

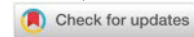
# ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN THE FUNCTION OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

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**Abstract:** The main goal of this paper is to determine the level of development of entrepreneurial education in the Republic of Serbia, bearing in mind the fact that entrepreneurial education plays a significant role in encouraging entrepreneurial spirit and entrepreneurship. Acquiring and developing entrepreneurial competences in the territory of the Republic of Serbia for persons older than 15 years is also achieved through the implementation of the functional basic education program for adults. In the design and realization of entrepreneurial activities, the connection of the economy and educational institutions plays a significant role, as well as the introduction and implementation of the dual education system, began to be implemented within certain secondary vocational schools, mainly in the field of technical-technological scientific disciplines. Various extracurricular activities, projects and programs implemented in educational institutions, often with the support of national and/or international institutions, organizations, business entities, etc., make a significant contribution to the acquisition and development of entrepreneurial competences.

Entrepreneurial knowledge, skills and abilities can be improved by studying entrepreneurship at universities and colleges, through independent exams and/or modules, at basic, professional, specialist, master's and doctoral studies, with a multidisciplinary approach, mainly within organizational sciences, business economics and management, engineering management and industrial engineering.

Entrepreneurship is also successfully studied in the sphere of informal education, through the implementation of various training and development programs created for different age categories of the population, with different levels of entrepreneurial (prior) knowledge.

Based on research, it has been established that in the Republic of Serbia, a certain progress has been made in the implementation of entrepreneurial education, which is represented in a formal sense at all levels of education, especially in secondary vocational education. On the other hand, it was established that it is necessary to work on improving the general entrepreneurial climate and entrepreneurial environment, which would stimulate all categories of the population to be additionally educated, activated and realize their entrepreneurial potential. In this, entrepreneurial education plays an extremely important role, which should be continuously improved. It is especially necessary to work on improving the implementation of entrepreneurial education in the youth population. The need to create a program to encourage and improve female entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship of the socio-economically vulnerable population was also identified.

**Keywords:** entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial education, entrepreneurial education of young people, Republic of Serbia

**Field:** Economics

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In scientific and professional circles, the prevailing opinion is that the level of entrepreneurial education of young people is crucial for the development of the sector of small and medium enterprises and entrepreneurship, i.e. the economy as a whole (Jović-Bogdanović et al., 2022), which is especially important when taking into account that in the Republic of Serbia, more than half of employees (65% of employees) are in the sector of small and medium enterprises (Arsić et al., 2020). The sector of small and medium-sized enterprises in developing economies contributes significantly to gross added value, affects financial stability, and in crisis situations is a stabilizer, often a driver of economic development, therefore it is not surprising that potential entrepreneurs increasingly recognize the importance of lifelong learning for business success (Jović-Bogdanović et al., 2022). Small and medium-sized enterprises in the Republic of Serbia, similarly to other developing countries, today face numerous challenges and difficulties, such as: 1. unstable business ecosystem, 2. difficulties in charging for own works and services, 3. high level of parafiscal fees and 4. difficult and expensive access to finance (Arsić et al., 2020). The ultimate goal is to

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strengthen the sector of small and medium enterprises through the process of entrepreneurial literacy of (potential) entrepreneurs, adequately connecting business experience gained in practice and theoretical knowledge. Risk is an integral part of entrepreneurship, therefore having an adequate entrepreneurial education is important, as it can contribute to reducing the negative impact of potentially risky events (Jović-Bogdanović et al., 2022).

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the evolution of entrepreneurial education in Serbia. It examines key trends, challenges, and opportunities within the sector. Utilizing a range of data sources, the study evaluates the growth of entrepreneurial programs, levels of student engagement, and the effectiveness of various educational models. The objective is to illuminate the development of entrepreneurial education in Serbia and its broader implications for economic growth and job creation.

Employing both theoretical and empirical research methodologies, the authors systematically explore fundamental concepts while offering a comparative analysis of the role of entrepreneurial education in stimulating innovation and economic advancement, with a particular focus on its significance in the Serbian context. The empirical component is underpinned by current literature and case studies, particularly addressing the impacts of entrepreneurship education on economic development.

The research methodology involved an application of diverse methodological procedures, primarily desk research and the systematic collection of both primary and secondary data. Alongside scientific methods such as analytical-synthetic, inductive-deductive and comparison-classification techniques, the study effectively communicate summarized data pertinent to the analysis.

## 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

“Systematic and continuous implementation of learning and education processes are becoming one of the most important forms of human resource development in the modern socio-economic environment. Permanent needs for highly qualified, independent and trained workers, as well as increasingly necessary retraining and retraining, broaden the field of action and application of knowledge and education. Numerous companies and institutions invest more and more in the knowledge and education of their employees, offering them numerous programs for the acquisition and improvement of various knowledge and skills. Recognizing the importance of knowledge and permanent learning for successful business, leading world companies have started to establish their own schools and even universities as a special center for learning, training and development of their existing and potential employees. (Premović J. and Premović T., 2011). Education basically represents a set of activities aimed at collecting and acquiring different forms of knowledge through the realization of the learning process and the training of individuals for the application of acquired knowledge in everyday life (Garabinović, 2017).

In Europe, entrepreneurial education is also considered a decisive factor in the successful realization of entrepreneurial activities, especially when taking into account the fact that entrepreneurs are not born, but are created by modeling entrepreneurial potential, in which the role of entrepreneurial education is extremely important (Subotić, 2017). In the most developed countries, young people devote more time to entrepreneurship education, which positively reflects on the development of entrepreneurship in those countries, while in countries with the lowest incomes, young generations manifest their entrepreneurial potential earlier, among other things, because they spend less time in the school system (Schoof, 2006 ).

In the process of creating a successful entrepreneur, educational workers can help potential entrepreneurs to better spot and use potential business opportunities for entrepreneurship (Subotić, 2017). Entrepreneurial education increases entrepreneurial activities and directly affects a higher level of self-confidence, a lower risk perception and the improvement of human capital, as a valuable resource in any entrepreneurial venture (Jiménez et al., 2015). At the institutional level, within the framework of legal regulations, various strategies, programs, analyses, etc., entrepreneurial education was introduced as a lifelong learning concept with a special focus on children and young people (Čekić-Marković, 2015; Subotić, 2017; Jović-Bogdanović et al. , 2022).

Different entrepreneurship education programs can influence the intentions of entrepreneurs in the process of starting a business (Peterman and Kennedy, 2003). Entrepreneurial education in the narrower sense refers to the acquisition of economic and business knowledge and skills, familiarization with the world of work, designing and planning a career and implementing activities that contribute to the acquisition and development of the so-called “soft skills”. By studying entrepreneurial content through formal and informal education, awareness of employment opportunities is acquired and developed, as

well as opportunities for starting one's own business venture as a source of income and livelihood, i.e. for successful inclusion in the world of work ([https://prosveta.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/16\\_Preduzetnistvo.pdf](https://prosveta.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/16_Preduzetnistvo.pdf)). Global Entrepreneurship Monitora Special Report on Entrepreneurship Education & Training (Martínez et al., 2010) also indicate to the importance of education. They point out that education is key to the development of entrepreneurial activity and that people with less education are less likely to engage in entrepreneurial activities. The lack of entrepreneurial education results in a low level of entrepreneurial potential (Franke and Lüthje, 2004). The results of the research conducted on a sample of 37,285 respondents also show the existence of a significant relationship between entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial potential (Bae et al., 2014).

The perception of the role of education in developing a sense of initiative and in developing an entrepreneurial spirit differs from country to country. The OECD- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, report Entrepreneurship at a Glance 2013 (Entrepreneurship at a Glance 2013) showed that in Brazil, Norway and Portugal, for example, more than 75% of adults consider formal education important, while this the share in Japan is less than 20% (OECD, 2013). The importance and multiple positive effects of the application of entrepreneurship education, which is implemented both in formal and informal education, are also shown by the results of extensive research conducted in European countries. Namely, in 2015, the European Commission presented the results of entrepreneurship education in 23 European countries in a report, after 91 studies on entrepreneurship education were carried out. Conducted research has established that entrepreneurial learning gives good results, "that it works" (European Commission, 2015). The results of these extensive research indicate that students who had entrepreneurship education during their schooling, compared to students of the same age who did not have entrepreneurship education:

- acquire and develop more intense relationships with peers and with the school
- exhibit a higher level of self-confidence, a higher level of motivation for learning and have more professional and business ambitions
- they are less likely to be unemployed, more of them are stably employed
- work in better and better-paid jobs
- have greater opportunities to establish their own business
- companies owned by them tend to be more innovative and successful compared to companies whose owners did not acquire knowledge and experience in the field of entrepreneurship during their education.

In the Republic of Serbia, following the example of the developed countries of the European Union, the importance of entrepreneurial education on the development of entrepreneurship and on the general socio-economic development is increasingly recognized. The Government of the Republic of Serbia ranks entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial education as key priorities in the development of human resources. The Serbian Government declared 2016 the year of entrepreneurship, while the next 10 years were declared the decade of entrepreneurship, which shows that the need for the development of entrepreneurship is huge, that the development of entrepreneurial potential and entrepreneurship is necessary in order to accelerate economic development, start the labor market, reduced unemployment (Subotić et al., 2017; Jović-Bogdanović et al., 2022). Due to all of the above, a survey of the current implementation of entrepreneurship education in Serbia was conducted. In addition to the analysis of the existing situation, the possibility of improvement and development of entrepreneurial education as a prerequisite for the development of entrepreneurship in the Republic of Serbia was also pointed out, the results of which are presented in this scientific paper.

#### 4. RESULTS

In the Republic of Serbia, entrepreneurship in formal education as an independent subject is represented within primary and secondary vocational education with the largest scope and content of entrepreneurship being studied within secondary vocational schools, most often agricultural-food, chemical-technological, technical, and especially economic, which is not the case in gymnasiums and art schools, in which the entire implementation of educational activities affects the development of (defined) competencies, among which competencies for entrepreneurship are included.

"Entrepreneurship" can be studied in elementary schools in the Republic of Serbia in recent years in the 7th or 8th grade (in the weekly fund of 1 hour, i.e. in the annual fund of 34 or 36 hours) as one of the offered electives "Free Teaching activities", which are a mandatory part of the teaching and learning plan that the school plans with the program and the Annual Work Plan. The Institute for the Improvement of Education and Training has created a Program for the implementation of teaching content

in “Entrepreneurship”, which includes four interrelated topics (protection of consumer rights, the world of work, start yourself and others, student companies), which are most correlated with the curriculum of the compulsory education subject “Technique and technology”. During the study of the teaching content from “Entrepreneurship”, the importance of valuing and basing the teaching process on the knowledge and skills that the students have acquired from extracurricular activities and from the world of work and business is apostrophized.

“Entrepreneurship” is studied in elementary schools in the Republic of Serbia to contribute to the “development of innovation and entrepreneurship in students, the ability to turn ideas into action, the ability to work in a team and use various sources of knowledge for a better understanding of social processes and phenomena and takeover responsible roles in modern society. The purpose of the free teaching activity “Entrepreneurship” is the development of entrepreneurial competencies, support for the professional development of students, as well as preparation for navigating the modern world of work, which is changing due to technological development”. (<https://pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SIGlasnikPortal/viewdoc?uid=5d9b256c-edfa-4f7e-9398-50e74cce091&actid=979123&doctype=og>).

In addition to the acquisition and improvement of students’ competence for “Entrepreneurship and orientation towards entrepreneurship”, during the implementation of the content of topics from “Entrepreneurship” other general cross-curricular competences of students are developed (communication, work with data and information, digital competence, problem solving, cooperation, responsible participation in a democratic society, responsible attitude towards health, responsible attitude towards the environment, aesthetic competence)” (<https://pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SIGlasnikPortal/viewdoc?uid=1c6fd9b3-b030-4bf1-8fb9-f51db533ea8&actid=979124&doctype=og>).

The introduction of entrepreneurship as an independent teaching subject in vocational secondary schools began in 2002, when the Republic of Serbia implemented the Reform and Modernization of Secondary Vocational Education. In the period from 2003 to 2005, and as part of the first phase of this Reform, “Entrepreneurship” was implemented as a separate compulsory subject in five areas of work in fifty pilot schools, i.e. in total in twenty sample educational profiles. This was preceded by the correction of existing and the creation of new curricula. In the period from 2005 to 2008, as part of the second phase of this Reform, “Entrepreneurship”, also as a separate compulsory subject, was introduced in twenty-two selected pilot schools, i.e. in eight selected sample educational profiles. As part of the second phase of the introduction of “Entrepreneurship” as a special subject in secondary vocational schools, the education of teachers who taught “Entrepreneurship” was carried out. Until 2013, in secondary vocational schools, teaching in “Entrepreneurship” was successfully implemented in seventy selected educational profiles in the four-year and three-year duration of student education. Considering the importance of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education, the implementation of “Entrepreneurship” as an independent compulsory vocational subject, which is still current, especially in secondary vocational education, has been continued and improved. (Čekić-Marković, 2015; Premović, 2024).

In the development of students’ entrepreneurial competences, the possibility of applying acquired knowledge and skills in practice is extremely important, in which the Dual Education model plays a special role, which has been successfully implemented in recent years through the cooperation of companies and secondary vocational schools, mainly in the field of technical and technological disciplines. Through various extracurricular activities, projects and programs in primary and secondary education, entrepreneurship is promoted and popularized, all with the support of the European Union, as well as various national and/or international institutions, organizations, business entities, etc. (Premović, 2024).

One of such projects which is implemented with the support of the European Union and which represents a novelty in the education system of Serbia, is the Project “Second Chance - Development of a System of Functional Primary Education for Adults”, which is implemented in primary schools and in schools for primary education of adults. This program involves a three-year education (divided into 3 cycles, each cycle lasting one year) of participants who are older than 15 years, and who need to acquire basic education and to be trained for certain jobs and professions. As part of the implementation of this project, entrepreneurship lessons are also implemented, the aim of which is for students to acquire and improve entrepreneurial competences, to train them for “enterprising implementation of activities from the context of the family, macro and micro social environment and the development of competencies necessary for successful inclusion in the world of work and acquiring economic and business literacy” ([https://prosveta.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/16\\_Preduzetnistvo.pdf](https://prosveta.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/16_Preduzetnistvo.pdf)).

In higher education, entrepreneurship is studied at colleges and universities in the Republic of Serbia through independent exams and/or modules, at basic, vocational, specialist, master’s and doctoral studies, with a multidisciplinary approach, predominantly in the field of social-humanistic and technical-technological scientific disciplines within organizational sciences, business economics and

management, engineering management and industrial engineering. There are also different types of training and improvement programs, which are organized and implemented in the sphere of informal education, by state or private, domestic and/or international institutions, organizations, educational centers, professional-scientific societies, etc. for different age categories of the population, with different levels of entrepreneurial (pre)knowledge.

The prevailing opinion among the professional and scientific public is that in order to improve the youth employment process and harmonize educational policies with the requirements of the labor market, and all with the ultimate goal of improving the economic and general development of developing countries, such as the Republic of Serbia, it would be necessary to revise school and university curricula in the direction of encouraging the development of entrepreneurial potential in children and young people, through compulsory and optional subjects at all levels of education, during all phases of schooling, as well as through the organization of various seminars, forums, educational and motivational workshops with programs of empowerment and providing professional support and help (Subotić, 2017). In addition to the introduction of entrepreneurship education into the regular education system at all levels of education within different educational profiles (Subotić, 2017; Jović-Bogdanović et al., 2022), it is important to fulfill the basic prerequisite for the successful implementation of entrepreneurship education, the creation of a stimulating environment that supports and nurtures the development of entrepreneurial competencies (Subotić et al., 2017; Stanisavljev et al., 2019; Premović, 2024).

It is also important that educational workers apply adequate, modern interactive methods and work techniques, that the classic passive teaching system be replaced by a new and more efficient one for the adoption of teaching content from entrepreneurship. Some of the modern teaching methods that could be successfully implemented in the teaching of entrepreneurship are, for example, the scientific method and the PLTL method. The PLTL method is a method of research group workshop learning, which is led by a peer mentor, and it has been very successfully implemented in the study of teaching content in the field of chemical technology and related scientific disciplines in both high school and university education (it is very successfully represented in developed university networks). (Premović, 2013; Premović et al., 2017). In the territory of the Republic of Serbia, there is a clear need to implement various programs and projects with the aim of encouraging entrepreneurship, especially female entrepreneurship and encouraging entrepreneurship in socially sensitive categories of the population, which includes people of lower socio-economic status (Subotić, 2017).

## 5. CONCLUSION

In the Republic of Serbia, progress has been made in the past period in the implementation and development of entrepreneurial education (especially in the sphere of secondary vocational education, and to some extent also in the sphere of basic education, basic adult education and higher education), as one of the most important prerequisites for the development of entrepreneurship. However, in grammar schools and art schools in the Republic of Serbia, entrepreneurship still does not exist as a compulsory subject, and almost nothing significant has been undertaken to achieve this goal. In the sphere of informal education, there are various activities (programs, projects, trainings, workshops...) which educate and encourage the population to realize their entrepreneurial ideas.

On the way to introducing entrepreneurship into the education system, the Republic of Serbia relied on examples of good practice, as well as on the support and financial assistance of the member states of the European Union and various domestic and foreign partners. It would be necessary to continuously work on improving existing projects, on increasing their scope and content, as well as on expanding and deepening existing collaborative relationships, on finding new European and other partners, but also on the successful application of examples of good practice from socio-economically developed countries. so that the implementation of (formal and informal) entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurship in the Republic of Serbia, especially in the youth population, would be successful. In this way, through high-quality entrepreneurial education, young people will be adequately prepared „to real life“ through sustainable successful business of individuals, and thus society as a whole, which is of extreme importance for the Republic of Serbia, as one of the developing countries.

Based on the research conducted, it was established that it is necessary to keep working on improving the general entrepreneurial climate and entrepreneurial environment, which would stimulate all categories of the population to be additionally educated, activated and to realize their entrepreneurial potential. In this, entrepreneurial education plays an extremely important role, which should be continuously improved. In particular, it is necessary to work on improving the implementation of entrepreneurial education in the youth population, who are considered key implementers of entrepreneurial activities, and thus of the economic

and overall socio-economic growth and development of every society and state, especially developing countries, including the Republic of Serbia. In addition to the need to improve youth entrepreneurship, the need to create a program to encourage and improve female entrepreneurship and the entrepreneurship of the socio-economically vulnerable population has also been identified. The Republic of Serbia, on its way to improve entrepreneurship, which is achieved through the improvement of formal and informal entrepreneurship education, should follow the application of good practices of the developed countries of the European Union, whose support and help in the implementation of entrepreneurship education is significant and shows a tendency to grow.

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