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THE ESSENCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF ACADEMIC ACTIVITY MANAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract: This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the essence, content, and organizational structure of academic activity management in higher education institutions. It examines the concept of academic governance, its structural elements, functional areas, and three-level organizational structure on a scientific basis. The article discusses the educational, research, curriculum and methodological, and international cooperation dimensions of academic activity, the cycle of management functions, and the institutional composition of Uzbekistan's higher education system. The findings contribute to improving the academic governance system and optimizing its organizational structure.

Keywords: higher education, academic activity, academic governance, organizational structure, management functions, governance levels, educational management, institutional structure, collegial bodies.

Annotatsiya: Mazkur maqolada oliy ta'lim muassasalarida akademik faoliyatni boshqarishning mohiyati, mazmuni va tashkiliy tuzilmasi kompleks tahlil qilingan. Ilmiy asosda akademik boshqaruv tushunchasi, uning tarkibiy elementlari, funksional yo'nalishlari hamda uch darajali tashkiliy tuzilmasi ko'rib chiqilgan. Maqolada akademik faoliyatning ta'lim, ilmiy-tadqiqot, o'quv-uslubiy va xalqaro hamkorlik yo'nalishlari, boshqaruv funksiyalari sikli, shuningdek, O'zbekiston oliy ta'lim tizimining institutsional tarkibi yoritilgan. Olingan natijalar akademik boshqaruv tizimini takomillashtirish va uning tashkiliy tuzilmasini optimallashtirishga xizmat qiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: oliy ta'lim, akademik faoliyat, akademik boshqaruv, tashkiliy tuzilma, boshqaruv funksiyalari, boshqaruv darajalari, ta'lim boshqaruvi, institutsional tuzilma, kollegial organlar.

Аннотация: В статье представлен комплексный анализ сущности, содержания и организационной структуры управления академической деятельностью в высших образовательных учреждениях. На научной основе рассмотрены понятие академического управления, его структурные элементы, функциональные направления и трёхуровневая организационная структура. В статье раскрыты образовательное, научно-исследовательское, учебно-методическое и международное направления академической деятельности, цикл управленческих функций, а также институциональный состав системы высшего образования Узбекистана. Полученные результаты способствуют совершенствованию системы академического управления и оптимизации её организационной структуры.

Ключевые слова: высшее образование, академическая деятельность, академическое управление, организационная структура, управленческие функции, уровни управления, управление образованием, институциональная структура, коллегиальные органы.

INTRODUCTION

The competitiveness and effectiveness of a modern higher education system largely depend on how scientifically grounded and organizationally sound the management of academic activities is. The processes of creating, disseminating, and transmitting knowledge to the younger generation - the core mission of a higher education institution - take place within the framework of academic activity. Therefore, a deep understanding of the essence of this activity and the rational design of its organizational structure constitute a central issue in higher education management.

The management of academic activities is not limited to organizing the educational process. It encompasses interrelated processes such as research, faculty capacity development, quality assurance, international cooperation, academic mobility, and the digital transformation of governance. Integrated and coordinated

management of these processes enables an institution to achieve its strategic objectives.

In the Republic of Uzbekistan, reforming the higher education system, expanding the academic and financial autonomy of universities, and aligning governance with international standards have been designated as priority areas of state policy. In recent years, the number of higher education institutions has increased substantially, while their status and governance models have become more diverse. Under these conditions, a scientifically grounded study of the essence and organizational structure of academic activity management is particularly relevant.

A distinctive feature of academic activity management is that its object - the creation and transmission of knowledge - is creative and intellectual in nature. Managing such activity requires approaches that differ from traditional command-and-control methods and take account of academic freedom, collegiality, and professional self-governance. A proper understanding of the theoretical essence of academic governance is therefore a necessary condition for designing its organizational structure rationally.

This article aims to explain the theoretical essence of academic governance, identify its structural elements and functional areas, and analyze its organizational structure. The study comprehensively examines the concept and components of academic governance, the cycle of management functions, organizational models, and the three-level structure.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON THE SUBJECT

The essence and organizational structure of academic activity management have been examined from different perspectives by international, CIS, and Uzbek scholars.

American scholar Burton R. Clark investigated organizational models of university governance and scientifically substantiated the distribution of authority among departments, faculties, and administrative levels in the management of academic activities. He described the university as an institutionally distinctive system and regarded the participation of the academic community in governance as an important factor. However, the digital dimensions of governance were not sufficiently addressed in his research.¹

British researcher Michael Shattock comprehensively examined the organizational structure and strategic management of universities, substantiating the interaction among governance levels and the balance of authority. In his view, an effective organizational structure combines centralized strategic governance with the autonomy of its units. At the same time, the economic mechanisms of governance were analyzed only to a limited extent.²

American scholar R. Birnbaum characterized universities as complex organizational systems and examined the combination of collegial, bureaucratic, and political models in academic governance. He substantiated the loosely coupled nature of an academic organization. However, modern digital governance tools were not reflected in the study.³

Russian scholar S. D. Reznik developed the organizational foundations of university and department management and mechanisms for managing faculty activities. He analyzed academic governance in connection with human resource management. However, an integrated system for evaluating governance was not presented.⁴

Russian researcher G. B. Kleiner advanced organizational management theory from the perspective of institutional economics and studied the organizational structure of higher education institutions in relation to the institutional environment. However, the digital ecosystem of higher education remained outside the scope of the research.⁵

Professor R. Kh. Aylimov studied educational management and the modernization of higher education, substantiating organizational and economic mechanisms for managing education quality. The author demonstrated the importance of a strategic approach to higher education governance. Nevertheless, a comprehensive index-based evaluation system for academic governance was not developed.⁶

Professor Q. Kh. Abdurakhmonov examined human capital development and the integration of higher education with the labor market, including the influence of academic activity on economic efficiency. However, the organizational structure of academic governance was not analyzed in depth.⁷

Professor U. V. Gofurov analyzed organizational and economic mechanisms for managing higher education

1 Clark, B. R. *The Higher Education System: Academic Organization in Cross-National Perspective*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.

2 Shattock, M. *Managing Successful Universities*. 2nd ed. Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2010.

3 Birnbaum, R. *How Colleges Work: The Cybernetics of Academic Organization and Leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1988.

4 Reznik, S. D. *Department Management: A Textbook*. Moscow: INFRA-M, 2014. [In Russian].

5 Kleiner, G. B. *Economics of Organizations*. Moscow: INFRA-M, 2018. [In Russian].

6 Aylimov, R. Kh. *Education Management*. Tashkent: Fan, 2019. [In Uzbek].

7 Abdurakhmonov, Q. Kh. *The Economics of Human Capital*. Tashkent: IQTISODIYOT, 2020. [In Uzbek].

institutions within his research on education economics and the improvement of governance systems. His work made an important contribution to the development of higher education governance theory. However, insufficient attention was given to the concept of the digital university.⁸

The literature review shows that international scholars have extensively investigated the organizational models of academic governance and the distribution of authority. Researchers in CIS countries have focused on the organizational foundations of university and department management, while Uzbek scholars have achieved important results in higher education reform and educational management. Nevertheless, the essence and organizational structure of academic activity management have not yet been sufficiently examined through an integrated approach that incorporates contemporary digital and comprehensive perspectives. This gap determines the scientific significance of the present study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodological foundations of the study comprise the theories of academic governance, strategic university management, educational management, institutional governance, and the systems approach. The research employed analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction, comparative and systems analysis, abstraction, and logical generalization.

Structural-functional analysis was applied to study the components and organizational structure of academic activity. Statistical, graphical, and tabular methods were used to assess the institutional composition of the higher education system. The empirical base consisted of materials from the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Statistics Agency, and internal regulatory documents of higher education institutions.

Analysis and results

To explain the essence of academic activity management, it is first necessary to clarify the concept of academic activity. Academic activity is a set of interrelated processes carried out in a higher education institution and directed toward the creation, dissemination, and transmission of knowledge. It encompasses the organization of the educational process, research, curriculum and methodological work, the academic development of faculty and students, international cooperation, and education quality assurance.

Academic activity management is a managerial function aimed at achieving an institution's strategic objectives by planning, organizing, coordinating, motivating, and controlling these processes. Its distinctive features are the creative and intellectual nature of the object of management, the long-term and multidimensional character of the results, and the academic community's strong aspiration for autonomy.

The essence of academic governance is more fully expressed through its structural elements. These elements can be grouped into six interrelated areas (Figure 1).

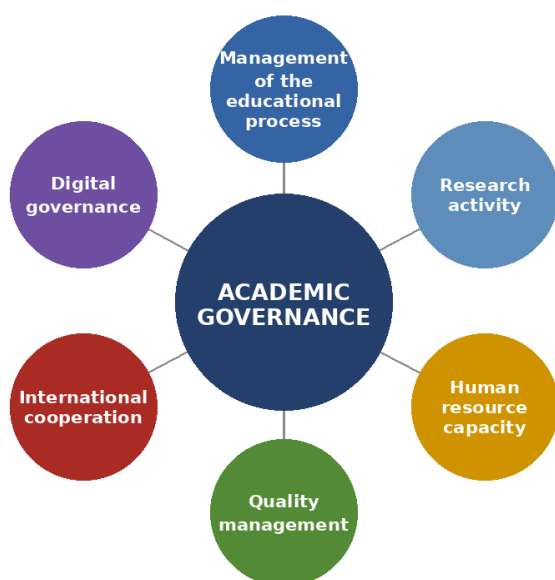


Figure 1. Structural Elements of Academic Governance⁹

Management of the educational process encompasses the development of curricula and programs, the

⁸ Gofurov, U. V. Economics and Management of Education. Tashkent: Lesson Press, 2021. [In Uzbek].

⁹ Source: Author's elaboration.

organization of classes, and assessment. Research management focuses on defining research priorities, organizing research projects, and improving performance. Human resource capacity management includes faculty recruitment, professional development, and incentives. Quality management covers the education quality assurance system; international cooperation includes academic mobility and joint programs; and digital governance refers to management based on information technologies.

The content of academic activity can also be considered through its principal functional areas. The ratio among them shows how the resources and attention of a higher education institution are distributed (Figure 2).

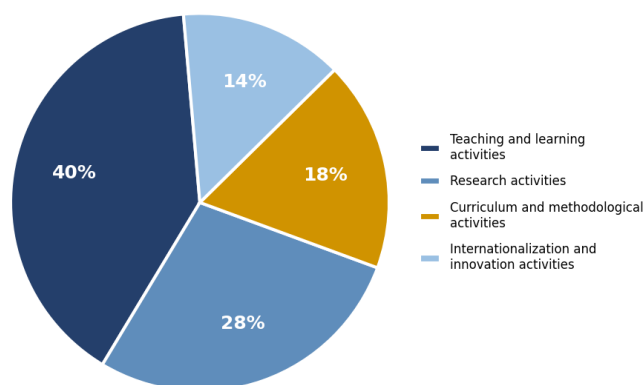


Figure 2. Main Functional Areas of Academic Activity¹⁰

When analyzing the organizational structure of academic governance, it is important to identify the features that distinguish it from management in other sectors. First, authority in an academic organization is formed from two sources: administrative hierarchy and academic standing or expertise. A professor may possess high academic authority in a field while occupying a lower position in the administrative hierarchy. This dual system of authority makes academic governance complex and distinctive.

Second, decisions in academic governance are often made collegially; the governance process relies on collective deliberation rather than unilateral authority. Third, academic units such as departments and faculties possess substantial autonomy and make independent decisions within their areas of responsibility. Fourth, faculty members, who are the object of management, have high qualifications and strong intrinsic motivation, requiring an approach that differs from traditional administrative methods.

Several organizational models of academic governance have emerged in international practice. Each has distinctive features in terms of the distribution of authority and decision-making procedures (Table 3).

Table 3
Main Organizational Models of Academic Governance¹¹

Model	Main characteristic	Decision-making
Collegial model	Leadership of the academic community in governance	Collective discussion and consensus
Bureaucratic model	Primacy of formal rules and hierarchy	Through the administrative hierarchy
Entrepreneurial model	Market principles and flexibility	Rapid and results-oriented
Political model	Balance among stakeholder groups	Negotiation and compromise

In practice, these models do not occur in pure form. Most higher education institutions apply a mixed model that combines their elements. For example, academic issues such as educational programs and research priorities may be resolved through a collegial model, whereas administrative and financial matters may be handled through bureaucratic or entrepreneurial models. Under current conditions, the share of entrepreneurial-model elements is increasing as higher education institutions operate more extensively in market environments.

In higher education institutions in Uzbekistan, a combination of bureaucratic and collegial models currently remains dominant. As university autonomy expands, the influence of entrepreneurial-model elements is increasing. Rationally managing this process—that is, balancing academic freedom with market

¹⁰ Source: Author's elaboration.

¹¹ Source: Author's elaboration.

responsiveness—is an important task of modern academic management.

The organizational structure of academic governance is changing under the influence of digital transformation. New units that provide information technology support—information technology centers, data analytics services, and digital education divisions—are being added to the traditional three-level structure. The introduction of a unified higher education management information system has accelerated and centralized information flows among governance levels.

Digitalization affects organizational structure in several ways. First, it accelerates information exchange among governance levels and makes it more transparent. Second, it enables data-driven decision-making. Third, it creates opportunities to reduce certain intermediate governance tiers and thereby flatten the structure. Fourth, it strengthens horizontal links among organizational units.

At the same time, digitalization does not automatically solve every problem in an organizational structure. If management processes are ineffective, merely converting them into digital form will not produce results. Digitalization must therefore be accompanied by process review and optimization. The combination of process redesign and digitalization can substantially increase the effectiveness of academic governance.

The analysis demonstrates that the essence of academic activity management is determined by its multifaceted, systemic, and distinctive nature. Its organizational structure is based on the coordinated operation of strategic, tactical, and operational levels and on the principle of collegiality. A rational distribution of authority and responsibility across governance levels, together with effective decision and reporting flows, is a major determinant of academic performance.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This article systematically examined the essence and organizational structure of academic activity management in higher education institutions. The results of the study support the following conclusions.

First, academic activity was identified as a set of interrelated processes through which a higher education institution creates, disseminates, and transmits knowledge. Its management is a distinctive activity characterized by the creative nature of the object of management, the multidimensionality of results, and academic autonomy.

Second, the management of the educational process, research, human resource capacity, quality management, international cooperation, and digital governance were identified as structural elements of academic governance, and their close interrelationship was substantiated.

Third, academic governance operates through a cyclical sequence of planning, organizing, coordinating, motivating, and controlling and evaluating functions, while the priority assigned to these functions differs across governance levels.

Fourth, it was scientifically substantiated that the organizational structure of academic activity management is based on a three-level hierarchical model comprising strategic, tactical, and operational levels and is complemented by the principle of collegiality.

Based on the research results, the following scientific and practical recommendations were developed:

- create an integrated system for managing the structural elements of academic governance through a unified information platform;
- clearly define authority and responsibility across governance levels and digitalize the decision-making and reporting flows between them;
- transform collegial bodies from formal structures into effective governance instruments and support their deliberations with pre-prepared analytical materials;
- optimize the balance among the functional areas of academic activity in accordance with the institution's strategic objectives;
- develop flexible organizational governance models for higher education institutions of different statuses - public, private, and international - while maintaining a common methodological foundation.

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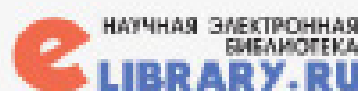
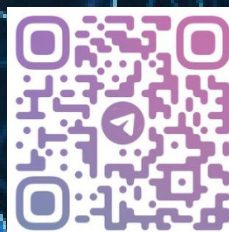
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