



RENKEI

Collaborating across Cultures Handout

The 2013 RENKEI Researcher Development School in Bristol and Kyoto



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Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10
Bristol, 1 st -14 th July Designed by Dr Alison Leggett, Dr Robin Humphrey and Jane Nolan MBE Supported by Bianca Soucek, Dr Alice Scott and Laura McManus									
Exploration of School's theme and interdisciplinary approaches to research, from a UK perspective	Exploring Cultural Differences through Drama and Role Play 1 (Vox coaching)	Exploring Cultural Differences through Drama and Role Play 2 (Vox coaching)	Developing your presentation skills, with focus on academic posters	Creative thinking and the entrepreneurial mind set	Working with industry: Bridging the academia - business divide	Answering the big questions around Urban Sustainability through a UK lens (including formation of teams), Via World Café.	Exploring personality difference in teams using Myers Briggs Type Indicator	Day to prepare team presentations for the next day	Presentations by each team to invited academics
Kyoto, 1 st -14 th December Designed by Professor Tetsuo Sawaragi, Dr Alison Leggett, Dr Robin Humphrey and Jane Nolan MBE Supported by Shinobu Minato and Wei Shulin									
Exploration of School's theme and interdisciplinary approaches to research, from a Japanese perspective	Presentations by each team to invited academics and representatives from industry	Exploring the Grand Challenge through a Japanese lens	Exploring and discovering more about Japanese culture	Exploring the Kyoto Townscape: Site visit to Kyoto Centre for Community Collaboration	Presentation by each team to the RENKEI group	Answering the big questions around Urban Sustainability through a Japanese lens (in the same teams), Via World Café.	Teams work on their new ideas	Teams prepare new presentations	Presentation by each team to invited academics and reps from Kyoto business and community groups

Collaborating Across Cultures – Details of the programme

The 2013 RENKEI Researcher Development School ‘Collaborating Across Cultures’ was a collaborative and highly innovative programme designed to enhance and develop a range of key transferable skills of postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers from a wide range of disciplines chosen through a competitive process from the 11 universities in the RENKEI network (Bristol, Newcastle, Liverpool, Southampton, Leeds and UCL in the UK, and Kyoto, Tohoku, Nagoya, Kyushu, Ritsumeikan in Japan). There were three main aims: To develop future research leaders with the skills to lead in collaborations between different disciplines, cultures and sectors; To facilitate the formation of active collaboration between participants to achieve tangible outcomes; And to develop a sustainable network of researchers across Japan and the UK.

The School took place in two parts with a two week programme in Bristol in July 2013 and two weeks in Kyoto in December 2013. The underlying rationale was to facilitate the development of skills and cultural understanding in the group prior to the formation of cross-cultural, interdisciplinary teams in Bristol, who would work on a response to the Grand Challenge of ‘Urban Sustainability and Resilience’ in the five months before Kyoto, where they would present to academics and representatives from industry. A key element would be the economic sustainability of their proposal, using the tool ‘Business Model Canvas’. The teams would then respond to the Grand Challenge using a Japanese lens and present a second time to an audience of academics, business representatives and community groups in Kyoto.

A range of pedagogical approaches were employed, particularly in Bristol where the initial emphasis was on exploring the influences of disciplines, culture and personality types on communication and team working. Senior academics from Bristol and Newcastle presented on the opportunities for and challenges of working in interdisciplinary teams, while Vox Coaching spent two days with the participants exploring aspects on cultural and inter-personal communication. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) was used to identify psychological preferences in how individuals perceive the world and make decisions, and trained MBTI practitioners facilitated the exploration of these preferences and how awareness of them can improve team work. Presentation skills were honed via a day’s workshop and another day was spent exploring the entrepreneurial mindset and how to turn an idea into an economically-sustainable business.

Throughout the School there was an emphasis on spanning the academic/business divide. Participants interacted with academics, local entrepreneurs and business people and made numerous site visits to local businesses, community groups and enterprises focusing on urban sustainability and/or resilience.

A key pedagogical tool utilised throughout was the ‘World Café’, an innovative approach to large group dialogue and brainstorming, in this case about the key issues (all generated by the participants) in our Grand Challenge, which concluded with team formation around an idea for a response to the challenge (each team had to include participants from both UK and Japanese universities). Interestingly, in Bristol all the teams focussed on urban sustainability, while in Kyoto the emphasis was on resilience in the face of ecological disasters, reflecting the differing geological, cultural and political concerns in the two countries.

The climax of both the legs of the School were 20 minute presentations by each team (utilising all the academic, communication and presentational skills learnt in the School) showing both the social and economic need for the project and how it could bring together academics and the wider community effectively and viably.

The School was financed by the RENKEI UK-Japanese collaboration, facilitated by the British Council, Japan, who made an additional financial investment for this inaugural event of the collaboration. Buoyed by the evident success of the School, the organisers are developing ways to run similar programmes on smaller, less costly, scales both between countries (fewer universities and shorter stays) and within universities (utilising home and international early career researcher populations). The process and outcomes of the RENKEI School are being disseminated in a number of ways, via a short video and accompanying booklet commissioned by the British Council, Japan, planned journal articles and accepted presentations at national (UK Higher Education Academy) and International (European Universities Association Council for Doctoral Education) conferences. A Handbook is planned, outlining the techniques used, which will have particular resonance in Japan where transferable skills training is in its infancy.

A selection of feedback from a survey on lasting Impact of RENKEI 5 months after the programme ended (from a total of 15 responses)

Question: What do you think you gained from the experience, as both a researcher and an individual?

I am undertaking an interdisciplinary PhD which uses aspects of engineering, economics and public policy. This can feel isolating because you never fully fit within a research group (or even within a university department) and are constantly trying to understand someone coming from a different disciplinary background. RENKEI has helped me to maintain confidence through difficult patches by helping me to recognise why I am feeling out of my comfort zone and giving me some ways to articulate that to people I'm working with when I don't fully understand them (or they don't understand me!). Having the confidence to persevere with this interdisciplinary path of my PhD is making my PhD more relevant to stakeholders in industry and creating more interest in my results.

I cannot begin to describe what RENKEI has given me, both in my personal and academic life. I made friends; gained experiences I have never had; learnt new things and smiled more than I have ever smiled in my life. It made me reconsider my role as an academic. I always thought, because of my niche background (Philosophy), that I was destined to a life of solitary work and limited opportunity. I learnt I have more to offer than that, and learnt the real meaning of transferable skills. It also made me very keen to pursue more collaborative projects because it is remarkable how much these types of projects can push you to your limits and really bring the best out of you. I truly learnt things about myself I didn't know beforehand. I will never forget it and I miss it regularly.

As a researcher I believe that I have gained confidence to be involved with collaborative research projects. I have been taking part in workshops designed to increase interdisciplinary and collaborative research, especially in relation to the Cabot Institute at the University of Bristol. RENKEI has helped me reflect on my own approach to group-work and collaboration. It has also given me some invaluable experience of navigating group-discussion and dynamics that emerge participants. I have become a much more reflective groupworker. As an individual, I have gained confidence travelling and presenting. For example, I am trying to organise a presentation at Stanford University, California, in order to foster research links.

1. More confidence in networking and communication 2. Importance of enterprises, particularly social enterprise. 3. The breadth of Collaboration - Collaboration can come from anywhere, not particularly from one's own discipline. The broader and creative collaborations from completely different disciplines may bring more impactful results (even more than what we think of) 4. The cultural clash faced when we collaborate with people from different cultures and ways to overcome and lead a successful collaboration 5. The greatness and philosophical perspectives of Japanese culture 6. The importance of effective communication of research in simpler manner to people from other disciplines and lay audience. 7. Lots of friends.

Confidence in academic presentations - more awareness when working in a team (of both advantages and potential problems, e.g. pay more attention to who the team members are, but also more awareness of my own personality and dynamics that may arise when working in a group).

i have come to realise that the aspects of research/academia that i find most stimulating and rewarding are the discussions, even debates, working together (solving a problem together), coming up with new ideas and collaborating with different people (different expertise, different fields, different nationalities, or all together) - ALMOST irrespective of the subject, as in fact I had no background in urban sustainability (academic background) but just personal interest and curiosity in the subject, but nevertheless truly enjoyed the process of group activities and team projects - i would say RENKEI made me more aware of the importance of the PROCESS(ES) of research and that those are probably what I enjoy the most in this field.

Question: Do you have any examples of specific things that you have been able to do or achieved as a result of participating in the RENKEI programme?

The skills I learnt on RENKEI helped me to have the confidence to go up and talk to keynote speakers at a conference. As a result I have created contacts in industry which I have been able to use in research interviews and workshops.

I'm helping my supervisor to coordinate an international research project which has collaboration partners from all over the world. I have also taken part in other international research projects/activities as a representative of my research group, department or university. I have been awarded funding for a two-year international collaboration project as a co-applicant, and I'm applying more funding to initiate even more international collaboration projects from various funding bodies. All

training and experience from the RENKEI programme help me to handle these jobs much better and more confidently.

1. During my job interview, I had to give a 40 minutes presentation. I considered the diverse backgrounds of the researchers and provided an interesting and impactful overview with visually appealing slides to attract the attention of the audience. This has received lot of attention and was helpful in bringing audience engagement. This can be directly attributed to some of the training I got from Bristol. 2. This experience has encouraged me to think of the cultural differences in student group when I was planning talk for students undertaking a master module and also to present in a way to encourage discussion 3. I have become more open towards collaboration and willing to work in different cultures than before.

I am currently applying to the JSPS post-doctoral Research Fellowship in order to return to Japan in 2015 and carry out research at a Japanese institution.

I have had the opportunity to organise a multidisciplinary 2-day workshop with colleagues from UK and French institutions. While being awarded the funds to organise it may not be directly an outcome of the RENKEI experience, i definitely put into practice some organisational/ team-working skills that I learnt during the Bristol and Kyoto schools.

I have recently been asked to head a large information systems project, after being the technical lead. I don't think I would have been able to do this without the RENKEI experience.

I am now a TA in a class on giving effective presentations, and I have been passing on what I have learned from RENKEI to my graduate students. I am actively searching for a social enterprise that I can relate to my research. I have been collaborating with social scientists to come up with a proposal. We are still at the planning stages but hopefully it will be a successful venture.

I applied for, and won, an award of £2,000 to enable me to attend a conference. The award was The Honourable Company of Air Pilots award for Aviation Safety. The RENKEI experience enabled me to believe in myself and my research to apply for the award.

More active engagement in interdisciplinary projects, and attempting to forge links with institutions abroad. I would like to build links with non-academic organisations but have yet had an appropriate opportunity to do so. The RENKEI experience has given me the experience and confidence to do these things and to appreciate what it might entail.

I have more confidence to make a presentation and my presentation skills were much improved. I attended an international conference this month (225th ECS) and made an oral presentation. I think my presentation went well and I could have an active discussion with the audience. Also, I think my English have been improving (still poor though) as I keep in touch with students in the UK and often talk with them on Skype.

Tools, Techniques and approaches

- 1. Speed networking:** a means of introducing each participant to everyone in the group through an intensive, noisy but effective session in which people start to learn about each other. For RENKEI we asked each participant to produce a small poster about themselves and their interests to use as a prompt.
Participants are lined up facing each other and introduce themselves to each other for 2 minutes each. Then one side moves along so they are facing a new person, and introductions are made. A whistle is required to signal the changeovers. Although it can be tiring due to the energy it requires, it breaks down the initial barriers and gets everyone talking. A bottle of water (with the participants' names on labels) is an essential resource for this exercise.
- 2. Creative problem solving:** participants were introduced to creative problem solving (Osborne and Parnes) as a way of approaching a problem or challenge more laterally, using divergent thinking to try and get beyond limiting assumptions, to generate a large quantity of ideas which might lead to breakthrough solutions. After the divergent phase, convergent thinking is used to evaluate the ideas and define potential action.
- 3. Creative idea generation:** participants were introduced to **lateral thinking** and **Six Thinking hats** (Edward de Bono) – techniques for facilitating thinking in different ways to get out of our habitual thinking styles, achieve more rounded views of problems and develop more imaginative solutions. For an example of lateral thinking in action visit <http://www.thefuntheory.com/>
Participants also used **SCAMPER** (Bob Eberle) – a mnemonic (Substitute, Combine, Adapt, Modify/Magnify, Put to other uses, Eliminate, Reverse/rearrange) – as a set of provocations to help generate ideas.
Brainstorming (Osborne) – participants used this effective tool during the World Café as a means of divergent and lateral thinking, avoiding judging and converging until after the free flowing generation of ideas.
- 4. Evaluating ideas**
MARKETS (Cambridge Judge Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning) is a useful mnemonic for considering the viability of an enterprise:
Market – what is the need which is being fulfilled? Who are the customers? What are the dynamics of the market?
Approach – how will the enterprise approach that market, what is the business model?
Risk and rewards – how will risks be understood and minimised, what will the rewards be?
Knowledge – identification of intellectual property, designs, technologies and brands
Ethics – legal and ethical considerations
Team – what are the skills and capabilities of the team, is there a shared vision?
Sustainability – environmentally and in terms of sustainable demand
- 5. Business Model Canvas**
This tool was extensively used during RENKEI to consider the viability of the participants' projects. It was originated by Osterwalder and Pigneur (2010) who worked with 470 practitioners from 45 countries to develop a framework which they compare to a painter's canvas, with 9 key areas. It is a dynamic and creative tool for thinking about how to realise value - value can be economic, social, cultural or take other forms.
Business Model Canvas helps you consider your approach and can be applied to potential enterprises or to research or other types of projects. The canvas should also be contextualised in the wider environment, so that social, economic, technological, political

factors, the competitive environment, the market and the macro economy are considered.

<http://canvanizer.com/new/business-model-canvas>

For 6 short introductory videos which are a good teaching and learning resource, visit

<http://www.entrepreneurship.org/bmc>

6. **World Café:** World Café was used to generate the project ideas during RENKEI. It is an innovative approach to large group dialogue which involves the participants in a free flowing discussion, brainstorming and recording ideas in words and pictures, sharing knowledge and insights. Each café table has a question about an issue which requires ideas and solutions. The participants move around the café tables during rounds of divergent thinking and their conversations with different people result in the cross pollination of ideas. Ultimately, through the final convergent thinking stage, innovative possibilities for action can emerge. It is helpful for each table to have a facilitator, who can act as a “table memory,” summarising the discussions so far as each group of participants arrives at the table. <http://www.theworldcafe.com/>
7. **Myers Briggs Type Indicator:** participants gained insights into the way people think and behave through an MBTI workshop, which helped develop understanding of their own and other peoples’ preferences, to facilitate effective team working and collaborative working. For more info see <http://www.opp.com>
8. **Drama for presentation, communication and networking:** drama was used to help participants explore cross cultural communication and develop greater understanding. Team working, networking and presentation skills were also gained and the participants used their creativity. The drama workshop contributed to the bonding of all involved, both participants and the RENKEI facilitators. www.voxcoaching.com
9. **Interdisciplinary panels:** academics and experts provided context and opportunities for questions about the grand challenge themes under consideration.
10. **Contributors from academia and business:** large numbers of contributors, from universities, research institutes, businesses, social enterprises engaged with the participants, who also made site visits, for example to the Hamilton House social enterprise in Bristol.
11. **Cultural experiential learning:** opportunities were provided to experience the culture of the host countries, the UK and Japan, to foster cross cultural learning. Participants took part in activities such as ikebana which introduced key principles of Japanese design and aesthetics which were relevant to the urban sustainability and resilience theme.
12. **Conceptual mapping:** concepts, ideas and responses to place were mapped using social media and then developed into new types of maps, for example cycle safe routes.
13. **Enterprise Enquiry Cycle:** Kevin Byron (2010). This cycle was used to track the development of an idea for an enterprise. <http://www.renkei-researcher-schools.org/files/2013/07/RENKEI-Market-research.pdf>
14. **Reflective practice:** participants were encouraged to reflect on their experience throughout the programme. Reflective questions were provided as prompts.

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