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**Academic freedom in Sudanese Higher Education Institutions:**

The case of Some Teaching Practices

**ABSTRACT** This paper is an attempt to foster an additional interpretation of the drop in academic standards in the Sudanese higher education institutions. Recently, huge literature (spoken and written) has been released condemning educational policies and blaming the students for not raising to the college teachers’ expectations. Teachers’ role has rarely been questioned except when the relevant discourse centres upon the disadvantages of local training. The paper has reported a number of instances of teaching practices to show that teachers do, in fact, have their share in the mess.

Academic freedom, standards, policies, knowledge production, responsibility

1. **Introduction**

This paper takes on a subject that has rarely been addressed by the Sudanese educational researchers. It discusses teachers’ use of their marginal academic freedom in mishandling their teaching tasks. The last fifteen years or so have witnessed the release of huge literature on the standards’ drop in Sudanese higher education institutions. To date, students and policies only seem to have been blamed for it. This can be argued to lead nowhere in any serious attempt to reform higher education in Sudan since the teachers’ contribution has not been addressed. It seems that since the bulk of assessment has been done by the latters, it is unlikely that they visualize their being accomplice. In critical discourse analysis terms, teachers have access to academic power that makes their judgment more influential than their students’ (cf. Van Dijk 1993). It is unfortunate that the academic freedom margin that teachers enjoy is not always put by some of them at their students’ disposal. This paper reports a variety of instances of teachers’ misuse of academic freedom in doing their teaching tasks.

2. **Theoretical Background**

According to the *Dictionary of the History of Ideas* “academic freedom is the liberty of thought which is claimed by teachers and other elements of the educational community”. The *Wikipedia encyclopedia* (henceforth WE), on the
other hand, is more specific in defining the same concept; viz. the term “academic freedom” applies to “teachers, students, and academic institutions to pursue knowledge … without interference” (p.1). The verb “pursue” here is a general word that implies knowledge production and reception. Traditionally, the former is the responsibility of the teachers (and institutions) while the latter is the students’ responsibility. This definition seems to have been tailored to match educational institutions where “interference” is political in nature, saying nothing about institutional interference. A comprehensive view of “academic freedom” can best be conceived in connection with the three institutional categories in juxtaposition; viz. [for full text, contact the author]