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THE CONCEPT OF WESTERN CASPIAN UNIVERSITY

As the number and scale of universities continue to grow globally, the expectations placed upon them by various stakeholders have also expanded and diversified, leading to more intensive discussions surrounding their roles and functions. This concept aims to strengthen the interconnection between research and teaching, to integrate scientific inquiry with educational activities, and to utilize research outcomes within the teaching process. The primary objective is to expose students to contemporary scientific approaches and methodologies, while enhancing the quality of education by incorporating academic research into teaching practices.

In the modern era, educational processes that focus solely on the transmission of existing knowledge are no longer considered effective. In recent years, the role of universities in the creation, dissemination, and application of knowledge has significantly increased. Today's universities are not only consumers of scientific innovation and new knowledge, but also producers of such knowledge, actively facilitating its dissemination through innovative teaching methods. In this regard, the integration of scientific research and teaching is a defining feature of the contemporary university

model and constitutes a fundamental component of institutional development strategies.

Such an approach enables the organization of education through science, contributes to the improvement of the quality of specialists and academic-pedagogical staff trained by universities, and enhances the active role of higher education institutions in addressing the socio-economic challenges of the country. The strengthening of scientific research activities in universities, their transformation into research universities, active participation of the academic staff in research and innovation, involvement of students in this field, development of scientific research skills, expansion of "university-business" cooperation, promotion of interdisciplinary research, internationalization of scientific activity, and collaboration with foreign scientific centers are of particular importance.

In the context of the current requirements, universities should organize their activities based on the following principles:

- Integration of science and education processes;
- Support for the development of fundamental science;
- Coordination between fundamental and applied research;
- Attraction and utilization of resources in areas aligned with research priorities, and the development of new technologies and products;
- Support for leading scientists and scientific-pedagogical teams in the fields of research and education;
- Preparation of thematic plans on a competitive basis;
- Promotion of youth's scientific and technical creativity;

- Support for entrepreneurial activity in the scientific and technical field;
- Integration into the international community

Main Goals and Objectives of the Concept Implementation

The primary goal of planning and implementing scientific research activities in universities is to improve the quality of education, train highly qualified specialists, and utilize the educational, scientific, technical, and innovative potential of the university to support the technological and digital modernization of the country and its national economy. This also includes the development of new technologies. Achieving this goal successfully requires taking into account the specific characteristics of universities, their areas of activity, and the priorities related to training specialists.

To achieve this goal, solving the following tasks is of great importance.

- Improvement of the teaching process, application of new educational technologies, development of scientific-methodological support, and prioritization of research related to the training and professional development of academic and pedagogical personnel;
- Alignment of competitive research aimed at the commercialization of fundamental and applied studies;
- Training and retraining of personnel in the field of innovation and scientific-technological entrepreneurship;
- Advancement of the integration of science and education, and expansion of collaboration between universities and research institutions;

- Development of postgraduate academic education, including the reorganization and improvement of doctoral studies;
- Promotion of lifelong learning following higher education;
- Ensuring the participation of all actors in the teaching process—students, doctoral candidates, dissertation researchers, faculty, and research staff—in research activities;
- Increasing the participation of university faculty in national development programs, scientific-technical and innovation development programs, and competitive scientific grant schemes;
- Securing the active role of universities in the implementation of scientific, technological, and innovation policies;
- Attraction of additional extra-budgetary funding sources;
- Establishment and development of small innovative enterprises;
- Expansion of international integration and creation of favorable conditions for attracting foreign investments;
- Enhancing the participation of university scholars in international scientific and educational programs and attracting foreign investments;
- Development of partnership relations with the real sector of the economy and other economic entities.

Impact Areas of the Concept Implementation

The solution of the above-mentioned tasks, in turn, may contribute to the provision of the following in order to strengthen the scientific-research activities of universities.

- Improvement in the quality of specialist training through increased involvement of faculty members in scientific research and the engagement of first-year students in research activities;
- Development of innovative research units, including interdisciplinary networks, creation of new knowledge, transformation of this knowledge into technologies, and its transfer to industrial enterprises;
- Promotion of innovative entrepreneurship, expansion of experience in establishing relevant companies, and application of mechanisms for the commercialization of intellectual property;
- Expansion of applied research and strengthening of the material and technical infrastructure of scientific laboratories, along with the establishment of expert centers to assess the quality of applied research and technological solutions;
- Enhancement of the quality of fundamental and exploratory research, development of cooperation with international research centers, and involvement of international experts in joint research projects;
- Creation and support of youth scientific organizations.

Mechanisms for the Concept Implementation

- Development of researchers' and scientists' fundamental and theoretical competencies;
- Support for the integration of scientific-pedagogical teams with research-oriented production;
- Competitive selection of individual research projects;
- Establishment of an effective system for the development of the university's material and technical base;

- Support for laboratories operated by scientific-pedagogical teams conducting research projects and modernization of the research infrastructure;
- Implementation of effective systems for project management;
- Creation of favorable financial and social conditions to support the scientific activities of students and academic staff.

Performance Indicators of Concept Implementation

- Increase in the number of research-related requests and project proposals from the real sector of the economy (including those implemented through small innovative enterprises within the university);
- Growth in the volume of high-tech products produced by the university's small innovative enterprises;
- Rise in citation indices of publications authored by university academic staff;
- Increase in the number of students undertaking internships in the real sector of the economy and scientific institutions;
- Expansion in the share of academic staff participating in commissioned or self-initiated scientific research projects.

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