

## Development of social skills of laity by the leaders of youth Catholic groups

Straipsnyje analizuojamos katalikiškų grupių vadovų pasauliečių socialinių gebėjimų ugdymo galimybės, aptariamas Bažnytinėse organizacijose, draugijose ir jaunimo centruose vykdomas katalikiškų jaunimo grupių vadovų pasauliečių ugdymas, kuris yra neformalus ir gali būti apibrėžtas kaip kryptinga veikla, padedanti žmogui tapti sąmoninga asmenybe, sugebančia atsakingai ir kūrybingai spręsti problemas, aktyviai veikti savo bendruomenėje, bei atverianti kelią į kito asmens supratimą ir meilę.

The paper analyses the opportunities for the education of social skills of the Catholic youth group leaders. The authors discuss about development of social skills of laity Catholic youth group leaders carried out in Church organizations, associations and youth centres is non formal education which can be defined as targeted activity assisting for a man to become a conscientious personality capable of responsible and creative solving of his problems, being active in his community, and opening the way to another person's understanding and love.

### Preface

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Today, education of laity by the leaders of youth Catholic groups in Lithuania is conducted in youth centres, Catholic organizations and associations. The preparedness of leaders more than anything else determines the implementation of goals set for the youth Catholic groups, relations and the groups, believe and trust. Responsible and confident leaders who can lead, be delicate, finesse and tolerant, able to listen and to forgive, be an example to the group members are particularly needed, since they are always involved in the Church mission, whose main purpose is to promote a new life, disclosed by witnesses, and the service to everyone who needs help. However, if the group leaders will not be able to deliver appropriate guidance, groups will have difficulties in carrying out their activities. Therefore, it is important to organize the development of social skills of group leaders.

Some of our modern world features are increasingly common interactions between people, and active participation of laity affects the development of new Catholic groups in addition to the existing traditional groups, which sometimes originate directly from the origins of the existing groups. In these groups, mutual assistance, communication with other persons and personal witnessing enables the congregation to deliver the goods news and the grace of Christ to people not only in spiritual level but also in daily life; to strive for piercing the world's realities with the spirit of the Gospel, and improving it.

Therefore, the relevance of social and skills today is obvious. The developmentally in-

cludes the creation of knowledge by sharing, cooperating and interacting. These skills should receive particularly great attention, especially in the modern society, because with no education of active, critically and independent-minded citizen (e. g. Catholic group leaders) it is impossible to build a democratic society.

There are scientific works in Lithuania where the problem of spiritual education of youth in groups is analysed, sociological assessment of an organized group of prayer of believers in the Lithuanian Church renewal. However, insufficient emphasis is provided on the importance of leaders, their education.

The aim of work is to disclose the opportunities for the education of social skills of the Catholic youth group leaders.

The feasibility study for the development or social skills of laity Catholic youth group leaders was based on the quantitative and qualitative research methodology. For the research part of this work, the questionnaire method was selected. Questions for the analysed persons were delivered in writing. The questionnaire included questions that helped to obtain information about the following:

- Age and education of leaders engaged in Catholic groups;
- What social skills are significant for leaders;
- What social skills the leaders should develop;
- What problems do leaders face when they lack social skills.

In order to clarify the possibilities for the development or social skills of laity Catholic youth group leaders, the study involved 36 respondents.

## 1. Concept of Catholic groups

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Their human in its deepest nature is a sociable being. He cannot live and develop his skills without communication with others. The Holy Scripture teaches us that man is created “in accordance with the image of God”, that he can get to know and love his Creator, he has appointed to be in control of all creations on Earth – to manage and use them to the honour of God. However, God did not create the man lonely, from the very beginning; he created a man and a woman (cf. Pr 1. 27). The union between a man and a woman is the first personal communication example.

The main features of the present world included the increasing contacts between people, the development of which is contributed by modern technical progress. However, brotherly conversation between people evolves out of the context of this progress, deeper – in interpersonal communication. The Christian revelation greatly encourages such communication between people. It also helps to better understand the laws of public life, entered by the Creator in the spiritual and moral nature of a man<sup>1</sup>.

From the societal nature of a man, it is clear that their development of a human personality and the progress of the entire society depend on each other. After all, the source, the object and purpose of all public institutions is and must be the human person, which by very nature requires public life, so the social life is not any supplement to him, but communication with others, mutual respect, conversation with his brothers to develop the human talents and enable him to meet his mission.<sup>2</sup>

In the new times, the self-organisation of laity Catholics has been revived and gained a highly differentiated nature. In particular, with increasingly intensifying mutual relations, many old Catholic groups are revived, and many new ones are created. The definition of laity here refers to all the believers of Christ, except for those who are ordained and belong to the monastic caste acknowledged by the Church<sup>3</sup>. The feature, distinguishing laity is their secular nature. They live in the world assuming its full range of responsibilities and work, surrounded by usual family and public life conditions. Catholic groups often differ by way of their organization, training methods and the direction and scope of activities. However, generally, the goal they all pursue is the same – responsible participation in the mission of church to promote the Gospel of Christ as a source of human society renewal.

Catholic groups seeking spiritual and apostolic goals have many motives and satisfy many needs. It is the representation of the public nature of human, and the implementation of his need for increasing the scope of activity and its efficiency. The cultural influence, a source, incentive, fruit and sign of all other environmental and societal changes, may emerge not due to separate people but rather due to the activity of any group, community, association or movement. On the other hand, various methods of joint activities, especially in secularized world, are very helpful for many people in living Christian life according to the evangelical requirements, and in undertaking missions and the Apostleship<sup>4</sup>.

## 2. Education of Catholic group leaders

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In its broadest sense education is a targeted, systematic, permanent, process lasting throughout human life. It includes such concepts as *education* – human social experience enhancement, encouragement to assess and understand the world phenomena and to behave as proposed by educators. *Training* is a systematic, organized, planned and directed activities and interactions of educator and his learners. *Education* is encouragement of physical, mental development of a human. By physically educating, we strive to raise the man healthy, strong, and beautiful. By promoting human mental health, we train his mind, skills and feelings, his will, character. *Upbringing* means that the promotion of the formation of human attitudes and behaviours towards the right direction. Education forms the human relationship with environment, people, labour, materials and himself. Education trains the mind, feelings, will, character *Formation* includes the desire to provide, by education, the consistent quality of personality characteristics and mental processes. The concept of formation includes the processes of raising, training and education, and objectives, which are set by the educator to himself<sup>5</sup>. All these concepts are very closely related and do not have strict limits. They are complementary, and taken together, constitute education.

Globalization creates the world interlinked with a wide range of network, so people must master the changing technologies, so in this context, competences that are required by individuals, become more complex and need more knowledge and skills. Europe can face a major challenge, which is not the information technology and entrepreneurship, but namely social skills. In addition, it is possible to achieve through education and self-education.

Development or social skills of laity Catholic youth group leaders carried out in Church organisations and centres is non formal education which can be defined as targeted activity assisting for a man to become a conscientious personality capable of responsible and creative solving of his problems and be active in his community<sup>6</sup>. It is a perfect opportunity to different professions and education for people to meet, interact and collaborate in order to create new knowledge. The learning methods it uses are more diverse, more adapted to the man and his needs. Man is free to choose all the learning content, methods, time, and place. This gives the person opportunities to achieve better results and greater confidence in his own capabilities.

Formal education is state regulated and controlled general and vocational education, when after successful completion of studies and exams, state recognized diploma or certificate is issued. It is accomplished in schools, colleges, universities and other educational institutions. Non-formal education differs from the formal-formal education by specifically detailed learning content. So there is no contradiction between the formal and non formal education.

When analysing the education of laity Catholic youth group leaders one should note that that the primary and main personal educator is the family. Pope John Paul II is said about families in his letter: "Parents are the first and principal educators of their children; they share their own task with other persons and other agencies, with church and state"<sup>7</sup>. Discussion about the meaning and features of family education might take long time. However, it is not our goal even more so because the processes taking place in the family are generally hidden from outsiders' eyes. It is important to emphasize only that the family, as an independent public body, can independently solve education problems.

While talking about the development of social skills or leaders, let us review what includes social skills. This is behaviour, which in certain social situations leads to what the proper ratio between the positive and negative consequences for the individual, social environment and society. The term *social* means related to public life, sociable person means gregarious (dictionary of Lithuanian language). *Ability* indicates that at certain talent has been trained: a certain action, activity or behaviour.

Education Standards (1997) defines the social skills in three steps:

- *get along* with other individuals and their groups, establish and maintain interpersonal relationships, find compromises, constructively to address conflicts;
- *study*, work and create together with other persons, help them, persuade and attract for the achievement of common goals;
- *participate* in the nation's and the community's cultural, civic and political life, respect life principles and values of democratic society, care for the environment<sup>8</sup>.

A large part of (formal education) graduate students who learn in Lithuanian tertiary institutions indirectly is also prepared to work as leaders of Catholic groups. After being asked, some students of higher educational institutions confirmed that they not only work at school, but also are engaged in social activity in parishes by leading Catholic the groups. They also work in the youth, family centres, non-formal educational institutions and organizations and participate in jointly organised training courses or seminars of leaders.

Talking about the ongoing education of laity Catholic youth group leaders we have to

pay attention to the fact that such educational projects have been carried out by Catholic activity Patria: Youth house in 2000, they implemented a Christian social ethics program – the ongoing project, held since 1997. This project consists of three separate programs: the Christian social ethics seminars, youth group leaders refresher courses, and international social ethics seminars. The project aim was to introduce the leaders of various youth organizations with the principles of social ethics, and help them to analyze the structures of the surrounding environment and to critically evaluate them, to improve their skills of working with groups. The main objective of the project was to educate the skills of youth leaders of conscious participation in public life<sup>9</sup>. *Ateitininkai* federation in 2001 organized the training of *Ateitininkai* leaders<sup>10</sup>. Youth Division of the Lithuanian Kolping Society actively operating since 1994 prepares both the local and international programs. The main events of youth section include the annual camp for the children of Kolping families, local youth events for the surrounding population, workshops for students and ethnic minorities, and international cooperation. A couple of years ago there was a long lasting seminar, which prepared a group of young Kolping followers that became proficient in conducting different seminars. This group of young people organizes and conducts training for the youth of various parishes<sup>11</sup>. Youth Division of the Lithuanian Kolping Society in September-December 2002 organised the preparation of youth leaders for the parishes in Troškūnai. Seminars were held on one weekend of each month. The following topics were presented and discussed in these seminars: self-cognition, group and processes in the group, introduction to group management, communication and cooperation, conflicts and their management, Christian social teaching, project management and project writing, search for project funding<sup>12</sup>. Now let us analyse the results of the feasibility study for the development or social skills of laity Catholic youth group leaders.

### **3. Results of the feasibility study for the development or social skills of Catholic youth group leaders**

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The study included 36 respondents. After being asked, what is their age, and after summarising the questionnaire data, it became evident that the age of respondents ranges from 15 to 64 years. (Figures 1, 2, 3 – indicate the number of leaders by age, see. Fig. 1). Responses showed that the age of leaders ranges between 20 to 34 years. This suggests that the majority of leaders are young people boldly achieving their goals and capable of actively performing in the group.

During the survey, it was important to find out the educational leaders. Five options were presented, including: higher, incomplete higher, post graduate and secondary. The summarised results showed that: 20 (55%) of interviewees have higher educations; 9 (25%) – incomplete higher education, 2 (6%) – post graduate, and 5 (14%) – secondary education (see Figure 2). These survey results indicate that the majority (55%) of leaders have higher education.

The leaders were given a question about what social skills obtained:

1. Ability of communication (noted by) 35 (97%).

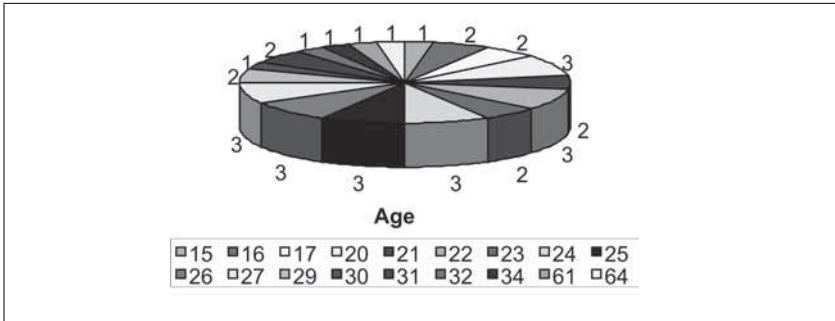


Figure 1. Distribution of leaders by age

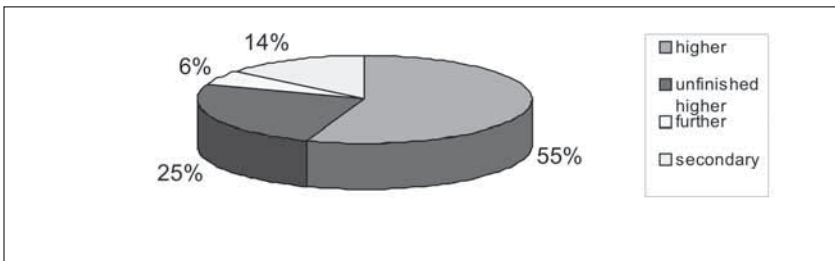


Figure 2. Education of Catholic group leaders

2. Planning and organising skills – 35 (97%).
3. Ability of self-motivation and motivation of others – 30 (83%).
4. Responsibility, industriousness – 33 (92%).
5. Deep spiritual life – 31 (86%).
6. Openness – 23 (64%).
7. Ingenuity – 26 (72%).
8. Honesty – 30 (83%).
9. Self-awareness, emotional balance and self control – 30 (83%)
10. Resolution for the achievement of the objectives set – 23 (64%)

The results of the completed survey enabled to rank the answers of leaders by importance. Consequently, the significant issues for leaders include:

- Ability of communicating and planning and organising remained the first, and their ranking did not change;
- Ability of self-motivation and motivation of others dropped from position 3 to 5;
- Responsibility, industriousness rose from position 4 to 3, which indicates that this is more important for leaders than the ability of self-motivation and motivation of others;

- Deep spiritual life rose from position 5 to 4, which means it can be assumed that every leader seeks for a deep spiritual life;
- Openness moved from position 6 to 9;
- Ingenuity moved from position 7 to 8;
- Honesty rose from position 8 to 6;
- Self-awareness, emotional balance and self control rose from position 9 to 7;
- Resolution for the achievement of the objectives set remained in the same position 10 (see Figure 4).

The study included a question about what social skills would the leaders attempt to develop. Therefore, the answers revealed the following choices among the participants of the survey: implementation of general ideas 26 (72%); getting closer with the group members during the leadership process 24 (67%); fast and qualified explanation of arising problems 18 (50%); maintenance of balance, control of negative emotions 22 (61%); establishing of trusting atmosphere in the group 33 (92%); noticing and appreciation of various skills of the group members 29 (81%).

Thus one may conclude that leaders are concerned that the group members feel com-

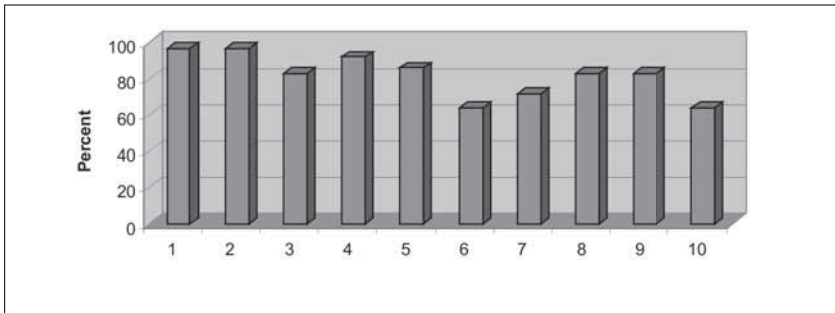


Figure 3. Ranking of social skills

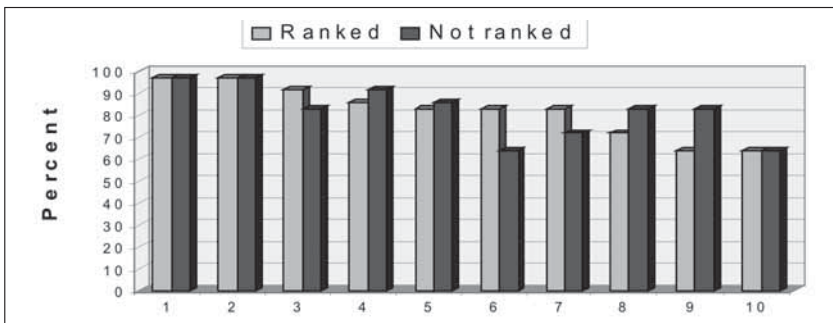


Figure 4. Ranking of answers by importance

fortable, trust and are confident about each other, endeavour to accept each other as the greatest gift, feel responsibility to others and are responsible in exercising of their mission. But creating an atmosphere of trust is not so easy, especially leaders themselves must be honest and reliably perform their duties, they must also abide by promises, be consistent, keep calm in accordance with their principles, but not whims, and be not impulsive; and scrupulously keep secrets. If this is not achieved, there will be no trust not only between the leader and the group members, but also among members of the group. And the lack of trust kills any of the relationships.

During the survey it was important to find out what problems do the leaders face when they lack of social skills. Out of the 36 respondents, the answers regarding the most common issues can be presented as follows (see Figure 5): assumption of responsibility, lack of competence was named by 1 respondent (3%); lack of member motivation to participate in the group 1 (3%); lack of initiative, fear of talking about problems and addressing them 1 (3%); indifference to activities 1 (3%); dominance of some individuals in the group 1 (3%); insufficient time for pre-planning of events 1 (3%); passivity of people, failure to comply with agreements 1 (3%); failure to discharge assumed obligations 1 (3%); quarrels, conflicts 2 (6%); differences of opinion, indifference 1 (3%); lack of the leader's authority 1 (3%); apathy, passivity 1 (3%); disorganized atmosphere, inability to incorporate all the group members in the activities 1 (3%); interpersonal relations 1 (3%); self-containment, passivity of members 1 (3%); lack of concentration and discussions about insignificant issues 1 (3%); conflict relations between the leader and the members of the group 1 (3%); satisfaction of exclusively own needs, regardless of the others, lack of duty 1 (3%); personal problems sourcing of the past 1 (3%); attraction of new members 1 (3%); the answer was "none" 1 (3%); no answer 12 (33%);

The answers reveal that leaders are faced with a variety of problems, that they must solve responsibly considering the group members, saw that all of them may achieve their group visions. They must have a realistic viewpoint to the arising challenges, do not become frustrated or try not to see the problems at all. It is necessary that leaders delegate all the concerns and problems to God and do what they can.

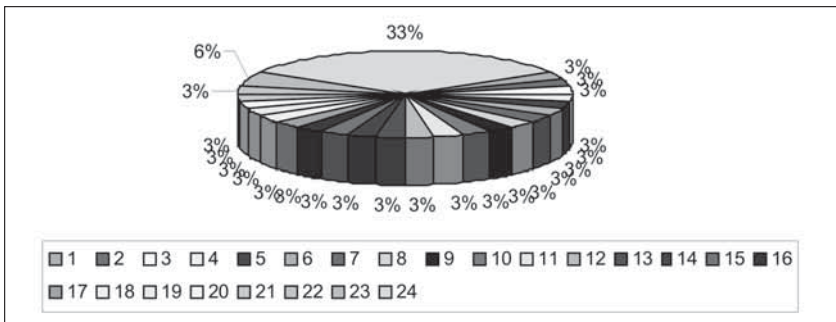


Figure 5. Problems identified by the group leaders



## Conclusions

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1. The Catholic groups often differ among themselves by their organization, training methods and the direction and scope of activities. But generally, the goal they all pursue is the same – responsible participation in the mission of church to promote the Gospel of Christ as a source of human society renewal.

2. Development of social skills of laity Catholic youth group leaders carried out in Church organizations, associations and youth centres is non formal education which can be defined as targeted activity assisting for a man to become a conscientious personality capable of responsible and creative solving of his problems, being active in his community, and opening the way to another person's understanding and love.

3. The Catholic group leader just like any other leader might have the ability to be a leader, and learn the necessary leading techniques to manage a group of people entrusted to him and to take appropriate action. Among the other group leaders, he is different he implements the Christian values.

4. The survey revealed that:

- The majority of leaders young people from 20 to 34 years of age;
- The majority of leaders have higher education;
- The leaders seek to develop: the ability to implement common ideas; getting closer with the group members during the leadership process; fast and qualified explanation of arising problems; maintenance of balance, control of negative emotions; establishing of trusting atmosphere in the group; noticing and appreciation of various skills of the group members.

• The leaders are concerned that the group members feel comfortable, trust and are confident about each other, endeavour to accept each other as the greatest gift, feel responsibility to others and are responsible in exercising of their mission

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## KATALIKIŠKŲ JAUNIMO GRUPIŲ VADOVŲ PASAULIEČIŲ SOCIALINIŲ GEBĖJIMŲ UGDYMAS

S a n t r a u k a

Šiandien Lietuvoje katalikiškų jaunimo grupių vadovų pasauliečių ugdymas yra vykdomas jaunimo centruose, katalikiškose organizacijose bei draugijose. Nuo vadovų pasirengimo labiau nei nuo kitų veiksmų priklauso katalikiškų jaunimo grupių užsibrėžtų tikslų įgyvendinimas, santykiai grupėje, tikėjimas ir pasitikėjimas. Atsakingi ir kompetentingi vadovai, gebantys vadovauti, būti švelnūs, taktiški ir tolerantiški, sugebantys išklausti ir atleisti, būti pavyzdžiu grupės nariams, yra ypač reikalingi, nes jie visuomet dalyvauja Bažnyčios misijoje, kurios pagrindinis tikslas yra skelbti naują gyvenimą, atskleisti liudininkų, ir tarnavimą visiems, kuriems reikalinga pagalba. Tačiau jei grupių vadovai nemokės ir nesugebės tinkamai vadovauti, grupėms bus sunku vykdyti savo veiklą, todėl svarbu organizuoti vadovų socialinių gebėjimų ugdymą.

Dabartiniame pasaulyje, intensyvėjant žmonių tarpusavio ryšiams, veiklus pasauliečių dalyvavimas skatina šalia tradicinių grupių kurtis įvairias naujas katalikiškas grupes. Abipusė jų narių pagalba, artimas bendravimas ir asmeninis liudijimas įgalina tikinčiuosius ne tik dvasiškai pagelbėti žmonėms skelbiant Kristaus naujieną bei malonę, bet ir siekti pasaulio tikrovę persmelkti ir išbulinti Evangelijos dvasia.

Taigi socialinių gebėjimų aktualumas šiandien yra akivaizdus. Jų ugdymas – tai žinių kūrimas dalijantis, bendradarbiaujant ir sąveikaujant. Šiems gebėjimams reikėtų skirti didesnę dėmesį, ypač dabartinėje visuomenėje, nes neugdant aktyvių, kritiškai ir savarankiškai mąstančių piliečių (pvz., katalikiškų grupių vadovų), neįmanoma kurti demokratinės visuomenės.

Lietuvoje yra mokslinių darbų, kuriuose nagrinėjama jaunimo dvasinio gyvenimo ugdymo problematika grupėse, organizuotos tikinčiųjų maldos grupės Lietuvos Bažnyčios atsinaujinime sociologinis įvertinimas, tačiau juose nepakankamai akcentuojama vadovų svarba, nenagrinėjamas jų ugdymas.

Šio straipsnio tikslas – atskleisti katalikiškų jaunimo grupių vadovų pasauliečių socialinių gebėjimų ugdymo galimybes.

Atliekant katalikiškų jaunimo grupių vadovų pasauliečių socialinių gebėjimų ugdymo galimybių tyrimą buvo remtasi kiekybinių ir kokybinių tyrimų metodologija. Šio darbo tyrimui pasirinktas anketavimo metodas. Klausimai tiriamiesiems buvo pateikiami raštu. Anketą sudaro klausimai, kuriais siekiama išsiaiškinti:

- katalikiškose grupėse dirbančių vadovų amžių, išsilavinimą;
- kokie socialiniai gebėjimai vadovams yra reikšmingi;
- kokius socialinius gebėjimus vadovai siektų ugdyti;
- su kokiomis problemomis vadovai susiduria trūkstant socialinių gebėjimų.

Siekiant nustatyti katalikiškų jaunimo grupių vadovų pasauliečių socialinių gebėjimų ugdymo galimybes, tyrime dalyvavo 36 respondentai.

Atlikus tyrimą paaiškėjo, kad katalikiškos grupės dažnai tarpusavyje skiriasi organizavimo, auklėjimo krypties ir būdų bei veiklos srities atžvilgiu. Tačiau visuotiniai ir giliai sutampa pagrindinis jų tikslas – atsakingai dalyvauti Kristaus Evangeliją kaip žmonių visuomenės atsinaujinimo versmę skelbiančios Bažnyčios misijoje. Bažnytinėse organizacijose, draugijose ir jaunimo centruose vykdomas katalikiškų jaunimo grupių vadovų pasauliečių ugdymas yra neformalus, jis gali būti apibrėžtas kaip kryptinga veikla, padedanti žmogui tapti sąmoninga asmenybe, sugebančia atsakingai ir kūrybingai spręsti problemas, aktyviai veikti savo bendruomenėje, bei atverianti kelią į kito asmens supratimą ir meilę. Katalikiškos grupės, kaip ir bet kokios kitos organizacijos, vadovas turi turėti gebėjimą juo būti, taip pat – mokyti reikalingų vadovavimo būdų, kad galėtų vadovauti jam patikėtai žmonių grupei bei priimti atitinkamus sprendimus. Iš kitų grupių vadovų jis išskiria tuos, jog turi ir realizuoja krikščioniškąsias vertybes. Vadovais dažniausiai dirba jauni (nuo 20 iki 34 metų amžiaus) žmonės, didesnę dalis vadovų turi aukštąjį išsilavinimą, vadovai yra suinteresuoti, kad grupėse nariai jaustųsi patogiai, pasitikėtų vieni kitais, stengtųsi priimti vieni kitus kaip didžiausią dovaną, jaustų atsakomybę vieni prieš kitus ir atsakingai vykdytų jiems patiktą misiją. Vadovai turėtų noriai stengtis įgyvendinti bendrus sumanymus, vadovaudami grupei suartėti su nariais, greitai ir kvalifikuotai paaiškinti iškilusias problemas, išlaikyti pusiausvyrą, kontroliuoti neigiamas emocijas, sukurti pasitikėjimo atmosferą grupėje, pastebėti ir įvertinti grupės narių sugebėjimus.

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PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: katalikiškos jaunimo grupės, katalikiškų jaunimo grupių vadovai pasauliečiai, socialinių gebėjimų ugdymas.

KEY WORDS: youth catholic groups, laity leaders of youth catholic groups, development of social skills.

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