

**CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS OF ART MANAGEMENT IN IMPROVING
INNOVATIVE MANAGEMENT WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

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Abstract. This article explores the conceptual foundations of the art management approach in modernizing the management system of higher education institutions (HEIs) and fostering an innovative environment within them. Today, the transformation of higher education demands not only technological upgrades but also creative and flexible management models. The paper analyzes how the aesthetic, motivational, and flexibility principles of art management can be integrated into the governance of higher education. As a result of the study, a structural-functional model designed to enhance the efficiency of innovative management in HEIs is proposed, and its practical significance is discussed.

Keywords: higher education, innovative management, art management, creativity, corporate culture, transformation, flexibility.

INTRODUCTION. In today's global economy and digital transformation landscape, higher education institutions (HEIs) are evolving beyond mere centers of knowledge dissemination into strategic hubs that drive innovation, creative ideas, and human capital development. Ensuring the competitiveness of HEIs directly depends on the flexibility and innovative capacity of their management systems [1].

In the Republic of Uzbekistan, the fundamental modernization of the higher education system and the introduction of contemporary management techniques into administrative activities have been designated as top priorities of state policy. Specifically, the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Education" legally established the concepts of enhancing the autonomy of educational organizations and democratizing their management systems [2]. Furthermore, the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. UP-5847, "On Approval of the Concept for the Development of the Higher Education System of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030," explicitly outlines the tasks of improving the governance system in HEIs, granting them academic and organizational-managerial independence, and implementing innovative management models into the educational process [3]. Aligning with these initiatives, the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. UP-269, "On Measures to Implement the Administrative Reforms of New Uzbekistan," demands a reduction in hierarchical chains of command within state bodies and educational institutions, while supporting imaginative and creative approaches to decision-making [4].

Additionally, the Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PP-55, "On Measures to Improve the Management System of Higher Education Institutions," mandates that university leaders abandon conventional bureaucracy in favor of flexible, results-oriented management strategies [5]. However, despite the comprehensive regulatory framework now in place, many traditional management models in practice fail to fully keep pace with contemporary demands and the momentum of systemic reforms, largely due to high levels of authoritarianism, rigidity (lack of flexibility), and highly standardized, formulaic decision-making systems [6].

Addressing this challenge necessitates introducing a novel concept to educational management: art management—signifying management through the lens of art and creative

methodology [7]. Art management does not merely imply the administration of cultural and art institutions; in its modern interpretation, it represents the art of organizing managerial processes creatively, establishing an aesthetic environment, and fostering autonomous and creative thinking within any organization, including HEIs, to achieve the strategic objectives outlined in legislation [8].

METHODS. The methodological foundation of this research comprises a system-wide analysis of higher education institution management systems, comparative-pedagogical analysis, process modeling, and expert evaluation methods. In the initial phase, using the system analysis method, the structure of contemporary higher education institution management systems and the fundamental principles of art management were thoroughly examined in their close interconnectedness and as a single, unified whole [9]. Concurrently, the managerial chains of command in higher education management and the inherent patterns of generating a collaborative creativity environment within them were subjected to a comparative-pedagogical analysis. Drawing upon the theoretical data synthesized through these analyses, a conceptual model for the step-by-step integration of art management elements into the existing organizational-managerial structure of higher education institutions was developed via the modeling method [10]. This model serves to delineate the mechanisms for transitioning from traditional rigidity to flexibility in institutional governance.

In the empirical (practical) phase of the study, an expert evaluation method (anonymous questionnaire) was employed to verify the proposed scientific hypothesis and to establish a reliable database. The survey process involved administrative leaders, deans, and department heads actively operating within the governance systems of three leading higher education institutions in the republic, comprising a total of 24 qualified experts [11]. A specialized socio-pedagogical survey titled "The Role of Creativity and Aesthetic Environment in HEI Management" was conducted with the participation of these experts to evaluate the specific criteria that foster an innovative atmosphere in higher education. In particular, the subjects individually assessed key metrics—including the level of flexibility in contemporary leadership, the role of emotional intelligence in decision-making, and the performance indicators of administrative staff in making creative choices—utilizing a rating scale ranging from 1 to 10 [12]. The analysis of the aggregated expert evaluations ensured the objectivity and practical validity of the research findings.

RESULTS. An analysis of the data obtained from system-wide studies and expert questionnaires conducted in higher education institutions indicated that high performance indicators of innovative activity in universities are not solely determined by the state of the material and technical base or the volume of financial resources. On the contrary, these metrics are intrinsically linked to the quality of the internal corporate culture, the management style, and the psychological climate established for the staff. Through the application of art and creativity principles within the administrative sphere, four primary conceptual pillars (principles) that elevate HEI management to a qualitatively new level were identified and scientifically systematized.

The first principle is creative flexibility, which urges the leadership and faculty to abandon rigid stereotypes and find non-standard, original solutions to both routine and strategic challenges.

The second pillar is defined as the principle of aesthetic and emotional intelligence, which serves to establish a genuine emotional connection between administrators and staff, as well as between teachers and students, thereby rendering the work environment visually and psychologically comfortable.

The third principle, collaborative synergy, involves minimizing hierarchical barriers between departments and divisions to implement a project-based management system.

The fourth principle, visual and cultural branding, establishes the priority of shaping a unique aesthetic appeal and cultural atmosphere within both the internal and external spaces of the HEI.

The numerical indicators aggregated during the expert survey fully validated the aforementioned insights. In faculties dominated by traditional, namely strict authoritarian and rigid management styles, the index of advancing new ideas and innovative initiatives averaged 4.2 points on a 10-point scale. Conversely, in environments where elements of art management—such as academic and creative freedom, a project-based approach, and a system of creative incentives—were established, this indicator was significantly higher, reaching an average of 8.6 points. This statistical disparity demonstrates the profound necessity of transitioning toward contemporary, human-capital-oriented methods of governance in higher education.

Based on these empirical results and theoretical generalizations, a three-stage conceptual model of innovative management grounded in art management was developed for higher education institutions:

The sensory-aesthetic stage (First stage): Aims to optimize the university's work and learning environment both visually and psychologically, introducing design solutions that enhance staff productivity.

The creative-activity stage (Second stage): Broad academic freedom is granted to ensure that the faculty can completely manifest their autonomous and creative thinking, accompanied by the establishment of creative spaces such as co-working zones and innovation laboratories.

The synergetic stage (Final stage): The organizational and legal mechanisms are activated to systematically transform the non-standard and creative ideas generated by the collective into the university's commercializable intellectual property and innovative products.

DISCUSSION. The findings obtained during this study enrich the substance of classic and contemporary perspectives in the field of educational management and propose novel approaches to them. Previously, the administrative activities of higher education institutions primarily emphasized strict economic, bureaucratic, and quantitative factors—namely Key Performance Indicator (KPI) systems, dry ranking outcomes, and multi-page reports. However, this study demonstrates that soft management skills and aesthetic dimensions are, in fact, the primary catalysts and driving forces for fostering innovation within the educational environment. Unless a creative and liberated atmosphere is established within a university, any digital or technological advancement faces a high risk of remaining merely on paper.

In enhancing management efficiency, the art management approach requires a higher education institution leader to function not merely as an ordinary administrator or a commanding executive, but rather as a distinct "director" or "curator." A contemporary leader must promptly discern the latent creative potential and innovative ideas within every member of their team, provide them with necessary support, and effectively align them with the institution's overarching strategic objectives. Nevertheless, during the process of implementing this creative framework into the existing structures of higher education institutions, certain systemic risks and resistances become apparent. The first of these is the traditional administrative bureaucracy and rigid reporting frameworks prevalent in universities, which can substantially constrain the creative freedom of the faculty and limit their opportunities to pursue non-standard ideas. On the other hand, personnel challenges—specifically the insufficient development of art management competencies, agile leadership culture, and emotional intelligence skills among current mid-level and senior administrators—also operate as factors that decelerate institutional transformation.

Despite these barriers and difficulties, introducing the principles of art, aesthetics, and creativity into higher education governance sharply mitigates occupational burnout or chronic fatigue syndrome within the institution. This approach enhances the collective's intrinsic motivation and institutional loyalty, and most importantly, exerts a direct positive influence on the development of independent and innovative thinking among students. The creative and flexible initiatives implemented by the leadership revitalize the entire university climate, literally transforming it into a hub of innovation.

CONCLUSION. The improvement of innovative management activities in higher education institutions does not merely consist of altering the organizational structure, updating personnel, or establishing new departments. Above all, this process signifies a fundamental renewal of the university administration's management philosophy and a paradigm shift in the approach to human capital. The conceptual foundations of art management established within the scope of this study enable higher education administrations to transition from traditional rigidity to extensive flexibility, and from authoritarianism and strict hierarchy to a novel system grounded in mutual cooperation and collaboration. Such a shift in management style establishes a robust foundation for unleashing the creative potential of all tiers within the university.

The three-stage innovative management model proposed in this research serves to elevate the quality of higher education to a new, higher level by ensuring a creative, open, and liberated academic climate within the university environment. The systematic implementation of the sensory-aesthetic, creative-activity, and synergetic stages eliminates bureaucratic barriers in universities and activates the mechanism for transforming the innovative ideas of faculty and students into real, practical outcomes.

In conclusion, for future-oriented higher education institutions seeking to secure their standing in the contemporary world, relying on aesthetic and creative management models is not merely an option, but a strategic necessity. Transforming universities into hubs of innovation and achieving the lofty goals outlined in legislation will directly depend on how deeply we can integrate the principles of art management into educational governance.

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