Partnership of small and medium businesses in chain and network systems

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1. Characteristics of operation of SME sector enterprises

Contemporarily, considerable changes are taking place in the operation of SME sector enterprises in the process of growth and development. It is driven by a variety of factors which are particularly exposed in models describing the life cycle of organizations. Despite critical remarks presented in the literature and regarding the idea itself to describe the shift in operation of enterprises within the models of life cycle of organizations [21], it could be found that this manner for perceiving the process of management in an organization may be of use in practice.

One of major reasons for such situation is the size of the enterprise. The SME sector, particularly micro and small businesses are often limited in a similar manner and characterized with similar characteristics. For the same purpose, another reason for analyzing the enterprise lifetime can be identified, i.e. the stage at which one observes taking of business actions. At the stage of starting up business operation, the entrepreneur becomes the major subject of the analysis, hence at this stage, a major factor identified is the person of the future entrepreneur (entrepreneurs or partners in a civil partnership). It is in the micro- and small enterprises in which the need arises for the analysis of the following:

- reasons for which the entrepreneurs open a business
- knowledge possessed
- experience in operating a business
- knowledge and experiences of the sector
- knowledge of management.

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Numerous publications demonstrate the future fate of an enterprise which is “inherently” conditioned by the events preceding the physical registration of the enterprise [23]. In turn, after the registration of the enterprise, the processes take place which have been described in the literature in a number of different ways, but they their common denominator is the description of behaviour of persons which manage these enterprises and changes that took place as a result of this process. Another reason for which it is difficult to refer in practice to models describing life cycles of organizations is the shock within the organization itself. Despite the fact that by the process of management, the enterprises pursue balance, the so-called development thresholds cannot be entirely ruled out.

In the studies dating back to the end of 20th century, the models and analyses referring to the Greiner model emerged which perceived the crisis as a situation which inevitably occurs in the growth process of an organization [6]. Currently, upon the assumption of going through crises, it is increasingly difficult to compete on the market. The weakening of the enterprises resulting from a crisis understood as a weakening trend of the growth of an enterprises is currently being reduced and replaced with pro-action or interaction on the part of contemporary entrepreneurs. The last reason that is conducive in the analysis of how partnerships in business are entered into, is the professionalization of management in SME sector.

In the literature regarding enterprise management, an approach is commonplace which points to the importance of the transition process from entrepreneurial to professional management in SME sector companies. As in case of reasons set out above, certain new behaviours are being observed in the SME sector enterprises in their functioning which could be, in part at least, justified with the models describing life cycles of organizations. As a result, in order to address the question of consolidation of enterprises, it shall be necessary to present the manner in which the behaviour of enterprises shifts over their life cycle, with particular consideration of the SME sector specificity.

2. Relationships of small and medium businesses in chain, network and cluster systems

One of the methods to strengthen and develop enterprises of the SME sectors is the creation of structures (systems) at the level of meta-solutions. They are a result of changes and reorganizations of a qualitative nature which allow for more effective operation of companies which they include. “For it is easier to compete in a coherent group of enterprises than struggle individually to gain a good competitive market position” [8]. The organizational and procedural synchronization of economic processes leads to improvement in competence and adequacy of operation.

Certain business dependencies existing between enterprises result in the creation of relationships and interactions. These, in turn, lead to logistic
chains. They allow for the quick and flexible transfer of goods and services. The logistic chains are sources for making up technical and technological differences between cooperating enterprise and a source of knowledge and learning. “The knowledge gained as an asset constitutes an element of the enterprise’s competitive superiority” [9, p. 59].

The links of a logistic chain (enterprises cooperating within the frameworks of such chain) must cooperate and closely match each other. The enterprises integrate, exchange communication and information and adjust their processes to the processes of other business partners, since the integration and coordination of logistic systems of enterprises is perceived contemporarily as the very substance of logistic management [15, p. 163]. Thus, a chain is created (formed) which is stable and internally coherent. As a result of actions based on the integration of processes and communications, as well as coordination, such chain is referred to as supply chain.

![Fig. 1. Scheme of a typical supply chain](source: own work)

The supply chain demonstrates the number of links acting as intermediate stages in the flow of goods, information and cash from the first supplier to the end client (Fig. 1). It is the subjective scope of a supply chain. Referring to the concept presented by M. E. Porter, the scope and areas of potential cooperation of supply chains are unlimited. As stated by J. Witkowski “the supply chain comprises excavation, production, trading and service companies cooperating within various areas between which the streams of products, information and financial assets are transferred” [24, p. 19]. The structure of a supply chain describes main links and specialized links which, in turn, M. Sołtysik differentiates to functional and supporting specialists [22, p.49]. A traditional supply chain is linear in form.

In the process approach, the supply chain is a sequence of processes adding value to a product during its flow and processing from the raw materials, through all intermediate forms and up to the form which complies with all requirements of the end-client. [see 5].
With respect to the coordinating and integrating role, a supply chain may be referred to as integrated or complex supply chain [22, p. 27]. As a result of such actions, the supply chain achieves higher effectiveness of its individual links and the system as a whole. However, this requires providing supply chain participants with necessary advance information, joint demand planning and forecasting, agreeing on the division of risks and benefits, as well as the coordination of flow [15, p. 166]. The concept of supply chains is a development of logistic principles – as stated by M. Christopher and cited by M. Sołtysik and A. Świerczek [3], [22, p. 21].

External factors such as [3], [4]:
- industrial and market globalization,
- dynamically changing market nature,
- changing structure of supply channels as well as goods and services distribution channels,
- technological changes and innovations,
- organizational integration,
result in the emergence of diverse forces shaping the relationships and interactions between the enterprises within a supply chain. It is also due to these forces that a supply chain may be perceived as a network structure.

In the network approach, supply chain is a supply network. Different terms also exist: strategic networks, business (economic) networks, networks of dependencies. A supply networks is a complex metasystem (complex metastructure) [8, pp. 319-326]. It comprises many enterprises cooperating with one another. It may take a variety of forms in a given time interval. The individual links of a supply chain (its elements) may also change over time alongside the relationships and connections between these elements. In such a system, various elements are linked to one another in a number of ways. Mutual dependencies and interactions (positive and negative) exist between the individual parts of this system which result in the growth, reduction or stabilization of a supply chain [8, pp. 319-326].

The metastructure is characterized by a dynamic, holarchic structure of mutually cooperating holons (enterprises). The more the supply chain expands, the less coherent and deprived of closeness the system they comprise becomes. This means that in such a metastructure, the links and dependencies may be somewhat more or less permanent. Thus, one may differentiate links which are always present in the supply chain (so-called core supply chain) and links which change dynamically, e.g. depending on the task being exercised at a given time (so-called auxiliary links). After the cooperation is concluded, the auxiliary links become separated from the core and the cooperation abandoned [10, p. 14]. A confirmation of the above is the finding by J. Johanson and L.-G. Mattsson that the networks, as a result of interactions and relationships between enterprises, are stable and changing at the same time [13, p. 34].

In a supply network, both the behaviours of a cooperative and competitive nature are present [see 14]. Behaviours of a cooperative nature are manifested by
partnership and cooperation on terms of equality (e.g. by mutual agreement for determining economic priorities).

A supply network is a developed system in which each link (enterprise) is a separated sub-system. The concept of a supply network goes beyond the domain of a single enterprise. It is a concept of an inter-organizational manner of solving problems, logistic operation and management at the level of metasolutions. The supply chain (network of supplies, dependencies and links) construed as a metastructure, is an inter-organizational system which exceeds legal frameworks of organizations which it encompasses [see 17, p. 16]. The network of links and dependencies between the cooperating enterprises is effected by transfers of material goods and information (Fig. 2).

![Fig. 2. Supply networks as a metasystem (metastructure)](source: own work)

Supply networks (economic networks) constitute organizations of a hybrid nature which combines hierarchic and market relationships [27, p. 208].

The enterprises may also form cluster structures. Clusters (groups of enterprises) provide their participants with a sense of belonging and allow for building market superiority [26, p. 7]. According to one of the definitions, a cluster is “an economic group of enterprises operating within related sectors, their suppliers and other organizations cooperating in the production process and in the value-adding chain which are linked by network relationships and for which the participation in the group may be an important factor affecting their individual competitiveness” [26, p. 17].

A clear difference between the supply chain and supply network mentioned before and a cluster is the more formalized manner in which the latter operates (cluster are most often organized by local institutions, territorial government
units, sector, state-owned or private organizations, as well private or state-owned institutions operating in the educational domain).

As in the case of metastructures discussed previously, also the clusters may be organized in a variety of configurations. They may be configured (Fig. 3) in accordance with four basic models [26, p. 69]. The isomorphic structure which is characterized by an accurate reference to the task being performed is typical for freshly created clusters. A specialization structure is implemented for organizations which would like to be included in a given task or its part. The partnership structure is perceived as the most desirable for clusters but it imparts a number of risks. First of all, such risks are connected with the lack of will to take integrating measures between the enterprises and their business processes and the perception of only one’s own interest (profits and losses) instead of the interest of the entire cluster structure. This can be compared to a situation in which every enterprise cares for its own interest only. The last structure refers to a specialized team of surgeons. It is characterized by cooperation, engagement and focus on a joint goal.

![Cluster structure models](image)

Fig. 3. Cluster structure models a) isomorphic, b) specialized, c) partnership, d) team of surgeons

*Source: on the basis of: [26, pp. 69-72]*

Insufficient resources, be it technical, financial or human resources, result in obstruction of growth processes and development of SME sector enterprises. One of the methods for initiating these processes is to implement integrating solutions which have already proven effective for SME sector enterprises. One of the most common measures to achieve this is cluster-based integration.

There are numerous definitions in the literature determining what a cluster is [18], [20], [12]. Despite the fact that M. Porter proposed a definition to which a majority of studies in this field pertain, it lacks clear reference to SME sector enterprises. However, the promotion of this kind of solutions within the European Union has become an additional incentive for the entrepreneurs to
integrate themselves in such forms. In this case, referring to the model set forth by I. Adizes (which is discussed below), one may notice a clear need to prepare both the entrepreneur and the organization itself to the integration processes to be implemented. A major factor to be considered in this process is the preparation of the entrepreneur to execute managerial roles, as set out by H. Mintzberg [16].

It turns out that both information and decision-making roles need to be performed very accurately since the typical form of a cluster involves a risk of entering into direct relationships with market competitors which constitute an integral element of the sector. Furthermore, a cluster structure often demarks the borderline of strategic alliances. It intensifies the process of pursuing joint plans regarding a selected fragment of business operations, acts as an integrator, results in the exchange of information, employees between the enterprises and, based on previous strategies of companies, affects their current shape, often with consideration of stronger relationships within an alliance.

Good examples of such processes can be found in clusters themselves, e.g. such as in case of Dolina Lotnicza (Aviation Valley Association).

The Aviation Valley Association was created in 2003 by a group of local entrepreneurs with the aim of making Podkarpackie, Poland, one of the leading aviation regions in Europe, along with already existing aviation clusters such as those in Toulouse and Bordeaux in France. The principle tool for reaching this vision was to build a strong regional cluster allowing for better exploitation of regional potential. In this context, the Aviation Valley project activities were aimed at supporting an initial phase of cluster development with the focus on enhanced communication mechanisms within the cluster as well as improved presentation to the outside world, most notably to potential investors. The objectives of the Aviation Valley Association [29]:

- the organization and development of a low cost supply chain
- the creation of favorable conditions in order to enhance the development of aerospace industry enterprises in this region
- the further development of aerospace research, aptitude and skill
- the cooperation with universities of technology, which would promote new ideas and scientific research within the aerospace industry
- the promotion of the Polish aerospace industry
- the protection of enterprise and businesses in the aerospace industry.

The Aviation Valley Association currently represents 80 companies within the region. The number of 100 members is expected to be reached within the next few years. Its members range from large manufacturers employing more than 1,000 to 45 family firms or subsidiaries with fewer than 50 staff. The organisation has established links with clusters around the world, and now also represents the country's aerospace sector in Brussels through the Association of Polish Aviation Industry.
3. Partnership – reasons for creation and development

3.1. Changes of entrepreneurship behaviours in respective periods of its operation

As indicated above, the SME sector enterprises are very much involved in the processes preceding their physical registration and commencement of business operation [11]. A contemporary Polish entrepreneur may come through this process with the use of a number of instruments for the support of SME sector enterprises. These instruments include (with conscious omission of the category of so-called financial and non-financial support tools) at least several forms with are jointly referred to as an active form of influence on the entrepreneurial activity in Poland. These include pre-incubators, seed capital and business angels.

The said instruments concentrate on ensuring the transfer of knowledge, experience and resources which are essential to better preparation of the entrepreneur to the process of founding a business3. Obviously, the instruments of this kind ensure not only easier going through the procedure of enterprise registration but often eliminate the situations in which the future entrepreneur takes wrong decision, e.g. unawareness of the lack of competence for managing a business.

In a majority of cases, the support instruments for future on-line business owners are not seen as a separate category. Majority of support for future entrepreneurs is carried out within the framework of initiatives such as pre-incubators or institutions which, although not using the name of “pre-incubator”, prepare future entrepreneurs to entry on the market. In practice, the comprehensiveness of trainings, workshops or specific skills are the most important aspects in which the entrepreneurs may benefit. In such case, an additional support may take the form of initiatives different from traditional methods of financing. In particular, the idea and experience transferred along with the capital by business angels is of significance. The transfer of knowledge and resources required for development of foundations of future enterprise on the market takes place at this stage.

Developing the frameworks of an organization are increasingly often being based on solutions from the field of logistic management. At this stage, the enterprise owners design the system of connections and relationships in which a given entity will operate in future. Additionally this kind of relationships may be formed in the case of the so-called spin-off, or spin-out enterprises. In such a case, the period preceding the opening of the business operation is the

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3 Current support tools increasingly often involve competence tests available on-line, e.g.: competence test of a future entrepreneur prepared within the framework of the KOMPASS project executed under INTERREG IVC financed by EFR (materials provided in electronic form at the workshops named: Training in the scope of Profiling Tool organized by Kompass on 09.12.2010, PAM Center, University of Lodz, Faculty of Management).
stage of collecting experience and gathering knowledge for creation of future relationships in the business.

The subsequent phases of enterprise life cycle are often based on much more sophisticated processes. Among many models describing the shift in behaviours of an entrepreneur, one may differentiate the model developed by I. Adizes [1]. It indicates, among others, the change in entrepreneur’s behaviour at various stages. I. Adizes describes and evaluates the behaviour with the application of four spheres denoted PAEI: P – producing results, A – administering, E – entrepreneuring, I – integrating)

- P – production understood as supply or provision of specific goods or services to the market,
- A – administration – creation of formal order in the scope of structures and processes,
- E – entrepreneuring – creating changes and implementing innovations,
- I – integrating – cooperation between all participants in a given organization.

Fig. 5. Organizational Styles over Lifecycle  
*Source:* [1]

The transition from one phase to the next phase takes place when an organization solves major problems of the phase it currently works through. Capital letters used in the scheme represent considerable intensity of given function whereas lower case letters – minor intensity.

As it follows from the stages presented above, along with transition through individual phases, the major field of entrepreneur’s operation changes. Still at this start-up stage the entrepreneur concentrates on overcoming obstructions in entering the market and verification of major assumption created within the framework of planning process. It should be noted that despite the existence of the behaviours referred to as entrepreneurial on the part of the enterprise man-
ager a difference emerges among them depending on the period since which the organization has been operating.

In the period referred to as “courtship” the entrepreneurial behaviours are created which fall into the “primary degree” category. As indicated previously, they often are of an operational nature and are based mainly on quantitative parameters (gathering capital essential for launching a business, purchase of required amount of fixed assets, employment of staff necessary for operating a business, rental of production and service premises, rental of land, etc). The primary entrepreneurship is perceived as creative and forming the future growth and development of an enterprise. However, it lacks the translation of entrepreneurial activity to all other three parameters shown in model by I. Adizes.

As shown by the analyses of the model author, it is only after this when the transition to the subsequent stage may take place. In order for this to happen, the entrepreneurial management gradually becomes reflected in operations within the enterprise which bring effects in the form of production/services that find clients on the market. In the model of I. Adizes, this period is referred to as “infant” and, in perception of many entrepreneurs, is the target. However, it should be noted that apparent stabilization based on “first degree” entrepreneurship and acceptance of its operation on the market, it is not prepared for “turbulences” resulting from rapid changes in such enterprise’s business environment.

In practice, the majority of obstacles in the said environment listed in reports by PARP [30], PKPP Lewiatan [31], etc. regarding the operation of SME sector enterprises points to the possibility of occurrence of an often rapid change in the environment of the enterprise to which it is not able to react effectively. It is a result entrepreneur’s lack of knowledge regarding the management of changes. It becomes inevitable that the enterprise progresses to the “Go Go” phase which guarantees the maintenance of large production/service scale as a result of implementation of “second degree” entrepreneurship in which the entrepreneur concentrates on benefiting from the advantages stemming from the growing market position due to the increasing time of business operation.

In this period, the entrepreneur gathers knowledge on the sector, gains experience in operating a business, increases reputation among customers, counterparties and financing institutions. This state does not determine rapid changes in the operation of an entrepreneur, however at this stage it is possible to counteract certain minor problems. However, methods used for overcoming such problems will still be based on the knowledge, experience and intuition of this particular entrepreneur. In this period, despite the gradual development of the enterprise, e.g. in terms of employment figures, no longer any actual use of intellectual value of this resource takes place. As in case of previous phase, a natural tendency exists among the SME sector entrepreneurs to cease development at this stage. It could be assumed that this phase guarantees a period of prosperity.
However, as it follows from the more modern interpretation of I. Adizes’ model, this period is not safe, since the organization has not yet developed any mechanisms which allow for knowledge gathering methods and decision making that are alternative to those of the entrepreneur himself, etc. In particular, it is visible in case of obstruction in the decision making process in a situation in which the enterprise pursues diversification and its processes become increasingly sophisticated, etc.

The subsequent phase is named “adolescence” and is the beginning of a very important period in the company lifetime. It is also a period which is often deferred by entrepreneurs to indefinite future. In this period, the enterprise concentrates on mechanism allowing for optimization of a business model that the enterprise follows at a given point. It is a time in which the organization starts to prepare not only for future growth, but also for future development. The methods and techniques implemented in the enterprise start to become visible in real decision in the scope of reallocation of capital, human resources and technical assets. Often, it is a time in which the enterprises start to delegate part of authority and responsibility to other persons.

In practice, there are many actions possible in this scope, however a very beneficial process to SME sector enterprises in the process of implementation of logistic solutions in companies which have not used them previously, but achieved a level ascribed to this phase (as mentioned above, a very good solution consists in preparation of the company structure to implementation of logistic management at the stage preceding the actual commencement of an enterprise’s core operation).

In this phase, processes such as outsourcing, benchmarking and reengineering are taking place as rationalization of operation. Often these processes lead to an opportunity of optimizing one’s business model by consolidation processes based on partnership relations. It is worth noting that it is this period that the enterprise is factually prepared to undertake informed initiatives to build a partnership. Apart from this, it should be noted that the foundation upon which the partnership may be built is the supply chain which comprises the enterprise that builds or will build it.

In order for these processes to take place, the entrepreneur should accept the changes of organizational nature. It requires a “third degree” entrepreneurship which is based on acceptance of professional changes in the enterprise. Professional management applied in “third degree” entrepreneurship is characterized by a high level of delegating authorities and duties as well as strong support in control measures consisting in monitoring of individual processes, implementation of procedures and pursuing system integration. In this period the costs incurred by the enterprise increase considerably which, in turn, becomes a basis for expansion (often rapid) of production/service provision scale, whereby the entrepreneur himself does not execute this scale. Numerous investments,

\[4\] For comparison, the original version of the I. Adizes’ model of 1988 did not assume the so-called “Founder’s Trap”.
organizational changes, implementation of various projects results in strong “turbulences” at this stage of company life cycle.

If the entrepreneur was above to develop mechanism enabling professional management, a real chance exists for transition into the subsequent phase referred to as “prime” which guarantees material (i.e. measurable in qualitative and quantitative terms) growth and development of the company. This also gives the opportunity to physically observe changes in relationships created with business partners. The “third degree” entrepreneurship is clearly visible in the perception of authority and relationships between individual goals and goals of enterprise managers and whole organization. The entrepreneur increasingly often considers the solutions based on intra-entrepreneurship which prove effective in large and structurally complex organizations.

Due to doubts regarding the contemporary applicability of I. Adizes’ model in its entire scope (late implementation of integration measures, low credibility – in terms of causes – of business failure trajectory, etc) one may consider the “prime” period as a period of crucial importance to maintenance of growth trend in an enterprise. In particular, aforesaid changes in employer behaviours translated onto the enterprise confirm the significance of this process for taking integrating actions.

3.2. Partnership in a network

Upon the observation of forming supply chains and supply networks, one should conclude that they create two types of relationships. This division into polycentric and hierarchic networks was determined on the basis of organizational configuration [25, p. 20].

Polycentric networks are: local networks based on personal contacts, technological relationships and equity holdings. Also virtual networks are classified as polycentric networks. Polycentric networks are networks of multi-sector nature.

Hierarchic networks are networks based on coordination of operation. Thus, they are dependent upon coordinating organization which role may be performed by a production, trading or logistic enterprise. This division is presented in figure 6.

The observation of small and medium business allows the creation of dependencies and relationship between them to be tracked. In the SME sector, the prevalent manner for the creation of business networks is by personal contacts. The relationships with recipients in such case are built on the basis of good personal contacts of an entrepreneur (or a representative of the enterprise) with the customers. The longer the relationship between the cooperating businesses or their representatives, the stronger the foundation for contact created. The regularity of contacts and relationships is also important.
The influence of cooperation and the creation of polycentric networks is also a derivative of the degree of trust towards the other party. The effective recommendation of other entrepreneurs requires a strong foundation of trust and long-term cooperation, hence the so-called networking meetings have become very popular recently. These meetings are organized and attended by representatives of enterprises seeking business contacts on the basis of mutual recommendations and reference. Apart from this, cooperation in such networks consists in maintaining such relationships by e.g. mutual support. However, it should be noted that translation of contacts from networking meetings into actual business contacts requires much work and engagement.

Apart from partnership based on good contacts, effective business relationships should be based on certain values. The concept of the creation of business contacts and relationships based on common and substantive values allows for the creation of long-term and effective relationships with the client by creating the image of a professional enterprise.
Hence the cooperation between small and medium businesses requires the creation of technological connections. These connections are favoured because of highly specialized knowledge of the entrepreneur and his employees. As a result of cooperation, certain mutual dependencies arise between business partners connected with owned or shares resources. Thanks to the cooperation, the enterprises have access to resources of business partners within the created network as well as other partners’ resources (knowledge, technical resources, materials, etc) which they are unable to acquire by acting on one’s own due to “limited scope” of own business. Possible exchange and adaptation of operation manner allows for closer and more effective cooperating relationship. Relationships based on resource-related connections refer also to information and equity holdings.

SME sector enterprises are also possible to enter into hierarchical networks with bigger organizations. However, it refers to a situation in which such SMEs are invited to cooperate by a larger organization which, within the scope of relationships, takes on the role and duties of a coordinating entity. The SME sector enterprises are sub-contractors and have to comply with the instructions from the network leader.

“Constant integration involves co-existence of formal and information relationships in long term. Relationships are created between others as a result of technological, trading, financial and social exchange” [19, p. 24].

The development of partnership between enterprises is a result of two kinds of links emerging in the course of cooperation. The longer the cooperation period, the higher the probability of entering into close relationships between enterprises based on links [7, p. 78]:

- of a social nature – partners’ relationships are created between employees of cooperating enterprises. However, the lack of satisfying benefits (of economic nature) for an enterprise does not allow for the intensification of the cooperation into business partnership in mid-to-long term perspective,
- of an economic nature – cooperating enterprises raise economic benefits (or other benefits – e.g. prestige), hence they enter into closer partners’ relationship. However, a lack of trust between the employees at the operational and strategic level is a source of conflicts and crises in the course of cooperation.

Fig. 7 shows the shift in relationship and scope of cooperation. Short term co-operation (transactional cooperation) may transform into long-term cooperation. Such a situation is possible in the case of frequent contacts, the joint execution of contracts and joint overcoming obstacles and resolving conflicts. Process-based cooperation becomes more characterized with integration. It consists in the integration of functional operation and coupling of internal processes for the purpose of increasing the efficiency and flexibility of a supply chain. Initial integration at the level of internal processes may lead to creation of structural connections – adjustment of organizational framework to more effective performance of tasks with respect to the business partner and “blurring of boundaries” between individual enterprises [7, p. 81].
Fig. 7. Change of relationship and cooperation in a supply chain a) short term cooperation, b) process-based cooperation, c) long-term cooperation

Source: on the basis of: [2, p. 8]

4. Conclusion

Is it follows from the above deliberations, the reasons for and the course of the process of consolidation of SME sector enterprises are diverse. It should be concluded that it is the entrepreneur who is responsible for leading an organization to a state which enables the processes of building partners’ relationships. An increasingly strong connection between the enterprises within the framework of a logistic chain becomes a real foundation for creating partners’ relationships between enterprises. The awareness of one’s role in the logistic chain, awareness of the fact that because of partners’ relationships they do not compete with each other but instead create value which allows for competition with other logistic chains, results in the fact that such relationships become an element of strategy and their durability is long-term.

Partnership and cooperation in chain, network or cluster systems act as an unquestionable support of all organizations participating in such systems. Despite that, transition to the partners’ form of operating a business is difficult, even in the SME sector.

References:

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