A New Paradigm for Formation: Learning from Appreciative Inquiry

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Abstract

In the changing scenario of the world and the new mindset of people, formation of priests and religious calls forth for a paradigm shift. Appreciative Inquiry (AI) model which found great impact in Organization Development (OD) gives a viable alternative for the conventional approaches in formation. It shifts the focus from seeing the world and people as problems to mysteries with positive possibilities. Paradigm shift is, then, from deficit model to appreciative model. Every person and situation contains seeds of vitality and hope on which brighter future can be created. As human beings are creator of their reality, much depends on formees and formators what future they make.

With the 4 -D method of AI – Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny, the work of formation can be exciting experience for formators of journeying with the formees discovering their "life -forces "and directing them for the realization of the goals of the priestly and religious life. In place of a mass formation, AI perspectives give a personalized formation emphasizing the utilization of personal potentials for the goals of the Kingdom. The co -creative approach of AI leads to natural accountability and commitment. It vibrates positive emotions and creates a healthy world around.

Introduction

Changes are happening all -around. New generations sing a different tune. They have distinct experiences and worldviews. Change brings new challenges and opportunities. Yesterday's answers are inadequate for today's problems. Albert Einstein said, "The world we've made,

as a result of the level of thinking we have done thus far, creates problems we cannot solve at the same level of thinking. " Changed scenario requires new strategies of management. Are the formators of priests and religious trying to hold the new wine in the old wineskins? They need to understand the changing mindsets of the emerging generations and develop corresponding strategies to be effective and relevant. Seminars and talks being conducted sporadically on paradigm shift in formation are encouraging signs revealing at least many took cognizance of the need for new approaches to face the challenges.

We look up to psychology and other social sciences for solutions for most of the problems in formation. But we may get outdated if we fail to notice that such sciences too are in constant change and that there are new discoveries. While looking for new paradigm for formation we should not fail to explore a comparatively new science emerged in the Corporate World, namely Organization Development known as OD. In the ever competitive world of business and management, innovations and accommodation of the latest is the key to stay aloft. The think -tanks of Organization Development (OD) propose ways and means for effective management of people and organizations taking into account changing times and mentality. Findings of the researches and successful practices of OD could be profitably adapted in the field of formation as the strategies for transformation could be similar even if the scope is different.

According to Warren Bennis (1969:2) organization development is a *complex strategy* intended to change the beliefs, attitudes, values, and structure of organizations so that they can better adapt to new technologies, markets, and challenges. If formation is also considered as a complex strategy to bring about changes (personal transformation) of the formees to conform them to the vision and mission of priestly or consecrated life and enable them to face the challenges of the present day, OD can offer some valuable insights how to achieve it. According to another definition, OD is both a theoretical and a practical study of the different *processes* of sustained and continuous efforts to bring about *planned changes* (a conscious, deliberate improvement) through the utilization of scientific knowledge in an *organization* by applying *modern technology* (scientific tools, methods, procedures, tests, devices, and the like) in the hands of *professionals* (those skilled practitioners/specialists in the helping profession) committed to a sound, consistent, and relevant *philosophy* (a system of perspective, worldviews, values, beliefs, concepts) of the ultimate 'whys', 'whats', and 'hows' of planned organization change.

(SAIDI, Course notes, 2007). One cannot fail to notice that Formation has all these characteristics and Formators as 'professionals' should aim at planned changes in the formees using the latest scientific tools for moulding them for the desired goals.
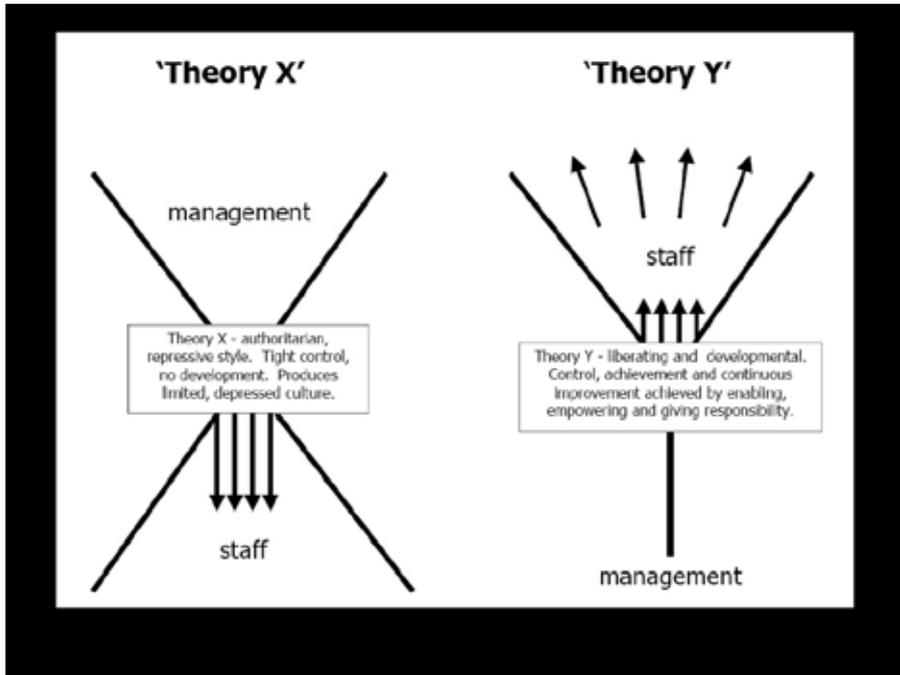
While keeping our eyes open to the researches and practices in Organizations, this article explores one particular approach found greatly rewarding in OD known as Appreciative Inquiry (AI) paradigm for change.

Before examining the philosophy and practice of AI a word is in place on the changing world views in OD exemplified in what is known as theory X and theory Y. A comparison in the qualities of both theories (see the table 1) will tell us that the pessimistic view of human person in the yester years of theory X is replaced today with an optimistic and positive view as seen in the theory Y.

Table 1: McGregor's Theory X -Y
(Clark. 2012, Internet source)

Theory X	Theory Y
‣ People have an inherent dislike for work and will avoid it whenever possible. ‣ People must be coerced, controlled, directed, or threatened with punishment in order to get them to achieve the organizational objectives. ‣ People prefer to be directed, do not want responsibility, and have little or no ambition. ‣ People seek security above all else.	‣ Work is as natural as play and rest. ‣ People will exercise self -direction if they are committed to the objectives (they are NOT lazy). ‣ Commitment to objectives is a function of the rewards associated with their achievement. ‣ People learn to accept and seek responsibility. ‣ Creativity, ingenuity, and imagination are widely distributed among the population. People are capable of using these abilities to solve an organizational problem. ‣ People have potential.

Table 2: Implications of the theories X and Y (McGregor, Internet resource)

With Theory X assumptions, management's role is to coerce and control employees and with Theory Y assumptions, its role is to develop the potentials in employees and help them to release those potentials towards common goals. Our present models of formation seem to work more from Theory X than Theory Y. Candidates are seen as immature people with insufficient, if not, lack of motivation. Accordingly they are to be supervised all the time and controlled. If organizations where profit motives dominate have changed to a more positive understanding of human person it is high time for us to do so with regard to candidates of priestly and religious vocations who are motivated by higher values.

Appreciative Inquiry approach in OD basically believes in the positive potentials of people. Its premise is that there are a lot of unexplored potentials in people and organizations which can be explored and used for better future. It challenges us to focus our effort and energy on looking for the positive assets and potentials rather than on correcting the negatives. Our formation interventions are generally related to the deficit model. It is based on the belief as in the Theory X that the people are with problems. It is logical, then, that the problems are to be analysed, their sources are to be understood, and solutions sought. In this process most of the energy of the formator is spent on exploring

of the negatives in the person, leaving little time to the exploration of the untapped potentials and talents. In the AI perspective the formator is advised to change the focus of attention - focus on the positive strengths and amplify them. The net result would be that not only the strengths grow further but also the negatives disappear without a direct intervention to remove them. As it is said, "Roads with the most traffic get widened. The ones that are rarely used fall into disrepair " (Linley & Joseph, 2009: 258).

The table 3 shows the difference in the process of intervention in Deficit Model and AI Model.

Table 3: Comparison of AI Model with Deficit Model

Problem Solving/ Deficit Model	AI Model
• **Problem Identification** • **Cause Analysis** • **Solution Analysis** • **Action Planning**	• **Discovery: what gives life?** • **Dream: what might be?** • **Design: how it will be?** • **Destiny: what we want to happen?**

A novice -master who approaches the formation on deficit model might call all the novices together every week for a group sharing and tell them, "Let us learn from the mistakes of one another! " They have to find out what wrong others do and discuss about it in the group to find ways to avoid such mistakes in the future. The aim is good. But it creates a lot of anxiety in each novice as nobody wants to hear others pointing out his mistakes. Recall the butterflies in your stomach when your formators publically corrected you! On the other hand if the formator were to say, "Let us learn from the good others do ", the whole atmosphere of the group changes. Each one is eager to hear what good things others have found out about him! When people are recognized and appreciated for something, the natural tendency is to repeat more of such behaviours. And when others come to realise what the socially valued things are, it encourages them too to modify their behaviours. In this process the negatives disappear without directly focusing on them.

Psychology itself moved from pathology model to positive psychology. Albert L. Winseman & others (2003) observed that though pathology model yielded many important breakthroughs in the treatment of mental illness, it allowed for very little attention on the study of fulfilled individuals and thriving organizations. A new perspective is given by positive psychology which studies on optimal human functioning and aims to discover and promote the factors that allow individuals and communities to thrive.

> Positive psychology is about identifying the strengths in individuals and organizations, and helping them develop and excel based on these strengths. This new paradigm explores ways to help people flourish rather than simply function. Topics receiving attention within the Positive Psychology movement include courage, strength, wisdom, spirituality, happiness, hope, resiliency, confidence, satisfaction, and other related areas of study. (Winseman & others, 2003:224)

The positive psychology confirms that strengthening the positives is a more rewarding approach for transformation than punishing the wrongs. Alan Carr says,

> People's intrinsic motivation is strengthened by offering them choices about how they complete tasks, opportunities for self-direction, and feedback which confirms that they have performed a task well. However, feedback which indicates that negative performance has occurred weakens intrinsic motivation. Positive feedback strengthens intrinsic motivation because it increases perceived competence concerning the task in question. Intrinsic motivation, quite unsurprisingly, is weakened by punishment, threats of punishment, pressured evaluation and by imposing, goals, deadlines and directives. (Carr, 2004:50)

Hodges and Clifton observe that after about age 15, the talents, or recurring patterns of thought, feeling, or behaviour do not significantly change in a person.

> Individuals can develop a heightened self-awareness, they can stabilize their values and beliefs, and they can add knowledge and skills on the way to developing their talents into strengths. Still, it seems that their greatest return on their investment into development comes from focusing on the synaptic connections that are already strong.

> At the individual level, strengths-based development involves three stages: identification of talent, integration into how the individual views himself or herself, and behavioral change. This process involves many steps, including identifying things done at excellence, claiming them as strong points, naming them, sharing them with others, consciously thinking about how performance can be maximized if behaviors and talents are aligned, adding necessary knowledge and skills, and actively using the talents whenever possible. (Linley & Joseph, 2004:258)

AI approach to change in Organizations and people is a practical application of this theory.

What is AI?

David Cooperrider discovered an award winning and innovative way of transforming the Organizations. It is to inquire into what positively exists already in the organization and make effort to increase that quality further. Basically Appreciative Inquiry draws on the best of "what is " already existing in the people and organizations in envisioning the future of the organization ("what might be "), and charting the strategies to realize the vision. It eventually creates productive workplaces providing dignity and meaning for the employees and forms a collaborative community.

While it is difficult to sum up the whole of AI, Cooperrider provides a practice -oriented definition of AI:

> Appreciative Inquiry is about the co -evolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them. In its broadest focus, it involves systematic discovery of what gives "life " to a living system when it is most alive, most effective, and most constructively capable in economic, ecological, and human terms. AI involves, in a central way, the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential... instead of negation, criticism, and spiralling diagnosis, there is discovery, dream, and design. AI seeks, fundamentally, to build a constructive union between a whole people and the massive entirety of what people talk about as past and present capacities: achievements, assets, unexplored potentials, innovations, strengths, elevated thoughts, opportunities, benchmarks, high point moments, lived values, traditions, strategic competencies, stories, expressions of wisdom, insights into the deeper corporate spirit or soul, and visions of valued and possible futures. (Cooperrider & others, 2000:5)

Cooperrider asks the question which is very relevant for us as we look to better models for formation:

> Could it be that we have reached "the end of problem solving "as a mode of inquiry capable of inspiring, mobilizing and sustaining significant human system change? What would happen to our change practise if we began all of our work with the positive presumption – that organizations, as centers of human relatedness, are "alive " with infinite constructive capacity? (Cooperrider and others, 2004:4)

Basic Principles of AI

Positive Constructionism gives the philosophical backing for AI. According to it, knowing (inquiry) stands at the centre of any attempt to

change. The purpose of knowing is not so much seeking explanations but for anticipatory articulations of tomorrow's possibilities (Cooperrider 2004:18). We construct our reality the way we know, what we inquire, and what we seek to find. It places then a lot of importance to the power of language and communication in forming our realities. Inquiry is used not so much to interpret the past but for articulating future possibilities. Knowledge is created through collective effort using positive inquiry which in turn is the substance for constructing our realities. *The constructionist principle* underscores the human capacity to construct our world into heaven or hell. It is the mind that constructs our realities. Every person has his or her mental models through which the realities are filtered and perceived. Sages have spoken of it through the proverbial images of the blind people perceiving the elephant in multiple ways. By changing the patterns of perception we can create different realities.

As formators we can construct the future realities of the formees depending on what mental models that we carry. By changing the negative images of the formees and dwelling on their positive strengths we are able to construct a different world for them. It calls forth for paying attention to the quality of inquiry.

The Principle of Simultaneity tells that inquiry and change are happening at the same time. The questions we ask set the stage for what we "find, " and what we "discover " (the data) becomes the material out of which the future is conceived and constructed. The seeds of change - that is, the things people think and talk about, the things people discover and learn, and the things that inform dialogue and inspire images of the future - are implicit in the very first question we ask (Cooperrider 2004:18). Hence the articulation of questions is very important. Even the most innocent question evokes change - even if reactions are simply changes in awareness, dialogue, feelings of boredom, or laughter. So as formators we need to reflect, as Cooperrider says,

> It is not so much "Is my question leading to right or wrong answers? " but rather "What impact is my question having on our lives together... is it helping to generate conversations about the good, the better, the possible... is it strengthening our relationships? " (Cooperrider and others, 2000:18)

The Principle of Simultaneity, then, cautions the formators to educate themselves of the art of asking questions. If the first question or every question that they ask leads the formee towards changes in certain direction, the formators are to be extremely careful about the nature of the questions they put before the formees. The questions are formed

such a way as to help them to discover their positive strengths and build their positive possibilities. There are three types of questions generally used in the appreciative inquiries - value questions, peak questions and miracle questions.

Value questions are intended to surface the most important values held by the person. Questions like, 'Why do you want to be a priest', 'What sustains you in religious life?,' 'What in the Congregation attracted you most?' should lead the formees towards greater awareness of their deeply held values. The peak experience questions help the persons to look backward and search for the high points in their lives (for example: What is the most cherished moment of your apostolate? What was the best experience of your community life? What did you like most about your school life?). These questions lead the persons to scan the life to discover the most cherished moments and discover further what might bring vitality and joy in their lives. The miracle questions or the forward questions help the formees to imagine the future and strive towards their realization (for example: What would you like to be remembered for? What would you like to see more of? When you look at five years ahead what do you like to see happening in your leadership?). These types of questions widen the horizons of possibilities for the future and instill enthusiasm and hope in the formees. AI questions are expansive and generative. They value "what is" in the persons and spark the appreciative imagination. It is needless to say that they convey unconditional positive regard for the formees. The mindset of the formator should be a deep positive valuing of the formee – of their worth and possibilities. If the formator is deeply rooted in the deficit model it is hard to achieve this goal as formees are seen as problem people!

The Poetic Principle implies that there are manifold ways of interpreting the reality as a good piece of poetry may be interpreted in multiple ways. According to Cooperrider, "Pasts, presents or futures are endless sources of learning, inspiration, or interpretations…. What the poetic principle invites is re -consideration of aims and focus of any inquiry in the domain of change management" (Cooperrider and others, 2000:19). The implication for the formation is that we can study any aspect of the persons and interpret them in a productive way for their future. Generally formators grapple with liabilities with which the formees come rather than with the assets they carry with them. Much of such assets remain unexplored and underutilized. The Poetic Principle challenges us to turn our mind to the unexplored potentials in each individual and utilize them for the work of the Kingdom. There are

always something good in every person, however negative we consider them. Our tendency is to look at the negative side and lament. It is good to remember the saying, "What we focus on grows". If we focus on the negatives, contrary to our expectation, negatives might only gain more strength than they disappear! We have also the other possibility to look at the brighter side and amplify it. Jackie Kelm suggests that we look at what we want more of than what we want less of.

> The power in the Poetic Principle is becoming aware of how your focus creates your reality, and intentionally using it to pay attention to what you want. A critical factor in this is learning to focus on what you want more of - and not less of. Your brain is not able to process the negative or absence of something, so it is important to pay attention to what you want more of.

> ... The key in all this is knowing what you want more of, which can be more difficult than it first appears. Many of us are culturally programmed to focus on what we want less of, so it can feel awkward or even difficult at first to think about what we want more of. It can also feel just plain wrong, since we are so programmed to focus on what we don't want and eliminate it. (Kelm, 2007)

Developing on the idea of "the positive core" in the organizations, Kelm identifies the same qualities like wisdom, knowledge, strengths, resources etc., in the personal level too. She affirms that "the process of simply looking for those positive attributes strengthens and augments that inner core. Focusing on our greatest attributes makes those attributes come alive, becoming stronger and more present through our attention to them" (Kelm, 2005:106).

Those who consider it unwise to focus only on the strengths should at least give a greater proportion of their time in the discovery of the positives. A meaningful exercise from the part of the formators would be to write about the positive core of each of the formees regularly.

The formation should attend to the expansion of human capacity to love as Religious formation is essentially the process of moulding the formees as great lovers of God and humanity. (*Sanyasa Journal of Consecrated Life*, 2004). It is in discovering such positive potentials and qualities already existing in the formees that our attention to be focused in the new paradigm of formation. The formators have to develop, what is called in AI, an "Appreciative Eye." Kelm explains, "One of the essential components in developing an appreciative eye is the ability to focus so exclusively on the positive that the negative becomes irrelevant" (Kelm, 2005: 48). Traditionally our eyes are wide open to the problems

and we look at the darker side of things. AI suggests looking at the positive alone.

While focusing on the positives, rightfully the question arises, "What happens to the negatives?" or "What about the corrections to be given?" According to the traditional model, the focus is on correcting and shaping. According to this paradigm the Formators are concerned about the lack of proper values in the candidates, their psycho-spiritual, social immaturities, developmental problems, lack of psycho-sexual integration, traumas and brokenness etc. They are real concerns which affect the persons. It is not that these issues are thrown under the carpet according to the AI perspective. The contention is that by focusing on the positive aspects and making them grow, the negatives are bound to have less and less impact in the life of a person. We become what we study; what we focus on grows and what is not in our focus loses its strength. When, for example, one dwells on the things that increase confidence and courage, what is on the other side – diffidence and fear - disappears. Positive and negative cannot co-exist. Thus without directly dealing with the negatives, the issues are resolved by amplifying the strengths. Hence AI suggests having a 'bias' to positive.

The fourth principle - *The Anticipatory Principle* - indicates that the image of the future guides the current behaviour of the person. Anything great happened in the world was conceived in the minds of the people first whether it be the invention of supersonic flying machines or candidly moving submarines. The images formed in the mind have the capacity to draw the person to their realization. The popular books like Rhonda Byrne's *The Secret* highlighted the power of attraction of the images we form in the mind about the future achievements. While we may not agree with the purposes for which the power of attraction is applied by different persons in this book, researches do confirm the heliotropic tendencies in the human person. Heliotropic character of the mind and body implies that like the plants are turned towards the sun, our body acts according to the images we form. We are all aware how we are affected by the images of the future events. We become anxious with the mere thought of appearing in front of a large gathering for the first time or by the thought of an important event where we are called to play an important role. The anticipatory principle underscores the capacity of positive images to influence and guide our behaviour.

There are also a lot of researches on the therapeutic effects of positive images and positive beliefs. Cousins argues that "the greatest value of the placebo is that it tells us that indeed positive imagery can and often

does awaken the body to its own self-healing powers" (Cooperrider & others, 2000:34)

If we as formators can create the images of the future for the formees, - what the formees have to arrive at – insert them powerfully into their present imaginations, then such vision will have strong impact on their present behaviours. In fact much of our intellectual and spiritual formation is intended to create ideal picture of what the formees should eventually become. Formators effort should be to create possible ideal future basing on the capacities and assets of the formees. AI interviews and workshops aim at creating a "provocative proposition" otherwise known as "possibility statement" for the person or organization. A provocative proposition captures the ideal future scenario as if happening in the present. Formators can help the formees to create such provocative proposition as the ideal to which the formee strive for. If it is created together with the formee and is grounded on his potentials, it will have a compelling force for its actualization. Formators' inquiry should be in the direction of creating such powerful positive imagery as Cooperrider reminds,

> To inquire in ways that serve to refashion anticipatory reality – especially the artful creation of positive imagery on a collective basis – may be the most prolific thing any inquiry can do. Our positive images of the future lead our positive actions – this is the increasingly energizing basis and presupposition of Appreciative Inquiry. (Coopperrider and others, 2000:19)

The fifth and final principle of AI - *Positive Principle* - is drawn out of experience that for building and sustaining momentum for change, there should be a large amount of positive affect and social bonding – like hope, excitement, inspiration, caring, friendship, sense of urgent purpose, and sheer joy in creating something together. The positive emotions facilitate growth and change. As every person and situation has a positive core dwelling more on it one can stimulate the positive emotions which in turn help better functioning of the person. Jackie Kelm points out,

> Positive Psychology research by Barbara Fredrickson and others shows how feeling good leads to thinking good. When you feel good, your whole brain is engaged and fully functioning and you think clearly and more creatively. You are good at solving problems in this state, and thus make better decisions. When negative emotions begin to kick in, your mental capacity begins to shrink like a balloon with a hole in it. (Kelm, 2007)

The effect of positive emotions is amply confirmed by researches. Award-winning research by Barbara Fredrickson on the function of positive emotions is a noteworthy example. She proves how a person in joyful state has sharper mental abilities and tries new things. Overtime, joy contributes to the increase of a person's physical, intellectual, and social skills. (Orem & others, 2007)
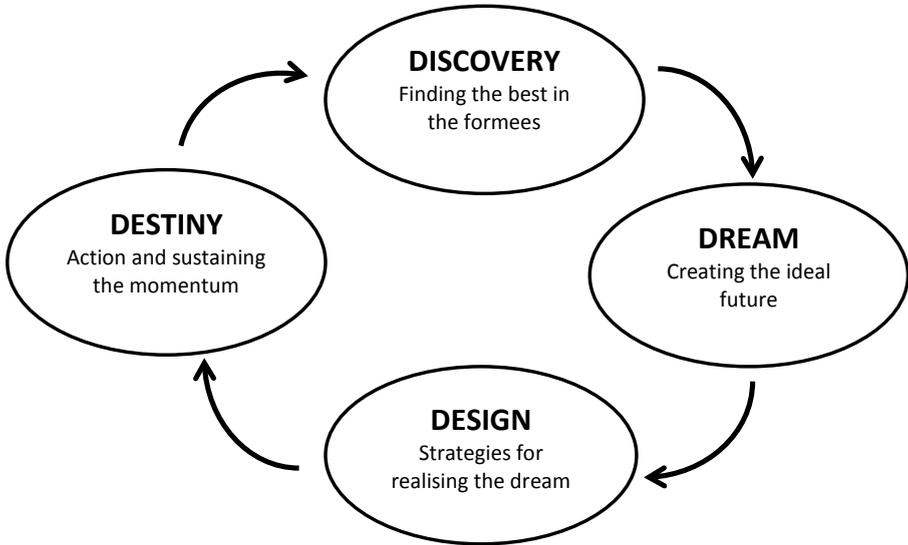
The positive principle reminds us again the need to focus on discovering the positive core of the persons and using positive inquiry. The more positive the question we ask the more long lasting and successful the change effort. The formators have to craft positive unconditional questions which help the emergence of positive emotions. Having an eye for the positive and seeing the good in others make the person feel good and creates a positive world around.

Following the principle of seeking 'what we want more of than less of' formators have to less and less focus on fixing things like anger, anxiety, hatred – the negative feelings and attitudes – and look for things that might lead the formees towards positive emotions and attitudes. This would mean that they have to formulate clear images of what is to be achieved – compassion, understanding, peace of mind, love etc., - and the strategies to achieve it.

Methodology of AI

The five fundamental Principles of AI are put into practical application through the 4-D Cycle framework designed by Cooperrider. According to him there are four key stages in AI approach to change – *Discovery* – mobilizing a whole system inquiry into the positive change core; *Dream* – creating a clear results-oriented vision in relation to discovered potential and relation to questions of higher purpose, that is, "What is the world calling us to become?"; *Design* – creating possibility propositions of the ideal organization, an organization design which people feel is capable of magnifying or eclipsing the positive core and realizing the articulated new dream; and *Destiny* - strengthening the affirmative capability of the whole system enabling it to build hope and momentum around a deep purpose and creating processes for learning, adjustment, and improvisation... (Cooperrider & Others, 2000:6)

Figure 1: AI 4-D Cycle

The 4-D cycle methodology is used in AI summits and workshops of shorter duration. The same frame work could be used in formation though the accompaniment of the formator with the formees is a matter of long duration.

In the Discovery stage we inquire into the positive change core or "life-forces" of the formee. As in Organizations systematic inquiry is made to find its surplus capacity – every strength, innovation, achievement, resource, living values, hope, positive tradition, passion, high point experience etc., - formators have to inquire into the values, strengths, passions, dreams, and visions of the formees that they can build their future on such foundations. Such discoveries are made engaging in positive stories – life experiences – of the formees. The formators search in the history of the formees "What gives life?" to the formees. Their vocational stories, peak positive experiences, achievements, high-points in life etc., are important sources to discover what give vitality, strength and motivation in their vocational life. Such "life-forces" are the foundation on which their future possibilities can be built. Thus formators are to be trained to ask the right questions to elicit positive stories and identify the emerging themes in the life of the formees.

Once the "life-forces" and underlying passions are discovered, the formator can guide the formee to the next stage of Dream. At this stage formees with the help of the formators search for the best application of those strengths in the contest of Priestly and Religious vocation. This calls forth for aligning the personal strengths with the ideals and

expectations of the vocational life. Formee is helped to formulate a "possibility statement" or "provocative proposition". It is a statement about how those "life–forces" discovered in the first stage can be amplified and lived profitably in the new context of vocational life. This becomes the Dream to which the formee constantly strives for. It "provokes" the person to act in its direction. The stronger the image created (the dream) stronger also is its power of attraction or its pull towards its realization. As noted by Cooperrider, "One aspect that differentiates Appreciative Inquiry from other visioning or planning methodologies is that images of the future emerge out of grounded examples from an organization's positive past... the good news stories are used to craft possibility propositions that bridge the best of "what is" with collective speculation or aspiration of "what might be". (Cooperrider, 200:13) Accordingly in the context of formation the provocative proposition or possibility statement should not only maximize the strengths and potentials discovered from the stories of the formees, but also the ideals they are called to live in the congregation and the Church. Within the charism of the Congregation or the expectations of priesthood, the formees have to use their life-forces. Using each area of their strengths formees could be helped to form their provocative propositions as they continue to discover new things.

In the third stage of Design the formator's work is to help the formees to identify the details, the steps to be taken for the realization of the provocative proposition. It implies identifying the values, behaviours, strategies etc., to be pursued by the formees. It is a very important stage as it is the design which makes the dream practical. The realization of the dream depends on how concrete are the steps by making them specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (popularly known as SMART). The formees need to identify the commitment they have to make for realizing each part of their dream.

The fourth stage of Destiny is one of actual implementations and going forward. In the beginning stages of AI the fourth stage was known as Delivery. It emphasized planning for continuous learning, adjustment and improvisation. It meant also action planning, developing implementation strategies, and dealing with challenges of sustainability. In the Destiny stage, then, there should be plans for sustaining the effort and criteria for measuring the success. In the formation context, regular dialogue with the formators should adequately sustain the momentum. Actual realizations lead to new stories, discoveries and dreams. Thus the virtuous-cycle of growth is put in motion.

The Benefits of the AI Paradigm

The appreciative inquiry process is thus a radical shift from the problem-solving approach generally practiced in the formation of religious and priests. What are the benefits of this approach? To cite a few:

Appreciative Inquiry approach builds on the deepest human desire to be appreciated. Hence it is appealing and energising.

It is non-threatening to the formees and so they feel comfortable. Because of the positive quality of the questions that formators raise, AI approach is never threatening for the formees. They rather feel energized and recognized for their merits and motivated to realize their potentials.

Formators are not feared but trusted as companions and guides in their vocational journey. As co-creators of their future, the formees feel greater self-esteem and sense of commitment to the goals. They would take greater responsibility about their growth and achieve greater maturity.

There is a personalized formation taking place through this approach. Individual's personal strengths and potentials form the raw materials on which their future is built in the context of the institutional ideals and expectations.

It should be noted the process in AI is co-creative; the formees and formators are collectively involved. Thus nothing is externally imposed. Formees discover things in dialogue with the formator. What is co-created does not need external force for implementation. Commitment is natural when one is involved in the creation of the vision.

It highly respects the formees. With fewer children in the families, the candidates who experienced high regards and love at home should feel valued in the formation houses too. The focus on their negatives by the formators is hardly in tune with their mindset.

The positive expectations of the formators of their formees will have positive impact on them. What formators believe about the formees will go a long way in their realization. We create what we believe.

Formees feel valued, unique and special. With their personal qualities valued and recognized, formees perceive their personal charism. They realize that they have something unique about their call and have something to contribute for the kingdom of God.

Valuing the uniqueness and differences nurtures diversity; co-creation promotes collaboration and high performance.

Focus on goodness and health leads to communities to thrive on positive energy and fosters a good and healthy community life.

There is less chance to write off anybody as one can find some strength in any person. The formator's effort will be to discover what way such assets could be made use in the vocational life.

AI approach inspires the formees to have courage to make a positive difference; to have higher purpose; and to create bold dreams that give value and success for life.

It brings out the best in the formees. Formators become catalyst in this process.

Formators themselves develop their capacity to attend to others; to engage in deep listening; to feel empathy and develop emotional intelligence.

When formators develop positive frame of mind and choose positive language they create a new friendly world connected with one another working for the realization of the common vision.

Conclusion

We have examined the difference that AI approach can make in the field of formation of priests and religious. We can only affirm what Cooperrider once stated, "Appreciative Inquiry can get you much better results than seeking out and solving problems.... We concentrate enormous resources on correcting problems that have relatively minor impact on our overall service and performance... when used continually and over a long period of time, this approach can lead to a negative culture. If you combine a negative culture with all the challenges we face today, it could be easy to convince ourselves that we have too many problems to overcome – to slip into a paralyzing sense of hopelessness." (Cooperrider & Others, 200:9) AI approach creates a positive culture, builds up hope in the person, strengthens the positive potentials, and elevates the spirit. It creates optimism in the people and happy community emerges. Every person and situation will be seen as opportunities and ultimately God is glorified as "God's glory is man fully alive."

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