

The Role of Entrepreneurial Extracurricular Activities in Improving School Culture

Ivana Babić

¹Sveučilište Hercegovina, K.M. Viševića Humskog bb, 88000 Mostar, Bosna i Hercegovina

Email: [ivana.babic\[at\]hercegovina.edu.ba](mailto:ivana.babic[at]hercegovina.edu.ba)

Abstract: A study assessing school culture from the perspective of student cooperative leaders was conducted in primary schools in the Republic of Croatia using the Wagner and Masden – Copas Survey, which contains 17 statements rated on a Likert scale from 1 to 5 as part of a doctoral dissertation. 133 student cooperative leaders participated in the study, which is an extracurricular activity defined by law. Factor analysis of the results identified five dimensions of school culture: professionalism, educational character, collegiality, educational element and self-determination. The results showed a positive school culture, but also pointed to certain areas for improvement, such as involving parents and the community and strengthening professional cooperation. The gender, age and professional qualifications of student cooperative leaders have a statistically significant impact on school culture.

Keywords: school culture, student cooperatives, professionalism, collegiality, self-determination

1. School culture

School culture is one of the pedagogical phenomena and concepts, which, like other phenomena of school management, has its origins in organizational culture. (Staničić, 2006: 341) Understanding the concept of organizational culture is very important in analyzing the meaning and character of institutional life, so most scientists agree that organizational culture is a part of every organization and that its existence, like the existence of the organization, is unquestionable. Barnard (1938) and Mayo (1945) were the first scientists who, in their research on organizational culture, mentioned the importance of norms, feelings, values, and unforeseen interactions in describing informal organizations. (Domović, 2000)

Organizational culture is a concept taken over and adapted from the fields of anthropology, sociology, and ethnology, which is why it required a more careful definition for a more precise introduction. Numerous definitions of organizational culture arise from equally numerous definitions of the concept of culture – Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) found 164 definitions. *Therefore, we say that there are as many definitions of organizational culture as there are organizational culture theorists, and they differ in terms of ideology, central concept, and perspective from which the authors use certain terms.* (Sušan, 2005: 35)

Regardless of the differences that are noticeable in the definitions of organizational culture theorists, what they all have in common is that organizational culture represents a system of values that dominates an organization. It appears as the result of group or organizational learning, and there are numerous factors that influence its emergence and development: employee relations, the type of activity the organization engages in, cultural influences of the broader social context, the degree of interaction. Different organizations have differently strong organizational cultures.

Since the basic concepts of organization such as the formation of organizational units, division of labor, decision-making, ordering, and control of the execution of orders in

an organization as an institution also operate in school conditions, we can speak of a school as an organization in which there is a generally accepted philosophy, ideology, or system of values, assumptions, beliefs, expectations, attitudes, and norms that we call culture.

As early as 1932, Waller claimed that schools have their own, precisely defined culture. *In schools, there are complex rituals of interpersonal relationships, a series of customs, ways of thinking, and irrational sanctions, as well as moral codes based on them.* (Waller, 1932: 103 according to Wilson et al. 1994: 5207)

As a result of the intuitive sense and approach to organizational life in educational institutions as a whole, instead of the terms school feeling, school impression, tone, milieu, spirit, identity, atmosphere, the use of the terms school culture, school climate, or school atmosphere has become common. Although there is still a terminological inconsistency between the aforementioned terms, some authors point out that the geographic location of the researchers also contributes to this inconsistency, and that American researchers mostly use the term school climate, while European researchers use the term school culture more often. (Staničić, 2006)

In the context of a school as an educational institution, the most commonly used definition is that culture is a system of values, assumptions, beliefs, expectations, attitudes and norms of a school in which the determinants of its *culture reveal how participants in school life approach the problems of decision-making and decision-making. Culture brings stability and security to the school as an organization, strengthens order, facilitates and strengthens forecasting, and gives meaning.* (Owens, 2004: 185) However, sometimes in researches related to common characteristics, the school uses the term culture of the school, and in those that determine the differences between individual schools, we find the term culture of the school (the cultures of the school).

Scientific study of school culture has recently emerged in the

function of improving the quality and development of educational activities as a whole, and taking into account the characteristic cultures, researchers divide schools into effective and ineffective schools. Effective schools are those in which a positive school culture prevails, that is, positive professional relationships in all aspects of school life and work.

2. Products of student cooperatives as a component of school culture

Student cooperatives represent an important segment of educational work in schools, and their products can be a significant contribution to school culture. Through the work of a student cooperative, students develop entrepreneurial skills, environmental awareness, team spirit and creativity, while creating products that enrich the school community.

According to Article 39 of the Act on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools, adopted by the Croatian Parliament on 15 July 2008, primary and secondary schools may establish a student cooperative as a form of extracurricular activity in accordance with the school statute and special regulations. Cooperatives are one of the oldest forms of reforming public schools in order to enable students to prepare for life and enable them to actively master educational content in accordance with their preferences and abilities. One of the important segments of school culture are school symbols, and a student cooperative can produce various items with the school logo, such as badges, pendants, canvas bags, T-shirts and diaries. These products strengthen the school's identity and the sense of belonging among students and teachers. The cooperative can also produce educational materials, such as handmade notebooks, ecological waste sorting boxes or posters with motivational messages. In this way, students contribute to the aesthetic decoration of the school and raise awareness of important values, such as ecology and mutual respect. Finally, the student cooperative can produce arts and crafts, such as ceramic decorations, jewelry, soaps or candles, which can serve as gifts for school guests, awards for successful students or decorative elements within the school premises. Through all these activities, the student cooperative not only encourages creativity and entrepreneurship, but also actively contributes to the development of school culture, strengthening community and creating an inspiring school environment.:

3. School Culture - An approach to analyzing school quality Title and authors

There are many definitions of quality, and the most commonly used official definition is according to HRN EN ISO 8402, which states that quality is the totality of characteristics of a given entity that make it capable of satisfying expressed or assumed needs. Determining the quality of a school is a very important issue in the field of school pedagogy, but a system of indicators of the quality of upbringing and education has not yet been fully determined. Indicators should help schools identify important areas of their own activities – their own strengths, weaknesses, and development opportunities.

One of the definitions describing school culture says that it is the way a school works (Deal and Kennedy, 1983; according to Stoll and Fink, 1999), and if we view it as one of the possible approaches to analyzing school quality, then it is necessary to analyze whether school culture enables quality education and successful teaching.

According to the Global Monitoring Report, two goals that must be met in order to achieve quality education are listed. The first states the cognitive development of students as the main goal of every education system, and the second emphasizes the educational role in promoting the values and attitudes of responsible citizenship and in nurturing the creative and emotional development of every participant in education. Schools that focus on the quality of education will enable children to develop and grow in environments that are both sustainable and challenging, that give them security, a high level of self-esteem and encourage motivation for further learning. It would be good if all schools could be places where children of different abilities can learn, grow and develop together. Then we could define them as schools where quality education takes place and is implemented.

Rational identification of school culture comes down to determining the state of the three most important areas in which teachers operate, namely: professionalism, collegiality and self-determination. (Center for Improving School Culture – CISC, 2002, according to Staničić, 2006: 333). Determining professionalism shows the extent to which teachers participate in the appropriate professional area (curricular, extracurricular, etc.), and above all in the process of planning, organizing and conducting classes. Collegiality shows the quality of the relationship between all participants in the teaching process (teachers, students, parents, etc.), while assessments in the area of self-determination indicate how teachers feel about their involvement in school matters, whether they are involved in a certain activity because they want to or simply because they have to, whether they are improving themselves because they really want to or because the administration is forcing them to, etc. (Staničić, 2006.).

4. Research methodology

The main objective of this paper was to investigate whether leaders - teachers in primary schools where student cooperatives operate improve school culture. The research task follows from the main objective.

4.1 Research task

To investigate whether leaders of student cooperatives in primary schools improve school culture through three key areas of school culture: professionalism, collegiality and self-determination of effectiveness.

4.2 Research hypothesis

Leaders of student cooperatives sufficiently improve school culture in the areas of professionalism, collegiality and self-determination of effectiveness in total and in relation to school size and geographical location.

4.3 Research variables

Independent variables:

- Gender of student cooperative leaders
- Age of student cooperative leaders
- Level of education of student cooperative leaders
- Years of service of student cooperative leaders
- Size of school in which student cooperative operates
- County in which student cooperative operates.

The dependent variable is:

The attitudes of student cooperative leaders about school culture related to:

– professionalism, collegiality, self-determination of effectiveness. Professionalism, collegiality and self-determination of effectiveness are areas of rational identification of school culture. Determining professionalism shows the extent to which student cooperative leaders participate in the field of student cooperative activities. Collegiality shows the quality of the relationship between the human resources of elementary school student cooperatives. Self-determination indicates how student cooperative leaders feel about being involved in school matters. The assessment is expressed in the levels to which the student cooperative leader agrees with the statements on the assessment scale, which relate to the aforementioned areas of school culture identification.

By operationalizing the dependent and independent variables, they were translated into verifiable and empirically measurable quantities. The formulation of the statements in the scale used was aided by the use of the aforementioned variables.

4.4. Research participants

The research participants were 133 student cooperative leaders in elementary schools in the Republic of Croatia. The survey was conducted on the entire population of student cooperative leaders during the County Expert Councils of Elementary School Student Cooperatives, in collaboration with the heads of the County Expert Councils. A total of 133 leaders (N = 133) responded to the survey. In the group of research participants, the representation of males is 7.5% (N = 10), and the representation of females is 92% (N = 123).

Statistical processing of data on the age structure determined 5 categories (The first category consists of managers whose age is up to 30 years (4%, N = 5). The second category consists of managers from 31 to 40 years (41%, N = 54). The third category consists of managers from 41 to 50 years (34%, N = 45). The fourth category consists of managers from 51 to 60 years (16%, N = 21) and the fifth category consists of managers from 61 to 65 years, i.e. until retirement (6%, N = 8).

Regarding the educational qualification, the respondents were divided into three categories. The first category consists of managers who have a higher education, which in the Bologna school system corresponded to university graduates, but during the research no leader declared about the professional qualifications of the university graduates. The

total number of leaders with higher education was (N = 25, 19%). The second category consisted of leaders with higher education (79%, N = 105) and the third category of leaders with master's degrees (2%, N = 3).

According to the criterion of work experience, the respondents were divided into the following groups: leaders with up to two years of work experience (1.5%, N = 2). The second category consisted of leaders with 3 to 5 years of work experience (7.5%, N = 10). The third category consisted of leaders with 6 to 10 years of work experience (25%, N = 33). The fourth category consisted of leaders with 11 to 15 years of work experience (22%, N = 29). The fifth category consists of leaders with 16 to 20 years of experience (13%, N = 17) and the sixth category consists of leaders with more than 20 years of experience (32%, N = 42).

Considering the size of the school, and the criterion is the number of students, leaders are divided into those who work in schools with up to 100 students (11%, N = 14), those who work in schools with 100 to 300 students (38%, N = 51), leaders who work in schools with 300 to 700 students (37%, N = 49) and those who work in schools with more than 700 students (14%, N = 19).

4.5 Assessment of school culture from the perspective of student cooperative leaders in schools where student cooperatives operate

The assessment of school culture from the perspective of the leaders of student cooperatives was examined using the Wagner and Masden-Copas Survey (Wagner, C., Masden-Copas, P. An audit of the culture starts with two handy tools. *Journal of Staff Development*, 23(3), 2002), which consists of 17 items presented in the form of statements. Namely, for the purpose of a more thorough approach to the study of school culture, it is possible to apply several different procedures and instruments, and the most commonly used is the so-called triage.

In this case, it is part of the triage - a quick procedure for determining the state of school culture using 17 items presented in the form of statements, which the respondents assessed on a scale of five levels of intensity: (1) always, (2) often, (3) sometimes, (4) rarely and (5) never. In addition to the assessment scale, the questionnaire contained a question about age, gender, length of service, professional qualifications and the size of the school in relation to the number of students in which the respondent works. Since the paper used a linguistically adapted version, which was used in such a form for the first time in the Croatian context, it was necessary to determine its basic metric characteristics. The reliability of the scale was expressed by Chrombach's alpha coefficient, which shows satisfactory consistency ($\alpha = 0.81$).

By applying the Guttman-Kaiser criterion (according to which all latent factors whose characteristic root is equal to or greater than one are considered significant) and the scree-test, which analyzes the scree-plot curve (diagram) and determines the number of factors after which the curve flattens out, five factors were extracted according to the particles that have a dominant projection. The values of

characteristic roots (Eigenvalues) and percentages of explained variance for all components are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Values of characteristic roots and percentages of explained variance for 17 components of the scale of components of school culture

Component	Characteristic root	Percentage of explained variance	Cumulative characteristic root	Cumulative percentage of explained variance
1	4,837	28,452	4,837	28,452
2	1,538	9,049	6,375	37,502
3	1,385	8,145	7,760	45,647
4	1,207	7,100	8,967	52,747
5	1,147	6,748	10,114	59,495
6	0,982	5,775	11,096	65,271
7	0,923	5,428	12,019	70,700
8	0,789	4,639	12,807	75,338
9	0,727	4,278	13,535	79,616
10	0,661	3,886	14,195	83,503
11	0,553	3,254	14,749	86,757
12	0,536	3,153	15,285	89,910
13	0,451	2,650	15,735	92,560
14	0,388	2,280	16,123	94,840
15	0,342	2,013	16,465	96,853
16	0,277	1,628	16,742	98,481
17	0,258	1,519	17,000	100,000

The names of the factors are: professionalism (items 8, 12, 13, 14 and 15), educational character (items 2, 4 and 6), collegiality (items 1, 9, 10 and 11), educational element (items 3, 5 and 7) and self-determination (items 16 and 17). Determining professionalism shows the extent to which the leaders of student cooperatives collaborate in the professional field with other teachers in the school. The assessment of collegiality within the school culture should indicate the quality of the relationship, and self-determination should indicate how the leaders of student cooperatives feel about their involvement in decision-making on school issues. The obtained reliability coefficients for all five factors show satisfactory internal consistency, and are: for the dimension of professionalism $\alpha = 0.78$ (explaining 72% of the total variance), for the dimension of educational character $\alpha = 0.39$ (explaining 20% of the total variance), for the dimension of collegiality $\alpha = 0.65$ (explaining 68% of the total variance), for the dimension of educational element $\alpha = 0.32$ (explaining 28% of the total variance) and for the dimension of self-determination $\alpha = 0.45$ (explaining 22% of the total variance).

For the purposes of the research in this paper, 133 questionnaires were collected and processed. It should be noted that the original author's name was used in naming the research instrument, although the instrument is structurally a Likert-type scale. The results were processed using the statistical functions of the computer program Statistica 10. For the purpose of a general description of the results, arithmetic means and standard deviations were calculated (Table 2), and then ANOVA analyses of variance were performed between the independent variables of age, gender, years of service, school size, level of education, and regional affiliation with respect to the county in which the school is located.

Table 2: Basic descriptive results – components of school culture (N = 133)

Assertion marks	M	SD
P1	3,25	0,98
P2	4,56	0,58
P3	4,28	0,77
P4	4,22	0,87
P5	3,83	1,01
P6	4,64	0,61
P7	4,29	0,74
P8	4,27	0,84
P9	3,50	0,88
P10	3,95	0,85
P11	3,83	0,99
P12	4,64	0,59
P13	3,98	0,88
P14	4,68	0,69
P15	4,47	0,69
P16	4,05	0,85
P17	4,32	0,97

5. Results and Discussion

According to the results in Table 2, it was determined that the leaders of student cooperatives significantly influence the school culture, and the obtained arithmetic mean results indicate a positive school culture, which needs to be maintained and improved in some areas, $3.59 < M < 5$ (Staničić, 2006).

The result that shows a lower arithmetic mean value than the one indicating a positive school culture ($M = 3.25$) is related to the statement marked with number 1, which reads: "parents, family members and other members of the community are involved in the extracurricular activities of the student cooperative in our school with their work and contribution." Such a value could mean that improvements are needed, so it would be useful to determine the areas of school culture in which these improvements need to be made (Staničić, 2006). In addition to the stated statement, lower values are observed in the statement marked with number 5 - student members of the student cooperative have fewer punitive measures than other students in the school ($M = 3.83$); number 9 - student cooperative leaders and other school employees visit/talk/meet outside of school to socialize ($M = 3.50$); number 10 - Our school reflects a real sense of community ($M = 3.95$); number 11 - other school employees support and appreciate when student cooperative and section leaders give new ideas ($M = 3.83$); number 13 - When something does not work in our school, all employees whose work is related to the student cooperative prefer to work on preventing problems rather than on repairing the damage and possible subsequent reactions ($M = 3.98$).

The results of the lower arithmetic means on statements 1, 9, 10 and 11 and the previously mentioned results on the factor structure may indicate that hierarchy still prevails among the factors operating in the student cooperative - leaders and other teachers and external collaborators, instead of collegiality as an important norm of school culture. In this area of the culture of relationships, it is worth working on establishing unity in determining goals and responsibilities, and on behavior based on mutual respect and evaluation. It

goes without saying that the leaders of student cooperatives create the method and areas of activity in the student cooperative, but the leadership style and the way they motivate their collaborators can have a positive effect on the area of the culture of relationships. *Encouraging communication, participatory leadership and motivation by highlighting the achievements of valuable individuals will significantly contribute to improving the culture of relationships, and thus the pedagogical culture in the school* (Staničić, 2006: 332).

The arithmetic mean value ($M = 3.83$) on statement 5, according to which students-members of the student cooperative receive fewer punitive measures than other students in the school, is related to the factor related to educational action. The other two statements (3 and 7), which make up the factor structure of the educational element, have values of $M > 4.2$, so the total results on the mentioned factor indicate a positive school culture. Since the results of an extensive study that included students who were cooperative and those who were not cooperative, and which examined a system of 21 moral values, showed that cooperative students have more pronounced positive moral values than non-cooperative students, and that the mentioned difference did not arise by chance but as a result of working in a student cooperative (Biljan, 1984), it can be concluded that one of the reasons for the slightly lower value on the statement may be ignorance of the rulebook on pedagogical measures and ignorance of descriptive documenology from which it could be determined whether a student behaves better than others, or whether or not he or she has received more punitive measures. *Descriptive assessment is a documen- tal area that a teacher needs to know and master well in order to build a successful school in which he or she will fulfill the role of creator and leader, not an order-giver. This concept requires much more creativity in teaching, which means "much" more preparation for teaching and better systematic monitoring of students and their achievements, both in the cognitive, emotional and social areas.* (Šutalo Selimagić, 2013: 524)

The value $M = 3.98$ on the statement marked number 13, which states that when something does not work in our school, all employees whose work is related to the student cooperative prefer to work on preventing problems rather than repairing damage and possible subsequent reactions, is related to the factor related to professionalism. In addition to the stated statement, the factor structure of professionalism also consists of the statements marked numbers 8, 12, 14 and 15. The values of the arithmetic means of the stated items are $M > 4.20$. From the results of the slightly lower arithmetic mean value for statement 13 compared to the results of other statements of the same factor, it can be concluded that there is still room for improvement in the area of professional cooperation between student cooperative leaders and other teachers in the school, and that professional development needs to be focused in this area.

The dimensions of school culture obtained through factor analysis correspond to the content of the three basic dimensions of school culture listed in the relevant literature - professionalism, collegiality and self-determination of effectiveness, and two more categories of educational and

upbringing character were added to the research results. Determining professionalism showed the extent to which the leaders of student cooperatives cooperate in the professional area (planning, organizing, etc.) with other teachers in the school. The assessment of collegiality indicates the quality of the relationship, and the assessment in the area of self-determination indicates how the leaders of student cooperatives feel about being involved in decision-making on school issues;

The basic descriptive results support the hypothesis that the leaders of student cooperatives significantly influence the ethno-pedagogical components of school culture, and the results of arithmetic means obtained indicate a positive school culture, which needs to be maintained and improved in some areas ($3.59 < M < 5$). The results also indicate the need for improvement in the area of school culture, which refers to the involvement of parents, family members and other community members in terms of their work and contribution to student cooperatives. This result was not expected given that 638 external members are included in 162 student cooperatives. The above result could indicate so-called formal involvement without activities, about which more precise data could be obtained through additional research. From the results of the conducted analyses of variance and double ANOVA, it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant influence of gender on the total components of school culture, i.e. that female leaders of student cooperatives significantly improve school culture than male leaders of student cooperatives. The above statement is supported by the results according to which male leaders of student cooperatives with higher education have significantly less influence on school culture than female leaders of student cooperatives with the same level of education. The above result was expected given the dominant representation of female leaders among the surveyed leaders of student cooperatives (92%). However, the result can also be commented on in view of the greater number of decisions made on appointing female employees to the position of student cooperative leaders and according to research confirming that female teachers have a more pronounced social and pedagogical side of the teaching profession (Biklen, 1995) and therefore a greater influence on school culture. It is important to emphasize that more statistically reliable results would be obtained if a larger number of male student cooperative leaders responded to the research.

The results indicating a difference in the influence on school culture in favor of older student cooperative leaders with a higher level of education can be explained by greater work, and therefore professional experience, and a greater number of participation in various forms of professional development. This is supported by the claim (Mowday et al. 1982) that work experience is the greatest force that influences the connection of an individual with the work organization and his influence on it in terms of improving the ethno-pedagogical components of school culture.

The improvement of school culture in the area of professionalism is positive according to the research results, but it is worth paying attention to the slightly lower result of the item relating to professional cooperation compared to the

other items. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is still room for improvement in the area of professional cooperation of student cooperative leaders with other teachers in the school and that professional development could be focused in this area. The research results point to the conclusion that the cooperation of student cooperative leaders with other teachers in the school in the professional area is significantly influenced by the level of education and years of work experience for those leaders who have a higher education. In this context, it would be interesting to examine which area of education of leaders with a higher level of education affects the increase in the level of professionalism and whether experience or a specific area of professional development during their working experience have an impact on the increase in the level of professionalism. The result, which is at the lower limit of a positive school culture on the items of the collegiality dimension, indicates that hierarchy still prevails among the factors operating in the student cooperative - leaders and other teachers and external collaborators, instead of collegiality as an important norm of school culture. In this area of relationship culture, it would be worth working on establishing unity in determining goals and responsibilities, as well as behavior based on mutual respect and evaluation, which could be the topic and content of professional development.

Research in the area of the educational character dimension indicates a positive school culture, and the largest difference in the improvement of school culture in this area is between the leaders of student cooperatives with higher education in schools with 300-700 students, who have the lowest score, compared to the leaders of student cooperatives with higher and higher education in schools with up to 100 students, who have the highest score. The results show that in improving the educational character of school culture, the leaders of student cooperatives from Southern Croatia have the least influence, unlike the leaders from Central, Northwestern and Eastern Croatia, whose influence is the greatest.

A significant influence was also recorded on the components of the educational element and self-determination of the effectiveness of school culture. The level of influence does not depend on the variables of age, gender, years of work, educational qualifications, school size and geographical location.

The results of multiple regression analysis show that the variables of age, gender, educational background, years of service, school size and geographical location were significant in predicting the components of school culture, which together explain 9.53% of the variance, of which the gender of the student cooperative leaders contributes the most. Given the above results, it can be assumed that in addition to the above variables, the improvement of the school culture of student cooperative leaders is also influenced by some other variables that were not included in this research and could be the subject of future research.

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Author Profile

Ivana Babić Ivana Babić, PhD in Pedagogical Sciences. She is employed in an elementary school in the Republic of Croatia and as an external associate in the title of assistant professor at the University of Bosnia and Herzegovina. She graduated from the Faculty of Science and Mathematics. She participates in domestic and international scientific meetings, conferences and colloquiums as a speaker, author of papers and is a member of the Organizing Committees. She has published several papers in the field of pedagogy.