

Warwick Integration Summit
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Promoting Dialogue: Challenges and Opportunities

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'Global Graduates'



Research by agr, CIHE & CFE

- 12 leading employers, representing 3500 graduate recruits
- Ranked a list of global competencies by order of importance



Global Graduate report, 2011 (agr, CIHE, CFE)

'Global Graduates'



Global Graduate report, 2011 (agr, CIHE, CFE)

'Global Graduates'



Top two items:

- An ability to work collaboratively with teams of people from a range of backgrounds and countries;
- Excellent communication skills: both speaking and listening



Global Graduate report, 2011 (agr, CIHE, CFE)

'Global Graduates'



Are we developing these skills in our graduates?

Current situation:

- Activities to promote interaction & 'mixing'.
- Success often 'measured' by number of participants of different backgrounds.

But is this sufficient?





Taking Stock: Considering the Challenges

Student Barometer Feedback



	UK	Non-UK	All
Most of my close friends are the same nationality as me.	76.9%	42.1%	65.3%
In my leisure activities, I often mix with people from different countries.	65.4%	79.1%	70.0%
Working in groups on my course is difficult when members are from many different countries.	22.5%	20.4%	21.8%
I learn a lot when doing group work with people from different countries.	59.9%	83.7%	67.9%
Developing the intercultural skills to work effectively in global contexts is important to me.	76.8%	94.1%	82.6%
My experiences during my degree programme are helping me develop intercultural skills	63.1%	87.7%	71.4%

The Challenge of Group Work



328 students added a comment on group work (most comments made by UK students):

- lack of opportunity for mixed-nationality group work or for group work at all (!)
- their feelings towards group work in general;
- how they felt about mixed-nationality group work;
- factors that affected how valuable they found group work to be.

The Challenge of Group Work



Many students extremely positive:

“It is indeed difficult but it gives a great opportunity to learn about different conceptions and visions on things. Meeting people from all around the world may be the best thing that happened to me this year.” [French UG]

“It is incredibly helpful due to the number of perspectives and approaches. I am glad I have not had to work with large groups of single-nationality students, including my own nationality.” [‘Other’ UG]



The Challenge of Group Work



Two complaints from UK students:

- Impact of poor English language proficiency;
- Differences in participation styles.



The Challenge of Group Work



Impact of English language proficiency:

e.g. “Some of the English is a LONG way from the level of native English speakers - particularly from the Chinese students I have worked with. It results in additional workload to check they're written contributions and ultimately damaged the marks for the rest of the group. THIS IS INFURIATING FOR ALL ENGLISH-SPEAKING STUDENTS AND SYSTEMS SHOULD BE IN PLACE TO PREVENT IT!” [UK PG]



The Challenge of Group Work



Reflections on the comments:

“Some of the English is a LONG way from the level of native English speakers ...”

- Unrealistic expectations;
- Expectations don't fit in with reality of international working, where people don't (and won't) speak like native English speakers!



The Challenge of Group Work



Reflections on the comments:

“... check they're written contributions”

- Own language not perfect!



The Challenge of Group Work



Reflections on the comments:

“THIS IS INFURIATING FOR ALL ENGLISH-SPEAKING STUDENTS AND SYSTEMS SHOULD BE IN PLACE TO PREVENT IT!”



- High risk of resentment against the students and the university!

The Challenge of Group Work



Differences in Participation Styles:

“Group work was stressful as not all members contribute.” [UK PG]

“Although there is a huge benefit of having a wealth of different experiences from all areas of the world, often international students seem quite shy in seminars and don't speak that much.” [UK UG]



The Challenge of Group Work



Lack of participation 'explained' in various ways by UK students:

- Weak language skills;
- Unwillingness to participate;
- Lack of confidence;
- Shyness and embarrassment;
- Culturally different participation styles.



The Challenge of Group Work



Explanations not self-reflective:

- None referred to the potential impact of their own language and interactional behaviour! E.g.
 - Turn-taking styles (e.g. amount of pausing);
 - Adjustments in their own use of language (choice of vocabulary, speed etc.)



The Challenge of Group Work



Mutual adjustment, e.g.

- Turn-taking styles (e.g. amount of pausing);
- Adjustments in their own use of language (choice of vocabulary, speed etc.)

These are exactly the international team working skills that employers are looking for!

Can be practised and honed in group work.

... Many UK students are failing to realise this.



Opportunities

Opportunities

We need:

- Not just 'mixing activities', although the opportunity to mix is vital;
- ✓ Greater focus on the promotion of sustained and meaningful dialogue.



Example from One World Week: Routes to Personal Growth for Core Planning Team (1)



What experiences did you go through that helped you grow in these ways?

E4 Working with people, listening to their problems and helping them to find a solution, managing large teams.

E5 Having to talk to new people and work with them under pressure forced you to deal with them and be honest and to the point.

Example from One World Week: Routes to Personal Growth for Core Planning Team (2)



What experiences did you go through that helped you grow in these ways?

- E9 *Working with a team leader who works in a very different way to me. I was the deputy. We made a great team, but it is always good to learn how to use each other's qualities to make things better rather than clash.*
- E12 *Leading a team that was sometimes uncooperative.*

Example from One World Week: Routes to Personal Growth for Core Planning Team (3)



What experiences did you go through that helped you grow in these ways?

E3 It really is the entire process to be honest. From working in inter-cultural teams, to leading those same diverse teams and being on the exec with lots of different personalities and being amazed at the wide range of ideas and new ways of thinking that I was exposed to. Working as a group under extreme pressure to achieve a shared goal and vision, and then sharing success with a team which has worked so hard to achieve is a truly unique experience and I believe it has made the entire OWW experience for me worthwhile.

Opportunities



- ✓ Focus on sustained and meaningful dialogue.



Opportunities



Key context: University seminars

- Ideal context for developing intercultural communication skills;
- Need to capitalise on this.



Opportunities

Lessons from Belgium

- 283 engineering students, of mixed nationalities, took intercultural communication course;
- Gave feedback on their experiences;
- Many showed remarkable growth in intercultural awareness and competence.



Lessons from Belgium



Example 1: Adjusting language

“I had some difficulties with communicating with a Chinese student in my lab group. We had difficulties with understanding each other, because I spoke too fast and he mumbled sometimes. But if we spoke slowly and articulated well, it was much easier to communicate with each other.” [Belgian male]

Lessons from Belgium



Example 2: Learning foreign words to ease tension

“I was in a group with Latvian, Indian, Chinese and Thai students in one of the EE project. I knew getting a good headway would be hard specially with the Chinese student as his English was not good and he was new in our college. ... During the project we noticed he wouldn’t come forward with his own original ideas to save face. To fight this, we tried to learn Chinese words and let him know that we are just like him and there is no harm in trying. We wanted to make him more comfortable. Similarly, I also tried to learn Latvian, Thai and Indian too to promote our relationship and still make a good headway.” [Nepali male]

Lessons from Belgium



Example 3: Checking for understanding

“In the EE4-project we found out when communicating with Chinese student, they often just say “yes yes ...” at first we thought they understood it immediately. A week later we hoped to see the results we expected, this was not the case. After asking what they did we immediately found out that they totally didn’t know what to do. So now we explain what they need to do and afterwards we immediately ask some questions to find out if they really understand it. This way we found out that yes doesn’t mean the same in every culture. We were told of this in the course intercultural communication but we thought this advice was overrated but now we can say out of our own experience that a YES isn’t always a YES.” [Belgian male]



Moving Ahead

Moving Ahead: Planning



How can we achieve 'sustained and meaningful dialogue'?

- Identify potential events/activities;
- Identify techniques for promoting effective communication in intercultural groups;
- Run courses to train students (and staff!) in use of these techniques and their benefits.



Moving Ahead: Self-awareness



Transformation

“Transformation should be seen not simply in terms of individuals changing themselves to fit into their host cultures but also as the process by which host cultures transform themselves to accommodate the presence of sojourners.”



Evanoff 2006: 423-4

Moving Ahead



**... entails change
for each of us!**



Thank you!

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