

# Cross Cultural Work nurturing the skills - thinking outside the borders

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# Setting the Scene

- Globalisation - we live and work in an international setting
- Ease of communications with Web 2.0 email, social networking establishing worldwide communities of professionals
- Both opportunities and problems can create a climate for cross cultural work

# Definitions

- Collaborative - involving two or more people working together for a special purpose.
- Team- a group of people who work together to do something.
- Cultural- the totality of socially transmitted behaviour patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought.  
<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/culture>

# Collaborative Projects

- **European Gateway on Alcohol, Drugs and other Addictions (The Gateway)**  
An online database of descriptions and links to over 1000 evaluated European websites from 32 countries, on the use and misuse of drugs and other psychoactive substances. Produced by information professionals and subject experts from 18 institutions across Europe who have selected, classified and catalogued these Internet resources.

# Collaborative Projects

- **Evidence based Electronic Library on Drug Addiction (EELDA)** an evidence based website on cannabis, cocaine, & ecstasy aimed at professionals in mental health and addiction care including libraries, and the public. Produced by a multi disciplinary team – addiction researchers, librarians, web designers, academics

# Environment & Drivers

- Extensive skill base & knowledge to draw upon
- Experience of partnership working within parent organisations
- Favourable political & social climate
- Project proposals of benefit to all partners
- Shared vision of the end product being a useful resource
- Commitment to respective project aims

# Environment & Drivers

- Information overload
- Concerns about finding quality information about addictions on the internet
- Idea for Gateway Project conceived 1999, planning group established
- Idea for EELDA Project conceived 2003, planning group established
- Backing & support from Elisad board and senior management of partnership organisations.



# Challenges / barriers

- Partnership management
  - finding a balance
  - changes in personnel
- Funding & Resources
  - Planning
  - IT
  - Time
  - Sustainability

# Challenges / barriers

- Project Management & Leadership  
styles  
skills
- Communication
  - virtual & face-to-face

# Challenges / barriers

- Cultural issues
  - at work
  - teams
  - leadership
  - work styles
  - language

# Challenges / barriers

- Ideological  
addictions  
evidence based
- Professional  
taxonomy & indexing  
search criteria/protocols

# Cultural Issues at work

- Not easy to be culturally sensitive and you need to be aware of this, there are biases, stereotypes
- Racial differences will always remain – being identified as different is isolating
- People recognise the differences in cultures - but have a tendency to think that their culture and their way of doing things is the best and only correct way.- ethnocentrism -

# Cultural Issues at work

- People's inability to see cultural differences – the opposite of ethnocentrism, we dress the same and therefore assume that attitudes methods of working are the same - parochial
- Culturally diverse teams need cultural education, you cannot just throw people together and hope it will work.

# Cross cultural leaders

- Open, accepting of differences
- Empathy and non-judgmental
- Culturally sensitive and aware of key cultural traits which require respect.
- Aware of superficial differences, stereotypes
- Understand cultural differences, why they exist, and how they can be overcome or accepted.

# Cross cultural leaders

- Understand cultural differences, why they exist, and how they can be overcome or accepted.
- Bust assumptions
- Involve people in decisions—build teams
- Encourage communication, creativity, and tap into the cultural aspects that add value.
- Have the right skill base.



# Cross cultural teams

What characteristics must cross cultural teams have

- Ability to tolerate differences,
- Flexible and open to change
- Out-come focused
- Patient
- Respect for both skills and individuals

# Cross cultural teams

What characteristics must cross cultural teams have

- Develop understandings about working styles, meetings, language, timescales, and management processes
- Good communication and listening skills
- Good at interpersonal relations

and not have.....

rigidity; non team players; resistant to change

# Critical success factors for collaborative working

- Set clear aims and goals
- Have the right resources & partners
- Take a planned and phased approach
- Recognise that no project can happen over night
- Have a project plan
- Access to administrative support
- Working practices to be agreed
- Tasks clearly allocated and defined

# Critical Success Factors

- Transparent accountability & decision making
- Invest time in building the team
- Build in cross cultural education
- Sharing of problems builds trust
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Use specialist knowledge and skills

# Critical Success Factors

- Communication -email groups, newsletters
- Visible ongoing support from partners and leaders
- Evaluate and review regularly
- Keep funders informed of progress
- Accept that conflict will arise
- Focus on delivery of product
- Appropriate leadership style

# Benefits of collaborative working

- Stimulates ideas through sharing of professional knowledge.
- Subject knowledge is developed.
- Provides staff development, mentoring & training.
- Develops skills and experience of bidding for funds.

# Benefits of collaborative working

- Develops team working skills
- Develops knowledge and skills in using IT information systems and metadata.
- Develops skills in critical evaluation of websites.
- Develops skills in electronic information retrieval.

# Benefits of collaborative working

- Developing skills in promotion and marketing.
- Assisting one another with common professional issues.
- Raises the profile of information and library services and employing organisations



# Benefits of collaborative working

- Strengthened ELISAD as an organisation.
- Encourages more joint working, both in Europe and globally.
- Can develop and foster cross professional groups and understandings – SALIS (Substance Abuse Librarians and Information Specialists).
- Enables networking

# Key Learning

- Partnership projects are hard work
- Partnerships take time to develop and must have ending processes
- Partnerships must be able to cope with change
- Partnerships must be realistic in their aspirations
- Partners must be involved, commitment and good communication is crucial
- Partnerships can strengthen existing groups and networks
- Agree a definition of partnership

# Key Learning

- Have robust financial systems or access to them
- Trust and mutual respect for variety of professional skills is required
- Have a project manager with clear role to progress the project
- Respect for other cultures and work styles
- Effective planning processes need to be in place
- Be clear about work methodology/processes but avoid being too prescriptive
- Have clear aims and outcomes for the project

# Key Learning

- Use the collective skills, experience and knowledge that exists within the team and employing organisations
- Know your own role, make sure others understand your role and make sure you understand others' roles
- Consider need for project management skills training
- Good human interaction is the key to successful partnerships—"no man is an island"
- Patience and humour

# Key Learning

- Avoid using remote working, build in opportunities for face-to face activities.
- Use all forms of communication and be clear about the processes for communication.
- Be inclusive – consult partners
- Friendships can happen between partners, but it is important that they do not override professional boundaries.
- Review project at regular intervals – learn lessons and apply them.
- Endings and closure

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