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## THE CONTEXTS OF THE COMPETITIVENESS IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION

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### *Abstract*

*The term of competitiveness in referring to the Higher Education and its institutions is the subject of research and it is mentioned in the foreign and in the Polish literature of the subject in some different aspects. The most important contexts of competitive analysis are: competitiveness of national systems of the Higher Education, competitiveness of education offer quality and competitiveness in the sector of the Higher Education in the quantification of resources, skills and position school.*

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### **Introduction**

The knowledge both possessed as a result of scientific researches and that which is passed in the process of education is more and more becoming the main resource of economy. 'In advanced societies not work nor natural resources and even not money are not basic resources; they were replaced by information and knowledge' (see more: Gasparski, 2000, p. 47). Those two factors were becoming constant basis of developing and building knowledge based economy. That economy is supported by information society (johokashakai) described in the sixties of the 20th century by Tadao Umesamo and next popularized by a future visioner Kenchi Koyama (see more: Kenchi, 1997, p. 72).

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Information civilization that is in building process is shaped by subjects responsible for creation and knowledge distribution- higher schools. Those subjects and their role in economy are bound by very intensive changes which noticed both by theoreticians and practitioners of economy.

Main trend observed in the wide circles of discussions led in last 30 years is more common referring and using by the subjects of sector of the higher education the market mechanism Marketability is often determined by label of a new paradigm of contemporary university (see more: Antonowicz, 2005, p. 145) or treated as a factor with the higher influence changes and transformation of university reality in Europe (see more: Kwiek, 2010, pp. 88).

The basic reason of implementation of market mechanism in the Higher Education is assumption that it leads possible the best using resources in the given society. Necessary factors for function mechanisms of a market character are:

- ensuring freedom on the side of the provider of education services particularly in the range of possibility of coming on the market, forming an offer, using resources and price policy.
- ensuring freedom on the side of the buyer of education services particularly in the range of choice of service provider choice of the academic programme.
- ensuring access to necessary education for doing choices of market character
- introduction of price mechanism that ensures totally or partly covering the costs of studies (see more: Brown, 2011, pp. 8-9).

As a natural of introducing market mechanism to the system of the Higher Education is appearance the category of competitiveness what is one of the leading ideas of reform of the Polish education and in the effect category of competitiveness.

The importance of competitiveness problems and intensively of changes in the Higher Education sector (see more: Dietl, Sapijaszka et.al., 2012; Ratajczak, 2012, p. 53) decided about undertaking thinking in the frame of this article. The aim of this work is presenting main contexts of competitiveness in the sector of Higher Education.

### **International competitiveness of Higher school and its influence on competitiveness of a country and region**

The term of competitiveness in referring to the Higher Education and its institutions is the subject of research and it is mentioned in the foreign and in the Polish literature of the subject in some different aspects. The first context is referring to **competitiveness of national systems of the Higher Education** regardless each other in the global scale.

The most often mentioned areas of verification of such interpreter competitiveness are the results gained by universities in particular countries in the international ranking (Shanghai Ranking, Laiden Ranking, Times Higher Education) (see more *Strategia Rozwoju Szkolnictwa Wyższego*, 2010, p. 49) and results of competition for getting foreign students with the most often mentioned instrument of the position

of competition to get foreign students, the most often used instrument is the number of these students in the general population of students in a given country. Besides competitiveness of the national educational systems is also referred to area of the scientific research and its measures are regarded as an outlay participation in the research and developing in the gross national product, bibliography indicators and among them also cite indicators. The Polish Higher Education unfortunately shows very weak results if we compare them with the results of other European countries (see more Wolszczak-Derlac, Parteka, 2010, p. 52).

It is worth mention that in the wider prospective as a policy of European Union it is said not only about national competitiveness of the systems of the Higher Education but also about competitiveness of the European system of the Higher Education what is included in the logic of Lisbon Strategy and it reflects in the mechanisms of Bologna Process which one of aims is to rise attractiveness and 'to improve competitiveness position of system of the Higher Education in such way it could refer to contribution of this geographical into civilisation development' (see more: Kraśniewski, 2004, p. 52). The method of rising competitiveness of institutions which are main elements of this system) was creating common education system that still is lack of unified conception in this case. Besides creating of such system would demand for unified administration structures what seems to be a less probable with such big political and structure divergence of Union (see more: Dziejwulak, 1997, p. 120).

## The finance of the Higher Education

The second area of the discussion in the subject topic refers to **competitiveness mechanisms of public financial means** in the frames of given national system of the Higher Education and introducing the mechanisms of the competitiveness between particular universities in two basic spheres:

- means assigned for research activity, where the rule of the competitiveness is done by so called education bon (see more: Cieciora, 2004, pp. 74-76) or proper algorithm of financing universities from public sources
- means assigned on research activity where grants competition system can be implemented from these funds (competitive funding) (see more: Brown et. all., 2011, pp. 168-169) functioning in the most developed countries of the world (see more Santiago, Tremblay, Arnal, 2008, pp. 109-114)

An intrinsically meaning for implementation competitiveness in the distribution of public funds destined on the Higher Education has the grade of implementation of such competitiveness mechanism of improving quality especially in the research sphere but at the same time unfavourable effects coming from the fact that it is financing mainly of short term character. Finally effectiveness is strongly depended on quality of law regulation introducing those mechanisms into life (see more *Partnerstwo publiczno-prywatne w świetle doświadczeń międzynarodowych oraz strate-*

*gii rozwoju szkolnictwa wyższego*, Warszawa: Instytut Społeczeństwa Wiedzy, 2012, pp. 25-44) and removing of bureaucratic barriers that limit competitiveness (see more: Żylicz, 2012, pp. 17-18).

The third area of solutions, being derivative of national competitiveness of the Higher Education System is an **influence of the Higher Education on competitiveness of country region or city**.

With relations to **influence on country competitiveness** the Higher Education is conceived as one of twelve columns of competitiveness, national economy (see more *The Global Competitiveness Report 2009-2010*, Geneva: World Economic Forum; Schwab, 2009, p. 5), constituting a key element of the country innovation system (see more et.al., Gornitzka, Lengfeldt,; Gornitzka, 2008, p. 5) and provide qualified human resources for economy (see more *Reflection of higher education aspects In the conception of national competitiveness*, In *Baltic Journal of Management*, Vol. 6, Issue 1; Ramoniene, Lanskoronskis, 2011, pp. 124-139) what is particularly essential facing globalisation process (see more Szablowski et.al., 2002, pp. 49-55; Marciniak) and also itself can be relevant sector ensuring incomes and also from sale (export) of educational services (see more *Knowledge In the Marketplace: The Global Commodification of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, In Peter Ninnes Meeri-Hellstén (Ed.) *Internationalizing Higher Education. Critical Explorations of Pedagogy and Policy*, CERC Studies in Comparative Education, Vol. 16, Dordrecht: Springer, Naidoo, Jamieson, 2008, p. 38)

Also, **the Higher Education effect on region or cities competitiveness** (see more: Szczepańska-Woszczyzna, 2001, pp. 149-151). The literature of subject refers in that range to multiple relations starting from universities influence on supply of highly-qualified labour force. generating students demand on goods and services and at the same time the rise of local economy by engaging commercialize of research result and technology transfer i.a. in the form of technological parks, companies of type spin-off and every activities in the cluster structures up to the role of universities in revitalization post-industrialcity areas. In connection with the higher schools stop being an instrument to support economy growth and competitiveness reinforcement of national economy (see more *Szkolnictwo wyższe. Wyzwania XXI wieku. Polska Europa, USA, Difin*, Warszawa, 2009, p. 24).

## **Graduates, high school teachers and institutions competitiveness**

Analysing different aspects of competitiveness in the sector of the higher education it is not allowed to omit the main stakeholder of it. the consideration deali.a.with graduates competitiveness in the labour market what results from the double nature of demand for educational services and in the effect of the double nature of competitiveness verification. On one hand the supplying that is the Higher Education schools answer to the demand recommended for the needs of educational market repre-

sented by potential students and audience, on which the graduates of universities compete (see more: Dietl, Sapijaszka et.al., 2001, pp. 333-335; Buchner-Jeziorska). Competitiveness in this area is verified by such quantity index as the percentage of employed or self-employed, graduates on by the level of incomes in the determined time after graduating and also by the quality index such as employer opinion about graduates preparation to work. The question of graduates competitiveness on the labour market gets a special meaning in the context of percentage rising of people having higher education diplomas (see more: Piróg, 2013, p. 313) what leads to growth the rate of unemployed between who we graduated.

An essential area of discussing about **competitiveness in Higher Education is personal competitiveness of academic teachers**. In this range it is necessary to put attention on area of didactic activity, verified by the effectiveness of teaching process, effects of studying gained by the effects, posed by students and the area scientific-research activity reflected by gaining researching grants, effectiveness of publication, the index of quotations and out coming of them professional promotions (see more Koroński, 2012, pp. 25-26). Personal competitiveness differ academic teachers' salaries in dependence of gained effect of work (see more *Najważniejsze propozycje zmian w systemie zarządzania szkolnictwem wyższym w Polsce w opinii ankietowanych profesorów – wyniki badań*, In *Zarządzanie i Finanse*. Journal of Management and Finance, Chapter 1, Vol. Gdańsk; Wawak, 2012, p. 381).

The next area to analyse is institutions of Higher Education competitiveness on the education market which can be defined as 'ability to improve an offer in order to get students and financial means for realisation research projects, didactic and other and also building reputation in the frame of the Higher Education school and in the relation with other academic institutions' (see more *Zarządzanie uczelnia. Koncepcje i współczesne wyzwania* Warszawa: Wolter Kluwer; Leja, 2013, p. 193).

## **Competitiveness of education offer quality**

A change of geopolitical situation and social-economical in Poland what was an effect inter alia of be a member of European Union effect with closer contacts between European countries. Those relations took place on many planes, they cause that it is necessary to raise the level of education on all steps of education on all steps of education. To fulfil this demand in the Higher Education there is implicated the necessity to reorient aims, content and method of teaching. As an effect it can new quality of schooling result from some essential trends in this area:

1. Evolution of price strategy used by particular school- it is essential not only the rate of price but also price relation to quality of schooling and other elements of competitiveness of school (the quality of service, access, practicality, friendship).
2. An effect of encapsulation of the Higher Education school comprehend as rebuilding one educational service by the other one.

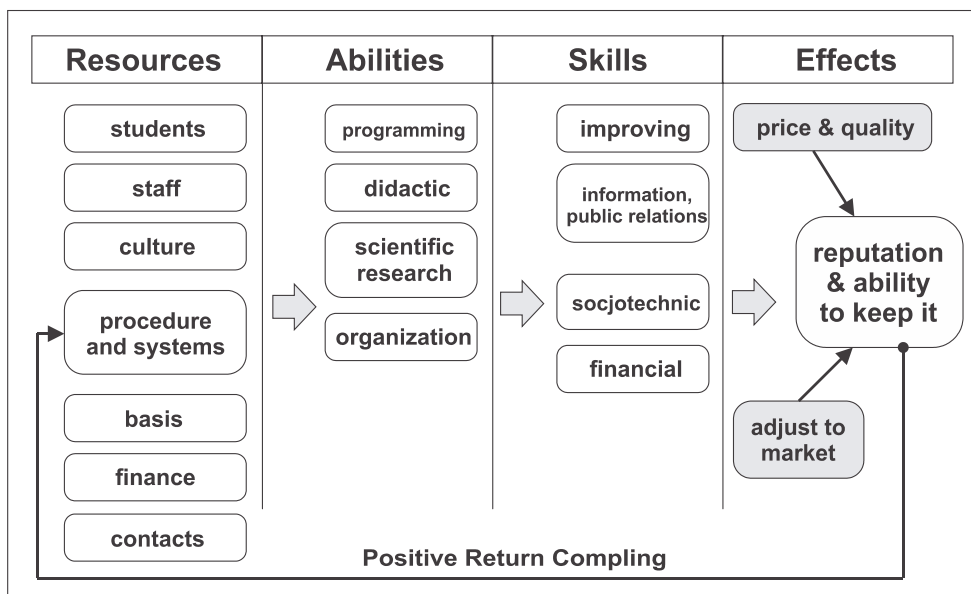
3. The changes of the roles of a student and a lecturer in didactic process. The student has an influence on content and form of teaching. He is an active side of the process of passing knowledge.
4. Individual approach to a student. The students present different kind of learning and different habits connected with studying lectures. Exercises have to visualise them that they have ability to assimilate and gain knowledge by their own. It supports an active attitudes supplied by academic teachers.
5. Developed abilities to learn continual and self-study. the students more and more often are equipped by the school in proper technique and strategy of studying. thanks to it they can borden their competence of schooling, self-study and flexible reacting on possible change of job.
6. Development the generation Net Gen brought up on possibilities which are given by the Internet. Abilities passed earlier by using traditional methods, in the second decade of the 21st century the students posses with the help on the net. Thanks to the access of knowledge increased, disappeared time limits and increased the access to professional lecturers.

Mentioned trends do not constitute closed collection; they only indicate a direction of changes. These transformation result particularly from reorientation of buyer's function of education services on higher level. Similarly to other sectors of service he acts here in a double role buyer or consumer service. Being prosument he actively takes part in the process of projecting educational service. Effective using this trend can be one of the source of the competitiveness advantage at school on condition skilful shaping by it emotion, experience and experience of service buyer. This is the area to develop by marketing (see more *Zastosowanie koncepcji marketingu relacji w uczelniach wyższych w Polsce na podstawie badań własnych*, In *Marketingowe źródła uzyskiwania przewagi konkurencyjnej w działalności nowoczesnych podmiotów gospodarujących, Przedsiębiorczość i zarządzanie*, Tom XII, Vol. 5, Łódź: SWSZiP; Seliga, 2011, pp. 105-120), partners marketing (see more: Nowaczyk, Sobolewski et.al., 2013, pp. 243-256; Hall) and feelings marketing, which roles are more and more seen by schools of the Higher Education. Activities in this range should deal both with current study candidates (see more: Nowaczyk, Sobolewski et.al., 2011, pp. 197-210; D. Rapińska, 2010, pp. 29-38; Dejnaka) and graduates (see more Nowaczyk, Lisiecki et.al, 2006, pp. 243-244).

### **Competitiveness in the sector of the Higher Education in the quantification of resources, skills and position school**

Analysing the views presented in the literature of the subject related to competitiveness of higher education schools it should be maintain that they are related to resources, skills and position schools.

As an example to the first approach can be the analysis by A. Koźmiński, (see more: Koźmiński, 2006, pp. 243-244) who puts attention on the basic function of strategy which is creating advantage of higher education school competitiveness. This function reflects in the schools reputations among its key interesarium—students, employers, government and local administration, receivers of scientific research results. Reputation influences on ability of possessing valuable sources by the higher education school and ensuring proper conceived relation between quality and proper conceived relation between quality and price of higher education school. the model of creating competitiveness advantage of higher education school according to A. Koźmiński was presented on Picture 1.



**Picture 1.** The sources of competitiveness advantage of the higher education

Source: Koźmiński, 1999, p. 243.

An essential feature of the model by A. Koźmiński is back compling mechanism between gained competitiveness position and ability of possessive and keeping proper resources by the higher education school what next leads to improving existing competitiveness position.

Looking into getting competitiveness advantage by the school according to resources and skills school it would be necessary to put attention on the following elements of the competitiveness potential:

- a) an immanent **features of the Higher Education school** such as: image, prestige and reputation, innovativeness, the quality of the offered services and managing,

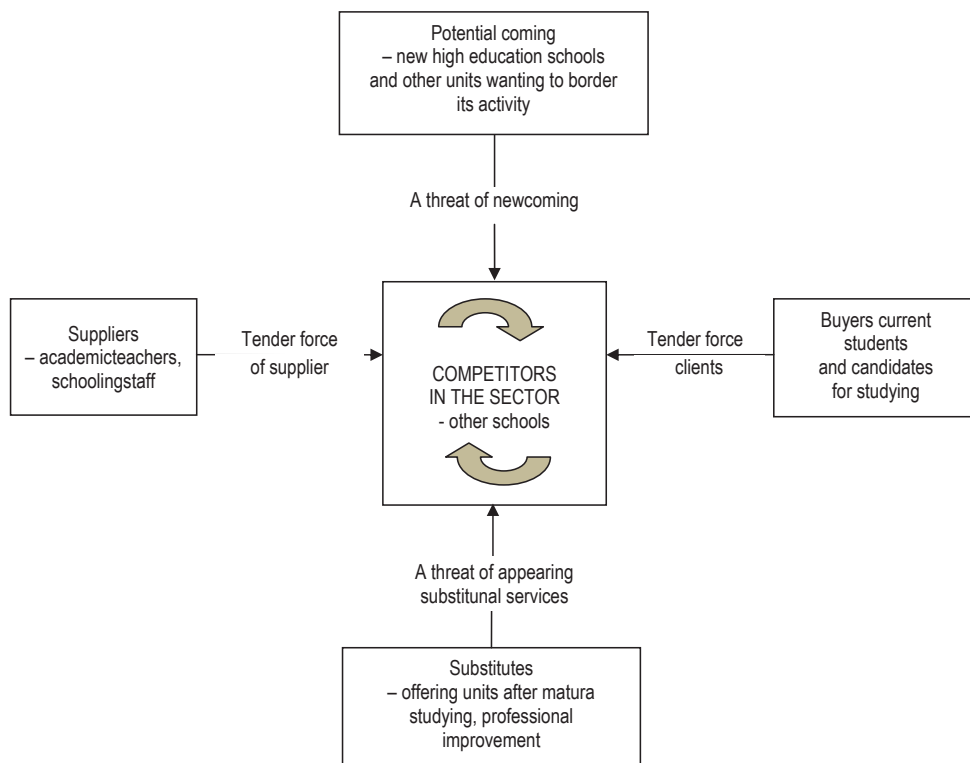
flexibility, undertaking international orientation ability to meet client's needs, client's loyalty, the image of graduates, admitting to school criteria employer opinions, school traditions, seeding place, the size of school, priority effect on the market.

- b) **non-material sources of school**-intellectual capital, knowledge, key competence, organisational culture, professional staff of lectures (its size, scientific level, represented areas, involving in school life).
- c) **material sources of school**-premises and social conditions, location of buildings providing with things.
- d) **processes realised at school** particularly students service, development of Staff policy, knowledge management, loss of schooling management
- e) **using techniques and tools of management** such as: planning, strategy management benchmarking, competing by participation in the market, team work.
- f) **Tools supporting managing** – information technology especially systems of class ERB, CRM, systems ensuring quality of type ISO, BSC.
- g) **using instruments of marketing** – particularly price strategies, building the mark of the school, public relations, creating a unique selling offer – USP (Unique Selling Proposition)
- h) **organising structures** – such as Career and Practice Office, Library
- i) **didactic products** – schooling offer, specialities, according with KRK, the number of hours, e-learning using modern methods and techniques of teaching, respected diploma, salary, scholarship offer, international cooperation, studying foreign languages order, number, sort and structure of didactic hours individual process of schooling, methodology of activities, relation with practice and employers (learning by doing), diplomas accepting, product certification (lifelong learning)
- j) **products connected with scientific searches** – novelty, unique led experiments, meritoric level of the research works in the international scale, won prizes, distinguishes, continuity of led researches, international contacts, the number of scientific publications, scientific conference
- k) **business partnerships** – cooperation with units of the local government, state and local institutions and entertainments.

The analyse of possibility of building competition on advantage of higher education school is based on position approach is concentrated on model of 5 powers M. Potera (see more: Porter, 2001, p. 24). The picture 2 is a graphic presentation of this approach. According to J. Nogiec competitions between them will become stronger because useless demographic trend. The risk of new suppliers coming in the market is rather low what reflects from high formal barrier regulation of coming in market. As a substitute of educational services the higher education school are other form of schooling (school after matura exams, courses, trainings) and they at a little degree can compete with a traditional academic education because they cannot offer a diploma for adult students. The role of suppliers according to authors is very



strong because of shortage which is typical in the Polish Condition (see more *Model współdziałania uczelni publicznych i niepublicznych – stan obecny i perspektywy*, Warszawa: Fundacja Promocji i Akredytacji Kierunków Ekonomicznych, Instytut Społeczeństwa Wiedzy; Woźnicki et. al, 2004, pp. 125-134). The biggest tender force in the market have current students and potential clients- students



**Picture 2.** The model of 5 powers according by M.Potter

Source: Nogieć, 2009, p 171.

I. Seredocha (see more *Strategie marketingowe uczelni prywatnych w Polsce Elbląg: Elbląska Uczelnia Humanistyczno-Ekonomiczna*; Seredocha, 2007, pp. 30-32) using the model of five powers by M. Porter, he regards for the key suppliers of knowledge (academic staff) and also the suppliers of permissions (government agency) estimating the power of warding contract by tenders of those group as high. The suppliers of weaker warding contract are grammar school which are the suppliers of candidates for studying and suppliers of different sort of commodity and services necessary for a university to function. For buyers of services the author recognizes not only

students but also wider the whole society in which the school function what results from cultural role of the higher education school.

Another author A Sulejewicz (see more: Dietl, Sapijaszka et.al., op. cit., 77-91) introduces the sixth power- complementary goods. He does an analyse according this model of the Polish system of the higher education in the 90s of the 20th century and also an analyse rivalry forces in world higher education presented in the Table 1.

**Table 1.** Comparison of complete powers in the Polish High Education schools in the 90s of the second decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Competitiveness powers	The Polish higher education in the 90s of the 20 <sup>th</sup> century	The Polish Higher Education in the second decade of 21st century	World Higher Education schools
Competition inside branch	Low, increased together with the development private sector, regional	Strong, especially between public and non-public sector mainly of regional character	Strong connected with marketing and privatisation process of the higher education basing on benefits of scale, international.
Substitutes	None	Training service opened internet courses, gaining qualification out of school system, systems of certification qualification of unions and branch societies	Alternative forms of getting qualification validity, services training for schools, universities, corporations, knowledge offered by Internet portals
Complementary goods	Not big influence noticed in case of schools created in non-traditional locations	Growing influence of services, B+R, projects financed from EU means	The market of service B+R, however endangered by static higher school approach
The force of buyers	Individual buyers, little rising in case of after graduate schooling, buyer institutional – meaningful	Growing, also in the night of saving consumer	Growing – both individual and institutional (company)
The force of suppliers (didactic staff)	Varied after appearing the private sector high	Varied, fall down because of less demand for didactic work, temporary changeable because of limiting two shifts work	On mass scale falling down but at the same time growing in case of so called 'stars'.
Newcomers/Barrier of coming in	At the beginning high (political) after legislative change	High market barriers on the side of demand rising barriers legislative	Falling down together with introduction learning by Internet

Source: Sulejewicz, 2006, pp. 79-85.

Basing on presented forces of competitiveness in the higher education schools A. Sulejewicz also shows on acting which can be taken traditional schools in order to keep competitiveness position. In range to step up barriers of coming in he shows on:

- possibility of using of varied strategies based on labour- consuming didactic techniques impossible to copy by the subjects which base their strategy of acting on advantages of scale and low changeable costs.
- offering except education some benefits of scale and low changeable costs
- barrier creating by accreditation and certification

Lower of the force of buyers the higher school services can follow by real impediment of students mobility (points transfer, programme differences, price – promotion policy rewarding early and packet shopping of services, or acting in the range of branding. As two possible strategies he shows then:

1. Innovative adoption of modern educational strategies in big universities set on using profits scale.
2. Limit of market pool for those areas in which school has non imitable, isolated from competition sources, ensuring long-term advantage realised on focused area of basic actions

In the area of limiting competing it shows on possibility or realisation of fusion strategy and taking and reducing the force of each other force of competitiveness by strategy system with putting attention at the same tie on risk of interpretation of some action done by government agenda as useless for consumer and breaking the anti-monopoly rules.

It is worth to notice that coming into strategy aliases, building of schools net and the process of their fusion may result on getting a scale affect what leads to improving competitiveness (see more *Światowy et.al., 2001, p. 189*). As a result of fusion and take up and there follow reducing intensity of complete fighting in the sector, border of warding contract by tenders position of school in relation environment i.e. state institutions possessing by school in short time some different means what was not possible to get them in limited way or they would not be possible or they could demand long time, possibility of occurring different synergetic effects (see more: *Zygarłowski, 2012, pp. 45-46*). An essential effect reflecting from the process of consolidation is also capital concentration, which is necessary for investments and introducing by universities of modern service products (see more: *Wawak, 2012,0p. 249*).

It is necessary to underline the fact, that researches confirm that gained compete position of the Polish private schools creating the groups of schools of holding character is in comparison with universities functioning by themselves. It refers both with them financial incomes and also compete for prestige and academic position (see more *Pozycja konkurencyjna niepublicznych uczelni sieciowych w Polsce*. In *Zeszyty Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Administracji i Biznesu im. E. Kwiatkowskiego w Gdyni*, Vol. 16; *Zygarłowski, 2011, pp. 121-134*).

There is also a need to put attention on particular role in building attention on particular role in building competitiveness advantage of net connection which are the response to chances and threatening's reflecting from the Internet development and possibilities of its using in didactic. The connections can have both the character of multi institutional in the form of net, where the participants are other and also competing universities (see more Gołębiowski, Dąbrowski, Mierzejewska et. al., 2005, p. 67) and also strategy alianse with service suppliers that are not the higher education schools which function on the rule of outsourcing (see more *What business wants from higher education*, (Phoenix: American Council on Education, Oryx Press; Oblinger, Lee Verville, 1998, pp. 146-147).

## Conclusions

The way of competitiveness of managing of the higher education school and the grade and measure of gained compete position should also relate to school mission. From this prospective it seems that it is the key relation to such aspects as:

- established range of geographical acting and competing of schools: global nationwide and regional
- an area of key activity of schools: mainly researching, mainly didactic, researching-didactic
- established student's profile: school teachers elite, school of international character, school allows to complete education and connect studying with work, school bets to equal social differences

Among the views basing on quite traditional approach to competitiveness based on typical factors and theories of economic character it is necessary to notice also some views more 'philosophical' reflecting to need of study of interdisciplinary and looking for criteria of future competitiveness of universities in such factors as: **true** and recognizing objectivity as a factor deciding about quality of schooling, **the pictures** of graduates which will be the base of creating 'society of wisdom', **participation** of academic teachers and students in the process of building culture based on science, **leadership** as a factor of competitiveness of studying organisation and **entrepreneurship** (see more *Uniwersytet trzeciej generacji. Stan i Perspektywy rozwoju*, Poznań: ECWP; Burawski, 2013, pp. 39-58)

To sum up the consideration related to competitiveness in the sector of the Higher Education there is a need to claim that the fact of common implementation market mechanism school abilities to compete is becoming directly new element of social mission of university. (see more *Misja i służebność uniwersytetu XXI wieku*, Warszawa: Instytut Społeczeństwa Wiedzy, Fundacja Rektorów Polskich, Woźnicki, 2013, pp. 127-132). Ability to compete is based on knowledge and it rely on using not only existing knowledge but also on consciously target to reach it and completing, in such

way to better win limits (see more: Koźminski, 2005, p. 103). Creating new knowledge is an effect of dynamic interaction between three players: knowledge practiser, knowledge constructor commander (see more *The Knowledge Creating Company New York: Oxford University Press; Nonaka, Takeuchi, 2000, pp. 184-185*). In order the interaction could give positive effects each of group should have features copied from organisational culture what is a resultant of features of contractor. Such approach to competitiveness dominates in sectors and branches in which knowledge gives particular advantage and is used also in the Higher Education school.

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