

WHICH SYSTEMS THINKING FRAMEWORK FOR THE ON-GOING IMPROVEMENT IN THE OPERATION OF THE TOWNSVILLE SUPER CLINIC?

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ABSTRACT

The Australian Government is implementing a number of Super Clinics. There is considerable government expectation that these Super Clinics will do well. Townsville is one of the locations for a Super Clinic.

The design of an overall systems thinking framework to make sense of the system called the on-going improvement in the operation of the Townsville Super Clinic is investigated. This system has most, if not all, of the complexities that a system can have. Thus, a sophisticated systems thinking framework to help guide the on-going improvement is a must.

Keywords: Super clinics, Sustainable Systems, medical and health systems

Preamble

The notes for the Medical and Health Systems SIG say that the primary goal of the session is to facilitate dialogue and collaborative learning.

That is precisely my goal. My goal is to generate discussion and obtain considerable help from those present.

I have a research question. The Systems Conference is an extraordinary opportunity to get feedback and input from many colleagues.

I hope that those present do not consider that this goal is too self interested and inappropriate for a presentation to the SIG.

I hope that those present will find my presentation very interesting and have a very rewarding discussion.

I hope that all the members of the SIG group are looking forward to discuss my paper and provide comments. After all, one of the spirits of ISSS is to provide the chance for us to be beneficial to each other.

The on-going improvement of the “Super clinic” in Townsville, Australia surely matches the theme of ISSS 2009, Making Liveable, Sustainable Systems Unremarkable.

My academic background is:

- Growing social and human capital in a regional development context.
- This usually includes mentoring regional development champions.
- This mentoring usually includes empowering organizational change, empowering community leadership and community endorsement of champions.

My main academic activity is supervising research students.

An alternative title for my current work could be:

- Putting system theory into practical use in clinical practice. The on-going improvement of a “Super clinic” in Townsville, Australia.

Presentation notes

The Australian Government is implementing a number of Super Clinics. There is considerable government expectation that these Super Clinics will do well. Townsville is one of the locations for a Super Clinic.

Aim of this presentation is to obtain input and feedback from the participants in the SIG that will help design an overall systems thinking framework to make sense of the system called the on-going improvement in the operation of the Townsville Super Clinic.

This system has most, if not all, of the complexities that a system can have. Thus, a sophisticated systems thinking framework to help guide the on-going improvement is a must.

The wider research question is: How can we achieve on-going improvement in the operation of the Townsville Super Clinic so that the Townsville Super Clinic is one of those that does very well?

However, to achieve this on-going improvement, we first need to design an overall systems thinking framework to make sense of the system called the on-going improvement in the operation of the Townsville Super Clinic.

Thus, the aim of this SIG presentation to obtain input and feedback from the participants in the SIG that will help design an overall systems thinking framework to make sense of the system called the on-going improvement in the operation of the Townsville Super Clinic.

My desired outcomes from this SIG conference presentation are:

1. That I make a number of contacts with whom I can later carry on a conversation by e-mail and/or by telephone.
2. That at the SIG we have a discussion in which those present give me their tentative answers to my following three questions.

- a. What are the 3 areas of systems thinking (or leading authors or seminal papers) that are most likely to be most appropriate or most useful in developing the overall systems thinking framework to make sense of the system called the on-going improvement in the operation of the Townsville Super Clinic?
- b. What are the advantages and the disadvantages of each of these and what aspects of the system called the on-going improvement in the operation of the Townsville Super Clinic are specially suited to each of these?
- c. What are the main systems questions that the presenter has not asked?

Process: I would like to manage the discussion in the following two Stages:

First, each individual answer (on the sheet provided) the following three questions:

- a. What are the 3 areas of systems thinking (or leading authors or seminal papers) that you think are most likely to be most useful in developing the overall systems thinking framework to make sense of the system called the on-going improvement in the operation of the Townsville Super Clinic?
- b. What are the advantages and the disadvantages of each of these?
- c. What aspects of the system called the on-going improvement in the operation of the Townsville Super Clinic are specially suited to each of these?

Second, in small groups of 5-7 discuss and then provide a group answer (on the sheet provided) to the following three questions:

- a. List the aggregation within the group of the three areas picked by the individuals.
- b. Discuss and produce a group list of 3 areas.
- c. List the main reasons for the top three that the group chose.

Some aspects of the System are:

- 1) The on-going improvement will operate within an organizational context; thus the on-going improvement is an organizational process.
- 2) The on-going improvement process will be managed as a series of projects.
- 3) Each project will be identified, developed and implemented collaboratively by a small team of representatives from the main stakeholders in the Townsville Super Clinic.
- 4) The outcomes of each project will be monitored and evaluated by representatives not directly involved in the project.
- 5) Each project will be separate but inter-related with the other projects.
- 6) The outcomes from some projects will change the focus of projects that follow.
- 7) The on-going improvement process will be iterative: Identify; improve; evaluate; reflect; identify etc.
- 8) The on-going process will be over 5-10 years.
- 9) The on-going improvement will come from at least the following two sources:
 - a) Narrow sources: For example improvements in the physical layout of the vaccination room to increase the through-put. These narrow sources projects will be important in achieving on-going improvement in the operation of the Townsville Super Clinic. However, other people are working on these narrow sources projects. I am not interested in the narrow sources.
 - b) Systems sources: For example interactions, non-linearities, complementarities, known relationships, suspected relationships. I am interested in systems sources.
- 10) Data for systems sources: The establishment of the Townsville Super Clinic will include computer facilities and security and privacy processes that can be used to collect virtually any type of data, thus let us assume that data is not the usual limiting factor.