



# Dialectics of Academic Freedom and Autonomy in the Process of Higher Education Integration (on the Example of the Experience of Uzbekistan)

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**Abstract:** The article analyzes the modern transformation of universities in the context of higher education and science integration, the dialectical nature of the concepts of social conditions and institutional autonomy. The evolution of university development from the Humboldt model to the postclassical period, the transformation of traditional academic values under the requirements of a market economy in globalization are studied. Also, the internal and external factors of the implementation of the principles of academic independence and integrity in national research universities within the framework of the "U10" program are philosophically illuminated.

**Keywords:** Integration of Science and Education, Hierarchical Freedom, Academic Autonomy, Dialectics, Postclassical University, "U10" Program, Academic Values, Utilitarian Approach

## Introduction

Today, universities around the world are experiencing a new transformational stage in their development. Similar to their medieval predecessors, modern higher education institutions continue to search for their unique socio-cultural mission aimed at preserving and advancing the highest human values and virtues. While relying on the most progressive academic traditions, universities not only assimilate emerging intellectual and cultural trends but also actively contribute to their formation. In this context, value-oriented and ethical principles play a decisive role. However, the education of students and young scholars in the spirit of academic values is increasingly being replaced by new utilitarian principles such as efficiency, competitiveness, and quality. Consequently, the problem of redefining and protecting the fundamental academic values of universities has become particularly relevant in contemporary conditions.

The development and application of knowledge constitute key factors of socio-economic progress. The growing need for lifelong learning is transforming its temporal boundaries, forms, and methods of acquisition. The increasing number of universities, including private higher education institutions within the global educational environment,

represents a generally positive trend aimed at expanding access to diverse forms of education and establishing the foundations for lifelong learning. Institutional diversification continues to evolve; nevertheless, traditional universities retain their leading role, particularly in professional training and scientific research.

The university model of the third millennium must fundamentally differ from its predecessors. The scale of human activity, the rapid generation and utilization of new knowledge, advances in computer technologies, and the development of the information industry require the elimination of the gap between education and training, as well as between the holistic worldview of young individuals and their preparedness for professional activity.

## Methodology

In the contemporary world, the global competitive economy is knowledge-based. Higher education institutions, including universities, must learn to respond sensitively to both their internal needs and the rapidly changing demands of the labor market, which increasingly requires highly developed human capital formed through a synthesis of traditional and innovative approaches in education.

The integration of science and education represents a process of developing mutually beneficial cooperation and interaction between educational and scientific spheres in order to ensure the correspondence of educational programs and research activities with practical problems and social needs. The growth of informatization necessitates the emergence of new methods of cognition and research. Previously, within the integration of science and education, the dominant approach was cognitive in nature, where success was measured by the correspondence between intended goals and achieved results. Today, however, the integration of these spheres is increasingly determined by an economic approach, where efficiency and practical benefit occupy central positions.

The integration of science and education:

- increases the effectiveness and productivity of research;
- improves the quality of education and scientific-technical personnel training;
- contributes to the efficient use of budgetary resources;
- stimulates the commercialization of applied scientific research and innovation, as well as interaction with entrepreneurship;
- increases the involvement of young people in scientific research and development activities.

Thus, the integration of science and education is the result of the systematic activity of academic actors. Without granting academic freedom and institutional independence to these actors, it is impossible to achieve meaningful results.

Indeed, universities can and should become full-fledged and independent participants in socio-political life, effectively competing with political parties in terms of the scale and depth of their societal influence. In the emerging information civilization, the power of the university becomes especially significant. Universities are capable of manifesting themselves as centers of culture and knowledge, as factors harmonizing the social environment, and as a new socio-political avant-garde.

Higher professional education is currently under considerable pressure. The dynamics of social development, particularly globalization, the emergence of a knowledge-based society and economy, and the increasing role of science as a key factor of social transformation, are changing not only the concept of higher education itself but also its position within society. The state, civil society, the labor market, and individuals are placing new demands upon education, thereby expanding the accountability of higher education institutions to various stakeholders.

Traditionally, the university as a center of education, science, and culture has occupied a leading role within the system of higher professional education. The modern university continues to play a decisive role in social life; however, debates regarding its essence—its goals, values, functions, and mission—remain ongoing. Although discussions concerning the “idea of the university,” originating in classical German philosophy, have persisted for more than two centuries, the issue of the academic values of the modern university remains insufficiently studied. Under conditions of globalization, internationalization, integration into the global educational space, massification of higher education, rapid growth of scientific information, and the spread of market relations, there is an urgent need to identify the fundamental principles of academic activity—research and teaching—which increasingly conflict with traditional academic values associated with the service of science and culture.

Within Humboldt’s concept of the university, the unity of teaching and research acquires special significance. Research constitutes the central activity of university life, and the educational process is carried out precisely within this research environment. Consequently, in the Humboldtian model, academic freedom is regarded not merely as an individual right of the professor but as an organizational principle of university activity itself. This approach allows academic freedom to be institutionalized and strengthened at both structural and cultural levels.

In contemporary socio-philosophical studies, the Humboldtian model is frequently interpreted as the “normative ideal” of academic freedom. For example, Sisay Tamirat characterizes the Humboldtian university as “a model in which academic freedom is the central element of the idea of the university,” arguing that “the Humboldtian university remains committed to the internal logic of scientific inquiry and therefore seeks relative independence from external utilitarian interests.” Within this framework, academic isolation appears not as a limitation of freedom but rather as a mechanism for its protection.

However, under modern conditions, the practical implementation of the Humboldtian model has become increasingly complicated. The massification of universities, the strengthening of market relations, and the growth of state orders narrow academic autonomy and intensify the risk of subordinating academic freedom to instrumental goals. Lynch and Ivancheva critically analyze this tendency, emphasizing that “even when institutional autonomy formally exists, academic freedom may lose its substantive meaning under conditions of managerial governance.” This indicates the necessity of reconsidering contemporary interpretations of the Humboldtian concept.

## Result and Discussion

In Uzbekistan, the spread of market relations has affected all spheres of public life and has transformed the goals, values, functions, and missions of universities. The commercialization of higher professional education and the commodification of education are leading to changes in the ideological foundations of the university.

The traditional academic values of the university include institutional autonomy, academic freedom, and the unity of teaching and research. However, these traditional academic values increasingly appear to be replaced by new principles such as efficiency, competitiveness, and quality. Therefore, the problem of defining academic values under contemporary conditions has become particularly urgent and requires comprehensive socio-philosophical analysis.

As a social institution, the university has historically fulfilled research, educational, and cultural functions. Today, however, it faces the risk of losing these functions and must therefore defend its positions, unique purposes, and values.

The values of the modern university include institutional autonomy—the ability to independently determine goals and select means for achieving them without external interference—as well as academic freedom, understood as freedom of research and teaching. Despite shifts in value orientations, institutional autonomy and academic freedom remain essential principles of university activity.

Nevertheless, against the background of ongoing transformations in all spheres of public life, the concepts of university autonomy and academic freedom are themselves evolving, while the traditional functions of the university—research, teaching, and education—are gradually diminishing. There is an increasing need to define new forms of responsibility before society, government, business, and individuals. The interaction of universities with other social institutions also requires reconsideration.

Under conditions of the post-classical university, academic freedom becomes not merely a traditional value existing “in itself,” but rather a socio-philosophical phenomenon reconfigured within a complex institutional regime. The defining feature of this era is that the university no longer exists solely as a “classical corporation” governed by the internal logic of science and culture; instead, it functions as an open system engaged in constant interaction with the knowledge economy, global competition, labor markets, political legitimization, and technological platforms. Therefore, the transformation of academic freedom cannot be explained through a simplistic linear conclusion that it has either “expanded” or “narrowed.” Simultaneously, academic freedom may be legally strengthened while subtly constrained through managerial and market mechanisms.

One of the most visible changes within the post-classical university is the transformation of the hierarchy of university values. Contemporary socio-philosophical analyses suggest that “under the influence of globalization and market relations, universities gradually abandon traditional values such as academic freedom and freedom of scientific inquiry, prioritizing instead efficiency, competitiveness, and quality”.

Philosophically, this implies that academic freedom shifts from the status of an “ultimate goal” to that of an “instrumental means.” Free inquiry becomes increasingly tied

to systems measured through rankings, grants, project performance, and indicators of “social demand.” Under such conditions, intellectual autonomy—the scholar’s inner independence in the pursuit of truth—comes into conflict with external instrumental rationality. Consequently, the dialectical tension between the “internal logic” of knowledge (truth, evidence, method) and its “external value” (profit, market demand, political necessity) intensifies.

At the same time, within the post-classical university, academic freedom is frequently discussed together with institutional autonomy. Importantly, autonomy is no longer interpreted as “unlimited sovereignty,” but rather as a model balanced with political and economic accountability. Researchers analyzing commercialization processes emphasize that “autonomy is often promoted as autonomy limited by political accountability”.

In recent years, Uzbekistan has implemented large-scale reforms aimed at expanding access to higher education, improving educational quality, strengthening scientific capacity, and developing international cooperation. At the same time, the effective utilization of existing potential, the integration of science with the economy, and the deepening of the relationship between education and research remain pressing issues.

On April 3, 2026, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, reviewed the presentation concerning the implementation of the “U10 – Uzbekistan’s Globally Advanced Universities” program. Within the framework of this program, ten higher education institutions will receive the status of national research universities on a competitive basis, and scientific clusters will be established within them. The academic values of the existing 207 state, joint, and private universities continue to evolve in accordance with contemporary requirements. The strengthening of academic independence, academic freedom, and principles of academic integrity within academic communities is developing under the influence of both internal and external factors.

In this regard, a significant dialectical contradiction emerges: although universities appear to receive greater managerial independence, this same independence may simultaneously be re-regulated internally through mechanisms of accountability, audit culture, and performance indicators. As a result, intellectual autonomy may be formally recognized while, in practice, external centers continue to determine which subjects are considered important, which topics are deemed acceptable, and which research outcomes receive funding.

Another major source of transformation in the post-classical university is the massification of higher education and the technocratization of governance. As universities increasingly become mass institutions, the logic of “service” and “platform” intensifies: students are viewed as “customers,” educational programs as “products,” and scientific results as “performance indicators.” Studies in academic ethics likewise reveal a shift in values, emphasizing that “the fundamental value of the Humboldtian university—the pursuit of scientific truth—is gradually losing its significance, and consequently the basic values of the university are changing”.

## Conclusion

The transformations occurring within higher education as a result of the integration of science and education are shaped by the influence of various internal and external factors. On the one hand, the aspiration of universities to preserve their autonomy and capacity for independent activity represents a natural institutional tendency. On the other hand, society exerts influence upon universities through various mechanisms in an effort to ensure that its interests and values are reflected within them. However, exclusive adaptation to labor market demands may limit the fundamental values and objectives of higher education institutions, reducing them to narrowly specialized structures transmitting utilitarian knowledge. At the same time, the state also seeks to realize its strategic interests through the regulation and control of universities.

Under conditions of the post-classical university, academic freedom increasingly confronts new institutional challenges. Managerial governance, economic efficiency, and ranking systems intensify tendencies toward evaluating scientific activity according to instrumental criteria, thereby narrowing the substantive meaning of academic freedom.

Therefore, the preservation of academic freedom must extend beyond formal legal declarations and be supported through the development of collegial governance, a culture of scientific debate, and strong norms of academic ethics. Only under such conditions can higher education institutions fully realize their creative and intellectual functions.

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