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## DIGITAL UNIVERSITY IN THE POST-POSTMODERN ERA: TO THE QUESTION OF FORMING A NEW CORPORATE CULTURE

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*The aim of the article* is to analyse the peculiarities of a digital corporate culture of the university, highlight its parameters and indicators, orienting on the cultural-educational and digital communicative needs of students, teachers and workers in the post-postmodern era. *Results of the research.* Digital university or University4.0 is a trend of the first quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and a high-tech infrastructure platform for deploying various educational initiatives, the successful functioning of which depends on the digital corporate culture, its parameters and indicators. *Scientific novelty.* For the first time in the framework of Digital Culture Studies as an innovative interdisciplinary field, the article examines the dichotomy of the market type of corporate culture popular in foreign and Ukrainian educational practice and the new “holistic” type proposed by the author based on a broader socio-cultural approach, the achievements of open science, the ideas of critical pedagogy and the phenomenological approach in educational practice. *Conclusions.* It is emphasised that higher education in the post-COVID period is characterized by accelerating digital transformation, and many Western university managers are actively forcing this process. It is argued that the vast majority of such initiatives face the same problems associated with the dominance of the instrumentalism philosophy and neoliberal discourse, when the value of education is increasingly interpreted through the prism of financial success and business-narratives, leading to the absolutisation of the market type of university corporate culture. The author proves the one-dimensionality and limitations of this type and proposes its restructuring on the basis of a holistic approach, which involves the synthesis of digital learning, culture of work and knowledge, digital reading, digital ontology and anthropology, radical openness, creative work, where the “new” corporate culture should be based on digital competencies as a “field of cooperation” between student and teacher.

**Keywords:** digital university; corporate culture; holistic approach, digital competences; digital communication; Digital Culture Studies, higher education; post-postmodern

## Introduction

Today, with more confidence, it is worth constant that digitalization has been transforming on the basic imperative of modern life which, however, is becoming a principle and an important factor in many spheres of development, including higher education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is confirmed by the increased attention of the whole world to digital universities, which, in our opinion, firstly, with the essential growing interest in digital educational technologies against the background of the introduction of restrictive measures during the period of COVID-19 pandemic, and, secondly, as scientists note, with the need to reflect on the processes of digitization and digital transformation of higher education (Williamson et al., 2021), and, thirdly, with the appearance and spreading universities which positions themselves as “digital”: digital university of Geneva (<https://www.unige.ch/numerique/en/>), digital university of Seoul (<http://www.sdu.ac.kr/>), Numerique is the French digital university (<https://universitenumérique.fr/>), West African digital university (<https://thewauu.com/>) and others. It is known that on October 11, 2023, in Ukraine the project “Digital University — Open Ukrainian Initiative” was presented as an instrument of higher education support in Ukraine under the conditions of martial law and post-war reconstruction, which is being implemented within the framework of the EU Erasmus+ Education, Training, Youth and Sport Program. The purpose is ambitious but, in general, is correct — to organize the processes of digital transformation in education by creating “a single digital educational ecosystem in Ukraine” on the basis of which would occur highly qualified, non-stop, inclusive and transparent educational process with the help of existing digital innovations in education and using a clear paradigm to add future innovations.

At the same time, it is important to realize that the need for further development of digital education elements in higher education is due to both socio-cultural markers of the post-postmodern era and the information and cultural needs of the younger generation (such as Generation Z, Generation Alpha) who were brought up in the digital era and representing a new anthropological type, which intellectuals and representatives of Cultural studies refer to as “Homo informaticus”. It goes about informative or a socio-virtual person who can’t imagine themselves outside the space of “gadgets”, virtual reality and network communications (Tretter, 2017; de Brabandere, 2020). As for “post-postmodernism” without delving into terminological variations (many experts consider the concept of “post-postmodernism” to be transitional and ambiguous in meaning, and therefore use the terms “pseudo-modernism”, “metamodernism”, “digital modernism”, etc, which marks a departure from postmodernity with its textuality and intertextuality, the latest civilizational milestone in history, accompanied by the emergence of interactive and virtual artifacts as elements of “illusory-sensual quasi-reality” and “computer doubles of reality”. In other words, it is the digital epoch which is accompanied by the dominance of “techno-images” (A. Coquelin) and the creation of a powerful interactive virtual reality, when the artistic and cultural form as an “open system” is replaced by the multi influences

of the latest “hyperreality”, and the dialogue is replaced by a user’s dialogue with the screen and computer image (Zubavina, 2018).

In the conditions of the next stage of digital transformation, fierce competition with global leaders in education and open online education, Ukrainian universities are now facing the need to change and develop new approaches to managing educational activities. Forms and models of student learning, the role of the teacher, and the university management system are changing significantly, which necessitates re-orienting university activities toward a different end result. In order to maintain its position in the global and Ukrainian markets, higher education institutions are now forced to make complex decisions in terms of restructuring their corporate culture and transitioning to digital-based learning management.

#### ■ Analysis of previous studies

The digital university in the academic discourse is mostly presented within the framework of two approaches, between which there are obvious differences in the axiological understanding of the concept. The first is the university as a business model. It presents the processes of digitalization from the standpoint of increasing the effectiveness of digital technologies in various industries, evaluating the feasibility of marketing solutions, design, convenience, cost reduction, etc. (Matkovic et al., 2018; Bockshecker et al., 2022). The second approach is focused on public good and open source (Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC-BY) License), accessibility and digital engagement. It is well illustrated by the books “The Digital University: A Dialogue and Manifesto” (Peters & Jandric, 2017) and “Conceptualising the Digital University: The Intersection of Policy, Pedagogy and Practice”, in which the authors identified four components of the digital university matrix: educational environment (combination of digital and physical spaces); digital participation, information literacy (the foundation of personal and professional development); educational program; development of courses (in particular, digital analytics) (Johnston et al., 2018).

Ch. Jones and R. Goodfellow (2014) are convinced that the conceptualization of the digital university involves the identification of an empirically fixed phenomenon, discourse, and theoretical concept. J. Ibáñez and V. Juarros (2018), based on the analysis of publications by Latin American authors from 2007 to 2017, concluded that the vast majority of them outline and describe individual components of the digital university but do not try to formalize it. Indeed, most approaches focus on individual elements (features or characteristics), among which information and communication (digital) technologies are constitutive. Thus, back the work edited by R. Hazemi and St. Hailes (2002) “The Digital University — Building a Learning Community” was published. According to S. Jones (2013), the digital university is based on a binary: the use of new computing technologies in some universities and the use of analog technologies, including television and telecommunications, in others. It can be also distinguished as a group of studies that focus on educational technologies of e-learning and distance learning. According to G. Siemens, D. Gašević and S. Dawson (2015), the content of a digital university involves the parallel implementation of distance, blended and online learning approaches, the choice of which will determine the quality of teaching and education, the qualifications of graduates, and their fur-

ther participation in the models of modern global society. Ph. Sheail (2018) considers the digital university as a form of organizing trans-local (between regions and countries) and timeless (through/between time) connections that are formed around the gradual introduction of digital technologies in all areas of the university, primarily related to developments in the field of online teaching and learning.

I support the thesis that the concept of a digital university should be based not only on the use of digital technologies, but should also reflect qualitative changes in the approach to the educational process with the involvement of the achievements of open science and ideas of critical pedagogy, the potential of the phenomenological approach in educational practice. In this vein, the concept of “smart education” and smart university seems interesting. A. Mbombo and N. Cavus (2021) define a “smart university” (SmU) as an educational organization that uses technological innovations to fulfill its mission. Even though they still put digital technologies in the first place, they also emphasize the importance of individualized learning, flexible educational trajectories, and the formation of an intellectual environment for the continuous development of competencies of participants in the educational process, which, in tandem with technology, essentially change the educational environment itself. The task of SmU is to quickly adapt the learning process to external challenges. Similar ideas are related to the Smart Campus concept and the use of artificial intelligence and other Industry 4.0 technologies, we met in works by S. Majumdar and M. Mandal (2021), P. I. Silva-da-Nóbrega, A. F. Chim-Miki and M. Castillo-Palacio (2022), K. Polin, T. Yigitcanlar, M. Limb and T. Washington (2023) and others.

### ■ The aim of the article

Despite the intensification of research on the problem of the digital university and the prospects for implementing the concept in educational practice, the “cultural paradigm” or the aspect related to the formation of a new corporate culture of the university under the influence of modern digital technologies remains poorly articulated and not fully conceptualized. That is why the purpose of this study is to analyze the features of the digital corporate culture of the university, to highlight its parameters and indicators, focusing on the cultural, educational and digital communication needs of students, teachers and staff in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Methods of analysis, synthesis and generalization were used to study the theoretical and technological prerequisites for the emergence and development of the concept of “digital university”, transformation processes in higher education, as well as to identify the specifics of digital corporate culture and its functional and substantive features. The author also relies on Digital Culture Studies as an innovative interdisciplinary field that explores digital culture as a new social system that is actively developing today through the synergy and transformation of traditional cultural practices and institutions through digital technologies, including higher education (Bollmer, 2018; Ferreir, 2019; Miller, 2020; Condruz-Bacescu, 2022; Osiński, 2023).

### ■ Study results

The digitalization of the university space is a requirement of the times and a transformation of the “ethos” of the educational establishment, no matter what

some analysts and experts say. B. Johnston, S. MacNeill, and K. Smyth have not accidentally distinguished two approaches to the conceptualization of the “digital university” as narrow and broad. The narrow one, in their view, is cultivated by neoliberal instrumentalist discourse and identifies the digital university with digital technologies and infrastructure, or with the development of students’ digital technologies. This, and here I can only agree with the authors, impoverishes and somewhat deforms such a construct as a digital university, which should be considered from the perspective of a broader approach as a socio-cultural one, taking into account pedagogical theory and practice of organizational development. The author’s criticism of the neoliberal approach to higher education is quite understandable and justified since the interpretation of higher education as a market where the value of education is increasingly interpreted through the prism of financial success and contribution to national economic competitiveness to the detriment of other potential choices shows the one-dimensionality and limitations of this approach. This is not to mention the radical interpretation of the Internet and digital technologies as a fundamental transformation of the academic culture of an institution, its values, structures and practices. Within this neoliberal vision, the “digital” is perceived as a tool of subjugation, standardization and suppression. If we add to this the growth of managerialism in the organizational practice of universities (Johnston et al., 2018), which can be observed in many foreign and Ukrainian institutions, the challenges are serious enough to not disappear by themselves.

The struggle against these challenges turns them into tasks and, in agreement with M. Peters and P. Jandrić (2018), calls for perceiving the modern digital university as a philosophy that has emerged in the era of the digital mind and focuses on a holistic approach, i.e., the synthesis of digital learning, work and knowledge culture, digital reading, digital ontology, digital anthropology, radical openness, creative work, and the co-production of symbolic goods. I believe that only in this way can we build a strong digital culture as a competitive advantage for public and business universities and a key factor in the success of digital transformation. At the same time, as Burton Clark (1998) once argued, due attention should be paid to the constitutive and strategic core, expanded development periphery, diversified funding base, academic stronghold, and integrated entrepreneurial culture, which will not only help the university become more innovative but also align its progress with traditional academic values.

The COVID-19 situation has intensified two interrelated processes in many Western and Ukrainian universities: on the one hand, diagnosing the state of digital infrastructure and inventorying many related problems (the unpreparedness of many teachers to work in a digital environment, lack of licenses and experience in using video and Internet communication tools, lack of individual devices and equipment, etc. A few examples: Charles University in Prague has posted webinars on its website with presentations of various study programs, where there is a separate section to help foreign students in difficult situations (<https://cuni.cz/UK-1.htm>). The Canadian Virtual University (CVU), which includes institutions whose programs meet national standards, helps potential students increase their confidence in the quality of their education. Each university has a department of distance and online learning,

the Center for Creative Learning Initiatives (CCLI), which is created for coordination, quality assessment, management and modernization, and the Teaching, Learning, and Technology Council (<http://www.cvuuvc.ca>). Tallinn University has created a special page for discussing the organization of the educational process via Skype. The university's website has published information on the results of a study conducted by experts to examine the impact of the pandemic on the psychological health of the country's residents (<https://www.tlu.ee/en>). The University of Bath actively publishes information on updates on the university website: library opening hours, exam rescheduling dates, and work procedures for administrative and academic staff. The university regularly publishes guidelines for organizing and supporting online educational programs, introducing new technologies and quality control procedures, for example, online program certification (<https://www.bath.ac.uk/courses/>). In Moldova, with the support of Orange Moldova, the Uniting Teachers campaign was launched. Moldtelecom35 and Moldcell36, in cooperation with the Moldovan Olympic Committee provided free Internet access to teachers for two months. The websites, developed under the guidance of the Chisinau example ([www.educatieonline.md](http://www.educatieonline.md)) and the Association of ICT Companies (<https://invat.online>), describe positive practices of translating educational content into electronic format to facilitate distance learning. I would like to note that Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts is also actively working in this direction, having a Faculty of Distance Learning, which is responsible for the digital transformation of the university, development of the concept/development of the infrastructure of the educational information environment, development of an ecosystem for improving the digital competence of teachers, introduction of digital innovations, conducting research on e-learning, monitoring and adaptation of international experience in the use of e-learning tools, etc. The Faculty consists of the Laboratory of Distance and Blended Learning, the Office of Digital Competencies and the Center for Innovative Technologies (<https://knukim.edu.ua/fakultet-dystancijnogo-navchannya/>).

No matter how much one talks about the introduction of new startups, attracting additional financial resources, effective educational management, student-centeredness, proactivity and aggressive marketing, combining academia with educational innovation, etc., in the context of digital transformation, which, of course, also needs to be paid attention to, it is still crucial to take a conscientious approach to the formation of a corporate culture that supports the change and ensures interaction with the external environment and is an effective mechanism for adapting the university to the conditions of digital transformation. Modern Western authors are right when they emphasize that any major transformation, including digital transformation, requires a culture that supports change and simultaneously implements the company's overall strategy. Ignoring culture, the organization risks the failure of transformation (Hemerling et al., 2018). Covering the university key activities (educational, research and management), the digital transformation seems to "suggest" the logic of restructuring the corporate culture, which should be based not on "centrism" but on a kind of educational communitarianism, partnership and communication. It is characterized by fast, flexible solutions based on operational communications and information openness, with a high degree of interaction with external partners. In a digital

university, students are both partners and customers. Their mutual understanding and results depend on a coherent positioning in the digital space of the university based on a common understanding with the faculty and management of the digital competencies of the future.

The Science and Knowledge Service of the European Commission has developed the Digital Competence Framework, which defines the structure of digital competences for citizens regardless of their field of employment: “The integrated DigComp 2.2 framework provides more than 250 new examples of knowledge, skills and attitudes that help citizens engage confidently, critically and safely with digital technologies, and new and emerging ones such as systems driven by artificial intelligence (AI). The framework is also made available following the digital accessibility guidelines, as creating accessible digital resources is an important priority today” (Vuorikari et al., 2022). This is a wide set of competencies, — digital communications, joint use of digital resources and digital tools, network ethics, information and work with data, security, creation of digital content and related legal aspects, identification of problems, formation of solutions to technical problems, etc., — the formation of which takes place based on “integral readiness” and relevant corporate culture, where the main principles are technological adaptability, decision-making based on digital data analysis, digital thinking and communication, as well as ethics and safety.

Turning to foreign experience, it can be seen that a Digital University is most often a combination of a digital campus and electronic educational platforms, which host educational courses and conduct active learning, taking into account digital document management and administration of student achievements in a personal office. So, in the USA, the phrase “digital campus/smart campus” is more often used, rather than “digital university”. With minor variations, this concept includes a digital platform with cloud storage and synchronization, interactive educational content, digital culture and participant interaction, and data analytics. In Germany, the concept of a digital university is interpreted in the logic of state policy and includes digital infrastructure, digital educational space (courses, personal offices of students, etc.), digital competence of participants, educational content corresponding to Industry 4.0. The digital university in China is more instrumental (creating and using digital campuses) and also contains modernization potential (supporting and improving the efficiency of innovation in education and public administration). The digital campus includes four blocks: digital educational resources, digital management, digital infrastructure, digital potential of educators (Xiao, 2019). Regardless of the specific features of the policy regarding the digitization of education in the mentioned countries, the hybrid approach of the USA, Germany’s focus on creating a single national digital platform that will not be centralized (the state-initiated and funded program started in February 2021), and, despite the active promotion of automated management of campuses and implementation of new administrative regulation and accreditation tools, mainly China’s declarative policy is for the field of higher education, the most important indicator is the digital competence of teachers and students. As a review of research conducted in 2015–2021 shows, the vast majority of these categories of citizens have a basic level of digital competence, but the development of technologies and the complexity of infrastructure require them to further improve it (Zhao et al., 2021).

Therefore, the management of Ukrainian universities needs to draw the right conclusions and abandon the exclusively instrumental interpretation of the concept of a digital university in favor of understanding it as a “place of interaction” between different stakeholders, when it comes not only to the joint participation of the state and individual private players, but also to digital communication between teachers and students following the real needs of modern society, without which the digital competence of the latter in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is impossible. In turn, this implies: the rejection of any attempts to absolutization the market type of corporate culture, “diluting” it with adhocracy: openness to changes, innovations and discussions, combining academism with educational innovations; development of the university’s digital transformation strategy (emphasis on digital values in the process of informing students, teachers and employees, implementation of innovative teaching methods taking into account educational platforms, development of additional modules for students’ digital literacy, creation of digital communities in social networks, etc.); implementation of practice-oriented training and active interaction with employers; concentration of the content, methodology and efficiency criteria of higher education on production processes and the technological potential of Industry 4.0.

It should not be forgotten that universities on the way to digital transformation should provide all opportunities for students to build individual educational trajectories, expand interaction with each other in the implementation of networked educational programs using online courses, use digital technologies to improve the quality of education and motivate students of all forms of education, and increase the cost-effectiveness of educational services. Today, some solutions to modernize educational activities, such as the modular principle of building an educational program, the use of online technologies, project activities, etc., have already been implemented in most, large Ukrainian universities, including the Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts but a qualitative leap in developing a modern approach to university management, given the above features of the new digital collaborative culture, is a matter of the nearest future.

## ■ Conclusions

Thus, post-COVID higher education is characterized by accelerating digital transformation processes. Many Western university managers are actively pushing these processes, and for many countries, the implementation of a digital university model or concept is an urgent task of state education policy (for example, in Germany or China, where a program for modernizing the education system until 2035 has been proposed, which includes the development of digital campuses, coordination of the creation of an integrated intelligent learning and service platform, and reform of education management and monitoring based on digital solutions). The development and implementation of digital university concepts in different countries face the same problems associated with the dominance of the philosophy of instrumentalism and neo-liberal discourse when the value of education is increasingly interpreted through the prism of financial success and business narratives, which leads to the absolutization of the market type of university corporate culture. I believe this approach is one-dimensional and does not reveal the full potential of the digital university, which

should be replaced by a holistic approach, considering the corporate culture of the digital university as a complex, multifaceted phenomenon, in fact, to restructure the co-corporate culture, which should be based not on “-centrism” but on educational communitarianism, partnership and communication. Thus, the holistic philosophy of the digital university envisages a synthesis of digital learning, work and knowledge culture, digital reading, digital ontology and anthropology, radical openness, creative work and co-production of symbolic goods, where the “new” corporate culture should be based on digital competencies as a “field of collaboration” between students and teachers. Within this field, digital communication between participants in the educational process should take place, openness to change, innovation and discussion should be articulated and implemented, academicism should be reconciled with educational innovation, and strategies for the digital transformation of the university should be developed with an emphasis not only on the entrepreneurial approach but also on values, while the content, methodologies and performance criteria of higher education should focus on production processes and the technological potential of Industry 4.0.

Perspectives for further research include a more detailed study of approaches to digital education and the organization of a digital campus as a response to the challenges of our time, an in-depth analysis of successful practical cases of digital transformation of individual universities in different countries, comparing foreign experience with Ukrainian initiatives in this area, comparing the peculiarities of the corporate culture of public and private universities in Ukraine and abroad, etc.

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## ЦИФРОВИЙ УНІВЕРСИТЕТ В ЕПОХУ ПОСТ-ПОСТМОДЕРНУ: ДО ПИТАННЯ ФОРМУВАННЯ НОВОЇ КОРПОРАТИВНОЇ КУЛЬТУРИ

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*Мета статті* — проаналізувати особливості цифрової корпоративної культури університету, окреслити її параметри та показники, орієнтуючись на культурно-освітні та цифрові комунікативні потреби студентів, викладачів і працівників в епоху пост-постмодерну. *Результати дослідження*. Цифровий університет або Університет 4.0. — тренд першої чверті XXI ст. і високотехнологічна інфраструктурна платформа для розгортання різних освітніх ініціатив, успішне функціонування якої залежить від цифрової корпоративної культури, її параметрів і показників. *Наукова новизна*. У статті вперше в межах Digital Culture Studies як інноваційного міждисциплінарного напрямку розглянуто дихотомію популярного в зарубіжній та українській освітній практиці ринкового типу корпоративної культури та нового, запропонованого автором, «холістичного» типу на базі ширшого соціокультурного підходу, здобутків відкритої науки, ідей критичної педагогіки та феноменологічного підходу в освітній практиці. *Висновки*. Наголошено, що вища освіта постковідного періоду характеризується прискоренням цифрової трансформації, і чимало західних університетських менеджерів активно форсують цей процес. Стверджується, що переважна більшість подібних ініціатив наштовхується на однакові проблеми, пов'язані з домінуванням філософії інструменталізму та неоліберального дискурсу, коли цінність освіти все частіше тлумачиться крізь призму фінансового успіху та бізнес-наративів, що призводить до абсолютизації ринкового типу корпоративної культури університету. Доведено одновимірність й обмеженість такого типу та запропоновано його реструктуризацію на засадах холістичного підходу, що передбачає синтез цифрового навчання, культури праці та знань, цифрового читання, цифрової онтології та антропології, радикальної відкритості, творчої праці, де в основі «нової» корпоративної культури мають бути покладені цифрові компетенції як «поле співпраці» студента та викладача.

**Ключові слова:** цифровий університет; корпоративна культура; холістичний підхід; цифрові компетенції; цифрова комунікація; Digital Culture Studies; вища освіта; пост-постмодерн



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