

Full Length Research Paper

Appreciative inquiry: a tool for transforming the University for Development Studies

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The supremacy of the traditional way of thinking and decision making continue to make society to look for methods of searching for problems and their possible causes faced by individuals, groups, organizations and find ways of overcoming them and build the capacity of the human resources and consequently, the development of individuals, organizations and communities. The University for Development Studies implores the Committee System of Management; which also scouts for problems as in the traditional approach. It is in the light of this that the study seeks to explore the positive approach of Appreciative Inquiry and make recommendations to the University Management for consideration. In the context of the current management challenges facing the University, this approach will serve as a “Positive Revolution Model” which will allow staff to participate effectively in the management of the University and hence; create transformational change in the development of the University which will in turn lead to high productivity. Appreciating one’s worth of ideas is a very powerful tool to unearth his/her talents. Appreciative inquiry has been envisaged as a powerful approach that University Administrators and Managers can adopt, as its foundation is built on the social constructionist viewpoint to support contemporary management of higher educational institutions. The paper outlines the philosophy of AI as it applies to organizational development and transformational change; illustrates AI practices connected with a five- stage model; highlighted the differences between AI and the traditional approach; and substantiated reasons why AI is more successful in managing change. The author suggests that any approach by itself is not an end in itself unless a person internalizes it positively or follows through by “valuing it and acting on it”.

Keywords: Appreciative inquiry, transformational change, higher education, dialogue

INTRODUCTION

The task of Universities in national development cannot be over emphasized. Universities are critical to building the human capital that in turn builds the very institutions that are regarded as vital for development. It is these educated individuals who develop the capacity and analytical skills that drive local economies, support civil society, teach children, lead effective governments, and make important decisions which affect the entire societies (Yizengaw, 2008; pp 4).

Tertiary institutions are credited with social improvements including improved quality of life for self and family, better decision making, increased status and opportunity for individuals, social mobility, greater cohesion and reduced crime rates. Tertiary Institutions are the backbone for developing a country’s human

capital base. These human resources contribute to civil society, enlightened citizenship, self-reliance and equal opportunity. The state’s citizens develop the ability to engage in argumentative dialogue and reasoning and learn to value tolerance and respect. It facilitates national development by promoting democratic ideals and intellectual and industrial competitiveness through greater social cohesion, peace and trust in social institutions, democratic participation, and appreciation of diversity in gender, ethnicity, religion and social class. Tertiary education also improves the accountability of governments and generates independent research and analysis that supports vibrant debate that can greatly improve the effectiveness of government policy and other services.

Tertiary educational institutions are very critical to the economic success and long-term development in Ghana, a country facing several challenges in terms of growth and development in many areas of its economy. Tertiary educational institutions provide economic and social benefits, both to the individual and the public, produces qualified human capital, adapts and generates knowledge, promotes international cooperation and improves competitiveness in the global knowledge-based economy. However, it faces challenges in terms of leadership, management and governance. Management inefficiencies drain scarce resources away from the fundamental objectives of increasing access, quality and relevance and thinly spread human and financial resources. Underutilized facilities, duplicative programme offerings, uneconomical procurement procedures, and allocation of a large share of the budget to non-educational expenditures are largely related to management and leadership inefficiencies and capacity limitations (Yizengaw, 2008; pp 4).

Academic leaders are not often trained in the management of Tertiary Institutions. Generally institution leaders at all levels are poor in strategic planning, market research and advocacy, research management, financial planning and management, human resource management, performance management and partnership building and networking skills.

Until of late, the University for Development Studies has had leadership crisis of getting substantive officers for some of the principal officers' positions. According to the Vice Chancellor's Annual Report 2008/2009, the positions of the Vice Chancellor, Registrar, Finance officers and Internal Auditor were 'acting positions'. These crises have transcended from that period to the current leadership where they are confronted with staff absenteeism, lateness to work, irregular attendance, gossips, failure to adhere to policies, disrespect for seniority, gross indiscipline and above all perpetual laziness. It is in view of these that, innovative approaches of contemporary management techniques have to be adopted to surmount the challenges. One of such innovations is the use of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach to turn the problems to positive constructs.

The Concept of Appreciative Inquiry

"Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a theory and practice for moving towards transforming organizations from a holistic framework. Based on the belief that human systems are made and imagined by those who live and work within them, AI leads systems to move toward the generative and creative images that reside in their most positive core – their values, visions, achievements, and best practices." "AI is both a world view and a practical

process. In theory, AI is a perspective, a set of principles and beliefs about how human systems function, a departure from the past metaphor of human systems as machines. Appreciative Inquiry has an attendant set of core processes, practices, and even 'models' that have emerged. In practice, AI can be used to co-create the transformative processes and practices appropriate to the culture of a particular organization." "Grounded in the theory of 'social constructionism,' AI recognizes that human systems are constructions of the imagination and are, therefore, capable of change at the speed of imagination. Once organization members shift their perspective, they can begin to invent their most desired future."

Appreciative Inquiry can also be viewed as the co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them. In its broadest focus, it involves systematic discovery of what gives "life" to a living system when it is most alive, most effective, and most constructively capable in economic, ecological, and human terms. AI involves, in a central way, the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to apprehend, anticipate and heighten positive potential. It centrally involves the mobilization of inquiry through the crafting of the "unconditional positive question" often-involving hundreds or sometimes thousands of people. In AI, the arduous task of intervention gives way to the speed of imagination and innovation; instead of negation, criticism, and spiraling diagnosis, there is discovery, dream, and design.

Appreciative inquiry is also perceived as an approach to organizational and community development that has been used successfully worldwide to cultivate hope, build capacity, unleash collective appreciation and imagination, and bring about positive change. It is based on the simple idea that human beings move in the direction of what we ask about. When groups query human problems and conflicts, they often inadvertently magnify the very problems they had hoped to resolve. Conversely, when groups study exalted human values and achievements, like peak experiences, best practices, and worthy accomplishments, these phenomena tend to flourish. AI deliberately asks positive questions around affirmative topics to ignite constructive dialogue and inspired action within organizations and communities. Change research shows that community innovation methods that evoke stories, and affirm and compel groups of people to envision positive images of the future grounded in the best of the past, have the greatest potential to produce deep and sustaining change and inspire collective action.

Appreciative Inquiry is also an approach to the areas of organizational performance and learning that was developed as an alternative to the "ground-up" restructuring used for organizational change.

Appreciative Inquiry is built on two fundamental principles: appreciation of people and the organizational system; and articulation of organizational best practices as a means of creating a better vision for the future. Its aim is to generate new knowledge and to assist members of an organization to collectively envision a desired future. Using the Appreciative Inquiry process, organizations examine and identify areas where their current systems are successful, and then determine ways to make those successes more constant. The process involves storytelling and interviewing to draw the best of the past in order to effectively visualize a successful future.

“AI is an exciting way to embrace organizational change. Its assumption is simple: Every organization has something that works right – things that give it life when it is most alive, effective, successful, and connected in healthy ways to its stakeholders and communities. AI begins by identifying what is positive and connecting to it in ways that heighten energy and vision for change.” “...AI recognizes that every organization is an open system that depends on its human capital to bring its vision and purpose to life.” “... The outcome of an AI initiative is a long-term positive change in the organization.” “... AI is important because it works to bring the whole organization together to build upon its positive core. AI encourages people to work together to promote a better understanding of the human system, the heartbeat of the organization.”

AI seeks, fundamentally, to build a constructive union between a whole people and the massive entirety of what people talk about as past and present capacities: achievements, assets, unexplored potentials, innovations, strengths, elevated thoughts, opportunities, benchmarks, high point moments, lived values, traditions, strategic competencies, stories, expressions of wisdom, insights into the deeper corporate spirit or soul, and visions of valued and possible futures.

The positive core of organizational life is one of the greatest and largely unrecognized resources in the field of change management today. As said earlier, we are clearly in our infancy when it comes to tools for working with it, talking about it, and designing our systems in synergistic alignment with it. But one thing is evident and clear as we reflect on the most important things we have learned with AI: human systems grow in the direction of what they persistently ask questions about and this propensity is strongest and most sustainable when the means and ends of inquiry are positively correlated. The single most prolific thing a group can do if its aims are to liberate the human spirit and consciously construct a better future is to make the positive change core the common and explicit property of all.

The University for Development Studies uses the Committee

System of management. With this system, members of

the various committees seek to find out about problems that have occurred or taken place and make attempts to find solutions. This approach does not allow employees to unearth their potentials. It is in view of this that the paper seeks to describe how leadership and management at the University for Development Studies can facilitate change through the use of AI at the faculty, departmental, sectional, unit, programme, and project level. Specifically the paper described the philosophy of AI as it applies to organizational development; AI practices associated with a five-stage model; make comparisons that will reflect the differences between the traditional approach to management and appreciative inquiry; advance reasons why it works better than the traditional problem solving approach to managing organizations and institutions; and made recommendations to UDS Management for consideration. This management approach is a healthy one and if well implement can lead to the positive growth of the University.

Origins of the Appreciative Inquiry

In 1987, Cooperrider and Srivastva launched the concept of appreciative inquiry, as a response to the action research developed by Lewin in the 1940s; appreciative inquiry aimed to be an instrument for social change, chiefly for organizational change. From the point of view of the authors, one of the failures of action research was caused by focusing on the problem, which leads to a shortage of innovative potential. They considered that this focus on the problem leads inevitably to a restraint of imagination and reduces the possibility of creating new theories. The vision of appreciative inquiry turns the problem-focused approach upside-down, taking into account what goes well in an organization, its successes, as identified by its members. Any organization faces problems, but researching the problem with the purpose of solving it increases its development; the questions asked during the inquiry become courses of action.

Focusing the questions on identifying the problems in the organization, during an organizational investigation, directs the organization's actions towards deepening the problems. The appreciative inquiry does not deny the existence of problems in an organization or community, but, in order for them to be alleviated, positive aspects are identified, cultivated and promoted. Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) built the appreciative approach based on Kenneth Gergen's constructionism (1985; 1994); Gergen sees reality as a social construction and a permanent reconstruction on the interactions between individuals (Gergen, 1999).

From the constructionist perspective, any organization is a human construction, generated by the

interpretations the social actors have about this entity and about themselves, being the products of human interactions, and a social construction (Cooperrider, Barrett and Srivastva, 1995, p. 157). Some authors place categorically the base of the appreciative inquiry in the foundation of social constructionism, asserting that the appreciative inquiry is a way of thinking about change, built on the assumption of the social construction of an organization's reality (Murrell, 2001, p. 92). In order to change an organization, action must be directed to the way individuals interpret the organization; the appreciative inquiry seeks to identify the best of "what is". Appreciative inquiry can generate new knowledge; help create a collectively desired vision of the future, as well as assist in choosing the actions that can result in the desired future (Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1994, p. 207).

From the description given by the author, it follows that, in order to expand the domain of knowledge, we must find "the best of what is" in the organization's experience and, on the basis of these successes, create a collective vision of "what could be". "What is" does not concern only the present, in the sense of a reality manifesting itself, but also actual interpretations given by agents to past events. "What is" represents a social construction in the moment of analysis, but this can also be a result of the interpretations given to past events. From this perspective, the present is what people think at this moment about the organization.

Appreciative inquiry is viewed as an instrument of organizational transformation that focuses on learning from success. Instead of focusing on deficiencies and problems, the appreciative inquiry focuses on discovering what works best, why it works and how can success be expanded in the organization (Johnson and Leavitt, 2001, pp. 129-130); the authors state categorically the need to learn from success and the necessity to abandon the orientation manifested in the action research, which aims to identify deficiencies, problems, shortcomings and constraints.

Bushe reconsiders the concept of appreciative inquiry, building a definition that makes good use of the constructionist perspective on social reality, as a result of creating a collective image about a desired future (Bushe, 1995). In his definition, the author underlines the role of a common vision, a "common reading" of the organization and of its future (Elliott, 1999, p. 76).

Since it was conceptualized in the late 1980s as a research methodology and change paradigm, the technique of 'appreciative inquiry' (AI) has proved to be highly effective for capturing the positive features of an organization or social system and energizing the members to strive for higher levels of performance.

The Appreciative Inquiry Process

Appreciate inquiry evolved into an organizational deve-

lopment approach to change management, understood most commonly as a process-based method that supports organizational transformation (Cooperrider, Whitney, and Stravos, 2008). Rooted in social constructionist philosophy, AI is "more than a method or technique...it is a way of living with, being with, and directly participating in the varieties of social organizations we are compelled to study" (Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1987, p. 131). The theoretical underpinnings of AI are expressed through five key principles:

- First is the constructionist principle which simply states that human knowledge and organizational destiny are interwoven. To be effective as executives, leaders, change agents, etc., we must be adept in the art of understanding, reading, and analyzing organizations as living, human constructions. "The purpose of inquiry, which is viewed as totally inseparable and intertwined with action, is the creation of 'generative theory,' not so much mappings or explanations of yesterday's world but anticipatory articulations of tomorrow's possibilities" Knowing that organizations stands at the center of any and virtually every attempt at change. Thus, the way we know is fateful.
- The principle of simultaneity recognizes that inquiry and change are not truly separate moments, but are simultaneous. Inquiry is intervention. The seeds of change are, the things people think and talk about, the things people discover and learn, and the things that inform dialogue and inspire images of the future which are implicit in the very first questions we ask. The questions we ask set the stage for what we "find", and what we "discover" (the data) becomes the linguistic material, the stories, out of which the future is conceived, conversed about, and constructed.
- The poetic principle is a metaphor for understanding human organizations. Thinking of organizations as an "open book" (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p.9) allows for their stories to continually be co-authored. The important implication is that we can study virtually any topic related to human experience in any human system or organization. We can inquire into the nature of alienation or joy, enthusiasm or low morale, efficiency or excess, in any human organization. There is not a single topic related to organizational life that we could not study in any organization. Therefore, there are endless choices for the focus of inquiry.
- The anticipatory principle suggests that the infinite human resource we have for generating constructive organizational change is our collective imagination and discourse about the future. One of the basic theorems of the anticipatory view of organizational life is that it is the image of the future, which in fact guides what might be called the current behaviour of any organism or organization. Much like a movie projector on a screen, human systems are forever projecting ahead of themselves a horizon of expectation (in their talk in the

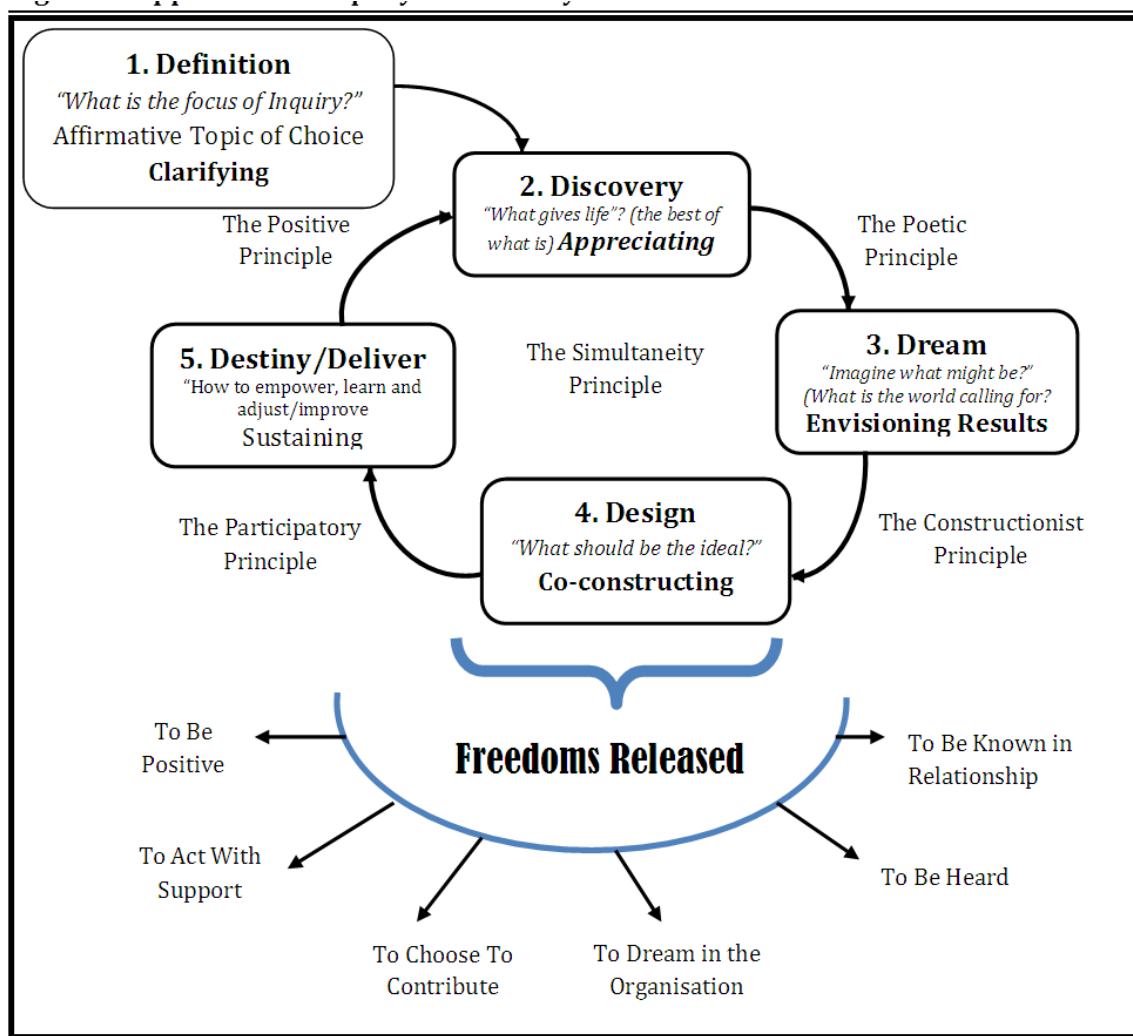


Figure 1: Appreciative Inquiry "The 5-D Cycle"

Source: Modified from Cooperrider and Whitney 2005, pp 60

hallways, in the metaphors and language they use) that brings the future powerfully into the present as a mobilizing agent. To inquire in ways that serves to refashion anticipatory reality—especially the artful creation of positive imagery on a collective basis--may be the most prolific thing any inquiry can do.

- Finally, the positive principle suggests that it has been experienced that building and sustaining momentum for change requires large amounts of positive affect and social bonding with respect to things like hope, excitement, inspiration, caring, camaraderie, sense of urgent purpose, and sheer joy in creating something meaningful together. What has been found is that the more positive the question asked in any work the more long lasting and successful the change effort.

It does not help, when we have found, to begin our inquiries from the standpoint of the world as a problem to be solved. We are more effective the longer we can retain the spirit of inquiry of the everlasting beginner.

The major thing we do that makes the difference is to craft and seed, in better and more catalytic ways, the unconditional positive question.

Organizations typically change in the way they inquire. Simply put, if we continue to search for problems, we will continue to find problems. But if we look for what is best and learn from it, we will find more and more of what is good and we can magnify and multiply our success.

The 5-D model is a series of coordinated stages (see Figure 1) by which the University Administrator guides the University towards a vision and desired goals centered around a positive core (Cooperrider et al., 2008). Defining the affirmative topic is considered the first step in the AI process. Critical to this stage is choosing and clarifying the focus of inquiry. This initiates the discovery stage, in which employees identify and appreciate the positive core through sharing life-giving stories. As the University discovers its potential and higher purpose, it moves into the dream stage, where

the employees create a clear, results-oriented vision that enhances the positive core. In the design stage, employees create bold statements of possibility for the ideal Institution, creating structures to enact the positive core. The final stage, called the delivery or destiny stage is where implantation happens. In this stage, new ways of thinking and new actions not only increase productivity, efficiency, and performance, but result in organizations that operate with an “appreciative eye” (Cooperrider et al, 2008, p.47).

This process is meant to be ongoing, resulting in new affirmative topics that guide further inquiry. There are a variety of ways that inquiry interventions can be structured. It is important to note that 5-D model is a more contemporary version of the model; many sources depict only the four primary stages, beginning with the discovery stage. Stratton-Berkessel (2010) clarified the purpose, task, and deliverables or outcomes of the four primary stages (see Figure 1), which can be helpful for practitioners as they navigate the inquiry process.

Peter Drucker, one of the most influential management thinkers, stated: “The task of leadership is to create an alignment of strengths in ways that make the system’s weaknesses irrelevant.”

Together these five principles “clarify that it is the positive image that results in the positive action, [and that] the organization must make the affirmative decision to focus on the positive to lead the inquiry” (Cooperrider et al, 2008, p. 10). The principles provide the necessary foundation for understanding the practice of Ai, as described through a stage-based cycle, referred to as the 5-D model (Donnan, 2005).

The 5-D process strategically discovers the best of what has been to create a shared vision of the future, from which action can be planned and implemented to increase life-giving experiences between races and to change organization and structures. This is done through pairing staff for interviews using the Appreciative Inquiry model. Relationships form as they together discover their own positive stories of comfortable diverse relationships in the university community. These stories are then collectively analyzed by the group to create a set of principles that become the basis for constructing a new collective vision of the university. The staff then develop action steps to bring the vision into reality and ensure sustainable change within the university community. For a more in-depth explanation of the 5-D process see Figure 1.

Again the AI process describes above ensures that the liberation of power leads to positive change. Appreciative Inquiry works because it unleashes the six freedoms over the course of just the 4-D Cycle. It creates a surge of power and energy that, once liberated, won’t be re-contained. It is through the liberation of this power that AI creates self-perpetuating momentum for positive change – a positive revolution

modified from: Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005, p. 60.

Busche and Kassam (2005) suggested that AI’s transformative potential comes from focusing on changing how people think rather than what they do. Rather than emphasizing action-plans, AI supports self-organizing change processes that flow from new ideas (Busche and Kassam). The outcomes that distinguish AI from other organizational development interventions are that AI results in new knowledge, models, and theories that are co-constructed by employees. Appreciative inquiry results in a generative metaphor; that is, provocative statements that create new possibilities and compel new action (Busche and Kassam).

Competencies of an Appreciative Inquiry System

1. Affirmative Competence: The University draws on the human capacity to appreciate positive possibilities by selectively focusing on current and past strengths, successes, and potentials;
2. Expansive Competence: Management challenges habits and conventional practices, provoking staff to experiment in the margins, makes expansive promises that challenge them to stretch in new directions, and evoke a set of higher values and ideals that inspire them to passionate engagement;
3. Generative Competence: The University in its quest for a discipline community constructs integrative systems that allow staff to see the consequences of their actions, to recognize that they are making a meaningful contribution, and to experience a sense of progress; and
4. Collaborative Competence: Management, as a matter of surmounting the current prevailing leadership challenges should build on the staff durbars the Registrar has initiated. This is where staff would be engaged in ongoing dialogue and exchange diverse perspectives.

Comparison between AI and the Traditional Approach

The most basic differences between the traditional approach and appreciative inquiry can be summed up in Figure 2 below.

Appreciative inquiry differs from the traditional approach to organizational development and transformational change in several ways. Firstly, the traditional view of the organization assumes that it is a constellation of problems waiting to be overcome whereas AI assumes that the organization is a source of infinite capacity and imagination. The traditional view tends to keep the organization at or close to its existing capabilities as it merely seeks to tweak people and processes, however, AI seeks to build and expand

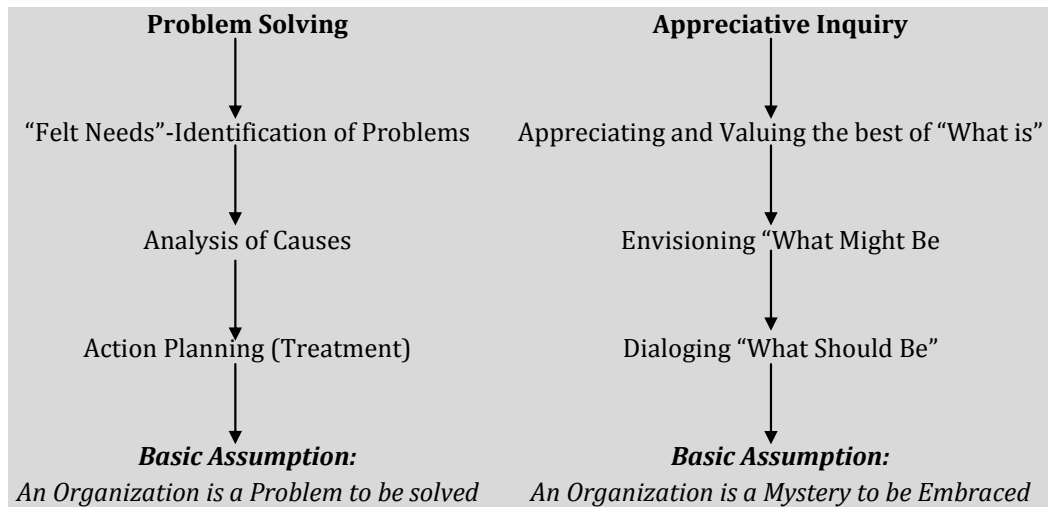


Figure 2: Problem Solving and Appreciative Inquiry

organization positives in ways that allow for ingenuity and initiative. The traditional view is negative in nature as it is concerned with problems, symptoms, causes, solutions, action plans and interventions. AI on the other hand thinks in terms of: the true, the good, bettering and possibilities.

Secondly, the traditional approach assumes that there is an ideal position. This 'ideal' state exists when all of the identified existing problems have been resolved. AI conversely starts off at the 'ideal' and looks to expand and build on this state infinitely, leading to a more synergistic organizational development process.

Thirdly, the traditional approach often yields fragmented responses as it breaks down the organization into many problems. The approach is relatively slow as a result of having to deal with the problems consecutively. Also, the Management of Institutions would experience greater resistance to change, the longer that the unconstructive behaviour was exhibited in the organization. Work habits and norms that are embedded in organizational culture can be extremely hard to change. Further, the solving of one problem often leads to the creation of another. AI on the other hand is much more efficient as it brings about energy from a shared vision of a preferred future. It simultaneously builds enthusiasm, corporate confidence, and human energy. The University Management should support in driving the change rather than forcing the change as is typical in traditional approaches.

One of the underlying principles of Appreciative Inquiry is that we have within us all the information and resources we need to renew our workplaces, our communities and ourselves. This is very different from more traditional approaches that rely on an outside "expert" to come in, recommend or implement solutions and leave.

Another difference is the contrast between Appreciative Inquiry and traditional problem-solving

methods. Instead of beginning with the question what are the problems we are facing here? We start from what is working best for us right now? Appreciative Inquiry is based on the idea that we do have a choice about how we see the world and act upon it.

Appreciative Inquiry differs fundamentally from traditional problem-solving approaches. The basic assumption of problem-solving methodologies is that people and organizations are "broken" and need to be fixed. The process usually involves: (1) identifying the key problems; (2) analyzing the root causes; (3) searching for possible solutions; and (4) developing an action plan. Deficit-based analysis, while powerful in diagnosis, tends to undermine human organizing and motivation, because it creates a sense of threat, separation, defensiveness and deference to expert hierarchies. Problem solving as a means of inspiring and sustaining human systems change is therefore limited.

In contrast, the underlying assumption of appreciative inquiry is that people and organizations are full of assets, capabilities, resources, and strengths that can be located, affirmed, leveraged and encouraged. There are a variety of AI models that guide how Appreciative Inquiry is practiced but all of them are based on: choosing the positive as the focus of inquiry; inquiring into stories of life-giving forces; locating themes that appear in the stories and selecting topics for further inquiry; creating shared images of a preferred future; and finding innovative ways to create that future.

Why Use Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative inquiry has low resistance as an approach to change because it focuses on internal strengths; it builds upon the positive core as opposed to change imposed by external consultants or benchmarks. Basically, change comes positively from within the

organization. People feel that they are building on their own strengths and working towards the optimal performance situation that they want; their strengths are celebrated and developed. AI assumes that every individual has some untapped positive experiences that are useful in motivating change and development; this immediately shows employees that the management has faith in their abilities. Schall et al. (2004) argued that appreciative inquiry can help us more effectively understand leadership. "Given the roots of appreciative inquiry in constructionism, and an emerging trend to see leadership as a social construct, appreciative inquiry emerges as one of the most appropriate methodological frameworks to pursue empirical work on leadership" (p. 148).

Employees do not have to take direction from outside sources who do not know all of the details about the organizational culture rather; internal interviews take place with people who understand the environment. Mistakes are not analyzed and broken down for everyone to criticize which saves time, energy, and frustration among employees. AI's positive, energetic environment drives innovation and change.

Best practices are developed and enhanced through the use of appreciative inquiry. If best practices are developed, the strengths of the employees develop as well as customer (the public) satisfaction. When organizations become better at what they do best, all employees will be happy.

Learning Institutions such as UDS may use the Appreciative Inquiry approach to change the current situation because AI is abound with benefits such: it creates a positive atmosphere for change and avoids the resistance and loss of hope for a better future encountered through the more traditional problem-solving approaches; it maximizes employee input and creates buy-in; by grounding employees in the best of the past and inspiring visions of a more-hoped-for future; generates creativity, ownership and motivation; and engenders a renewed commitment to any organizational change and easily translates it into action.

Appreciative inquiry as an Organizational Theory, views issues with an "appreciative eye". Organizations are centers of human relatedness, first and foremost, and relationships thrive where there is an appreciative eye and when people see the best in one another, when they can share their dreams and ultimate concerns in affirming ways; The focus of Appreciative Inquiry is not the righting of wrongs but the building of strengths. It is not problem or conflict focused but solution and resource oriented; leaders in organizational development usually focus on problem-solving and assessing what's lacking or going wrong in organizations. Appreciative Inquiry is the opposite of this; and appreciative inquiry is an organizational study that selectively seeks to locate, highlight, and illuminate the "life-giving" forces of an

organization's existence. It is a selected perceptual process which collects and apprehends what is instead of what is not. In contrast to reengineering, which seeks to create "ideal" processes that may not grow from an organization's existing strengths, Appreciative Inquiry seeks to identify those strengths and then to capitalize on them. It draws a picture of these strengths through discussions and interviews with people in the organization, who, by the nature of this interaction, are invited to talk about those elements they most value and have been most successful exploiting.

Why AI is more successful than the Traditional Approach

The traditional approach seeks out and places blame on those found lacking in the organization and seeks to correct their problematic behaviour. The problem with this is that it tends to restore the organization to a previous level rather than moving the organization beyond this point. The method of appreciative inquiry, on the other hand, tends to be a relief to employees of an organization as it does not focus on trying to change them by seeking out problematic behaviours. It instead causes persons to enter a positive and energized state as the focus and praise is on what they are doing right in the organization. It is also encouraging as it invites people to engage in building the kinds of organizations that they are affiliated. It's also easier to see envision the future vividly when it is rooted in the past experiences of organizational members, rather than trying to start with a blank canvas.

Additionally, it also greatly aids in the acceptance of change as it helps everyone see the need for change, explore new possibilities, and contribute to the solutions. This ensures that the vision is translated into reality and beliefs into practice through the alignment of both formal and informal organizational structures.

Often times when organizations are redesigned to solve perceived problems, some of the previous organizational goods are lost. Appreciative inquiry focuses on being driven by organization positives therefore minimizing these losses as redesign starts with the organizational goods.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

- Appreciative Inquiry by itself is not an end in itself unless a person internalizes it positively or follows through by "valuing it and acting on it". Therefore implementing AI requires commitment on behalf of all staff especially those in positions of responsibility, in order to instigate change;
- Appreciative inquiry provides a useful solution for

organizations that desire to break out of the problem-oriented mindset and embrace a strengths-based philosophy. The value of AI lies in its philosophy and practice. In view of this leadership should be uniquely positioned to bridge theory and practice through the use of AI models, influencing our ability to effectively train and develop staff and also influence positive change in the university;

- Appreciative Inquiry is an approach that pushes against the grain of traditional problem-solving approaches that dominate organizational development; University management may encounter resistance to the approach. For example, staff may be eager to skip over early stages to get to the solutions. Therefore educating staff/employees on the philosophy and value of the process is important in changing mindsets and creating openness in dialogue which is necessary for the co-construction of new possibilities;

- While Management may be a helpful resource for the initial stages of the Appreciative Inquiry Cycle, it really becomes the job of the Departmental/Sectional/Unit Heads to sustain positive change. Appreciative inquiry may itself be considered a transformational process because it promotes changes in how people think and what they do (Bushe and Kassam, 2005). Within Management, AI could be a force for transformational leadership development. For example, as staff engages together in the work of leadership in dealing with change, they may develop higher levels of motivation and performance;

- There is the potential to explore AI as an identity formation process. As AI shapes organizational identity, employees' sense of self, belonging, and view of their role within the University is also shaped through the construction and alignment of the shared vision, goals, and standards. In the process of constructing what could be the staff are also becoming leaders who are able to enact that preferred future;

- Appreciative Inquiry best serves when there is a high level of process integrity, where the means and the ends are the same. If an institution such as ours want greater cooperation across departmental lines, greater employee commitment and responsibility, and faster cycle time, the process must engage people in interviews across departments, involve employees in making decisions and determining the process, by so doing it will be faster than usual;

- Human change integrity also contributes to AI's success. This is the capacity for system members to be, in Gandhi's words, "the change they want to see." AI impacts personal, relational, and organizational performance profoundly and simultaneously. As individuals are interviewed, they experience unfamiliar validation and support. Telling their stories and being witnesses by other people is an exceptionally transforming experience. At the relational level, the

interview taps a human longing top experience and recognize meaningful connections. Once discovered, the stories, the shared experience, and the connections become part of the individual's and the organization's identities. With AI, the organization, its employees and partners transform simultaneously in relation to one another;

- Perseverance in change is another success criterion. Change is life itself, not an event. At its best, AI leaves greater organizational capacity to change through inquiry, sharing stories, relationship-enhancing communication, and co-operative innovation. We do not leave organizations in a final state called effectiveness or excellence. We persist in being open to learning, discovering new possibilities for understanding and performance, and sharing our best with others to raise the collective standard of living within our organization and on the planet.

- Creating narrative-rich communication ensures a fertile field for success. In contrast to memos, plans and policies, Appreciative Inquiry works into the organization's communication through storytelling, testimonials and staff durbars. AI taps into the organization's inner dialogue—the stories that members tell about themselves and their organization. In effect, sharing best practices, magic moments, and life-giving experiences is how organizing occurs. Through narrative-rich communication, best practices are disseminated and enhance enthusiasm and the sense of well-being. When appreciative stories "have wings" and fly around, the capacity for change and high performance expands; and

- Inquiry and dialogue create rich anticipatory images. AI is based on the principle that our future images guide our present performance. Where the images are hopeful and expansive, organization performance and personal motivation are generally high. Where the images are depressed or deficient, morale tends to be low and turnover high. By fostering the discovery and sharing of success stories—past and imagined—AI invites affirmation and expansion.

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