

Toward a Pedagogy of Appreciation

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Abstract: The time is ripe for a pedagogy of appreciation. This chapter is a cross pollination of the positive philosophies and visions of educators such as Dewey, Freire, Kolb, and Handy with the vibrant and emerging organizational change ideas and processes of Appreciative Inquiry. This pedagogical stance is values driven and embraces the relevance of personal experience. There is a distinct bias towards success and positive change through supportive relationships and dialogue in the creation of knowledge. This chapter details step by step classroom applications that follow the 4D model (Discover, Dream, Design, Destiny) and extend the experiential learning cycle. For the student, these applications have led to more energized and sustained interactions, an increase in positive attitudes towards other students and the professor, more relevant and personally meaningful concepts, and a fuller and more hopeful view of the future. For the professor, a deeper engagement with the students and their stories leads to a stronger connection with the values, concepts and models of the course. The chapter concludes by identifying some challenges in applying and extending an appreciative approach to educational systems as a whole.

Toward a Pedagogy of Appreciation

"One of the tasks of the progressive educator...is to unveil opportunities for hope, no matter what the obstacles may be." -- Paulo Freire

Introduction

Educational institutions at all levels are hearing the urgent call to quality. Business organizations have had to fashion effective responses to deep and widespread changes brought on by technology and globalization. Many of the boundaries to travel, information, finance, and ideas have disappeared around the globe and a web of new connections proliferates (Friedman, 2000). Today's educational institutions are likewise under enormous pressure to streamline operations, improve quality, and respond to new global realities. Invariably, the classroom becomes the context for heeding the call to quality. How can excellence in the classroom be attained?

Einstein suggested employing a radically different way of thinking in order to create a new reality. In the organizational world, Appreciative Inquiry offers exactly that. We have been impressed by its transformative power and creative implementation in a wide range of industries and organizational types. As educators, we began to wonder if there was room for Appreciative Inquiry in education as well. This paper will describe just such pedagogy of appreciation. We will draw upon positive visions from educators around the world, delineate a set of guiding values for an Appreciative Pedagogy attuned to these philosophies, detail step by step classroom applications, consider some exciting consequences, and identify some challenges in applying and extending this approach to teaching. We hope to show that Einstein's advice can be enacted in the classroom as well.

A Positive Vision of Education and Pedagogy

John Dewey, a contemporary of Einstein, called for a radically different way of conceiving the nature and task of education. Dewey (1966) was deeply concerned with understanding the purpose of education in a democratic community. He reasoned that education is intricately connected to the flow of life itself. Living things, whether a single cell, a species, or a human culture, maintain themselves by renewal through interaction with an environment. Yet, no living being is equal to the task of endless renewal. All succumb. Every individual is born helpless and immature and each individual who carries the life experience of the group, in time, passes away. Yet, the life of the group goes on. On a physical level, DNA is passed along; on a social level, beliefs, hopes, ideals, practices, etc. are recreated and passed along. Education in the broadest sense is the means of this social continuity of life (Dewey, 1966).

Historically, we "learned at the elbow." Through joint activity, we developed common understandings and dispositions; and culture was "transmitted through the communication of habits of doing, thinking, and feeling from older to younger" (Dewey, 1966). By doing one's share in a common venture, "the individual appropriates the purposes which actuate it, becomes familiar with its methods and subject matter, acquires needed skills, and is saturated with its emotional spirit" (Dewey, 1966).

As societies grew in size and complexity, learning by direct sharing became problematic. All must acquire a wide store of knowledge from many sources. Eventually, fragmented knowledge was believed to exist in the published word, detached from direct experiences, and isolated from its social context. With limited time and much to cover, educators learned to narrowly define their work to favor a detached, efficient, symbolic mode of teaching. The short-term benefits of this approach seemed obvious and it became easy to mistake this form of

pedagogy as the only form of real education. Yet, if we look closely at the nature of learning, this is extremely unfortunate. Dewey argues that any social engagement is educative to those that share in it, but activities cast in a mold and taught in a routine way lose this depth of educative power. As educators, we face the difficult problem of keeping a balance between the experience-based informal and the symbolic formal modes of education.

At their core, educational methods need to align with our nature and the nature of intelligence. Dewey argues for a pragmatic theory of knowing. Knowledge is an act that brings one's intellectual resources to consciousness with a view to straighten out a perplexity or to engage in an activity that purposely modifies the environment. Thus intelligence resides in shaping an aim and moving toward a future result by means of a set of actions and interactions with others. A real aim or curiosity activates the mind, and energizes initiative and exploration. This "inquiry mode" drives everything. Following through on one's aim in joint activity with others implies social direction and builds social intelligence, which we would now identify as emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995). When aims and controls are imposed by those outside the learning process, we "lose the chance of enlisting a person's own participatory disposition" to develop intrinsic direction (Dewey, 1966). Such direction is as central to the learning venture as it is to successful organizational change strategies, including Appreciative Inquiry.

When we re-design educational inquiry into a cooperative process with intrinsic direction and dialogue with others, we not only learn better, but also pick up critical cultural "dispositions" towards work, learning, and relationships. Handy (1998) identifies such intangibles as the qualities that are essential for doing well in life, e.g. curiosity, relatedness, self control, the capacity for deferred gratification, and confidence. These must be practiced and inculcated at

various levels of education. As a protected place to practice for life, the school must therefore pay attention to "how" instead of just "what" people learn.

The “how” makes all the difference. Method and subject matter are intricately interwoven. It is possible to design learning activities that deepen knowledge of a subject, build broad dispositions, and result in emotional, interpersonal, and team skills. Knowledge is distributed across various structures of the brain. Rich complex activity activates more areas of the brain and results in more resilient, longer lasting learning; a knowledge that is integrated and connected. Verbal, symbolic knowledge, the main conduit for traditional education, is important, but is only one piece of the puzzle.

While Dewey’s logic seems compelling, the pedagogical battle was already lost. In 1916, Dewey (1966) wrote, “That education is not an affair of telling and being told, but an active and constructive process, is a principle almost as generally violated in practice as conceded in theory.” From the perspective of a much faster and more complex world today, it seems particularly ironic that educators were unable to slow down and do it right so long ago.

87 years later, there still seems to be an Education Problematique. The constellation of deeply ingrained beliefs, practices, and the institutional structures that Dewey hoped to transform has gained even more momentum. "Education is suffering from narration sickness" observes Paulo Freire (1970). He decries education as dehumanizing, a mechanism for maintaining and embodying oppression. Ackoff (1974) warned of the emergence of schools as prisons. Charles Handy (1998) called his own education "positively disabling", where content seemed irrelevant, and the process "cultivated a set of attitudes and behaviors which were directly opposed to what seemed to be needed in real life" (p. 200).

One merely has to walk quietly down the hallways and corridors of academia and witness, with very rare exceptions, teachers making deposits of information to students who passively record them. In this banking model, “the contents, whether values or empirical dimensions of reality, tend in the process of being narrated to become lifeless and petrified,” (Freire, 1970:57). Education as preparation for a distant future diverts attention from the *only* point of leverage: the needs and possibilities of the immediate present (Dewey, 1966). Furthermore, the imposition of external controls generates dysfunctional responses as students learn to value their experience mainly for the grades and diplomas they acquire. The degree of dependence on reward, punishment, grades, and fear in the system might be best seen as a measure of the disconnection of students from more intrinsic motive forces of learning. The irrelevance of the classroom experience to today's students is captured very clearly in one student's e-mail to a colleague early this spring. He wrote the professor: "It is so beautiful outside I have decided to miss class today and enjoy the sun. I hope you are not disappointed about my decision." For this student, there was no sun in class.

At quick glance, the educational state of affairs seems hopeless. A May, 2002 Department of Education report indicates “truly abysmal scores” in US history by soon-to-vote, high school seniors. Only 11% scored at grade level or above. 57% fell below the most minimal standard imaginable. Efforts solving such problems can be characterized as either one of finger pointing, trivial incremental tweaking, or piling on even more of the same methods that Dewey and Freire would implicate as the cause. Many educational stakeholders feel helpless and hopeless.

Freire (1994), however, insists that there is hope, that hopelessness is not the final ontological reality. Humans cannot ‘be’ without the impulse to hope. Hopelessness, in fact, is hope in masquerade. Generating a positive vision of education and pedagogy must therefore

begin with the question of hope. “Hope as an ontological need demands an anchoring in practice” (p. 9).

Appreciative Pedagogy: Toward Positive Change in Education

What are some of the characteristics of education where there is hope? Based on Appreciative Inquiry, we propose that Appreciative Pedagogy can be effective in bringing about an avalanche of positive change in education, rendering obsolete the Education Problematique. Appreciative Pedagogy seamlessly combines a mindset that is oriented towards appreciating and valuing the best in human experience, and a commitment to generative action that seeks to realize the fullness of human potential. Like Appreciative Inquiry, Appreciative Pedagogy involves a way of viewing the world that is at once realistic, positively transforming, and hopeful. It is realistic because the focus of inquiry and source of vision is the abundant experience of the learners. It is positively transforming because it radically changes experience from irrelevance and boredom to one of high energy, connectedness, and importance. It is hopeful because what is apprehended engenders positive images of the future that can guide action and transform current realities of the participants.

Core Values: An Orientation Toward Discovering Success

Value 1. Appreciative Pedagogy is experience-centered.

If thought is to be aroused and not just words acquired, personal engagement is critical. We suggest that highly meaningful engagement results when the process of learning proceeds from the rich experiences of learners, about life, themselves, and the world. We have a clear bias for “inside out” learning. The learner’s experience is an abundant and highly engaging source of knowledge that matters (Dewey, 1966). Kolb (1984) articulates a learning cycle where concrete

experience occupies a central beginning role. Freire (1994) refers to a process of "unveiling" one's reality.

Appreciative Pedagogy begins with personal experience and expends vast energy to explore and unveil these experiences. In doing so, it places learners in their proper place – an elevated place of substantial relevance. The unspoken message is loud and clear: your experience is important. Students know that this education is about them and starts with them. Learners become relevant as potential sources and co-creators of knowledge.

Value 2. Appreciative Pedagogy proposes a bias in favor of success.

A positive vision of education must focus on experiences of success. While a significant part of the human experience is littered with failures, mistakes, and disappointments, a more vital portion sparkles with success, peak and proud moments of growth, and with gloriously satisfying relationships.

Appreciative Pedagogy focuses attention on those moments of success when one experienced excellence, and when relationships were great. The kinds of questions we ask are critical in defining the quality and direction of conversations. We construct our worlds in the direction of what we persistently ask questions about (Cooperrider, 2002). We can consistently ask questions that guide conversations toward identifying life giving forces, sources of great energy, and experiences of personal success and growth. Fredrickson (2000) provides evidence that “positive emotions, when tapped effectively, can optimize health, subjective well being, and psychological resilience.”

Core Values: An Orientation toward Generating Positive Change

Appreciative Pedagogy, aside from its spirit of discovery, rests on a fundamental belief in the capacity of positive vision to engender radically transforming action. This belief is captured in the following value statements.

Value 3. Appreciative Pedagogy has a transformative bias, as opposed to description and knowledge banking.

The appreciative mindset cannot be understood nor defined apart from transformation and radical change. A full education “stimulates true reflection and action upon reality thereby responding to the vocation of men as beings who are authentic only when engaged in inquiry and creative transformation” (p. 71, Freire, 1970).

Appreciative Pedagogy seeks to build a sense of heightened possibility and abundance of potential where the unveiling of possibilities and the creation of actualizing processes and structures become central features of the learning adventure, rather than the filling of empty receptacles.

Value 4: Appreciative Pedagogy is strongly oriented toward the challenging vision of a life worth living.

The task of enhancing value is one that Appreciative Pedagogy addresses very seriously. Not only is a positive vision of human existence essential to the learning adventure, education must be oriented towards the realization of the dream of a life that is worth living (Shepard, 1995). Because this dream is based on real experiences there is no question on the dream’s feasibility.

Handy challenges education to be a safe place to practice for life. Our educational institutions must become a place where there is continuous articulation and striving towards becoming better, e.g. more responsible, more ethical, more appreciative of beauty, more active in

community, and more fully human. Maslow referred to this as self actualization (Maslow 1976). The educational endeavor cannot simply be about herding people through fences that go nowhere. It should be about guiding a living, not making a living.

Value 5. Appreciative Pedagogy is biased in favor of supportive partnerships rather than hierarchic relationships in the learning experience.

Life worth living is characterized by healthy and happy relationships that are contexts for respecting human dignity, for enacting productive interdependence and collaborations, for safely facing developmental challenges, and for actively supporting the growth of others (Shepard, 1995). Freire (1970) envisions an ideal relationship between teachers and students. While an oppressive educational system relegates students to being empty receptacles of knowledge, a humanizing and liberating system is one that connects both teachers and students as "... subjects, not only in the task of unveiling reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge" (p.56). A spirit of partnership that characterizes the educational task generates "committed involvement" instead of "pseudo-participation" (p. 56).

To sharpen abilities that create and nurture healthy relationships, the pedagogical milieu must be one that models and encourages active experimentation with partnering, collaboration, and interdependence. Rigid hierarchical relationships and autocratic structures must be suspect and possibly deemed counterproductive, because these tend to project negative self-fulfilling prophecies of human nature. McGregor's (1995) Theory X is quite instructive in this sense.

Value 6. Appreciative Pedagogy favors dialogic processes, where students and teachers are constantly engaged in the re-creation of knowledge-- knowledge that matters.

Knowledge that matters and is relevant to practice is the exciting result of discovery and creation (Dewey, 1966). It is not that we deny the existence of an "objective" knowledge. We

realize more that relevance of such knowledge is best discovered and uncovered through the learner's active involvement including dialogue with others. It is also clear that when students have been engaged actively and fully, there is an abundance of insights that are deeply embedded in awareness and there is less susceptibility to memory loss.

This set of fundamental values lead to powerful possibilities for the 1) discovery of the best, thereby allowing us to truly appreciate the grandeur and mystery of human existence in general, and one's experience in particular, and for 2) enacting and realizing the best in human nature, thereby engaging us in a radically transforming adventure that has for its ultimate mission the realization of human potential. We realize these values represent lofty aspirations. They are a vision to move towards, not a statement of fully accomplished reality. But, assuredly, this vision is achievable, because it springs from experiences of success.

Appreciative Pedagogy, Experiential Learning, and the 4D Model

Over the years, we have witnessed the emergence of various approaches for improving the relevance and effectiveness of management education. A guiding philosophy and method that has gained almost universal acceptance among management faculty is experiential learning. Experience-centered pedagogical approaches espouse a common value. They regard students' experience as relevant and valuable. They acknowledge the usefulness of students' past and present experience as a well-spring of insight into organizational life, an interesting focus for reflection, and a credible source of guidance for action and experimentation (Kolb, 1984).

Appreciative Pedagogy complements and extends the power of experiential learning in education in two important ways. First, the appreciative mindset tunes our attention to moments of success. The potential range of experiences to allow into or create in the classroom can be overwhelming in quantity, variety, and richness. The professor with limited time must choose

the experiences to make figural for the day. The appreciative tuning focus makes our choices more deliberate when drawing upon our collective reservoirs of memory or in debriefing a classroom experience such as a role play or simulation. The concrete experience is still the foundation for learning, but the wheat has been separated from the chaff.

Secondly, the appreciative focus qualitatively extends the processing of the raw experience in the reflective and conceptual stages of Kolb's experiential learning cycle. In both approaches, we reflect on the experience and distill its key essences. We uncover concepts that seem to give us a better handle on the core elements of the experience and so provide potential leverage for future action. Detached rational understanding is not sufficient though. The appreciative process incites us to continue converging before moving to action. A positive image or a provocative proposition for the future is necessary as the end product of the reflective and conceptual steps. These images and propositions take us beyond mere explanation and build a “pull” energy for change by literally bringing an exciting future into the present. In Lewin’s terms, this further unfreezes the current equilibrium of forces by building a positive “felt” need for change, which is hope. Consequently, appreciative understanding inspires hope, builds momentum, and heightens commitment to action.

Appreciative Pedagogy facilitates the exploration and creation of positive realities in the classroom on a daily basis and we have found the 4 D model (discover, dream, design, and destiny) a useful frame to organize our thoughts and activities. In the following sections, we would like to offer some concrete examples of appreciative exercises that we have designed and to share our thoughts about some of the learning processes that occur in and between individuals during these activities. *The 4 D model in pedagogy is about connecting: to our own experience, to others and their stories, to theory, and to the future and wider environment through vision and*

action. As the semester unfolds, Appreciative Pedagogy guides the professor to make conscious and positively oriented decisions as to what material to use, what aspects of student experiences to tap and highlight, and how to finish the converging stage in the experiential learning cycle with an inspired clarity of future possibilities.

Discover

We are guided by the belief that students come with a rich array of positive experiences in many, if not all, the topics we deal with in management. Appreciative Pedagogy trusts in, celebrates, and deliberately seeks out students' experiences of success and moments of high energy and great pride.

A concrete example might help to illustrate the discovery step and its secondary benefits. When students learn that they will work in teams all semester long, there is a detectable range of emotions from fear and anxiety to hopeful anticipation. Kim had a typical explanation to her reaction when she filled out the "Where You Stand With Teams" worksheet: "I normally do not like working in groups because of uneven distribution of work. I usually end up doing much of it while others have fun." We have experimented with the process of building learning teams by asking students to focus on groups that they remember with happiness, pride, and a sense of accomplishment. Since everyone has had experience in groups (try to imagine an individual who has never been in a group!), this is an excellent opportunity to spend some time in discovery of best team moments.

When Kim and her teammates participated in this process, they focused on re-connecting with experiences in their "best teams" – experiences of success, fun, closeness, and other positive characteristics of their own best teams. After her team reported out and turned in a very lengthy list of "Best Team Characteristics," a composite from all their experiences, Kim

remarked: “I had a lot of fun listening to all these positive stories. I had forgotten I was part of a great team before... I think we will do well.”

A variety of methods are possible to surface positive experiences, but all start with students taking a few moments to quietly reflect and identify one or more experiences to explore further. Students could be asked to individually write a few notes to share later, or they could be paired up to conduct interviews with each other. As students begin to articulate their success stories, positive emotions are re-experienced and animate the expression of the story. This tends to pique the listeners’ interest and curiosity. Animated conversations ensue, the energy in the room swells. Jason, a shy sophomore, noted in his reflection sheet, “I felt so comfortable talking in my team today. I never felt this before and I hardly knew them! After the first question or two I was not afraid of their questions anymore ‘cuz each one was more out of curiosity... chance for me to show them things that I did well. Ok, I had to be careful not to sound like I was making it up.”

The professor provides a guidance for this discovery task in several ways: 1) context, by giving an overview of Appreciative Inquiry, its values, and the 4D model, 2) focus, by shaping a question that targets the inquiry, 3) energy, by inspiring and encouraging the search for the best and 4) a quiet reflective mood for thoughtfulness and adequate time for dialogue. We encourage students to be curious and to ask probing questions of each other in order to clarify and obtain very specific descriptions of the events and the forces that made them occur. In Jason’s team, this is exactly what happened.

Several benefits accrue from this initial storytelling. Putting one’s experience into words for others pushes the individual to clarify aspects of an experience that have remained fuzzy and unexamined. Sometimes, as in Kim’s story above, the good is often forgotten and buried in a

pile of negative experiences, and so this process often leads to new insights and energy. Second, a well-told story provides listeners with new perspectives on topics that are naturally complex given the diversity of human experience. Third, by "loading our best experiences into memory," we create a set of "hooks" to connect with the stories of others and with the more abstract models and readings of the course. Finally, as with all Appreciative Inquiry, by focusing on the best of what was, we create an unspoken anticipation of what might be. Using our team example, students who are hesitant about groups reawaken memories that demonstrate that there is also fun and hope in joining with others. Kim was able to overcome her earlier fears and was hopeful. Here's how her story ended:

“My experience with my team was a very positive one for me... Everyone in my group was very responsible for their work, and wanted the group to succeed as a whole...I would describe my team as hardworking and flexible... Each member of the team had their own part organized, and the parts of others. For example, Ashley was responsible for editing...and then putting everyone's part in logical order.”

When we connect first to our experience of success, a subtle and important shift of perspective takes place. The usual pedagogical goal of memorizing and banking some set of other people's abstract theories is no longer prominent. Rather, reading theories becomes a way to deepen one's understanding of the personal experiences brought to light during the discovery step. Good readings are then a helpful sharing by others who were also seeking to understand. This order of learning activity reinforces the value of inside-out learning over the more traditional outside in.

This does not minimize the value of other's thinking as conveyed through the written word. Great writings are resources to help us on our journey of learning and action, not burdens to be held accountable for. In fact, in finding and choosing worthy pieces to read, we might ask

if a particular piece is rooted in the best of our nature and does it help inspire us to a new sense of possibility.

The discovery step occurs in two phases. The first phase of discovery is about extending out and exploring the range of a topic. In a class of 30, we might have 30-60 stories of great team moments. While experience (and stories or cases) unconsciously accumulate as expertise to draw upon, we also benefit greatly from an inductive process of distilling the essence of experience. This second phase is a converging process. The themes that we distill are easier to hold onto and provide usable elements for later vision and action. They are particularly useful because the student has experiential referents for what these themes or concepts mean and for what authors might mean when they use the same or similar ideas such as cohesion, shared leadership, consensus, integrity, etc.

During this converging phase, pairs or small groups work on themes followed by reports in a plenary session that allow the professor to help summarize, clarify, or connect various ideas. In the team example, students feel confirmed when they find that other groups have identified many of the same key elements to group success. They are also pleasantly surprised to hear a few more important ideas that they hadn't considered in the reports. From other groups. "My classmates know something!" In fact, students will often generate 90% or more of what expert readings will cover, although it is unorganized. In this team example, the professor might help bring order with the distinction of task or people-related behaviors as a simple way to begin organizing and discussing the rich data that comes from students. In the plenary session, both the professor and students have the opportunity to connect to other ideas from the course, other appreciative inquiries, and to readings that could precede or follow the in-class discovery.

The topic of teamwork is only one of many. We have looked into moments of peak performance, extraordinary motivation, exemplary leadership, core values, deep commitment, and more. Many, if not all, of these topics are intricately intertwined. As students inquire into any one of these, they begin to find significant connections to others. A story of personal peak performance can be a good case with multiple paths to follow in discussion. A peak performance could hint at the type of motivation in play and the nature of leadership imbuing the situation. The number of focuses that are possible in the discovery phase is almost equal to the possible number of topics in a management course.

We have also used variations of this process to explore and build competencies of various kinds. For example, we might ask students to think of a time when they really listened and understood what another was saying as a lead in to active listening. Or we might guide students to explore moments when they have convincingly influenced others as one lead in to the topic of power. Asking students to examine their experience to help prepare criteria for presentations and written reports leads to a better understanding of what is required and serves as a review. With little extra effort, the appreciative focus can be applied to many of the active learning materials that most teachers currently use. “What did we see being done well in the ____ (role play, case, simulation, etc.)? What made this possible? What positive images could we generate?”

In many occasions, we observe student dependency, anxiety, and confusion. This is especially true when a major team project is first mentioned. However, the time spent exploring prior experiences of great projects provides hope and guidance. Drew noted in his reflection sheet, “Now I know my teammates and their motivations. Like me, they want to do really well.” Alicia describes this experience in her Team Assessment paper.

“We talked about great projects we did before. This was so helpful. From our stories we identified important things, like each one pulling their weight,

having fun, helping each other, listening, being open minded, considering everyone's interests.... At first, we had so many different interests...they were all sorts. (The professor) helped us realize we can be creative... we decided our project will be on effective communication, using dolphins as our focus.... I don't know why but I just felt like I wanted so much to study dolphins.”

Discovery can also extend beyond the boundaries of the class. A managerial interview is a very useful activity for most undergraduates. Many have never talked to a person in their major field of study. This simple exposure is beneficial. By adding several questions, however, we can turn this experience into an appreciative inquiry. For example, the student may ask the manager to remember a time of peak performance on the job and further inquire about the various factors that contributed to the performance (system, self, etc.). Motivation, quality, and creativity can all be explored as students and managers become co-inquirers and builders of knowledge.

Whatever the topic or activity, the guideline is to focus discussions on identifying peak experiences and life-giving forces. Students discover that they are comfortable asking affirmative questions about experiences of success, because these elicit positive reactions and responses. We argue that energy tends to be heightened and more productively invested when directed towards discovery of what works rather than what does not work. What works contains the seed that might transform. Appreciative Pedagogy puts into constructive practice what Bennis (1995) calls "management of attention." The conversation should not dwell on stories of failure. Meticulously, the professor would not even allow tales of "failure avoided." Statements like "does not look over your shoulders all the time" or "doesn't have favorites" can be reoriented by asking, "What does your manager do that makes her so great?" Probing questions like these can help to refocus the conversation on "the best of what is" rather than "what is not" there.

Dream

“The more subjected and less able to dream of freedom , the less able will concrete beings be to face their challenges,” (Freire, 1994).

Building on the profound connection between positive image and positive action (Cooperrider, 2000), the dream step connects the student to the future by drawing from the themes of best moments to help shape an exciting vision of self in action and in relationship to others. Education is ultimately about preparing its participants to join with others in achieving agreed upon outcomes (Dewey 1966, Handy 1998). While the discovery phase is beneficial in and of itself in relation to learning, it is dreaming that increases the likelihood of future action and thus contributes to the education of those involved. Topics become relevant and take on personal meaning when we connect them to our dreams. Roger put this especially well, “This class was about me, my life. We look at many ideas and topics, and all of them became about me and my life, my work, even my relationships. He made me work hard, but he made it feel like play, but also seriously about life.”

The themes and images of the discovery phase provide the source material for the dreaming step. While we may draw upon the writings and thoughts of experts and others outside the class, this step is not about getting or guessing the "right answer" that some expert already has. Personal experiences of success ground the ideal in what is subjectively real, fulfilling, and energizing, rather than on the objectively distant, often filtered narratives of "best practices" in some famous, but often quite unfamiliar corporate realities. Our own experience helps shape the details of the vision that is right for us and provides the light in the image that pulls us forward and "convinces" us of its rightness. Like a plant that grows in the direction of the light source, the person strives to grow towards the positive image, steadily transforming from "what is" into "what can be."

A sharp image has more motivational pull, so it is necessary to spend adequate time working with the discovery material to create guiding images and propositions. In the team example, after hearing all the various stories and ideas associated with highly successful teams, each group is asked to distill a list of key qualities that will underlie its vision for itself. The groups are then asked to generate a small set of provocative propositions about great teams and to fashion a guiding motto for themselves. They are asked to sign off on their vision and propositions to establish a psychological contract for the project. The energy rises dramatically again as we ask each team to introduce themselves to the class and share their ideals and motto. They know that they will be back on stage for a presentation later in the semester and they begin to see a real possibility in themselves and others for good performance and a rewarding experience. We want student teams to focus on the question of ‘*what would be great to do,*’ and move away from the questions of ‘what is required’ and ‘what the professor wants.’ This is how Sarah experienced this phase, as told in her own words.

“We used everything from our list of Best Team Characteristics. For example, we all agreed our team will be fun, productive, where we all learn a lot about ourselves and relevant topics. We actually made it happen. I have never been part of a team where the members talked and went out together outside of class.....I would describe my team as caring, fun, productive, focused, open-minded... I learned a lot about both myself and topics discussed in class... rewarding, and insightful. I could say a lot more but I don’t have enough space in the form.”

Sarah’s experience with her team is typical for many in her class. From observations of her team, it was clear that they started, like most, with fears and anxiety. Yet, when they were encouraged to rediscover their peak experiences of success and pride, they were able to dream of a great team that they could build together.

With a little imagination, it is possible to find opportunities for “dreaming” in many class topics and activities. In debriefing a corporate ethics role-play, we ask questions that raise moral

leadership to greater prominence, versus a focus of what not to do. Where did examples of moral leadership occur? What made these possible? Have there been times in life when we exercised a moral leadership at work or in other settings? What are the key factors necessary for personal and corporate moral leadership?

In a global simulation, following a round of regional goal setting and competitive bargaining, we ask the large group to collectively dream a picture of an ideal world. Not surprisingly, most people would like to see a world where all have adequate food to eat, with clean air and water, with basic education, and with sustainable and beneficial uses of technology. Working towards this dream dramatically transforms the next round of interaction between regions. Creativity, generosity, and trust flourish where 15 minutes before, manipulation and deception dominated. The contrasting spirit and behavior of the two rounds demonstrates the power of an overarching positive vision in the dynamics of human behavior and relationships.

Design & Destiny

The Dream step is a fertile soil for developing a “true” aim, ala Dewey. An aim which emerges from existing conditions is a stimulus to intelligence. The mind comes vibrantly alive in the planning and consequent actions that bring forth a complexity of unexpected conditions and connections with others. We like to isolate a vision or proposition from the dream step and identify the skills and know-how critical to success. In the team example, we often hear that a key factor in success was that “we all agreed.” What is agreement exactly? How did this happen? What was said? What skills do we need to insure agreement?

Continuing with the team example, we ask students to identify personal leadership behaviors to help their own team move towards the ideal. Throughout, we involve students in an ongoing reflection and action cycle based on their propositions and hopes for their team by

asking individuals and groups to reflect (both worksheet and discussion) on questions such as: How are we doing so far in realizing our propositions and plans? What is going well? What have I done? What leadership or action is needed? What would be great to do? What is the first step to take from here, specifically? What will I do? Any resultant actions will be later reflected and hopefully lead to another cycle of action and reflection to further guide project activity. Class debriefing sessions during the semester and/or a final paper can identify current successes and pitfalls, and include further visioning and planning towards project completion. One group that was having difficulty in choosing a topic for their group project was encouraged to revisit their initial vision of a great group. In doing so, they realized that they were not “really listening” to each other. When they slowed down to listen, they not only found a topic that was exciting to everyone, they became a real team in the process.

The classroom reality differs in several important ways from a large organization. The ongoing organization is tied to an environment in short and long term ways. Common vision and collective action are critical to organizational survival and long term success, whereas the classroom is temporary and relatively closed to its environment. For visions that fall outside the course boundaries or do not involve collective action with others present, the responsibility for follow through rests on the individual.

The professor, however, may need to look creatively for ways that help support students pursuing their visions. When we debrief class experiences with a focus on what was done well, we can also add the design step by generalizing to work and life situations beyond the class. Assignments that encourage students to experiment and reflect are particularly helpful. For example, MBA's are typically hesitant to initiate career discussions with higher ups, but at the same time they deeply desire to know where they stand and where they are going.

Appreciative interviews with organizational leaders can focus on the exciting developments in their various industries and companies and the positive role that those pursuing and obtaining an education can play. Sharing this information in small groups and/or the larger class is always an option. Students are curious to hear these stories and there is great energy in processing them. There is genuine shock when they discover that organizations, which are paying the bill for an MBA, do not have plans for them. Some may discover that they will need to move on, while others have engaging conversations that instill hope and energize more initiatives. A surprising number discover that their appreciative inquiry was also a satisfying experience for the manager involved and created positive reverberations like new job assignments or promotions, often within weeks of the interview. The student learns that he or she also needs to creatively look for ways to reframe organizational or course activities to implement their vision.

A final note on the 4D model. While these steps have been presented as a sequential model, there are not always clear lines between discovering, dreaming, designing, and delivering in practice. Inquiry and dialogue, particularly in groups, have a life of their own and are more of a dance, than a rigidly controlled prescription.

Consequences of Appreciative Pedagogy

We believe Appreciative Pedagogy to be a useful guide in organizing educational activities and a useful tool in tackling the mainstream content and activities of a typical management class. Moreover, additional benefits normally flow from this process of learning and relating to others. We believe that appreciative pedagogy has generated a number of healthy outcomes for our students. Some are immediate, some are cumulative (Yballe & O'Connor, 2001.)

1a. *We have observed more energized and sustained interactions.* In contrast to the difficult moments of "pulling out" responses after a lecture, we are often faced with the question

of when or whether to proceed to the next step due to the high energy level. One student commented, "This is the first time that I loved working in groups."

Freire notes that we must do everything to ensure an atmosphere in the classroom where teaching, learning, and studying are serious acts, but also ones that generate happiness. Only to the authoritarian mind can the act of education be seen as an adult task. Fredrickson (2001) notes that play builds enduring social resources, social-affective skills, increased levels of creativity, and fuels brain development. Happiness and play need not be restricted to the school yard. Dewey (1966) understands play and work as existing along the same continuum; both involve aims that require us to organize across time. The line between them is often fuzzy, particularly in creative endeavors such as brainstorming. Joy and fun can be and should be integral to education.

Several others themes constellate around this theme of energized and sustained interactions.

1b. ***Students feel a sense of safety when publicly speaking up; they experience less fear and inhibition.*** The positive focus "honors" their experiences. Students have reported: "This made it easy to talk to someone about my best performances", "I could talk for hours about my proudest moments", or "When I talk about failures, I cover up many facts, even from myself." Fredrickson (2001) posits that "the experience of positive emotion broadens people's momentary thought-action repertoires." For example, joy broadens the urge to play, push limits, and be creative. Interest broadens learning by creating the urge to explore, take in new information and experience, and expand the self in the process Fredrickson (2001). "Experiences of positive affect prompt individuals to engage with their environments and partake in activities."

1c. *A positive attitude emerges towards other students as knowledgeable, trustworthy, and real.* Appreciative Pedagogy helps to move the class through the early stages of group development and provides a foundation for a healthy and productive culture to emerge. Many students eagerly report that they have had experiences very similar to others in the class. There is surprise in discovering common ground with a stranger or a new insight into a friend. This deepens the conviction of the life-giving forces they uncovered, but also begins a bonding or identification with others and the class as a whole. In contrast with the traditional lecture culture and in spite of the initial wariness we all have of strangers and new situations, others become "real" and they come into focus as we listen, connect, show support, and work as partners.

1d. *Students gain a greater trust in self and heightened confidence in their experience.*

Fredrickson (2001) suggests that

“the capacity to experience positive emotions may be a fundamental human strength central to the study of human flourishing. ... Ancestors who succumbed to the urges sparked by positive emotions to play, explore, and so on would have by consequence accrued more personal resources.”

Participation seems livelier and we attribute it to a greater trust and confidence in one's experience. Inner direction develops and drives further inquiry and this is a core element of a life worth living. Participation is fragile for younger students, because years of school have convinced many that the answers come from the book or the teacher. Pedagogy should “move students from “beings for others” to “beings for themselves” (Freire, 1994).

1e. Many students have reported that they find it very comfortable to ask for feedback, request guidance, or chat with the professor on important challenges involving their teams or projects demonstrating a *positive attitude towards the professor as resource, guide, and helper.*

While almost everyone reported an initial sense of skepticism and lack of understanding about what the professor is up to, they have also indicated that those feelings changed to trust.

2. ***Concepts and insights are personally meaningful and relevant because they are firmly rooted in personal experiences.*** Experiences are rich food for thought and learning. Appreciative Pedagogy reconnects ideas and thinking to experience, to outcomes, to others. Reports from subgroups are, in essence, "live cases" that can be used to springboard various discussions. Furthermore, topical coverage is rarely an issue. We have discovered that lists generated by undergraduates in very brief activities often contain a large percentage of the material reported by experts. This can help alleviate the distrust that some students have of experts and "book learning" as they find themselves on the same "page."

3a. ***A "fuller" and hopeful view of the future (images of what students can be) emerges as an alternative to an "empty" view (what they should not be).*** With focus on the positive, many wonder what happens to negative experience. After all, life isn't all roses. We believe that while negative experience may be useful in drawing attention to important issues, we ultimately learn best from what works well. Many part-time MBA's have had negative experiences in their organizations and in reaction to misguided change efforts. They feel frustrated by the constraints to initiative and growth and by the many subtle signs of disrespect they sense. Their anger is rooted in the fact that they have been hopeful and have expected better. Those who have begun to believe that nothing beyond their negative experience is possible in *any* organization are truly amazed to hear from classmates who love their jobs and bosses, who are challenged and empowered, and believe themselves to be in great organizations. They begin to wonder if maybe they could work in such a place or maybe carve out such a space right now. Some management innovations have actually worked. This kernel of possibility allows them to proceed, sometimes

skeptically, with the work of the course. Some skepticism proves useful in deepening the learning process in ways that blind conversion may not.

3b. *Students begin to gain skill and confidence in Appreciative Inquiry as a creative alternative to objective analysis or problem solving.* Problem solving is a powerful activity that we believe works best in the context of Appreciative Inquiry. Going right to the problem often leaves us in the same frame of reference that we started with. Focusing on what was great and building a positive vision will often reframe the context of the problem and ultimately transform the system. Additionally, the appreciative process taps into the resource of personal experience and is sustained by the conviction of that experience, as well as the positive image. Approaching life as a miracle to be experienced rather than a problem to be solve is a dramatic and useful shift in perspective.

4. There have been *positive consequences for us, the professors*, when we have managed our classes with an appreciative stance. Certainly, the above outcomes (e.g., positive attitude, greater energy, participation, and interaction) make our teaching more enjoyable and easier. Practically, we have found it easier to guide students in developing their competencies because of the connection with personal experience.

We have also felt more alive in the process. The appreciative mindset awakens our desire and nurtures our curiosity to create and discover new possibilities that enrich our existence in class and give it new meaning and direction. We have also enjoyed a steady flow of success stories brought by students. This fresh material has stimulated our learning and has led to a deeper, more grounded connection with the values, concepts, and models we teach. Finally, their "aha!" experiences, the discovery of something valuable has renewed our hope and belief that we are on the right track.

Some Challenges

While the appreciative mindset has been a positive force in the classroom, this approach has not been without challenges. To do it right, the appreciative spirit must seep into every aspect of the course and it must penetrate the whole system. This teaching style will ultimately fail if it's tacked on like an experiential exercise at the end of a chapter in a textbook. We found that each experiment in Appreciative Pedagogy led us to new course adjustments or self confrontation on our values. Do we give students opportunities to read about what works well? Do assignments give students opportunities to experiment, practice, and reflect on what works well, and do they encourage the students to stretch to their highest level? Do our performance evaluations give students a sense of how much they have accomplished? Do papers help to clarify and integrate further each step in the 4 D model?

Younger students who have been deeply ingrained in "banking" methods will often find low structure or a personal focus unfamiliar and uncomfortable. Some may respond in self protective ways, e.g. "I've never had a success" or "I'm not really curious about anything." This requires some finesse in helping the individual draw upon their experience. More broadly, it requires some patience and consulting skill in respecting the resistance and working the class through some new ways of behaving and relating. Following Lewin's classic formulation, change (learning) occurs in a system (student) when we reduce resistance (through participation and ownership) and increase hope (through positive vision of the future.)

As teachers, we feel "young" when we try something for the first time. The appreciative approach calls for a very different skill set than the traditional lecture style. Mistakes, uncertainty, resistance, and doubt are inevitable. Appreciative Pedagogy is a serious challenge. If you believe that it is possible, however, begin by looking for opportunities for small

experiments. We believe that the positive results will kindle a long-term adventure for those willing to try. Still, one may experience pressure from peers and administrators who hear reports of too much noise in class, or lack of traditional structure, or who might misunderstand students' sense of comfort with the class as equivalent to lack of work or seriousness.. Also, the steps we have outlined take considerable time and will raise issues of coverage. You will however, find ample opportunities to clarify one's values and purpose in the process of experimenting with an appreciative approach.

Stepping back from the class, we face the challenge of responsibility for our own educational experiences. As students or professors or trainers, personally and collectively, we must reflectively use an appreciative lens to examine our own best moments of learning and teaching as a basis for course adjustments, personal growth, and to better shape the educational settings we find ourselves in. A small example was an inquiry into best teaching moments at a small liberal arts school that led to a series of faculty led workshops on pedagogy.

As the appreciative method spreads through a course or curricula, inevitably one bumps into other limits of an institutional nature. Class size, room configuration, class time and length, coverage standards, and sequence of courses all pose challenges. Yet, ultimately, here also is an opportunity. It might be fun to imagine an entire school guided by appreciative values. We'd like to report such a success, but we are still dreaming.

Can we dare to imagine a boundary-less education where students connect to their experience, to others, across topics and disciplines, and to their organizations, families, and communities? Could an appreciative mission help bring this about and guide it? In fact, there are intriguing examples of this possibility already. In Chicago, young school children connected across generations to business and political leaders as they led appreciative interviews about the

future of their city and the world. Students in a low performing urban school district in Cleveland found new learnings as they came to life in an appreciative inquiry involving themselves and school, business, church, and community leaders. Brazilian children learned about each other, poverty, and social economic class by having schools in wealthy and poor districts paired in appreciative interviews. We are limited only by our imagination. Students need not be just containers of knowledge, but can be partners in the re-creation and refinement of their society's knowledge and wisdom.

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