Developing 'Global People':
Resources to support Intercultural Effectiveness

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Overview

- Difference & Intercultural Partnerships
- Sino-UK Collaboration: Case Study
- Workshop Activity
- Global People Resources
- Global People Resources: Website
- Further Insights and Developments

Difference and Intercultural Partnerships

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IC Partnerships

Recent claims:

"Professional cultures are global and transcend national differences."

"The idea of there being a need to adapt to Chinese culture can be a barrier to successful discussions."

Peter Brady, Times Higher Education

22 January 2009

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IC Partnerships

How do we perceive cultural differences?

Minimise ⟷ Exaggerate

- Excessive minimisation or exaggeration both unhelpful

- Chinese partners frequently mentioned cultural differences (many aspects)

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Sino-UK Collaboration: Case Study

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eChina-UK Programme

- Set of Sino-British collaborative projects on eLearning in education

- Funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) (£4 million) & supported by Chinese Ministry of Education

- Involved British and Chinese universities working in partnership

- The Programme has had 3 phases

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eChina-UK Programme

Phases 1 & 2: British & Chinese universities worked collaboratively on range of eLearning in education projects

- Phase 1: 2003-2005.

- Phase 2: 2005-2007.

Global People Project forms Phase 3 of the eChina-UK Programme

- Phase 3: 2007-2009.

Global People: Background

Two of HEFCE's Key Goals for the eChina-UK Programme:

- Strengthen collaboration between China and the UK

- Disseminate generic insights on a range of issues, including the benefits & challenges of working interculturally

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Global People: Background

Phase 3 (Global People): 2008–2009

Key Aims:

- Draw out learning from the eChina-UK Programme on working interculturally
- Identify generic frameworks and models (i.e. not country specific)
- Develop resources that are of practical value to those working in international projects (especially in HE)

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Global People: Background

Phase 3 (Global People): 2008–2009

Procedure:

- Review the literature on intercultural competence and on working across cultures

- Analyse data from the eChina-UK Programme & Projects from an intercultural perspective

- Collect new interview data from eChina-UK project members

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Management

Chinese 23: *"Great differences exist between the working mechanisms in China and in the West. …*

Our working procedures, overall circumstances, thinking style and decision-making processes etc. are not all the same."

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Communication: Language

Chinese or English?

Chinese 21: *The working language was English. Due to the language problems, when we couldn't express ourselves clearly, it seemed that we were disadvantaged.*

Communication: Language

English or Chinese?

Chinese 16: *"I think we should show consideration for each other in terms of language. China is now developing very fast; they should know some Chinese to communicate with us. … We have learned a lot of English; it's their turn to learn some basic Chinese, as it's two-way communication. I find it weird that they don't know even a word of Chinese."*

他们应该懂中文

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Communication: Language Use

Meaning needs to be negotiated

British 09: *When I first joined, I spent weeks if not months on a simply practical confusion as to what is a unit, a module, what was the other one?*

British 06: *Activity*

British 09: *There was no standard definition, so I was like blocked at the first hurdle, and so I wasn't quite sure how much material I'd got to write … I thought I don't understand this, I can't do this.*

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Communication: Management

Management of Channels of Communication

Chinese Researcher: *In your opinion, was the communication effective?*

Chinese 20: *No, it wasn't. Though both Chinese and British sides had their own project managers, they couldn't do all the communications on their own. We should have embedded different communication mechanisms in the project at different levels.*
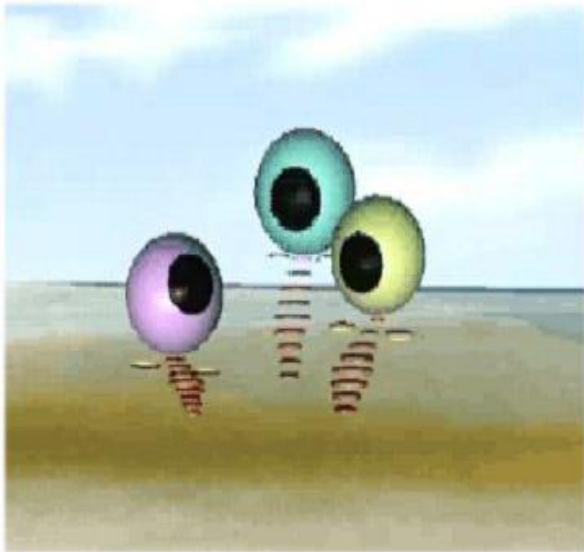
Communication: Management

Attention to Communication Protocols

Chinese 06: *The UK colleagues are more likely to raise issues directly. Their logic is that issues should be raised first, then they'll try their best to find solutions. … Sometimes the UK project manager sent some suggestions to us. When we got the suggestion, we usually got nervous and wondered 'must we do it immediately?' or 'are they commanding us to do this?' But working together with them for a while I gradually realised that I could voice my opinions too and take time to think. It wasn't a problem.*

Communication: Management

Attention to Communication Protocols

Chinese 02: *Sending mass emails is a good way. But when we send such emails, it will infringe Chinese principles. If I send such an email to a person in a higher position, s/he will feel offended. Nowadays we send various materials by email, but Chinese are special, superiors will feel particularly insulted. … Sending emails to superiors is not a good way, because it shows no regard for status differences between people. Some superiors dislike equality, so the best way to communicate with them is to submit a report, either in written or oral form.*

YOU HAVE 7490 NEW MESSAGES

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Relationships

Attention to Relationships

British 06: *Whilst it is recognised that building social relationships serves to strengthen developing working relationships, it should likewise be acknowledged that this relies heavily on the willingness of team members to give of their free time, outside the boundaries of any given project. The value of this 'voluntary' input outside formal working time should not be underestimated, nor remain unacknowledged. There is a social dimension to effective team building that should ideally be built into the project.*

Personal Qualities

Need for Self-Awareness

Brit 17: *Can we step back a bit because we're getting a bit detailed?*

Brit 18: *Am I losing you?*

Ch 20: *Well to me it's a bit too detailed, can you give me an overall picture?*

IC Partnerships

Research indicates we could all have benefited from better preparation in:

- Managing across cultures
- Communicating across cultures
- Building relationships across cultures
- Developing qualities for working across cultures

Workshop Activity

Global People Resources

Global People Resources

http://www.globalpeople.org.uk/

- Global People Toolbook: Life cycle model of intercultural partnerships

- Learning process model

- Competency framework

- Range of publications (downloadable, free of charge)

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Global People Toolbook

Rationale: Intercultural effectiveness is vital for the success of projects yet is often overlooked in the planning

Purpose: Provide a practical, step-by-step guide to managing the intercultural aspects of an international partnership
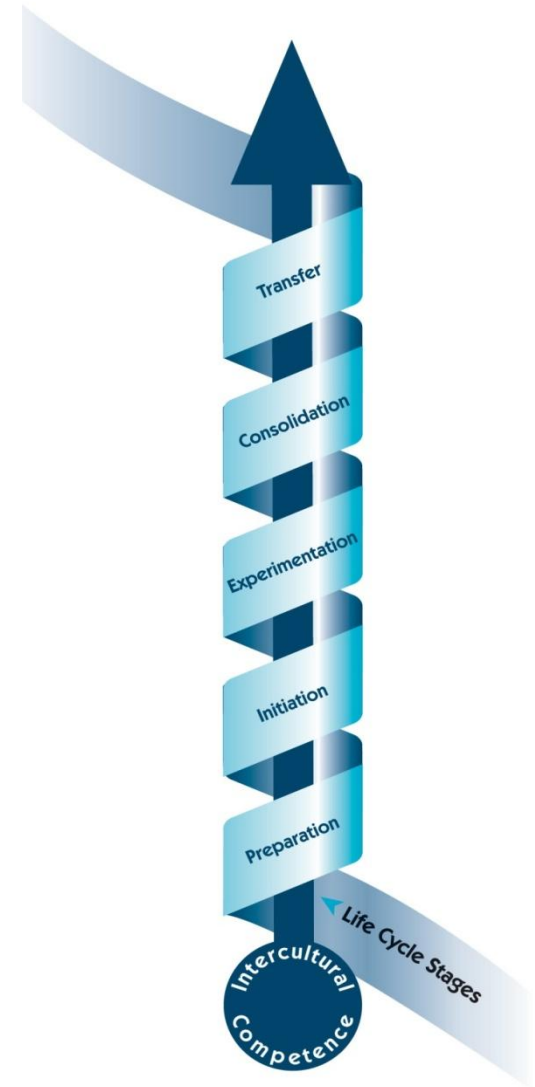
Global People Toolbook

Audience: Academics, project managers and other staff responsible for planning, managing or reviewing intercultural collaborations

Sources of Information: Broad research base, with authentic examples from the eChina-UK Programme

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Global People Toolbook

Five-stage life cycle model

- Preparation
- Initiation
- Experimentation
- Consolidation
- Transfer

Global People Toolbook

For each stage of the life cycle model:

- Main Activities for the stage
- Authentic Case Study from the eChina-UK Programme
- Commentary on the case study – with reference to Core Competencies
- Practical implementation Tips
- Management and development Tool

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Let's take a quick walk through……

Stage 1: Preparation

Activities

- Develop a vision
- Research the context
- Audit intercultural skills
- Break the ice
- Review channels of communication

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Illustrated by..........

Case Study – early days of the eChina-UK Programme

Commentary – relates Activities to Case Study, showing how these operate in a real-life context, and identifies the intercultural competencies of most value to this Stage

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6 Tips for Dealing with Difference

1) Look for people who can act as 'cultural bridges'.

2) Use a range of strategies to gather information about your partner's cultural context. Realise that it is difficult to predict what you need to know, so take every initial contact as a learning opportunity.

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6 Tips for Dealing with Difference

3) Do not treat generalisations about other cultures as immutable facts.

4) When initiating contact, remember that even the most basic skills in another language will help establish a climate of mutual trust.

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6 Tips for Dealing with Difference

5) Review different communication modes (email, teleconference, face-to-face, online space etc.) and be ready to use different modes according to communicative need.

6) Agree ground rules for communicating – identifying preferred ways of working together inclusively.

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For practical guidance....

Tool - 6 tools located in a Resource Section at the back of the Toolbook.

Team Resource Audit - a simple instrument for reviewing the intercultural (including language) skills in your (actual or desired) team

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Active learning runs through the process

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Learning Process Model

- Highlights the importance of active learning in developing intercultural competence

- Encourages project leaders to build reflection and knowledge-sharing into the project plan

- Provides a simple 3-phase model to identify the core learning process

- Provides examples of how to embed learning into the partnership experience

Acquisition-Awareness-Embedding

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To sum up......

Research-based but focused on practice:

- Grounded in international research
- Activity-oriented
- Illustrated with authentic case studies
- Practical tips
- Tools for individual and team development
- Detailed complementary material on the website

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Global People Resources: The Website

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- Provides an insight into:
  - What the project is about
  - Who it is for
  - Why intercultural competence matters
- Provides further research-based information and resources

Global People Website

- Key elements (supplementary to the aspects already explained):
  - The Competency Framework
  - Downloadable pdf files (free)
  - Order form for purchasing printed version of the Toolbook

The Competency Framework

- Intercultural collaborations are a delicate balancing acts

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- Our Competency Framework was developed to help raise awareness of competencies that facilitate intercultural work

- It is grounded in the experiences of members of the eChina-UK Programme

The Competency Framework

- Identifies four competency clusters
  - Knowledge and Ideas
  - Communication
  - Relationships
  - Personal Qualities and Dispositions
- Explains each competency and discusses why it is important for intercultural effectiveness
- Illustrates each competency with a case study example from the eChina-UK Programme (some of them supported by audio clips)
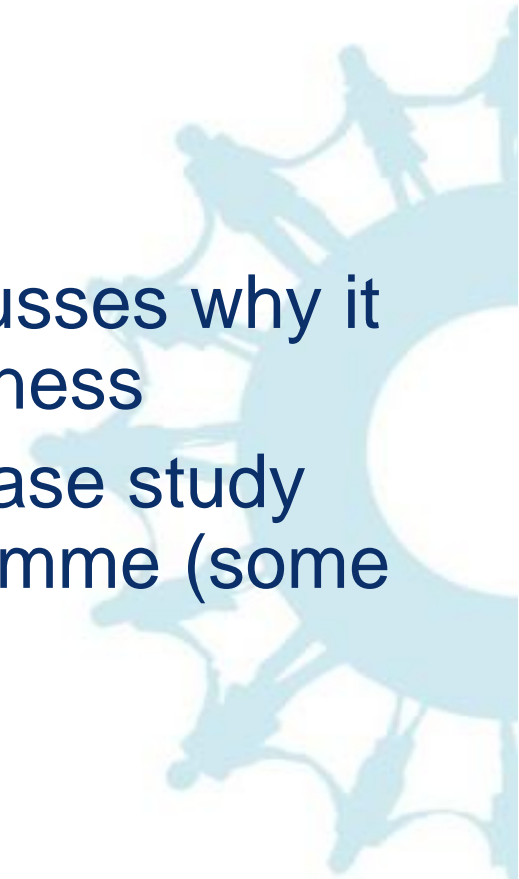
Case Study Example: Language Adjustment at the start of a meeting

Adjusting one's use of language to the proficiency level of the recipient(s) is vital for effective communication; however, it is sometimes easier said than done. Consider the following interaction that took place at one of our meetings:
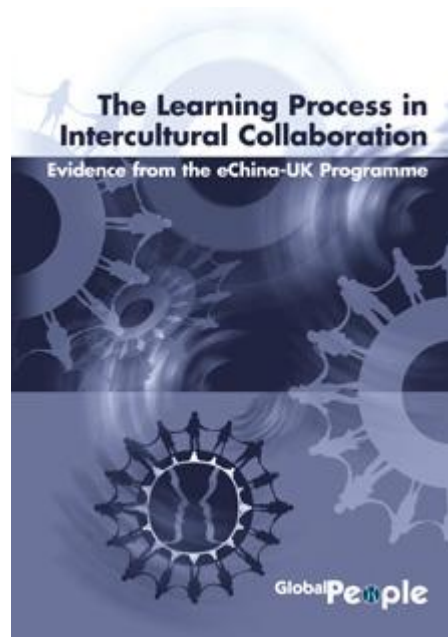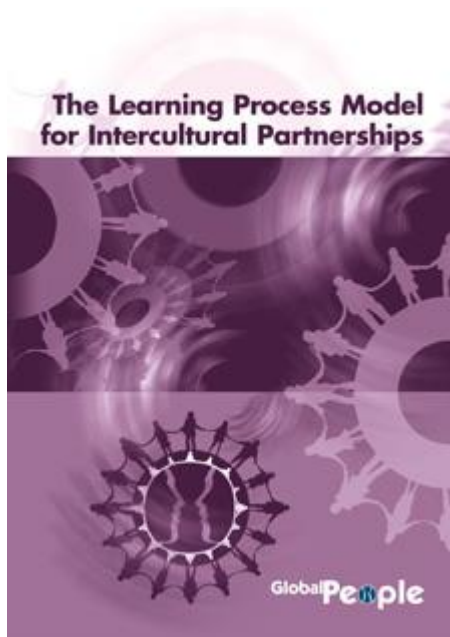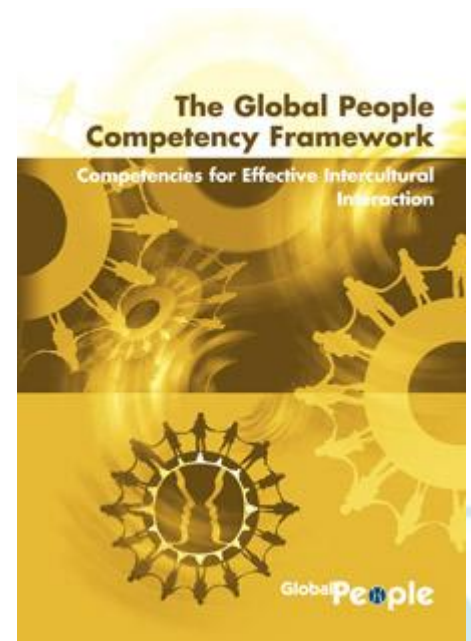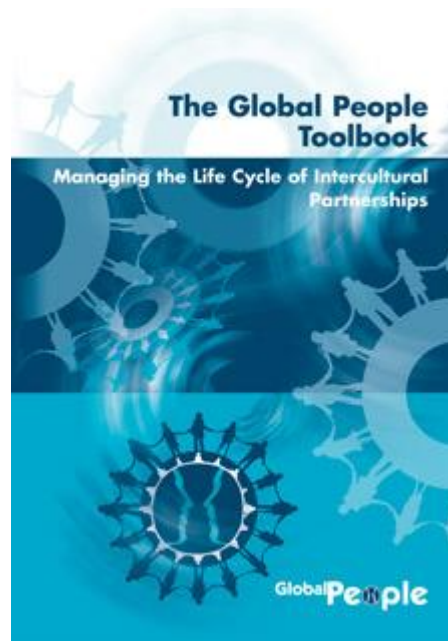
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Chair:	*[...] I'm going to ask everybody to speak very clearly and uh without heavy accents if possible*
Everyone:	*Laughter [as the Chair speaks with a Scottish accent]*
Chair:	*and we may take some pauses just to make sure everybody uhm uh is keeping up with the conversation cause we can sometimes each of us speak very quickly when we get excited. Uh this afternoon is a chance for us really to explore the research issues ## tell each other what we're doing ## tell each other what we hope to achieve what we're aspiring to ### and it would be wonderful if we could perhaps focus on the use of technology in learning ## if that was of interest to you ##### so what I I'd like to do is I think it would be very helpful for one of our colleagues to volunteer to <as we say in Scotland: start the ball rolling cause we really love football>. Uh I think I think it would be fair to ask one of our colleagues to start the ball rolling and (name of British colleague) if you would like to kick off for us.*

This excerpt demonstrates a number of adjustment practices. The Chair clearly shows a high level of awareness of this competency, by asking participants to speak clearly, to avoid accents, to avoid fast speech and to pause regularly in order to ensure that all participants have the chance to follow the conversation. The Chair then goes on to put her insights into practice, speaking slowly and clearly, by pausing regularly (signalled by #) and trying to avoid the use of a heavy Scottish accent. However, only seconds later she speeds up (signalled by < >), falls into a heavy Scottish accent, uses an idiomatic expression ('to start the ball rolling') which leaves all but one of the Chinese participants with blank faces, and then goes on to repeat the idiom and to use complex vocabulary ('kick off'), which is unlikely to be understood and could easily have been replaced by a more simple word, such as 'start' or 'begin'.

The Global People
Landscaping Study

Intercultural Effectiveness in Global
Education Partnerships

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The Global People
Toolbook

Managing the Life Cycle of Intercultural
Partnerships

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The Global People
Competency Framework

Competencies for Effective Intercultural
Interaction

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The Learning Process Model
for Intercultural Partnerships

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The Learning Process in
Intercultural Collaboration

Evidence from the eChina-UK Programme

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Sino-British Interaction in
Professional Contexts

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Further Insights and Developments

Further Insights

Learning More

Who can benefit?

- Directors and managers responsible for internationalisation

- Project leaders and academics involved in international partnerships

Opportunities to learn more:

- Customised workshops run by Global People team

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Further Insights

Further Applications

Intercultural effectiveness for students:

- Currently being developed and piloted at Warwick

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Further Developments

Plans (subject to funding)

- **Further research** (e.g. with different countries, different types of projects, different types of partnerships)

- **Additional tools** for use in development workshops

Thank you

The Global People Team
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