CAMPBELL-OZTEN ASSOCIATES

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SYSTEMIC MANAGEMENT PRACTICE IN ORGANISATIONS

It is both unwise and impossible to describe **systemic practice** in a nutshell and the following will show you why. However we could use the term 'relational practice' as its all about taking account of the context and relationships in our work and how we relate to ourselves and others. This helps us create focus, be centred and authentic, make wise choices, achieve elegance and enhance organisational life.

To give you some of the context: systemic practice is rooted in postmodern theory, philosophy, anthropology, psychology, systemic family therapy, sociology, communications theorists. Some of the language is very distinctive as it attempts to capture complex ideas in much the same way as medicine, architecture do. As it is a contemporary field it has drawn on others of its time since 1950's – Humanistic, Gestalt, Jungian - so some of the language may sound familiar. It is also connected to Systems Thinking in that 'thinking in systems' is a necessary mindset and ability for systemic organisational practice. When thinking in systems we observe the organisational world as a web of interconnecting systems of relationships.

CORE PRINCIPLES

1.   SYSTEMIC CONCEPTS COME ALIVE THROUGH PRACTICE

Systemic is all about usefulness so its application is context specific. You will encounter displays of this from our work, and together we will look at the richness of your working lives in analysing closely details of episodes to understand how translation into practice happens.

People ask what <u>is</u> systemic practice, we say a better question is 'tell us how you worked systemically?' 'What happened, what was different and useful?' ie the contrast is that our emphasis is on what <u>does</u> systemic organisational practice <u>do</u>, show, create, enable …… ie what it produces **in context.** This means wide, reductionist generalisations are not possible.

This is where the idea of systems comes in: something happens and if we could stop it in time we could look at the surrounding context which influenced/enabled it to happen. This is a system.

2.   PROBLEM DEFINITION

Systemically we see problems as dilemmas to explore, as we believe the solution is in the problem. This contrasts with conventional organisational wisdom which may seek to put right 'solutionise' too quickly, or to deny or push away by making excuses for the problem. We believe: no matter how dysfunctional a problem it has a meaning and some usefulness to the system, and we need to tease this out in order to dislodge its grip, so its better to get inside and discover the meaning of a problem ie whats holding it in place.

Exploring will lead to stuckness unravelling on its own, the skillful exploration becomes an intervention in itself.

3.   USE OF LANGUAGE

'All anyone did is talk'. Systemically, we would see this as useful, we are interested in purposeful conversation, in fact the transformative power of conversation, and making wise choices about use of language.

Wittgenstein said 'language is fateful' and from a systemic perspective we believe language is action ie language is behaviour and so we look closely at words and gestures used, images created, bodily sensations experienced as ways of understanding what is going on between people and within people. The focus is on how we relate to each other and what we create together through our particular use of language.

4.   BRINGING TO CONSCIOUSNESS

We strive to bring to consciousness who you are as a person and practitioner (manager, consultant, coach) ie what you believe and value and how your life experiences have moulded these, because these influence what you do when you work, how you use language, how you relate to others, to problems.
As you discover fundamental beliefs and values your 'systemic observer eye' develops and therefore your **capacity for reflexivity**.

5.   SKILLS ENABLING CAPACITY FOR REFLEXIVITY

We believe that we co-create reality and reflexivity is the capacity observe yourself in interaction with others doing just this. Once able to do this you can reshape patterns of interaction for the better. Reflexivity can be enabled by enhancing your skills in inquiry ie:

- clarifying and circular questioning
- hypothesis fuelling your curiosity
- voicing assumptions
- reframing