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## Research of students' ideas about the actual and expected image of university corporate culture

### Дослідження уявлень студентів про реальний і очікуваний образи корпоративної культури університету

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#### Abstract

The purpose of the article is an empirical research and theoretical substantiation of students' ideas about the actual and expected image of university corporate culture. Materials and research methods: valid psychodiagnostic tools made it possible to determine the content-related parameters of university corporate culture relevantly and compare the studied images; a correlation matrix was constructed; reliability coefficients for the obtained data were applied. Results. Differences were identified in four types of actual and expected images of corporate culture: Closed (CT), Random (RT), Open (OT), and Synchronous (ST). The author established the prevalence of the closed type (CT) of the actual image of university corporate culture ( $t = -2.31$ ;  $p < .05$ ). An open type (OT) was recorded ( $t = 2.41$ ;  $p < .05$ ) as an expected image of corporate culture. The interrelation between the parameters of students' social expectations and the parameters of the types of the desired image of corporate culture was fixed. Conclusions.

#### Анотація

Метою статті є емпіричне дослідження і теоретичне обґрунтування уявлень студентів про реальний і очікуваний образи корпоративної культури університету. Матеріали і методи дослідження: застосовано валідний психодіагностичний інструментарій, який уможливив релевантно виміряти змістові параметри корпоративної культури університету і порівняти досліджувані образи; побудовано кореляційну матрицю; застосовано коефіцієнти перевірки достовірності отриманих даних. Результати. Встановлено відмінності за чотирма типами реального і очікуваного образів корпоративної культури: Закритий (СТ), Випадковий (РТ), Відкритий (ОТ), Синхронний (СТ). Констатовано переважання закритого типу (СТ) реального образу корпоративної культури університету ( $t = -2.31$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Зафіксовано відкритий тип (ОТ) ( $t = 2.41$ ;  $p < .05$ ), як очікуваний образ корпоративної культури. З'ясовано взаємозв'язки параметрів соціальних очікувань

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Students' ideas about the actual and expected images of university corporate culture are related to the parameters of social expectations and ascertain the self-regulatory readiness of respondents for future professional activity.

**Key words:** organizational culture, higher education institution, institutional affiliation, educational space, professional identification.

## Introduction

In today's realities, a university is an integration platform that produces the synergy of educational and scientific activities. A university is also endowed with powerful educational and consolidating functions. A university plays a crucial role in the formation of competencies through training and practice and effectively undertakes the mission of training through research and social interaction. A university is the basis of a new technological structure, promotes the development of academic potential, outlines the contours, sets the pace, and determines the focus of innovative activity both within the country and on a global scale.

At the same time, a university is a part of the world culture, an indicator of people's conduct and public sentiment which can influence all participants in public life extensively. A university plays a crucial role in preserving spiritual heritage and developing and multiplying spiritual and cultural values.

It is recognized that despite such an important role and significance in public life, a university is the bearer of a unique and authentic activity arrangement, namely, it has an original corporate culture. The phenomenon of the corporate culture of a higher education institution requires more attention from the scientific community. Modern science should focus on the conceptual parameters of corporate culture, the determinants of the formation and development of organizational culture, the identification of education actors with university organizational culture, compare the actual and expected images of university corporate culture and clarify their differences. The above is far from a complete list of urgent tasks amidst the problem under study. The current research deals with one of the mentioned tasks.

студентів з параметрами типів бажаного образу корпоративної культури. Висновки. Уявлення студентів про реальний і очікуваний образи корпоративної культури університету зв'язані з параметрами соціальних очікувань і визначають саморегуляційну готовність респондентів до майбутньої професійної діяльності.

**Ключові слова:** організаційна культура, заклад вищої освіти, інституційна приналежність, освітній простір, професійна ідентифікація.

**Hypothesis.** 1. It is assumed that the study of students' ideas about the actual and expected image of university corporate culture will have scientific value, and its findings can be relevant to the organizers of educational and scientific processes and heads of higher education institutions. 2. Respondents' ideas about the expected image of university corporate culture have significant correlations with the content parameters of social expectations that positively affect their self-regulatory readiness for future professional activity.

**The research purpose** is an empirical study and theoretical substantiation of students' ideas about the actual and expected image of university corporate culture.

## Literature Review

Corporate culture is a unique educational and scientific space that cultivates in subjects a sense of belonging to institutional activities. It applies not only to education and science but also to production, trade, and services. The researcher R. Nesmeianova (2018) found that advancing corporate culture mobilizes solidarity with the organizational mission and strategy. For most employees, organizations that successfully promote corporate culture become a social sphere, a source of material well-being, and a place where their professional capabilities and competencies are actualized. In other words, corporate culture makes an organization multifunctional by solving some problems of an employee. As a result, employees no longer regard it only as a "place to earn money" (Nesmeianova, 2018). H. Tovkanets (2011) interprets the corporate culture of a higher education institution as a set of social norms and rules of conduct established within university space between the participants of communication

– subjects and objects of educational and scientific activities. In addition, the researcher compliments the above list with the culture of interpersonal relations, namely, “the actualization of “the spirit” of the higher education institution: all subjects – from the rector and managers to academic staff and students – are well-aware of the institutional mission, strategy, and tasks and make every effort to implement them” (Tovkanets, 2011, 173).

The differences between students with high and average status regarding satisfaction with the organizational culture of a higher education institution, which were identified by V. Kalenchuk (2019), seem relevant to this study. The author argues that students with average status are more likely to enjoy activities (educational and scientific); instead, they are less focused on warm emotional relationships with groupmates or other students. Such students have low expectations about approval from their colleagues. Respondents with high status tend to be active, have pronounced critical thinking, strive to take a leadership role, keep the situation under control, are not afraid of taking responsibility and additional duties, and have a warm emotional relationship with the environment. Despite the status differences, students described the organizational culture of the higher education institution under consideration as closed, and an open type, in which democratic relations prevail, is desirable (Kalenchuk, 2019).

Researchers V. Moroz et al. (2014) conducted a thorough theoretical analysis of the manifestations of the corporate culture of a higher education institution and generalized the following: 1) corporate culture is based on collective values, and the matter and form of its manifestation are shared by a significant part of the university community; 2) academic staff is the major carrier and source of development and formation of university corporate culture: it adopts norms and rules of conduct and forms and improves them in practice; 3) university corporate culture institutionalizes established norms and rules of conduct within the institute of culture and institutional formation; 4) the corporate culture of each particular higher education institution should be considered from the perspective of the subculture of a specific social group, since several models of subcultures can take place at once; in other words, faculties have their norms, values, and rules of conduct within one university; 5) corporate culture is the object of the university head’s influence on the

quality and efficiency of the organizational structure. In certain circumstances, university corporate culture has organizational-legal and marketing mechanisms for managing a higher education institution (Moroz et al., 2014). We are increasingly noticing university brand, logos, and other corporate attributes. They are designed and developed for capitalizing an intangible asset to increase its value.

As we touch upon the issue of the university’s corporate culture model, it is advisable to mention the study by V. Kubko (2014). Thus, the author covers the step sequence of designing corporate culture. The first step is to assess the existing culture and values. The next one is to specify the mission and values of a higher education institution. It is critical when alignment goes from senior executives to performers and vice versa: “top-down and down-top” (Kubko, 2014). Students should be directly involved in formulating the university’s mission and strategic objectives. As a result, they actualize their belonging and contribution to the creation of university corporate culture. It is expedient that the strategic tasks focus on improving the competitiveness of the university and its students, the quality of professional training, and positive image creation (Kubko, 2014).

Nowadays, there are advanced requirements for the interaction of universities with organizations that hire their graduates. It drives universities to transform into educational corporations. An educational corporation is an innovative entity that aims to solve a range of problems – from obtaining a profession to mastering the conduct rules and moral principles of employees, reputation at the national and international levels, and integration into a new cultural community (Liu et al., 2019). Such challenges, in turn, encourage researchers to seek progressive technologies of organization and creation of corporate culture, preserving traditions and introducing innovations.

The expected image of the corporate culture of a higher education institution is an integrated unit that depends on social expectations and trends (Popovych, 2007; 2014) and the expectations of subjects and their regulatory capacity (Popovych, 2019). University corporate culture is associated with professional identification (Blynova et al., 2020c; Blynova & Kruglov, 2019; Popovych et al., 2020a; Zaverukha et al., 2022) and labor migration activity of university students and graduates who “decided to look for their place outside the country” (Blynova et al., 2020a).

In the study context, the fundamental contribution by L. Constantine (1993) is of thematic interest. The scientist specifies the essence of the image (model) of the organization's corporate culture. The model is a set of ideas of subjects about the organizational life style and envisages the availability of actual and desired (expected) images. L. Constantine (1993) states that depending on the values and the essence of ideas, the types of organizational culture have the following classification: Closed (CT), Random (RT), Open (OT), Synchronous (ST). CT is characterized by hierarchy, traditional authority, strict legal regulation, negative feedback, and conformism of subordinates. RT is dispersed; creativity and initiative of actors prevail; nonconformism dominates, and employees prioritize their interests over corporate ones. OT is a combination of open and random types; an agreement prevails; it does not have strict legal regulations. Joint activities, consolidated dialogue, and partnerships dominate. ST is characterized by a symbiosis of the goals and values of actors. Occasional arrangements are active; there is no strict regulation. Actors mainly express implicit and latent expectations (Constantine, 1993). L. Constantine (1993) types assisted in studying students' ideas about the actual and expected images of university corporate culture.

## Materials and methods

**Methodology.** The research on students' ideas about the actual and expected images of university corporate culture relies on original methodological theses, which are advanced and substantiated in the contributions of L. Constantine (1993), H. Tovkanets (2011), V. Moroz et al. (2014), Popovych et al., (2021b; 2021c) et al. Four types of corporate culture by L. Constantine (1993) are used as a guide. The expected image of students is regarded as a set of ideas about university life style and the social expectations of students – as a regulatory capacity and the ability to influence their professional becoming within corporate culture (Popovych, 2017). During the implementation of the research ascertaining strategy, the developments of scientists who dealt with corporate culture (Blynova et al., 2020b; Coman & Bonciu, 2016; Tierney, 1988), issues of building automated and non-automated management systems (Nosov et al., 2020a; 2020b; Zinchenko et al., 2019; 2022); organization of educational and scientific processes (Halian et al., 2020a; 2020b; 2021; Popovych et al., 2020b; 2021d); the activity of

specialists under specific conditions (Hudimova, 2021; Hudimova et al., 2021), in the construction of the expected action mode (Hulias & Hoian, 2022; Hulias, 2020; Plokhikh, 2021; Plokhikh et al., 2021) were taken into account. The experience of using empirical strategies, which is specified in the mentioned works, allowed building a relevant algorithm to achieve the research goal.

**Participants:** Undergraduate students in the third and fourth years of study of the educational program “Public Management and Administration” of the Institute of Postgraduate Education and Pre-University Training (n=38) and students of the educational program “Management of Organizations and Administration” of the Faculty of Economics of Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University (Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine) (n=44) were involved in the research. Thus, the total sample comprised n=82 respondents. The gender distribution was as follows: males (n=33; 40.24%) and females (n=49; 59.76). Descriptive frequency characteristics were M=20.11; SD=2.01 (age range: 19-24 years). The sample was random; it meets all the requirements for empirical research.

**Organization of Research.** The empirical review was organized from November to December 2021 at one higher education institution – Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University (Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine). This is one of the conditions for our research, as corporate culture is analyzed within the specific university.

To implement ascertaining research strategy, the questionnaire “Scales of Organizational Paradigms” (“SOP”) (Constantine, 1993) is used. The technique was translated, tested and adapted by S. Lipatov (2005). The psychodiagnostic tool has twenty-five blocks of statements. Each statement has four options that are related to organizational paradigms of corporate culture: closed, random, open and synchronous. In each block, a respondent chooses the statement that most accurately renders his/her ideas of the actual course of events at the university. Then this procedure is repeated to choose an option of the expected corporate culture. We have taken into account all seven scales of the questionnaire, which cover the conceptual parameters of university corporate culture: Leadership and Management (LM), Communication System (CS), Change Management (CM), Orientation Style (OS), System Coordination (SC), Workspace (WS), and Problem Solving and Decision Making (PSDM). Some statements

relate to more than one scale. The reliability of the empirical data was verified using the homogeneity index  $\alpha$ -Cronbach, which amounted to  $\alpha_{SOP1} = .823$  in the former variant and  $\alpha_{SOP1} = .845$  in the latter.

Respondents' social expectations as self-regulatory readiness to act were identified using the questionnaire "Level of social expectations of personality" (LSEP) (Popovych, 2017). Three main scales were applied. The technique facilitates assessing the cognitive, emotional and behavioral components of the expected action. The  $\alpha$ -Cronbach coefficient was  $\alpha_{LSEP} = .923$

**Statistical Analysis.** The statistics were prepared using the certified program "SPSS" v. 23.0. In some cases, MS Excel was applied. The researchers established standard descriptive characteristics for experiment reproducibility. Spearman's correlation coefficients ( $r_s$ ) were used to construct the correlation matrix. The differences between the respondents' actual and expected images of corporate culture were established by the Student's t-test. The  $\alpha$ -Cronbach indicators are considered reliable at a level not lower than .8 (average). The differences

between the studied parameters are considered reliable at a level not lower than  $p \leq .05$ .

## Results and discussion

The organized empirical study aims to analyze students' ideas about university corporate culture. The ideas relate to the culture of the higher education institution in which the students have already studied for at least two full academic years. Thus, during the ascertainment review, they were third- and fourth-year students. The choice of student groups was random. Students' awareness of university life made it possible to obtain balanced, substantive, and constructive answers to the statements of the questionnaires and formulate diagnostic hypotheses. The above contributed to producing a coherent idea about the actual and expected image of university corporate culture through the eyes of students. According to the SOP questionnaire (Constantine, 1993), the actual and expected images of university corporate culture is determined. In Tabl. 1 renders a comparison of the types of relevant images using the Student's t-test.

**Table 1.**

*Respondents' comparison of the types of actual and expected images of corporate culture (n=82)*

Corporate culture type	M <sub>1</sub>	M <sub>2</sub>	t-test	Significance level
Closed Type (CT)	±10.05	±3.54	-2.31	p<.05
Random Type (RT)	±5.94	±7.01	–	–
Open Type (OT)	±6.12	±10.84	2.41	p<.05
Synchronous Type (ST)	±3.34	±4.12	–	–

**Source:** Personal elaboration, November – December, 2021.

**Note:** M<sub>1</sub> – arithmetic mean of ideas about the actual image; M<sub>2</sub> – arithmetic mean of ideas about the expected image.

We state that the results obtained under the descriptive frequency characteristic (M<sub>1</sub> and M<sub>2</sub>) meet the sample experimental norm (Lipatov, 2005). Applied the same technique, there were data that do not have significant differences, which were recorded in another study (Blynova et al., 2020b). A comparison of respondents' ideas about the expected and actual images showed that the university is predominantly characterized by a closed type (CT) of corporate culture (M=10.05). The types are further arranged in the following sequence: OT (M=6.12), RT (M=5.94) and ST (M=3.34). Respondents convey corporate culture as a structured, bureaucratic management model with consistent regulation of internal processes and strict subordination. As for students' ideas about the expected image of corporate culture, there are two statistically significant differences: OT

(t=2.41; p<.05) and CT (t=-2.31; p<.05). It is expected that modern student youth strive for openness and mobility, thus the idea of open corporate culture dominates. In their opinion, such a type most fully corresponds to the democratic principles and facilitates the development of personal potential and professional becoming of a young specialist. At the same time, it is recognized that the higher education institution under consideration is a first-class state institution where statutory regulation should be advanced that will contribute to the accurate coherence of educational and scientific processes. Students realize the abovementioned but also appeal to the fact that the creative component of professional development declines amid discipline approach and regulation.

In Table. 2 renders the study results for corporate culture types following the basic SOP scales (Constantine, 1993) through the main frequency

characteristics (M and SD). The results obtained were also compared using the Student's t-test.

**Table 2.**

*Comparison of the main frequency characteristics of the respondents' ideas following the main SOP scales (Constantine, 1993)*

Scale	M <sub>1</sub>	SD <sub>1</sub>	M <sub>2</sub>	SD <sub>2</sub>	t-test (M <sub>1</sub> & M <sub>2</sub> )	Significance level
<b>Open Type (OT)</b>						
LM	1.11	±.74	1.12	±.75	–	–
CS	.96	±.29	1.51	±.41	3.11.	p<.01
CM	1.78	±.32	2.12	±.39	2.11	p<.05
OS	1.24	±.23	1.28	±.24	–	–
SC	.79	±.20	.86	±.22	–	–
WS	1.18	±.26	1.48	±.36	2.72	p<.05
PSDM	.94	±.22	1.13	±.25	2.23	p<.05
<b>Random Type (RT)</b>						
LM	1.30	±.25	1.31	±.26	–	–
CS	1.47	±.32	1.48	±.33	–	–
CM	1.12	±.28	1.15	±.29	–	–
OS	1.5	±.31	1.7	±.33	–	–
SC	1.21	±.28	1.55	±.37	2.19	p<.05
WS	.91	±.18	1.21	±.24	2.22	p<.05
PSDM	.99	±.21	1.04	±.23	–	–
<b>Closed Type (CT)</b>						
LM	2.12	±.28	2.09	±.27	–	–
CS	1.83	±.18	1.52	±.15	-2.21	p<.05
CM	1.11	±.17	.92	±.15	-2.12	p<.05
OS	1.81	±.42	1.82	±.42	–	–
SC	1.62	±.26	1.61	±.25	–	–
WS	1.52	±.28	1.21	±.22	-2.68	p<.05
PSDM	2.36	±.32	1.81	±.21	-2.81	p<.05
<b>Synchronous Type (ST)</b>						
LM	1.44	±.36	1.45	±.36	–	–
CS	.76	±.21	.75	±.19	–	–
CM	1.18	±.41	1.22	±.43	–	–
OS	.48	±.16	.57	±.19	–	–
SC	1.41	±.28	1.44	±.29	–	–
WS	1.41	±.17	1.46	±.17	–	–
PSDM	.72	±.19	.75	±.21	–	–

**Source:** Personal elaboration, November – December, 2021.

**Note:** M<sub>1</sub> – arithmetic mean of ideas about the actual image; SD<sub>1</sub> – standard deviation of ideas about the actual image; M<sub>2</sub> – arithmetic mean of ideas about the expected image; SD<sub>2</sub> – standard deviation of ideas about the expected image.

A comparison of the main SOP scales (Constantine, 1993) elucidated specific conceptual features of the student idea about the functioning of the higher education institution. We state the mirror changes in the open and closed types. Consequently, there is an increase in the OP indicators for the following scales: CS (t=3.11; p<.01), CM (t=2.11; p<.05), WS (t=2.72; p<.05) and PSDM (t=2.23; p<.05) and

decline for the same scales in CT: CS (t=-2.21; p<.05), CM (t=-2.12; p<.05), WS (t=-2.68; p<.05) and PSDM (t=-2.81; p<.05). Significant differences were recorded in two Random Type scales: SC (t=2.19; p<.05) and WS (t=2.22; p<.05). There are no significant differences in Synchronous Type.

Significant differences that are noted in open and closed types are because the dominant communication system is hierarchically-oriented. Its large part has regulatory content, and the flow runs mainly from top to down. Students hold that their opinion matters to the university administration, but, in truth, they notice that change management is slow enough. This is evidenced by the findings for the CM scale ( $t=2.11$ ;  $p<.05$ ). In open-type terms, respondents are ready to change the workspace drastically by

building it on partnerships and modifying available procedures, rules, and instructions. They believe it can significantly affect the solution of educational and scientific problems and the speed of decision-making.

In order to establish correlations between the expected image of corporate culture and the parameters of students' social expectations, a correlation matrix was constructed (Tabl. 3).

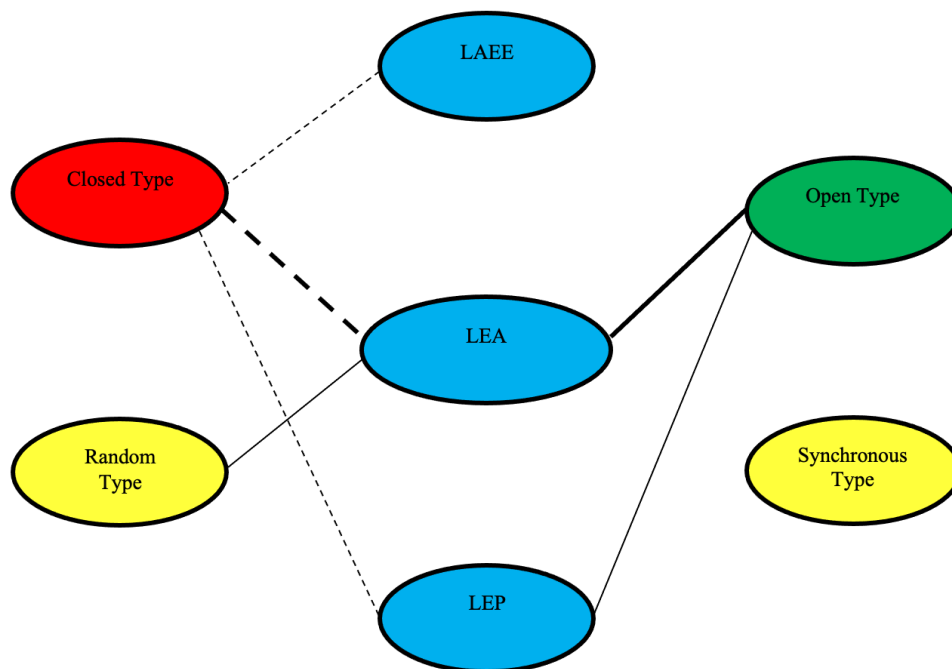
**Table 3.**  
Correlation matrix of the expected image of corporate culture with LSEP scales (Popovych, 2017)

Corporate culture type	LAEE	LEA	LEP
Closed Type (CT)	-.087*	-.283**	-.136*
Random Type (RT)	.071	.131*	.023
Open Type (OT)	.081	.224**	.147*
Synchronous Type (ST)	.022	-.022	.049

**Source:** Personal elaboration, November – December, 2021.

**Note:** LAEE – Level of Awareness of the Expected Events; LEA – Level of the Expected Attitude; LEP – Level of the Expected Performance; \* –  $p < .05$ ; \*\* –  $p < .01$ .

A correlation pleiade is presented for visualization (Fig. 1).



**Figure 1.** Correlation pleiade of the expected image of corporate culture and parameters of respondents' social expectations

**Source:** Personal elaboration, November – December, 2021.

**Note:** — — — — negative correlations at  $p \leq .01$ ; - - - - - negative correlations at  $p \leq .05$ ; ———— positive correlations at  $p \leq .05$ ; ———— positive correlations at  $p \leq .01$ ; LAEE – Level of Awareness of the Expected Events; LEA – Level of the Expected Attitude; LEP – Level of the Expected Performance.

The correlation matrix (see Tabl. 3) and the correlation pleiade (see Fig. 1) made it possible

to find out that the content parameter of the LEA of social expectations is the most critical in

producing students' ideas of university corporate culture. LEA has two most loaded relationships with the following culture types: CT ( $r_s = -.283$ ;  $p < .01$ ) and OT ( $r_s = .224$ ;  $p < .05$ ). It was also established that the LEA parameter is the most dependent since it has the most relationships – three. It is noted that the formed expected attitude of respondents as a reflection of emotional and value assessment of corporate culture ideas is the main component in the professional becoming and development of future specialists. The relevant scientific facts are confirmed by the study of Popovych et al., (2021a). As the Level of the Expected Attitude affects an individual's regulatory capacity and ability to predict the likely course of events, the association with the expected image of corporate culture is a reproduction of the constructed model of corporate culture in the minds of actors. The obtained results find endorsement in the research on the professional identity of future specialists by Blynova et al., (2020b). The interrelation of professional identity with the corporate culture of a higher education institution has a positive impact on the formation of specialists. In this context of argumentation, the lack of significant relationships of Synchronous Type with social expectation scales is evident. This is because students do not associate ST with their perspective. Unspoken agreements and implicit expectations, which are at the heart of the type concerned, contradict the goal of students' professional development.

Researchers B. Fralinger and V. Olson (2007) concluded that the effectiveness of functional decision-making in universities depends on corporate culture. Continuous assessment and change management are essential for effective coordination of activities. The original comparison of students' ideas about the actual and expected images of university corporate culture justifies the conclusions of the mentioned researchers. The above-proposed algorithm is an example of solving an urgent scientific problem within the corporate culture framework. In particular, J. Hennigan (2005), in his thesis "Corporate culture in an institution of higher education", emphasizes the importance of corporate culture type and the training of future specialists. We believe that our desire to compare actual and expected images and find leverage confirms the validity of finding a connection (Hennigan, 2005) and the desire to render one that researcher N. Bilyk (2020) calls the regulatory function of corporate culture. It is clear that this research has some limitations, namely, empirical data relate only to students. It is advisable, in the long term, to conduct a

comprehensive study which samples all subjects of university activity.

Dn. Mierzwa and Dm. Mierzwa (2020) pursued a similar goal in their research, using other tools and experimental strategy. The desire to study the current and desired corporate culture confirms the relevance of our pursuits. Researchers J. Smart and E. John (1996) found that culture type has a much stronger independent influence on institutional performance than culture power. This is another argument that the creation of university corporate culture directly influences the quality of training of future specialists.

### Conclusions

1. It is theoretically justified that corporate culture is a unique educational and scientific space that cultivates in subjects a sense of belonging to institutional activities.
2. Differences in four types of actual and expected images of corporate culture were identified: Closed (CT), Random (RT), Open (OT), Synchronous (ST). The prevalence of the closed type (CT) of the actual image of university corporate culture is established ( $t = -2.31$ ;  $p < .05$ ). It was found that the open type (OT) ( $t = 2.41$ ;  $p < .05$ ) is an expected image of the corporate culture of the university under consideration.
3. The correlation matrix clarified the interrelation between the parameters of students' social expectations and the parameters of types of the desired image of corporate culture. It was fixed that the content parameter of the LEA of social expectations is the most important and most dependent in the formation of students' ideas about university corporate culture. It was explained that respondents' expected attitude is a projection of the emotional and value assessment of corporate culture ideas and the main component of professional becoming and development of future specialists.
4. The goal was achieved, and the hypothesis was proved. It is noted that studying students' ideas about actual and expected images of university corporate culture has scientific value. Therefore, it is advisable to operationalize the results in the educational and scientific processes. It was found that respondents' ideas significantly correlate with the content parameters of social expectations that positively affects their self-regulatory readiness for future professional activity.



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