



EDU-LAB - NEW DANUBIAN GOVERNANCE IN LABOUR MARKET  
RELEVANCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education system and Labour of market in Serbia

Best practices

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The system of higher education in the Republic of Serbia in the period from 2005 until today, has passed through some serious changes and was faced with serious challenges. The harmonization of the higher education system with the Bologna Process, the reform of the system, the recomposing of the system into the so-called 'tertiary' system, the quality policy, the introduction of an accreditation system, the possibility of creating joint programs, the formation of numerous professional and regulatory bodies, have set new frameworks for future development. But, also, through realization of activities, system was faced with a numerous open questions. Facing numerous problems, where on the first place was the reality "on the ground" as well as some hasty solutions, the mentioned "historical" law has come through a series of changes and amendments ("Official Gazette of RS", No. 76/2005, 100 / 2007 - authentic interpretation, 97/2008, 44/2010, 93/2012, 89/2013, 99/2014 and 45/2015 - authentic interpretation), and after all of the mentioned amendments, in September 2017, a new law on higher education was passed.

The history of higher education in the Republic of Serbia is quite long, dating back to the 19th century. After the Second World War, the University of Novi Sad (1960), Nis (1965), Pristina (1970), Podgorica (1974) and Kragujevac (1976) separated from the University of Belgrade, (founded 1905). In addition to the development of university education in Serbia, the development of higher education has begun. At the end of the 1950s, the state began establishing higher professional schools in those larger cities and industrial centers. Extremely dynamic development of the society, especially the industry at the time, requires well-trained experts. Thus, towns such as Subotica, Novi Sad, Belgrade, Zrenjanin, Kragujevac, Trstenik, Krusevac and others received college institutions. This institutions were formed by the reputation of, at that time, highly respected German high schools. The duration of their studies lasted between two and three years, and study profiles and programs were always in line with the current level of science and technology in the world and the needs of the labor of market. Higher professional schools in Serbia have always played a very important role and have made a huge contribution to the development of society and the economy not only in local communities, but also at the level of the region and the Republic. The basic characteristic of the work of these institutions and their educational programs was their compatibility with the economy. These institutions had a strong base in that economy of the region and the republic.

The functioning of these two types of institutions within the framework of higher education in the period from World War II to 2005 was regulated by a large number of regulations, laws and decisions, starting with the "Resolution on Higher Education, University and Academies of 09.04.1945. to the "Agreement on the Unique Design of a Professional Title for Enrolled Studies at the Medical and Dental Faculty of December 17, "

A special review should be made on a set of laws that regulated higher education in the 1990s. In the period until the 1990s, all the higher education institutions had only one founder - state. The establishment of private higher education institutions begins in the mid-1990s. of the last century.

It can be freely said that in the past, all reforms were implemented partially, without clear vision of the real needs for reforms, and without a clear insight into the implications of these reforms. It was mostly about rebuilding the segments of the higher education system (plans, programs, textbooks), and we can freely say that almost all reforms were mostly guided by the "inner" needs of the education system. Rarely there were attempts to understand the development of a higher education system from the point of view of its mission and functions towards the outside world in which it functions and for which it exists. In other words, the analysis of the situation and the design of the development of the higher education system has not been realized in full cooperation with the partners from the economy and society. These projections were made without the active participation of the public, especially those who are most concerned about this segment of education. The conclusions are usually adopted without leading a broad and competent public debate on the state of and perspectives of this segment of education.

All this has produced that the crucial decisions have been made without critical debate, without a clear idea of the reform. The initial ideas were not clear enough nor creative enough, and without clearly emphasizing the need to finally open the education system to the community in which it lives.

From the conclusions of the Strategy for the Development of Retention in Republic of Serbia until 2020, it follows that a '*generic system of higher education is fairly closed to itself, separated from its surroundings, shaped by commercial interests, somewhat exposed to party influences*'. The emergence of private educational institutions was initially presented as a contribution to improving the quality of education through strengthening competition, generated and managed in a large number of cases, profit interests and the absence of public and other requirements related to the quality of education.

The activity of higher education is crucial for the development of the Republic of Serbia. Serbian higher education system is a part of an international, and especially unique, European, educational, scientific and artistic space. The mission of higher education is to intermittently transfer and create scientific knowledge and professional competences through organized studies and research, enabling, first and foremost, social, cultural, economic and other progress of our country and its citizens, in the constantly changing circumstances of life and development.

## 2. HIGHER EDUCATION CAPACITIES IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

According to the data of the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission of the Republic of Serbia - CAQA, there are eight states universities and ten private universities. Within these states universities, there are 87 faculties, which carry out teaching process at all three levels of study in all five scientific fields, then 13 Institutes, 41 development and 16 service centers. The dominant scientific fields of the faculty are socially humanistic (32 faculties) and technical and technological field (30 faculties). Then, within the natural mathematical field, 10

faculties, 9 faculties within the field of medicine and 7 faculties in the field of art carry out teaching at accredited study programs. A large number of study programs are accredited at Universities, among which those who are accredited within IMT (interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary science) are especially important. The specificity of these programs is to unify available resources and move towards the challenges that new technologies put ahead of higher education.

In the private sector, there are a total of 46 faculties within the 10 universities. The dominant scientific field of work of faculties within is socially humanistic (30 faculties), then within a technical and technological field, seven faculties performed accredited study programs, within the natural mathematical field, 3 faculties, 2 faculties within the field of medicine and 4 faculties in the field of art.

**Table 1. Structural capacities of faculties at state universities**

University	Faculties within scientific fields						Institute	Center	
	SH	TT	NM	Med	Artt	Prog. at univ. leve		develop.	service
University of Belgrade	10	11	6	4		16	11	7	6
University of Novi Sad	6	5	1	1	1	15	2	16	1
University of Nis	5	6	1	1	1	2		12	6
University of Kragujevac	6	4	1	1				6	3
University of Kos.Mitrovica	5	2	1	1	1				
University of Arts					4	6			
University of Defence		1		1					
University of Novi Pazar						45			
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>39/65</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>16</b>

(SH social humanity field, TT- technical technology field, NM; natural sciences and math field. MED medical field, Art field )

**Table 2 Structural capacities of privet universities in Serbia**

University	Faculties within scientific fields					Study program at university
	SH	TT	NM	Med	ART	
University Dzon Nezbit	5		1		1	1
University Singidunum	3		1			23
University Alfa	4	1			1	11
European University	1	1			1	
University Edukons	4					24
University Metropoliten	1					34
University Union	3	1			1	
University Union Nikola Tesla	6	4	1			11
University Privredna Akademija	3			2		
University of Novi Pazar						2
<b>total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	

(SH social humanity field, TT- technical technology field, NM; natural sciences and math field. MED medical field, Art field )

A careful analysis of the geographical distribution of universities is noted that they are mainly concentrated in large cities and regional centers, such as Novi Sad, Belgrade, Nis, Kragujevac, Kosovska Mitrovica and Novi

Pazar. Within the framework of its functioning, certain universities or faculties have their members who are located outside of the university center, such as the faculties in Bujanovac, Vranje, Leskovac, Jagodina, Uzice, Cacak, Subotica, Sombor, Zrenjanin, Vrsac, Vrnjačka Banja, Krusevac.

It is important to emphasize that the private universities are mostly concentrated in Belgrade, while in other parts of the country they function according to the principle of consulting centers.

From the point of view of professional education in the Republic of Serbia, there are 61 professional education institutions: 48 whose founder is the state and 13 private institutions. The total number of accredited study programs is 305 study programs at the basic level of study and 76 study programs at second level of study. Regarding the structure of study programs, the largest number of study programs is accredited within the technical and technological field, 172 in the basic-level studies and 83 in the study of the second level studies. Within the framework of the social humanitarian field, there are 94 programs at the first-level studies and 40 study programs at the second-level studies. Within the field of medical field there are 25 study programs at the basic level of study and 14 at the second level, and in the field of art, there are 11 programs, of which 10 are on basic level of studies and one program at second level studies. Within the natural mathematical field, only one program is implemented in basic level of studies.

According to CAQA data, in the period 2012-2016, at all types and at all levels of study, a total of 2454 study programs were accredited / re-accredited

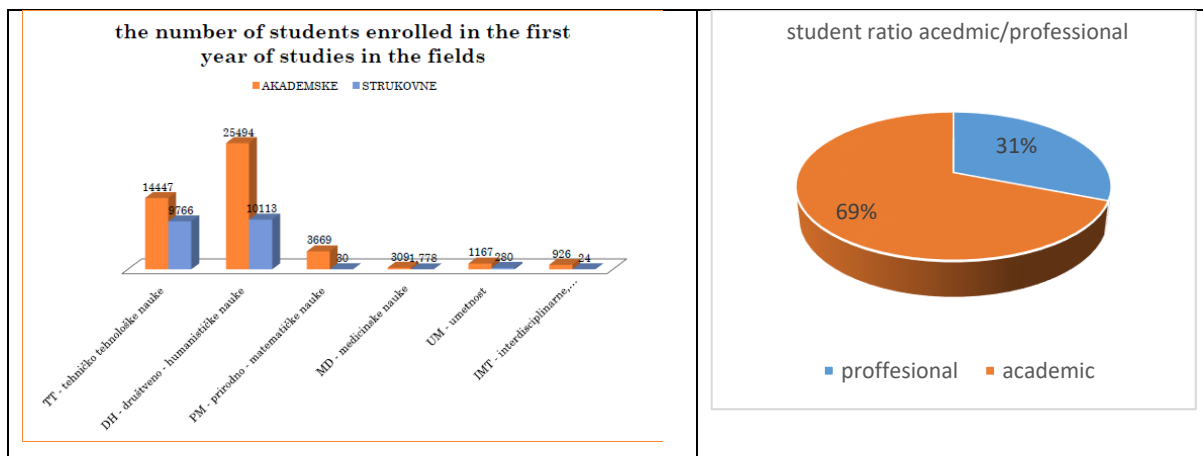


Figure 1. (a) Chart with distribution of the number of student enrolled in the first year of studies per scientific field in Serbia 2015/16 (b) student ration academic/professional studies

### 3. HIGHER EDUCATION IN SERBIA TODAY IN THE LIGHT OF THE HE LAW- 2017.

With the adoption of a new law on higher education in September 2017, further directions of its development are defined. This law confirms that the activity of higher education is realized through the realization of academic and professional studies on the basis of accredited study programs for acquiring higher education. In academic studies an academic study program is being conducted, which enables students to develop and apply scientific, artistic and professional achievements. In vocational studies, a vocational study program is conducted, which enables students to apply and develop the professional knowledge and skills necessary for inclusion in the work process.

For the purpose of vocational training of persons with acquired higher education for inclusion in the work process, short programs of studies with clearly defined structure, purpose and learning outcomes have been introduced and for which the certificates for completed short program of studies and acquired competences have been issued.

The Law defines first-level studies as follows: basic academic studies; basic vocational studies; specialist vocational studies. Second degree studies are: master academic studies; master vocational studies; specialist academic studies, while studies of the third degree of doctoral academic studies.

Study programs are realized within one or more of the following educational-scientific, ie educational-artistic fields: Natural Sciences and Mathematics; Social-humanistic sciences; Medical Sciences; Technical-technological sciences; Art. Basic academic studies have from 180 to 240 ESPB points, basic vocational studies have 180 ESPB points. Specialist vocational studies have at least 60 ESPB points. Specialist academic studies have at least 60 ESPB points when previously mastered academic studies.

Master academic studies have at least 60 ESPB points, when the scope of basic academic studies of 240 ESPB points has been previously achieved; or at least 120 ESPB points when the scope of basic academic studies of 180 ESPB points has been previously achieved. Master vocational studies have at least 120 ESPB points when the first stage of the study has reached at least 180 ESPB points. Study programs of academic studies can be organized in the framework of basic and master academic studies.

Doctoral studies have at least 180 ESPB points, with a previously completed study scope of at least 300 ESPB points in basic academic and master academic studies, or integrated academic studies. Study programs of academic studies in medical sciences can be organized in the framework of basic and master academic studies, with a total volume of up to 360 ESPB points. A short study program can be conducted in the range of 30 to 60 ESPB points. In order to promote scientific research, that is, artistic-research activity, the university can have scientific, or artistic institutes.

In order to carry out innovation activities and provide infrastructure support for the development of innovations and commercialization of the results of scientific or artistic research, the university can comprise innovation centers, centers of exceptional values, technology transfer centers, business and technology incubators, science and technology parks and other organizations, in accordance with the law regulating scientific research activity.

The University performs scientific research and artistic work in order to develop science and creativity, to improve the activities of higher education, that is, to improve the quality of teaching, the improvement of scientific and artistic youth, the introduction of students in scientific and artistic work, and the creation of material conditions for the work and development of universities.

Scientific work at the university is realized through basic, applied and developmental research, and artistic work through art projects. Artistic work at the university implies creativity, interpretation and artistic research, and it is realized through art projects. Scientific and artistic work is carried out and organized in accordance with the law and the general act of the institution.

In order to commercialize the results of scientific research or artistic work, the university or other higher education institution may be the founder of scientific institutes, innovation centers, centers of exceptional values, technology transfer center, business and technology incubator, science and technology park and other organizations for

performing innovation activities and providing infrastructure support for the development of innovations and commercialization of research results, in accordance with the law.

As a special form of its activity within its educational field, the HEI can organize and implement lifelong education following general technological advancement, the development of areas and the needs of the labor market, while lifelong education adapts to the ECTS system, and it can include elements related to non-formal education. In adult education, HEIs can create educational programs that enable the rapid reorientation of employees in new areas of work, especially those that enable self-employment.

It is particularly important to point out that the new law gives the possibility of engaging non-university lecturers from labor work, but with certain limitations. A higher education institution may, on the proposal of an expert body, engage in active teaching process, which including lectures and exercises, at the first and second level of study, up to one third of classes per course during the semester, non-university lecturer who has acquired higher education at least master academic studies and who has the necessary knowledge and skills in the appropriate field and shows the sense of teaching. Non-university lecturer can be engaged exclusively on professional applicative subjects. The professors employed at the higher education institution are responsible for ensuring the quality of instruction delivered by non-university lecturer. The general act of a higher education institution regulates the method of selection more closely and the time that the trainer is engaged outside of employment.

#### 4. HIGHER EDUCATION AND LABOUR MARKET

If we look at the above data in a realistic way, it can easily be sketched that the capacities of higher education in the Republic of Serbia are not in correlation with the current state of the economy. A large number of study programs in the technical and technological field, then the existence of centers for knowledge and technology transfer, innovation centers should be a carrier of faster technological development of our economy. However, the situation on the ground is different. The reasons are multiple. In the first place, accredited study programs are only declaratively based on properly defined goals and outcomes. Namely, the study program determines the outcomes of the learning process in accordance with the law defining the national framework of qualifications; then professional, academic, scientific or artistic name; conditions for enrollment in the study program; list of compulsory and elective study areas, or subjects, with a framework content; the way of conducting studies and the time needed for performing certain forms of studies; the score of each case presented in accordance with the European System for Transferring Points (hereinafter ESPB points); the score of final work in basic, specialist and master studies, or doctoral dissertation or doctoral art project, expressed in ESPB points; preconditions for enrollment of certain objects or groups of objects; the way of selecting subjects from other study programs; conditions for moving from other study programs within the same or related fields of study; as well as other issues of relevance for the implementation of the study program.

Each subject from a study program or a short study program is indicated by the number of relevant ESPB points, and the scope of the program is expressed by a set of ESPB points. A total of 60 ECTS points corresponds to the average total student engagement within the 40-hour working week during a school year. The total student

engagement consists of active teaching (lectures, exercises, seminars, etc.), independent work, colloquium, exams, final work, student practice, volunteer work in the local community and other forms of engagement.

Generally speaking, if one looks at the general goals and outcomes they have, they are in some way following technological and other changes, however, the level of acquired knowledge, competencies, abilities and attitudes that students gradually acquire are not at the required level.

As stated in the introductory part, "that educational reforms have been largely driven by the internal needs of the education system", and in the case of the development of study programs, they are created to the internal needs of the institutions, rather than to the real needs of the market. In most cases, for financial reasons, managing authorities, "for peace at home", resort to solutions to representing the competencies of teachers and associates, introducing program content that does not contribute to the effectiveness of the realization of psychological outcomes and the goals of study programs.

The next big problem, in defining the goals and outcomes of the study programs, is the absence of any serious systemic dialogue between the representatives of the professional bodies of the higher education institution with representatives of economy. Good practice from the region and beyond, that higher education institutions have their own expert advice whose members, in addition to representatives of teaching staff and distinguished experts and representatives of the economy, almost do not exist in Serbia. Furthermore, there are very rare and expert meetings aimed at connecting, or initiating cooperation between institutions of higher education and economy with the aim of improving existing technologies and products, faster transfer of knowledge. A small number of positive examples exist but are mostly due to personal initiatives and enthusiasm of individuals. Problems of realization of professional practice, preparation of practical works of final works, master and doctoral theses, involvement of students in production processes as well as realization of project tasks for the needs of the economy are very pronounced.

These problems are largely a result of poorly defined and incomplete regulations and standards for the accreditation of study programs and institutions generally based on the minimum requirements prescribed by the National Council for Higher Education.

For example, in "Supplementing Standards for Accreditation of Study Programs within a Specific Educational, ie Educational and Artistic Field" within Standard 5, it is stated that

"An integral part of the curriculum of study programs for basic and graduate studies in the field of technical and technological sciences is professional practice and practical work for at least 45 hours, which is carried out in the appropriate scientific research institutions, in organizations for performing innovation activities, in the organizations for providing infrastructure support for innovative activities, in companies and public institutions ". However, in the case of botany sciences, in the field of agriculture and forestry, we have a situation in which students are obliged during the basic studies to realize a working practice of at least 45 hours, a production practice of at least 45 hours and a technology-organizational practice for the duration of at least 45 hours.

Here it is necessary to point out that this example is the only exception in terms of " sharper " definition of the conditions for the realization of professional practice.

In addition to the standards set out above, the next problem is the formation of a teaching professional or scientific expert base of higher education institutions. *Standard 10*, which defines organizational and material resources



more precisely, stipulates in general that adequate teaching-scientific bases, both own and in the economy, must be provided for the implementation of the study programs. Its own teaching bases are: teaching laboratories, scientific and research development laboratories, technical centers and other scientific, research and development and innovation units within the higher education institution.

However, things slowly change, but not fast enough, and that is confirmed by the fact that during the development of standards for the professional master, the course time for the subject professional practice has increased 4 times in comparison to basic studies. Thus, the time found in this case, is minimum 180 hours, /minimum 90 hours per year/, and professional practice has to be realized in industry or public institutions.

Teaching-scientific bases in the economy are: institutes, centers of exceptional values, organizations for carrying out innovation activities, organizations for providing infrastructure support to innovative activities and food, production, equipment and services companies.

Furthermore, teaching bases should be equipped with the necessary measuring, demonstration, computer and information communication equipment for carrying out teaching activities of experimental, demonstration and simulation character from all subjects within groups of scientific-professional and professional-applicative subjects.

In most cases, these scientific teaching and / or professional teaching bases are fictitious, and students mostly perform a practice within their own institutions /labs. The question of the quality of scientifically teaching and / or professionally- teaching bases gets more and more important. This is confirmed again through the standard for accreditation of the professional master, where the *Standard 5* prescribes:

"The final work on master vocational studies is a project that addresses the practical problem of the economic or public sector, which is accepted by a business or public institution. The final work is done in a commercial or public institution with which a higher education institution has a contract. A member of the commission for the defense of final work is the representative of the institution in which the candidate realizes the final work. "

Simply this attitude clearly refers to the higher education institutions of vocational orientation on the economy and the creation of partnership relations.

As in the case of *Standard 5*, the field of biotechnical sciences has more stringent conditions, and so the higher education institution must provide appropriate experimental goods in its possession or on the basis of leasing, the total area of at least 100 ha of arable land on which different plant species are produced and cultivate different types of livestock, nursery and seed production, using modern technology supported by quality machinery according to the requirements of study programs.

In the field of forestry, appropriate experimental goods must be provided in the possession of a higher education institution or from the lease, the total area of at least 1000 ha of land on which different types of forest fruits are grown, production of seeds and nursery material using modern technology, supported by quality machinery.

If we take into consideration the data on the large outflow of the higher education staff, then the problem of high-quality accommodation staff comes to the forefront. The lack of practical experience in the implementation of development projects is a shortcoming. The minimum conditions for the selection of teachers and associates are based mainly on scientific and academic references, without conditioning with some practical experience. This is

perhaps the main reason for avoiding critical discussions about the quality of study programs and the required level of competence of graduated students. Partnership between economy and higher education must also consider the possibility of training teachers in development and production processes in the economy. However, almost all countries in the region, and even wider, have similar problems and develop their own mechanisms for solving them.

As we already mentioned, as one of the potential solutions, the new law gave the possibility of engaging non university lecturers with certain limitations, but this should be considered as the first step towards the integration of knowledge, and establishment through the necessary feedback of education and economy.

What is in support of these findings is the fact that the Serbian market demands a high-quality workers, of course, from certain areas. It should be noted immediately that these are the areas that currently give the highest contribution to GDP. To create such a highly educated staff, it is necessary to create the conditions that through the education system, students acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable them to adequately meet all technological challenges. It is precisely because of the creation of the above mentioned conditions that a stronger link between the economy and higher education is needed.

A part of higher education in the Republic of Serbia tries to disclose the above mentioned, critical statements through the unfolding activities within the RDI. Innovation in work with students, mechanisms of teaching realization, development of entrepreneurship through interpersonal competencies, application of ICT platforms, represent one aspect of the challenges of solving. Support for the opening of the start-up and the spin off company on the example of the University of Novi Sad is a model that can be used and mapped within the complete higher education system in Serbia. Establishing over a hundred start-up enterprises, University of Novi Sad, in the first place the Faculty of Technical Sciences, opened the doors to the technological development of the city and the region. In this way, Faculty and University of Novi Sad has shown that he is able to effectively transfer knowledge transfer in an efficient manner. From here follows the logical conclusion that the level of innovation of a higher education institution is in full correlation with the degree of economic development of the region

However, from the standpoint of higher education, the situation is somewhat different. The main challenge for HEIs in Serbia is not about how to increase the supply of commercial ideas from the universities into business. The focus should be on a question about how to raise the overall level of demand by business for research from all sources. Measured against developed countries, the research intensity of Serbian business is low – and the position has been deteriorating in recent decades. This could have an adverse impact on the overall productivity of the Serbian economy.

Serbian HEIs have strong science and professional basis. It is significant potential to transfer knowledge to business in the form of intellectual properties IP. These transfers take a range of different forms and we can expect it's grow in years to come. Most HEIs plan to develop technology transfer offices, some of them already have it, but the main problem would be lack of trained and motivated staff. The biggest problem is a lack of clarity over the ownership of IP in research collaborations. This facts makes negotiations harder and more expensive than otherwise would be the case, and it sometimes prevents deals from being completed. Public funding for basic

research, and for the development of technology transfer offices, is intended to benefit the economy as a whole rather than to create significant new sources of revenue for the universities.

The HEIs are playing an important role in regional development, and development agencies have to take an active role in building bridges between business and universities across the regions.

## 5. CONCLUSION

An outlook, it provides the ability for numerous analyses within almost all segments. It is clear that the higher education system is facing many challenges, which should be adequately addressed. This answer without a clearly defined "strategic partnership with the economy" is almost impossible. From some provisions of the new law on higher education it can be concluded that the legislator has noticed a somewhat crucial problem and made the first serious step in that direction. However, the before mentioned legal provisions require deferred amendments, as well as the adoption of a number of accompanying acts, which takes time, which unfortunately we do not have. What is in the domain of the possibilities of higher education institutions and what needs to be done intensively is:

- Periodic analysis and redefinition of goals and outcomes of study programs if needed.
- Formation of professional councils of higher education institutions composed of teachers of teaching staff and experts from companies that are partners of higher education institutions.
- Strengthening the capacities of scientifically and professionally base in the economy.  
(realization of practical teaching, realization of practical projects for the needs of the economy and in cooperation with the economy, efficient professional practice with clearly defined goals and outcomes, defining and finalizing works, master and doctoral theses in cooperation with the economy and for the needs of the economy, organizers of professional lectures intended students and teaching staff by experts from the economy, preparation of staff and enterprises for practical work with students)
- Engagement of non-working teachers in accordance with Articles 80 and 87 of the Law on Higher Education.
- Creating short educational programs in accordance with Article 34 of the Law on Higher Education on the basis of real needs of the economy and in cooperation with the economy.
- Strengthening the sense of entrepreneurship through student development through interpersonal competencies.
- The development of a public private partnership on the relationship between a high-education institution and a private company.
- Preparation of rules and general acts, with the aim of clearly defining rights and obligations regarding the protection of intellectual property
- Opening of its laboratory, teaching and scientific resuscitations to the economy.
- Establishing new and improving work and capacity building of existing innovation centers.

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