

Social Entrepreneurship Education at Croatian Universities

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The paper aims to examine how social entrepreneurship education (SEE) is implemented at Croatian universities. The research was conducted through in-depth interviews with five professors who teach the Social Entrepreneurship course or a related one that covers this topic. The undertaken research identified the dominant themes within the content of the analysed courses, the teaching techniques used, and the target competencies of SEE. The comparison of the results with SEE in other countries resulted in three opportunities for the development of the analysed courses: (1) emphasizing the importance of social enterprise scaling and local adaptation of existing social innovations; (2) greater use of service learning; (3) more significant focus on sales skills and financial management with an emphasis on new sources of financing aimed at social enterprises. The results will help policy creators support the recommended improvements of the SEE at Croatian universities.

Key words: social entrepreneurship education; syllabus; teaching methods; competencies.

INTRODUCTION

In the last ten years, professors of higher education in Croatia have recognized the importance of social entrepreneurship education (SEE) which impelled them to enrich educational programs with topics and courses that enable students to acquire competencies in this area. The first part of the paper will present a brief literature review on SEE, the corresponding teaching methods, and the students' competencies that such education intends to develop. The research questions were posed based

on the literature review. The second part of the paper provides insight into the implementation of the empirical part of the research. The collected data is analysed in the third part, while the fourth part contains the discussion. The conclusion, limitations of the research and the resulting future research questions are given in the last and fifth part of the paper.

Social Entrepreneurship Education

Social entrepreneurship as a business model in which economic and social goals are intertwined is slowly finding its way

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on the economic scene. Initially, the term and the concept itself were promoted by William Drayton, the founder of the organization Ashoka: Innovators for the Public, with which he wanted to encourage people around the world to solve social problems through entrepreneurial action (Šimunković et al., 2018; Vidović, 2012; Škrtić & Mikić, 2011). The literature offers many definitions of social entrepreneurship, which differ in aspects the authors want to emphasize. In the European Union, the term social enterprise (European Commission, 2011, p. 3) covers two types of enterprises: enterprises that provide social services or goods to vulnerable groups of people, and enterprises that provide social and professional integration through the employment of disadvantaged people. In the context of marginalized groups, Cvitanović (2018) lists the following: people with disabilities, victims of domestic violence, national minorities, recovering addicts, homeless people and beneficiaries of the right to guaranteed minimum compensation. However, this group also includes all those who are in any way excluded from access to valuable resources (such as health, employment, education, political and social life), which increases their risk of poverty and social exclusion (Ministry of Health and Social Care of the Republic of Croatia, 2011).

In Croatia, the term *social entrepreneur* is defined through nine key criteria listed in the document titled Strategy for the Development of Social Entrepreneurship in the Republic of Croatia for the Period 2015 to 2020, which the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted in 2015. Although the Strategy (Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, 2015) offered a definition of social entrepreneurship in Croatia and announced the creation of the Register of Social Entrepreneurs, which should serve as a basis for applying for special tenders

and realizing incentives intended for social entrepreneurs, such official records do not exist today. Social entrepreneurship in Croatia has not yet achieved its full potential due to the incentive framework that is incomplete and insufficient (Račić, 2022; Šimunković et al., 2018). Besides insufficient incentives, both reports point out the general unawareness of the population about social entrepreneurship and its potential, so interventions within the educational system are also dearly needed.

One of the essential elements for developing social innovations in the EU is the encouragement of investment in innovative education, training and employment programs in this area (Franc et al., 2020). One of the measures that the Strategy (Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, 2015) mentioned is the promotion of the importance and role of social entrepreneurship through education, which must consider the duality of social entrepreneurship. The term *social* refers to the realization of the company's social mission—the sustainable reduction of exclusion, marginalization or suffering of a particular social group (Martin & Osberg, 2007). The social component is also visible in decision-making because decisions in social enterprises are not made solely based on the ownership stake, but attention is paid to the interests of all stakeholders (Bežovan, 2004; Šimunković et al., 2018). The *entrepreneurial* component refers to the activities focused on investments, market expansion, creation of products and services, risk-taking and others (Škrtić & Mikić, 2011; Vidović, 2012). Accordingly, social entrepreneurs are active participants in the market. They include those people who would otherwise most likely be excluded from the market activity as both producers and consumers due to reduced productivity, prejudices, low purchasing power and other reasons (Kedmenec, 2015).

It is well-known that entrepreneurship education can contribute to developing basic entrepreneurial skills (Halilović et al., 2014). Research also showed that students exposed to SEE perceived social entrepreneurship as more desirable and feasible than those who were not (Kedmenec et al., 2016), which is in accordance with the social-entrepreneurial intention model based on the entrepreneurial event theory (Shapero & Sokol, 1982).

The Social Entrepreneurship course was first introduced by Gregory Dees in the mid-1990s at Harvard University. Harvard's example was soon followed by other highly respected American universities and colleges which began to introduce educational and research programs on social entrepreneurship into their curricula (Brock & Steiner, 2009; Vidović, 2012). Not long after the introduction into American universities, the concept of social entrepreneurship was brought into various European universities, most noticeable in Great Britain, France, Belgium and Italy (Brock & Steiner, 2009; Vidović, 2012). The Faculty of Economics and Business of the University of Zagreb offered the opportunity to learn about social entrepreneurship as part of the course Entrepreneurship to the first generation of students who studied according to the Bologna Process (Škrtić & Mikić, 2011). The VERN Polytechnic was the first to introduce a course called Social Entrepreneurship and Social Innovation in 2012 (Vidović, 2019).

Croatian students perceive social entrepreneurship mainly as an activity of non-profit organizations or as part of corporate social responsibility (Perić & Delić, 2014), opening the space for Croatian universities to improve in this area. There are several courses at universities and polytechnics where this topic is covered as a teaching unit or only as a single lecture within the curriculum, and rarely

is social entrepreneurship presented as an independent course.

Researchers monitor how SEE develops in certain countries (Kumar et al., 2021; Nakao & Nishide, 2020) and in specific scientific fields (Hussain et al., 2022). The main goal of our research is to identify how SEE is implemented in the Croatian higher education system. The emphasis is placed on three key elements: teaching content's structure, teaching methods' usage and social-entrepreneurial competencies as a planned learning outcome. The scientific contribution of the paper is a comparison of the elements of SEE in Croatia with SEE in countries where it has been present for a longer time. In line with that, the practical contribution of the paper is visible in helping policymakers and professors in creating and implementing high-quality SEE.

In the next three chapters, we shall present the literature review on the topics of teaching content, teaching methods' usage and social-entrepreneurial competencies to set the foundation for research questions. After that, the "Methods" chapter explains the identification of the research subjects, the responsiveness of the sample and general observations about the analysed courses. This is followed by the "Results" chapter which in three sections presents the characteristics of the analysed courses, followed by the section with remarks on students' interest and future development directions for SEE, as observed by the interviewed lecturers in the open-ended questions.

Teaching Content

According to Brock and Steiner (2009), the most common topics that appear within the Social Entrepreneurship course are the following: social problems and needs, innovation, scaling a social enterprise, acquiring resources to achieve a mission, recognizing an opportunity, creating a

sustainable business result, and outcome measurement. Social entrepreneurs must be able to see opportunities where others see problems. Education helps identify, evaluate and exploit, these opportunities to turn them into good business ideas. Innovations in the context of social entrepreneurship can appear in various forms, not only in the form of a new product or service. As for scalability, social enterprises should focus on maximizing social impact and improving living conditions. Moreover, SEE improves individual skills in searching for resources to achieve the social purpose of one's venture. Furthermore, the balance of both economic and social missions is important for the organization's long-term sustainability. And finally, measuring the outcome is necessary to promote a positive impact (Brock & Steiner, 2009). In order to investigate whether Croatian professors also emphasize the mentioned topics, the following research question is posed:

RQ1: Which topics dominate the content of courses dealing with social entrepreneurship at Croatian universities?

Teaching Methods

According to the communication-information criterion, Cindrić et al. (2010) list the following categories of teaching methods: verbal methods (oral presentation method, conversation method, reading and working on the text method, writing method), visual methods (demonstration method, drawing method, method of making and interpreting mind maps), and the method of practical work and the method of learning according to the model. The method of oral presentation has numerous forms, the most common of which are lecturing, narrating, describing, reasoning, explaining, reporting, thinking aloud and indirect presentation (Cindrić et al., 2010; Kiper & Mischke, 2008; Poljak, 1970).

The chosen method must be appropriate to the structure of the course but also the competency level of the students.

In the process of SEE, various teaching methods are used, of which the following stand out: classic lectures and theoretical learning, analysis of ventures, discussions, case studies, practical projects, service learning, consulting, writing a business plan, and less represented guest lectures, volunteering, practice and entering a concrete social-entrepreneurial venture (Brock & Steiner, 2009). SEE should also include gaining experience in pro-social activities, specifically volunteering, activism and donating (Kedmenec, 2015), because these are activities that direct students' attention to social problems, empower them to solve them, and strengthen compassionate love, which is the most prominent distinguishing characteristic of people who have the social-entrepreneurial intention (Kedmenec et al., 2015). Students act more innovatively and responsibly when they connect with a social-entrepreneurial idea (Amundam, 2019) and are intrinsically motivated to solve problems (García-González & Ramírez-Montoya, 2020). In order to compare the above with Croatian teaching practice in tertiary education, the paper will try to answer the following research question:

RQ2: Which teaching methods are most often used in courses dealing with social entrepreneurship at Croatian universities?

Competencies for Social Entrepreneurship

The dual mission of social entrepreneurship also requires specific competencies necessary for starting and managing a social entrepreneurial venture. Various authors in their inquiries into the social entrepreneurs' competencies start with general entrepreneurship competency which also relies heavily on managerial competencies

(e.g. in Komarkova et. al., 2015; Amini et al., 2018.). The relevant competencies required for traditional entrepreneurs need not be exchanged for some other competencies, but extended into some new areas (Komarkova, 2015). In her overview, Orhei (2011) states broader dimensions for social entrepreneurs' competencies: a) cognitive – relying on knowledge; b) functional - relying on skills; and c) personal – relying on attitudes. These all affect entrepreneurs' outputs resulting in innovative, social and value creating activities that incorporate additional awareness of the entrepreneurs' impact on the environment and society (Orhei, 2011). Additionally, Miller et al. (2012) found out that social entrepreneurs listed the following ten competencies as the most important: the problem-solving ability, building effective teams, management of financial capital, ability to lead/develop others, ability to communicate with customers, suppliers and other stakeholders, interpersonal communication skills, ability to sell and market the organization, manage strategy development, capacity to measure outcomes and ability to develop collaborative relations. These overlap with the characteristics in Orhei (2011). The newer research also keeps confirming Miller et al. (2012)'s results, such as Amini et. al. (2018) in the healthcare industry, Capella-Peris et al. (2019) with the development of Social entrepreneurship competency scale based on literature, and validated by experts and students, or Vazquez-Parra (2020) with testing of theoretical competences (grouped as personal characteristics, leadership, social innovation, social value and management) in the university setting.

In order to determine whether courses dealing with social entrepreneurship in Croatian higher education develop the identified necessary competencies, the following research question is posed:

RQ3: What are the target competencies of SEE at Croatian universities?

METHODS

The starting point for the identification of teaching courses the curriculum of which deals mostly with social entrepreneurship in the Croatian higher education system was the European Commission's report on social enterprises and their ecosystem in Europe. The report, among other things, provides an overview of educational institutions that are active in the field of social entrepreneurship (Vidović, 2019). The data from the report was supplemented by a search of the database of the Portal of Croatian Scientific and Professional journals (Hrčak), where an effort was made to find authors who work in Croatian tertiary education and write about social entrepreneurship. In the next step, 13 potential respondents were contacted using available email addresses. Five professors agreed to participate in the research. Our assumption is that the others mainly teach the topic on social entrepreneurship within other courses, so they might have felt as not being eligible to participate in the research.

This represents the first limitation of the study, the data have been gathered from only 38% of the identified population, which is somewhat mitigated by the fact that all the respondents have courses dedicated to social entrepreneurship, while Vidović's (2019) overview shows that in most of the faculties, the topic is usually only part of the curricula of other courses. So, it is plausible that we have encompassed most of the courses whose content is fully dedicated to social entrepreneurship. Another limitation is that we lack the data from all the Croatian regions with missing data from southern regions (Istria, Primorje and Dalmacija), since the respondents are mostly from Zagreb

faculties, one is from Northern Croatia and one from Eastern Croatia. Therefore, it makes the generalization questionable. However, the overall centralization of Croatia’s economy and population in Zagreb reflects well this fact in the majority of respondents from Zagreb, thus making it quite appropriate to draw conclusions about general trends in Croatia’s SEE. These facts have to be taken into account when discussing the results of the analysis. The third limitation is getting only one side of the picture, the lecturer’s perspective. However, since this research was part of one of the authors’ graduate thesis projects, it would exceed the scope of this work and the proposed length for most of the scientific journal requirements. This limitation actually poses direction for further research in this field including students’ views in the next stage of research.

The research is mainly based on in-depth semi-structured interviews lasting

60 to 120 minutes. Four interviews were conducted online and one live. The interview covered the following topics: basic features of the course, teaching content, evaluation of student work, teaching techniques, target competencies, student interest and results, professors’ preparation for teaching and SEE in Croatia. For the target competencies, respondents were supposed to evaluate the extent to which their students acquired 27 competencies identified based on previous research (Miller et al., 2012). Respondents were required to evaluate each target competency with a score from 1 to 5 (1 - competency is not adopted at all; 5 - competency is strongly adopted). The professors also provided insight into the syllabi of their courses in order to analyse the course content, teaching techniques, evaluation methods, and compulsory and supplementary literature. Table 1 shows the basic characteristics of the courses included in the research.

Table 1
Basic characteristics of the analysed courses

Higher Education Institution	Course	Year	Type of Course	Number of ECTS Credits	Number of Students
ERFZG	Selected Topics in Social Pedagogy IV: Social Entrepreneurship	First year of graduate study	Elective	2	17-30
VERN'	Social Entrepreneurship and Social Innovation	Third year of undergraduate study	Elective	4	15-23
PFZG	Social Economy and Social Entrepreneurship	First year of graduate study	Elective	4	25-27
EFOS	Entrepreneurship of Non-Profit Organizations	First year of graduate study	Elective	5	30-35
FOI	Social Entrepreneurship	Third year of undergraduate study	Compulsory	6	80-100

Source: Authors.

The *Selected Topics in Social Pedagogy IV: Social Entrepreneurship* course is an elective course at the *Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation* of the *University of Zagreb (ERFZG)*. It is offered in the

first year of graduate studies and is open for enrolment to students of all majors (Educational Rehabilitation, Speech Therapy and Social Pedagogy) at the faculty. Between 17 and 30 students enrol in the

course. The course carries 2 ECTS points and is based on two hours of lectures per week, including various practical tasks. The course was introduced in 2018 at the initiative of the lecturer, who noticed that this topic was missing in the Croatian education systems and she believed that she had enough knowledge and personal experience to share with others.

The *Social Entrepreneurship and Social Innovation* course at the *VERN' University* (VERN') is taught in the 3rd year of undergraduate study exclusively for students majoring in Economics of Entrepreneurship as an elective course. Usually, about 15-20 students enrol in it. Given that a course of the same name is taught in English, it is common practice for exchange students to enrol in that course. The course was introduced back in 2012 at the initiative of the lecturer who collaborated with non-governmental associations active in social entrepreneurship. The course carries 4 ECTS credits and consists of 10 hours of lectures, 14 hours of exercises and 16 hours of fieldwork, indicating that more emphasis is placed on the practical part of learning.

The course *Social Economy and Social Entrepreneurship* at the *Faculty of Law* of the *University of Zagreb (PFZG)* is taught in the first year of the graduate study Social Policy and Social Work as an elective course. The course was introduced in 2017 based on the professional experience of the lecturers, aiming to introduce social entrepreneurship to students of Social Policy and Social Work, as they represent a good prototype of people who could develop this form of entrepreneurship in Croatia. The course is worth 4 ECTS credits, and consists of lectures, practical exercises, assignments and the creation of a social enterprise business plan. The two lecturers teaching this course published a university textbook in 2021.

At the *Faculty of Economics in Osijek (EFOS)* of the *J.J. Strossmayer University of Osijek* students are introduced to social entrepreneurship as part of the elective course *Entrepreneurship of non-profit organizations*. This course is taught in the first year of the graduate study of Entrepreneurial Management and Entrepreneurship and is not available to students of other majors. The course carries 5 ECTS credits and the teaching itself consists of 30 hours of lectures and 15 hours of seminar exercises. On average, 30 to 35 students enrol in the course.

At the *Faculty of Organization and Informatics* of the *University of Zagreb (FOI)* the course *Social Entrepreneurship* is taught in the 3rd year of the undergraduate study program Economics of Entrepreneurship. The course is the only one of the five analysed courses that is taught as a compulsory course and students of other majors cannot enrol in it. The course was introduced in 2017 and is worth 6 ECTS credits. It is structured into 30 hours of lectures and 30 hours of seminar classes. Given that it is a compulsory course that all students enrol in, it is taken by 80 to 100 students per year.

RESULTS

It is interesting to note that the initiative to introduce the course on social entrepreneurship came from the lecturers interested in social entrepreneurship, who noticed the benefits that students have from learning about this topic. Given that the presented courses are held in the final year of undergraduate or first year of graduate studies, most students hear about social entrepreneurship in earlier years as part of other courses when the topic is covered only briefly and superficially with some practical examples.

Of the analysed courses, only the course at *FOI* is compulsory. As for for-

eign students, only *VERN* offers the possibility to enrol in this course in English. However, it is encouraging that the other respondents in the interviews also recognized the potential of teaching their course in English, meaning that this idea could be realized in the future.

Teaching Content

The teaching content analysis showed that all five courses deal with the social entrepreneurship definition and give an overview of its historical development, placing it in the context of the contemporary social economy. Also, in all analysed courses, the business plan elements for a social enterprise or non-profit organization are studied, including marketing, sales, management, finance and risk analysis. Examples of good practices in social entrepreneurship and the outcomes and sustainability of social enterprise are present in the contents of the four analysed courses. Students generate their social-entrepreneurial ideas in four out of five analysed courses, while social innovation topics appear in three analysed teaching contents.

Considering that the course at *FOI* is compulsory and carries the most ECTS points, the syllabus includes the largest number of units, including the analysis of legal regulations relevant to social entrepreneurship, such as the Law on Associations, the Law on Cooperatives, the Law on Volunteerism, and the Ordinance on Determining the Employment Quota for Persons with Disabilities. The course also offers an in-depth analysis of social problems such as poverty, homelessness, diseases, addiction, environmental, and other problems that present opportunities for social entrepreneurship.

Mandatory and supplementary literature varies from course to course and includes books, articles and other sources related to the topic of the course. The area

of social entrepreneurship is continuously developing; therefore, it is necessary to update the teaching materials every academic year. Professors can enrich their personal knowledge by reading the current literature, training, attending and presenting at various conferences, following publications from the civil sector, and also by professionally working with social enterprises. Furthermore, they emphasized the importance of maintaining contact with various experts in this field, as well as social entrepreneurs and fellow lecturers.

Teaching Techniques

The analysed courses apply a wide range of teaching techniques shown in Table 2, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature and creativity of social entrepreneurship in practice. The professors listed a total of 13 teaching techniques they use. Seven of those are used by all respondents of this research. These include classic lectures, creating a social enterprise business plan, presenting it, bringing in a guest lecturer, storytelling, watching a video report about social entrepreneurs, and working on a detailed case analysis. Three teaching techniques appear in the four analysed courses: a field visit, working on a given text and watching a documentary film about social entrepreneurship. As part of the three analysed courses, the teaching technique of role-playing is also used, during which students, through various activities (simulation of conferences, project presentations), play the roles of entrepreneurs, donors, users, and other stakeholders and represent their point of view in various discussions. As part of the two analysed courses, students have the option of volunteering. They also have the option of donating, if they wish, as part of one of the analysed courses.

Table 2
Teaching techniques used in SEE

Teaching Techniques	Number of courses in which a teaching technique is used (out of five analysed courses)
Professor's lecture	5
Creation of a social enterprise business plan	5
Presentation of a social enterprise business plan	5
Lecture by a guest lecturer	5
Storytelling	5
Watching video reports about social entrepreneurs	5
Case study	5
Field visit	4
Working on a given text	4
Watching a documentary film about social entrepreneurship	4
Acting	3
Possibility of volunteering	2
Possibility of donating	1

Source: Authors.

The respondents point out that the most effective techniques are those related to practical activities. Guest lecturers, field trips, volunteering, role-playing, and storytelling are just some techniques that help students create a clearer picture of the importance and possibilities of social entrepreneurship.

Two of the five analysed teaching courses have mid-term exams, while in the other courses students take the exam at the end of the semester. Mid-term and final exams test the theoretical knowledge covered in lectures and seminars and include multiple choice questions, open-ended questions, recognizing and giving examples, defining, and the like.

The activity common to all the analysed courses is the social enterprise business plan and its presentation. These are shorter business plans that students work on in teams and which describe elements such as perceived problem, set goals, business segment, target group, end users, devised solution, necessary activities, finance, growth projections, the impact of the solution on social community and

the like. When writing project proposals, students usually use defined forms or specific questions that they need to answer as guidelines. Regardless of the plan's scope, they all include the basic elements necessary for such a project. Since the projects are done in teams, the interviewees point out that it is difficult to evaluate the members of the same team because it is impossible to know which member contributed to what extent. Therefore, the engagement of individual students is tested during the presentation of the project, and some professors have also introduced peer evaluation of students according to a defined questionnaire. Regardless of the difficulty and variety of activities used to evaluate students' success, almost all students manage to pass the courses with grades of very good or excellent.

Competencies for Social Entrepreneurship

Based on the literature review, a list of competencies was made that, according to previously conducted research (Miller et al., 2012), are adopted (or should be adopt-

ed) within SEE. Respondents assessed on a Likert scale from grade 1 to 5 the extent to which the mentioned competencies are adopted within the analysed courses they teach, where grade 1 means that the competency is not adopted at all, and grade 5 means that it is strongly adopted. Based on the evaluation, the competencies were divided into three categories shown in Table 3. Target competencies of high intensity were rated grade 4 or 5 in at least four out of five analysed courses. Target competen-

cies of low intensity were evaluated with grades 3 or 4 in at least four out of five analysed courses, while competencies that are not sought to be developed in the analysed courses were evaluated with grades 3 or less in at least four out of five analysed courses. The competency of fundraising is specific in that it was rated with all grades from 1 to 5 by the five interviewed professors, indicating the different importance attached to it in different courses.

Table 3
Target competencies of SEE

Target competencies of high intensity
Interpersonal communication skills
Time management
Innovativeness and creativity
Flexibility
Ability to challenge traditional ways of thinking
Sense of moral imperatives/ethics
Ability to identify social problems
Ability to commit to a collective purpose
Taking responsibility for actions
Donor cultivation
Identification of opportunities
Evaluation of opportunities
Social skills
Confidence to succeed at challenging task
Marketing skills
Target competencies of low intensity
Management of financial capital
Negotiation skills
Capacity to measure outcomes
Cultural awareness
Humility
Management of strategy development
Development of volunteers' support
Competencies that are not sought to be developed
Sales skills
Exploitation of opportunities
Management of logistics and technology
Manage administrative work

Source: Authors.

It is interesting that the time management competency is sought to be adopted with high intensity in all courses. The reason for this is the number and complexity of the activities students perform, thus strengthening that personal skill. The identification of entrepreneurial opportunities is at a high level in all observed courses. The reason for this is the intention of the lecturers to point out to students the possibilities in the field of social entrepreneurship. However, there is also a low level of exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunities, which means that hardly any student idea comes to life in a real environment.

Student Interest and the Future of SEE

Most students are interested in courses from this domain, which is reflected in the number of students who enrol in them as elective courses every year. The professors observed that the students' interest is stimulated by the attractiveness of the field and the activities carried out within the courses (projects, field visits and the like). It was emphasized that students should not perceive a course of this type as very difficult because this could lead to the development of negative emotions towards the field itself, which conflicts with the effort to present social entrepreneurship as both desirable and feasible.

The interviewees agreed that social entrepreneurship is still not sufficiently represented in the Croatian education system and that its representation depends too much on the lecturers' enthusiasm. Some believe that the reason for this is that it is a relatively new concept. Others, on the other hand, state that the presence of traditional entrepreneurship in the Croatian education sector is not sufficient as well. What is certain is that the respondents call for cooperation and exchange of experiences within the academic community and encourage their colleagues at other educational institutions to introduce social entrepreneurship courses.

DISCUSSION

Before immersing into a discussion, we have to stress out the limitations of the study considering the fact that we have gathered data on only 5 out of 13 identified courses. When reading the discussion, the reader has to keep this in mind that the sample probably doesn't represent the whole. However, as already mentioned, the overall centralization of Croatia's economy and population in Zagreb is well reflected in our sample, thus conclusions drawn about general trends in Croatia's SEE can be taken as plausible.

Social entrepreneurship is poorly represented in the Croatian economy; thus, the public knows very little about it. Despite this, universities are increasingly realizing the importance and benefits of the introduction of SEE. The collected data provided an insight into how such education is carried out, starting with the topics that dominate the SEE content (research question RQ1).

In comparison with courses at universities in other countries, the most common topics of SEE in Croatian higher education practice are also social problems and

needs, recognizing opportunities, acquiring resources for the realization of a social mission, creating sustainable business results and outcome measurement, all of which is practically applied in the creation of a social enterprise business plan. In contrast to SEE abroad (dominantly in the USA) (Brock & Steiner, 2009), professors in Croatia place less emphasis on innovation and scaling of social ventures, which is in line with the practice of social entrepreneurship in Croatia. Social entrepreneurs in Croatia are particularly much more focused on topics related to the social context and community than on commercial goals such as efficiency and financial independence (Vuković et al., 2017). Therefore, there is room for improvement of the teaching content by familiarizing students with existing social innovations and the possibilities of scaling their social-entrepreneurial ventures.

The research also provided insight into the teaching methods most often used in the analysed courses (research question RQ2). The most prevalent are verbal methods, which include classical lectures, indirect presentation using various video reports and films, conversation, and reading and working on the text (reading manuals, reports, articles and laws, and answering related questions). Also, the method of practical work is used to a great extent when students create their own social enterprise business plan. Practical methods are present through volunteering and donating activities. Furthermore, role model learning, that is, learning according to the experience of specific social entrepreneurs, activists, stakeholders and various guest lecturers, is applied to a large extent.

In accordance with education for social entrepreneurship abroad (Brock & Steiner, 2009), Croatian educational practice also uses classical lectures and theoretical

learning, writing a social enterprise business plan, and case studies. Compared to practices abroad, there are fewer practical projects with service-learning components. They exist sporadically in some academic years when professors have a project within which they organize it. In this case, service learning is an additional activity and is not mandatory for all students, primarily due to the capacity of the project itself. For example, *FOI* and *VERN* students had the opportunity to gain experience within the *Pop-up rural socially innovative hubs* project funded by the European Social Fund, where they helped the participants develop entrepreneurial projects with an emphasized social mission (Kantar & Svržnjak, 2019). The possibility of volunteering is less common than it is abroad, while starting a real social-entrepreneurial venture is not a learning outcome of any of the analysed courses. However, it is not excluded as a possibility upon course completion.

Today's SEE in business schools follows the principle of learning by doing, which enables a balance between theory and practice (Wu et al., 2013). Therefore, room for improvement in the Croatian SEE is visible in the use of service learning which encourages students to learn through practice, strengthening their critical thinking and showing them that they are capable enough to initiate the necessary changes in their local communities (Detelj et al., 2018). At the same time, positive social effects are achieved that benefit various stakeholders in the civil and private sectors (Calvert, 2011). When partnering with third-party organizations outside the classroom (Thomsen et al., 2021) or co-creating shared communities of practice (Hockerts, 2018), students' comprehension of the subject matter is much stronger compared to the traditional new venture approach. It is important that

students who have only one social entrepreneurship course implement in some way at least one part of their social enterprise business plan under the supervision of professors (Douglas, 2015). In doing so, professors can support students with design thinking principles that are particularly appropriate and useful when starting social enterprises (Kickul et al., 2018). Reflection and critical thinking about real problems in local communities can lead to a greater understanding of society's issues, and networking for future projects (Pischetola & Martins, 2021). At the institutional level, service learning significantly influences environmental sustainability commitment in higher education (Alfirević et al., 2022).

The results of the analysis also answered the question of what the target competencies of SEE are at Croatian universities (research question RQ3). Like the social entrepreneurship courses at universities in North America, Europe, Asia and Australia (Miller et al., 2012), courses in Croatia place great emphasis on the creation, evaluation and sustainability of the social enterprise business plan, innovation and creativity. Unlike their colleagues abroad, Croatian professors recognized the need for developing marketing skills, interpersonal communication skills, a sense of moral imperatives/ethics, and the ability to challenge traditional ways of thinking.

The room for improvement of the target competencies of SEE in Croatia exists in sales skills and financial management, specifically in fundraising. Both social entrepreneurs and professors from abroad agree that SEE should include teaching financial management, emphasizing new sources of funding such as impact investing, social venture capital and social impact bonds (Barber et al., 2021; Fraser et al., 2018; Miller et al., 2012).

CONCLUSION

In Croatia, interest in social entrepreneurship has been growing over the years, but the number of people involved in social entrepreneurship activities is still at a modest level. The inclusion of social entrepreneurship in the curricula indicates new career development opportunities for students. Values, skills and knowledge acquired through SEE are relevant to students who want to become social entrepreneurs, and to those wanting to become internal entrepreneurs in non-profit organizations (Wiley & Berry, 2015).

The analysed courses were introduced into the curricula due to the lecturers' interest in social entrepreneurship. However, the courses are mostly taught as electives, which means that the universities have not realized all the benefits that the introduction of social entrepreneurship as a compulsory course can have. Therefore, the course is enrolled by students interested in this topic, while some may not enrol because they are not familiar with the term itself and its meaning when choosing an elective course.

The introduction of SEE as a mandatory part of the study program would ultimately, as stated by Mair (2010), help solve certain social problems. In other words, it could increase the chance that, due to increased awareness of the impact of business on society, some social needs never arise. SEE should strive to attract, in addition to students who already know that they want to engage in it, students who are more "traditional" in their goals, because this way the discussion in the classroom is enriched and a greater number of students are informed about this topic after completing their studies (Worsham, 2012). One professor noticed that the students who participated in SEE also began to pay more attention to the social impact of their

commercial, entrepreneurial ventures that they are working on in another course. Another professor pointed out that an increasing number of students are choosing the topics of social innovation and social entrepreneurship for their undergraduate and graduate theses.

Here we have to once again accentuate the limitations of the study elaborated in the Methods part of the article: a small sample with only 38% of responses from the identified population, lack of responses from the southern Croatian region, and responses from only one kind of the actors in the educational system – professors.

Based on the conducted research, three opportunities were identified for the development of the analysed courses: (1) emphasizing the importance of the scaling of social-entrepreneurial ventures and local adaptation of existing social innovations; (2) greater use of service learning; (3) a more significant focus on sales skills and financial management with an emphasis on new sources of financing aimed at social enterprises.

The conducted in-depth interviews provided useful content for all professors thinking about introducing or upgrading SEE. Nevertheless, it would be valuable to collect data from other professors of higher education teaching social entrepreneurship courses in Croatia in the future. Furthermore, the acquisition of competencies is based on professors' evaluations, so for a more complete picture, students who attended the analysed courses should be asked to assess the extent to which they acquired a particular competency.

The possibilities of applying distance learning in SEE should be examined in the next step. Enrichment of teaching techniques with gamification and the possibilities of virtual and augmented reality are also expected. Therefore, it would be good to

repeat interviews with professors soon. By keeping up with technological progress and social needs, professors can ensure the development of competencies that will prepare students both for the labour market and for solving social problems, thus ensuring a better future for the community. The analysis shows great opportunities to improve SEE in Croatia, but also offers additional directions for further research with the inclusion of additional courses in the analysis, confronting the results with views and attitudes of the students, and including additional remarks from the social entrepreneurs in practice.

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Sažetak

OBRAZOVANJE ZA DRUŠTVENO PODUZETNIŠTVO NA HRVATSKIM SVEUČILIŠTIMA

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Cilj rada bio je ispitati kako se obrazovanje za društveno poduzetništvo (ODP) provodi na hrvatskim sveučilištima. Istraživanje je provedeno dubinskim intervjuima s petero nastavnika koji predaju predmet Društveno poduzetništvo ili srodni predmet unutar kojeg se ta tema obrađuje. Temeljem provedenog istraživanja identificirane su dominantne teme unutar sadržaja analiziranih predmeta, korištene nastavne tehnike te ciljane kompetencije ODP-a. Usporedbom sa inozemnim ODP-om prepoznate su tri prilike za razvoj analiziranih predmeta: (1) naglašavanje važnosti skaliranja društveno-poduzetničkih pothvata i lokalne prilagodbe postojećih društvenih inovacija; (2) veće korištenje društveno korisnog učenja; (3) veći fokus na prodajne vještine i upravljanje financijama s naglaskom na nove izvore financiranja usmjerene društvenim poduzećima. Rezultati će pomoći kreatorima politika da podrže navedena poboljšanja u obrazovanju za društveno poduzetništvo na hrvatskim sveučilištima.

Ključne riječi: obrazovanje za društveno poduzetništvo, nastavni sadržaj, nastavne metode, kompetencije.