

**INNOVATION AND ALL THAT JAZZ:
AN EXPLORATION OF JAZZ AS A MEDIUM FOR
LEARNING ABOUT INNOVATION**

CAROLYN HOWE

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Abstract

The research study discussed in this paper is centrally concerned with perception and understanding of innovation and association with the concept in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). It is with particular reference to jazz, as a metaphor for innovation, that the concept is examined and an exploration of the effectiveness of the jazz metaphor therefore represents a core focus for this study.

It is within the overarching 'Year of Innovation' programme delivered by the University of Gloucestershire during 2004-5, that this study is located. The 'Innovation through Jazz' component of this programme involved the use of live jazz within interactive workshops delivered with Gloucestershire SMEs. The author was involved in the design and delivery of these workshops and these engagements provided a useful forum for exploration of innovation and the jazz metaphor.

The author approached this study from an interpretivist worldview, adopting a primarily qualitative methodological approach for this essentially exploratory study. The author used mixed methods in her research, making particular use of semi-structured interviews, observation and questionnaires. The resultant data set incorporated data of both a qualitative and quantitative nature, triangulated to provide rich insight into perceptions and understanding of innovation and the effectiveness of the jazz metaphor as well as into a number of issues around employment relations in small firms.

Given the diversity of small firms as well as of the individuals within them, the author does not attempt to make generalisations from her findings. This exploratory study does however provide new insight into the effectiveness of the jazz metaphor, applied in the specific context of small firm innovation.

The study moves knowledge about the jazz metaphor beyond the primarily theoretical terms in which it had typically been discussed previously. The study found some support for the validity of the metaphor for providing insight into innovation and organisational innovativeness. It also however found jazz not to be universally liked, and the study provides new insight into the negative implications this can have for learning. It also raises questions over the usefulness of the metaphor based upon a finding that, for some individuals, the concept of using jazz as a metaphor for exploring innovation was just too abstract.

In undertaking this exploration, this study has made a number of independent contributions to knowledge about the jazz metaphor and more specifically its effectiveness as a medium for learning about innovation.

Author's Declaration

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other education institution in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University.

Signed

..... C. E. How

Date

... 2/3/2007

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The research study discussed in this paper is concerned primarily with the concept of innovation. It is an exploratory study, examining perception and understanding of innovation and association with the concept in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). It is with particular reference however to jazz, as a metaphor for innovation, that the concept is explored.

The concept of innovation is richly examined as part of this study, both in general terms and in the context of small businesses. Innovation, the literature informs us, is typically conceptualised as a process (Tidd et al, 2001), concerned essentially with change and *“doing things differently”* (Burns, 2001, p.49). Whilst a variety of definitions of innovation are found in the literature, few authors dispute its importance. Henry & Mayle, for example, propose that *“Innovation and change are now central to today’s business environment”* (2002, p.3) and Kim & Mauborgne suggest innovation to be the key driver of business growth (in Harvard, 2001).

This study is concerned not only, however, with exploring innovation but also specifically with the value that jazz, as a metaphor for innovation, can bring to the development of insight and understanding about the concept. Jazz is a form of music typically characterised by both its strong rhythms and its use of improvisation (www.oup.com). Bastien and Hastager, indeed, describe jazz as *“a form of musical innovation”* (in Kamoche et al, 2002, p.14); creativity, challenge and invention key features of the music.

Whilst there exists a considerable volume of research on innovation and, albeit more limited, on jazz and the jazz metaphor, there has to date been little integrative work. The purpose of this study is therefore to provide new insight in this field, undertaking an examination of understanding, perception and association with innovation in small firms and an in-depth exploration of the appropriateness and effectiveness of the jazz metaphor, for providing new insight and understanding into the concept. The study draws upon a review of key literature from all related fields as well as new primary research with a number of Gloucestershire SME owner-managers and employees.

The study, undertaken as part of a Master of Arts research degree, has been located within a wider 'Year of Innovation' programme of business support, run by the University of Gloucestershire. This overarching programme focussed upon encouraging innovation with the county's small business population, recognising the importance of innovation to the local economy.

The study's location within this wider programme had a number of implications for the research methodology, the research sample and the author's role. Whilst discussed much more richly in later sections of this paper, it is important that the contextual issues to any study are properly understood and an awareness developed of any potential implications for the study. The author feels it therefore useful to offer such contextualisation as part of this introductory chapter. Section 1.2 offers an introduction to some of these contextual issues, structuring the discussion in relation to the strategic importance of innovation, the political drive to promote innovation and the author's personal desire to assist companies enhance their understanding and capability to innovate.

1.2 Contextualisation

1.2.1 The Strategic Importance of Innovation

Many definitions of innovation are offered in the literature. These include definitions of it being about *"the introduction of new things, ideas or ways of doing something"* (www.oup.com), as being *"about doing things differently"* (Burns, 2001, p.49); or to *"break away from established patterns"* (Mintzberg, 1983, p.254). Innovation is most frequently conceptualised as a process and a description such as that offered by Tidd et al: *"essentially we talking about change"* (2001, p.6) usefully captures the essence of the concept.

Innovation is advocated as an issue of central importance to business today (Henry & Mayle, 2002) and a key driver of growth (Kim & Mauborgne, in Harvard, 2001, p.101). Aside from any growth ambitions, innovation is considered essential even to the survival of a business, with failure to innovate a prime source of business failure (Utterback, 1998).

An approach therefore of not changing, adapting, renewing or innovating is rarely a viable option for businesses today: *"In essence, unless organizations are prepared to renew their products and processes on a continuing basis, their survival chances are seriously threatened"* (Tidd et al, 2001, p.17).

As will become clear through reading this paper, innovation is not only a complex concept, but an extremely important capability for businesses. This study usefully includes an exploration with Gloucestershire SMEs of their understanding and perceptions of the concept, investigating the extent to which they relate to the concept and the cultural issues impacting their capability to innovate.

1.2.2 The Political Drive for Innovation

With innovation so critical to business survival and growth, helping businesses to innovate is a common driving force behind many of the business support programmes offered by local government agencies. It is indeed within such a wider business support programme that the author's research study, discussed in this paper, is located.

The research study has been undertaken within an overarching business engagement programme run by the University of Gloucestershire entitled 'Gloucestershire Year of Innovation'. This programme, jointly funded by the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), sought to promote innovation with Gloucestershire's Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs).

Within the literature on business innovation, Tidd et al articulate a challenge facing businesses today as *"not one of whether or not to innovate but rather of how to do so successfully"* (2001, p.18). This challenge is perhaps also shared by government agencies; the funding from SWRDA and the ERDF targeted specifically at original, even experimental approaches to encouraging innovation. The initiative submitted by the University of Gloucestershire was considered novel and innovative in both its focus and approach and was accordingly awarded funds.

The University of Gloucestershire's 'Year of Innovation' programme included traditional business support components such as innovation-focussed seminars, research and consultancy. It also, notably, included a novel approach of using jazz, as a metaphor, for exploring innovation. The part of the programme which took this novel jazz-based approach was entitled 'Innovation through Jazz' and it is within this business engagement project that the research study, discussed in this paper, was undertaken.

The jazz metaphor was proposed by the University as a potentially interesting approach to exploring innovation, based upon parallels which intuitively seemed to exist between how jazz bands create, improvise and innovate in their music and how businesses operate and innovate successfully.

Innovation, as will be discussed further throughout this paper, is a complex concept and there is much discussion in the literature about the concept, what it is, how to encourage and nurture innovation and how to manage it. A rich discussion is also offered in the literature of the qualities which characterise innovative organisations, with broad consensus around the importance of visionary leadership, effective team-working; extensive communication; a creative climate and a learning focus (Tidd et al, 2001; Goffin & Mitchell, 2005; Rogers, 1995). Many of these qualities can also be found in successful jazz bands. The idea then of using jazz, as a means to explore innovation, intuitively seems to make sense and appears to offer an interesting lens through which to view the concept:

“If you look at the list of characteristics that are associated with the 21st Century organisation, you find concepts like flexible, adaptable, responsive to the environment, loose boundaries, minimal hierarchy. When you look at the list for a second, if you’re interested in jazz, you recognize that all of those ideas could as easily be associated with a jazz band as a 21st Century organisation. And so the idea of comparing these worlds seems like a sensible one.”

(Hatch, 1998, p.557)

In conceptual terms the link between business innovation and jazz therefore seemed plausible and worthy of further exploration. In practical terms a link was proposed as part of the ‘Innovation through Jazz’ project, with interactive innovation workshops involving live jazz performance delivered in open-forums and, as part of a more detailed engagement programme, with sixteen Gloucestershire SMEs. These workshops engaged owner-managers and their employees in exploration, demonstration and discussion of the qualities, skills, techniques and culture common to both jazz and business innovation. It is against this background that the author undertook her research, the

'Innovation through Jazz' programme providing a useful opportunity for this exploratory study.

1.2.3 The Personal Desire to Enable Innovation

Having introduced the reader to the concept of innovation, outlined its importance to business success and explained why the novel jazz approach to exploring innovation with small businesses may have attracted funding, it may be of interest to briefly outline some of the issues which drove the author's personal motivation for this study and for her involvement.

From the author's perspective, her interest and motivation to undertake this study can be considered in the context of a personal desire to help organisations innovate and develop their businesses. In addition to the appeal of the academic challenge involved in undertaking such a study, her motivation for involvement also drew upon a general desire to contribute to knowledge about innovation and how it can be encouraged and enabled in business. This contribution relates to the knowledge and understanding of the author herself, of the involved business and of the collective academic world.

The musical interest and experience of the author, albeit not specifically with jazz music, added a further dimension of interest. Her experience in playing a number of instruments in both a solo and group capacity ensured an appreciation of, and useful insight into, many of the musical concepts explored through this study.

This research study has therefore provided a valued opportunity for the author to not only explore an area of interest for her in innovation, but to undertake this exploration through a metaphor of interest, namely music.

The metaphor of jazz is a highly focussed lens through which to investigate innovation, itself a complex concept. It is the belief of the author that in undertaking this study it has created not only value to herself, to her cognitive

experience, skills and knowledge, but also to business awareness and academic understanding.

1.3 Research Aim and Questions

Having provided a broad introduction to the research study discussed in this paper, it is useful at this point for the author to make explicit the aim of this study and the research questions it is seeking to answer.

Research Aim:

To undertake an examination of innovation in, and with, small and medium-sized enterprises and to explore the effectiveness of jazz as a metaphor for innovation in a workshop context.

Research Questions:

Associated with the research aim are a set of questions that seek to provide focus to the research. The author has identified four research questions:

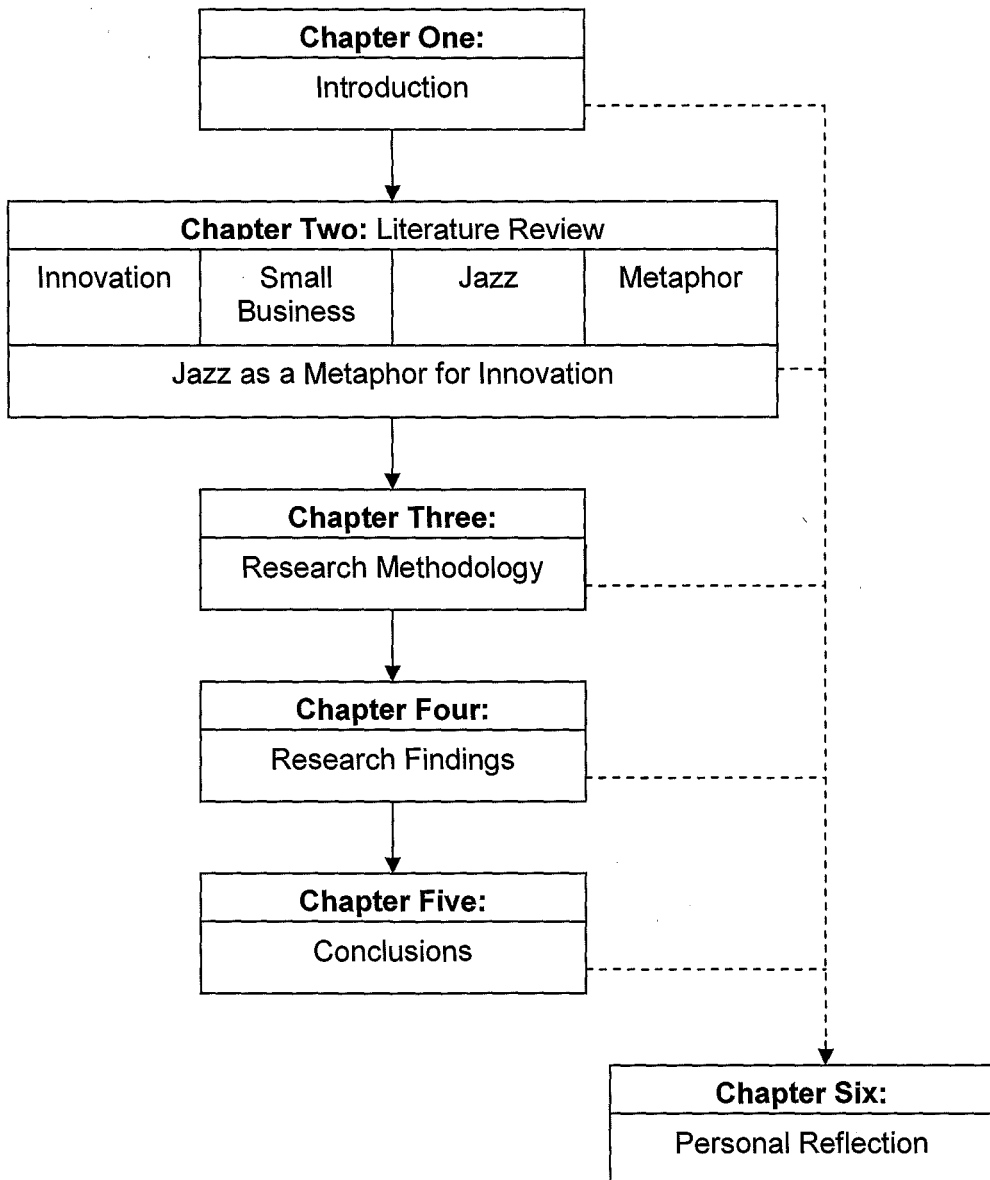
- What are the features of innovation and what factors contribute to organisational innovativeness?
- What are the defining characteristics of jazz and how useful is it as a metaphor for innovation?
- How is innovation perceived and understood by the owner-managers and employees of small and medium-sized enterprises?
- How effective is jazz as a medium for learning about innovation in a workshop context?

1.4 Structure of the Paper

Having provided an introduction to the research study this paper will move on, through the chapters that follow, to provide the reader with a well-considered, thorough and intellectually challenging treatment of the topic of study.

The paper is divided into six chapters, as illustrated by figure 1.1. Structuring the paper in this way, the author hopes, will provide a logical framework for discussion of the study and a coherent flow to the reader.

Figure 1.1 Structure of the Paper



Following this introductory chapter this paper will therefore move on, in chapter two, with a critical review and analysis of key literature and literary debate on innovation, small business, jazz and metaphor. The literature review is “*an essential part of every research project*” (Hart, 2001, p.2), helping to identify key concepts and theories to be explored in the research and highlighting potential gaps in research and knowledge.

Building on from the literature review the paper then moves on to discuss the key methodological considerations for this study. Chapter three provides a discussion therefore of these considerations, opening the discussion with an exploration of some of the philosophical issues and an explanation of the author’s chosen philosophical approach. The chapter then offers a discussion of the research approaches and strategies suited to the study, explaining the author’s choice of methodological approach and research methods.

Chapter four provides a detailed discussion of the findings from the primary research. This discussion includes an examination of owner-manager and employee association with the concept of innovation, their perceptions and understanding of the term and concept. Interpretations of the jazz metaphor are discussed and insight as to the effectiveness of the metaphor explored at length. The findings from the primary research are discussed in with reference to the findings from the literature review, enabling a rich analysis, synthesis and discussion of all concepts and findings. Limitations of the jazz approach are also discussed here and this forms an important part of the discussion.

The study’s findings are summarised in chapter five and conclusions drawn. The author highlights contributions to knowledge made by the study and goes on to propose possible areas for further research in this field.

Chapter six is the closing chapter of this paper, offering an insightful and personal reflection from the author upon both the subject of study and the experience of undertaking it.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

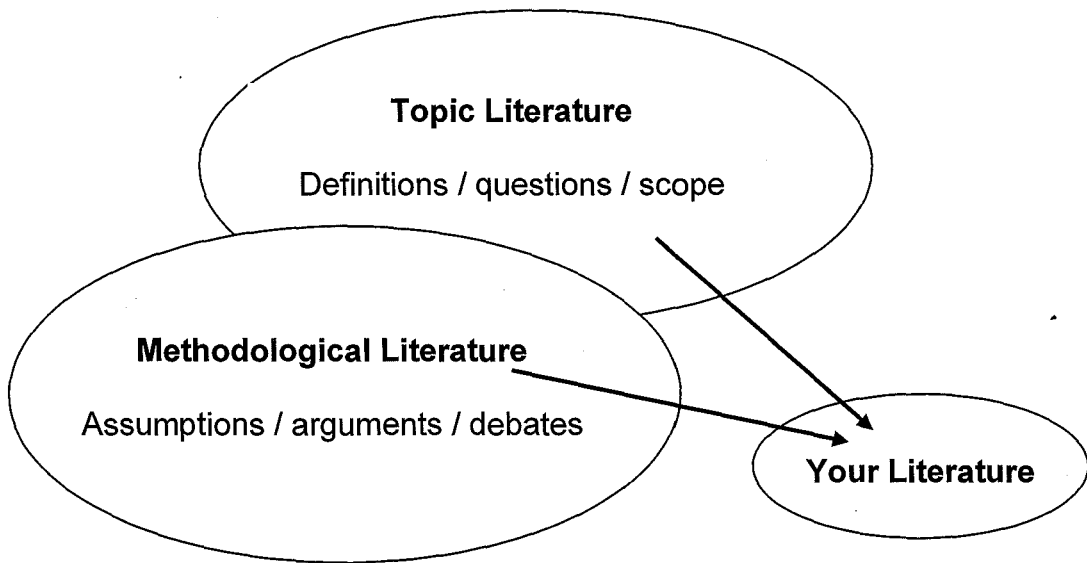
Having provided an introduction to the research study and an outline of the context within which it was undertaken, this paper will now move on to a review of the literature of relevance to this study.

The literature review is “*an essential part of every research project*” with both intellectual and practical value (Hart, 2001, p.2). A literature review can help identify work that is of relevance to a research study, helping to identify key concepts for exploration in the research, as well as highlighting potential gaps in research and knowledge.

It is the aim of this chapter therefore to review key literature of relevance to the author’s exploration of innovation in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and the usefulness of the jazz metaphor in developing thinking, learning and understanding of innovation. The review helps identify key concepts in innovation and jazz and a critical analysis and synthesis of these leads on to a full and rich discussion of the relationships and implications for the research study.

In addition to helping identify research, concepts and ideas of relevance to the research topic, a literature review can also be valuable in helping inform methodological choices and data collection methods. As advocated by Hart (2001) both topic and methodological literature were therefore reviewed in undertaking this study, as captured by figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1 Two Primary Strands of Literature

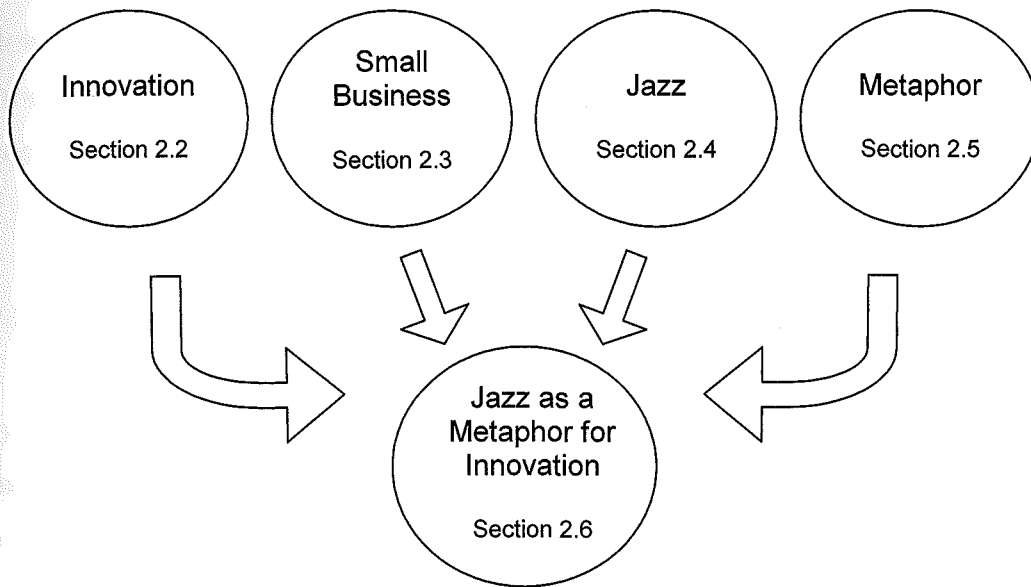


Source: (Hart, 2001, p.3)

Methodological literature, debate and concepts are explored primarily in chapter 3 of this paper. Such literature was however reviewed in parallel with the more topic-specific literature and there are clear cross-implications.

'Topic Literature' (Hart, 2001) is however what forms the basis of the discussion in the following sections of this chapter. The literature reviewed for this study is divided for discussion into five key areas, as illustrated by figure 2.2. It is with reference to these areas that the chapter is structured, enabling a logical and coherent flow to the discussion.

Figure 2.2 Literature Review Structure



Source: author's own

As a study centrally concerned with innovation and innovativeness and with the perception of these concepts in small firms, a useful starting point for discussion of the findings of the literature review is with an exploration of these concepts and with an introduction to some of the defining characteristics of innovative organisations. This is the focus of section 2.2.

In section 2.3 the author will move on to offer a discussion of small firms, exploring definitional issues and characteristics that are suggested to distinguish them from larger firms.

The study is also concerned, more specifically, with exploring the impact of jazz, as a metaphor, on those perceptions of innovation and the usefulness of this metaphor for enhancing understanding of the concept and capability to innovate. Following on from the initial review around innovation and small business then, the literature review moves on to explore the music form that is 'jazz' in section 2.4.

The value that metaphors more generally can bring to understanding is discussed in section 2.5, before a much more detailed discussion is undertaken in section 2.6 on the jazz metaphor specifically, including a detailed review of its defining characteristics and its apparent relevance to innovation in small firms. Conclusions from this discussion are provided in section 2.7, the final section of this chapter.

2.2 Innovation

As a study concerned with innovation in small and medium-sized firms, a useful starting point from which to discuss the findings of the literature review is with an exploration of this central concept of innovation. Definitional issues are therefore discussed in this section and an introduction to the concept of innovativeness and qualities of innovative organisations offered.

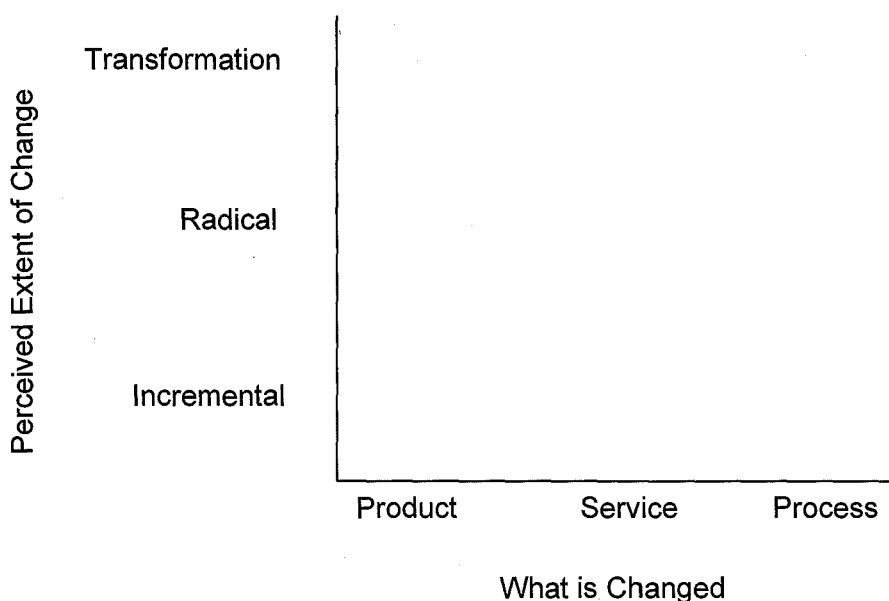
2.2.1 Innovation – Definitional Issues

A dictionary definition of innovation introduces us to an association with newness, defining innovation as being about *“the introduction of new things, ideas or ways of doing something”* (www.oup.com). This idea of newness is developed further by Everett Rogers, defining ‘an innovation’ as *“an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption”* (Rogers, 1983, p.11). Rogers goes further to emphasise that it is this perception of newness that distinguishes something as an innovation, clarifying *“It matters little, so far as human behaviour is concerned, whether or not an idea is ‘objectively’ new.... The perceived newness of the idea for the individual determines his or her reaction to it. If the idea seems new to the individual, it is an innovation”* (ibid).

In this definition Rogers introduces innovation as a noun, discussing the characteristics that define something as an innovation. The work of Tidd et al (2001) further explores the concept, identifying two possible dimensions to

innovations. One dimension they suggest sees change in the things an organization offers (products / services) and the ways in which they are created and delivered (process). The second dimension of change they suggest relates to the degree of novelty involved, varying from relatively small incremental changes right through to more radical and transformational ones. These dimensions scope what they describe as the 'Innovation Space' captured in the figure 2.3 below.

Figure 2.3 Dimensions of Innovation Space



Source: Tidd et al (2001, p.8, fig 1.1)

From an ontological perspective, that is considering the nature of innovation, it is as a process however that it is most typically conceptualised (Tidd et al, 2001). A definition taking this ontological perspective, offered by Burns, defines the concept of innovation as “*about doing things differently*” (2001, p.49) or “*breaking the mould*” (ibid, p.65). Mintzberg similarly considers what it is to innovate, defining it as to “*break away from established patterns*” (1979, p.432). The concept of innovation can therefore be considered to be essentially about change (Tidd et al, 2001).

Whilst precise definitions of innovation vary, few authors dispute its importance. *"Innovation and change are now central to today's business environment"* (Henry & Mayle, 2002, p.3) and as a driver of growth *"innovation is the key driver"* (Kim & Mauborgne, in Harvard, 2001, p.101). Aside from any growth intentions however, innovation itself is considered essential even to the survival of a business, with failure to innovate a prime source of business failure (Utterback, 1998).

Whilst change and innovation may be seen as *"a risky and uncertain process"* (Tidd et al, 2001, p.17) an approach of doing nothing, of not changing, adapting or innovating is rarely a viable option for businesses today *"In essence, unless organizations are prepared to renew their products and processes on a continuing basis, their survival chances are seriously threatened"* (ibid).

Having outlined some of the key definitional issues around innovation, it may be useful to move on to the concept of innovativeness and to introduce some of the qualities most typically associated with innovative organisations. These qualities are explored in much more depth in section 2.6 however it is useful to introduce them at this stage, providing a useful foundation from which the nature of innovation in small firms can then be discussed.

2.2.2 Innovative Qualities

Innovation is a complex concept and there is much discussion in the literature about the concept, what it is, how to encourage and nurture it and how to manage it. Common characteristics of, or qualities for, successful innovation are also discussed in this field of literature. A review of these qualities provides a useful framework against which a rich exploration of the relevance and value of jazz and the jazz metaphor can later be discussed, in relation to business innovation.

In discussing the characteristics or qualities of individuals or organisations effective at innovating, it may be helpful to make reference to concept of

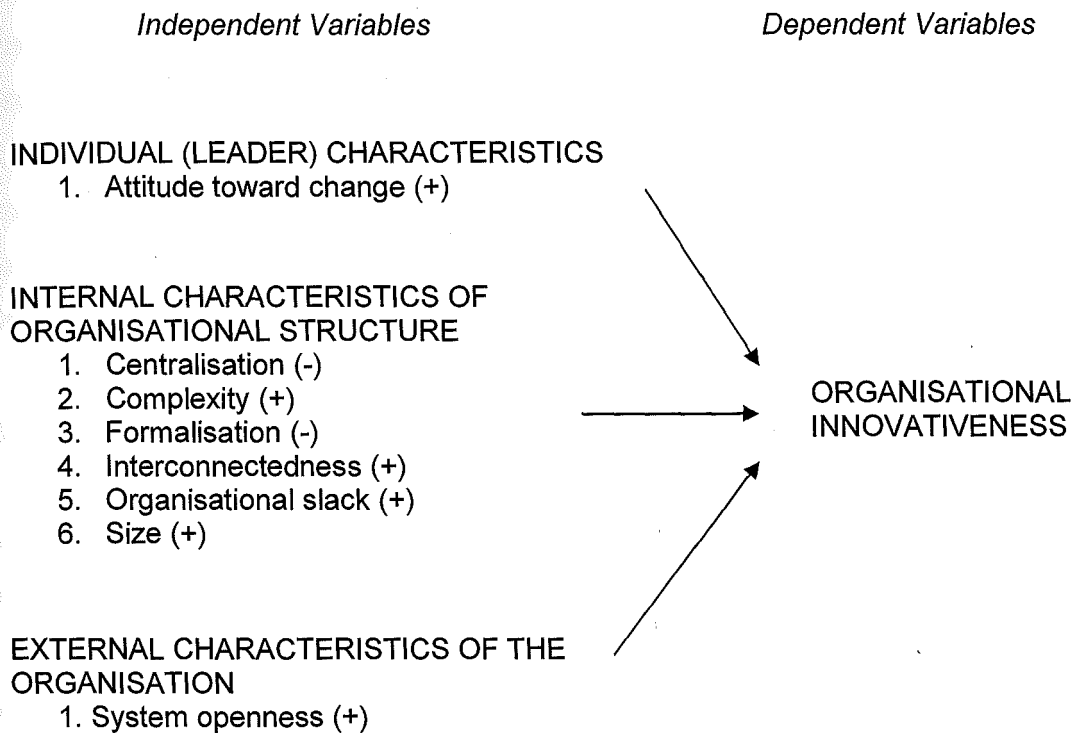
'innovativeness'. This concept introduces us to the idea of a spectrum of differing levels of innovation activity and provides a framework for making some kind of assessment of the extent or effectiveness of innovation-related behaviour or activity, at an individual or organisational level.

Ten key characteristics, or components, of innovative organisations are identified by Tidd et al (2001). These components broadly relate to matters of vision and the need for a shared vision; effective leadership and the will to innovate; appropriate structures; key individuals; effective team-working; continuing and stretching individual development; extensive communication; high involvement in innovation; an external focus; a creative climate; and being a learning organisation (2001).

Goffin & Mitchell (2005) offer just four critical qualities for successful innovation, and whilst grouped differently, these cover many of the same components, namely (1) leadership and the ability of leaders to manage change and coordinate people issues; (2) creativity and ideas, with the atmosphere and rewards to nurture these; (3) a willingness to take risks, the 'no-blame' culture; and (4) effective cross-functional relationships and organisational learning.

Rogers (1995) also identifies a number of variables impacting organisational innovativeness, these he groups into three main categories, namely (1) individual (leader) characteristics, (2) internal organisational structure characteristics, and (3) external characteristics of the organisation. These variables and some of the qualities within them are diagrammatically shown in figure 2.4 below, indicating also whether these characteristics have a positive (+) or negative (-) influence on organisational innovativeness.

Figure 2.4 Independent Variables Related to Organisational Innovativeness



Source: Rogers, 1995, p.380.

Whilst the above models summarise the types of variables impacting an organisation's ability to innovate, in such a study as that which the author has undertaken, it is important that each of these variables be not only identified but be explored in much greater depth. A much fuller exploration of the qualities of and conditions for innovation will be undertaken in section 2.6, forming part of the author's in-depth examination of the jazz metaphor and its relevance to and value in exploring the concept of innovation.

Having introduced then the concepts of innovation and innovativeness, the author will now move on to section 2.3 for an exploration of small businesses, a discussion of their defining characteristics and an introduction to the relevance of innovation in these firms.

2.3 Small Business

Rich discussion concerning the definition and characteristics of small businesses can be found in the literature and it is with a summary of this discussion that the author opens this section of the paper. Given the study, about which this paper is concerned, was undertaken with small and medium-sized enterprises, it is important that a detailed understanding is developed of the nature and characteristics of these businesses and the people within them.

2.3.1 Small Business – Definitional Issues

The concept of a 'small business', according to Barrow, "*defies easy definition*" (1998, p.2) with consequently no uniformly accepted definition for a small firm (Burns, 2001, Verhees & Meulenber, 2004). That is not however to say that many definitions have not been offered or cannot be beneficially considered. A notable source of discussion on such a definition is the Bolton Report (Bolton, 1971) which reported on the state of small business in Britain at that time. This offered a number of "*objective definitions*" (Deakins & Freel, 2003, p.37) making reference to employee numbers, turnover, or certain characteristics of the business.

The employee definition offered, classified small firms by some maximum number of employees, for example a small manufacturing firm being defined as one with less than 200 employees. The precise number of employees in this definition however varied from one industrial sector to another. In other sectors, for example retail, a more readily applied definition was one based upon turnover. A small road transport business, in contrast, however might have based itself on neither of these definitions, rather by some maximum number of vehicles in its fleet, in this case having 5 or less vehicles.

Definitions based upon the characteristics of a business provide another alternative perspective by which to classify small firms and, in this case, base

the small firm definition upon such characteristics as having a small share of the market; operating independently and being managed by the owner or part-owners in a personalized way (Deakins & Freel, 2003).

Establishing a business on one's own is generally accepted as a very risky thing to do and, consequently, the people that do so are suggested to have special characteristics (Stanworth & Curran, 1973). There is much research and literary discussion on the characteristics of small firm owner-managers, offering a description of them as typically independent, highly self-sufficient (ibid.) and with a management style that is often autocratic, impulsive, egocentric and essentially unpredictable (Stanworth et al, 1982). The small firm consists of more than just the owner-manager however and must be seen as a social whole. Literature of interest to this study concerns therefore not only the characteristics of the owner manager but also the culture and employment relations in these firms. Further discussion is offered throughout this chapter on these areas, notably offering a discussion of communication, involvement, trust and ambition.

Despite the diversity of small firms, the multiplicity of definitions was not deemed ideal and instead a single definition was sought. In 1996 the European Commission developed the concept of a 'small and medium enterprise' (SME) defined broadly as an organisation employing fewer than 250 employees. Further definitions within this have developed, defining enterprises with 0-9 employees as 'micro', 10-49 employees as 'small' and 50-249 as 'medium'. The number of employees is not however the sole basis of the SME definition. Indeed, for an organisation to qualify as an SME, as outlined by the European Commission, it must meet the criteria on both employee numbers and independence as well as satisfying criteria based upon turnover or balance sheet figures.

The detail of the European Commission's definitions and criteria are summarised in figure 2.5:

Figure 2.5 European Commission SME Definitional Criteria

Criterion	Definition		
	Micro business	Small business	Medium business
Maximum number of employees	9	49	249
Maximum annual turnover	-	7 million euros	40 million euros
Maximum annual balance sheet total (total assets)	-	5 million euros	27 million euros
Maximum % owned by one, or jointly by several, enterprise(s) not satisfying the same criteria	-	25%	25%

Source: Burns, 2001, p.8.

Such definitions are useful to this study in developing a feel, at some level, of the type of organisations with which the study is concerned, namely SMEs. It is arguably however of more value to look beyond such objective definitions, to investigate the more behavioural characteristics of SMEs. These could prove useful in developing understanding of the SME owner and employee perspectives, reactions and behaviour to innovation and use of the jazz metaphor.

With approximately 4.3 million small businesses in the United Kingdom however (Federation of Small Businesses), the desire to identify defining characteristics shared by all such businesses is however not possible. Some 12 million people are employed in such firms (ibid.), representing a collection of people even larger and even more disparate and diverse than the businesses in which they work. Such diversity has given rise to the plethora of characteristic definitions offered for small firms and the people who run them, for *“the more you try to create a picture of the typical small-business founder, the more elusive they become”* (Barrow, 1998, p.15)

Indeed, Deakins & Freel suggest *"in the face of the increasing pace of change, it may be folly to define the small firm"* (2003, p.40). The definitional discussion offered by the author is however helpful in developing some kind of picture of the type of organisations within which perceptions of innovation are being explored. It is, after all, only companies which satisfied the European Commission's definition of an SME which were able to participate in the 'Innovation through Jazz' programme and hence with this study.

Having outlined some of the definitional issues around innovation and small firms, a useful next step would be to relate the two concepts to each another. The next section of this paper therefore focuses upon innovation within small firms, analysing both the importance of innovation for them and also their relative ability at innovating, as discussed in literature in this field.

2.3.2 Innovation in Small Firms

Whilst we know that innovation is important to business growth and more broadly to the economy, the literature suggests that small firms in particular play a key role in the economy and indeed innovation, especially in the innovation of new products and processes (Peters & Waterman, 1982). This innovativeness is attributed partly to their flexibility and willingness to try new approaches (Carter & Jones-Evans, 2000) as well as their ability to respond quickly to change (Deakins & Freel, 2003). Ease of communication and rapid decision-making are also noted as organizational advantages to small firm innovation (Tidd et al, 2001).

A positive relationship has however consistently been found to exist between the size of an organisation and its level of innovativeness (Rogers, 1995) indicating that it is the larger firms which are the more innovative.

This observation is however further developed to suggest that it is probably not size per se which has a relationship with higher innovativeness. As a variable which can be easily measured, it is suggested that size is more likely a surrogate measure of several other dimensions which impact upon

innovation, such as total resources, spare resources, technical expertise and organisational structure.

The limited financial, technical and / or human resource in small firms is believed to hinder such businesses, putting them at a disadvantage for realising the full potential of innovation (Carter & Jones-Evans, 2000). The owner-manager's lack of time for long-term thinking, the common absence of marketing expertise in small firms (Verhees & Meulenbergh, 2004) and typical absence of expertise or financial resource to cope with external developments, all work to restrict the development of technical, market-led or customer-driven innovations.

Small firms are however "*vitaly important to the economic success of the nation*" (Carter & Jones-Evans, 2000, p.30), described as "*a vital spark in the economy*" (Barrow, 1998, p.25). The lower levels of innovation exhibited by small firms, is therefore an important finding from the literature review. It is a particularly important finding for this study given its concern with innovation in SMEs, and for the wider Year of Innovation programme tasked with enhancing innovation levels in these Gloucestershire businesses.

Having introduced the reader to concepts of innovation and small business, the author will now move on to provide some background discussion on jazz music and the use of metaphors.

2.4 Jazz

In a study concerned not only with exploring innovation but also specifically with the value that can be brought by using jazz as a metaphor for innovation, it is important that a clear understanding of jazz is developed. The aim of this section of the paper is therefore to outline some key characteristics of the music form which is jazz, such that later sections of this paper can discuss in greater detail the similarities and differences between jazz and innovation in business and review the value of such metaphorical use.

A dictionary provides a definition of jazz as a style of music, characterised by its strong rhythms and use of improvisation:

jazz /dʒæz/ noun, verb

■ **noun** [U] a type of music with strong rhythms, in which the players often **IMPROVISE** (= make up the music as they are playing), originally created by African American musicians: a **jazz band / club** ◊ **traditional / modern jazz** ◊ jazz musicians—see also **ACID JAZZ**

Source: www.oup.com

Literature on jazz and in particular on its relevance to organisational studies argue however that jazz is much more than just a style of music. Bastien and Hastager for example describe jazz as “a celebration of the process of creating music, a form of musical innovation that engages performers as active composers in the collective invention, adoption and implementation of new musical ideas” (in Kamoche et al, 2002, p.14).

This definition expands our perception of what jazz is, and interestingly for this study, introduces the idea of there being some relationship between jazz and innovation. Bastien and Hastager describe jazz as a process, interesting again given the preceding ontological discussion of innovation and most popular conceptualisation of this also as a process.

A number of variations on the term ‘jazz’ also exist. These variations are often used in non-musical contexts and whilst not used to make direct reference to the music form there is an implied association to certain qualities which are seen to characterize jazz. Application of the jazz concept in this way introduces the idea of using jazz in metaphorical terms.

One common reference to the term is, for example, in the phrase ‘to jazz something up’. This sees jazz being used as a verb, meaning “to make something more interesting, exciting or attractive” (www.oup.com).

Interesting, exciting and attractive are qualities apparently therefore associated with jazz music, in particular with the activity of improvisation which lies at the heart of jazz. Improvisation will be explored much more fully in this paper, but in essence is an activity which in effect embellishes or makes more interesting the original sound. This therefore seems a sensible association.

The phrase '*to jazz something up*' can also be used to convey more than just elaboration, but also a degree of newness or modernity:

"to make a piece of music sound more modern: *It's a jazzed up version of an old tune.*" (www.oup.com).

Few jazz listeners would argue with this application of the 'jazz' term, for as a musical form so centred in improvisation, it is fundamentally about making music new, different, interesting and exciting. With jazz music having been played for many years, an association with modernity could perhaps be disputed, however as a music form which has continually reinvented itself this idea of modernising old tunes, through original improvisation and interpretation seems valid.

Another common phrase which makes reference to the term jazz is '*...and all that jazz*' for referring:

"...things like that. *How's it going? You know—love, life and all that jazz.*" (www.oup.com)

Association with "*...things like that*" again implies the idea of variation, developments within a theme. This also draws upon then the improvisational technique within jazz, characterised by elaborations on a central theme or tune with a number of variations which, whilst deviations from the central theme, do go well with it and in that sense are 'things like that'.

One further common use of the term jazz is as an adjective, 'jazzy', to describe something as being:

"in the style of jazz: *a jazzy melody / tune*" (www.oup.com).

Used as an adjective, 'jazzy' is suggested to indicate something as "brightly coloured and likely to attract attention" for example "*That's a jazzy tie you're wearing*" (www.oup.com).

Association of jazz with colourfulness may be a reflection of the elaborative quality of improvisational jazz, something which is widely accepted as a characteristic of the music form.

When used in this way to describe something, for example 'a jazzy tie', the meaning intended by the use of the term will however vary dependent upon the user's subjective opinion of jazz. Usage of the term therefore can form part of a value judgement. For some people a description of something as 'jazzy' may be an indication of disapproval, for others it may in fact be the opposite.

Kao for example uses the concept of jazziness, or something being 'jazzy' in a positive way, using it in his discussion of product design commenting "*The Black & Decker hand vacuum now looks jazzier than some sports cars*" (1996, p.13)

Peters & Waterman also make reference to the concept of 'jazziness' in their book 'In Search of Excellence'. They use the term in their discussion of an American company, Maytag, and its steady growth:

"Maytag's form of quality does not come from exotic technology; it comes from products that work. An analyst observes: "Maytag built its reputation on solid dependability, not jazziness.... It makes things good and simple"."

Peters & Waterman, 1982, p.174

Use of the term in this way implicitly communicates perceptions of jazz and notably pejorative associations. In particular the above use disassociates 'jazziness' with things which are 'good and simple', implying that jazz is not simple but that simplicity is good.

Peters & Waterman's use of the concept is also interesting in the association indirectly made between jazziness and exotic things. This usage suggests parallels with a definition given early which made reference to brightness and colourfulness. This association may also draw upon what may be perceived as exotic roots, with much jazz music having African-American origins.

Having now provided a conceptual overview of jazz as well as innovation and small business, the final remaining overview required before a more in-depth analysis and synthesis of these concepts is undertaken, concerns the concept of metaphor. Section 2.5 seeks therefore to introduce the concept of metaphor and the value its use can bring.

2.5 Metaphor

The word 'metaphor' derives from the Greek word 'metapherein' where meaning is carried over, or transferred from one concept to another (www.etymonline.com). A metaphor then can be used to show that two things share certain qualities, whether to make a description more powerful, for example: "*she has a heart of stone*", or to provide new insight into a concept, for example: "*a game of football used as a metaphor for the competitive struggle of life*" (www.oup.com). It is this latter use which is explored in this study, with jazz positioned as a metaphor for innovation in business.

Metaphors offer a way of "*making the strange familiar, summarizing insights, and representing related ideas*" (Henry, 2001a, p.71) with much potential value from the ability of metaphors "*to express patterns that would be hard to articulate in other ways*" (ibid., p.65).

The philosopher, Ricoeur, believes language can assert multiple meanings and suggests that the use of symbolic features such as allegory, metaphor, symbol, myth and analogy within speech, can play a valuable role in our interpretation of the world. In *The Rule of Metaphor* (1978) he discusses the value of metaphors as forcing us to do the work of thinking, by presenting a new idea in a new way. This perspective is echoed by Peters & Waterman who describe a benefit of metaphors as the way they “open up rich new veins for thinking” (1982, p.101), valuable in the way they “permit us to view a subject matter... in an entirely new and fresh perspective” (Hunt & Menon, 1995, p.83).

Whilst suggested by some as “a notoriously tricky tool of instruction” (Kao, 1996, p.38), metaphor is advocated as an important instrument of knowledge-building (Cunha et al, 1999) and a powerful way to enhance understanding (Hatch, 1998).

One way by which understanding or rather knowledge can be built or created is through the mobilization and conversion of tacit knowledge (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Tacit knowledge is a concept which will be further explored later in this chapter however it relates in essence to knowledge which may be personal, context-specific and difficult to formalise or communicate (ibid.). Tacit knowledge might relate to subjective insights, intuitions or ‘know-how’ and in this study could relate to the jazz musicians’ ability to create music, insight into which this study is interested.

Language, it is suggested, can often be inadequate, inconsistent and insufficient for articulating tacit knowledge (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995, p.70). In *Social Change and History*, Nisbet proposes however that much of what might be considered tacit knowledge “is expressible – in so far as it is expressible at all – in metaphor” (1969, p.5).

The use of metaphor then it is suggested can potentially help the elicitation of tacit knowledge, providing a communication mechanism for novel interpretation and the development of more intuitive-style understanding.

Whilst the jazz metaphor and the insight it may be able to bring to understanding innovation in small businesses is specifically being explored in this study, it is suggested that in fact no single metaphor can encompass the complexity that is business (Berniker, 1998). The jazz metaphor specifically, is however considered by many to add dimensional value (Hatch, 1989; Kao, 1986) and is asserted as making an imaginative contribution in the field of business and organisation (Hatch, 1999).

Having provided a discussion of the four key concepts within this study, namely innovation; small business; jazz and metaphor, the author will now move on to offer a more integrated discussion of the concepts. The author will seek to integrate and synthesise them, offering to the reader a rich and detailed exploration of jazz and its appropriateness as a metaphor for innovation in small firms, based upon discussion in the literature.

2.6 Jazz as a Metaphor for Innovation

The purpose of this section of the paper then is to draw together literature on the four interest areas of innovation, small business, jazz and metaphor and to synthesise and contextualise these for the focus of this study.

Whilst still an emergent field of literature, there are a number of authors with research and comment on the jazz metaphor and its value and relevance to business studies. There is also a significant body of literature on innovation and small business and, to a lesser extent, on jazz and these sources provide useful input to this literature review.

Notable in the literature on the jazz metaphor and its application to business is the symposium 'Jazz as a Metaphor for Organizing in the 21st Century' held at the 1995 Academy of Management National Conference in Vancouver and represented by a subsequent special issue of *Organizational Science* in October 1998 (Holbrook, 2003). Contributions at this symposium and to the subsequent publication, it is suggested "*drive home the fruitfulness and fertility of the jazz metaphor as a way of capturing relevant organisational phenomena*" (Holbrook, 2003, p.5).

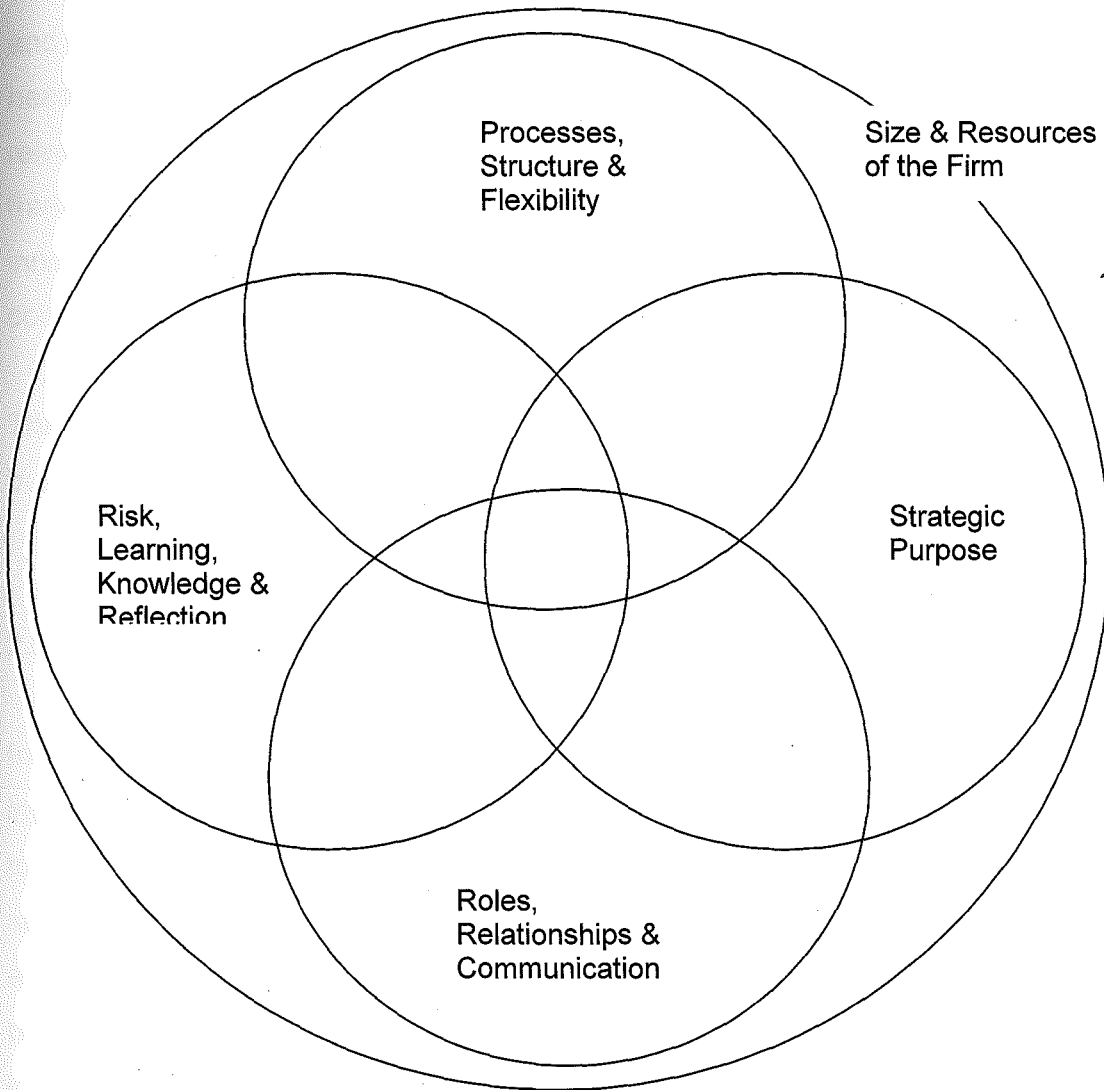
'If you look at the list of characteristics that are associated with the 21st Century organisation, you find concepts like flexible, adaptable, responsive to the environment, loose boundaries, minimal hierarchy. When you look at the list for a second, if you're interested in jazz, you recognize that all of those ideas could as easily be associated with a jazz band as a 21st Century organisation. And so the idea of comparing these worlds seems like a sensible one.'

(Hatch, 1998, p.557).

A considerable proportion of the literature on the jazz metaphor focuses specifically on the concept of improvisation. A good metaphor analysis asserts, however, that if two things are related in one way, they will be related in other ways as well. The remainder of this chapter therefore discusses a number of other concepts drawn from the literature on innovation and/or jazz, reflecting Hatch's assertion that "*when we use a metaphor, we feel that it's most responsible, necessary even, to push that metaphor to its fullest*" (1998, p.557).

In order to structure this discussion and informed by the literature review the author offers a new grouping of the variables impacting organisational innovativeness, groupings which will be useful for the examination of the jazz metaphor and its appropriateness for exploring business innovation. The author has identified five key groupings and captured these in the 'Organisational Innovativeness Flower' model shown in figure 2.6.

Figure 2.6 Organisational Innovativeness Flower



Source: author's own

Issues around the size and resources of the innovating firm have been introduced as part of the author's discussion of innovation in small firms in section 2.3.2. These issues will be further explored as part of the discussions which follow.

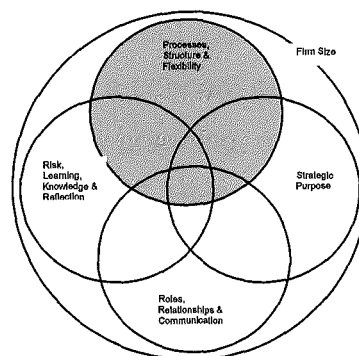
The remainder of this section of the chapter will however be structured around the four 'petals' shown in figure 2.6, namely (1) processes, structure and flexibility, (2) risk, learning, knowledge and reflection, (3) roles, relationships and communication, and (4) strategic purpose. These 'petals' provide the headings for the author's continued exploration of the jazz metaphor and its relevance to innovation. It is the intention of this model to provide a useful framework for presenting and discussing the relationships between jazz and innovation, providing a structure to the discussion which should be logical, coherent and helpful.

This discussion opens with an exploration of the issues in jazz and in business innovation around process, structure and flexibility.

2.6.1 Processes, Structure & Flexibility

In much of the literature reviewed for this study, the improvisational nature of jazz provides a key focus to discussion of the jazz metaphor. Improvisation is seen as a defining characteristic of jazz music and as such is an important feature to explore in this

paper. As a technique concerned with challenge, change and elaboration, an exploration of the improvisation concept provides a useful foundation to the discussion around process, structure and flexibility both in jazz and business innovation.



Improvisation

The word 'improvisation' is rooted in the word 'proviso', meaning, to make a stipulation before hand; to provide for something in advance; to do something that is premeditated (Weick, 1998). By adding the 'im' prefix, 'improvise' is created, meaning the opposite of proviso, as such concerned with the unforeseen, working without prior stipulation and with the unexpected.

The concept and skill of improvisation is a subject explored in not only jazz-focussed literature, but its presence is also notable in organisational literature, with application made to strategy (Crossan et al, 1996); organisational learning (Crossan & Sorrenti, 1997), organising and risk (Weick, 1998) and new product development (Kamoche & Cunha, 2001). While managers' interest in improvisation is suggested to have been increasing, research into this phenomenon is suggested still to be in its early stages, with knowledge on improvisation "*still fragmented*" and "*conceptual frameworks and empirical studies scarce*" (Vera & Crossan, 2005, p.727).

Vera & Crossan define improvisation as "*the spontaneous and creative process of attempting to achieve an objective in a new way*" (2005, p.733). With reference to the work of Schuller (1968), Weick offers a definition of the act of improvising, in association with jazz, as "*composing extemporaneously*" or "*on the spur of the moment*" (Weick 1998, p.544). The concept applied to business then, Cunha et al (1999) suggest, would describe a concept of unfolding action, action without the benefit of elaborate prior planning, or the "*convergence between conception and execution*" (Moorman & Miner, 1998, p.1) such that they occur simultaneously.

Not all action in business is, or can be, planned for. This is suggested to be particularly the case in small firms where, due to limited resources, the owner-manager typically has lack of time for long-term thinking and planning (Carter & Jones-Evans, 2000, p.357). The concept of unfolding action (Kamoche & Cunha, 2001) therefore seems just as relevant in the business context as in the jazz band. Indeed, with the uncertainty and rapidly changing environments faced by businesses today "*detailed planning may be a waste of time and resources...dangerous...perilous*" (Chelariu et al, 2002, p.146).

Much action in business is however planned. Innovative action, for example, Cunha et al (1999, p.305) suggest *"may be planned and scheduled so that all the necessary resources are in place"*. Innovation in this way then can be seen to be the result of planning, or systematic approaches, as well as potentially the result of more improvisational approaches.

Vera & Crossan (2005) offer a description of improvisation as a creative process that, whilst attempting to develop something new, does not always achieve such an outcome. As a spontaneous process of creation its outcomes, they suggest, are unpredictable and as such improvisation itself cannot be tied to success, in the same way however that planning is not necessarily associated with success.

Whilst it might be proposed therefore that *"improvisation per se is not necessarily associated with innovative outcomes"* it does offer an approach or process of creation, of interest in relation to how teams *"attempt to orient themselves to, and take action in, situations or events that are complex, ambiguous and ill defined"* (Drazin et al, 1999, p.287). Whilst an interesting approach therefore for any business operating in times of turbulence and uncertainty, firms tend to be concerned more with the outcome of any creative process than in the process itself (Vera & Crossan, 2005). Improvisation therefore may be of interest in so far as it enables the people within an organisation to generate creative, innovative responses in situations of time pressure, uncertainty, ambiguity and change; *"a skill and a tool that complements planning efforts"* (2005, p.736).

The extemporaneous quality of jazz improvisation, Crossan and Sorrenti combine with the concept of intuition to offer a description of improvisation as *"intuition guiding action in a spontaneous way"* (1996, p.1). However, Miner et al (1996) stress the deliberateness of improvisation in the jazz context. Successful improvisation, they suggest, is in fact the result of intentional efforts and whilst elaborate prior planning for the precise response may not have taken place, much other preparation and planning will have taken place

by way of developing the skills, experience and repertoire to be able to improvise (Miner et al, 1996, Vera & Crossan, 2005). The decision to improvise can therefore take place at both the strategic and operational levels, for improvisational jazz they argue is in fact the result of intentional efforts, even if delivered in a spontaneous manner.

The improvisational aspect of jazz in particular is suggested to have *"important lessons for innovative action in the organisational context"* (Kamoche & Cunha, 2001, p.734). The ambiguity, high turbulence and unprecedented change that characterise business today, it is suggested, makes the jazz metaphor very applicable (Barrett, 1998) and the concept of improvisation particularly useful. The value offered by the metaphor to business today, is also advocated by Kao (1996 p.35):

"There's no time for business managers to look for solutions in the archives of corporate sheet music. Today's highly competitive business world puts a premium on the skill of improvisation. All the world's a jazz club."

Ilinitch et al (1998) suggest that *"the period of disorder and chaos"* in organisational contexts is predicted to not only continue but become magnified. They suggest that *"as yet, we know very little about creating organisations and strategies which institutionalise capabilities for change"* (1998, p.xxxii). Improvisation, they go on to suggest, could be one such way for developing such capability for change.

Improvisation is suggested then as one such technique for creating change and innovation. Exploring the concept in more depth, we come across the idea presented by Konitz (in Weick, 1998) of a continuum of improvisation, based upon varying levels of imagination and concentration. At one end, Konitz suggests, lies interpretation, with only minor liberties taken with a melody. Increasing levels of imagination, modification and re-phrasing, lead through embellishment and variation, to improvisation at the other end of the scale.

Weick suggests that when musicians improvise they “*radically alter portions of the melody*” and that to improvise is to engage in more than paraphrase, ornamentation or modification (Weick, 1998, p.545).

Degrees of Change

The interpretation offered by Berliner (1994) proposes that, although varying in degrees of imagination and change, all positions on the continuum are, in effect, evident in improvisational jazz performance. Consideration of the concept of improvisation Berliner suggests should therefore encapsulate all gradients, in accordance with what Weick has termed ‘full spectrum improvisation’ (Weick, 1998).

This broader definition relates well to the concept of innovation, with similar variation in the degree of change and originality, expressed for example in ‘Dimensions of Innovation Space’ model developed by Tidd et al and captured in figure 2.3. Weick also, more explicitly, offers support for this parallel, suggesting “*the spectrum from interpretation to improvisation mirrors the spectrum from incremental to transformational change*” (Weick, 1998, p.546).

Kirton’s Adaption-Innovation theory explores innovation using this concept of a continuum also. Kirton bases his theory in this field upon a continuum of change, from adaption to innovation, reflecting the amount of structure and consensually agreed structure from which individuals are comfortable acting. Adaptors, he suggests, prefer more structure and, drawing on the work of Drucker (1969) describes them as having a preference for ‘doing things better’. Innovators, in contrast, he describes as having a preference for less structure and for ‘doing things differently’.

Kirton reflects on the need for organisations to have a balance of both approaches. The more innovative or ‘breakthrough’ approaches he suggests are needed in any organisation to survive. He also however suggests that an adaptive orientation is also important if an organisation is to guard against the inherent and potentially unacceptable risks associated with drastic change.

With reference to the work of Nystrom (1979), Kirton also advocates adaptive styles for short-term problem-solving as well as for many elements of longer, larger-scale change (1994).

Although Weick's model of 'full spectrum improvisation' identifies with improvisation as a continuum of change, it is with the more radical alterations that he most strongly associates the concept. Improvisation he suggests requires more than just paraphrase, ornamentation or modification (Weick, 1998). This perspective is very much echoed in the literature on innovation, where again it is to some extent recognised as a concept reflecting a continuum of change. It is however with the more radical change that 'innovation' as a concept is also more readily associated (Weick, Kirton, Burns).

"Simply introducing a new product of service that has customers willing to buy it, is not necessarily innovation. Innovations have to break the mould of how things are done."

Burns, 2001, p.49

Whilst innovations then can vary in scale, nature, degree of novelty and so on, so can innovating organisations (Tidd et al, 2001, p.40). Small firms are typically less structured and formalised than larger organisations and as such one might expect such freedom to give rise to more radical innovations. Burns reports on a study by Pavitt, Robinson & Townsend (1987) which indeed concluded that small firms are more likely to introduce fundamentally new innovations than large firms (2001). Burns contrasts this with an opposing view that in fact few small firms introduce really new products, rather products of marginal difference to their competition.

Whether considered radical or incremental, an innovation is likely to draw inspiration from something. This is characteristic not only in business innovation but also in our jazz paradigm. Improvisational jazz, albeit where musicians apparently "*make up the music as they are playing*" (www.oup.com) actually makes significant use of memory, past experience and precomposed

melodies. Much of today's jazz music is based, to some extent, on annotated compositions.

This is not to say that a jazz musician would simply play one of these compositions without at least some interpretation of it. Improvisation, of whatever degree, does very much lie at the heart of jazz and indeed *"no jazz musician worth his salt remains true to the original score"* (Kamoche & Cunha, 2001, p.744). They will however draw upon this original material to provide the structure around which to improvise. To quote bassist Charles Mingus, inspiration and improvisation have to be based on something *"You can't improvise on nothin'. You gotta have somethin'"* (Barrett & Peplowski, 1998, p.558).

Structure and Flexibility

Moving beyond then the intuitive, extemporaneous perspective of improvisation offered in this paper so far, Weick (1998) highlights a quality to improvisation which draws more significantly upon structure and order. In doing so he provides reference to an alternative description of improvisation offered from Berliner, namely as *"flexible treatment of pre-planned material"* (1994, p.400). Effective improvisation then, Weick suggests, is based on a depth of experience and degree of discipline, a 'reality' which it is suggested is often *"camouflaged by the spontaneity of the performance"* (Meyer et al., 1998, p.541).

Reference may be made in jazz then to precomposed materials, pre-rehearsed materials, prior performances, and / or musical structures (Hatch, 1998). This attribute clearly has parallels with innovation in business, where many innovations are also based on something pre-existing, particularly so where the resultant innovations are, in effect, incremental changes, adaptations or improvements (Kirton, 1994).

It is, paradoxically, through reference to such pre-existing material and 'musico-structures' (Kamoche & Cunha, 2001) that jazz is able to enjoy its creative freedom (Berniker, 1998). Musicians interpret structures in jazz as loosely as possible, maximising ambiguity and potential for interpretation (Hatch, 1999). In this way, structure is seen to support, rather than specify. By focussing on the freedom rather than the structures, jazz musicians use the empty spaces as opportunities to be creative, to improvise and innovate (ibid).

Kamoche & Cunha (2001) assert that parallels can usefully be drawn between the structure and flexibility in jazz, and the contradicting demands of control and creativity in business. In business, structures, such as rules and regulations are often cited as constraints to creativity and innovation. Weick proposes that it is actually the presence of too little structure or the wrong kind of structure in organisations that causes such difficulties for innovation (in Kamoche & Cunha, 2001). Structure, in the form of clearly specified goals, can in reality enhance creativity and innovation in business (Amabile, in Henry, 2001b, p.6). A stipulated vision or goal, but with autonomy around the process by which to achieve it, Amabile suggests, can foster creativity and also motivation and ownership.

Having undertaken a discussion of improvisation then and its relevance as a concept to innovation in business, it is also important, as advocated by Miner et al, that care is taken in this presentation to avoid "*delimitating the concept in ways that restrict it to success*" (2001, p.329). Art metaphors, used as a means for exploring improvisation and innovation, Vera & Crossan suggest have tended to highlight the positive side of improvisation as aesthetic and innovative, without fully examining the associated challenges (2005).

Miner et al (2001) suggest that improvisation, indeed, is not always successful and can be unskilled and cause harm. Lewin (1998) similarly offers a view that improvisation in business can be undesirable. With reference to March & Simon (1958) he describes improvisation as: "*an organisation dysfunction: an*

unintended outcome” and with reference to MacKenzie (1986) as “an *organisational design failure*” (Lewin, 1998, p.539).

Cunha et al (1999) similarly seek to balance the view of improvisation, highlighting some of the negative consequences which may be associated with the concept. “*The benefits improvisation yields – better organisational performance and personal feelings of transcendence (Eisenberg, 1990) – also have a flip side populated with personal anxiety and ever-lurking unintended organisational consequences*” (1998, p.317).

Where the concept of improvisation is however applied to the business context, as to whether jazz is the most effective metaphor for introducing this concept is another question. Crossan, whilst advocating the value of the improvisational model to business, organisation and innovation, indeed questions whether jazz is the best medium for such exploration. The skills involved in jazz improvisation, Crossan suggests, are inaccessible to many, particularly those less familiar with music. This view could therefore raise concern that the improvisational element, when offered through the jazz metaphor, may be seen as distant to a business audience.

Mirvis (1998) cites examples of other fields where improvisation can be just as essential as in jazz, such as sport; comedy; theatre (Crossan, 1998, Vera & Crossan, 2004, 2005); military; psychotherapy and play. The field of theatre, in particular, is advocated by Crossan as a medium for exploring improvisation: “*the skills of listening, communication and story-telling are available to everyone, making improvisation in theatrical terms more than a metaphor*” (1998, p.594).

To conclude on improvisation then, it is clear that there is a diversity of views regarding its benefits, its relevance to business and the medium through which it can best be explored. In industries characterised by high turbulence, an improvisational approach can be seen to offer much possibility to business (Holbrook, 2003), as can it “*in situations demanding creativity and flexibility, where improvisation is a benefit to performance*” (Hatch, 1999, p.96).

Whilst organisational improvisation is asserted by some authors as currently being 'a-typical' (Hutt et al, 1988), others propose it, rather, to be prevalent in organisational life (Vera & Crossan, 2005). Barrett (1998) draws upon examples of improvisation in organisations, including initiation of action without plans, deviations from plans and the discovery of new routines, to propose that "*to pretend improvisation is not happening in organizations is not to understand the nature of improvisation*" (1998, p.617). Indeed, the environmental conditions of uncertainty, complexity and dynamism suggest the improvisational approach as having the potential to become the norm in business (Stacy, 1996).

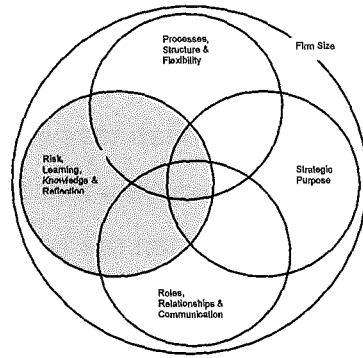
Such conditions require organisations to be dynamic, flexible and creative. A key component for encouraging such creativity, Amabile suggests, comes from granting freedom, "*giving people autonomy concerning the means – that is, concerning process – but not necessarily the ends*" (in Henry, 2001b, p.4). Such description presents clear parallels with jazz improvisation where indeed there is much freedom for creativity.

Creativity, the challenging and changing of things and the uncertainty of how things will turn out however brings with it risk. Indeed, risk is a key concept associated with change and innovation and so this paper will now move on to a discussion of risk, attitude to failure and learning, in both the jazz and business contexts.

2.6.2 Risk, Learning, Knowledge & Reflection

Being creative, breaking with habit and tradition, trying new things, innovating, all of these involve an element of risk - risk of making mistakes, risk of failing. So closely associated are these concepts that, in the words of Albert Einstein, "Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new."

(<http://www.quoteworld.org>)



Risk and Uncertainty

In jazz, such risks might relate to playing a 'wrong' note; in business perhaps to launching an unsuccessful new product. Acceptance of risk is an important behaviour both for individual entrepreneurs (Deakins & Freel, 2003) and for innovative firms. "Innovation is inherently uncertain and will inevitably involve failures as well as successes" (Tidd et al, 2001, p.317) and Kamoche & Cunha (2001) identify innovative organisations as those who characteristically treat mistakes as opportunities for organisational learning (Harryson, 1997) and reward failure from risk-taking (Sasaki, 1991).

Dealing with risk and the potential for, if not the reality of failure, is an important attribute of entrepreneurs and innovators (Deakins & Freel, 2003). Attitude toward and tolerance of failure, it is suggested, is very much dependent upon the culture and environment within which an individual or organisation is operating. Ekvall (1997) suggests that it is indeed those cultures that make risk taking and failure less threatening and dangerous, which most effectively promote creative behaviour and innovation (in Henry & Mayle, 2002). Peters & Waterman (1982, p.223) echo this view, suggesting "a special attribute of the success-orientated, positive and innovating environment is a substantial tolerance for failure".

Being comfortable then with risk is important for innovation, and looking at the jazz metaphor reviewed in this study, it is a quality which indeed can be seen to characterize jazz. The experimental nature of jazz improvisation is inherently risk taking. Apparent mistakes in jazz are however defined by their context (Hatch, 1999), and are rather considered "*points of creative departure*" (Barrett, 1998, p.610). In jazz, 'mistakes' or 'wrong' notes are not recognised as such; "*only notes unexpected within the underlying harmonic grammar*" (Kao, 1996, p.38).

Many people are however risk averse and strive to avoid or insure against them (Burns, 2001). Indeed, given the potential disruption, risk and cost associated with innovation and change, Tidd et al suggest "*it is not surprising that individuals and organisations develop many cognitive, behavioural and structural ways of reinforcing the status quo*" (2001, p.315). Business itself can be an inherently risky activity and in a small firm the amount of uncertainty can be particularly high: their markets more uncertain; their customer base more limited; and their influence on price much more restricted (Burns, 2001). Further commentary by Burns, of interest to this study, suggests that additional factors of uncertainty can relate to the aspirations and motivations of the owner-manager, making decision making in small businesses often very short-term and incremental with strategies, in effect, evolving on a step-by-step basis (ibid). This approach has clear similarities to the improvisational nature of jazz, discussed earlier in this chapter.

Tolerance of Mistakes

Uncertainty, risks and change can lead to mistakes and mistakes in business can be expensive. Barrett (1998) recognises that in some cases 'high reliability organisations' can be necessarily intolerant of errors (in Kamoche & Cunha, 2001). Such companies must, however, be cautious not to fall into what Levit and March (in Barrett, 1998) call the 'competency trap' with the temptation being to repeat what has worked before rather than risk failure with something new. "*Nowadays, whatever the risks of creativity, they're nothing compared to the risks of stagnation*" (Kao, 1996, p.121).

Risk then is a necessary part of creativity and innovation, and whilst the risk of failure or making mistakes may be seen as undesirable in many situations, mistakes in themselves can actually have a number of positive outcomes. Contextualising a mistake can enable it to be seen in a different light and there are indeed well known examples of apparent mistakes that, by different application, have been turned into notable commercial successes, 3M's 'Post-it Note' one such oft-cited example. 3M indeed prides itself on its continued acceptance of failure, as a normal part of running a business (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

Mistakes and failure can also represent a powerful "*opportunity for learning and development*" (Tidd et al, 2001, p.317) and a good entrepreneur will indeed regard a mistake as an opportunity to learn (Wickham, 2001). These ideas are reflected in the jazz literature, where risk-taking and opportunistic attitudes are actively encouraged, during improvisational play in particular. In jazz 'mistakes' are encouraged however not just as opportunities to learn not to repeat the 'mistake' but as creative diversions or moments. With the exception of companies such as 3M who so openly accept failure, most businesses, even those who see mistakes as opportunities to learn, do so with the motivation of learning so as not to make that mistake again. The focus in business can therefore be on recognizing why problems or mistakes occur such that processes can be put in place to ensure the problem does not happen again or that the firm is able to deal with it (Deakins & Freel, 2003).

Whether seeking to analyse 'mistakes' in order to celebrate their creativity or in order to seek to reduce the likelihood of a repeat, the learning associated in either case is an important feature. An ability to learn, at both an individual and organisational level is of utmost importance to growth and success (Peters & Waterman, 1982). Indeed, such capability to learn is positioned as one of the most important capabilities of a firm (Tidd et al, 2001, p.137) and this view is echoed by Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric: "*An organization's ability to learn, and translate that learning into action rapidly, is the ultimate competitive advantage*" (<http://www.brainyquote.com>).

Openness to Learning

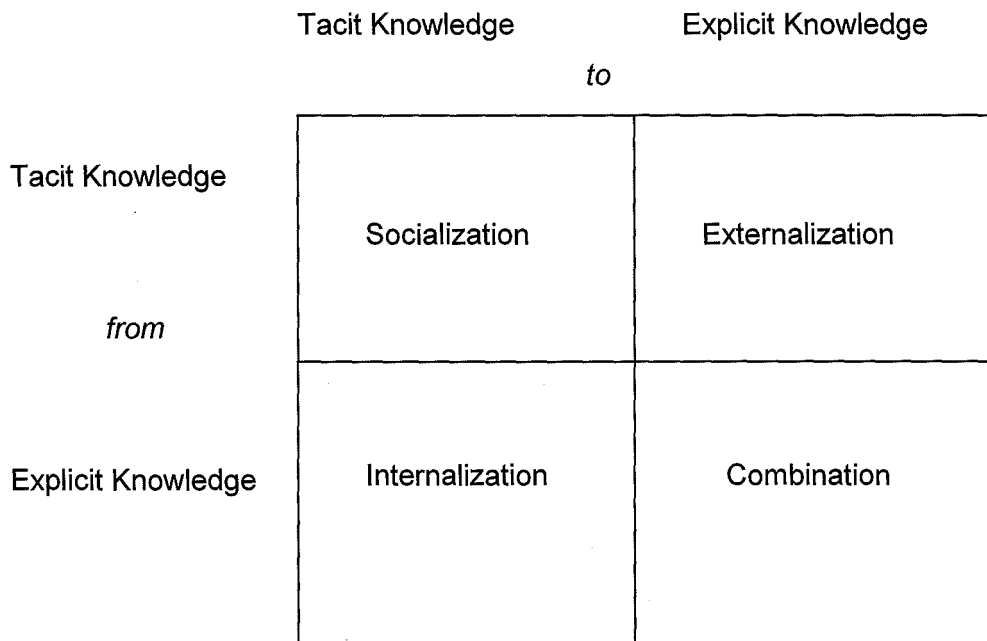
In a small firm, innovativeness implies a willingness of the owner to learn (Verhees & Meulenberg, 2004). In order to learn, or be a 'learning organisation' (Argyris & Schon, 1978, Senge, 1990), Claxton suggests organisations need to 'risk the four C's: the desire to be Consistent, Comfortable, Confident and Competent' (in Crossan, 1998, p.597). The act of improvisation, Crossan suggests, does indeed put these four C's at risk. Using improvisational jazz as a lens then for exploring innovation, creativity and learning seems of relevance and value.

The jazz band is indeed positioned by Barrett (1998, p.605) as "*an organisation designed for maximum learning and innovation*" characterised, he suggests, by its deliberate disruption of habituated behaviour patterns, embracing of errors and learning approach.

Learning is an important concept for this study, both for exploration in the contexts of the jazz band and the business organisation, but also in relation to the primary research which explored learning about innovation in jazz-based workshops. These workshops sought to engage delegates in a learning experience with the jazz musicians, learning taking place through demonstration, discussion, application and reflection. The act of exploring behaviour, attitude, mindset and action with the jazz musicians in this way, could be seen as a mechanism for transferring knowledge from the musicians to the workshop participants, in effect an act of 'knowledge conversion' (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

To explore the concept of knowledge a little further here, it is useful to refer to the work of Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) who notably suggest there to be four modes of knowledge conversion, illustrated in figure 2.7.

Figure 2.7 Four Modes of Knowledge Conversion



Source: Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995, p.62

Whilst identifying four modes of knowledge conversion, the key to knowledge creation, Nonaka & Takeuchi propose, lies in the mobilization and conversion of tacit knowledge. Tacit knowledge they describe as subjective, intuitive, not easily visible or expressible and highly personal. In the workshops, the articulation of tacit knowledge by the jazz musicians into explicit concepts in effect 'externalizes' their knowledge, making the concepts more accessible to the business audience.

Language is used to try to articulate tacit knowledge, though it can often be inadequate, inconsistent and insufficient (Nonaka & Takeuchi, in Henry, 2001b, p.70). In 'Social Change and History' (1969, p.5) Nisbet proposes that "much of what Michael Polanyi has called 'tacit knowledge' is expressible – in so far as it is expressible at all – in metaphor". The use of metaphor then, it is suggested, enables the elicitation of tacit knowledge, providing a communication mechanism for expression, aiding novel interpretation and intuitive understanding.

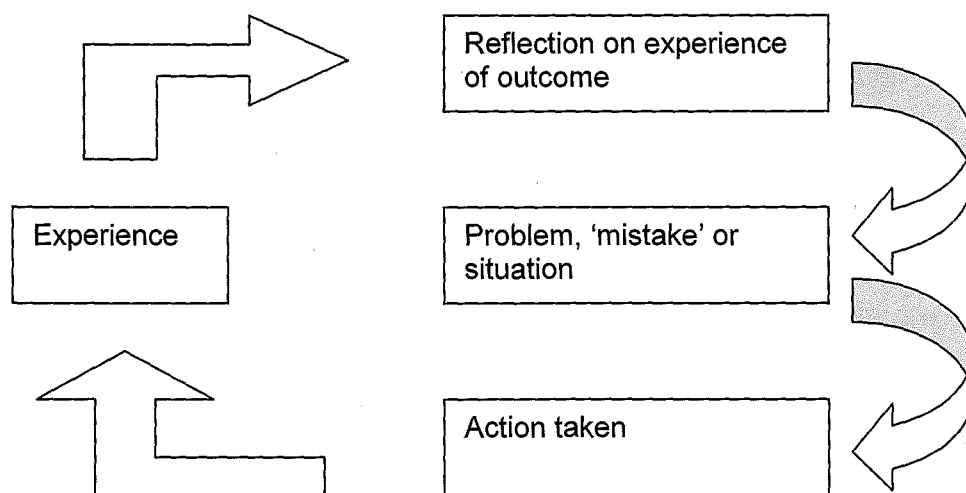
Reflection

Another concept within the subject of knowledge and learning, useful to draw upon in this study, is that of reflection and notably double-loop learning. These are useful concepts here due to their connection to learning from experience – something which jazz musicians must do, but also which the workshop participants must do, reflecting on both what the musicians are doing and communicating but also relating the ideas to the context of their work.

Innovation, Tidd et al suggest, can be presented as “a learning cycle, involving a process of experiment, experience, reflection and consolidation” (2001, p.339). Learning in innovation they propose requires strong feedback between ‘decisions and their implementation’ or between ‘analysis and action’.

This element of feedback is a key characteristic of double-loop learning, in effect, a process which involves examining an experience and reflecting upon it so as to learn from it (Deakins & Freel, 2003). Figure 2.8 seeks to diagrammatically capture this process:

Figure 2.8 Double-loop Learning



Source: Adapted from Deakins & Freel, 2003, p.22

As has been discussed, an ability to learn is crucial to success, both at an individual and organisational level. It is a characteristic of both successful and innovative organisations but also jazz bands. It is a concept of importance therefore to this study, both in its review of the jazz metaphor, but also in the following chapters which explore the primary research and indeed whether the jazz metaphor in anyway affects learning about innovation, perceptions and attitudes toward it.

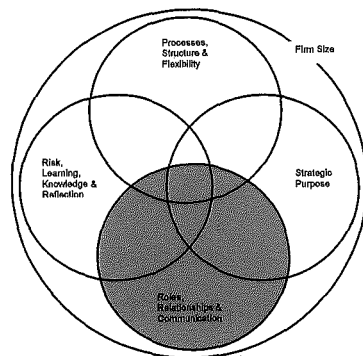
Deakins & Freel (2003, p.22) reiterate the importance of learning, reinforcing that individuals must be able *“to learn from decisions, from mistakes, from experience and from their networks”*. In this articulation, Deakins & Freel introduce another concept of interest to this study, namely networks. This paper will move on now to explore this concept further, along with a review of the influence on innovation of individuals, teamwork, relationships and communication.

2.6.3 Roles, Relationships & Communication

A jazz band is in effect a collective collaboration of individual musicians. Its best music is not created from one person – the leader – standing up and dictating what everybody else should do (Peplowski, 1998). To be effective and successful

the band must rather adopt a collaborative approach to its creation of music, members working together, supporting one another, sharing ideas.

The jazz band might itself be viewed as a small organisation. A feature of many jazz bands and one which may distinguish it from other types of business organisation might however be the fluidity of its membership. Musicians are often brought together to form a band for a specific opportunity or occasion. Following performance the musicians may ‘disband’ potentially



forming in a different way for another occasion, perhaps changing the band's size, style or membership.

Teamwork

The concept of team make-up along with that of teamwork, are of interest both within the context of a jazz band and that of a business organisation. Notable research in the field of teamwork and its relationship with creativity specifically, has been undertaken by Amabile. She suggests that diversity of perspectives and backgrounds within a team can be of much value. In the interests of creativity she advocates the careful design of teams, proposing that bringing people together with differing expertise and creative thinking skills, can enable ideas to "*combine and combust in exciting and useful ways*" (in Henry, 2001b, p.7).

Tidd et al advocate that successful innovation too is increasingly about teamwork and the creative combination of different disciplines and perspectives. They report on experiments which indicate that groups have more to offer than individuals in terms of fluency of idea generation and in flexibility of solutions developed, and reinforce the value of both diversity and teamwork, suggesting indeed that "*innovation is primarily about combining different perspectives in solving problems*" (2001, p.334).

The view that diversity benefits creativity and innovation is further supported by Hargadon & Sutton (in Harvard, 2001). Here they propose that companies that specialise in innovation hire people with varied skills, interests and backgrounds. This has clear parallels with the jazz band and its dynamic and evolving membership.

With regard then to the roles within these teams, Zaltman et al (1973, p.89) offer a useful discussion of views on this and implications for innovation and change. Formalised roles, Havelock (1970) suggests, function to maintain the status quo, with Hage and Aiken (1970) proposing an inverse relationship

between the extent of formalisation of roles or jobs within an organisation and the rate of innovation.

Organisational Structure & Leadership

Hierarchical differences are also proposed by Burns & Stalker (1961) as sources of resistance to change (in Zaltman et al, 1973, p89) and, in this sense, small firms are suggested to be at an advantage for change and innovation as they tend to be less hierarchical and less bureaucratic. The flatter structures in small firms are seen as beneficial in this context, generating behavioural advantages (Deakins & Freel, 2003) around flexibility and adaptability. Small firm owner-managers are however also described in the literature as typically autocratic in their management style and their reluctant to delegate in everyday decision-making (Curran et al, 1986b) can limit involvement and engagement.

Hierarchy, then, is a characteristic which can be seen to hinder innovation, particularly so, Helgesen suggests, in 'top-down' organisations that divide their labour between 'thinking' and 'doing' (1995). Such a division, she argues, destroys the value, even the possibility of feedback and therefore proposes that *"the division of conception and execution is inappropriate for organizations trying to respond to fast-changing events; it is inflexible, almost by definition"* (1995, p.26).

This commentary upon hierarchy and flexibility has clear links to the jazz band. As an organisation with such strong roots in improvisation, adaptability, flexibility and change, a structure that allows for the convergence of conception and execution and importantly feedback and learning, is essential. An effective jazz band is typically characterised by a flat organisational structure and minimal role hierarchy (Hatch, 1998). All individuals in the band will work together, supporting one another, sharing ideas and notably sharing leadership too (Peplowski, 1998).

Such capacity to switch between the roles of leading and supporting, Hatch (1999) describes as a skill to be associated with successful teamwork and collaboration. Indeed, given the extent of change faced by businesses today, it is a requirement that not just leaders, but people at all levels in an organisation, are able to think, plan, innovate and process information (Barrett, 1998). Flexible leadership, supportive teamwork and collective collaboration then are essential elements of success, both for the business and the jazz organisation.

This flexible view of leadership, described in the context of the jazz band, can be seen as having parallels to the concept of 'distributed leadership' discussed in some of the more contemporary studies on leadership (Copland, 2003, Timperley, 2005, Rickards & Moger, 2006). In accordance with this concept, the boundary between leaders and followers is blurred, the role taken by any individual, dependent upon the task to be undertaken and the individual's perceived skills and abilities.

The concept also proposes that there is no centre of decision-making, but that all individuals with knowledge and interest in a task are able to input to a task and lead on occasion. In conditions of uncertainty and turbulence, leaders can be more effective in enabling transformational change by allowing others to have ownership and a role in creating that change (Rickards & Moger, 2006). Parallels with this concept can be seen looking at the jazz band, as although characterised by apparently minimal role hierarchy, a "*hierarchy of skill and ability*" is proposed to exist (Hatch, 1998, p.567) with all players able to taking a leading role on occasion.

Building upon this discussion of hierarchy, leadership and teamwork, one further subject found in the literature of value to mention here, relates to the broader concept of organisational structure and the work of Henry Mintzberg in particular. Mintzberg proposed a series of archetypes to describe the structural configurations into which firms are likely to fall (1979) and his sixth configuration, that of a 'missionary' organisation (ibid, p.480), closely describes the structure observable in a jazz band.

The mission-orientated model describes an organisation characterised by its highly decentralised and simple structure, held together by trusted members with shared values and a common purpose or goal. Tidd et al offer a review of Mintzberg's archetypes and of interest to this study are the implications for innovation drawn in relation to the 'missionary' organisation (2001, p.321). Key strengths of the structure, they propose, relate to the ability of individuals to take initiatives without overt reference to others, driven by their quest for continuous improvement and confident in the pursuit of their shared goals. Weaknesses however can relate to an over-dependence upon a key visionary or leader and potential lack of control (Tidd et al, 2001).

The jazz band then can be seen to credibly fit within the organisational categories present in management literature. It shares many of the characteristics described, most notably those concerned with the concepts of teamwork, distributed leadership and mission-orientation. A further area of importance to any organisation, indeed any team, is that of communication and that forms the final focus of discussion within this section of the literature review.

Communication

Successful innovation is associated with environments characterised by information sharing, collective idea generation and extensive communication (Kamoche & Cunha, 2001). Kamoche & Cunha advocate the importance, indeed, of all media of communication and draw comparisons between the frequent discussion and emails in organisations and the regular signals and eye contact common place in jazz.

One concept characteristic of communication in jazz particularly, is that of 'jamming', discussed most notably by Kao (1996). Kao describes the concept as similar to that of having a conversation, where notes, like ideas, are able to bounce off one another: "*That sense of possibility, of spontaneous dialogue, is a crucial element in the creative culture*" (p.86). Jamming, Kao suggests, is

about “*inviting the element of fresh perception*” (ibid, p.121) and such invitation has close association with the culture already discussed as supportive of innovation.

Effective leaders recognise that they cannot solve all their organisational challenges alone, but that they must involve others, leveraging the thinking skills of other people (Basadur, 2004). The need, not to tell people what to do, but to “*engage them in the process of thinking innovatively*” (ibid, p.120) is proposed as an important behaviour for business leaders, achieving a positive motivational impact and encouraging people to think creatively. The importance of such inclusive behaviour can be seen as important in both the business and jazz band contexts.

In contrast to much communication, carried out on a one-to-one basis, the technique of ‘jamming’ involves many people communicating, simultaneously. It is a technique clearly identified in jazz, but Kao takes the concept further to apply it to the business world drawing upon an example of the development of innovative GroupWare technology which has enabled simultaneous interaction by many parties in business via networked computers. Using this technology, IBM held their first ‘WorldJam’ in 2001 and in doing so enabled the simultaneous offering of solutions to company-wide problems, from employees around the globe. This jamming-style of communication then has relevance to business as well as jazz and offers another example of the value that the jazz metaphor can bring to exploring innovation in business.

Whilst communication, then, is widely associated with effective innovation, there is some disagreement in the literature as to the extent and effectiveness of communication in small firms. Scott and Rainnie reflect upon a widely held view that relations in small firms tend to be harmonious, based in part, on their ease of communication (in Stanworth et al, 1982). Curran et al (1986a) suggest there could, indeed, be greater *opportunity* for face-to-face communication and negotiation in small firms but, in referencing a report undertaken by The Commission on Industrial Relations, challenge the extent and effectiveness of actual communications (1986b). Communication in small

firms, the report suggests, tends rather to be one-way, it not being in the nature of small-firm owner-managers to consult.

Having outlined many of the concepts related then to a discussion of roles, relationships and communication in jazz and in business, the final part of the author's literature review relates to the strategic purpose of the entities and it is this final section of the author's Organisational Innovativeness Flower which will bring the literature review and this chapter to a close.

2.6.4 Strategic Purpose

Innovation and change are key features of today's business world (Henry & Mayle, 2002) and innovation is a phenomenon closely related with economic development (Sundbo, 2001, p.21).

Given the importance then of innovation as a key driver of growth (Kim & Mauborgne, in Harvard, 2001, p.101) it is not surprising to see an objective related to innovation integrated within the strategic positioning of many successful firms.

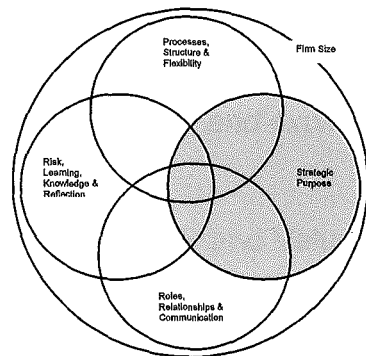
The following statements have been taken from a number of company websites and provide examples of the ways in which many organisations reference innovation and innovative behaviour within their mission, vision, strategy or values.

PHILIPS

'Innovation has always been the soul of our company...'

Taken from the description of the heritage of the Philips brand

<http://www.philips.co.uk/about/brand/>





'Innovation – Satisfying real-life needs with unique ideas'

One of the values of Kraft

http://www.kraft.com/profile/vision_values.html



'Innovative and Practical Solutions from a Diversified Technology Company.'

3M's strapline

<http://www.3m.com/>



'We're pioneers: We innovate continuously and explore new options with creativity.'

One of Zurich Financial Services' Brand Values

<http://www.zurich.co.uk/home/careers/workingforzurich/brandvalues.htm>



'The name Panasonic is synonymous with innovation, quality, performance and ease of use'.

Taken from Panasonic's company profile

<http://www.panasonic.com/support/overview.asp>

Notably, the examples given above are all large, international organisations. Small firms are, contrastingly, typically characterised as organisations with limited marketing expertise (Carter & Jones-Evans, 2000) and as being run by owner-managers with limited management training and limited time for long-term thinking (Stanworth & Curran, 1973). A formalised and articulated strategic vision, placing innovation at the forefront of the organisation's goals is perhaps therefore more a characteristic of large firms.

To be successful, any strategy for innovation must be in alignment with the organisation's wider strategy (Goffin & Mitchell, 2005) and any such strategy or vision should be clearly articulated by the leaders within that business

(Henry & Mayle, 2002). Such strategic clarity alone is not however sufficient (Tushman & O'Reilly III, 2002).

Success, Tushman & O'Reilly stress, comes not from the articulation of vision, strategy and objectives, but from their execution (ibid, p.219). Successful innovation and competitive advantage, they suggest, is as much about execution as it is about strategy. This view reinforces the point, made earlier in this paper, that innovation is not just about creativity and the generation of ideas, but about their successful implementation too.

Peters & Waterman (1982) describe innovation as a numbers game, highlighting the importance of the encouragement and generation of lots of ideas. Thomke (in Harvard, 2001) reflects upon this same issue and in doing so draws upon Thomas Edison and the approach taken which led to the invention of the electric light bulb. Edison's achievement, as with many other great inventions, was achieved through persistent creative ideas and rapid and frequent experimentation. Thomke goes on from this to propose, indeed, that "*experimentation lies at the heart of every company's ability to innovate*" (ibid, p.180).

The distinction between ideas or creativity and innovation is important to understanding and developing innovation and this distinction is something which Peters & Waterman suggest many advocates of business innovation fail to make (1982, p.206). Creativity they describe as "*thinking up new things*", innovation as "*doing new things*" (ibid). They propose there to be no shortage of creativity or creative people, the shortage they suggest is of innovators.

Peters & Waterman go so far as to describe creativity without follow-through, that is, without action, as "*a barren form of behaviour*" even "*irresponsible*" (ibid, p.207). One of the eight attributes offered by Peters & Waterman as characterizing what they describe as excellent, innovative companies is this 'bias for action', a characteristic also identifiable in jazz bands who, through improvising, act for the consumer, the audience, live.

An 'experimenting mentality' (ibid, p.136) or 'action orientation' (ibid, p.154) provides the opportunity, Peters & Waterman suggest, to move beyond creativity, to try things, perhaps to make mistakes, but above all to learn and in doing so enhance the chances of successful innovation (ibid).

Whilst a strategy for innovation, supported by a bias for creativity, experimentation and action will all positively influence the likelihood of successful business innovation, the need to understand customer needs is another consistent theme in the literature on innovation success (Tidd et al, 2001).

Peters & Waterman suggest that much innovation comes from the market and that 'excellent' companies have a closeness to their market and listen to their users, or customers (1982, p.193). Tidd et al similarly describe the development of a sense of customer requirements as essential, proposing that *"by developing a widespread sense of awareness of customers - both internal and external - quality and innovation can be significantly improved"* (2001, p.338).

Whilst a customer or market orientation is another ingredient then for successful innovation, it is a concept which aligns perhaps less comfortably, however, with the jazz band metaphor. Improvisation, a central construct of jazz, Lewin (1998) suggests does reflect such concepts as structural, market and operational flexibility. The extent to which jazz bands and musicians are truly market flexible or more broadly market-orientated, however, is challenged in key literature.

As a music form, jazz is sometimes criticised for its insularity, or in the terms used previously, its lack of market or customer focus. It has been described as somewhat elitist (Hatch & Weick, 1998) with a widely held perception that jazz musicians primarily perform for themselves (Crossan, 1998). Barrett (1998) discusses how jazz musicians themselves speak of being so absorbed in their playing that they are not consciously aware of thinking, reflecting or deciding what notes to play.

Ethnographic research by Berliner (1994) supports such a claim, finding such an absorption by jazz musicians in listening and responding to one another, that the focus available for the audience is extremely limited. An accomplished jazz musician, Peplowski, similarly proposes that a factor of primary importance to a jazz musician is one's own view of how, as a musician, you are playing. He goes on to suggest that, indeed; "*it doesn't matter what the audience thinks*" (1998, p.561).

The concept of market or customer orientation does then seem to offer some challenges to the use of the jazz metaphor in exploring innovation in a business context. Another concept worth mentioning here and one which may provide an alternative lens through which the approaches or orientations of the jazz band and innovative businesses may be reconcilable, is that of an 'innovation orientation', put forward by Carter & Jones-Evans (2000, p.360).

This approach suggests that much innovation, rather than coming from careful research into the needs of customers or assessment of the market, in fact starts with an idea or an intuitive feel for what is required. This concurs with the views of Adair (1990) on entrepreneurial activity, which suggest innovation is indeed about ideas and turning them into products or services which customers need. This innovation orientation, or "*zeal for the development of new concepts and ideas*" (Carter & Jones-Evans, 2000, p.360), as well as being apparent then in innovative business, is clearly also present in jazz, where creative and new ideas are relentlessly pursued.

2.7 Conclusion

Innovation, as has been discussed, is essentially about change (Tidd et al, 2001) and about doing things differently (Mintzberg, 1979). It is “*central to today’s business environment*” (Henry & Mayle, 2002, p.3) and essential for the survival of a business (Utterback, 1998).

Small firms are a “*vital spark in the economy*” (Barrow, 1998) and play a key role in innovation, especially of new products and processes (Peters & Waterman, 1982). Their small size brings organisational advantages associated with flexibility and a willingness to try new approaches (Carter & Jones-Evans, 2000); ease of communication and rapid decision-making (Tidd et al, 2001) and an ability to respond quickly to change (Deakins & Freel, 2003). Small firms do however also face a number of challenges to innovation, attributed primarily to their limited financial, technical and human resources as well as the owner-manager’s typical lack of time for long-term thinking (Carter & Jones-Evans, 2000) and their typically autocratic management style (Curran et al, 1986a).

A rich discussion is offered in the literature of the qualities which characterise innovative organisations with broad consensus around the importance of visionary leadership; effective team-working; extensive communication; a creative climate and a learning focus (Tidd et al, 2001, Goffin & Mitchell, 2005, Rogers, 1995). Many of these qualities can also be found in successful jazz bands. The idea of using jazz, as a means to explore innovation, intuitively makes sense and appears to offer an interesting lens through which to view the concept.

“If you look at the list of characteristics that are associated with the 21st Century organisation, you find concepts like flexible, adaptable, responsive to the environment, loose boundaries, minimal hierarchy. When you look at the list for a second, if you’re interested in jazz, you recognize that all of those ideas could as easily be associated with a jazz band as a 21st Century organisation. And so the idea of comparing these worlds seems like a sensible one.”

(Hatch, 1998, p.557)

Metaphors, in general, offer “*new veins for thinking*” (Peters & Waterman, 1982, p.101), expressing patterns that would be hard to articulate in other ways (Henry, 2001a) and in doing so enable a subject matter to be viewed from a new and fresh perspective (Fillis & Rentschler, 2005). Metaphors, it is suggested, provide a powerful way to enhance understanding (Hatch, 1998) and in this study can therefore offer an interesting mechanism through which to explore perceptions and understanding of innovation.

Consideration of the jazz metaphor focuses attention importantly on the concept of improvisation, a technique which lies at the heart of jazz and which describes a “*convergence between conception and execution*” (Moorman & Miner, 1998, p.1). This idea of ‘unfolding action’ (Kamoche & Cunha, 2001) is also of much relevance to the business world today, increasingly characterised by ambiguity, high turbulence and unprecedented levels of change (Barrett, 1998).

Sometimes disguised by the improvisational nature of jazz there is in fact a reasonable degree of structure even in this music form. Far from constraining creativity and innovation, however, such musico-structures (Kamoche & Cunha, 2001) rather allow jazz its creative freedom. The presence of some degree of structure or something pre-existing introduces the concept of full spectrum improvisation (Weick, 1998) applicable in both jazz and business and this has useful parallels with the incremental – radical innovation space, offered by Tidd et al (2001).

Any degree of change, of creativity or innovation, does however involve risk – risk of making mistakes and risk of failing. Acceptance of risk is therefore an important behaviour for innovative firms (Deakins & Freel, 2003) with the jazz metaphor able to offer fresh insight into the approach taken to mistakes in jazz. Mistakes, or in jazz “*points of creative departure*” (Barrett, 1998, p.610) rather offer opportunities for not only creativity but learning (Wickham, 2001); a learning orientation an essential capability for any firm (Peters & Waterman, 1982, Tidd et al, 2001).

Organisational structure is another theme identified in the literature, with parallels found between the minimal hierarchy and informal nature of roles within a jazz band and the qualities identified as conducive to innovation and characteristic of innovative organisations. Such qualities offer behavioural advantages around flexibility and adaptability (Deakins & Freel, 2003), enhancing the possibility and value of feedback (Helgesen, 1995) and also the rate of innovation (Hage & Aiken, 1970). A structure characterised by collaborative team-work and flexible or distributed leadership allows instead for a “*hierarchy of skills and ability*” (Hatch, 1998, p.567) effective in its enablement of a more dynamic, creative, communicative and innovative organisation.

Creativity is not synonymous with innovation and organisations need to demonstrate a ‘bias for action’ (Peters & Waterman, 1982) if good ideas are to become successfully implemented innovations. The spontaneity of live and improvisational jazz very much demonstrates not just the creativity inherent within this music form but indeed its bias for action, in effect, simultaneously composing and performing live to an audience. The closeness which a jazz band has with its audience is however questioned in the literature with notable criticism of the music form’s apparent insularity (Hatch & Weick, 1998, Crossan, 1998, Barrett, 1998). The concept of an ‘innovation orientation’ offered by Carter & Jones-Evans (2000) does however highlight the role of intuitive feeling in understanding the market and in doing so offers a way to reconcile this quality for innovation with the jazz metaphor.

Through this review it is apparent that a volume of literature exists on not just innovation but notably the jazz metaphor and its application to organisational and innovation studies. Whilst no single metaphor can fully encompass the complexity that is business (Berniker, 1989) the jazz metaphor is considered by many to add dimensional value (Hatch, 1989; Kao, 1986) asserted as making an imaginative contribution in the field of business and organisation (Hatch, 1999) and upheld as a fruitful and fertile way of capturing organisational phenomena (Holbrook, 2003). The literature review has indeed

been effective in identifying a number of key concepts of applicability to business innovation and / or jazz and these provide valuable material for further exploration in this study, discussed further in the remaining chapters of this paper.

Informed by the literature review and the concepts uncovered here, this paper will now move on to a discussion of the methodological considerations involved in the undertaking of this research study.

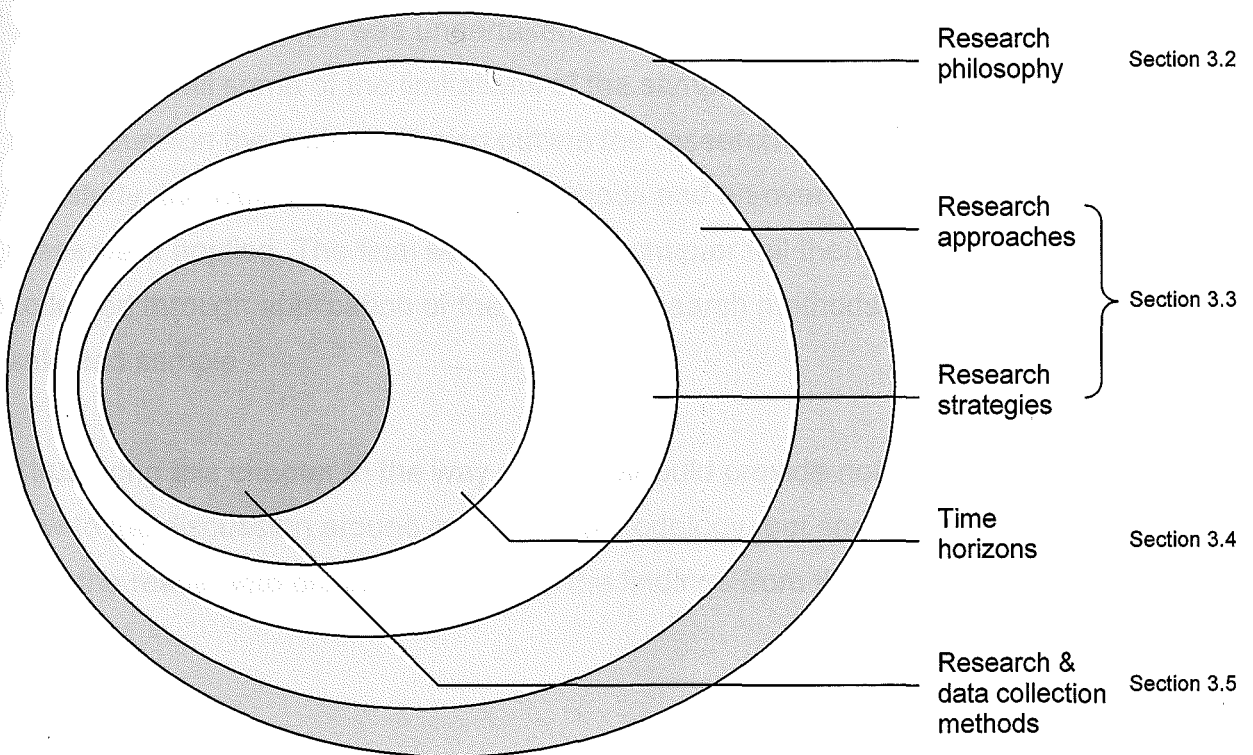
Chapter 3

Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this section of the paper is to explore the key methodological issues that underpin this research study. The chapter is structured into five key sections. These sections, or broad areas for discussion, have been identified with reference to 'The Research Process Onion' model developed by Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2000), captured in a simplified form in figure 3.1 below.

Figure 3.1 The Research Process Onion



Source: Adapted from Saunders et al (2000, p.85)

The opening focus for this discussion will be the research philosophy. The first section of the chapter will outline the importance of philosophical considerations in undertaking a research study and introduce the useful concept of a 'paradigm'. The author will also introduce the concepts of 'ontology' and 'epistemology', key concepts in relation to reality, knowledge and belief. Discussion will then move on to a number of the key philosophical perspectives and paradigms available to the author, providing a more in-depth discussion of those most aligned with this study and the author's philosophical stance.

Informed by the philosophical discussion and choice of paradigm, the chapter moves on to focus upon the research approaches and strategies available, identifying and reviewing those most appropriate for this particular study, given its topic, aims and objectives.

After some discussion of the time horizon applicable to this study, the author will move on to outline the research population, sampling frame and sample with which the research was undertaken. Detail around the selection will be outlined as will some of the limitations of the sampling approach. As part of this discussion the author will also outline the research methods employed in this study, the logic for the choice of methods and an overview as to how these were applied. The final section of this chapter will then outline the data collected through application of the chosen research methods with the selected sample.

Structuring this chapter in the way outlined should provide not only a coherent flow to the discussion around research methodology, but should also helpfully lead the reader into chapter four where the findings from this research will be explored.

3.2 Research Philosophy

Upon embarking on a research study there is much value in considering the philosophy of science. In undertaking any such study, a number of critical assumptions will be made, notably about what is real and how we can know this. Such assumptions relate to human knowledge and to realities encountered in our human world and, whilst deep and complex issues, they must be considered if the things being researched are to be appropriately researched and in turn understood. The importance of these philosophical matters and consideration of assumptions is articulated well in the perspective offered below:

“Such assumptions shape for us the meaning of research questions, the purposiveness of research methodologies, and the interpretability of research findings. Without unpacking these assumptions and clarifying them, no one (including ourselves) can really divine what our research has been or what it is now saying.”

Crotty, 1998, p.17

This section explores some of the key philosophical paradigms and discusses their relevance to the research. The motivation for doing so, as Crotty proposes is *“certainly not in order to pluck a research paradigm off the shelf”* (1998, p.216), but to be formative and for consideration. A useful starting point will be with an exploration of this concept of a ‘paradigm’.

3.2.1 Paradigm

Whilst a number of explanations of the concept of a ‘paradigm’ are identifiable in the literature, a widely accepted definition, given by Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (2nd edition, 1970, p.viii) is that of a *“disciplinary matrix”*.

A paradigm effectively provides an overarching conceptual construct, with a background of theory and beliefs about science and knowledge. It provides a

framework, based on theoretical principles, through which to make sense of the world; a "*basic set of beliefs that guides action*" (Guba, in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.19).

The paradigm within which a researcher selects to work will be influenced by a combination of beliefs. These will include beliefs about *ontology* (What is the nature of the phenomena under study?); *epistemology* (How is the world known? What is the relationship between inquirer and the 'known'?); and *methodology* (How do we gain knowledge about the world?) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.19).

Consideration of ontology, epistemology and methodology is of immense importance to any research study and as such the author will focus the next section of this paper on providing an explanation of each of these concepts, providing useful background to the discussion on research philosophies which follows thereafter.

3.2.2 Ontology

Ontology is a concept which lies at the heart of philosophical thinking and in broad terms concerns "*the study of being, that is, the nature of existence*" (Gray, 2004, p.16). It relates, in essence, to the assumptions we make about existence and the nature of reality (Cresswell, 1994). Considering something in ontological terms then would prompt us to consider whether something exists because we believe it does or whether it can exist independently of our beliefs.

There are two distinct extremes in thinking about reality, presented in the opposing ontological perspectives of realism and relativism. The realist perspective proposes that phenomena can exist independently of our beliefs or conceptions. The relativist perspective, in contrast, proposes that beliefs about reality are personal, that is relative to the person.

In any research study, ontologically-focussed thought will be of immense importance, prompting careful consideration about the nature of the phenomena under study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Whilst this study is situated within the broad interest area of innovation and innovativeness, it is human thought, behaviour and *perceptions* of the concept of innovation, with which this study is most centrally concerned. These are hugely complex and personalised cognitive phenomena and will be influenced by many factors, not least the beliefs, attitudes and experiences of the individual. Given the personalised nature of much which underlies perceptions, a relativist ontological position aligns most effectively with this study and the author's worldview.

3.2.3 Epistemology

Epistemology is a second concept at the heart of philosophical thinking but, where ontology concerns the understanding of *what is*, epistemology relates to understanding *what it means to know* (Gray, 2004, p.16) or how one is to know what is known.

Epistemological matters must therefore be considered in the design of a research project and in ascertaining how knowledge can be gained about the phenomena being studied. In this study this prompts a considered approach to the methodology to be applied, such that knowledge can be gained about the perceptions of innovation, as held and developed by those members of the research sample.

Having introduced here the concept of methodology, a brief outline may beneficially be provided of the meaning and value of this concept and the following section seeks to do this.

3.2.4 Methodology

The word 'methodology', Checkland and Scholes (1990) discuss as originally meaning 'the science of method'. The concept is important in any research study, but this is not with the purpose of selecting 'a methodology'. This, it is suggested, would be meaningless (ibid. p.A31) for it is rather the body of knowledge about method to which the concept of methodology refers.

The methodological approach taken in this study will be outlined later in this chapter, following a fuller review of the philosophical considerations underlying this particular study. Building on from philosophical matters to methodological ones should ensure a coherent flow to the chapter and provide a useful foundation from which to move on to discuss the choice and employment of particular research methods.

As suggested then, having provided some background to the key concepts of paradigms, ontology, epistemology and methodology, this paper will now move on to a discussion of the key philosophical paradigms of relevance to this study.

3.2.5 Key Philosophical Paradigms

As a study concerned primarily with human thought, perceptions, experience and behaviour, the research topic can be considered as belonging to the domain of social science. Identifying the research as falling within this domain is important - not merely for classification purposes, but as it will fundamentally drive the approach taken to the research. The research is ultimately concerned with people and the social environment, and this has important implications for the way the research is undertaken and what is sought by way of 'facts', 'evidence' and 'theories'. (Smith, in Burton (Ed.), 2000, p.5)

Social science, as an area of research, became increasingly widespread from the first half of the twentieth century as a valid area of inquiry (Hammersley, 1995). The thinking upon which it was based at that time was, however, largely that of the natural sciences, with the accepted approach broadly determined by the positivist philosophy. Further philosophical stances developed over time, and whilst positivism is not the approach taken in this study, it is useful to provide a brief overview of the philosophy and the issues it highlights.

3.2.5.1 Positivism

This positivist philosophy bases itself on three central concepts (taken from Hammersley, 1995, p.7):

- the primacy of natural science as a model for knowledge and inquiry
- an emphasis on method, logical argument, the testing of ideas against what is observable, broadly termed 'empiricism'
- the idea that science can only produce factual knowledge, we might call this 'objectivism'

According to positivism, reality exists in itself, with the object (reality) and the subject observing it, independent of each other (Thietart et al., 2001).

"Knowledge in this objective sense is totally independent of anybody's claim to know" (Popper, in Thietart et al., 2001, p.15).

Not all philosophers however take this stance, not at that time nor today, with philosophers such as Popper, Kuhn and Feyerabend believing that however faithfully the researcher might strive to adhere to scientific method, the research outcomes can be neither totally objective nor unquestionably certain. Crotty (1998, p.36) describes even scientific endeavour as *"...a very human affair. Human interest, human values, human fallibility, human foibles – all play a part."*

With social science studies, research tends to be focussed on people and society - on opinions, beliefs and feelings. Such phenomena are arguably

subjective in nature and their study pursuant of a very different kind of knowledge to that of scientifically established facts. Attitudes to social research have shifted over time and the positivist approach is often criticised by social scientists for its *“failure to take account of the fact that the people make sense of the world”* (Hammersley, 1995, p.16).

Given the focus of the research discussed in this paper and its concern with the exploration of thoughts, attitudes, beliefs and perceptions, it is clear then that positivism is not a philosophical approach useful to this study. Discussion can instead move to an alternative paradigm and one arguably much more aligned with this research study, namely Interpretivism.

3.2.5.2 Interpretivism

The paradigm of interpretivism developed as a reaction to the previously-dominant philosophy of positivism (Schwandt, in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Weber was notable in its development and argued there to be an important difference between the subject matter of the social sciences and that of the natural sciences. That important difference, he argued, was that people (the subject of the social sciences) are active, conscious beings, capable of attaching thoughts, feeling and meaning to phenomena and making choices as to how they act.

Where we seek to develop understanding, or ‘*verstehen*’ (Thietart et al., 2000) about such thoughts, feelings and meaning, it is the philosophical approach of interpretivism which is most closely aligned and most usefully considered.

This research study is most notably concerned with the development of such understanding in relation to the phenomenon that is innovation, exploring the experiences and perspectives of the ‘Innovation through Jazz’ workshop participants. It is the pursuit of this understanding which directs the research project.

In exploring such experiences and perspectives, it is essential that the individuality of these views is recognised. As well as each workshop itself differing from the next, each organisation with whom one is delivered will also be different. Such organisational differences relate to demographic factors such as size, industry, location and age, but importantly also to the organisation's history, development, experiences, aspirations and culture. The organisational context then is an important consideration in the review of experiences and perspectives in this study.

The contextualised nature, or relativity, of that which is being explored is indeed an essential feature of interpretivism and of this study. Individuality or relativity applies not just at the organizational level but critically at the level of the individual person too. The experience of the workshop will be unique to every individual, each person developing their own interpretation of the experience, with unique perspective and meaning. The social reality experienced by the workshop participants will be both subjective and contextual and it is essential to this study that an approach is adopted which strives to develop understanding about this experience from these individual, or relative, points of view.

In consideration then of the phenomenon being explored in this study, its complexity and relativity, it is within the paradigm of interpretivism that the study is being undertaken. Where research is focused around the understanding of psychological and social phenomena from the viewpoint of the individual subjects involved (as it is in this study), it is indeed the paradigm of interpretivism (and phenomenology) which Brewerton and Millward support as most appropriate. Here "the interest of researchers operating in this tradition is in *meanings* and *interpretation*" (2001, p.11 italics in original).

As a study concerned then with the exploration of the phenomenon of innovation and the relative perspectives, interpretations and meanings individuals attach to the phenomenon, another philosophical paradigm which can usefully be discussed is that of phenomenology.

3.2.5.3 Phenomenology

Phenomenology (Schutz, 1970) is another philosophical approach of relevance to this study and one which has had an important influence on interpretivism.

As an approach its focus is upon how individuals make sense of the world, or phenomena, around them and emphasises the importance of perspective. In order to research such perspectives or, in the study of perceptions, it is asserted as necessary to view such things from the point of view of the individual (Thietart et al., 2001).

With a focus of this study being individuals' association with and perceptions of innovation, the research must be designed in such a way then as to enable the researcher to access the involved individuals' perspectives and identify these interpretations and perceptions. These goals will drive the methodological choices outlined in the remainder of this chapter, such that the researcher is able, in effect, to move toward accessing the internal mind of the workshop participants.

All elements of the research approach need to reflect the nature of the subject, or in this case, phenomenon being studied. If true insight is to be sought into perceptions of innovation, the research will need to focus on accessing these from the point of view of the individual workshop participants and will require that the researcher be able to "*bracket out preconceptions in his or her grasp of that world*" (Thietart et al., 2001, p.14).

As a study concerned with thought and perceptions, the author would like to highlight one further philosophical paradigm for interesting discussion, namely that of constructionism.

3.2.5.4 Constructionism

Constructionism and objectivism offer contrasting perspectives on the nature of phenomena and the attribution of their meaning. An overview of these two positions is of interest in this study given its focus on the concept, or phenomenon, of innovation and perceptions of it.

Objectivism, Bryman describes as “*an ontological position that asserts that social phenomena and their meanings have an existence that is independent of social actors*” (2001, p.18). As an ontological perspective, objectivism then is classically associated with the positivist paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

This objectivist position, where social entities are seen as objective entities, is challenged however by the alternative ontological position of constructionism. This stance asserts, contrastingly, that social phenomena and their meanings are in fact created by the social actors, through social interaction and are in a constant state of revision. Becker (in Bryman, 2001, p.18) offers clarification of this concept, highlighting culture as an example of such a social entity, purporting that it is actually “*people who create culture continuously*”.

It is the belief of the author that this constructionist approach has notable value and relevance to this research study. The Innovation & Jazz workshops position the jazz band as an example of an innovative organisation and engage participants in discussion and reflection upon the skills, behaviours and culture exhibited there. There is a belief underlying these workshops and, indeed, the wider ‘Year of Innovation’ programme, that through better understanding of the characteristics of what makes an ‘innovative organisation’, that business people will be able to help construct their organisation as such a place of innovation. It was important therefore that the workshops were interactive, developmental and encouraged reflection.

The discussion and development of meaning and learning in the workshops can be seen as a dynamic, interactive and social process. Workshop

participants are colleagues from the same organisation and it is through group discussion, reflection and shared sense-making that collective meaning is effectively negotiated, or constructed. These characteristics describe the paradigm of social constructionism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) and as such this is the final key philosophical concept highlighted for relevance to this study.

Having discussed a number of the key philosophical paradigms and their application to this research study, the author will now move on to explore some of the methodological implications of these paradigms and to discuss the approaches and strategies taken in undertaking this study.

3.3 Research Approaches and Strategies

The concept of 'methodology', as outlined in section 3.2.4, relates to the science of method (Checkland & Scholes, 1990) referring, in effect, to the body of knowledge about method.

Methodological considerations will be central to the design of any piece of research and exploration here of these considerations provides a basis from which the author is able to discuss the research strategy, or approach, taken to this study. It is with reference to the philosophical positions described in the preceding sections of this chapter that these methodological considerations are discussed.

Whilst a number of methodological approaches were usefully considered in the design of this study, it is those of most relevance to the study and the phenomena being explored, which are examined most fully in this section of the paper. Useful discussion notably covers inductive and deductive approaches and also qualitative and quantitative research strategies, introducing alongside this discussion the concepts of grounded theory and also triangulation. Potential limitations of the methodological choices are also usefully explored in this section.

3.3.1 Inductive and Deductive Approaches

As discussed in the review of literature in chapter two, research into and knowledge about the jazz metaphor and its relationship to business and organisational matters is limited. The influence of the jazz metaphor on perceptions of innovation more specifically is yet further limited and as such the study, about which this paper is concerned, can be considered primarily exploratory in nature. This focus is recognised in the title of the study and in its exploratorily-focussed aims and objectives. Gray (2004) advocates exploratory studies as particularly useful where further knowledge is sought about a phenomenon and, as such, consideration of this study as “*exploratory research*” (Dane, 1990, p.5) seems appropriate.

As an explorative study the research is concerned not with the demonstration (Thietart et al, 2001, p.52) or testing of a hypothesis (Gray, 2004, p.6) or theoretical framework (Saunders et al, 2000, p.45) as associated with deductive approaches. Rather it is the exploration of complex concepts and broad conceptualisations with which it is concerned. Researching patterns, consistencies and meanings, Gray offers as characterising the inductive approach to research and it is this process with which this study more comfortably aligns.

Methodologically the adoption of a more inductive approach to this study meant that the literature review could be undertaken in parallel with other streams of research. Predetermined theories or conceptual frameworks are not required for the study to commence, though a “*competent knowledge*” of the subject area should be possessed by the researcher (Saunders et al, 2000, p.45). This feature was of benefit to this study and the demanding timescales within which the wider Gloucestershire Year of Innovation programme required its completion – in effect necessitating the rapid commencement of the primary research activity.

Within such discussion of the inductive approach to this study, it may be of value to briefly mention here the concept of Grounded Theory as an approach to research.

3.3.2 Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory is an inductive research concept that was developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and describes an approach whereby theory is developed in an inductive manner from the data. It is, however, specifically founded upon the concept of "*presuppositionless induction*" (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000, p.17). This is to imply that observers enter the research situation with no prior theoretical preconceptions and that theory is purely created, revised and refined in light of the data collected (Burns, 2000).

Whilst an interesting theoretical concept, Glaser and Strauss however dispute the fundamental basis of Grounded Theory, advocating that the researcher does not and cannot approach reality as a 'tabula rasa' (blank sheet) as required in accordance with the concept and that "*presuppositionless induction*" (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000) is consequently impossible.

The author of this paper and undertaker of this research study was involved in this project not purely as researcher, but also as designer and deliverer of the Innovation & Jazz workshops, as required by her role on the broader 'Year of Innovation' programme. She also brought experience of working in the field of innovation and as such some preconceived ideas about innovation and attitudes toward innovation. She did not therefore possess the 'tabula rasa' required by Grounded Theory.

Whilst not therefore being undertaken in accordance with the Grounded Theory approach, the research study is inductive in its reasoning, taking considerable care however in the application or development of more general theories.

Having introduced induction and deduction then as approaches to research, another common consideration in the design and undertaking of research relates to the relative merits of qualitative and quantitative approaches. The author therefore offers a discussion of these approaches in the section which follows, along with a review of the approach most useful to this study.

3.3.3 Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches

In considering the most suitable approach to collecting and analysing data in a research study, it is common for the researcher to give some consideration to this in terms of qualitative and quantitative approaches.

The term 'qualitative research', Denzin & Lincoln (1998, p.2) describe as being associated with a complex and inter-related family of terms, concepts and assumptions. It is suggested by Strauss & Corbin (1990, p.18) to mean different things to different people and its use consequently, they suggest, risks confusion. As an important concept for this study however, further discussion is provided here, striving to bring clarification to the term and approach and its relevance to this study.

Strauss & Corbin offer a definition of qualitative research as *"any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification"* (1990, p.17). Whilst a very broad definition, some areas of study are considered to more naturally lend themselves to qualitative types of research, notably research focussed upon the nature of individuals' experiences with a phenomenon (ibid, p.19).

A qualitative approach is suggested effective for exploring rather than measuring phenomena, perhaps furthering understanding through novel or fresh insight. Qualitative studies tend to focus on *"attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them"* (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p.3).

Silverman (2005) highlights a view that qualitative approaches tend to focus on the social construction of reality, the relationship between the researcher and what is being studied and the situational or contextual constraints. It is an approach generally advocated for the study of perceptions, meanings and emotions and focuses the study on the individual's point of view.

Given the nature of the study discussed in this paper and the paradigms within which it is being undertaken, the qualitative approach offers much value. The adoption of a qualitative methodology reflects the researcher's focus upon the exploration of rich and complex concepts, the need to explore perceptions of these from the view of the individual, doing so by seeking insight into changes in the internal mind. A qualitative approach to the research will allow such meanings, experiences and perceptions to be explored in-depth.

A primarily qualitative approach is advocated then by the author to enable an effective exploration of the issues in this relatively un-researched area, and in the depth required. A qualitative approach enables the researcher, Brannen suggests, *"to look through a wide lens, searching for patterns of inter-relationships between a previously unspecified set of concepts"* (1992, p.4). Its emphasis is on interpretation - both of the researcher and the individuals being studied (Erickson, 1986).

Having provided some discussion of the qualitative and quantitative approaches to research, it is also of interest to note that the distinction between these approaches is not considered by all to be so unequivocal (Thietart et al, 2001). Discussion in the literature on these methodological approaches in some cases draws the distinction in relation to data and in other cases in relation to variables or research methods. Indeed, in this study, whilst the overarching methodological approach is qualitative in nature, not all methods employed would be considered qualitative nor all the data gathered.

The multiplicity of methods used in the research leads us into a useful discussion around the value of mixed and multi method approaches, before

embarking on a discussion of the actual research methods employed in this study in section 3.5.

3.3.4 Mixed Methods and Triangulation

Denzin describes the combination of methodologies or methods in the study of phenomena as 'Triangulation' (1970). Although traditionally associated with quantitative research, Denzin and Lincoln also advocate its use in more qualitative studies as a useful way to generate an in-depth understanding of phenomena. Indeed as a strategy, they suggest that the combination of multiple methodologies can "*add rigor, breadth, complexity, richness and depth*" to any study (1998, p.4).

Qualitative research in particular is argued to be inherently multimethod in focus (Brewer & Hunter, 1989 in Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p.3) with potentially much consequential value. The use of multiple methods, or triangulation, Denzin & Lincoln suggest, reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon. As objective reality cannot be captured, given the interpretivist paradigm within which this study is being undertaken, triangulation serves to add richness to the findings.

"The combination of multiple methods, empirical materials, perspectives and observers in a single study is best understood, then, as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, and depth to any investigation"

Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p.4

The study upon which this paper focuses has been pursued through the employment of multiple research methods. Whilst a primarily qualitative approach has been taken to the research, not all methods in themselves would be considered qualitative nor all data gathered. Prior (1997) supports the complementary use of quantitative techniques or quantitative data to an otherwise qualitative study. He comments that "*although statistics on social phenomena often contain ambiguities they may nonetheless sometimes have a certain value as background material in qualitative research*".

The gathering of data through a number of different research techniques 'methodological triangulation' Gill and Johnson (2002) suggest can help overcome the bias inherent in any single method and, with reference to Smith (1975) suggest it can also help illuminate the many different aspects of a problem. This is particularly important in this research study, given the complexity of the concepts being explored and the limited existing research in this field.

Before moving on to discuss the actual research methods employed in this study, an overview of two more methodological approaches can usefully be provided, namely the approaches of Action Research (Lewin, 1946) and Human Inquiry (Reason, 1994).

3.3.5 Action Research and Human Inquiry

The term 'Action Research', first used by Lewin in 1946, is characteristically defined as being about problem-centred research (Gill & Johnson, 2002). The term strictly relates to a model developed by Lewin characterised by a specific sequence of steps, successive action research cycles and distinct roles for the researcher. Whilst not being applied in this study in this strict sense, the themes that characterize action research are very relevant.

Saunders et al (2000) identify 3 main themes associated with action research. These themes refer to the management of change as the emphasis of research (Cunningham, 1995); the involvement of the researcher with members of an organization over a matter of genuine concern (Eden & Huxham, 1996); and the findings having implications beyond the immediate project. Reason (in Henry, 2001b, p.184) enriches our understanding of the concept further, describing an action research strategy as intending to *"increase people's involvement in the creation and application of knowledge about them and their worlds"*.

Whilst not following the strict model and process of action research as defined by Lewin, a number of the features which characterise the approach are shared with this research study.

Located within the wider 'Year of Innovation' programme of activity, this study has developed out of a desire to explore means, in this case the jazz metaphor, for enhancing knowledge and capabilities around innovation. It is the hope of the wider project, as it is in action research work, that the development of such knowledge and capabilities will in turn prompt action and change and consequently generate benefits for the organisations involved.

Organisations' involvement with this study was on a voluntary basis and for those who enrolled, innovation was a matter of genuine concern or interest, as was a desire to understand more about this apparently important concept. In getting involved, organisations were agreeing to the exploration of these concepts with the University of Gloucestershire, as part of the 'Year of Innovation' programme of engagement and as part of this research study.

Enrolment saw the delivery of a tailor-made innovation workshop¹ with the organisation, exploring the concept of innovation and innovativeness using live jazz performance. The author of this paper, in conducting the study, was closely involved with the workshop participants, engaging them in workshop exercises, discussion, reflection and ultimately the collective development of understanding and knowledge about innovation and innovativeness.

Alongside this role of workshop delivery the author was also concerned with observing the participants and gathering research for this study and again this has parallels with the action research approach that "*focuses on simultaneous action and research in a participative manner*" (Coghlan and Brannick, 2001, cited in Gray, 2004, p.374).

Gray (2004, p.373) describes the action researcher as collaborating closely with the practitioners and as being involved in the research process as a

¹ Photographs from some of the 'Innovation through Jazz' workshops can be found in Appendix 6.

"change agent" (Gray, 2004, p.373) concerned not only with studying the organisation but improving it. This closely aligns with the approach taken to the 'Innovation through Jazz' project and the manner in which the author was involved and the study undertaken.

The experiential approach to the workshop engagements, the prompted reflection and the facilitated discussion are qualities which also characterise an approach termed 'Human Inquiry'. The practices of human inquiry, as discussed by Reason *"engage deeply and sensitively with experience, are participative, and aim to integrate action with reflection"* (1994, p.10). This approach then potentially lends useful thinking to this research study.

In his discussion of human inquiry, Reason proposes that *"we can only truly do research with persons if we engage with them as persons, as co-subjects and thus as co-researchers"* (1994, p.10). This stance is reflected in the approach taken in this study where, for practical reasons, the researcher was also co-designer and co-deliverer of the 'Innovation through Jazz' workshops. The multitude of roles fulfilled by the researcher was made transparent to the individuals in the 'Innovation through Jazz' intervention and hence this study. There are a number of implications of the researcher's multitude of roles and it is essential these are fully recognised and considered in the review of this study and its findings.

3.3.6 Role of Researcher

The influence that the researcher can have on the research itself is an interesting matter to explore and an important consideration for this, indeed, any study. Background, social situation, educational upbringing and values can all influence a researcher's approach to a study, whether it be in the conceptualisation or design of the research, in the methodological approach, or in what is 'heard' and how findings are interpreted. Denzin & Lincoln (2000, p.568) emphasise this influence, highlighting how behind every piece of research *"stands the personal biography of the researcher, who speaks from a particular class, gender, racial, cultural and ethnic community perspective"*.

Such influence can bring strong challenges to the desired quality in research of objectivity. Such quality is highly prized in both the natural and social sciences, but can be very difficult (if not impossible) to attain. Reason notes Skolimowski's description of objectivity, in relation to human inquiry, as a "*figment of our minds; it does not exist in nature*" (1992, p.42). So whilst it is important to remain as objective as possible, the influence of self on the research cannot be denied or ignored, and what is called for as a result is what Rowan and Reason refer to in *Human Inquiry* (1981) as "*critical subjectivity*". In order to deliver valid findings, this concept suggests the requirements of "*high quality, critical, self-aware, discriminating and informed judgements*".

Informed by this debate, the author endeavoured throughout this study to be transparent in her role and critically reflective with respect to any potential influence she may have on the study. Her role included being co-deliverer of the 'Innovation through Jazz' workshops (alongside the lead jazz musician), these workshops providing the key medium through which the perceptions of innovation and value of the jazz metaphor were explored in this study. Whilst engaged in delivering, that is presenting and facilitating the workshop and associated exercises and discussion, she was also interested in observing participants' reactions and responses to the experience. Observation, indeed, is one of the key research methods employed in this study and is discussed further in section 3.5. It is however of interest to mention here as part of the discussion around the author's role in this study.

Saunders et al (2000, p.218) offer two types of observational role. 'Participant Observation' they describe as more qualitative in nature, concerned mostly with discovery of the meanings attached to individuals' actions. 'Structured Observation' they contrastingly describe as being qualitative and more focussed upon the frequency of such actions.

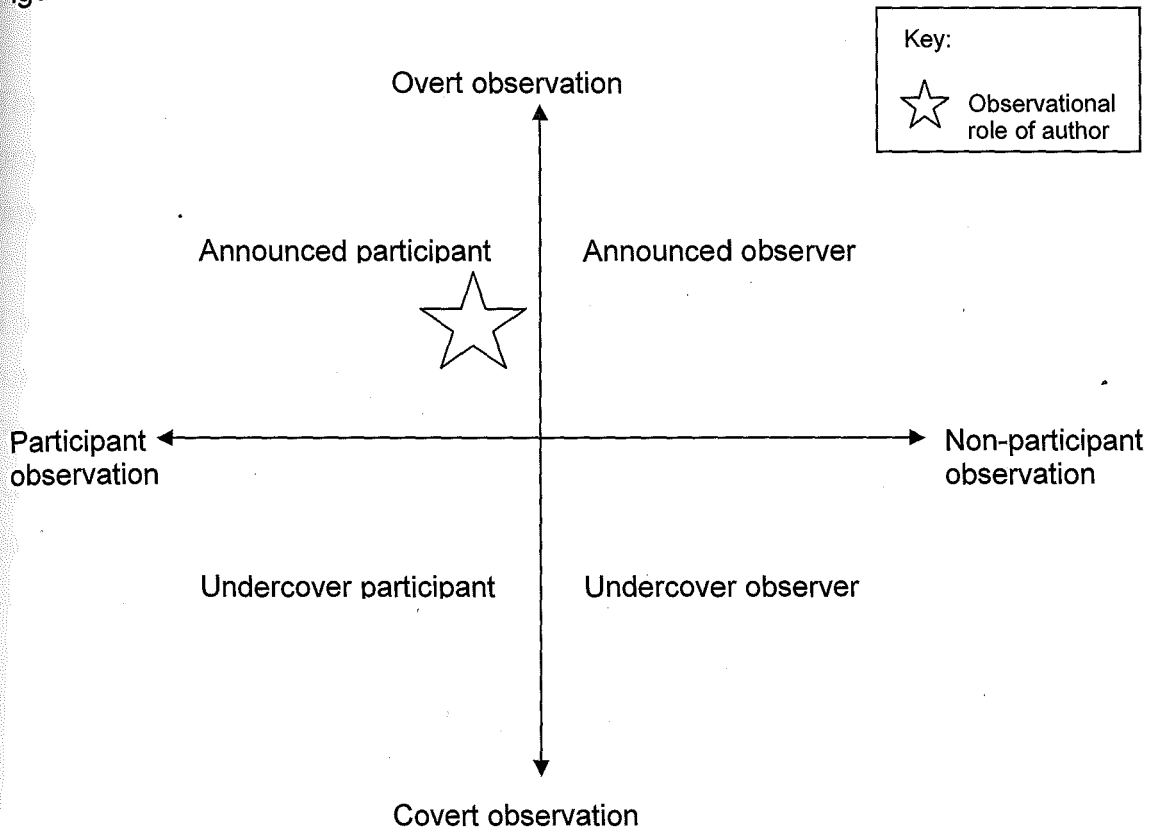
Observing the qualitative behaviours and responses of workshop participants, whilst herself participating by way of delivery and discussion, might indeed

then see the author engaged in both observation and participation. Engaged in what might be described as 'Participant Observation', or in the role of 'Observer as Participant' (Saunders et al, 2000).

Saunders et al (2000) highlight the social anthropological origins of Participant Observation and with reference to Delbridge and Kirkpatrick (1994) stress the need for the researcher to 'immerse' herself in the research setting if the nuances of meaning are to be adequately understood.

The role of the author of this paper in the undertaking of this study has been multifaceted and complex. Her role(s) has been made clear to all participants in the research and, whilst transparent about her research and observational roles, she does not perhaps fulfil the more strictly defined role of participant observer. Her role rather took a pragmatic focus, reflecting her role in not only undertaking this research study but in delivering the Year of Innovation programme in parallel. In terms of participation and observation, she would however like to propose a position for her role as an 'Announced Participant' (Gray, 2004), engaged also in overt observation. This position can graphically be shown with reference to the Observation Research Role model developed by Gray (2004) and captured in figure 3.2 overleaf:

Figure 3.2 Observation Research Roles



Source: Adapted from Gray, 2004, p.240

This brings to a close the discussion on methodological strategies and approaches relevant and appropriate to this study and this chapter will now move on to explore the time horizon for the research, sampling considerations and selection of research methods.

3.4 Time Horizon

The location of this research study within the wider 'Year of Innovation' programme had implications for many aspects of this study including the timeframe for its completion.

The 'Year of Innovation' programme represented one of the Inspire projects, funded by the South West Regional Development Fund and European Regional Development Fund. The agenda for these bodies and rationale for funding related to a vision of unlocking the potential of individuals and companies to innovate by:

- (1) creating a culture that encourages innovation in all sectors of the region's economy
- (2) strengthening the skills and capabilities of businesses to operate in an innovative manner
- (3) developing greater understanding of future changes and potential for innovation²

Whilst the Inspire South West programme ran from 1 January 2003 to 31 December 2005, the University of Gloucestershire's associated 'Year of Innovation' ran during the period June 2004 – September 2005. In order to resource this programme the University advertised a 14-month vacancy for a Research Fellow to join the University of Gloucestershire. This vacancy was filled by the author of this paper and engaged her in the recruitment, design, delivery and management of the 'Year of Innovation' programme. It also saw her engaged with the study discussed in this paper, the study complementary to the above aspects of her role and undertaken as a Masters research degree.

² Information about the South West of England Regional Development Agency (SWRDA) 'Inspire' South West programme is taken from the document 'Inspire South West Programme, Information for Project Proposers' produced by SWRDA and contained in Appendix 8. For more information about this programme please refer to the Appendices section of this paper.

The author of this paper and undertaker of this study was employed then at the University to work on this programme from August 2004 – September 2005. The timing and duration of the 'Year of Innovation' and the Research Fellow post clearly impacted on the research study. A notable implication was for the primary research. This was undertaken in association with the 'Innovation through Jazz' workshops delivered as part of, and hence during, the 'Year of Innovation'. The design and undertaking of all primary research consequently had to be completed during this 14 month period.

Such a restricted timeframe generated a number of challenges to the effective undertaking of this research study. New to the field of academic research, the author studied for her Postgraduate Certificate in Research Methods alongside the undertaking of the research. This parallel working was necessitated by the imposed timescale for the research and required the author to learn quickly and to be flexible in her approach, modifying the research design in line with her learning.

The timescale also allowed only limited time for the author to read related literature and begin thinking through the relevant concepts to explore and approaches to use in the research, before the primary research had to begin. The restrictive timescale necessitated relatively rapid commencement of the primary research and in recognition of the learning that would take place during this study it was agreed that it would be beneficial to treat the first research engagement as a pilot. This allowed learning from the experience and reflection upon what had worked well and what less so, to be incorporated into a refined approach for later research engagements.

Whilst the primary research had to be undertaken during the 'Year of Innovation' programme, the author's role at the University was extended and the period of registration for completing the research degree meant that an additional 11 months were available to the author of this paper to complete her study and research degree. This allowed the author to further enrich her literature review, exploring additional concepts and themes arising from the

primary research. Figure 3.3 visually summarises the timescale for this research and the main activities undertaken.

Figure 3.3 Timeframe for Research Project

Activity	2004		2005			2006		
	Autumn	Winter	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter	Spring	Summer
Research Project								
Scoping and design of research project	██████████							
Methodological thought-development	██████████							
Literature review	██							
Primary research	██████████					██████████		
Writing up of thesis					██			
Formal learning about undertaking research								
Postgraduate Certificate in Research Methods	██							
Overarching project	██							
'Year of Innovation'	██							

Whilst figure 3.3 and the preceding discussion describes the timescale available for the research, it is also of interest to focus on the time horizon over which understanding and perceptions of innovation were examined and the value of the jazz metaphor explored.

The research sample and methods employed to collect data will be discussed in the next section of this chapter. The horizon of study however spans the time between the first engagement following an organisation's enrolment on the 'Innovation through Jazz' component of the 'Year of Innovation' programme and the final engagement. Whilst a jazz workshop will have been delivered between these two dates, these engagements in effect provide the horizon of research and for each organisation typically spans a period of between 2 and 6 months.

Given the relatively short horizon over which involved organisations and individuals were studied it was recognised unlikely that observable changes in behaviour would be observed as a result of the innovation discussions and jazz engagements. The study therefore focussed upon thoughts, attitudes,

perceptions and understanding of innovation. Had a longer timeframe been available for this study it would no doubt have been of interest to involve participants in a number of engagements and interactions and to research observable changes as well as attitudinal ones, over a longer period.

Informed by the time horizon of this study and building on from the philosophical and methodological positions discussed in preceding sections, this paper will now move on to outline the research population and sample, the research methods selected for use in this study and rationale for the choices and the application of these methods to gather valuable data for this study.

3.5 Research Sampling and Data Collection

Having discussed in previous sections of this paper the subject of study and the research strategy, this paper will now move on to discuss with whom the research was conducted, the techniques or methods used to carry out this research and the data consequently gathered. Structuring the discussion in this way should provide a coherent flow, leading helpfully towards chapter 4 where the findings from the research will be discussed in-depth.

A question useful to consider now then is 'with whom is this research to be carried out?' and it is here that the author will begin her discussion of research sampling.

3.5.1 Research Sampling

Sampling is not a simple matter in research (Silverman, 2005) indeed Becker (1998) argues that "*sampling is a major problem for any kind of research. We can't study every case of whatever we're interested in...*" (in Silverman, 2005, p.136). Sample selection is a key consideration then to any research study and a useful starting point for this discussion is with an introduction to the concepts of a research sample, sampling frame and population.

3.5.1.1 Population, Sampling Frame and Research Sample

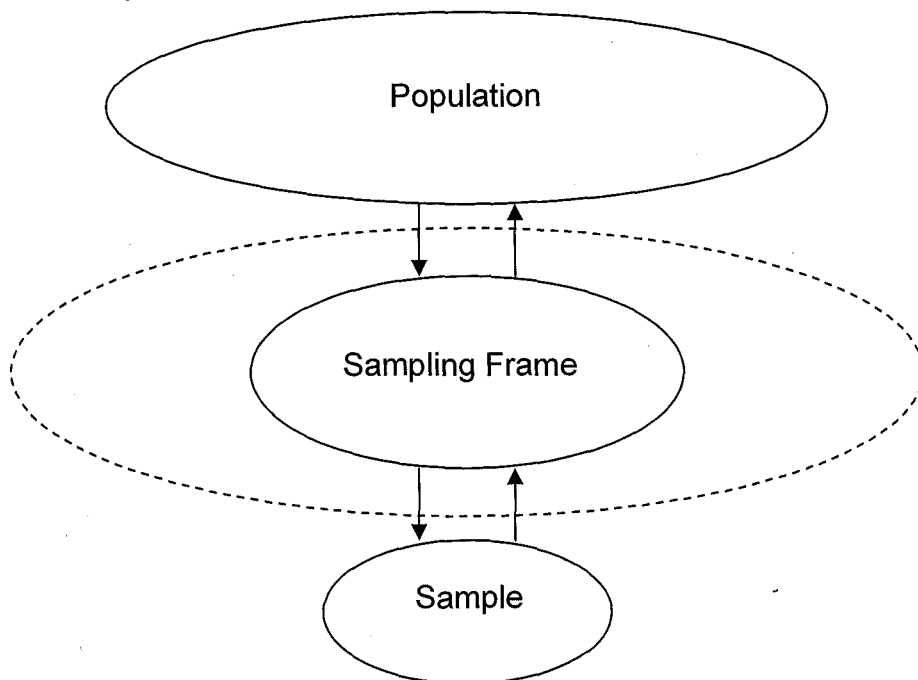
Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch (2000) provide some insight into these concepts, offering a definition of a research sample and population as follows:

“Crudely speaking, a sample is a part of something larger, called a population (or ‘universe’); the latter is the totality of entities in which we have an interest, i.e. the collection of individuals, objects or events about which we want to make inferences.”

Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 2000, p.10.

Gray (2004) offers further discussion of sampling and figure 3.4 usefully highlights the relationship between a population, sampling frame and sample.

Figure 3.4 Relationship between the Population, Sampling Frame and Sample



Source: Gray, 2004, p.84

In this study, the research population could be deemed to comprise all currently-operating SMEs based in Gloucestershire. As discussed in more detail earlier in this paper, SMEs for this programme have been defined simply as those companies with less than 250 employees. Additional criteria

for involvement in the 'Year of Innovation' and hence in this study, relates to a maximum amount of EU funding of which any participating company can be in receipt; a criteria set by the funding bodies of this programme.

The concept of a sampling frame allows account to be taken of the practical circumstances which may mean it is not possible to identify all members of a population (Gray, 2004). In this study the sampling frame theoretically contains all those organisations who could practically have got involved in the 'Innovation through Jazz' programme.

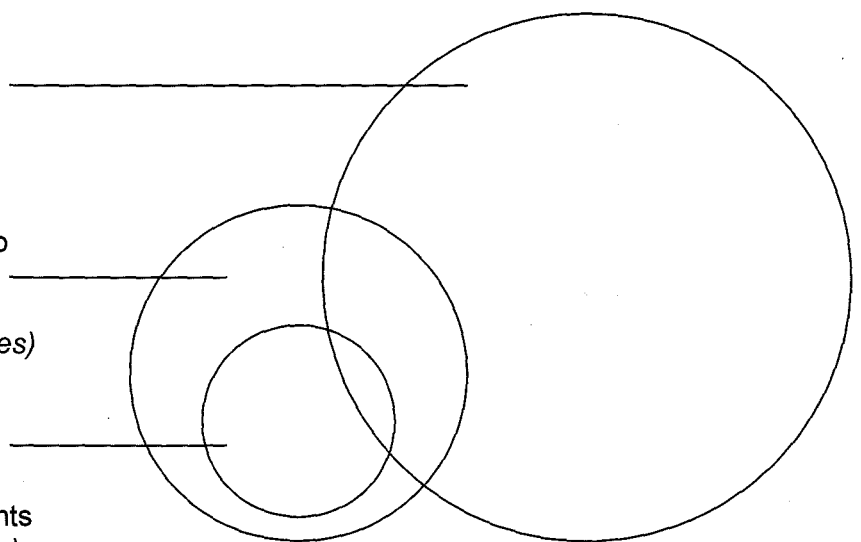
From this sampling frame, approximately 600 individuals from nearly 200 small and medium sized enterprises in Gloucestershire attended one or more of the 'Innovation through Jazz' public workshops run by the 'Year of Innovation' project team. These workshops were open to anyone in the county who was interested in hearing more about the project and the jazz approach to exploring innovation. These 600 or so individuals form this study's broadest research sample A, as shown in figure 3.5:

Figure 3.5 Research Sets

Research sample (A):
'Innovation through Jazz' public workshop attendees
(approx. 600 individuals)

Research sample (B):
'Innovation through Jazz' club members and in-company workshop participants
(individuals from 16 companies)

Research sample (C):
'Innovation through Jazz' in-company workshop participants
(individuals from 8 companies)



Source: Author's own

The greatest focus for this study was however the sixteen organisations who actually enrolled on the 'Innovation through Jazz' programme, either on to the 'Jazz Club' (a forum for up to two people from eight organisations to engage in a collective manner with the jazz approach to innovation) or on an individual organisation basis. Research sample B, as shown in figure 3.5 is an important set for this study and comprises those organisations and associated employees who enrolled on the 'Innovation through Jazz' component of the University of Gloucestershire's 'Year of Innovation' programme. Many of the owner-managers of these sixteen firms had attended one of the public workshops, though very few of their employees had.

Research sample C consists solely of those individuals from the eight organisations who enrolled on the 'Innovation through Jazz' programme on an individual organisation basis for an in-depth and tailored workshop delivered in their organisation. Particularly rich data was captured from these eight organisations, from the owner-managers and from the employees and this sample is hence of particular importance for this study.

As regards the size of sample, sixteen was the number of organisations decided upon by the 'Year of Innovation' project team such that the programme could deliver the outputs required by its funding partners. It is of some interest to provide a summary profile of each of the sixteen organisations engaged on the 'Innovation through Jazz' workshops and this is the purpose of the following section.

3.5.1.2 Organizational Profiles

Whilst the participant organisations vary from one another in many ways, a brief profile can consistently be provided for each of the organisations, indicating the industry in which they operate and the nature and size of the business. Such profiles should help the reader develop a picture of the organisations with which this study was conducted, provide a key by which the author can refer to particular organisations³ and their respondents⁴ and enable the author to provide some context to the findings.

Outlined below then is a brief profile of each of the sixteen participating organisations:

- Organisation IC1 operates in the transport industry and has increasingly become involved in the development of related technology. The organisation is a private limited company with a male owner-manager and approximately 40 employees.
- Organisation IC2 is an industrial supplier of tools and fixings to the building trade. The organisation is a private limited company with a male owner-manager and approximately 12 employees.

³ The names given to the organisations are fictitious so as to protect their identity. Those allocated an 'IC' number represent organisations engaged in-depth with in-company 'Innovation through Jazz' workshops. Those allocated a 'JC' number represent organisations engaged in the Jazz Club.

⁴ In order that the author can reference particular comments of workshop participants without compromising their anonymity, each individual has been given a unique Respondent Code. The first part of this code indicates the order in which the author engaged with that individual (for example indicating whether they were the first, second, third respondent in the post-workshop interviews) and the second part refers to the organisation from which the individual comes. For example, the second person interviewed at Organisation IC1 would be referred to as Respondent 2IC1. The comments of some of the managing directors are discussed at some length later in this paper and to enable a more coherent flow to these discussions fictitious names have been used to refer to these particular individuals. For example, the managing director of Organisation IC4 is referred to as 'Paul'.

- Organisation IC3 is a manufacturer and supplier of catering equipment. The organisation is a private limited company with a male owner-manager and approximately 14 employees.

- Organisation IC4 is involved in light electronic design and manufacture in the traffic and pedestrian management industry. The organisation is a private limited family business with a second generation male managing director and approximately 35 employees.

- Organisation IC5 is a consumer electronic and entertainment retail business. The organisation is a private limited family business with a first generation male owner-manager and approximately 30 employees

- Organisation IC6 operates in the aircraft industry and is involved in the provision and maintenance of aircraft and pilot training. The organisation is a private limited company with approximately 125 employees.

- Organisation IC7 is involved in the supply of storage, racking and shelving solutions. The organisation is a private limited company with a female managing director and approximately 107 employees.

- Organisation IC8 is concerned with the provision of industrial fasteners. The organisation is a private limited family business with a first generation male owner-manger and approximately 14 employees. Organisation IC8 was also a member of the project's Jazz Club forum and is consequently referred to in the remainder of this paper as Organisation IC8/JC1.

- Organisation JC2 operates in the renewable energy / biofuel industry. The organisation is a private limited family business, run by a father and son and employing one office assistant.

- Organisation JC3 is, in effect, an individual person, a retired man engaged in the international marketing and commercialisation of his deceased son's mechanical invention

- Organisation JC4 is a community development fund initiative, lending finance to start-up and expanding small businesses, social enterprises and disadvantaged groups. The organisation is a not-for-profit limited business with approximately 3 employees.
- Organisation JC5 operates in the specialist adhesive industry. The organisation is a private limited family business with a first generation male owner-manager and approximately 8 employees.
- Organisation JC6 is a residential property letting and property management agency. The organisation is a private limited company with approximately 22 employees.
- Organisation JC7 operates in the packaging industry. The organisation is a private limited company with a male owner-manager and 2 other employees.
- Organisation JC8 is a landscape architecture business. The organisation is a partnership with 2 partners and approximately 4 other employees.
- Organisation JC9 is a property development and project management business. The organisation is a private limited company, established by four individuals all of whom have an equal share in the business and now employs one further employee.

The manner by which individuals and organisations were informed of the 'Innovation through Jazz' workshop approach and the process by which the sample of sixteen organisations was established, is of interest and important to outline and this is the purpose of the following discussion.

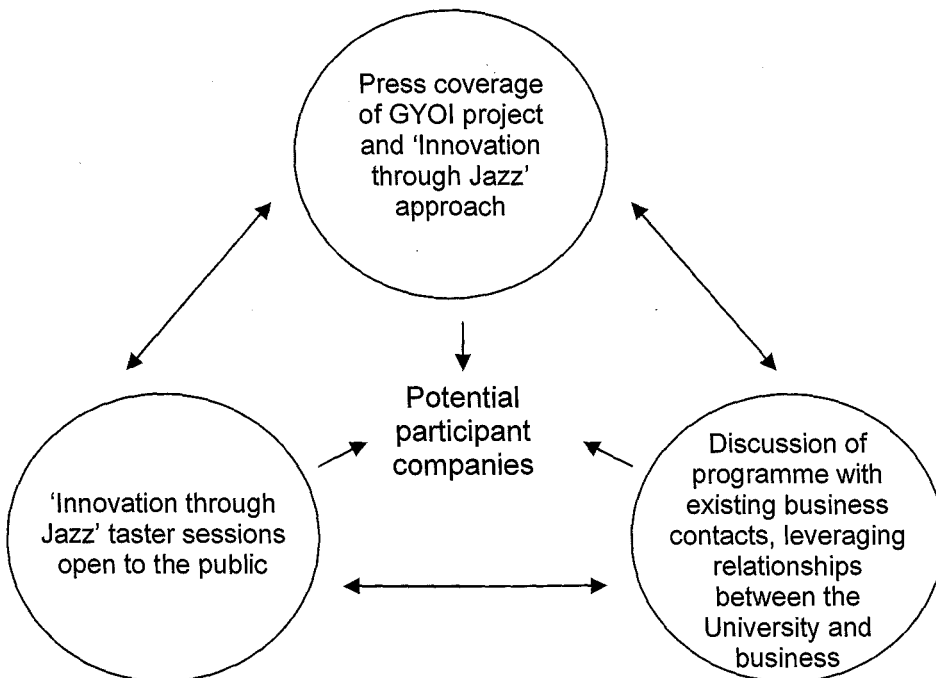
3.5.1.3 Sample Selection

The selection of the sixteen organisations forming the body of research sample was the result of a procedure termed 'non-probability sampling'. This reflects the sampling elements having been collated by the researcher and project team without adherence to any explicit scientific model or method.

The organisations researched in this study enrolled on the 'Innovation through Jazz' programme of engagement voluntarily. The 'Year of Innovation' programme team was responsible for generating publicity and interest in the programme but involvement was the decision of the organisation, typically its owner-manager.

Figure 3.6 visually captures the process by which the project team generated interest with Gloucestershire SMEs in the 'Innovation through Jazz' programme and in turn encouraged interested organisations to enrol.

Figure 3.6 Process of Generating Interest in the 'Innovation through Jazz' Programme



Source: Author's own

In the selection of any sample with which a study is to be undertaken, there are a number of ethical matters which should be considered. A discussion of those issues most pertinent to this particular study is offered therefore in the following section.

3.5.1.4 Ethical Issues

There are important ethical considerations in the selection of a research sample, as well as in the design, data collection, analysis and publication of research studies. Such considerations can relate to matters such as risk and harm, confidentiality, anonymity, privacy and informed consent.

This was not a study exposing participants to any risk or harm, and whilst privacy is often an important issue in research, in this study participating organisations welcomed the positive publicity that involvement could potentially bring, raising the profile of their organisation and associating it positively with innovation and change. This perspective to involvement will be discussed later in this paper.

The issue of informed consent was however very relevant to this study. 'Real consent' or 'valid consent' are also terms sometimes used in place of 'informed consent'. Whatever the term used, Kent (1993) suggests a common intention of attaining consent, namely being "*to achieve a position whereby people who agree to take part in a research programme know what they are agreeing to and authorize you to collect information from them without any form of coercion or manipulation*" (in Burton, 2000, p.81).

Kent describes five elements which need to be met to ensure informed consent, namely information; understanding; voluntariness; competence of participants; and actual consent to participate (ibid). These elements help, he suggests, to ensure the "*right to exercise self-determination*" is protected.

Every effort was made in the undertaking of this research study to adhere to these principles. Potential participants were fully informed about the programme and implications of involvement by both the author of this paper (the researcher) and other parties involved in the delivery of the 'Innovation through Jazz' programme. This included making them aware of the nature of their involvement, the aims of the study, likely time commitments etc.

Engagement formed part of a free programme of support, and no monetary incentive was offered to participants. It was also made clear that by becoming involved in the programme, participants were agreeing to involvement in the associated research study.

Interested companies were required to sign and return an Enrolment Form⁵ evidencing their desire to sign-up to the project and as such the author is confident in the attainment of voluntary informed consent from all sixteen participating organisations.

Having volunteered to participate in the 'Innovation through Jazz' programme, and in doing so in this research study, the sample can be considered to some extent to have been self-selecting (Saunders et al, 2000). As a non-probability sampling method the approach taken can also be considered that of 'convenience sampling' (Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 2000) as selection was also made, to some extent, by the 'Year of Innovation' project team based upon their knowledge of businesses, location and existing relationships between the business and the University.

Having introduced the sample used in this study and some of the related issues, discussion now moves usefully to outline the methods used to research and gather data for this study. Section 3.5.2 outlines the methods selected, the rationale for their choice and their application in this study. This leads usefully into a discussion of the data collected, before moving on in chapter four to explore the meaning and messages within that data.

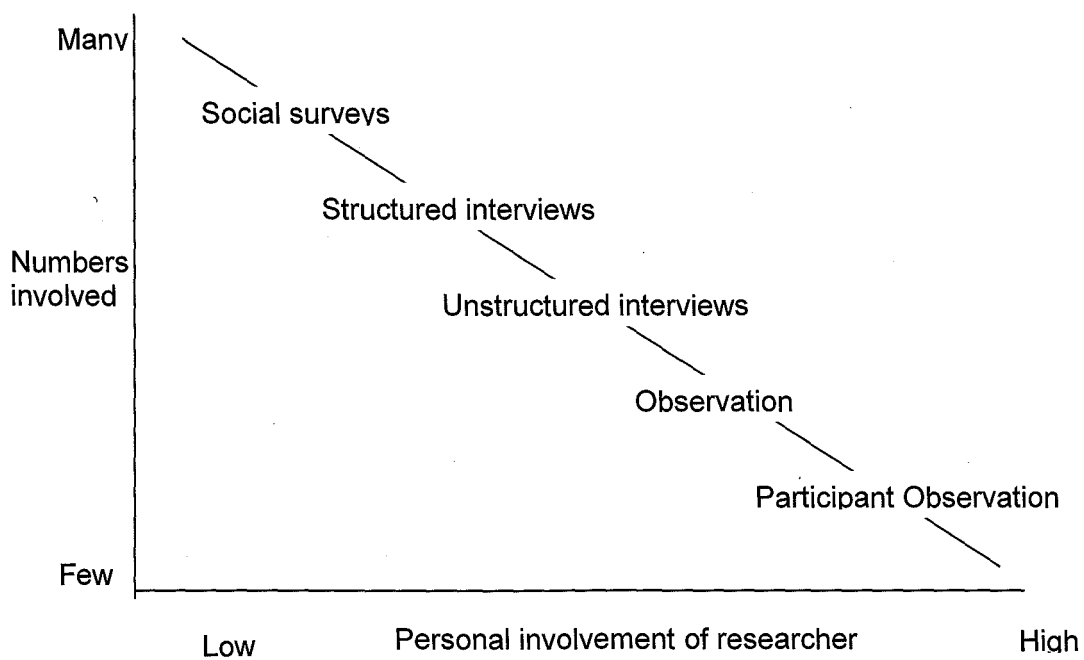
⁵ A copy of the Enrolment Form can be found in Appendix 2.

3.5.2 Research and Data Collection Methods

As discussed earlier in this chapter a primarily qualitative approach has been taken to this research, given its exploratory focus, the complex phenomena with which it is concerned and the paradigms of interpretivism and relativism within which the author is working. The value of quantitative techniques to gathering data are also however recognised by the author and a multi-method approach was felt to be of complementary value such that a rich understanding of the super-complex concepts could be developed.

There is much comment in the literature about available research methods and their relative merits. One of the more contemporary sources offers the following graphical presentation of some of the key methods of data collection available to the researcher:

Figure 3.7 Methods of Data Collection



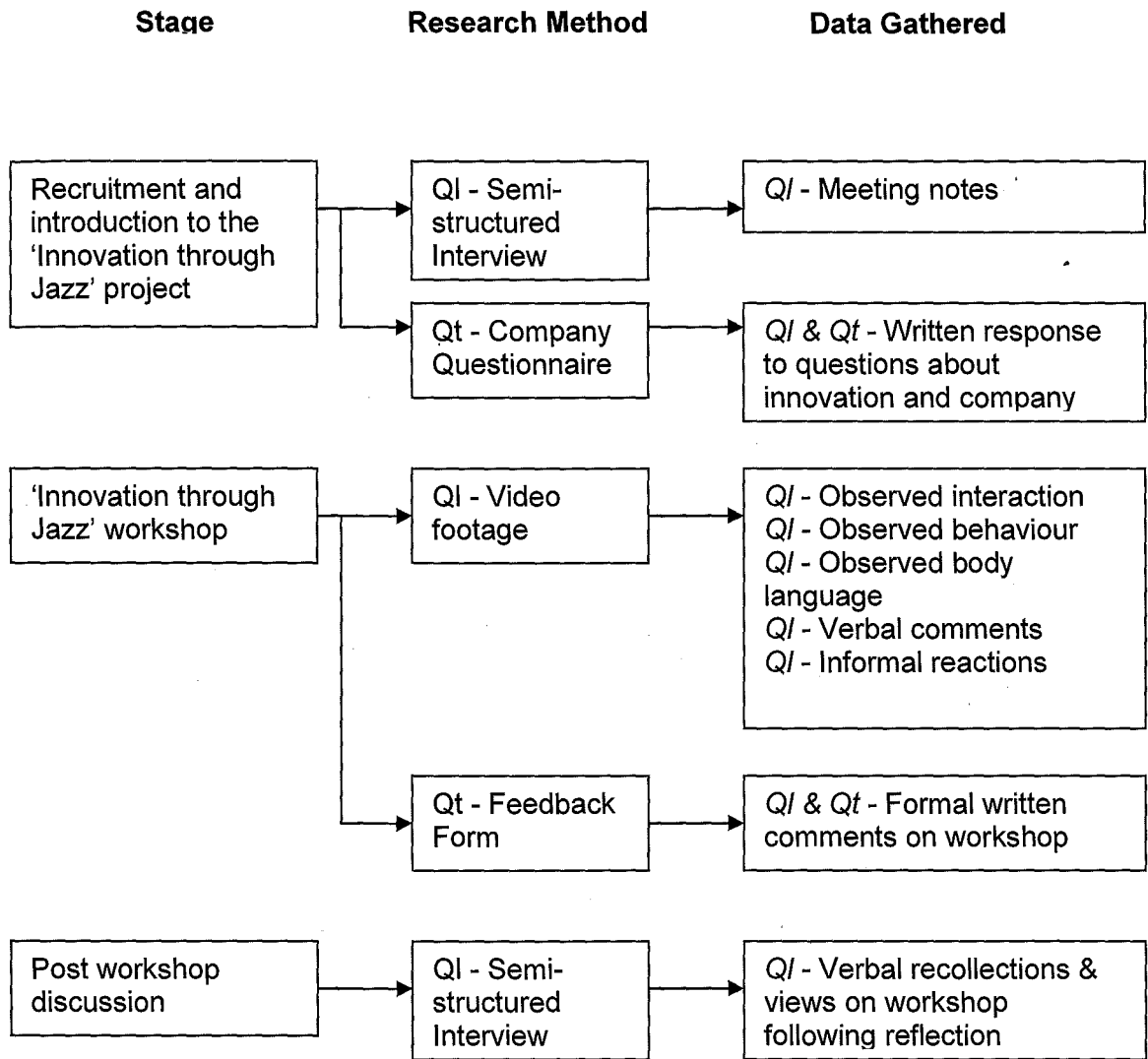
Source: McNeill & Chapman, 2005, p.23 – based on Worsley, 1977, p.89

Given the involvement of the author in the recruitment of the participating organisations, in the design and delivery of their 'Innovation through Jazz' workshops and in their observation and research for this study, her level of involvement is relatively high. Taken in conjunction with the relatively small sample of sixteen participating organisations, the above figure from McNeill & Chapman (2005) suggests potential suitability of the interview and observation techniques.

Cresswell (1994) offers a review of data collection methods and amongst these makes reference to the use of audio visual materials, in addition to the more traditional techniques of observation and interview as qualitative methods. Cresswell highlights the value of such techniques particularly when trying to tap into the participants' 'reality' (1994, p.151) or perspective – something with which this study is very much concerned.

As has been mentioned, a multi-method approach was taken to this research, triangulating the data from a number of different methods so as to build up a rich understanding of the concepts involved. The methods chosen will be discussed in more detail in the remainder of this chapter. Firstly however, it may be of value to offer a diagram to summarise the methods employed. Figure 3.8 seeks to do just this, highlighting when the various methods were used and the nature of the data they were successful in collecting. From this overview the methods employed will be discussed in more detail.

Figure 3.8 Research Methods Employed and Data Gathered



Key:

QI: Qualitative research approach or *data*
 Qt: Quantitative research approach or *data*

Whilst, as shown by figure 3.8, a variety of research methods were used in this study, the choice and application of methods developed through the duration of the research study. In recognition of the learning experience of the author, both about the undertaking of a research project and about the subject

of study, research with the first of the sixteen SMEs enrolled on the 'Innovation through Jazz' programme was undertaken as a 'pilot'. A pilot study Dane (1990) refers to as "*an abbreviated version of a research project in which the researcher practices or tests the procedures to be used in the subsequent full-scale project*" (1990, p.43). This was indeed the purpose of the author in treating the first research subject as a pilot, learning from this experience and enabling the refinement of approach with subsequent participants, increasing the value of the methods and the data collected.

A number of factors were taken into account in the selection of research methods, including the nature of the phenomena being explored, the audience with whom the research was being conducted, the author's ease with the different methods and the practicality of their use in this study. Given the complex nature of the phenomena being explored it was recognised that the use of multiple methods could add richness and rigour to the research and would allow the researcher the flexibility to use the method most appropriate to the situation and audience.

The primary methods employed in this study were interview, questionnaire and observation. The choice and application of these methods will be the focus of the following sections of this chapter.

3.5.2.1 Interview

Interviews were conducted by the author with individuals at the organisations participating in this study. The first interview preceded the 'Innovation through Jazz' workshop and was usually undertaken with the owner-manager of the business, typically the same person as who enrolled the organisation on the programme.

The purpose of this interview was multi-dimensional. In some cases it represented the organisation's initial meeting with the author of this paper and in the majority of cases it was also the first meeting with the lead jazz musician. Until this meeting contact would have been primarily via email and

telephone conversation. One purpose of the meeting therefore was to introduce the author and lead jazz musician, as designers and deliverers of the workshop, to the owner-manager. The meeting was carried out on the premises of the participating organisation and this enabled the author to develop a useful 'feel' for the organisation, helping to develop a picture for the organisation, its business, its culture, its environment and its employees.

Located within the funded 'Year of Innovation' programme, it was important as part of this wider programme, that the 'Innovation through Jazz' component delivered value to the participating organisations. This meeting therefore enabled information to be gathered about the business, the issues, opportunities, challenges it faces, the priority that innovation represents and the owner-manager's motivation for getting involved in the 'Innovation through Jazz' intervention. The meeting was used to explore possible ways in which the jazz metaphor could possibly be used to most advantage for them and themes for the workshop were sometimes selected / suggested at this stage.

The interview was conducted in a semi-structured way, providing a framework for the author to cover a number of different matters in the interview, but the detail of the discussion was very much free and flexible. Notes were taken at most of these meetings and some were taped.

Interviews were also carried out at the end of the research, a few weeks after the delivery of the 'Innovation through Jazz' workshop. These interviews were carried out again on the premises of the participating organisation, carried out this time by the author alone. The purpose of these interviews was to gather feedback on the workshop, the messages which seemed to have been most noted or most easily recalled and to gather thoughts on how well the jazz metaphor had worked.

These post-workshop interviews were typically carried out with two or three different people in each organisation. This was important, given the relativist, interpretivist paradigms within which the study was conducted, to gain insight into the various views and perspectives of the individuals involved in the

workshop. The choice as to with whom the interviews were carried out rested with the owner-manager who would typically suggest (and ask permission of) a couple of their employees. No pre-conceptions of the outcomes were communicated and it was very much stressed that the jazz approach was a novel way of exploring innovation and the purpose of the exercise was purely exploratory. There was no agenda of in any way seeking 'evidence' that it had or had not worked and this was stressed in all interviews. It was therefore requested, to limit bias, that interviews be conducted with multiple people in order to capture a diversity of perspectives.

These interviews were only very loosely structured, giving the author some control over the discussion but only so as to ensure the appropriate areas of interest were explored. The interviewee was given a significant amount of freedom to direct the conversation and to share their thoughts openly, with the author probing areas of particular interest.

Whilst providing valuable insight into the perspectives of those individuals engaged in the workshops, interviews can to some extent provide 'indirect' information filtered through the views of the interviewees (Cresswell, 1994). Given this study is concerned with the exploration of thoughts, attitudes, understanding and perceptions, it is valid to be exploring the 'filtered' perspectives of individuals. It is however essential that the researcher be sensitive to the potential for bias in what and how these perspectives are communicated, as a result of the researcher's presence. It is also important to be sensitive to the issue of not all people being equally perceptive or articulate and the effect this may have in the research gathered. Again, these are issues which will be explored further in discussion of the research findings.

The approach to interviewee selection, as discussed above, does have a number of limitations, including the potential for the views of those interviewed not to be representative of the wider workforce. This is an issue which the author is aware of and which will be discussed further in the chapter which follows this.

The data or insight gained from interviews was added to by other data collection techniques, notably questionnaire and observation and these research methods will be discussed further here.

3.5.2.2 Questionnaire

Whilst a primarily qualitative approach was taken to this study, the methods employed to gathering data included both qualitative and quantitative techniques. As a research method questionnaires are typically considered quantitative. The data they collect can however be qualitative and/or quantitative in nature and as highlighted in figure 3.8 questionnaires were used in this study to gather data of both types.

A number of different definitions exist for the term questionnaire (Oppenheim, 1992). In this study the term is used to reflect the predetermined set of questions, asked of each participant in the same order and in the same words and with the person answering the questions recording their own answers.

In this study, following the initial interview with typically the owner-manager at the participating organisations, the author would leave a Company Questionnaire with him / her to be completed and returned prior to the 'Innovation through Jazz' workshop. This questionnaire captured information useful both for the design of the workshop but also for gaining insight into the organisation, its attitude toward innovation and initial thoughts on jazz and its use here.

In designing the questionnaire the author took careful consideration of the number, type and wording of questions, the nature of response available to the respondent and any scales offered for capturing data. Use was made of a variety of question types such that a richness of data could be collected. A complete list of the questions contained in the questionnaire can be found in Appendix 4, however, specific questions can be highlighted to demonstrate the author's use of a variety of question types. Examples highlight the author's use of:

a/ open-ended questions

How do you think your employees feel about change?

b/ closed questions

Do you expect this level of competition [in your industry] to increase or decrease?

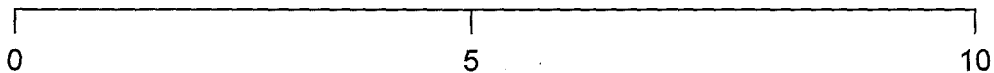
c/ ordinal scale or rating questions

On a scale of 1-5 how would you describe your growth aspirations for the company?

1	2	3	4	5
Decline in size	Stay same	Small Growth	Moderate Growth	Substantial growth

and d/ continuum scale questions

Put a X (cross) on the below line to indicate how innovative you feel your company is currently (0 lowest, 10 highest)



A copy of the Company Questionnaire used in this study is contained in the appendices section of this paper, along with the covering letter which accompanied it.

The questionnaire offered advantages in this study as a complementary method to add richness to the data and as a method which, as completed by the respondent themselves, may be at lower risk of interviewer bias (Gray, 2004) than some of the other methods employed in this study.

Feedback forms were another method used in this research and in many ways work in a similar way to questionnaires. Feedback forms again can be used to capture respondent answers to a set of predetermined set and order or questions. The popular use of such forms to gather feedback following events has resulted in the widely accepted term 'feedback form' but these are, in effect, the same as questionnaires.

Feedback forms represent another research method employed in this study and were used to gather thoughts (feedback) on the 'Innovation through Jazz' workshops from all participants.

A copy of the feedback form used is contained in Appendix 7 and this primarily made use of

a/ open-ended questions

What aspect of the workshop did you find most useful / interesting?

b/ closed questions with ordinal scales

<i>What did you think of...</i>	<i>1=Poor.....4=Excellent</i>			
<i>Content of the innovation & jazz workshop</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>

Clearly then, although typically considered tools of a quantitative nature, the data captured by the use of questionnaires and feedback forms in this study is both qualitative and quantitative and valuable in information provided for both the wider 'Year of Innovation' project and this research study.

The final research method employed in this study is that of observation and the final part of this section on research and data collection, offers a discussion of this particular method.

3.5.2.3 Observation

As has been discussed, the study discussed in this paper is concerned with exploring perceptions of, attitudes toward and, association with the concept of innovation. It seeks also to explore the impact that the jazz metaphor can have on those thoughts and given the workshop-based approach to exploring the jazz metaphor, observation offers an attractive method for research.

Given the author's role as Announced Participant (Gray, 2004) or Participant Observer (Saunders et al, 2000) her ability to carry out observation as effectively as possible could however be compromised by her parallel role delivering and participating in the workshops. Recognising this hurdle to effective observation, the author therefore made use of audiovisual equipment, namely digital video, to record the workshops.

Cresswell (1994) highlights the relative unobtrusiveness of using audiovisual techniques for recording observation as a benefit of this method for collecting data. The technique, he suggests, limits the potential for reaction to the method itself and hence exhibits lower risk of bias than some other research methods. Gray (2004, p.9) also suggests such unobtrusive methods have much to offer and advocates them as often representing "*flexible, creative and imaginative ways of collecting data*".

Video footage was taken of each of the 'Innovation through Jazz' workshops and the author used this record to review responses and reactions to the messages shared and the topics discussed in the workshop and to the use of jazz. By reviewing participants' physical reactions and expressions it may provide some insight into the effectiveness of the workshop and jazz approach and it also provides a record of their verbal responses, language a useful insight into their thoughts.

Observation, interview and questionnaire represent the three primary methods for researching and collecting data for the study discussed in this paper. By

combining methods, or 'triangulating' (Denzin, 1970) it is the intention of the author that a greater understanding can be developed about the complex concepts with which this study is concerned. The combination of methods is indeed an approach advocated as "*a strategy that adds, rigor, breadth, and depth to any investigation*" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p.4) and this is the intention for their use here.

Having discussed the research methods employed in this study, the author will briefly provide an outline of the data gathered using these methods, before concluding the body of discussion around methodology with an exploration in section 3.6 of possible limitations of the chosen approach.

3.5.3 Data

The author has outlined in preceding sections of this chapter detail of the different levels of sample with which research was carried out and the multitude of methods which were employed for gathering data. She has also made reference to her learning experience, both in relation to the phenomena being researched and in relation to the undertaking of a research study, with the research approach being adapted to benefit from these learnings.

These factors combine to provide a rich, albeit not uniform, set of data with research methods applied in a flexible way so as to take account of their effectiveness, appropriateness and practicality in the context of each organisation and workshop. The resultant data set, as highlighted by figure 3.9 is multi-faceted and provides valuable material for analysis, triangulation and discussion.

Figure 3.9 Summary of Data Gathered⁶

		Pre-intervention			Workshop Intervention					Post-intervention	
		Pre-workshop interview		Questionnaire	Workshop DVD			Workshop feedback forms		Post-workshop interviews	
		Notes	Taped							Notes	Taped
Organisation IC1	In-company workshop	✓			✓					✓	✓ MD
Organisation IC2	In-company workshop	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓ MD
Organisation IC3	In-company workshop	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓ ✓ ✓ incl MD
Organisation IC4	In-company workshop	✓		✓	✓					✓	✓ ✓ ✓ incl MD
Organisation IC5	In-company workshop	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓ ✓ ✓ MD + son
Organisation IC6	In-company workshop	✓		✓	✓					✓	✓ ✓ ✓
Organisation IC7	In-company workshop	✓		✓	✓					✓	✓ ✓ ✓
Organisation IC8 / JC1	In-company workshop & Jazz Club	✓		✓	✓					✓	✓ ✓ ✓
Organisation JC2	Jazz Club			✓						✓	
Organisation JC3	Jazz Club			✓						✓	
Organisation JC4	Jazz Club			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Organisation JC5	Jazz Club			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Organisation JC6	Jazz Club			✓				✓	✓	✓	
Organisation JC7	Jazz Club			✓						✓	
Organisation JC8	Jazz Club			✓			✓ (P1, P2)	✓ (P1)	✓ (P2)	✓	
Organisation JC9	Jazz Club			✓			✓			✓	
Various	Public Workshops				✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Key MD = Managing Director
 P1 = Partner 1, P2 = Partner 2

Source: Author's own

⁶ The names given to the organisations are fictitious so as to protect their identity. Those allocated an 'IC' number represent organisations engaged in-depth with in-company 'Innovation through Jazz' workshops. Those allocated a 'JC' number represent organisations engaged in the Jazz Club.

Whilst figure 3.9 provides a useful summary of the data gathered throughout this study, for data to be of value it needs to be analysed and interpreted and in doing so turned into information. Information is described by Diamantopolous & Schlegelmilch as "*the product of data*" (2000, p.8), in effect "*the knowledge obtained and conclusions arrived at after appropriate analytical techniques have been applied*" (ibid). This is the aim of chapter four of this paper where the data and findings of this study will be fully explored and implications of the study discussed.

The key findings of this study are grouped into themes and discussed under appropriate headings. Identification of these themes was the result of a careful, thorough and considered iterative process of reviewing, analysing, synthesising and continually reflecting upon the data. This process involved review and analysis of questionnaires, workshop notes, interview notes and transcripts. The interviews that had been conducted before and after the workshops provided the most complex data sets. Both the audio recordings and the interview transcripts were reviewed a number of times, first as individual interviews and then on a comparative basis.

The analysis was conducted at three levels:

- Within individual interviews, issues of high personal salience were identified through emphasis, use of emphatic and insightful language and repetition of themes.
- A full-sample cross-case analysis was conducted in order to highlight commonalities and differences of perspective and experience. This process identified common areas of discussion, shared ideas, repeated language, terms and issues.
- A further cross-case analysis was conducted at the firm level, in order to explore commonalities and differences of perspective with and across the participating organisations.

Having identified possible themes the author then pulled these together with the aid of a spider-diagram or mind-map to identify relationships, connections and to cluster themes. The questionnaires, workshop notes, interview notes, and transcripts were then reviewed again to make sure nothing had been missed or overlooked. The data was reviewed alongside a continued review of the literature and this meant that the author could continue informing her thinking and understanding and continue heightening her sensitivity to possible themes and issues. New themes did emerge through this process and the author maintained a flexible, open-minded and reflective approach to this process to ensure that her review of the data was comprehensive.

Chapter four of this paper will fully explore and discuss the findings of this study however before doing so it is important for the author to build upon the discussion offered so far on the methodological underpinnings of this study, with a discussion of the possible limitations of the chosen approach. This is the objective of section 3.6, the closing section of this chapter.

3.6 Limitations of the Methodological Approach

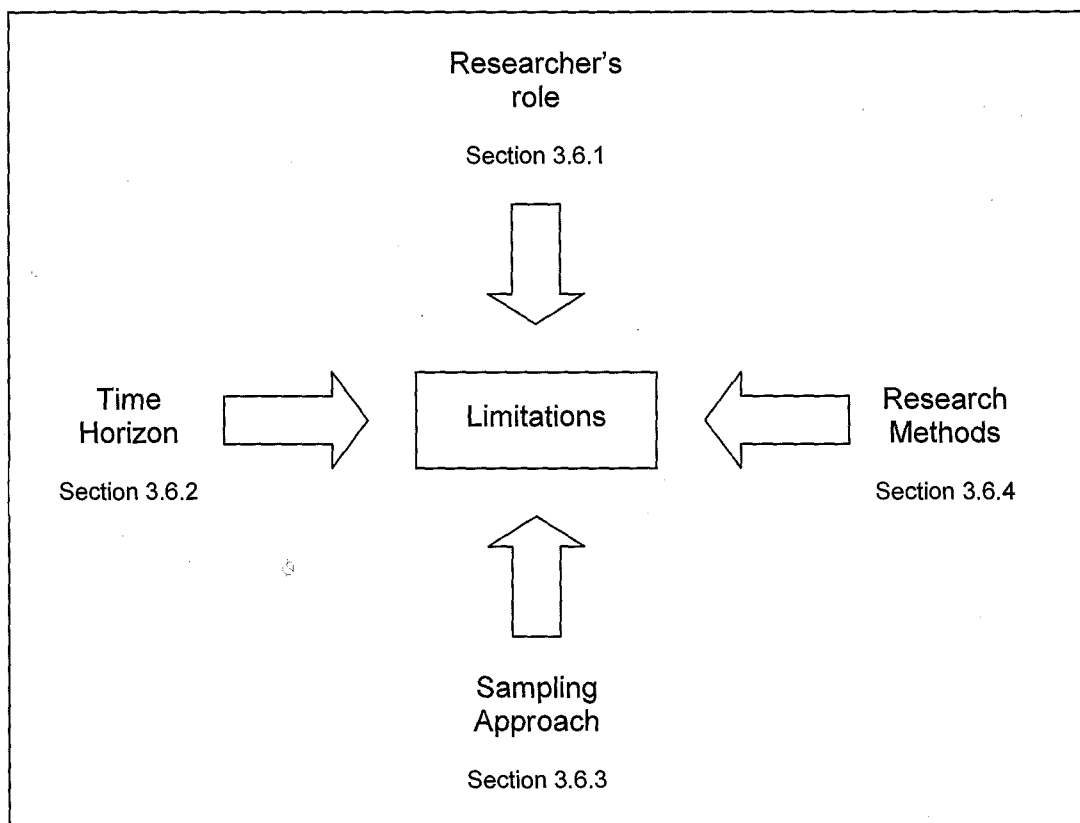
This chapter has so far provided a detailed discussion of the key methodological considerations underpinning the research study undertaken by the author. Although centred within the field of small business innovation, the study has been outlined as one concerned primarily with human thought, experience, behaviour and perceptions and with limited previous research in this field is positioned as an explorative social study.

Built upon the author's relativist ontological worldview, the study is concerned with researching the phenomena of interest from the perspective of the individual research subjects involved. It is in reference to the particular philosophical paradigms of interpretivism, phenomenology and social constructionism that the research has been carried, with all findings recognised as being both subjective and contextual.

The nature of the study and the chosen philosophical perspectives drive the choice of a primarily qualitative methodological approach. Particular use was made of interviews and observation for uncovering the rich conceptual issues involved, but with benefit also derived from the complementary use of questionnaires and feedback forms, providing a mixed method approach to the research.

These methodological choices and approaches do however have their limitations and it is important that these be outlined and discussed. The author concludes this chapter therefore with a discussion of these limitations, grouped under the four main areas of limitation identified by the author and captured in figure 3.10 below.

Figure 3.10 Limitations of the Methodological Approach



Source: author's own

The study, as has been discussed earlier in this paper, was located within the wider 'Year of Innovation' programme undertaken by the University of Gloucestershire. This wider project was funded to assist the region's small and medium-sized enterprises to develop their understanding and ability to innovate, helping to enhance their competitiveness and that of the region.

The 'Year of Innovation' programme had a significant influence on many aspects of this study, including its design, scale, duration and focus. Implications for the sampling approach are important to acknowledge and these will be discussed further in section 3.6.3. The influence and limitations of the wider project on the author's role and the study's timescale are also key issues and are consequently discussed here.

3.6.1 Limitations of the Researcher's Role

The author, as has been mentioned, was involved both in a research capacity and in that of the design and delivery of the jazz workshops. Her role can be described as that of 'Announced Participant' (Gray, 2004) or 'Participant Observer' (Saunders et al, 2000) and necessitated a transparency with the workshop participants if any associated bias was to be minimised. Such multiplicity of role could however have risked compromising the author's ability to deliver an effective workshop alongside carrying out effective observational research. The author was sensitive to this potential and consequently included in her choice of research methods, the use of audiovisual equipment, namely digital video, to record the workshop experience, comments and behavioural reactions.

The author was also sensitive to the potential influence her multiple roles could have had on the participant interviews and workshop feedback. As an employee of the University of Gloucestershire and as designer, deliverer and participant of the 'Innovation through Jazz' workshops it was possible that a participant may not have wanted to have been seen to be dismissing the value of the work of the project or those engaged in it. Should this be the case so

they might have had a tendency perhaps to be overly positive or polite about their experience and the value of the jazz metaphor. Recognising the potential for bias caused by this issue, the author emphasised the exploratory nature of the study and the desirability of frank, open and honest feedback.

3.6.2 Limitations of the Time Horizon

Another area of influence resulting from the study's location with the wider Year of Innovation relates to the timescale over which organisations were engaged on the 'Innovation through Jazz' programme and hence the timescale over which primary research could be undertaken. The horizon over which organisations were involved and hence could be studied was relatively short and the author recognised it unlikely that changes in behaviour as a result of the innovation discussions and jazz engagements would be observable. The research methodology necessitated therefore a focus upon thoughts, attitudes, perceptions and understanding of innovation. Had a longer timeframe been available for this study the author would have been interested to involve participants in a number of engagements and interactions and to research observable changes as well as attitudinal ones, over a longer period.

3.6.3 Limitations of the Sampling Approach

The wider 'Year of Innovation' project set criteria for the involvement of interested organisations in the 'Innovation through Jazz' component and selected sixteen as the number of organisations to be involved. These factors clearly impacted the sample with which the author could conduct this study.

Organisational participation in the project was, as has been discussed, on a voluntary and free-of-charge basis, with organisations able to volunteer their involvement as a result of interest in the programme. Although there were criteria which had to be met to qualify for involvement and some element of screening by the 'Year of Innovation' project team, the sample can be

considered primarily self-selecting (Saunders et al, 2000). The motivation for enrolment is therefore an important consideration for the author.

One possible source of motivation was felt by the author to be the level of press interest that the project generated from its very beginning. This could have motivated involvement driven by, for example, the opportunity to raise the organisation's profile, positively associating itself with an innovative project being run by the university and providing an attractive platform for the organisation to showcase its innovative achievements to date. Such motivation could have an influence on the respondents' behaviour and research findings and as such the author must be sensitive to this issue.

Where a convenience or self-selecting approach is taken to sample selection another concern can be that of representativeness, with such approaches prone to bias (Saunders et al, 2000). The population is likely to exhibit significant variation given its diversity and in light of the author's interpretative, relativist worldview it is unlikely that generalisations will be able to be made about the population from the sample researched in this study.

3.6.4 Limitations of the Research Methods

With limited exploration to date in to the value of the application of jazz in developing thinking, understanding and learning about innovation, this research study has been undertaken as a primarily explorative piece of research, concerned with gathering research in relation to human thought, experience and behaviour.

A primarily qualitative methodological approach was therefore taken to exploring the complex phenomena with which this study is concerned, with particular use made of interviews and observation, but with benefit also derived from mixing methods and the use of the more quantitative techniques of questionnaires and feedback forms.

Questionnaires were completed shortly after enrolment onto the 'Innovation through Jazz' project. Only one questionnaire was completed for each organisation however, typically by the owner-manager. A limitation of this approach is that it did not capture the richness of views that it would have, had other members of the organisation also been asked to complete it.

As a self-administered questionnaire the data can also be vulnerable to a number of issues, including the respondent's motivation and their interest in form-filling. Care was consequently taken by the author to ensure the questionnaire was self-explanatory, logically sequenced, clear and uncluttered, making it as simple as possible to complete.

Another limitation with questionnaires is the potential for measurement error or imperfect responses due to badly worded questions, poor scales, or the lack of a 'don't know' or 'not applicable' option. There can also be potential for systematic error if individuals were, say, to overrate their innovative abilities, perhaps wanting to portray themselves positively. The author consequently must be sensitive to any such issues. The questionnaire was however used as part of a mixed method research strategy and in complement with other methods, adding to the richness of data and gathering data of both a qualitative and quantitative nature.

Interviews formed another important method in gathering data for this study, with post-workshop interviews typically carried out with two or three different people in each organisation. It was important, given the relativist, interpretivist paradigms within which the study was conducted, to gain insight into the various and potentially diverse views and perspectives of the individuals involved in the workshop. The choice as to with whom the interviews were carried out however rested with the owner-manager who would typically themselves suggest (and ask permission of) a couple of their employees. The author must be sensitive to potential for bias in the selection of these employee representatives, for although asked that these represent some of the diversity of view in the workforce, the choice of individuals will impact the data gathered through this method. Whilst potentially representing

the diversity of views, it will not give the author a good feel for the degree to which different views are shared and the representativeness of the data.

The final key research method used in this study is that of digital video, to record the workshop experience, comments and behavioural reactions. Whilst establishing a relatively objective record of the workshop, limitations can still exist in relation to the quality of the video, in participants' response to being videos and in the author's analysis and interpretation of the footage.

3.6.5 Conclusion

Whilst a number of limitations exist in relation to the research methodology employed in this study, there will be limitations in the undertaking of any research study. What is essential is that these are identified, that the researcher's choices are informed by an awareness of both the benefits and limitations of particular approaches and that decisions are taken informed by this. The author has, in the preceding section, identified many of the limitations applicable to this study and it is informed by these that she now leads the reader to chapter four where the findings from this study are discussed in depth.

Chapter 4

Research Findings

4.1 Introduction

It is the aim of this chapter to present and discuss the key findings from this study, building upon discussion in previous sections of this paper regarding the aims, objectives and context of the study, related literature and the methodological approach taken to the research.

In outlining the findings it is valuable at all times to reflect upon possible limitations and potential for bias, as discussed in the sections which precede this one, as well as to relate the findings to issues highlighted in the literature review. As a study undertaken within the phenomenological and interpretive paradigms it is important also to reflect upon the individual and relativist perspectives with which this study is concerned.

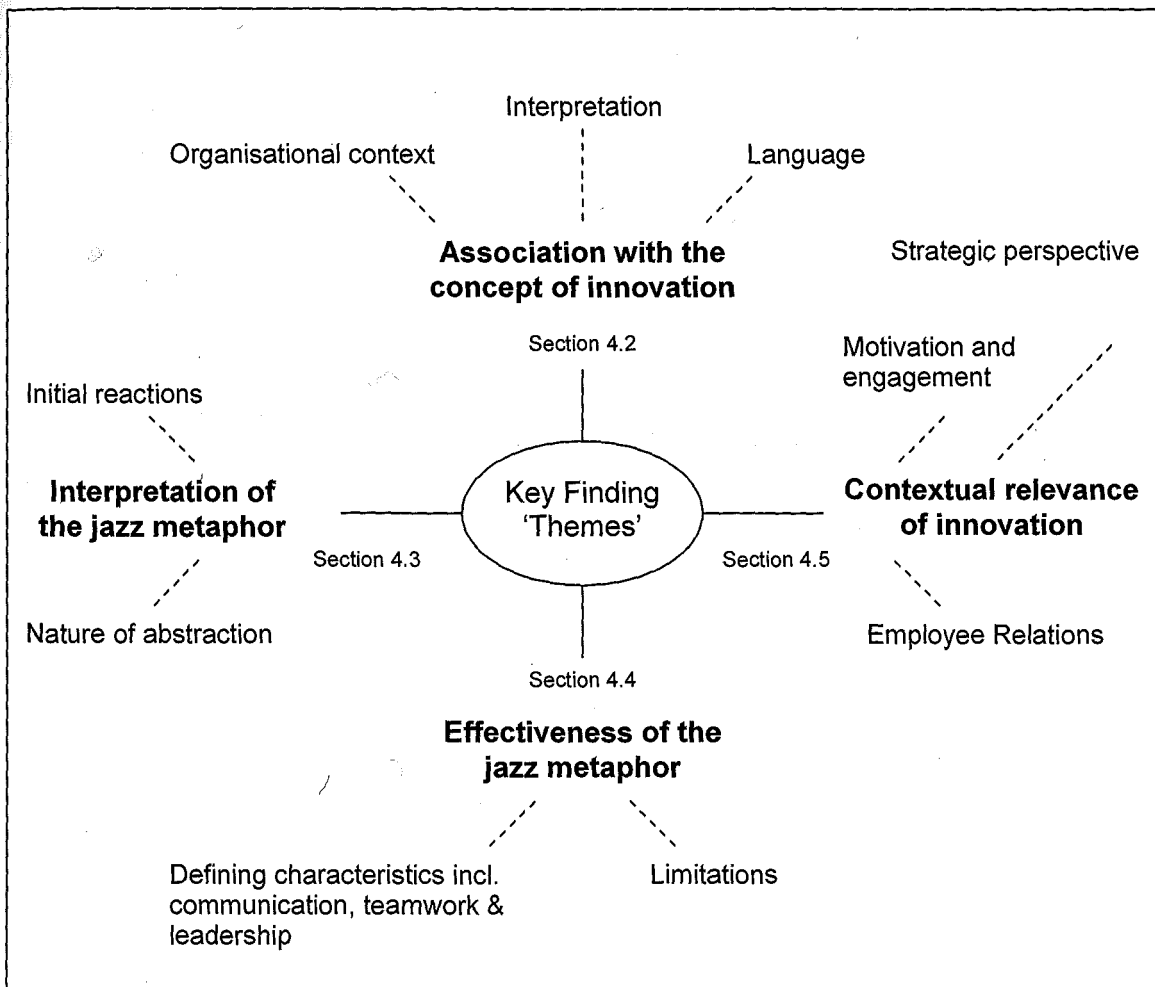
This study draws upon three partially overlapping data sets: 'A' which contains all participants of the 'Innovation through Jazz' public workshops; 'B' which contains all participants of the 'Innovation through Jazz' in-company or Jazz Club workshops; and 'C' which contains just those individuals involved in the in-depth in-company workshops. The relationship between these data sets is captured by figure 3.5 in chapter three and it is with reference to all of these sets that findings are drawn for this study.

Following consideration and analysis of the research data the author has grouped the findings from this study into four key themes, namely:

- Association with the concept of innovation
- Interpretation of the jazz metaphor
- Effectiveness of the jazz metaphor
- Relevance of the concept of innovation

These themes are depicted in figure 4.1 below along with some of the key issues identified within these broad themes.

Figure 4.1 Key Finding 'Themes'



Source: author's own

This chapter is focussed upon discussion and analysis of the findings from the research study, carried out with participants of the in-company, Jazz Club and public 'Innovation through Jazz' workshops. Discussion of these findings is

structured around the four key themes presented in figure 4.1; a framework that should hopefully provide useful structure to the reader and enable a coherent flow to the discussion.

This discussion commences with an exploration of the author's findings in relation to the extent and manner in which participants of the workshops associated with the concept of innovation.

4.2 Association with the Concept of Innovation

A key component of this study is an exploration of how the owner-manager and employees of SMEs relate to the concept of innovation, what they understand it to mean and how relevant they see it to be to their organisation.

4.2.1 Articulation of the Word 'Innovation'

An interesting finding with which to commence this discussion relates firstly to respondents' ability to articulate the word 'innovation', aside from any explanation of its conceptual meaning. During the post-workshop interviews a question asked of Respondent 11C8/JC1 encouraging him to say a bit more about innovative aspects of the workshop drew the response "*There has to be innovation, I guess, because Jazz is in...innov...innovative. Sorry! It's that word!*" Similarly, in response to being asked about what the key messages of the 'Innovation through Jazz' workshop might have been, Respondent 4IC3 responded "*Being in...innNov...ative! I can't say that! [laughter]*"

The word is not perhaps the easiest of words to articulate, the author appreciates this, however does wonder if respondents' difficulty with the word comes not only from its form but the limited use employees of SMEs may make of the word. Their limited exposure to the word, even the concept, would not be unsurprising, as highlighted by the work of Chell (1987, p.210) as part of her discussion regarding lower level employees' lack of interest and association with organisational and particularly strategic matters "*Shop floor*

workers, in general, prefer to discuss issues which affect them directly, and have less interest in, or enthusiasm for, organisational policy”

The enthusiasm of SME employees toward innovation is a significant focus for this study and will be discussed much more richly throughout the rest of this chapter. Another interesting perspective in relation to the difficulty shown in articulating the word ‘innovation’ is however of value to highlight here and comes from the work of Stanworth & Curran (1973). They suggest that the small-business owner manager is unlikely to have had formal management training and thus “*does not speak the current fashionable jargon of the social scientists*” (1973, p.13). If the small-business owner-manager thus does not use such management jargon it would not be surprising to see his employees unsure of the words themselves, including that of ‘innovation’.

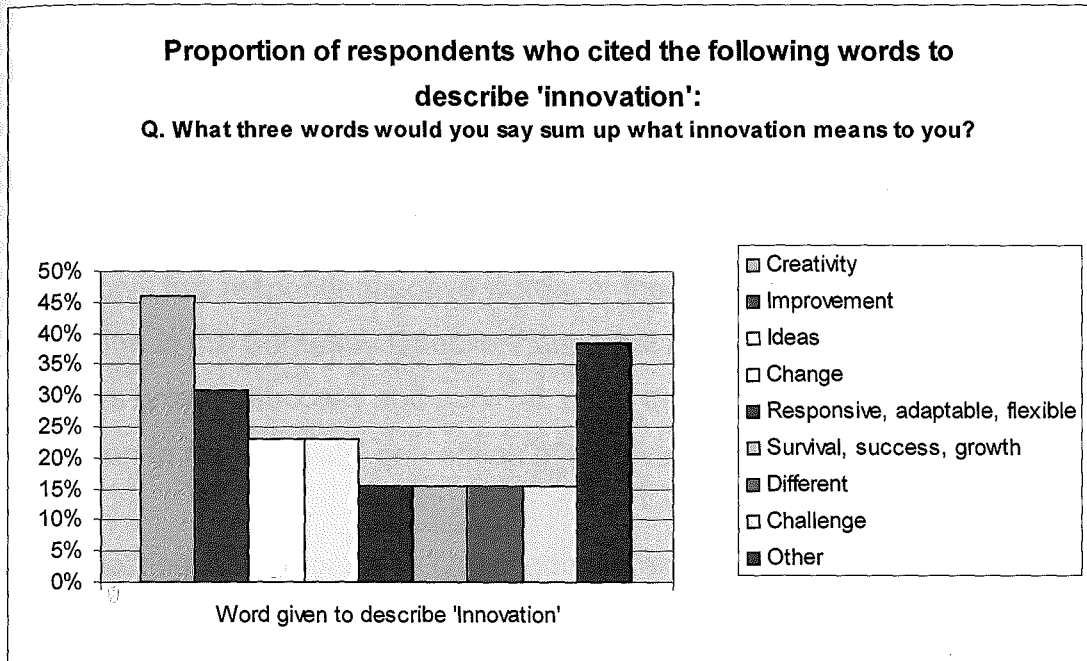
4.2.2 Articulation of the Concept of Innovation

A Company Questionnaire was completed by each of the owner-managers prior to their further engagement in the project and prior to delivery of the ‘Innovation through Jazz’ workshop. One of the questions here focussed specifically on developing a picture of the things with which the owner-managers associate innovation and to this end a question included in the questionnaire asked:

Q. What 3 words would you say sum up what innovation means to you?

Figure 4.2 summarises the words most frequently given in response to the question.

Figure 4.2 Words Offered to Describe 'Innovation'



Source: author's own

As shown by figure 4.2, nearly a half (46%) of all respondents included the word '*creativity*' (or for example '*being creative*') as one of their three words to sum up innovation. '*Improvement*' (and '*improving things*') was a characteristic noted by nearly one third of respondents (31%), with '*ideas*' and '*change*' the next most frequently given responses, each given by 23% of the respondents.

The response '*other*' included such words as '*imaginative*', '*open-mindedness*', '*forward thinking*', '*resourceful*', '*new approaches*', '*product development*', '*inspire*', '*passion*' and '*excelling*' each given by one respondent.

Having discussed the concept and qualities of innovation earlier in this paper, the author would propose that none of the responses given to this question is contentious. Indeed all of the words given sit comfortably with the concept of innovation and reference to all such characteristics can be found in the literature, for example creativity (Henry, 2001a, Tidd et al, 2001, Goffin &

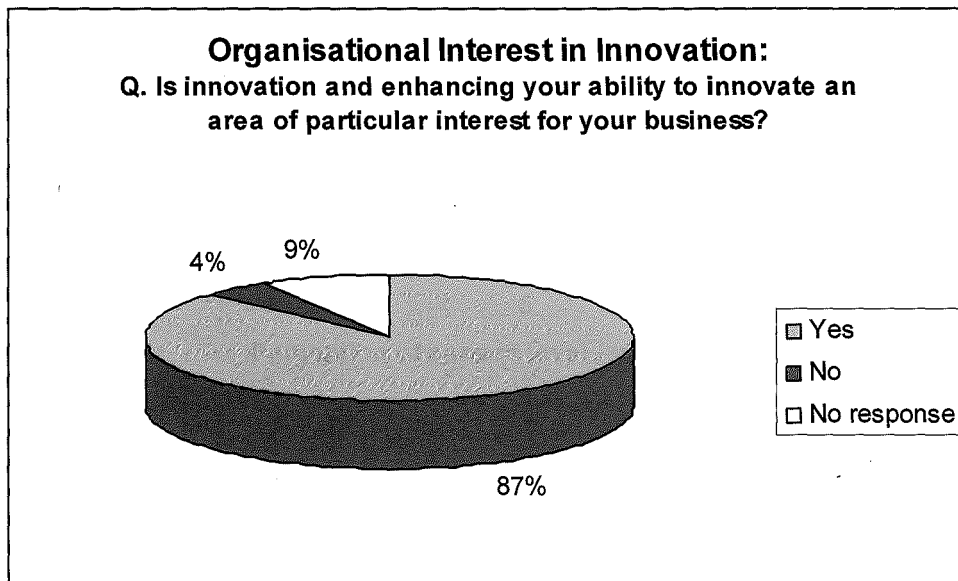
Mitchell, 2005) change (Henry & Mayle, 2002, Utterback, 1998, Tidd et al, 2001), survival (Utterback, 1998), different (Mintzberg, 1979), resourcefulness (Carter & Jones-Evans, 2000), product development (Peters & Waterman, 1982).

4.2.3 Association with the Need to Innovate

Whilst only two respondents gave words, in their choice of three to sum up innovation in the Company Questionnaire, that associated innovation with business growth, success and survival, other questions did gather useful data in relation to respondents' perception of the need to innovate.

One question in the Company Questionnaire asked respondents whether innovation and enhancing their organisational ability to innovate were areas of particular interest for their business. As shown in figure 4.3 below, 87% of the questionnaire respondents answered that it was.

Figure 4.3 Organisational Interest in Innovation

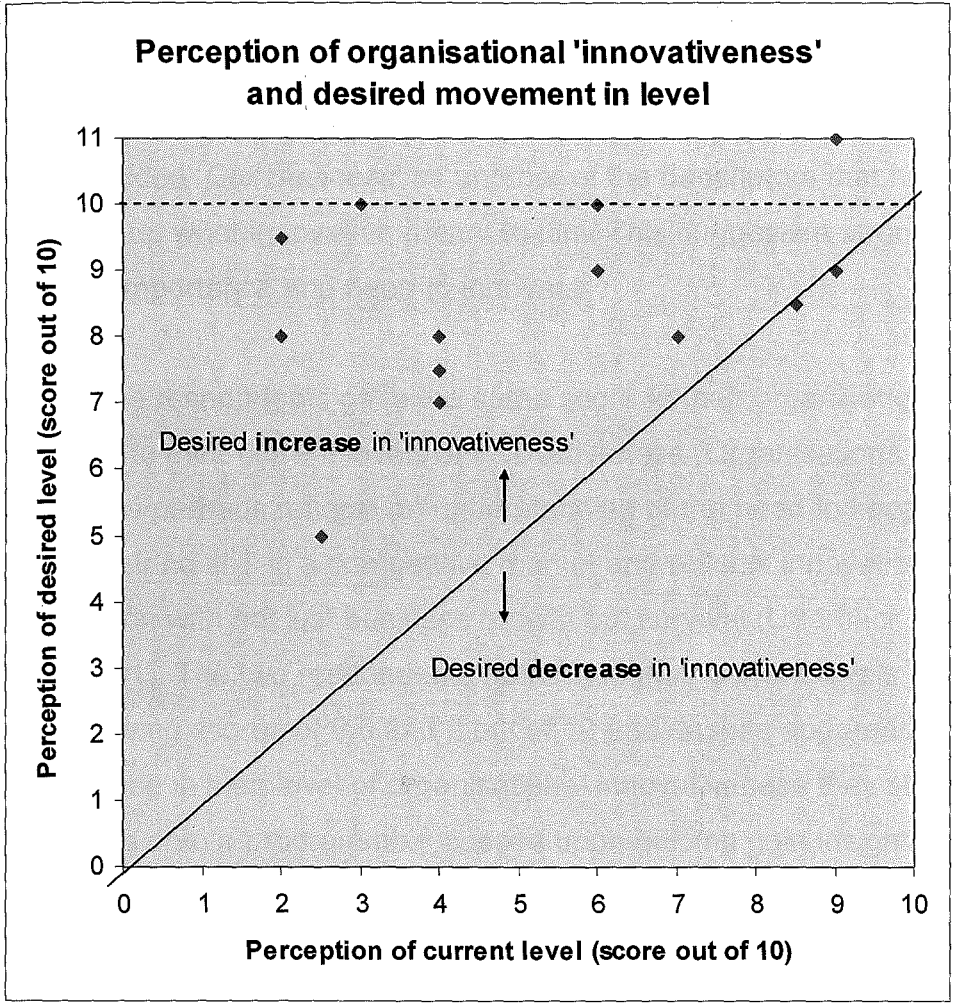


Source: author's own

Further questions in the questionnaire introduced the idea of organisational innovativeness and asked respondents to rate the innovativeness of their organisation in both 'actual' and 'ideal' terms

Figure 4.4 below plots the responses to these questions and highlights any disparity between how innovative respondents perceive their organisations to be currently and how innovative they would want them to be.

Figure 4.4 Perception of Actual and Ideal Levels of Innovativeness



Source: author's own

Respondents rated their organisation's current level of innovativeness from 2 as the lowest score, up to 9 as the highest. Ratings for desired levels of innovativeness varied from 5 to 11, with all respondents desiring a level of organisational innovativeness of at least that which they perceived to exist currently. Such desired increase in innovativeness is not a surprising finding

given this study focussed upon organisations enrolled on to a programme focussed upon innovation and enhancing capabilities to innovate.

Individual responses of particular interest include that for Organisation JC2, for example, where the owner-manager's son scored their current level as 9 and desired level as 11. As an organisation already considered by the respondent as innovative, he himself is apparently being innovative too, challenging the scale provided! Interestingly this is the same individual who associated innovation with '*Business Growth*' as captured by the three words he offered as summing up what innovation meant to him. This respondent also provided '*Our Business*' as another of the descriptors that he felt summed up what innovation meant to him. This suggests a strong association with the importance and need to innovate.

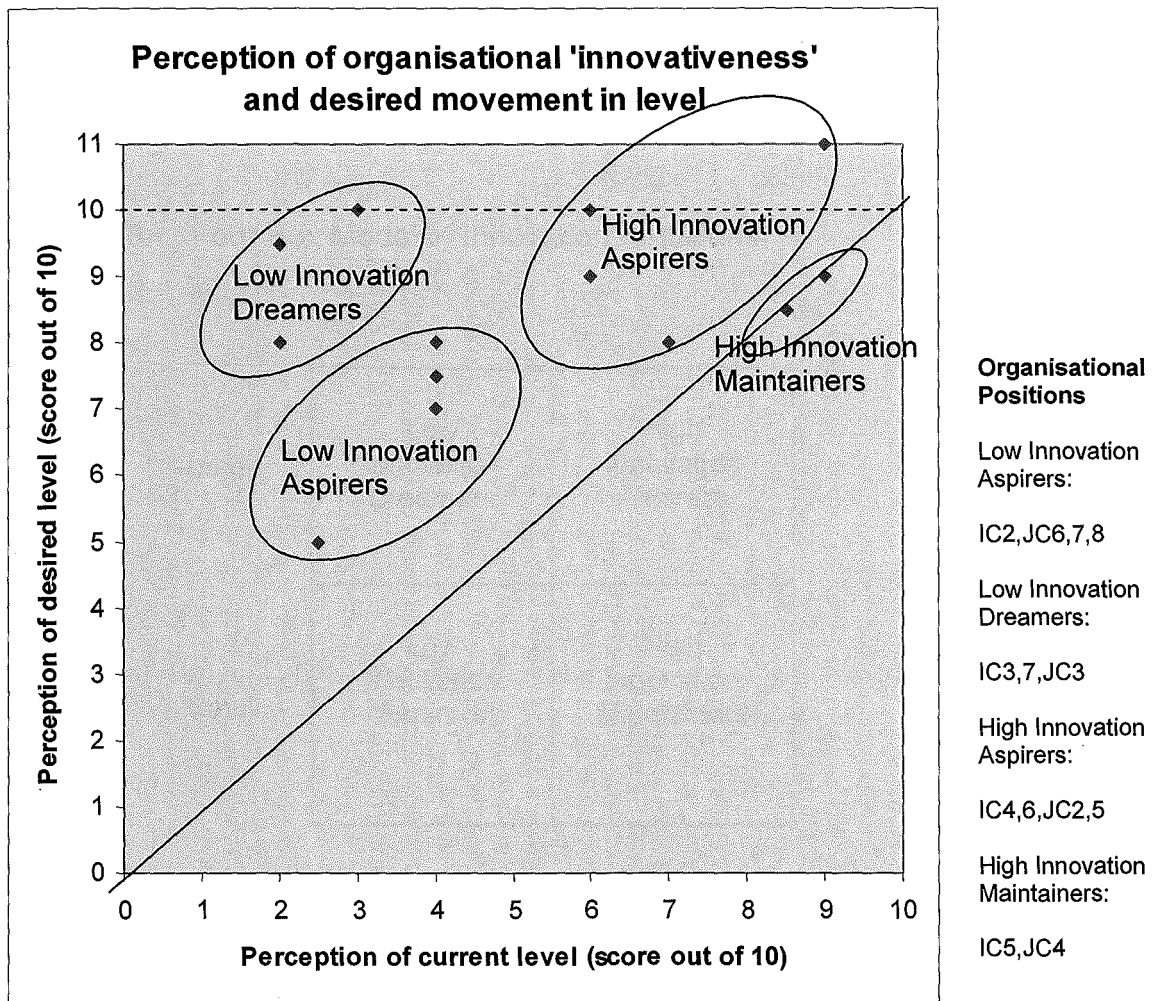
Two of the respondents gave the same score to their organisation's desired levels as to their current levels of innovativeness (Organisations IC5 and JC4). This perhaps reflects an understanding of the need to keep innovating to even 'stand still' in a competitive market and reflects innovation's association with not just business growth but survival (Utterback, 1998, Tidd et al, 2001). The two respondents both rated their current levels of innovation highly, giving scores of 8.5 and 9 out of 10 and despite apparently not seeking an increase in their level of organisational innovativeness they still enrolled their firms onto a programme focussed upon helping gain insight into innovation and developing organisational capability to continue innovating.

The author was surprised how low some of the individuals scored their organisations' current levels of innovativeness, 54% giving their organisations a score of 4 or below. This perhaps reflects the voluntary nature of the 'Innovation through Jazz' programme and its potential appeal therefore to organisations dissatisfied with their current levels of innovation and wishing to drive an increase in their innovation activity and capability. It may also indicate a weak association with the concept of innovation and hence a nervousness about rating themselves highly in this area. A lack of association with the

concept of innovation could be understandable given the limited education often undertaken by small firm owner-manager (Stanworth et al, 1982).

There is significant diversity in the organisations involved in this study as there is in the levels of innovativeness they currently perceive and desire. There are however, the author would like to suggest, some interesting patterns in the data and these are tentatively proposed by the author in figure 4.5.

Figure 4.5 Patterns in Perceptions of Innovativeness



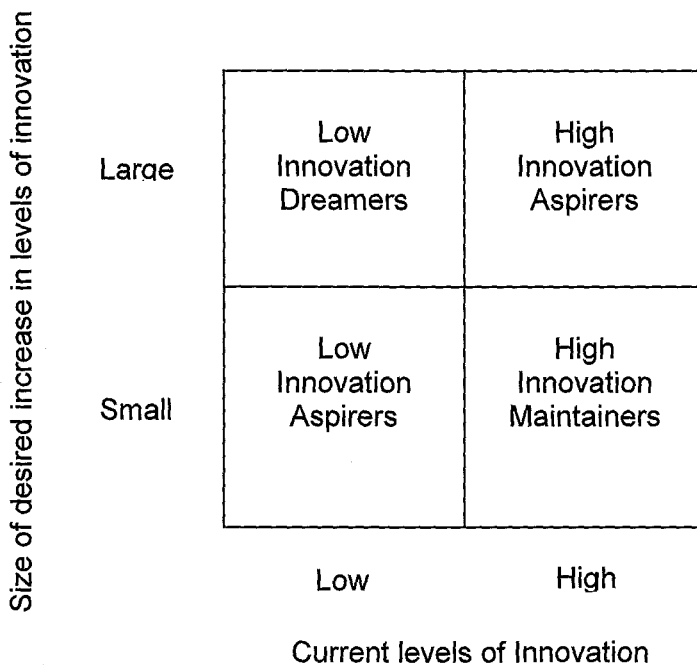
Source: author's own

Whilst making generalisations about a sample characterised by such diversity can be dangerous, particularly working within the relativist paradigm, the identification of patterns and models can help enrich understanding.

In preference to seeing just a dispersed set of data relating to innovation levels and ambitions, it is interesting to identify potential groupings of these organisations. The author has done just this; proposing four groupings in the data and naming these groupings as Low Innovation Aspirers; Low Innovation Dreamers; High Innovation Aspirers and High Innovation Maintainers.

These groupings and associated variables can be converted into a four box model and may be an interesting model against which later findings can be related and perhaps in to which further research can be conducted in the future.

Figure 4.6 Four Box Model of Innovation Ambitions



Source: author's own

Having established a feel for the levels of innovativeness perceived to exist (and desired) in the participant organisations, it is of interest to build upon this

with a fuller exploration of what the workshop participants understand of the concept of innovation. This is the purpose of section 4.2.4.

4.2.4 Understanding of the Concept of Innovation

Qualitative data with regard to the words, features or qualities that small-business owner-managers and employees associate with innovation was captured during the post-workshop interviews.

The managing director of Organisation IC4 (Respondent 1IC4) had an exceptionally rich understanding of the concept of innovation. His grasp and articulation of the concept far exceeded that of the managing directors and employees of the other participant organisation and was undoubtedly a reflection of their significant innovation capabilities, evidenced for example in their winning of the Queens Award for Innovation earlier that same year.

The managing director (Paul¹) of Organisation IC4 demonstrated both understanding, reflection and contextualisation in his articulation of innovation:

“We’re pretty good at the product side, but we don’t seem able to make the jump to processes and systems and other things we make, in terms of how we think” “It’s very easy for us to think about tangible items and have them on the table and work with them. It’s very difficult to think about the intangible items and we haven’t quite translated some of the skills we’ve got in one area to the other, and I think that’s what we’re trying to do” “We just want to create more change in our processes, different ways of thinking, different ways of thinking about our market or with our suppliers to help take it forward”.

In this passage we can see reference being made to a number of the dimensions of the innovation space (Tidd et al, 2001) with product and process innovation clearly referenced.

Notably, the managing director of Organisation IC4 was also one of only two respondents who gave words, in their choice of three to sum up innovation in

¹ As discussed in chapter three, the names of all respondents from the involved organisations are fictitious to protect their identity.

the Company Questionnaire, which associated innovation with business growth, success and survival. This further implicates a more sophisticated and strategic understanding of innovation and its criticality to business.

Other responses captured in the post-workshops interviews give insight into perceptions of innovation from the perspectives of other managing directors, owner-managers and employees in the participant organisations. Some of the most insightful quotations are discussed here.

Respondent 3IC8/JC1 talks about innovation in behavioural terms, associating it primarily with ideas *"I think individuals can and are innovative... individuals can have ideas of improving things, it may well just affect their particular part of the organisation or indeed it may affect the whole organisation"*. Such description associates ideas with improvement and positive change and in discussing the potential impact of these ideas the respondent demonstrates an appreciation of varying degrees of change and a spectrum of innovation (Tidd et al, 2001, Weick, 1998).

From the same organisation, Respondent 1IC8/JC1 similarly associates innovation with ideas, improvement and positive change, not only drawing this association but commenting on the importance of innovation too. In response to being asked about whether he feels innovation is of importance to the business his response was *"Without a doubt. I mean, if we've got staff that are innovative and bringing ideas into the company, they may not necessarily be taken on board but the fact that they're thinking of new ideas and trying to bring new ideas in, it can only be of benefit, an improvement to the way we run our business."*

These themes are echoed further by Respondent 3IC4, who similarly reflects upon the dimensions of innovation and the opportunity that doing things differently can present for doing things better *"In my case I'm not involved in creating new products and innovating in that respect, but even in my role and things associated with production and that sort of thing, I think I can still provoke. I think if you can do things differently, you can do things better."*

A comment by Respondent 11C3 implicates an association between innovation and it being difficult to do: *"I can understand from a perspective of a band how they like to be innovative, because you're doing something that you, you know, it's not really, it's like their vocation in life, so when they stood up in the band they actually love that and they'll go through hell and high water to go through that."* This response echoes the idea of innovation as a behaviour and as a potentially enjoyable behaviour of choice. Through use of the phrase *'hell and high water'* the respondent also however communicates a perception, or perhaps experience, of innovation being difficult.

The difficulty of innovation is a subject of much discussion in the literature, particularly the inherent uncertain nature of innovation (Tidd et al, 2001), the potential for mistakes and failures (Deakins & Freel, 2003, Kamoche & Cunha, 2001) and the need to accept and manage these risks (Deakins & Freel, 2003). Many people are however risk averse and are uncomfortable with and therefore strive to avoid risks (Burns, 2001) and as such the difficulty and lack of comfort with innovating, as expressed in the above passage is not a surprising finding. The contextual relevance of such a comment coming from the *employee* of an SME will be explored further as part of a rich discussion later in this chapter about the characteristics of small-business owner-managers and employment relations within such small firms.

A final finding in relation to the extent and manner in which SMEs understand and interpret innovation draws upon a comment from Respondent 21C7 and highlights the forward-looking, future-orientated perspective described in the literature as a characteristic of innovative organisations (Henry & Mayle, 2002, Storey, 2004). The respondent offers to the author his interpretation of innovation *"... looking at what the next task might be, which is what my idea is of what innovation would be"*. The emphasis in this interpretation is upon concern for the *next* task and in doing so echoes the future-orientated perspective of innovation.

This respondent goes on to say "... *innovation is 'what piece should we play next?'*". He uses this descriptor of innovation as part of a discussion of the limitations of the jazz metaphor (it being more concerned with the current task, or "*muddling through the particular tasks you've got in hand*"). His choice of language however makes use of musical references using the words "*piece*" and "*play*" and in doing so we see how the jazz metaphor has provided a language for the respondent to express his interpretation of innovation. Metaphors are discussed in the literature as valuable mechanisms for expressing things which might be hard to articulate in other ways (Henry, 2001a, Hatch, 1998) and this appears to be evidenced in this response.

As a study concerned not only with innovation in small firms but also the effectiveness of jazz as a metaphor for exploring innovation, this chapter will now move on to outline some of the key findings in relation to the jazz metaphor. This discussion will focus initially upon interpretations of the metaphor and will include an exploration of initial reactions to the metaphor and the nature of abstraction.

4.3 Interpretation of the Jazz Metaphor

Discussion about the way in which the jazz metaphor was interpreted provides valuable insight for this study and a useful starting point for this discussion is with an analysis of respondents' initial reactions to the use of the metaphor for exploring innovation. This is therefore the focus of the opening part of this discussion.

4.3.1 Initial Reactions to the Jazz Metaphor

Initial reactions to the jazz metaphor and its use for exploring innovation were captured in the pre-intervention Company Questionnaire, typically completed by the small-business managing directors or owner-managers. Reactions to the metaphor were also gathered in the post-workshop interviews and discussion here of the initial reactions draws upon both these data sources.

The pre-intervention questionnaire asked respondents *"When you saw that the University was putting jazz and innovation together, what were your initial thoughts about this link?"*

The majority of responses reflected an intrigue, a curiosity to explore this further and to find out why this link could have been made. Responses from the owner-managers or managing directors to this question included *"Bizarre / Curious"* (Organisation JC6), *"Strange!"* (Organisation JC4), *"Intrigued, wanted to know more"* (Organisation JC5), one of the respondents describing her initial thoughts about the link to be *"Positive. Innovative. Interesting"* (Organisation IC7).

A more common response however was that of a certain scepticism. A number of people commented on how it got them wondering how and why jazz and innovation could indeed be linked, the owner-manager of Organisation IC3 commenting that he was *"very sceptical at start"* and the manager of Organisation JC3 that, not fully understanding jazz, his initial reaction was one of *"near total incomprehension!"*

Whilst some participants felt a degree of uncertainty and even scepticism as to quite how this metaphor could apply and be useful in real business, for others the link seemed clearer with perhaps some pre-formed ideas as to why the link between jazz and innovation may have been posed. The managing director of Organisation IC4 shared his thoughts on this question... *"Jazz can be an innovative music form, there could be a link to industry. Let's see what message they have to give."* The respondent from Organisation IC6 went further, highlighting an area he could see there being an application *"Unusual but could visualise a link about teamwork for example."*

It was typically the SME managing director or owner-manager who completed the Company Questionnaire and, given it was they who enrolled the organisation on the 'Innovation through Jazz' programme, a positive reaction to the jazz metaphor might be expected. The post-workshop interviews were

however carried out with multiple personnel in each participant organisation and hence capture the reactions of other employees as well.

Comments in these interviews suggest a higher degree of scepticism amongst the workforces, Respondent 3IC6 for example commenting that *"There's a few of us that did think, at the start, you know, this is going to be a waste of time"*. Respondent 1IC8/JC1 similarly reflected upon the scepticism and negative initial reactions of a particular participant *"I had one person, who is usually particularly negative at these type of things, a member of staff, and he was commenting, making remarks about 'ah, this will be cr*p, blah de blah de blah' before the event"*.

For some people an awareness of the intended use of jazz music in the workshop and their dislike of this style of music, negatively impacted their expectations of the experience. Respondent 1IC6 suggested that *"Unfortunately a lot of people before they're coming in to attend they've already decided that they don't like jazz. I think that was the case with a few of them"*. Video footage from the workshop delivered with Organisation IC1 further provides evidence of some people's dislike of jazz with a workshop participant seen to have her fingers in her ears during one piece!

The extent to which individuals like jazz music and the impact this could have on the effectiveness of the workshops and the metaphor will be explored further in section 4.5 as part of a discussion of the limitations of the metaphor. The issue is however worth mentioning here as the publicised inclusion of jazz did appear to have an impact upon people's initial reactions.

Having introduced some of the initial reactions to the jazz approach, the author's discussion moves now to look at the way in which participants of the study related the jazz metaphor to innovation; the nature of their abstraction. This provides useful insight into the way in which individuals conceptualise innovation and leads the author thereafter toward a valuable discussion of the key qualities or messages taken from the use of the jazz metaphor for exploring innovation.

4.3.2 Nature of Abstraction

The manner by which the jazz metaphor was applied in the 'Innovation through Jazz' workshops drew a number of comments from respondents identifying the very *approach* itself as innovative. Respondent 11C6 made a number of comments in the post-workshop interview about the innovativeness of the approach: *"I think the innovation side of things is the approach."* *"I think at the beginning you talked a lot about innovation and to me the whole picture was innovation"*, *"I think the delivery was innovative so that made you think about the innovation side of things in the way it was being delivered"*.

Respondent 31C8/JC1 similarly identified innovation in the approach *"... it was a new way of presenting the message"* as did Respondent 31C6 *"It was an interesting and innovative way of portraying multiple aspects of doing business"*.

In comparison, Respondent 11C7 saw the jazz-focused workshop as delivering a demonstration of innovative *thought* *"I suppose it's a very graphic way of demonstrating the importance of communication and innovative thought and all those sorts of things"*.

An alternative perspective of is apparent in the post-workshop interview with Respondent 21C7 and in his reflection upon innovation and the applicability of jazz in *process* terms: *"There is such a thing as innovation where you can have a brainwave... but the market still has the answer 95% of the time I'd have thought"*. He goes on, in comparison, to describe a feature of jazz being *"to create something there and then and muddling through the particular tasks you've got in hand without looking at what the next task might be, which is what my idea is of innovation"*. It is the way in which new things are created or that change is brought about, that this respondent most closely associates the concept of innovation and against which he considers the jazz approach and it is, indeed, as a process that Tidd et al (2001) suggest innovation is most typically conceptualised.

Having introduced then some of the ways in which the jazz metaphor and its proposed link with innovation were interpreted, the author will now move on to provide a fuller discussion of the effectiveness of the metaphor in enhancing understanding of innovation and consequently capability to innovate. The following section of this paper will therefore explore these issues, offering a discussion of individual participants' overall views on the jazz workshop and the most notably cited messages identified from the workshops, before moving on to a discussion in section 4.5 of potential limitations of the approach and metaphor.

4.4 Effectiveness of the Jazz Metaphor

The opening focus for discussion of the effectiveness of the jazz metaphor will be general views of the 'Innovation through Jazz' approach, as expressed by participants of the workshops. Common themes can be identified in relation to how participants perceived the workshops and it is with reference to these themes that discussion here is structured. Section 4.4.1 explores these general views, focussing initially on comments about the innovative nature of the jazz approach and the attention it demanded, moving on to discuss comments about the relaxed and enjoyable style of the workshops and their thought-provoking nature.

Contrasting perspectives on the workshop from the managing directors of two of the involved organisations are discussed in more depth in section 4.4.2, followed by a discussion of the perceived relevance of jazz to business innovation. From here the author moves on to highlight and discuss the key messages that individuals appeared to take from the 'Innovation through Jazz' experience, comments clustered around the themes of teamwork; leadership; ideas and creativity; and communication and relationships.

4.4.1 General Views on the Jazz Workshop Approach

The general picture of feedback on the 'Innovation through Jazz' workshops was overwhelmingly positive. The following responses are typical of the expressed views of workshop participants, describing an approach which seems to have been enjoyable and informative:

"I thought it was very entertaining" (Respondent 11C5, managing director)

"Fantastic" "I love music" "very enjoyable" "I found it thoroughly enjoyable and quite useful as well" (Respondent 11C7)

"It was very good, thought we got a lot from it" (Respondent 11C4, managing director)

A number of respondents commented on the originality or innovativeness of the approach and drew positives from the novel or innovative approach.

Innovative

In response to the question *'What aspect of the workshop did you find most useful / interesting'*, asked of participants of the public 'Innovation through Jazz' workshops, comments captured on the feedback form included *"something different"*, *"new way to examine innovation"* and *"it was different!"*. Other responses, captured in the section for any other comments, described the workshop as *"refreshing"* and *"a breath of fresh air"*.

Such positive comments about the originality of the approach are supported by views captured in the post-workshop interviews. Respondent 21C6 for example praised the novel approach *"I thought the way of doing it with music was really different and quite a novel idea, you know, I thought it was really good, really interesting"*.

The managing director, Respondent 11C2, saw value in the jazz approach in the way it was able to simply convey the pertinent messages: *"I don't think*

you could do it without doing the jazz, to be honest, not as simply". Such a comment perhaps echoes the work of Henry (2001) who describes value in the use of metaphors, offering them as a way of *"making the strange familiar, summarizing insights and expressing related ideas"* (2001a, p.71) and able *"to express patterns that would be hard to articulate in other ways"* (ibid, p.65).

A number of respondents commented not only on the novelty of the approach but the benefit that this brought. One theme here relates to the multi-sensory experience of the 'Innovation through Jazz' workshops and the use of a live jazz band, expressed for example by a participant of one of the public workshops: *"Brilliant – visual, audial – good to remember, put into practice"*. Interestingly a number of people commented on the visual (rather than aural) nature of the jazz approach, for example Respondent 3IC6 commented in interview *"The music made it very visual"*:

Demanded Attention

The novelty of the approach itself seemed to keep people's attention in the workshop and appears to have made it more enjoyable. Respondent 3IC8/JC1 for example commented *"...it was a new way of presenting the message... I think that certainly helped to hold peoples' interest, for a lot longer and indeed I think people probably enjoyed it more"*. This respondent went on to suggest that such an approach might consequently be preferable to other, more traditional, styles of training *"I think people were probably more responsive to it because it was in that kind of environment rather than someone stood up by a flipchart and giving you facts-a-plenty"*.

Comments from the public 'Innovation through Jazz' workshops described the approach as one that *"keeps peoples' attention"* and *"demanded interest throughout"*. Respondent 2IC8/JC1 also commented on the attention this alternative approach commanded: *"I think because people hadn't done it before, it kept their attention even more, because they're all wondering what this is about and what's happening now"*.

The 'Innovation through Jazz' workshops clearly took a different approach to more traditional business training, making use of a live jazz band and engaging participants in music-making exercises. Higher levels of interest, attention and engagement were attributed to the inclusion of music specifically in the workshops. Respondent 11C8/JC1 described the approach as one *"...which I found quite useful and I found interesting and not boring"*. He went on to say *"It was the only workshop I've gone to I've never yawned at, they drive me, because it was different, interesting, I guess music was involved, so you're not likely to fall asleep when you've got a bit of music going on!"*.

Respondent 21C6 similarly reflected upon the value of this different approach and the higher levels of interest it was able to generate and sustain: *"I think it was completely different. I mean, we haven't considered doing it like that before, so, as I say we've done it in other ways before and, sitting in a classroom and, you know, twenty minutes and people tend to switch off or think about other things they could be doing, so doing it like that keeps your interest"*.

Relaxed and Enjoyable

The approach taken to the workshops seems to have made the experience more engaging but also more enjoyable and fun. Comments captured in relation to the public workshops described them as *"very enjoyable"* and *"fun and stimulating"*. The Jazz Club member from Organisation JC3 even took the time to email the 'Year of Innovation' programme director after one of the jazz club workshops to comment on how much he had enjoyed the session

"Thanks again for the jazz evening. The concept works really well and stimulates a great deal of thought and ideas. I can't remember the last time I learned, was challenged and had fun!"

A number of workshop participants commented on the relaxed nature of the workshops and saw this as another positive of the approach. Respondent 21C8/JC1 described the workshop as *"... quite a relaxed course and because it was fairly informal people could react more openly and with confidence"*

really". In response to the author asking whether the relaxed atmosphere helped, he commented *"It makes a big difference, yes, it takes all the tension out of the course and also it keeps your attention"*.

Similar thoughts were captured from the managing director, Respondent 11C4, again expressing value in the relaxed nature of the workshop:

"I think the jazz did work quite well because it was very different and it did help people relax a little bit and in business these days it is quite intense, it is quite, reasonably pressured at times and anything that does tend to open things up a little bit is good".

Could it however be that the workshop experience could have been too relaxed? Due to a lack of suitable facilities at the premises of Organisation IC2 and, at the request of the managing director, their 'Innovation through Jazz' workshop was delivered in a public house (notably another business of the managing director). The workshop was held on a midweek evening after work and some of the participants (including the managing director) smoked cigarettes and drank alcoholic drinks during the workshop. Ironically, in the post-workshop interview that managing director mentioned how he had talked about the workshop to some other people, encouraging them to get involved with the approach too, yet himself commenting on the nature of business that is done in the pub: *"I would encourage other companies to do it as well! No, I would! I've actually talked to a couple, but it's always over a beer, which doesn't really work does it. They don't remember it in the morning do they!"*

The last characterising theme, identified by the author from comments on the jazz workshop approach, focuses upon its ability to provoke thought.

Thought-provoking

A frequently given comment on these feedback forms related to the thought-provoking nature of the workshops. The approach appears to have been successful in encouraging people to think about innovation in their business in a new way, one of the partners from Organisation JC8 for example described

one of the best aspects of the Jazz Club being its design as *“a forum for creative thought”*

Many individuals described the experience as *“thought-provoking”*, Respondent 3IC4 for example describing the workshop as *“a general, more thought-provoking type of scenario”*.

Both partners from Organisation JC8 particularly focussed upon the thought-provoking nature of the workshops as one of the most beneficial aspects of the approach, advocating the *“dedicated thinking time”* which the workshops provided and even suggesting that the experience *“has instigated a much more creative, thoughtful approach to my business and beyond”*.

Following this discussion of views on the jazz workshop approach in relatively general terms, the author feels it of interest to highlight for the reader's attention, specific comments of the managing directors from two of the involved organisations. The following passages offer valuable insight into their quite contrasting views of the jazz approach, but also into the dynamics of working within an SME; raising issues which will be much more richly discussed in the final section of this chapter.

4.4.2 Contrasting Views of Two Managing Directors

The managing director, Respondent 1IC2, provided the following response when asked what he felt the main messages were that the workshop was trying to get over:

“Well, I think the biggest thing was the thing that I thought it would do and the fact that they could see just doing their own little bit wasn't enough really and the fact that they had to work together to make it work”.

A number of interesting comments can be made from this passage.

Whilst reference can be found here to the concept of teamwork, what is perhaps of more interest is the managing director's difficulty in articulating the messages from the workshop. Although managing director of the organisation, Gareth's articulation of the messages is not particularly effective, with rather generalist reference to *"the thing"* and *"it"*. The simplistic choice of words and use of language is not a surprising finding for owner-managers (Curran et al, 1986).

A further area of interest highlighted in this passage is the insight it potentially provides into employee-management relations, for example in the way he refers to his employees as *"them"* and their work as *"their little bit"*. The dynamics of relations in the small business are discussed later in this chapter and draw upon some interesting insight from this study.

The comments of a second managing director which the author felt of particular importance to discuss here is that of Paul, Respondent 11C4. His response to being asked about the themes or key messages of the workshop was *"There was the thing about being creative and the task and mixing the two things up at times. To create time outside of the business, to keep thinking about the future and what it means. Those are the things we feel we don't do very well, where as some of the other items, we said we're OK with that, thank you very much"*.

In comparison to Gareth's apparent 'them and me' language, Paul refers instead to the collective 'we'. Participants of Organisation IC4's workshop were all members of the senior management team and, as discussed earlier in this chapter, work in an organisation that had been awarded the Queens Award for Innovation that same year. Use by the managing director of the collective 'we' could perhaps therefore be related to a more integrative and empowering culture, features described by Chell (1987) as characteristics of high-innovative companies.

In both examples caution must however be drawn in relation to their generalising about the views of other people. As a study undertaken within the

paradigms of interpretivism and relativism, the author feels these passages provide more insight into the assumptions and attitudes of the two managing directors than as representations of the views of other employees.

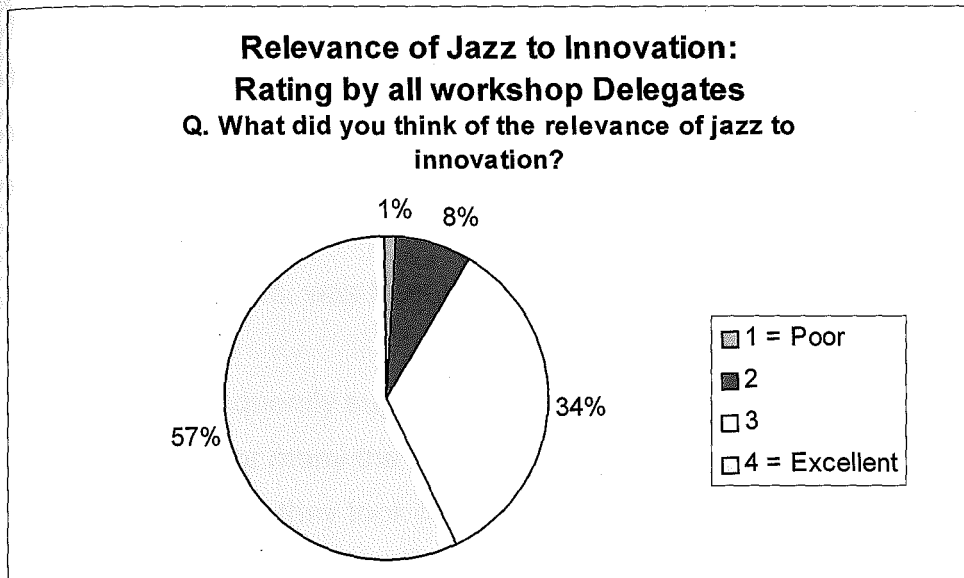
In the case of Gareth, this issue is apparent not just in that he felt his employees took the same messages from the workshop as he did, but that they were the messages he had already anticipated hearing: *“the thing that I thought it would do”*. This lack of open-mindedness may well have constrained the potential messages and value that Gareth and, possibly his employees, could have taken from the workshop experience.

Having introduced a few of the messages taken from the jazz metaphor and the workshop experience, from the perspective of two of the managing directors, the author will move on now to explore these messages more fully, drawing upon comments from all participants of the ‘Innovation through Jazz’ workshops. In order to set the scene for this discussion it may be of interest to share a view, first of all, on how relevant workshop participants felt the jazz was to an exploration of innovation.

4.4.3 Perceived Relevance of Jazz to Innovation

Participants of the ‘Innovation through Jazz’ workshops were asked, in the workshop feedback forms, to rate the relevance of the jazz to innovation on a scale of 1 to 4 (1 representing ‘Poor’, 4 representing ‘Excellent’). Figure 4.7 captures the responses from participants of all of the workshops:

Figure 4.7 Relevance of Jazz to Innovation



As shown by this chart, 57% of participants of the 'Innovation through Jazz' workshops rated the relevance of jazz to innovation as 4, namely 'excellent' with 91% of participants proving a rating of 3 or 4. These figures are indicative of a very positive view of the jazz's relevance to exploring matters of innovation, following experience of the workshop.

More specific comments about the jazz approach and its effectiveness are discussed below, grouped into the most frequently expressed themes. The author's discussion will highlight what individuals felt they took from the experience, what key messages they felt were conveyed using the jazz and how effective the approach was in communicating these messages.

4.4.4 Key Messages from the Jazz Approach

Four themes were identified by the author, around which comments on the jazz approach seemed to cluster. These themes related to messages concerned with teamwork; leadership; ideas and creativity; and communication and relationships. It is with reference to these four themes that discussion is structured.

Teamwork

The post-workshop interviews allowed the author to explore in more depth what the key themes or messages were that participants recalled from the workshops and to give them an opportunity to express, in their own words, what they felt the workshops were seeking to convey. One of the key themes of the workshops, as perceived by the participants and expressed in the post-workshop interviews, was teamwork.

Respondents frequently suggested teamwork as a key theme in the workshops and for many the need for and importance of teamwork was the main message that they took from the experience. Respondent 2IC8/JC1 commented *"The main theme I thought was teamwork and understanding the reason for teamwork and the importance of teamwork"*. Respondent 1IC6 drew a similar message commenting *"I know it all started with innovation to start with but I think the main talking point was teamwork"*. This response suggests a distinction between innovation and teamwork, seeing teamwork perhaps as something separate to innovation, rather than an enabling condition.

Leadership

As well as identifying the value of working well as a team, the importance of leadership was another workshop theme expressed in the interviews. Interestingly this was not, however, very richly articulated.

Respondent 1IC6 for example continued on from his discussion of teamwork to suggest *"The delivery and the content, was aimed, I thought, at teamwork and a little bit about leadership as well"*. He went on to confirm his view that *"It made people aware of team play and the importance of the team and also the leadership bit"*. The respondent's emphasis is clearly upon the team aspect and the use of the word *"bit"* to describe leadership suggests it may be a concept of lower perceived significance or relevance to him. The extent to which the respondent is involved in leadership is not known, though the

difficulty he has in recalling or articulating the leadership messages from the workshop may perhaps be indicative of a lesser familiarity with the concept, or perhaps that the leadership aspects of innovation were less effectively expressed through the jazz-led workshop approach.

Ideas and Creativity

Other messages expressed in the interviews related to the behaviour of individuals, in particular the need for ideas, to be creative and flexible.

Managing director, Respondent 11C5, saw many of these features in the workshop:

“Well, the main message was, to work well as a team, but the individuals, so that if an individual has an, a good idea, a good view, that that could be incorporated into the way we already do things to make us a little bit more flexible and change and improve areas. So if you can incorporate change into what you’re doing day to day, it’s good!”

Respondent 21C4 also drew the need to be creative as one of the key messages from the workshop, describing, for him the key message being *“Take time to use your brain! Think about alternative ways of doing things. Challenge the norms you’ve got”*. He reflected upon behaviour and comments in the period following the workshop *“... for a couple of days afterwards there were constant comments about ‘Hang on! Hang on! Use your right brain!’”* suggesting also some longevity to this message in that organisation.

Communication and Relationships

The final key theme, about which the ‘Innovation through Jazz’ workshops were perceived to relate, was that of communication and interpersonal relationships.

Respondent 11C7, in discussing the workshop, described it as having been about *“in general terms, looking at business skills and communication skills”*. Respondent 11C6 commented further on the communication messages of the workshop *“There’s even issues there of interdepartmental communication... which is quite important”*.

Respondent 11C3 highlights the messages he drew about interaction and interdependency and sees these issues as important not just to a jazz band but in business too and describes these concepts as readily transferable to that context:

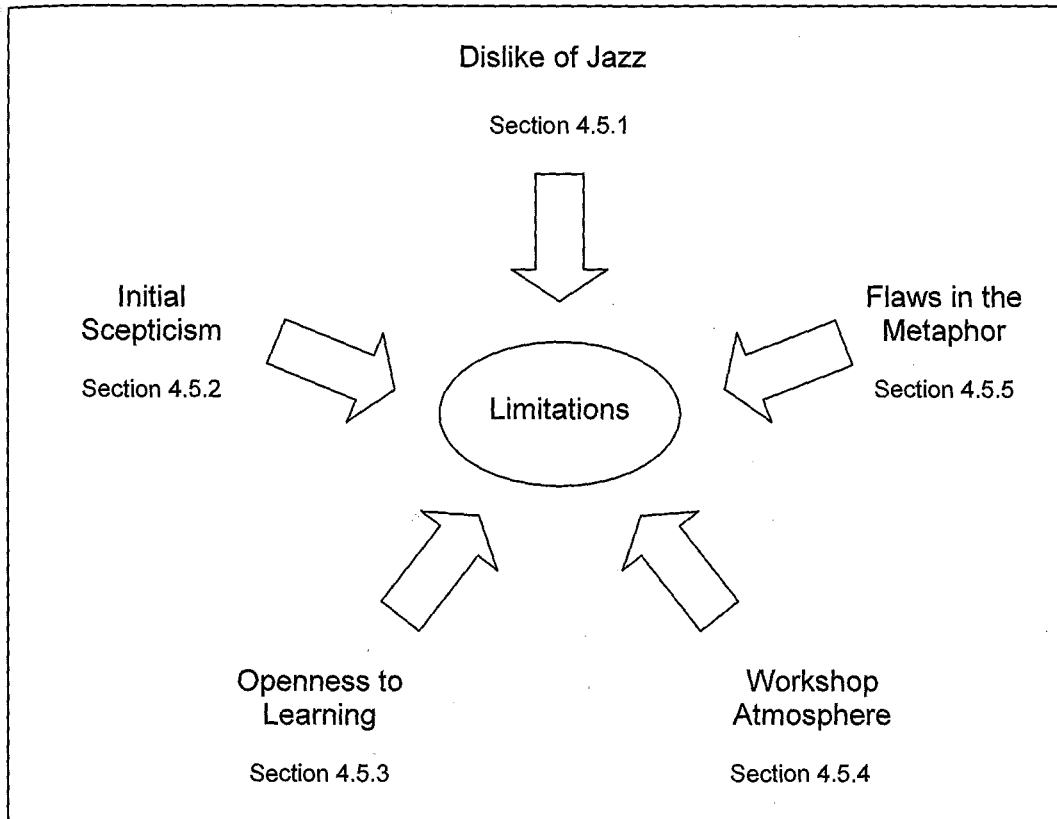
“The workshop was looking at how, like through jazz, how the band interact with one another, how they have an effect on each other and how one person can influence the other person’s work relationships within that band. And obviously you can extrapolate that on to the work environment”.

Having explored some of the key messages that were communicated by the jazz based workshops, the author will move on to a fuller discussion of some of the limitations of the approach, as discovered through the undertaking of this study.

4.5 Limitations of the Jazz Approach

There are a number of issues which may have limited the effectiveness of the jazz workshop approach to exploring innovation. Through this study the author has identified five key limiting issues, highlighted in figure 4.8 below. Each of these limitations will be discussed in turn, commencing with an examination of the way in which a dislike of jazz music may have limited the effectiveness of the jazz approach.

Figure 4.8 Limitations of the Jazz Approach



4.5.1 Dislike of Jazz

Many of the workshop participants knew before the workshop engagement that jazz was to be involved and for some people it would seem that their dislike of jazz music or preconceptions of it, may have affected their openness to the 'Innovation through Jazz' workshop.

Respondent 11C6 reflected in the interview that *"Unfortunately a lot of people before they're coming in to attend they've already decided that they don't like jazz. I think that was the case with a few people"*. He went on to suggest that for these individuals the inclusion of jazz might therefore have restricted the value of the workshop: *"I think it did hinder, for a couple of individuals, you know, which surprised me I must admit, as I didn't think you'd have to enjoy the music to appreciate what was going on"*.

The issue of individuals not liking jazz and its potential for limiting the effectiveness of the jazz metaphor, is a concern identifiable in the literature. Hatch and Weick (1998) for example raise concern that individuals could respond to such an approach with a mindset: *"I don't like jazz and therefore I don't like (and will resist participating in the use of) the jazz metaphor"* (1998, p603). Comments captured in this study, like that shared by Respondent 11C6, suggest that this was indeed a factor limiting the effectiveness of the jazz-led approach for some people.

4.5.2 Initial Scepticism

As discussed in section 4.3.1, the initial reactions of individuals to the jazz metaphor varied, for many however it was characterised by scepticism, with some people openly expecting the workshop to be *"a waste of time"* (Respondent 11C8/JC1).

Some individuals, although sceptical at the outset, were however convinced of the value of the approach following the workshop. For example, in a post-workshop interview Respondent 11C6 described how *"some people were fortunately turned and they've actually said that they weren't expecting it to be as good as it was. Which was quite nice. But they're more open-minded than some people"*.

Using an approach about which people may have a tendency to have formed negative preconceptions could however be a significant barrier to the engagement of participants and delivery of an effective workshop. The novelty of the approach, whilst generating a significant amount of intrigue and interest, also drew reactions of scepticism and as a potential limitation of the approach this reaction must be noted.

4.5.3 Openness to Learning

Another potential limitation of the jazz approach to innovation relates to the extent to which it offered participants the opportunity to learn and, importantly, the openness of participants to learning.

Respondent 11C7 suggested that some of the messages expressed in the workshop seemed *“a little obvious”* and commented on some colleagues who told him they thought it was *“A waste of time, I didn’t learn anything new”*. Respondent 11C8/JC1, similarly, though less critically, commented on the workshop *“I was definitely aware of the things within it”*

Such responses about not learning anything new were expressed by quite a number of workshop participants, many of the comments suggesting a possible defensiveness against the implication that they might not have known it all before; proud to state that, for them, they knew it all already and wasn’t anything new in the workshop that they could learn. Respondent 11C3 for example commented *“I didn’t learn anything new, but you know, I liked the afternoon of jazz and it seemed quite interesting... I found it interesting rather than useful to me”*, or as in the case of Respondent 31C6 *“Possibly the newer ones that don’t have the commercial background, they may have learned something out of it”*.

A particularly thoughtful response however to this issue came from Respondent 21C7, who saw value in hearing messages again: *“It’s kind of like going in to church in a way, in that you’re never going to learn anything particularly new you’re just going to have good business sense reaffirmed to you”*.

An openness to learning, at both organisational and individual levels is essential for innovation (Verhees & Meulenber, 2004, Tidd et al, 2001, Peters & Waterman, 1982) and this almost defensive behaviour of many of the employees of the participating organisations is an interesting finding and,

as a mindset, a potential limiter of any training intervention, not necessarily specific just to the 'Innovation through Jazz' approach.

4.5.4 Workshop Atmosphere

Whilst the messages contained within the workshops may not have apparently been new to many of the participants, the approach to communicating, demonstrating and experiencing innovation, using jazz, was described as "*original*" and "*novel*" by many of the public workshop participants.

Aside from any issues related to the use of *jazz* music specifically, the use of music, per se, in the workshop may however have created the wrong atmosphere for some participants. As discussed in section 4.4 the relatively informal workshop approach had many positive outcomes, particularly around the way it helped people relax (Organisation IC4), open up and respond more confidently (Organisation IC8/JC1). Comments were also, contrastingly made however, that implicated some limitations of such a relaxed atmosphere; Respondent 3IC6 for example, describing the possibility that some people "*may just have thought it was a nice little swan*". On being prompted what that meant, he clarified "*A swan is an easy time*".

Music was integrated into the exploration of innovation in business as a means of providing fresh insight, but for some the music seems to perhaps have distracted from, rather than facilitated communication of, the issues around innovation. This is evident in the rather ironic comment captured in interview from Respondent 3IC8/JC1 in her recollection of the workshop, saying "*I enjoyed the afternoon of music and er, it was a nice distraction from work*"!

Respondent 4IC3 seemed to emphasise the music rather than the content as his main recollection of the workshop "*Obviously I can remember most of the music, and some of the stuff we talked about*". Respondent 3IC6 echoed this comment, referring to an exercise toward the end of the workshop and

warning “they’ll remember it more, probably, for the clashing music at the end”.

The presence of jazz, the manner and extent to which it is used and the mindset of the workshop participants have all then been found to potentially limit the effectiveness of the jazz approach to exploring innovation. One further and extremely important consideration for the effectiveness of the approach relates to how innovation is conceptualised and the way in which the jazz metaphor is seen to relate to innovation. Whilst many of these perspectives have been outlined earlier in this chapter, the author would like to draw the reader’s attention to particular perspective offered by two workshop participants in the post-workshop interviews and the associated limitations for use of the jazz metaphor.

4.5.5 Flaws in the Metaphor

Very few workshop participants, interestingly, made any explicit comments about the jazz metaphor in more broad terms. As has been discussed throughout this chapter, participants were able to recall and articulate specific messages, themes or approaches, however only two respondents made any comment on the application and appropriateness of the metaphor more broadly.

Respondent 2IC4 commented on a flaw he perceived in the jazz metaphor, based upon its focus on the *one-off* creation of something which is original and innovative, rather than its ability to duplicate that innovation. This caused him difficulty with the metaphor, given his conceptualisation of innovation in a business context, explaining: “*What we have to do is be able to recreate the same product time and time again and jazz is free of those constraints*”.

As part of a discussion about the ‘Innovation through Jazz’ workshop and the effectiveness of the jazz approach, Respondent 2IC7 also expressed concern with the metaphor. This individual raised a number of interesting issues; his

concern related primarily to jazz's lack of external perspective and apparently limited concern for its customers:

"Hand on heart; I don't really think it's the right metaphor for innovation. There is such a thing as innovation where you can have a brainwave... but the market still has the answer 95% of the time I'd have thought. Jazz is pretty well introspective isn't it, it's relying on all your bodies to create something there and then and muddling through the particular tasks you've got in hand without looking at what the next task might be, which is what my idea is of what innovation would be"

He went on to suggest:

"Jazz is probably a tremendous metaphor for teamwork, for different people shouldering responsibilities, for going with the flow and having to react to some strange demands that come in. It's got to be a metaphor for lots of things... but I don't think it's a metaphor for innovation"

Following further enquiring from the author as to why the respondent didn't feel that jazz was a good metaphor for innovation, he suggested:

"The point is it's stuck in the piece you're playing, where as innovation is what piece should we play next"

Whilst passages of this interview have been incorporated into discussion earlier in this paper, its particular value here is to highlight this respondent's perception of jazz as *"pretty well introspective"* and the implied view that it is consequently flawed as a metaphor for successful business innovation.

This perception of jazz finds support in the literature where it is described as elitist (Hatch & Weick, 1998), characterised by musicians who primarily *"perform for themselves"* (Crossan, 1998) and who can become so absorbed in their playing (Barrett, 1998) that they have limited focus upon the audience, with many musicians of the view that *"it doesn't matter what the audience thinks"* (Berliner, 1994).

The introspective nature argued then to characterise jazz does bring into question the validity of its use as a metaphor for innovation in business, where innovative organisations as described as ones which develop a widespread sense of awareness of customers (Tidd et al, 2001), are forward-looking and future-orientated (Storey, 2004, Henry & Mayle, 2002) and where customer market intelligence is related positively to company performance (Verhees & Meulenberg, 2004).

The respondent's choice of opening words: "*Hand on heart...*" suggests a possible awkwardness with what he was about to say. This could support a concern, expressed earlier in this paper, around the author's role in both workshop delivery and research. The author remained highly sensitive to any potential bias which could result from her dual role and this could be an example where, indicated by the respondent's language, this impact may be evidenced.

Respondent 2IC7 followed his above critique of the jazz metaphor with a comment about the workshop still being useful, though this not being attributable to the jazz approach: "*A lot of the talk was good and made some excellent points, but I couldn't relate it to the jazz. The jazz didn't drum any of those points in*".

This individual clearly takes a deeper and more reflective approach to his discussion of the 'Innovation through Jazz' workshop than many of the other workshop participants, providing some very interesting and thoughtful comments for this study. Interestingly, as highlighted earlier in this chapter, he has also interwoven musical language into his articulated critique of the use of jazz metaphor for exploring innovation. This is evidenced further in the passage just provided, with reference to the inability of the jazz to "*drum*" innovation messages in! Whilst not an outcome spoken about by this respondent, the use of jazz in the workshops does appear to have provided a tool for him to clarify his conceptualisation of innovation and a new language for expressing these thoughts.

Having outlined a number of limitations to the jazz approach to exploring innovation, the chapter will move on now to discuss the contextual relevance of innovation in the sample of SMEs studied.

4.6 Contextual Relevance of Innovation

As part of a discussion about innovation and its role in business survival and success it is important that careful consideration is given also to the organisational context. A number of interesting findings can be shared in relation to the environment, culture and behaviours in the organisations included in this study and, given such matters will impact the success of any innovative efforts, discussion of these matters forms an important component of this paper. The purpose of this section of this chapter therefore is to provide a discussion of some of these contextual findings.

4.6.1 Employment Relations

This study uncovered a number of issues around employment relations in the SMEs involved, providing insight into leadership styles of the small business owner-managers, the nature of relationships, degrees of trust and communication.

A question in the post-workshop interviews which drew particularly insightful responses asked respondents about the involvement of the organisation's leader(s) in the 'Innovation through Jazz' workshop.

Leadership

In response to being asked whether it was felt that the absent owner-manager of Organisation IC8/JC1 should or should not have been at the workshop, Respondent 2IC8/JC1 gave the following answer:

"That's a difficult question really, because if the people felt relaxed enough to be able to react with their leader there, and I don't think they would have if Derek² had been there, and so you probably wouldn't have been able to get the best out of them".

This response is suggestive of a relationship between the SME owner-manager and his employees which is not relaxed or particularly comfortable, the implication being that the leader's presence at the workshop would have negatively impacted the openness and contribution of other employees.

In being pushed further on this point by the author this respondent went on to suggest that, whilst he wouldn't advocate the leader's inclusion in the workshop, he did feel that Derek needed to hear the messages from it. His suggestion therefore would have been *"I think possibly to have put him on the course on his own!"* Interestingly the owner-manager of Organisation IC8/JC1 was actually a member of the Jazz Club and therefore did indeed hear many of the same messages himself, the view of Respondent 2IC8/JC1 was however that he needed to hear exactly the same messages and for everyone to know that was the case.

Respondent 3IC6 similarly communicated a need for senior management to have been at the workshop:

"I think that was one thing from our side of things; that a lot of our senior management weren't there. I think it would have been better for them. It would have been interesting to see what their thoughts and input would have been really and whether they'd have been prepared to sit back and let everyone else have a go, or whether they'd want to get involved. It would also have given us a bit of feedback about as to what they have been thinking about".

It is the author's understanding that the senior management who were not present for the workshop were otherwise engaged with other business commitments and that their absence was not intentional. The insistence

² The names of all individuals and organisations involved in this study are fictitious to protect their identity

however that they should have been there is quite strongly communicated by this respondent, who goes on to say:

“There would have been a benefit if everybody was there, but by missing certain people out, the message doesn’t get across. The whole idea, to work, it’s for the management down to the shop floor and if you have the top away what’s the point”.

Concern expressed over the absence of some managers from the ‘Innovation through Jazz’ interventions finds support in the literature on management involvement. Basadur (2004), for example, comments on the undesirability of a situation where a leader sends his subordinates for training but does not attend himself. A manager’s absence, Basadur proposes, has the potential to both undermine the credibility of any such training and limit its value. If a leader is not familiar with what his subordinates have learned, there is also the consequential risk that they will have difficulty implementing any of their learnings.

Another view on this issue shared by James, the owner-manager, of Organisation IC5 made reference to a number of these same concerns around attending or not attending the in-company workshop. He expressed a sensitivity to the negative influence his presence might have had on the feelings, behaviour and engagement of his employees in the workshop, *“I felt that it was probably not beneficial me being there you know, I think by the end of the evening it was, they realised it wasn’t a test”*. Interestingly he was also sensitive to the positive influence his presence might have had, for example motivating his employees to try to impress him *“they did do a bit of that towards the end, didn’t they!”*

James consciously managed his involvement so as to balance his desire to support and engage with his employees, against his desire not to intimidate or take over: *“There were a couple of things I decided not to get involved in because I just think had I got involved in that especially, it would have been up to me and they would have expected things...”*. Overall, however, James did feel it was important that he was there, especially as the workshop was

held after working hours and he was therefore asking his employees to give up some of their own time to attend: *"There could have been a little bit of resentment if they'd all have gone and we hadn't"*

Involvement

It was the element of involvement, not just of the leader or senior managers but importantly of the rest of the employees, that was another feature of the workshop approach about which some comments focussed. Respondent 2IC8/JC1 for example emphasised the value of involving the workforce in initiatives such as the 'Innovation through Jazz' one, commenting *"The key thing about it was that you were getting everyone involved and no-one felt secluded"* going on to reminisce about an occasion when he was at school and how excluded he felt when not involved in a particular activity.

The need to feel included in the activity and plans of the organisation was another strong theme which came out of the interviews, along with a feeling that this is rarely the situation and that typically very little communication takes place.

Communication

Respondent 3IC3 commented on the lack of communication and employee engagement: *"In the year that I've been here that's the first time we've sat down as a company really"*. This perspective echoed by Respondent 2IC5: *"That was the first time people have had to actually go away and think about what we do, what we do basically and how we do things differently to other people... and how we can progress"*

The 'Innovation through Jazz' workshops seemed to provide an opportunity for communication and seemed a very positive experience for some of the workshop participants in helping forge some of those employee / management relations. In discussing the workshop, Respondent 1IC3 said *"It was nice for us all to sit down together as a group, as a company really"*. He

added: *"I thought the value in it basically was at the end when everybody got to talk about the way we did things here and, you know, people could bring their feelings out, in the open, and air them in a forum that they're not going to, that they might sort of find intimidating, you know, be intimidated, like in a meeting with the management"*. Respondent 3IC3 echoed this view, suggesting *"It did feel a bit, like emotional, at the end of it, like, because it was nice just to have everyone sat down, you know, and just speaking their mind"*.

The opportunity to be more involved and to be able to speak more freely about matters of concern to the wider organisation does seem something which many of the organisations' employees considered a valuable feature of the workshop approach and something which perhaps should be easier to do on a more frequent basis. The ease with which people feel able to get so involved and express their thoughts and ideas does however seem strongly related to the style of the leader, the nature of the relationship they have with their employees and the degree of trust.

Respondent 2IC8/JC1 clarified his perspective that *"...it depends on the type of leadership you've got, as to whether the leadership encourages teamwork. And, by encouraging teamwork, in addition to just giving people a rollicking when they get things wrong, you also compliment them when they get things right, and that builds up a good working atmosphere"*.

This individual continues in the interview to explain how key he considers leadership to be to innovation, commenting *"If the leader encourages innovation then it carries all the way down the line, but if the leader has a reaction 'oh, we've tried that before' or 'oh, don't waste my time' or 'haven't you got anything better to do, I'm busy' then it relays all the way down"*.

Comments such as those discussed above highlight particular issues in the SMEs studied, in relation to communication (is it sufficient and effective) and leadership (are the leaders approachable, involving and supportive). Further insight into these issues will be offered in section 4.6.2 as part of the author's discussion of owner-manager and employee motivation and engagement.

4.6.2 Motivation and Engagement

The 'Innovation through Jazz' workshop delivered with Organisation IC5 was organised to take place after the working hours one weekday evening and was originally positioned by the owner-manager, James, and his son (the management team) as an optional personal development opportunity. This original workshop had however to be cancelled due to a lack of interest from the employees of the organisation in attending it: *"People genuinely did not show any interest in coming"* commented the owner-manager's son (Respondent 2IC5)

Whilst the lack of interest shown by the employees frustrated and disappointed the management team, it also provided interesting insight for the management and the author; insight into employee interest, motivation and ambition. Respondent 2IC5 reflected *"We had this guy, one who applied for a manager's position and yet he said that he couldn't make it to this course and so I had a chat with him, sort of mentioned how, why does he think he doesn't need to go on this course, when he doesn't know what it is about or, when people have misconceptions all the time"*

On being probed further about what these misconceptions might be, or why this particular individual may not have had an interest in coming to the workshop, he suggested it be due to *"Preconceptions, I would imagine, that they only work 9.30-5.30 and that it will be going into their own time and they probably think they know everything there is to know about teamwork³ ... people think it's going to be a waste of time and boring"*. Respondent 2IC5 further articulated his perception as to why many employees aren't always interested in such developmental opportunities, conveying his belief that *"I think they're just happy doing what they do. Admittedly some of them are*

³ Whilst the purpose of sharing this passage is as part of a discussion about manager and employee motivation and ambition, it is interesting to note Respondent 2IC5's articulation of the workshop being about teamwork. The workshop was focussed on many of the qualities of innovative organisations and behaviours associated with innovation, however teamwork is the message found to be the most commonly assumed focus.

quite young and, you know, they may be don't realise what we're trying to do is to help them and to progress them... Most people are more interested in buses home and watching Eastenders, or whatever, you know"

James, the owner-manager and his son, appeared to have spent time discussing and reflecting upon motivational disparities between themselves and their workforce, James articulating a theory on this matter: *"My theory is, thought is, that it's sad to say, but 99% of people just do not understand how important they could be to the organisation... it is difficult to get people to understand that they could make a difference. It's just incredible!"*

Whilst trying to understand things from the perspective of his workforce, James also recognises that his attitude towards work is very different to theirs. He is the first generation owner-manager of this family business, having established the business at least 16 years prior and having built it up to its current standing. He suggests that what he and his son are trying to do is progress and push his staff and conveys the struggle he has understanding the attitude he believes they have to work: *"I can't understand why they don't want to become the best... I was one of the youngest managers... and I always wanted to be in charge, I always wanted to have an understanding of what was going on"*

'Them and Us'

Whilst there appears to be a divide then between the owner-manager and that of his employees, in relation to organisational interest, ambition, drive and personal development, this divide is apparent in other organisations and at different levels. At Organisation IC3 a divide appears to exist between the office and the manual workers, the office workers grouping themselves more with the managers of the organisation. This 'them and us' attitude is apparent in the following comment spoken by Respondent 3:

"I've got to be honest with you, when we first heard about it [the workshop], probably we [the office staff] were more cynical than anybody because, not so much because of the jazz, just thinking we've heard this a thousand times and, you know, because we [the office staff] work quite closely with Derek [MD]. I think all of us think we work quite well as a team anyway, but there's certain people that remain in the company that we don't think sometimes probably try quite as hard"

Ironically she follows this discussion with a comment: *"the other thing is to try and break down the 'us and them' as well"*. She clearly then is aware that an *"us and them"* culture has developed between the office and the manual workers and recognises this not to be helpful.

This relational divide is evident also in other organisations in this study. The managing director, Gareth, from Organisation IC2 repeatedly refers to his employees as the collective 'they' and in doing so creates a distinction between them and himself. Talking about the value of the workshop, for example, he groups his employees into one and attempts to speak on their collective behalf: *"I think they did actually get quite a bit from it"*

In grouping his employees as 'they' or 'them' he also declines to acknowledge diversity within his workforce:

"I would have said it's pretty much common sense, but other people don't see it, do they. If they've never run a business or been a manager, it's very difficult for them to actually get hold of the fact that they're going to get all of these negative things come back at them. And some people are just full of negatives aren't they... I mean just explaining that doesn't sink in"

The language Gareth uses in this passage provides insight into the relationship between himself and his employees and is indicative of the different perspectives they may have.

Tolerance of Mistakes

Further insight into the different characteristics of owner-managers in comparison to employees is provided through comments from Respondent 3IC3. He comments on the demanding expectations of Derek, the owner-manager, his difficulty delegating and his intolerance of mistakes:

"...with Derek, because he's been here, seen it, he's done everybody else's job, he's very keen on telling everybody the way he thinks it should be done".

This respondent describes Derek as "*Mr Perfectionist*" and reflects upon his intolerance of mistakes and the affect this has on staff morale and also innovation:

"He struggles if he sees someone make mistakes not to just tell them what to do. That's where the problem comes from. He sees it as making mistakes. They see his attitude as 'No! Do it this way' and you've only got to do that a few times and innovation disappears".

Interestingly this respondent, although commenting on some of the difficulties of the owner-manager's leadership, also suggests that following the 'Innovation through Jazz' workshop things are changing, improving slightly. He comments upon the manager's attitude and how this may have been a hindrance to innovation, suggesting "*that's how it has been, in the past*". The respondent further reflects upon the manager's somewhat controlling manner, suggesting however that things may now be improving: "*I think he is making an effort now to step back a little bit*". This is one of very few comments indicating a longer term effect of the workshop.

Having discussed a number of the key findings then in relation to employment relations, workforce engagement and small-business owner-manager traits, the final section of this chapter will focus now on these organisations' appetite for innovation, the role the 'Innovation through Jazz' workshops were perceived to play and the longevity or sustainability of their impact.

4.7 Sustainability of the 'Innovation through Jazz' Impact

The 'Innovation through Jazz' workshops typically lasted 2-3 hours. For some participants that may have been the extent of their involvement in discussion about innovation. For others, notably the owner-managers, the workshop and related meetings, held as part of their enrolment on the programme, formed part of a wider effort to increase innovation in their businesses.

The meetings and workshops were essentially concerned with developing heightened awareness and understanding of innovation and innovativeness. These engagements were about prompting thinking and developing learning, the jazz approach valuable as a tool of enticement and engagement and a lens through which the related concepts could be explored. The discussions and associated learnings represent positive steps toward understanding, and ultimately creating, the organisational climate whereby innovation can more readily flourish. Drawing upon comments and views expressed by participants of this study, the author is able to offer some interesting insight into this journey toward enhanced levels of innovation.

Respondent 11C6 articulated value in the workshop, contextualising it as part of a journey: *"I think they thought about it and that's the important thing. It's one step, not a big step, but one step. Get people thinking about things a little more"*. Respondent 11C7's comment also reflected a perception that whilst there was value in the 'Innovation through Jazz' workshop, it does need to form part of a wider effort: *"I thought it was a very very interesting thing to do, but its only any good if the business follows it through"*. Whilst not clear who exactly will be following it up or driving further efforts through or how, this employee does see the need for it to happen.

Responses from two of the owner-managers reinforce the perspective of the workshop and associated intervention being part of a journey. The language they use also suggests that this is a journey they have or will be continuing:

"It needs to be continued in some way because I think just as a one-off, they got a good understanding on that night didn't they, but whether any long term messages evolve from that? I suspect that when they see things happening within the company they'll understand a little bit more" (Respondent 11C5, managing director)

"The session the week before last was just a start, so whilst everyone agrees it's really positive, it is just a start and we want to go forward with it" (Respondent 11C4, managing director)

This managing director continued to indicate that, indeed, further steps had already been taken to drive innovation forward further, demonstrating a strategic commitment to enhancing innovation activity and capability in that business:

"Everyone said it was really useful and they'd like to do more, so we have done more this week... I think the three or so hours we had the other week sort of helped prepare the ground, or my thinking... sort of set the agenda in a way"

Having presented and discussed the key findings of this study, this paper will now move on to chapter five where the author will draw some conclusions from this research. In the chapter the author will reflect upon the study, contextualising the findings and discussing them in relation to matters identified and explored in the literature review. The manner in which the study has contributed to knowledge will importantly be discussed and suggestions will be made regarding future research.

Chapter five will be followed by a brief personal reflection by the author.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

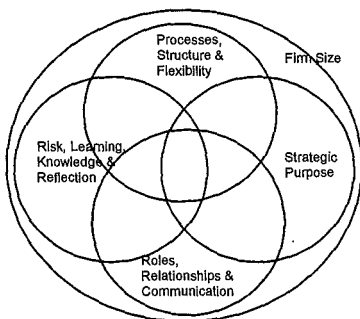
5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to draw together the findings from the study as discussed in chapter four, to synthesise and contextualise these findings against previous research discussed in the literature review and to discuss contributions to knowledge made by the study. The chapter closes with some suggestions for further work and research.

The chapter is structured into nine sections as illustrated in figure 5.1. This framework is intended to provide a logical structure to the chapter, allowing the author to offer a coherent flow to the discussion.

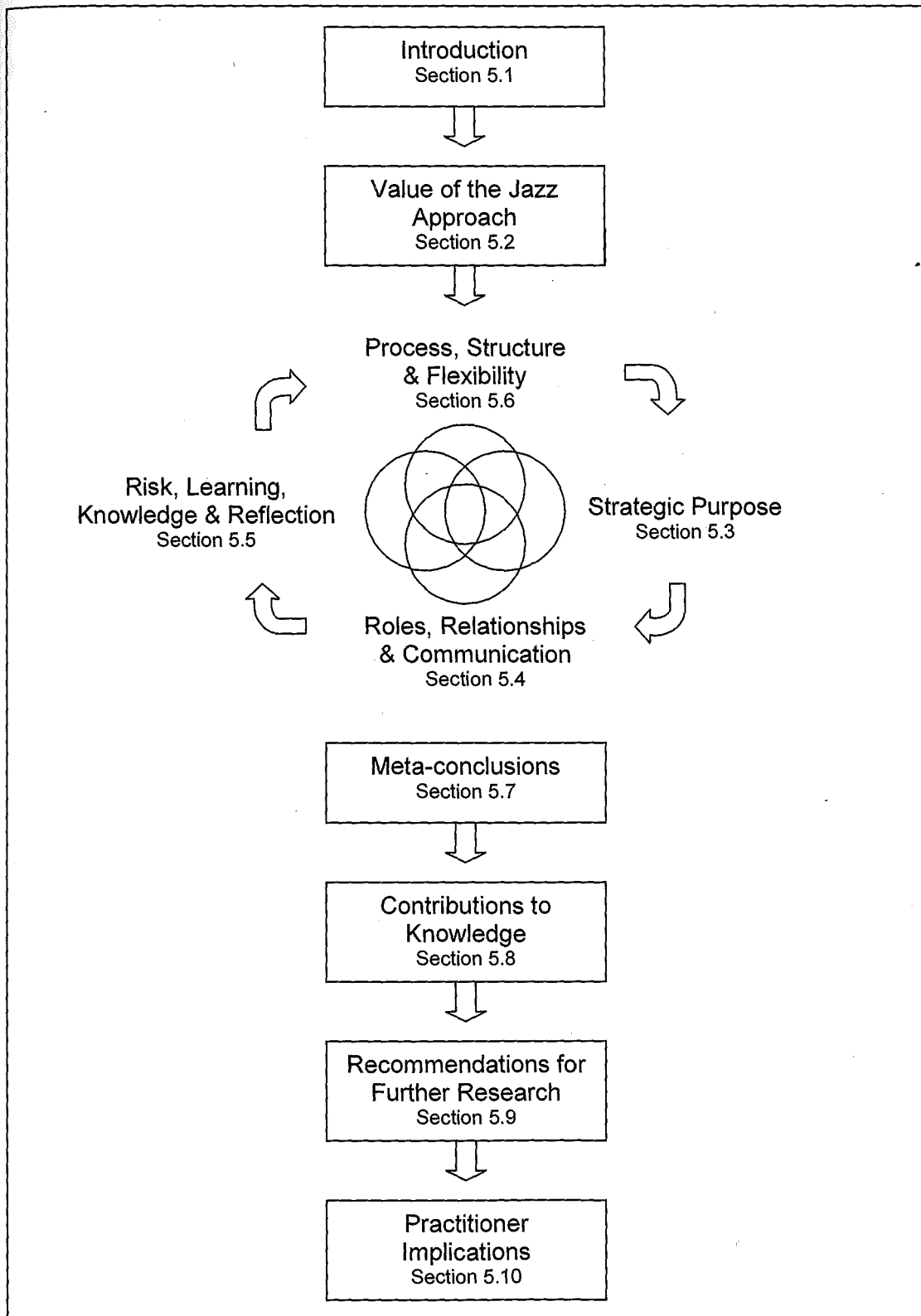
Section 5.2 provides draws some high level conclusions about the value of the jazz approach in general. A number of the associated issues are then further developed in sections 5.3 to 5.6 with the study's key findings examined in relation to findings from the literature review. The Organisational Innovativeness Flower, introduced in chapter two, is used as a structuring device for this examination.

Reprise of Figure 2.5 Organisational Innovativeness Flower



Source: author's own

Figure 5.1 Chapter Structure



In section 5.7 the author proposes some higher-level, much more tentative conclusions. Contributions to knowledge made by this study are discussed in section 5.8, leading into section 5.9 where areas for further research are recommended, concluding the chapter with a discussion of practitioner implications in section 5.10.

5.2 Value of the Jazz Approach

Some authors assert the value of the jazz metaphor (e.g. Hatch, 1999; Holbrook, 2003), proposing it to be a fruitful and fertile way of capturing organisational phenomena and suggesting it as making an imaginative contribution in the field of business and organisation. Through this study, this metaphor has been explored in relation to small firm innovation specifically and it is in this field that it is able to contribute new findings and knowledge.

'Innovation through Jazz' workshops, delivered as part of the University of Gloucestershire's 'Year of Innovation' programme provided the opportunity for the jazz metaphor to be explored in some depth with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the county, with new insights developed about the effectiveness of the jazz metaphor in this context.

Initial reactions to the jazz workshop approach and the use of jazz as a metaphor for exploring innovation drew comments of scepticism, though the most frequent reaction was one of intrigue and curiosity, attributed primarily to the novelty of the approach. Carter & Jones-Evans (2000) suggests a characteristic of small firms to be their flexibility and willingness to try new approaches and this was reflected in the findings of this study, the owner-managers voluntarily enrolling their organisations onto this innovative programme.

The inclusion of jazz was suggested by some workshop participants to help maintain attention and, referring back to the literature review, parallels can be seen with a definition offered of jazz, or rather a description of something as

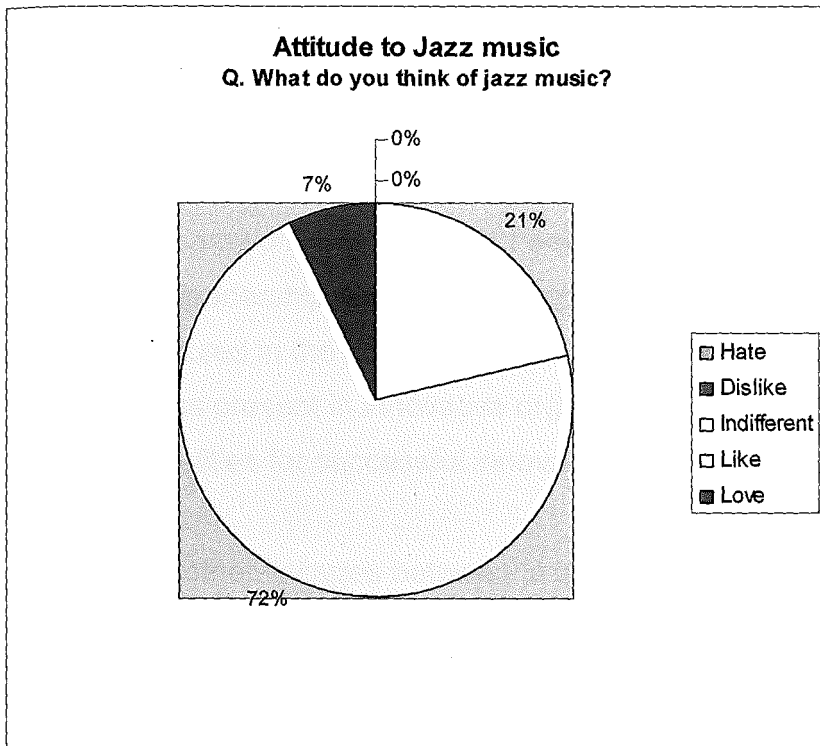
'jazzy', as something "likely to attract attention" (www.oup.com). The novel approach did indeed attract and maintain interest in the workshops and for some participants the musical element also helped them recall the workshop experience and messages.

For some of the workshop participants, scepticism about the approach affected their attitude and openness toward the workshop experience, limiting their interest and engagement. The inclusion of jazz music proved to be a distracting feature of the workshops for a few participants and, rather than enabling an environment for the valuable discussion of innovation and the development of new insights, it was in some cases a limitation.

There was a suggestion in the post-workshop interviews that for some individuals a dislike of jazz could have limited the effectiveness of the approach, the inclusion of jazz impacting their expectations of the workshop and negatively impacting their mindset and attitude during it. This issue was raised also in the literature review where Hatch & Weick (1998) convey concerns that individuals who do not like jazz may resist participating in the use of a jazz metaphor.

Although some of the workshop participants expressed a dislike of jazz, it is interesting to note the relatively high proportion of those owner-managers or Managing Directors involved in the study who did like jazz, as captured by figure 5.2 overleaf.

Figure 5.2 Attitude towards Jazz Music



Source: author's own

A question in the pre-workshop Company Questionnaire asked these individuals about their liking or not of jazz music and, as shown by figure 5.2, 79% responded that they either loved or liked jazz, the remaining 21% declaring an indifference to it. None of these individuals expressed hatred or even a dislike of jazz. This question was asked of the owner-managers or managing directors and the author feels it not surprising to find that these individuals were positive (or at least not negative) about jazz music, given it was they who enrolled their organisations onto this jazz-based intervention. It should however be remembered that these comments were not representative of many of the other participants of the workshops.

With regard to the extent and way in which individuals saw the jazz-based workshops as being about innovation, this study found a number of different views. For a number of the workshop participants it was the novel approach of using jazz where they could see a message about innovation. For others the

jazz provided a demonstration of the process of innovating or insight into innovative thought.

Most people, in response to being asked in what way the workshops explored innovation, focussed upon particular things discussed or demonstrated, with participants drawing specific messages from the workshops. The importance of effective teamwork was the most frequently cited message, with some reference to leadership and communication too. These were messages or qualities explored in the jazz workshops and are identified in the literature as characteristics present in innovative organisations (Tidd et al, 2001) and as important qualities for successful innovation (Goffin & Mitchell, 2005).

A number of other linkages between jazz and innovation were also explored in the workshops including, for example, attitudes to risk, the uncertainty of the future and the value of being able to 'think on one's feet', or improvise. These linkages were also proposed in literature on the jazz metaphor. Interestingly, however, very few participants recalled these messages when asked to describe the main features and messages of the workshop.

Further commentary on many of these proposed linkages is provided in the following sections of this chapter. The author opens this discussion with a focus upon the strategic purpose of organisations and jazz bands and the strategic context for innovation.

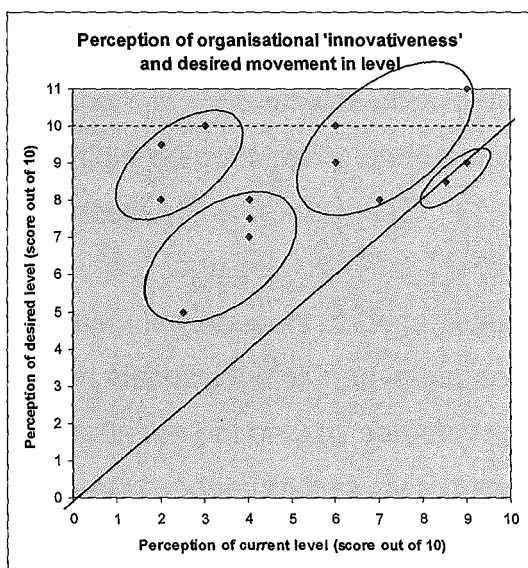
5.3 Strategic Purpose and Perceived Relevance

Understanding of, and association with, the concept of innovation varied significantly between and within the participant organisations. Whilst a number of authors, including Henry (2001b), Tidd et al (2001) and Utterback (1998), advocate the importance of innovation for business survival and growth, few of the involved organisations had an articulated strategy for innovation.

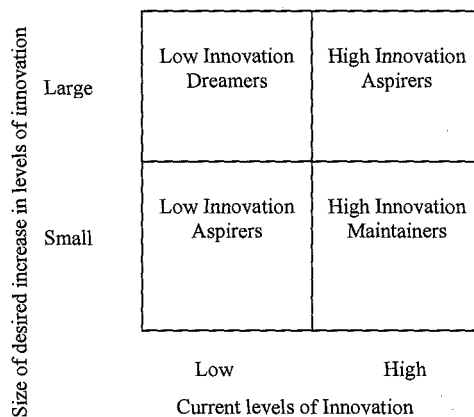
A number of individuals in the study had difficulty pronouncing the word 'innovation' and exhibited some difficulty or discomfort in using the term. This finding potentially offers support for the work of Stanworth & Curran (1973) who comment on the small firm owner-manager's lack of formal training and discomfort with management and social science jargon. The work of Chell (1987) explores lower level employees' limited interest in organisational matters and this also appears to be supported by this study where many of the SME employees seemed to have limited engagement in such strategic discussions.

All of the owner-managers or managing directors expressed a desire to attain innovation levels in their organisation of at least that which they perceived to exist currently. The size of the gap between actual and ideal innovation levels varied significantly however between the organisations.

Reprise of Figure 4.5
Patterns in Perceptions of Innovativeness



Reprise of Figure 4.6
Four Box Model of Innovation Ambitions



Source: author's own

Given that enrolment onto the 'Year of Innovation' programme was voluntary, it is not surprising that there was a desire by the owner-managers or managing directors of the participant organisations to increase, or at least

maintain, levels of organisational innovativeness. The variation in response is also not surprising to the author given the diverse nature of firms as well as of the individuals within them (Barrow, 1998; Deakins & Freel, 2003).

The way in which individuals conceptualised innovation also varied, with references made to both product and process innovation and conceptualisations articulated of innovation as an output, an approach, a positive behaviour and as a mindset.

A number of factors seem to have affected the degree to which respondents felt able and comfortable to engage in a discussion of innovation in conceptual terms. Employees at more junior levels in the organisations appeared to be much less articulate about 'innovation', less comfortable with the term and offered much more simplistic descriptions of the concept. The extent to which the owner-managers or managing directors understood and could relate to innovation was typically higher, though varied substantially. The owner-manager of Organisation IC2, for example, seemed to have a perception of innovation limited to little more than teamwork. The managing director of Organisation IC4, a recent winner of a Queens Award for Innovation, in contrast was able to discuss a rich conceptualisation of innovation, demonstrating understanding, reflection and contextualisation of the concept.

Other senior managers at Organisation IC4 were also able to engage in detailed discussions of innovation and it appears this comfort with the concept may be driven not only by seniority level, but by the managing director's heightened understanding, by a greater perceived need to innovate, greater sensitivity and greater salience.

It is of interest to explore the metaphorical fit of jazz to issues of strategic purpose. Authors such as Kamoche et al (2002) suggest jazz to be closely aligned with innovation, "itself a form of musical innovation" (p.14). Difficulties are however highlighted by other authors, including Hatch & Weick (1998), Crossan (1998) and Barrett (1998) who suggest jazz to be insular and lacking

in concern for the market or customer. This proposal finds support in this study; jazz music's apparent lack of concern for the market described by a workshop participant as a flaw in the metaphor's application to innovation.

A number of authors, including Weick (1998), Cunha et al (1999) and Chelariu et al (2002) describe jazz as being concerned primarily with the present, acting spontaneously and on the spur of the moment. This study found support for this view, Respondent 2IC7 criticising jazz for its essentially present-focus and suggesting it consequently unsuitable as a metaphor for innovation.

These findings of the author's study support the proposals of authors discussed in the literature review, and whilst offering support also raise some questions over the suitability of using jazz as a metaphor for exploring innovation with businesses.

5.4 Roles, Relationships & Communication

The need for organisations to be future-orientated and visionary is supported by a need for this vision to be clearly articulated and held not only the managing director but shared by his workforce too.

A comment in the post-workshop interviews from a respondent at Organisation IC6 provided insight into levels of commitment felt towards the business, its strategic goals and performance: *"Although there's a lot of humour that goes on in the hangar, there's also a serious undercurrent from us for making money for the company"*. The affinity expressed by this respondent to the organisation's performance supports discussion in the literature; Curran et al (1986b p.5) for example proposing the existence of close relations in small firms and *"feelings of moral involvement in the enterprise and identification with management goals"*.

The study also, however, uncovered suggestions that many other employees do not feel this affinity with the business strategy and management goals. The owner-manager's son in Organisation IC5, for example, described their workforce as being made up of individuals who want to *"only work 9.30-5.30"*, who *"don't understand that they could make a difference"* and who are *"more interested in buses home and watching Eastenders"*. This contrasting finding also finds support in the literature, Chell for example suggesting that typically shop-floor workers *"have less interest in, or enthusiasm for, organizational policy"* (1987, p.210).

This study found much variation then in the levels of motivation and commitment felt by small firm employees and in the extent to which they felt an association with the strategic goals of the organisation. The work of a number of authors, including Tidd et al (2001) and Goffin & Mitchell (2005), suggest that innovative organisations are typically visionary, having a vision that is both clearly articulated by the leader and, importantly, shared by all employees. The limited employee commitment and association with organisational strategy, apparent in some of the participant organisations, could therefore be limiting factors in these businesses' innovative activity and success.

Issues around the commitment of more senior managers or 'leaders' of the businesses also arose through the undertaking of this study, with some interesting insights generated into the relationships between the leaders and the rest of the workforce.

There was a view amongst many workshop participants that the leaders of their business needed to be present at and actively engaged in the 'Innovation through Jazz' workshop. The management's involvement at the workshop seemed an important indication of their commitment to the workshop itself, to its messages and to innovation. It also provided an indication as to their openness toward learning and by being at the workshop provided a valuable opportunity for management and shop-floor workers to sit down as one team and discuss strategic matters together. A number of authors, including Curran

et al (1986a) advocate the visibility of the leaders of small firms and emphasise the importance of the workforce seeing those who are responsible for making decisions in the business.

The study uncovered a suggestion in a number of the involved organisations that a 'them and us' culture had developed in relation to management and non-management. There was an implication by respondents that this was undesirable and a recognition that it would be beneficial to break down some of these silos or barriers in order to work more effectively as one team. This perspective is echoed in literature on organisational structure, where flatter, less hierarchical structures are considered more flexible (Helgesen, 1995) and empowering (Tidd et al, 2001). Small firms are suggested as typically less hierarchical than larger firms and consequently at an advantage for harnessing change and innovation (Deakins & Freel, 2003). This study however suggests hierarchical structures, to some extent, still hinder innovation and effective working in some small firms.

Another characteristic of small firms, proposed in the literature by Tidd et al (2001) amongst other authors, is suggested to be an ease of communication. Whilst the *opportunity* for face-to-face communication may be greater in small firms (Curran et al, 1986a) this study suggests that this may not always be borne out. The study uncovered a number of issues around communication, with respondents from Organisation IC3, for example, suggesting that the 'Innovation through Jazz' workshop was the first time they had all sat down together as a team that year. Comments from employees at Organisation IC6 criticised managerial absence at the workshop for the lost opportunity to find out more about their management's thinking, again indicating communication is not as effective in all small firms as it perhaps could be. Many authors, including Kamoche & Cunha (2001), advocate the importance of communication and associate successful innovation with environments characterised by information sharing, collective idea generation and extensive communication. The findings of this study suggest that for many small firms, communication could be much more effective and could currently be hindering innovation.

Further insight into the effectiveness of communication implied frequent difficulties caused by the owner-manager or managing director's style of communication, the nature of the communication and the language used in these interactions. Comments from Respondent 3IC3 implied an air of intimidation in meeting with management. Comments from Respondent 2IC8/JC1 described a typical response from the owner-manager of their organisation, suggesting that the manager will give people a "*rollicking when they get things wrong*" and rarely compliment them when they get things right. This respondent described an impression given by the owner-manager of being too busy to hear people's ideas, of being dismissive of any ideas and of viewing such behaviour as wasting his time.

A number of issues for innovation became apparent through the undertaking of this study concerning the relational and cultural characteristics of the involved small firms. The author will continue this discussion in section 5.5, focussing upon attitudes to risk, mistakes and failure. Attitudes toward reflection, learning and knowledge creation in the involved small firms are also discussed.

5.5 Risk, Learning, Knowledge & Reflection

This study found the owner-managers of a number of the involved SMEs to be notably intolerant of mistakes. Whilst starting a business is widely described in the literature as a risky thing to do, small firm owner-managers are typically independent and self-sufficient and they can be very unforgiving of the mistakes of others. A number of authors, including Tidd et al (2001), emphasise the inherently uncertain nature of innovation however and the inevitability of failures as well as successes. Innovative organisations are recognised as those that make risk-taking and failure less threatening (Henry, 2001b), have a substantial tolerance of failure (Peters & Waterman, 1982) and nurture a 'no-blame' culture (Goffin & Mitchell, 2005). A lack of tolerance for mistakes does however appear to represent quite a challenge for small

firms, based upon the findings of this study. Innovation is suggested by Tidd et al, for example, to be “*primarily about combining different perspectives*” (2001, p.334) yet in this study we see owner-managers quite defensive and dismissive toward alternative perspectives and ideas.

Curran et al (1986b) discuss the management style of small firm owner-managers and suggest a typical style which tends to be autocratic and reluctant to delegate in everyday decision-making. They also discuss a study undertaken by the Commission on Industrial Relations which questioned the ease and effectiveness of communications in small firms. The study suggested that it is not in the nature of small businessmen to consult and that communications can tend to be one-way. Chell (1987), for example, however proposes that improved decision-making and increased satisfaction and morale can arise from increased levels of communication and opportunities for participation.

More effective communication, more open relationships, greater trust and tolerance of mistakes appear from this study to be issues which may need addressing if small firms are to flourish. The diffusion of power and responsibility is also a significant issue to be addressed if the organisations in this study in particular are to develop, innovate and grow their competitive advantage.

A number of authors, including Goffin & Mitchell (2005), Tidd et al (2001) and Peters & Waterman (1982) propose a capability to learn as one of the most important capabilities of a firm. An openness and ability to learn, at both an individual and organisational level is suggested to be of utmost importance to growth and success (Verhees & Meurenberg, 2004). Continuing and stretching individual staff development is also suggested to be a characteristic of innovative organisations.

This study however uncovered some general scepticism and even boredom with much management training. The apparent scepticism regarding the effectiveness of training workshops is a concern for the barrier it may present

to learning in small firms. A number of individuals exhibited an apparent defensiveness against an implication that they might not have been familiar with the messages communicated in the 'Innovation through Jazz' workshops. Such behaviour appears indicative of a culture apparently not as open to learning as the literature might suggest desirable.

Despite having raised concerns over the workshop participants' openness to learning, the owner-managers of the firms involved do appear to be indicating an openness to learning by having enrolled their organisations on to the 'Innovation through Jazz' engagement programme. Verhees & Meulenber (2004) describe innovative small firms as those with an owner who is willing to learn and to adopt innovations. Many innovations in small firms, they suggest, "are based on off-the-shelf technologies, concepts, and/or resources offered by supplying industries" (2004, p.138) and in this way the small firms involved in this study can be considered innovative in their involvement in the University of Gloucestershire's 'Innovation through Jazz' engagement opportunity.

A discussion about innovation in chapter two offered definitions of the concept as being "about doing things differently" or "breaking the mould" (Burns, 2001). The owner-managers or managing directors who enrolled their organisations onto the 'Innovation through Jazz' engagement programme, in doing so, have indeed showed an openness to doing things differently, breaking the mould of traditional training or management education.

In conducting this study and following up with participants after the jazz workshops, the author prompted those individuals she interviewed to reflect upon the workshop experience, the messages explored and the metaphor of jazz. Whilst a number of authors, including Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995) and Deakins & Freel (2003) suggest reflection to be an important component of learning, there was little evidence of significant personal reflection or collective discussion of the workshop after its delivery. A lack of reflection could limit the potential effectiveness of the workshop approach to exploring

innovation with small businesses and this could be an interesting area for further research.

5.6 Process, Structure & Flexibility

An expressed desire for the senior management to have been at the 'Innovation through Jazz' workshop was discussed earlier in this chapter. The primary reason put forward for the absence of a number of the senior management from Organisation IC6's jazz workshop was 'other work commitments'. A number of authors on small business, including Carter & Jones-Evans (2000), suggest that small firms often have very limited financial, technical and/or human resources and that their senior management can have a perceived lack of time for long-term strategic thinking. This proposal does appear to be supported by the findings of this study and such resource limitations are noted as potential factors hindering the success of these businesses.

Interestingly, shop-floor workers in Organisation IC6 themselves also made reference to work commitments, commenting on the time 'lost' from production whilst attending the jazz workshop: *"Although there's a lot of humour that goes on in the hanger, there's also a serious undercurrent from us for making money for the company and they saw this as lost production time"*. This response is perhaps indicative of a culture where people feel 'too busy' to attend training, not only at the management levels but permeating the whole organisation. A number of writers, including Rogers (1995) and Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995), propose a degree of organisational slack to be an important factor influencing organisational innovativeness and, as apparent in Organisation IC4, it is important for the long-term success of a business that training is seen not as lost production time but as an investment.

Through the literature review a core issue was identified around This study therefore found a flexibility required not only in the mindset and behaviour of the owner-manager and wider workforce, but also in the allocation and use of

limited resources. Whilst many of the small businesses exhibited a primary focus on current rather than future issues and concern with primarily operational rather than strategic issues, the literature highlights the importance for innovation of developing a future-orientation and developing capabilities so as to exploit future opportunities.

Improvisation, a key characteristic of jazz, is described in the literature as one particular technique for developing flexibility and for creating change and innovation. It is described as a technique which, whilst extremely flexible and creative, equally draws upon some important structures. In this sense it seems a very applicable concept to business.

Having provided some concluding discussions upon the findings of this study, the author will now move on to section 5.7, proposing a couple of higher-level or meta-conclusions.

5.7 Meta-conclusions

The author would like to offer further discussion here of two key issues at the meta-level. Firstly the question is raised as to whether jazz is unique as a useful metaphor for exploring perceptions of and attitudes toward innovation and, whether there might be other metaphors which could be just as effective. Secondly it is recognised that the jazz workshops themselves are an innovation and this raises a number of issues concerning the sample profile and the possible diffusion process within the business population.

The Jazz Metaphor

The jazz metaphor provided a lens through which to view innovation and to explore such techniques as improvisation and for many of the participants of this study this approach was novel, refreshing and innovative in itself. The informal, relaxed and enjoyable workshop atmosphere that the jazz helped create was typically found to be of benefit. Comments from a few participants

suggested that the jazz may however have created an atmosphere that was too relaxed.

Whilst the jazz metaphor appears to have provided an interesting and relatively effective lens through which to explore innovation, the author does wonder whether other metaphors might have been just as effective. A key characteristic of jazz is improvisation, a technique also present in a number of other domains including sport, comedy, theatre (Vera & Crossan, 2004, 2005) and the military (Mirvis, 1998). This raises the question as to whether there could equally be validity in their use as a metaphor for exploring innovation, or there could even be a case for using multiple metaphors, such that a wider audience could effectively be reached.

Some of the individuals in this study expressed a dislike of jazz and it was suggested that, for them, this may well have diminished the effectiveness of the approach. The technical nature and specialised language used to discuss music can be intimidating and the accessibility of the jazz metaphor could consequently be challenged. The improvisational theatre metaphor, in contrast, draws on words rather than musical notes as its raw materials and as such is advocated by Vera & Crossan as more accessible, transferable and universal than the jazz metaphor (2005). Where alternative metaphors could perhaps have been more widely accessible, they may have been found to be as, if not potentially more, effective in developing new insights, learning and skill transfer.

The comment below, made by the managing director of Organisation IC4, one of the more reflective respondents, indeed questions the unique value of the jazz metaphor:

"It could have been jazz or anything! I think with these things you just need something to go with it... I could sort of see the parallels, but you could equally have done it with anything else you might have thought of".

Diffusion of the 'Innovation through Jazz' Messages and Approach

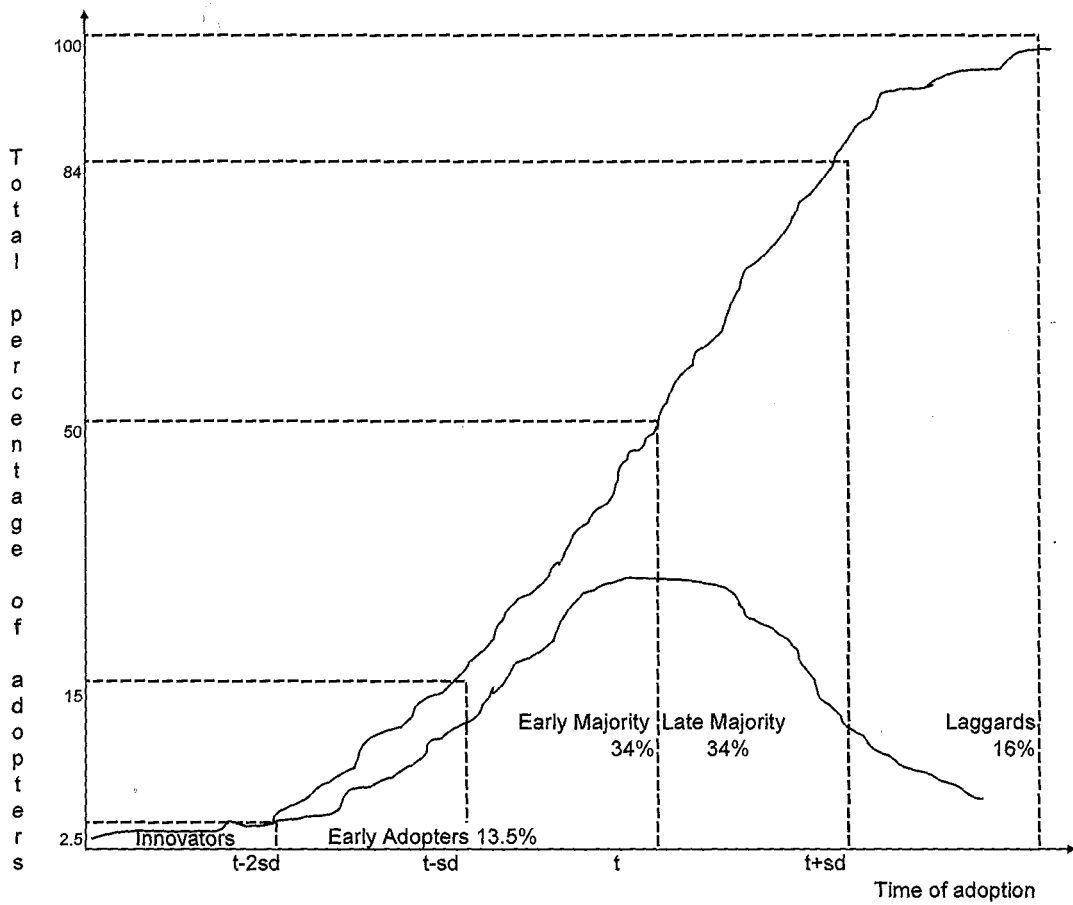
This study has examined innovation in a sample of sixteen small firms, exploring the owner-managers' and employees' understanding and perceptions of innovation, their attitude towards and association with the concept. The study has undertaken this exploration using a jazz metaphor and has done so with organisations voluntarily enrolled onto the jazz-based engagement programme.

The sample of organisations and individuals with which this study was conducted was however relatively small with just sixteen organisations engaged in-depth on the programme. Given the enormous diversity in small firms and their owner-managers (Burns, 2001; Barrow, 1998; Deakins & Freel, 2003) making any generalisations from this study is very difficult. Working within the paradigm of relativism encapsulates a worldview of the author centred in diversity and relativity and hence she seeks not to draw generalisations from this study.

The owner-managers or managing directors who enrolled their organisations onto the 'Innovation through Jazz' engagement programme have, in doing so, demonstrated an openness to trying new approaches and therefore innovative behaviour. In reference to the work of Rogers (1962, 1983, 1995) these individuals could be labelled 'Innovators'. They, in effect, represent part of a very small population of people comfortable with being the first to try a new innovation or, in this case, a new approach to exploring innovation. It cannot however accordingly be assumed that the employees of these owner-managers share this innovative trait and indeed, findings from this study suggest that many do not.

Rogers explored the adoption of innovations, developing a pattern for the diffusion, that is "*the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system*" (1995, p.5). This pattern, an S-shaped diffusion curve, is shown in figure 5.3:

Figure 5.3 The Cumulative Diffusion of Innovations



Source: Rogers, 1962

Diffusion theory could provide an interesting framework through which to consider continued delivery of and participation in the 'Innovation through Jazz' programme of engagement. Consideration of the sixteen organisations and their owner-managers as 'Innovators' or 'Early Adopters' could suggest a pattern to subsequent engagement opportunities as that plotted by figure 5.3. Diffusion is a social process and Rogers suggests that an innovation spreads among the firms in an industry in a process of diffusion similar to that of how an innovation diffuses among individuals in a community or system (1995). The diversity of views from the workshop participants could potentially also be mapped against diffusion theory, some people open to the approach immediately, others more delayed in their acceptance. Given time and

resources it could be of interest to research the diffusion process of the jazz workshops.

Having discussed many of the insights from this study, synthesised and contextualised these findings, the author will now move on in the remaining two sections of this chapter to highlight contributions to knowledge made by this study and to propose areas for further research.

5.8 Contributions to Knowledge

The jazz metaphor and its value for exploring organisational issues is discussed in the literature by a number of authors, including Kamoche & Cunha (2001), Miner et al (2001, 1996), Eisenhardt (1997), Kao (1996), Berliner (1994) and notably in a special issue of the journal *Organization Science* in 1998. Hatch (1999) suggests that the jazz metaphor can make an imaginative contribution in the field of business and organisation and Holbrook (2003) describes it as a fruitful and fertile way of capturing and exploring organisational phenomena. Connections between jazz and a variety of business issues are explored by these authors and proposals made in relation to a number of fields of business. Many of these discussions have however primarily focussed at the theoretical level, with few empirical studies referenced.

This work has set out to build on these contributions by exploring the applicability and usefulness of the jazz metaphor in the specific context of small firm innovation. An in-depth review and synthesis of the existent literature on the jazz metaphor and small firm innovation, considered alongside new primary research, has enabled the author to draw new insights into the effectiveness of the metaphor in this particular context and to contribute new knowledge in this field.

The study has found support for the jazz metaphor and its use for exploring issues of innovation in a small business context. Moreover, the metaphor was found to be an effective device for developing insights into a number of characteristics of innovative behaviour and conditions for organisational innovation. The use of the metaphor was also found to be effective in generating interest and intrigue with a population of small business owner-managers and employees; participants were curious about the involvement of a jazz band in the workshop and curious about how jazz might be able to provide insight into issues of relevance to them and their businesses.

Leveraging this initial curiosity, this study saw application of the metaphor in workshop engagements with participants able to observe, interact with, and engage in discussion with a live jazz band. Such application allowed the metaphor to be explored beyond being a merely theoretical construct, through active interaction with the participants. The use of live jazz was found to maintain the interest and attention of many workshop participants, heightening their enjoyment of the engagement, facilitating understanding and assisting recollection of the workshop.

Used in this way, the jazz metaphor was found by this study to provide a useful medium for engaging with the employees of small firms to explore innovation, in particular the teamwork, leadership and communication aspects. The metaphor was effective in prompting thinking and developing learning about innovation and consequently in providing a valuable step on an organisation's journey to enhancing innovative awareness, understanding and behaviour.

This work was also able to contribute new insights into limitations of the jazz metaphor, with a number highlighted during the study. With regard to the applicability of the metaphor to the context of innovation in small firms, a number of limitations were found. Jazz music was found to be predominantly concerned with the present as opposed to pursuing any longer term vision or plan. It was also found to be a form of music somewhat insular in its focus

(Cossan, 1998, Barrett, 1998), a number of participants commenting on the jazz band's apparently limited concern for its customers, or audience. Such features of jazz conflict with the strong future-orientation of innovative organisations (Henry 2002, Storey, 2004) and their widespread customer awareness (Tidd et al, 2001).

Personal engagement with jazz as a musical form was found to be a significant moderator of the effectiveness of jazz as a medium for learning. It is evident that most of the previous studies have been undertaken by authors who have had a keen interest in jazz and an enjoyment of the music. Moreover, a number of authors on the metaphor, including Kamoche & Cunha (2001) and Peplowski (1998) are jazz musicians themselves; it is perhaps not surprising then that there tends to be an underlying assumption of an engagement with jazz as a musical form. In contrast, this study found however that jazz is not universally liked. A number of the participants of this study expressed a strong dislike of jazz music and this was found to negatively influence these individuals' expectations of and openness to the experience and messages of the 'Innovation through Jazz' workshops. This finding raises questions therefore about the effectiveness of the metaphor in its use with individuals who are not devotees of the jazz style of music.

This study is also able to build upon views offered by some authors, including Vera & Crossan (2005, 2004), of the limited accessibility of jazz as a metaphor, finding in the context of small firm innovation that for a number of participants of this study the jazz metaphor was just too abstract, even where there was a liking for jazz. Many qualities of innovative organisations and conditions for enabling innovation were explored in the jazz workshops, but not all of these were recalled by participants. Instead participants' recollection of messages focussed upon just a few of these issues, for example teamwork, leadership and communication the most frequently cited themes. The post-workshop interviews highlighted strong recollection among some participants, though for some individuals this tended to relate to the music itself rather than the workshop's messages. In such cases the use of jazz seemed to distract from, rather than enable, discussion about innovation. Where use of the jazz

metaphor then moves beyond looking at it as a theoretic construct, but rather draws upon live jazz demonstration, this study found its use to potentially risk distracting from, even overwhelming, the messages it is seeking to explore.

In undertaking this study, new primary research has been undertaken and a contribution made to knowledge about the jazz metaphor and its effectiveness in the specific context of small firm innovation. The author recognises limitations however in this contribution, notable in relation to the relatively small scale of the study. As an exploratory piece of research it has however highlighted a number of interesting findings. These findings could beneficially be explored further through additional research studies and in the next section of this chapter the author proposes some areas of further research that could build upon this work and add robustness to its findings.

5.9 Recommendations for Further Research

One notable area that further research could address relates to the relatively short time horizon over which the jazz metaphor was explored and involved organisations studied. As discussed in chapter three, this short time horizon made it unlikely that changes in behaviour as a result of engagement on the 'Innovation through Jazz' would be observable. The study consequently focussed upon attitude, perception and articulated understanding of innovation. Building upon this study however with a longitudinal study would enable a richer exploration of the application of learning, development of associated skills and behavioural changes. It would also usefully enable a fuller examination of the longer term effects of the approach and the sustainability of the impact.

A number of organisations involved in this study referred to the 'Innovation through Jazz' engagement as a step in the right direction, or as part of a longer journey; valuable in its role of prompting thinking about innovation and beginning (or encouraging greater) dialogue about innovation in the firms concerned. The author feels it would be of great interest to follow some of

these organisations on that journey. A longitudinal study, as well as enabling a fuller examination of the longer-term impacts of the jazz-based intervention, and any subsequent initiatives embarked upon to encourage innovation, could also provide the opportunity to explore in more depth some of the factors that influence the sustainability of change and innovation in these organisations, at both an attitudinal and behavioural level.

Research into the diffusion of the jazz approach and messages would be another area of potential interest and value for further research. A longitudinal study could explore the diffusion of the messages from the jazz metaphor and workshops with the employees of involved organisations. An additional study of interest could explore the diffusion or pattern of adoption of a wider programme of jazz-based workshops exploring innovation. As proposed in section 5.7, the organisations who enrolled on the 'Innovation through Jazz' programme, focussed upon for this study, could be considered 'Innovators' or 'Early Adopters' of the jazz-based approach and it might be of interest to investigate further adoption of this approach.

Building upon this study, further insight could be gained into the value of the jazz metaphor for exploring innovation by carrying out richer inter-company analysis. Findings from this study have primarily been drawn from the sample of sixteen organisations enrolled onto the 'Innovation through Jazz' programme. As an exploratory study the findings from these different organisations have been presented alongside each other as part of a discussion of innovation in small firms and the potential value of the jazz approach. It would be of much interest to take this initial exploration further with an inter-firm comparative focus and by doing so, enable a much deeper exploration of the contextual issues to innovation in small firms.

It would be interesting to further explore the value of the jazz metaphor, focussing perhaps on some of the other small business climatic issues discovered in this study, such as communication or employment relations. The metaphor could be examined using a similar workshop approach, focussed perhaps on exploring 'Communication through Jazz' for example

rather than innovation. In a similar vein additional research could interestingly be carried out into the effectiveness of other metaphors for exploring innovation in small firms. Again, following the same workshop approach alternative metaphors could for example be explored through 'Innovation through Theatre' or 'Innovation through Play' workshops.

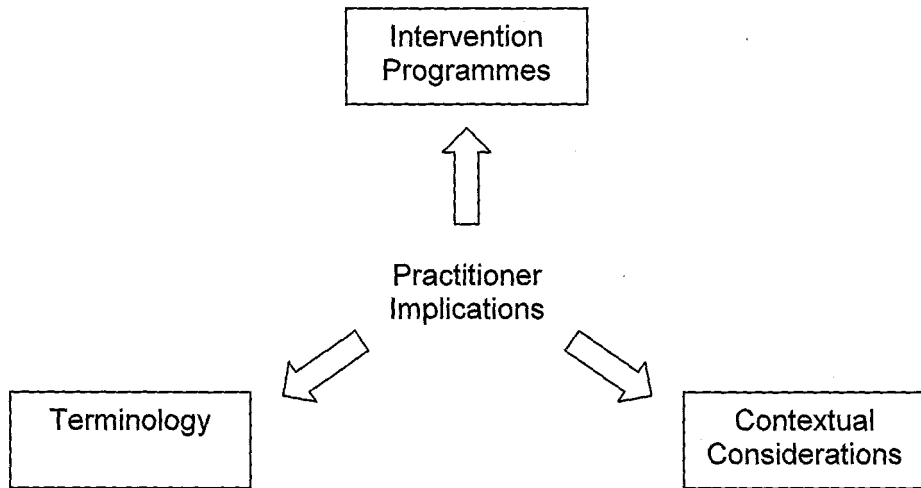
In the final section of this chapter the author would like to offer some possible practitioner implications arising from this study.

5.10 Practitioner Implications

A number of implications can be drawn from the findings of this study for application by training providers, enterprise support agencies and small firm owner-managers. As suggested by Salaman & Storey "*academics are not the only people with an interest in understanding the varying levels of innovation; it is also a focal interest for many practising managers*" (2002, p.147) as is it for those many other parties who work with SMEs.

The author has grouped practitioner implications from this study into three broad areas, highlighted by Figure 5.4. These implications relate to the way in which programmes, focussed upon engaging small firms with the concept and practice of innovation, might be designed and delivered. They also relate to the language used in such engagements and the wider contextual issues which must be considered alongside any innovation-focussed work.

Figure 5.4 Practitioner Implications of the Study



Source: author's own

Intervention Programmes

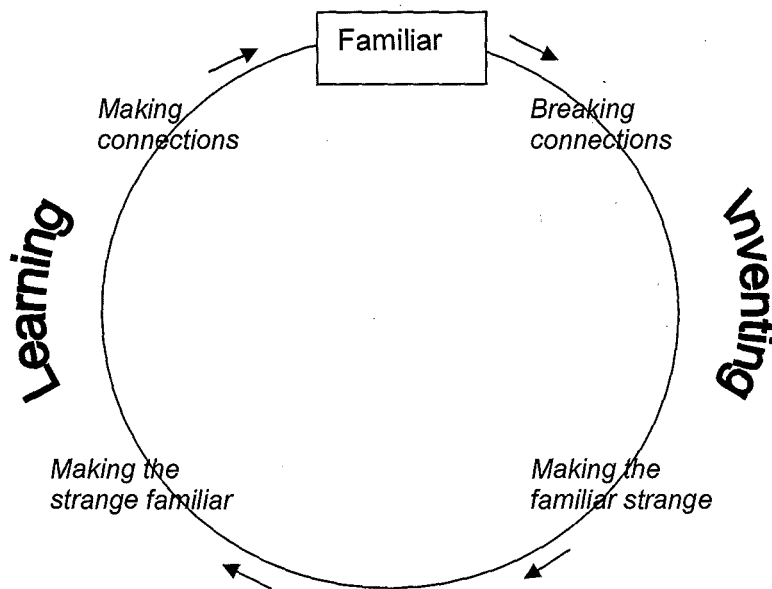
This study found a benefit in the *novelty* of approach taken to engaging the owner-managers and employees in the exploration of the concept and practice of innovation. The innovative use of metaphor and unusual involvement of a live jazz band attracted interest and attention, generating a useful level of intrigue and curiosity in the programme. A number of participants also positively commented on the attention commanded by the approach and the relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere it created. Participants drew comparisons with more traditional workshops, expressing a dissatisfaction, even boredom, with such interventions and as such the author would propose a general benefit in taking a rather more creative and novel approach to employee engagement programmes.

The author would not suggest that designers and deliverers of such programmes need necessarily involve jazz, but rather that any such programme should include some novel feature which, in the same way as the jazz did, can capture the interest and attention of participants. A limitation of

the jazz metaphor and use of live jazz was that for some individuals it distracted from, even swamped, the messages it was seeking to highlight. As such a careful balance must be struck in the application of any novel approach to ensure that it is engaging but not so much so that it risks distracting from or overwhelming key messages.

Basadur & Gelade (2006) advocate the role of invention in enabling learning and this offers support of the author's above discussion. Inventing, they describe as a process of breaking old connections, suggesting that when we invent we "*make the familiar strange*". Learning, on the other hand, they describe as a process of making new connections, suggesting that when we learn we "*make the strange familiar*" (p.48). As captured by figure 5.5, Basadur & Gelade see inventing and learning as a continuous loop.

Figure 5.5 Two Halves of a Continuous Process of Learning and Inventing



Source: Basadur & Gelade (2006, p.48)

Inventing new approaches to employee engagement programmes can be seen then to offer new ways of developing fresh insights and learning. An implication for enterprise support agencies might therefore be to invite and support more novel approaches to small-business engagement programmes, necessitating training providers therefore to challenge more traditional approaches and assumptions, designing new and different ways to explore business issues.

For an intervention programme to be effective it is vital that management are fully engaged and involved, as was expressed by individuals in this study and as indicated by a number of authors including Basadur (2004). This is necessary for management to show their commitment, for the programme to maintain credibility and for any subsequent efforts to embed and operationalise new learning to be successful. Small firm owner-managers must therefore ensure that they are visibly supporting any initiatives with which they are involving their employees and where, as a consequence, they are hoping to create strategic change.

Improvisation is a key feature of jazz music and, in this study, represented a useful concept in an exploration of creativity and innovation. It is described in the literature as a technique for creating change and as an enabling capability for innovation (Ilinitch et al, 1998). The author might suggest therefore some practitioner benefit in the further exploration of improvisation, its application in organizational contexts and development of associated skills. Owner-managers could encourage their employees to take a more improvisational approach to their work and training providers may be able to support such steps with the offer of further engagement with, exploration of and training in improvisational skills. Some benefit may also come of exploring the technique of improvisation through other metaphors, theatre one such domain where improvisation can be easily observed and experienced (Vera & Crossan, 2004).

Terminology

As a term, 'innovation' is not a word small firm owner-managers or employees are particularly comfortable with or confident using. A number of participants of this study had difficulty pronouncing it or articulating its meaning. As a concept however individuals were more familiar with the *essence* of innovation and some of the enabling conditions necessary for it to flourish. Management jargon does not readily form part of the language of small firm owner-managers and their employees (Stanworth & Curran, 1973) and it is important that any practitioners working with such individuals use language accessible to all involved parties.

The findings of this study suggest innovation to be a useful concept for exploring with small firms. It has found value in use of the term 'innovation' in engagement with small firms as, for some individuals, it is a useful construct, enabling them to think in more abstract and general terms about change and business development. The study has also found that for other individuals the concept needs unpacking if it is to be of value. Breaking the concept down to its component features (for example creativity, opportunism, teamwork, leadership and communication) can facilitate sense-making and help some individuals develop a greater understanding of innovation.

Contextual Considerations

The 'Innovation through Jazz' workshop engagements provided an opportunity and medium for prompting thinking and developing learning about innovation. Through involvement in training, individuals can learn to be more spontaneous and creative (Basadur, 2004, Amabile, 1996) and, of particular relevance to this study, learn to enhance their improvisational abilities (Vera & Crossan, 2004). The development of improvisational skills however "*requires more than attendance in training workshops; it requires the development of a culture and context that supports spontaneous and creative processes in firms*" (Vera & Crossan, 2004, p221) and as with any intervention programme,

training can only achieve so much on its own. As found in this study, an influential factor in the success of any change initiative is the culture of the organisation and such wider organisational issues are essential considerations for anyone working within, or with, small firms to nurture change and innovation.

Getz & Robinson suggest there currently to be a generation of managers who see innovation as so critical to the survival of their business that they are (mistakenly) focussed upon trying to build the ability to innovate before taking care of “*more important things*” (2003, p.131). These ‘important things’ they describe as including customer-focussed processes, as well as listening to, and acting on, the everyday ideas of their front-line employees. This study found a number of individuals within the firms involved, unhappy with a number of organisational and relational matters, highlighting issues around trust, communication, motivation and involvement. If owner-managers are to enable greater levels of innovation in their businesses, they need to address a number of these enabling conditions alongside (or perhaps even before) focussing specifically upon innovation.

As found through this study, innovation is an extremely rich concept and the steps to creating a more innovative organisation are many and varied. It is a journey and one that encompasses all aspects of an organisation, its management and employees, their mindsets, behaviours and actions. This study has found the jazz metaphor useful in providing some new insight into the concept of innovation and a number of the enabling conditions and behaviours. Given some individuals found the jazz metaphor of more value at the specific rather than conceptual level, the author would also like to suggest that there might also be value in applying it to more specific problems. For example, a jazz workshop could be tailored to help a particularly fragmented team work better together, or perhaps to help a team to become more creative in their problem-solving and come up with a creative solution to a particular problem that they are currently facing.

To conclude this chapter, the author would like to refer to a comment made by Respondent 11C6 in his description of the 'Innovation through Jazz' workshop as *"one step, not a big step, but one step"*, advocating how it had succeeded in the way it got people *"thinking about things a little more"*. The author hopes, similarly, that this study has provided another step in the exploration of small firm innovation and that it has succeeded through its analysis of the jazz metaphor, in encouraging the reader and practitioner to think about innovation in some new ways.

Chapter 6

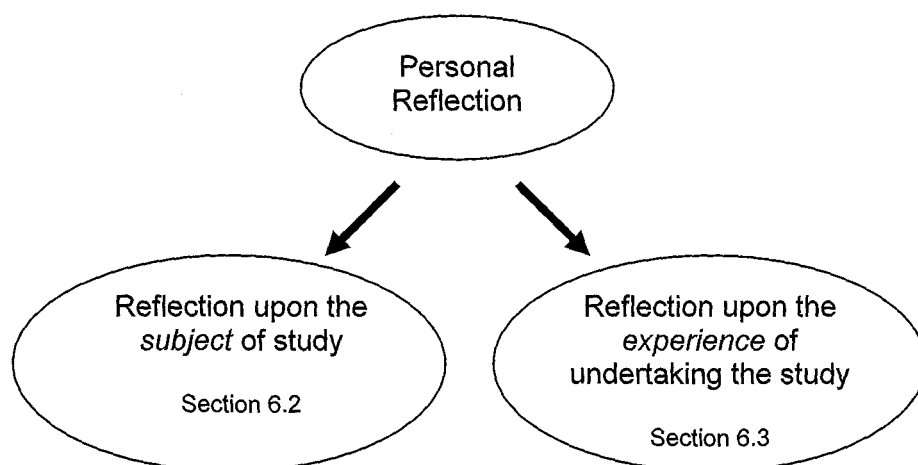
Personal Reflection

6.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the opportunity for me, as the author, to share my personal reflections on this study. The journey involved in undertaking this study has been a considerable learning experience and it is both of interest and value for me personally to record my thoughts and reflections on the experience, as well as hopefully of interest to the reader.

I have grouped my thoughts into two main areas; firstly, on the *subject* of the study and, secondly, on the *experience* of undertaking the study. The chapter is structured accordingly, as shown by figure 6.1 below.

Figure 6.1 Chapter Structure



Source: author's own

My discussion will open with a reflection upon the subject of study.

6.2 Reflection upon the Subject of Study

Working in the field of business development and innovation and undertaking a study into innovation in small firms, it is easy to imagine, from the amount of time that I spend thinking about innovation, that it is a concept well-recognised and readily understood by others. I appreciate this now was an unrealistic belief, however at the earlier stages of the study I was a little surprised how little the research participants apparently understood of the concept and also how little they actually seemed concerned with it. Having worked previously on the innovation programme at a large financial services organisation, I had an experience of innovation forming part of the organisation's widely recognised values and part of its strategic plan. It was a concept well articulated, well understood and acknowledged as fundamental to the business' success. Undertaking this study with small and medium-sized enterprises has opened my eyes to very different working environments, cultures, priorities and strategies and different not just in comparison to large firms, but to each other too.

The organisations I studied represented a selection of, although similarly sized, very different businesses. Many of these organisations were still run by the same person as had established them, often employing people with very different skills, attitudes and aspirations to the owner-manager. The organisations were, typically, strapped for resource and the people there focussed upon the 'here and now' and surviving the foreseeable future. The owner-managers and their employees seemed to be much more pragmatic than my experience in the large organisation mentioned, not familiar or comfortable with management jargon and with little perceived time to think in conceptual, even strategic ways.

At the outset of the study it was my intention to discuss matters of innovation with these organisations, to explore the jazz metaphor in depth and really to get to grips with these organisations about all aspects of innovation and

qualities of innovative organisations. Instead, I found individuals who were less bothered about what innovation as a concept meant and more focussed upon how it could help them; interested in what it means in practical terms, what they should consequently be doing differently tomorrow and how doing so will help them and their business.

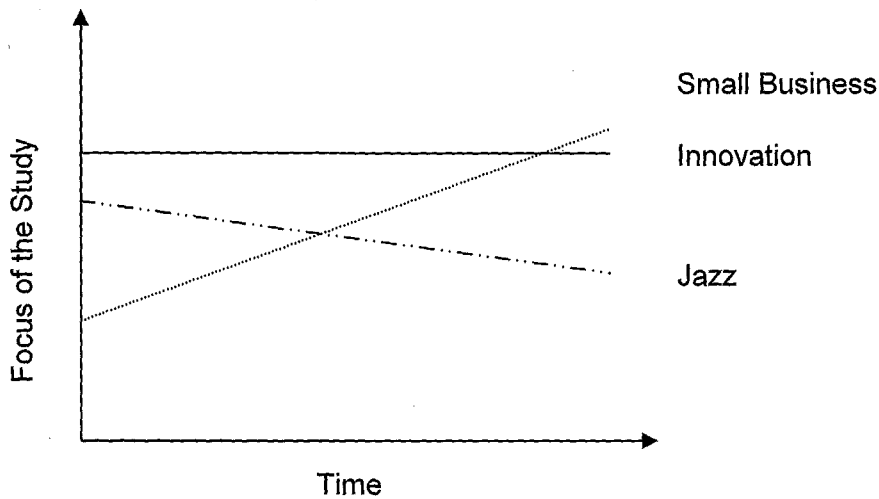
The jazz metaphor provided an alternative lens through which to view innovation and for many of the participants of this study it was novel, refreshing and innovative in itself. The informal, relaxed and enjoyable workshop atmosphere that the jazz helped create was found to be a benefit, the author does however wonder whether other metaphors might have been just as effective.

A key characteristic of jazz is improvisation, a technique however also apparent in a number of other domains including sport, comedy, theatre and the military (Mirvis, 1998). Some people involved in this study expressed a dislike of jazz and it was suggested that for them this may well have impacted the effectiveness of the approach. Other metaphors may have been more widely accessible and therefore just as, if not potentially more effective. As expressed by the managing director of Organisation IC4:

"It could have been jazz or anything! I think with these things you just need something to go with it... I could sort of see the parallels, but you could equally have done it with anything else you might have thought of".

Given the study's location within the 'Innovation through Jazz' project, I had assumed its primary focus to be 'innovation', along with an examination of jazz and the jazz metaphor. As time progressed and as I began to develop a better feel for the organisations and participants whom I was studying, I began to realise the focus was evolving, perhaps rebalancing to allow greater contextualisation of innovation in relation to all the other things for which these organisations and individuals were striving. Figure 6.2 captures the changing balance between these aspects which evolved during the undertaking of this study.

Figure 6.2 The Evolving Focus of the Study



Source: author's own

The study gathered some interesting insights into the working environments and cultures of SMEs. It identified a number of issues in these small firms around management/non-management divides, apparently created by the controlling behaviour of owner-managers and the difficulty they seem to have delegating, trusting others and accepting mistakes. The real issues of concern for these organisations, rather than being about innovation, seemed to be more about working better together, about building better relationships within their organisation and about communicating more effectively

For many of the owner-managers of these organisations it felt, to me, like their businesses had grown to a size whereby they were now no longer doing the things that had originally motivated them to start the business. People management and communication stood out as key components of their roles now and these were aspects which many did not seem to particularly enjoy or consider themselves any good at. I wonder if a real difference could be made to these organisations with more support of small business owner-managers. I feel it could be of real value to the owner-managers, their employees and the organisation if the owner-managers could be helped in learning to delegate

and trust others, particularly to do the aspects of their role which they do not enjoy so much. This could provide them with the time to focus on the bits they do enjoy and fundamentally to focus upon the more strategic issues which need to be considered for the future survival of their business.

The 'Innovation through Jazz' workshops were of value to the participating organisations, of that I am confident. I do however feel that the qualities that made it valuable to them were not necessarily the same ones intended by design. Rather than the main benefit being the development of greater understanding about the importance of innovation and how to act and think more innovatively, more significant value I feel came from the simple opportunity it provided to get everyone, or the majority of people from an organisation, to sit down together as one team.

There appeared to be immense value in getting all employees together, talking about issues of concern to the business and providing an opportunity for people to have an input. It made people, whatever their role in the business, feel involved and provided a valued opportunity for them to see the management and to hear their ideas and plans. It became apparent through this study, however, that getting the whole workforce of the participant organisations together in this way is very rare. Such a collective approach to business training, innovation or otherwise focussed, seems to have clear benefits. The improvement of relations and the development of more effective communications, I feel, are the issues upon which many of these organisations need to focus and where they will see the biggest improvement to their organisations.

6.3 Reflection upon the Experience of Undertaking the Study

The first thing I feel I need to express with regard to undertaking this study is how much more work it has been than I had imagined! It has been quite a significant challenge, intellectually and practically, but one that I have very much enjoyed and one from which I have gained a great deal. Whilst the subject of the study has had some overlap with my job at the University of Gloucestershire it has involved a significant workload over and above this and, at times, it has been a challenge to find the time to undertake this study as fully and comprehensively as I have wanted. I feel I have however found the time, from somewhere, and have really risen to the challenge, gaining much from the experience.

During the early stages of the study I was also engaged in studying for the Postgraduate Certificate in Research Methods. This was an extremely valuable experience, introducing me to some of the key philosophical and methodological considerations in academic research and 'setting the scene' for the undertaking of the research degree. The philosophical nature of academic research, in particular, I had not anticipated and for me this was a significant area of learning. In general, the learning curve involved in undertaking this study has perhaps been steeper and longer than I had envisaged.

There was also much value, for me, in meeting other individuals commencing a research degree at the University, helping build a community feeling and network of people with whom I could discuss the experience.

The research group established by my supervisor brought between four and ten of us together on a monthly basis. We were all research students in related social science fields and these meetings provided us with the opportunity to get together to discuss our research and our progress. I really cannot emphasise enough how valuable these sessions have been to me. They have provided a forum for academic thought and discussion, for

bouncing ideas and sharing worries, for general empathy and practical help. The friendship and support offered by this research group has been an immense help for me in my undertaking of this study.

At times I have found it difficult to assess how well I was doing during this study, to assess my intellectual grasp of the subject, the adequacy of my research understanding and the speed of my progress. With a background in project management I can have a tendency to want to develop detailed plans for how I am going to undertake work. The experience of undertaking this study has taught me however not to rush or to over plan, but to allow time to think things through thoroughly, to allow time for my thoughts to develop and for ideas and concepts to come to the fore. I have moved towards working in a more organic way since commencing this study and I feel this has improved the quality of my thinking and my work.

This study, as the reader will be aware, has explored the concept or technique of improvisation as part of its examination of jazz. As well as having 'practised what we preached' in delivering an innovative approach to exploring innovation we also demonstrated improvisation in our delivery of the workshops. A degree of planning and preparation did go in to each workshop, however given the interactive nature of such engagements it was not possible to completely plan the whole workshop and it would not have been effective to have done so. A flexible, improvisational approach allowed me (and the lead musician with whom I delivered the workshop) to ensure the experience delivered maximum value and benefit to the organisation. It also allowed us to demonstrate the value of being able to improvise and not just musically but in every day business life.

With my background in project management I am aware that I can have a tendency to want to plan and that improvisation, in many ways the antithesis of planning, is not something that I have personally been comfortable or confident doing. I can however say that as the workshops progressed I did feel more comfortable delivering them, as with many things they became

easier with practice and experience. I also began to feel much more comfortable with planning less and improvising more.

My increasingly improvisational behaviour has, interestingly, not just been confined to the 'Innovation through Jazz' workshops or to the duration of this study. As a consequence of this experience I would suggest that in both my every day work and non-work life, I have begun to take a more relaxed, less structured and more improvisational approach. The skills of improvising and benefits of doing so are issues which have become more salient to me through the undertaking of this study and as a behaviour it is something that I am enjoying exploring and something which I feel has brought benefits to me and my work, helping me become more mentally flexible, adaptable and agile.

This study has been practically and intellectually challenging, stretching and rewarding and, above all, something which I am immensely proud to have undertaken. I would like to express thanks to everyone who has supported me during this time, but most notably I would like to thank my supervisor, Ged Watts, for whose guidance, encouragement and unwavering support I am indebted.

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Appendices

Participant Enrolment

- APPENDIX 1 'Innovation through Jazz' Information Letter
- APPENDIX 2 'Innovation through Jazz' Participant Enrolment Form

Data Gathering – Before Intervention

- APPENDIX 3 'Innovation through Jazz' – Company Questionnaire, cover letter
- APPENDIX 4 'Innovation through Jazz' – Company Questionnaire

Participant Engagement

- APPENDIX 5 'Innovation through Jazz' – Example Workshop Structure
- APPENDIX 6 Photographs from 'Innovation through Jazz' Workshops

Data Gathering.- Post-workshop Intervention

- APPENDIX 7 'Innovation through Jazz' – In-company Workshop Feedback Form

Other

- APPENDIX 8 Inspire South West Programme 'Information for Project Proposers'

Dear < name > ,

Gloucestershire Year of Innovation: Innovation through Jazz – Business Training & Support

We are writing to you as we understand you may be interested in joining the 'innovation through jazz' business training and support programme. In this letter, we will explain more about the programme, and we enclose a form for you to complete if you wish to formally join and take part in the programme.

If you have less than 250 employees in your business, the programme is free, funded by the South West of England Regional Development Agency and the European Regional Development Fund. If you are a larger organisation and want to participate, there will be a charge to join the programme.

Why jazz & innovation?

If you have attended any of our introductory events, you will have seen that jazz can be used to explore many different layers of management approaches, personal working styles, and the culture of innovation in organisations. Parallels can be drawn between the processes taking place between the performing jazz musicians, and the management practices and creativity of individuals and organisations. The life cycle of the product produced by the jazz quartet can be examined, exploring how the four team members of the quartet work together to design and simultaneously deliver their product, involving high levels of teamwork, leadership, communication and improvisation. Jazz is used to explore how organisations innovate, which includes practices of management, changing culture, workforce development, communication, managing change, creative design and innovative delivery of new and existing products and services to different market groups.

How will the programme work?

At the outset, the team at the University of Gloucestershire will meet with you to help us build a richer understanding of your business and to discuss in more detail how we can work together for maximum value on this exciting project.

Building on this initial meeting, we will then look to design training, in the form of an innovation and jazz workshop. This will be designed to suit the needs of your organisation and will reflect issues specific to you, such as developments in your market and future trends that could impact your markets and the viability of your products or services in the future.

The workshop will use a jazz quartet, to explore opportunities for innovation in your company. Innovation is discussed, and comparisons are drawn between the performing jazz musicians and the management practices in your organisation.

We can deliver this workshop to an audience of your choice – whether to all staff or perhaps just a subset. We would work with you to select the most appropriate members of that group.

Following the training, we will keep in touch with you to help you turn the principles into practice. We will visit you at least twice over the following couple of months to discuss with you your workshop experience and learnings for your organisation. These meetings will also provide the opportunity for you to discuss in more depth any thoughts or plans you might have for the future of your organisation, areas where you might feel you need to be more innovative, or perhaps how to go about making some of the changes!

How do I get involved?

The 'jazz & innovation' approach is certainly different and promises to be stimulating, giving a fresh insight into where your business is now, and where it could be in the future.

The programme has attracted considerable interest already, and many companies have now expressed a wish to join. We are only looking to work with 8 companies on this in-depth element of the programme, so now is your chance to sign up.

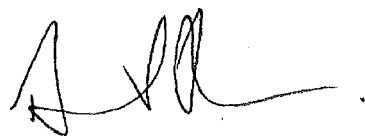
If you are interested, please complete and return the attached form, and we'll get back to you shortly.

If you have any questions about how the programme will operate, you can contact Kate Hall on 01242 536203 or email khall@glos.ac.uk

We look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes

Yours sincerely



David Owen
Head of University Development Centre

Gloucestershire Year of Innovation - Enrolment Form

Contact Name:

Company Name:

Company Address:

.....

.....

Tel: Fax:

Email:..... Website:.....

Industry Type:

No. of Employees:.....

I confirm on behalf of my Company that we would like to take part in the 'Innovation Through Jazz – Gloucestershire Year of Innovation 2004/05 project'

Signed:

Statement for European Funding Compliance:

I confirm that our organisation has not received more than 100,000 Euros of state aid over any three-year period.

Signature:

Note: Consultancy provided during this project is free of charge to those companies with less than 250 employees, which have not received more than 100,000 Euros of state aid over any three-year period.



EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND

supported by



South West of England
Regional Development Agency

**APPENDIX 3 'Innovation through Jazz' – Company Questionnaire,
cover letter**

< Name >
< Position >
< **Company Name** >
< Address 1 >
< Address 2 >
< City >
< County > < Postcode >

< Date >

Dear < Name >,

**Gloucestershire Year of Innovation
Company Questionnaire**

I am delighted you have signed up to take part in the exciting 'Innovation through Jazz' project being run by the University of Gloucestershire, and that we will be working with you in more depth on this. I am confident that you will find this an inspiring and valuable experience.

In order for us to gather some information about your company, and importantly your initial thoughts about innovation and about the link we are proposing with jazz, I enclose here a questionnaire. This should take you about half an hour to complete, and will be invaluable to us in the information and insight it provides. As a novel approach to innovation, it is important for the University to carefully research the value this jazz-led intervention brings to exploring these matters.

I would be extremely grateful if you could complete the questionnaire and post it back to me at the following address, as soon as possible.

University Development Centre
Dunholme Villa
The Park
Cheltenham
GL50 2RH

This will allow us to review your responses prior to your Innovation & Jazz workshop, which we will be running for you shortly.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone on 01242 543553 or by email chowe@glos.ac.uk

I look forward to receiving your questionnaire shortly.
Yours sincerely

Carolyn Howe
Research Fellow - Innovation & Jazz
University Development Centre



Gloucestershire Year of Innovation
Company Questionnaire

Please could you complete the following questionnaire regarding your company.

Your responses will prove very helpful in developing our understanding of your business and provide a valuable basis from which to discuss your involvement in the Gloucestershire Year of Innovation project.

Objectives

- To gather useful insight into your company, its background and its focus
- To provide a snapshot of your thoughts on innovation
- To gather initial thoughts on the proposed link between innovation and jazz

A. Your company...

- What is the name of your company?
.....
- What business/market would you say you are in?
.....
.....
- What customer need would you say you address?
.....
.....
- Have the products/services you have offered changed at all over time, how?
.....
.....
- How many employees do you have, in what roles? How is the organisation structured, how many levels are there?
.....
.....
- What do you see as the company's main strengths?
1.....
2.....
3.....
- What about weaknesses?
1.....
2.....
3.....

- On a scale of 1-5 how would you describe your growth aspirations for the company?

1	2	3	4	5
decline in size	stay same	small growth	moderate growth	substantial growth

B. Your competitors...

- Who would you say are your main competitors?

.....

.....

- How well informed do you feel regarding your competitors, on a scale of 1-5?

1	2	3	4	5
very poorly	poorly	adequately	well	very well

- How would you rate intensity of competition in your industry, on a scale of 1-5?

1	2	3	4	5
very low	low	reasonable	strong	fierce

- Do you expect this level of competition to increase or decrease?

.....

.....

C. Your customers...

- How would you describe your customer profile?

.....

.....

D. Your workforce...

- Who / which roles do you see as key to the company, why?

.....

.....

- Who within the company do you interact with on a regular basis?

.....

.....

- How do you interact with the rest of your employees? (e.g. team meetings, ad hoc meetings) and how often?

.....

.....

- How often do people in your organisation challenge the way things are done?

.....

.....

- How do you think your employees feel about change?

.....

.....

- How well do you think they understand the goals of the organisation and how their role fits in?

.....

.....

- How would you describe the relationship between management and the rest of the workforce?

.....

.....

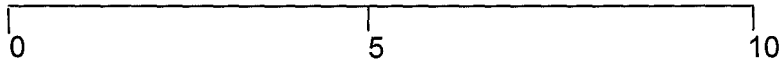
- How would you describe the atmosphere / culture in your organisation?

.....

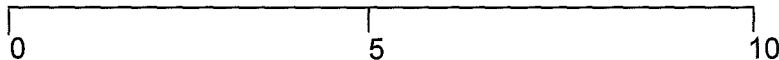
.....

E. Innovation

- Put a **X** on the below line to indicate how innovative you feel your company is currently (0 lowest, 10 highest)



- If you could do the same for how innovative you want your company to be, where would you put that **X** ?



- What 3 words would you say sum up what innovation means to you?

1.....

2.....

3.....

- How much change do you expect in your market place over the next 10 years?

1 2 3 4 5

none/very little little reasonable lots radical

- What and / or who do you see as the main drivers of change?

.....

.....

- What do you think are the main barriers or challenges to innovation for your company?

.....

.....

- Do you have many rules / regulations / standards which you need to comply with? What are these?

.....

.....

.....

F. Jazz

- What do you think of jazz music, on a scale of 1-5?

1	2	3	4	5
hate	dislike	indifferent	like	love

- When you saw that the University was putting jazz and innovation together, what were your initial thoughts about this link?

.....

.....

- If you have already attended one of the public Innovation & Jazz events run by the University, what were your thoughts about this link, having then attended?

.....

.....

- Can you think of any benefits from linking jazz to innovation? What might these be?

.....

.....

- Can you think of any other ways in which the use of jazz might be able to add value to your organisation?

.....

.....

G. And finally...

- If 3 things could change as a result of your involvement in this project what would you like these to be?

1.....

2.....

3.....

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.
We look forward to discussing your involvement in this exciting project further

*Please return your completed questionnaire to:
Carolyn Howe, Research Fellow,
University of Gloucestershire, Dunholme Villa, The Park, Cheltenham, GL50 2RH.*

APPENDIX 5 'Innovation through Jazz' Example Workshop Structure

< date >
< company x > 'Innovation through Jazz' workshop

Workshop structure

CH

Welcome everyone

Exercise – Warm up

We're all here for the next 2-3 hours, you've given up your time to be here. Hopefully this afternoon is going to be enjoyable, useful for yourselves and your company, but its not going to be your typical Friday afternoon. What we'd like to do first off, is ask you....what shall we do?!

Turn to person next to you, write some ideas down on post-its.

Give a few minutes, then get each group to share some of their ideas.

*CH/ BM/ Sarah take turns responding with Yes BUT, No BUT
And Yes AND, yes AND....*

Hoping to achieve / messages to share:

- *A bit of fun*
- *Also allows us to explain why we are here*
 - o *Be creative*
 - o *Discuss ideas in business*
 - o *Language use and impact*
 - o *Using jazz band to help us gain new insight*

Innovation

- **explain why we are here**
- **overview of GYOI project**
- **outline < manager's > involvement and interest**
- **Introduce concept of innovation (use powerpoint)**

Exercise – Mobile phones

Ask people to hold up mobile phones, CH read out features, put down if not have function.

Reflect upon what hoping to achieve / messages to share:
– innovation affects us all
- pace of change

Exercise – What is innovative?

What products/services/companies they think are innovative? Which not? Why / why not? What makes them innovative etc.

Explain the different arenas of innovation (product, market, process, human organisation). Examples

Exercise

In small groups think about developments at < company x > which have moved the company forward

*Put people into 2 groups of 4 (mixed groups) to discuss
Prompt beyond product*

Get to share some of these developments with everyone. How did they achieve these developments? How are they different?

Reflect upon what hoping to achieve / messages to share:

- *Recognise that innovation is relevant, < company x > are innovative, but need to keep at it*
- *How to see innovation in a company*
- *Appreciate different types of innovation*

NB Not just here to DISCUSS innovation & creativity, here to experience it too, using jazz, hand over to Ben...

BM

Jazz - Introduce Roles

investigating organisations is often a good way of learning/problem solving...

PLAY 1. – Perform short piece followed by exercises demonstrating roles

PLAY 2. – Play a request in a ‘straight’ style – (simple/boring)

Exercise

Ask audience how the band / music could be more creative? How could you work together differently to be more creative?

Reflect upon what hoping to demonstrate / messages to share:

- *No wrong notes, ‘technically correct’*
- *Risk*
- *Flexibility*
- *Go with the flow*
- *Expression, mood, emotion, passion*

PLAY 3. – a creative version of 2

Share thoughts on how jazz is different to other forms of music

Exercise - How is a performance created in the moment?

PLAY 4 – 2nd request ‘non-jazz’ in a jazz style

Discuss and demonstrate process and structure

Reflect upon what hoping to demonstrate / messages to share:

- *Jazz = being creative*
- *Important personally to be creative, able to be creative. Is it to them?*

Discuss how even in jazz there is some structure, and how business can have rules, regulations, constraints to innovation. Do < company x > have many regulations / rules?

Structure and Creativity (creativity and constraints)

Introduce idea of orchestra

PLAY 5 ORCHESTRA DVD

Discuss concept of orchestra, application of metaphor to business, but also differences.

Reflect upon what hoping to demonstrate / messages to share:

- *How does the orchestra work (leader, section leaders, scripted roles)*
- *Orchestra less creative individually, share common script, but still do us feedback, interpretation and communication in playing.*
- *Perhaps orchestra is more like a large organisation, and jazz band more aligned to SMEs?*
- *Orchestra more like machine, jazz more human – improvisation, leadership*

PLAY 6 – ‘scripted’ (perhaps an arrangement of Nimrod?)

Discuss how business isn’t generally like an orchestra

Introduce idea of **IMPROVISATION**, and its importance (can’t plan for everything!)

PLAY 7 – Nimrod Jazz

Improvisation through ROLES

Exercise - directing the musicians (possible audience involvement)

- a/ ‘Play this...’
- b/ ‘Play something like...’
- c/ ‘Play anything’

Exercise - LEADERSHIP

Ask audience to pick a musician to LEAD

PLAY 8 - with musician chosen to lead, leading

PLAY 9 - with moving leadership

watch what is happening with the leadership-discuss thoughts

Reflect upon what hoping to demonstrate / messages to share:

- Leadership & support – 2 way
- Feedback
- Flexible management, shifting leadership
- Freedom
- Risk, no such thing as a wrong note
- Challenge each other, be brave
- Empathy
- Equality in culture
- Sharing responsibility

Discuss, what other qualities hold a TEAM together? Beyond just the jobs you do? (brainstorm on flipchart)

? B R E A K ?

Exercise - PLAY 10 – batons

Discuss concepts of leadership, teamwork experienced by baton holders, from their viewpoint, that of audience and that of musicians.

Reflect upon what hoping to demonstrate / messages to share:

- Leadership
- Levels of communication
- Interdependencies
- Working as a team
- Compromise

Good team sees each other as customers of each other too. Being a customer and listening to each other can be an important feature of innovation.

PLAY 11 - improvisation with 12345 signals or 4 TUNES

Reflect upon what hoping to demonstrate / messages to share:

- teamwork and leadership
- if we each work on our own, can produce a less desirable output –
- need to work together, but also need someone to lead the teamwork, to compromise etc

Exercise – story improvisation

One person starts telling a story, when pass baton, next person carries it on. Need to incorporate surprise images which appear on Ppoint, into story.

Reflect upon

- we all improvise, all the time
- is an important skill, and can be developed with practice

- business isn't constant, predictable, unchanging, therefore valuable skill to have- something can see clearly in jazz context

Exercise / PLAY 12 – audience move musicians through different styles / speeds etc using prompt cards

Reflect upon what hoping to demonstrate / messages to share:

- *Incorporating customer feedback*
- *Sources of inspiration*
- *Responding as a team*
- *'Breaking things' – maintaining interest, novelty e.g. cars*

Discuss concept of incremental and radical innovation

Exercise - full spectrum innovation

Split into 2 teams, refer to cards with pictures of innovations on, ask each group to bluetac the pictures to where they think they fit on the spectrum of innovation (flipchart).

Get teams to share thoughts and explain why plotted where did.

Discuss with whole, what are < company x > innovations – incremental or radical?

Worth asking fundamental questions, challenging assumptions (give examples)

Ask what they can flex – where is their room for creativity?

What do they need to deliver on e.g. cost? Time? Quality?

As look to future, value in looking to past too.

Exercise -What are some of the innovations that < company x > have introduced in the last 20 years? Incremental? Radical?

Looking to the next 20 years...

Exercise -What might the future look like?

Get audience to select words from prepared flipchart, shout out those words feel of relevance e.g. change, unpredictable etc

SUMMARY

Exercise -Ask audience to identify what learned today / what key messages were.

Capture on flipchart.

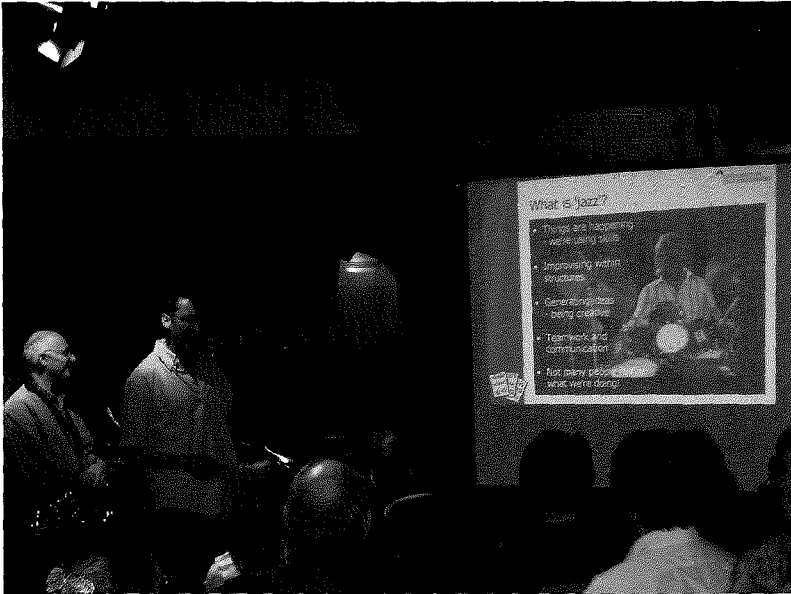
Ref prepared Ppoint list, and mention coming back to business – part of a journey.

Mention feedback forms. CLOSE.

APPENDIX 6

**Photographs from 'Innovation through Jazz'
Workshops**

(A) Public 'Innovation through Jazz' workshops



Discussing innovation and jazz

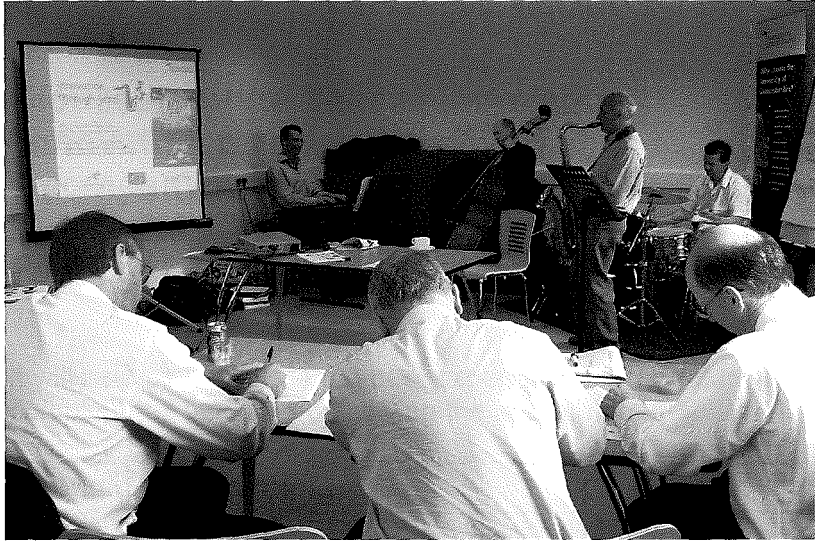


Demonstrating innovation with jazz



Engaging the workshop delegates in innovating with jazz

(B) In-company 'Innovation through Jazz' workshops



Engaging delegates in workshop exercises



Engaging delegates in controlling the band!



**APPENDIX 7 'Innovation through Jazz' – In-company Workshop
Feedback Form**

**Gloucestershire Year of Innovation
'Innovation through Jazz' workshop
< company name >**

Feedback Form

It will help us to provide the best experience for the future if you can spare the time to complete the following by circling the appropriate numbers.

What did you think of...	1 = Poor...4 = Excellent			
content of innovation & jazz workshop	1	2	3	4
relevance of jazz to innovation	1	2	3	4
quality of speakers	1	2	3	4
quality of jazz	1	2	3	4
speaker interaction with participants	1	2	3	4
workshop exercises	1	2	3	4
the workshop overall	1	2	3	4

What aspect of the workshop did you find *most* useful / interesting?.....
.....
...

What aspect of the workshop did you find *least* useful / interesting?.....
.....
...

Do you have any suggestions for any things you felt we could have done differently / better?.....
.....

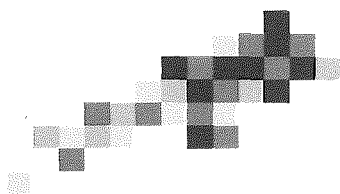
Any other comments:.....
.....
...

Contact Details (optional):

Name:

INSPIRE SOUTH WEST PROGRAMME

INFORMATION FOR PROJECT PROPOSERS



South West of England
Regional Development Agency



PROJECT PART-FINANCED BY THE
EUROPEAN UNION

INSPIRE SOUTH WEST PROGRAMME

INFORMATION FOR PROJECT PROPOSERS

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Please note that this Programme does not provide direct support to individual companies. Access to the programme will be through business support organisations and other public or private sector intermediaries

Part 1 - What does *Inspire South West* set out to do?

Summary

South West England has been developing measures to promote innovation for the past two to three years, as outlined in the Regional Innovation Strategy. It is developing a variety of mainstream programmes to deliver this. However, most of these are aimed at providing innovation support services that give clear, measurable outputs within a short/medium term time scale. We clearly need to consider longer term, more risky initiatives aimed at radically changing the behaviour of SMEs within our Region, to encourage them to value the contribution that 'innovation' can make to improving their productivity and business competitiveness. We must also increase the demand for the support services we can provide, especially in Objective 1 and 2 areas. We need to create sustained changes in business behaviour so that companies become more future orientated and more responsive to change. This is what Inspire South West aims to do and in this way, Inspire South West will complement mainstream programmes as well as filling in gaps in current service provision.

1.1 Background

Inspire South West is a part of the EU European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Innovative Actions programme. In 2001/2 a group of regional organisations came together to form a Steering Group to submit a bid for funding under the programme. Led by SW Regional Development Agency (SW RDA) and Government Office for the –South West (GOSW) the Steering Group included higher education, business support organisations and small businesses. It was supported by a wider Consultation group who provided useful feedback during the bid development process.

The Steering Group formed the nucleus of the Inspire South West Implementation Group which is now responsible for delivering the Programme.

1.2 Inspire South West Strategy

The 'Inspire South West' programme for Innovative Actions builds upon the aims and objectives of the Regional Innovation Strategy (RIS). This uses a wide definition of innovation which reflects our belief that there is no part of our region; no business sector; nor company or organisation that does not need to innovate to enable us to build a sustainable, globally competitive, knowledge based economy in the South West.

The RIS represents a shared vision of the need to unlock the potential of individuals and companies to innovate by:

- Creating a culture that encourages innovation in all sectors of the Region's economy
- Strengthens the skills and capabilities of businesses to operate in an innovative manner
- Develops greater understanding of future changes and potential for innovation

While we have plenty of examples of innovative, competitive businesses throughout the South West it is equally clear that many companies, especially among the region's SMEs, are not yet aware of the importance of innovation to the future health of their businesses. Our work to date has focused upon the provision of services across the region to enable companies to become more innovative. Inspire South West will seek to complement work in service provision by changing behaviour to create hunger for innovation and greater demand for services.

Inspire South West provides a unique opportunity to experiment with types of activities which we have not tried before. What we learn from the outcomes of these activities will enable us to design future programmes of activity so that they are more effective.

To ensure strategic coherence of 'Inspire South West' we have considered the thematic priorities identified as being particularly significant to the European economy for Framework Programme 6. We have selected those we consider to be most relevant to the South West Region over the next two to three years to base certain of our actions upon. These themes dovetail with work which is already underway on priority sectors within the South West as follows:

Inspire South West priority areas/SW-RDA Priority Sector

Information society technologies/Information communication technologies

Food quality and safety/Food and drink

Sustainable development, global change and ecosystems/Environmental technologies and renewable energy

These priority sectors also reflect the growth sectors identified within the Objective 1 programme for Cornwall.

However, our goal is to promote innovation in the entire Region and many of the actions will be aimed at SMEs in all sectors.

Learning points from the actions and our experience of implementing the programme will be transferred both within and outside the region, both to inform the design of future innovation support programmes and to improve the innovation and competitiveness of the EU.

The sustainability of our approach is of key importance and is reinforced by the strong linkages to the Regional Innovation Strategy. This will provide the framework for future work on innovation within the South West and ensure that the outputs from Inspire South West and the lessons learned are carried forward.

1.3 Objectives:

The overall objectives of the Inspire South West programme are:

- To improve the strength and sustainability of the regional economy through an increased use of innovative methods and practices by businesses as a result of a change in the culture of business practice in the region.
- To seek to address some of the weaknesses in implementation of the current Objective 1 and 2 programmes by improving the take up of new opportunities for businesses and by strengthening the matrix of services available.
- To ensure strong links between Innovative Actions and other programmes which avoid duplication but which allow for new and experimental approaches.

This will be achieved by:

- Ensuring that businesses have access to information about future changes which will impact upon their competitiveness;
- Ensuring that businesses understand the importance of making use of information and of the need to innovate;
- Improving access to finance for innovative businesses;
- Improving participation in, and the effectiveness of, business networks;
- Increasing the desire among the workforce to work in innovative businesses;
- Building an understanding of what are effective support mechanisms among innovation support providers;
- Assisting the development of viable, sustainable support services by improving the demand for services.

1.4 Activities:

Action 1 - Look Forward

The purpose of this action is to encourage South West businesses and support organisations to make greater use of knowledge for competitive advantage by establishing four 'regional technology panels'. These will cover:

- Information society technologies
- Food quality and safety
- Sustainable development, global change and ecosystems
- Aeronautics and space

Key to this action will be:

- Generating value added and commercially relevant information on future markets for key technologies relevant to the South West
- Taking the forward look out to the SME. We will seek novel methods of information dissemination, analysis and interpretation in order to do this, including providing opportunity for high quality dialogue and interaction between business and researchers/information providers.

An important function for the panels will be to identify and interpret the market implications for the South West arising from forthcoming technological changes and ensure that companies and organisations:

- anticipate change
- can move to a leadership position in innovation
- extract the maximum advantage from their innovation effort
- enable SMEs to 'get to the future first'

Much information is already generated but it is not generally tailored to a regional perspective, nor recognises particular regional circumstances. The panels will seek to correct this by collating and disseminating information, research and analysis, including the output of the UK Foresight Panels.

By using regional knowledge and understanding, the Panels will apply a South West perspective and match to SW strengths and weaknesses. This requires an understanding of key regional technologies and potential links to key markets for the South West. This will assist in identifying new uses for technology, promote the search for new markets and give businesses a competitive edge.

Past experience shows that projects that rely on static provision of information have proved largely unsuccessful in achieving take up and use by SMEs. The emphasis in this action will be on finding more dynamic, novel mechanisms for knowledge transfer which achieve better levels of adoption.

Action 2 - Changing Culture

The purpose of this action is

- to promote an understanding of innovation and technology amongst the wider public, students and businesses;
- to inspire businesses to be innovative;
- to encourage pride in innovating.

This will be achieved by:

1. Creating sub-regional innovation forums to meet and debate selected topics. These will have a broadly based, invited audience including businesses, local public authorities, community groups and individuals, schools and colleges and the scientific community. The purpose will be to build interest in and understanding of innovation and technological changes which impact upon the Region. (These forums will build upon sub-regional research and intelligence networks, which have been set up across the South West as part of the South West Regional Observatory.)
2. Working with schools, further education institutions, the Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs) and the young persons' advice service, Connexions, to decide how an understanding of innovation and technical change can be introduced to young people still in education, building upon national schemes.
3. Developing novel activities that demonstrate best practice in innovation in a way that will capture the imagination of businesses and encourage them to adopt techniques to improve the innovative capability of the companies and their staff. This action will also need to capture examples of best practice and publicise them widely, so that innovative companies are recognised and others aspire to emulate their performance.

Action 3 - Innovative Business

The purpose of this action is to provide practical support to regional businesses, especially SMEs and those businesses in Objective 1 and 2 areas, which will encourage them to take an innovative approach to all aspects of business planning and development (including product development, marketing and meeting customers needs), to take up the innovation support services which are on offer, encourage greater participation in networks and improve their access to funding.

There will be an emphasis on reaching companies which do not currently access innovation support services by encouraging a realisation that innovation is a key driver in maintaining business competitiveness.

The purpose of this action will be to build the capacity of SMEs, particularly in the priority sectors, to behave innovatively by:

1. Building understanding of innovation into mainstream business support programmes – to develop, with the Business Links, Innovation Relay Centre and other partners, an approach that encourages SMEs to be innovative. These organisations are well placed to stimulate SMEs to take an innovative approach to problems. This includes finding novel ways of communicating which will create a demand for the services which are available to assist SMEs from a wide range of regional providers including Higher Education institutes, research institutions and Business Links; and building an understanding of the key elements underpinning the development of an innovative culture within businesses.
2. Widening participation in networks - networks are an effective means of helping businesses innovate, providing them with examples of best practice, allowing them to share problems and seek solutions, promoting inter-firm learning and introducing them to new technology or new ways of working. It is known that the most highly innovative businesses make greater use of networks and value networking skills.

Undertake a study of existing networks in the region, publicise these and promote participation and support relevant networks to improve their effectiveness. Where there is business-led demand, support the development of new networks and link these to networks that already exist.

3. Financing innovation – to work with financial institutions to determine whether new approaches can be developed to assist businesses gain access to funding by looking for new, less traditional ways to calculate risk:reward ratios. This will make a significant contribution to the development of a comprehensive financial escalator and complement a range of initiatives already underway including our Regional Venture Capital Fund. It will help to identify gaps in market provision; examine the feasibility of public intervention in assisting the commercialisation of good ideas and allow for pilot projects to test products such as ‘proof of concept’ funding.
4. Building the capacity of the region’s SMEs to take advantage of the opportunities available through Structural Funds, especially Objective 1 priorities 1.5 and 1.6 and Objective 2 priorities 2.1 - 2.3; and through Framework Programme 6 and other European programmes. Priority will be given to opportunities arising from the research carried out under Action 7.1 - Look Forward in the identified key sectors of information society technologies, food quality and safety and sustainable development, global change and ecosystems.

Part 2 - What is the process for applying?

There will be a two stage application procedure;

Project Outline Proposal

Full Project Application (and Monitoring and Evaluation Plan)

2.1 Stage 1:

Applicants will initially be asked to provide a short Project Outline Proposal. This will be appraised by the Inspire South West Programme Manager and South West RDA's Appraisal Manager.

- If the project is considered to meet the programme and project selection criteria, the applicant is a legal entity and the proposed expenditure is eligible under the EU's ERDF guidelines (visit the DTI's website at www.dti.gov.uk/europe/structuralfunds/index.htm for guidance on the structural fund regulations, eligibility rules and the EC guidelines for Innovative Actions) they will recommend to a Project Decisions Sub-Group, (acting on behalf of the full Implementation Group - see 2.3 below) that the project proposer is invited to submit a Full Project Application.

Note: Guidance will be given on areas of the project which are felt to require additional information or amendment during the 2nd stage of the process.

- If the project outline does not meet the required conditions, the recommendation to the Project Decisions Sub-Group will be that the Project Outline Proposal is declined and the project proposer will be advised of this.

2.2 Stage 2:

Applicants who are successful at Stage 1 will be invited to submit a Full Project Application. This will be appraised by the Inspire South West Programme Manager and South West RDA's Best Practice Manager. They will recommend to the Implementation Group whether the project should be funded.

Before such a recommendation can be made, it may be that the Programme Manager will have to ask for additional information or clarity on particular aspects of the Project.

2.3 Who will make the decisions on which project proposals are funded?

To allow for more rapid decision making, the appraisal recommendations at both stages will be considered by a Project Decision Sub-Group acting for the full Implementation Group. This will consist of at least five members of the Implementation Group, including SWRDA and GOSW, but the membership of the Project Decision Sub-Group will rotate to avoid any conflicts of interest among the representatives, to broaden participation and to ensure that decisions on projects are made openly and transparently.

The RDA will invariably issue an offer of funding to projects that have successfully come through the stage 1 and stage 2 eligibility and selection stage processes. It would be only in wholly exceptional circumstances that an offer of funding would be withheld.

2.4 What will be the timetable for the Programme?

The Inspire South West Programme runs from 1 January 2003 to 31 December 2004 and expenditure must be committed within these dates. A further twelve months will be allowed to 31 December 2005 to ensure physical and financial completion of project activity and draw down of expenditure. A programme closure report will be submitted to the European Commission in June 2006.

However, in order that the new approaches tested under the Programme can be applied to the design of a wide range of regional activities including those undertaken with Structural Funding, it is envisaged that projects will begin as soon as possible and expenditure will be largely complete by 31 December 2004.

1st Call for projects: Closing date 30.04.03

2 signed copies of the Project Outline Proposal to be submitted by 17:00hrs on 30.04.03 to:

Lorelei Hunt, Innovation Manager
South West RDA
100 Temple Street
Bristol
BS1 6AE

The Implementation Group will aim to provide an initial response to the Project Outline Proposals by 31 May 2003. However, if additional information is required, this may result in some delay.

Project applicants will be asked to submit a Full Project Applications within one calendar month from receiving the decision on the Project Outline Proposal.

Decision on Full Project Applications will be made within one month, where all the necessary information has been submitted.

Depending upon the number and quality of project proposals submitted for this call, there may be a subsequent call for projects

2.5 What else do I need to know?

Project selection criteria

A full list of the criteria which will be used for project appraisal and selection process for the Inspire South West Programme is attached to assist on the development of project proposals. Projects may be brought forward for an entire Action, or for any sub-element of an Action. For example in Action 1, a project could be submitted to deliver one or more of the Regional Technology Panels listed.

Regional Economic Strategy/Regional Innovation Strategy

The overall strategy for the Inspire South West Programme was written to ensure that the projects undertaken as part of the Programme contribute to the achievement of the Regional Innovation Strategy and The Regional Economic Strategy. All project proposals will be expected to demonstrate how they are intended to do this through their expected outcomes.

Geographical coverage

20% of the total project expenditure must be in Objective 1 areas and a further 15% in Objective 2 areas. Region wide projects must take this into account in their delivery plans and this will also have to be taken into account by the Implementation Group in the overall allocation of funding for projects.

Evidence for project

Please make sure that you provide adequate evidence of the reasoning behind your project – this will include evidence of demand, evidence of similar approaches being used successfully elsewhere, evidence of the failure of conventional approaches and the rationale for novel methods.

Project outputs

While the Innovative Actions programme bidding process did not require specific forecasts of outputs and the EU are keen to encourage experimentation and greater risk taking, it is still necessary for projects to set realistic targets for the expected outputs and make every effort to achieve these.

In selecting appropriate outputs, project proposers should also consider the outputs and Tier 2 and Tier 3 targets_SWRDA is seeking to achieve, which are set out in its Corporate Plan as well as any others it feels are appropriate.

Partnership working

We are keen to encourage partnership working and collaboration where ever this can add value to projects and will expect to see evidence of how this has been considered.

Project options and risks

Please describe how you considered the different options which were available and why you selected the approach you will be using. Please make sure you have adequately assessed any risks to the success of the project and describe the steps you have taken to minimise these.

Leverage

We will be seeking to maximise the leverage the Programme can achieve. Wherever possible, projects should show some leverage of private sector or additional public sector funds to additional to the funding being provided by the Inspire SW Programme.

Project costs

Project funding should allow for participation in network activities and for promotion of the experiences gained during work on the project.

Project Evaluation

Project funding should allow for the costs of monitoring and external evaluation of the project.

2.6 Project Selection Criteria

Programme Level Criteria

There are a number of criteria that all projects will have to meet in order to gain funding from the Inspire SW programme.

- What is new and innovative about the approach proposed?
- How does the project contribute to increasing innovation in the Region?
- How will the project attract new participants?
- Does the project show how the lessons learned can be applied more widely?
- Will the project help to improve the effectiveness of innovation support mechanisms?
- Have the applicants considered a collaborative/partnership approach to delivery?
- Does the project show clear links to relevant regional/local strategies?
- Is there sufficient evidence to support the proposal?
- How will the project link to, and add value to, related initiatives
- Are there clear arrangements for project evaluation?
- Are the project management arrangements robust?

Project Level Criteria

In addition, each project must meet more specific criteria relating to the relevant Action area:

Action 1: Look Forward

Project selection criteria:

- Will the project improve access to information about future changes impacting upon businesses?
- Will the project help business to anticipate change and plan for the future?
- Will the project ensure businesses understand the importance of making use of information in decision making and of the need to innovate?
- How will the project increase the ability of existing businesses to react to new opportunities?
- How will the project improve interaction between SMEs and the knowledge base?
- How will the project increase the number of business start-ups
- How will the project reach companies not currently using innovation services?

Action 2 – Changing Culture

- Does the project encourage greater understanding of innovation and technical change?
- Does the project encourage individuals/organisations to appreciate the benefits of value innovation and technical change?
- Does the project show how will it increase interest in working for innovative companies?
- How will the project work to change the culture within the region's businesses?
- How will the project generate pride in innovation?
- How will the project deliver to its target audience?
- Does the project show how the action will deliver value to SMEs?

Action 3 – Innovative Business

- How will the project work to reach companies which have not accessed innovation support services previously?
- How will the project stimulate companies to innovate?
- How will the project improve access to finance for innovative businesses?
- How will the project widen participation in business networks?
- How will the project improve the effectiveness of business networks?
- How will the project improve the capacity of SW companies to benefit from European funding schemes?

Useful web sites for further information

For more information on ERDF Funding issues -
www.dti.gov.uk/europe/structuralfunds/index.htm

For the Regional Economic Strategy (Ministerial Draft version)
www.southwestrda.org.uk/rda/res/index.shtml
(The revised RES will be launched on 7 April 2003)

For the Regional Innovation Strategy
www.southwestrda.org.uk/publications/business.shtml

For the SWRDA Corporate Plan
www.southwestrda.org.uk/publications/corp_plan.shtml

Please note that our revised Corporate Plan, which includes new Tier 2 and Tier 3 targets and milestones has been submitted for Ministerial Approval and we hope to receive this at the end of March. Applicants should refer to the current Corporate Plan in developing their Project Proposals but look out for the revised version which will become available early in April.