

Online supplementary material

An example of a training programme outline using the Systemic Constellation method

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Introduction

A training programme that uses the Systemic Constellation method fits within the parameters of education to foster professional identity formation (PIF), the development of professional behaviour and (personal) leadership development. It enhances students' awareness of their social environment and socialisation process. The method reflects an experience-based learning approach, offering students an embodied experience and an opportunity for shared reflection.

Practical matters

A systemic constellation is often performed with a group of 5–30 participants led by a trained facilitator. Students may be enrolled as individuals or collectively as a project team. The classroom should be large enough to allow individuals to move around. Also, it should be possible to move chairs and tables to the side. In general, the training takes approximately 2 hours.

Process

Welcome and introduction

The training starts with an introduction to the topic and approach. The facilitator explains the development of PIF and the socialisation process in a medical setting. When several student teams take part in the programme, each team is given an opportunity to create a systemic constellation of their case or project. The teams and their social environment form the starting point and focus of the systemic constellation.

Interview

The group and facilitator decide which student team goes first. The facilitator interviews the team or one team member regarding their project. Together, they identify a case or issue concerning their project and attempt to develop a clearer perspective on it. Next, they identify and select elements that are linked to the case, issue or project. These elements could be individuals (e.g. the supervisor or the assignment giver), groups (e.g. the target group or patients) or abstract elements (e.g. planning, communication or hierarchy).

Setting up the constellation

After the elements have been identified, the facilitator asks the team to pick four representatives from among the student observers (who are not part of the interviewed team). These representatives do not have to play a part or obtain instructions as in regular role-playing exercises; they simply represent the elements. The four selected students, each of whom represents one of the four elements, are asked to stand up and select a position in the room. In this way, the social system in which the case, issue or project is embedded is visualised, forming the constellation. The other individuals who are present actively participate as observers.

Examination of the constellation

The facilitator examines the constellation together with the team, the representatives and the observers. The facilitator supports the process and helps students to make their beliefs, ideas, views and emotions explicit by asking questions. Examples include: *'What do you see?'*, *'What do you feel or think?'*, *'What changed for you and when...?'*, *'Where is your focus?'*, *'To what do you feel most connected?'* The facilitator then invites the team members to position themselves within the constellation at points that best represent their own positions at that moment. By becoming part of the constellation, the team members become aware of their own positions in the team and the social system in which they are embedded. Lastly, all members of the team may be asked to explore other positions in the constellation. They are encouraged to examine the distances and positions between the different elements. Thus, the students literally have an opportunity to 'try out' different perspectives.

Debriefing and reflection

When a point of saturation is reached, the constellation process is concluded with a shared reflection. For instance, the facilitator may ask: 'What did you learn from the exercises that you can incorporate into your daily life?'



General remarks

At the end of each step, the facilitator asks the students (the team and the observers) to reflect on the constellation and helps them to make their ideas, views and emotions explicit. Specifically, the facilitator asks the individual team members to identify the place within the

constellation where they would be most comfortable or most effective for the project's implementation.

The visualisation by students of the social system and their physical presence within the constellation yields insight into implicit norms, values and structures within the team and the wider social system. This method enables students to voice their own implicit norms, values and structures within the team. In light of their observations, the students can share their experiences and ideas and reflect on how they are related to their own competencies, beliefs, values and norms. Moreover, students from the same team often take up different positions within the constellation, which often surprises them, sparking a conversation about roles and functions within the team.