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Developing a Postgraduate Dual-Award in Educational Leadership: a Russian pelican[1] meets an English rose.

1.   Introduction

At the start of the millennium, Crossley (2000, p. 319) argued that increased globalization was "revitalizing" the field of comparative and international education. He cited Arnove's (1999, p. 16) suggestion that "Globalisation has infused the ever-present need to learn about each other with an urgency and emphasis like no other in history". The events of September 2001 further heightened this need for cross-cultural dialogue and understanding (Crossley and Watson, 2003, p. 2), but global tensions continue to make such work difficult. It is therefore imperative that international partnerships are promoted wherever possible, and that the collaborative processes contained therein are critically examined in order that academics contemplating or already participating in such partnerships can make informed judgements about what will likely facilitate and/or hinder their endeavours. Accordingly, this paper analyzes the influences and outcomes that shaped a two-year partnership between Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia and the University of Leicester, England, so that colleagues involved in similar Anglo-Russian research or curriculum development can learn from our experience.

It has been alleged that "collaboration demands equal, or near equal, power relations" and that "transplant" approaches in which a precise outcome is pre-determined are less likely to succeed (Gilbert and Gorlenko, 1999, p. 351). Our own experience co-leading a 30-month partnership between our two universities suggests that this is not always the case - an equal distribution of power is not a pre-requisite of effective educational collaboration, and programme validation is not the only measure of success. We have also come to the conclusion that partnerships evolve and are shaped by a multitude of factors operating at different levels

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[1] Herzen State Pedagogical University is the oldest teacher training institution in Russia. It uses the pelican as its symbol because it began life in 1797 as a house for foundlings, and a pelican nursing her young is the traditional emblem of Russian monastic orphanages..

(international, institutional, departmental and project-team), the most influential of which are money, trust and commitment.

The paper is divided into four sections. The first section discusses the drivers, potential benefits, hindrances and affordances of international collaboration, drawing upon the generic literature in the field of international and comparative education, including Crossley (2000; 2002), Crossley and Holmes (2001), Crossley and Watson (2003), Fisher et al. (2008), Watson (2001) and Zajda (2005). The second section explores notions of Russian culture, drawing upon Hofstede's seminal work, and later research in Russia by Bollinger (1994), Gilbert (2001) and Naumov and Puffer (2000). The third section analyzes the Herzen-Leicester partnership using a conceptual framework derived from the literature on international collaboration and previous empirical studies of Russian-UK partnerships. We have prioritized partnerships between educational institutions, particularly those described by Gilbert and Gorlenko (1999), Shaw and Ormston (2001) and Walton and Guarisco (2007; 2008), but, because the literature is quite limited, we have also included some examples of commercial partnerships (Katsioloudes and Isichenko, 2007; Paton and McCarthy, 2008). The final section draws conclusions about the conditions and processes that make fruitful collaboration more likely.

2.1   Cross-cultural Collaboration: drivers, potential benefits, hindrances and affordances

Crossley (2002) identifies three drivers behind the renewed interest in comparative and international education. These are intensified globalisation; intensified international competition, manifested in league tables of student achievement, such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA); and rapid advances in information and communications technology. Crossley and Watson (2003, p. 10) add a fourth driver, namely "rapid geopolitical change", a feature particularly pertinent to the Russian federation.

In terms of the potential benefits, it is claimed that comparative studies enable researchers to develop a better understanding of their own and each other's contexts (Crossley, 2000, p. 324), though this, presumably, depends upon the skill and sensitivity of the researchers involved. It is

also claimed that comparative studies can serve as a vehicle for democracy (Jarvis et al., 2005, p. 135), whilst safeguarding against the uncritical importation of Western models (Shaw and Ormston, 2001, p. 119).

With regard to hindrances, Crossley and Watson (2003, p. 33-49) point out that comparative research is complex and subject to political motivations; the research focus may be unclear; there may be tensions between global and local priorities; agendas may conflict and misconceptions arise; and the data collected may be biased or limited. Moreover, in what Crossley and Watson call "developing countries", the infrastructure may be poorly developed; public research may be limited; funding may be inadequate; and researchers may not share a common language. Crucially, the literature is divided as to whether an equal distribution of power is a pre-requisite for successful collaboration, with Gilbert and Gorlenko (1999) arguing that it is, and Walton and Guarisco (2007; 2008) arguing that it is not.

In terms of affordances, the Swiss Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries (KFPE, 1998, p. 8) has produced a list of 11 "principles". These are:

1) deciding on the objectives together;

2) building up mutual trust;

3) sharing information and developing networks;

4) sharing responsibility;

5) creating transparency;

6) monitoring and evaluating the collaboration;

7) disseminating the results;

8) applying the results;

9) sharing profits equitably;

10) increasing research capacity;

11) building on achievements.

Here again, though, KFPE's insistence that objectives must be mutually negotiated has been challenged by Walton and Guarisco (2007; 2008). They claim that partnerships can still thrive with pre-determined, even imposed, aims, which is just as well, because partnerships are very often subject to the external requirements of funding bodies.

2.2   The Influence of Culture

Hofstede (2005, p. 4) defines culture as" the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others". His 1991 survey of 116,000 IBM employees in 72 countries is by far the most widely used (and abused) study of national culture. Critics have claimed that his data collection tools are Western-centric (Shaw and Ormston, 2001, p. 123) and that such bipolar surveys "imply opposition and conflict because they insist that people cannot adhere to both extremes at the same time" (Fisher et al., 2008, p. 312). Nonetheless, Hofstede's work remains hugely influential and, although his original survey did not include Russia, his dimensions of culture have been subsequently applied to Russian subjects, with varying degrees of rigour.

Bollinger (1994) sent a questionnaire to 55 executives attending a training course in Moscow in 1989. Although this represents a very small, skewed sample, Bollinger (1994) informs us that the Russians scored highly on Power Distance (76 points compared to 40 for the United States participants in Hofstede's original study) meaning Russians expect and will tolerate large power imbalances between employees; they also scored highly on Uncertainty Avoidance (92 compared to 35 for the UK) but low on Individualism (26) and low on Masculinity (28) meaning that Russians see men and women as having overlapping roles.

Whilst Bollinger's (1994) sent his questionnaire to only 55 subjects, Naumov and Puffer (2000) distributed theirs to 300 managers, professionals and students at several Russian business schools between October 1995 and June 1996. 250 usable questionnaires were returned. These indicated a score of 40 for Power Distance, putting Russia on a par with the US (40), and slightly

above Canada (39) and the Netherlands (38). For Uncertainty Avoidance, they scored relatively highly (68) but not as high as in Bollinger's study (92). For Individualism, they scored 41 points, making them low for a developed country, but high for a developing country. Bollinger's research, conducted ten years earlier, yielded a higher figure for Power Distance (76 compared to 40) and a lower one for Individualism (26 compared to 41). This leads Naumov and Puffer (2000, p. 715) to speculate that individualism may have risen during the period of *perestroika* or "reconstruction", and with it a growing intolerance of power imbalances.

Whereas Naumov and Puffer (2000) use quantitative data from 250 questionnaires, Gilbert (2001) uses qualitative data (observations, interviews and documentary analysis) from six case studies of Western-funded management development programmes run between 1995 and 1998. She highlights the fact that analyzing Russian culture is "a hazardous exercise" (Gilbert, 2001, p. 5) and one "doomed to contradiction" (2001, p. 18) because it is very difficult to disentangle "traditional Russian culture" from "the Soviet mindset, a product of two generations of propaganda, command economy, institutionalized terror, and stultifying stagnation" (2001, p. 5). Nonetheless, she tentatively suggests Power Distance is a "highly ambiguous concept" (2001, p. 15) for former communist countries, and that personal power (as opposed to role power) is now more evident in Russia than in the West. She further suggests that Russians are divided over the issue of collectivism versus individualism, because of linguistic variations. The Russian language has far more words than English to describe a "team", leading her participants to conclude that the term is "hopeless vague" and that Western ideas about teamwork are "simplistic and trite" (2001, p. 15). This could explain why previous empirical studies have placed Russia at quite different points on the collectivism/individualism continuum. Finally, Gilbert (2001, p. 16) claims that, although Russians dislike the great uncertainty they now live with, there is no evidence to suggest they are more risk-averse than their Western counterparts.

What the literature above serves to illustrate is that it is hard to generalize about a nation state on the basis of a small sample, and that doing so is particularly problematic in the case of Russia

because the region is composed of so many diverse ethnic groups (Heyneman, 1998, p. 28-29) and has experienced such dramatic political, social and economic changes throughout its history (Gilbert 2001, p. 7), but especially over the last 20 years.

2.3   Insights from Previous Russian-UK Collaboration

Although there has been "an explosion of collaborative activity" (Gilbert and Gorlenko, 1999, p. 335) since 1990, the literature on Russian-UK educational partnerships is still quite thin. Shaw and Ormston (2001) describe a two-year project in which staff from The Oxford Centre for Education Management, at Oxford Brookes University, collaborated with a Regional Education Authority in southern Russia, in order to help INSET providers and 40 headteachers "develop more active ways of teaching and leading" (Shaw and Ormston, 2001, p. 121). The project threw up some "unexpected elements" which Shaw and Ormston (2001, p. 123) list as:

> Unexpected barriers in transmitting and understanding concepts across the language divide; contrast between English and Russian perceptions of management; high-level diplomatic reception/farewell rituals, warmth and hospitality beyond expectations … misinterpreted messages … different perspectives on decision-making; apparent organisational confusion and secrecy … lack of collaboration towards a common goal.

Based on their experiences, Shaw and Ormston (2001, p. 131) conclude that projects need clear goals agreed by all; the Russian partner needs to have genuine ownership of the project; modes of communication need to be agreed at the outset; cultural differences in planning and training need to be acknowledged; and the agenda of each stakeholder needs to be understood. They argue that collaboration between culturally distant partners can be successful, but only if they "spend time establishing an agreed way of working, and a mechanism to fine-tune this, before focusing on the task itself" (Shaw and Ormston, 2001, p. 132). Although their project was funded by the British Council and overseen by the Russian Federal Ministry, it had a local

steering committee with many Russian stakeholders. Power relations may not have been equal, but the Russian partners had plenty of scope for negotiation.

The same cannot be said of the first case study reported by Gilbert and Gorlenko (1999). In this instance, a Moscow business school tried to "transplant" an MBA programme offered at Wolverhampton Business School. Despite "a certain mutual euphoria" (Gilbert and Gorlenko (1999, p. 339) at the outset, the full MBA was never validated and the partnership broke down after six years. Although a key and eventual stumbling block was the language of assessment, Gilbert and Gorlenko (1999, p. 341) suggest that "both partners placed too much emphasis on the *product* of the collaboration, rather than the *process* of mutual learning needed to achieve it". They go on to conclude that "When everyone is committed to a single pre-ordained outcome (validation of a certain course), there is a tendency to try to gloss over, or at least minimize, differences in outlook and ways of working which are bound to surface sooner or later". They then contrast this experience with their second case study, in which a "process" model was adopted. Instead of simply reproducing the Western programme *in toto,* this partnership jointly developed a local training programme and then provided sufficient professional development for Russian trainers to deliver it. In the first case study, the UK partner held all the power, as the validating body, whereas in the second, the locus of control was shared. For Gilbert and Gorlenko, this is the key difference accounting for the failure of the first partnership and the success of the second.

However, Walton and Guarisco (2008) critique Gilbert and Gorlenko's analysis by highlighting a successful eight-year "transplant" partnership involving London Metropolitan University. In this case, the MBA has been validated by the UK institution, student numbers are growing, and new modules being developed. Walton and Guarisco (2008, p. 254) conclude that "shared learning" is still possible within a "one-dimensional product-oriented transplant model". The inherent power imbalance can be circumvented, just so long as there are high levels of personal and institutional trust, constant commitment from senior academics, and "constant effort … by all parties involved to understand each other's cultures and traditions" (Walton and Guarisco,

2008, p. 266). They also suggest that it is helpful for teams to spend time in their partner's institution.

3.1.1 The Herzen-Leicester Partnership

The partnership was funded by the British Degrees in Russia (BRIDGE) project. BRIDGE was established in June 2004 to help Russian and UK higher education institutions (HEIs) develop professionally-oriented postgraduate dual-awards, validated by both institutions. BRIDGE was sponsored by the UK's Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills, managed on a day-to-day basis by the British Council, and supported by Russia's National Training Federation. Around 65 projects were funded in six rounds of bidding. The partnership between Herzen and Leicester focused on the development of courses in educational leadership, primarily in the area of curriculum management. At the time of writing, the first cohort has been registered for the first module, but the full Masters has not yet been validated.

Prior to its collaboration with the University of Leicester, Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia already had strong links with Dalian University in China, Sorbonne University in France, and the University of Iowa, USA. It was also developing dual-awards with St. Denis University, France, and Oldenburg University, Germany. The department of Educational Management was keen to offer its face-to-face programmes via distance learning, and an independent advisor suggested they contact the University of Leicester's Centre for Educational Leadership and Management (CELM). The Rector of Herzen then issued an official invitation, leading to a three-day visit by the Deputy Director of CELM in March 2005. Different types of teaching and research collaboration were discussed, and various funding opportunities explored.

A return visit took place in October 2005, when three high-ranking Russians came to Leicester for four days. They were the Rector, a Vice-Rector, and the Deputy Director of the Institute for Continuing Professional Development (CPD), who is also the Russian co-author of this paper. In December 2005, the Deputy Director of the CPD Institute and the Deputy Director of CELM

applied for BRIDGE 2 funding to develop one CPD module in curriculum management. When this was successful, they applied for BRIDGE 3 funding to develop a full Masters in educational leadership. This application was also successful.

The collaboration began in earnest when four members of CELM visited Herzen University in June 2006. They met the Deputy Director of the CPD Institute, the Dean of the School of Management, the Dean of the Department of Psychology and Pedagogy, various other faculty members, and representatives from the Distance Education Centre. Between June 2006 and September 2008 (when the BRIDGE funding ended) Herzen and Leicester academics met 12 times, at each other's institutions, at the British Council in Manchester, UK, and at two international conferences in Scotland and Sweden. This contrasts very sharply with the experience of London Metropolitan University, where there was no face-to-face contact before the initial validation visit (Walton and Guarisco, 2007, p. 368).

The original CPD module has been validated and some students have enrolled. However, validation of the full Masters has not yet been achieved. The Chair of the Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee at Leicester has reviewed the programme specification favourably on pedagogical grounds, but, as is the case for all university courses, official validation will not be conferred unless and until the course can demonstrate its financial viability. This is proving to be a major stumbling block, but, as the following discussion demonstrates, other benefits have been realized.

3.2   Methodology: Analytic autoethnography

This paper has been generated by analytic autoethnography (Anderson, 2006). It is not written in the literary style characteristic of emotional/evocative autoethnography (examples of which include Ellis and Bochner, 2006; Doloriert and Sambrook, 2009; Holt, 2003 and Sparkes, 2007), not least because the authors lack the requisite narrative and expressive skills (Anderson, 2006,

p.377). Instead, it aspires to embody the key characteristics of analytic autoethnography. These are:

1) Complete member researcher status
2) Analytical reflexivity
3) Narrative visibility of the researcher's self
4) Dialogue with informants beyond self
5) Commitment to theoretical analysis

(Anderson, 2006, p. 378).

 As the Russian and UK project leaders, we were complete (even pivotal) members of the social world under study. We reflected upon the process throughout, both individually and jointly during the team visits and whilst co-presenting our work at international conferences. We have deliberately written ourselves into the text, and wish to make it clear that the opinions reported here are our own. That said, we have also engaged in dialogue with others. During the 30 months of the project, we talked at length with other members of the BRIDGE team, especially during the face-to-face visits (which totalled more than 45 days). We also collaborated with five BRIDGE team members (three Russian and two UK) on four international conference papers. These meetings and papers have undoubtedly coloured our perceptions, but we are not claiming to represent the views of others. We also circulated a draft of this paper to those team members most heavily involved in the project, and to the current Head of the School of Education at Leicester, and to a former Head, who was in post at the time of the partnership. Their feedback has been incorporated wherever possible, but the opinions reported here remain ours alone, as joint Russian and UK project leaders.

4 Results

4.1 Specific Historical Influences

As with the partnerships previously cited, a range of factors affected the collaboration at specific points in its two-and-a-half-year history. Katsioloudes and Isichenko (2007) categorize

such factors as internal or external, but a four-fold division (international, institutional, departmental and team-based) seems to better capture the full range of influences.

4.1.1   International Influences:

Alexander Litvinenko, a former Russian agent and fierce critic of former Russian president Vladimir Putin, was poisoned to death in London in November 2007. UK police issued an arrest warrant for Andrei Lugovoi, the Russian politician and former KGB agent thought by some to be responsible for Litvinenko's death. In retaliation, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov ordered the closure of the British Council offices in St. Petersburg and Yekaterinburg.

Although relations between Herzen and Leicester continued to be very cordial, these events had an indirect effect on the partnership in two ways. Firstly, the closure of the British Council office in St. Petersburg meant that the first cohort of students for the dual-award were unable to take the IELTS English language test, and had to find an alternative way to demonstrate their language competency. Luckily, they were able to take the Leicester English Test instead. This proved to be a blessing in disguise because, unlike IELTS, this test can be taken at any time and the results are available with 48 hours, which greatly expedited the application process. Secondly, a BRIDGE conference scheduled to take place in Moscow in March 2008 had to be replaced by a one-day event at the British Council offices in Manchester the following June. Although the Leicester team had been looking forward to visiting Moscow, the change of plan meant that another member of the Herzen team was able to make her first trip to the UK. What this episode demonstrates is, firstly, the capacity of international events to impact upon academic partnerships in unexpected ways, and secondly, the resourcefulness of both institutions and the British Council in circumventing the problem.

4.1.2   Institutional Influences:

The collaboration began at a time when Leicester University was very much pre-occupied with the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) and staff publications. Not surprisingly, the first report written for the Vice Chancellor by the Deputy Director of CELM highlighted the "very

attractive" research opportunities afforded by the collaboration, By contrast, Herzen academics in the spheres of management and pedagogy asked for help in developing a prestigious dual-award that could be offered via distance learning, and, initially, made no mention of writing academic papers. This accords with previous studies of Russian academia, in which certain institutions and departments were found to prioritize teaching over research (Smolentseva, 2003, p. 134). Indeed, in the three studies reviewed by Jarvis et al. (2005, p. 134) "well over half" of the Russian academics did not participate in research at all, and 87% believed "published research is either not required or a mere formality for acquiring permanent academic employment".

According to the literature on international collaboration, it is vital both to build research capacity, especially in developing countries (Crossley, 2002, p. 82; Crossley and Holmes, 2001, p. 396; KFPE, 1998, p. 8), and to harmonize expectations at the outset (Gilbert and Gorlenko, 1999; KFPE, 1998; Shaw and Ormston, 2001). However, in our judgement, building research capacity may be a Western-centric idea, and some differences of expectation cannot be resolved at an early stage, meaning the time is better spent developing mutual warmth and trust. A certain amount of research has been possible resulting in four joint conference papers and some joint publications. This work has been allowed to emerge and evolve; had it been stipulated at the outset, Herzen colleagues might not have been so enthusiastic.

4.1.3   Departmental Influences:

The School of Education at Leicester University underwent an academic review in December 2006, which led to a number of far-reaching consequences, including the closure of CELM and the transfer of all its activities to the School of Education. The School was also set a series of very ambitious "betterment" targets by the central university administration. These required the department to save 10% of its turnover every year from then on, by increasing income and/or reducing costs. Senior university administrators identified educational leadership and management as one area where some of these savings might be achieved.

Half-way through the collaboration, the then Head of School called the Leicester team into his office and told them that because the project was not generating income, the time spent on it would be hard to justify to central administration. In his words, "The bottom line is that it's people's jobs we are talking about here". Shortly afterwards, the Leicester team welcomed a delegation from Herzen for a shortened trip. None of the three visitors had been to the UK before and, at the first meeting, one of said, with tears of joy in her eyes, "I've waited forty years for this moment". This illustrates the danger of seeing collaboration purely in terms of tangible output and financial gain. Trow (1996, p. 52) reminds us that: "Education is a process pretending to be an outcome. That is what makes all measures of educational outcomes spurious. Our impact on our students can never be fully known; it emerges over their whole lifetimes and takes various forms at different points in their lives". The same could easily be said of international collaboration.

4.1.4   Team Influences:

The BRIDGE funding was unusual in that it was awarded to institutions, not named individuals. The original Leicester project leader was a relatively long-serving senior lecturer and the Deputy Director of CELM. When she moved to another university in September 2006, the funding did not move with her, as happens with other grants from UK research councils, such as ESRC or AHRC. Instead, a new project leader from within the existing Leicester team was chosen. This person is also one of the two co-authors of this paper, and, in her judgement, the team probably benefited from the fact that she had lived and worked all over the world. On the other hand, a certain amount of influence within the university (and particularly its Academic Office) was probably lost since she was a recently-appointed and relatively-junior member of faculty.

4.2   On-going Factors

The influences described above relate to specific events during the life of the project. Other factors moulded the partnership on an on-going basis. Predominant amongst these were language, hospitality, commitment, trust, flexibility and money.

4.2.1   Language

Regrettably, none of the Leicester team spoke Russian. By contrast, several Herzen academics spoke fluent English and the majority of BRIDGE participants had some English. Nonetheless language issues shaped the project in two significant ways. Firstly, although the original BRIDGE 2 application stated that the language of instruction would be Russian, Leicester's Academic Office subsequently made it clear that university policy required any dual-award to be taught and assessed in English. This was non-negotiable, even though other universities, such as the Open University (personal communication) and London Metropolitan University (Walton and Guarisco, 2008, p. 255), allowed students to be taught and/or assessed in Russian. This immediately reduced the pool of potential applicants, and caused a degree of understandable anxiety amongst Herzen academics, some of whom expressed reservations about their own English skills.

There were also times when misunderstandings arose. Sometimes this was due to the difficulty of translating not just words, but concepts; at other times, it was due to differences in expected and preferred modes of communication. For example, both teams conducted research to inform the curriculum development, one part of which looked at how Russian and English teachers conceptualize educational leadership. The questionnaire initially developed by the Leicester team sought to draw a distinction between "management" and "leadership". This distinction now has an extensive literature attached to it in the UK, but we cannot be sure that the Russian and English research participants understood the two terms in the same way.

As well as linguistic misunderstandings, there were also differences in the ways individuals communicated with each other and recorded their discussions. The Leicester team took extensive notes during all team meetings. By contrast, Herzen colleagues took very few notes. Despite these differences, the project leaders cannot recall any occasion on which the two teams had different recollections of the same meeting. Similarly, whereas the Leicester team would write long emails, outlining a range of options in considerable detail, Herzen colleagues

would reply with just a few sentences, either agreeing to a proposal or stating their preferred course of action, without further elaboration.

All of these observations echo the findings of previous Anglo-Russian partnerships. Gilbert and Gorlenko (1999, p. 340) note their own university's insistence that teaching and assessment be in English, whilst simultaneously questioning the rationale for this and detailing its negative consequences, particularly for Russian academics faced with students whose English is more fluent than theirs. Shaw and Ormston (2001, p. 125) also mention similar language issues to those experienced by the Herzen-Leicester partnership. They highlight the difficulties of not merely translating words, but communicating meaning, giving as their examples, "management" (which in Russian implies "authoritarian administration"), "training" (which implies workers having something done to them) and "learning" (which in Russian is simply the reflexive of the verb "to teach" meaning "is taught"). Finally, with regard to preferred modes of communication, Gilbert (2001, p. 16)) explains how "the Western preoccupation with documentation" came into gentle conflict with Russia's "more predominantly oral tradition". The Russians in her research said they were unlikely to read the 100-page documents produced by their English colleagues, and could not be persuaded that providing detailed written feedback for students was better than simply talking to them individually after class.

4.2.2   Hospitality

Gilbert (2001) and Shaw and Ormston (2001) both mention the exceptional hospitality enjoyed by the UK teams when in Russia. This was certainly the case with the Herzen-Leicester partnership. The Leicester team were treated to wonderful dinners with traditional vodka toasts. They were also taken to the opera, a jazz concert, music recitals at the world-famous Mariinsky Theatre, and The Russian Museum, as well as enjoying their own private boat tour of St. Petersburg. Although the BRIDGE funds were designed to cover a certain amount of hospitality, the UK project leader (and budget-controller) was frequently unable to persuade her hosts to accept any BRIDGE money.

By contrast, the Leicester team could only offer their hosts more modest refreshments, a walking tour of Roman Leicester, and a concert with the Birmingham Philharmonic Orchestra. Some of this was down to geography, Leicester being a far less cultured city than St. Petersburg. However, some of it was also due to different perceptions of what constitutes hospitable behaviour. Two members of the Leicester team had lived and worked abroad for many years. They discussed the issue of hospitality amongst themselves on numerous occasions and were acutely aware of the value many societies place on giving visitors a fulsome welcome. Yet, as representatives of Leicester University, they were somewhat stymied by university regulations that limited how much meals could cost and allowed for just one glass of wine per person with an evening meal. On one occasion, a UK restaurant owner allowed Russian colleagues to supply their own bottle of vodka. On another, the UK project leader contributed to a bottle, using her own money, because the lack of reciprocity was so glaring to her.

4.2.3   Commitment

Although all the people directly involved with the project showed high levels of commitment, the senior administration at Herzen devoted rather more time to the partnership than their Leicester counterparts, and appeared to the project leaders to be more supportive of it. The Herzen Rector and one Vice-Rector came to Leicester for four days even before the BRIDGE funding had been secured. The Rector also sent the Deputy Director of the CPD Institute to Leicester so that the BRIDGE 3 application could be completed more easily. By contrast, although the University of Leicester's Vice-Chancellor signed the BRIDGE applications and briefly met the Rector when he came to the UK, he did not have any other contact with Herzen staff.

The Leicester team met the Rector and one or more Vice-Rectors almost every time they visited St. Petersburg (and there were profuse apologies on the few occasions when this was not possible). When the Herzen team came to Leicester, however, they did not usually meet the Head of the School of Education, nor anyone more senior in the university administration.

The intermediary responsible for putting London Metropolitan University in touch with their Russian partner highlighted the need for "a champion in a high position within each institution who can push things through" (Walton and Guarisco, 2007, p. 372). The same sentiment was echoed by many other UK BRIDGE project leaders at the British Council meetings in Manchester, one of whom argued that "having the Vice-Chancellor on-side is vital because he can tell the Academic Office to make things happen [with regard to Quality Assurance procedures]". The UK project leader did not feel this sort of high-level support was forthcoming at Leicester.

4.2.4   Trust

According to Uzzi (1997, p. 43) quoted in Walton and Guarisco (2008, p. 257), trust is "a predilection to assume the best when interpreting another's motives and actions". Trust can be personal, procedural or institutional. In the collaboration described by Walton and Guarisco (2008, p. 262), institutional trust was high because each partner recognized the strong reputation of the other. By contrast, procedural trust was low because each institution had different procedures and policies, particularly in relation to quality assurance. This did not adversely affect the partnership, however, because levels of personal trust were so high. "The common theme that emerged from all respondents, regardless of their role, was the need for personal trust and commitment, together with forbearance, diplomacy and the ability to be flexible" (Walton and Guarisco, 2008, p. 263). This situation mirrors that of the Herzen-Leicester partnership, which was characterized by high institutional trust, low procedural trust, and very high personal trust. Because of the exceptional rapport established between certain sets of individuals, further joint collaboration has occurred, outside of the BRIDGE project.

That said, the Herzen-Leicester partnership appears to differ from that reported by Walton and Guarisco in two important ways. Firstly, the relationships described in Walton and Guarisco (2007, p. 369) although very warm were "based on pre-existing roles … [and] … conditioned by structural equivalences". In other words, the Russian Rector had a strong personal relationship with the UK Deputy Vice-Chancellor, and the Russian Vice-Rector had a strong personal

relationship with the UK Head of Department. Perhaps because the Leicester team comprised just three junior lecturers, with no high-level champion, the relationships they established with their Herzen colleagues cut across such structural boundaries. Secondly, Walton and Guarisco (2008, p. 263) maintain that their partnership also had high levels of "implicit collegial trust" because the institutions "shared an academic background and familiarity with the way the profession works". Given what was said earlier about Herzen prioritizing teaching and Leicester prioritizing research, it may not be fair to claim that the Herzen-Leicester partnership exhibited the same high level of collegial trust.

4.2.5   Flexibility

Previous authors have highlighted the need for flexibility in international collaboration. Whilst everyone directly involved in the Herzen-Leicester partnership has been personally flexible, at the institutional level, Herzen has exhibited rather more flexibility than Leicester. For example, when the University of Leicester Academic Office made it clear that the course had to be delivered and assessed in English (despite what had been previously written on the BRIDGE application), Herzen readily agreed. Obviously, the relative flexibility of each institution is related to the fact that one holds considerably more power than the other, in terms of course validation. However, informal discussions with other UK BRIDGE project leaders indicate that other validating institutions have been more accommodating. Some, such as the Open University, have allowed Russian students to be assessed in Russian rather than English. Moreover, at least one post-1992 university known to the authors has allowed a BRIDGE course to run, even though it was not financially viable, something Leicester (a pre-1992 university) will not countenance.

4.2.6   Money

The literature on Russian-UK partnerships is almost silent on the issue of money, which is surprising as it had a huge impact on the Herzen-Leicester partnership, in at least three ways. Firstly, the fact that BRIDGE funding covered just accommodation and travel, not staff time, meant that, in the second year of the partnership, the Leicester academics came under

considerable pressure to devote less time to it. Another department within Leicester University had already concluded that collaboration with Russia was insufficiently attractive, in terms of research and/or student fee income. As the "betterment" targets set for the School of Education began to bite, Leicester staff were asked by the then Head of School to reduce the amount of time they spent on the project.

Secondly, managing the BRIDGE fund presented a number of practical challenges and the sensitivity of the British Council was an absolute boom in the circumstances. They allowed money to be vied between budget headings, and carried over from one year to the next. This flexibility was vital because the situation was constantly evolving and what had been specified two years in advance was not always still relevant. That said, the project still relied on the UK project leader personally paying expenses in both countries and then claiming this money back from the University of Leicester to whom the BRIDGE funds had been paid at the outset. Other BRIDGE project leaders did the same, either because their institution was unwilling to provide them with a cash advance or because the regulations governing such advances were very convoluted and time-consuming. It was also extremely difficult to reimburse Russian colleagues for expenses covered by BRIDGE, as electronic international bank transfers were often rejected and cheques lost in the post. The high levels of personal trust mentioned above were certainly needed when several Russian colleagues remained out-of-pocket six months after their UK visit.

Thirdly, and most significantly, Leicester required (as per its strategic policy) that the course be financially viable, from the outset and for a three to five-year period. In this context, financially viable meant that the course fee covered all the materials and the staff time involved. Fees were set as low as possible (with Leicester charging less than half the normal international fee) but this is still proving problematic. The Masters in educational leadership is targeted at school heads, university middle leaders, and Ministry of Education officials. These people do not earn enough to pay their own fees, and federal regulations prevent public sector institutions from paying course fees to overseas universities. Whereas MBA students might earn enough to fund

themselves, or be sponsored by their employer, this is not the case for students of educational leadership.

Although Herzen has provided money for 15 university academics to enrol on the first iteration of the CPD module, it remains unclear how the rest of the Masters degree will be funded**.** The course documentation indicates that to be financially viable, the programme needs to recruit at least one cohort of 20 part-time students, able to pay for the full degree over three years. There is no evidence that this level of recruitment is achievable, given the target audience, and without it, Leicester is unwilling to consider validating the programme.

What this discussion has illustrated is that no amount of personal or institutional trust can compensate for a lack of financial viability. However, it would be unfair to assume from this that the partnership has been a failure, though this is the conclusion reached by Gilbert and Gorlenko (1999) in similar circumstances. A degree of shared learning has undoubtedly occurred and this will be explored in the next section.

4.3   Outcomes: Evidence of Shared Learning

Walton and Guarisco (2008, p. 256) ask whether shared learning can take place between unequal partners, where one institution is the awarding body. The answer in the case of the partnership between London Metropolitan University and a Moscow business school must be a resounding "yes" since "all the informants said how much they had learned from the partnership at personal, intellectual, professional and institutional levels" (Walton and Guarisco, 2008, p. 266). This was also the case with the Herzen-Leicester partnership. Obviously, the two teams learnt about each other's culture and academic traditions in both teaching and research. Because the dual-award focuses on educational leadership, they also learnt how this is conceptualized by different people in different contexts. Each team learnt something about the quality assurance processes being used at their own and their partner's institution. The two project leaders also learnt about project management (though, in truth, the

UK project leader learnt a great deal, as this was her first project, and the Russian project leader learnt rather less as he was already highly experienced in international collaboration).

Both sets of colleagues learnt not only from their international partners, but also from other members of their own institution. For example, the three Leicester academics involved in the BRIDGE project deepened their understandings of research design and ethical frameworks by collaboratively devising data collection instruments that were then discussed with their Herzen colleagues. In so doing, the Leicester lecturers did not simply teach each other; they jointly-constructed meaning. Similarly, at Herzen, the BRIDGE project brought together people from disparate departments and units who would not otherwise have met. For example, one visit to Leicester included colleagues from Educational Management, Psychology and Pedagogy, English Language, Modern Foreign Languages, Social Management, Information Technology, Library, Student Services and Quality Assurance.

As well as increasing their knowledge, participants also enhanced their partnering skills and attitudes. Walton and Guarisco (2008, p. 266) list these as:

> Diplomacy; ability to forbear; ability to be flexible; cultural sensitivity; ability to harness educational culture; ability to mesh two organisational cultures; clear vision; ability to set clear goals; ability to handle ambiguity; upward management skills within and between institutions; communication skills; coaching skills; double density observation skills; willingness to trust; commitment; enthusiasm; empathy; working at it; championing.

Although both project leaders believe there was not much evidence of clear vision, clear goals, and coaching in the Herzen-Leicester partnership, all the other skills and attitudes were present at the start and further developed as the partnership progressed. For this reason, even though validation of the full Masters has still not been achieved, the partnership is seen by the authors and most participants as highly successful.

5 Conclusion

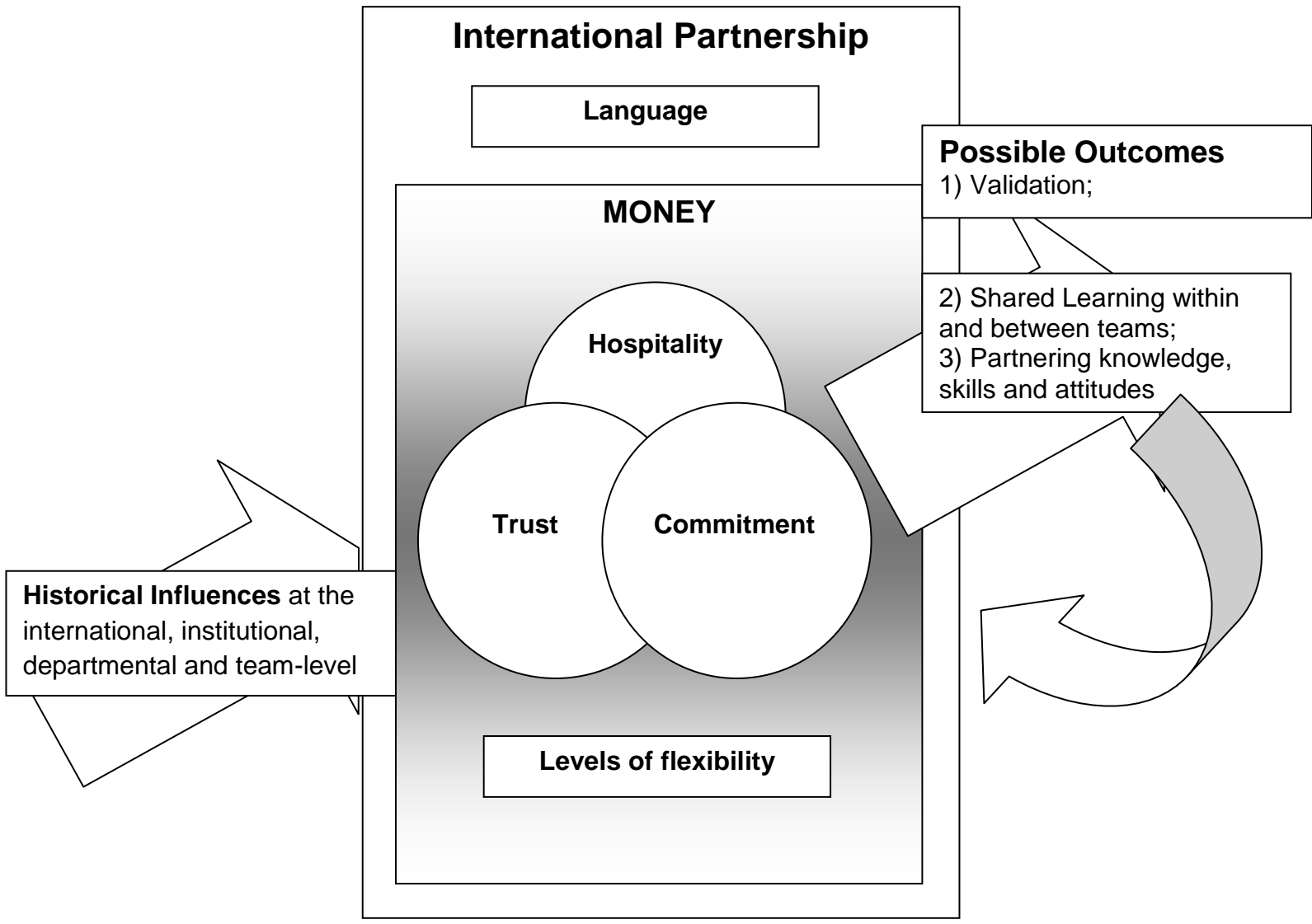**Figure 1 – The Interplay of Influences and Outcomes**

International Partnership

Language

MONEY

Hospitality

Trust

Commitment

Levels of flexibility

Historical Influences at the international, institutional, departmental and team-level

Possible Outcomes
1) Validation;

2) Shared Learning within and between teams;
3) Partnering knowledge, skills and attitudes

Figure 1 illustrates the various influences that can impinge upon any international partnership and some possible outcomes. As we have seen, historical influences can operate at various macro, meso and micro-levels. In the paper, we have described international, institutional, departmental and team-level factors, but we could just as easily have highlighted global, national or even regional trends and events. Of course, it is impossible to predict exactly which factors will impact upon the partnership, and in what ways. Nonetheless, it is advisable to have at least one person in each institution charged with "horizon scanning" so that the partnership is as well prepared as it can be for unforeseen circumstances.

On-going influences are, by their very nature, more predictable, and, in this paper, we have identified language, hospitality, trust, commitment, flexibility and money as particularly significant. In figure 1, money is represented as a shaded background because its influence is so pervasive, which makes it all the more surprising that many papers on Russian-UK partnerships do not mention it at all. We have represented hospitality, trust and commitment as interlocking circles because they serve to mutually reinforce each other. In our judgement, the importance of building strong personal trust and commitment cannot be underestimated, and the sharing of meals and social events is a vital facilitator of this process. Our two institutions had rather different attitudes towards official entertaining, and we would argue that the more restrained approach imposed by the University of Leicester (though common throughout UK universities) could have been counter-productive if Leicester academics had not supplemented it with some of their own, personal resources.

Clearly, some members of any international partnership need to share a common language. As none of the Leicester team spoke any Russian, we were very fortunate that so many Herzen colleagues spoke English. However, the success of a partnership depends not so much upon the number of people within it who speak the same language, but upon the willingness of all those involved to co-construct meaning and explore linguistic variations in an open, non-threatening way, whilst remaining mindful of just how tiring constant detailed translation can be. Not

everything needs to be explained with the same degree of detail and clarity, so some misunderstandings can be glossed over for the sake of expediency.

It became clear as the partnership progressed that the senior administration at Herzen were considerably more flexible than their counterparts at Leicester. Discussions with other UK BRIDGE project leaders indicated that this was not simply a result of the UK institution having more power as the validating body. For example, Roehampton University (established in 2004) views dual-awards as a way to provide significant marketing advantage and enhance recruitment possibilities (personal communication). By contrast, the University of Leicester "is not engaged in a major way in collaborative provision, and its strategic intentions continue to focus on distance learning" (University of Leicester Code of Practice on Collaborative Provision, 2008/9, p. 5). It lies beyond the scope of this paper to investigate the reasons behind such differences in institutional strategy, but, clearly, flexibility or the lack thereof is a key factor in determining partnership outcomes.

On one key measure, the Herzen-Leicester partnership has failed because it did not achieve validation of the full Masters before the BRIDGE funding ended in September 2008. However, Katsioloudes and Isichenko (2007, p. 137) remind us that success is a multidimensional, subjective and highly ambiguous phenomenon. Extensive discussions with all BRIDGE team members indicate that the partnership has been very successful in other ways. There has been a great deal of shared learning, both within and between institutional teams; knowledge has been transferred, but, more importantly, meaning has been co-constructed; partnership skills and attitudes have been greatly enhanced, particularly in the case of the UK BRIDGE project leader. At the team and individual level, these enhanced skills and attitudes have fed back into the partnership, resulting in increased trust and commitment, setting up something of a virtuous circle. At the institutional level, however, there appears to have been very little change. Our final insight, therefore, is that whilst some obstacles can be overcome by heroic individual and team efforts, others, particularly those relating to money, cannot. Whilst we disagree with Gilbert and Gorlenko's (1999) contention that genuine collaboration requires

equal power and a process model, we do recognize that some challenges can only be overcome if there is strong commitment from both sides at the highest level. The personal backing of the Rector and the Vice-Chancellor, or lack thereof, is a key determining factor in what any international partnership is able to achieve.

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