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## The Role of Storytelling, Drama and the Impact of Technology on Team Spirit in Rural Schools

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### ABSTRACT

Conflict management strategies are crucial to enhance the culture of the schools even in rural areas. Communication enhancement and interaction between colleagues within the workplace require willingness to solve problems and develop positive perceptions on conflict. Storytelling approach and expression of the thoughts between colleagues to state problem and put forward steps for win policy in conflict situations are internalized in this research process. The research aims to reveal the role of storytelling approach in conflict management process for increasing the school achievement. The teachers acted voluntarily in the parts of the research. As the nature of the research relies on story telling approach, the qualitative research was employed and self-reports are used to gather in-depth data. The findings showed that teachers need in-service training on empathy for resolution of conflict through storytelling approach. In addition to this, it is revealed that team spirit, technology, professionalism, metaphors become a harmonic picture of story telling approach to enhance conflict management.

**Keywords:** conflict management, professionalism, rural schools, story telling, team spirit

### INTRODUCTION

The strategic structure and operation of educational institutions have a great role on the formation of human profile in the 21st century (Koudra & Hurst, 2008). Learning individuals and knowledge have become the focus of production. While knowledge, consideration and ethics are highly effective in human quality, critical and flexible thinking, adapting peace and educational values has emerged as a necessity. In order to raise a confident generation, it is of utmost necessity to raise the reliability of school programs with contents to achieve values and a peaceful education (Altınay, Dağlı, Altınay, 2016).

Today's education systems, indicate the requirement of technology in professional development and information both in daily life and educational life. Professionalism is the basic issue in professional development. As Hixon & Buckenmeyer (2009) notes; implications for professional development are addressed in relation to the barriers to classroom technology use and the developmental pattern of teachers' technology integration. Therefore, professionalism emphasizes, today, the importance of team spirit of teachers and sharing it both with administrators and students. In this respect, teachers' conception of team spirit in professional development is quite important. Team spirit, metaphors and technology become medium for managing conflicts in schools' development and quality (Chrispeels, Castillo, and Brown, 2000; Ammeter and Dukerich, 2002).

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#### **State of the literature**

- Story telling is an effective tool to set mutual understanding in conflict issues.
- Drama as a storytelling approach is a reflection of real life and a rehearsal space for making mistakes in order to build a better life, it provides the space to make mistakes without any loss and limitless options to try and explore the focus of an issue.
- While practicing drama and involving in conflict management process; participants start to build a harmony as a group and form the best ensemble for a specific reason at work.

#### **Contribution of this paper to the literature**

- It is observed that practice in drama education has a strong effect on improving leadership skills of school leaders and also teachers.
- With the help of technology and storytelling techniques, students learn quicker, develop their communication skills, and organize more effectively.
- As for the impact of technology on team spirit, it can be said that technology affects teachers' thoughts and opinions positively and this helps a lot to improve team spirit.

Enhancement of school culture requires strong communication between colleagues for every step of management practices. Effective management on leadership; conflict; team inspiration needs to be internalized between colleagues in school context (Senaratne & Gunawardane, 2015). Significantly, storytelling approach is significant to explore thoughts, experiences, and feelings upon conflict situation in order to develop mutual understanding on issues for further win policy between people. The distinctive nature of story telling in drama with young people derives from the process of enactment in which the participants play an active part in devising and telling the story. (Cockett, 2006). Story telling approach is a way of multiple angles of interpretation. It is a democratic approach to gather a data through harmonic picture. Story telling is a way of interviewing to gain in-depth reflections. It is a medium to foster interpretations from people. Therefore, it is an effective tool to set mutual understanding in conflict issues.

Drama is a form of art which gives the participants opportunity to understand and objectively observe who they are. Moreover with its therapeutic and constructive characteristics, it gives the participants a large space for practice to improve their skills personally within a specific field. First of all, drama provides a space for the participant to meet people and cooperate. Cooperation and collaboration are very important value in the professional life. Within the cooperation process; role playing starts. Participants start to share responsibilities according to their skills. After sharing the responsibility, solidarity and quality of work is practiced. While practicing drama and involving in conflict management process; participants start to build a harmony as a group and form the best ensemble for a specific reason at work. During the dramatic exercise; leaders slowly starts make their selves recognized as leaders inside the group. They start taking more responsibility and suggesting intelligent ideas to shape the structure and the content of the process. Individually they start to lead the group with no formal given responsibility.

Drama as a storytelling approach is a reflection of real life and a rehearsal space for making mistakes in order to build a better life. It provides the space to make mistakes without any loss and limitless options to try and explore the focus of issue. Drama and storytelling approach provide a chance for playing the cases and performing again and again in order to discuss the reasons for any violent tendencies as part of conflict resolution. After all; the participants sit in a circle which express the equality and emphasizes dialogue in communication and confront with the past. Also; that sitting form is a dramatic element in order to make people feel the equality and dialogue in communication with the other participants for communication practice and conflict management process. Morgan (2014) explains how using digital story projects to help students improve thier reading and writing. Sepp and Bandi-Rao (2015) further generated a model for digital storytelling similarly to make this process easier and reachable for students. School leaders, in practice, often become overwhelmed as they attempt to solve problems with complex, interpersonal dimensions (Cranston & Kusanovich, 2014). With its ephemeral character; drama can

tell a story about history, literature, mathematics in a very interesting way but as also mentioned team-building skills, solidarity, cooperation and empathy improving aspects of the exercise. The term applied drama focuses on the emotional and social experience of the participants during the practical process of understanding and facing the other participants in action. The theme is the overwhelming use of the terms “collaborative” or “consultative” to describe issue in decision-making process. To make the decisions after having a collaborative and consultative process within the group, considering other partners in an organization and respecting their thoughts and considering their perspective lets the leader and teachers decrease the risk of mistaking. Drama and storytelling allow participants to act individually and create the ideal way of communication according to the partner. Social responsibilities and variable cases bring out the different way of communication. Therefore drama exercises provide leader and teachers a space to experience diverse communication scenarios in all aspects.

The studies point out storytelling approach in communication (Rottier, 2000), however they stays partial which there is no enough studies focusing on interrelations between conflict management and school culture. This interdisciplinary work highlights some preliminary understandings that may be foundational to other leadership development pursuits and the enhancement of risk taking, decision making and conflict management. To improve a leader’s skills in leading; several pre-organised drama exercises can be practiced, potential cases can also be practiced, reading the theory of pedagogy in diverse cultures can be a way also but the main conclusion is that; drama is an ephemeral form of art which is live and happening at that moment. A leader has to be the one who can improve him/her self in leading by taking risks, making decisions, persuading and motivating the group members to follow him/her in each specific case. Not only practicing potential scenarios but to develop practical thinking and problem solving.

The theoretical framework of the study stances on social exchange theory which covers social change and negotiated exchanges between people. Social exchange theory includes human relationships to increase the mutual solutions between people. Therefore, the research aims to reveal the role of storytelling approach in conflict management process in school context. The following research questions are revealed in process:

- a. What are the perceptions of the teachers on team spirit, technology and metaphors through storytelling approach for professionalism?
- b. How do teachers find solutions for conflict issues in school context?

## METHODOLOGY

The qualitative research is employed as gathering patterns in respect to issue. Upon qualitative research approach, case study was used to evaluate the situation. Self-reports were used in this research which could be best choice of exploring perceptions and experiences upon the problem. Questions are prepared in advance to collect data (Creswell, 2003).

### The participants

The participating group was formed through snowball sampling method (Tavşancıl & Arslan, 2001). It was assumed that the most data could be collected from teachers in rural schools (Tavşancıl & Arslan, 2001). So, teachers who are working in rural schools become volunteer participants in this study.

### Data collection procedure

Questions were prepared to reflect the most reasonable conceptions of the participants related to professionalism and team spirit. For the confirmation of the content validity, three experts overviewed the self-report form and some questions were either omitted or reviewed for the final version. Pilot of self-report was done with five participants and the clarity and comprehensibility of the questions confirmed. A further confirmation was done by two other experts for clarity and comprehensibility of the question. The two experts had a 85% agreement on the validity of the questions. This was followed by data collection procedure after which a content analysis was done in four parts.

## Coding the data

All the recorded data was analyzed and every line was numbered to form the self-report documents. The data was, then, reviewed and put into meaningful sections and coded in a key list, which were, then, read separately for agreement and disagreement and reorganised. For the reliability of the research, Miles's and Huberman's (1994) validity formula was referred to and a 90% average was obtained. A calculation over 70% is acceptable for reliability (Miles & Huberman). Therefore, the result obtained was accepted as reliable and the codes were taken as the basis to reach them.

## Organizing the data in codes and themes

The specified codes were put into categories to reach the themes in three dimensions to investigate professionalism and team spirit of the participants. The views by the participants were presented to the readers in a clear and comprehensible way.

## Interpretation of the findings

The data, defined in detail, was interpreted through qualitative research stages and some findings were reached. The explanations to do with the importance of the findings were supported by literature.

## FINDINGS

It was stated that numerical analysis of the data provided higher reliability, minimized errors, and facilitated the comparison among categories. Therefore, the qualitative data was reduced into percentages in tables. The participants' views were presented in every dimension.

### Dimension I: Definition of professionalism and team spirit

The first dimension dealt with the definition of professionalism and team spirit. 80 teachers from 4 rural schools were asked to reflect their views on professionalism and team spirit in the light of the film they watched. Their views are shown under rates and themes in [Table 1](#).

50% of the participants defined professionalism as "people coming together to think and organize for common aims". 59% defined team spirit as "moving together for power". These two rates were recorded to be the highest among other themes. The statements by the participants reflect the views that professionalism is an organised unity to think together for common interests. On the other hand, they reflected their views about team spirit as working together to overcome difficulties.

(T( 23)) defined professionalism as, "*Organisation of people doing the same job at the same place to think and create effective ways to solve problems*". (T( 58)) defined team spirit as, "*People organising at the same work place (e.g. teachers at a school) for power and move together to overcome a difficult situations*". The rates of other themes that came up in the definition of professionalism seemed to be close to each other. In this respect, there are definitions to do with professionalism as, "*Working together to overcome difficulties*" and "*Controlling each other mutually to organise and act in unity to protect each other*". As for themes to form team spirit, there are definitions as, "*Providing help and support*" and "*Individuals' acting together to overcome problems*". In the light of these themes, when the findings are interpreted, the participants reflected their thoughts about professionalism and stated that as colleagues working at the same place, they were a group of people around an aim with common thoughts, organising easily, controlling each other and acting together to overcome problems and handicaps. As for team spirit, they conveyed their opinions as forming a power within the institution by supporting and helping each other and acting in unity to overcome problems. These definitions of professionalism and team spirit may be considered as helpful hints for teachers in forming team spirit to overcome problems in their future career.

**Table 1.** The definition of professionalism and team spirit according to the video script

Definition of Professionalism	Respondent	Non - respondent	%	Definition of team spirit	Respondent	Non - respondent	%
Overcoming problems in a team	20	60	% 25	Acting together for power	47	33	% 59
Mutual control, organisation and protecting each other	15	65	% 19	Providing help and support	21	59	% 26
Organising to think and act in unity for an aim	45	35	% 56	Coming together to overcome problems	12	68	% 15

### Dimension II: State of metaphors formed by professionalism and team spirit

This part of the research dealt with the **state of metaphors formed by professionalism and team spirit**. 80 participants were asked to reflect their opinions about the subject matter. Their views are shown in **Table 2** under rates and themes.

%29 of the participants related professionalism to "honeybee" metaphor mostly. The second metaphor related to professionalism with %15 rate was "sunflower". The most frequently used metaphor to do with team spirit (%15) was "puzzle", %14 "football team", and %13 "anthole". The main reason behind the most frequently used metaphor "honeybee" can be interpreted as a comparison with the collective work done by honeybees, such as collecting and carrying honey to their hives etc. When the other metaphors related to professionalism are examined, it can be seen that they form a unity and work in harmony and reach their aims. (T(32)) explained views to do with the metaphor "honeybee" as " *Colleagues, like teachers, are exactly like honeybees acting together in harmony for an aim*". Another most frequently repeated metaphor to do with professionalism is sunflower. (T(51)) stated views on the same point as, " *Sunflower is the biggest resemblance to do with professionalism. The main aim of the flower is to make its seeds ripe. To achieve this, they always turn towards the sun. In the evening they bow to protect the seeds. I can say that all teachers behave in the same way, as a sunflower, towards their students*". This can be summarized that individuals doing the same job can fulfill their tasks by supporting each other and working in collaboration. The metaphor "football" used for team spirit was reflected by (T(68)) as, " *Forming team spirit greatly resembles the working of a football team in which the players collaborate well in harmony to score goals and win the match*". The message from this metaphor is that people doing the same job can easily achieve their common aims by supportive and collaborative work. Another most frequently repeated metaphor to do with team spirit was "puzzle". (T(28)) stated views to do with "puzzle" saying, " *In forming team spirit, we can consider a puzzle in which every single bit needs to fit in its proper place to bring about a unity. This is the same with the ones with a team spirit. If every individual does what is expected, the picture becomes clear. If a bit in a puzzle misses, the picture cannot be fully reflected*". If teachers fully carry out their responsibilities in a team spirit, the expected picture becomes fully clear.

### Dimension III: The impact of technology on professionalism and team spirit

This part deals with the **impact of technology on professionalism and team spirit**. 80 participants were asked to reflect their views on the subject matter in the light of the film they watched. Their views are shown under rates and themes in **Table 3**.

**Table 2.** Metaphors formed, in the light of the video script, to do with professionalism and team spirit

<b>Metaphors to do with professionalism</b>	<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Non - respondent</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Metaphors in team spirit</b>	<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Non - respondent</b>	<b>%</b>
Walking – stick	2	78	% 3	Puzzle	12	68	% 15
Perfume	3	77	% 4	Musical note	8	72	% 10
Mark	1	79	% 1	Orchestra	7	73	% 9
Flower plant	5	75	% 6	Football team	11	69	% 14
Cooking meal	6	74	% 8	Soil	1	79	% 1
Chair	2	78	% 3	Parts of the body	4	76	% 5
King’s Crown	2	78	% 3	Shoe lace	1	79	% 1
Internet web	8	72	% 10	Vehicle engine	6	74	% 8
Honey bees	23	57	% 29	Anthole	10	70	% 13
Sunflower	12	68	% 15	Many hands together	1	79	% 1
Syllabus	7	73	% 9	Pomgranade seeds	2	78	% 3
The cook and the waiters	3	77	% 4	Pastry	2	78	% 3
Rainbow	4	76	% 5	Letters	7	73	% 9
Matching cards	2	78	% 3	Logos	8	72	% 10

%30 of the participants reflected their opinions on the impact of technology on professionalism as, *“Technology helps us find different ways of teaching styles and this increases success”*. As for the impact of technology on forming team spirit, %29 of them stated, *“Technology is a crucial factor in developing thoughts and ideas as well as team spirit”*. These two themes seem to be at the highest rate in the evaluation of the impact of technology on professionalism and team spirit. This result is an indication that teachers find different teaching methods which increase their success rate. Even more, with the help of technology, teachers learn more rapidly, they develop communication among themselves and coordinate better and more effectively. In addition, with the help of technology, they can reach not only the surroundings, but also the whole world and develop universal opinions about their profession. In this respect, (T(43)) said , *“I can say that my colleagues are more successful in their profession and can find different teaching methods and this is due to their interest in the use of technology*. Another participant, (T(45)) expressed views as, *“ By following technology, as colleagues, we can easily reach universal developments all over the world and improve new ways in teaching”*. The most frequently used theme by the participants is, *“Technology adds a lot to us in developing new thoughts and opinions to form team spirit”*. The other themes formed in team spirit with the help of technology are as follows;

- *It helps with more collaboration and development of team spirit*
- *It helps with increasing sharing, transformation of knowledge, and team spirit*
- *It helps with developing responsibilities, awareness and harmony to the fullest in team spirit*

In the light of these themes, it can be said that technology plays a great role in affecting colleagues improve thoughts and ideas in developing team spirit. Moreover, technology plays an important role in increasing collaboration which adds more to developing team spirit. In addition to these, the research and the participants’ views show that technology is a big factor in developing responsibilities and awareness and thus providing a smooth run of team spirit. (T(59)) commented on this point saying, *“Due to technology, people doing the same job*

**Table 3.** The impact of technology on team spirit

<b>Impact of technology on professionalism</b>	<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Non - respondent</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Impact of technology on team spirit</b>	<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Non - respondent</b>	<b>%</b>
Technology improves professional knowledge	18	62	% 23	Technology helps develop team spirit	21	59	% 26
Technology raises communication and coordination	22	58	% 28	Technology helps increase collaboration and team spirit	16	64	% 20
Technology helps raise success	24	56	% 30	By technology thoughts and ideas develop	23	57	% 29
Colleagues can reach remote places by technology and make use of professional developments	16	63	% 20	Technology helps improve responsibilities and awareness for harmony in team spirit	17	63	% 21

*changed their thoughts and opinions to a great extent in a positive way and this helps a lot in the development of team spirit". (T(76)) expressed views as, "I can frankly say that, with the help of technology all colleagues take their responsibilities more seriously and are more aware of their tasks and this helps team spirit work in harmony".*

### **Professionalism and team spirit**

The participants defined professionalism and team spirit as a collective effort, thinking, and organisation of the individuals doing the same job for common aims. This can be assumed as a powerful team spirit which can overcome possible problems when acted together. In such a situation, according to the participant's feedback on the subject matter, the colleagues are a group of people who can easily organize, control each other, and act together and overcome problems easily. In the case of forming team spirit, they explained the situation as becoming a power in the same institution by supporting and helping each other to overcome problems. This feedback falls in well with Thamhain (2004) and Altnay's (2014). However, in the light of the participants' views and opinions on the subject matter, we strongly recommend that in order to carry out their profession more effectively, teachers should work more collaboratively and in more solidarity.

### **Metaphors**

%29 of the participants stated the "honeybee" metaphor the most among the others in relation to professionalism. The second frequent metaphor is by %15 is the "sunflower". As for the formation of team spirit, the most frequently used metaphor is by %15 is the "puzzle", by %14 is the "football team", and by %13 is the "anthole". In this respect, the reason for the participants' stating the "honeybee" metaphor the most lies behind the truth of the hard work carried out by bees to build their hives and make honey. When the other metaphors to do with other professions are examined, it can be seen that they unite in great harmony like a mosaic to reach common aims. These metaphors can be summarized as unities acting together and helping each other to reach common targets. This dimension of the study has a lot in common and similarity with the the findings by Altnay (2014). The



“puzzle” is the most frequently used metaphor to do with team spirit. In this respect, it is highly recommended that every teacher, trying to form team spirit, should take responsibilities to work in harmony and perform every given task. When done so, the anticipated picture becomes clear.

### **The impact of technology**

The feedback received from the participants about the impact of technology on professionalism and team spirit indicates that teachers develop different teaching methods through which they increase their success rate. In addition, with the help of technology, they learn more and quicker, develop communication among themselves, and organize more effectively. Teachers do not only reach their close environments, but they can also reach remote parts of the world and learn more from universal developments to do with teaching. As for the impact of technology on team spirit, it can be said that technology affects teachers’ thoughts and opinions positively and this helps a lot to improve team spirit. In addition to these, technology helps the development of coordination and collaborative work in which team spirit becomes stronger. This dimension of the study has a lot in common and similarity with the findings by Zhang, Keil, Rai & Mann, (2003), Thamhain (2004); Lambert (2013); and Altınay (2014). The research revealed that through technology, sharing, exchange of knowledge, and team spirit are at a higher level. However, both the researcher and the participants emphasize that, through technology, all the involved should be well aware of their responsibilities and tasks. They should also refer to technology more often and use it more effectively to provide a team spirit operating in full harmony. Recent findings of Leite et.al (2016) suggest that interactive narratives with multiple robots are a promising approach to foster children's development of social-related skills. In further studies, investigation on this specific issue could be carried in urban schools for comparative case studies and empirical studies can be employed for generalization.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Quality education is very much discussed in schools and teachers have always been the major element to affect the quality of an institution or system. In order to improve their teaching skills and influence the students they are working with; teachers have to be good leaders. Leading teachers are the ones; who walk a path and make the students follow them without any demand. For developing leadership skills, school leaders have to be open-minded first of all and intellectually well educated. After that; practically, leaders will need to explore their selves and face their weaker skills. Then the process of development starts for a potential leader (Cranston, Kusanovich, 2014). Through the process; analyzing the weakness determines the content of the drama exercise as storytelling approach where this is the strongest practical support for a leader in order for him/her to rehearse real life in school context.

According to the researches related with drama education, conflict management and leadership, it is observed that practice in drama education has a very strong effect on improving leadership skills of school leaders and also teachers. Whereas most of the resources and researches seem to reflect that within the researches, pre-organized practice programmes and readymade exercise programmes have been considered. At this point, instead of pre-organizing the drama education programmes and exercise content; the individual analyze of the situation must be taken into account. Case by case; when a potential leader is focused on certain topics; the drama exercises and the conflict management strategies would be devised in relation to that frame. So as every human being is different in making decisions and perceiving situations; they will individually find their own way to lead. And this research’s conclusion sheds a light on the way where the drama exercises are to be applied in order to improve leadership skills of school leaders and teachers in action through storytelling approach, metaphors, films (Glanz, 2016).

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