

DEVELOPMENT OF ENTREPRENEURIAL COMPETENCES IN PRIMARY SCHOOL SYSTEM IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA, WITH A FOCUS ON COMPETENCES FOR SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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Abstract. In order for education system objectives to have a positive impact on the economic prosperity of the country, but also with the aim of developing a “culture of self-reliance”, entrepreneurial competence is one of eight key competences whose development is recommended by the European Union. This paper analyzes to what extent the learning outcomes defined by the Croatian national curriculum encourage the development of entrepreneurial competence in elementary education in Croatia and to what extent is this contributed by the Primary School Curriculum. The focus is also on promoting development of competences for social entrepreneurship, a business model that is not only aimed at gaining profit, but also an active contribution to well-being and sustainability of the local community.

First part of the paper defines the area of competence and social entrepreneurship. The central part of the paper consists of an analysis of the National Curriculum Framework and a review of the Primary School Curriculum and the competence of teachers and professors. The paper also analyses curricular documents with the current Comprehensive Curricular Reform. In the final part, recommendations are given to improve the existing model for development of entrepreneurial competences.

The analysis showed that necessity for developing entrepreneurial competence is recognized at the national level, but the incentive is primarily expressed at a declarative level and requires a systematic upgrade of the existing curriculum, and in particular the education of teachers and professors. There is an opportunity to upgrade it within the current proposal of Comprehensive Curricular Reform.

Keywords: entrepreneurial competences; social entrepreneurship; key competences; Curriculum

1. Key competences as a starting point

The assumption for ability and motivation of an individual for lifelong learning are developed key competences. The importance of competences is in

their synthesis of theory and practice - possessing a certain competence means applying theoretical knowledge in real, everyday life situations as well as in professional environment. After defining strategic goals of the European Council for the Development of Knowledge Society in Lisbon in 2000, the European Union Council and the European Parliament in 2006 adopted a political agreement on the competence framework for development of eight key competences for lifelong learning. Development of these competences is driven by implementation of strategic documents and development plans. Through education programs, key competences are integrated by gaining interdisciplinary status, integrating them into existing curriculum or creating separate subjects.

According to the Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan, surveys show that between 15% and 20% of students participating in smaller entrepreneurial projects in secondary education later set up their own businesses, which is 3 to 5 times less than in general population. However, young people primarily benefit from learning for entrepreneurship, developing knowledge of business, and basic skills and attitudes that include creativity, initiative, perseverance, teamwork, understanding of risk and sense of responsibility. The plan explains this as an entrepreneurial mindset that helps entrepreneurs transfer ideas into action and increase employability in the long run (according to the European Commission, 2013).

When describing development of entrepreneurship through formal education, Baranović and Štibrić (2007) interpret it in a wider context and differentiate terms entrepreneurship and the initiative in a way that entrepreneurship as a term includes narrower economic aspects of action, while initiative encompasses "going beyond economics to all other areas of human and social life" (Baranović & Štibrić, 2007: 341). Entrepreneurship Competence Framework (2016) defines entrepreneurship as an activity stemming from opportunities and ideas, and then transformed into value for others. This definition rests on adding value, in any area - from private, public to civil, as well as in combination. This includes various forms of entrepreneurship, including intra-entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship, green entrepreneurship and digital entrepreneurship.

1.2. Who is a social entrepreneur?

Social enterprises are guided by the principle of so-called "Triple bottom line", according to which the success of the organization is measured by its economic, ecological and social impact¹). In this way, social entrepreneurship places social and environmental well-being in focus and takes an active role in solving social and environmental problems. This is realized through social management and internal relationships and behaviors (Baturina, 2013).

According to Škrtić and Mikić (2007), social entrepreneurs do not differ much in behavior from traditional entrepreneurs, but the difference is that social entrepreneurs use their competences to solve a social problem such as education, unequal access to technology, environmental pollution, etc. By doing so, they go

into depths of social problems and seek ways to change them from root, which often involves changing systems, expanding solutions and advocating their application at the level of the entire community. As a prerequisite for the socially responsible action of an individual, Perić and Delić (2014) state an entrepreneur's willingness to actively participate in local community. For this reason, an important part of developing competences for social entrepreneurship is civic competence. One of the most common forms of social entrepreneurship are cooperatives, and student cooperatives are one of the most common forms of learning for entrepreneurship in Croatian primary schools.

2. Education for entrepreneurship in primary schools in Croatia

According to Law on Primary and Secondary Education (2008), education in schools is realized on the basis of national curricula, education plans and programmes and school curricula.

2.1. Entrepreneurial competence in the National Curriculum Framework

The value of the National Curriculum Framework is focused on key competences and learning outcomes. In the "Focus on Competence" section, key competences are explained in response to life and work in a modern society and entrepreneurial competence is defined in the following way:

"Initiative and Entrepreneurship" refers to the ability of an individual to turn ideas into action, and includes creativity, innovation and readiness to take risks, and ability to plan and run projects to achieve goals. It is a foundation for everyday, professional and social life of an individual. It also provides a basis for acquiring specific knowledge, skills and abilities needed to launch social and market activities."²⁾.

Within the six curriculum areas prescribed by the National Curriculum Framework, there is a visible contribution to development of entrepreneurial or socio-entrepreneurial competences through outcomes defined for each area. According to them, the linguistic-communication area is highlighted as important in terms of appropriate, correct and constructive communication, as well as intercultural awareness, tolerance and respect for diversity, and tolerance for personal mistakes. This is important for building self-confidence for entrepreneurial activity and quality relationships with the environment. The mathematics area plays an important role in creativity and problem solving, as well as in economic activity, which is essential for an entrepreneur, who primarily turns ideas into action. Science promotes respect for the environment and responsibility in social activity, which is why it is important in the context of social entrepreneurship. Technical and computer area is complementary with science area in terms of ecologically responsible production and mathematics area, in terms of creativity and problem solving. It is one of the areas that emphasizes entrepreneurial activities, especially in the context of

designing and creating products and services and understanding processes of economic activities. In addition to this, the socio-humanistic area plays the most important role in developing entrepreneurial competence as only this area explicitly implements student activities organization and entrepreneurial project management, as well as acquiring numerous other knowledge relevant to understanding the entrepreneur and his social role. Also, it is essential to build a self-conscious person who is interested in the community in which he lives and actively works for the benefit of the community, which is the foundation of social entrepreneurship. The art area plays a role in developing and creativity and independence in action, while physical and health education area teaches to strive and take care of physical and mental health of the individual, essential to life in hectic and stressful social environment, and develops perseverance, resilience and competitiveness in action.

Further on, the Curriculum defines interpersonal topics which, by integrating educational areas and teaching subjects, influence the development of key competences. The description of the interrelated subject "Entrepreneurship" emphasizes that an essential part of the development of entrepreneurial competence is "the development of enterprising and innovative persons capable of seeing opportunities in which their ideas can be transformed into action in different situations: education, work and life in general".²⁾

The specificity of interpersonal subjects is that teachers are obliged to integrate them into content of the lesson together with topics of regular content prescribed by the Curriculum. But although this is a teacher's obligation, it is solely on their will, organization and personal motivation in what way and to what extent will this be achieved. The reality of everyday teachers in Croatia is often such that they do not leave enough time to introduce additional content due to content overload:

"Furthermore, the research aimed at evaluating compulsory education curricula in Croatia (Baranović, 2006) found that, in the view of teachers in elementary schools, plans and programs as well as the process of their implementation, there are numerous shortcomings. This is primarily apparent in the excessive scope of the prescribed content, its inadequacy of relevance, poor interpersonal relationships, and dominance of traditional teaching methods."²⁾

2.2. Entrepreneurial Competence in Primary School Curriculum and Program

Following the adoption of the Primary School Curriculum, in 2006, a group of Croatian scientists in the field of education analyzed the status of entrepreneurship competence in that document. It is important to mention that this plan as one of the priorities in developing education in Croatia emphasized the importance of connecting education system and the job market as one of key steps in introducing entrepreneurial education as developmental content within existing subjects (according to Education System Development Plan 2005 – 2010, 2005).

Analysed areas were Science in 4th grade and Geography and Technical Culture in 8th grade. These subjects were selected based on comparative analysis of the presence of this competence in the curricula of European countries, which showed that the content for developing entrepreneurial competence is most reflected in them. The analysis concluded that promoting development of entrepreneurial competence is represented only at declarative level in primary school curriculum, which is the foundation of teaching content in Croatian primary schools and one of the main starting points for teachers and teacher planning. The starting point for this conclusion is based on the fact that content related to entrepreneurship and development of entrepreneurial competence is mentioned only in general description of education outcomes in elementary schools, and mentioned only in certain characteristics inherent in the entrepreneur's personality. Only one lesson (Science and Society in 2nd grade) contains learning outcomes associated with entrepreneurial development - under the thematic unit "People occupations" it is the outcome of "getting to know different occupations in the immediate environment".

Due to insufficient representation of content or clearly defined learning outcomes that would stimulate development of entrepreneurial competence in elementary schools, it can be concluded that great responsibility remains on the interpersonal theme of entrepreneurship prescribed within the National Curriculum Framework. More specifically, responsibility remains on teachers who, in addition to existing curriculum content, should find a place to introduce content related to entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship.

2.3. Education and professional development of teachers for working in primary school

After completing initial education, teacher competence continues to develop through vocational training programs. Vocational training is a one-year internship at the end of initial education and systematic training during teachers' working life. Systematic professional training can be individual or collective, and the latter is also a legal obligation of teachers (Skupnjak, 2011). According to Baranović et al. (2006), the underlying problem of vocational training is that it often does not correspond to actual needs of schools and teachers, i.e. it is based primarily on content provided by the organizer rather than the needs of educational process. In addition, Skupnjak (2011) points out the following:

"It is worrying that 15 – 26% of teachers do not make a personal training program, which leads to a situation where their skills are insufficiently developed because their professional development is based on improvisations, which does not contribute to development of competences and realization of a role of teacher also being a curriculum co-author".

Horvat and Lapat (2012) point out that current form of teacher education is difficult to meet the demands of today's society and requires "lifelong education in

combination with lifelong learning so that an individual could climb and maintain a position on a ladder of society of change and knowledge”.

In Croatia, there is no constructive connection between initial education and continuing education programs that could compensate for disadvantages of initial education and achieve continuity in the professional improvement of teachers (Skupnjak, 2011). Studies also show that students of teaching faculties and employed teachers and subject teachers feel best trained in the area which they teach, and assess all other competences are weaker (according to Baranović et al., 2006). In 26 primary schools of different regions in Croatia, a survey was conducted among class and subject teachers, which sought to establish teachers' perceptions about school activities and teaching methods that stimulate development of entrepreneurial competence in students as well as their assessment of entrepreneurial skills and behavior of students. More than half of the teachers stated that they sometimes participate in organizing and implementing activities that encourage student entrepreneurship. The participation of teachers in such activities has been shown to increase with increasing years of service, and one of the reasons for this is lack of education to develop entrepreneurial competence in their initial education (Baranović et al., 2006).

2.4. Comprehensive Curricular Reform

Comprehensive curricular reform is a first measure of realizing National Strategy for the Development of Education, Science and Technology, and includes curricular and structural changes in early and pre-school, primary and secondary education in Croatia. The reform includes extension of primary education to nine years and a number of changes that are envisaged to be gradually implemented on a long-term basis (According to National Curriculum Framework: Proposal, 2016).

During 2016, one of the first steps of the first phase of Reform implementation has been realized: curriculum proposals for all levels and types of education have been made. Curriculum documents are combined in the National Curriculum Framework which determines elements of the curriculum system for all levels of up higher education. National Curriculum Framework emphasizes entrepreneurship as one of the fundamental values promoted at all levels. Entrepreneurship as a value has not been highlighted in the 2011 National Curriculum Framework.

The comprehensive curricular reform makes a significant step away from the National Curriculum Framework, which is a start of a curriculum-based approach to learning outcomes because it defines curricula for all elementary school subjects and curricula of interdisciplinary topics. It also defines the curriculum of the interdisciplinary subject of Entrepreneurship as well as the interrelated subjects of Civic Education and Sustainable Development, which have a significant potential to mediate the development of competences for social entrepreneurship. Learning outcomes in curricula are related to expectations and outcomes of interdisciplinary topics curricula, though not explicitly for each subject.

After analyzing curriculum documents, it is evident that the Comprehensive Curriculum Reform demonstrates additional effort to create a foundation for development of entrepreneurial competence, and also creates predispositions for development of competences for social entrepreneurship. However, it is important to note that in this case the realization of the goals of curriculum documents depends on training of teachers after accepting the proposals of curriculum documents, i.e. at the beginning of the experimental implementation of Reform. At the moment of the analysis of curriculum documents, the experimental implementation of Reform has not yet begun, primarily because of the influence of political relations.

3. Recommendations for improving the existing model

1. Provide quick and unobstructed experimental implementation, and then further support for enhancement of Complete Curricular Reform.
2. In line with one of the fundamental outcomes of the Strategy for Development of Science, Education and Technology – “Raising the Quality of Work and Social Responsibility of Teachers” – to provide existing teachers with vocational training programs for the development of entrepreneurial and social skills in students.
3. Schools and teachers who have identified an adequate model of entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship education to engage in teacher training programs to provide examples and exchange of experiences.
4. Provide support to schools in connecting with businessmen and social actors in order to create practical work programs for students.
5. Initial curricula of teachers to be aligned with requirements of the National Curriculum Framework, ie the National Curriculum Framework at the official beginning of the implementation of Complete Curricular Reform.
6. In terms of initial education and further vocational training of teachers to provide specialization through additional courses and modules to enable them to maintain extracurricular activities on entrepreneurship.

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