Building University and Society Partnership through Service-Learning in Lithuania

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Abstract

The article deals with theoretical and practical possibilities for collaboration between universities and social stakeholders. The experience in service-learning when creating the network of collaboration of Šiauliai University and non-governmental, public and business sectors is presented. In this context, features of interaction among different service-learning participants' groups (academic staff, students, heads of organisations), factors of the educational process and socio-cultural context helping to foster development of partnership, to maintain relations and mutual support are highlighted.

Keywords: university-society partnership, service-learning, mutual learning, cooperation, social capital, volunteering, civic education.

Introduction

Presently, universities understood as business- and labour market-oriented institutions must educate high quality specialists, knowledge workers and global citizens endowed with intellectual and personal features applicable in the world labour market as well as to stimulate social development. One of the objectives of higher education is implementation[1] of the third mission related to mutual learning of universities and society in partnership. Such collaboration should improve quality of scientific research in universities and stimulate creation of knowledge as well as its exchange, to stimulate the increase in the number of innovations, initiate new activities and forms of organisation. OECD (1996) emphasises the importance of increase of knowledge dissemination through collaborative networks[2] and diffu-

sion of technologies. In this context, the ideas of collaboration among sectors of service-providing university, entrepreneurial institution of higher education and society are relevant; these ideas are related to stimulation of economic development (Bridges, 2004; Tjedvoll, 2004). The development of inter-organisational networks is important not only as the development of common knowledge and innovative culture but also as the possibility to mutual long-term learning, dialogue-based collaboration when educating specialists and society members endowed with competences necessary for the contemporary labour market. In such a way, the development of collaborative networks is the necessary condition of the learning society (Longworth, 2000).

In this context, education of wide-profile specialists who are able to continuously improve their qualification and adjust to constant socio-economic change in university is highlighted. It is emphasised that more attention should be paid to consistency of the development of both specific and generic skills. Exactly the latter ones, otherwise called transferable skills, would allow to easily realise oneself in the pluralistic and global labour market and society, to creatively act under unexpected conditions (Dewey, 2007; Barnett, 1994). Striving to implement such educational aims and expected learning outcomes, it is necessary to provide appropriate educational conditions for learning through activities, practice and social environment, to collaborate with various social stakeholders, project intellectual, professional and social activities in real situations, to create knowledge through the development of common understanding, open discussion and reflection of education participants. In words of Longworth, (2000), the idea of the learning society (learning region/city) should be implemented; such idea foresees creation of such learning conditions which would allow every society member lifelong striving for perfection of one's own human potential and competences, to gain diverse knowledge, abilities needed for implementation of life roles, also to develop personality traits, opinions, values, attitudes.

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[1] Education and Training 2010. Report from the commission to the council on the Council Resolution of 23 November 2007 on Modernising Universities for Europe's competitiveness in a global knowledge economy, Commission of the European Communities, Brussels, 2008.

[2] Inter-sectorial partnership and collaborative networks, also called knowledge networks, are the form of cooperation meeting the changing nature of creation innovations and dissemination of knowledge which shifts from the linear process to a more complex one, i.e. the innovation occurs in a complex process, in the interaction among a great number of social agents, institutions what may grow into the national system of innovations (OECD, 1996:16).

The first theoretical analysis of learning through service to communities made the benefit of application of this method relevant in the development of the precedent of a closer collaboration between institutions of higher education and public organisations (NGO); also, it was as one of the possible ways of striving to contribute to the development of the civic society, encouragement of civic activeness in Lithuania (Mažeikis, 2003; 2004) or as the possibility to relate principles of religious and civic education (Balčiūnienė, 2007). In order to adjust the service-learning for Lithuanian conditions, the term of cooperative studies (Lith. *kooperuotos studijos*) was suggested, by emphasising not serving or provision of services but collaboration between social stakeholders and institutions of higher education as well as integration of other learning methods (cooperative learning)[3]. In the framework of the Leonardo da Vinci project CIVICUS coordinated by Vytautas Magnus University, experience of service-learning in various countries has been analysed, scholarly publications were worked out (Profesinis rengimas: tyrimai ir realijos, 2005; Sanden & Zdanevicius (Eds.), 2006). Institutional implementation of learning through service to communities and its adjusted variant – cooperative studies – in study programmes has been implemented in 2006–2008, when Šiauliai University was implementing the project supported by the European Social Fund "Development of Successful Students' Career when Implementing the Innovative Method of Cooperative Studies (KOOPERIA)" (http://kooperia.su.lt). The results of this institutional experience were introduced in scholarly publications (Mažeikis, 2007; Mažeikienė (comp.) 2008; Socialiniai tyrimai, 2008).

The article discusses the experience of implementation of service-learning in Šiauliai University. The aim of the article is to reveal the factors that strengthen and weaken the partnership between the university and society when applying the opportunities of service-learning. The following problem questions are raised: What features of service-learning allow setting up collaborative networks between the university and social partners? What factors predetermine the success and the failure of collaboration between the university and social partners?

Service Learning – *a bridge* between university and society

The interest in application of service-learning in institutions of higher education increased in the 1980s, when American institutions of higher education felt that they were about to lose the public significance and it was aimed at establishment of the ci-

vic mission of universities (Erlich, 2000; Colby et al., 2003). Learning through service to communities was singled out as an effective means for civic and democratic development enabling getting closer to real societal problems. In this context, the theories of **symbolic capital** (Bourdieu) and **social capital** (Putnam) which are based on the concepts of *social exchange* and *social commodities* are very important (Mažeikis, 2007). Besides other strategies on political activeness of universities, such as scientific research oriented towards social problems and communities (Hartley, 2009), the potential of learning through service to communities to increase the social capital through building networks of university–community partnership was noticed (Jacoby and Associates, 2003; Cambell, 2000); it met the needs of a local community as well as national and global ones (Jacoby, 1996). Diverse forms of service (voluntarily, philanthropic, charitable, altruistic, civic activities) may increase the symbolic capital of communities, educational institutions, single personalities manifesting in the dimensions of popularity, prestige, authority. The social capital is manifested as features of social organisations (trust, common norms, and networking) which may increase productivity of the society (Putnam, 2000). According to Mažeikis (2007), "voluntership is a means of circulation of the social capital, the power of self-organisation of communities necessary for this capital's increase." (p. 27). Even though it is difficult to measure the increase of the social capital being accumulated thanks to common activities of the university, the community and students during learning through community service, however, Mažeikis (2007) underlines that where community is active and its activities are socially acceptable, positive societal interactions are observed, their results are obvious, too: the land price of the neighbourhoods where this takes place increases; such communities become the centre of attraction which initially stimulates the increase of social welfare, settlement of new, more motivated families, and later such communities attract small and medium business, commercial centres and, thus, revive neighbourhoods. In other words, the development of long-term mutual social relations provides conditions for implementation of the idea of learning region / city. Also, the environment of a learning region, society is being created (Jarvis et al., 2006; Longworth, 2000).

Research works prove the use of partnership between university and various society sectors being developed during service-learning and reason the demand for application of this method in institutions of higher education thanks to its holistic educational character (Kaliba, 2006; Furco, 2002b; Covitt, 2002, Zlotkowski, 2000; and many others) because service-learning as the unity of learning strategies helps to impro-

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[3] The term *cooperative studies* was suggested by Prof. G. Mažeikis (2003, 2004, 2007).

ve students' subject-related knowledge, abilities, attitudes in various study programmes and subjects. E.g. in works of pedagogues from other countries, the impact of social work, ethics studies, informatics, mathematics, art, marketing and other fields is described. It is emphasised that study programmes based on experiential and reflexive learning stimulate versatile professional, intellectual, personal, social and civic perfection, and present data on the positive impact of service-learning on the achievement of course aims. **Extension of involvement of students into the labour market** is not the least important aspect of the positive impact of service-learning. The research of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), having surveyed 22 thousand students with experience of service-learning (Astin et al., 2000), indicated that learning through community service made a positive impact not only on academic achievements (better learning results, the average marks), value transformations (higher expressed feeling of civic responsibility, tolerance attitudes), personal and leadership features: a positive impact on students' attitudes to take part in community service programmes after graduation was noticed. Moreover, it is observed that gaining of experience of community service, when implementing projects on learning through community service, allows obtaining marketable skills, maintaining useful acquaintances, gaining self-confidence, better perception of one's own competences and possibilities (Young et al., 2007). During learning through community service, students form their professional identity, relate studies to future career opportunities which stronger motivate learning.

Learning through community service activities is undoubtedly useful for communities too (Gray, Ondaatje, Zakaras, 1999); however, the concept of the benefit may vary depending on whether **the aims of learning through community service are linked to *charity* or *change*** (Battisoni, 1997). During service based on philanthropic principles, charity activities of particular help (e.g. sharing food, helping elderly people to do shopping, tidy up at home, taking care of children etc.) to the local community are underlined. On the contrary, change-oriented service emphasises transformative potential of service-learning to not only meet the needs of the society but also to search for reasons and solutions for society problems together with society members. In **critical service-learning** (Mitchell; 2007; Butin, 2005; King, 2004), the contemporary concept of service is linked to the notion of society engineering, the need to find out the nature of societal and communal problems and to solve them when getting involved into dialogue-based relations. Community service is more than just a simple help for those society members who have less, are poor, social outcasts, marginalised. During critical service-learning, it is aimed at enablement of students and community members who through joint acting may bring a particular change when creating common welfare. The critical service-learning model emphasises students' involvement into service activities where the essential aim is dedicated to the analysis of issues of power disbalance, social inequality, social enablement, exclusion and inclusion, racial discrimination and many others. Such conception of the enabling service should lead to social actions involving into solution of social problems. Such learning through community service point of view is based on ideas of Paolo Freire and critical pedagogy; that is why, first of all, the learning process enabling all participants, especially those belonging to non-dominating society groups, is emphasised and, thus, social justice in the aspect of learning, perfection is ensured. Butin (2007, 2005) paying much attention to conceptualisation of learning through community service, when talking in the perspective of the critical theory of learning through community service, underlines that during service all groups of participants (academic staff, students and community members) should act jointly aiming to find out the nature of knowing, explore what define and control knowing, what hegemonic powers impact creation of knowing etc. This critical point of view would be matched by learning through the community service model of civic involvement (Watson, 2004) and the community model (Codispoti, 2004) where the aspect of civic participation, representation as well as community-based cooperation, collaboration, development of partnership are emphasised. Both models regard the principle of reciprocity from the point of view of benefit, results as well as the process, interaction of participants during the service. The role of an educator is related to the learning process (in the sense of content, methods) where critical thinking, involvement into meaningful activities of the service of a learner, solutions of problems aiming to bring social change would be encouraged. The role of students is understood not as rendering knowledge gained in university to the society members but as learning how social, civic initiatives are understood in the context of academic/theoretical and communal/practical knowing.

Socio-cultural and creative adjustment of service-learning in Lithuania

In 2006–2008, the project "Development of Successful Students' Career when Implementing the Innovative Method of Cooperative Studies (KOOPERIA)" aimed at the adjustment and implementation of the innovative learning through community service in North Lithuania region's institutions of higher education. Šiauliai University, Šiauliai and Pa-

nevėžys colleges re-arranged and tested 44 courses according to this method in various study programmes[4] and various study modes (full-time, part-time evening, part-time extra-mural). The creation of new educational reality proceeded on the ground of service-learning experience of Šiauliai University experts gained at USA universities as well as the experience gained during analogous projects that were carried out in Lithuania and scientific, practical sources worked out by authors from other countries. During the project, cooperative studies were tested by more than 30 academic staff and more than 600 students; institutions of higher education started the relations with more that 200 organisations (NGO) which accepted students for the period of one semester.

As it was mentioned above, separate authors and institutions in Lithuania call service-learning not as learning through community service but as cooperative studies (Mažeikis, 2003; 2004, Balčiūnienė, 2007; Mažeikis, 2007; Mažeikienė (comp.) 2008; Socialiniai tyrimai, 2008), by emphasising not service and provision of services but cooperation, collaboration of social stakeholders and institutions of higher education as well as integration with other methods (*cooperative learning*). Mažeikis (2003, 2004, 2007, 2008a) discusses the occurrence of the idea of cooperative studies and adjustment of the new educational practice; he emphasises that *Šiauliai University develops cooperative studies that is creative adjustment of service-learning, innovative transfer of the model valid in other cultures and its application to Lithuanian conditions* (Mažeikis, 2008a). To be more precise, **cooperative studies** is called **the creative construct of cooperative learning and service-learning** (Mažeikis, 2007). The latter description allows revealing socio-cultural and creative-interpretational aspect of transfer of service-learning and its adjustment to local conditions.

The employment of cooperative studies rather than service-learning in Šiauliai University is based on the mismatch of essential American postulates, i.e. service, sociality, volunteership, with Lithuanian reality determined by different historical, sociocultural peculiarities of the country (Mažeikis, 2007, 2008a; Mažeikienė (comp.), 2008). Service-learning was supplemented by methods of cooperative learning. Adjusted branch of service-learning, i.e. cooperative studies, expands the spectrum of social stakeholders covering not only various neighbouring communities but also NGOs, organisations of the public sector, business enterprises; the concept of service

is changed by the market-oriented form of collaboration – cooperation of university community and social stakeholders.

In the pedagogical system of the adapted service-learning[5] based on the liberal learning paradigm, the roles of learning participants change. Cooperative studies de-centralises the power of a lecturer because learning is transferred outside auditoria. The case of Šiauliai University projected that only introductory lectures acquainting with the subject's aims, content, procedures of formulation of assignments and accounting for them etc. would take place in auditoria; and then formed groups of students would get involved into activities of chosen social stakeholders (communities of religious, ethnic minorities, various NGOs, public state enterprises or business companies) for a period of 3 months; materials for studies, tasks and other information related to the subject's content would be placed in the virtual studies environment (*Moodle*). Assistance has been organised for students of cooperative studies: academic staff regularly individually or in groups provided consultations for students, social stakeholders appointed persons – mentors who helped students in formulation of activity tasks and successful integration into the community. The cooperative studies underlines the utilitarian cooperation when neither lecturer nor students or social stakeholders have the monopoly of knowledge. When solving a real problem/task identified in activities of social stakeholders, all participants of the process (lecturer, students and social stakeholders) become equal partners, learners and co-authors of the knowledge being constructed.

Analysis of experience in creation of partnership between university and society when applying service-learning: Šiauliai University case

Research methods

The research of the new educational reality – service-learning (cooperative studies) – consisted of several stages during which the triangulation of research methods was employed: theoretical constructs of the method were investigated when purposively collecting empirical data, experiences of specialists' practitioners and target groups (students, academic staff and social stakeholders) were compared when applying techniques of the *focus* group, a structured survey in a written form was used, when carrying out individual interview and participating observation (Vandzinskaitė, 2011).

[4] The method was tested in various programmes of Social Sciences: Public Administration, Business Management, Education, Special Education etc. Courses covered modules from general education (Introduction to Business and Management, Religious Studies) to specialised vocational studies (Marketing, Social Anthropology, Analysis of Political Parties).

[5] This adjustment of cooperative studies, an adapted version of service-learning in Lithuania will further in the article be called with the original 'service-learning' term.

The present article introduces the results of the final research stage – results of the interview survey and participant observation (Vandzinskaitė, 2011). The interview aimed at finding out individual experiences of lecturers (12) and students (30) who tested service-learning[6], when going deeper into specific experiences of participants' interaction, organisation of a subject, pedagogical process, collaboration with social stakeholders, problems that arose and other peculiarities; questions related to the following were presented: the pedagogical scenario (changes in arrangement of the course, tasks, assessment etc.), specificities of mastery of the new roles of all participants (academic staff, students, social stakeholders) and interaction, assessment of educational efficiency and possibilities of service-learning in one's personal opinion; also, the possibility to the informants to underline positive and negative experiences in service-learning was provided. With regard to these assessments, it was aimed at revealing and interpreting socio-cultural and institutional conditions for implementation of the method and building partnership.

During all stages of the research, methods of participant observation were applied that allowed observation and participation of all involved participants (academic staff, students and social stakeholders) in public discussions. In 2007–2009, seminars (2) on dissemination of experience of the academic staff that had tested service-learning were held; there they introduced their experiences, faced problems, didactic insights; also, meetings for discussion of the results of collaboration of all participants (academic staff, students and social stakeholders) were arranged (1); students' service-learning assessments (3) were looked through at the end of the semester. Informal conversations and discussions helped to find out essential problems faced by the participants, to observe the exploration of problem situations and the dialogue-based search for solutions. This assisted in the selection of informants who would reveal the most obvious contextual aspects of application of service-learning and would ensure a wide spectrum of unique, successful and unsuccessful experiences in application of the new method, with regard to disciplinary specificity of the course and uniqueness of its implementation situation (e.g. exceptionality of developed competences, characteristics of an organisation where practical placement was organised, peculiarities of students etc.).

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[6] The interviewed lecturers and students participated in the various courses: Applied Anthropology and Communities, Marketing, Special Pedagogic and Theory of Education, Social Anthropology, Local Government Administration, Corruption and Anti-corruption Policies.

Analysis of the research results

The data of the interview stage proved the results obtained during other stages (*focus* group, qualitative questionnaire-based survey) evidencing the actual benefit obtained by all groups of participants (Vandzinskaitė, 2011): when meaningfully getting involved into local activities, students initiated new activities in organisations, brought innovations, thus, tested themselves in professional activities and started maintaining useful contacts; through cooperation between organisations, communities, business enterprises and institutions of higher education, trust of employers in institution of higher education as well as readiness for collaboration in the future increased; tasks that had been carried out by students were useful to organisations: students worked out real project applications for receiving financial support (e.g. applied for the city public governance institution to organise local and international events and received financial support, others worked out applications for EU structural funds), carried out various social research investigations for organisations (e.g. survey of city residents concerning usage and quality of drinking-water), in separate cases students' assistance was especially effective, e.g. a rural community received financial support. Student's research works and provided consultations to communities created the precedent of collaboration between university and rural communities. Not only personal benefits in the sense of students' professional competences but also expanded career opportunities are observed; also, the benefit to both community and institution of higher education is highlighted.

However, implementation of cooperation as the essential aspect of such innovative studies occurred to be a difficult task for participants. The results of the *focus* group and questionnaire-based survey suggest that the participants made no distinction between service-learning and traditional practical placement, organisations did not understand the idea of service-learning itself, and students did not employ the possibility of learning inside organisation. As the interview and observation data show good and bad experiences of collaboration with social stakeholders depend on many aspects: more emphasised participation of a lecturer in students' learning process and maintenance of contacts with social stakeholders; students' initiative, motivation when carrying out tasks; also, it depends on the attitude of social stakeholders towards service-learning, students, and readiness to welcome and help them in learning activities.

Because of the change and ambiguity of participants' roles, also, because of sometimes hostile relations among social stakeholders, students experienced many diverse feelings and emotions. Despite po-

sitive impact of service-learning, it becomes obvious that for many students during their study period the experience of learning was tense, unpleasant, caused stress and many doubts, formed the lack of self-confidence, uncertainty for the final result etc. According to one student of project activities, "*You get many both positive and negative emotions. You have one hundred and one questions raised in your head why things happen in a certain way; you experience one hundred and one uncomfortable feelings. There was quite too much of this negative experience*."

Sometimes **negative the experience of students was related to insufficiently organised, impolite and unfriendly behaviour of staff in organisations**, **explicit** indifference or even indiscrete, incollegial behaviour. One case illustrates that the staff of organisations behave especially hostile and it is very difficult for students to maintain contacts and, what is more, to solve occurring problems or disagreements: "<…> the deputy head behaved with us in a very hostile way, to say more, sent us away. One said "*what tasks, what tasks?! I know nothing, go away! After two weeks when the head returned <…> he was very surprised and asked why we came here? We gave you many documents and you can work out an excellent report*. We may draw a conclusion that they are not willing to accept for practical placement." (Daiva, 21) Other students assessed their service-learning especially negatively not only because of insufficient readiness of social stakeholders to welcome students or their unwillingness to closer collaborate but also because of offhandedly assigned tasks and because of using the students as additional labour force, as students' put it "**to perform unskilled work**": "we performed the work of couriers which was not paid for". We had to distribute invitations to the conference. Perhaps it would not be so angry if all the invitations were received at once, but we had to go to the same street or neighbourhood for several times, <…> there were such places which were not reached by bus and, thus, we had to go in own cars, on own expenses." (Jolanta, 21)

As it was mentioned in the theoretical part of the article, in the case of service-learning, various activities are projected including the task of a "courier". Still, students were mostly disappointed not by the type of the task but by the irresponsible and disrespectful attitude towards them and presented tasks: "*Somehow they treated us very irresponsibly. If we are not needed, so why to take part in such service-learning? For the purpose to show that you collaborate with the university*" (Laura, 20). The case illustrates ineffective cooperation of students and social stakeholders which was not based on the principles of collaboration and learning. The research revealed that the type of a task for service-learning and the process of adjustment of the task is a very important aspect of service-learning which, in many cases, determined more successful or especially valuable, positively assessed experiences and learning results. According to students who participated in activities of public governance institutions during cooperative studies, the lack of a clear task in advance makes the learning process more difficult: "*When going for partial practical placement at a governance institution I expected that we would get tasks that help us to practically find out about activities of a particular department. However, this not happened, and I may say that my partial practical placement was formal*."

In this context, we can single out two experiences of emotional dissatisfaction:
⇒ Inner conflicts (stress, low self-confidence) arising due to heavy responsibility load because, differently than studying in a traditional way, students were responsible for working out a certain application. Students sometimes felt that too complex and requiring high responsibility tasks were assigned to them in teams, the tasks not to be carried out by them independently. Or the absence of particular tasks, when students were confused and worried that they would not be able to meet the expectations and successfully finish studies of the course.
⇒ External conflicts (conflicts of interests, tension of time) arising due to the tension in sharing competences, different interests, lack of motivation for various groups of staff to collaborate etc.

When occurring in the field of such tension or becoming witnesses of conflicts, students usually were not able to properly assess the situation, did not notice the mismatch of individual's professional interests, were not able to manage conflicts. In such cases, if a mentor helping to analyse causes for conflicts is absent, this negative experience may make harm to students, de-motivate them. Thus, a lecturer has an important task to perform – to explain the conflict of interests as a natural and unavoidable feature of a heterogenous organisation. This way, the negative experience of conflicts may turn into useful experience. Conflict situations may bear the educational sense when they are quite intensive and dramatic but not too painful and de-motivating. Negative experience bears the educational impact only in the case when it is being considered, reflected. In other words, only through experience-based learning, when experience is related to constant reflection, the benefit of negative social and inner tensions becomes visible. However, if a student has no abilities of independent reflection, one may be helped by a lecturer during consultations, while developing and directing student's consi-

derations towards the right purpose.

Despite the discussed negative experience of service-learning when collaborating with social stakeholders, other experience suggests that the tasks performed by students were useful to all groups of participants: excellent learning results as well as those useful to social stakeholders were achieved. E.g. a staff of a governance institution states that "*suggestions proposed by students will be used in working out recommendations on prevention of corruption to subordinate companies, enterprises and institutions; and in future we expect close collaboration with the university.*" In other case, on the ground of lecturer's statements, students had the opportunity to become researchers of local opportunities and consultants to community project activities, catalysts of social processes – what enabled them to implement several aims during service-learning:

⇒ **The idea of service-learning is being implemented through learning a particular subject by carrying out particular** useful **activities for the community**. Research and consultations for communities carried out by students developed the precedent of collaboration between the university and rural communities revealing the activity fields of the university as a regional one. According to a lecturer, rural neighbourhoods appreciated students' support because young, organised people suggested how to solve problems, assisted in working out and implementing small projects. In separate cases students' help was especially effective when the community received the support of 40 thousand Litas. Projects of other communities are still under consideration.

⇒ **Substantial partnership relations were started between students as future specialists of public administration and activists of neighbourhoods, local communities, the employment opportunities occurred to students.** The results of partnership activities are illustrated by the fact that several students were offered jobs of managerial or public administration character in the neighbourhoods where they had carried out their service-learning practical placement.

⇒ **Personal and social relations between students and community members**. When introducing a successful example, a lecturer mentions the situation when community members, the elderly or chairperson of the community invited students to come and spend several summer days, arrange an excursion around (e.g. to show the swamp). However, there were some relations that had not been developed as close ones, when people in separate communities were very busy and "*had no interest in communicating, just presented a task, assigned students for it, did the job and that was all.*"

The research revealed that the **civic potential of service-learning was quite weakly expressed**; students and social stakeholders noticed it the least, the latter sometimes even did not provide opportunities for students to get involved into meaningful activities. According to one lecturer, this is "***part of our culture***" in this case, these are the peculiarities of Lithuania as a post-Soviet country. Still the dimensions of civic activity sometimes are unexpectedly revealed through the type of a specific task, properly chosen social stakeholder (institution, organisation) for partial practical placement in service-learning of reflexive activities, holistic perfection of a personality, critical thinking when perceiving the diversity of society.

When implementing their courses after this innovative method some lecturers underline public spirit as one of the essential features of service-learning. During the interview, one lecturer emphasised that academic activities and cognitive competences as well as personal and civic competences are necessary for "*keeping balance between intellectual development, which is a great concern of the university, and maturation of a personality.*" According to the academic staff, both personal and intellectual competences project not as much the intellectual development but "*the ability to recognise and solve social problems, analyse cases, plan activities etc.*" Meanwhile civic competences oriented towards "*personality as such*" speak of what a human should be: "*one should not be irrelevant to societal changes, environment, one should express a clear personal and civic position.*" Although, on the perception level, some lecturers name the importance of civic awareness, still, in actual experience of service-learning, insufficiency of this awareness is reflected on the levels of students, social stakeholders, and academic staff's ability to purposefully develop these competences. It is emphasised that during service-learning certain passiveness of students was obvious; they were often waiting for the initiative, suggestions and invitations for activities from social stakeholders. According to opinions of the academic staff, students hardly recognised civic aspects, essence of activities and the place of the visited institutions in the wider societal context: "*Work in this particular institution was emphasised only; the very few managed to think that this institution was part of the society, that the entire society starts changing from this particular cell, this institution, the crumbs, what happens there. As much as you bring benefit to it, there is the possibility that this we-*

alth would increase, and what was not brought will not increase."

Specificity of another course related to the analysis of anti-corruption activities revealed not only deeper perception of the course content but also the possibility that occurred during service-learning to develop students' civic competences. Students acknowledged that if not service-learning, they would have never understood the essence of anti-corruption policy and its role when implementing prevention of corruption in the public sector: "*If we were not at the governmental organization working with corruption and other violations of law and were not examining these laws I would have not understood to present day what the analysis of the corruption probability market was.*" Although such experience did not allow them to cover all the course topics and go deeper into specificity of the anti-corruption policy on the national scope, still they mastered a particular case of one particular organisation, perceived its essence and peculiarities and this, according to the lecturer, was the greatest plus of such studies. This course also had highlighted the **socio-cultural context** that had determined collaboration with organisations. Aiming to implement service-learning the greatest problems were caused by certain organisational matters: unwillingness of some organisations to welcome students for practical placement of service-learning ("*after they find out the title of the module they refuse to accept us*"). A lecturer delivering this study subject, when searching for suitable organisations for practical placement of service-learning, faced the problem – "*no one wished to let us in*", i.e. the majority of institutions refused to welcome students motivating by unusual practical placement of service-learning, or just refused without any explanation. To the lecturer's mind, the reasons for refusal could be related to the specificity of this course, i.e. public institutions must carry out anti-corruption policy, e. g. "*some organisations do not wish to let students in because they are afraid to show that they do nothing or that everything is formal.*" Because of this reason, it was attempted to adjust to the organisations that accepted students and to formulate tasks with regard to their specificity. It was aimed to make this practical placement maximally useful to receiving institutions and that students would have the right to experiment and decide on what investigation and in what form to carry it out. Thus, students were provided with freedom, they "*were not thrust into a particular frame*", and institutions could decide themselves "*what students should do*".

The lecturer explains such situation as a specificity of our country having a high level of corruption because the unwillingness of organisations to accept students could be treated as one of the features of systemic corruption, when, due to the fear of publicising

not transparent policy of an organisation they refuse to collaborate: "*I think that in some Scandinavian countries, Sweden, Norway, Finland or even in Great Britain which hold a high level in fighting corruption, such problems would not have occurred and students would have been accepted with joy; and where the level is lower, they do not wish anything, do not wish publicity because everything becomes obvious.*" It is understood that certain organisations working with secret information are not and cannot be accessible as learning environments; however, other organisations which must carry out anti-corruption programmes, because of fear that students might see and publicise inactivity of these organisations, do not wish to let students in. On the other hand, such negative experience and understanding of a problematic situation in fighting corruption had a strong educational character, determined the change of students' civic attitudes and development of civic values, and the real possibility to get acquainted with anti-corruption activities implemented by institutions allowed students to feel needed and able to contribute to creation of the state anti-corruption policy: "*After looking at students you start thinking, my God, I wish everyone would be like them and there would be no corruption, nothing to investigate.*"

The choice of a traditional learning environment is based on the content of major competences of the profession-related profile, and chosen unusual organisations for practical placement of service-learning allow emphasising the importance of other competences belonging to the same profession-related profile. Acquaintance with anti-corruption laws at the Special Investigation Service allowed students to deepen their legal knowledge, practical placement at school allowed improvement of pedagogical and education management competences. Also, practical placement in these institutions enabled understanding the reasons for phenomena taking place in the society, reasons for the societal evil, possibilities to cope with it and, in this way, to develop competences of active and principle-based citizenship.

Students' involvement into activities of organisations coping with law violators, acquaintance with cases of violation of norms and deviance from legal standards allowed approaching the cognition of society norms and value boundaries, better understanding of processes taking place in the society, assessment of phenomena from the positions not only of specialists but also of citizens.

* * *

The research data show the positively evaluated efficiency and benefit of service-learning to all groups of participants; however, it also underlines the challenges arising from adjustment of the innovative method; these challenges revealed difficulties of or-

ganisation of such type studies, lack of both participants' competences and experience in collaboration. An assumption may be drawn that lack of cooperation skills which are to be the ground for this method was one of the factors weakening educational efficiency of learning by service-learning. This was also named by participants themselves during the interview and methodological seminars, meetings. Many of them stated that all problems (mentioned in the research), i.e. different understandings of the concept of cooperation and service-learning, obstacles in organisation of the process of cooperative studies, change of roles etc., could be solved when constantly communicating and sharing experience, successful decisions and searching for solutions, i.e. **all three parties closely collaborating but not only approving partnership by formal agreements**. The academic staff told that "*all three parties should sit together and discuss more often*", social stakeholders mentioned the need for maintenance of a direct and closer contact with academic staff, "*to call each other at least, to discuss tasks and occurring difficulties*", and students also supported closer collaboration between academic staff and social stakeholders": "*they could collaborate more because sometimes organisations even do not know that we will come.*" According to one lecturer, closer collaboration among lecturers, i.e. sharing good experiences of service-learning, creative didactic and interdisciplinary solutions or just ways out of conflict situations faced by students, should proceed as well: "*I, and maybe majority of other lecturers, had minimal competences for service-learning, they were mostly based on life experience. Here is a sense to point out the idea on cooperation of academic staff when helping solving difficulties occurring to students in their cooperative studies.*"

In other words, the best results of cooperative learning were achieved when all participants invested more time and effort in attempt to create the environment enabling reciprocal learning, helping to cope with lack of competences or discrepancies in organisation of such type studies. To be more precise, when **students** were more motivated and **considered their learning with responsibility**, **academic staff helped them** to formulate and match tasks, contacted with social stakeholders, moderated reflexive activities, helped in solving conflicts etc.; and when **social stakeholders accepted roles of mentors** along with responsibility for students' learning activities in community/organisation. In words of one lecturer, the idea of service-learning is likely to be implemented in practice when a student, lecturer and social stakeholders act as one, like "**mountain climbers tied to the same rope.**"

Conclusions

Participants of service-learning positively assess opportunities of the method to match both academic and social environments, to create new, real social world problem solution-oriented learning content, when involving social stakeholders and local communities into the study process. The participants underlined the conditions to learn in different educational environment, to test themselves in real practical situations, to know values, points of view and interests of different social spaces. In their assessment, social stakeholders emphasised acquaintance of students with the social world of practical activities, students' abilities to apply theoretical knowledge when carrying out useful tasks in organisations as well as expression of attitudes of students' professional activities.

However, insufficient participants' understanding of learning in cooperation as partial practical placement of service-learning as well as their inability to dissociate it from the concept of traditional practical placement were revealed. The participants hardly mastered learning activities being different from traditional practical placement, cooperation of all participants as the condition for reciprocal learning was insufficiently understood. Perhaps it was the most difficult for social stakeholders, who usually considered service-learning as traditional formal practical placement, to perceive the idea of partial practical placement and cooperation; they did not identify themselves as mentors and did not try to create the educational environment enabling students' learning. Such research results show the lack of innovative collaboration forms and experience of the university and society.

During service-learning, the lack of students' deep and self-directed learning was revealed. One of the most outstanding aspects of service-learning, i.e. changed roles of learning/teaching participants as well as increased circle of education participants diminished the power of a lecturer and gave more freedom to students in the learning process. Even though throughout service-learning a lecturer accepted the roles of a learner and co-author in creation of new knowledge, still insufficient students' ability to learn independently and increasing communicative, task formulation and implementation, collaboration, problem solving difficulties in relations with social stakeholders determined the need for the greater control from the academic staff. The research revealed that the results of service-learning were much better when lecturers tried to control the process of students' learning and collaboration with social stakeholders, i.e. *participation from the start to the finish*.

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Universiteto ir visuomenės partnerystės kūrimas Lietuvoje taikant mokymosi tarnaujant metodą

Santrauka

Straipsnyje aptariamos teorinės ir praktinės universitetų ir socialinių partnerių bendradarbiavimo galimybės. Straipsnio tikslas – atskleisti universiteto ir visuomenės partnerystės kūrimo taikant mokymąsį tarnaujant bendruomenei galimybes bei partnerystę stiprinančius ir silpninančius veiksnius. Keliami tokie probleminiai klausimai: kokios mokymosi tarnaujant bendruomenei savybės leidžia kurti universiteto ir socialinių partnerių bendradarbiavimo tinklus? Kokie veiksniai lemia universiteto ir socialinių partnerių bendradarbiavimo sėkmes ir nesėkmes?

Mokymosi tarnaujant bendruomenei taikymas universitete aktualizuojamas šiuolaikinės švietimo politikos kaitos kontekste, kai universitetai, suvokiami kaip į verslą ir darbo rinką orientuotos institucijos, kurios turi parengti aukštos kvalifikacijos specialistus su pasaulinėje darbo rinkoje pritaikomomis intelektinėmis ir asmeninėmis savybėmis bei skatinti socialinę plėtrą. Šis metodas pristatomas kaip vienas būdų, leidžiančių praktiškai realizuoti naujus reikalavimus sukuriant naujas edukacines aplinkas – partnerystę tarp universiteto ir socialinių dalininkų. Kadangi mokymasis tarnaujant bendruomenei plačiai taikomas kitose šalyse – daugiausia JAV, remiantis užsienio šalių moksliniais tyrimais pagrindžiamas šio metodo veiksmingumas ir nauda: mokymasis tarnaujant bendruomenei išskiriamas kaip efektyvi pilietinio ir demokratinio ugdymo priemonė, didinanti simbolinį bei socialinį universiteto ir socialinių dalininkų, regiono kapitalą.

Empirinėje straipsnio dalyje pristatoma mokymosi tarnaujant bendruomenei diegimo patirtis kuriant Šiaulių universiteto ir nevyriausybinio, viešojo bei verslo sektorių bendradarbiavimo tinklą. Pateikiami baigiamojo tyrimo etapo – interviu apklausos ir stebėjimo dalyvaujant – rezultatai, kurie atskleidžia skirtingų mokymosi tarnaujant bendruomenei (angl. *Service Learning*) dalyvių grupių (akademikų, studentų, organizacijų atstovų) sąveikos ypatumus, edukacinio proceso ir sociokultūrinio konteksto veiksnius, kurie padeda išryškinti partnerystės kūrimo, santykių palaikymo ir abipusės naudos optimizavimo galimybes. Tyrimo duomenys byloja apie teigiamai įvertintą metodo veiksmingumą ir naudą visoms dalyvių grupėms, tačiau kartu išryškina ir inovatyvaus metodo adaptavimo metu kylančius iššūkius, atskleidusius tokio tipo studijų organizavimo sunkumus, dalyvių kompetencijų stokas ir bendradarbiavimo patirties trūkumą: (1) tyrimo dalyviai palankiai vertino metodo galimybes derinti akademinę ir socialinę aplinkas, sukurti naują, į realaus socialinio pasaulio problemų sprendimą orientuoto mokymosi turinį, į studijų procesą įtraukiant socialinius partnerius ir vietines bendruomenes; (2) išaiškėjo nepakankamas dalyvių dalinės praktikos – mokymosi kooperacijoje – suvokimas ir negebėjimas jos atsieti nuo tradicinės praktikos sampratos; (3) atsiskleidė studentų giluminio ir savivaldaus mokymosi gebėjimų trūkumas.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: universiteto ir visuomenės partnerystė, mokymasis tarnaujant bendruomenei, abipusis mokymasis, kooperacija, socialinis kapitalas, savanorystė, pilietinis ugdymas.