

FACULTY AND STUDENT
RESEARCH IN PRACTICING
ACADEMIC FREEDOM

INNOVATIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION TEACHING AND LEARNING

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LEARNING VOLUME 31

**FACULTY AND STUDENT
RESEARCH IN PRACTICING
ACADEMIC FREEDOM**

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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SERIES EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

INNOVATIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION TEACHING AND LEARNING

The purpose of this series is to publish current research and scholarship on innovative teaching and learning practices in higher education. The series is developed around the premise that teaching and learning is more effective when instructors and students are actively and meaningfully engaged in the teaching–learning process.

The main objectives of this series are to:

- (1) present how innovative teaching and learning practices are being used in higher education institutions around the world across a wide variety of disciplines and countries;
- (2) present the latest models, theories, concepts, paradigms, and frameworks that educators should consider when adopting, implementing, assessing, and evaluating innovative teaching and learning practices; and
- (3) consider the implications of theory and practice on policy, strategy, and leadership.

This series will appeal to anyone in higher education who is involved in the teaching and learning process from any discipline, institutional type, or nationality. The volumes in this series will focus on a variety of authentic case studies and other empirical research that illustrates how educators from around the world are using innovative approaches to create more effective and meaningful learning environments.

Innovation teaching and learning is any approach, strategy, method, practice, or means that has been shown to improve, enhance, or transform the teaching–learning environment. Innovation involves doing things differently or in a novel way in order to improve outcomes. In short, Innovation is positive change. With respect to teaching and learning, innovation is the implementation of new or improved educational practices that result in improved educational and learning outcomes. This innovation can be any positive change related to teaching, curriculum, assessment, technology, or other tools, programs, policies, or processes that lead to improved educational and learning outcomes. Innovation can occur in institutional development, program development, professional development, or learning development.

The volumes in this series will not only highlight the benefits and theoretical frameworks of such innovations through authentic case studies and other empirical research but also look at the challenges and contexts associated with

implementing and assessing innovative teaching and learning practices. The volumes represent all disciplines from a wide range of national, cultural, and organizational contexts. The volumes in this series will explore a wide variety of teaching and learning topics such as active learning, integrative learning, transformative learning, inquiry-based learning, problem-based learning, meaningful learning, blended learning, creative learning, experiential learning, lifelong and life-wide learning, global learning, learning assessment and analytics, student research, faculty and student learning communities, as well as other topics.

This series brings together distinguished scholars and educational practitioners from around the world to disseminate the latest knowledge on innovative teaching and learning scholarship and practices. The authors offer a range of disciplinary perspectives from different cultural contexts. This series provides a unique and valuable resource for instructors, administrators, and anyone interested in improving and transforming teaching and learning.

Patrick Blessinger
*Founder, Executive Director, and Chief Research Scientist,
International HETL Association*

Enakshi Sengupta
Associate Editor, International HETL Association

FOREWORD

It is both a pleasure and an honor to provide the foreword for this book, *Faculty and Student Research in Practicing Academic Freedom*. The book covers a broad range of perspectives and will provide an invaluable resource to thought leaders everywhere as it presents insights into many of the challenging aspects of academic freedom relevant to modern higher education. As a Vice-Chancellor and Principal who has worked in higher education for several decades, I view resources such as this as critical to enabling debate and challenge to higher education and central to value and benefit institutions bring to wider society.

This book focuses on an important, and very current, issue – academic freedom – and explores topics, which are increasingly covered in global news, social media, and well publicized, and discussed across higher education. As an Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society, former Chief Executive of the Higher Education Academy and a Vice-Chancellor and Principal, I know first-hand the importance of academic freedom and the necessity for this to be central to the value, mission, and purpose of all institutions around the world. So much of what we do in higher education relies on the work of our academics, especially as research is at the center of all that we do. This book also highlights associated issues faced across differing national boundaries: for example, international policies, gender inequality, administrative power, free speech, student research, and students rights. This gives the book added relevance for academics everywhere, providing a knowledgeable evidence-based resource and a body of knowledge to enable open, fruitful discussion within our precious higher education establishments.

What makes this book so interesting is the unique range of case studies that are presented. The consistent examination of academic freedom, explored in different contexts, challenged from the student and staff perspectives, highlighting the importance of civic engagement and democratic atmosphere, investigating students' engagement in activism, exercising rights, and interest in politics. An historic perspective of academic freedom is described using the experience of Turkish academics and students and by comparison with international policies and practices. Academic freedom of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq is explored through practice and perception and the book highlights academic freedom and gender inequality in Pakistani higher education, exploring the social barriers and cultural norms that affect academic freedom of female academics. It continues with a chapter focusing on the crisis that institutions, students, and practitioners face around academic freedom in Hungary and discussion on balancing freedom and discipline within military academies highlighting both the regulations and the realities that encourage and suppress academic freedom in these institutions.

These diverse case studies from higher education domains less commonly reported on in the research papers, highlight key issues and experiences that we can learn from, such as the examination of administrative power, labor law, and free speech that can often suppress academic freedom in a college. Safeguarding academic freedom during leadership transitions and organizational change in universities is also explored and a conceptual framework for shared leadership through proper governance is a wonderful resource for new leaders. Self-censorship in the social sciences is covered nicely and the book concludes with an exploration of the perspectives of Black/African American doctoral students and their experience of academic freedom.

Although the book focuses on very specific examples and case studies, the underlying issues are universal and affect many institutions, academics, and students worldwide. It is important for readers to reflect on how this may affect them and what they can do to be more aware of the impact this may have on their colleagues and the sector as a whole. The findings shared in this book, along with the knowledge that will be act as a catalyst for discussion and change, will be invaluable in ensuring that academic freedom can be discussed and hopefully protected in our institutions for the benefit of educators and students everywhere.

Professor Craig Mahoney
Principal and Vice-Chancellor

PART I

COUNTRY-SPECIFIC PRACTICES

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO FACULTY AND STUDENT RESEARCH IN PRACTICING ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Enakshi Sengupta and Patrick Blessinger

ABSTRACT

Academic freedom has been the topic of debate and discussion since the concept evolved in academia. It has been a controversial topic that has different dimensions and explores the significance of this concept with relation to knowledge development and enhancement of student's progress. Academic freedom expects faculty members to submit their ideas and research results to rigorous peer review and to experts who excel in the subject matter. The current debate surrounding the topic lacks clarity and has taken a different shape in different countries. In some countries, it has assumed the role of individual freedom, in some the collegial and institutional freedom, and in others it respects the freedom of students. Apart from teaching-learning, it is the freedom to conduct research and explore new avenues of knowledge. In this book, the concept of academic freedom is examined in the lights of globalization and challenges it poses to the development of higher education. We have seen that in recent years the concept of academic freedom has been threatened and some academics expressing their right of academic freedom were fired from their academic position, and in some cases, were imprisoned. Such case studies where academic freedom was silenced have been highlighted in this book. Authors have tried to explore how the concept has been balanced with transparency and accountability and what role did racial and gender biases played in pairing with rights and responsibilities.

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Case studies from Turkey, Iraq, Pakistan and Hungary have been presented along with other interventions and programs meant to support and uphold academic freedom.

Keywords: Academic freedom; knowledge; transparency; accountability; debate; globalization; institutional freedom; political regime; faculty members; student's progress

INTRODUCTION

1980s saw a spurt in the growth of the concept of academic freedom (Marginson, 1997). Some academics writing about this topic also suggested that freedom is becoming increasingly constrained in modern universities. Warning bells have been ringing making members of higher education aware of the fact that constriction will lead to deterioration of public debate the practices of pluralistic democracy (Melody, 1997). Some have even warned that this constraint on freedom might result in the poor relationship between students and faculty members and a fall in teaching standards with an emphasis on conducting "safe" research instead of speculative ones which might challenge the existing status quo (Kayrooz, Kinnear, & Preston, 2001). The economic downturn, globalization and internationalization of higher education have left its fingerprints on this concept. Increasing fiscal pressure and constraints on universities in the recent decade have resulted in the changing nature of higher education. Assessment and evaluation of academic performance and trends toward marketization and commercialization of universities with growing societal concern have led to a radical change in the teaching-learning pattern of an institution of higher education (Schuller, 1995).

Tracing back in history to view the contemporary origin of academic freedom, we travel back to 1940, which took its shape after a series of joint conferences in 1934. The concept of academic freedom was studied and debated by representatives of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), which defined and defended the academic freedom of college professors to teach and conduct research along with delving into issues of academic governance and collective exercise of academic freedom (Sengupta & Sumer, 2020). These debates and discussions are collectively called as the 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure. The text was further modified in 1989 and January 1990. Changes were superficial in nature and were restricted to language in order to remove gender-specific references that were found in the original text. The document was codified to promote public understanding and support of academic freedom, tenure and agreement in keeping with the interest of institutions of higher education. The concept of academic freedom is applicable to both the dimension of teaching and research and the advancement of knowledge. The text is also meant to protect the rights of the teacher in teaching and of the student to freedom in learning.

Academic freedom is open to a range of interpretation and is generally used to support a range of conflict, causes and positions (Worgul, 1992).

Although much confusion exists around this concept, it has some common themes and they emerge in varying degrees of frequency. At its best, it is presented as a basic right of academics, a right that is meant to support non-interference in their activities, the right to engage in meaningful research that investigates and discusses problems and gives the academic full liberty to express their conclusion on the subject. It allows them to publish their work in journals or instruct their students about their findings without fearing the interference of political or ecclesiastical authority of administrative officials of the institution in which the faculty member is employed (Worgul, 1992). While non-interference is one dimension of this freedom, the other part is engaging in appropriate academic activities and giving appropriate support to the academic activities (O'Hear, 1988). Discussions surround:

whether academic freedom should apply only to the acknowledged special interests of academics or whether it should instead be extended indefinitely to cover any teaching, scholarship, research or publication which any academic chooses to engage in. (Tight, 1988, p. 118)

Clash of competing ideas is considered healthy in academia which acts as a catalyst to developing knowledge and enhancing critical judgment among students. Debate occupies a central position in academic freedom and teaches students to engage in a difference of opinion, form their grounded judgment and learn the value of comparing perspectives. Academic freedom is an essential component toward sustaining society that is free, diverse and supports democracy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Education is considered as a public good and hence the notion of academic freedom and its role in higher education attracts attention from academics and policy-makers who discuss and debate to what extent should teaching staff practice academic freedom. Aronowitz (2001) argues that academics do not wholeheartedly practice the concept of freedom and thus fail to prepare students in their ability to fight social evils. He further argues that as responsible individuals we are committed to democracy and thus higher education in its very role must provide the much-needed tool to support and uplift the concept of democracy among the students. Most of the work found in the literature support the critical role of the academic in advancing the public good (Moore, 2003; Pulley, 2004).

AAUP has put forth a statement that elaborates the concept of common good and purpose of academic freedom, "to promote public understanding and support of academic freedom and tenure and agreement upon procedures to assure them in colleges and universities. Institutions of higher education are conducted for the common good and not to further the interest of either individual teacher or the institution as a whole. The common good depends upon the free speech for truth and its exposition. Academic freedom is essential to these purposes" (AAUP, 1940, p. 1).

Academic freedom, according to Dewey (1927), is the platform that allows an individual to shape and participate in public discourse and is the very foundation

on which the platform of a democratic society is built. It allows an academic the right of free inquiry without any external hindrances – an unknown binding social compact between society and professors in which society agrees to the need to allow a faculty member the pursuit of truth without any interference, be it political or economic in nature contrary to the vested interest of any individual which might interfere with the autonomy of the academics.

Academic freedom is deeply rooted in the educational policy and governance of an institution, in which the state and its legitimate institutions play an active role. Hence, academic freedom is not only the prerogative of the academic institution but becomes a responsibility of the state and its educational policy-makers and influencers. The state's role is not to be discreet in its policies and exercising self-restraint in all possible interventions. It should ensure that all state vehicles should not undermine the concept of academic freedom or try and curtail it in their own way. Intolerance of views, self-censorship and bias opinions curtail the free independent thinking of the academics and render the concept of academic freedom as meaningless. Institutions of higher education have the power and the ability to protect and promote academic freedom, challenging views and established opinions and thus creating a body of knowledge that is progressive and futuristic in nature. Mere constitutional guarantees do not ensure academic freedom unless they are deeply connected to the democratic process of the country and free-thinking power of its citizens.

The effort to uphold and support academic freedom through constitutional apparatus and institutional guarantees may fail miserably if the institutions of higher education are made to operate under unreasonable or arbitrary limitations. Institutions should be capable of resisting intrusions in its daily operations and its opinion and should be committed to its democratic rights and this can be achieved under the able direction of a strong and committed leadership team. Leaders in the institution can ensure that rights of every individual are protected and a great sense of accountability and transparency prevails in the university. Addressing the needs and rights of academics can only be done by creating stakeholder's engagement and the official body that is capable of a systematic, analytical and dispassionate way of addressing the challenges faced in exercising academic freedom.

Emphasis has been given to tradition that concerns with the academic freedom of the students (Downs, 2005). Literature has addressed issues of academic freedom from a student's point of view within and beyond the classroom context that includes individual rights including due processes and civil liberties. Academics have also worked toward academic freedom at the elementary and secondary level (Brown, 1994). This area of study is concerned about the intellectual freedom of both teachers and students and its focus has been the content of the curriculum used in the schools.

CONCLUSION

International bodies like AAUP have given special emphasis to the concept of academic freedom and the freedom of students to be able to learn without any

coercion or restriction. The freedom to teach, learn and conduct research is equally important and none of these dimensions can be devalued as they are all interconnected. Students are expected to be taught and they have the freedom to protest against the indoctrination of political and religious ideologies. They also have the right to express their opinions on the curriculum. Both teachers and students have the right to intellectual autonomy, the right to discuss and debate in a manner that respects both teachers and students as individuals and their right to dissent (Moshman, 2009).

CHAPTER OVERVIEWS

Civic Engagement and Democratic Atmosphere in Times of Trouble: Perspectives of University Students in Turkey, by Omer Caliskan, speaks about the study which seeks to understand the experiences and perceptions of the university youth regarding the democratic atmosphere of a public university located in Turkey. To this end, the objective of this research is twofold: (1) to investigate university students' level of civic engagement regarding student activism, exercising rights and interest in politics and (2) to explore students' perception of their university environment regarding the promotion of tolerance, respect for ideas and participation in decision-making. This study was carried out at a public university located in the middle of Turkey. A mixed-method approach was employed, including both qualitative and quantitative data. A total of 332 undergraduate students participated in the quantitative part while 14 undergraduate students were interviewed in the qualitative part of the study. In quantitative data collection, two self-developed scales were used: Civic Engagement Scale and Perceptions of Democratic University Environment Scale. The results of the data analysis indicated that students' overall civic engagement level was below the average level. In particular, the level of students' activism was significantly lower than that of students' interest in politics and exercising rights, respectively. In addition, the level of students' interest in politics was significantly lower than that of students' exercising rights. With respect to the students' perception of democratic university environment, the data revealed that students' overall perception of the university environment was slightly above average level. Specifically, the students' perception of university environment regarding respect for ideas was significantly higher than that of university environment regarding participation in decision-making.

Academic Freedom in Turkey: A Historical Perspective in Comparison to International Policies and Practices, written by Ahmet Su and Engin Karadağ, is about academic freedom which according to the authors is of central importance in all kinds of activities of academics and students. Considering this, many reforms were made to secure and improve academic freedom in Turkey. The most important reforms and changes were made in 1933, 1946, 1960, 1973 and 1981, and they all coincided with significant social and political periods. But, the history of Turkey's academic freedom is not bright. The past university policies pertaining to academic freedom had occasionally positive, but often restrictive,

results in expanding academic freedom. Despite policies and reforms, illegal dismissals of faculty members, disciplinary inspections and penalties were experienced. Moreover, the restrictions also affected freedom of expression in the forms of censorship and self-censorship; freedom to learn, teach and conduct researches had limitations. On the other hand, the removal of headscarf bans and the abolishment of coefficient policy which disadvantaged some students in the university entrance examinations can be given as examples of improvement in academic freedom of students, both of which improved students' access to higher education. When compared with other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, the rankings and various indicators present Turkey at lower end in terms of academic freedom. This shows that further steps are to be taken to improve academic freedom in Turkey.

Academic Freedom – To Whom Does It Matter? Exploring the Concept of Academic Freedom in Kurdistan Region of Iraq, written by Enakshi Sengupta and Fahrettin Sumer, explains that academic freedom is not a novel concept but is becoming a core component of the world of academia in ensuring higher academic standards and the development of curriculum that will meet the needs of the future. Every university needs to recognize that the creation of knowledge and development of higher education sector are impossible without recognizing academic freedom. Academic freedom is not restricted within faculty members but touches the lives of the students. Consensus-building and dialogical methods of interaction rather than pushing the boundaries of what can and cannot be said in institutions of higher education are becoming increasingly important in promoting academic freedom. In this chapter, the authors will explore the meaning of academic freedom as understood by faculty, administrators and students in an international university in Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Authors will delve into both practice and perception mode of academic freedom in their analysis of the qualitative data derived from their research based on structured interviews. They will evaluate their research findings in consideration of the relevant literature.

Gender Inequality and Academic Freedom in Pakistani Higher Education, authored by Zainab Fakhr and Hazel Messenger, is about academic freedom and the right to express one's views in higher education which is important for faculty and students alike, so enabling intellectual integrity and professional autonomy. However, this might not be the case for female academics in countries where females are marginalized, and their opinions are dominated and limited by the society and culture. Gender inequality and how it negatively influences the opportunities available for females to progress is a universal issue; however, although initiatives designed to tackle this problem are being seen to result in gradual improvement internationally, particularly in industrial countries, the situation in developing countries remains a concern. In developing countries, women tend to be either absent from many organizations or exist at the margins of organizational life with the result that they have fewer opportunities for development or career progression. This has a negative impact on the growth and development of a country at national level, particularly when there has been investment in female education from an earlier stage. It would seem that this