Narration as a Means of Formulating and Transferring Tacit Knowledge

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Abstract
The goal of this study is to highlight the importance of the narrative type of knowledge, its relation to tacit knowledge and to outline the specifics of tacit knowledge in the narrative form in the context of teaching. Stories are parts of our identity and culture. We assume that social knowledge (skills) are a specific type of tacit knowledge. This type of knowledge poses difficulties for knowledge management because it is difficult to communicate using propositions and rules. On the other hand, this knowledge is not completely incommunicable – it can be easily transferred using narratives. Through stories we safely live through dilemmas, experience, hurtful situations and thus understand what constitutes value and truth in our culture. A story and subsequent discussion offers re-living an experience and a new framing of the tacit image of other people's practice. Through stories we give moral, practical or aesthetic meaning to situations and are able to better understand ourselves, our culture and our knowledge. Teacher experience is ungraspable tacit knowledge gained over years of interaction with pupils and through solving a variety of problems and situations. This teacher knowledge forms the best prerequisite for developing the quality of a school. Whether consciously or unconsciously, experienced teachers transfer their knowledge and experience onto their colleagues who based on this information are able to avoid some situations, foresee them as well as deal with them directly. This knowledge is not shared only among teachers but also between the teacher and the pupil.

Keywords: tacit knowledge, narrative, story, teacher, sharing

In a World of Narratives

On the one hand we encounter a dichotomic division of knowledge into narrative and scientific (Lyotard 1979, Bruner, 1986 and others), on the other into tacit and explicit (Polanyi, 1959, 1966, Morgan 2008, Wasonga – Murphy, 2006 and others).[1]. Narrative knowledge has been called a typical kind of knowledge in a non-modern type of societies while scientific knowledge is typical for the modern age (cf. Lyotard, 1979, 1986). However, as early as 1970s, Lyotard pointed out the unbalanced relationship between them: While scientific knowledge requires narrative for its own justification, scientific knowledge disputes the existence of the narrative knowledge form. A similar division has been studied by Bruner[2] (1986) who concludes that narrative form of knowledge forms the organisation of human experience.

While the logical-scientific form of knowledge points out differences and verifies them, narrative form connects elements together by means of which it reveals explanation. It is apparent that narrative offers an alternative form of knowledge. This is the reason for its use in a variety of fields: Stories are told not only by journalists and (narratively oriented) researchers but also by teachers and pupils, doctors and patients, trainers and their players or athletes, salespeople and managers, etc. It allows them to convey in a simple and natural way what would otherwise be communicable with great difficulty (if at all).

Stories are a part of our identity and culture (Gudmundsdottir, 2013). Czarniawska (2004), Pinnegar – Daynes (2007, p. 28 In Clandinin, 2007) and others notice the natural use of narrative in popular culture. Pinnegar – Daynes (2007, p. 28 In Clandinin, 2007) also note that broader culture in the past twenty years has seen greatest success with narrative forms such as memoirs and creative non-fiction; also museums have started to make use of the stories of individuals as a means of establishing specific, personal relationships with the visitor and on television, reality shows have become most popular; in them, individuals confess their experience and stories. Even traditional forms of stories such as myths, sagas, epics, folk tales and short stories, which have temporarily lost their appeal to contemporary recipients, gain great popularity with the aid of new technologies. Autobiographical and biographical stories, which have a very strong ability to enrich us with knowledge and personal experience which would be otherwise impossible to transfer, have been gaining favour also with filmmakers in the past years[3]. This is very peculiar, given the old thesis of literary science and social history that popularity and occurrence of this type of stories always naturally increases during wars and politically non-standard periods where they represent an escape from reflection and existing social and political circumstances.

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[1] Some authors reject contrastive dichotomies and seek the relationship between tacit and explicit knowledge. Despite that, they still operate with these terms – "types of knowledge". For instance, according to Gill (2006) it is logically impossible to separate explicit knowledge from some form of tacit knowledge – tacit knowledge is the main source of all knowledge (In Morgan, 2008).

[2] Division into the narrative mode of knowledge and logical-scientific or pragmatic (Bruner, 1986)

[3] For instance, popular biographical films Chavez (2013), Diana (2013), Mary Queen of Scots (2013), Camille Claudel 1915 (2013), Lovelace (2013), Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom (2013) and ones still in making Tesla (2014), Van Gogh (2014), Bukowski (2014), Grace of Monaco (2014), Anita (2014), Gloria (2014) Buffalo Bill (2014), Castro's Daughter (2015), Dorothea: The Life of Dorothea Lange (2015), Spinning Gold (2015), The Brontes (2016), Henry Starr (2016), Bosch (2016), The Man Who Sold the Eiffel Tower (2016), The Big Picture (2016) and many others.

Television, film, newspapers and magazines or computer games convey information through stories. Their readers or viewers operate with them in a natural way (informal learning) and decide which stories they choose to believe and which to doubt although they are being presented by science or government. It can be said that science which has today overcome its reservations against narrative research can make use of narrative just a successfully as popular culture is doing.

Narrative form of knowledge

We assume that social knowledge (skills) are a specific type of tacit knowledge. If one wishes to study social life (in the broadest sense, without regard to a specific area), he or she must necessarily deal with the narrative form of social life as a form of knowledge and a form of communication (cf. Czarniawska, 2004, p. 13). This type of knowledge poses difficulties for knowledge management because it is difficult to communicate using propositions and rules. On the other hand, this knowledge is not completely incommunicable – it can be easily transferred using narratives (Linde, 2001, p.2). Stories can be used to describe knowledge which cannot be quantified, i.e. to describe knowledge of social interaction, social practice. Gudmundsdottir (2013) explicitly says that a story is the result of the narrative form of knowledge.

Tacit knowledge is not easily visible or explicable; it is deeply rooted in a person's actions, experience, thoughts and values (Wasonga – Murphy, 2006). For this reason, Lunenburg and Ornstein (2004 In Wasonga – Murphy, 2006) explain tacit knowledge by means of an alternative model which is based on metaphors, stories, biographies, autobiographies, conversations with specialists, etc. In this respect we can partly agree with the otherwise disputed ways of externalising tacit knowledge[4] in Nonoka and Takeuchi (1995) who suggest expressing incommunicable knowledge in figurative language and symbolism which to some extent corresponds to using narrative. Thanks to this, individuals with different experience and from different backgrounds can understand things with the help of imagination. A story or an additional question can also lead an individual to reconsider his or her understanding.

Storytelling offers the often sought after bridge between tacit and explicit knowledge. Tacit social knowledge can thus be demonstrated without being directly articulated (cf. Linde, 2001). Knowledge which cannot be described in words can be easily communicated using stories. Storytelling is a part of any practice (cf. Edwards – Thomas, 2010, p. 408). It is apparent that the best answer to some questions is another question or a story which is usually able to say more than information alone.

Here, we deal with the so-called social type of tacit knowledge whose easiest means of transfer is the narrative type of knowledge. If we understand tacit knowledge in a way that includes knowledge connected with the so-called craft knowledge (e.g. the

[4] Nonoka – Takeuchi (1995 In Wasonga – Murphy, 2006) suggest the conversion of tacit knowledge into explicit through externalisation which is in contrast with Polanyi's idea when only explicit knowledge can be externalised by various means since it is communicable. If an individual externalises his or her explicit knowledge, the externalised knowledge is only the author's personal knowledge (Morgan, 2008). Nevertheless, externalisation as understood by Nonoka – Takeuchi (1995 In Wasonga – Murphy, 2006) lies in the process of forming collective reflection, dialogue, metaphors and analogies, sharing personal knowledge and diversity. According to them, the incommunicable can be conveyed through figurative language and symbolism.

work of a surgeon), it is probable that the narrative form of knowledge is incapable of communicating "craft tacit knowledge" in the same full extent as it does in case of the social type of knowledge.

The Concepts of Narrative and Story

Finally, it is necessary to define the words narrative and story in terms of their usage in this text. The term narrative in narrative theory sometimes refers to the actual process of narration, sometimes the words story and narrative are understood synonymically (cf. Fiore, Metcalf, McDaniel, 2007). Some theorists, however, consider story to be a signified entity where one story can contain several narratives (cf. Genette, 1980 In Fiore, Metcalf, McDaniel, 2007), while this definition is close to the concept which is most practical for work with tacit knowledge shared through narratives (and stories).

We only outline a brief conception since the topic at hand is a broad one and is subject to extensive theoretical study by narratologists. In accordance with Barthes (1977) and Czarniawska (2004), we consider narrative to be something with which we can operate[5]. A narrative is considered to be a spoken or written text which offers a number of chronologically connected event/action or events/actions types of elements (Czarniawska, 2004). In this sense, it is easy to say what is not a narrative even though it is a text – it can be e.g. a chart, typology, list, etc. (see Goody, 1986). It can therefore be said that a narrative follows us everywhere we look, while a story has the addition of a plot. Todorov (1971) offers a definition of minimal plot, "Minimal complete plot consists in the passage from one state of equilibrium to another. Ideal "narrative" begins with a stable situation which is disturbed by some power or force. There results a state of disequilibrium; by the action of a force directed in the opposite direction, the equilibrium is re-established, the second equilibrium is similar to the first, but the two are never identical."In other words, every story is also a narrative but not every narrative (or its fragment) is also a story.

The process of sharing tacit knowledge is not limited only to stories containing a plot but uses any narrative which in itself enables the explication and transfer of the specific type of knowledge which would otherwise be incommunicable.

Fiore, Metcalf a McDaniel (2007, p. 41) define a story as a temporally and causally sequenced series of events experienced by the main character who overcomes one or more difficulties (or fights adversaries) in a specific environment (cf. Bruner, 1991). Acording to the results of studies of narrative forms, (Booker, 2005) there is a very low number of basic plots and dramatic situations which are the basis for every story: subduing a monster; from vagrancy to plenty; journey and return; comedy, tragedy; rebirth. Booker (2005), Fiore, Metcalf and McDaniel (2007) and others have found in their analysis of popular narratives that it is this low number of basic plots which lies behind successful stories. Also research focused on conveying tacit knowledge using narratives (e.g. Linde, 2001) claims that stories are most commonly told about either a great success or failure. People usually do not tell stories about the routine of day to day work and with themes of process organisation.

[5] Barthes (In Polkinghome, 1988, p. 14) sees narrative present at all times, in all places, in all societies – the history of narrative begins with the history of the human species. People without narratives do not exist and they never have.

The main character of a story serves as the protagonist, minor characters exist in the narrative in order to connect with the main character or to provide other dramatic functions (Fiore, Metcalf and McDaniel, 2007, p. 41). However, minor characters as well as major ones can be equally suitable for character reflection as a part of the process of communicating tacit knowledge (cf. Krátká, 2010).

Narrative and Its Role in The Process of Sharing Knowledge

Stories have the ability to direct and change our lives (Noddings, 1991, p. 157 in McGill, 2007); therefore they have been used throughout history in order to share basic cultural values, evaluate our experience and reinforce social ties (cf. Bruner, 2002). By telling and listening to stories we interpret and construct new realities; they are our means of interpretation, organisation and formation of meanings and coherence upon the basis of our experience (Bruner, 2002). Narrative is a representation of past events through any medium: oral, written, film, cartoon. (Linde, 2001, s. 4).

Stories offer an opportunity for insight into other people. Their power lies in their ability to convey to the individual something completely new without needing him or her to leave the comfort of his or her environment. According to Gargiulo (2007, p. 203) stories function as a type of transporters, simulators of virtual reality, able to create a complex world open to new discoveries. Stories function as a place where people may "play" with characters and situations so that they create and open new possibilities for themselves (cf. Gragiulo, 2007).

Also when teaching, we tell stories which are a primary tool for educators. Through stories we safely live through dilemmas, experience, hurtful situations and thus understand what constitutes values and truth in our culture. A story and subsequent discussion offers re-living an experience and a new framing of the tacit image of other people's practice. Through stories we give moral, practical or aesthetic meaning to situations and are able to better understand ourselves, our culture and our knowledge.

Experiential learning operates with the idea that our learning is directed by concord between our experience and the experience of others (Gargiulo, 2007, p. 204). This concord need not be perfect for an opportunity for reflection to arise. Gargiulo even speaks about associations which are elicited by the story and thanks to which our reflection and learning becomes deeper, more permanent and elementary. On the other hand, he warns against excessive relying on the clarity of messages in the form of allegories which lead to the weakest form of learning. The main task of experiential learning is to help overcome common ways of thinking about a problem and to create space for new perspectives. Occasionally we encounter the expression that "experiential learning welcomes the unexpected" (cf. Gargiulo, 2007, p. 209).

A specific advantage of using different stories for experiential learning is the fact that when listening to the story of a different person we are not too biased by our own point of view compared to when focusing solely on our own problem or on ourselves (Gargiulo, 2007). Differences between the character and us become opportunities for new insight. Through characters with which we identify we enter new situations as

well as situations which we lived through in some form and through reflection we gain a new opportunity to learn from them.

Learning from stories presupposes active "reading" of the story, being engrossed in the story. This is the only way of entering someone else's situation. Our understanding of stories of others is rooted in finding a relation between our experience and the experience of the character, from recognising our similarities (cf. Krátká, 2010). Eliciting a situation which gives way to learning is aided by strong emotional involvement in the story; the fact that we find the story realistic and find a parallel with a specific situation in our own lives or in our environment (cf. Rideout, 2008, p. 9; Krátká, 2010).

Stories have the ability to aid us in navigating old distant areas and access new realisations which stem from the variety of knowledge and experience of others (cf. Gargiulo, 2007, p. 209). Every story then functions as a building block which fits with other blocks and can thus help to gain better insight and understanding (Gargiulo, 2007, p. 210). For this reason, the answer to some questions is a story or another question and an answer to a story is another story.

A part of linguistic tacit knowledge involves discursive knowledge: how and when to tell a story. Knowledge of identity, who is who and what is his or her history, is a very important part of individual tacit knowledge (Linde, 1993). Also knowledge of someone's identity as a group member is easily expressed through narratives (Linde, 1993, p. 3). Knowledge of the identity of an institution and how to be its proper member is transferred onto new members by means of a narrative since it would be almost impossible to communicate explicitly. Especially the part of becoming a member of an institution involves learning the stories of the institution, with which everybody must be familiar, as well as the appropriate time for their telling. In connection with this, there are also ways by which people share their own stories within the context of the institution. (Linde, 2001, p. 3)

However, stories do not only remind one of past events but also express the speaker's moral attitude towards the event: the story's protagonist acted well, badly, his or her behaviour is or is not appreciated and according to this, can be a model for the listener's future actions. Stories are beneficial in terms of cognition and are able to elicit and "discuss" affective and social types of information (Fiore, Metcalf and McDaniel, 2007, p. 41). Generally, it can be said that sharing the same experience with a character creates opportunities for reflection of personal experience and identification with a character creates an opportunity for self-reflection (cf. Krátká, 2010). Although the learning environments produced by our discovery of relations between the stories of others and ourselves can sometimes seem chaotic, this process remains an irreplaceable and elementary form of lifelong learning.

Stories do not only describe past events but also enable for the so-called "between the lines" transfer of the speaker's moral attitude to those events. Naturally, the fact remains that stories most effective for learning are those where such judgements are not explicit. Best narratives are those which "show, not tell." (cf. Labov, 1972, Linde, 2001 and others). This way we can "show" which type of behaviour we expect to be useful. Gargiulo (2007, p. 209) also warns against excessive relying on the clarity of messages in the form of allegories which lead to the weakest form of learning.

Thanks to stories we communicate more than information (explicit knowledge) but also something which is truly important in experience (tacit knowledge). Stories allow the sharing of personal experience and personal understanding and in the process of their telling they further lead to the deepening of one's own understanding through the dialogue between the speaker and the listener. In social fields especially, it is common that, for instance, managers or teachers tell stories about their own career and the career of those who serve as an example of changes in a given institution. Stories are told in the first or third person and they transfer history and values in terms of individual and institutional social tacit knowledge. Linde (2001) notes that stories are told in other fields as well. Naturally, engineers or designers also tell stories, about how and why some design choices were made but such stories only rarely enter the circulation as so-called institutional stories. They live and die with their storytellers. They would not be understandable to an outside listener without the author's interpretations. (Linde, 2001, p. 6-7).

Being aware of the potential of stories as carriers of tacit knowledge, there is an effort for their capture in knowledge management. However, the spontaneity of storytelling appears to be replaceable only with difficulty, as much as it is difficult to artificially produce a narrative which would be useful for learning (cf. Linde, 2001). Notes taken during solving a problem are virtually unusable since they are very brief and technical. Furthermore, the benefit of a video recording with a story is dependent on the ability of the speaker and the one who categorises the recording using appropriate key words and classification. Non-edited transcript of an oral story is difficult to read and its layout requires the ability to work with such a text as well as the knowledge of the field, its practice, etc. These and many other issues pose a problem for capturing narratives in order to detach them from the spontaneity of storytelling. Among the basic information in narrative remembering is the fact that it is rather the informal situations which lead to storytelling (cf. Linde, 2001; Basso, 1996, etc.). There is a number of situations in which stories are spontaneously told. Some are directly designed for remembering and storytelling (e.g. regular celebrations, anniversaries, etc.), others are used for it without a primary intent (unexpected encounters, random checks, etc.).

Narratives Transferring Tacit Knowledge of Teachers

Teacher storytelling is rooted in experience instead of reason. Thanks to this, teachers' stories help us reveal events and their meaning in their lives. The study of narratives is always necessarily a study of ways how people experience the world. Stories facilitate a link between the theoretical and the human side of any process, e.g. leadership (cf. Wasonga – Murphy, 2006).

Stories (of teachers) capture not only events and their resolutions but also personal perspective which appeared to have been useful (or not) in the given situation. Learning to teach is a cultural process beginning in the childhood at school, continuing by teacher training and eventually extending over teaching at schools. We therefore approach teaching equipped with tacit knowledge about what we believe the teacher's role is and what our childhood experience was, whether good, bad or peculiar. Thence ensues the need to take interest not only in stories connected with events which students immediately experience during their teaching practice but also

any other stories which enable them to describe and share their values and reasons for specific reactions, etc. If not restricted, storytelling naturally becomes a part of teacher education; it is not merely another method of transferring the curriculum in teacher training (cf. Edwards – Thomas, 2010, p 408). Transforming tacit knowledge as experience with solving special problems into narrative knowledge is a lifelong method of sharing and informal learning.

Teaching is a conservative field and stories help new teachers to rapidly socialise with the school culture. The knowledge of teachers of their strength is often tacit and implicit. Yinger (1990 In McGill, 2007) describes this tacit knowledge as the language of practice when teachers think and act in an acceptable way. Teachers gain their experience gradually over years and this process cannot be accelerated (McGill, 2007, p. 170-171). The core of teacher knowledge (stories) is rooted in their practice, their actions which they performed in the classroom.

Narrative is considered a powerful means of understanding the complex processes which constitute the act of teaching (cf. Kelchtermans, 2009, p. 260). Teachers' storytelling about their professional life and practice is often spontaneously framed in the narrative form. They make use of anecdotes, metaphors, images, etc. Storytelling is a natural way for them to attribute meaning to events and situations (Kelchtermans, 2009). The use of narratives, such as stories and anecdotes enable us to enter the lives of teachers and their understanding of events, professional practice and pedagogy. They help us reveal events and their meaning in teachers' lives. Thanks to the specific "grammar" of a story and the personal perspective, teachers ranging from beginners to experts find anecdotes an interesting and welcome way of accessing their tacit knowledge and further reflection on their practice (McGill, 2007). Research dealing with teachers' stories has been relatively frequent in recent years. It was carried out by e.g. Beattie – Conle (1996); Bruner (2002); Carter - Doyle (1996); Clandinin (1985); Clandinin – Connelly (1995); Elbaz (1981, 1991, 2007); Jalongo – Isenberg – Gebracht (1995), Linde (2001), Kelchtermans (2009), McGill (2007) and others.

Edwards – Thomas (2010, p. 408) claim that just like case studies are not only examples of how something works but also knowledge theory or generalisations as well, so do teachers' stories include very valuable knowledge. Teacher narratives based on experience are not only messages giving information about how teachers thought about themselves but rather they construct self-understanding within interaction and simultaneously (implicitly or explicitly) they present the public with the option to affirm, question or refute the attitude being communicated (cf. Kelchtermans, 2009). The message inside stories is not a neutral standpoint but an expression of the individual's personality, moral choices and emotions involved.

Elbaz-Luwisch (2007, p. 259 In Clandinin, 2007) notes that the discourse of the teaching profession can be found in the stories of many educators despite it is often in conflict with other discourses such as professionalism. Many stories bear a strong sense of educator professionalism which can be seen in the moral extent of things. The concept of profession then exists in interaction with moral experience.

The question arises where educator identity based on moral experience comes from. A number of stories (e.g.in research by Clandinin, 1985, 2007 etc. or Elbaz 1981, 1991, 2007 and others) show that they stem from practical experience gained

sometimes as early as during childhood and which in the form of tacit knowledge co-forms the knowledge of an educator and his or her membership to the profession.

What applies to experts in companies whose knowledge management received a good deal of attention in recent years, must logically apply to education. To young university students and graduates, educationt is financially a fairly unattractive field and for this reason, it sees an increase in age of its members and the reduction of experience and tacit knowledge due to retirement of teachers (cf. Lejeune, 2011). The quality of a school is determined by its reputation and the reputation of the school is dependent on the experience and quality of the teaching staff and on capable management (cf. Střelec, 1998, 2004). As stated many times before, teacher experience is ungraspable tacit knowledge gained over years of interaction with pupils and through dealing with a variety of problems and situations (cf. Gerholm, 1990). This teacher knowledge forms the best premise for making a quality school with good reputation; other factors co-forming school reputation come to effect afterwards, which is why it is so important.[6]

The above-described demonstrates the importance of the experience of specific people and of experienced teachers. Whether consciously or unconsciously, these teachers transfer their knowledge and experience onto their colleagues who based on this information are able to avoid some situations, foresee them as well as deal with them directly. This knowledge is not shared only among teachers but also between teachers and pupils. Based on this information, pupils gain further knowledge and experience which they can use in their favour. Lejeune (2011) addresses the question why large companies would take part in the operation of high schools and universities. It is in order to prepare professionals already predetermined for specific positions within the company and to aid their implementation into the work process of the company. For this reason, large companies co-fund schools and universities. However, it is not only a financial involvement but also an influence over the curriculum, providing material and technological aids to be used in classrooms. This type of teaching has a good record in the development of practical skills and rooting tacit knowledge for specific working environment through real experience (cf. Lejeune, 2011).

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[6] Střelec (1998, p. 168) notes that the main role in forming the public image of a school is played by pupils' parents where the main source of information about the school that parents have are their children. School, family and the public represent three vertices of a would be triangle in which relationships are formed. At the first sight, the public appears to be a somewhat unclear and least important factor of the three, however, it is not to be underestimated. The task of the public opinion can be illustrated on specific examples as an agent which co-influences key decisions in education on the local, regional as well as national scale (cf. Střelec, 1998). The reputation of a school and individual teachers is also considerably influenced by the relationship of parents with the school who in return take part making the public opinion about education in general.

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