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# **Innovation Activities in Call and Contact Centres – An Exploratory Study**

by

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*“Capital isn't so important in business. Experience isn't so important. You can get both these things. What is important is ideas. If you have ideas, you have the main asset you need, and there isn't any limit to what you can do with your business and your life.”*

*Harvey S. Firestone 1868 - 1938*

## Chapter 1: Introduction

*“What we call the beginning is often the end. And to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from.” T.S. Eliot (1888-1965)*

Call and contact centres play an important role in the global economy, employing millions of people in the USA and UK and hundreds of thousands in other parts of Europe, Africa and Asia (Russell, 2008). They are often the main point of contact for customers accessing organisations, so have a key part to play in the overall perception customers have of the entire organisation (Dean, 2002). However, the centres in developed countries are facing increased pressures from low-cost alternatives in developing countries and increasing customer demands, which results in these centres needing to enhance their competitive advantage. One method for increased competitiveness is through an increased focus on innovation; organisations that can continually renew and adapt through advances in their services, products and processes will stay ahead of the competition (Bessant, 2003). Innovation is concerned with the organisational processes and tools necessary to translate ideas into new processes, products, services or businesses (Isaksen and Tidd, 2006). Although innovation poses many risks, organisations that do not renew their products, processes or services on a continuing basis place their survival in danger (Tidd et al., 2001).

The model of call and contact centres has been utilised since the 1980s and a wide body of research has grown since that time. This body of work often focuses on the more negative aspects of centre operations, such as issues with employee morale, attrition, and customers' dissatisfaction with the service quality received. This has resulted in the fields of human resource management and customer service quality being well researched areas in contact centres, but little has been researched on innovation within this context. It has however been studied in a number of research areas such as psychology, operational research, gender theory, etc. but it has yet to be studied through the lens of innovation.

A number of external forces impacting on call and contact centres in developed countries, such as intensified competition, changing needs of customers and technological advances in the business environment have resulted in a need for innovation (Goffin and Mitchell, 2005). Innovation has long been discussed as a source of competitive advantage for organisations operating in developed economies (Porter, 1990). However, the centre responses to these pressures have been to cut costs and improve efficiency (Russell, 2008), often through outsourcing or offshoring of contact centre operations, where “the most standardised and least risk-laden processes being sliced-off and offshored” (Taylor and Bain, 2005: 277). The industry in developed countries now is looking for ways in which it can be more competitive and focus on higher value work. Innovation has been cited as a way of achieving this higher value focus (Edwards et al., 2005), and the need for competitive advantage has resulted in an increased pressure for constant innovation (Bessant, 2003). Conversely, the call and contact centre industry is not seen as having a focus on innovation – there is a gap in knowledge concerning innovation in contact centres.

Most of the research which uses the centre as the unit of analysis has focused on emotional intelligence (e.g. Higgs, 2004), labour processes (e.g. van den Broek, 2003), human resource management strategies (e.g. Wallace et al., 2000), service quality (e.g. Gilmore, 2001) or gender issues (Belt, 2002). Call and contact centres have not yet been used as a unit of analysis in innovation studies and equally innovation has not been studied in contact centre research. Furthermore, research which takes the contact centre as the object of analysis is comparatively recent, perhaps due to the recent advent of call and contact centres as an individual organisational entity, suggesting that call and contact centre research is dealing with an “emergent empirical phenomenon rather than with a theoretical construct” (Russell, 2008: 196).

This research therefore aims to understand innovation in call and contact centres. Primarily focusing on if contact centres are involved in innovation activities and if so what type of innovation they are involved with. The organisational factors that

influence (either positively or negatively) innovation activities in contact centres is a main focus of the study. An exploratory qualitative case-based strategy is employed to understand the complexities of innovation in call and contact centres.

This research is crucial because if call and contact centres are to remain competitive and attractive to customers then they need to focus on innovation. At the moment there is no knowledge on innovation in call and contact centres, but by understanding how innovation relates to contact centre operations the barriers that can impede innovation can be identified.

The timeliness of this research is supported by the recent backlash against the current operating model of call and contact centres - this is true even in India where centre jobs are seen as prestigious (Taylor and Bain, 2008). There is bad public perception of the industry fuelled by recent media coverage (e.g. UK Channel 4's Cutting Edge, 2007). Customer demands on the call and contact centre model are increasing. There are calls from industry bodies (CCA, 2008) to rethink the current operating model hence this is an opportune time to understand innovation in contact centres.

This research will make a contribution to knowledge in two main ways. The first, and most significant, is that it will add considerably to the expanding body of literature that is evolving on call and contact centre management. The absence of theory on innovation activities in centres means that the findings from this research will provide the foundation knowledge for further studies into this phenomenon. It also makes a contribution to the innovation literature as call and contact centres have yet to be used as a unit of analysis for innovation studies. Therefore, the findings from this work will contribute to the body of knowledge on general innovation and service innovation areas.

Table 1.1 summaries the structure of this thesis and highlights the main contents discussed in each of the chapters.

*Table 1.1 – Thesis structure*

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Description of Contents</i>
1 – Introduction	Introduction to the research area and why the topic is important to study.
2- Literature review	Initial literature review to explore the gap that exists between the two bodies of literature important to this study. From this an initial conceptual framework is developed and research questions are generated.
3 – Research philosophy and strategy	Discussion on the underlying philosophical paradigm of this research and the implications this has on the approach, findings and quality of this research.
4 – Identification of factors influencing innovation	A systematic review of the innovation literature to identify the important organisational factors which influence innovation. The findings drive the development of the conceptual framework and subsequent fieldwork methodology.
5 – Fieldwork methodology	Presentation of the methods used to select, collect and analyse the empirical data gathered from the case companies.
6 – Empirical findings	Presentation of the analysed data collected from the case studies to show the findings from each case company as well as from the cross-case findings.
7 – Discussions	Provides a discussion on the findings shown in Chapter 6. It compares the findings against the research questions posed. It also discusses the process of theory building through the results of this research and discusses the quality and validity of this research. The contribution this research provides is also examined in this chapter.
8- Conclusions	Summary of the key conclusions that can be drawn from this research. It also provides a discussion on the limitations of this research. The implications this work has for theory and the future work are examined in detail, with some future recommendations being posed. The implications for practice are also considered in this chapter.

Figure 1.1 overleaf shows a graphical high-level structure of this research and aligns each of the research phases with the related chapter. This figure allows the structure of the research to be understood in a holistic manner and also shows the rationale for the arrangement of the thesis.

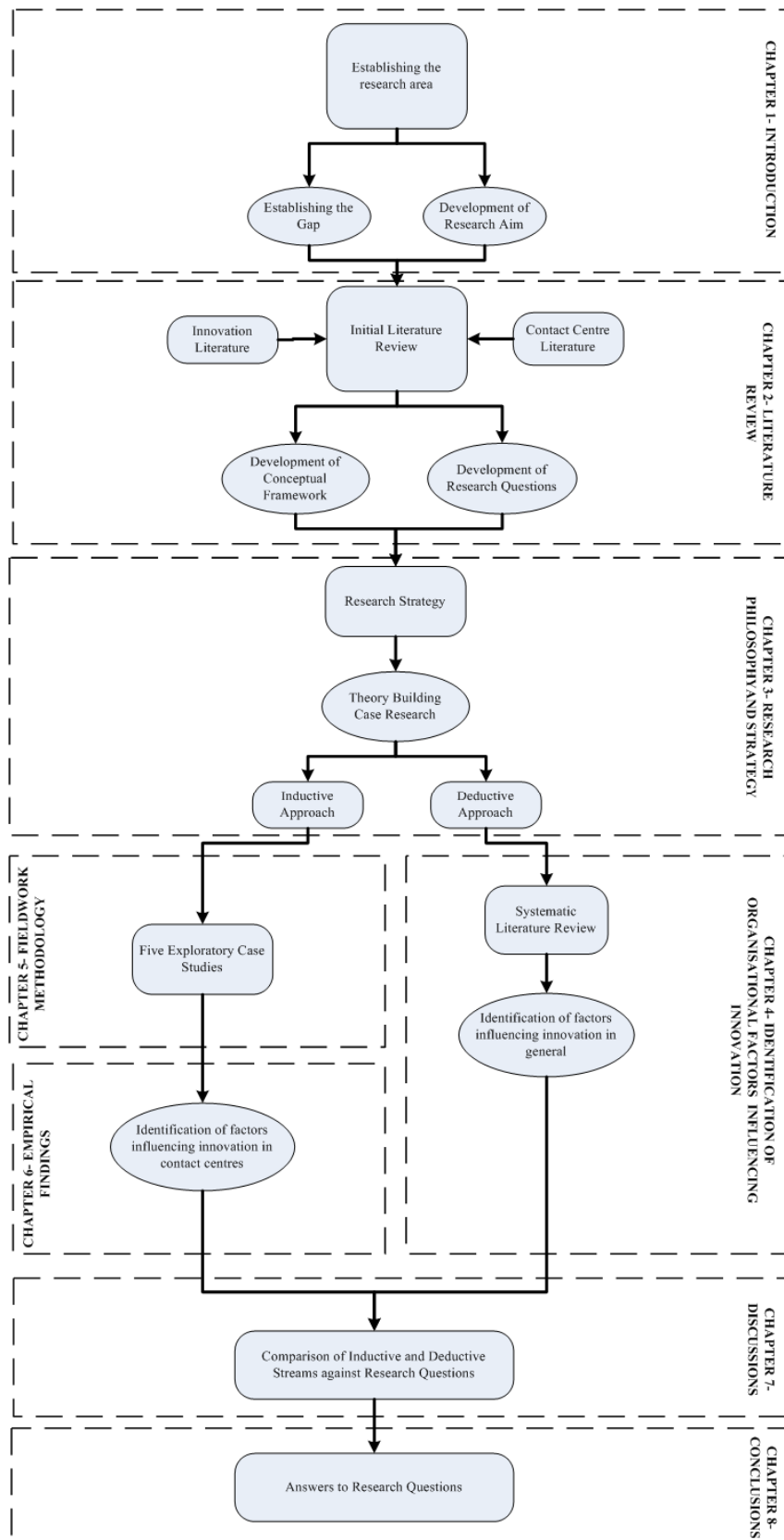


Figure 1.1 – Structure of this research

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

*“Literature is strewn with the wreckage of men who have minded beyond reason the opinions of others.” Virginia Woolf (1882 - 1941)*

It is important to set the theoretical context into which this research sits. As was outlined in the introduction this research is exploratory as there is no current theory on innovation in contact centres. There is however an emerging field of literature on call and contact centre management as well as a wide body of theory on innovation (including the theory existing on service innovation). Therefore, this work spans both these theoretical fields and aims to fill the gap between these disparate bodies of knowledge.

### 2.1 DEFINITION OF TERMS

#### **Innovation**

A number of key terms are used within this research and it is important to understand the meanings of these terms within its context. The first and most central term to this research is ‘innovation’ – this is a term that is often confusing and used interchangeably with other terms such as invention, innovativeness, innovative, and innovates.

There are many definitions of innovation and some often confuse ‘invention’ (coming up with the idea) with ‘innovation’ (the whole process of taking that idea into successful implementation and use) Bessant (2004). There are many authors who also define innovation as the process through which new ideas, objects, behaviours, and practices are created, developed, or implemented (e.g. Robertson, 1967; Zaltman et al., 1973). To broaden this definition van de Ven (1986 : 591) states that innovation “is a new idea, which may be a recombination of old ideas, a scheme that challenges present order, a formula, or a unique approach which is perceived as new by the individuals involved”. It is this broad definition that is used in the context of this research as it covers a wide variety of types of innovation and also shows that innovation is a process of developing the ideas - however, it should also be noted that innovation is also referred to as the outcome of the process of innovation. Many authors will discuss innovation as the tangible output of



developing the new idea. In this research the output of the innovation process is referred to as the type of innovation.

### Innovation types

There has been much work focused on identifying and classifying different types of innovation (e.g. Wolfe, 1994; Anderson et al., 2004) in an attempt to understand and classify the type of innovation within the organisational context.

Damanpour (1991) has drawn together the main types of innovation identified by scholars in his meta-analysis of organisational innovation, as seen in Figure 2.1. He outlines six main types of innovation and these have become widely accepted by the vast majority of authors working within this field (e.g. Medina et al., 2005; Jin et al., 2004).

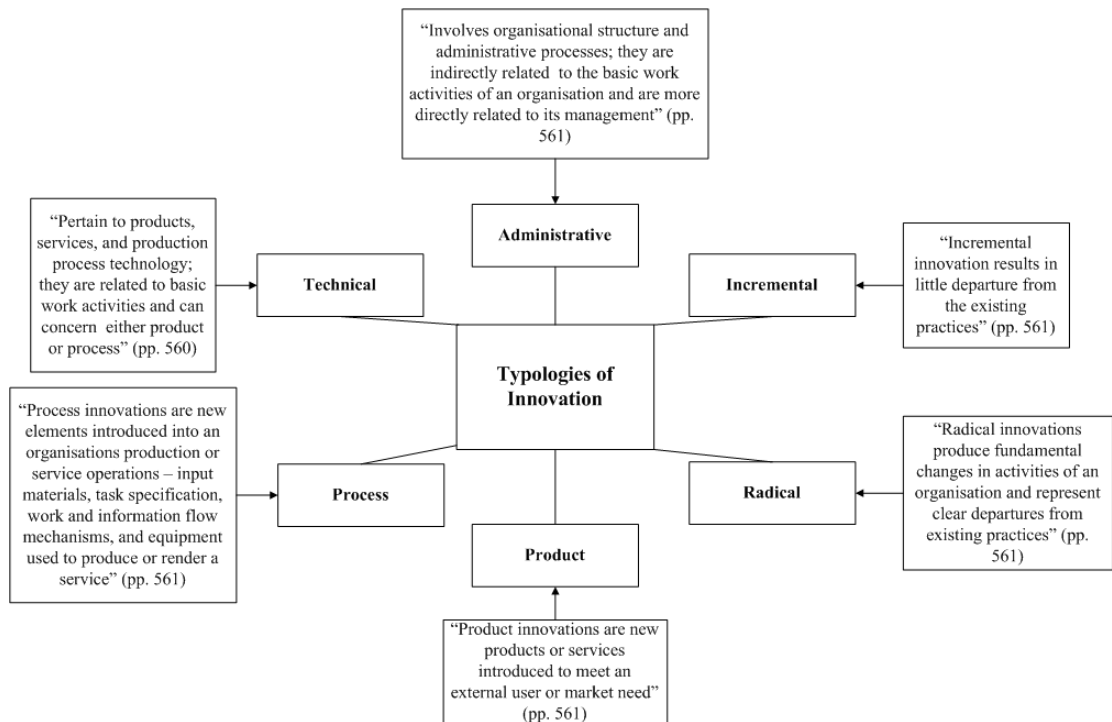


Figure 2.1 - Meta-Analysis of innovation types (developed from Damanpour, 1991)

Wang and Ahmed (2004) have built upon work first carried out by seminal authors such as Schumpeter (1934) by investigating the various areas where organisations can have innovative ability. The authors also identify six dimensions of

organisational innovation; product, market, process, behaviour and strategic innovation. These differ from Damanpour (1991) in that the Wang and Ahmed (2004) study is more concentrated on the areas in which to innovate rather than the characteristics of the type of innovation.

Gallowj and Weinstein (1997) have carried out research into innovation within the service industry context and they also suggest that there are varying types of innovation. They propose six types of innovation which are radical, improvement, incremental, ad hoc, recombinative or architectural, and formalisation. These types of innovation include the common types (incremental and radical), but the authors argue that the four others are specific to the service industry.

Other authors have approached the topic of types of innovation from the impact that they have on the organisation, i.e. either high or low impact types of innovation (Manimala et al., 2005). Some authors (Tushman and Anderson, 1986) go as far as classifying innovation types as competence enhancing or destroying, fitting with the incremental and radical innovation types of innovation respectively (Nord and Tucker (1987). Some have also discussed innovation types from the point of view of implementation, such as Daft (1978) who outlines a dual model of innovation and presents both top-down and bottom-up approaches.

Other studies (O'Connor and McDermott, 2004) have focused on one particular type of innovation and examined how organisational factors influence this type of innovation. These studies have focused on either radical (Stringer, 2000; Ettlíe et al., 1984) or incremental (Bessant and Francis, 1999; De Jong and Kemp, 2003) innovation types and have neglected the other types of innovation that might be affected by organisational characteristics.

What is apparent from the existing studies researching the relationship between organisational characteristics and innovation types is that in these studies the

innovation types are often limited to the tension between incremental and radical innovation (Koberg et al., 2003; Manimala et al., 2005; van Looy et al., 2005).

Figure 2.2 has been developed to illustrate the differences between innovation and innovation types. It shows that innovation in this research is concerned with the actual process of gathering, developing and implementing new ideas, and types of innovation are the outputs of this process.

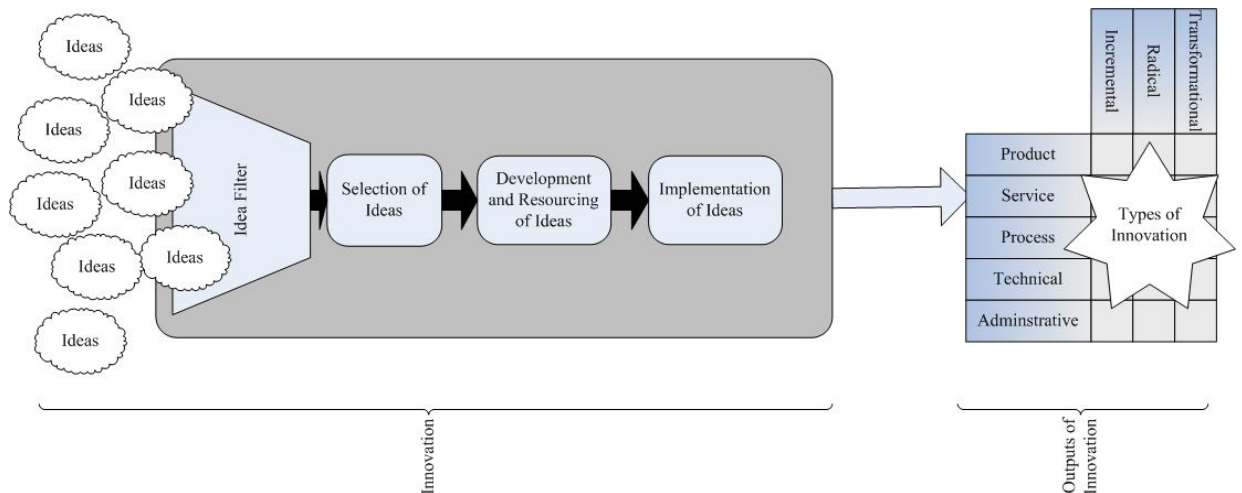


Figure 2.2 – Innovation and Types of Innovation (developed from Damanpour, 1991; Tidd et al., 2001; Goffin and Mitchell, 2005)

### Contact centres

When discussing the definition of contact centres it is important to be by stating the distinction between call centres and contact centres. Although these terms are often used interchangeably they do relate to different types of centres. A call centre is a centralised office used for the purpose of making and receiving a large volume of telephone calls. Whereas, a contact centre is the same as a call centre with the addition of handling other forms of contact such as letters, SMS, faxes, live web chats or e-mails. In response to the critical media attention received, call centres have re-branded their centre as a ‘customer service centre’ or ‘customer satisfaction centre’ (Taylor and Bain, 1999). As the industry has evolved it could be said that what is commonly referred to as a call centre by the public is in reality a contact

centre. Therefore, contact centre is used in this research to encompass all types of customer contact in a centralised location.

### Contact centre characteristics

There are a number of studies which aim to classify contact centres using different characteristics. The most commonly used are:

- **Location of the centre** - A study by BTeLocations (2003) provide a distinction on the location of contact centres. The study defines three types of contact centre based on their geographical location, these are: rural, edge-of-town/business park and metropolitan/city centre. The study identifies characteristics of centres that are driven by their location.
- **Size** - A study by the UK Department of Trade and Investment (Dti, 2004) used contact centre size as a way of categorising the industry. The study provides a banding of contact centres based on the number of advisors working within a centre. Table 2.1 shows this banding and how it is used in this research.

*Table 2.1 – Size bandings of contact centres*

<i>Size band (agent positions) from Dti (2004) study</i>	<i>Categorisation used in this research</i>
10-50	Small
51-100	
101-150	
151-200	Medium
201-250	
251-500	Large
501-1,000	
1,001 +	

- **Direction of contact** – the direction of contact relates to the nature of the activity within the centre (Feinberg et al., 2000). In-bound relates to customers calling the contact centre and out-bound relates to the contact centre calling the customer. Centres can also provide both in-bound and out-bound services, so there are three categories within this characteristic.
- **Ownership** – this refers to whether a centre is in-house or outsourced/offshored (Taylor et al., 2002; Taylor and Bain, 2005). In-house contact centres are owned and managed by the wider company whereas outsourced centres are owned and operated on a contract basis by specialist

contact centre providers. Offshored centres are commonly located in a ‘low-cost’ country in order to embrace the opportunities of globalisation (Taylor and Bain, 2005).

- **Nature of services provided** - the nature of the services provided can be thought of as a dimension of the uncertainty of demand against the complexity of the service. This is developed from a well-known manufacturing concept derived by Puttick (1987). Table 2.2 shows the constructs which comprise this categorisation of the nature of services.

Table 2.2 – Nature of services

Service Classification	
Uncertainty of Demand	Technical Complexity of Product/Service
Length of the Interface Duration (Mills and Margulies, 1980)	Confidentiality Level of Information Transferred during the Service Delivery (Mills and Margulies, 1980)
The Volume of Calls (from Puttick, 1987)	Number of Steps in the Delivery of the Service (from Puttick, 1987; Zeithaml et al., 2006)
The Nature of the Service Required (from Puttick, 1987)	Emotional Content of the Service Interaction (Anton, 2000)
Agent Absenteeism (from Puttick, 1987)	Degree of standard knowledge content that the Service has (from Puttick, 1987)
	Importance of Agent Decisions (Mills and Margulies, 1980)

- **Operating models**- this refers to the models that Batt and Moynihan (2002) provide in their study, which echoes research carried out in manufacturing studies. Batt and Moynihan (2002) provide three models of contact centres; mass production, mass customisation and professional service – these models will be discussed further in this chapter as they provide a comprehensive view of the contact centre industry.
- **Customers** - this refers to the type of customers that are serviced through the contact centre. This distinction is usually made at a high level where centres are either business-to-consumer or business-to-business (Miciak and Desmarais, 2001).

## **2.2 INNOVATION**

Studies into innovation have covered a broad spectrum of organisation types, ranging from library and education areas (e.g. Harris, 2000; Harris, 2006) to factory and facilities management fields (e.g. Edwards et al., 2005; Mudrak et al., 2005). The literature also examines innovation from various standpoints such as new product and service development, R&D, process improvement and organisational change (e.g. Barras, 1986; Storey and Kelly, 2001; Rhyne et al., 2002).

The vast majority of the innovation literature can be split into two streams; one stream is concerned with economic implications that examine the macro-level issues such as diffusions of innovation across countries. The second stream is concerned with the innovation within organisations and the associated micro-level issues. This includes the influence of structures, processes and people within an organisation on innovation (Kessler and Chakrabarti, 1996).

The latter body of work has its origins in the 1960s (Burns and Stalker, 1961; Mansfield, 1963; Wilson, 1966; Shepard, 1967; William and Black, 1967). This interest in innovation within the organisational context has increased over time with a recent jump in the number of studies looking at the organisation and its ability to innovate. It is this body of work that is used within this literature review to understand which organisational factors influence innovation in any type of organisation. As was discussed in the introduction, this research is interested in exploring the organisational characteristics of contact centres that influence innovation therefore this body of knowledge is central to this research work.

As an initial starting point a high level literature review is carried out to identify the commonly cited organisational factors in the innovation literature. Table 2.3 shows the main organisational characteristics that were identified from an initial literature review, each of which is discussed in detail thereafter.

*Table 2.3 – Organisational factors and characteristics influencing innovation*

<b>Organisational Factors</b>	<b>Innovative Characteristics</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
Strategic Alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Focused on the external environment</li> <li>▪ Development of an innovation strategy aligned with the corporate objectives</li> <li>▪ Strategic commitment to innovation</li> <li>▪ Effective communication of innovation strategy</li> </ul>	Tidd et al., 2001; Davila et al., 2006; Ozsomer et al., 1997; Bessant et al., 2005
Organisational Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Low degree of functionality</li> <li>▪ Flat hierarchical structures</li> <li>▪ High degree of flexibility</li> <li>▪ Adaptive to the external environment</li> <li>▪ High level of resource slack</li> </ul>	Amabile et al., 1996; Bessant and Francis, 1999; Lemon and Sahota, 2004; Loewe and Dominiquini, 2006; Ozsomer et al., 1997; Damanpour, 1987; Merx-Chermin and Hijhof, 2005; Chanal, 2004; Tidd et al., 2001
Organisational Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Time to develop ideas</li> <li>▪ Tolerating mistakes</li> <li>▪ Effective internal communication</li> <li>▪ Learning environment</li> <li>▪ Allow risk taking</li> <li>▪ Innovative as a way of life</li> <li>▪ Collaborative culture</li> <li>▪ Open culture</li> <li>▪ Support innovation and new ideas</li> <li>▪ Proactive problem identification and solving</li> </ul>	Tidd et al., 2001; Goffin and Mitchell, 2005; Davila et al., 2006; Knox, 2002; Jaskyte and Riobo, 2004; Merx-Chermin and Hijhof, 2005; Hyland and Beckett, 2005; Loewe and Dominiquini, 2006; Bessant et al., 2005; Bessant and Francis, 1999; Amabile et al., 1996; Bessant et al., 2005
Management style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Commitment to innovation</li> <li>▪ Coaching</li> <li>▪ Empower employees</li> <li>▪ Participatory decision making</li> <li>▪ Democratic leadership style</li> <li>▪ Stimulating and motivating innovation</li> <li>▪ Support of new ideas</li> </ul>	Damanpour, 1987; Merx-Chermin and Hijhof, 2005; Jaskyte and Riobo, 2004; Bronstein, 2005; Knox, 2002; Davila et al., 2006; Tidd et al., 2001
Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Professionalism</li> <li>▪ Commitment to training and development</li> <li>▪ Cross-functional job rotation</li> <li>▪ Employee autonomy</li> <li>▪ Team based working</li> <li>▪ Broad knowledge base</li> <li>▪ Roles to facilitate innovation</li> </ul>	Loewe and Dominiquini, 2006; Damanpour, 1987; Hyland and Beckett, 2005; Merx-Chermin and Hijhof, 2005; Goffin and Mitchell, 2005; Tidd et al., 2001; Amabile et al., 1996; Lemon and Sahota, 2004
Innovation tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Effective knowledge transfer system</li> <li>▪ Idea generation system</li> <li>▪ Creativity management</li> <li>▪ Goals and metrics for innovation</li> <li>▪ Reward system</li> <li>▪ Ideas implementation system</li> <li>▪ Motivation scheme</li> <li>▪ Risk and benefit identification system</li> </ul>	Bessant and Francis, 1999; Chanal, 2004; Lemon and Sahota, 2004; Davila et al., 2006; Merx-Chermin and Hijhof, 2005; Hyland and Beckett, 2005; Goffin and Mitchell, 2005; Wood, 2003; Loewe and Dominiquini, 2006; Bessant et al., 2005; Amabile et al., 1996

### **2.3 INNOVATION IN SERVICES**

So far this literature review on innovation has focused on the general innovation literature, however it is important to realise that this research is carried out within a service industry and there is theory specifically developed for innovation within this context. As much of the innovation theory has been developed in the manufacturing industry (Drejer, 2004), service scholars have highlighted service innovation as an important yet underdeveloped branch of innovation theory, as noted by Sundbo (2000: 110): “there has only been a limited number of studies of innovation in service firms”. Services have characteristics that differentiate them from manufacturing; services are intangible processes and must also include some link with the customer to be complete (Soteriou and Chase, 1998). Some authors (e.g. Drejer, 2004) call for manufacturing and service innovation theory to work towards a common framework - this is due to the boundary between manufacturing and service activities becoming blurred. However, it is important to understand that there are still some distinctions between service and manufacturing that will impact upon innovation within the different contexts.

Innovation in services has become an important topic over the last few years primarily due to the increasing importance of the service sector in many countries, where services can account for 60-70% of the gross national product (Goffin and Mitchell, 2005). However, services have huge diversification ranging from personal services such as hairdressing, to education, transportation and to large scale service provision such as finance and insurance services. This diversity means that any generalisations made about services and innovation must be qualified with exceptions (Fagerberg et al., 2005).

Although it is acknowledged that there is an important emergent field on service specific innovation theory, the work carried out in this research takes the innovation theory to be generic across all organisation types. The service specific innovation literature is used in the discussions chapter to enfold this body of literature against the empirical findings of this study.



## **2.4 CONTACT CENTRE LITERATURE**

This section of the chapter outlines the major subject areas where most of the work has been or is being carried out with respect to contact centre operations. This will give a picture of what subject areas are of interest to scholars investigating the contact centre industry. This breakdown will also help to identify gaps within current academic thinking, showing any areas that have not been studied or are underdeveloped within this context.

Of the almost seventy studies explored as part of this literature review the majority were carried out between the late 1990s and early 2000s, which seems to match the boom in contact centre introductions in the 1990s. Thus, the research activity within academia has mirrored the activity in contact centres in practice.

The diagram shown in Figure 2.3 is a map of the literature that has been reviewed in this area. The main areas of study that have been carried out in the contact centre research field are highlighted in the map with regard to the various disciplines. The map also attempts to show main linkages within areas of the literature, however due to the interdisciplinary nature of the contact centre literature it would have been impractical to show all the linkages that exist between the various studies, as the map would become too complex to be of any worth. The findings from the literature map will now be discussed in more detail.

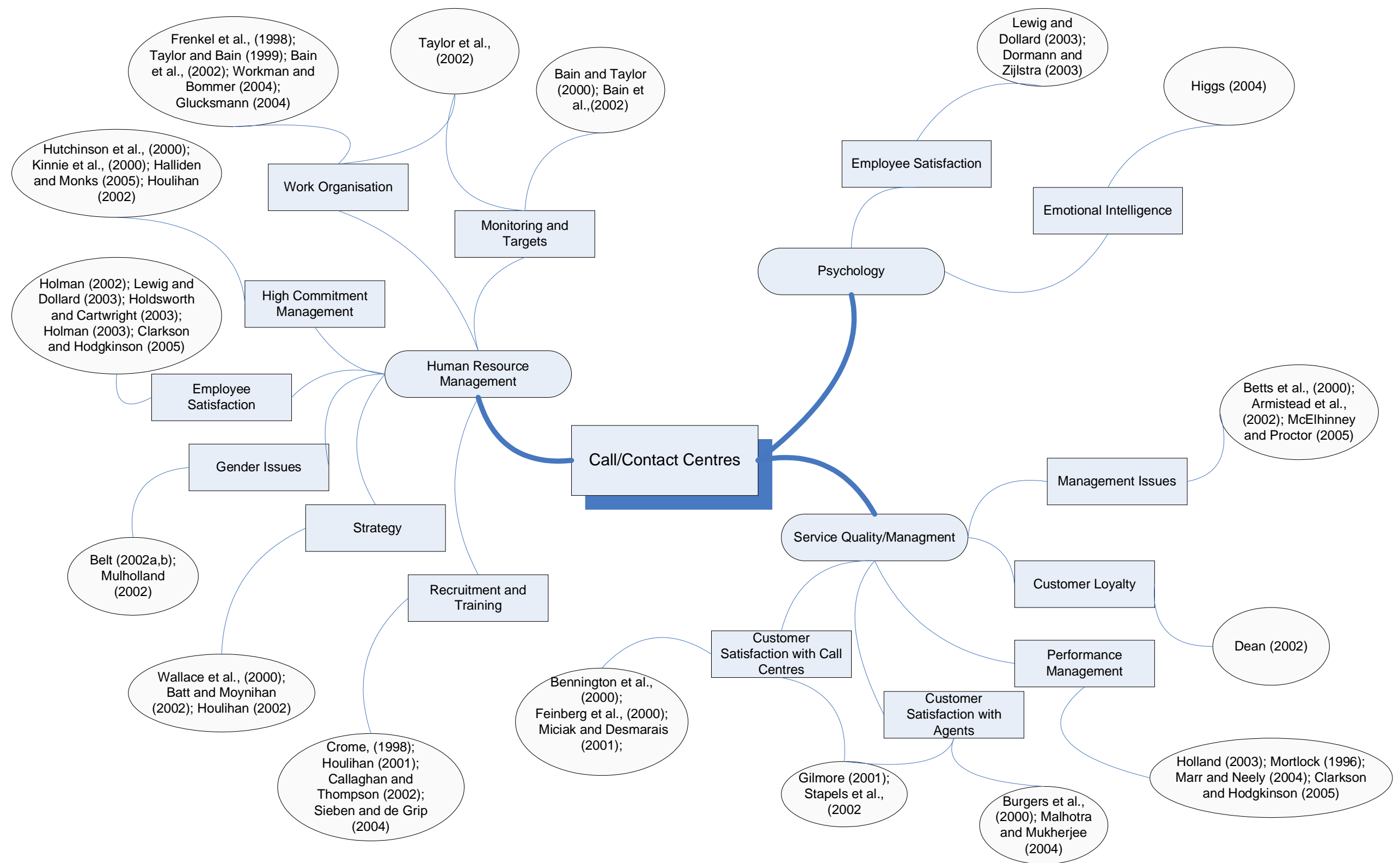


Figure 2.3 – Literature map for contact centre literature review

The vast majority of the literature reviewed was from the human resource management perspective. Although a large amount has also come from the service management perspective, it is the human resource management view that seems to dominate the literature in the area of contact centres. The core of much of the literature (van den Broek, 2003; Lewig and Dollard, 2003; Belt, 2002; Holman, 2002; Houlihan, 2002; Crome, 1998; Taylor and Bain, 1999; Frenkel et al., 1998; Kinnie et al, 2000; Wallace et al., 2000; Bain and Taylor, 2000; Bain et al., 2002; Mulholland, 2002; Taylor et al., 2003) seems to be focused on employee satisfaction factors, such as performance measures, work organisation, labour process and stress. This literature is mainly focused on the human factors of contact centre operations, and how the nature of contact centre operations affects the employees working within the operations.

The service management literature (Staples et al., 2002; Bennington et al, 2000; Burgers et al, 2000; Feinberg et al., 2000; Gilmore and Moreland, 2000; Higgs, 2004; Malhotra and Mukherjee, 2004; Gilmore, 2001; Dean, 2002) is mainly concerned with linking operational factors to customer satisfaction and service quality. This literature is focused on the operational factors of contact centres, which also include human factors, and how these impact the service quality perceived by the customer.

This shows that human factors and customer satisfaction in the context of contact centres have been highlighted as important areas to investigate, however it has been said that contact centres in general have two main components; people and electronic equipment (Garrett et al., 2002). It has also been said that contact centres are technologically driven and it is their “technological foundations that give contact centres their flexibility to serve customers and the ability to have reduced customer service costs.” (Prabhaker et al., 1997: pp.228). Most of the academic literature on the contact centre industry does mention the use of technology within the contact centre industry but it is given only a fleeting mention or limited to discussions on how it affects customer satisfaction (Walker et al, 2002), how it is used to monitor employees, or the effects that it has on employees (Kinnie et al, 2000; Dormann and

Zijlstra, 2003). There has been little reference to how technology will affect the future of the industry in years to come; although Datamonitor (2004) does mention that contact centres are starting to use technology to build networked, virtual-type contact centres. Perhaps the prevalence of studies on technology utilisation within contact centres with regard to performance and human factors is due to the fact that these concepts cannot be disentangled from each other, i.e. technology will always have an impact on workers and customers alike and it is this impact that researchers in the contact centre field find most interesting.

It is also apparent from the literature that the vast amounts of studies carried out in the industry are concerned with the view of the contact centre agents. Very few take into account the management view when carrying out the research, although most do discuss the managerial implications of the research.

### **Operating models of contact centres**

It is evident from the literature (Malhotra and Mukherjee, 2002; Dean, 2002; Batt and Moynihan, 2002; Gilmore, 2001; Frenkel et al., 1998; Bain et al., 2002; Deery and Kinnie, 2002;) on contact centres that there are three main tensions that affect the strategic dynamics of centres. These are; cost, customer service and employee satisfaction. There is a strategic tension that exists between these factors, where the contact centre operations management has to make a decision as to which factor is important in their type of operation. The focus of the strategic direction that a contact centre takes is dependant on many factors such as; the company's overall aims for the future, the type of customers the company has, and the service that it provides. Therefore, a one size fits all approach would not be suitable to contact centre strategy development. There has, however, been an attempt made to generalise the strategy of contact centre operations into different typologies of service production models. Drawing from experiences within the manufacturing industry, Batt and Moynihan (2002) put forward the types of production models that can be adopted within a contact centre, which are concerned with gaining a strategic fit between the three tensions stated above.

The three model types suggested by Batt and Moynihan (2002) are:

- Mass production model
- Professional service model
- Mass customisation model

Although the above authors define these production models explicitly, many other authors also talk about the same types of organisational characteristics and work organisations that are evident in the models. Therefore, it is possible to classify the literature into schools of thought based on these production type models.

A wide and general review of the contact centre literature shows that the main schools of thought on contact centre operations can also be thought of in terms of the service production models proposed by Batt and Moynihan (2002).

The mass production school (Garson, 1988; Fernie and Metcalf, 1998; Taylor and Bain, 1999) has the view that contact centre jobs are low paid with few career prospects giving the industry the reputation of being a 'dead-end job'. They share the vision of contact centre operations being routine, repetitive and managed through the application of computer technology which closely monitors performance. This school has the opinion that automation is used as a substitute for labour. This mass production school of thought believes that contact centre operations share the same features of the 'engineering model' that is based on Taylorist work organisations.

There is an opposing view in the professional service school of thought within the literature (Frenkel et al., 1998; Leindner, 1996; Ashford and Humphrey, 1993). These authors share the view that contact centre work is diverse, where agents are challenged and the work requires discretion as each service encounter is different. This school of thought says that agents are trusted to deliver the required service level to the customer by building relationships with the customer. The services provided are complex and therefore the agent must be able to think for themselves without the use of scripts or monitoring. This school of thought believes that contact centre agents should be empowered to perform to high levels of customer service.

There is also a view that is shared with many authors (Korczynski, 2002; Halliden and Monks, 2005; Kinnie et al., 2000; Hutchinson et al., 2000) in the contact centre literature which pertains to the mass customisation school of thought – it could be argued that this is the dominant school of thought in the literature. The view shared by the authors of this school is that contact centres can be rationalised as well as keeping their employees satisfied and giving a high level of customer service. They agree that some level of automation must be used in conjunction with focusing on customer service levels. It has been said that this type of approach is the ‘fun and surveillance’ approach (Kinnie et al., 2000) where there is still a degree of control over the work organisation of employees but there is a strong emphasis on employee satisfaction.

## **2.5 INTEGRATION OF INNOVATION LITERATURE WITH CONTACT CENTRE LITERATURE – *POSITIONING THIS RESEARCH***

In order to set this research into its theoretical context, the innovation and contact centre literature is integrated and the factors identified from the initial innovation literature review (in Table 2.3) are compared against the three schools of thought that are evident in the contact centre management literature. Table 2.4 draws together the evidence from the contact centre literature under the headings of the important factors for innovation. The objective of this is to identify existing theory on the characteristics of contact centres and how they relate to the theory within the innovation literature.

Table 2.4 – Gap analysis between bodies of literature

<b>Organisational Innovative Characteristics</b>	<b>Contact Centre Types</b>		
	<b>Mass Production</b>	<b>Mass Customisation</b>	<b>Professional Service</b>
Human Resources	Sacrificial HR strategy (Wallace et al., 2000). Employees with low growth needs, low social needs and weak interpersonal skills (Gilmore, 2001). Low or no levels of worker autonomy (Taylor et al., 2003). Introductory training focusing on the procedures and processes (Adia and Chowdhury, 2004; Miciak and Desmarais, 2001).	High commitment HR strategies (Hutchinson et al., 2000; Houlihan, 2002; Kinnie et al., 2000). Increase in training and development opportunities (Kinnie et al., 2000). Low task discretion (Kinnie et al., 2001).	Employees with high growth needs, high social needs and strong interpersonal skills (Gilmore, 2001). Semi-professional, empowered worker (Winslow and Bramer, 1994 cited in Frenkel et al., 1998). Frequent training that spans multiple areas, with on-going ‘on the job’ training (Shah and Bandi, 2003). Formally educated agents with high skill levels (Batt and Moynihan, 2002).
Organisational Culture	No creativity (Frenkel et al., 1998). A culture of command and control prevails in the mass production call centre with agents being controlled and monitored to a high extent (Houlihan, 2001; Seddon, 2003; van den Broek, 2004; Taylor and Bain, 1999; Adia and Chowdhury, 2004; Callaghan and Thompson, 2001) with some call centres encountering management intimidation, resulting in defensive agents (Bain and Taylor, 2000; Houlihan, 2001; Wallace et al., 2000).	More open culture that aims to balance intensive surveillance with fun activities (Kinnie et al., 2001). Some creativity (Frenkel et al., 1998). In the mass customisation culture there is more opportunity to chat and collaborate with other agents (Batt, 1999).	The professional service approach requires an organisation to: share information to employees about the company’s performance; give employees power so that they have responsibility and authority to make day to day decisions about their job related activities; and ensure that employees are rewarded on the organisation’s performance (Gilmore, 2001). Involving and informing employees during change programs (Halliden and Monks, 2005). Agents collaborate with one another to provide services to customers (Batt and Moynihan, 2002).
Organisational Structure	Based on the machine bureaucracy archetype (Adia and Chowdhury, 2004).	Relatively flat structure compared to the mass production model with fewer layers of management (Kinnie et al., 2001).	Usually a customer has a single point of contact that they develop a long-term relationship with, therefore the organisational structure is very flat with agents drawing on a flexible informal network of other professionals to solve customer issues (Batt and Moynihan, 2002).
Management style	The supervisor has a disciplinary role (Frenkel et al., 1998). 'Big brother' management	The supervisor is a facilitator and coach (Frenkel et al., 1998). Management	Management empowers agents to become autonomous and equips them with the relevant

<b>Organisational Innovative Characteristics</b>	<b>Contact Centre Types</b>		
	<b>Mass Production</b>	<b>Mass Customisation</b>	<b>Professional Service</b>
	<p>exercising total control over the labour process, through high levels of tracking and monitoring is evident in mass production call centres (Taylor et al., 2002; Fernie and Metcalf, 1998; Adia and Chowdhury, 2004; Burgers et al., 2000; Taylor and Bain, 2000; Gilmore, 2001; Frenkel et al., 1998). This management style is driven by the rationalisation strategy, which results in the need for management to ensure adherence to standardisation with the objective of management to minimise costs. Therefore the focus of management is on operational efficiency (Burgers et al., 2000; Dean, 2002; Wallace et al., 2000; Staples et al., 2002) which leads to task focused management (Wallace et al., 2000; Gilmore, 2001), this focus on tasks mean that only the specific job get done and the agent will not think about extra ‘tasks’ such as coming up with new ideas or thinking about operational improvements.</p>	<p>have an increased role in the training and development of agents through a coaching role (Hutchinson et al., 2000). Although behaviour and output are still measured by management as a form of control (Frenkel et al., 1998).</p>	<p>knowledge that they need to deal with complex customer issues (Gilmore, 2001; Holdsworth and Cartwright, 2003). Leadership is through involvement with the agents to enable them to perform their tasks (Houlihan, 2003).</p>
Strategic Alignment	<p>The basic business strategy is focused on low cost high volume services (Gilmore, 2001).</p>	<p>The business strategy is focused on a commitment to customer service while still focusing on cost rationalisation (Hutchinson et al., 2000).</p>	<p>The basic business strategy is focused on differentiation, customised and personalised services (Gilmore, 2001). They provide the complete range of services as a single point of contact (Batt and Moynihan, 2002).</p>
Innovation tools			



Although Table 2.4 shows that the differing views on contact centre management can be aligned with some of the organisational factors for innovation, it is important to note that the professional service model is not the dominant model within the call and contact centre industry. The industry is much more aligned to the mass production and customisation models and from this initial literature review and gap analysis it can be argued that contact centres do not have the organisational characteristics that would support innovation.

## **2.6 CHAPTER CONCLUSIONS**

From the initial literature reviews carried out into the characteristics of innovative organisations and contact centres it can be seen that by taking the common mass production and customisation views of contact centres, one could be assume that contact centres are not organisations where innovation or the necessary tools for innovation are prevalent. This view of the contact centre is widespread among many academics and consumers. However, this research takes this view as its starting point and aims to give a greater understanding of whether or not it is valid. As there is no current knowledge on this subject area, any well developed insights into this phenomenon will further the debate on both contact centre operations and innovation within the service context.

It can be concluded that there is a significant gap within the literature on contact centres and how innovation might be undertaken in such an environment. This has been bolstered by the fact that industry experts (see Appendix 2A) have verified that there is very little knowledge on innovation activities within the call and contact centre industry. This provides a significant gap for this research to fill and allows for the research to make a significant contribution to knowledge.

Figure 2.4 shows a conceptual framework developed from this initial literature review. This research will focus on the organisational characteristics that influence innovation activities in contact centres, and attempt to identify the types of innovation (i.e. the outputs of innovation) that are evident in contact centres.



*Figure 2.4 – Initial Conceptual framework showing areas of relevant literature*

The next chapter will use this conceptual framework to develop a number of research questions that will drive the empirical work of this research.

## **Chapter 3: Research Philosophy and Strategy**

*“Philosophy is nothing but common sense in a dress suit”. Author Unknown*

### **3.1 NATURE OF THE RESEARCH**

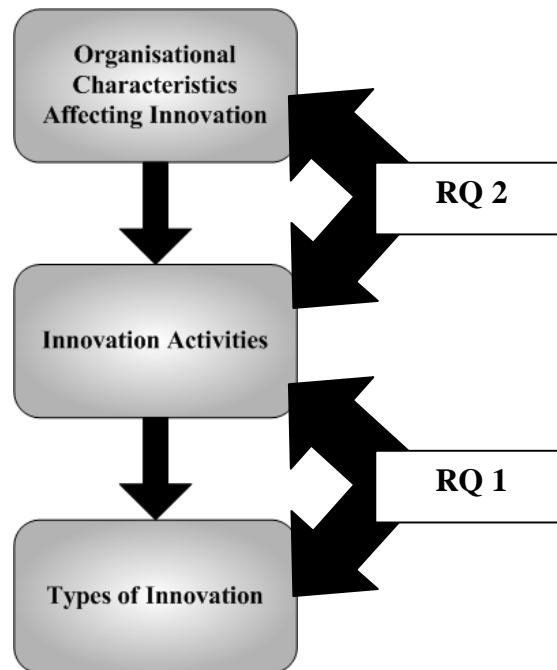
As was presented in the introduction, the aim of the research is ‘to understand innovation activities within contact centre operations’. As discussed in Chapter 1 the research area under investigation is exploratory in nature as very little work has been carried out into this subject and so this research aims to build theory in the area of innovation in contact centres. This means that the nature of the research can be discussed before more details of the project are developed. It is important to keep the aim of the research in mind as this will influence the overall philosophical paradigm and methodology that the research will follow.

### **3.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

A conceptual framework shows the main areas of interest in the study and the expected relationships that might exist between them. Conceptual frameworks are often depicted using diagrams where main concepts can be represented as boxes and the relationships between the main concepts can be illustrated by arrows or lines connecting them. Conceptual frameworks are useful in allowing research questions, hypotheses or areas of interest to be easily identified and communicated (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Maxwell, 2005).

Conceptual frameworks are useful when the research area and questions cannot be easily defined. As discussed in the introduction the research goal of this project is to understand innovation activities in contact centres, and through the initial literature review a number of areas of interest can be identified. These areas of interest and how they may be related can be brought together in an initial conceptual framework. It is important to reiterate that this research focuses on firm level innovation, i.e. innovation that is generated within the operations of the contact centre, and is not concerned with innovation activities originating from outside the organisation.

Figure 3.1 shows the initial conceptual framework that is derived for this research project and where the research questions fit with it.



*Figure 3.1 – Initial conceptual framework*

The initial conceptual framework shows that there are two main areas that are of interest for this research project – these are:

- The organisational characteristics (namely the enablers and barriers) that impact on the innovation activities of contact centres.
- The types of innovation in which contact centres are involved.

Using the conceptual framework in Figure 3.1 it can be seen that there are a number of points within the framework that can lead to the development of research questions. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that there is a direct step from the conceptual framework to the research questions of a study, which start to operationalise the conceptual framework.

Silverman (2005) cites Punch (1998) in highlighting the role of research questions, stating that there are five main reasons for defining the research questions:

1. They organise the project and give it direction and coherence.

2. They delimit the project, showing its boundaries.
3. They keep the researcher focused.
4. They provide a framework when you write up your research.
5. They point to the methods and data that will be needed.

It is also important to understand that the research question derived for the study should be researchable – this means that the research questions must be able to be answered. It is a practical consideration that must take into account timescales, ethical considerations, and access to the required data as well as the personal limitations of the researcher (Institute of International Studies, University of California, 2001).

It can therefore be seen that the development of the research questions is a very important phase in any research project. It should also be noted that research questions can develop and be refined as the project progresses – this is especially true in exploratory research such as this (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Therefore, the research questions defined at this stage of the research may be further refined as this research progresses.

Using the conceptual framework in Figure 3.1 a number of research questions can be defined. These are outlined below – the purpose, assumptions and rationale for each are also discussed.

***RQ 1. Are contact centres involved in innovation activities and if so what type of innovation can be seen?***

The purpose of this research question is to understand the overall attitude to innovation within contact centres. It aims to understand how contact centres view innovation, what innovation means to them and whether or not they involved in any innovation activities. The findings of the initial literature review and expert interviews conclude that contact centres are not organisations in which innovation is important. Therefore, this research question aims to understand more about the

underlying assumption that contact centres are not organisations that are concerned with innovation.

***RQ 2. What are the enablers and barriers to innovation activity in contact centres?***

This research question leads on from RQ1, and aims to identify the characteristics of contact centres that can impact upon innovation activities. The underlying assumption in this question is that there are a number of characteristics that are important for organisations to successfully innovate. The outcome of this research question will identify both the enablers for and barriers to innovation activities. A systematic literature review will be undertaken to identify the characteristics that influence innovation, it is envisaged that this literature review will identify these factors for a general view of organisations.

It is expected that the findings from this research question can be used to develop a series of propositions that will allow theory to be generalised from the particular to the general.

As was discussed earlier in this section, there are a number of reasons why research questions are important to a study and one of them is that they point to the methods and data that should be used in the research.

### **3.3 PHILOSOPHICAL PARADIGM**

“The decision to study a topic in a particular way always involves some kind of philosophical choice about what is important” (Easterby-Smith et al., 1991: 3). Research philosophy is therefore inherent in the study before the research strategy and design is considered.

The philosophical debate in management research is concerned with the ontological and epistemological foundations of the research.

Ontology is the “assumptions that we make about the nature of reality” (Easterby-Smith et al., 1991: 31). On the two extreme ends of the ontological spectrum are the

realist and the relativist positions. Realists view the world as concrete and external, and believe that research can only be furthered through observations that are directly related to the occurrence that is under investigation. On the other hand, relativists believe that different observers will have an affect on the phenomena under investigation, as all observers will have a different viewpoint of the phenomenon.

Epistemology relates to the “general set of assumptions about the best ways of inquiring into the nature of the world” (Easterby-Smith et al., 1991:31). The nature of the ontological assumptions affects the epistemology. The epistemological assumptions relate to the nature of knowledge and how knowledge can be generated.

The ontology and epistemology make up the philosophical assumptions and paradigm within which the research is conducted. Table 3.1 details some of the main ontological and epistemological positions and compares science with social science positions. It shows that positivism in science and social science have different characteristics, which highlights that social science paradigms are different to the philosophical paradigms put forward by traditional physical sciences. Management research falls into the social science paradigms, and Table 3.1 outlines the three main paradigms commonly discussed within management research.

Table 3.1 - Ontologies and epistemologies in science and social science (Easterby-Smith et al., 2004)

<i>Ontology of science</i>	<b>Traditional Realism</b>	<b>Internal Realism</b>	<b>Relativism</b>	
<i>Ontology of social science</i>		<b>Representationalism</b>	<b>Relativism</b>	<b>Nominalism</b>
<i>Truth</i>	Is established by correspondence between observations and phenomena	Is determined through verification of predictions	Requires consensus between different viewpoints	Depends on who establishes it
<i>Facts</i>	Are concrete	Are concrete, but cannot be accessed directly	Depend on viewpoint of observer	Are all human creations
<i>Epistemology of science</i>	<b>Positivism</b>		<b>Relativism</b>	
<i>Epistemology of social science</i>		<b>Positivism</b>	<b>Relativism</b>	<b>Social Constructionism</b>

The paradigms, consisting of the ontology and epistemology, are characterised by the way in which they approach the truth, and the facts concerning the knowledge generated through the research. Each of the three main epistemologies of social science will now be discussed in more detail in order to understand where this research lies.

**Positivism** - Within positivism the truth is gained through a series of predictions or hypotheses about the nature of the phenomenon under study and these predictions are verified through empirical fieldwork. The facts that are evident about the phenomenon are thought of as concrete but cannot be accessed directly.

**Relativism** - Within relativism the truth is only gained when different perspectives of the phenomenon are in agreement. The facts of the situation are dependant on the viewpoints of the observers that are involved within the phenomenon. This means that a variety of viewpoints are needed to establish findings within this research paradigm.

**Social constructionism** - Within social constructionism the truth is dependant on the person that establishes it, meaning that people's perception of the truth is taken as the



truth, as this is what people believe. The facts concerning the phenomenon are derived from the people involved in the phenomenon and so are constructed from the human aspect.

Positivism, relativism and social constructionism are points on a spectrum, with positivism and social constructionism taking positions at either end of the scale. Many authors also consider the ontology or epistemology of research as a spectrum (for example, Morgan and Smircich, 1980; Meredith et al., 1989). It is often the debate between these ends of the spectrum that is discussed to show the differences between the philosophical paradigms. Table 3.2 highlights the contrasting differences between the ends of the spectrum.

*Table 3.2 - Contrast between positivism and social constructionism (Easterby-Smith et al., 1991:30)*

	<i>Positivism</i>	<i>Social Constructionism</i>
The observer	Must be independent	Is part of what is being observed
Human interests	Should be irrelevant	Are the main drivers of science
Explanation	Must demonstrate causality	Aim to increase the general understanding of the situation
Research progresses through	Hypotheses and deduction	Gathering rich data from which ideas are induced
Concepts	Need to be operationalised so they can be measured	Should incorporate stakeholder perspectives
Unit of analysis	Should be reduced to simplest terms	May include complexity of whole situations
Generalisation through	Statistical probability	Theoretical abstraction
Sampling requires	Large numbers selected randomly	Small number of cases chosen for specific reasons

By taking the two extremes of the philosophical spectrum the differences between them can be discussed in a clear way. As is seen in Table 3.2, Easterby-Smith et al. (1991) identify a number of characteristics that are important in management research, i.e. the role of the observer, concepts, generalisability, and these are discussed in relation to the ends of the philosophical scale.

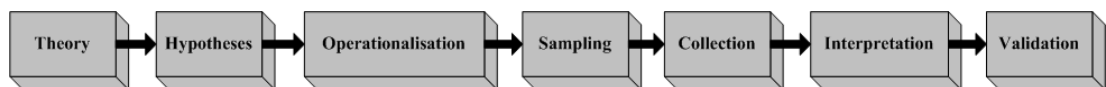
Positivism is concerned with reducing the complexity of the phenomenon often to its simplest terms. This means that the terms can be operationalised and measured, often through deductive research where hypotheses are developed and tested through

large scale statistically valid studies. Research within the positivism paradigm often seeks to establish causality between various aspects of the phenomenon under investigation.

On the other hand research carried out in the social constructionist paradigm is often concerned with gaining an understanding of the phenomenon including all the complexities and interactions that exist within and around the phenomenon. Rich data is collected from a specific collection of cases which are often small in number. Theory is abstracted through an inductive process using the rich data collected from a number of stakeholder perspectives.

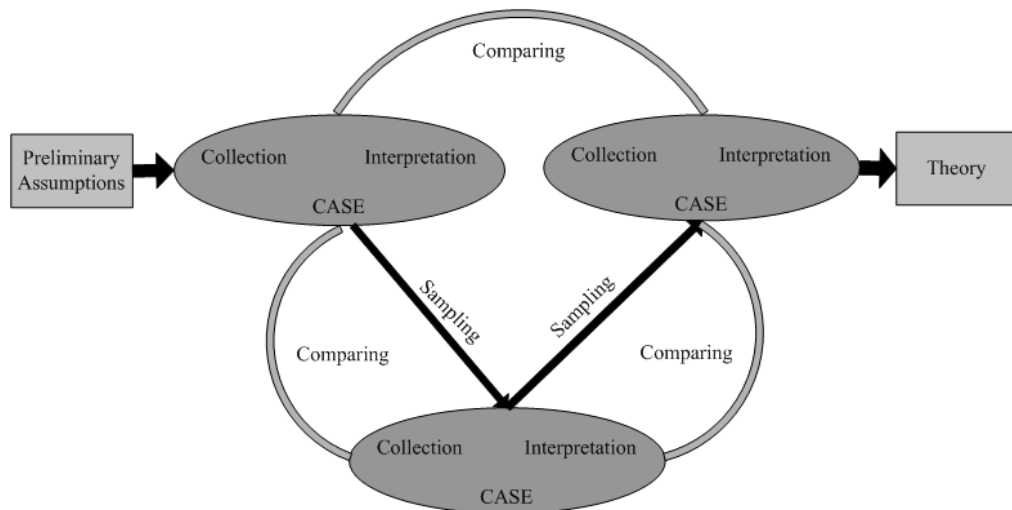
It is not only the nature of the data collected within the paradigms that differ, but also the process of carrying out the research.

The dissimilarity between research paradigms has been discussed previously, and these philosophical paradigms affect many aspects of the research process. Flick (2002) outlines the effect philosophy has on the research process, with the positivist paradigm being identified as a linear research process, the structure of which can be seen in Figure 3.2.



*Figure 3.2 - Linear model of the research process (Flick, 2002: 44)*

The linear process of research is suited to the quantitative nature of positivist research that aims to validate a set of hypotheses. This is also suitable for qualitative research carried out in the interpretivist paradigm, but only in a very limited way. Flick (2002) argues that qualitative research is more suited to a circular interlinking of the research process; this is based on the work carried out by Glaser and Strauss (1967). This view of the circular approach to the research process is seen in Figure 3.3.



*Figure 3.3 - Circular model of the research process (Flick, 2002)*

In the circular model of the research process each of the case examples are used to compare against each other, building knowledge through learning from each of the case studies. Although each of the cases is investigated individually they are drawn together to develop new theory or to build on existing theories. It is an iterative process that will develop as the research progresses, in this way it is similar to the inductive approach favoured in the grounded theory approach to research. It makes the process of designing a methodology one that is tentative and subject to change and development as the research begins to generate new knowledge.

Although the philosophical paradigms have been discussed as a spectrum with positivism and social constructionism as the end points, it should be noted that even within each of the paradigms there are different extremes. This can result in it being difficult to clearly define where a research project sits on the spectrum. It is easier to highlight the general paradigm within which the research work rests and then discuss the specific context of the research work and how this impacts upon the overall research methodology.

### **Philosophical paradigm of this research**

The preceding discussion on research philosophy has focused on the general ontologies, epistemologies and paradigms concerning management research. Undertaking such a discussion on research philosophy often reduces this complex

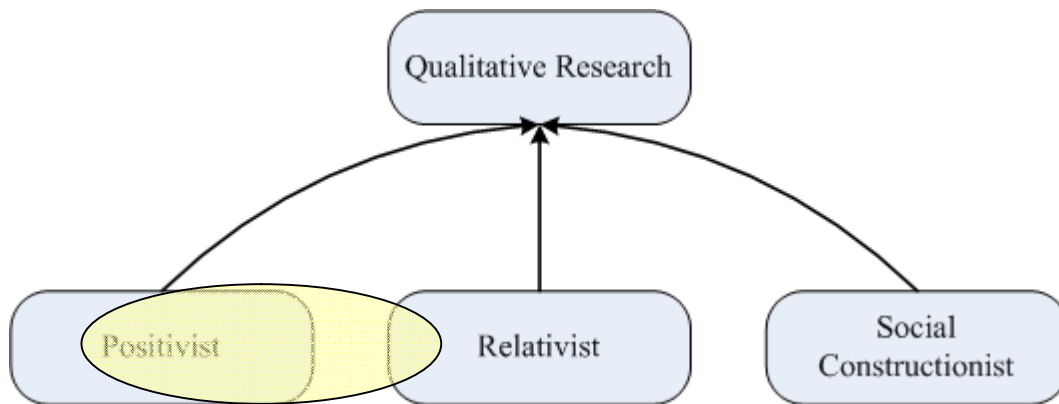
topic into categories and paradigms that are considered as disconnected and mutually exclusive from each other. However, this section discusses the implications these philosophies have for the research paradigm of this work and show that the philosophical assumptions underlying this work are more complex than management research textbooks show.

Considering the research aim and questions that are driving this work, i.e. identifying organisational factors that are barriers or enablers to innovation activities, it can be seen that the underlying assumptions of this research are focused on some objective reality, which means that there is a strong positivist influence in this research. However, there are aspects of other epistemologies that also influence the philosophical paradigm of this research.

As was presented in the general discussion there are three paradigms based on the underlying research epistemology: positivist, social constructionist and relativist. However, Myers (1997) proposes that, “while these three research epistemologies are *philosophically* distinct (as ideal types), in the practice of social research these distinctions are not always so clear cut. There is considerable disagreement as to whether these research "paradigms" or underlying epistemologies are necessarily opposed or can be accommodated within the one study.”

As will become apparent in the subsequent section of this chapter, the research strategy that this study employs is a qualitative one. While qualitative research is commonly associated with social constructionism and interpretivism it should be noted that 'qualitative' is not a synonym for 'interpretive' - qualitative research may or may not be interpretive, depending upon the underlying philosophical assumptions of the researcher (Myers, 1997). The philosophical assumptions in this research are those innovation activities and the enablers and barriers to them can be observed by an objective external observer. However, as the facts concerning this research area are not easily observed and measured this result in there being issues with the interpretation that each of the interviewees has on the areas under investigation. Because the different interpretations coming from the different participants will have

an effect on the findings of this research, therefore a qualitative strategy is a useful approach to adopt in this study. Qualitative research can be undertaken in any of the philosophical paradigms discussed. Figure 3.4 shows the three epistemologies and how they relate to qualitative research, with the position of this work identified.



*Figure 3.4 – The three epistemologies and how they relate to this qualitative research*

Figure 3.4 shows that the philosophical assumptions underpinning this research are based within the positive and relativist epistemologies, although from the figure it can be seen that the assumptions are more rooted in the positivist paradigm.

The positivist paradigm is generally based on the assumption that reality is objectively given and so can be described by measurable properties which are independent of the observer (researcher) and his or her instruments. Positivist studies generally attempt to build theory, in an attempt to increase the predictive understanding of phenomena. In this case the phenomena under investigation is innovation activities in contact centres and the understanding required relates to the organisational barriers and enablers that impact on innovation activities. Equally, Figure 3.4 shows that the philosophical paradigm of this research also overlaps into the relativist epistemology. This is because the research is based primarily on interviews undertaken with employees of contact centres. When dealing with interviews the reality constructed by the interviewees is historically constituted and is produced and reproduced by people, therefore there are some assumptions in the philosophical paradigm of this work that are influenced by relativism.

### **3.4 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH**

The debate on research philosophy usually surrounds the epistemological characteristics of the paradigm and the impact these have on the rest of the research design, but the debate can often get clouded when methodological approaches are also discussed as a research paradigm. Rolfe (2006) highlights this problem by saying “The quantitative/qualitative methodological distinction is often taken to be identical to the positivist/interpretivist epistemological distinction. The resulting alignment of quantitative research with positivism and qualitative research with interpretivism has led to a great deal of confusion in the debate over whether it is possible or desirable to mix methodologies within the same study (Morse 1991, Baker et al. 1992).”

Quantitative and qualitative research is often put under the headings of positivism and interpretivism respectively, and it should be noted that this leads to a simplistic debate on research design and methodology. Quantitative and qualitative research refers to the nature of the methodological approach. Quantitative research adopts methods which use numerical data and statistical analysis, qualitative research on the other hand uses data driven by words and interpretative analysis. It is easy to see why the terms positivism/quantitative and interpretative/qualitative do get used interchangeably if the characteristics defined in Table 3.2 are used to discuss the philosophical paradigms. The methodological approaches do lend themselves to each of the paradigms but as has been discussed previously, the blurred boundary between the philosophical paradigms is also true of the boundaries between the spectrums of methodological approaches.

While the notion of qualitative research being a paradigm in itself is rejected, it should be understood that a large body of literature has developed on qualitative research. It is important to consider qualitative research to be an approach to methodology, and therefore research in itself, as it follows a different research process to that of quantitative research.

Although Creswell (1998) says that “Qualitative inquiry represents a legitimate mode of social and human science exploration without apology or comparisons to quantitative research” (Creswell, 1998:9), it is still necessary to discuss the rationale for choosing to follow a qualitative approach. Creswell (1998) also put forward a number of reasons for adopting a qualitative methodology. These reasons are seen in the first column of Table 3.3 and are used as a rationale for why a qualitative approach is pursued in this research project.

*Table 3.3 – Rationale for a qualitative approach for this research*

<i>Reasons for Qualitative Approach (Creswell, 1998)</i>	<i>Rationale in this Project</i>
The nature of the research question	As discussed previously in this chapter the nature of the research questions are such that they aim to understand what is happening with innovation activities within contact centres.
The topic needs to be explored	The topic is one that has little research carried out and so it exploratory in nature.
There is a need to present a detailed view of the topic	Due to the complex nature of innovation activities within organisations a detailed and holistic view needs to be gained from the research area.
Study individuals in their natural setting	As the research aims to understand innovation activities within contact centres, the context and natural setting are important to build the theory.
The observer brings themselves into the study	It is often difficult to negate the effect that the researcher brings to the study so the researcher is part of the study and this must be discussed with regard to the findings of this research.
There is time and resources to spend on data collection and analysis	There is necessary time and resources to collect and analysis the data needed for a qualitative study.
The observer is an active learner who can tell the story from the participants view	The research aims to use verbatim data from the participants to tell the story of the phenomenon from the participants’ point of view without passing judgement.

The qualitative methodological approach adopted in this research has a number of implications for the strategy adopted, the data collection methods used and the way the data is analysed. These implications will be discussed throughout the subsequent sections and chapters of this thesis. One of the first considerations that needs to be examined is the research strategy used to conduct this research project.

### 3.5 RESEARCH STRATEGY

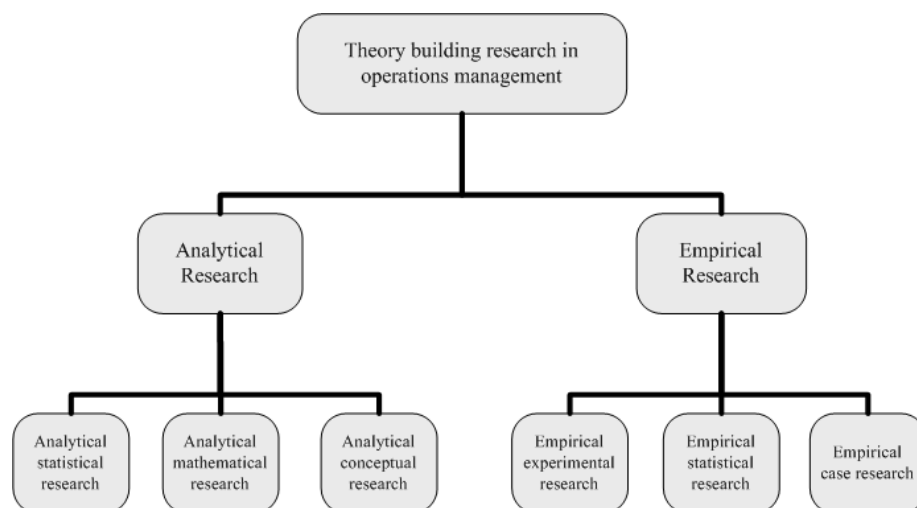
As has been discussed in the previous section of this chapter this research sits within the positivist paradigm and has a qualitative approach, therefore impacting on the strategy pursued in the research.

It was discussed in the introduction to this chapter that the research area is under developed and as such the research is exploratory in nature. This has resulted in one part of the research strategy focussing on theory building.

It is important to understand what is mean by theory, as it can have a variety of meanings to different people. Wacker (1998) provides a useful description of the components of a theory as:

1. definition of terms or variables
2. a domain where the theory applies
3. a set of relationships of variables
4. specific predictions

Wacker (1998) also goes on to describe the various types of theory-building research that are apparent in operations management research; these types of theory-building are seen in Figure 3.4.



*Figure 3.4 – Types of theory building research in operations management*



Figure 3.4 highlights that theory can be generated through two main routes, either analytical or empirical research. Analytical research uses deductive methods to arrive at conclusions whereas empirical research uses data from external organisations to derive theory

There are three main types of empirical research for theory building in operations management, these are; experimental, statistical and case study. Experimental research is used when manipulation can occur within the organisational setting under investigation, statistical research is used to verify theoretical relationships in larger samples of organisations, and conversely case study research aims to develop insightful relationships within a limited set of companies.

Returning to the overall aim of this research and the research questions that are driving this work it can be seen that empirical case study research is a key strategy for this research work. This is due to the fact that the research aims to gain deep insights and understandings of the research area, which lends itself to being suitable for undertaking within the case study mode.

Meredith (1998) defines case research as an approach that:

*“...typically uses multiple methods and tools for data collection from a number of entities by a direct observer in a single, natural setting that considers temporal and contextual aspects of the contemporary phenomenon under study, but without experimental controls or manipulations” (pp. 443)*

This definition shows that a variety of methods can be used in the case approach and that the researcher is under no pressure to make changes to the organisational context that they are investigating.

One advantage of case studies is that they provide an opportunity for the intensive analysis of many specific details that are often overlooked by other methods, such as surveys (Kumar, 1999). Case studies often focus on the relationships and processes

of a phenomenon, which tend to be interconnected and interrelated, and to understand one thing it is often necessary to understand the linkages between all the factors (Denscombe, 2002). The research questions that are driving this research work are concerned with understanding a series of linkages and processes on the actual process of innovation, therefore this research question is focused on the understanding of linkages between all factors rather than the outcomes of a particular factor. Case studies embrace these complex factors whereas positivist methods aim to narrow the factors so that the focus can be on one or two particular relationships and on the outcomes of these relationships. However, the real value in the case study method is that they give the researcher the opportunity to explain why certain outcomes might happen not just what the outcomes are (Denscombe, 2002).

Not only do case studies allow complex relationships to be understood but they also have the benefit of the research being carried out in the natural setting of the organisation, meaning that the situation is not artificially created. In theory this should result in observations that are a true representation of the case company that is under investigation (Yin, 2003). This means that the researcher is under no pressure to impose controls or make any changes in the research environment. However, a critique of this characteristic would be that there could be an observer effect that is caused by the presence of the researcher within the case company, resulting in the researcher witnessing behaviour that is not representative of the organisational environment. It is often impossible to totally negate the affect the researcher has on a case company, but the researcher will need to be aware and understand what affect their presence might have on the results of their research and discuss this in relation to their findings (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002).

Case studies can be carried out in a number of different ways and in a varying number of case companies depending on the aims of the research work. However, one of the distinguishing features that case studies have is that a variety of sources and types of data can be used as is appropriate in the investigation. This flexibility in data collection methods means that the case study approach can sometimes be criticised as producing 'soft' data that is difficult to analyse. Nevertheless the use of

multiple data sources will mean that triangulation can be used as a data validity tool, which is suitable for this type of research (Denscombe, 2002). This critique of the type of data that emerges from case study research leads onto the discussion of the credibility of generalisations that are made from this approach.

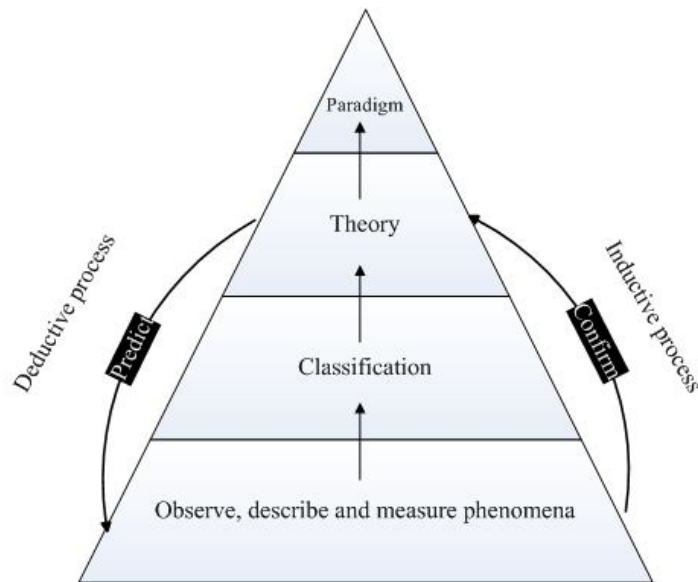
The main decision to be made when it comes to selecting companies to take part in a case study is whether single or multiple case companies are used. Single case studies are often in-depth with the researcher having a high degree of access to a variety of people and documentation, but they can often be limited in the generalisability of their findings. On the other hand, in a multiple case strategy various settings are investigated to extend the generalisability of the results (Meredith, 1998). Wacker (1998) also says that theory-building research seeks to find similarities across many different domains to increase its abstraction level and its importance; therefore multiple case studies are recommended.

Case research has been proven to be suitable for building theory and Eisenhardt (1989) provides a structured process for building theory from case study research, as outlined Table 3.4. This research will follow this process for building theory from the case studies under investigation. Chapter 5 will examine the selection of cases, the data collection instruments and protocols, and the way in which the data will be analysed.

*Table 3.4 – Process of building theory from case study research*

<i>Step in process</i>	<i>Activity in process</i>
Getting started	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• definition of research question</li> <li>• possibly a priori constructs</li> <li>• neither theory nor hypotheses</li> </ul>
Selecting cases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• specified population</li> <li>• theoretical, not random, sampling</li> </ul>
Crafting instruments and protocols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• multiple data collection methods</li> <li>• qualitative and quantitative data combined</li> <li>• multiple investigators</li> </ul>
Entering the field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• overlap data collection and analysis, including field notes</li> <li>• flexible and opportunistic data collection methods</li> </ul>
Analysing data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• within-case analysis</li> <li>• cross-case pattern search using divergent techniques</li> </ul>
Shaping hypotheses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• iterative tabulation of evidence for each construct</li> <li>• replication, not sampling, logic across cases</li> <li>• search evidence for ‘why’ behind relationships</li> </ul>
Enfolding literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• comparison with conflicting literature</li> <li>• comparison with similar literature</li> </ul>
Reaching closure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• theoretical saturation when possible</li> </ul>

In theory-building research there is also the consideration of whether the research is inductive or deductive and Christensen and Sundahl (2001) suggest that both of these types of research are required for true theory-building. This is true of this work as it has characteristics of both types of research. This generation of theory will be discussed further in Chapter 5 when the validity of the empirical fieldwork is discussed. Figure 3.5 outlines the process of theory building and highlights the nature of the inductive and deductive processes of research.



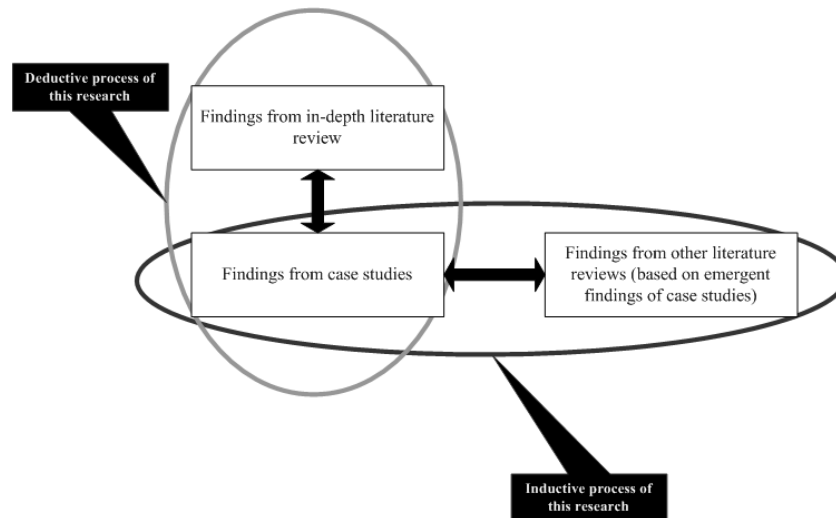
*Figure 3.5 - Theory building process, inductive and deductive processes  
(Christensen and Sundahl, 2001)*

Inductive research uses empirical fieldwork as a starting point and compares this against theory with the aim of confirming what theory says. Deductive research in contrast starts with theory and uses it to predict what will happen within the empirical field. As has been discussed above it is thought that both sides of the triangle in Figure 3.5 are required to truly build theory.

The research questions that steer this work are exploratory in nature and lend themselves to a more inductive nature of research, using the evidence found from the case studies and informing theory through an inductive process. However, research question 2 has an element to it which lends itself to deductive research. The question looks at the organisational characteristics that positively or negatively impact on contact centres' ability to be involved in innovation activities. Although there is no current theory on this there is a wide body of literature (and subsequently theory) on innovation and what characteristics affect this. This theory can be used as part of the deductive process of this research. Chapter 4 examines this body of literature and uses the findings to develop a model that can be compared against the findings from the case study phase of this work - this will allow current general theory to be

compared against the context specific findings that will come from the empirical fieldwork.

Both the inductive and deductive processes of this research are shown in Figure 3.6 which also shows that the in-depth literature review will be compared against the findings of the case studies within the deductive path. The inductive path will use the findings from the case studies and will compare any emergent issues from the empirical data with the theory concerned with these emergent issues.



*Figure 3.6 – The inductive and deductive processes of this research*

### **3.6 CHAPTER CONCLUSIONS**

The main conclusions of this chapter are that the research questions are driving the philosophical and methodological design of this work. Due to the nature of the research questions the research adopts a type of positivist paradigm which means that the research is concerned with the meanings that people give to their observations of the phenomenon under investigation. Also because of the nature of the research questions and paradigm in which it sits, the approach that the research adopts is one of a qualitative methodology.

The research aim and questions also come to the fore when considering the research strategy. Since the aim and questions are exploratory and the research area is under developed, this research employs an empirical theory building strategy using case studies. Case studies are used for this research as it is important to understand the

complexities associated with the 'true' setting in which innovation activities are undertaken within the contact centre environment. Therefore the research needs access to cases to fully develop theory from the contact centre context and case research permits the researcher to observe the phenomenon within its natural setting.

In this chapter it was discussed that theory building research can follow two main paths, the inductive or deductive processes, but it is considered that research needs to follow these two paths in order to develop a more robust theory. In order to compare current generalised theory with the context specific findings that will come from the case studies, an in-depth literature review is proposed and discussed in the following chapter.

## **Chapter 4 – Identification of Organisational Factors Influencing Innovation Activities**

*“If you're not failing every now and again, it's a sign you're not doing anything very innovative.”*

*Woody Allen (1935 – Present)*

This chapter deals with the findings of the in-depth literature review that is carried out to address research question 2, which seeks to understand the organisational characteristics that influence innovation activities in contact centres. It is thought that by understanding what work has previously been done on this subject from a generic point of view, an understanding of the specific context of contact centres can be achieved. The findings of this literature review will be used to further develop the conceptual framework and drive the empirical phase of this work by providing subject areas around which the interview questions will be focused.

This chapter begins with the aim of the in-depth literature review and details the methodology of a systematic literature review, the method by which the in-depth literature review was carried out. This chapter then details the findings of the literature and presents a theoretical model developed from the findings.

### **4.1 METHODOLOGY FOR SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW**

The fundamental research problem that faces any researcher working in the area of innovation is the vastness of literature on the subject. As an effective means of coping with the number of papers published in this area a systematic literature review technique is used.

Although systematic review theory was developed from medical research methods, it is gaining awareness in the management research field (Tranfield et al., 2003; Denyer and Neely, 2004; Pittaway et al., 2004). Traditional narrative literature reviews are criticised for being heavily influenced by researcher bias (Mulrow, 1994; Denyer and Neely, 2004).



Systematic reviews “bring together as many studies as possible that are relevant to the research being undertaken, irrespective of their published location, or even disciplinary background” (Thorpe et al., 2004: 258). The review must be done in a way that ensures that all the decisions made during the review process are transparent; this allows readers to determine the suitability of the studies included and the robustness of the conclusions drawn (Denyer and Neely, 2004).

The literature search begins with keywords and search terms (Tranfield et al., 2003). For this study, the following keywords and strings were selected: drivers AND innovati\*, barriers AND innovati\*, organisatio\* AND innovati\*, “factors influencing innovation”, “innovative organisation”, “innovativeness” and “organisational innovativeness”. These keywords were entered into prominent academic databases, including ABI Proquest, Emerald and Ingenta. The databases were searched for citations from 1960 to present. This process resulted in the retrieval of 4,212 citations.

Using the same methodology as Thorpe et al. (2005) these citations were then downloaded into bibliographic software, where the titles were analysed against pre-defined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Although there are weaknesses with analysing only the titles of studies other authors have found this approach useful when dealing with a vast number of citations (Pittaway et al., 2004; Thorpe et al., 2005). If there was ambiguity with a study’s title, the citation abstract was reviewed to understand the relevance of the study. At this point, the citations were examined to identify duplicate citations, book reviews and anonymous authors. After this initial review and title analysis, 977 relevant citations remained in the database.

### **Criteria to Select Sources**

The abstracts of the selected 977 citations were analysed to understand their fit and contribution to the purpose of this study. A set of characteristics were defined and it was deemed that a paper should have these present in order to maximise the quality of the systematic review. These inclusion criteria are seen in Table 4.1.

*Table 4.1 - Inclusion Criteria*

Criteria	Reasons for Inclusion
All industries and sectors	To gain a wide picture of the factors that affect organisational innovation and innovativeness – not just limited to one area.
All countries	To ensure a cross-cultural view of organisational innovativeness.
Barriers to innovation in organisations	To identify the factors that inhibits innovation in the organisational context.
Drivers for innovation in organisations	To identify the factors that encourages innovation in the organisational context.
Characteristics of innovative organisations	To identify the characteristics that are evident in organisations that have been recognised as innovative

Conducting a similar exercise, a set of exclusion criteria were identified (as seen in Table 4.2). These identify the characteristics which would make a paper worthless to this study.

*Table 4.2 – Exclusion Criteria*

Criteria	Reasons for Exclusion
National systems of innovation	This is not in the organisational context.
Implementation of specific innovations	The results are focused on the innovation being implemented.
Consumer innovativeness	To exclude many articles that focus on how consumer innovativeness affects the product/services they buy.

As a result of this stage, 102 studies were considered pertinent to this literature review (these can be seen in Appendix 4A). The full texts of the studies were then reviewed in-depth to extract factors that impact on innovation activities.

### **Identifying the factors influencing innovation activities**

The 102 studies selected were analysed to identify factors affecting organisational innovation activities. From each article full text, the factors described were located in the text extracted as quotes into a database, e.g. “shared vision” from Calatone et al., (2002) and Garcia-Morales et al., (2006). This was repeated for the 102 articles resulting in 423 database entries. Any exact duplicate quotes (factors) were immediately eliminated, reducing the entries to 321. Additionally any factors that were concerned with common themes were merged, e.g. “Leadership” and “Leadership style” were combined. This reduced the number of factors to 295. However, many of the factors in the database were related to one another, e.g.

“Market knowledge” and “Knowledge integration”. To be of use to study innovation the factors needed further consolidation.

To rationalise the factors a strategy was used that has been described in different ways by different authors. Jones (2004) uses ‘Nominal Group’ technique, i.e. a physical gathering where the participants use brain-storming techniques, and private ranking of ideas and tabulation (Mays and Pope, 2000).

This approach was adopted and repeated across all the 295 original factors in the database to create 31 sub-factors shown in column 2 of Table 4.3. The process did not group beyond the point where further interpretation of authors’ descriptions of factors would have been required. The second stage used the factor groupings cited by Damanpour (1991); Read (2000); Lemon and Sahota (2004); Webster (2004) to establish clusters of the 31 sub-factors created. The clustering resulted in nine ‘generic’ factors being identified that could collectively represent all the original factors from the database, these are shown in column 1 of Table 4.3. To maintain traceability of these nine factors to the factors quoted from the full text articles the links to the 31 sub-factors and 295 original factors were maintained. For example under the factor “Technology” there are a number of sub-factors including “Utilisation of technology”. For brevity, a third column that lists the links to the 295 original remaining factors has been omitted.

*Table 4.3 – Factors and sub-factors influencing innovation activities*

<b><i>Factor</i></b>	<b><i>Sub-Factors</i></b>
Technology	Utilisation of technology Technical skills and education Technology strategy
Innovation tools	Idea generation system Creativity management Goals and metrics for innovation Reward system Ideas implementation system Motivation scheme
Corporate strategy	Organisational strategy Innovation strategy Vision and goals of the organisation Strategic decision making
Organisational structure	Organisational differentiation Centralisation Formality
Organisational culture	Communication Collaboration Attitude to risk Attitude to innovation
Employees	Motivation to innovate Employee skills and education Employee personalities Training
Resources	Utilisation of slack resources Planning and management of resources Knowledge resources Technology resources Financial resources
Knowledge management	Organisational learning Knowledge of external environment Utilisation of knowledge repositories
Management style and leadership	Management personalities Management style Motivation of employees

In pursuit of clarity a description of the meaning of each factor in the context of this research is discussed.

***Technology.*** Technology is often discussed as an output of innovation (Erdener and Dunn, 1995; Madsen and Ultoi, 2005), but in this research we are concerned with its role as an influencing factor. Technology discussed in this research is concerned

with the utilisation of technology to facilitate innovation and innovative behaviour within and between organisations.

***Innovation tools.*** This relates to the mechanisms and incentives that an organisation may have in place to support and encourage innovation. For example, idea generation systems, suggestion schemes, incentives.

***Corporate Strategy.*** Strategy is a wide subject area and the definition can often be confusing. Strategy in this research refers to aspects of the corporate and innovation strategies of the organisation (Damanpour and Evan, 1984; Read, 2000; Martins and Terblanche, 2003) and how they impact innovation activities. It also refers to the dissemination of the strategic vision throughout the organisation.

***Organisational structure.*** Organisational structure has received much attention in the general management literature (e.g. Mintzberg, 1992) and often covers more than the simple configuration of the organisation. However, within this research organisational structure relates to the way the various parts of an organisation are configured and how this impacts on an organisation's innovation activities.

***Organisational culture.*** Culture here refers to the culture of the organisation, although organisational culture has been discussed widely in general management literature (e.g. Hofstede, 2001). In the context of this research it relates to the values and beliefs of the organisation and how these impact the innovation activities within the organisation. It takes into consideration the organisation's approach to collaboration, communication and risk.

***Employees.*** Employees refers to the non-management employees of the organisation and the role they play in affecting innovation activities. This factor takes into account the various personal characteristics associated with employees (e.g. Ahmed, 1998; Bharadwaj and Menon, 2000) and the motivation of employees to become innovative (e.g. Mostafa, 2005).

**Resources.** Relates to all the resources that the organisation has, human, financial and physical, but they are discussed in relation to the level of slack resources (e.g. Nohria and Gulati, 1996; Subramanian and Nilakanta, 1996) and how resources are managed (e.g. Knight, 1987; Wan et al., 2005) to impact innovation activities.

**Knowledge management.** Knowledge management in this research refers to the management and utilisation of knowledge for innovation activities. This covers all aspects of knowledge, both internal and external to the organisation. This factor will also take organisational learning into consideration as it plays a key role in knowledge management (e.g. Salavou, 2004; Ng, 2004).

**Management style and leadership.** Management style and leadership refers to the employees that have responsibility for the management of the organisation. This factor is concerned with a number of aspects to the way management influences innovation activities. For example it takes into account the management style within the organisation (e.g. Pearson et al., 1989; Hyland and Beckett, 2005) and how management can motivate employees to become more innovative (e.g. Roffe, 1999; Rivas and Gobeli, 2005).

Table 5.3 synthesises the results and discussions of a large number of papers and puts them into a common framework. The results of this stage of the research show that there are nine factors (and relating sub-factors) that influence the innovation activities of an organisation. Many authors have already performed this type of analysis of the literature (Damanpour, 1991; Tidd et al., 2001; Bessant, 2003) but it has been limited in its scope.

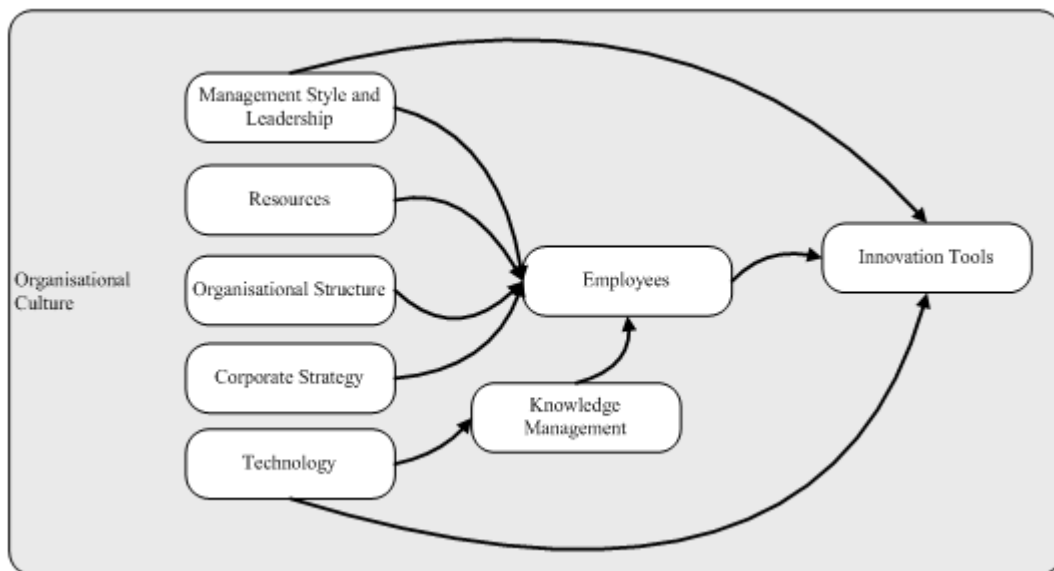
Although the findings do share some common factors with other studies, it provides a more comprehensive view of the literature concerning the factors that influence innovation activities. The work carried out in this research encompasses different academic fields and organisational contexts and has drawn together the findings from over 100 studies on innovation to develop the factors in Table 4.3.

The important relationships between the factors were then examined. This provides a more complete view of how these factors and relationships impact on innovation activities. This research aims to open up the debate on the need for a systemic approach to innovation activities rather than focusing on singular factors.

#### **4.2 DEVELOPMENT OF MODEL**

Through the structured review process a number of relationships which exist between the factors were captured. From this literature review it can be seen that the commonly cited relationships that exist between the factors can be identified; this is shown in Figure 4.1. The relationships (and direction of the relationships) between the factors are denoted in the model by the arrows. The arrows, and therefore relationships, were identified after the factors (as seen in Table 4.3) had been inductively derived. Further review of the 102 papers examined reference to relationships between any of the factors. While the literature shows that all the factors had some level of relationship between them, there were some relationships that were more commonly discussed than others, and it is these commonly discussed relationships that are synthesised into an inductive model.

It is important to note at this point that organisational culture will require special attention as it is the most commonly cited factor in the literature for influencing innovation activities within an organisation. It was also seen to have the widest impact on the other factors, it is pervasive therefore there is no benefit in explicitly linking it to the other factors in the model. Rather, it envelopes the other factors as shown in Figure 4.1.



*Figure 4.1 - Model of relationships between the factors*

### **Role of organisational culture**

For this research ‘culture’ relates to the values and beliefs of the organisation and how these impact on innovation activities within an organisation. It takes into consideration the organisation’s approach to collaboration, communication and risk. Organisational culture is often intrinsic to the way an organisation functions and the values it engenders within its operation. It is also the most commonly discussed factor relating to innovation activities that has been identified within this study. Ahmed (1998) goes so far as to say that it is the ‘primary determinant’ of innovation. Due to the pervasive role that organisational culture plays in the management of innovation this factor is discussed separately.

The relationship between culture and strategy is highly complex and it is often difficult to separate the effects that strategy and culture have on each other. The relationship between these two factors is examined within the literature in two ways. Firstly, in the way the culture will drive the strategy adopted, for example some authors (Veugelers and Cassiman, 1999; Craven et al., 2002) discuss the impact that having a culture which encourages risk will have on developing strategies with higher levels of risk. Secondly, the literature discusses the impact of corporate strategy on organisational culture. For example, some authors argue that by having a



shared vision of innovation, the organisation's strategic goals will translate into the organisation's culture (Vracking, 1990; Calantone et al., 2002; Martins and Terblanche, 2003; Lemon and Sahota, 2004; Ng, 2004 Garcia-Morales et al., 2006). Therefore it can be seen that an organisation's strategy can represent the underlying culture that currently exists, but corporate strategy can also drive the culture within the organisation. There is a delicate relationship between these two factors and strategic change often requires a substantial change in organisational culture (Balogun et al, 2004).

It is often difficult to separate organisational culture and organisational structure as both have developed in parallel over the lifetime of the organisation. While the literature is in agreement on the nature of organisational culture for managing innovation it is more difficult to discuss the organisational structure conducive to the effective implementation of innovation activities. Mintzberg (1979) describes the 'innovative organisation' in his seminal work but this is a simplistic view of organisational structure for innovation activities. Burns and Stalker (1961) on the other hand provide a contingent approach that highlights the complexities of organisational context and innovation activities, and it is this approach that is adopted when considering the relationships within the model.

Management style, techniques and behaviour often reflect the culture of the organisation. A move away from an autocratic management style to a more participatory and democratic style of management reflects a culture that is focused on stimulating innovation (Pearson et al., 1989; Roffe, 1999; Rivas and Gobeli, 2005; Hyland and Beckett, 2005). Some authors maintain that a change in management attitude and approach can actually engender a culture that encourages and supports innovation (McDonough and Leifer, 1986; Knight, 1987; Pearson et al., 1989; Damanpour, 1991; Roffe, 1999; Read, 2000; Zwetsloot, 2001; Jaskyte, 2004; Hyland and Beckett, 2005; Mostafa, 2005; Rivas and Gobeli, 2005). Changes in management characteristics can influence innovation activities but McDonough and Leifer's (1986) suggest that management must retain a balance between an

innovative culture and the maintenance of everyday operational requirements is also important. This balanced view is often missing from the wider innovation literature.

The notion of extended and networked enterprises has long been discussed in the general management field, and a culture that supports collaboration means that networking can become a reality. Networking with other organisations, whether long-term or short-term, can result in an organisation's attitude to innovation changing (Hadjimanolis, 2000; Kandampully, 2002; Pavitt, 2002; Flor and Oltra, 2004; Jaskyte and de Riobo, 2004; Medina et al., 2005; Mudrak et al., 2005). This is because the organisation becomes open to new ways of thinking and doing, and learns from the experiences of other organisations or external bodies. One of the key ways that organisations can increase their external linkages is through their employees having contact with external bodies such as universities and professional institutions. This interaction with the external environment often results in increased levels of professionalism in the organisational culture. Professionalism is often discussed in relation to the positive impact it has on innovation activities within an organisation (Daft, 1978; Damanpour, 1987).

The willingness to learn and generate knowledge is something that needs to be inherent in the organisation's culture (Subramanian and Youndt, 2005). An organisational culture that actively seeks out new knowledge and learning opportunities has a culture that is described as a 'learning orientation' (Glynn, 1996; Bharadwaj and Menon, 2000; Calantone et al., 2002; Chanal, 2004; Hult et al., 2003; Salavou, 2004; Bates and Khasawneh, 2005; Brennan and Dooley, 2005; Merx-Chermin and Hjihof, 2005). This learning orientation is a culture that supports the generation of knowledge through a variety of channels, such as learning from past projects or obtaining knowledge external to the organisation. Learning here suggests that the organisation also utilises the knowledge that has been gained through the learning process. Organisations that have a high level of learning orientation and knowledge generation use the knowledge to generate and develop new ideas. Accordingly, the more often organisations exploit their knowledge resources then the greater chance they have of increasing the number of innovations they develop

(Pavitt, 2002). Organisations that learn from their mistakes have a different type of culture from those organisations that relinquish when they make a mistake.

Although in this section it has been seen that some of the direct relationships that culture has with the other factors, it also has residual effects on other factors within the model. These effects will be discussed further in the analysis of the model.

#### **4.3 DISCUSSION ON MODEL**

As has been discussed, organisational culture permeates all of the factors in the model and it is inappropriate to separate culture from each of the factors. The culture that engenders innovation is often described as open, where creativity and risk taking are encouraged and information freely flows around the organisation (Roffe, 1999; Calatone et al., 2002; Wan et al, 2005). The shared vision of an organisation that supports and encourages idea generation and development needs to be put in place before other changes can be made to the organisational factors.

##### ***Management style and leadership, Resources, Employees and Innovation tools***

The literature supports the view that employees that are empowered and autonomous have a greater degree of control over their work. This degree of control means that employees feel comfortable enough in their role to be innovative in their own work environment (Thamhain, 1990; Tang, 1999; Zwetsloot, 2001; Amar, 2004; Mostafa, 2005; Muthusamy et al., 2005; Nystrom et al., 2002). However, some authors argue that the level of management support given to empowered employees will affect their ability to innovate (Knight, 1987; Tang, 1999; Martins and Terblanche, 2003; Mostafa, 2005); therefore employees must not feel alone in the pursuit of innovation. Although employees are fundamental to the generation and development of new ideas the literature argues that employees need to be given sufficient resources, in time, materials and finance to allow ideas to emerge (Thamhain, 1990; Avlonitis et al., 1994; Pavitt, 2002; Hyland and Beckett, 2005; Mostafa, 2005). It is therefore the role of management to ensure that the innovation tool comes to fruition and that employees know how to interact with the innovation tools (Vandermerwe, 1987; Johnson, 1990).

### ***Organisational structure and Employees***

Organisational structure directly influences employees within the organisation and this is done through a number of channels such as the way in which teams are organised and the degree of formality in the organisation. The organisational structure can often dictate the nature of the jobs in the organisation (Meadows, 1980; Koberg et al., 1996; Hage, 1999; Lewis and Moultrie, 2005). While lone employees can develop innovations, teams of employees will be more important in influencing the overall ability of the organisation to innovate (Anderson and West, 1998; Read, 2000; Lemon and Sahota, 2004; Noke and Radnor, 2004; Muthusamy et al., 2005). The use of team-based working is dependant on other factors such as open and collaborative organisational culture and participatory management style therefore employees working in teams will be more open to discuss and implement new ideas within their teams.

### ***Corporate strategy and Employees.***

The corporate strategy needs to be developed to reflect the organisational culture and communicate the shared vision and goals of the organisation (Cottam et al., 2001; Ng, 2004; Jager et al., 2004). All employees of the organisation need to understand how the corporate strategy impacts upon their jobs and what they need to do to help the organisation achieve their goals (Pearson et al., 1989). Therefore, if an organisation wants to be more effective at developing innovations this needs to be reflected somewhere within the corporate strategy, otherwise employees will not see how innovation directly impacts on their day-to-day tasks.

### ***Technology, Knowledge management and Employees***

Technology indirectly impacts employees through knowledge management because ICT is commonly used as a facilitator of knowledge transfer (Sorensen and Stuart, 2000; Kandampully, 2002); drawing together fragmented knowledge resources to develop a single knowledge repository (Ettlie, 1980; Damanpour, 1987; Jantunen, 2005). This means that employees can gain access to a wide based of knowledge that is collected throughout and beyond the organisation, and having this information

readily available can support employees in the development of new ideas. Successfully using knowledge and learning tools, such as a knowledge repository, to feed into the innovation process results in an integrated approach to new idea development and implementation (Neely et al., 2001; Aranda and Molina-Fernandez, 2002).

### ***Technology and Innovation tools***

The innovation tool is the only endogenous factor within the model, meaning that is derived internally by other factors within the model. It is affected by the employees, the management style and leadership of the organisation and the technology used to enable the management of the process. Technology is often used in a supportive role to alleviate various stages of the innovation tool (Watts et al., 1998; Petroni, 1998; Loewe and Dominiquini, 2006). More often than not technology is discussed in relation to the ‘fuzzy’ front end of innovation activities. This is the stage of innovation activities where ideas are generated and that is difficult to capture and explain, hence the use of technology to facilitate useful idea generation. Technologies such as virtual reality (Watts et al., 1998) and group work software (Klein and Dologite, 2000; Pissarra and Jesuino, 2005) all have a place as innovation tools.

### ***Employees and Innovation tools***

The model identifies employees as the conduit between the organisational factors and the innovation tools. Employees play a central role in developing ideas as inputs into the innovation tools and without ideas the innovation tools simply would not function. The literature highlights that the employees of the organisation are a potential rich source of ideas and they should be encouraged to take part in the early stages to ensure that a constant supply of ideas is generated to input into the innovation tools (Woodman et al., 1993; Guimaraes and Langley, 1994; Andriopoulos and Lowe, 2000; McAdam and McClelland, 2002; Thamhain, 2003; Wood, 2003). Some authors do stress that employees need to be trained and educated before they can have a positive impact on innovation activities (Koen and Kohli,

1998; Loewe and Dominiquini, 2003; Pohlmann et al., 2005; Brennan and Dooley, 2005; Shipton et al., 2006).

In this section each of the commonly cited relationships have been identified and the nature of the relationships that exist between the factors as been examined. The analysis of the model has highlighted that the relationships between the factors are complex and it can be difficult to tease out the main relationships existing between them. However, a holistic view of the factors impacting innovation activities, often missing from the innovation literature, has been presented.

The literature on innovation is diverse and complex, and covers many different subject areas and research fields. This can make it difficult for academics and practitioners alike to understand the wide-ranging organisational factors that can influence an organisation's ability to become more innovative. There is agreement in the literature that due to the complexities associated with innovation research, one will never generate a single true theory or best practice of innovation (Tidd, 2001). What is apparent is that the theories discussed hold true in various circumstances, such as; relating to life-cycle stage of the organisation (Koberg et al., 1996; Sorensen and Stuart, 2000), to the stage of development of the innovation (Gopalakrishnan and Damanpour, 1994), the type of innovation pursued (Damanpour, 1987; Damanpour et al., 1989) and the wider environment that the organisation operates within (Koberg et al., 1996; Brennan and Dooley, 2005). This contingency approach for generating theory is common in innovation research (e.g. Wolfe, 1994; Damanpour, 1996), but what is also important is the role of the relationships between the factors. These relationships will be influenced by the organisational context such as organisational size, age and the external environment, all of which are contingent factors. Although this literature review has not examined the influence of the contingency factors on the relationships, it is acknowledged that these factors are also an important consideration in this research.

#### **4.4 CHAPTER CONCLUSIONS**

This chapter draws three main conclusions. Firstly, there are nine important factors that innovation activities in an organisation, namely; management style and leadership, resources, organisational structure, technology, knowledge management, corporate strategy, employees, and innovation tools.

Secondly, organisational culture is a key factor for the existence of innovation activities. It is a factor that impacts all others and is also impacted upon by changes in the other factors. Therefore the researcher can conclude that organisational culture emerges and develops through changes in the other factors.

Thirdly, the common relationships that exist among these nine factors and how they can impact on innovation activities have been identified. By examining these relationships it can be seen that there are a number of exogenous factors that are not impacted by any other factors within the model. These exogenous factors are technology, organisational structure, resources and management style and leadership. This suggests that these factors play an important role in the antecedent phase of effective innovation. Innovation tools is the only endogenous factor within the model i.e. it does not impact on any other factor within the model although it is influenced by other factors within the model. This means that innovation tools is a key factor to which all other factors impact, suggesting that the other factors influence innovation activities through the mediating effect of the Innovation tools.

#### **Implications for research question 2**

At this point in this research it can be concluded that there are a number of organisational factors that are important in influencing innovation activities however, this can only partially answer research question 2 as it is not yet known what factors are important in contact centres and whether they are enablers or barriers. The findings from the literature review will be used to shape the interview questions for the fieldwork phase of this research; this phase is detailed at the beginning of Chapter 5 which discusses the fieldwork methodology.

## **Chapter 5: Fieldwork Methodology**

*“If we knew what it was we were doing, it would not be called research, would it?” Albert Einstein (1879 - 1955)*

This chapter details the fieldwork methodology that is pursued for this research study. It will discuss how the conceptual framework has developed in light of the findings from the in-depth literature review and how these impact upon the fieldwork methodology employed as part of this research. As the conceptual framework has developed, the research questions of the study have also become more refined in nature. The chapter will examine how the refinement of the research questions will impact upon the methods used within the case study strategy. The case studies will be discussed in relation to how they have been selected and what implications this has for the study. The chapter then discusses the research methods that will be used for data collection within each of the case companies and the implications these have on answering the research questions. The chapter then concludes with a discussion on the data analysis techniques that will be used to analyse the data collected. The issues of validity and verification will be discussed throughout the chapter when dealing with specific methods.

### **5.1 DEVELOPMENT OF CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The aim of the previous chapter (Chapter 4) was to identify the main factors that influence innovation activities within an organisation. Studying the literature from a generic position allowed all factors to be identified rather than context specific factors. The literature review also aimed to determine if any relationships exist between each of the factors - this was to allow innovation activities to be considered from a holistic point of view.

By drawing together the findings of the literature review (Chapter 2) and the model from Chapter 4, the initial conceptual framework can be further developed to show more detail in each of the areas of interest – the new conceptual framework is shown in Figure 5.1. The findings of the in-depth literature review have allowed the organisational characteristics that impact on innovation activities to be identified, whereas the types of innovation have been drawn from a number of innovation



studies (Damanpour, 1991; Tidd et al., 2001; Goffin and Mitchell, 2005). The conceptual framework has grown in detail but has also become more focused in its area of concern.

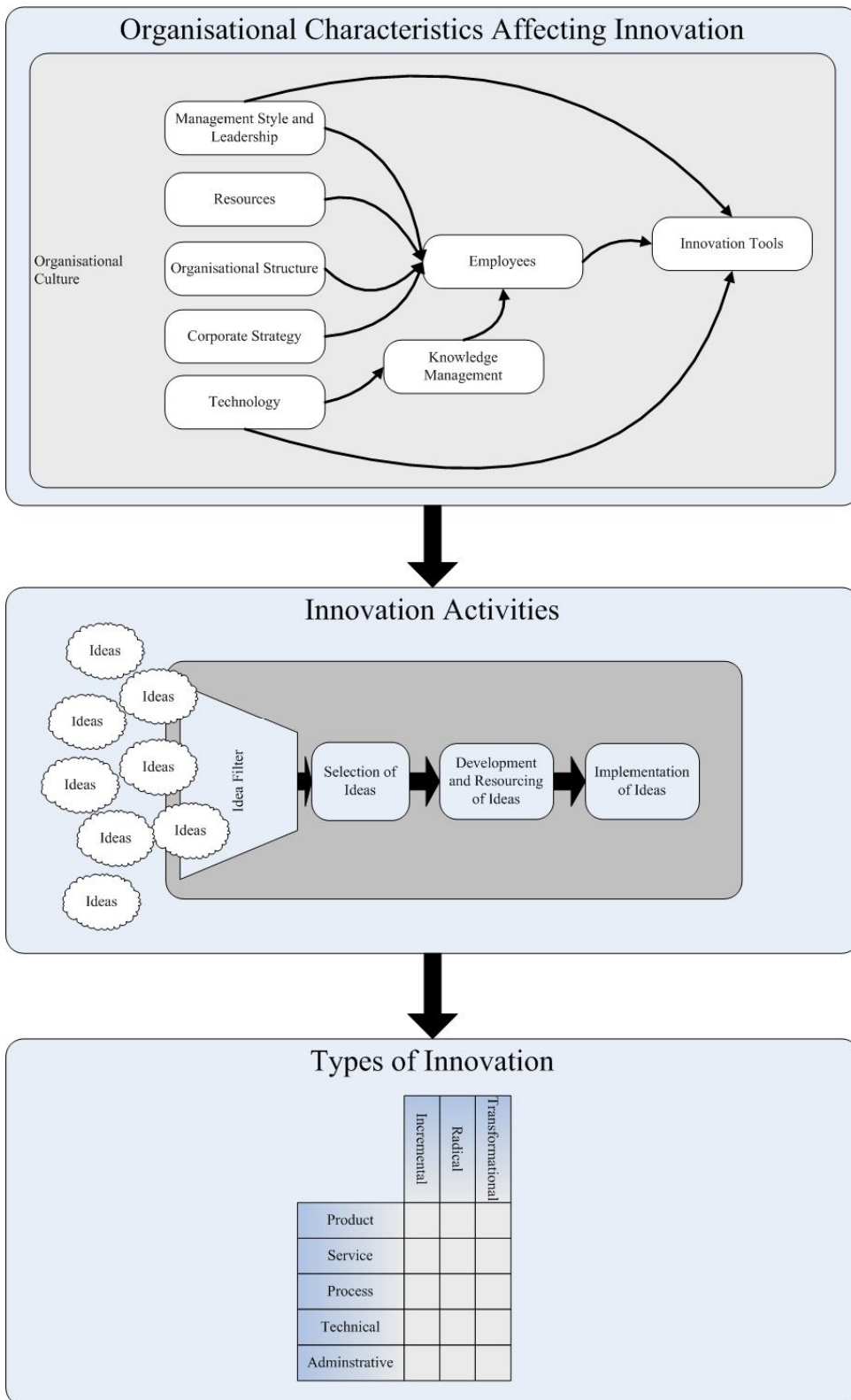


Figure 5.1 – Development of conceptual framework

## **5.2 CASE SELECTION AND DESIGN**

One of the important stages of case study research is the design and subsequent selection of the case companies. There are a number of different strategies that can be adopted when it comes to case design and hence case selection. The main design choice comes in the number of cases included in the study. This is normally differentiated by single or multiple cases. However, Yin (2003) states that there is a limited distinction between single and multiple case design. He does go on to say that multiple cases can provide more compelling evidence and can be regarded as being more robust. As was discussed in Chapter 3, this research adopts a multiple case study design to allow theory building and theoretical replication of innovation activities within contact centres to be achieved. Theoretical replication can be achieved through multiple case studies as each case is selected to show contrasting results but for predictable reasons. This leads on to understanding why each of the cases were selected for inclusion in this study.

By drawing on the conceptual framework (Figure 5.1) the characteristics of contact centres are used as criteria for selecting the case companies to be included in this study. The design aims to select case contact centres that have these different characteristics.

The potential cases were identified through a number of methods; the industry body for the UK contact centre industry, the Customer Contact Association (CCA), was involved in providing a number of potential cases. The CCA used their members list as well as previous winners of the CCA Innovation and People Award to identify potential case companies for the study. Other industry bodys' innovation award winners were also identified. The potential case companies were contacted both through an e-mail via the CCA or directly from the researcher, this e-mail included a short description of the project and the involvement that would be required from the contact centre if they took part in the study.

Table 5.1 shows which case companies were selected to take part in this study, and indicates the nature of each of the case companies when compared against the

contact centre characteristics defined in the conceptual framework. During the selection of the case companies it was thought that the sector was also an important characteristic to consider.

*Table 5.1- Composition of case companies*

<i>Case Company</i>	<i>Direction of contact</i>	<i>Customers</i>	<i>Nature of services</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Ownership</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Sector</i>
BBC/Capita	Inbound	Consumers	Complex customer services	Small	Outsourced	City centre, Glasgow	Public
DVLA	Inbound	Consumer	Simple customer services	Large	In-house	Business park, Cardiff	Public
NCR	Inbound & Outbound	Business	Complex technical helpdesk	Large	In-house	Business park, Bellshill	Private
The Good Morning Project	Outbound	Consumer	Simple customer services	Small	In-house	City centre, Glasgow	Public
Dell	Inbound & Outbound	Consumer & Business	Complex technical helpdesk Simple sales	Large	In-house	City centre, Glasgow	Private

Although Table 5.1 outlines the cases and the characteristics that each case has it does not justify why the cases are included in this study. Yin (2003) states that “every case should serve a specific purpose within the overall scope of inquiry” (pp. 47), therefore Table 5.2 outlines why each of the cases has been deemed suitable for inclusion within this study.

*Table 5.2 – Justification for cases to be included in this study*

<i>Case Company</i>	<i>Justification for Inclusion in this Study</i>
BBC/Capita	This is an outsourced contact centre although it deals with a public sector client. It is one of the founding members of the CCA and so it was thought that this centre would be an established centre with good practices embedded with its operations.
DVLA	This centre is a technology focused centre that has the largest IVR in the UK and is also an in-house public sector contact centre. The publication of the Varney report has resulted in in-house public sector contact centres going through many changes – this centre was included to show if these changes have implications for innovation.
NCR	This centre is a multi-lingual centre that deals with complex inquiries from business customers - it was included into this study as it deals with business customers using high skill level employees.
The Good Morning Project	This is a contact centre which has outbound operations but this centre deals with providing a service rather than outbound sales which are common within the industry.
Dell	This contact centre was used as it contains both sales and technical help, as well as business and consumer customers, within the same centre, therefore the implications of service and customer type can be investigated within one organisation.

Table 5.1 and Table 5.2 show the cases that are included in this research project and identify why they are included in the study and state the characteristics that each case has. The empirical findings (presented in Chapter 6) discuss each of the cases in further detail as part of the within-case analysis.

What can be seen from the selection of case companies is that although there is a wide selection of different contact centres there is a bias towards Glasgow as a geographical location, mainly because Glasgow is a geographical cluster for contact centres within the UK. The selection also shows that there is a bias towards inbound services, due to the fact that the industry as a whole is moving away from outbound ‘cold-calling’, and because of the offshoring of much of the outbound services there are few outbound centres located in the UK.

Once the case companies are selected and access is gained the next main phase of the research is to collect the data that will be used to answer the research questions.

#### **5.4 DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

The research philosophy, approach and strategy were discussed in Chapter 3 in relation to how they shape the research - these methodological decisions have an impact on the way the data is collected and the methods that are used. The strategy employed is one of empirical case study, and one of the fundamental characteristics of case research is the ability to use a number of tools and techniques for data collection. Yin (2003) highlights this eclectic mix of sources of data in Table 5.3.

*Table 5.3 - Data sources in case research (Yin, 2003)*

<i>Source of Evidence</i>	<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
Documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Stable-can be reviewed repeatedly</li> <li>▪ Unobtrusive-not created as a result of the case study</li> <li>▪ Exact-contains exact names, references, and details of an event</li> <li>▪ Broad coverage-long span of time, many events, and many settings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Retrieveability-can be low</li> <li>▪ Biased selectivity, if collection is incomplete</li> <li>▪ Reporting bias-reflects (unknown) bias of author</li> <li>▪ Access-may be deliberately blocked</li> </ul>
Archival Records	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (Same as above for documentation)</li> <li>▪ Precise and quantitative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (Same as above for documentation)</li> <li>▪ Accessibility due to privacy reasons</li> </ul>
Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Targeted-focuses directly on case study topic</li> <li>▪ Insightful-provides perceived causal inferences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bias due to poorly constructed questions</li> <li>▪ Response bias</li> <li>▪ Inaccuracies due to poor recall</li> <li>▪ Reflexivity-interviewee gives what interviewer wants to hear</li> </ul>
Direct Observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reality-covers events in real time</li> <li>▪ Contextual-covers context of event</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Time-consuming</li> <li>▪ Selectivity-unless broad coverage</li> <li>▪ Reflexivity-event may proceed differently because it is being observed</li> <li>▪ Cost-hours needed by human observers</li> </ul>
Participant Observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (Same as above for direct observations)</li> <li>▪ Insightful into interpersonal behaviour and motives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (Same as above for direct observations)</li> <li>▪ Bias due to investigators manipulation of events</li> </ul>
Physical Artefacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Insightful into cultural features</li> <li>▪ Insightful into technical operations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Selectivity</li> <li>▪ Availability</li> </ul>

Although the number of data collection methods facing case study researchers can be confusing, the research questions and conceptual framework of the research can

direct the type of data collection methods used. To this end Table 5.4 outlines the link between the research questions and the data collection methods employed.

*Table 5.4 – Rational for data collection methods*

<i>Research Question</i>	<i>Data collection methods</i>
<b>RQ 1. <i>Are contact centres involved in innovation activities and if so what type of innovation can be seen?</i></b>	Interviews with different levels of employees
<b>RQ 2. <i>What are the enablers and barriers to innovation activity in contact centres?</i></b>	Interviews with different levels of employees  Observations of the contact centre environment

Since the research questions are exploratory in nature, the main types of data collection methods used were interviews and direct observations. These two methods were used due to the flexibility they give the researcher in collecting data; although the interviews followed a prepared outline of questions there was still some flexibility to allow the interviewee to discuss issues that they felt were important to the topic under discussion (Appendix 5A outlines the interview questions).

Interviews are appropriate for understanding complex situations and collecting in-depth information from a wide range of interviewees (Kumar, 1999); therefore interviews will be carried out at many different organisational levels with a wide range of people. By interviewing a range of different people in case companies the influences between organisational characteristics and innovation activities can be discussed and understood from a variety of perspectives.

Although interviews might seem easy and non-technical they are filled with potential issues that might affect the execution of interviews. Interviews are not just general but are classified according to the degree of flexibility that they have; structured interviews follow a defined set of questions, semi-structured interviews follow broad themes and unstructured interviews allow the interviewee to talk around a subject area (Kumar, 1999; Flick, 2002). Therefore the first point is to understand the type of interview that will be carried out, as this will affect the information that will come from the interview. One of the main critiques of the interview research method is

that the quality of the data depends on the quality of the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee; therefore it is dependant on the skill of the interviewer to get to the information that is essential to answer the research question (Kumar, 1999). This point also relates to the influence the interviewer has over the bias of the answers that the respondent gives and the way questions are asked (Denscombe, 2002). These issues can be overcome by the interviewer practicing at interviews before going out to case companies. However, the concern of bias is not so easily overcome and will have to be taken into account in the discussion of the findings.

Another issue is that interviewees might tell the interviewer what they want to hear, however, observations can help to combat this and some of the other issues with interviews. Observations usually occur in the natural setting; however they can be time consuming and can also be biased by the presence of the researcher. Documentation was also collected from a number of the case companies, but documentation proved difficult to obtain in all the cases. Case companies need to build up trust with the researcher in order to release their confidential information, so understandably a number of companies were reluctant to give copies of documentation. The data collection methods used in each of the cases are summarised in Table 5.5.

*Table 5.5 - Data collection methods for each case*

<i>Case Company</i>	<i>Interviews</i>	<i>Observations</i>	<i>Call Listening</i>	<i>Documentation</i>
BBC	√	√	√	
DVLA	√	√		√
NCR	√	√	√	√
The Good Morning Project	√	√		√
Dell	√			

There were a number of issues in collecting data, at the outset it was envisaged that both managers and call centre advisors would be interviewed in each of the cases but it became apparent that not all cases would allow their advisor-level employees to be formally interviewed. This has implications for the conclusions that can be drawn from the data collected in this study, as some of the data collected does not give the advisors perspective on the subject matter.



There were also issues surrounding the depth of data collected from each of the case companies. Due to the varying sizes of the contact centres involved, the amount of interviews conducted impacted upon the depth of the data collected. Table 5.6 summaries the number of interviews collected through this study.

*Table 5.6 - Interviews executed in case companies*

<i>Case Company</i>	<i>Number of Interviews</i>
BBC	5
DVLA	7
NCR	11
The Good Morning Project	2
Dell	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>

The interviews, where possible, were digitally recorded. The recordings were then used to develop synthesised interview notes, these interview notes were then brought together with the observation notes and any notes taken from documentary evidence, and compiled into case study notes. The case study notes from each of the cases can be seen in Appendix 5B. The case study notes were used as the ‘raw data’ for the data analysis phase of this research.

## **5.5 DATA ANALYSIS METHODS**

Maxwell (2005) states that “For novices, data analysis is probably the most mysterious aspect of qualitative research” (pp. 95), which can be the result of the vast array of qualitative data analysis strategies that can be adopted. Yin (2003) also states that “The analysis of case study evidence is one of the least developed and most difficult aspects of doing case studies” (pp. 109). Therefore, the case study analysis strategy in this research is carefully described to allow a coherent understanding of how the analysis was carried out.

To simplify the choice of data analysis strategy, the study’s research questions and conceptual framework can be used. These are used in order to analyse the data in a way which will address the propositions of the study (Yin, 2003).

There are a variety of methods for presenting qualitative research data and Miles and Huberman (1994) present a full chapter on this. More often than not, interview and case notes are used as the main source of documented evidence and this study is no exception.

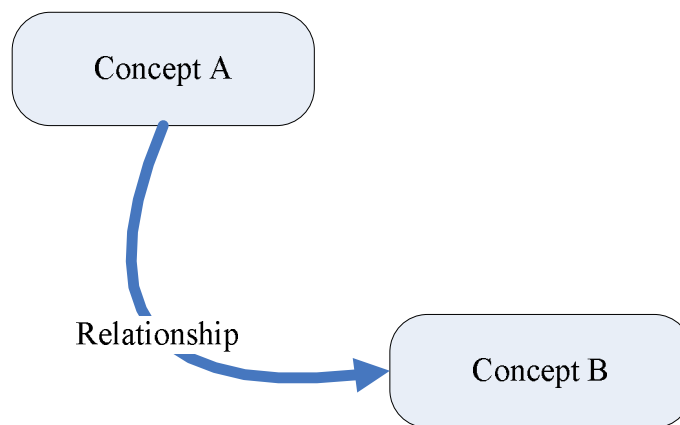
The first phase of data analysis in this project happened at an early point in the research, the interview notes are not verbatim transcriptions from the interview recordings. Instead, the interview notes are an attempt at data reduction. In the interviews a wide range of subjects were discussed and instead of recording the discussions word for word, the main points from the discussion were noted. The rationale for this was to reduce the data to the subjects that were pertinent to the research questions and the conceptual framework. This is not to say that the richness, often associated with qualitative research, was lost during this data reduction phase as the interview recordings could always be consulted for clarification and more depth during the data analysis process.

### **Within case-analysis**

The research adopts a multiple case research strategy; this is adopted for a number of reasons, such as theoretical replication but also as a means to enhance the generalisability of the research findings. Although the cross-case analysis is an important part of multiple case research, within-case analysis needs to be undertaken with the data from each case company prior to performing the overall comparative analysis.

The within-case analysis technique is driven by the research questions. Since the aim of the question is to understand and explain the influence that organisational characteristics have on both the innovation activities and the output of the innovation activities the data analysis method had to reflect this aim. Therefore, a method of mapping was used to identify the main characteristics and the relationships that exist between them.

Mapping is used in qualitative research to provide a graphic representation of what is happening within the data, there are a number of different types of mapping such as; influence diagrams, causal networks and even flow charting. Commonly mapping uses standard conventions to build and present the maps. Miles and Huberman (1994) discuss causal networks within their seminal textbook on qualitative data analysis, in which they propose the convention for presenting maps. They state that often concepts are denoted by boxes and relationships are represented by arrows or lines. Such conventions are seen in Figure 5.2.



*Figure 5.2 - Mapping conventions for presenting relationships*

Although Miles and Huberman (1994) refer to this type of mapping as causal networks, for the purposes of this work the term causal mapping will be used. This change in terminology is due to the fact that causal networks can be limited in their flexibility whereas causal maps can be much more flexible in how they are presented and analysed.

In this research each case was analysed using the causal mapping technique. The aim of this technique was to identify the characteristics that impact upon innovation activities and the relationships that exist between the characteristics. In order to construct the maps a structured process was followed using the case study notes from each of the case companies. As Maxwell (2005) says “The initial step in qualitative analysis is reading the interview transcripts, observational notes, or documents that are to be analyzed” (pp. 96), therefore the first step in constructing the maps was to

read through the case study notes. At this stage company demographics (i.e. size of the contact centre, location, ownership etc.) were ignored, only the interview and observation notes were considered.

Reading through the notes, key concepts were identified by referring back to the conceptual framework, and also allowing concepts to emerge from the data, which were noted as a 'box' on the map. The emergent concepts were more difficult to identify and evolved through the identification of the concepts included in the conceptual framework; if concepts did not fit in the conceptual framework they were considered to be emergent. When the notes discussed any types of relationship between the concepts an arrow was drawn to represent the relationship, with the direction of the arrow indicating the direction of the relationship. The standard procedure for drawing these maps and networks is still evolving and therefore can be adapted to fit with a specific research aim (Miles and Huberman, 1994), however the map still needs to be accompanied by some narrative detail.

Once the maps are drawn a detailed narrative is constructed, the role of the narrative is to provide a description and explanation of what is happening within the map and therefore within the case. The nature of the maps means that clusters of concepts often form around another concepts, resulting in a narrative that can be structured around the map. Miles and Huberman (1994) say that the combination of the map and the narrative is more useful than either would be on its own. It should be noted that the narrative should be as succinct as possible.

In order to verify the findings from the cases, both the map and narrative from each of the cases were sent to the respective case company in order for them to identify misinterpretations. The maps can prove difficult for lay people within organisations to understand so these were explained to the participants, either via telephone or face-to-face. At this point the participants could change the content of the maps or modify the concepts or relationships included in them.

### **Cross-case analysis**

Cross-case analysis is used in this research as an approach to enhance the generalisability of the findings, but it is also used as a means to deepen and develop the understanding of the innovation activities within different types of contact centres. The use of cross-case analysis also augments the explanations that are developed from each of the cases by contrasting and comparing the findings across the selected cases.

A common starting point for data analysis is to construct an array or display of the data. A display is a visual format that presents information systematically so that the user can draw valid conclusions. Once an array or display has been constructed, then the researcher should begin looking for explanation and causality (Voss et al., 2002).

Miles and Huberman (1994) outline two main strategies for cross-case analysis, these are:

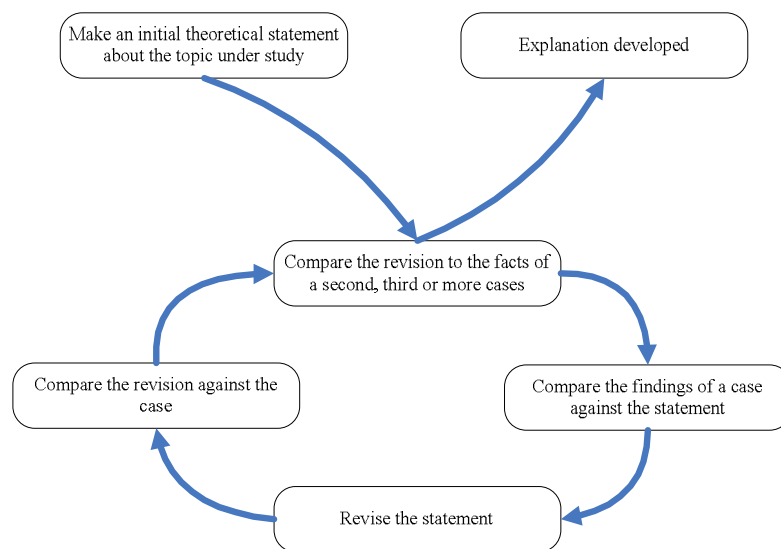
- Case oriented strategy, and
- Variable oriented strategy

A case oriented strategy is based on the replication of the conceptual framework across the cases involved in the study whereas a variable oriented strategy is concerned with themes that can cut across all the cases to be analysed. Depending on the research aims of the study, the strategies can be adopted together or singularly on their own.

In this instance of this research, both the strategies have been adopted. In the case oriented analysis the conceptual framework was used to compare the findings across all the cases. This is a similar approach to Yin (2003) who states that data analysis should rely on the theoretical propositions that led the case study in the first instance. The use of the conceptual framework helps to focus attention on certain data and ignore other data, therefore using a combination of the conceptual framework and the case data to draw conclusions about the overall cases. Although this method of

analysis is focused on the a priori concepts, using this analysis with the variable oriented analysis allows emergent themes to be investigated across the cases.

The main aim of the different types of analysis is to build an explanation of what is occurring across the cases. Yin (2003) refers to explanation building as a special type of pattern matching, using the conceptual framework and case data (both the raw data and the maps developed from the within case analysis) to explain the causal links that surround the organisational characteristics of contact centres and innovation activities. Explanation building within case research is iterative in nature, and although Yin (2003) states that the process is not well documented he does put forward the series of iterations that the explanation is likely to go through, as illustrated in Figure 5.3.



*Figure 5.3 - The explanation building process (developed from Yin, 2003)*

The techniques for analysis discussed in this section are particularly useful when the research is exploring a new subject area, and as was discussed in Chapter 1 the topic that this research investigates is relatively unexplored. This explanation building process can draw conclusions for the study but can also be part of the hypotheses-generating process, where the aim is not to draw conclusions but to develop ideas for further study. This study draws on the latter aim of explanation building and will draw hypotheses which can be used for further empirical study.

The data analysis methods (both within and cross-case) discussed in this section will allow robust conclusions to be drawn from the data, however the next issue to consider is the validity of the research and conclusions.

## **5.6 VALIDITY OF THIS QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

Validity is a key issue within qualitative research and Maxwell (2003) states that “The validity of your results is not guaranteed by following some prescribed procedure...it depends on the relationship of your conclusions to reality, and there are no methods that can completely assure you have captured this” (pp. 105). Further validity issues will be discussed in the conclusions chapter as it is at this point that the validity can be further examined in relation to the conclusions that have been drawn.

There are, however, a number of tactics that can be employed to enhance the validity of the study during the design and fieldwork phases of the methodology (Yin, 2003), these are:

- Construct validity – ensuring the correct concepts are being studied
- Internal validity – establishing a causal relationship
- External validity – establishing the domain to which a study’s findings can be generalised
- Reliability – demonstrating that the study can be repeated

Using Yin’s (2003) tactics for enhanced validity as a basis, Table 5.7 is developed to show how these tactics are applied within this research – it can be seen that this research follows a structured approach which can ensure its validity and reliability.

*Table 5.7 -Research design tests for validity and reliability in this research  
(developed from Yin, 2003)*

<i>Tests</i>	<i>Case Study Tactic</i>	<i>Application in this research</i>
Construct validity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use multiple sources of evidence</li> </ul>	Systematic literature review, interviews, observations and documentation as multiple sources of evidence.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a chain of evidence</li> </ul>	Case study notes developed along with a research diary to record ideas and thoughts on the subject.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have key informants review draft case study report</li> </ul>	Maps and narratives reviewed by key contact within each of the contact centres included in this study
Internal validity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explanation building</li> </ul>	Robust data analysis through an iterative process of checking and revising theoretical assumptions based on the case data.
External validity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use replication logic in multiple-case studies</li> </ul>	Use of the conceptual framework to allow theoretical replication to take place. The theory is replicated across the different cases and conclusions are drawn.
Reliability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use case study protocol</li> </ul>	Case study protocol was developed at the outset of the case research (seen in appendix 4A).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop case study database</li> </ul>	Nvivo was used as a case study database to hold almost all sources of data.

### **Triangulation**

Triangulation is a method that can be used for the evaluation of qualitative research, and Yin (2003) identifies four types of triangulation used in the assessment of qualitative and hence case research. These are identified as:

- Data sources (data triangulation)
- Different evaluators (investigator triangulation)
- Perspectives of the same data (theory triangulation)
- Methods (methodological triangulation)

This research utilises two of these forms of triangulation, namely data and methodological triangulation. The data triangulation has been carried out within the case research design; Table 5.5 previously discussed in this chapter outlines the different methods used to collect data within the case study. Four main methods of data collection have been use within this study; interviews, observations, call listening and documentation. These multiple sources of evidence have been



converged through the development of the case study notes to allow facts to be drawn from several resources of data.

Methodological triangulation has been achieved throughout the overall study. A literature review (detailed in Chapter 2), expert interviews (detailed in Chapter 2) and case studies have been used in an effort to triangulate the methods used in the overall qualitative study. This strategy is used to reduce the risk that the conclusions will reflect only the biases or limitation of a specific source or method, and allows a broad more secure understanding of the issues being investigated (Maxwell, 2005).

## **5.7 CHAPTER CONCLUSIONS**

Here the conceptual framework has developed further and through this development there has been some refinement of the research questions.

This chapter has also discussed the selection of case companies and has considered why these were selected for inclusion into this study. The main conclusion is that there are five case companies where data can be collected for this study. This chapter was also concerned with the data collection methods that will be used as data collection instruments within each of the cases – these methods are linked to the research questions. It can be concluded that interviews will be the main data collection method and these will be supplemented by observations and documentation.

The chapter also examined the data analysis methods that will be used to analyse the data collected. It was concluded that for within-case analysis causal mapping will be used to identify the relationships between organisational characteristics and innovation activities. Cross case analysis will also be carried out using the conceptual framework as a basis for showing similarities and dissimilarities across the data collected from all the case companies.

The issues of validity, reliability and triangulation were also introduced in this chapter and discussions on how the research design has been constructed to ensure

the validity and reliability of the research is robust were presented. These issues will be further discussed in the conclusions chapter of this thesis as validity (and quality) can only be judged once conclusions are drawn from the research.

## Chapter 6: Empirical Findings

*“I find that a great part of the information I have was acquired by looking up something and finding something else on the way.” Franklin P. Adams (1881 - 1960)*

This chapter is concerned with the findings gathered from the empirical case study and data analysis phases of this research project. Each one of the case studies is introduced and the within-case analysis, and therefore the findings, from each of the cases are presented. The chapter then provides an examination of the cross-case analysis and the findings which emerge from comparing the cases against each other.

### 6.1 WITHIN CASE ANALYSIS

The cases will be introduced and discussed in relation to the situation each case was in during the data collection phase, since the context at the point of data collection can have an impact on the findings of the empirical work. As discussed in Chapter 5 the data analysis phase of this work follows a mapping convention, meaning that the findings of the cases are presented as maps. The maps in this research are conceptually ordered displays of the case study notes, and allow complex data (including relationships between concepts) to be presented in a visual way. The maps presented in this chapter are conceptually ordered as they are constructed and ordered by the concepts and variables that were discussed by a number of interviewees. Other types of maps might be ordered by time or by the role of the interviewees (Miles and Huberman, 1994) but the research questions driving this research are focused on identification of the main concepts and the relationships between them, therefore conceptually ordering the maps is appropriate.

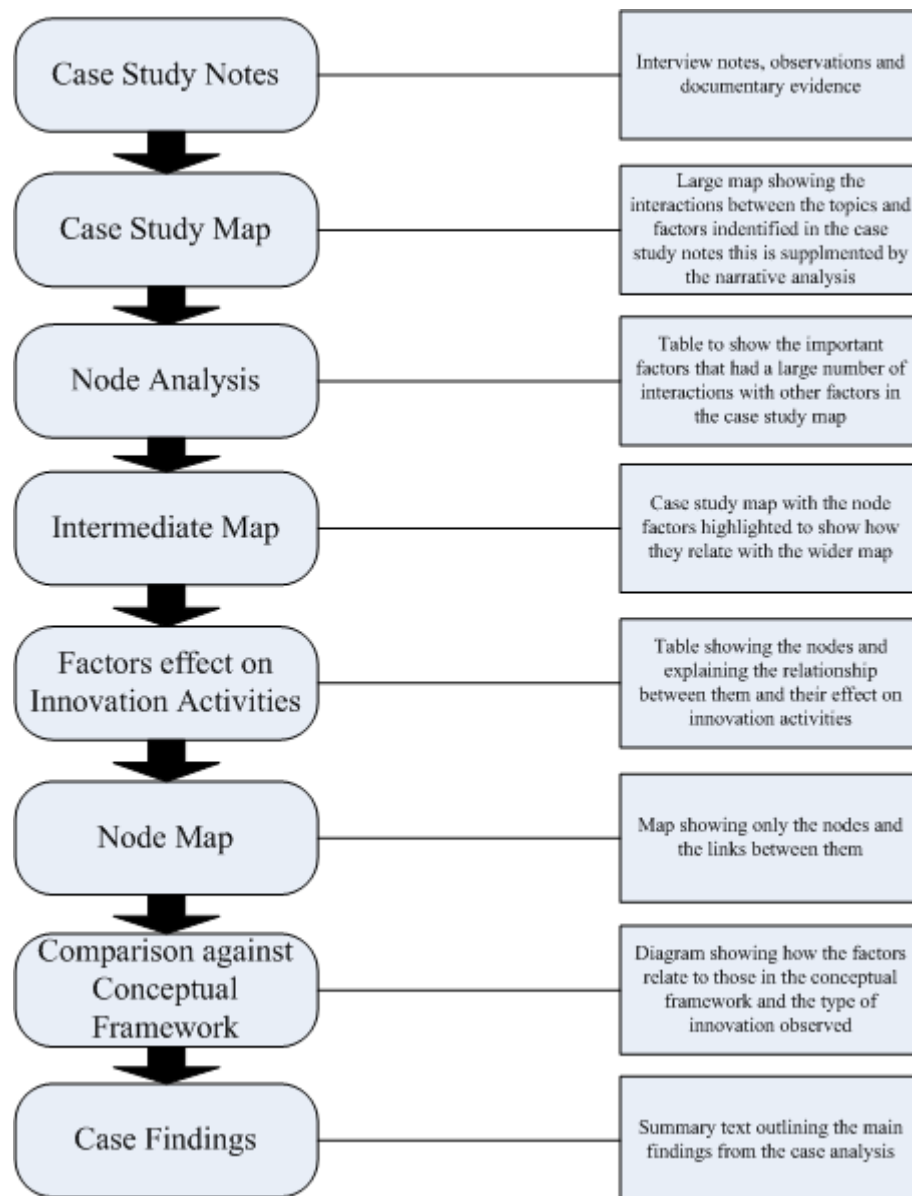
The maps are analysed in a number of ways to allow the findings to emerge, these are:

- *Narrative analysis* – a description of the map discussing the concepts and linkages between the concepts. This analysis will allow the ‘story’ of the case to emerge.
- *Node analysis* – an analysis looking at the concepts which have many linkages to other concepts. This analysis will allow the important concepts of

the maps to be identified. The nature of the relationship these concepts have on innovation activities will also be identified and presented.

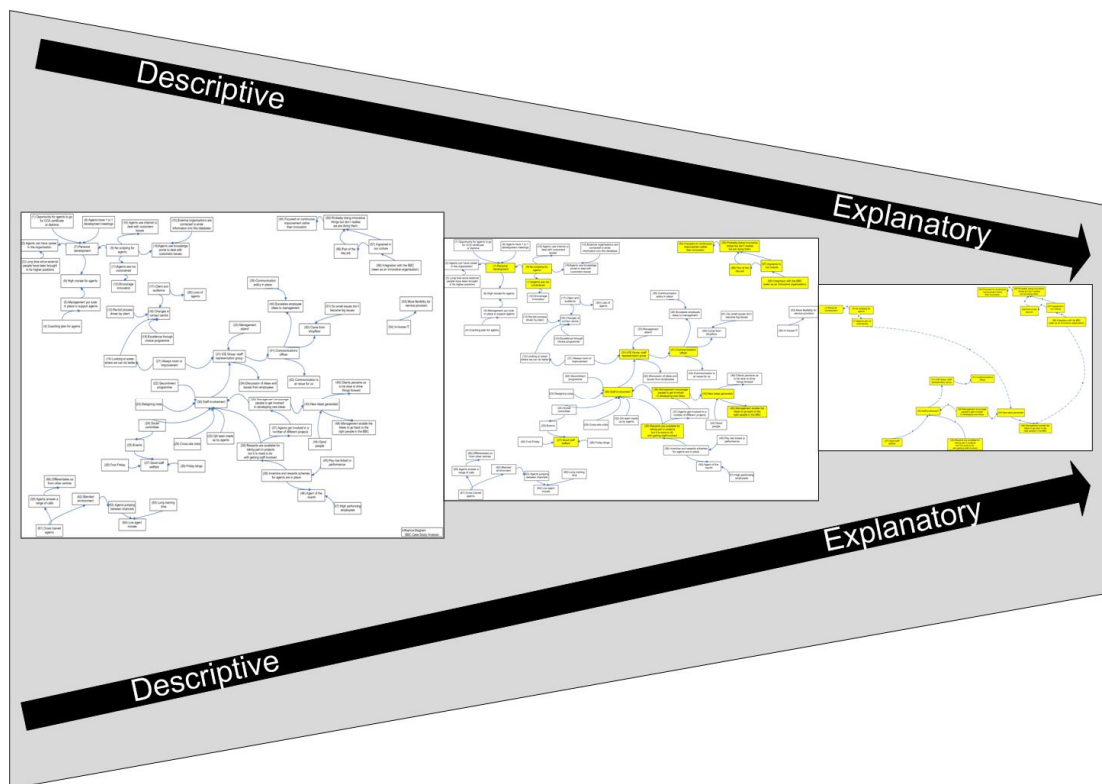
- *Comparison against conceptual framework* – an analysis which uses colour coding to identify the concepts on the map which relate to the areas of the conceptual framework. This analysis will allow a comparison to be made against the conceptual framework which was developed from literature.

Figure 6.1 outlines the main steps in the within-case analysis, starting with the case study notes and ending in a summary of the findings.



*Figure 6.1 – Structure of within-case analysis*

The main purpose of carrying out this analysis is to identify the factors that are barriers or enablers to innovation activities in contact centres and to understand why they have this effect. In order to achieve this aim the analysis will move from descriptive through to explanatory. As Miles and Huberman (1994) point out there is no clear boundary between describing and explaining and they say that ...”the researcher typically moves through a series of analysis episodes that condense more and more data into a more and more coherent understanding...” (pp: 91).



*Figure 6.2 – Condensing of the within-case analysis of this research*

Figure 6.2 shows the condensing process that takes place in the within-case analysis of this research. The analysis begins with the large map which summarises the whole case, the purpose of this stage is to provide a description of the case. The analysis then focuses on the clusters and nodes of the maps; the purpose of this is to identify the important concepts and factors that are influential to innovation activities in the case. The final map in the analysis removes the other concepts from the map

to leave only the nodes (other concepts might also be left in the final map if they are deemed important to the contextual understanding). The relationships between the nodes are then investigated to understand what effect they have on each other and on innovation activities, i.e. a positive or negative effect. It should be noted that each case company defines innovation activities in different ways and these will be discussed in the context of each case. It is from this final explanatory map that a coherent understanding of the enablers (positive effect) and barriers (negative effect) to innovation activities can be obtained. As part of the explanatory phase of the analysis, a table is drawn up to summarise why the factors have a positive or negative relationship to innovation activities in each case. The factors identified in the cases that relate to the factors identified in the systematic literature review are classified as deductive factors, and the factors that come solely from the findings of the cases are classified as emergent factors. The findings of the case are summarised and compared against the conceptual framework.

## **BBC/Capita**

### ***Company background***

Capita are specialists in business process outsourcing, having clients in central and local government, and in the private sector. Within the operation under investigation they provide information/audience lines to the BBC. This centre is located in the city centre of Glasgow and employs approximately 130 people. While the contact centre is operated by Capita there were very few signs that this is a Capita centre – the centre had BBC branding, posters and signs. This centre is one of the founding members of the CCA. The area under investigation deals with all types of consumer and the range of enquires is wide and diverse in nature. The centre deals with this variety by multi-skilling their employees to handle all types of calls.

The centre is a small and set up in an office type environment, and does not conform to the typical stereotype of what a contact centre should look like. There were no performance measures or targets evident in the working area. The overall ‘feel’ within the contact centre was a relaxed atmosphere, with the researcher being allowed to freely listen into calls and discuss issues with the advisors.

During the collection of data this centre was implementing a number of new initiatives, the key ones discussed by the interviewees were:

- A recent re-bid process with their client, the BBC.
- Appointment of a communications officer to improve issues within the centre.
- Development of new a performance measurement and rewards scheme to allow a fairer process to be used for all levels of employees.

Figure 6.3 overleaf summarises the data collected in a conceptual map.

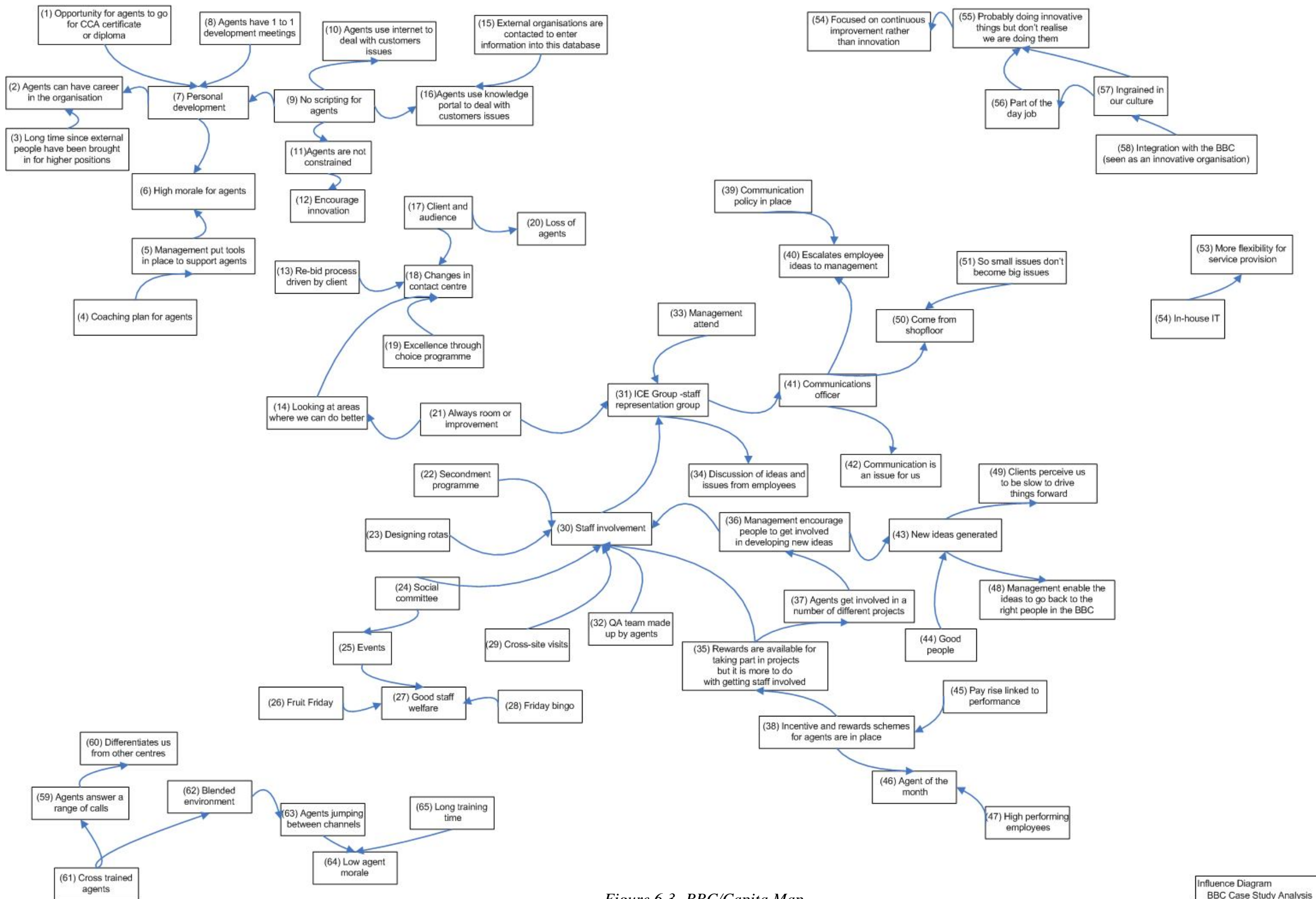


Figure 6.3- BBC/Capita Map

Influence Diagram  
BBC Case Study Analysis



### *Narrative Analysis*

If the map (Figure 6.3) is read from the top left hand corner, it can be seen that there is a cluster of concepts, with personal development (7) at the centre of the cluster. In this centre agents have regular one-to-one meetings with their managers (8) for personal development, and agents also have the opportunity to go for CCA certification or a diploma (1). This means that agents can have career progression within the wider organisation (2) and because of this it has been a long time since external people have been brought into the centre for higher level positions (3). There is no scripting for agents (9) in the centre; the agents use a knowledge portal (16), which is populated using knowledge from the external environment (15). They also use the internet to deal with customers (10) meaning that agents are not constrained (11) in the way they do their jobs. This can encourage innovation (12) and further personal development (7). This personal development (7) results in employees having a high level of morale (6) within this centre. This high level of morale (6) is also driven by the fact that management puts tools in place to support the agents (5) - this is usually through a coaching plan for agents (4).

Within this centre there have been a number of changes (18). The client and audience (17), a re-bid process by the client (13) and an excellence through choice programme (19) have all driven this change. The centre management is also driving change by looking at areas where they can do better (14) as the management believes that there is always room for improvement (21). This belief has led to the introduction of a staff representation group (the ICE group) (31) which management attend (33) to discuss ideas and issues from employees (34). As part of this ICE group a communications officer (41) will be employed – this person will come from the shopfloor (50). A communications office will be put in place to escalate employee ideas to management (40) and to ensure that small issues that employees have do not become big issues (51). This role will also be supported by putting a communications policy in place (39) as the management thinks that communication is an issue for the centre at the moment (42).

One of the main drivers for the ICE group is staff involvement (30) and this is a theme which is at the centre of a large cluster. Staff involvement is achieved not only through the ICE group but also through a secondment programme (22), staff designing rotas (23), cross-site visits (29), and the fact that the quality assurance team is also made up of agents (32). Staff involvement is also achieved through a social committee (24) and this committee is responsible for events (25) and good staff welfare (27) with programmes such as Fruit Friday (26) and Friday bingo (28). Staff involvement is also achieved through management encouraging employees to get involved in developing new ideas (36) - this involvement is often attained through agents getting involved in a number of different projects (37). There are rewards available for taking part in projects but the management stresses that it is more to do with getting staff involved rather than the reward (35). There are other incentive and rewards schemes in place within the centre (38) but these are linked to performance (45), and high performing employees (47) can become agents of the month (47).

Although new ideas are generated from employees (43) – because the centre has good people (44) – and through management encouragement (36), Capita's clients (the BBC) perceive the centre to be slow to drive things forward (49). The management does enable the ideas from employees to go back to the right people in the BBC (48) to allow the idea to be implemented.

There is a high level of integration with the BBC which itself is seen as an innovative organisation (58); this means that the BBC culture is ingrained within the culture of this centre (57). The management thinks that the centre employees are probably doing innovative things as part of their day job (56) but that they do not realise they are doing them (55). This is because they are more focused on continuous improvement rather than innovation (54).

### ***Node analysis***

Examining the concepts that have more than three interactions with other concepts in the map Table 6.1 can be produced. This analysis is performed to understand the

main concepts that are important within the maps and are discussed in further detail below.

*Table 6.1 – Node analysis for Capita/BBC*

<i>Concept Description</i>	<i>Number of Interactions</i>
(30) Staff involvement	8
(7) Personal development	5
(31) ICE group- staff representation group	5
(18) Changes in contact centre	4
(41) Communications officer	4
(43) New ideas generated	4
(9) No scripting for agents	3
(27) Good staff welfare	3
(35) Reward available for taking part in projects	3
(36) Management encourage people to get involved in developing new ideas	3
(38) Incentive and reward schemes are in place	3
(55) Probably doing innovative things but don't realise we are doing them	3
(57) Improvement is engrained in our culture	3

Figure 6.4 shows these nodes identified on the large case study map, to illustrate how the node organisational factors interact with the wider factors in the map. This allows the context to be understood in richer detail.

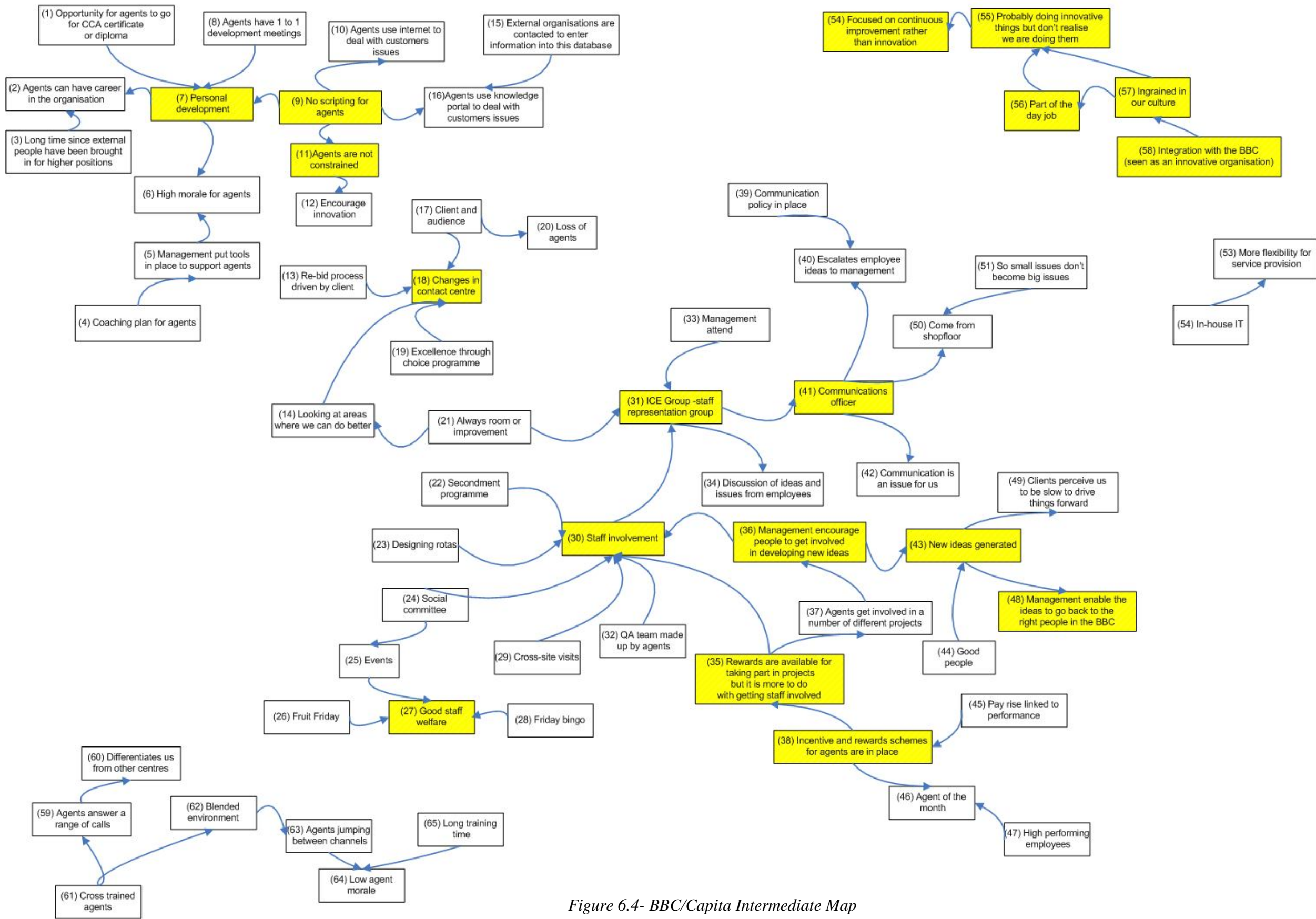


Figure 6.4- BBC/Capita Intermediate Map

As can be seen in Figure 6.4, staff involvement is a key node within the map, which was discussed in relation to a number of key issues including the ICE group. This representation and involvement of staff are key points in the map and getting employees involved for discussion is how the contact centre is operated. The ICE group is a forum in which staff can discuss issues and new ideas are presented for consideration and development. The representation and involvement of employees has links with good staff welfare which the interviewees believe this centre has.

Personal development is also a key node on the map and this is concerned with the development of employees through one-to-one development meetings and the chance to study for recognised qualifications. Employees are encouraged to have a career within the organisation and are not limited to front-line work. There is no scripting for agents within this centre and the interviewees said that this resulted in enhanced personal development. It also shows that the employees are not constrained within this centre. They are encouraged to use a number of different information channels to help resolve the customers' issues in a way that they see fit.

The generation of ideas is another key node in the analysis of the BBC/Capita map, and staff involvement and the ICE group are key inputs into this node. Although the ICE group is a formal mechanism for the collection and discussion of ideas that the employees might have, there is no formal process for the development of these ideas. The ideas are taken by management but after this the process becomes ad hoc and informal; it is not known whether there is a structured process for the development and implementation of employee ideas once they are passed onto the management. Management encourage people to get involved in developing new ideas and employees are actively encouraged to get involved in a number of different projects. There are also incentives for employees who get involved in projects e.g. agent of the month award.

There was a recurrent view from the interviewees that this centre is probably doing innovative things that are engrained in the culture of the centre but they do not recognise them as being out with the day job. The interviewees felt that this was

because the centre has close integration with the BBC, which is seen as an innovative organisation. However, because being innovative is part of the day job, the innovation is focused on continuous improvement rather than specific innovation activities.

Table 6.2 discusses the effects (either positive or negative) that these key nodes as organisational factors have on innovation activities, as well as the phase of innovation activities which they impact. This table was constructed using the case study notes and intermediate map (showing relationships between the nodes) to allow the relationships between organisational factors and innovation activities to be identified. Figure 6.5 shows the node factors on their own and the relationships between them (either positive (+) or negative (-) depending on the case study notes). A dashed arrow linking two organisational factors shows that a relationship was implied by the interviewees but was not explicitly identified in the interviews.

Table 6.2 – Organisational factors effect on innovation activities in BBC/Capita

Organisational Factors	Effect on Innovation Activities		
	Positive	Negative	Phase of Innovation Activities
Staff involvement and representation (30; 31)	When members of staff are involved in the operation of the call centre then they feel that their opinions count to the company and they are therefore more inclined to put forward ideas and be involved in improvement initiatives. In this case there is the ICE staff representation scheme where employees and management meet to discuss issues and where employees can informally put ideas forward to the management.		
Good staff welfare (27)	When members of staff feel valued and have a high level of welfare then they have an increased loyalty to the company and so will go above and beyond their day to day job to become involved in the development of new ideas. In this case the management provide free fruit to all employees on Fridays to providing fun activities such as Bingo.		
Management encourage people to get involved (35; 36)	When management encourage staff to get involved then it demonstrates to employees that their involvement is important to the call centre which in turn will make employees feel that they have the power to influence important decisions in the centre. In this case employees work with management on day-to-day tasks, such as designing rotas as well as involvement in improvement initiatives. In this centre there are also rewards for taking part in improvement projects but this has more to do with getting employees involved rather than reward.		
Personal development (7)	If employees have personal development in the call centre it shows employees that the company is investing in them and sees a future for the employee in the call centre. In this case many of the more senior jobs are recruited internally and it has been sometime since someone from outside the centre has been recruited.		
Improvement engrained in our culture (54; 55; 56; 57; 58)	In this case the improvement culture has been generated through the call centre's interaction with their external client and is based on the nature of the relationship which Capita has with the BBC. The relationship is based on collaboration rather than a strict contract.		Idea generation (43)
No scripting for agents (9)	Scripting often dictates how agents should carry out their jobs and how they can interact with the customer they are dealing with, this in turn constrains the flexibility in the nature of the job. In this case agents do not have any scripting and are allowed to deal with the customers in their own way this results in the agents in this case being able to use their own initiative. This means that agents can find better ways of carrying out their jobs and can make suggestions to management and other employees.		
Communications officer (41)	With open communication channels then there will be more trust between the employees and management thus resulting in both top down and bottom up ideas being more accepted. In this case communication has been an issue for the centre and in order to resolve this issue they have appointed a communications officer to act as a conduit between employees and management. This person has come from the shopfloor so that employees will feel comfortable talking to the officer about their issues and ideas that they might have.		
Agents not constrained (11)	When agents are not constrained then they have more flexibility in carrying out their jobs and this means that they will find better ways of carrying out the tasks which can lead to employees putting ideas forward. In this case agents were able to move from their desks and walk around the centre. They were also allowed to have food and drink at their desks, which made the working environment more like an office than a call centre. The agents were empowered to handle the customers query through their own experience.		
Interaction with client (18; 48; 58)	Capita have a high level of interaction with the BBC (their client) and this is reflected in the fact that ideas are transferred (in both directions) between Capita and the BBC. There is also a transfer of the BBC's culture into the Capita call centre this was evidenced through BBC posters and branding being used throughout the call centre as well as Capita employees in the call centre also follows the same dress code rules. This has resulted in the culture in this Capita call centre being open and focused on continuous improvement. However, also in this case the BBC was pushing Capita to become more proactive in change and improvement initiatives.		

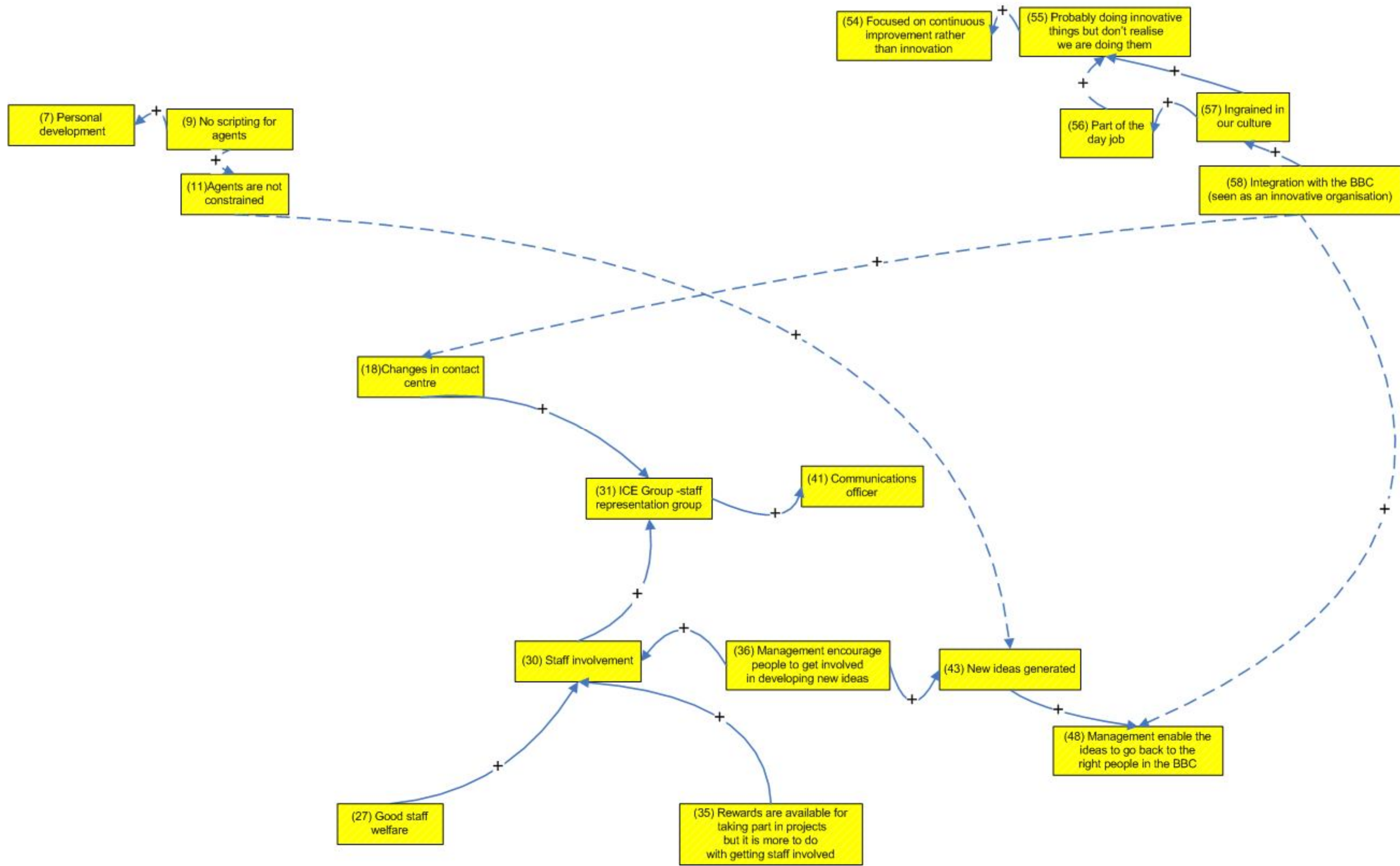


Figure 6.5 – Effects of organisational factors on each other for BBC/Capita



### **Comparison against conceptual framework**

Table 6.3 summarises the findings of this case and shows the organisational factors verbatim (in column 1) from the interview notes. In order to make a comparison against the conceptual framework (as seen in Figure 6.6) these verbatim organisational factors have been assigned into a corresponding factor from the conceptual framework. Table 4.3 from the systematic literature review has been used to assist in placing the organisational factors. If there is no directly corresponding factor then the factor which was identified is described as an emergent factor which is specific to the empirical context.

Table 6.3 – Comparison of findings against factors of conceptual framework BBC/Capita

Organisational Factors	Effect on Innovation Activities		Factors from Literature Review (From Table 4.3)									Phase of Innovation Activities					Type of Innovation
	Positive	Negative	Technology	Innovation tools	Corporate strategy	Organisational structure	Organisational culture	Employees	Resources	Knowledge management	Management style and leadership	Idea generation	Idea filter	Select ion of ideas	Development and resourcing of ideas	Implementatio n of ideas	
Staff involvement and representation (30; 31)	√							√				√					Incremental process innovation
Good staff welfare (27)	√										√	√					
Management encourage people to get involved (35; 36)	√										√	√					
Personal development (7)	√							√				√					
Improvement engrained in our culture (54; 55; 56; 57; 58)	√						√					√					
No scripting for agents (9)	√											√					
Communications officer (41)	√						√					√					
Agents not constrained (11)	√											√					
Interaction with client (18; 48; 58)	√											√					

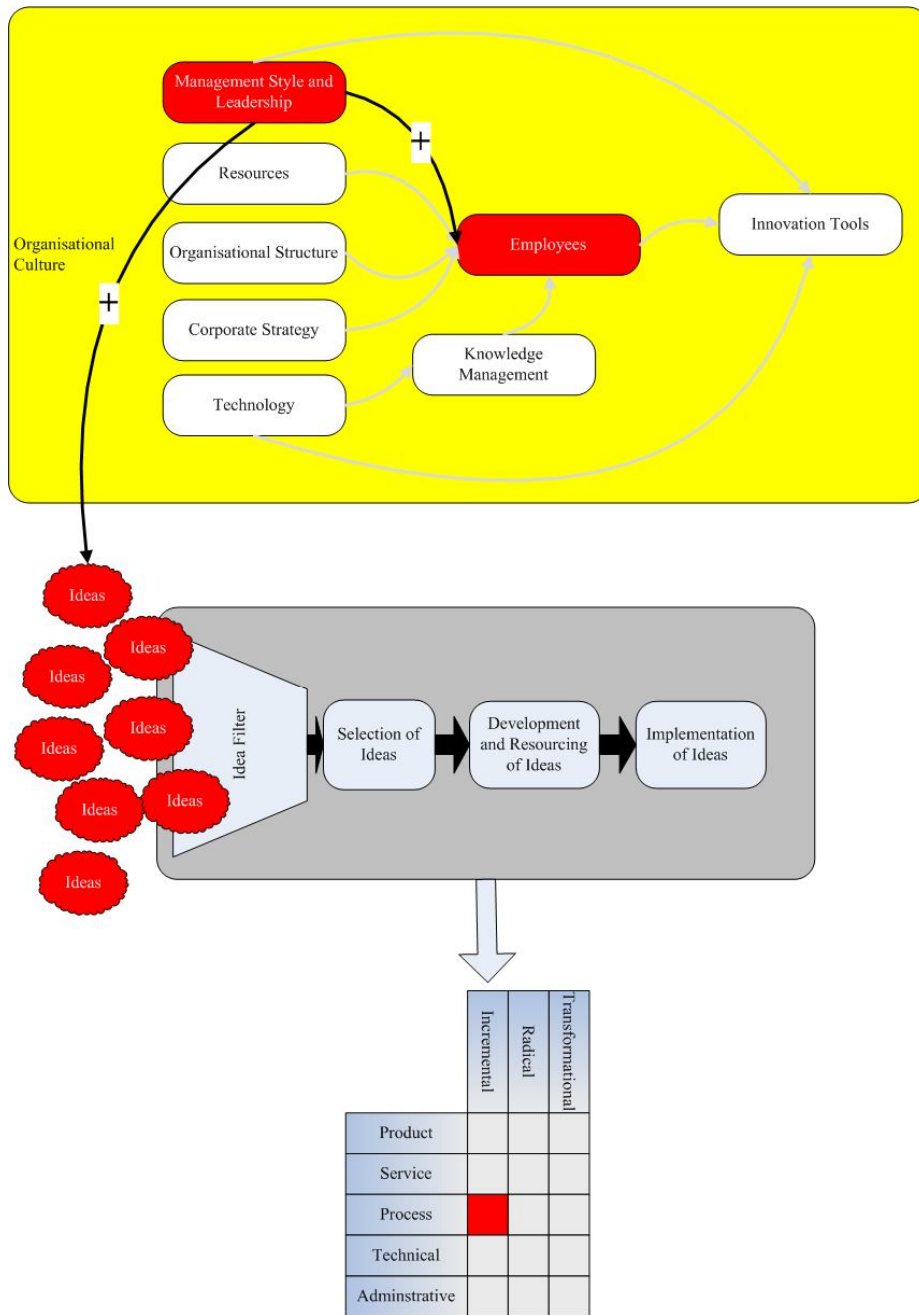


Figure 6.6 – BBC/Capita Analysis against Conceptual Framework

Table 6.3 has highlighted that there are a number of organisational factors that do not directly relate to the factors within the conceptual framework, these can be identified

as the factors which are context specific to this case. These factors have been identified as:

- No scripting for agents (9)
- Agents not constrained (11)
- Interaction with client (18; 48; 58)

## **DVLA**

### ***Company background***

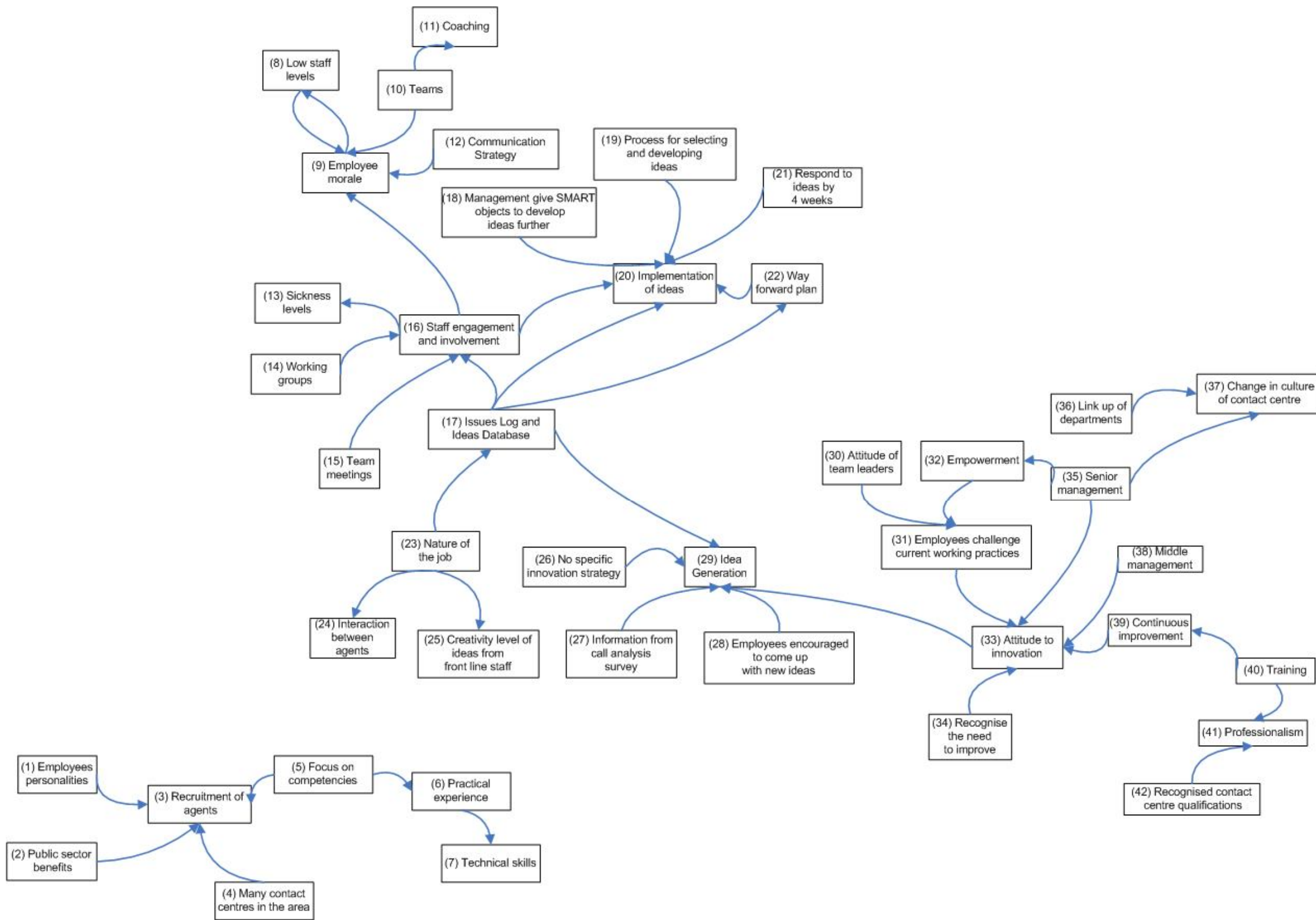
The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) is an Executive Agency of the Department for Transport (DfT). The Agency is accountable to the Secretary of State and Ministers and, through them, to Parliament and the public, for efficient and effective management of the Agency and its responsibilities. The primary aims are to facilitate road safety and general law enforcement by maintaining registers of drivers and vehicles, and to collect vehicle excise duty (car tax).

The DVLA contact centre is located in a business park on the outskirts of Cardiff in a purpose built building. The contact centre is large (employing over 850 people) and is set up as what one would consider a stereotypical contact centre arrangement with large open plan office floors and agents grouped into teams by desks. Visible performance measures and targets were evident in all areas of the contact centre and team leaders had performance monitoring software running on their computers to monitor their advisors. The centre deals with a wide range of consumers with a variety of different issues and the centre uses specialisation of employees to cope with this variety.

At the time of data collection the centre was undergoing a number of changes and initiatives, these were:

- The implementation of recommendations from a government report (which detailed changes to be made to public sector contact centres).
- Going through the process for CCA accreditation.
- Implementation of the employee suggestion scheme.

Figure 6.7 overleaf presents the concepts discussed during the interviews.



Influence Diagram  
DLVA Case Study Analysis

Figure 6.7 – DLVA Map

### *Narrative Analysis*

Reading the map (Figure 6.7) from the bottom left hand corner it can be seen that the recruitment of agents is an issue (3) as there are many contact centres in the area (4) and so attracting the right employees can be difficult. However, the public sector benefits (2) make the centre more attractive than others. The recruitment of employees focuses on their personalities (1) and competencies (5) such as practical experience (6) and technical skills (7).

At the centre of the other cluster in the map is staff engagement and involvement (16), which has been driven by working groups (14), team meetings (15) and the issues log and ideas database (17). Staff engagement and involvement has resulted in lower sickness levels (13) and higher employee morale (9). The higher employee morale has also been driven by the introduction of the communications strategy (12), high staff levels (8) as well as the use of teams (10) and a coaching policy (11).

The issues log and ideas databases (17) (the issues log are boxes placed around the centre where staff can put issues into, the ideas database is an electronic suggestion scheme on the intranet) are impacted upon by the nature of the agents' jobs (23). The nature of the agents' jobs restricts the interaction between agents (24) and also limits the creativity level of ideas that come from the front line staff (25). The log and database are used for idea generation (29) as employees are encouraged to come up with new ideas (28). Ideas are also generated from information coming from a call analysis survey which uses customer information (27). However, the fact that there is no specific innovation strategy (26) means that there is no direction to the generation of ideas. The attitude to innovation within the contact centre (33) also impacts upon the generation of ideas. The general attitude to innovation is a continuous improvement approach (39) – this approach is driven through training (40) and an increase in professionalism (41) where recognised contact centre qualifications are offered (42). Management recognises the need to improve (34) within the centre but has different attitudes to innovation – middle management has a slightly negative attitude to innovation (38) whereas senior management has a more positive attitude to innovation (35). Senior management recognises the benefits of

empowerment (32) which results in employees being encouraged to challenge current working practices (31), and this is also supported by the open attitude of team leaders (30).

The inputs into the issues log and ideas database (17) are used to develop a plan called ‘the way forward plan’ (22), which is used for the implementation of ideas (20). There is a structured process which management follows for selecting and developing ideas (19); all employees’ ideas are responded to within four weeks (21) and the employees are given SMART objectives to develop their own ideas further (18).

### *Node analysis*

Examining the concepts that have more than three interactions with other concepts in the map Table 6.4 is developed. This analysis is performed to understand the main concepts that are important within the maps, each of which are discussed in further detail below.

*Table 6.4 – Node analysis for DVLA*

<i>Concept Description</i>	<i>Number of Interactions</i>
(16) Staff engagement and involvement	6
(20) Implementation of ideas	6
(33) Attitude to innovation	6
(17) Issues log and database	5
(9) Employee morale	5
(29) Idea generation	5
(3) Recruitment of agents	4
(23) Nature of job	3
(31) Employees challenge current working practices	3
(35) Senior management	3

Figure 6.8 identifies these key nodes on the large case study map to show how the node organisational factors interact with the wider factors in the map. This allows the context to be understood in richer detail.



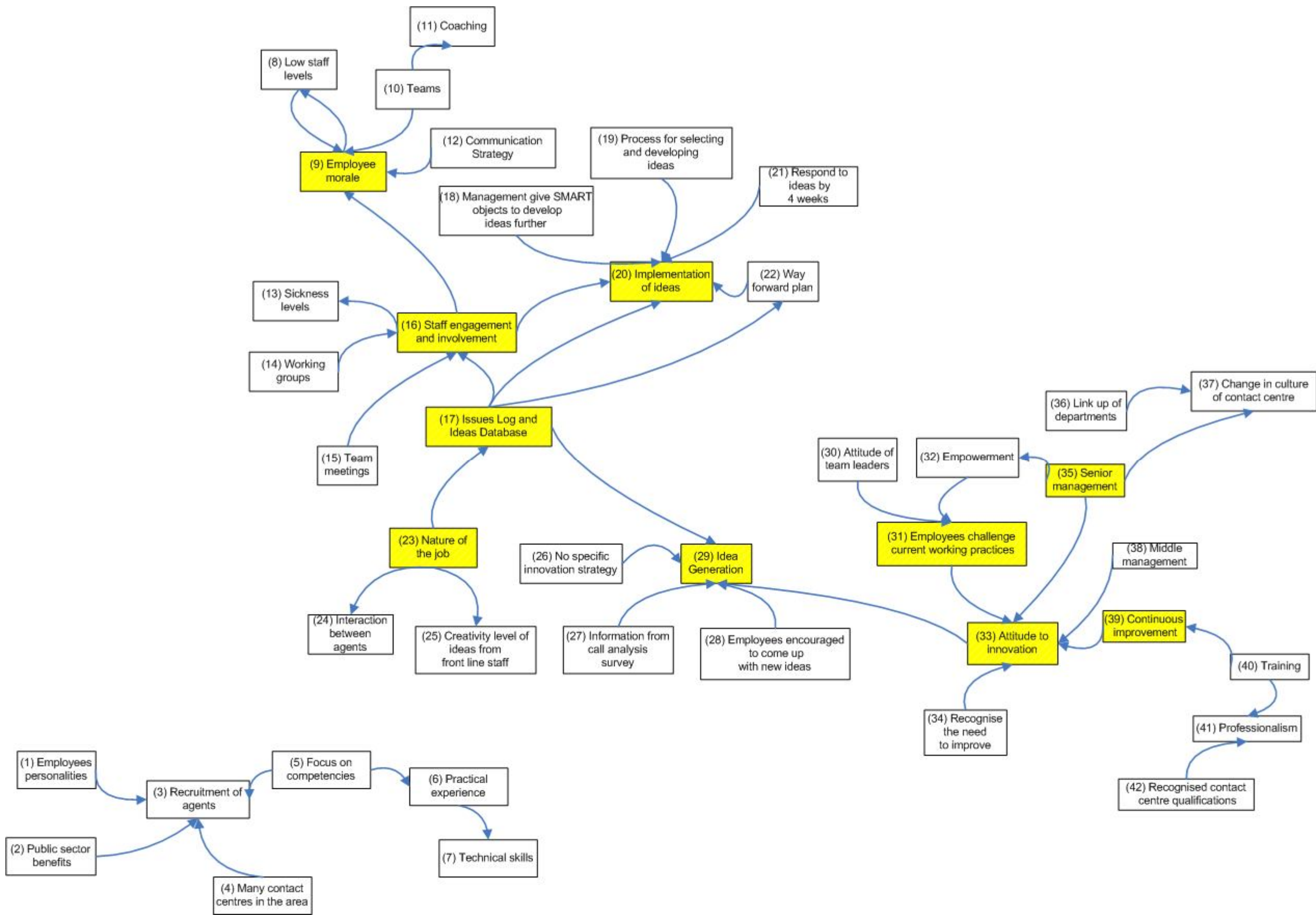


Figure 6.8- DVLA Intermediate Map

Figure 6.8 shows that staff engagement and involvement is a main node within the map, and that this engagement and involvement has been achieved through team meetings and working groups with employees. There has also been involvement and engagement through the issues log and ideas database which has resulted in reduced sickness levels and has resulted in a positive increase in the number of employees' ideas being implemented. However, the nature of employees' jobs can have a negative impact on the use of the issues log and ideas database.

The attitude to innovation is also a key node within the map and this is concerned mainly with the attitude that management have with innovation. It was discussed by the interviewees that senior management has a very positive attitude to innovation and this is witnessed by the fact that management has empowered employees to challenge the current working practices within the centre. On the other hand the interviewees thought that middle management considered innovation to be of limited importance to the centre. However, the general feeling from the interviewees was that the overall attitude to innovation was one of continuous improvement and that the centre management recognises the need to improve.

Table 6.5 discusses the effects (either positive or negative) that these key nodes as organisational factors have on innovation activities, as well as the phase of innovation activities which they impact. This table was constructed using the case study notes and intermediate map (showing relationships between the nodes) to allow the relationships between organisational factors and innovation activities to be identified. Figure 6.9 shows the node factors on their own and the relationships between them (either positive (+) or negative (-) depending on the case study notes). A dashed arrow linking two organisational factors shows that a relationship was implied by the interviewees but was not explicitly identified in the interviews.

Table 6.5 - Organisational factors effect on innovation activities in DVLA

Organisational Factors	Effect on Innovation Activities		Phase of Innovation Activity
	Positive	Negative	
Staff engagement and involvement (16)	When members of staff are involved in the operation of the call centre then they feel that their input is important to the company and they are therefore more inclined to be positive towards the implementation of a new idea. In this case		Implementation of ideas (20)
Issues log and ideas database (17)	The issues log and ideas database are mechanisms through which employees can make suggestions and put their ideas forward. This can be ideas about anything that the DVLA is involved in and not restricted to the contact centre. This has a positive effect on idea generation as employees have a formal way of communicating their ideas to the management and will receive feedback on the viability of their idea, usually within two weeks. These mechanisms also have a positive effect on the implementation of ideas as there is a formal procedure for idea selection, development and implementation. The employee who made the suggestion will also be involved in the development and implementation of the idea.		Idea generation (29) and Implementation of ideas (20)
Attitude to innovation (33)	The attitude to innovation that an organisation has a great impact on innovation activities. In this case the management have a positive attitude to innovation and actively encourage employees to put forward ideas and get involved in the development and implementation of the ideas.		Idea generation (29)
Senior management (35)	Senior management support for innovation has a positive impact on innovation activities as they can generate an environment where all employees can be involved in innovation activities. In this case the senior management have changed the culture in the contact centre where employees are empowered to challenge current working practices and put their own ideas forward. This is also demonstrated through the recent implementation of the ideas database and the business improvement team which supports the database.		Idea generation (29)
Employee morale (9)	When employee morale is high then they are more likely to be involved in projects that are out with their day-to-day job and become more involved in the operation of the contact centre. This results in them wanting to become more involved in the improvement of the contact centre.		Implementation of ideas (20)
Nature of the job (23)		The nature of the job is one that is highly specialised and narrowly focused on tasks rather than the whole process this means that there is limited interaction between agents which means that they do not discuss their ideas with each other. The nature of the job also limits the creativity that frontline employees can come up with. This is due to the fact that frontline employees normally carry out routine repetitive tasks and cannot understand how these tasks fit into the wider process or organisation. This means that agents are often limited in their ability to put their ideas forward or in taking time away from their jobs to get involved in the implementation of their ideas.	Idea generation (29) and Implementation of ideas (20)
Employees challenge current working practices (31)	When employees feel that they can challenge the current working practices then it has a positive impact on employees putting ideas forward. In this case employees are empowered to challenge current working practices and put their own ideas forward.		Idea generation (29)

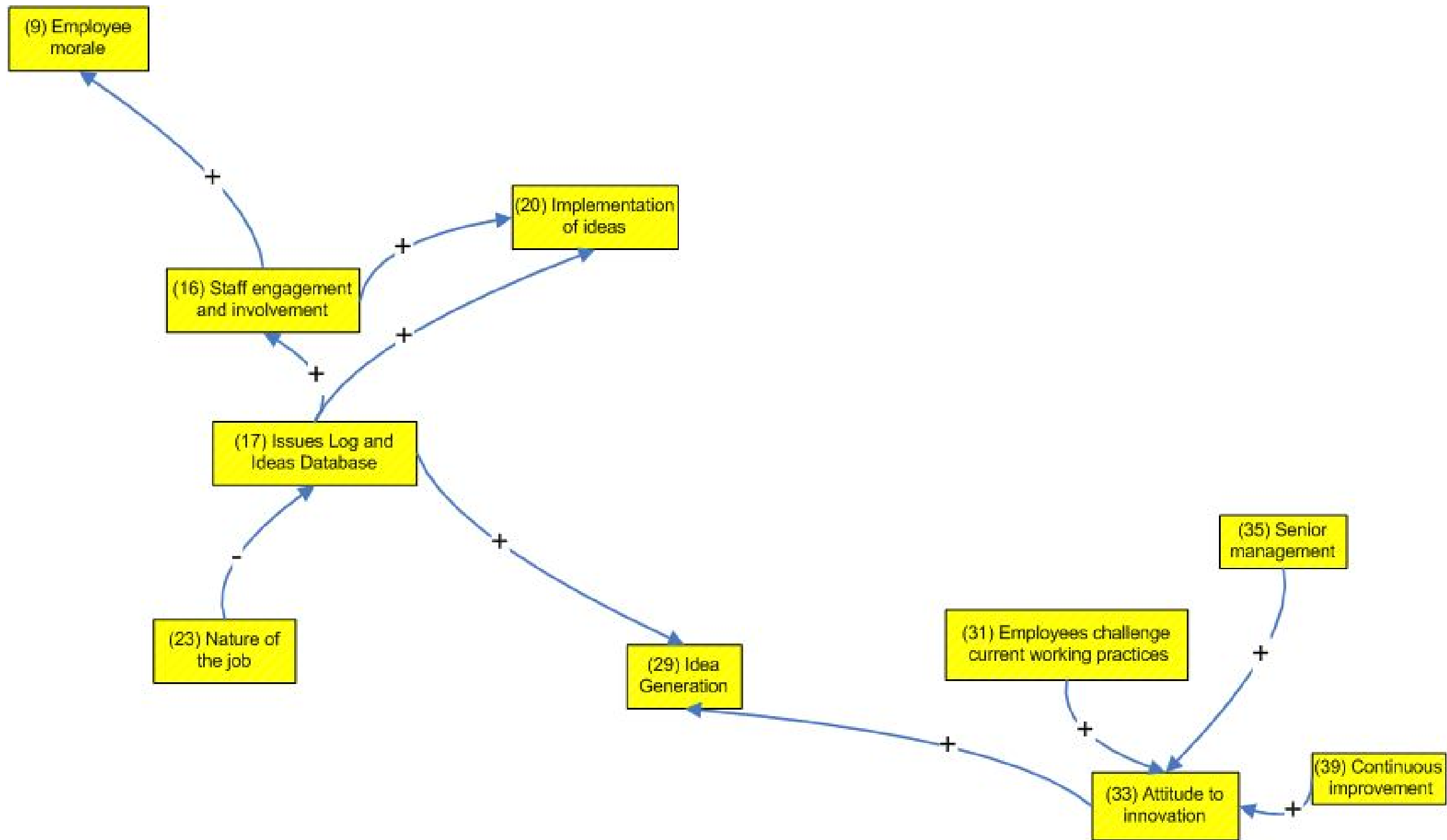


Figure 6.9 – Effects of organisational factors on each other for DVLA

### ***Comparison against conceptual framework***

Table 6.6 summarises the findings of this case and shows the organisational factors verbatim (in column 1) from the interview notes. In order to make a comparison against the conceptual framework (as seen in Figure 6.10) these verbatim organisational factors have been assigned into a corresponding factor from the conceptual framework. Table 4.3 from the systematic literature review has been used to assist in placing the organisational factors. If there is no directly corresponding factor then the factor which was identified is described as an emergent factor which is specific to the empirical context.

Table 6.6 – Comparison of findings against factors of conceptual framework DVLA

Organisational Factors	Effect on Innovation Activities		Factors from Literature Review (From Table 4.3)									Phase of Innovation Activities					Type of Innovation	
	Positive	Negative	Technology	Innovation tools	Corporate strategy	Organisational structure	Organisational culture	Employees	Resources	Knowledge management	Management style and leadership	Idea generation	Idea filter	Selection of ideas	Development and resourcing of ideas	Implementation of ideas		
Staff engagement and involvement (16)	√							√									√	<i>Incremental &amp; radical process innovation</i>
Issues log and ideas database (17)	√			√								√					√	
Attitude to innovation (33)	√						√					√						
Senior management (35)	√										√	√						
Employee morale (9)	√							√									√	
Nature of the job (23)		√										√					√	
Employees challenge current working practices (31)	√											√						

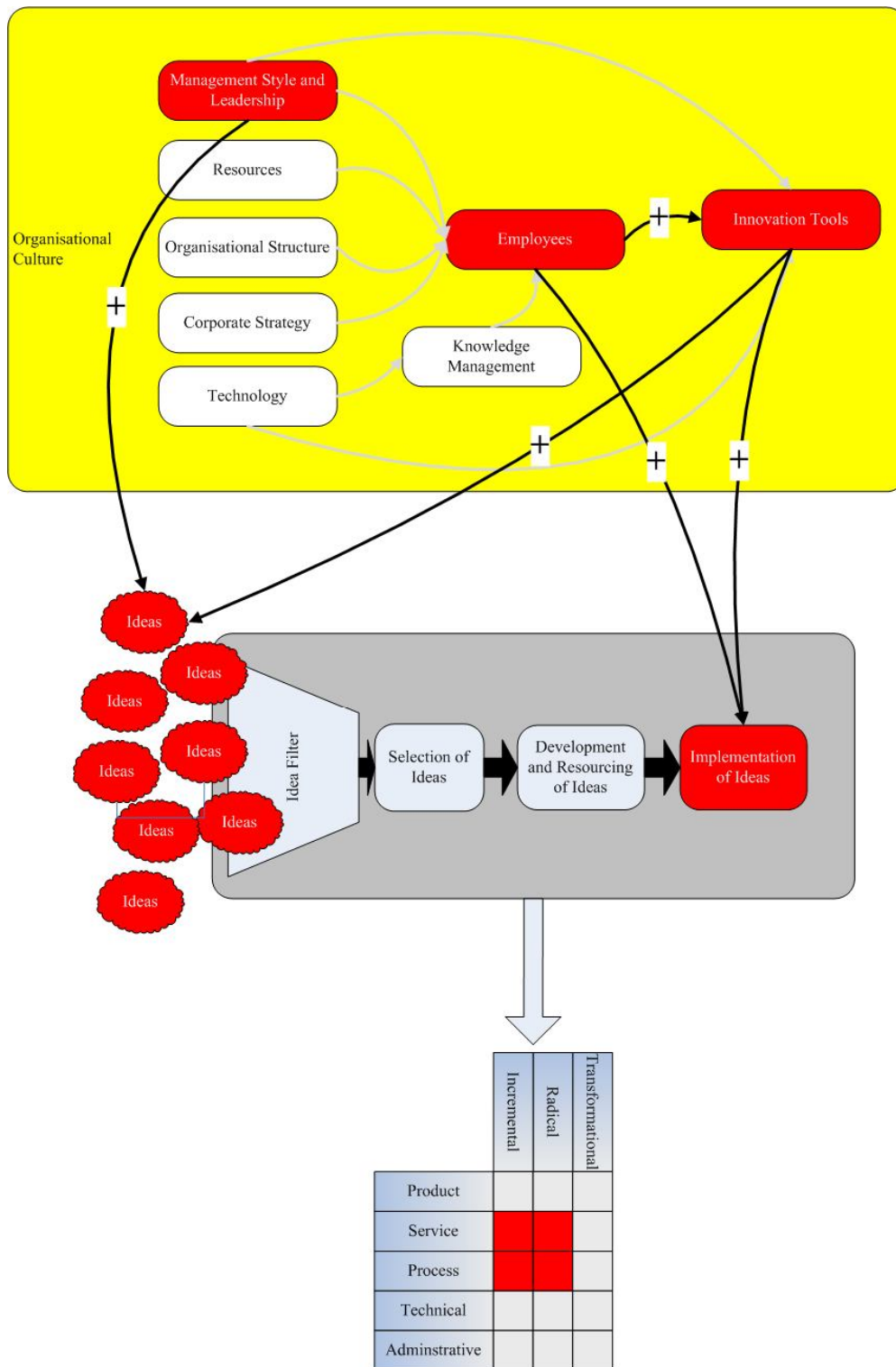


Figure 6.10 - DVLA Analysis against Conceptual Framework

Table 6.6 has highlighted that there are a number of organisational factors that do not directly relate to the factors within the conceptual framework, these can be identified as the factors that are context specific to this case. These factors have been identified as:

- Nature of the job (23)
- Employees challenge current working practices (31)



## **NCR**

### ***Company background***

NCR Corporation is a technology company specialising in products for the retail and financial sectors. Its main products are point-of-sale terminals, automatic teller machines, check processing systems, barcode scanners, and business consumables.

The area of NCR which was investigated for this study was the multilingual contact centre based at Eurocentral in Bellshill, Scotland. The centre employs approximately 300 people. This centre is called a service centre as it only deals with calls from business customers, i.e. banks or supermarkets, to respond to the repair and maintenance of the machinery that is in operation. The centre staff liaise with the customer and the engineer who will fix the issue with the machinery. This centre is unique in this study in that it is a multilingual centre with staff who are either native speakers or fluent in most of the common central European languages.

This centre is located within a business park in a purpose built building which conforms to the stereotypical idea of what a contact centre looks like. There were no visible performance measures or targets evident in the centre. It is a large centre with open plan office layout and advisors are grouped together depending on the country to which they provide service. The variety of calls is limited and is usually routine and transactional.

Figure 6.11 overleaf presents the concepts identified through the interviews.

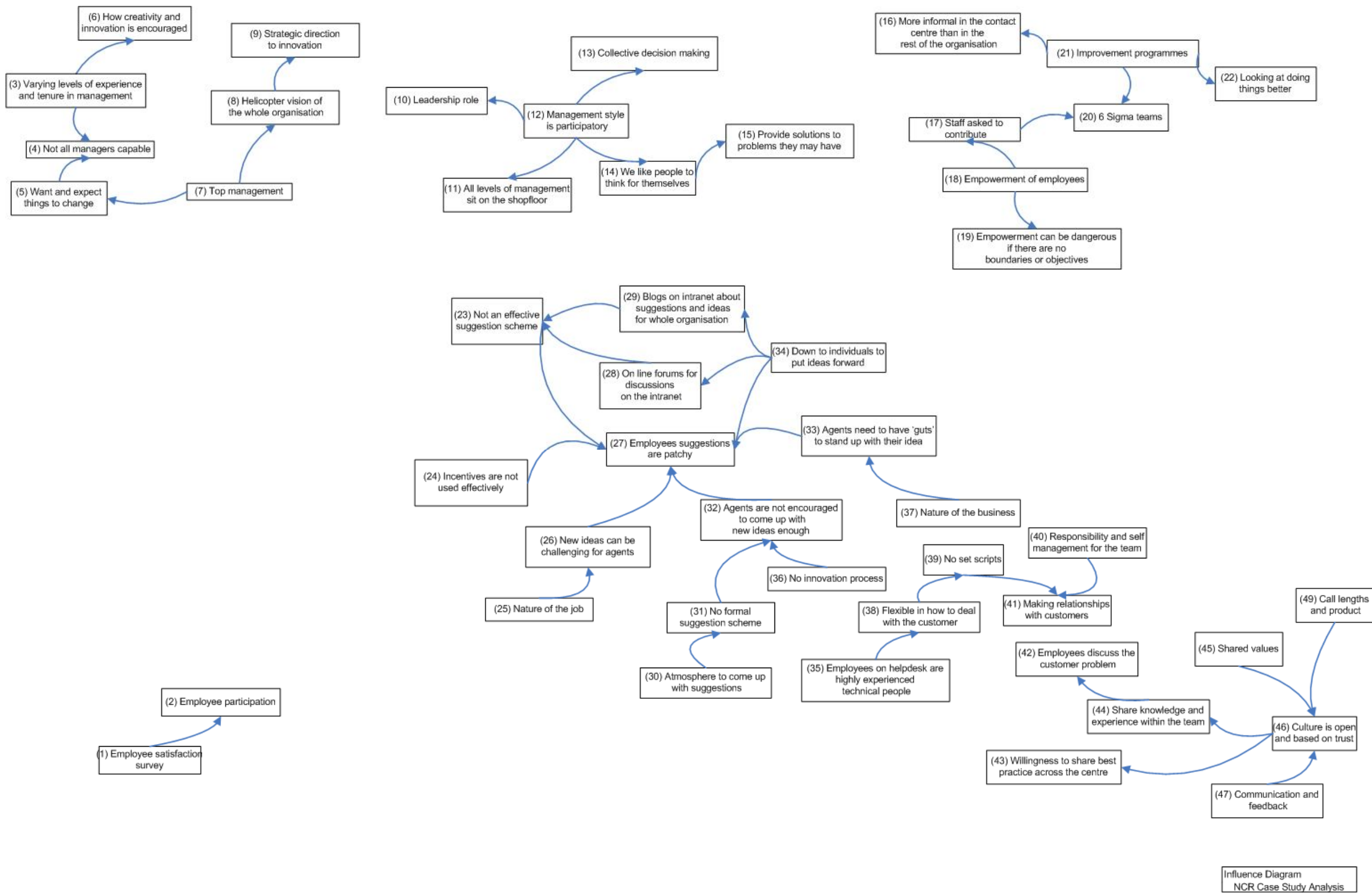


Figure 6.11- NCR Map

### *Narrative Analysis*

Reading the map (Figure 6.11) from the bottom left hand corner it can be seen that an employee satisfaction survey (1) is used primarily for employee participation (2).

Top management (7) within the contact centre wants and expects things to change in the centre (5) but not all managers are capable of managing the change (4) due to varying levels of experience and tenure (3). This experience and tenure also influences how creativity and innovation is encouraged within the centre (6). Top management has a helicopter vision of the whole organisation (8) and it is this vision that is required for the strategic direction for innovation (9).

The management style within the centre is participatory (12) which is seen through the leadership role management has (10), the collective decision making process (13), and the fact that all levels of management sit on the shopfloor (11). This participatory management style means that management encourages people to think for themselves (14) and provide their own solutions to the problems they may have (15).

There are improvement programmes within the wider organisation (21) which strive to do things better (22), however this is more informal in the contact centre than in the rest of the organisation (16). The improvement programme is normally executed through Six Sigma teams (20) in which staff are asked to contribute (17) in an effort to empower employees (18) – however management stress that empowerment can be dangerous if there are no boundaries or objectives to it (19).

In the largest cluster in the map the central theme is that employee suggestions are patchy (27) because there is not enough encouragement for agents to come up with new ideas (32). This is due to the fact that there is no innovation process (36), no formal suggestion scheme (31), and a lack of climate to come up with suggestions (30). Suggestions are also patchy since new ideas can be challenging for agents (26) due to the nature of the job (25) and incentives are not used effectively for suggestions to be put forward (24). Also, because of the nature of the business (37)

agents need to have ‘guts’ to stand up and voice their ideas (33) so it is down to individuals to put ideas forward (34). There are online forums for discussions on the intranet (28) and blogs on the intranet about suggestions and ideas for the whole organisation (29) but these are not an effective suggestion scheme for the contact centre (23).

Employees on the helpdesk are highly experienced technical people (35) and are flexible in how they deal with the customer (38) i.e. there are no set scripts (39). The purpose is to form relationships with customers (41) so employees have responsibility and self management for the team (40).

The culture in the centre is open and based on trust (46) due to the call lengths and products (49). This culture is also influenced by the shared values (45) and shared knowledge and experience within the team (44) – employees discuss the customers’ problems with each other (42). There is also open communication and feedback (47) and a willingness to share best practice across the centre (43).

### *Node analysis*

Examining the concepts that have more than three interactions with other concepts in the map Table 6.7 is developed. This analysis is performed to understand the main concepts that are important within the maps and are discussed in further detail below.

*Table 6.7 – Node analysis for NCR*

<i>Concept Description</i>	<i>Number of Interactions</i>
(27) Employee suggestions are patchy	6
(46) Culture is open and based on trust	5
(12) Management style is participatory	4
(21) Improvement programmes	3
(23) No effective suggestion schemes	3
(32) Agents not encouraged to come up with new ideas enough	3
(34) Down to individuals to put ideas forward	3

Figure 6.12 highlights these nodes on the large case study map to show how the node organisational factors interact with the wider factors in the map. This allows the context to be understood in richer detail.

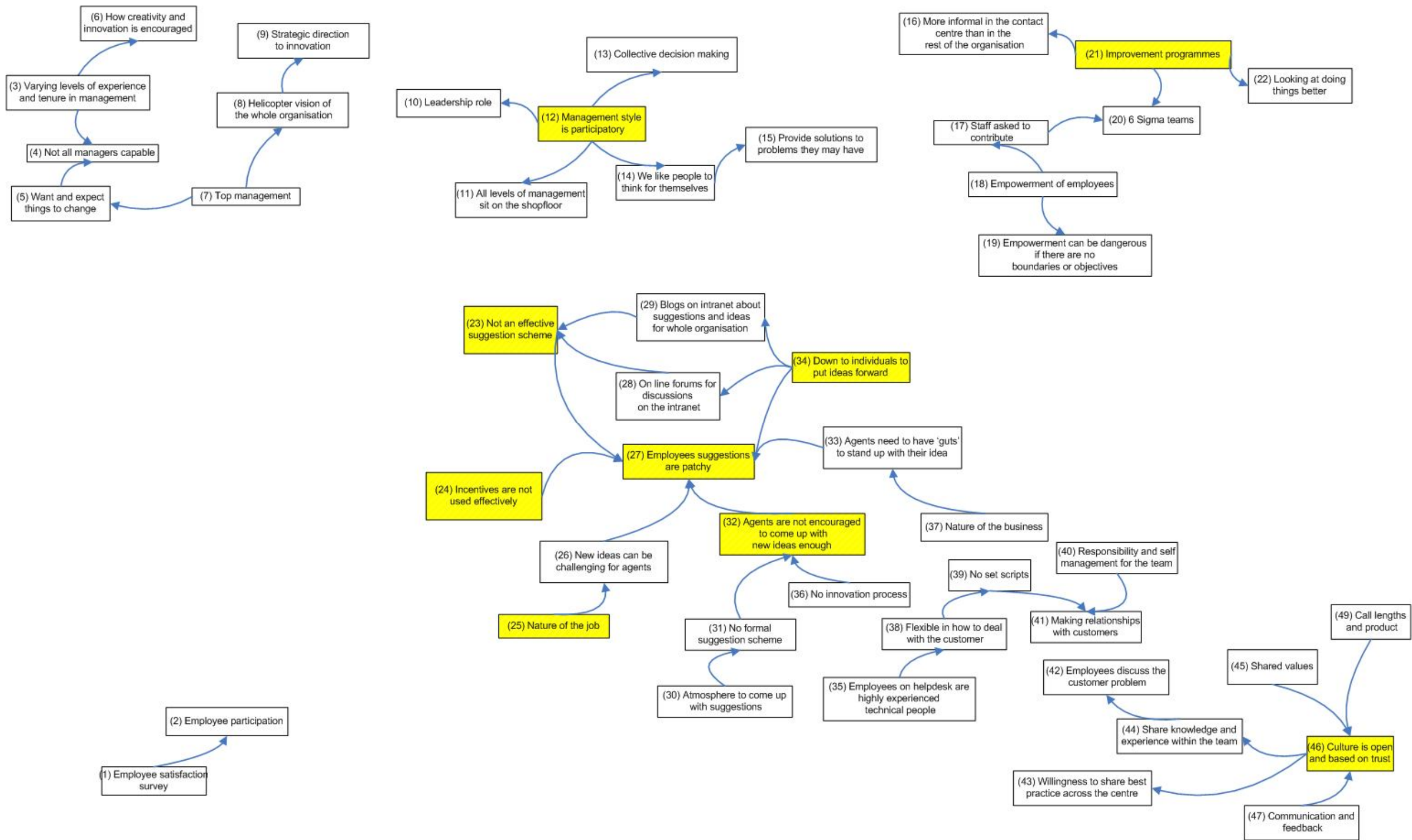


Figure 6.12- NCR Intermediate Map

One of the main nodes on the map is that employee suggestions are patchy within this centre – this is due to the fact that employees are not encouraged to come up with ideas as there is no formal suggestion scheme or innovation process for employees to use within this centre. There are, however, blogs and on-line forums on the intranet for the whole organisation. Other barriers could be that incentives are not used effectively and new ideas can be challenging for employees due to the nature of employees' jobs. The nature of the business means that employees need to be brave to put their ideas forward. However, there are improvement programmes aimed at doing things better, such as Six Sigma teams to which staff are asked to contribute.

The participatory management style is also a key node on the map which is related to the leadership role which management has within the centre. The interviewees pointed out that all levels of management sit on the shopfloor with the frontline employees as an example of the open management culture that exists in the centre. There is collective decision making within the centre as it was said that the management likes people to think for themselves and so provide their own solutions to any problems they may have.

Table 6.8 discusses the effects (either positive or negative) that these key nodes as organisational factors have on innovation activities, as well as the phase of innovation activities which they impact. This table was constructed using the case study notes and intermediate map (showing relationships between the nodes) to allow the relationships between organisational factors and innovation activities to be identified. Figure 6.13 shows the node factors on their own and the relationships between them (either positive (+) or negative (-) depending on the case study notes). A dashed arrow linking two organisational factors shows that a relationship was implied by the interviewees but was not explicitly identified in the interviews.

Table 6.8 - Organisational factors effect on innovation activities in NCR

Organisational Factors	Effect on Innovation Activities		Phase of Innovation Activity
	Positive	Negative	
<p>Not an effective suggestion scheme (23)</p> <p>Incentives are not used effectively (24)</p> <p>Agents are not encouraged to come up with new ideas enough (32)</p> <p>Down to individuals to put ideas forward (34)</p>		<p>When there is no effective suggestion scheme then there is no formal mechanism for employees to put their ideas forward therefore employees do not put their suggestions forward.</p> <p>In this case there were no incentives (monetary or recognition based) to encourage employees to come up with new ideas, again this means that employees will not feel motivated to come up with new ideas or suggestions.</p> <p>If agents are not encouraged to put forward ideas then they will not want to be involved in innovation activities. In this case there are no formal procedures for capturing, developing or implementing employee suggestions. This case also does not have an atmosphere were employees are encouraged to come up with suggestions, thus resulting in limited employee suggestions.</p> <p>As there is no formal mechanism for capturing suggestions or ideas then it is down to individuals to put their ideas forward. Due to the nature of the business in this case this means that agents would need to have 'guts' to stand up with their idea. This means that unless the agent felt strongly about their idea then they would keep their idea to themselves.</p>	<p>Employee suggestions (27)</p>
<p>Culture is open and based on trust (46)</p>	<p>When the organisational culture is open and based on trust, which is generated by communication and feedback, then employees have an understanding and awareness of what is happening with improvement programmes. Employees are asked to contribute to the improvement programmes which will ensure successful implementation of the improvement.</p>		<p>Improvement programmes (21)</p>
<p>Management style is participatory (12)</p>	<p>When the management style is participatory they encourage employees to get involved in the implementation of improvement programmes and will encourage employees to solve problems on their own.</p>	<p>However, in this case the employees are not fully empowered to take part in the improvement programme as management think that empowerment can be dangerous to the implementation programme.</p>	
<p>Nature of job (25)</p>		<p>The nature of the job is one that is highly specialised and narrowly focused on tasks rather than the whole process as well as being focused on operational performance targets. Because of the limited remit of the agents jobs and the tough performance targets they have to meet then coming up with new ideas can be challenging for agents.</p>	<p>Employee suggestions (27)</p>

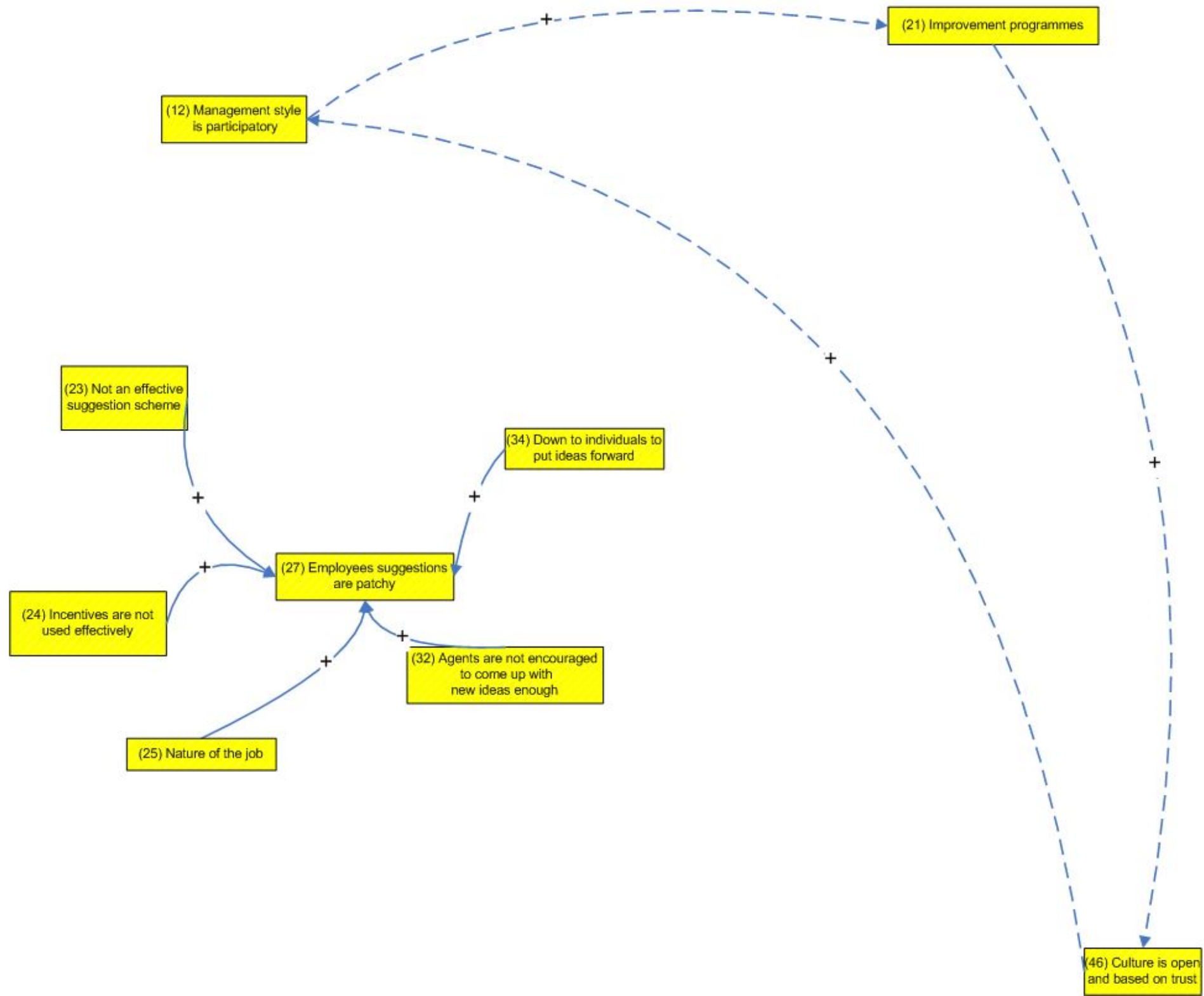


Figure 6.13 – Effects of organisational factors on each other for NCR



### ***Comparison against conceptual framework***

Table 6.9 summarises the findings of this case and shows the organisational factors verbatim (in column 1) from the interview notes. In order to make a comparison against the conceptual framework (as seen in Figure 6.14) these verbatim organisational factors have been assigned into a corresponding factor from the conceptual framework. Table 4.3 from the systematic literature review has been used to assist in placing the organisational factors. If there is no directly corresponding factor then the factor which was identified is described as an emergent factor which is specific to the empirical context.

Table 6.9 – Comparison of findings against factors of conceptual framework NCR

Organisational Factors	Effect on Innovation Activities		Factors from Literature Review (From Table 4.3)								Phase of Innovation Activities					Type of Innovation	
	Positive	Negative	Technology	Innovation tools	Corporate strategy	Organisational structure	Organisational culture	Employees	Resources	Knowledge management	Management style and leadership	Idea generation	Idea filter	Select ion of ideas	Development and resourcing of ideas		Implementation of ideas
Not an effective suggestion scheme (23)		√		√								√					Incremental process innovation
Incentives are not used effectively (24)		√		√								√					
Agents are not encouraged to come up with new ideas enough (32)		√						√				√					
Down to individuals to put ideas forward (34)		√								√		√					
Culture is open and based on trust (46)	√						√									√	
Management style is participatory (12)	√									√						√	
Nature of job (25)		√										√					

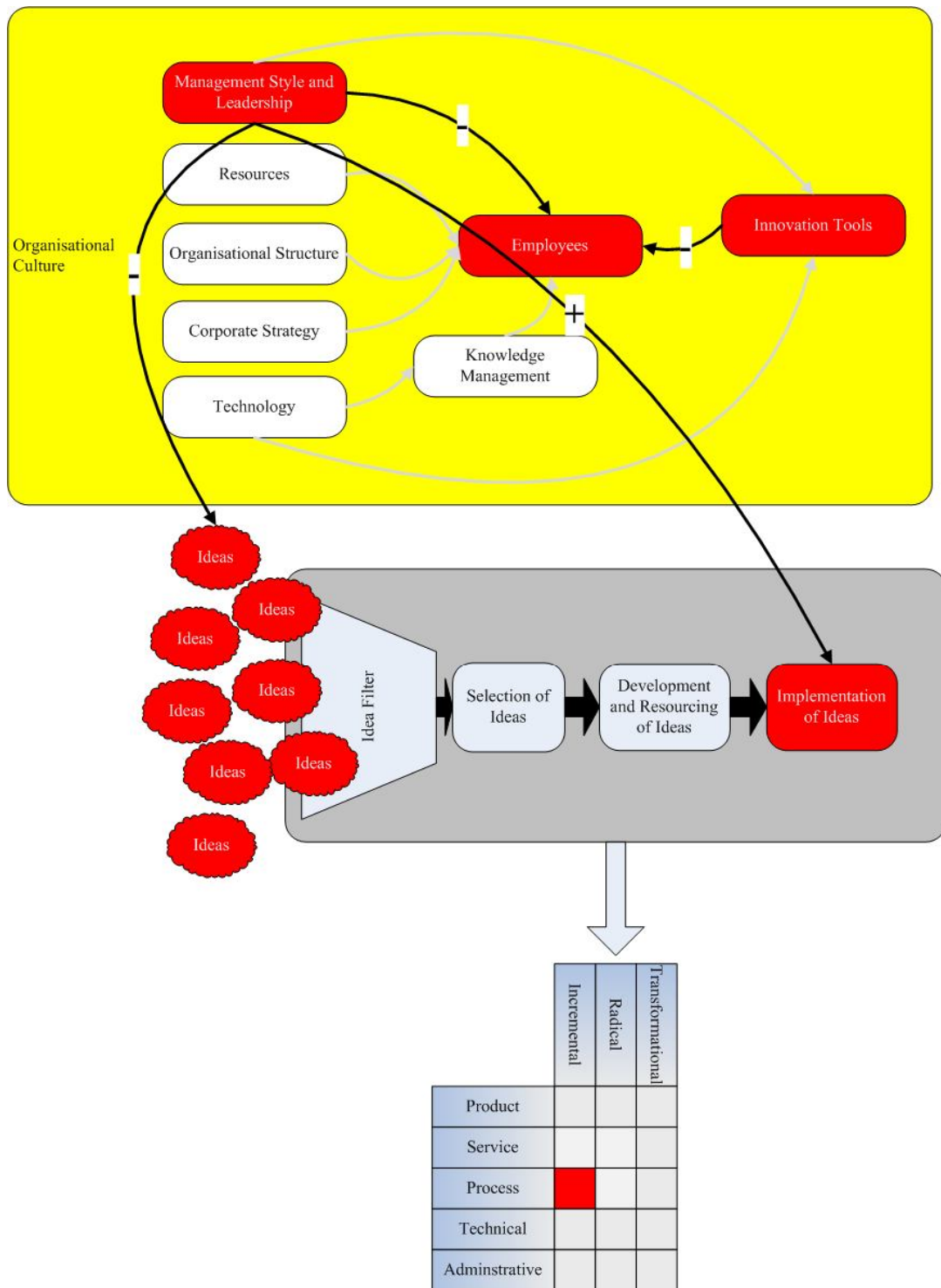


Figure 6.14 – NCR Analysis against Conceptual Framework

Table 6.9 has highlighted that there is an organisational factor that does not directly relate to the factors within the conceptual framework, this can be identified as the factor that is context specific to this case. This factor has been identified as:

- Nature of job (25)

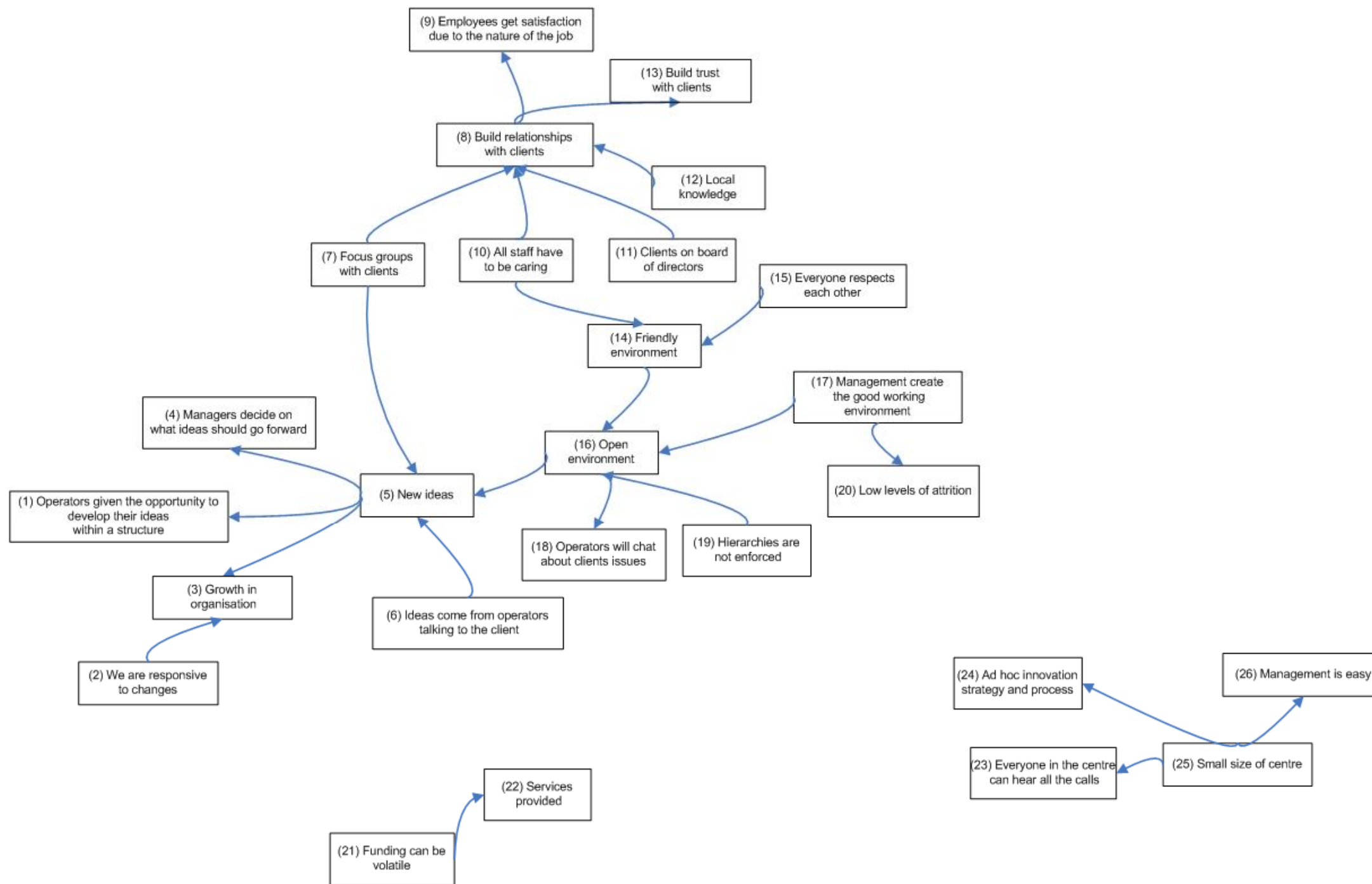
## **The Good Morning Project**

### ***Company background***

The Good Morning Project is a collaboration initiative between organisations with an interest in supporting the more vulnerable members of communities; primarily by means of regular friendly telephone conversations.

The centre under investigation was based within a community project office building on the outskirts of Glasgow. It is very small in size (employing approximately 30 people) and looks like an office. Although the centre is run as a charity the advisors who are employed are fully paid members of staff. This centre is an out-bound centre which mainly deals with elderly people to provide support, and as such the support often goes beyond the calls they receive. The team also undertake face-to-face meetings with their clients through book and cinema clubs but telephone contact is the main form of contact.

Figure 6.15 overleaf illustrates the output from the interviews in a conceptual map.



Influence Diagram  
Good Morning ProjectCase  
Study Analysis

Figure 6.15- The Good Morning Project Map

### *Narrative Analysis*

Reading the map (Figure 6.15) from the left hand side it can be seen that new ideas (5) are central to a cluster. New ideas are generated from operators talking to the clients (6) as well as focus groups held with clients (8). The focus groups are set up since the main aim of the centre is to build relationships with clients (8) and because of this clients also have representatives on the board of directors for the centre (11). The need for close relationships with clients means that the frontline employees all have to have local knowledge (12) and must be caring (10) as this builds trust with the client (13). Employees get satisfaction due to the nature of the job (9).

New ideas are also impacted by the open environment of the contact centre (16). This open environment is developed through the friendly atmosphere (14) where everyone respects each other (15), and management creates a good working environment (17). Hierarchies are not enforced by management (19) which further reinforces the open environment. This good working environment has resulted in low levels of attrition within the centre (20). The open environment not only impacts upon the generation of new ideas but also allows operators to chat among themselves about clients issues (6).

Management will decide on what ideas should go forward for development (4) but operators are then given the opportunity to develop their own ideas within a structure (1). The new ideas will generate growth in the organisation (3) and the centre is responsive to changes (2).

The centre is small in size (25) meaning that management of the centre is easy (26) and everyone can hear all the calls in the centre (23), however it also means that the innovation strategy and process within the centre is ad hoc (24).

### *Node analysis*

Examining the concepts that have more than three interactions with other concepts in the map Table 6.10 is developed. This analysis is performed to understand the main

concepts that are important within the maps, which are discussed in further detail below.

*Table 6.10 – Node analysis for the Good Morning Project*

<i>Concept Description</i>	<i>Number of Interactions</i>
(5) New ideas	6
(8) Build relationships with clients	6
(16) Open environment	5
(14) Friendly environment	3
(25) Small size of centre	3

As Table 6.4 shows new ideas are a key node on the map.

Figure 6.16 highlights these nodes on the large case study map to show how the node organisational factors interact with the wider factors in the map. This allows the context to be understood in richer detail.



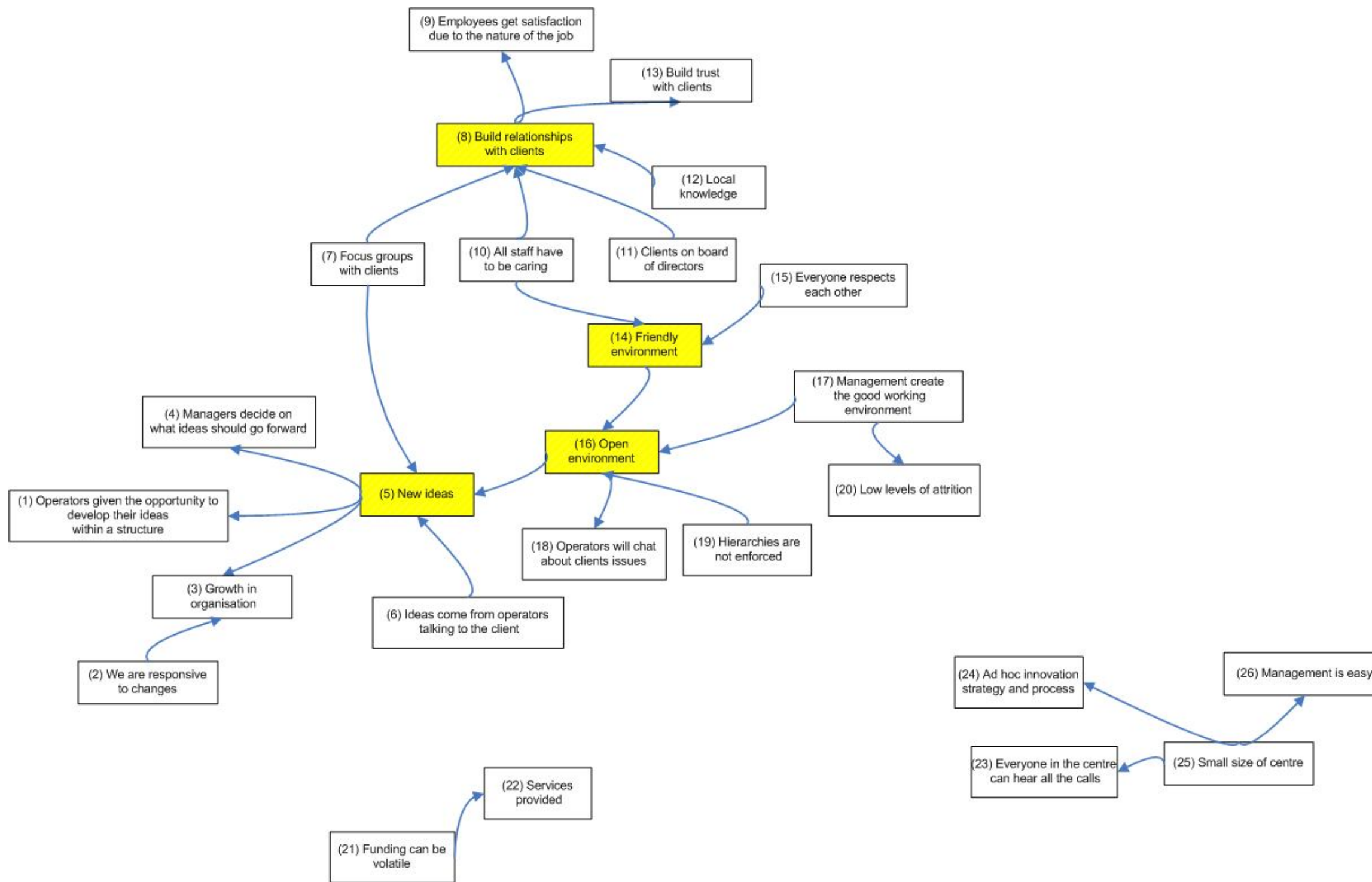


Figure 6.16- The Good Morning Project Intermediate Map

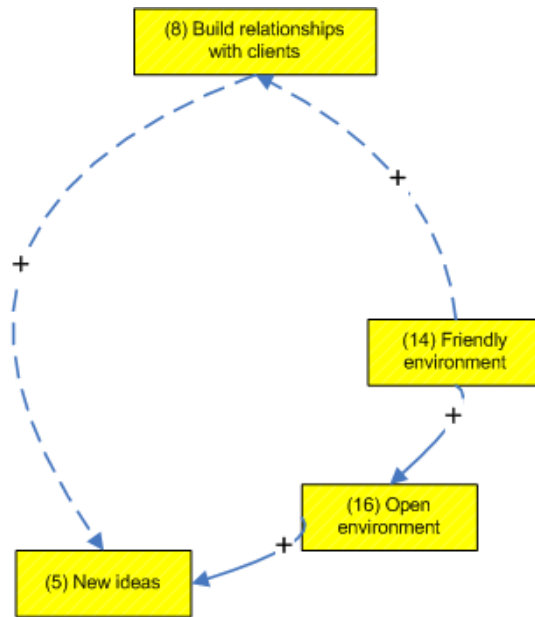
These ideas usually come from employees talking to the clients and are developed through the open culture which exists within the centre. This open culture is developed through management creating a good working environment which is friendly and where everyone respects each other. The new ideas are put forward in an informal manner and there is no formal suggestion scheme or innovation process in place; the small size of the centre makes the management of employees and so their ideas easy. Management makes decisions on what ideas should go forward for development but employees will be involved in the development of their ideas.

One of the other key nodes is that of building relationships with clients, this is due to the nature of the services provided by this centre as relationships are central to its operation. Again due to the nature of the services provided all staff have to be caring and open and this influences the friendly working environment that the interviewees think exists within the centre.

Table 6.11 discusses the effects (either positive or negative) that these key nodes as organisational factors have on innovation activities, as well as the phase of innovation activities which they impact. This table was constructed using the case study notes and intermediate map (showing relationships between the nodes) to allow the relationships between organisational factors and innovation activities to be identified. Figure 6.17 shows the node factors on their own and the relationships between them (either positive (+) or negative (-) depending on the case study notes). A dashed arrow linking two organisational factors shows that a relationship was implied by the interviewees but was not explicitly identified in the interviews.

*Table 6.11 - Organisational factors effect on innovation activities in the Good Morning Project*

Organisational Factors	Effect on Innovation Activities		
	Positive	Negative	Phase of Innovation Activity
Open environment (16)	The management create an open working environment that encourages a culture where hierarchies are not enforced. This means that all employees discuss ideas and issues freely between each other. It also results in ideas being passed to management in an informal atmosphere with a constant dialogue being present between management and employees.		New ideas (5)
Friendly environment (14)	In this case due to the client who they are providing a service to the working environment needs to be one where employees are friendly with the client as well as each other. This friendly environment perpetuates the open environment that encourages transfer and development of new ideas.		
Build relationship with clients (8)	The primary purpose of this case is to build a relationship with the client and this means that new ideas can come directly from the client due to the good relationship that exists between the employees and their clients. This is evidence through the focus groups that the contact centre holds with their clients to discuss new idea and suggestions.		New ideas (5)



*Figure 6.17 – Effects of organisational factors on each other for the Good Morning Project*

***Comparison against conceptual framework***

Table 6.12 summarises the findings of this case and shows the organisational factors verbatim (in column 1) from the interview notes. In order to make a comparison against the conceptual framework (as seen in Figure 6.18) these verbatim organisational factors have been assigned into a corresponding factor from the conceptual framework. Table 4.3 from the systematic literature review has been used to assist in placing the organisational factors. If there is no directly corresponding factor then the factor which was identified is described as an emergent factor which is specific to the empirical context.

Table 6.12 – Comparison of findings against factors of conceptual framework the Good Morning Project

Organisational Factors	Effect on Innovation Activities		Factors from Literature Review (From Table 4.3)									Phase of Innovation Activities					Type of Innovation
	Positive	Negative	Technology	Innovation tools	Corporate strategy	Organisational structure	Organisational culture	Employees	Resources	Knowledge management	Management style and leadership	Idea generation	Idea filter	Select ion of ideas	Development and resourcing of ideas	Implementatio n of ideas	
Open environment (16)	√				√							√					<i>Incremental &amp; radical service innovation</i>
Friendly environment (14)	√						√					√					
Build relationship with clients (8)	√						√					√					

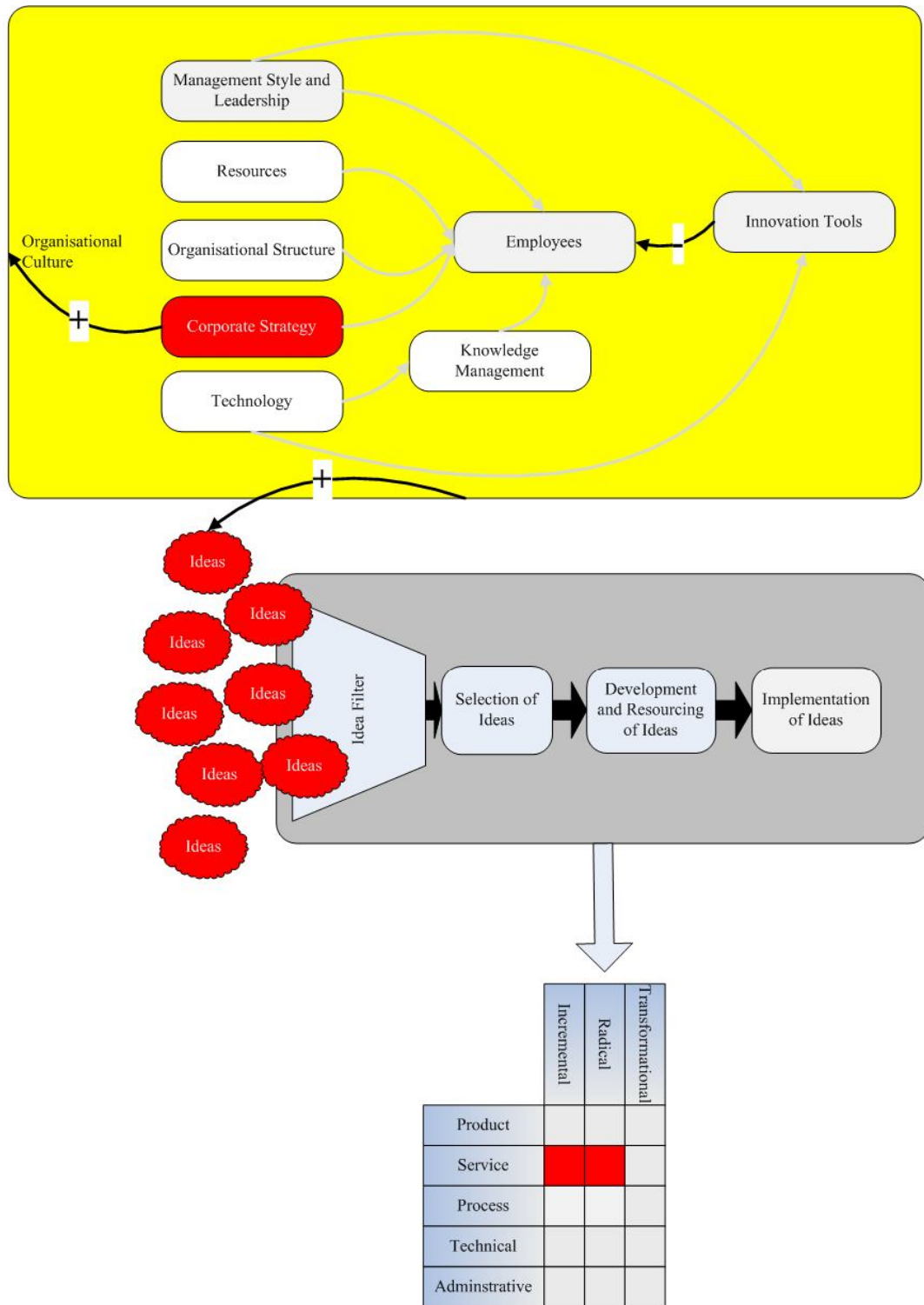


Figure 6.18 – The Good Morning Project Analysis against Conceptual Framework

Table 6.12 shows that there all organisational factors identified in the case study directly relate to the factors within the conceptual framework

## **Dell**

### ***Company background***

Dell, Inc. is a multinational company based in Round Rock, Texas which develops, manufactures, sells, and supports personal computers and other computer-related products.

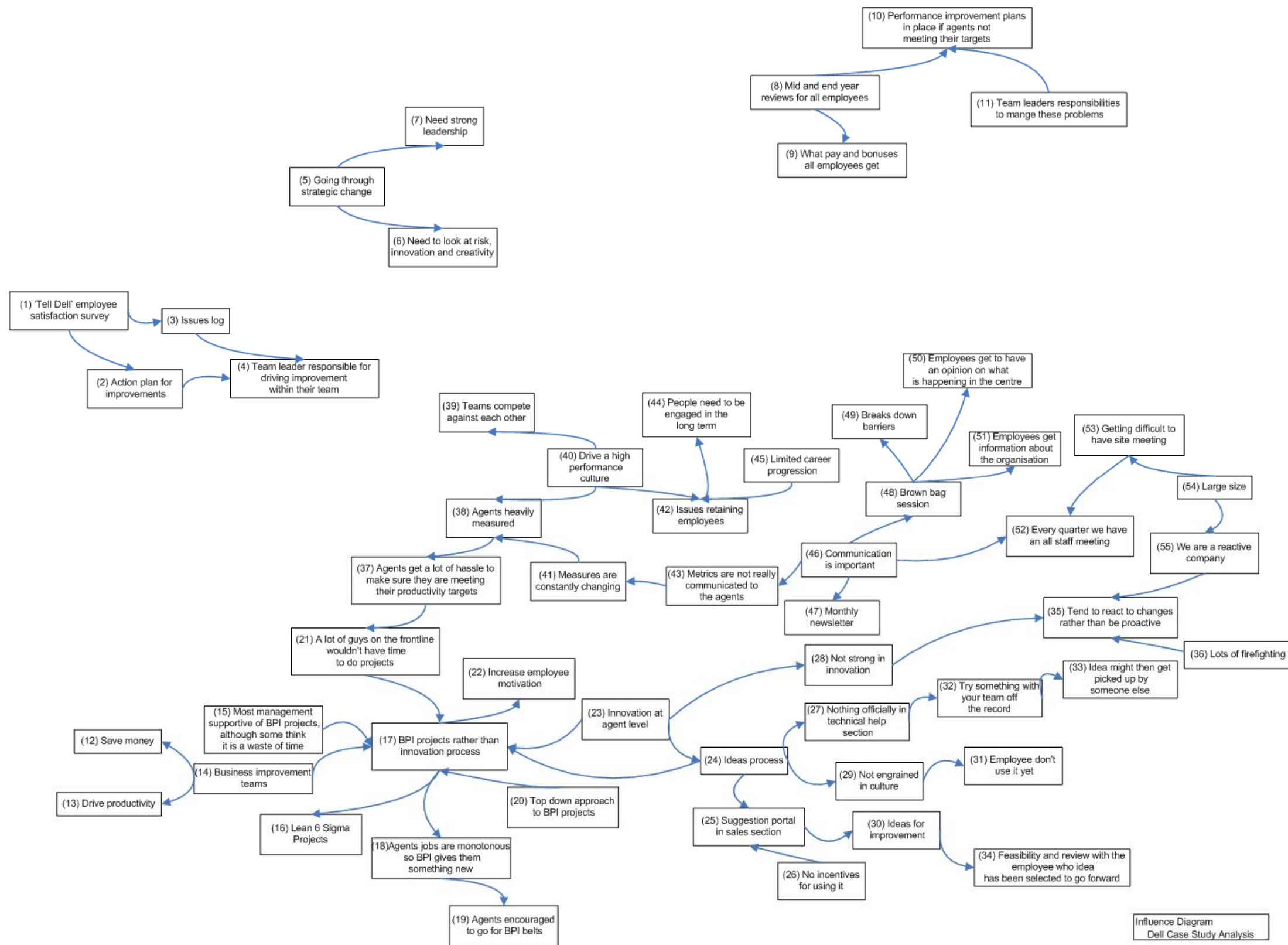
The site under investigation is the Dell technical helpdesk and sales contact centre which is based within a business park on the outskirts of the city centre of Glasgow. The centre employs over 830 people and is split between the technical helpdesk and sales functions. These functions are not co-located but positioned at opposite ends of the centre, therefore these are considered within the company as separate contact centres.

The technical helpdesk centre is mainly staffed with graduates or people who have a high level of technical skills concerning computers, software and peripheral equipment. The sales staff on the other hand has a lower skill and education level.

There was no visit of the contact centre areas therefore any evaluation or description of the physical environment cannot be given.

Figure 6.19 overlaid presents the factors identified from the interviews on a conceptual map.





Influence Diagram  
Dell Case Study Analysis

Figure 6.19 – Dell Map

### *Narrative Analysis*

Reading the map (Figure 6.19) from the left hand side it can be seen that there is a 'Tell Dell' employee satisfaction survey (1) and from this survey an action plan for improvements (2) as well as an issues log (3) are developed. These then feedback to the team leader who is responsible for driving improvement within their own team (4).

At the moment the whole centre is going through strategic change (5). As part of this there is a need for strong leadership (7) and the centre also needs to look at risk, innovation and creativity (6).

There is a large cluster on the bottom right hand side of the map which has the concept of business process improvement projects (17) at the centre of it. Business process improvement (BPI) projects are driven by business improvement teams (14) with the aim of saving money (12) and driving productivity (13) and can be executed through lean Six Sigma projects (16). There is a top down approach to the BPI projects (20) and although most management is supportive of the BPI projects some do think it is a waste of time (15). Agents are encouraged to go for BPI belts (19) and it has been seen that the BPI projects can increase the motivation of employees (22); this is because agents' jobs are monotonous so BPI gives them something new (18). There is some level of contradiction in the findings as it has been said that a lot of agents on the frontline would not have the time to do projects (21). This is because agents get a lot of hassle to make sure they are meeting their productivity targets (37). Agents are heavily measured (38) as the centre drives a high performance culture (40), where all teams compete against each other (39). This high performance culture and the fact that there is limited career progression (45) has resulted in the centre having issues retaining employees (42) therefore people need to be engaged in the long term (44).

As has been identified agents are heavily measured but the measures are also constantly changing (41) and although communication has been seen as important for management (46) the new metrics are not really communication to the agents (43).

For communication there is a monthly newsletter (47) and brown bag sessions (48) where employees get information about the organisation (51) and get the opportunity to express an opinion on what is happening in the centre (50). The aim of this session is to break down barriers between levels of employees (49). There is also an all-staff meeting every quarter (52) but this is getting difficult to accommodate (53) as the number of employees has grown (54).

This large size means that the centre is a reactive company (55) which tends to react to changes rather than being proactive (35), thus leading to lots of fire fighting (36). Due to the reactive nature of the centre they are not strong in innovation (28) i.e. there is little innovation at the agent level (23). Although there is an ideas process within the sales environment (24), there is no official process within the technical help section of the contact centre (27). In the technical help section of the centre people can try new ideas within their team off the record (32). The idea may then get picked up by someone else within the wider centre (33). As was mentioned there is a suggestion portal in the sales section of the contact centre (25) which employees can input ideas for improvement (30). Management then reviews the feasibility of the idea with the employee who put the idea forward (34). This scheme is not yet ingrained in the culture of the site (29) which means that the employees do not yet use it (31). There is also no incentive for the employees to use the suggestion portal (26).

### ***Node analysis***

Examining the concepts that have more than three interactions with other concepts in the map Table 6.13 is developed. This analysis is performed to understand the main concepts that are important within the maps which are discussed in further detail.

*Table 6.13 – Node analysis for Dell*

<i>Concept Description</i>	<i>Number of Interactions</i>
(17) BPI projects rather than innovation process	9
(24) Ideas process	5
(46) Communication is important	4
(48) Brown bag session	4
(14) Business improvement teams	3
(23) Innovation at agent level	3
(35) Tend to react to change rather than be proactive	3
(38) Agent heavily measured	3
(40) Drive a high performance culture	3
(42) Issues retaining employees	3

Figure 6.4 highlights these nodes on the large case study map to show how the node organisational factors interact with the wider factors in the map. This allows the context to be understood in richer detail.

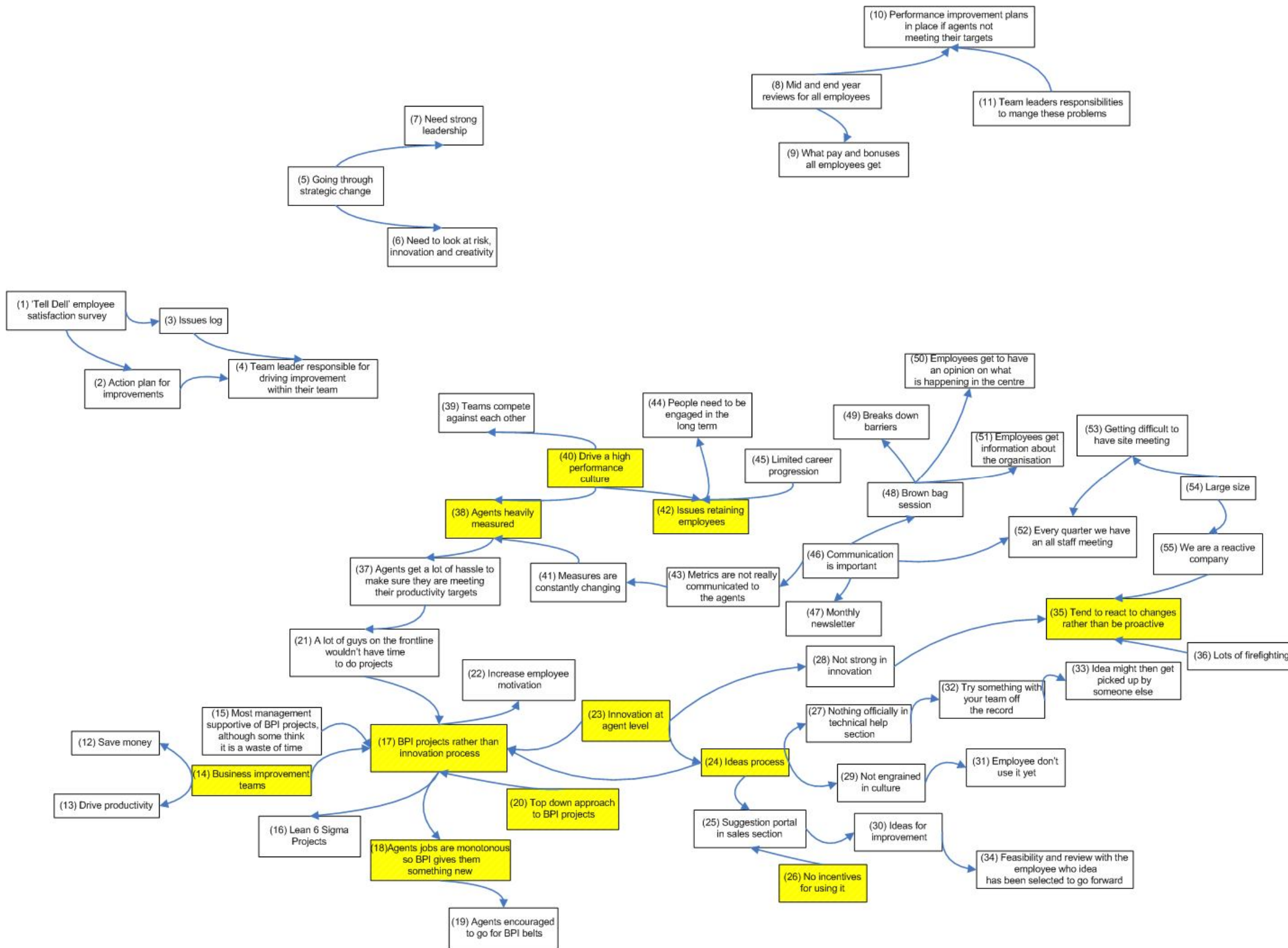


Figure 6.20 - Dell Intermediate Map

It can be seen that the key node on this map is the BPI project rather than an innovation process. The interviewees thought that because employees' jobs are monotonous, BPI projects give them something new to think about, resulting in increased employee motivation. There is a top down approach to these BPI projects with most management supportive of the projects but some think it is a waste of time. The BPI projects are usually carried out with business improvement teams on Six Sigma projects with the aim to save money and drive productivity. However, some of the interviewees felt that many of the frontline employees would not have the time to do the projects due to the nature of their jobs. This is because frontline employees are heavily targeted and measured through tough productivity targets – a high performance culture is in place within this centre.

The interviewees thought that communication was an issue for the centre, as some changes were not directly communicated to the employees. In an attempt to improve the communication within the site there are brown bag sessions which aim to get employees involved – this is through breaking down barriers between the different types of employees and giving all employees the opportunity to voice their opinion about what goes on within the centre.

In the technical help section there was no formal process for innovation, rather a test and try culture, whereas in the sales section a new formal suggestion portal was being implemented. This suggestion portal was not engrained in the culture and as such was not used by any of the sales frontline employees.

Table 6.14 discusses the effects (either positive or negative) that these key nodes as organisational factors have on innovation activities, as well as the phase of innovation activities which they impact. This table was constructed using the case study notes and intermediate map (showing relationships between the nodes) to allow the relationships between organisational factors and innovation activities to be identified. Figure 6.21 shows the node factors on their own and the relationships between them (either positive (+) or negative (-) depending on the case study notes).

A dashed arrow linking two organisational factors shows that a relationship was implied by the interviewees but was not explicitly identified in the interviews.

Table 6.14 - Organisational factors effect on innovation activities in Dell

Organisational Factors	Effect on Innovation Activities		Phase of Innovation Activity
	Positive	Negative	
Ideas process (24) No incentives for using it (26) Tend to react to change rather than be proactive (35)	There is a formal mechanism for suggesting an area or issue for undertaking a business process improvement (BPI) project. This means that the BPI projects are focused on areas of importance.	However, during this case study this ideas process was not being used to select BPI projects. Although there is an ideas process in place the employees do not use it because they are not aware of it and do not have any incentives for using it. Due to the large size of the company and the high levels of expediting then they tend to react to changes than actively seek it. This has resulted in the contact centre not being focused on innovation or being focused on engendering a culture which encourages employee suggestions.	BPI projects rather than innovation process (17)
Business improvement teams (14)	Business improvement teams are developed to undertake the BPI projects, these teams focus on saving money and driving productivity. Having teams specialised in business improvement means there is a dedicated resource for the implementation of BPI projects which should result in successful business improvement.		
Top down approach to BPI projects (20) Agents heavily measured (38; 40; 42)	In this case there is a top down approach to the BPI projects, most of the management support the BPI projects this will ensure that the work does get carried out and has achievable deliverables.	However, in this case it was noted that some of the management think that BPI projects are a waste of time and so do not encourage their employees to take part in them. In this case there is a culture of driving productivity performance which means that many of the agents are heavily measured to ensure that they are achieving their competitive targets. This means that many agents get hassled to meet their performance targets and resulting in the agents not having the time to take part in BPI projects.	BPI projects rather than innovation process (17)
Agents jobs are monotonous so BPI gives them something new (18)	Due to the repetitive monotonous nature of agents jobs, their involvement in BPI projects would mean an increase in employee motivation. Agents are encouraged to take part in BPI projects and go for BPI belts (qualifications). Because the agents jobs are monotonous then being involved in BPI projects would mean that their job is richer and they will want to succeed in implementing their project.		



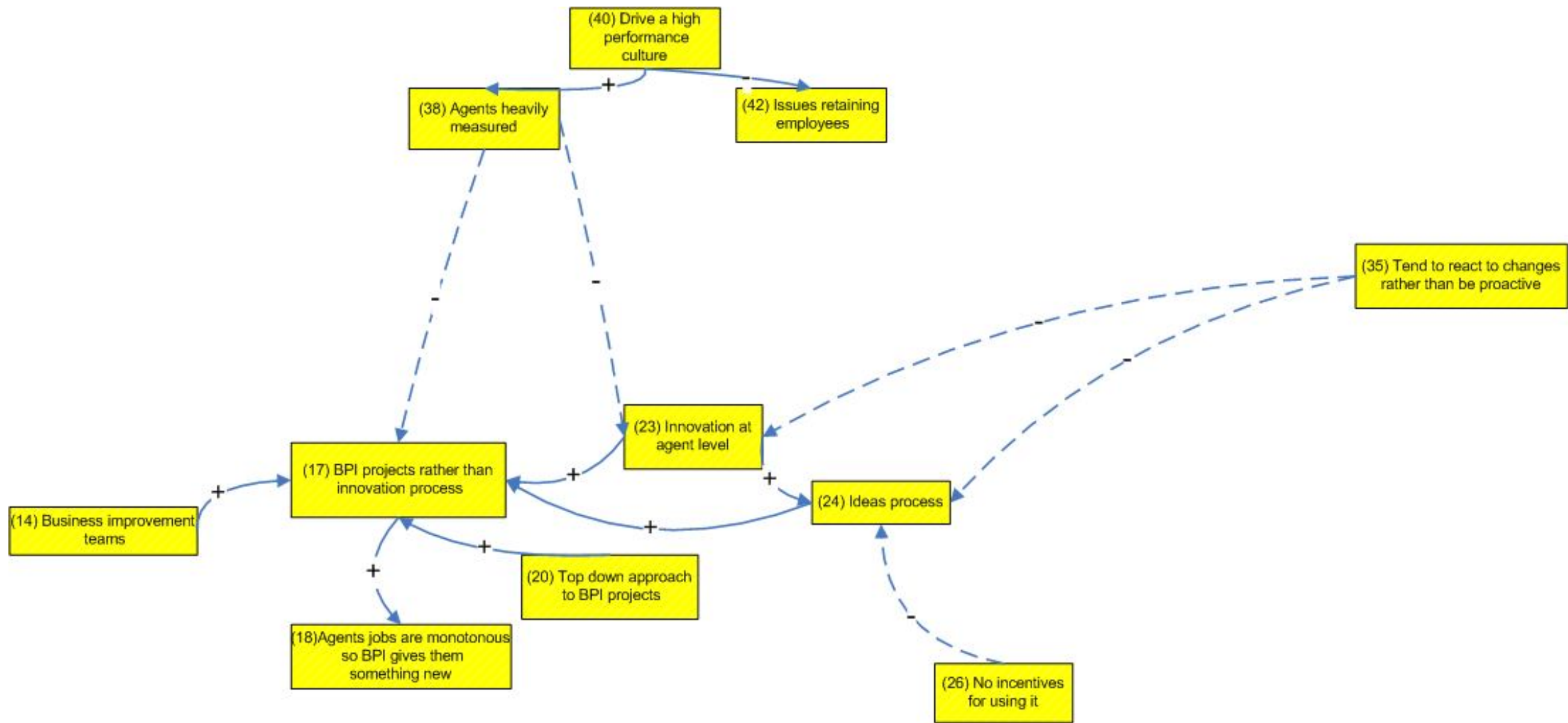


Figure 6.21 – Effects of organisational characteristics on each other

### ***Comparison against conceptual framework***

Table 6.15 summarises the findings of this case and shows the organisational factors verbatim (in column 1) from the interview notes. In order to make a comparison against the conceptual framework (as seen in Figure 6.22) these verbatim organisational factors have been assigned into a corresponding factor from the conceptual framework. Table 4.3 from the systematic literature review has been used to assist in placing the organisational factors. If there is no directly corresponding factor then the factor which was identified is described as an emergent factor which is specific to the empirical context.

Table 6.15 – Comparison of findings against factors of conceptual framework Dell

Organisational Factors	Effect on Innovation Activities		Factors from Literature Review (From Table 4.3)									Phase of Innovation Activities					Type of Innovation
	Positive	Negative	Technology	Innovation tools	Corporate strategy	Organisational structure	Organisational culture	Employees	Resources	Knowledge management	Management style and leadership	Idea generation	Idea filter	Select ion of ideas	Development and resourcing of ideas	Implementation of ideas	
Ideas process (24)	√			√												√	Incremental process innovation
No incentives for using it (26)		√		√												√	
Tend to react to change rather than be proactive (35)		√					√									√	
Business improvement teams (14)	√							√								√	
Top down approach to BPI projects (20)	√										√					√	
Agents heavily measured (38; 40; 42)		√														√	
Agents jobs are monotonous so BPI gives them something new (18)	√															√	

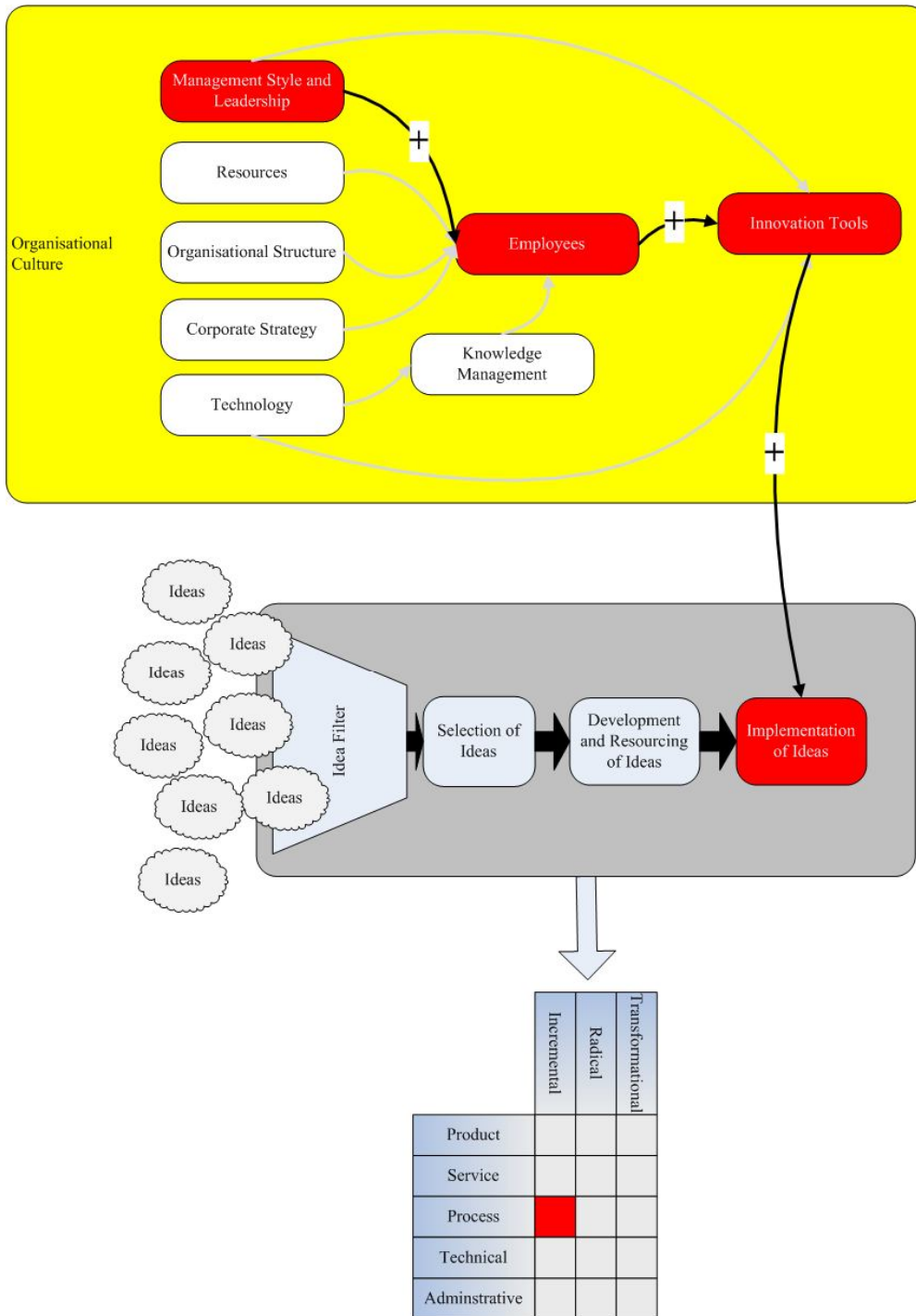


Figure 6.22 – Dell Analysis against Conceptual Framework

Table 6.15 has highlighted that there are two organisational factors that do not directly relate to the factors within the conceptual framework, these can be identified as the factors that are context specific to this case. These factors have been identified as:

- Agents heavily measured (38; 40; 42)
- Agents jobs are monotonous so BPI gives them something new (18)

## **6.2 CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS**

The cross case analysis is performed to allow patterns in the within-case analysis to be identified. This will allow similarities and differences between the findings from each of the cases to be identified and discuss common themes that may exist across the cases. This provides insights into the wider contact centre context.

The initial phase of the cross-case analysis is to identify the barriers and enablers to innovation activities in contact centres; this is in order to answer RQ 2. The organisational factors that have a positive effect on innovation activities (+) are described as enablers and the factors that have a negative effect (-) on innovation activities are described as barriers.

From an initial analysis it can be seen that there are more enablers than barriers emerging from across the case data. The organisational factors from the cases that did not fit into a classification from the literature review were analysed and it can be seen that the factors all relate to the nature of the advisors job. Therefore a new factor is added that is called 'Nature of Job'.

Table 6.16 uses the factors; corporate strategy, employees, innovation tools, management style and leadership, nature of job and organisational culture which have been identified from the within-case analysis as important factors affecting innovation activities in contact centres to analyse the data across the cases.

Table 6.16 – Cross-case analysis grouping data by factor

Factor	Enablers	Phase of Innovation Activities	Barriers	Phase of Innovation Activities
<b>Corporate Strategy that...</b>	Builds relationship and promotes interaction with clients (BBC/Capita; The Good Morning Project)	Idea Generation		
<b>Employees that...</b>	Are involved, engaged and represented (BBC/Capita; DVLA)	Idea Generation		
	Have personal development (BBC/Capita)	Idea Generation		
	Have good employee morale (DVLA)	Idea Implementation		
	Work in business improvement teams (Dell)	Idea Implementation		
<b>Innovation Tools that...</b>			Result in individuals to put ideas forward without support (NCR)	Idea Generation
			Are not an effective suggestion scheme (NCR)	Idea Generation
			Have no incentive for using it (NCR; Dell)	Idea Generation
	Use an ideas process (DVLA; Dell)	Idea Generation and Implementation		
<b>Management Style and Leadership that...</b>			Does not encouraged agents to come up with new ideas (NCR)	Idea Generation
	Has support from senior management (DVLA)	Idea Generation		
	Focuses on good staff welfare (BBC/Capita)	Idea Generation		
	Is participatory and encourage people to get involved (BBC/Capita; NCR)	Idea Generation and Implementation		
	Adopts a top down approach to BPI projects (Dell)	Idea Implementation		
<b>Nature of job that...</b>			Is 'on-line' dealing with customers and is 'tied' to the computer system with heavy performance measures (NCR; DVLA; Dell)	Idea Generation and Implementation
	Has no scripting or constraints for agents (BBC/Capita)	Idea Generation		
	Are monotonous so BPI gives them something new (Dell)	Idea Implementation		
<b>Organisational Culture that...</b>	Has a good attitude to innovation (DVLA)	Idea Generation		
	Has an open, friendly environment where employees challenge current working practices (The Good Morning Project; NCR; DVLA)	Idea Generation and Implementation		
	Has improvement engrained in the culture (BBC/Capita)	Idea Generation		
			Is reactive to change rather than proactive (Dell)	Idea Implementation
	Focuses on communication (BBC/Capita)	Idea Generation		

Table 6.16 provides the factors that are most commonly witnessed across the cases. The description of the factor is followed by the case names in brackets - this shows how many cases this factor relates to. It can be seen that there are no factors that are common across all five cases however, by analysing the table it can be seen that there are a small number of factors that are seen across three of the five cases. A moderate number of the factors are common across two of the five cases and a large number of the factors are attributed to single cases. These factors are categorised accordingly as:

- Primary factors (emerging from **three** out of five cases)
- Secondary factors (emerging from **two** out of five cases)
- Tertiary factors (emerging from one **out** of the five cases)

Based on the analysis carried out in Table 6.16 a number of findings can be deduced:

- There are **two** primary factors
- There are **five** secondary factors
- There are **fifteen** tertiary factors

These factors are presented in Table 6.17, the implications of the findings contained in Tables 6.16 and 6.17 will be examined in the discussions chapter so will not be discussed here.



Table 6.17 – Primary, secondary and tertiary factors affecting innovation activities in contact centres

	Description	Phase of Innovation	Effect on Innovation Activities	Number of Cases where Evident
<b>Primary Factors</b>	Organisational culture that has an open, friendly environment where employees challenge current working practices	Idea Generation and Implementation	Enabler	3
	Nature of job that is 'on-line' dealing with customers and is 'tied' to the computer system with heavy performance measures	Idea Generation and Implementation	Barrier	3
<b>Secondary Factors</b>	Corporate strategy that builds relationship and promotes interaction with clients	Idea Generation	Enabler	2
	Employees that are involved, engaged and represented	Idea Generation	Enabler	2
	Innovation tools that use an ideas process	Idea Generation and Implementation	Enabler	2
	Management style and leadership that is participatory and encourage people to get involved	Idea Generation and Implementation	Enabler	2
	Innovation tools that have no incentive for using it	Idea Generation	Barrier	2
<b>Tertiary Factors</b>	Employees that have personal development	Idea Generation	Enabler	1
	Employees that have good employee morale	Idea Implementation	Enabler	1
	Employees that work in business improvement teams	Idea Implementation	Enabler	1
	Management style and leadership that has support from senior management	Idea Generation	Enabler	1
	Management style and leadership that focuses on good staff welfare	Idea Generation	Enabler	1
	Management style and leadership that adopts a top down approach to BPI projects	Idea Implementation	Enabler	1
	Nature of job that has no scripting or constraints for agents	Idea Generation	Enabler	1
	Nature of job that are monotonous so BPI gives them something new	Idea Implementation	Enabler	1
	Organisational culture that has a good attitude to innovation	Idea Generation	Enabler	1
	Organisational culture that has improvement engrained in the culture	Idea Generation	Enabler	1
	Organisational culture that focuses on communication	Idea Generation	Enabler	1
	Innovation tools that result in individuals to put ideas forward without support	Idea Generation	Barrier	1
	Innovation tools that are not an effective suggestion scheme	Idea Generation	Barrier	1
	Management style and leadership that does not encouraged agents to come up with new ideas	Idea Generation	Barrier	1
	Organisational culture that is reactive to change rather than proactive	Idea Implementation	Barrier	1

### **Comparison against conceptual framework**

In order to compare the cross-case findings against the conceptual framework the within-case analyses (i.e. Figures 6.6; 6.10; 6.14; 6.18; 6.22) were compared against each other. Figure 6.23 shows the findings of this cross-case analysis; it identifies the organisational factors that impact on innovation activities in comparison to the factors that were identified for generic organisations. The other factors (resources, organisational structure, corporate strategy, technology and knowledge management) have been shaded to show that they have limited importance within the contact centre context.

There are also no relationships (i.e. (+) or (-)) identified on Figure 6.23, this is because the organisational factors identified here can be either enablers or barriers to innovation activities depending on how they are characterised. For example, from the NCR case factor (32) “Agents are not encouraged to come up with new ideas enough” which is assigned to ‘management style and leadership’ has a negative effect on innovation activities whereas the opposite is true in the BBC/Capita case. In the BBC/Capita case factor (36) “Management encourage people to get involved in developing new ideas” which is also assigned to ‘management style and leadership’ has a positive effect on innovation activities.

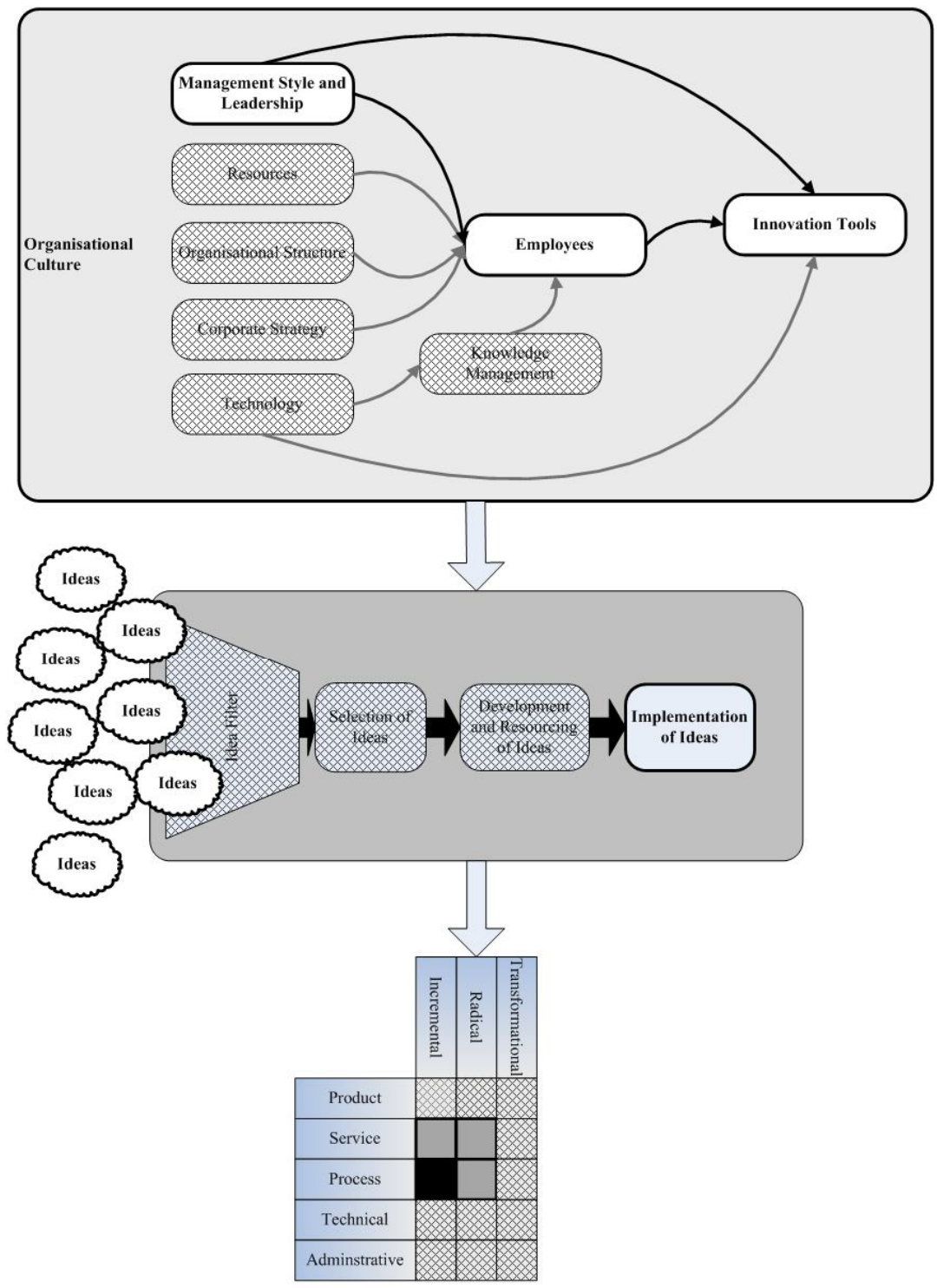


Figure 6.23 - Comparison of cross-case findings against conceptual framework

### 6.3 CHAPTER CONCLUSIONS

The main conclusions of this chapter are that the research questions of this study have been answered through the within and cross-case analysis which was presented in this chapter. A summary of these findings is presented in this section.

It can be seen that the case contact centres are involved in innovation activities but these activities usually focus on the generation of ideas or the implementation of ideas or change initiatives.

The type of innovation witnessed in the cases focuses on incremental process innovation; although some cases focused on service innovation the type of innovation in the majority of cases was process focused.

A number of factors were identified as important as enablers and barriers for innovation activities in contact centres, the factors that were common across a number of cases are described and primary or secondary factors.

The primary and secondary enablers of innovation activities in contact centres are:

- Primary factor
  - An organisational culture that has an open, friendly environment where employees challenge current working practices
- Secondary factors
  - A corporate strategy that builds relationship and promotes interaction with clients
  - Employees that are involved, engaged and represented
  - Innovation tools that use an ideas process
  - Management style and leadership that is participatory and encourage people to get involved

The primary and secondary barriers of innovation activities in contact centres are:

- Primary factor
  - Nature of job that is 'on-line' dealing with customers and is 'tied' to the computer system with heavy performance measures
- Secondary factor
  - Innovation tools that have no incentive for using it

## Chapter 7: Discussions

*“...free discussion is the very life of truth” Thomas Huxley (1825-1895)*

This chapter develops insights and interpretations from the findings to provide a robust theory building process. In accordance with Eisenhardt (1989) this chapter provides a discussion which allows the enfolding of literature – both similar and contrasting – to allow new theory to be developed. This analysis with the literature will show where there are gaps in the theory and where these empirical findings contradict, verify or add to existing knowledge. This then shows where the research has developed theory and has given its contribution to knowledge.

This chapter compares the findings from the fieldwork against the research questions – this will show if the research questions have been answered and the implications that this brings. It also provides a free debate to discuss why the relationships within the findings have occurred and develop a number of predictions on this - this is a key step in the theory building process. The issues of verification and rigour are also addressed in this chapter which concludes with a discussion on the limitations and benefits of the methodological approach of this research work.

### 7.1 CRITIQUE OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

***RQ 1. Are contact centres involved in innovation activities and if so what type of innovation can be seen?***

Research question 1 (RQ1) is posed to allow an understanding of how innovation is thought of within contact centres, whether it is a key concern for them or whether it is not an important consideration for them. In structuring the research questions, this first question is used as a gate question to allow debate on innovation and its importance within contact centres. This question also seeks to understand the type of innovation that can be witnessed in contact centres.

***RQ 2. What are the enablers and barriers to innovation activity in contact centres?***

RQ 2 is the main research question of this work and is concerned with the identification of the organisational factors that enabler or are barriers to innovation

activities within the contact centre environment. As has been demonstrated through the literature review carried out in Chapter 4 there is an extensive body of knowledge concerned with the organisational factors that influence innovation activities but it is through the empirical research of this study that the factors affecting innovation in contact centres have been identified. This is an important question since by identifying the factors influencing innovation activities in contact centres further work can be done to understand how these factors can be manipulated to encourage and enhance innovation in this context. The limitation of this research question is that it only looks at the organisational factors and does not take into account external factors such as regional innovation policies, market conditions or the impact of technological advances.

## **7.2 CRITIQUE OF METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH**

The main empirical methodology pursued as part of this research is comparative multiple case studies. This research is carried out in an exploratory manner due to the nature of the subject area with the main aim to build theory.

The critiques of qualitative and case based research, where small numbers of cases are investigated, are usually focused on the representativeness and generalisability of the research findings (Creswell, 1998). However, for exploratory research where insights to new theory are sought, the qualitative case based research approach is appropriate (Yin, 2003). Although the findings of this research cannot be said to be general for all contact centres it does provide a basis and theory on which to build further research work.

The area of this research which is an emergent methodological approach is that of the systematic literature review. This is a technique developed from the medical field and proves useful when searching for tightly defined and bounded subject areas but is not suitable for carrying out wide ranging literature reviews. This approach was only used in this research to identify the factors influencing innovation activities because this was a tightly bounded research area. It would not have been suitable to

carry out the literature review summarised in Chapter 2 as the technique can often miss key literature due to the inflexibility of the approach.

There are also limitations within the cases used in this research. The cases have been selected from the UK - this therefore limits how general the findings are to other contact centres within other geographical areas. However, as the contact centre model has been replicated from developed countries, such as the USA and UK, to developing countries, such as India and the Philippines, then it is envisaged that this work would be replicable across geographical locations (Global Call Centre Survey, 2006). Further work that covers a wider geographical area would allow further confidence in the findings.

### **7.3 COMPARISON OF FINDINGS TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Each of the research questions will now be taken in turn and the findings from the cases will be discussed in relation to the research question posed. A summary of the findings of the research questions can be seen in the conclusions of this thesis in Chapter 8.

#### ***RQ 1. Are contact centres involved in innovation activities and if so what type of innovation can be seen?***

It can be seen that contact centres are involved in innovation activities but these activities usually focus on the generation of ideas, or the implementation of ideas or change initiatives. Table 7.1 provides a summary of the evidence from each of the case studies on their approach to innovation activities.



*Table 7.1 – Summary Innovation Activities across Cases*

<i>Case Company</i>	<i>Approach to Innovation Activities</i>
BBC/Capita	Continuous improvement that is engrained in the culture
DVLA	Continuous improvement (CI) environment with teams set up for CI projects
NCR	Looking at current working and think how to do things better
The Good Morning Project	Ad hoc, reactive to change
Dell	Business Process Improvement (BPI) environment with teams set up to do BPI projects

Investigations of the cross case analysis show that many of the contact centres within this study are concerned with continuous improvement rather than innovation.

Rijnders and Boer (2004) cite Boer et al. (2000) in their definition of continuous improvement which is understood as “the planned, organised and systematic process of on-going, incremental and company-wide change of existing practices aimed at improving company performance” (pp. 283). Using this definition it would seem that three of the case companies do have continuous improvement processes in place, although further work would need to be carried out to show how planned, organised and systematic these processes are.

This finding implies that contact centres are not aware of innovation as an important activity, although they do see the importance of continuous improvement. This lack of awareness of innovation is not restricted to contact centres but to the service industry in general. This finding therefore supports Sundbo (2000) who suggests that “service firms are not always aware of innovation as an activity with the potential to develop their business” (Sundbo, 2000: 112). He then goes onto propose two main reasons why there is a lack of focus on innovation in services, which are:

- Services have traditionally been seen as peripheral to industrial activities
- Innovation research has been concerned with manufacturing

It can be inferred from the findings of this research that this theory also is true within the contact centre context.

The other reason for this focus on continuous improvement (rather than innovation) is that contact centres were initially set up on a model that aimed to reduce operation costs. This focus is still evident in the industry with service level agreements (SLAs) driven by nominal operational targets.

***The type of innovation seen in cases***

Table 7.2 provides evidence of the type of innovations that were witnessed within each of the case contact centres.

*Table 7.2 – Type of innovation seen in cases*

<i>Case Company</i>	<i>Evidence of Ideas being Implemented</i>
BBC/Capita	Continuous improvement focus, e.g. multi-skilling of advisors to enable a blended environment
DVLA	90% incremental e.g. changes in working environment and 10% radical e.g. getting rid of tax disks for vehicles
NCR	Do what we do better, e.g. strategic resource of a specific area of the centre
The Good Morning Project	Addition of services to existing service, e.g. starting book and cinema clubs for clients
Dell	Process innovations, e.g. projects that save money and drive productivity

The type of innovations generated within the contact centres involved in this study was varied although it can be said that the majority of the ideas put forward by the advisors were concerned with their day-to-day jobs or the processes that they were involved within. Many of the centres get ideas from advisors on the physical working environment, the benefits they would like to receive from the organisation or how to do their job better or different. As such the composition of ideas coming from advisor level employees is focused on the process level. These findings seem to support the work carried out by Sundbo (2000) who says that “validity of the strong emphasis on process innovation also extended to non-technological innovations in services” (Sundbo, 2000: 112). It could be argued that this is because it is difficult to separate the process from the consumption in service innovations. Gallouj and Weinstein (1997) say that services have a ‘fuzzy’ output which can make it difficult to measure and this also true of innovation outputs in contact centres.

Some of the contact centres involved in this study said advisor ideas had come from them talking to the customer and so were focused around making something better for the customer but again it was difficult to classify the innovation types into one of the predefined categories discussed in Chapter 2.

***RQ 2. What are the enablers and barriers to innovation activity in contact centres?***

The within-case analysis has provided a number of enablers and barriers to innovation activity in contact centres; however it is through the cross-case analysis where patterns begin to emerge. Although many factors (fifteen from 22) were specific to individual cases (tertiary factors) there were a number of factors that were common across pairs of cases (five from 22) (secondary factors), in addition to factors that were common across three of the cases (two from 22) (primary factors). The discussion in this section focuses on the primary and secondary factors identified from the cross-case analysis as the aim of this research question is to identify the common barriers and enablers from the cases, this is not to say that the tertiary factors are not important but their significance may become apparent through a large scale survey.

**Enablers of innovation activities**

This section discusses the primary and secondary enablers of innovation activities in contact centres.

***Primary factor***

*An organisational culture that has an open, friendly environment where employees challenge current working practices*

This factor refers to the general atmosphere that exists within the contact centre and can be thought of as part of the organisational culture.

The working environment was discussed by advisors in the three cases (NCR; DVLA; Dell) to describe the way they felt about the atmosphere in their area of the contact centre, many discussed this environment as something that was created by the management of their area as well as the people working in their area. It was seen

that working environment played an important role in whether advisors were keen to put their ideas forward (either into a suggestion scheme or to their manager). NCR openly admitted to saying that advisors need to stand up and put their ideas forward which implies that the working environment in this centre was not conducive to generating ideas. However, in other the centres all employees (both advisors and managers) were actively encouraged to put their ideas forward with some centres providing multiple channels for advisors to submit ideas. Therefore, the working environment needs to be open to allow new ideas to be encouraged and not frowned upon.

Often advisors discussed whether it was acceptable or not to challenge current working practices and this often has much to do with the relationship they had with their manager. DVLA actively encouraged advisors to challenge the way things were done and trained the leadership team in how to deal with this type of working environment. This was part of the DVLA's major culture change which involved a new building, new working practices and the end of a CCA accreditation process.

### ***Secondary factors***

*A corporate strategy that builds relationship and promotes interaction with clients*

BBC/Capita is an outsourced centre and it raises some interesting points in that they thought they were a dynamic contact centre but their client perceived them to be slow to change. This client perception has spurred the centre on to become more proactive in seeking out new improvements that can benefit their business. They have also adopted the client's attitude to change and creativity and have integrated their staff into a culture that is similar to that of the client to allow this to happen. This is also true of the Good Morning Project whose primary strategy is to build relationships with their clients - in this case ideas are used directly from the interaction with the client. This has led to innovation activities that have focused on innovation in the service offering to the client rather than process focused innovation.

The next two factors are decidedly interrelated, employees that are involved, engaged and represented are often the result of a management style that is participatory and encourages people to get involved.

*Employees that are involved, engaged and represented*

This relates to the various initiatives that are in place to allow employees to be engaged and get involved within the contact centre.

Almost all of the contact centres investigated in this study had some level of employee involvement or participation scheme. This ranged from employees organising charity and social events to them setting rotas and shift patterns.

The impetus for many of the suggestion schemes and employee involvement programmes was not to generate ideas and develop innovations but rather to gain participation from employees. As many contact centres suffer from issues with employee attendance and attrition then these schemes are put in place to allow advisors to feel more involved in the overall operation of the centre. These approaches are often used to limit the effects of the nature of the job and make employees feel valued.

It was seen from the case data that there is a strong link between these employee suggestion schemes and involvement programmes and innovation activities. It was found that many of these provide the front end of the innovation process within contact centres – where ideas are presented, generated and developed. In one of the case studies (DVLA) advisors were also involved in the implementation of their idea but this was a limited view as in most of the other cases advisors were taken out of the innovation process once their idea was put forward.

*Management style and leadership that is participatory and encourage people to get involved*

This refers to the way management treat and manage the employees within the contact centre.

What has been seen from the case data is that management plays an important role in enabling innovation activities in contact centres. In the centres that had ad hoc, emergent innovation tools (BBC/Capita; NCR; Good Morning Project) it was the management that made decisions about the future of the idea and how it would progress and be implemented. This also reflected how approachable management made themselves to the advisors to allow them to discuss their ideas.

Often in the centres (DVLA; Dell) that had more structured innovation activities management controlled the development of the idea once it had been placed into the suggestion scheme or was brought up at a participation group. Only one or two of the centres involved in the study allowed advisors to be included in the further development and implementation of their idea. An overall theme which came from all the cases was that innovation activities were dependant on management taking a leadership and facilitator role.

*Innovation tools that use an ideas process*

Two of the cases investigated had structured innovation tools (DVLA; Dell) that were used to generate, develop and implement ideas and these were found to have a positive effect on innovation activities. However, all cases spoke about the generation of ideas. In contrast only two cases (Dell; DVLA) discussed the implementation of ideas as important. It is thought that this could be due to the impetus behind the set up of these innovation or suggestion scheme programmes being the boost of employee morale through involvement and participation. The schemes and programmes are set up with the aim of encouraging employees to get involved in the centre and therefore the focus is not on the output of the innovation tools but rather on the view that employees have a say in the operation of the contact centre. There is a need for contact centre management to realise the potential

economic benefits of the ideas that are developed from the advisors and not just focus it as another employee participation group.

### **Barriers of innovation activities**

This section discusses the primary and secondary barriers of innovation activities in contact centres.

#### ***Primary factor***

*Nature of job that is 'on-line' dealing with customers and is 'tied' to the computer system with heavy performance measures*

This refers to the nature of employees' jobs, such as back office or front office employees. One of the key emergent themes coming from the case data was that the nature of advisors jobs restricted their involvement in the innovation process.

In Dell and the DVLA, advisors were 'on-line' dealing directly with customers and another set of advisors were 'off-line' dealing with customer enquiries as a back office function. Although both sets of advisors were targeted using the same methods there was more potential for 'off line' advisors to take part in business improvement programmes. This could be due to the urgency that is often felt by 'on line' advisors when dealing with customers in real time. There is also that fact that 'on line' advisors are often 'tied' to their desk by their headsets which means physically moving from their desk can be restricted. 'On line' advisors also have the added pressure of being 'controlled' by the computer system – often the systems used by contact centres have designated break times built into the system to which advisors have to adhere. This adherence can be difficult if an advisor is dealing with a customer enquiry which runs into their break time.

This can be broken down to an issue with the job design of the 'on line' employees. Job design can have an impact upon innovation. Often work within the contact centre environment is based on the Tayloristic principles of job specialisation – where an advisor only has a limited set of tasks that they can undertake. In the cases investigated as part of this study there was a wide variety of job designs in contrast to the commonly held view that all contact centre advisors do a limited job. The

differences in job design also reflected differences in the way advisors were involved in innovation activities. The advisors working within job designs that were task focused, routine and transactional in nature were encouraged to use the structured suggestion schemes that are often placed on the company intranets as witnessed in Dell and the DVLA. These types of jobs also meant that although advisors may put forward a good idea that is subsequently developed and implemented, they will not be involved in the development or implementation. This type of job design also meant that advisors had a limited view of the overall process in which they worked – often only viewing their specific tasks and immediate work area as areas for improvement. Therefore, it could be argued that such specialisation in job design can limit the breadth of the innovation generated from advisors working within it.

However, in multi-functional job designs where advisors can carry out a range of tasks and the job is not so routine the advisor is often encouraged to take their ideas to their manager where they will often work together to develop the idea further as witnessed in BBC/Capita and the Good Morning Project. The innovation process within these types of job designs is often much more organic and emergent – this is in contrast to the highly structured approach of an employee suggestion scheme. Advisors working within this type of job design often had a broader view of the process they were working within this allows a broad scope of ideas to be generated. Also due to the more complex nature of the services that are provided through a multi-functional job design, the advisors had more opportunity to build a rapport with the customer. This can allow for customers concerns or suggestions to also be put forward to the advisor. This would allow the advisor to work on the customers' behalf and put their idea forward within the contact centre – effectively making the contact centre a listening post for the wider organisation.

The use of performance measures and performance monitoring within the call and contact centre environment are widely research topics but this research has often focused on the impact these have on customer service levels or employee morale. It would also seem from this research that there is still an issue within contact centres



surrounding the way advisors are performance monitored and managed although this research has only investigated the impact they have on innovation activities.

The nature of operationally focused efficiency measures means that advisors are under time pressures to answer calls and deal with customers enquiries within a set time period. The use of tally sheets and electronic queue and call handling time boards were observed in a number of the centres investigated in this study (DVLA; NCR; Dell). These targets are set by management and are cascaded down to the advisor level so advisors have no control over their performance targets. In many of the centres investigated this culture of time based measures was evident and the impact it has on innovation activities is complex.

In the centres that had a high level of operationally focused measures where advisors were under pressure to answer and deal with customer calls within a set time space the management of idea generation and collection was structured (DVLA; Dell). This structure was often through on-line intranet sites where ideas can be posted or through staff representation groups. However some of the advisors spoken to in the sites were either unaware of the suggestion schemes or were too busy to put their idea forward. In one of the centres investigated the advisors were so heavily targeted that they could not be involved in any type of business development (Dell).

### ***Secondary factor***

<i>Innovation tools that have no incentive for using it</i>
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This relates to the incentives that are used by management to get employees involved in using innovation tools within the contact centre. In NCR and Dell there were no incentives for employees to use any of the innovation tools and the respondents viewed this as detrimental to idea generation in their centres.

The use of incentives for rewarding high performance and good behaviours is common through the contact centre industry but these incentives are often used for rewards based on quantitative performance metrics often tied in with sales or profits.

When interviewing advisors on this subject it was interesting to discover that that they thought that seeing their idea implemented was better than receiving a reward.

#### **7.4 DEBATE ON OVERALL FINDINGS**

The main assumption underlying this research is that innovation is essential for economic growth and competitiveness, however some researchers (e.g. Miller and Friesen, 1982) say that innovation is not always positive in all circumstances.

One of the major findings of this work is that idea generation techniques and employee suggestion schemes are used not to generate new ideas, business opportunities or innovations but rather to allow advisors to be involved within the contact centre. The main driver for innovation activities within the contact centre industry is for employee involvement and participation, not innovation. If the value of employees' suggestions was seen as something that can bring economic benefit to the contact centre then it is thought that the innovation activities would become a great focus for centre management – rather than the lip service that is often paid to the innovation activities within the industry. Even contact centres that had an innovation focus were lacking in their ability to manage the innovation activities beyond the fuzzy front end of idea generation and collection. Further work needs to be undertaken to analyse the ideas generated within contact centres and the potential impact they could have on both the contact centre and the wider organisation because at the moment this is not clear.

The continuous improvement focus that the industry appears to have can perhaps be explained by the fact that they are operationally focused organisations rather like factories, and the use of continuous improvement is widely documented in the manufacturing industry. There is an argument that operationally focused organisations can only manage incremental improvements and innovations – often focused on processes - due to the limited scope the employees have of the process. However, within the contact centre environment a counter argument could be made for the fact that some advisors have direct access to customers and can be used as a corporate listening post – not only feeding back customer suggestions to the centre

but also to the wider organisation. This could allow customers' opinions to feed back into the new product or service development process of the wider organisation. However, this link to the wider organisation is often missing from contact centres due to the peripheral (non-strategic) view which senior management place on the contact centre function, which is evident through the high number of contact centre operations that are both outsourced and offshored.

It was also seen from the findings that innovation should not be considered from the centre level but rather from a lower level, specifically to the services which advisors provide. It was seen that the nature of the services provided had an impact on the nature of the advisors' job which then influenced the way advisors could get involved with the innovation activities and other improvement initiatives. It also impacted upon the mechanisms used for the collection and development of the ideas put forward. Therefore it is suggested that further studies of innovation within contact centres should look at the team level of activity rather than the overall centres. It is often common to find more than one type of service provided by different areas of the one physical workspace; this is why it is stressed that a team or service type focus is required for further studies of innovation.

## **7.5 THEORY BUILDING**

Christensen and Sundahl (2001) define theory as a "statement of what causes what, and why, and under what circumstances" (pp. 3). Therefore by drawing on the discussions new theory can be built in the area of innovation within UK contact centres.

Wacker (1998) proposes four components that need to be defined before theory can be developed in operations management, these are:

- Definitions of terms or variables
- A domain where the theory applies
- A set of relationships of variables
- Specific predications

Each of these categories is now considered in the context of this research.

### **Definitions of terms or variables**

The terms of this research were defined at the beginning of this thesis (see Chapter 2 for full definitions and discussions), these are:

- *Innovation activities* - the process through which new ideas, objects, behaviours, practices are created, developed, or implemented.
- *Innovation types* – the outputs of innovation, i.e. process innovation, technical innovation, incremental innovation, etc.
- *Contact centres* - a call centre is a centralised office used for the purpose of making and receiving a large volume of telephone calls. Whereas, a contact centre is the same as a call centre with the addition of handling other forms of contact such as letters, SMS, faxes, live web chats or e-mails.

### **A domain where the theory applies**

Due to the fact that this research was carried out in the UK, the main domain in which the theory applies is the UK contact centre industry. However, it could be argued that contact centres are standardised across many of the geographical areas in which they are located which would mean that this theory could be applied in any contact centre industry. However, as this study was limited to the UK it can at this time only be applicable for UK contact centres.

### **A set of relationships of variables**

The conceptual model developed from the outset of this research has been populated from the cross case analysis data and therefore Figure 7.2 shows the relationships that exist between the variables included in this study.

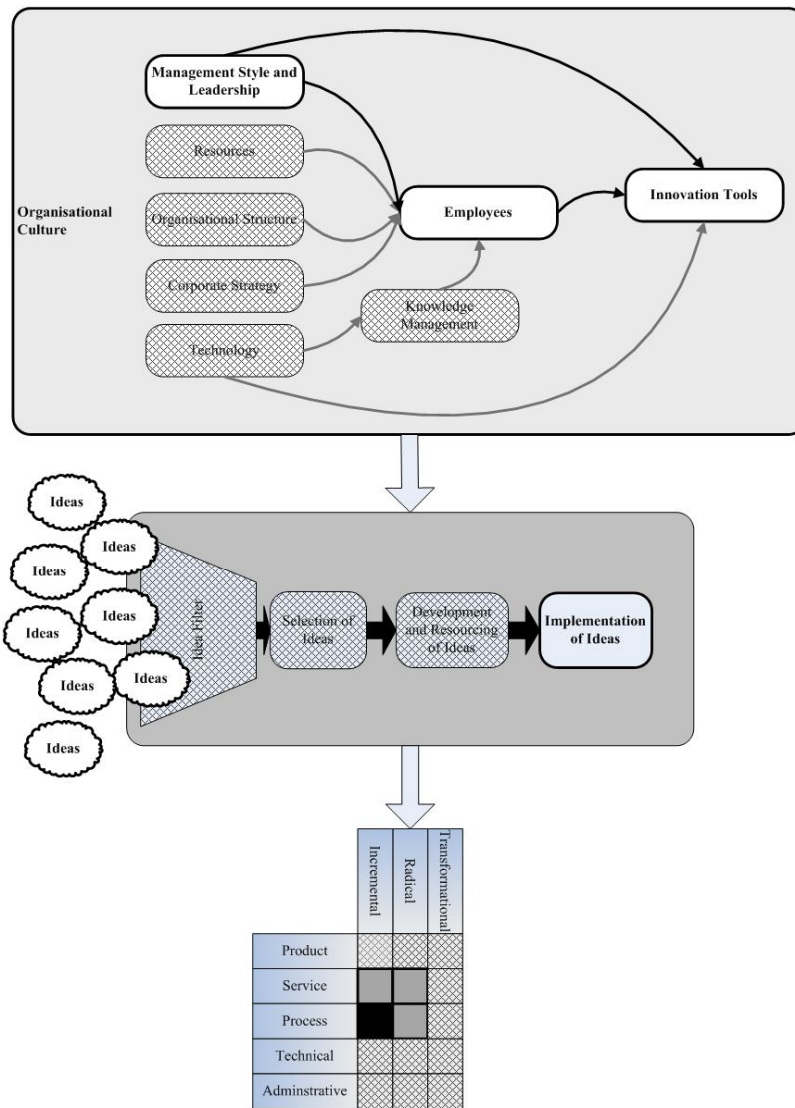


Figure 7.1 – Overall findings of this research against the conceptual framework

### ***Organisational factors from model that influence innovation activities***

Both Table 6.16 (in Chapter 6) and Figure 7.1 above show that organisational culture and management style and leadership can both positively and negatively affect innovation activities in call centres. Figure 7.1 also shows that organisational culture and management style and leadership impact innovation activities through the mediating factors of employees and innovation tools.

The organisational culture was discussed by employees to describe the way they felt about the atmosphere in their area of the call centre. Many discussed this environment as something that was created by the management of their area as well

as the people working in their area. It was seen that working environment played an important role in whether advisors were keen to put their ideas forward (either into a suggestion scheme or to their manager). One of the case companies openly admitted to saying that advisors need to stand up and put their ideas forward which implies that the working environment in this centre was not conducive to generating ideas. However, in other centres all employees (both advisors and managers) were actively encouraged to put their ideas forward with some centres providing multiple channels for advisors to do this.

Employee involvement and participation seemed to be a key emergent theme from the data that influences the innovation activities and the utilisation of innovation tools. The impetus for many of the suggestion schemes and employee involvement programmes was not to generate ideas and develop innovations but rather to gain participation from employees. As many contact centres suffer from issues with employee attendance and attrition, these schemes are put in place to allow advisors to feel more involved in the overall operation of the centre. It was found from the cases that these approaches are often used to limit the effects of the nature of the job and make employees feel valued.

However, it was seen from the case data that there is a strong link between these employee involvement programmes and innovation activities. It was found that many of these programmes provide the inputs (i.e. ideas) for the idea generation phase of innovation activities. In some of the case studies, advisors were also involved in the implementation of their idea but this was a limited view as most of the other cases' advisors were not involved in the implementation of their idea.

An overall theme which came from all the cases was that innovation activities were dependant on management taking a leadership and facilitator role. Many of the interviewees discussed how management championed employees to be involved in the innovation activities through the use of innovation tools. It is thought that this could be due to the drive behind the set up of these innovation or suggestion scheme programmes being the boost of employee morale through involvement and

participation. The schemes and programmes are set up with the aim of encouraging employees to get involved in the centre and therefore the focus is not on the output of the innovation activities but rather on the view that employees have a say in the operation of the contact centre. There is a need for contact centre management to realise the potential economic benefits of the ideas that are developed from the advisors and not just focus it as another employee participation programme.

#### *Less important factors*

As was discussed previously, the model presented from the findings of the systematic literature was developed as a generic model for all types of organisations. From the findings of this research it has become apparent that some of the factors have more or less impact in the call centre context. Organisational culture, management style and leadership, employees and innovation tools have been identified as important influences on innovation activities in call centres. On the other hand factors such as corporate strategy, organisational structure, resources, knowledge management and technology were not discussed by the interviewees as key factors for effecting innovation activities in call centres.

One surprising finding is that technology is not seen as a key factor, as contact centres are often thought of as complex socio-technical systems. This reflects the findings of Voss and Zomerdijk (2007) who found that technology plays a lesser role than might be expected in service innovation. However it could be argued that the nature of job is so bounded in and controlled by the information technology systems that are used in call centres (Bain and Taylor, 2000), that technology does have an indirect negative influence on the nature of the job which in turn results in being a barrier to innovation activities.

#### *Emergent organisational factors*

Many of the emergent organisational factors identified in the cross-case analysis are related to employees or the nature of the employees' job, suggesting that the way employees work and are managed are central to innovation activities in contact centres.

## Specific propositions

The findings of this research leads to the conclusion that there are a number of tentative propositions that can be developed to test the theories is has built. Removing organisational culture, (as discussed previously organisational culture is pervasive and its effects are implicit to the understanding), we can see (in Figure 7.2) that there are three main factors and it is through their influence that we can develop a series of propositions.

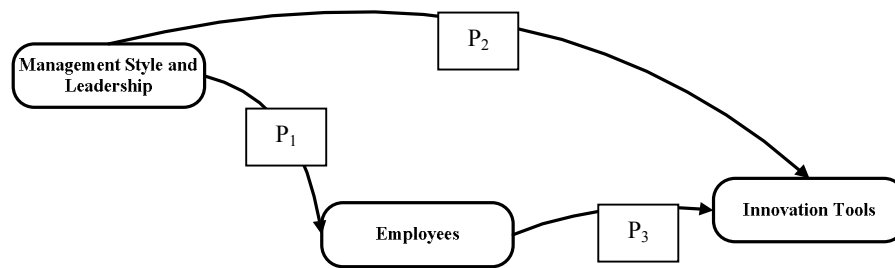


Figure 7.2 - Key factors of innovation activity in contact centres

Using both Table 4.3 and 6.17 it can be seen that the motivation of employees is the most important enabler for innovation activities across the cases. In the cases where management style and leadership were barriers, this was due to employees not being encouraged. Therefore, the main propositions that can be built on the findings of this analysis are built on the factor of management style and leadership:

- ***P<sub>1</sub>: Contact centres with management that encourage employees to get involved will be engaged in more innovation activities***
  - The term ‘encourage’ in this proposition refers to a management style that is open, participative and has incentives in place to encourage employees to be involved in the innovation activities.
  - The term ‘involved’ refers to involvement in different aspects of the management of the contact centre and does not solely refer to innovation activities.
- ***P<sub>2</sub>: Contact centres with innovation tools supported by management will be involved in more innovative activities***



- The term ‘innovation tools’ refers to suggestion schemes, idea processes, business improvement projects.
- The term ‘supported’ refers to management that realise the important of innovation in their contact centre and will continually update and manage the innovation tools that they have in place.
- ***P<sub>3</sub>: Contact centres that have employees who are able to use innovation tools will be involved in more innovation activities***
  - This proposition refers to employees having the necessary skills and time to use the innovation tools. This may be through changing the nature of the employees’ job so that they can take advantage of the innovation tools.

The context in which these propositions would hold true is for the idea generation and idea implementation phase of innovation activities when dealing with incremental process innovation.

Further research can be undertaken to identify if these propositions also hold true in other service context and in different geographical locations.

Eisenhardt’s (1998) approach to theory building includes the enfolding of literature against the case study findings, and this discussions chapter has used the literature throughout the discussion to enfold the empirical findings within its theoretical context. The wide ranging findings from this empirical work cover many academic fields and it is a limitation of this work that not all bodies of literature can be enfolded with the findings. However, it is envisaged that the findings of this work can be utilised to further develop theory across a number of research fields.

## **7.6 QUALITY OF THIS RESEARCH**

As was discussed in Chapter 5 the quality of case research is determined by four key tests (Yin, 2003). Table 7.3 reiterates the quality criteria of this set out in Chapter 5 and shows where in this thesis the evidence is to support the quality of the research.

*Table 7.3 – Validity of this research with evidence from thesis*

<i>Tests</i>	<i>Case Study Tactic</i>	<i>Application in this research</i>	<i>Evidence in Thesis</i>
Construct validity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use multiple sources of evidence</li> </ul>	Systematic literature review, interviews, observations and documentation as multiple sources of evidence.	Chapter 6 – presentation of the findings from the case companies.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a chain of evidence</li> </ul>	Case study notes developed along with a research diary to record ideas and thoughts on the subject.	Case study notes seen in Appendix 6
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have key informants review draft case study report</li> </ul>	Maps and narratives reviewed by key contact within each of the contact centres included in this study	Chapter 7 discussion on validity of the research
Internal validity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do explanation building</li> </ul>	Robust data analysis done through an iterative process of checking and revising theoretical assumptions based on the case data.	Chapters 5 & 6 showing data collection and analysis techniques
External validity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use replication logic in multiple-case studies</li> </ul>	Use of the conceptual framework to allow theoretical replication to take place. The theory is replicated across the different cases and conclusions are drawn.	Chapter 6 showing use of conceptual framework to analyse the findings from the cases
Reliability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use case study protocol</li> </ul>	Case study protocol was developed at the outset of the case research.	Case study protocol seen in Appendix 5
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop case study database</li> </ul>	NVivo was used as a case study database to hold almost all sources of data.	Screenshots from NVivo seen in appendix 6

There has been a conscious effort to maintain good practice against the quality criteria set out by Yin (2003) throughout the process of this research. Qualitative research often suffers criticism for a lack of rigour, but by following the tests set out for case research it can be seen that this work has rigour built into it from the methodological design phase.

## **7.7 VALIDITY OF FINDINGS**

Silverman (2005) say that ‘validity’ is another word for truth, and while Yin (2003) sets out the criteria which most case research follows, one of the most important validity tests is that of respondent validity. This is where the interviewees who took part in the study are asked to review the claims that have been made within the

research about their organisation. For this research all of the maps and narrative analyses were sent to the key contact in the case organisations who was given the opportunity to modify or remove any data from the maps or narrative. Within this research none of the respondents modified the data in any way. This could have several meanings within the context of this research:

- The respondents agreed with the contents of the maps and narratives
- The respondents did not take time to read the maps and narratives
- The respondents disagreed with the maps and narratives but did not feel strong enough to change them

Obviously there are a number of implications from this to the validity of this research, therefore a number of supplementary evidences were utilised to increase the validity of the findings. This evidence was collected in the form of supplementary case studies and an industry workshop focusing on innovation in contact centres.

### **Supplementary case studies**

A number of other cases were carried out as part of a wider study of the contact centre industry and although these cases did not follow the methodology that is explained in this thesis they did follow a structured data collection method.

Case research was carried out in three other UK contact centres, the characteristics of each is seen in Table 7.4.

*Table 7.4 – Supplementary Case Characteristics*

<i>Supplementary Cases</i>	<i>Direction of contact</i>	<i>Customers</i>	<i>Nature of services</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Ownership</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Sector</i>
BT	Inbound	Consumer	Simple customer service Simple sales	Large	In-house	Various locations, UK	Private
Kwik Fit	Inbound	Consumer	Simple customer service Complex customer service	Large	In-house	Business park, Uddingston	Private
National Australia Group	Inbound	Consumer	Complex customer service	Large	In-house	Business park, Clydebank	Private

As was previously mentioned, the data collected as part of this parallel research was not carried out by the methodology described in this thesis – however there was some opportunity to collect some data relating to innovation activities and employees involvement in the innovation activities. As the data was collected in a different manner to the five cases in the main body of this thesis it was not analysed in the way described in Chapter 5. Therefore, the findings from these supplementary cases is only used to provide validity in the further development of the theory generated from the five main cases.

These cases provided further insights specifically into the innovation activities in contact centres and some of the organisational factors that influenced the process. All of the three supplementary cases had structured continuous improvement processes usually initiated through employee suggestion schemes. In all of the cases the emphasis behind the suggestion scheme was employee involvement and not necessarily business development – this validates the findings from the main body of this research.

The organisational characteristics that became evident from the main case studies was that the innovation activities were influenced by the nature of the job (specifically front office workers versus back office workers). The nature of the

service was also seen from these supplementary cases to be important to the way the innovation activities are organised, with routine transactional services being compared to technical services. This is also in support of the findings from the main body of the research.

It can be seen from this active pursuit of further development of the theory that there has been a structured process for validating the findings of this research, allowing the researcher to conclude that the findings that are presented are a representation of the truth in the contact centre industry.

## **7.8 CONTRIBUTION OF THIS RESEARCH**

The contribution that this work makes to knowledge falls into two bodies of knowledge as it makes contributions in different ways to each. The contribution that the work makes to the field of contact centre operations management (and to some extent service operations management) is extensive. Although the research is focused on contact centre operations it could be argued that this research has some level of applicability to the wider service context, especially the findings that have emerged concerning the nature of the service and the impact it has on the innovation activities. Referring back to Figure 2.3, it can be seen that the body of knowledge that exists within contact centre operations is often focused on human resource management, psychology and service quality/management fields – to date no work has been carried out into understanding innovation activities, and specifically the innovation activities within contact centres. This research work therefore goes some way to provide some explanation of innovation activities and the characteristics that can impact upon them within the contact centre context.

On the other hand the contribution that this work makes to the body of knowledge concerning innovation is related to the application area of the theory. Innovation has been studied in a wide encompassing range of organisational context including many different types of service organisations but there has been no work carried out within the contact centre environment from an innovation theory point of view. Therefore

the contribution that this work makes to the innovation field is the application area of the theory.

## Chapter 8: Conclusions

*"If you want a happy ending, that depends, of course, on where you stop your story." Orson Welles  
(1915-1985)*

Chapter 7 presented a detailed discussion on the findings of the cross case data analysis against the research questions - this section will not cover what the discussion said about each research question but will rather summarise the discussion into a coherent set of conclusions. The implications of this research for both theory and practice will also be presented in this chapter.

### 8.1 KEY CONCLUSIONS FROM THIS RESEARCH

***RQ 1. Are contact centres involved in innovation activities and if so what type of innovation can be seen?***

The conclusion coming from this research question is that the research points towards contact centres being focused on innovation activities but instead of using the term innovation they talk about continuous improvement and doing things better. It can be seen that contact centres are involved in innovation activities but these activities usually focus on the generation of ideas or the implementation of ideas or change initiatives. This leads to the conclusion that:

***The majority of innovation activities in UK contact centres is focused on idea generation or idea implementation and have a focus on continuous improvement initiatives.***

It can be seen that although many of the contact centres did not monitor the types of ideas submitted or implemented, most of the ideas discussed by the interviewees were focused around the advisors jobs and the processes they were involved in. It can therefore be concluded that:

***The majority of innovations that take place within UK contact centres are focused on incremental process innovation.***

***RQ 2. What are the enablers and barriers to innovation activity in contact centres?***

The main high level factors that were identified from the main cross-case analysis were:

- Corporate strategy
- Employees
- Innovation tool
- Management style and leadership
- Nature of job
- Organisation culture

Table 8.1 shows these factors in bold type and the resulting descriptions of enablers and barriers identified from the cross-case analysis. The categorisation of primary, secondary and tertiary of the factors come from the number of cases where the factors were witnessed.



Table 8.1 – Barriers and enablers of innovation activities in contact centres

	Description	Phase of Innovation	Effect on Innovation Activities
<b>Primary Factors</b>	<b>Organisational culture</b> that has an open, friendly environment where employees challenge current working practices	Idea Generation and Implementation	Enabler
	<b>Nature of job</b> that is 'on-line' dealing with customers and is 'tied' to the computer system with heavy performance measures	Idea Generation and Implementation	Barrier
<b>Secondary Factors</b>	<b>Corporate strategy</b> that builds relationship and promotes interaction with clients	Idea Generation	Enabler
	<b>Employees</b> that are involved, engaged and represented	Idea Generation	Enabler
	<b>Innovation tools</b> that use an ideas process	Idea Generation and Implementation	Enabler
	<b>Management style and leadership</b> that is participatory and encourage people to get involved	Idea Generation and Implementation	Enabler
	<b>Innovation tools</b> that have no incentive for using it	Idea Generation	Barrier
<b>Tertiary Factors</b>	<b>Employees</b> that have personal development	Idea Generation	Enabler
	<b>Employees</b> that have good employee morale	Idea Implementation	Enabler
	<b>Employees</b> that work in business improvement teams	Idea Implementation	Enabler
	<b>Management style and leadership</b> that has support from senior management	Idea Generation	Enabler
	<b>Management style and leadership</b> that focuses on good staff welfare	Idea Generation	Enabler
	<b>Management style and leadership</b> that adopts a top down approach to BPI projects	Idea Implementation	Enabler
	<b>Nature of job</b> that has no scripting or constraints for agents	Idea Generation	Enabler
	<b>Nature of job</b> that are monotonous so BPI gives them something new	Idea Implementation	Enabler
	<b>Organisational culture</b> that has a good attitude to innovation	Idea Generation	Enabler
	<b>Organisational culture</b> that has improvement engrained in the culture	Idea Generation	Enabler
	<b>Organisational culture</b> that focuses on communication	Idea Generation	Enabler
	<b>Innovation tools</b> that result in individuals to put ideas forward without support	Idea Generation	Barrier
	<b>Innovation tools</b> that are not an effective suggestion scheme	Idea Generation	Barrier
	<b>Management style and leadership</b> that does not encouraged agents to come up with new ideas	Idea Generation	Barrier
<b>Organisational culture</b> that is reactive to change rather than proactive	Idea Implementation	Barrier	

## **8.2 LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH**

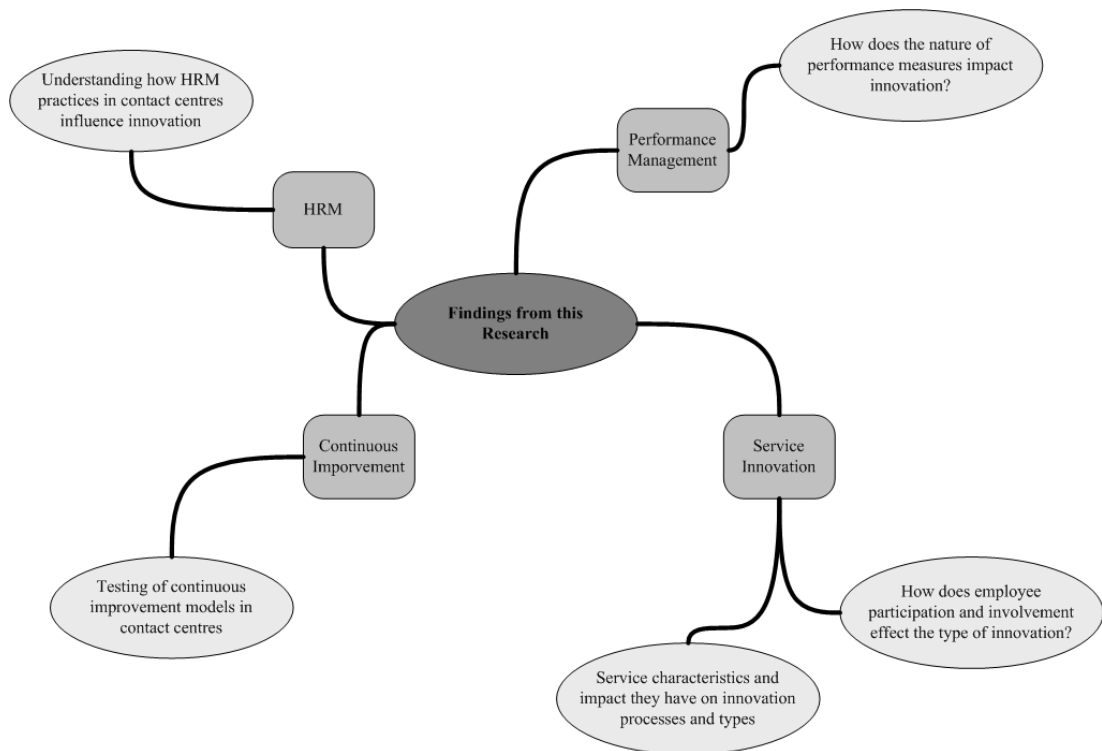
This research work is exploratory in nature and as such it employed a qualitative case based research strategy. A limitation of this method of research is its representativeness and generalisability. Although it is agreed that the findings from this research can realistically only be concluded for the cases involved in this study this does not mean that the findings are unimportant. This study provides insights into an area of study which was limited in its exploration and the findings can now be used as a foundation for further research. One of the ways in which the generalisability of this research can be developed is through a large scale survey of the contact centre industry within the UK. This would not only test the theory developed in this work but would also provide a more representative sample of innovation activities within UK contact centres.

## **8.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

This research is theory-building in nature and due to its exploratory nature it has developed the foundations of new theory of innovation within contact centres. It does however have wider implications to service innovation theory, as well as the wider innovation theory and continuous improvement. It provides a new context in which innovation theory has been studied and as such adds to the debate on service innovation, which could lead to the development of a prescriptive model for service innovation, something which is currently missing from the service innovation literature (Sundbo, 2000).

Contact centre operations have specific characteristics that make them different from other forms of organisations in relation to work organisation, job design and human resource management strategies. These areas of innovation theory could be further developed to understand their implications on innovation, for comparative purposes, against other types of organisation.

As this research is exploratory in nature there are many new research opportunities that have become apparent through its development. Figure 8.1 shows the potential research direction that the findings of this research could take.



*Figure 8.1 – Future research directions from this research*

There are four main theories to which this research already contributes but also can develop through further work. These four areas will be discussed in further detail with focus being paid to the future research work that could be carried out in each area.

### **Service innovation**

As was mentioned previously this research contributes to the service innovation theory by supporting some of the existing theory. It also develops new theory, as the nature of contact centre operations is a very specific type of service offering due to the voice-to-voice aspect of the service interaction. Further work that can develop from this research could be to understand the impact that the characteristics of services has on innovation and the types of innovation generated in service organisations. This would bring together service classification work and innovation theory, both of which are currently developing areas of research.

As was mentioned in Chapter 7 there has been some work carried out into employee involvement and participation and the impact this has on innovation, but this has yet to be fully developed both in the innovation literature and for the service context.

### **Continuous improvement**

Continuous improvement (CI) is a mature subject area in manufacturing, however the application of models, processes and techniques of CI is under developed in the service context. This means that further work in the contact centre context could be carried out to understand the models of CI used by contact centres in more detail. Proposed models of CI could be tested within the contact centre context to examine what type of CI process and techniques are best for different types of contact centre.

### **Performance management**

There is very little current theory on the effects that performance measures have on the development of innovation and as such the findings of this research have shown that a relationship exists between how employees' performance is measured and participation in innovation activities. There does however need to be further work to understand the true nature of this relationship and also to test if this relationship is true within other industrial contexts. Therefore, further work needs to be carried out to understand how the characteristics of performance measurement and management systems can impact on innovation within organisations.

### **Human resource management**

Human resource management (HRM) is a widely researched area within the contact centre field but the implication it has on innovation (and continuous improvement) is still underdeveloped. This research has given some insights into the impact that job design and work organisation has on innovation but these areas still require further in-depth study on their own accord to develop the theory further.

In addition to these specific areas, an encompassing large scale survey of UK contact centre could be carried out to test some of the relationships identified through this work, this would greatly enhance the generalisability and usefulness of this research.

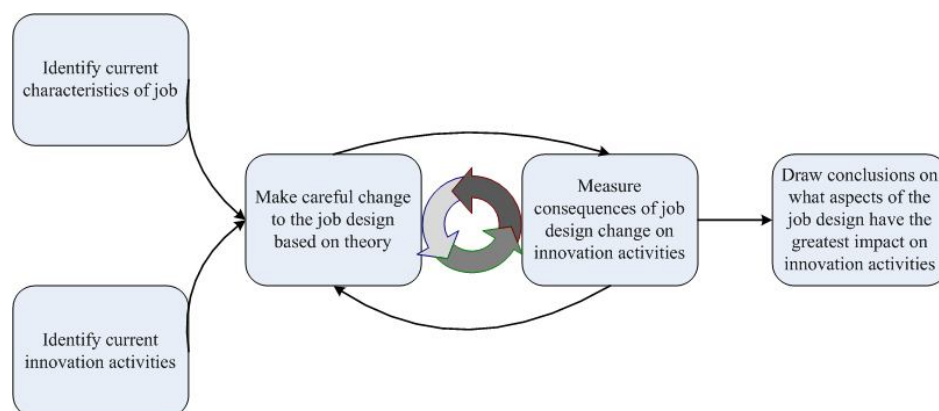
This study is exploratory and is focused on the development of theory and a key conclusion of this research has resulted in the development of a series of propositions based on the empirical findings of this research. The aim of carrying out a large scale survey would be to test the theory and the propositions that have been built through this research. However, there is a possibility that this large scale survey will simply confirm the findings of the study presented in this research and would not provided any insights to develop the theory further.

### **Action research**

A more coherent approach to further developing the theory could be through an action research study. Action research provides a useful methodology for theory development and validity of various research outputs (Eden and Huxham, 1996). As the barriers and enablers that affect innovation activities have been identified through the findings of this research, the action research study would take these factors as starting points.

### ***Intervention study (an example)***

One of the barriers to innovation activities identified from this study was nature of the job; this factor is taken to illustrate how an action research study could be undertaken building on from this research. Figure 8.2 shows the structure of the proposed action research study into job design and its effect on innovation activities. Although ‘nature of job’ has been selected as an example other factors (or combinations of factors) identified as enablers or barriers could also be used.



*Figure 8.2 – Structure of proposed action research intervention study*

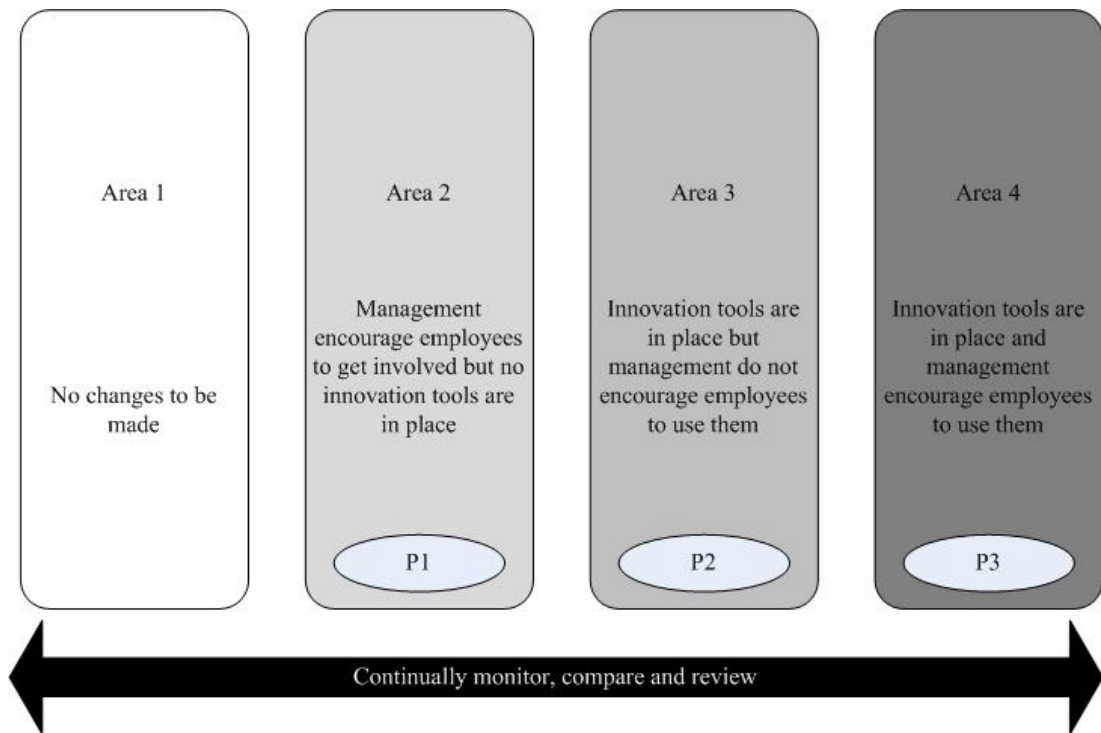
By undertaking an intervention study, further in-depth theory could be developed surrounding one of the emergent areas from this study. Action research can also be used as a type of experiment, where changes can be made in one area and not in another area of the organisation.

***Experimentation study (an example)***

In order to test the propositions developed from the findings of this research an experiment could be undertaken in several areas of a contact centre. The propositions are:

- ***P<sub>1</sub>: Contact centres with management that encourage employees to get involved will be engaged in more innovation activities***
- ***P<sub>2</sub>: Contact centres with innovation tools supported by management will be involved in more innovative activities***
- ***P<sub>3</sub>: Contact centres that have employees who are able to use innovation tools will be involved in more innovation activities***

One area of the contact centre would run as normal with no intervention from the research and this would act as the ‘control’ area. The other areas of the contact centre would have different changes made to them and the effects would be observed. These changes are seen in Figure 8.3.



*Figure 8.3 - Structure of proposed action research experimentation study*

In order to undertake this type of experimentation approach to action research there needs to be careful control between the different areas used in the study.

Although action research can allow emergent theory to be developed, and can develop a richer theory than perhaps a large scale survey would generate, there are also a number of contentions that face action research. Eden and Huxham (1996) identify twelve contentions that they say can be overcome to allow rigorous action research to be undertaken.

One of the key contentions with action research is the need for a robust methodology that will allow the effect of the changes to be measured and monitored to demonstrate causality and outcomes. In order to overcome these issues, a high degree of method and orderliness is required in reflecting about, and holding on to, the emerging research content of each cycle of involvement in the organisation.

Eden and Huxham (1996: pp 84) sat that “doing *action* in action research demands experience and understanding of methods for consultancy and intervention.” This

means that the researcher needs to be aware of the nature of client-centred activity and how this differs from ‘pure’ research methodologies. The researcher will also need to be aware of the issues involved in building and sustaining a consultant/client relationship and the resulting nature of politics in the organisation where the intervention is occurring. This often means that the researcher needs to have an existing working relationship with the company before action research is carried out. In the context of this research one of the cases described in the supplementary evidence section is involved in a Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) project with the university department. Therefore there is potential for action research to be carried out, within the scope of this KTP project, into innovation activities and continuous improvement in contact centres.

#### **8.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE**

This research has many implications for practice. The key areas where practitioners can learn lessons and transfer the findings into their operations are:

- Contact centre management can start to understand how their organisational characteristics impact on innovation activities – by understanding this management can take action to encourage innovation through the management of those characteristics.
- They can begin to understand that the customers they service and the services they provide can have an impact on how they manage their operations for innovation – this allows management to align their contact centre operations with the service environment for successful innovation.
- They can see that continuous improvement processes are taking place in other contact centres and they do work in the industry – by becoming operationally effective then contact centres can start to focus on the long term vision of continuous innovation not just improvement.
- They can see that improvement initiatives can be successfully completed by involving advisor level employees in the implementation of them – this will alleviate some of the issues with advisors’ job design by allowing them to take part in innovation initiatives. This will increase employee morale and job satisfaction which can reduce attrition within the contact centre industry.



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## Appendices

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## Appendix 2A - Expert Interviews

For the expert interviews 4 key academic experts were identified as suitable to give direction on this research work, table 2A highlights the academic selected and the reasons why.

*Table 2A – Selection of experts for interviews*

<i>Expert</i>	<i>University/Industry Body</i>	<i>Area of Expertise</i>	<i>Justification</i>
Michael Stock	Customer Contact Association (CCA)	Contact Centres	Expert in contact centre operations and strategy. Founding member of the CCA.
John Bessant	Imperial College London	Innovation Management	Expert in all aspects of innovation management
David Holman	University of Sheffield	Contact Centres	Expert in industrial relation and human resource aspects of contact centres
Palie Smart	University of Cranfield	Innovation Management	Expert in the innovation process and new product development process

The interviews were carried out and detailed notes were taken, these notes were then put into a qualitative data analysis software package called NVivo. A word frequency analysis and content analysis were carried out within NVivo on the interview notes to gather areas that were deemed important from the experts' point of view. The words 'innovation', 'call', 'centre' and 'contact' were the most commonly used words from the interviews, however, these words would be expected as these were the subject areas that the interviews focused on. More interestingly the other words frequently used in the interviews were 'process', 'management' and 'customer'. By reading the interview notes and understanding what each interviewer was discussing regarding each of the frequently used words a number of areas that are important for investigation were identified. These are:

- The formal or informal systems or processes for innovation
- What role the agents and team leaders have in these systems
- What characteristics of contact centres influence innovation
- The role contact centres play in the innovation process of the wider organisation

- The management models that are apparent in contact centres and how they influence innovation
- How does agents' job design influence their ability to partake in the innovation process
- How different types of contact centre approach innovation
- What types of innovation contact centres might be involved in

## Appendix 4A - Studies to identify organisational characteristics influencing innovation

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## **Appendix 5A – Interview Questions for Case Studies**

### **Case Study Questions**

#### **General Overview**

- Can you tell me a bit about the organisation?
- Can you tell me about your role in the organisation?
- Do you think that this contact centre is innovative? If so why?

#### **Age of Organisation**

- How old is the contact centre?

#### **Size of Organisation**

- How many employees do you employ?
- Does the organisation have any other sites in the World?

#### **External Environment**

- How does your external environment impact on your contact centre?

**Technology**

- What level of technical skills and education do the employees have?
- Is there a technology strategy in place?
- Is technology used to support innovation?

**Innovation Strategy**

- Is there an innovation strategy in place?
- Are the vision and goals of the organisation understood by all employees?
- Is decision making done strategically?
- Is innovation aligned with the corporate strategy?

**Organisational Structure**

- How many management levels does the company have?
- Does the company use teams?
- Are decisions made on site without consulting superiors?

**Organisational Culture**

- How would you describe your organisational culture?
- Is the company tolerant of employees making mistakes?
- Does the company have effective internal and external communication?
- Do you collaborate with any other external organisations
- Are employees encouraged to be creative with new suggestions?
- Do you have an open culture?
- The company has a commitment to continuous innovation?
- Does the company allow and encourage risk taking from its employees?
- Does the company have a pro active problem identification and solving culture?

### **Employees**

- Are employees motivated to develop new ideas?
- What level of skill and education do employees have?
- Is teamwork and collaboration among employees actively encouraged?
- Does the company give employees on-going training and professional development to employees?
- To what degree do employees have discretion and autonomy over their work?
- Are there employees in the organisation who have role that encourage innovation?

### **Resources**

- Are spare resources used to develop and experiment with new ideas?
- Is a broad knowledge base available to the company
- What level of technological resources does the organisation have?
- To what extent does the organisation use financial resources to develop new ideas or solve problems?

### **Knowledge Management**

- Does the company actively learn from past project and activities?
- Does the company have a structured database where information is stored and can all employees access it?
- Is the company involved in continuous organisational learning?
- To what extent does the company uses knowledge about its external environment to develop new ideas?

### **Leadership and Management Style**

- To what extent are management supportive when new ideas are brought to them by employees?
- What management style does the company have?
- To what extent are employees involved in strategic activities?
- To what extent do management empower employees to be innovative?
- Do management have a commitment to innovation?

### **Innovation Process**

- Are tools available to support the generation and development of new ideas?
- Is there anything in place to support the implementation of new ideas?

- Are any goals and metrics used to encourage employees to be innovative?

**New questions from Expert Interviews**

- What does innovation mean to you?
- Describe some of the innovations you have developed/implemented?
- How good are you at coming up with new ideas?
- How do you classify ideas?
- What proportion would you say are radical or incremental?
- What tools or techniques do you use to implement new ideas?
- Do you have a culture for innovation?
- Do you have an innovation strategy?
- Do you have a continuous improvement team? If so who is involved?

## **Appendix 5B – Case Study Notes**

### **Capita – BBC Information Services Glasgow 26<sup>th</sup> October 2007**

#### **Case Study Notes**

##### **Background Notes**

- BBC information services in city centre of Glasgow
- Outsourced contact centre provided by Capita
- Small contact centre
- Services carried out at the contact centre in Glasgow
  - Telephones – 800,000/year
  - E-mail – 240,000/year
  - Letters – 240,000/year
  - Complaints – 100,000/year
  - SMS - fluctuates
  - Podcasts
  - Ticketing for shows
  - Tours for BBC television centre

##### **Interview Notes**

###### ***Paul Johnston and Lesley Bennet***

- 3 main channels of contact – correspondence, e-mail and phone
- Moving to a blended contact environment
- Cross trained agents will allow the implementation of the blended environment
- We did try to have a blended environment but agents were jumping between channels too much and this led to low staff morale
- The excellence through choice programme has led to changes in the contact centre
- We have started to look at areas where we can do better
- Change has resulted in lost people

- There has been a re-bid process this has been driven by the client and also by us to make the changes in the contact centre
- There are lots of changes – this is dynamic times
- We have 90% customer satisfaction and quality levels
- Employees are often education to degree level but it is often their first job since leaving university
- We aim to get the best agents – recruitment is from S1 jobs in Glasgow
- There is less of a pool of agents in the area as more and more contact centres are locating in the area
- Normally agents stay in the job for roughly 2-3 years
- Agents answer a range of calls
- There is an incentive and reward scheme for agents
- ICE group – is a staff representation group which meets every 2 weeks – discussion of ideas and issues from the employees
- There is a communications policy in place – this escalates employee ideas to management
- There are newsletters, a communications portal, intranet and e-mail used to communication between all members of staff
- The knowledge portal allows contact with staff
- We have communications issues but we aim to get agents more involved in the operations
- There is a coaching plan in place – to increase personal development in agents – this then improves and increases agents morale
- We work with the CCA – we are open to other people
- We are working within the CCA standard – we are founding members of the CCA – we have accreditation of the CCA
- We do internal benchmarking
- We have a high variety of calls – this is driven by what is being broadcasted on the TV
- We report back to the BBC
- We are more focused on continuous improvement rather than innovation
- Unsolicited ideas taken by management

- Staff involvement
  - Social committee
  - Designing rotas
  - Secondment programme
  - Cross-site visits
- Staff encouraged to think like the BBC – this is driven by the BBC – we mirror the culture of the BBC – we are integrated into the BBC
- We carry out services for various parts of the BBC – can be reception advice which is complex and technical and complaints which must be bespoke to each customer – a lot of time is spent on complaints
- Training is now 3 weeks – reduced from 4 weeks – training is now done in blocks – all training is provided in-house
- We have a quality assurance team which is made up by agents
- Agents have the opportunity to go for a CCA certificate and diploma – it has to be written up in agents PDP
- There is scope for career progression in the company – we have a lot of internal candidates for jobs
- Our employees can be accredited by the Institute of Leadership and Management
- There are specific training for our employees - e.g. HTML training for the research team
- We have agent of the month awards for high performing employees
- All employees have 1 to 1 development meetings
- We have fruit Friday where all employees receive free fruit – also have Friday bingo where agents will play a game of bingo
- We do things like Children in Need, Comic Relief and Halloween parties
- We have good staff welfare
- We link up with the wider Capita for development purposes
- We have lots of interaction with BBC and other Capita sites but not as much as we would like – but this could be due to the geographical location of the centre
- There is growth in our Northern Ireland contact centre but this can be competition to the Glasgow site

- Agents who have left the contact centre and now coming back
- We have communication champions – they work with the lower level employees and they escalate the issues to management
- We have a partnership way of working with the BBC – we have monthly and once a quarter meetings to talk about what is happening in the contact centre
- SLA's – we work together to achieve these and for further development of the contact centre – we have a two-way interaction with the clients
- We look at the external environment to look for future developments that can impact on the contact centre
- IT is in-house – this gives us more flexibility for service provision
- IVR's are used for high volume services and are provided by an external provider
- High volume drives IVR's and automation – we have to manage customers expectations
- There is lots of information through the internet – to encourage customers to self-serve
- We aim to provide added support on the back of the internet
- BBC is customer facing – will only be located in the UK
- We do get calls from outside the UK but we can't serve them as they are not licence payers
- Change is driven by the client and the audience – try to get to a true blended environment – gone through cross-skilling to get to this environment – blending has been put in but agents have had problems with it –demoralised and have lost agents due to it – so we have listened to our employees and stopped this process of blending – now have chunks of work where agents will do phones for 2 hours and then do 2 hours of e-mail – new agents will be put into place they won't know any different environment
- Criticisms from client is that we are slow to engage – we have good people with good ideas but our clients think we are slow to drive things forward – we were hurt about this – we have provide the client wrong in that we can innovate and change



- ‘Excellence through choice’ project – across all Capita sites – improve the business for customer, us or the client or combination – lots of people involved and is on-going – it was put in as part of our re-bid processes to the client – our client have been pleased about it
- Quality management is just a new role – good service quality levels by moray – but how can we maintain and improve these scores – we got worse before we got better – puts us in a better position for the future
- Excellence through choice has come out of the re-bid process – the BBC have gone through change so this impacts onto us during the re-bid process – driven by the client – but also drive by us knowing the business better than the client – we have put the steps for improvement in place to meet the changing needs of the customer – the customer has not explicating told us what to do
- We are looking closely at moray figures – but looking at more closely certain areas of quality figures using a ‘rate my response’ survey collected from the agents– we are already at the top end of the service quality scale – asking what was good about the service
- Education level of agents are usually degree level – is often their first job after leaving university – it is not particularly a high paid job – we don’t tend to lose people – keep them on average 2-3 years
- We run our own recruitment open days and assessment centres – have used other external bodies but we don’t always get the right people through this way and there is an added cost – we use a lot of friends and family recommendation
- There is no problem recruiting agents – but the pool has decreased in recent years due to increased number of contact centres in Glasgow
- We advertise with the Capita and BBS logos but we make it clear agents will not be working for the BBC – it is not a stepping stone into the BBC
- We do not see ourselves as a typical call centre – as we have a wide variety and range of contact areas and information – people are not sitting doing the same thing day in and day out – it does give them scope
- There is no scripting – we have guidelines form the BBC to help us answer calls – scope for peoples development – not constrained – we encourage innovation

- All agents answer a range of calls – not segregated into different lines – once fully trained agents can do all the jobs in the contact centre
- Cross skilling makes us different from typical call centres as our agents do a wide range of jobs
- Incentive schemes are currently being developed – how to reward them for good performance and quality
- We have a group called the ICE group – staff representation and managers go into it and meet fortnightly – put forward ideas, concerns and suggestions about the business as a whole – always room for improvements
- Bringing in a communications officer – get involved in the ICE group so that ideas can be brought forward and acted on – the officer will be someone who comes from the shopfloor – this comes from feedback with the briefings
- We have monthly newsletters, message board and communication portals and intranet, e-mail is used constantly – knowledge portal which is an information database which all agents require to deal with their contacts as well as general information
- Bringing in coaches – to work with the team management (who currently do monitoring and coaching) – take away the coaching role of the team manager – they will integrate the operations team and the quality team – this will have a positive impact on morale as people will see that we have put things in place to support them – this coaching will help with employee development
- Work with external organisations – have a lot of external people come in such as our clients – we host events for the CCA with people such as BT who want to see what we are doing in the centre
- Have a CCA certificate and diploma for staff – re-assessed for the CCA standard, the outsourcing part – we have assessed each year – anything that is out there to help us and support the business to perform well then we are interested
- We look at other centres within Capita to learn about what they are doing – it is difficult to benchmark outside the organisation as the nature of our interactions is so different – agents deal with a variety of different interactions from sensitive subjects to routine information – is driven by what is on the television

- We have to deliver the BBC message in a positive way even if it is a complaint
- We prepare about 2,000 reports – even when the show is actually on air so we give them instant feedback to the producers of the show
- We will set up automation to deal with big television programmes high volume calls from a big hit - such as after Panorama
- We deal with requests to be in the audience for programmes and giving out tickets
- More continuous improvement than innovation – we are probably doing innovative things but we don't realise we are doing them – we just try to do it as part of the day job – it is ingrained in the culture – because of the integration with the BBC (as it is a very innovative company) they encourage us as thinking that we are working for the BBC even although we are not
- We feed ideas through to the BBC if any of our agents come up with an idea that will impact on the wider BBC organisation – we will enable ideas get to the right people in the BBC
- We encourage people to get involved in new ideas – we get them involved in a number of different projects – they can get rewards but it is more to do with getting them involved than the reward
- Get involved in social events and designing rotas – get involved in the change programme – we have secondment programmes – we get them to go to different sites such as Belfast and they go to the BBC in London and the BBC come up to the contact centre
- BBC wants us to look and feel like the BBC – majority of staff feel like they work for the BBC rather than Capita and this is deliberate for this contract – we have a dress code that mirrors the BBC – integrating cultures as well as processes
- Complaints are key for the BBC – they want a bespoke response to every individual complaint given to the BBC – we spend a lot of time on complaints
- Training takes about 3 weeks – long training used to generate low morale levels as we used to expect them to go straight onto the phones after their training – is now spread out over a longer time period

- Quality assurance is done after they come out of training- the QA team is made up of agents so it is peer monitoring
- Training is provided in-house although the BBC might come up to do specific training
- Professional development is done through the CCA – certificate and diploma – we work with them to get further development - there is scope for agents to have a career within the organisation – it has been a long time since we brought anyone in from outside for higher positions
- Agent performance is linked to a percentage pay rise
- We have a lot of social events with the agents
- Nature of the contract has resulted in us being a bit disintegrated with the rest of Capita
- We could do more in terms of people things but it is a two way street – communication is an issues for us at the moment – we have a communications strategy at the moment – the communication officer is intentionally at the lower levels of employees so that small issues do not turn into big problems
- We have a structured relationship with the client – it is very much a partnership – if we have any problems we can discuss them together
- We work together to achieve the SLA – sometimes the client will suggest that we reinvest service credits back into the organisation
- We have people who are looking at what is happening in the external environment – we can feed this back into the client organisation
- In-house IT has been designed for this particular contract – work with the client to develop this
- Front end IVR for unsolicited calls – to help route the calls – have to do this due to the volume of calls – peoples demands and expectations drive how we interact with them and the services we provide – people are self-serving much more than they have done in the past – is reducing the complexity of the service provided by the call handlers – we can then support the BBC with more complex tasks rather than dealing with routine tasks

- Location of the contact centre is a political reason – no customer facing services are allowed by the BBC to be done outside the UK although back office functions are done in places like India

### ***Incentive scheme***

- The main aim of the scheme is for increased quality
- At the moment the incentive scheme is focused only on operational staff – they get rewarded now – such as most improved performer (on targets)
- There will be rewards for positive behaviour
- We aim to also get support staff involved in the scheme – this will be done by the end of the year
- Phone targets – average call handling time
- Correspondence – letters per hour
- We get an overview of employees opinions
- We have many different jobs in the contact centre – so how do we get common ground for the reward system
- It is very stats based in the operations areas – productivity focused but we also have quality checks in place
- There are monetary rewards in place for employees
- How to measure performance – how to go beyond your job description (above and beyond the everyday job) – justification needed – then checked by people who decide who gets the reward
- Nomination based vs. pure stats – what is the justification
- Based on the contribution to the business
- Reward should come from the profits made from business success – so will have a positive influence on the rewards - a virtuous cycle
- How to measure the performance of team managers is an issue for us at the moment

### ***Research team***

- We respond to producers of BBC programmes both radio and television – based on the content of the programme that has been aired

- We contact different organisation for information for programmes – for support to expect calls generated by BBC programmes
- We provide support for appeals
- We also provide information for the IVR after programmes have aired for example after ‘Panorama’
- Information generated goes into the knowledge portal for agents to use in their interactions
- The knowledge portal pops up when a customer phones as the system has recognised the phone numbers
- Agents use the knowledge portal and the internet to get information to solve customers issues and problems

### ***Feedback team***

- We give feedback to the BBC
- Core tasks are shared among the team which is geographically dispersed
- We have different SLA’s for all the channels we support
- We take care of capacity buying for the contact centre – we work out the capacity for the month vs. the forecast
- We look at the calls answered – number of dropped calls and number of calls answered in SLA time
- SLA is looked at on a monthly basis – if targets are not met then financial penalties will be met
- All the performance figures go onto the intranet – this is so that operations can see how they are performing but also so that the BBC can see the performance of the operations
- There is a monthly report for all the SLA stats generated
- Feedback is logged by all agents – this is both solicited and unsolicited feedback
- Agents take a summary of calls and this goes back to the BBC
- Calls provide the most immediate reaction from customers
- There is a feedback site on the BBC intranet – this is the most ‘hit’ site on the BBC intranet

- We also provide a narrative report for individual programmes based on the feedback from customers
- We work from 7am to 12am with 130 staff
- Agents can swap shifts with each other as long as the calls are covered

### **Observation Notes**

- BBC signs and poster everywhere in the offices – very small capita signs
- Felt like I was in the BBC not an outsourced contact centre
- I was allowed to listen into calls
- Agents use limited on screen prompting – but are allowed to deal with the customer the way they want within boundaries
- No obvious scripting
- Use of intra and internet technologies as well as contact with e-mail to other parts of the BBC
- Office was open plan with desks arranged into clusters
- Agents were walking around the contact centre and were able to have food and drinks at their desks

## **Dell Glasgow 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2007**

### **Case Study Notes**

#### **Background Notes**

- Based on the outskirts of the city centre – buses are put on from the city centre to take employees to the centre
- 830 people on the Glasgow site – 85% of employees are males on site due to technical nature of work
- Potential to go to 14-15000 people in the current offices
- 150 sales people on site
- 12 people in a team is an optimum level for the team

#### **Interview Notes**

##### ***Allan Miller – HR Manager***

- Manage a team of HR generalists
- Like to go to a business centre rather than a contact centre
- We would like to give employees more careers paths – potential for the employees who are based here
- Initiatives come from the Dell organisation – such as ethics and values or work life balance – these need to be undertaken in the contact centre
- Brown bag sessions – get employees opinions on what is happening
- Building up the site and bringing more jobs to Scotland – seeing Scotland as a different market to the rest of the UK and Ireland – build up sales within this market – built business around the Scottish market
- Employees – creating a great place to work and customers having a great experience with Dell
- Want to be part of the community – involved with the community and go out to schools to talk about employment in Dell – don't know what technology jobs are about
- Competitive reasons for locating here – most important was the talent labour pool – lots of technical graduates from the universities – seen as a medium cost



centre from Dells perspective with regards to wages and operating costs – grants were available

- Qualification levels of agents – there is a mixture – technical support agents – deal with corporate customers – 12 or so calls per day – about solving the customers problem – IT qualifications are important – quite a number of our people are graduates
- To move to a business centre concept we need more graduates – support for solutions and services – looking at professional set qualifications
- Sales do not need standard qualifications
- Links with other sites within the UK to other contact centres and also to factories around the UK and Ireland
- Dell are hoping to move into the retail market
- Highly integrated with other parts of the Dell organisation – a lot of business interaction – technical support and sales on site here can talk to each other
- At the moment going through strategic change so we do need strong leadership
- Communication – site communication is important – every quarter we have an all staff meeting were we talk about results and any big themes – any awards given to people – got to a size where it is quite difficult to do these type of site communication meetings – talk about going off site
- Have a newsletter – Glasgow bulletin – monthly -localised
- Winning culture committee – about making this place a great place to work – linked to the site management team – a group of enthusiastic employees – given some money to do initiatives which are largely social such as bringing in free fruit – now have free fruit all the time – but every Friday we bring outside people in to give talks to the staff
- Sports and social committee also
- We try to make every day special and not just some days – this winning culture committee is marketed beyond here – we have got a best practice going on here – more about how we do it rather than what we do – committee of about 20 people – one of the big success factors – this is not specific to contact centres but is across the whole of Dell

- Have quite a young age group of employees
- Dell measures almost everything – ‘Tell Dell’ one time a year – employee satisfaction survey – our results are quite strong – we are good are attracting agents but we have some issues at retaining employees this is due to the limited career progression in the centre - attrition is an issues – we drive a very high performance culture and this is not everyone’s cup of tea to meet these high performance targets – issues to try to get people engaged in the long-term
- Issues log – the team leader is responsible for driving improvement in their team – an action plan is co-ordinated across the scheme – coming from the employee satisfaction survey
- Performance measures – very tight employment cycle – mid year and end of year performance reviews for all employees – get a mark and this relates to what pay and bonus you get
- Also an annual development plan for all employees
- VOC in technical support – customer experience asked to complete a survey – results above 90% - if we can raise customer experience then the wider organisation is on track
- Very structured in terms of it’s measurements – some people would say that there are too many measures others would say that they like the structure
- Agents are heavily measured – performance improvement plans put in place if agents are not meeting their targets – team leaders have the responsibility to manage this problem – absence and lateness are some issues
- We have a lot of business improvement teams – green belts, black belts – to save money and drive productivity – through getting people here on the site on time
- All the measures are known by everyone – it is a very performance driven culture in here
- Employee satisfaction is linked back to HR – this is then linked back to business success
- We recruit in-house not using agencies – well tell them what the job is like at the open days so they are aware of the performance measures and this is reinforced through training – agents then have to meet their targets by 30 days

- We do tend to change stats – VOC stats
- HOSIN plan – there are plans for each function – how to improve ‘Tell Dell’ and employee retention results
- Benchmarking is a new area for us – maybe against the ‘Tell Dell’ results to other sites – we are sharing more in areas such as winning culture – but we need to do more sharing within the organisation
- Externally we don’t really interact with other bodies – but it is something we need to look at in the future
- We are not accredited by anyone like the CCA or IIP but we have been through ISO
- Not sure if we compare against any of our competitors
- Innovation at agent level – encouraging more – Dell not been strong in innovation – we tend to react to changes rather than be proactive
- The change needs us to look at risk, innovation and creativity much more - but this is very new to us – need to encourage more of it
- Fairly new ideas process but is not ingrained into the culture where employees can put ideas in – but we will see more of that in the future
- BPI projects rather than innovation process – people will get awards for successful BPI projects – need to look at recognition for employees but this needs to be more focused on innovation
- HOSIN plan for the corporation and all other plans feed into this top level strategic plan – it is a very short term vision company - but moving towards business centre then we will start to look at longer term strategies
- Call for action for change within the whole organisation - in a wave of change – change would be moving into the solutions business and moving into the retail market
- Challenges – moving into markets that it has not been operating in before – we have partners but we need to develop the partnerships more

***Rory McCabe – IT Manager***

- We have lots of fire fighting but we try to be proactive

- IT department was invited to be in the senior management team during the implementation of the new site but is not part of it anymore – I think they should be allowed back onto the team
- We are quite informal in nature
- We have a variety of meetings with managers and teams
- There is 360 degree feedback in place for all employees and managers this is linked to the individual development plans of employees – but it can have a limited impact on the way things are done
- Everything is measured in Dell
- Dell culture is quite open and can allow people to have their own views on things concerned with the business
- Technology is not brought into the site by the IT manager
- Things change quickly in dell but a change freeze is made at the moment
- Not completely structured as this gives increased flexibility
- We are an extremely reactive company but it size can be a limitation to this
- We work with Dell on Dell – only using Dell kit – we sue Avaya and Microsoft systems as well as VoIP
- There is no trade union on site as it is not really needed
- The technology is used to help agents carry out their jobs

***Adam Lochery and George Hamilton – Technical Staff***

- Technical support for commercial customers – escalation point for the guys in the team
- Part of the BPI team – in the process of undertaking a project focused on 6 sigma and lean
- Employees are 2/3 customer facing and 1/3 not customer facing
- Deal with customers when they are angry
- Dell is moving towards lean and 6 sigma so many BPI projects are focused on this – have to think in an abstract way to put these into a service environment
- BPI project can have monetary value or can have an in-direct value to the organisation – this will influence the type of belt that the agent gets

- There are lots of people here who could be called my manager – most management are very supportive of the BPI projects but some managers think it is namby-pamby stuff and is a waste of time
- Agents are encouraged to go for BPI ‘belts’ – have a mentor who will help with projects- it is coming from the top who want 100% employee involvement – a lot of guys on the frontline wouldn’t have time to do the projects as they get a lot of hassle to make sure they are meeting their productivity targets
- Metrics are constantly changing – could be how many e-mails are answered – main metrics are productivity – aim for a call time for about 15 mins but are more concerned with VOC id the customer happy – talk and wait times are more important how often they were available to talk to customers during their working day – used to measure on calls per day but this has changed
- The metrics can be fair but agents can skew the metrics
- The metrics are never really communicated to the agents – what is actually getting measured – not aware of the metrics they are being measured by – bonuses are based on your metrics – productivity is the main one
- Balanced scorecard – balance really good customer satisfaction with low warranty costs you will do well at bonus time
- Bonus is dependant on how the team, centre and wider organisation has performed – this can sometimes be unfair
- Interaction between the team, technical help and team leader – depends on what the agents have a query about - leveraging different areas of knowledge – more structured in Dell
- Has been duplication of work across the functions
- Team leader interacts directly with the team – it is really open door within the contact centre – don’t need permission to talk to anyone – the agents can go up to the team leader at any time to ask questions
- There is a recruitment freeze in the contact centre at the moment
- Team do compete against each other – incentives put in place every quarter from top management for team leaders to compete and this goes down to the agent level – reward could be a day off or a day out with Dell paying – it creates

a good environment - there is never any bad feeling between the teams we just try to be the team that gets the day off – it is a good culture

- Agent interaction – will interact to discuss a problem or a customer query with people who are not on the phones
- Some guys have niche skills on the shopfloor so they will get questions relating to their expertise
- Most guys have degree level qualification but I have professional qualifications
- Dell will pay for additional qualifications – as long as they will provide value to the organisation
- Personal development plan – 5 year career plan – courses are part of this development plan – have a learning resource site on the intranet – encouragement to go on training courses from your team leader
- Always encouraged to move to somewhere else in the organisation – encouraged to move up within Dell – although Dell looks good on your CV
- Sales are focused on making money whereas technical support is all about keeping the customer happy
- There is sometimes miscommunication between technical support and sales
- Don't have interaction with sales – it is very functional so there is little interaction between sales and technical support this is all the way up to the top of the organisation – they have different targets and goals so might be good that they are separate
- Suggestions scheme – nothing officially – not to our knowledge – could be part of a BPI project but this is very localised – there is maybe a benefit in suggestion scheme – a lot of ideas in here so most of them would fall flat on their face – more likely to go through the BPI route
- Try something within your team off the record and then someone sees this and gets picked up – it is more informal
- All targets are based on quarters – these are driven by the HOSIN plan – customer experience is our big focus – although this is not directly communicated to the agents – no explicit link between low level metrics and goals/HOSIN plan of the organisation

- Brown bag lunch – getting to know people who are higher up in the organisation – they can give you a bit more information about the organisation – breaks down barriers
- Mission statement or vision of Dell – mission is that it is all about the customer experience – this is for our area signs are all around the walls – customer experience is driven by the whole organisation – this is always in the forefront of our minds – we do a post-mortem on all bad customer interactions
- Customer satisfaction surveys are analysed but we try to root-cause what has caused the low satisfaction levels – we don't ever ask customers who are satisfied what we did right
- We do call customers and ask for feedback and make sure they are happy for the service – we do put a dollar value on customer satisfaction this is due to the fact that we are dealing with corporate customers – 1% increase in customer satisfaction can have major impact on the financial results of the organisation
- Winning culture team is good for social events – everyone enjoys the events
- Most people like to work for Dell – nobody dreads coming to work – the culture is quite nice
- 'Tell Dell' – 360 degree feedback – you get the opportunity to score your manager confidentially – each team has a 'Tell Dell' champion – champion to get team involved even if not a BPI project – all feedback is given to management and it is taken seriously by everyone
- One of the best companies I have worked for – you are treated well and respected

***Nicola Christie – EMEA Public Sales Operations***

- Business process improvement champion – 6 sigma black belt – BPI project manager – continuous improvement
- Trying to reduce the non-value add activities – increase the time they can spend on the phone selling – biggest focus is around saving time for agents
- Face to face meeting with the whole team from around Europe – but have weekly meetings using conferencing equipment

- Interaction with other areas – interact with sales – provide mentorship and support to all the sales
- There is quite a lot of interaction and communication within the sales structure
- BPI is a choice for agents – most people want to do it – so it is self-driven – there is communication around it – a lot of jobs are very monotonous – BPI gives them something new and something different – it allow them to progress
- Known agents that have been miserable in their jobs but after taking part in the BPI projects have transformed them – they are really keen and has changed their morale – this has impacted on other motivation
- BPI is driven from top management down – management driven by Dell culture – we can definitely do it better – as we are not as mature in BPI as we would like – it's a growing thing
- BPI is for a more effective and efficient business – investment into the business – don't think it was for morale – but it develops people we have got which does have a knock on effect of morale – developing our own people to grow into roles to make the business better
- All your goals have to feed into the overall targets for the business
- All BPI projects have to roll up into a global metrics - must have an impact on business performance
- Direction of the company comes from the top
- Process in place called the suggestion portal – is new but is in place and working – idea for improvements – it will filter out people who want a moan – have to say where it would impact and how much it would cost and who would be involved – goes to a sales change management board to assessed – to filter out duplicated and unfeasible – good ideas will go to a feasibility review – gather more information about the idea with the person who came up with it – then budget and resources will be put through with project – it is a fair process
- We have had a great response for people putting their ideas forward
- People will get feedback about the status and decision of their ideas – through e-mail



- There are no incentives in place for people to contribute to the suggestion portal – apart from making a contribution to the business
- Management style – dependant on the manager – there is no particular style of management
- Organisational culture – dependant on what department you are in – sales is very strong management very top down – but this type of management would not work in development and support areas as it would have sink creativity have bad effect on morale
- Attitude to creativity and innovation – as much as we can in my area – a lot of people have been in Dell a long time so we try to get away from the ‘we have done this before’ attitude – so it is good to get new blood in – the people aspect in very important for creativity and innovation
- I don’t think we have an innovation strategy – there is nothing mapped out - it is just rather a direction we are working in
- There is a lot of communication about the new direction which Dell is going in – it is all about up selling – some of the sales guys are pushed in this direction to make more money
- External environment is used to do my job – web sites or seminars mainly for 6 sigma – learning from other companies and seeing what they are doing in this area – Google is used to get new ideas - this could be a personal thing
- Adoption of new ideas – strip out terminology – people are more willing to take it on board if they understand it
- Benchmarking is done to see how we are performing against our competitors
- Dell are good to their employees and are customer focused and have their finger on the pulse when it comes to competition
- Need more investment in IT systems – to get rid of a lot of the manual work – we need to mix it up a bit more – their have been people who need to pushed out of their comfort zone
- The site is not accredited by anyone other than ISO

### **Observation Notes**

- No offer of getting a tour of the contact centre

- Contact centre within a larger building – new offices – new contact centre
- Few posters up advertising special weeks such as the work life balance week or the ethics week – with photos

Case Study Notes

**Background Notes**

- Over 1 million calls per month
- Various call handling areas
- Partnerships with IBM and Fujitsu
- Approx. 850 employees at site
- New site with brand new building
- Consolidation of public sector call centres
- All public sector call centres should be accredited

**Interview Notes**

*Strategy (Carole Evans –Operations Manager)*

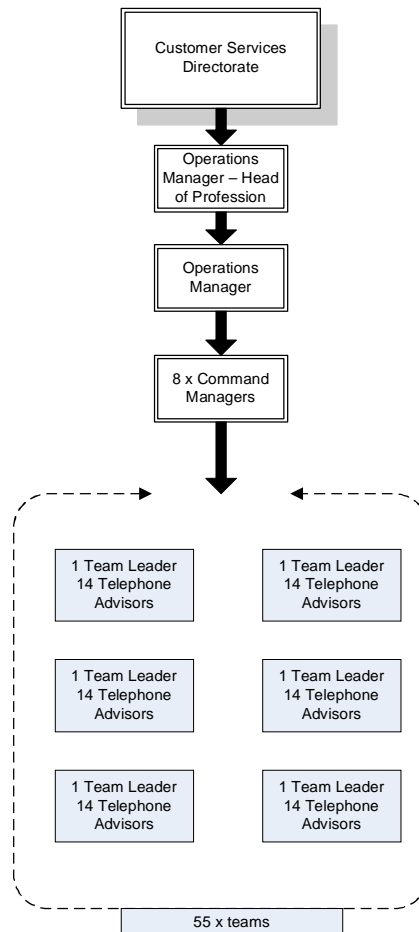
- Manages day-to-day operations of whole contact centre and investigates what can be done going forward.
- The contact centre deals with everything to do with vehicles and drivers, including all local offices.
- The contact centre deals with telephone and e-mail but does not deal with written enquires. Written enquires are more complex than telephone and e-mail this is why it is not done.
- She is responsible for all the technology in the contact centre.
- It has the largest IVR in the country and this means that emergency responses can be put on the system quickly if there are any problems with the contact centre.
- Vision of the contact centre is displayed on the plasma screens and booklets (although not published at the time of this interview) have the strategic vision and goals of the contact centre explained within them.
- Seminars are carried out with all contact centre staff to review historical performance metrics and what is the way forward for the contact centre.
- Looking to take on Northern Ireland interactions.

- Jobs have been split into two job families these are interactions (customer facing) and transactions (back office).
- Need to look at how to improve what we are doing in the contact centre.
- There is a customer channel team which monitor why the customer is calling and will then make changes in the process for dealing with the customers.
- There is speech recognition on all the routine applications for the DVLA – this is managed by IBM.
- As part of the performance management framework all staff get a performance management review (PMR). All staff (top management to agent level) get a 1 to 1 with their immediate manager every month to discuss targets, service quality levels and their personal contribution (i.e. positive behaviours and what the employee brings to their role). There is a staff report at the end of the year.
- There is a communication strategy in place – as it is no good having good performance if employees don't understand what is happening.
- Every 6 months there is a meeting with all contact centre staff – this is part of the communications strategy.
- The DVLA contact centre is involved in its own recruitment. There are a lot of contact centres in the area – DVLA have little issues in recruiting as the benefits are better in the public sector than in the private sector.
- Training is all done in-house with own training department – it is not outsourced.
- Development plan for employees comes from the monthly 1 to 1 development meetings.
- For staff involvement, working groups have been set up to get staff involved.
- The staff have also chosen the colour scheme for the new contact centre building.
- There was also a family open day before the new contact centre opened to allow operators and their family to see the new contact centre.
- Values are linked to the strategy
- There needs to be a balance between the performance of the contact centre and the development and well-being of the employees.

- Employees are allowed to challenge new processes and ways of working.
- There is an ideas database and an issues log which all employees can use to put forward comments or suggestions. Each contribution into these systems will be responded to by 4 weeks and will be published on the contact centre intranet.
- There is an on-going mystery shopping exercise at the moment there is about 90% satisfaction level with the service provided.
- There is also an automated customer satisfaction survey which customers can take part in after they have their quire dealt with.
- There is also an employee satisfaction survey which is filled in by employees.
- There are 4 'buzz' days per year; these are days aimed at operators which might be theme days, raffles or goodies left in the rest area. A team of operators organise these days with the management providing £1000 per 'buzz' day. The employees really like these days.
- There is also a team of the month award - this identifies the teams in the contact centre which have made a significant contribution.
- The contact centre is also nominated for a number of awards – West Wales Communication Awards, CCA Awards and CCF awards.
- A company called 'Blue Sky' is to provide some training; this is external management training for contact centre specific management.
- There is a lack of contact centre management specific tools.
- There is little funding in the contact centre (public) sector but the new minister thinks that contact centres are his 'windows on the world'.
- The role of the chief executive - builds the role of culture in the whole agency.
- Feedback into the wider organisation with fault identification and feedback into processes.
- Highly involved in the governments contact council.

***Organisational Structure (Kin Glynn, Rebecca Emery and Claire Kilbane – Command Managers)***

- The organisational structure has been described as highlighted in the diagram below:



- Teams are used for coaching and mentoring (for support) – morale is a by-product of this structure.
- Teams do not compete but rather look at others performance for benchmarking.
- The ‘buzz’ days introduced by management have fell flat as the agents didn’t have time off the phone in order to enjoy the activities.
- It is hard for agents to interact with each other this is due to the nature of the job.
- The communication structure (strategy) has improved staff morale.

- Performance targets come from top management but also team leaders also look at historical data.
- Service level (i.e. call times) will be lessened in important over the years as the nature of the service changes.
- Team leaders do have discretion over making decision at their level.

***Technology (Simon Mogford, Natalie Morgan and Claire Powell)***

- IT implementation team are involved in developing new IT systems. Staff can bring new ideas to the IT department.
- The telephone support team which maintains the current system and also makes improvements to the system.
- They look into technology for improving customer services/operator work.
- Employee ideas are investigated and developed
- Technology is developed in-house and also brought in from external sources.
- The technology departments need to know the challenges of the overall business so they attend seminars in the business and then research possible solutions to problems coming from the seminars.
- Some off the shelf technology is used but it always needs to be modified for use in the DVLA contact centre.
- Long-term contracts with IT providers can be frustrating as internal IT department can come up with new ideas but have to clear it through IBM/Fujitsu first.
- The DVLA has signed up a long-term contract with IBM and Fujitsu the relationship has being going for 7 years and is tied in until 2014.
- Practical experience is better than educational qualifications.
- Technology can be an inhibitor to innovation but can also make people think outside the box.
- In-house IT department wants to integrate e-mail with telephony technology but this has been blocked due to the relationship with Fujitsu.
- Small changes can be made to the ICT system but the current system performance has to be maintained.

- Work can be delayed by years because of priorities by the third party IT providers.
- Outside technology providers come to the contact centre technology departments with radical new technology but the DVLA like to wait until the technology has been debugged by other organisations.
- The IT department is limited by the amount of new technology it can implement as it is controlled by Fujitsu, so would have to work closely with the third party provider or the in-house IT department will be taken over.
- The IT department has worked with British Telecom (BT) to understand the demand to the contact centre.
- IVR is used on the 5 'big hitters' services into the contact centre – IVR is good for transactional processes.
- The use of automation needs to be considered on a fitness for purpose basis.

***Knowledge Management (Jonathan Matthews – Training Department)***

- Before the move to the new centre:
  - Agents received 2 days training with the DVLA (not on phones), 1 week 'buddy' training and then 5 weeks and 3 days on the job training.
  - No monitoring of the trainers.
  - No training plan – no priorities and no forward thinking about training.
  - There is a poor relationship with operational areas.
  - Agents had a high sickness absence rate and low morale.
- After move to new contact centre:
  - Training plan – increase visibility to contact centre as they didn't appreciate how busy training was.
  - Also thought training was just time off telephones.
  - Information about training is now on the intranet.
  - Interactive training is now in place on the intranet.
  - There are train the trainer events.



- There are checklists to monitor training sessions and provide feedback and coaching.
  - Performance management into training.
- All aspects of contact centre review are fed into the training materials.
- Checklist to ensure information has been received – trainees are coached to understand if they have received the right information.
- There is a 30 question multiple choice test which agents complete after each training module.
- Training is now in the role of coaching.
- There is now one point of contact for training into contact centre for an increased level of professionalism.
- From September 400+ people will need to be trained or re-trained.
- There are training links into IVR.
- Module structure makes it easier to train new agents and train new skills which results in cross-trained agents.
- Change of culture has resulted in some staff losses from trainers.
- Looking to continually improve.
- Simulation learning technology so that training can be done by distance learning – this aids people returning to work.
- Training hopes to improve team building.
- Generic training programmes are less relevant to the contact centre context so ore specific training is required.
- Training will use more external providers to deliver courses and give recognised qualifications.
- Important to get people qualified in contact centre specific areas.
- There is a need to develop professionalism in contact centres.
- 360° evaluations to act on new implementation of courses.
- Training is making direct links with performance data – to show that training has an impact on contact centre performance.
- There is a training forum once per month.
- Training needs to be in centre and has to be embedded into the contact centre.

- Link up between the departments in the contact centre has been a key driver in changing the contact centre culture.

### ***Leadership and Culture (Aled Davies)***

- There are a number of factors which has driven change in the contact centre:
  - Performance management
  - Accreditation
  - Introduction of job families
  - New management development programme
  - HR framework – at the moment there is no clearly defined HR strategy
  - People framework – draws together HR and highlight how employees should be measured and improved.
- Organisational culture – overall feel is not what expected as there is a positive culture and a lot of effort and hard work.
- The culture if not command and control but is also not at the other end of the scale, so is somewhere in the middle.
- There is a high degree of customer – but this might be different on other organisations.
- Performance measures are important but not detrimental to overall culture.
- Tolerance – not tolerant but also not intolerant of mistakes – agents cannot make many mistakes due to the nature of the job but coaching usually pick these mistakes up.
- Work with external bodies – yes, we collaborate with other industry contact centres, West Wales Contact centre Association and Welsh contact centres, CCA and other motoring organisations. This is often done on a 2 way sharing of knowledge – benchmarking.
- Industry bodies often facilitate the introduction of external bodies to the contact centre – DVLA contact centre is not seen as a threat by other contact centres due to the nature of its customers and services.
- Employees are encouraged to come up with new ideas but not sure how creative these ideas are.

- Culture encourages ideas so the contact centre generates more ideas than other parts of the DVLA.
- One way customer interaction.
- Management support – senior management very supportive – middle management sees it as an added task – frontline agents have a 50/50 view on it.
- Frontline are reaping big benefits.
- Management style – no specific management style at present.
- Current: - top management – empowerment, middle management – between empowerment and command and control, front – 30% command and control 70% involvement management (participatory).
- Future: - supportive coaching environment, performance measures though clear parameters and criteria.
- The future vision is driven by the operations manager.
- Move from time stats to quality stats – measures drive behaviours.
- There is a commitment to innovation but this is more at senior/middle management level at the moment – team leader level might not be the same – not sure how much creativity and innovation can be gained at the team leader/agent level as they have an intense job to do.
- Scope of job – encouraged but not provide support – through a line management route.

***Innovation Process (Rodger Evans – Continuous Improvement Team)***

- There is a high level of communication.
- There is a continuous improvement environment.
- Agency has an ideas database – for the entire agency not just the contact centre.
- At the start there were lots of ideas put into the ideas database but the development of these ideas were limited. But there is now a process in place for selecting and developing ideas.
- Issue boxes are available around the contact centre for staff to put in issues they may have about the environment or accommodation of the contact centre.

- The issues database/boxes are another option away from the normal chain of command but the improvement team need to be careful to respect the existing chain of command when putting forward new ideas.
- There is a plan called the 'way forward plan' this has ideas from the ideas database and from the issues log but the team also actively search for issues to be placed on this plan – a single point of contact is assigned to each of the issues on the plan.
- Staff ideas scheme – this works because the staff want to be involved in something more exciting than their day-to-day jobs.
- New projects – staff are actively involved before the implementation of any new processes.
- The contact centre strives to integrate the ideas database with the issues log to get a comprehensive view of employees' thoughts. For example there were 41 ideas logged in August 2007.
- Once employees have submitted their idea into the ideas database they are invited to discuss their idea in more detail to the management – the management then give the employee SMART responses to help with the development of their idea.
- Suggestion schemes are a good way of gaining staff engagement – as they increase morale and get ideas which are 'fit for purpose' around the current IT systems.
- For continuous improvement employees are encouraged to challenge, in team meetings, the current working methods – team leaders have to have the culture where agents can openly challenge them in a respectful manner.
- The contact centre is currently going for accreditation of the CCA and the agents have received feedback about this from the team leaders.
- Involvement is encouraged through team meetings.
- Ideas/issues are classified in a number of ways:
  - Environment
  - Communication
  - Processes
  - Casework department

- Personal
- Others
- In the contact centre almost 90% of the ideas generated are incremental in nature, the remaining 10% are radical in nature – some of the ideas are not just focused on contact centre operations but on the running of the whole agency.
- There is not a specific innovation strategy in place but we link in with IT providers to find new technology. There is a strategy in place to re-engineer the back office when this is done more value add call can be dealt with in the contact centre.
- The front-office (contact centre) and back-office (rest of the agency) are disjointed.
- Continuous improvement team (driven by Rodger) – there are no agents in the CI team but the team does get larger depending on the project – it can pull people in from different department to help on CI projects.
- There is a process in place which allows for the prioritising of ideas.
- Overall performance metrics are given to agents to show performance.
- Employees also have been given ‘duvet days’ which they can use at short notice – although there are restricted days.

***Employees/Resources (Linda Duffy and Martin Jones)***

- There is a database which shows all information about individual staff levels – this is management information – showing manpower levels and is used for planning new projects.
- This database is used to determine attrition and turnover rates and make decisions based on these rates.
- The database also shows gains/losses, staff levels and efficiency.
- Updates are given on a daily basis and the information is used for operational management of the contact centre.
- There is a wide variety of staff which work in the contact centre.
- Capacity levels for the contact centre are worked out daily (team leaders have to send in information by 9.30am) due to the limited buffer of employees that

they have – they also use this database for forecasting demand and capacity levels.

- This database has resulted in a more open transfer of information to management from team leaders – the team leaders now report on a regular basis as it has now become ingrained in the culture (has become routine) – All information is shared between all the management.
- There has been a problem in recruiting staff to work in the contact centre – however there is a high potential pool of agents as there is a high volume of contact centres operating in the area.
- We held out first ever open recruitment day – looking at job specific recruitment – we showed a ‘warts and all’ view of the contact centre – from this we have got a number of people on a waiting list to get jobs in the contact centre – when this list drops to 60/70 people we will run another recruitment day.
- Attrition rate has reduced.
- Public sector attracts agents due to the benefits it has over the private sector.
- We investigate sickness and how it is dealt with – we look for sickness levels over the different teams to find the reasons why people are/are not off on sick leave and we try to identify teams with low sickness levels and use them as a best practice example.
- The contact centre has had a problem with sickness levels but it is getting better.
- Low staff levels have a negative impact on staff morale and low staff morale can lead to more sickness – can be a vicious cycle.
- We are looking for the best time of the year to have recruitment days.
- We are currently thinking about developing staff training in interview techniques.
- Benchmarking with other contact centres is not like for like as there are no other contact centres which deal with the same clients are DVLA.
- We are currently mid-table for attrition levels but it is difficult to benchmark as there are no organisations like the DVLA.
- Employee engagement could reduce sickness levels but this takes time to have an impact on the sickness performance.

- Many people use the DVLA contact centre as a stepping stone to other areas of the agency – now have introduced 3 year contracts before employees can move to other areas of the DVLA.
- People do not need qualifications to work in this contact centre (this is new government policy) – but interview process is very structured – and is more focused on competencies and personalities of employees than qualifications.
- The contact centre has tight resources so there is no scope for slack or extra resources.
- Casual labour can be converted into permanent employees.
- Attrition rates can be viewed as the effectiveness of the contact centre.
- Call reduction is a key term now and is a focus for the contact centre.

***Customer Channel Manager (Grant .....***

- We view customer contact from the customers' point of view.
- The position was supposed to be called 'call reduction manager' but this would have caused panic in the contact centre.
- There are a group of people (6) which form the customer channel team – all the members of this team have previously worked on the telephones.
- We investigate what is causing the customers difficulties and understand why they need to call the DVLA, i.e. is it to do with the information available or is it to do with the processes we have in place.
- We take this project right across the agency – getting information from all parts of the agency not only the contact centre.
- Information goes back and forth between the contact centre and the wider organisation via the customer services directorate.
- The team will take initiatives forward and will engage with other people in the contact centre to make this happen.
- The survey of calls has a good sample so that we can see what are the 'big hitting' calls and then we go in-depth to find the root cause of the problem which customers are calling about.
- On the call tracker we identify the causes of failure demand (this is demand which is not generated by the contact centre) these are :

- Transfer and re-directions
  - Processes
  - Information
- We are trying to get people away from seeing the phone as the first option for contacting the DVLA.
  - The information for the survey comes from agents classifying their calls through pushing a coded button after the call is complete – this is to get a significant sample size.
  - If an agent can answer customers enquires through a knowledge database then the customer should be able to do that for themselves without calling the contact centre – agents should only be used when a live system is required.
  - 100,000's of enquires for information can get the information on-line – what is the best way to get information?
  - What is the best way to published printed information based on the findings from the call analysis?
  - We are working with various groups of get a concise database of information and leaflets.
  - We aim to stop customers actually calling the contact centre and get the information they need for elsewhere.
  - Contact centres now have final say over advertising in things like phonebooks – this will ensure better call routing for customers so they are using the right number for their enquiry.
  - We fed the information from the study into the innovation process and other projects this can result in productivity improvements.
  - We are looking for better/different ways of doing things to give information to the customers to reduce calls to the contact centre.
  - Multi-skilling agents can reduce the transfer of calls.
  - We would like to reduce the number of IVR's but the improvements need to be in place before IVR's can be reduced.
  - New channels can generate more calls for the contact centre i.e. e-mails might have problems with automated payments which result in calls being made to the contact centre.



- Helpdesk function in the future – moving away from providing information to actually solving problems.
- This work is a stimulus for innovation an improvement in the wider organisation and within the contact centre

### **Observations from Contact Centre Tour**

- New building built 2/3 years ago.
- Separate from other buildings of the DVLA, completely different site on the other side of Swansea.
- Based in an enterprise park with a number of different organisations (including a number of large contact centres).
- All doors to the contact centre and areas within the contact centre are accessed through employees ‘tags’ to open doors.
- In reception (and throughout the contact centre) there are large plasma TV’s running ‘News 24’ programmes and displaying DVLA related material – such as a visit by a parliamentary minister – the contact centres vision and mission (for the future) were also displayed on these.
- There was also a large stand detailing CCA accreditation information (which the centre is going for next week) in the reception area.
- Contact centre was large and open plan (with break areas being incorporated into the work area).
- Different service areas were located next to each other – no clear definition between the different service areas was evident.
- ‘Stats’ (targets) were displayed on digital display boards – around the contact centre – were not understandable to the common observer.
- High level ‘stats’ were also displayed on a plasma TV before entering the contact centre – these were split into different service areas of the contact centre – also evident that two types of agents work in the contact centres – scripted and unscripted
- No posters or advertising evident about the ‘ideas scheme’ – although a poster proclaiming that “organisational change is happening now” was evident – looked like a DLVA or government wide poster.

- Did observe the staff intranet which has an area for staff idea collection and staff issues section.
- Observed a number of ‘outputs’ from both the idea scheme and the staff issues log for August 2007 – evident that a wide number of ideas/issues are generated by the employees each month.
- Also observed the results of an employee survey about their knowledge of the employees’ ideas scheme – evident that employees in the contact centre do know about the scheme.
- Observed the employee monitoring system where team leaders can look at a variety of statistics about the individual members of their team – although they said that they only use this information to highlight problems so that agents can be coached and mentored (developed) to solve any problems or give them help.
- Telephony and e-mail (IT based) customer interaction areas were separate as the technology cannot be integrated yet.
- E-mails to the DVLA are answered by agents – there is no automation of the e-mail system.
- No clear distinction between teams which carry out the same type of service provision.

## Good Morning Project Glasgow 14<sup>th</sup> August 2007

### Case Study Notes

#### Background Notes

- Phone 'elderly' clients to make sure that they are awake and are okay
- A limited company with charitable status
- Funded from a number of different channels
- Approx. 20 employees
- Mix of full and part time employees

#### Interview Notes

##### *Nicky Thompson – Project Manager*

- High value to the customer but does not generate a profit
- Main job is to build relationships with people – meaningful relationships that grow with time- build trust
- Customers tell us that the relationships are meaningful to them
- Can notice when mental or physical health deteriorates
- Alert service when customer does not answer their phone – but will check doctors, hairdressers, etc. – then will contact a nominated contact if still no response – will also go out to the customers house to check on the customer – also will contact the police if still no answer
- Referral can come from social work, or doctors to be part of the service but can also have self-referral
- Pass on information of what is happening in the community this means that people want to be part of this service
- Afternoon and night call service – a social call
- Services depend on the funding received
- Over75 – female – can get out and about
- Employees – are paid staff – 365 days services for over 300 people – staff of 15 on rota over 7days per week – but have to be paid as this gives the reliability of the service – volunteers are of limited use as they are not totally dependable

- Focus group to meet with clients and they also sit on the board of directors to let you know how it is going
- Length of calls – lists of clients – give clients all the time they require but have to get through all the list – but have a robust level of staffing – project manager and assistant – do not stop people talking over their allocated time
- Organisational structure - Project manager – project supervisor – 2 call supervisors – telephone carers
- IT skills and personality are both important when recruiting staff
- Performance management – size means that management is easy – calls are monitored as everyone can hear the calls in the office due to the size of the office – every contact is logged into the system – every day someone else checks your work in the system to look for mistakes
- Making mistakes – coaching and reprimanding – if they have made a mistake people have to be told – but training will be given if more mistakes are made – some people have been reprimanded due to lack of due care to their work
- Training is all done in house – information collected from various sources – monthly training days – people participate more if I'm not in the room
- New ideas – i.e. book club and cinema club – the idea coming from agent talking to a customer
- We never got to this stage without having ideas from people – evolved and grown over time – client needs drive ideas – evaluation forms taken from clients
- Limited company with charitable status – Scottish executive regeneration fund – health board and police – we are not a cheap service - £145000 per year running costs
- Service provided has an impact on other services in the community – takes loading away from things like doctors and social work
- Clients are split up into geographical communities – but we are just one big team as we are so small – lottery application in to get the service operating Glasgow wide
- We have developed this operating model – we have set up 9 other good morning projects (trademark) – we go and put this model into different areas and provide training at different levels of employees

- Use free open source software
- Other areas in Glasgow have tried to set up the same model but have failed – we are responsive to changes and are always looking to expand this is what makes us different
- Funding areas are so volatile and this can impact on the services that can be provided by us – no financial benefit for the funding organisations so we have to think about the other benefits that the service gives them
- There is a monthly newsletter for operators and clients
- Local knowledge is highly important for these types of call centre

***Anne Marie Blair – Project Supervisor***

- Updating the client database
- First point of contact for staff for the day to day running
- Relationship with the staff – it is friendly environment – all staff have to be caring – they respect me because I’m the project supervisor, but it is not you just do the job because I say so – but everyone in the office respects each other
- All the staff know that they have to ask if they are not sure about what they are doing – ask before they make mistakes
- Everyone is quite open with new ideas for events – it is not a free for all either but we (managers) will decide on what ideas will go forward
- Operators are given the opportunity to develop their ideas but this is within a structure – there needs to be a structure to do the job
- Mixture of different types of employees from all different backgrounds and ages
- Policy not to get too attached to individual clients
- The client leads the conversation and the service and so time is not an issue – we can also phone back clients to carry on conversations
- We have a good environment in here – we have a good office and people will chat about the clients if they have concerns about them – constantly in communication with each other
- Part time staff are equally involved as full time staff

- We respect each other and don't talk down to each other – in other contact centres where I have worked this is not the case
- If you didn't care about people you couldn't do this job
- We are all comfortable with each other – hierarchies are not enforced although they are here
- Employees get good satisfaction due to the nature of the job and the interaction they have – people don't want to leave as they enjoy the job – management have an important role to play in creating the good working environment as it all steams from them – low levels of attrition
- Interaction with external bodies - as we aim to have lots of external links as we can pass on this information to our clients – support other projects in the community – open to work with other organisations
- We are not a call centre – but we are a care and alert service- no one follows a script and no one is told what to say – we have boundaries but we work within them but it is our own personalities that come through on the phone to the client – personal touch
- Do not listen into calls without the operator knowing – we go around and sit beside the operator to listen in to monitor performance of operators every few months
- Problems are nipped in the bud before they can create problems to the clients
- The type of people we attract – they have got to use their initiative and common sense
- No structured innovation strategy it is more ad hoc due to the size of the operation

#### **Observation Notes**

- Based within a larger building which had a number of different community projects based there
- Very small open plan office with project manager sitting in separate area
- Very few desks set in two clusters grouped informally
- Basic technology with no electronic monitoring system
- No visible targets evident in the contact centre area
- Interviewees enthusiastic about the whole project

**Case Study Notes**

**Background Notes**

- New building opened in 2004.
- Has just over 300 employees but has the capacity for 550 seats.
- There are many sites around the world but main sites are Scotland, India and USA.
- The contact centre is located in a business park in the central belt of Scotland.
- It is a multi-lingual in-bound contact centre mainly dealing with business-to-business interactions.

**Interview Notes**

***Joan McCredie (Agent) – Lloyds TSB Technical Helpdesk***

- This is a pilot area which is set up to show that the contact centre can deal with this type of technical service.
- Happy for me to listen into calls and look at any of the performance monitoring/targeting software that they use.
- There are 7 people in total in the team – but this will increase if the pilot is successful
- There are no set scripts in this part of the contact centre – we are flexible to deal with the customer how we like within reason – it is all about making relationships with customers
- Currently we look after 600 machines which we have taken over from Siemens
- We work to remote resolution targets – so we aim to solve the customers problem over the phone without an engineer being needed to go to the banks premises
- Flowchart of how to deal with the ATM is provided by the bank – quickly resolved for the bank
- We provide information and technical help for banks in the UK
- We have 48% clear rate target – this is for remote resolution opportunities
- The people who work in the helpdesk are highly experience technical people

- We have tools to listen in but are not used due to the small size of the team – but we do run a report on all the team members to show their performance during the day
- There is a call volume of 70-80 calls per day (from 9am – 11pm) – we have a long talk time with the customers so as to take them through the solution to their problem
- Problems with engineer can generate calls to this area of the contact centre
- The level of technical help given to the bank is dependant on the experience that the caller has with the ATM
- Remote working in this area is allowed – for weekends the agents can work from home using a mobile
- All employees can check other team members' availability – for breaks etc.
- This area can discuss the customer – then get an engineer to the site to fix the problem if it cannot be resolved over the phone
- We can then call the banks back to check that the problem has been fixed and are happy with the service

***Gordon MacKay – Team Leader - Lloyds TSB Technical Helpdesk***

- Targets are monitored against the SLA's set up by the client
- The metrics used here are standard but we are in the process of putting in a new tool for metrics
- We use work instructions rather than scripting
- We work on the premise of responsibility and self-management for our team members
- Employee suggestions are patchy
- Blog's are available on the intranet about suggestions/ideas about different subjects – there are also on-line forums for discussion on the intranet
- It is down to individuals to put ideas forward in the on-line forums – it is not really an effective suggestion scheme
- We need to spend more time communicating
- We have incentives but they are not used effectively



- Sharing within the team – transfer of knowledge and expertise among the team to help each other solve the problems
- We have standard processes and systems across all the contact centres in the World
- As for innovation we have improvement programmes – are looking at programmes to do things better
- In the support functions – less effective on the ground – small local changes are done quickly
- There is a willingness to share best practice – we work with other areas of the centre and organisation to do this
- There is no separate team for continuous improvement – there are 6 sigma teams and contact centre staff are asked to contribute to this team
- It is more informal in the contact centre – than in the rest of the organisation
- The organisational structure is similar to other contact centres – depending on the area of the contact centre you are in
- Working hours, etc. will impact on the culture of the type of work/customer being dealt with – longer call times will impact on culture – so culture is time and product dependant

***Gordian Mothersole – Team Managers France Operations***

- Innovation is about being creative – working smarter not harder – tools (IT, etc.) and people available (skills and knowledge)
- Creative – trying things run of the mill people will say ‘that’ll never work’
- How you measure productivity – is there a different way of doing things
- Looking at things differently – looked at current working and think how to do things better
- There are varying levels of experience and tenure in management – depending on management profile – how they encourage creativity and innovation in their team
- Top management have a helicopter vision of the whole operation so can give strategic direction to the innovation

- Innovation strategy driven by the top management – wants and expects things to improve but not all managers are capable of making the change
- NCR are definitely an innovative company as a whole – large R&D team – looking at new ways to use existing technology
- The creation of the customer care centre is innovative – the way it has been set up, the way we work and the processes being used
- Centre of excellence for innovation
- The NCR culture is that we are expected to do what to do but in business ethics – need to respect each other in the workplace
- The culture is driven and expected to be open, trust – if someone has knowledge let them use it and develop and grow
- Cultural difference between countries – working cultures between countries can be challenging
- Agents are not encouraged to come up with new ideas enough – want people to help out this new things – it is not that we don't want them to come forward but the nature of the job makes it challenging for the agent
- On the intranet the VP blog – is a high level suggestion scheme – all employees can air their views on this blog
- Implementation of a new process – nature of the business can result in having to have the 'guts' to stand up with your idea
- Don't have an innovation process as such within the contact centre – would be beneficial to have an innovation meeting – to get access to ideas – allow would have to be carefully managed
- We have empowerment of employees to work on projects – provide support and help to the team (management role)
- Empowerment can be dangerous if there are no boundaries or objectives
- Collaboration and teamwork is encouraged looking at doing other peoples work if team shortages – but this is limited due to the nature of the work
- We send information by e-mail around the team to communicate problems

***Bob Popovitch – Team Manager Northern Europe Operations***

- Call management for 12 different countries – sending engineers to locations to solve problems on time to meet contractual obligations
- Co-ordination of maintenance and repair of terminals
- Adherence of the process – monitoring what is happening with adherence
- Responsible for 8 countries that are dealt with at this site and 4 outside this centres
- Centralised contact centres are better for communication and management
- There are training programmes in place for the modern apprenticeship programme (NVQ) all agents so through this process at level 3 – also management level so through level 4 of the NVQ
- There are various skills and education levels in this area of the contact centre – recruitment is very important – we recruit for attitude rather than qualifications
- Attrition is always a challenge – transitory workers who are wanting to learn English
- The culture is very good – we all have shared values in this area
- Due to the number of different cultures in the contact centre we have courses on communication and culture – there is no favouritism for countries in this contact centre - everyone is equal in this contact centre
- We have an open culture with communication and feedback
- The management style is not autocratic – we like people to think for themselves and provide solutions to problems they may have
- We have a leadership role – our team leaders and managers give an example to their employees
- We are successful (a centre of excellence for the company) on all managers having the same style
- Participatory management is the style that we have here – with collective decision making with all employees
- There is no formal employee suggestion scheme – but we have an atmosphere to come up with suggestions

- There are incentives (both team and individual) and rewards for good initiatives – these rewards are vouchers or days off - there are also Global recognition programmes – this is for contribution in an extra ordinary way
- There is opportunity to do something in a better way – compared to what we have already – not just technical improvements
- There is an employee satisfaction survey – this encourages participation – it is anonymous and every 6 months
- We need to find a balance between sharing and competition within and between the teams
- We do have scripting in this area of the contact centre but we are interested in quality as well as the quantity of the calls

***John-Paul Glendale – Learning Manager for EMEA***

- Global training for all customer training – job role objectives skills and training
- Job role curriculum's are aligned to meet business objectives – getting back into skills and competencies
- We do talent management by spotting people who could fit into other job roles and train them to do these roles – agents themselves can put themselves forward for other jobs as long as they have the correct training – we spot talented people and develop them further
- Every employee has a personal learning plan
- Centres will allow professional qualifications but this is individual to each centre – cost can be an issue for obtaining professional qualifications
- Managers will spot if people need training – so will see areas of performance improvement
- Training is now put into nuggets so is modular in nature – this makes it easy to be personalised – but this is really reliant on managers to manage it
- Cross skilling of agents is dependant on departments and nature of the service provided – not all agents need to be cross skilled – is dependant on the customer that the agent is interacting with

- Helpdesk is focused on a particular customer so there is no need for cross skilling
- Skills routing is used in certain areas
- The Exceptions Manager role might involve into a continuous improvement manager
- In India there are suggestion boxes around the centres – they also do spot recognitions for employees who have the ideas – the agents have the vision of the process so can make improvements in the processes
- There are e-mail addresses for improvements in other areas
- Suggestion schemes are good if they are acted on and feedback is given – but can run away with you
- It is down to managers to push and monitor the suggestion scheme and give feedback to the employees that have taken part
- Employees have a lot more empowerment than other types of contact centres

***Isabel Rodriguez – Team Manager Iberia Operations***

- The Iberian operation is contracted by a third party based in Chile this is in the past 2 years
- 45% of engineer calls are through e-mail – although e-mail means that there are slower response times – 4 customers actually use an automated service through a website rather than call the centre – automated e-mails are sent to customers to tell them the status of their jobs
- Communication between me and the operations managers in Chile is through MSN instant messenger - it is quick and it is free to use
- I can do remote listening and interaction with the calls from the location in Scotland to the contact centre in Chile – I have all the information about the operation to hand
- The out of hours service was first sent to Chile before the remainder of the operations were sent to Chile
- Training is provided by NCR – some training is done on site whereas other training is provided remotely by distance learning
- ‘Meeting place’ in outlook is used for communications

- Remote training is done with small groups of agents
- Senior management and team leaders all sit on the 'shopfloor' with the agents – difficult to tell who are agents and who are managers
- All agents have their own desk with names and are allowed personal items on their desks
- There is an NCR university on the intranet which all employees can access and use to help with their development plans – there are soft skills as well as technical skills
- The development plans and targets of employees are linked in with the SLA
- All employees get 1 hour per day to invest in yourself – agents are encouraged to develop themselves through the NCR university

***Graham \*\*\*\* - Project Co-ordination Officer***

- Scottish government gave grants and locating the centre here - Eurocentral is a good location for travelling throughout the world – this is one of the main reasons for locating the centre here
- We are a customer care centre – as we don't sell anything to our customers
- We did attend a number of CCA meetings and we won the CCA award but in the past year we have not had as much contact with the CCA as we would have liked
- The sales team want to come here – we often have major customer here on site to view the operations – it is a flagship
- We work in conjunction with the Dundee operation – for visits of customers
- There is a lot of change in the organisation – long service is now not the norm in the organisation
- All managers have a weekly meeting to discuss performance – conference call and on-line presentation for performance
- All agents can be on call at home – so have computer and phone at home – all team leaders and managers have broadband lines installed at their home
- The lights in the facility have been selected for low cost and also they reduce the glare on the screens of the agents

- The facility also has high ceilings as this keeps the noise level down and makes it not claustrophobic for the employees working here
- There are very few storage cupboards in the centre – so that there are limited amounts of junk stored – there are no bins under the agents desks so that we have clean and hygienic work areas
- To give the centre an open plan there are lots of space between desks to make it open – there is 1.2 meters between the desks
- Agents desks are kept as standard as possible – the IT system has all the information that the customer needs therefore there is no need for lots of paperwork or desk diaries on the agents desks
- Agents can sign in anywhere in the centre and in theory they can sit where they like
- Skill routing can be done with the systems and lots of reports can be drawn from the system
- Cisco VoIP – call management – we were one of the first customers to get the system – we were nervous at first but we were happy to go with the new system

***Derek Dutty - IT Manager***

- We have common processes across all the countries – 10 years ago we didn't have common processes there were different ways of doing jobs
- RBS as a major customer has driven change in the systems for NCR – as they want real-time information web based
- We have business evolution – looking for cost savings
- Technical solutions usually have a cost savings down the line
- Profitability drives innovation and then technical improvements
- Geographical location – workforce scheduling is a major innovation but has taken a long time to develop
- NCR and Servicepower collaborated to develop the workforce manager
- There are 4 levels of technical skills
- Software development all done through third parties often through Indian software development companies

- SLA controls the operation – we are charged costs if SLA is not met
- Recording is done on random calls – these help with agent training and record not only the call but also everything that was on the agents screen – demonstrations to do with new starts this identified areas for training
- Internet usage is allowed for agents but it is supposed to be outwith working hours
- Automated system called ‘foretell’ looks for specific words in the body of the call or remarks put in by agents – this takes away agents/managers subjectivity
- Call avoidance strategy – field agents calls the customer and talks them through the problem
- We have web casts – senior VP’s when launching ‘new NCR’ linked to NCR global intranet – interactive questioning from all employees around the globe
- We are good at communication in general – for example the live interactive web casts

### **Observation Notes**

- Employees sit depending on the country of the world that they are dealing with. Each desk has flags depending on the country they are working with. This is on the top floor of the contact centre.
- Desks are grouped into small clusters with lots of space around them – agents are separated by partitions around there desks
- Employees are split depending on the nature of service they provide.
- CCA awards and accreditation are seen when entering the reception. – also plasma screen playing a video about NCR
- Don’t like to call themselves a contact centre but a customer management centre
- A huge CCA excellence award winner’s 2006 banner is hung in the upstairs part of the contact centre.
- From listening to Lloyds TSB team calls
  - team has a friendly atmosphere where all the team members chat to each other



- information and knowledge is shared however this can be down to the small team size and the nature of the work
- Most of the employees dealing with the foreign clients are natives from these countries with the exception of 1 or 2 Scottish employees - most employees are people who come to the UK to improve their English – this can mean a transient workforce
- Most call that come from the UK market are dealt with the NCR centre in India