

Title: **The student voice in staff development through student-led appreciative inquiry for inclusion**

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Abstract:

Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

1. Discuss with student researchers their experience as ‘student voice’ researchers and enhancers of staff development
2. Assess the merits of Appreciative Inquiry [AI] as a staff development method
3. Identify possibilities for using AI and student researchers to drive staff development in participants’ own institutions

Session Outline

This workshop engages with two conference themes: students as researchers and the student voice in staff professional development.

Appreciative Inquiry [AI] is increasingly being championed as a research and evaluation method in HE (Ludema et al 2001; Cousin 2009). We have run a number of AI projects at UW (Chapman 2010; Symonds, 2010). Our experience is that there is particular power in hearing students report participatory research (Seale 2010) which conveys appreciation of work undertaken by academic staff. So far this seems to be a win, win, win situation; with students gaining from their experiences of researching and presenting their findings, educational developers achieving greater staff engagement, and, academic staff feeling empowered to drive their practice forward.

A team of 3 academics and 3 students led a collaborative project using AI on what constitutes good inclusive practice in the Institute of Education (University of Worcester). The students collected data from fellow students at the Institute, analysed it and presented it at a staff development day. The impact on staff has been particularly powerful because students collected and presented the findings and because AI is a strengths-based approach. Indeed, feedback from staff has been overwhelmingly positive. This workshop explores the value of the AI approach, both for the student researchers and for its impact on academic staff development.

The workshop will start with a student-led activity to get delegates experientially engaged with AI. This will be conducted by the same students who successfully ran the workshop with 70 Education staff at UW. This will lead into a short introduction of AI methodology and principles; with discussion to explore the merits and limitations of AI. The students will then take questions on how they gathered, analysed and presented their data, evaluating how the process impacted on their own learning and development. They will explore their feelings about doing research with university staff and how they were perceived by their peers (Trowler & Trowler 2010). They will also run another experiential activity with delegates to explore the 'Dream' phase of AI – i.e., the envisioning of a perfectly inclusive practice. Academic staff from the project will provide a brief report on changes emerging from the AI project and answer questions on its impact. Finally, there will be opportunity to explore ways in which AI could be adapted to other development concerns and institutional contexts.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

10 minutes student-led activity with delegates: The merits of an appreciative approach - 'post-it' activity to engage participants and illustrate the 'Discovery' phase of AI

10 minutes input: The Appreciative Inquiry approach to staff development in theory and practice – Presentation of the 4D model used.

15 minutes group discussion: What could go wrong with Appreciative Inquiry?!

15 minutes student session and experiential activity with delegates: The student experience of undertaking and presenting AI research on inclusion – To include a 'Dream' phase experiential activity with delegates

15 minutes group work: considering the interplay of the student voice, students as researchers, co-creators and educational developers.

10 minutes witness session: Staff from the development day highlight and answer questions on the impacts of this student-led staff development project; an evaluation to illustrate the 'Destiny' phase of AI

15 minutes group discussion: The possibilities of using student researchers and/or Appreciative Inquiry for staff professional development within your programmes and teams.

References

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Cousin, G. (2009) *Researching Learning in Higher Education*, Routledge

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