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MUNDARIJA

Чертовицкий А.С, Нарбаев Ш.К, Ахмаджонова Ш	Оценка эффективности использования земель сельскохозяйственного назначения в регионе: методический аспект	5
Вахобов А.Р	Агросуғуртанинг халкаро стандартларини жорий этиш масалалари	16
Mamatov M.N	Sport sohasini moliyalashtirishning o‘ziga xos xususiyatlari	21
Primova Sh.K	Buxgalteriya hisobini avtomatlashtirishning audit sifatiga ta'siri	33
Abdirakhmonov A.T	Appreciative leadership and its importance in organization development (od)-application to uzbekistan	42
Каландаров А. Б	Банкларнинг муаммоли кредитлар билан ишлаш амалиётини такомиллаштиришнинг долзарб масалалари	49
Mamajonova M.M	Impact without mass: divergent research signals for Uzbek universities in the THE and QS World University Rankings 2027	58
Saidaxmedova N.I, Norbekova N.M	Postindustrial transformatsiya sharoitida oziq-ovqat xavfsizligini ta’minlashning nazariy-metodologik kategoriyalari, mezonlari va indikatorlari	74
Sharipov Sh.X	Respublika va xorijda qo’llanilayotgan purkagichlar konstruksiyalarining tahlili va yangi model uchun optimal turini tanlash	81
Usarov J.A	Boshqaruv servis kompaniyalarida majburiy badallarni undirish jarayonining raqamlashtirilganlik darajasini kompleks baholash	92
Usarov J.A	Boshqaruv servis kompaniyalarida qarzdorlikni raqamli monitoring qilish va risk bo‘yicha segmentatsiyalash mexanizmi	105
Axrorov M.Sh	Nasos stansiyalarining energiya samaradorligini sun’iy neyron tarmoqlari asosida optimallashtirish	114

APPRECIATIVE LEADERSHIP AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT (OD)-APPLICATION TO UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract. This conceptual article examines how appreciative leadership can support organizational development in Uzbekistan amid economic reform, digital transformation and changing workforce requirements. It retains the original article's focus on strengths, participation and collaborative change while updating its policy and economic context with sources published in 2025 and 2026. The analysis combines foundational appreciative leadership literature with recent institutional reports and a current national policy document. It proposes an implementation framework linking the five leadership practices of inquiry, illumination, inclusion, inspiration and integrity to diagnostic assessment, participatory design and outcome evaluation. The central argument is that appreciative leadership may help organizations mobilize existing capabilities when it is supported by transparent decisions, credible feedback and operational accountability. Macroeconomic growth and global workforce statistics provide contextual evidence; they do not demonstrate the causal effectiveness of appreciative leadership in Uzbekistan. The article therefore presents a practical framework for testing rather than claims of empirically established national impact.

Keywords: appreciative leadership; appreciative inquiry; organizational development; Uzbekistan; employee participation; digital transformation; change management.

Introduction

Organizational development concerns the deliberate improvement of organizational capabilities, working relationships and performance. In Uzbekistan, its relevance extends beyond introducing new structures or technology. Organizations must also develop the management practices through which employees interpret change, share knowledge and coordinate action. The original article identified appreciative leadership as one approach to this task. Its contemporary relevance lies in helping managers recognize effective practices and use them as a basis for learning and improvement. Appreciative leadership builds on appreciative inquiry, a tradition associated with Cooperrider and Srivastva's foundational work. It directs attention to strengths and the conditions under which people perform well. Whitney, Trosten-Bloom and Rader subsequently organized the leadership approach around five

practices: inquiry, illumination, inclusion, inspiration and integrity. These concepts predate the current reform period; their application requires adaptation to present organizational conditions. The question addressed here is how appreciative leadership can be translated into feasible organizational development practices in Uzbekistan during the 2025–2026 period. The argument is conditional: participation and recognition can support change when leaders also address constraints, allocate resources and evaluate results. Positive language alone cannot remedy poor incentives, deficient processes or weak governance.

Methodology and scope

The article uses a narrative literature review and document analysis. Sources were selected for their relevance to appreciative leadership, Uzbekistan's development priorities and contemporary workforce transformation. Foundational literature establishes the conceptual framework; reports published in 2025 and 2026 update the context. Recommendations are developed by relating these sources to organizational decision making. This is not a systematic review, and no claim of comprehensive coverage is made.

No interview transcripts, questionnaire dataset, sample description or empirical results accompany the supplied article. This revision therefore makes no claim to newly collected primary data. It does not estimate causal effects or represent the practices of all Uzbek organizations. Statistical references distinguish the year in which a report was published from the period to which its data refer. Forecasts remain forecasts, and proposed implementation measures remain recommendations.

The development context of Uzbekistan

The IMF's April 2026 mission statement reported real GDP growth of 7.7 percent in 2025 and projected growth of 6.8 percent for 2026 . The latter figure is an April forecast, not a completed annual outcome or a claim to the latest forecast available. The figures describe a growing economy, but do not establish whether a particular leadership approach caused that growth. For organizational development, the relevant question is how firms and institutions can improve execution and workforce capabilities as their operating environment changes.

The World Bank's 2025 Country Economic Memorandum emphasizes private sector development, competition, infrastructure and improved corporate governance. These recommendations suggest that leadership development should be connected to organizational systems and business constraints. Consultation may identify workable improvements, but organizations also need financing, reliable infrastructure and sound governance. Appreciative leadership should therefore be positioned as a complementary management approach within a broader reform agenda. The policy discussion must also reflect changes after the original 2017–2021 reform period. Presidential Decree PF-21 of 16 February 2026 provides an updated framework for continuing reforms within national priorities to 2030 . The 2023 decree PF-158 is no

longer the operative decree. Accordingly, the earlier industrial programmes and expired planning periods in the original article are not presented here as current policy. The organizational framework proposed in this article is an analytical interpretation, not a leadership model prescribed by that decree.[4]

Contemporary workforce and technology challenges

Gallup's State of the Global Workplace 2026 report, based on data collected during 2025, reports global employee engagement of 20 percent and manager engagement of 22 percent. These are international findings and should not be treated as Uzbekistan-specific estimates. Their relevance is contextual: organizational change requires attention to the experience of managers as well as employees, rather than assuming that people will sustain additional responsibilities without support. The World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report 2025 estimates that 39 percent of workers' existing skills will change or become outdated between 2025 and 2030. This is an employer-survey-based global expectation, not an observed outcome for Uzbekistan. It nevertheless provides a rationale for examining learning, communication and adaptability alongside technical training. Digital transformation is likely to require changes in work routines, and managers should establish where employees need guidance before expanding new systems. For Uzbek organizations, the practical implication is to connect technology adoption with discussion of actual tasks. Before introducing an AI-assisted workflow, for example, a team can identify tasks that require professional judgement, review how successful work is currently performed and define responsibility for checking outputs. Appreciation becomes useful when it helps reveal expertise that would otherwise remain overlooked. It becomes counterproductive if enthusiasm discourages employees from reporting errors or implementation difficulties.[5]

Five strategies of appreciative leadership

The following applications draw on the five practices described by Whitney, Trosten-Bloom and Rader. They are proposed adaptations for organizational use in Uzbekistan, rather than evidence that these practices are already widespread or effective nationally.

Inquiry

Leaders ask questions that help employees explain successful work and suggest improvements. A department might ask which conditions enabled a project to meet its deadline, then compare those accounts with delivery records. Responses should

[4] International Monetary Fund. (2026, April 13). Uzbekistan: Staff Concluding Statement of the 2026 Article IV Mission. https://www.imf.org/en/news/articles/2026/04/13/mcs041326-uzbekistan

[5] President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. (2026, February 16). Decree PF-21 on additional measures to consistently continue and advance reforms within the country's priority development directions to 2030. Official Uzbek text: https://lex.uz/docs/8050769

inform decisions and receive follow-up; consultation without a visible response can weaken trust.

Illumination

Leaders make useful capabilities visible. A skills inventory, peer demonstration or review of effective service processes can identify expertise beyond formal titles. Recognition should be based on specific contributions and accompanied by opportunities to apply and develop those skills.

Inclusion

Leaders involve people whose experience is relevant to a decision. Frontline employees, newer staff and affected stakeholders should have accessible opportunities to contribute. Confidential feedback may be needed when hierarchy inhibits discussion. Participation should be judged by whose views influence the decision, rather than attendance alone.

Inspiration

Leaders connect change to a credible purpose and an achievable next step. A digital service project can be explained through its intended benefit to users and staff, together with training and support. Ambitious messages require realistic milestones, resources and clarity about responsibilities.

Integrity

Leaders align decisions with stated standards and accept responsibility for their consequences. Fair recognition, transparent criteria and consistent treatment of concerns make appreciation credible. Managers should acknowledge setbacks and correct decisions that produce unintended harm.

Tools for organizational development

Diagnostic assessment and facilitated dialogue serve different purposes. Diagnostic work establishes what is happening through performance records, process analysis and employee feedback. Dialogue helps participants interpret experience, question assumptions and design alternatives. Organizations should combine these methods: a successful-work narrative is an informative starting point, but its implications should be checked against operational evidence.

A feasible appreciative inquiry process can be organized through the familiar four stages of Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny. Discovery identifies effective practices and the conditions that support them. Dream develops a shared view of a better future. Design translates that view into changes in processes, roles and resources. Destiny puts those changes into practice and sustains learning. The descriptions below operationalize this established cycle for a proposed organizational pilot; they are not reported research findings.[6]

[6] World Bank. (2025). Uzbekistan Country Economic Memorandum: Fostering Private Sector-Led Growth and Global Integration. https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/uzbekistan/publication/cem-2025

Stage	Proposed activity	Expected output
Discovery	Review successful cases alongside failures and baseline data	Documented strengths and constraints
Dream	Discuss achievable improvements with affected staff	Shared outcome priorities
Design	Assign actions, owners, resources and measures	A pilot plan with review criteria
Destiny	Implement, review feedback and revise the intervention	Evidence for continuation or adjustment

Table 1. Proposed application of the appreciative inquiry cycle. Source: author's adaptation of the appreciative inquiry approach discussed in the original article. The table describes a process to be tested, not measured effects.

Throughout this process, managers should keep a decision record linking staff suggestions to actions, reasons for non-adoption and later review. This helps distinguish listening from symbolic consultation. Sessions should also invite discussion of workload, safety and recurring failures. Appreciative inquiry is more credible when employees can discuss difficult experience without pressure to provide a positive account.

Implementation and evaluation

An initial pilot should focus on one unit and one operational challenge. In a university department, for example, the challenge could be inconsistent coordination of student support. The team would document response times, unresolved enquiries and staff workload before holding an appreciative discussion. Participants could identify cases in which coordination worked well and examine which practices are transferable. A small intervention might clarify responsibility for enquiries and introduce a shared review routine.For a private enterprise, the corresponding challenge might be repeated delivery delays. Staff accounts of timely deliveries can reveal useful coordination habits, while process records identify whether procurement, production scheduling or communication constrains performance. The resulting intervention should address the observed mechanism, rather than assume that improved morale will resolve delays. Both examples are illustrative proposals, not cases investigated for this article.

Evaluation should combine operational outcomes and employee experience. Suitable measures may include delivery reliability, unresolved cases, voluntary turnover, reported clarity of roles and the proportion of staff suggestions that receive a documented response. Organizations should select measures before implementation, use consistent definitions and review whether workload or service quality deteriorates elsewhere. A higher number of suggestions alone does not demonstrate better

performance.

Pre- and post-intervention comparisons can identify changes, but they cannot establish causality on their own. Demand, staffing or other reforms may explain the results. Where feasible, a comparable unit or phased rollout can strengthen evaluation. Interviews can explain how staff experienced the process, provided participation is voluntary and responses are handled appropriately. Reporting should distinguish observed outcomes from participants' interpretations and managerial expectations.

Benefits and limitations

The potential contribution of appreciative leadership lies in revealing practical expertise, widening participation and giving staff a clearer role in improvement. In employee development, strengths-based discussion can help connect existing competence with training needs. Younger employees may contribute new perspectives, while experienced colleagues provide operational knowledge. Learning opportunities should be allocated according to demonstrated needs and transparent criteria, rather than assumptions about age.These benefits depend on implementation. Selective recognition can reinforce favouritism; heavily managed conversations can silence criticism; and an emphasis on individual strengths can obscure structural problems. Leaders should therefore examine whose contributions are recognized, whose concerns remain unanswered and whether proposed changes are adequately resourced. Appreciation should reinforce fair treatment and professional standards.

The article does not demonstrate that appreciative leadership raises productivity, investment or national growth in Uzbekistan. Its contribution is a contextually updated framework that organizations can assess through pilots. Future research could compare units using different change approaches, examine how hierarchy shapes participation and test whether improvements persist after the initial intervention.[7]

Conclusion

Appreciative leadership offers a useful perspective for organizational development in Uzbekistan when recognition and participation are linked to specific operational decisions. The updated economic and policy context strengthens the case for management practices that support learning and implementation, but does not provide direct evidence of the model's effectiveness. Its value should be established at the organizational level through transparent processes and credible evaluation. A practical next step is a limited pilot that combines diagnosis, appreciative dialogue and measurable changes in work routines. Leaders should identify existing strengths, acknowledge constraints, involve affected employees and review outcomes before expanding the approach. Under these conditions, appreciative leadership can be

[7] Gallup. (2026). State of the Global Workplace: 2026 Report. Global data summary; data collected January–December 2025. https://www.gallup.com/workplace/697904/state-of-the-global-workplace-global-data.aspx

examined as a disciplined method for collaborative improvement within Uzbekistan's continuing reform agenda.

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