4E's Socratic Model: A grounded theory for managing team creativity in an organisational context

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Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter begins with a discussion of the context of the review in grounded theory research (section 2.1) and a review of definitions of creativity (section 2.2), and continues with the historical background of creativity research (section 2.3). It then reviews literature on the following topics: the creative individual (section 2.4), which discusses individual traits that enhance creativity; the creative organisation (section 2.5), which discusses structures and conditions that encourage creativity; and Socratic approaches to managing creativity (section 2.6), which examines the use of the Socratic method in an organisational context.

Sections 2.7 and 2.8 highlight the implications from the literature and develop the conceptual framework for the study.

2.1 Context of the Literature Review

In grounded theory research, it is accepted that a comprehensive review of all literature in the field under investigation beforehand is not desirable as it could be a constraining factor (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). This view is echoed by Becker (2007), who cautions that it is better to use, rather than be used by, the literature.

Relevant theoretical frameworks emerge as data is collected and analysed; therefore reviewing the literature is an ongoing part of theory development (Charmaz, 2006). Based on the recommendation of Corbin and Strauss (2015), this chapter enhances sensitivity and provides descriptive materials relating to the study of creativity in an organisational context and stimulates analytic questions to be
addressed in observations and interviews. It also reveals gaps in extant knowledge and positions the study in relation to these gaps (Charmaz, 2006).

This approach allows the identification of the antecedents of both individual and organisational creativity and the establishment of a context from which to measure the effectiveness of taking a Socratic approach to improving it. Secondly, by examining the support for use of the Socratic method in this context I establish a baseline from which to build the proposed Socratic model.

This chapter can also be matched to stage 1 of the Socratic process; exploring what is already known.

2.2 Creativity Defined

Creativity has been seen as a process of the development of novel ideas that result in something of value (Anderson, Potocnik & Zhou, 2014; George, 2007; Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Shalley, Zhou & Oldham, 2004). It is distinct from innovation, which follows on from creativity and is viewed as idea implementation (Amabile, 1996; King & West, 1987). 

Creativity is the result of the interaction of three factors: cognition, environment and personality (Eysenck, 1993). In the creative context, cognition involves the selective combination of unrelated ideas or concepts (Koestler, 1964). A creative environment is one that supports free collaborative improvisation (Sawyer, 2006). The personal qualities and traits of the creative individual include motivation, experience, risk orientation, social skill and persistency (Amabile & Gryskiewicz, 1987). It is important to distinguish between a trait, which is attitudinal, and a quality such as extroversion, which is personality-based. In the team context an individual’s
attitudes can be positively affected by creative experiences regardless of their individual personality traits (Amabile et al., 2005).

Creativity (the development of novel ideas) is distinct from innovation which is the implementation of them. While this study is concerned only with creative outcomes, the usefulness of them in a management sense can only be determined by the ability to be successfully implemented. Cropley, Kaufman and Cropley (2011) posit that innovation is not necessarily a separate construct and can in fact occur simultaneously.

Cropley and Cropley (2005) describe this construct as functional creativity which meets four criteria: relevance and effectiveness, novelty, elegance and genesis. However, the development of creative functionality must arise out of a creative outcome and therefore the current study concentrates on the efficient production of that.

2.3 Historical Background

There have been four notable stages in the study of creativity since 1924, when Wertheimer, in an address to the Kant Society, promulgated Gestalt theory, based on the notion that examining the constituents of something will not necessarily allow a description of the whole. In other words, there is more value in the whole than the sum of its parts. When applied to creativity, this view holds that examination of the constituents of creative behaviour will not explain the whole.

However, in the following decades the focus was on doing just that – examining the constituents of creativity. Guildford (1950) advocates a psycho-analytical approach but cautions not all creativity is the same. He recognises the Gestalt view, recommending examining patterns rather than specific factors as their
productivity in a creative sense will vary in different applications. However, Guildford does identify five creativity-relevant abilities an individual should have: problem sensitivity, fluency, novel idea generation, flexible thinking, and the ability to synthesise and analyse.

Wertheimer and Guildford’s work focused on the individual, whereas Amabile (1983) introduces a componential model of creativity made up of three pillars: motivation plus domain and creativity-relevant skills. While agreeing with Guildford that creative abilities are important, without specific domain-related skills or motivation they will not necessarily result in creative productivity.

Nine years later, Sternberg and Lubart (1992) introduced an investment theory, which focuses on creative productivity, saying the greatest output will come from identifying and pursuing undervalued ideas, which requires the application of six resources (p. 245): intelligence, knowledge, thinking style, personality, motivation and environmental context.

All of these theories can be summarised by taking an interactionist view that creativity is the result of a confluence of situational and behavioural factors arising from interactions amongst individuals, groups and organisations (Woodman, Sawyer & Griffin, 1993). This brings us back to the Gestalt view: if the sum of the whole is indeed greater than its constituents, how is this confluence of factors best managed to produce that synergistic effect? (George, 2007).

In order to answer that question, we need to first identify the elements that make up the whole, and, therefore, we must examine individual creativity, how that is affected by organisational climate, and how individual creativity in concert with organisational climate affects creativity in a team context.
2.4 Creative Traits and Competencies

A recent global study (Adobe, 2012) found that only 1 in 4 people feel that they are reaching their creative potential and that there is increasing recognition of the importance of creativity in an economic sense. This finding is important because self-efficacy has a positive bearing on an individual’s ability to experiment with new ideas (Yoon & Kayes, 2016).

Amabile (1983), in discussing the social psychology of creativity, proposes a framework for conceptualising creativity that consists of domain-relevant skills, creativity-relevant skills and task motivation. This framework suggests that creativity is not something that happens in isolation but is the product of an individual’s outlook, experience and environment. Therefore, in order to benefit from creativity, an organisation must create an environment conducive to creative thought and action. Or, as Amabile says, “creativity requires a confluence of all components; creativity should be highest when an intrinsically motivated person with high domain expertise and high skill in creative thinking works in an environment high in supports for creativity” (Amabile, 2012, p. 3).

A review of the literature on the internal and external drivers of individual creativity reveals 10 themes (illustrated in Figure 2.1). Because the literature relevant to this study is so prolific it helps to see both the range of drivers as well as the authors who discuss them which in turn focuses the discussion on the most relevant themes. This approach is also taken for the other sections of the literature review.
2.4.1 Intrinsic factors

An initial coding of studies on individual creative traits identified 6 broad themes shown in Figure 2.1 (reading from bottom to top): self-direction/intrinsic motivation (combined), resiliency, sense-making, social competence, knowledge/expertise, and risk-taking propensity. Each of these is discussed below.

The first theme (self-direction/motivation) is defined as an individual who acts autonomously and with purpose (Rhee, 2003). It is arguably the most significant factor as it is a catalyst for an individual to indulge in creative behaviour and thereby develop new insights (Rock & Schwartz, 2006; Amabile & Grysikiewicz, 1987; Florida, 2002; Ford, 1996; Gilson & Madjar, 2011). It stems from the desire to master something (Elliot & Church, 1997; Bergquist, 2006), which in turn increases...
motivation (Elliot & Church, 1997; Wang & Tsai, 2014). However, a number of authors also link intrinsic motivation to a strong sense of creative self-efficacy (Diliello & Houghton, 2006; Mathison, 2011; Tierney & Farmer, 2002).

Writing from a neuro-scientific perspective, Rock and Schwartz (2006) state that insights generated by the individual make stronger connections in the brain than insights given to them as a conclusion. If creative insights stem from individual proactivity in making new connections it is not surprising that there is growing consensus amongst academics that proactivity (as described above) is a critical driver of organisational effectiveness. (Kim, Hon & Crant, 2009).

While motivation stems from both intrinsic and extrinsic influences (Amabile, 1996; Andriopoulos, 2001; Oldham & Cummings, 1996), the synergistic effect is more pronounced when intrinsic motivation is high (Amabile, 1993), which in turn is strengthened through learning perception, level of importance and positive feedback (de Almeida et al., 2017). This implies that a motivated individual with the right attitude, operating in a supportive environment, will have the greatest potential to produce a creative outcome. However, even where creative self-efficacy is low it can be significantly improved by positive organisational influences (Mathiesen, 2011).

The second theme is resiliency. Resiliency is a process-oriented construct involving affect, cognition and behaviour, enabling an individual to overcome challenges (Rothstein, McLarnon & King, 2016). There is general agreement that resiliency and perseverance are important in the development of creative solutions (Amabile & Gryskiewicz, 1987; Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Fillis & McAuley, 2000). According to Ford (1996) perseverance comes from an individual’s sense-making process, which attributes meaning to specific information and then dictates a
certain action, even in the face of ambiguity. The resulting perseverance is therefore logical rather than being based on pure doggedness and can be said to be dependent on a learning orientation (Gong, Huang & Farh, 2009).

The third theme is sense-making. Resiliency and motivation by themselves are necessary but not sufficient to facilitate a creative outcome; an individual also needs to have the ability to synthesise information in order to create new meanings (Ford, 1996). This process is described by Weick (1995) as a retrospective evaluation of situations. Proficiency in sense-making leads to more creative outcomes that are radical in nature rather than incremental (Gilson & Madjar, 2011). This higher order creativity is a pre-requisite to achieving a transformed consciousness (Bergquist, 2006) that, in turn, contributes to overall creative self-efficacy.

The fourth theme is social competence. Amabile & Gryskiewicz (1987) conceptualise the components of social competence as rapport, listening skills, team interaction skills, being open to ideas, and political nous. Their research, conducted amongst scientists, found that highly creative scientists had good social skills that enabled them to communicate better and have a stronger rapport with other team members compared with scientists who were less creative. In addition to the competencies described above, Cirella (2016) says that collective reframing (building on others contributions) is a social competency that demonstrates commitment to a social system and adds to collective creativity. This idea of situational social competency is echoed by Pera (2013) who calls it distributed creativity.

The interactionalist model of creative behaviour first described by Woodman and Schoenfeldt (1989) confirms that creativity in an organisational context is
characterized by individuals working together in a social context. However, it is not enough just to work together; an individual’s creativity is dependent on their position in the group (Bourdieu, 1966). This is because new ideas come from a process of social interaction that canvasses the views of many to arrive at new conceptions (Dewett, 2004).

The fifth theme concerns expertise. Without specific knowledge or experience the proactive or self-directed person will be restricted in their ability to conceive and act on new ideas (Sternberg, in Sawyer et al., 2003, p. 96). Amabile and Gryskiewicz (1987) and Ford (1996) agree, with Ford noting that “Accumulated experiences lead individuals to develop interpretive schema, preferences, expectations, and knowledge related to specific domains of behaviour.” (1996, p. 1117). Ford includes knowledge and ability as one of three major influences that either facilitate or constrain creativity (the others being sense-making and motivation). Having broad interests has also been identified as relevant (Oldham & Cummings, 1996), as that can lead to considering an issue from a variety of contexts.

The sixth theme is risk-taking propensity. Willingness to take risks is an antecedent to creativity (Dewett, 2006; Florida, 2002). Risk orientation and risk-taking behaviour feature prominently in lists of personal qualities identified by researchers as an antecedent to creativity (Amabile & Gryskiewicz, 1987; Fillis & McAuley 2000). However, in order for risk to be productive there must be organisational encouragement and tolerance (Amabile et al., 1996; Dewett, 2006).

In summary, there are six creative competencies: self-direction/intrinsic motivation (combined), resiliency, sense-making, social competence, knowledge/expertise, and risk-taking propensity. Of these self-direction/intrinsic
motivation is the most significant as without it an individual can lack the motivation to use their creative faculties (Rock & Schwartz, 2006). However, in a business context it is recognised that an individual operates as part of a social system, therefore it is the interplay between intrinsic and extrinsic factors that will determine the level of creativity exhibited.

2.4.2 Extrinsic factors

A positive work environment can help offset an individual’s resistance to change, and is an important input into employee creativity (Hon et al., 2011; Park et al., 2014). Researchers have identified three environmental factors that have a bearing on an individual’s creativity: situational fit, supervisor support, and engagement.

The relationship between personality and creativity is dependent on the situation (Fishbein & Azjen, 1975; Anderson et al., 2014) and the stronger the fit between a situation and the personal traits of the individual, the more likely it is that the desired behaviour will result (Raja & Johns, 2010). This is supported by Conti, Coon and Amabile (1996), who found empirical support for Amabile’s componential model (1983) in that measures of creativity within the same context (situation) and domain showed a strong positive relation.

Unsworth and Clegg (2010) while agreeing with the need for recognition and encouragement found that even when fit and support are high, creativity is seen as something additional to an individual’s role and as such engagement in creativity can be dependent on the worthwhileness of the task and the likely effect on the individual.
Creative self-efficacy can also be enhanced by supervisory support and a non-controlling management style (Amabile & Gryskiewicz, 1987; Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Madjar et al., 2002; Tierney & Farmer, 2002; Shalley et al., 2004; Chong & Ma, 2010). This is regardless of the level of an individual’s creativity; however, a high level of individual creativity does insulate against an unsupportive climate (Choi, Anderson & Veilette, 2009). Support from co-workers and other outsiders also has a similar effect, irrespective of the individual’s perceived creative ability (Madjar et al. (2002), although Shalley et al. (2004) caution that the results in this area are less clear.

While numerous studies have examined the impact of various supervisory behaviours on individual creativity, the wide range of behaviours studied and the limited study of each has meant that the results are sometimes inconsistent (Anderson et al., 2014). This effect is illustrated by Chini (2011), who found that an organisational culture that encourages creativity (through support for risk taking and idea generation) positively affected creative outcomes but that encouragement from supervisors and colleagues did not. This implies that a motivated individual is not negatively affected by immediate impediments to creativity as long as the overall culture of an organisation supports it.

Based on the preceding review, an individual with high creative potential will be intrinsically motivated and resistant to negative extrinsic inputs (Amabile, 1983). They will also have the ability to create new meanings from inputs and have a willingness to take risks. However, in this study, creativity in organisational teams is being examined so it is important to make the distinction between an individual’s creative potential as described by Amabile (1998) and others and practiced
creativity, which DiLello and Houghton (2008) define as the ability to exercise that potential.

In summary, creativity in a team context is dependent on individual creativity, moderated by social and structural antecedents (Bourdieu, 1966; Dewett, 2004; Fishbein & Azjen, 1975; Anderson et al., 2014; Woodman et al., 1993).

2.5 The Creative Organisation

While it is generally agreed (as discussed earlier) that creativity can improve business outcomes, the traditional management model “is built on a monocratic, hierarchically structured authority chain” (Cummings, 1965, p. 221) which, in practice, produces a reality where proactive behaviour is often discouraged (Bateman & Crant, 1999). They attribute this to the over-controlling effects of rigid company structures and instead advocate a management approach that encourages freedom to pursue broad organisational goals in “fruitful, creative, innovative ways” (Bateman & Crant 1999, p. 66).

Creed (2011) expands on this theme by identifying five categories of organisational norms/rituals where traditional management and creativity are in conflict, as outlined in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2.

*Traditional vs Creative Orientation*

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<tr>
<th>Traditional Organisation</th>
<th>Creative Organisation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservatism</td>
<td>Innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precision</td>
<td>Imprecision</td>
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<tr>
<td>Task orientation</td>
<td>Relationship orientation</td>
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This is consistent with Cummings’ (1965) view of a traditional organisation and demonstrates that a structure that encourages creativity is the antithesis of a traditional hierarchical management structure. So, given that the culture of an organisation can have a negative effect on creativity, how does a manager develop an environment in which creativity will flourish?

Firstly, it is important to state that creativity is an interaction between individuals and their work environment (Woodman et al., 1993) but a creative environment plays a primary role. An increase in organisational creativity has a positive effect on both the individual’s motivation and job satisfaction (Basadur, 1993) and is an important precursor to the development of creativity in teams (Park et al., 2014). However, while the highest overall creativity comes from high individual and organisational creativity mechanisms, if only one of these is high the results are significantly better if that factor is organisational creativity (Bharadwaj & Menon, 2000). So, what are the antecedents of organisational creativity?

Amabile and Gryskiewicz (1987) identify five elements important in establishing a creativity climate in an organisation: freedom, encouragement, resources, recognition and challenge. An employee who has a feeling of control over their work is more likely to pursue new ways of doing things rather than wait to be told what to do. This can be further encouraged by an organisation that has an overall creative expectation (Unsworth et al., 2005; Lin & Lui, 2012) that can also mediate negative organisational influences (Unsworth et al., 2005).
An encouraging and supportive management can serve as a buffer between the individual and organisation and mediate negative influences (Choi et al., 2009; Hon et al., 2011). Managers are also responsible for the allocation of resources that according to Epstein, Kaminaka, Phan and Uda (2013) is their most important role in eliciting creativity. However, supportive managers do not necessarily increase creative performance (Chong & Ma, 2010) – but they are directly responsible for time availability and valuing new ideas that contribute to employee creative willingness (Basadur & Hausdorf, 1996). A positive creative climate is also supported by managers providing recognition of and feedback on employees’ work (Amabile et al., 1987).

Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer and Vohs (2001) caution that managers also need to pay attention to the negative as one negative can undo a long history of positive interactions. This is an example of prospect theory which states that in decision-making people tend to overweight a certain outcome and underweight a probable outcome (Khaneman & Tversky, 1979). Therefore, in the case of reinforcement, the loss (negative) looms larger than the historical positives.

Finally, a challenging work environment has a positive effect on employee creativity (Amabile et al., 1987), but it needs to be backed up by supportive non-controlling supervision to produce creative outcomes (Cummings & Oldham, 1997). However, there is a fine line between being supportive and unconstrained freedom, which Cokpekin and Knudsen (2012) say has a negative effect on creativity; therefore an environment that promotes both individual growth and a learning environment will be better equipped to facilitate creativity (Robinson & Stubberud, 2015).
2.6 Creativity in Teams

Creativity involves a complete ecological system made up of intrapersonal, interpersonal and environmental factors (Treffinger et al., 1993). Rhodes (1961) proposes the 4P’s model of creativity (person, process, press and product). Creativity in teams involves both the individuals and the process by which they interact to produce a creative outcome, however, Rhodes adds “press” as a fourth P which stands for the interaction between the person and the environment, which he says has a moderating effect.

This fourth P is an important consideration as it suggests that a team consisting of highly creative individuals in a conducive environment is not sufficient in order to produce a creative outcome. This study proves that creative outcomes are possible regardless of individual creativity and environment – the critical factor is the way in which participants interact.

In a lean, highly competitive environment, co-operative teamwork can overcome a deficit in resources (Appelbaum, Bethune & Tannenbaum, 1999), resistance to change (Hon et al., 2011), and can positively affect intrinsic motivation (Amabile, 1997); therefore, it is not enough just to develop creative leaders, you must also develop creative self-directed teams who can react quickly to changing circumstances (Jain et al., 2015).

A review of the literature reveals seven themes relevant in producing creative teams: openness to creativity, engagement, integrating processes, goal orientation, positive external forces, group knowledge, and diversity. Figure 2.3 depicts studies that contribute to developing these themes. Next, each theme will be discussed in turn.
The first two themes – openness and engagement – are necessary antecedents to creativity because they provide the foundation for working as a team rather than a group of individuals, and can insulate against lower levels of individual self-efficacy and negative external forces.

Being open to (Gilson & Shalley, 2004) and engaging in (Schilpzand, Herold & Shalley, 2011) creative processes are the first steps in producing creative outcomes. In a team context, the sharing of ideas communicates a willingness to engage (Binnewies et al., 2007) but engagement motivation is higher in teams with low bureaucracy regardless of individual differences (Hirst, Vanknippenberg, Chen & Sacramento, 2001). Support for this comes from Bissola, Imperatori and Colonel (2014) who found that it is the combination of individual creativity and team dynamics and processes that can produce a creative result regardless of individual creativity.
As we have seen, engagement in a challenging task increases motivation and results in a creative outcome (Ruscio, Whitney & Amabile, 1998). Csikszentmihalyi (1997) calls this effect ‘flow’, the results of which add up to an outcome greater than the sum of the inputs. This idea of flow also explains how a fully engaged team can perform at high levels regardless of the individual creativity of team members. An important prerequisite to engagement is the building of trust and cohesiveness between members that, according to Nath (2009), requires three behaviours: self-observation, an appreciation of diversity, and developing a capacity for new behaviours. Building trust introduces feelings of safety and support that open the doors for creative behaviour (Nisula & Kianto, 2016).

In exploring causal relationships between personality and its effect on team performance, O’Neill and Allen (2011) found that only conscientiousness was predictive – in other words commitment to team processes is more important than personality. This differs from an earlier study by Neuman, Wagner and Christiansen (1999) who found that in addition to conscientiousness, openness and agreeableness were also predictive. In this study, the authors worked with 82 teams in a real-world retail environment, whereas O’Neill and Allen worked with engineering students where culture and expectation may have had a part to play.

Commitment to team processes can also stem from the presence of shared mental models in teams which, according to Santos, Ultdewilligen and Passos (2015), have a positive effect on performance and serve to facilitate group integration (West, 2002). Without such processes, even the positive effect of the presence of creative team members is neutralised (Taggar, 2002; Tiwana & McLean, 2005). Individual group members who don’t have the same understanding of the group’s
reality (Jehn, Rispens & Thatcher, 2010) and lack integration are likely to underperform.

In research conducted with 13 work groups, Burningham and West (1995) found that being committed to a vision and engagement in its development were significantly related to creative output. In addition to vision, they found that participative safety, task orientation and support for creativity also had significant impact. Interestingly, lack of support for innovation in itself didn’t affect a group’s ability to arrive at a creative outcome.

Debate within a team can have both positive and negative outcomes. Too much debate can lead to limited understanding of viewpoints, with individuals conveying ideas rather than engaging. On the other hand, too little debate results in the suppression of thoughts and ideas. Isaksen and Erkvall (2010) suggest that having a facilitator to lead the group and manage the process is a good way to integrate perspectives and prevent unproductive conflict. While team self-direction is not necessarily a bad idea it is only successful when dealing with familiar concepts (Cohen & Bailey, 1997). The tension that stems from group interactions is necessary to produce a level of discomfort that in turn produces change (Brown & Grant, 2010). Some negative effects, such as pessimism, can actually enhance creativity (Charyton et al., 2009). In their study Charyton et al. expected optimism to increase creativity; however, their results suggested the opposite. As their study was with college students this finding might not translate to a business environment.

Empowering leadership contributes positively to creative output and team engagement where task interdependence is high (Hon & Chan, 2013) and the frequency and quality of communication between the leader and team members not
only increases engagement but also has a positive impact on outcomes (Gajendran & Joshi, 2012; Kahrobaei & Mortazavi, 2016). A leader is also responsible for creating a compelling vision and setting goals to provide effective support for creativity (Schwarz, 2015). Setting creative goals in a team context will also enhance creative output (Lee & Yang, 2015; Shalley, 1991). In a group setting it is best if leadership comes from an independent facilitator who can both motivate participants and manage knowledge; this produces an efficacy of interaction between the individual, the group and the organisation (Cropley & Urban, 2000).

Leader expectation and group knowledge together have a positive effect on creativity (Holman et al., 2012). To ensure a high level of relational capital, the amount of group knowledge (West, 2002) and the degree of integration of that knowledge is important (Cohen & Bailey, 1997; Tiwana & McLean, 2005), and when coupled with high degrees of motivation and feelings of safety within the group, employee creativity will be maximised (Zhang & Gheibi, 2015).

Diversity amongst team members (and support for it) has a positive effect on overall creative performance (McLean, 2005; Sosa, 2011) but this can also result in a higher degree of conflict within the group, which has to be carefully managed to avoid having a negative effect on group creativity (Jehn et al., 2010). Diversity in cognitive style is also important as more creative styles positively affect idea generation, whereas an attention-to-detail style is positively linked to performance quality (Miron-Spektor, Erez & Naveh, 2011).
2.7 Initial synthesis of the Data

Creativity in an organisation exists as part of a creative ecosystem (Figure 2.4). It relies on integrating the creative potential of the individual with a supportive operating environment and a culture that supports risk-taking and idea generation.

Creativity is both experiential and social (Florida, 2002) and benefits from synthesising information based on diverse perspectives in an integrative social environment (Sawyer, 2006). A desire to produce a practical outcome, coupled with strong social ties, improves the likelihood of an idea being implemented (Baer, 2012).

Researchers have identified six antecedents of creativity in an individual; however, in order to harness that creativity an organisation must provide a supportive environment that tolerates mistakes. Of the six traits highlighted, self-direction/intrinsic motivation is the one that must be fostered in all individuals for the
Socratic approach to work effectively, as a disinterested individual will not actively participate in the questioning process that is designed to stimulate critical thinking.

From an organisational perspective, creativity depends not only on the individual but also on the structures that organize them (Sawyer, 2006, p. 292). This means that the task of the manager should be to create an environment where employees feel engaged, by understanding the conditions under which creativity will flourish (Anderson et al., 2014). The challenge for managers is that they often work in an environment that is less than supportive or tolerant and their teams are made up of people with varying degrees of creativity; however, self-reported measures of creative potential can be used by managers to identify and act on specific gaps (Diliello & Houghton, 2008).

The creative organisation is one that has a structure and culture that foster the conditions supported by norms and rituals that lead to creative outcomes (see Figure 2.5).

**Figure 2.5**  
*Conditions and norms of the creative organisation*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditions</th>
<th>Norms</th>
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<tr>
<td>Individual Freedom</td>
<td>Innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouragement</td>
<td>Imprecision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(management and peers)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource and time</td>
<td>Relationship orientation</td>
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Decision-making is often the preserve of senior management and is not usually encouraged amongst the rank and file. Gratton (2007) proposes a new approach to management, based on Socratic leadership, where “The role of leader will be less about controlling and commanding, and more about igniting energy and enabling groups to volunteer and emerge.” (p. 45).

The leader must create an environment where three essential conditions are met. The first requirement is to suspend but not suppress your own judgment, as in the dialogue itself it is important to consider all perspectives. Secondly, it is important to view all participants as colleagues – rank inhibits the free flow of information. The third requirement is to use a facilitator who is not a participant but rather serves to manage the flow of the dialogue through enforcement of the ground rules and the use of Socratic questioning. (Senge, 1990).

Based on a number of experiments with students, Monteil (1991) concluded that an individual’s cognition “can be controlled and activated in part by metasystems of social regulations” (p. 234). A team engaged in a Socratic Dialogue can be said to be such a metasystem, in which the processes and norms governing the dialogue can have a direct relationship with the outcome. So, rather than focusing on the creativity of individuals, we should consider instead the dynamics of a metasystem that efficiently facilitates a creative outcome (see Figure 2.6):
Figure 2.6: Creative Team Metasystem

Figure 2.6 illustrates a team cell (top right quadrant) that has a strong desire for mastery of a subject as part of a supportive metasystem with a creative mandate. The team illustrated consists of motivated, experienced creative thinkers (consistent with Amabile’s 2012 conception of highly creative individuals). This is illustrated by the circles, representing individual team members, who are aligned to the outside perimeter of the team cell (representing goal commitment). Uncommitted and less creative team members would be shown closer to the inside of the cell (as shown in the unaligned team cell).

The ideal scenario illustrated shows the team cell positioned in the top right quadrant of an environment that is represented by two axes: creative climate and creative flow. A highly creative climate coupled with a high degree of team creativity produces the highest overall creative output (Bharadwaj & Menon, 2000). This is further enhanced by the degree of engagement in the task that produces creative flow (consistent with Csikzentmihalyi, 1997). The final element of the metasystem is the team leader/facilitator (represented by the cell nucleus being an
empowering leader with a high degree of relational capital, generating an environment that is participative rather than prescriptive (Hon & Chan, 2013).

The proposed Socratic Model (discussed below) has been designed to test whether an everyday team in an organisational context can become a highly creative team, as conceptualized above, through the application of a Socratic approach to team operation.

2.8 Socratic Approaches to Managing Creativity

What is Socrates’ famous method? In the absence of Socrates himself we must make do with Plato, Aristotle and others from ancient times to interpret it for us. McPherran (2010) describes Socrates as a facilitator (who has no fixed opinions of his own) guiding a dialogue to a conclusion, always cognizant of participants’ interests. According to McPherran, the Socrates in Book 1 of Plato’s Republic is the one most closely aligned to the Socratic Dialogue as he self-assuredly interrogates, leading the interlocutor to a state of aporia, where they recognize that their view is incorrect. So, let us examine Book 1 to determine whether this does provide a model for the Socratic method as we know it.

In Book 1, Socrates starts by posing a question seeking to define the meaning of a concept, in this case justice, by asking Cephalus to choose between two conceptions (331c). As an aid to clarity Socrates presents a scenario to illustrate the answer is more complex than Cephalus might think. This approach is designed to encourage critical rather than defensive thinking; however, a single question appears to be insufficient to achieve this as Cephalus takes his leave, asking Polemarchus to take his place (331d). From this exchange it appears that for the elenctic method to
work, participants must be committed to the process and also agree on a definition of the question under consideration.

Polemarchus at first defends Cephalus’ stand by quoting Simonides. This demarks the second stage of the elenchus: that of exposing what is currently believed about the issue under discussion. Before attempting to refute this logic, Socrates makes sure that his interpretation of what Simonides said is in alignment. This exchange highlights the importance of ensuring a statement’s meaning is clear before a refutation is attempted.

Thus the elenchus continues, with Socrates presenting scenarios rather than contradicting directly, until he brings Polemarchus to a state of aporia (334c). Only after this state has been reached does the dialogue move on (336) until finally Polymarchus admits he is wrong. Robinson (1953) says this reflects Plato’s view of an elenchus. It is only then that Socrates asks for new suggestions – this is the third stage in which a search for a solution is instigated. Note that at no time does Socrates seek to win the argument based on his superior skill; rather, as Vlastos (1982) says, the whole premise of the elenchus is for participants to expose beliefs at the expense of advantage.

Thrasymachus, who up until now has only been a bystander, demands that Socrates offer his own opinion (336d). Instead Socrates professes ignorance and encourages Thrasymachus (who professes to know the answer) to enlighten him. If Socrates had yielded to this request he would in effect have turned the elenchus into an eristic argument that seeks to win rather than find truth (Vlastos, 1982).

The dialogue now becomes a group one for a time, with Polymarchus and Thrasymachus being joined by Clitophon, and the dynamics of the group come into
play, which Thrasymachus exploits by attempting to revert to his original thesis (341). Having a number of participants, however, does not alter the approach, as Socrates continues to address statements directly to the person making them before inviting other contributions.

It seems at this point that Socrates is facing a standoff that he averts by asking if a better result could be obtained by both sides promoting the positive aspects of their argument and then having an independent party judge the winner (348b). This strategy causes all parties to commit to the elenctic process and Thrasymachus agrees to continue using Socrates’ approach. Book 1 ends with Socrates summing up and Thrasymachus agreeing (357b). Thus, some conclusion is reached without necessarily being a “solution”.

Based on this exchange in Plato’s Republic, it can be said that the Socratic method, or “standard elenchus” as Vlastos (1982) terms it, is a process involving the following steps: Debate and agreement on the topic; clarification of meaning before refutation occurs; self-recognition of error in current beliefs; search for potential new meaning; and summing up and agreed conclusion.

How can this be applied in a modern context? While there are conflicting views (Schiender, 2013), from an organisational context it is generally agreed that Nelson was the first to apply it. Nelson (1949) says that the method doesn’t produce new knowledge, but rather uses reflection to make explicit the tacit. He describes the method as one of regressive abstraction – moving backward from a statement and removing assumptions – to be left with the essence. In order to reflect, we must first question those assumptions therefore the process can be described as the “practice of asking the ‘right’ questions to stimulate thinking” (Kachaner & Deimler, 2008, p.
the result of which is claimed to be a higher level of engagement and ownership of issues.

In the examination of assumptions the process will also illustrate shortcomings in thinking (Morrell, 2004) that can create dissonance, as often deeply held beliefs may be challenged during the dialogue (Alexander, Shollert & Reynolds, 2009). The resulting conflict can result in the difficult or entrenched being passed over or agreement being reached without mutual belief in the outcome. This means the wealth of tacit knowledge (Nelson’s goal) available to a group remains tacit rather than being converted into explicit and therefore useful knowledge (Kessels, 2001).

However, this dissonance, if handled correctly, can result in people examining their beliefs more closely (Grill, Ahlborg, Wikstrom & Lindgren, 2015), and is at the core of a Socratic Dialogue. This identifies the need for effective facilitation; in other words, someone who takes the role of Socrates in asking the right questions in an effort to produce a creative solution (Santaneen, Briggs & de Vreede, 2004). Introducing an element of structure into a dialogue brings a greater focus on the problem being discussed, producing fewer but more creative solutions than a free-flowing structure such as brainstorming (Sagiv, Arieli, Goldenberg & Goldschmidt, 2010).

The importance of questioning is well established but the specifics (such as number and type) remain uncertain (Schneider, 2013). While authors such as Paul and Elder (2008) advise against predetermining questions, it should not be left to the skill of a facilitator to be able to arrive at a successful outcome. The questioning process should be one of guided discovery that involves moving from the concrete (what is known), to the abstract (synthesis of that knowledge) (Padesky, 1993) thus
inspiring new insights that produce a creative outcome (Neenan, 2009). Skordoulis and Dawson (2007) agree, saying that this process is particularly useful in times of change when the status quo is being challenged. For a Socratic dialogue to work effectively, the person assuming the role of Socrates (facilitator) must possess ‘strategic knowledge – which question to ask next – rather than factual knowledge on the subject itself’ (Archie, 2010).

The abstract nature of Socrates’ directed questioning technique lends itself to use in a variety of contexts (Overholser, 1991) and it can also be applied in both leadership and follower roles. Such roles and suitable applications have been identified by Tucker (2007), as presented in Figure 2.7.

Figure 2.7.
*Roles and applications for Socratic questioning*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Application</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructor</td>
<td>Critical thinking and comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor</td>
<td>Intellectual development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Follower buy-in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follower</td>
<td>Probe reasoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>Open dialogue and feedback</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From a leadership point of view, questioning should be seen as a legitimate process (Gratton, 2007) but it needs to be managed. A participative approach such as that at the heart of a Socratic dialogue can result in creative insights (Andriopolous, 2001) but it also runs the danger of producing unrestrained creativity that can be counterproductive. However, the risk of this can be mitigated through the use of specific questions to change minds in addition to ones that guide discovery (Neenan,
2009). This creates interplay between critical and creative thinking that causes
people to question their ideas and those of others (Chesters, 2012).

Gose (2009) identifies five strategies Socrates used to create a successful
dialogue:

- Probing questions about ideas that have been tabled
- Expansive questions to uncover relationships between ideas serving to
categorize existing knowledge
- Devil’s Advocate-style propositions
- Maintenance of the group dynamic
- Assigning roles to encourage lively discussion.

This analysis suggests that Socrates’ role goes beyond that of an interrogator
and that Socratic questioning should be used to stimulate a dialogue where
participants’ beliefs on an issue are challenged (elenchus) to identify incorrect
assumptions so participants themselves find their beliefs wanting (Morrell, 2004).
From this resulting state of frustration (aporia) a joint search for truth is begun.
Socrates typically began with a question such as “What is the point of X?” Paul and
Elder (2006) agree that the question should relate to a belief or conclusion that is
held or has been reached; however, other authors suggest starting the dialogue with a
collaborative agenda-setting process (Bolten, 2001; Chesters, 2012; Andriopoulos &
Lowe, 2000).

For a Socratic dialogue to be effective it should be divided into three distinct
parts (Chesters, 2012; Kessels, 2001). The first concerns the question itself; in its
final form it should be simple and specific to experiences rather than hypothetical,
and should also be capable of being solved by rational argument (Bolten, 2001). The second part is a dialogue addressing the question, the aim of which is to reach an explicit (actionable) consensus (Overholser, 1991). The final part is an evaluation that results in specific principles that apply to the question (Vlastos, 1982). This has the effect of increasing the knowledge capital of the organisation or group, which has a positive effect on organisational learning (Bennett, Anderson & Sice, 2015).

For a Socratic dialogue to be successful it must recognize and support the considerations relevant to human behaviour that, according to Ajzen (2002), are behavioural, normative and control beliefs. In other words, in order for the desired behaviour to be successful, an individual must first feel positive about it, must perceive support for it amongst peers and believe the behaviour is feasible. To develop the trust necessary to tackle difficult issues and come to some shared meaning, institutional roles and status should be suspended to remove any defensiveness (Bagshaw, 2014) and thus produce a sense of fellowship that Socrates called Koinonia (Michalko, 2012).

In this climate, positive feelings are reinforced based on feedback that increases feelings of efficacy (Lewis, 2011). The staged nature of the Socratic model provides natural points at which progress can be assessed and positive feedback given. This is reinforced when agreement is reached at the end of the dialogue and follow-up actions are identified and agreed. The positive contextual factors described above increase individual inclination towards creative behaviour (Lim & Choi, 2009).

Sometimes, in reaching consensus, more interrelated questions are raised. Kessels (2001) attributes this to the process of unlearning, which often exposes faulty
assumptions that have been held dear by the group. As a result Kessels’ idealistic hourglass model cannot be applied universally, so rather than the final outcome being the agreement of Principles (the result of Nelson’s regressive abstraction) after the ‘judgement’, it should end with an agreement on actions that should be taken. This then allows for further investigation and consideration of other questions at a later date. It also allows for investigation beyond philosophical boundaries (Bolten 2001).

Based on this discussion, it can be said that the resulting process should achieve three things: expose tacit knowledge; identify false assumptions, and create a climate of self-examination. Structurally it should be managed by a non-participating facilitator who poses appropriate questions to stimulate dialogue; provides feedback to maintain positive engagement; and sums up, resulting in agreement on future action.

2.9 Proposed Socratic Model

The proposed Socratic Dialogue Model (Figure 2.10) synthesizes the approach of Socrates himself with the constructs of 21st century authors (Figure 2.8) for application in a business context. It proposes that the initial question (what do we currently believe about the issue?), establishes a hypothesis or belief that requires testing and is followed by a series of questions gathering evidence (what evidence supports our belief?); questions to uncover conflicting views (what conflicting views are there?); and finally a series of questions to explore the implications and consequences of the discussion (where does this dialogue lead us?).

At the core of the method is the Socratic elenchus or refutation, which is a series of questions from Socrates designed to expose inconsistencies or ambiguities in belief (Vlastos, 1982). Ambiguity in a premise set in a Socratic elenchus must be
removed before any refutation can be accepted as true (Dougherty, 2007). He cites, as an example, Plato’s Gorgias 491c (trans. Lamb, 1967) in which Socrates queries Callicles on his meaning of the term ‘better and superior’. A facilitator, then, must consider each premise individually rather than the set as a whole when guiding a discussion.

It is important that this process is reflexive and results in self-awareness rather than something imposed (Kirkland, 2012). Socrates, as reported by Plato, explains the importance of this by saying “…the lover must follow his beloved wherever he might lead.” (Euthyphro 14C trans. Woods & Pack, 2007). This means that even though you are committed to your favourite ideas you nevertheless should be prepared to challenge them. According to Kelly (2011) this is difficult to achieve, as people often come to a discussion with a commitment to a certain doctrine or ideal that provides a lens through which they engage in the dialogue. However, it is only from the resulting state of aporia that a dialogue can move away from personal opinion to examine the question rationally.

Mathews (2009) makes an important distinction between the Socratic Method common in teaching (where a knowledgeable instructor seeks to teach using questions rather than direct instruction) and the Socratic elenchus where Socrates specifically pleads ignorance on the subject at hand and presumes that the interlocutor has tacit knowledge of it that can be exposed through questioning. From the perspective of creativity, however, both these methods need to be combined so that the facilitator should take the position of Socrates conducting an elenchus to enable participants to expose tacit knowledge, and through a new dialogic process recombine it into new knowledge. This additional process is important so as not to end in a state of perplexity (aporia), which often resulted from a purely Socratic
elenchus (Mathews, 2009). This interplay between critical and creative thinking allows us to be critical without being defensive and thereby frustrated by the process (Chesters, 2012).

A distinction should also be made between ‘knowledge’ and ‘opinion’. Knowledge can be substantiated whereas mere opinion cannot (Prior, 1998). During the Elenchus the person undertaking the role of Socrates needs to expose opinions so that they don’t form part of the new knowledge unless they can be ratified.

The objective of the dialogue is not to make final decisions (Bohm, 1996) but to engage participants in a creative process that “inspires further curiosity and open-minded reflection” (Skordoulis & Dawson, 2007, p. 993). According to Schmid (1983) the rationale for the Socratic method is to expose both the lack of knowledge about the dialogic issue and any delusions about existing knowledge.

This creative process can be used as a management tool to engage participants in the decision-making process in order to foster increased understanding and ownership (Kachaner & Deimler, 2008; Skordoulis & Dawson, 2007).

Authors in the field of business who refer to the Socratic method put forth a number of different descriptions of the underlying process (Figure 2.8). In each case they add additional steps aimed at coming to some conclusion that extends Socrates’ philosophical model.

Kessels (2001) reviews a number of approaches to conducting dialogues in a business setting and laments that they lack clear guidance on their implementation. He introduces the idea of first and second order questions. A first order question relates to something concrete, whereas a second order question is abstract relating to the way a first order question should be considered. This idea of blending abstract
and concrete is at the core of a Socratic dialogue and something that a facilitator needs to be skilled in as some knowledge is tacit rather than explicit.

Kessels suggests that a dialogue should be conducted in three sessions. The first session to formulate the question itself such that it is non-empirical, capable of being addressed through rational argument and also based on experience rather than hypothesis. The second session is where the question is considered and the third is the evaluation. Kessels presents the dialogue as an hour glass model starting with the question where all views are canvassed, then converging to a specific judgement and diverging again to justify the result.

Bolten (2001), like Socrates, concerns himself with ethical questions. He uses a case study from the banking industry to illustrate the dialogic process using the traditional Socratic dialogue. Bolten’s contribution in a business sense is insight into facilitating a dialogue. Firstly, that the question being considered must be related to something of value to the participants rather than a dialogic exercise. And, secondly, that the facilitator (apart from being experienced) needs to be able to contextualize the abstract by using concrete examples.

Chesters (2012) proposes a six-step model based on two distinct phases: creative and critical. The creative phase explores the question itself and the generation of ideas while the critical phase is evaluative. Chesters makes the point that these two phases represent an interplay rather than a progression. This has relevance to the facilitator who must be comfortable with such an interplay – at times encouraging divergent thinking and at others encouraging convergent thinking. The skill comes from knowing which type to use at any point of the dialogue.
Andriopoulos & Lowe (2000) use a grounded theory methodology to develop a theory they call perceptual challenging. The theory was developed from 40 in-depth interviews with members of project teams in three organisations in creative industries. The process of perceptual challenging has four steps: adventuring, overt confronting, portfolioing, opportunising. Unlike the Socratic method, the first step, adventuring combines aspects of question determination and refutation which could potentially result in an exploration of the more obvious issues before all the issues have been exposed; whereas an important element of the Socratic method is agreement on what is known before moving on. This serves to put participants on the “same page” and helps to reduce interpersonal conflict.

The second step, overt confronting, closely matched the Socratic refutation, however this is where the methods diverge – the final two stages are related to individuals working on multiple projects and how they manage them rather than as a team working on a single issue.

Figure 2.8.
Approaches to creating a Socratic Dialogue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socratic Method</th>
<th>What is X?</th>
<th>Refutation (Elenchus)</th>
<th>Frustration (Aporia)</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kessels (2001)</td>
<td>Question definition</td>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul &amp; Elder (1998, 2006)</td>
<td>Examining origin or source Belief, statement or conclusion</td>
<td>Support, reasons, evidence and assumptions</td>
<td>Opposing thoughts and objections</td>
<td>Implications and consequences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolten (2001)</td>
<td>Original question in non-empirical form</td>
<td>Information gathering</td>
<td>Argumentation</td>
<td>Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chesters (2012)</td>
<td>Problematic situation Constructing an agenda Gathering and Reasoning and analysis Making judgements and self- Concluding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

Kessels (2001) stresses the importance of commencing with an examination of the question itself to remove ambiguities and foster engagement in the process. From the point of view of participants, this process helps clarify thinking and introduces the idea of examining beliefs before the substantive arguments are put. For the facilitator, it sets the scene, providing a non-threatening way of establishing their role in the process and also establishing argument amongst participants early in the process. Paul and Elder (1998) emphasise the need to unpack questions proposed to uncover the presuppositions that make it up. In this unpacking process, the facilitator should keep in mind that the aim is to arrive at a question that doesn’t require empirical investigation (Bolten, 2001). Too often a dialogue fails to arrive at an answer because further investigation is required. Instead, the topic must be capable of being examined through a process of thinking only. Andriopoulos and Lowe (2000) use the term “adventuring” to describe this initial stage to emphasise that in creative processes, orthodoxy needs to be challenged to expose any relevant uncertainties.

The second stage in the process is to gather relevant information and at the same time try to elicit concrete examples of abstract ideas so that participants are forced to question their beliefs themselves (Bolten, 2001). Andriopoulos and Lowe (2000) go further, labelling this as a process of overtly confronting both concepts and contexts. Once all relevant information has been exposed it must be questioned in order to determine what is opinion (can’t be substantiated) and what is actual...
knowledge. This process should result in each participant self-correcting (Chesters, 2012) rather than having a solution imposed. During this stage, the facilitator should be aware of the need to group common themes together to keep the dialogue on track in order to encompass the diversity of both knowledge and context (Andriopoulos & Lowe, 2000).

The final step, which extends the traditional Socratic Dialogue, is to gain agreement on the implications and consequences of the knowledge exposed (Paul & Elder, 1998).

My initial synthesis of the data in the preceding literature review leads to the generation of a process based on a Socratic dialogue that is illustrated in Figure 2.9 and followed by a discussion of each stage.

At each stage of the review I used open coding to generate concepts to enhance my sensitivity to the data and provide questions for implementing the process in the workshops that form the second stage of data collection. This process is an important first step in the development of a grounded theory because it can be used to make comparisons between the data and the literature (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The concepts and the insights gained from them are detailed in Figure 2.9.
Figure 2.9.  

*Concepts and insights gained from the literature*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Insights gained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>The environment created through the process must be conducive to creative thinking. The facilitator should therefore ensure the process is one of guided discovery where participants come to their own conclusions and at the same time feel they can safely express their opinions without fear of ridicule. This will also encourage people to synthesize information and express new ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>The facilitator should be aware of and overcome any reticence in any participant by directing questions broadly to ensure engagement by everyone. This questioning should not only expose differences in thinking but also differences in experience and background so that participants have an appreciation of diversity that will improve creative outcomes. Each participant will have a different level of creativity-relevant skill; therefore, the initial engagement process should recognize and enhance them. According to the literature these are: self-direction/intrinsic motivation, resiliency, sense-making, social competence, knowledge/expertise, and risk-taking propensity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self efficacy</td>
<td>As people often underestimate their own creativity it is important to establish a measure of this through the questionnaire used in this study so that the effect on the individual of implementing the model can be ascertained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerance</td>
<td>Dominant individuals can often stifle creativity through dogmatism or challenging people rather than ideas. An important role of a facilitator will be to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Encouragement

In developing questions the facilitator should keep in mind that the process is one of guided discovery. This is often a problem for leaders who are anxious to push their own agenda. Appropriate feedback should be used to maintain motivation.

Challenge

Engagement in a challenging task increases motivation and results in a creative outcome. The questioning process must lead participants to recognize any faults in their own thinking rather than directly challenging their ideas. This will encourage them to critically examine what they think and distinguish between opinion and knowledge.

Culture

Creativity exists within an organisational environment that cannot necessarily be changed to facilitate more creative outcomes. However, having a person who is in a position of authority involved can demonstrate supportive management that can mediate negative organisational influences. As culture is driven from the top it will be an important part of the implementation process to gain the support of senior leaders in an organisation to legitimise creativity as one of the key norms of the operation.

The proposed Socratic dialogue model (Figure 2.10) is the result of synthesising my review of the literature and determining the process used in the workshop stage of the research.
2.9.1 The Question

Socrates typically started with a challenging question, the answer to which people often claimed to know, but upon further questioning they started to critically examine their thinking. Paul and Elder (2006) suggest that as part of this process, the origin or source of those beliefs should also be questioned. This process encourages participants to be self-directed by challenging what they may have been told before and putting them in a situation where they have to actively consider their beliefs.

Bolten (2001) suggests a caveat; that the original question should be formed in collaboration with participants, a collaboration which Chesters (2012) says should include constructing an agenda. Andriopoulos and Lowe (2000) highlight the creative aspect of this process by using the term ‘adventuring’ as part of creating a perpetually challenging environment where “individuals are encouraged to explore uncertainty, so that they can generate innovative solutions.” (Andriopoulos & Lowe, 2000, p. 736).
2.9.2 The Evidence

A desired outcome of this second part of the Socratic Dialogue is that the questions should be challenging and produce a realization that a contrary view is possible or even probable (elenchus). It is important for the questioning to be overt and confronting (Andriopoulos & Lowe, 2000) and to ask participants to provide evidence of their beliefs (Paul & Elder, 2006) to differentiate them from assumptions. This process encourages people to use their experiences to reflect on alternatives.

2.9.3 The Argument

By this point participants should be ready to question their beliefs and consider opposing thoughts and objections (Paul & Elder, 2006) and at the same time be prepared to argue with other participants (Bolten, 2001) to ensure all conflicting views are exposed and examined. At this point of the dialogue group dynamics come into play and participants are forced to consider other opinions. It can also be a test of participants’ resilience.

This process is important as it can help to avoid “groupthink” which is often the result of a drive for consensus (Nemeth & Nemeth-Brown in Paulus et al., 2003).

2.9.4 The Results

The final result stage examines the implications and consequences (Paul & Elder, 2006) of the preceding dialogue and produces a creative outcome. In order to produce a creative outcome, an information-driven session where new learning and evaluation is sought (such as the one proposed) is the most appropriate (Stasser & Birchmeier in Paulus et al., 2003).
While Chesters (2012) suggests that a conclusion is required, this shouldn’t be seen as an ending of the exploration of the issue, but rather as a summation of the current situation and hopefully a starting point for further exploration (Bohm, 1996; Skordoulis & Dawson, 2007).

2.10 Summary and Implications

If managers are to use the Socratic method in promoting creativity in their teams, they must first understand how to effectively harness creativity to produce innovations that will lead to competitive advantage. While it has been demonstrated that employee creativity is of benefit to an organisation (Gong et al., 2009) and is a necessary step in gaining a competitive advantage (Oldham & Cummings, 1996) ideas alone “are [a] necessary but not sufficient condition for opportunities to emerge” (Dimov, 2007, p. 718). Therefore, in operationalizing the Socratic Model the desired outcome should be to produce actionable results.

The contribution of this research is to empirically test and validate the theoretical model; document its final iteration; and produce a template for its use by management. A grounded theory methodology is used because of the exploratory nature of this task and a desire to produce a management tool grounded in reality. This methodology is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.