Trust as an Element of Personnel Strategy in Enterprises in Poland

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Abstract—This article describes the significance of social trust in building the personnel strategy of an enterprise. Social trust has a very measurable pragmatic value. It is a factor which streamlines the functioning of the social system of an enterprise. The author presents various approaches to defining social trust in an organization, as well as briefly describing its structure. There is a subsequent concentration on the factors determining the growth of social trust in an enterprise. This paper also describes the issue of building trust as an element of personnel strategy. It indicates the necessity to choose the personnel strategy which includes elements of social trust as a factor determining the success of an enterprise. It also presents examples of research on the level of trust in organisations in Poland.

Index Terms—Building of trust, enterprise, organisational trust, personnel strategy.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the theory of management it was long claimed that success on the market was decided to a large degree by the general strategy of a company, whereby attention was first and foremost paid to production and distribution, while human resources were treated as a less important factor. Only recently have managers acknowledged that success on a constantly changing market is decided to a large extent by employees that are equipped with the appropriate social competences, particularly the skills of interpersonal cooperation within worker teams and organisations. The aforesaid skill depends on the degree in which the given organisation acknowledges and shares the set of social and ethical norms and values. They constitute the basis of trust, which is a significant cultural and economic value of an enterprise. Trust enables the restriction of the influence of formal mechanisms of control, which leads to the situation whereby the autonomy of employees is increased. The consequence of the growth of trust is also the increased openness to new partners as cooperation with them may bring significant added value. Another positive effect is the reduction of uncertainty in cooperation with new partners. The appropriate management of the human factor involving the optimal allocation and skillful use of the competence of employees, as well as ensuring the free flow of knowledge and exchange of experience within the organization requires the acceptance of a specified personnel strategy, in which important positions include aims associated with building trust in an enterprise. Thus, it is important to reflect on the role of trust in managing human resources. The aim of this paper is to indicate trust as an essential element in personnel strategy, as well as the presentation of research relating to the degree of occurrence of trust in large enterprises in Poland.

II. NOTION OF TRUST IN AN ENTERPRISE

Trust may be defined in various ways. For instance, P. Sztompka claims that it is in its own way, a type of bet taken on the issue of uncertain future activities of other people [1]. It is possible to say in the words of P. Dasgupta, that: „trust is the appropriate prediction of the activities of people who have an influence on the activities of individuals in a situation where the choice of action must be carried out before it is possible to observe the actions of others [1]. Another notion of the term of trust was presented by B. Noteboom, according to whom first of all, “Real trust, or trust in the strong sense, is an expectation that things or people will not fail us, or the neglect or lack of awareness of the possibility of failure, even if there are perceived opportunities and incentives for it” [2]. However, S.D. Boon, and J.G. Holm define trust as “a state involving confident positive expectations about another’s motives with respect to oneself in situations entailing risk” [3].

Analysis of the afore-mentioned notions of trust indicates the difficulty with the unequivocal definition, with relation to which the creation of a global definition is becoming problematic. It is merely possible to attempt to define the forms and types of trust. In professional literature various types of trust are indicated as follows: trust based on recognition, trust based on affection- also referred to as emotional trust; national trust based on national calculation; contract trust, competence trust, trust of good will; trust based on history; trust as a characteristic of the exchange ties between people; trust as a cultural norm; trust based on the fear factor, trust based on knowledge, trust based on identification; trust based on competences, trust based on values; trust based on the process, trust based on institutions, trust based on characteristic features and organisational trust. In the context of the theme of this paper, the issue of the description of organisational trust is deserving of greater attention. By availing of the approach of R. Putman [4], we may say that trust in an organisation that is shown to other employees is based on the principle of mutuality, in the notion that it is necessary to do something for your co-worker, while not expecting to be immediately recompensed, but in the hope that in the future the said colleague or another colleague will return the favour. This constitutes a system of
supplementing organisational control. The factors shaping this trust are credibility, competences, honesty and the quality of information.

Trust in an organisation may take on various dimensions. M. Bratnicki and J. Strużyna defined five main dimensions, namely, personality, calculative, institutional, perceptive and cumulative [5]. The personality dimension of trust first and foremost appears in the accepted patterns of behaviour, norms and values, which are the regulators of employee behaviour and influence the degree of trust with regard to an organisation, while secondly, it encompasses the personality features of employees, e.g. empathy, responsibility, openness. Employees who are open to others more frequently trust their co-workers than employees who are introverted. Another dimension of trust is the calculative level in which an employee carries out a calculation of the losses and benefits resulting from the relations of trust with regard to other people. An individual will display trust towards other co-workers and the organisation itself, as long as the benefits accruing from this approach will be equal to or greater than their own contribution. The level of trust is also influenced by the institutional dimension that occurs in the stability and transparency of an organisation. The more stable an organisation is, the more frequent and longer employees trust each other. Mutual perception of the co-workers plays a highly important role in the perceptive dimension. This process is influenced by organisational culture, which with its own form of prism through which employees may mutually perceive each other. The last dimension of trust – the cumulative one is associated with knowledge possessed by the partners relating to the ties. The degree of informing other co-workers, as well as the organisation itself with relation to e.g. its missions, aims, strategies and current situation influences the level of trust with relation to them. The analysis of the dimensions of trust facilitates the definition of its occurrence in the organization. In an enterprise where there is a high degree of trust, the employees make an individual contribution to its development. They invest in maintaining relations with others by putting their abilities, talents, tangible and intangible assets at the disposal of other employees. Thanks to this, they may also benefit from the abilities, talents and resources of others. This mutuality is the basis of cooperation. However, in an organisation in which there is a low level of trust, individualistic approaches become common, whereby employees are focused on the realization of their own interests that are not always in accordance with the interests of the organisation.

III. FACTORS OF THE GROWTH OF TRUST IN AN ORGANIZATION

The level of trust in an organisation is dependent on the occurrence of many various factors. The identification of these facilitates the undertaking of specified actions aimed at ensuring the growth of organisational trust. An attempt to identify the factors influencing the level of social trust in an organisation was undertaken by J.K. Butler, who on the basis of interviews with 84 managers of large enterprises defined 11 factors that have an impact on the degree of occurrence of trust, namely, availability, competence, cohesion, discretion, clarity, honesty, loyalty, openness, fulfillment of promises and sensitivity. Analysis of the scope of the occurrence of these factors enabled the definition of the level of organisational trust [6]. These factors during the course of subsequent research were verified and eliminated to the last factor of sensitivity as one which poorly defines trust. On the basis of this set, the research tool of CTI (Conditions of Trust Inventory) has been built, consisting of 10 factors that may be used to define the degree of occurrence of trust in the given organisation.

Another proposition for the research of the factors of trust was presented by M. Fuchs, who distinguished the following determinants of trust: content of work, degree of participation, degree of autonomy, feedback communication, success of an organisation on the market, work pressure, individual remuneration, age of an employee and length of work experience. These factors are subsequently placed under empirical verification. Research on trust in 245 enterprises in Germany reveals that the strongest impact on the trust variable was related to such factors as: content of work, participation and feedback. However, individual factors such as the level of remuneration, age, length of work experience did not indicate a strong statistical relation with trust [7]. Knowledge relating to the factors determining the degree of the occurrence of trust in an organisation facilitates the undertaking of actions on behalf of building a model adjusted to the specifics of an enterprise.

IV. TRUST AS AN ELEMENT OF THE PROCESS OF BUILDING PERSONNEL STRATEGY

In enterprises operating in conditions of uncertainty and relatively high levels of fluctuation, an important role is played by organisational trust. Its significance is reflected in personnel strategy which comes down to the constant improvement of particular elements of human potential, with the aim of adjusting them to the emerging changes within the enterprise and its environs [8]. In formulating the personnel strategy, the management of an enterprises searches for answers to the following questions: what is the state of the enterprises with relation to human resources? What do we assume to be the level of employment in a defined long term period of time? What methods can we avail of to achieve this level? Will and in what scope will organisational trust be helpful in the consolidation of human resources? The answers to these questions will become reality in the form of the personnel plan of the enterprises that is integrated with its general strategy. Mutual dependence between the personnel strategy and trust may be followed by analyzing the following types of strategy: development, stabilization, defensive [9]. In development strategies that are characterized by innovative activities and research analysis taken with the aim of launching new products or gaining new markets, employees having the highest meritological and creative qualifications are needed. The personnel plan assumes in this case the acquisition of a new staff with high level of competences or constant improvement of the employees already hired by organizing training at a high level. An important function is fulfilled by trust which
facilitates the fast adaptation of newly recruited employees and influences the creation of the orientation of cooperation. In the situation of the strategy of stabilization, focused on maintaining the position on the market gained thanks to the high quality of the goods or services offered, as well as the perfectionism of activities require employees of high qualifications. The personnel plan assumes the maintenance of the composition of the team personnel, as well as constantly increasing the qualifications of the employees guaranteeing the maintenance of the market position. In this strategy, there is an emphasis on building trust as a factor stabilizing personnel. Approaches of co-responsibility and solidarity among employees are promoted. However, in the defensive strategy which assumes the reduction of costs and is adopted in situations of unfavourable economic conditions, excessively strong competition etc. Actions aimed at changes in the structure of employment are preferred. These are featured by internal restructuring and maintenance of or changing the profile of activities. The consequence of this strategy is on the one hand, to reduce employment. While on the other hand, to keep the best employees and their constant improvement in knowledge. A significant role is fulfilled by trust as a factor facilitating the reduction of uncertainty among team members following the restructuring process.

The choice of personnel strategy to a large extent depends on the accepted general strategy. The process of creating a personnel strategy is a difficult activity as it requires taking many factors inside the organisation into account, as well as external factors and performing many tasks. One of the tasks which faces managers who are building a HRM strategy is the definition of activities on behalf of building trust. It is possible to use the profile of organisational trust with this aim in mind. The results of research on the ties between trust and the strategy of the given organization indicate the occurrence of four profiles of trust, namely: empathy, co-participation, values and structure, identity and involvement [10]. Trust based on empathy is featured by a high degree of sensitivity, openness and tolerance. Employees are open to honest discussions about the management of the company. In crisis situations they are ready for sacrifice on behalf of the company, e.g. undertaking overtime work for reduced remuneration. Trust based on co-participation may be built on the basis of participative ties, featured by co-participation in taking decisions by all the subjects participating in the economic undertaking at hand. This type of trust influences the creation of the approaches of identification with the tasks carried out by the particular employees, which improves the effectiveness of the enterprises as a whole. In the case of trust based on values and structure as a whole, familiarity with the aims, missions and strategies of the enterprise on the part of the employees is important. The values creating the mission of an organisation are becoming the road sign for the behavior of employees. This refers to first and foremost such values as the following: justice, loyalty and devotion to the cause of the organisation. The degree of trust with regard to an organisation also influences the stability of the structures and procedures applied. In building trust based on identity and engagement, emphasis is placed on the process of identifying employees from the enterprises and engaging them in its functioning. The consequence of these activities is the basis for co-responsibility among the employees for the fate of the company, the feeling of common aims and mutual dependency.

V. EXAMPLES OF RESEARCH ON THE LEVEL OF TRUST IN ORGANIZATIONS IN POLAND

Organisational trust is relatively seldom an independent subject of research in the field of management. Trust is most often viewed as a significant element of social capital. Of the published results of research on trust in organizations in Poland, we may distinguish the research that has a macro-social dimension, relating to the society as a whole and the micro-social dimension relating to defined organisations. Research on trust in a macro-social dimension is realized in a cyclical manner by Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej (Centre of Research on Public Opinion) and relates to trust inside an organisation, as well as internal trust. Research dated March 2010 indicates that 84% of those analysed trust their co-workers, with whom they work every day. However, trust in large enterprises is only shared by 35% of those surveyed. The highest level of trust with regard to enterprises is held by people achieving high incomes with high qualifications and working in managerial positions or as high level specialists. From the research on external trust, e.g. that shown towards partners in economic interests it is indicated that every third respondent feels that it is worth trusting a business partner (34%) [11].

Micro-social research facilitates the identification of the scope of occurrence of social trust in enterprises and the course of its creation. Attention should be paid to research on trust carried out among 150 enterprises in the province of Wielkopolska (Greater Poland) run by the team of A. Skawiński. The subjects of the research were selected randomly from the layers of companies of various sizes and various locations. Sincerity, competences, trust in employees, honesty, responsibility, mutual trust and trust in the management were all analysed as attributes. The responses were distributed on a five degree scale, in which 1 signified absolutely not, while 5 absolutely yes. The analysis of the research results indicated that every third respondent feels that it is worth trusting a business partner (34%) [11].
majority of managers declare trust in their subordinates (81%), however, as many as 44% of managers admitted that employees when given the chance to gain something will be dishonest. The analysed employees are willing to share knowledge (65% of managers are of this opinion), however, only 34% of respondents feel that people admit to mistakes and take responsibility for them. In the analysed enterprises, trust is built on the basis of the stabilization of companies and on the attention to the interests of the employees. In the majority of the companies analysed, work is perceived as stable (86%) and there is attention to the interests of employees (75%). In summing up the research results, it is possible to state that the high level of trust accrues from the stable position of enterprises on the market. Employees in such a situation cooperate willingly, share knowledge and trust each other.

VI. CONCLUSIONS
One of the essential factors in determining the behavior of employees in an enterprise is that of trust. This may become an important element in personnel strategy, but it is however, a very complex process and requires a lot of attention on the part of managers. In order for trust to be effective, it is first and foremost necessary to strive towards the creation of conditions of rational trust, or in other words, to create a transparent structural system of organisation, in which clear conditions of cooperation would be binding. The next step is the creation of moral trust based on adhering to the moral standards in ties between employees and managers. Building trust requires involvement and responsibility on the part of the management and individuals operating in the organization. This only appears when the values, missions and aims are shared by all the individuals concerned. The research results presented relating to trust in enterprises in Poland are very optimistic, which may result in the fact that the research was carried out among the biggest and best companies on the Polish market. They indicate stabilization in enterprises as the basis of building organisational trust. The appropriate personnel strategy is also helpful here in ensuring the feeling of security as employees do not have the need to compete with each other.

REFERENCES