

# Trends and Development Challenges of Entrepreneurial Education in Serbia

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**Abstract:** *In the era of globalization and rapid technological changes, entrepreneurship emerges as a key factor in economic development and innovation. Entrepreneurial education, as a systematic preparation of individuals to be effectively implemented in systemic education and entrepreneurial ventures, represents a crucial component of this process. The field of entrepreneurial education faces numerous challenges that need to be recognized in all spheres of the educational system to ensure its effectiveness and relevance. The aim of this paper is to present the current state of entrepreneurial education in Serbia which was achieved through curriculum analysis at different levels of education.*

**Keywords:** *entrepreneurship; vocational schools; HEIs; curriculum; informal education.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship, as the driving force of economic growth and innovation, represents an important aspect of modern society. The development of entrepreneurial spirit and skills is becoming more and more important in the context of a rapidly changing and technologically advanced world economy. In this sense, entrepreneurial education appears as a key element in enabling individuals to understand and effectively participate in this dynamic environment. In modern society, where entrepreneurial activity has become a key element of national and international economic strategies, the importance of entrepreneurial education cannot be overestimated. Entrepreneurship education plays a critical role not only in creating new entrepreneurs, but also in fostering innovative and creative thinking within existing organizations.

According to Schøtt, Kew, and Cheraghi, in traditional society young people were not encouraged to actively engage in the world of entrepreneurship [1]. It was believed that through work experience one gains maturity and knowledge and that through work young people can develop entrepreneurial characteristics and become entrepreneurs. Education and the immediate environment did not influence the encouragement of young people to develop their entrepreneurial potential and become entrepreneurs, what more the environment that includes family and other informal actors who can help young people to raise funds and start their entrepreneurial idea did the exact opposite and disincentivized young people by refusing to help them. One of the main reasons is the fact that they did not want to invest in people

without experience. Even today, this represents one of the main problems in the process of developing youth entrepreneurship and a stumbling block at the very beginning of the development of an entrepreneurial idea, although the situation is changing for the better and there are changes in the norms and value system in which young people who decide on entrepreneurship are supported and they see as an extremely valuable part of society [2]. Entrepreneurial potential is seen today as a phenomenon that should be nurtured and encouraged through the education system and socialization as well as through training programs and trainings. Young people are supported more and more in their entrepreneurial endeavors, both emotionally and financially, and successful young entrepreneurs become so-called Community stars [1]. Many researches today deal with young people and their entrepreneurial potential, intentions and competencies that they can improve through various education programs and trainings [3]. Beginning entrepreneurs are much younger today than in previous generations [1]. Solomon [4] states in his research that there is a great need for the development of entrepreneurship education throughout the world. Authors Aronsson and Birch [5] believe that it is necessary to create entrepreneurship programs that have the capacity to adapt the curriculum and incorporate into it the development of entrepreneurial competencies in the domain of sales, management and product development. In his research [6], Jones comes to the conclusion that entrepreneurship education may not statistically contribute directly to the opening of a greater number of new businesses, but he believes that entrepreneurship education is very

important for the development of specific skills that are crucial for the development of future academic citizens, in a way that modern society expects them.

The main goal of this paper was an overview of the state of the entrepreneurial education in Serbia which was achieved through the search of Serbian HEI's for entrepreneurship related study programs. Paper also gives an insight into the state of entrepreneurial education in secondary education, as well as the legislation overview from the mentioned domain.

## 2. ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION CHALLENGES IN SERBIA

The definitions of entrepreneur and entrepreneurship are numerous and varied – there is no single and generally accepted definition, but each of them to a certain extent refers to knowledge, skills and competencies related to business, proactivity, productivity and innovation with the prism of creativity. It is important to point out the difference between the terms "entrepreneur" and "acting entrepreneurially", because in the first case it is about any natural or legal person who starts an independent business, and in the second about the coherence of knowledge, skills, attitudes or the ability to recognize opportunities, that is, chances in the environment and their implementation for the benefit of future, or current business.

When defining the concept of entrepreneurship education, it is very important to mention the evolution of the same concept with reference to the Republic of Serbia, as one of the countries where the evolution has become more frequent. So, in Serbia, the development of entrepreneurial education followed global trends, with an increasing number of programs and initiatives at all levels of education. However, there are still challenges regarding the quality and relevance of the program, as well as regarding the integration of entrepreneurship education into the country's broader development strategy.

Contemporary entrepreneurial education is a dynamic field that is constantly developing and adapting to the changing needs of the market and society. Global trends are shaping the way entrepreneurship is taught and practiced, opening up new opportunities and challenges for educators, students, and entrepreneurs [7].

Although global trends significantly influence the development of entrepreneurial education, local initiatives and approaches play a key role in adapting these trends to the specific needs and context of Serbia. Some of the key aspects of local tendencies in entrepreneurship education are [8]:

- Cooperation between educational institutions and the economy;

- Focus on the development of the entrepreneurial ecosystem;
- Promoting entrepreneurship among young people;
- Utilization of local resources and potential;
- Adapting to the needs of different target groups.

The lack of resources is one of the key challenges in the implementation of entrepreneurial education in Serbia. This problem manifests itself on several levels [9] and affects the quality and availability of programs, as well as their effectiveness in fostering entrepreneurial spirit and skills. Those levels are created according to the following hierarchical diagonal method (from the most important missing resource):

- Financial resources, which are reflected as limited financial support and lack of financial incentives;
- Human resources, which are reflected in the lack of qualified lecturers and the lack of mentors and advisors;
- Material resources, which are reflected in the lack of modern equipment and materials and the lack of space for work and cooperation;
- Institutional resources, which are reflected in the form of lack of support from educational institutions and lack of cooperation with the economy (dual education).

Resistance to the traditional education system represents a significant challenge in the implementation of entrepreneurial education in Serbia. This resistance manifests itself in different ways and makes it difficult to integrate entrepreneurial principles and skills into existing educational structures [10]. Some of the crucial ways of resistance manifestation are:

- Focus on theory and not on practice;
- Lack of flexibility;
- Resistance to changes;
- Lack of support;
- Lack of awareness of the importance of entrepreneurship.

Overcoming these challenges requires a strategic approach that includes [10]:

- Education and training of teachers;
- Promotion of entrepreneurship;
- Cooperation with the economy;
- Flexibility and innovation.

## 3. ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION TRENDS IN SERBIA

The systematic design of entrepreneurial education in Serbia is regulated by a series of documents that have been adopted in recent years.

The umbrella law of the education system in the Republic of Serbia is the Law on the Basics of the Education System [18]. It sets the foundations of the system of preschool, primary and secondary

education and upbringing, namely: principles, goals and standards of education and upbringing, methods and conditions for carrying out activities of preschool upbringing and education, primary and secondary education and upbringing, types of education and upbringing programs, establishment, organization, financing and supervision of the work of institutions, as well as other issues of importance for education and upbringing.

Each form of entrepreneurial education has its advantages and disadvantages, and it cannot be claimed that one is the best. Their combination can be the optimal solution, and continuous entrepreneurial education during the lifelong educational system becomes a necessity to stay on the market. Entrepreneurial education should not be limited only to young people, but should also include older generations who want additional knowledge and business excellence. Awareness of the importance of entrepreneurship and education is already included in this model, and the key challenge remains to make this a widely accepted way of thinking and seeing the world.

### 3.1. Vocational Secondary Schools

The Law on Secondary Education and Upbringing [19] in Article 11, which refers to the content of the school curriculum, states that it contains "programs and activities that develop problem-solving abilities, communication, teamwork, self-initiative and encouragement of the entrepreneurial spirit", as well as a program of career guidance and counseling.

In Serbia in 2005, an analysis by the Ministry of Education and Sports in the Government of the Republic of Serbia determined that, in addition to good initiatives at the national, regional and local levels, a comprehensive plan for the thorough and adequate implementation of entrepreneurship in education is still missing [11].

The following is a collaboration of the most commonly applied pilot programs at universities in the global world, with an aspect on consolidation with teaching and educational processes of entrepreneurial education:

- Student Entrepreneurship Program [12],
- Secondary Vocational Education Reform Program [13],
- Junior Achievement Young Enterprise [14],
- GTZ project for professional education in the period from 2020-2012 [15].

The expected outcomes of this and other general and cross-curricular competencies are currently defined only at the basic level. Concrete outcomes for entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial orientation are as follows:

- The student understands the importance of personal initiative and shows proactivity in getting to know the characteristics of the labor

market (requirements of jobs, way of working of institutions, positioning in the business world).

- Understands the principles of the functioning of the labor market and understands the need for continuous training in accordance with the development of the market and the demands of employers.
- He is able to identify and adequately present his skills and abilities (strengths); knows how to write a CV and motivation letter.
- He knows how to express and defend his ideas, as well as to influence others through the skills of public speaking, negotiation and conflict resolution.
- Has the ability to set realistic goals, assess and accept risks; plans and manages resources (knowledge and skills, time, money, technologies and other resources) with a focus on achieving goals.
- Knows how to communicate with employers; knows how to negotiate; he is ready for practice and volunteering while respecting the agreement [20].

#### 3.1.1. Entrepreneurship as a subject

Within the first phase of the Secondary Vocational Education Reform Program (2003-2005), which was financed from CARDS EU funds, new and refined old curricula were developed for 20 sample profiles in 50 sample schools from five areas of work (agriculture and food processing, health and social protection, construction and geodesy, mechanical and electrical engineering). As an important novelty and as an integral part of these 20 sample profiles, the subject of entrepreneurship was developed and introduced into the curricula. The course program itself is adapted to the field of work and to each of the educational profiles within which it is realized [19].

The first teacher training included 15 entrepreneurship teachers from agricultural schools, who, with the support of experts from the Secondary Vocational Education Reform Program, continued to train future entrepreneurship teachers through six regional seminars lasting two days each.

The second phase of the Vocational Education Reform Program was implemented from December 2005 to May 2008. Similar to the first phase, the project was implemented through several key areas with the aim of implementing new vocational education strategies based on partnership with the economy, professional development of employees in education, implementation of new teaching programs, provision of quality training for adults, constant innovations in teaching process and modernized school infrastructure. 22 pilot schools were included in the second phase of the reform process.

According to Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development data, secondary vocational schools are in the 2013/14 school year. had 287 profiles classified into 15 sectors, of which 166 were four-year profiles (42 experimental), and 121 were three-year profiles (9 experimental). This means that today, if we take into account the 19 sample profiles that were translated into the regular system by 2013/14 the subject entrepreneurship is implemented in 70 educational profiles, it is on the list of compulsory subjects with a fund of 62-64 hours per year and is implemented in the final year of schooling with the insistence that active teaching methods are used in its implementation.

### 3.2. Higher Education

When it comes to higher education, the reform that began in the early 2000s led to a series of changes in the structure of studies, changes in subject content, rationalization of study plans and programs, greater mobility, etc., which contributed to certain positive changes in many areas of higher education.

Following the new paradigms of education, it is worrisome that in higher education in Serbia, according to Paunovic, it is evident "a very small number of private and state faculties (mostly economic, business or management-oriented faculties) that deal with this issue and that offer their students the opportunity to they learn something more about entrepreneurship. In the minority there are also faculties where entrepreneurship has the status of a special subject, and in the majority of faculties where certain segments of entrepreneurship are studied within other subjects" [16].

And in the Education Development Strategy itself until 2020, the models just mentioned are stated:

- "Continuous development of measures leading to increased employment"

- Introduction of research elements and contents that encourage entrepreneurship,
- All higher education institutions should train students for the development of innovation and entrepreneurship;
- "Entrepreneurial University"
- Encouraging the creation of business incubators in higher education institutions,
- The use of multidisciplinary approaches in the process of creating entrepreneurial spirit and skills [17].

By analyzing the accredited study programs of the first, second and third degree (Table 1), we came to the conclusion that entrepreneurship appears in the names of 27 study programs, 19 academic higher education institution and 31 educational and scientific disciplines.

### 3.3. Informal education

Entrepreneurship cannot be adequately explored through a single perspective approach, and learning about it is not limited to formal educational institutions. It goes beyond those frameworks with its complexity and includes different forms of learning, including non-formal and informal education.

Informal and informal education are often intertwined, but in this context we will treat them as similar because individuals in both varieties show self-initiative in learning. This can be achieved through various educational centers and cultural and educational institutions. In Serbia, there are 108 such centers [21]. Many of them are focused on teaching foreign languages or computer science, but there are also those that offer broader programs, such as the Academy Education Center in Čačak. In addition to providing language and IT courses, this center also offers training in modern business, retraining, preparation for university studies and development of intellectual skills. However, there are few centers that offer specific courses on entrepreneurship.

**Table 1.** Higher education institutions, study programs and courses from the field of entrepreneurship

HEI	Course	Study program	Year	Status	YA
Faculty of Economics UNIKG	Entrepreneurship management	BAS Economics and Business Management (Module 1 Management and Modul 2 Marketing, Tourism and Hotel Management)	3	C/E	2020
Faculty of Economics UNIBG	Entrepreneurship and Small Business Management	BAS (240 ESPB) Economics, Business Management BAS (180 ESPB) Economics, Business Management and Statistics	3	C	2020
Faculty of Economics in Subotica, UNINS	Entrepreneurship	BAS Economics study program BAS Business Informatics	4	E	2023
Faculty of Technical Sciences in Čačak, UNIKG	Entrepreneurial innovation	BAS Entrepreneurial Management	1	E	2009
	Basics of entrepreneurship		2	C	2014
	Economics of entrepreneurship		1	C	2021
University of Belgrade	Entrepreneurship	MAS Entrepreneurial Management - TEMPUS	1	C/E	2011
College of Business Economics and Entrepreneurship Belgrade	Entrepreneurship	BAS Business Economics and Entrepreneurship	3	C	2012 2015
		MAS Business Economics and Entrepreneurship	1		2012 2015
College of Business Economics and Entrepreneurship Belgrade, Čačak	Entrepreneurship	BAS Business Economics and Entrepreneurship	3	C	2012 2015
		MAS Business Economics and Entrepreneurship	1		2012 2015

HEI	Course	Study program	Year	Status	YA
Belgrade Academy of Business and Art Vocational Studies in Čačak	Entrepreneurship	BAS Management	2	E	2021
Faculty of Economics in Čačak, University of Priština	Entrepreneurship	BAS Business Economy	4	C	2021
Union Nikola Tesla University, Belgrade	Basics of entrepreneurship	BAS Entrepreneurial business	2	C	2016 2023
	Entrepreneurial Management		3	C	
	Innovation and entrepreneurship Management of entrepreneurship	BAS Real estate management	4	E	
Union Nikola Tesla University, Belgrade - studies at the university	Entrepreneurship and Creativity	MAS Management and Entrepreneurship	1	C	2016 2023
Union Nikola Tesla University, Belgrade, Faculty of Entrepreneurial Business without legal personality	Basic of entrepreneurship	BAS Entrepreneurial business	2	C	2011
	Entrepreneurial management				
	Innovation and entrepreneurship		3		
Union Nikola Tesla University, Belgrade, Faculty of Entrepreneurial Business without legal personality	Entrepreneurship and Creativity	MAS Management and Entrepreneurship	1	C	2011
Faculty of Organizational Sciences "Eduka" Vocational School of Entrepreneurship, Belgrade	Entrepreneurship	BVS Entrepreneurship management	2	C	2012 2020
Technical College of Vocational Studies Arandelovac	Entrepreneurship	BVS Applied economy and entrepreneurship	2	C	2017
Higher School of Economics of Vocational Studies Peć, Department Peć - Leposavić	Entrepreneurship	BVS Business of small and medium enterprises	2	E	2017
				C	2024
College of Business Economics and Entrepreneurship Belgrade - Jagodina	Entrepreneurship	BAS Business Economics and Entrepreneurship	3	C	2013 2015 2022
College of Business Economics and Entrepreneurship Belgrade - Loznica	Entrepreneurship	BAS Business Economics and Entrepreneurship	3	C	2013 2015 2022
College of Applied Vocational Studies, Vranje	Entrepreneurial economy Entrepreneurship	BVS Entrepreneurial Management	3	C	2015
	International entrepreneurship	MVS International economy and entrepreneurship	3		2022
Faculty of Technical Sciences in Novi Sad, University of Novi Sad	Entrepreneurial Management	DAS Industrial Engineering / Engineering Management	1	E	2019
			2	E	2012

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Taking into account the fact that the current efforts towards the integration and implementation of entrepreneurial education in the Republic of Serbia are at a very good level, there are nonetheless significant shortcomings that hinder the full potential of this discipline. Despite the effective implementation of entrepreneurship in the names of study programs at higher education institutions, there is a lack of integration of entrepreneurship and its competencies into the comprehensive educational system. Furthermore, the traditional education system, which has not yet been fully inhibited, often poses a problem for the innovative methods and applications that could enable a dynamic trend and development of entrepreneurial skills among students and participants. Moreover,

the lack of effective training for educational staff in entrepreneurship orientation further raises concerns regarding the creation of adequate educational and teaching content, primarily, and then the environment that could potentially motivate, enhance, and raise young people's awareness of the importance of applying entrepreneurial activities in the Republic of Serbia.

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