

Coaching as a perspective

by Bernd Schmid

Coaching is now highly acknowledged as a specific format of counselling.

Beyond this understanding, the concept of coaching entails in a more general sense the consideration of the perspectives, competencies and qualities contained in professional action and the organisational processes advocated in coaching.

Here we describe **Coaching as a professional perspective, quality and expertise.**

Coaching as a professional perspective focuses on:

- man and profession (Profession Coaching) and
- man and organisation (Organisation Coaching) .

Like ellipses, contemplations from the perspective of coaching always focus on two main areas which are related to each other, namely man on the one hand and the professional and organisational world on the other hand.

This relatedness lays the foundations for coaching as an independent profession.

In principle, this does not necessarily lead to new insights, but already existing insights can be bundled and new areas of interest and new approaches can be targeted.

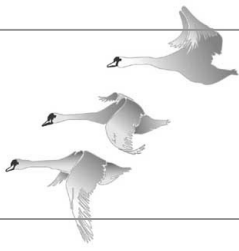
Coaches are decathletes.

Coaching is an interdisciplinary approach. Coaches are in eye to eye dialogue with the special disciplines relevant to coaching. In turn, those persons in positions of responsibility in the worlds for which coaching provides its services need to accept manifold principles of control and various quality criteria.

At the same time, the way they fulfil their tasks has to make sense in a multitude of different ways. Coaching has to be able to meet these expectations. So in coaching there is no room for the dominance of partial perspectives; on the contrary, all disciplines have to submit likewise to integration into the overall service offered by coaching. It is to be welcomed that each of the disciplines can show its own outstanding performance in a certain field which may have priority from time to time, but in the final analysis coaching depends on coordinated optimisation and integration.

Man and profession

In coaching the professional world is viewed from the perspective of man and man from the perspective of his professional life. So we gather everything we need for a better understanding of working people and their professional lives on the one hand, and developments in the professional world as well as professionalism in times of social change on the other hand.



The first view entails, for example, learning in accordance with the various phases in life and career development and attuned to other areas of life, an intrinsic professional self-image and an appropriate integration of individuals in professional communities.

Whereas the second focuses on developments in vocational fields and in the field of professionalisation, on institutions and markets and how these impact on people with regard to the way they live, their quest for meaning and their social activities.

Man and organisation

In coaching, organisations are described from the point of view of people. People work and spend an essential part of their lives in these organisations. How can we configure an organisation in such a way that it can achieve its aims in accordance with the reasons for its existence on the one hand, while at the same time contributing to the quality of life and creation of meaning for all its participants?

What must man be like in order to be able to do his job responsibly and help make his performance and the culture of the organisation ready for the future? Who bears what responsibility, who needs what support? Who is entitled to what kind of access to social resources?

Competence and context

Coaching frequently deals with competencies, both with regard to performance and with regard to the art of living. Today competence is expected on many different levels. So every individual has see about developing his own professional competence. But competence is not a personal characteristic of itself. Nobody can be competent as such. Different competencies are decisive in different contexts.

A context-based understanding of competence could be expressed by the following formula:

Competence in profession/organisation = role competence x context competence x fit

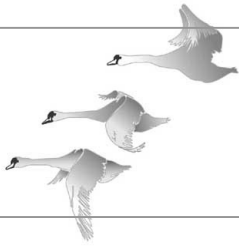
The multiplication shows that a low competence score in one dimension reduces total competence. At the same time, an increase in competence in a neglected dimension has a multiplicative effect. So it is generally more a question of meaningful complements and composition than one of perfection in one single dimension.

Role competence:

An actor (to use the theatre metaphor) needs to acquire a repertoire of roles to play as well as the necessary techniques.

Context competence:

In order to be able to present these roles well in actual productions, the actor needs knowledge of typical plays, production methods and where they are performed. Power conflict in a Greek tragedy differs from that in a street musical. A working theatre is different to a big playhouse.



Fit:

Whether role and context competence are convincing have to do with fit. Can the upcoming productions, plays and roles be filled with personal meaning?

As in the image of an ellipse, coaching is always about the relationship between man and profession and man and organisation.

The fit¹ between man and profession and man and organisation

has many facets.

What has to be taken into account when we are asked whether a profession is meaningful for a person? Professionalism is often an integral part of professional communities and their cultures of further education and examinations, of markets and social developments. Here we are dealing with emotionally born, individual professionalism on the one hand, and professional culture in the social environment on the other

What has to be taken into account when we are asked whether a person's activity is meaningful for a specific organisation? In this case, it is not only a question of expertise, but of whether the tasks and how they are orchestrated, whether the relationships, milieus, styles and values that influence performance and atmospheric qualities, fit this person. And conversely it is also important for the organisation that this person's participation is meaningful to the organisation itself.

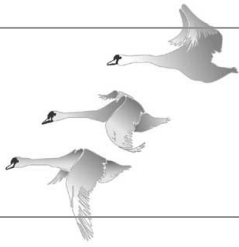
Coaching as an expertise

For many professionals competence in dealing with people in the professional and organisational world is important even if primarily they are not and do not wish to be counsellors. However, as managers, executives or specialists they are interested in incorporating these qualities in their professional self-images and their manifold roles and tasks. Accordingly, they qualify themselves in the field of coaching without operating under the name of coach.

1. Coaching, then, is an expertise for people in organisations and professions. It is a particular expertise for people-friendly structures and processes and is combined with other areas of expertise.
2. In this case, coaching is not defined by a special work setting such as counselling or by a professional identity as a counsellor. However, a coach needs to be competent in counselling as this enables him to demonstrate his communication skills.
3. This can be achieved through qualified further education. Cooperative counselling and supervision based on practice are key elements of a learning culture.

¹

Schmid, B. and Messmer, A. 2005: Systemic development of human resources, organisation and culture (in german: Systemische Personal-, Organisations- und Personalentwicklung). EHP, Bergisch-Gladbach, Germany, p. 26-45, see: www.isb-w.de/Download/Download-Empfehlungen/Passung.



Coaching expertise means in particular:

- Expertise in personality development; this expertise entails an understanding of people in a field of tension with regard to career orientation, their career within an organisation and their private lifestyle².
- Expertise in a personally fitting professional development that is also suitable for the market and the organisational world, as well as in devising appropriate working and learning processes to achieve this.
- Expertise in the fit between man and the organisation to enable developments on both sides to be coordinated and configured professionally.
- Expertise in job- and organisation-oriented cultural encounters and in controlling organisations by means of this culture³.

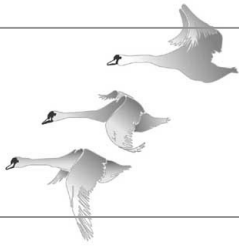
Culture from the perspective of coaching

Taking the overall complexity of organisations into consideration, it would appear that conscious, methodical control is not or only roughly possible at the price of mechanising procedures and wilting creative potential. For creative harmonious professionalism you need the whole complexity of personality. For self-control and cooperation in an organisation you need culture in order to induce highly valuable orchestrations of reality and to integrate them into essential processes.

Figuratively speaking, professional and organisational culture is not a question of cultural events reported in the Sunday arts pages, but of the manner of our daily dealings with one another, of our culture, as depicted in the business section of the newspaper. It is obvious that culture cannot be delegated to coaching, and many other perspectives in which coaches have less expertise have a decisive influence on culture. Nevertheless, coaching with expertise in cultural development can be an important partner for all persons with responsibility. Over and beyond individual coaching, it is essential to take cultural perspectives in all processes of the organisation into consideration.

² Schmid, B. 2004: Systemic Coaching – concepts and approaches in personality counselling (in German: Systemisches Coaching – Konzepte und Vorgehensweisen in der Persönlichkeitsberatung), EHP, Bergisch-Gladbach, Germany.

³ Extract from paper no. 57: "Self-Organisation, construction, innovation" (in German: "Selbstorganisation, Konstruktion, Innovationen" http://www.systemische-professionalitaet.de/isbweb/component?option=com_docman/task/doc_download/gid,464/), also published in: LO (magazine „learning organisation“) 15/03.



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Bernd Schmid (born in 1946) studied economics and has a doctors degree in [Education](#) and Psychology. Special Interests: Systemic teaching, profession and working culture and working with intuition, dreams and psychological images.

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- Co-founder and member of the presidency of the *Deutschen Bundesverband Coaching* (DBVC) (German Association for Executive Coaching)..
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- Lectureships and collaboration with several Universities (e.g. Heidelberg and Mannheim and the Steinbeishochschule Berlin).
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