Bernd Schmid

creating

shared

realities

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systemic professionalism

Creating Shared Realities

by Bernd Schmid 2019

Dr. phil. Bernd Schmid (born 1946)

is the founder and leading figure of isb GmbH Wiesloch (since 1984) and the Schmid Foundation (since 2011). He has worked internationally as a speaker, learning and professional culture developer, and as an entrepreneur and founder of initiatives and associations. Today, he provides his expertise in organizational development and coaching as a mentor and concept developer at the intersection of profit and nonprofit entrepreneurship.

Schmid is, among other things, an honorary member of the Systemic Society and honorary chairman of the executive committee of the German Federal Coaching Association. He is a recipient of the 2007 Eric Berne Memorial Award from the International TA Association ITAA, the 1988 Science Award from the European TA Association EATA, and the 2014 Life Achievement Award from the continuing education industry. In 2017 award for his life achievement from the German Society for Transactional Analysis DGTA.

Numerous essays on personal and professional topics can be found at

www.isb-w.eu/campus/de/schrift/Blogarchiv-von-Bernd-Schmid-0000SY0812D

Additional publications for free download, as well as videos, are available at www.isb-w.eu/campus/de and www.youtube.com/user/ISBlearning.

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Foreword

This book is for quite advanced professionals who are experienced in the field of organizations, having had some education in dealing with roles, structures, projects, markets, as well as taking responsibility and delivering services. It offers an overview over almost 40 years of development at the isb and introduces into the isb way of understanding and dealing with professionalism, organizational processes and development as well as questions of consulting and entrepreneurship.

Nevertheless, beginners may still be fascinated by the isb systemic approaches and get inspiring perspectives for further learning. However, they might miss step-by-step explanations of how things can be done and more examples illustrating isb-ideas. Browsing is facilitated by the gray background of key phrases.

Advanced professionals using these framing descriptions will discover a wealth of descriptions bringing their own experience and reasoning to a point. They may also gain surprising insights, which they can immediately relate to situations they experience within their field. Thus, they may feel reassured and eventually re-evaluate their way of developing ideas and start doing things differently. In brief, this book can help professionals reexamine their point of view, their services and their cultural mission.

You are invited to use one or the other isb-approaches for dialogues and studying with colleagues and customers. Due to the isb policy all further material is free for use. More than 5,000 professionals are actually sharing the isb alumninetwork, including representatives of many major corporations in Germany. These networkers, internal corporate employees (2/3) and self-employed, external professionals (1/3) have usually

participated in extra-occupational courses at isb for two years and are now working together in peer groups and on projects in many regions and internationally. They exchange insights, practical proceedings, hints and job opportunities. Many of them call the isb their professional home.

Further material to this handbook and each Chapter is provided free on the isb-campus. An instruction in using this material for your own work can be found at the end of this book.

If you are interested in further studying the isb approaches, you are welcome to visit isb-website www.isb-w.eu/en

Join seminars or organize something like a workshop or sharing session locally yourself. There is a lot of material in English and isb runs international platforms for dialogue and co-developing.

Introduction

Culture comes from culture and examples teach the lesson. (isb-slogan)

An organization is not a defined thing. An organization appears as something different depending on different chosen perspectives. The owner of a company may think of it in terms of legal construction and which shareholders hold which kind of share. The technical director may understand it as buildings and technical equipment, the HR director may understand it as a marketplace for qualification and performances, the training director may see an assembly of competences and needs for more qualification etc.

isb discusses organizations from a variety of perspectives, important for developing both professional and organizational culture, always related to people and performance. From a systemic perspective, a company may be seen as a network of leadership relationships, as a system of responsibilities or a system where learning takes place.

This illustrates that "systemic" is rather about a way of looking at things than about defining a company as a system, even though this can also be seen as a valid definition. It is based on the principle of taking ideas about reality as real even if they convey only a vague connection to factual reality. From a systemic perspective reality is always the reality of the observer. Isb observes companies from the perspective of relationships between human beings acting in their organizational roles. Culture of performance and satisfaction in working lives is our main perspective, because this is the core of our expertise. Our goal is to engage responsible executives and service providers who are ready to take a look at their work and their businesses from this perspective.

Our major focus on organizations is development through culture. Culture? Do we really have time and resources for cultural development? We should definitely invest it!

If you think culture is expensive, try ignorance!

Almost everybody has experienced that in a project after a quick start and achieving quick results, after some time problems start to pile up. Achieving good results becomes increasingly difficult and expensive, if you have neglected taking care of essential basics in the first place. If you go for quick wins by neglecting culture, this will backfire through problems in the longer run. However, if you take good care of culture from the beginning, your potential in gaining further results will grow steadily. The more complex the tasks of a team become and the faster conditions change, the more important the cultural foundation of the team tends to be.

If you want quick results,
start with culturing.
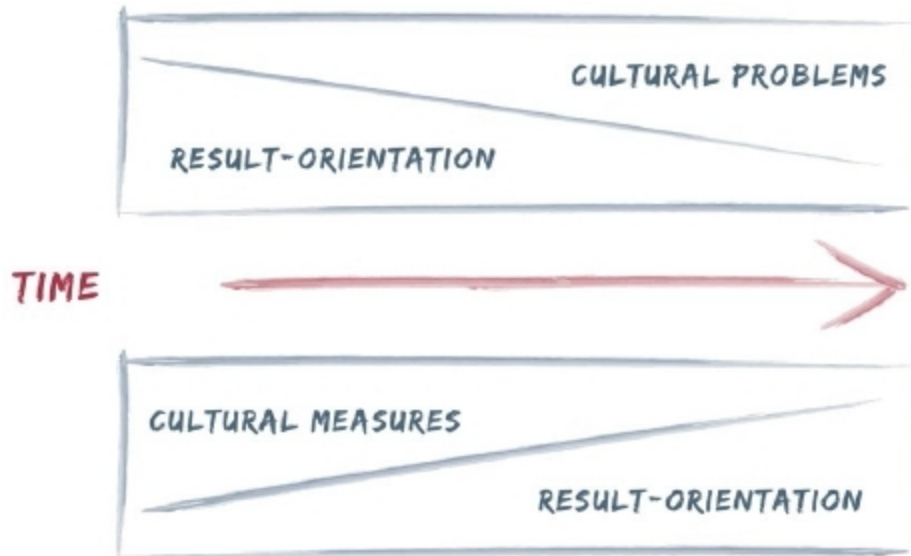
Fig. 1: Relation of result and culture orientation in organizations (Schmid 1996)

There are no limits to the complexity in which an organization can be looked at. We elaborate here on our perspectives and approaches, as this is exactly our expertise. By doing that, we feel responsible for serving the overall responsibility of entrepreneurship. This is crucial at the end of the day.

1.   Sharing reality

Why sharing reality?

An organization is a mix of multiple realities functioning together to achieve results. These realities can either be cohesive or fragmented. If realities are not in sync, energy in an organization will be drained and there will be a waste of time, money, productivity and human energy. This is why sharing realities as a perspective matters for all areas in organizations. Looking at structures, processes, approaches, models and methods, there is always the one urgent question: is it contributing to a shared reality? Shared reality does not mean that everybody agrees on a certain point of view, nor do we want to reduce enriching variety. It simply means that we mutually understand as much of our realities as we possibly can. It means that we are able to effectively relate to each other and to join each other's realities in a way that makes organizational life and performance possible, effective and satisfying.

1.1.   What is Reality?

From a systemic point of view, reality can only be grasped, if we understand whose reality is meant. Individuals and groups live in their own cosmos, with their own mix of habits of perceiving, varying experience in biography, interests, competences, responsibilities and roles in society. Although reality may include "hard facts", it is still a narrative. And many "hard facts" derive from ideas about reality having created their own reality in return. This is why in principle such realties should be open to change, provided that new ideas are created and realized in a shared process.