

Service Learning: Understanding Hands On as a Service

by Ruby Tan

Tool(s) used:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability Compass • Systems Iceberg
Purpose of using tool:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synthesizing Thinking • Guiding Discussion <p>Overview: It was the first session of Hands On service (the service of sorting and packing donations that come through, to be sent to our NGO partners). I wanted the students to consider the Sustainability Compass (SC) aspects of this service, and then also to use the Systems Iceberg to discuss why the room is always such a mess with lots of inappropriate items that get donated.</p>
Context of lesson/case study:	Service planning session
Participants (# and description):	Middle School students
Topic, Theme, or Key Understanding of unit/project:	Understanding Hands On as a Service
Length of unit/project:	Roughly 11 weeks
Resources/materials & setting required:	Markers, big paper and a classroom

Lesson Plan/Description of the Project:

The session was to be a planning session for the weeks ahead, of the Hands On service. It was a session for them to understand what the service is, what impact it has, and a challenge we face (the volume of inappropriate donations).

I tried getting the students to fill out the compass poster on Hands On, suggesting to them, for example, "who are the groups of people Hands On impacts?" to guide them along the Wellbeing section. Simple guiding questions like, "How do you think Hands On affects the environment?" or "How do you think Hands On affects the communities whom we donate to" (for Society).

Secondly, I asked them to consider why the room was so messy, which was a result of a large volume of donations coming in, a lot of which was inappropriate. Each section had to be explained a few times and guiding questions to help them deepen their thinking. For example, With the Mental Models, I had to get them to consider why even, people would donate inappropriate clothing/items, and for the Systemic Structures, how does the school's system impact how parents bring in donations?

Reflection

Plusses:

I guess, as a first-timer using the SC with the students, I sometimes struggled to give guiding questions when the students seemed stuck. Eventually we were pretty happy with what we got.

I had more challenges with the Systems Iceberg because the students didn't seem to understand the various parts of the iceberg. They seemed to think that the only reason C522 is messy is because people want to donate items for a good cause. But it was pleasing to be able to give them examples to give them a head start

(for eg. Systemic structure: the school's drop off point is convenient and un-manned and so no one tells them what they've brought in is inappropriate).

Overall I was excited and happy to be able to encourage deeper thinking through these tools that I've learnt. And glad that the first attempt was not a disaster!

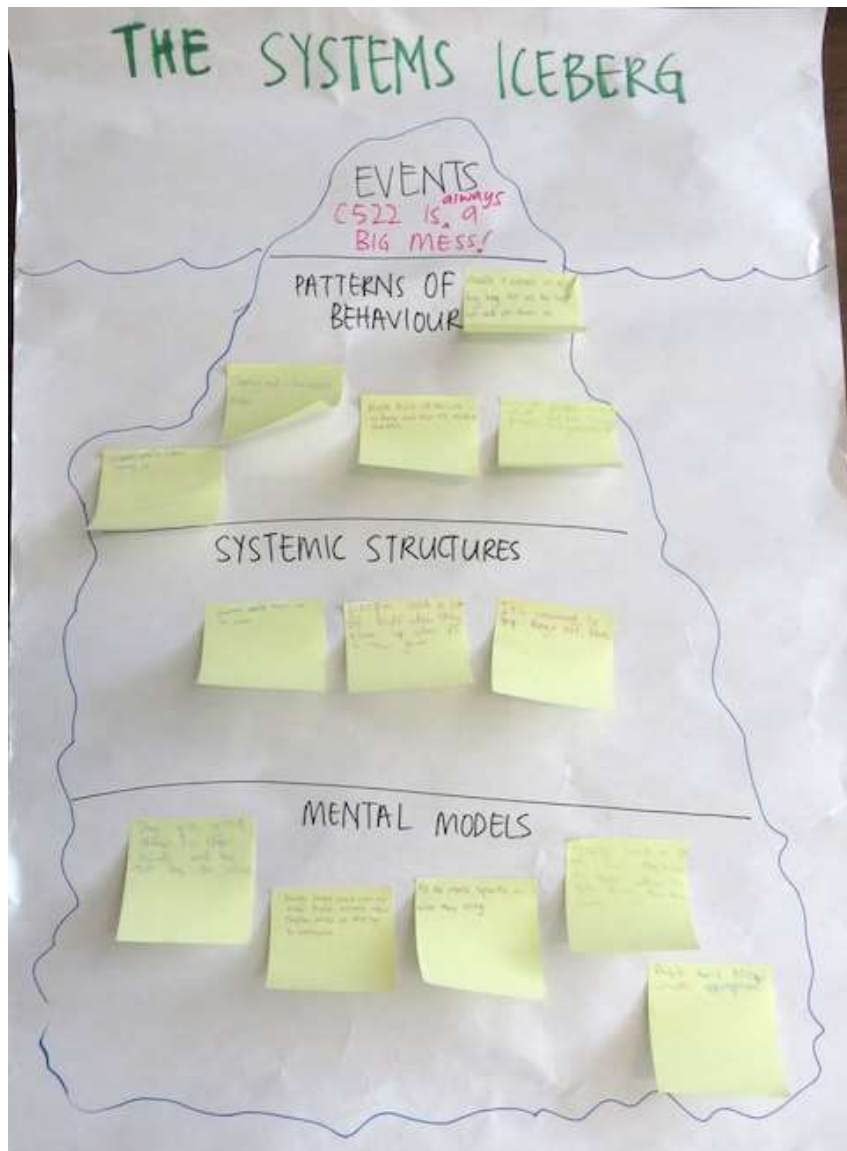
Challenges:

I would be more confident with what each aspect of the SC or the iceberg means, and to have good examples on hand to encourage thinking (instead of needing to come up with them on the spot!). It might also have been helpful to split them up into groups instead of having the group of 8 working on the entire thing. I could also split them up into groups to stick 1 - 3 post its on, and then switch groups, to allow them to participate and contribute for all sections. The group was also really quiet as it was the first time they were meeting one another. splitting them up into the smaller groups might have encouraged interaction too.

Suggestions for other practitioners and educators:

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Evidence and Resources:



Lesson plan submitted by: Ruby Tan, 2016, while serving as Service Officer at UWCSEA, Singapore