Social Economics’ Innovation in Socioeducation Institution for Sustainable Development

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Abstract
Lithuania, during the last decades, is undergoing a rapid development stage, and in recent years is experiencing the effects of the worldwide economic crisis on all fronts. Our professionals and ordinary citizens are forced to re-evaluate the lessons of democracy and freedom in all areas – politics, economy, culture and business. It is not only the unique experience of Lithuania. All countries of Eastern Europe continue to search for their identity amidst the impacts of globalization and the worldwide economic crisis. Social economy partnerships and network cooperation are helping to meet the new challenges that emerged after Lithuania became a member of the European Union.

Key words: Social economy, social innovation, social partnership, social capital.

Upon the arrival of post modernity and the networked era, especially since the economic crisis, if people are to remain competitive, then they will only be able to do so in the State in which they are able to use their creative potential to empower civil society by encouraging public – private partnerships, intersectional trust, innovative solutions, and the discovery of a free society that is open and mobile. Lithuania is facing a difficult challenge, namely to maximize the use of human, civic and social resources as well as other successful social economic partnerships in order to create compelling reasons why people should live in the country. In this paper, we consider the social economics and partnership phenomena as flexible and effective ways of combining not only the interests of social partners with a common purpose and benefits, but also finding new and innovative solutions to problems by using new techniques and players who are interested in finding new and innovative solutions to the problems facing not only Lithuania but all of post-communist Europe.

Social economy is defined and understood in different ways, but most authors define it as alternative education and social sector activities, including cross-sacral partnerships. Robert D. Putnam, a political scientist and professor of public policy at Harvard University, works for the formation of modern civil society through the development of social capital on the basis of societies and associations, individual trust in other individuals, socium and institutions, while at the same power and role as the associative civic index.

Key conditions for success in a civil society are positive sociability, an associative person who seeks power and control, and the ability to build social networks and communities. Community is not simply the fact of social life, but also the value and values which are mostly formed in those communities. People who come together for these purposes are usually associated with non-profit activity focused on the public interest and accomplish their goals mostly through non-governmental organizations. In different countries, non-governmental organizations are developed differently, but there are similarities between them.

I Table: Social Economy Constitutes

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The “Social Economy” constitutes a broad range of activities which have the potential to provide opportunities for local people and communities to engage in all stages of the process of local economic regeneration and job creation, from the identification of basic needs to the operationalisation of initiatives. The sector covers the economic potential and activities of the self-help and co-operative. Movements, that is, initiatives that aim to satisfy social and economic needs of local communities and their members. This sector includes co-operatives; self-help projects; credit unions; housing Associations;
partnerships; community enterprises and businesses. The Social Economy is the fastest growing sector in Europe and this context is fertile ground for the creation of many new enterprises locally.

The generations of the 1960s, 70s, and 80s who received a higher education degree express their dissatisfaction regarding their socio-economic status and the ineffectiveness of political leaders by creating new non-governmental organizations. These generations are still critical of the government, business, and other political sectors; because they see that the state apparatus is a cumbersome bureaucracy with low efficiency while the business sector often operates without social responsibility. Therefore, they seek a third way through establishment of non-governmental organizations. Moreover, many citizens have also discovered this third sector (NGOs) as a socio-economic alternative while they ignore the skepticism in evaluating policies and corruption scandals and take note that the key players in the market economy are still uninterested in addressing urgent social problems. The administrations of the Belgium, United States, Canada, Germany, Australia, Norway, Denmark, have significantly increased funding for the non-profit sector, nongovernmental organizations, attempting to balance public welfare, public policy and partnerships with the private sector. Other western world leaders have turned to non-governmental organizations to find a “third way” (e.g., Tony Blair’s “Third Way” program and Mr. Schroder’s “new middle” doctrine). The French Prime Minister L. Jospin describes these processes with the following words: “Yes – the market economy, not – the public market, but also the fact that the Western European non-governmental organizations had areas with the highest proportion of income originating in government funding.” The non-governmental sector led growth in the world and in the development of civil rights with better quality and less expensive package of services, information technology and the emergence of a much better communication and mobility thereby promoting partnership and the opportunity to choose a cheaper quality and superior service. “The Social Economy consists of association-based economic initiatives founded on values of:

- Service to members of community rather than generating profits;
- Autonomous management (not government or market controlled);
- Democratic decision making;
- Primacy of persons and work over capital

The report, “Social and Civil Dialogue Guarantor” according to A. M. Sigmund, said that the enlarged Europe is at a critical juncture, when decisions must be made that will determine the future of the European Union and the daily lives of its citizens. The role of civil society in the future of Europe is very important. The new European Union member states increasingly turn to issues of public life. Representative democracy cannot represent the interests of all citizens. The citizens themselves must participate both in public and political decisions. It is therefore important that the citizens of the broader representation of non-governmental and civil institutions and organizations remain involved in these decisions. Following the definition of social capital, the article examines how it can be assessed and then goes on to list the main findings on the significance of social capital in the understanding of the social economy and community development.

Some argue that these non-governmental organizations often lobby their development objectives. They are usually not so strong, however, that they are able to represent the interests of their groups as adequately as they like. Nevertheless, there are a growing number of non-governmental organizations that are able to represent less organized groups. For example, children’s interests in Lithuania have, for several years, successfully been represented by the Confederation of Lithuanian non-governmental organizations for children.

Lobbying is not always a simple procedure and requires a lot of human and financial resources. Without pressure from citizens, though, political parties and government institutions are generally not interested in cooperation with the NGO sector, which avoids the problems of a transparent government. The Confederation of Children NGOs, active in fighting for the fundamental rights of the child in Lithuania, currently brings together more than 70 different non-governmental organizations working with and for children, while also representing Lithuania in the NGO / UNICEF network. Non-governmental organizations, like the Confederation of Children, continuously monitor and collect information on state-run programs for children and ensuring children’s rights are protected. There activities are organized by

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1 Based on principles of participation, empowerment. http://www.socialeconomyhub.ca/?q=content/role-education-promoting-social-economy-canada-%E2%80%93-csehub-thematic-newsletter
2 Alan Kay. Social capital, the social economy and community development. http://cdj.oxfordjournals.org/content/41/2/160.short
comments on the Lithuanian government report to the Joint Committee of the peoples. Over the years, the Confederation of NGOs for children not only has had the strongest co-operation of NGOs, but also became actively involved at both national and regional levels. Through its business strategy, the Confederation of NGOs for Children has launched joint activities with key ministries, crafting policies and measures affecting the child’s representative bodies at the regional level. The Confederation of NGOs for Children encourages States to participate in national and EU structural fund programs that help not only the implementation of various training and education activities, but also the development and provision of social services, professional preparation, and techniques for promoting positive socialization of social and economic development. The government of the Republic of Lithuania in 2009, based on a joint report which contains information about the state in 2004–2008, carried out measures to implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and took to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child proposals adopted by the Member States in preparation of periodic reports.

Economic and social problems in Europe are playing a more important role in shaping the direction of the EU. This understanding was the basis for the establishment of the European Union Economic and Social Affairs ministry. As such, through a democratic environment, robust discussions regarding decision-making issues and the harmonization of opinions of participants have served for the faster implementation of the Lisbon Strategy. The European Union’s Economic and Social Affairs ministry do not offer assessments based on opinion, but also prepare formal and informal meetings with civil society organizations, trade unions, employers, and other relevant associations. The number of non-governmental organizations and the contributions they make to the global economy continue to grow rapidly. In dealing with and understanding the function non-governmental organizations in Lithuania in comparison to there development worldwide, we cannot ignore regional characteristics. Fifty years of occupation by the Soviet Union has left a deep imprint on the central and eastern European region, affecting numerous societal processes. Sanctioned by the Soviet occupation, virtually all organizations with public and professional interests in charitable activities of self-expression had their leaders exiled or eliminated. Thus, in the Lithuanian public consciousness of today, non-governmental organizations are partly bound up with the impression of a half century of Soviet public organizations. During the current reforms over the last twenty years, there has been a free and independent civic initiative, although some of the first independent Lithuanian Ministers tried to restrain these initiatives.

In this atmosphere it is easy to create conspiracy theories about the selfishness of the social partners themselves because of their alleged narrow interests. Naturally, it is also easy to accuse non-governmental organizations in such an environment of dishonesty through active lobbying. As a result, Lithuania has not yet taken full advantage of the benefits of socioeconomic relations between various sectors (public and private social partnership). Umbrella organizations have turned to consumer rights activists, children, youth, seniors, and other professional organizations representing their interests. In the civic sphere the apparent fragmentation of umbrella organizations and organizations operating without sufficient internal synergies has become problematic. It is also one of the reasons why the economic-social partners in Lithuania are unable to absorb high-quality European Union funding opportunities and influence the quality of government decisions. This process has hindered not only the improve of the complex and bureaucratic project management, but also non-governmental organizations and the consolidation objective priorities. Trust between public, private and civil society sectors is lacking as the majority of the EU funds were used for the annual budget, poor quality road repairs and endless professional training conducted by authorized government scientific institutions without formal qualifications to name a few examples.

Social partnerships and innovation can produce unexpected results with better quality decisions. Social partnerships can also inspire creativity, promote positive personal and social ecological engagement, and optimize human resources to increase mutual trust and social capital. However, the implementation of these conditions requires a balancing of the public, private and non-governmental actions that promote the transparent use of public funds, clear priorities, and minimize bureaucracy. Such processes are not yet ready to be implemented by politicians and managers not only in Lithuania, but also in many other countries. Global change, social and economic dynamics, and new challenges are becoming increasingly important factors in all parts of the world. Such factors lead to accelerating changes in science, technology and development, qualitatively altering the lifestyle of modern society. Social partnerships can create a competitive advantage, pooling resources between government authorities, political, public and private organizations that can be the basis of a learning society fuelled by citizens’ efforts in the

3 Kvieskienė, G., Kvieska,V. Social partnership for innovation. V. 2012. 220
country. Professor Robert Putnam argues that “social capital” includes the following features of social life as “social networks, sociology of culture, norms and trust that enable participants to work effectively together to achieve common goals” (1995, 664). Analyzing how the public market works and sharing a wide range of objectives and ideas moves, toward enhancing the general interest and welfare of citizens. Social capital consists of trust, social networks and norms of mutual communication, which are not only interrelated, but also independent. When trying to figure out what is social capital and why it is so important to increase, many often employ a family model. For example, without trust within a family there is no family, love, or respect. These social values are needed to safely raise children and to live your life with the same person so that, when the time is right, the children can be entrusted to manage the family’s wealth as the parents move into old age, having to rely upon their spouse and children. When these values are lived in a family and passed down to children, families can thrive and children can grow up safely, giving them hope and a future.

Family and work: Lithuanian society places a high value on life but the common people of our country are facing a deep problem with keeping professional life and family responsibilities in balance. Today, when both men and women are equally involved in the labor market, dominated by long hours, hard work, high work rate, and quality requirements dictated by the new technology culture, families with young children or who care for elderly or disabled relatives often find themselves unable to do so. Such pressures put a strain on two kinds of trust – a particularistic trust found within the family a generalized notion of trust found within society. Particularistic trust is trust that only the “insiders”, people who have similar social characteristics, come to know while a generalized notion of trust is defined by confidence in the “alien” or “stranger”. This optimistic approach to trust is of the same fundamental values which we are most familiar with.

Conclusion

We can summarize the notion of social capital in Lithuania only as an idea that lacks confidence. However, if we analyze the positive trends of cooperation between the private and public sector and the increase in project implementations through partnership schemes with non-organizational social networks and diffusion, perhaps Lithuania is developing a social economy. Recent success, though, has strengthened the belief that social partnerships are much more effective for infrastructure and service needs of various sectors. Partnerships can take many forms, but the type and form of partnership must be individually tailored to each project and its partners. Once the preferred form of partnership is chosen, taking into account the type of project and the needs of the sector, the tailored partnership must promote the joint use of public finances ad the expedient delivery of services.

Social partnerships create conditions for innovation, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), social economy organizations which optimization of costs, and the accumulation of social capital. Moreover, our studies allow for ample space to illustrate the theoretical arguments, statistical data, research and regulations, case studies, qualitative and quantitative research, and the insights of the author. As such, the proposed subject would be “Social Partnerships influenced by innovative solutions” with the objective to analyze the social partnerships on innovation and social capital development.

Research subjects we consist of 44 Lithuanian municipalities, 40 industrialists and businessmen associations, and the Confederation of Lithuanian businessmen involved in the project, social partnerships through informal communication and sport teams in Lithuania. Subjects will also include Lithuanian experts selected by the employers association, the Confederation of Lithuanian businessmen, trade unions and industry associations of trade unions, the Association of Municipalities representatives, mayors and their deputies, and 103 social workers, education managers, and social pedagogues.

Discussion

Specific objectives include: 1. To analyze the best practices in foreign countries, setting up and managing the socio-cultural services providing multiple institutions; 2. To analyze the operation of socio-educational service centers in Lithuania and the social nature of the partnerships; 3. To introduce the

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Santrauka

Sparėtjanty virtuali komunikacija standartizavo tarpusavio suvokimą, pagreitino pasikeitimą informaciją tarp skirtingų kraštų ir socialinių grupių, o laisvosios rinkos plėtra ir demokratinės vertybės tapo daugelio pasaulio šalių prioritetų. Sukūrta, kad postmodernizmo epochoje, juo labiau ekonominės krizes sąlygomis, konkurencingos išlieka tik tos valstybės, kurios geba pasinaudoti asmens kūrybinio potencialo, kuria pilietiškų visuomenės partnerystė ir tarptautinė Bendruomenių ir socialinės ekonomikos sektorius devintųjų dešimtmečių veda visuomenės veiklą. Lietuva iškyla sudėtingų šaltinių maksimalai pasinaudoti žmogiškaisiais, pilietiniais ir socialiniais ištekliuose, tačiau dėl įvairių sektorių tarpusavio nepasitikėjimo, politikų nepasitenkinimo, vis dar pasitaikancios korupcijos ir nesuderinių viešųjų lėšų panaudojimo socialinės ekonomikos įrankiai Lietuvoje naudojami vangi.


Socialinis kapitalas – nuodų ir sėkmės metafora. Visuomenė gali būti analizuojama kaip rinka, kurioje žmonės kuria gerovę, keisdamosi įvairiausiais daiktais ir idėjomis, siekdami bendro intereso ir gerovės.