

# From Expert (?) to Novice and Back Again...

## David Goodman



As a Senior Lecturer in Leadership and Management at the University of Chichester I teach all undergraduate levels and on our Masters programmes. I am the Programme Coordinator for the Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship Programme, and Digital Marketing Apprenticeship Programme. Prior to this, I was at the University of Portsmouth in a range of different roles.

The first part of my career was mainly in the private sector within the creative and cultural industries as a contractor and consultant.

After a first degree in Fine Art, I returned to study and spent several years studying, as a 'distance learner', with the Open University resulting in Master in Business Administration (MBA) in 2008. My commitment to life-long learning and further study resulted in an Accounting qualification (Open University 2013) and Postgraduate Certificate in Learning & Teaching in Higher Education (2017) and I am currently working on a Professional Doctorate in the area of work-based learning and apprenticeship.

### Introduction

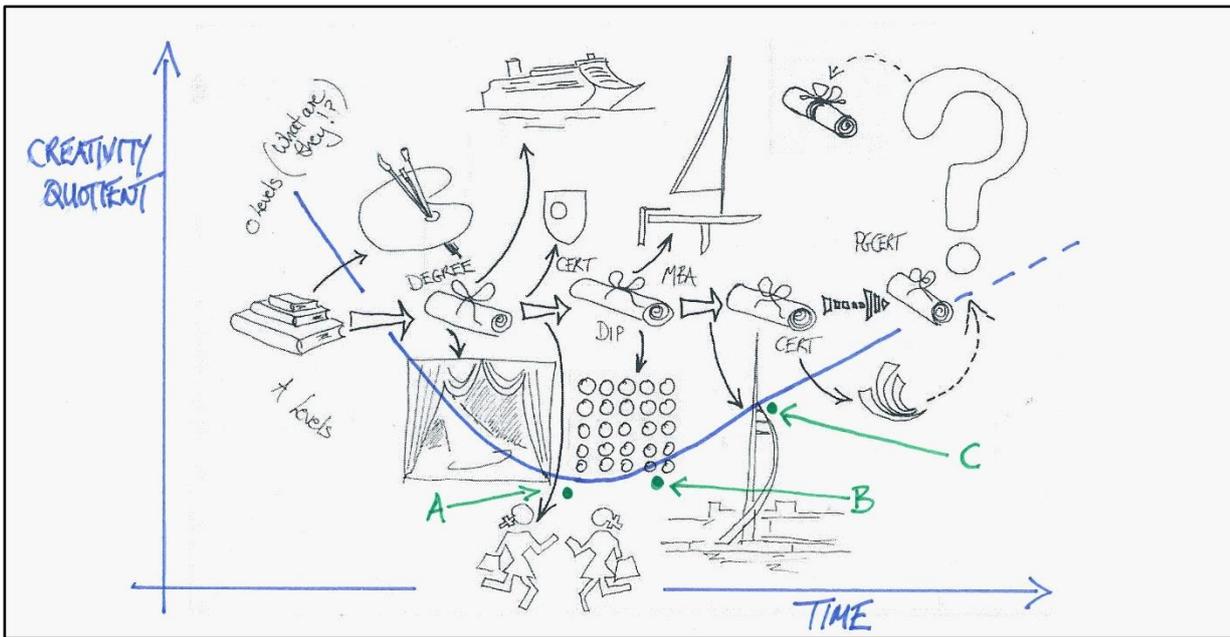
The call for articles suggested '...journeys of creativity from novice to expert...' but my earliest experience flipped the journey around i.e. it might be argued that I began with more expertise as a creative practitioner and then lost the opportunity to use my creativity before finding it again. This raises the question of what is more important to creativity – our level of experience/expertise or the affordances we have to act creatively emphasising and how much the wider context of our work matters.

I was an art student in the 1990s where creativity was central to my practice and those years provided a formative experience. But after graduating, my 'first career' slowly eroded much of my creativity, despite being in the domain of theatre, film and television (ironically part of the creative industries), because commercial pressures overwhelmed my ability to practice creatively. The nadir was reached during four years working in a small engineering business undertaking diverse projects, each holding creative potential but the daily reality was ensuring the business was not loss making. Thankfully, I created an entirely different career and I now find myself teaching leadership and management in which I am able to utilise my creativity as I attempt to work with students creatively beyond 'Powerpoint' and bullet points.

This short personal narrative is in two parts. First, I briefly highlight three incidents that re-energised my creativity, before discussing in part 2, three simple activities I use in my current classroom practice to encourage students to use their imagination and creativity.

### Part 1 – Incidents that rekindled my creative spirit

I use figure 1 to introduce myself to students during our first 'contact', it sketches out my timeline and immediately sets some expectations for students as I try to encourage them to consider the use of imagination and creative visual thinking.



**Figure 1** My 'Me-Map' annotated with a creativity quotient curve.

It also illustrates three specific incidents that reenergised my own creativity (marked A, B, C) and I think highlight the relationship and connection between our work and life identities. For this narrative I have also annotated figure 1 with two axes, and a 'creativity quotient' curve reflecting my introductory comments.

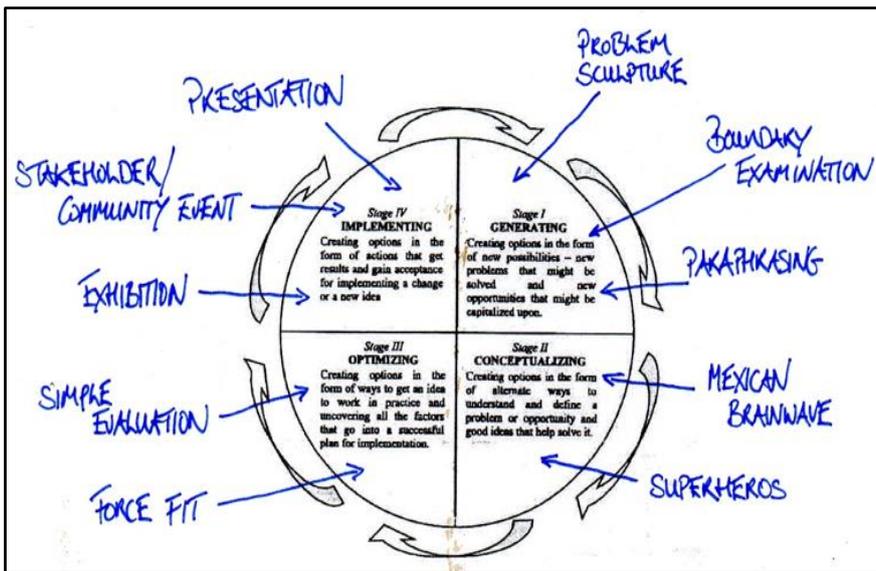
**Incident A** is very personal but, for me, a very important part of the journey. Low in the curve my lack of creativity at work and in life was significantly impacted by the arrival of two new family members. A deeper exploration of this is probably required but, suffice to say here, the impact on me of two new pairs of eyes looking at the world very differently triggered a shift in my perspective and I now reflect was the initial catalyst towards an upward curve.

My role in the small engineering business grew with the organisation and we were undertaking projects for cruise line companies which I was project managing. During these **incident B** added momentum; a regular daily programme meeting held by the client became very personal and provided the realisation that my knowledge of 'business' was, at best, slim. My conclusion at the time was to return to education.

Studying with Open University (OU) led to the final **incident C** and I took a module called 'Creativity, Innovation and Change' (CIC). It made me reconsider how I thought about organisations and individuals within them. Breaking down 'forms and norms' typifying business management education I was challenged to think very differently and it coincided with the start of my 'second career' moving to the University of Portsmouth (UoP) as a research project manager. Here my first teaching opportunities emerged working and with an open minded faculty this role became increasingly 'hybrid'.

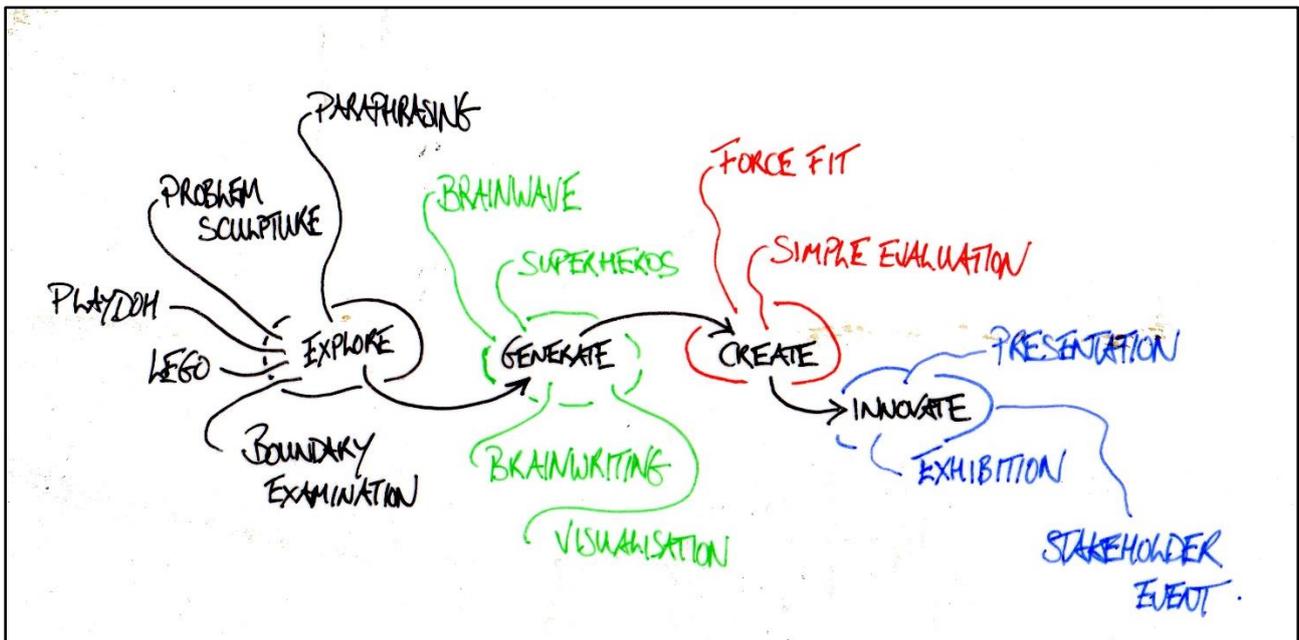
A series of conversations culminated in the creation of a 5-day induction programme for level 7 architecture students. Typically, they had been in architectural practice for a year and often developed a particular mindset, so during the week we wanted to challenge them by working on a time constrained 'live' problem from an external partner. Borrowing heavily from CIC the programme attempted to expose students to alternative forms of creativity from their practice experience.

I was introduced to Min Basadur<sup>1</sup> during CIC and I continued reading around creative process and individual differences<sup>2</sup>. We used his CPSP inventory to form teams and the four quadrants were used as 'phases' for different exercises, see Figure 2.



**Figure 2** After Basadur<sup>1</sup> (1990) an annotated creative process

This is not radical and there are existing many 'flavours' of creative process to draw upon<sup>3,4,5</sup>, but for 5 years we experimented, pushing students beyond normal practice approaches, and ultimately leading to me conceiving the framework: Explore, Generate, Create, Innovate, illustrated in Figure 3.



**Figure 3** Explore, Generate, Create, Innovate

## Part 2 – Re-engaging in creative practice

Arriving at the University of Chichester on a full academic contract gave further impetus to the journey and provided new opportunities for my creative practice. Using my experience from the OU, I determined to go beyond the 'bullet point' in my teaching practice and now I discuss three small activities used to provoke management students to think about being creative in practice.

## Activity 1 The Portrait



During semester 1 I teach most of our first years an introductory management module and it is one of the foundational modules. I aim to push them beyond expectations built in school and college of what University experience will look like from the very start. Having already introduced myself using figure 1, I try and to learn their names very quickly and not being a great fan of 'ice breakers' I wanted to use something quick but 'different', avoiding a form of 'creeping death' introductions. For me TED talks are increasingly like 'marmite' and increasingly I think recent talks tend to have lost the sense of inquiry and exploration from the early days. However, Tim Brown delivered a very engaging session at Serious Play 2008 (Brown, 2008) and used a task that met my criteria.

The task is to produce, in 60-90 seconds (variations due to the atmosphere in the room at the time), a portrait of a partner and is met with a mix of groaning, laughter, apologies and justifications, 'I can't draw...', 'Sorry...'. I then ask students to present each other with these as a gift to be used as a name plate on their tables.

Figure 4 Portraits

It is an early 'intervention', working in analogue, it is quick with low-ish risk but I have a chance of learning names and they start to form connections. In a short debrief I emphasise the need to capture key details and the value of thinking in a visual mode, finally highlighting work need not be always mediated by some form of digital tool.

## Activity 2 The Scroll

Within the same module as activity 1 this task is from the closing sessions, concluding modules might result in a quiz, or I could go review highlights (or lowlights...) using 'Powerpoint', but I wanted to use a visual approach, again opening the possibility for some creativity. I cannot remember how I arrived at the idea of a scroll, possibly a quest for cheap paper, or some media about the 'ancients', and I suspect a combination of both. Small groups (usually 4-6 works) make their own scroll capturing the entire module using their notes and Moodle (our VLE). Figure 5 shows two examples of scrolls which provide opportunities for creative expression while they reflected on what ideas have been explored.

Figure 5 Example scrolls

In the early days using this technique I made groups use collage and found images from magazines. The spectrum of results was often very good, but some groups struggled and my reflection was the constraint of using found images pushed the good students further but hindered the less confident students.

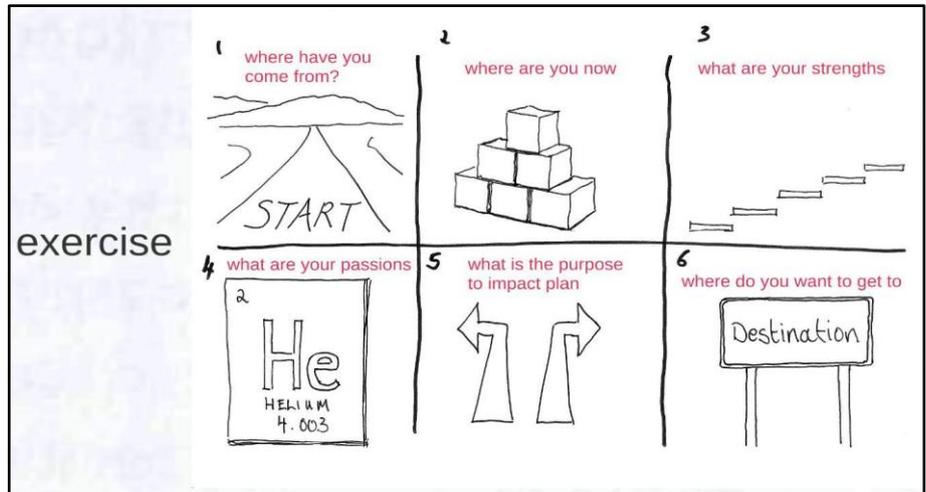


### Activity 3 Storyboard

With second year students I continue using 'the visual' in my 'Leadership' module. Briefly for context this is a relatively theory heavy module, but much of the session is based on discussion, student led whiteboard exercises, debates, they have to read, they have to listen, they have to watch and they have to draw...

Week 6 (ish) we spend some time talking about the idea of vision and purpose. I find these two words very tricky to disentangle and I am never really confident of the best way to explore them. This year I produced a short manifesto about higher education and read it in class.

Very performative, but too abstract for these students. I like visual planning activity, but will be delighted if I never see another Gantt chart again, so borrowing from Film and Television the notion of a storyboard exploring individual purpose provided a good exercise.



**Figure 6** The Storyboard Exercise Brief

Figure 6 illustrates the task set as homework. Students are required to create a storyboard but consider it in the terms noted in each frame, ending by addressing 'where you want to get to'. Figure 7 shows an extract from the following weeks 'exhibition'.



**Figure 7** The Storyboard Exhibition

What strikes me reflecting on this image is the diversity

of response, numbers 7 and 8 illustrated a much higher level of visual thinking and engagement in contrast to the much less detailed numbers 2 and 3. You might not be surprised to know there is a gender split that deserves some further investigation.

### Integrating the two parts of my story

So, drawing things together, I have discussed a personal journey of creativity, a curve down and then back to my current level where I am, in a small way, bringing moments of creative practice into my teaching. Actively reflecting on the spectrums of creative practice I have experienced, including performance, role play, drawing, making and use of images, my sense is the task is to continue to experiment within the activities and affordances the world of work provides. It is clear from my narrative that some environments, roles and circumstances provided me with little opportunity to utilise my creativity while others offer much more. Context matters and perhaps greater or lesser affordances is a bigger factor in determining the extent to which one can be creative rather than the level of experience/inexperience one has of that environment. There is, for me, still scope in the classroom to devise and run activities with a sense of freedom which in my first career did not exist and so I argue I must provide those affordances to my students regardless of their level of experience.

In terms of my experiments with students: we will each value the outcome of experiments differently but for me the activities I describe above:

1. Allow students to connect with each other,
2. Provoke students to think differently about themselves and ideas enabling them greater scope to use their imaginations and express themselves creatively,
3. Show me the value of experimenting as a means of exploring who I am and what I am capable of doing,
4. Involve me in ways that mean I am more engaged in my teaching; thinking more deeply about active learning and participation beyond 'Powerpoint' and bullet points,
5. Ultimately, enable me to express myself more creatively and give me a greater sense of professional fulfilment.

### **Sources**

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- 5 Brown, T., & Martin, R., (2015). Design for action: how to use design thinking to make great things actually happen.(Spotlight on the Evolution of Design Thinking). *Harvard Business Review*, 93(9), 57–64.
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