

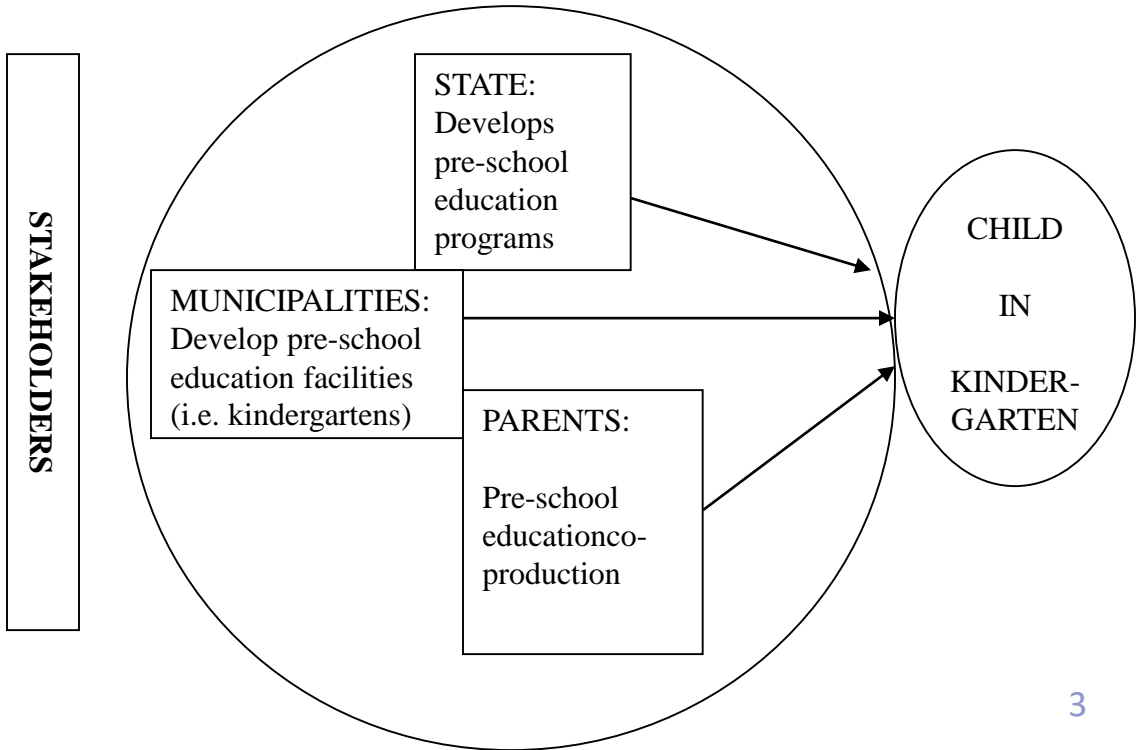
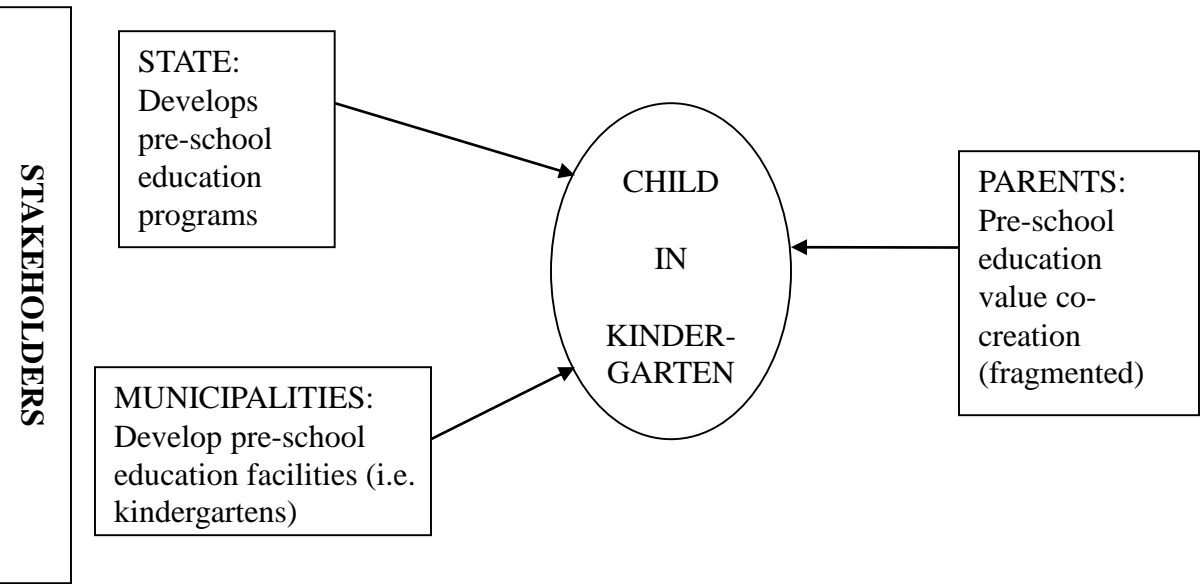
PARENTS AS PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION SERVICE CO-PRODUCERS IN LITHUANIA

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Short subtitle dolor sit amet

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- Traditionally, the participation of citizens is associated with forms of political activity and citizen participation in political decision-making, while citizen participation in the administrative processes is less analyzed, and in particular the direct participation of citizens in the implementation of public policy issues, participating in public service delivery and quality improvement processes.
- Pre-school education is a particularly suitable area for the clients (parents, of course) to become the co-producers of the service. The evidence from Lithuania's pre-school education routine proves the service still to be under the strong influence of the 'classic' bureaucratic public administration conceiving, however, parents as people who 'only receive this service delivered to them'.



- Research *aims* to evolve *the challenges* of coproduction for all the participating stakeholders: providers of the pre-school education (namely, local authorities, the managers of the kindergartens, and the teachers) and clients (namely, parents as well as parents' representing NGO's).
- Purpose is aimed *to find* the obstacles for the *co-production* and *value co-creation* in the pre-school education and *to provide* (based on E. Ostrom, J. Alford theories of coproduction) the best solution for the increase of parents' involvement in the co-production.
- Based on the experience of the Klaipeda city municipality a model is created that could be applied for the other pre-school education provision in the other municipalities in Lithuania as well as abroad (namely, CEE countries).

Pre-school education system in Lithuania

- According the Law on Education (article 6, 1991, as last amended on April 2016), pre-school education is a part of non-formal education in Lithuania. The Law regulates the pre-school curriculum to be “prepared in compliance with the criteria of pre-school curricula approved by the Minister of Education and Science, shall be implemented by pre-school education schools, general education schools, freelance teachers or other education providers” (article 7 part 4).
- The ownership of pre-school education facilities (namely, kindergartens) according the Law could be public (state’s or municipalities’) as well as private.
- According the Law on Local self-government (article 6, part 8, 1994, as last amended on January 2016), “organization of pre-school education” is an independent function of any municipality meaning, thus, that all the 60 municipalities are able to organize the implementation of the function according their own will

The case of the Klaipeda city municipality (1)

- There are 54 public (owned by the municipality) organizations (public *kindergartens*), providing the pre-school education in the Klaipeda city municipality and 9 private organizations (private *kindergartens*).
- Only 44 of the 54 organizations are providing only pre-school and pre-primary education, the rest 10 are providing the mixed education services, integrating pre-school education in the broader scope of education services.
- Around 8500 children are attending the public

The case of the Klaipeda city municipality (2)

- In September 2015, the total of more than 2200 parents signed a petition against the city council's decision (of June 2015) to change the taxation system of the pre-school education.
- Parents' dissatisfaction was caused, first of all, because of the withdrawal of the tax's reduction possibility in case of child's illness.
- The second reason for the dissatisfaction was caused by the process itself: none of the parental organizations' (parental NGOs) was involved in the municipal work group elaborating the new system.
- The process itself got a title of "*kinderevolution*" from local media.

The case of the Klaipeda city municipality (3)

- The protest, led and coordinated by the biggest parental NGO – the West Lithuania Parents' Forum (WLPF), resulted on the 27th of May 2016 when the Klaipeda city council (after a tough and hard work of all the stakeholders) approved the new project of the pre-school education tax system.
- The 8 months of the process revealed lots of different problems concerning parents' abilities to be involved in the co-production of the pre-school education service at local level. We identified these following problems:
 - The first is the patchy involvement of parents (as the main stakeholders) in the production of the pre-school education service.
 - The second problem is the question of legitimacy.
 - The third problem is the skills (and readiness) of all the stakeholders to work under the conditions of parental participation

Research design (1)

- Bearing in mind the national and the local systems of the pre-school education, we identified the main stakeholders of the research:
 - (i) the owners of the public entities (namely, local council and local administration),
 - (ii) the managers of these public entities (directors and their deputies for education in the kindergartens),
 - (iii) parents and (iv) parents' representing NGOs.
- Parents' participation in the co-production of the service, therefore, could be divided into several levels:
 - the first level (*micro-level*) – participation in the co-production of the service in the kindergartens' (in the direct implementation of the service),
 - the second level (*macro-level*) – participation in the co-production of the service at the

Research design (2)

- **Triangulation. Sources:**
 - (i) quantitative survey of pre-school facilities managers and active parents;
 - (ii) focus group by interviewing NGO's representatives and the officials from the municipality.
- **For the quantitative survey two overflowing questionnaires were composed: one for the top managers, the second for active parents. Both sides of the service provision were asked the same questions about**
 - (i) the abilities of parents to be involved in the different parts of the service provision
 - and about (ii) the merits and demerits of parental involvement.
- **The questionnaires were distributed by using the electronic means (specialized portal www.apklausa.lt as well as by e-mail, and by using the social network of the *WLPF*).**

Research design (3)

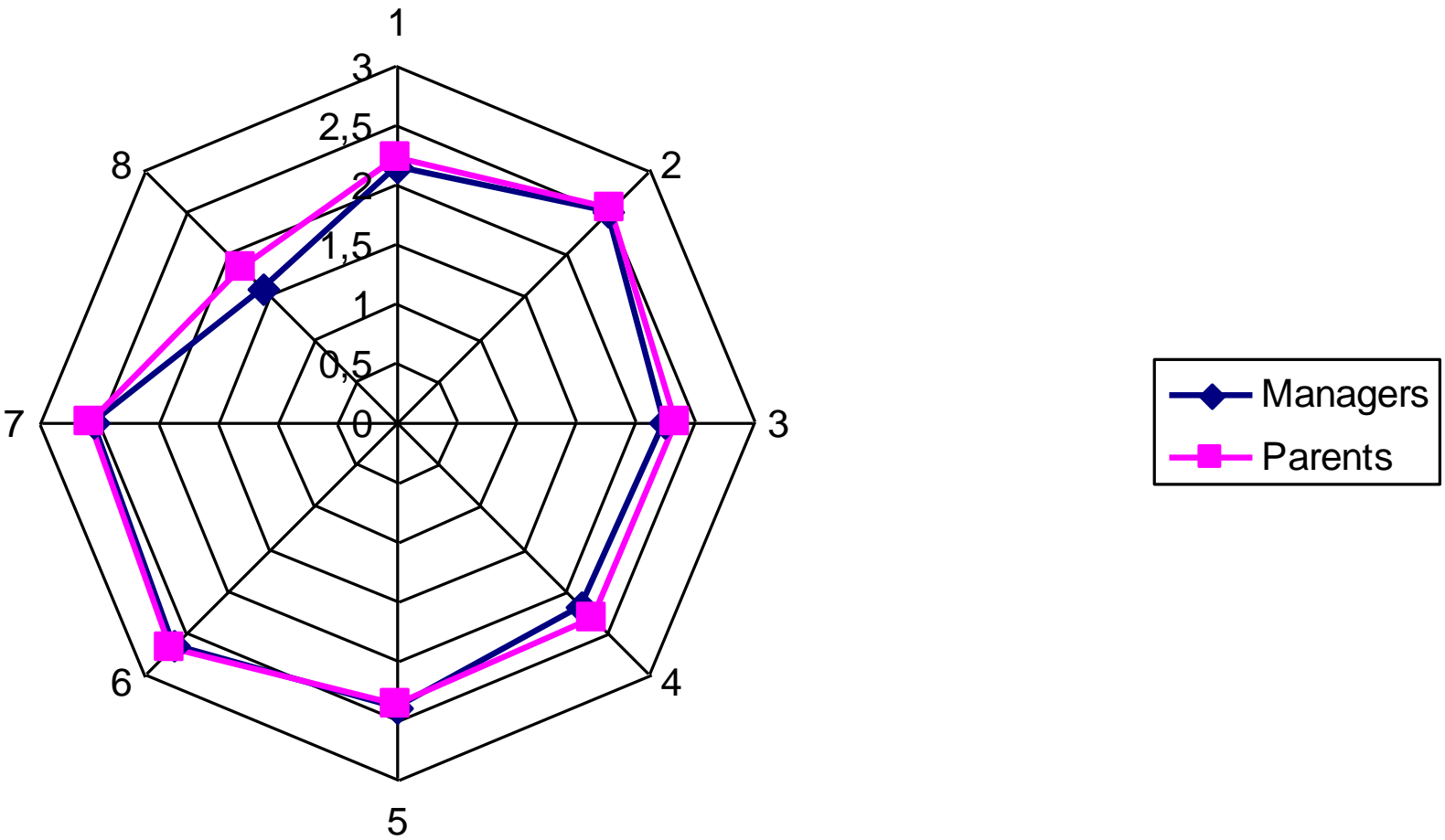
- The second part of the research was 3 focus groups:
 - The 1st focus group was composed by 3 local council Committee members,
 - The 2nd focus group was composed from 3 local administration officials
 - The 3rd focus group was composed from 3 parents' NGO representatives.
- All of the participants were asked:
 - (i) to articulate their position on citizens' participation generally,
 - (ii) to remember their emotions of September-October 2015 when the process of "kinderevolution" started,
 - (iii) to reveal the merits and demerits of parents' participation,
 - (iv) to reflect the experience gained through the process of "*kinderevolution*".

RESEARCH RESULTS

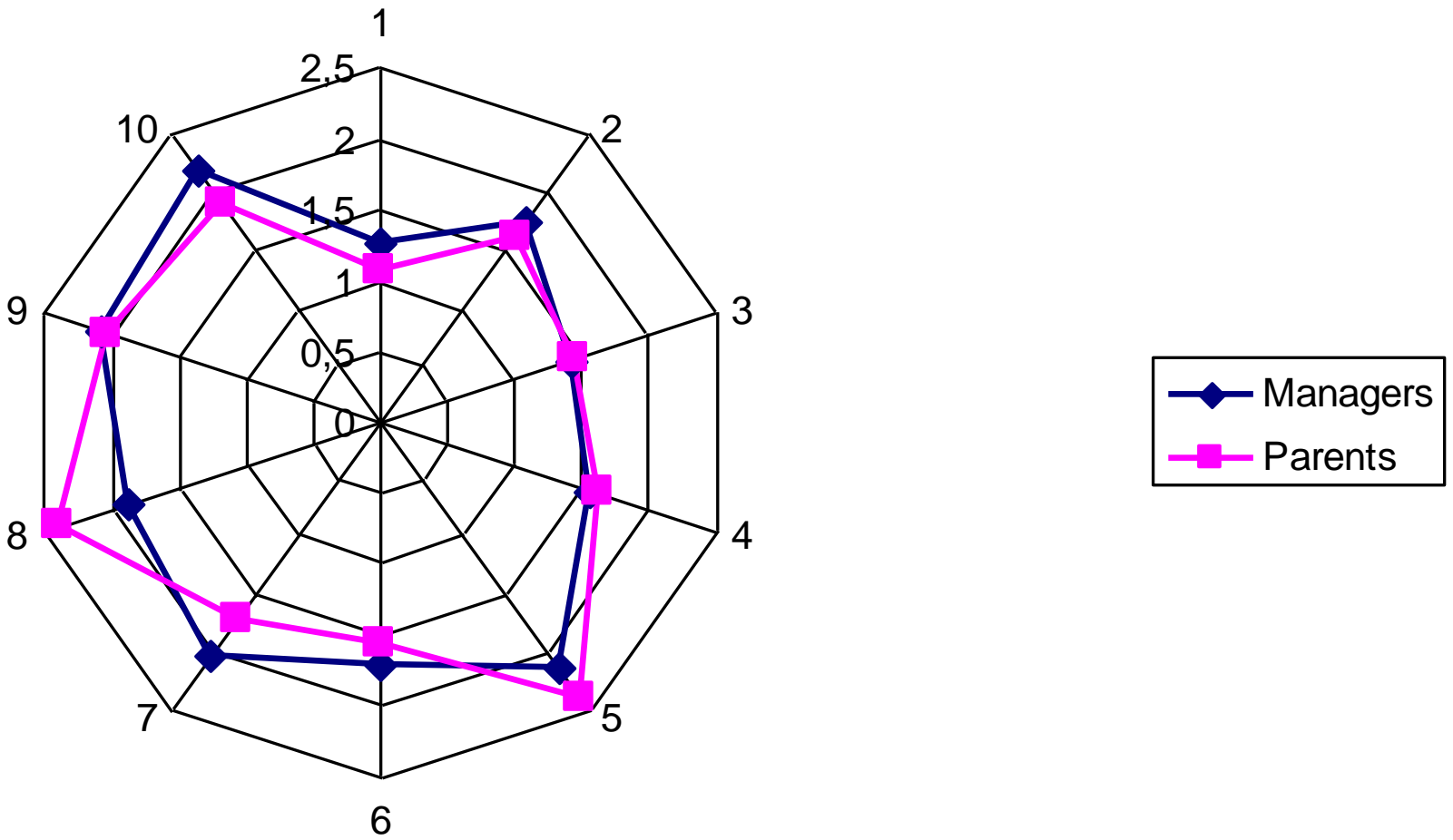
- Parents evaluated the abilities to be involved in the service co-production lower than the top-managers of the kindergartens.
- It appeared that for some parts of involvement abilities parents indicated the ignorance of such ability

No.	Participation fields	Means (3 max.)		Percentage of parents that do not know about the abilities to participate
		1	2	
		Managers'	Parents'	
1	Parents' council	2,59	2,36	14,3
2	<i>Kindergarten's council</i>	2,59	1,82	36,9
3	Parents' meetings (in the groups)	2,74	2,89	3,6
4	Financial support	2,52	2,66	22,6
5	Organizational support	2,52	2,44	31,0
6	<i>Creation of education programs</i>	1,70	1,64	45,2
7	<i>Menu composition</i>	2,44	1,65	38,1
8	<i>Preparation of meal</i>	2,74	1,29	39,3
9	<i>Care of environment</i>	2,37	2,24	36,9
10	Ability to participate in teaching	2,44	2,3	45,2₃

- MERITS OF INVOLVEMENT IN CO-PRODUCTION



- DEMERITS OF INVOLVEMENT IN CO-PRODUCTION



Focus groups results (1)

General evaluation of citizens' involvement in the co-production of services:

All of the 3 groups treat citizens' involvement as a positive thing. However,

- (i) position of the Committee members (i.e. local politicians) separated very obviously depending on the scale *dominant party-opposition*. The dominant party representatives, as a rule, mentioned more negative aspects of citizens' participation while the member of the opposition, contrary, revealed only the positive aspects.
- (ii) local administration representatives “switched on the tape” that city inhabitants most often have no will to participate and “*are indifferent for the calls from the administration to express their will*”.
- (iii) representatives of the parental NGO, contrary, indicated a big lack of information and communication about the routine questions being discussed in the municipal departments.

Focus groups results (2)

Secondly, the focus groups' participants were asked to remember their emotions of September-October 2015 when the process of the "*kindervolution*" started and to reveal the merits and demerits of parents' participation (based on this concrete process).

- Again, it is possible to reveal differences among the groups: politicians (and administration officials) tended to minimize the scope and effect of the process itself differently from the NGO members who emphasized the process as a great victory.
- Nonetheless, all the groups revealed the biggest merit that top-managers of the public *kindergartens* gained lots of attention. As a result: (i) their management effectiveness increased and (ii) the other different problems in the kindergartens' management have been revealed that are now included in the political and administrative agenda.

Fokus grupių rezultatai (3)

Galiausiai buvo prašoma reflektuoti patirtį, sukaupią „darževoliucijos“ metu.

***Increase of the publicity
the dialogue***

Development of

increase of communication skills

Conclusions (1)

From the discussion with the focus groups' members we made a conclusion that citizens' involvement still is in the embryonic stage while the politicians and local administration revealed to be understanding citizens' involvement as *political* participation but not as involvement in the co-production of services.

NGO, contrary, revealed to be willing rather for the participation in the co-creation of service delivery (leaving all the political questions aside).

This contradiction is a big obstacle for the creation of appropriate service co-production.

Conclusions (2)

The results of this case study revealed these very obvious obstacles for the citizens' involvement in the co-production of services at local level:

- The *lack of clear (and really functioning) tools* for the involvement. Local administration usually uses very traditional (even, obsolete) means for the preparation of decision projects.
- When there is a lack of appropriate tools, *the question of legitimacy* is always on the tape: who should represent citizens on every different question?



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THANK YOU FOR ATTENTION

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