

Treasured Article – reviewing a jewel from the treasure chest of early articles on SF in organisations

Coaching – reduced to the maximum. Introduction to Solution-focused Brief Coaching by Peter Szabó

A review of Peter Szabo's early coaching article - Katalin Hankovszky

Peter's article (see PDF below) was first published in German 2000 in Switzerland¹. The primer publication contained a larger coaching study, conducted in client organizations of the publisher, and further articles on coaching. The only article on a single specific coaching approach was the one on Solution Focused Brief Coaching by Peter. The article was spread also in English for several years as a description of solution focused conversations in the context of coaching. The English version is being published only for the first time now in SFiO's online journal, Interaction.

This article was written at the very end of the 1990-s and can be seen in two different emerging processes. As part of the development of coaching, and as reusing Solution Focused Brief Therapy for non-therapeutic settings.

Coaching in today's sense occurred since the 1990's in Europe. Originally defined as a *setting*: "a confidential conversation between a leader on a higher hierarchy level and an external person for supporting the first" (Geissler:2009) coaching developed fast and quickly arose as a format for supporting other groups in organizations – later also outside of organizations and outside of the context of work. Geissler points out that coaching developed as an *umbrella term*, without further specification about what actually happens between coach and client. The careful description by Peter allows a hint about what *this* particular way of coaching looks like in a session.

In the middle of the 1990's I was an excited reader of Insoo Kim Berg's books and a struggling reader of Steve de Shazer's. Workbooks on solution focused counselling with kids or families allowed me further practical hints on how solution focus might work in a (counselling) conversation.

In this intense discovery period, Peter's text came as a consequent description of that other and 'new', solution building paradigm. After some research in the literature, I see his article at the beginning of describing solution focused conversations as 'coaching', picking examples and research evidence which fit with the grammar of organisations. So, this article in my view is the very moment of emergence of conversations which we today still call Solution Focused (brief) Coaching.

¹Peter Szabó: Reduced to the max. In: Buner, Hankovszky (eds.) (2000): Coaching. Beiträge zur Methode und Praxis, I.VW HSG, St.Gallen *Caution: I'm one of the editors of that publication! Even if I left that booklet behind and rediscovered it only a decade later, some nostalgic and heroic deformation of the view on it must be taken in to account.*

The same emergence is also displayed in the change of the title between first and second edition of *Paul Z. Jackson* and *Mark McKergow's* joint book, (The Solution Focus: The Simple Way to Positive Change (2002) to The Solutions Focus: Making Coaching and Change SIMPLE (2006).

From my view of today, this treasured article shows a remarkable *methodology for describing* solution focused work. Using directly the voice of the author, offering the perspective of single cases, describing mainly what's wanted (instead of problematising what is not working optimally), using a tentative language – all this allows the perspective on something still developing: Solution Focused Brief Coaching. Peter elegantly demonstrates how to build on the work of others by quoting empirical results of other studies. The article even contains a case of not-coaching and so gives us a glimpse of the development of Peter's coaching practice - and proposes even further development.

Dear reader, wishing you a nice reading – and listening to the early voice of solution focus in organizations.

Editor's note

While the original article was written in German in 1998/1999, the English article we publish in PDF below is a slightly updated version of Peter's article from the early 2000's.