

The Declaration on Academic Freedom and Autonomy of Institutions of Higher Education

(Lima, 10 September 1988)

Preamble

The Sixty-Eighth General Assembly of WORLD UNIVERSITY SERVICE, meeting in Lima from 6 to 10 September 1988, the year of the 40th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Bearing in mind the extensive set of international standards in the field of human rights which the United Nations and other universal and regional organizations have established, in particular the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education,

Convinced that universities and academic communities have an obligation to pursue the fulfillment of economic, social, cultural, civil, and political rights of the people,

Emphasizing the importance of the right to education for the enjoyment of all other human rights and the development of human persons and peoples,

Considering that the right to education can only be fully enjoyed in an atmosphere of academic freedom and autonomy of institutions of higher education,

Recognizing the essential vulnerability of the academic community to political and economic pressures,

Affirming the following principles pertaining to education:

a) Every human being has the right to education.

b) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall strengthen the respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, and peace. Education shall enable all persons to participate effectively in the construction of a free and egalitarian society, and promote understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic, or religious groups.

Education shall promote mutual understanding, respect, and equality between men and women. Education shall be a means to understand and contribute to the achievement of the major goals of contemporary society such as social equality, peace, equal development of all nations, and the protection of the environment.

c) Every State should guarantee the right to education without discrimination of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, economic condition, birth, or other status. Every State should make available an adequate proportion of its national income to ensure in practice the full realization of the right to education.

d) Education shall be an instrument of positive social change. As such, it should be relevant to the social, economic, political, and cultural situation of any given country, contribute to the transformation of the status quo towards the full attainment of all rights and freedoms, and be subject to permanent evaluation.

Proclaims this Declaration.

Definitions

1. For the purposes of this Declaration

a) "*Academic freedom*" means the freedom of members of the academic community, individually or collectively, in the pursuit, development, and transmission of knowledge, through research, study, discussion, documentation, production, creation, teaching, lecturing, and writing.

b) "*Academic community*" covers all those persons teaching, studying, doing research, and working at an institution of higher education.

c) "*Autonomy*" means the independence of institutions of higher education from the State and all other forces of society to make decisions regarding its internal government, finance, administration, and to establish its policies of education, research, extension work, and other related activities.

d) "*Institutions of higher education*" comprise universities, other centres of post-secondary education, and centres of research and culture associated with them.

2. The above mentioned definitions do not imply that the exercise of academic freedom and autonomy is not subject to limitations as established in the Present Declaration.

Academic Freedom

3. Academic freedom is an essential precondition for those education, research, administrative, and service functions with which universities and other institutions of higher education are entrusted. All members of the academic community have the right to fulfill their functions without discrimination of any kind and without fear of interference or repression from the State or any other source.

4. States are under an obligation to respect and to ensure to all members of the academic community those civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights recognized in the United Nations Covenants on Human Rights. Every member of the academic community shall enjoy, in particular, freedom of thought, conscience, religion, expression, assembly, and association as well as the right to liberty and security of person and liberty of movement.

5. Access to the academic community shall be equal for all members of society without any hindrance. On the basis of ability, every person has the right, without discrimination of any kind, to become part of the academic community, as a student, teacher, researcher, worker, or administrator. Temporary measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality for disadvantaged members of the academic community shall not be considered as discriminatory, provided that these measures are discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved. All States and institutions of higher education shall guarantee a system of stable and secure employment for teachers and researchers. No member of the academic community shall be dismissed without a fair hearing before a democratically elected body of the academic community.

6. All members of the academic community with research functions have the right to carry out research without any interference, subject to the universal principles and methods of scientific enquiry. They also have the right to communicate the conclusions of their research freely to others and to publish them without censorship.

7. All members of the academic community with teaching functions have the right to teach without any interference, subject to the accepted principles, standards, and methods of teaching.

8. All members of the academic community shall enjoy the freedom to maintain contact with their counterparts in any part of the world as well as the freedom to pursue the development of their educational capacities.

9. All students of higher education shall enjoy freedom of study, including the right to choose the field of study from available courses and the right to receive official recognition of the knowledge and experience acquired. Institutions of higher education should aim to satisfy the professional needs and aspirations of their students. States should provide adequate resources for students in need to pursue their studies.

10. All institutions of higher education shall guarantee the participation of students in their governing bodies, individually or collectively, to express opinions on any national and international question.

11. States should take all appropriate measures to plan, organize, and implement a higher education system without fees for all secondary education graduates and other people who might prove their ability to study effectively at that level.

12. All members of the academic community have the right to freedom of association with others, including the right to form and join trade unions for the protection of their interests. The unions of all sectors of the academic communities should participate in the formulation of their respective professional standards.

13. The exercise of the rights provided above carries with it special duties and responsibilities and may be subject to certain restrictions necessary for the protection of the rights of others. Teaching and research shall be conducted in full accordance with professional standards and shall respond to contemporary problems facing society.

Autonomy of institutions of higher education

14. All institutions of higher education shall pursue the fulfillment of economic, social, cultural, civil, and political rights of the people and shall strive to prevent the misuse of science and technology to the detriment of those rights.

15. All institutions of higher education shall address themselves to the contemporary problems facing society. To this end, the curricula of these institutions, as well as their activities, shall respond to the needs of society at large. Institutions of higher education should be critical of conditions of political repression and of violations of human rights within their own society.

16. All institutions of higher education shall provide solidarity to other such institutions and individual members of their academic communities when they are subject to persecution. Such solidarity may be moral or material and should include refuge and employment or education for victims of persecution.

17. All institutions of higher education should strive to prevent scientific and technological dependence and to promote equal partnership of all academic communities of the world in the pursuit and use of knowledge. They should encourage international academic cooperation which transcends regional political and other barriers.

18. The proper enjoyment of academic freedom and the compliance with the responsibilities mentioned in the foregoing articles demand a high degree of autonomy of institutions of higher education. States are under an obligation not to interfere with the autonomy of institutions of higher education as well as to prevent interference by other forces of society.

19. The autonomy of institutions of higher education shall be exercised by democratic means of self-government, which includes the active participation of all members of the respective academic communities. All members of the academic community shall have the right and opportunity, without discrimination of any kind, to take part in the conduct of academic and administrative affairs. All governing bodies of institutions of higher education shall be freely elected and shall comprise members of the different sectors of the academic community. The autonomy should encompass decisions regarding administration and determination of policies of education, research, extension work, allocation of resources, and other related activities.