

# Curricular Approach to School Libraries Education Program

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## Summary

*This paper reports on the model of the curricular approach to teaching within the school library program. In 1980's, school librarians have started to look for the ways and possibilities to educate pupils. Since then, school librarians have used their own programs in direct educational process. Those decisions and also their implementation, were on the level of revolutionary changes, but today the library education programs participate in knowledge management within the school curriculum.*

*In that way, school libraries have shown the way and the application models of information resources in education which were forerunners of today's new ways of learning.*

*Methodology: The authors will use comparative analysis and statistic indicators based on perennial practical research.*

*Results: Based on practice, literature reviews and comparative analysis, this paper shows the contribution of the school librarianship to learning which is based on information resources within the National and school curriculum frameworks. The key result is the Librarianship and information management education aiming at expectable progresses, that is, at learning results which are visible and measurable.*

**Key words:** school curriculum, knowledge management, information resources, education, school library

## Introduction

The basics of modern knowledge concepts in general, and new ways of knowledge achievement are marked by the attitude that education has not prepared people for workplace because they haven't achieved enough qualitative knowledge. Those wide spread and often mentioned attitudes seem like consequences of dissatisfaction and unadapted people who were educated and now they work. That (very natural and logical) imbalance is mostly led in tight connection to very fast progress of technology which has brought radical changes in the society. According to that or just to it, there is a need for equally swift and drastic changes in knowledge achievement, even in knowledge contents. According to such conclusions, educational process wants to make novelties by using new strategies, reforms and big steps which were taken before the former preceding steps were fully usable in the educational process.

Following such logic and analysing contents, methods, manners and strategies of knowledge achievement, all innovations (which are always welcome) within the education system could be carried out far more rationally and with less shock for the process participants esp. students and teachers. The Croatian education system has always followed educational needs of society and individuals. The newest in the series of suggestions which should offer more qualitative education is National curriculum frameworks. Keeping in mind that every novelty brings something new, better or/and more qualitative, this paper would also be a valuable contribution. Nevertheless, it can be claimed, with audacity based on experience, that long time ago school librarians found and since then practised curricular approach in education.

## School library and curriculum

In 1980s in some schools there were only outlines of the curricular<sup>1</sup> approach to education, but in that approach was clearly visible. The proof is in existence of school libraries which in early 1980s started the transformation of classic school library into Library-information centres whose main idea was the school library as a part of educational process. By focusing on information in educational work in school library, the project was started with programs of "learning how to learn". Integration of that knowledge opened the door to students and teachers to learning based on information and knowledge resources. The defined part of school activity program, which defines the frameworks, makes the firm basis which every school shapes in its most appropriate way.

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<sup>1</sup> The term was at first used in Anglo-Saxon countries and then in Germany, later in other European countries and also in Croatia. Originally, the term "curricular" means *sequence, way* (to reach something), for example, *the way of planning during education process*. It is interpreted differently, for example, as learning content, as substitute for term "syllabus", in the sense of system, educational program, planning, preparing and evaluation (*development curriculum*), in the sense of *curriculum* programming access. That is the reason that there are *curriculum theory* and *curriculum practice*. Source: Antić, Stanko (2000.)

That is the reason why it is so important that the annual plan and activity program are adopted, planned and made by those who are going to implement it. Except considering the main frameworks of the subjects and time-table for regular classes, it is also possible to add and change all other activities according to capabilities of school or needs of the students. A team of experts (professionals like educator, psychologist, defectologist and school librarian, also parents, if necessary) chooses activities and create time-table according to activities which are going to be presented during the school year. Flexibility of the annual plan and school activities program reflects its diversity every year. Changes, which are clearly visible in the program, help us to follow real intentions of a school to improve educational process. Breadth and diversity during planning and programming give a picture of employees and school profile. Annual plan should reflect school's identity, which means that it should only be partially similar to other plans. Most of the annual plan has to be different from every school to school. That would indicate that schools do care for modern approach to education and their needs and preferences – a student in the middle of the education, the quality of learning as a need, key competences for lifelong learning as a process and learning outcome as a final goal.<sup>2</sup>

The real school curriculum is a reflection of such sequence. In Croatian school libraries such learning approach is in practice since 1980s. The foundations of the National curriculum frameworks are compatible with those described within the organisation in the school library.

### **Towards curriculum guidelines**

The Croatian school librarians tabled *Library education of students* program which includes two fields: *information literacy and promotion of reading*. The program became a part of the National plan and program for primary school (more important than other subjects, not any more within the Croatian language classes, section media culture) and is implemented in all Croatian primary schools. Considering other subjects, the program is divided in three parts: *topic, key terms and educational achievements*. The program baselines are not some-

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“In the recent times, the term “curriculum” has been used very often. This term is not uniquely defined except the consensus that it refers to process and it is wider than syllabus. If we talk about *curricular or cross-curricular approach* in a specific subject, then it refers to content interconnection of specific (and all) subjects – “processing” of specific contents (or aspects) of all subjects, that is, full approach to realization of National plan and program, with other school subjects and activities.” (Kurikularni pristup promjenama u gimnaziji. Zagreb: Ministarstvo prosvjete i športa Republike Hrvatske, 2003.)

“The term *curricular* is nothing else but didactics which was developed in Anglo-Saxon speaking area. Curricular cycle is targetting at objectives, procedures, methods, learning strategies, evaluations, and all that are didactic issues” (Jurić, “Didaktika u kurikularnom krugu”. Školske novine br.13. (2006.)

<sup>2</sup> According to D. Kovačević; J. Lasić-Lazić; J. Lovrinčević: “Školska knjižnica – korak dalje”.(2004.)

thing that students learn during one school year, but their knowledge, skills and competences were determined across different educational levels and in different fields and learning contents. The main task is to create an active reader and an user of different information resources who is capable of independent life-long learning. By implementing the new National plan and program, the Library education of students program was adjusted to other subjects. The following example shows how it works in practice:

Table 1: Library education of students and Croatian language classes

<p>School library: Information literacy  Topic: Reference collection  <i>Key terms:</i> encyclopaedia, thesaurus, dictionary, spelling book, atlas  <i>Educational achievements:</i> to comprehend the reference collection and how to use it aiming at expanding knowledge; to recognize reference collection on different media; to know how to find, choose and apply information</p>	<p>Croatian language – Media culture  Topic: school library – using of dictionary and spelling book  <i>Key terms:</i> dictionary, spelling  <i>Suggestions for methodic interpretation:</i> to learn about different editions of dictionaries and spelling books that are available in the library; to encourage students to express linguistic doubts and to solve them by using dictionaries and spelling books</p>
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Reference collection is used in the third (level of recognition) and fourth grade (beginning of learning in how to research information in specific field). The example shows that it is possible to plan and implement classes in school library through cooperation between the Croatian language teacher and school librarian who have a common goal: to present to students important reference books (dictionary and spelling) and at the same time to check acquired knowledge (educational achievements) by using a specific text, which means to encourage and develop reading skills which are the criteria to enter the world of information research. Without qualitative professional cooperation between teacher, school librarian and co-workers the Program can not be implemented, because it is not just a teacher's/school librarian's tool, but also a student's tool in the process of independent learning and information research.

### **Library-information education program**

School library is accessible to students in the period of their most intensive knowledge acquisition and learning, and in the period of their attitude and behaviour development which is important for their future lives. The school library is not only support to education but also supports personal creative progress of every student who, in that way, develops permanent need for life-long learning. Partnership and team work enable the school library and librarian to participate actively in accomplishing interdisciplinary and multimedia approach to classes which emphasize methods and readiness to use knowledge and its testing and refining. In such conditions the school library enables realizing individual and collective educational, information, cultural and social needs of its

patrons, especially students. Information theory and practice of teaching program in the school library reflect legislative guidelines (IFLA/ UNESCO School Library Manifesto: The school library in teaching and learning (2000)) which emphasize the basic tasks of the school library, which are important for basic literacy, computer- and information literacy development, and professional ethics (the school librarian as information professional and educator). For the first time, in the history of Croatian school librarianship, the implementation of a unique teaching program in school libraries enables vertical educational connection and it can be expected that this vertical connection is going to be realized on all educational levels. School library will be indirectly included in school curriculum through the Library-information education modulus and directly, within interconnected subjects. The Library-information education will be realized within three fields: reading, information literacy, and cultural and public activity from the 1st primary school grade to the 4th high school grade, in five educational cycles:

Primary school: I. (1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> grade); II. (5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade); III. (7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade)  
High school: IV. (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> grade); V. (3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> grade)

### **Reading**

In search for new approaches to learning in library, librarians apply reading & understanding methods which should be connected to the classes' contents. Instructions to subject comprehension are divided into five learning methods: connectivity, experience, application, cooperation and transfer to new contents. Connectivity is related to learning in the context of life experience which is the pith of learning (research, retrieval and finding). At the beginning of education, students are encouraged to reading, improving their reading skills and reading habits (retelling, writing, dramatization, singing, drawing). It is important to strengthen student's self-esteem during solving given tasks and finding library resources. By accomplishing those activities, students start to understand importance of reading and learning in everyday life because they enrich their vocabulary and develop written and verbal communication.

### **Information literacy**

The best way to develop information literacy is the team work of teachers and other professionals in school library and methodic planning based on existing students' skills and needs, with already known modules of good practice which trace developmental school plan. In this context, it is important to promote multidisciplinary field known as human information behaviour. On the information field, it includes process of information recognition, searching, evaluation and use of information. Those are the reasons to research information behaviour. Continuous professional education and knowledge acquisition, and life-long learning impact information behaviour the most.

### **Cultural and public activity**

One of the important components in school librarians' work are cultural and public activities which actualize important events in school or in its surroundings (important anniversaries of events and persons, promotion of cultural events, development of ecological consciousness etc.). Contents of cultural and public activity are components of annual plan and program of school library and librarians, and also components of educational process of the school in general. They are also a stimulus to conduct school projects on specific topics which are initiated and coordinated by a school librarian in cooperation with teachers. Cooperation between the school librarian and cultural institutions – libraries, museums, theatres – aims at education of an individual with developed cultural needs and habits.

### **Expected achievements in library-information education**

According to the form of educational cycles, which was given in the draft National curriculum framework for pre-school and compulsory education in primary and high school, the workgroup for Library-information education program proposed expected achievements of students, already mentioned in three fields: reading, information literacy, and cultural and public activity. Those expected achievements, as a final learning result, are the starting point of topics and contents of the future Library-information education program, according to working arrays and educational cycles. The following examples show how it looks in practice:

#### EDUCATIONAL CYCLE (1st-4th grade, primary school)

##### *Reading*

Students:

- are familiar with the school library and book lending rules
- independently choose books
- participate in different activities which stimulate reading and developing reading culture (retelling, writing, dramatization, singing, drawing)
- understand importance of reading in their lives, compare situations and characters from literary works to everyday life; they communicate with literary text on the level of recognition
- know what is a children's magazine; recognize columns which are educational and those which are for fun
- independently choose and read books and children's magazines in order to develop reading skills and to achieve reading habits
- reading enriches their vocabulary and develops written and verbal communication, they understand and react to simple and complex questions

- understand the value of creative achievements
- accept library as a place for learning, talking and having fun

### *Information literacy*

Students:

- know the difference between book and non-book materials
- recognize children's magazine as a part of the library collection and as information resource; they use indexes to find wanted contents
- know the difference between literary-artistic texts and popular-scientific ones
- are familiar with book parts and know how to find specific information in a book (title page, foreword, afterword, note about author)
- are familiar with different information resources in library and use them according to their age
- use thesaurus and encyclopaedia in order to expand their knowledge and to develop information skills; they know how to search the library collection by using alphabet, indexes and marginal words
- know the use of dictionary and spelling book; they are familiar with and respect the spelling standards of the Croatian language

### *Cultural and public activity*

Students:

- are familiar with children's department of the city/public library and as their patrons they use the library's services in order to learn and to spend there their quality time
- are familiar with and they visit cultural institutions
- are familiar with children's rights, they respect them and have positive attitude towards themselves and others
- accept differences

## I. EDUCATIONAL CYCLE

(1st -2nd grade – high school and triennial vocational and art school)

### *Reading*

Students:

- have developed reading interests and skills
- have developed the need to be familiar with popular-scientific and professional journals
- are able to read and understand popular-scientific and professional texts
- know how to connect personal experience, pre-knowledge and new information from different information resources.

### *Information literacy*

Students:

- are able to find, evaluate and use different information resources
- independently form queries in order to find information
- know how to search library catalogues and Internet resources
- are able to find information in reference and professional literature
- are used to writing notes
- know how to list used bibliographic references
- understand and critically review information, they use them in the right way and creatively
- understand professional terminology
- are familiar with cooperative and research learning

### *Cultural and public activity*

Students:

- are familiar with and respect local and the Croatian cultural and natural heritage
- have a positive attitude towards cultural and natural heritage of other people
- have a need to participate in different cultural events
- have a positive attitude towards nature and environmental protection
- accept differences and other people's opinions and attitudes.

### **Conclusion**

The main objective of every school and its library is learning. The quality of the school library program is tightly connected to the quality of education. The old model "one teacher in one class" is now history. Information society calls for new models of teams of teachers who have different qualifications and competences to create a new cooperative environment. Workgroup plans everything, aiming at developing research abilities and students' comprehension of school subjects, but also at encouraging cooperative learning, reading with understanding and developing of social skills. Presented programs and ways of working and learning in and with the school library speak for themselves about theoretical ingenuity and practical competences of the school library in achieving high standards in learning and teaching.

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