

## University of Southampton Research Repository

Copyright © and Moral Rights for this thesis and, where applicable, any accompanying data are retained by the author and/or other copyright owners. A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge. This thesis and the accompanying data cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the copyright holder/s. The content of the thesis and accompanying research data (where applicable) must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holder/s.

When referring to this thesis and any accompanying data, full bibliographic details must be given, e.g.

Thesis: Author (Year of Submission) "Full thesis title", University of Southampton, name of the University Faculty or School or Department, PhD Thesis, pagination.

Data: Author (Year) Title. URI [dataset]



**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON**

FACULTY OF SOCIAL, HUMAN & MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES

School of Education

**Cross-Cultural Engagement in China:  
Problems, Potential and Opportunities**

Sarah Margaret Palmer

Thesis for the Doctorate of Education

September 2016



FACULTY OF SOCIAL, HUMAN & MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES

School of Education

**Cross-Cultural Engagement in China:  
Problems, Potential and Opportunities**

Sarah Margaret Palmer

Thesis for the Doctorate of Education

September 2016

This study explores the cross-cultural experiences of design and engineering practitioners in China. It examines the influence of context and culture on the engagement experience and identifies ways in which employees can be developed in order to perform efficiently within the context.



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

## **ABSTRACT**

FACULTY OF SOCIAL, HUMAN & MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES

School of Education

### **CROSS-CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT IN CHINA: PROBLEMS, POTENTIAL AND OPPORTUNITIES**

By Sarah Margaret Palmer

Thesis for the Doctorate of Education

September 2016

The challenges experienced by an individual operating within a cross cultural business setting arise from a number of factors related to and emanating from its context as a whole. This study explores the observations and experiences of design and engineering practitioners within the Chinese context and aspires to understand what factors affect their ability to function effectively and impact a potentially successful outcome to a project. It seeks to identify the historical, contextual and cultural factors which most affect the cross cultural experience both from an individual and a practice-based level and understand how the influence of Westernisation is changing the contextual characteristics of China, using observations and experiences communicated by participants.

How practitioners learnt to respond to, plan for and adapt to the context and its challenges has been explored. The study also sought to identify how employees can be developed and supported in order to gain experience within this transforming context and identify the appropriate pedagogical strategy in order to achieve better contextual and cultural understanding.

The study concluded that practitioners needed to experience the context first-hand in order to holistically understand the cultural issues and effectively adjust and respond the setting. Being in-context and having direct contact with their Chinese counterparts also afforded UK practitioners better opportunities to build relationships with them, which is shown to develop trust, improve communication and enhance the potential of a successful project outcome.

Further, as data shows that companies are adopting an mentor-led experiential learning pedagogy in context in order to develop their staff for cross-cultural engagement, a degree of theoretical knowledge of culture, wider contextual issues and the implications of these would aid practitioners in being able to understand, interpret and thus respond effectively to the challenges which arise from the cross-cultural business setting.





## Contents

ABSTRACT .....	i
<b>List of Tables.....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>List of Figures .....</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP .....</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>Definitions and Abbreviations.....</b>	<b>xiii</b>
<b>Glossary of Terms .....</b>	<b>xiv</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Statement of Problem.....	1
1.2 Rationale and Boundaries.....	3
1.3 Significance/ Contribution .....	6
1.4 Assumptions/Limitations .....	7
1.5 Nature of Study.....	8
<b>Chapter 2: Literature review.....</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1 The Developing Global Economy .....	9
2.1.1 Globalisation .....	9
2.1.2 Pacific Rim: regional development, politics and policy .....	11
2.1.3 China – Economic Development.....	13
2.2 Cross-Cultural Business.....	16
2.2.1 Culture: definition, dimensions and implications.....	16
2.2.2 Britain - Culture.....	18
2.2.3 China - Culture .....	23
2.3 The Engineering and Design Industry: Global Product Design (GPD).....	27
2.4 Gaining knowledge & developing support mechanisms .....	29
2.4.1 Global skills .....	29
2.4.2 Training and education for cross-cultural interaction.....	31
2.5 Theoretical Exploration.....	32
2.5.1 Universal or Context-Specific Practice.....	32

2.5.2	Context within this study .....	36
2.5.3	Experiential Learning within context .....	38
<b>Chapter 3:</b>	<b>Methodology .....</b>	<b>41</b>
3.1	Qualitative Research Design.....	41
3.2	Ethical Considerations .....	42
3.3	Data Collection Method - Interviews .....	43
3.4	Participants.....	46
3.5	Interview Schedule .....	50
3.6	Recording data.....	53
3.7	Pilot Interview .....	53
3.8	Data Analysis .....	54
3.9	Identifying Themes .....	56
3.10	Conclude with participants.....	58
<b>Chapter 4:</b>	<b>Analysis &amp; Empirical Data .....</b>	<b>61</b>
4.1	People, place & culture .....	63
4.1.1	Cultural differences noted: .....	63
4.1.2	Cultural change/shift/development.....	67
4.1.3	The Chinese approach: accommodating/friendly .....	69
4.2	Culture in the workplace .....	71
4.2.1	Lifestyle & work-life balance .....	71
4.2.2	Hierarchy .....	72
4.2.3	Chinese organisation and planning.....	74
4.2.4	Money orientation in Chinese business .....	76
4.2.5	Work ethic and practice .....	77
4.2.6	Ethics .....	78
4.2.7	Host company support and hospitality .....	80
4.3	Adapting and functioning in the Chinese context.....	82
4.3.1	Individual skills and responsibility.....	82
4.3.2	Quality control management .....	87
4.3.3	Language issues.....	89

4.4	Building relationships.....	91
4.4.1	The benefits of building relationships .....	91
4.4.2	Finding the right company .....	92
4.4.3	Negative aspects of attempting relationship building .....	93
4.4.4	Reactive process management: local support.....	93
4.4.5	Trust .....	94
4.4.6	Communication issues .....	97
4.5	Training and knowledge transfer .....	100
4.5.1	Dedicated training .....	100
4.5.2	Mentoring & support .....	100
4.5.3	Knowledge transfer.....	101
4.5.4	Debriefing – social, cultural, human .....	101
4.5.5	Debriefing – business/technical .....	102
<b>Chapter 5:</b>	<b>Conclusion and Recommendations .....</b>	<b>103</b>
5.1	Culture has implications .....	103
5.2	Building relationships improves engagement .....	105
5.3	Planning, adaptability and managing expectations.....	109
5.4	Challenges arising from societal changes .....	111
5.5	Effective staff development through experiential learning .....	112
5.6	Context, management and learning style.....	114
5.7	Recommendations .....	121
	<b>List of References .....</b>	<b>125</b>
	<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>135</b>
	<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>136</b>
	<b>Appendix A.....</b>	<b>137</b>
	<b>Appendix B .....</b>	<b>144</b>
	<b>Appendix C .....</b>	<b>151</b>
	<b>Appendix D.....</b>	<b>159</b>
	<b>Appendix E .....</b>	<b>161</b>
	<b>Appendix F .....</b>	<b>174</b>



## List of Tables

Table 1:	Participant Profile Data	Section 3.5 p 42-44
----------	--------------------------	---------------------



## List of Figures

Figure 1	Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory .....	p 32
Figure 2	Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory Applied to findings .....	p 121





# DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP


I, SARAH PALMER

declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

**Title: CROSS-CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT IN CHINA: PROBLEMS, POTENTIAL AND OPPORTUNITIES**

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. Delete as appropriate None of this work has been published before submission
- 8.

Signed: 

Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2016



## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor David Reynolds and Professor Anthony Kelly for their advice related to this study. I would also like to thank my husband Gary, family and friends who offered moral support and encouragement when times were tough. Finally, gratitude goes to those colleagues who offered constructive advice at times of need.



## Definitions and Abbreviations

APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CAD	Computer Aided Design
CCPCC	Chinese Communist Party Central Committee
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CQ	Cultural Intelligence, cultural quotient
DfID	Department for International Development
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GA	General Arrangement (engineering drawing)
GPD	Global Product Development
HE	Higher Education
IDV	Individualism Index
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IT	Information Technology
JIR	Japanese Institute of Research
NIC	Newly Industrialised Countries
QM	Quality Management
SME	Small Medium Enterprise
SOE	State Owned Enterprises
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organisation
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training & Research
WTO	World Trade Organisation

## Glossary of Terms

- Hard skills:** Teachable, work-based skills which are quantifiable, such as: reading, drawing, report writing, computer literacy (transferable skills) and physical industry-related skills such as carpentry, CAD, prototyping, machining.
- Mentoring:** An experienced person in a company or educational institution who trains and counsels new employees or students.
- Soft skills:** Personality-driven skills which are less quantifiable, such as: ability to communicate, listening, engaging, getting along with others, team working.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

British design and engineering industries have increasingly relied on provision in China to provide parts and manufacturing services in order to produce the physical outcomes of their products. The Chinese manufacturing base has been vital to British industry, as it has provided cost-effective production which the UK provision has largely been unable to match financially in recent years, due to labour costs and the volume of provision. Despite recent statistics showing that growth of the Chinese economy is slowing and examples that some UK companies are returning to manufacturing on-shore, the sheer size and power of the Chinese market ensures that it will still be an important destination for British engineering and product design companies for some years to come.

### 1.1 Statement of Problem

Globalisation has transformed the world of business and enterprise and the processes around the phenomenon which facilitate its functioning. There is now greater freedom for individuals to travel across international borders in order to seek new opportunities, enabled by technological advances, micro and macro policy development internationally, and improved infrastructure. In response to this, governments, businesses and educators have had to adapt their approach and internationalise their processes and provision in order to function effectively and provide for the new, international, transient learners, workers, and industry professionals.

In the current market, British design and engineering practitioners frequently travelling to China in order to conduct business; these cross-cultural engagements are often short-term, for a few days to a few weeks. This allows little time to experience the local culture or sufficient saturation within the context to fully understand it, as would happen if the assignment was longer-term or expatriation was undertaken. The geographical distance between the UK and China make travelling between them to conduct business both time consuming and cost-heavy, therefore it is vital that any interaction is efficient and effective.

The importance of understanding a culture and the influence of contextual factors which are so diverse to our own cannot be underestimated. Misunderstanding and lack of knowledge can provide many challenges to not just business but all settings when two contrasting cultures meet. To illustrate, in August 2015 the BBC reported events in Mount Rigi, Switzerland, where special trains were being provided for Chinese tourists in order to “diffuse tensions” with other visitors.

## Chapter 1

The Chinese tourists were described as generally disturbing other visitors, crowding platforms, rude, not using toilets properly and spitting on the floor. Quoting from Swiss newspaper 'Blick', the BBC reported rail chief Peter Pfenniger observing that "*their strong presence is a challenge*" ([www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)).

In response to new demands, internationalisation as a theme of Higher Education research is increasing in relevance, particularly for practitioners and policy makers. Kehm and Teichler (2007) observe that the concept transformed from a "*marginal to a central issue in higher education institutions*", concurring with Hahn (2004) that evidence pointed to the "*mainstreaming of internationalisation*". In a review of a decade of academic literature analysing and reflecting on the developments linked to the higher education internationalisation agenda, Kehm and Teichler (2007) highlighted the main themes, encompassing: mobility of students and academic staff; mutual influences of higher education systems on each other; internationalisation of the substance of teaching, learning, and research; institutional strategies of internationalisation; knowledge transfer; cooperation and competition; national and supranational policies as regarding the international dimension of higher education.

Clearly there are advantages to the internationalisation of provision and collaboration, such as capacity building, the mutual benefits of sharing knowledge and the development of cross-borders partnerships from which improved understanding and cognitive awareness is developed. Knight (2011) and Hudzik (2015) also caution that there are negative consequences, such as the inability to control access to ideas reducing local advantage, commercialisation, self-interest and status building.

Blum and Bourn (2013) argue that globalisation and internationalisation research in education for the most part focusses on institutional change, whilst their intention is to shift the emphasis back to curriculum change and developments in teaching and learning for the benefit of global professions. Reflecting on higher education provision for the engineering and health sectors, they conclude that that "*there is evidence of interest in integrating global perspectives within (relevant) degree courses from students, but that this raises major challenges concerning discipline-based knowledge, valuing differing perspectives and approaches towards teaching and learning*". They refer to a Department for International Development (DfID-funded Students as Global Citizens research project, which "*showed resistance – on the part of some institutions, individual educators and students – to making space within crowded curricula for what are perceived to be 'soft' skills' and in the engineering provision, engagement levels in global issues was related to students' own personal interests*". In one University however, an emerging theme from the engineering subject field was "*the opportunities these areas created for a range of curriculum approaches and*



*methodologies, including lectures and seminars but also placements, design modules and closer relation to practical experience. The importance of practical and ‘real life experiences’ was highlighted in the dialogue with students” (2013, p 49).*

## **1.2 Rationale and Boundaries**

When discussing design and engineering, the focus of this research draws on those areas which design, engineer and manufacture a physical product or parts of that product, be it a ship, mechanism, components, car or household product, for example. Often these products are mass-produced for the consumer market, or have parts which are mass-produced, but occasionally practitioners have travelled transnationally to get a bespoke item produced which they would struggle to get manufactured in the UK for various reasons, e.g. economic, capacity. China was chosen as the focus of this study as its place and influence in this market holds particular relevance to this sector of industry in the UK and continuing business interaction between the two parties will be important for the foreseeable future – a statement supported by the data collected for this study. Considering time-constraints, financial implications and the logistical effort required when travelling to China and running part of a project from its shores, it is vital that any interaction is efficient and effective.

There is much academic literature outlining the effects of culture on business practice in generic and over-arching business and management terms, but less that was directly relevant to the design and engineering areas of practice defined for this report, nor to the wider contextual influences around them. Hence this investigation should give some insight into the issues most pertinent to these industries as well as the wider implications of practice within this context.

Formalising this data is worthwhile in order to understand the social and practice-based processes that are at the core of what was happening in these exchanges and potentially affect the success or failure of the interaction. It is also important to understand which concepts were embedded in this context and which, if any, were unique or particularly pertinent to these industries. It is hoped that enhanced knowledge of practice in this context will help companies and their employees be prepared for likely challenges and ‘go equipped’ to address potential issues.

The research seeks to understand the experiences of practitioners within the Chinese context; how they translate what is going on around them; conceptualise events; adapt and manage the experience and what mechanisms or strategies they put in place as an active response, in order to react positively to what is occurring.

## Chapter 1

The background structure and support network within the industry for these practitioners will also have an impact on the response strategy. The study intends to identify those methods by which new/early career practitioners engaging for the first time in the Chinese setting can be best informed and educated in order to improve their personal experience of such engagement, perform effectively and lessen the negative impact from specific identified sources of side-effects on a project outcome.

When considering the development of knowledge for practitioners entering these industries and what is needed to support their future activities within the global marketplace, we need to consider where education is going with regard to developing this theory and associated skills. The British Council (2011), investigating the needs of today's employers defines "*global employability skills*", including "*the ability to work effectively with customers, clients and businesses from a range of different countries and cultures*" as critical in a globally-operating company. Bourn and Neal (2008) analysed the range of initiatives currently shaping 'global skills' and the 'global dimension' in engineering subjects in UK Higher Education and noted the varying interpretations of these issues. They noted that "*the transferable skills and competencies identified as being relevant to sustainable development are very similar to the professional skills demanded by business*" (2008, p 11). Central to the authors' argument is the need to align the varying skill sets and gain some cohesive provision which encompasses the essential skills and perspectives needed to work effectively in the current global market. This equates to provision needing to be balanced, to ensure that concepts such as sustainability, ethical development and responsibility, equality and poverty reduction are addressed, whilst maintaining 'the inclusion of 'soft' professional skills – such as communication, presentation and interpersonal skills, critical and analytical skills, creativity, innovation and adaptability'.

Blum and Bourn (2013), noted that higher education institutions faced with developing programme content addressing internationalisation and global citizenship are concerned that provision is already stretched and time-constrained. They also point to 'inertia' from institutions when facing internationalisation of the curriculum. However, whilst some students showed 'resistance' to such developments in their provision, others were open to new challenges and saw them as relevant to their future professions. They emphasise that "*the challenge of globalisation for higher education is about much more than responding to economic agendas and the marketplace. It requires both academics and students to recognise the relationship between their professional needs and the skills required to live and work in a global society that is increasingly fragile, uncertain and insecure about its future*" (2013, p 51). Mugham and Kyvik (2010) appraised

internationalisation learning provision offered by higher education (HE) business programmes and despite evidence of developments in curriculum in order to address the challenges, they proffered similar concerns. They noted *“an emphasis on theory-building and that the cognitive and communicative development necessary for success in a complex and diverse community of nations and cultures remain largely neglected”*. However, they cite examples of good practice for international business education, including IBM University Business Challenge which develops cognitive abilities through competition between different institutions based on realistic simulated companies; and the Knowledge Transfer Partnerships in the UK (2010: 196) which allow for collaboration between universities, graduates and businesses. The down-side is that these are available to a relatively small number of individuals. Thus, both educational institutions and the wider professional bodies may need to look for creative pedagogic solutions for providing the relevant knowledge to students and young practitioners.

The above literature highlights the shortfalls in recent and current international business elements of higher education (HE) from which graduates are passing into globally practicing firms. This study explores the value of current workplace learning opportunities which are available, such as student placements and company mentoring practices and whether they offer the appropriate skills development and learning environment in order to support this agenda. It seeks to identify whether the shortfall in relevant global skills experienced by some practitioners entering and operating within the globally-mobile workplace impacts their performance and experiences and whether companies can make up this deficiency by offering employees international experience within the global workplace.

The researcher has arrived at this study from a long career as a Senior Lecturer in the Design and Engineering department of a UK higher education institution. Observations and experience in the sector have pointed to internationalisation and global skills content being largely theoretical in undergraduate design and engineering programmes, as noted by Mugham and Kyvik (2010) and being marginal compared to ‘hard skills’ development. The opportunity to develop these skills through practice within an international setting is available through placement programmes; however, it is down to the student to opt for this type of placement and relies on them having a personal interest in the international experience (as described by Blum and Bourn *ibid*, above).

It is important to emphasise and give clarity to the boundaries of this research study and understand what it seeks to contribute. The exercise seeks to:

- Explore the role of context; identify whether the problems identified are context-specific, industry specific or universal in nature.

- Identify relevant issues and 'differences' which influence and impact within these boundaries, using qualitative data from those involved from the UK who fit into the prescribed profile for this study.
- Bring focus to and clarify specific cultural dimensions or contextual concepts from which the influencing factors emanate.
- Develop better understanding regarding how individuals interpret what is going on around them and how they adapt and respond to this.
- Investigate how practitioners learn to function effectively in the cross-cultural setting, the pedagogical approach which companies currently apply and whether the methods are appropriate in order to develop effective employees.

It is hoped that recommendations can be put forward in order to inform and/or support all levels of business employees, including early career practitioners, new graduates to the industry and those from middle management and below (in the relevant industries) to understand the nature of 'difficulties' they may encounter when new to travelling to China for short-term business engagement; what may occur and why, to manage expectations and to be able to deliver a measured and constructive response to potential difficulties they face by gaining knowledge of the context through the experiences of others.

### 1.3 Significance/ Contribution

The study seeks to develop concepts from the existing knowledge base regarding the effect of context and culture on cross-cultural business interaction with view to understanding its role in participant experiences in this setting. Patton (2015:9) notes that *"the great delusion of our times is that we can control what happens...things seldom work out as planned"*. The study aims to explore participant's personal accounts in order to identify how practitioners cope with unexpected events, how they interpret what is happening and in what ways they attempt to manage the consequences of events around them and the circumstances they find themselves in.

Many of the dimensions which affect experience and outcome are likely to occur across various subject fields, but this study seeks to identify those which are particularly pertinent to the industry sectors defined within the boundaries of this research. Secondly, much of the literature which is already available on the subject of cross-cultural business and engagement – and indeed training provision – is aimed at managerial-level professionals, business leaders, company leaders etc. What is less clear is how much of this knowledge is actively filtered down to other levels of business; many companies send shop-floor, lower management and early-career employees, but

little is written about whether relevant knowledge which could help improve engagement is disseminated throughout a project team. The study also seeks to determine the strategies currently employed by UK companies in order to develop their employees for transnational engagement and how global skills' learning is facilitated. It is proposed that the findings of this study could be used to aid those in control of project teams to better inform, direct, prepare and support employees to understand and respond effectively to problems within the cross-cultural setting as they arise.

Finally, in light of the rapid development, ensuing changes and the increasing influence of the West brought about by an opening, internationalised economy, the research seeks to present a current snapshot of how the context and culture of China is changing and how this is affecting the UK practitioner who seeks to engage within it. Much of the research on the dimensions of culture has its roots in the 1980's; this study seeks to examine how these dimensions still affect the Chinese business context and explore what is changing in light of China's new political and economic direction.

## **1.4 Assumptions/Limitations**

Conceptual and theoretical frameworks have been put in place to identify the dimensions which affect the cross-cultural interactions of a specific group of practitioners within a defined industry profile. The group of individuals at the focus of this project are specifically and clearly defined above; this report does not seek to be phenomenological and does not intend to apply its findings to any other group of individuals.

Background information collected from participants may be used to identify whether any sub-set of individuals (defined by educational background, professional level, experience, for example) encounter different challenges related to these dimensions. However, due to the relatively small sample size in focus, it could not be assumed that these parameters and actions attributed to them could be applied beyond the framework of this study.

It is not intended that this study focus on the issues of those who have to adapt to the cultural and practical issues experienced if engagement is long-term, or they have been relocated with family, which may be more complex. It is not intended that the expatriate UK community is explored, nor those who have been immersed in the local context for a long-term or indefinite period.

Due to the design of the study which involves a one-off interview with each participant, the key themes and dimensions described by the participants were explored at the time of interview. The researcher has attempted to react to these elements as they have emerged in each interview; although the data is reflected on and interpreted and evaluated after the interview, there was no opportunity to re-visit the participant and elicit further data. This relies on the interviewer responding and exploring at the time of interview; however, it is felt that this enabled participants to continue to direct the interview and also ensured that one particular dimension or theme was not prioritised over any other which the participant wished to communicate. As a courtesy, a précis of findings was presented to participants at the conclusion of the study; this also gave them an opportunity to respond to the conclusions of the research.

### **1.5 Nature of Study**

The thesis will be qualitative by design due to the nature of the data collected and presented. However, specific concepts were highlighted from the data on analysis according to a quantitative value, ensuring that patterns of instance could be established. It is hoped that open interviews will enable participants firstly to direct the investigative questions in the direction which is most pertinent and significant to them, in order to explore the cross-cultural interactions they have experienced (see Methodology Chapter 3 and Appendices B & D). Additionally, that any subjects, words or dimensions of interest which are put forward by participants can be further explored within the interview process, leading to richer and more comprehensive data on areas which potentially influence the whole experience.

## Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter seeks to explore the observations, developments and theories arising from research which have an effect on the contextual and operational factors which are investigated within this thesis. The changing paradigm of global trade, international political policy development, the shifting dynamics and emergence of new powerful economies are all examined in order to ascertain their influence on the context.

At the centre of this is the individual; practitioners of industry who seek to travel globally in order to seek trade and source services or products related to their industry. In order to achieve this they engage within different contexts with other individuals shaped by diverse and unfamiliar cultural backgrounds in settings defined by factors which are unlike their own. They need to address the challenges which arise from this in order to succeed in their assignments.

### 2.1 The Developing Global Economy

#### 2.1.1 Globalisation

The global economy has evolved over hundreds of years, from the simple beginnings of nomadic individuals to the vast, all-encompassing trade and finance network that we understand today. For centuries people have travelled to find employment and opportunities, trading their labour and goods and seeking resources by which they can earn money and produce commodities that others need. Buckman (2005, pp 1-2) discusses the progression of integrated trade into a new, global phenomenon and cites European colonisation from the sixteenth century as “the force that first linked together all the world’s regional trade networks”. In recent decades, the concept of ‘globalization’ has emerged and is defined in a variety of ways by sociologists and academics.

Some argue that globalization is not a new process, but is merely “*increased internationalization*” (Rugman, 2000). However, Guinness (2003, pp 6-7) debates that ‘a change in the geographical pattern’ of production processes, culminating in fragmentation across national boundaries, the resultant complexity and increase of international trade, the emergence of Newly Industrialised Countries (NIC), integration of nations into the capitalist system and the opening of emerging economies, are all developments which justify the use of the term ‘globalization’ due to their

## Chapter 2

nature, the scale of and rapid acceleration of change which has been activated by these occurrences.

The transforming influence of globalization is highlighted by Schirato and Webb (2003, pp 1-21), who suggest that *“globalization could be understood as a set of technologies, institutions and networks operating within, and at the same time transforming, contemporary social, cultural, political and economic spheres of activity”*. Addressing the different definitions of globalization by economists (as global economic interdependence, competitiveness and the role of communications technology) and historians (social risks of globalization; disparity, nationalism, protectionism etc.), Alexander (2000, p 20) notes that *“historians seem more alive to the social risks of globalization than do economists”* and that the historical perspective has an advantage as it concerns itself with *“human agency and human consequences”*. His statements lead to the theory that it is more than physical actions, advances in technology and business strategies which lie behind globalization, but it is also dependent on and affected by human factors, cultural aspects and sociological dimensions, political and historical factors.

Much has been written about globalization and researchers have attempted to explain and proposed constitute dimensions which define the phenomenon. Chase-Dunn (1999) defined globalization as a multi-faceted phenomenon, which could be defined by five dimensions:

1. Common ecological constraints
2. Cultural globalization
3. Political globalization
4. Globalization of communication
5. Economic globalization: worldwide interrelationships of markets and finance, goods and services, and networks created by transnational corporations.

These dimensions are supported by Guinness (2003), who identifies the following attributes as constituent properties of globalization; environmental, social/cultural, linguistic, urban, demographic, political and economic. Clearly debate points to a number of intertwining facets which have caused and in turn, affected global changes in both the way trade is conducted and consequently altered the way many communities live and function.

Buckman (2005, p 29) traces how global trade has changed in recent decades and notes the rise of the East Asia ‘tiger’ economies of South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore to become major players in international trade, aided by changes in national political policy, where *“their*



*competitiveness was often buttressed by large government subsidies; the net result was that they became major global trading nations by the early 1990's".*

### **2.1.2 Pacific Rim: regional development, politics and policy**

Dynamic growth in East Asian economies has shifted the world economy's entire centre of gravity from the Atlantic to the Pacific Basin.

(Gehlhar et al, 1994)

In 1970 14% of world production emanated from East Asian countries; this had increased to 23% by 1992 and The World Bank currently continues to support the steady development of countries within this geographical area, noting that *"East Asia and Pacific remains the world's growth engine despite a challenging external environment, with developing economies growing by 7.2% in 2013"* (www.worldbank.org). In its East Asia Update, entitled Adjusting to a Changing World (April 2015), The World Bank confirms continued economic growth in the region: *"The developing economies of East Asia are projected to grow by 6.7% in 2015 and 2016, slightly down from 6.9% in 2014. China's growth is expected to moderate to around 7% in the next two years, compared with 7.4% in 2014"*.

The IMF (International Monetary Fund, April 2015) has forecast global growth for 2015 at 3.5% and 3.8% for 2016; although its growth has slowed in recent years, the IMF predicts that Asia "will remain the global growth leader" and will "continue outperforming the rest of the world in the medium term" (IMF, April 2015, p 53). This is supported by the United Nations (UN), who state that "Asia is predicted to be the most dynamic region, growing at about 5.5%" (UNCTAD, 2014).

In 1989 a new forum was founded in order to enhance the trading possibilities for countries around the edge of the Pacific Ocean or 'The Pacific Rim'. The establishment of APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) set out its mission of "achieving stability, security and prosperity for the region through free and open trade and investment" (www.apec.org). Founding members of APEC included Australia, Canada, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia and the United States and since then it has grown to include China in 1991, Russia in 1998 and several countries from South America. APEC has continued to develop and grow, with 21 economies currently established as members with the collective aim to engage with each other to improve and develop trading relationships in order to strengthen their individual and collective economies (APEC mission statement, Appendix A.i.).

Discussing the potential for development of the Pacific Rim economies, Thompson (2013, p 1) noted that "reports from international agencies on the future of East Asia published in the 1950s

and 1960s were pessimistic about the growth and developmental potential for the region's economies". As it transpires however, in the period from 1970s to date, *"their record has been outstanding and has far eclipsed the growth rates of advanced countries and other developing areas alike"*. Thompson highlights three interconnecting issues influencing and giving a catalyst to this rapid development, notably; open regionalism, the East Asian-North American relationship and the open, liberal global economy.

In summary, the literature supports the rapid development of business, trade and industry in the Pacific Rim region, supported by the formation of cooperatives and forums such as APEC and ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations). These bodies have enabled greater cooperation between different countries in their regions in order to develop strategies to allow their members to trade more freely, build reciprocal agreements and work together to implement policies to ensure they continue to promote and improve business opportunities for all those involved. As time has progressed, more members have joined these bodies and the potential for trade and cooperation became greater and spread across a wider geographical area. Institutions such as the WTO and the World Bank are predicting continued development in the region and with this the region's position in the global market will become stronger. However, this has to be supported by continuing policy development in order to make the region's business and industrial maturation sustainable and equitable; it also needs to ensure that the focus of these efforts continues to move with global trends and that industry keeps pace with changing technology and global standards and output requirements.

The competitive advantage that arises from such cooperation has a wider impact, affecting other nations including the UK. Asia has become a destination key to manufacturing for example, as it has been able to offer affordable services and goods and capacity which cannot be matched by other regions. The UK has seen its own manufacturing industry struggle to compete as UK companies go to countries such as China and Malaysia in order to supply and fulfil their needs through a provision which cannot be matched in cost.

Lower labour costs in such countries have been exploited by Western companies for many years but *"the quest for reducing costs comes into tension with other moral demands and values about treatment of workers"* (Kruegar, 2008, p 114). APEC does not only work towards economic prosperity for its members, it also promotes social change including; improved worker rights, benefits including better education for people across the social spectrum, improved support for small businesses and inclusive access to opportunities. In the APEC Leader's Growth Strategy (14<sup>th</sup> November, 2010) they stated that they were setting out to achieve 'Five Growth Attributes': Balanced, Inclusive, Sustainable, Innovative, and Secure Growth (Appendix A.ii.).

Kobayashi et al (1999) noted the rapid economic development in China did not ensure inclusive benefit; thus, the paradigm has shifted again towards a more ethical business and economic development, as discussed by Heilmann and Melton (2013) and has formed part of the objective aspirations of the current (12<sup>th</sup>) Five Year Plan (see China – Economic Development 2.1.3). These plans also align with the ethical development strategy as set out by APEC (2012) and the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) aims of United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO – Appendix A iii.).

### 2.1.3 China – Economic Development

Wei and Leifner (2012) commented on the dramatic emergence of the Chinese economy in the last forty years, noting *“such a rapid rise is a phenomenon rarely seen in human history. The velocity and complexity of the restructuring, in terms of the economic, social, political, and environmental dimensions, is truly unprecedented”*. The World Bank (April 2015) identified changes in paradigm within the Chinese economy, which point to the Chinese government needing significant policy development to ensure continued economic growth: *“In China, as it shifts to a consumption-led, rather than an investment-led, growth model, the main challenge is to implement reforms that will ensure sustainable growth in the long run”*.

In 1979 China implemented its ‘Open Door Policy’, an important step in the country shifting from a historically inward-looking and insular view, to an outward orientation. From the end of 1978, then-leader Deng Xiaoping started on a path of significant political and philosophical reforms; the adoption of a new economic development strategy at the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCPCC) embarked on an open-door policy with the aim of developing the Chinese economy in a way that it had never allowed before, introducing the concepts of foreign investment, open trade and new technology. The radical change of direction, outlook and the effects of policy change were noted by Wang et al (2003) who state that China’s *“greatest achievement”* was that its people *“recognised that industrial modernisation, the adoption of advanced methods of agriculture, and the opening up of international trade were the only ways China could assume its place as a modern nation”*. They also define these developments as ‘mind liberalisation’ arising from the Open Door Policy. Kobayashi et al (1999) concurred, citing the Chinese government’s establishment of open economic, technology and industry development zones in order to attract foreign investment as instigating *“an entrepreneurial boom”*.

## Chapter 2

However, reforms of such scale in such a vast and diverse population may not be without problems and this view seems simplistic. Kobayashi et al (1999) reported in a periodical for the Japanese Institute of Research (JIR), geographical neighbours to China, who share many of the same economic networks. They assess the changes some 20 years later as China having clearly achieving their economic goals; however, also noted is their assessment of the negative issues this paradigm change has instigated, including regional income disparity, income gap between owners/executives of private ventures and employees of state-owned enterprises, financial orientation and inequality raising from a poor legal system:

*The existence of this income disparity under a socialist regime is inevitably causing a variety of alarming social phenomena. Worship of money has spread among the people. Huge numbers of rural people have flooded into the cities in search of higher incomes, leaving many rural communities deserted and exposing China to the danger of future food shortages.*

*China has maintained a one-party socialist dictatorship on the political level, while moving to a market system on the economic level. This conflict has exposed inadequacies in the legal system ... there is no system of checks to prevent the arbitrary exercise of power by the Communist Party. The accepted wisdom among modern Chinese is that "those in authority (quan) will be able to acquire money (qian)".*

Kobayashi et al (1999).

Further, they stated the need for legal and monetary systems modernisation to “reflect contemporary need” and address many of the issues above.

China presented a series of Five Year Plans starting from the mid-1950s, through which it has set out programmes for social and economic development. The first of these was presented in when China’s State Planning Commission set out its aims for the period 1953-1957. At the time the newly-released plan documents were appraised by Shabad (1955) who noted them as ‘ambitious’ and long-term in their aims to become a major industrial power. The documents showed a strategic shift away from small enterprises and to upscale and mechanise in a drive towards industrialization; also there is evidence of a drive towards capital goods rather than consumer goods.

By 2015 China will be coming to the end of its 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan and setting out its plans for the next half-decade. Key points of the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan were:

- Improvement and development of affordable housing
- New pollution targets
- Wellbeing targets to increase life expectancy
- Innovation targets
- Education improvements

The plan also prioritised new industry development, energy conservation and environmental protection, biotechnology, new materials, new IT (Information Technology), high-end engineering and manufacturing and clean energy vehicles (KMPG, 2011).

Heilmann et al discuss the changing objectives of development planning in China and observe that it has matured through the various stages of five year planning and has strived to deliver a more equitable planning output. This has led to the introduction of macro-regional development plans, which prescribes to the regional leadership structure what the national government development strategy is, whilst it *“authorizes the regional governments to try out novel ways and means to achieve the goals defined in the plans”* (2013, p 592).

Wei et al (2012, pp 102-105) conclude that the emergence of China as an economic force has been instigated not by just internal reforms however, but also rapid globalisation which has occurred at the same time, noting that they are ‘intertwined’: *“China rises at the historic juncture of an era of accelerated globalization, and China itself is a critical force in accelerating globalization. The rapid growth and structural change in China would never have been achieved without extensive foreign direct investment (FDI) and trade”*. Chinese Ambassador Peixin (2003) described globalization as a *“double-edged sword, bringing opportunities and challenges, advantages and disadvantages”*. He goes on to describe how China has learnt from its experiences of opening up and reformed itself, putting policies in place in order to turn *“challenges into opportunities”*.

China’s accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001 enabled it to trade more freely with the rest of the world, particularly with its neighbours such as Japan and also to attract substantial foreign investment. Peixin (2003) stated that *“with accession to the WTO, China is faced with growing pressure from international competition”*, but that *“opening the country to the outside world is China’s basic and long-term state policy”*. Economy Watch (2010) affirms Peixin’s assertion that essential political changes have led to China’s unprecedented economic growth: *“From being an excessively centrally planned economy it matured to a more open economy from his time and is now the growth engine for the world economy for the past ten years”*.

It remains to be seen how the changing focus of China and other APEC countries towards greater social responsibility and sustainable objectives will affect the market and its ability to stay at the forefront of manufacturing competitiveness. For now it appears that British companies continue to seek the services of these countries as they are still considered financially advantageous to be suppliers and manufacturers of British design. Yet as the move towards sustainability and social improvement impacts these costs, it will be interesting to see whether in the future China can

remain competitive; whether manufacturing will return to Britain or be sourced elsewhere in the global marketplace.

## 2.2 Cross-Cultural Business

### 2.2.1 Culture: definition, dimensions and implications

Research provides many interpretations of what 'culture' is and what it constitutes. Early definitions include Linton; *"A culture is a configuration of learned behaviours and results of behaviour whose component elements are shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society"* (1945, p 32). Later, Useem et al, expressed culture as *"the learned and shared behaviour of a community of interacting human beings"* (1963:169), concurring with Linton that the behaviour is both shared and learned by particular groups of people. Hofstede (2001) defined culture as *"the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another"* and cites the definition of culture by Kluckhohn (1951) as *"patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups"*, which includes historical, traditional ideas and values. This idea of people transmitting patterns of ideas and values through their behaviour is also supported by Kroeber and Parsons (1958).

Hofstede's definition of culture being 'software of the mind' is much cited in contemporary research and is still the fundamental basis of his own current research. His philosophy is that *"one's mental programs lie within the social environments in which one grew up and collected one's life experiences"* and concludes that culture is learned, not innate, and is a collective phenomenon, also influenced by heredity and learning from previous generations (2010 p 5-7). Hofstede et al (2010) present culture as being part of the mental programming; it sits somewhere between human nature (basic, fundamental needs and feelings we all share as human which is inherited i.e. fear, anger, joy) and an individual's personality (unique to each person, partly inherited, partly learned). Hofstede (1993:89) notes that *"Culture is a construct; that means it is not directly accessible to observation but inferable from verbal statements and other behaviors and useful in predicting still other observable and measurable verbal and nonverbal behaviour. They do not "exist"; they are tools for analysis which may or may not clarify a situation"*.

The epistemological evolution of Hofstede's theories was developed further by data from the China Value Survey (Michael Bond et al, 1987) which explored and defined the basic values for Chinese people and Minkov (2010) through the World Values Survey. Over a period of exploration,

translation and development, Hofstede defined six fundamental dimensions of culture; Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Masculinity vs. Femininity, Individualism vs. Collectivism, Long vs. Short Term Orientation (from Bond, 1991) and Indulgence vs. Restraint (from Minkov, 2010); The GLOBE Study (Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness project, published in 2004, House et al [see Appendix A. iv.]). House et al (ibid) undertook a long-term study into leadership effectiveness, which focused on sixty two societies and examined, tested and theorised leadership effectiveness, subject to its relationship with societal and organizational culture. For the GLOBE Study, culture was defined as a set of psychological attributes, which could be applied societally or organizationally as *“shared motives, values, beliefs, identities, and interpretations or meanings of significant events that result from common experiences of members of collectives that are transmitted across generations”* (House et al, 2004, p 15)

In summation, culture can be defined as encompassing the norms, values, beliefs, and attitudes of a group of people, which is built up through shared experiences, historical influences, traditional values and practices. The culture of a group of people or society develops in reaction to a variety of internal and external influences and many of its dimensions have passed down through generations. Hofstede’s dimensions of national cultural differences were applied to this study, in which the main focus was a study of global leadership, but expanded to include national and organizational cultures. The conceptual dimensions increased to nine; the power distance and uncertainty avoidance dimensions were maintained, collectivism split into institutional and in-group collectivism, masculinity-femininity became assertiveness and gender egalitarianism and the measure long-term orientation became future orientation. Humane orientation and performance orientation were also added.

Practitioners are aware that ‘cultural differences’ exist, but are not always sure what culture is and what to attribute to it. Measured, informed reflection and adjustment is likely to be needed in order to work within a different culture and respond effectively to it. As people are shaped by and act according to their own particular values, beliefs and communal practices and influences (what they know), culture is very personal and intrinsically part of what they are. This fact needs to be acknowledged and respected by both sides of the exchange in order to operate effectively and get the most out of the interactions as they occur.

### 2.2.2 Britain - Culture

The historical foundations of British culture have been defined over centuries by migration to and from the British Isles and point of political conflict throughout its history. In the fourth and fifth centuries migrants from north Western Europe migrated to Britain. This wave of settlers from Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, France and Rome mixed with the resident Britons and Celts, bringing Christianity and forming the basis of Anglo Saxon English culture (Stenton, 1971). Despite succumbing to Norman control in 1066, the Anglo Saxon cultural identity and beliefs prevailed; the Norman accounting procedures which enabled the compilation of the Domesday Book along with the legal and societal structure laid out in the Magna Carta (signed by King John in 1215) *“laid the foundations for an infrastructure based on democracy, rule of law and commercial acumen”* (Ashkanasy et al, 2002). Westward migration then continued with the colonisation of Ireland, whilst the English also followed the Spanish and Portuguese in pursuit of trade in the East. Further, defeating the Spanish Armada in 1588 *“marked the ascension of English naval power. This allowed the island nation to begin the colonial expansion that underpinned its economic success in the centuries to come. For the next 200 years, England embarked on a massive colonial occupation and social migration”* (Ashkanasy et al, 2002, p 29).

When reflecting on the historical relationship between ‘globalisation’ and ‘Empire’, Magee et al (2010) emphasise the significance of mass migration of 50 million Europeans to the New World between the mid-nineteenth century and the First World War, of which 13.5 million were British. With improvements in transport and communication, this migration continued into the second half of the twentieth century to countries such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and the United States. They discuss the profound consequences of this movement, noting that *“emigration was a force for global economic growth, integrating labour, commodity and capital markets to an extent never previously seen”*, although they caution that *“white settlement led to the widespread dispossession and oppression of indigenous peoples, as well as the racialisation of the social order the polarising effects of which were felt powerfully at the time and still resonate today”*.

Cannadine (1999) asserts that *“it remains a generally held belief, not just in Britain but around the world, that class, like the weather and the monarchy, is a peculiarly and particularly British preoccupation”*., which also alludes to the concept of societal order as discussed by Magee et al (above). Throughout its early history Britain maintained a traditional, feudal aristocracy. Cannadine {ibid} describes a series of political battles throughout history resulting in class conflicts as *“the balance of power shifted decisively and irrevocably between one defeated class on the way down and another triumphant class on the way up”*. He believes that *“Britain retains*



*intact an elaborate, formal system of rank and precedence, culminating in the monarchy itself, which means that prestige and honor can be transmitted and inherited across the generations”.*

Indeed, Britain maintains a strong aristocracy to this day with a monarch as Head of State alongside strong democratic parliamentary system.

Magee et al (2010, pp 6-7) moot the advent of a “*British World economy*” which arose from the “*uneven process of globalisation*” from which barriers to integration emerged and “*complicated cross-societal economic activity*”, specifically; cultural, ethnic and/or religious (differing values, beliefs, expectations); informational (e.g. knowledge of context); political (laws and tariffs designed to protect trade etc.). They argue that “*the spread of neo-British communities reduced all three barriers thereby facilitating trade, investment and further rounds of migration between the United Kingdom and British settler societies overseas*” and thus skewing trade towards those seen as ‘British’. These predominantly English speaking ex-colonies have developed Western economies and make up the Anglo Cluster societal culture group, as defined by Gupta and Hanges (GLOBE Study, section 10, House et al 2004, p 183).

Ashkanasy et al (2002, p 33) point to the Anglo Cluster of the GLOBE study (House et al, 2004) being “*a modern legacy of the vast power of the British Empire, based on an Anglo-Saxon culture that developed in England in the early centuries of the First Millennium. The cultural values of the English have spread across the globe and now the Anglo Cluster comprises of some of the most advanced and democratic economies in the developed world*”. These values include secular tolerance, a robust legal infrastructure and naval power. They note that “*these values underlie all the countries of the Anglo Cluster, giving them a sense of confidence and power hitherto unknown in history*”.

The results of the GLOBE study present an interesting insight into the cultural makeup of the Anglo Cluster, of which Britain is an integral part and overriding influence. Although the study explores leadership styles within cultures rather than cultures per se, Dorfman et al (2012) point out that “*national culture indirectly influences leadership behaviors through the leadership expectations of societies. In other words, executives tend to lead in a manner more or less consistent with the leadership prototypes endorsed within their particular culture*”.

Reviewing the GLOBE data, Ashkanasy et al conclude that the societies within the Anglo Cluster are Performance-Orientated and male dominated “*that value individualism and paradoxically, gender equality*” (2002, p 38). Further, “*they also desire to become more loyal and committed to family life and value collective rewards, although (this) is not reflected in practice*”. The authors conclude that leadership styles in these countries would ideally be charismatic and inspirational, yet demonstrating a participative style. Looking in more detail, Anglo Cluster societies scored mid-

range in most dimensions regarding societal practices, yet scored highly on Power Distance (PDI) and low on gender egalitarianism. They allude to the historical basis of these findings:

*The high emphasis on authority, power distance and status in this cluster is a result of the promulgation of the British Empire as colonies battled between their paradox of maintaining their Motherland practices and forging their own identity in hostile environments. Despite this cluster being quite liberal, in its endorsement of gender roles, its members still perceive themselves to live in a male dominated society.*

Ashkanasy et al (2002, p 33)

Regarding societal values, Ashkanasy et al (2002, p 34) note that the Anglo Cluster scores highly on values of Performance Orientation, Humane Orientation, Family Collectivism and Future Orientation, whilst scoring low on Power Distance. They conclude that the performance orientation “*can be traced back to the Protestant mentality of the British as they established their colonies and trade routes through the New World*” and note that even today, “*U.S.A. and (White) South Africa strongly endorse achievement, especially in the pursuit of material wealth*”. Some of the more notable judgements regarding the Anglo Cluster include: “*(it) does not have or want an over emphasis on group loyalty and collective interests*”; “*(it) emphasises performance and looks towards the future*”; “*Anglo Cluster countries feel moderately assertive, but feel there should be less reliance on formal rules and procedures and more equal power distribution*”; “*(it) believes that there should be more equality for women and a greater humane orientation*” (Ashkanasy et al, 2002, p 35). Although the above results give picture of the cultural traits of a cluster in which the British are included, it has to be acknowledged that there will still be significant differences between these nations. In a study of perceived cultural characteristics of different countries by Peabody (1985), participants indicated that “*the English are relatively non-assertive*” whereas the Americans are seen as highly assertive.

Hofstede ([www.geert-hofstede.com](http://www.geert-hofstede.com)) discusses the detail of British culture based on the results of his 6-D Model (dimensions of culture). Identifying the historical social structure/class system which has prevailed in Britain for centuries, (as described above by Cannadine 1999 and Magee et al, 2010) he notes that “*the (low) PDI score at first seems incongruent with the well-established and historical British class system and its exposes one of the inherent tensions in the British culture – between the importance of birth rank on the one hand and a deep seated belief that where you are born should not limit how far you can travel in life. A sense of fair play drives a belief that people should be treated in some way as equals*”. He also evaluates Britain’s high Individualism (IDV) score, saying that “*the British are a highly Individualist and private people*”. He believes that they are brought up to think independently and define their own contribution to the world, although also notes “*a much discussed phenomenon is the rise of what has been seen as rampant consumerism and a strengthening of the ‘ME’ culture*”. This may go alongside the high score for

the Indulgence dimension, which, although denoting a society which views life with optimism and positivity, has within it people who put an emphasis on leisure time and “*act as they please and spend money as they wish*”. Hofstede et al (2010, p 33) noting that the individualistic values of England and Scotland “*could be recognised centuries ago*”, is alluding to its development as a national concept throughout history. Discussing the origins of the power distance dimension, they also note that “*there seems to be a relationship between language area and present-day mental software*” and that “*those European countries with Germanic language roots who remained ‘barbaric’ during Roman times such as England tend toward a low power distance score*” (2010, pp 82-84).

As noted above regarding a high Performance Orientation score, the British are a Masculine society driven for success and it can be seen how this can have developed from the nation’s historical activity. Hofstede considers this another paradox within the British culture, which can be confusing to those outside:

*A key point of confusion for the foreigner lies in the apparent contradiction between the British culture of modesty and understatement which is at odds with the underlying success driven value system in the culture. Critical to understanding the British is being able to “read between the lines” What is said is not always what is meant.*

Hofstede ([www.geert-hofstede.com](http://www.geert-hofstede.com))

Hofstede (ibid) also comments on the British score on Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI), which is low:

*As a nation they are quite happy to wake up not knowing what the day brings and they are happy to ‘make it up as they go along’ changing plans as new information comes to light. As a low UAI country the British are comfortable in ambiguous situations - the term ‘muddling through’ is a very British way of expressing this. There are generally not too many rules in British society, but those that are there are adhered to (the most famous of which of course the British love of queuing which has also to do with the values of fair play).*

Contemporary Britain is a multicultural society in which many different cultural and ethnic groups live side-by-side and, as it has through history, the UK continues to experience the influence of other cultures as a diverse range of different nationals come to settle there. Mainly due to its current membership of the European Union (EU) which allows freedom of movement for its citizens between member states and also a stable economy and the good prospect of employment it has enjoyed over the last three decades, the number of migrants coming to settle in the United Kingdom has risen significantly since the 1970s. The Office of National Statistics (ONS) shows that in the year up to June 2016 284,000 EU citizens immigrated to the UK, the largest recorded number and the report states that “Immigration of Bulgarian and Romanian

citizens continues the upward trend seen over the last few years and in 2015 Romania was the most common country of previous residence” (White, ONS, 2016). Alongside this were 289,000 non-EU migrants. The report also predicts that the population of the UK will rise by 9.7 million in the next 25 years. Currently, 37% of the citizens of London were born overseas.

It can be argued that in contemporary British society, the social structure and class system (noted by Hofstede *ibid* and Cannadine 1999) is still alive and well although it has changed over the last 70 years since World War 2. The Great British Class Survey (January 2011) was based on the theories of Pierre Bourdieu (1984) .aimed to link economic capital (job, income) which people believe to be an indicator of their class, with cultural and social capital, in order to gain an insight into the social makeup of contemporary Britain. The survey concluded that there were seven existing ‘classes’ in British society; the Elite, with high levels of all three capitals and significant economic capital which sets them apart from others; The Established Middle Class, members of which have high levels of all three capitals but less than the Elite and whom are ‘culturally engaged’; The Technical Middle Class, a new small group with high economic capital but less cultural engagement; New Affluent Workers, whom are young, with medium economic capital but high cultural and social capital; Emergent Service Workers, comprising of mostly urban individuals with low economic capital but has high levels of 'emerging' cultural capital and high social capital; The Traditional Working Class, who score low on all capital; the Precariat, who are the lowest on all capitals and considered “*deprived*” and who live “*precarious*” lives. Interestingly, the Survey found that “*twentieth-century middle-class and working-class stereotypes are out of date. Only 39% of participants fit into the Established Middle Class and Traditional Working Class categories*”. Further, “*the traditional working class is changing. It's smaller than it was in the past. The new generation are more likely to be Affluent Workers or Emergent Service Workers*”.

To get a picture of contemporary UK values as identified by its citizens, we can look to the national values survey (NVS) by the Barrett Values Centre (2013), who summarised the findings of their survey thus:

*Citizens of the UK have a strong set of relationship values that influence how they treat others and how they wish to be treated. Having close relationships and connections with others is extremely important to them. They need to feel a sense of love and belonging. If these needs are threatened or not met they will experience anxiety about not being accepted or not being loved. Finding a sense of meaning in their lives is also important to them. Their values show: meaningful close relationships with others are important to them and are central to the decisions they make; kindness, empathy and consideration are crucial to their interactions with others; they seek to ensure that people are treated justly and fairly; they have a fun-loving approach to life and enjoy sharing good times; they appreciate freedom and autonomy and prefer not to be reliant on others.*

Barrett Values Centre (2013)

### 2.2.3 China - Culture

Presenting their view of the Chinese cultural make-up, Wang et al (2003, p 19) state that *“Western and Chinese cultural values have different origins. The West has nurtured the concept of relative social equality. The entire Chinese social system is based on inequality, where values have contingent meanings within different social contexts”*. Leung (2008, p 185) proffers that Chinese culture is most characterised by *“its high collectivism and power distance”*. Further, he notes that *‘many Chinese indigenous concepts, such as face, harmony, guanxi (interpersonal connections), renqin (compassion), and paternalistic leadership, can be traced to these two broad cultural dimensions’*.

Confucianism is an influence which is often discussed; it is an ideology which historically has had a profound influence on Chinese social values and social structures, which in turn influences relationships inside and outside of business. Confucius (551-479 BC) philosophised that the stability of society hinged on unequal relationships. He defined the ‘wu lun’, consisting of five ‘cardinal’ relationships, which have mutual and complementary obligations. Lui et al (2015) discuss how Confucianism is still relevant in the Chinese business context today:

*Confucianism is widely regarded as a moral philosophy, expressing the ethical significance of the family/social system. It has been the major source of morality in China for two thousand years and people are today still looking for ways to apply it to restore the moral foundations of society.*

(Lui et al 2015, Appendix A.v.)

Confucius believed that ‘order’ in relationships and people knowing their status and abiding by it was critical to a stable society. Each party had an obligation to the other based on their status within the relationship and unlike in other cultures, inequality was the basis on which stability was founded. People were seen a member of a family unit, rather than an individual and looking at the data provided by the IBM survey, Hofstede et al (2010, Chapter 4) support this position, with China featuring low on the Individualism Index (IDV) and following the collectivist position, rated values such as filial piety important.

Building on this in contemporary business literature, Wang et al (2003, p 23) note that *“in Chinese culture, collectivism defines individual status. Individuals are not defined by independent status as such but by their dependant relations within the social hierarchy”*. The collectivist nature of Confucianism, because it places collective interests over individual values and interests, sees the family relationship or ‘familial collectivism’ at the core of its concept. Filial piety is also crucial

within this structure, based on hierarchy and loyalty to the family. However, when translated to structures outside the family, this can lead to *“the dark side of Confucianism”* -dominance and subordination (Ip, 2009). Discussing the paternalistic nature of Confucianism, Ip notes that this characteristic *“restricts or suppresses and individual’s freedom to choose”*.

When applied to a company structure, it *“creates an environment that hampers development of the individual’s capability to make choices (and) breeds a habit of passivity on the part of employees in the workplace because employees are habitually deprived of the opportunities to take responsibilities, as well as make choices and decisions”* Ip (2009, p 473). In turn, he notes that the authoritarian dimension, which often co-exists with paternalism in a *“Confucian Firm”*, can create a command-and-control organisation, which stifles open debate, creativity, initiative and may render employees *“compliant”* and *“unthinking”*. This can sometimes impact on the messages being conveyed by Chinese company employees; The EU SME Centre (2013) advises that individuals should *“never assume that ‘yes’ means ‘I agree’ or ‘let’s go for it’”*. They note that this is a cultural element within Asian cultures; this response suggests understanding, but not necessarily agreement. It can also be a mechanism in order to keep discussions harmonious and its meaning *‘depends on the context and the person who is saying it’* (2013, p 15). It may also be that a polite ‘yes’ can mean many things, but the employee hasn’t got the authority to commit beyond a certain level (Gao, 1998 and Fang and Faure 2011, Appendix A. vi. and vii).

In Hofstede’s investigation of the IBM survey, China and countries which have experienced a Chinese cultural influence (Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, etc.) occupied upper-medium and high PDI (Power Distance Index) zones. He notes that their people *“accept and appreciate inequality but feel that the use of power should be moderated by a sense of obligation”* (Hofstede 2010:80-84), reflecting some of the characteristics of a historical Confucian ideology, part of a ‘cultural inheritance’, which has been defined over thousands of years of being ruled from a single power centre. Having reviewed business literature which discusses Confucianism however, Lui et al (2015) caution that the concept, its meaning and its influence have been discussed in divergent ways by different writers: *“Many Confucian concepts have multiple meanings and have been interpreted in different ways at different times by different people... like most very old philosophies and religions, the understanding of what is ‘Confucian’ has changed over time”*. They note the ‘high’ Confucian culture of the original texts and a ‘low’ interpretation which is *“easy-to-digest”* and has been influenced by other religions, ideas from outside China and a variety of writers and publications.

Evidence suggests there is still interplay in the Chinese workplace between traditional values and modern economic drivers. Leung (2008) defines the challenge as needing *“to decipher which*

*pattern of behaviour Chinese people will exhibit*", in part influenced by the importance that is put on material gain. He also offers an interesting perspective in the Chinese 'transition' for international businesses, and offers three dimensions for foreign businesses to consider:

1. *"Broad generalizations about Chinese people are useful only as a starting point"*. He notes the divergent *'traditional'* and *'competitive and direct'* approaches and advises that *"knowing about face and guanxi is certainly useful"* but is not applicable in all situations.
2. *"Social behaviour is likely to be influenced by traditional norms and values"* while *"economic behaviours are likely to be driven by contemporary social ethos and institutional characteristics"*. Thus, there are the influences of both national culture which influences the natural make up of individuals, as well as the culture of organisations themselves.
3. *"Given the pervasiveness of materialism in contemporary China, many management practices based on intrinsic motivation (e.g. participative management, empowerment, job enrichment, knowledge and quality management) may not fare well"*. In short, if there is no tangible gain attached, they may not find such an approach well received.

Leung (2008, p 186)

It is important to note that the rate with which China developing and changing has a significant impact on the experience of the practitioner when engaging within the Chinese context. This has presented businesses the challenges of a 'dual society'; the prevalence of traditional ways still influences the older generation and modernisation and Westernisation which is more evident in the young. Managing, communicating and interpreting events within this environment is testing and challenging for all, particularly those new to the cross-cultural experience.

Fang et al argue that modernization has changed Chinese values and culture. They discuss changes in communication patterns brought about by modernisation and open interaction, with *"the emergence of a new Chinese communication style which diametrically differs from the traditional one (yet) old Chinese values and communication style have not disappeared but coexist within the same Chinese culture with a new set of values and a new communication style"*. (2011, p 331, Appendix A. vii).

Changes in culture were explored by Zhang et al (2014); they note that the change in China towards market-orientation and the new social security system *"reshaped Chinese national culture"* and believe that this leads to a more equitable distribution of power between employees and managers (2014, p 311). Their study concluded that China was still scoring high on long-term orientation dimension, with power distance reducing significantly between 2014 and previous

studies and individualism experiencing a substantial increase. In conclusion, they assert that *“the current national profile is dramatically different from the one that was estimated in 1994 in many dimensions”* (2014, p 318).

Discussing social reform and China’s new welfare system, Xiong (2009, p 38) observed that since opening up and economic reform *“Chinese people have begun to hungrily absorb new knowledge, values and any advanced elements of Western culture”* yet *“Chinese government and people never lost their own consciousness when they utilized Western technologies to serve their own purposes”*. Further, he notes that after 30 years of reform, *“the whole country has changed profoundly in many aspects of social life, including people’s social values and lifestyle”*.

When learning about other cultures and preparing to work with different cultural backgrounds to our own, many consider a non-judgemental attitude vital. Hofstede urges that such study should come from a standpoint of cultural relativism, noting that *“one should think twice before applying the norms of one person, group or society to another”* (2010, pp 26-7). Wang et al (2003) note that lack of cultural understanding between both Western and Chinese partners can lead to problems and there is often a culture of *“mistrust and risk”*. They advocate *“a proper understanding of cultural acclimatisation is a prerequisite”* and that *“nine out of ten (business negotiations) fail because of ‘misunderstandings’”*. Lewis (2006) advises learning the language of the context, developing empathy in order to effectively interact and making efforts to understand that which has shaped people and their culture: *“We can widen our horizons not only by learning foreign tongues but also by cultivating empathy with the views of others; standing in their shoes in their geographical, historical and philosophical location; seeing ourselves from that perspective”*. Lewis (ibid) also believes we need to be introspective; it is not just understanding other people’s cultural perspective and make-up, but also knowing our own. These statements encourage looking beyond our own cultures when judging the cultural thought-process and behaviour of others, which may be a consequence of their own, different culture. The advice that we approach cross-cultural engagement with empathy and objectivity is perhaps one step towards successful engagement and communication with those from other cultures.

Literature suggests that a country’s culture may well evolve as wider contextual changes take place. It is hoped the participant voices contributing to this study help us understand the role of context and culture in the modern Chinese setting. The value comes from their contemporary in-context engagement experiences which when documented and shared, can contribute to the evolving picture and epistemological argument.



### 2.3 The Engineering and Design Industry: Global Product Design (GPD)

Eppinger and Chitkara (2006, pp 26-30) draw from a Deloitte research Study in 2003, citing its findings to demonstrate the rapid shift towards global product development (GPD). In a study of North American and Western European manufacturers, *“48% of the companies surveyed had set up engineering operations outside of their home region. In fact, 22% of the North American manufacturers had already located engineering functions in China, as did 14% of Western European manufacturers polled”*.

International links are vital to the daily practice of many British product design and engineering companies. Where once these industries were national in nature and often ‘in-house’ operations, distributed working has now become common practice. Hence, companies from this sector cannot ignore the importance of understanding contextual issues in order to function effectively in the cross-cultural scenario.

Buckman (2005) highlights how innovation and political developments over the last few decades have changed the physical working paradigm for design engineering and product design. One such development is the emergence of the ‘global product’, which has *“different parts produced and marketed from a number of countries around the world”* (2005, p 27). To illustrate, Buckman presents the findings of one study, which revealed that *“a particular brand of car sold in America was produced in nine different countries”*. The ‘footprint’ of this example spread from the U.S., to Europe, Asia and the Far East back to the Caribbean. In support of this shift, Castells (1996) also presents these changes in working practice, stating that *“with the ever-increasing globalization of design and manufacturing, teams are less likely to be co-located, and are increasingly having to work across time and space in virtual teams”*. Undoubtedly over the last twenty years the internet has changed the way that design and engineering teams work and much of the design development process has become virtual by nature. Schirato et al (2003, p 46) affirm this development: *“technology is one of the most prominent of the many areas used to characterize globalization, and the new communication technologies in particular are seen by many people as having radically changed the way the world works”*. Eppinger and Chitkara also note the change to a practice of *“global collaboration”*:

*A new paradigm has emerged whereby companies are utilizing skilled engineering teams dispersed around the world to develop products in a collaborative manner. Best practice in product development (PD) is now rapidly migrating from local, cross-functional collaboration to a mode of global collaboration.*

(Eppinger and Chitkara 2006, pp 22-30)

## Chapter 2

Larsson (2003, pp 153-160) states *“there is a growing trend in creating virtual global teams, in which collaboration proceeds across time zones as well as across geographical, cultural and functional borders”*. Further, *“work in global virtual teams places demands on both physical and virtual environments that support these geographically dispersed groups”*. Coming from the perspective of the very specific needs of the design industry, Larsson voices concern that the direct communication between individuals is an intrinsic part of the design process, which needs to be upheld in some way:

*Since design involves communication and interaction between individuals and groups in complex social settings, the social character of design activity is not separated from the technical results. Rather, it is continuously present in the meetings, discussions, arguments, debates and interpretations that make up the intricate weave that is design.*

Larsson (2003, pp 153-160)

Supporting Larsson's stance that the interactive and communicative process of design between various members of a team is both critical and distinctive to the discipline, Dym et al (2005, pp 103-120) consider the unique characteristics of design and outline the following attributes and/or skills which a good design engineer needs to have, including the ability to think as part of a team and communicate through design language and through this discuss, debate and question design decisions through a *“social process”*. As summarised by Dym et al (ibid): *“today's engineer must design under - and so understand at a deep level - constraints that include global, cultural, and business contexts”*. When investigating the distributed working paradigm, Evaristo et al (2004) exposed the following dimensions which define and affect the performance of distributed teams; trust, perceived distance, level of dispersion, synchronicity, types of stakeholders, complexity, culture, type of project, systems methodology and the existence of policies and standards. When reviewing their research on the dynamics of working practice, problem solving and communication within distributed projects they noted that understanding diversity and culture played an important part, stating that *“it became clear both sides made mistakes, partly caused by assumptions about each other's backgrounds and cultures”*.

Undoubtedly, distributed working relies on a number of factors in order to function correctly, efficiently and sensitively. Ensuring that a set of individuals working on a project can communicate and liaise effectively is essential and considering the comments of Larsson (2003, above) and Dym et al (2005); this is particularly the case when dealing with product design and design engineering, where for example there could be more than one solution to a problem, the opinions of a number of team members from different inter-dependant disciplines need to be sought and in some cases, direction is not based on quantifiable data, but on individual opinions and even creative instinct. If transferring this form of working practice into a distributed,

transnational paradigm, then the national and learned culture of those individuals in the team may well have an impact on the patterns and success of communications.

## 2.4 Gaining knowledge & developing support mechanisms

### 2.4.1 Global skills

In 2008 Gordon Brown, then British Prime Minister, stated that Britain needed to compete in the “*global skills race*”. In the context of his speech, he was alluding to the need for technical or vocational ‘hard’ skills such as those taught through apprenticeship schemes and other industry-related schemes. The British Council (2011), investigating the needs of today’s employers defines ‘global employability skills’, including ‘the ability to work effectively with customers, clients and businesses from a range of different countries and cultures’. Bourn (2011, pp 559-571) investigated the interpretations of and approaches to ‘global skills’ by education institutions and contributing agencies in the UK and his findings identified three emerging patterns:

*Through looking at how the term ‘global skills’ has been interpreted within a UK context, (research) has identified three trends that underpin much of current policy and practice. These trends of economic, intercultural dialogue and understanding and critical global perspectives are not mutually exclusive, and combinations of all three can be seen in some programmes, activities and policy statements.*

Bourn (2011)

Bourn and Neal (2008, p 11) analysed the range of initiatives currently shaping ‘global skills’ and the ‘global dimension’ in engineering subjects in UK Higher Education and noted the varying interpretations of these issues. They noted that “*the transferable skills and competencies identified as being relevant to sustainable development are very similar to the professional skills demanded by business*” Central to their argument is the need to align the varying skill sets and gain some cohesive provision which encompasses the essential skills and perspectives needed to work effectively in the current global market. This equates to provision needing to be balanced, to ensure that concepts such as sustainability, ethical development and responsibility, equality and poverty reduction are addressed, whilst maintaining “*the inclusion of ‘soft’ professional skills – such as communication, presentation and interpersonal skills, critical and analytical skills, creativity, innovation and adaptability*”. Concepts such as ‘relationship-building’, ‘problem-solving skills’, ‘critical thinking’ and ‘flexibility of workforce’ are regularly occurring themes throughout literature which discusses global issues, managing global teams, global skills education, etc. When mapping the key dimensions and skills which education needs to address in order to fulfil the

'global dimension of engineering', Bourn and Neal (2008, p 16) define four main themes: Social, Environmental, Professional and Management skills, Business and Enterprise skills (2008, p 16).

In December 2011, The British Council and Think Global funded a report entitled 'The Global Skills Gap', which canvassed major British companies to find out what global skills they were looking for and how they considered current provision. Findings concluded that:

*Three-quarters (75%) of board- and director-level executives and CEOs think that "we are in danger of being left behind by emerging countries unless young people learn to think more globally". A similar proportion (74%) are "worried that many young people's horizons are not broad enough to operate in a globalised and multicultural economy".*

The British Council et al (2011).

A survey of UK businesses by The British Council et al (2011, pp 3-4) reveals that "for job seekers, knowledge and awareness of the wider world is more important than degree classification or A-Levels" and that the vast majority of business leaders feel schools should do more develop global thinking. Further, the report concludes that findings suggest that "higher attainment isn't enough to make UK school leavers more attractive as potential employees" and "that it is more important for young people to be able to think globally than do well in their exams". Brown et al (2008, p 27) concurred, noting:

*Levels of qualification were important as a measure of 'hard skills' in identifying appropriate candidates, but for virtually all jobs the primary focus was on behavioural competences (soft skills) including initiative, perseverance, time-management and team-working. (Further), employers did not view technical (hard) skills as a major problem. They could easily provide training for those who needed to get up to speed with the latest technical developments. Their major concern was finding suitable people with the appropriate behavioural competences to 'get the job done' or 'take the business forward'.*

Ultimately, in order to continue to thrive and compete, the UK will need to ensure that all its workforce continued to inclusively develop and be flexible, in order to keep up with developing vocational skills sets, as well as ensuring that both the 'hard' and 'soft' global skills are underpinned. In the recent past, research has shown that this has not been the case. The UK Treasury identified in 2004 that those with higher qualifications were more likely to receive investment in further training. The Advanced Institute of Management Research (Benedettini et al, 2010) investigated the UK manufacturing industry and how it was faring in the on-going global economic downturn. The research concluded that it was vital for the workforce to receive continued skills training, in order for the UK to maintain its position within the global manufacturing economy. Critically, however, some research points to training provision lacking inclusivity:

*Evidence shows that employers do spend significant amounts on training ... however, the training that employers do provide is least likely to be received by those with lower skill levels. (Further) when employers do train they are most likely to invest in those already with higher-level qualifications. An employee with a level 4 qualification is over four times as likely to receive training from their employer than an employee with no qualifications at all.*

HM Treasury (2004, p 26)

#### **2.4.2 Training and education for cross-cultural interaction**

Hofstede (2005, pp 358-262) believes that the ability to communicate cross-culturally can be learned. Knowledge is gained by learning about and understanding different cultures and “*while we may never share their values, we may at least get an intellectual grasp of where their values differ from ours*”. Hofstede et al (2010, pp 419-420) suggest that “*the acquisition of intercultural communication abilities passes through three phases: awareness, knowledge and skills*” (Appendix A. viii). Considering this advice, any future training and/or support for practitioners engaging in cross-cultural working practice may well encompass these three phases.

Thomas (2008, p 191-240) investigated the challenges of overseas assignments on participants, in turn considering the cross-cultural training which was provided by employers. He observed: “*the contradiction that cross-cultural training is effective but that firms fail to avail themselves of it is a long-standing issue*”. Further, he finds that “*firms tend to select individuals for overseas assignments based on the individual’s ability to fill a technical requirement*”.

For those companies who do choose to engage in cross-cultural training for their employees, there is a growing supply of consultancies who will offer such training through short courses. Content ranges widely from overt to subtle cultural considerations (Daniels et al, 2002). Hofstede (2005) notes; “*in the booming market for cross-cultural training, there are courses and books that show only the sunny side: cultural synergy, no cultural conflict. Maybe that is the message that some business-minded people like to hear, but it is false*”. If true, this questions the effectiveness of this form of off-context training. Some employers, such as Rolls Royce, have a targeted in-house structure of training for their employees, which demonstrates the importance they place on this issue and the steps they’ve taken in order to train their workers effectively. Cultural training is also provided by the British Government, through the Department of UK Trade and Investment, and bodies such as the Britain China Business Council (CBBC) for companies and individuals who actively seek this type of support.

Reviewing the research of Li et al (2013) investigating strategies for developing ‘global leaders’, Winn (2013) discusses some of the ways by which companies can develop “*cultural intelligence*”

(CQ) in their employees. He stresses the benefits of actually experiencing the culture first-hand – *“cultural exposure”* – noting that *“companies utilize international experience as a primary vehicle for developing global leadership skills and cultural intelligence”* (2013, p 11), although also cautions that the speed and success of this can vary from person-to-person. Winn uses the dimensions of head (cognitive CQ), heart (motivational CQ) and body (behaviour CQ), as outlined by the research of Li, Mobley and Kelly (2013), in order to frame his discussion. Li et al (ibid) discussed the benefits of going to the different country on assignment and described culture shock not as a barrier, but *“a unique learning experience that challenges assumptions of the expatriate's own culture”*, indicating that the challenge helps develop confidence and subsequently individuals are able to implement *“culturally adaptive behaviours”*, although they do caution that this takes time.

Practice-based learning, whether in education or in employment, may be an appropriate method of addressing the issue, as it provides context and is likely to be of benefit to both sides. However, this may not always be logistically possible, so alternative ways of delivering the appropriate knowledge may need to be considered. Based on the evidence, it could be argued that some form of cultural understanding for individuals engaging in transnational working is critical to the success of distributed projects and business interaction, thus it needs to be addressed at some point in the overall, long-term process from education to employment. Finally, the effectiveness of any training needs be understood. If Hofstede is correct that *“studying culture without experiencing culture shock is like practicing swimming without water”* (2010, p xiv), the most effective methods by which businesses effectively prepare and support their employees needs to be considered and the most effective pedagogy identified.

## 2.5 Theoretical Exploration

### 2.5.1 Universal or Context-Specific Practice

This study tests the theory of universal management practice and whether or not a set of rules will work in all cultures and contexts. It attempts to use current data in order to understand whether Western practices will work within the context of China with some adaptation; further, it explores whether issues go beyond national culture and are brought about and shaped by wider contextual issues or a set of conditions which are distinctive to China.

Hofstede asserts that as management practice is about people and they are shaped by their culture, accordingly *“management practices in a country are culturally dependent and what works*

*in one country does not necessarily work in another*" (1994, p 7). In the Journal of Organizational Dynamics (1999) Hofstede refers to the research of D'Iribarne in the 1980's (published in 1993); the research involved a study of three production plants in three different countries (France, the Netherlands and the U.S.) which Hofstede describes as demonstrating *"the historical stability of the national component in management"* (1999, p 35) and pointing to the historical past of these three cultures having a continued influence on feelings and thinking patterns within those countries. Hofstede notes that D'Iribarne *"refutes a superficial belief in the universality of management fads by showing how life in each country follows a line of historical continuity that affects many facets of society, of which management is one"* (1999, p 38).

In an appraisal of the history and development of international management, Hofstede (1993) noted that *"management as the word is presently used is an American invention. In other parts of the world not only the practices but the entire concept of management may differ"*. In early management science research, it was believed that the practices of management were universal and could be applied to all situations internationally, which the majority of this research emanating from the United States. Reviewing cross-cultural management research from 1971-1980, Adler (1983) noted that *"less than 5 per cent of organizational behaviour articles in top American management journals focused on cross-cultural issues"* and of those who did address cross-cultural issues, most were single-culture studies and *"less than one per cent investigated the interaction between employees of different cultures"*. The conclusions of Adler's review of the American-centric management research of this period supports the stance that American management journals were too slow to respond to internationalisation and how this changed management practices and instead, U.S. publications and researchers of this time focused in the majority on the 'domestic environment' and did not address culture or understand the implications of an entirely different context to management practice. Those which did refer to engagement between cultures tended to discuss a single organizational setting or the organisational practices of two countries, but were generally less comparative in nature and accounted for a very small proportion of articles. In 1983 Adler was advising journals, scholars and management professionals to *"question whether paradigms developed in and for the domestic U.S. environment are applicable outside of the United States"*. Concluding the appraisal of relevant literature to date, Adler deduced that both funding and methodological complexity had impeded cross-cultural research, although some editors and authors may have chosen to *"reflect a strictly parochial point of view"*.

In order to understand the dynamics of the cross-cultural engagement activity, it was imperative to ascertain the importance of *context* to the study and how integral it was to the entire engagement process. Patton (2015) presents the epistemology of context and its effects as being

critical to qualitative research, in order to understand the effects of external factors on what is happening in a particular situation: *"sensitivity to context is central to qualitative inquiry and analysis"* (Patton: 2015, p 9). He defines context as including: *"attention to and understanding of important nuances of culture, politics, economy, history, geography, resources and institutions"*. Corbin and Strauss define context in a pragmatic terms as being sets of conditions *"in which problems and/or situations arise to which persons respond through some form of action/interaction and emotion (process), and doing so it brings about consequences that in turn might go back to impact on conditions"* (2008, p 8). The paradigm or structure of this research (as illustrated above) fits effectively into the contextual framework as presented by Corbin & Strauss, notably that:

*...any explanation of experience would be incomplete without (a) locating experience within the larger conditional frame or context in which it is embedded; and (b) describing the process or the on-going and changing forms of actions/interaction/emotions that are taken in responses to events and the problems that arise to inhibit action/interaction. We also look for consequences because these come back to be part of the next sequence of action.*

Corbin et al (2008).

Hofstede (1983, pp 75-89), called for management research to consider the impact of individuals' cultural background and consider local cultural conditions: *"Most present-day management theories are 'ethnocentric', that is, they take the cultural environment of the theorist for granted. What we need is more cultural sensitivity in management theories; we could call the result 'organizational anthropology' or 'management anthropology'"*, a position supported by Evaristo et al (2004). The belief in a set of practices that will work in all contexts has been increasingly challenged in the last two decades. Aharoni and Burton (1994) sought to question the validity of a generalizable universal management theory through a call for papers to the management science community. From the results of their inquiry, drawn from eleven papers which have all modelled and analysed the theory in different ways, they note that *"truly universal rules are very few; yet there are some models and approaches which can be adapted and applied internationally"* (1994, p 1). In summarising the findings of their investigation, the authors noted that *"culture is an important variable, making rules less universal than is sometimes assumed. (Further) our knowledge about managing is much more likely to be specific to a culture, an institution or a given organization or firm than we were accustomed to recognizing and acknowledging"*.

Thus, their research supports the stance that both culture and context are relevant to how one manages in a certain situation. Thomas (2008, pp 10-11) identifies the 'global manager' existing in a sphere where he or she has to deal with four critical dimensions: economic, legal, political and



cultural. He states that *“culture is singled out as uniquely important to international management”* for three main reasons:

1. To a great extent, the economic, legal and political characteristics of a country are a manifestation of the nation’s culture.
2. Unlike the economic, legal and political aspects of a country, which are observable, culture is largely invisible.
3. The practice of management focuses largely on interpersonal interactions. Managers of a team distributed across different countries have to deal with people who are culturally different.

Deresky (2011, p 105) supports this assertion, underlining that ignoring cultural differences can leave a company ineffective and can be detrimental to business relations. From a management perspective, she notes that *“an understanding of the local culture and business environment can give managers an advantage in competitive industries”*. Further, if the issue is addressed, *“cultural awareness enables them to develop appropriate policies and determine how to plan, organize, lead and control in a specific international setting”*. Deresky (2011, p 131) also notes that globalization is changing how Chinese and other Pacific Rim countries manage their businesses. With more Chinese students travelling abroad and foreign workers coming in, she observes that management styles are becoming more Westernised, less ‘human-centred’ and more profit-centred and individualistic. However within this, she notes that the new generation was still *“holding on to their Confucian values”*, something which should be noted by those planning to engage. (Lui et al, 2015; Leung, 2008).

For some understanding of how important context is to the activities at the focus of study, we can look at research in other areas with theory which may be applicable to this research. For example, Alexander investigated comparative primary education across five countries (England, France, India, Russia and the United States). His argument was that *“children’s educational experiences are shaped not just by classroom circumstances and the decisions of the teacher, but also by the school values and organization, by local pressures, national policies and political control and – sufficing all these – by culture and history”* (Alexander, 2000). Considering the role of culture within the wider context of education, he defends his stance that cultural, educational and social ‘systems’ are entwined and notes that *“life in schools and classrooms is an aspect of our wider society, not separate from it: a culture does no stop at the school gates”* (2000, pp 29-30). He concludes that education is not a ‘value-neutral vehicle’; and states that *‘effective teaching arises from attention to cultural, psychological, epistemological and situational considerations, not*

*merely organizational and technical considerations'*. If this is the case, then there is potential to consider this view as transferable into the business context- the office, the meeting room and the individuals within these.

### 2.5.2 Context within this study

It was critical to understand the importance of *context* to the study and how integral it was to the entire engagement process, as detailed within the literature review (Patton, 2015; Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Alexander, 2000). Looking at the proposed conceptual framework of the enquiry and reflecting on early data collection results, it was clear that the data was moving in a direction which was conforming to this proposed structure as set out by Corbin and Strauss:

1. *There are conditions*: In this study, the conditions could be defined as the existence and identification of 'differences' be they cultural, business process-related, behavioural, logistical, geographical, lack of control, and issues arising from the make-up of the particular context.
2. *There are inter/actions and emotions*: e.g. lack of confidence, questioning intentions, misinterpretation of actions, application of defensive mechanisms, stress, tension between parties.
3. *There are consequences*: poor project outcome, loss of business, inability to complete planned activities in the time available, dissolution of business partnerships/relationships, etc.

It was also hypothesised that culture was an important dimension within the study and that cultural differences were likely to be part of the framework when exploring the causes of challenges within the cross-cultural engagement and this is supported by the literature (Hofstede, 1983, 1994, 1999; Evaristo et al 2004; Aharoni et al, 1994; Thomas, 2008; Deresky, 2011). Culture is also an important element which helps shape the context of the situation.

Writing for the Asian Pacific Journal of Management (2007) Hofstede affirms that "*the crucial elements of the management process show strong continuity over time, but differ from one country to another, as a function of the local culture*" and further "*because management is always about people, it is part of the culture of the society in which it takes place*". He notes the differing values, historical influences, resources and practical issues between countries which make the theory of 'universal' management 'naïve' and asserts that "*universal solutions to management problems do not exist; they would presuppose one universal type of human being in one universal type of society*". Through research conducted with MBA students across 15 countries, Hofstede et

al (2002) and Hofstede (2004) detailed the most important perceived goals for business leaders across those countries (Appendix A. ix. for table of results), which Hofstede concludes *“reads like a recipe for conflict in globalization projects in which top management from one country tries to run businesses in another”* (2007, p 5).

Hofstede attempts to define ‘Asian Management’ but cautions that care needs to be taken not to homogenise what is ‘Asian’ or ‘Western’, as specifics differ between countries. However, the research served to highlight the differences between ‘Western’ and ‘Asian’ management styles as related to the epistemological understanding of cultural dimensions. Hofstede noted that *“the Collectivism versus Individualism distinction has profound implications for the kind of management that is appropriate within a culture”*; further, Asian countries scored highly for the Power Distance dimension which had a significant but lesser contribution to the results as did Long Term versus Short Term Orientation (which has its roots in Confucianism) for which China scored highly for long-term orientation. The paper highlights the differences between management practices and aims in differing countries and emphasises the message that there is not a universal management style which fits all situations; much of this can be attributed to epistemologically-established cultural dimensions and thus the situational context of an event.

Childs (2009) discusses a *“contextual evolution”* arising from China’s economic growth and subsequent rapid change which has seen Chinese management evolve through *“material, ideational and institutional”* aspects as a response. Noting the rapid development that China has seen, it is easy to visualise Child’s argument that management in China is not set or static; this may then support the stance that practitioners would best be served learning ‘in-situ’ in order to understand the nuances of Chinese business, how the country is changing and the effects of a changing context on Chinese business and its interaction with overseas countries per se. This is supported by Zhang et al (2014, p 321); noting the *“dramatic changes”* experienced by China which affect its culture, they assert that managers need to *“understand the dynamics of national culture to implement effective management practices”* and that *“changes of cultural dimensions have to be corresponded with changes in management practices”*.

Reviewing the literature it is clear that there are a number of factors which make Chinese businesses and the individuals within them function differently to what we understand or experience in the UK. Its history, values, changing political stance, liberalisation, geographical location, resources, people and culture all inform its context. This research seeks to establish that context does affect how business is conducted cross-culturally in a Chinese setting; consideration for the context of a situation as well as cultural sensitivity, cultural intelligence (CQ) and understanding of individuals and why we perceive them as ‘different’ will all improve the chances

of a successful outcome. Further, it seeks to establish the best pedagogical strategy in order to develop young/early-career practitioners to function in a different context is to allow them to experience it first-hand.

### 2.5.3 Experiential Learning within context

Hofstede (1994) asserts that management practices are culturally dependent. If it is correct that the context and its constitute dimensions need to be considered in order to effectively function and manage projects in this culturally diverse setting, then it can be argued that practice within the context needs to adapt to whatever it presents in order to be successful in its objectives (Aharoni et al 1994,). If understanding context is important to managing and improving performance within it, then a learning pedagogy that takes place within that context and provides the appropriate knowledge of the context by experiencing and working within it could theoretically be advantageous. Practice-based learning was discussed by Winn (2013) as appropriate in this situation as it provides the much-needed context.

Experiential learning is learning by actual experience through participation in real-life activities. Learning by experience is *“the central process of human adaptation to the social and physical environment”* (Kolb: 1984:31). Models of experiential learning include:

- Dewey (1938): the nature of experience is continuous, with experience, inquiry and reflection being intrinsic elements
- Piaget (1999): learning is a lifelong process of discovering knowledge, assimilation and accommodation of learning from experience and knowledge
- Lewin (1951): a four-stage cycle of action research with encompasses reflection, planning, action and observation

Kolb (1984, p 1) notes that *“our survival depends on our ability to adapt not only in the reactive sense of fitting into the physical and social world, but in the proactive sense by creating and shaping those worlds”*. Further, investigating the models presented by research, he concludes that effective learning through experience encompasses four key abilities:

*Concrete Experience abilities (CE); Reflective Observation abilities (RO); Abstract Conceptualization abilities (AC); and Active Experimentation (AE). Practitioners must be able to involve themselves fully, openly and without bias in new experiences from many perspectives in order to execute effective reflective observation (RO). They must be able to create concepts that integrate their observations into logically sound theories (AC), and they must be able to use these theories to make decisions and solve problems (AE).*

Kolb (1984, p 30).

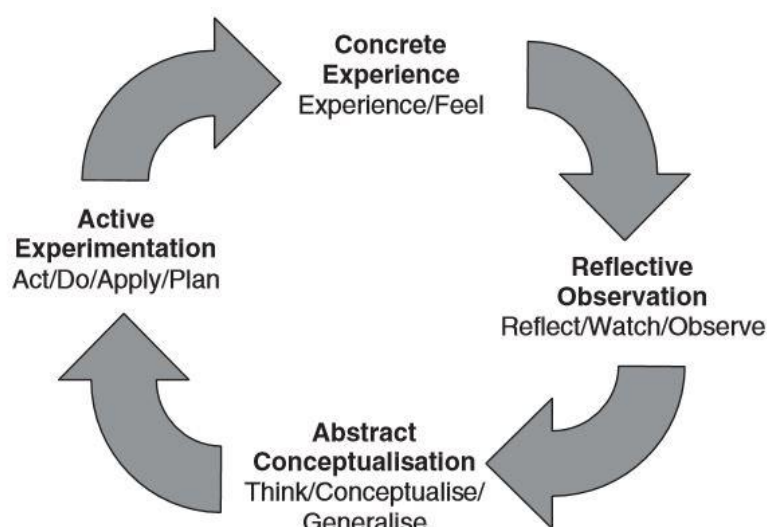


Fig 1:  
Kolb's Experiential  
Learning Theory

The Experiential Learning Theory as presented by Kolb is certainly challenging for practitioners in the cross-cultural situation, as it requires a cyclical process of experience, perception, reflection (also Lewin, 1955), forming explanation and theories and action in-context. Kolb cautions that experiential learning process relies on diverse abilities which can be “*polar opposites*”, between which the practitioner continually needs to choose.

Exploring the development of cultural intelligence (CQ), Li et al (2013) concluded that experiential learning in an overseas setting helped develop CQ in global managers, and level of CQ increased in line with time spent in context. They also determined that when leaders adopted a divergent learning style this development was strengthened: “*Divergent learning style emphasizes concrete experience and reflective observation*” (Li et al, 2013, see Appendix A. xii), which resonates with the findings of Kolb (1984), who suggests that the greatest strength of this learning style lies in imaginative ability and the awareness of meaning and values (Kolb, 1984; see Appendix A x, xi).

Due to the focus of this study being on practitioners from the design engineering and manufacturing industries and adaptation of management to suit context, it is interesting to note that Kolb's exploration of learning styles when relating to career/profession deduced that engineers tended towards a convergent, active learning style which is opposed to the divergent learning style which was presented by Li et al as being conducive to development of CQ in across-cultural setting (see Appendix A. xiii). As noted:

*Professional orientation shapes learning style through habits acquired in professional training and through the more immediate normative pressures involved in being a*

*competent professional. In engineering, for example, this involves adapting a rigorous scientific and objective stance towards problems. In nursing, it may involve compassion and caring for the sick. In management, much of the professional orientation centers on decisiveness and a pragmatic orientation.*

Kolb (1984, p 88).

Kolb also presents other factors as shaping an individual's learning style; personality (introvert/extrovert), education and how this shapes an individual's learning style and task-based forces, notably *"the effective matching of task demands and personal skills (which) results in an adaptive competence"* (1984, p 93). When considering adaptive competency, the benefits of a divergent learning style in order to develop CQ needs to be considered, specifically its propensity to valuing skills: *"being sensitive to people's feelings and to values, listening with an open mind, gathering information and imagining implications of ambiguous situations"* (1984, p 94).

In summation, Kolb's model of experiential learning and the factors presented above may help us understand the data presented by participants and form a picture of competency and deficiency in practice which is currently arising from the cross-cultural events detailed. If the practice-based learning style is relevant as it provides context to the management process (as detailed by Winn 2013) then the experiential learning pedagogy and its overriding factors are likely to apply.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### 3.1 Qualitative Research Design

The methodological approach of this study aimed to move from the anecdotal, informal data presented by practitioners of the design and engineering fields who had engaged with manufacturers and sourcing companies in China and formalise the vehicle by which their experiences were logged.

A methodology needed to be designed that would fit this objective; in a given situation which fits into a set of parameters (in this case being industry related, time-span related, sited similarly – i.e. within the context of China) each practitioner is experiencing a set of circumstances and putting meaning or understanding to that situation related to their own background and thought processes. It is hypothesised that culture gives rise to ‘differences’ which affect practitioners in the cross-cultural setting; they have to interpret these events in order to operate, then respond. The aims of their engagement cross-culturally may be similar, but do different individuals experience the same challenges and react in the same way? Corbin et al believe that *“there is no one reality (but) each person experiences and gives meaning to events in light of his or her own biography and experiences, according to gender, time and place, cultural, political, religious and professional backgrounds”* (2008, p 10). They argue that such research can be described as ‘constructivist’, where *“concepts and theories are constructed by researchers out of the stories that are constructed by research participants who are trying to explain and make sense out of their experiences”*.

This study is qualitative in approach, as this fits within the objectives of the research – notably, to record, interpret and react to the experiences of individuals from a specific industry, to understand what is going on in a given situation. Cresswell (2014, p 4) defines qualitative research as *“an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem”*. Corbin and Strauss (2008) present the following definition and suitably define reasons for why this type of study is suited to a qualitative approach: *“there are many reasons for choosing to do qualitative research, but perhaps the most important is the desire to step beyond the known and enter into the world of participants, to see the world from their perspective and in doing so make discoveries that will contribute to the development of empirical knowledge”*.

Patton (2015:46) prescribes that strategies or qualitative design include:

1. Naturalistic inquiry
2. Emergent design flexibility
3. Purposeful sampling

Having no personal experience of the context in focus, there were no pre-conceptions from the research point of view and the subject and points of interest were entirely directed by the participant, without it being controlled or manipulated by the experiences of the researcher. As themes and key dimensions emerged, there was flexibility which allowed these areas to be further explored through the data collection process, which were then used to inform the theoretical development. The participant sampling for the study was purposeful, not random (see participant information, 3.4); there were specific participant criteria in order to get the 'rich data' that was needed to build the picture of events for the study. However, naturalistic inquiry did not fully fit as a concept within this study, as the data collection was not taking place within the context in question, but was dealing with reflection and cognition after the fact, when the participant was back in their natural, familiar setting. However, the context of the engagement was being described and reflected upon by participants and integral to the data being offered, so maintained its place as fundamental to interpreting and analysing events: "*context envelops and completes the whole*" (Patton, 2015, p 69).

### 3.2 Ethical Considerations

The ethics guidelines of the University of Southampton were adhered to for this thesis. A proforma seeking consent for the research was submitted stating subject, intent, use and collection of data and ethical considerations to be applied to the study, and other supporting documents were approved by the ethics committee prior to the start of the research (see Appendix D). The premise for all data collection and use of data was that informed consent had to be sought from each participant. To ensure participants were informed of the nature and use of the research, a Participant Information Sheet was carefully drawn up, making clear the boundaries of the research, data use, their role and rights as participants and to cover handling and use of the data.

An important consideration was confidentiality of both the participant and companies around which the data focussed. It was critical that participants felt free to be open, explicit and factual about their experiences in business, without running the risk of compromising their own individual standing within that company, the reputation of their company within their sector or putting at risk the relationships which had been built between companies around which the data



focussed. It had to be considered that specific sectors of such industries are quite close and many companies operate within similar networking and practice-related circles, so careful write-up of the data was important. In order to achieve this, the following measures were taken:

- Individuals were given pseudonyms to avoid identification or linkage to the data.
- Companies were anonymised; no names of establishments, businesses etc. within the sector are to be identifiable through the data.
- Any other form of data which risks the confidentiality of a participant, other agent or identifying a company is to be anonymised or treated according to ethics guidelines.

The rights of an individual participant who had volunteered to take part in this research also had to be clearly defined. As well as gaining *informed* consent, the participant had the right to withdraw participation at any time within the process and also had the right to refuse to answer any questions they were not willing to address. These rights were made clear through a consent form, which was signed by each participant at the start of an interview. The researcher has read through and made clear the boundaries of use of the data and the rights of the participant prior to commencement of any data collection interview.

Participants were also asked for approval for the discussion to be Dictaphone recorded prior to the commencement of any interview. How the data would be stored, who had access to it and what it would be used for were also discussed with the participant. This information has formed part of the informed consent' procedure, which was approved by those providing data via a Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form with each participant at the beginning of each interview.

### 3.3 Data Collection Method - Interviews

*Direct quotations are a basic source of raw data in qualitative inquiry, revealing respondents' depth of emotion, the ways they have organized their world, their thoughts about what is happening, their experiences, and their basic perceptions. The task of the qualitative research is to provide a framework within which people can respond in a way that accurately represents their points or view about the world, or that part of the world about which they are talking.*

Patton (2015, p 26).

With this advice in the forefront, being mindful of the need to collect rich data and the fact that observation within the relevant context was not viable, the options for data collection included questionnaires, interviews and/or focus groups. A method of data collection needed to be identified which allowed practitioners freedom to express their thoughts and convey their

experiences, without being led by the questioning. It was also important however, that the researcher was able to introduce particular themes of interest in order to elicit evidence from key areas, but again without leading to participant to a specific conclusion (see Appendices B and D).

One-to-one interviews were identified as the most appropriate method by which to collect data. Finding appropriate participants which fitted the sample profile was proving challenging and ultimately it was not going to be feasible to find a suitable number of individuals within a small geographical area who were willing and/or able to give their time for the study. Clearly this would be become more problematic if it was expected that respondents would have to travel a distance to take part in the study. The introduction of a mixed-methods design was considered, with the utilisation of questionnaires, telephone interviews or Skype interviews being considered as potential options in order to support the one-to-one interview method. However, a mixed-methods process of data collection involving questionnaires was ruled out for the following reasons:

- There were already limited numbers of participants fitting the required profile for participation, thus it had to be ensured that the numbers which were available were converted and retained. There is the risk that an emailed or posted questionnaire could be ignored or de-prioritised thus the sample number would be significantly limited. It was also more likely that the data which could be gathered would be limited by the method; there may be issues related to interpretation and/or a risk that questions would not be framed sufficiently to cover the potentially wide field that was being researched.
- Questionnaires did not afford the opportunity to respond to data communicated by the participant and explore potentially significant themes at the time of recall, which could result in confusion, loss of context, compromising the 'flow' of data and taking up more time from participants.
- Disparity of data afforded by the different methods was a risk, resulting in compromising validity and quality of data.
- The inability to develop the 'rapport' with the participant (as noted by Patton).

Interviews were clearly the most appropriate method of data collection as this technique did afford flexibility and the opportunity to respond to key words or themes put forward by participants in a flexible and responsive approach, with interesting points explored further at the time of interviewing, on a one-to-one basis. Due to logistical/distance constraints and time constraints set by participants, the data was collected via a 'one-point-in-time' method, namely one interview per participant in one visit (Patton 2015, p255).

Holsteim and Gubrium (edited by Silverman 2011, p 149) argue that the interview process is *“interactionally active”* and *“no matter how hard interviewers try to restrain their presence in the interview exchange and no matter how forthright interviewees are in offering their views, these are interactional accomplishments rather than neutral communicative grounds”*. The experience of the data collection phase of this research resonates with this view; whilst being interviewed participants continually sought a response from the interviewer and looked for some kind of understanding as part of the relationship which is being built through the data collection process. Remaining completely impassive and not responding with at least some form of affirmation or encouragement to continue with their stories is challenging. The participants are sharing personal experiences the interpretation of which reflects themselves as individuals and it was important for them to see that what they wanted to say had some degree of relevance or interest to the researcher.

Throughout the interview process, it was important to find a way to encourage participants to continue to share their stories and go deeper into their thoughts and experiences, whilst not lead them in any way. The researcher needed to probe deeper into particular subjects and clarify statements/concepts if needed without suggesting any particular stance in response. As noted by Holsteim and Gubrium (edited by Silverman 2011, p 152) *“interviewing is unavoidably interactional and constructive”*.

As the data collection phase progressed, the importance of the rapport and relationship between researcher and participant became a significant factor in gaining rich data, particularly where geographical distance was involved. It was important that the value of their experiences and its significance to the study was relayed to participants prior to data collection; after initial discussions regarding the worth of sharing their knowledge and its role in informing others who would be in the same position as them, participants were keen that their data was used for a worthwhile cause. Participants often acknowledged and appreciated that a researcher had gone to greater lengths to meet them and record their views. They felt that this afforded a weight to their views within the study and communicated to them that their experiences were important and that they were being taken seriously. The consequence of this is that the researcher was often allocated more quality time by the participant to conduct the data collection interview and participants felt compelled to divulge their experiences and views in full and rich detail. On reflection, it can be noted that some of the most valuable and contributory data has arisen from participants with the more complex logistical requirements, which justified the extra effort from the researcher.

### 3.4 Participants

The design of the research required the purposeful sampling of participants. Purposeful sampling is defined by Patton as “*selecting information-rich cases to study, cases that by their nature and substance will illuminate the inquiry question being investigated*” (2015, p 264). The basic/essential profile of participants demanded:

- Practitioners of the engineering and design subject areas fitting the industrial profile (as detailed in Chapter 1).
- Individuals from the UK who have engaged with businesses in China at least once, in order to source parts and/or commission manufacturing for products or parts (this is to specifically define the sector in question and to define the types of activities for which the individuals were utilised in the Chinese context).
- The engagements were ideally of a short-term nature, which may vary between days and weeks. It was not intended that data be collected from practitioners who had relocated to China for long-term assignments.
- Participants were also sought from a range of employee levels from relevant businesses; owners/directors, upper management, lower management, shop-floor and student, in order to get a diverse range of views and experiences.

There are many companies within the industries described who have employees fitting into the defined basic profile, but identifying and making arrangements with those available for the data collection was exacting. Three of the biggest challenges were:

- Finding significant participants who fitted into the appropriate profile who were willing to participate in data collection
- Geographical distance between various participants.
- Time restrictions on access to relevant participants.

Due to these restrictions, it could be argued that the strategy was actually “*purposeful random sampling*” (Patton, 2015, p 268); there are many potential cases which could be studied, but few available that were able to circumvent these challenges. Thus there is an element of randomness to the sample; differing company profiles within the essential boundaries of the sample, varying levels of education and experience, individuals from different stages of their careers, varying levels of exposure to the context and the timescales from last exposure. When designing the instrument of data collection (namely the interview questions), these elements which prescribe to

purposeful random sampling were actually used as another potential source of data, with descriptive questions pertaining to the education level, career attainment, experience of individual participants, exposure to different cultural contexts all built in to the first stage of the interview. Data from this could also be used at analysis stage, if deemed appropriate in order to substantiate the case for the theoretical underpinning.

Participants were sought and located via various methods; LinkedIn (business networking website), existing contacts, colleague's contacts, networking events and students of a UK University's Design and Engineering department. Categories included:

1. Upper Management, Director, Business Owner (SME)

These participants tended to have more industry experience and in most cases, had participated in multiple cross-cultural engagements within China for business purposes. They held a greater level of responsibility for projects and were often instrumental in developing and maintaining business relationships for the longer-term benefit of their company. Category 1 individuals mostly had travelled more extensively and had more experience of different cultures. Their educational background varied, both at level achieved through study and on subject relevance, although the higher proportion had industry-relevant qualifications.

2. Lower Management, shop floor employee (skilled)

This category encompassed practitioners with a greater level of current 'hands-on' experience of their industry, tending to have a skilled background and being select for assignment due to their 'hard skills' profile. Generally these participants had started their careers from a non-university education background, but within qualifications in line with the requirements of their industry (at level 4 and below). Some had worked for their companies for an extended period and worked their way up to a lower-management or line management level, whilst others had completed undergraduate study at a later date within their company, in order to progress in their careers and had achieved lower management level ('early career practitioners'). Participants in this category tended to have responsibility for the successful completion of part of a project rather than a project in its entirety, giving them some level of responsibility although they were not accountable for an entire project. Generally these individuals had less experience of working cross-culturally and would have gone to China maybe once or twice for their companies.

### 3. Student/intern (undergraduate).

Participants within this category were current university undergraduates, studying relevant industry-based subjects; they were all under 25 years old. These participants had gone to China for a more extended period of a few months for a placement/internship to work to gain industry experience. Cross-cultural travel experience varied between participants. The focus of their engagement activity was to gain experience; although they had some responsibility within a team for part of a project, the responsibility was limited. For this study, these participants are classed as the next generation of 'early career practitioners'.

Participant profile data is contained in Table 1 (below). It contains the participant's pseudonym to identify, as well as company profile, background and engagement/event details (number of, location):

<b>PARTICIPANT :</b>	<b>POSITION:</b>	<b>SECTOR:</b>	<b>NO OF VISITS</b>	<b>DISTRICT (CHINA):</b>	<b>EDUCATION</b>	<b>PREVIOUS TRAVEL</b>
ADAM	COMPANY DIRECTOR/OWNER	SME – (DESIGN, MANUFACTURING)	ONE	UNSPECIFIED (GUANGZHOU?)	HNC/HND	GLOBAL CULTURALLY DIVERSE
ALLIE	BUSINESS OWNER	SME -2 PEOPLE/START-UP	TWO	GUANGZHOU	DEGREE	GLOBAL CULTURALLY DIVERSE
DAN	TECHNICAL SALES	DESIGN/MANUFACTURE (HEAVY INDUSTRY) MEDIUM-SIZED, GLOBAL	ONE	UNSPECIFIED	BTEC/HNC UNDERGRAD BENG (TOP-UP) - CURRENT	WESTERN USA/EUROPE WESTERN CULTURE PROFILE
FAYE	JUNIOR – INTERN (MARKETING)	PRODUCT MANUFACTURING (MEDIUM SIZED, GLOBAL)	ONE (3 MONTHS)	ZHUHAI	CURRENT UNDERGRAD (MANAGEMENT & DESIGN)	EUROPE
GILES	DESIGN PROJECT ASSISTANT	PRODUCT MANUFACTURING (MEDIUM SIZED,	ONE (EXTENDED – 9 MONTHS)	ZHUHAI	CURRENT UNDERGRAD (DESIGN)	GLOBAL CULTURALLY DIVERSE

	(PLACEMENT)	GLOBAL)				
GLYN	COMPANY OWNER	INDUSTRIAL – (SME) NATIONAL	ONE		DEGREE	WESTERN EUROPE/USA
GREG	DESIGN PROJECT ASSISTANT (PLACEMENT)	PRODUCT MANUFACTURING (MEDIUM SIZED, GLOBAL)	ONE (EXTENDED 9 MONTHS)	ZHUHAI	CURRENT UNDERGRAD (DESIGN & MANAGEMENT)	WESTERN
*HELEN (PILOT)	DESIGN INTERN	COMPUTER HARDWARE	TWO (ONE EXTENDED)	SHANGHAI	DEGREE	-
JAKE	CUSTOMER PROGRAMME MANAGER	DESIGN & MANUFACTURING (LARGE GLOBAL COMPANY)	MULTIPLE	UNSPECIFIED	APPRENTICESHIP DEGREE	GLOBAL CULTURALLY DIVERSE
LUKE	COMPANY OWNER/DESIGNER	PRODUCT DESIGN SME	SEVERAL (FOR SOURCING/ MANUFACTURING)	NINGBO (PLUS OTHERS)	APPRENTICESHIP IN FURNITURE DESIGN	GLOBAL CULTURALLY DIVERSE
MARTIN	SKILLED, SHOP FLOOR	HEAVY INDUSTRY GLOBAL	ONE	WU HAN	NVQ LEVEL 3-4	UK/EUROPE
NEIL	SENIOR BUYER	LARGE RETAIL COMPANY (PRODUCTS) NATIONAL.	70+	SHANGHAI BEIJING + OTHERS	DEGREE	GLOBAL CULTURALLY DIVERSE
OWEN	MIDDLE/UPPER MANAGEMENT (PROJECT MANAGER)	DESIGN & MANUFACTURING	MULTIPLE	SHENZHEN	DEGREE, POST-GRAD	GLOBAL MAINLY EUROPE
ROB	SHOP FLOOR TEAM LEADER (SKILLED)	HEAVY INDUSTRY GLOBAL	TWO	WU HAN	BTEC/NVQ – LEVEL 4	MAINLY EUROPE 1X THAILAND
RYAN	QUALITY ENGINEER (TRAINEE	(SME) PRECISION COMPONENTS	ONE	SHANGHAI	HNC/HND, DEGREE P/T MASTERS	UK & EUROPE

	MANAGEMENT , UNDERGRAD				-CURRENT	
SAM	OPERATIONS MANAGER (SME) SMALL TEAM	PRODUCT DESIGN & MANUFACTURE	MULTIPLE	SHENZHEN	SCHOOL (LEVEL 3)	MAINLY UK LIVED IN SINGAPORE

Table 1: Participant Profile Data

A sample size of 16 was reached, consisting of individuals who represented the different positions in the company structures and reflecting different levels of experience within the industry and of operating cross-culturally. The sample includes four SME owners, four senior managers, two a junior management level, two at shop-floor (skilled) level and four students/interns.

### 3.5 Interview Schedule

Questions varied slightly according to the participant category; for example, category 1 participants had more responsibility and tended to lead projects or to set up business relationships (see Appendix D). They were questioned on their experiences regarding the concept of professionalism, also how they would support young practitioners or employees engaging cross-culturally for the first time (within this context). Category 2 and 3 interview schedules varied slightly; students were asked their views about cultural content within education, whilst those currently employed full-time were questioned on company debriefing activity (see Appendix D).

The first set of questions in the interview schedule were to gather background information from the participants (see Table 1); these facts would help to identify the role and responsibility of the individual, as well help the researcher understand the 'worldview' of the participant, their experience of different cultures, the educational and professional/industrial background they came from as well as the level of responsibility they held for a successful outcome of their project. They were also asked when the engagement(s) took place and what their role was in the assignment. It was anticipated that this information may have a bearing on the results of analysis further along the study. The research is exploring participant experiences, reactions to, interpretation of and response to events; considering Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984), there may be dimensions related to the individual's background which has a bearing on this. As the interview process was designed as a set of one-off interviews with individual participants, it was useful to gather this background data within this single-chance data collection opportunity.



It was also imperative that participants were afforded the opportunity to drive the data in the direction which seemed important to them. Thus a key 'open-ended' question started the discussion on the experience; *"Can you tell me about your experience in China?"* It is not possible to present direction-free questioning when participants are taking part in a data collection process where they have given 'informed consent'. Part of the process of consent is providing the individual with a research question and brief synopsis of the aims of the research, which by nature elude to 'culture' and 'cross-cultural engagement' as being the central themes to the study. By understanding this, the participant is already at least partially aware of the type of data which is the focus of the researcher's quest.

At this point participants were encouraged to speak in general terms about their experiences and take the answer to this question in the direction they chose, but it was suggested they speak about whatever was pertinent to them, from start to finish of the engagement event (Appendix B. i). This open-ended question acted as the start point to a story of a set of experiences from participants; the researcher probed for further information as points of interest were shared which needed clarification or elaboration. Participants were encouraged to share their thoughts, reactions, feelings as events unfolded and to communicate their interpretation of events and what they thought was happening at the time.

Further questions targeted subject areas which the researcher wished to explore in light of background information, prior anecdotal points of interest and potentially relevant subjects arising from the literature review (see Appendix D for sample interview schedule). The main themes addressed by further questions included:

1. Training and support (from companies involved in the engagement process) prior to and during the project engagement event
2. Difficulties arising from the engagement and how they overcame these.
3. Cultural differences noted: impact, reactions to, challenges
4. Their perceptions of the Chinese as people and the relationships between groups of people
5. Working style of the Chinese companies and organisational/management style; adaptation required, responses to, implications of
6. Preconceptions of China, the people and Chinese working practices vs what they found when they went there
7. Differing concepts of business, professionalism and business style between China and the UK
8. Debriefing by company post-engagement

9. Reflection: what could be addressed or considered in order to improve project outcome and personal performance, thoughts on the experience, and (in the case of category 1 participants) how employees or early-career practitioners could be supported in such project events.

One point of note which emerged from the data analysis phase and development of the theoretical framework: it may have been useful to formally gather data on the location of the engagement within China in order to analyse the data from a regional cultural perspective. There was no specific question requesting this information; however, specific regional detail was given by the majority of participants during the interview process. Where known, it has been included in the table above in order to provide further data, but it has not been included within the formal analysis of the data. This decision was made due to the fact that it was not formally requested and considered at the beginning of data collection; and in order to limit the boundaries of the research to those specified at the beginning of the process.

Charmaz (2010, p 7) describes the interview as “*contextual and negotiated*”. The interviewing approach taken for this study resonates with much described by Charmaz as the “*intensive interview*” in order to gather “*rich data*”. It fulfilled many of the objectives that the ‘intensive interview’ set out to achieve, notably to:

- Go beneath the surface of the described experience
- Stop and explore a statement or topic
- Request more detail or explanation
- Ask about the participant’s thoughts, feelings and actions

Charmaz (2011, p 24)

However, the technique does not fully fit the profile of the intensive interview as defined by Charmaz because; the interviews were one-off and relatively short in comparison to Charmaz’s definition of ‘intensive’ – being from 30-75 minutes in duration, depending on the time constraints set out by participants. The data is from interviews transcribed and analysed only and doesn’t include other material such as observation, text, etc. or long-term collection methods. This method does though conform to Charmaz’s description of the nature of ‘rich data’, so thus could be described as ‘rich interviews’ rather than ‘intensive’:

*Rich data are detailed, focused and full. They reveal participants’ views, feelings, intentions, and actions as well as the contexts and structures of their lives. (2011, p 16).*

### 3.6 Recording data

All interviews were recorded using a voice recording device. As interviews were being conducted, the researcher developed a method of recording key themes, words of interest, expressions of interpretation or personal thoughts which could be relevant, directly onto the interview schedule itself, to aid recall at a later date. Once recorded, they were transcribed and later analysed. Participants were asked to agree to the interview being voice recorded via the ethics process, where they were notified of how this material would be used, by whom and for what purpose (see Appendix D for ethics forms).

One of the main difficulties which arose from the interview process was associated with venue for the data collection. The majority interviews were conducted within an area arranged by the participant, with particular consideration for the comfort of the participant and the venues were selected in order to inconvenience the individual as little as possible. Most interviews were also conducted during the working day, so in many cases it was preferable to the participant to conduct the interview either on their business premises or within reach of it. Several of the interviews had interruptions whilst the process was taking place, which could interrupt the flow of information. Background noise in some cases also made transcription of the data more difficult. A disadvantage when meeting participants within their workplace situation on a working day was interruption from employees, the telephone, etc. although obviously this was more convenient to some participants. Most of the other interviews were conducted within a quiet room organised by the researcher, with much more regulated conditions, providing better conditions in which to conduct data collection and the researcher could control and manage the environment.

### 3.7 Pilot Interview

A pilot interview was conducted with the participant 'Helen' in order to test the questions and ensure they gathered pertinent information for the study. The pilot demonstrated that the open ended, exploratory questions were providing the study with the relevant contextual description and insight, as experienced by the participant who had encountered the in-context situation. This early data also indicated that the wider contextual and cultural observations contributed to part of the overall experience, but also highlighted the important role of these themes within the workplace/business engagement experience. Further, it brought into focus the timeline of the engagement with the people and the context as a whole, from pre-contact preparation, through to the interaction itself and then longer-term planning. From this, the questions were designed to gather data regarding all these elements by giving more direction to specific areas after the open questions. The scope of the topic was potentially extensive and the open design of early

questioning could potentially focus on a broad range of different themes. Later questions were inserted in the process in order to prompt the researcher and ensure that all anticipated relevant areas were covered, if they had not been addressed via open questioning. Some of these questions were needed in order to expand specific themes with some interviews, but in many cases the topic areas had already been covered via open questioning (see Appendix B).

In the final interview schedule, there are also control questions at the beginning of the interview; the original pilot interview was tailored towards 'Helen' as a student; it was important to ensure the data differentiated between participants from different backgrounds – experience, industry role, etc. in order to map themes which were stronger from different participant profiles (Questions 1- 5; see Appendix B). There were also work-related/company questions which were not relevant to students, so were omitted from their interview schedule.

### **3.8 Data Analysis**

The data was analysed using a 'bottom up' approach (Myers, 2013 p 166); due to its exploratory nature and theory-building objectives it was important to be open to the participants driving the direction of the content and being free to articulate the events and thoughts around them from the stance of what was important to them. The theories which have developed as the data collection and systematic analysis stages took place were informed and shaped by the participants themselves.

A natural form of data analysis emerged, which was similar to the Interpretative approach noted by Silverman (2011, p 274-5) and taken from transcript form whilst following methods and procedures comparable to those defined below:

1. Read single transcript (note initial comments and ideas)
2. Generate initial themes (transform comments into themes)
3. Create an initial list of themes
4. Cluster themes (map themes into connected areas)
5. Create a list/table with superordinate themes and sub themes
6. Go to new transcript (repeat above process and refine list/table of themes)
7. Create a final list/table with superordinate themes and sub-themes

Each transcript was analysed and themes identified using the method identified in section 3.9; specific quotes relating to each theme were transferred to a template. When this process was completed, each sub-theme was looked at individually; all quotes across all the transcripts which

related to that sub-theme were transferred to a template for that individual theme and when analysed corresponded to one of five key overarching themes:

- a) People, Place and Culture: National/context-specific culture (elements and dimensions related to the context arising from how people think, act etc.) observed by participants. What participants note related to culture and how they interpret it.
- b) Culture in the workplace: Chinese organisational culture and business practice observed or affecting activity by participants.
- c) Adapting and Functioning in the Chinese Context: Working practice/workplace issues. Bringing in elements of b (above); relating to how participants work within these new boundaries or how they respond to them actively, for example, changing how they work within the Chinese context or adapting to it.
- d) Building Relationships: Discussion of and mechanisms for building relationships in order to develop trust, enhance confidence and improve communication.
- e) Training and Knowledge transfer: Mechanisms to support staff when on assignment and use of information (from the experience) after the assignment is completed. Mechanisms or developing staff and using industry experience to inform.

Theme 'a' noted instances related to the wider context; how society worked, cultural observations, behaviour of and interaction with people in societal situations. Category 'b' was looking at the more localised contextual picture, as observed and experienced by practitioners whilst in the workplace. The themes detailed in c and d proved to be particularly interesting and pertinent to the 'response' element of the theoretical framework (AE –Kolb, 1984) and emerged as data collection and analysis was conducted. Essentially, there were no questions directly asking about relationships and trust, but these concepts emerged and were explored at the time of the interview if alluded to by participants and arising from the other open-ended questions. The importance of these concepts developed through data collection and were specifically tracked and highlighted throughout the analysis stage.

The data is retrospective and each participant has told his or her story of their experience in the defined context; the study hopes to represent the events as described; reflection and emotive response, conceptualisation/construction of thought relating to the events and responding actions. The data analysis stage has identified patterns and themes or concepts which give an understanding of a shared yet individual experience. The method identifies with that detailed by Patton (2011, p 544) as 'Indigenous and Analyst-Constructed Patterns and Themes' (Appendix B i. for interview schedule and purpose behind questions and B ii & iii). This study has encompassed

both deductive and inductive analysis from the data. Patton (2011, p 541) defines these forms of analysis as:

- Qualitative deductive analysis: determining the extent to which qualitative data in a particular study support existing general conceptualizations, explanations, results and/or theories
- Qualitative inductive analysis: Generating new concepts, explanations, results, and/or theories from the specific data of a qualitative study.

This research does both; the analysis process aims to identify categories, themes and concepts related to the context and cultural setting of the participant's engagement experience within China which are noted by participants, being either dimensions which they could identify themselves as evident within the setting or as concepts which had an effect on their experiences. However, the development of the framework in order to understand participant interpretation of what is going on around them, what they are experiencing, how they respond with regard to their interpretation of events and what is affecting the success of their projects is essentially built as a response to the data which participants elect to communicate. Putting these elements together in order to describe the entire process is the fundamental aim of the research and drives the data analysis process. The second stage of data analysis (i.e. looking at each individual theme and sub-theme across all participants) attempts to take this inductive analysis and test each theme. This process seeks to ascertain whether; a sub-theme is identified by more than one participant; is evident across several participants; is reoccurring but in different forms, for example.

### **3.9 Identifying Themes**

For this study, over-arching areas of interest were first established in order to structure the data; much of this composition emerged early through both consideration of early anecdotal data and also via the pilot interview. At this point two main areas of interest emerged, notably the wider contextual picture (e.g. national cultural experiences and observations external to the workplace and organisationally-controlled events) and those with the workplace observed and experienced from within it.

As the data was collected, key words and phrases were identified which corresponded with themes and concepts covered by existing literature (Chapter 2) and which had been noted previously from both anecdotal data and a pilot interview. As more interviews were conducted subject patterns emerged from the language used by participants; these were identified, correlation was logged and from these the principle themes were formed. Key concepts are also identified quantifiably, i.e. by the number of participants who have provided data corresponding

with the theme. Themes with the larger quantitative footprint (at least 6/16) formed the body of the empirical findings, as events and observations related to these concepts were more justifiably forming a pattern in the data.

Examples of the development of themes using language and quantifiable occurrence are as follows:

Exploration of the context in Chapter 2 confirmed that culture was an important influence on the experiences of the UK practitioner, as it was such an intrinsic, deeply embedded part of the context. It was identified as a key element in the 'differences' experienced by practitioners and therefore often at the root of the challenges identified. Culture as a concept and its influence on the participant experiences both in the wider context and in the business interaction experience was directly explored through the data collection phase. Deconstructing the literature which discusses culture, its dimensions and influence () and highlighting key elements of the concept enabled related themes to be identified as they emerged from the data. In some instances, there was direct word/label correlation between the cultural conceptual element identified in the literature and the language used by the participant in the data; for example observations on the 'hierarchy' of a company structure was discussed by Wang et al (2003) and also emerged within the data of this study (detailed in the Empirical Data in section 4.2.2). In other transcripts this was not labelled directly, but described so that the correlation could be identified and logged with the theme.

Later in the process as more interviews were conducted and analysed, the concepts of improving communication and relationship building via direct contact emerged as important parts of the overall structure and as noted previously, became key to the longer-term picture regarding cross-cultural business strategy. This emerged as it was identified by 12 of the 16 participants, notably by those with more responsibility for projects in the long-term; consequently this theme recorded a large quantitative value. Key identifying words such as 'direct communication', 'face-to-face', 'direct contact', 'need to be there' (in context) linked these elements of data together as a theme.

These concepts also identified with elements which were discussed in Chapter 2; Hofstede (2010, p xiv) asserts that an individual needs to be within the context in order to learn and understand it; Larsson (2003) believed that direct communication was vital to the design process and its effective execution; Bourn (2011) emphasised the importance of relationship-building within the Global Skills 'soft-skills' set.

In another example showing the development of themes, Chapter 2 identified how China's membership of organisations such as APEC had led to more sustainable business development

and improved ethical standards within businesses. These wider developments and their implications can be evidenced from data highlighted in Chapter 4, as participants discuss their observations relating to changing standards in the Chinese workplace and the implication this has for project costs, for example. Quantity is not the main justification; 7/16 participants for example, discussed the implications of improved ethical standards for UK business. However, all three participants from an upper management profile who all had significant long-term responsibility for completion of projects in China all discussed this theme at length. This makes this theme worthy of discussion, but it has to be noted that further research with a larger sample from the same profile would be needed in order to establish this theme further.

These examples demonstrate that it was important for the researcher to be alert to language cues which coincided with themes and concepts which had emerged from the Literature Review, as well as the quantifiable measure which could be put to a theme in order to justify its relevance.

### 3.10 Conclude with participants

Due to the nature of the study and its design as a qualitative enquiry, it was important to be able to demonstrate confirmability of the conclusions. Shenton (2004) advises that:

*The concept of confirmability is the qualitative investigator's comparable concern to objectivity. Here steps must be taken to help ensure as far as possible that the work's findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher. The role of triangulation in promoting such confirmability must again be emphasised, in this context to reduce the effect of investigator bias.*

Guba (1981) addresses the naturalistic design of qualitative research and defined the following criteria in order to justify the trustworthiness of this type of study: credibility (in preference to internal validity); transferability (in preference to external validity/generalisability); dependability (in preference to reliability); confirmability (in preference to objectivity).

Patton (2015) discusses the analytical triangulation approach through 'review by inquiry participants' in order to achieve confirmability. Justifying the approach, he proffers that '*researchers and evaluators can learn a great deal about the accuracy, completeness, fairness, and perceived validity of their data analysis by having the people described in that analysis react to what is described and concluded*' (2015, p 668).

In order to achieve confirmability of the conclusions of this study and affirm the accuracy of the analysis through analytical triangulation participants were provided with a précis of the conclusion of this research and invited to respond. Written reactions from participants to the



précis of findings confirmed their views of the accuracy of the conclusions of the study and include: 'it certainly picked up on what we spoke about'; 'Your précis makes for an interesting read, especially as I can relate to many of the findings'; 'I think it is accurate, informative and useful'. Further benefit of this process is that participants can identify their role in the process, understand the value of their contribution and as a consequence the researcher can be confident that the study has accurately reflected the experiences of the participants.



## Chapter 4: Analysis & Empirical Data

This chapter presents the results of analysis of the qualitative data collected for this research. It presents the key themes, dimensions and concepts arising from the data, explores their meaning, their relevance to the subject and discusses what can be learned from this. The participants have given their time to communicate their experiences, thoughts and feelings which have arisen from cross-cultural interaction with Chinese companies and the study attempts to use their knowledge in order to add to current epistemological understanding and improve the experience for future practitioners.

The events discussed are from the personal perspective of the participant, so aspects of the actual physical event have been communicated, as well as an interpretation of what is happening, effects of or reactions to it, opinions, feelings, and constructed explanations (execution of RO and AC, - Kolb, 1984) by the individual. It is important when interpreting the data to differentiate between these different angles.

As outlined in the theoretical/conceptual description, the research findings will take into consideration the influence of context and culture on the experiences of the participants, as well as attempting to understand whether theory of universal management is relevant to this context.

### **Participant direction to open questioning**

Question 5 of data collection: “Can you tell me about your experience in China (both inside and outside the workplace setting)?” was designed as an open question in order to induce a response which was led by the individual, be it work, culture, people, business etc. By keeping this key question open to any subject it was anticipated that the participant could select what was important to them; this was likely to be a first-recall response which, it could be argued, was a subject which was at the forefront of their experience. Participants elected to steer his question into various conceptual areas; first reactions to the ‘tell me about your experiences in China’ question are highlighted in Appendix C. i.

It is interesting to note that the participants who are from either Upper Management levels within their company, or owners, who can be considered to have a greater level of responsibility for the success of a project and for whom the success of the engagement is critical, have answered the first open-ended question with reference to business matters. First responses generally pointed towards the success from a business perspective being the critical dimension,

but it can be argued this is to be expected, as by design the study sets out to primarily explore business interaction.

Participants from lower levels within their companies, with less responsibility, had a tendency to provide opening data related to humanistic, personal experiential themes; culture differences they had noted, preconceptions, language issues on arrival, issues related to food, etc. The responses were related to personal impressions and feelings, as opposed to business related issues. It may be construed from this that the context is foremost in the minds of these individuals when recounting the experience retrospectively.

### **Developing themes**

As a result of the data analysis process a number of key themes or dimensions were identified which cover a range of concepts and their relationship with each other. For example, 'communication issues' seemed to have its strongest link with the theme of 'building relationships' and 'trust' yet as a concept it also linked with language issues, and problems linked to quality control (the 'Adapting and functioning in the Chinese workplace' theme) and emanating from wider societal cultural differences (the 'People, place and culture' theme).

When analysed, the data encompassed a number of over-arching themes and sub-themes. Although they have been given boundaries in order to structure the data, the themes and sub-themes are inter-related and affect each other (as noted in 3.9).

These themes or concepts developed through the process of data analysis, as described. Once transcribed, the data was explored line-by-line and any subjects, words or statements of interest which arose were highlighted; each instance was then interpreted and aligned to a theme or sub-theme; some statements aligned to more than one as they could be construed as having meaning relevant to more than one concept. The following findings explore the analysis in greater detail, in order to define and present a picture of what is experienced by practitioners in the cross-cultural context. It is important to consider the position in practice, cultural worldview and/or level of relevant experience of the participant as these statements are discussed.

The data has been presented and discussed one category or theme and sub-category/theme at a time. The participant relaying or communicating the data is identified with relevant statements where appropriate and a key denoting their position within their company structure is included – i.e. Company Owner (CO); Senior Manager (SM); Lower Management,/early career professional practitioner(LM), skilled or technical/trades level employee (TEC); student/intern (ST); further detail can be found in table 1 - participant data on p 47. The accompanying number relates to the page from the participant's transcript from which the information has been isolated. Some of

the key concepts discussed in each sub-theme are highlighted in the following sections; each section also includes a summary of the main findings and indicators in each area. The data collected covers a plethora of concepts, dimensions and subject areas; those highlighted as key concepts have been chosen if they show the potential to have a direct effect either on the emotional or physical experience that the practitioner which may have whilst engaging with businesses and industries in China and also which fulfil the quantitative measure which can validate it as a recurring theme.

The following data encompasses a range of observations made by participants when in China. These are from the view of individuals from a different cultural background when looking at the Chinese cultural context around them. Similar to the structure of enquiry proffered by Corbin and Strauss (2008) – “*conditions, inter/actions and emotions and consequences*”, some elements are simply observation whilst others have some impact on the experience of the participant and in some instances they provoke a physical or emotional response from the participant.

## **4.1 People, place & culture**

Much of the data described in the following category reflects concepts and issues related to innate or national cultural characteristics and concepts thereof, which have been relayed by participants when reflecting on their business visits and assignments to China. These encompass the attitudes, actions and behaviour of local people when in contact with UK participants, both inside and outside the working environment. In the main these concepts are encompassed within this section as they give examples of behaviour considered reflective of the people and wider context rather than an organisation; although the behavioural aspects do transpose into the workplace or organisational setting, they are not entirely directed by the setting itself or organisational cultural constraints.

### **4.1.1 Cultural differences noted:**

In the sub-category of ‘Cultural differences noted’, the following give further detail of some of the key concepts which were significant in that they were identified and discussed by multiple participants thus carried a greater weight in this sub-category/theme. All 16 participants registered observations which contributed to this theme.

#### 4.1.1.1 Food

Various observations and opinions related to food and the national/cultural dimensions of eating in China were presented. They encompass subject areas such as animal rights and the ethical treatment of animals; content and presentation of food and its cultural standing as the antithesis of what Westerners consider 'acceptable'; hygiene issues. 8/16 participants communicated observations and issues related to food. Some of the main statements arising from this subject are as follows. They present an overview of the general thoughts, reactions and coping mechanisms: Dan (LM, p 12) described the food content and what was considered acceptable to eat as *"off-putting"* but made light of the issue. He noted that *"anything they can eat they will eat"* but was able to be reflective and look at his own culture: *"we tend to be a bit more precious I suppose with regard to what we eat"* (Dan, p 13). Helen (ST, p 8) noted that choosing foods can be *"quite daunting and you don't want to eat them"*. Rob (TEC) also noted shock at some of the food he was presented with, but made light of the situation. He noted that *"you kind of go along with whatever you're given"*, but demonstrated that he was willing to be open-minded, which lessened the negative impact. Jake explained that there were times when he *"really chose not to eat it (the food put in front of him)"*, but felt the need to be *"respectful"* as he was a customer and demonstrate understanding of the Chinese cultural position on food (Jake [SM], p 6). Allie coped with her issues surrounding animal welfare by becoming vegetarian at all times whilst in China. It was clearly something which concerned her, but was able to accept that it was a different cultural context, by concluding that it was *"just a different way of life"* (Allie CO, p 6).

#### 4.1.1.2 Hygiene

Dan explained that he was *"a bit fussy with hygiene"* and he was concerned with hygiene and general cleanliness in restaurants. The hygiene implications of many people sharing dishes he found *"quite disgusting"* and was his particular area of concern (Dan [LM], p 13). Rob notes similar issues, saying: *"you're used to hygiene levels here (in the UK) and you go somewhere like that and you're obviously seeing – it looks a bit grubby when you're eating out"* (Rob [TEC], p 3).

Faye described the hygiene in China as *"really bad ... like the toilets and like spitting and ... but that's just the norm to them, it's how they are"* (Faye, ST, p 5 and 13). Although it clearly is an issue, this may not be applicable to people in all regions and across generations. Helen also communicates similar observations. When asked about the biggest cultural issues she had to overcome, her answer was *"hygiene"* (Helen, ST, p 6). She noted that *"in China it's common-place and everybody's cool with spitting 'inside and out'"*. She also describes surprise at seeing *"babies' poo in the street"*, plus issues with cleanliness in the toilets. Similar reservations were discussed by Rob (TEC, p 9) and Jake (SM, p 8).

#### 4.1.1.3 Politeness

Dan commented that when in meetings, Chinese workers would do things “*deemed impolite*” in the UK which “*embarrassed*” him; “*they tended to clear their throat quite a lot and quite loudly and it’s not normally a noise you would make in public in Britain*”. Further, “*in meetings you’d get people clearing their throat quite violently almost and that, yeah, made me kind of almost heave at one point*” (Dan [LM], pp 11-12). He also observed that they smoked in meetings. Dan also noted ‘throat-clearing’ in restaurants by waiters and waitresses when serving food and described this as “*off-putting*” (Dan: 12). He was surprised that this also included ‘young women’, which as he explained, would be embarrassing for someone from his culture (UK).

Dan also explained that some of his attempts to be polite were not taken as he would have expected. He attempted to greet his Chinese counterparts in Mandarin, but got no response or reply (Dan: 4). He interprets this as just not being rude in the Chinese culture.

Dan was animated regarding how to act in crowded areas. He noted that he tends to be “*quite polite like sort of waiting for people to move and not barging and things*”. He pointed to a past work trip when a Spanish colleague told him he was “*too polite*” and to “*push, shove, kick just move out they won’t mind*”, but felt this “*goes against his principles*” (Dan, p 13). He observed that this was more ‘normal’ to the Spanish colleague and was not deemed rude by either him or the Chinese people around him “*it’s just the way it is*”, indicating it was not an East-West difference, but rather an issue rooted in British culture. Faye noted a similar event whilst waiting to get in a lift. She explained that “*you just have to go for it. There’s no waiting around for anyone*”, so learned to adapt to her surroundings (Faye [ST], p 13).

Jake addresses the concept of politeness and explains that “*the Chinese mentality is to shout a lot and demand a lot ... you have to deal with that, you know it’s not meant personally, it’s just their culture*” (Jake [SM], p 6). Further, he says “*they will just tear strips off one another because that’s just their mentality, you know that’s the way they deal with situations*”. This relates to workplace situations and how they demand a certain performance from co-workers. Jake has put this ‘heated’ way of dealing with issues down to Chinese culture. This potentially could apply to other cultures and more indicative of being non-British in its approach.

Owen (p 5) notes the Chinese are “*extremely polite, courteous*” in his experience. Glyn states that “*I never find them rude, never find them bolshie*” (Glyn [CO], p 7).

These three sub-categories have arisen from questions to participants regarding what they have noted which can be attributed to cultural differences and may be classed as emotionally challenging or causing discomfort. These particular sub-categories are interesting because they

are concepts which could be considered as having a correlation with British cultural norms. Ethical food production, food hygiene, hygiene related to public places and buildings for example, are all heavily regulated in Britain and represent standards which British people have grown up to expect. This of course, is not always the same in some other contexts. This also presents some synergy with those who profess that it is important to understand our own culture before we can understand the culture of another set of people (Lewis, 2006).

### 4.1.1.4 Different way of thinking

Adam noted observations of China being a 'communal society' where people helped each other. Drawing comparisons with Britain, he theorised that Westerners were more *"manipulative, calculating and high-level thinking than the Chinese are"* (Adam [SM], p 4). When discussing the poor building standards in a hotel in which he stayed in China, Adam made judgements regarding how the Chinese thought processes worked. He felt they had *"good Intentions"* to build a nice hotel, but they lacked standards so the project's quality *"fell by the wayside"*. He noted that toilets, for example, were not fitted in the right places and connected properly to waste systems, which resulted in unhygienic, poor facilities. His evaluation of the issue was that *"they just don't see the fault whereas we're quite analytical people, they're not"*. He concludes that their approach is *"more about how many and how much, it's very basic, that's the impression we usually get with them"* (Adam, p 9).

Greg described the Chinese way of thinking as *"Chinese logic"*, something which perplexed him (Greg [ST], pp 16-17). His conclusion was: *"Chinese logic just seemed a lot different to English logic and I don't really know how to explain it properly. But there's a think with Chinese culture that you can't really give them a job and expect them to just use common sense to fulfil it. If you give them a job and tell them to do something they will do what you tell them to do and no more, no less basically"*.

Owen observes that the Chinese in his experience are *"not proactive per se; I had no evidence of any proactive (actions)"* (Owen [SM], p 12).

Interestingly, three of the four participants observing lack of initiative, lack of analytical skills and a simplistic approach to direction are higher level practitioners. It could be construed that they would expect more proactivity and initiative and the data suggests that this may be a problem for them in terms of getting a project completed effectively. This lack of initiative could also be put down to the cultural dimensions with the influence of Confucianism, for example, as noted by Ip, 2009 who described the employees of a *"Confucian Firm"* as passive, compliant and unthinking.



#### 4.1.2 Cultural change/shift/development

This sub-theme deals with changes in society and China in general, which were noted by participants. Some of the concepts are observations, whilst other may have an effect on the practitioner, be it on their experience or on business performance or project outcome. 11/16 participants registered observations which contributed to this theme.

##### 4.1.2.1 Improving living standards

Adam notes social change, *“particularly in the big cities”*, with more people achieving a university-level education, upward mobility of the young well-educated, more Western brands and goods available, which are coveted by the new wealthy: *“you’ve got all these young kids ... they want to achieve, they want more money”*. (Adam [CO], p 6). Dan also notes the recent *“significant change”* in the quality of life which has been witnessed by Chinese people (Dan [LM], p 6).

The implications for business of the new opportunities for the younger population are highlighted by Neil: *“another shift change in China, is the young people now are not coming through, they don’t want to work at the factory level anymore, they don’t see it as... they kind of see it beneath them, so what tends to happen is there are shortages, despite the population of China, they actually struggle to get decent staff in some of these factories”* (Neil [SM], p 12). Further, he notes the scale of the problem beyond this industry: *“You know we’re getting communication now from factories saying you know we’re 20-30% light on staff because they just haven’t come back, especially the youngsters they just... it wasn’t for them. So we’re kind of in this spiral of a problem, I don’t think it’s just our industry, I mean I think it’s just all in China, they just don’t want to work”*.

Observing improving working conditions, Sam states: *“the more I’ve gone out there the better it’s become; they’ve now got doctors in the factories, they’ve got the right amount of beds, they actually have Saturday afternoon and Sunday off. A lot of them now actually have Saturday off as well. So basically the culture change is that they are becoming more – I would hate to say it – more European...”* (Sam [SM], pp 6-7).

Clearly, there is evidence of an improvement in living and working conditions, benefits such as healthcare and fair wages for Chinese workers. This can be advantageous to Western companies who need to demonstrate ethical practice and adherence to CSR policy, but the adverse implication is that it signals rising costs for these companies and workforce issues.

#### 4.1.2.2 Westernisation

The changes which are influencing contemporary Chinese culture were evident and observations alluding to the concept of Westernisation were presented by 12/16 participants. The level of change however is more significant in some areas than others, such as major cities like Shanghai and geographical areas close to Hong Kong. Some did note that there were areas which were still more traditional and had avoided much of the Western influence. Participants observed the rate of change which has, in their opinion, affected China. Some of the key dimensions include:

Adam (CO, p 6) noted the 'dual society' of modern and traditional China which now co-exists, a concept supported by Martin's observations (Appendix C ii.). There is evidence that parts of China are becoming culturally 'homogenised' by the western influence, with Sam (SM, p 7) noting that Western fast food chains are now visibly embedded and culture is changing. This is supported by Ryan, who comments that the Western retail brands mean *"it could have been absolutely anywhere"* (Ryan [LM], p 8); Martin (TEC, p 7) stating *"he wasn't expecting to see some of the shops – like Jaeger and these sorts of places"*; and Greg (ST, p 6): *"there's more foreign restaurants in my city, more foreign films"*. Allie (CO, p 18) felt Shanghai was *"cosmopolitan"* and *"quite European"*. In comparison however, Faye's experience was different and she noted: *"When I went there I thought it (her region in China) was going to be really westernised but it's really not westernised at all"*. She found it hard to articulate the nature of the culture she experienced, but explained that the region she experienced was *"really Chinese"*, from which we can construe that it had a more traditional Chinese composition. Glyn also has the impression that although Westernisation is evident, *"Their (Chinese) culture and heritage is still there and embedded"* (Glyn [CO], p 9). Further, Jake noted that *"only the very wealthy can afford European or global brands"*, which raises the possibility that although Westernisation looks on offer, it may only be an option for the few.

These comments highlight that China is going through a process of Westernisation and Western influence, through brands, retail, big catering corporations, is now widespread in many parts of China. It cannot be ignored however that there are still parts which maintain their inherently traditional culture and even in Westernised areas, traditional culture still prevails alongside the Western influence, which is something from UK practitioners to consider and be sensitive to. It also suggests more Westernised areas were easier for some participants to adjust to, unlike more traditional areas.

#### 4.1.2.3 Generational changes

The increasing openness of China in recent years and the buoyant economy which has benefitted from diversifying and broadening trade opportunities has brought with it new choices and options for its people, particularly the younger generation. Greg (ST, pp 6-7) noted that *“younger people are coming from smaller towns and they’re trying to come over to Zhuhai so they can live a more westernised life”*; further, *“the younger people are now trying to move to the bigger cities to try to get high paid jobs...They know a lot about western culture”*. Martin explained his experiences of Chinese nightlife whilst on assignment there, describing it a *“as good as we (the UK) get”* and that *“the youngsters seem to be coming up together”* (Martin [TEC], p 6). Neil (SM, p 12) pointed to the changing expectations of the young Chinese: *“they obviously see what goes on in the Western world ... so why would they want to sit in the same seat for eight hours a day doing the same task (like their parents did)”*. Reflecting the aspirational aspects, Ryan commented on the new opportunities which had been on offer to Chinese practitioners he came into contact with: *“those guys had actually done their education over here (the UK)... then they’d been flown back basically to carry on out there (China)”* – Ryan (LM, p 8). The upward mobility of the younger generation of Chinese, changing aspirations, western influences and the emergence of the parallel societies (old and new) was also discussed by Adam (CO, Appendix C iii.).

#### 4.1.3 The Chinese approach: accommodating/friendly

14/16 participants registered observations which contributed to this theme. The vast majority of participants (13/14) reported that the reception they received from local people was outwardly and demonstratively friendly and polite. From the business perspective, participants noted being chauffeured, dined out, not allowed to pay when going out, being made to feel comfortable. Allie (p4) records that they *“...pretty much take care of you from the moment you land to, you know, the moment you go. They’re very attentive, like hospitality-wise”*. Similar observations were noted by Jake (SM, p 3) and Neil (SM, p 4). Other words used to describe the experience include *“polite, relaxed, formal”* (Ryan [LM], p 10), *“good-natured”* (Rob: 13), *“never brash or bolshie”* and *“professional, courteous and graceful”* (Glyn [CO], p 7 & 11). Often the treatment was described as going beyond what participants expected, at times excessive.

Outside the business environment, it was generally noted that people were very friendly and went out of their way to help, converse and be in the company of Western visitors. Giles’ (ST, p 5 & 9) experiences took him outside the major westernised cities and he had the impression the Chinese were *“curious”*, *“inquisitive”* and found Westerners *“a novelty”*. Similarly, Faye was in the same area and found the Chinese *“fascinated by the western culture”* (p 4 & 14). Both noted that

socially they were in demand and had drinks bought for them etc. Helen was in a multinational company in a major city and described her colleagues thus: *“They really enjoyed having – having an international person around ... the people who recently became staff and the interns really liked having me around and fifteen-to-twenty of them would take me for lunch and want to know about things in the UK, and want to know about design in England and stuff like that”* (Helen [ST], p 4). Further, this extended outside the workplace: *“I in fact ended up living with another one of the (Chinese) interns... Her parents offered for me to live with them for the three months, for free in exchange for me being their daughter’s friend – the most genuinely nicest and kindest thing that’s probably ever happened to me and made everything a lot more easier upon arrival”* (Helen, p 7). Jake {SM}, with an extensive history of business travel to China felt that this form of courteous, accommodating, friendly behaviour was *“ingrained”*. Across the data there was a feeling that this behaviour was genuine and not forced.

### Summary of key findings:

Based on observations and reports from participants, it is clear that China is very different culturally to what we understand in the Western world. On an individual level, people had different values and ways of interacting with each other which were normal within the Chinese context, but alien to the Western view. Generally, it was reported that the people were hospitable and friendly, polite, courteous and also inquisitive. However, participants observed instances of public chastisement, shouting and exhibiting behaviour such as spitting and pushing which are not considered polite in the UK context, but considered the norm in China. There were also comments related to poor hygiene and food-related concerns whilst in China, which can be attributed to this context and its cultural norms.

Psychologically, some noted a different way of thinking to what they were used to and the Chinese were perceived by some as lacking initiative, not proactive and fearing to deviate from ‘the norm’ (Ip, p 2008,).

Westernisation and significant changes in cultural dynamics were observed, which could be attributed to China’s drive to open up to wider economic markets and thus outside influences. This includes the greater drive which the country has seen towards outside investment. These changes encompass two elements;

1. Changes in infrastructure, buildings, expanding cities, the emergence of Western brands in Chinese shops, etc. With this, some noted that the ‘traditional China’ was either not evident or was being erased by these developmental changes.

2. Changes attributed to outside influences and adapting dynamics which have prompted transformations in human behaviour and expectations. Participants noted a new affluence and wealth, and with this a drive for success, new ambition and expectations, money-orientation and improved opportunities for younger people. However, it was noted that this new affluence appeared markedly unequal and two parallel societies (the upwardly mobile, new rich and the immobile working class) had emerged.

Improvements in both social mobility and working conditions were noted by participants. Societal changes and developments in government policy as a consequence of membership of such bodies as ASEAN and the WTO could be contributing factors in these changes, as well as changes in expectations as the younger population looks outward to other societies.

Participants explained that when faced with awkward situations, it was important to maintain politeness, not be offended, react appropriately and give consideration to the fact that what they were experiencing or observing was contextually and culturally driven differences. Cultural sensitivity is advised; practitioners should approach the experience from a position of cultural relativism, as advised by Hofstede (2010, p 26-27); 'differences' should be accepted for what they are and not assumed to be a problem because they are unlike our own make-up.

## **4.2 Culture in the workplace**

The following observations by participants reflect their experiences within the workplace and largely provide data to explore the working behaviour and organisational practice of Chinese businesses with which they have come in contact. 16/16 participants registered observations which contributed to this theme. The following concepts or themes regarding 'differences' explores their observations of the workplace dynamic; how participants felt they were treated and how they fit within the Chinese workplace; how they were viewed by their counterparts. It also includes observations related to dimensions which forced changes in working style or practice by UK participants or which potentially affected assignment and/or project outcome when liaising with Chinese companies.

### **4.2.1 Lifestyle & work-life balance**

Observations relating to work-life balance, how the Chinese workers lived and how this affected the organisations they worked for was highlighted by participants. Helen ([ST], p 4) noted the long

lunchtimes she experienced, including a one hour 'nap' which employees would take in the office (with lights out) prior to the afternoon's work. Martin also noted similar behaviour, with his company adhering to a two-hour lunchtime, when most employees would leave the site (Martin [TEC], p 8).

Owen (SM, p 5) and Adam (CO, p 5) both discussed their observations; Chinese workers lived on site in company accommodation and were often away from their families for extended periods of several months. It was noted that when holidays occurred and they all went home, the local area became "*a ghost town*" (Appendix C iv & v). Owen (p 5) and Neil (SM, p 7-8) also reflected that national holidays could potentially cause problems with projects, due to the fact that the entire workforce could leave for an extended period and production would stop. Sam (SM, p 11) concurred, observing that "*you've got the problem where people go away at Chinese New Year and don't come back, you've also got people who will job hop*", which again alludes to issues arising from staff turnover and timescales/deadlines. Clearly this theme highlights some very different lifestyle and work concepts to that experienced in the UK. This data presents significant cultural, historically-bound behaviours which do have an impact on timescales and project delivery, which need to be considered.

### 4.2.2 Hierarchy

The concept of social hierarchy in Chinese culture was discussed by Wang et al (2003); Ip (2003) also defined the concept of hierarchy within the "*Confucian Firm*" and the collectivist ideology which influenced it. The dimension of hierarchy and/or evidence of strict social order emerged during the data collection process and was noted by 12/16 participants; it was observed at societal level and more predominantly, within the Chinese workplace, where it could have greater implications for project outcome and engagement success.

#### 4.2.2.1 Hierarchy and control

Adam observed two companies with different approaches; in one company he reports that it was "*difficult to tell who was in charge... nobody was really cracking the whip*" (Adam [CO], p 7). In another company however, he noted that the concept of hierarchy was much more defined and communicated an intimidating picture: "*the workers are sitting there, heads down and there'd be one guy and you can see he's in charge and you go and speak to him and like he'll get one of his minions to come over and say no, no, no, shout, shout, shout*". Giles concurs with Adam's view that the hierarchical structure can result in intimidation but attributes it to the historical influence

of 'communist society': *"they've been growing up and they've been taught their place in society and a lot of them would be really scared or intimidated by the bosses"* (Giles [ST], p 4). Owen also noted signs of intimidation when something went wrong or was not completed by a deadline: *"if the Director saw it the chastising was quite visible and significant, not in the same manner as the Japanese 'saving face' but they would very openly chastise"* (Owen [SM], p4). These examples serve to underpin a cultural difference which UK practitioners found difficult to witness and were not used to; the hierarchical structure at times lent itself to intimidating and disrespectful behaviour from those higher in the order to those below them and was perceived as a form of 'bullying' which has largely been removed from the UK workplace by legislation, yet is still evident in this context (Ip, 2009). It also provides evidence that the Chinese maybe do not yet understand what their clients or customers find acceptable and are themselves not sensitive to cultural differences and what is deemed appropriate in a modern workplace setting by Western guests. However, practitioners need to be aware that as visitors to the Chinese culture, they need to demonstrate a level of understanding of the culture and accept that the Chinese have a different way of doing things which they accept as the norm.

#### **4.2.2.2 Not encouraging initiative**

Dan shared an anecdote related to a business meeting he experienced where they were left without water on a hot day because the employees with whom they were engaged in discussions with did not have approval from their superior to go and get water (Dan [LM], p 11). Jake noted that *"the hierarchy thing is incredible ... In China you do your job. If you think about doing something that somebody else should be doing you know you'll get your knuckles rapped"* (Jake, SM, p 9). It could be construed from this that initiative may well be something which is stifled by this form of hierarchical structure and thus could potentially impede the progression of a project. Glyn however defines the benefits this may afford the Chinese, noting that this makes the company structure *"clearly identifiable"* and that the *"vertical alignment"* is *"the way they organise themselves industrially"* (Glyn [CO], p 16).

The hierarchical structure in the workplace was clearly visible. Allie's experience was more one of respect for a leader: *"everyone kind of, like stands to attention"* (Allie [CO], p 8). Dan also notes *"there is definitely a lot of respect for your superiors ... I think it would be quite rare to have someone challenging their authority"* (Dan, p 1). The element of respect is also addressed by Glyn, who believes that pride in their business is at the root of the hierarchical behaviour and mutes the influence of Confucian values.

#### 4.2.2.3 Hierarchy and access

The anecdotes, opinions and observations above demonstrate the impact of the hierarchical structure on workers, as well as its embedded, historical place in the Chinese business and culture as a whole. One critical issue to note in the data relating to hierarchical structures in the Chinese workplace is that much of the data alludes to this dimension having a potential impact on business performance and project outcome from the perspective of the British practitioner. Their experiences record a range of issues which Western practitioners need to be aware but most notably, the hierarchical structures made access to the 'right' people sometimes difficult for foreign practitioners. Luke noted that *"there's a real hierarchy as to who you should talk to and who you shouldn't talk to...you're kind of usurping people's positions if you go behind their back and talk directly to the engineer but sometimes you need to do that"* (Luke [CO], p 4). Jake had similar experiences, noting of the Chinese workplace structure *"it's hierarchical so only their manager would talk to me when in reality I wanted to talk to the guy that was sat three spaces down but they just wouldn't talk"* (Jake [SM], p 4). Also *"the (UK) management wouldn't sit down and talk with the engineers, there had to be another (Chinese) manager in the room"* (Jake, p 3), a point supported by Glyn (CO, Appendix C vi.). Thus it can be demonstrated that the hierarchical nature of Chinese culture does permeate the workplace and through this, can have an impact on the business engagement experience particularly with regard to communication and project success in various ways, for example slowing down the process and/or limiting access to the right information in order to achieve a faster or more successful outcome.

#### 4.2.3 Chinese organisation and planning

Participants noted problems related to how the Chinese organised engagement events, meetings etc. and issues related to the thought process which affected business success while they were in China, which could be an outcome arising from the Chinese 'different way of thinking', which participants noted earlier.

Adam (CO, p 12) explained that it would be useful for UK companies to understand how their Chinese counterparts - and Chinese society as a whole - worked. He had concerns relating to their ethics, also their (lack of) *"attention to the finer detail"* and the fact that they were *"not proactive"* (Adam, p 4). He also alludes to a 'basic level of thinking' which has been his impression when working in the Chinese business/factory.

Dan noted that he was warned before going to China that it was a *"unique experience"* and of the *"unique way"* they had of running projects (Dan [LM], p 4). He thought that going there would be a chance to learn more about this first hand, demonstrating enthusiasm for the



opportunity. He communicated his own individual experiences of a business meeting where *“you’d kind of look around and at times certain people (Chinese employees) would almost be switched off and be asleep in the meetings, which you wouldn’t really get away with over here in most companies at least. I’d be quite embarrassed but it seemed quite common place for them...”* (Dan, p 5). He also experienced an event where they (as foreign clients) were expected to do as the Chinese boss told them (Appendix C .vii). Further, he explained the chaotic and illogical organisation which could prevail and have an impact on the progress and success of a meeting. He described these events as being *“slightly chaotic”, “unnecessary”, and “lacking structure”* (Dan, pp 8-10, Appendix C. viii).

Neil notes similar experiences, but believes *“when it comes to actually one-on-one meetings they don’t think to organise ... they wouldn’t think to do any homework or check how our products were doing or how business was or anything”* (Neil [SM], p 4). Further, *“, they don’t think the same as we do, they just think end results and mass production, they don’t think about what preparation work to get to that stage”*. This experience is similar to that of Owen, who describes in his assessment, the differences between the Chinese and British approach and how they dealt with it: *“we’re trying to consider a much more complex and complicated approach or process approach or step-by-step approach whereas the Chinese would go and shave a bit off, so to the extent that we would have to have an engineering decision-making meeting without a Chinese person in the room”* (Owen [SM], p 8).

Rob (TEC, p 6) was surprised by the completely different approach to a meeting in China as opposed to that of a UK company: *“it’s a totally different atmosphere to what you might get if you were at a meeting in a British company. Like, there’s a lot more structure to a British management meeting, whereas you got there and they were sat in a grotty old room and all smoking, shouting between themselves”*.

Jake’s observations related to the Chinese response when issues arose in a project. He noted how different it was to other places he had been in the world: *“the Chinese mentality is to shout a lot and demand a lot and you know you just have to... you kind of have to deal with that, you know it’s not meant personally, it’s just their culture”* (Jake, p 6).

Sam (SM, p 11) maintains that constant pressure needs to be applied: *“If you send an email they’ll say, I’ll answer that tomorrow. You need to be on it all the time; you can’t rely on an email. You can just confirm it on an email what you’ve talked about but you cannot just rely on saying I’ll send an email and wait for the reply”*.

Reviewing this data, it is worth noting that three of the participants who spoke at length regarding this theme profiled as Senior Managers or business owners, whilst the other was in a lower management position but experiencing these interactions alongside his senior manager. This theme was more evident to those in a position of driving meetings and negotiations, with significant responsibility for the success of a project and therefore most affected by these types of issues in the Chinese workplace.

### 4.2.4 Money orientation in Chinese business

The 'money orientation' concept is one which occurs as a national/innate human dimension (Kobayashi et al, 1999,) and translates to the business situation. 6/16 participants contributed observations which fitted with this sub-theme. Participants recalled the business emphasis on money and a client's spending power. Luke (CO, p 4) noted that *"at a business level it's down to dollars you know and it will always be down to dollars and that's probably the same with any business in reality"* (Appendix C. ix). He also stated *"the more money you spend the more seriously they take you"* (Luke, pp 7-8), although again the same could be true for many countries, not just China. Jake concurs with Luke, but notes the haste with which a company can find itself marginalised if spending power drops: *"The minute your volumes drop and then their attention span drops as well. It's very business orientated"* (Jake [SM], p 4). Sam (SM, p 6) also notes *"it's all about money. If I have the money you'll do my job and likewise if somebody comes along with a bigger order than you, you get pushed behind"*. Data supports this as a potential issue for UK companies who think they have built on-going relationships with Chinese companies; without a constant stream of orders for example, they may need to regularly re-start the cycle of finding new partners to work with and also indicates that UK practitioners may experience little concept of loyalty from Chinese companies. Again, the theme continues with Neil (SM, p 13); *"They don't care ... if they lost us as a customer then they just go and pick up another customer. We've had factories in the past where we've spent several million dollars' worth of business and the next year nothing and you don't even hear from them, they're not bothered. And we find it staggering how you can give them so much and they can just quite happily walk away and they're not fazed by it"*. The approach may indicate a lack of long-term thinking by the Chinese business due to the volume of customers seeking their services, which could potentially see overseas companies looking to other countries to satisfy their needs.

It was also observed how visible the wealth divide between the top and the bottom had become; we can also surmise that the main beneficiaries of success had a propensity to display their wealth. Participants observed the visible gap which has developed between those individuals higher in the economic structure, such as business owners and those lower down, the workers.

Luke explained his experience: *"I'm basically dealing with bosses and it's incredible how rich they are or appear to be"* (Luke [SM], p 4). Neil concurred: *"you have the factory owners who are very wealthy mainland Chinese businessmen and they are quite aloof ... the gaps between the teams we work with and the head are miles apart in terms of wealth, in terms of status"*. In his view, the distribution of the wealth which derived from success of a business was clearly unbalanced. He described it as *"feast or famine"* (Neil, p 9).

#### 4.2.5 Work ethic and practice

12/16 participants contributed observations which fitted with this sub-theme. Despite previous reports describing long breaks, lack of planning and chaotic meetings, 6/16 participants describe the Chinese as hard working. *"They work really long hours. The normal working times for Chinese is Monday to Saturday, 9 till 5:30 and they are completely fine with that, so they only have their one day off a week"* (Greg [ST], p 14). *"They're extremely hard working; you know they will work for 24 hours solid if they feel that they need to do that to keep their customers happy. They are very customer-focused"* (Jake [SM], p 3).

Observations regarding work ethic also instigated comparison to the working ethos in the UK: *"from a business perspective sometimes you... you wish that you had a bit of the Chinese work ethic in you know driving your workforce because they do work hard, very, very hard, very hard"* (Glyn [CO], p 7). Neil concurred; *"they've actually got a very good work ethic, you know they work a lot harder and longer hours than we do this side"* (Neil [SM], p 4). Adam (p 4) reflected on the communal working style and the benefits of this: *"their work ethic is completely different from the West ... Chinese people want to work, that's quite obvious and because they're a kind of communal society they work together to get it (a task) done"*.

7/16 commented on the long hours the Chinese work; some noted that sometimes this cause difficulties for them as they were often expected to work long hours alongside them when they were there: *"you have to prepare yourself to work for, you know 16/18 hours a day because that's what they want to do because they want to get the job done"* (Jake [SM], p 14); *"... the boss says that we will stay until midnight and it was just kind of expected that we would stay until midnight"* (Dan [LM], pp 6-7). Greg (ST, p 4) as an intern experienced the different working hours for a more extended period than most, 6-7 days a week which he found challenging, but had to accept. This of course also impacts on the Chinese themselves, with Jake (p 5) noting that *"when they work until midnight does it actually mean they're not going to see their family"*, whilst Neil (p 8-9) points out their lack of 'work-life balance' compared to that of the western world.

Practitioners praised their Chinese counterparts for their professionalism when it came to getting a task completed: *"If I can find people in the Far East who are good you often use them because they just respond in a much more professional manner you know in their communications and obviously their manufacturing timescales are more realistic"* (Adam [CO], p11). Also, Giles (ST, p 4) noted their level of practitioner skills and their approach to him as a student learner-practitioner: *"There's a lot of staff out there, like Chinese staff who are really, really good at what they do, like a lot of the engineers were superb ... they didn't expect too much of me. But they kind of utilised the different skills that I had, which aren't so common in China"*. Owen (SM, p 18) believed Chinese showed a *"keenness to do stuff quickly and in their eyes efficiently"*, whilst Jake (p 9) felt *"you have to respect their processes and respect the fact that they are very proud of what they do"*.

If these observations are considered, it is clear that the Chinese workers and businesses maintain a good work ethic; they are prepared (and expected) to put the time in in order to get a task completed, which may well impact their work-life balance. Practitioners are in some cases, expected to adapt in order to match this work ethic when on site, which some accept, whilst others find this a difficult adjustment to make.

### **4.2.6 Ethics**

As it has opened its doors to the wider business community and embraced its position in the global market China has needed to develop ethical standards and general working and living conditions for its working people. This is to satisfy the need for ethical practice from foreign companies as well as comply with the requirements of the groups in which it belongs, such as APEC.

#### **4.2.6.1 Working conditions, rights and benefits**

Three participants commented on observations relating to ethics and working conditions/worker's rights, generally noting recent improvements and a changing attitude within Chinese businesses towards their employees, although this is not yet universal (Appendix C x, xi, xii). Although a comparatively small number, these participants are all upper-management level employees within their companies and had all completed multiple visits to Chinese factories over a prolonged period. A comment by Sam (SM, p 8) encompasses the changes: *"there are now doctors in place, there's health and safety in place, there's a lot of good things happening in China"*.

As China has sought to become an active member of geographically wider economic bodies such as APEC in order to gain from opening and expanding markets, it has had to address its previous issues on this front (Sheehy, 2014) and improvements are becoming more evident within the context.

#### 4.2.6.2 Implications for UK business

Improving working conditions for Chinese workers and adherence to internationally accepted ethical standards had some financial implications for British businesses, as discussed at length by Neil (SM, p 10). He communicates two things: firstly, that UK companies can now source and produce goods in China with more confidence that they can ethically justify where those goods come from, which means that improved ethics has benefitted both sides. However, Neil was keen to highlight the cost implications of these developments, alongside other financial pressures: *“the knock on effect is that ultimately it means the prices go up and that’s when obviously it makes our life difficult, so it’s the moral stance versus the business stance”* (Neil, p 12). Neil concludes that this has made companies look to other places in which to source and produce its goods, but the ethical stance of a company and its ‘reputation’ is important; he believes China is still a destination in the short-term due to its developmental progress, which gives it an advantage (*“less risk”*) over other Asian competitors. From this it can be construed that having developed its ethical stance China has enabled itself to remain competitive in the current market.

#### 4.2.6.3 China: staying competitive

Some of the data (above) has highlighted that whilst ethics have improved, there are cost implications to this which have an impact on both sides of the business border. The implications of improved ethical standards of operating in China need to be noted and 7/16 participants have discussed issues related to this sub-theme. There is much debate as to whether the UK or China are more competitive (8/16 participants contribute) and the future is discussed, with opinion divided. Adam for example, describes how easy it is dealing with companies outside the UK than within it: *“I’ve gone to like five suppliers in the UK or Europe and I’ve got really high prices and it’s taken me forever to get that information and then I find someone in Taiwan or in China and I say this is what I want, within two or three emails I’ve got a price, I’ve got a delivery date, I’ve got a sample sent by DHL in my hand you know, yeah here’s the order”* (Adam [CO], p 11-12). Generally participants feel China still has the competitive edge and is more cost effective than the UK (Allie [CO], p 10; Luke [CO], p 6) and Allie also suggests that the UK government does not support British companies well in order to manufacture in the UK. Owen (SM, p 6) and Neil (SM, p 18) believe

that China is becoming less competitive, whilst Neil considers that China still has an edge in the short-term. Although China is considered to be becoming less competitive, participants indicate that other emerging markets outside the UK are more likely to become targets for companies. The ethical quandary posed by this however, is noted by Neil (p 18): *“the standard of living is lower in India and Bangladesh you can get the products made cheaper, but it’s just weighing up whether it’s the right thing to do...”*

### **4.2.7 Host company support and hospitality**

The impression given to and treatment experienced by a visiting company is important in any context, business or country and the participants were asked to communicate their experiences in China regarding the hospitality they were shown and how much support they were given. 12/16 participants raised points of note and 11/12 portrayed a good experience. General hospitality which tended to be offered included help to make routine visit arrangements, chauffeuring, being escorted around the area, being dined out and generic help being available for the duration of a visit to a company. Some of the experiences were described thus: *“They’re very attentive”, “they take care of you from the moment you land”* (Allie [SCO] p 4); *“When visiting factories they were really helpful, they’d take you to hotels, let you pick what hotel you wanted to stay at, show you around the city a little bit, show you to restaurants. So the help they gave was really good”* (Greg, ST, p 9); *“Because I’m a customer, I’m treated incredibly well and I’m taken to the finest restaurants, everybody is extremely polite to me, nothing is too much trouble for them so everyone is smiling”* (Luke [CO], p 5). Ryan (p 6) noted that *“with the best intentions”* his host company arranged Western food for him as they wanted to ensure he didn’t get ill, also Western-style accommodation, although he would have been happy to experience something *“more traditional”*. Dan (p 6) commented that he was surprised that he did not have any contact with his host company outside the workplace, but this was an isolated experience.

### **Summary of key findings:**

Many of the observations recorded about the wider society and culture did transpose to the workplace. Widely, the Chinese ‘hosts’ were described as friendly, helpful, disciplined and hospitable. Chinese workers were observed to be keen to do their work and to learn, but not necessarily to be efficient. Hours were long in the workplace and people worked hard; participants noted that the work-life balance was unequal and often Chinese workers accepted the need to sacrifice family time in order to complete their tasks and fulfil their role in the workplace. UK practitioners were largely expected to work the same way when engaging on-site.

One noted workers doing low-level mundane tasks and there was a wider impression that Chinese employees had very specific roles from which they did not deviate. This may link in part to the hierarchical structure which was clearly evident within the workplace, as it was outside. Many participants noted a clearly defined company hierarchy and authoritative leadership, and noted that care had to be taken in order to avoid circumventing this structure, either deliberately or accidentally. This could pose problems, notably difficulty accessing the right people, for example those with the right skills to answer technical questions, rather than someone in authority without the technical knowledge.

As noted previously, a 'different way of thinking' was observed by participants. This was highlighted through two key actions: disorganised meetings and issues arising from an authoritarian, hierarchical structure which hindered access and short-term thinking based on financial gain rather than output quality.

Participants registered observations aligned to the theme of change and transformation in the wider Chinese context and a greater influence on the culture deriving from policies encouraging opening to overseas markets and Westernisation. Similar transformation and development was noted within the Chinese workplace itself. Improving working conditions for Chinese employees and enhanced ethical standards were observed and although this was broadly applicable, there were still a small number of reports to the contrary. One senior manager discussed problems he had in the past with female colleagues and female Chinese engineers being side-lined; however, there was evidence that this was changing and the perception of women and women's opportunities in the Chinese workplace were improving. Participants noted that improving ethical standards had the following effects on their business:

1. Improved ethical standards in certain Chinese companies aligned with their own company's CSR policy, thus made these companies more suitable to do business with.
2. Conversely, enhanced worker's rights, working and living conditions, improved wages and other ethical changes impacted their costs and made China less competitive.

Taking in the above observations, overall participants felt that China was still a place in which they would conduct business. It was generally felt that despite increasing costs China was still more financially viable for manufacturing than the UK, although the gap was closing. One pointed to the developing manufacturing capacity of other Asian countries, but felt that China's industrial development over the last 2-3 decades still gave them an edge in the current market. It was noted however, that UK companies needed to be realistic about their financial projections and that the costs of improving ethical standards needed to be built into their plans.

### 4.3 Adapting and functioning in the Chinese context

The data examines how the Chinese workplace differs from that of its UK counterparts, to what extent the wider national culture affects the Chinese business and how things are changing as China opens up to new markets, absorbs and adjusts to practices from other parts of the world. The data also explores how practitioners adjust and adapt to function effectively within these different parameters and what strategies they may put in place in order to overcome challenges and achieve a more effective outcome to the business engagement process.

#### 4.3.1 Individual skills and responsibility

The following criteria encompass various elements which allude to the requirement of specific skills or a reactive approach to the circumstances afforded by the context.

##### 4.3.1.1 Adapting working style

14/16 practitioners shared observations relating to this sub-category. Dan (LM, p 15) commented on an “*ad hoc*” working style which he had experienced within Chinese companies, which translated to negotiations being in a different order to that they would normally experience or instigate. Dan alluded to the company wanting to “*cut to the chase*” and find out early on in the meeting whether the project was worth their while rather than wasting time building up to something which was then not in their interests. Many observed that timescales and planning time tended to be less structured than they were used to and discussed the need to be flexible, adaptable and ‘*go with the flow*’ in order to reach conclusions. Helen (ST, p 2) noted that the need for “*flexibility and adaptability*” was one of the key things she learned from her time in China; she explained that she could often be asked to do sometime at very short notice, with little time for preparation. Martin (TEC) explained that at whatever stage you were at on a specific task (e.g. a technical survey), if it was lunch time you stopped; he experienced no flexibility from the Chinese side.

Rob also noted a lack of urgency from the Chinese company, when in reality they were on tight timescales, on a very short visit: “*we (would) turn up for meetings ... where they’re all having fags, chatting round the table and having Chinese tea*” (Rob [TEC], p 11). Faye (ST, p 8) explained “*everything was delayed*” and noted that delays were “*expected*”.

Others noted the way they needed to adapt their working style to the Chinese way of working, e.g. matching their hours, pace and adopting their work ethic. This theme was important to Owen



(SM), who communicated the importance of realistic timescales: *“So in my project plan, my project plan’s got longer because if you went at Chinese speed you just didn’t get it right, so you would allow time in the project”*. Owen alludes to having to adjust timescales in order to factor in mistakes and allowing time for the Chinese factory to get over these problems. Ryan (LM, p14) describes adapting his working methods by *“matching their pace”* and *“adopting a slightly different attitude”*.

Three participants noted the need to relay very specific instructions and pay attention to detail in order to avoid mistakes. *“You have to point everything out, make it crystal clear what it is that you want or what it is that you’re doing”* (Allie CO, p 9), who also points out that you can’t just assume that some things are obvious (). Greg (ST, p 20) also explains *“you have to be so specific about everything”*, which is also noted by Sam (SM, p11).

Three participants also emphasised the need for clear communication in order to avoid mistakes, encompassing concepts of both communication style and language. Giles notes the need to adapt to this when in the Chinese context: *“we’d try and stress a point to them and they’d be like no we understand ... and they’d go away and they’d make the prototype and then they’d come back and do exactly what we told them not to do so, you have to try and think of a... a way around that”* (Giles [ST], p 10). He also notes that sometimes giving instructions *“verbally just isn’t good enough”*, pointing to the need for good CAD models or engineering drawings in order to convey the appropriate detail. This is supported by Neil (SM, p 4) and Greg (ST) who first notes: *“I’d tell them to do it but perhaps I wasn’t precise enough and I’d just be like could you do this for me please and it basically wouldn’t get done properly and then I’d have my Manager having a go at me saying you’ve got to explain it properly, you didn’t explain it properly and I’m just like oh like I didn’t realise”* (Greg, p 17). Further, *“you have to be so specific about everything, you have to work up your specs and everything and your GA drawings and all of those have to be so detailed”* (Greg, p 20).

#### **4.3.1.2 The importance of pre-planning/organisation**

10/16 participants contributed observations and advice to this sub-theme. Being from the Senior-Management profile, Neil (SM, p4) believes that the UK company needs to drive the agenda for the cross-cultural engagement, believing the Chinese companies he deals with as being *“poorly organised”* and noting *“they don’t think to organise”*. Travelling so far and restricted by a tight timeframe, Neil believes a clear agenda and timetable should be set prior to engagement. Similarly, Luke (CO, p 9) believes *“you have to have clear aims as to what you’re going to achieve”*.

## Chapter 4

Also from a Senior-Management perspective, Owen advises recording all experiences and learning from them is a vital part of organisation and planning for cross-cultural visits. He advises *“preparation and contingency for changes of direction and issues”* (Owen SM, p 3). Jake felt previous trips would have been more successful had they researched companies in greater detail before going out to China (Jake [SM], p 14). Jake also notes that you should have all Intellectual Property (IP) agreements and other protection in place prior to engagement. Rob (TEC, p 8) also points to the need for sharing and checking detailed information prior to a trip, to ensure dates, timescales, project targets etc. are clear.

Participant advice points to practitioners needing to manage expectations as to what they want to or are likely to achieve and what the Chinese company can deliver. Clear goals need to be set which have a realistic grasp on the situation and what potential problems may arise. Good pre-planning should include realistic timescales and contingency plans in case of unexpected problems, due to the logistical limits e.g. time and distance. It is notable from participant comments that the Chinese working style often has significant differences from that which we experience in the UK and that these are likely to raise issues.

Neil (p 5), Adam (CO, p 12) and Lee (CO, p 2) all note that you can face damage or some form of negative outcome to a project unless you have put time into pre-assignment research on the company you are dealing with. In fact, 7/16 participants clearly express how important it is to know who you are dealing with and anticipate what you can expect from them. As articulated by Adam (p 12):

*If you go in and like oh I'll go and get someone in China to make it without any of that experience, you are opening yourself up to some damage and the only reason we know is because we've gone through that, you realise what the pitfalls are and what things you have to overcome and what you've got to look out for.*

The importance of knowledge of the industry in this context is also highlighted. Neil (p 5) explains that understanding the context you are going into is important and that you need to see the right information prior to going into a Chinese business because having the relevant knowledge will afford more protection. Experience is also cited as an important asset in order to gain a successful outcome, but for that you need to utilise the right people. They also note that knowledge and experience can be gained, but you need to go there (in context) in order to do this effectively; you can also benefit from the knowledge of others within your company who have first-hand experience: *“Experience is the most valuable thing you've got, if you haven't got that experience you need to buy that experience from somewhere”* (Sam [SM], p 15). Further, *“there's nothing more important than being able to tap into somebody that's got that experience. You*

*can't... it's not something you can read a book and say I'm now experienced at or take an exam and say I actually know exactly what I'm doing because every time I go to China it's a totally different kettle of fish"* (Sam, p 16). Neil (p 19) concurs, noting that consistency and maintaining satisfactory links are also important (Appendix C xiii).

Adam (p 3) notes that experience has taught him to give his Chinese counterparts as much up-front information and specific detail as possible, in order to avoid mistakes.

#### **4.3.1.3 Taking control**

Participants have indicated that they have had to take control of the manufacturing process, for example, in order to facilitate a successful outcome. 7/10 participants contributed advice and observations related to this sub-theme. In some cases they have had to micro-manage the physical process and control the decision-making process. Allie (CO, p 4) explains that *"you have to literally think of everything ... you can't leave anything up to them (the Chinese company)"* as standards slide. This alludes to the dimensions such as different thought processes and not taking initiative but also perhaps lack of the necessary knowledge and skills: *"... they did have a clear understanding of what we hoped to achieve but they didn't necessarily know how to do it, so they would be awaiting the instructions"* (Owen [SM], p 13). Participants indicated that being on site themselves afforded the Chinese their experience and knowledge, which maybe they did not have. Of the benefits of being on-site, Martin (TEC, p 10) noted: *"We knew what we were looking at so – and our experience of what we do made that side of it very easy"*, confirming the importance of 'hard skills' experience in order to operate within the context effectively.

Several participants alluded to the need to give their Chinese counterparts clear direction on both requirements and process, in order to achieve the desired results (4/10). Aligned with this was the need to ideally be on-site and managing the process directly in order to 'accelerate' the process or else there would be significant delays and issues with completion. If not, continual (daily) pressure from distance needed to be applied. To illustrate, Adam (CO, p 8) believed *"the more control you have the easier it is"*, whilst Jake (SM, p 2) explained *"I was there in a management sort of role to ensure that the team got what they wanted from the supplier and didn't come across any blockers. I was really there as an escalation path"*. He also noted that *"unfortunately you have to be that customer that you just keep pushing them and making sure that they give you what you need because the minute you take your eye off it they'll go and do something else for someone that is shouting"* (Jake, p 12). Sam also noted the need for vigilance: *"...you've got to understand that the only way you're going to meet your deadline is if you keep chasing and chasing and chasing"* (Sam [SM], p 10).

Two examples offered by participants to strengthen management of the process within China included:

*everything has to be agreed in writing and so we've all got action points afterwards otherwise... they don't tend to get it ... then you'll get back to the UK and you'll get a very random email saying "why didn't we discuss this" ... God we spent half an hour on that! So I always try and get a summary at the end of each meeting to make sure that they're on the same wavelength as we are and then I get our Chinese office then to follow it all up* (Neil [SM], p 10)

Adam highlighted the benefit of experience within the setting: *"More recently we're moving away from them to give us some independence and you know we can manage our own business now"* (Adam, p 3).

### **4.3.1.4 Accountability**

8/16 participants contributed data to this sub-theme. Participants afforded the opinion that it was the responsibility of the UK practitioner to be accountable for the success or failure of a project when its completion was dependant on some form of outcome from China (3/8). This was particularly the case with experienced or more senior practitioners. Neil (SM, p 6) believed you need to be clear with Chinese suppliers and dictate terms and conditions. Adam felt his Chinese counterparts did not face up to problems and getting them to be accountable was difficult (Adam [CO], p 3-4). Ryan (TEC, p 17) concurred; in his experience it had been difficult to get people to take responsibility for damaged goods, etc.

### **4.3.1.5 Electing the right people**

11/16 participants contributed observations which were related to this theme. Data suggested that it was important that the people who were chosen to go on assignment in China or who had elected to go were viewing the opportunity as a positive experience. Some participants felt that a positive attitude and open-mindedness helped when the individual encountered a potentially problematic or unsettling situation which was culturally or contextually dependent unlike what they were used to. For example, Faye (student) described herself as *"scared to try new things"* and *"quiet and shy"* which raised the question whether she was able to function effectively in this context. Faye cut short her time in China, largely attributing this to adjustment problems within her company; also long hours and communication issues with her company management.

Giles (student) discusses useful attributes for functioning in this context: *"Being very open minded, being very adventurous, being really laid back as well because it can be very frustrating at*

*times*" (Giles [ST], p 3). Greg (student - p 10) concurs, whilst also citing experience of the context making the transition easier: *"I showed more and more of an interest and got more of an understanding. I came back for Christmas then when I went back again I realised that I knew where everything was in the city and it started to feel a lot more like home... I enjoyed meeting new people ... you've got to show an interest and you've got to be willing to get involved"*.

Helen (student) felt her open and positive attitude to the opportunity helped her more than her 'hard skills' (in line with the findings of Brown et al, 2008) and that employers had identified the need for the right attitude and a good level of confidence *"I found when applying for jobs lots of people weren't so worried about my (hard) skills but were worried about me moving over to China and maybe me not coping with it"* (Helen: 3). Rob (TEC, p 2) discusses his experience in similar terms, noting his company were confident to send him to China as he felt he had the positive attitude and personality which would cope with the challenges it brings. Rob described an experience when a UK colleague from his parent company was less 'flexible' and developed a negative attitude to the engagement process and the context as a whole, which jeopardised the entire outcome. The colleague became uncooperative and rude which led to them returning home without finishing the task at hand. Rob's account of his co-worker alludes to an inability to deal with the cultural differences and an unwillingness to commit to project a great distance away which required flexibility in timescales, somewhat due to commitments at home.

#### **4.3.2 Quality control management**

Data suggests that participants have experienced a plethora of issues surrounding quality control when manufacturing in China. Some consider this as Chinese companies' lack of maturity in the sector (i.e. fast-expanding manufacturing economy which outstrips the ability to gain experience and skills required) and understanding of quality control standards, as highlighted by Jake (SM, p 3): *"I think there are quality concerns, where they don't really have an eye for process control, quality controls and things like that and there's just a lack of maturity in that area"*. Owen (SM, p 5) notes: *"If a company hasn't got western people managing it, the Chinese can't manage the quality at all"*, suggesting issues with process management (Leung, 2008).

Of the 12/16 participants who offered information related to this theme, several discuss the problem by alluding to a very different mind-set regarding the required outputs and manufacturing standards. Their data suggests that Chinese company employees either do not understand, do not have an 'eye' for quality and precision (i.e. the 'hard skills'), or that they simply do not see it as a priority, but instead look to fast turnaround, financial gain and cutting costs. To illustrate, Allie (CO, p 10) observes: *"I think they're always trying to cut corners and I*

*don't know how many times we have to keep repeating you know, quality up, don't cut corners, keep the price up, we will pay more ... we'll pay more to not have a problem in three months' time"*, whilst Owen (SM, p 9) also believes quality is compromised: *"they're more in the numbers game than the accuracy game"*.

This has come to the forefront as being a major issue for UK companies; clearly there has been a historical problem with regard to quality which can significantly affect the successful outcome of projects, particularly within the manufacturing sector. Participants described the methods they adopted in order to improve this issue; the tendency was to take control and carefully manage the process themselves in order to save time and money. Strategies include: good research prior to committing to a company, overseeing output on site, carefully managing documentation and ensuring that strict quality standards are set from the outset, setting the standards early in the production process: *"They're actually very good once they've made something on a production run to repeat it to exactly the same quality; they're very good at that, the trouble is getting them to that standard to begin with"* (Luke [CO], p 5). *"We've got some very strict quality control standard documents, which we send out to our suppliers, it's like a minimum level of expectation that we expect them to check against"* (Neil [SM], p 15).

The experiences discussed by participants indicate that both time and money need to be invested if quality standards are to be implemented and maintained. It was clear that some companies were either establishing their own manufacturing facilities in China, or more commonly, if they were not able to be there to oversee the process themselves, they were employing a local Quality Control company to do it for them. Either way, this has an impact on project finance, as this extra investment needs to be factored into unit costs and thus can have an effect on the perceived financial gain of cheap manufacturing in China: As noted by Owen (SM, p 5): *"the people that say I'm getting this part for 10p are either very naïve or they're just isolating the cost of quality. And the only good quality stuff coming out of China is managed by western people with western resources in China ... that's why English manufacturing is becoming more competitive because as they've put the true quality costs into China"*

Some companies were taking the approach where they gave further training to Chinese practitioners in order to improve their own output. Owen (p 10) explained that his company had invited the Chinese workers to their own factory in the UK in order improve their skills and knowledge. However, there were cultural aspects (as described in 4.2.1 – worker mobility) which affected the effectiveness of this strategy; it has been described how Chinese workers often move around and don't return to their companies after public holidays. There is the risk that the benefits of training staff in order to improve the output of one's own project may prove short-

term, as mobility and high staff turnover implies that relevant skills and knowledge may be lost with this phenomenon:

*There was a turnover of staff so the continuity through never seemed to pick up ... they have to keep the key positions longer. But they spend a lot of time on the Quality Team, so the Quality Managers came to the UK factories and worked in the UK factories for three months and then the quality changed in China.*

(Owen, p 11).

We used to go over and train production staff and how to build and how to check to our policies not their policies because of the lack of quality control they had. And you do all that work and then three months later you'd go into the factory and none of the people you trained work there anymore and you have to start all over again.

(Jake, p 8).

However, changes in working conditions and improved laws governing worker's rights and improved education and social mobility as highlighted do point to improved employee retention and better skills sets however, which will in turn afford added benefits to UK companies.

#### **4.3.3 Language issues**

13/16 participants contributed observations to this sub-theme, They generally described language barriers as 'challenging' and data indicated that they could impede both day-to-day fulfilment of tasks and effective relationship building with companies and key individuals within them. The advantages of learning a language were discussed by both Lewis, (2006) and Hofstede et al (2010) but no participants reported being able to use the local language constructively. Some noted that there encountered less English-speakers in China than they had anticipated (7/16). The need for accurate translation was highlighted by Dan (LM, p 9), in order to avoid misinterpretation and incorrect detail and also the utilisation of English-speaking Chinese who had industry and/or knowledge (Luke [CO], p 4) in order to avoid mistakes. Evidence shows some companies utilise local English-speaking translator, but those who were embedded in the country for a longer period of time needed to learn the language in order to function. This aligns with data regarding 'electing the right people' to work in China and using those who are willing to embrace the cultural and contextual differences

#### **Summary of key findings:**

Participants believed that practitioners needed to be flexible and adaptable when working or engaging within the Chinese context as they were likely to come across problems

affecting performance or project outcome, which they would need to react to immediately. Good communications skills were also important; participants noted that it was vital to be clear with instructions; presenting their Chinese counterparts with specific instructions and exact details/objectives/expectations was critical to avoid misunderstandings. Other vital attributes in individuals included:

- Good preparation and pre-planning prior to assignment. Set out clear deadlines and put all agreements and key points in writing (after a meeting, for example) with clear objectives and action points. Planning for issues was important, as was a contingency.
- Willingness to engage and experience a new context and the ability to work effectively in an unfamiliar setting and sensitivity when communication issues arise.
- Being dogmatic, relentless and direct. Also having the ability and confidence to take control and be persistent in order to get tasks completed.
- It helps to be savvy and cautious; practitioners also need to be accountable for the outcome.

It was evident that the language barrier could cause a problem as some participants noted that less people spoke English than they expected; however learning the language was not considered vital when engaging short-term. Participants observed that many Chinese companies did employ English-speaking workers for cross-cultural business, but that these individuals did not always have the technical knowledge required, so effective communication of specific detail could still be a challenge.

One of the biggest challenges to a project was quality control (QC); participants noted that these Chinese lacked maturity in QC and process control, and struggled with accuracy, which often meant that output quality was poor. In their judgement, there little understanding of what quality standards are expected by parties from outside China. They reported that Chinese manufacturers prioritised money, cost and numbers over quality, also noting that they often cut corners, took little responsibility for poor output and dismissed problems with quality as being unimportant. General advice from participants pointed to the need for constant monitoring of quality, detailed and specific instructions (including support drawings). They also noted that good research and quality checks were needed prior to presenting work to a company and that quality benchmarks needed to be contractually agreed and signed prior to manufacturing.

Many companies engage a local specialist QC company to oversee standards and quality on their behalf, whilst others have set up their own facilities in China to directly oversee output quality



and process. One noted that being on-site meant they could also lay out conditions and expectations with the company management; these steps could reduce returns and problem response times. Participants noted that these forms of quality control management could be expensive and needed to be factored into the manufacturing costs. Whilst they also observed that QC was improving because Chinese companies were learning from other companies, education was improving, and some UK companies were investing time to train the Chinese workers with UK standards in order to improve QC and output, high staff turnover in China means this sometimes has to be frequently repeated, thus time lost.

## 4.4 Building relationships

Despite not being presented with any questions related directly to building relationships, it emerged from the open questioning as a key concept with real benefit to the practitioners. Thus direct questioning relating to this concept was built into interview schedules to test its validity over a larger number of participants. Establishing good relationships was viewed as important in order to develop a good understanding between teams from different cultures and enhance the chances of a good project conclusion or business outcome.

### 4.4.1 The benefits of building relationships

Participants considered the development of working relationships with their Chinese counterparts as vital to the success of their business interaction. 11/16 participants contributed data to this theme, highlighting both observations and actions. Examples of the benefits of developing relationships include: *“You get to know the suppliers very well and then they treat you better than they do if you’re kind of chopping and changing”* (Neil [SM], p 5); *“It’s like any relationship but I think if you want to get the best out of a supplier, regardless of nationality, I think particularly with the Chinese, you’ve got to build a good relationship with them”* (Jake [SM], p 12).

Sam (SM, p 11) felt that *“getting to know”* the factory owner ensured he took on more responsibility for his role in their project outcome. Both Rob (TEC, p 2) and Neil (SM, pp 6-7) believe it helped the Chinese company to understand what they wanted to achieve and their methods. Further, Neil (p 4) felt that building a relationship developed a bond and turned the process into a partnership.

Participants noted that it required a long-term commitment in order to build the relationship: *“Obviously like we’re 2,000-3,000 miles away, so it’s difficult to sometimes get that relationship*

*going, you have to actually be there and be with them for ten years”* (Adam [CO], p 9). It was emphasised that this and other methods of relationship-building require a considerable investment of time. Owen (SM, p 13) detailed the lengths to which his company went to in order to develop this relationship and the understanding which goes with it and explained that the ‘key turning point’ was when they started bringing Chinese employees over to the UK to work with them and share good practice. Neil also explained that they improve relationships by bringing their key Chinese contacts to the UK to work with them: *“these are the people (China company contact/Account Manager) that we try and grow with and get them to think like we are”* (Neil, p 7). Further, Neil details how important the commitment to relationship-building is to his company and the need to develop this face-to-face over a protracted period of time (Appendix C. xiv).

Data highlights the importance that participants attributed to getting to know the individuals in a company personally; this facilitated better access to the right people, broke down barriers, promoted better understanding and afforded enhanced cultural understanding. The advantages of getting to know individuals and engaging on a personal level were discussed by 7/11 participants; the importance of this concept was stressed and highlighted benefits such as improved trust, showing interest and commitment and identifying common values (see detailed supporting quotes from Jake (p 5), Owen (p 18), Sam (p 13) and Glyn (CO, p 15) – Appendix C, xv, xvi, xvii, xviii).

There was one particularly interesting statement from Jake (p 11) who noted: *“if you learn (about) the individual you can forget about the cultural stuff because you know them as a person and they are ultimately the same as you and I”*, which suggests that the personal approach can transcend culture and context .

### 4.4.2 Finding the right company

8/16 contributed observations to this sub-theme. The importance of research in order to find the right companies to do business with was discussed by 6/8 participants. The knowledge gained from good research afforded companies confidence in a company’s standards, reliability and ability to fulfil a contract. The importance of going to China and dealing directly with the companies was also emphasised by 5/8. Luke encapsulated several of the benefits of face-to-face and seeing a manufacturing facility for yourself, by noting:

*the most critical part of choosing a manufacturer is to make sure that a) that you’re dealing directly with the factory and not through a trading house where you’re losing margin, b) that the communication is excellent, c) that the quality and delivery times will be adhered to, d) that the way that the factory is run takes into consideration safety and quality aspects that would match European and American standards.*

(Luke [SCO], p 2).

Similar benefits were highlighted by Sam ([SM], p 3). Luke's comment above, illustrates a common problem, where a company you communicate with may not actually be doing the work themselves at a site you visit. There were also issues with industry certification (workplace and industry standards) not always being legitimate, as noted by Sam (p 2), so caution is advised and again, leads back to the importance of good research and going to see a facility in person.

#### **4.4.3 Negative aspects of attempting relationship building**

The negative consequences of relationship building were far outweighed by positive gains. There was also no strong theme; most comments were individual rather than denoting widespread issues. Adam (p 3) noted a shift in the operation direction of his company to a more self-managing model, which afforded them independence. Two participants also felt that the long-term commitment of time in order to build a relationship did not always pay off, sometimes due to the nature of Chinese businesses and staff turnover, but also due to lack of commitment they experience from the Chinese companies. To illustrate, Jake (SM, p 7-8) observed that *"they can disappear in swathes you know after the sort of national holidays and you can have to start again building relationships and training people"*, whilst Neil (SM, p 14) cautioned that *"(It) is difficult at times when you've actually built up a relationship with these people and that's where they don't have any shame and just you know, if they don't think it's right for them they'll just move on"*.

#### **4.4.4 Reactive process management: local support**

Due to the time and distance involved in going to China to oversee production, many participants' companies had chosen to employ or develop local support and 12/16 participants contributed to this sub-theme. Data revealed that companies were employing local practitioners who were tasked with overseeing the production process for their products, or that they were contracting local manufacturing management companies to oversee output. Three participants noted that having Chinese-speaking individuals in China managing the process for them improved communication. They were also more familiar with the cultural nuances and were better able to interpret and understand the thought processes behind the decisions and actions taken. These 'intermediaries' facilitated improved support for a variety of aspects, including security, quality control management and logistics, as well as providing general support in order to minimise delays, improve efficiency and affording the UK company the reassurance that there was someone trustworthy to oversee output on their behalf. The importance of local support was clear, as highlighted:

(On the role of the intermediary): *And we'll just have to go out there, meet them, show them exactly what it is that we do, what we want, what we need, and get them to take that side of it over for us* (Allie [CO], p 13).

*... we've got an office in China nowadays with one full time employee and I send her to look at the factories... it's an expense having an office in China and your business needs to reach a certain size before you get to that stage* (Luke [SM], p 3).

*The biggest help we've got is we've got an office in China ... one of their roles is to assist the UK office when we're travelling. So every time I go to China I always travel with one if not two members of the China team who are obviously local to the country and obviously have the language* (Neil [SM], p 6).

### 4.4.5 Trust

Difficulties arising from, problems encountered and observations which could be attributed to or have a correlation with the dimension of 'trust' emerged from the data and became a significant theme. As such, in later interviews the question of trust was introduced in order to ascertain and frame its significance. As noted by Patton (2015, p 254): *"All aspects of qualitative enquiry can be emergent, including inquiry questions. Part of the inquiry journey can be discovering new questions"*. This particular theme had the ability to impact on the potential success of an assignment or project (Evaristo et al, 2004), lowered confidence in the relationships or partnerships that UK practitioners had (or were trying to form) and also prompted various actions to be taken by participants and their companies in order to protect themselves from damage or losses (Wang et al 2003). Issues and observations which related to 'trust' were reported by 12/16 participants.

#### 4.4.5.1 Trust - caution

Participants observed poor communication from Chinese companies, where they either did not listen to or understand the requirements set out, whilst others noted that they just went ahead and did things 'their way' and lacked standards. They also believed that Chinese companies had a tendency to hide or avoid problems. Not understanding the potential influence of culture in these circumstances, some participants interpreted this as 'lying', which made them very cautious. This may also demonstrate an inability to execute the 'abstract conceptualisation' (AC) stage of Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984), arising from lack of cultural intelligence (CQ). In these situations, both prior planning and experience are both useful, is noted by senior-level participants:

*You've just got to watch if they start covering up when they get things wrong. So you know you need to say to them if there's a problem let us know. We always put on technical drawings for example, if in doubt talk to us* (Adam, p 13).

*At a senior management level or sort of business level it's just you know they don't want the hassle ... they think their team can fix it before you find out so they just, they carry on and... sometimes they do, I'm sure we never find out about some of the problems but occasionally they don't and they tend to be the really good ones because if they've not managed to fix it its normally a fairly heavy impact on what you're trying to do ... (Jake, p 7).*

*...challenging (what they are doing) is the biggest part of the job because they will just keep trying it on and on and on (Neil, p 6)*

Perceived lack of ethical practice was also discussed. This included lack of loyalty or commitment, avoiding culpability, covert or underhand meeting/negotiation practice, copying or replicating designs, not being truthful about their capabilities and even corruption. These observations resulted in lack of trust, the need for participants to continually monitor work and general wariness and cautiousness. The range of themes within this dimension is broad; some examples are:

*We had an ex-agent of ours try and steal our name and they are now a competitor ... they tried to claim they were (his Company name) and that we were buying from them and they were making them. So it got all complicated and messy (Glyn [CO], p 3).*

*... you've got to share this information with them but you would do it under legal agreements and as little as you had to do to achieve the next stage of what you needed to do (Jake [SM], p 13).*

*... even though you might stipulate it you don't honestly know whether the material is right or not because sometimes what they'll do is they'll put shavings off the floor in it if you're not careful. So you really have to be on the ball. And you build up that relationship over years and years and years, but basically in a nutshell don't trust anybody in the first year (Sam [SM]: 6).*

(See also Appendix C, xix, xx).

#### **4.4.5.2 Trust – saying 'yes'**

9/16 participants discussed events or experiences where their Chinese counterparts would say 'yes' to a request or query and this was perceived as a positive or affirmative answer, meaning that practitioners expected something to be agreed and carried through. They then explained that the word 'yes' when articulated did not necessarily mean that something had been accepted as agreed or would/would not be done if requested. Similarly, more experienced participants noted that the Chinese with whom they were conducting a business exchange would did not like to say 'no' to a request. This resulted in unrealistic expectations, confusion, and disappointment and in some cases, projects failing to meet deadlines or standards. When reflecting on this, participants demonstrated various levels of abstract conceptualisation (AC); evaluating the issue and concluding this was: their host's way of avoiding or covering up problems; telling you want they

want you to hear in order to get your business; not understanding what is wanted; not telling the truth; or being culturally orientated as to not say no to a request and appear rude (see Gao 1998, Appendix A vi). The following quotes outline various perceptions and conclusions made by participants relating to the issue of truth:

*Cultural differences are as simple as things like the Chinese can't say no because its considered rude, so there's particular ways in which you need to ask for things to make sure they get done and you have to recognise the signs of what we would consider as an if, but, maybe actually is a definite no over there (Luke [CO], p 2).*

*The Chinese company were basically telling lies to when it would be ready and they knew that it wasn't going to be ready in time (Rob [TECH], p 6).*

*The key difficulty is just managing the yes's (Owen [SM], p 8).*

*There are other companies that I wouldn't trust today, whether I've worked with them for ten years or whatever, I just wouldn't because they still tell you what you want to hear (Sam [SM], p 13).*

*... you can't put pressure on them to say yes because ultimately they'll tell you what you want to hear but they won't deliver against it (Jake [SM], p 3).*

#### **4.4.5.3 Trust dynamics: power with the Chinese company**

Data indicated that participants were concerned that some Chinese companies lacked commitment to their customers/clients and were prepared to walk away from an established agreement or relationship. One rationalised that this was due to the volume of potential customers they had coming to them whilst others reasoned that this was related to money and financial gains. For example, Neil ([SM], p 13-14) relayed his personal experience thus: *"we've had (Chinese) factories in the past where we've spent several million dollars-worth of business and the next year nothing and you don't even hear from them, they're not bothered. And we find it staggering how you can give them so much and they can just quite happily walk away and they're not fazed by it"*. Further, he notes that *"they do hold a lot of power"*. Similarly, Adam (CO, p 9) explains *"you trust them to a certain point but you know if they want to do something they're going to do it, it's as simple as that, they make their minds up about it. They will just like get rid of you"*.

Experiences and observations related to the negative affect of Chinese companies holding the balance of power were discussed by 7/16 participants.

#### 4.4.5.4 Face-to-face

The importance of conducting research and business face-to-face as discussed by 8/16 participants (Hofstede, 2010; Larsson, 2003). Interestingly, most participants with a business-owner or senior-management profile (i.e. those with greatest responsibility and accountability) addressed this issue during interviews. Face-to-face, direct, on-site contact was considered important in order to improve communication, break down barriers, to make more reliable judgements on a company's abilities and to oversee manufacturing processes and troubleshoot when required. It was noted that although this was a significant time investment and multiple visits were often required, it saved time and money in the long-run. Allie (CO, p 5) explained: *"communication's never really easy ... that's why it's so important to go out there and do things face-to-face"*. Further support data includes:

*The language barrier and the body language just get lost on teleconferences and even video conferencing doesn't really help. We used all media and you would achieve 100 times more in the period of time you were there compared to if you tried to do it remotely by phone calls and things having you on site (Jake [SM], p 4).*

*it's not until you actually go out and visit them to understand their capability ... We try and do so much of it face-to-face because things get lost across email and the communication doesn't always come across well (Neil [SM], pp 13-14).*

Luke (CO, p 3 & 8) explains that he conducts internet searches for partner companies first, in order to save time and then organises visits. Caution however, is still advised: *"I went to visit and got taken around the factories, it was only then that I realised that they weren't actually their factories. But nothing's ever quite as it seems in China"*.

#### 4.4.6 Communication issues

Problems arising from poor communication have been covered in part by other sub-themes, but in this section the theme has been isolated due to its importance, having been addressed or reported by 14/16 participants. Participants have indicated that communication difficulties partly due to the language barrier have been a factor which affects project outcome and can generally make the engagement process more challenging. One cited the Chinese lack of industry knowledge as a problem when communicating expectations. As noted previously, very specific detail needs to be communicated in order to lessen the risk of misinterpretation and use of support material such as engineering drawings and written instructions can also help. Others noted that companies often used English-speaking employees or middle-men in order to facilitate better communication. Communication issues also arose from cultural differences; participants indicated that cultural sensitivity was needed when addressing communication problems arising

from this dimension, as well as being vigilant for verbal and non-verbal signs that there is a communication problem. Neil (SM, p 14) relayed his experiences of attempting to overcome the communication problems thus: *“you have to allow the time for getting across the communication and just not assume that they understand. In the past you know, too many people say yes to you and then they’re not actually taking it in so you do find yourselves having to talk very slowly, having to communicate things you know several times”*. Greg (ST, p 3) cautioned on the need for reflection on your own actions: *“there are just certain cases where things get misread in communication where you can be seen as rude, certain things you do when you don’t mean them to”*.

### **Summary of key findings:**

Participants communicated the advantages of building relationships with companies and individuals in China with which they conducted business. The importance of good, pre-commitment research into companies was emphasised, in order to understand their capabilities, to have confidence in the standard of their work and to build trust. Once a company had been chosen, a long-term commitment was needed in order to build a relationship, which could require multiple visits; however, with that commitment came confidence, a smoother process, reassurance, improved communication and understanding. It was also noted that establishing a good relationship breaks down barriers and improves honesty.

Data emphasised the need to research companies and build relationships face-to-face; participants noted that you could not rely on the internet or distance communication methods to either choose a company or communicate important information – a practitioner would need to be on-site. Data also highlighted the importance of getting to know individuals on a personal level, beyond the superficial and build more than just a business relationship. Participants indicated that it helps to get an insight into their culture/their lives in order to understand them as individuals and that social interaction broke down barriers. Some companies found it useful to bring their Chinese counterparts to the UK to see how things were done; this helped both the practical ‘hard-skills’ element of the relationship as well as the understanding of and acceptance between individuals. However, it was also noted that the effort and investment was sometimes lost due to problems with staff-turnover and the transient nature of Chinese company human resources.



Although establishing a long-term relationship with a Chinese company was considered beneficial, participants still advised caution in both long-term and short-term associations. Problems with Chinese companies experienced or observed by participants include:

- Lack of loyalty/commitment, having their own agenda
- Avoiding culpability/liability
- Avoiding problems, hiding issues
- Lack of initiative and resorting to doing things 'their way' instead of how it was agreed: inflexibility, attempt to dictate, feels like you are working for them, not them for you
- Poor organisation; sometimes too many individuals are involved in a process
- Poor communication (Chinese): not advising of problems, listening to requirements, lack of appropriate standards, etc. (5/12)
- Copying, replicating, stealing intellectual property, lack of legislation to protect, stealing company name/brand (7/12)
- Being underhand (Chinese): covert tactics in meetings, passing of premises/companies as something they are not, lying about skills and abilities, using counterfeit/waste materials as premium materials (9/12)
- Corruption: paying bribes, corruption 'from the top'

Practitioners noted that these things were difficult to manage and it was important to either be there on site in order to troubleshoot and oversee project output, or to engage a specialist local company to manage this. Whichever option was adopted, it was vital to be vigilant, take control, monitor process and be prepared to keep the pressure on.

Interestingly, participants discussed the Chinese inclination to say 'yes' when this may not been the correct response to a question or affirmation. Some examples from the data include:

- Tomorrow doesn't mean tomorrow: timescales are often not honest/realistic or adhered to if set (4/9)
- Telling you what they think you want to hear (to get your business) – (4/9)
- Saying 'yes' but not understanding what you want
- (Chinese company employees) covering up problems
- They will always say 'yes' to business/will not say 'no' to anything (culture)

Indications are that it is difficult to understand whether 'yes' means 'yes' and that it can be difficult to get a realistic commitment from the Chinese company. Practitioners advised that

practitioners need to accept this cultural trait (Fang et al 2011; Gao, 1998) and recognise the signs, manage the 'yes', see for yourself, expect the unexpected.

Data indicated that investing time in and establishing a good long-term relationship with a company improved communication and developed trust; this was generally conducive to a better ability to manage both the process and the contextual issues which arise from cross-cultural interaction, leading to an improved chance of successful project outcome.

### **4.5 Training and knowledge transfer**

Data has so far presented some examples of good practice which have been adopted by practitioners in the cross-cultural setting which have for the most part been learned through experiencing the context. Early questions in the data collection process investigated whether dedicated pre-assignment training was offered to participants in order to support and develop their understanding prior to their cross-cultural engagement. Further questions towards the end of the questioning explored whether their experiences and the knowledge they gained was used to further educate or support the development of other practitioners within their company (see 2.4).

#### **4.5.1 Dedicated training**

8/16 participants contributed data to this sub-theme. There was evidence of very little dedicated training provision being offered to practitioners prior to their assignments. On questioning, one participant who was a business owner felt that useful knowledge could be taught (Adam [CO], p 13), whilst one noted that his company did record and use the knowledge gained by him and his colleagues in order to inform in-house training (Owen [SM], p 16,).

#### **4.5.2 Mentoring & support**

14/16 participants contributed data to this sub-theme. Participants indicated that passing on their knowledge and experience to other members of their team (and other employees) was important and that a mentoring-style supportive approach was a useful method by which to do this. Being offered the opportunity to go visit China and learn within the context itself was considered the optimum vehicle by which to gain the appropriate knowledge and gain better understanding of the situation as a whole (Kolb, 1984). As explained by Sam (SM, p 16): *"Mentoring is a must ... there's nothing more important than being able to tap into somebody that's got that experience"*.

And of mentoring on-site, he adds: *"...it's taken me years of going out and going out and going out to learn this. It's not something you can teach somebody by reading a book, it's not something you can teach somebody by sitting showing them videos of the factories you've been to see"*.

Participants indicated that their companies did send junior members of a project team to China accompanied by more experienced practitioners in order to achieve this development. A holistic approach to mentoring and supporting junior team members including aspects of culture as well as business expectations within the context was described by Jake (SM, p 15 – Appendix C. xxi).

Neil explained how he learned by mentoring when he started out in his career and that he had continued the good practice himself as part of a *"succession planning"* process. The value of being given this form of informal mentoring experience was also noted by younger participants: *"My company supported me in the fact that they let me have an insight into a lot of things ... they would encourage me to just go on a factory trip and to see how business was done in a factory"* (Giles ST, p 5).

#### **4.5.3 Knowledge transfer**

Five participants discussed the advantages of Chinese companies sending employees to the UK, with the opportunity to share good practice and offer industry training as well as the chance to develop more successful partnerships and improve communication being particularly useful (Hofstede et al , 2010). As noted by Owen (SM, p 11-12): *"the Quality Managers came to the UK factories and worked in the UK factories for three months and then the quality changed in China ... and then they started doing that with all levels of the Chinese business"*. Owen also discussed the initial resistance from the British workers at his company to Chinese workers coming to learn from them, as they feared it would impact their jobs. However, the exchange proved successful and overrode these fears (Appendix C. xxii).

#### **4.5.4 Debriefing – social, cultural, human**

Very little data addressed the action of debriefing and whether participants were asked to share or document their experiences post-engagement. No documentation or formal process was followed by most participant companies in order to log, register or document their experience in order to use it for future visits. One indicated that he participated in an informal verbal debrief on the business side of his experience, but this did not address the social, cultural or humanistic elements of the visit (Jake [SM], p 16).

#### **4.5.5 Debriefing – business/technical**

Business or technical debriefing tended to be informal, although 4/10 participants who did contribute to this sub-theme noted that technical and project-related feedback was documented in some form. Owen (p 3) and Neil (p 15) were both from senior-management positions and did note that they had some form of written process in place by which they could feedback post-assignment information which they deemed pertinent (e.g. on Chinese company performance or factors relating to project success).

#### **Summary of key findings:**

There was no indication from participants that dedicated training related to cross-cultural issues via any method was offered to them by their employers prior to cross-cultural engagement. There was, however, support for an experiential learning pedagogy. There was evidence that companies chose to develop younger/less experienced staff for these events by informal mentoring by sending them to China accompanying a senior or experienced member of staff for support and guidance. Senior practitioners did identify their own development historically via a mentoring or accompanying process and said that they in turn developed and prepared their own junior employees in the same way. Data from 8 participants affirmed that knowledge of how projects were managed, business was conducted and how to function in the cross cultural setting needed to be learned within the context and that young/early career or junior staff needed to go to China in order to effectively understand the unique set of contextual implications. It was noted that issues experienced in-context between younger/inexperienced and older/experienced practitioners were varied, due to differing levels of responsibility.

There was little evidence of formal debriefing of the contextual or humanistic elements of a visit on return to China. Those companies who did conduct a debrief tended to focus on the technical, practical 'hard skills' elements of the experience and debriefing was casual; there was some evidence of this being documented for future use via technical reports (strategy etc.), employee handbooks (for interns), business-related documents and supplier review documents.

As noted above, two companies did invest time developing Chinese staff by binging them to the UK. They explained that in their experience, this strategy improves understanding; Chinese employees see what the UK company does, the UK workers gain a better understanding of the Chinese as individuals. The exercise builds mutual understanding, which improves the likelihood of successful results/project outcome.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

This research focussed on the design and engineering industries, notably in the manufacturing and product sectors. The researcher collected and analysed data from UK participants who are either students of or current practitioners in these industries who have experienced the dynamics of cross-cultural engagement in China for their companies.

Analysis of the data presented by participants has identified a number of themes which play a part in or have an impact on their experiences whilst conducting cross-cultural business in the Chinese setting. These themes can be attributed to the contextual composition of the events and are defined or affected by dimensions of culture, history, political development and even geographical parameters which as a blend are unique to China. These themes go beyond culture, but are as a result of factors arising from a wider context; understanding the issues and gaining knowledge of the context can help companies manage the cross-cultural engagement process, improve performance and optimise their chances of a successful project outcome.

Further, there is clear evidence that experiential learning is an important pedagogical approach which can be utilised in order to develop staff for the cross-cultural setting. This method is being utilised by UK companies in order to 'succession plan' and broaden the operating knowledge of their employee base.

The following chapter identifies and contextualises the key themes resulting from the data and their correlation to existing theories, detailing: how context affects participants and the way they operate; response strategies put in place by practitioners in order to address the challenges they face; and points to actions which can be taken in order to address potential challenges.

### 5.1 Culture has implications

Culture was described by Linton as *"a configuration of learned behaviours and results of behaviour whose component elements are shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society"* (1945, p 32), whilst Hofstede (2001) defines it as *"software of the mind"*, a collective wherein *"one's mental programs lie within the social environments in which one grew up and collected one's life experiences"*. The challenge for practitioners attempting to engage within an unfamiliar culture is that of interpretation of behaviour, discourse and signals around them. It is not always clear what elements of the experience can be attributed to cultural differences:

*“culture is a construct; that means it is not directly accessible to observation but inferable from verbal statements and other behaviours and useful in predicting still other observable and measurable verbal and nonverbal behaviour”* (Hofstede, 1993, p 89). There was evidence that the majority of participants were open minded and inclined to engage and relate to their Chinese counterparts. The fact that these participants were willing to take part in cross-cultural assignments and had travelled with an inclination towards gaining from a new learning experience in a setting they knew would be culturally unfamiliar meant that they were effectively open to learning through concrete experience (CE – Kolb, 1984). The point made regarding finding the right people to participate in cross-cultural engagement supports the need to elect individuals with characteristics supporting broad-mindedness and flexibility, which are amenable and responsive.

The prevalence of Confucianism through the establishment of societal ‘order’, individuals abiding by their status in order to maintain stability (Wang et al, 2003, p23) and the influence of collectivism are concepts of Chinese culture which were evident within participant data. Participants noted a hierarchical structure in Chinese business, including: authoritative leadership, subservience of workers to their managers and clear evidence of symbols and wealth denoting status and position within the hierarchy. There were also issues in some cases related to inability to access ‘the right people’ who maybe had the relevant skills to address a problem or discuss an aspect of a project as a hierarchical structure meant that they had to access their counterparts in a specific order. Participants reported that this was difficult to circumvent without causing offense.

Ip (2009) discussed *“the dark side of Confucianism”* and its paternalistic approach which *“breeds a habit of passivity on the part of employees in the workplace because employees are habitually deprived of the opportunities to take responsibilities, as well as make choices and decisions”*. Participants noted difficulties arising from Chinese employee’s reluctance to deviate from the norm and as a consequence, lack of initiative.

The Chinese inclination towards saying ‘yes’ to requests or questions was also highlighted, which was interpreted as ‘telling you what they think you want to hear’. As noted by one participant: *“the key difficulty is just managing the yes’s”* (Owen [SM], p 8). Some participants viewed this as a way of covering up problems, but sometimes it indicated lack of understanding, in line with the advice from The EU SME Centre, (2013) and data suggested achieving realistic commitments proved difficult. As noted by Gao (1998) and Fang et al (2011), this culturally-embedded issue is related to traditional Chinese communication styles (implicit, polite, face-directed communication styles, also associated with relationships, status, conflict avoidance etc. - see Appendix A.vi & vii).

However, Fang et al also noted that this communication style was changing as a result of the modernisation process and cultural evolution.

These three distinctive Chinese cultural traits often left participants feeling frustrated and they found them difficult to circumvent. Those who had acquired some degree of cultural intelligence through exposure however, were able to understand that these issues were culturally-embedded and that they were not purposefully designed to obstruct. Winn (2013) noted the importance of international experience and “*cultural exposure*” as a vehicle by which to develop cultural intelligence, a stance supported by Li et al (2013) who believe it develops confidence and “*culturally adaptive behaviours*”. The advantage of working in-context in order to develop cultural as well as industry knowledge was also highlighted by participants, addressing the points made both Winn (2013) and Li et al (2013). Currently, UK companies do appear to be adopting an informal in-context experiential learning pedagogy in order to develop their staff for interaction in the global market.

In general the Chinese were considered friendly, curious and hospitable towards Western visitors and participants theorised that this was a natural cultural trait. Social interaction was an important element of the relationship building process within the business environment. In light of this, participants needed to be willing to accept cultural concepts which were that were outside their normal comfort zone. Concerns related to hygiene and food when eating out were regularly reported and in wider society, incidents such as public chastisement and shouting, throat clearing, spitting and disregard for personal space. Hofstede (2010) promoted the need to view such differences from a standpoint of ‘cultural relativism’; Lewis (2006) presented the need to ‘cultivate empathy’ and exercise objectivity in order to circumvent cultural barriers.

Largely, participants contributing to this study enjoyed their social encounters with the Chinese people both inside and outside the workplace and there was a tendency to see the people favourably, develop an appreciation of their cultural nuances from a positive perspective and exercise the ‘objectivity’ advised by Lewis. Some of the more senior participants with greater responsibility for project success voiced frustration with the cultural aspects which tended to get in the way of efficient business.

## **5.2 Building relationships improves engagement**

Building relationships with companies and individuals was a strategy many practitioners adopted in order to improve engagement and project outcome potential. Participants noted it required a

long-term commitment and investment of time in order to build a good relationship, which needed to be developed through face-to-face interaction, both within the workplace and through social activity outside. Establishment of trust emerged as a particularly important concept to senior practitioners and those with more project outcome responsibility. These participants were looking to forge partnerships with Chinese companies to ensure long-term business stability and on-going provision.

Data indicated that the establishment of a good relationship afforded the following enhancements:

- It helped participants work within the bounds of a social/hierarchical structure and get to know the right people
- It was a strategy by which to develop trust between parties and improve confidence.
- It improved communication, increasing the likelihood of successful outcome to the engagement process

Epistemologically, the theory of 'trust' has developed to encompass two main concepts:

- Cognitive trust: a reliance on or expectation for a partner firm's expertise and its ability to perform and fulfil relationship obligations (Dwyer, Schurr et al. 1987; Anderson and Weitz 1989).
- Affective trust: relies on the goodwill/benevolence or honourable intentions of another party (Anderson and Narus 1990; Andaleeb, Lee et al, 1992).

Discussing affective and cognitive trust, Jones (1996:8-11) concurs, noting that *"trust is composed of two elements; an affective attitude of optimism about the goodwill and competence of another as extends to the domain of our interaction and, further, an expectation that the one trusted will be directly and favourably moved by the thought that you are counting on them"*.

Smith and Barclay (1997) noted five trusting actions: relationship investment, influence acceptance, communication openness, control reduction and forbearance from opportunism. Dowell et al (2015) tested various structural models regarding trust development and concluded that *"cognitive forms of trust are more important than affective trust in the early relationship phase, but affective trust is still important"*. Further in the mature relationship phase *"the link between competency trust and commitment is significant"* while the effect of affective trust on performance diminished.

Certainly the evidence suggests that practitioners hope to establish good working relationships with companies in order to feel optimism that their needs will be met in the future when they return to China both through goodwill and assuring competency of the chosen partner. This is



obviously important when the time and cost implications of travel are considered. There is evidence of relationship investment by UK companies (as defined by Smith et al, 1997) in order to improve communication openness and achieve control reduction (i.e. the need to be on-site to oversee and maintain control over the manufacturing process). The findings also align with the conclusions of the study by Dowell et al (2015); the establishment of cognitive trust in partner companies in the early stages (as discussed) through thorough research and on-site meetings in order to establish the competence and expertise of companies when choosing prospective partners. Further, in the early stages of the relationship building process affective trust is also adjudged then to some degree considered established once a business relationship has been effective longer term.

Jones (1996) describes the risks that come with trust, however, noting it's emotional foundations and cautioning that it can lead to *"blinkered vision"* as it *"restricts the interpretation we will consider as possibly to applying to the words and actions of another"*. As we view those we trust through an 'affective lens' we are willing to rely on them and thus risk harm. As interpretation of events and actions has already been defined as a challenge due to cultural differences, this is a salient point to consider. Participants highlighted the importance of experience in the cross-cultural setting and senior practitioners advised that caution is maintained through the process, a point where maybe less experienced individuals are at risk of said problems.

Leung (2008:186) underlined the emphasis on financial gain in contemporary Chinese business: *"Given the pervasiveness of materialism in contemporary China, many management practices based on intrinsic motivation (e.g. participative management, empowerment, job enrichment, knowledge and quality management) may not fare well"*. Some participants believed that Chinese companies were driven by profit and that the more money they spent the better they were regarded; they accepted that they would be 'dropped' or side-lined if another company came in offering better financial gain to their hosts; there was little loyalty or commitment afforded by Chinese companies; some Chinese companies were prepared to walk away from a project rather than deal with problems when they arose, especially when it could lose them money. They concluded that the Chinese tended to think short-term with regard to business relationships, possibly due to the volume of business coming their way. Some practitioners responded by attempting to build longer-term relationships in order to gain from establishing 'affective trust' and seeking to develop loyalty, although some noted that time put in to building relationships could be lost due to other context-defined factors such as those related to the transient workforce.

Caution was recommended with any collaboration, even when a relationship was deemed to be established. Participants highlighted problem areas which could be difficult to control; corruption, copying or replicating designs, lying about skills and abilities, counterfeiting, Chinese companies avoiding culpability and hiding problems. They advised that potential problems could be reduced or offset by: thorough research; establishing legal agreements; limit sharing technical or product information to what is necessary; being authoritative and knowledgeable. Above all, participants accepted that this is 'just what can happen' so were alert and cautious throughout the project process.

Data suggests that trust is not being fully established in numerous cases, but the process does enable some form of optimism to be applied. There is little evidence of 'blinkered vision' as cautioned by Jones (1996), with participants demonstrating a limit to the trust they afford to relationships. Data indicates that experienced practitioners had learnt quickly not to relinquish all responsibility for the outcome of their projects (manufacturing for example) and put all trust in the Chinese companies. However, it does also demonstrate that their level of trust improved considerably when a good personal relationship had also been built with their Chinese counterparts. Jake for example, described getting to know each other's families and building a relationship beyond the workplace to a point where a close, long-term bond was developed which 'transcended culture'. This is an example where implicit affective trust had been established through forming closer, personal bonds with individuals; cognitive trust had been accepted when the partner company was chosen then Jake had the confidence that his projects were safe in the hands of his 'friend' and felt goodwill and dependability were in place.

As noted in section 2.3, good communication is vital to industries such as design and engineering. Evaristo et al (2003) observed that when projects or elements of them are distributed over a wide geographical area (as in the case of these practices), *"coordination and communication among players is paramount for an efficient and effective outcome"*. Larsson (2003) concurs, highlighting the *"social character of design activity"*, a stance also supported by Dym et al (2005) and Hofstede (2010). As both engineering and design require a 'social process' in order to work out and solve problems, to debate and interpret ideas, team thinking and understanding of design language there needs to be an efficient level of understanding and communication between parties. Communication in the Chinese workplace can be challenging to a Western practitioner as it can be influenced by context-specific cultural patterns, although Westernisation and social development is changing this to some extent, as noted by Fang et al: *"the emergence of a new Chinese communication style which diametrically differs from the traditional one (yet) old Chinese values and communication style have not disappeared but coexist within the same Chinese culture with a new set of values and a new communication style"* (2011, p 331).

Some participants were concerned by language barriers and poor interpretation leading to misunderstanding and adverse consequences for a project, thus improved communication could negate these issues to an extent (Hofstede et al 2010). Holistically, communication encompassed the concept of trust as well as the mechanical actions of conveying or articulating information. Again, on-site communication was regarded more reliable than that from a distance in order to improve interpersonal communication and understanding as well as to articulate the physical requirements of a project effectively, as noted by participants in section 4.4. Pre-planning and adaptation to emerging events whilst in context were also important in order to avoid miscommunication; the need for specific detailed instructions and support material was also vital in order to ensure practical needs were conveyed effectively.

Participants generally demonstrated willingness to develop relationships and were prepared to commit the time and engage fully in order to overcome communication issues make the process easier going forward. Even after a number of visits over several years some still found the engagement process frustrating, but were philosophical about this and generally understood that difficulties often emanated from unconscious actions arising from cultural differences rather than actions intended to frustrate.

### **5.3 Planning, adaptability and managing expectations**

From the data presented it can be determined that participants in the cross-cultural context were executing a interpretative process, attempting to reflect on events and understand the basis of their existence using their gained knowledge of the culture and the implications of the wider context. The process led to them adopting adaptive behaviours in order to manage the engagement experience itself with view to improving the prospects of a successful outcome.

The data thus presents a picture of events which lean towards the experiential learning paradigm of Kolb (1984) and illustrate actions and plans congruent with active experimentation (AO).

Due to implications of distance, cost of travel and logistics between the UK and China it is imperative that practitioners go there fully prepared in order to fully benefit from contact time. Understanding and research of the potential challenges which can arise from the context will aid practitioners in pre-planning to ensure that they are able to provide the right information and materials (e.g. engineering drawings, quality and standards agreements, Intellectual Property protection), respond promptly to queries and maximise their contact time. Participants advised that researching companies and checking their abilities, safety and QC (quality control) records,

qualifications and regulation compliance credentials was critical in order to find the right partner/source. This needed to be conducted within the context in order to get an honest and realistic appraisal of their capabilities.

It was also noted that timescales often slip, so practitioners need to have realistic expectations and plan for problems; set realistic timescales and have a contingency; set out a clear, detailed agenda prior to assignment and ensure the supplier/manufacture knows what your expectations are. Participants lessened the potential for frustration and potential delays in projects by ensuring they closely monitored production, continually pushing and ensuring that all detail and instructions were clearly articulated and re-iterated. Data highlighted that practitioners often felt the need to take control of both the interaction proceeding and the project output process in order to achieve a successful outcome.

Participants communicated much respect for the Chinese work ethic; however, they indicated that practitioners working within the Chinese business environment were expected to work long hours in line with their hosts. Greg (ST, p 4) described his shock at having to match their hours. They needed to exercise flexibility when it came to structuring their working day, which was different to what is experienced in the UK. They also voiced the need to display flexibility when in meetings, which could often be chaotic, disorganised and badly structured which as discussed previously, could be attributed to culturally-defined thought processes. Participants generally believed this could be improved by targeted pre-planning (e.g. detailed agenda, list of requirements) in order to attain a better outcome. Participants' response to these issues often depended on the position they held within their company structure; more experienced practitioners in management-level positions or above expected such challenges and found strategies in order to work with or around these problems. Less experienced individuals such as students and shop-floor workers tended to apply themselves hands-on and found this much more testing and at times, struggled to maintain the demands of the Chinese workplace.

The unprecedented speed with which China has opened itself to outside markets, instigated policy change and developed its economy, all in a relatively short period of time (Thompson. 2013 p 1) has an impact on how they are conducting business. It could be argued that their processes and ways of dealing with businesses are behind those of countries which have developed open economies over a longer period of time and through that, have learnt to deal with and understand the expectations of people coming to them for services from other countries in a modern economy

Participants widely conveyed quality control issues; the challenge of getting parts and products manufactured to the standard expected by Western companies and indeed required by law in

countries such as the UK was onerous. Jake (SM, p 3) believed this challenge was due to the Chinese *“lack of maturity in that area (of the industry)”* arising from rapid development. Participants generally voiced concerns that many Chinese companies performed poorly when it came to detail and accuracy; they did not understand quality expectations and lacked maturity in QC (Quality Control) and process, considered volume and cost over quality and precision and generally had little in place to manage the quality control process. As noted earlier this may also align with the lack of ‘intrinsic motivation’ brought about by materialism (Leung, 2008).

Experienced participants with responsibility for successful delivery (managers, etc.) developed strategies by which they could mitigate these problems, for example by employing local intermediaries to oversee the QC process in their absence, or in some cases, investing time and money to bring Chinese practitioners to the UK in order to provide further ‘hard skills’ training. Data illustrates that there were added benefits of this strategy, including improving relationships between two companies and their workers and alleviation of negative issues such as mistrust, protectionism and cultural barriers. One in particular noted that bringing Chinese workers to his factory in the UK had enabled once suspicious workers to forge personal and long-term relationships to the benefit of both parties.

## 5.4 Challenges arising from societal changes

Several decades of development have given rise to a transient workforce, which travels from rural areas into the cities to work. This has for a long time caused issues as workers returned home to their families, often not returning to their jobs. It can have implications for the UK practitioner with responsibility for a project conclusion; Chinese companies do not know who will return after extended holiday and this can leave factories short of workers at critical times; key skills can be lost, time and money spent on development of skills in Chinese workers can be wasted. This can also negate investment in a long-term relationship. As illustrated by Jake (p 7): *“they can disappear in swathes (after national holidays) and you can have to start again building relationships and training people”*. Rapid economic development has given rise to a ‘dual society’; some participants observed inequitable distribution of wealth and power, both inside and outside the workplace, at odds with observations of a changing, modernising, more equitable culture noted by Zhang et al (2014).

Changes on a societal level also mean that traditional workforce profiles are changing; Westernisation, education, open borders, new ethical standards which affect worker’s rights and benefits have brought with them new aspirations for young Chinese, many of whom are reluctant

to do mundane jobs in factories (). For the younger generations, there is a shift towards an individualistic paradigm rather than the historically collectivist mind-set (Deresky, 2011, Zhang et al, 2014). Xiong (2009) observed: *“the whole country has changed profoundly in many aspects of social life, including people’s social values and lifestyle”*. Finding – and indeed retaining – staff in China is becoming more difficult as workers have become more mobile and transient in seeking better opportunities, particularly those from the younger generation. Neil (p 13) noted that there had been a ‘shift change’ from which staff shortages and lack of appropriate, available staff arose. On a positive note however, there are greater opportunities available now for young Chinese citizens, including the channels by which they can travel abroad to study and train. In some instances this has resulted in improved levels of ‘hard skills’ and industry knowledge culminating in better provision for UK companies.

Generally participants were philosophical about the challenges related to cultural influences and societal changes on the Chinese workforce although clearly some found it a frustrating consequence of working with Chinese companies. They are aware that these are concepts beyond their control and tend to accept this happens. Management and business owners generally sought to plan for such challenges by working to longer deadlines (e.g. starting a project early), avoiding setting deadlines around Chinese national holidays, where possible.

Some participants observed that as a consequence of changes in policy to deliver better ethical standards (workforce benefits, improved wages etc.), manufacturing costs have significantly risen, which has meant that the fiscal advantages for UK companies of manufacturing in China are becoming less sustainable. Quality control issues were also a problem; the cost of these needed to be factored in to a project meaning that this was also making manufacturing in China less competitive. For now participants are saying that China still provides manufacturing and sourcing services which are justifiable on cost, but China needs to recognise that this may not always be the case so will need to think ahead to develop new strategies in order to maintain their place in the global economic arena (see also Evaristo et al, 2004).

### **5.5 Effective staff development through experiential learning**

Data suggested there was very little specific training provision being provided for practitioners or by senior-level practitioners for their own staff. However, pedagogy built around mentoring and supporting on-site was considered the best way by which to develop staff for cross-cultural, trans-national business. Although mentoring was informal and unstructured, evidence suggests it was strategically organised in order to develop staff and one noted it was *“succession planning”*.

An American management study conducted with International Business Machines Corporation (IBM) and the American Society of Training and Development (ASTD) identified that 60% of companies utilised mentoring as a method of passing on knowledge, with 50% still using documentation by way of handling knowledge gained (Lesser and Rivera, 2006). Crucially, *“mentoring was also identified as most effective in learn-while-doing scenarios where mentors offer guidance to students in realistic situations they may be encountering”* (Stevens, 2010). The study by Stevens shows the importance of knowledge transfer from more experienced employees through to younger practitioners as an advantageous development strategy: *“an organization committed to capturing and transferring critical knowledge within their ever-changing workforce demographics is a company that can retain organizational knowledge and improve its workforce. Organizational leaders of today, managing multi-generational workforces, possess the opportunity to utilize knowledge management for strategic advantage”*.

Participants indicated that it was vital to take staff within the context and to give them the opportunity to interact first-hand with Chinese businesses and their employees in order to develop their knowledge with direct experience; the effectiveness of this strategy for development of *“cultural exposure”* was discussed by Winn (2013) and knowledge transfer as noted by Stevens (2010). The data indicates that junior staff were routinely accompanied by a senior member of staff who was experienced within the cross-cultural setting; this allowed them to directly encounter issues as they arose and observe how the manager/senior practitioner reacted and responded to situations as they emerged, thus profiting from their experience.

This approach was supported by the EU SME Centre (2013) which asserts that first-hand experience is needed in order to appreciate the rapid changes and their impact on culture. A ‘learn by doing’ experiential learning pedagogy was endorsed by 8/16 participants (including senior practitioners/managers) who felt that learning to work in a new environment could not be taught by reading books. They also noted that cultural understanding was vital, yet it was hard to develop in individuals without being within the context to experience it first-hand. This in part concurs with the stance of The British Council (2011) which suggests implementing strategies by which ‘global skills’ can be developed in the future workforce through mentoring and in-context trans-national pedagogies.

There was also evidence of UK companies developing Chinese staff in order to best serve their needs. Two senior practitioner’s companies had taken this approach; it was recognised that investing time and resources in developing the appropriate ‘hard skills’ in Chinese practitioners could mean a more likely successful outcome for their projects and that this could save time and money in the longer-term. The added benefit was better understanding between the two parties,

improved communication and the 'personal touch' which aided relationship building for the longer-term.

Contrary to the advice of Stevens (2010), data suggests that on return from overseas assignments, UK companies do not tend to de-brief and/or document their experiences, so this cannot be relied on to aid development of staff. It also indicates that useful information gained through in-context experience could be lost. When this process did take place it tended to be on the technical elements of a project rather than those regarding cultural and communication/interaction ('soft skills') aspects which, taking the evidence of this study, ignores some of the important issues related culture and interaction.

There are already established bodies such as the China Britain Business Council (CBBC) who do support companies engaging cross-culturally and who offer training and a vehicle by which to share knowledge. Strengthening awareness of their role and encouraging companies to engage would also provide additional support to companies new to the cross-cultural engagement process.

As noted by Benedettini (2010) any training provision provided by government or companies also needs to be inclusive in order to develop employees from all levels of industry who are likely to engage, not just those in management/owner positions.

### 5.6 Context, management and learning style

If the full range of themes and issues arising from them is taken into consideration it would suggest that this context is unique in its composition. Nowhere else would you see the combination of cultural, historical, geographical and societal changes that are evident in the contemporary Chinese context. It would therefore make it more viable to manage events within the context in a way which considers its cumulative dimensions and conditions. As noted by Hofstede (2007): *"because management is always about people, it is part of the culture of the society in which it takes place"* (see also Hofstede, 1983; Adler, 1983; Aharoni and Burton 1994,). As illustrated by the data provided by participants for this study, elements of China's historical cultural composition – Confucianism and collectivism for example, are still evident and influencing their way of functioning within the workplace (Lui et al 2015;). Its collectivist values are strikingly divergent to the individualistic values of Western societies and therefore pose context-specific issues for UK business people; thus the advice of Hofstede (2007) that *"the Collectivism versus*



*Individualism distinction has profound implications for the kind of management that is appropriate within a culture”* resonates in this instance.

Consequently, British practitioners are faced with finding ways of managing a project process within a very different context and culture to their own. They need to be reactive to events as potential problems have both time and financial implications. Zhang et al (2014, p 308) note that *“management theories are often not implemented in non-Western nations without modification”* suggesting that more universal strategies could be employed within this context as long as they are mindful of the contextual constraints and are implemented with these having been considered.

The data presented in section 4.3 illustrates how practitioners have found ways to adapt in order to function within the Chinese context. Participants described strategies which include local QC management and commitment to developing strategic relationships with Chinese companies for longer-term gain. It can be argued that by utilising local management companies to oversee manufacturing process and output, UK companies are employing agents who manage on their behalf within the parameters of local management practice in order to fulfill their requirements, thus bypassing the need to adapt a Western management style to the context.

Long term, strategies addressing physical elements such as Quality Control (QC) management could potentially follow universal parameters with suitable training and on-going development support given to Chinese companies by their Western counterparts. Indeed, subsidiary and support companies are already managing the process for companies within the Chinese context using universal industrial parameters; testing and prototyping, standards delivery, process control etc. () and this strategy is seen to be bringing benefits by improving the standard of manufacturing output and taking the pressure away from managers who have to oversee QC from a distance. The evidence that some UK companies have brought their Chinese counterparts to Britain in order to facilitate their training also provides some support for this strategy.

It could be argued that building relationships in order to improve communication, establish trust and develop loyalty between two companies is a pertinent strategy in all contexts and is mindful of Hofstede’s advice that *“management is always about people”*. However, the issues arising from the data which support a cultural ‘duality’ currently evident in China which has been defined by many wider contextual factors does not make that easy. Traditional cultural practices, values and behaviours are still evident, yet new developments and the influences have brought about changes which affect the culture and how people and society are functioning and thinking. Zhang et al (2014) observe: *“(there is) solid proof that current Chinese national culture has experienced dramatic changes”,* and *“changes of cultural dimensions have corresponded with changes in*

*management practices*". As described by participants, China appears to sit in a place between the old and the new, with both affecting the business interaction and practice methods which then affect those conducting business there. This was described by Childs (2009) as 'a contextual evolution' in which Chinese management practices were impacted, resulting in evolution and change to management practice in the country. Through their research, Zhang et al (2014) also noted the increase in the Individualism index within China (Appendix F). With this in mind, it can be assumed that the influence of Westernisation on the context and the rise of Individualism (which is stronger in Western contexts such as America and Western Europe) may see Chinese management practice develop further along the lines of that utilised in the west, which could result in more synergy in approach.

Through their data, participants demonstrate the development of cultural acclimatisation and intelligence (CQ) through face-to-face in-context engagement, which allows them to develop better understanding first-hand. The in-context 'learn by doing' pedagogy supported by a mentor was discussed by 14/16 participants and is seen as a way of facilitating this advantage as well as retaining skills and knowledge which could otherwise be lost. This method of training employees is evident throughout Western management and is a useful tool when developing staff for cross-cultural engagement. Essentially, if the Chinese contextual and cultural composition is unique and intrinsically shapes how they interact and conduct their business, the most effective way to learn about it is to go there and experience it first-hand.

### **Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory**

These findings demonstrate a level of development in line with Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984). There is evidence to support all four elements of the learning cycle. Kolb (1984) believes that when an individual adheres to all four components of the learning cycle (see fig 1, p 32) then they have a better understanding and the process of learning is more successful. Considering the evidence presented in this study, it could be argued that there is weakness in execution of the model presented by Kolb when it comes to learning by practice, as illustrated by participant data herein.

Individuals were clearly going through a process of concrete experience (CE) by being mentored within the context and being part of real-life projects for their employers. There is evidence of observation and reflection on their experiences (RO), abstract conceptualisation (AC) in order to evaluate, explain and understand events and behaviours they were experiencing and active experimentation (AE) in the form of the actions they took in order to manage the situations

effectively for example; relationship building strategies and the implementation of local QC management. However, participants have indicated that there was little or no specific 'soft skills' training prior to engagement, meaning there was little theory which they could refer to in order to help them explain or attribute meaning to behaviours and events. The consequence of this lack of theoretical context-specific knowledge may contribute to the confusion and misunderstanding which occurred in certain situations. When experiencing something through an interaction which they couldn't explain, participants were unable to draw on theoretical knowledge in order to find a reason for it, which meant that they searched for explanations outside the context, from experiences in other parts of life which were totally unconnected with the context in which they were performing.

To illustrate, Jake (SM, p 6) noted *"the Chinese mentality is to shout a lot and demand a lot and you know you just have to... you kind of have to deal with that, you know it's not meant personally, it's just their culture"*. This demonstrates Jake's attempt at reflective observation (RO), abstract conceptualisation (AC) and his way of explaining the behaviour he witnessed. However, Rob (TECH) references delays to a project and concludes that *"the Chinese company were basically telling lies to when it would be ready and they knew that it wasn't going to be ready in time"* (Rob: 6). Having no theoretical knowledge, less industry and contextual experience than Jake, Rob and a colleague struggled to rationalise and attribute a reason to their communication challenges. These deficiencies led to an unsatisfactory project outcome in this example, leading to Rob and the colleague returning to the UK with a project incomplete; the colleague disengaged with the process and both were unable to initiate active experimentation (AE) in order to complete the assignment. It could be argued that some form of cultural intelligence knowledge via pre-assignment training may have helped these practitioners rationalise and respond to the issues presented.

Further, this inability to adapt at times of challenge could be attributed to other forces outlined by Kolb, such as task/job role, education and profession. Participants who occupied positions lower in their company infrastructure (shop floor/skilled workers) such as Martin and Rob (see participant profiles - Table 1, 3.3) experienced difficulties executing elements of Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, and found adapting to the nuances of the context a challenge. This deficiency could potentially arise from lack of experience in the cross cultural setting (as highlighted above), the lack of an experienced mentor on-site to offer support or from their educational background, although it would take further research to establish this. Certainly evidence suggests that cross-cultural training is often not inclusive and tends to be targeted towards higher-level professionals (UK Treasury 2004, p 24). Participants from higher management positions with more experience and higher educational backgrounds such as Owen,

Jake and Neil (see Table 1) appeared much better equipped to adapt and complete the ELT cycle in order to put meaning to challenges and contextual/cultural issues and apply solutions in order to improve potential outcomes.

Li et al (2013) asserted that a divergent learning style best supported the development of cultural intelligence (CQ) in the overseas setting. The divergent style's *"greatest strength lies in imaginative ability and awareness of meaning and values ... those orientated toward divergence are interested in people"* (Kolb [ibid], p77-8).

If we also reflect on Kolb's exploration of learning styles of various professions and his assertion that engineers tended towards a more convergent learning style, this may also have an impact on the performance of some engineers in challenging engagement situations, especially when it involves people, social interaction, culture and values. If engineers are generally adopting a convergent learning style based on practical problem solving and decision making (Kolb 1984, p 77) and where *"they prefer dealing with technical tasks and problems rather than social and interpersonal issues"* (Hudson, 1976 via Kolb 1984) then this could affect the whole learning process. However, experienced upper management participants showed more inclination towards building relationships on both a commercial and personal level. These individuals demonstrated an approach more conducive to the divergent style of learning by showing interest in individuals and particularly in Jake's example, by building long-term personal connections with individuals and their families.

In summary, data appears to suggest that Kolb's ELT may break down mid-way through the cycle (see figure 2). It could be argued that operating in divergent and unfamiliar settings such as the cross-cultural context like those discussed in this study test the cognitive abilities and potential of an individual to critically analyse, interpret and apply appropriate meaning to events and actions by other individuals within that setting. If we look at figure 2, it can be theorised that as a result, the cycle can break down at point A (in green) - the reflective observation (RO) point due to the inability of an individual to reflect on events and conceptualise their meaning when that individual has no experience of the cross-cultural action and lacks either the guiding influence of an experienced mentor and/or has no theoretical understanding of the culturally-specific influences which are affecting their experience. If they are unable to successfully execute the abstract conceptualisation (AO) stage of the cycle then they are not adequately equipped to respond effectively at point B (in orange) – the active experimentation (AE) point. This is where lack of appropriate knowledge can affect the practitioner's ability to respond to culturally-defined challenges. This break however, can be exacerbated or alleviated to a greater or lesser extent by

other factors such as whether they possess a convergent or divergent learning style, openness to experience, position, education etc. as highlighted above.

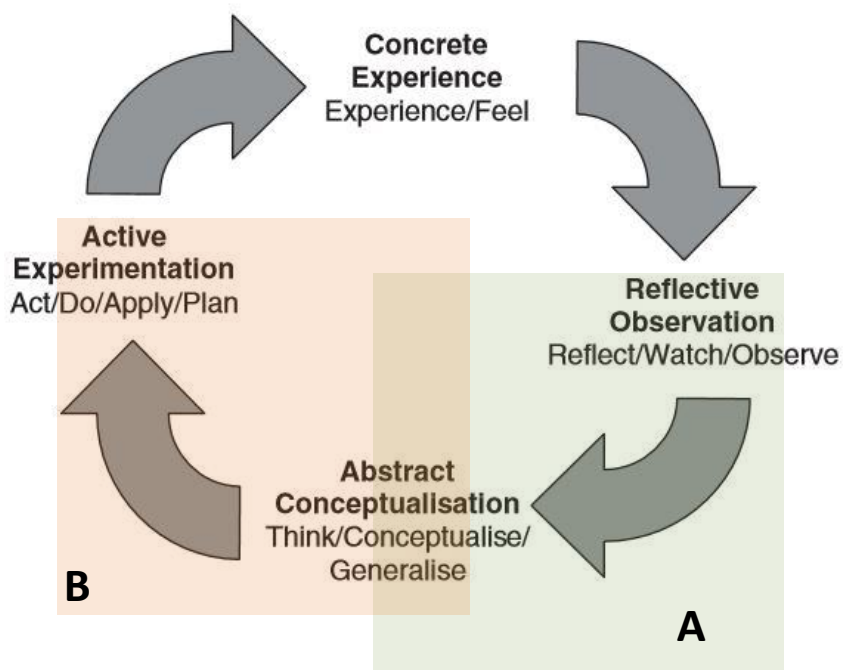


Fig 2

In order to operationalise the ELT cycle and ensure it is effectively completed, the context of the engagement process must be acknowledged if it is unfamiliar and divergent to the individual's own. Performance of the individual could be optimised if he/she received some form of support either by; receiving the theory associated with the context in order to inform their RO/AC stage of interpretation (i.e. to understand the difficulties arising from events and to respond effectively) through prior learning from education or training provision; or with the guidance of an experienced practitioner who is familiar with the contextual frame of the engagement and who can help the individual complete the RO/AC stage of the cycle.

Taking employees cross-culturally into an assignment with a mentor has been identified as a good way of teaching them how to operate in the context in question, providing concrete experience (CE) and the opportunity for reflective observation (RO) supported by the experience of a mentor and/or support training. This is appropriate when management practice needs to adapt the way it operates to the context itself.

These practitioners would not receive such a rich experience and foundation to their learning without being deployed in-context. However, there is still potentially a role for training-based

knowledge acquisition in order to support this pedagogy and to fill the AO gap in the learning cycle.

As a consequence of these conclusions, the researcher believes there are a range of practical opportunities through which this knowledge could be disseminated. The findings could support future consultancy or training to companies in order to help prepare them and their employees for upcoming engagement within the Chinese setting. The concluding theory may also be used as a framework for future research involving other cultures and contexts. There is also the opportunity to publish from this study in order to ensure that the valuable data which has been provided by participants and the conclusions thereof is not information which is unused; data has suggested that companies are not utilising or sharing the valuable data from their own experiences which could then inform future engagement.

## 5.7 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made as a result of the conclusions of this research:

- UK companies need to select staff for cross-cultural engagement that are open to the experience; are broad-mindedness and flexible; which are amenable and responsive. Those individuals need to have a positive attitude to learning about new cultures and how to operate within them and display a degree of 'cultural relativism'.
- Industry members need to consider developing a formal mentored experiential learning pedagogy using international experience and cultural exposure in order to give staff the opportunity to acquire cultural intelligence and other relevant 'global skills'. Staff with this experience displayed better understanding of challenges arising from culture and could adapt and respond better to context-specific issues, thus improving the chances of a successful project outcome. By developing a formal strategy the knowledge gained could be used across sectors and also 'plug in' to formal education provision such as apprenticeships etc.
- Currently many companies have not established provision by which they can document or disseminate existing knowledge which has been gained through previous trips to China, meaning that useful information is lost. Companies would be advised to develop processes in order to de-brief staff after engagement and document knowledge gained through experiential learning which can be used for development of other staff. Further, an industry-wide structure which enables information sharing would further strengthen the body of knowledge available to companies.
- Due to the globalised nature of the engineering and design industries, relevant cultural training is more likely to be undertaken by managers/owners who have responsibility for the successful delivery of projects, rather than being inclusive. Information gained from training is often not disseminated to staff lower in the company structure that may be also required to oversee elements of projects overseas, leaving them vulnerable and unable to respond to context and culturally-specific challenges. It is recommended that, along with a dissemination process as detailed above, policy is developed to ensure that education and training provision for these sectors provides the relevant theoretical as well as industry-specific knowledge for cross-cultural engagement – i.e. 'soft' skills' and 'hard skills'.
- There is some evidence that educational background, industry experience and existing level of cultural experience of an individual practitioner (the 'world-view') may affect their

ability to understand, evaluate and respond to the challenges presented by a divergent culture and context. However, the sample representing these dimensions in this research is small; future research using larger sample sizes from each profile may further develop understanding of the relevance of these dimensions to the overall picture.

- It is advised that UK companies thoroughly research potential Chinese partners/suppliers in order to appraise their capability and understand the potential challenges. Research needs to be conducted on-site in China in order to develop a realistic understanding of a Chinese company and what it can offer.
- Companies need to be willing to invest time to build relationships with Chinese companies and individuals in order to gain the benefits of improved communication and trust. This strategy is an on-going commitment but also establishes continued provision and stability, saving time in the long term.
- Thorough pre-planning is also essential prior to engagement in China. Meetings need to be carefully prescribed and clear expectations communicated to the Chinese company. All support material such as technical drawings, IP documentation, and quality and standards agreements etc. relevant to a project need to be provided up-front and clearly defined. Timescales need to consider local holidays in order to avoid unexpected delays.
- Due to distance, companies need to consider employing local companies in order to manage the production/manufacturing process on their behalf. The benefits these companies provide include; industry expertise; local knowledge; and on-site presence in order to oversee process.







## List of References

Adler, N. (1983). Cross-Cultural Management Research: The Ostrich and the Trend. *Academy of Management Review* (8, (2) pp 226-232.

Aharoni, Y., Burton, R.M. (1994). Is Management Science International: In Search of Universal Rules. *Management Science*. 40,(1), pp1-3.

Alexander, R. (2000). *Culture and Pedagogy: International comparisons in Primary Education*. Blackwell Publishing, MA., USA.

Andaleeb, S.S., Lee, W. and Gruneisen, D.U., (1992). Building Bridges: A model of Partnership between buyers and sellers. *IN: Proceedings of the American Marketing Association, Summer Educators Conference*, P108, Chicago IL.

Anderson, E. and Weitz, B.A., (1986). Make-or-buy decisions: vertical integration and marketing productivity. *Sloan Management Review* 27(3), p.3.

Anderson, J. C., and Narus, J. A. (1992). A Model of Distributor Firm and Manufacturer Firm Working Partnerships. *Journal of Marketing*. 54, (1), pp 42-58.

Ashkanasy, N. M., Trevor-Roberts, E. and Earnshaw, L. (2002). The Anglo Cluster: legacy of the British Empire. *Journal of World Business* 37 pp 28-39.

Benedettini, O., Clegg, B., Kafouros, M., and Neely, A. (2010). The Ten Myths of Manufacturing: What does the future hold for UK Manufacturing? *Advanced Institute of Management Research*, London. [www.aimresearch.org](http://www.aimresearch.org)

Blum, N., and Bourn, D.(2013). Global perspectives for global professionals in the UK: engaging students within engineering and health. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 43 (1) pp 37-55.

Bojun, Y. and Waley, A. eds, (1999) *Confucius. The Analects*. Library of Chinese Classics Chinese-English Laozi, Hunan: Hunan Publishing House.

Bond, M.H., (1987). The Bond Study: the Chinese culture connection. Chinese value survey (CVS). *Organizational Dynamics*. Hong Kong

Bond, M. (1991). Chinese Values Survey. *The Chinese Culture Connection* (Research Collective).

## List of References

Bourdieu, P., (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Harvard University Press.

Bourn, D and Neal, I. (2008). The Global Engineer: Incorporating global skills within UK higher education of engineers. *Development Education Research Centre Institute of Education University of London* (for the Department of International Development). EAP and Development Education Research Centre

Bourn, D (2011). Global skills: From economic competitiveness to cultural understanding and critical pedagogy. *Critical Literacy: Theories and Practices. Institute of Education, University of London*. 6 (1)

British Council (2011). Connecting Classrooms. (Programme Guide, p 1-7).  
[www.schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/programmes-and-funding/connecting-classrooms](http://www.schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/programmes-and-funding/connecting-classrooms)

British Council and Think Global (2011). The Global Skills Gap: Preparing young people for the new global economy. [www.info@think-global.org.uk](http://www.info@think-global.org.uk) (accessed 11 Aug 2012).

Brown, G (2008). Apprenticeships to boost the UK 'skills race'. [www.labour.org.uk/gordon-brown](http://www.labour.org.uk/gordon-brown) (accessed 06 November 2008).

Brown, P., Lauder, H. and Ashton, D. (2008). *Education, Globalisation and the Knowledge Economy*. The Teaching and Learning Research Programme (Institute of Education, University of London) and The Economic and Social Research Council. [www.tlrp.org](http://www.tlrp.org)

Buckman, G. (2005). *Global trade: Past mistakes, future choices*. Zed Books. London p1-2.

Cannadine, D. (1999). The Rise and Fall of Class in Britain. The New York Times on the Web. Colombia University Press [www.nytimes.com/books/first/c/cannadine-class](http://www.nytimes.com/books/first/c/cannadine-class) accessed 7<sup>th</sup> January 2017.

Castells, M. (1996). *The Rise of the Network Society*. Wiley & Sons Ltd, Oxford, UK.

Charmaz, K. (2010). *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*. Sage Publications Ltd., London.

Chase-Dunn, C. (1999). Globalization: A world-systems perspective. *Journal of World-Systems Research*. 5 (2), pp 187-215.

Childs, J. (2009). Context, Comparison, and Methodology in Chinese Management Research. *Management and Organization Review* 5 (1) pp 57–73

- Corbin, J. and Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of Qualitative Research* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, Ca.
- Cresswell, J. W. (2014). *A Concise Introduction to Mixed Methods Research*. Sage Publications Inc. London.
- D'Iribarne, P. (1993). National cultures and the integration of foreigners. *European Journal of Education* 28 (3) pp359-367
- Daniels, J., Radebaugh, L.H. and Sullivan, D.P. (2002). *Globalization and Business*. Pearson Education Inc., New Jersey.
- Deresky, H. (2011). *International Management: Managing Across Borders and Cultures*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Pearson, USA.
- Dewey, J., (1938). *Experience and education*. Colliers Books, NY.
- Dorfman, P., Javidan, M., Hanges, P., Dastmalchian, A. and House, R. (2012). GLOBE: A twenty year journey into the intriguing world of culture and leadership. *Journal of World Business* 47 pp. 504-518.
- Dowell, D., Morrison, M. and Heffernan, T. (2015). The changing importance of affective trust and cognitive trust across the relationship lifecycle: A study of business-to-business relationships. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 44, pp.119-130.
- Dwyer, F R., Schurr, P.H. and Sejo, O. (1987). Developing Buyer-Seller Relationships. *Journal of Marketing*. 51 (2), pp 11-27.
- Dym, C. L., Agogino A. M., Eris, O., Frey, D.D. and Leifer, L. J. (2005). Engineering Design Thinking, Teaching and Learning. *Journal of Engineering Education*, 94 (1) pp. 103-120.
- Economy Watch (2010). The Chinese Economy. [www.economywatch.com](http://www.economywatch.com). Copyright © Stanley St Labs.
- Eppinger, S.D. and Chitkara, A.R. (2006). The New Practice of Global Product Development. *MIT Sloan Management Review*. 47,(4) pp22-30.
- EU SME Centre (2013). Negotiating and dealing with Chinese business partners. *EU SME Centre*.
- Evaristo, J. R., Scudder, R., Desouza, K.C. and Sato, O. (2004). A dimensional analysis of geographically distributed project teams: a case study. *Journal of Technology and Engineering Management*, 21 (3) pp175-189.

## List of References

- Fang, T. and Faure, G.O (2011). Chinese Communication Characteristics: A Yin Yang Perspective. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 35 (3) pp.320–333
- Gao, G. (1998). “Don’t Take My Word For It” – understanding Chinese speaking practices. *International Journal for Intercultural Relationships*. 22( 2) pp 163-186.
- Gehlhar, M.J., Hertel, T.W. and Martin, W. (1994). Economic Growth and the Changing Structure of Trade and Production in the Pacific Rim. *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* 76 (5) pp 1101-1110.
- Guinness, P. (2003). *Globalization*. Hodder & Stoughton, UK.
- Heilmann, S. and Melton, O. (2013). *The Reinvention of Development Planning in China, 1993-2012*. Modern China 39(6) pp 580-628. Sage Publishing.
- HM Treasury (2004) Skills in the Global Economy. [www.hm-treasury.gov.uk](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk)
- Hofstede, G. (1980). Motivation, leadership, and organization: Do American theories apply abroad? *Organizational Dynamics* 9 (1) pp 42–63
- Hofstede, G. (1983). The Cultural Relativity of Organizational Practices and Theories. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 14 (2) Special Issue on Cross- Cultural Management, pp. 75-89
- Hofstede G. and Bond, M.H. (1988). The Confucius connection: From cultural roots to economic growth. *Organizational Dynamics*, 16 (4), pp 5–21
- Hofstede, G. (1993). Cultural Constraints in management theories. *Academy of Management Executives*. 7(1). np
- Hofstede, G. (1994). The business of international business is culture. *International Business Review*, 3 (1), pp1–14
- Hofstede, G. (1999). The Universal and the Specific in 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Global Management. *Organizational Dynamics* 28 (1) pp 34-44.
- Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture’s Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviours, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Sage Publishing.
- Hofstede, G., Van Deusen, C. A., Mueller, C. B., Charles, T. A., and the Business Goals Network. (2002). What goals do business leaders pursue? A study in fifteen countries. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 33 pp 785–803.
- Hofstede, G. (2004). Business goals and corporate governance. *Asia Pacific Business Review*, 10pp 292–301.

- Hofstede, G. (2005). *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*. McGraw-Hill, New York, USA.
- Hofstede, G. (2007). A European in Asia. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 10 (1) pp16-21
- Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J. and Minkov, M. (2010). *Cultures and Organizations. Software of the Mind*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. McGraw Hill USA.
- Holstein, J.A. and Gubrium, J.F. (2011). *The constructionist analytics of interpretive practice*. The Sage handbook of qualitative research 4 pp.341-358.
- House, R.J., Hanges, P. J., Javidan, M., Dorfman, P.W. and Gupta, V. (2004). *Culture, Leadership, and Organizations. The Globe Study of 62 Societies*. Sage, California, USA.
- Hudson, L. (1976). *Commentary: Singularity of Talent., Individuality in Learning*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Hudzik, J.K. (2015). *Comprehensive Internationalisation. Institutional Pathways to Success*. Internationalization in Higher Education, Routledge, NY .
- International Monetary Fund (2012). World Economic outlook April 2012. Growth Resuming, Dangers Remain. *International Monetary Fund, Publication Services*, Washington, U.S.A.
- International Monetary Fund (2015). World Economic Outlook: Uneven Growth, Short- and Long-Term Factors. Report. [www.imf.org/external/Pubs/ft/weo/2015/01/](http://www.imf.org/external/Pubs/ft/weo/2015/01/)
- Ip P. K (2009). Is Confucianism Good for Business Ethics in China? *Journal of Business Ethics* 88 (3) pp 463-476.
- Jones, K. (1996). Trust as an Effective Attitude. *Symposium on Trust*, University of Chicago; *Ethics* 107 (1) pp 4-25
- Kehm, B. M., Teichler, U. (2007). Research on internationalisation in higher education. *Journal of Studies in International Education* 11 (3) pp 260-273.
- Kluckhohn, C. (Ed, 1951). *The Study of Culture*. IN: Lerner and Lasswell (s)The Policy Sciences. Stanford University Press pp 86-101
- Kluckhohn, C. (1951). Values and value-orientations in the theory of action: An exploration in definition and classification. In T. Parsons & E. Shils (Eds.), *Toward a general theory of action*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press
- Knight, J. (2004). Internationalization Remodeled: Definitions, Rationales, and Approaches. *Journal for Studies in International Education* 8 (1) pp 5–31

## List of References

- Knight, J. (2011). Is Internationalization having an Identity Crisis? IMHE Info. p 1, OECD, Paris
- Kobayashi, S., Baobo, J. and Sano J. (1999). The 'Three Reforms' In China: Progress and Outlook. *Sakura Institute of Research Inc.*, The Japan Research Institute (Periodical) 45.
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Prentice Hall, NJ.
- KPMG Academy (China) Ltd. (2011). China's 12th Five Year Plan: Overview. *KPMG International Cooperative (KPMG International)*, Switzerland.
- Kroeber, A.L. and Parsons T. (1958). The Concepts of Culture and of Social System. *American Sociological Review*, 23 pp 121-134.
- Kruegar, D.A. (2008). The Ethics of Global Supply Chains in China – Convergences of East and West. *Journal of Business Ethics* 79 pp 113–120
- Larsson, A. (2003). Making Sense of Collaboration: The Challenge of Thinking Together in Global Design Teams. *In Proceedings of the 2003 International ACM SIGGROUP conference on Supporting group work* pp 153-160 ACM
- Lesser, E. and Rivera, R., (2006). Closing the generational divide: Shifting workforce demographics and the learning function. *International Business Machines (IBM) & American Society of Training and Development (ASTD)*. Somers: NY
- Leung, K. (2008). Chinese culture, modernization, and international business. *International Business Review* 17 pp 184-187. Elsevier.
- Leung, M. (2008). The Effects of Chinese Values (Confucian Work Dynamism and Human-heartedness) on Students' Achievement Goals and Learning Strategies.
- Lewin, K. (1951). *Field Theory in Social Sciences*. Harper & Row, NY.
- Lewis, R.D. (2006). *When Cultures Collide: Leading Across Cultures* (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed). Nicholas Brealey International. Boston, London.
- Li, M., Mobley, W.H. and Kelly, A.(2013). When do global leaders learn best to develop cultural intelligence? An investigation of the moderating role of experiential learning style. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 12 (1), pp.32-50.
- Linton, R. (1945). *The Cultural Background of Personality*. Appleton Century Crofts, NY.



- Liu, T.Q. and Stening, B.W. (2015). The contextualization and de-contextualization of Confucian morality: Making Confucianism relevant to China's contemporary challenges in business ethics. *Asia Pacific Management Journal*. Springer Science + Business Media, New York (published online 26 June 2015).
- Magee, G.B., Thompson, A.S. (2010). *Empire and Globalisation: Networks of Good, People and Capital in the British World, c.1815-1914*. Cambridge University Press, NY.
- Ming, L., Mobley, W. H. and Kelly, A. (2013). When do global leaders learn best to develop cultural intelligence? An investigation of the moderating role of experiential learning style. *Academy of Management Learning & Education* 12 (1) pp 32-50.
- Minkov, M. and Hofstede, G.(2010). Hofstede's fifth dimension: New evidence from the World Values Survey. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, p.
- Mughan, T. and Kyvik, O. (2010). The internationalisation of business: educational paradigms and challenges. *Journal of International Business Education* 5 pp 179.
- Myers, M. D. (2013). *Qualitative Research in Business and Management*. (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) Sage Publications Ltd. London
- Patton, M.Q. (2015). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, Ca.
- Peabody, D. (1985). National characteristics. *Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme*.
- Peixin, Ambassador Zha. (2003). China and Globalization. *The Chinese Economic Association Annual Conference* (14 April, 2003). [www.chinese-embassy.org.uk](http://www.chinese-embassy.org.uk)
- Piaget, J.(1999). The psychology of intelligence. *Routledge*, London.
- Rugman, A. (2000). The End of Globalization. *Random House Business Books*, Oxford.
- Schirato, T., Webb , J. (2003). Understanding Globalization. *Sage Publishing*, London.
- Shabad, T. (1955). Communist China's Five Year Plan. *Far Eastern Survey*, Vol. 24, No. 12 (Dec., 1955), pp. 189-191 Published by: *Institute of Pacific Relations*.
- Sheehy, B. (2014). Defining CSR: Problems and Solutions. *Journal of Business Ethics*. Published by Springer Dec 2014.
- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information* 22 (2004) 63–75 IOS Press

## List of References

- Silverman, D. (2011). *Interpreting qualitative data: A guide to the principles of qualitative research*. Sage, London
- Smith, J.B. and Barclay, D.W. (1997). The effects of organizational differences and trust on the effectiveness of selling partner relationships. *The Journal of Marketing*, pp.3-21.
- Stenton, F. M. (1971). *Anglo-Saxon England* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed). The Oxford History of England. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Stevens, R.H. (2010). Managing human capital: How to use knowledge management to transfer knowledge in today's multi-generational workforce. *International Business Research*, 3(3), p.77.
- Thomas, D.C. (2008). *Cross-Cultural Management: Essential Concepts*. Sage Publishing, California USA.
- Thompson, G. (Ed, 1998,). *Economic Dynamism In The Asia Pacific: The Growth of Integration and Competitiveness*. Routledge. Oxon. Also The Open University, 1998.
- UNCTAD (2014). Trade and Development Report. *United Nations Conference on Trade and Development*. New York/Geneva 2014.
- [www.unctad.org/en/PublicationChapters/tdr2014ch1\\_en.pdf](http://www.unctad.org/en/PublicationChapters/tdr2014ch1_en.pdf)
- Useem, J., Useem, R. and Donoghue, J., (1963). Men in the middle of the third culture: The roles of American and non-Western people in cross-cultural administration. *Human Organization*, 22(3), pp.169-179.
- Wang, Y., Zhang, X.S. and Goodfellow, R. (2003). *China Business Culture: Strategies for Success*. Talisman Publishing, Singapore.
- Wei, S-J. (Dec 1993). Open Door Policy and China's Rapid Growth: Evidence from City-level Data. *NBER Working Paper* No. 4602
- Wei, Y.H. Dennis and Leifner, I. (2012). Globalization, industrial restructuring, and regional development in China. *Journal of Applied Geography*. 32 (1) pp 102–105
- Winn, B. (2013). Learning to lead with cultural intelligence (CQ): When do global leaders learn best? *People & Strategy* 36.3 pp 10-13.
- World Bank (January 2012). Global Economic Prospects: Uncertainties and vulnerabilities. p 1 [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org) (accessed Jan 2014 ).

Xiong, Y. (2009). Social Change and Social Policy in China: National Adaptation to Global Challenge. *International Journal of Japanese Sociology*. 18 pp 33-44.

Zhang, D. and Wu, S.J. (2014). Achieving Successful Business in China: Assessing the Changing Chinese Culture. *Journal of Asia-Pacific Business*, 15 (4) pp 307-323.

Internet sources:

[www.apec.org/Meeting-Papers/Leaders-Declarations/2010](http://www.apec.org/Meeting-Papers/Leaders-Declarations/2010) last accessed 23 January 2017

[www.bbc.co.uk/news/blogs-news-from-elsewhere-34085270](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/blogs-news-from-elsewhere-34085270) accessed October 2017

[www.bbc.co.uk/science/0/21970879](http://www.bbc.co.uk/science/0/21970879) accessed 07 January 2017.

[www.cbbc.org/services/resources/china-reports/](http://www.cbbc.org/services/resources/china-reports/) last accessed 23 January 2017

<http://data.worldbank.org/country/china> [last accessed 18 January 2017)

[www.everyculture.com/To-Z/United-Kingdom](http://www.everyculture.com/To-Z/United-Kingdom) The Barrett Values Centre, accessed 12 January 2017.

[www.geert-hofstede.com](http://www.geert-hofstede.com) accessed January 2013.

[www.geert-hofstede.com/united\\_kingdom](http://www.geert-hofstede.com/united_kingdom) accessed 07 January 2017.

[www.gov.uk/government/news/education-school-linking-give-pupils-a-global-outlook](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/education-school-linking-give-pupils-a-global-outlook) [last accessed 28 January 2017]

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/exporting-to-china/exporting-to-china](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exporting-to-china/exporting-to-china) [updated November 2016; last accessed 28 January 2017]

[www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/186830/13-960-rigour-and-responsiveness-in-skills-am](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/186830/13-960-rigour-and-responsiveness-in-skills-am) (last accessed 28 January 2017; no longer available]

[www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration](http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration) December 2016 Quarterly Report compiled by White, N. accessed 08 January 2017.

<http://www.unido.org/en/what-we-do/trade/csr/what-is-csr> [accessed February 2016]

<http://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eap/publication/east-asia-pacific-economic-updated> [last checked 20 January 2017; no longer available]



## Bibliography

Ambler, T. and Witzel, M. (2000). *Doing Business In China*. Routledge, London.

Hampden-Turner, C and Trompenaars, A. (2000). *Building cross-cultural competence: how to create wealth from conflicting values*. John Wiley, Chichester.

Hofstede, G. (2002). *Culture's consequences: comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations*. Sage, Thousand Oaks, California.

Jandt, F. E. (2001). *Intercultural communication: an introduction*. Sage, Thousand Oaks, London.

Lewis, R. D., (2006). *When cultures collide: leading across cultures*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. Boston ; London  
Nicholas Brealey

Lustig, M. W and Koester, J. (2000). *Intercultural competence: interpersonal communication across cultures*. Pearson, Boston.

## **Appendices**

## Appendix A

### Supporting information: Chapter 2 Literature Review

i. APEC Mission Statement (2.1.2, p 11).

APEC is the premier Asia-Pacific economic forum. Our primary goal is to support sustainable economic growth and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region.

We are united in our drive to build a dynamic and harmonious Asia-Pacific community by championing free and open trade and investment, promoting and accelerating regional economic integration, encouraging economic and technical cooperation, enhancing human security, and facilitating a favorable and sustainable business environment. Our initiatives turn policy goals into concrete results and agreements into tangible benefits.

[www.apec.org](http://www.apec.org)

ii. APEC Growth Strategy (2.1.2, p 12)

The organisation states the following visions as the basis of these attributes:

- **Balanced Growth:** We seek growth across and within our economies through macroeconomic policies and structural reforms that will gradually unwind imbalances and raise potential output.
- **Inclusive Growth:** We seek to ensure that all our citizens have the opportunity to participate in, contribute to, and benefit from global economic growth.
- **Sustainable Growth:** We seek growth compatible with global efforts for protection of the environment and transition to green economies.
- **Innovative Growth:** We seek to create an economic environment that promotes innovation and emerging economic sectors.
- **Secure Growth:** We seek to protect the region's citizens' economic and physical well-being and to provide the secure environment necessary for economic activity.

[www.apec.org/Meeting-Papers/Leaders-Declarations/2010/2010\\_aelm](http://www.apec.org/Meeting-Papers/Leaders-Declarations/2010/2010_aelm)

iii. UNIDO CRS statement (2.1.2 - p 13)

Corporate Social Responsibility is a management concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and interactions with their stakeholders. CSR is generally understood as being the way through which a company achieves a balance of economic, environmental and social imperatives (“Triple-Bottom-Line- Approach”).

[www.unido.org](http://www.unido.org) (2015)

iv. Six fundamental dimensions of culture – definitions (2.2.1 p 17):

1. Power Distance: “the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally” (2010:61).
2. Uncertainty Avoidance: “The extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations” (Hofstede et al, 2010:191).
3. Masculinity vs. Femininity: The masculinity side of this dimension represents a preference in society for achievement, heroism, assertiveness and material reward for success. Society at large is more competitive. Its opposite, femininity, stands for a preference for cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak and quality of life. Society at large is more consensus-oriented. ([www.geert-hofstede.com](http://www.geert-hofstede.com)).
4. Individualism vs. Collectivism: “individualism (pertains to) societies in which the ties between individuals are loose; everyone is expected to look after him-or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism (as it opposite pertains to) societies in which people from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people’s lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty” (2010:92).
5. Long vs. Short Term Orientation (from Bond, 1991): “long term orientation (stands for) the fostering of virtues orientated towards future rewards – in particular, perseverance and thrift. Its opposite pole, short-term orientation stands for the fostering of virtues related to the past and present – in particular, respect for tradition, preservation of ‘face’, and fulfilling social obligations” (Hofstede et al 2010:239).



6. Indulgence vs. Restraint (from Minkov, 2010). “Indulgence stands for a tendency to allow relatively free gratification of basic and natural human desires related to enjoying life and having fun. The juxtaposition, restraint, reflects a conviction that such gratification needs to be curbed and regulated by strict social norms” (2010:281).

Hofstede et al (2010).

The Globe Study (Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness project), (House et al, 2004).

v. Definitions of Confucian ‘cardinal relationships’ (2.2.3 p 23):

1. Sovereign – subject
2. Father – Son
3. Elder – Younger Brother
4. Husband – Wife
5. Senior Friend – Junior Friend

Lui et al (2015) present the five main concepts as: Five key concepts: Ren (仁 benevolence), yi (义 righteousness), li (礼 ritual), zhi (智 wisdom), and xin (信 trustworthiness).

vi. The major speaking practice strategies in Chinese culture (2.2.3, p 24):

- han xu – implicit communication
- ting hua – listening centeredness
- ke qi - politeness
- zi ji ren - a focus on insiders
- mian zi - face directed

These speaking practices are situated in and support the other focus of the Chinese self, the importance of role relationships and the deeply held Chinese beliefs about talk.

Gao (1998).

vii. Chinese Communication styles (2.2.3, p 24 & 25):

Implicit vs. Explicit Communication: the Chinese aversion to explicit, direct communication (with roots in Taoism)

Listening-Centred vs. Speaking-Centred Communication: Listening Centred; where not everyone is entitled to speak is associated with seniority, leadership, hierarchy and expertise.

Polite vs. Impolite Communication: the Chinese concept of politeness, rooted in the Confucian notion of self and harmonious relationships with others. Also propriety, respect and 'giving face'.

Insider-Orientated vs. Outsider-Orientated Communication: The Chinese propensity to engage in conversation with people they know (the insider). Also related to 'guanxi' and trust.

Face-Directed vs. Face-Undirected Communication: Social harmony achieved through controlling feelings, appearing humble, avoiding conflict and hiding competition.

Fang and Faure (2011)

viii. The acquisition of intercultural communication skills (2.4.2 p 31):

- Awareness: understanding and recognition that we and others will be different and have our own 'mental software' influenced by our different geographical, environmental, humanistic and historical factors. 'Different' is not necessarily bad; we all have good reasons why we do things 'our way'.
- Knowledge: Although we may not have the same basic values, it may help to learn about different cultures in order to understand what they are and where they come from. To be educated in order to work with diverse cultures in a considerate and knowledgeable manner.
- Skills: Once we have awareness and knowledge, we can acquire the skills in order to work with people from different cultures. This will help us address difficulties we may face which arise from different cultures, be flexible, considerate co-workers.

Hofstede et al (2010:419-20)

ix. Research into perceived business goals across countries (2.5.2 p 37):

**Table 1**

Five relatively most and five relatively least important perceived goals (out of 15) ascribed to successful business leaders in four countries.

China (1999)	India (1999)	Denmark (2004)	USA (1999)
<i>Most important</i>	<i>Most important</i>	<i>Most important</i>	<i>Most important</i>
Respecting ethical norms	Family interests	Creating something new	Growth of the business
Patriotism, national pride	Continuity of the business	Profits 10 years from now	Personal wealth
Power	Personal wealth	Honor, face, reputation	This year's profits
Honor, face, reputation	Patriotism, national pride	Staying within the law	Power
Responsibility tds society	Power	Responsibility tds employees	Staying within the law
<i>Least important</i>	<i>Least important</i>	<i>Least important</i>	<i>Least important</i>
Creating something new	Staying within the law	Family interests	Profits 10 years from now
Game and gambling spirit	Creating something new	Power	Responsibility tds employees
This year's profits	Responsibility tds employees	Responsibility tds society	Family interests
Personal wealth	Respecting ethical norms	Personal wealth	Continuity of the business
Staying within the law	Game and gambling spirit	Continuity of the business	Creating something new

[Source] Based on research by Hofstede et al. (2002), after adding 2004 data from Denmark collected by Mikael Søndergaard. Chinese data are from respondents studying in Australia and the USA but referring to Mainland Chinese business leaders.

x. Diverse abilities needed for experiential learning (2.5.3 p 37):

The first dimension represents the concrete experiencing of events at one end and abstract conceptualization at the other. The other dimension has active experimentation at one extreme and reflective observation from the other. Thus, in the process of learning, one moves in varying degrees from actor to observer and from specific involvement to general analytic detachment.

Kolb (1984:30-31).

xi. Kolb (p 77-78) definition of four key learning styles (2.5.3):

- Convergent: relying predominantly learning abilities of abstract conceptualisation (AC) and active experimentation (AE); problem solving, decision making and practical application of ideas. Knowledge is organised by hypothetical deductive reasoning; expression of emotion is controlled and convergent learners “prefer technical tasks and problems rather than social and interpersonal issues”.
- Divergent: emphasises concrete experience (CE) and reflective observation (RO). It’s strength lies in imaginative ability and awareness of meaning and values, viewing concrete situations holistically from many perspectives. Divergent learners “are interested in people and tend to be imaginative and feeling-orientated”.
- In assimilation: dominant learning abilities are abstract conceptualisation (AC) and reflective observation (RO). The strength of this approach lies in “inductive reasoning and the ability to create theoretical models”, in putting together contrasting concepts in order to form a holistic explanation. This approach looks for sound theories and is less focused on people.

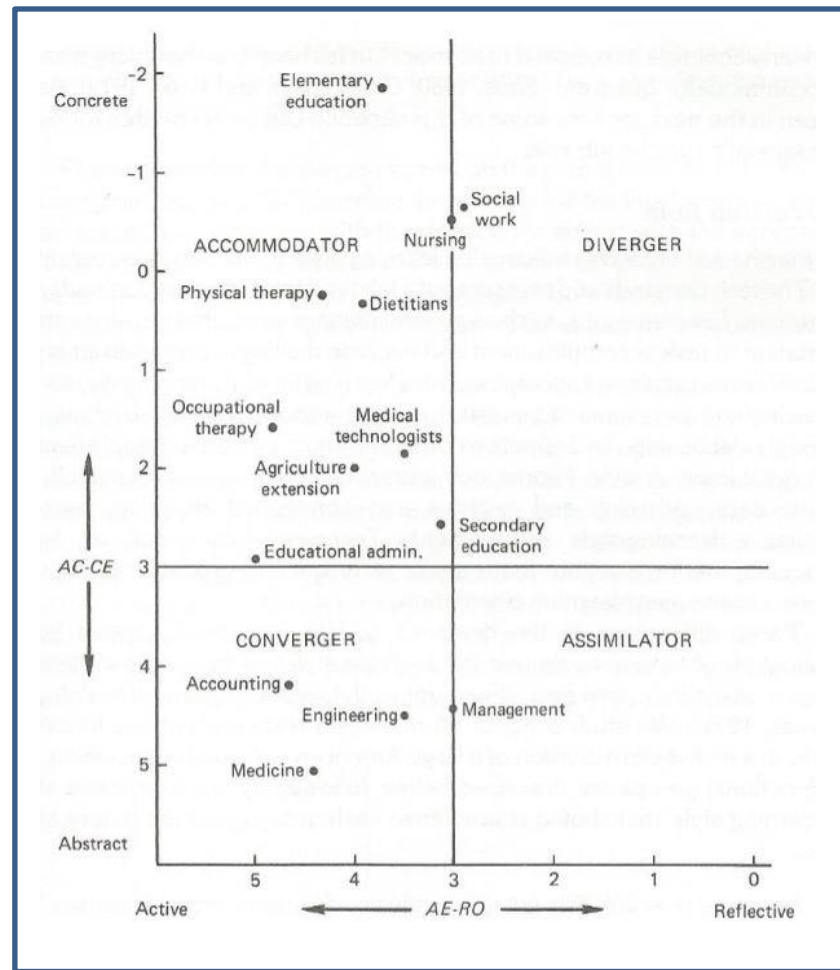
Accommodative: emphasising concrete experience (CE) and active experimentation (AE), the strength lies in carrying out tasks and plans as well as involvement in new experiences. “The adaptive emphasis of this orientation is on opportunity seeking, risk taking, and action”. It is best suited for situations requiring adaptation to changing immediate circumstances; however, problem solving tends to be “in an initiative trial-and-error manner”. Individuals displaying this learning style tend to be viewed as ‘pushy’ and impatient.

xii. Divergent learning style (2.5.3 p 39):

Executives with this learning style will tend to check assumptions and adjust mental maps when actual experiences are different from expectations (metacognitive CQ); they will use different perspectives to understand both similarities and differences among cultures (cognitive CQ). People with a divergent learning style tend to have broad cultural interests; they tend to show high interest for international experience (motivational CQ). They are interested in people from different cultures, and are more likely to build relationships with people from different cultures.

Li et al (2013:13).

xiii. Kolb's Learning Style Scores for Various Professional Groups (2.5.3 p 39):



Kolb (1984:89).

## Appendix B

### Support Material - Chapter 3: Methodology

i. Interview Schedule: Questions & Purpose (3.5, p 51):

Standard interview schedule:

Question	Content	Reasoning
1	<p>a. What does your company do (sector)? How big is the business?</p> <p>b. What is your role? What do you do within the company?</p> <p>c. How long have you been employed there?</p>	To gain data on and understand the participant's career/industry background
2	<p>a. What is your educational background (level, subject)?</p> <p>b. What do you think are your particular skills within your area of practice?</p> <p>c. Where do you sit within the management structure of your practice?</p>	To gain data relevant to the educational/career background of the participant
3	Where have you travelled before (for employment or leisure)?	To understand the cultural/world travel (scope) experience of the participant
4	When did you travel to China for your company and what was your role in this assignment?	To gain data on the number of, duration and participant's role in their engagement with China.
5	What specific background or skills do you have to make you appropriate for this role? (Manager)	<p>To determine the relevant skills set which made them suitable for engagement</p> <p>*To explore key skills held</p>

	*Why do you think you were chosen to go? (Employee)	and to determine whether they volunteered or were designated for the assignment by their employers
6	Can you tell me about your experience in China (workplace/outside work).	Deliberately open, non-directional and intended for the participant to direct the conversation to what was pertinent to them
7	What support did you have from your company and from the Chinese company when employed on this assignment (before and during)?	In order to understand the level of support the participant had whilst on assignment; useful in order to gauge how autonomous they were and how pro-active they needed to be when certain situations arose
8	Was there anything which proved particularly difficult whilst you were on the assignment and how did you overcome it/deal with it?	Open question designed to allow the participant to lead the discussion in the direction/subject area pertinent to them
9	What cultural differences made the biggest impact on you during your stay?	This question was designed to focus the participant on cultural issues, with neither a positive or negative connotation
10	Were there anything about the cultural differences which made you feel uncomfortable?	The question explores cultural differences with view to understanding the negative emotions they

		evoke
11	Did you find the Chinese culture interesting or challenging (explore)?	This question was intended to probe further into the stance of the participant and how they interpreted or experienced cultural differences in the wider sense; whether these differences elicited a positive or negative response
12-13	What cultural differences about the Chinese workplace did you experience?  *Was their organizational style/management different to what you experience in the UK? (*not included in student interview schedule)	Exploring workplace culture as opposed to innate or national cultural characteristics, including management style. This attempts to explore the roots of issues which may affect work-performance and successful outcome of the engagement
14	What was your perception of the relationship between the Chinese workers and their superiors? Managers and colleagues?	Question designed to understand potential cross-over of innate, national cultural dimensions into the workplace setting
15	Did you have to adapt your style of working to fit in with their way of working?	Exploring the impact cultural issues had on the way participants worked and how they responded/adapted to these
16-17 *15/16 for students)	What do you think were key cultural differences in the Chinese people themselves that you encountered during your stay?	To explore the participant's understanding of culture and to allow them to highlight what was pertinent to their



	Did you consider the cultural differences before you went to work in China? (Q18 in the employees interview schedule)	experience  To understand whether participants anticipated cultural aspects prior to engagement
18-19 (*17-18 for students)	Do you think the differences in culture affect work performance?  Do you think cultural differences had an impact on your communications/engagement with your Chinese co-workers during your stay? If so, how?	Questioning the influence of cultural differences in the workplace; in order to understand how they affected performance and outcome.
20-23 (*not on student interview schedule)	In your opinion, do the Chinese understand how we do business? Does their approach differ from ours? Do you believe they had a clear understanding of what you hoped to achieve? Do you believe the Chinese have the same concept of professionalism as we do? If no, how does it differ?	Probing work-place differences, including the concept of 'professionalism'. Also to understand whether an understanding had been achieved relating to the objectives of the engagement.
*24 (*not on student interview schedule)	Would you say 'trust' plays a part in the success of this engagement? (*managers/senior professionals)  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This question was built in to later interview schedules in response to data collected earlier in the interview process. Often the concept of trust was highlighted via open questions by the participant and developed as an interesting /important dimension. This question was inserted as a prompt tool for the researcher to ensure the concept was addressed during the interview if it had not already been discussed in prior questions</li> </ul>	To explore the role of trust and to understand its relevance to and potential impact on the engagement process (and success of)
25	How did you stay in contact with your	Question to gauge the

(*not on student interview schedule)	company/employer whilst on assignment in China? (managers/senior professionals)  How did you stay in contact with your manager/employer whilst on assignment in China? (employee Q 21).	influence of the participant's company on the engagement process and to determine the level of on-assignment support given. Thus to also gauge the level of independence afforded to the participant and the response level they were responsible for.
26 (*23 for employee)	On return, did your company debrief you on your visit? Were your experiences put to use in any way by your company?	To understand whether the UK company used the participant's engagement experience in order to inform future activity
27 (*21 for student)	On reflection, was there anything that you would have liked to know about before you went on the assignment?	Exploring how useful the participant felt any pre-engagement training or information would have been in light of their experiences
28-29 (*23/24 for employee)	What do you think was the biggest challenge that you were presented with in order to complete your assignment?  Is there anything that you feel may have improved/affected your performance or the results of your efforts on this assignment?	To ask participant to reflect on their experience and direct data to what was most pertinent to them and address the key challenges as they see them
30 (manager/senior professional only)	How do you think you could best support a young practitioner or younger employee employed in the same situation?	Considered opinion as to how they would use their experience in order to support and develop younger staff (strategy)

31-32 (*26/27 for employee)	What do you think you gained from the experience?	To prompt self-reflection
*Q 25 for students only	*Do you think it would be useful to cover cultural issues as part of the school curriculum or as part of your course?	To explore participant views on educational provision and cultural issues
	Is there anything else you wish to express about the experience?	To give the participant the opportunity to add anything not covered in previous questions or to emphasise what is pertinent to them

Data Analysis (3.8 p 55):

ii. Indigenous and Analyst-Constructed Patterns and Themes

There are severe limitations to open-ended data collected in writing on questionnaires, limitations related to the writing skills of respondents, the impossibility of probing or extending responses, and the effort required of the person completing the questionnaire. (Further) effective interviewing techniques, skilful questioning, and the capacity to establish rapport are keys to obtaining credible and useful data through interviews.

Patton (2015:27).

iii. (3.8, p 55):

A good place to begin inductive analysis is to inventory and define key phrases, terms, and practices that are special to the people in the setting

studied. What are the indigenous categories that the people interviewed have created to make sense of their world? What are the practices they engage in that can only be understood within their worldview? (Further), analysing such indigenous practice begins with understanding it from the perspective of its practitioners, within the indigenous context, in the words of the local people, in their language, within their worldview.

Patton (2011:544).

## Appendix C

### Support Material - Chapter 4: Empirical Data

- i. Participant Direction to Open Questioning – first response (p 61):

PARTICIPANT	INITIAL RESPONSE (OPEN QUESTION: EXPERIENCE IN CHINA)
Adam	Business. Factories being similar to those in UK, unlike his preconceived expectations.
Allie	Pre-trip fear of going there. Food concerns.
Dan	Preconceptions – China being different to what he expected. First business exchange. Poor communication, language issues. Cultural differences (in business).
Fran	Preconceptions – China being less Westernised than expected. Culture differences.
Giles	Language, communication issues, lack of English speakers (and issues arising from this).
Glyn	Recall of previous failed trips prior to last exchange (historical). Selling products which were then copied.
Greg	Cultural differences, lack of English speakers, communication issues.
*Helen (Pilot)	Culture (innate, national). Learning to adapt (reactions). Business practice not what was preconceived expectation.
Jake	Business difficulties arising from hierarchical structure of Chinese business: being able to access the right people. Quality concerns.
Luke	Business differences (factory set-up). ‘Lord of the Rings’!
Martin	Pre-trip nerves. Intimidating to carry important equipment he was responsible for which was taken away and inspected.
Neil	Finding the right companies. Understanding their capabilities and trust issues. Understanding the culture.

Owen	Business difficulties arising from hierarchical structure of Chinese business: being able to access the right people. Factories: labour intensive.
Rob	Food, eating – culture.
Ryan	(Shanghai) unlike expectations/pre-conceptions- it was very westernised. Etiquette elements of business culture.
Sam	Finding the right companies, understanding their capabilities. Building relationships and trust.

Supporting Quotes:

ii. (section 4.1.2.2. p 68):

You go to some of the towns and major cities and all the Top Shops were there ...all your major high street shops were there – and the young people there, the music playing, you thought that it's not any different to some of our (UK) big cities. (But) as we were driving there, you saw the little towns where they were working out of little tin huts, so there was that side of it that would be poor in certain areas.

(Martin, p 6).

iii. (4.1.2.3, p 69):

It is changing; it is changing especially in the big cities. You know you've got all the new Chinese out of university, the well-educated, brands are appearing everywhere, you have high street shops, you know people want to buy Mercedes and BMWs so it's changed a lot more recently because of there being more wealth in China so you've got these two kinds of societies running in parallel now. So you've got the old guys who just sit there and are happy to do mundane jobs but you've got all these young kids like you know they want to achieve and work in the same way and like they want more money. So you're getting kind of a dual society definitely in China.

(Adam: 6)

iv. (4.2.1, p 72):

(The) whole community only lives there whilst they're working there and you will notice the factories all have accommodation blocks. So that salary package for a factory worker

includes their accommodation and food and then the few times a year that they would go home to their family ... they would work for extended periods of six months or eight months before they had a break and that might only be a national holiday like the Chinese New Year where they might get two or three weeks off and they would all go home to their families and the town turns into a ghost town and everything shuts down, everybody disappears

(Owen: 5)

v. (4.2.1, p 72)

...all the workers pretty much live on site and it can be a small business or a large business. So in the larger factory where we worked there was a big massive five storey building and then they have a big yard and across the yard they have like a building for all the staff that live in... So they live there and they eat there and that's their home

(Adam: 5).

vi. (4.2.2.3 p 74):

I've been involved with engineers before who have been ping-pong emails with me ... (the emails) will go back to his boss and then (the engineer) will come back to me and he'll end up being the go-between and I won't get to speak to the boss, but it would be much easier if we just cut him out and I went straight to the Head of Engineering and heard it from the horse's mouth and we'd have saved two lots of work

(Glyn:16).

vii. (section 4.2.3 p 75):

...the meetings weren't moving fast enough, we weren't really accomplishing enough so they said oh the boss says that we will stay until midnight and it was just kind of expected that we would stay until midnight. And we were saying but we can't stay until midnight because we've got other things to do because we kind of had sort of almost homework to do from the changes in the meeting and things and... and they kind of expected us to, because the boss had said that we were supposed to.

(Dan: 6-7).

## Appendices

viii. (section 4.2.3 p 75):

The chaotic and illogical organisation of meetings:

- going back and forth between different parts of a negotiation, depending on who was available (due to different people being responsible for different aspects of a project);
- taking breaks at odd times, breaking up the flow of discussions (which could have allowed them to discuss things about the proposals outside the meetings), sudden changes of decisions or output;
- 'out of the blue questions' (potentially designed by an individual to impress the boss rather than progress discussions).
- Progress being stalled by exploration of very minute detail

(Dan: 8-10, 18).

ix. (4.2.4 p 76):

They (Chinese companies) understand how to take our money off us and they are in it for the long term. So they're not like some other countries I've dealt with, where they just want to take your deposit, get your final payment and never deal with you again and just keep your cash, they really genuinely want to build the business and make more and more stuff for you and take money off you for years to come".

(Luke: 4)

x. (section 4.2.6.1 p 78):

I think at worker level, so engineers, middle management guys, the fear is that their managers will find out (about mistakes made) and there are no HR policies about people needing a month's notice and stuff there, you know people will disappear from a team very rapidly... And I think vice versa with the management and the staff, you know if they think you've screwed up and you're going to upset a customer or whatever then you can be gone.

(Jake: 7).

xi. (section 4.2.6.1 p 78):

He (Chinese factory owner) made sure that his staff came back to him by basically treating them really well. So they had better accommodation than they'll get in any other factory, they got slightly longer breaks, they also got paid pretty well ... for what they were doing and they would,



you know (receive) medical care and things like that for their families back in the villages, if there was a real serious issue with one of their family they would make sure that a doctor got to see them.

(Jake: 8).

xii. (section 4.2.6.1 p 78):

It's definitely changed over the last few years as the worker rights have changed in China...there's definitely been a shift change ... with Government regulations more in favour of the workers and having more rights towards salary, towards insurance, healthcare, these are all things years ago that a lot of them didn't have" (Neil: 10). Further "There's just so much more available to them, you know the salary ... it's so much better than what it was ten years ago... on the plus side that's improved for everybody, so they're all now being paid more, they have better facilities.

(Neil: 12).

xiii. (section 4.3.1.2 p 85):

...and it's all about the knowledge you know, so if somebody replaced me you know it would take them a few years to understand because the thing about doing 70 trips is you visit hundreds of suppliers over that time so you kind of get a really good understanding of who are the people you should be working with. So it all kind of comes with experience and not chopping and changing

(Neil: 19).

xiv. (section 4.4.1 p 92):

We make a big effort to travel to you know all corners of China to go and find these right people to work with. Whereas a lot of people would try and do it through the internet or search engine and things like that and yes you can probably find product but it's whether you're finding the right people to work with. So for us those relationships are pretty important

(Neil: 16)

xv. (section 4.4.1 p 92):

(On building relationships): ... at a personal level not just as a company, getting to know your opposite number and the guys that you're going to talk to on a daily basis ... even understanding a bit about their family, you know if they've got kids, you

know when they work until midnight does it actually mean they're not going to see their family or are they single guys and things like that and understanding what commonalities you have, letting them know more about you as well, so your family and you've got children and things like that. And I think it means a lot to them to see and understand that, that it's more than just a business relationship; there is kind of some personal contact and personal relationship between both the businesses and the individuals.

(Jake: 5)

xvi. (section 4.4.1, p92):

You know even a webcam, I can pick up that you're nodding and reassuring that I'm saying the right ... thing but that's not the same as being with someone and seeing them in conversation with people and whether they're smiling and learning what their values are, finding common values. You can't get that from a webcam, you can't learn somebody's attention to detail and quality standards or own morals from a Skype call can you?

(Owen: 18)

xvii. (section 4.4.1, p 92):

... if you choose a company, and sometimes we choose bad ones, it's going to happen, but the ones that you don't choose as well you have to work harder with. The ones that you've built up the trust and you know the family and you know the mum and dad and you know, it is a family environment that works normally.

(Sam: 13).

xviii. (section 4.4.1, p 92):

(On relationship building): in business its key, its critical and regardless of what I've said about how hard it is to get on on a personal level at first with these guys who are in business, I think once... by the time you've gone out (with) them ... you know break the ice, I just think it takes longer to break the ice. I think they're still people at the end of the day who enjoy the company of other people.

(Glyn: 15).

xix. (4.4.5.1 p 95):

Corruption is rife, its prolific ... So counterfeit goods of raw materials was a major problem, so it would look like the right material, on the back its even got all the logos and everything like that but it's not the right material so counterfeiting is a big problem. So corruption is a big issue you know and that extends to when something gets stuck in Customs, there's one figure to officially release it from Customs and another figure to get it past the guy that holds the fort, two different things. So we were sending people from the factory down to pay corruption fees for stuff that was stuck in Customs.

(Owen: 14).

xx. (section 4.4.5.1, p 95):

I'd speak in the morning and I'd say oh, when will this be ready and she went oh, tomorrow, tomorrow and I like I know in my head she's not talking about tomorrow ... they like to please people basically and not say the truth, but in my... like when it came down to project management we needed the truth to tell the customer rather than them just telling us what we wanted to hear..

(Faye - student: 19)

xxi. (section 4.5.2 p 101):

Go with them because you never send them alone. Definitely tell them about the personal side of things, you know like the food, the toilets, the poverty and all that sort of stuff they're going to expect, so you know they have to... you know you've got to brace yourself for it because it's different. From the business side of things getting them to understand that you're not going out there to talk to a guy that's going to sit there and listen to what you say and come back and tell you there's a problem or you know they have to understand that they are... well you are responsible for making sure that the commitments you get given are backed up and there is something behind them, making sure they understand the differences between the business cultures between the two countries and two organisations.

(Jake: 15).

xxii. (section 4.5.3 p 101):

The English guys were very sceptical of the process but at the end of it a Chinese guy in the UK was a productive asset to the team, so they've loved it and then when they went back and they've taken the good practices from the UK, they started noticing the tools were coming better, so they loved the process, 'when's the next Chinese guy coming?' they used to go...

(Owen: 12).

## Appendix D

### Support Material: Interview Schedule - sample

#### Interview schedule – Employee Practitioner

1. Background:
  - a. What does your company do (sector)? How big is the business?
  - b. What is your role? What do you do within the company?
  - c. How long have you been employed there?
2. Personal Background (Practice):
  - a. What is your educational background (level, subject)?
  - b. What do you think are your particular skills within your area of practice?
  - c. Where do you think you sit within the shop-floor/management levels of your practice?
  - d. Where have you travelled for your employment?
3. Where have you travelled before (for employment or leisure)?
4. When did you travel to China for your company and what was your role in this assignment?
5. Why do you think you were chosen to go?
6. Can you tell me about your experience in China (workplace/outside work).
7. Did you have any training from your employer before going on assignment to China?
8. What support did you have from your company and from the Chinese company when employed on this assignment (before and during)?
9. Was there anything which proved particularly difficult whilst you were on the assignment and how did you overcome it/deal with it?
10. What cultural differences made the biggest impact on you during your stay?
11. Was there anything about the cultural differences which made you feel uncomfortable?
12. Did you find the Chinese culture interesting or challenging (explore)?

## Appendices

13. What cultural differences about the Chinese workplace did you experience?
14. Was their organizational style/management different to what you experience in the UK?
15. What was your perception of the relationship between the Chinese workers and their superiors?
16. Did you have to adapt your style of working to fit in with their way of working?
17. What do you think were key cultural differences in the Chinese people themselves that you encountered during your stay?
18. Did you consider the cultural differences before you went to work in China?
19. Do you think the differences in culture may have affected your work performance?
20. Do you think cultural differences had an impact on your communications/engagement with your Chinese co-workers during your stay? If so, how?
21. How did you stay in contact with your manager/employer whilst on assignment in China?
22. On return, did your company debrief you on your visit? Were your experiences put to use in any way by your company?
23. On reflection, was there anything that you would have liked to know about before you went on the assignment?
24. What do you think was the biggest challenge that you were presented with in order to complete your assignment?
25. Is there anything that you feel may have improved/affected your performance on this assignment?
26. What do you think you gained from the experience?
27. Is there anything else you wish to express about the experience?
28. Would you be happy to do it again?

## Appendix E

Support Material: Ethics Protocol

August 2012

### SSEGM ETHICS SUB-COMMITTEE APPLICATION FORM

**Please note:**

- *You must not begin your study until ethical approval has been obtained.*
- *You must complete a risk assessment form prior to commencing your study.*
- *It is your responsibility to follow the University of Southampton's Ethics Policy and any relevant academic or professional guidelines in the conduct of your study. This includes providing appropriate information sheets and consent forms, and ensuring confidentiality in the storage and use of data.*
- *It is also your responsibility to provide full and accurate information in completing this form.*

1. **Name(s):** Sarah Palmer

2. **Current Position** Part-Time Student (EdD)

3. **Contact Details:**

**Division/School** Southampton Education School

**Email** [spalmer@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:spalmer@bournemouth.ac.uk); [sp3e09@soton.ac.uk](mailto:sp3e09@soton.ac.uk)

**Phone** 07546207519

4. **Is your study being conducted as part of an education qualification?**

Yes ☒ No ☐

5. **If Yes, please give the name of your supervisor**

Prof Daniel Muijs, Dr Natasha Rumyantseva

6. **Title of your project:**

Cross-Cultural Engagement: A Strategy for Preparing Design and Engineering Practitioners for Distributed Working Practice

7. **What are the proposed start and end dates of your study?**

Oct 2010 - Dec 2015

## **8. Describe the rationale, study aims and the relevant research questions of your study**

This study aims to explore the experiences of Design and Engineering practitioners when embarking on short-term work-related assignments in China. It is the current nature of these industries to engage in distributed projects and collaborative work which is transnational, part of which involves individuals with particular skills sets being sent on short-term engagements into different cultural settings. The study aims to focus towards practitioners of the UK design and engineering sectors which are associated with the manufacturing or building of goods in conjunction with the Chinese industry sector.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that practitioners are being sent to work and engage with individuals in across-cultural working situation with varying degrees of preparation and support in order to cope with or address issues and problems which stem from cultural differences. Literature suggests that an understanding of cultural differences between groups of people and how these differences affect our engagement transculturally, can improve work performance in these situations.

The project aims to explore and address the following objectives:

1. To understand the experiences of working in a cross-cultural setting for these individuals, as part of distributed or collaborative working teams.
2. Through these experiences, to develop an understanding of the issues, problems, impact and coping strategies of practitioners in these cross-cultural situations.
3. To identify the educational background and industry entry-level of these individuals, also the skills set which has ensured their selection for the tasks in question. Further, to identify any cross-cultural training that has been provided via their educational history, or by companies or managers in order to ascertain if and when the participants have had any preparation or support in order to improve the outcome of cross-cultural engagement.
4. To identify the key issues which may undermine or make difficult, the cross-cultural assignment. From this, to develop a strategy, or to suggest appropriate ways by which practitioners can be informed and supported in these situations, in order improve engagement and thus improve performance.

## **9. Describe the design of your study**

The study will be qualitative in approach and involve semi-structure interviews with participants at different stages of the relevant disciplines. The interviews will cover overarching themes in order to explore the relevant themes, which can be flexible and led by the participant. Although directed to relevant topics, the questioning will be open;



participants will be given the opportunity to lead the discussion to what they feel is pertinent to them, from which the interviewer can then pursue interesting threads.

This study will involve participants over 18 years old, who:

- Are studying in the relevant subject areas, to understand their views on the potential of cross-cultural working practice, to gauge expectations (10 interviews)
- Are working in the relevant industry sectors, who have prior experience of working in distributed teams and who have engaged in short-term assignments in China (six interviews)
- Managers of teams involved in distributed working practice and overseeing those involved in cross-cultural assignments (6 interviews).

**10. Who are the research participants?**

The participants will be a range of individuals from the design and engineering disciplines, who are based in the UK. These could be drawn from higher education students studying design and engineering, practitioners and employees currently working in this sector and managers of employees from these disciplines. They will all be over 18.

**11. If you are going to analyse secondary data, from where are you obtaining it?**

Secondary data may be obtained from higher education/UK government offices of education, skills, trade and industry, to determine the academic profile of practitioners to the engineering and design disciplines.

Data may also be obtained from relevant industry bodies (i.e. the IED – Institute of Engineering Designers) to gain statistics relevant to workers engaged in different industry sectors, etc.

**12. If you are collecting primary data, how will you identify and approach the participants to recruit them to your study?**

Potential participants from higher/further education (students) may be approached through the researcher's employment at Bournemouth University, as well as links at partner Colleges involved in these disciplines. The researcher's employer is funding the EdD study and is happy with the study using its students and industry links. Ethical clearance for this has also been approved by the researcher's employers.

Participants from industry will be sought through the researcher's own links and networks via her employment, existing contacts with employers, etc.

- 13. Will participants be taking part in your study without their knowledge and consent at the time (e.g. covert observation of people)? If yes, please explain why this is necessary.**

No

- 14. If you answered 'no' to question 13, how will you obtain the consent of participants?**

*Please attach a copy of the consent form if you are using one – or if you are not using one please explain why.*

Participants will be briefed verbally regarding the nature of the study and what the interview will involve when they are recruited, and this will be reiterated more fully at the start of the interview. When interviewed, a written information sheet and consent form will be used as part of the consent process prior to commencement of the interview. In accordance with the ethics guidelines of the University of Southampton, participants will be informed of their right to withdraw at any time and their right to choose not to answer any of the questions if they do not wish to do so. They will be informed of how the data will be kept, in line with the Data Protection act, and ensured of the confidentiality of the data and their anonymity as a participant in the study.

- 15. Is there any reason to believe participants may not be able to give full informed consent? If yes, what steps do you propose to take to safeguard their interests?**

No.

- 16. If participants are under the responsibility or care of others (such as parents/carers, teachers or medical staff) what plans do you have to obtain permission to approach the participants to take part in the study?**

N/A

- 17. Describe what participation in your study will involve for study participants. Please attach copies of any questionnaires and/or interview schedules and/or observation topic list to be used**

The participant will meet with the interviewer at a time/location which is convenient to the participant. Interviews will be one-to-one between the interviewer and the participant. Permission will be sought from the participant to audio record the interview. If the interviewer cannot meet with the participant due to geographical distance or other impediments, another method may be adopted, such as a skype or telephone interview.

**18. How will you make it clear to participants that they may withdraw consent to participate at any point during the research without penalty?**

This will be made clear during the provision of information at the outset of the interview as part of the consent process. At the conclusion of the interview the participant will be informed that it has been completed and asked whether they are still happy for the conversation to be used as part of the research. A point of contact with the researcher will be maintained for the participant if they decide at a later date to withdraw their consent for their data to be used.

**19. Detail any possible distress, discomfort, inconvenience or other adverse effects the participants may experience, including after the study, and you will deal with this.**

It is not anticipated that the nature of the subject matter will cause distress or discomfort to the participant. However, the semi-structured approach of the interviews will endorse the participant's agency to direct the conversation away from topics that they consider to cause them excessive discomfort. In the event that the participant is distressed, the opportunity to move to another topic, take a break, postpone the interview to a future occasion or withdraw from the process will be offered.

**20. How will you maintain participant anonymity and confidentiality in collecting, analysing and writing up your data?**

Pseudonyms will be used for all individuals referred to in transcripts and all other research output so that these individuals and events described cannot be identified. Audio recordings, transcripts and other documents will be stored electronically and password protected. Only the researcher will conduct the interviews, transcript recordings, handle and analyse the data and write up the data, so no other agent should be involved in the process.

**21. How will you store your data securely during and after the study?**

All electronic and audio data will be stored on a computer which is accessed by the researcher only. The computer will not be general access to any other person. Access to the computer and thus the data will be password protected and that password only available to the researcher. Any data forwarded to supervisors of the study will be forwarded via a secure route, for the use and access of the relevant supervisors only.

Personal information will only be included on printed information where it is essential (e.g. consent forms or interview schedules) and this will be either scanned for secure electronic storage and destroyed, or placed in locked storage, immediately after use.

Data collected and generated for this study will be kept securely for the duration of the study, for a maximum of five years, after which it will be destroyed.

**22. Describe any plans you have for feeding back the findings of the study to participants.**

There are no direct plans to feed back the findings to participants by routine, however participants can be advised of a contact number or e-mail for the researcher if they specifically wish to review the findings of the study.

**23. What are the main ethical issues raised by your research and how do you intend to manage these?**

Ethical problems would arise if employees of companies or managers of relevant practitioners were encouraged to be honest and free with opinions and asked to discuss situations which have arisen with other individuals or companies, and this information in any way was critical or could cause distress or embarrassment to other parties.

Participants must not be put in the position where they could incur any personal penalty by participating in the study. It is important that the data is written up with complete confidentiality, with no indications which point to specific companies, assignments or individuals involved or otherwise.

**24. Please outline any other information you feel may be relevant to this submission.**

Ethics Committee response and Amendments request (January 213):

This is a well-written proposal; however, some amendments are needed before it can be approved:

Important documents are missing in the application.

1. You need to include different consent forms for all the participants in your research not only students; and in these forms remember to include a box regarding their consent to use a voice recorder.
2. Similarly, you need to include in your submission different information sheets for all participants. In these forms, you can make more explicit the fact that they won't get a direct benefit themselves but that the study aims to benefit the industrial sector...
3. You mentioned that you've got ethical clearance from your employer, it would be good if you can show evidence of this, perhaps you can upload an email, letter, etc.
4. The Risk Assessment Form was missing and it is a compulsory document.

## Risk Assessment Form

Researcher's name: Sarah Palmer

<p><b>Part 1 – Dissertation/project activities</b></p>
<p>What do you intend to do?</p> <p>This EdD thesis study aims to understand the preconceptions, perceptions and experiences of design and engineering practitioners when engaging with counterparts in China through distributed working and/or business engagement. It will also gather literature based evidence of existing cross-cultural support training and education which is available. From this, it aims to produce a strategy in order to enhance support for practitioners when entering such engagement for the first time, to improve the personal experience and in turn, improve working performance.</p>
<p>Will this involve collection of information from other people?</p> <p>The study will be qualitative in approach, and involve a series of semi-structured interviews with practitioners, managers and those preparing to enter the design and engineering industries. The interviews will be one-to-one and involve participants over 18 years old. This study will involve participants over 18 years old, who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Are studying in the relevant subject areas, to understand their views on the potential of cross-cultural working practice, to gauge expectations ( 6-10 interviews)</li> <li>- Are working in the relevant industry sectors, who have prior experience of working in distributed teams and who have engaged in short-term assignments in</li> </ul>

<p>China (up to 10 interviews)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Managers of teams involved in distributed working practice and overseeing those involved in cross-cultural assignments (up to 6 interviews).</li> </ul>
<p>If relevant, what location/s is/are involved?</p> <p>Interviews are anticipated to be conducted in a practitioner's place of work, by arrangement.</p> <p>Other interviews may take place in the researcher's place of work. These will be low-risk office-based environments.</p>
<p>Will you be working alone or with others?</p> <p><b>Interviews will be one-to-one, in an office environment. These will take place during my working hours. If off-site, my supervisor will be advised as to where and with whom the interview will take place. Visits will be logged in a file to which there will be no access by agents outside the boundaries of the study (i.e. researcher, supervisors). The confidentiality of my supervisor will be ensured.</b></p>
<p><b>Part 2 – Potential safety issues / risk assessment.</b></p>
<p>Potential safety issues arising from proposed activity?</p> <p>Lone working, but it is hoped that the above precautions will support this as a low-risk activity.</p>
<p>Person/s likely to be affected?</p> <p>Researcher; but activities will be supported (as above).</p>

Interviews will take place in a low risk environment.
<p>Likelihood of risk?</p> <p>Unlikely.</p>
<b>Part 3 – Precautions / risk reduction</b>
Existing precautions:
<p>Proposed risk reduction strategies if existing precautions are not adequate:</p> <p>N/A</p>

<b>Part 4 – International Travel</b>
<p>If you intend to travel overseas to carry out fieldwork then you must carry out a risk assessment for each trip you make and attach a copy of the International Travel form to this document</p> <p>Download the <a href="#">Risk Assessment for International Travel Form</a></p> <p>Guidelines on risk assessment for international travel at can be located at:  <a href="http://www.southampton.ac.uk/socscinet/safety">www.southampton.ac.uk/socscinet/safety</a> (“risk assessment” section).</p> <p>Before undertaking international travel and overseas visits all students must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure a risk assessment has been undertaken for all journeys including to conferences and visits to other Universities and organisations. This is University policy and is not optional.</li> <li>• Consult the <a href="#">University Finance/Insurance website</a> for information on travel and insurance. Ensure that you take a copy of the University travel insurance information with you and</li> </ul>

know what to do if you should need medical assistance.

- Obtain from Occupational Health Service advice on any medical requirements for travel to areas to be visited.
- Ensure next of kin are aware of itinerary, contact person and telephone number at the University.
- Where possible arrange to be met by your host on arrival.

If you are unsure if you are covered by the University insurance scheme for the trip you are undertaking and for the country/countries you intend visiting, then you should contact the University's Insurance Office at [insure@soton.ac.uk](mailto:insure@soton.ac.uk) and check the [Foreign and Commonwealth Office website](#).

Risk Assessment Form for

**NO**

**(Delete as applicable)**

International Travel attached



## Participant Information Sheet

**Study Title:** Cross-cultural engagement: Strategy for supporting Design and Engineering Practitioners from the UK in distributed teams for first-contact engagement in China.

**Researcher:**

**Ethics number:**5197

**Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.**

### **What is the research about?**

This study is the thesis element of a Doctorate in Education qualification. I am a Senior Lecturer in Design in a UK University and am researching the effects of and support for practitioners of Design and Engineering (for manufacturing) when engaging in cross-cultural engagement for the first time. The study focuses on short-term contact through distributed working teams between the UK and China. It attempts to understand the experiences of British practitioners when participating in short-term assignments in China and to gauge what pre-assignment support is and/or should be offered in order to help them perform more efficiently.

### **Why have I been chosen?**

You have been selected as you have played a part in this cross-cultural experience, within the relevant industry. You are currently a practitioner involved in the Design and/or Engineering industry and have management and/or leadership responsibility for employees participating in cross-cultural business engagement or working assignments.

### **What will happen to me if I take part?**

Interviews with individual participants will be conducted in order to collect data for this study. Interviews will be Dictaphone recorded to ensure that all data is accurately documented. Interview will be up to 90 minutes in duration. On analysis, follow up interviews may be requested by the researcher if any specific dimensions need further investigation. This will be on approval of the participant.

### **Are there any benefits in my taking part?**

It is hoped that this study will benefit this industrial sector by adding to current knowledge and making a contribution which may enhance the support for practitioners when working short-term on assignments in China.

### **Are there any risks involved?**

There will be no risks associated with participation in this study. Ethics guidelines with regard to confidentiality, consent, use of data and storing of data will be adhered to.

**Will my participation be confidential?**

This study will comply with the Data Protection Act and the Ethics Policies and Procedures of the University of Southampton. The information will be stored on a password-protected computer, used by the participant only. The information presented for the resultant study will remain anonymous; pseudonyms will be used in order to protect participants and no personal information will be presented in the research which is likely to breach this confidentiality. Identities of individual companies and/or businesses connected to participants will remain anonymous.

Information regarding participants and the data supplied may be shared with direct supervisors of the author of this study, but within the boundaries of this study only.

**What happens if I change my mind?**

You have the right to refuse to address any question you are not willing to answer. You have the right to withdraw at any time without your legal rights being affected.

**If you have any concerns or complaints in relation to your participation in this study, please contact:** Dr Martina Prude, Head of Research Governance (02380 595058, [mad4@soton.ac.uk](mailto:mad4@soton.ac.uk)) is happy to be the named party.

**CONSENT FORM – Practitioner/Manager (V1)**

**Study title:** Cross-Cultural Engagement: Strategy for supporting Design and Engineering Practitioners from the UK in distributed teams for first-contact engagement in China.

**Researcher name:** Sarah Palmer

**Study reference:** R1

**Ethics reference:** 5197

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet (insert date /version no. of participant information sheet) and have had the opportunity to ask questions

☐

I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be used

☐

I consent to the use of a voice recorder for this interview

☐

I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time

☐
**Data Protection**

*I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on a password protected computer and that this information will only be used for the purpose of this study. All files containing any personal data will be made anonymous. Any personal and/or company information presented in the recorded data and used for the final study will be anonymous.*

Name of participant (print name).....

Signature of participant.....

Date.....

## Appendix F

### Support Information: Chapter 5 – Conclusion

i. Chapter 5 (p 116):

Younger generations value individual success and achievement, they are willing to take risks and opportunities to advance their careers. Emergent entrepreneurs are a group that values aggressiveness and competition the most... this might shape Chinese national culture more toward individualism and masculinity.

Zhang et al, (2014).





