Teacher's trust
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Chapter 1

General Introduction

“Trust is good but control is better!” For a long time this slogan expressed the human resource management (HRM) approach in many organizations around the world. Employees were closely controlled and rewarded for their performance of small, fixed parts of work that could easily be described in job- and task-descriptions. The relationship between an employee and the organization was purely economic “a fair day’s pay for a fair day’s work” (Walton, 1985, p. 78). However, in the 1970s the struggle to compete in an increasingly globalizing market and changing expectations of employees have started to change this management approach. It seemed impossible to reach the needed levels of excellence without committed employees and commitment did not seem to flourish in a workplace dominated by control (Walton, 1985; Whitener, 2001). Many organizations, such as General Motors and Procter & Gamble, started to rethink their management approaches and radically changed their human resource strategies. These new “commitment-oriented” strategies included, for example, increased spans of control, focus on team responsibilities, broader and more flexible job designs that encourage employees to participate in decision making, and new career possibilities. This new approach has seemed to pay off. Research indicates that having committed employees who are willing to go beyond the call of duty seems to be one of the most critical success factors for organizations (Organ, 1997; Rappaport, Bancroft, & Okum, 2003; Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983; Walton, 1985). Next to certain human resource practices, employees’ trust in management seems to have the strongest impact on building commitment (Whitener, 2001). Thus, it might much rather be true that: “control is good but trust is better”!

Schools as well need committed employees who are willing to ‘go the extra mile’ to reach the school’s goals and objectives (e.g. Somech & Ron, 2007). Dutch schools for vocational education and training (VET), like many other schools around the world, are confronted with ever growing demands, such as more accountability for their well-functioning, higher expectations regarding student achievements, the need to continuously adapt their education to new insights concerning pedagogy and
learning, and fulfilling a “social mission”, such as social cohesion and integration of students from diverse backgrounds (Hooge, Honingh, & Langelaan, 2011; Karsten, 2016; Runhaar, Konermann, & Sanders, 2013). To meet these demands, VET schools need teachers, who are flexible, help and support each other, seek ways to improve work processes, and take extra effort and initiative, if needed. In other words, teachers who merely do what their formal job- and task descriptions tell them to do, will not fully contribute to let the school excel. Thus for schools it seems worthwhile to consider, how they can stimulate teachers’ commitment and behavior that goes above and beyond minimal job requirements, for example, with their HRM. As the development and implementation of human resource policies is a relatively new task for VET schools (Runhaar & Runhaar, 2012), and research on HRM is scarce, this is particularly relevant for VET schools.

Referring to Blau’s (1964) social exchange theory, this dissertation argues that interpersonal trust may be the key to commitment and behavior that exceeds job requirements, usually referred to as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). According to social exchange theory, people tend to reciprocate benefits they receive from others and by doing so they will develop social exchange relationships with one other. Teachers who feel that their school offers benefits to them, for example by supporting them or acknowledging their work, might return these favors by engaging in OCB. They are also likely to develop commitment towards the school. However, in contrast to economic exchange the benefits exchanged are not agreed upon in advance and thus the risk is involved that the favor will not be reciprocated (Molm, Takahashi, & Peterson, 2000). To evoke social exchange it thus seems important to reduce the perceived level of risk. Here trust comes into play, as it is seen as a way to reduce the perceived level of risk (e.g. Mishra, 1996). At the same time, trust is likely to develop through social exchange as, in the absence of assurance structures, benefits received will be seen as signs of the other’s trustworthiness. In VET schools, recent developments, such as an increase in size of schools, larger spans of control, greater autonomy and the introduction of team-based structures may have changed the nature and importance of social exchange relationships between teachers and (other members of) their school.

In view of the role that teacher’s trust may play in social exchange between a teacher and his/her school and the lack of research on this topic in schools, this dissertation wants to contribute to the knowledge in four areas: the conceptualization
of individual teacher’s trust, the ways a school’s management may foster teacher’s trust, the consequences teacher’s trust may have for desirable teacher outcomes, and the role of teacher’s trust in the school in teachers’ social exchange relationship with their school.

**Theoretical foundation: social exchange and trust in schools**

**Social exchange**

Relationships can be seen as a product of a history of exchange (Blau, 1964; Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006). According to Blau (1964) this exchange can either be economic or social. Whereas in economic exchange it is specified in advance what is exchanged and when the exchange occurs, in social exchange the terms of exchange are unspecified (Organ et al., 2006). In the economic exchange relationship teachers have with their school, they agree to perform certain tasks in exchange for pay and other benefits usually put down in black and white in the employment contract. In addition, teachers involve in economic exchange with (other members of) their school, whenever they have clear agreements about the exchange, for example, when teacher X agrees to teach a class of teacher Y in exchange for teacher Y teaching a class of teacher X.

However, once teachers start interacting with other members of their school, social exchange relationships are likely to develop. In social exchange partners offer benefits to one another without knowing when or whether the other will reciprocate. Social exchange is initiated by one party “by spontaneously giving another party something of value -a tangible product or a service, or a favour or gesture of respect, admiration or support” (Organ et al., 2006, p. 54). In a working context a teacher might, for example, decide to provide help and advice to a colleague and thus invest time and effort into the relationship without knowing whether the colleague will eventually return the favour. Although the teacher does not have certainty, based on Blau’s social (1964) exchange theory it is likely that the colleague will reciprocate as people tend to reciprocate benefits they receive from others. The motivation to do so has been ascribed to the development of affective commitment, described as a
feeling “of liking for, and attachment to, a specific exchange partner, which are indicated by expressions of commitment to the partner and positive evaluations of the partner” (Molm et al., 2000, p. 1406). When the colleague reciprocates, a social exchange relationship is likely to develop as both exchange partners develop affective commitment towards one another.

Trust may play a key role in social exchange (e.g. Gambetta, 1988; Molm et al., 2000). As the terms of exchange are not agreed-upon in advance in social exchange, risk is always involved. Trust can be seen as a way to reduce the perceived level of risk (Mishra, 1996). Thus, trust may be a necessary condition for social exchange. At the same time, trust is likely to develop through social exchange. Taking the absence of assurance structures into account, benefits received in social exchange are likely to be seen as signs of the exchange partner’s trustworthiness (Molm et al., 2000) and, consequently, enhance the level of trust.

Trust

Trust is not an easy concept to grasp. Many different conceptualizations and definitions exist. A broad distinction can be made between trust in other persons, usually referred to as interpersonal trust and trust in a greater unit, such as an institution or the state (e.g. Baek & Jung, 2015; Luhmann, 1979; Zaheer, McEvily, & Perrone, 1998). Although consensus is lacking, organizational researchers are increasingly adopting the view that interpersonal trust contains two key elements, the willingness to be vulnerable/take a risk in the relationship with another party and positive expectations of the intentions or behaviors of the other party (e.g., Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995; McEvily & Tortoriello, 2011; Rousseau, Burt, Sitkin, & Camerer, 1998). Based on this view and in line with Rousseau et al. (1998, p. 395) in this dissertation interpersonal trust is defined as “a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability [to another] based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another”.

Some research has been conducted to identify the sources and outcomes of trust. Consensus, however, is lacking on which elements are part of trust and which are either antecedents or consequences. Dietz and Den Hartog (2006) make a theoretical distinction between the input, the process (trust itself) and the output of trust. The input or antecedents of trust can be summarized in five different
categories: the trustor’s propensity to trust, characteristics of the trust referent (trustee) that determine his/her trustworthiness, such as integrity, ability/competence and benevolence (e.g. McEvily & Tortoriello, 2011), the quality and nature of the trustor-trustee relationship, macro-level cues, and domain- and situational factors (Dietz & Den Hartog, 2006; Mayer et al., 1995). Output consists of trust-informed attitudes and behaviors, such as risk-taking behaviors and voluntary extra-role attitudes and behaviors. Accordingly, we make a clear distinction between trust, as defined above, and its sources and attitudinal and behavioral consequences.

In educational research teachers’ trust in different trustees, such as the principal, other teachers, students and parents, has been associated with several sources and outcomes, such as collaboration (e.g., Tschanen-Moran, 2001), teacher professionalism (e.g., Tschanen-Moran, 2009), professional communities of teachers (e.g., Cranston, 2011; Louis, Dretzke, & Wahlstrom, 2010), teachers’ collective efficacy (Lee, Zhang, & Yin, 2011), teachers’ organizational citizenship behavior (Tschanen-Moran, 2003) and student achievement (Hoy, 2012; Hoy, Tarter, & Witkoskie, 1992; Louis et al., 2010). However, in most of this research trust is studied on collective level as it is conceptualized as a collective property, cf. faculty trust (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2011). The focus of this dissertation is in the role of trust in social exchange between individual teachers and (agents of) the school, consequently trust needs to be analyzed on individual level and conceptualized as an individual property.

Input from the organization in the social exchange relationship

In the relationship between an employee and (agents) of his/her organization several aspects might feel as benefits to the employee. When these benefits are not part of the economic exchange between the organization and the employee, they are likely to stimulate social exchange and can thus be seen as an input of the organization in the social exchange relationship with the employee. To teachers such benefits may, for example, be the support to perform their jobs effectively, provocation for their socio-emotional needs, recognition of extra work effort and fair treatment (Aryee, Budhwar, & Chen, 2002; Organ et al., 2006). On the macro-level, these benefits may be part of the human resource management, the structure or the climate of the organization.
Human resource management:

Human resource management (HRM) refers to “all those activities associated with the management of work and people in organizations” (Boxall & Purcell, 2011, p. 1). Certain human resource (HR) practices can be perceived by employees as a favor offered by the organization and thus contribute to their social exchange relationship with (agents of) the organization. In general, a distinction can be made between control- and commitment-oriented approaches to HRM (e.g. Arthur, 1994; Kathri et al., 2006; Runhaar & Runhaar, 2012). The basic assumption of the control-oriented approach is that people cannot be trusted and are incapable of self-regulating their behavior, thus in order to manage them effectively and increase the organization’s performance, they must be closely monitored via a variety of control mechanisms. In the commitment-oriented approach people are believed to be capable of self-regulation and to work most effectively when they are committed to the organization and its goals (Khatri, Bavejo, Boren, & Mammo, 2006). In this approach, “the focus is on developing committed employees who can be trusted to use their discretion to carry out job tasks in ways that are consistent with organizational goals” (Arthur, 1994, p. 672). HR practices associated with the commitment-oriented approach are aimed at empowering and developing employees and include practices such as participation in decision making, broad task descriptions, offering opportunities for professional development and sharing knowledge (Arthur, 1994; Marescaux, De Winne, & Sels, 2012; Runhaar & Runhaar, 2012).

Research indicates that commitment-oriented HR practices lead to favorable employee attitudes and behavior, such as affective organizational commitment, intrinsic motivation, taking initiative, and OCB (Khatri et al. 2006; Mossholder, Richardson, & Settoon, 2011; Runhaar & Runhaar, 2012; Runhaar, Konermann, & Sanders, 2013), whereas control-oriented HR practices rather stimulate employees to simply follow instruction and to do just what they are told. The mechanisms through which commitment-oriented HR practices relate to favorable employee attitudes and behaviors, can be related to social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). As Settoon, Bennett, and Liden (1996, p. 219) suggest “positive, beneficial actions directed at employees by the organization and/or its representatives contribute to the establishment of high quality exchange relationships that create obligations for employees to reciprocate in positive beneficial ways”. Relating to self-determination theory, beneficial actions can be defined as actions that help satisfying the
employees’ basic needs, i.e. the need for autonomy, relatedness, and competence (e.g. den Broeck, Vansteenkiste, De Witte, & Lens, 2008). Commitment-oriented HR practices are likely to be perceived as such positive, beneficial actions. Offering opportunities for professional development though training, for example, may satisfy the need for autonomy as it increases the feeling of internal control; it may also allow for relatedness satisfaction as it may be perceived as a sign of being valued by the organization and allow for collaboration with other organizational members; finally, it may satisfy the need for competence as it allows acquiring new skills and knowledge (Marescaux et al., 2012).

At the same time, commitment-oriented HR practices may be seen as a sign of the organizations and/or its representatives trustworthiness and thus contribute to the level of employees’ trust. Offering opportunities for training, for example, may be viewed as a sign of benevolence of (agents of) the organization by signaling support and affection to the employee. Including employees in decision making and thus showing consideration for teachers’ needs, interests and opinions might also be seen as a sign of (the agents of) the organization’s benevolence (Moye, Henkin, & Egley, 2005). In addition, commitment-oriented HR practices might be seen as a sign of the organization’s trust in its employees. As discussed previously, such HR practices allow employees certain degrees of autonomy and imply little control. Thus it involves taking a risk for the (agents of) the organization. Although research on the consequences of being trusted is very scarce, it can be suggested that being trusted results in positive feelings of the one being trusted (trustee) and a desire of the trustee to meet the expectation of the trustor. It is likely that the trustee feels highly appreciated as receiving trust classifies the trustee as being a good, trustworthy person. The trustee does not want to disappoint the trustor and loose this appreciation. In addition, being trusted might also stimulate self-efficacy (Conger & Kanungo, 1988) as it shows that someone believes in you. It is thus likely that the trustee will “feel obligated, empowered, and confident in fulfilling the expectations of the trustors” (Lau, Liu, & Fu, 2007, p. 322). Research (Brower, Lester, Korsgaard, & Dineen, 2009) showed that, next to trust, being trusted has a unique contribution to positive employee outcomes, such as performance and organizational citizenship behavior.
Structure:
Next to HRM, the structure of an organization, might influence the employee’s perception of received organizational favors and thus contribute to the employee’s social exchange relationship with (agents of) the organization. Organizational structure refers to an “organization’s internal pattern of relationships, authority, and communication” and is most commonly divided into three dimensions: centralization, formalization, and complexity (Fredrickson, 1986, p. 282). Centralization refers to the degree to which decision making is concentrated; formalization to the degree to which the exact tasks of employees are specified; and complexity to the degree that the organization consists of many, usually interrelated, parts (Hall, 1977). Elements of the organizational structure might feel beneficial to an employee when they help satisfying the employee’s basic needs. For example, a high degree of formalization might undermine an employee’s need for professional autonomy and competence as it limits his/her decision making discretion (Perrow, 1972). However the need for professional autonomy might not be the same for all employees. It is likely that employees with a high degree of professionalism, such as teachers, have a large need for professional autonomy (Frederickson, 1986).

Climate:
In short, the climate of a school may be seen as its personality as perceived by the members of the school. It has been defined as “the set of internal characteristics that distinguishes one school from another and influences the behavior of its members” (Hoy, 1990, p. 151). This set of internal characteristics is likely to be influenced by the formal and informal organizational structure, HRM, and the behavior of all its participants (Hoy, 1990). As characteristics of an individual determine his/her trustworthiness the climate of a organization is likely to determine the trustworthiness of the organization and thus contribute to an employee’s level of trust in the organization. For example, when the organization has a supportive climate in which employees feel that the organization values the employees’ contribution and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades, 2001), the organization is likely to seem benevolent to them. This may enhance the level of the employee’s trust in the organization and stimulate the employee to reciprocate. Also a fair climate, in which employees feel that the organization treats employees equally and just, might contribute positively to employee’s trust in the organization. It might
seem as a sign of the integrity of the organization. In fact, former research has found a positive link between perceived justice and employee’s trust (e.g. Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002).

Input from the employee in social exchange relationship

Employee behavior that is not part of the economic exchange relationship between the employee and his/her employer, however, that is still beneficial to the organization can be seen as the employee’s input in the social exchange relationship with the organization. Such behavior is usually referred to as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Although this behavior is usually directed towards individuals in the organization, in an aggregate it promotes the functioning of the organization. Also particular attitudes, such as affective organizational commitment (AOC), might be beneficial to the organization, as they might stimulate beneficial behavior, such as OCB or task-related performance, that goes above the minimum requirements. As discussed previously, employees’ AOC might develop when employees receive favors from (agents of) the organization. At the same time, OCB and AOC might be consequences of an employee’s trust in the organization.

Organizational citizenship behavior:

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) has been defined as behavior that is ‘discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system and that in an aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization’ (Organ et al., 2006, p. 8). This behavior is directed towards an individual or the organization as a whole (Williams & Anderson, 1991). It usually does not directly contribute to the core tasks of the organization, however, maintains the broader organizational, social and psychological environment to facilitate the core activities (Motowildo, Borman, & Schmit, 1997). In a school setting, teachers might, for example, help organizing open days, help colleagues who are overloaded with work, or suggest pedagogical or didactical improvements (Belogolovsky & Somech, 2010). OCB might be motivated by social exchange through the development of affective commitment and trust. As OCB is not rewarded by the formal reward system, risk is involved when investing time and energy in it. As discussed before, trust is assumed to reduce the perceived
level of risk (Mishra, 1996). Also affective organizational commitment, which might develop when receiving favors from the organization, is likely to stimulate OCB. It can be expected that teachers who are affectively committed to their organization do their utmost best to help the school to achieve its goals and to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization that goes beyond minimal expectations (Somech & Bogler, 2002).

**Affective organizational commitment:**

Several different types of employees’ commitment to their organization have been differentiated in the literature. The most commonly used differentiation is the one of Allen and Meyer (1990), who distinguish between continuance, affective and normative organizational commitment. Whereas continuance commitment is “based on the employee’s recognition of the costs associated with leaving the organization” (Allen & Meyer 1996, p. 253), affective commitment expresses employees’ emotions towards the organization which are likely to be shaped through social exchange. The most widely used definition of affective organizational commitment (AOC) is the one of Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979, p. 226) who define AOC as “the relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization”. Normative commitment can be seen as a “moral obligation to stay with the organization” (Buck & Watson, 2002, p. 181) and is believed to be partly shaped already a priori to the entrance in the organization by socialization processes. Although employees with all types of commitment are believed to stay with the organization, only affectively committed employees actually want to stay with the organization due to positive feelings towards it. Meta-analytic findings (cf. Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002) show that particularly aspects associated with employees’ work experiences, such as perceived support, contribute to the development of AOC. Empirical evidence also exists about a link between AOC and desirable employee outcomes, such as trust (e.g. Ayree et al., 2002; Büssing, 2002), OCB and job performance (e.g., Feather & Rauter, 2004; Meyer et al., 2002). Also in educational research indications exist that affective commitment relates to OCB (Somech & Bogler, 2002).
General Introduction

**Context: Dutch schools for vocational education and training**

Dutch schools for vocational education and training (VET) provide vocationally-oriented secondary education, split up into a prevocational track (age 12 to 15) and senior vocational education (age 16 and older). Senior vocational education provides vocational education in different sectors, namely engineering, health & social care, economics and agriculture preparing students for a wide range of occupations (Elffers, 2011). VET schools are usually large organizations, with up to 20,000 students and more. They often consist of a number of locations. In the 1990s VET schools have increased enormously in size. On average, the number of students at each Dutch VET school today is more than five times as big than 30 years ago (Blank, Felsö, & Van der Aa, 2012). This expansion is due to a wave of mergers of VET schools in the 1990s mainly initiated by financial considerations. As schools became financially more autonomous from central government, they were seeking ways to reduce costs. Along with this autonomy, schools were also held accountable for the financial functioning of the school. School leaders with new qualities were needed resulting in a shift from pedagogical towards a more business-oriented school leadership (Karsten, 2016).

**Structure**

VET schools usually have a team-based structure, meaning that teacher teams are the building blocks of the school organizations. Teacher teams are interdisciplinary and usually develop and implement the educational program for one or more tracks of vocational education, like hairdressing or instruction (Runhaar, Ten Brinke, Kuijpers, Wesselink, & Mulder, 2014). Next to their responsibility for the (further) development and provision of the educational programs, they usually have some autonomy regarding the coordination of tasks and planning, formally carried out by middle management (Hermanussen & Thomsen, 2011; Witziers, Sleegers, & Imants, 1999). Leadership usually is distributed over three management layers: supervisors or team leaders (first level), who usually manage one to four teacher teams, location directors or sector directors (middle-level), who usually either manage one of the school’s locations or one department (for example one sector of vocational education...
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and training), and the central board of school directors (top-level). The top-level managers are responsible for finances and strategic issues, like policy development and formulation of long-term goals. The middle-level managers provide input for policy development, are responsible for the implementation of long-term goals, and often also have responsibilities in finance and personnel (Runhaar, Konermann, & Sanders, 2013). The first level managers usually are responsible for translating the school’s objectives to the team level, advising the middle-level managers, coaching and evaluating the teacher team(s), recruiting and selecting new personnel and educational leadership (De Rooij & Vink, 2009).

Current HRM and its relation to commitment and trust

Next to the increased financial autonomy in the 1990s, VET schools also became responsible for the terms of employment of their staff and strategic HRM. The development of human resource (HR) policies and strategies is thus a relatively new task for VET schools (Runhaar & Runhaar, 2012). The new HR policies and strategies primarily aim at the “stimulation of teachers’ professional development in line with educational goals and the alignment of the various HRM practices” (Runhaar & Sanders, 2013, p. 238). Particularly, VET schools seem to be focusing on HR practices targeted at supporting, training and developing staff, such as introduction programs and personal development plans as well as performance appraisal and reward systems (Runhaar, Sanders, & Konermann, 2013). However, implementation often seems to stagnate as cohesion between different HR practices is missing and managers often (still) lack the necessary knowledge and competencies to carry out these practices (Runhaar & Runhaar, 2012; Smylie, Miretzky, & Konkol, 2004).

As research on HRM in schools is scarce and little is known about the relationship between HRM and trust, the author of this dissertation conducted 16 semi-structured interviews with practitioners1 at two VET schools. The intention was to explore the status quo regarding HR policies and practices and to get an impression of the contribution of the applied HR practices to teachers’ trust in management and other teachers and their commitment to the school. At the two

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1 Per school the following persons were interviewed: one of the school directors (first-level management), the head of the HRM department, two supervisors (third-level management) of two team, and four teachers (two of each team).
schools, the HR departments were busy with a shift of their HR activities, from mainly administrative tasks towards the implementation of more strategic HRM that is in line with the schools’ goals. The main focus of their activities was the professional development of their employees including professional trainings, the implementation of yearly development interviews, team monitoring and the development of new task descriptions. Although several interviewees mentioned that HR practices might benefit employees’ motivation, the stimulation of employees’ commitment to the school was not one of the policies’ objectives. However, as discussed previously, developing employees reflects commitment-oriented HRM. Teachers mentioned that frequent contact, participation in decision making and being valued influenced their affective commitment. The interviewees also described several situations that either fostered or reduced their level of trust. Some teachers mentioned, that they felt that they were trusted by management because they got a lot of autonomy in their work. They also described situations in which they were valued or supported by their supervisor and related this to their level of trust in the supervisor. In addition, the involvement of teachers in the school’s development, such as receiving appropriate information and participation in decisions were mentioned as aspects that increased trust. Misunderstandings due to a lack of communication, on the other hand, were used several times as examples for reduced trust.

The nature of VET teachers’ work

As mentioned before, teachers at VET schools nowadays work in interdisciplinary teams. This means that instead of being responsible for instruction in one or two subjects, teachers are part of a team, which is responsible for the development and implementation of the educational program for one or more tracks of vocational education (Runhaar et al., 2014; Wesselink, Dekker-Groen, Biemans, & Mulder, 2010). This joint responsibility has changed the nature of the teachers’ work, from mainly working in isolation towards an increased need for collaboration among teachers. Also the implementation of a new educational approach, namely competence-based education (CBE), has partly changed the nature of VET teachers’ work. With CBE the emphasis in educational programs has shifted from primarily knowledge acquisition to career guidance and developing professional attitudes and competences of students, asking for new abilities of teachers. Teachers have to learn
to take on new roles, like coach or tutor, “to cooperate with each other and to exchange their ideas in order to integrate the different disciplines into meaningful, practice oriented education” (Runhaar & Sanders, 2016, p. 797). CBE has thus also increased the importance of collaboration. In addition, teachers in VET schools need to be open and adaptive to the specific (leaning) needs of students with diverse socio-cultural backgrounds, age and level of education, as VET schools have a very diverse student population (Karsten, 2016).

This dissertation

Problem statement and research questions

The success of schools depends to a large extent on the teachers’ willingness to ‘go the extra mile’ for their school and exceed their call of duty to achieve the schools’ goals and objectives (e.g. Somech & Ron, 2007). Recent developments in VET schools might even have enhanced this need. Exceeding the call of duty means going beyond formal job- and task-descriptions and thus behaving in ways which are not directly recognized by the formal reward system, referred to as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). OCB is thus not part of the economic exchange relationship between a teacher and his/her school. Instead, such behavior may be motivated by the teacher’s social exchange relationship with the school. As engaging in social exchange implies taking a risk because the teacher does not know whether (agents of) the school will reciprocate, a teacher’s trust in (agents of) the school may be the key to such behavior. It thus seems very relevant for school managers to know how they can stimulate teacher’s trust in (agents of the) schools. As research on individuals teacher’s trust is scarce, this dissertation wants to enhance the understanding of individual teacher’s trust and addresses the following research questions:

- How can individual teacher’s trust be conceptualized and measured?
- How do current organizational characteristics of VET schools relate to teacher’s trust?
• How does teacher’s trust relate to his/her self-efficacy, affective organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior?

• Which role does teacher’s trust play in the relationship between current organizational characteristics, which may be part of the teacher’s social exchange relationship with (agents of) the school, and teacher’s self-efficacy, affective organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior?

**Integrated model of teachers’ trust and social exchange in VET schools**

Based on the theory of social exchange and trust a model (figure 1) was developed that visualizes the theory that guided this dissertation. This model integrates the development of teachers’ trust, on the one hand, and their social exchange relationship with the school organization, on the other hand. In this model, the behavioral outcome of teacher’s trust in (agents of) the school, specifically teacher’s OCB, is, at the same time, the teacher’s input into his/her social exchange relationship with the school. The macro-level input of the school, split up in HRM, structure and climate, in the social exchange relationship may, at the same time, enhance the teacher’s trust, as it may be seen as a sign of the school’s trustworthiness, may determine the quality of the teacher-school relationship and may serve as macro-level cues. In order to determine which aspects of HRM, structure and climate are relevant for social exchange and trust of VET teachers, both theory and the specific context, such as current HR practices in VET schools and structural developments, as discussed before, were taken into account.
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Thesis overview

As consensus is lacking on the conceptualization of interpersonal trust and as there is a tendency to measure teachers' trust on collective level in educational research, the second chapter presents an in-depth conceptualization of interpersonal trust that is in line with the latest discussion on trust and a review of the measurement of interpersonal trust, particularly in educational research. Additionally, it reports on a further development of a measurement instrument for surveys which measures teacher's interpersonal trust in colleagues and the immediate supervisor on individual level.

The third chapter focuses on the role that high-commitment HRM, namely teachers' structural empowerment (cf. participation in decision making, professional development and team autonomy), plays in relation to teacher's trust and teacher's self-efficacy. The introduction of team-based structures in VET schools might have
increased teachers’ structural empowerment. Particularly, it was examined whether structural empowerment relates to teacher’s trust in management (cf. the immediate supervisor and higher management) and via the enhancement of collaboration also to teacher’s trust in his/her team members and whether teacher’s trust relates to teacher’s self-efficacy.

The fourth chapter focuses on the structure of the school, namely structural distance between teachers and management (span of control), and teacher’s psychological distance to management (value differences) in relation to teacher’s trust in management (cf. the immediate supervisor and higher management) and via trust to teacher’s affective organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior. Structural as well as psychological distance might have increased due to increases in size, larger spans of control and more accountability of VET schools. Further, it was examined whether certain human resource practices, namely participation in decision making and top-down communication relate to psychological distance.

The fifth chapter focuses on the role of climate, reflected in the level of perceived organizational support and perceived procedural justice, in teachers’ social exchange with the school. Particularly, it was examined whether climate relates to teacher’s trust in (agents of) the school (cf. his/her team members, immediate supervisor and higher management) and via trust to his/her affective organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior.

The sixth chapter presents and discusses the main research findings including suggesting for future research. Furthermore, implications for educational practice and methodological considerations are given.