



Lena Holmberg

has a PhD in Educational Research, worked as a consultant and manager in an IT company and started the AI consulting company Apprino. With Jan Reed, she was guest editor of the November issue of the AI Practitioner in 2007 that focused on AI and research.
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Jan Reed

PhD, BA, RN has been involved in research for many years. She has a nursing qualification, and teaches and supervises healthcare students at the Northumbria University. Her interest in the possibilities and contributions of Appreciative Inquiry research to the processes of change has recently resulted in a book.
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AI Research Notes carries news of AI research developments. We'd like to make it as collaborative and appreciative as we can – we know that many of you are working and thinking about the relationship between academic research and AI, and that you have news, which we'd like you to

These 'research notes' focus on the differences (if any) between research and evaluation. To some, this distinction may be spurious, but if you move between the worlds that have been constructed around the two activities, you can feel confused (Reed, 2007) . Evaluation can be characterized as an activity which is managed by the host organisation, who will use the information to shape internal development, while research can be characterized as activity led by people engaged in an academic world who wish to use the data to inform wider debate

This suggests two areas of difference. Firstly, there can be a difference in how the project starts, whether it is commissioned by the host, or funded by an external agency. Secondly, there might be differences in how the information gathered is used. In evaluation the information might be used internally, to aid development, while in research, information might be opened to a wider audience, who will critique the academic validity and contribution of the study.

We can see differences, then, in the starting and ending of the project, and these may shape the way that information is being shared of these contexts

discussion piece from Matt Dunn, who lays out some of the differences as seen from a traditional point of view. He goes on, however, to suggest a non-traditional synergy between evaluation and research.

The second piece is an account, by Margaret Wright, of a project in which she carried out an evaluation while a researcher was carrying out a study at the same time. Initial suspicion of the researcher turned to gratitude that there was someone available to verify the data. This gratitude turned to concern, however, that this verification might not understand or support AI. This sums up the way in which research and evaluation can work together – they can both challenge and support each other.

1 Reed J (2007) Appreciative Inquiry: Research for Change. Sage, New York.



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When I embarked on a dream project i.e. working in schools using AI, I found it curious that the client who employed me had also employed a researcher – my thinking was that the AI method itself was sufficient as it was action research. However the piece of work was not begun by my AI colleague or myself, but was underway by the time we were brought in. The funder was also on board so we were past the post in terms of setting goals. An independent researcher was there and to be fair the project was much bigger than just the AI piece we did. Therefore it made sense for the client, a charity with only a few staff, to employ a researcher. There was a separate funder too for the AI piece and a lot of time, we were told, had been spent in communicating the method, its possible impact and

In fact, from initial feelings that the researcher was superfluous and was of course an expense which might have gone into the pot for the AI research, I began to feel that the other researcher would be an asset independently verifying what the folks involved in the work thought (i.e. the pupils and the teachers) in case there was any thought on behalf of the client or the funder that we were skewing the results. In other words, there were probably two opportunities for the folks involved to comment and reflect on the AI work i.e. when we, the consultants were involved, and also when the researcher came around too. The initial delight at not having to write up the project and read what an independent researcher had written turned to concern that justice had not been done to the work or to the potential for the future and given that this was a pilot then this was critical.

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My work involves carrying out evaluations of development aid, including projects and programmes. Although evaluation methodologies based on AI principles are available, these have not normally been considered suitable for use under the tight terms typically presented by bilateral and multilateral agencies. Now, based on many years of experience with traditional social science evaluations and training in change facilitation, I have developed an evaluation concept which uses a triangulation of onre s A ic considte

Most evaluations base their recommendations on observations of failure and deficits. Using this approach the evaluator lacks sufficient and appropriate information to assess what might lead to success in a given situation. AI, conversely, builds on success and creates ownership.

Resistance to focusing on appreciating successes comes from the anxiety of potentially missing wrong doings or failures in projects and programmes. However, I explain that AI does pick up on problems but by focusing on areas for improvement, and stakeholders' wishes for something which better the current situation. This is achieved by reformulating problem/deficit statements.

As a drastic refocus for some of the development agencies, AI naturally provokes some resistance and anxiety. But, as the wish for a better approach is felt deeply and urgently by many, my experience is that AI is readily accepted.

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Once upon a time, AppreciativeÜ

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people who have been trained in research in order to publish in academic papers. They try to find 'the truth'. Appreciative Inquiry is not looking for 'the truth'. It is looking for useful solutions to the challenges of the times.

I have been working with Appreciative Inquiry for fifteen years. It started with two great demands on me: 1) I had to create the research design, and 2) I had to write the research questions.

Appreciative Inquiry is an adaptive method; there is no universal method in AI. It is easy to produce theory from single cases with Appreciative Inquiry. It is easy to create action learning from these theories. It is harder to publish in 'scientific' journals and magazines.

Appreciative Inquiry produces very good science and theory. We just have to become better at producing practical theories.

AI Research Notes will carry news of AI research developments. We'd like to make it as collaborative and appreciative as we can – we know that many of you are working and thinking about the relationship between research and AI, and that you have news, comments and questions which we'd like you to contribute.

The next issue (November 2009) will focus on the use of AI in Information Technology research while the February 2010 column will be dedicated to practitioners appreciating AI research and suggesting ideas for AI researchers to pick up. Hopefully this can turn our column into a dialogue between researchers and practitioners.

Please send suggestions and material to jan.reed@unn.ac.uk or lmholmberg@gmail.com. Please continue to send us material and suggestions

Jan and Lena

Impact of Appreciative Inquiry on Research: Experiences, Reflections and Thoughts for the Future.

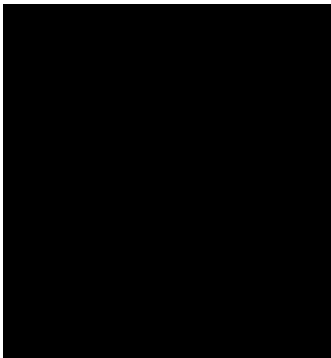
AI Practitioner

Guest editors: Professor Jan Reed and Dr. Lena Holmberg.

Impact of AI on Research – the Latest Experience.

DVD documentation of the workshop led by Professor Jan Reed and Dr. Lena Holmberg on 9th November 2007 in Gateshead, UK.

Both available from www.aipractitioner.com



Introduction to Appreciative, Systemic and Constructionist Ideas and Practices at Work in Denmark by Carsten Hornstrup and Thomas Johansen
A view of how Danish organisational practitioners are thinking about and using AI as a main inspiration in leading and consulting for organisations

From Appreciative Inquiry to Inquiring Appreciatively by Carsten Hornstrup and Thomas Johansen
Foreground 'inquiring' and formulating a foundation for i-a

Creating a Great Place to Work in a Danish Public School by Jan Henriksen
Designing a project that gave life and meaning to the entire organisation

Corporate Ethical Scorekeeping: a Systemic Constructionist Appreciative Approach towards Working with Corporate Values by Thomas Specht
Facilitating corporate value processes at different organisational levels in Denmark

Inquiring Appreciatively: Reconstructing Stress-related Problems in a Danish Drug Rehabilitation Centre by Camilla Rask and Thomas Johansen
Inquiring appreciatively applied to stress-related problems in a drug rehabilitation centre

Doing Irreverence Appreciatively by Thomas N. Christensen
Irreverence, linked to the idea of appreciation and doing organisational development, can open up possibilities and new ways of thinking

Systemic Appreciative Evaluation: Developing Quality Instead of Just Measuring It by Malene Skov Dinesen
Evaluation has become a 21st century obsession. Are the personal and economic resources being spent in the most meaningful and productive way?

Research Notes carries news of AI research which is about to start, is in progress or has been completed. Contributions are from researchers around the world.

This issue will be devoted to leaders' stories in Sweden.

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