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## COMPONENTS OF UNIVERSITY AUTONOMY – EXPECTATIONS AND FACTORS FOR DEVELOPMENT

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### ABSTRACT

The paper reviews briefly research outcomes and debate around university autonomy in the global world. Different types of autonomy and components are discussed together with pre-requisites for the process of moving towards independent organizational governance. The role of stakeholders and their expectations are presented.

### KEYWORDS

Autonomy, academic freedom, financial independence, organizational independence.

### INTRODUCTION

The topic of university autonomy has been widely discussed and researched in developed countries for quite a long time. There are many studies and reviews of how university autonomy has evolved in European countries, the United States of America, Great Britain and the developing Asia-Pacific countries. [7]

On the territory of the post-Soviet space, the concept of university autonomy mainly includes the transfer of

powers to universities for independent academic and financial management, which includes decisions on the selection and opening of new academic institutions, research, management of the economic activities of the university, determining the cost of a training contract, financial budgeting and issues of expanding the infrastructure of the university. [1]

If one examines the articles regarding university autonomy, it is very common to find discussions regarding the freedom of universities to choose the direction of teaching and research, without interference from outside state institutions of power. [2,5,6,7] The main task of universities, in these articles, indicates the importance of universities, as free educational institutions, in cultivating students as literate and full-fledged citizens of the free world, capable of critical thinking and independent decision-making.

However, to a greater extent, in recent decades, research on university autonomy has been focused on discussing managerial freedom and improving the efficiency of universities, developing criteria for evaluating the activities of universities as public institutions that receive funding from external state and non-state institutions. In the post-Soviet space, where the state dominates the educational sectors of the economy, public policy plays a key and overarching role in determining the direction of university research and determining the results of the quality of education in universities. Public authorities use financial and legal policies that define the scope of university education and thus describe the boundaries of university autonomy. [2,3]

If we look at European universities, it can be noted that, despite the significant level of funding for the activities of universities at the expense of the state

(75%), in recent decades there has been an active discussion of increasing the level of autonomy of universities. [6] At the level of public policy, one can observe a tendency to provide an increasing level of autonomy to universities, through the possibility of independent management of financial and economic activities through various reforms in the field of higher education. Research shows that increasing the level of university autonomy is correlated with an increase in the level of competence of its graduates, as well as the quality of university research activities. [3,8]

At the same time, increasing the level of university autonomy means that universities have a greater level of responsibility for their results. University autonomy can be described in four parts:

- 1) Academic autonomy - this includes providing universities with independent decisions on granting scientific degrees, reviewing and developing new curricula, forms and methods of teaching, defining areas and areas, as well as the scope, goals and methods of scientific research.
- 2) Financial autonomy - this includes independent decisions of universities on sources of funding, distribution of funds received, decisions on the amount of tuition fees, decisions on the distribution and accumulation of financial surpluses.
- 3) Organizational autonomy - this includes independent decision-making regarding the structures

of universities, its charters, policies and procedures, the conclusion of contracts with external and internal suppliers, the creation and operation of internal bodies, as well as the election of persons making key strategic decisions.

4) Personnel autonomy - this includes the development of its own policies and procedures, according to which the university recruits administrative, academic, and operational staff, determines the level of wages and career advancement.

If we pay attention to the reforms carried out in the Republic of Uzbekistan in recent years, we can note that the government is faced with the challenge of a rapidly growing population and a large demand for educational services. In this regard, the state realized the need for reforms to significantly expand the availability of higher education, which in 2016 was about 8%, that is, out of 100 applications received for university admission, state universities could provide places for only 8 applicants. In the concept for the development of higher education in the Republic of Uzbekistan, the task was set to increase enrollment to the level of 50 percent by 2030. With more than 700,000 graduates graduating from schools, colleges and lyceums in Uzbekistan each year, universities should raise their admission quotas from 80,000 in 2016 to 350,000 in 2030. [11]

This means not only expanding quotas at existing universities, but also creating new public universities, enabling the opening of private universities, as well as opening joint educational programs and universities with foreign partners.

However, most of the burden, in expanding the quotas for admitting new students, is assigned to state universities, the number of which increased from 2016 to 2023 by one and a half times and exceeded 100 universities. [9]

At the same time, questions arise about financing the activities of existing and new universities, covering their current and capital expenses, effective management of economic activity, updating infrastructure, including student dormitories, educational and laboratory facilities and equipment.

The state budget cannot afford to maintain so many universities and cover all the necessary economic requirements and needs. On the other hand, universities should improve the quality of educational services and research activities, joining the competition in local and international rankings. In this regard, starting from 2018, the government piloted reforms to provide universities with greater autonomy and the transition from a centralized state corporate governance system to a decentralized autonomous corporate governance system for universities, transferring to them some of the powers of academic

and financial decisions for independent management.[10]

On the other hand, funding from the state budget was limited, obliging universities to independently seek financial resources to cover current and capital expenditures.

In 2021, the number of universities granted financial and academic autonomy has been expanded from ten to forty. Along with this, universities were given the opportunity to make their own decisions regarding the management of their own infrastructure, and, if necessary, invest in its expansion, leasing or sale.

Universities were also given the authority to review existing academic programs and forms of their provision, close unclaimed ones and open new ones, determine admission and pricing quotas. The state reserves the right to place an annual state order for certain educational areas, providing coverage for the costs associated with the payment of wages, as well as the payment of student contracts, up to 25% of the provided quotas for student admission. [10]

Based on the above reforms, it can be noted that the government, as the main founder of state universities, is interested in their financial independence and less dependence on the state budget, thereby transferring the university model to greater self-financing, increasing the efficiency of their financial, economic and economic activities, as well as improving the

quality of education and the compliance of academic programs with the requirements of the labor market, through graduates entering the labor market.

If we pay attention to the interests of students and their parents, as one of the stakeholders of universities, it can be noted that their main interest is to receive a quality education with minimal financial investment, as payment for student education, as well as a guarantee of subsequent employment according to the specialty. [6] To do this, the university needs to correlate the pricing of training programs according to their demand in the labor market and future career prospects. From this we can conclude that universities need to constantly monitor and update curricula and teaching methods in order to achieve their goals for the compliance of university graduates with the requirements of the labor market in terms of their knowledge, skills and qualifications.

On the other hand, industry and employers are interested in ensuring that university graduates have the necessary skills and knowledge to perform their tasks in the country's rapidly changing economy.

In conclusion, it can be said that the interests of university stakeholders in Uzbekistan are largely identical to those trends that can be observed throughout the rest of the developing world. The only difference is that the labor market in the rapidly changing economy of Uzbekistan, which is undergoing

an active transformation from a centralized monopoly state economy to a more open, market economy and increasingly integrating with world markets, the requirements for the depth of knowledge and qualifications are not yet so high. However, with the growth of competition and the further rapid growth of economies in Central Asia, the requirements for graduates and, accordingly, for universities will increase more and more.

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