

Education for entrepreneurship in kindergartens

Jasna Peklić, Kindergarten “Markuševac”, Štefanovec 172, 10040 Zagreb, Hrvatska, mob: 00385 91 5407217, fax: 00385 1 4574810, e-mail: jasna.peklic@zg.t-com.hr

Dinka Vujatović, Kindergarten “Markuševac”, Štefanovec 172, 10040 Zagreb, Hrvatska, Tel: 00385 1 4574803, fax: 00385 1 4574810, e-mail: djecji.vrtic.markusevec@zg.t-com.hr

Summary

The “Children’s Entrepreneurship Week” is the name under which, since 2009, a project in kindergartens across Croatia has been carried out. It is launched by the Ministry of Economy, Crafts and Entrepreneurship (now the Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Crafts) with the aim of educating the public about the need for education for entrepreneurship from an early age. The project was implemented in five cycles in sixteen cities in Croatia.

The project team consisted of Vitomir Tafra and Zdravko Tkalec, lecturers at University College Nikola Šubić Zrinski (Zagreb) and Jasna Peklić, the director, together with Dinka Vujatović, a teacher at Markuševac kindergarten. They designed and participated in the implementation and evaluation of the project.

To obtain the relevant data from the surveys for parents and educators, it was necessary that kindergartens follow the instructions for the implementation of the project, while maintaining their identity and specific climate in which they operate.

As in previous years, the last cycle of the research confirmed the expected positive response from all participants who wish to continue ongoing work on the development of entrepreneurial competencies in children as it has been the case of Markusevec kindergarten.

Key words: *Kindergarten, entrepreneurship, competence, continuity*

1. Introduction

The “Children’s Entrepreneurship Week” is the name under which, since 2009, a project in kindergartens across Croatia has been carried out. It is launched by the Ministry of Economy, Crafts and Entrepreneurship (now the Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Crafts) with the aim of educating the public about the need for education for entrepreneurship from an early age.

Ideas and needs on the implementation of this project came from the new National Curriculum for Preschool and general compulsory and secondary education, which is based on the development of eight key competences for lifelong learning, and one of them is the initiative and entrepreneurial spirit.

The project team consisted of Vitomir Tafra and Zdravko Tkalec, lecturers at University College Nikola Šubić Zrinski (Zagreb) and Jasna Peklić, the director, together with Dinka Vujatović, a teacher at Markuševac kindergarten. They designed and participated in the implementation and evaluation of the project with a focus on the acquisition of specific knowledge and skills through appropriate activities for children that encourage their creativity, innovation, creativity, initiative, entrepreneurial spirit.

With the implementation of the Children's Week of entrepreneurship we were able to stimulate further continued implementation of these projects and the integration of economic and entrepreneurial elements in the daily activities of children in kindergartens. The project encouraged the educators as well, and their associates and principals of kindergartens and stressed the importance of education for entrepreneurship at an early age, which was evident in the feedback we received after the project.

2. Project tasks and goals

The project has been implemented since 2009. Since 2012 it has been implemented in kindergartens in five cities in Croatia: Hvar, Koprivnica, Senj, Solin and Klostar Ivanic.

The objective of the first phase of the project "Children's Week of Entrepreneurship" was to sensitize society about the need for education for entrepreneurship with children at early and preschool age, and to create an entrepreneurial environment that will, through various game activities appropriate to children's age, allow children to acquire some basic entrepreneurial knowledge, skills and attitudes. Through lectures and joint workshops, the project team will educate as many of the educational staff for independent implementation and integration of entrepreneurship in the regular ten-hour kindergarten program. Greater emphasis is placed on cooperation with the local community and the structure of local authorities, without whose support the project would not have been realized.

The National Curriculum is a fundamental document in compliance with the European Union, which defined, and the Republic of Croatia adopted the eight core competencies for lifelong learning. One of these competencies is initiative and entrepreneurship. Since the National Curriculum is a development document and the basis for the development of all other curriculum documents, in the second phase of the project the aim is to make the curriculum for entrepreneurial learning in preschools.

3. The course of the project

Our overall development is not only based on advances in knowledge, but also on the change of beliefs and behaviors. Children acknowledge themselves and the world around them through practical action and interaction with the environment that surrounds them, or through messages they receive from the environment. Children should be seen as intelligent and competent little creatures that learn by doing and by working with others, and are capable to organise their own activities. For this reason, they should be offered a variety of sources of knowledge through changing and enriching the material context in accordance with the humanist conception of development because in this way we encourage natural learning process.

One of the natural ways of learning is children working on the project where the trainer does not lead but encourages the children. This method was successfully applied in the implementation of the project "Children's Week of Entrepreneurship". Project approach requires that every preschool teacher makes the initial draft, i.e. a rough direction of the project development, which can vary, depending on the interests of the children. Children guided by self-interest choose a specific topic they will explore whereas the role of educators is to provide the necessary resources for the project, to encourage them to think, to debate, to reason and to cooperate and ex-

change opinions with other children. Trainer observes and documents the course of the project (photos, video and audio, records of children's statements, making informative posters). The resulting documentation has multiple meanings, from encouraging children to debate and remember the important moments of the project, then monitoring the development of the application leading to the evaluation and presentation (to the parents, their peers, the community at large ...).

So far the implementation of the project started by the Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Crafts sending a letter of intent to appointed kindergartens. After that, the members of the project team responsible for the pedagogical part contacted the kindergartens and sent them materials related to the project including:

1. Operational Plan for implementation of the project
2. Guidance on the implementation of the project
3. Survey for Teachers prior to the implementation of the project
4. Survey for Teachers after the project implementation
5. Surveys for parents prior to project implementation
6. Surveys for parents after the project implementation

Before the implementation of the project as instructed by the project team, kindergartens organize parent meetings where parents are invited to collaborate and are informed about future events in the kindergarten, about the role of their children in the project and the importance of the project to the overall development of their children.

Prior to the project implementation, educator or professional associate asks the children whether they are familiar with the basic economic concepts (raw materials, production, consumption, earnings ...). After the project implementation, the children are tested to determine how many of them adopted these terms, or whether they only recognize them or use them during the activity.

Within two weeks after receiving the instructions, kindergartens send their programs of activities to the project team. Then, via telephone consultations, they agree on the course of events, give instructions regarding the offered incentives, implementation of activities and a methodical approach. In general, preparations for the final activities last up to two months. Thereafter, on a day decided by the Ministry of Business and Trade, their representatives and project team members visit the kindergarten where the final activities of the Children's Entrepreneurship Week take place. The local community is also involved and the media covers the entire event.

3.1. The structure of the program of the final days of the "Children's Week of Entrepreneurship"

9:15

- *Activities aiming at the production of various items Trajanje: prema interesu djece*
- *Presentation of the results of activities carried out during the project*

10:00

- *Selling exhibition*
- *Press conference*

16:30

- *Workshop for female educators*

In the afternoon, workshops were held for all educators and professional associates in kindergartens. After the workshop, participants filled out evaluation sheets through which the project team received feedback.

3.2. Evaluation sheet

Please answer the following questions!

I liked the most _____

After the workshop, I feel _____

I wish this was different _____

How will you use new knowledge in changing your practice in creating programs? _____

Message to the hosts _____

Thank you!

After two to three weeks, kindergartens submit completed surveys to the project team who handles them. After each cycle, the representatives of the kindergarten that participated in the project have a joint meeting with members of the project team where they work on the evaluation of the project by presenting the results of the survey. Together, they agree on the modes of further cooperation in the implementation of entrepreneurship in regular work.

3.3. Some survey results



Survey results: parents

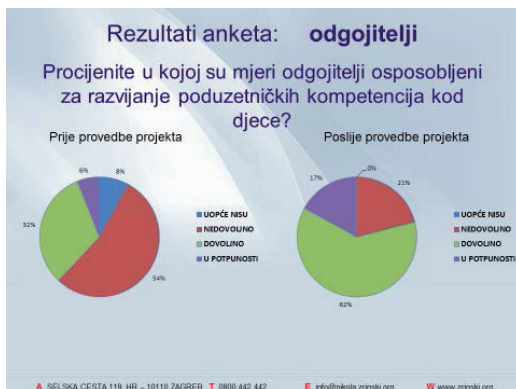
Do you think it is important that educators develop children’s entrepreneurial competencies?



In your opinion, should these projects be further implemented?



To what extent are you satisfied with your child’s participation in the project?



Survey results: educators

How well are the educators prepared to develop children’s entrepreneurial competencies?



How much do the educators actually develop the children’s entrepreneurial competencies?



Educators at Markuševac kindergarten

Do you need additional education in that field?

4. Continuity in Markuševac kindergarten

Markuševac kindergarten continuously works through various projects to develop competencies of initiative and entrepreneurship, and involves parents who actively participate and promote the implementation of the projects as important factors for the development of their children. These are no longer necessarily just simple production projects that used to end up with selling exhibition with a view to profit, but complex projects that involve a number of associates and the community and affect the overall development of a child with a focus on developing competencies of initiative and entrepreneurship.

During several years of preparation, implementation and monitoring of the project in kindergartens, we concluded that the wealth of different stimuli in the child's environment resulted in a number of different activities in which children adopted new skills and knowledge related to entrepreneurial behavior.

In addition to basic economic concepts that children face during the project, such as raw materials procurement, manufacturing, sales, income, consumption, promotion, money ... children have the opportunity to participate in activities in which with their own hands they produce new valuable things. Through such activities they develop the proper attitude to work and their own value system. They are focused on teamwork and non-violent conflict resolution, and their reflections and discussions on the division of revenues are the first attempts of evaluation and self-evaluation.

For years, ethno group Pčelice have intensively and continuously been working to promote the development of entrepreneurial competencies through diverse projects.

Last project "Watchmaking" during the pedagogical year 2013/14 lasted several months. Besides investigating the functions and structures of various watches, exploring the concept of time, creating unique wall clocks, the project also included a tour of Zagreb with the famous watchmaker Mr. Lebarović. The project also included the commemoration of the Day of the City of Zagreb on the occasion of which the children were introduced to the sights of their hometown.

Entrepreneurship projects have enabled us stronger links with the local community, establishing contacts with interesting jobs and people as well as charities and development of social sensitivity. An ongoing project "My little garden" promoted the values of the proper relationship to nature and nature conservation, and to cultural heritage. Children have undergone a complete manufacturing process from raw material procurement (the old indigenous seeds), breeding-production, harvest, processing and sales, and investment earnings to a new manufacturing process. Through the care of the garden and farm animals, children are developing and building up their natural skills. Their enthusiasm is transferred onto the parents who are actively involved in all phases of the project.

Implementation of projects which promote the development of entrepreneurial competencies implies a broad scope of activities and cooperation of educational staff, parents and community members and imagination of children and educators who gave direction to the development of projects. Through the project, the children developed a proper relationship to money and the manner of disposing with it as the basis for their further financial aspects of life.

A symposium for principals of kindergartens in Zagreb on "How to work on quality changes and the development of kindergarten" was held in Markuševac kindergarten last school year. During the conference, the project team gave a presentation "Entrepreneurship in kindergarten"

where they presented the results of previous work. A symposium for preschool educators on the same subject is planned for the next educational year.

5. Conclusion

The project team decided to proceed in a different way with the last implemented project in the kindergarten Spring in Klostar Ivanic. The idea of change occurred suddenly due to lack of time to implement the project. In the kindergarten Spring we decided to start from the end, i.e., to have workshop for educators first, so that they are familiar with the process they will later carry out through the activities with the children. The project team was not discouraged, they rather used this new situation to, through new methodological approach and comparing the results of previous surveys and the results of surveys that will be later compared, assess which approach gives better results. When we arrive at the final activity we will be able to estimate the extent to which children adopted basic economic concepts (maybe to a greater extent than in other kindergartens) as well as the extent to which the education of their educators influenced that. The given results will be the basis for the next cycle in front of us.

As we mentioned before, the National Curriculum is a framework and therefore the starting point for the development of pedagogical program which means that it will be followed by many more additions and refinements. The part that requires the most modification is the part that talks about kindergartens. The four member project team is the only one that has so far worked in a targeted and structured way to develop entrepreneurial competencies of preschool children and also conducted its own research to determine the extent to which we were able to integrate basic economic concepts in contemporary kindergarten curriculum and how big is the support of the profession in continuing the project.

We believe that our experience and knowledge gained through leadership and participation in the project as theoreticians and practitioners will be of great importance for the elaboration of educational attainment of entrepreneurial competencies. We are willing to participate and to make available all the material collected so far.

Literature

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