

SFCT review reviews

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Design and Facilitation of Solution Focused Quality Review Process

I designed and facilitated an institutional quality review process based upon Solution Focused Principles within my institution, Ghana Christian University College (GhanaCU). This process was mandated by the GhanaCU Institutional Quality Policy. Both the Policy and the review process were designed to enable teams to frame and take responsibility for their own quality improvement – in contrast to the past in which our quality standards were dictated to us by external parties. At the core of the process was the Solution-Focused Quality Review Instrument that all unit teams in the institution were required to complete under GhanaCU's current Institutional Quality Policy. The Instrument was designed around the SF therapeutic model consisting of identification of strengths, framing of a preferred future in terms of new goals and their impacts on other parties, identification of existing and new resources to meet goals, scaling of progress towards goals, and development of action plans to achieve goals. The approach emphasised existing strengths and resources possessed by teams and the development of solutions to challenges rather than the analysis of 'presenting problems'. The design of the review instrument was negotiated with the Institutional Quality Team from August to November 2013 and approved by the Institutional Quality Board in November 2013.

From November 2013 until August 2014, 13 Unit Teams completed Quality Reviews. I facilitated the review process in 10 out of 13 institutional units using an SF coaching approach and supported unit teams in identifying achievements, challenges, framing goals and developing action plans to meet their goals. Unit teams were subsequently required to report on progress towards their goals at the

Annual Quality Meeting held at the end of the academic year in August 2014.

Each academic and administrative unit completed a Review Instrument. All identified achievements and with one exception formulated viable goals and action plans. Unit teams found that the structure of the review form gave them a framework to assess the quality of their work and to develop improvement plans. In comments on the review form, unit teams indicated that this had been a valuable learning and team building experience for them.

The Annual Quality Meeting was considered to be a valuable event that revealed the 'state of quality' in the institution and gave participants a valuable overview of the institution's work and activity.

All in all I believe that the review process has enjoyed a large degree of success in realising its purpose of enabling teams to take responsibility for their own quality improvement. I consider the reasons for this are the willingness of colleagues to participate in a new process, the strong learning emphasis built in the review process by the Solution Focus Approach, and my facilitation. The opportunity provided by the review process has also helped me to build my skills as a facilitator as I monitored and developed my practice.

Candidate's summary

I have developed my SF practice largely in isolation, so I found the comments from Annette and Rob, who are very experienced practitioners, very encouraging and helpful. I felt very affirmed by the value that my reviewers found in the processes I had developed and facilitated, especially of the comprehensive evidence I had presented in my Piece of Work. It gave me a sense that my colleagues and I were doing something really innovative with the SF approach that is unique, at least in our situation, while also being firmly inside the SF framework. (Perhaps that's why it is unique!). Annette and Rob also gave me some very helpful pointers on the way forward to develop my practice in 'micro' engagements with

individual colleagues to develop an SF flavour and perspective on everyday interactions and tasks. (I am already beginning to frame some positive questions that I can add to my morning greeting to colleagues such as ‘I trust that your day looks promising’.)

Reviewer’s summary

Brian’s piece of work was most impressive in many ways. Brian is a self-taught SF practitioner! He has not attended any formal training in SF before implementing his project on a Solution Focused Quality review process within Ghana Christian University College. He was very resourceful in reading widely in SF before designing his process. The process he introduced showed many SF clues from the design of the process, facilitating the work with teams, reflecting on his facilitation style during and after and adapting forms and design of sessions as they were being implemented. With a topic like Quality that is historically deficit-focused, Brian managed to stay focused on being progress-oriented and helping teams to notice the useful change that was occurring. He also dropped less helpful Quality Assurance Standards as it was not helping teams to come up with their own focus on improvement. The process went so well that Brian is now in the second year of working with teams across the university and establishing Quality Champions to continue the great work.

The reviewers were Annette Gray and Rob Rave. Annette comments:

“Brian showed in this piece of work his ability to remain solution focused, and in particular to keep honing his approach and simplifying it as the process emerged. The work was thorough in terms of its breadth, working with 13 teams, 10 of which Brian facilitated himself. As a result of this work a new way of working with quality management teams and a review instrument was established. Not only the piece of work but also his own

reflective learning process bore the signs of a solid solution focused based approach.”

Read more about Brian and the work on the SFCT website at <http://www.asfct.org/our-members-voice/members/list-of-members/brian-k-jennings/>