

Liberty in the age of terror a defense of civil liberties and enlightenment value...

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Free speech, as Grayling defines it, " is the fundamental civil liberty" because " without it, none of the others are possible, for none of the others can even be claimed or defended without it" (Grayling 63). The right for free speech has been granted by the Canadian law and is understood legally as everyone's right to freedom of belief, thought, opinion as well as expression, including the mass media and other communication media.

The chief rationale for the protection of this right is the role of free speech as the instrument of democratic government. It is understood as a tool for furthering individuals' personal growth and truth dissemination (Hogg 833). Canadian educators, who work in increasingly intensifying and centralized school environments, have been found reluctant to express their views concerning school issues as well as controversial issues in the classroom.

MAIN CLAIM: Canadian teachers do not exercise their right to free speech seeing it as a privilege, which leads to lack of informed public dialogue based on criticism of specific educational issues and erosion of intellectual inquiry in the classroom.

For a start, Canadian teachers do not exercise their legal right to free speech as they avoid critical expression and confrontation with students over controversial study topics. In an in-depth study of Canadian teachers' use of their free speech right, it has been found that Canadian teachers limit their free expression because of their perceived threat of censorship and employers' aggressive attitude towards criticisms or reflexivity.

For example, Stephen, a senior high school teacher with more than 25 years of experience, shares that teacher censorship is alive and well and asserts <https://assignbuster.com/liberty-in-the-age-of-terror-a-defense-of-civil-liberties-and-enlightenment-value/>

he and other teachers are censored by the school administration. Other teachers say that in reality, they do not have a legal right to freedom of expression because of employers' directions to watch what everyone's is saying, setting the limits of expression at work and outside school about school matters and school authorities.

Also, they said they avoided free speech expression as a means of preventing the cases of repercussions following teachers' statements that were believed to have negatively affected the reputation of administration or schools. Interestingly, censorship by the school authorities is often based not on their worries about the reputation of a school but on teachers' expression of thoughts that simply differed from the positions of their employers.

For instance, Linda, another interviewed teacher, expressed the view that censorship in Canadian public school setting targets " views, or thoughts or words or ideas that are not allowed to be shared or [...] do not agree with their [school authorities'] train of thought" (Hoben 190). If to apply Teresa Bejan's thesis about the difference between the effects of isegoria and parrhesia on the development of the democratic society and the need of isegoria in present-day parrhesiastic tradition in America, one can say that the situation in Canadian schools is much worse.

Indeed, one cannot observe here any tension between teachers' forced silence and their desire to exercise free speech. In fact, teachers who are warned against sharing their ill views on school-related topics, embrace a passive stance and fail to check the legitimacy of such demands fearing job loss. To make matters worse, they are eager to avoid conflict to prevent

accusations of insensitivity and insulting behavior. Hence, teachers in Canadian public schools neither exercise isegoria nor enjoy parrhesia, being afraid of job loss or job insecurity and being unwilling of arguments or believing they are obliged to withhold certain things from the general public.

The result of the free speech restrictions on public school teachers and their unwillingness to engage in open criticism of the existing school system and challenging class discussions is the detrimental effect on the quality of children's education (Reyes 35). Specifically, many teachers made it clear that the public does not have an accurate view of what is going on in Canadian public schools. They linked this situation with censorship and information dissemination barriers set by some educational stakeholders and parents (Hobe, 1995).

In addition, teachers' fear of teenagers' accusations in hurting their feelings resulting from teachers' explanations of certain controversial events or phenomena leads to erosion of classroom discussion, passionate inquiry, and students' inability to defend their views or publicly express their own opinions. As a matter of fact, teachers often face teenagers' complaints about their information being too hurtful or offensive even though these complaints are ungrounded and based on the students' inability to objectively perceive information that diverges from their established worldviews.

In these situations, teachers need to remember about their right to isegoria and remind their students' that their wish to preserve free expression as the privilege of their group contradicts the law and the principle of equity with

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regard to free speech in the Canadian schoolenvironment. One of the greatest French philosophers and cultural theorists of the twentieth century Michael Foucault said, " Language is no longer linked to knowledge of things, but to men's freedom" (Foucault 245).

Whereas teachers in Canada seem reluctant to exercise their right to free expression at work and beyond it, the fact that they recognize the adverse outcomes of such position gives hope that they will reassess their position and become increasingly active in resolving educational matters and inspiring meaningful debates in classrooms aimed at preparing self-governing and autonomous individuals aware of how thoughtful communication should take place within a democratic society (Schwartz 242).