

The background features a blue gradient with silhouettes of people in various poses, some holding hands, and abstract circular and swirling patterns. The text is overlaid on this background.

Intercultural Competence for International Collaboration: *Experiences of the eChina-UK Programme*

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Overview

- Introduction: key questions
- Case study: Background to the eChina-UK Programme
- Difference & intercultural partnerships: examples
- Intercultural competence
- Global People Resources: Toolbook
- Global People Resources: Website

Introduction

Fundamental Questions

- How can international partners work together more effectively?
- What intercultural competencies are needed for this?
- To what extent are foreign language skills important?

Case Study: The eChina-UK Programme

eChina-UK Programme

- Set of Sino-British collaborative projects on eLearning in education
- Funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for English (HEFCE) (£4 million) & supported by Chinese Ministry of Education
- Involved British and Chinese universities working in partnership
- 4 initial projects, 3 follow-up projects, with each project having core team of about 16 to 35

Key Parties in the Programme

Stakeholder/
Management

HEFCE

MoE

U of
Nottingham

BNU

BFSU

Lead
Universities

WUN

Open/
Cambridge

Tsinghua U

Team
Members

Senior
Management

Academics

Technical
Staff

Trainees

Global People Project

Phase 3 – the Global People Project: 2008–2009

Key Aims

- Review the literature on intercultural competence and on working across cultures
- Analyse data from the eChina-UK Programme & Projects from an intercultural perspective
- Develop a resource bank that is of practical value to those working in international projects (especially in Higher Education)

Difference and Intercultural Partnerships

Differences

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

Differences

How do we perceive cultural differences?

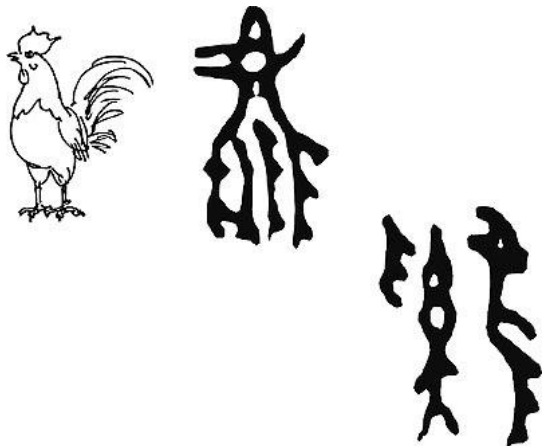
Minimise  Exaggerate

- Excessive minimisation or exaggeration both unhelpful
- What role does language play?

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.”*



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.*



Language

Not just a question of proficiency...

- Meaning needs to be negotiated and agreed

Language

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.*

Differences

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

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.”

Management

Tensions needing to be Balanced

Development of course materials as an end in itself



Development of course materials as a means of conducting applied research and of gaining generic insights

Development of a full course/module



Development of innovative samples

Design which is suited Chinese learners' current study preferences



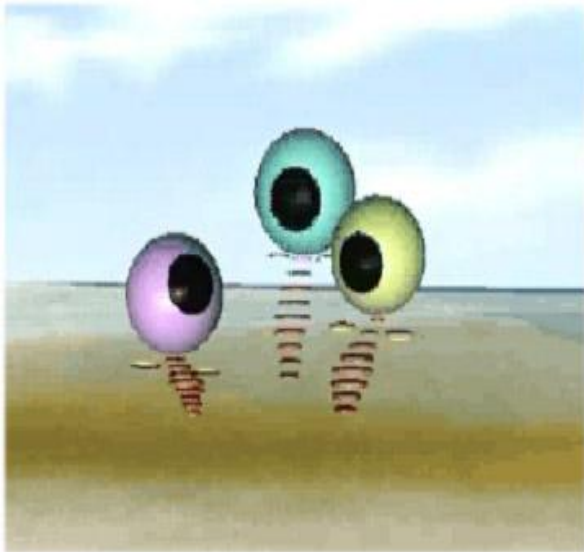
Design which helps implement China's educational reform by giving more emphasis to student-centred learning and self-study

Communication

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

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.*



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?*

Intercultural Competence

The Competency Framework

- Intercultural collaborations are a delicate balancing act

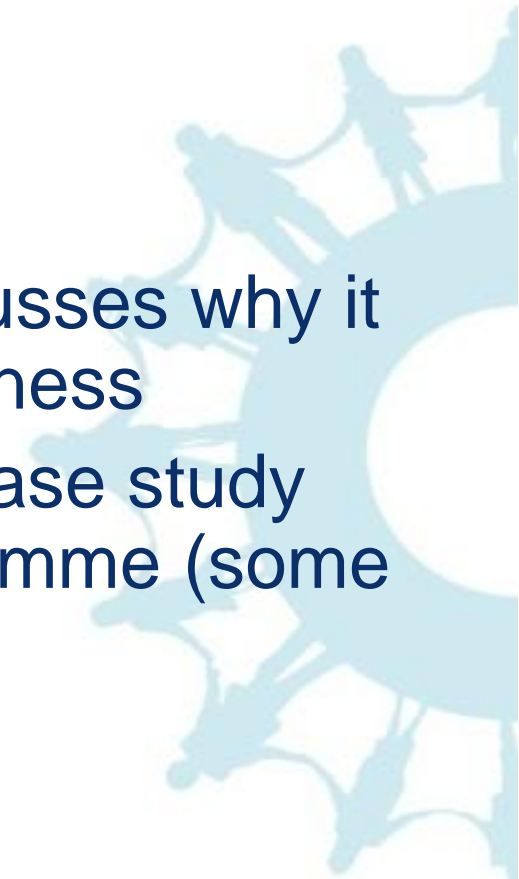
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- Our Competency Framework was developed to help raise awareness of competencies that facilitate intercultural work

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)




Communication Competency Cluster

- Communication management
- Language learning
- Language adjustment
- Active listening
- Attuning
- Building of shared knowledge & mutual trust
- Stylistic flexibility



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:

	
Chair:	<i>[...] I'm going to ask everybody to speak very clearly and uh without heavy accents if possible</i>
Everyone:	<i>Laughter [as the Chair speaks with a Scottish accent]</i>
Chair:	<i>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.</i>

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'.



Global People Toolkit: Managing the Life Cycle of Intercultural Partnerships

Global People Toolkit

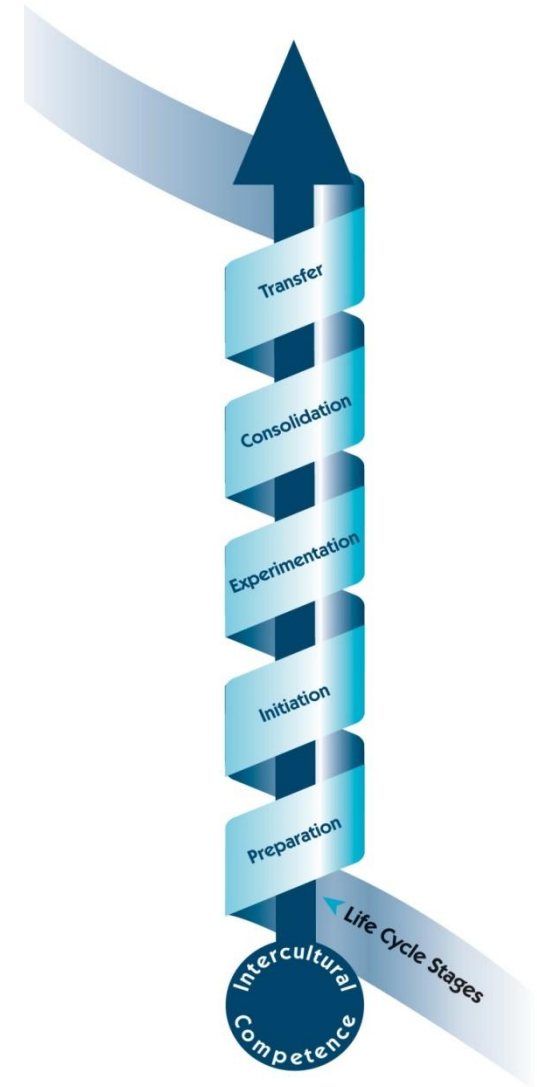
Rationale: Intercultural effectiveness is vital for the success of projects yet is often overlooked in the planning

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

Global People Toolkit

Five-stage life cycle model

- Preparation
- Initiation
- Experimentation
- Consolidation
- Transfer



Global People Toolkit

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**

Active learning runs through the process



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

Global People Resources:
The Website
<http://www.globalpeople.org.uk>

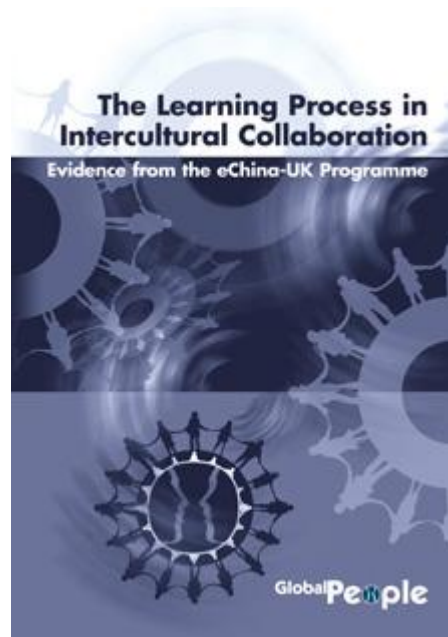
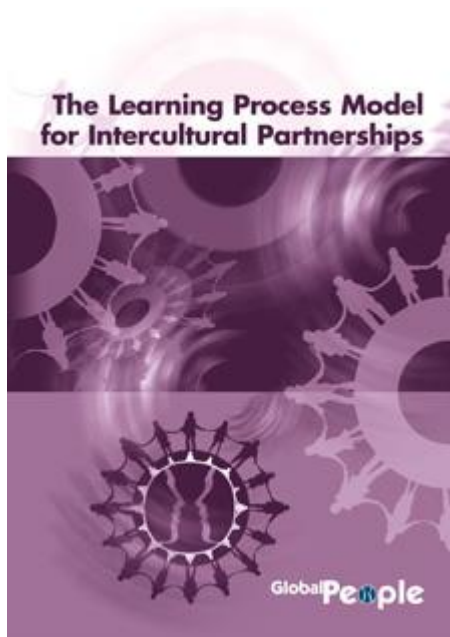
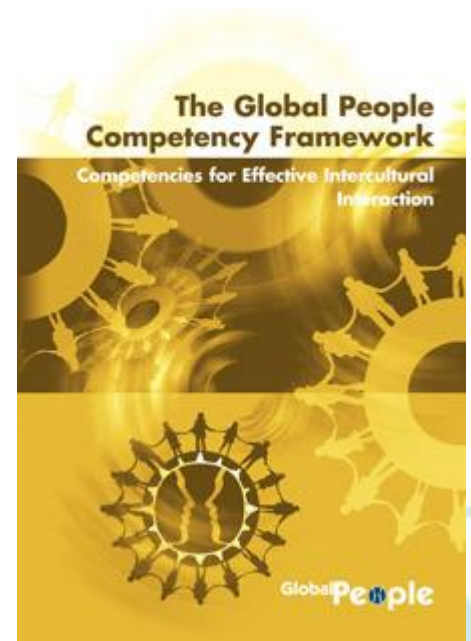
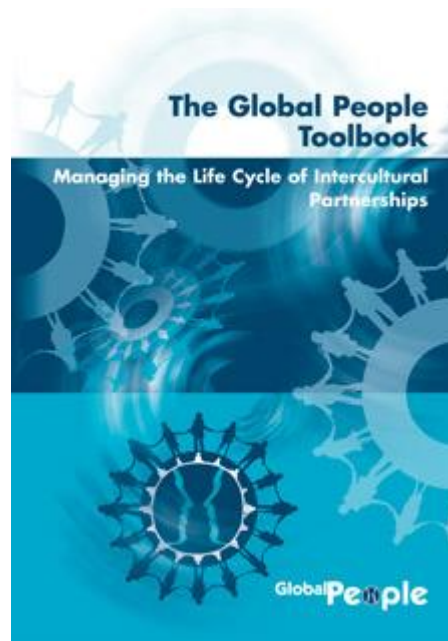
Global People Website

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

Comprises four main sections:

- Life cycle model
- Competency framework
- Learning process model
- Resources





Thank you