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A Four-Module Developmental Programme For Cultivating Communicative Creativity in Higher Education Leaders: Design, Structure, And Methodological Principles

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Abstract: This article presents the design and methodological architecture of a twelve-week, four-module developmental programme created to cultivate the communicative creativity of higher education institution (HEI) leaders. Rather than reporting outcome statistics, the article focuses on the programme itself as a replicable instructional model: its theoretical grounding in the integration of Amabile's componential theory of creativity and the Bass–Avolio transformational leadership model; its sequential module structure (divergent thinking, innovative behaviour, communicative flexibility, and systematic problem-solving); the specific techniques and activities employed each week; and the pedagogical principles — experiential learning, formative interim assessment, and iterative adaptation — that govern its delivery. A complete week-by-week map of the programme is provided so that the model can be reproduced, adapted, and evaluated in other institutional settings. The article argues that communicative creativity is best developed not through isolated training events but through a cumulative, scaffolded sequence in which each module deliberately builds on the competencies formed in the preceding one.

Keywords: Communicative creativity, professional development programme, instructional design, divergent thinking, innovative work behaviour, experiential learning, higher education management, leadership development.

Introduction: Professional development for university leaders frequently takes the form of isolated seminars or one-off workshops whose effects rarely persist. When the target competency is creativity — and specifically communicative creativity, understood as a leader's capacity to generate novel, relevant, and effective ideas across varied communicative situations and to convey them in audience-appropriate ways — the limitations of the isolated-event model become especially acute. Creativity is not a single technique to be transmitted in an afternoon; it is a composite of cognitive skills, behavioural repertoires, and motivational dispositions that develop cumulatively. Designing a programme capable of cultivating such a competency therefore poses a distinct instructional-design problem: how to sequence content so that skills reinforce one another, how to convert theory into durable practice, and how to keep a fixed curriculum responsive to a particular group of learners.

This article addresses that problem by describing, in reproducible detail, a twelve-week developmental programme designed to cultivate the communicative creativity of HEI leaders. The programme was implemented as the intervention arm of a larger quasi-experimental study; the effectiveness results of that study are reported elsewhere. The purpose here is different and complementary: to document the programme as a methodological artifact — its rationale, its architecture, its week-by-week content, and the design principles that hold it together — so that other researchers and practitioners can replicate, adapt, and test it. The article is organised around four questions: on what theoretical basis was the programme constructed; how were its modules sequenced and why; what specific techniques and activities were used; and what pedagogical principles governed delivery and assessment.

THEORETICAL AND DESIGN RATIONALE

The programme's content was derived from the integration of two theories. Amabile's componential theory specifies the internal architecture of creative capacity — domain-relevant skills, creativity-relevant process skills, and intrinsic task motivation — and thereby indicates what a developmental programme must actually cultivate. The Bass–Avolio transformational leadership model specifies the leadership behaviours — idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration — through which creative capacity is enacted in an organisational setting, and thereby indicates the behavioural targets toward which the programme's communicative work should be directed. Reading the two theories together yields a design brief: a programme must develop cognitive creative skills, translate them into innovative behaviour, express them through adaptive communication, and channel them into the resolution of real organisational problems.

Anderson, Potočnik, and Zhou's model of creativity and innovation development supplied the overarching logic that individual attributes, the developmental programme, and the organisational environment interact, and that a programme should therefore attend to all three rather than to the individual alone. This is why the programme repeatedly asks participants to apply techniques to authentic problems drawn from their own institutions, so that individual skill-building is continuously coupled to the organisational context in which it must ultimately function.

Three pedagogical frameworks translated these commitments into a teachable method. Kolb's experiential learning cycle structured each topic as a movement from concrete experience, through reflective observation and abstract conceptualisation, to active experimentation — which is why every theoretical input is paired with a practical task and a homework application. Kirkpatrick's model of training evaluation shaped the specification of each weekly session with explicit objectives, expected outcomes, and assessment criteria. Gibbs' reflective cycle informed the portfolio work through which participants consolidated and internalised their learning. Together these frameworks ensured that the programme was not a sequence of topics but a coherent learning system.

OVERALL PROGRAMME ARCHITECTURE

The programme spans twelve weeks and comprises four modules, each occupying three weeks and totalling twelve contact hours. Sessions were held twice weekly, on fixed days and at a fixed time, a schedule chosen to minimise disruption to participants' primary duties while allowing full concentration during sessions. The defining structural principle is cumulative sequencing: the modules are ordered so that each builds directly on the competencies formed in the previous one. Divergent-thinking skills developed in the first module become the raw material for idea generation in the second; the innovative-behaviour skills of the second are enacted through the communication skills of the third; and the fourth module integrates all prior skills and directs them toward complex organisational problem-solving. This scaffolding is what distinguishes the programme from a collection of independent workshops, and it is the feature most essential to preserve in any replication. Table 1 maps the full sequence.

Table 1. Week-by-week structure of the four-module programme

Week	Focus	Principal techniques and activities
Module I	Divergent thinking	—
1	Foundations of creativity	Programme orientation and trust-building; theory of creativity (Amabile componential model, Guilford divergent thinking); Torrance dimensions — fluency, flexibility, originality, elaboration; creative-potential self-assessment and goal-setting.
2	Divergent-thinking techniques	De Bono's Six Thinking Hats applied to real management situations; SCAMPER (substitute, combine, adapt, modify, put to other use, eliminate, rearrange); homework analysing an institutional process via SCAMPER.
3	Associative thinking and analogy	Associative chains, random-word and forced-connection techniques; direct, personal, symbolic, and fantasy analogies; Gordon's synectics; Module I interim assessment.
Module II	Innovative behaviour	—
4	Foundations of innovative behaviour	De Jong–Den Hartog model (problem identification, idea generation, idea promotion, idea implementation); reframing institutional problems from an innovation perspective; each participant selects one real problem to develop.
5	Idea generation	Classic and modern brainstorming (reverse, written, electronic); Osborn's rules; nominal group technique and Delphi method; task to generate ≥20 candidate solutions for the chosen problem.
6	Idea promotion and advocacy	Presentation strategies, audience analysis, message tailoring; role plays presenting to senior leadership, peers, subordinates, and external partners; anticipating and addressing resistance; Module II interim assessment.
7	Idea implementation	Project planning, resource identification and mobilisation; SMART goals and timelines; team formation, task allocation, monitoring systems; each participant presents a full innovation-project concept.
Module III	Communicative flexibility	—
8	Foundations of effective communication	Martin–Rubin communicative-flexibility theory (repertoire breadth, situational perception, behavioural adaptation); self-diagnosis of communicative style; strengths and weaknesses.
9	Communicating with diverse audiences	Strategies for faculty, students, administrators, external partners, and media; active listening, empathic response, constructive feedback, practised through role play.
10	Managing complex communicative situations	Conflict resolution, working with resistant audiences, crisis communication, communicating change; simulation exercises under stress; Module III interim assessment.
Module IV	Systematic problem-solving	—
11	Systems thinking	Senge's systems-thinking principles and the five disciplines; mapping one's institution as a complex system; causal-loop diagrams, system archetypes, dynamic modelling.
12	Creative problem-solving and integration	Osborn–Parnes model, TRIZ elements, design thinking (Kelley & Kelley); participants integrate all skills into a comprehensive communicative-creativity strategy for their institution; portfolio submission and final assessment.

Note. Each module comprises three weeks and twelve contact hours. “Interim assessment” denotes formative evaluation at the close of each module. The final week culminates in an integrative institutional strategy and a personal development portfolio.

THE FOUR MODULES IN DETAIL

1. Module I — Divergent thinking

The first module cultivates the cognitive foundation of communicative creativity: the capacity to see many possible solutions to a single problem. It opens with the theoretical grounding of creativity and with participants assessing their own creative potential and setting personal development goals — a deliberate first step, since Kolb's cycle begins from the learner's own

experience. The second week is devoted to divergent-thinking techniques, with De Bono's Six Thinking Hats and the SCAMPER method taught not in the abstract but through authentic management scenarios, such as introducing a new curriculum in a faculty. The third week develops associative thinking and analogy — associative chains, random-word and forced-connection techniques, and Gordon's synectics — training participants to transfer successful practices from other fields into the higher-education context. A key design feature throughout is the immediate application of each technique to a real institutional process, which anchors abstract method in concrete practice.

2. Module II — Innovative behaviour

Where the first module generates ideas, the second translates them into action, and it is structured around the four stages of the De Jong–Den Hartog model. Participants begin by identifying a genuine problem in their own institution and reframing it from an innovation perspective; each carries this single problem forward through the remaining weeks, which gives the module a project spine. The idea-generation week introduces the full family of brainstorming variants along with the nominal group technique and the Delphi method, with participants tasked to produce at least twenty candidate solutions for their chosen problem. The advocacy week develops the communicative dimension of innovation — tailoring the presentation of an idea to senior leadership, peers, subordinates, and external partners, and anticipating resistance — while the implementation week adds project planning, SMART goal-setting, resource mobilisation, and monitoring. The module closes with each participant presenting and defending a complete innovation-project concept.

3. Module III — Communicative flexibility

The third module makes communication itself the explicit object of development, grounded in Martin and Rubin's theory of communicative flexibility, according to which flexibility comprises breadth of communicative repertoire, accurate situational perception, and skill in behavioural adaptation. After a diagnostic first week in which participants identify their own communicative style and its strengths and weaknesses, the module moves to communicating with the distinct audiences a university leader must address — faculty, students, administrators, external partners, and the media — and cultivates active listening, empathic response, and constructive feedback through role play. The final week confronts the hardest cases: conflict, resistant audiences, crisis communication, and the communication of change, all practised through simulation under stress. This module is where the cognitive and behavioural gains of the first two modules acquire their communicative form.

4. Module IV — Systematic problem-solving and integration

The concluding module integrates all prior competencies and directs them toward complex organisational problems. It begins with systems thinking — Senge's five disciplines, the mapping of one's own institution as a complex system, and tools such as causal-loop diagrams and system archetypes — so that participants learn to trace the systemic roots of the problems they face. The second week equips them with creative problem-solving methodologies: the Osborn–Parnes model, elements of TRIZ, and design thinking. In the final week, participants synthesise everything they have learned into a comprehensive strategy for developing communicative creativity within their own institution, submit a personal development portfolio, and take part in a final assessment. The module thus closes the loop opened in Week 1, converting individual skill-building into an institution-level plan.

PEDAGOGICAL PRINCIPLES OF DELIVERY

Beyond its content, the programme is defined by a small set of delivery principles that any faithful replication should preserve. The first is method pluralism: each session deliberately combines lectures, practical exercises, group discussion, role play, simulation, case-study analysis, and independent assignments, so as to accommodate different learning styles and, more importantly, to move learners around Kolb's cycle within a single session rather than lecturing at them. The second is authentic application: techniques are never taught in the abstract but are immediately applied to real problems drawn from participants' own institutions, and homework extends that application between sessions. The third is formative iteration: at the end of every week, feedback on the quality and usefulness of the sessions was collected and used to adjust subsequent sessions, and each module closed with an interim assessment that monitored progress and allowed content to be re-tuned to participants' needs. The fourth is reflective consolidation: through a personal development portfolio maintained across all twelve weeks, participants reflected on and internalised their learning, in line with Gibbs' reflective cycle.

Assessment was built into the design rather than appended to it. The layered structure — weekly feedback, module-level interim assessments, and a final integrative evaluation — embodies Kirkpatrick's logic by tracking reaction and learning as the programme unfolds and by requiring, at the end, a demonstrable application in the form of an institutional strategy. This

continuous-assessment architecture is part of what makes the programme evaluable and, therefore, replicable: an adopter can locate exactly where in the sequence a given competency is meant to form and can measure whether it has.

REPLICATION AND ADAPTATION

The programme is offered as a model to be reproduced and adapted rather than as a fixed prescription. Several features are structural and should be retained in any replication: the cumulative ordering of the four modules; the pairing of each technique with authentic institutional application; and the layered formative-assessment architecture. Other features are parameters that adopters may reasonably vary to suit their context — the total duration, the balance of contact hours across modules, the specific creativity techniques selected within each module, and the scheduling of sessions. In settings with different cultural or institutional characteristics, the authentic problems participants work on will naturally differ, and this is by design: the programme's coupling of skill-building to real context means that it localises itself through the problems its participants bring to it.

Two cautions follow from the design. First, because the modules are scaffolded, reordering them or omitting earlier modules would undermine the logic on which the later ones depend; adopters who must shorten the programme should compress within modules rather than remove foundational ones. Second, because the programme's effectiveness depends heavily on authentic application and iterative adjustment, a delivery that reverts to lecture-based transmission would retain the syllabus while losing the method. The programme, in short, is a system, and it is the system — not any single technique within it — that constitutes the contribution offered here.

CONCLUSION

This article has documented a twelve-week, four-module developmental programme for cultivating the communicative creativity of higher education leaders, presenting it as a replicable methodological model rather than as a set of outcomes. The programme's distinctive contribution lies not in any individual technique — most of the techniques it employs are well established — but in the way those techniques are sequenced, coupled to authentic institutional practice, and held together by experiential-learning and formative-assessment principles into a coherent developmental system. By providing a complete week-by-week map and an explicit account of its design principles, the article aims to make the programme available for reproduction, adaptation, and independent evaluation in other higher-education settings. Future work might test the model across differing institutional and national contexts, examine which modules contribute most to which outcomes, and investigate the minimum duration at which the cumulative logic of the design still holds.

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