

# Towards a Pedagogy of Trust

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Introduction – What is trust?

The word *trust* is a very overworked one, used in all kinds of situations to mean a wide variety of things. It can mean, amongst other things, confidence, faith, reliance, and expectation. It is also used as a fallback claim to justify attitudes and behaviour towards others, for example “I can trust her with my life,” or “I just don’t trust him.” Heimer (2001) distinguishes *trust* from *faith*, *confidence*, and *legal trust*. All four involve some vulnerability or risk, but trust, for Heimer, differs from the other three terms in that it is accompanied by an obligation for the trustee to consider the perspective of the truster, and by the right of the truster to negotiate with the trustee. Trust is also similar to *reliance* but some theorists distinguish this from trust, which they say includes an element of morality. *Expectation*, like risk, is part and parcel of trust, but when expectations are strong, *trust* gives way to *confidence*.

For the purposes of this paper, I will use Weber and Carter’s (2003) definition of trust “as *an orientation* between self and other whose object is the relationship” (pp. 2–3). They also claim that “trust’s premise is the belief that the other will take one’s perspective into account when making a decision and will not act in ways to violate the moral stan-

dards of the relationship” (p. 3). I use this definition as it includes the cognitive, the moral and the social elements of trust.

Do we live in an age of distrust?

There has also been a surge in interest on the topic of trust among academics, which is seen in the great increase in number of theoretical and research-based books and journal articles, especially in the area of sociology. Perhaps this increase is because of the perception that there has been a decline in trust in society and that we now live in an “age of distrust.” Some surveys have supported this, with people answering that they have less trust in government than before. Writers such as Hardin (2006) agree. He argues that we are now a “network” society rather than a village or a community, and that there has also been a decline in social participation. Because of these changes, we now have contact with many more people whom we don’t trust or whom we may even distrust, and in this sense we are in an age of distrust. This distrust, it is argued, has spurred the interest in trust.

However, perhaps it is the opposite—that we live in an age where we need to be able to trust, and actually do trust, many more people than we used to. This is the position of Solomon and Flores (2001) who believe that there is more trust in the world now, and that this is what has made people more interested in it. They believe that people may say or even feel that they trust people and governments less in today’s world, but their behaviour shows more trust, perhaps because it is necessary.

Or perhaps this increase in interest is because “trust” is seen as a kind of magical phenomenon that can deliver golden eggs of prosperity,

popularity, and happiness. Fukuyama (1995) and Covey (2006) are among those who believe in this power of trust. This is usually the default position in the literature on trust—that it is always a good thing. Though they do not argue that trust is a sufficient condition for cooperation and success, they usually believe that it is a necessary condition. Cook, Hardin and Levi (2005), however, remind us that successful cooperation can also be the result of lack of trust or even of distrust. However, regardless of whether trust is necessary for all positive social interactions, everyone agrees that it is a very important part of society, modern and ancient, and that it is present in some form in our interactions with other humans in our daily lives.

### The importance of trust

Without thinking about it, we trust everyday. As Covey (2006) writes “Trust impacts us 24/7, 365 days a year” (p. 1). It is not only the ubiquitous nature of trust that makes it important. Trust also plays a pivotal role in how we behave and in the success of our relationships, whether romantic, business, political, familial, or otherwise. Some, like Covey, believe it is the most important component of all relationships. In the subtitle of his book he refers to trust as “The one thing that changes everything.” It is not necessary to agree with him to accept that trust has a profound impact on motivation, on achievement, on self-esteem, and on satisfaction with relevant relationships and situations.

This significance and omnipresence, is perhaps, perversely, the reason we don’t think about trust in our daily lives. And again perhaps it is the reason that, until the last two decades, trust has not been the focus of much theory and research in the social sciences. It has been considered an important component impacting on many things, but not fo-

cused on in its own right.

My position is that, in our contemporary globalized society, real trust, as opposed to expectation, reliance, confidence, or obligation, has taken on an even more central role in society than previously. Because of this, there is more pressure on individuals to choose when and how to trust. As I previously stated, there is confusion in the literature, and in our ordinary use of the term in daily life, on exactly what trust is and what it is not. In agreement with Sztompka (1999), I consider trust to have three dimensions: 1) as a characteristic of relationships, 2) as a form of social intelligence (Goleman, 2006; Yamagishi, 1998, 2001), and 3) as a cultural rule. The second one is slightly different to Sztompka's personality trait, but there is similarity in its individual psychological aspect. The first two dimensions make it doubly important that a focus on trust be an integral part of educational policy, as education should be based both on developing intelligences (Gardner, 1999) and on developing relationships. This is the main thrust of my argument in this paper. It is based on my perception that education has not responded to this need, made more urgent by the rapid changes occurring in the world under the guise of globalization.

Education and trust

### *Cooperative Learning*

Education has been slower and less enthusiastic than the other social sciences in following the trend towards a focus on trust. There have, however, been groups, movements, and individuals that include trust-building as an important part of their principles. Cooperative Learning (CL) is one of these. CL has had a long and varied history, both within and outside of Japan. Sugie (1999) gives a brief, but clear history of CL

in Japan, including its most representative form, Buzz Learning. Though trust is not explicitly focused on, it is often considered a necessary condition on which to base Buzz Learning or other forms of CL, as the following excerpt shows: “The realization that the teacher is there to aid them helps the student to trust the teacher. Under these circumstances cooperative learning is ready to be practiced” (Inoue, 1999). Here the teacher spent a month trying to consider the students’ perspectives, listening to them, not getting angry with them, and treating them with respect.

CL outside of Japan has its roots in psychology, with Jigsaw (Aronson, 1978) perhaps its first incarnation. Since then many forms of CL and varying theoretical positions have been developed, but the most commonly quoted principles are Johnson and Johnson’s (1999) five elements: 1) positive interdependence, 2) individual accountability, 3) face-to-face promotive interaction, 4) social skills, and 5) group processing. As these elements suggest, trust is a necessary component of CL. As with Buzz Learning in the Japanese context, trust is considered to be a necessary condition for CL to be effective. In addition, trust is a consequence of cooperation. There is thus a mutual interaction between trust and cooperation.

### *Learner autonomy*

Another recent development in educational theory and practice related to trust is learner autonomy, or self-directed learning. This has been especially strong in the area of language learning (Benson, 2001). Benson’s definition of autonomy “the capacity to take control of one’s own learning” (p. 47) clearly shows the profound implications this approach has for changing the traditional roles of the teacher and the stu-

dents. The teacher thus needs to be both trusting of, and trustworthy towards, students. As with CL, there are variants of autonomous learning, and teachers may focus on different aspects, such as the technological, for self-directed learning in self-access centers, or the psychological aspect, where the focus is on self-regulation of learning in terms of psychological factors. However, they all involve a change in the nature of trust in the classroom.

### *Individual approaches*

Individual educators or teams of authors have focused on trust-related ideas in the classroom. Recognizing the importance of a positive atmosphere in the foreign or second language classroom, and of language confidence, Davis and Rinvulcri (1990) suggest a variety of activities to build these particular forms of trust. However, this doesn't go beyond the classroom, and is more related to confidence and harmony amongst the group of students that real trust and cooperation.

Paulo Freire's ideas include a need to be genuinely trusting and trustworthy as teachers. His pedagogical ideas are much more all-encompassing and far-reaching, but they correspond closely to part of my argument for a pedagogy of trust. In *Teachers as cultural workers*, he advises novice teachers feeling fear on the first day of teaching to "tell the learners, in a demonstration of being human and limited, how one feels at the time" (2005, p. 87). He acknowledges that this requires "deep trust—not naive but critical trust—in people" (p. 88).

My proposal, though it incorporates this idea of trust, is definitely less ambitious and profound than Freire's. However, it is different from the range of approaches listed above in that it involves a committed fo-

cus on trust at all levels of education. This proposal is based on 1) the increased importance for trust in our lives, as I have claimed before, 2) the suggestion that trust is never fixed, that it takes a long time to be established and a short time to be destroyed, and 3) the first two dimensions of trust stated before: trust as a characteristic of relationships, and trust as a form of social intelligence. Before proceeding with these dimensions though, we need to look closely at the third dimension, stated above—the cultural dimension.

### Trust and Japanese culture

Francis Fukuyama (1995) believed that trust was the important social capital missing from low trust societies—Chinese societies, Italy, Korea and France—and in abundance in high-trust societies—Japan, Germany, and the US—that enabled the latter to become economically successful, and the former to struggle. If we accepted his version of what constitutes “low trust” and “high trust” then we may immediately wonder if trust is such a positive thing after all, considering the responsibilities that the three “high trust” countries share for the suffering resulting from major wars.

However, his analysis has been questioned, in regard to Japan, by Yamagishi (1998). Yamagishi argues that Fukuyama has confused the high *security* of (past) collectivist Japan with trust, and labeled Japan a high trusting society. Using Heimer’s distinctions from our introduction, Fukuyama has confused *trust* with *confidence* or *faith*. Yamagishi believes that the past *trust* of villages or communities was not really trust, but *confidence* based on knowledge and *security* that comes from small “closed” communities. Yamagishi thus claims that not only is Japan a low-trust society, but that this is a direct result of its collectivistic na-

ture. He argues that “collectivist society produces security but destroys trust” (p. 9). Like most other theorists, he also believes in the positive power of trust, claiming that trust “emancipates people from closed relations and leads them to form spontaneous relations with new partners” (p. 11).

Yamagishi’s (1998) arguments are based on numerous empirical studies he has undertaken with his colleagues in Japan. His results are corroborated by other empirical data reported in Hofstede’s (2001) seminal work on cross-cultural differences, which show that collectivism has a negative correlation with measures of trusting. These results are also complemented by journalistic accounts (e. g. Zielenziger, 2006) and anecdotal evidence of the lived experience of many Japanese and non-Japanese living in Japan, including the present author.

Yamagishi’s experimental results and his discussion of them in relation to Japanese society were what initially stimulated my interest in the area of trust. His grounded argument that high trusters are not naive or gullible, but actually more competent than low trusters at picking up on clues which can help one to make judgements about whether to trust someone or not, supports his belief that trust is a form of social intelligence (Yamagishi, 1998, 2001), rather than a personality trait. This also was an important impetus for turning my interest in trust towards education. Before moving on to social intelligence and education, however, I would like to return to the issue of confusion over what trust is. One approach to getting through the confusion is not by contrasting trust with what it isn’t but by proposing different forms of trust.

Authentic trust, simple trust, blind trust – a Pendulum of Trust

It should be clear that the trust I'm referring to is not a form of simple or naive trust. The trust I'm proposing is what Solomon and Flores (2001) call *authentic trust*. This view of trust does not deny distrust or consider it to be its opposite. It encompasses distrust, and goes beyond it. In order to fully describe the nature of authentic trust, how it differs from other forms of trust, and how it may be conceptualized and used to assess relationships, I have developed a Pendulum of Trust, an adaptation of Stuart Rees' (2003) Pendulum of Power (see Figure 1). It is a pendulum rather than a line representing a continuum, to show movement back and forth.

Rees' Pendulum of Power distinguishes amongst unidimensional power—dictatorial or autocratic power—on the left, seemingly shared two-dimensional power in the middle, and multi-dimensional power on the right.



Figure 1 . Rees' Pendulum of Power (Rees, 2003, p. 67).

My initial adaptation of this to a Pendulum of Trust (see Figure 2) intentionally makes a direct connection between power and trust. In this pendulum, authentic trust is definitely on the right. *Simple trust* is towards the left, not on the extreme left, which is the position for *blind trust*, and its partner *distrust of the Other*. I will clarify these forms of

trust starting from the left of the pendulum and moving towards the right.



Figure 2 . The Pendulum of Trust.

### *Blind trust*

Blind trust, according to Volkan (2004), is a perversion of basic trust of a leader of a group. This is probably accompanied by complete distrust of the Other, the image of others as being opposed to members of the group. The basic trust that is perverted is the trust of Erik Erikson (1963). The trust that a child learns in his 1<sup>st</sup> stage of psycho-social development. The trust that the child acquires in the caretaker develops into trust in the environment, and eventually trust in herself. In my view, basic trust is a component of all forms of trust, but in the case of blind trust it is a perverted form. Blind trust is placed on the extreme left, as I consider it to be the most unidimensional and dangerous form of trust.

### *Simple trust*

According to Solomon and Flores (2001), simple trust is “the unthinking emotional attitude we would all like to assume regarding our fellow citizens and which we hope we can take for granted with our friends and family” (p. 60). It is unthinking and unreflective—a kind of

default idea of trust. It consists primarily of basic trust, but basic trust can become conscious, whereas simple trust remains unconscious. It is also simple in the sense that it is taken for granted and doesn't include any thought of the possibility of distrust. We hold it as a kind of precious ideal, but whereas it might be appropriate in families with small children, it's necessary to give it up in order to develop a more sophisticated form of trust. On the pendulum, I conceive of it as somewhere left of center, to where the arrow is pointing in Figure 2. Though, there may be a range within simple trust itself, from left of center to right of center.

### *Authentic trust*

Solomon and Flores (2001) contrasting authentic trust with simple trust, sees simple trust as “focused optimism” (p. 92), and authentic trust as “*self*-confident rather than simply optimistic. Its focus is on one's own responsibilities in trusting. Authentic trust is trust that is well aware of the risks, dangers, and liabilities of trust, but maintains the self-confidence to trust nevertheless” (p. 92). They suggest that simple trust can be transformed into authentic trust, and often is, but usually as a result of some form of traumatic experience, such as tragedies within families. The simple trust that was taken for granted prior to the traumatic event, comes to the fore and needs to be negotiated in order to hold the bonds of the relationship together. Trauma is, however, not necessary for simple trust to be transformed into authentic trust. A deep commitment to a relationship, with a strong sense of self-awareness, is necessary. It is a commitment for the sake of the relationship, and not as a means to a selfish end, though, Solomon and Flores claim, authentic trust usually has optimal results. This is why I have placed authentic trust on the extreme right of the Pendulum of Trust in Figure 2.

Using these definitions of forms of trust as a way of analyzing disagreements about trust, we can argue that Fukuyama's claim of Japan being a high trusting society may be based on simple trust, while Yamagishi's claim of Japan being a low trusting society may be based on authentic trust. Authentic trust is certainly a form of trust that doesn't just happen or develop on its own. It needs self-confidence or, as some would state, self-trust. It needs both conscious, rational thought as well as more automatic, highly tuned, unconscious judgment. It is the real meaning of trust as a form of social intelligence. It is also the basis for my argument for trust to be a focus in education.

### Social intelligence

If one believes that intelligence, or intelligences, can be developed, then the idea that trust is a form of social intelligence leads quickly to the conclusion that it can be nurtured and developed through education. Daniel Goleman, the famed advocate of emotional intelligence, thinks so. He has recently turned his attention towards social intelligence, which he claims was subsumed by emotional intelligence, but which deserves its own category in its own right. He considers social intelligence to consist of two broad categories: social awareness and social facility (2006, p. 84). Social awareness includes primal empathy (a basic sensing of others' feelings), attunement (real listening), empathic accuracy, and social cognition. These abilities seem to me to be necessary ones for making authentic trusting judgments, both carefully considered and spontaneous ones. Social facility, on the other hand, includes synchrony (interacting well non-verbally), self-presentation, influence, and concern. These seem to be necessary skills for displaying trustworthiness. Goleman considers both of these categories to include conscious, cognitive capacities—what he calls the “high road” of the brain—and uncon-

scious, emotional ones—the “low road” of the brain. Moreover, he argues that research shows that both of these types of capacities, the conscious as well as the unconscious, can be developed through training. The resulting increase in social intelligence can have a profound impact on behavior, happiness, and life in general.

Towards a pedagogy of trust

*Trust in the classroom and the curriculum*

My argument for a pedagogy of trust is aimed at putting a focus on developing authentic trust at all levels of education and throughout the complete context in which education is delivered. It includes the above-mentioned Cooperative Learning, learner autonomy and individual approaches to building trust in the classroom. The teacher has the ultimate responsibility here for presenting her trustworthiness to students and for being authentically trusting of students in the way in which the curriculum is practiced in the classroom. The Pendulum of Trust is useful here for teachers to gauge, not the amount of trust they put in their students, but the form of trust on which they base their relationships with the class as a whole and with the individual students.

A focus on trust in the classroom should be based on two approaches: a conscious discussion of trust as part of the content of the class, and a less cognitive approach, where the process of the class is based on authentic trust amongst teachers and students. Students thus learn *about* trust and *experience* authentic trust in action. Details of classroom practice and activities is beyond the scope of this paper, and will ultimately depend on the individual teacher’s context and style, but reflection on the type of trust teachers use in their classes and a focus on developing authentic trust is a solid basis for making decisions about

the course goals, and individual lesson plans.

### *Trust in schools*

While there has been some focus on the aspect of developing trust in the classroom—self-trust, a trusting atmosphere, and trust between teacher and students—it hasn't been generally accepted as being an important aspect of education in itself, usually only as a means to the end of improving learning of the content of the subject. Making a case for a focus on developing trust in schools as a whole, Kochanek (2005) argues that "Increasing trust in schools has been linked to increased participation among faculty in school reform efforts, greater openness to innovations among teachers, increased outreach to parents, and even higher academic productivity in a school" (p. xv). As this suggests, a pedagogy of trust should not be seen as limited to the classroom. A trusting environment not only enhances trust in the classroom, it provides the lived experience of effective trusting that is necessary to build on the unconscious, non-cognitive, "low road" capacities of the brain.

The onus on changing trusting relations from simple trust, or even blind trust, towards a more authentic form of trust lies ultimately with those in power: from headmasters and headmistresses of schools and university presidents and deans, to department heads, center directors, and team leaders. It involves analyzing the current state of human relations amongst the major players and working deliberately towards change. A major obstacle to this is what Solomon and Flores (2001) refer to as "cordial hypocrisy" (p. 4), the pretense of trust when actually there is none, and characterized by public politeness in the name of harmony. The Pendulum of Trust helps us to differentiate authentic trust from other forms of trust and to assess the relationships under scrutiny

in terms of how authentically people trust each other.

## Conclusion

Trust is ever-present, multi-dimensional, and powerful. It comes in different forms, and is used in everyday life and in the research literature to refer to different, but related, concepts. In focusing on trust, it is important to distinguish amongst different forms of trust, and to identify the important issues. Applying it to education in a concerted way involves all players, but the responsibility for initiating change towards authentic trusting behavior rests with those in power. This implies a change in the way they use their authority to affect change in the educational context. Change within the classroom necessitates the teacher changing their way of teaching as well as the focus of their teaching to incorporate trust as a central principle in the curriculum.

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