GlobalPAD CPD Tools

Intercultural Partnering

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Reference for this tool
Ewington, N., Reid, S. Spencer-Oatey, H. & Stadler, S. (2009) Global People Tools for Managing Intercultural Partnerships. *GlobalPAD Intercultural Professional Development Tools.* Available at GlobalPAD Open House
http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/globalpad/openhouse/interculturalskills/
Full toolbook available at
http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/globalpeople/resourcebank/gppublications/

Managing Intercultural Partnerships in International Projects

Tool 1 – Team Resource Audit

This tool can be used at the preparation phase of an international project as a way of reviewing the human resources available to the project. It will stimulate consideration of any possible gaps that may exist in terms of qualities required to build trust with prospective international partners. It can also be used by a recently formed local team as a way of identifying new potential team members and for identifying development steps for those already joined.

Categories	What do we need?	What have we got?
Language skills ▪ our ability to communicate in a lingua franca required in this project ▪ our ability to communicate in the language of a key partner ▪ resources we have for managing any linguistic gaps – translation services, etc.		
International experience ▪ our past experience of working on international partnerships ▪ our experience of working with the specific national culture(s) involved in the project ▪ our experience of living & working outside our home culture		
Motivation ▪ our motivation about committing time to the project and building relationships with new international partners		
Flexibility ▪ our readiness to commit more time than may be currently anticipated ▪ our willingness to travel ▪ our preparedness to adapt project goals and outcomes to integrate the needs of our international partners		
Personal qualities ▪ our willingness to push ourselves into uncomfortable and ambiguous situations from which we can learn ▪ our awareness of cultural factors impacting on our own behaviour, and on that of our partners ▪ our ability to adapt our style in communicating to be clearly understood		

What actions do we need to take to fill the gaps?

ACTION	URGENCY
1.	
2.	
3	
4.	

Tool 2 – Partner Review

This tool can be used at the initiation phase of an international project to share understanding about what is currently known about partners, and what still needs to be discovered. It covers areas that are often a source of mistaken assumptions and a cause of low mutual understanding in international projects, and where the gathering of specific information can encourage effective collaboration. The tool is also a useful way of reflecting on learning from a recent event, and focusing on specific avenues for future exploration.

About our partner (s)	Current understanding	Further areas to explore
1. Key objectives		
2. Anticipated outcomes		
3. Function/status of individual partners within own organisation		
4. Relative status within the team		
5. Specific experience & skills of individual partners relevant to project		
6. Contacts/networks they are willing to share		
7. Stakeholders to whom they give critical importance		
8. Access to relevant information/resources/experience		
9. Level of prioritisation they give to project, and constraints faced		
10. Level of individual motivation		
11. Level of experience in working in international partnerships		
12. Key differences in the political, social & economic context in which they operate		

Tool 3: 20 Tips for Building Rapport

In order to bring people closer together and to enhance communication in international project teams a focus on tasks needs to be balanced by a positive approach to relationship-building. A key competence required is 'rapport' which involves showing warmth and attentiveness in building relationships, and a genuine concern for others' welfare. As one participant on the eChina-UK Programme put it: "Delight in each other's otherness".

Some of the ideas have been touched on in the tips given in the Global People Toolbook at each stage of the life cycle. However, this tool could be used by individuals, or a local team, at the early phase of a project to reflect on a range of practical ways of showing rapport and building trust with international partners.

1. Take the time to get to know people, get to know how they think, and try to understand their concepts and language.
2. Don't be scared to use spoken communication: some issues can be resolved on the telephone or face-to-face much more easily than via email, especially urgent messages, and confidential or interpersonal issues.
3. Make time for regular face-to-face meetings; aim for as much direct contact as possible not just for business purposes, but also for social bonding.
4. Visit the other's culture; it will aid your understanding of and appreciation for the people and practices of the partner's culture.
5. Keep good, regular contact with a designated and dedicated contact person at the partner institution.
6. Allow for exchange visits: these will not only foster relationships, but also enhance your understanding of organizational differences and procedures.
7. Show and reciprocate hospitality: this is critical for building deeper levels of trust and ensuring that task is embedded in relationship.
8. Show appreciation for kindness, effort and hospitality, e.g. by giving small gifts.
9. Use a cultural mediator to help smooth relationships and facilitate understanding.
10. Try and limit turnover of personnel during the duration of the project, as it hinders relationship and trust-building.
11. Be open about your institution's goals; this will eliminate suspicion and help partners to understand your actions better.
12. Accommodate your counterparts' language limitations to an appropriate degree especially when they are using your native language as the 'lingua franca'. (Remember – adapting too little makes it hard for them to follow, but over-adaptation is insulting)
13. Show patience at all times, with special attentiveness to maintaining composure in situations where a lot of clarification is required.
14. Show goodwill and respect by learning some key words and phrases in the other's language;
15. Include a native speaker of the partner's language in your team to help improve communication and understanding.
16. Work on a 'common language' for the project by agreeing shared terminology and ground rules for communication.
17. Ensure that you choose people for the project team who are genuinely interested in participating in the project and in collaborating with members of the given culture.
18. Actively listen by clarifying and negotiating meaning as this shows respect for differences in views, and the concerns that others may have.
19. Be ready to do personal favours for individual partners as a way of showing deeper and longer-term interest in the relationship.
20. Demonstrate that you are committed and can be relied upon by delivering on all the promises that you make.

Tool 4: Communication review

This tool could be used at the experimentation phase of an international project as a way of reflecting on how communication has been handled during the initial stages of the project life cycle, and in agreeing best practice for the partners as the project moves forward. It is designed to support the team in reviewing their key communication tasks & channels before deciding how to link them more effectively in future practice. An example of a completed plan is given on the following page.

Key Channels / Key Tasks	Face-to-face	Video conference	Telephone	Tele-conference	Teamware	Email/ report to team / individuals	Email ccs		Minimum Frequency
Regular Team Meetings									
Reporting progress within team									
Report progress to stakeholders A, B & C									
Report progress to stakeholders D, E & F									
Regular catch-up with team									
Urgent need for information									
Events at key phases & milestones									

Tool 4: Communication review (worked example)

Key Channels / Key Tasks	Face-to-face	Video conference	Telephone	Tele-conference	Teamware	Email/ report to team / individuals	Email ccs	Minimum Frequency
Regular Team Meetings	Best ☺	OK 😐		OK 😐				Monthly but face-to-face at least 2 x a year
Reporting progress within team					Best 😐	OK 😐		As agreed at team meetings
Report progress to stakeholders A, B & C						Best ☺ (for summary of phase)		At end of each phase
Report progress to stakeholders D, E & F			Best ☺ (for changes to outcomes)				Best ☺ (for minutes of meeting)	Monthly after meetings & at other agreed times
Regular catch-up with team			Best ☺ (for individuals)		Best ☺ (for whole team)			1 or 2 times weekly
Urgent need for information			Best ☺			OK 😐		Schedule unstructured time
Events at key phases & milestones	Best☺							2 x a year (one in each country)

Tool 5: Six Steps to Effective Team Learning

The purpose of this checklist is to support reflection within a team during an international collaboration. Encouraging participants to reflect on their experience – and to share those reflections with their colleagues – makes it easier to recognise the cultural learning that is taking place and to use that learning to shape the future performance of the team. In the Global People Life Cycle Model, this is summarised by the phrase 'review, reflect, revise': take time out to review progress on the project; reflect on the experience of working across cultures; revise behaviour if interaction has not been working as well as it might. The Six Steps should be used in the preparation phase of a project but can be revisited at any stage to encourage team sharing of learning.

Step 1: Prepare the team

Make sure that, from the outset of the project, team members know that they will be encouraged to reflect on their experience and to share these thoughts with each other. It should be made clear that this is never a competitive exercise, nor is it about producing the "right" answers to problems: it should be a relaxed and fruitful way of learning from each other and so improving the cultural experience for all team members.

Step 2: Plan review into the project schedule

Although spontaneous discussion of cultural issues can be of great value (and shouldn't be discouraged), the advantages of having a more structured review process include the involvement of all the team members and the opportunity to capture key learning points and decide how to act on them. Thus, it helps to factor a series of review meetings into the project plan and, where possible, to schedule them to follow major events or milestones in the project's development.

Step 3: Select a focus for the reflection

Whereas some individuals find it easy and natural to reflect on their experience, others are less comfortable with the process: people whose learning style is strongly 'learning by doing' may resist anything that looks too much like "navel-gazing"! The benefit of selecting a focus for reflection is that it provides everyone with a common starting-point and a concrete event to discuss. The focus may be a meeting with partners; a significant presentation or the pilot-run of a project activity. It may equally be a process that all members have experienced: managing email communication with another culture, for example.

Step 4: Set the scene for the meeting

Give colleagues time to reflect: let the team have plenty of warning of the time allocated for reflection and discussion. Ask everyone to spend a little time before that meeting reflecting upon the chosen focus. Make sure that the team meets in a comfortable setting and with a relaxed atmosphere – this should feel like an opportunity to talk informally but also to take decisions that will affect the project.

Step 5: Facilitate the meeting

One member of the team should take the lead in the meeting to prompt discussion and also to capture the key learning points that emerge. This needn't be the team leader or the most senior person present: it may be a role that could circulate among the group or, perhaps, there is one person in the team who is recognised as a natural facilitator and could take the role with everyone's approval. This person, supported by the team leader, should also ensure that the cultural learning is turned into action: if colleagues have identified important challenges arising from the collaboration, then these need to be addressed by all the team and new modes of behaviour developed.

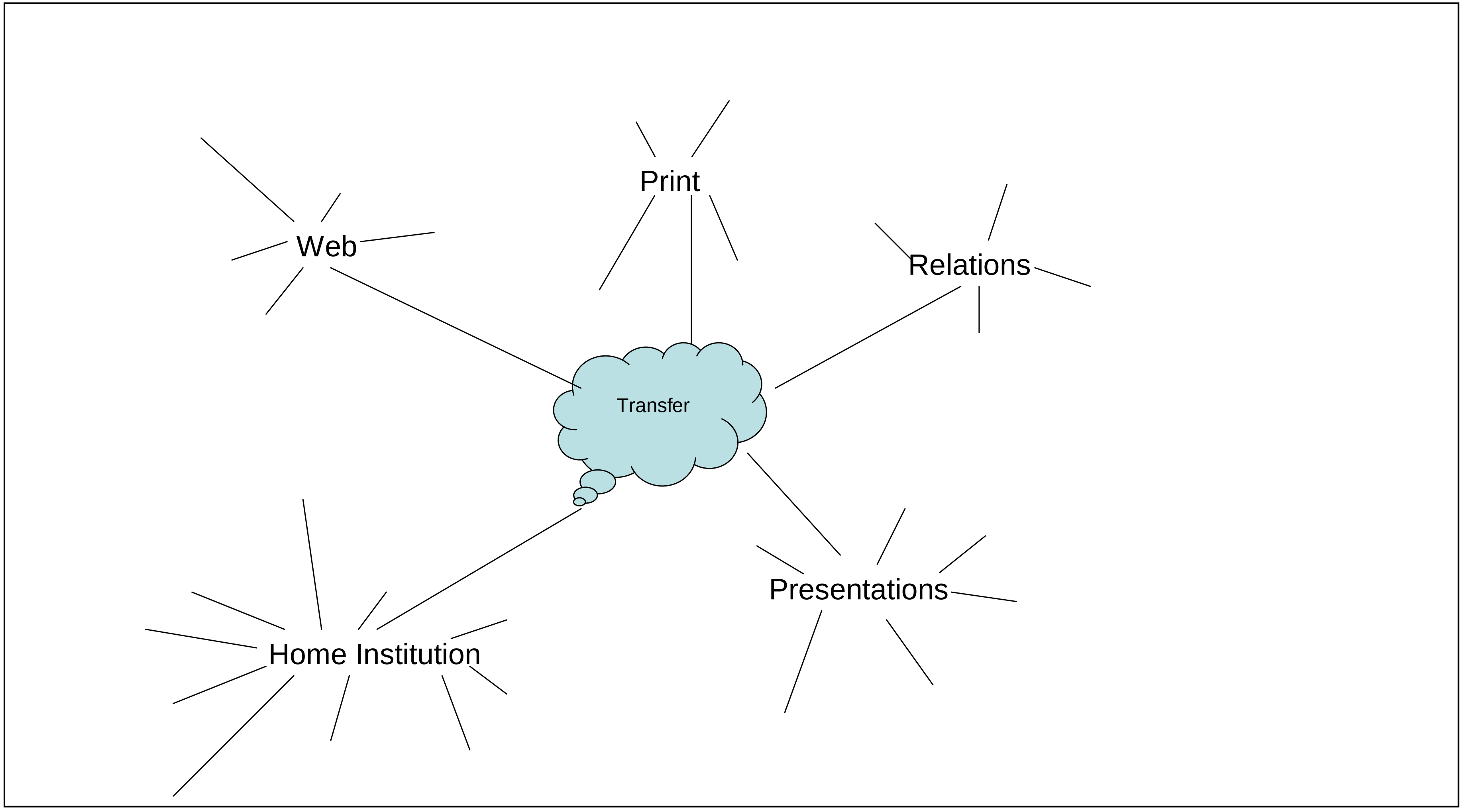
Step 6: Make learning sustainable

As far as possible these opportunities to reflect should feel like a natural part of the project 'flow' and be welcomed by the team as one of the tools that they can use to improve their own performance and the quality of their experience. To enhance this, it's important to maintain good communication within the team and to make explicit how the reflection sessions may have helped the project to succeed. Don't treat each review point as a discrete event to be completed and discarded: encourage colleagues to recognise how their learning is developing throughout the project. One way of doing this is to use some of the reflection time to look back on earlier cultural assumptions that have changed and acknowledge that the group has become more sophisticated in the way it works. Another valuable activity can be to extend the reflection activity to take in project partners and to share cultural learning as a means of strengthening trust and understanding between the groups.

Learning is a tool which can improve project performance. It is also the source of personal development, positive team interaction and enhanced satisfaction from the experience of intercultural collaboration.

Tool 6 – Dissemination Mind Map

This tool can be used at the transfer stage of a project life cycle to identify different ways of disseminating the formal outcomes and learning from the project. It enables team members to brainstorm specific transfer activities around five strategic channels of dissemination – web, print, presentation, home institution, relations. A blank map is provided for customising to a specific international partnership context, plus a complete example given from the eChina-UK Programme. A particular benefit is gained by the different parties involved in a partnership to work on this brainstorming process together as they can learn from each other and find areas of synergy.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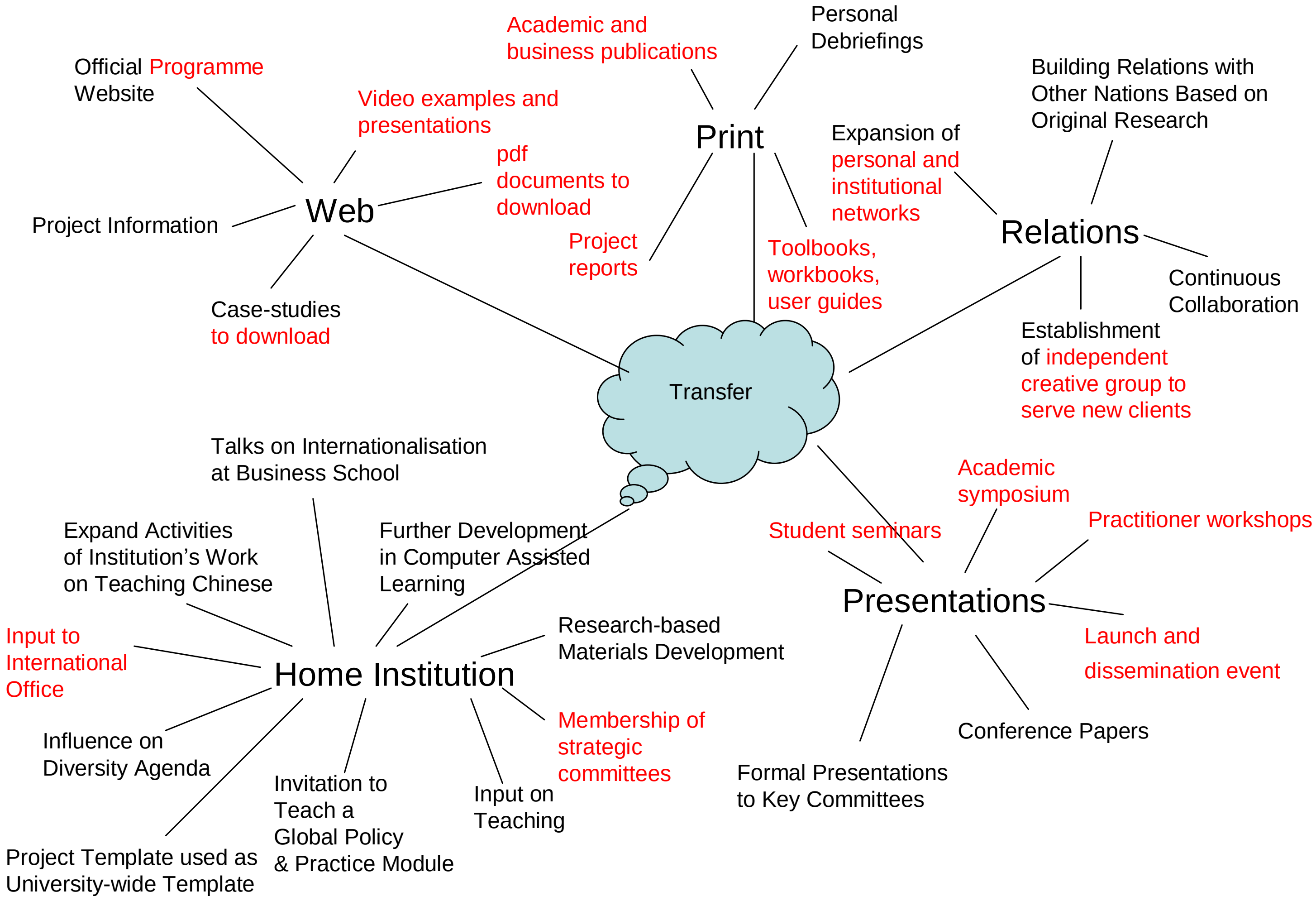
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Continuous Collaboration
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Presentations
Academic symposium
Student seminars
Practitioner workshops
Launch and dissemination event
Conference Papers
Formal Presentations to Key Committees
Home Institution
Talks on Internationalisation at Business School
Expand Activities of Institution's Work on Teaching Chinese
Further Development in Computer Assisted Learning
Research-based Materials Development
Input to International Office
Influence on Diversity Agenda
Project Template used as University-wide Template
Invitation to Teach a Global Policy & Practice Module
Input on Teaching
Membership of strategic committees