

***Participation of the youth as a challenge „360°
Participation. Youth Handbook” by John Grace and
Pauline Grace***

Dorota Bazun¹
Institute of Sociology
University of Zielona Góra

Mariusz Kwiatkowski²
Institute of Sociology
University of Zielona Góra

Ana Mielczarek-Żejmo³
Institute of Sociology
University of Zielona Góra

Source: Social Innovation online Journal, no. 2/2018 (June-December)

URL stabil: <http://www.inovatiasociala.ro/en/1-10-2-2018/>

Published by: Research Institute for Quality of Life, Romanian Academy

The Social Innovation online Journal is an online platform created in 2009, during the project „Social Innovation – Factor of socio-economic development”, coordinated by Prof.dr. Cătălin Zamfir at the Research Institute for Quality of Life of the Romanian Academy. Based on the belief that open research increases the global exchange of knowledge, the content of this platform is open access. Since 2016, the aim is to promote results of scientific research in innovative and accessible ways to the wider unspecialized public. The Social Innovation online Journal is thus committed to explain in an accessible language the results of scientific social research. The Social Innovation online Journal is a journal that offers readers the opportunity to contribute to the debates. It has two annual numbers, without a fixed publishing date, but a six month interval during which texts are published.

By accessing the papers and texts in the archive of the Social Innovation online Journal you are accepting the terms and conditions of use available at <http://www.inovatiasociala.ro/>. These indicate, among other things, that you can use the copies of the papers available only for personal, non-commercial use. Please contact the Editorial Office for other types of use, by using the e-mail contact@inovatiasociala.ro.

Any copy of the materials from the Social Innovation online Journal must contain the same legal notice, as they are in this file.

¹ bazun@interia.pl

² m.kwiatkowski@is.uz.zgora.pl

³ a.mielczarek-zejmo@wpps.uz.zgora.pl

Participation of the youth as a challenge „360° Participation. Youth Handbook” by John Grace and Pauline Grace

Dorota Bazuń, Mariusz Kwiatkowski, Anna Mielczarek-Żejmo

Rezumat:

Cum putem să creștem participarea tinerilor în societate? Aici găsiți o prezentare a câtorva unelte practice disponibile.

Cuvinte cheie: Participare, tineri, intervenție socială, recenzie

Abstract:

How can we increase youth participation in society? Read a review of some practical tools available.

Keywords: Participation, youth, social intervention, review

Participation means taking part. Not only is participation taking part but also it means being a part of a greater whole, operating in cooperation with others in something bigger than just one's self, being a partner in sharing responsibility for both decisions and actions. In this way participation is a challenge. A mature democracy is not possible without citizens' participation. On the other hand there are many barriers to citizens' participation in public life and especially when the youths are concerned.

Such characteristics and behaviours like escaping into privacy, individualism, focusing on own career, are attributed to young people. These are attitudes that make it difficult to engage in activities for the common good. There are a few guide books and websites which can help deal with participation (United States Environmental Protection Agency (n.d), Participation Works (n.d), Family Health International (2005), Participatory Methods (n.d)). They focus on participation in order to solve different problems or to engage different stakeholders. They have mainly very practical aim and despite some advantages, a lack of general and theoretical perspective is present. The authors focus on presenting toolkits of increasing the level of activity and participation and give some interesting hints on how to put them into practice by adjusting to specific contexts.

The book "Participation Youth Handbook" seems to differ. The authors not only present the tools and examples, but they also discuss and reflect on participation. The preparation of the textbook can be considered an attempt to answer the problem of social and civic passivity of the young generation. Participation - as the authors emphasize - is not an end in itself, it is a process. It is an important action that can change the lives of individuals and the fate of entire societies.

The manual consists of several parts. The key concept was explained in the first one. In the second part several models of participation are presented. The third part consists of descriptions of selected case studies. Emphasising practical aspects that make the authors expect to encourage young people and the youth workers to engage in this process.

To what extent can this textbook contribute to achieving this objective? First, by showing the various ways (models) of participation, with particular emphasis on the activity of young people. Second, by presenting and analysing several cases of the youth's involvement in achieving social goals. Third, by proposing scenarios of various games and activities aimed at eliciting young people.

In the description of different ways of participation, the ladder metaphor comes to the foreground. The ladder can be a tool when important decisions are being made. The handbook describes several typologies of participation which take into account the degree of the participants' involvement.

The three case studies illustrate different strands of the participation process. The first concerns the struggle of young people for maintaining budgetary funds allocated for their activities. The second describes the activities of Young Mayor and their Young Advisers. The third concerned overcoming individual and collective dimensions of communication barriers. All examples of youth participation in creating the public sphere combine at least three features. First of all, they present real engagement of the young generation representatives in important and serious matters to them. Secondly, they point towards the need of involving different stakeholders when common goals are concerned. Third, they emphasize that involvement of the youth in decision-making processes is empowering, inspiring and educational for them (training of political activities).

The most important is the practical part of the textbook preceded by the 360° Participation Game and by scenarios of classes. The 360° game requires from participants their engagement in all stages of making public decisions on the example of changing a common space. It includes such stages like the formulation of objectives and activities, directions, as well as consultations and discussions on the best solutions. Also decision-making and in-depth evaluation of the process are part of the game.

The last part of the textbook contains "Activities" which are twenty-five ready to use scenarios of classes with the youth. The idea of "Activities" focuses on the basic, and at the same time necessary competences for the participatory processes. The main goal is to equip participants of potential workshops with appropriate patterns of communication skills also with partners of different cultures (and especially values) and different genders or abilities.

The main value of the textbook is that the authors devoted a lot of attention to theory and practice. They do not only teach about techniques and tools of participation but they do teach through them. Not only do they give the readers (youth, youth workers, local authorities) scenarios of decision-making processes, but the scenarios of acquiring the competencies necessary to make decisions about diverse and complex matters. The textbook is an interesting attempt to combine the theoretical perspective of social capital (Putnam 2000) and to put it in practice by following different participation models. From the perspective of developing participation it can be considered as strengthening both bonding and bridging capitals of societies.

References:

Family Health International (2005) Youth Participation Guide: Assessment, Planning, and Implementation, Advocates for Youth. Rights. Respect. Responsibility, <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/publications-a-z/1652-youth-participation-guide-assessment-planning-and-implementation> [Accessed 24 May 2018].

Grace J., Grace P. (2017) 360° Participation. Youth Handbook, Available online: https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/f3ef4c_cb09e020f28145449b0ea711886a1486.pdf [Accessed 26 April 2018].

Putnam R. D. (2000) Bowling Alone: the Collapse and Revival of American Community, New York, Simon & Schuster.

Participation Works (n.d) Resources, <http://www.participationworks.org.uk/resources/> [Accessed 24 May 2018]

Participatory Methods (n.d) Resources, <http://www.participatorymethods.org/resources/> [Accessed 24 May 2018].

United States Environmental Protection Agency (n.d) Public Participation Guide, https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2014-05/documents/ppg_english_full-2.pdf [Accessed 24 May 2018]