Oct. 3, 2011

Hello Harrison,

Your mail came as a surprise...a pleasant one.

Though sent to our info account, the systems guy forwarded your mail to my box this morning. I almost deleted it thinking it’s the usual forwards. Glad I didn't.

I came across OST when I was looking for other tools that I can use together with Appreciative Inquiry. The web and the OS community online helped me understand the whole thing but not quite. It was when I decided to join the 2009 WOSonOs in Taiwan that I realized just how powerful OST is in bringing people together. That's also where I met Gail and Dick West, Larry Peterson and the rest of OST practitioners mostly from the region.

After the conference, I wasn't sure what to make of OST but felt that if I am to get somewhere I had to try using it. And I did starting with a small project - generating a year-round Ruby anniversary plan for SEAMEO INNOTECH my center. It was a good testing ground as I'm with my peers and they made it easy for me. Then I started to use the process in more diverse groups/themes:

* reviewing an open/ live system like the performance development and management system of the center
* engaging the center's Governing Board on how best to position INNOTECH to respond to educational challenges in the region
* bridging/managing transition in a way that is more integrative, positive, and life-giving for a group of Teresiana nuns of Poveda
* stretching the organizational possibilities for all the 19 SEAMEO regional centers in the Southeast Asia (this international conference took place in December 2010)
* defining the bold steps that PSTD can take to make the most difference (PSTD is the local counterpart of ASTD)
* leveling up Operation Compassion’s engagement in Laguna (OC is an NGO that's providing assistance to a group of 800 displaced families affected by typhoon and flood).

Though some of these initiatives were mostly part of my work at the center, I make it a point to extend myself- always testing my limits and the limits of OS within the context of my country. I also like to see OST grow as a positive and forward-looking framework in community engagement and development. And as my center is into educational innovation I want to see OS applied in education work all within the context of a system that is most challenged, problematic and complex...sometimes it’s enough to break one's heart.

OS second principle is my guiding light- I'm always reminded of it whenever I hit the wall. Then somehow everything seems right with the world. That's why I'm in love with OST, it swings beautifully from moment-to-moment happenings my side of the world. Things are no longer following their usual predictable lines, and that's when I'm reminded of the second principle.

I just got back the Governing Board meeting in Bali this weekend, and there too we had a quick round of OS. What's great about this is that all the Ministries of Education in the region have membership in our Board. On Friday this week, I'll run a session for a school in a neighboring province, the idea is to create a space for the school community to discuss the issue of K-12. Unlike most countries where basic education is from Kinder to Grade 12, my country is one of the very few (Iraq is the other one) that still has K-10 system. I'll be using OST in helping people make sense of this education reform. This is going to be a blast as we invited a cross section of the school and community.

Much has yet to be done and time is the only limitation.

In my OST journey, Gail has been my inspiration, friend and mentor. She nudged me to take that leap of faith and would tell me that it’s ok to let go. Last year, we were able to invite her to come over for a 3-day OST training in the center. So now OST has a home in the country- it’s slowly expanding. We still have a long way to go, but it’s an exciting ride. I hope to visit Gail in November.

Glad I have this opportunity to share with you about OST in my country. I hope I didn't overwhelm you with details. Still can't believe I'm writing you. I don't know- just happy that we have a chance to connect. I've always wanted to say thank you for making sense of the world and for teaching us to respect people's ability to self-organize....thank you for providing the mental framework that elevates...thank you for making it easy for me to see alignment between this framework and my own inner possibilities.

Happy Monday morning :)

metta~

sharon joy