CONVERGENCE OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND RESEARCH ACTIVITY.

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Annotatsiya. *This article provides a theoretical and methodological analysis of the process of convergence between academic freedom and research activity within the context of the modern higher education system, particularly in an environment characterized by the rapid implementation of digital and artificial intelligence technologies. The pedagogical significance of academic freedom in fostering students' scientific subjectivity, developing independent and critical thinking, and forming reflective research competencies is substantiated. Research activity is interpreted as an integral and systematic component of the educational process, supported by artificial intelligence–based digital tools, which ensures students' intellectual development and the formation of scientific thinking. The research findings demonstrate that the integration and mutual alignment of academic freedom and scientific inquiry, including their integration with artificial intelligence technologies, play a crucial role in shaping an innovative and reflective pedagogical environment in higher education.*

Kalit so'zlar: *academic freedom, the concept of convergence, independent thinking, pedagogical process, conceptual approach, innovative pedagogical environment, scientific research, reflective research, modern education, research inquiry, intellectual development.*

Introduction. In pedagogical systems, the process of convergence manifests itself through the strengthening of interconnections between the content of education, teaching methods, educational subjects, and learning outcomes. While in traditional educational models these components were often considered relatively independent and fragmented, the convergent approach implies their integration within a unified pedagogical system. This integration enhances the effectiveness of the educational process, increases the activity of educational subjects, and ensures the practical relevance of acquired knowledge.

The concept of convergence in pedagogy is closely associated with the systems approach and the synergistic paradigm. According to the systems approach, the educational process represents a holistic system composed of interrelated elements, where changes in any single element affect the functioning of the entire system. The synergistic approach, in turn, substantiates the processes of self-development, activation of internal resources, and the emergence of unexpected positive outcomes within pedagogical processes. From this perspective, convergence is interpreted as a key mechanism that generates a synergistic effect within the pedagogical system.

Material And Methods. In this article, theoretical and scientific-methodological approaches were employed to examine the process of convergence between academic freedom and research activity. The research materials included scientific and pedagogical literature, regulatory and legal documents, reports of international organizations (UNESCO, OECD), as well as the experiences of foreign and domestic higher education institutions. [1]

During the research process, the methods of theoretical analysis, comparison, systematization, generalization, and conceptual analysis were applied. These methods served to identify the interrelation between academic freedom and

research activity, as well as to substantiate their role and significance within the pedagogical process.

Results And Their Analysis. Let us now present the ideas discussed in this article by referring to the scientific interpretation of the concept of convergence.

Convergence is the process by which two or more independent processes move closer to one another, integrate, and transform into a unified functional system. From a pedagogical perspective, convergence signifies the transition of educational phenomena from an isolated state to an integrated, systemic, and synergistic unity. [2]

The concept of convergence is gaining particular significance in contemporary pedagogical research under conditions characterized by the increasing complexity of educational processes, the intensification of interdisciplinary integration, and the strengthening interconnections between education, science, and innovation.

In the context of modern higher education, convergence is primarily manifested through the rapprochement of educational and research activities. Scientific research is no longer regarded as an independent activity separated from the educational process, but rather as an integral component of educational content. This approach contributes to the formation of students not as passive recipients of ready-made knowledge, but as active subjects engaged in knowledge creation.

Within this process, academic freedom acquires special pedagogical significance. Academic freedom provides students with opportunities to choose research problems, determine research methods, formulate scientific hypotheses, and independently interpret research findings. At the same time, research activity represents the practical embodiment of academic freedom, ensuring its realization within the real pedagogical process. Thus, a dialectical interrelationship exists

between academic freedom and research activity, and their convergence emerges as a fundamental principle of modern higher education.

Under conditions of convergence between academic freedom and research activity, the student is formed not as a passive participant in the educational process, but as an active subject of scientific inquiry. In such a context, the teacher performs not the role of a transmitter of ready-made knowledge, but rather that of a scientific mentor, consultant, and facilitator. This, in turn, leads to the establishment of subject–subject relationships within the pedagogical process. [4]

Within an educational process organized on the basis of a convergent approach, research activity contributes to the development of such essential competencies in students as critical thinking, reflection, independent decision-making, and scientific responsibility. These competencies cannot be fully formed in conditions where academic freedom is absent. Therefore, the integration of academic freedom and research activity is regarded as a necessary condition for the development of students' professional and scientific potential.

Furthermore, the process of convergence leads to the acquisition of an interdisciplinary and problem-oriented character by educational content. Scientific research is aimed at solving real-world problems, the resolution of which requires the integration of knowledge from various academic disciplines. As a result, the educational process is organized in a way that harmoniously combines theoretical knowledge with practical activity, thereby ensuring the stable and conscious acquisition of knowledge.[6]

Convergence, as a pedagogical category, denotes the transition of educational phenomena from an isolated state to an integrated, systemic, and synergistic unity. The convergence of academic freedom and research activity serves as an important methodological foundation in modern higher education for

shaping students' scientific subjectivity, ensuring the innovative character of the educational process, and achieving the sustainable development of the higher education system.

The modern higher education system occupies a central position in societal development as a key institution for knowledge production, scientific research, and innovative advancement. As emphasized in UNESCO reports, higher education is no longer limited to the task of training qualified personnel; it also assumes responsibility for generating scientific knowledge, aligning it with societal needs, and developing innovative solutions. Within this context, the harmonious integration of academic freedom and research activity acquires strategic importance.

Academic freedom emerges as a crucial institutional condition for the development of research activity. According to the report, in environments where freedom of scientific inquiry is restricted, the process of knowledge creation remains confined, and innovative potential cannot be fully realized. Therefore, engaging students and early-career researchers in independent research activities and providing them with opportunities to freely choose research topics ensure the sustainable development of the scientific environment within higher education institutions.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the convergence of academic freedom and research activity is emerging as a significant pedagogical regularity within the modern higher education system. Academic freedom is not limited solely to the legal or institutional autonomy of educational subjects; rather, it functions as a crucial condition for shaping students' scientific subjectivity, fostering independent and critical thinking, and establishing reflective research competencies. [1]

The study revealed that research activity cannot develop fully in the absence of an environment of academic freedom. Conversely, the real essence of academic freedom is revealed through scientific inquiry, independent research tasks, problem-based situations, and scholarly communication. From this perspective, academic freedom and research activity form an integrative system that mutually complements, reinforces, and develops each other.

In conclusion, the convergence of academic freedom and research activity represents one of the strategic directions of modern higher education development, serving to unlock students' scientific potential and to prepare them as intellectually mature, independent, and innovatively minded specialists. The findings of this study scientifically substantiate the necessity of expanding academic freedom within the higher education system and establishing research activity as a central element of the pedagogical process.

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