

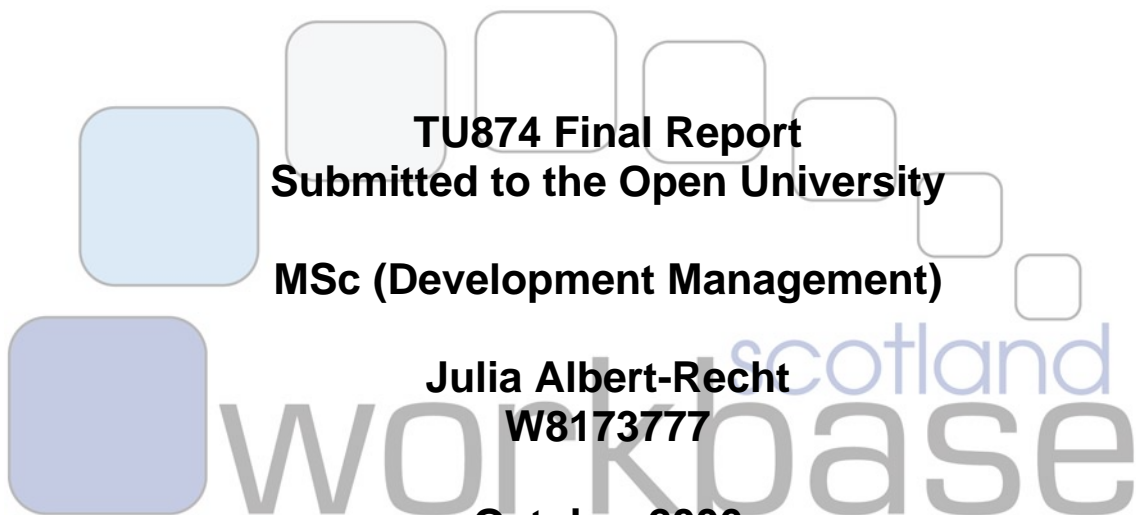
**SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL
CAPITAL**

The Scotch Whisky Industry Partnership Project

**TU874 Final Report
Submitted to the Open University
MSc (Development Management)**

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October 2006

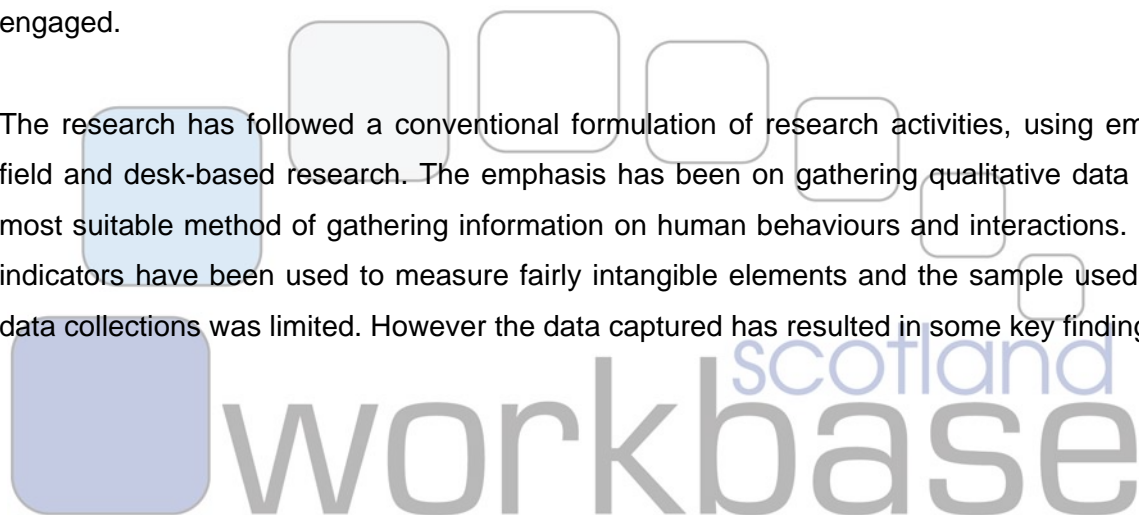


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research project focuses on a single case study, The Scotch Whisky Industry Partnership Project, which was delivered by a small Scottish NGO, Workbase Scotland. Workbase were commissioned in 2004 to assist a funded partnership of 10 companies involved in the whisky industry to assist them in achieving their objective of developing partnership arrangements across the industry, with the goal of raising the sector's competitive performance in the global economy. The companies aimed to achieve this through increasing employee involvement and participation in their businesses. It was felt that employee involvement could be best secured through training the workforce in the areas of leadership, communications and business awareness skills.

The aim of this research project is to evaluate the training activities carried out under the Scotch Whisky Industry Partnership Project, with a view to identifying the contribution they have made to growing social capital and the development of collaborative/co-operative working relationships within the companies involved. The existence of a global economy has created a greater recognition of the value of human and intangible resources within organisations, not only at the level of individual skills and knowledge but also the importance of shared competencies based on team working, networks and trust. Social capital can be defined as “the social norms; social networks and trust people have available to them for productive purposes”, (Schuller, T, 1999, p1). This research has tested the hypothesis that social capital can be actively built within organisations, and that its growth is affected by, and can affect the quality of intra-organisational relationships in which the participants are engaged.

The research has followed a conventional formulation of research activities, using empirical field and desk-based research. The emphasis has been on gathering qualitative data as the most suitable method of gathering information on human behaviours and interactions. Proxy indicators have been used to measure fairly intangible elements and the sample used in the data collections was limited. However the data captured has resulted in some key findings.



Key Findings

- There is evidence that there have been some positive changes in the way the workforce that received training behave and that this may have impacted positively on the companies business performance
- Staff skills were enhanced, particularly in the areas of communication, team-working and self-awareness There is evidence that increasing individuals' capacities and understanding can lead to more cooperative working relationships
- There is evidence that the delivery of cross-organisational training to groups of employees across the 10 companies had a significant impact on increasing social capital
- Data suggests that the training had little impact and was of little benefit in an organisational environment where existing industrial relations and communication channels were extremely poor. It is suggested that some commonality of view and shared perspective and goal, must already be present in order for the type of activity offered under the Whisky project to have any significant impact on levels of social capital

Recommendations

Whilst the findings from this research do suggest a link between the training activities and the growth in networks, changed norms of behaviour and levels of trust between those that took part in the whisky project, the sample size of those that took part was very small. For this reason the research cannot be conclusive. It is recommended that any further research focus on building social capital within organisations widen the sample size in order to build more conclusive evidence.

It would also be useful for any further research or exploration on the concept of social capital to place more emphasis on exploring and agreeing on the measurements i.e. proxy indicators that can most usefully used to identify the presence of social capital.

The whisky project sought to change behaviours, organisational norms and culture within the participating organisations. The research would benefit from being conducted over a longer time period to explore if changes had been developed and sustained in the longer term.



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the following for their support in this project

- Dr Jacqueline Rockliffe-King, my OU tutor
- Workbase Scotland staff, consultants and board members
- Those organisations who agreed to take part in the research
- All those who agreed to be interviewed
- Dr Steve Evans



CHAPTER 1

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this project is;

To evaluate the training activities carried out under the Scotch Whisky Industry Partnership Project, with a view to identifying the contribution they have made to growing social capital and the development of collaborative/co-operative working relationships within the companies involved.

The evaluation is a "retrospective assessment of performance against objectives at a particular point in time" (Robinson and Thin, as cited by, OU TU870, 2001). Social capital may be defined as "the human networks and associated social norms that facilitate cooperation or collective action", (OECD, 2001)

This very specific aim was the result of an extensive modification and reflection process that took place throughout the research project. As a result of an initial literature review, data gathering exercise, and in discussion with various stakeholders, there was a growing realisation of the extent of work involved in the research process. The researcher slowly moved to narrowing down the project focus and identifying realistic boundaries (Blackmore and Ison, 1998, p57). Due to the social dimension of any evaluation "it is important to ensure that its function is explicit" (TU870 OU, 2001, part 3 p13). The focus of the research project is on one specific area of interest – the training delivered as part of a particular development intervention, The Scotch Whisky Industry Partnership Project, using the project as a case study. It became clear that the most relevant, interesting and measurable part of the project was the building of human capacities which may have been developed as a result of the training, enhancing performance and building social capital. It was also identified that exploring changing intra-organisational relationships was of particular relevance to development management. The research project aims to achieve the following objectives, summarised under three headings as suggested by OU (TU870, 2001, section 2, p27)

1. **Personal and Learning Outcomes**

- Increase the researcher's personal capacity and performance to design, progress and complete a structured research project
- Teach the researcher the discipline of planning
- Increase the researcher's skills in report writing

- Increase the researcher's confidence in their ability to learn independently using identified methodologies and using their initiative
- Increase the researcher's ability to identify the unique value of Workbase Scotland as their new employer

2. **Organisational Outcomes**

- To gain a clearer understanding on how Workbase's building of human capacity through training may have contributed to the growth of social capital in the client organisations
- To deliver research-based evidence to the organisation for the purpose of winning new business
- As part of the Action learning cycle (OU TU870, 2001, study guide 2, p16) allow reflection to assist in learning, and to improve organisational capacity and modified practice. Key recommendations included in the research report will be submitted to the Board of Directors

3. **Outcomes for Development Management**

- Build evidence of practical ways in which social capital can be developed
- Gain new insights into the management of intra-organisational relationships and the relationship between the nature of intra-organisational relationships and the growth of social capital
- Build greater understanding of how intra-organisational relationships can be moved from those of competition to cooperation and coordination, through applying the 3C's as a framework for analysis



CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1. The Hypothesis

This research project seeks to test the hypothesis that social capital can be actively built within organisations, and that its growth is affected by the quality of intra-organisational relationships in which the participants are engaged. The project has focused on a particular case study, the Scotch Whisky Industry Partnership Project, and seeks to evaluate the impact of training delivered by a small NGO, Workbase Scotland, on the behaviours, social norms and levels of trust and cooperation, built through training activities, of those companies and individuals involved. It explores how the training may have built the capacity of the organisations to communicate better, leading to an increase in trust, and impacting on intra-organisational relationships by moving them from relationships of competition and conflict to those of cooperation.

2. The Case Study

The whisky project began in 2003 at the instigation of the GMB Union, the main union representing employees in the whisky industry. Their stated objective was to “develop and build on existing partnerships arrangements across the Scotch whisky industry, and to raise the sectors competitive performance in the global economy” (DTI Whisky Project, Final report). They wanted to “nurture employee involvement and participation, which would lead to improved company performance” (DTI Whisky Project, Final report). An audit to assess employee/employer relationships had identified;

- An aging workforce with growing levels of temporary employment
- Widespread recognition that “employees and employers needed to learn to work together” and that “this doesn’t just happen by itself”. (DTI Whisky Project, Final report).
- Recognition that existing communication methods were inadequate in a changing environment.

The whisky project involved 10 companies representing almost 5,000 people spread across 50 sites in Scotland.

3. The role of Workbase Scotland

In October 2004 Workbase Scotland was brought in to develop the project. They worked with the companies to identify their goals in terms of improving the employee-employer relationships and in raising the skill levels of employees.

The activities offered by Workbase Scotland to assist the companies in achieve these goals were;

- Support for each of the companies to develop or progress existing employee forums
- Facilitation of steering group meetings in order to support the development of partnership cooperation across the 10 companies
- Training to develop core behavioural skills – The training consisted of six modules, delivered over six days. It covered;
 - Business awareness
 - Communication with your team
 - Problem management
 - Effective Leadership
 - Coaching your team

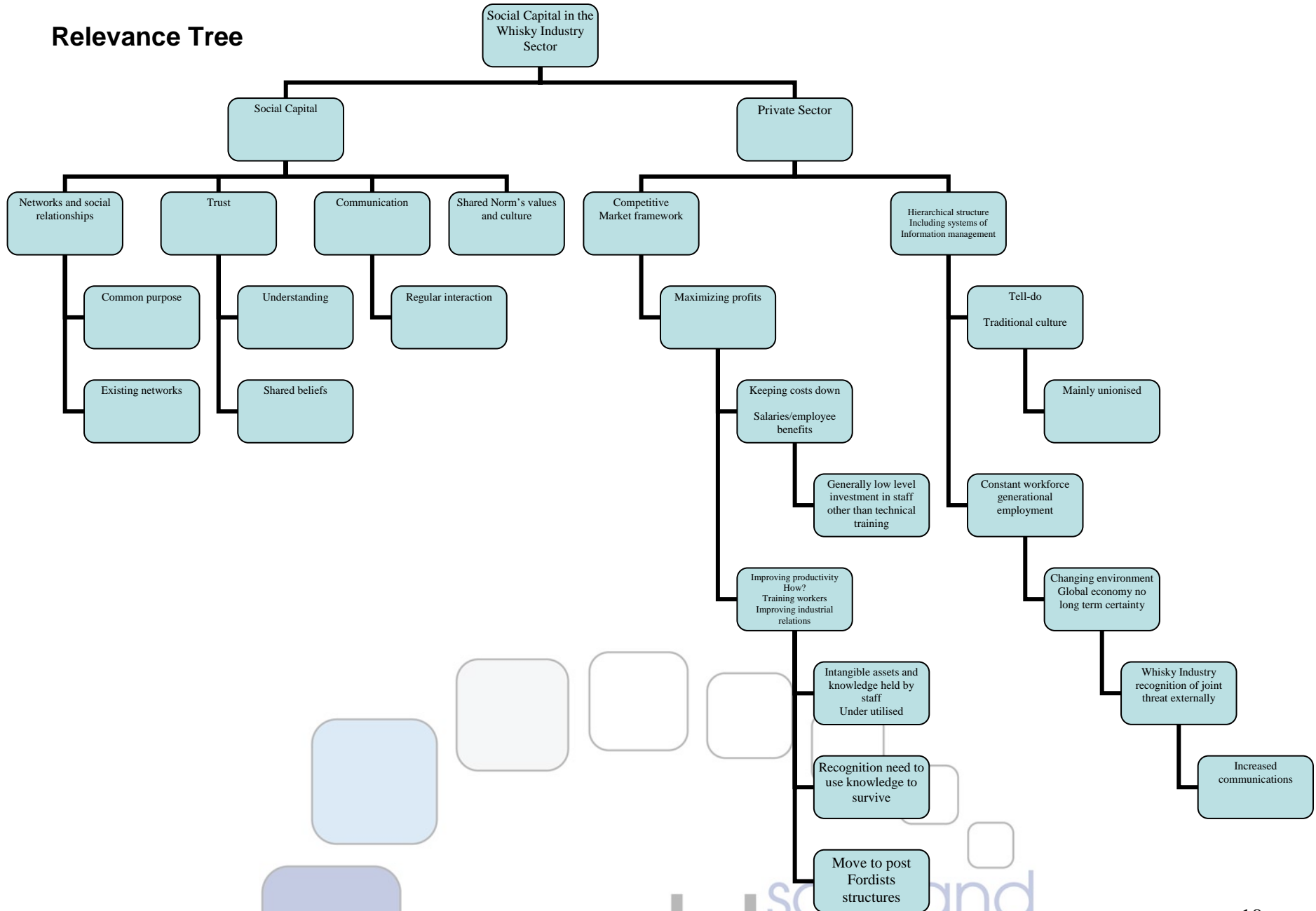
As a result;

- All 10 companies set up new employee forums or reviewed existing systems of employer/employee consultation
- The partnership steering group identified common goals and held regular meetings attended by all 10 companies
- 84 staff received training across the 10 companies

A Relevance Tree highlighting the key issues can help in outlining the real world sub-problem as well as the conceptual sub-problem under investigation



Relevance Tree



CHAPTER 3

THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

This research project seeks to measure the effectiveness of a specific development intervention, The Scotch Whisky Industry Partnership Project, and will do so by examining the effectiveness of the training delivered to the whisky companies. It explores if the training has contributed to the building of social capital by building employees capacity to communicate more effectively and with greater confidence, which may have lead to better knowledge sharing, and contributed to establishing common frames of reference and shared goals within the organisations. Increasing levels of trust and a cooperative spirit within teams may have resulted in shifting intra-organisational relationships onto a more cooperative footing. The target set by the whisky companies was to “*nurture employee involvement and participation, which would lead to improved company performance*”. (DTI Whisky Project, Final report).

Effectiveness; performance in relation to targets set in the original plan

(Robinson and Thin, as cited by the OU TU870, 2001)

1. The relevance of the case study to development management

1.1 Institutional Relationships

This research project has been an opportunity to undertake a piece of small-scale research to provide new insights into how social capital may be developed and the part that this may play in supporting a shift in institutional relationships within individual organisations. The information gathered has explored to what extent the traditional whisky firms with union/management hierarchies and structures may have moved to work to a framework of intra-organisational cooperation. The ways in which organisations engage with each other is influenced by the interaction of three ideal types of institutional relationships – the 3 C’s. Whilst competition can be defined as “the action to endeavour to gain what another endeavours to gain at the same time”, coordination is defined as “the action of a harmonious combination of agents towards producing results” and cooperation “to work together with another person or thing, to an end” (Shorter Oxford English Dictionary). Chataway (as cited by the OU, 2000) argues that cooperation whether between enterprises or between public and private sectors is the key to successful development.

1.2 The role of the Development Manager

One of most fundamental tasks of development managers is to effectively coordinate, negotiate and broker activities and people that may have different views and varying goals. The starting point for being able to broker activities across a range of organisations is to first examine how individual organisations can develop internal shared norms and behaviours that allow them, employees and employers, to identify shared goals and to interact with each other in cooperation to achieve these goals. The 3 C's will assist us to identify the extent of the changing ways of relating within the whisky companies as a result of the training activities. We will examine "How far building social capital can help to overcome social hierarchies, power relations and conflicts of interest and increase the scope and depth of participation in institutional change more generally?" (OU, TU872, study guide 1, 1999, P48). Growing social capital is more than just a problem of managing information or training individuals. It concerns the ways in which the culture of an organisation – the shared values, goals and understandings supports or hinders the growth in knowledge sharing" (Healy, T, 2000)

2 The role of social capital in organisations

2.1 The Growing Interest in Social Capital

In today's increasingly competitive global economy, many organisations are looking at ways they can improve their business performance and increase their productivity. The changing nature of markets and technology has created a greater recognition of the value of human and intangible resources within organisations, not only at the level of individual skills and knowledge but also the importance of shared competencies based on team working, networks and trust. There is a growing interest in the concept of "social capital", which owes its prominence to the work of Robert Putnam in political science (1993, 1996), James Coleman in educational sociology (1988), and Francis Fukuyama in economic history and sociology (1996), as well as to the active support of the World Bank.

2.2 Social Capital as a Concept

Social Capital as a concept remains open to interpretation and debate at very basic levels. It is most frequently defined in terms of the "social norms" (informal rules that dictate behaviours) "social networks" (interconnected groups of people), and "trust" (the level of confidence that people have in others) have available to them for productive purposes, (Schuller, T 1999). "Social capital can be seen as a resource that facilitates cooperation within

or between groups of people to pursue shared objectives” (Putnam, RD, 1996). Whilst views differ about what constitutes social capital, there are also issues around how it operates, and how one measures it.

2.3 Is Social Capital of Benefit?

There is also disagreement about whether or not social capital has beneficial effects. For example Portes and Woolcock (1998), highlight the destructive possibility of social capital where tightly-knit groups may act to exclude outsiders, where trust and mutuality operate to enhance inequalities. The potential for particularly close networks to hinder rather than facilitate cooperation may be considerable. Another dimension of social capital is whether it is *bonding* (or exclusive) and/or *bridging* (or inclusive). “The former can be said to be more inward looking, having a tendency to reinforce exclusive identities and homogeneous groups. The latter may be more outward-looking and encompass people across different social divides” (Putnam, R, 2000). Scholars do agree that it is important to recognise that social capital is multi-dimensional in nature.

2.4 Social Capital in Firms

“Social capital has been understood to refer to human networks and associated social norms that facilitate cooperation or collective action” (OECD, 2001). Research into this relatively new concept has tended to focus on families, schools or civil society. The term has been used less often to refer to the intangible resources contained within a private sector firm which it is argued “potentially underpins economic performance” (Healy, T, 2001) This research project is based on the hypothesis that social capital can be purposefully built leading to changes in attitudes, norms and values which can be shared, with increased trust and effective networks being developed. But how far does the theory of social capital help us to understand what may be going on as a result of the activities carried out under the whisky project?

3 Situating Workbase in the context of development management

3.1 Background

Workbase Scotland is a small “not-for-profit” people development organisation based in Glasgow. They employ only four permanent staff, but work with a number of private sector training consultants. They are managed by a Board of Directors staffed by representatives from the public “economic regeneration” sector and large trade unions. They have worked

mainly in the private sector with small business and large multi-nationals delivering training in core communication skills. More recently they have become involved in facilitating a range of employee forums and services that focus on understanding roles within organisations. Workbase's style is experimental in seeking to bring about individual and cultural organisational development. They work to build up human institutions that enhance communication, and recognise the importance of skilling workers and consulting with them. Workbase supports the concept of empowering workers and increasing their capacity to participation in areas that affect them. They take the view that social capital formation may be one of the results of undergoing a process of training in communication skills and awareness raising.

3.2 Workbase Scotland's Role in Development Management

Thomas (1996) identifies a range of conceptual and skills areas which characterise the distinct nature of development management. Using these as a guide we can identify to what extent Workbase Scotland and the case study under investigation can be placed within the field of Development Management.

- Workbase takes a lead in deciding, "What is to be done in the name of development". (Thomas, A 1996.) With a strong trade union base, they act on behalf of the workforce to *"Creatively develop smarter employees who add-value and innovation to their workplace, which in turn will transform organisational performance into wealth for the nation"*. Workbase Scotland's vision statement
- Workbase Scotland aims to achieve social goals external to the organisation. Whilst the whisky companies wished to see benefits of improved employer/employee relationships and ultimately improved productivity, (goals internal to each organisation) they also wished to see increased partnership working between the whisky companies.
- For Workbase Scotland the whisky project was a "deliberate effort aimed at progress" with Workbase trying to "manage the development efforts". (Thomas, A, 1996) The commitment of the companies was to change the culture to some degree across the whisky industry.

- None of the whisky companies had control over the resources for funding the project. Part of Workbase's job in facilitating the individual companies to form a "partnership" was to assist them in identifying some shared values and goals to allow them to work together effectively.
- Workbase Scotland identifies with the definition of development as working towards "the satisfaction of human need", and the idea that their development interventions would contribute to creating the conditions for "the realisation of the potential of human personality". (Seers, as cited by OU TU870, 2002). In evaluating the impact of the training on the social capital within the whisky companies and the extent to which this has shifted intra-organisational relationship, we are also examining how far the training has built human and organisational capacity. Building human capacities is concerned with creating the potential for growing an individual's skills and confidence just as building organisational capacity creates "the potential for something to happen" (Cook, 1995, cited by OU TU870, 2002). Developing human and organisational capacities however is political, takes place over the long-term and is likely to involve a wide process of change which will involve shifts in power holding, struggles for control and decision making processes and the ability to "do things better" (OU, TU870, 2002, part 3, p48). Whilst this research project may be able to go so far as to suggest that individual and organisational capacities will have been built as a result of the training activities, any in-depth examination of improvements in economic performance is beyond the scope of this project.

4. Areas of Research under Investigation

This research project tests the hypothesis that social capital can be actively built within organisations, and that its growth is affected by the quality of intra-organisational relationships in which the participants are engaged. It seeks to evaluate the impact of training delivered by Workbase Scotland, on the behaviours, social norms and levels of trust and cooperation of those companies and individuals involved. The research areas under investigation are

- The working culture of the organisations
- The pre-training needs of employees
- The immediate perceived impact of the training
- The skills gained as a result of the training

- Evidence of the implementation of the skills gained as the result of the training and the impact of this implementation
- The impact of the training in building greater organisational understanding and shared awareness

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1 Methodology

After considering the various methods that are available to those gathering research data the decision was taken to adhere to the following methodology to investigate the research hypothesis;

- To follow a conventional formulation of research activities as proposed by Stone (1978)
- A piece of empirical field and desk-based research testing the hypothesis that the training delivered by Workbase Scotland as part of the whisky project has impacted on the whisky firms, increasing social capital and positively affecting intra-organisational relationships.
- One development intervention has been used as a case study, and data gathered that tests the validity of the hypothesis. Initial existing data on the possible impact of the training suggested that key variables could be identified.
- The emphasis is on qualitative data as the most appropriate method for measuring human behaviour.
- Indicators, defined as “a sign of change, by which one can assess progress towards objectives” (Robinson and Thin, as cited by the OU TU870, 2001), will be hard to objectively verify in this investigation. Outcomes are likely to develop over the long-term and be intangible, Proxy indicators which contain the elements that, (it is argued) contribute to social capital will therefore be used, These indicators of the presence of social capital and increased cooperative behaviour will be signs of;
 - Increase communication
 - Increased positive interactions
 - Signs of behavioural change leading to desired outcomes for company performance

- Increased networking
 - Changes in attitude and levels of understanding
 - Widened perspectives
 - Shared understanding
 - Indicators of increased trust and confidence
- Here the problem of attribution must be highlighted. One cannot decisively prove that the training activities were the cause of any changes in behavior; all that can be done is to establish a plausible association between the two.

1.1 Choosing and rejecting particular techniques, identifying difficulties

- The sample size being researched was too small to be handled statistically.
- Utilising mainly qualitative methods was deemed more suitable for examining issues involving people. The focus of the research was on measuring impacts on people. The researcher needed to know the perceptions of individuals and gather knowledge not available elsewhere (Woodhouse, P, 1998, p28).
- As the researcher had strong people and interviewing skills they were confident in their ability to gather critical information during field research.
- The design methodology was feasible. Access to all documents and to interviewees was supported by Workbase Scotland and the 10 companies involved in the project.
- The researcher had easy access to the case study participants. This allowed the researcher to be opportunistic in their approach to accessing knowledge on the areas of particular relevance and interest.
- Interviews were semi-structured allowing secondary questions to be asked and employed an “iterative learning process” (Woodhouse, P, 1998, p143).
- In gathering data the researcher adhered to the principles of triangulation and documentation using multiple sources of information to test their understanding, and reflecting on their own role and influence on the interview.
- The researcher attempted to acknowledge and minimize their bias by testing how “trustworthy” their process had been by using the checklist provided on p 52-3 of block 3 of the OU Development Management project materials, and guided by Katzers (1998) five-star guide evaluation. For example, the researcher aimed to give a true reflection of what was related to them. They introduced the interview process by emphasising that they wanted to hear participants own opinions and that what they

said would be unattributed. The presentation is, as far as the researcher is aware, free from distortion; however the attribution of the impact of the changes to the activities of Workbase cannot be unambiguous. Clearly the case study data represents a small sample and therefore there are questions about how far it is representational and how far a generalisation. Some data, which was perhaps only stated by one individual and did not seem to have particular significance in the researcher's opinion, has been omitted.

1.2 Design

Workbase Scotland and the companies involved in the whisky project were very supportive to the researcher in making available all written materials, both published and grey for examination. The gathering of primary information was also supported and access to employees made possible by the cooperation of the companies involved.

1.2.1 Documentary sources

1.2.1.1. The researcher carried out a literature review focusing on existing theory on social capital. The majority of materials were sourced through internet searches. Key authors were identified through common references. A literature review on inter and intra-organisational relationships, the concept of the 3 C's and capacity building was also carried out. Finally it was necessary to review concepts of development management in order to properly place the research within this arena.

1.2.1.2 The researcher carried out desk research reviewing a range of grey material available, for example the official whisky project review document and project report as well as minutes of meetings, correspondence and e-mails. It was necessary to discard information, which was found to be less useful. In this the researcher exercised their own judgment and this has therefore impacted on what has been reported. Common themes were grouped; similarities and inconsistencies were noted against the data gathered during the semi-structured interviews with those involved in the project. The researcher remained aware of

the source of the grey materials, author and purpose, for example the reports were produced by private consultants employed by the whisky firms, and this may have affected the content ensuring positive reports were produced.

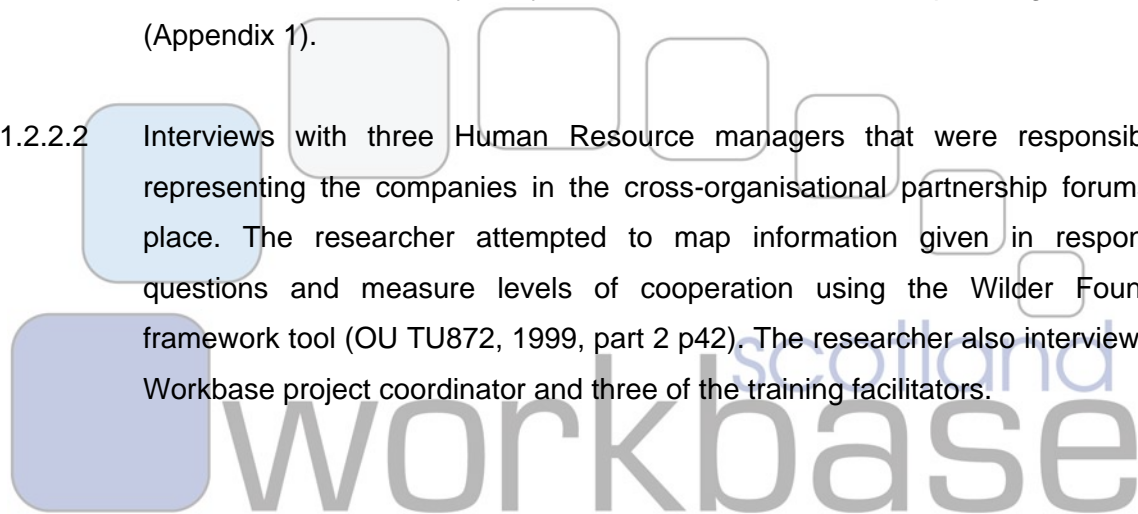
1.2.1.3 Existing available pre-training questionnaires of 58 employees prior to receiving training were reviewed in order to establish a baseline; this was to assist in overcoming the attribution problem. One has to recognise that any changes observed may have resulted from a large variety of causes, not just the training intervention.

1.2.1.4 Reviewing the post-training evaluations sheets of all 84 employees that received training proved valuable. The evaluations focused on the perceived benefits of training immediately after the training had taken place. The researcher grouped participants' responses into themes in order to identify commonly felt experiences.

1.2.2 Primary Sources

1.2.2.1 An initial focus group with five staff members across nine of the companies 10 companies was carried out. A second focus group was carried out with five staff involved in an internal employee/employer forum within one company. The participants were all working at operator and first-line management level. Their views may be taken as representative of the companies concerned. However the participants had not previously met with the researcher and therefore it should be born in mind that they may have been cautious in expressing their views. (Appendix 1).

1.2.2.2 Interviews with three Human Resource managers that were responsible for representing the companies in the cross-organisational partnership forums took place. The researcher attempted to map information given in response to questions and measure levels of cooperation using the Wilder Foundation framework tool (OU TU872, 1999, part 2 p42). The researcher also interviewed the Workbase project coordinator and three of the training facilitators.

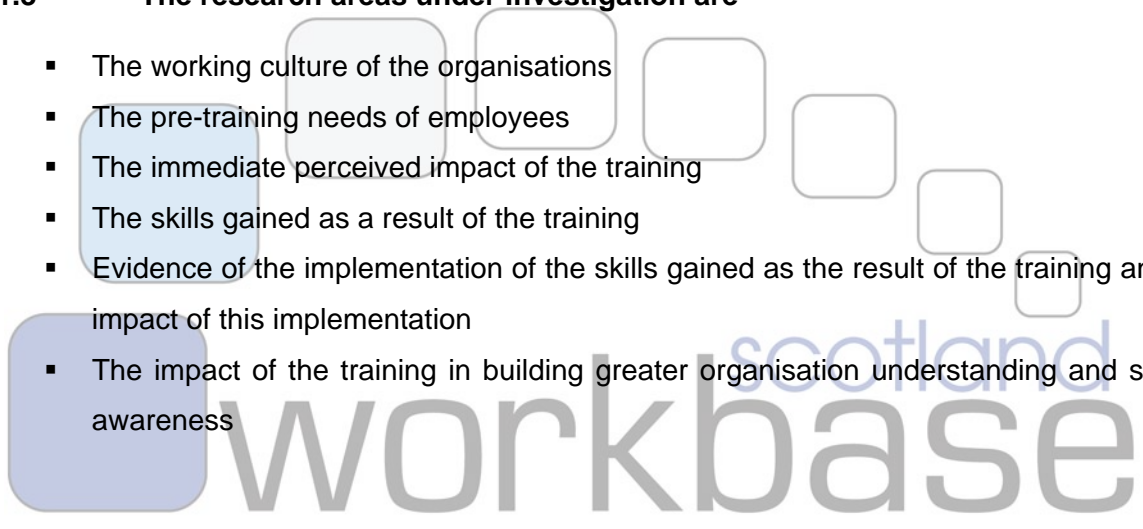


- 1.2.2.3 The researcher attended an internal employee/employer forum run by Dewar's as a non-participant observer with a view to identifying behavioural indicators of cooperation and effective sharing of information and communication.
- 1.2.2.4 A series of semi-structured, one-to-one interviews with eight employees from the three contrasting companies that were chosen from the original 10 (Edrington, North British and Dewar's) were carried out over a two-month period. The reason for focusing the research on these particular companies was based on the perception of Workbase staff, the project manager and a number of the employees. They identified that these three companies represented the spectrum of employee/employer relationships and therefore were a good means of exploring issues of power and difference "(Roche, C, 1998). The responses were grouped into common areas. (Cohen and Prusak, 2001) identify 10 points which they argue make social capital work, such as;
- Better knowledge sharing, due to established trust relationships, common frames of reference, and shared goals.
 - High levels of trust and a cooperative spirit
 - Greater coherence of action due to organisational stability and shared understanding.

These points were used as a starting position for designing the interview schedule (Appendix 2).

1.3 The research areas under investigation are

- The working culture of the organisations
- The pre-training needs of employees
- The immediate perceived impact of the training
- The skills gained as a result of the training
- Evidence of the implementation of the skills gained as the result of the training and the impact of this implementation
- The impact of the training in building greater organisation understanding and shared awareness



CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

1. Presentation of the research data

The presentation of the results seeks to highlight the relationship between capacity building of individuals and the contribution that they may make to increasing the presence of social capital, and how this may enhance cooperative behaviour within the companies. The research hoped to identify evidence by looking for the presence of social capital using proxy indicators such as signs of behavioural change, better communication, an increase in positive interactions, shared understanding and increases in levels of trust. These are all elements that have been identified as contributing to the presence of social capital.

In gathering the primary information, a consistent pattern of findings and commonality of responses emerged across the majority of interviews and focus groups (FG). However there emerged one clearly anomalous case from the semi-structured interviews (SSi) conducted in one company. The researcher has chosen to present the data from this one company separately in order to be able to contrast the findings more clearly. The consistent data gathered from the majority of information received is presented using sub-headings that address the research areas under investigation. The contrasting information gather from semi-structured interviews in the one particular company where anomalous result found is presented under section 2.

1.1 Analysis and findings from documentary sources

1.1.1 Literature Review

The literature review confirmed the there is a growing interest in the concept of social capital but that it remains open to interpretation and debate at basic levels. There is general agreement that its key components are norms, networks and levels of trust that shape the quality of societies social interactions. Little research has been done on how this concept can be applied to the intangible resources contained within a private sector firm. The fluidity of social capital leads to debate about its application as a concept and difficulties in how to measure its existence.

1.1.2 Project Report and Grey materials

The grey materials revealed clear evidence that the 10 companies displayed a level of commitment to the project. Their aim was to raise the whisky sector's competitive performance in the global economy by moving to cooperative ways of working, through bringing about changes within the organisations that would promote new norms and patterns of behaviour. The group of companies aimed to change communications structures and to skill workers in order to achieve common goals i.e. increased productivity. The materials revealed that sharing of information across the companies had taken place and their commitment was demonstrated through the freeing up of employees to take part in the training activities. Examining grey materials highlighted the importance of collecting primary data on the background issues to the project i.e. the organisational culture.

1.2 Background issues identified through gathering primary material on the organisational culture

1.2.1 Identifying the working culture of the organisation (17 operational and first-line management staff interviewed using semi-structured interviews and through two focus groups)

- When asked about existing organisational culture, operational and first-line management employees interviewed acknowledged that there had been some shift in culture over the last few years that new people were coming into the sector, with new ideas. Jobs were no longer secure for life with lots of restructuring and buyouts taking place.

"It's Victorian, from the dark ages" (FG).

"They used to announce redundancies over the Tannoy system, listing names in alphabetical order, then say to me, "Pete keep them motivated" (SSI)

"Things have changed a lot, there's more pressure, and it's all about meeting targets and making profits" (FG)

"They ask you not to leave your brains at the gate" (SSI)

Three human resources managers were interviewed using semi-structured interviews concurred with these views. They highlighted that the pressures of the global market had forced them to look at ways of improving their competitiveness, which meant making changes in the workplace.

- In some companies industrial relations were particularly poor, with a major strike taking place in the last three years
- There was a recognition of the need to improve communications
- There was a recognition of the need to invest in staff to make the companies more competitive

“We needed greater understanding between unions and managers, we were not working effectively”

“The bottom line was obvious, the project would benefit the whisky industry, all would benefit, no one would have a competitive advantage but it would strengthen the whole industry and protect the product”

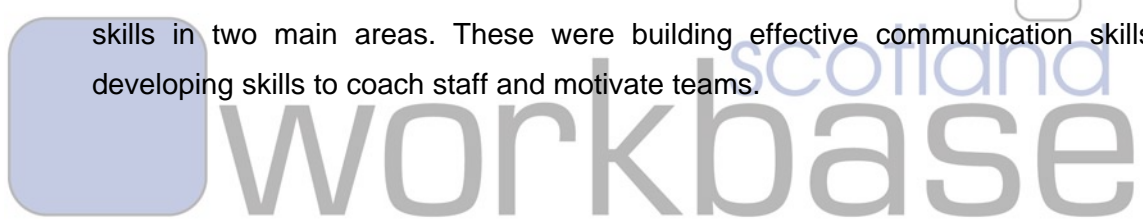
“There needed to be acceptance and realisation that employers, employees and the Trade Unions are really stakeholders and partners in the business, each have different pressures, but we needed to talk through issues, consult and inform. The project was about creating space to allow us to do this”

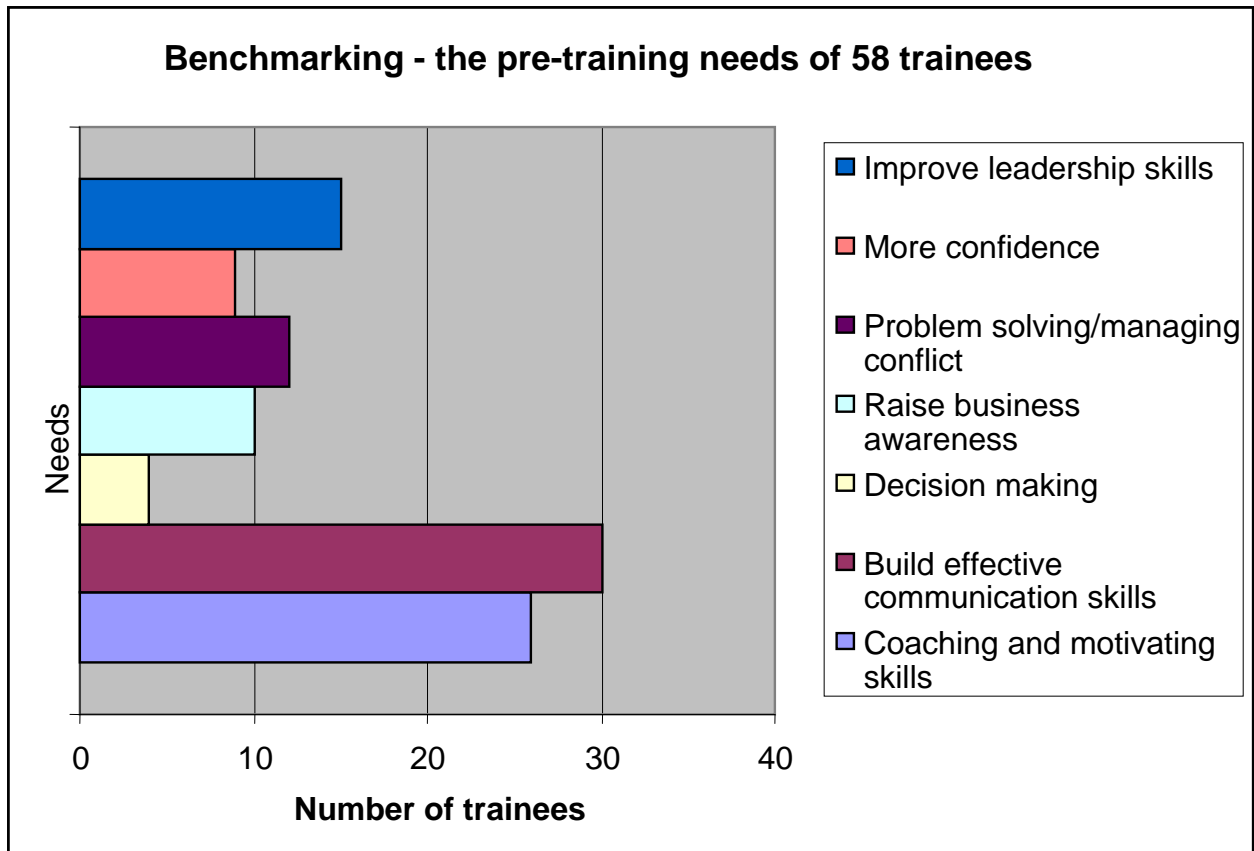
“Prior to this project the unions would have been excluded from the HR forum but through this project we had a new common thread, the need to move from a confrontational environment and improve performance in the industry”

1.3 Baseline study, findings from existing documentary data

1.3.1 The pre-training needs of employees

58 pre-training questionnaires completed by trainees across the 10 companies were reviewed. Their responses regarding the skills that they wanted to build were grouped under common headings. Employees identified that they needed to strengthen their skills in two main areas. These were building effective communication skills and developing skills to coach staff and motivate teams.





1.3.2 Post-Training Evaluations.

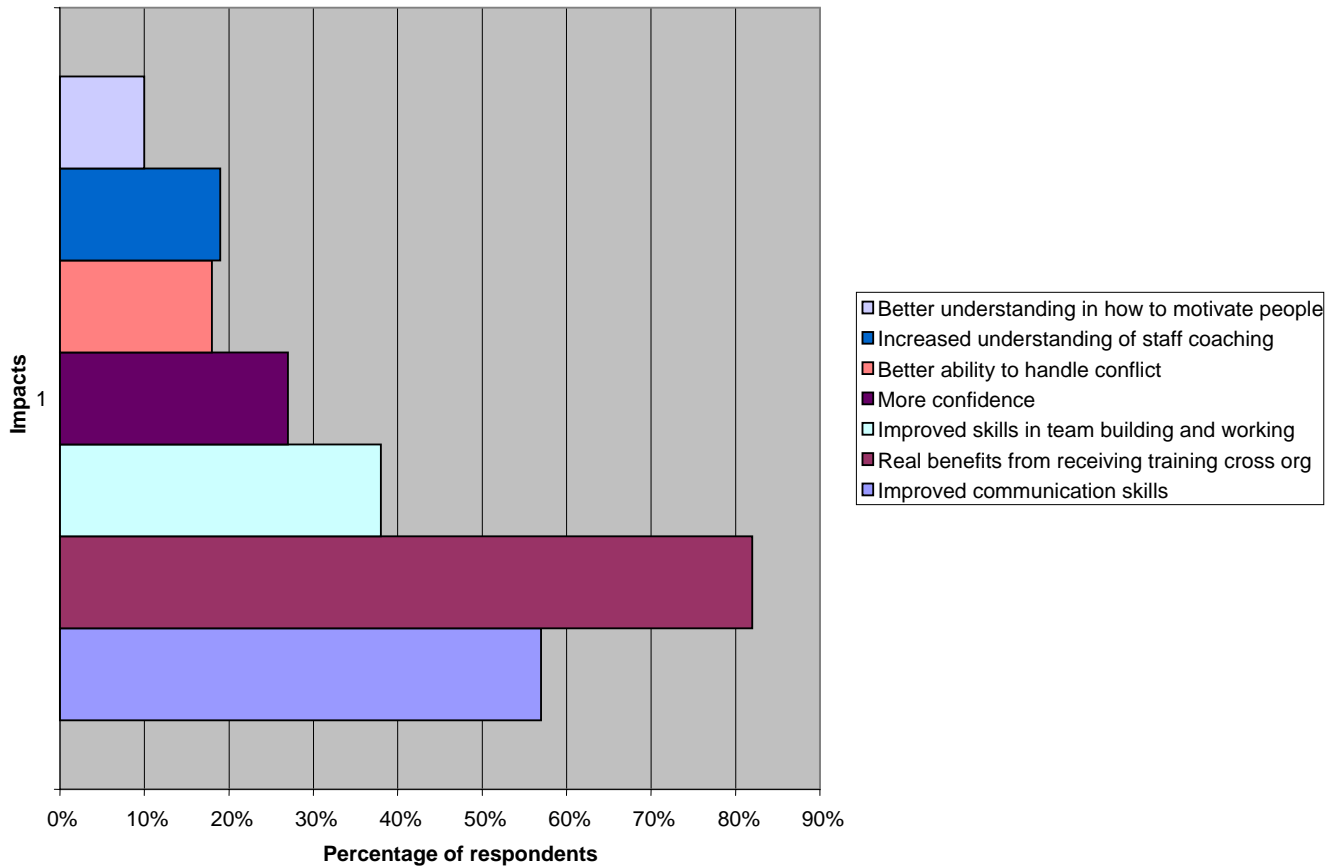
Immediately after each of the training sessions, participants from all 10 companies were asked to complete an evaluation form on the perceived impact of the training on them. Of the total 84 trainees, 15 were female, the rest male. All were white. This information has been collated below and highlights that;

- 83% of those receiving training thought that a major benefit had been the learning and sharing that occurred as a result of the cross organisational method of training
- 58% thought that their communications skills had improved
- 49% thought that they had improved their team-building skills and ability to work together

It is important to note here that impact immediately post-training delivery is largely theoretical. Impact can only be assessed after observing how much learning is put into practice i.e. the desired behavioural changes resulting from the capacity building training. However there is a correlation between the skills required and listed in the pre-training

questionnaires, (communication and motivating teams) and the perceived impact of training on communication skills and coaching and motivating teams.

Perceived impact of Training on staff



1.4 Findings from primary sources focusing on the research areas

1.4.1 Skills gained as a result of the training (17 operational and first-line management staff interview using semi-structured interviews and through two focus groups)

- All of the respondents said they had gained greater confidence
- The majority said that they had learnt the importance of looking at things from other's perspectives
- The majority mentioned the importance of trying new approaches to tackling situations
- Learning to listen and to take a step back was mentioned frequently
- All of the respondents said their communication skills were stronger

“My confidence has improved, it taught me I could go and do something else, and I’ve been accepted for teacher’s training” (SSI)

“Lots of people’s attitudes changed, I think people are looking at the bigger picture rather than focusing on their own wee bit” (SSI)

“I’ve learnt to listen, and take a step back, I don’t just fly off the handle any more” (SSI)

“Perhaps I was too laid back before; it’s made me more assertive and more confident in dealing with situations” (SSI)

1.4.2 Evidence of new skills being used in the workplace and their impact (17 operational and first-line management staff interview using semi-structured interviews and through two focus groups)

- All staff interviewed were able to give good examples of how they had used their new skills in the workplace and the benefits that this had had.

“The guys found it hard to see me as the foreman, this used to pass me by, and I would let it go; now I’m more confident in my role. I gained their respect and trust. The company gets a better performance” (SSI)

“One guy I work with is difficult, I used to lose the plot and shouted, now I have one-to-ones with him, ask him how he feels and we try to find solutions. The company gets a department that is running better; staff feel better and more efficient” (SSI)

“My two team leaders were very competitive and aggressive, this did affect production. Their behaviours have certainly improved. They are working with one another putting new structures in place. In the past you couldn’t have asked them to do this” (SSI)

“The culture has changed, people don’t hesitate to come and speak to me now” (SSI)

“Team Leaders are less hands on; they can delegate now and are clearer in their roles” (FG)

1.4.3 Identifying the most positive things about the training (17 operational and first line management staff interview using semi-structured interviews and through two focus groups)

- One unexpected impact of the training emerged when participants were asked what they most enjoyed about the training, and backs up the data collated from the 84 post-training evaluation forms. All participants interviewed said they benefited from taking part in training which had been delivered to people from across the 10 organisations in mixed clusters, and external to their own place of work.

“We identified common goals and issues; it gave me a wider perspective and understanding”(SSI)

“I enjoyed knowing we’re not so badly off here; everyone is dealing with the same stuff” (SSI)

“All businesses have similar problems; it was comforting to staff knowing that we are not alone in these situations” (FG)

“We got good ideas from one another; it was a bonus meeting new people, in the same line of work, and it as exciting and interesting” (FG)

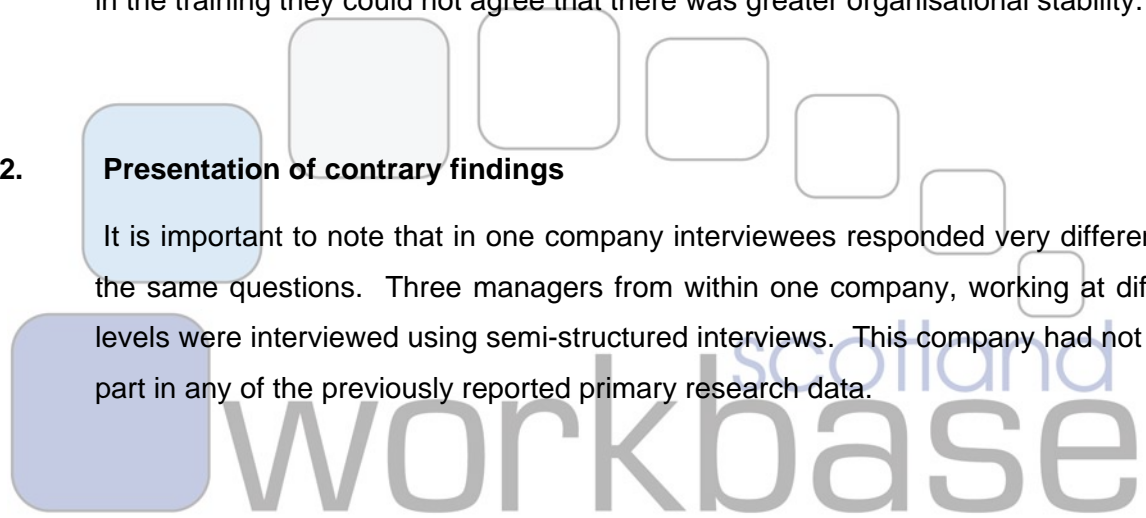
“It made me happier with my own employer” (FG)

1.4.4 Evidence of greater organisational stability and shared understanding within the organisations as a result of the project

- Whilst the majority of employees interviewed did report that they had a greater understanding of their companies’ goals and increased business awareness there was general agreement that as only a very small percentage of employees had participated in the training they could not agree that there was greater organisational stability.

2. Presentation of contrary findings

It is important to note that in one company interviewees responded very differently to the same questions. Three managers from within one company, working at different levels were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. This company had not taken part in any of the previously reported primary research data.



2.1 Primary data gathered focusing on research areas

2.1.1 Identifying the working culture of the organisation

The management is pretty poor, there's no support from them

The management is pretty good; we're well looked after

Communication is terrible; you're told what to do you don't ask any questions

Men don't trust the management. The starting point is, confrontation, them and us

It's heavily unionised, the tail wags the dog

- The three employees interviewed appeared to be in agreement that communication within their organisation was very poor. Whilst some blamed the management for this, others felt that this was the result of the union's behaviour.

2.1.2 Skills gained as a result of the training

It was a waste of time for me, I was told to go on the training

No one wanted to go on the training; we'd lose our bonuses taking the time off to train

They never see the point in taking part in talking; they think they'll lose their bonuses

We can use our new knowledge to attack the management

- All employees interviewed found it difficult to focus on the skills that they may have gained through attending the training. Two of those interviewed focused on the way in which they had been compelled to attend the training. The third manager, and the most senior interviewed, highlighted employees' general reluctance to take time to attending meetings or training, as they believed this would impact on bonuses. This he stated was not the case. Worth noting is the statement which acknowledges that there was new knowledge gained as a result of training, but that this would be best used to "attack the management"

2.1.3 Evidence of new skills being used in the workplace and their impact

I would have loved to try out some of the things I learnt, but if you can't speak to the staff without union meddling what's the point."

In principle the communication forums are a good idea, but it's been too slow to be implemented

I learnt how I could speak to people differently, different interactions, but I can't implement any of it. The union doesn't want to talk to us

- All employees interviewed acknowledged that there had been benefits to the training and also to the idea of introducing communication forums but again would not be specific about the skills and knowledge they may have gained. They also reiterated their lack of ability to implement any of the learning.

2.1.4 Identifying the most positive things about the training

- All the managers interviewed reported that they had enjoyed attending the cross-organisational training and found benefits in sharing ideas and learning from the other distilleries. These responses are similar to those gathered from all the other interviews and focus groups carried out across the other nine organisations.

2.1.5 Evidence of greater organisational stability and shared understanding within the organisations as a result of the project

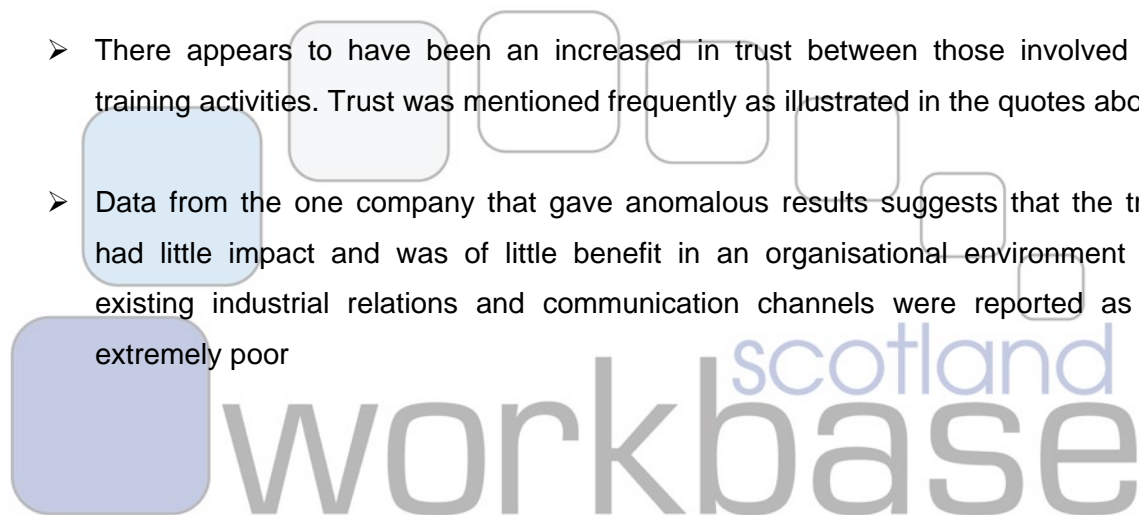
- Whilst there was acknowledgement that the idea of introducing a communications forum was potentially valuable, the slowness of its implementation led those interviewed to have little faith in it. None of the three managers felt that the training had had any impact and all three agreed that there was no greater organisational stability or shared understanding as a result of the project.

In interviewing employees from this company the researcher found difficulty in adhering to the interview format, as the respondents appeared to have little interest in focusing on the benefits of the training in any detail. All three of those interviewed acknowledged that in principle there were potential benefits to participating in the training but depending on their position within the

company, laid blame for their lack of ability to apply the skills they were taught at the door of the management or the union in blocking any progress.

3 Key Findings

- The research identified that the working culture of the organisations was very traditional but that the sector is now experiencing a significant amount of change. There was recognition by employees and employers of the need to address this change to ensure their economic survival.
- There is evidence that there have been some positive changes in the way the workforce that received training behave
- There has been an increase in staff skills, particularly in the areas of communication, team-working and self-awareness
- The project has highlighted the benefits of working cross-organisationally allowing employees a greater understanding of their industry
- Changes in staff behaviour may have impacted positively on the company's business performance. Although there is no concrete evidence of improved productivity, anecdotally employees mentioned this as a result of the training on a significant number of occasions and this is illustrated in the quotes above
- There appears to have been an increased in trust between those involved in the training activities. Trust was mentioned frequently as illustrated in the quotes above
- Data from the one company that gave anomalous results suggests that the training had little impact and was of little benefit in an organisational environment where existing industrial relations and communication channels were reported as being extremely poor



CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A recap of the aim of the project

This research project began with the aim of evaluating the training activities carried out under the Scotch Whisky Industry Partnership Project, with a view to identifying the contribution this has made to growing social capital and the development of collaborative/cooperative working relationships within the companies involved. The project focussed on a case study looking at it through the prism of social capital and trying to measure how the building of human capacities can support its presence.

This research project sought to test the hypothesis that social capital can be actively built within organisations, and that its growth is affected by, and can affect the quality of intra-organisational relationships in which the participants are engaged.

The data captured during the project process presented in chapter 5 has resulted in some key findings. However one must ask what do the key findings mean in relation to the project aims? To what extent do they add credence to, or refute the hypothesis, or indeed highlight something new? It was acknowledged that the research was in exploring the hypothesis seeking to identify some fairly intangible elements. The indicators of growth in social capital and signs of increased cooperative behaviour are proxy indicators which focus on behavioural changes. The indicators were;

- Increase communication
- Increased positive interactions
- Signs of behavioural change leading to desired outcomes for company performance
- Increased networking
- Changes in attitude and levels of understanding
- Widened perspectives
- Shared understanding
- Indicators of increased trust and confidence

2. Key Findings in conclusion

- The research identified that the working culture of the organisations was very traditional but that the sector is now experiencing a significant amount of change. There was recognition by employees and employers of the need to address this change to ensure their economic survival. The research identified that there was strong agreement that employers and employees needed to improve their communication, people and management skills and to learn to interact more cooperatively.
- The primary data gathered from the first two companies clarified that the immediate perceived impact of the training was seen as positive and had improved individuals communication skills, people skills, self awareness, management skills and increased their confidence. The data also offered evidenced that new skills had been implemented in the workplace, and that this had led to changed behaviours, increased understanding amongst employers and employees and improved working relationships. There is also anecdotal evidence that this has resulted in more efficient working teams, increasing their productive capabilities. This suggests that the training did have an impact on the levels of social capital within the companies and that relationships had improved moving onto a more cooperative footing.
- All those taking part in the research highlighted that the cross-organisational delivery of training was of significant value and had raised their levels of business and industry awareness, and enabled shared learning and knowledge to take place. The concept of social capital stressed the importance of building networks and shared norms in growing social capital. The data gathered supports the concept that this element of the training activity had an important impact on growing shared understanding and norms and identifying common goals.
- The primary data revealed that within one company the training activities had little impact. Whilst those interviewed had enjoyed the training and recognised its value, they were not implementing any new skills they may have learnt citing various reasons for their inability to do so. The information gathered demonstrated that the organisation had extremely poor intra-organisational relationships, with a fundamental lack of communication and understanding across all levels of employer, union, employee relationships. This would suggest that in organisations that demonstrate very low

levels of cooperative behaviour any attempts to actively grow social capital are more challenging.

3. The significance of the Key findings

From the key findings listed above, three things stand out as significant

3.1 The unexpected impact of delivering intra-organisational training

One can argue that the delivery of the training cross-organisationally to groups of employees across the 10 companies had a significant impact of increasing social capital. Whilst the term social capital has been defined in numerous ways the core concepts revolve around networks and associated norms of reciprocity, with trust being closely associated with each. Delivering the training cross-organisationally does appear to have supported the development of both of the core concepts - increased reciprocity and sharing of norms and increased networks across the employees of the 10 firms. It also appears to have raised awareness and understanding of the industry resulting in an increase in employees trust in their own employers. The model of training delivery under the whisky project could be said to have supported the active building of social capital if “social capital consists of the stock of active connections among people: the trust, mutual understanding, and shared values and behaviours that bind the members of human networks and communities and make cooperative action possible” (Cohen and Prusak, 2001, p4) The inter-organisational delivery of training may have resulted in building bridging (as opposed to binding) social capital.

Whilst the whisky companies as private sector players could be said to be in competition with each other, the whisky partnership activities have adhered to a more cooperative form of interactive behaviour between the companies. The project occurred because of shared externalities amongst the firms. The project arose out of the recognition that the companies had shared needs and faced shared threats and could benefit from working together. The training delivered was a positive externality for which there was common support and interest. Chataway (cited by the OU, TU870, 2001, p69) highlights the growing realisation that “there are aspects of competitiveness that support softer social conventions that have held society together successfully”. She acknowledges that “interdependencies are increasingly being recognised as contributing to behaviour but lying outside the limited view of humans as economic rational beings”

The potential of innovative networks within and across industries has growing significant in the area of regional industrial development. It is argued that knowledge is transferred, gained and lost across networks and industries and new knowledge is often the result of strategic opportunities which allow for the

- Exploitation of existing knowledge from inside (intra-networking)
- Imitation of existing knowledge from outside (extra-networking)
- Exploration of new knowledge (intra and extra-networking) (Healey, T, 2001)

The whisky project case study research findings appears to offer an insight on the importance of this networking (social capital) and how it can happen in practical terms.

3.2 Building the capacity, skills and understanding of individuals through training resulting in behavioural changes that facilitate cooperation or collective action i.e. social capital.

There is evidence that people within the organisations have increased their ability “to work together in various arrangements to resolve collective problems” (Robinson, D et Al, 2000, p 5), i.e. in cooperation. Whilst relationships within the companies are still based on hierarchy the increase in understanding and communication and perhaps ultimately trust, has enabled individuals “to work together, act in conjunction with another to a shared end” (Shorter Oxford English dictionary). In development management, the development manager is required to have the skills to manage a whole range of diverse interests across many organizations. Cooperation is cited as a strong device for managing these range of interests. In order to be in a position to do this, individual companies must first build shared goals and cooperative relationships internally. Findings from this research would suggest that increasing individual’s capacities and understanding can lead to more cooperative working relationships. “Once we start to become conscious of how we think and interact and begin developing capacities to think and interact differently, we will already begun to change our organisations for the better, those changes will ripple out around us and reinforce a growing sense of capacity and confidence” (Ross, et al (1994) as cited by the OU TU872, 1999)

3.3 Without a basic level of trust and communication this type of interaction cannot build social capital.

There was one company that was unable to benefit from the activities of the whisky project. Whilst the training may have developed some knowledge and increased skills levels, the learning was not implemented. More fundamental issues require to be addressed, which were outwith the scope of the whisky project intervention. The discourse on the concept of cooperation in organisational relationships implies the need for some commonality of view and shared perspective and goal. Within this one organisation these elements were clearly lacking. Within this organisation relationships could be said to display elements of the concept of “unruly competition” (Moore, M as cited by OU, TU870, 2000) with competition over resources i.e. power, ideas, constituencies clearly displayed. This appears to have stimulated bad relations between people leading to the undermining of trust and cooperation i.e. social capital.

4 Problems identified and recommendations

- One of the main difficulties with regards to the key findings from the research is that the sample size of those that took part was very small. For this reason the research cannot be conclusive. However the findings from that small sample do suggest a link between the training activities and the growth in networks, changed norms of behaviour and levels of trust between those that took part in the whisky project. A recommendation for any further research would be to widen the sample to build more conclusive evidence.
- The whisky project sought to change behaviours, organisational norms and cultural changes within the participating organisations. The research would also have benefited from the researcher being able to undertake further research to examine if changes had been developed and sustained over a longer period of time.
- Whilst the research tools utilised i.e. semi-structured interviews, observation and focus groups were feasible and useful. By contrast the indicators used to measure changes to networks, trust and norms by the very nature of the concepts were proxy indicators,

therefore the findings are open to debated and dispute. The findings cannot be based on scientific measurement and it can be argued are therefore inconclusive.

- The scope of the research project did not allow for an assessment of the other activities delivered as part of the whisky project i.e. the facilitation of a partnership-working group across the 10 participating companies, and the setting up of internal information and communication forums. The research would have been strengthened if the impact of these activities had been included. Time and feasibility constraints did not allow for this to happen.

5. How far were the original objectives achieved?

• Personal and Learning Outcomes

All personal and learning outcomes were achieved. Of particular importance has been the learning for the researcher in how to learn independently, using new tools, and their increased capacity to design progress and complete a structured research process. The importance of clearly identifying the scope and focus of the research cannot be under estimated

• Organisational Outcomes

All organisational outcomes were achieved. Workbase Scotland have a clearer understanding on how they may have contributed positively to building the social capital and the human capacity of the organisations and increased their understanding of how this may have supported increased intra-organisational cooperation. This knowledge may increase their capacity to promote their skills with the purpose of winning new business

The research has allowed Workbase to reflect on their learning allowing them to consider ways of modifying their practice. Key recommendations to be included in a report to be submitted to the Board are;

- The delivery of training was as a small part of the process of changing the culture within the client organisations; other ways should be identified to keep the momentum going. It may be that the employee forums and steering group partnership working over the longer term could fulfill this.

- This type of intervention must be a long-term investment and returns for organisations will take time.
- The benefits of delivering training to groups of employees from different organisations within the same industry were significant. Workbase Scotland should consider promoting this model of training delivery as bringing real added value to future projects focusing on organisational development and improvement of industrial relations.

- **Outcomes for Development Management**

The findings of this research project do provide some evidence of ways in which social capital may be developed. They may contribute in a small way to providing new insights into the importance of intra-organisational relationships in contributing to social capital in the private sector. The findings offer a useful suggestion for a method for increasing social capital across organisations which it may be useful to further explore i.e. provision of some kind of cross-sectoral and cross organisational interaction. It is suggested that there would be some merit in undertaking further research in this area if the researcher had the scope to increase the sample size and study in more depth the range of activities implemented and designed to increase workers skills and organisational communication.



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APPENDIX 1 Focus group Schedule

Date

Objective; to identify the benefits to the participants in taking part in the Workbase Project training and the impact that this has had on their lives and on the organisation

Characteristics of participants, 5-12 people

| Role within Organisation | Role in Project | Years employed in firm |
|--------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

- Stage 1 – Identify what the working culture was in the organisation prior to the project
- Stage 2 - Identify what personal benefits participants have gained from taking part in the project (seeking specific examples)
- Stage 3 – Identify the impact of these changes on the organisation



APPENDIX 2

Interview Schedule for employees undertaking training

1. Company Name
2. Name and role of interview
3. Can you describe the working culture of the company?
4. What part did you play in the project?
5. What were the aims of the project?
6. What skills did you learn or develop as a result of the project?
7. What evidence do you have to show you use these skills in the workplace?
8. What benefits do you think there have been from using these skills?
9. Could you agree with the statement that there is a greater organisational stability and a shared understanding within the organisations now than before the project? In what ways?
10. What benefits did you get from undergoing shared training across different whisky companies?

Interview Schedule for HR Managers working on the Partnership forums

1. Company Name
2. Name and role of interview
3. Can you describe the working culture of the company?
4. How did the organisation consult with and inform workers before the project, how do they do it now, how is knowledge shared?
5. How much time and space is devoted to facilitating face to face interactions and staff interaction? Has this changed since the project?
6. What part did you play in the project?
7. What were the aims of the project?
8. What do you understand by partnership?
9. What skills do you think staff have developed as a result of the project?
10. What evidence do you have to show you these skills are being used in the workplace?
11. What benefits do you think there have been from using these skills?



Appendix 3 Companies taking part in the Research Project

- Workbase Scotland
- Dewar's
- North British Distillers
- Morrison Bowmore
- The Edrington Group
- The GMB Union
- Inverhouse Distillers
- Allied Distillers
- The Glenmorangie Company
- Glenfiddich
- Chivas Brothers
- Whyte & Mackay

