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Re-framing student academic freedom : a capability perspective

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Abstract

The scholarly debate about academic freedom focuses almost exclusively on the rights of academic faculty. Student academic freedom is rarely discussed and is normally confined to debates connected with the politicisation of the curriculum. Concerns about (student) freedom of speech reflect the dominant role of negative rights in the analysis of academic freedom representing 'threats' to academic freedom in terms of rights which may be taken away from a person rather than conferred on them. This paper draws on the distinction between negative and positive rights and the work of Sen (1999) to re-frame student academic freedom as capability. It is argued that capability deprivation has a negative impact on the extent to which students can exercise academic freedom in practice and that student capability can be enhanced through a liberal education that empowers rather than domesticates students. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Macfarlane, Bruce, E-Mail: bmac@hku.hk