The impact of the school library on the development of entrepreneurial skills in students

By Angelina Bijelic and Mihaela Banek Zorica

Snapshot

Entrepreneurial skills are among the most important elements of development of each individual. To be an innovative, creative, and active member of society prepared to constantly develop and create new knowledge and skills, are the fundamental determinants of overall social and economic progress. The aim of this paper is to highlight the important impact of the school library on the development of the entrepreneurial skills of each individual that lead to success.

Introduction

Entrepreneurship is an essential economic and social phenomenon receiving insufficient awareness and space in all fields of human activity during life. The development of the human mind and social progress have produced a striving for a higher quality of life. High quality of life demands an active lifelong learning process, interests in acquiring new skills in life and a systematic search for new possibilities and monitoring of up-to-date content of interest. Many people have excellent ideas, however, not everyone is able to put them into practice. Since entrepreneurship is the ability of an individual to put ideas into practice, not being able to do so means the lack of entrepreneurial skills.

The concept of entrepreneurship has existed as long as the system we call human society. The concept of entrepreneurship has been approached differently and used in different contexts, but not systematically and comprehensively. For decades, entrepreneurship has been viewed as an entirely economical concept, tied to the growth and development of companies and businesses in which entrepreneurship is based on the economic theory and experiences of economical services. Entrepreneurs have been viewed as capitalists and investors, and entrepreneurship as a specific economic trait of an individual, an employer or an institution. The above statement can be confirmed by the broadest definition of entrepreneurship found on Croatian Wikipedia (n.d.):

> Entrepreneurship is an economic activity of an individual or multiple partners that requires financial investment and accepting risks and uncertainty to enter a business venture in order to make a profit. It is a way of economic activity in which the entrepreneur decides what, how and for whom to create and accomplish on the market at his own expense and risk in order to make a profit.

...the importance of entrepreneurship for each individual has been understood and the concept has become an essential part of the social domain.

Over time, the importance of entrepreneurship for each individual has been understood and the concept has become an essential part of the social domain. The understanding of the concept of entrepreneurship has evolved with social progress.

Social progress and the awareness of the whole spectrum of possibilities that entrepreneurship offers for each individual's development started changes in perceptions of the concept of entrepreneurship. This can be confirmed by our Croatian National curriculum (2017) and the cross-curricular theme of entrepreneurship, a document in which entrepreneurship is defined as a value that seeks to activate personal potential in a creative, constructive, responsible and innovative way in order to adapt to the changing circumstances in different areas of life and different social roles. A sense of initiative and entrepreneurship is one of the key competences of the European Reference Framework of Key Competences for Lifelong Learning and is necessary for any citizen's ability to find (self) employment and personal development in a knowledge based society (Ministry of Science and Education of Republic of Croatia, December 2017).

The importance of entrepreneurship is illustrated by the introduction of entrepreneurship as one of the eight key competences of students into the National and framework curriculum in 2010 and as a cross-curricular theme in the proposal for the National curriculum after public hearing. In order to understand entrepreneurial skills it is necessary first to understand the qualities of entrepreneurship and what it really means to be an entrepreneur.

> The attributes of entrepreneurship that most of the students possess are openness to changes and new experiences, preparedness for cooperation and agreement with their peers (Šutalo, 2012).

This statement reveals attributes that are closely related to each other; they are brought together by two central concepts: change and cooperation. The causality of the mentioned entrepreneurial attributes can be explained by the following process: each individual strives for a higher quality of life, which depends on new experiences, and these depend on the previous openness to change. Apart from the openness to one's own progress and new experiences, the attributes of cooperation and agreement are extremely important for each individual to become socially sensible, active and a responsible member of his community.

There are many entrepreneurial skills, but for the purpose of this paper, we will highlight just a few. While planning certain activities which aim to build entrepreneurial skills in students, it's necessary to work out the functional tasks during preparation since

> the specific emphasis is on functional tasks that build different entrepreneurial skills capabilities in students: initiative, independence, accepting risks, innovativeness, creative problem-solving, self-confidence, persistence, reporting skills, cooperation and flexibility in a team and others. (Lovrenčić and Vrančić, 2019)

When entrepreneurial skills are considered, the focus is on preparing the students for independent, productive and successful life and laying the foundation for upgrading existing acquired skills with new ones. These skills will be further developed by students after primary school and high school education at higher educational institutions or in business and private surroundings.

...developing entrepreneurial way of thinking and acting in everyday life and work, learning to work and development of qualities of entrepreneurial person (responsibility, independence, industriousness, initiative, creativity, decision-making capability, self-confidence, decisiveness, accepting reasonable risks and risk management, mobility, flexibility etc.) (Ministry of Science and Education of Republic of Croatia, December 2017)

The role of the school library in curriculum

For a long time, school libraries in Croatia were considered a passive space at school, where students went to borrow a book or to be if there were no classes. Through the year's this perception has gradually changed. School librarians have actively participated in the process that ensured a more trustworthy reputation for school libraries. This has seen a greater awareness of the value and importance of school libraries as a central information, educational, cultural and social center for every school. This earlier negative reputation, created across decades, is not always easy to change, so school librarians have demanding challenges in front of them. The first steps towards better perceptions occurred when school library programs started to be integrated into school curriculum. The majority of the activities were oriented towards reading or media culture, in the beginning, and connection with other subjects were usually neglected.

Over time, awareness of the possibilities and the roles of school libraries gradually grew, society and technology developed, and the importance of information centers was acknowledged. This led to changes in the definitions of school libraries, the approach to education and training of school librarians, and the need for a suitable media space that would successfully follow and satisfy the needs of modern individuals.

School library is a physical and digital space in a school, intended for learning, where reading, research, thinking, imagination and creativity are of key importance for students on their path from information to knowledge and for their personal, cultural and social development. This physical and digital space is known under different names (e.g. school media center, documentation and information center, learning center), but for all such content and services, the most often used name is school library. (Schultz-Jones and Oberg, 2015)

Modern society strives for information and knowledge. A vast amount of information is at the disposal of every member of a modern society, and much of this is useless, rather than useful, if the individual is not computer-literate. When using different media, one must understand the type of media being accessed, have a clearly defined goal about the information you seek and be aware of the need to filter the available information to avoid the unnecessary waste of time. School library plays a major role in this area, as an information center of an educational institution the school library must be concerned with the computer literacy of its users and all other individuals.

> School library gives information and knowledge essential for successful functioning in modern society which is increasingly being based on information and knowledge. School library helps students acquire lifelong learning skills, develops their imagination and hence helps them to become responsible citizens. (Sætre and Willars, 2002)

For many years an educational model has been sought that would enable a school for life, learning about learning, knowledge about knowledge, and an excellent basis to improve self-awareness and self-development.

> School library supports education in further expanding student's knowledge, using different methods and means for students to express themselves aiming for complete development of each student, so that he/she can fully rely on himself/herself. Accordingly, educational content corresponds to individual needs and development of a student (Kovačević, Lasić-Lazić and Lovrinčević, 2004).

The above statement leads one to conclusion that school libraries have an essential role in the development and future success of each student, and consequently the whole society.

The reputation, role and perception of the school library (and hence of the whole school) depends on the qualities of the school librarian as a teacher, collaborator and professional. In order for the school library to have a dignified reputation in an institution, a qualified, capable and entrepreneurial school librarian is needed, whose reputation is affirmed by the following activities:

The reputation, role and perception of the school library (and hence of the whole school) depends on the qualities of the school librarian as a teacher, collaborator and professional.

creating a positive and friendly learning environment,
helping users become computer-literate,
promoting research-based learning,
revealing their own possibilities to students,
developing self-confidence and independence in students,
giving advice and encouraging students to work,
monitoring and helping, self-education and training,
constantly searching for new methods,
cooperating with the principal and other employees within and outside the institution,
cooperatively supporting the curriculum,

offering a friendly and warm approach to all visitors of the library,

promoting the value of the school library,

media-related education

and fulfilling the expectations of all users. (Kovačević, Lasić-Lazić and Lovrinčević, 2004)

A school librarian has a great responsibility on multiple levels: educational, cultural and artistic, social, status and professional. On an educational level, a school librarian has to participate in the teaching process, build upon, develop, improve and support the teaching process directly or indirectly. In the cultural and artistic domain, all manifestations, exhibits, promotions, public shows, matinées, concerts and other events should be planned ahead and organized by a school librarian. On a social and status level, a school librarian should shrewdly plan his/her status, and through this the status of the school library in its community and strive for a social impact within the institutional and beyond. At a professional level the school librarians responsibility is tied to the information sciences and a need for constant education and professional training in order to completely fulfill the expectations and needs of their users.

> **A school librarian has a great responsibility on multiple levels: educational, cultural and artistic, social, status and professional.**

Developing entrepreneurial skill in the school library

The school librarian has a very important role in devising different meaningful activities and workshops aimed at building different skills in students, offering different possibilities, and creating a sound foundation for self-growth and the development of lifelong learning. An essential segment in the progress of the whole society.

Activities and workshops need to contain carefully planned tasks organized by a well-prepared expert that is constantly being trained, attends different workshops and deepens their own knowledge and skills with the support of different sources. The school librarian has a large number of tasks and responsibilities and these must come before the participation in direct or indirect educational process. Despite this the effort is ultimately of value.

Every activity can have one or more goal, however, when planning any activity, one of the main goals should be the promotion of the school library. Goals should be monitored through outcomes, and success in reaching the mentioned goals can be found out by evaluation after each activity. After each activity is completed, the school library should have several more visitors. Increased patronage means an increased possibility of interest in information and programs offered by the school library and also a higher awareness of the inseparability of the school library from the education and learning.

> Libraries that wish to offer effective and meaningful programs need to strive to include young people in all the steps of program making. It is recommended to include young people in decision making, planning and implementation of programs intended for them, which is the best way to add to their positive development (Barbaric, 2009).

This quote introduces an idea that can greatly improve the success of activities, i.e. the inclusion of the students' ideas, interests, and the subjects and tasks they would like to focus on. While planning an activity, it is desirable to devise tasks that most students can participate in and those that allow them to demonstrate their skills. The possibilities for creating new or existing activities that influence the development of entrepreneurial skills in students are great. There are also opportunities to include more than one entrepreneurial skill within a single task. For example, if the goal of a certain activity is to influence the development of creativity in students, and the plan is to work with a group of students divided into smaller groups, apart from creativity, the entrepreneurial skill of cooperation and agreement with other group members is being built. There is also scope within this activity to develop independence, decision-making, determination, flexibility, responsibility or diligence at the same time.

A workshop for the development of entrepreneurial skills: Paper airplanes

This activity is intended for work in groups and is competitive. It includes practical work and several working materials. Students need to be divided into several groups (every group should have at least 3 members, and these groups should be taken from one class group).

Students should be asked to assign roles within their groups and make a strategy (group leader, record keeper, executioner), the task should be explained and basic information about duration and following activities should be provided. Working materials should be provided after that. Students can assign roles according to each phase of the task, but can also help one another.

Task: Your task is to make airplanes from 6 A4 sheets of paper. You have 2 minutes to discuss and strategise, 10 minutes for making your airplanes from your material and 5 minutes for throwing the airplanes inside the designated space in the school library or classroom. The goal of this task is to throw as many airplanes as possible inside the designated space in the school library or classroom.

This task can help build the following entrepreneurial skills:

- creativity
- organization
- cooperation and agreement
- independence and flexibility
- decision-making
- responsibility

Since creativity is a mental process that includes creating new ideas, concepts, problem solutions or new links between existing ideas and concepts, this task helps build creativity because students need to think of ways to make as many airplanes as possible that will land in the designated

space. The organization skill is developed before starting the actual task, since students need to organize within a group, assign roles and determine who does what and in which order. While planning a strategy, students work together to discuss and find agreement, exchange ideas, make and accept suggestions and thus build collaboration and agreement. During the making of airplanes, airplanes are being made either by a single person that does it best or by several group members that may each make the whole airplane at the same time or assign different steps among themselves. By making airplanes, students develop independence as well, since each student is focused on his/her own contribution to the making of the airplanes. Developing flexibility occurs during disagreement with an idea and adapting to the wishes and vision of the group. Decision-making is developed during preparation of strategy and at the moment of throwing airplanes into the designated space in the school library or classroom and in accepting responsibility for the final decisions, regardless of the final outcome.

Making paper airplanes is an activity that makes students face challenges, make quick decisions and develop strategies, take risks, face the possibility of failure, and accept responsibility for the activity outcome, assessment of their own strategy, and any planning for improvement. Challenges are reflected in the activity set-up, as it demands the making of as many airplanes as possible that will fly to a defined distance. There is a possibility that some groups will focus on the amount of airplanes, regardless of the quality and shape of airplanes suitable for flying the distance, while another group may focus on maximizing the quality of airplanes in order to make each of them fly the defined distance. Also, some students may go for both quality and quantity of airplanes. The challenge is to choose a goal, which is an essential decision in planning a strategy for making the airplanes.

Participants choosing quantity of airplanes over quality take the risk that none of the airplanes will fly into the designated space, while participants that choose quality over quantity risk that, even if all airplanes fly into the designated space, there may not be enough airplanes for victory. Also, regardless of quality and quantity of the airplanes, there is a possibility that the success will depend mostly on the capability of students to assess the necessary strength, speed, height, and the way of throwing the airplanes into the designated space. In each case, there is a possibility of failure, and students need to be made aware that this is an essential part of success and entrepreneurship itself. It is important to accept responsibility for failure, after which the strategy chosen is assessed and plans for improvement are carefully made. Students learn that every failure is a steppingstone to success and an opportunity for development, improvement, learning and acquiring new knowledge and skills.

This simple activity is extremely adaptable to all age groups and workshop types, enables minimal material cost, is very efficient in building the above-mentioned entrepreneurial skills and stimulates curiosity in students, as well as interest and motivation for acquiring new knowledge and skills.

The above-mentioned example shows that a large number of entrepreneurial skills can be covered by a single activity. The school library can have an impact on building entrepreneurial skills in students if just one planned activity results in success. The activity can also play an

important role in promoting the reputation of school libraries and maximize the number of active users that will use the school library. This can contribute to the development of new knowledge and skills and influence the improvement of the whole society.

Conclusion

Upon completing their education, students should, according to their formed views, beliefs and attitudes be able to recognize their own interests and skills as well as plan and organize the next steps in their life. The school library, an integral part of the educational system and cultural and social life of a student, should devise and enable different activities and services that stimulate the building of work-related values that jointly make up the entrepreneurial skill system.

The aim of this paper was to highlight the importance of school libraries and their role in the development of the entrepreneurial skills of students by describing certain activities that may be offered by school libraries to accomplish this goal.

References

Barbaric, A. (Ed.) (2009). Smjernice za knjižnične usluge za mladež. Zagreb : Hrvatsko knjižničarsko društvo

Kovačević, D. Lasić-Lazić, J. Lovrinčević, J. (2004) Školska knjižnica - korak dalje. Zagreb : Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Institute for information studies, Department of Information and Communication Sciences

Lovrenčić, S. Vrančić, M. (2019) Poduzetničke vještine u osnovnoj školi : razredna nastava - primjer dobre prakse. *Učenje za poduzetništvo*, *Vol 2*(2). 211-215

Ministry of Science and Education of Republic of Croatia. (2017). National curriculum of the cross-curricular theme of entrepreneurship: a proposal after public hearing. [Online]; MZO, December 2017. **https://mzo.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti/Obrazovanje/ NacionalniKurikulum/MedupredmetneTeme//Me%C4%91upredmetna%20tema%20 Poduzetni%C5%A1tvo.pdf** (accessed on February 8, 2019)

Sætre, T. P., & Willars, G. (2002). *The IFLA/UNESCO school library guidelines*. The Hague: IFLA Headquaters.

Schultz-Jones, Barbara. & Oberg, Dianne (Eds). (2015). *Global action on school library guidelines*. Berlin ; Boston : De Gruyter Saur

Poduzetništvo. (n.d.). Retrieved February 9, 2019 from **https://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Poduzetni%C5%A1tvo**

Šutalo, V. (2019). Poduzetničke kompetencije i suradničko poduzetništvo: put do promjena i unaprjeđenja kvalitete programa i obrazovanja. *Učenje za poduzetništvo, Vol 2*(2). 161-164

Angelina Bijelic has graduated from the Department of Information and Communication Sciences, FHSS. at the University of Zagreb. Currently she is working as a school librarian at the primary school in Sveta Nedjelja and is actively working on developing entrepreneurial skills in students.

Mihaela Banek Zorica, Ph.D., is a full professor and the Head of the Department of Information and Communication Sciences in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Zagreb. She teaches in the undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate level subjects related to school libraries, e-learning and knowledge organization and management. She has participated at international and national conferences as an author and a reviewer and as a member of the organization or program committee.