

STRENGTHENING SOCIAL COHESION: ADULT LEARNING THROUGH THE PRACTICE OF VOLUNTEERING

Annotation. The article aims to show the influence volunteering has on strengthening social cohesion. This requires dealing with different theories and models to describe and explore the nature of volunteering. A pilot-research was carried out from the theoretical framework.

The results of the research show a correlation between the important things in life and the level of influence in this field, the relevance of civic skills and competences, and the role of reflection. The study also provides insight into practice of volunteering in Lithuania.

Keywords: Adult learning, volunteering, participation, decision making, civic skills, knowledge, reflection

Introduction

When we talk about the ways to strengthen social cohesion, such as civic empowerment and social partnership, it's always connected with a process of (lifelong) learning, especially when considering the individual and organizational perspective. The role of reflection in this context is fundamental. Without reflection, there is no development, improvement, innovation, or social cohesion. Volunteer work is a practical way of gathering experience and reflecting-in and on-action. Therefore, volunteers can expand their skills and competences that are needed for social cohesion. The **aim** of the research is to describe adult learning through participation in the practice of volunteering. The **object** of the research is the adult learning through participation.

The **tasks** of the research are to:

- analyze scientific sources in order to identify the main aspects of different theories connected with volunteering
- verify the theoretical considerations by describing the participatory reality of adults in the society

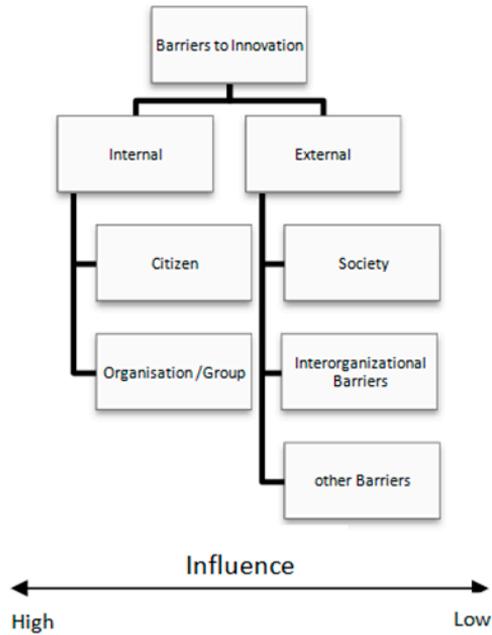
Participation

When we talk about civil empowerment and social partnership, we talk about various forms of participation (codetermination) of individuals and groups or organ-

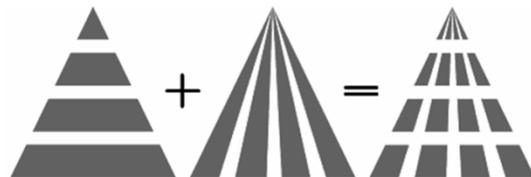
izations in the decision making processes. To describe the nature of participation, Arnstein, for example, uses the “ladder of citizen participation.” He makes a three-fold division and differentiates between “non-participation,” “tokenism,” and “Citizen Power.” Within this tripartite division, he distinguishes eight stages. Arnstein defines participation as to be involved in decision-making. Just informing or explaining about decisions does not meet this criterion. In his opinion, the step “informing” is “<...> the most important first step toward legitimate citizen participation,” but he also mentions that no one has absolute control like the eighth stage. But he nevertheless identifies power as the main motive. Participation refers to the relation of actors to each other and the distribution of decision making power between these actors (Arnstein, 1969). By using this model, we can also identify a self-referential holistic side of participation. As a part of society, citizens live in different systems so that their influence on decisions may vary. In their own families, they will have more influence on decisions in contrast to decisions concerning the country, for example. When put in a management context, some barriers to innovation can be identified.

The different systems like family, community, city, country, etc. can be seen as hierarchical barriers while Arnstein’s model of participation describes functional barriers, which together

lead to some kind of operational islands. Hörrmann and Tiby use this illustration to describe barriers to innovation at an organizational



(Arnstein, 1969)

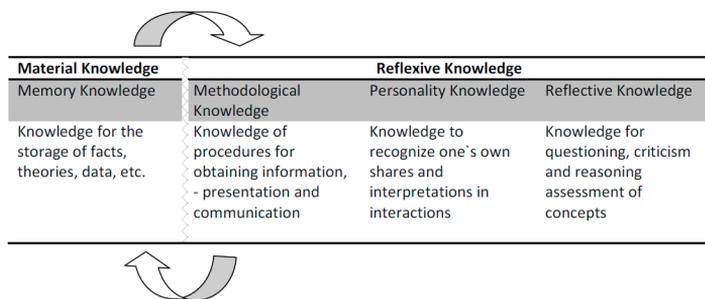


(Hörrmann and Tiby, 1990)

level (Hörrmann & Tiby, 1990). Following this theory, it is clear that citizens are acting in different contexts based on operational islands. The goal is to use the leeway and resources of each island to make use of the level of participation that is possible.

Another model illustrating participation and barriers is from Müller-Prothmann, et al. (2008). The diagram represents a simplified and adapted-to-the-topic model. In both models, it is clear how the level of participation corresponds to external factors and these are mutually dependent. But at the same time, it is clear that the level of the citizen (internal) is fundamental to understanding the dynamics of participation. What does a competent and responsible citizen need to participate in a democratic country? In a report produced by the “Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools” the use of civic learning is described as follows:

“Civic skills are the abilities necessary to participate as active and responsible citizens in democracy. They are necessary for critical thinking and collective action, and they include speaking, listening, collaboration, community organizing, public advocacy, and the ability to gather and process information” (The Leonore Annenberg Institute for Civics of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania, 2003, p. 16). The report also notes that self-efficacy is a precondition in order to make a change (civic action) but, at the same time, this action can lead to more self-efficacy. The European Commission has also identified eight key competences in the context of lifelong learning. One of those is called “Social and Civic Competence.” This competence is based on knowledge and includes the ability to reflect critically and creatively (European Commission, 2006, p. 10). But what exactly does this mean? Living in a society where knowledge has high value forces citizens to learn how to deal with knowledge. That means, they have to know how to transform material knowledge into reflexive knowledge in a constructivist manner. To illustrate this process, Arnold and Lermen developed the following model (Arnold & Lermen, 2005, p. 47).



(Arnold and Lermen, 2005)

Based on this model, it is clear that citizens actively manage their own learning process, including the evaluation of what is learned. Based on this knowledge the person then reflects on his real life.

Motivation is very important in this context. Why do people want to participate? How does one motivate them, fuel their desires, to participate? Going back to Adam Smith, different authors (Smith, 1950; Esser, 1993, p. 243) have assumed two main goals for human action: physical well-being and social recognition. Hence, similar goals should be present when people choose to participate. Moreover, participants should feel like they can make changes, which relates to the aforementioned notion of self-efficacy. But who assesses these opportunities and results?

This brings us to the value of reflection. The idea of reflective practice goes back to Schön. He distinguishes between reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Reflection-in-action means reflecting during the action about the action. Reflection-on-action occurs after the action is completed when we review what we have done and how we performed. Schön mentions that knowledge is necessary for both types of reflection (Van den Bossche & Beausaert, 2011, pp. 82–83). Out of this theoretical framework the following three theoretical outcomes can be identified, resulting in the theoretical basis by which we developed a questionnaire for measuring participation.

The theoretical outcomes

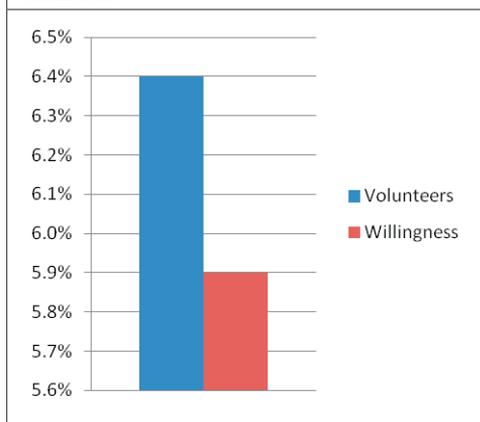
- I. A citizen is motivated to participate dependent upon the level of influence he or she has in decision making.
- II. Citizens need civic skills / competences to participate.
- III. Citizens need knowledge and the cognitive tools to reflect.

Results of the research

Based on a sample size of 88 participants, 80.7 % are females, 83.9 % are students, 24.4 % are working. Of those who are working, 95.23 % are volunteers. A majority of the respondents are single (88.6 %). Two groups could be identified, the group of volunteers and the group of people who are not volunteering at present.

| <p>Which field are you volunteering in? If you are not a volunteer, which field would you like to participate in?</p> | <p>What personal benefits do you get through volunteering? What are your thoughts about why people become volunteers?</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|-------------|----|-----------------|----|--|----------|----------------|---------|--------|--------|----|----------|----|-----------|---------|-------|----|---------|---|---|-------|---|----|---|----------|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----|----|--------|----|---|----------------|----|----|------------|----|----|
| <table border="1"> <caption>Data for Field of Volunteering and Field of Interest</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Field</th> <th>Field of Volunteering (%)</th> <th>Field of Interest (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Education</td> <td>18</td> <td>15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Social Work</td> <td>32</td> <td>40</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Culture</td> <td>25</td> <td>15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sports</td> <td>10</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Medicine</td> <td>5</td> <td>8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ecology</td> <td>12</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Animals</td> <td>5</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other</td> <td>5</td> <td>15</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | Field | Field of Volunteering (%) | Field of Interest (%) | Education | 18 | 15 | Social Work | 32 | 40 | Culture | 25 | 15 | Sports | 10 | 5 | Medicine | 5 | 8 | Ecology | 12 | 5 | Animals | 5 | 5 | Other | 5 | 15 | <table border="1"> <caption>Data for Personal Benefits and Why Volunteering</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Personal Benefits (%)</th> <th>Why Volunteering (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Personal Development</td> <td>60</td> <td>40</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Career</td> <td>10</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Social Aspects</td> <td>25</td> <td>40</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Experience</td> <td>10</td> <td>15</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | Category | Personal Benefits (%) | Why Volunteering (%) | Personal Development | 60 | 40 | Career | 10 | 0 | Social Aspects | 25 | 40 | Experience | 10 | 15 |
| Field | Field of Volunteering (%) | Field of Interest (%) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Education | 18 | 15 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Social Work | 32 | 40 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Culture | 25 | 15 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sports | 10 | 5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Medicine | 5 | 8 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ecology | 12 | 5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Animals | 5 | 5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Other | 5 | 15 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Category | Personal Benefits (%) | Why Volunteering (%) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Personal Development | 60 | 40 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Career | 10 | 0 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Social Aspects | 25 | 40 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Experience | 10 | 15 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <p>What hinders you from becoming a volunteer?</p> | <p>How important are the following things in your life?</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <table border="1"> <caption>Data for Factors Hindering Volunteering</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Factor</th> <th>Percentage (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Time</td> <td>75</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Information</td> <td>15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Personal Issues</td> <td>20</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | Factor | Percentage (%) | Time | 75 | Information | 15 | Personal Issues | 20 | <table border="1"> <caption>Data for Importance of Things in Life</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Percentage (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Studies</td> <td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Family</td> <td>21</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Friends</td> <td>19</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Free Time</td> <td>18</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other</td> <td>11</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | Category | Percentage (%) | Studies | 20 | Family | 21 | Friends | 19 | Free Time | 18 | Other | 11 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Factor | Percentage (%) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Time | 75 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Information | 15 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Personal Issues | 20 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Category | Percentage (%) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Studies | 20 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Family | 21 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Friends | 19 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Free Time | 18 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Other | 11 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

How many hours a week are you volunteering?
How many hours a week would you like to volunteer?



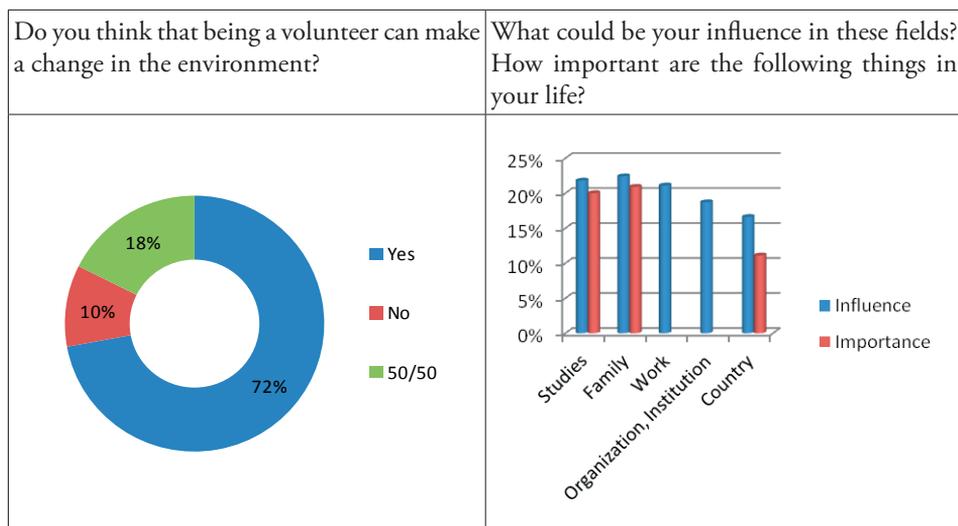
Result Summary

- If volunteers have a placement, they are also more willing to engage
- The social field is the most interesting for respondents. The main motivation is personal development
- The ways of volunteering should be more flexible (home-office, flexible time planning etc.)
- New measures are needed to improve the information process

Theoretical outcome I

A citizen is motivated to participate dependent upon the level of influence in decision making.

Results from the research



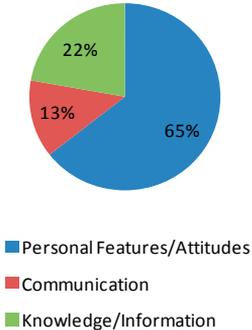
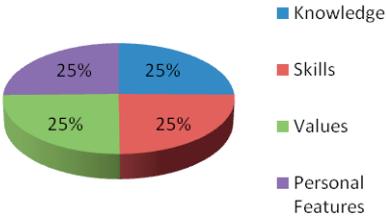
Result Summary

- There is a correlation between the importance/interest and the degree of influence
- The respondents think that volunteering is a way to change things

Theoretical outcome II

Citizens need civic skills / competences to participate.

Results from the research

| What knowledge, skills, values and personal characteristics does a volunteer need for civic action? | How important are knowledge, skills, values and personal characteristics in this context? | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|------------|-----------------------------|-----|-----------------------|-----|---------------|-----|--|----------|------------|-----------|-----|--------|-----|--------|-----|-------------------|-----|
|  <table border="1"> <caption>Data for: What knowledge, skills, values and personal characteristics does a volunteer need for civic action?</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Personal Features/Attitudes</td> <td>65%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Knowledge/Information</td> <td>22%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Communication</td> <td>13%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | Category | Percentage | Personal Features/Attitudes | 65% | Knowledge/Information | 22% | Communication | 13% |  <table border="1"> <caption>Data for: How important are knowledge, skills, values and personal characteristics in this context?</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Knowledge</td> <td>25%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Skills</td> <td>25%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Values</td> <td>25%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Personal Features</td> <td>25%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | Category | Percentage | Knowledge | 25% | Skills | 25% | Values | 25% | Personal Features | 25% |
| Category | Percentage | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Personal Features/Attitudes | 65% | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Knowledge/Information | 22% | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Communication | 13% | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Category | Percentage | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Knowledge | 25% | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Skills | 25% | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Values | 25% | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Personal Features | 25% | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

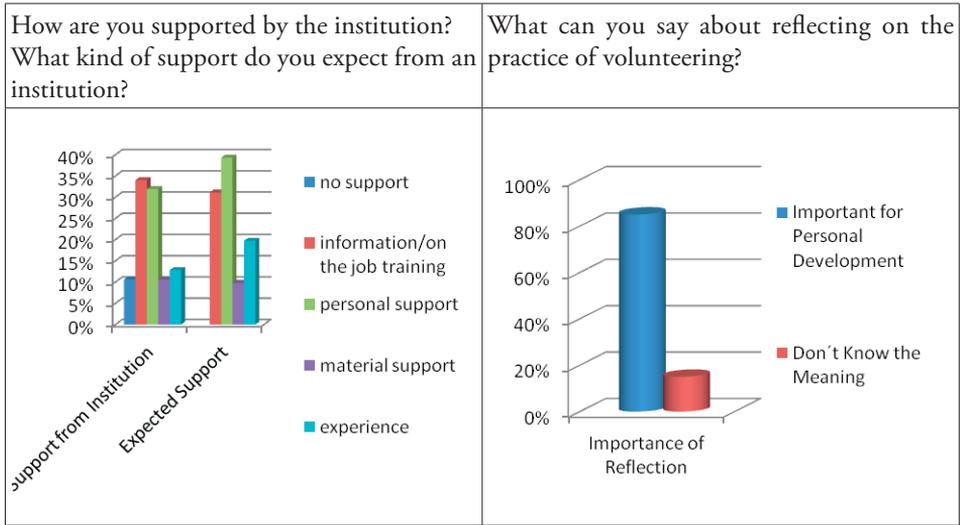
Result Summary

- For civic action, personal features seem to be more important than in general
- Civic skills and competences seem to be very important for the volunteers. In context of LLL these skills and competences can be continuously expanded through volunteering

Theoretical outcome III

Citizens need knowledge and the cognitive tools to reflect.

Results from the research



Result Summary

Volunteers expect different types of support. The most important types are personal ones (personal support and on-the-job-training), which leads to personal development. It's assumed that volunteering is a practical field for reflection and an opportunity to transform material knowledge into reflexive knowledge. The ability to reflect is mentioned as very important and a precondition to achieve these goals.

Conclusions

The practice of volunteering (civic participation) is a fundamental part of our everyday life. In different situations and systems, we must deal with a variety of decisions. The research shows that the level of participation can vary. In the context of strengthening social cohesion skills, competences, the ability to reflect, motivation and knowledge are basic to taking an active part in the decision making process. These factors are interdependent. To develop sustainable ways to strengthen social cohesion, action plans need

to deal with these factors. Volunteering is a very important field necessary to expanding civic skills, which are needed for civic action. To achieve this, the nature of volunteering has to be adapted to the needs of possible volunteers. The research also shows a gap between supply and demand. If we take these conditions into account, it could create a win-win situation. On the one hand, implementing these strategies may strengthen social cohesion while, on the other hand, developing the personality of volunteers.

List of References

1. Arnold, R. & Lermen, M. (2005). Lernen, Bildung und Kompetenzentwicklung. Neuere Entwicklungen in Erwachsenenbildung und Weiterbildung. In: *Die lernende Gesellschaft. Lernkulturen und Kompetenzentwicklung in der Wissensgesellschaft*. Weinheim: pp. 299-320.
2. Arnstein, S. (1969). A Ladder of Citizen Participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, No. 4, pp. 216–224.
3. Van den Bossche, P. & Beusaert, S. (2011). The reflective practitioner: D. Schön. In: *Theories of Learning for the Workplace. Building blocks for training and professional development programmes*. Oxfordshire: Routledge, pp. 79–86.
4. Esser, H. (1993). *Soziologie: Allgemeine Grundlagen*. Frankfurt / New York.
5. European Commission (2006). Key Competences for Lifelong Learning – A European Framework. Luxembourg.
6. Hörrmann, G. & Tiby, C. (1990). Projektmanagement richtig gemacht. In: *Management der Hochleistungsorganisation*. Wiesbaden, pp. 73–91.
7. Müller-Prothmann, T.; Behnken, E. & Borovac, S. (2008). “Innovation Management Devils’ – A Disruptive Factor Based Analysis of Innovation Processes”. In: *Open Innovation. Creating Products and Services Through Collaboration*, Proceedings of the XIX ISPIM Conference, Tours. France.
8. Müller-Prothmann, T. & Dörr, N. (2011). *Innovationsmanagement*. Strategien, Methoden und Werkzeuge für systemische Innovationsprozesse. München: Carl Hanser Verlag.
9. Smith, A. (1950). *The Wealth of Nations*. London, New York.
10. *The Leonore Annenberg Institute for Civics of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania and the Campaign for the Civic Mission*, 2003. Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools. Available at: <<http://civicmission.s3.amazonaws.com/118/f0/5/171/1/Guardian-of-Democracy-report.pdf>>.

Santrauka

Genutė Gedvilienė, Dalia Staniulevičienė, Christianas Gridelis

SOCIALINĖS SANGLAUDOS STIPRINIMAS: SUAUGUSIŲJŲ MOKYMASIS SAVANORIAUJANT

Straipsnyje siekiama parodyti savanoriškos veiklos svarbą socialinės sanglaudos kontekste. Aptariamos skirtingos teorijos ir modeliai, padedantys atskleisti savanoriškos veiklos pobūdį. Atliktas bandomasis tyrimas patvirtina, kad pilietinis žmogaus aktyvumas pasireiškia dalyvaujant savanoriškoje veikloje. Pilietiniam veiksmui atlikti svarbios žmogaus asmeninės savybės. Žmogaus gebėjimas reflektuoti, motyvacija ir žinios yra pamatiniai pilietinio dalyvavimo, sprendimų priėmimo procese.

Esminiai žodžiai: suaugusiųjų mokymasis, savanorystė, dalyvavimas, sprendimų priėmimas, pilietiškumas, refleksija.

Iteikta 2013 m. sausio mėn.

Pateikta spaudai 2013 m. gegužės mėn.

Genutė Gedvilienė – mokslų daktarė, Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto Socialinių mokslų fakulteto profesorė; mokslinių tyrinėjimų kryptys: mokymo ir mokymosi paradigmos, mokymasis grupėmis – kognityvinių ir socialinių gebėjimų tyrimai, suaugusiųjų mokymasis; adresas: Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas, Socialinių mokslų fakultetas, Edukologijos katedra, K. Donelaičio g. 52, Kaunas, Lietuva, LT-44244; el. paštas g.gedviliene@smf.vdu.lt

Genutė Gedvilienė – Prof. Dr. Faculty of Social Sciences, Vytautas Magnus University; Areas of scientific interests: teaching and learning paradigms, learning in groups - research into cognitive and social skills, adult learning; address: Department of Education Sciences, Faculty of Social Sciences, Vytautas Magnus University, K. Donelaičio str. 52, Kaunas, Lithuania, LT-44244; e-mail g.gedviliene@smf.vdu.lt

Dalia Staniulevičienė – Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto Socialinių mokslų fakulteto Edukologijos katedros doktorantė, asistentė; mokslinių interesų sritys: suaugusiųjų mokymasis, probleminis mokymasis, reflektvyvioji praktika, savanorystė; adresas: Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas, Socialinių mokslų fakultetas, Edukologijos katedra, K. Donelaičio g. 52, LT-44244 Kaunas, Lietuva. el. paštas d.staniuleviciene@bibl.vdu.lt

Dalia Staniulevičienė – Doctoral Student, Assistant in the Department of Education, Faculty of Social Sciences, Vytautas Magnus University. Field of research: adult learning, problem based learning, reflective practise. Address: Department of Education Sciences, Faculty of Social Sciences, Vytautas Magnus University, K. Donelaičio str. 52, Kaunas, Lithuania, LT-44244. E-mail: d.staniuleviciene@bibl.vdu.lt

Christianas Gridelis – suaugusiųjų švietimo magistras, socialinio darbo bakalauras, Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto Socialinių mokslų fakulteto Edukologijos katedros asistentas; mokslinių interesų sritys: savanorystė, dalyvavimas, strategija „Europa 2020“ „Erasmus visiems“ kontekste, beglobių švietimas; el. paštas gridelc@googlemail.com

Christian Gridel – Master of Arts in Adult Education, Bachelor of Arts in Social Work, Assistant in the Department of Education, Faculty of Social Sciences, Vytautas Magnus University Lithuania; Field of research: Volunteering, Participation, Strategie „Europe 2020“ in Context of “Erasmus for all”, Education for the Homeless; E-mail gridelc@googlemail.com