

Freeing Teachers: A Way to Ultimate Success

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Abstract

Teachers should be trusted and given the ultimate freedom in class. Too much pressure from the administration, colleagues, local authorities, or/ and coordinators spoils their mission. The possible question in this regard is: What possible ways that make it easy for teachers to be as free as possible? In order to fathom the depth and value of freeing teachers, the authors distributed a questionnaire to (21) male and female first year Information Technology majors-IT- at University of Technology and Applied Sciences- the Sultanate of Oman. The results, however, were amazing—almost all students agree that teachers should be free in classrooms without being under pressure, whether from school administration, or local authority. Explanation, description, and recommendations will be highlighted in detail throughout this article.

Keywords: cultivating students, educational values, ethics of teaching, freeing teachers, school administration, teachers as life makers

(Received: 23 September 2024; Revised: 09 October 2024; Accepted: 28 November 2024; Published: 31 December 2024)

Introduction

Teacher's freedom is considered one of the basics in the teaching profession. Moreover, it is a necessity for teachers to feel secure in or out of class, and must be combined with respect from all—colleagues, students, administrative body, etc.

Freedom in the academic institutions should be activated and practiced, not just theoretical, and should be a prerequisite in the field of teaching. The teacher should be independent and work accordingly as he/ she plays many roles in class—teacher, parent, educator, facilitator, etc. The question now is since Freedom is mentioned in the constitution of countries, why is it always highlighted and discussed at all levels? In fact, freedom should be highlighted, and teachers should take a vital role in the decision-making process in designing curricula. This paper

focusses on freeing teachers in classrooms, open forums, and protecting them against any prejudice of what so ever.

Statement of the Problem

This article tackles an important academic issue-- lack of freeing teachers. In the absence of assisting teachers and giving them the considerable portion of freedom, major things could happen and get mixed up negatively-- working under pressure and bad mood.

Objectives of the Study

This study pursues the following two-fold purpose:

1. Identifying the benefits of freeing teachers.
2. Examining how depriving teachers of freedom affects their performance, well-being, and overall development and progress.

Literature Review

Academic administrations should treat faculty members in a way they feel secure and creative, bearing in mind that financial matters have no priority in the field of innovations. What is important here is Freedom that makes faculty members stars in the teaching field. “Understand the needs of your teachers. Allow teachers to have freedom to be ‘superheroes’. Think about what will ‘re-energise’ teachers. It is not all about money but about satisfaction and enjoyment” (Goodeve, 2018, Para. 6). In the digital world, teachers should utilize all possible things to help students excel in their studies. This also depends on the open-minded administration that utilizes all possible things for the teacher’s advantage to feel free, trusted enough in using what develops, and promotes the level of his/ her students. Teachers can create websites, or use some apps as possible means of communication with students. This is a double-edged policy—acquiring the skills of using technology and getting the appropriate knowledge via enjoyable means.

It is safe to say that the learning era has touched the digital space where teachers and students utilize technology for more convenience. These apps are innovative, and you can use them for many purposes, including communication, project collaboration, feedback, planning lessons, and more (Teacher-made, n.d, Para. 1).

Artificial intelligence, particularly large language models like ChatGPT, offers a compelling solution. Here's how it works: Teachers simply input the homework assignment into an AI system and upload the students' submissions, whether as PDFs or photos. The AI processes the submissions, evaluates the work, and provides detailed feedback in a matter of seconds. This process not only saves time but also offers several other benefits:

Consistency: AI ensures that grading is consistent and impartial, free from human biases or errors that might occur after a long day of marking.

Immediate Feedback: Students receive feedback almost instantly, allowing them to understand their mistakes and learn from them while the material is still fresh in their minds.

Scalability: Whether it's a class of 20 or 200, AI can handle the workload with the same efficiency, making it a scalable solution for schools of all sizes. (Jan, 2024, Para. 3).

Teachers are human beings; sometimes they feel they are extremely under pressure, whether due to work or personal issues. Going on trips to different places, sitting with the family and playing with the kids create a positive attitude that helps them have a peace of mind and relaxation. This is a kind of freedom that teachers should use, as this is reflected on their work. In short, teachers should be happy in order to be more innovative and creative. "The 'happier' the teacher the more productive the teacher[s] are going to be. Think of what is going to make a difference to a particular teacher eg attending their child's production, fitness sessions or trips abroad." (Goodeve, 2018, Para. 6). "The best teachers are happy, relaxed, full of energy, ready to take on new challenges and inspire their students. You have the responsibility to ensure that the students get the best version of yourself as possible". (Gardner, n.d, Para. 10).

Don't feel guilty about going to bed early, having an evening off from work to play with the kids or even enjoying that piece of cake in the staff room. Whatever makes you feel better. It's both for you and for the students! (Gardner, n.d, Para. 11).

In order to have distinguished teachers in a certain institution, there should be a reasonable teaching load and less administrative duties. They-teachers- are busy doing lots of work such as preparations, conducting tests, invigilating, marking, etc. The matter becomes worse if teachers teach at public schools where there is a big number of students who, sometimes, create a chaotic atmosphere that hinders teachers' creativity. In this case, if the administration seeks the utmost success, it should

discuss and consult with faculty members all issues they face in a constructive dialogue that highlights their needs openly. “Today’s educators are bound by chokingly-detailed mandates of testing, test preparation, and all of the accompanying busy paperwork. This has produced increased pressure, unrealistic demands on teachers’ time and the systematic removal of joy from public school classrooms” (Markward, 2016, Para. 1).

In the ever-changing work landscape we all face, it is imperative to provide staff with the freedom to innovate while maintaining a clear sense of purpose and direction. Guardrails for innovation, whether seen as the guiding banks of a river, the structured edges of a sandbox, or the canvas upon which educational experiences take shape, offer a structured framework within which educators can experiment and create purposeful learning experiences (Thigpen, 2024, Para. 15).

It is no secret to say that teachers around the globe lack many of their rights: low salary, not much respect from the local society and students, as well. This is mainly due to the culture of societies. Teachers will not excel in bad societies that demote the value of what is offered by teachers.

To change the culture so that the teaching profession is marked by trust, respect and the freedom to teach, there are aspects we can legislate and we can negotiate.

And that starts by focusing on three essential areas:

1. Developing a culture of collaboration;
2. Creating and maintaining proper teaching and learning conditions; and
3. Ensuring teachers have real voice and agency befitting their profession (Education Healthcare public services, 2019, Para. 46).

McKenna (2018, Para. 9), suggests that certain programs should be started by recruiting some teacher candidates from the nontraditional societies such as graduates of high schools, and some assistant professionals. This is a way of dealing with education by creating in-house programs that promote a free choice of teachers to participate in the development of the society. “Implementing Grow Your Own programs at the district level that recruit teacher candidates from nontraditional populations (e.g., high school students, paraprofessionals, and after-school program staff)”.

Without freeing teachers, no complete progress is expected. There should be a complete and comprehensive collaboration by all. Respecting teachers and attracting them to this noble profession-teaching- will produce and introduce smart teachers.

Teachers need the freedom to teach. If we want our public schools to be all we hope, if we want to attract and retain a new generation of wonderful teachers, this cannot be solely a teacher issue or a teacher union issue. We must act, and act together. (Education Healthcare public services, 2019, Para. 54).

Teachers can become innovators by creating things from their own while teaching. Instead of spending too much time writing comments or reports as feedback, they are free to use charts or graphs to replace the old-fashioned ways of teaching.

Giving pupils visual feedback on their progress towards learning targets can be quicker and more engaging too, so take a closer look at your systems to see whether you could use progress charts or graphs to replace more time consuming reports (Cooper, 2021, Para. 11).

Freeing teachers is both, a public requirement and necessity. By freeing them, they teach and inspire successfully. Many procedures done by the educational zones, or districts, hinder the teacher's work. Take for example conducting standardized exams with many off- days. All of that leads to teacher's disempowerment, and might be a waste of time. To have powerful teachers, they have to have a say in this field and get free to behave and follow what they believe as teaching development.

We need to free our teachers to do what they do best – to teach and inspire. Well-intentioned yet failed education policies that have overemphasized standardized testing, driven national, and state-level 'standardized' curriculum have led to teacher disempowerment. These efforts have left us with an excessive number of school days being devoted to test taking and preparation while also wresting control over classroom time and creativity in lesson planning from teachers. We have effectively rendered teachers increasingly powerless at the same time we expect them to do more than ever. (Busteed, 2024, Para.5).

Methodology

This study employs a quantitative research design using a survey method to gather data on the matter of Freeing Teachers, and its effect on the overall academic performance and Students' perceptions of freeing teachers. The ultimate aim and use of surveys is appropriate for collecting standardized, comparable data across a sample of students, allowing for statistical analysis of their responses.

Participants

The participants included (21) first year (IT) majors: 10 males and 11 females, aged (19) to (20). They were selected through convenience sampling from the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Oman. All participants are native Arabic speakers, which could influence their perceptions due to their educational and cultural background.

Sampling Strategy

Due to logistical constraints, the sample size was limited to (21) participants. A convenience sampling method was employed, as the students were readily available to the researchers at the time of the study. However, the small sample size limits the generalizability of the results and is considered a limitation of the study.

Research Instrument

A researcher-designed questionnaire consisting of (10) items was employed to gather data. The questionnaire included both closed-ended questions (Yes/No, Agree/Disagree) and Likert scale items (1-5) to measure students' perceptions on the topic: Freeing Teachers, including empathy, fairness, and communication skills. The instrument was validated through a pilot test with a sample of (5) students first to ensure clarity and reliability, with minor adjustments made to wording based on their feedback.

Data Collection Procedure

Surveys were distributed to participants during their regular class time at the University. Before participation, students were briefed on the purpose of the study, informed of their right to

withdraw any time, and assured of their anonymity. Participants provided written consent, and surveys were completed within (15) minutes during a scheduled session.

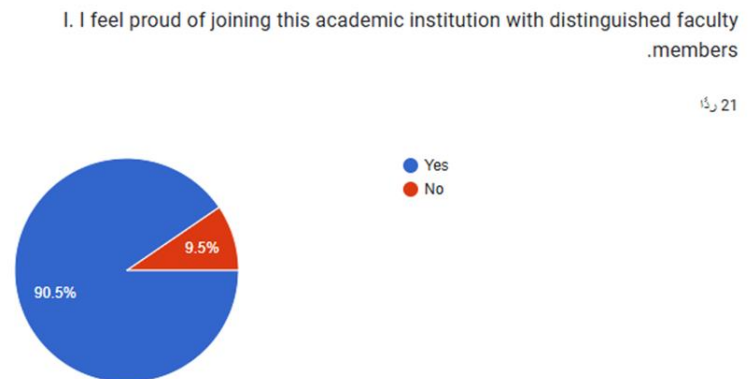
Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical standards of research. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and they were assured that their responses would remain anonymous.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Table1

I. I feel proud of joining this academic institution with distinguished faculty members.	Yes 19	No 2
	90.5%	9.5%



The findings indicate that most participants (90.5%) feel proud of joining this academic institution with distinguished faculty members. Distinguished academics are acknowledged as leaders in the field, innovators in partnerships and collaborations, and contributors to the profession. They leave a lasting impression on coworkers, students, and other people.

Table 2

3. Teachers give students the ultimate freedom to ask, answer, and think critically.	Yes 18	No 3
	85.7%	14.3%

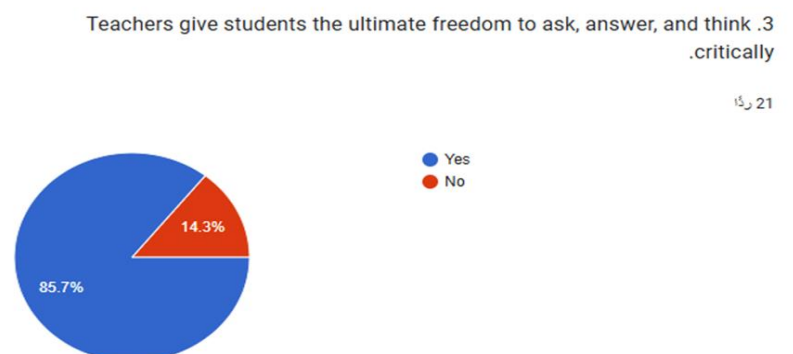


Table 2 illustrates that (85.7%) of participants agreed that teachers give students the ultimate freedom to ask, answer, and think critically. Critical thinking is essential to education because it enables students to consider and understand the material at hand.

7. In addition to teaching, teachers should be free to promote values, advice, and recommendations to students to reinforce their positivity in class and society, as well.	Agree	Disagree
	19	2
	90.5%	9.5%

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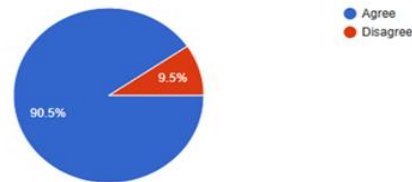


Table 3

Table 3 shows that the participants (90.5%) agreed that teachers should be free to promote values, advice, and recommendations to students to reinforce their positivity in class and society, as well.

Table 4

9. Teachers should be free to join, participate, attend local, national, or international conferences, etc.	Agree	Disagree
	18	3
	85.7%	14.3%

Teachers should be free to join, participate, attend local, national, or international conference, etc.

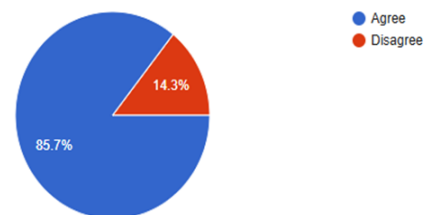


Table 4 shows that the participants about (85.7%) agree that teachers should be free to join participate; attend local, national, or international conferences, etc. In international conferences, teachers can learn about the most recent findings, developments, and innovations in their field.

Conclusion

In an educational system that promotes teachers' status, teachers feel trustworthy and could achieve more than what is expected. They do deserve enjoying the ultimate freedom in teaching, creating, using their skills and knowledge.

Moreover, teachers need to think, evaluate, and improve their own skills in light of courage from the top of the hierarchy- Ministry of higher education. The teacher needs to be recognized as a productive individual in the educational environment. It is worth mentioning that teachers face challenges during their career, but once there is a balance between what they believe in and what the academic institution requires, things can be measured well with reasonable results.

Concentration on the autonomy of teachers will bless taking the most appropriate decisions and, in turn, all things will be in a good shape. Moreover, giving teachers a span of freedom reflects good outcomes on the quality assurance of the complete academic process. It is time to liberate teachers and give them the utmost freedom to set an example in the whole society.

Recommendations

- Teachers should be free to deal with their students, observe them to learn what they can, or cannot do, by keeping records of their progress with dates of occurrence.
- Teachers should provide students with the most possible opportunities from the very beginning to behave accordingly such as guessing meaning from the text at hand highlighting the use of functional independent academic and personal behaviors to support their early skills -- reading , writing, speaking, listening.
- Teachers should assist their students by encouraging critical thinking and having their own way of judgment.
- Teachers should offer students certain materials according to their current ability, level and guide them to be willing to detect mistakes and then self-correct.
- Teachers should consider the gradual reduction of their role and interference as new knowledge is offered. This supports students' independence, especially when teacher's support resumes if a student is weak enough.
- When continual student's learning is the goal, teachers should consider the learner's disposition for independence as key to success.

- Teachers should inform students about the things they did correctly in early lessons and have them monitor their progress as part of their independent behavior.
- Students should be given freedom to learn in their own ways and preferences, while teachers teach what is required to solve current problems that may appear.
- Teachers should make sure that taught strategies in class are learned ones, or it is time for adopting a different way.
- Teachers' instruction and support should continually be based on informed and reflective decisions assist and support students' development based on observational data of students' progress

Acknowledgement

The researchers would like to express their gratitude to all participants whose involvement was essential for the accomplishment of this study.

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