

AMED in 2020 and beyond

A hopeful perspective

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A context

As 2020 approaches, a number of important questions arise for AMED. What are the changes that might now be possible for AMED? What is 'good work' becoming (Taylor 2017)? And how can we, as AMED, contribute to its realisation? Why does AMED still matter?

Contributions that we've received so far to our appreciative co-inquiry about AMED2020 speak to me of two competing narratives within a context of natural organisational life cycles. One is a narrative of despair or nostalgia; the other is one of hope and anticipation. Call me naive, but, despite the force of its counter-narrative, I am holding on hope.

I'm wondering how we can hold on to enduring AMED values whilst continuing to operate in this new, volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous, turbo-charged technologically-dominated environment which is transforming the nature of work and employment? Can we contribute to a humanistic shift (e.g. Mele 2003) that asserts that the role of technology is to contribute to the improvement of everyone's lives – including those of the underprivileged?

Adopting an appreciative inquiry perspective

Whilst sharing the same AI acronym as Artificial Intelligence, Appreciative Inquiry counsels us to adopt a positive perspective. In doing so, for reasons of context and practicality, it's also important to take account of historical and anticipated trends. It is not a naïve approach. Figure 1 here represents the appreciative inquiry process as a five-stage cycle of Define, Discover, Dream, Design and Deliver/Destiny.

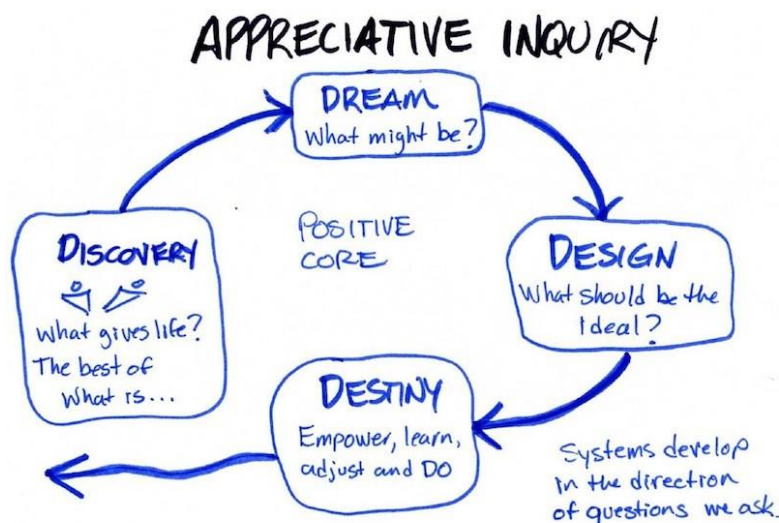


Fig 1: A five-stage process of appreciative co-inquiry (David Cooperrider)

Source: Cooperrider et al

Through such a process of continuous co-inquiry and co-creation, I hope that, collectively, we'll come to realise a clear vision of AMED's role in 2020 and beyond.

In signalling our intention to engage in such conversations, we were inspired by the image of [Paul Gauguin's triptych](#): Where do we come from. What are we. Where are we going.



(Paul Gauguin (1848-1903). D'où venons-nous.jpg)

This might help us to take stock of AMED's past, present and future.

AMED's origins

A more detailed, well-researched history of AMED remains to be written (although [Bruce Nixon's contribution](#) in this edition touches on that). When AMED was founded in the minimally-hyperlinked 1980s, the world of personal, management and organisational development was still in its relative, uncomplicated infancy. AMED was one of a small number of early entrants into this world of work, bursting with pioneering energy. Today, its fourth or fifth generation Council Members are looking to pass on the torch to a New Generation, whilst seeking to uphold a strong set of inter-generational and multi-cultural relationships. The 'market place' is now crowded with competing, well-resourced business schools and other institutes, all jostling with each other for pre-eminence. In such circumstances, there are some who feel that AMED's 'glory days' are over. However, perhaps there remains an important special niche for us to occupy, infused with what we might call 'The AMED Way'.

AMED's present: 'The AMED Way'

A present is both a gift and a moment. What is – or could be - the unique gift that AMED has to offer to its members, and to society at large? It seems to me that 'The AMED Way' includes some of the following features:

Hope comes from the promise of involving a New Generation of more diverse AMED Members, Networkers and occasional Guests who are actively concerned about the future of our planet. It comes from continuing to develop and experiment with our gatherings (both virtual and face-to-face) and publications in a variety of digital and print-based formats, from re-energising our Special Interest Groups, and from continuing the eclectic project of our journal e-O&P and the AMED Writers' Group and its pre- and post-publication Gatherings. It comes from forming nimble, flexible, temporary alliances and partnerships with other like-

minded networks (small or large), such as the Institute for Small Businesses and Enterprise ([ISBE](#)), various progressive universities, the Oxford Brookes Coaching and Mentoring Society ([OBCAMS](#)), the International Foundation for Action Learning ([IFAL](#)), [Sadler Heath](#), the [UK Chapter of Humanistic Management](#) (e.g. Mele 2003), to name but a few. In short, it comes from creating synergies with a range of overlapping networks and individuals who share something of our values.

It seems to me that these values ('The AMED Way') consist amongst others of a profound sense of community, a commitment to 'development', an explicit injunction against direct 'selling', a desire to collaborate rather than compete, and the espousal of experiential learning, creative, and reflective and reflexive green practice. As Tony Page said to me recently, how can we recover our power of agency through reflection, action and writing, from which other possibilities arise? How can we convert these aspirations into practical initiatives?

AMED's future

In a spirit of [Appreciative Inquiry](#), it seems to me that we can sustain this more hopeful counter view. AMED may have been great in the past, and can be great – though probably in different ways – in the future. For this to happen, we need to understand the factors that, taken together, explain why AMED has changed in certain respects, and that are shaping the world in which we might continue to contribute in the years ahead? This is the task that we need to undertake between now and 2020 and beyond.

I believe that an AI perspective will help us to acknowledge that AMED has changed with the times, and that it will give us the confidence to continue to do so. Appreciative Inquiry invites us to ask some important questions: Who are we? What can we do? What do we want to be, mindful of other similar small networks? What sort of administrative and funding base would help us to achieve this? What is our USP? This appreciative co-inquiry needs to be expressed in relevant, contemporary terms, including a mix of writing and other communication forms, formats and purposes.

An interim conclusion

I believe that that AMED's time is not yet expired, and indeed we have much to contribute. By involving actively a New Generation of young people from all cultures and walks of life, we can ensure that AMED understands better the societal trends that will help us to contribute to subsequent vital initiatives. Like Sadler Heath, an important aim for AMED will be to help people thrive in future (non-) work settings.

Forthcoming editions of *e-O&P* will devote space to surfacing refreshed visions of AMED. This might well include a vision of AMED as orbiting within a constellation of other likeminded networks that promote fresh, independent thinking and practices in support of personal, management and organisational development in a post-Brexit society.

These are big questions and ambitions. Please join us in this hopeful project.

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Links

AI Commons: Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry.

<https://appreciativeinquiry.champlain.edu/learn/appreciative-inquiry-introduction/>

Humanistic Management. If you're interested, please enrol yourself on the Facebook site for the Humanistic Management Network and on Twitter @HumanisticMgmt. You'll see some great pictures of the Humanistic Management UK Chapter launch on both sites.

Taylor, M. (2017). Good Work. The Taylor Review of Modern Working Practices. Royal Society of Arts, London. 116 pages. <https://www.thersa.org/globalassets/pdfs/reports/good-work-taylor-review-into-modern-working-practices.pdf>

Mele, D. (2003). The Challenge of Humanistic Management. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 44, pp 77-88, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1023/A:1023298710412>

About the author

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