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## Contextual Approaches to Strengthening Responsibility in Business Management and Leadership

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# Contextual Approaches to Strengthening Responsibility in Business Management and Leadership

## EDITORIAL

Anna-Maija Lämsä  
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The papers in this special issue of the EJBO journal will contribute to the knowledge of trust and a socially responsible way of acting in organizational life. The papers are selected from the presentations which were made in the conference 'Contextual Approaches to Responsibility in Business Management and Leadership' at the University of Jyväskylä, School of Business and Economics in Finland, June 13-15, 2006. The conference assembled representatives from both academia and business companies in the Nordic and Baltic countries. The thirty-two participants shared the findings of the recent and ongoing researches, examples of good organizational practices, along with insights and conclusions leading to a lively discussion.

The conference was organized under the framework of the Nordplus Neighbour Project "Creation of training programme for human resource development and promotion of social responsibility". This is an international project (2004-2007) funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers and carried out by a network of partners from Estonian Business School in Tallinn; Center for Business Ethics, Vilnius University in Lithuania (coordinator); School of Business and Economics, University of Jyväskylä in Finland; Riga International School of Economics and Business Administration in Latvia; School of Business Administration Turība in Latvia; BI Norwegian School of Management in Oslo; Baltic Business Club and Kaliningrad Institute of International Business in Russia; Business and Organization Ethics Network BON in Finland and Lithuanian Association of Business Ethics.

The general aim of the project is to contribute to sustainable development of the Nordic region and the adjacent countries through the improvement of education programmes and research in business ethics and human resource management as well as promotion of corporate social responsibility in organizational practices. During 2004-2006 the total number of seven workshops and conferences were held in the participating countries, the

Jyväskylä conference being the seventh event organized by the project partners.

The starting point of the Jyväskylä conference was that too little emphasis has been placed on deepening the understanding how certain contexts such as socio-cultural and organizational ones are related to the development of responsible management and leadership. For example, the idea of corporate social responsibility, CSR – an expression of responsible business – emerged in business discourse of the post-communist countries at the beginning of the 21st century while in the United States and western European countries the idea has been discussed for decades. Due to varying historical traditions and social systems it can be expected that meanings and interpretations of CSR as well as other responsibility-related topics, such as organizational trust and value management vary remarkably depending on time and place. Consequently, the conference presentations and discussions were an attempt to contribute to developing a context-sensitive attitude to the topic.

The five articles in this special issue are based on the original insights reflected in the conference presentations. In her article 'Do You Trust Your Boss? A Jungian Analysis of Leadership Reliability in CRS' Tarja Ketola stresses the idea that in order to create CSR it is essential that the staff could trust their leaders. The main argument in this article is that trust in leaders depends on the interrelationship among a leader's values, words and actions. Based on the Jungian analysis the author introduces five combinations of a leader's values, words and actions as the basic alternatives of leadership reliability in CSR.

Merita Mattila and Iiris Aaltio concentrate on the social and discursive construction of values in organizations in their article 'From Tools to Social Construction of Organizational Reality: Studying Value Dissemination in the Case Companies'. The authors are interested in the processes which lie behind value management and the importance of the congruence between words and

deeds. The article concludes by arguing that the process from plans to actual realization of values in an organization takes a long time. Value dissemination is a mutual and interactional process between the leaders and the led. Although values can be regarded as a basis for well-organized performance, the empirical cases of this study show that the value dissemination process can be problematic in many ways.

Anu Puusa clarifies the concept of an organizational identity in her article 'Conducting Research on Organizational Identity'. According to this paper, the concept of an organizational identity answers the question of 'who are we as an organization'. It embodies the characteristics of an organization that its members perceive to be central, distinctive and enduring when the historical perspective is taken into account. Anu Puusa and Ulla Tolvanen continue then the topic of an organizational identity by exploring its interdependence with trust in the article 'Organizational Identity and Trust'. They argue that trust is a key in understanding the link between an organizational member's

identification and a strong organizational identity. A strong identification results in a higher level of trust and in that way creates stronger commitment to the organization and its goals.

Finally, the article 'Management Models in Organizations and Problems of CSR Promotion: Lithuanian Case' by Nijolė Vasiljeviėnė and Aleksandras Vasiljevas compares the effectiveness of CSR initiatives and human resource development in public and private sector organizations and highlights the challenges raised by a post-communist context, namely, in the Lithuanian state/public administration and especially the country's educational system. The authors conclude that social science achievements including advanced managerial technologies and the paradigm of constructionist business ethics should be integrated when solving context-determined problems. Moreover, according to this article, under post-communist circumstances it is critical to carry out intensive and proactive promotion of modern management in the public sector, applying the concept of post-modern ethics.

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