The socio-economic situation in Ukraine is characterized by deepening of crisis phenomena and, at the same time, accompanied by an increase in European integration and globalization processes. Considering this, in accordance with the Law of Ukraine "On the Fundamentals of National Security of Ukraine", the main contemporary priorities of national interests include, in particular, the creation of a competitive, socially oriented market economy and ensuring the constant improvement of living standards and welfare of the population; integration of Ukraine into the European political, economic, legal space [1]. A special role in the formation of a competitive national econo-
my belongs to the system of higher education and individual higher education institutions (HEIs), since they determine the levels of human capital and intellectual potential of the nation. In addition, a sufficient competitiveness level (CL) of domestic HEIs is a prerequisite for the integration of the national system of higher education into the European educational space.

**Target setting.** The activities of HEIs in Ukraine are under the influence of a significant number of factors, which intensify the competitive struggle in the market of educational services and greatly complicate the process of managing the competitiveness of HEIs. These factors include the following: reforming the system of higher education; increase in the level of HEIs autonomy; applicants number reduction; insufficient competitiveness level of the national economy, which, in turn, greatly reduces domestic HEIs competitiveness in the international market of educational services. These circumstances update the search for ways to improve the management of HEIs competitiveness in modern conditions.

**Actual scientific researches and issues analysis.** Analysis of scientific literature on the subject of research shows that the question of the competitiveness essence, the definition of its components and influence factors, the system formation for managing the competitiveness of production and intermediary organizations are studied in detail in domestic and foreign scientists’ works. HEIs competitiveness, as an object of economists’ research, is not so common in scientific literature. At the same time, the need to ensure the competitiveness of domestic HEIs in modern conditions causes the scientists’ interest to this question, in particular Bachynska O. M., Vorobiova K. O., Hryshchenko I. M., Dudko P. M., Ivanov Yu. V., Nefedova T. M., Prus L. R., Salohubova V. M., Tarasenko I. O., etc. [2-8]. Thus, the special role of the quality of educational services and image in managing HEIs competitiveness is emphasized in the papers [2; 3]. In the paper [4], innovative development of HEIs and its priority directions are investigated as the main factor of ensuring HEIs competitiveness. In Ivanov Yu. V., Prus L. R., [6; 7] and Salohubova V. M.’s [8] writings the management of HEIs competitiveness is proposed to be based on the use of marketing tools, namely: “7P” marketing [8] and benchmarking technologies [6; 7].

**Uninvestigated parts of general matters defining.** The question of determining the management stages sequence of HEIs CL remains insufficiently researched in the scientific literature.

**The research objective.** The investigation of category essence of HEIs CL; definition of the management stages sequence of HEIs CL.

**The statement of basic materials.** Analysis of scientific literature [2, p. 6; 3-5; 6, p. 14-16; 7, p. 5-6; 8, p. 12-13] became the basis for identifying the main characteristics of HEIs competitiveness, which the author summarizes as follows: (1) high quality of educational services; (2) meeting the consumers’ needs of educational services and society as a whole; (3) the HEIs adaptability to changes in the educational services market; (4) the effectiveness of the search, formation and competitive advantages use.

The revealed characteristics of HEIs competitiveness, as well as the essence of the categories “competitiveness factors” (“... factors that affect the viability of the enterprise, which absence endangers its existence” [6, p. 19]) and “HEIs competitive advantage” (“... advantage , which, as a result of its influence, brings HEIs additional income... Competitive advantages ensure the uniqueness of the service and satisfy client’s specific needs ”[6, pp. 18-19]) became the basis for the formation of the author’s definition of HEIs competitiveness as HEIs place complex characteristics in the educational services market, formed on the basis of effective adaptive management of competitiveness factors set (identified by the author as competitiveness “necessary conditions”) and HEIs competitive advantages (defined by the author as competitiveness “sufficient conditions”).

The theoretical study of competitiveness, the categories of “competitiveness factors” and “competitive advantages”, as well as the specifics of HEIs activity, allowed to determine the competitiveness management principles of HEIs, namely:
- complexity and systemic, researching HEIs competitiveness as an open system taking into account the complex of interconnected elements - factors of the external environment and competitiveness internal factors;
Tsymbalenko N. V. Competitiveness management of Ukrainian higher educational institutions

The proposed stages sequence of HEIs competitiveness management is shown in Fig. 1

In the process of controlling HEIs competitiveness, it is implied to monitor continuously the external environment factors: HEIs opportunities and threats, consumers’ demands of educational services and employers, leading HEIs activities in the domestic and international educational services markets.

Fig. 1. Stages of HEIs competitiveness management

Source: created by the author
Besides, ensuring HEIs competitiveness management effectiveness requires the assessment of all competitiveness key factors in order to identify HEIs weaknesses; distinguishing those competitiveness factors that can potentially become HEIs competitive advantages; as well as the available competitive advantages. Identifying the factors of competitiveness that are unsatisfactory ("weaknesses"), implementation of the strategy of preserving the existing level of HEIs competitiveness is necessary. Successful implementation of this strategy allows us to move to the next level of competitiveness management – implementation of increasing HEIs competitiveness strategy based on formation of HEIs competitive advantages (in the presence of competitiveness factors that can potentially become competitive advantages). In the case of "weaknesses" absence in HEIs activity and HEIs competitive advantages system formation, it is expedient to implement a strategy of ensuring the highest level of competitiveness based on managing the competitive advantages.

It should be noted that taking into account the current stage of socio-economic development of Ukraine and global trends in the development of higher education, a special role in competition in educational services market belongs to such competitive advantages as: brand (HEIs image); high quality of educational and related services; diversification of educational services portfolio; low cost of services; orientation to the real sector of the economy; employment assistance; technical-technological uniqueness of educational services provision (e.g., the presence of extramural and distance learning); convenient location of HEIs, presence of hostels.

Conclusions. The research of the essence of economic categories "HEIs competitiveness", "competitiveness factors", "competitive advantages" became the basis for definition of principles and formation of management stages sequence of HEIs CL. The advantages of the proposed stages sequence are: ensuring the monitoring of environment condition and factors of the HEIs CL; the possibility of choosing a competitive strategy based on the analysis of the "weaknesses" identified by the results, the available and potential competitive advantages of the HEIs. Further research requires specification of these competitive strategies of HEIs; as well as methods of formation and management of competitive advantages of the HEIs.

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Література


Received for publication 01.03.2018

Бібліографічний опис для цитування:
Tsymbalenko, N. V. Competitiveness management of Ukrainian higher educational institutions / N. V. Tsymbalenko // Науковий вісник Полісся. – 2018. – № 2 (14), Ч. 1. – С. 124-128.

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