

Introduction

Qualitative research is the collecting and analyzing of non-numerical data such as text, video, or audio, to understand a phenomenon. It can be used to gain insights into an issue or create new ideas for research. Qualitative research allows us to make sense of life, to describe and explain the social world and to develop theories. Qualitative research is used to investigate aspects of human life such as culture, beliefs and values, expressions, and morality. Researchers try to understand how people explain their experiences, create their worlds and what meaning they get from their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Many philosophical assumptions such as positivism, postpositivism, critical theories and constructivism informs qualitative research. These philosophical assumptions can guide researchers as they investigation. Merriam and Tisdell (2015), pointed out that a researcher should examine they philosophy on the nature of reality, the reason for the research and the type of knowledge that is expected at the conclusion of the research.

There are many researches designs that qualitative researchers use to investigate an event. Six of the most used approaches are basic qualitative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, narrative analysis and qualitative case studies. Some other known types of qualitative approach includes action research, arts-based research, autoethnography, critical theory, discourse analysis and oral history. This paper will examine, what is a relatively new variant, since it could not be found on any of quality research list, 'appreciative inquiry.

The paper will look at the meaning of appreciative inquiry and who the proponents are. It will also examine the history and the philosophical underpinning of this approach to qualitative research. The paper will explain when an appreciative inquiry would be best used in a research and if it can be used along with other research variants. It would be important to understand the advantages of conducting an appreciative inquiry and the process in conducting such a research.

What is Appreciative Inquiry?

Research is done in many cases to solve a problem and know more about something. Usually when we want to see improvement in something, the first thought is to figure out what is not working or what is wrong. Most approaches then focus on the problem to be solved and not at the other positive aspects of the organization. Appreciative inquiry appeared in the late 80s as an iteration of the action research approach to organizational development (Cooperrider & Srivasa, 1987).

Cooperrider and Srivasa (1987), indicated that the traditional action-research methodology restricted its potential ability to help social systems change over time because of its problem-oriented worldview. They offered an AI approach as a more suitable form of inquiry in a post-industrial society as they saw the potential of uniting theory and practice for the purpose of social change.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a collaborative approach to change that focuses on the strength in organizations and other human systems. It is a way to engage groups of people in self-determined change. It focuses on what is working, rather than what is not working and leads to people shaping their future.

Philosophical Underpinnings

Appreciative Inquiry is based on social constructionist philosophy, which stresses that people collaborate to actively construct or create knowledge and reality is shaped by their experiences. The appreciative mode of inquiry “is a way of living with, being with, and directly participating in the varieties of social organization we are compelled to study” (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987, p.131).

There are five key principals that expresses the theoretical foundation of Appreciative Inquiry (Priest, Kaufman, Brunton, & Seibel, 2013). These principals were developed in the early 1990s by David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva and serve as the guide for Appreciative Inquiry work.

The five principles are:

Constructionist Principle – looks at the connection between social knowledge and organizational future

The Principle of Simultaneity - recognizes that inquiry and change occur at the same time. Changes are implicit in the questions asked.

The Anticipatory Principle – The positive imagining of the human systems lead to positive actions and hence move in the direction of their images of the future. The more positive and hopeful the image of the future, the more positive the present-day action.

The Poetic Principle - Human organizations are like open books and are endless sources of study and learning. What we choose to study makes a difference. It creates the world as we know it.

The Positive Principle – The momentum for lasting and effective change requires large amounts of positive affect and social bonding. This momentum is best created through positive questions that strengthen the positive core

Steps to conduct an Appreciative Inquiry

The five principles are the underpinning philosophy of Appreciative Inquiry. There is also a 5 point process that offers a generative model for approaching change in an organization. The 5D cycle is used to start Appreciative Inquiry. It is used to focus on the positive in the organization and examine what works to create a positive future. The process cyclical and each item can be referred to backwards and forwards throughout.

5D Process in Appreciative Inquiry (Priest, Kaufman, Brunton, & Seibel, 2013)

Definition - What is the inquiry? Definition is used to clarify the area of work to be considered. This is a recent addition – the 5Ds were originally the 4Ds. Definition defines the project's purpose, content, and what needs to be achieved. Defining what to study/ inquire into.



Discovery - **Appreciating the best of 'what is'** A dialogue is conducted to ascertain 'what works'. The organisation or community's successes, strengths and periods of excellence are rediscovered.

Dream - **Imagining 'what could be'** uses the rediscovered past achievements and successes to imagine new possibilities and envision a preferred future. People to identify their dreams for a community or organisation after discovering 'what is best'. It is projected in wishes, hopes and aspirations for the future.

Design - **Determining 'what should be'** Design brings together the stories from discovery with the imagination and creativity from dream.

Destiny/Delivery: **Creating 'what will be'** this identifies how the design is delivered, and how it's embedded into groups, communities and organisations.

Appreciative Inquiry practitioners want to build – or rebuild – organizations around what works, rather than trying to fix what doesn't.

History of Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry was developed during the '80s by both Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva, his then mentor at the time. A collaboration between the doctoral program in organizational behavior (OB) at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio and the Cleveland Clinic Foundation, a health care organization was the origin of Appreciative Inquiry. Bushe, 2012 also noted that many Appreciative Inquiry theorists and researchers were graduates of this doctoral program. In 1979 David Cooperrider, a doctoral student was as an intern as part of a research project on physician leadership leadership. During the research, the team he was on found the atmosphere hostile and negative and decided to take another approach. His mentor,

Suresh Srivastva, impressed by his young student encouraged him focus on the positive and what gave life to the organization (Bushe, 2012).

Appreciative inquiry was created as an iteration of the action research approach to organizational development (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). suggested that the generative capacity of action research was limited by its traditional problem-oriented worldview. Generative capacity relates to the ability to help social systems evolve, adapt, and creatively alter patterns over time. Priest, Kaufman, Brunton, and Seibel, 2013 stated that Cooperrider and Srivasa were inspired by the potential of uniting theory and practice for the purpose of social change and they proposed that an AI approach was a better mode of inquiry in a post-industrial society.

Appreciative Inquiry has emerged as another approach to organizational change and development. It is an affirmative approach that directs questions on what's right, what's working, and how to work toward a desired vision (Moore, 2020).

In 1996, Cooperrider, Whitney and several of their colleagues became centrally involved using AI to mid-wife the creation of the United Religions Initiative, a global organization dedicated to promoting grassroots interfaith cooperation for peace, justice and healing.

In an early application, Cooperrider and Whitney taught AI to employees of GTE (now part of Verizon). This resulted in improvements in employees' support of the business direction. The continuous process improvement generated both improvements in revenue collection and cost savings earning GTE in 1997.

Appreciative Inquiry was also used in the first (1999) and subsequent meetings of business leaders that created the UN's Global Compact.

In 2001, Cooperrider and Diana Whitney published an article outlining the five principles of AI.

In 2011 Gervase Bushe, a researcher on the topic, published a review of the model, including its processes, critiques, and evidence. He also published a history of the model in 2012.

What are the beauties of conducting an Appreciative Inquiry?

Whitney and Trosten-Bloom, 2010, in their book stated that when certain conditions are in place the personal and organizational power is released. Their research suggested six conditions which they call the Six Freedoms. The beauty of Appreciative Inquiry comes, from the way these Six Freedoms are unleashed over the course of the 5-D Cycle (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010).

1. Freedom to be known in relationship.
2. Freedom to be heard.
3. Freedom to dream in community.
4. Freedom to choose to contribute.
5. Freedom to act with support.
6. Freedom to be positive.

Appreciative Inquiry it is easy to identify the areas of good performance and then communicate and established the good performance so that it is repeated continuously. Appreciative Inquiry can be used to emphasize how an organization can capitalize and build on what is good. It can be a means of motivating staff and help them to reconnect them to the goals and aspirations of the company or institute (Rogers & Fraser, 2003).

Some other advantages noted in the literature are:

1. Creates energy and motivation.
2. Engaging, powerful, uplifting.
3. Can be transformative by focusing on strengths rather than problems.
4. Builds on what has worked in the past and therefore is more likely to succeed.
5. Well proven in a diverse range of contexts.

6. Fosters community involvement and engagement.
7. Creates a strong vision.
8. Encourages partnership working.
9. Help people to identify the values and behaviour they want to have in the future.
10. Uses a set of principles to apply to other decisions in the future.
11. Each community develops its own response to its own situation.

What are the challenges while conducting an Appreciative Inquiry?

Rogers and Fraser, 2003 pointed out that Appreciative Inquiry posits that by emphasizing the positive there will be positive outcomes. Some critique of this research method noted that this is too focused on the good feelings and not on the true realities of a human experience in an organization. They also pointed out that Appreciative Inquiry “may encourage unrealistic and dysfunctional perceptions, attitudes and behavior.” Literature listed the following as disadvantages of Appreciative Inquiry:

1. Some people view the lack of direct attention to problems as a weakness.
2. Because of the relatively small numbers involved it can exclude some people
3. Critics say Appreciative Inquiry focuses only on the strengths and positive aspects of a community, person or organization so it may make decisions based on an unbalanced understanding of the issues.
4. People may feel that their problems and issues are being minimized.
5. Appreciative Inquiry is a holistic approach to development, including planning, action and reflection – so if you’re just looking for an evidence-gathering approach or to evaluate, this may not be appropriate as it requires a commitment to the whole cycle.

When to conduct a Appreciative Inquiry

Originally Appreciative Inquiry was developed to promote organizational development. In recent years Appreciative Inquiry was used in education to bring about

change (Shuayb, Sharp, Judkins, & Hetherington, 2009). Appreciative Inquiry can be used in:

1. evaluating and developing initiatives in schools and local authorities
2. organizational development
3. identifying examples of good practice and suggesting ways forward
4. projects wishing to record young people's voices
5. participative research.

Can a Appreciative Inquiry be combined with another type of research?

Appreciative Inquiry came out of action research, a traditional research type that focuses on solving a problem. Shuayb, Sharp, Judkins, and Hetherington, 2009 stated that It is possible to use some aspects of Appreciative Inquiry such as the questions and incorporate them into a traditional evaluation study.

How many participants can be included in an Appreciative Inquiry and what should be the criteria while selecting them.

A researcher can begin an Appreciative Inquiry with a small main group of around 5-15 participants. The later stages, like in the Dream Stage, requires increasing the number of participants to implement the 'vision'. This increase in participants could include friends, family and strangers and can develop to around 200 people.

Instruments for data collection

The most important aspect of Appreciative Inquiry is the interview. In the interviews the questions asked are designed to strengthen the system's capacity "to identify,

anticipate and heighten positive potential” (Shuayb, Sharp, Judkins, & Hetherington, 2009). The Appreciative Inquiry interviews are different from the traditional interviews. Rather than soliciting facts and opinions that Appreciative Interviews seek to obtain examples, stories and metaphors. The researcher is trying to find the best moments, events and stories (Shuayb, Sharp, Judkins, & Hetherington, 2009).

Appreciative Inquiry interviews can be conducted in pairs or through focus group workshops. In order to get the most out of the participation and discussion among participants, those who use Appreciative Inquiry frequently train a number of participants in conducting appreciative interviews.

Ethical considerations while conducting any QLR study

The ethics of a researcher is very important to add to the validity and reliability of a study. There are policies, guidelines, and codes of ethics put in place by the federal government, institutions, and professional associations. However, the values and ethics of the researcher determines what he/she will do in an investigation. “In qualitative studies, ethical dilemmas are likely to emerge with regard to the collection of data and in the dissemination of findings” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

According to Bryman and Bell (2007) the most important principles related to ethical considerations are:

1. Research participants should not be subjected to harm.
2. Respect for the dignity of research participants should be prioritized.
3. Full consent should be obtained from the participants prior to the study.
4. The protection of the privacy of research participants has to be ensured.
5. Adequate level of confidentiality of the research data should be ensured.
6. Anonymity of individuals and organizations participating in the research has to be ensured.

7. Any deception or exaggeration about the aims and objectives of the research must be avoided.
8. Affiliations in any forms, sources of funding, as well as any possible conflicts of interests have to be declared.
9. Any type of communication in relation to the research should be done with honesty and transparency.
10. Any type of misleading information, as well as representation of primary data findings in a biased way must be avoided.

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