

Academic Freedom and Self-Actualization of Teachers in a Higher Education Institution

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Academic Freedom, Understanding, Practice, Self-Actualization, Palompon Institute of Technology

Received : 08, December

Revised : 12, January

Accepted: 25, February

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ABSTRACT

Academic freedom is very important in the performance of duties of the teachers. The study was undertaken to determine how academic freedom affects the self-actualization of the teachers of Palompon Institute of Technology and sought to find out the respondents' level of understanding and extent of practice of academic freedom; level of self-actualization as well as the significant difference in the level of understanding and extent of practice of academic freedom when respondents are grouped according to their profile variables, significant relationship between the level of understanding on academic freedom and its extent of practice, and the significant relationship between academic freedom and self-actualization. Results of the study revealed that there is a significant difference in the level of understanding and extent of practice of academic freedom and self-actualization when respondents were grouped according to their profile variables. A significant relationship existed between the level of understanding on academic freedom and its extent of practice and that a significant relationship existed between academic freedom and self-actualization of the teachers. It was concluded that the respondents have a moderate understanding of their academic freedom and in terms of practice, they sometimes practice their academic freedom; and that the respondents demonstrated high level of self-actualization. Thus, academic freedom was noted to have association on the teachers' teaching performance, self-expression, and self-worth.

INTRODUCTION

Academic freedom is very essential to all members of the academic community, specifically those of the teachers. This same freedom serves as the bond which holds the university together and the principle which protects its educational mission (Nelson, 1999). This freedom is seen not as only a basic right of educators in the classroom and in research but as a constitutional right (Kraus & Stevens, 2012) that serves as their protection in the performance of their duties. The concept is defined as the freedom of the members of the academic community, assembled in colleges and universities, which underlies the effective performance of their functions of teaching, learning, practice of the arts, and research and that the recognition of such freedom is necessary in order to enable faculty members to carry out their roles (Fuchs, 1963). It is this same freedom that protects college and university faculty members from unreasonable constraints on their professional activities (Franke, 2011). This freedom is fundamental for the protection of the rights of the teacher which will have an effect in student learning (AAUP, n.d.). Academic freedom encompasses not only that of the teachers, but also that of the institution and the students. However, the present study only looked into the academic freedom of the teachers.

It was in 1915 that the widespread understanding of academic freedom came about when the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) issued its first comprehensive analysis of academic freedom in the United States through its Declaration of Principles. However, it was noted that the roots of academic freedom historically extended as far back as the time of the ancient Greeks wherein the focus was on the discovery of truth (Crabtree, 2002). And with the advent of the Enlightenment and the spread of philosophical liberalism, the concept of academic freedom as an open mechanism for the exchange of ideas grew in popularity and acceptance (AcademicFreedomNote s.com, n.d.).

The 20th century America saw how education had become a means of preparation for societal contributions and it was in this period that academics found themselves entering more and more into the public arena of political discourse. The result, experts said, contributed to a more practical application of academic freedom. It was noted that in this period, academic freedom in America allowed the individual professors to state their opinions and speak their ideas in the classroom without fear nor retribution. Such was said to be strengthened by AAUP's 1940 Statement: "to promote public understanding and support of academic freedom and tenure and agreement upon procedures to ensure them in colleges and universities."

AAUP provided a comprehensive view on academic freedom which served as a springboard in the implementation of such freedom in many colleges and universities. For AAUP, in its Declaration of Principles of Academic Freedom, three elements of academic freedom of teachers were identified: (1) freedom of inquiry and research – that teachers are entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results; (2) freedom of teaching within the university or college – that teachers are entitled to freedom

in the classroom in discussing their subject; and (3) freedom of extramural utterance – that when teachers speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline. As stressed by AAUP, academic freedom is fundamental for the protection of the teacher in teaching and of the student in learning.

Prof. Arthur O. Lovejoy, an American professor, defined academic freedom as the freedom of the teacher or research worker in higher institutions of learning to investigate and discuss the problems of sciences and to express his conclusions whether through publication or in the instruction of students, without interference from political or ecclesiastical authorities, or from administrative officials of the institution in which he is employed, unless his methods are found by qualified bodies of his own profession to be clearly incompetent or contrary to professional ethics. This view was supported by Dr. Carlos P. Romulo, former President of the United Nations General Assembly, who stated that academic freedom is the right of the teacher to teach the subject of his specialization according to his best lights; to hold, on other subjects, such ideas as he believes sincerely to be right; and to engage in outside activities, and to express his opinions on public questions in a manner that shall not interfere with his duties as a member of the faculty or negative his loyalty to the school, college or university that employs him (Nolledo, 1990).

In the Philippines, the 1987 Constitution, through Article XIV, Section 5. (2) clearly stipulates that “academic freedom shall be enjoyed in all institutions of higher learning.” This provision granted by the highest law of the land is also supported and reinforced by Republic Act 7722 or the Higher Education Act of 1994 which (Section 13) mandates that the State guarantees academic freedom among chartered colleges and universities in the Philippines. Thus, the Palompon Institute of Technology, being a chartered state college, as provided for by the law, is entitled to its academic freedom, and its teachers have their academic freedom, too.

Filipino authors also shed light in this matter. Simbulan, as cited in Mill, stated that the political basis of academic freedom stems from the freedom of thought and expression. To him, academic freedom is essential in the preservation of a full, critical, and fair discussion within the university. He also stressed what academic freedom is, in the context of academic life, as follows: academic freedom needs to be protected through tenure of professors; universities should protect their professors, researchers, and students in their exercise of academic freedom inside and outside the classroom; academic freedom should not be limited to the classroom; and it is the faculty’s academic freedom which should prevail. This claim was supported by Cruz (2015) when he said that academic freedom can be understood through Section 4 of Article III which guarantees the freedom of speech, of expression, or of the press. He also cited Tabora who emphasized that academic freedom is the “essence” of higher education.

In theory and principle, there is no doubt that academic freedom exists and is included in the higher legislation of the country. It can also be noted that during the said 2007 Research Conference on Protecting and Defending

Academic Freedom conducted by Education International, it was found out that the Philippines belongs to Category 2 or the No Formal Restrictions Category, compared to countries which restrict the practice of academic freedom.

However, gaps are still evident. For one, institutions of higher learning in the Philippines do not seem to have a uniform platform on what academic freedom is and how expansive or restrictive its scope is. Determining the scope of academic freedom for teachers is very crucial because it will guide the teachers in the proper understanding on what academic freedom really is so that they can put it into appropriate practice. This will also help the teachers in knowing what their rights are or if their rights had been violated or if they had gone beyond their rights. However, academic freedom is not absolute, and that the extent of practice of academic freedom varies from one country to another as well as from one academic institution to another. Teachers also need to know that such freedom is accorded with limitations. Determining the scope of academic freedom will also set the parameters in guiding the teachers so that they cannot misuse nor abuse this freedom. AAUP highlights these limitations. Limitations of academic freedom come in when teachers conduct research for pecuniary return, because even if teachers are entitled to full freedom in research, this type of research should be based upon the understanding of the authorities in the institution. Another limitation, in terms of the freedom in the classroom in discussing the subject matter, must be noted. That although teachers are entitled to this freedom, they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to the subject. And that limitation on extramural utterance comes when teachers are inaccurate and do not exercise appropriate restraint.

The Palompon Institute of Technology, an institution of higher learning, is a chartered state college located in the Municipality of Palompon, in the Northwestern Leyte area. It is on its journey toward achieving a university status through Republic Act 10599. With this feat, major academic changes are expected to take course. And with its quest for a full-fledged university status, it must also expand its horizon in all aspects of academic matters or concerns. And one of these is the thorough understanding and full practice of academic freedom, specifically that of the teachers.

The PIT Faculty Manual (2012) stated that the faculty, being both a scholar and a private citizen, has academic freedom. This freedom gives the faculty the right to pursue the truth and express freely what holds to be true either individually or collectively. This same freedom guarantees that the faculty, a member of the community of scholars, has the freedom to perform research, instruction, extension, and publication without restrictions and interference from any constituted authority.

The present study was conducted in order to determine the level of understanding and extent of practice of academic freedom among the teachers of PIT. With the provision of academic freedom in the PIT Faculty Manual, the researcher believed that every faculty member must fully understand what academic freedom is so that they are properly guided on its implementation or practice. However, it was noted that the institution does not conduct orientation

nor information dissemination to its faculty members with regards to academic freedom. There was no proper forum nor venue in which the matter was discussed in order for all faculty members to thoroughly understand it. Moreover, not all faculty members are aware of the said provision in the Faculty Manual, thus, they are not knowledgeable on what it is. Without the proper knowledge and understanding of academic freedom, it would be difficult for the teachers to exercise or put such freedom into practice. Without a universal understanding on academic freedom, the interpretation would vary, and worse, its practice would differ from one teacher to another which may create confusion among the members of the academic community. The researcher believed that the teachers' knowledge and understanding of their academic freedom could greatly help them fulfill their professional obligation as teachers.

Freedom, as defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary, is "the absence of necessity, coercion, or constraint in choice or action." Freedom can be likened to that of self-actualization in the sense that it allows a person to grow and develop himself through his potentials. Like freedom, Pajouhandeh (2013) asserted that self-actualization is the desire to become more and more what one is, and to become everything that one is capable of becoming. Thus, in academic freedom, there is self-actualization. For Abraham Maslow, self-actualization is at the peak of a person's hierarchy of needs, the ultimate fulfilment of a person's needs. This study aimed at finding out how academic freedom affects the teachers' self-actualization in terms of their *teaching performance, self-expression, and self-worth*.

Findings of the study will enable the administrators to review and revisit the school's guidelines and policies on academic freedom to be able to address the needs of the teachers better. This will also help in proposing improved standards and policies in the understanding and practice of academic freedom in PIT. Through this study, there will be a commonality of understanding and active correct practice of academic freedom among the teachers in PIT. This will also help the faculty members understand the scope and limitation of their academic freedom so that they will not misuse nor abuse this said freedom. More importantly, proper understanding and practice of academic freedom will provide a room for harmonious relationship between the teachers and school administrators, and the mission of providing quality education to the students will be further strengthened. Finally, the appropriate practice of academic freedom will be necessary in order to contribute to the teacher's well-being in terms of their performance, self-expression, and self-worth.

The study attempted to determine how academic freedom affects the self-actualization of the teachers of the Palompon Institute of Technology, Palompon, Leyte.

Specifically, it looked into the profile of the faculty, their level of understanding of academic freedom as well as their extent of practice, their level of self-actualization. Moreover, it sought to determine if a significant difference existed in the level of understanding on academic freedom and its extent of practice, and self-actualization when respondents are grouped

according to profile variables. The study also determined if there a significant relationship between the teachers' level of understanding on academic freedom and its extent of practice. Finally, it sought to find out if a significant relationship between academic freedom and the self-actualization of the teachers.

METHODS

The study utilized the descriptive-correlational research method since it aimed to determine the relationship between level of understanding and extent of practice of academic freedom.

The respondents of the study included the entire faculty population of the Palompon Institute of Technology belonging to the different Colleges of the Institute. Members of the faculty were classified as those who are tenured or those who have permanent status with academic ranks of Instructor I – Professor VI; and untenured or those who have temporary and contract-of-service statuses, with academic ranks of Instructor I and Contract-of-Service, respectively.

The researcher used a survey questionnaire to collect the data for needed this study. A self-made survey questionnaire was developed, and administered to all faculty members, the respondents of the study, of Palompon Institute of Technology. All respondents were asked to answer the survey questionnaire which looked into their understanding and extent of practice of academic freedom, and their level of self-actualization. They were also asked to identify their status of appointment, academic rank, designation, and length of service in PIT. Through the use of the survey instrument developed for this study, data were collected, and a descriptive correlational research design was utilized to address the research problems identified in the study.

A self-made survey questionnaire was devised and utilized to gather the data needed for the study. Items on the questionnaire examined the profile of the respondents, their level of understanding and extent of practice of academic freedom, and their level of self-actualization.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Majority of the respondents occupied Permanent Status of Employment (47%), followed by those in the Contract of Service (37.7%) and least are those in Temporary Status (15.2%). In terms of Academic Rank, the largest percentage is occupied by faculty under Contract of Service (37.7%) while the least number are those having a Professor rank (1.3%). Most of the respondents do not occupy administrative positions (77.5%). Majority of the respondents have only stayed in the Institution for a short period – ten years and below (62.3%).

Level of Understanding on Academic Freedom. Table 1, shown on the next page, presents the summary on the level of understanding of the teacher on academic freedom in terms of the eight dimensions. The overall mean for the level of understanding is 3.20 interpreted as “moderately understood” by the teachers. This conveys that there are provisions on academic freedom that the respondents have not fully understood and that proper discussion on what

their academic freedom as teachers is should be made known to them by the administration in the form of a symposium or forum.

Table 1. Summary on the Level of Understanding Academic Freedom

Level of Understanding of Academic Freedom	Mean	Interpretation
On Assessment of Learning	3.48	Highly Understood
On Teaching Method Used	3.43	Highly Understood
On Participation in School Governance	3.40	Highly Understood
On Formulation of School Policies	3.28	Highly Understood
On Classroom Management	3.16	Moderately Understood
On Expression of Criticism and Opinion in School Governance and Policies	3.05	Moderately Understood
On Subject Matter	2.93	Moderately Understood
On Extramural Utterance and Action	2.84	Moderately Understood
Overall Mean	3.20	Moderately Understood

Extent of Practice of Academic Freedom. Table 2 presents the summary on the extent of practice of academic freedom of the teachers in terms of the 8 dimensions. The overall mean for the extent of practice of academic freedom is 2.89, lower than mean for the level of understanding of academic freedom which is 3.20. This indicates that the teacher-respondents' practice of academic freedom is not the same as the way they understand the concept. Thus, to understand academic freedom is one thing and to put it into actual practice is clearly another thing to consider. This is where Herzberg's hygiene factors come into the scenario. The hygiene factors can be used in trying to understand why the teachers do not "always practice" their academic freedom or why their extent of practice of academic freedom is lower than that of their understanding of academic freedom. Using Herzberg's theory, reasonable policies, good relations with coworkers, and job security are the reasons that limit the teachers' practice of academic freedom as the present study revealed. Another reason is the school being the environment of educational motivation.

Table 2. Extent of Practice of Academic Freedom

Extent of Practice	Mean	Interpretation
On Teaching Method Used	3.35	Always Practiced
On Classroom Management	3.27	Always Practiced
On Assessment of Learning	3.22	Sometimes Practiced
On Subject Matter	2.78	Sometimes Practiced
On Participation in School Governance	2.78	Sometimes Practiced
On Extramural Utterance and Action	2.67	Sometimes Practiced
On Formulation of School Policies	2.64	Sometimes Practiced
On Expression of Criticism and Opinion in School Governance and Policies	2.37	Rarely Practiced
Overall Mean	2.89	Sometimes Practiced

Level of Self-Actualization. The summary on the level of self-actualization as shown in Table 3, reveals that out of the 3 dimensions on self-actualization, only self-expression got a descriptive rating of “moderately self-actualized” and the other two dimensions were rated “highly self-actualized.”

Table 3. Level of Self-Actualization

Extent of Practice	Mean	Interpretation
On Self-Worth	3.49	Highly Self-Actualized
On Teaching Performance	3.39	Highly Self-Actualized
On Self-Expression	2.98	Moderately Self-Actualized
Overall Mean	3.27	Highly Self-Actualized

Difference in the Level of Understanding and Extent of Practice of Academic Freedom and Self-Actualization when Respondents are Grouped According to Their Profile. The succeeding tables (Tables 4-7) present the respondents’ level of understanding and extent of practice of academic freedom in relation to their status of employment, academic rank, designation, and length of service.

Table 4. Difference in the Level of Understanding and Extent of Practice of Academic Freedom and Self-Actualization in terms of Respondents' Status of Employment

ANOVA		Status of Employment				
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value
Understanding of Academic Freedom	Between Groups	.698	2	.349	3.27	*.041
	Within Groups	15.834	148	.107		
	Total	16.532	150			
	Between Groups	22.424	2	11.212	58.46	*.000
	Within Groups	28.383	148	.192		
	Total	50.806	150			
Self-Actualization	Between Groups	.869	2	.435	3.57	*.031
	Within Groups	18.023	148	.122		
	Total	18.892	150			

*Significant at 0.05, F-crit = 3.06

Table 5. Difference in the Level of Understanding and Extent of Practice of Academic Freedom and Self-Actualization in terms of Respondents' Academic Rank

ANOVA		Academic Rank				
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value
Understanding of Academic Freedom	Between Groups	.253	4	.063	.567	.687
	Within Groups	16.279	146	.112		
	Total	16.532	150			
Practice of Academic Freedom	Between Groups	17.692	4	4.423	19.501	*.000
	Within Groups	33.114	146	.227		
	Total	50.806	150			
Self-Actualization	Between Groups	.885	4	.221	1.793	.133
	Within Groups	18.008	146	.123		
	Total	18.892	150			

*Significant at 0.05

Table 6 .Difference in the Level of Understanding and Extent of Practice of Academic Freedom and Self-Actualization in terms of Respondents' Designation

ANOVA		Designation		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Understanding of Academic Freedom	Between Groups			.166	5	.033	.294	.916
	Within Groups			16.366	145	.113		
	Total			16.532	150			
Practice of Academic Freedom	Between Groups			11.056	5	2.211	8.065	*.000
	Within Groups			39.751	145	.274		
	Total			50.806	150			
Self-Actualization	Between Groups			1.149	5	.230	1.878	.102
	Within Groups			17.743	145	.122		
	Total			18.892	150			

*Significant at 0.05

Table 7. Difference in the Level of Understanding and Extent of Practice of Academic Freedom and Self-Actualization in terms of Respondents' Length of Service

ANOVA		Length of Service		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Understanding of Academic Freedom	Between Groups			.043	3	.014	.128	.943
	Within Groups			16.489	147	.112		
	Total			16.532	150			
Practice of Academic Freedom	Between Groups			15.233	3	5.078	20.983	*.000
	Within Groups			35.573	147	.242		
	Total			50.806	150			
Self-Actualization	Between Groups			.773	3	.258	2.089	.104
	Within Groups			18.120	147	.123		
	Total			18.892	150			

*Significant at 0.05

Relationship between Level of Understanding on Academic Freedom and Its Extent of Practice. It is reflected in Table 11, shown on the next page, that there are significant relationships between level of understanding on academic freedom and its extent of practice in terms of subject matter, participation in school governance and teaching methods used. In terms of participation in school governance, with .246 correlation value and a p-value of .002, the respondents' level of understanding and extent of practice on academic freedom was positive low – with slight correlation.

Table 11. Relationship between Level of Understanding on Academic Freedom and Extent of Practice

Level of Understanding vs Extent of Practice	Pearson r (p-value)	Strength of Correlation
Subject Matter	.220** (.007)	Low or Slight Correlation
Teaching Methods Used	.168* (.039)	Negligible Correlation
Assessment of Learning	.029 (.720)	Negligible Correlation
Classroom Management	-.019 (.814)	Negligible Correlation
Participation in School Governance	.246** (.002)	Low or Slight Correlation
Formulation of Policies	.152 (.063)	Negligible Correlation
Expression of Criticism and Opinion in School Governance	.134 (.101)	Negligible Correlation
Extramural Utterance and Action	.066 (.418)	Negligible Correlation

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Relationship between Academic Freedom and the Self-Actualization of the Teachers. Table 12 presents the relationship between academic freedom and self-actualization of the teachers in terms of teaching performance, self-expression, and self-worth. This sought to find out whether academic freedom is significantly related to each of the dimensions of self-actualization of the teachers.

Table 12. Relationship between the Academic Freedom and the Self-Actualization of the Teachers

Self-Actualization		Level of Understanding	Extent of Practice	Overall Level of Academic Freedom
Teaching Performance	Pearson Correlation	.61**	.31**	.40**
	p-value	.000	.111	.000
Self-Expression	Pearson Correlation	.36**	.21*	.34**
	p-value	.000	.010	.000
Self-Worth	Pearson Correlation	.37**	.22**	.35**
	p-value	.000	.007	.000

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed);

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings in this study, it was concluded that there are still many teachers who are nontenured or are under Contract of Service, as well as having no designations, and have only stayed in the Institution for ten years and below.

Moreover, the respondents' **moderate understanding** of academic freedom in terms of subject matter, teaching methods used, assessment of learning, classroom management, participation in school governance, formulation of school policies, expression of criticism and opinion in school governance, and extramural utterance and action led to a frequency of **sometimes practicing** their moderate understanding of academic freedom.

With an overall mean of 3.27 or interpreted as highly self-actualized, the researcher concluded that this level of self-actualization greatly allowed the respondents to perform well in their work, express themselves at the work, and most importantly, see their worth as teachers.

It was also concluded that the profile variables can be seen as determining factors as to how teachers put their academic freedom into practice. These findings support previous studies which claimed that tenure system has a relationship on the teachers' academic freedom. Tenured

The findings implied that when teachers understand their academic freedom, this will be reflected in the manner they teach, in being responsible for the teaching methods to be used in class, as well as in participating in school governance.

Therefore, this goes to show that it is really important for teachers to understand their academic freedom so they can put it into practice in order for them to be self-actualized.

In the light of the conclusions drawn from the findings, the researcher recommends that the Palompon Institute of Technology must provide specific guidelines on academic freedom, highlighting the academic freedom of teachers, and a copy of such set of guidelines must be provided for each faculty member to serve as their guide for practice.

Also, the school administration must hold symposia or fora for all teachers regardless of status of employment, academic rank, designation, or length of service that will tackle academic freedom so that the teachers be properly informed and guided.

Moreover, further studies must be conducted in order to determine the factors that encourage and limit the teachers' practice of academic freedom in order to address problems regarding differences in understanding of academic freedom.

Likewise, mechanisms and guidelines must be formulated in order to bridge differences in terms of the extent of practice of academic freedom across teachers of different status of employment, academic rank, designation, and length of service.

Additionally, school administrators should continually encourage teachers to practice their academic freedom in order to maintain their high level of self-actualization.

Furthermore, mechanisms must be crafted to continually uphold the teachers' high level of self-actualization for quality instruction, research, extension, and production services.

FURTHER STUDY

Research still has limitations so that further research is still needed related to the topic Academic Freedom and Self-Actualization of Teachers in a Higher Education Institution.

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