HIGHER EDUCATION TREND: SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS THE KEY TRANSVERSAL SKILL

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Abstract. The aim of this article is to provide analysis of the current regulations in the sphere of higher education in the European Union and scientific works related to the development of social entrepreneurship skills under modern conditions. Moreover, the paper brings in a comprehensive system towards providing students with the necessary entrepreneurial skills within the present higher education system. It has been defined that the set of key transversal skills outlined by the Commission to the European Parliament in 2017 lay in the area of social entrepreneurship. The reason for this is seen in the current trends on the global market and the challenges that humankind is facing in the present time. Three approaches have been studied as the most relevant ones for providing students with relevant skills: transdisciplinary, learner-centred and challenge-based. Based on their reconsideration, a comprehensive system towards development of social entrepreneurship skills among students has been suggested.

Key words: social entrepreneurship, skills, students, higher education, approach, system.

Introduction. 2020 turned out to be a challenging time for higher education systems (HESs) in different countries all over the world. Even before the pandemic, there had been discussions about the need to apply new methods of teaching future specialist for the needs of a constantly transforming world, to enhance digital competences of university staff and motivate them to use new tools and learning resources, etc. This issue was under attention of international programmes (e.g. Tempus, Horizon2020, Erasmus+) and organizations (e.g. British Council, EVZ, DAAD and others). Therefore, we do not state that the COVID-19 quarantine regulations brought some completely new challenges to HESs in terms of distance organization of studying, however we need to admit that it sped up and intensified these processes within universities and HESs in general. Universities had to rethink its educational process under the new conditions as a whole and work out new methods of keeping high quality of its services in the online environment to provide the market with qualified specialist. The modern tendencies that had been developing for some time in education (digitalization, student's independent learning path, self-study, supervised project work, etc.) received great support on the administrative level and met the needs of the majority of academic staff from the practical point of view.

However, not only methods became the subject of reconsideration. The times of pandemic made it vivid what kind of specialists and with what specific competencies are more qualified to survive in the unstable economy and what skills are of greater demand nowadays. As it was mentioned before, we are talking here not of completely new skills and competencies, rather of those whose necessity has been proven by the present realia.

The literature review has revealed a great interest to social entrepreneurship as a vital competence of the present and educational approaches created for its development. At the same time, the understanding of structure of social entrepreneurship, as well as specific tasks for its development require more attention.

Literature review. In 2017 there was a renewed EU agenda for higher education published, which stated that the labour market was becoming more flexible and complex, and so people had to become more creative, autonomous and resilient, as well as to develop communicative and digital skills.

The requirement to be entrepreneurial was stated the first and was connected to the future prosperity of the humankind. At the same time, there was a task put before universities – develop innovations and entrepreneurship not for the sake of science or business, but for the sake of the world, meaning the people in general, as well as on the local level, for the regions and communities. The idea was expressed that regions had to develop in specific areas (so called, «smart specialization») and that universities could facilitate this process, uniting academics, business and governments and becoming «entrepreneurial actors» (Communication, 2017). Therefore, it can be stated that back in 2017, a clear strategy was developed by the EU to make university graduates not only clever and skilful in their area of knowledge, but also being able of acting entrepreneurially for the benefit of the society.

The importance of this competence we have witnessed these years, when existing businesses couldn't fully fulfil the needs of people in the quarantine and had either to change, or to cooperate with newly appearing start-ups. The Peterson Institute for International Economics published an article called «Startups boom in the United States during COVID-19», which clearly demonstrated the growth of start-up business activity in the USA over 2020, stating the 24% increase (Djankov, Zhang, 2021). The same tendency towards the rise of new start-ups was reported by BBC News article, which gives the number of 13,257 of new companies registered in 2020 in comparison to 11,503 in 2019. It also went over the list of reasons for this, among which there were the brake of routine and support from the local community, for which the business initiative was originally created (BBC News, 2020). Researchers support the idea of social entrepreneur as an actor being able to challenge the status quo, carry out relations this business sector, government and other institutions to improve the world (Bacq, Lumpkin, 2020).

Taking into account all the above mentioned, it is possible to make a conclusion, that one of the key transversal competences of the present, is entrepreneurial one, with a clear focus on social value and connection with the community – that is, social entrepreneurship (SE) competence.

The notion of social entrepreneurship is a relatively new one, however entrepreneurship, as it is, has been actively used in modern normative documents and informative materials together with some social aspect. For example, studying the Communication of the EU published in 2020 «Achieving the European Education Area by 2025», we find a highlighted importance of transversal skills such as entrepreneurship, critical thinking, creativity and civic engagement (Communication, 2020: 6). Putting them together, we clearly see their interdependence in connection to a social entrepreneur, as he/she is a person who is creative enough to suggest some innovations to the market and start an enterprise, as well as the one socially engaged, understanding the needs of the community and how his/her business can help. Critical thinking is necessary to clearly see the current situation, predict the risks or possible changes and adapt successfully.

The understanding of social entrepreneurship competence comes from the clear understanding of SE notion and its structure, so special attention should be paid to it. The online dictionary Investopedia gives the following definition: «A social entrepreneur is a person who pursues novel applications that have the potential to solve community-based problems. These individuals are willing to take on the risk and effort to create positive changes in society through their initiatives» (Hayes, 2021). As T. Gandhi and R. Raina state, social entrepreneurship uses new approaches, takes the arising opportunities and generates solutions bringing changes to the society for the better. As the key skills of a social entrepreneur, the authors distinguish communicative (in terms of interaction with different stakeholders) and adaptive (meaning, the person is capable of responding to changing circumstances) (Gandhi, Raina, 2018). R. Ziegler in his book «An Introduction to Social Entrepreneurship» underlined that social entrepreneurship is developed by individuals rather than big international companies and focus on overcoming problems in different areas of our lives like social inequality and exclusions or ecological problems and risks. The author describes social entrepreneur as a persistent, self-reliant, system-thinking, initiative-taking person that earns support from non-governmental sector for its eco-

nomic activity (Ziegler, 2011: 1). Kickul J. and Lyons T.S. underline the difference between socially responsible business and social entrepreneurship, stating that while some business may support corporate social responsibility and focus on sustainable business practices, social entrepreneurs use their products and services to change the society (Kickul, Lyons, 2020). Some researchers directly name social entrepreneurs as the «agents of change» tracing their emergence back to the protest movements against capitalist systems (Hervieux, Voltan, 2018). At the same time, there are research findings stating that social entrepreneurship has impact on four types of capital created in communities, such as physical, financial, human and social capital (Lumpkin, Bacq, Pidduck, 2018).

Thus, in our work we understand social entrepreneurship as a business activity of an individual or a group of individuals, brining social benefit and contributing to solving different issues existing in their local communities and general society.

The position of social entrepreneurship in the academic context is less revealed. Sassmannshausen S.P. and Volkmann C. focus their work on social entrepreneurship as an academic field, outlining its thematic clusters and methodological issues (Sassmannshausen, Volkmann, 2018). Social entrepreneurship is disclosed as a separate study discipline, with its major topics: innovation, impact, sustainability, and scale (Kickul, Lyons, 2020); hybrid organization, non-profit structures, for-profit structures, challenges, advantages, strategies (Mitra, Kickul, Gundry, Orr, 2019). Different approaches and methods are advocated for teaching the course, such as design thinking approach (Kickul, Lyons, 2020), experiential learning (Hockerts, 2018), stakeholder approach (Starnawska, 2018), dark side theory / critical analysis (Talmage, Gassert, 2021). A course on social entrepreneurship has been developed for unemployed women to enhance their self-realization (Voronkova, Nikishkin, Frolova, Matveeva, Murzagalina, Kalykova, 2019).

Social entrepreneurship not as a separate subject, but as a transversal skill is shown in the work of García-González A. and Ramírez-Montoya M.S. The researchers prove that introducing social entrepreneurship projects at different courses improve students' potential to such activity (García-González, Ramírez-Montoya, 2021). Satar M. S. and Natasha S. in their work demonstrate the developed 13-item scale that measures four dimensions of social entrepreneurship orientation of individuals, such as social passion, innovativeness, risk-taking and pro-activeness (Satar, Natasha, 2019). A case-study on introduction of separate courses focused on social entrepreneurship aspects into the Management studies has been carried out and data showing a change in students' attitudes and behaviours has been collected (Adelekan, Williamson, Atiku, 2018). Still, with all the prosperity of literature on entrepreneurship education value, the potential of social entrepreneurship training on the university level is still not quite revealed.

Aim and hypothesis. *The aim* of the article is to ground social entrepreneurship as the key transferable competence that has to be developed among university students in order to make them competitive in the changing circumstances caused by economic development, global issues and social transformations; as well as to suggest possible ways of its development in the higher education system through a comprehensive system of training and creating a favourable learning environment.

We believe that such training with largely enhance students' employability and flexibility on the modern labour market, enabling them to introduce social changes for the better of humanity.

Methods. The paper is based on a thorough analysis of current regulations in the sphere of higher education in the European Union countries, study of scientific works of Ukrainian and foreign researchers related to the development of social entrepreneurship skills and statistical data presented in them.

The questioning was performed at Chernihiv Polytechnic National University in October, 2020 among 769 students of the fourth year of study majoring in all the specialties. Part of its data, referring to the educational process, students needs and attitudes is used in this article to bring in students' perspective on separate topics. The questioner results are available online with free access on the university website in the section «Education quality – Quality monitoring».

Results. Forwarding our attention to the role of higher education in supporting SE development, it should be stated that, as SE is a complex notion, HESs need to focus on developing SE competence among students in the variety of its skills through various approaches and methods in a unified/properly managed system.

Thinking of how to develop these skills among students in the HES, more attention should be paid to the already mentioned Communication of 2020. In it, it is suggested to develop this set of skills through transdisciplinary, learner-centred and challenge-based approaches (Communication, 2020: 6), which seems reasonable as SE can not be referred strictly to one field of knowledge, it is largely based on personal, individual skills and attitudes, including the ability to analyse and efficiently solve problems in different spheres of life.

The point of interdisciplinarity is supported by empirical research presented in the Unbounded University: Unlocking Opportunities Through Online Learning e-book. It was published by Coursera for campus and provides data on the research into the in-demand skills on the modern labour market. Entrepreneurship is present in all spheres analysed with a greater or lower importance (Coursera for Campus). This means that regardless of the student's major, entrepreneurship skill is necessary and should be developed. While students studying Economics or Business are more likely to have subjects on entrepreneurship and SE in particular, engineering students or managers tend to be less familiar with the issue, as it is not directly included into the curricular. So, how can the interdisciplinary approach mitigate this gap? To start with, while topics and modules are fixed within a subject, separate skills may be developed throughout interdisciplinary projects.

H. Yener (2020) states that entrepreneurs need to be able to approach complex problems, act in not very favourable conditions and make the right decisions. Moreover, they need to have system thinking in order to make these right decisions, looking at the issue from a multiple perspective (Yener, 2020: 26–27). Interdisciplinary tasks, according to the researcher, may develop these skills as real-world decisions are not limited within one area (Yener, 2020: 31). This idea finds another perspective in the work of Pardo-Garcia C. and Barac M. – the scientists speak on the effectiveness of work of multidisciplinary teams in problem-solving approach, stating that such teams show greater results (Pardo-Garcia, Barac, 2020). Chernihiv Polytechnic National University (Ukraine) has been practicing this multidisciplinary approach to problem solving in Start-ups competitions. Teams are being created by representatives of various specialties, e.g. a future engineer works with economics, marketing specialist and social worker, together they prepare a presentation of their start-up idea, which includes not only the description of the business, but also financial calculations, market analysis, marketing plan, risk analysis and so on. After such work students develop not only their professional and soft skills, but also get a deeper understanding of the complexity of entrepreneurship and necessary knowledge from different spheres. In the questioner performed in September, 2020 at the university among fourth-year students 40,6% of questioned approved such form of training and 34,5% partially agreed with the benefit of interdisciplinary projects.

Therefore, interdisciplinarity may be introduced into the study process through project work, complex tasks for teams created by mixing students with different majors into one teams and extracurricular activities implying joint work of students from different fields of knowledge.

Moreover, interdisciplinarity should be viewed not only from the students', but also from the teachers' perspective: there may be co-teaching initiatives developed, involving cooperation of teachers from different departments in teaching lectures, conducting seminars or organizing project work. More and more academicians are talking of the need to create complex courses, involving different specialists in teaching separate course modules to provide students with real-life content, which is rarely limited within one area of knowledge. The support of this idea we may find looking through the winners of Erasmus+ KA2 projects on the EU portal, demonstrating teams not only of different

universities, but also of different specialties, aiming to work on developing educational courses or changing current educational procedures throughout the universities, regardless of the students major, or on the boarder of several majors.

Learner-centred approach is another one to focus on. Canadian scientists conducted a comprehensive research on the learner-centred lecturing, where students were invited after some training to perform 10-minutes lecturing at the class using learner-centred approach and throughout the study conducted anonymous questioners. What we find out from their work is that learner-centred teaching places a lecturer into a role of facilitator, giving to students more autonomy and freedom in their actions and speaking out their opinions, and so rising their self-efficacy (Troop, Wallar, Aspenlieder, 2015). The learner-centred approach has been actively promoted by the Ministry of Higher Education of Ukraine, its various acts and regulations. However, it is largely seen from the point of view of procedure and formal elements, e.g. students nowadays are free to form their individual educational trajectory via choosing up to 20% of elective courses, as well as including the results of nonformal education to their portfolio.

The student questioner performed at Chernihiv Polytechnic National University and already mentioned above, showed that students are active participants within student self-governance: for 39,4% of students' university social life is important with 9,1%, for whom it is very important; 56,4% stated that they participated in events organized by the student council. So, students play an active role in forming the university out-of-class life and have the potential in giving more input into their in-class-life. However, their role at such form of studies as a lecture is still often more of a listener. Obviously, there is a need to make learner-centeredness more practical in terms of methods and tools used at the classroom studying, which requires special trainings for university teachers and mastering facilitation techniques. Some steps are taken in this account in Ukraine. For example, 15 state universities were involved in the British Council project «English for universities». The educational and scientific workers received training on modern methods of English language teaching, as well as on teaching other courses in English. The suggested techniques were largely based on facilitation and student-centeredness and found wide usage at different specialties, both at lecture and practical classes (British Council).

The student-centred approach is connected with the third one − challenge-based. Researchers show that this approach develops not only specific skills of the study major, but also embraces «soft skills» like teamwork and effective communication, while creating space for diversity of viewpoints in problem solving and active participation of learners (Willis, Byrd, Johnson, 2017). This approach is distinctly multidisciplinary and develops skills of working with various stakeholders. It deepens learning experience and brings up relevant questions for students' consideration (Rådberg, Lundqvist, Malmqvist, Svensson, 2020). As practice shows, making challenge-based projects is time-consuming, putting much pressure on a teacher on the preparatory stage and in the monitoring process, and requires from students responsible attitude to studies, more of independence and self-reliance, at the same time showing really great results if performed well. At the same time, this approach may be used on a lower level of complexity, being introduced at lectures (as open questions for discussions) or laboratory classes (group tasks that are suited for dealing with during one class) and so preparing students for real-life challenges.

Based on these three methods, the transdisciplinary, learner-centred and challenge-based, I would like to suggest a comprehensive system towards SE skills development. Regardless whether students have a specialized course on SE or not, Social Entrepreneurship Centre, or its analogue, at a university may play a crucial role in mobilizing resources and providing both teachers and students with necessary training. Researches support the idea that regulatory environment, organizational support have a positive and strong impact on power and eligibility of social entrepreneurship development (Urban, Kujinga, 2017).

As many universities have centres of career and start-up centres nowadays, they may become the basis for creating this new, but highly necessary subdivision that will be responsible for the system functioning, namely:

• analysis of the level of SE skills formation among students through regular questioners and quality of SE ideas presented at different competitions and start-up pitches;

• provision of specific training courses for teachers with teaching excellence development (e.g. Methods of facilitation, Techniques for critical thinking development etc.);

• monitoring of how the new methods and techniques are used at various courses by collecting students' feedbacks on teachers' performance;

• organization of relevant courses for students as extracurricular activities or elective subjects (e.g. Boost up your creativeness, On the way to your start-up etc.);

• organization of extracurricular events directed at SE skills development (teambuilding camps, excursions to social enterprises, development of volunteering initiatives etc.).

In terms of responsibilities and the people involved, the system may be represented in the following way (see Figure 1):
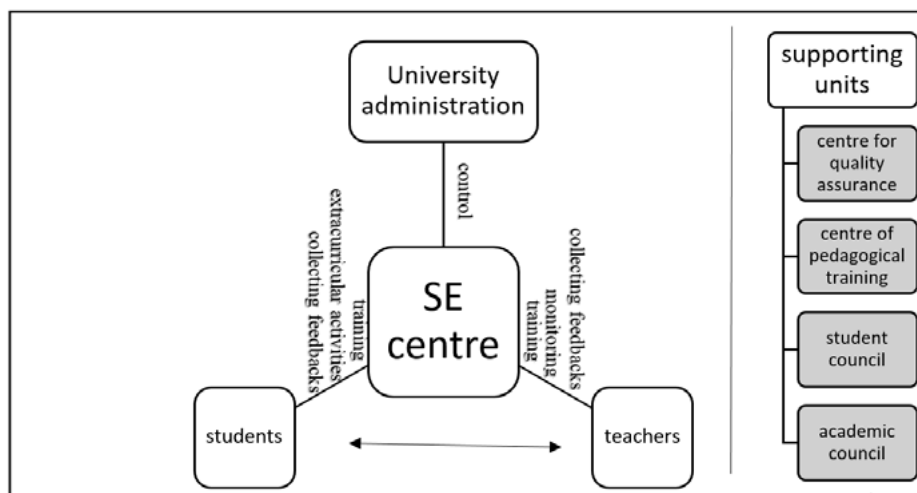

Figure 1. The comprehensive system towards development of SE skills among students

Discussion. The suggested system, as well as the usage of the three approaches to teaching process mentioned above, could be of benefit for creating university environment focused on social entrepreneurship skills development among students. It is important that the system is evaluated from different viewpoints and its mechanisms of operation are developed that will be supportive to all the stakeholders rather than a burden. The existing university administrative structures may be already complex and overloaded, which puts a question of SE centre function as a separate subdivision, or being incorporated into the existing one.

Moreover, considering that modern universities are developing in the direction of life-long learning, inviting general public to study full-time, as well as to attend separate courses, the question of developing SE skills among adult learners deserves further attention. It is generally known, that approaches and methods of teaching youth and adults may differ. What is more, adult learners are often more detached from the university environment, as they have family responsibilities and other duties, which limits the time and forms of work on social entrepreneurship skills development. Another question in this regard is if all categories of adult learners need the social entrepreneurship skills at the same level, or if there are separate categories, for which they are really crucial. Considering Ukrainian context, for example, at present there are internally displaced persons that are in the focus of social

attention, as well as military personnel and ATO/JFO veterans, the number of which is increasing while the war conflict at the East of Ukraine is continuing. Developing social entrepreneurship skills among such groups of adults may support them as a part of professional retraining, give impulse to self-realization at a new place or in a new role, and help them to unleash their full potential for their communities.

Limitations. This study is limited by the lack of empirical data on the efficiency of the educational approaches suggested for the social entrepreneurship competence development, which is seen as a task for future research. The same is true for the suggested system.

Conclusions. COVID-19 crisis has enhanced a series of processes that for some time developed worldwide, including social entrepreneurship. The positive outcomes of social entrepreneurship for economy and social welfare makes it crucial to develop necessary skills at modern universities. As such, the following could be outlined: creativeness, critical thinking, civic engagement, communicative and adaptive skills. The educational system needs to focus on developing these skills among students to provide them with better employability and career prospects.

The three main approaches for developing social entrepreneurship skills are transdisciplinary, learner-centred and challenge-based, which can be applied together at different levels of complexity and forms of classes which can be united in a comprehensive system of training. What is more, the goal may be achieved by initiatives on both student and teacher levels, e.g. interdisciplinary student project on one hand, and co-teaching of departments on the other hand.

Apart from the comprehensive training approach, universities who put as a strategic goal social entrepreneurship development may strengthen this direction by creating social entrepreneurship centres as structural subdivisions, that will perform organizational and analytical functions involving both students and teachers into curricular and extra-curricular activities, creating a favourable environment for developing social entrepreneurship competence.

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