

## INNOVATIVE START-UP TRAINING PROGRAMME BASED ON GOOGLE APPS

Milan KRSTIĆ<sup>1</sup>, Goran LAPČEVIĆ<sup>2</sup>, Zorana NIKITOVIĆ<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Inovativnost, ORCID 0009-0006-5838-8070*

<sup>2</sup>*Faculty of Business Economics and Entrepreneurship, ORCID 0009-0005-0754-5454*

<sup>3</sup>*Faculty of Business Economics and Entrepreneurship, ORCID 0000-0003-1443-7345*

**Abstract:** *Entrepreneurship is important for every economy as it encourages economic growth, self-employment and the creation of new jobs, as well as the development of innovations, all of which lead to social well-being. Entrepreneurship is a human activity of practical application of knowledge and skills with a high degree of manifestation of individual abilities. To succeed in establishing a new business entity, it is important to carry out specialized innovative start-up training aimed at preparing people who want to become entrepreneurs, including active entrepreneurs, and which is carried out in order to build their knowledge and skills necessary for starting and running a business. The mentioned programme can be implemented in a traditional way, through a software platform for innovative management, as well as through Google apps. This paper discusses the possibility of implementing an innovative start-up programme relying on Google apps, based on the practical realization of one such programme implemented by the authors working with the users of regional innovation start-up centers in Serbia.*

**Keywords:** *Education Programme, Start-up, Innovative Start-up Training, Google apps*

**JEL classification:** *O30*

### 1. Introduction

Ever since the standalone application — Google Forms — was launched at the beginning of 2016, it immediately became a significant alternative to other ways of creating questionnaires because it provided users with more opportunities for making surveys of various types and purposes, the possibility of on-line creation of surveys, collection of survey results, survey processing, etc. Today, Google Workspace, which includes the aforementioned Google Forms application along with other applications (Docs, Sheets, Slides), is becoming an indispensable tool of modern business.

One of the areas where Google Workspace has found significant application is education, especially in different types of training. In this sense, this paper shows the possibility of using Google applications in innovative start-up training, based on the practical realization of such a training program.

Entrepreneurial training is a category of informal education and is organized in order to provide potential and current entrepreneurs with the necessary support in the form of relevant knowledge, skills and competencies, both for starting a new business and for managing and improving an existing one.

Therefore, in this paper, the focus is first directed to Google apps, which are briefly presented. Then the focus is transferred to entrepreneurial training in terms of its goals, the topics it deals with, as well as the methods that are applied during its implementation. Then the focus shifts to the innovative start-up training programme (aimed at establishing a new venture), and states that its structure consists of activities (introductory session, thematic activities, additional activities and final session) comprised of several educational sub-activities.

<sup>1</sup> [mykrstic@gmail.com](mailto:mykrstic@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> [gorlap@gmail.com](mailto:gorlap@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup> [djurazo001@gmail.com](mailto:djurazo001@gmail.com)\*

In their work with the users of regional innovation start-up centers in Serbia, the authors used three ways of implementing innovative start-up training programmes: the traditional way of training, training through a specialized software platform for innovative management, and training based on Google apps. In this paper, the training programme based on Google apps is discussed in more detail, in terms of its basic characteristics, implementation possibilities, centralized (Google) document management, as well as potential benefits from its application.

## 2. Google Apps

Ever since 2006, when the word "google" was included in the Oxford English Dictionary, it has become clear that Google has become a brand and the first resource for finding answers to anything. Since then, Google has evolved many times, whether in software (in terms of cloud data storage, communication capabilities, on-line applications, operating systems, browsers), hardware (Android phones, Chromebooks, speakers with artificial intelligence, home security devices), or in the ability to use and access data. A key advantage of any Google solution is the interconnection (existing or potential) with all other Google products. (Bass C, 2021)

Application of various technologies improves learning environment and provides preconditions to transform teaching into learning. The online learning environment is quite different from a traditional classroom, in which one had limited interaction and almost unlimited access to learning resources (Vučeković, Medić, & Marković, 2020). Advances in technology, such as the enhancement of smart-phones, tablet computers, and improved Internet access, have resulted in many new ICT tools and applications designed to increase efficiency and improve business flow. The global Covid19 pandemic has only further increased the already significantly established dependence on ICT technologies, by expanding the use of Google products, especially in distance education (Google Classroom, Chromebook). (Bass C, 2021)

Google Workspace today includes several user apps, namely: Docs, Sheets, Slides, Forms, Keep, Sites, Drive, Gmail, Meet, Calendar, Chat (Google Workspace, 2022).

Google apps come free with a Google account and are fully functional tools for the forms offered. (Guay M, 2022)

Of special importance for this paper are those Google apps that enable the creation of content: documents, tables, slides and forms (Docs, Sheets, Slides, Forms).

Here, we should mention only some of the advantages that the Google form offers in comparison to a manual questionnaire in terms of paper use, ecology, time efficiency, labour costs, recapitulation of respondents' answers, etc. Since today almost everyone has a smart-phone that is directly connected to Google, Google Form has become an alternative way to apply a selected digital questionnaire. (Rohmah N, Hariyono M, Shofiyuddin M, 2018).

## 3. Innovative Start-Up Training Programme

Entrepreneurial training, known as start-up training, serves to prepare people who want to become entrepreneurs, including active entrepreneurs, by providing them with self-confidence and building their knowledge and skills, all of which is necessary for success, development and business management.

Entrepreneurial training is "a form of informal education intended for potential and current entrepreneurs, regardless of their differences in terms of age, level of education, previous experience, and which aims to build the knowledge and skills necessary to start and run a business" (Krstic M, Skorup A, Lapcevic G, 2018).

As a rule, entrepreneurial training is not "one-size-fits-all" but differs depending on the stage of development in which a potential or existing enterprise is. After its completion, the participants of the training should be able to create ideas, prepare business plans and raise their business to a higher level. Entrepreneurial training also includes peer learning, sharing knowledge and know-how, as well as mentorship. (European Training Foundation, 2019)

**Entrepreneurship training program (ETP)** is a specific type of education whose purpose is to develop entrepreneurial competence in potential individuals in order to motivate them to start their own entrepreneurial venture.

The key **objectives** of ETP could be summarized as follows (Solanki K, 2021):

- Encouraging entrepreneurial spirit, self-employment and development of small and medium-sized enterprises.
- Encouraging the establishment of new companies and especially the expansion of existing ones in rural areas.
- Building entrepreneurial skills in potential entrepreneurs to help them to develop into entrepreneurs.
- Helping entrepreneurs to (re)define their business goals and to work individually and as a group on their realization.
- Education of entrepreneurs for unforeseen threats and risks related to business.
- Facilitating the making of strategic entrepreneurial decisions.
- Developing team building and coordination skills to meet future demands.
- Developing communication skills among potential entrepreneurs.
- Educating potential entrepreneurs to define their visions and work in a coordinated manner on their realization.
- Enabling potential entrepreneurs to analyse the environment and make appropriate decisions about products/services.
- Helping potential entrepreneurs to understand the legal procedures and norms involved in establishing a new venture.
- Incorporating the basics of industrial relations.

Therefore, ETP integrates **the topics** that deal with basic entrepreneurial skills, knowledge and competencies (Solanki K, 2021):

- *Entrepreneurship* — concept, history, characteristics, quality, importance, advantages, roles in the economic development of the country, etc.
- *Motivation for achievement* — increasing self-confidence, self-awareness, innovation, need for achievement and other entrepreneurial skills of entrepreneurs by using behavioural psychology techniques.
- *Management* — management concept in terms of basic management functions such as production, marketing, finance and labour relations, which are necessary to start a new venture and then make it profitable.
- *Support system and procedures* — schemes, roles and availability of various service agencies, financial and non-financial institutions and various programmes, including government policies.
- *Project feasibility* — information on potential business opportunities, on market research, assistance for the preparation of the project feasibility study, evaluation of the project feasibility study, technical and commercial viability analysis, etc.
- *Study visits* — industrial visits to successful entrepreneurs.
- *Technical knowledge* — information about the economic aspects of technology, such as costs and benefits associated with a certain technology.
- *Market issues* — knowledge of how the market works, the possibility to conduct market research of one's own project, successful entrepreneurs sharing their experience.

During the realization of the ETP, different **methods** can be applied, and some of them are (Solanki K, 2021):

- *Lectures* — oral transfer of information to participants.
- *Written teaching* — in the case of a standardized training system.

- *Individual instructions* — provision of entrepreneurial training by one person.
- *Group work* — when similar instructions are given to all candidates.
- *Demonstrations* — when the focus is not on providing theoretical but practical knowledge.
- *Meetings* — discussions of groups of people on various issues they face, where views and ideas are exchanged and conclusions are drawn based on various proposals and alternatives.
- *Conference* — transfer of knowledge about new ideas and techniques with the participation of experts from various fields who share their knowledge and experiences useful for the participants.

If it is a ETP that is primarily oriented towards the formation of a new business entity, then such ETP is called the **Innovative Start-up Training Program (ISTP)**.

The standard ISTP structure consists of the following **activities**:

- introductory session;
- thematic activities; (accompanying or additional activities);
- final session.

**The opening and closing sessions** are the activities that start and end the ISTP and, as a rule, include the presentation of the participants, the presentation of the training plan, recording attendance, summarizing the results and evaluating the satisfaction of the participants.

**Thematic activities** concern the delivery of key entrepreneurial skills and knowledge and include the following activities:

- *Motivational innovative training*, which is carried out for the purpose of affirming entrepreneurship and starting your own start-up in order to motivate the participants of the training .
- *Advanced innovative training*, which is carried out in order for the training participants to become more familiar with entrepreneurship and with relevant areas such as creativity, innovation, circular economy, etc.
- *Innovation mentoring in defining an innovative start-up plan*, which is carried out for the purpose of training participants in the creation of a start-up business plan as well as its further development and improvement.
- *Instructional training* for initiating and operating a start-up, which is conducted to operationalize initial stages of a start-up business in terms of registering business entities with the Agency for Business Registers, opening an account and doing business with the bank, taxes and contributions, invoicing and e-invoicing, bookkeeping, etc.
- *Innovation mentoring in improving the business of an established start-up*, which is carried out to improve its performance in terms of product/service portfolio, innovation, competitiveness, business processes, crisis resistance and development planning.

**Accompanying or additional activities** are of an optional nature, and as a rule, they are added between certain thematic activities in order to enrich them with additional training, such as, for example, round tables, different types of competitions in the function of the creation and development of start-ups, and similar promotional activities.

Each of the mentioned activities consists of two or more **sub-activities** that can include different types of training actions such as:

- *theoretical lectures* (oral presentations with or without multimedia support of various types),
- *workshops* (practical training, for example, thematic, instructional, presentation, discussion, creative, motivational and others),
- *simulations and games* (such as brainstorming, creativity exercises such as "6 hats", etc.)
- *independent work by the participants* (such as filling in appropriate forms, surveys, creating a business plan, creating a presentation of a business plan, etc.),
- *presentations*, for example of a business plan, by the participants,
- *getting to know successful entrepreneurs*,
- *visits to successful start-ups and institutions for innovation support* (business incubators, start-up innovation centres, science and technology parks, etc.).

ISTP can be carried out in *various ways*, for example:

- In a traditional way,
- It can be entirely based on an innovative management software platform, and
- It can be entirely based on Google apps

#### 4. ISTP Realization in the Traditional Way

The basic **characteristics** of ISTP implementation in the traditional way could be briefly summarized in the following:

- Materials and/or communication used during training differ depending on the type of activity or sub-activity as well as in terms of purpose (content, information, data, instructions, etc.).
- The training is carried out through direct contact, or direct interaction between the trainer and the participants in a designated space, while the interaction can be carried out on a "one-on-one" or "one-to-all" basis.
- Instruments as carriers of information for the delivery of materials and/or communication within the training applied by trainers, as a rule, are represented by some of the standard Microsoft Office documents, such as Word, Excell, PowerPoint documents.
- Several types of instruments are used as information carriers, but the most common instruments used are word or pdf documents in e-format or in printed version.
- Trainers hand over the instruments to the participants either personally in printed version or in e-format via the Internet (via e-mail or Viber), and the training participants supplement or fill them in and then return them to the trainers via direct communication or in e-format via the Internet (via e-mail or Viber).

Based on the above, it can be concluded that such a working method leads to certain data in documents (for example, identification data and others) being entered multiple times and appearing in several different places, which significantly increases the *redundancy* of data.

#### 5. Implementation of ISTP Based on the Innovative Management Software Platform

ISTP based on a software platform for innovative management, (Skorup A., Krstić M., Lapčević G., 2017) has the following **features**.

The basis of this ISTP is the specialized **Software Platform for Innovative Management** (SPIM), which represents a specific user guide for entrepreneurial self-education within the framework of innovative management, which is based on the application of information and communication technologies.

The purpose of SPIM is **consulting for innovative management**, i.e. spreading and sharing the latest knowledge, skills, best practices and relevant information from innovative management to different users.

SPIM provides its users with **sophisticated informational entrepreneurial support** within the four built-in educational modules, namely:

- creativity,
- tools,
- innovativeness,
- product life-cycle management.

SPIM is operationalized through:

- available and relevant instructions about the mentioned modules,
- entrepreneurial communication,
- entrepreneurial self-education,
- a campaign of ideas in case of group education,
- having participants manage the life cycle of an idea.

In this way, users are given the opportunity to access educational content and expand their knowledge and competences within the available possibilities of applying SPIM, that is, in online or offline mode.

## 6. Implementation of ISTP based on Google applications

ISTP consists of a total of seven key educational areas, which build on each other in a logical sequence, namely:

- Motivational innovative training,
- The start of the education,
- Advanced innovative training,
- Innovative mentoring in defining an innovative start-up plan,
- Competing for the best start-up business plan,
- Innovative mentoring in promoting the start-up,
- Instructional training for initiating and operative running of the start-up.

The main **characteristics** of an ISTP based on Google Apps could be summarized as follows:

- Materials and/or communication used during training differ depending on the type of activity or sub-activity as well as in terms of purpose (content, information, data, instructions, etc.).
  - Training is carried out through direct contact, or direct interaction between the trainer and the participant in a designated area, the interaction can be carried out on the principle of "one to one" or "one to all", as well as through *indirect interaction between the trainer and the training participant via the Internet*.
    - Instruments as carriers of information for the delivery of materials and/or communication within the training applied by trainers, as a rule, are presented in one of the standard *Google applications, such as Google docs, Sheets, Slides presentations, Question form*.
      - Doc or pdf are most often used as information carriers in e-format, while in this method *printed versions are reduced to a minimum*.
      - Several types of instruments are used that the participants of the training complete or fill out and then return the completed ones to the trainers via indirect communication, which reduces data redundancy to a minimum.

In the case of the questionnaire, due to the specificity and possibilities provided by the Google question form, the logic of the questionnaire was changed, and the additional changes were implemented due to different interpretations.

ISTP based on Google applications can be implemented immediately, from personal computers and tablets as well as smart-phones. Only in the case of a Google Sheet document, with smart-phones, it is necessary to first download an Excel-reading app into the phone. However, it must be noted that Google Sheet is not the most comfortable for working from a smart-phone. All other Google documents used here, with the exception of Google Sheet, are accessible and comfortable for working from a smart-phone.

The basis of ISTP based on Google applications is the **Central** (Google) document that is a kind of user guide, since all other documents that are used in any way in ISTP are presented within it. They are linked and can be called, viewed or shared from there by the trainer.

In it, all activities (including their sub-activities) are presented as follows:

- serial number, short content (or management if they represent an action),
- identifying the place (where the training is carried out),
- identifying its implementer (for example, the name and surname of the trainer),
- input elements for its implementation (for example, presentation, questionnaire, etc.),
- output elements after its implementation (for example, a completed form, business plan, etc.), as well as
  - additional information if necessary.

The concretely implemented ISTP that was used to create this work integrates a total of 21 documents, and the number of documents by type is as follows: Google docs – 2, Google Sheets – 2, Google slides presentations – 9, Google question form – 8.

In order to illustrate the created documents, in the following text, the PrintScreens of some of the aforementioned Google documents are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3.

**Figure 1: Participant’s profile (Google question form)**

**PROFIL UČESNIKA**

Poštovani,  
Molimo Vas da popunite upitnik koji se tiče Vašeg predstavljanja.  
Upitnik sadrži ukupno kratkih 12 pitanja i za njegovo popunjavanje će vam trebati nekoliko minuta.  
Unapred se zahvaljujemo na saradnji!

Ime i prezime \*

Adresa \*

Srednja škola, ustanova visokog obrazovanja, funkcija ili druga bliža odrednica \*

Interesovanja (navesti redom: 1 \_\_\_\_\_, 2 \_\_\_\_\_, 3 \_\_\_\_\_) \*

Stecene veštine (navesti redom: 1 \_\_\_\_\_, 2 \_\_\_\_\_, 3 \_\_\_\_\_) \*

**Figure 2: Records (Google question form)**

**EVIDENCIJA PRISUSTVA**

Poštovani,  
Molimo Vas da unesete tražene podatke radi evidentiranja Vaše prisustva ovoj sesiji.  
Upitnik sadrži samo 3 identifikaciona pitanja i za njegovu popunu će vam biti potrebno manje od 1 minuta.  
Unapred se zahvaljujemo na saradnji!

Mesto održavanja \*

Tema \*

ime i prezime

Kratki odgovor

**Figure 3: A business plan model (Google slides presentations)**

**Model poslovnog plana**

1. Poslovna ideja

2. Portfolio proizvoda / usluga

3. Tržišni aspekt ideje

4. Konkurencija

5. Konkurencija nastaviti/

6. Konkurencija nastaviti/

The implementation of ISTP based on Google applications requires the appointment of an **administrator**, a person who, in addition to knowing ISTP, has also mastered working with Google documents. The administrator's task is, among other things, the formation of a Viber group for start-up education, delivery of a welcome message to all participants of start-up education, delivery of links to all previously mentioned Google documents to all education participants and trainers, monitoring of records, response of education participants, etc.

The **benefits** of using ISTP based on Google Apps are multiple and can be summarized as follows:

- Redundancy of data is eliminated (one and the same data in several places), as well as subsequent retyping of the text by participants or by trainers and mentors.
- All data are stored in Google applications and are updated on-line in accordance with the competencies of the participants (training participants, trainers and mentors).
- All records of attendance at individual trainings are kept in one place, one below the other, in a separate Excel document.

The results of all questionnaires, answers of participants, are also placed in appropriate Excel documents.

## 7. Conclusion

The basis for writing this paper is the practical realization of ISTP created by the authors of this paper based on Google applications. The mentioned ISTP resulted from a critical analysis of ISTP in the traditional way and efforts for its further improvement. The analysis indicated the expediency of the IT improvement of ISTP, that is, its upgrade in terms of the application of standard Google applications (Docs, Sheets, Slides, Forms). A carried out ISTP based on Google applications pointed out all the advantages of their application. Therefore, this paper briefly points out the key advantages and disadvantages of implementing ISTP in a traditional way and the corresponding one based on Google applications. The special value of this ISTP based on Google applications is its ability to be easily and quickly further adapted and improved according to the newly identified needs and experiences of the users themselves.

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