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Editor-in-Chief Prof., Dr. Oleksandra Karintseva, head of the economics,
entrepreneurship and business administration, Sumy State University

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APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY (AI) METHOD IN THE STUDY OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Iryna Melnyk, PhD, As. Prof.

Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, Ukraine

Introduction. The approach developed by Dr. David Cooperrider and Dr. Suresh Srivastava in the 1980s aims to improve the quality and sustainability of educational practices through the collaboration of all stakeholders (Cooperrider, 1990). This approach is known as the 5-D model – Definition, Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny – which helps to identify strengths, co-create effective strategies, and develop a culture of positivity and collaboration (Srivastava et al., 1999). Nowadays, university education prioritizes sustainable development as an opportunity to align educational practices with broader global goals. Appreciative Inquiry is based on several core principles that guide its application in organizational development and change management. These principles emphasize a strengths-based approach and foster constructive stakeholder engagement, promoting a positive collaborative environment for sustainable change.

Data and Methods. The 5-D model is a structured framework for implementing an assessment study consisting of five stages: Definition, Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny. Each stage builds on the previous one, including identifying strengths, anticipating future opportunities, co-creating effective strategies, and committing to continuous learning and adaptation. This model promotes effective change management and strengthens stakeholder cooperation and collective action, ultimately improving education quality.

The study of using the Positive Inquiry method has become a transformative methodology in education, particularly in improving the quality and sustainability of educational practices. This strengths-based approach enables educators and students to co-create a vision for improvement by focusing on academic institutions' strengths and potential. Involving all stakeholders in the educational process helps create a collaborative environment conducive to meaningful change. Applying the Positive Inquiry Method in the academic context is intended to promote transformational change. In the present study, the method was used to explore the perspectives of first-year students to come together to solve common problems and find ways to improve pedagogical practices tailored to their needs. In the first month of studying at the university, a student actively gets acquainted with all the processes of the university community through the discipline “University Studies,” which allows the student to express their thoughts and impressions, gain new knowledge about the future specialty and unite students into an academic group with their views, observations, and preferences. During these first introductory classes, the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) method of positive-oriented research is used (Word of Work Project, 2024). Collaborative work in groups of students begins with the correct formulation of generative questions. How do you see it? How can we do this

best together? Perhaps if we...Discussing such questions together stimulates creativity and innovation in acquiring new knowledge, deepens connections, and improves relationships between students and the teacher and students in the group. As a result of such collaboration, new ways of solving complex problems and compelling images for collective ideas emerge. In a student group, trust in each other is necessary, positive energy is generated, and the community of students moves further in the direction of mutual trust and understanding. The first topic used in the positive research method was “How do you see your future at this university?” The first phase of the research (Discovery) is the discovery of the best of what is, during which students explore the historical past of the university where they will study and find fundamental knowledge helpful in shaping their future. While researching the phenomenon of visioning the future, students focus on their vision and learn the basic principles they use in their research. In the second stage of the cycle, the dreaming phase, students explore the question: How should it be?

Results. They imagine themselves in three years...model what situation is desirable and what their environment looks like, and move on to the third stage of research (Design) (What should be?). At this stage, the vision of the future is transformed in the first-year students’ minds. The fourth and final research stage (Destiny) is developing an action plan to translate all the ideas into tangible actions. The joint passage of all four phases of the cycle of the positive research method leads to the rapprochement of students and the organization of a new, friendly group. The research resulted in works created with the help of data visualization services – infographics, drawings, digital narratives, and other forms of self-expression-allowing students to formulate their dreams and emphasizing the importance of their involvement in decision-making related to their education.

The use of the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) method of positive-oriented research when working with first-year students who are just starting their way in the university community is based on the fundamental principles: constructivism (creating social reality – you should always be open to new knowledge), predictability (you need to move in the direction of thoughts, see and hear the expected results), positivity (many ways of open communication provide endless possibilities in understanding a person, object, phenomenon, action).

Students are actively involved in the initial stages of the 5D cycle – “Discovery” and “Dream” – where they identify the key ideas that shaped their educational experience. Their findings emphasized the importance of enjoyable learning, relevant life experiences, collaborative learning environments, and family metaphors in the learning environment. These findings have important implications for sustainable development to create a supportive and effective learning environment. Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny phases focus on identifying what is already working well and envisioning an improved future.

Research using the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) method of positive-oriented research plays a crucial role in promoting transformational change in educational institutions, which is a prerequisite for achieving sustainable development.

Sustainable development requires a fundamental transformation in the way education systems operate, moving from traditional incremental approaches that prioritize efficiency to focusing on developing new, impactful processes.

Conclusions. The use of this method in education emphasizes its importance in preparing future leaders to address complex global issues, equipping people with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to contribute to a sustainable future. In this context, this approach serves as a pedagogical tool that emphasizes the strengths and potential of educational systems, promoting the collaborative search for innovative solutions to pressing problems. This shift from traditional problem-solving to generative approaches is in line with the broader goals of sustainable development. Transformational changes in the educational environment are closely related to the use of various innovative methods, the introduction of modern digital tools, and the involvement of various forms of formative assessment of classes. All these aspects are closely interconnected and stimulate the adoption of the main idea: learning is an opportunity that needs to be supported, as students say, “embraced”. Such a positive focus not only creates motivation among the participants of the educational process but also promotes a culture of cooperation and engagement, which is vital for the implementation of sustainable practices in education. By creating an environment in which stakeholders are encouraged to explore and build on their strengths, the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) cultivates the conditions necessary for sustainable transformation.

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