Appreciative Andragogy and Peak Learning

- Thomas A. Conklin, Ph.D.
Creating classrooms of preference: An exercise in appreciative inquiry

Thomas A. Conklin, Ph.D.
Journal of Management Education
2009
Appreciative Inquiry  (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005)

- Human systems move in the direction of their images of the future. They are heliotropic. (self-fulfilling prophecy)
- The seeds of change are contained in the questions we ask.
- Organizations are not problems to be solved, but mysteries to be embraced. They need constant re-affirmation.
A.I. seeks to...

- generate new knowledge and expand the realm of the possible.
- help members envision a shared desired state.
- help translate beliefs into practice.
A.I. - Essential Conditions

- Get the whole system in the room.
- Focus on the life-giving past to envision and ignite possibilities of preferred futures.
- This is not problem solving. It is an exercise in anticipatory learning - the social construction of a preferred future.
4 Main Steps in Application

1. Discovery - Best of what has been
   What is the best classroom/learning experience you have ever had?
   What happened to make it that way?

2. Dream - Best that might be
   What is possible for this class?
4 Main Steps in Application

3. Dialogue - what it might truly look like?
   ✓ Plenary group discussion
   ✓ Refinement
   ✓ Last chance to “get on the ballot”

4. Destination - What will we commit to?
   ✓ Gallery walk
   ✓ Commitment
   ✓ Who will do what by when
A.I. Leverage Points

- Participatory process, vs. dictated from top management

- Competitive advantage is people
AI Exercise

Objectives for class:

1. Learn about and experience AI which is being increasingly used in organizational life and which they are likely to encounter once they enter the work force.

2. Confront tacit and explicit norms of learning (powerless, other oriented and designed, recipient versus creator).

3. Create an experience that fosters greater self reliance, independence, self-direction and autonomy.

4. Students become more responsible for their education through an exercise that celebrates their experience as valid, worthy and reliable.
Appreciative inquiry in management education: Measuring the success of co-created learning

Thomas A. Conklin, Ph.D.
Rama Kaye Hart, Ph.D.
Organization Management Journal 2009
The Questions

- Does AI have a measurable impact on student learning experiences?
- Does AI leverage the ideas of student centered learning?
Major Findings

- AI is useful for directing students’ actions
- Students believe their personal contributions help achieve learning goals
Study Description

- AI visioning process exercise (Conklin, 2009)
- Repeated measures experimental design
  - Survey: t1 4 weeks post, t2 12 weeks
- MBA leadership development course
- 25 participants
  - 10 females, 15 males
  - 23 White US; 1 Pakistani (woman), 1 Chinese (man)
- Age range 24-57, mean 29
Instrument - examples

- We are developing skills to apply in real life
  - My contribution to achieving this is…
- I feel I am bridging the gap of where I am now and where I want to be professionally and personally
  - My contribution to achieving this is…
- I am developing an effective leadership style
- I am learning how to build and manage cohesive teams and tight work groups
- I believe the class is helping me to develop a career plan that will be helpful over the next 5-10 years

- 1-5 Likert scale
### Results

**Perceived Achievement of Key Outcomes: Paired-Sample Comparison Between Middle (T1) and Late (T2) in the Semester**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>T1 Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>T2 Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>sig.(2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. I feel I am bridging the gap of where I am now and where I want to be professionally and personally.</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>0.653</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>0.562</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>0.014*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. This class is engaging.</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>0.452</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>0.597</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.031*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I believe we have broken away from the traditional method of teaching and learning.</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>0.611</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>-1.82</td>
<td>0.086**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Have less lecture and more activities in class.</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>0.597</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>-2.42</td>
<td>0.026*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05  **p<.10  n=19  a n=18  b n=16  c n=17*
### Results

#### Perceived Personal Contribution to Key Outcomes

Paired-Sample Comparison at Middle (T1) and Late (T2) in the Semester

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>T1 Mean S.D.</th>
<th>T2 Mean S.D.</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>sig.(2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. We are developing skills to apply in real life.</td>
<td>3.37 .495</td>
<td>3.89 .620</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>.029*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I feel I am bridging the gap of where I am now and where I want to be professionally and personally.</td>
<td>3.58 .737</td>
<td>4.13 .692</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>.005*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I am developing an effective leadership style.</td>
<td>3.53 .841</td>
<td>4.05 .621</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>.056**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I am learning how to establish goals and how follow through on them.</td>
<td>4.26 .806</td>
<td>3.68 .749</td>
<td>-2.16</td>
<td>.045*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* *p<.05  **p<.10  n=19 a  n=18 b  n=16 c  n=17*
Conclusions and Further Research

1. A sustained level of achievement was attained in the areas that mattered most to students
2. Integrates student centered learning, andragogy, classroom as organization, AI, and autonomy-supportive classrooms
3. Is the process reliable over multiple classroom experiences?
Appreciative inquiry and the autonomy-supportive classroom in business education: A semi-longitudinal study of AI in the classroom

Thomas A. Conklin, Ph.D.
Nathan S. Hartman, Ph.D.
Journal of Experiential Education
2014
Research Question

- The degree to which students claim they got what they said they wanted through the AI exercise across multiple classroom experiences.

- Sought to determine the validity of the process generally, not the case level validity.
Method

- Used same approach of creating surveys from identified ideals as generated thru AI exercise
- 3 undergraduate classes and 7 graduate (10)
- A total of 209 respondents
- A total of 142 peak experiences
Results

- Students’ ratings of having desired peak learning experiences ranged from 3.00 to 4.39
- Ratings of their individual effort toward the creation of those experiences ranged from 2.84 to 3.82
Results

- AI is a viable method that helped construct the climate and shepherd the behavior of the class in ways that led to experiences that were meaningful, educative, and valued by students.

- AI helps foster a participative form of education and make the learning a sustainable experience by enabling students to identify peak moments of learning in a broad variety of learning environments.

- The exercise opened new portals of possibility and released students’ imaginations toward what was possible in the classroom which reflects autonomy-supportive classroom characteristics.
Autonomy- Supportive Classes

- AS classrooms are characterized by teachers who listen more, let go of some control, provide fewer answers to students’ questions and instead, ask probing questions that aid students in discovering their own answers.

- Teachers who engaged in conversational, activity, and who supported students’ intrinsic motivations witnessed greater motivation and academic competence in students.

- Other student outcomes included enhanced creativity, a preference for optimal challenge, and increased conceptual understanding. Reeve, Bolt, and Cai (1999); Reeve, Jang, Hardre, and Omura (2002)
Implications

- AI helped to create an autonomy-supportive (AS) classroom environment (Reeve, Bolt, and Cai 1999; Reeve, Jang, Hardre, and Omura, 2002).

- AI could aid in the evolution of growth mindsets as discussed by Dweck (1999, 2006).

- The overarching premise is that the positive focus of AI contributes to the creation of an AS classroom which renders the soil fertile for the emergence of growth mindsets, and the possible transformation of fixed mindsets into growth mindsets.
Making it personal: The importance of student experience in creating autonomy-supportive classrooms for Millennial learners.

Thomas A. Conklin, Ph.D.
Journal of Management Education
2013
Student Centered Learning

- Class activities driven by student interests
- Develops independence (Biggs, 1999; Shuell, 1986)
- Connects to lived experience (McCombs and Whistler, 1997)
- Increases retention (Silberman, 1996)
- AI and student centered approach leverages individual/collective experience
Andragogy

- The art and science of helping adults learn. (Knowles, 1980, 1984). (Pedagogy is the art and science of educating children)

- Assumptions of Andragogy:
  1. adults need to know why they need to learn something
  2. adults need to learn experientially
  3. adults approach learning as problem-solving
  4. adults learn best when the topic is of immediate value
  5. as an adult’s self concept becomes more oriented towards being an independent person, she is more self directed in her learning
Classrooms as Organizations

- The classroom is “subject to analysis using the conceptual tools available in the [management] course” which bridges the gap between the classroom and organizations to which students belong (Cohen 1976, p. 13)

- Bridge the gap between experience and theory (Buckley, Wren & Michaelsen, 1992)

- Weil (1988) gives students the authority and “responsibility for planning, organizing, staffing leading and controlling their class” (p. 54).
Autonomy-Supportive Classes

- AS classrooms are characterized by teachers who listen more, let go of some control, provide fewer answers to students’ questions and instead, ask probing questions that aid students in discovering their own answers.

- These teachers witnessed greater motivation and academic competence in their students. Other student outcomes included enhanced creativity, a preference for optimal challenge, and increased conceptual understanding. Reeve, Bolt, and Cai (1999); Reeve, Jang, Hardre, and Omura (2002)
Uniting Thread

- Participant experience
- Shared voice
- Integrates personal/professional interests and demands of the course...contextualizes the experience
Student Issues

The exercise:
- Refreshed with the opportunity to present their ideas, thoughts, experiences, and feelings about the course.
- Discomfort with the increased level of freedom and ensuing responsibility.
- Aware of their contribution to creating their experience here and in other areas of their lives.

Over the semester:
- How to sustain the level of energy required for this exercise across the semester.
- Some have a sense that we did not create what we said we wanted.
Instructor Issues

- Energy –
- Power –
- Grades –
Group Issues

Introduces group to foundational ideas in OB

- Kolb’s learning cycle
- Hackman and Oldham’s job characteristics model
  - Both are experience based
Summary

The task and the process unite the 5 areas covered:
1. Andragogy
2. Student Centered Learning
3. Classrooms as Organizations
4. Problem Based Learning
5. AS classrooms
Themes of Peak Learning

1. Stretch, novelty, edge experiences
2. Relational nature of peak learning
3. Self affirming – validating; the learning was personal
4. A transformative epiphany
5. Yielding – doubt and trust as inquiries into learning
6. Real life/real world
   6A. High Stakes
   6B. Perseverance
      6B1. Meaningful success, mastery