Community Research as a Factor Building Inclusive Community in Lithuania

Viktorija Baršauskienė, Irena Leliūgienė and Eglė Vaidelytė, *Kaunas University of Technology, Faculty of Social Sciences*

Social and political change in Europe, increasing labour mobility, development of the new European social policy and increasingly global nature of the social problems had a profound effect on the socio-cultural and socio-educational work in community and on its objectives. In order to keep these new communitarian standards of social policy, the first steps have to be made in fostering local community with the perspective it will reach the western European communitarian level.   That is the reason why university in these changes started to turn more and more to the society and first of all has put a great emphasis on the community research. This initiative was induced by non-existence of civic tradition during the communist period, the gap in the development of civil society and its culture, the weakness and the poorness of the third sector. This paper is based on the analysis of the community and civil society research conducted during recent years by the researchers of Kaunas University of Technology, Faculty of Social Sciences. The paper involves a review of the research methodology, interpretation of the received data and summary of the results. It discusses both theoretical and empirical possibilities of building and developing inclusive community.

Introduction

In the global world, information and knowledge have become a new source of welfare for nations. The whole system of human values is changing, placing a major emphasis on knowledge as one of the key factors of social empowerment of individual and community. Individuals and society are participating in the globalisation processes, where knowledge is one of the key conditions of self-realisation and success and one of the key guarantees of social welfare. The paradigm of the new economy encompasses not only a learning individual, but also a learning community and a learning society (institutions, companies). Social scientists sometimes even argue that the learning process is more important than what is learned.

Literature also places significant emphasis on communities, community development in the modern world, the impact of future technologies on the social empowerment in the modern community, the influence of globalisation on the community development, the nature of community work in the 21st century, and the methods and principles of community development (Halal, 1998; Passing, 1998; Babacan and Gopalkrishnan, 2001; Appadurai, 1990; Brecher and Costello, 1994; Craig, 1998; Habermas, 1976; Kenny, 1994; also a number of Lithuanian authors - Grigas, 2000; Karalius, 2000; Leončikas, 1999; Baršauskienė and Leliūgienė, 2001, 2002, and others). Lithuanian researchers Jucevičienė and Jucevičius (2003), Kuzmickaitė (2003) analyse the role of entrepreneurship in resolving the social problems of community and the learning city as one of the factors of community empowerment.

The new social policy challenges empowered not only local government subdivisions (neighbourhoods) that were newly established in Kaunas, but also university to give preference for the communitarian progress. It induced deeper interest in community development, networking and partnership between the academic and practical fields. In the period of 2000-2004, I.Leliūgienė, E.Štuopytė, E. Vaidelytė, V.Baršauskienė - the researchers and lecturers from Kaunas University of Technology have conducted quantitative and qualitative studies as well as supervised a number of theses at the graduate, postgraduate and doctoral level. These studies included: „The community center engagement with children, its social educational functions and the peculiarities of their manifestation (PhD dissertation by E.Štuopytė, supervisor prof. I.Leliūgienė, 2002); „Social-educational preconditions/premises of the establishment of community centre (the case study of Kačerginė village " (author Š.Vanagaitė, supervisor – dr. E.Štuopytė, 2002); „The strategy of cooperation between local government and educational institution in the context of community education (case of Panemunė local government in Kaunas)" (author L.Vitkutė, supervisor – dr. E.Štuopytė, 2004); "Socioeducational preconditions for the establishment of partnership network between local government subdivision and comprehensive schools (the case study of Žaliakalnis)" (author G.Tamkutonytė, supervisor – dr. E.Štuopytė, 2004); "Opportunities for building a sense of community between inhabitants in local government subdivision (Case of the local government subdivision *Centras* in the city of Kaunas)" (author J.Kvietkauskaitė, supervisor – prof. I.Leliūgienė, 2004); "A study of possibilities to mobilise local community for team work"– (A.Penčylienė, I.Leliūgienė, 2002). A qualitative study "Philanthropic action in post-communist settings", analyzing philanthropy as social responsibility building inclusive community was conducted by PhD. Candidate E. Vaidelytė in March-June, 2003.

The outstanding volume of research indicates university relevance in building inclusive community.

In the global academic society, the role of higher education as a provider of services and a potential stimulator of social empowerment of the community has been addressed by Tjeldvoll (1998) and other Western scholars.

However, most of the researchers who deal with the issues of community development, community work and social empowerment, do not analyse them in relation to the role of higher education (universities). Those authors who discuss the idea of a service university (Tjeldvoll, 1998; Waterhouse, 2000) do not address service provision as a way of university intervention into empowerment of communities (especially, territorial ones) in today's increasingly global world.

In the global world, it is difficult to ensure efficient community development and social empowerment without exploitation of the intellectual resources possessed by universities as institutions of research and studies.

In this context, an **important question** is: could the community research initiated and conducted by university be considered as a factor building an inclusive community?
The paper is **aimed** at:
1. Revealing the university role in building and implementing inclusive community.
2. Summarizing the studies and surveys on building an inclusive community that were conducted at Kaunas University of Technology in recent years.

Research methods are literature analysis, quantitative and qualitative research methods.

1   The role of university in the development of inclusive community

Referring to the above discussion it can be argued that although the above-mentioned Western researchers represent universities and demonstrate high erudition in the area of community work and community development, they leave aside the role of higher education in developing and empowering communities. At the same time, their community studies and theoretical models can be directly applied to community development.

A number of scholars (Tjeldvoll, 1998; Clark and Burton, 1998; Waterhouse, 2000) focus on the role of universities as service institutions in society and community.

The purpose of the service university is to adopt the emerging key features of the higher education institution of a new type, and to open this institution for detailed study and debate.

A service university, its organisational form and work methods are marked by great change: a contemporary university turns into a mediator between the researchers, who create a certain product, and the external world. To define the service university as a certain phenomenon the above authors are using the terms of 'academic capitalism', 'entrepreneurial university' and 'corporate university'. 'Enterprise' covers both economic and academic dimensions. 'Enterprise' means that such university is mostly concerned with its prestige and income.

A contemporary university has broad possibilities to implement new technologies in virtual ways. In this sense, universities are both a cause and an effect of globalisation. At the same time, distance education and virtual universities can play a crucial role in reducing social exclusion in communities.

Universities are a part of the expanding market which is oriented to people and communities. Both academic community and local community have developed and become equal partners, which can be illustrated by creation of partnership networks between universities and communities, development of joint projects, etc.

Asbly (quoted in Altbach et al., 1999) also notes that universities, which traditionally educated the elite and served as an institutional basis for research, are forced to turn to the surrounding world. Already in the 1980s it was noted that university is increasingly becoming a service provider, in addition to knowledge creation and dissemination (Bowden and Marton, 1998).

In his discussion of the priorities of Oslo University, Tjeldvoll (1998) points out that it must use its knowledge for developing the society and community and for maintaining relations with the environment.

Such works have provided a good background for further discussion of the university as a source of community development and its sustainable functioning. In the view of the authors of this paper, a modern university performs many roles in community development, however the most crucial of them in the knowledge and information society are the following:

– educator;
– researcher;
– initiator.

The role of *educator* is realised by university through the programmes of study, for example, by educating social educators and social workers for territorial communities. An important role is played by continuing education courses, various retraining courses, seminars and courses for community workers, where university has sufficient competence to perform these functions.

Conducting community *research* is one of the important roles of university as a research institution. This kind of research enables university to diagnose and evaluate the level of community development and, based on the theoretical model created as a result of such research, to suggest strategies for further community development.

University as a bank of knowledge often performs the role of *initiator* of new ideas.

It can be assumed that intervention of the university, which regards providing versatile services to the community as its duty, can enable the development of community into a new quality – a learning community, where relevant conditions are created for development in the areas of IT, economic, educational, cultural, financial and human resources.

2 Review of the local community research in Kaunas University of Technology, faculty of Social Sciences

As it was mentioned above, modern communitarian development in Europe, also increased an active role of university in community development. As a result, a demand for deeper analysis of the possibilities of inclusive community development emerged. This chapter summarizes the main results of the conducted research.

3 The community center engagement with children, its social education functions and the peculiarities of their manifestation

The study was carried out during the period of February 2000 to March 2001. It included the following stages (Štuopytė E., 2002):

Stage 1: analysis of the situation. The aim of the study was to collect and study information on community centers in Lithuania. The method used was analysis of literature and documents.

Stage 2: the study of the documents regulating the activity of community centers. The aims of the study were to find out what legal and normative documents form the basis for the activity of community centers, and to reveal what functions and how are realized in the activity of community centers. The method of the study was document analysis.

Stage 3: interviews with the heads of community centers. The aim of the study was to identify the community centers in which continuous work with children is carried out, the ways in which this work is organized (i.e. the types, forms, and ways of activities), and which institutions help community centers realize their social educational functions. The present and former heads of 18 community centers registered in Lithuania during the period of 1994 to 2000 were interviewed. Having completed this and the previous stages of the study, the following community centers were selected: (1) those whose aims and activity correspond to the concept of international community center; (2) those that were operational during the period of the study, and the duration of whose activity was not less than 1 year; and (3) those that carried out work with children. During the period of the study, 11 community centers were operational, but only 5 of them were engaged in the continuous work with children.

Stage 4: the expert evaluation of the ergonomic conditions of the community center. The aim of the study was to find out whether the community center had the conditions that allow realization of the social educational functions when working with children. The method used in this study was expert evaluation.

Stage 5: a survey of volunteer educators and the children served by the center. The aims of the study were to investigate the manifestation of the social educational functions of the community center engagement with children, the volunteer educators' motives of activity, their cooperation with school, the possibilities of creation of the partnership network, and children's attitude towards their school. Method used in this study was questionnaire survey. The respondents were volunteer educators working at the community center and children served by the center. At this stage, a sample was chosen using target group selection: only children who were constantly engaged in some program and the educators who worked with children in these programs were surveyed. In total, 116 (92.8%) of children engaged in various programs and 34 (100%) volunteer educators working with these children were surveyed.

Results. After adopting the experience of foreign community centers, Lithuanian community centers have turned into the institutions providing social educational services. Analysis of the documents regulating the activity of community centers showed that the majority of community centers operating during the period of 1994-2000 developed programs and projects for work with children. Hence we can conclude that children are one of the main groups of clients not only at specialized children care centers, but also at other community centers.

The manifestation of social educational functions in these programs is varied. When implementing some programs, several social educational functions are performed. For the performance of these functions, not only the number of programs, but also their duration and continuity are important. Comparison of several children-oriented programs showed that, if the programs are related, children can transfer from one program to another. Thus, better conditions for children's self-realization at community centers are created.

The analysis of interviews with the heads of community centers showed that in the majority of centers work with children is not carried out due to the lack of volunteers having competence for such activity. Hence a conclusion can be made that the issue of human resources is of great importance in the work with children at community centers. The main method of work with children is group work, and only a few centers work with children on an individual basis. The main aims of children-orientated work identified by the heads of community centers allow concluding that the centers operate mainly in the social sphere fulfilling the care-provision function.

Results of the survey of the volunteer educators working with children and the children themselves showed that all social educational functions (except for formation) are manifested in their common activity. The only difference is between the strength of the manifestation of these functions. Comparison of the results of the expert evaluation of the ergonomic conditions of community centers and the results of the survey of volunteer educators and children enables one to assume that the manifestation of social educational functions does not always depend on the ergonomic conditions needed for the fulfillment of these functions.

Comparison of the means of evaluation of the volunteer educators' and children's activity did not reveal any significant differences. Both volunteer educators and children pointed out the main types of common activities at the community center. Quite strong statistically significant correlation was found between the results of the evaluation of the volunteer educators' and children's relationships. It is possible to assume that the relationship between volunteer educators and children at community centers are not only sincere and based on mutual understanding and cooperation, but are also based on the principle of democracy. The volunteer educators and children form a team in which everybody is an equal partner.

4 Research of the possibilities of mobilising local community for team work

Local community is very relevant for increasing the quality of life, developing the sense of social responsibility, preventing asocial behaviour, fostering national culture and traditions. The study was conducted by A. Penčylienė and I. Leliūgienė in 2002. Using qualitative and quantitative research methods, the authors revealed the possibilities of uniting local community for team work to develop a positive attitude towards healthy way of life. The study included two stages: quantitative, at which teachers of secondary school where surveyed, and qualitative, during which the directors of 6 local community institutions were interviewed.

Results of the research indicate that most of the respondents (67. 4 %) of the survey have positive attitude to team work in developing healthy way of life. As many as 65.2% have mentioned the need for local councils to initiate and coordinate this activity. On the other hand, 38.4 % of respondents declared negative attitude towards this plan, saying that they do not believe that these institutions will develop such an activity to promote healthy life. However, 55.4% of the respondents declared that teamwork in propagating healthy life could minimize tendencies of using alcohol and drugs. It was also mentioned that medical doctors should not only pay attention to sick people, but also work with healthy people, educate them in the field of healthy style of life. Interviews with directors of the key local community institutions indicate that the leaders of these institutions perceive the relevance of healthy life in local community, though the lack of initiative was mentioned as a main factor preventing team work. On the other hand, the study revealed that directors of main local community institutions are inclined to delegate this initiative to the others. Respondents' attitudes towards teamwork in promoting healthy life illustrate rather worrying tendencies (table 1).

Table 1: Respondents' attitudes to participation in the healthy life promotion activities

	I completely disagree	I don't know	I completely agree	I partly agree
I don't have time for this	25.81%	7.53%	32.26%	34.41%
I would like to partcipate, but don't have enough competence	11.83%	47.31%	25.81%	15.05%
No, I don't want to participate in healthy life promotion activities	30.11%	30.11%	48.39%	13.98%
I don't like community activities	60.22%	9.68%	12.90%	17.20%

Most respondents do not admit that they do not like community work (60.22%), though a big part of respondents are not sure about their competence in this field (47.3 %). It maybe assumed that this factor could be one of the motives that discourage the initiative for local community activities.

The hypothesis that local community institutions can mobilize for developing positive attitude to healthy way of life has verified only at the theoretical level, as all the potential members of the team confirmed the relevance of such networking.

5 Social-educational preconditions for establishment of the community centre (the case of Kačerginė)

Kačerginė is a town kind of settlement located in Kaunas region. After 1933 it became known as a resort. Since 1997 its resort status was changed into town with its own anthem, flag and arms.

The study. 500 questionnaires were distributed by bringing them to the respondents' homes, school and other institutions of the town. Community Council members and seniūnija actively participated in questionnaire distribution. About 350 questionnaires were filled in and returned. Taking into account that general population is less than a 1,000, it can be argued that the number of respondents reflects the overall population.

Results of the survey indicated that:

- Lack of money is the key problem for most of the respondents preventing them from participation in the events and meeting the needs of socio-cultural education;
- Kačerginė community members are interested in the establishment of the community centre as a social-educational institution and completely approve this idea;
- There is a need for rehabilitative help to senior, sick and socially disabled community members as well as for counselling (anonymous mutual support group) and social-legal education of community members;
- Kačerginė community members expressed the need for such socio-educational programmes as computer literacy development, foreign languages skills, various lectures, consulting, cultural events, trips, meditation groups, etc.;
- participation in the community activities is important for all age groups – teenagers, retired and employed people;
- community members living in the neighbourhood expressed the need for education in the social, cultural, legal, medical, psychological, environmental and other areas.

In terms of the material and human resources of Kačerginė community, it has a network of local community members and groups which do not belong to any formal system of social-educational support. These people participate in the interesting cultural-educational activities (organise events, exhibitions, reading sessions, etc.) and arrange effective socio-cultural help for local community members. Therefore the community centre should provide various socio-educational services, taking into account the needs of the solidary people of this town.

The *hypothesis* that the established community centre as a social-educational institution would enable meeting the needs of town's inhabitants was not rejected.

6 Opportunities for building a sense of community between inhabitants in local government subdivision (Case of the local government subdivision *Centras* (LGSC) in the city of Kaunas)

It was a comparative study, comparing the answers of schoolchildren and adults of the LGSC.

Out of 210 questionnaires 6 were not returned and 2 were invalid, so data were taken from 202 questionnaires. The sample involved 105 schoolchildren and 97 adult inhabitants of the LGSC.

Research results showed that respondents most like living in their area because 'everything is close from here' and 'life is always bubbling here'. Comparing schoolchildren's and adults' responses, one can notice that the latter have stronger community sense than the former (Figure 1). However, it should be noted that the percentage of children communicating with other residents of LGSC is higher than that of adult people.

Figure 1: Community features of the LGSC residents
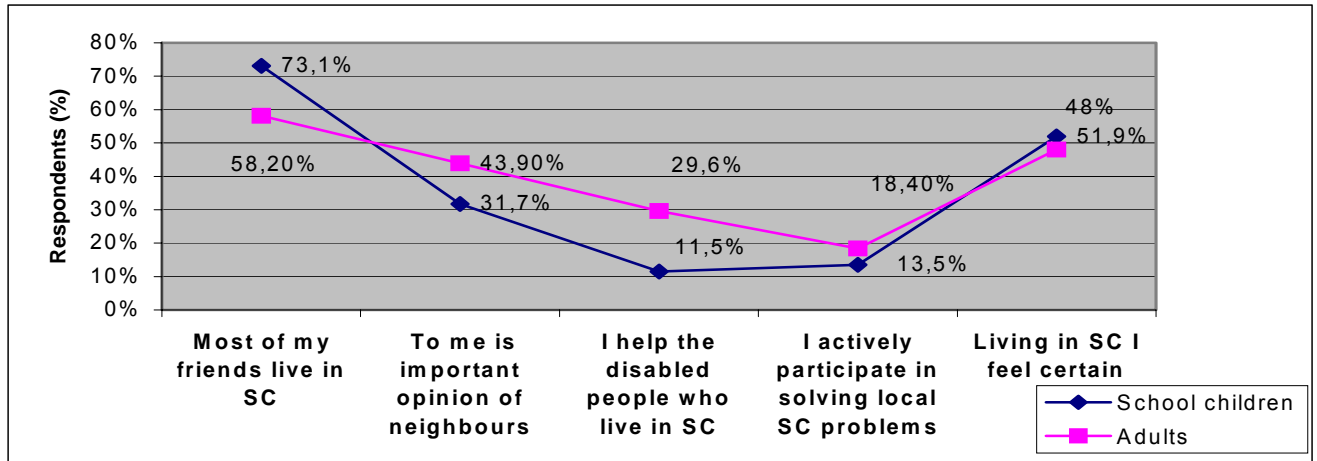
Based on the community features suggested by I. Garcia (quoted in Kvietkauskaitė,1999), it can be concluded that some of them are characteristic to the relationship of both children and adults with other LGSC residents. The fact that not all features are present is rather normal. According to S. Butvytis and L.C.Johnson (quoted in Kvietkauskaitė 1999), it is often the case in the larger communities that people with common interests interact, most often through various larger social organisations.

Summarising results of the study, it can be noted that most of the surveyed schoolchildren and adults do not participate in any organisations. It can be presumed that this is one of the factors preventing development of the sense of community. One of the organisations that could encourage children to join community life is the school. In case of adults, the biggest influence belongs to local government and other organisations which are organising citizens' meetings (over 15% of the adult respondents participate in such meetings).

The study showed that respondents' relationships with other residents of the LGSC are characterised by one of the key features of community – direct interaction. Naturally, such interaction is possible only between people living in the neighbourhood or those with common interests.

7 Socioeducational Preconditions for the Establishment of Partnership Network between Local Government Subdivision and Comprehensive Schools (the case study of Žaliakalnis)

The survey involved 89 respondents working in Žaliakalnis comprehensive schools as teachers or administrators. 23 respondents were from primary schools, 25 from basic schools, 22 from secondary schools and 19 from gymnasiums.

To determine the preconditions for development of the partnership network, first of all it was important to learn whether the respondents participate in any network of organisations. It was determined that only 16% participate in such networks, while 80% do not (Figure 2).
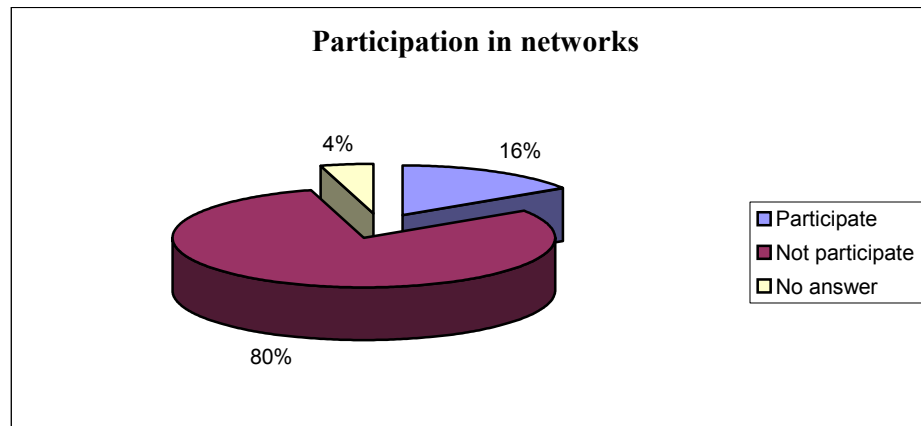
Figure 2: Respondents' participation in networks

However, the study indicated that none of the networks mentioned by respondents are similar to the one analysed in the study, i.e. a network involving schools and local government subdivision. On the other hand, respondents participating in the networks clearly understand their benefit and purpose.

The respondents agree that all kinds of activity would be useful for local government and schools, except work in the election districts, and that these activities could be organised by the network.

The study showed that no active cooperation between Žaliakalnis comprehensive schools and local government is taking place. This cooperation could be promoted by a newly established network.

Most of the respondents' schools are not capable of implementing the educational institution's mission. This is another precondition for establishing a network.

Almost all of the respondents agree that it is worth establishing such network.

Most of the respondents understand the importance of face to face meetings to the network. The study showed that they would be able to participate in such network.

The biggest problem revealed was lack of knowledge about the activities of the local government subdivision. However, overall it can be stated that there are socio-educational preconditions for the establishment of partnership network in Žaliakalnis local government subdivision.

8 The strategy of cooperation between local government and educational institutions in the context of community education (case of Panemunė local government in Kaunas)

According to various authors (R.Jucevičius, 2003; P.Jucevičienė, 2003; B.Janiūnaitė, 2003; G.Cibulskas, 2003; R.M.Andriekienė and V.Targamadzė, 2002), two key strategies – cooperation and education – are relevant in the educational context of the community (see Table 2).

Table 2: The features of cooperation and education strategies (L.Vitkutė)

Cooperation strategy	Education strategy
Purpose: create conditions for cooperation between institutions	*Purpose:* provide greater opportunities for community members
Features:	*Features:*
Joint use of resources	Educational conditions are created for the entire community

Sharing power and responsibility	Changing needs of the community are taken into account
Common values and philosophy	Interests of the entire community are important
Sharing ideas, knowledge, experience	Institutions are open to community
Common goals	Community members participate in the institution's work
Competition replaced by cooperation	
Cooperation encouraged by local government	

Summarising the theoretical part of the study, it can be argued that education of every community member is especially important in the territorial community. This enables them to deal with their problems more effectively and to better adjust to the changing environment. In this context, cooperation between institutions and development of the joint strategy would enable more effective organisation of the educational process in the community, more flexible reaction to its changing needs and more productive use of the scarce resources.

94 respondents working in the Panemunė local government subdivision (PLGS) and in the educational institutions located on its territory were surveyed.

It was attempted to answer the question what prevents educational institutions from cooperation with PLGS and vice versa. The key barrier revealed was lack of time. The least important barrier is lack of funds (according to 69% of the respondents). One respondent pointed out that no problems exist, except some barriers from the PLGS side.

Summarising results of the study, it can be stated that the cooperation strategy is more characteristic to this community than the education strategy. All key features of the cooperation strategy are present, except joint use of resources. Meanwhile in case of education strategy it can be noticed that although institutions are open to the community, their attention is focused on their direct clients, i.e. schoolchildren and their parents.

Also, it can be noted that cooperation between PLGS and educational institutions is fragmented, contacts are occasional, which in turn hinders dealing with common problems. Only the management of institutions interact more frequently. However, more active help of the PLGS staff is lacking.

9   Philanthropic action in a community as manisfestation of social responsibility

The collapse of the communism system in Eastern Europe has raised some new questions about the virtues of corporate capitalism and corporate social responsibility (Parkinson, 1993). Philanthropy is one of them, appearing in its new qualities as a particular form of social responsibility in particular circumstances. The modern qualities of philanthropy include *corporative (strategic) philanthropy* and *socially orientated* philanthropy. *Corporative philanthropy* generates social and economic benefit and is based on strategic action, while *socially orientated philanthropy* is oriented namely to social benefit.

The question that occurs is: what is this pure modern philanthropy concept - strategic action based on relational social responsibility or social responsibility for social dysfunction in society? According to public polls, 41 % of respondents in Lithuania indicated that philanthropy is help to socially excluded people, while 88% of the respondents from business sector (and as many as 93% NGO representatives) indicated that in Lithuania there are social groups who will not survive without donations (Lithuanian business companies and NGO survey on philanthropy issues: report of quatititative research).

On the basis of this two-fold approach a *hypothesis* could be suggested.

Under the typical circumstances of modernization corporative philanthropy is dominating, while in the post-communist reality, philanthropy as a phenomenon includes some peripheral strategic aspects, but is more oriented to the relief of social dysfunction.

Qualitative research on the philanthropic action has been carried in Lithuania in the spring of 2003 (project manager PhD. student E. Vaidelytė). Ten in-depth semi-structured interviews, every approx. 1 hour long, with the representatives of each group of philanthropic actors (donors, intermediaries and recipients) were carried out. The interview included 4 main topics: perception of the concept "philanthropy" and experience in philanthropic action, political and value orientations, biographical aspects and other question that help to interpret the received information.

Empirical data indicate that most intermediaries and recipients see philanthropy as a component of corporative social responsibility, putting emphasis on cooperation between public, private and nongovernmental sectors, while donors look at corporative action as a manner of linking social and economic objectives. Some aspects of relational social responsibility could be also identified in the philanthropic action, though during the interviews this tendency was not emphasized because of still rather sceptical attitude to strategic philanthropy considering it not the "pure form of philanthropy".

Thus the hypothesis that in the post-communist reality, philanthropy as a phenomenon includes some peripheral strategic aspects, but is more oriented to the relief of social dysfunction was confirmed to some extent, as though could be noticed a lot of manifestations of strategic and corporative philanthropic action, rather often the perception that socially oriented philanthropy is more valuable and "right" form of social responsibility is dominating. This tendency is popular not only among philanthropic actors (especially among intermediaries), but in society as well.

Conclusion remarks

1   The processes of globalization and tendencies of new democracies in Lithuania, as well as in new European Union countries, determine new qualities for the university and community. Modern university participates not only in science level oriented to elites, but also approaches and empowers local communities, taking role of educator, researcher , initiator and building its inclusive directions.

2   The analysis of the results of the scientific research that were conducted in Kaunas University of Technology in 2002-2004 revealed the following rather challenging tendencies of building and developing inclusive communities:

2.1   Ater adopting the experience of foreign community centers, Lithuanian community centers have turned into the institutions providing social educational services. Children are one of the main groups of clients not only at specialized children care centers, but also at other community centers.

2.2   Most local community members are not sure about their competence and this maybe assumed as one of the factors that discourage the initiative for local community activities.

2.3   One of the organisations that could encourage children to join community life is the school. In case of adults, the biggest influence belongs to local government and other organisations which are organising citizens' meetings.

2.4   Education enables community members to deal with their problems more effectively and to better adjust to the changing environment. In this context, cooperation between institutions and development of the joint strategy would enable more effective

organisation of the educational process in the community, more flexible reaction to its changing needs and more productive use of the scarce resources.

2.5   Empirical data indicate that most community members see philanthropy as a component of corporative social responsibility, putting emphasis on cooperation between public, private and nongovernmental sectors and building inclusive community with a new quality of social solidarity perception.

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Author´s Adress:
Assoc Prof Dr Viktorija Baršauskienė, Prof Dr Irena Leliūgienė and PhD Candidate Eglė Vaidelytė
Kaunas University of Technology
Faculty of Social Sciences
Kaunas
Lithuania
Email: ei@ktu.lt, egltamu@ktu.lt