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### Miriam Subirana

With a PhD from the University Barcelona, Miriam is an artist and the author of several books including *Flourishing Together, A Guide to Appreciative Coaching* and *Indagación Apreciativa*, co-authored with David Cooperrider. Founder of Institut IDEIA, for dialogue and AI, and an AI coach, she is also PCC certified by the International Coaching Federation.

Contact: [miriam@institutoideia.es](mailto:miriam@institutoideia.es)

# Sharing Successful Appreciative Inquiry Practices in Education

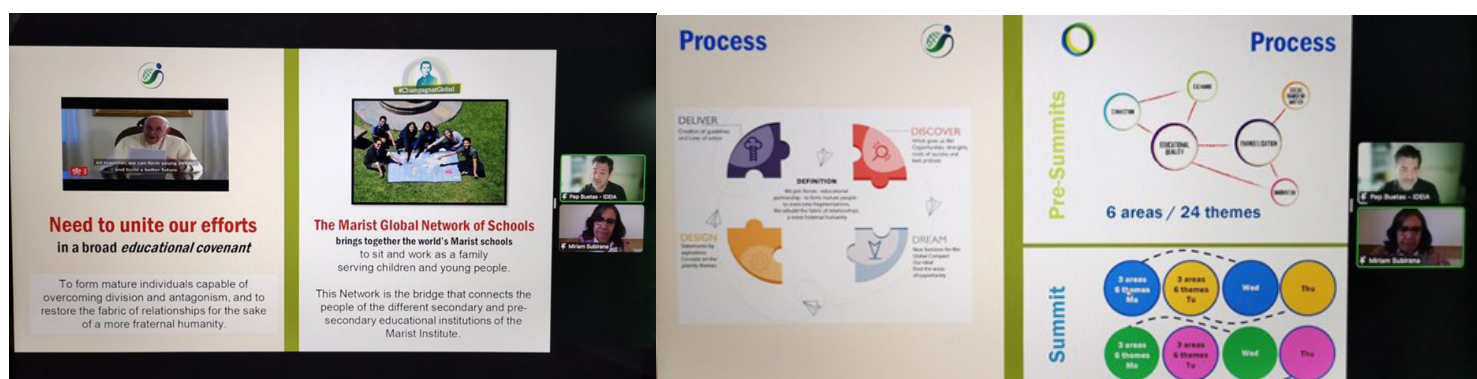
The author facilitated sessions at the April 2022 AI Jam which shared the successes of several whole-system summits in education, some global, some local, that she was involved in during the pandemic.

During the pandemic, I coordinated the facilitation of several whole-system summits in the field of education, each with between 300 and 700 participants from over 60 countries, and in four languages, simultaneously. At Champlain College's AI JAM in April 2022 we – Pep Buetas and myself – presented three big projects along with other, more local projects presented by Circe Peralta and Maria Teresa García Bosch. It was great to work together with other facilitators to unite our strengths and AI expertise in the service of a flourishing education for a better world.

The successes included:

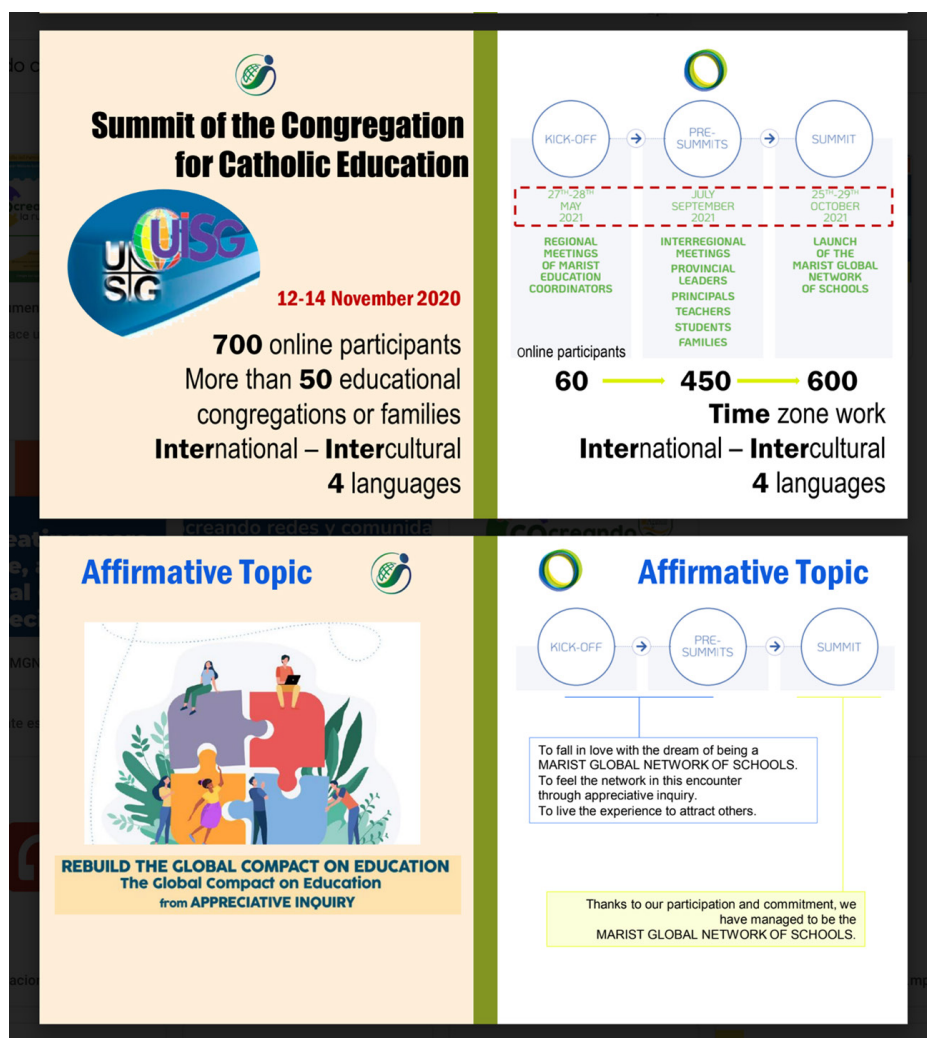
- A summit in which more than 400 educational congregations and families, international and intercultural, participated to unite efforts in reflecting on the statement “We join forces, educational partnership, to form mature people, to overcome fragmentations. We rebuild the fabric of relationships and a more fraternal humanity”.
- For the first, we created a multilingual team of 21 facilitators plus hosts which we divided into seven teams, in each of which one of the client's key project leaders was involved. The teams handled 100 people each in sub-plenaries and groups. This provided the possibility of having everyone's voice heard.

- A key factor in the success of all these programs was the full involvement of the top leaders and executive teams from the client side, not only in the initial meetings but throughout the summit. They participated fully. This is one of the key factors that makes a positive difference to the final results.
- It was the first summit for several of the facilitators and/or their biggest summit ever. So afterward, we had more AI facilitators expert in running summits online.
- The senior AI practitioners shared many ideas on crafting the best questions and how to make them even better. It was a great learning experience. Indeed, it is so much better for the clients and for the facilitators to work collaboratively; each enriches the other's wisdom on how to devise the best question and what the best protocol is for each situation and activity. This was definitely a success factor.
- At the JAM, along with this summit, we also presented another huge program to create the Marist Global Network of Schools that was run over several months in 2021.



Presenting the success stories of these two big summits reminded us of the beauty and power of so many people dedicated to education in schools and universities of all over the world coming together with the aim of empowering education in the twenty-first century.

The voices of young students and their parents, together with teachers, professors and administrators, inspired the best combination of ideas and results. There was commitment and enthusiasm. By the end of the summits, we already had many proposals for action and engagement from those who would start rolling them out.



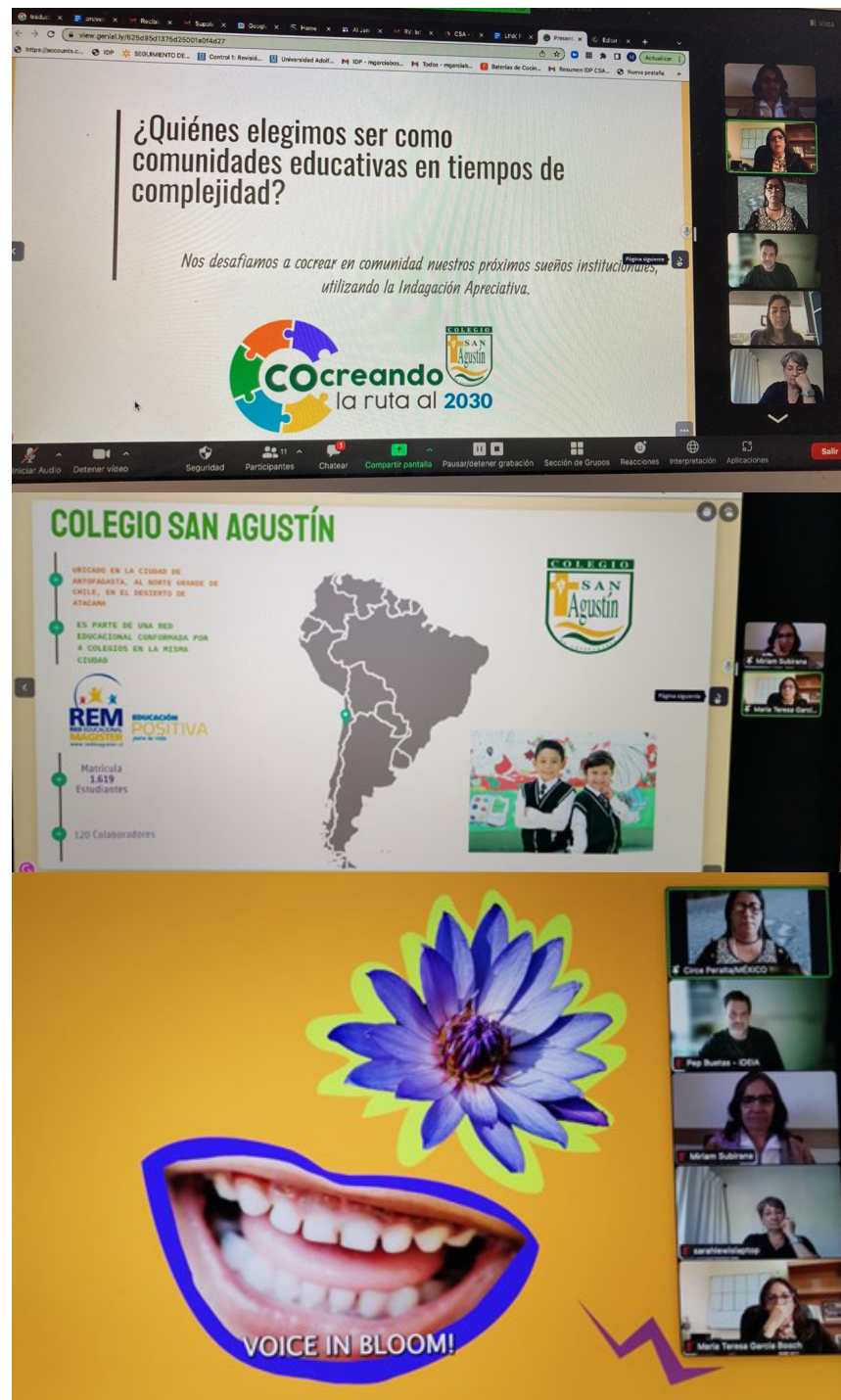
We also presented the results of the summit at a school in Chile in which we had over 300 participants, with all the systems engaged with that school in one room. It was rewarding to hear the director of the school, Maria Teresa García Bosch, explain not only the benefits of the summit but what happened afterward: how they proceeded with the project groups that had been created and all the different activities run by the teams that emerged from our November 2021 summit.

One of the challenges of this summit was that they took the idea of the “whole system in the room” so seriously that we had eight-year-old children and parents with a rudimentary education. The school’s coordinating team worried that the questions might not be clear to some participants. We needed to craft the questions with a lot of care. One thing we did differently was to ask the teachers to test some of the questions with the children beforehand.

In a different summit, Circe Peralta from Mexico prepared a video in Spanish with English subtitles in which she explained the Children’s Parliament created

in the “Casas Hogar” in Malinalco, Mexico. It was wonderful to see children participating and their voices being heard.

The photos below are of the facilitation by Pep Buetas and Miriam Subirana of the pre-summit definition of the affirmative topic at the Chilean school. We were online with a facilitator present in the school, making a team of three facilitators.







One good question that was asked was about the future:

*Based upon these summit experiences: how do you envision future summits? What are you dreaming of?*

*Let us rekindle hope  
and unleash the power  
of cooperation now to  
co-designing the future we  
want to live in.*

Education is such a crucial aspect in growing into a complete person. I dream of more whole-system-in-the-room summits with education institutions that allow all voices to be heard. At the same time, I dream of them being living examples of the power of dialogue, of co-creation, of respect for different voices – and of inclusion. All these aspects so much needed in all our societies today.

Let us rekindle hope and unleash the power of cooperation now to co-designing the future we want to live in.

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