.3)	120 (19.6)	259 (42.4)	192 (31.4)	3.96	0.942
AF8	Departments/ faculties have their own autonomy in hiring temporary staff and research assistants	13 (2.1)	29 (4.7)	150 (24.5)	255 (41.7)	164 (26.8)	3.86	0.937

As before, the scores for 'Agree' (Scale 4) and 'Strongly agree' (Scale 5) were aggregated together and recoded as 'Agree.' From Table 6, 421 (68.9%) respondents agreed that, whenever necessary, some faculties sought experts and consultants in the private sector to teach courses and conduct industrial training for students. Thishighlights the university's initiativeto seek cooperation fromexperts in the private sector. Cooperative linkages between public universities and the private sectors through collaboration is a hallmark of the current approach in human resource development. Also, a total of 476 (77.9 %) respondents agreed that their university provided numerous courses and workshops for staff development. This fact indicates that public universities are concerned with staff's productivity and quality; thus management staff is required to improve their skills, knowledge, and performance through training and education. Other autonomous initiatives performed by universities include:

- The university autonomously provides scholarships to academic and management staff to pursue higher degrees in local or foreign universities—449 (77.9%) respondents agreed. This implies that premier universities provide opportunities for staff's career advancement.
- The university or faculty autonomously determines its own performance standards and criteria for staff promotion—475 (77.7%)respondents agreed.
- The university autonomously gives rewards and incentives annually to staff with excellent performance—451 (73.8%) respondents agreed.
- Departments or faculties have their own autonomy in hiring temporary staff and research assistants—419(68.5%) respondents agreed. This implies that a department or faculty has the freedom to employ part-time staff for some programs and priority projects.

Table 7 shows the results pertaining to university autonomy in the area of finance. The values of the mean for all the items fall within the range 3.63 to 3.81, indicating that generally the respondents tended to 'Agree' with their university's autonomy in finance.

Table 7: Frequency, Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses
Regarding University Autonomy in Finance

	Items in Finance	**Level of agreement**					**Total**	
		1 (n,%)	**2 (n,%)**	**3 (n,%)**	**4 (n,%)**	**5 (n,%)**	**Mean**	**SD**
AG2	The university commercializes the available expertise.	10 (1.6)	45 (7.4)	168 (27.5)	269 (44.0)	119 (19.5)	3.72	0.915
AG3	The university collaborates with the industries as a business partner	11 (1.8)	38 (6.2)	176 (28.8)	258 (42.2)	128 (20.9)	3.74	0.919
AG4	The university rents out their facilities whenever available	6 (1.0)	40 (6.5)	168 (27.5)	245 (40.1)	152 (24.9)	3.81	0.917
AG5	The university promotes their professional staff /professionalism via internet	11 (1.8)	46 (7.5)	153 (25.0)	265 (43.4)	136 (22.3)	3.77	0.94
AG6	University puts in efforts to reduce the financial dependency on government	7 (1.1)	34 (5.6)	151 (24.7)	295 (48.3)	124 (20.3)	3.81	0.861
AG7	Efficient management of funds is practiced by the faculty or university all the time	14 (2.3)	42 (6.9)	195 (31.9)	266 (43.5)	94 (15.4)	3.63	0.904

Again as before, responses for 'Agree' and 'Strongly agree' were aggregated together. From the results in Table 7, 388 respondents (63.5%) agreed that their university commercialized available expertise in order to generate profit by providing consultancy services or conducting research projects for government agencies and private firms. This connotes one of the innovative ways associated with university autonomy in financial management. Other areas of financial autonomy include:

- The university collaborates with the industries as a business partner—386 (63.1 %) respondents agreed. Nowadays, universities usually seek industrial partnerships because of the potential financial rewards of patents and licenses that result from the commercialization of academic research.

- The university rents out their facilities (lecture halls, seminar rooms, and machines) whenever available and not in use by others—397 (65.7 %) respondents agreed. This initiative supports the university's effort to generate income by maximizing the usage of existing facilities available in the university.
- The university makes efforts to reduce financial dependency on the government by acquisition of funding from diversified sources—419 (68.6 %) respondents agreed. This connotes an important aspect of financial development driven by demands of a growing needs and rising costs.
- Efficient management of funds is practiced by the faculty or university all the time, not just merely applicable to circumstances when the funds are limited—360 (58.9%) respondents agreed. This refers to the university's autonomy to formulate guidelines to manage its funds efficiently and effectively at all the time. This plays a pivotal role in bolstering university financial strength by supporting the activities that are orientated towards development-focused agendas.

Table 8 shows the responses to items pertaining to university autonomy in the area of infrastructure and facilities. The mean values for all items fall within the range 3.76 to 4.17, indicating the general tendency to agree with statements concerning university autonomy in planning their infrastructure and facilities.

Table Frequency, Mean and Standard Deviation for Items in Infrastructure Facilities Domain

	Items in Infrastructure Facilities	Level of agreement					Total	
		1 (n,%)	2 (n,%)	3 (n,%)	4 (n,%)	5 (n,%)	Mean	SD
AH2	University construct its own infrastructure and facilities, according to its own development plan	7 (1.1)	34 (5.6)	155 (25.4)	316 (51.7)	99 (16.2)	3.76	0.828
AH4	From time to time, the university sees the needs to improve the existing infrastructure facilities	8 (1.3)	30 (4.9)	134 (21.9)	299 (48.9)	140 (22.9)	3.87	0.865
AH5	University recognize the importance of ICT and therefore equips the faculties or university with ICT facilities	1 (0.2)	7 (1.1)	91 (14.9)	299 (48.9)	213 (34.9)	4.17	0.728
AH8	The university has its own rules and regulation to protect its operation and assets so that the infrastructure facilities can be utilized responsibly and prudently	1 (0.2)	8 (1.3)	127 (20.8)	312 (51.1)	163 (26.7)	4.03	0.736

Also, recoding "Agree' and 'Strongly agree' together, results show that 415 (67.9%)respondents agree that their university constructs its own infrastructure and facilities, according to its own development plan. This refers to the university's autonomy and power in formulatingits own infrastructural developmentpolicy. This is to develop their ownlong-term solutions to infrastructural problems and challenges. Apart from that, the university also has full autonomy in building up its ICT facilities for students, management staff, and academics in order to achieve organizational efficiency and effectiveness. Consequently, respondents also agreed that the university had its own rules and regulation to protect its operation and assets so that the infrastructure facilities could be utilized responsibly and prudently. This describes the university's autonomy toconstruct its own regulatory policiesfor the purpose of infrastructure facilities operation and maintenance.
Lastly, Table 9 shows the responses to items pertaining to university autonomy in the area of student affairs and development. The mean values of all items fell within the range 3.87 to 4.12, indicating that in general, the respondents tended to 'Agree' with the existence of university autonomy in students affairs and development.

**Table 9: Frequency, Mean and Standard Deviation for Responses
Regarding University Autonomy in Student Affairs and Development**

Items in Students' Affairs		Level of agreement					Total	
		1 (n,%)	2 (n,%)	3 (n,%)	4 (n,%)	5 (n,%)	Mean	SD
AI2	The university determines the activities carried out by students, according to the needs of the university	7 (1.1)	27 (4.4)	142 (23.2)	295 (48.3)	140 (22.9)	3.87	0.852
AI3	The faculty/university organizes various activities for students aimed to prepare the students for their future career	2 (0.3)	18 (2.9)	126 (20.6)	297 (48.6)	168 (27.5)	4.00	0.793
AI8	The university offers various co-curricular activities for students, which are treated as courses with the required number of credit hours.	3 (0.5)	17 (2.8)	98 (16.0)	276 (45.2)	217 (35.5)	4.12	0.81

Again, the responses for 'Agree' (Scale 4) and 'Strongly agree' (Scale 5) were aggregated and recoded as 'Agree.' Results showed that 435 (71.2 %) respondents agreed that the university determined the activities carried out by students, according to the needs of the university. This reflectsuniversity's involvement in overseeing the administration of student life and student development within the campus. In general also more than two-third of respondents agreed that the university organized various activities for students' future career. This statement implies that the university initiated many opportunities for students to engage in co-curricular activities and development programs to develop students' personality and life skills.

DISCUSSION:

The original idea of the university is embedded in the philosophy of liberalism and empiricism, i.e. liberation of the mind based on true, empirical knowledge. European universities during medieval times upheld this philosophy, with the masters or academics giving tutelage to a small group of students of the elite class to become society leaders, men of letters, and learned men of the upper class (Veysey, 1965). University autonomy arises in this context as a form of sentiment and conscience to protect university academics from being influenced and corrupted by the interests and powers of other institutions in the society, thereby jeopardizing the pursuit of true facts, concepts, and knowledge. The more dependent a university on other institutions, the more it lacks autonomy, and the more questionable the integrity of knowledge generated.

As of the early twentieth century, universities in Europe and the U.S.A. adopted the philosophy of pragmatism, i.e. universities should generate knowledge and technology for speeding up agricultural and industrial revolution. Science and engineering became the preferred areas of study which underscored national progress and development, thereby leading to the emergence of progressivism philosophy then (Sufean, 1995). Those philosophies are still prevalent today, and they have been alleged to cause the deterioration of university autonomy in terms of state and industrial interventions in research and academic affairs in universities.

This study, however, has challenged the prevalent contention that public universities lack autonomy, due to the fact that they are government establishments and the university managers are appointed by political leaders in the government. This study found that if university autonomy was specifically conceptualized operationally into nine areas or sub-constructs, then university academics (the respondents) understood and regarded that public universities were largely autonomous institutions, with minor intervention and restriction by the government in certain areas. Henceforth, the hypothesis that public universities lack autonomy can be disputed and refuted.

CONCLUSION:

For generations, academics have viewed with apprehension the encroachment of numerous interests into higher education institutions, particularly government and industrial linkages with academic and

research works. The surge of pragmatism has overwhelmed universities in many parts of the world since the early twentieth century, and today it is even more so due to globalization and market demands. Public universities have been held accountable to fulfill the ever changing needs and developments of the state, society, employers, industries, and institutions, so much so that universities have become the melting-pot of many interests from different stakeholders. The idealism of ivory tower with its neutrality of autonomy apparently is assumed to be a long foregone conclusion and a deteriorating paradigm.

Whatever it is, this study has reassessed how far university autonomy forms part of academics' conscience in contemporary context. This study has unveiled that if the conception of university autonomy was deconstructed into some specific dimensions, then academics realized that university autonomy was still largely in the university's jurisdiction. Hence, the long-held perception that public universities lack autonomy has not been corroborated empirically. Discussions on university autonomy have been merely underscored with nostalgic sentiments.

It is suggested here that similar studies should be replicated by fellow academics in other countries to verify the extent and variations of university autonomy in the context of different political systems and cultures. A large number of studies in this area would be able to broaden the knowledge on autonomy, philosophy, governance, management, and best practices of universities around the world.

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