



CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL SCIENCE IN AUSTRALIA: LIMITS OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND THE IMPACT OF PRACTICAL POLITICS



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Abstract

In the second half of 2008, The Senate Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (SSCEEWR) conducted an inquiry into academic freedom in Australia. The inquiry released its report in December 2008. Interestingly, this report did not have the same title as the inquiry itself. This paper suggests that the above inquiry was designed to divert attention in order to seek conservative or right-wing support and get *academic freedom* to be fully scrutinized by the government. The question that needs to be posed here is, how is this government watch of the academic agenda able to provide ‘independent’ environment and autonomy for Australian universities? I argue that universities are homes of flourishing ideas. These ideas most possibly are or need to be diverse in order to grow and create multiple perspectives and alternative solutions to the problematic issues such as socio-political, economical or etho-cultural issues. Although privatization is mentioned in the article in relation to academic freedom, the main purpose of this paper is not to question appropriateness of privatization in terms of education rights for students lacking sufficient money. My aim is to focus on academic freedom in the context of Australian Higher Education and under which conditions it [academic freedom] may be best provided.

Keywords: Academic Freedom, Government Scrutiny, Privatization, Political Economy of Academia, Research Funding.

AVUSTRALYA’DA SIYASİ BİLİMLERİN ELESTİREL COZUMLEMESİ: AKADEMİK ÖZGURLUGUN SINIRLARI VE PRATİK SIYASETE ETKİLERİ

Öz

2008 yılının ikinci yarısında İşçi ve İşveren Hizmetler ile Eğitim Senatosu, Avustralya’da akademik özgürlüğe dair bir soruşturmayı inceledi. Soruşturma raporu 2008’in Aralık ayında açığa çıktı fakat ilginç olan su ki raporun başlığı dahi soruşturma ile aynı başlık altında işlenmemiştir. Bu makalede yukarıda sözü edilen soruşturmanın muhafazakâr ve sağ-destek

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toplamak amacıyla dikkati dağıtmak ve *akademik özgürlüğün* hükümetin sıkıyönetimine girmesi adına tasarlanmış olduğu görüşü savunuluyor. Bu aşamada sorulması gereken konu, hükümet gözetimi altında akademinin (akademik basın) ne denli özgür bir ortamda Avustralya üniversitelerinin bağımsızlığını sağlayabileceğidir. Makalede savunduğum açı; değişik fikirlere ev sahipliği yapan üniversitelerin bağımsızlığının gerekliliğidir. Bu fikirlerin büyük oranda ve olasılıkla farklı olması gerektiği, farklı görüş açıları yaratılarak, etno-kültürel, sosyo-politik veya ekonomik vb. gibi toplumsal sorunlara alternatif çözüm üretebilme yetisine katkı sağlayabileceğinden kaynaklanıyor. Her ne kadar akademik özgürlüğe ilişkin olarak özelleştirilmeden bahsedilmiş olsa da, makaledeki asıl amaç özelleştirilmenin ve öğrenci haklarının irdelenmesi değildir. Makaledeki ana hedefim, Avustralya Yüksek Eğitim bağlamında akademik özgürlüğün hangi koşullar altında en iyi sağlanabileceği sorusunu vurgulamaktır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Akademik Özgürlük, Akademinin Siyasi Ekonomisi, Araştırma Fonu, Hükümet Gözetimi, Özelleştirme.

ACADEMICS have accused the Young Liberals of a “witch-hunt” after two blacklists of Australian University lecturers accused of having a left-wing bias were presented to the Senate Inquiry into academic freedom in Sydney yesterday (Paul Norton 2008).

In the second half of 2008, *The Australian Senate Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations* (SSCEEWR) conducted an inquiry into academic freedom in Australia. The inquiry was released its report in December 2008. Interestingly, this report did not have the same title as the inquiry itself. “In a hint of its findings” (Gelber 2008), the report was released under the title of “Allegations of academic bias in universities and schools” (SSCEEWR 2008).

The Inquiry was based on suggestions about “actual risks” and threats to Australian academic freedom made by among other, Young Liberals. A number of “predictable contributions” were also offered by Australian academics such as Mervyn Bendle and Kevin Donnelly (Norton 2008). Norton concludes that the some of the most critical submissions are from students who claim to have suffered and continue to suffer from “left-wing bias”. These were students who claimed to have been subjected to “unfair treatment” by the academics and teachers “on the basis of the students’ disagreement with the educators’ point of view” (Norton 2008). Bendle was one of the strongest voices defending the Young Liberals’ submission. It is worth quoting in full the following arguments from his article “Secret Saudi Funding in Australia”:

...terrorism studies in Australia were in crises due to the monopoly position held by neo-Marxists, pro-Islamists and anti-Western academics (Bendle et al 2006). The academics who “blew the whistle” on this situation were subject to sanctions within their institutions (Thomas 2007), while the new center draws off a substantial proportion of the funding available for the study of terrorism in Australia in order to pursue research apparently designed to avoid controversy...



... Meanwhile, the president of the Australian Union of the Jewish Studies claimed that... “We see many lecturers preaching things similar to Wahabism” (O’Keefe 2007).

Bendle concludes his argument regarding to his views about Australian academic freedom in the period of the Inquiry’s focus as follows:

Australian universities are now driven entirely by financial priorities and demonstrate little or no interest in preserving academic freedom or in promoting a diversity of academically-grounded views on the central issues of our age. They are also quite prepared to sacrifice staff whose views are inconvenient. The injection of \$2.7 billion of Saudi funding into such a system would be a national security and cultural disaster (Bendle 2006).

Gelber(2008) notes that the Inquiry was to investigate “the level of intellectual diversity and the impact of ideological, political and cultural prejudice”. In order to achieve conclusive decisions about the Inquiry’s task, curriculum and course content was subjected to scrutiny. The investigation examined an alleged “problem at educational institutions” and therefore, required proper parliamentary scrutiny (Gelber2008). The Senate however, concluded that the evidence provided by Young Liberals as “highly subjective”, anecdotal” and “clearly exceptional” (SSCEEWR 2008, P.3, pp.12-14). As Gelber argues, “for now” Australian academic freedom has no “new” risks. However, it needs on-going protection and maintenance.

Argument:

It is possible to suggest above inquiry was designed to divert attention in order to seek conservative or right-wing support and get *academic freedom* to be fully scrutinized by the government. The question posed here is, how would the government watch of the academic agenda able to provide an ‘independent’ environment and autonomy for Australian universities? I argue that universities are homes of flourishing ideas. These ideas most possibly are or need to be diverse in order to grow and create multiple perspectives and alternative solutions to the problematic issues in the process of resolution.

Due to the scope of this paper, I mainly concentrate on Arts, Humanities and social sciences. I am not dismissing the importance of other fields in different faculties. However, the social sciences seem to be especially under pressure of ideological differences; therefore, facing particular risks and threats such as being “a proper object of parliamentary scrutiny” (Gelber 2008). For this reason, I refer to *academic freedom* and universities from the perspective of the social sciences. Universities still need to be considered as delivering institutions of independent research where new (and most possibly diverse) ideas can originate, develop and arise for the betterment of the future.

The social sciences, by offering an understanding of societies and cultures, help position *diversity* accordingly. As a result alternative ways of communication between distinct cultures, for instance, can be established through various research projects or a new perspective might be applied to a particular socio-political problem.



In what follows I pose three major issues that needs examining relevant to scholarly freedom in the Australian academy. First, the possible privatization of higher education institutions. However, it is important to state here that I do not necessarily suggest this options as a negative one. Rather, I pose this option as a possible path that might divert into a platform that serves self- interested monopoly. However, privatization might also take an extremely positive form that serves common-good by rejecting certain external restrictions and allowing diversity.

Second, as has already been mentioned is the government scrutiny. Third question, which might be the most speculative one, might suggest certain internal restrictions. By this I mean the academics themselves who has an expertise in her/his field may occupy, or has a right to see in herself or himself to occupy a certain ‘territory’ within his/her area of interest. The third issue concerns the endangerment of academic freedom. Being highly speculative, it might not be supported by empirical evidence or might not be investigated through scholarly research unless it is empirical. Therefore, I will not include this option in this paper; however, it should not be read as this is an invalid speculation.

Conditional Funding: (In) dependent Research Universities in the United States and Canada:

Academic funding and the interests of academic freedom appear to be two distinct ideological needs that do not in support one another. There appears to be certain criteria for the *eligibility* of academic funding, an eligibility which stipulates restrictive guidelines regarding academic freedom. Such *conditional funding*, I argue, not only has a control over the academics, but also poses a significant threat to academic freedom. In this section I examine the role of *Academic Capitalism*(Slaughter and Leslie 1997)¹a good example of challenges regarding (in)dependent research such as America’s “Project Camelot” in the 1960s, which highlights the impact of practical politics and Academic Capitalism (or as I called it the *conditional funding*) upon the universities. Sheila Slaughter and Larry Leslie argue in *Academic Capitalism: Politics, Policies, and the Entrepreneurial University* as cited in Bok (2000: 8cited in St.John 2004) that “the recent wave of entrepreneurial behavior is a response to the reduction in government support for higher education that began in the 1970s.” According to my findings, there seems to be two major issues with academic funding. First, it is the risk of government scrutiny, which might threaten the academic freedom. Second, it is the privatization of the universities. In what follows, I examine the privatization of higher education institutions in the Americas emphasizing, in particular, the relation between the academia and government.

Privatization of Higher Education Institutions

The case made in *Academic Capitalism* “will be of particular interest to research administrators” as there is an increase of private funding and decrease of public funding in higher education institutions in Canada (Borouche 2001: 33). Although there might be (significant) changes in “source and allocation of funding” in public universities in majorly

¹Slaughter, S and Leslie, L.L. 1997, “Academic Capitalism”, *The John Hopkins University Press*.



English speaking countries such as Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States (p. 33). It is then accurate to say that the universities not only face the threat of – restrictive- academic freedom by the government. There is also another issue with the funding that especially the public universities face as the privatization rise. I suggest that privatization might allow and accommodate self- interested educational policies and research fields. Therefore, I argue that the academic freedom is risked and restricted by the research that is conducted under the government control just as much as it is risked by the privatization of educational institutions. This issue of privatization is important because the role of the major corporations in research universities seem to be very prominent. As Boroche argues:

Historically, universities have had a tradition of autonomy from the market and from the state. However, since the end of World War 2, corporations in western countries have increasingly turned to research universities for science-based products, processes and services to market in the merging global economy, in order to compete with the growing and emerging corporations of eastern countries. (Borouche 2001: 33)

As suggested by Borouche corporations as well as governments might interfere with (in) dependent research and subsequently, significantly restrict academic freedom. In agreement with Borouche, I argue that the universities should remain autonomous. As stated earlier, privatization of higher education institutions, especially research universities might conclude disastrous outcomes. At this stage, however, it is important to keep in mind that privatization seem to occur as a result of the decrease in public fund. As Borouche further argues:

Decreasing the amount of undesignated public funding forces institutions to seek new (generally non-governmental) sources of funding and therefore to align their activities with the need of the market. (Borouche 2001: 34)

Similar to the Canadian examples, there seems to be a major decrease in public funding of United States’ higher education institutions. It seems to be the case that not enough “attention” has been paid to the public universities, their funding and governance (Lowry 2007: 3003). As Lowry argues:

Scholars of State politics and policy have devoted little attention to public universities where so many of them work. This lack of attention seems odd since public higher education is organized at the state level, and its funding and governance have been debated at length in many states in recent years. Government appropriations have been declining as a share of public university revenues...(Lowry 2007: 303)

According to the arguments of above scholars, there seems to be a tendency towards privatization in North American higher education. The decrease of academic funding from state and federal government resulted in for some universities to seek different income resources, one of which is privatization (Just and Huffman 2009: 1102). Bok argues that what he describes as “*entrepreneurial behavior* puts many public and private universities at risk” (cited in St. John 2004: 593). Therefore, I argue that privatization of higher education



institutions might be in the monopoly of a particular major corporation. Below, I examine this issue in more detail.

The purpose of this paper is not to question appropriateness of privatization in terms of education rights for students lacking sufficient money. My aim is to focus on academic freedom and under which conditions it [academic freedom] may be best provided. Private (higher) education, assuming with sufficient funding might be independent from the government. Therefore, regardless of the financial aspects of privatization, it might provide a ground of freedom for academics to conduct their research. For this reason, in the case of privatization versus public, I am advocating neither. However, as stated earlier, private hands might use the opportunity (through *conditional funding*) to manipulate research projects that takes place in universities to control and restrict academic authority. Given this reason, it is possible to suggest that privatization of universities might take two distinct turns in terms of academic freedom. Higher education institutions and research universities both public and private might have advantages and disadvantages in terms of what they can offer to academics, educators and students. Nevertheless, I suggest depending on institutions' source of the income (*conditional funding*) and directorate of a particular or multiple research project(s), both public and private universities are under risk as it [the source of funding] might delimitate academic freedom. In this regard, it is worth quoting Calhoun (2006: 7-43):

Universities have flourished in the modern era as central public institutions and bases for critical thought. They are currently challenged by a variety of social forces and undergoing a deep transformation in both their internal structure and their relationship to the rest of society. Critical theorists need to assess this both in order to grasp adequately the social conditions of their work and because the transformation of universities is central to a more general intensification of social inequality, privatization of public institutions, and reorganization of the relation of access to knowledge. This is also pivotal instance for asking basic questions about the senses in which the university is or may be "public": (1) where does the money come from? (2) who governs? (3) who benefits? and (4) how is knowledge produced and circulated.

In agreement with Calhoun, I argue that it is necessary to further investigate the funding sources (*conditional funding*) for higher education institutions as well as the research projects (by whom and for what particular reason) that are conducted in research universities. This is important because if the management of funding of the research industry has one-sided and self-interested tendencies, this situation of monopoly would affect academic freedom directly. By this I mean what I call the *conditional funding* is placed in the heart of politics of education. To this point I have outlined the first obstacle that academia in North America is facing regarding funding issues. I did not intend to raise arguments about privatization of higher education in terms of financial aspects, as my main focus is academic freedom. I argue that even private research universities and institutions are under threat if *conditional funding* occurs for conducting a particularistic, private and self-interested research with the suggestion of a selected group of people. In the next section I examine the second obstacle that pressures academic freedom, which is government control.



Government Control: Politics of Education and Academic Freedom

This section examines possible interference from government or government supported agents and how this interference would influence and pressure academic freedom in the USA and some other parts of the world such as Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Regime.

Ostensibly, “academic research is about uncovering new facts” (Van Halden 2010: 648) and universities are or are supposed to be autonomous. Here, it is worth remembering the argument of Bourouche (2001), World War 2 [WW2] was a landmark in changing research universities in terms of their behaviour. Following WW2, due to rising globalization, fast-paced advanced capitalism and growing markets, major corporations in the Western countries turned to “science-based products...to market in the global economy and emerging corporations of eastern countries” (Bouroche 2001:33). Such a trend also impacted on political science, often delineated as a “moral discipline” that promotes democratic values and is committed to reinforce the “emergence and stabilization of democracy” (Huntington 1988 :3, 7). In this situation, the ‘products’ of political science were also liable to exploitation, especially in the intense ideological milieu of the Cold War era. (link back to Bendle and original issue)

In consideration of the above analyses, it is clearly worth examining the extent to which universities possess a viable academic freedom and autonomy from governments, especially in times of great social and political anxiety, where the ontological and existential securities of a nation are perceived as threatened? There is an ongoing debate about the funding of the research industry and problems, of either an ideological or political nature that have emerged between the government and universities since WW2. While Australian scientists, for instance, “protest at loss of funding board” (Dennis 2005: 1), similar problems seem to be occurring throughout the world such as Canada (Venne 2001) and the US (Barrett 2010: 46). As for another example, a similar circumstance can be identified in the academic research community in Cold War-era United States. Lockman states that:

...in the 1950s and 1960s, usually with funding and other support provided by the State Department, the Pentagon, or the CIA which were interested in fostering “policy relevant research”. The result was that scholarly agendas were often influenced by the needs of the national security state to which the Cold War had given birth. (Lockman 2004: 146)

The dynamics of funding may also indicate a problematic relation between the government and universities in a way, which makes academia dependent. Political science as Huntington describes it is a “moral discipline”. Therefore, this might conflict with reality as his description attributes “ethical legitimacy” (Eisfeld& Pal 2010: 223). In East Europe, after the collapse of the Soviet regime, the research agenda was organized according to particular political ideologies:

The research agenda is to a considerable degree shaped by national political concerns ... [and] present-day problems of the political process ... There is a ... reluctance to engage in broader cross-national comparisons ... and a



general orientation towards applied research ... Methodological and meta-theoretical debate is virtually absent.²

As these examples suggest historically the research industry does not have complete self-autonomy as the political economy of academia dependent on the government. Some academic literature also suggests that the non-governmental “interest groups” also play a major role in academic research (Tandberg 2009:417). As Tandberg maintains:

However, the higher education literature historically suffers a dearth of any systematic efforts aimed at understanding the role of interest groups in state-level policy formation for higher education. So while recent studies have examined the influence of legislatures, bureaucracies, governors and other institutional political actors on state higher education policy, very few have sought to account for the activity of organized non-governmental interest groups. (Ness *et al.* 2009; Tandberg 2009)

Interest groups are argued to be a significant influence on policy making which has an authoritarian power over establishing state policies and “spending priorities” (Tandberg 2009:418), and they also have a power in decision making (Gray and Lowery 1999; Heinz *et al.* 1993; Jacoby and Schneider 2001; Nice 1984; Tandberg 2006; Tandberg 2009).

To sum up this section, the problematic relation between the government and even particular interest groups, which seem to have a major influence on academia is more likely to cause tension. First, the problem with the funding and the political economy, affects the autonomy of the universities or the autonomy of the scholars. Additionally, as was presented in the Eastern European case, the scholarly literature may be involved with political ideologies due to the problems caused by funding or by authoritarian pressure. The academic freedom has been a prominent topic since 9/11. The “new academia” according to Talhami:

Favoring the nationalization of spiritual centers is a secular view that credits religion with a predisposition towards intolerance and violence. This view has been expressed in studies of the Islamic resurgence such as Benjamin Barber’s *Jihad vsMcWorld*, Bernard Lewis’s *The Roots of Muslim Rage*, Roger Scruton’s *The West and the Rest*, Robert Spencer’s *Islam Unveiled* and Samuel Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilizations*.

It is also important to note the army sponsored- social science Project Camelot in the 1960s in the USA where the *independent* academic research was conducted under the influential control of the government (Crown 1969). Giroux argues that similar approaches to social sciences were pursued post 9/11 by the US government (Giroux 2008). It is worth quoting in detail the following arguments:

²Prepared by DavidJakniunaite and Inga Vinogradnaite as an addendum to Chapter 12 in Einsfeld and Pal (2010).



Subject to severe financial constraints while operating within a regime of moral panics driven by the ‘war on terrorism’, higher education in the United States faces both a legitimation crisis and a political crisis. With its increasing reliance on Pentagon and corporate interests, the academy has largely opened its doors to serving private and governmental interests and in doing so has compromised its role as a democratic public sphere... Highlighting and critically engaging the specific ways in which the forces of militarization are shaping various aspects of university life, this article focuses on the growth of militarized knowledge and research, the increasing development of academic programs and schools that serve military personnel, and the ongoing production of military values and subject positions on US campuses... While higher education in the United States has long been a major site for producing the neoliberal subject, it is only in the aftermath of 9/11 that the university has also become an intense site of militarization. There has been increasing concern among academics and progressives over the growing corporatization of the university. Yet the transformation of academia into a ‘hypermodern militarized knowledge factory’ has been largely ignored as a subject of public concern and critical debate. (Armitage, 2005: 221 cited in Giroux 2008)

Additionally, in the USA academia is suggested to have had much reduced freedom post 9/11, as Powell argues:

The authors cite an increasing number of cases where Middle East studies faculty, most in departments of history or political science, have faced intense scrutiny, not only for their written work but also for how they lecture. Even the languages indigenous to the conflicts in the Middle East are now subject to examination by Congress. If HR 3077 is passed, members may decide to limit federal funding for university centers for teaching languages like Arabic, if, after consideration by an overboard, these centers appear to train students to view U.S foreign policy too critically. The authors of these essays argue that the academic freedom has never been challenged so systematically or with such political power. (Powell 2006)

In the light of the above examples, such as Project Camelot or post-Soviet Eastern European political agenda, it is possible to say that practical politics play a significant role in determination of academic curricula. Earlier in my paper I suggested that privatization might also determine a particularistic academic agenda in higher education institutions and research universities. I argued that researches that are conducted one-sidedly and self-interestedly by a certain group of people weaken academic freedom as a result of monopoly. In this case, *conditional funding* might be used as a controlling agent to serve interests of a particular board. Although I presented privatization as a possible threat to academic freedom, I also argue that strong influential pressures which impose by government or government agents also puts private educational institutions at risk. As I mentioned earlier, my aim is not the financial aspects of privatization in terms of education rights. However, I suggest that privatization of research universities and higher education institutions needs to be considered



in terms of academic freedom. I argue that threat that might be cause by privatization regarding academic freedom is, the private management of universities or higher education institutes to be monopolist and partisan in pursuit of a particular aim, which might reduce or limitate academic freedom. However, if the private hands are neutralized, I suggest that government control might still influence academic freedom and autonomy of universities in both public and private institutes. To this point, I have outlined and identified the issues that are closely linked to academic freedom mainly in the North America. The following section examines (pressure on) academic freedom in Australia in more detail.

The Political Economy of Australian Academia

On the basis of the examples I presented above such as Project Camelot, I suggest that Australian academy is hardly likely to be immune from influential (government) scrutiny. For instance, like many other countries, in Australia “funding uncertainties” pose a problem for the universities and research exercises are assessed by the federal government. As Tandberg (2009) argues:

Funding specifically for research comes from Canberra via a block grant from the Commonwealth government and individual competitive grants awarded by the Australian Research Council, and from private sector support for specific projects. In the humanities and social sciences, of course, where the principal inputs into research are staff time and library facilities, research is heavily subsidized out of teaching revenues (King &Kriesler 2008: 289)... a struggle between the university sector as a whole and anti-intellectual conservative politicians who resented the role of chardonnay-sipping, latte-drinking academics on the opposite side of the so-called “culture wars”, (Melleuish 1998; McKnight 2005) and were particularly hostile to any criticism by academics. (Tandberg 2009)

If we take seriously the linkage proposed in this paper between *conditional funding* and academic freedom, then it is possible to suggest that Australian academia has and probably will continue to have problems regarding academic freedom. As “funding uncertainties” appear as a problem for Australian research universities and higher education institutions, what I call the *conditional funding* might oblige to feed the political economy of Australian academy in order to cease “uncertainties.” Given the case the academic freedom of both the universities and academics themselves are under threat and I argue what it is possibly being sacrificed (academic freedom) by academics, higher education institutions and research universities for the exchange of *conditional funding* needs careful analysis. Apart from the government control of academic curricula, privatization, also appear as a risk that Australian academia might face as “private sector support for specific projects” increase. In what follows, I examine a number of Australian cases regarding academic freedom.

Restrictions or a strong assumption made by the government about John Buchanan’s research project concerning working life is an excellent example to investigate in the framework of Australian academic freedom. According to Buchanan his personal political opinion (being a socialist) has been argued to be “incidental to his status” as a professional researcher and as a result **allegedly** affected his *ability* and *credibility* to conduct a holistic and objective research. Buchanan states that:



A major feature of the attacks on working life researches in 2007 was that we were or re associated with the labour movement. According to then [1996-2007 Howard Era] Federal Government Ministers and *The Australian* newspaper, any association, no matter how old or incidental, was all that mattered as it, allegedly, compromised our ability to undertake credible research...The Australian also made much of the fact that in political outlook I am a socialist...(Buchanan 2008:30)

According to Buchanan's example, it appears the case that especially in Howard era (1997-2007), the rise of the right (conservative) ostensible. However, whether the government is left or right does not or should not mean it has a right to influence research universities, academia and academic freedom. By this I mean a) Leftist governments (Australian Labour Governments) seems to have a tendency to dislike criticism of academics as much as the rightist governments (Australian Liberal Governments) b) Therefore, universities should maintain their *autonomy* and must be *immune* from government influence whether left or right. It is worth quoting the following statements from Buchanan:

The Keating government [Australian Labour Government 1991-1996] did not like our criticism of enterprise bargaining and our observations about the problems about its association with deteriorating working time standards, just as the Howard Government did not appreciate our analysis of its "workplace reforms". The real virtue of the Keating Government, and the Hawke Government before, however, was that both were committed to the provision of data and they spent money generating robust statistics and case study evidence to help people make sense of the impact of their initiatives. The Howard Government cut data collection and as soon as *Work Choices* started to bite, ceased releasing even administrative by-product data. (Buchanan 2008: 31)

These findings support my argument that governments not necessarily agree with academia or they are accepting academics criticism. Which particular political outlook of Australian governments,(whether Right or Left) has a more tendency to decline or to restrict academic freedom is not what I am arguing in this paper. However, according to Buchanan's argument and experience, Howard Government was more hostile towards academic work in comparison to Keating Government. It is possible to further research the relation between academia and the Australian Governments that served throughout the history would produce holistic results regarding Australian Academic freedom. More speculatively, it might be also possible to see evidences of *conditional funding* of special research projects that were conducted or continue to be conducted in research universities under government control, which serves that particular government's self-interest.

Buchanan argues that there is a critical role for Academy of Social Sciences in Australia to play to resist the attacks on academic freedom and onto academics. He argues that, "strong institutional response is required" (Buchanan 2008: 37). Buchanan Further suggests that diversity of media ownership and freedom of journalism is vital for the academia to survive. He reasons as the following:

...We were on the verge of entering a very authoritarian regime where if you were a researcher asking the "wrong" questions, the government would attempt to silence you; if you would not be silenced, it would attempt to



damage your reputation – directly or indirectly...This was a clear example of why working people need unions – without autonomous organizations that are independent from management and government, it is very hard for those under attack by major agencies such as the Government to have the means to defend themselves.

...we were tired of seeing our colleagues personally attacked for undertaking important scholarly research. The primary institution for promoting and defending research in the social sciences, including our own field, is the Academy...The supportive responses to the attacks on us, and others like us, came from a wide variety of sources. This is significant, because if democracy is to flourish we need open and informed public debate. (Buchanan 2008: 36, 37)

It is possible to suggest in light of the above discussion, that to some extent at least, elements of Australian academia might be likely to be involved in such a problematic cycle. At the very least, what I hope this discussion establishes is the value of further research in this area. In agreement with Buchanan's above argument, I suggest it is important to point out a few facts: 1) Australian academia seems to be facing some threats and difficulties to conduct independent research projects by major power such as government, government supported agents, some parts of the media community. 2) "Various sources" Buchanan refers to that attack on research universities, academia and higher education institutions might indicate the involvement of private sectors or private corporate into academia. This involvement, which might be instigated by *conditional funding* to manipulate or privatize particular research projects to serve their self-interest. 3) It is vital for diversity and the autonomy of universities to maintain to accommodate democracy.

Returning now to my early discussion, with the example of the Inquiry that was submitted by the "Young-Liberals" to Senate regarding Australian academic freedom, the diversity of ideas are important for betterment of not just Australia, but any society. With the decline of young-liberals' Inquiry for governments scrutiny of academic curricula by the Senate, Gelber argues that "for now" Australian academic freedom has no "new" risks, however, it needs on-going protection and maintenance. At this point it is important to point out the fact that Gelber emphasizes the security of Australian academic freedom "for now". The impact of practical politics and private corporations on academia are harmfully restrictive. In the case of *conditional funding*, the risk is that diversity simply vanishes as Australian academia faces serious threats.

Conclusion

This paper has examined Australian academic freedom by critically analyzing the situation of Political and Social Sciences in Australia. My intentions were to explore the limits of Academic Freedom and the impact of practical politics in academia. By careful analysis of North American and Eastern European cases with examples such as Project Camelot in the 1960s the United States and discussion of quite recent hardship that Australian academia has faced and continue to face such as the young-liberals' Inquiry or Buchanan's experience has shown that academic freedom in Australia needs to be constantly defended against possible attacks and restrictions. This protection is vital for the autonomy of Australian universities and for diversity to maintain. As stated earlier in my discussions diversity is significant. As



Buchanan suggests, “if democracy is to flourish we need open and informed public debate” (Buchanan 2008).

In particular, I have demonstrated in this paper that there are two major factors, which might be possible threats to Australian academic freedom. I argued that the first reason is privatization. Major corporate organizations might influence and manipulate the autonomy of higher education institutions, research universities in alignment with their self-interestedly and one-sidedly corporate aims. To support my argument I quoted Boruche who argued, that “corporations in western countries have increasingly turned to research universities for science-based products, processes and services to market in the merging global economy” (Borouche 2001: 33) However, my criticism of privatization of higher educational institutions was not concerned about financial aspects of students or equal rights. My main concern was the protection of academic freedom. At this point, what I call the conditional funding of external agents was in use as a tool of manipulation of research industry. Similarly, I argued that second factor for possible restrictions on Australian academic freedom is government or government supported agents’ influence. I argued that *conditional funding* plays a major role in the restrictive influential attitude of government, a role, which serves as a controlling agent to neutralize academia’s impartiality and autonomy, even more, to pressure it (academia) into a possible partisanship with government. The problematic relation between the government and even particular interest groups, which seem to have a major influence on academia is more likely to cause tension. I explored this issue with the examples such as the United States’ Project Camelot and the changing “Political Science” academic curricula, which took place in the Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Regime.

The findings of various cases, which took place in other countries such as the USA, Canada as well as Australia supports my contention that Australian academia has obstacles and face serious difficulties in terms of academic freedom. However, due to the scope of this paper, I have been unable to demonstrate various examples to restrictions and limitations applied onto higher education institutions. Potential of future attacks towards academia seem highly possible. Therefore, as Buchanan argues, the diversity of media ownership and institutional responses are required. Maintaining academic freedom and the autonomy of (research) universities are partially the responsibility of institutions and academics’.

As stated initially, the issue of academic freedom and the impact of practical politics remain great importance to Australian higher education industry. It is because the diversity and autonomy are vital for the future to better accommodate democracy. According to Buchanan’s professional experience, for instance, Howard Government (Right-Liberal) appears to be hostile towards academic research more so than Keating (Left-Labour) Government. Therefore, I argued that investigating the relationship between Australian Governments throughout the years, which share contrasting political views, would possibly give interesting and important results regarding academic freedom. Ongoing research could and should examine in more detail the question of academic freedom and the relationships between the academia and the major influential agents.



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