Abstract

The topic of educational alliances undertaken between Sino and foreign universities remains a contentious and much debated matter. This is an area of considerable and often very busy activity with a high rate of failure and frustration – yet, also, examples of reward, mutual satisfaction and achievement. This paper evaluates a key aspect of these alliances often overlooked in research – that is, educational delivery activities and projects which form the heart and core of alliances. The paper notes that the development and delivery of a range of programs including not just degree or part degree courses, but also research, seminar and ancillary activities, lies at the very core of a successful alliances, particularly if these activities can be undertaken in a manner which melds two very different cultural and educational worlds, and in a way which can contribute to the Chinese students' sense of wellbeing and ability to take part in the globalisation of the emerging Chinese market economy.

ASPECTS OF EDUCATIONAL DELIVERY WITHIN SINO FOREIGN EDUCATIONAL ALLIANCES: IS THIS THE REAL KEY TO SUCCESS?

INTRODUCTION

Even after almost thirty years of considerable levels of educational cooperation between Chinese and foreign universities (there are now over 300 such alliances in Shanghai alone) the issue remains as complex, and vexed as ever. The failure rate remains high, the stresses considerable and many questions still remain to be answered about what really makes such alliances successful, particularly in the longer term.

The aim of this paper is to focus on the issue of *educational delivery* – that is on the development and delivery of a range of educational activities in a Sino foreign university context, as another part of the jigsaw. Managers and teachers (Chinese and foreign) from alliances across China were interviewed and monitored across 7 years and the findings indicate just how important, subtle and indeed sensitive educational delivery issues are in a Chinese context – perhaps even more so now that in the past when the market place was somehow more opaque, softer and more forgiving.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sino foreign educational studies by Hayhoe (1989, 1996), Willis (2001 a,b; 2004 a,b,c), tended to focus on a range of issues relating to the formation and maintenance of alliances at an organisational level in which educational delivery activities, including teaching, were often considered within the larger fabric of the alliance in total. Willis (2005) focussed to some degree on delivery issues but, again, was more concerned about issues of success and failure in a wider context. Rather more specific and relevant were Street, (1992), Ross, (1993) and Ross and Liu (1998) who focussed on a range of issues related to educational alliances including in the classroom and they touched on key issues and concepts such as *guanxi* (which can be defined as relationship development based on mutual benefit), commitment (often discussed in a complex manner and related to some degree to teaching situations and

contexts), trust, empathy, respect, sincerity, longevity (in the sense that an alliance which had been in operation for a significant period of time stood a better chance at survival than one which had been in operation for only a short period of time), and sincerity. Some of these authors, such as Street, for example (1992) also placed particular emphasis on the importance of educational delivery in a Chinese organisational and cross cultural context mulling over the strands and threads of how teachers could deliver value in a Chinese context – as a foreigner teacher: this was an issue which also concerned Johnson (1996) who produced a particularly thoughtful analysis of what it was like to teach, live and work in an educational institution in China, but he did not seek to identify particular strands, issues, trends and key findings: his analysis was rather more anecdotal.

Chinese authors have also discussed educational alliance and other issues associated with university development and alliance activity. For example studies by Deng, (1994); Jiang, (1995); Jing, (1995); Fang, (1996); Kok, (1996); Cui, (1997); Guo, (1997); Huang, (1997); Guo, (1998) and Dai, (2001) – to name but a few, are of value because they provide a sense of how Chinese writers perceived educational development in China and also associated alliance activity, but their studies do not discuss specific teaching issues - however, they do provide an evaluation of strategic issues, frameworks and Chinese concerns. A more intriguing and eminently readable study of education in regard to the actual delivery of programs in China by foreign teachers was undertaken by Ming in 1999: he painted a picture of general confusion and frequent disaster underscoring the observation that the use of face by Chinese students could be the meanest of all weapons to an unwary and incompetent foreign teacher.

Still relevant studies by Pepper (1995), and the World Bank study (1996) are useful for their background perspective on educational change and development in China, but do not discuss issues of foreign cooperation directly. They do, however, provide a conceptual framework which remains relevant today.

Other studies have considered various aspects and issues of educational development in China but do not directly address the topic of this paper although all of them tend to emphasise cross cultural issues and the importance, and value, of relationship

development and maintenance in Chinese - foreign strategic alliance situations. Studies by Baird, Lyles, Li and Wharton (1991), Child (1994), Carey and Zou (1995), Canyon (1997), Fuxin and Gronin (1997), Benewick and Wingrove (1998), and Bray (1998) all provide useful and valuable background information and together with the work of the aforementioned authors paint a picture of a complex, ever changing and never easy educational environment in China, in which foreign universities often struggle to develop and maintain alliances in a climate of confusion, cross cultural issues and competing demands. It remains Hayhoe (1996) supported by some of the studies by foreign teachers who have worked in China for extended periods of time (such as Johnson, 1996) who paint the most intriguing picture of educational alliance activity in various locations and university partners in China. Even more recent and relevant studies by Willis (2006), for example, still tend to focus on the structural, organisational, cross cultural and strategic aspects and issues of sino foreign educational alliances – each aspect of which may be of relevance to the current topic but one still wonders: what are the actual and key issues within an alliance, at the actual delivery level, which might constitute value and importance to an alliance as a whole.

METHODOLOGY.

Initially, six case studies were used as the basis for the initial evaluation of a range of key educational delivery issues including subjects, styles, forms of collaboration and so on. These case studies were located in Wuhan, Nanjing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Beijing, Hangzhou and Guangzhou. They were alliances which had been in operation for over five years and in each case managers (from each side, that is, foreign and Chinese), and teachers (again, from the two sides) were interviewed for their views about the delivery of course and programs and associated educational activities (these exact words were used), in a China or foreign context as part of an educational collaboration between the two sides.

Rather than provide strict headings or a menu of possible questions (which was tried initially but with rather restrictive results), respondents were asked (individually and never in groups) to discuss:

- what they felt were the key *aspects of educational delivery* in a Chinese educational and collaborative context,
- what were the key and most important *features* of each of the these aspects;
- what were some of the *important issues* to be aware of in regard to success (and, indeed failure) in regard to these issues;
- how issues *related to each other* if at all; and
- whether there were *other associated and or relevant issues* to consider.

(The process was distinctly qualitative and made use of some strategies and suggested put forward by Patton, (1980), and Huberman and Miles, (1994)

These case studies were used as the basis of more extensive data collection across alliances located in the same cities and also Kunming, Dalian, Lanzhou, Chengdu, Wuxi, Xiamen, Shenzhen, Chongqing, and Hohhot. Variations of responses, where relevant, are noted below. The core discussion framework outlined above was now augmented by further issues, aspects and issues raised by the various people in a range of locations.

Data continued to be collected over a seven year period, that is, from 2000 till the end of 2007 and any emerging trends are identified below. The final collection took place in July 2007 on a visit to five cities and provinces in China and in a strange way nothing had changed, yet issues and trends had become more assertive, sharply etched and focussed. China was no longer an “easy place” to undertake educational programs (if indeed it ever was, which one doubts) but by 2007 it was clear that respondents – on both sides – had a clearer view about what was important, what was needed and what constituted educational success at the local delivery level.

KEY FINDINGS.

A range of key issues and factors emerged in regards to this issue, as follows:-

Development and delivery of management and business courses.

The *development and delivery of management and business courses* was endorsed by all sides (Managers and teachers) as being a key part of most alliances. It often tended

to remain at the core of a successful alliance as these units enabled, in the minds of the Chinese, them to assist them to develop a modern and competitive market economy and also assisted the university to develop its brand and image as a modern, dynamic and competitive provider of business education. There was indeed sustained demand for subjects in the following subject areas: -

- Management;
- Marketing;
- International Trade;
- Banking;
- Economics;
- Finance;
- Insurance;
- Project Management;
- Distribution and Logistics;
- Consumer Behaviour;
- Strategy;
- Innovation;
- Export Management;
- Positioning (in a deregulating market economy);
- Tourism;
- Organizational behavior and change Management;
- Electronic Commerce;
- Competitor analysis;
- Costing;
- Services Marketing and Management;
- Culture (i.e. American cultural studies); and
- Relationship marketing and management issues in a cross cultural trade context

There was also demand for a variety of western business and management behavioural skills associated with economies such as USA. These included: individualism, creativity, problem solving, innovation, and the ability to take calculated risks. Chinese and Foreign teachers and managers noted that these skills were associated by students with modern market economies. These skills lay behind the more structured aspects of a program, course or unit(s).

The high level of demand for these programs was because: -

- Many Chinese universities were weak in these areas because their emphasis had been on other others such as the sciences and engineering between 1949 and 1978;
- Chinese universities and the Government believed that access to these programs could assist them and China to develop a modern market economy;

- There was a growing market of Chinese students from Chinese private companies and State Owned enterprises for these courses which they believed could increase and improve their jobs prospects; and
- It was felt that foreign teachers (in particular) could give Chinese students a taste of “real” western values and behaviour when they taught these programs in China.

Despite their enthusiasm for these courses, the Chinese were ambivalent about the issue of the importation of western values and ideas into China. They worried that these ideas might gradually erode Chinese values and concepts. However, they did not worry about this issue unduly because they believed that their Chinese culture was strong enough to withstand the impact of western values which, in a sense, would form a second tier, or new level of values to augment, but not replace Chinese values. Nevertheless, their desire for western ideas and values was always tempered by this concern, even though it could be rationalised in the way just described. A feature of successful alliances was their ability to deliver western business and management programs in a way which did not undermine Chinese cultural values or cast aspersions about these traditional concepts. A feature of less successful ones was where these courses were delivered in a way which was perceived to undermine or overshadow Chinese values and create the impression that the foreign country (and its culture) – such as America was somehow “better” than China.

Although business and management courses often formed the core of a successful alliance, this was not the case in all situations, as some alliances had a different overall strategic focus. However, in the majority of cases the development and delivery of business and management subjects formed the core of a successful alliance. It remained so across the decade. What did change was the demand for better quality courses and units. People were very aware, now, of second rate courses and programs which were not at a level comparable with the home campus of the foreign university.

In regard to implications of this issue, alliance staff needed to decide: -

- Whether to offer a business program and *if so*;
- The type and range of business courses to be offered in the program;

- The modes of delivery (as discussed elsewhere in this section);
- The degree to which these courses needed to be modified to meet Chinese needs (bearing in mind that a funding of this study was that there was a preference for relatively unadapted and “authentic” programs);
- Who should teach the programs;
- Whether any other courses should be offered in niche areas or in more “traditional” fields such as sciences and engineering; and
- Whether these courses needed to be supported by seminars, research activities and/or guest speakers from overseas – that is, whether an augmented approach was needed and required to add competitive value.

Subjects could be delivered at a **prestige benchmark** standard or a more **pragmatic level**. In the case of the former option, the two sides needed to ensure that they made use of highly qualified teaching staff, accessed extensive physical resources (such as library and teaching facilities and equipment), and offered a reasonably wide range of subjects within a business degree or program. The focus of the whole of the program needed to be on establishing an international benchmark image. If staff wished to position the program at a pragmatic level, they could make some minor adjustments to recognise the slightly lower level of the program - for example by using some sessional staff (in addition to full time staff), reducing the level of physical infrastructure, or perhaps by offering some of the non core subjects via distance education.

In summary, the development and delivery of business and management courses was a key aspect of alliance success. However, it was not crucial to offer these courses if the focus of an alliance was on another area such as research, or (as in the Wuhan case study) a highly specialised area or teaching and research, in that example, hydrological engineering. In most cases, though, business and management programs formed the core of a well-established and successful alliance. It was so in 2000 and remained so in late 2007.

Development and delivery of other subjects.

There was however, considerable demand for non business/management subjects including:-

- The humanities (including history, sociology and ethnography) in cases where it was felt that these would add to Chinese students' knowledge about a particular foreign country (such as USA);
- Specific subjects such as real estate management, insurance management, regional development, and tourism, which often reflected local demand;
- Engineering, the sciences or other more specific subject areas (such as agriculture, forestry, electrical mechanical engineering, and water sciences), which reflected the nature of the Chinese university; and
- Often quite specific subject areas developed to meet Chinese client needs (such as State Owned Enterprises).

Even though the core and most valued area of Sino foreign delivery was in the business/management areas, alliances often did collaborate to offer other subjects areas. These added a sense of breadth - of maturity. However, these subjects were rarely offered in preference to core business-management units. They tended to add value to some alliances and not others – but rarely were a key success factor. This is because most of these course areas did not necessarily lead to the development of the business and management skills so desired by Chinese universities and Government bodies. They were seen as valuable: but business and management programs were often still viewed as being crucial to the development of an internationally competitive China.

The criteria for deciding whether to offer non business and management courses was to consider:-

- Gaps in the Chinese university offerings;
- Gaps in the offerings of competitors within China;
- Local demand for courses and programs;
- Government policy (where for example a particular issue or policy would be emphasised, thereby creating demand for courses at the local level);

- The needs of key stakeholders and funding bodies such as Ministries; and
- The desire for alliances to differentiate their offerings from others.

The implication of this issue was that there were still many opportunities for universities to offer a range of non business and management programs in China, in both “traditional fields” such as the sciences, and in emerging niche areas such as tourism, real estate management, the insurance industry sector and so on, as noted above. These programs were often offered in addition to business and management programs but at least one alliance cited in this research focussed only on engineering related activities. In general, however, respondents tended to feel that the future lay in the area of collaborating in the development and delivery of a core business program (or programs) and then offering a range of niche courses and activities to add value, breadth and diversity – and they noted that these programs offered also needed to include a segment (perhaps an assignment and associated lecture material) on the business angle of the unit. As some respondents noted in 2007, in China, everything had an angle – a business angle, that is.

The development and delivery of undergraduate, postgraduate and articulated programs.

Both sides agreed that there was demand for both undergraduate and postgraduate programs particularly in the business and management fields. Postgraduate programs were marginally more popular because they were perceived to be more prestigious and more lucrative.

Increasingly it was necessary to offer a complete foreign degree program in China to:

- Meet student needs;
- Compete with other foreign university alliances in the same or adjacent cities; and
- Indicate genuine commitment to both the Chinese university partner and to students.

In some cases, it was also desirable to offer:

- A range of linked degrees in China (as in Shanghai);
- A wide range of major study areas within a business degree program; and
- A wide range of subjects within these majors, and not just the bare minimum.

However, in some cases, it was acceptable to offer an incomplete degree program in China if:

- The majority of units were offered in China with perhaps just the last year being offered in the home university campus;
- The program delivered in China was of such a high standard that students did not mind having to study some of the units abroad or via distance;
- The program was clearly designed as a feeder into a top ranking program in the foreign country; and
- It was not possible to obtain Government approval to offer the complete degree in China, which was still an occasional problem.

In summary, both sides agreed that it was no longer adequate to operate a level two, three or four alliance in China without offering a comprehensive degree program in China, *if the delivery of such a program was a strategic aim of the alliance*. The idea that such an alliance could be used to simply offer a few subjects in China with the remainder only available via distance or at the foreign campus was not supported by respondents. Ideally an undergraduate and postgraduate program would help the two sides to service a wide range of students over a considerable period of time.

Modes of delivery.

Various modes of delivering courses and associated programs in offshore markets have been discussed quite extensively in the literature with a tendency for particular authors to focus on one particular mode – for example there is an extensive body of literature on distance education. Little research has been found which compares a range of modes in an environment such as China. A range of modes was discussed in the current research and the major themes which emerged are as follows: -

Table one:- Educational modes of delivery

(Table one) Mode.	Discussion.
Face to face delivery in China using foreign teachers.	This was favoured as the ideal form of delivery by all respondents as it enabled students to experience foreign teaching face to face in their own environment. However it was sometimes not financial feasible.
Face to face delivery in China using a mix of Chinese and Foreign teachers.	This was accepted by both sides as a valid and practical way of delivering a degree program in China.
Some face to face delivery of classes in China (for example a few lectures provided by Chinese and or/ foreign staff), augmented by distance education (using print and electronic methods and materials).	Accepted by the two sides as being acceptable for non-core subjects in a degree program but less desirable for core subjects where students preferred a more committed face to face, campus based approach.
Distance education without any face to face teaching.	This was disliked by all unless it was either unavoidable or only used for highly specialized and perhaps not very popular subjects. In essence, however, it negated the whole rationale behind delivering a foreign program in China, which was to enable the students to experience a western teaching experience at first hand.
Compressed format (where, for example, a teacher would deliver 5 lectures instead of the normal 12; or where a full set of 12 lectures might be provided over a short period of time, perhaps a week or a weekend workshop).	This model had been used by some alliances but was becoming unpopular as students wanted a full set of lectures and tutorials delivered across a semester – that is, they wanted what they would receive if they studied abroad.
Study abroad – where the Chinese student studied in the foreign campus.	Both sides felt that this mode of delivery was not the key focus of an alliance and if it were, the alliance would fail.

There were some variations between the two sides in regard to the above overall observations: -

- Rather more than the foreigners, the Chinese felt that unless an alliance encompassed a significant degree of face-to-face delivery by a combination of foreign and Chinese staff, it would fail – or be terminated. This was quite a

sensitive issue. They associated distance programs with a lack of commitment and viewed study abroad as money raising – although both were accepted if they were a minor part of an alliance program and did not mitigate against face to face on campus delivery within the Chinese university;

- The Chinese liked a mix of Chinese and foreign teachers for reasons of balance and equity: foreigners liked this model because it was cheaper than using just foreign staff and it also showed them that the Chinese side was committed to the alliance;
- Compressed formats (where for example a unit or subject was delivered across shortened period of time) had been quite popular in the past, but seemed to be in decline – both sides noted this – but the issue was emphasized more by the Chinese; and
- Some Chinese universities had in the past promoted their students studying abroad but did not want this to be the key focus of an alliance as it simply benefited the foreign university campus.

Although respondents widely agreed on the desirability of teaching classes in China using a range of Chinese and Foreign teachers to deliver a full range of lectures and associated tutorials, they also noted that this was not always practicable. This issue tended to depend on the type of delivery model used. - and there were two noted in the case studies. Although this issue was also raised in regards to structural issues it was also discussed in regard to educational delivery and is therefore considered at this juncture in regards to delivery aspects: -

Table two: Delivery models (benchmark/pragmatic).

(Table two) Delivery model.	Discussion.
<i>Prestige benchmark model.</i> (Nanjing)	Employed high ranking foreign and Chinese teachers. Delivered complete classes in China. Provided library and a wide range of ancillary services and facilities. Aimed to provide a superb quality educational program in China. Targeted China's best students for this postgraduate program. Often quite small but some examples were given of large scale prestige benchmark programs which also

	aimed at benchmark standards.
<i>Pragmatic model.</i> (Shanghai)	<p>Employed a range of medium to high ranking (some sessional) Chinese and foreign teachers.</p> <p>Delivered mostly complete classes in China; some compression used (for example five lectures rather than a full set of 12).</p> <p>Made use of some distance education methods of education.</p> <p>BUT made available subjects in a variety of Chinese locations (15) and offered a wider range of subjects than in Nanjing.</p> <p>Targeted a wide range of students.</p> <p>Size of program ranged from small to – more commonly – large.</p>

These two models were very different (the Tianjin and Beijing case studies fell somewhere in the middle): one was large and flexible; the other small and sharply focussed on face to face delivery such as one would received in Washington or Boston. But both agreed that quality of teaching was of key importance to alliance success and that as much as possible (given their different models) they tried to offer a reasonable degree of face to face teaching in China. Neither liked cheap, shoddy, “fly in and fly out” programs which offered an ad hoc range of subjects for Chinese students who were expected to eventually study in the foreign university campus. These low cost delivery models were attacked by all respondents, particularly in Tianjin where the Chinese university had seen many in action.

The range of options between on-campus delivery and distance education can be summarized in the following diagram:

Diagram one: Modes of delivery

Modes of delivery

At one extreme was the delivery of courses and programs via distance education: at the other was the delivery of a complete range of subjects in China using face to face delivery. In between was a range of options, using distance education for some courses and not for others; and combining some degree of on-campus face to face delivery with distance education. As universities moved towards the use of full on-campus delivery (which was the trend in China), they did face some problems and challenges. (The arrow depicts the senses that the modal offerings were part of a continuum).

These included the cost of locating foreign staff in China, and the issue of whether to deliver a wide range of subjects using this mode of delivery or just a few, core subjects. In most cases a compromise was to offer a core range of subjects using face to face delivery and deliver the remainder using a combination of face to face delivery, some distance education support, and aspects of compressed delivery, where, for example, an alliance might deliver five out of twelve or thirteen lectures, making the remainder available on-line.

The reasons why the Chinese liked foreign on-campus delivery (where practicable) was because (a) they felt that this gave their students face to face contact with foreign staff, (b) this mode of delivery was viewed as demonstrating commitment on the part of the foreign university, (c) they felt that this level of delivery increased their competitive position vis a vis other Chinese universities offering foreign programs. They felt that distance programs lacked quality, commitment and were too often just an extension of the foreign university teaching program, demonstrating little regard for the Chinese university and its students. They preferred modes which were more committed, focussed on them and their students, and were China oriented. Gradually, they were also becoming more confident and assertive in demanding higher modes of delivery in China, whereas in previous years they had been content to accept what were often perceived to be low levels of educational delivery.

In summary, the overall trend in China was towards full on campus delivery of courses and programs, and increasingly this was being associated with long-term success. In the meantime either of the two models (prestige, or pragmatic) noted

above was considerable capable of being successful as long as it was delivered with commitment, professionalism and quality.

The implication of this issue was that alliance staff needed to choose between a pragmatic and prestige benchmark model of alliance, and in addition also had to decide between distance and on campus China based delivery, bearing in mind that the preference and trend is for the latter. There was no one best model or mode of educational alliance in China, but increasingly the trend was towards more complex, China based programs which focussed on the development and delivery of a core degree program in China, augmented by a range of other issues as noted below. One of the complexities of this issue was that there was no one best model of educational delivery which a foreign university (and its Chinese partner) could follow, but rather a range of issues and problems which needed to be considered to ensure that the two sides developed and managed programs to meet their respective needs - not an easy matter in what was a rapidly deregulation educational market in China.

Style of teaching (Western vs Chinese).

This was a key issue. It has been well discussed in the literature, for example by Ming (1999), Street (1992), and, in particular by Heidi Ross (1993). The consensus view is that foreign teachers needed to use a blend of western and Chinese teaching styles and this view was endorsed by respondents whose findings tended to reflect the views of Ross quite closely but rather more emphatically. The views of the two sides (mainly teachers) were very similar and were as follows: -

- Chinese students wanted to experience a foreign style of education in China;
- They felt that a foreign program would develop their skills in individualism, creativity, problem solving, western business and management skills;
- They also liked the idea that the foreign sourced subjects they studied for in China were very close to what they would receive in the foreign university campus;
- However, they also were used to a somewhat more group based, teacher led teaching style and this meant that - ;
- Alliance teaching staff had to develop a teaching style which married Chinese and foreign teaching styles;

- To achieve this integration, foreign staff indicated that they acted in three roles: as an expert (which was a role associated with a Chinese teacher), as a facilitator (which was more the way they taught in the West) and as a friend (as students wanted to be friends with their foreign teachers);
- Chinese teaching staff also developed the roles of expert, facilitator, and friend to their students;
- In terms of actual classroom delivery, two models were used: some teachers moved seamlessly between being “the teacher as an expert” and “the teacher as a facilitator”; others divided their class time into specific blocks of “teacher as expert” and then “teacher as facilitator;” and
- When they acted as an “expert”, teachers would be quite prescriptive, directive, specific, and authoritarian – they would tell students what to do; when they were facilitators, they would adopt a far more flexible model, asking the students for their ideas, views, encourage differing views and provide no specific answer to an issue or problem – the trick was to balance these two approaches leaning towards the latter so that the students felt that they were indeed receiving a western style of teaching.

Teaching staff noted that the style of teaching required in China was complex and taxing. Moving between a variety of styles was not easy, but to focus on just one model (expert or facilitator) was to court disaster. Teachers who had spend several years in China talked about this issue far more than ones who flew in and out of China. The consensus was that if foreign and Chinese teachers could not adopt a flexible and complex teaching role, they would undermine the very core of the degree program which was to enable their Chinese students to experience a sense of western teaching – albeit in a Chinese context.

If a teacher taught just as a facilitator, students would become confused. If they taught in a directive way (as an expert), students would feel that this was not an authentic western educational experience. A delicate and not always easy balanced had to be achieved.

The degree to which *foreign staff* needed to modify their teaching approach to meet the need of their Chinese students depended on a range of factors including:

- The *standard and level of the students* (for example, there was a slightly lower level of modification required for postgraduate students compared to undergraduate ones);
- The *level of exposure to foreign teachers* (if students had been taught previously by foreign teachers they were often more used to their style, requiring less modification);
- The *location of the university* (universities in less westernised areas tended to require a higher level of teaching style modification than those in Shanghai, for example); and
- The individual style of the foreign university teacher, as some managed to teach their students in what they felt to be a reasonably unadapted style, relying on their skills as a teacher and their personalities to achieve success.

In all cases, however, at least some degree of teaching style modification was required to meet the needs of the Chinese students: it was usually an issue of the degree of adaptation required.

The implications of this issue for alliance staff was to ensure that they employed teaching staff who were able to convey a range of western educational values and concepts in a way which was acceptable and understandable to Chinese students – and this often meant that these teachers would need to spend considerable time in China gaining an understanding of the educational and cultural milieu in which they and their students would undertake their studies. Some of the personal characteristics of effective teachers in China included: empathy, sensitivity, flexibility, experience (teaching in cross cultural contexts), and an understanding of not just Chinese culture, but, also, their own cultural basis. As one very experienced teacher noted in Nanjing, to be successful in China, one needed to “teach western values and ideas - because that is so often what people look for – in a context of being able to meld western and Chinese cultures, experiences, values and ways of teaching – and learning.” To do this, he moved between a variety of teachings styles, constantly challenging and testing his students, yet never allowing them to drift too far from their own values and ideas. He felt that an effective and successful alliance rested on the development of a

pool of experienced and well qualified teachers who were able to bridge cultural variations and differences. Too often, he felt, alliances failed to consider the teaching aspect of alliances, preferring to focus on issues of program (or activity) development, and income generation. Yet at the core of an alliance, from his perspective, was the issue of teaching an effective range of programs and courses. Teaching in a cross cultural context was never an easy process, and it needed to be taken seriously by alliance managers – a view also noted by Street (1992).

Exchange of staff and students.

The exchange of staff and students was also endorsed by both sides as being an important educational aspect of a successful program for a variety of reasons:-

- Students from both cultures were able to experience each other's home environments and this was viewed as a very positive and valuable part of an alliance;
- Staff could also visit each other and experience their respective environments;
- The process of staff exchanges helped to develop and foster various types and forms of relationships between the two sides;
- Exchange of staff and students was viewed by the Chinese as a sign of genuine commitment to an alliance, and helped to integrate the two sides rather than “just make money out of the Chinese side” as one respondent noted;
- The exchange aspect of an alliance was a way in which an alliance could be differentiated from local Chinese university courses, or programs.

There were *two types* of exchange programs. The first was designed to develop links, build bridges and enable the two sides to experience a different culture. The second type of exchange was undertaken to raise income for programs and activities. Some exchanges did both. Some blurred the two. For example, a key source of funding for some programs (such as in Nanjing) was student fees paid by foreign students to study in China. This income could be used to offset some of the costs associated with the overall program. A combination of exchange programs undertaken for both income and non income generation purposes were viewed in a favourable light by both sides, and particularly the Chinese who considered them to be a key indicator of not only a

successful alliance but one which had real and underlying commitment. Exchanges were endorsed by both managers and teachers for basically the same reasons. However, even though they were viewed as an important activity in an alliance they were never considered to be important as the development and delivery of courses and programs in China: they were a way in which breadth could be added to an alliance.

Exchange programs had deeper and richer meanings for the Chinese than for the foreigners. For the Chinese they were a way of experiencing the West through personal visits, and they also showed commitment on the part of the two sides. They were linked to the twin concepts of *guanxi* and reciprocity in that they bound the two sides together in a network of exchange visits to each other's countries (and campuses) which gradually build networks and *guanxi* relationships between the two sides.

Exchange programs have long formed an integral part of alliances and the implication of this issue for alliance is the need to continue to include exchange of staff and students as an integral part of an alliance framework. Issues such as balance, equity and fairness also need to be observed in establishing and managing exchange programs.

Research activities.

Research activities were endorsed as an important aspect of an alliance. They added breadth, credibility and credence to alliances. There were a range of views expressed between the two sides and these are summed up as follows:-

Research activities: composite views.

- Research activities helped to establish the status and image of alliances. They also added breadth and credibility.
- However, research activities were not the core aspect of an alliance (this was the delivery of a degree program).
- A research program, helped to attract and retain good foreign and Chinese academics.
- Research also helped to enhance the brand equity of the two sides.

- Commercial research was a valid form of collaboration and it could help raise income for the alliance and its staff members.
- Pure academic research was a valid form of collaboration, too and was particularly valuable in setting the image and status of the alliance.
- Prescriptive research was also valued – this was where the two sides would undertake a project and then make a series of practical and business oriented recommendations often for fee-paying clients in China.
- Over time, research would become a more integral part of alliances as they matured, and developed more complex and higher level models, such as the China Europe International Business School in Shanghai. This alliance was a step higher than the Nanjing program.
- There was a place for research in all levels of alliances, from levels one to four, and research was not just restricted to higher level alliances which had better resources – indeed the level one case study in this research was only concerned with research.
- One of the key advantages of undertaking joint research was that it enabled the two sides to research issues in their respective countries.

There were some minor variations between the two sides, as follows:-

Research activities: variations of views.

- There was more interest in commercial research on the Chinese side as they needed the income;
- The idea of prescriptive research was also emphasised more by the Chinese than the foreigners;
- Foreign university staff emphasised the value of research as a way of attracting high quality foreign staff to work in China - this issue was not raised by the Chinese.
- Chinese staff noted that a foreign university which wanted to engage in research as well as teaching (which often generated considerable income) was more committed than one which did not, but this issue was not discussed by foreign staff.
- All staff complained that although they were encouraged to undertake research, they never actually had the time and spent too much time teaching.

In general alliances were starting to increase their research focus, respondents said. This was because they were gradually expanding the range and scope of their alliances and developing more mature and complex alliance models which were capable of encompassing a wide range of activities and programs. All respondents agreed about the importance of research in regard to providing credibility and status for an alliance but the problem was how to finance it and justify it vis a vis teaching. This was an issue in Shanghai where, however, there was still a view that research would gradually become a key part of alliances.

Therefore research was not crucial for a successful alliance (except for the level one alliance which was solely based on research), but it was a valuable and important adjunct to alliances which gave them status, image and reputation.

The implication of this issue was that there was considerable scope and demand for research activities, which added depth, breadth and strength to an alliance. Most respondents felt that an alliance which offered a range of activities and programs (such as courses, research and exchanges) were more successful than those which did not, as the number, scope and range of these activities signified a higher sense of commitment and potential longevity. Increasingly alliances needed to factor in the inclusion of research activities to their alliance plans if they wished to develop and maintain an alliance which has breadth and substance.

Brand equity activities.

A range of brand equity activities was considered to be important for alliance success:-

Brand equity activities: composite views.

- The development and delivery of an internationally recognised degree or post graduate degree program in China was the most important brand equity alliance activity since this established the credentials of the program.
- A degree program in China could be enhanced (in regard to branding) if it was delivered by full time Foreign and Chinese staff, encompassed a wide range of subjects and majors, was endorsed by the Ministry of Education and/or local

bodies, and was offered over a significant period of time, that is more than three years.

- Other activities (such as research, exchanges and so on) could also help enhance the brand equity of the two sides if they were of sufficient stature, quality and image.
- The reputation of the two parent universities was becoming increasingly important as a branding issue. This was particularly the case for universities within the top 100 in China.
- Visits by foreign key academics and other famous visitors also helped to enhance the equity of the alliance.
- Consultancy and fee for service programs with key stakeholders in China could also help to enhance the brand equity of the two sides.

This issue of brand enhancement was more important to the Chinese than the foreigners, and was very important in Shanghai where competition amongst Chinese university and their foreign counterparts was very strong. It was increasingly more important over the decade. Even though a range of issues was raised by respondents, as noted in the above panel, the overall view of all was that if the two sides delivered a world class range of programs in China, they would ensure their position in the education marketplace. If they did not, particularly in competitive locations such as Shanghai, they would become lost amongst the plethora of second rate providers. Other activities could help to add additional value to this often core and crucial activity, which tended to provide the anchor for a highly regarded alliance program in China.

The importance of brand equity activities for alliances was one which needs to be emphasised to a considerable degree because it was becoming so critical to ongoing alliance success. Several respondents noted that alliances which were not of excellent standards were being discarded in favour of those which had a firmer and more sustainable long term base – founded on quality programs, activities and structures. If an alliance chose to establish a program at a basic, simple rather than higher level standard, staff still needed to be careful to ensure that the various activities were undertaken to a high standard, within the parameters of a pragmatic program. They needed to be mindful of the need to ensure that the standard of the alliance activities

matched the image promoted in the market. Certainly, this is an issue which will gain momentum as Chinese educational market place gathers competitive dynamism.

Additional items.

Additional items not raised in the initial set of key findings but raised in discussions were as follows.

Increasingly, alliances were delivering classes in various locations around China – the issue of multi locational delivery of courses and programs and associated activities and projects.

Increasingly, alliances were delivering courses and programs in a variety of locations in China, for two reasons: to raise income and to service a wider range of student markets in China. Foreign universities could deliver programs in a range of locations through an alliance with one key university partner in China or through a range of partners (as in the case of the Shanghai case study where the foreign university delivered programs through 15 Chinese universities). The benefit of the “single partner” model was that the two sides could develop and maintain a close bond with each other, simply delivering courses in a range of locations under their close control and supervision. The benefit of the multi partner model was that it enabled a foreign university to develop links with a number of universities, which meant that it was never dependent on just one. Furthermore it could ask the various universities to organize and facilitate program delivery at the local level – that is, in the various cities where the programs were to be delivered. Both models could be successful, but the second had to be managed with care and decorum, since multi partner agreements could cause tension and loss of trust between the foreign and Chinese university partners.

It was more common for pragmatic alliance programs to be offered in a variety of locations, but it was also possible for benchmark programs to be offered in a variety of locations. Again the key was for the two sides to decide on what they wanted to do about this issue and then ensure that the delivery of programs in one or more locations

was consistent and of a high standard. However, respondents felt that over time they would need to deliver programs in a wider range of locations to raise income and help establish the brand image of their alliance programs in more than just one or two locations.

English was usually the preferred language of instruction – but...

Although English was often the preferred language for foreign programs and courses (since it tended to indicate to the students a degree of authenticity), this often needed to be supported by some delivery in Chinese either within the English language class (a common approach in Nanjing) or as separate Mandarin classes as in some other locations. Both Managers and especially teachers felt that there was a need for bilingual delivery - so long as the overall language of instruction was English.

This was a more complex issue than it appears. It was important for most of the programs to be made available in English since this tended to guarantee their western authenticity and branding. However, it was also important to offer some of the programs in Chinese to ensure that the students could understand the various concepts and ideas presented in class. Yet this issue had to be dealt with considerable tact and aplomb as Chinese students often prided themselves on their ability to tackle classes in English, just as if they were studying in the foreign country.

Foreign (and Chinese) teachers needed to develop the western skills of their students but in a carefully planned and not too stressful manner.

The issue of melding western and Chinese teaching styles has been discussed, but respondents also wanted to note, as a separate but related issue, that Chinese students undertook foreign courses and programs to develop their “western” skills, according to respondents. They wanted to learn to think as individuals, to develop innovative and creative solutions to problems, to learn to question role ideas and concepts and to develop their own ideas, opinions and viewpoints. Often their view of “western skills” was somewhat fuzzy and indistinct, gleaned from TV shows, the views of returning Chinese and a belief that “the west” held the magic keys to business (and personal) success.

This almost naïve desire to learn the ways of the West posed a considerable dilemma for teachers. They had to somehow provide their students with a sense of these western skills, while at the same time not threatening or upsetting traditional values, views and learning behaviour. They often remarked that they needed to straddle two very different cultures, moving between one and the other so that their students could get a feel for western values and ideas while at the same time never moving too far from their safety zones of being Chinese. This was one of the most difficult and complex aspects of educational delivery and came up repeatedly in discussions as one of the most important aspects of a successful alliance.

Increasingly the status or image of the foreign university was considered to be a key success factor in the delivery of activities.

Increasingly the status and image of the foreign university was considered to be a key aspect in the delivery of courses and programs, and the undertaking of other activities such as research and seminars.

If the foreign university did not have a well developed image and status, Chinese respondents tended to feel that its courses and programs were second rate, respondents noted. (However, they had to balance this against the perceived level of commitment, so this was not a straight forwards issue). However, the love of high ranking foreign universities was particularly relevant to Chinese universities located in top 100 in China (under the 211 program). Some top one hundred universities only signed agreements with the highest-ranking foreign universities in a foreign country – such as amongst the top eight in Australia, for example. Non 211 universities tended to be less fussy, the respondents felt, since they were in a weaker negotiating position, since they were not identified as being amongst the elite in China. In terms of educational delivery and the issue of success in an alliance respondents felt that: -

- There tended to be better initial acceptance (by Chinese students and staff) of courses and programs delivered by a *high ranking foreign university*; and
- In terms of the impact of this issue on the success of an alliance, it was necessary for a foreign university to (a) indicate clearly its *ranking and status* and (b) if not an elite university ensure that its courses and programs were *first class* when

delivered in China, emphasising quality, commitment and perceived value in educational delivery terms. The latter group could also enhance some aspects of their brand equity through demonstrating various forms of personal and resourcing commitment to the alliance and ensuring that relationships were carefully nurtured and maintained.

Chinese university staff expressed concern at the attitude of foreign students studying in China.

Another finding which was somewhat unexpected was the view expressed by Chinese academics staff in regard to the teaching of foreign students undertaking studies in a Sino-foreign program in China.

The staff felt that foreign students were often difficult, complaining, and irrational. This was an issue which they felt could undermine at least one part of many alliances if not corrected or considered in terms of overall success factors.

The problem was that some foreign students did not like the Chinese teaching style which tended to be somewhat more rigid and formal than they were used to. Chinese staff tried to adopt more flexible and integrative teaching techniques but found this difficult. In Nanjing (and also in other case study locations) Foreign students in China often complained about the rigidity and “old fashioned nature” of Chinese teachers and felt that it needed to be changed if alliances were to be successful from the point of view of foreign students studying in China. These students were often a key part of an alliance since they helped to pay for the alliance courses.

To overcome this problem, some alliances were paying more attention to informing foreign students that they would be taught in a Chinese way (explaining what this meant) for at least some of their classes since almost all alliances shared teaching between the two sides to maintain a sense of equality and balance.

Although there has been considerable research into the experiences of foreign teachers teaching Chinese students in China, there has been almost none discussing the problems and issues facing Chinese teachers teaching foreign students in the same

country. This is an issue for future research, but in regard to the current research alliance staff need to inform their foreign students about the nature of style of Chinese teaching, and assist their Chinese colleagues to resolve some of the problems, challenges and issues of teaching often very assertive western students.

There was some confusion about the desirability of introducing new subjects, degrees and associated programs into China, as part of an alliance, compared to focussing on a core range of subjects. This needed to be resolved to ensure a successful alliance program.

An issue raised by respondents in the busier locations such as Shanghai and Nanjing was whether they should expand the range of subjects and degrees offered in China to attract a wider range of students. Some alliance respondents felt it was best to concentrate on improving the quality of a core range of subjects (Nanjing) whereas others (Shanghai) felt it was desirable and indeed essential, to increase the range of subjects and degrees on offer in China. There was no clear answer to this issue, but in terms of success, it was necessary for alliances to discuss and review their subjects frequently in terms of (a) student perceptions and needs, (b) competitor activities and (c) emerging areas of demand in China which were often linked to deregulation – for example, when the insurance industry was deregulated in Shanghai there was an immediate demands for subjects and short courses in this area. It was noted that the issue of choosing, modifying, and adding new subjects was one which needed to be considered on a regular and frequent basis. The Chinese education market was now so competitive (in terms of foreign programs) that one could not simply introduce a degree program and leave it unchanged for a few years. As one respondent noted, delivering a class in China was one thing – but another aspect of the issue was to ensure that the subject was the right one and that it met student expectations in a climate of considerable competition and increased student expectations.

Many of the behavioural issues which were relevant to an alliance as a whole were also applicable, and important, to each educational activity or project.

Staff needed to make use of all of the behavioral attributes and concepts which were relevant to any other part of an alliance – that is, they needed to be able to develop a sense of shared and reciprocated respect, empathy, face, trust, and even a sense of

guanxi behaviour between teaching and associated staff from the two sides and within the classroom situation (with their students), albeit to a more limited degree – but students still needed to be able to trust the foreign teacher. These attributes helped to build bridges between students and teacher and between teacher and colleagues. The exercising of these attributes was also relevant in other aspects of educational delivery activities including exchange and research programs.

Respondents increasingly, over the decade, emphasised that guanxi relationships were indeed important between Chinese and foreign staff but perhaps less so in the classroom, where it was rare and perhaps undesirable for teachers to develop high level guanxi relationships with their students since this caused jealousy and accusations of favoritism amongst other students. Often it was better to sustain the teacher pupil relations at what some termed “working colleague” or “basic friends” - or perhaps, more correctly, with the teacher as expert, facilitator and friend. However, it was still possible and viable to develop what might also be termed a basic sense of a guanxi relationship with the students – where they felt that the teacher had their genuine and best interests at heart and in response they would offer their best work, and would participate in discussions and interactive classroom analysis.

There were five stages in the way foreign teachers taught in China, and only the third and fourth (stages) tended to be successful.

There were five stages in the way foreign teachers tended to teach in China. These were as follows: -

Table three: Stages of teacher development in China.

Table three Stage.	Discussion and relevance to success of an alliance.
Naïve.	When foreign teachers started to teach in China they were often very naive and ill equipped. They often felt that they had no real idea of the needs of their students and often failed to bridge the gap between western and Chinese teaching methods and expectations. They often failed to meet student needs. However, they often did not realize this since they could not understand or “read:” the views of their students.

Learner.	During this stage, foreign teachers started to gain more experience and insight into their Chinese teaching activities. They would increase their level of student success and better meet the complex needs of the student groups.
Empathetic.	By this stage the teachers were becoming more at home with China and its culture and could deliver programs and activities which met the needs of their students. They tended to become more reflective, less assertive (in the sense that they no longer felt that their foreign teaching skills were, alone, enough to meet student needs), and more insightful in terms of student needs and cultural issues. These teachers tended to be successful.
Experienced.	Some teachers reached the stage of being experienced teachers in China. This meant that they could bridge western and Chinese educational issues, understand and appreciate many aspects of Chinese culture, and understand their students. Often it took several years to reach this stage.
Mature.	Some teachers (for example in Nanjing), felt that they had reached the stage of being mature teachers in China, able to understand some of the deeper issues associated with their students and Chinese culture. Often these teachers were very successful. They were often able to almost seamlessly move from western to Chinese teaching styles with a minimum of difficulty.

Alliances which employed a group of experienced foreign teachers (who were at the experienced or mature stages) tended to be more successful than those which did not. This was, for example, the situation in Nanjing where many teachers were very experienced and considered to be highly successful, according to students. Conversely teachers who spent only a short period in China were naïve and this was often a problem for an alliance in the sense that these teachers did not even know that they were not meeting the needs of their students, an issue raised by Ming (1991) in his research. Intent on just surviving in a very different culture, these inexperienced teachers would often battle their way through classes not realising that they were failing to communicate with their students who, in turn would be often too embarrassed to say anything.

Alliance staff increasingly needed to employ experienced and savvy teachers who could understand the nature and culture of their students in China. If they did not, students will become disgruntled and annoyed.

The use of sessional teachers (foreign or Chinese) could be successful but the two sides had to be increasingly careful.

A growing trend across the decade was for the two sides to make use of sessional staff and this could be quite successful – if the staff were well trained, professional, committed and genuinely interested in the unit, the students, and the alliance. However, the use of sessional staff was often a complete disaster because they taught for a wide variety of institutions in China (including in the same city) and this tended to dilute the reputation and image of the two sides. Students often felt that they were being short changed and were, indeed, not receiving what they felt was the true, foreign and authentic program. This was an issue which needed to be treated with care and discretion.

Finally, and above all, the development and maintenance of a number of deep-set relationships was the key to the successful delivery of activities and programs in the alliance.

Finally, respondents on both sides agreed that the development and maintenance of guanxi relationships was the most crucial key to the successful development and delivery of courses and associated programs in an alliance. Although they recognized that sometimes colleagues within the activity areas would be just basic friends or working colleagues, as discussed above, there still needed to be a core group of teachers and associated academics with deeper relationships who could:

- Develop the programs;
- Monitor these activities;
- Deal with problems and issues;
- Relate to key stakeholders elsewhere in the alliance (such as at higher levels);
and
- Deal with the students.

Just as managers needed to form and maintain core groups based on guanxi relationships teachers needed to cement their professional and working relationships in the same way. They also needed to form and maintain guanxi relationships with other stakeholders in the alliance such as key managerial staff and administrators. They needed to be treated as core, key and valued members of the alliance.

Conclusion.

Increasingly alliance staff reported that an alliance needed to deliver complete degrees in China, using a wide variety of modes, and focussing on measurable, benchmarked and internationally competitive quality above all. Alliance delivery staff also needed to understand the cultural needs and milieu of their Chinese students (and Chinese teachers needed to do the same in regard to their foreign students in China), and they needed to include a range of activities which did not just include teaching but also encompassed issues such as research and exchange. Above all, they needed to be able to integrate activities and projects into the context of cultural sensitivity and associated behavioural issues based on Chinese traditions. That is, values such as guanxi, respect, trust, empathy and so on, were as important in delivery situations as to an alliance in totality. They also focussed on the need to consider whether the alliance delivery model should be pragmatic or a prestige benchmark model. Both were viable, but they were different and this needed to be recognised and embraced by alliance staff early in the set up of an alliance. In summary, educational, delivery activities were at the core of a successful alliance, and as competition increased amongst alliances in China, so too did the importance of paying attention to these issues. Yet these delivery issues and concepts depended on the establishment of guanxi relationships amongst a range of core groups (including teachers) and the establishment of a sound framework and structure for the alliance which enabled academic staff to delivery quality programs and engage in a range of other educational activities ad projects which would add value and lustre to themselves and their students.

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