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**Creators:** Burnapp, D., Zhao, W., Boteju, D., Jament, J., Feng, Y., Li, S., Powis, C., Klimes, C. and Mallam-Hassam, Y.

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**Case study author:** Burnapp, D.

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## Case Study 12: eChina-UK and Global People

**Author: Dave Burnapp**

### Introduction.

This case study illustrates some of the issues discussed in 'Chapter Seven: Growth of eLearning', and also discusses some aspects of managing institutional linking projects and of capacity building as discussed in 'Chapter Five: Development and Discourse'. The case study will firstly describe the 'eChina-UK Programme' which involved partner institutions in the UK and China<sup>1</sup> in a co-ordinated series of projects, running from 2003 to 2007. The programme aims were to:

- *Strengthen collaboration between China and the UK by sharing experience in the use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT), and particularly the Internet, for distance and flexible learning; and*
- *Develop and pilot innovative distance education courseware in selected areas.*

(HEFCE 2002:9, quoted in Spencer-Oatey 2007:6)

The individual projects developed under this initiative concerned the development and piloting of eLearning materials, mostly related to teacher education with a particular focus on various aspects of teaching English as a Foreign Language. There was also an associated research aim of investigating the state of eLearning in China. The intention from the beginning, however, was to use this project as a learning opportunity for the HE sectors in both countries to develop ways of working together; so in addition to the tangible deliverables of teaching and learning materials, and the eLearning tools and platforms which the various projects produced, there were also intentions to garner wider intangible benefits. In terms of project management this can be seen as an example of the value of clearly distinguishing between outputs and outcomes (see these guidance notes for a simple clarification<sup>2</sup>), and as an example of seeing that long term benefits deriving from initiatives – those aspects which often need to be addressed in project bidding pro-forma documents under headings such as 'sustainability' and 'dissemination' – may more likely be

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.echinauk.org/>

<sup>2</sup> [www.northampton.ac.uk/download/272/outputs-and-outcomes-guidance](http://www.northampton.ac.uk/download/272/outputs-and-outcomes-guidance)

outcomes rather than outputs. This case study will therefore conclude by describing the 'Global People' online toolkit<sup>3</sup> which gives guidance concerning operating cross-cultural projects in higher education, which was an off-shoot of the initial project. This case study is based on the book produced by the teams involved in the project<sup>4</sup>, an interview with Helen Spencer-Oatey who was the UK manager of the e-China-UK Programme, the eChina-UK website,<sup>5</sup> and the Global People website<sup>6</sup>.

### Key learnings up front

The first 11 of these learning points are adapted from the eELT project<sup>7</sup> which formed one part of the eChina-UK programme.

- **CS 12.1.** Collaborative international eLearning-based projects require a manager both experienced in online learning and with an understanding of both contexts.
- **CS 12.2.** There needs to be openness between the partners – recognising and respecting their differences – particularly concerning leadership, quality assurance processes, and styles of learning.
- **CS 12.3.** Developing quality online materials requires resources and time, and an understanding of both the pedagogic and the technical aspects of online learning.
- **CS 12.4.** Issues of IPR (Intellectual Property Rights) need to be set out clearly in the languages of both partners.
- **CS 12.5.** The working relationships between academic staff (e.g. those recording lectures and writing materials), and the technical staff involved in the online publishing of e-materials, require and rely on clear dialogue.
- **CS 12.6.** There need to be face-to-face meetings of technologists, learning designers, and academics.
- **CS 12.7.** There needs to be evaluation expertise within the team at all stages, hopefully involving potential learners, including the initial generation of ideas.
- **CS 12.8.** For dissemination of project ideas to a wider audience it is essential to allow online engagement with the project materials rather than to rely only on written reports.

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross\\_fac/globalpeople/](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/globalpeople/)

<sup>4</sup> Spencer-Oatey, H. (2007) *e-Learning Initiatives in China*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.echinauk.org/>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross\\_fac/globalpeople/](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/globalpeople/)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.echinauk.org/cases/nottingham/intro/iscrypt.pdf>

- **CS 12.9.** It is essential to utilise the diverse experiences of all the partners to make use of the strengths of their different approaches and experiences.
- **CS 12.10.** It is essential to take time for partners in projects to share and agree the key concepts, and to agree shared definitions of the terms used, in relation to issues such as teaching and curriculum. Expect there to be differences.
- **CS 12.11.** It is important to recognise that there will be similarities and differences in the two contexts, for example concerning the teacher-learner relationship, and how eLearning materials may feature within a programme; it might be useful to blend these, to accept that different topics may use different approaches.
- **CS 12.12.** In order to establish truly mutual collaborations it is better for them to be financed jointly by both partner countries.
- **CS 12.13.** It is vital to develop a shared understanding of all aspects of the collaboration from the beginning: pedagogic approaches; project management; and technology applications/platforms. eLearning collaborations require many levels of negotiation, and require some participants to engage in boundary crossing and cross-cultural brokering.
- **CS 12.14.** It is important to recognise that the eLearning mode of delivery can be scalable, possibly reaching larger numbers of learners without greatly increasing costs. Hence it can be conducive to the massification of education, for example using distance learning programmes as a way of widening access. However it is necessary to be cautious of cost-saving aspirations involving the removal of tutors.
- **CS 12.15.** It is possible to use eLearning for continuing professional development and as an enabler of life-long learning and enterprise training; the easy availability of learning materials can allow students to choose how and when they will study, taking advantage of flexible opportunities for upgrading skills and knowledge whilst still being engaged with their work situation.
- **CS 12.16.** It is essential to recognise the importance of the development of appropriate technical infrastructure, both within institutions and throughout society in general, hence it may be necessary to carry out a complete technical audit *in situ* to ensure that online materials are accessible in all the locations.
- **CS 12.17.** It is essential not to give too much weight to technology, and to balance the emphasis on technology with a suitable emphasis on learning. There should be careful

consideration of the balance between a focus on the content and a focus on the learners' needs.

- **CS 12.18.** It is essential to design courses around the process of learning experienced by students rather than around a structuring of the chunks of information which are the course intended learning outcomes.
- **CS 12.19.** It is necessary to recognise that quality provision will often require a restructuring, indeed a recreation, of any existing modules: it is not simply a matter of allowing access to existing Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) which may have been developed just as support for on-campus programmes.
- **CS 12.20.** It is beneficial to recognise that eLearning can offer materials which are flexible and non-linear, so allow learners to identify their own needs and self-manage their own learning process.
- **CS 12.21.** It is necessary to design eLearning materials so that they encourage the growth of autonomous learners, supported by online tools which allow for interaction, and by tasks which promote reflection and subsequent sharing.
- **CS 12.22.** It is essential that student induction includes aspects of developing the competence of 'self-management of the learning process' (a psychological requirement) as well as introductions to course aims and approaches (a pedagogic requirement) and how to use the VLE tools (a technical requirement).
- **CS 12.23.** It is essential that instigators of eLearning collaborations recognise that teachers will need to undergo a series of transitions, and so to provide staff development opportunities to assist in these transitions: adapting to the change from face-to-face teaching to eTutoring; becoming aware of issues concerning the creation of online communities and ways of interacting; adapting to different pedagogic approaches used in different cultures of learning; becoming familiar with the specific tasks used in different courses; becoming familiar with the particular eLearning tools used on a particular platform; becoming proficient in supplying feedback in eLearning contexts.
- **CS 12.24.** It is suggested that staff training should itself be online in order to give staff the experience of using the tools the students will themselves use.
- **CS 12.25.** It is strongly recommended that anyone engaging in intercultural working in higher education consults the Global People website.

## Summary of the eChina-UK programme

Liz Beaty<sup>8</sup>, then the director of Learning & Teaching at HEFCE which financed the eChina-UK programme, described it as intending to combine cultural awareness with good pedagogic practice, and as a way of enabling ongoing links between the higher education sectors in China and the UK<sup>9</sup>. Although primarily an eLearning initiative, the linked projects within the programme had wider ambitions relating to 'a genuine cultural and educational exchange between China and the UK', and collaboration with *mutual* benefit is repeatedly identified as being a key feature of the programme. The issues relating to managing and collaborating such cross cultural projects are discussed in Spencer-Oatey and Tang (2007) and in McConnell, Banks, and Lally (2007). From an outside view, however, it seems that the tangible benefits of the projects, in terms of using the eLearning outputs, were accrued mostly by the Chinese partners (linked to the reform of curriculum and teaching approaches, and the development of distance learning as part of the modernisation strategy of Chinese higher education), whilst for the UK partners the benefits were more intangible such as providing an opportunity for staff to develop their eLearning skills and to experience other cultures of learning. The programme manager (interview data) felt that the actual eLearning materials which were developed do indeed have relevance, but over and above such relevance these materials were a means to an end: of the programme establishing methods of cross-cultural understanding and working which can inform other collaborative projects. The Global People online toolkit, which was subsequently developed, was a way of presenting these lessons learnt in the eChina-UK programme in a conceptual framework which could aid others entering this area<sup>10</sup>.

The programme website emphasises that each of the projects involved collaborative work involving partner institutions in the two countries, yet describes the scheme as being *funded* by HEFCE whilst only being *supported* by the Ministry of Education in China. It is worth pointing out that the slightly later 'China-UK Collaborative Partnerships in Entrepreneurship and Employability'<sup>11</sup>, which was operated under the PMI2 Connect scheme (see Case Study 7), also had overt aims to operate collaboratively: 'All funded partnerships will be mutual and complementary, and be sustainable beyond PMI2 funding<sup>12</sup>', yet similarly

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<sup>8</sup> Now Pro Vice Chancellor (Academic Enterprise and External Relations) at Cumbria University

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.echinauk.org/intro.php?main=1&sub=0>

<sup>10</sup> Case Study 7 describes how a team entering into such a collaboration made use of the Global People materials in this way.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning-pmi2-connect.htm>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning-pmi2-connect.htm>

this scheme too was funded only from the UK side. This raises issues of ownership of activities, and of partners' feelings of being empowered with a voice in project direction. 'Chapter Five: Development and Discourse' and 'Case Study One: Good Practice in Educational Partnerships Guide' both discuss the importance of clearly identifying and establishing the nature, indeed the ethos, of the relationship between partners in collaborative links. It is hoped that future collaborative schemes will be financed jointly by both partner countries, as pragmatically this may be the only way that truly mutual projects – those built on truly equal positions of power – can be developed.

The eChina-UK programme was complex in many different dimensions, and the programme website very neatly identifies a series of overarching tensions which the projects needed to recognise and work within<sup>13</sup>, concerning areas including: balancing a focus on the development of specific materials with a focus on more generic research; balancing development of complete courses with development of 'samples' to illustrate eLearning approaches; balancing conflicting ideas concerning the delivery platforms to be used, for example whether to create new platforms or adapt existing ones; balancing specific detailed directions for tasks with more flexible approaches; and balancing the inputs of various experts with the inputs of different practitioners.

### Projects within the eChina-UK programme

This section will outline the projects which were developed in this programme, so will illustrate the scope of these innovations, based mainly on information derived from the project website. The following section will then gather more reflective appraisals of the projects, which were presented by the project teams in a book which was produced as an output of the programme (Spencer-Oatey 2007), and from these suggest transferable lessons for others entering into collaborative eLearning programmes.

The four initial projects, which started in 2003, included: '**DEFT**' aimed to supply training in generic eLearning pedagogy for secondary school teachers; '**eELT Training**' with two strands supplying training for secondary and tertiary level teachers; and '**CUTE**' supplying English language for non-English specialist university teaching staff, to allow them to publish academically and to teach their specialities in English. There was also a research project to examine aspects of education in China, but this is not directly related to the scope of this

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.echinauk.org/overview3.php>

case study. Details of each of these projects, and of the collaborating partners in them, are on the eChina-UK website<sup>14</sup> and are only briefly outlined here.

### **'DEFT'**

In brief, the 'DEFT' online materials, consisting of two bilingual modules, formed part of a Masters level course in Education. The steps taken in the project involved conducting a needs analysis, followed by reiterative stages of developing, piloting, evaluating, and modifying the online materials. This was also to be a vehicle for the team to devise a model of eLearning, and to allow them to address the pedagogic challenges that eLearning entails, whilst gaining experience of cross-cultural practice. The modules were designed for in-service teachers, so illustrate the flexible opportunities presented by eLearning for continuing professional development<sup>15</sup>. This mode of delivery allows participants to upgrade their skills and knowledge whilst still being engaged with their work situation, as the easy availability of the materials allows students to choose how and when they will study. The example materials which are on the project website use Moodle, which is an open access platform. Note, however, that Moodle was not the first platform which the project used, and in Motteram et al (2007) there is an account of the stages the project team followed of choosing the appropriate platform, and this illustrates the many levels of negotiation (boundary crossing and brokering to use the terminology adapted by Motteram et al) which collaborations using eLearning need to take.

Some tasks in these modules firstly aim to develop individual reflection on practice, but then the participants are expected to use online forums to interact and discuss their ideas with others. Hence – using the terminology of Chapter Seven – these modules demonstrate use of web 2.0 opportunities. Linked to this is the role of eTutors who monitor individual progress, give feedback, and encourage group participation. Co-learners are also able to contact and support each other individually as another form of interactivity; hence in various ways the participants are expected and enabled to form a learning community. Other features of the example materials are: ability to enter and edit your profile; the ability to open ancillary materials for tasks in new windows and toggle between them; the use of hyperlinks to online resources; the use of online

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.echinauk.org/cases/cases.php>

<sup>15</sup> A different solution to the challenge of supplying high level CPD whilst still allowing participants to carry on with their work is given in Case Study 4; in that case the training programmes were given in intensive blocks.



individual journals to note ideas and to get feedback from eTutors; use of online quizzes; and automated responses to tasks.

### **'eELT Training'**

There were two strands associated with this project; one for continuing professional development (CPD) of secondary school teachers via materials at BA level, and one for CPD tertiary institution teachers at MA level. The need for staff development was related to the new curriculum for English teaching which was then being introduced in China, which placed a greater emphasis on communicative competence. Features of both levels were self-study elements and online group work using a range of media and technologies, therefore this project required the development of various online tools to allow the creation of online materials including audio recording, and text and video annotation. Features of the course materials were: an introduction to the possibilities offered by online learning (including aspects of the processes, the design, and the support possibilities); use of video as prompts for reflective thinking; use of a personal work space to create and save ideas for sharing; some degree of student choice to personalise their learning pathway; online discussion forums via a virtual interactive platform; interactive animations as a form of virtual classroom; and online grammar games. There is also a detailed list<sup>16</sup> of transferable lessons learnt from this project, and these are glossed as items CS1 – CS11 at the beginning of this case study.

### **'CUTE'**

This project created a small scale pilot of an intended larger project aimed to develop an integration of both face-to-face (F2F) and online materials (this mode is often known as blended learning) in the form of two modules of Academic Listening and Speaking, and Academic Writing. The aims were that Academics in China would be enabled to deal with their specialities using English: teaching, publishing, and presenting at conferences. This involved examining different approaches to the teaching of English, which itself demanded cross-cultural awareness amongst the project partners. The processes of enquiry, material development, trialling, and evaluation, all required dynamic engagement of tutors and trainees, and hence necessitated a reflective cycle of development and learning for all concerned. The combination of F2F and online materials is

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<sup>16</sup> See pages 11 – 13 in this pdf on the project website:  
<http://www.echinauk.org/cases/nottingham/intro/iscrypt.pdf>

described as being a 'division of labour', with the F2F activities involving shared construction of meaning via negotiation, and the online activities using a range of multimedia resources. The case study of this particular project on the eChina-UK website goes into great detail concerning technical aspects – dilemmas and proposed solutions – encountered.

There were three further projects in the second stage of the programme (2005 - 2007): **CUTE 2**, a follow on from CUTE described above; **eEducator Training**, a module to train tutors (in different disciplines and working in different cultures) to support online learning; and **'Intercultural Pedagogy'**, relating to the production of online courses, the production of tools, and intercultural professional development in eLearning.

### **'CUTE 2'**

The target group and aims remained as with CUTE above, this being the larger roll out of the first programme, with a more clearly defined balance of activities; F2F (20%) and online (80%). The project therefore set out to train tutors (module 2) to support the learners using the online language module (module 1). The project report<sup>17</sup> emphasises the flexibility and non-linearity of the materials, which allow learners to identify their needs and be supported accordingly. Another aspect afforded by the eLearning mode of delivery is scalability, with larger numbers of learners not greatly increasing costs.

### **'eEducator Training'**

The particular features of eLearning – including student-centred aspects such as flexibility and non-linearity, and the use of multimedia tools – demand that teachers undergo a transition in their pedagogic approaches, and this module aims to assist in this transition. In this project the materials were developed jointly by a Chinese university and a UK university, and then piloted and evaluated at an institution in Malaysia. The development process also involved potential trainees. A necessary part of this process is encouragement and support in developing reflective approaches. Part of the module hence encourages the participants to locate this learning experience within their personal development plan. The materials have also been designed in a way that enables them to be localised to reflect the situation of use. The content includes introduction

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.echinauk.org/cases2/cute2/introduction.php>

to the use of various online learning tools by a process of immersion, and exploration of the differences in, say, the mentoring role which eLearning necessitates.

### 'Intercultural Pedagogy'

The project report<sup>18</sup> begins: 'To be successful in achieving professional educational development in e-learning in international contexts, we believe that it is vital to develop a shared (i.e. 'intercultural') understanding of pedagogy (teaching, learning, e-tutoring) and research'. To achieve this the project used three packages; an online course involving HE staff from China and the UK to investigate their conceptions concerning eLearning; an investigation of tools which support assessment of online engagement; and creating a framework for running intercultural CPD related to eLearning.

### Transferable lessons drawn from the projects

These reflections are restricted to pedagogic and managerial aspects of eLearning, rather than to technical aspects, and are mostly taken from the book (Spencer-Oatey 2007) produced by the programme. These are used to identify tips which are possibly transferable to other eLearning international education collaborations.

#### *Massification and wider access*

The development of eLearning can be conducive to the massification of some forms of education, using distance learning programmes as a way of widening access, for example that related to the Chinese government policies of educational reform. Similar uses of eLearning to enable educational development are occurring in other places, including Africa<sup>19</sup>. Kang and Song (2007) point out that this growth was partly prompted in China by the closure of schools during the SARS outbreak. eLearning can also be an enabler of life-long learning and enterprise training, but to be successful is itself dependent on the development of appropriate technical infrastructure, both within institutions and throughout society in general. In Case Study 7 it was pointed out that in collaborative links reliant on eLearning there is a constant difficulty of interfacing the eLearning environments of the two institutions, hence a recommendation made there was:

**CS 7.22.** It is necessary, in collaborations relying on eLearning, to carry out a complete technical audit as a whole range of technical issues may

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.echinauk.org/cases2/lancaster/introduction.php?main=7&sub=1>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.elearning-africa.com/>

need to be addressed to ensure that the online materials are accessible in all the locations, ranging from band-width problems to download materials and quality of headphones to enable students to listen to podcasts clearly.

One of the researchers in Case Study 7 (personal communication) put this succinctly: 'use the lowest versions of everything you want to include.'

#### *eLearning and self-management of the learning process*

Gu (2007) discusses the particular importance of developing amongst potential students the competence of 'self-management of the learning process' which is implicated in web-based flexible learning. Gu identifies the difference between this and much of campus-based education in China, as usually the very detailed schedule of activities on campuses reduces students' needs to manage their learning. This distinction will exist to varying degrees in all cultures of education, hence it would seem that this aspect of initially developing self-management (a psychological requirement) should be discussed and explored in student induction to eLearning courses, along with introductions to the course aims and approaches (a pedagogic requirement), and introducing how to use the VLE tools (a technical requirement). A more detailed discussion of issues related to induction to participants of eLearning, including 'building communities' which itself depends on 'self-disclosure', is given in Hall, Hall and Cooper (2007).

Moving beyond induction, Gu (2007) describes a 'learning-process-design model' for eLearning programmes, which is built around the process of learning experienced by a 'projected default learner who undertakes a goal-directed process of learning' (p52). These aspects of design around the learning experience are also covered in Joyes (2007). This differs from traditional course design which is often built around a structuring of the chunks of information which are listed in the intended learning outcomes. The courseware design described is based around four principles (see pages 53 – 54 in Gu 2007): the principle of multimedia presentation and multimodal interaction; the principle of maximizing experience-sharing; the principle of maximizing active participation and engagement; and the principle of user-friendliness. It is necessary, therefore, that institutions wishing to use eLearning as a mode of international collaboration should recognise that quality provision will often require a restructuring, indeed a recreation, of any existing modules they operate: it is not simply a matter of allowing access to existing VLEs which may have been developed just as support for on-campus programmes.

### *eLearning and the growth of learner autonomy*

McGrath, Sinclair and Chen (2007) link the life-long learning potential of eLearning to the growth of learner autonomy<sup>20</sup>. Autonomy does not infer isolated individuals, but perceives students as being socially interactive agents (this social dimension placing the concept within Vygotskian models of learning), hence autonomy needs to be enabled by online tools which allow for interaction, and needs also to be encouraged by the design of tasks which promote reflection and subsequent sharing. In the '**eELT Training**' project described earlier the materials were therefore conceived to allow the participants to be autonomous learners and so then to become autonomous teachers, but McGrath et al (2007) stress that in this project there needed to be preparation for such autonomy in the Chinese context via scaffolded experiences. To transfer this to a wider learning outcome, for other collaborative projects, this would seem to confirm the point made in Chapter Six, and in the Case Studies Seven and Nine, about the need firstly to recognise that there are fundamentally different pedagogic approaches in different cultures of learning, and secondly about the need to explore these differences in staff development activities for both partners.

### *Relationship between pedagogy and technology*

One of the issues addressed by Marsh, Brewster, Cavaleri and King (2007) is the relationship between what can be thought of as eLearning developers and the teachers who provide the content: early initiatives tended to be led by technology and 'too much attention was paid to the 'e' in e-learning' (p96). The earlier approaches seemed almost to assume a removal of the need for tutors, whilst the newer approaches recognise the need for tutoring, but tutoring conceived of with new responsibilities for the online mode. Marsh et al were working on the CUTE project described earlier, and it will be recalled that this was blending online with F2F delivery in a 'division of labour', as well as blending individual study with online forums. The more technical aspects of this are discussed in Zähler (2007). The learning outcomes from this are likely to be informative for many other forms of transnational delivery, particularly those blending online and flying faculty support. Their summary (Marsh et al 2007) offers these aspects to be considered: the need for careful balancing of an emphasis on technology and an emphasis on learning; for careful consideration of the balance between a focus on the content and a focus on the learners' needs; and careful – indeed cautious – consideration of cost-saving aspirations involving the removal of tutors. Their conclusion is that the focus should be on

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<sup>20</sup> They employ the 'Bergen' definition of Dam (1995): *Learner autonomy is characterised by readiness to take charge of one's own learning in the service of one's needs and purposes. This entails a capacity and willingness to act independently and in co-operation with others, as a socially responsible person.*

learning (*supported* by technology), structured around learners' needs (similar to the 'learning-process-design model' described above), and recognition of the key role of tutors. A crucial conclusion is: 'the effectiveness of online language learning does not reside in the medium itself but in how it is used' (Marsh et al 2007, p107). Zähler (2007) describes the process of deciding between possible choices of learning platforms, choices which can be thought of as both technical and political, and differences between on the one hand designing 'reusable learning objects'<sup>21</sup> and on the other the approach of CUTE that 'the learning experience ought to be contextualised and integrated' (p130).

### *Training of academics as eTutors*

The needs for, and possible components of, training for academics to develop eLearning skills has been implicitly referred to throughout this case study, and a detailed discussion of this, arising from the eELT project outlined earlier is given in Joyes and Wang (2007). This project was intended to create a generic framework for such training:

*We argue that a new approach to tutor training is needed, in which tutors are not just trained to use the new learning tools/technologies of a given platform, or how to handle the tasks/activities within the course materials, but rather are provided with the conceptual tools to analyse such tools and materials for themselves.*

(Joyes and Wang 2007, p 110).

To this can be added the requirement, in all forms of transnational education, to recognise that such interfaces necessarily involve different understandings of just what knowledge is, and how learning and teaching is achieved. Indeed one repeated aim of internationalisation of higher education is precisely to become aware of such differences. The 'course materials' referred to in the above extract from Joyes and Wang will have been derived from one specific culture of education (whether from the UK, or from China, or from elsewhere) so are likely to be based on features which may need unpacking for some of the eTutors. A recommendation in Case Study 9 was hence:

- **CS 9.4.** It is essential that the teachers are introduced to the principles underlying the surface behaviours contained in the teaching approaches the TNE course requires: for example: that use of *discussions* is underpinned by a concept of the social construction of knowledge.

Joyes and Wang (2007) also argue that eTutor training should be experiential, that is it should itself have online content. This is particularly important as

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<sup>21</sup> See this website for more information concerning the RLO approach: <http://www.rlo-cetl.ac.uk/>

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potential tutors may be less experienced and hence less familiar with the associated technologies than many of their students. They point out that usually tutors are recruited due to their experience in traditional face-to-face teaching, so in the process of becoming eTutors they will need to undergo several transitions. An example might be the need for the tutors themselves to be introduced to the nature of student autonomy anticipated in eLearning, as described above in the work of McGrath et al (2007), which may not have been a component of their previous experiences either as teachers or as students. In addition, to add to the point made above drawn from 'Case Study 9: Transnational Education' that there may be fundamental differences in approaches to education which students and staff bring with them when entering into collaborative programmes, this can include expectations of what should be the relationship between teachers and students. A further transition for all staff could therefore involve developing a mindfulness of such fundamental aspects of the programmes they and their students are working with, and their training should prepare them for supporting their students in whichever transitions they themselves will face. Joyes and Wang (2007) identify a set of core abilities which training should include within four domains: pedagogic aspects of the teaching approaches of the programme; cognitive aspects relating to the ways of thinking expected; community aspects relating to student collaboration; and feedback as enabled by eLearning contexts. Zähler (2007) points out that feedback in the form of prepared responses resembling multiple choice testing – an early approach aimed to reduce tutor involvement – offered 'limited opportunity for scaffolding' and from his ensuing discussion (pp136 – 137) it seems that feedback, in a Vygotskian model of responding according to students' current understandings, requires human as well as software responses.

### **Global People**

This is an online repository of resources which organises the outcomes from the eChina-UK programme into a framework intended to guide others entering into intercultural projects in higher education. In the process of being engaged with the earlier project, the various partners had at times struggled to get a clear understanding of the complexities of the many different aspects of such collaborations. In the words of the UK manager: 'I think everybody would say that we had been actually deeply transformed by it' (interview data) and they wished to be able to cascade their own emerging understandings, in particular in relation to intercultural working. On the Global People website there are a series of activities which give guidance concerning topics such as developing and sharing an initial vision; establishing communication with partners; and building relationships. The materials are organised into five sections, the most relevant for this case study being the '**Life Cycle Model**'. This is a guide concerning

project and partnership management, based on the five stages which projects may typically follow: Preparation; Initiation; Experimentation; Consolidation; and Transfer.

- The **Preparation** stage is defined as: 'that period when a project has been agreed but not yet begun, or has been proposed but not yet formalised', and this is also the stage which is the main focus which this 'Strategic Implications of International Collaborations in Higher Education' project has set out to facilitate and clarify. This is a knowledge seeking phase, and a time of trying to identify possible problems, in particular in relation to culture and all the expectations which come with this. This relates to developing awareness.
- In the **Initiation** stage the project activities have begun, but there is still need for a lot of tentative exploration and checking: 'the emphasis will be more on the partners learning from (and about) each other'. Interestingly Global People describes 'openness' as a competence to be developed, therefore much needs to be done to examine one's own expectations and competences.
- The **Experimentation** stage has a shift in focus to more practical issues, but there should still be space for renegotiation and clarification of understandings and objectives.
- By the time of **Consolidation** there may well be settled procedures and firm friendships based on clearer understandings, and this might be seen as the most productive stage when the project outputs are being produced in well established patterns.
- The **Transfer** stage includes dissemination and hopefully plans for future developments and sharing in other projects.

This life cycle is supported by a '**Competency Framework**' with clusters of competences (Knowledge and Ideas; Communication; Relationships; and Personal Qualities and Dispositions) with a range of activities within each cluster, each illustrated with examples which occurred during the eChina-UK programme. A further section outlines a '**Learning Model**' related to developing intercultural competences, which is also an area of activity constantly referred to throughout this research project, in particular in connection with staff development: 'We believe that participants in an intercultural collaboration must pay attention to the process of learning throughout the project: it is not just a matter for reflection and evaluation once the project is complete'. There is also a recently added section concerning student development of intercultural competences:



'**The Global Student**', which is of value for including Internationalisation at Home aspects to collaborations. For all of these areas as well as supplying online materials there is a more detailed downloadable collection of materials supplied in a '**Resource Bank**'.

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