

Proposal Master Dissertation

1. Proposed Title

The Trust Way. Trust building in International Management

An exploration and analysis of specific leadership factors and their potential influence on trust building in international management at the example of Swiss SME Managers doing business in Hungary

2. Aims/Objectives

Trust makes social life and interaction possible. As a decidedly social phenomenon, trust emerges from and maintains itself within the interactions of everyday business interactions. The main emphasis on the multicultural aspects of trust differentiates this research from others within the field of sociology, anthropology and economics. It is to find a constructive combination of the different aspects rather than a complete integration or synthesis.

The dissertation begins by rehearsing some selected main perspectives guiding the discussion of trust and trust building in international relations. A next step is to identify some main aspects in international management on the individual, organizational and cultural level of trust and trust building. The dissertation then explores their possible synthesis to a trust building strategy. Furthermore an additional research in the form of four case studies may give some indications on the function and the influence of the chosen trust factors. The final section considers the conclusion for practical synthesis and a rough process concept of trust building in international management.

The main objectives of the dissertation therefore are:

- to render the concept of trust more precisely
- to identify the main aspects to reduce the complexity of international management
- to research the main aspects for trust building in international management
- to develop a rough concept of trust building strategies in international management

The daunting challenge for the study of trust and the trust building process is, to bring in discussion an additional dimension of the complexity due to cultural diversity in the management context.

3. Relationship to previous work

Trust is widely acknowledged as an important concept to study because it enables inter-institutional and interpersonal cooperation. The literature on trust displays different concepts and inadequacies, and in addition demonstrates a lack of consensus. As a consequence a large variety of definitions of trust is used, ranging from a structural phenomenon to a state of an agent. In this study two existing concepts will be checked, and analysed, and the main trust building factors selected in relation to the trust building aspects in cultural diversity.

The different theoretical frameworks on cultural diversity cover the aspects from economical theories to the very specific focus of indigenous cultural psychology. Those approaches apply to the current fragmentation within organizational studies as a whole. In fact, there is a palette of theoretical perspectives relevant to cultural and general diversity studies. To a large amount they derive from anthropology and sociology, and many of the founding scientists of cross-national economic perspectives adopted an internationally comparative approach.

The cross-national approach has been the mainstream, concentrating on the similarities and differences between features of organization that might characterize various countries or cultural regions. Consequently the national differences embodied in organization play a significant aspect in their research.

Although trust refers to different value systems in different societies - like the financial, the legal system, and even the family system - this study focuses only on the organizational system on the level of a specific cultural diversity aspect, the 'nationally and organizationally defined business cultures'.

Currently in research there is a tendency to find an analytical framework that combines the present partial perspectives on 'trust' from the cultural diversity approach on one hand and from the organizational change concepts on the other hand.

Trompenaars/Hampden-Turner/Wooliams (2003) were the first to develop an integrative way of seemingly opposing values with their concept of 'reconciling cultural differences'. Following a review of these perspectives, this study tries to advance a framework that can help to bring together the insights offered by the mentioned two perspectives. Furthermore it directs attention towards potential interactions between them and management.

In the words of Sztompka (1999) 'I refuse to be dogmatically one-sided and try to draw inspirations and insights from multiple sources in the attempt to integrate them into a coherent framework. I try to figure out, phenomenologically, how trust could possibly operate, without contradicting our general sociological knowledge about human action, social structures, and social processes', specifically in international management processes. Therefore this dissertation puts an essential weight on the intercultural management activities and the individual, organizational and cultural contextual conditions of leadership.

4. Methodology

This study utilizes abductive logic, considers theory building as a discussion between existing theory and empirical data.

The research process structure will be inductive and ideographic methods will be used, like explanation of subjective meaning systems and explanation by understanding (emic):

- Generation and use of qualitative data (partially quantitative data collection)
- Semi-structured face-to-face interview with three or four managers
- Questionnaires
- Review of existing case studies and experiments
- Literature research

As trust is very sensitive and fragile interpersonal mechanism that is hardly researchable. Therefore it is important to optimize objectivity by

- using different research methods of data gathering
- validating the theoretical research findings with empirical research data
- verifying the gathered data by feed-backing the results to the subjects
- correlating the findings with existing studies and data

Overt research methods allow to gain the commitment to research, and to allow accessing to everyday settings as an observer, and as well as minimising reactivity among the subjects of research.

5. Plan of work

Phases	Content	appr. necessary time / days
1.	Definition of the area and the population to be studied	0.5
2.	Literature research	13.0
3.	Development of theoretical concept	2.0
4.	Redefinition of the areas and the population	0.5
5.	Construction of the first draft of the survey instruments	1.0
6.	Organization of the contacts and research setting	1.5
7.	Pre-test	1.0
8.	Edition and redefinition of the survey instruments	1.0
9.	Semi-structured face-to-face interview with three or for managers	2.0
10.	Transcription of the data	3.0
11.	Analysis and interpretation of the data	3.0
12.	Communication of the data to the population	1.5
13.	Review of existing case studies and experiments	3.0
14.	Reinterpretation of the data	1.5
15.	Writing and corrections	18.0
	Total	52.5

6. Resources required

Library

Computer with Word- and Excel processing

Interview-partners from SME doing business in Hungary

Research material from previous studies on the subject

7. Bibliography Selection – (unauthorised translation by M.H.)

Trust

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Research Methods

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8. Form of presentation

Traditional form