The title of doctoral dissertation is absorptive capacity of learning organization. The matter of absorptive capacity has been a subject of research for more than 20 years. W. M. Cohen and D. A. Levinthal were the first one to notice that the absorptive capacity is an organization’s ability to identify, assimilate and use the knowledge, which is present in the organization’s surroundings. The authors claimed that this knowledge may be used by the organization for economic purposes. The absorptive capacity is also a recognition of value of external knowledge, and an ability to develop a set of organizational procedures and processes, thanks to which the organization may acquire, adopt, process and use the knowledge in order to obtain dynamic organizational abilities.

Identification of external and internal factors of absorptive capacity in schools was the main aim of the research presented in this work. The following detail aims were taken in order to achieve the major aim. The theoretical and cognitive aim was a characteristic of relations among factors of absorptive capacity and dimensions of absorptive capacity of an organization. The methodological aim comprised an operationalization of factors and dimensions of the absorptive capacity. The utilitarian aim was to provide a managing staff of different schools with knowledge about the factors of absorptive capacity, developing a directive of shaping the absorptive capacity for decision makers, bodies that administer and control schools.

The main aim of our study was to examine the relationship between absorptive capacity and the determining factors in our analytical model. To do this, we first defined a set of variables that would allow us to measure the study aspects. The model comprises two main blocks: one showing the different dimensions or components of absorptive capacity; the other showing the determinants of this capacity. The previous assumptions are the cornerstones of the proposed model and produce the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Prior related knowledge is positively related to absorptive capability.
Hypothesis 2: Sills of employee is positively related to absorptive capability.
Hypothesis 3: Interaction is positively related to absorptive capability.
Hypothesis 4: Educational project is positively related to absorptive capability.
Hypothesis 5: Potential absorptive capacity is positively related to realized absorptive capacity.

The subject scope of the research comprises schools, as understood by Art. 2 of the Act on the System of Education, from 7th September 1991 (Dz. U. from 2004, No. 256, item 2572, as amended). The system of education includes the following types of schools: primary, gymnasium, secondary schools. The spatial extent of the research comprises the province of Silesia.

This study presents results of the research conducted between August 2011 and September 2012. The empirical research was divided into 5 stages. The first stage was realized in August 2011, and it comprised the realization of pilot studies. The studies were of explorative character, and they are a basis for verification of the research model and an introduction to further research over factors of absorptive capacity at schools. Another pilot study was conducted in January 2012. Aim of the conducted research comprised verification and testing of the research tool on a bigger sample. The next pilot study was conducted in March 2012. The main aim of testing the research tool was to adjust the statements to specificity of the school’s work, and to check the time that is necessary to fill the survey, the correctness of the question’s layout, clearness of the used statements as well as transparency and clarity. The survey questionnaire was given to five principals – chosen through an expert method – of particular types of schools: primary school, gymnasium, basic vocational school, secondary school of general education, postsecondary school. The right research was divided into two types, and was conducted in two formats: survey questionnaire (n=151) and interviews questionnaire (n=20).

The work consists of five chapters, which are preceded by an introduction. Summary of the ending. The first three chapters present the results of a systematic review of the literature. Chapter Four presents the methodology of the research, while the last section, the fifth - the results of empirical studies and recommendations and recommendations for management.

Completion of work includes the conclusions of the ongoing review of the literature and empirical research, as well as directions for further research on the absorptive capacity. Complement the work of a bibliography, a list of tables, graphs and diagrams, which are shown at work. An integral part of the work is the appendix, which includes sample questionnaire and interview questionnaire used in empirical studies. The appendix contains the current operationalization of absorptive capacity and produced by other researchers correlation results.
The research is under an honorable patronage of the Polish Association of Management Staff of Education (OSKKO). Can be considered a reasonable opportunity to obtain a fair and comprehensive research material that allowed for statistical analysis of existing laws.

Factors of the absorptive capacity that were distinguished during the pilot research and, which underwent the research comprise: base knowledge, workers’ abilities, interactions with surroundings and educational projects. Empirical research showed that the factors ‘base knowledge’ and ‘workers’ abilities’ may pose a single factor. Up till now, in literature of the subject, these both factors were treated separately. Within the course of empirical research, it was stated that respondents evaluated the workers’ abilities the highest, and the base knowledge the lowest. It has the lowest meaning as a factor of absorptive capacity. Interactions with surroundings are more important than the base knowledge and educational projects, but there are less important than the workers’ abilities. The factor of educational projects is assessed higher than the base knowledge. However, the educational projects are less significant than the workers’ abilities and interactions with the surroundings.

Absorptive capacity is a multidimensional concept. Firms cannot exploit external knowledge if they have not previously acquired and integrated this knowledge into their organizational processes. However, the acquisition of knowledge does not necessarily imply a capacity for transforming and exploiting it. For example, a firm can have a high level of potential of absorptive capacity, but a low capacity for exploiting external knowledge through the development of new products or processes. This does not mean that potential of absorptive capacity are not important. Indeed, in highly dynamic environments, they make it easier for firms to adapt to changes, explore new paths, and even reshape their knowledge base. The conducted analysis of correlations revealed a strong positive dependency of potential and executive absorptive capacity. Therefore, the potential absorptive capacity causes the executive absorptive capacity.

The empirical research confirmed correlations between factors and dimensions of the absorptive capacity. Results of the research confirm also an empirical presence of relations between the factors and the absorptive capacity, and between a potential and executive absorptive capacity. There is also a connection between the factors and the absorptive capacity. This is positively correlated. Potential absorptive capacity is positively related to realized absorptive capacity. This is that the organization can use the content without the adoption of new knowledge.

Absorptive capacity is a sequence of consecutive dependency. Indicates the four dimensions: identification, assimilation, internalization and use new knowledge. In the course
of empirical research respondents recognized the lack of awareness about the mechanism of transfer of knowledge to the organization. Respondents acquire knowledge without awareness of the reasons and the causes of this state of affairs. There is a need to supplement the sub-processes of absorption capacity of two. Resorption is a process of diffusion of new knowledge to the organization, while absorption is the process of penetration into the foreground. Learning organization must be aware of the time of diffusion and penetration of new knowledge. Ignorance can make to the organization enters useless knowledge that can harm her.

Summary of the foregoing, constitute guidance for managers and supervisor of the school. The starting point was a statement that the study of the absorptive capacity and the factors affecting it can contribute to the understanding, how and why organizations can acquire and assimilate new external knowledge. Also important is the answer to the question of why some organizations acquire, and others cannot. Reference is made to the appropriate climate for the development of absorptive capacity, included in the strategy of knowledge. The chosen strategy implies knowledge of strategic changes that may lead to a reconfiguration of existing resources and bringing them into the organization. Absorptive capacity emerges as a primary theme in strategy and organizational research. Studies have shown that it is important to consciously develop appropriate elements of absorptive capacity, which could increase its efficiency.

The test procedure requires studies indicate limitations, because the results are not definitive, universal or right. Limitations studies on two issues: the research sample and operationalization. Due to the difficulty in reaching a large group of schools, the study was conducted on a sample selected at random. In addition, the study was a reduction of operationalization. Divergences among different researchers are visible as well on the level of conceptualization and operationalization of the absorptive capacity. Literature of the subject also does not provide an unambiguous answer for the question about cause and effect relations of separate factors with the dimensions of absorptive capacity. What is more, there is a lack of empirical research conducted in organizations serving the social environment – the non-profit ones.

This paper has examined these issues, and proposed an analytical model of the antecedents of firms’ absorptive capacity. Future research may incorporate additional knowledge attributes, which will enable the identification of new types or levels of absorptive capacity and evaluation of the role of different antecedents, especially organizational ones. Future studies might address the problem of measurement of absorptive capacity by proposing
new ways to operationalize its dimensions or components, bearing in mind such aspects as knowledge attributes.

The conducted empirical research create a possibility for further studies on the absorptive capacity. An interesting direction of the further research is an identification of other factors of the absorptive capacity than those included in literature of the subject. It is suggested to conduct further research also in educational institutions. Here, knowledge is of great significance. However, conditions of the absorptive capacity are different from those present in the innovative and specialized organizations. It is proved by the fact that the base knowledge is a factor of little significance. Therefore, still both the absorptive capacity and its conditions are fields that were not researched. A necessity to pay attention to this area comes from a belief that the absorptive capacity cause innovation and organization learning.

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