

The Impact of Trust on Compliance and Commitment

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INTRODUCTION

On this poster we present the hypothesis and an integrated model of the mutual coherence between *trust*, *compliance* and *commitment*.

The term of compliance occurs in different work areas and professions e.g. teacher-student, physician-patient or supervisor-employee. Even if these work areas use the same wording, there is a lack of a common model and understanding. Compliance describes the observance of guidelines or instructions by a person on a higher hierarchy level or a person with larger domain-specific knowledge. On this compliance the factor trust has significant influence.

By the example of a physician-patient or supervisor-employee relationship the description and impact of compliance becomes obvious. Furtheron we use the terms *instructor* and *actor* to shift the topic from concrete relations to a higher level. In this interaction a knowledge downward gradient prevails between the instructor and the actor. The instructor gives instructions and recommendations to whose execution the actor is responsible for himself. If the actor follows these instructions, his behaviour is called compliant, if he does not follow them his behaviour is non-compliant.

GETTING INTO TRUST

Trustworthy behaviour of instructor → trust to instructor (and positive mental cost-benefit analysis) → compliance → positive reaction and/or positive outcome → intensifying trust → growing commitment.

Trust reduces complexity (cp. LUHMANN 1996), creates stable basic conditions for action and social interaction processes and serves as central mechanism of continuity of social order and the structure as well as the maintenance of stable social relations over time (cp. ENDRESS, 2002: II). The constitution or rather the perpetuation of stable social relations in organisations is impaired by the measure of mental connection to the organisation (*commitment*). Organisational commitment describes itself, "to what extent humans feel associated and connected to their organization or parts of the organization" (own translation, VAN DICK 2004: 3). Important for the connection between trust, compliance and commitment is that commitment can refer to persons, organizations or products and implies rising of "determined behaviours, and/or the readiness for this as also to abandon of other behaviours" (own translation, MOSER 1996: VII).

If the instructor develops a trustworthy relationship to the actor, the probability of compliant behaviour rises. "On this background trust readiness leads both by the increased cooperative behaviour and by the tendency to accept decisions from others to more effective working - and learning conditions" (cp. PETERMANN 1996: 68). In the optimal case, which characterizes itself here by reasonable complexity reduction on the part of the instructor and comprehensibility on the part of the actor, the actor follows the instructions and receives thereupon a positive reaction of the instructor. If the actor is encouraged in its way of acting and if the confidence between both is encouraged, this trust to the instructor impairs positively the commitment of the actor.

The emergence and the maintenance of the trust relationship is a key factor in the view to the observance of instructions and the solidarity with the total context. However the instructor must win the trust of the actor first. The duration of the relationship, changing dependences and an unpredictable moment offers favourable basis for trust relations (LUHMANN 1996: 46). The computability is decisive for trustworthiness. Trust is based on "the faith in the reliability, credibility and trustworthiness of a person [...] and the appreciation of fidelity and integrity" (cp. ENDRESS 2002: 42). If the actor does not follow the instruction his behaviour is non-compliant due to different reasons.

ON THE WAY OF DISTRUST

Behaviour of instructor without special focus on trustworthiness → distrust to instructor (and negative mental cost-benefit assumption) → non-compliance → negative reaction of instructor and no or negative outcome → intensifying distrust (self-fulfilling prophecy).

One can differentiate between at least three types of non-compliance:

1. Non-compliance without specific reasons

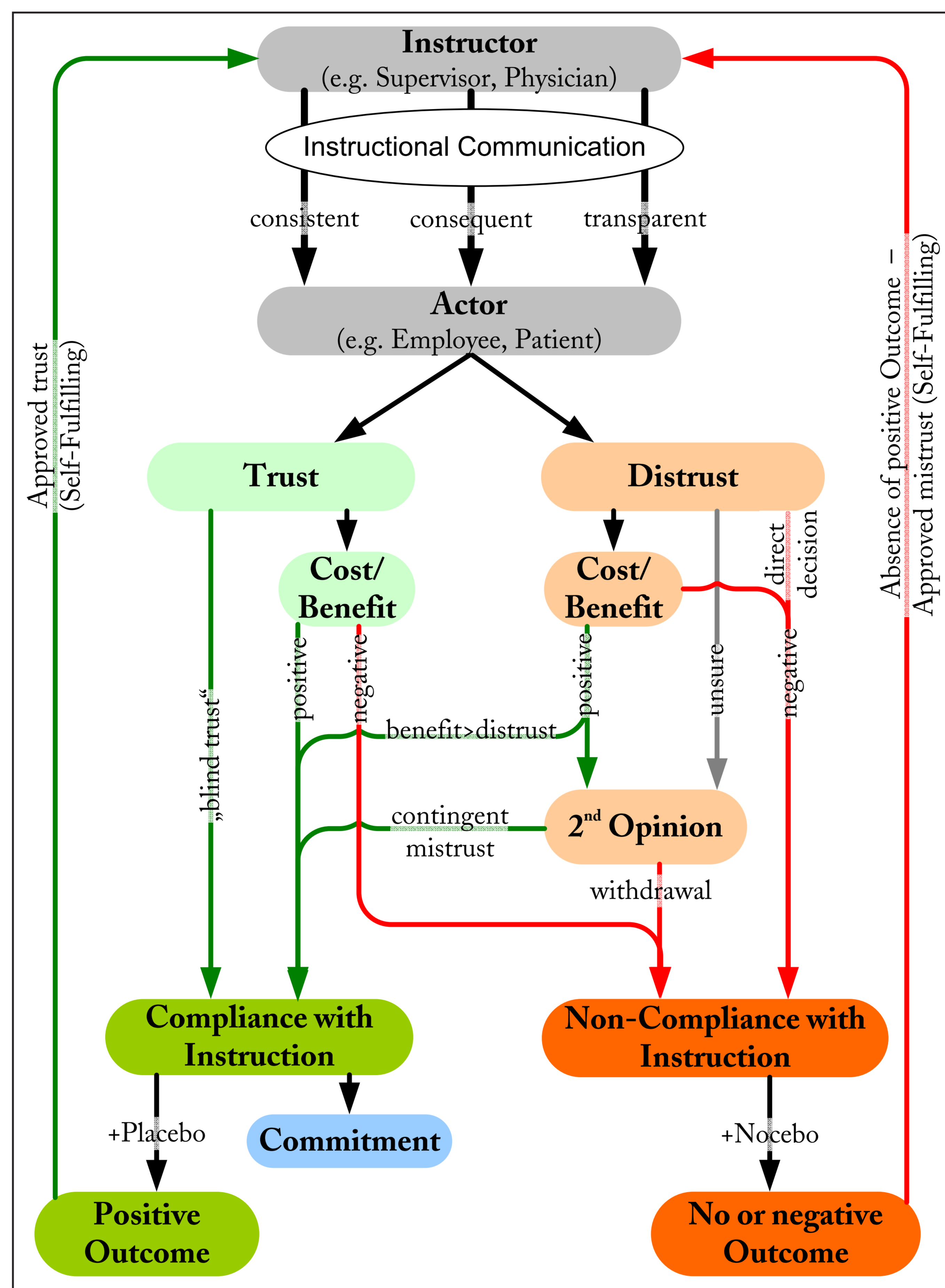
The actor forgets to obey the instruction (stringent) or rather attaches to the exact observance no large value.

2. Non-compliance because of unfavourable cost-benefit relation

The actor believes that the effort to follow the instruction is very high compared to the expected outcome. Therefore he does not take these troubles on himself.

3. Intelligent non-compliance

The actor has reasons to assume that the instruction will be adverse for him. And/or the actor states that some other instructions contradict with the actual instruction.



Doubts about the instruction lead to declining *compliance*, the perception of the instruction as a behavioural corset to *reactance*. With hidden non-compliance *nocebo* effects are conceivable, which limit the outcome and lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy. The actor feels confirmed: "I knew, that it will be not successful and worth nothing."

GEISLER (2002) states a lack of trust between physician (=instructor) and patient (=actor) as a reason for non-compliance. This bond of trust could be helpful however in several regards. First of all a high measure of trust will limit the number of follow up consultation and the selection of competitive statements (2nd opinion). Moreover the trust promotes higher compliance and an additional placebo effect by means of the actual effect of the therapy. By stronger treatment success the patient will consult presumably rather again this physician, than in the first case.

CONCLUSION AND PERSPECTIVE

The behaviour of the instructor and intensity and duration of the relationship are key factors to result trust and thereby compliance and commitment of the actor. The learn-theoretical view of ROTTER (1980, 1981) assumes "confidence develops itself over the experience in respective social learning history" (own translation, SCHWEER 2003: 6). The confidence act of the actor could accordingly be affected by the consequential and consistent behaviour of the instructor, since is central components of trust are reliability and credibility (cp. ROTTER 1980, 1981).

Both the communicational behaviour and the consequences which can be attributed to a non-compliance must be transparent for all involved parties. In further research it has to be considered in which kind trust-promoting information, communication and learning processes could be initiated and run.

LITERATURE

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