Klaipėdos universitetas

SOCIAL INNOVATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ABSTRACTS of REPORTS

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of 17th international conference organized by Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities at Klaipėda University

28- 29 of April,

Klaipėda, 2021

The 17th international conference „Social Innovations for Sustainable Regional Development": Klaipėda, Lithuania, April 28-29, 2021. Abstracts of reports. Klaipėda: Klaipėda University, 2021, p. 86

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English language not edited. This is responsibility of authors of abstracts

ISBN 978-609-481-115-9

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THE RESEARCH OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATION WITH CONSUMERS THROUGH SOCIAL NETWORKS

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Summary. The article analyzes the benefits of social networks for business, highlighting that companies mostly use e-commerce models B2B, B2C. Research reveals results related to the digital space and ways to help businesses communicate with consumers and find new ways to provide information, build and develop relationships through social networks. Researchers emphasize the benefits of social networking and the variety and accessibility of digital marketing tools to business customers, especially young people. However, there is a scientific problem with what criteria for evaluating social networks can determine their impact on consumers and single out the most popular. The research used the analysis of scientific literature, comparative analysis and qualitative research method - expert survey, on the basis of which the most popular social networks among business enterprises in Lithuania were determined. The study analyzed the accounts of social networks LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and highlighted the reasons for using them in communicating and providing information with consumers.

Key words: e-business models, internet marketing, social networks, benefits, communication.

JEL code (s): M30; M37; O3; Q5

Introduction. Businesses are increasingly interacting with consumers in the digital space by presenting a variety of messages related to the products and services offered, emphasizing the company's brands, the distinctive features of the products, and so on. As needs change, it becomes increasingly difficult for consumers to choose the information that is relevant to them, due to the abundance of information, the variety of forms of communication and the use of advanced information technologies. Companies are increasingly using social media, which is popular among consumers, to find out not only the needs of consumers, but also their attitudes toward a product, service, or improvement (Heinonen, K., Strandvik, T., Voima, P. 2013).

Theoretical background. Social networks are mostly used by companies operating according to the e-commerce models B2B, B2C models. Much of the research has focused on exploring the benefits of social networking for businesses using a variety of e-business models. Sonja Utz (2016) researched LinkedIn, Cripps H., Standing C.and Fanning S. (2015) - Facebook and revealed how social networks help businesses, Swani, Brown, Milne (2013) researched what makes consumer audiences interested trademark; Christodoulides, G., Michaelidou, N., Siamagka, (2019), Brennan R., Croft R. (2012), Brennan R., Tzempelikos N., Wilson, J. (2014) analyzed the use of social networks in B2B marketing. Although B2B marketers who use social networks perceive their benefits for business growth, the problem arises with what criteria to evaluate social networks and their suitability for business communication with the consumer.

Research aim. To analyze the scientific literature and highlight the evaluation criteria of social networks, their impact on consumers, to substantiate the research methodology and to identify the most popular social networks among business enterprises in Lithuania.

Methodology. Research methods: analysis of scientific literature, comparative analysis, analysis of the most popular social networks in Lithuania "LinkedIn", "Facebook", "Instagram", "Twitter", their application in corporate marketing. During the empirical research, a qualitative research method was chosen - expert survey. **Results.** In the first part are analysed the scientific literature and reviews the main aspects of online marketing theory, revealing the main elements of online marketing, describes e-business models, social networking business benefits, key marketing effectiveness measurement indicators and impact measurement indicators.

The second part deals with the aspects of the organization of the research, and describes the questions of the questionnaire, as well as how the respondents answered the topic. The study involved a target group: 25 people working as marketing managers, agency managers, corporate social network marketing specialists.

The third part social networks are extensively analyzed: LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, their use in corporate social network marketing, and TOP10, 2019 Lithuanian social network accounts are analyzed. After analyzing the results of the survey and the social network accounts of Lithuania's TOP10 companies, it was established that the Maxima brand is the most well-known in Lithuania.

Conslusions. Literature analysis can be used to distinguish the following key indicators of social networks, such as: number of followers, engagement -reactions to a post or advertisement, reach of the target audience, traffic analysis -where the most traffic comes fromand clicks on advertising or record number. Also, which social networks are best suited for the type of campaign: to generate high quality targeted contacts - LinkedIn; to spread the message to a wider audience - Facebook; It is recommended to choose YouTube to share any professional corporate video message/video. Instagram is recommended to choose when there are e-commerce B2C sales.

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IS THERE ROOM FOR INNOVATION OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHIATRY

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Summary. Today's economic conditions lead to goal orientation, increased competition, market saturation, etc. This forces to search for new sources of efficiency in all areas, including the provision of medical and healthcare services. Therefore, special attention must be paid to the personnel's motivation and education, as well as to the system of work with the personnel that organizes it. The research was carried out to examine the peculiarities of the personnel management process at healthcare setting, i.e. the Department of Psychiatry. The results revealed that it takes a lot of time and effort to develop and implement an innovative motivation system at the healthcare institution.

Keywords: innovations, personnel management, human resource management, healthcare setting

Introduction. Today's economic conditions are extreme. This leads to goal orientation, increased competition, market saturation, etc. This forces to search for new sources of efficiency in all areas, including the provision of medical services in treatment facilities of psychiatry profile. Therefore, special attention must be paid to the personnel's motivation and education, as well as to the system of work with the personnel that organizes it. This is especially relevant in Lithuania, when providing inpatient medical services, where there is a lack of material resources and only by maximizing the potential of personnel can increase the efficiency of personnel.

Theoretical background. There are two important directions in personnel management, or components of personnel management: personnel organization (personnel accounting and statistics; personnel needs planning; recruitment, transfer, dismissal; work organization and remuneration; professional development, etc.), and personnel management (personnel management), forming the content of personnel management (co-workers' cognition; co-workers' motivation; application of sanctions; management style; management methods, etc.). According to A. Sakalas (2003), the first component - personnel organization - is mostly related to the functions performed by the personnel department (although heads of departments are also involved in the personnel organization) and the second component, which is personnel management, belongs to the area of interaction (cooperation) between managers and subordinates.

Many researchers tend to call the process of personnel organization as personnel formation and distinguish its following activities (Lipinskienė, 2012):

- assessment of the organization's personnel potential (personnel's statistics and accounting, evaluation of jobs and workplaces, employee's evaluation);
- forecast of the required personnel (forecasting personnel needs and personnel supply);
- personnel search and selection (internal and external sources of demand);
- recruitment, redeployment (recruitment, adaptation, transfer, promotion);
- dismissal;
- in-service training and retraining (independent in-service training, in-service and out-of-organization training, retraining);
- career management.

It should be noted that personnel management is a more formalized process. According to A. Stankevičienė and L. Lobanova (2006), it is more closely related to labour law norms and functions of the personnel service, guaranteeing the legally based implementation of personnel management work. Personnel management is a 'softer' relationship-oriented activity aimed at creating an effective employee cognitive and motivational system, good relations between managers and subordinates and increase employee satisfaction.

The basic function of personnel management is human resource management and its primary purpose is to plan, use, and nurture people's energy and efforts to achieve organizational goals effectively and quickly (Reddy, 2004). Today's economic conditions, new technologies and technical progress force us to look for the means to increase work efficiency. Healthcare facilities are not an exclusive area, only here the consumer with the problems that occur to him is a little more whimsical. When organizing and managing the personnel, there is a gap between new requirements and old traditions. Therefore, more attention should be paid to employees' leadership evaluation, their motivation. Today a large number of people work in organizations, whose main motivation means still are high salaries and good working conditions. Even more, there is no legalized system of labour contribution assessment and remuneration for work in Lithuania. Today the importance of the content of the work and the self-esteem of the individual, the recognition of his / her merits, as well as the growing role of self-expression and career opportunities in the motivation of employees are emphasized. From the point of view of improving the situation, it cannot be underestimated that the study of motivation and job satisfaction would allow to forecast not only the actions of labour market participants, but also to adjust the elements of the state social policy. On the other hand, the relationship between productivity and job satisfaction is well known, although their direct dependence has not yet been conclusively demonstrated. It is possible to speak more clearly about indirect dependence: dissatisfaction leads to absenteeism, personnel turnover, and so on. In any case, job satisfaction in the organization acquires the function of an activity quality regulator; therefore, it is necessary to talk about the ways of motivating employees in organizations and strategies specified to a certain organization. **The aim** of the research was to examine the peculiarities of the personnel management process at healthcare setting, i.e. the Department of Psychiatry.

Methods. Taking into account the aim and object of the research, it was decided to use quantitative research methods. In order to reveal and evaluate the situation as comprehensively as possible and to present possibly more realistic suggestions to solve personnel management issues in the Department of Psychiatry an anonymous survey was conducted.

The research involved 11 men and 89 women working in the Department of Psychiatry. 13 doctors, 60 nurses, 27 nursing assistants, and 5 other personnel participated in the survey. For comparative analysis, all the participants were divided into two groups: doctors and medical personnel.

Most respondents worked in the healthcare system for more than 10 years (n=53), 27 respondents work from 5 to 10 years and 15 work from 2 to 5 years.

Results. Based on the results of the survey, it can be stated that more than half of the employees working in the psychiatric department are satisfied with their work. It should be noted that for employees who are satisfied with the job, the goals and strategy of the institution are completely clear, and those who are indifferent to the work performed are also indifferent to the goal and strategy of the Department of Psychiatry. According to the Department of Psychiatry personnel, the most important factors determining job satisfaction are:

1. Salary paid;
2. Good psychological atmosphere;
3. Leadership style, relationship with the manager;
4. The employee's own attitudes.

The most significant determinants of job dissatisfaction in the psychiatric department

1. Underpayment;
2. Working conditions;
3. Too much tension, anxiety, stress at work.

There are material means of motivating employees in the institution. Attention should be paid to the fact that while communicating with respondents during the research there was observed the view that money alone was not the most important criterion. Employees would like their views to be taken into account so that their contribution to the success of the institution is valued.

It should be noted that the research shows a tendency to look at moral encouragement offhand. Of course, forms of moral encouragement such as praise, leisure programs, and events with families, joint travel, i.e. sincere communication probably depend on the understanding of the principles of freedom and democracy, the ingenuity and qualification of leaders. The majority of employees say they are sometimes considered personalities, 9 % of employees noted that they never felt to be considered as personalities.

Conclusion

It takes a lot of time and effort to prepare and implement an innovative motivation system. Their development of such motivation system is closely related to the company's aspirations, goal management, and a clear organizational structure of the institution's management. Creating a motivational system involves knowing that all people are different, so everyone needs to be treated differently. It is necessary to take into account individual needs and only then take measures. In terms of needs it is important to emphasize the needs are a volatile thing that is constantly changing. Some employees need respect, opportunities to improve, while others need certain life structures or the like. It is therefore necessary to find out the individual needs as early as possible, and use a variety of testing methods that make it possible to structure the process of recognizing people's needs.

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IMPACT OF CHANGES IN ORGANIZATION´S STRATEGY ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

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Introduction. Today, the majority of Lithuanian organizations face external environment factors that cause changes in business strategies. The need of immediate identification and prompt reaction upon "unbalanced" outside environment encourages the search for counterbalance in the organization´s internal resources. Employee engagement is considered as a tool that helps to ensure competitive advantage and business continuity. *Problem:* it is not clear what effect do changes in organization's strategy have on employee engagement. *The aim of the study*: to analyze the impact of changes in the organization´s strategy on employee's engagement. *Objectives*: to identify the conditions for effective employee engagement and tools required to achieve them; to emphasize measures that require more management support and attention.

Keywords: *Organization, employee engagement, strategy.*

JEL codes: J53, M12; M51.

Strategic changes in organizations. For a long time, production organizations have been an accustomed to adhering to long – term strategic plans. They were reflected in the organization´s operational methods and processes, transmitted in day – to – day operations and communication skills. The pandemic has caused new environmental conditions, the uncertainty which requires active monitoring of the external factors, understanding its variables, their relations and trends (Matos et al., 2019). Many schools of strategic management ("behavior", "environment", "scenario", etc.) make original proposals that encourage the adoption of different approach in the context of an uncertain, difficult – to – plan environment, or changes (Sarkar et al., 2018). As never before, organizations have to adjust and adapt their activity. The condition for their continuity is a prompt response and adequate reaction to new conditions. This is a daily challenge that also requires strategy. However, is it possible to create or develop the strategy every day? In this case, the schools of "configuration" and "scenario" offer to evaluate all possible business alternative and combine them in one common direction. It is like a short – term, current plan, which is prepared from the "today´s" position. If the "tomorrow´s" day provides different conditions, the organization will choose the other scenario, but will not deviate from the defined direction (Bodwel et al., 2009). The operational position is chosen as inevitable in the context of complex and unplanned changes in the face of a changing future. This is a challenge for managers, as their decisions are equated with balancing in an unstable outside environment conditions. However, same strategy must also apply to the internal participants – employees that require security and stability in order to effectively cooperate and work for the company.

The conditions of employee engagement. It is believed that employee engagement is an internal organization´s recourse, that despite stressful outside factors can ensure competitive advantage and added value (Pikturnaite, 2015). Employee engagement is described as a positive state that includes: energy and willingness towards their work; active participation and interest; taking on additional powers and interest in work (Libona eta l., 2018; Lapointe et al., 2018). It is a commitment to the organization, that includes teamwork, mutual communication and trust. Engagement defines an employee´s level of activity, productivity, the quality of the work (Anitha, 2014). The following conditions for engagement are emphasized: 1) social security; 2) job satisfaction; 3) well timed information; 4) salary motivation; 5) empowering. A sense of ***social security*** helps to reduce stress. In fact, manufacturing companies are those whose employees often face factors that lead to a burnout at work condition: noise, vibration, temperature changes, dust (Chen et al., 2017). These increases both – emotional and physical exhaustion. Stress problems can be solved more objectively through <u>*group collaboration*</u>. In this way problems are "divided", then they are seen in different ways and can be solved faster (Saks, 2015; Levine et al., 2006). The group´s activities bring up informal leaders who use their qualities to resolve conflicts and improve interpersonal communication. This satisfies employee´s communication and recognition. The need for ***job satisfaction*** is formed through learning and improvement (Caniels et al., 2019). Commitment to the organization is tied to work experience. A manufacturing company usually have a significant number of employee with extensive professional experience. If their professional development has reached the boundaries of the organization, it is appropriate to transfer their experience and skills to others. This forms mentors who discover new self – realization and help others improve. The benefits of <u>*mentoring*</u>

are knowledge, skills, time saving, solving problems and interesting challenges. The mentoring process is related to acquisition of new skills and information that can be used in daily work immediately (Hezlet et al., 2005). In all processes the ***well timed information*** is needed. It can be formed by *changing communication methods and style*; by improving or creating new information networks and actors. It is important to mention, that the lack of employee caused by pandemic conditions, increase the workload. That leads to confusion about work priorities, causes the conflicts of professional roles. In addition, the lack of information or its rapid change often causes doubts towards personal competencies and future of the organization (Calle et al., 2016). It is recommended to narrow the concept of confidential information in order to create feedback processes. There is an opinion, that ***reword motivation*** is one of the most difficult condition for employee's engagement (Suniti et al., 2019). Especially, it is difficult during the time of crisis or ever – changing circumstances. In the event of a pandemic, incentives for external motivation (traveling, traditional holidays, incentive seminars) are not possible. It is recommended to develop additional *professional skills* of employees that could be applied in the rotation of positions or functions. The theory proposes to include the variable part of the wage based on newly acquired skills (Grishnova et al., 2019). Trying to use ***empowermen***t it is important to increase the *workplace autonomy* and to expand opportunities for decision – making at the higher organization´s level. Options for individual or group empowerment are offered, as well as professional or goal – specific and field – enabled alternatives (Serba et al., 2016; Lapointe et al., 2018). In any case, empowerment is closely related to collaboration and self- identification through assumed responsibility for decision, through influence on other members, and through organizational performance.

Research. The study was conducted by the following methods: descriptive, comparative method, analysis of scientific literature, semi-structured interview, and standardized questionnaires. It is based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. It was decided to choose a manufacturing company, whose 81 employees (89% out of a total) agreed to participate in this study. The first aim of the study was to analyse tools that have an impact on employee engagement from management point of view. Therefore, a total of 15 members of administration staff attended a semi-structured interview that consisted of 16 open questions. At the same time, 66 lower level employees were handed anonymous questionnaires in order to find out: how effectively do measures and tools selected by the management work in terms of employee engagement; which ones are the most liked by the employees; which of those do require additional support by the management. Combination of these two methods has allowed the study to evaluate the accuracy and comprehensiveness of same information by expanding the topic with more in-depth data.

The results revealed that the most applied employee engagement means are *implementation of mentoring*; change *the way of communication*; increase *autonomy of the working place*. The **mentoring** was justified for the following reasons: 1) the feeling of social security increased, which was emphasized by as many as 95 % of the respondents; 2) reward motivation increased (90 %) and 3) information sharing become more efficient (85 %). According to the participants, interpersonal "communication with mentor allows to see the versatility of situations, helps to use the received information at work immediately, motivates so seek and earn more". Changing the way and means of **communication** helped to feel more socially secure (100 %), ensured a better flow of necessary information (100 %) and led to higher job satisfaction (95 %). The participants highly valued the manager´s openness and information about organization´s future vision and business plans. This "allows us to understand the actions at the organizational level and consider our contribution towards the goals". The increase or **workplace autonomy** has led to job satisfactions (72 %), ensured more efficient use of the information received at work (80 %), and increased reward motivation (71 %). Participants noted that having more autonomy there are more possibilities to be more creative. This way "promotes professional self – expression and leads to better results and to higher reward". These study revealed the most effective "set" of employee engagement means. Without exceptions, all employee engagement means (*mentoring, communication, workplace autonomy, group collaboration and development of new skills*) have been indicated as increasing *job satisfaction*. Meanwhile, empowerment was only positively understood by employees through using the monitoring and increasing the workplace autonomy.

Conclusions.The formations of new strategy in organization is inevitable if it is responded adequately to environmental factor. Therefore, the impact of strategy´s changes on employee engagement depends on how the reasons, meaning and objectives of all changes, are clearly disclosed to employees. After analyzing the conditions of employee engagement, the main ones emerged: 1) a need of social security; 2) a need of job satisfaction; 3) a need for timely information; 4) a need for motivated reward; 5) a need for authority through empowerment. On this base, measures have been developed to encourage employee engagement. These are mentoring, communication, autonomy, group collaboration, development of new skills. The study revealed:

The most successful measures are: *mentoring*, *communications and autonomy*; Measures requiring better managers´ attention and support are: *group collaboration*, development of *new skills*; Without exception, *all the measures increase employee job satisfaction*; The need of authority through *empowerment can be met by using mentoring and increasing workplace autonomy.*

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SECTION
EDUCATION AND CREATION OF INNOVATION IN CHILDHOOD

TEACHER LEADER FROM THE PRE-PRIMARY AND PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN PERSPECTIVE

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Summary

Teacher leadership from the perspective of school principals and teachers was analysed. However, teacher leader from the pre-primary and primary school children perspective has not been investigated. The research aim is to analyse pre-primary and primary school children opinion on teacher leader underpinning the elaboration of implications for teacher education. The empirical study was carried out in February 2021. The sample was composed of four children who attend pre-primary and primary schools in Riga, Latvia. The data were collected through interviews. The study results show the characteristics of teacher leader from the children perspective: teacher leader is a kind person and treats children well. Implications for teacher education imply teacher training on the use of politeness in communication with children: linguistic politeness as well as body language politeness.

Keywords: children opinion, pre-primary school, primary school, teacher education, teacher leader.

JEL codes: I21, I20

Introduction

Teacher leadership is widely discussed by the scientific community. Particularly, in pre-primary and primary school teacher leader plays a key role in children life. Pre-primary and primary school teacher has to introduce children into school life as pre-primary and primary school has a significant impact on children development (Osher, Kendziora, Spier, Garibaldi, 2014). Teacher leadership from the perspective of those who practice it, namely school principals and teachers, was analysed (Angelle, Schmid, 2007). However, teacher leader from the pre-primary and primary school children perspective has not been explored. The aim of the research to analyse the pre-primary and primary school children opinion on teacher leader underpinning the elaboration of implications for teacher education.

Theoretical background. According to generally accepted standards, the term "leadership" means the ability to effectively organize, inspire, motivate, and manage other people, affecting their behaviour and destinies. Analyzing the scientific literature, the qualities of leaders as well as teachers are as follows (Bae, Hayesdawn, O’Connor, Seitz, Distefano, 2016; Salimullina, 2017; Melnis, 2018; Živica, 2019): high level of motivation; responsibility; emotional intelligence; self-confidence and building confidence in other people; professionalism; enthusiasm; intention to develop; kindness; interest; listening.

Leadership is a key skill that unites all the school representatives. The leader always tries to strengthen and maintain good, committed relationship (Salimullina, 2017). A leader is a person who is able to see something unique, unusual in others and shows it with his / her attitude towards other people (Živica, 2019).

The real leader is not afraid of making mistakes, but is able to use his/her specific situation with a view to analyzing, learning, trusting others and separation the positive from what happened (Živica, 2019). He/she seeks to strengthen and bring in people self-confidence, encouraging and convincing that the failure does not mean stopping the pursuing his/her target (Živica, 2019).

21st century school is an institution that creates an environment to brings together children, teachers and the public interest in the accumulation of knowledge and joint action in which the curriculum is made up of interdisciplinary projects or subjects, and the teaching is based on a real life problem and dilemma solving (Kalniņa, 2010). The teacher in this school is the organizer of the learning process that helps children transform information to knowledge and knowledge into life wisdom (Kalniņa, 2010). In turn, a child is an individual who is motivated to learn, because in the learning process he/she sees how learning prepares him/her for life

(Kalniņa, 2010). The child is a personality whose curiosity is being developed. Curiosity is necessary for the lifelong learning process (Kalniņa, 2010). There are large variations in the learning process as it is taught (the teacher is flexible in the choice of methods) and children are enthusiastic to learn, continuing their studies outside the formal school day (Kalniņa, 2010).

In the process of teaching, a person not only acquires knowledge, but also experience, which results in a change in his behavior. It should be noted that Figure 1 illustrates the structural elements of experience (Ahrens, Zaščerinska, Hariharan, Andreeva, 2016). The elements of experience, namely knowledge, skills and attitude, are inter-related (Ahrens, Zaščerinska, 2015). In pedagogy the terms competence and experience are used synonymously (Ahrens, Zaščerinska, 2015).

Figure 1. Elements of experience in pedagogy

A lot of schools search for the best use of teacher leadership to facilitate the change and support learners to get better results. Teacher leadership initiatives can (American Institutes for Research, 2019):

• Accelerate the achievement of children developmental priorities and objectives;
• Enhance the quality of training, curriculum, assessment and quality of the courses;
• Removing barriers and improving the learning environment;
• Sustainable and effective management system formation;

Teacher leaders help children to benefit from teachers' experience and ideas to promote children development. Leaders roles and options can promote teachers' career development for those who are looking for recognition, seeking career advancement or the opportunity to work on special projects or interests (American Institutes for Research, 2019).

The modern meaning of leadership among teachers is a particular way of thinking or essence, rather than a set of behaviors. The notion of leadership among teachers tends to move away from titles or positions to an informal, complex approach. A teacher-leaders is considered a teacher who not only fulfill the teacher's responsibilities given class, but also takes responsibility for leading outside the classroom. Such teachers are often informal leaders who "come ahead" by following the teaching process and innovation, developing their relationships to expand their learning and influence others.

Teacher leader has to prepare children for the modern life. Teacher leader has to educate the children in such a way that children school experience influences their life achievements. It is the responsibility of the teacher to build a competent, social, successful personality, and a teacher with leadership qualities and abilities can achieve this goal (Krieviņš, 1997). A teacher-leader is a person whose authority is strengthened both among children and among colleagues, who can (Krieviņš, 1997):

- organize their own and other people activities aimed at reaching the shared objectives,
- motivate and inspire people to success.

The teacher-leader has an active life position - he listens carefully, observes, learns and shows his interest to be a role model for the others (Krieviņš, 1997).

The teacher's activity can be characterized by the strengthening of authority through professional skills, with a high level of intelligence (Krieviņš, 1997).

Confidence in a teacher as a professional is formed from the conviction that the teacher is able to (Krieviņš, 1997):

• Understand, explain and predict the course of events of life;
• Disclose and explain the secrets of nature, human behavior, the emotional and mental state;
• Help to choose operational goals;
• To inspire and advance the noble actions;
• To help understand life and its meaning;
• Fairly evaluate and resolve conflicts;
• To teach his/her subject.

The transition from the teacher-head to the teacher leader is a gradual process and may take a long time (Smuljans, 2016). This progression is called organic, not imposed (Smuljans, 2016). It was described as "the appearance of [cases]," and "organized complexity" (Hunzicker, 2017). However, most of the teachers do not intend to be the leaders, but teachers become leaders following a way to their progression (e.g. one step forward, two back) in lifelong learning. This progression can be described as a constantly changing process of learning moving.

As a teacher leader's task is to introduce children into the modern life through the development of children experience where attitude is a structural component, teacher leader is such a school teacher whom children should like.

Methodology. The guiding question of the empirical study was as follows: What qualities characterize teacher leaders from the perspective of pre-primary and primary children? The study purpose was to analyse pre-primary and primary children opinion on teacher leader. The empirical study was carried out in February 2021. The sample was composed of four children who live in Riga, Latvia. It should be pointed that the sample was chosen on the basis of the well-acknowledged children age rate:

- early childhood (3 to 8 years old),
- middle childhood (9 to 11 years old).

The children parents signed the informed consent form for the children participation in the study. In order to save the information of the present research confidential, the respondents' names and surnames were coded as follows: Respondents 1 was a 3 yeas boy who attended a pre-primary school. Respondent 2 was a 4 year girl in a pre-primary school. Respondent 3 was a 7 year boy in the 1st form of a primary school. And Respondent 4 was a 10 year girl in the 4th form of a primary school. The study was qualitative. The interviews served as the method of data collection. The interviews were built of the question: What teacher do you like? The data were gathered with the help of the children parents as the children's parents were acquainted with the children situation at school and their teachers. The parents helped to interpret the children speech as the parents know what their children mean in a particular situation.

Results. Table 1 presents the study results.

Table 1: Description of teacher leader by the pre-primary and primary school children

Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4
A beautiful teacher, Very kind, Treat the child well, Calm, Caring, Quiet	Kind, Calm, Joyful, Who help others, Intelligent	The beloved teacher is the class teacher because she: is kind, is beautiful, is intelligent, explains lessons well, treats children well.	Teachers who wait for an answer from the student, explain the material in detail, still treat a child well in case the child makes a mistake

The analysis of the study results is based on such a measure as the frequency of teacher leader characteristics pointed by the respondents: we consider only teacher leader characteristics pointed by the majority of the respondents (3 or 4 respondents' responses).

The study results reveal that the children were able to express their opinion on teacher leader. The children were also able to identify characteristics of ideal teacher leader in the teacher at his school (Respondent 3). The children opinion on characteristics of teacher leader is heterogeneous. The study results based on the frequency analysis allow finding out the common characteristics of teacher leader from the children perspective. The majority of the respondents imply that teacher leader is a kind person (3 replies) and treats children well (3 replies).

Conclusions

Findings of the empirical study allow drawing a conclusion that children have their own opinion on teacher leader. The results of the empirical study show the common characteristics of teacher leader from the children perspective: teacher leader is a kind person, and treats children well.

Implications for teacher education imply teachers to be trained on the use of politeness in communication with children. The focus of such a training should be put on linguistic politeness (children response on kindness of teacher leader) as well as body language politeness (children response on treating children well by teacher leader).

The present study has some limitations. A limitation is participation of only four respondents in the empirical study. Another limitation is that children from only one city in one country tool part in the study. A limitation also is that the parents helped to interpret the children speech. The use of only one method of data collection also limits the empirical study. Translation of children opinion about a teacher leader from Latvian into English can also limit the use of data analysis as the same words can be used in a different meaning in different languages.

Future research will focus on involvement more respondents into the empirical study. Methods for data collection and analysis will be searched. A mixed method study will be implemented in future. The translation of respondents' replies from one language into another will be performed by experts. A comparative study of children from different age groups could be carried out as well as comparative studies of different countries are of a great research interest, too.

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DYNAMICS OF CONNECTIVITY AND CONTINUITY BETWEEN FORMAL AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN BULGARIA

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Summary
The abstract presents shortly the results of a study on the dynamics of connectivity and continuity between formal and non-formal education in Bulgaria based on mixed research methodology which integrates documental and project analysis with case studies and a survey. The collected and analyzed quantitative and qualitative data demonstrate that formal and non-formal education are genuinely linked through their similar objectives, functions, contexts, and target groups, which time & space dynamics is shaped by the expectations and requirements of formal systems, markets, and institutions, as well as of the individual and group cultures, traditions, and interests. These gives reason to treat their continuity as a naturally shared function which does not devalue or obliterate each of them, but rather highlight their unique role and added value.
Keywords: formal education, non-formal education, para-formal education, Bulgaria
JEL code (s) I20

Introduction

The existence of the European Education Area, of which Bulgaria has been a full member since 2007, undoubtedly energizes national education systems and reforms in value and conceptually. In recent years, special attention has been attached to the multifaceted convergence between formal, non-formal and informal education. They are also the focus of both European recommendations in the field of education and international studies and analyses of some of the most competent and influential international organizations, alliances, and networks (OECD, UNICEF, UNESCO). In countries such as Bulgaria, which have deep historical traditions of folk education, these innovative educational policies and priorities create an opportunity not only for the development of new related practices, but also for the revival and modernization of traditions. With the entry into force of the Pre-School and School Education Act (2016), it has become one of the most actively developed priorities of national education policies in both school and university education. The new legislation has led to development and implementation of a wide range of supporting policies and regulations promoting symbiosis between formal and non-formal education, in order to make qualitative progress on the most serious problems and tasks facing home education - school dropout prevention, inclusive education, validation of competences acquired informally, dual education for those at risk of dropping out, training in e-learning, etc. In the field of university education, leading practices also reflect a strong interest in integrating academic programs with practical training and experience of future higher education professionals. This study aims to analyze and conceptualize the dynamics of connectivity and continuity between formal and non-formal education in Bulgaria by examining their current presentations and transformations.

Theoretical background

Research efforts in Bulgaria in such a direction were presented by a series of research projects and published recently in a special edition *Anthology Non-formal Education* (2018) which includes *more than 60 studies*. Their focus is first and foremost the theoretical study of the essence and specifics of formal, non-formal and informal education, their procedural and factor connectivity, as well as the effectiveness of the different practices and fields of non-formal education: civil education and participation, adult education and adult literacy, career guidance and counselling, inclusive education, museum, theatrical and library educational programs, sports and youth training activities, higher education, health and environmental education, etc. In 2020, a special study was carried out on the practical importance of non-formal education through the prism of its functions, values and goals. So far, however, the link between formal and non-formal education is not the focus of a special theorized-empirical research interest to present its current state in a Bulgarian context, which motivates the initiation of this project.

Despite increasingly active and engaged formal policies and programs promoting the integration of formal, non-formal and informal education, there are still many barriers and deficits in practice that hinder sustainable change. Most of the well-known research and public positions focus on the lingering function of institutional traditionalism in education, which makes it difficult to mix formal and informal functions, their roles and status. In doing so, such resistances and inhibitions have vivid contextual specifics. It is therefore essential that they are systematically investigated, exploring both their global conceptual dimensions and their specific environments, context, manifestations, factors, barriers and challenges. On the other hand, non-formal learning and education is a manifestation of the natural human need to move forward, from a sense of personal, social and career development, for which learning is the usual and authentic mechanism. Whether and to what extent people, societies and institutions understand and accept it, the convergence of formal education systems and organizations with informal practices of complementary, compensating and bottom-up learning and formal learning is a fact. However, this link is still under-explored, and even less regulated and used for individual or social needs and purposes. In this sense, this study is a targeted effort towards addressing these both conceptual and applied deficits. A specific focus of interest is the so-called *para-formal education,* which aims to support, complement and/or compensate for the efforts of the formal system in order to ensure quality and sustainable lifelong learning and lifelong education for all.

The theoretical foundations of the study integrate three types of theories, which taken together, allow us to enter the depth of the research theme: organizational resilience theory (O. Brafman & R. Beckstrom, 2008); institutional work theories (Maguire, Hardy & Lawrence, 2004), and theories of organizational (educational) networks (Hadfield, M., Jopling M., Noden C., O'Leary D., Stott A., 2006). These conceptual choices are based on a set of research data and arguments. In most cases, in the field of non-formal education we are talking about educational/training organizations and activities that are either entirely self-organizing (very often civil organizations or even informal groups), or have mixed/hybrid status (e.g. community centers). Therefore, it is necessary to "look" in particular, at the unique survival mechanisms and coping of organizations and initiatives in the fields of non-formal education and *training (resilience factors and mechanisms)***.** Even when it comes to private initiatives or businesses, their practical relevance in non-formal education is difficult to assess or explain with traditional business models and criteria. Because education and training offer /"produce"/ spirituality and competence, and these are quite sustainable values, as well as their functions represent unique examples of *organizational cultures***.** In the field of non-formal education, they are often shared by certain social groups or communities, which are both the environment, the culture, the network, but also the driving force of success and survival. Therefore, their typical behavior is of partnership through cooperation, coordination, flexibility, additionality, subsidiarity best applied *in the context of working in an educational network.*

Methodology

The main goal of the study is to explore the conceptual and practical dimensions of the connectivity between formal and non-formal education in Bulgaria. These is why *the research methodology* integrates methods and techniques for theoretical analysis and mixed (quantitative and qualitative) empirical research.

The theoretical analysis is based on the review and conceptual synthesis of the theoretical grounds of the three leading groups of theories. This achieves the justification of the paradigm dimensions of connectivity between formal and non-formal education.

The empirical part of the study was implemented through a package of mixed qualitative and quantitative methods, including: a) *conceptual contingent analysis* of the official strategic documents for the development of Bulgarian education; b) *conceptual contingent analysis* of the thematic and applied priorities in the 84 approved *European educational projects* for 2020 Erasmus+ program (K1 and K2) with leading Bulgarian participation; c) *online survey among 64 educators* working in schools and after-school organizations; d) *21 case studies* of para-formal educational organizations and practices (fig.1).

Fig. 1 Research methodology

Results

Conceptual analysis of known theories made it necessary to create a comprehensive model of connectivity between formal and non-formal education, covering (1) their systemic connectivity, (2) their functional interconnection, and (3) their determinative interdependence in practice. *At a systemic level*, their connectivity is explained and justified by the natural overflow and continuity between them as specific dimensions of the single public phenomenon of "education". *At functional level*, formal and non-formal education interact through their single mission to ensure quality individual and social development for each one here and now. *At a determinative level, their* connectivity is set by the systemic and non-systemic features of their educational goals and values (fig. 2).

Evolving functions (development)	**Stimulating**	**Defensive and supportive**	**Compensating**
Sectoral (stabilization)	Supporting social, social and integration policies and practices Supporting the uniqueness of Community cultures, traditions and practices Supporting formal education Labour market support		

Fig.2 Functional dimensions of connectivity between formal and non-formal education

The mixed (qualitative and quantitative) empirical data show that the *connectivity between formal and non-formal education in Bulgarian context is based on their continuity*. Educational formal and non-formal educational practices integrate national values and traditions with current priorities in education by:

- addressing the meaning and objectives of *lifelong learning as a significant current priority for overall human and societal development* that inherits the traditions in this country of community- and folk education;
- reflecting them as *simultaneously connected and autonomous developing (self-managed) phenomena* that function in accordance to the specifics of current contexts valid for them;
- covering an *extremely wide range of practical fields* – from youth activities through vocational continuing training and qualification, para-formal and partner formats, complementary other forms of supported learning and training outside traditional educational organizations and institutions, several of which are based in communities and groups (fig. 3).

Thematic dimensions	**Thematic areas and activities**
Education for sustainable development	Environmental education and sustainable development Health education and food culture Equal education and learning opportunities for all throughout life. Professional guidance and counselling
Education for democracy	Youth work and participation Civic education and democracy
Support for personal development	Key competences and personal development Education in arts and personal development Sport and personal development Additional (academic) support for personal development Resocialization and resilient education for personal development

Fig.3 Thematic dimensions and areas of connectivity between formal and non-formal education (empirical trends)

- *addressing the educational needs, interests and cultures of large number of individuals and groups.* The collected *quantitative (survey) data* show that lifelong learners of all ages are very diverse in their personal, professional, and social profile, which is why they are also typical users of various educational activities. The largest number of them form two specific groups of adults – young people (61%) and students (59%), followed by children in a preparatory group and primary school age (35.6%). The third group of educational service users in the field of non-formal education is formed by the socially weak (30.5%) and unemployed (30.5%) people. The fourth group of users has a lower inclusion in non-formal education but covers a wider range of groups: 15.3% are families with young children (0-3 years old), children in a preparatory group (4-6 years old), and a socially passive group of adults who did not work or study. Between 5–10% are the single parents (8.5%), children and pupils raised by guardians (8.5%), families and children with special needs / disabilities (3.4%), single people (10%), adults and young people with SOPs (6.8%), homeless / living on the street (5.1%), members of self-help groups (5.1%).
- using *specific approaches by addressing specific educational needs*. Children and pupils are mostly looking for more individualized and effective support for coping with the standards of formal education while satisfying their parallel interests. Adults usually look for alternative instructional possibilities to cope better in the labor market by the acquisition of useful key and professional competences in the context of their cultures, communities, and groups.

Conclusion

The research results give rise to valuable assessments and conclusions regarding the dynamics of connectivity and continuity between formal and non-formal education.

First, formal and non-formal education are genuinely linked through their similar objectives, contexts and target groups, which gives ground to conceptualize their continuity as a naturally shared function shaped by the expectations and requirements of formal systems, markets and institutions, as well as of the individual and group cultures and interests.

Secondly, the trends of connectivity and continuity between formal and non-formal education do not devalue or obliterate them, but rather highlight their uniqueness. These are manifested by a diverse set of specific manifestations – compensating, complementary, stimulating, stabilizing, corrective, etc., which at present have proved key to the quality of 21st-century education.

All these trends and conclusions give ground to assess the sustainable dimensions of their connectivity and continuity as symptoms of a nascent new educational paradigm. Its conceptual and applied features may be associated with so-called para-formal education as the increasingly range of dynamic manifestations of mutual support and interaction between formal and non-formal education attract the interest not only of researchers and practitioners but also involve the policymakers at all levels.

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PRECONDITIONS FOR THE DIFFUSION OF INNOVATIONS IN SOCIAL PEDAGOGICAL ASSISTANCE IN SCHOOLS

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Summary

Innovations in social pedagogical assistance in schools are significant for ensuring equal opportunities in education for all social groups, especially for the children from disadvantaged social, economic, and cultural (SEC) backgrounds, for addressing the issue of quality and accessible teaching and learning. The aim of this research is to identify the preconditions for the diffusion of social pedagogical assistance (SPA) innovations in secondary schools. The qualitative research (interviews with social pedagogues) has identified the preconditions for the diffusion of SPA innovations in schools: constant self-reflection of social pedagogues, enabling (creative) environment, opportunity to experiment and see the value of innovation, with sufficient time allowed for this, collegial support as well as constructive and timely feedback from school administration.

Key words*: social pedagogical assistance, innovation, secondary school.*

JEL codes: 120

Scientific literature indicates that educators-innovators are important for the diffusion of educational innovations in schools, so they need appropriate conditions created for them to be enabled disseminate the innovations in communities. National school research reports on the activities and quality of education note the insufficient rate of diffusion of educational innovations (Bakonis, 2020; Mikėnė, Gailiūtė, 2020; Mikėnė, Zaburaitė, 2020; Kalvaitis, 2020). Educational innovations, their content and diversity have been consistently analysed in domestic and foreign research works of the last decade (Pečiuliauskienė, 2010; Kvieskienė and Kvieska, 2018; Gulbinas and Rapkauskaitė, 2015, Hatlevik, 2017; Ignatova, 2017, etc.). One notable aspect of educational change (shift) is the change in the roles of students and teachers, the change in the learning environment, the diversity of teaching and learning resources (Ignatova, 2017). The aim, in the country, is to evaluate the schools based on the result achieved, i.e. the obtained qualitative change (shift) of activities, substantiating it with managerial and educational indicators (Bakonis, 2020). On the other hand, it is noted that the changes take place too slowly, i.e. some innovations find it difficult to find their way into school life. Performance indicators of social pedagogical assistance in secondary schools are no exception. One of the novelties of social pedagogical assistance is bibliotherapy, which as an educational method aims at helping students to delve into personal, social problems and those of learning motivation, to look for solutions (Janavičienė, 2011; Liu et al., 2009; Naylor et al., 2010; Carlbring et al., 2011; Moldovan et al., 2013; Pehrsson, McMillen, 2010; Sučylaitė, 2013; Stewart, Ames, 2014; Hazlett-Stevens, Oren, 2017). Although pedagogical and socio-pedagogical benefits of this method have been proven, this innovation is slowly spreading in the country's educational institutions (Šmitienė, Klanienė, Pavalkytė-Vasiliauskienė, 2019). The schools are encouraged to responsibly choose or create prevention programs for solving the problems that students face (Olweus 2011, 2018; Gaudiešiūtė, Kavaliauskaitė, 2020), to create inclusive learning and teaching environments (Anderson et al., 2014; Galkienė, 2017), therefore the success of these processes lies not only in the development of social pedagogical innovations, but also in their rapid diffusion in schools. There is still a lack of scientific works in the country that research the diffusion of innovations in social pedagogical assistance in schools.Research problem: What social pedagogical innovations do social pedagogues implement, how are they accepted? What are the preconditions for the diffusion of innovations in social pedagogical assistance in secondary schools? Research methods: analysis of scientific literature, semi-structured interviews, published (manifest) content analysis. The aim of this research is to identify the preconditions for the diffusion of social pedagogical assistance (SPA) innovations in secondary schools.

According to E. Rogers, the creator of the *Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) Theory* (1962), communities adopt innovations with ambiguity. Diffusion of innovations in communities is crucially influenced by perception of the innovation significance, communication channels, time (influencing decision-making and acceptance speed), and social systems in communities (Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) Theory* 1997). The social context of innovation implementation, the specific community of the organization, as well as the roles, the groups and subsystems that have developed in it, become important. Within the context of innovations in social pedagogical assistance, it is focused co-operation of the socio-pedagogical team and the acceptance of innovations by the majority of that community members that become significant. In defining the social conditions for the diffusion of innovations, Rogers (1997) notes that the innovations brought to the community (group) must guarantee positive change, be compatible with the existing nature of activities; it is important that their substance is comprehended, leaving the freedom of choice (decision) (i.e. to test the innovations in the organization and get a safe feedback). This is usually a complex multi-complex phenomenon, comprising: the process, result, and technologies (problem solving methods) (Jakubavičius et al, 2008). Cooperation and communication of the school community, i.e. sharing good practices, appropriate feedback, psychological, financial support and the like become particularly important. However, the diffusion of innovations always begins with a person, an innovator, who perceives innovations in scientific and practical activities as very important, and who systematically reflect on their work (professional self-reflection, self-analysis) (Jakubavičius et all, 2008). As Kalvaitis (2020) notes, the qualitative change (shift) of educational culture in schools is associated with higher professional qualification of teachers, qualitative improvement of competence, creating conditions for the diffusion of innovations in schools. The development of these conditions is especially relevant in schools where the majority of students come from disadvantaged social, economic and cultural backgrounds (SEC). In these schools, the quality of teachers' professional competence, and the ability to incorporate educational innovations into their activities become essential elements in ensuring equal learning opportunities for all students and reducing the gap in students' academic progress among the learners from different social groups.

In order to reveal the aspects of diffusion of the innovations of social pedagogical assistance in secondary schools, a qualitative research was conducted. Qualitative content analysis and structured interview method were chosen. This research method allowed to identify the attitude of social pedagogues to innovations in socio-pedagogical activities, to the choice of new methods, means, and forms of social pedagogical assistance, and the diffusion of these innovations in schools. Criterion sampling method was applied in the research, which allowed to select the informants, based on the characteristics important for revealing the research problem. The reserch involved social pedagogues with work experience in secondary schools of at least 10 years. There were 29 social pedagogues invited to participate in the reaseach. To reveal the research problem, interviews were conducted with 9 social pedagogues who work in different secondary schools, who have stated that they have been adopting innovations of social pedagogical assistance in their work, systematically reflecting on their activities, and have been actively getting involved in school community life. It is these social pedagogues who have completed their master's programme in social pedagogy, therefore their approach to the innovations in social pedagogical assistance can be considered competent. All social pedagogues who participated in the study were women. The following topics (questions) for the informants were selected for the structured interview: innovations in social pedagogical assistance; conditions for the emergence of innovations in social pedagogical assistance; conditions for the diffusion of innovations in social pedagogical assistance in schools.

Having summarized the results of research it was noted that the social pedagogues who participated in the research were of the opinion, the implementation of SPA innovations in secondary schools is one of the guarantors of quality social pedagogical assistance. The social pedagogues who participated in the research can be referred to as innovators who are open to innovations, actively cooperate in professional networks and school communities, systematically improve professional competencies even after the postgraduate studies in social pedagogy. As social pedagogical assistance, the informants have also named the changed attitude towards one’s professional activities, development of new forms of activities, discovery of new methods and means of social pedagogical assistance. Based on the analysis performed, the essential preconditions for the diffusion of innovations in social pedagogical assistance in schools include continuous professional self-reflection, enabling (creative) environment in schools, discovered personal value of innovation (justified expectations), support from managers and colleagues, freedom to choose and adopt innovations.

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SECTION
GREEN DEAL AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

INSIGHTS FROM COMPANIES: FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY MATTERS

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Summary
This review type research examines in an exhaustive manner the state of the art in the field of corporate sustainability, over the period 2011-2020, focusing on practices of global companies, with the intention of identifying different dimensions of sustainability and their implication for firm performance, by quantifying the amount of research related to the four dimensions of corporate sustainability. This research methodology provides relevant evidence on the topic and the trends in research outputs.
Keywords
corporate sustainability; financial performance; government policy.

JEL codes G32; G38; G30

Introduction
This review type research examines in an exhaustive manner the state of the art in the field of corporate sustainability, over the period 2011-2020, focusing on practices of global companies, with the intention of identifying different dimensions of sustainability and their implication for firm performance. In the `new reality`, marked by digitalization and circular trends, corporate sustainability exhibits a significant connection with the socio-economic environment. In this respect, we have quantified the amount of research related to the four dimensions of corporate sustainability (CSR, sustainable development, stakeholder theory and corporate accountability) and also examined a large variety of relevant indicators related to corporate sustainability which may support the quantification process of their impact on financial performance.

Theoretical background
The field literature indicates the theoretical pillars of the corporate sustainability concept, namely: sustainable development (which implies the study of micro and macro elements) and the stakeholder theory, creating the connection with corporate governance domain (including ethics/accountability), CSR approaches and the concept of corporate accountability. We found extensive literature on corporate sustainability, and also related topics such as corporate social responsibility and performance, environmental strategies and performance.

Methodology
First, more than seventy articles, extracted from Web of Science – Core Collection were reviewed. The relevance of the selection of the articles was analysed through the determination of the search criteria, considering concepts underlying corporate sustainability. Our study includes a wide selection of independent variables as controls, covering issues from all areas of business. Furthermore, we revealed trends in research in topics related to corporate sustainability (CSR, sustainable development, stakeholder theory and corporate accountability), over the period 2011-2020, with the intention of identifying relevant factors related to corporate sustainability having impact on financial performance.

Results
Considering over seventy papers from the Web of Science Core Collection, over the period 2011-2020, categorized as research articles, results indicate that research is mainly focused on two areas. First, a significant number of papers refer to firm performance measures relating to the corporate sustainability, using performance methods and internal procedures of the companies. The results indicate that methods of enhancing financial performance rely on factors such as scope of activity, firm size and age, leverage, social environment, corporate governance variables: board competency, gender, age. Secondly, a considerable part of the literature

is based on macroeconomic factors, towards a sustainable development, such as: country financial stability, efficiency and stability of fiscal and monetary policies, and their impact on the private sector, interest rate, inflation rate, exchange rate and the gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate. The approach used in the paper could be of practical benefit to young researchers, corporate specialists, and even public decision makers for building national or regional strategies for implementing sustainability programmes.

Conclusion

Considering the main four pillars of corporate sustainability, namely: human, social, economic and environmental, we aim to identify both micro and macroeconomic factors related to corporate sustainability having impact on financial performance, by quantifying the amount of research related to the four dimensions of corporate sustainability. The results indicate that methods of enhancing firm performance rely on factors such as scope of activity, firm size and age, leverage, social environment, corporate governance variables: board competency, gender, age. Secondly, a considerable part of the literature is based on macroeconomic factors, towards a sustainable development, such as: country financial stability, efficiency and stability of fiscal and monetary policies, and their impact on the private sector, interest rate, inflation rate, exchange rate and the gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate.

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ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND GREEN TAXATION

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Summary: In an attempt to tackle the environmental imbalances produced by the excesses of the global economy, the great contemporary legal systems are gradually evolving towards remedial intervention models of a different nature, in line with environmental sustainability policies.

To encourage this trend, the OECD has qualified interventions aimed at environmental protection all measures that affect the choices between different technological or consumption alternatives, through the modification of convenience in terms of private costs and benefits.

Within these coordinates, a strategic position is assuming environmental taxation which, supported by a widespread cultural orientation, can help prevent, eliminate or reduce polluting activities through a complex of taxes, tariffs, fees, contributions and other services imposed. owed by the polluting manufacturer or user. In this context, the role of environmental taxation can be truly decisive to discourage pollution.

Keywords: Environmental imbalances; sustainable governance policies; the "polluter pays" principle; green taxation tools; environmental taxes.

JEL code (s): K34

Introduction: In an attempt to tackle the environmental imbalances produced by the excesses of the global economy, the great contemporary legal systems are gradually evolving towards more complex remedial models in the wake of sustainable territorial governance policies.

To encourage this trend, the OECD has qualified interventions aimed at environmental protection all measures that affect the choices between different technological or consumption alternatives, through the modification of convenience in terms of private costs and benefits.

Within these coordinates, a strategic position is assuming environmental taxation which, supported by a widespread cultural orientation, can help to prevent, eliminate or reduce polluting activities through a complex of taxes, tariffs, fees, contributions and other services imposed by the manufacturer or user.

This form of taxation can also act as a collector of resources to finance the rehabilitation works and the exercise of environmental services through the use of the fiscal lever and non-tax instruments as a resource to meet the costs of the services of which the citizen can benefit from environmental matters: waste disposal, thermal destruction, recycling and regeneration processes.

Considering that it is inappropriate for environmental taxation to be followed by an increase in the overall tax burden, it will be the task of the legislator to proceed with a correct distribution of the tax burden to compensate for the higher revenues deriving from environmental taxes with the revenue that can be deducted from other forms of taxation.

In any case, the environmental tax must affect "eco-sustainable" productions: the producer is required to pay the tax levy to the tax body so that the latter does what is necessary to avoid and prevent negative effects on the environment.

On the contrary, the fiscal instrument does not comply with production activities aimed at generating waste, discharges, noise emissions or polluting gases when these are prohibited by law and sanctioned from an administrative or criminal point of view. In fact, in such situations, the tax cannot finance the environmental remediation service.

Theoretical background: In functional terms, there are many forms of protection available to the legislator: "command and control" policies, aimed at establishing limits, prohibitions and controls; "green taxation" measures, aimed at encouraging non-polluting behavior and discouraging polluting conduct from a promotional point of view.

In the current perspective, the legal regime of environmental protection, governed only indirectly by the Italian Constitution (articles 9 and 117, paragraph 2, letter s), draws mainly on supranational sources, including those of a community matrix, based on principles of precaution and preventive action, on the principle of priority correction at the source of damage caused to the environment and on the “polluter pays” principle (article 191, paragraph 2, TFEU).

From a fiscal point of view, the “polluter pays” parameter becomes a source of legitimacy for taxes to protect the environment and for subsidized treatments that pursue the same purpose: the criterion not only allows the public body to receive tax benefits in which the “environment” factor is included within the taxable case, but constitutes a canon for identifying an autonomous economic strength of the taxpayer which is a prerequisite for the application of a real “environmental tax”, a type of tax in which the conduct harmful to the environment is a direct index of wealth to be subjected to taxation.

Given the complexity of the subject, therefore, the reflection on the theoretical models of analysis requires an investigative development not limited to the traditional elaboration schemes of environmental issues, but aimed at enhancing the new prospects of investigation disclosed by the emerging forms of environmental taxation.

Methodology: The environmental tax affects the economic burden on the environment. In fact, polluting activities, on the one hand, produce a cost that can be assessed financially, equal to the impoverishment suffered by the community to remove or limit the harmful effects; on the other hand, they make the agent obtain an enrichment, that means an individual, immediate and economically evaluable advantage, equal to the value of natural resources in danger of extinction taken away from common use, which is configured as the power to dispose for free of the tools necessary to satisfy their needs.

This form of taxation is based on a twofold order of reasons: in the externality of the “environment” asset, likely to positively or not negatively affect the cost of producing or consuming certain goods; in the configuration of environmental values as public or widespread heritage.

In the dialectic between the polluting activity resulting from individual action and the impoverishment of environmental values suffered by the community, is grafted.a methodological analysis based on a global approach to the phenomenon and on a remedial dynamics that cannot exclude the tax lever.

This methodological framework suggests the need to scrutinize the new legal issues related to environmental protection also from a fiscal point of view and to dwell on pervasive structures with sometimes unprecedented and insufficiently explored profiles.

In fact, the advantage obtained by the user of the “environment” asset, resulting from the polluting activity carried out to the detriment of the community, is a fact suitable for expressing the ability to pay, effectively showing wealth, as it affects the economic strength expressed by the taxpayer, connected to the particular value constituted by the dominion over the good-environment, endowed with its own autonomy and easy measurability.

In this context, the *ratio* assumed by the “polluter pays” principle of making economic operators bear the actual cost of the pollution produced in order to relieve the burden of the state system, avoiding that the restoration costs are faced only by state bodies in a direct or mediated manner, that is through the granting of aid aimed at favoring some and not others, and may create unjustified competitive advantage positions, so as to distort the market.

Currently, the “polluter pays” principle is an axiom of Community environmental policy, which has assumed binding force for all Member States, even in matters not covered by specific interventions.

Basically, those who carry out activities or behave in contrast with environmental standards must bear the expenses necessary to remove or reduce, within acceptable limits, the effects of the pollution produced and implement precautionary and corrective actions at the source: so understood, the “polluter pays” principle does not take on the nature of an authorization to pollute for a fee, nor does it have the character of a sanction, but represents a preventive criterion of distributive efficiency, codified in the Community legal system.

Results: Nowadays, despite the commitment of the EU institutions, there are still no real community environmental taxes, although there is no lack of proposals in this direction. Environmental taxes and eco-incentives, instead, are frequently used by the Member States, whose domestic laws give more importance to “green taxation”, inspired by EU principles.

For the future, we can only hope for greater coordination of environmental taxation within the Community, through a rethinking of it, with a view to improving European integration policies in order to develop a uniform response to the current economic-financial crisis and favor economic growth; reasoning differently would produce the antinomian effect of widening the inequalities of treatment, still existing, through the establishment of national environmental taxes, wholly or partly uncoordinated by the community context.

The environmental purpose, therefore, rises to the political, cultural and social intent of the tax claim, an extra-fiscal objective external to its assumption that can lead to qualify the levy in terms of purpose tax with an indemnity function rather than as a real environmental tax.

In fact, once a tax has been identified (be it a manufacturing tax, an excise duty, a consumption tax, or other) an environmental function is attributed to it, acting either on the destination of the revenue or on the measure (rate, mainly) of the tax.

Conclusion: In the context of environmental taxation, particular importance is given to environmental taxes “in the strict sense”, qualified structurally environmental taxes, which respond directly to the Community principle “who pollutes pays” (article 191 TFEU), having as a prerequisite the polluting factor , that is the productive event of the damage: the taxable case is given by the physical unit, whose harmful effects for the environment, in case of use or release, are proven with certainty.

Different are environmental taxes “in the broad sense”, defined taxes “with environmental purposes”, characterized by a traditional assumption, such as consumption, assets or income, which is accompanied by the purpose of protecting the environment implemented through the incentive or disincentive for certain activities or the use or production of goods of environmental importance.

The distinction between “redistributing” environmental taxes and “incentive” environmental taxes assumes a higher elaborative importance: the former tend to finance environmental protection and clean-up measures, charging the costs to the authors of the polluting conducts with taxing environmental policies; the latter, in addition to affecting those who pollute, can induce investment in innovations and technologies to reduce harmful activities with favorable environmental policies (so-called “green taxation”).

Finally, there is no lack of fiscal or parafiscal instruments capable of having a positive impact on the environment: this is the case of taxes with effects of regulation (direct or indirect) of the degree of exploitation of natural resources, such as, for example, the regional tax on state concessions, the concession fee and the taxes applied to concessions for mines and small diversions of public waters.

In this context, the use of taxation or facilitating fiscal instruments, in the context of environmental policies, can have advantageous effects according to the system of underlying values, even if they can be graduated in terms of effectiveness.

In order to conclude, the role of environmental taxation can be truly decisive for discouraging polluting emissions and the consumption of pests and for preserving environmental matrices and non-renewable resources, both through direct taxation tools aimed at hitting retractable income from conduct that is not respectful of the environment, and through indirect encumbrance techniques capable of affecting consumption with purpose taxes intended for the reclamation of polluted sites.

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THE IMPACT OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND ENVIROMENTAL TAXES ON ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION: EVIDENCE FROM EU-15 COUNTRIES

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Environmental degradation caused by the increase in production due to the industrial revolution, increased use of fossil fuels and the population growth had been ignored until the 1960s. Approaches emphasizing environmental sustainability were put forward in the development and growth process in the 1970s. By the 1980s, with the Brundtland report published in 1987, the concept of sustainable development was used for the first time. Sustainable development is a concept that has economic, environmental and social dimensions. Sustainable development is not only important to ensure economic growth, but also to protect the environment and natural resources by taking into account the interests of future generations. Economic growth accelerating with the globalization process increases the pressure on environmental resources. In other words, the environment is affected by current production activities. Along with the increase in economic growth, the increase in economic activities causes various environmental deteriorations such as the increase in carbon dioxide emissions. Countries play an active role in achieving sustainable development goals through various policies, restrictions and regulations. In this context, the environmental policies play a key role in achieving both environmental and sustainable development goals. For this purpose, countries use various economic instruments within the scope of policies aimed at reducing environmental damage. One of these policy instruments is environmental taxes applied within the scope of environmental sustainability. Member countries of the European Union can benefit from some of the highest environmental standards in the world. Green growth-oriented EU policies play an important role in the environmentally sustainable economic growth of Europe. In this concept, the aim of this study is to examine the effect of economic growth and environmental taxes on environmental degradation in EU-15 countries for the period 1995-2018. In the study, environmental degradation is measured as CO2 emissions, economic growth as GDP at fixed prices, and environmental taxes as the share of GDP. Having found that the variables are cointegrated, the slope coefficients are estimated by Panel Dynamic Least Squares (DOLS) method proposed by Pedroni (2000, 2001). Findings from the DOLS estimator demonstrated a positive relationship between economic growth and environmental degradation, whereas a negative relationship is detected between environmental taxes and environmental degradation. Growth (development) policies implemented in the EU-15 countries should depend on environmentally friendly economic instruments such as taxes.

KEY WORDS: *Environmental Degradation; Economic Growth; Sustainable Development; Panel DOLS*

JEL Codes: Q01; Q56; Q50

SECTION
ADULT EDUCATION IN TIMES OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

CHANGES IN STAFF DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES IN A BUSINESS ORGANISATION

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Summary. This paper presents the findings of a study on attitudes of employees of business organisations towards changes in their development strategies in terms of learning and competence development. The study is based on the assumption that the lack of corporate staffs' competences hinders innovation, impairs the quality of activities, while the engrained conventional approach towards staff training prevents from using workplace opportunities of self-study and competence development. The study identifies the following practical issue: conventional staff training, principles and methods of competence development that depend on direct and virtual learning are not always effective lately. The paper, therefore, is aimed to analyse the changes in staff development strategies in terms of employee learning and competence development from the perspective of corporate staff.

Keywords: competence development, corporate staff development strategies, learning, staff training.

Introduction. Research hypothesis: during the survey, the data were collected on employees' learning methods, factors that constrain their development, principles of staff development applied, the support they expect from their organisation, and so on. The findings of this research are significant in that showing possible changes in the strategies applied in respect of the object under study (staff development), in enabling purposeful actions and targeted intervention in the ongoing employee training processes in order to improve them and obtain better results of employee learning and competence development. An analysis of the research participants' attitudes can help to answer the following problematic questions in more detail: are the acquisition of competences, trainings held, and employee learning considered identical phenomena? What is the efficiency of staff training and competence development activities or the learning tools applied? What does the application of the principles of staff training and competence development in an organisation mean in practice?

Theoretical background. According to the World Economic Forum, 80 percent of business leaders believe that the activities of corporate employee training and competence development teams, workforce strategies should be more advanced and innovative, enable employees to develop analytical, critical thinking, complex problem-solving skills, emotional intelligence, creativity, etc. Any staff training programme or self-learning, whether it is comprehensive, meaningful or not, makes no benefit for an organisation if concepts or theoretical knowledge learned are not practiced in professional activities. On the contrary, the acquisition and development of competences is valuable to an organisation if meets the targets of staff development and if employees' competences can be compared, quantified, and analysed. Training and competency development teams or individuals in charge of staff development in an organisation can find the right solution to the said problem in case they make changes in staff development strategies in regard to their learning and competence development. To better understand the challenges and offer more effective staff development strategies, employees of Lithuanian business organisations were interviewed.

Methodology. *Scope of the research.* There was criterion sampling applied in the study. Questionnaires were only sent to organisations with a number of employees from 100 to 149, as they usually have staff training teams or designated employees in charge of staff training. According to Lithuanian official statistics (Official Statistics Portal, 2020), there were 495 enterprises operating in the Republic of Lithuania, with 100 to 149 employees at the beginning of 2020. The number of companies in Lithuania with this indicator is the largest one compared to other companies with 100 to 1000 employees. There were 400 questionnaires emailed to various companies by asking them to distribute the survey to their staff. In total, 1322 persons from 324 different companies responded to the questionnaires. *Data collection methods*: a quantitative research strategy (anonymous questionnaire) was chosen. *Data analysis methods*. SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 21.0 for Windows and Microsoft Excel were used for statistical data analysis. The Pearson chi-square ($\chi 2$) criterion was used to assess the correlation between the categorical variables analysed. The Spearman's correlation coefficient of $0.2 < r < 0.5$ weak correlation, $0.5 < r < 0.7$ moderate, and $0.7 < r < 1$ strong correlation was used to examine the relationship among rank data. The variance was considered statistically significant at $p < 0.05$. The difference in results was considered statistically significant at $p \leq 0.05$.

Results. The research participants believe that they will need different competences in the future, therefore, the revision and upgrading of staff training strategies is the matter of topical interest.

According to more than half of the survey participants, their organisations have persons in charge of staff training, however, their staff training and competence development activities, as well as the effectiveness of the measures taken were rated as low on average. So, only one in five respondents approves their organisation's staff training plan, which can be attributed to the ineffectiveness of existing employee training measures.

The study has revealed that employees learn independently through a variety of channels and formats. The practice of those responsible for employee training would receive greater recognition if they integrated various learning opportunities, such as analysis of experiences, examples, videos, podcasts, etc. into the professional activities of employees. Just as well the respondents consider self-learning to be dominated by multimedia tools, smartphones, tablets, software applications, professional networks, and so no. Such self-learning activities might be attributed to a company's efforts to train its employees. However, there is a lack of insight into the competences acquired by employees through self-learning. With incomplete data on employee self-learning and learning objectives, those in charge of staff training are only able to provide standardised and fundamentally ineffective staff training strategies. Therefore, the employee self-learning datasets, currently used by many innovative companies, should be enlarged.

The study highlights the main preferred strategic changes to staff training so as to use the opportunities for self-learning and competence development offered by a workplace. More than half of the survey participants are in favour of showing more interest in actual and real self-learning practice of employees. More than a third of all respondents support new principles for employee training and competence development, which enable the integration of self-learning into professional activities as a place for self-improvement and competence development. More than half of the survey participants are in favour of shifting from training to the acquisition of competences, by adapting the competence assessment to the elimination of the identified gaps.

Concusions. More than half of the survey participants observe the application of new, strategically important principles of staff training in a company. The rest of respondents, however, are sceptical and do not see any change. For those who speak positively about the application of the strategic principles for staff training in a company, training means an open area that provides greater opportunities for progress in independent learning and competence development. On the contrary, for those who are against staff training – it is a closed, vertically managed field, where a content, tools, and resources are planned and developed by persons in charge of employee training, thus, constraining human curiosity, creativity, free choice, and initiative.

It is suggested for corporations: to be open to employees' wills and seek to implement strategic changes to employee development by integrating self-learning into daily independent activities; to show interest in actual and real self-learning practice of employees; to apply new principles of staff training, by shifting from employee training management to competence development incentives, from the formation of staff training content to the creation of learning environment and an integrated learning ecosystem; to move from training to the acquisition of competences, by adapting competence assessment to the elimination of identified gaps.

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COVID-19 AND ITS IMPACT ON ADULT LEARNING AND PERFORMANCE DURING ONLINE EXAMINATION

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Abstract:

The COVID-19 pandemic is proving to be a constructive disruptor, giving an opportunity for restructuring the present education system, classroom teaching and evaluation system. Most educational institutes have shifted to online learning platforms to keep the academic activities going.in this paper I have tried to understand an impact on learning and performing on the online platform with respect to engineering students of private university of Gujarat State, country India. I also examined the student's preferences for various attributes of online classes, which will be helpful to design effective online learning platform. The results indicated that majority of the respondents (78%) are ready to opt for online classes to manage the curriculum during this pandemic. However, in engineering education system where many courses are practical oriented, shifting completely to online mode may not be possible and need to device a hybrid mode, the insights from this article can be helpful in designing the curriculum for the new normal. This paper brief discusses the potential of online learning to expand the opportunities for adult learning, and identifies some key issues that the crisis has emphasized. Addressing these issues could contribute to the expansion of online learning and online examination or evaluation of engineering students.

Key words: COVID19, Online learning, Stress, Performance

Introduction:

The pandemic Covid-19 has spread over whole world and compelled the human society to maintain social distancing. It has significantly disrupted the education sector which is a critical determinant of a country's economic future. February 11,2020, the World Health Organization (proposed an official name of the virus as COVID19.It was first identified in Wuhan, China on December 31, 2019. First death by COVID19 was the 61-year old man in Wuhan, China2020. WHO declared COVID-19 as a pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic is overwhelming the functioning and outcomes of education systems—some of which were already stressed in many respects. This is true across the world and affects all children, though to differing degrees depending on multiple factors—including the country/region where they live, as well as their ages, family backgrounds, and degree of access to some "substitute" educational opportunities during the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has provided us with an opportunity to pave the way for introducing digital learning. This article aims to provide a comprehensive report on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on online teaching and learning of various papers and indicate the way forward.

Research highlights certain dearth such as the weakness of online teaching infrastructure, the limited disclosure of teachers to online teaching, the information gap, non-conducive environment for learning at home, equity and academic excellence in terms of higher education. This article evaluates the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teaching and learning via online mode and performance of students via online examination. The challenges and opportunities of online and continuing education during the COVID-19 pandemic is summarized and way forward suggested.

The University Grants Commission of India (UGC India) is a statutory body set up by the Government of India in accordance to the UGC Act 1956 under Ministry of Education, and is charged with coordination, determination and maintenance of standards of higher education. It provides recognition to universities in India, and disbursements of funds to such recognized universities and colleges.

The UGC since then has been coordinating, determining and maintaining standards of university education and teaching in the India and has taken initiatives for various eLearning sources as under.

These ICT initiatives, which cover a broad range of subjects and courses, have been prepared by experts for providing an excellent learning experience to all.

I. **SWAYAM Online Courses:** SWAYAM Online Courses provides access to teaching-learning resources. These resources were earlier delivered on the SWAYAM platform. Students or learners who registered on SWAYAM (swayam.gov.in) in the January 2020 semester can continue their learning as usual.

II. **UG/PG MOOCs:** UG/PG MOOCs hosts learning material of the SWAYAM UG and PG (Non-Technology) archived courses.

III. **E-PG Pathshala:** e-PG Pathshala hosts high quality, curriculum-based, interactive e-content containing 23,000 modules (e-text and video) in 70 Post Graduate disciplines of social sciences, arts, fine arts and humanities, natural & mathematical sciences.

IV. **E-Content courseware in UG subjects:** e-Content courseware in 87 Undergraduate courses with about 24,110 e-content modules is available on the CEC website at http://cec.nic.in/.

V. **SWAYAMPRABHA:** Swayamprabha is a group of 32 DTH channels providing high-quality educational curriculum-based course contents covering diverse disciplines such as arts, science, commerce, performing arts, social sciences and humanities subjects, engineering, technology, law, medicine, agriculture, etc to all teachers, students and citizens across the country interested in lifelong learning.

VI. These channels are free to air and can also be accessed through your cable operator. The telecasted videos/lectures are also as archived videos on the Swayamprabha portal.

VII. **CEC-UGC YouTube channel:** CEC-UGC YouTube channel provides access to unlimited educational curriculum based lectures absolutely free.

VIII. **National Digital Library:** National Digital Library is a digital repository of a vast amount of academic content in different formats and provides interface support for leading Indian languages for all academic levels including researchers and life-long learners, all disciplines, all popular form of access devices and differently-abled learners.

IX. **Shodhganga:** Shodhganga is a digital repository platform of 2, 60,000 Indian Electronic Theses and Dissertations for research students to deposit their Ph.D. theses and make it available to the entire scholarly community in open access.

X. **e-Shodh Sindhu:** e-Shodh Sindhu provides current as well as archival access to more than 15,000 core and peer-reviewed journals and a number of bibliographic, citation and factual databases in different disciplines from a large number of publishers and aggregators to its member institutions including centrally-funded technical institutions, universities and colleges that are covered under 12(B) and 2(f) Sections of the UGC Act.

XI. **Vidwan:** Vidwan is a database of experts which provides information about experts to peers, prospective collaborators, funding agencies policymakers and research scholar in the country..

Theoretical background:

The education sectors of India as well as world are badly affected by this. It has enforced the world wide lock down creating very bad effect on the students' life. Online education has gained immense popularity among working professionals and students pursuing higher education. These categories of online learners find immense benefit in the autonomy and flexibility that these courses offer. Online courses can be planned around their schedule which may include full-time employment, internships and caring for family. Online learning can also help them take out some quiet time to study.

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) was detected in China in December 2019, spread throughout the world within a few months and was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization on 11th March 2020. Universities around the world had to close their campuses down in the spring of 2020 and shift all their academic programs online (Bao, 2020). Universities were not prepared for such a transition from classroom-based education to completely online education. Most universities initially lacked infrastructure and strategies (Zhang, Wang, Yang, & Wang, 2020).

There has been a lot of advances in educational technology in the last few decades and the same proved to be immensely useful during this pandemic (Chatterjee & Chakraborty, 2020; Dhawan, 2020). Several online platforms to support online education were available (Nash, 2020). Nevertheless, it was a challenge for universities to map their educational activities in an online space. Additionally, professors and students faced a wide range of logistic, technical, financial, and social problems (Lassoued, Alhendawi, & Bashitialshaaer, 2020; Peters et al., 2020).

The pandemic and the lockdowns to contain it have affected the mental health of people around the world. Many students are suffering from stress and anxiety (Cao et al., 2020; Islam, Barna, Raihan, Khan, & Hossain, 2020). Such psychological issues often hinder students from adapting to online education. Moreover, not all students have equal access to, and expertise on, digital technologies. Although these inequalities existed earlier, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed this digital divide (Jæger & Blaabæk, 2020).

Methodology:

Objectives of the study:

The present research paper focused on the following objectives:

- To enlighten various measures taken by Govt. of India for education sector during this pandemic.
- To highlight various impact of COVID-19 adult learning for online classes
- To highlight various impact of COVID-19 adult performance for online examination

Questionnaire

I prepared a questionnaire with 16 statements related to online education (classes and examination) during the COVID-19 pandemic. A student had to respond to each statement on a 5-point Likert scale where a score of "1" represented "Strongly disagree" and a score of "5" represented "Strongly agree." The statements were related to the teaching-learning process in general, content delivery, professor-student interaction, assessment and health and social impact of online education.

I sent the questionnaire using online mode to 500 undergraduate students of the university continued to receive their responses and got 176 responses form engineering students of private university of Gujrat state, India.

Data analysis:

After collection of data out of 176,27 females and 149 males engineering students (Table 1) have given response. All various branches students have respondent to the online survey, branches are chemical engineering, civil engineering, computer science engineering, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering and instrument &control engineering (Table 2).

Gender	respondents
female	27
male	149
total	176

Table 1: Shows response of Gender

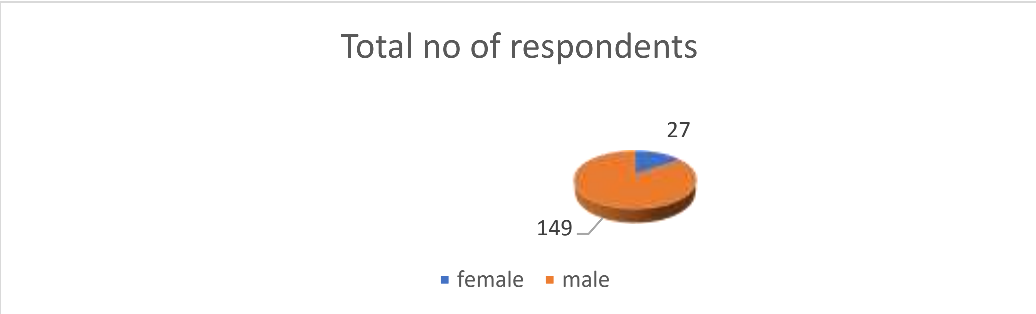

Chart: 1 Shows response of Gender

Branch	Total respondents
Chemical engg.	15
Civil engg.	5
computer science engg	85
Electronic & communication engg	30
Electrical engg.	12
Instrument & control engg.	17
Mechanical engg.	12
total	176

Table 2: Shows representation of Branches of respondent

Cases of stress during online examination	Responses (%)
Problem of internet connectivity...	56%
Technical problem issues...	48%
Subject is difficult...	35%
Difficult question paper	34%
Do not have the preparation for exam	27%
Due to practical subjects...	32%
Due to exam timing duration...	55%
Surrounding noise at home...	21%
Due to more than one paper / exam per day...	58%

Table: 4 shows what causes stress. Out of 176, there were 143 students who are from rural and urban area due to this they are facing internet problem as well as technical problem therefore they don't have proper learning of subject and also always in stress due to this connectivity issue of internet.

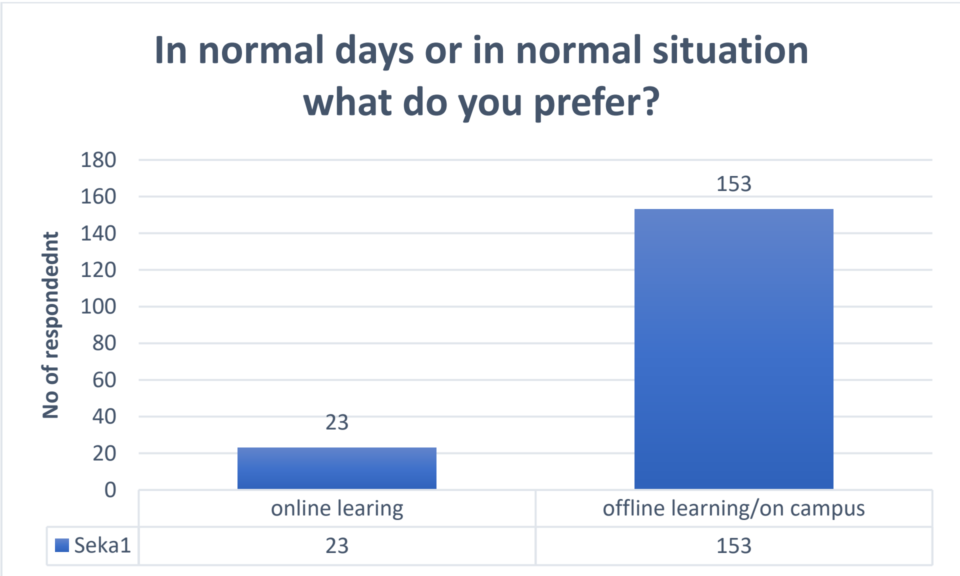

Chart: 4 Shows data on opinion from respondent about teaching mode

As per above chart 4, the students are requesting and they wish for offline or on university campus teaching 86%, whereas only 14% students prefer online teaching even during normal days or normal situation.

Finding and Suggestions:

After analysis data from 176 respondents, majority students wish to study offline or on university campuses only.

Most of the students are form urban and rural area so they are facing Internet bandwidth is relatively low with lesser access points, and data packages are costly.

Research also stated that due to online classes its kill's innovative ideas and reduce interpersonal skills and communication.

It is also found that due to online classes those which hare practical subject, they are lacking to understand it, because theory cannot work alone for practical subject. Respondent group is engineering students so they only get subject after experiment in their respective areas but sue to online class they just observe and watch it in their laboratories and in real sense they are not performing so they are lacking in practical knowledge, this is big loss to undergraduate students.

Due to no physical movement at home during online classes student feel laziness and also don’t have mood and don’t concentrate thought out day during online classes.

It was asked students that what should be the remedies for to reduce stress during online examination and classes, there were many suggestions form students that it should be more break after each sessions, it should be some fun or music activity twice in a week. It should be one paper per day and enough time should be given to upload documents.

It is suggested by students that it should be only MCQ type or objective while online examination, no descriptive one.

This is suggested that even after the COVID-19 pandemic when the normal classes resume, teachers and learners should be encouraged to continue using such online tools to enhance teaching and learning.so in future if its need to do online mode classes or online examination it has a positive impact on students to be a good adult performer and learner.

The university should focus that how to do online classes in innovative way so adult learner can get and grab the subject in real sense and program objectives and course objective is not going to serve by the university.

Conclusions

COVID-19 has impacted immensely to the education sector of India. Though it has created many challenges, various opportunities are also evolved. The Indian Govt. and different stakeholders of education have explored the possibility of Open and Distance learning (ODL) by adopting different digital technologies to cope up with the present crisis of COVID-19. India is not fully equipped to make education reach all corners of the nation via digital platforms. The students who aren’t privileged like the others will suffer due to the present choice of digital platforms. But universities and the government of India are relentlessly trying to come up with a solution to resolve this problem. The priority should be to utilise digital technology to create an advantageous position for millions of young students in India. It is need of the hour for the educational institutions to strengthen their knowledge and Information Technology infrastructure to be ready for facing COVID-19 like situations

The education system of any university has to developed and innovate required infrastructure for students and for teachers so in proper way so its enhance positivity for learner and for teacher too.

This is also important to consider mental and physical health of the students. So it is required to have some mediation or physical exercise in before morning sessions and the university has to introduce various motivational technique for students where they can learn positively and with fun. The respondent are technical students so it must to focus that how to impart practical skills to them during online mode teaching.

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DIGITAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN ADULT EDUCATION FOR LEARNERS, TEACHERS AND TEACHER TRAINERS: INSIGHTS FROM TWO IMPLEMENTED NORDPLUS ADULT PROJECTS

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Summary

The conference contribution is specifically sought to highlight the results of two Nordplus ADULT projects implemented by Klaipeda University, namely: *Development of digital entrepreneurshi: addressing the needs of immigrants and asylum seekers; Adult educators' competence training for development of immigrants and asylum seekers' digital entrepreneurship.* The goal of the projects is to develop and validate a competence development program for adult educators working with target groups such as immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers as well as a training programme in digital entrepreneurship for immigrants and asylum seekers themselves. The conference contribution discloses some methodological issues on the development of digital entrepreneurship and highlights the importance of the project activities for migrants' education and their successful integration into socio-economic life of societies.

Keywords: digital entrepreneurship, education of migrants, socio-economic integration of migrants.

Introduction

As countries in Europe and beyond have faced a large influx of immigrants and asylum seekers, social and integration services have to take the immediate response and to provide sufficient support to integrate newcomers into the host society and get them on a path to economic self-sufficiency. Innovative educational trends that would foster successful integration of immigrants and asylum seekers into labour markets in host countries and globally should be developed. Given the fact that immigrants and asylum seekers' employment potential in European countries is rather law (report of Migration Policy Institute, 2017) the new ways of integration should be developed especially those of fostering entrepreneurial competence. Advances in digitisation and developments in ICTs create opportunities for new types of entrepreneurial activities. One such type of entrepreneurial activity is digital entrepreneurship, defined as a new business creation opportunity generated by ICTs – internet, mobile technology, social computing and digital platforms. Digital entrepreneurship is supposed to become in future one of the opportunities in promoting the successful integration of immigrants and asylum seekers into labour market. ICT competencies are one core determinants of the success of a digital enterprise. Hence countries have to raise the awareness of current immigrants and asylum seekers (future entrepreneurs or innovative employees) of the possibilities to combine new technologies, product and service development and doing business thus promoting their economic self-efficiency. However, at present, there are no specific programmes for immigrants and asylum seekers in the field of digital entrepreneurship in Baltic countries. Meanwhile, as stated by research, digital entrepreneurship is supposed to become one of the most effective ways for immigrants and asylum seekers' to integrate into labour markets, because it is not directly related to their qualifications or language skills that usually limits their employment capacity (Eurostat, 2019).

In the boundaries of two Nordplus ADULT projects it was sought to develop a training programme for adult educators to work with immigrants and asylum seekers and develop their competence in the field of digital entrepreneurship. Trained adult educators will start implementing innovative programmes for target groups of adults (including immigrants and asylum seekers) thus reflecting the needs of labour markets, target groups. The projects are implemented by partners form Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Sweden. Sweden traditionally has been an immigration receiving country (OECD DELSA report, 2017) with well-developed immigrants and asylum seekers' integration and support policies. Therefore, the experience of Sweden in the labour market integration programmes is very important for the current project. However, as stated in Eurostat (2017) non-native immigrants and asylum seekers are usually employed in subsidized works. That means that the issues of immigrants and asylum seekers' entrepreneurship are relevant for Swedish labour markets. Baltic countries currently face demographic decline, skills shortage leading to unbalance in their labour markets. On the one hand, there is unemployment (Estonia – 7.0%, Latvia – 9%, Lithuania – 7.5%, Eurostat 2019). On the other, many industries, in particular in the field of ICT, experience a shortage of skilled workforce. Another tendency is that immigrants in these countries continue to face great difficulties in finding employment, and are also more likely to be found working on short-term, low-paid jobs which fail to fulfil their skills potential, moreover, entrepreneurial capabilities of immigrants are not sufficiently developed (Eurofund, 2019).

Therefore, by supporting the development of entrepreneurship as an integral part of adult education, and by modelling new methods of combining new digital technologies, entrepreneurship education, the project helps both immigrants and asylum seekers to acquire relevant competence for successful integration into labour markets.

Theoretical background

Advances in digitisation and developments in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are changing the international business landscape, transforming business practices and creating opportunities for new types of entrepreneurial activities. One such type of entrepreneurial activity is digital entrepreneurship, defined as a new business creation opportunity generated by ICTs – internet, mobile technology, social computing and digital platforms. Digital entrepreneurship is supposed to become in future one of the opportunities in promoting the successful integration of job seekers into labour market.

Digital entrepreneurship is defined as a practice of pursuing "new venture opportunities presented by new media and internet technologies" (Davidson, Vaast, 2010). It is similar to traditional entrepreneurship. Digital entrepreneurship - is a subcategory of entrepreneurship that leverages new technologies in novel ways such as the Internet Communications Technology. A digital entrepreneur is an individual who uses the Internet as a tool to create commercial opportunities, disseminate information, and collaborate with clients and partners (Nuthall, 2006). In the sense that "digital ventures aim at generating a financial profit and are directly inscribed into the economic realm, such as creation of a new company or commercialization of an innovation" (Davidson, Vaast, 2010). In digital entrepreneurship "some or all of the entrepreneurial venture takes place digitally instead of in more traditional formats" (Hair et al, 2012). The current focus of digital entrepreneurship (DE) research has centered on successful digital entrepreneurs with proactive innovation strategies and high-performance outcomes, largely being well-known brands (Duan et al, 2020). Digital enterprises are different from traditional entrepreneurial ventures because they have different business models and can pursue their products, marketing and distribution activities using digital platforms.

Digital entrepreneurship competencies have been defined as the total ability of the entrepreneur to perform a job role successfully using a range of ICT means (Sarry et al, 2010). The studies of digital entrepreneurship (Nelles, Vorley, 2011; Nuthall, 2006) allowed the authors of the present contribution to develop a framework of digital-based entrepreneurship competencies. On the basis of the framework the teaching-learning programmes for adult educators and migrants were developed.

Results and conclusions

The research in the digital entrepreneurship sector is increasing the interest and efforts in immigrants who are engaging in digital entrepreneurship (Duan et al, 2020). Our project results raise the awareness of the Baltic countries' adult education organisations and stakeholders in the field of immigrants and asylum seekers integration. We strongly hope that Lithuania together with the neighbourhood countries will improve the quality of adult education programmes, develop innovative programmes (as in digital entrepreneurship), contribute to promoting of collaboration between adult education and business sector, and adjust adult education to the needs of socio-economic context.

Our goal is to strengthen the competitiveness of immigrants and asylum seekers in the Nordplus countries by combining the development of adult educators' digital competence and entrepreneurship in adult education, and by creating the necessary methods and partnerships between education, business and non-profit sector.and development of innovative training programme for adult educators competence development. By supporting the development of entrepreneurship as an integral part of adult education, and by modelling new methods of combining new digital technologies, entrepreneurship education and involvement of companies, the project helps both immigrants, asylum seekers, educators, trainers, teachers, researchers and entrepreneurs acquire relevant competences and frameworks for cooperation.

Our projects contribute to the improvement of the learning process of adults. The projects promote new teaching-learning models, new didactical approached to competence development, attracting more adult learners from different target groups. The competence approach and new methods of competence development will promote the tacit knowledge of students and graduates on how to start their own business etc. Thus, the project would enhance the rates of employability among adults.

We implement the vision of adult education institutions as services providing institutions in a close cooperation with local business community. Therefore, we develop competences of administrative and education staff in work with community by involving them into mutually beneficial projects etc.

In our projects we seek to make an impact on various groups of adult education stakeholders (adult educators, adult learners, researchers, vocational education, labour market representatives, policy-makers, etc) and people related to education, increasing their entrepreneurship capability to act under new opportunities. We promote the intercultural dialogue and understanding among the partner countries, stimulate collaboration and synergetic effect, complex approach to solving of similar problems and special emphasis on quality but not on comparison

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ENTREPRENEURSHIP ONLINE TRAINING IN A HOST EUROPEAN COUNTRY FOR ADULT LEARNERS' DIGITAL SKILLS

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Summary: Digital skills of refugee migrants during job orientation were mostly assessed in the implemented research. The aim of the research to analyse adult learners' digital skills for entrepreneurship underpinning the implementation of digital skills' self-evaluation by adult learners with migrant background in a host European country. The empirical study was carried out in February 2021. The sample was composed of 31 adult learners with migrant background in Germany. The data were collected through online survey. The theoretical research outlines the three key digital skills for entrepreneurship, namely project management, web development, and digital marketing. The results of the empirical study allow drawing a conclusion that adult learners' self-evaluation of their own digital skills for entrepreneurship is positive. The research limitations have been identified. Directions of further research have been proposed.

Keywords: adult learners with migrant background, digital skills, entrepreneurship, host country, online training.

JEL code (s): I25

Introduction: Nowadays entrepreneurship is considered to be the effective strategy for development and growth of societies since it leads to technical and innovative changes and causes economic growth as well as converts the new knowledge to modern products and services (Melnikova, Zaščerinska, 2017). Entrepreneurial attitude is needed not only when starting your own business but also in doing jobs as well (Viningienė, Kirjavainen, Kuusisto, 2018). The importance of entrepreneurial skills is specifically highlighted by the employers (Viningienė, Kirjavainen, Kuusisto, 2018). Also, digital transformation accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly increased the growth of digital entrepreneurship. On the other hand, countries in Europe and beyond have faced a large influx of immigrants and asylum seekers (Melnikova, Zaščerinska, 2018). Due to this, social and integration services have to take the immediate response and to provide sufficient support to integrate newcomers into the host society and get them on a path to economic self-sufficiency (Melnikova, Zaščerinska, 2018). The investments in labor market integration policies are especially compelling in countries facing demographic decline and skills shortages (Melnikova, Zaščerinska, 2018). Hence, adult education in host European countries is elaborating entrepreneurship online trainings for the enhancement of digital skills of adult learners with migrant background. However, the previous research mostly focused on assessing digital skills of refugee migrants during job orientation in Germany (Stiller, Trkulja, 2018).

The enabling research questions is put forward: What are adult learners' digital skills to be enhanced through entrepreneurship online trainings in a host European country?

The aim of the research to analyse adult learners' digital skills for entrepreneurship underpinning the implementation of digital skills' self-evaluation by adult learners with migrant background in a host European country.

Theoretical background: Digital skills for entrepreneurship is an emerging research area. Against this background, a couple of concepts on digital skills for entrepreneurship have been developed. Table 1 presents an overview of digital skills for entrepreneurship developed by different researchers.

Table 1: Overview of digital skills for entrepreneurship

<table>
<tr><td>Laurinavicius, 2021</td><td>Willbold, 2021</td><td>Melnikova, Jurgaityte, Zaščerinska, Aleksejeva, Leete, Koppel, Rohdin, Olsson, 2019</td></tr>
<tr><td>Communication
Finances
Branding
Marketing
Networking
Automation
Design
Analytics
Tech
Self-education</td><td>1. Artificial Intelligence
2. UX (User experience) Design & Web Development:
• how people interact with the product
• who uses the product
• how they use the product
• why they use the product
3. Digital Marketing
4. Analytical Reasoning & Data Visualization
5. Design Thinking
6. Cloud Computing
7. Project Management</td><td>- Using the potential of network-based business;
- Care about technological developments and market dynamics;
- Maximum use of information technologies and supply management improvement;
- Innovation management and implementation</td></tr>
</table>

For answering our research question about adult learners' digital skills to be enhanced through entrepreneurship online trainings in a host European country, we will focus entrepreneurship online trainings only on the digital skills highlighted in all the three groups of digital skills for entrepreneurship:

1. Digital marketing (Willbold, 2021) or marketing (Melnikova, Jurgaityte, Zaščerinska, Aleksejeva, Leete, Koppel, Rohdin, Olsson, 2019; Laurinavicius, 2021),
2. Web development (Willbold, 2021) or Tech (Laurinavicius, 2021) or Use of information technologies (Melnikova, Jurgaityte, Zaščerinska, Aleksejeva, Leete, Koppel, Rohdin, Olsson, 2019),
3. Project management (Willbold, 2021) or Automation (Laurinavicius, 2021) or Innovation management and implementation (Melnikova, Jurgaityte, Zaščerinska, Aleksejeva, Leete, Koppel, Rohdin, Olsson, 2019),

Thus, the application of such theoretical methods as theoretical analysis, synthesis, comparison and modelling allow outlining the three key digital skills for entrepreneurship to be enriched through entrepreneurship online trainings in a host European country as shown on Figure 1.

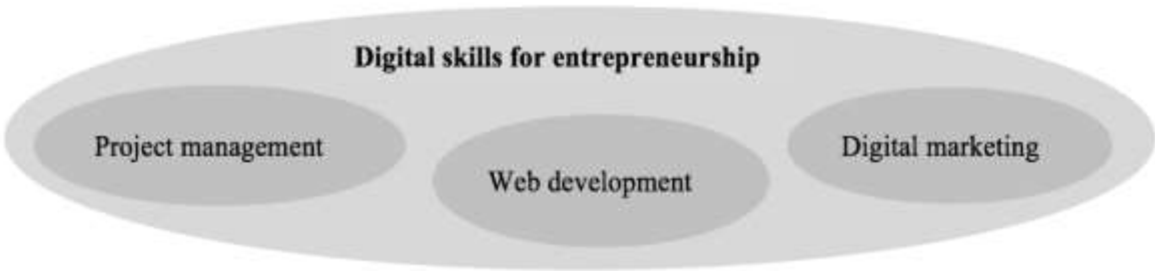


Figure 1. Key digital skills for entrepreneurship

Self- evaluations is often utilized along with other resources to make decisions about revising, adopting, or rejecting a training course (Ahrens, Bassus, Zaščerinska, 2012). Self-evaluation is usually used by the students of a training course (Ahrens, Bassus, Zaščerinska, 2012).

Methodology: The guiding question of the empirical study was as follows: What is adult learners' self-evaluation of their own digital skills for entrepreneurship?

The purposes of the study was to analyse adult learners' self-evaluation of their own digital skills for entrepreneurship aimed at designing entrepreneurship online training.

The empirical study was carried out in February 2021. The sample was composed of 32 adult learners at Hochschule Wismar, Germany. It should be noted that Hochschule Wismar organises monthly meetings for adult training in different areas including digital entrepreneurship. As the period of the implementation of entrepreneurship online training within the empirical study coincided with the lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the training was given online.

As Hochschule Wismar has deep roots in teaching engineering since 1908, many adult learners who took part in the study have engineering background (mechanical, maritime, electrical, computer, etc). The group of 31 adult learners was heterogenous (the field of study and work, languages, etc):

- 25 students were male, and six students were female.
- The students were between 20 and 29 years old.
- 30 engineering Master students are originally from India, and one - from Pakistan.
- The students received Bachelor degrees in different fields of engineering in India: mechanical, electrical, computer, etc.

Hence, Germany was the host country for these adult learners who participated in the online survey.

Furthermore, engineering is the professional field for the adult learners who took part in the survey.

The empirical study was of the exploratory nature. The exploratory study was chosen due to the uncertainty in the research field (Ahrens, Gruenwald, Bassus, Zaščerinska, Melnikova, 2017). An exploratory study is characterised by a high degree of flexibility and lack of formal structure (Ahrens, Gruenwald, Bassus, Zaščerinska, Melnikova, 2017). An exploratory study aims to identify the boundaries of the social environment in which the problems, opportunities or situations of interest are likely to reside (Ahrens, Gruenwald, Bassus, Zaščerinska, Melnikova, 2017). The methodology of the exploratory study proceeded (Ahrens, Bassus, Zascerinska, 2017)

- From Exploration in Phase 1
- Through Analysis in Phase 2
- To Research Question in Phase 3.

The data were collected via an online survey. The online survey was based on an online questionnaire. The online questionnaire was built of such questions:

- How do you evaluate your automation skills (Maximize your workflow efficiency, responsibility delegation)?

- How do you evaluate your technical skills (Create a website; Working with codes HTML, CSS, and JavaScript; Building an online store)?
- How do you evaluate your marketing skills (identifying your target audience, storytelling)?

Results: Figure 2 shows the study results on the project management skills for entrepreneurship.

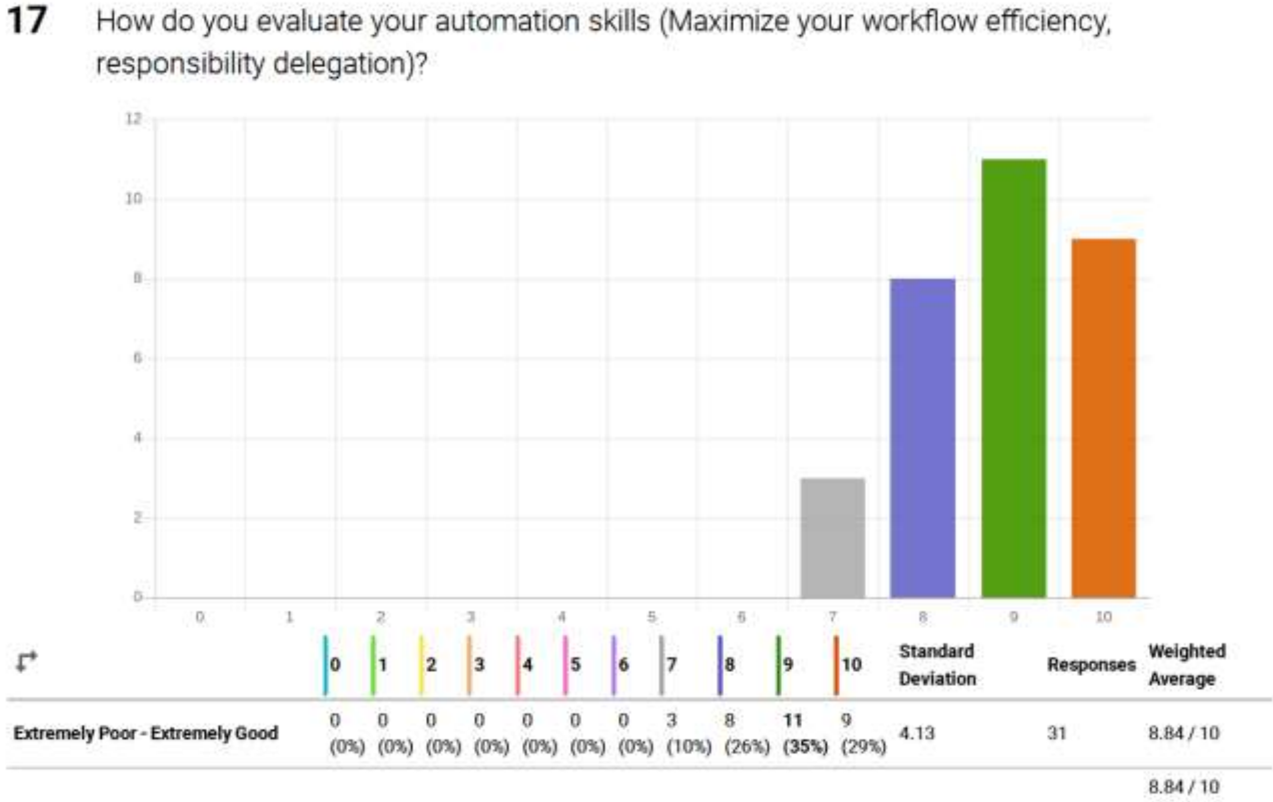
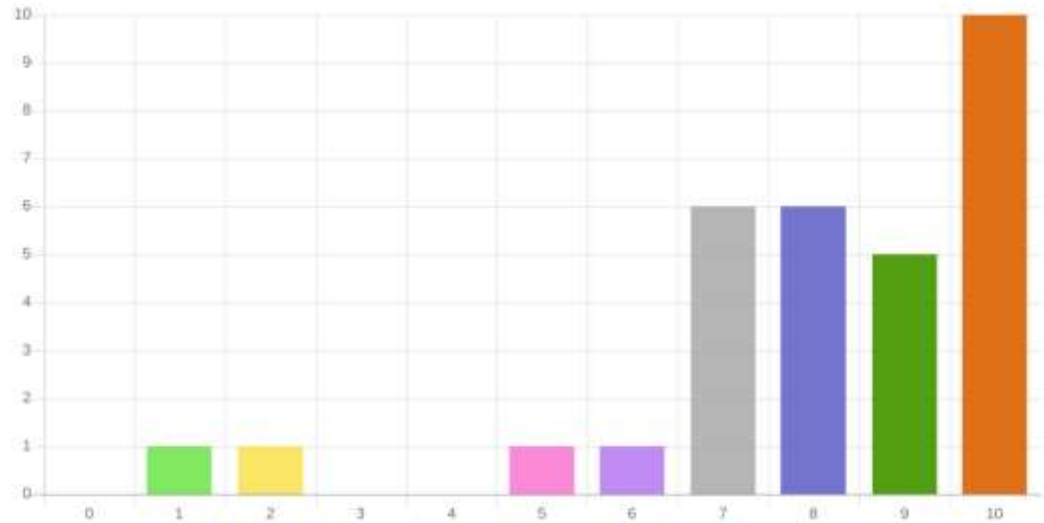


Figure 2. The results of the project management skills for entrepreneurship

Figure 3 shows the study results on the web development skills for entrepreneurship.

20 How do you evaluate your technical skills (Create a website; Working with codes HTML, CSS, and JavaScript; Building an online store)

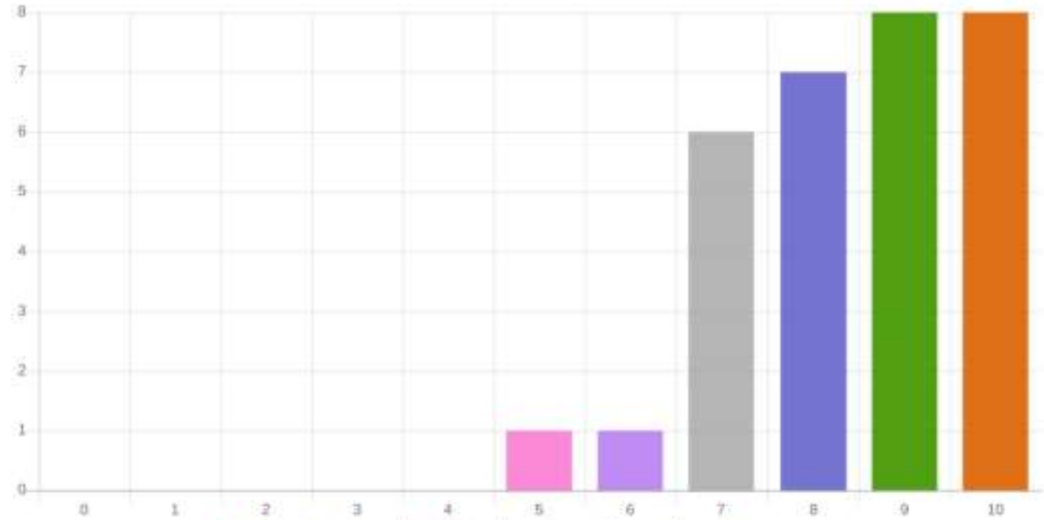


	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Standard Deviation	Responses	Weighted Average
Extremely Poor - Extremely Good	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	6 (19%)	6 (19%)	5 (16%)	**10 (32%)**	3.21	31	8.03 / 10
														8.03 / 10

Figure 3. The results of the web development skills for entrepreneurship

Figure 4 shows the study results on the digital marketing skills for entrepreneurship

15 How do you evaluate your marketing skills (identifying your target audience, stotytelling)?



	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Standard Deviation	Responses	Weighted Average
Extremely Poor - Extremely Good	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	6 (19%)	7 (23%)	**8 (26%)**	8 (26%)	3.41	31	8.42 / 10

Figure 4. The results of the digital marketing skills for entrepreneurship

The analysis of the study results is based on such a measure as the weighted average. Table 2 indicates the results of the weighted average for each digital skills for entrepreneurship.

Table 2: The weighted average results the digital skills for entrepreneurship

Project management	Web development	Digital marketing
8.84	8.03	8.42

The study results reveal that the adult learners' positive self-evaluation of their own digital skills for entrepreneurship prevails. It can be related to the entrepreneurial culture in India: many families in India have their own business. Many families in India try to involve all the family members in their family business. Another assumption is that young people conventionally over-estimate their capabilities.

Conclusion:

The theoretical research outlines the three key digital skills for entrepreneurship:

- Project management,
- Web development, and
- Digital marketing.

The results of the empirical study allow drawing a conclusion that adult learners' self-evaluation of their own digital skills for entrepreneurship is positive.

Implications for entrepreneurship online training to be provided to adults with migrant background in a host European country imply to focus on the development of the three key digital skills for entrepreneurship:

- Project management,
- Web development, and
- Digital marketing.

The present study has some limitations. The scientific literature found through google search was only analysed. A limitation is the participation of only 31 respondents with migrant background in the empirical study. Another limitation is that adult learners with migrant background from only one adult education institution in one country took part in the study. Only one method, namely online survey, was used for data collection

Future research will focus on involvement more respondents into the empirical study. Also, the future work will concentrate on the involvement of adults with different professional backgrounds. Use of methods for data collection and analysis will be widened. Further research will include a mixed method study. A comparative study of adult learners from different age groups could be carried out as well as comparative studies of different countries are of a great research interest, too.

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EMPOWERING OF A UNIVERSALLY DEVELOPED PERSONALITY EMPLOYING THE PROJECT METHOD

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Summary. The study made analysis of major reasons why it is worth employing the project method in adult training/learning process and why it is topical and significant for learner and his continuous growth and improvement, for empowering of a universally developed personality. It allows to look at the phenomenon wider and deeper, to realize each participator's behaviour, the factors that predetermine it, whereas complete knowledge of a phenomenon and a newly gained understanding can become a significant empowering of a universally developed personality in the any human activity. The research results confirm that that the project activity is a favourable environment for learner stimulation of strong motivating (positive emotional tone, success, interest, demand for impact making and achievements) and empowering of a universally developed personality.

Key words: empowering, learner, proactiveness, project method, universally developed personality.

Introduction. The present-day telling social changes would be unthinkable without necessary reforms in education system. However, continuous reforms of the system do not lead to expected results. Modern adult education is still unable to result in comprehensive education of a competent society member, grounding his activities on the sense of community and synergetic links. Alteration is a complex process, as it is related to a personality's transformation both from the viewpoint of structural changes (a new collection of personal properties, skills, abilities, position, etc.) and a new psychological orientation, taking place inside everyone, when attempts are made to adapt to external changes and refuse something for the sake of a newly achieved state (Skaržauskienė, 2008). Undoubtedly, the character of changes in the modern process of learning and modern society is expressed in new orientations, technologies, methods and principles, serving as a meaningful access for implementation of a new paradigm in upbringing of a well-rounded/universal personality. In this work the authors make an attempt to disclose the significance of the project method in stimulation of learners' empowering of a universally developed personality. *The key problematic question* is about what should training/learning environment in the project method correspond to when attempts are made to make it efficient for empowering of a universally developed personality? *Purpose of the research* are to make analysis and ground the significance and efficiency of the project method for learner – for his continuous growth and improvement, for empowering of a universally developed personality. Reseach methods: analysis of scientific literature, questionnaire.

Theoretical background. Continuously changing situations require a systemic approach to the phenomenon, flexibility, activeness and competence. Andragogues can achieve efficient results by varying different factors, as one correct problem solution method does not exist. In a situation like this systemic thinking, strategic consistency and operational flexibility gain decisive importance. However, the objective (result, perspective) should be evident, whereas abilities will determine by what means and methods it will be achieved (Daum, 2001).

According to J. Dewey (2014), efficiency of purposeful training/learning is to be treated as diversion of energy towards a specific direction. Therefore, it becomes important to be able to employ different methods and other means, build a learning environment and direct it towards a desired trend. One of potential alternatives in this mission is the project method, potentially efficient in building a favourable learning environment, responding to life itself. As a training/learning method project has been rather widely analysed. Still missing is its systemic and profound analysis from the viewpoint of empowered and universally educated personality.

Some researchers (Merediht & Mantel, 2013; Nesgovorova et al., 2013; Guo, Li & Skitmore, 2010; Ramanauskienė, 2010; Dinsmore & Cabanis-Brewin, 2011; Kvedaravičius, 2006 et al.) focus on that the more active is learner's involvement in the project activity, the more evident and strong become properties and features, typical to a universally developed personality, huge energy potential, independence, self-confidence, positive evaluation of own abilities and competence, which means that he is ready for active work, that he wants and is able to qualitatively and efficiently work and achieve optimal results. On the other hand, a universally developed personality with its independence, proactiveness, systemic and constructive thinking, free will in taking a decision to cooperate with others, to unite knowledge, abilities, skills, talents and jointly strive for better results can be a significant assumption for efficient communication and cooperation.

In the process of the project method dominating are strong motivating factors, creating favourable environment for transformation of learner's personality as well as his interaction. It also leads to transition of teaching into self-guidance based learning, creates all conditions for learner to become an autonomous, self-dependent and pro-active personality, to choose and form objectives for development of own personality, to focus on the present and the future, to choose learning and development as a value based orientation, reflecting the existential sense of life.

Methodology. A quantitative research was performed in Klaipėda University in 2020. 157 respondents, representing learners of Andragogy and Pedagogy specialities participated. A questionnaire was employed, it consisted of 17 questions. The research aimed at disclosure of links between the project method and strong motivation stimulating factors (feeling tone, success, interest taking, influence making and demand for achievements/success), leading to proactiveness of learners and empowering of a universally developed personality. Results of inquiry among those not participating in project activity (T1) were compared to results of inquiry among those participating in it (T2). Chi square criterion (χ^2) was employed for evaluation of statistic significance.

Results. Analysis of the research results shows that the project activities involve learners into active work. They can easily resolve and choose the topic and problem, a realistic field of activity, sense the differences and evaluate peculiarities of own chosen work and that prescribed by others. Analysis of positive verbal expression of concern level a statistically significant difference was discovered ($\chi^2 = 46{,}65$; $p = 0{,}000$). It was found that the highest evaluation of concern was chosen by 39 % of non-participants (T1) and 67 % of those learning and participating in project activities (T2). The level of learner's concern in the process of teaching/learning is mostly related to pursued objectives and activity. If the task/assignment is too easy, learners will not experience big demand for its accomplishment. To the contrary, if it is too difficult, a stress is experienced and minimal energy will also be spent for learning. According to M. Hunter (1982, 12), only "moderate concern stimulates efforts for learning". Growth of a positive concern level and its positive tendencies show that "moderate concern" was dominant in the project activity. It caused learners' willingness to act self-dependently (search for new knowledge, explore, discover, learn, etc.). In that case research results give occasion for thinking that projects are meant for stimulation of motivation in learning.

Research and analysis of success as an important motivating factor showed that at least 69% of learners, non-participants in project activities back (T1) are focused on and oriented towards success. A large part (82 %) of participants (T2) chose success as a motivating factor. In that sense statistically significant difference between T1 and T2 was $\chi^2 = 12{,}48$; $p = 0{,}0004$.

On the basis research results it would be possible to assume that project activities create necessary conditions for satisfaction and growth of learners' demand for impact making. The more self-confident, self-dependent and daring a project participant is in communication and expression of own ideas the more realistic is possibility for him to become an established authority and leader, a rightful leader of a group. If a learner takes the most important position in accordance with intensity of communication, if he almost always determines the discourse, encourages and stimulates the exchange of ideas, offers the most of suggestions then he is likely to become the leader. Learners with a stronger demand for leadership demonstrate stronger efforts for learning in situations when self-dependence, initiative and activeness are encouraged and stimulated (Herzberg, 1968).

Highest scores in inclination for success/achievements were chosen by 21 % of non-participants (T1) and 19 % of participants (T2). On the basis of research results it is possible to assume that presently participants of the project activity are less inclined for success/achievements, as they were likely to develop and improve important personal properties during the above period of time. These properties are self-dependence and autonomy; their activities are based on self-confidence and reliance on others; they work together and are not inclined for competition and personal victories. Instead, they follow "let's win together" principle and take a value related position rather than sensations; they focus their initiative and energy on active work, joint activities and goals. While summarizing the research results it is possible to maintain that dominant motivating factors (positive feeling tone and the motive of success/achievements) in the project activity stimulate learners' proactiveness and thier continuous growth and improvement, for empowering of a universally developed personality.

Conclusion. On the basis of analysis of scientific literature and research results it is possible maintain that the Project method in the process of training/learning is a favourable environment with specific requirements and peculiarities. It functions as a transformation mechanism and appears to be efficient: for development and improvement of learners' proactiveness, ability to plan their own actions, construct perspectives, personal properties, skills and abilities, development of systemic and constructive thinking, for gradual and continuous qualitative transformation of personality, its actions and behaviour, for becoming of an independent personality, its qualitative development and empowering of a universally developed personality.

The Project method in the process of training/learning creates a favourable environment for improvement of personal properties, skills and abilities, for building of a value-based position and, what is most important, for their positive disposition towards changes in their personality, interrelations, approach to the world and transformation. This alteration ensures changes of other individuals and processes, which leads to transformation of the entire system. That is how a new step is made towards the quality of relations between the personality and others as well as towards optimal andragogic interaction.

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SECTION
HUMAN GEOGRAPHY AND INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH IN SUSTAINABLE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

SITUATION ANALYSIS WITH RURAL SETTLEMENT TYPES AND POPULATION IN REGIONAL PARKS OF COASTAL LITHUANIA: HOW TO INCREASE THE TERRITORY' ATTRACTIVENESS?

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Summary

The situation with rural settlements (villages) and rural population number in three Regional parks of the coastal Lithuania has been studied from 2001 to 2019. The analysis of statistical data obtained from the local administrators, National Statistics and conducted social research (two semi-structured interviews) has shown, that depopulation continues to grow in the small size of villages, while much better situation is observed in the villages of medium and large size mostly due to the better social infrastructure in two of three studied Regional parks. Contrary, the rural population in the third, Pajūris Regional park has increased 3 times during the observational period due to the nearness of Palanga and Klaipėda towns and the Baltic Sea coast. Among the attempts to increase the attractiveness of Regional park's territory, new educational routes and ecotourism can be proposed.

Keywords: settlement type, rural population, ageing, territory' attractiveness, educational routes.

JEL codes J11, R11, R23, Z32.

Introduction

The beginning of the 21st century opened for humans many complex environmental problems inherited from the 20th century, and it became more evident that human-nature relations have to be developed in more sustainable way. The Regional parks in Lithuania were formed mostly in 1992 and they occupy mostly less-urbanized remote rural areas. These parks have many tasks and functions: to protect the natural and cultural objects, habitats, entire landscapes or their elements (Baškytė, 2006). The rural landscape in Lithuania has been drastically changed after the collapse of Soviet Union and with country's transition from the centralised to market economy started in 1991 and particularly with consequences of Land Reform. It also has shown the essential changes with the entering EU in 2004. One of the purposes of European protected areas is to create vibrant landscapes and rural areas. Through sustainable agriculture and tourism in protected areas, land abandonment and the loss of rural areas could be reduced (European Protected Areas..., 2018). For geographers as territory planners, it is important to keep these territories alive for young people and families in order to satisfy their social-economic needs here and also to make attractive for the different visitors coming to see the valuable natural and cultural-historial objects of these parks.

The **aim** of this study was to investigate the situation and changes in types and number of rural settlements, population number and ageing as well as their economic activities and needs in three Klaipėda county' Regional parks in order to search for the measures to increase the territory' attractiveness. Research **tasks** were as follows:

1) to analyse the number, size and type of rural settlements in the studied Regional parks and their changes in time and space;

2) to fulfill social survey in the 10 wards of four district municipalities and special survey for Regional park specialists on the preservation and attraction problems of the main nature and cultural heritage objects;

3) to analyse the situation with rural population number, distribution, demography, occupation and expectations followed from the Social survey results and in respect of increased attractiveness of Regional park;

4) to propose the new educational ecotourism routes for Pajūris Regional park.

Theoretical background

The environmental behaviour of individuals and the society/ies very much depend on the examples of good practice combined with qualitative environmental learning. Biospheric values and environmental self-identity can drive people' pro-environmental behavior (Balundė et al, 2019). Thus, the theoretical background of these problems is related to the psychology, educology and sociology (Seamon, Gill, 2014; Sommer and Sommer, 2002). Environmental education can influence learners' behavior. Research shows that there is a positive relationship between environmental education and attitudes towards the environment (Gao, 2018). Any natural environment and the component of cultural landscape as well as society are changeable within time and space. We share the opinion, that geological and geomorphological components and their structure are among those elements of any landscape which are proon to be more stabile during the long-time climatic periods than others (Solncev, 1962; Basalykas, 1965). The educational field trips together with some practical activities in the space of different forms of nature protection territories like Regional and National parks, might be one of the forms of such environmental learning and also to serve as the measure to attract more currious visitors to the nature protected territories. For example, Widawski at al (2020) suggests that in the development of geotourism, it is possible to create thematic didactic routes (walking paths), to include as many didactically important objects as possible, which would reveal interesting geological and geomorphological assets.

The benefits of a place valuable in terms of natural and cultural heritage are very important to the human mind, especially for children and young people. The health benefits of the area also have added value. More broadly, it affects the local economy. The private sector develops tourism business services in protected areas. Here, state support for protected areas is very important. In Finland, for example, local businesses benefit from government funding for national parks, as the funds received go back to society through local entrepreneurship and jobs (The Attractiveness and..., 2020). Protected areas are also important for the development of the whole region (Pietrzak-Zawadka, Zawadka, 2018).

In order to ensure the rest of the population and to obtain economic benefits, protected areas should stand out for their attractiveness. There are many components of an area's attractiveness (travel time to the area, amenities, environment, charismatic species and recreational activities. Sustainability had moderated positively correlated with the attractiveness (Sánchez-Martín at al, 2020, Mohamad at al, 2017). Thus, visitors take into account both the internal attributes of the park and the external features (Viveiros de Castro at al, 2015). F. Giambona and L. Grassini (2020) see attractiveness as a component of competitiveness, as increasing tourism flows is one of the goals of competitiveness.

Methods used to fulfil the tasks of current research: compilation of different scientific sources, materials describing preserved cultural and nature objects in the coastal region, analysis of Census data (2001) and annual data of Lithuanian Statistics Department on municipality and local levels, data obtained in 2019 from 10 administrational wards (NUTS-5 level); semi-structured interview with administrators of 10 wards on the social-economic and demographic situation and development perspectives in rural localities; semi-structured interview with Landscape specialists of three regional parks in Klaipėda region (Pajūris, Salantai and Nemunas Delta), GIS method, village classification method worked out by prof. S. Vaitekūnas (Vaitekūnas, Čepienė, 2014). In semi-structured interviews, the interviewer devises beforehand a general plan, which might incorporate several open-ended questions (Willig, 2001).

Results

The studied 4 municipalities are rural or semi-rural (Čepienė, Bučienė, 2020). In total there were 25 rural settlements (villages) in the Nemunas Delta Regional park, 6 in the Pajūris Regional park and 26 in the Salantai Regional park during the period from 2001 to 2019 including few village with zero population.

The studied villages were grouped to the 9 groups by resident number intervals : 0, 1-4, 5-9, 10-24, 25-49, 50-99, 100-199, 200-499, 1000+. Also, the villages were analyzed by the changes of population number in the each village in 2019 as compared with 2001.

The population of the studied villages is rapidly ageing, as in the whole of Lithuania. The population aged 65 and over already reaches 21.4 percent. The share of children under 14 years old is declining accordingly. This age group accounted for only 13.7 percent of the total population in 2020. It should be noted an important phenomenon that in many wards, where the surveyed settlements are located, the net migration of the population in 2019 was positive. The values of net migration of the population were especially high in Kūlupėnai (108.5 / 1000 population) and Kretingalė (106 / 1000 population) wards. In other wards the values of population migration were lower, and in Kintai ward the value of net migration was negative (-169/1000 inhabitants).

These figures represent only one year data, thus the longer-term observation is necessary to be conducted.

One of the main problems is the lack of social infrastructure in small settlements. As the number of children decreases, schools are closed. Currently, schools operate only in the larger settlements or townships as Salantai, Mosėdis and Rusnė.

Other socio-economic problems mentioned by the representatives of the wards are: unemployment, insufficient income, alcohol consumption, lack of social skills, etc.

According to the Survey of the Regional park specialists, there might be more active communities in the Nemunas Delta and the Salantai Regional parks. The only community in the Karklė village of Pajūris Regional park is among the most active communities in the park's territory. Also the specialists of Regional parks have noticed that the level of ecological education of local residents is not satisfactory, many different conflicts arise due to the miss- understanding of parks' missions and regulations.

One of the activities that can be still more developed in Regional parks is the tourism. In 2010–2020, the number of the population engaged in tourism business increased the most in naturally attractive places, closer to the Baltic Sea and the Curonian Lagoon: Kretingalė, Kintai, Rusnė, Šilutė wards. Other businesses in these areas are less developed.

The most popular routes of visiting tourists are those related with water and nature tourism in the Nemunas Delta Regional park, cultural and nature tourism in the Pajūris and the Salantai Regional parks.

One of the measures to increase the attractiveness of Regional park's territory might be the new educational routes to explore nature objects and ecotourism. But to ensure the movement of tourists in the protected area, it is important to have a supportive infrastructure that performs many functions: hiking trails, observation decks and parking lots (Widawski at al, 2018).

Very strict protection regulation has a negative impact on the economic activity of local population. It is therefore very important to maintain a balance between protection and human activities.

The research (Kliimask et al, 2015) has shown that in order to guarantee the permanent accommodation of people and to preserve valuable rural landscapes, it would be useful to remove some particularly strict legal restrictions in the protected areas. The possibilities of this proposal should still be scientifically investigated in the case of Lithuania.

Conclusions

The dominated village size groups were different in three studied Regional parks in 2001. The smaller groups were typical for Pajūris Regional park, but there was the increase in group size in 2019, when the Kalotė village has reached new group status with 1000+ residents. At the same time in the Nemunas Delta Regional park the prevailing group of villages of medium size in 2001 decreased to the groups with small size of villages in 2019. The Salantai Regional park's villages generally remained of the same size in 2019 as compared with 2001.

The most of rural population in the Salantai Regional park was concentrated in the group with 200-499 residents, and in the Pajūris Regional park – in the largest by size village with 1000+ residents in 2019. Differently, in the Nemunas Delta Regional park most of rural residents nowadays settle in the medium size of villages with 50-99 and 100-199 residents.

The rural population in Regional parks is ageing rapidly. This is due to the negative long-term migration processes of the population and to the unfavorable socio-economic situation, especially in areas remote from larger settlements or the coast.

New educational routes might be proposed and adopted for nature or ecotourism according to the research projects like "EcoTour4Natur" in the Pajūris Regional Park.

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INNOVATIVE RESORT IN THE PROTECTED TERRITORY? THE CASE OF THE CURONIAN SPIT

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Summary

Protected territories play a significant role in a global ecosystem. Care of these sites requires many resources that are scarce. Generation of revenue for conservation is an issue that can be solved if to turn to innovations. It is important in case of the Curonian Spit national park (CSNP) with Neringa resort already situated and Smiltyne suburb of Klaipeda city as a potential resort area. The research deals with the question *what are perceived as innovations, and how they contribute to the innovative resort on the CSNP*? The results revealed that any innovations are foreseen by the administration of CSNP with not much of them planned by Neringa and Klaipeda municipalities. The lack of social innovations is the main problem of the innovative resort on the territory of the national park.

Keywords: innovation, resort, protected territory, social innovation, Curonian Spit.

JEL codes: D85, H75, L38, O21, O30, P21, Q56, Z32

Introduction

Protected territories play a significant role in the ecosystem of our planet. It is calculated that up to 15 percent of the Globe is nature reserves (Watson, Allan, et.al. 2018; World Bank, 2019). They are treated as conservative with the status quo being a priority in their performance management (Castro- Arce, et al., 2019). It is obvious especially when we have in mind UNESCO territories or strict reserves. In some cases, these territories need to balance protection and tourism. Professionals working in these areas try to find ways for optimising both visitor experience and the quality of the site (Spenceley and Snyman, 2017).

Care of these sites requires financial, operational, and human resources (Macedo et al., 2013) with most financing occurring from public sources. And as usual, public resources are scarce. Therefore, the generation of revenue for conservation is an issue that can be solved if to turn to innovations.

Innovations are not something new in the contemporary world. According to Filer (2019), public innovations can help to improve social and economic welfare. And policymakers should play a key role in fostering the process. Nowadays global and local issues foster us to look for new ways how to challenge them and act in ways we have never done before (COVID-19 pandemic can be named as a good example of innovative performance as well). Such a situation prompts novelty in both business and public sectors. This possibility is also seen if to have in mind the resort town in a national park as it is in our case.

It should be recalled that the Curonian Spit is an area, unlike the other four national parks in Lithuania. The Curonian Spit is inscribed onto the UNESCO world heritage list (together with its Russian part in Kaliningrad oblast). The territory is administrated by three institutions. Neringa municipality is a famous Lithuanian and international seaside resort that covers only two percent of the Lithuanian territory of the national park with about 2,500 permanent inhabitants living in four settlements remoted from each other. The only Lithuanian seaport, Klaipeda, takes responsibility for the Smiltyne suburb, which is a very tiny area at the very end of the spit, separated from the main city by the Curonian lagoon. Both municipalities are managed by local council boards while the national park is managed by the administration of the national park. The forests in the area are managed by a division of the State Forest Enterprise. This institution is not included in the research because there are no citizens in their field of management.

The picture of the Curonian Spit as a UNESCO - protected area is already a well-established reality, which requires constant supervision, nurturing, and legal support as well as financial injections. Therefore, sound about innovative trends in the development of the site can be heard periodically from the authorities of the territory (Burksiene and Dvorak, 2020).

During the interview while the other research had been made the director of the administration of the national park of the Curonian Spit put some interesting thoughts about possible innovations on the territory. She recalled the statement of Mrs. Renate Elly Künast, a German politician of Alliance ‘90/ The Greens Bundestag member, a former Minister of Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture, when she visited the Curonian Spit. This lady argued that living on such an exceptional territory is a good possibility to pioneer in innovations while trying new technological solutions or agreeing on some decisions concerning protection (i.e., refusing of plastic bags).

Innovations as a new possibility for Neringa municipality were also emphasized in the interview with Mr. Narunas Lendraitis, the vice mayor of Neringa resort.

Human as part of the ecosystems is little emphasized in the regulations of the protected territory. Meanwhile, the vision of the innovative resort seems to be a relatively new and quite brave announcement. Knowing the specific attitude of environmentalists for everything that is not about nature and fauna, the above utterances seem a little bit suspicious and require deeper analysis. Therefore, this **research** focuses on the following **question**: *what are perceived as innovations, and how they contribute to the innovative resort on the territory of the Curonian Spit national park*?

So far, only Neringa municipality has the status of a resort. However, Klaipeda city has made claims to seek the status of the resort area for Smiltyne and has such an objective in its strategy for 2021-2030 inscribed.

Theoretical basis

Innovations related to the technologies are most popular and used widely in all industries. The study of an innovative resort in Taiwan emphasized ubiquitous technologies as the primary innovation in all main resort services: transportation, accommodation, leisure, entertainment, dining, shopping, meeting, and complex. The research used thirty-nine indexes that covered both private and public services (see in Chang, et al., 2016). The results encourage the importance and use of high technologies in the resort industry at their maximum to satisfy customers' needs. Technologies can help either to create a new service product or to improve service quality. Therefore, the importance of technological innovation is obvious for tourism businesses for attracting more visitors and for earning more money (*as economic incentives* according to Macedo, et al., 2013). But technological innovations are also useful for local government as they can help to improve management and administration of the site while involving local stakeholders in the decision-making process related to the competitive development of the resort (as *participative incentives* according to Macedo, et al., ibid.) and creating common rules from down – top (*legal incentives* according to Macedo, et al., ibid.).

Hammami (2015) points one more important aspect of innovation in heritage sites. The author argues that new perspectives, innovative ideas for societal and city development should be set in heritage practices and suggests creative industries that include technological solutions for progress and creativity for the management of heritage of all kinds.

The studies concerning innovations in protected territories namely emphasize the change in governing process as the main aspect for the novelty. The authors argue that it is impossible to create any regulations from the top-down. Informal aspects in the issues can be of greater importance than the formal ones (Schleicher, et al., 2018). Macedo, et al. (2013) propose participative governance approaches with the inclusiveness of locals as an opportunity to innovate. According to Lockwood (2010), it is difficult to achieve any objectives without local communities. The compromise and cooperation with local stakeholders and individuals are needed for agreeing and moving forward to innovations. Castro-Arce, et al. (2019: 2258) name this as adaptive governance or *social innovation*, which means “changes in social relations, political arrangements and/or governance”.

Social innovation has some peculiarities: it (i) shows that the interests of more people can be considered and potentially met; it (ii) occurs in new forms of social networks; it (iii) leads to better inclusion of all social groups in decision - making and implementation of strategies. This reflects shared authority, responsibility, and accountability among a variety of actors and requires decision-making carried out by common consensus (Borrini-Feyerabend, 2003). Spenceley and Snyman (2017) widen patterns of these definitions with emphasis on a macro level and suggest partnership that not just happens but should be well engineered. The authors have in mind that partnerships should expand and include neighbouring territories as well as their communities for a common management for innovations. In contrary, according to Zidonis, et al. (2020), the societal demand for modern management is low in post-soviet countries.

Agreeing with the above, I argue that the integration of high technologies and creative industries is not enough for the innovative resort in a protected area. Common management based on integrated social innovations is a must.

Methodology

The aspects of innovations in protected territories and the resorts, if they are settled there were revealed concerning the above theoretical basis. These aspects are as follows: high technologies, creative industries, social innovations (consisting of inclusion of various stakeholders as well as neighbouring areas) that are realized in close networking for the innovative development.

These aspects make sense to analyse the concept of an innovative resort in the case of Curonian Spit national park. As the territory deals with three respective authorities the above aspects should be considered to develop the site as a valuable innovative resort. Therefore, these aspects serve as research criteria. Strategies of Klaipeda city and Neringa municipality as well as the management plan of the Curonian Spit were analysed. Content analysis was used as the research approach with the main keywords as follows: *innovative, innovation, technologies,* and *creative industries.*

The keywords were checked concerning resort, tourism, cooperation, and community. In this case, extra keywords such as *resort, tourism, cooperation, and communities* were added. The names of two other institutions were also searched in every document to check attitudes to possible interinstitutional cooperation with neighbours on the same territory (i.e., a keyword *Klaipeda* was searched in the documents of Neringa and the national park). The name *Smiltyne* was also searched to recognize how this potential resort area is treated by all three respective institutions concerning innovations in the planned resort area.

The statements with keywords were collected systemized and evaluated in the context of innovative resort development both individually and in partnership with neighbour institutions.

Results

Calculation of all statements was made and general results (numbers of keyword replication) are provided in the table (see Table 1).

Table 1. Numbers of keywords in analysed documents

Keyword	Klaipeda city	Neringa municipality	CSNP administration
Innovation, innovative	22,16	10, 6	0, 0
technologies	50	36	8
resort	11	54	0
tourism	111	119	14
cooperation	58	26	0
communities	152	49	0
Creative industries, residencies	3	12	0
Smiltyne	38	4	40
Klaipeda	Not applicable	34	4
Neringa	2	Not applicable	11
Administration of CSNP	18	25	Not applicable

The primary results show that *tourism* is mentioned much more than the *resort* in Klaipeda and Neringa strategies with no mention in the plan of CSNP. Smiltyne seems not to be important in Neringa's development. Communities seem to be three times more important for Klaipeda than for Neringa. While creative industries (as an innovation) seem to be more actual to Neringa than Klaipeda. But they are not of great importance in the development of both territories. Neither cooperation nor innovations are important for the administration of CSNP.

To answer the research question, reflections on innovations are analysed concerning the remaining keywords. Technologies are furthers understood as innovations. Creative industries also reflect innovation; thus, they are not further calculated and researched as the numbers of statements are low. Smiltyne is distinguished in the analysis to reveal how other institutions see innovation for that newly planned area.

Table 2. Innovations (including technologies) concerning related criteria

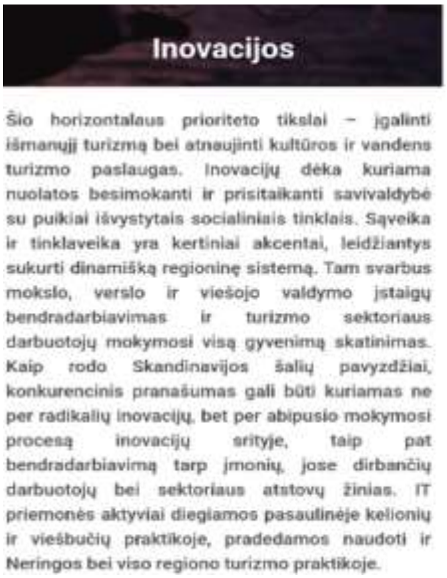
Criteria	**Klaipeda**	**Neringa**	**CSNP**
tourism	3	7	0
resort	0	1	0
Smiltyne	1	0	0
Cooperation with neighbouring areas	16	1	0
Community	1	0	0

If to compare numbers in both tables we can see that terms have very few relations to innovations.

CSNP results: *Innovations* are not mentioned in the CSNP management plan at all. Despite, eight statements with the word technology (see Table 1) were checked, zero results concerning other keywords were found. The meaning of technology in six inscriptions is related to the requirements of the provision of common functions. The term is also mentioned concerning water supply and stabilization of the shores either of the Baltic sea or the Currish lagoon.

Klaipeda results: The *innovation* related to Smilyne is mentioned once and is related to the planned means of public self-propelled transport. One more *innovation* is related to the youth community. It addresses the conception (just conception but not the object) of a modern centre of youth media. No terms of *innovation* related to the resort were found. In the field of tourism two direct inscriptions of technological innovations were found: (i) development of tourism innovations through technological progress and start-ups; (ii) development of a mobile program for tourists. The third statement concerning technology and tourism was found in the planning technologization in conference services, if to have in mind conference tourism. All other statements with the term of *technologies* reflect an improvement of city welfare, social, educational, scientific, environmental, public, or business sectors in general. It is worth mentioning that Klaipeda decided to set up a centre of marine sciences, technologies, and innovations till 2030. Klaipeda municipality is going to cooperate with neighbouring municipalities in innovative ways, but mostly with Klaipeda district municipality or "*with other municipalities*". Neighbours on the CSNP are not mentioned.

Neringa results: Smiltyne as a possible neighbouring resort area does not play any role in the development of Neringa. Communities are meant only as stakeholders that need closer inclusion in city life and decision-making. The relative exception can be made to cooperation in transportation between Neringa and Klaipeda that in reality concerns all possible travellers including local people. "Sustainable mobility" can be relatively related to technological innovation. But it is oriented to all populations. Innovations concerning resort development can be expressed relatively in terms of competitiveness, uniqueness, effective infrastructure. A little bit more statements were found concerning tourism innovations. The possibility of a single ticket for tourism in Klaipeda region is proposed. Already implemented projects of a single system of information of water tourism routes and single marketing system or direction to sustainable tourism that are already newly implemented can be related to innovations. What is very important to be mentioned in the strategy – municipal decision to set innovations as a horizontal priority (see Fig. 1) aiming to turn to smart tourism with innovative culture and water tourism services. Permanent learning and adaptation on a municipal level with the inclusion of tourism businesses and perfectly developed social networks are defined in the vision of the strategy. The network should use modern IT and cover public, private and science fields for the dynamic and success of the regional system. What is missing – clear definition concerning social innovations on intermunicipal (interinstitutional) level on the site of CSNP.



Inovacijos

Šio horizontalaus prioriteto tikslai – įgalinti išmanųjį turizmą bei atnaujinti kultūros ir vandens turizmo paslaugas. Inovacijų dėka kuriama nuolatos besimokanti ir prisitaikanti savivaldybė su puikiai išvystytais socialiniais tinklais. Sąveika ir tinklaveika yra kertiniai akcentai, leidžiantys sukurti dinamišką regioninę sistemą. Tam svarbus mokslo, verslo ir viešojo valdymo įstaigų bendradarbiavimas ir turizmo sektoriaus darbuotojų mokymosi visą gyvenimą skatinimas. Kaip rodo Skandinavijos šalių pavyzdžiai, konkurencinis pranašumas gali būti kuriamas ne per radikalių inovacijų, bet per abipusio mokymosi procesą inovacijų srityje, taip pat bendradarbiavimą tarp įmonių, jose dirbančių darbuotojų bei sektoriaus atstovų žinias. IT priemonės aktyviai diegiamos pasaulinėje kelionių ir viešbučių praktikoje, pradedamos naudoti ir Neringos bei viso regiono turizmo praktikoje.

Fig.1. Innovations in Neringa strategy as a horizontal priority

Results of using of terms *communities* and *cooperation* concern social innovations and show that respective institutions are not ready for social innovations (or adaptive governing) on the common territory of CNNP because no common networking means in the development of the resorts are planned. No local communities are taken in mind for a modern management and vision of a modern resort implementation on the famous Lithuanian tourism site.

Conclusions

The administration of the Curonian Spit National Park fulfils the functions of conservation and protection concerning regulation. Therefore, no innovations are foreseen in the activities despite the progressive intentions of the director of the institution. Innovations are planned in Klaipeda and Neringa development and cover all public services. Despite both municipalities consider innovations in transportation, more innovations are foreseen for Neringa tourism business than for Klaipeda. Creative industries deserve to be discussed as not much can be said about innovations in the context of tourism and resort.

Too little attention is paid to the development of the innovative resort, creative industries, and the inclusion of local communities in decision-making for the development. Networking on the municipal and regional levels is better expressed in Neringa strategy. Stronger emphasis on social innovations is needed both within the boundaries of one municipality and between the three respective institutions.

Kim & Hong (2013) emphasized three dimensions: political, legal, and social – as important for successful performance managements. Research revealed that main actors of the Curonian Spit are not ready to set an innovative resort in the protected territory as neither common means nor common consensus is foreseen for joint development of both Neringa resort and Smiltyne resort area.

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COOPERATION AND DEMOGRAPHIC DYNAMICS IN THE IBERIAN BORDER: THE CASE OF THE EUROREGION ALENTEJO-ALGARVE-ANDALUZIA (AAA)

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Summary

This research focuses on the Alentejo-Algarve-Andalusia Euroregion. This transboundary region since 2010 has been fruitful of its Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) through the Euroregion formula. It is a diverse territory and of different magnitudes. However, it is also not alien to the dilemmas of depopulation and aging of the population, particularly in rural areas. Therefore, it becomes one of the main issues in this borderland. Thus, we propose the hypothesis that in CBC, an opportunity can be found to overcome these territorial problems and maintain or retain the population. Contextually, new circumstances, as is the case of Covid-19, the development of teleworking, the multiple rural initiatives, the new European funds, are just some examples that may change the current demographic regression scenario and favor their rural spaces and populations.

Keywords: Borderlands; Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC); Regional Studies; Territorial Assessment.

JEL codes: R1; R5; R58.

Introduction

The borderland between Portugal and Spain stretches for nearly 1,300 km, therefore, being one of the most extensive terrestrial borders in the South of Europe (López Trigal, 1997). Consequently, the 2014-2020 Spain-Portugal Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) area affects thirty-seven NUTS III of these two countries, which resulted from many extensions of the years as of their intervention areas in successive territorial cooperation programs. Nowadays, the current border action area covers 253,466 km2 and brings together more than seventeen million people, representing more than 5% of the area and more than 3% of all of the Union European population (Antunes Simões, 2008; Jurado and Pazos, 2016). One of the main characteristics, and at the same time the most significant obstacle of the Spanish-Portuguese border, is the tenacious demographic crisis that it suffers. In addition to the lack of human resources and the continued loss of population due to demographic aging and low birth rates, a new economic emigration began with the 2008 crisis, especially incisive in this area. This scenario makes this border region unattractive, although with nuances given the accused internal asymmetries regarding population evolution and demographic aging (Jurado and Pazos, 2016). At the border, the average age is 40.3 years, compared to the EU average of 39.7. Similarly, the elderly population of the border represents between 20-24% of the total, compared to 10-12% of young people. In reality, the causes of aging are complex, but they are directly the increase in life expectancy, the fall in the birth rate, and the historical rural exodus. Similarly, the low economic and social expectations increase significant emigration flows of young and educated people, while immigration is hardly relevant or only at the border's coastal ends.

Contextually, this research intends to briefly analyze, based on the existing literature, the cooperation and demographic dynamics in the Euroregion Alentejo-Algarve-Andaluzia (AAA) (Figure 1) with a specific focus for the border municipalities. Thereby, we describe what occurs in Vila Real, Castro Marim, or Rosal de la Frontera border municipalities.

Figure 1. Location map of the Euroregion Alentejo-Algarve-Andalucía (AAA).

Methodology

Bearing in mind the scope of this preliminary research, the authors needed to apply different research methodologies -i.e., direct and indirect methods of analysis. Consequently, the methodological approach consisted of the following four steps: literature review, data collection, case study analysis, and description of the results, ending with the discussion and conclusions.

Among the several sources of information the authors have used to develop this preliminary research, it is possible to highlight some previous studies already develop and published over the Portuguese-Spanish were fundamental to sustain this investigation (see: Barrientos Alfageme, 2009; Felicidades García, 2013; Castanho et al., 2016; Castanho, 2017; 2019; 2020).

Nevertheless, several other demographic variables could be studied. The selected ones, based on their interest in this study, have been population size, density, evolution in the last 20 years, aging, and structure by gender. It has been preferred to take the data directly from the respective National Statistics Institute (INE) and georeferenced with Geographic Information Systems (GIS).

Results

The AAA complex has just over 9.5 million inhabitants, representing 17% of the Iberian Peninsula population (Table 1 and Figure 2). This Euroregion presents substantial socio-territorial imbalances, not only because it fits very different realities in dimensions (Andaluzia contributes more than 70% of the territory and more than 87% of the population), but also due to design and territorial management policies applied to each one of them has no territorial continuity on the other side of the border.

Table 1. Major features of the Euroregion AAA

Territories	Population	Surface (km^2)	Density (inhabitant/km^2)	Iberian Peninsula totals (%)
Alentejo	733.370	31.551	23,24	1,29
Algarve	441.468	5.412	81,57	0,78
Andalucía	8.388.875	87.868	95,47	14,75
Euroregion AAA	**9.563.713**	**124.831**	**76,61**	**16,81**
Spain	46.507.760	504.645	92,16	81,76
Portugal	10.374.822	92.201	112,52	18,24
TOTAL	**56.882.582**	**596.846**	**95,31**	**100,00**

Sources: MAPA, 2014; PDR, 2014; INE, 2019

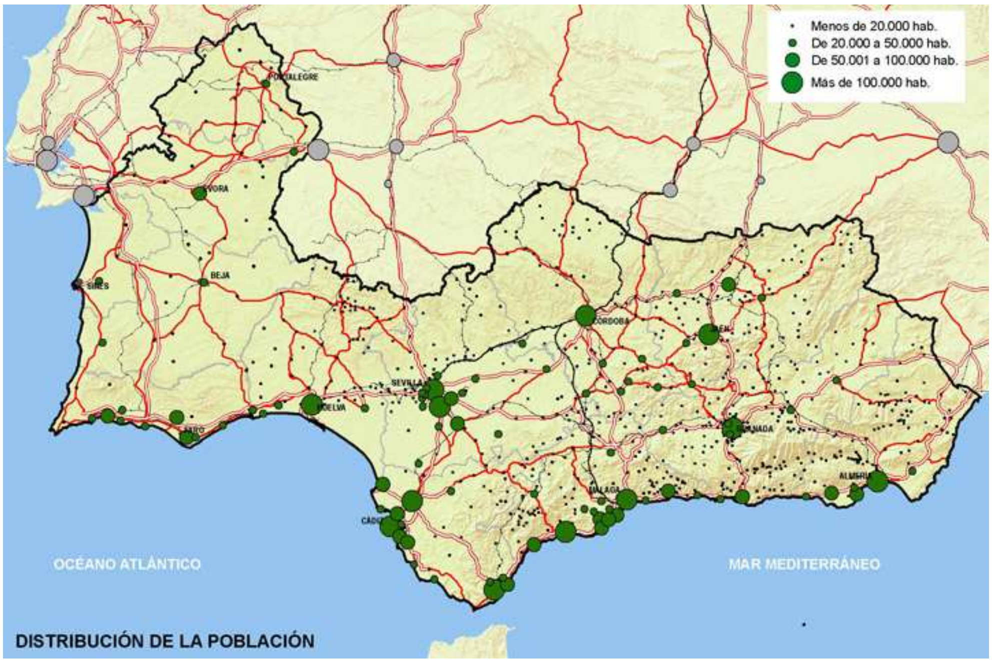

Figure 2. Population distribution map of the Euroregion AAA.

It supposed to be focused on the Euroregion AAA's demographic dynamics in the last four decades. In that case, it is possible to identify the two most populated cities: Ayamonte and Vila Real de Santo António. These two cities had sustained demographic growth of around 45% in these 45 years of observation. In turn, only both municipalities jointly gather more than 40% of this border sector population. On the contrary, the rest of the Portuguese-Spanish border presents a demographic situation that we could define as dying in some cases - i.e., in the Euroregion AAA. Of the 16 remaining municipalities in the AAA Euroregions, only Castro Marim and Rosal de la Frontera show demographic declines close to the average. In extreme cases such as Encinasola and Alcoutim, the situation is catastrophic because the 2014 population barely reached 35% of

1970. Considering these data and this scale, and in opposition to what is usually provided by the geographic literature in its peninsular descriptions, the Portuguese-Spanish border can also be considered a semi-unpopulated space organized, with a density of 15.8 inhabitants per km^2 in 2014.

According to this analysis, the municipalities in this sector present a population system weakened by past decades' continuous emigration flows. The well-known rural exoduses of the 1960s and 1970s, although they have already slowed down in some cases from Andévalo and *Margem Esquerda do Guadiana*, continue to exist, with significant consequences today, as: (i) the fall in the birth rate and the increase in aging and general mortality; (ii) the inability to maintain productive activities that hardly reach the minimum profitability threshold; and (iii) the tacit abandonment of tiny rural nuclei, generally of less than 50 inhabitants, with which productive uses and activities are also abandoned.

Consequently, this borderland is a territory with high aging rates (Figure 3), with the presence of a population over 65 years of age that far exceeds the Spanish, Portuguese or Andalusian average. This situation is especially evident in the Portuguese municipalities of Alcoutim and Mértola and the neighboring municipalities of San Silvestre, Sanlúcar de Guadiana, and El Granado, where the elderly population presents values between 20 and 45%, and triples, when not more, than the young population, from 0 to 14 years old, which here reach worrying values below 10%.

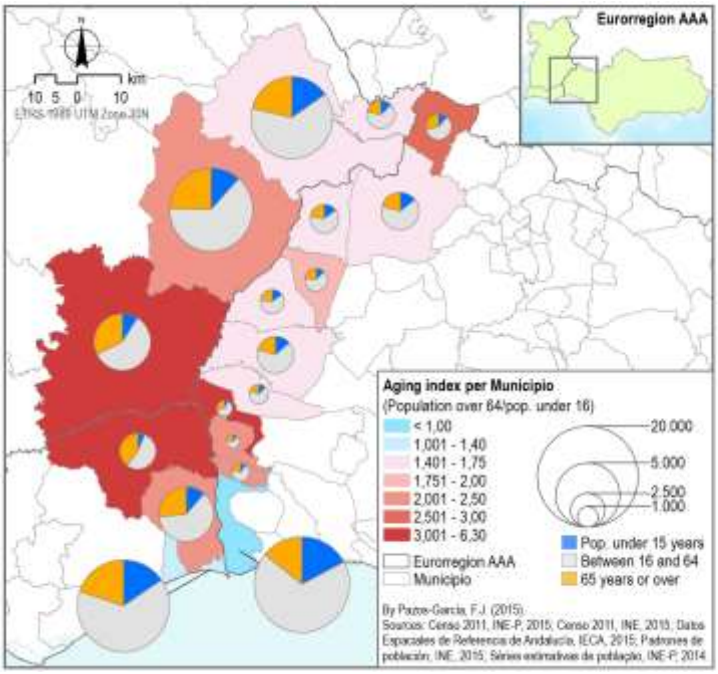

Figure 3. Distribution by age groups of the population in the border municipalities.

Although the deactivation of the barrier effect of the Spanish-Portuguese border has favored CBC relations in the last 25 years, mainly due to the combined drive of investment processes fostered by community funds and programs - also, we should highlight the cooperative efforts of public administrations At different scales, significant advances are still insufficient to reverse the productive isolation and overcome the peripheral situation of much of this sector of the Raya (Márquez Domínguez, 2012; Jurado and Pazos, 2016).

Conclusions

Currently, demographic dynamics and low population densities restrict this border region's attractiveness, competitive capacities, and convergence with the regional, state, and European space, especially on the inland border, far from the coast. In this way, to the north of the Ayamonte-Vila Real de Santo antónio-Castro Marim axis, the population void fills the neighboring lands' future with doubts. Faced with demographic sluggishness and depopulation, the current period of deactivation of the border could initiate development processes based on endogenous resources such as mining, hydraulic, wind, forestry, agricultural, hunting and environmental, the strengthening of navigation along the Guadiana river and its ports. However, the development of the border has focused on the construction of bridges and road infrastructures that have connected the urban networks of the two countries for the massive arrival of visitors, but that has not been enough to stop the depopulation reach the referred convergence.

Based on the above-mentioned, we believe it is more appropriate, efficient, and focused on the particularities of border areas, an area more in line with the NUTS III, which in our case is made up of the Algarve, Baixo Alentejo, and the province of Huelva, with dimensions which in this case are 23,982 km2 and 1,082,556 inhabitants. Moreover, cooperation and links between states, communities, and regions have increased, but not so much in this specific border territory. By necessity, and considering the Portuguese-Spanish border's demographic and economic instability, new development approaches are required to promote its territorial-productive system and identity.

Furthermore, as one of the possible strategies to fix population in these border regions the new circumstances, as is the case of Covid-19, the development of teleworking, the multiple rural initiatives, the new European funds, are just some examples that may change the current demographic regression scenario and favor their rural spaces and populations.

As final remarks, the new territorial structures for the governance of the borderlands between Portugal and Spain should be highlighted - the so-called Eurocities. In fact, Eurocities are feasible institutions in very close cities and municipalities, and have always had strong relationships (Castanho, Kurowska-Pysz, and Naranjo Gómez, 2019). Those second genertion structures offer a unique formula of empowerment, cooperation and governance that is very exciting for the future of border territories. According to Jurado Almonte, Pazos-Garcia, and Castanho (2020): 2*Sharing public resources, creating synergies and being visible in the administrative sphere is the common denominator of the Eurocities created in the Iberian Border*".

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SUSTAINABLE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT – CASE STUDIES FROM BULGARIA

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Summary

The 80s of the XX century called for the idea about the interrelation among the economic, social and environmental issues, which has been articulated in the concept for sustainable development (SD). SD is usually classified as a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. The definition is clear and has become very popular. However, the main challenge is how to measure such a development and how to achieve it in practice.

The presentation gives two examples from Bulgaria on measuring development - a research work on sustainable regional development and an evaluation of integrated water resources management.

Keywords: sustainability, regional development, Bulgaria, case studies.

JEL codes: O2, Q5, Q2, A2.

Introduction

The term SD and related terms and synonyms became very popular and modern at the beginning of the 21st century, which led to their excessive use and thus, to a certain deprivation of their content. Therefore, it is important when measuring development to have specific goals and to take into account the different aspects of development – economic, social, environmental, as well as institutional (political) dimensions of SD which are often neglected in analyses. The institutional dimension is usually considered in relation to integrating environmental protection in other policies, but is rarely accepted as a separate dimension. However, institutional aspects should never be ignored when preparing a sustainable development programme. Criteria of equal worth should be developed for monitoring and evaluation of state and trends in each dimension. Indicators should reflect these dimensions and the interconnection between them. It is possible to combine them in indices and a complex of indices. SD indices with single indicators are mainly intended for use on a national level, they are not easily applicable on a local level and are not a good guide for decision-makers who want to achieve sustainability on a local level. This leads to the compilation of multiple sets of sustainable development indicators (indices), each of which includes a wide range of specific indicators. Existing sets of indicators are often incompatible and there is a danger that without applying a clear method, they will serve specific (ad hoc) purposes of the study. Such indicators may be ineffective in promoting sustainable development and hinder the process of such development.

We should be very careful when using weights trying to combine and simplify indicators. A study of inclusive regional development was conducted (Totev et al., 2021). It analysed three groups of indicators: economic and social, social and environmental, and environmental and economic. The interrelations between the different development aspects are very important and this is proven by analysing correlation coefficients between indicators.

Various indicators in various directions - air, climate change, water resources, soil condition, biodiversity, forests, waste and material resources, radiation status of the environment, noise pollution and others, characterize the state of the environment. For some of the indicators in Bulgaria there is data only on a national level, or at certain points (hot spots), or on the level of natural-geographical regions, river basins, etc., which do not coincide with the administrative division of the country and accordingly there is no data on a district level (NUT2 regions in Bulgaria), i.e. it is not possible to use the same approach as in economic and social analyses where there is NUTS2 data. The second challenge is that a large piece of information is confidential because of a statistic secret. The only possible approach to get statistical information on air pollution by districts is to have ranks of the districts according to the degree of emissions (not individual data) – respectively rank 1 most heavily polluted, rank 28 least polluted. This allows to determine the relative pollution in one area compared to others, as well as to determine the changes in the ranks over time.

A weak to moderate correlation is established between the ranks by districts for GDP per capita and the ranks of the respective indicators for air pollution.

The assessment of pollution in Bulgaria shows that the steady upward trend in GDP is not linked to an increase in pollution. On a national level, emissions of major air pollutants are declining. On a district level, the change in pollution according to rank indicators in 2017 compared to 2008 is insignificant.

Method

The study does not combine all indicators in one single index It does not apply weights too. It rather studies ranking and regions in groups and focuses on the top three or five) regions with the best and worst indicators, e.g. most clean and most polluted. These analyses could offer a good guide for decision-makers.

Case study research

A survey on the implementations of the integrated water resources management (IWRM) was conducted in 2020 in Bulgaria according to UN indicator SDG 6.5.1 for sustainable development for IWRM.

Water resources have been managed "in pieces" for many years, because the decisions were usually dominated by engineers and the long-term economic, social and environmental consequences of these decisions were not taken into account. The policies have been changing gradually and the management approach has been transformed from a fragmented towards an integrated one. These policies are supported and encouraged on an international level. In 2015 United Nations (UN) member states adopted new post-2015 development agenda. The agenda includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and 169 targets for the means of implementation, global partnership, monitoring and review. SDG indicator number 6 concerns water – the goal is to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation. It also encourages integrated water resources management. The mechanisms for measuring of IWRM, included in the SDG Agenda, are an example for overcoming the deficiencies of the previous development goals, management and evaluation tools.

Data on SDG indicator 6.5.1 is collected through an UN questionnaire and responses are consolidated through consultations between relevant stakeholders, such as national and subnational line - ministries and institutions involved in water resources management and other stakeholders such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academia and business. It takes into account the various users and uses of water, with the aim of promoting positive social, economic and environmental impacts at all levels, including the transboundary level, where appropriate.

The analysis includes the following aspects of SD: Enabling environment; Institutions and participation; Management instruments; Financing. The evaluation is in the form of consultations with interested parties (who fill in questionnaires) and take part in workshops to discuss the results and finalize the scores. Each section contains two sub-sections, the first covering the national level, and the second covering all other levels, which includes sub-national, basin/aquifer and transboundary levels as appropriate. For each question, a score between 0 and 100 may be selected. The score selection is guided by a descriptive text for six thresholds, which are specific to each question.

The assessment of the degree of IWRM implementation in Bulgaria took place in the mid-2020. Average results are as follows: average rating for Bulgaria – 60 points and by components: for funding - 52 points, and for the other three components - 62 points. The assessment of SDG 6.5.1 for Bulgaria (60 points) is within the European average, indicating that the country has achieved a relatively good implementation of the principles of IWRM. The four Basin Directorates in the country are well developed, but an issue stands out concerning practical application of IWRM and the adequate financing of the measures. Another important problem is the frequent change in legislation, the need of security and predictability of the processes, the lack of high institutional capacity and good management. The problems are aggravating especially on a regional level – the scores of a component of IWRM on a basin level are lower than those on a national level (Mochurova et al, 2018, UN Water, 2018).

The first example of a study of SD illustrates a desktop research and evaluation of regional development. Statistical analyses on a district level for Bulgaria allows to determine those NUT2 regions that are the most problematic and do not meet the requirements for inclusive development in terms of economic, social and environmental dimensions.

Conclusions

The evaluation of IWRM illustrates a practical evaluation of one SD aspect. It includes different types of methods – desktop research, but also workshops with consultations between relevant stakeholders. Interdisciplinary approach is applied too. Stakeholders from different fields of science and practice participate – technical, natural, social sciences. It is difficult to organize such evaluations – it is resource and time consuming, communication between people of different backgrounds is also challenging, but it is a way to overcome the tension between technical and popular input into decisions, and is a conventional element of any discussion of 'good governance' for the environment.

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TOURISM IN THE FACE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Summary

Tourism and travel (hereinafter T&T) significantly contributes to the global GDP and creates jobs worldwide. As the COVID-19 pandemic struck the world, travel restrictions and lockdowns hit hard to the T&T sector, together responding in economic indicators. Traditional, unsustainable business models are not working anymore. To survive, the transformation for T&T sector is essential. This leads to the aim of the research to evaluate the COVID-19 pandemic effects on tourism considering whether it could be a change towards sustainable regional development. Methods of scientific literature analysis and synthesis, statistical data analysis, situation modelling, logical conclusions are applied to estimate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism, to assess challenges and opportunities in tourism in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, to evaluate the possible changes in tourism towards sustainable regional development. It is revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic has also a positive approach considering the future of tourism as it is the opportunity for a change towards more sustainable future of tourism, contributing sustainable regional development.

Keywords: travel and tourism, COVID-19 pandemic, market, incomes and losses.
JEL codes: F2, F43, H5, M0.

Introduction

The role of tourism in economic development is incontrovertible. T&T sector remarkably contributes to the global GDP and creates job places worldwide. According to WTTC's (2020), as of 2019 the sector accounted for 10.3% of global GDP and supported the livelihoods of 330 million people, creating one in four new jobs worldwide. Unfortunately, the situation transformed, when the COVID-19 pandemic struck the world. To limit the spread of the COVID-19, governments across the globe have taken drastic measures by locking down the entire country or the most affected cities and by prohibiting entry to their borders, resulting in an immense hit for the global tourism industry (Fotiadis et al., 2021). The pandemic has nearly brought the global tourism industry to a halt (Sharma et al., 2021). WTTC (2020) data of November 2020 reveals that 142.6 million jobs have been lost in 2020 (43% decline) as a result by pandemic. Moreover, $3,815 billion loss in T&T in global GDP is accounted (43% decline). It is also estimated that international global arrivals have already declined by 65%, while domestic travel arrivals declined by 33%. If nothing will be done to improve this situation, these numbers of losses are expected to get even higher. The unsustainable practices of tourism industry did not help the cause of sustainable living worldwide (Sharma et al., 2021). Therefore, with the enormity of the COVID-19 outbreak, it is not essential to come back business as a traditional way when the pandemic ended, rather than it can be a scope to re-evaluate a transformation of the overall tourism system for the sustainability (Gossling et al., 2020). In the face of the pandemic, sustainable regional approach may not only be a way for the sector to survive the COVID-19 crisis, but also a step towards more sustainable future in economic, socio-cultural, environmental terms. Consequently, the research question of how the COVID-19 pandemic will affect the tourism and whether it could be a change towards sustainable regional development, is raised.

The problem of the research. When the COVID-19 pandemic struck the world, T&T sector was the first to feel the effects. It got into a precarious position. Traditional tourism business models have stopped working. Travel restrictions and lockdowns hit hard to the sector that significantly contributes to the global economic development. Tourism numbers have dropped sharply, together responding in economic indicators. The predictions of tourism and economic losses clarifies that to survive, the transformation for T&T sector is essential. This raises the question maybe this crisis situation could have not only negative effects, but at the same time be the moment for the long-needed change to rethink the tourism, considering regional, more sustainable approach.

The aim of the research: to evaluate the COVID-19 pandemic effects on tourism considering whether it could be a change towards sustainable regional development. ***Research object:*** the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism, considering whether it could be a change towards sustainable regional development. ***Research tasks:*** to estimate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism; to assess challenges and opportunities in tourism in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic; to evaluate the possible changes in tourism towards sustainable regional development. ***Research methods:*** scientific literature analysis and synthesis, statistical data analysis, situation modelling, logical conclusions.

Results

The T&T industry in the time of services-led growth trends has become increasingly important worldwide since 1990. The T&T's direct contribution to the world GDP increased from 9.9% in 1995 to 10.3% in 2019. The total contribution to world employment in 2019 was 10.4% (Sharma et. al., 2021). In many places tourism has also become a strategic pillar industry, given its increasingly significant contributions to the local GDP (Zhang et al., 2021). Goodwin & Wilson (2004) add that, despite its importance, tourism is also one of the most vulnerable industries (Zhang et al., 2021). As the COVID-19 pandemic struck world and it came to a standstill, so did T&T sector (WTTC, 2020).

Within the space of months, the framing of the global tourism system moved from overtourism to non-tourism (Gossling et. al., 2020). Since late 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented global health and social emergencies and profound negative impacts on the global economy (Zhang et al., 2021). More than 90% of the world population is under the restrictions (Gossling et al., 2020), 142.6 million jobs have been lost, $3,815 billion loss is accounted in T&T in global GDP, international global arrivals have declined by 65% and domestic travel arrivals declined by 33%. If nothing will be done to improve this situation, the numbers are expected to get even higher (WTTC, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic changes the overall business situation in all over the world. Tourists' number are falling dramatically, revenue is shrinking, and people lose their job – it is the real depiction of the tourism industry (Deb & Nafi). WTTC (2020) assess that the slowdown of T&T will have devastating ripple effects beyond the sector itself. The great lockdown and shutdown of the tourism-related businesses and supporting businesses following the COVID-19 pandemic have resulted in an unprecedented socio-economic impact (Fotiadis et. al., 2021). Deb & Nafi (2020) estimate that the effects of this COVID-19 pandemic crisis on tourism sector may be more harmful than any other previous shock and the consequences may be felt for the next two to three years. Skare et. al. (2021) estimates that in the optimistic and unlikely scenario of an end to all lockdowns, the world economy takes about one quarter period to achieve a new balance. If partial lockdowns persist, recovery time will likely be considerably longer. Kaushal & Srivastava (2021) argue that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to thwart the sector and it raises serious questions about the present and future survival of the sector.

Estimating the impacts and outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic, World Tourism Organization UNTWO (2020) has made a SWOT analysis of T&T sector in the face of the COVID-19. Analysis reveals that behind the weaknesses as the loss of affected spenders' income, the disruption in airline industry, the lack of information, the risky traveling, low levels of demand, the positive effects and the main strengths disclose the resilience of tourism, highlights the importance of domestic tourism, reveals the adaptation capacity and reminds government support to the sector. As well as behind the threats as world recession, rising unemployment and jobs at risk, closure of business, disposable income, uncertainty weighing on consumer and business confidence as well as uncertain length of pandemic and the question of vaccine availability, there are opportunities like re-thanked business model, innovation and digitalization, de-escalation phases initiated by several countries toward the 'new normal'. A progress in adaptation plans in destinations and companies, and sustainability and sustainable-oriented segments. Deb & Nafi (2020) believe that behind the challenges, this situation would give an opportunity to think about the current business structure of the tourism industry, which may need to reform to address crisis moment, to protect business and to protect jobs.

Tourism is at a crossroads and the measures put in place today will shape the tourism of tomorrow (OECD, 2020). As Brouder (2020) states, this time, the reset has the potential to be transformative. It is an opportunity to take advantage of new technologies, implement green recovery strategies, and shift to policy and business practices that better balance the environmental, social and economic impacts of tourism. Policy makers should leverage the opportunity to reboot the tourism economy on a stronger, fairer and more sustainable footing (OECD, 2020). As the pandemic caused the sharp and deep decline in mobility (European Central Bank, 2020), domestic tourism is set to return faster than international travel (Singh & Mir, 2020). Countries are implementing policies, related to the promotion of domestic tourism, reflecting its crucial contribution to travel and tourism in major economies and a common industry expectation that domestic travel will recover before inbound travel (Arbulu et. al., 2021). Brouder (2020) suggests if, for instance, destination management, marketing organizations start to take a regional approach at the same time as there is unprecedented turbulence in tourism entrepreneurship, we may begin to see destinations re-emerge with an altogether different focus. As changed behaviour of people create new norms, the tourism sector may need to come to terms with more local-oriented, environmentally conscious tourists. OECD (2020) argues that sustainability may become more prominent in tourism choices, due to greater awareness of climate change and adverse impacts of tourism. It is estimated that this crisis, and the recovery plans are a once in a lifetime opportunity to move towards more sustainable and resilient models of tourism development.

Conclusions

The analysis confirmed that the COVID-19 pandemic has wide effects on tourism sector. As more than 90% of world population is under the restrictions (Gossling et al., 2020), it results in the reducing numbers in T&T in global GDP, in jobs, in tourist arrivals (international and domestic). However, as the world grapples with the realities of the global pandemic, there is an opportunity to rethink exactly what tourism will look like for the decades ahead (Brouder, 2020). The crisis situation brings challenges for the sector, but however, also provides opportunities to encourage innovation, drive new business models, explore new niches or markets, open up new destinations, and move to more sustainable and resilient tourism development models (OECD, 2020). This pandemic will contribute to creating new business models, which will essentially determine the industry's chances of survival by transforming it into a much more sustainable form (Sharma et. al., 2021). As the world is under the restrictions, it especially effects international travel, the focus goes to the local, regional level. During the pandemic and post-COVID-19, domestic tourism is dominating with most travellers coming from nearby areas (Haywood, 2020). It is believed that the feeling of belongingness among locals will dictate terms for the revival of the tourism industry (Sharma et. al., 2021). Therefore, as the local, regional level trips in these difficult times could be the only way of traveling and the COVID-19 pandemic is considered to be a time for tourism sector transformation, the answer to the main research question of whether the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on tourism could be a change towards sustainable regional development, is positive.

Concluding briefly, besides the negative effects, the COVID-19 pandemic has also a positive approach considering the future of tourism as it is the opportunity for a change towards more sustainable future of tourism, contributing sustainable regional development.

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SPANISH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ADMINISTRATIVE LAW

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Summary

This paper contains an assessment of the accomplishment of the Sustainable Development Goals in Spain through Administrative Law. Since the global agreement for sustainability was performed in 2015, all countries have been concerned with implementing measures to achieve it. The same trend has been followed in Spain and this has occurred in both the public and private spheres. However, in this paper we will focus on the analysis of Spanish Administrative Law due to its great impact on each and every one of the seventeen objectives of United Nations. In addition, this work goes much further, since it shows how through the teaching of Administrative Law, awareness about sustainable development can be promoted, as an example of social responsibility of Universities regarding the Sustainable Development Goals in each region.

Keywords: sustainable development goals, administrative law, regions, public administrations.

JEL codes: K23, I38, I23, I25.

Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (hereinafter, SDGs) are seventeen goals that the United Nations considers universal, transformative and inclusive challenges, and that describe the main development challenges for humanity from an economic, social and environmental view. For its achievement is crucial the implementation of proper regulations and administrative policies that tends to sustainability. But, it is equally important to generate awareness of these values in the next generations of universities students due to the fact that the future is in their hands, and show them how to advance in sustainability.

Theoretical background

Achieving the SDGs requires an arduous task that depends on to a large extent on how the next generations are educated, since awareness of their importance and information on how to achieve them is an important legacy that can be transferred to them. At the same time, Administrative Law is the scope of Law that can offer a huge contribution to achieve all the SDG due to its transversal character.

Methodology

This research has been carried out through an initial theoretical study that involves the review of the main current literature on the SDGs, its accomplishment through the Spanish Law, and de study of the cases related to some SDG, but the assessment of the SDGs' accomplishment in Spain has been carried out taking into consideration the feedback of the Administrative Law students who, after the theoretical sessions, completed a questionnaire in which they gave a critical assessment of the knowledge previously transferred to them.

Results

The innovative nature of the action described has allowed not only to assess the degree of compliance with each one of the Sustainable Development Goals through Spanish Administrative Law, but also to provide critical thinking to students and, above all, what is more important, to verify that the transfer of knowledge to future legal professionals has been done, and this will undoubtedly contribute to achieve higher levels of sustainability in the near future.

Conclusion

This analysis reveals the extension of the accomplishment of the SDGs through Spanish Administrative Law, that is shown in the results obtained through a control group made up of Law students and that show medium-high compliance of the SDGs considered in general terms in Spain. The study demonstrated too that the incorporation of activities that allow transferring knowledge about sustainability to students produces the result of increasing their awareness on the subject, and training them in critical thinking to achieve a sustainable future, as a manifestation of the social responsibility that the University owes to the society in which it is inserted.

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THE PROBLEMS OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES IN THE BULGARIAN BACHELOR`S PEDAGOGICAL EDUCATION

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Summary

This abstract presents a part of a study of the awareness of students of pedagogical specialties, on the problems of refugees and asylum seekers on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria. A societal attitude in Bulgaria towards migrants, who seek international protection, is heavily under the influence of prejudices and stereotypes, which were accumulated over the years. The fears of the Bulgarian citizens are the cause of protests in some cities and small towns against the construction of new refugee centres, against the settlement of people that have been granted a humanitarian or refugee status, as well as in the basis of difficulties relating to their integration and their socialization in general.

Keywords: refugees, asylum seekers, seeking international protection, young people.
JEL codes: J40, J6, I38.

Introduction

The problems that come with migration are highly relevant for all countries of today's world. These issues are not foreign to Bulgaria, which, until recently, was labelled as a source of migration, but at this moment is now a country, which gives international protection and accepts migrants from third world countries. This new position of the country put forward challenges not only for the Bulgarian institutions and organisations, but as well as for the Bulgarian educational system.

One of the most-substantial challenges in the process of giving asylum and the social acceptance of the refugees turned out to be the mindset of the Bulgarian citizens towards this specific group of people. Currently, refugee-migrant topics are integrated into academic disciplines studied in the last courses of pedagogical training. The opportunities for development in the direction of practical cooperation are increasing with each passing year.

Theoretical background

Despite the easy access (for example, through the Internet) to information regarding the contents of laws and regulations affecting the rights and responsibilities of Bulgarian citizens and foreigners, multiple surveys have shown that societal attitude in Bulgaria towards migrants, who seek international protection, is heavily under the influence of prejudices and stereotypes, which were accumulated over the years. Data from the surveys conducted on the topic of "How the public feels towards the refugees and the people who seek asylum in the country", which are conducted by representatives of UNHCR in Bulgaria show that the public sentiment towards refugees and those who seek international protection are polar – from "compassion" through "indifferent", to "untrusting, fear, hate, resentment". (3)

These same surveys show that the "tolerance and readiness to accept refugees" of the Bulgarian citizens is higher than "for the acceptance of economic migrants". Such attitudes are due to the fear of the Bulgarian citizens from migrants from third world countries, which is stated in all the research conducted up to this point (2013-2020) and can also be determined as divergent. For example, during 2013 (in the beginning of the increased migrants' flow, caused by the war in Syria), the concerns of the Bulgarian citizens are mainly about "in respect to personal security, the loss of workplaces and the fear of spreading disease". In 2017 "the main concerns are related to security, the differences in culture and religion" (2) while during 2020 "that refugees can spread diseases lower during the year that the world is in a state of a pandemic" and it is aimed at "causing crime" and "taking workplaces" (3). Indeed, the fears of the Bulgarian citizens are the cause of protests in some cities and small towns against the construction of new refugee centres, against the settlement of people that have been granted a humanitarian or refugee status, as well as in the basis of difficulties relating to their integration and their socialization in general.

In 2017 “92,4% of Bulgarians share, that they have never spoken to a refugee” (1). This tendency is continued until 2020, when 90,9% share that “they do not keep in contact with a refugee” while 76,8% that “they have never met a refugee” (3). The sources of information throughout the years are the same – Bulgarian citizens have received information regarding the refugees and asylum seekers through TV, which is “a main source of information” (91%), followed by the Internet (30%), social media (21%), the press (16%). (2).

Methodology

The following research was conducted in the period of October to November 2019, March to May 2020 by lecturers in the postgraduate degree “Social work with refugees and migrants” of the Faculty of Education of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”. The goal set out is to understand the notion that students that start learning pedagogical education, have towards refugees and asylum seekers and the process of their social inclusion into the Bulgarian society to state the needs and/or the deficits regarding these question in the current educational content.

The main hypotheses, which this study revolves around are:

1. There is a need to introduce students that undergo educational degrees (due to them being future citizens, and future specialists in their professional sphere) with the process of social inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in Bulgaria.
2. The better the locals understood the reasons for which the ones asylum seekers are in our country and what we could provide for them as a host country, the higher the realisation rates of policies regarding the inclusion and integration will be.

For the purpose of the research, a survey was created. The greater part of the questions are open ended, which gives the participants the chance to express their opinion according to their understanding, instead of choosing from previously set definitions.

A total of 183 students from the Faculty of educational studies, undertaking a Pedagogy, Social activities and Informal education, ages 19 to 31, were included in the study. The participants are students in their first and second year of education, full-time and part-time education. Part of them was grown up (some of them even living and working) in different settlements – Sofia and the region, the smaller and bigger settlements in Bulgaria. The demographic characteristics of the surveyed allow us to form an understanding of the local regions, from which they originate, expanding the scope of the research.

The results of the survey showed that 171 of the respondents do not know and have not had the opportunity to interact with a person who is asylum seekers or refugees. This means that a significant part of the respondents have formed a notion without it being directly based on contact and observation – rather they are based on notions that are formed in the public space. The following answers of the participants of the survey showed that:

1. It is not possible to say that the young people in Bulgaria are significantly informed about the problems of the refugees and asylum seekers. This is confirmed by the above mentioned research, according to which “due to the significantly lowered in recent years migrant flow towards Bulgaria and other countries, which are part of the EU, the topic is left to the side in the public’s consciousness”, respectively – and the interest of media, by virtue of whom the public molds their views.
2. Young people have an incomplete, and often incorrect, notion of people who are looking for protection and/or asylum. A big part of them do not make a substantial difference between refugees, asylum seekers, and economic migrants. One (even though being a small) part include in these groups even Bulgarian citizens – representatives of ethnical minorities, traditionally included in the so-called vulnerable groups.
3. The notion that respondents have for refugees and asylum seekers in Bulgaria are mostly based on assumptions, common understandings, and prejudices towards these groups of people, rather than direct observations, personal experiences and impressions.
4. The notions of respondents from settlements, where there are no centres for sheltering and integration for asylum seekers or refugees, form their views about refugees and asylum seekers based on information provided by the media (most commonly – TV) and social media. And here,

as the abovementioned research “assumptions in favour of your views”, respondents “rely on common clichés”, “reports from the media” and other. (3)

5. The notions of respondents, which come from settlements that there are centres for sheltering and integration for refugees and asylum seekers, mostly form their opinions under the influence of indirect contact and observation of the social environment. In most cases, the opinions expressed are negative, and in them they find polar feelings – of fear and hatred.
6. The notions of respondents, which come from settlements that there are centres for sheltering and integration for refugees and asylum seekers, and who have had the opportunity to directly communicate and interact with the people from this group (by means of volunteering, being neighbours or other) show significantly higher justification for their statements and conclusions. In their answers, there are no extreme (nationalistic, xenophobic or similar) statements or labels.

This gives the basis to the conclusion, that young people have a need of not only specialized and trustworthy information concerning the migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. Opportunities for communication and direct interaction must be facilitated, so they can form their own personal opinions based on their own impressions, based on experience and personal contribution. Such opportunities can be provided through the promotion and popularization of social initiatives towards young people, in terms of integration and socialization of foreigners; by virtue of improving opportunities regarding students for experience, internships in institutions and organizations, working within the area of integration and socialization of foreigners and so on. For higher education students in the specific degrees, which participated in the research, such experience would help their effective work in future, within spheres of exceptional importance for society such as education and social politics.

Currently, refugee-migrant topics are integrated into academic disciplines studied in the last courses of pedagogical training. Such disciplines are Intercultural Education, Inclusive Education, Human and Child Rights. Thanks to the Memorandum of Cooperation between UNHCR and Sofia University, the opportunities for development in the direction of practical cooperation are increasing with each passing year.

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Social Innovations for Sustainable Regional Development

Abstracts of reports of 17 international conference organized by Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities at Klaipėda University

Klaipėda, 2021

SL1335. 2021 04 27. Apimtis 10,75 sąl. sp. l.

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