

[DOI: 10.20472/TEC.2015.001.008](https://doi.org/10.20472/TEC.2015.001.008)

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TEACHERS' LOUNGE ACCORDING TO THE SOCIAL SHARING SITE EKSI SOZLUK

Abstract:

Teachers' lounge is the room where teachers spend nearly all their break times and working hours at school except for the course hours. In this lounge teachers rest, make preparations for lectures, review students' homework, assess papers and converse with their colleagues concerning personal or work-related topics. Teachers' lounge presents an environment where all teachers in the school gather and communicate. In terms of enhancing the social capital in schools, the role of a comfortable and safe teachers' lounge based on the principles of self-development and helping others, where scientific works on education are discussed, and students' problems are handled under the light of scientific problem, is significant. The things that happen in the teachers' lounge are considered important because they have the potential to affect primarily the social capital of the school, and accordingly the success of the school. The purpose of the present study is to determine how social media users perceive teachers' lounge. Data of the study were collected through document review method among qualitative research methods. The reviewed documents consists of the opinions or entries written under the topics of "teachers' lounge", "teachers' lounge conversations" and "teachers' lounge dialogs" in the social sharing site Eksi Sozluk (<https://eksisozluk.com/>). Collected data were subjected to content analysis. By analyzing the data, a total of 23 codes concerning teachers' lounge were established. These codes were integrated under 6 themes. By analyzing the data, a total of 23 codes concerning teachers' lounge were established. These codes were integrated under 6 themes: market place, lounge, private spaces, socialization, Interpretation and Curiosity, Excitement. According to the entries made in the Eksi Sozluk social sharing site, in its current state teachers' lounge is far from having an effect that would increase the social capital of the school. Teachers use this room mostly for recreation and conversing with each other rather than using it for professional interaction.

Keywords:

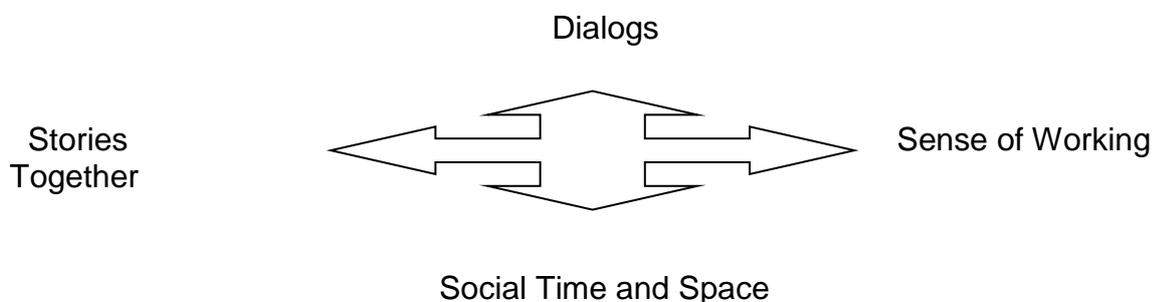
Teachers' lounge, Eksi Sozluk, social capital

JEL Classification: A20

Teachers' lounge is the room where teachers spend nearly all their break times and working hours at school except for the course hours. In this lounge teachers rest, make preparations for lectures, review students' homework, assess papers and converse with their colleagues concerning personal or work-related topics. This lounge usually features desks and chairs. In larger and more advantageous schools, sofas may be used instead of chairs and teachers may be provided with lockers, into which they can put their stuff, computers and TV. In the study conducted by Karasolak and Sari (2011) it was determined that a cleanly, wide and well-kept teachers' lounge makes it easier for teachers to develop positive attitude towards the school.

Teachers' lounge presents an environment where all teachers in the school gather and communicate. In terms of enhancing the social capital in schools, the role of a comfortable and safe teachers' lounge based on the principles of self-development and helping others, where scientific works on education are discussed, and students' problems are handled under the light of scientific problem, is significant (Toremen and Ersozlu, 2010). Signs such as the way people coinciding in this environment salute (or ignore) each other, how they approach to the questions they direct at each other, their interpretations and the prevailing emotional atmosphere (energetic, timid, angry, optimistic, lively, gloomy, friendly, suspicious, etc.) point at the social capital stock of a school in question (Cohen and Prusak, 2001, as cited in, Toremen, 2002; 2004). Social capital is a potential that directs people to cooperation and enables them to work more efficiently together in line with the objectives that are being aimed at (Ekinci, 2010). Social capital may be seen as the "emotions the organization stirs in individuals" that are embedded within the daily routine of the organization. Social capital is the norms and social relations within the social structures that enable individuals to coordinate their actions in a way to achieve the desired objectives (Toremen, 2002; 2004).

According to Ekinci (2010) social capital plays a significant role on the effectiveness of school as a livable environment through the senses of trust, cooperation and belonging between the teachers and executives, and thus enables a more qualified educational environment and means. In order to utilize this potential and therefore to render the school more effective, school principals need to invest in social capital. According to Toremen (2002), investing in social capital is to engage in dialogs, telling stories, developing the sense of working together and creating social space and social time. Toremen explains this with the following diagram.



Spaces where the teachers will gather, converse, see others and be seen by others and sufficient time to do all these are the components of social capital. Common spaces enable the realization of the sharing and the activities that are

necessary for the process of information generation (Ekinci, 2010). In schools, the place where this space and time is provided, on the other hand, is nowhere else than the teachers' lounge. The social time and space dimension of social capital investment is mostly related with teachers' lounge. According to Ekinci, in addition to out-of-school activities, the information sharing in teachers' lounge will play a significant role in the development of the senses of trust, cooperation and belonging.

In the study conducted by Toremén (2004), it was determined that teachers do not feel themselves very comfortable in teachers' lounge, that they cannot fully share their knowledge, that they partially believe that those things they talk about are partially relayed to the administration, that they do not find the lounge boring and uninviting, and that there are not too much contention and conflict in the lounge. Yesil and Korkmaz (2012) on the other hand determined that topics concerning the school environment and teaching-learning processes are discussed "very frequently" in teachers lounge, while personal, social, economic and political topics are discussed "sometimes", that mostly teaching-learning, school environment and academic development related topics are discussed and that women talk about learning-teaching related topics more frequently than men. According to the study conducted by Negis-Isik and Gursel (2013), the place where newcomer teachers are welcomed warmly is the teachers' lounge, and that the school culture is important in the success of the school.

New communication technologies offer a media where people can share their thoughts and works and where sharing and discussion are essential. This virtual environment referred to as the social media is important not only due to being user based, but also due to its feature of bringing together people and masses and enhancing the interaction between them (Vural and Bat, 2010). Also the number of studies conducted on social media is increasing (Yavuz, 2014). The things that happen in the teachers' lounge are considered important because they have the potential to affect primarily the social capital of the school, and accordingly the success of the school. The purpose of the present study is to determine how social media users perceive teachers' lounge.

Method

Data of the study were collected through document review method among qualitative research methods. The reviewed documents consists of the opinions or entries written under the topics of "teachers' lounge", "teachers' lounge conversations" and "teachers' lounge dialogs" in the social sharing site Eksi Sozluk (<https://eksisozluk.com/>). Eksi Sozluk was established in 1999. It is a website in the form of an urban dictionary where all sorts of topics are discussed freely by users of all ages. In order to be able to express opinions on the topics in the site, it is required to be a member (<http://eksisozluk.nedir.com/#ixzz3WWtQSvjE>).

The entries found under the mentioned topics were downloaded until the date of 6th of April 2015. With the exclusion of the entries that are considered to be off-topic, a total of 135 entries were taken into consideration. While the first entry included in the scope was written on 20th of September 2001, the last entry belongs to the date of 19.11.2014. While only one entry was made in 2003, 2013 was the year where the most (48) entries were made.

Collected data were subjected to content analysis. Content analysis was carried out in line with the steps suggested by Yildirim and Simsek (2006) as: (1)

coding data; (2) finding themes; (3) organizing codes and themes; and (4) commenting on the findings.

Findings

By analyzing the data, a total of 23 codes concerning teachers' lounge were established. These codes were integrated under 6 themes. The established themes and their explanations are presented below.

1- Market place

According to the entries integrated under this theme, teachers' lounge is the place where some teachers try to sell cosmetic products to other teachers.

2- Lounge

According to the entries integrated under this theme, teachers' lounge is the place where teachers relax, rest, gather energy, tell jokes and banter with each other.

3- Private space

According to the entries integrated under this theme, teachers' lounge is the place teachers appropriate and where they do not want anyone other than teachers, including principals, vice principals and particularly students and their parents.

4- Socialization

According to the entries gathered under this theme, teachers' lounge is the environment where the school culture is introduced to the new coming teachers, where teachers have their lunch or tea, women gossip, men usually talk about sports, and where noisy conversations -considered to be pleasing by some and meaningless by others- are made.

5- Interpretation

According to the entries gathered under this theme, when teachers gather in these lounges, they share with each other the negative views on some particular students and negative student behaviors.

6- Curiosity, Excitement

According to the entries gathered under this theme, students see this room as if it is a holy place, and believe that teachers are engaged in high levels of philosophical, ideological and economy-related conversations, and thus are over-excited when they enter. On the other hand, those that enter this lounge as teachers and observe other teachers' behaviors are mostly surprised and disappointed.

The user, who is most probably a teacher, that made the entry dated 06 August 2013, explained his or her thoughts in a way that nearly embodies all these themes. The teacher says; *"Do not worry, it is nothing special. Teachers lounge does not have all the things we had been imagining as children. There are no sophisticate conversations whatsoever. While female teachers chat about Avon products and their children, male teachers mostly talk about football and the unions. That is to say, the men and women of the teachers' lounge are no different than any men and women out there. Please don't make me laugh, saying there cannot be gossiping among all those people of high education."*

Discussion and Comments

Teachers' lounge should play a role that increases the social capital of the school (Toremen and Ersozlu, 2010). According to the entries made in the Eksi Sozluk social sharing site, in its current state teachers' lounge is far from having an effect that would increase the social capital of the school. Teachers use this room mostly for recreation and conversing with each other rather than using it for professional interaction. No scientific discussions are carried out, no cooperation for solving students' problems is displayed or no effort is made to help others. Also the presence of gossiping in the teachers' lounge indicates that more harm is made rather than the good use expected. The findings obtained from the present study partially differ from the studies conducted by Toremen (2004) and by Yesil and Korkmaz (2012).

Factors such as the rather frequent circulation of school executives, lack of objective criteria concerning those to be assigned as school principals, the lack of additional training that should have been required from those to be assigned as school principals and the bureaucratic structure may cause these problems experienced in the teachers' lounge.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The data of the present study were collected from the social sharing website Eksi Sozluk. Accordingly they reflect the opinions of individuals, who are found of sharing their opinions in the social media, use internet and probably are of a rather young group of age. Although there are clues indicating that the owners of the entries may be teachers, the fact that we cannot know whether or not they are actually teachers constitutes a significant limitation of the study. The fact that the obtained findings differ from those of previously conducted studies indicates the need for further studies. Both qualitative and quantitative studies to be conducted on teachers' lounge would bring in further clarification on the matter.

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