

‘Academic Freedom’ in Indian Higher Education Setting

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Abstract: In the Indian higher education (HE) setting, what ‘academic freedom’ of students and faculty members constitutes has not been discussed in detail. As a result, many faculty members and students have discerned ‘academic freedom’ as freedom from external control and influence. It is noticed that faculty members and students are often misinterpreting and misconstruing the concept of ‘academic freedom’ as ‘legal freedom’ and confused it with ‘civil and political rights’. This creates a hurdle to achieve the aims and objectives of Indian HE institutions. Against this backdrop, the paper discusses the concept of ‘academic freedom’ and its importance in the higher education setting. It examines the relationship between ‘academic freedom’ and ‘university autonomy’ in the Indian context. It discusses the HE institution’s social responsibilities concerning the notion of ‘academic freedom’. It delineates faculty member’s and student’s academic freedom in the Indian higher education setting. It submits that ‘academic freedom’ is not to be treated as ‘legal freedom’. But it is an essential requisite for quality teaching-learning activities, productive and rewarding research works in higher education. The paper adopts a qualitative methodology that subsumes descriptive, evaluative, and interpretative approaches to derive its conclusion.

Keywords: Academic Freedom, Higher Education Setting, Legal Freedom, Social Responsibilities, Teaching-learning Activities, University Autonomy

1. Introduction

Higher education institutions are regarded as the hub for knowledge production and dissemination. According to Altbach (2001), higher education institutions are devoted to the pursuit and transmission of knowledge. These institutions concern for ‘knowledge’ creation and dissemination and prepare students for professions, social services, industry, and rational citizenship. According to Cardinal Newman (1982), the principal function of higher education institutions is to cultivate intellectual culture. Verbitskaya (2002) says that higher education institutions aim to seek and transmit the truth, educate pupils for intelligent contribution to the growth and development of society. Neave (2002) enunciates that “higher education institutions aim is to pursue the truth wheresoever it shall lead” (p.331). Thus, it may be stated that higher education institutions are meant for knowledge acquisition, production, and transmission for the benefit of pupils, and thereby society.

According to Hagg (2009), there is an increased demand for higher education (HE) day by day. New universities are getting established across the globe. In India, conforming to the global trend, the number of students admitted for education in Universities is accelerating. As a result, stakeholders of the university like students, guardians, employers are increasing exponentially. In this context, HE institution’s roles and responsibilities are enlarged and intensified, which is a concern for many scholars across and outside India. At present, a university in India is more than a university because universities are not only the hub for higher learning but also for cultural activities, political debates, and ideological riots (March 6, 2017, The Indian Express; February 15, 2016, The Guardian; April 11, 2017, Livemint;

February 18, 2016, The Hindu). It is true that to achieve the aims and objectives of universities in India, both students and faculty members must partake in all the decision-making bodies. They also need to be part of the higher education institution's initiatives and innovations. They need to help the university authorities to achieve the ultimate height of the university like other universities in the globe. In short, students and faculty members of higher education institutions can create a peaceful and amicable environment for teaching, learning, and research work. To challenge the existing ideas, faculty members are to be encouraged to take up the new and alternative perspective of a research problem, participate in discoveries and innovations, and use 'academic freedom' without fear, risks, and limitation. Students also need 'academic freedom' to think something new and do research tasks innovatively. Haggins (2000) reported Davie, who defined academic freedom as freedom from external interference in (a) who shall teach, (b) what to teach, (c) how to teach, and (d) whom to teach. The aim of 'academic freedom' is to help students and faculty members of higher education institutions to think freely and do academic tasks without any fear and compulsion (Magsino, 2010; Verbitskaya, 2002; Sanchez-Sosa and Lerner-Febres, 2002; Shin and Harman 2009; Menon, 2003). According to Altbach (2001), academic freedom is a central value of higher education institutions, as it impacts the academic profession in every respect. Further, he says that academic freedom is at the core of the mission of the university. It is essential for teaching and research works. Without academic freedom, universities can neither achieve their potential nor contribute to the emerging knowledge-based society (p.205).

O'Neil (2008) enunciates that "academic freedom is a curious concept, not easily defined, and poorly understood" (p.vii). The notion of 'academic freedom' is a debatable issue. What does 'academic freedom' include and exclude is not well defined for students, faculty members, and university stakeholders in the Indian HE set-up. As a result, in the name of 'academic freedom', students and faculty members are engaged with teaching and learning issues and actively participated in religious-cum-cultural activities, political debates, ideological riots, etc. In Altbach's (2001) view, 'academic freedom' must be the foremost concern for everyone in the HE setting, but unfortunately, it has been overlooked and not studied in detail.

2. Academic Freedom and HE Setting

Academic freedom is the right of individuals working in academia. This freedom subsumes the right to teach, research, and publish, free from external influence and coercion (Menand, 1996; Haskell, 1997; Gibbs, 2016). Verbitskaya (1996) reported Ben-David, who said, "academic freedom is the freedom of the system of education and the freedom of research from political, religious, or ideological influence" (p.289). A Russian Scientist, Mendeleev, wrote, "academic freedom is the freedom of creativity. It is an intellectual value which shows the character of the process of education and the university life" (p.289). Global Colloquium of University Presidents in the year 2005 said, "academic freedom may be defined as the freedom to conduct research, teach, speak, and publish, subject to the norms and standards of scholarly inquiry, without interference or penalty, wherever the search for truth and understanding may lead" (p.5). Altbach (2001) conveyed that "academic freedom means the free pursuit of teaching and research, as well as decision making on the grounds of solely academic criteria" (p.208).

According to Verbitskaya (1996), the idea of 'academic freedom' is very important in the life of universities. It possesses the inherent and hidden vibes as well as spirits to challenge the orthodox ideas and beliefs. Hagg (2009) expressed that "academic freedom contributes significantly to achieving quality in teaching and research tasks" (p.2). Neave (2002) mentioned that most of the stakeholders of HE institutions believe that 'academic freedom' is part of human rights and, more particularly to the right to 'freedom of speech', but it is not true (p.332). 'Academic freedom' is not the same as academic democracy'. According to Van Ginkel (2002), academic freedom applies to academia alone and specifically to academia speaking based on specific expertise and knowledge and doing so in

that capacity (p.332; Reported in Neave 2002). Academic democracy is about the process of decision-making within an academic institution, i.e. the distribution of rights to participate in decision-making among different constituencies of the institution (Sanchez-Sosa and Lerner-Febres, 2002, p.387).

3. Relationship between Academic Freedom and University Autonomy

The idea of ‘university autonomy’ enshrined in the Cordoba Reforms of 1919. It has long been a powerful force in Latin America (Water, 1968). European Union (2008), in its Council of Committee of Ministers, approved a recommendation on ‘academic freedom’, which states that ‘academic freedom’ and university autonomy are fundamentals requirements of any democratic society. In the U.N. universal declaration of Human Rights, it is mentioned that academic freedom is considered a basic human right in universities across the globe. According to Karran (2009), “the academic freedom must emphasize the unity between teaching and research, and the consequent need for academic freedom to be enjoyed by both students and university faculty members” (p.268). Hagg (2009) mentioned that universities are required to be accountable to many interests of society such as teaching, research, etc. (p.3). Further, he said, to cater to societal demands, university teaching, and research must be morally and intellectually independent of all political authority and economic power (p.3).

Although academic freedom and university autonomy are closely linked with each other (Suwanwela, 1996; Fuente, 2002), it is noticed that university autonomy does not necessarily guarantee academic freedom. For example, certain private universities may enjoy autonomy but reluctant to confer academic freedom to their students and faculty members. Karran (2009) said, “Autonomy is necessary but not a sufficient condition for academic freedom, as autonomous universities (private universities) can deny academic freedom to their employees” (p.7).

A question arises, ‘Can ‘academic freedom’ be given to the faculty members and students of universities as their constitutional rights?’ Universities are very often centers of political and intellectual dissent. The China, Vietnam, Cuba, Burma, Iran, and Syria governments have withdrawn ‘academic freedom’ from Social Sciences and other departments of the universities merely because their fields of research are politically and ideologically sensitive (Altbach, 2001, p.211). The Singapore and Malaysia governments have also banned certain research topics from researching their universities for the national interest. The topics are ethnic conflicts, local corruption, etc. The reason is perhaps the research findings may have oppositional views that may question the government policies (Altbach, 2001, p.213). Thus, the state government, in the hand of university administrators, controls academic freedom in the university, as it pays salary to the university faculty members and other employees. In contrast to these scenarios, industrial countries like Japan and Germany have extended academic freedom to university faculty members for teaching, research, and freedom of expression (Altbach, 2001; 2015). In the U.S.A., the American Association of University Professors (A.A.U.P., 2006) in their document mentioned ‘institutional regulation on academic freedom and tenure’ which is widely accepted in American Universities and followed by other countries, like Canada, The Netherlands, etc. In India, universities avail academic freedom; as mentioned by Kothari Commission (1966) “universities are pre-eminently the forum for a critical assessment of society — sympathetic, objective, unafraid— whose partiality and motives cannot be suspected” (275-276).

According to Verbitskaya (2002), “academic freedom of a university is determined by the degree of university autonomy” (p.342). University autonomy endorses the following agendas for its growth and development, but not limited to these only.

- i) Define priority areas of research
- ii) Determine the organizational structure of the University
- iii) Introduce and approve educational programs based on societal demands and internationalization of the curriculum.
- iv) Recruit faculty members based on working load and job responsibilities.

- v) Offer free educational services to the economically poor and needy students (e.g. Teach to the poor and weak students, etc.)
- vi) Income accumulated from research and consultancy project grants shall be utilized for the benefit of economically underprivileged and poor students.
- vii) Universities must try to refrain from political, ideological, and religious pressure.
- viii) University must create the infrastructure for students and faculty member's recreational purposes.

To explain, a university must avail autonomy to carry out research to fulfill its objectives and goals. By researching the research expertise domains, a university can positively contribute to the formulation of appropriate policy for the benefit of society. Autonomy in research would also help students to nurture their creativity and critical thinking. A university's autonomy assists in designing the university organization structure. The structure is to be followed for initiating and completing the tasks on time and stipulated manner. By adhering to the organization structure and completing every task on time, a university can set a precedence for others about transparency and accountability in the work culture. A university autonomy encourages each department to offer new courses and programs based on the societal demands and students' present needs through its academic council approval. By doing this practice, a department could use its faculty members' potential, knowledge, and skills to make the course curriculum as par with the international standard for the students' benefit and benefit of the society at large. A university needs to avail autonomy to recruit faculty members based on the need of the department as well as strengthen the core research areas of the department. Any external force in the faculty recruitment of a university set-up will stand as a barrier in achieving university excellence, quality teaching-learning, and research work to a great extent. While availing autonomy, a university must aim to fulfill its social responsibilities, that is, provide the required guidance and counseling to the weaker section of the students who need more help to excel in the HE setting. Further, a university must offer free educational services (i.e. no charge for course fee and tuition fee) to the economically poor, underprivileged, and needy students. In this case, university autonomy may be used potentially by its governing bodies to use the accumulated income from research and consultancy projects. The money is received from alumni and through donations may be used for the benefit of needy students. The public would recognize and appreciate this noble activity of the university. A university must try to refrain from political, ideological, and religious pressures on teaching and research activities. This would help the university to formulate and execute various decisions in the university for the benefit of students, faculty members, and the public at large. A university is also required to avail autonomy to create the infrastructure for students and faculty members for recreational activities on the university campus. This would make the university a stress-free and healthy campus to nurture quality education. And, quality education would contribute to the progress and benefit of society.

Verbitskaya (1996) believes that there should be a policy about HE that gives autonomy to HE institutions in respect to all procedures concerning personnel in carrying out teaching and research, financial activities on the legal basis, and the charter of the institution (p.291). I believe Indian higher education institutions must get 'autonomy' to plan and execute the following agendas for the inclusive development of the HE institutions, meeting the expectations of stakeholders in offering quality teaching, and involving in innovative research works.

- i) Universities can plan their structural units for the functions of their departments and divisions/centers.
- ii) Universities can define the procedures of appointing the administration board, and Deans of schools, and Heads of departments.
- iii) Universities can design the study programs and course curricula according to their national educational guidelines.

- iv) Universities can have agreements and sign contracts with partners at home and abroad for research activities.
- v) The university academic board, the Vice-Chancellor, must manage the university, as they are responsible for the growth and development of the university.
- vi) The Vice-Chancellor can be elected through special interaction with professors, representatives of faculty members, and students of the university.
- vii) The university must decide the service conditions and service period of the Vice-Chancellor.

Further, the 'academic board' of a university in India must avail 'autonomy' in the following matters, not limited to these only.

- i) The academic board can change the charter.
- ii) The academic board can take decisions on faculty member's training, curriculum design, rules, and regulations concerning personnel and academic matters.
- iii) The academic board can establish relationships with national and international universities.
- iv) The academic board can carry out structural changes upon the Vice Chancellor's suggestions (e.g. create posts for faculty members recruitment, opening a new department, etc.).
- v) The academic board can present and discuss the university budget before the governing body for its approval and execution, etc.

In India, the I.I.T. (Indian Institute of Technology), AIIMs (All Indian Institute of Medical Science), now I.I.M. (Indian Institute of Management) got the 'autonomy' status in the year 2017. The ministry of Human Resource Development (H.R.D.) of India bestowed statutory power on I.I.M. and restricted government role in appointing Director and faculty members of the institutions. From now on, I.I.M. doesn't need to go to the government for various permission and clearances. Further, I.I.M. can grant degrees to students besides the postgraduate diplomas. The honorable minister of H.R.D. of India, Mr. P. Javadekar said, 'autonomy is a must for institutions which have created an eco-system for excellence in HE' (The Economic Times; July 30, 2017). The I.I.M. 2017 bill abolished the post of the visitor from the I.I.M. The I.I.M. can appoint members of the Board of Governor (BoG), wherein one government representative must be a member. (The Times of Indian; July 30, 2017)

4. Social Responsibilities and HE Institutions

HE institutions are believed to be the game-changer of society. It guides students to think new, contribute knowledge in reshaping the society, and change the perceptions and thoughts of people against age-old blind beliefs and socio-religious superstitions. It is the HE institutions that prepare a child into an adult. HE institutions, while availing 'academic freedom', must consider their responsibilities to render the services to the students, faculty members, and stakeholders. The reason is freedom comes with responsibilities, and responsibilities are combined with duties. In this context, Shils (1991) and Russell (1993) state that academic freedom comes along with responsibilities, that are entrusted with teaching and research in the HE setting. According to Fuente (2002), the role of a university is to prove to society the quality of its teaching and academic production, and be attentive to the social and cultural demands of its environment (p.338). Further, he expresses that "universities should endorse their commitment to academic freedom, increase the range of their social responsibilities, generate alliances and networks amongst themselves" (p.339). The 1950 UNESCO document entitled "Policy for Change and Development in HE", enunciates that to fulfill the creative and philosophical functions of the universities, faculty members must avail 'academic freedom' to choose the course(s) to teach based on their research expertise or interest. Altbach (2001) warns that if universities are found violating academic freedom that must be censured and informed to the academic community. When the violation is remedied, censure can be lifted. (p.218)

5. Higher Education in India and Faculty Members' Academic Freedom

Academic freedom enables faculty members to cultivate new ideas and put forth those before the academic world for their scrutiny and consideration. In this sense, university faculty members are considered as proposers of new ideas to the world. Their imagination and inferences were witnessed by many discoveries and innovations in the scientific as well as humanity domains. They contribute their expertise to the growth and development of society by doing painstaking research on societal problems and giving solutions or resolutions to these problems. Their contributions indeed help society to move towards the betterment of human civilization. In India, the Report of the Education Commission (1964-66) states that "the academic freedom of faculty members to pursue and publish independent studies and researches and to speak and write about significant national and international issues should be protected" (p. xiii). In this context, Karran (2009) writes, "to allow university faculty members to challenge existing knowledge and create new ideas; they are to be granted 'academic freedom' to undertake research and discuss new ideas and problems of their disciplines, and express their conclusions through both publications and in the teaching of students, without interference from political or ecclesiastical authorities, or from the administrative officials of their institutions, unless their methods are found by qualified bodies within their discipline to be incompetent or contrary to professional ethics" (p.1). de George (2003) states that academic freedom for teaching 'is the right to teach one's discipline in the way that one, because of his or her knowledge, deems best. If it is for one's knowledge that a university hires a faculty member, it must presume that the faculty member is the best-qualified person it can find to teach the subject' (p.17).

In the Russian government education law, *Article-3* states that professors, scientists, and students are to be given 'academic freedom' for the achievement of the aims and objectives of the universities. It expresses that university faculty members must get the freedom to teach the subject(s) of their choices and do research on their interesting research topics. Further, it is mentioned that 'academic freedom' must embrace academic responsibility to create appropriate conditions for independent research. The American Association of University Professors (A.A.U.P.) in the year 1915 Declaration states that freedoms, which university faculty members expect to enjoy in a university set-up entail certain correlative obligations (Gibbs, 2016, p.180).

The UNESCO (1997), in its policy document, enshrines that "the right to education, teaching, research can only be fully enjoyed in an atmosphere of academic freedom" (p.26). UNESCO has also recommended 'academic rights and freedom' in its HE institutions policy (Refer to Para 27). It says, HE faculty members must avail academic freedom in their respective organizations. They shall be free to teach and discuss course contents in the classroom. They must be free to carry out research and publish results thereof. They shall be free to participate in professional and representative academic bodies.

6. HE in India and Student's Academic Freedom

Students are the stakeholders of HE institutions (Menon, 2003, p.237). Their participation in university decision-making bodies is viewed as an expression of the ideal of democracy. As a stakeholder of the university, students must be granted an equal voice in university decision-making. According to Magsino (2010), student academic freedom is understood to be a means to achieve university aims and objectives. Further, he enunciates that student's academic freedom influences university development. Their participation in the university meetings would contribute to defending their interests. It may lead to the growth and progress of the university. Such as deciding credits of a course, helping administration to select food carters for hostel mess through the tendering process, creating student-counseling groups to help academically unmotivated and depressed students, etc.

According to Lee (1987), students' involvement in university governance can facilitate the evaluation of curricula and teaching practices through the identification and correction of weaknesses in programs and instruction. Wood (1993) writes that students' participation in university meetings could build a healthy organizational climate at universities by promoting an atmosphere of openness, communication, solidarity, and trust. Menon (2003) states that student's trust in the institution might reduce the confrontation and conflict between administrators and students, faculty members, and students (p.238).

Since students are the cardinal members of the HE system, any decision on academic matters bereft of their participation would have a direct impact on them (Gould, 1973; McGrath, 1970). Their career and life opportunities are mostly determined by the quality and type of education they receive from HE institutions. The future of students' lives is also determined by HE institutions to a large extent. So, they are entitled to be part of the university decision-making process (Lee, 1987). Rodgers et al. (2001), Cockburn (2006) evokes that students' participation in university decision-making is effective and impactful. Their participation in university governance does not only help the university to accomplish its aims and objectives but also set new goals for future achievements.

A question arises, to what extent students are allowed to participate in and contribute to university decision-making? Bridges (1967), Hoy, and Miskel (1996) convey that students would be involved in university decision-making so long as they view it as important. Menon (2003) expresses that if students don't have a personal stake in the outcome of the topics under discussion, they are likely to perceive the decision situation as unimportant. For example, faculty members' recruitment process, non-teaching staff recruitment, job assignment to non-teaching staff, etc. Hoy and Miskel (1996) mention that students' participation in university decision-making would yield positive results only in cases where stakeholders are party to achievements of organizational goals. Winch (1996) delineates that for retaining quality education and achieving the aims and objectives of HE institutions, all the parties, including students, must be agreed upon the institute policies. In this regard, Little et al. (2009) report that in the United Kingdom HE set-up, students play an active role in university decision-making. Menon (2003) expresses that student unions in the university are required to promote the general interests of its members (p.254).

In the I.I.T. (Indian Institute of Technology) of India, students participate in the following decision-making committees to achieve the aims and objectives of the institution to a large extent (Refer to the Act and Statutes of the I.I.T., 1961).

- i) Hostel management and its functions
- ii) Hostel mess tendering and food catering selection process
- iii) The academic unethical disciplinary committee
- iv) Sexual harassment committee
- v) Timetable committee
- vi) Cultural and Sports committee
- vii) Curriculum design and approval committee
- viii) Academic council committee
- ix) Department consultative committee
- x) Research council committee, etc.

To explain, students elected bodies do participate in the hostel management committee meeting to formulate new policies and take decisions concerning student's welfare in the hostel sector. Students' participation in the hostel management committee meeting would enable the I.I.T. to fix the system flaws, if any, and fulfill students' requirements and desires. Students elected bodies also participate in the ethical committee meeting to redressal the grievances about students' unethical practices. In this case, students become witnesses to the complaint and decision-making process after hearing the parties. Students elected bodies to participate in the sexual harassment committee meeting to give justice to the complainant if the complaint has merits. They participate in the 'timetable' committee meeting to represent students' concerns before the committee members and help them to make appropriate

decisions. This provision is exercised to protect students' involvement in many academic and cultural activities. Students are part of the sports and cultural committee, as they are the players of various sports and organizers of academic and cultural festivals on the campus. This provision is made to encourage students in sports activities and find out the best players among them to train for the state and national level competition. In I.I.T., each department nominates two students as members of the curriculum design and approval committee. This provision is made to take care of the fairness in course curriculum design and students' workload to handle the course contents and assignments. Further, it helps authorities to take various decisions on academic matters and research matters. Students elected bodies also participate in the academic council and research council to help authorities to take achievable and unbiased decisions for the benefit of students, faculty members, and society at large.

Students in I.I.T. can use their academic freedom to choose a course from the basket of courses to fulfill the required number of credits of a program. They can change from one engineering department to another engineering department after completion of one year of the engineering program subject to the seat's availability and other stipulated criteria. They can use academic freedom to share their disagreements on the issues that are discussed and debated in the class, participate in the seminar and conferences, offer new proposals, ideas, and arguments on academic issues. They can use their creative minds to think innovatively and

In the year 1960, the U.S.A. and thereafter Germany formulated student's 'academic freedom' policy for their universities. In the policy, it was mentioned that students could choose the courses of their study, their personal and social lives within the university (Magsino, 2010, p.26). American Association of University Professors (A.A.U.P.) in 1967 on *Rights and Freedoms of Students* document mentioned that "academic institutions exist for the transmission of knowledge, the pursuit of truth, the development of students, and the general well-being of society. Free inquiry and free expression are indispensable to the attainment of these goals" (p.13). Thus, facilitating academic freedom to students in a university set-up could result in profound changes in the university.

A question arises, is 'academic freedom' the same as 'legal freedom'? Magsino (2010) answers that every member of society enjoys legal freedom because s(he) belongs to a state and thereby citizen of a state. For example, salesman, milkman, washerman, craftsman, fisherman, businessman, administrative officers, etc. But Student Academic Freedom (S.A.F.) is enjoyed by students only, that to while pursuing their degree or diploma or certificate programs in the HE institution. Hence, equating legal freedom with 'academic freedom' would be a misleading act. According to Karran (2009), academic freedom is limited to university set-up only. It cannot be equated to 'legal freedom', such as 'freedom of speech'. He says, 'freedom of speech' is entitled to every citizen of a state, whereas academic freedom is confined to individuals who are part of university settings (i.e. students, and faculty members). According to Barrow (2009), academic freedom does not refer to the freedom to engage in any speech act (p.178). The U.S.A. courts have by and large refrained from making pronouncements on matters that are primarily academic (Young, 1970). For example, the Supreme Court of the U.S.A. in the year 1957 pronounced, "scholarship cannot flourish in an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust. University faculty members and students must always remain free to inquire, to study, to evaluate, to gain new maturity and understanding; otherwise, our civilization will stagnate and die...." (*Sweezy vs New Hampshire* 1957, p.250). Standler (2000) states that a significant part of individual academic freedom is not legal freedom (p.18). Oakeshott (1967) expresses that student academic freedom is 'the freedom to be academic'. Magsino (2010) warns that "it must be admitted that legal freedom in every academic matter could sufficiently demolish the theories underlying the overarching authority the university possess vis-à-vis students" (p.29). Student's academic freedom includes selecting a course from the basket of courses for their study, selecting professor(s) for the thesis guidance, choosing topics to do research, participating in the university campus and hostel welfare activities, etc. But these freedoms are not available to every citizen of a state, hence not to be treated as legal freedom. Magsino (2010) further adds, S.A.F. also includes going on a strike to take on the university to provide academic and recreational

facilities in the university campuses for the benefit of students. It is to be noted here that students while enjoying academic freedom in the university set-up, must discharge their duties for the benefit of society at large.

Hook (1969) claims that student's academic freedom must be confined to education alone and applied to university campus(es) only. Barrow (2009) warns that students should confine themselves to talking about what they are qualified to talk about in the university set-up. He says, "I, as an individual, have academic freedom only because and in so far as I am a member of the academic community" (p.181). Magsino (2010) reiterates that student academic freedom is "the freedom to be a participant in an academic endeavor, to partake of the freedom of the university in the pursuit of human understandings" (p.36). Academic freedom is not a license to abuse, slander, endanger, and incite in a university set-up. Rather, it must be used cautiously and consciously for the benefit and growth of the university and society at large (Barrow, 2009). Thus, S.A.F. shall not be extended to political agendas and disruption to the university functions. On educational grounds, students are allowed and encouraged to exchange their ideas, comment on issues, and challenge the faculty members' views. Magsino (2010) evokes that the university has no business meddling with students' activities performed outside of the university (p.32). If the university would facilitate academic freedom to the students and take responsibility for the students, then it must monitor and control the activities students perform at the university campus(es). If universities are indifferent towards the student's academic freedom, then universities would have no moral rights to blame students for the use of their legal rights in the university campus(es) to avail and use academic and recreational facilities as a citizen of a state. In this context, Magsino (2010) warns that if students in the university will avail legal freedom, then the situation may come that would destroy the university autonomy and damage the academic set-up.

Radhakrishnan committee report (1962) on the Indian HE system states that in the name of 'academic freedom', students' indiscipline behavior in the university campus shall not be encouraged and supported by the institute authorities. Students' indiscipline behaviors can be handled by formulating policies and sharing university aims and objectives with them. The report further highlights that university authorities must develop a greater sense of social responsibility in students for educational progress and societal development. According to Altbach (2001), the violation of academic freedom by university students must be monitored and regulated by the institute authorities, if required (p. 217).

7. Conclusion

'Academic freedom' is a core value of HE institutions. The Ministry of Education, Government of India, has bestowed 'academic freedom' on India's autonomous universities and institutions. It states that autonomous universities and institutions can carry out the research and teaching-learning activities based on their expertise and interest. These institutions can offer new courses and programs based on societal demands and students' present needs. For that, they do not need any approval from the higher education regulatory bodies, such as University Grants Commission, and All India Council for Technical Education.

'Academic freedom' in Indian HE institutions encourages students and faculty members to think creatively, do innovative research, and engage in quality teaching-learning activities. It nurtures universities to offer quality education and stands as per the international university standards. Thus, bereft of 'academic freedom', teaching-learning, and research activities in HE institutions cannot be productive and rewarding. Since 'academic freedom' assists in achieving the aims and objectives of the higher education institutions, it is considered an indispensable element and a fundamental requisite for higher education institutions to become globally reckoned and acknowledged.

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