

Academic Freedom Conference
“Problems and Challenges in Arab and African Countries”

10-11 September 2005, Alexandria, Egypt

FINAL REPORT

Saturday, 10 September 2005

The Opening Session

The opening session was chaired by **Prof. Nouria Benghabrit-Remaoun, Prof. Shahida El-Baz, Prof. Jan Henningsson, Prof. Ebrima Sall, and Ms. Anna Lundh.**

Prof. Nouria Benghabrit-Remaoun welcomed the speakers and the guests, highlighting the absence of cultural aspects, which necessitates the organization of events such as the Academic Freedom conference. Higher education in this regard is a way to foster critical thought and knowledge production in the younger generations. Prof. Remaoun pointed out that one of the main objectives of the UNESCO Forum is to discuss these problems. Accordingly, all participants were invited to make recommendations and propose ideas. Next, the floor was given to Prof. Shahida El-Baz, one of the organizers of the event.

Prof. El-Baz welcomed the panel and guests, apologizing for being a late-comer to the organizing committee. She thanked all those who have contributed to the success of the event. She then officially declared the conference open, conveying the greetings of Mr. **Samir Amin**, Chairperson of the Arab and African Research Centre.

Prof. El-Baz pointed out the correlation between freedom and the advancement of nations. The conference, hence, is a venue for the defence of national identities and creativity. In this sense, it is impossible to realize the academic freedom of the intelligentsia in isolation from the community. Other relevant concepts include the dissemination of such values as education and transparency to replace those of the destructiveness witnessed in Iraq and Palestine.

Prof. Jan Henningsson, addressing the audience in Arabic, welcomed the participants and highlighted the role played by the Swedish Institute in Alexandria. Through cultural diplomacy, the Institute specializes itself in establishing cultural dialogues between the Arabs and the Europeans. He also pointed out that the Institute, in collaboration with the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, hosts the Anna Lindt Foundation. He described **Dr. Ismail Serageldin** as an inspiring personality who celebrated the culture of the mind. Hence, he invited the conference to become a celebration of the culture of the mind. He concluded by reiterating his welcome of the participants.

Prof. Ebrima Sall began his speech by conveying his greetings to the audience. Thanking the organizers of the event for their efforts and also expressed the pleasure of CORDESIA to be a partner at this Forum. Founded 33 years ago, CORDESIA has a special interest in Academic Freedom. It has throughout those years enabled African researchers to come together, and to produce a discourse which makes more sense to the Africans. Prof. Sall discussed the objectives and publications of CORDESIA, as well as its programs and achievements. Some of the key issues he raised in his speech included the following:

- The impact of the autonomy of academic institutions on the broader society
- The new challenges which face Academic Freedom (e.g.: globalization)
- Knowledge as the key for the development of Africa
- Means of knowledge production

Ms. Anna Lundh, as UNESCO representative, welcomed the participants, pointing out that the conference is indeed a good example of what the Forum aims to be: an arena which facilitates research and knowledge, and broadens the discourse. Ms. Lundh further described the structure of the Forum, the Regional Committees, as well as the importance of publication for UNESCO and for the Forum. She pointed out that the main aim is to make research available to support development.

Next the floor was given to **Dr. Soheir Wastawy** (Chief Librarian, Bibliotheca Alexandrina), who delivered the opening speech. She conveyed the greetings of **Dr. Ismail Serageldin**, and welcomed the guests to the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. She gave a short presentation about the Library, its philosophy, objectives and achievements, which was followed by a ten-minute video about the history of the Library. **Dr. Wastawy** also pointed out the importance of libraries in pursuing freedom and disseminating knowledge. In this sense the Ancient Library of Alexandria was more than a library. A Mouseion, it was the first entity in the world to make knowledge universal.

In closing the session, **Prof. Remaoun** thanked all the participants and announced the start of the working sessions.

SESSION I

The Development and Modifications of the Concept of Academic Freedom and University Autonomy in Arab and African States

Social and human sciences and academic freedom: historiographic practices in Algeria and the Arab world.

Hassan Remaoun

The main theme of this paper is the problems between memory and history, and their impact on the human and social freedom in Algeria. The main points tackled in this paper include: a) Historiography and censorship b) History vs. memory c) Social history d) Facts and the legitimization projects of colonialism and e) The glorification of history.

Censorship is prominent at universities, creating many problems such as the number of people who are persecuted for their knowledge. The fact that there is censorship in other sectors of society as well has produced a constant confrontation between history and memory. Memory is selective, not critical. It selects things from the past that may interest us; hence, there is a social lack in history. The people do not always have access to, or the ability to find facts. Historians, unlike other people, admit that they may not have access to the facts. In this sense, the social history becomes a form of legitimization of the national history, which always seeks to linger between history and memory.

The universities in Europe acquired a degree of autonomy from politics, but the relation between the two is complicated nonetheless by funding. This also gave rise to problems of objectivity. In the Arab countries, the relation between nationalism and the university traditions is different. It is very similar to the relation between the Ancient Library of Alexandria and the modern Bibliotheca: there is tradition but also discontinuity. On the other hand, there is also ideological confrontation due to the dominating intellectuals in the Arab World. There are three main categories of intellectuals: a) The Liberals: they support a more philosophical approach b) The Technocrats: they enter the social sphere c) The Populists: they reach power in some states and are characterized by certain criteria among them a) opening up to modernity b) tending to the left, often socialist c) confronting theology d) ambiguous, in that they attempt to forge a national identity.

The paper concludes by saying that history is a search for identity and knowledge of what happened and why. This is one of the stakes of Academic Freedom.

The Nature and Evolution of Academic Freedom in Mali

Isaie Dougnon

The focus of this paper is on the nature and the evolution of Academic Freedom. This raises the question of funding: How can we tackle academic freedom in a country with no funding for research?

Considering higher education in Mali, we find that Malian professors were obliged to leave the country, due to lack of democracy, leading to the blocking of academic freedom. In this case it is not possible to talk about freedom across national borders, which allows intellectuals to have an impact abroad.

There are a number of factors that contribute to the violation of academic freedom. These can be summarized in the following: a) all political education is prohibited. b) Educational programs are subservient to state censorship c) The ministry of education monitors the professors d) all schools and educational institutions are monitored e) All lectures and activities are monitored and the teaching of philosophy was banned.

This is a clear indication of how academic freedom is violated. The reform of the university, meeting the needs of the society, and opening its doors to the civil society are all still very distant from Mali.

In the conclusion of the session, it was made clear that among the main problems, which hinder academic freedom and development in developing countries, is the absence of "good government". Furthermore, many Arab and African countries lack policies which support academic freedom.

SESSION II

The State vis-à-vis Academic Freedom

The chair of this session, **Prof. Mala Singh** introduced the session by raising a number of key issues which summarize the main theme of the session, namely the State vis-à-vis Academic Freedom. These can be summarized in the following:

1. The relation between the State and academic freedom is constantly negotiated and renegotiated. It is shaped by many factors and actors. The parameters are dynamic and hence the question arises: Are there minimum limits to be defined?
2. Academic freedom is not a special rights dispensation. It is rather a regular set of rights, striving for political and social rights.

Academic freedom may still be under threat. Some of the factors that may delimit academic freedom are: a) The State may be drawing academia into serving a developmental agenda that does not allow for enough critical evaluation of that agenda. b) States sponsor education: for what kinds of research and teaching is money made available? c) Religious and cultural fundamentalism also have impact on academic freedom.

The State vis-à-vis Academic Freedom

Hassan Nafaa

The presenter started by saying that the relationship between the State and academic freedom is a highly complicated matter, for academic freedom is a recent concept which presents itself forcefully. However, its constituents are not quite clear.

He further maintained that states play a major role in influencing academic freedom through a number of channels that may be categorized mainly into direct and indirect channels. The direct channels can be expressed through administrative and financial restrictions, security and monitoring activities on campuses or through direct intervention in the elections of student and faculty unions. The indirect channels can be expressed through legislative bills that impose censorship or rigid criteria for publishing research results etc.

The paper concluded by saying that academic freedom is strongly linked to the existence of general forms of freedom and democracy. It is then that universities will be able to defend their rights honourably and liberally.

Research Freedom in Arab Universities.

Namir K.S. Al-Saoudi, presented by Abdel Moneim Osman

The paper which was presented by Prof. A. Osman, due to the absence of Dr. Al-Saoudi started by saying that freedom is the ability to undertake a task freely, with no obstacles or hindrance. The academia is represented by the cultural and scientific institutions. Hence, academic freedom is the freedom of the academic institutions to conduct instruction, research and publication without the interference of any external bodies.

At university, it is essential to protect both professors and students in the search for knowledge from the interference of the authorities. There should be no religious, political or ideological restrictions imposed.

In Iraq, there were scholarships to the UK and other countries, and these Iraqi researchers later became the nucleus for the research centres. The impact of the Baath Party was very forceful, and provided sufficient resources for such centres. Studies in the fields of solar energy, water sources, astronomy, oil, medicine ...etc were conducted. Since Iraq was a wealthy country, strategies aimed at improving the social conditions of the people were drafted and implemented. In the eighties, however, the Baath Party started interfering to make scientific research serve military purposes and no longer were developmental strategies a priority. Scientists and researchers began to desert these centres, and the research centres of Iraq became a constituent of the military institution. This is clearly a consequence of the negative impact of the government interference and infringement on faculty and institution's freedoms. Iraq also suffered a large magnitude of brain drain due to these government policies.

Ever Changing Contest: The Struggle for Academic Freedom and its Repercussion in Nigeria, 1985-2005

Yanusa Ya'u

The question of academic freedom in Nigeria has been a contested terrain. Academics, in the light of the inheritance of the anti-colonial struggle, sought to offer an alternative discourse. Hence, there is a subversive quality to academic freedom. The contest took different forms at different times.

The higher education system in Nigeria has gone, since 1978 till recently, through a series of confrontations with various political regimes which ruled the country during this period. Professors were sacked, students were killed, vice-chancellors were dismissed and the Academic union was banned various times. All these happened because of continuous infringements on academic freedom and institutional autonomy.

The situation today is that the government is committed to the IMF. If the university wants academic freedom, it has to raise its own funding and salaries. Hence, there is now a stalemate.

In the wake of totalitarian regimes and the absence of the concept of freedom, and the amount of disturbance this has created in the society, as well as the migration of the intellectuals,

and in the light of the reforms undertaken, etc. it becomes necessary to set new methodological principles for positive forms of freedom. It is essential that the states shift towards democracy. This will enhance freedom. However, change is difficult.

The chairperson concluded the session with the following closing remarks:

1. The important issue raised is the relation between academic freedom and university autonomy.
2. There is the issue of what the obligations of the states to create an environment in which freedom becomes a reality?
3. We should remember that academic freedom should not only be seen as a priority for social activists in developing countries with undemocratic regimes. It should be also a priority in ostensibly democratic regimes.

SESSION III

Social Actors in the Struggle for Academic Freedom

Prof. Shahida el Baz opened the session pointing out that there is no academic freedom without agents/actors to achieve it. Academic freedom is part and parcel of other forms of freedom, and related to the structure of society and its level of development. Hence, there are many actors.

1. Direct actors, which include the academics, the university community, etc.
2. Social forces, which include the forces in society which fight for freedom, social justice, participation in politics, etc. and are linked to social organizations.

Therefore, success is related to society – a free society. The system of education is at the heart of this problem. Once a free society is established then academic freedom would be guaranteed.

Social Actors in the Struggle for Academic Freedom: A Case Study of Birzeit University Riham Barghouti & Helen Murray

The paper started by indicating that the challenges facing academic freedom discussed so far in this conference have all been discussed within a postcolonial context. This paper tackles the challenges facing academic freedom in Palestine, a country still under occupation. It, thus, focuses on the importance of education in challenging the foundations of occupation.

Beirzeit University was established in 1957 as the first Arab university in the country with a vision of building a free Palestine society. The University has gone through various stages of development, particularly struggle against occupying forces and the struggle to emerge and survive. The freedom of the institution was often infringed upon through closer and military actions preventing students and staff from reaching the University.

There was International support for academic development. However, this support was increasingly tied with an increase in collaboration between Israeli and Palestinian institutes. Opinions of Palestinians converged on the fact that the support did not help the Palestinian people. It was based on this that there were many calls to boycott Israeli institutions not only in Britain and France but also in the United States. However, there were two main problems posed by this stance:

- a. The boycott is attacked by its opponents as an infringement on academic freedom. However, the infringements on the academic freedom of the Palestinians are ignored.
- b. This stance would punish that section of the society which is most likely to be sympathetic to the oppressed. This however is not really true.

Those who acknowledge the illegality of the Israeli occupation still argue that the boycott is useless.

History, however, has shown that boycotts bring an end to oppressive regimes. One obvious example is the regime in South Africa.

This is why we discuss academic boycott at a conference which focuses on academic freedom.

The paper concluded by saying that the struggle continues: there can be no academic freedom without an end to the Occupation. The role of the university, then, under occupation is not just an academic one.

**The Stranglehold of Tradition and Culture on Women:
Lessons from Southern African Female Writings**
Seatholo Masego Tumedi

This paper believes that the contributions made by the literary field to academic freedom should not be disregarded. For what we deal with in literature is not written in vacuum, but is formed by experience in society.

Findings of the research conducted for this paper indicate that:

- There are no complementarities between masculine and feminine gender identities in the literature produced in South Africa.
- Men have monstrous power, whereas women are powerless, have no control, are very submissive and subservient, collaborating in their own oppression.

Patriarchal oppression was found to share common ground with racial oppression. The paper examines social contracts of tradition and culture, their role in the disempowerment of women. Using a quotation from various African texts, we find these calamities depicted by a number of writers: abuse against women, assault, violence at home, arranged marriages, etc.

The most important point is the question of female education. In all texts it is rejected. Seeking to pursue education is seen as abnormal, and girls are described in “their mania” for education. The perfect kind of woman is – as described in one character – the one who is inside the house, chattering with other women, learning how to cook exquisitely, and how to please the man who will one day take her for wife.

In conclusion, the paper indicates that the issue of gender at university remains a catching issue. There is no liberation from tradition and culture. In what ways are we recreating ourselves if the highest educational institutions remain at gender imbalance under the power of the patriarchy?”

Academic freedom relates to accessibility, and hence women do not have the same access. It is based on this that women writers are beginning to bring about gender awareness and how to change the existing imbalance.

SESSION IV

Religious, Social and Cultural Aspects Impacting on Academic Freedom

Prof. Jan Henningsson then introduced Prof. El-Ahwany, describing him as an engineer-com-philosopher, an advocate of the culture of non-violence and dictates his work to Paulo Freire and Abdel Abu-Zahra, who fought for the pedagogy of freedom

The Changing Cultural, Socioeconomic and Religious Factors Impacting Academic Freedom in Egyptian Universities

Ahmed el-Ahwany

The presentation is not a scientific paper. It completes previous work that analyzed the evolution of the university in the Third World, the special features of Egyptian higher education, and the rise of the freedom of speech at Egyptian universities. There was a horrible law issued on 31st May 1994, namely the law of nominating the rectors of universities by appointment, thus changing the future of universities. The aim was to control universities and the opposition in preparation for the elections, which were to be held the following year. As a result, some professors were held in prison for years.

The question raised here is, what happened in those 10 years? It is possible to say that there are three decades of deterioration and these past ten years are the culmination of this trend.

Reading most of his paper, Prof. el-Ahwany came to the following conclusion: The last three years have witnessed the decline of human rights and academic freedom for professors and students alike. The only way to overcome this situation is through non-violence movements against infringements on freedoms.

Sunday, 11 September, 2005

SESSION I

Economical Changes, Realities and Impacts on Academic Freedom

Academic Freedom in Private Universities in Africa: The Case of Tanzania

Johnson M Ishengoma

Tanzania is composed of mainland and islands. In Tanzania, the private education sector is a new phenomenon. It started in 1997. Ever since 1967, Tanzania was trying to implement socialism. Higher education has to be controlled by the government as a scarce resource. The only private institutions that was allowed to exist, was St. Augustine University. The paper is based on the author's observations and research. It also records the author's personal experience of the challenges and problems, which face private education in Tanzania.

Academic freedom should include, among others, the freedom of the lecturer to grade students' papers without intimidation or fear. We have now 17 private universities. Most offer undergraduate and advanced programs in business, law, mass communication, education and secretarial studies. However, the private institutions are mostly for those students who cannot be admitted into highly competitive public universities.

Eight of these universities have appointed a vice chancellor, which is the British system of administration. Many of these universities do not have academic assemblies; indeed most of them are affiliated to religious bodies.

Funding depends largely on donations and tuition fees. Most institutions hire retired faculty from other places and rely on part-time faculty members. This is a three year contract, and hence has serious implications for academic freedom. Academic qualifications, on the other hand, are very low. The majority of the staff has masters and other degrees, but only few have PhD degrees. There is no doubt that higher academic qualifications ensure freedom that is more academic. For one thing, degrees give confidence. Also, most faculty members focus on teaching, therefore research remains limited. The question of knowledge production is not really there.

The paper concluded by saying that private education is constrained by a number of factors , important among them are: a)The nature of employment which is based on contracts, b) Retired faculty members hired, c) Low academic qualifications, d) Quality of student enrolled, e) Lack of independent research and f) No assemblies and Unions.

These constitute the main challenges for higher education in Tanzania.

**From Political to Economic Constraints:
Trends in Sociolinguistic Research and Academic Freedom in Malawi**

Gregory Hankoni Kamwendo

Malawi had a very oppressive political system, which constrained academic freedom until 1994. Now there are new constraints, which are economical in nature. In the period, 1964-1994 Malawi was ruled by a dictatorship. There was one nation, one language, but also one leader. Various forms of freedom were repressed. The university was strictly controlled and monitored to prevent “subversive elements” from joining the staff. In addition, “subversive disciplines” such as social sciences, political sciences and social linguistics were prohibited.

By definition, social linguistics is politically sensitive, because language is used to consolidate the dictatorship. In the context of 20 languages, one language only was promoted. The other languages were seen as against one ideology. In the early 1970s, there was a language survey conducted for Africa, but it was not allowed into Malawi. Linguists were too afraid to object to Banda’s anti-linguistic lectures on language.

Following the 1994 ballots, democracy introduced new freedoms including academic freedom. The problem, however, is that a new set of constraints came up such as the fragile economy which led to low funding, therefore limited research. In 1996, the language centre at Malawi University was set up. It is severely crippled, however, because of funding. The only donor forthcoming is GTZ, the German institution for mother-tongue research. Therefore, the centre has to dance to the donor’s music.

The paper concluded by saying that in the absence of funding, the institutions remain reliant on external funding and this will always affect academic freedom.

SESSION II

Academic Freedom in Areas with Armed Conflict

Due to the absence of Prof. Thierno Bah, Cameroon, who was scheduled to present a paper entitled *L'Université et les libertés académique en Afrique. Hier, aujourd'hui et demain*, Prof. Carlos Cardoso and Prof. Abdel Moneim Osman gave a presentation about their personal experience as academics in armed conflict areas.

Academic Freedom in Areas with Armed Conflict with special reference to Sudan

Abdel Moneim Osman

Universities in war-zones or areas of conflict are very unique, particularly in Sudan, and face difficulties unfamiliar to other universities. In 1989, Juba was bombarded almost daily. The government decided that this is not a suitable environment for higher education, and moved the university to Khartoum.

The effects of war on the university were two-fold:

1. The physical effect: The forces took over the buildings to be used for military purposes. The buildings had cost the equivalent of 20 million Euros.
2. The human part: The effect of the situation on the students, the staff, and the mission of the university. There are ethnic groups in Sudan, so any conflict reflects itself in the university. The students and staff are divided according to their tribes or ethnicity. In this case it is very difficult to take any decision due to these sensitivities. Appointment of staff too is problematic, especially to high posts.

Under such conditions, university autonomy and academic freedom cannot be practiced.

One major phenomenon to be observed in most areas of conflict is that of brain drain. Professors migrate to more secure countries, which influences the quality of education. However, we have not focused on the lives of the students, nor on the loss of facilities, which are often irreplaceable. In the light of the massive transfer of labour into non-conflict areas, another problem arises, namely that in the new areas professors and students are often considered to be the other, and have no space to develop their creativity. On by-product of conflict, as is the case in Palestine for instance, is the targeting of higher education. However, it is not the only by-product. Conflict also affects development and aspirations. Education is part of the social fabric, and this is not acknowledged in the international frameworks for the protection of education.

In Iraq, the American forces have occupied the dormitories of student housings, which has influenced the students' lives. Part of the students left to return to their hometowns or villages, others postponed their education indefinitely. This has partly led to the establishment of private universities, which are not up to standard. Also the Kurdish community had their students' housing, part of which housed female students. The housing was invaded, under the pretext that it belonged to Islamist groups. The treatment the students received at the hands of the forces is indescribable.

SESSION III

Communication Revolution and Academic Freedom

Prof. Mohamed Abdul Wahed, chair of this session, introduced the main theme to be tackled, pointing out that the information revolution has brought in the winds of change. Humanity has moved from the age of scarcity of information to the age of wealth and abundance in information. The professor has changed from being a provider of knowledge into being a facilitator for accessing the information. Power has shifted from the professor to the student, and there are now many electronic activities available, such as e-media, e-publishing, e-democracy, e-government, e-learning, etc. Who knows? May we one day come to e-academic freedom?

Communication Revolution and Academic Freedom

Basyouni Hamada

There are two major considerations that need to be pointed out. First, that the communication revolution has not only affected the concepts of academic freedom, but globalization too is highly influential. Second, that the presentation given attempts to provide a global view therefore much may or may not be available in the Arab/African World. Accordingly, two major questions need to be raised:

1. Where do African countries stand vis-à-vis the communication revolution?
2. To what extent is the Islamic culture in line with technology and with the communication revolution?

To discuss the relationship between academic freedom and the communication technology requires a reconsideration of the definition of both concepts. In other words, academic freedom was conceived in a context prior to the communication revolution. In the digital age, concepts of academic freedom may be off point, since this revolution has democratized communication and has freed individuals from restrictions. All types of communication systems, but also new political systems, are formed around modes of communication. Similarly, the communication revolution has changed university structures and activities. Therefore, academic freedom should be re-examined.

The link between the communication revolution and academic freedom: The communication revolution paved the way to the knowledge society, which is a critical factor, since one strategic resource for the prosperity of humankind is knowledge itself as well as access to it. The communication revolution has also allowed for easier and faster dissemination of knowledge, in particular by diffusion through publication online. In the light of this, it is important to remember that the university is at the heart of the knowledge society. Therefore, academics are entitled to new ways of knowledge production, dissemination, learning, and empowering information sector in the economy.

The implications of the knowledge and the communication revolutions, as discussed above, indicate that Universities and the state must support each other. At the same time, it is education that maintains the political mechanism of the state. This is due to a number of facts of the current state of affairs. Firstly, power over knowledge is out of the control of the nation state. Secondly, the educational system is out of the control of the nation state. In the light of the communication revolution, interactivity will radically change the ways of conducting research, increasing efficiency and productivity. Similarly, online academic publication, changing patterns of reading, as well as the speed of change will all defeat the possibility of broad planning.

The major principles of academic freedom include that this freedom is linked to the freedom of expression and changes from being a negative right to being a positive right, expressible in terms of Freedom to Academic freedom requires full university autonomy, since secrecy has a negative effect on academic freedom, as will be shown by Dr. Shamsi's presentation.

Future trends of the communication revolution will be influenced by the architecture of the net, but will also emphasize the responsibility of the university professors as agents of change and freedom fighters. However, freedom is not absolute. There should be internal and external accountability.

In conclusion, it was mentioned that academic freedom in Arab and African countries lags behind the potentials of the communication revolution and this lack of academic freedom is justified by the need for stability.

Academic Freedom and the Right to Publish

Maitha Al-Shamsi & Basyouni Hamada

The paper started by saying that to publish is a right for two reasons:

1. The right to publish is an essential component of the freedom paradigm
2. Publishing is an important indicator for gauging scientific advancement

The freedom of expression in the academic milieu is essential. The right to publish is closely related to the right to communicate, which is part of human rights and freedom. When we discuss scientific publication, people believe we mean only journals. However, there is a necessity to publish and disseminate opinions in the community, be they social, political or otherwise. This is achieved through such channels as the television, the internet, etc.

The interrelation between academic freedom and the right to publish is related to the responsibility of academic researchers to make their findings known. The restrictions imposed on the diffusion of research inhibit universities from playing their role effectively, since the positive right requires the availability of means of communication.

The problem of secrecy is largely related to the concept of industrial secrecy. This highlights the conflict between the university culture and the industry culture. It is difficult to establish that mutual collaboration that can actually lead to numerous benefits. In addition, the right to publish is often tied to issues of national security. In conclusion, the paper indicated that the right to publish is central to academic freedom and is crucial to the advancement of knowledge. Without the freedom to communicate, academic freedom remains far from reality.

SESSION IV

Globalization and Academic Freedom

Prof. Abdalla Bibtana opened the session with the following possible aspects of the impact of globalization on academic freedom:

1. No doubt that globalization will have a profound effect on higher education and will change the system.
2. Further shrinking of the funding by the state, therefore the private sector will have more impact on academic freedom.
3. The possible impact of the GATS on the future of higher education especially on the national systems of higher education will be so profound.

The floor was then given to the keynote speaker.

Globalization and Academic Freedom

Ebrima Sall (representing Adebayo Olukoshi, Executive Secretary of CODESRIA)

In a previous session, the question was raised whether one day there will be e-academic freedom and e-democracy. Today is 11th September, which means that four years of global significance have passed. The interconnection between events is usually easy to see, but sometimes we need to detect them. The date 9/11 already has an impact on funding and academic freedom in and beyond the USA, especially with new fields of interest emerging, such as terrorism. Religious fundamentalism and terrorism lead to serious violations of academic freedom all over the world. One example is travelling to the USA. There is the emergence of a new state of emergency determined by the policy makers. Researchers have to deal with this. One important issue in this regard is the question of who decides what to research.

Academic freedom has been defined as the freedom in pursuit, production and transmission of knowledge in all its forms through any means. It is the freedom of researchers and scholars to pursue knowledge and the truth without interference or control. Academic freedom is a prerequisite for research. Without academic freedom, research remains “essentially ideas in closed corridors”. Franchise evokes the autonomy of universities. Hence, it is the dichotomy of academic freedom versus immunity. This is comparable to parliamentary immunity.

The link between globalization and academic freedom is very complicated. There is a two-way link between knowledge and globalization. While the economy is changing, knowledge has supplanted physical wealth. Knowledge has a central place in all social groupings since the beginning of history. However, what kind of knowledge? Academic freedom is a condition for the production of knowledge, and is realised only within certain sets of conditions and closely linked to other freedoms.

Globalization is changing academic freedom and political environments and practices such as:

1. The landscape is one of very hybrid institutional environments: tradition vs. new, corporate vs. franchise, etc.
2. Mixed modes of delivery, research and publication: old and new modes, market-sensitive and practical, distance learning. etc.
3. Sources of documents in research are diverse: collaborate research, through e-mail and mobile phones, for example.
4. Increased possibility of dissemination, for example, on yahoo.
5. The explosion of the media and changes in political structures, which facilitate communication.
6. Polarization of the political space.

How do such points increase academic freedom and what are the risks?

1. Forced liberalization through globalization, but it is very selective. For example, getting a visa and the freedom of movement for scholars.
2. Globalization increased the polarization between the North and the South, not just geographically.

3. Relations between the state and the public university have changed. The state has moved from state-steering to state-interfering mechanisms.
4. The public universities are forced to functions like private universities in managing their resources.
5. The rapid increase in private education: the significance is not limited to the number of universities, but also to their effect on society and education.
6. GAT treaties applied to the higher education sector mean that higher education becomes a commodity.
7. Political correctness: exploring alternatives, scholars seem to have reached the end of history.

Academic freedom: in the light of the tremendous changes occurring in the global environment, it is necessary to retain some space for critical thought. Due to the limitations of time, the next two papers were reviewed only briefly by the speakers.

New Global Economy and Academic Freedom in Kenya

Julius O. Jwan

The paper starts by saying that the new global economy dictates that developing countries, which rely heavily on donor funds to meet their recurrent expenditures and provide social services such as education, to promote more courses that have higher economic returns in the world of work. It is based on this that education becomes more of an investment with quantified economic returns than a social and moral service to society. In Kenya, the consequence of this philosophy has resulted in the increase of demand on science and technology-based courses and sharp decrease on humanity and social science studies. In conclusion, the paper recommends a re-look at the impact of the new global economy on the universities with a view of focusing on local realities of the developing countries, without depriving the universities in these countries of the academic freedom that they so much deserve.

Globalization and Academic Freedom in Cameroon Universities with a Focus on the Anglo-Saxon University of Buea, Cameroon

Nicodemus Fru Awasom

Since Cameroon is bilingual, for both English and French are spoken there, the establishment of an Anglo-Saxon university can be considered an identity issue. There is no doubt that the economics of globalization has affected Cameroon's higher education. For example, one university of Yaoundé is patterned along the French tradition. However, the economic crisis set in with a new demand from the English minority for "their" university. The only way to survive this crisis was to make concessions and to allow for the establishment of a minimal university. This university was thought to epitomize democracy, yet there was great disillusionment, and the question posed itself: what went wrong? A number of things can be listed as causes for this failure: Among these are: a) a rise of the Anglophone movement for cessation, b) all promises dashed, c) leaders were not elected, but hand-picked, d) "non-conformist" lecturers had to be contained, e) no publication without censorship and f) hunting and fleeing of writers because of their publications which did not conform to the "official" view of history.

In conclusion, the paper indicated that, the dream of an Anglo-Saxon university has been dashed for political reasons. The system is mainly Francophone; therefore, an Anglophone decentralizing system is not possible. At the conclusion of the session, it was clearly stated that the very mission of the university needs to be revisited.

SESSION V

Indices and Benchmarks for Academic Freedom in Arab and African States

Academic Freedom and Other Forms of Freedoms, Belief, Opinion, Association, Education

Emad S. Abdul Razaq Al-Shik Dawood

The paper started by saying that since ever universities have been established, there has been continues efforts to gain and preserve their academic freedoms. After indicating the various types of freedoms such as freedom of belief, freedom of expression, freedom of opinion and the way all these constitute the base for academic freedom, the author gave a number of examples of violation of these freedoms in Iraq. These range from assassinating professors, looting libraries, laboratories and museums to the very low salaries of professors, which have led to great magnitude of brain drain. The paper concluded by saying that in spite of all these violations and obstacles, it is necessary to continue the strive to retain academic freedom and institutional autonomy.

Academic Freedom: Misconceptions and Misuses A Search for a New Definition, Indices, Benchmarks and Index

Abdel Moneim Osman

The paper started by stating that academic freedom is specific to the university institution. We cannot have the concept without the university as a community of scholars who seek the production and dissemination of knowledge.

There are also other epistemological aspects, which need to be taken into consideration:

1. Knowledge is valuable to be disseminated. Therefore, we need a free-inquiry atmosphere.
2. Masters of knowledge have more power investigation and rights than others, especially the right to promote what they master.

Therefore, we have two concepts: that of academic freedom and university autonomy. Ashbey described them as “two quite distinct concepts but they are interdependent.”

In conclusion, the paper stated the following recent statements which can be used as guidelines for new definitions:

- Difference between academic freedom and other forms of freedom.
- Close relation between university autonomy and academic freedom.
- The political activity vs. political statements.

The discussions which followed the presentation centred around the following aspects:

- The need to address the social responsibility of academic freedom.
- The need to address the academic freedom of students.
- The need to investigate the difference between academic and intellectual freedoms.

Recommendations of the conference

In conclusion, of the proceedings of the Conference, the following recommendations were put forward by the participants:

1. In order to have a clear definition of the issue of academic freedom, there should be an analysis of the interaction between the national, regional and global factors.
2. A call for the study of the impact of privatization in the field of education on academic freedom, as there are no concrete studies available yet.
3. To monitor the real impact of ICTs on academic freedom.
4. The partners of this conference should continue cooperating so that a convention could be established and endorsed by all academics.
5. The formation of a network of academic freedom monitors/Academic Freedom Watch, as well as interacting mechanisms for information sharing, dissemination and publication should be secured, to which UNESCO and other organizations may contribute.
6. The partners' websites should be linked to the relevant projects and programs on academic freedom.
7. To support and promote financial conditions of academics in armed-conflict areas, as well as to protect them.
8. The papers of this conference are to be published in English, French and Arabic.
9. The introduction of the concept of Intellectual Freedom in connection with Academic Freedom.
10. The consideration of the concept of hegemony over higher education through state religious machinery and the impact of this on academic freedom.
11. To maintain the role of the state in higher education and the status of state universities so as to protect and promote academic research and provide academic freedom.
12. To recommend donors and aid institutions to respect the academic role of the institutions which they are trying to help.
13. The need to send a message to the political leaders to signal the importance of knowledge in achieving development. The infringement upon academic freedom is not conducive to knowledge production and dissemination. The knowledge deficit is the main reason for underdevelopment.
14. Not to leave out the racial factors in academic freedom, such as is the case in Africa. Public affirmative action such as the empowerment of Blacks in South Africa is needed, or working towards the appointment of these to higher positions. The issues are there and need to be explored.
15. The university in conflict areas is an important issue that needs more exploration. How can the university enter into solidarity with people at Birzeit, in Iraq, etc? There is enough solitude and isolation. There must be some form of consolidation.
16. Links between universities are problematic, for there is no communication, no idea about the book collections available, etc. Academic freedom needs the free passage of

academics and ideas across borders. However, in the Arab World and Africa we have no freedom and right to move. Launching campaigns of solidarity for academics under occupation and for refugee students.

17. To elaborate indices and benchmarks.
18. To democratize the university. Students are marginalized. T.A.s have no access to department and board meetings. In this sense the university is more like politics, and closer to a dictatorship.
19. The need to evaluate the professors and teachers through a mechanism to guarantee students' rights. This is part of the social responsibility of the university.
20. A media-channel for the UNESCO to act as a window for the persecuted and the oppressed, through which they may also publish their research and their opinions.
21. The need for the autonomy of the academic institutions to safeguard academic freedom.
22. All high officials and the administration should be elected.
23. The concept of academic freedom should be redefined, practiced and evaluated through/in the light of the communication revolution.
24. The immunity of the university professor against any violation by the state or even the university officials should be ensured.
25. The gender dimension has been underplayed at this meeting. Please find a way to fit it in at following meetings.
26. The concept of duty vis-à-vis rights has been neglected. There is a need to raise the awareness of academic freedom in this light in all educational systems, and at all educational levels.

Closing Remarks and discussion of the outcomes of the Conference

Prof. Jan Henningsson: I learnt quite a lot, and was impressed by the ferocious self-critique of some participants, regardless of their personal safety. In Sweden we have a lot to learn. There are other obstacles to academic freedom than those, which are obvious and can be gauged. Methods of exclusion, gender issues, ideologies, etc. are all hindrances to academic freedom. The best way to make progress is across regional borders. I welcome further such meetings to look at each other's experiences. We need the Other not only as a mirror, but also to learn.

Prof. Ebrima Sall: We are very pleased to be part of this initiative. It has been very enlightening and we have high hopes. We will need a lot of hard work to implement the recommendations, especially through the UNESCO. But let me point out that the teachers are on the front-line every day, and they don't wait for us. The Forum is essential; however, we need to take the struggle to a higher platform.

Prof. Abdel Moneim Osman: This is a good opportunity to meet and to share, to be clear about some aspects and to exchange experiences. Dissemination of knowledge is very important, and we hope to disseminate a word or two about this conference. The civic society should be involved. I do not rely on governments and government officials. There is also a possibility of monitoring, establishing indices and benchmarks, and I hope we will see more development in this area.

Prof. Nouria Benghabrit-Remaoun: This Forum is an example of the cooperation of institutions, and I wish to thank the Swedish institute in Alexandria; AARC; and CODESRIA. Cooperation should be continuous.

Ms. Anna Lundh expressed her thanks to the partners of the Forum; the Swedish Institute; the keynote speakers and praised their contributions; the Bibliotheca Alexandrina for helping with the logistics; the interpreters for the long days of work; and the contributors of questions and interventions that made the Conference even more fruitful. She concluded by saying she hoped that each participant will now have “a seed to take home”.