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MSc LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES

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E-LEARNING WITH CHINESE LEARNERS WEST MEETS EAST

Dissertation

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I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment of the programme of study leading to the award of Master of Science in Learning Technologies is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been citied and acknowledged within the text of my work.

Signed: Edward Collins-Hughes

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to consider possible modifications e-learning providers from 'western' countries, such as Ireland, need to make for Chinese learners. These providers can be commercial organisations or academic institutions, or other entities and the Chinese learners can be learning in China or as expatriates in a western country, such as Ireland.

The hypothesis was:

> 'Chinese learners need e-learning which is developed to meet their culture and learning styles".

The project involved a range of research methodologies. These included a questionnaire, interviews and an experiment. A broad range of people, including Chinese learners, their teachers and other people working with them, in Ireland and China, took part in the project. The questionnaire was distributed by teachers in a number of educational institutions, and by email, and was also downloadable from a dedicated website set up by this author for the project (http://www.wme-learn.com). Interviews were carried out in Ireland and China. The experiment involved two groups of Chinese learners – one using e-learning without any special modifications; the other using modifications which had been identified from the extensive literature review, questionnaire and interviews.

This research report contains details of how the project was operationalised, incorporating detailed methodologies and tools. The hypothesis was proven to a large extent. A 10-point model of modifications was presented and this author set out a number of recommendations to put these into practical action. This author recommends that the research work continue into the future in this exciting and challenging arena.

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1. INTRODUCTION:-

in the world within the next 25 years. China's role as a very major economic force in the world economy is nothing new. From the tales of Marco Polo and the journeys of the early explorers we know that China was the most important trading nation in the known world at that time. It is useful to recall, for example, that Christopher Columbus sailed west to find a new route to China – not to discover America! Recent Chinese history has seen it withdraw from the world generally since the middle of the twentieth century – but this has changed dramatically with the new 'open door' economic policies of the Chinese government in recent years.

With a population of over 1.3 billion people the government of the PRC places great importance on education and training to give the country competitive advantages into the future. Given the vast size of the country and the rapid movement of people from the countryside into cities (over 40% of Chinese people now live in cities), existing third-level colleges and corporate in-house training services are unable to cope with the huge demands on them to provide rapid education.

Chinese people place considerable status value on a western education and the government of the PRC has been sending thousands of students abroad in recent years to gain such educational experiences and qualifications. For example, Ireland had over 3,000 Chinese students on various education and training courses during 2004, (international Education Board of Ireland, 2005).

There are opportunities therefore for western providers of education and training services with Chinese learners. Given the need to rapidly deploy such services and the potential for the Internet and e-learning in China western providers must be properly prepared. 80 million Chinese people had Internet access by the end

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of 2004 and the UN praised China during 2005 for its tremendous success in transforming its telecommunications infrastructure beyond all recognition since it joined the WTO. Within China broadband infrastructure is now at world-class standard. The Internet is rapidly becoming a part of peoples' everyday lives.

The question of whether it is possible to directly transfer e-learning programmes and materials available to western learners to Chinese learners is crucial. If it is necessary to modify these to suit Chinese learners then we need to know what these modifications should be and prepare ourselves accordingly. It may not be possible to simply modify existing programmes and materials; we may need to adopt a different pedagogy to suit the learning styles of Chinese learners who are heavily influenced by China's traditional teaching methods linked to Confucian principles. Many of the Chinese learning and teaching styles observed by western educators may be misunderstood, as Chinese learners seem to develop deeper levels of learning and understanding using methods which westerners may have failed to fully appreciate up to now.

Key areas for education and training are information technology, engineering, business/entrepreneurial management, human resources management, and hospitality management. These are all areas which western educational establishments, business entities and e-learning service providers have considerable experience. Combining that experience with any modifications necessary for Chinese learners should place providers in a strong position in this most important marketplace.

This research project sets out to identify some of the more important learning and teaching issues with Chinese learners, and investigate how they can be addressed in appropriate e-learning initiatives.

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Section 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

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2.1 OVERVIEW:-

A detailed review of relevant literature is included in this section. The review covers three broad areas:-

(A) Chinese people, education and learning;

(B) Culture Shock and Acculturation in e-learning; and

(C) Cultural factors and their effects on the behaviour and attitudes of Chinese people.

For the reader's convenience these are summarised in the following pages. These summaries are followed by more detailed reviews for each area.

2.2 Section Summary – Chinese people, education and learning.

This section considers how Chinese people learn. It looks at the Chinese education system and how students are taught in China. Key aspects of the Chinese education system are reviewed, such as the role of the teacher, the role of the student, memorisation and priorities for Chinese students in China. It also considers the implications generally for 'western' educators, whether providing services to Chinese people in China or to Chinese people outside China.

Confucian teaching still has a major influence on the education system in China today. Confucius believed that a person can advance their standing through education, and living itself is a learning process. He also taught that virtually anything can be learned by the serious student who applies himself diligently enough, with the idea of innate abilities , intelligence, and personal attributes or interests seen as secondary.

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Successive Chinese governments, from Confucian times to the governments in place since the Communist Party of China came to power in 1949 have used education as a tool for social order. Recent reforms place emphasis on quality, technology, respect for teachers, standards and economic development. With the rapid growth in economic activity China places even greater importance on education in recent years. Families spend many times their annual income to provide education for their children. A 'western' education is particularly highly-valued. For example, there are over 35 million business entities in China employing more that 90% of the population. However, few have any knowledge of western systems of management and entrepreneurship, given the nature of State control of these enterprises until recent times. Chinese people are urgently learning these skills through education abroad and new initiatives in this area at home.

Traditionally the Chinese education system discouraged participation generally, frowned on student questioning of teachers, and put teachers in a very exalted position, where they are regarded as virtually all-knowing in their subject area. The teacher controls the education process and is expected to provide all the answers, typically by way of supplied detailed and complete notes, handouts and reading tracts from books. Until recently the primary roles of the teacher were information/knowledge transfer, and maintaining discipline. Students were conditioned to see themselves as virtually unworthy to question the teacher or comment on them or their performance or their ideas in any way.

Students and teachers are keen to avoid any potential embarrassment of the other. In this regard, the student by not asking the teacher a question which the teacher is potentially unable to answer avoids embarrassing the teacher and ensures that they are not seen themselves as arrogant or individualistic. In turn, the teacher may avoid asking a student a question that the student may not be

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readily able to answer. These behaviours are part of the process of 'face', which is discussed later in this review.

Many westerners mis-interpret the process of memorisation applied throughout the Chinese education system. The process is not simply 'rote' learning as many people from western countries experienced as children. Many Chinese people use memorisation as a method for deep learning. Of course, some use it simply for short-term memory to enable them to pass the next examination.

In something of a paradox, group achievement is preferred to individual ambition – both in the education system and at work. Yet, Chinese people can find it difficult to engage in group activities in education – preferring to work alone to ensure that they get full credit for their own work and do not lose out by having under performing team members. For example, in language learning classes Chinese students may complain about what they consider 'time-wasting' by other nationalities, such as people who are more expressive and vocal. Chinese students may present as passive, to the frustration of many western teachers, and are ready to complain that other students or teachers are not 'serious' enough. Chinese students see themselves as serious learners and often insist that the techniques they are used to in China be used by western educators.

Forms of assessment and review in Chinese education are quite different from western countries. Appraisal often comes in the form of criticism or reprimand, with implied or actual penalties or punishment. Positive reinforcement is discouraged generally. These approaches are radically different from most western countries today.

In keeping generally with Confucian ideas education is administered by people whose principal characteristics are dedication, discipline, strong will and

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persistence. While these skills may be worthy in themselves, there can be less emphasis on teacher training and development of new pedagogies and ideas in teaching than there is in western countries.

There is a great deal of educational inequality in China, with those who have the money being able to secure better quality education, just as in many other countries. Management education, such as MBAs is in high demand, and countries such as Australia derive very significant income from providing these courses. Other key areas for education services from western countries are vocational education and training, English language courses, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) courses, and secondary education.

Western educators need to be acutely aware of these issues and their implications in designing and delivering education to Chinese students, whether in the classroom or online, and whether in China or to Chinese people abroad.

2.3 Section Summary – Culture Shock and Acculturation in e-Learning:-

People who move from their native country to live in another one for an extended period – such as for work or study – are often referred to as 'expatriates' in the literature. This is the term we will use for our purposes in this section. We are primarily concerned with Chinese people who are expatriate students and learners. We are also concerned with people from so-called 'western' countries who are expatriates in China. The discussion on culture shock and acculturation refers to both these groups.

The process of adjusting to the way things are done and the way people think in a country where one is an expatriate is well-documented. The severe

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psychological effects and 'culture shock' which expatriates can undergo can have very dramatic effects on one's ability to function well – either in a work or a learning situation. The process of adjusting to these differences and shocks i.e. acculturation is a lengthy and fraught one which may not always have a successful outcome. Often expatriates simply cannot make the necessary changes of mindsets and behaviours necessary and are compelled to return home, unsuccessful in their mission abroad.

The implications for e-learning are considered in this section and a number of conclusions are arrived at in the context of e-learning with Chinese learners. The majors ones are:-

(a) the process follows a definite time pattern – with expatriates feeling quite elated in the early stages of their life in the new country, followed by culture shock and poor psychological wellbeing after a few months, followed by several months of social and psychological adjustment;

(b) during the process people will rarely be able to concentrate and apply themselves as well as they would in their own country. This has practical implications for any sort of learning, for example;

(c) strategies to overcome these severe difficulties include social supports, training in acculturation, and reducing uncertainty as much as possible e.g. by using education and training materials and techniques in the early stages which are familiar to the learner;

(d) since language plays such a vital part in communication and communication plays a key role in overcoming suspicion and misunderstanding, it is important to keep language simple, be conscious of the danger of possible mis-interpretation of even simple words and language, and use the Chinese (Mandarin) language in the early stages of relationships;

(e) be conscious of the importance of relationships and trust, guanxi and

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Confucianism to Chinese people and act accordingly, including allowing for these in e-learning, such as in groupwork and assessments;

(f) the length of time the Chinese person has been living in Ireland is very important, because of the acculturation process. Similarly, the length of time the 'westerner' is in China and the duration of the particular relationships with Chinese students – in Ireland or China – has a direct bearing on the mixture or 'western' versus Chinese e-learning techniques which should be used; and

(g) from a practical point of view it is important to have people who can 'bridge the gap' between cultures. In China the western expatriate will need to avail of localisation services and build working relationships with pro-western Chinese people. In countries like Ireland the e-learning providers will need to avail of the services of Chinese people are well advanced in the acculturation process – as they can play a crucial role in fostering trust and facilitating the introduction of new ideas and e-learning initiatives.

Some practical implications and tips for e-learning:-

1. Be aware of culture shock and the acculturation process - both for the learner and the service provider;

2 Keep all statements simple

3 Use Mandarin translations alongside English where possible;

4 Keep the frames of reference relevant to Chinese people e.g. use authentic materials and scenarios;

5 Encourage social interaction e.g. through a Wiki which has an informal style for support;

6 If possible, tailor the materials and delivery systems based on the current state of acculturation of the individual learner;

7 Work closely with learners who have successfully mastered the acculturation process as they can act as mentors and facilitators for other

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learners, helping to reduce negative feelings and foster positive attitudes to help overcome passivity, for example;

8 Understand and recognise guanxi and other social support and network arrangements (guanxi is discussed elsewhere in this report); and

9 Remain positive, persist and maintain strong self-motivation processes.

2.4 Section Summary - cultural factors and their effects on the behaviour and attitudes of Chinese people.

For over 2,500 years China has had sets of rules and understandings which govern the way people are expected to behave with each other in organisations. Toaist principles govern twelve positive behaviours (12 golden standards) and twelve behaviours to guard against (12 golden safeguards).

After many years of total control by and support from the State, Chinese people became used to the "iron rice bowl" i.e. guaranteed rates of pay and work conditions regardless on the individual's contribution or performance. With the move towards the open economy people are now conscious of rates of pay and conditions, as well as bonuses and other incentives as motivators. Chinese people try to avoid uncertainty and see money as important in its own right, but also as a sign of economic and social status. While the same may be said for people from other countries, it is particularly important to Chinese people who see it as shameful not to have enough money to provide for their family needs. This has direct implications in education where families borrow money to pay to educate their children.

Guanxi, or personal connections, is extremely important in China. There is no concept in western countries which is quick so intricate. Westerners will talk about their 'contacts' and 'networks', but guanxi is a much deeper process of

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relationships between various people. Especially in the current period of social and economic change Chinese people are very slow to trust anyone who is not intimately connected with them. This distrust and the practicalities of going about one's daily business in a bureaucratic society mean that there have to be ways of circumventing the frustrations and blockages. Guanxi allows people to deal with each other and make mutually supportive relationships which facilitate a great deal of activity in China. This permeates society and oils the wheels of commerce, business and daily living. Its practical implications in education are the possibility of Chinese people 'helping' each other in homework or similar activities.

Guanxi incorporates the concept of filial piety. Essentially children owe respect and support to their parents – particularly from son to father. Wives owe respect to their husbands. Younger sons owe respect to their older brothers. People in the workplace or schools and college owe respect to the managers and teachers. This has a direct influence on the attitude of students towards teachers, as discussed elsewhere in this review.

Concepts like trust, loyalty, dedication, commitment to one's organisation or educational establishment are all paramount. They are the sought-after personal characteristics. They far outweigh western notions of performance, ability, ambition, justice, legal rights and contract law. Relationships are founded on trust and respect, reinforced by loyalty, dedication and long-term commitments.

'Face' is a concept largely unknown in western countries. A person's 'face' is the respect, dignity and pride in which they are held by others as a consequence of their social achievement and their personal behaviours. It is very important in China that people do 'face work' i.e. behave in ways which protect the face of others and of oneself. Different people have different levels of 'face' depending

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on where they are situated in a hierarchy. For example the production manager in a company will have more 'face' than the production supervisor, but less than the general manager. Everyone must work to maintain the status of the person in the hierarchy, and 'face work' is ongoing to ensure everyone keeps everyone else's face.

A practical consequence of 'face' in education is assessment and examinations. Chinese people are very reluctant to engage in formal, public appraisal processes. Any criticism of another person may cause loss of face and shame. There is a tendency to shy away from ongoing assessments for this reason. Examination preparation may be done in a way which places the student in an optimum position to succeed.

There is also an understanding that people succeed because of their morals and 'good face'. Because of their good character and diligent application in a moral way, it is believed that people will get results, regardless of their particular aptitudes or preferences. Teachers, as well as students, fall under this 'moral' imperative – so that the teacher's role is exalted and extends beyond the classroom to influence the lives and moral formation of their students.

Toaist principles incorporate fatalism – the idea that many things are outside the control of the individual. Environmental factors may be seen as having a life of their own over which the student can have no influence. Western concepts of modifying one's behaviour to take account of environmental factors are rarely understood. The Chinese student will fatalistically accept some obstacles to their progress which a student from the west will simply 'work around'. From a practical point of view an assignment, exercises or project which calls for creative solutions to a given problem may pose too much of a psychological obstacle for the Chinese student to overcome. These students need to be gradually

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introduced to these ways of thinking and problem-solving. The Chinese study, however, may simply not be interested in developing these techniques, since fatalism discourages them from taking any personal responsibility.

Daoist principles of harmony are applied in the formulation of questionnaires and in conflict resolution. Chinese people try to avoid conflict. A person may not tell their superior that there is a problem – as this could cause tension and disharmony. The person will feel it is better to leave the problem unmentioned and trust the other person to be able to notice it for himself. The person at the higher level can they provide the solution, the first person will carry implement the solution, and harmony will be restored. Not the best approach from a westerner's point of view to a house fire!

In dealing with a questionnaire or in interviews for example, the Chinese person will try to provide the answers which he perceives the interviewer is looking for. This phenomenon is well known by researchers in designing and implementing these techniques. However, the degree to which the Chinese person may feel the need to give the interviewer the information 'required' is related to the hierarchical structure, the need for harmony in all things, and the concept of 'face'. In examinations, Chinese students will often reproduce complete tracts of memorised texts as this is what is done in China – where this is the respectful and harmonious way to treat one's teacher and ensure everyone's face is maintained.

Guanxi incorporates the concepts of 'in-groups' and 'out-groups'. If a person is a member of the 'in-group' there are very strong bonds of loyalty, dependence, and trust between the person and the other members of the group. If the person loses trust for some reason they then become part of the 'out-group', where they are virtually shunned, and receive no support or help. 'In-groups' make things work for each other and they extend beyond the workplace or college into all aspects

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of peoples' lives. This has very practical implications for groupwork and team projects in education, and for face-to-face and online collaboration and support systems. It is important to be aware of the 'in-groups' and work with them through key members to encourage teamwork and extended groupwork.

Confucian principles of filial piety put the onus on the more senior person to take responsibility for all the others in the hierarchy. This person has to make all the decisions and control the various processes in the organisation. All subordinates expect to be given clear instructions and commit themselves in honour to carrying these out exactly as instructed. N o personal initiative is called for and no deviation from instructions is permitted. From an educational point of view Chinese students will expect the teacher to control the process, issues clear instructions and maintain discipline.

A significant drawback of the hierarchical system of control is that people further down the chain of command expect all the information they need to be passed down to them. However, they often believe that it is not their function to pass information up the hierarchy – expecting those at higher levels to have some other process for knowing what is going on. The combination of rigid adherence to instructions and non-communication of what could be critical information to higher levels can lead to problems. In the education setting, the student will be slow to participate, exchange ideas or offer opinions.

2.5 Detailed Review – Chinese people, education and learning:-

Morgan, D. (1998) reminds us that China has made very important contributions to education and education technology over the years. After all, China is were the printing press and paper money originated and is the repository of ancient learning and manuscripts. It is also one of the few areas of the world where

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writing developed independently. From the Shang Dynasty of 2200 B.C. people were taught music, writing, archery, charioteering, the abacus, and rituals. In later centuries Confucius laid the foundations for education and society for the most part Morgan tells us. The main concepts were the investigation of knowledge and search for wisdom, with life being a learning experience. While people are basically alike, Confucius believed that education and training could put people into a superior position, able to "bend the will" as Morgan puts it, of the ordinary, uneducated person. He hoped that people would be better inspired if they had a good education. By the end of the first millennium A.D. reading, writing and literacy were seen as the means to success, with official examinations for state positions. Mass production of printed material began from the early second millennium A.D., with Confucian works becoming more accessible to ordinary people. To the beginning of the 20th century Confucianism was promoted throughout the empire with the emphasis on man as the superior being with the capacity of the human mind to control outcomes.

He outlines the approaches of the western powers – Britain in particular – in imposing their education systems of China, which largely ignored China's previous systems. With the coming to power of the communists in 1949 Mao and his colleagues placed great importance on education and a tool for social order. Looking to the then Soviet Union as a model education become uniform and regulated. As part of this process Mandarin was imposed as the official state Chinese language throughout the country. The Russians were asked to leave in the early 1960s and the more elite schools and universities were closed down and other restrictions were imposed as part of the Cultural Revolution, which encouraged a return to simpler ways. From the 1980s onward, after the end of the Cultural Revolution, Deng Xiaoping reformed the education system concentrating on quality, standards, technology, respect for teachers and economic development. However by 1988 Morgan tells us, 288 million people were still illiterate. New reforms were to lead to 8% of the population in higher

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education by 2000 (from 3% in 1993) and to rapidly increase the percentage of women in education.

Surowski, D. B. (2000) takes us through the development of the education system in China. Since 1976 educational reforms have concentrated on the "four modernisations" – agriculture, industry, national defence, and science and technology. In many cases the 6-3-3 system of education (six years primary, 3 years junior secondary and 3 years senior secondary), was applied. In 1995 the Education Law of The Peoples' Republic of China was passed to develop the third level and university system.

Huang, L. (2005) looked at the profile of students attending six public universities in the southwest area of China. He finds that while students come from all socio-economic strata in China a disproportionately large number come from high-income families. Rural women are significantly under-represented. Urban areas are over-represented. The average cost of higher education in China greatly exceeds average annual income. Even at that there are huge differences in the costs of the least expensive and most expensive courses. Over one third of students and their families have to borrow money to finance their courses.

Li J, Zhang, Y., & Matlay, H. (2003) tell us that entrepreneurship education in China is a very new concept. In 2001 the Chinese Ministry of Education began to fund these programmes in a number of universities. Much of the growth of the Chinese economy has come from the small and medium enterprise (SME) sectors. These are composed of co-operatives, collective enterprises, foreign joint ventures, small individually-owned businesses, and private companies. In 1999 there were 33 million of these businesses accounting for 99% of China's economic activity. Amongst the barriers facing entrepreneurs in recent decades

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were political uncertainty, lack of access to borrowings for capital and cash-flow, and legal protection.

MBA courses have been running for the past few years with 50-60 programmes now throughout the country. This is a thriving market and with the number of higher educational institutions growing over the past 15 years from approximately 1,000 to 2,300 general student intake numbers have gone up from around 600,000 to 4.8 million.

Zhou, P. (2003) tells us that since the early 1990s MBA education in China has grown dramatically. In striving to narrow the gap between demand and production as part of the new drive towards economic development, Chinese managers have been adopting a 'scientific management' approach, as per F W Taylor and others. Zhou tells us that Chinese management education has been somewhat obsessed with production-focussed approaches rather than people-focussed ones. It is only recently that Chinese managers began to realise the importance of so-called 'soft' skills alongside the 'hard' one they are used to. He points out that a major problem is the use of materials either developed by Chinese teachers from western textbooks; or those imported wholesale from the west. He recommends that authentic example from China, such as case studies, and China-orientated materials generally should be used with Chinese students. He also recommends that all materials be available in Chinese (and English where the students wish to have both options).

He point out the need for western educators to be aware of guanxi and renqing (please see later sections of this review). He reminds us also of the tradition roles of Chinese teachers – transferring knowledge and maintaining discipline. He points out that while Chinese students are good at memorising from textbooks, they are poor at abstract or creative thinking, and new concepts.

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Brett M. & Gretchen, L. (1999) tell us that 'It has been suggested that doing business in China is like looking at a mirror image. What are considered ``normal" Western business practices are conducted in an inverse way and, as if reflected in a mirror it is ``often difficult to distinguish the shadows from reality" '. Westerners tend to apply our own cultural values to Chinese people, leading to misunderstanding and distrust. They advise us, for example, that Chinese people tend to concentrate on group goals rather than individual ones, and that we need to understand that Chinese industry is based on the group as a fundamental unit. We often forget that Chinese people rarely want to stand out from the crowd and are very uncomfortable if put in a position where they are expected to do so. This is very different from the individual in western society. Joining appropriate groups and being accepted by the right people are very important they tell us. Rules of business practice and protocol must be observed as otherwise the collective, as they call it, can feel threatened. In this regard, participation in traditional greeting rituals, dining and drinking etiquette and gift giving put us in a favourable light compared to those who do not do these things. We also need to remember that our 'off-duty" behaviours will also be closely considered.

Because the political system has fostered loyalty to the people, individual ambition is discouraged. This means that issues such as efficiency and profitability may be seen by potential Chinese partners as of less value than social goals. Given their long history Chinese people are generally more cautious and adverse to risk-taking and innovation than westerners. In negotiations we need to know our Chinese counterparts – particularly their social standing and authority – and they need to know ours, the authors advise. Business relationships are based on personal relationships rather than the business contract. They advise that great offence can be given by asking for a formal written contract. These same concepts and understandings hold true to the education system as to business.

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Martinsons M. G. & Martinsons, A.B. (1996) tell us that rote learning is deeply rooted with Chinese students. Stimulating Chinese students of management studies in universities to be more innovative is not easy but they have carried out some experiments which may prove helpful. They say that Confucian thinking still dominates, where they say

> 'Confucianism is based on authoritarian principles, with technical expertise and positional power being the basis for this authority.'

Great respect for teachers and passive subordination by the learners are key principles. Rote learning fits into this model. Reproducing large tracts of text is seen as respectful of the teacher rather than potential plagiarism the authors tell us. The solution is to encourage discussion and participation amongst groups of learners. While this approach is a key element of western management education, and especially of e-learning, it is not easy to implement in the context of rigid Confucian thinking.

Jacobs L., Guopei G., & Herbig P. (1995) explain that while official policy is that 'Confucianism is dead' its effect pervades Chinese life. When talking about hierarchy and Confucianism they tell us:

> 'A foreign business person must understand the implications of this strong sense of hierarchy to do business successfully in China. Small events, which might be irrelevant in another culture, can become important. For instance, when a group picture is taken, the most conspicuous position should be given to the one highest in rank in the group. Any breach of the rule may offend the group leader and cause business opportunities to slip away.'

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Schermerhorn J. R. Jr, Bond, M.H. (1997) look at how expatriate managers from western countries must deal with cross-cultural issues in managing enterprises in Asia. They consider the prior culturally-dominated viewpoints of these mangers and their expectation on taking up their new roles. Existing group loyalty, respect for elders, harmony in relationships and strong recognition of hierarchy and superior-subordinate relationships are key factors the western manager must take on board. Factors such as lack of participation in discussions, lively discussions amongst themselves AFTER a non-participative approach at meetings and language barriers can be very off-putting for the western manager. They emphasise the importance of prior preparation for interactions, the capacity to regard all unexpected occurrences as learning opportunities, and the ability to learn quickly and adapt to the situation as it is manifestly is as opposed to how we expect if to be, are key approaches in a successful process. This is also the case in education and training. There is a good deal of empirical evidence (ACELS Discussions, Dublin, January 2006), that Irish teachers can become very frustrated with these behaviours from Chinese students. This apparent passivity is quite alien to the Irish education culture of today, and Irish teachers expect, and need, interaction and challenge from students.

Watkins D. (2000) reviews issues in cross-cultural education at the University Of Hong Kong. He states:

> 'By combining insights from different disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and linguistics we now have a much clearer picture of the factors which influence learning outcomes.'

He believes that many factors contribute to the improvement of education but the cultural ones need particular attention in these circumstances. He says that most major theories of learning and education have been devised from research in the west (principally the USA); with much of the research subjects being white males in their early 20s. This is a quite difference group from Chinese learners. He

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considers both Western principles of student learning and as he says "how Chinese students and learners think and go about learning and teaching".

His research revealed that for Western learners greater levels of self-esteem and personal control lead to deeper learning.

Chinese learners are seen as followers of rote learning, which in generally regarded as leading to poor quality, and shallower learning outcomes. However, Chinese learners appear to out-perform Western learners in many respects. This paradox has been well researched he says in recent years. The paradox is partially resolved he says because Chinese learners are memorizing more of what they learn – in a deeper process than rote learning as understood in the west. Rather than rote learning in the western sense Chinese learners use the process of memorizing to learn more deeply with greater understanding of the learning materials. The Chinese learner who can reproduce large tracts of text from memory invariably understands what they are reproducing – as opposed to a western learner who may use such a process for short-term goals, such as passing an examination. Chinese learners use repetition to develop new meaning he says while western learners use it to "check that they really remember something". He says that western look for short-tem insights while Chinese learners look for long-term deep understanding. Chinese learners attribute their success to effort, while western learners attribute it to effort and ability. Chinese people believe that intelligence in not innate but can be improved by hard work.

He also finds that western learners are motivated by individual achievement characterised by individual competition and strong egos. Chinese learners involve others – such as family and peers – in a collective form of achievement. They have a sense of moral duty to the significant people in their lives. In China the relationship between the teacher and student is very like one between a parent and child, Watkins finds. In the west a good teacher is seen as one who

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stimulates interest and discussion, provides structured exercises and gives clear instructions. In China key teacher skills are very deep knowledge of the subject, an ability to answer all questions and to act as a strong, moral role model. Chinese students expect their relationship with the teacher to extend beyond the classroom, rather than simply being supportive as happens with the western teacher. The teacher has a role in the moral education of the student. It is taken as given that all students will pay full attention to the teacher in China. He goes on to other aspects of teaching in China, the way Chinese groups of students work together and the how questions are dealt with.

He concludes that rather than trying to adapt western style teaching to Chinese students, we need to take a more culturally relevant approach.

Kennedy P. (2002) takes issue with the stereotype of the Chinese learner who learns by rote, is passive and relies heavily on memorization. He reminds us that:

> 'Hofstede (1980) developed a framework for measuring cultural differences in 40 countries. He identified three cultural 'layers': the basic norms and values shared by all human beings; the collective beliefs and values shared by particular groups of people; and an individual's unique experience of people and things. The four dimensions of 'cultural difference' Hofstede posited are: individuality/collectivism, power/distance (relative inequalities of power and wealth), uncertainty avoidance and masculinity/femininity'.

He says that the learning styles adopted by Chinese learners are often contributed to 'Confucian values'. He says that in Hong Kong the wisdom and knowledge of teachers is taken for granted and is not to be questioned. Teachers are expected to have a good moral character. He also discussed the notion of saving face (mien-tzu). He points out that one's status in front of others is very

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important to Chinese people. If we cause someone to 'lose face' that is a shameful and selfish act. We should be modest and not 'blow our own trumpet' by, for example, expressing independent opinions of our own. Challenges to teachers are seen as disrespectful. This could cause them to lose face. Positive feedback and appraisals from teachers and parents are also discouraged. This is all very different from what we are used to in the western teacher-student so-called 'ideal' relationship.

Chinese learners are said to prefer clear text and inductive learning, rather than deductive learning styles. Chinese learners prefer to reflect and to be systematic, rather than impulsive and creative. An interesting phenomenon is that Chinese students don't often co-operative well in the classroom, but co-operate readily outside it. Kennedy points out that research shows that Chinese learners learn by repetition – as each time they go back over a known text they may get some additional insight and knowledge they missed earlier.

He goes on to discuss motivation, group work, professional and experiential learning, learning tasks and adult learning styles, and various new approached to learning that have been adopted in Hong Kong universities.

He concludes that more culturally sensitive pedagogies should be adapted with Chinese students. He cautions us of being too general and to realise as he reminds us that it is individual people who interact with each other, not cultures. He tells us that language proficiency, the assessment system and teachers' expectations are very important factors. He says that enough time must be given for Chinese students to adjust to new teaching approaches if they are to work well. He believes that we should not let ourselves be held back by any pre-conceived myth we may have about deep-rooted Confucianism – such as rote learning, memorisation and passivity.

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Guo S. (1999) tells us that there are few incentives in China for people to take up teaching as a career. He reminds us that traditionally teaching was seen as a process of transferring knowledge to students. Traditionally teachers simply repeated what they had learned themselves in school or college to their own students. We have the dilemma therefore of official government policy on the one hand which fosters education and respect for teachers, balanced on the other hand by poor treatment and employment conditions for teachers, and often inadequate teacher training.

Hallinger, P & Leithwood, K (1996) discuss culture on education administration. They tell us that China, Hong Kong, Thailand and Malaysia all operate highly centralised, bureaucratic forms of education administration. All schools, they argue, are administered in the context of their culture. The social system within the school is government by the broader cultural setting of the country. This also influences how education leaders and administrators are themselves education and trained to run the education system. They say:-

> "In China certain attitudes and moral codes of behaviour hold much higher priority as distinguishing between more and less effective leaders than appears to be the case in Western schools. Traits such as dedication, discipline, strong will and persistence are considered highly important as are age, seniority and experience. This reflects a different sense of administrative priorities from the performance-oriented normative descriptions of administrative practice that characterize Western nations"

Ying L, Fuzong L, & Wang X (2003) investigated student behaviours in web-based distance learning systems in China. They looked at what Chinese students want, how they think, and the sorts of support they need from their tutors. Four

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universities, including Tsinghua University, have been delivering web-based learning for some years. Over 40% of students on the Tsinghua University course opted for online video presentations as their preferred method of web-based learning. These were essentially reproductions of classroom-based lectures and tutorials. Over 80% of the students opted for some form of project work as part of their assessments, rather than traditional closed-book examinations. While over 70% of the students said they enjoyed the greater levels of freedom, almost 20% said they had too much freedom. They also complained that there was little communication with the teacher. Many of the students were very interested in an online forum which was set up for them. The researchers state that the teacher's instruction is "always necessary and very important". They advocated more student collaboration and cooperation, and more tailoring of material to individual student needs.

Gomes, L & Murphy, J (2003) tell us there are four international markets in education for Chinese students:-

(1) University education;

(2) English-language courses;

(3) Vocational education and training (VETs); and

(4) Primary and secondary education.

China is Australia's fastest growing market for education. The researchers found that brand names are very important to Chinese students. Parents of Chinese students are key decision-makers in many cases as to which education programme is purchased, since they are the ones who must arrange the finance.

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2.6 Detailed review – culture shock and acculturation in e-learning:-

Selmer J., Ebrahimi B.P., & Mingtao L. (2000) considered the sociocultural and psychological adjustment of business expatriates assigned to Hong Kong from the Peoples' Republic of China (PRC) and western countries. They found the expatriates from the PRC less well able to make a successful transition than those from western countries. The authors define an expatriate in this context as:-

> "..... an employee of an organisation who is sent on a temporary work assignment in another country from their home country. Such assignments are usually between three to five years."

They explain that the two concepts of psychological adjustment and sociocultural adjustment are quite separate. They define psychological adjustment as:-

> "Psychological adjustment deals with subjective wellbeing or mood states such as depression, anxiety and fatigue. The theoretical basis of the subjective wellbeing component of psychological international adjustment has been well developed, especially in relation to work and work environment characteristics."

They define sociocultural adjustment as:-

> "..... the ability to ``fit in" or to negotiate interactive aspects of the host culture as measured by the amount of difficulty experienced in managing everyday situations in the host culture."

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They tell us that there are three key aspects of sociocultural adjustment:-

(1) Adjustment to work;

(2) Adjustment to interactions with natives of the host country; and

(3) Adjustment generally to the local environment outside the workplace.

They explain that psychological adjustment involves the expatriates in being aware of their own attitudes. Attitudes involve their fundamental beliefs and values, and it is rarely that expatriates will alter these in the shorter term at least. However, most expatriates will successfully make the adjustment if they regard it as a practical, problem-solving exercise. Whether they make significant changes to their deeply-held beliefs and attitudes over time is a process for each individual – and one which is entirely voluntary.

Sociocultural adjustment involves the expatriates in altering their behaviours. They do this in response to the environment in which they find themselves and as a response to their realising what behaviours are socially necessary and acceptable in the circumstances. These are practical actions expatriates take and can be easily dispensed with when they return to their own cultural surroundings.

Where expatriates anticipate in advance the sort of sociocultural adjustments they need to make then they usually need to make very few psychological adjustments initially. They will be able to anticipate most of the adjustments they need to make and reduce uncertainty and negative surprises to the minimum. These ease the psychological adjustment for them. They will exhibit appropriate sociocultural and psychological behaviours and the transition process will be much easier for them.

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Practical factors the authors found, such as the higher cost of living, the quicker pace of life, and the language differences made it quite difficult for many expatriates from the PRC to readily make the sociocultural and psychological adjustments needed for a speedy transition to Hong Kong circumstances. Frustration in their slowness in making the sociocultural adjustments can cause psychological problems for the expatriates.

Feichtinger, C. & Fink G. (1998) remind us that culture shock applies to both groups and organisations as well as to individuals. They define culture shock as follows:-

> "So-called culture shock is a phenomenon that is experienced by people who spend a long time (more than three months) in another country. Culture shock is caused by confrontation with a different culture. Thus, only people who have to interact and communicate effectively (e.g. to be effective in their work) with representatives of the foreign culture will experience a culture shock whereas tourists will not".

They explain that culture shock takes place in different phases. People will experience different types of psychological discomfort at various stages in time and will need appropriated tools for effectively dealing with these.

They say that the "acculturation process" as they call it, follows a U-shaped curve over time. In the early stages of a stay abroad the person will have feelings of euphoria as he overcompensates for the huge differences between their own country and the new one. However, the authors tell us; this soon fades away as the person is faced with practical daily problems. The acculturation curve falls steeply as the person tries to adjust to the new, harsh realities. Only after a

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period time in this process does the curve start to rise again.

They set out some common causes and symptoms of culture shock:-

- lack of orientation – with a general sense of uneasiness and anxiety;
- psychological and physical problems – including depression and stress-related illnesses;
- strong sense of being powerless and helpless;
- poor sense of orientation accompanied by apathy and passivity;
- poor self-confidence and loss of trust in other people; and
- withdrawing and behaving defensively

Glanz, L. (2003) discusses the processes people go through in trying to make sense of a new situation in which they find themselves. She calls this process "sensemaking" and discusses it as follows:-

> " Sensemaking is the process whereby we use conscious rational thought to reanalyze and bring order to confusion and surprise. This seems to be a concept that provides a workable framework for uncertainty and unstable environments encountered in international expatriate experience"

She points out that it is essentially an internal process, and her research is centred on how expatriates can use story-telling to help to increase the process of sensemaking. She tells us that people relate events around them to how these will affect them in their future. The more people make anticipations for the future the less they will be surprise by future events and be better able to make sense of them. Some people are better at coping with new experiences and in assimilating these with their own cultures. She says that research shows these people can act as "cultural mentors" for others. She also reminds us that people

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tend to remember past events in the light of their outcomes – often effectively rewriting history in the process. In other words, people remember things differently after the outcome of events from the way they experiences the events at the time they were happening. In practical terms, expatriates can remember events leading up to their failure to successfully manage the process differently from how the events actually occurred at the time. People may see the start of the process as being the most difficult period in coping – whereas in fact most research shows that the period a few months into the process is often the most difficult for the person to cope with.

She explains that sensemaking is a social process and how people do it depends a lot on their own outlook on life and how they interpret things and put meanings on them. The person may not be consciously aware that they influence their environment as much as the environment influences them. By behaving in various way and putting their own interpretations and meanings on things they engage in a process of self-fulfilling prophesies.

Expatriates can also fix on certain, limited clues rather than maintaining a broad perspective, she tells us. This can cause them to misread simple situations and actions.

Kaye, M. & Taylor, W.K.G. (1997) tell us that people have to respond to the stimuli in a new cultural environment. The initial period of excitement and elation is followed by a period of disillusionment and then by culture shock. The process the person then goes through to understand the local people, the attitudes, mindsets and behaviours can be very stressful. People may feel angry and anxious with a general sense of apprehension, anxiety and uncertainty about the future. They tell us that people tend to react in three broad ways:-

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(a) resistance – where the new culture is rejected;

(b) assimilation – complete rejection of one's own culture in favour of the new one; or

(c) acculturation – learning to live with the new culture, while maintaining your "roots" in your own one

People may not even be aware of their behaviours as they exhibit symptoms such as deep distrust of local people, obsessions with minor matters – such as food hygiene and general services – and constant complaints about the supposed laziness or inefficiency of the local people. They may also be extremely reluctant to learn the local language. All of these may persist for up to a year before the acculturation process kicks in.

They found that training for expatriates – prior to leaving for the new country and during the process – was crucial in assisting a successful process of acculturation. A second most important issue was language and the capacity of expatriates to quickly gain good local language skills.

Haslberger, A. (2005) discusses language skills in the context of adaptation to a new culture. Other people observe the person's behaviour and draw inferences from it. At the same time the person's internal 'measurement' process will be ongoing and influences their cognitive and emotional states. During the adaptation process the person will have a range of positive and negative emotions. The greater the degree of novelty or difference between the person's own culture and that of the new country the bigger the impact on their capacity to adapt. People tend to be most comfortable where they can compare positively their 'old' and 'new' environments e.g. where road signs or public transport or services are very similar.

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The degree to which the new country if open to receiving people from other cultures is also a key factor the author points out. Where the expatriate has a relatively high social status in the new country this can help the adaptation process as the local people may be more open to facilitating or accommodating the acculturation process.

The more self-efficacy the expatriate has the greater their capacity to make a successful adaptation. By 'self-efficacy' the author means the degree to which the person believes in their own strengths and ability to adapt and deal with potential setbacks or problems. Language skills are a key factor in self-efficacy. The person with good language skills will be able to have themselves understood and to understand other people. They will also be better armed to adapt to new information and feedback and to assimilate their new learning with their existing reservoir of skills and knowledge.

Good language skills aid both emotional and cognitive development and adaptation in these circumstances.

Being able to develop social networks and networks of friendly contacts are also key factors facilitating adaptation.

Haslberger draws a number of important conclusions. In relation to language skills he states:-

> "..... basic language skills training is a common feature in expatriate preparation. However, once abroad, most expatriates drop classes under the pressures of work and companies happily oblige to save money. Trailing family members often receive less training to begin with. The

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strong relationship of language skills with cognitive and affective adaptation warrants heightened attention to continued language training once abroad."

Holopainen, J. & Bjo¨rkman, I. (2005) looked at the personal characteristics of expatriates and how these related to their success in the foreign countries to which they had moved. The capacity to interact well with people from other cultures brings with it the possibility of useful information exchange – a vital factor in successful communications and relationship-building. They point out that it is *not the expatriate's language skills per se which are most important but their* willingness and capacity to communicate with people in the host country. The person who is willing to invest time in communicating with people from the host country will improve their language skills in time, increase information exchange and significantly improve the acculturation process. This speed of this process had a direct positive impact on the person's performance, the authors found.

Fontaine, G. (1997) tells us that what he calls the "ecology of strange lands" *place great psychological challenges to people who go there on assignments*, such as work periods or education. The success of these assignments often depends on how well the person can cope with these challenges. He says:-

"The ecology might involve, for instance, the skills, expectations, and relationships of the task participants, the characteristics of the physical resources available, and the health, safety, security conditions of the assignment site, respectively. There are several characteristics common to the ecologies of most international assignments. For example such *assignments are usually characterized by travel to a place different from* home; they typically involve special problems associated with time differences and communication; there are important cultural differences in

the people and how they live and do business – particularly in how they resolve conflict, since some conflict is almost unavoidable interculturally; there is often less organizational, social, and technological support than at home; and assignees usually are more responsible for providing the structure of their daily, weekly, and monthly activities."

These factors are depicted by Fontaine in Figure 2.1 below.

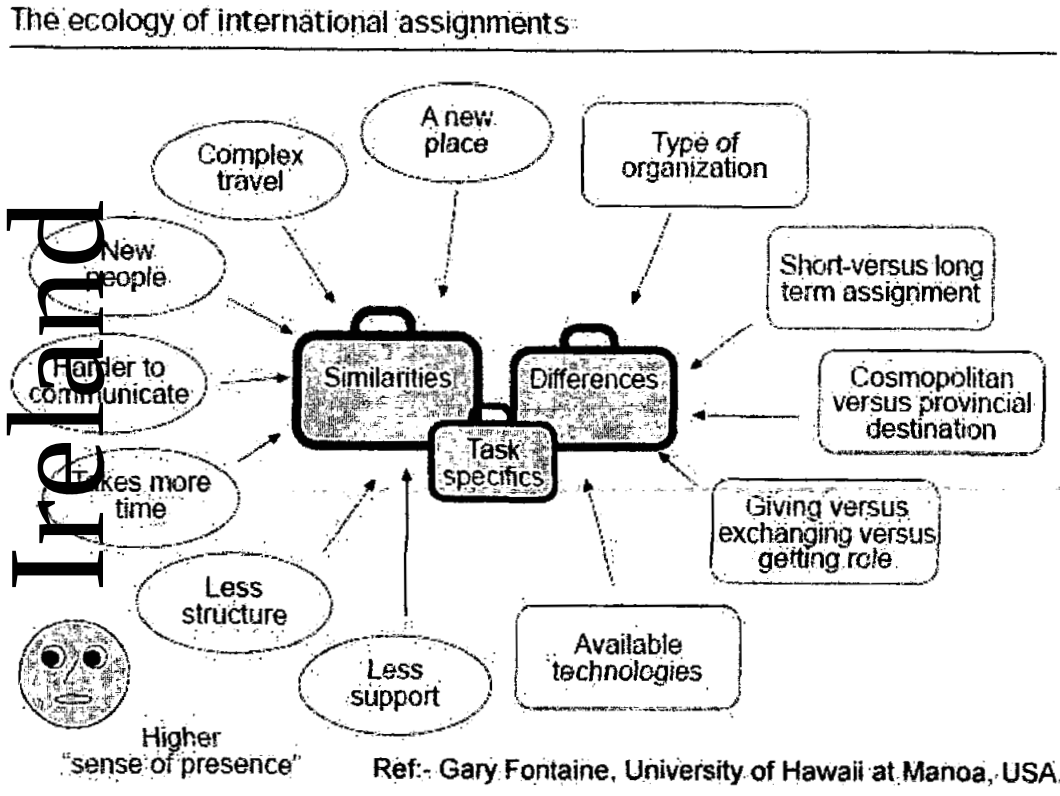

Figure 2.1

Fontaine tells us that people are faced with three main challenges:-

(a) coping with "ecoshock" – the entire range of sociocultural and practical differences in the new environment;

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(b) developing strategies to effectively complete tasks – with particular emphasis on understanding the different perceptions of roles and causes of offense and conflicts; and

(c) maintaining the motivation to continue – dealing with the first two challenges will be influenced by the real reasons the person has taken the foreign assignment. Reasons can include opportunities for career advancement through improved education or work experiences or both. They can also include personal reasons related to family expectations for example. In any event, the person needs to understand that the onus is on them to adapt to their circumstances – not the other way around.

Social supports are very important in this process. These will come from family, colleagues and friends. The person will also need to develop a range of new relationships which will provide social and practical supports and useful information.

These skills are depicted by Fontaine in Figure 2.2 below.

Suutari, V. & Brewster, C. (1998) remind us that the greater the "cultural distance" as they call it the more difficult it will be generally for the expatriate to make the necessary cultural adaptations. They point out to us that Europe is the region in the world with the most developed range of separate cultures. While the authors were primarily interested in the effects of different cultures in Europe on people moving from one European country to another, their findings could be very pertinent to people coming from outside Europe for work or education for extended periods.

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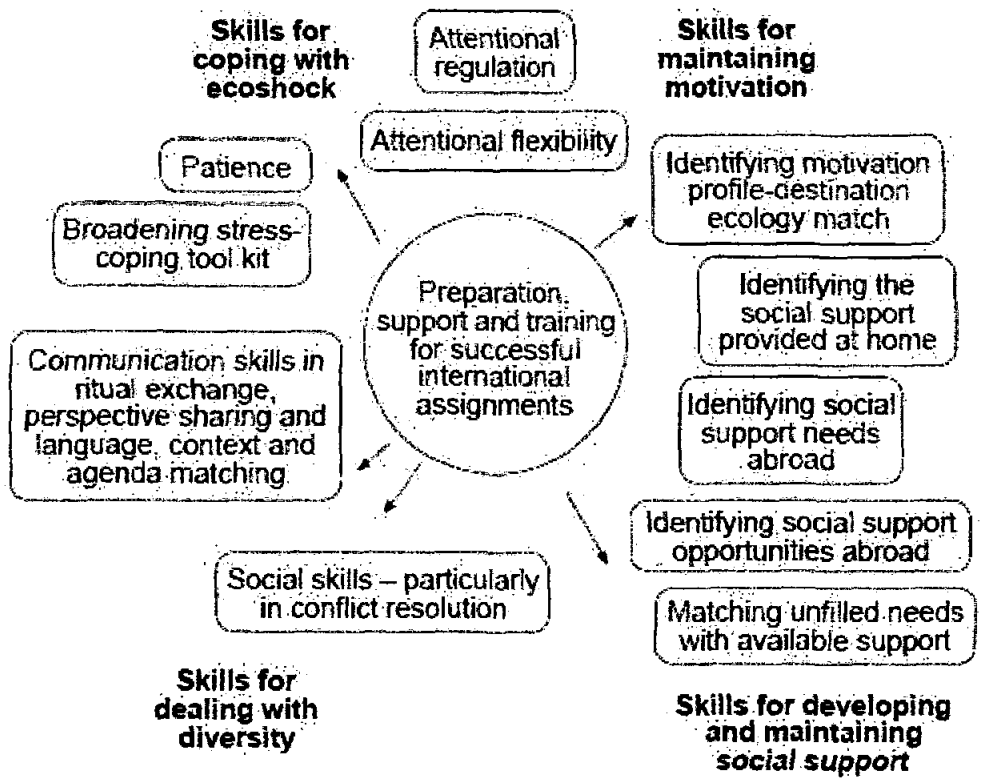
Skills for success abroad that need to be addressed in preparation, support and training



Ref:- Gary Fontaine, University of Hawaii at Manoa, USA.

Figure 2.2

Issues like the differences in the organisational styles – e.g. the more formal management structures in Germany, were important factors in adaptation. Other factors included leadership styles (again, the Germans generally using less participation), were also important. They produced a list of 'top 10' pieces of advice for expatriates taking up a job in a new country, as follows:-

1. Integrate yourself in the local community as soon as possible

2. Your family must be motivated and prepared in advance

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3. Learn about the country and its culture and history before going there
4. Be positive and open-minded, not critical or suspicious
5. Learn the local language if possible beforehand
6. Clarify what is expected of you before you go
7. Clarify the details of your contract/arrangements before leaving home
8. Visit the new country beforehand
9. Get feedback from other expatriates who have worked in country
10. Make sure you have good professional skills for your new job

Professor Geert Hofstede

(Initial quotation below from Professor Geert's website –

http://www.geerth-hofstede.com/hofstede_dimensions.php)

"From 1967 to 1973, while working at IBM as a psychologist, Professor Geert Hofstede conducted perhaps the most comprehensive study of how values in the workplace are influenced by culture. He collected and analysed data from over 100,000 individuals from 50 countries and 3 regions. Subsequent studies validating the earlier results have included commercial airline pilots and students *in 23 countries, civil service managers in 14 counties, 'up-market' consumers in* 15 countries and 'elites' in 19 countries.

From the initial results, and later additions, Hofstede developed a model that *identifies four primary dimensions to assist in differentiating cultures:*

(a) Power Distance – PDI;
(b) Individualism – IDV;
(c) Masculinity – MAS; and
(d) Uncertainty Avoidance - UAI.

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Geert Hofstede added a fifth dimension after conducting an additional international study with a survey instrument developed with Chinese employees and managers.

That Dimension, based on Confucian dynamism, is Long-Term Orientation - LTO *and was applied to 23 countries.*

These five Hofstede Dimensions can also be found to correlate with other *country and cultural paradigms."*

Hofstede gives the following overview to his dimensions:-

"**Power Distance Index (PDI)** focuses on the degree of equality, or inequality, between people in the country's society. A high PDI ranking indicates that inequalities of power and wealth have been allowed to grow within the society. These societies are more likely to follow a caste system that does not allow significant upward mobility of its citizens. A Low Power Distance ranking *indicates the society de-emphasizes the differences between citizen's power and* wealth. In these societies equality and opportunity for everyone is stressed.

Individualism (IDV) focuses on the degree to which the society reinforces individual or collective achievement and interpersonal relationships. A High Individualism ranking indicates that individuality and individual rights are paramount within the society. Individuals in these societies may tend to form a larger number of looser relationships. A low IDV ranking typifies societies of a *more collectivist nature with close ties between individuals. These cultures* reinforce extended families and collectives where everyone takes responsibility for fellow members of their group.

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Masculinity (MAS) focuses on the degree the society reinforces, or does not reinforce, the traditional masculine work role model of male achievement, control, and power. A high MAS ranking indicates the country experiences a high degree of gender differentiation. In these cultures, males dominate a significant portion of the society and power structure, with females being controlled by male domination. A low MAS ranking indicates the country has a low level of differentiation and discrimination between genders. In these cultures, females are treated equally to males in all aspects of the society.

Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI) focuses on the level of tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity within the society - i.e. unstructured situations. A high UAI ranking indicates the country has a low tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity. This creates a rule-oriented society that institutes laws, rules, regulations, and controls in order to reduce the amount of uncertainty. A Low UAI ranking indicates the country has less concern about ambiguity and uncertainty and has more tolerance for a variety of opinions. This is reflected in a society that is less rule-oriented, more readily accepts change, and takes more and greater risks.

Long-Term Orientation (LTO) focuses on the degree the society embraces, or does not embrace long-term devotion to traditional, forward thinking values. High LTO ranking indicates the country prescribes to the values of long-term commitments and respect for tradition. This is thought to support a strong work ethic where long-term rewards are expected as a result of today's hard work. However, business may take longer to develop in this society, particularly for an "outsider". A low LTO ranking indicates the country does not reinforce the concept of long-term, traditional orientation. In this culture, change can occur more rapidly as long-term traditions and commitments do not become impediments to change.

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Using the tool provided on his website this author generated the image below.

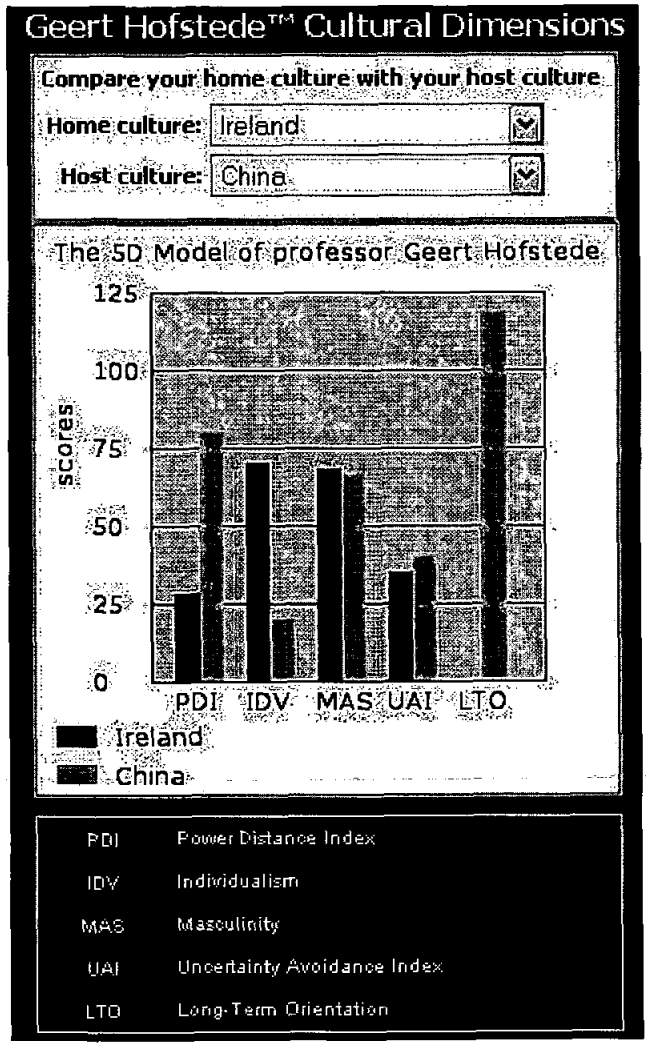

Fig 2.3 – Cultural Dimensions – Ireland and China – 2006

From Hofstede's website this author extracted the comparative tables for Ireland, China and European countries as per April 2006, as shown in Fig 2.4 after this text.

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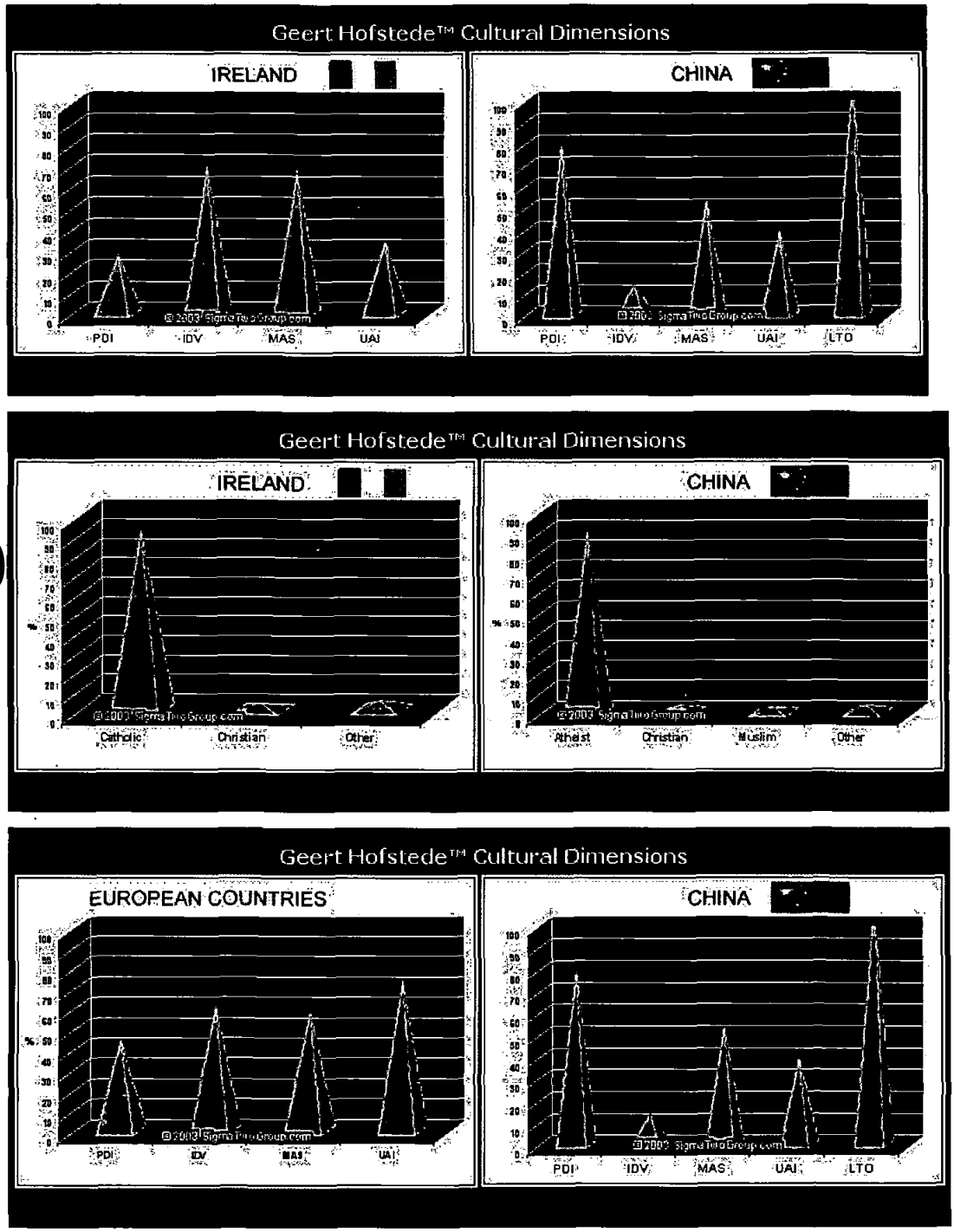

Fig 2.4 Hofstede's comparative tables for Ireland, China and Europe, April 2006.

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Selmer & Lam (2004) tell us that adolescents who spend time living in a country with a different culture to their own develop a high degree of sensitivity to that culture. During adolescence they are particularly impressionable and this makes it easier for them to absorb the cultural norms and behaviours and to create a frame of reference for the future. The frame of reference incorporates the adolescent's own 'native' culture as well as that of the 'foreign' one – leading to what the authors call a 'third culture', which assimilates a range of experiences and impressions. They have something of what the authors call a 'global mindset' in this third culture which can make them very good candidates for working and living in the foreign country later in life.

The authors remind us that people need to prepare themselves to live and work in countries which have a very different culture to their own. These people should not behave in the same ways as they do in their home countries; but need to adjust their ways of thinking and behaviour to suit the new country. Behaving as one does at home may not only be ineffective, but may produce negative outcomes. Training is usually provided to these so-called 'expatriates" to help them to make the necessary transition. They tell us that a lot of this training is ineffective, and they suggest that using people who have a third culture – so-called 'third culture kids – TCKs' provides a ready-made solution for organisations with foreign operations.

Relevance of acculturation to e-Learning:-

We are faced with a number of different but related scenarios in the context of e-learning for Chinese learners through services provided from so-called western countries. The three broad scenarios in the circumstances of this study are:-

(a) Services provided to Chinese people who are living in China;

(b) Services provided to Chinese people who are living in Ireland; and

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(c) Services provided to Chinese people who have lived in Ireland and who are now living in China.

In all scenarios we need to be aware of the culture shocks which may be experienced by the service providers and the Chinese learners. The process of acculturation may be west-east (where the western services provider must acculturate to China); or east-west (where the Chinese learner must acculturate to the west and its culture and ways of teaching and learning). It may also be west-east-west where both Chinese people and people from western countries such as Ireland need to constantly acculturate to each other.

From a consideration of the factors outlined earlier in this section of the report and the feedback from the questionnaires, experiments and interviews the following issues arise:-

(A) Chinese learners who have recently come to Ireland may be experiencing great difficulty in acculturating and perhaps find themselves in some sociocultural and psychological discomfort or stress. They may not be very receptive to the western styles of learning and teaching as they are practiced in Ireland. The issues of passivity, the differences in the role of the teacher in China and Ireland and the teaching styles generally in China as compared to Ireland are highlighted elsewhere in this report. Adjusting to the different pedagogies and related tools for learning and teaching, such as greater learner autonomy, are very challenging for Chinese learners. Add to that the techniques and practices of e-learning and the Chinese learner may be particularly disadvantaged in attempting to optimise its use;

(B) Chinese learners who have been living, working and studying in Ireland for at least a year may have begun to successfully acculturate. Depending on personality factors such as self-efficacy and motivation the Chinese learner may be better able to benefit from the Irish approach to learning – both classroom-based and blended with e-learning elements. There is a great deal of empirical

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evidence, supported by responses from the interviews done as part of this study, that Chinese and Irish people have some personality traits in common. In particular both Chinese and Irish people see themselves as very friendly and willing to communicate socially with other people. This could be a significant factor in the acculturation process as many researchers have pointed out the effect of communication and social interaction, together with larger networks of contacts and information sharing, as important in the process. This similarity could be a very important 'social lubricant' for both Chinese and Irish people as they need to interact with each other.

The findings of this research project seem to suggest that Chinese people who have been living in Ireland for two or more years have made a success of the acculturation process. They may, as so many foreigners who came to Ireland in the past - tend to 'become more Irish than the Irish themselves'. Certainly, when one hears Chinese people asking to be called 'Sean' or 'Iona' they have made a large leap across the cultural divide;

(C) There is empirical evidence that Chinese people who have lived in Ireland for some time and who have now returned to China generally are very positive in their outlook on Ireland. In recent years there has been a number of very successful education exchange programmes between Chinese and Irish universities, institutes and colleges. Some of the Chinese students are now working for the Irish education providers as their representatives in China, for example. Ireland is fortunate in not having a history of colonialism or interference in the affairs of other nations. It has the disadvantage of not have any long-term business and trade linkages with China although several Irish commercial organisations are now establishing themselves in China, especially in the services, management development, education, food and ICT sectors; and

(D) Language plays a vital part in human communications and researchers on the topic of acculturation and culture shock point out how crucial it is for expatriates to quickly learn the local language as the primary form of

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communication and social interaction. Mandarin is the official Chinese language as used by government bodies and at all official levels, and in the media and on television. E-learning needs to be provided in as user-friendly a way as possible and the use Mandarin in addition to English is crucial to facilitating information exchange, understanding and learning. Educated Chinese people speak English and it is rapidly becoming the language of international trade. However, it is wise to use Mandarin where possible in conjunction with English.

Even for Chinese learners who have been in Ireland for some time using Mandarin with English is a good communications facilitator – and a significant gesture towards demonstrating appreciation of the communications difficulties Chinese learners may be having.

In relation to language generally, we need to be extremely careful to ensure that the meaning of words and phrases are clear to both Chinese and Irish people communicating together. One must take great care in translations and in the process of phrase simplification. That is not to say that any degree of patronisation is to be applied. Simply put, words just do not have the same meaning and people can easily misunderstand or even offend each other. The research on acculturation discussed earlier touched on this important topic. Chinese people may easily take offence at words or phrases which they either misunderstand or which have radically different meaning in their culture.

Smalltalk is a simple example. Irish people talk about the weather, the prices of houses and traffic congestion. They also enquire after people's health and often use a lot of hand movements and gestures in speaking. The Irish person who nods their head or says 'yea' or 'yes' during conversation is usually indicating that they agree with the other person. Chinese people may often in smalltalk ask the other person their age, or what salary they are paid, without realising that these sort of personal questions are not normally asked in Ireland. They can be offended if asked about their health or that of a relative and may not understand

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what they mistakenly think is a genuine Irish obsession with the weather! When a Chinese person says 'yes' in conversation it is merely to indicate that they can hear the other person – not that they agree with them. The Irish person who says to a Chinese person "I will see you later" may leave the Chinese person confused as to when the next meeting is scheduled to take place – while the Irish person is simply saving 'goodbye'.

Phrasing questions is important if the Irish person is to get the meaning of what they have in mind across to the Chinese person. This is why questionnaire preparation (as discussed elsewhere in this report) can be fraught.

2.7 Detailed review – cultural factors and their effects on the behaviour *and attitudes of Chinese people:-*

Low (2001) tells us that over 2000 years ago, Chinese people devised ways of dealing with the same sort of management issues people in the 'west' have experienced in recent years. The Zhou Dynasty (770 b.c. to 221.b.c.) saw many technological and managerial advances in China. Low tells us that the ancient Chinese developed a number of treatises on the philosophy and practice of management and administration. Lao Tsu (500bc) developed his ideas on leadership, Sun Tzu (around 500 b.c.) set out his ideas on strategic thinking, and Zhunge Liang (c.200 b.c.) set out his principles of management. Tao Zhugong was perhaps the greatest management writer and his principles are still adhered to by many managers in modern China, even though he first set his ideas to paper over 2,500 years ago.

Tao was taught 18 principles of war when he was a military general and later applied most of these to business. He advised others to apply them in a flexible way. Through a process of 'handing down' from one generation to the next, these transformed into 12 golden standards and 12 golden safeguards for

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management. (Please see Appendix 4 for details of the 12 golden standards and 12 golden safeguards).

Chiu et al (2002) advise that a variety of elements – including base salary, year-end bonus, merit pay and individual bonuses are strong motivators for Chinese employees. The 'iron rice bowl' (*tie fan wan*) which existed prior to the recent economic reforms is rapidly disappearing. People used to be paid more-or-less equally, regardless of personal performance. Laws govern the levels of pay – where rates in international joint-ventures are not allowed to exceed 120-150% of those payable in Chinese state enterprises in the same line of business. Chiu et al tell us that Chinese people prefer to get merit pay, and group and individual bonuses. Where the total package is unlimited Chinese people are agreeable to having it shared equally, regardless of individual performance. However, where it is restricted they prefer merit payments and individual bonuses – which can sometime reach 40% of overall annual remuneration.

Housing can also be a big motivator. Traditionally Chinese people were registered at a particular address and movement was severely restricted. With more liberal movement allowed now there is a major housing shortage. Houses have also become very expensive. Jobs where housing is also provided are therefore much sought-after.

Chinese managers in their study listed the following as key factors in motivating and retaining employees (in raked order):-

(1) base salary;

(2) merit pay;

(3) year-end bonus

(4) housing (mainly for supervisors)

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(5) group cash bonuses (mainly for supervisors)

(4) housing (mainly for workers)

(5) individual cash bonuses (mainly for workers) – often linked to overtime

Chiu et all tell us that money is very important to the Chinese mentality. They say that being successful in China means that one is financially independent.

> "Money represents one's success and achievement in life. The head of a family has to provide food, shelter and other physiological needs to his/her family members. Money can provide many different needs. It would be shameful if one could not provide the material needs for one's family".

They tell us that Chinese people are known to be low on uncertainty avoidance and on trust. They do not trust employers, the government, business partners or those outside their immediate family. Chinese employers are therefore less interested in providing indirect benefits to employees – such as pensions, sick schemes or extended leave.

Wood & Whitely (2002) try to define guanxi for us – as there is no concept which is quite the same in western business. They say:-

> "Personal connections in society are called guanxi in China. ....Guanxi assumes an importance in personal relationships unparalleled in the west. The importance of the concept in Chinese culture is related to the degree of structural and formal business practice and the combined

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influence of Chinese heritage, including political history, religion, and philosophical underpinnings such as the *wu liu* and familial piety".

They tell us that there is an emotional component in guanxi and that this is important in the context of impersonal business dealings, where there are still weak legal and regulatory frameworks.

Western abstract ideas such as justice and equity, and western notions of contract law, are largely irrelevant (and often unknown) to Chinese people, who are primarily concerned with the nature of the relationship between the parties. Guanxi is the 'conduit' used, rather than the formal communication and administrative systems, for resolving problems and making agreements.

Wood & Whitley's research with Chinese leaders of industry revealed that most see China as being in a state of transition from the old government-socialist-controlled system to a more open, balanced country and economy. Guanxi can be seen by some of the Chinese participants in the study as a way of getting a better understanding of other people by forming an insight to their emotions – thus perhaps conferring a competitive advantage on the Chinese party in a Chinese-western interaction. The Chinese person sometimes sees this as a quicker route to dealing with a competitor than detailed market research as per the western management approach.

Wood & Whitely explain that guanxi can be applied to different situations. Complex social relationships are involved. Leaders are restricted in their actions by their superiors – including the government as the overall superior to everyone in China.

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Li & Wright (2000) remind us that guanxi is a system of intricate and pervasive networks of personal relationships. It is believed to stem from Confucian teachings on relationships:-

(a) emperor-subject;

(b) father-son;

(c) husband-wife;

(d) elder-younger brother; and

(e) friend-friend.

In order to get the information they need in an environment where information is generally not freely available, people have to build trusting relationships between each other. These relationships take some time to build up before people will exchange the necessary information and resources between them. While guanxi generally applies to inter-personal relationships it can also be said to exist between organisations, the authors suggest. There are obvious risks in conducting business relationships based on guanxi alone the authors warn us. Human failings may see people pursuing their personal interests at the expense of those of the organisation, for example. There is a great deal of evidence they tell us that western organisations which spend a lot of time in developing their relationships with their Chinese partners gain competitive advantage through the exchange of information, availability of scarce resources and many areas of mutual co-operation, such as product promotions and advertising.

Wang (2003) tell us that Chinese Township-Village Enterprises (TVEs) employed over 73% of China's rural workforce in 2001. In his research he points out that TVEs have achieved outstanding performance and growth, particularly in niche markets. Part of the problem facing TVEs is the lack of trained managers. To help to deal with this issue the TVEs have been expanding the scope of the jobs

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and roles of their workers. A key issue is the degree of trust which can be placed in these employees Wang says.

Wang tells us that building trust is a sophisticated psychological process. It takes time and a variety of process and checks before the manager will have built up a high degree of trust in the person. He states that the degree of willingness on a manager's part to foster trust and autonomous decision-making in a subordinate is largely dependent on the personality of the manager. The more trust the manager has in the subordinate the more power he is likely to give to him: the higher the levels of trust the greater the degree of participative management. This is borne out by the actual experiences in TVEs where there are high levels of trust and high levels of participative decision-making. Managers tend to trust people who have demonstrated their dependability and intelligence. They recognise those who are willing and who they can trust generally, but select those who they can depend on, within these criteria. Also, the more educated the manager the more willing they are to foster participative styles of decision-making.

Leung & Chan (2003) tell us:-

> '"Face" is the respect, pride, and dignity of an individual as a consequence of his/her social achievement and the practice of it, or "face work", is the use of a complex package of social skills to protect his/her face and the face of others in Chinese relational settings'.

It is important to distinguish that in the west, while people do not like to 'lose face' or be embarrassed, it is not an 'end-of-the-world' scenario generally in communications. However, in China 'keeping face' is a form of relationship building. Both parties work to ensure that the other does not lose face, which is

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seen as a serious matter.

Traditionally Chinese people have lived and worked within strictly hierarchical structures. A person who moves up this hierarchy will have more respect, dignity and 'face'. A move downward reduces 'face'. A manager will have more 'face' in front of his subordinates, and less in front of his superiors.

The level of 'face'; can be improved through personal effort – hard work, involvement in the community, reputation, renown, personal wealth. One's network of social contact will also improve one's 'face'.

Loss of face will result from a variety of one's own actions e.g. misbehaving in public.

All parties are therefore anxious to ensure that they do not cause loss of face to the others and that they themselves do no lose face. In return, it is expected that various favours can be granted. This provides linkages to the concept of guanxi discussed elsewhere in this section of the report. 'Face work' i.e. ensuring that the other parties 'keep their face' is an important diplomatic tool in building relationships with a view to gaining competitive advantage. It applies between individuals and organisations, and also within organisations. Nothing can be done which causes the organisation itself to 'lose face' – and only employees who fully understand the process may gain a significant role in the organisation.

Wang tells us that successful negotiators dealing with Chinese partners will:

> "Plot their positioning through face work to seek speedy government approval of business projects and establishment marketing channels.

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They manipulate four face work dimensions, i.e. reciprocity, respect, response, and popularity to achieve three positions; i.e. the cruel, smoother and impresser. Each position will put different psychic distance and transaction cost between the Hong Kong and the Chinese negotiators. An impresser is found to have the smallest psychic distance and transaction cost with his/her Chinese counterpart(s). Only if the negotiators position themselves as impressers they can establish a good guanxi and an old friend status with their Chinese counterparts. If guanxi is perceived as the infrastructure of that relationship network, then face work is the lubricant to help negotiators develop dynamics in that network. Old friends count and the negotiation deals become easy.

Wong & Chung (2003) found in their study of work attitudes of Chinese people in the food industry that filial piety, loyalty, righteousness and friendship remain key concepts in the Chinese work ethic. They say that Chinese people are primarily concerned in the workplace with:

(a) opportunities – for advancement and promotion;
(b) loyalty to the employer; and
(c) good pay arrangements.

Other key issues are power structures, formality and acceptance of authority.

Hempel (2001) discusses employee performance and the different understandings of this term between 'western' managers and Chinese ones.

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He states:-

> "Western observers have noted that Chinese managers appear to define performance in terms of personal characteristics such as loyalty and obedience rather than through reference to outcomes. Chinese observers agree, noting that Chinese performance appraisals place great emphasis upon 'moral" characteristics.

Hempel tells us that the organisational objectives of Chinese organisations often differ wildly from those of western ones. Run by the State until recently the great majority of Chinese companies are run as a family business with the primary objective to keep control in the family. Individual performance may not be seen in these circumstances as so important as the capacity of the person to help the family to maintain control of the business (even public companies often have their majority control in the hands of a single family Hempel tells us).

Since formal, public appraisal process may damage a person's 'face' these are often dispensed with in Chinese companies in favour of more informal reviews. In addition, management will need to be careful in how it deals with the outcomes of these reviews as the employee can not be seen to 'lose face' – hence the appraisal may never have any discernable outcome.

In a culture where academic performance is often attributed to effort and diligence rather than innate ability or aptitudes, there is widespread belief that people can advance themselves through hard work and character/moral formation. So-called 'moral' employees are also seen as diligent and good performers with 'good face'.

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Many Chinese people ascribe to the concept of 'fatalism', from the Taoist tradition. People are seen as being subject to the external environment rather than having any influence over it. Western managers will be conscious of the external environment and take action to influence events based on feedback from the environment. Chinese managers may see themselves as having no influence related to environmental factors. The Chinese person will probably see it as very unfair to have their performance appraised in the context of factors over which they believe they have no personal control. A western person may adapt his actions to adjust for the environment, while the Chinese person will not do so and fatalistically accept the consequences of the environmental factors, abrogating any personal responsibility.

Given the Confucian principles of hierarchy the employee is very unlikely to ever question the actions or opinions of his superior. In addition, the need to promote harmony will often mean that potential conflicts are avoided at all costs – leaving contentious decisions unmade.

Li (1999) tells us that US and European managers in joint-venture companies with Chinese partners often find it very difficult to get the Chinese managers to participate in the decision-making process. Western management theory and practice places a great deal of emphasis on personal responsibility for one's own actions and performance. Chinese managers are very slow to give opinions – lest they be seen to criticise their superiors – something they feel they have no right to do. In promoting harmony, they may continuously consult their superiors – negating the western approach of managing by exception – where consultation is generally kept to the minimum and the person is trusted to get on with their work.

Tjosvold T et al. (1999) tell us that conflicts and disagreements within the team are key for successful delivery of services in East Asia. They remind us that

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Deutsch (1977: 1980) at Columbia University in his research proposed that how group members work together and their effectiveness is shaped by how each individual perceives his own goals relative to those of the group. If the person sees that his goals can be achieved by co-operating with others to achieve group goals he will do so. This will allow him to consider conflicts and disagreements between group members as positive and will work with these to ensure the group achieves its goals. They are prepared to consider the other person's point of view, learn from the additional information provided and assimilate this with their own information and experiences to date. On the other hand, of the person sees the his goals as being very different from those of the group he may tend to compete with other group members with different views and act in a negative 'win-or-lose' way. He will not assimilate the different views and information and agreement will not be reached.

In preparing questionnaires with Chinese people it is necessary the authors tell us to continuously re-work them to make the questions more concise and clear. Questionnaires were completed in small groups with explanations given based on examples to help them understand how to complete them. Small rewards were given to the participants to complete the questionnaires.

The researchers found that Chinese people who participated in open discussions, compared to avoiding conflict, were curious to ask questions, explore opposing views and worked to integrate views. They saw those with other views as strong and competent. The saw people who avoided conflict as weak and ineffectual. They became more attracted to those with opposing views, who were not competitive in their attitudes, and looked forward to working with them in the future. The tell us:

"The goal is gradual, systematic change. Co-operative teamwork requires

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people to create forums for direct discussions, trusting values, and constructive conflict management relevant, effective, and

appropriate for all. People need confidence that their colleagues want to work together and manage conflict co-operatively for them to experiment and build quality enhancing teamwork."

Liu J. & Mackinnon A. (2002) discuss how organisations are managed in China and consider what the key influences on management styles may be. They tell us that the "sense of belonging" which Chinese people have is a direct result of their family upbringing and education system. It is a very important factor, not dissimilar to the 'old school tie' system in the UK. Religion and culture also have *profound effects. For example, Confucius in setting out his thought on* relationships, made no provision for dealing with strangers. The authors remind us that he was particularly strict about misbehavior in public. Daoism fosters harmony by adapting to nature rather trying to challenge it. The bamboo can either bend with the wind and survive, or resist it and be broken by the wind. The sense of fatalism is very important. Rules and guidance exist for the individual which govern morals and behaviour. The analytical skills of Chinese people are also crucial, and are largely shaped by their experiences and training. Language *should be kept simple and the tendency to over-explain things needs to be* resisted by westerners. Chinese people prefer more ambiguity, especially while they are building up a relationship of trust with the other party.

As guanxi imposes mutual obligations on people senior management must spend more time in supporting junior managers than happens in western companies.

Buttery, E. A. & Leung, T.K. P. (1998) remind us of the concept of 'power distance' i.e. the way less powerful people in an organisation accept and expect power to be distributed unevenly. Chinese people accept power distance much

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more readily than Westerners generally. They also remind us of the importance of human ties rather than individualism, in Chinese organisations. The uncertainty avoidance index is a measure of the degree to which people feel threatened by uncertainty and unknown situations. The index is high for Chinese people compared to people from the USA or the UK. Chinese people place great emphasis on perseverance and thrift – both of which give them a longer-term perspective generally on situations.

In negotiations for example, Chinese people are willing to extend the process over a long period of time in order to get the optimum result for themselves. They are also prepared to continuously re-negotiate agreements to achieve the results they want. As part of the process the Chinese participants will discuss matters between themselves with a view to reaching a collective decision, incorporating guanxi imperatives relevant to the situation. They tell us that guanxi boils down to having access to the necessary influence to make things happen. Guanxi is about building up a life-long relationship rather than securing a single deal. Confucius emphasised the importance of knowing other people and the unimportance of being known yourself. Chinese people will therefore ask the other person many questions while being reluctant to give much information about themselves. This can be very frustrating for Western people. Chinese people, in conforming to Confucian teachings, know their own place in society and that of others and apply strict rules to respecting these. The authors tell us that the only productive way into negotiations in Chinese society is through someone who is already well established in the hierarchy.

They advise us that to 'give face' is to praise someone's reputation in society. To cause someone to 'lose face' is to denounce their status and reputation. Bureaucracy is ever-present and all decisions are avoided which may include any degree of risk to the decision-maker or official. Only when all the paperwork has been thoroughly completed will the official consider the application. The authors

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remind us that the signing of a contract is often the beginning of the serious *stages of the negotiation process rather than the end of it !*

Koeszegi S.T. (2004) quotes Baier (1986) in defining trust:-

> "trust is accepted vulnerability to another's possible but not expected ill will (or lack of goodwill) toward one."

They tell us that Chinese people prefer a deadlock or a break-off in negotiations rather than have a loss of face.

Hutchings K. & Michailova S. (2004) advise us of the concepts of 'in-groups' and 'out-groups' in Chinese organisations. People who share common interests and are concerned for the welfare of others in the group are said to be part of an 'in-group'. Trust and inter-dependency for information and resources mark in-groups in China. When people lose respect and trust they are regarded as 'out-group'. *In-groups exist outside the workplace and extend to many aspects of Chinese* society where personal networks and relationships facilitate information exchange and access to influence and resources.

In groupwork in Western countries we usually work on the basis that putting people into close contact with each other will stimulate the formation of groups with all the resultant dynamics within and between groups as originally discovered by Elton Mayo, and others. This is not the case in China and the authors advise us that we need to understand that only in-group members will *work together, out-group members will be excluded. They also advise us that we* should use intermediaries to help in groupwork. Small numbers of individuals who are already in-group and adept at guanxi will help us through introductions

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and advice on the best way to group individuals. For example, new group members are usually close friends or family members of existing ones. They are highly motivated to work within the group as it is in their interest to 'keep face' both for individuals and the group.

The authors remind us that because Chinese people who demonstrate strong individualism are seen as bad, weak or untrustworthy, information sharing, feedback and performance appraisal should all be done on a collective group basis rather than with individuals. Similarly, peer-to-peer appraisal and information feedback will generally not work because of the perceived need by Chinese people to be very positive about in-group members and very negative about out-group members; making objectiveness virtually impossible.

Fang T. (2006) tells us that while Chinese negotiating styles are complex, they are not unfathomable. He briefly describes the Taoist principles of yin yang – the paired nature of everything existing in the universe. Please see Fig 2.5

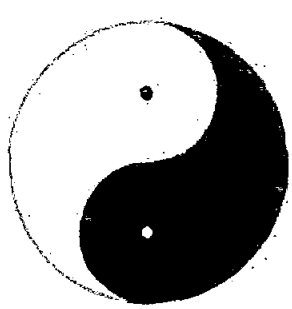

Fig 2.5 – Yin Yang

The black dot in the white and the white dot in the black represent the belief that there is never either absolute white or absolute black. There is always a little bit of the opposite in each part. The two parts depend on each other. The two parts have to be taken together and embrace paradox, change and contradiction.

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Chinese people will follow different teachings and behave in different ways depending on the circumstances. The Chinese person will be interested in stratagems which get the results he wants without having to force the other person into a bad or losing position. These are the application of centuries of wisdom in using indirect skills of combat and behaviour.

Newell S. (1999) tells us that paradoxes form a key part of Chinese relationships and that Chinese people will spend time in relationship-building to discover and manage these paradoxes. They, unlike Western managers, will not necessarily strive to find the' one best solution' in the circumstances, but will seek to better know the people in the situation first before arriving at a solution.

Kumar R. & Worm, V. (2003) discuss the differences in attitude towards time between European and Chinese managers. They tell us that Chinese people need to spend time at the outset to get information and gain an understanding of the other person. Chinese people may feel that the more time spent overall in reaching agreement the better the agreement will be in the end. Europeans on the other hand see much time as simply wasted on trivialities and irrelevancies. Europeans are continuously looking for ways to short-circuit the process and cut down the long time elements.

While Europeans can be quite flexible until the point where agreement is reached, it generally ends then. On the other hand Chinese people see the need for ongoing flexibility and will often look for more flexibility after agreement is reached. Verbal commitments from a Chinese person are far more important than written ones. The Chinese person will feel houour-bound to fulfill any commitments or obligations that have been made.

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Liu S. & Vince R. (1999) tell us that Chinese managers display the following patterns of behaviour in joint-ventures:-

- dependency on higher authorities in decision making;
- reluctance to assume responsibility;
- non-risk taking; and
- poor communication across boundaries.

Littrell R.F. (2002) in his study of Chinese managers found that after a period of greater personal and professional empowerment under Western styles of management, many Chinese managers prefer to revert to the paternalistic model. They find being given direction and told what to do within traditional Chinese management structures is more comfortable for them. They need to display less initiative, and find that they are not responsible for decisions made elsewhere. In fact, a more senior manager who grants his subordinates more freedom in decision-making may be seen as attempting to get away from doing their own job. Once we move away from Western societies the tools used to determine management effectiveness, such as teamwork and leadership skills, are very difficult to apply with any significant degree of accuracy.

Sven C. Voelpel S.C. & Zheng H. (2005) found in their research of Siemens ShareNet in China that language was a major barrier to communications, since the company's operating language is English. People in middle and upper levels of Chinese management usually have fairly good English language skills – but these need to be improved with practice. To help overcome this problem the authors suggest that Siemens introduce a special section to foster the use of the Chinese (Mandarin) language to stimulate participation. They also realised that as incentives were withdrawn Chinese employees tended to reduce their willingness to share information. This should also help to reduce the very high levels of staff turnover which is a serious problem for Siemens in China. They

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also had to deal with the issues of in-group/out-group, lack of willingness to share information generally, and reluctance to 'lose face' by participating in the system.

O'Keeffe H. & O'Keeffe W.M. (1997) explain that in Chinese culture the person per se is not important – but their role in the organisation is. Chinese people tend to be passive and polite in their dealings with non-Chinese people, such as Westerners, on a daily basis. They will not raise important issues. If the issue is sufficiently important they expect that the Westerner will be the one to raise it – as otherwise the Chinese person may cause unnecessary disharmony. This can cause serious communications problems between Chinese and Western people – as both sides see the communication process very differently. Westerners expect direct and open communication and to be given all the information they feel they need to make the correct decisions. Chinese people see this sort of directness as unnecessary and rude and capable of causing people to lose face. They believe that these things are best left unsaid in the interests of harmony. Westerners may misinterpret this as deliberate and devious withholding of crucial information. The situation is fraught for both groups. The Chinese person will expect the Westerner to understand the situation anyway and to take the initiative – avoiding loss of face later on for the Chinese person. If the Westerner does not correctly interpret what is really going on and take necessary actions the Chinese person may later feel that the Westerner has deliberately not taken the right action just to put the Chinese person in a bad position and hold them back. The Chinese person who sees the Westerner taking initiative and making decisions may see that person as acting egotistically and arrogantly and resent this 'individualistic' approach, which disrupts the harmony of the status quo.

The authors tell us that Chinese people will strictly adhere to formal lines of authority and communication and will not change over from vertical to horizontal communication to help to resolve a problem for example. Westerners become

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frustrated with Chinese colleagues who come to them continuously with what they see as time-wasting, trivial problems. The Chinese in turn get frustrated with these Westerners who will not respect authority and give them the clear instructions and support they feel they need to do their jobs. Any resulting mistakes will cause the Chinese to lose face.

The authors tell us that Chinese people accept all information given to them without any critical analysis. They say that often Chinese people are unable to tell which information is relevant or important. Chinese people tend to interpret information in the context of the past and their own experiences. Westerners tend to interpret information in its own right and in the context of the here-and-now, especially where decisions have to be made based on the information. The Chinese person may take a pragmatic approach that no matter how much data and information one has it is never possible to have all the information needed to make complete decisions and that there is no real point therefore in systematically analysing information. Westerners will see information as necessary to predict the future and help make good decisions. Chinese people see this as Western arrogance – for who can predict the future?

Chow I.H.S. (2004) tells us that familism plays a crucial role in staffing in Chinese organisations. It is common for family members to be appointed to crucial position. Job descriptions are deliberately kept vague to give managers a great deal of personal flexibility in recruiting. References from other employers play a key part in recruitment. Less emphasis is placed on ability than on loyalty and the right attitude to the company. With a shortage in management skills, companies provide training in this area – but mainly in technical aspects of the job.

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SECTION 3

HYPOTHESIS / RESEARCH QUESTION

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3.1 The background:-

It appears from the literature review that the education system is China is significantly different from the systems in western countries such as Ireland. The underlying philosophies and historical development of the Chinese education system are reflected in teaching and learning theories and practices. The fact that successive forms of government over many centuries have seen and used education as a tool for the social development of China also has a significant bearing on how Chinese people are taught.

Teaching and learning takes place in any society within the context of the values and philosophies of that society. Confucian, Toaist and Daoist philosophies and teachings have been central to many behaviours and practices in Chinese society generally and within the education system. They continue to be very influential, despite China's rapid movement toward economic development as part of its 'open door' policies. As part of this process education and training are promoted as key factors in the planned economic development of China.

Deep-rooted understandings and inter-personal relationships are very important in China. From a practical point of view, the relationship between student and teacher results in teacher-centred education and maintenance of discipline. The process of transferring knowledge from teacher to student follows ancient patterns of behaviour and does not readily distinguish between knowledge transfer and student capability and performance. Students may be motivated by short-term objectives, such as passing examinations, to the detriment of longer-term understanding and application of knowledge. Logical thinking and reproduction of large volumes of information are characteristic outputs of the Chinese education system, accompanied by processes of repetition, memorisation and apparently passive learning.

Developing creative thinking skills, so-called 'soft' or people-management abilities, and strategic management capacity are all challenges facing Chinese

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people in the exposed global marketplace following China's joining the World Trade Organisation (WTO) a few years ago. Models of organisation development, including education management, follow the underlying philosophies of filial piety and respect for hierarchy, where most value is placed on loyalty, respect, and face work.

The Chinese learner is conditioned by these approaches. Education management is also conditioned by them. The education service provider from a western country needs to be aware of these crucial factors, and to be able to accommodate them and adapt to them.

3.2 The research question:-

Arising from the above discussion the principal research question is how Chinese people learn and how western providers of e-learning need to tailor their programmes and materials to suit Chinese learners.

This overall question can be broken down into the following ones:-

(A) How do Chinese people learn?
(B) How do these learning styles differ from western ones?
(C) What approaches do western education providers need to adopt for training and education with Chinese learners?
(D) What additional approaches do western educators need to adopt for e-leaning with Chinese learners?

The hypothesis therefore is that:-

'Chinese learners need e-learning which is developed to meet their culture and learning styles".

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SECTION 4

RESEARCH METHODS

4 RESEARCH METHODS

4.1 Introduction:-

Three separate but interwoven research techniques were used to help to test the hypothesis in this research project. These were:-

(1) 4-page questionnaire covering a range of learning and technical topics;

(2) Series of interviews with individuals representing a cross-section of organisations dealing with Chinese people and Chinese people, in both China and Ireland; and

(3) an experiment with two groups of Chinese learners.

4.2 The questionnaire:-

Following review of the literature I prepared a list of possible topics to be included in the questionnaire. This list is contained in Table 4.1

The topics are related to learning and teaching issues generally and are grouped into the following areas:-

(A) Teaching and learning styles generally;
(B) The student's preferred learning styles;
(C) Feedback and assessment;
(D) Groupwork;
(E) Support; and
(F) Participation

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The list was given to two teachers of Chinese students as well as two Chinese students. Based on their feedback various amendments were made and the list of topics was shortened considerably.

A number of specific topics related to e-learning techniques were also added.

The draft questionnaire was then given to two people to review – Mr Donal McAlister, Carlow IT who divides his time between Ireland and China working on education services for Chinese students: and Ms Dee Doyle, Dublin City University, a well-known expert on teaching Chinese students in Ireland.

This draft questionnaire is reproduced in Appendix 1

Various changes were made to the questionnaire based on their feedback.

The questionnaire was then produced in bi-lingual format (English and Mandarin Chinese languages) and given to the Sun Li and Professor Huo Xiuying at Tsinghua University, Beijing as well as to Mr Mike Reid at Waterford IT. No negative comments were received from either institution and no suggestions were made for any further modifications. The questionnaire was then piloted at Waterford IT and in Beijing, with the assistance of Ms Phyllis Wang, teacher and translator there.

37 responses were received in this pilot phase. I did an initial analysis of these and presented the findings at the National College of Ireland in March 2006.

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TOPIC	a	b	c	d
TEACHING AND LEARNING STYLES:-				
There is a difference in teaching styles between China and the West				
Chinese teachers prefer to give detailed lectures and notes				
The teacher should be able to know everything about the topic				
Teachers should give complete notes and handouts with lectures				
Everything should be regulated and predictable				
The teacher should set everything out for students – such as timetables				
MY LEARNING STYLE:-				
I prefer to get detailed lectures and notes from the teacher				
I find it difficult to take down notes from teachers in Western classroom				
I prefer the teacher to give me all the information I need to learn				
I prefer to find out some of the information for myself				
I like it when I have to give a quick answer to the teacher				
I like it when I have time to think about an answer for the teacher				
I learn best when I can read the lectures over and over in my own time				
I prefer to have as much control myself over what and when I learn				
I believe that it is important to fully understand what I have learned				
I prefer it when there is no uncertainty or ambiguity				
I like to learn by exploring a topic on my own				
I like to learn by exploring a topic with other learners				
I prefer when everything is clear and logical and I don't have to draw my own conclusions				
I like to learn by repetition				
I like to come up with new and original ideas				
I believe learning is important in improving my status				
I like to solve problems because it gives me new experiences				
How well we do depends on how hard we apply ourselves				
How well we do depends on our intelligence and abilities				
I don't like to take the risk of guessing at a possible solution				

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I prefer the teacher to repeat the topic until I understand it				
I prefer to learn by rote				
I learn better if materials include images, photographs and short videos as well as text				
FEEDBACK AND ASSESSMENT:-				
In China students are not asked to do assignments				
I prefer not to do assignments				
The most important thing is to remember the topic to pass the examination				
I learn best if my teacher constantly gives me feedback and encouragement				
I learn best if my teacher constantly corrects me and shows me where I am going wrong				
I like assessments in the form of multiple-choice questions				
I like assessments in the form of case studies				
I like assessments in the form of research projects				
I like assessments in the form of collaborative projects with other students				
It is important to cite references for materials we use in our reports				
It is important that we be able to justify our arguments and opinions				
It is important to have practical exercises to demonstrate what we know				
I need specific instructions to ensure I can complete an assignment				
I prefer to be able to apply what I have learned outside the classroom				
GROUPWORK:-				
I feel I have more control if I work on my own				
In China students are not asked to work in groups				
I prefer not to work in a group				
I like working in a group if I it is clear beforehand what we must achieve				
It is important to conform to the views of the group				
It is important to understand who the important people in the group are				
SUPPORT:-				
If I am having some difficulties I prefer to go to a family member first for help				
If I am having some difficulties I prefer to go to a teacher first for help				
The teacher should be able to offer me help if I need it				

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I should be able to ask the teacher for help if I need it				
I like to get support from the teacher outside the classroom				
I Like to get support from my fellow students outside the classroom				
It is important that I have good English language skills				
It is important that the teacher speaks in a way that is easy to understand				
PARTICIPATION:-				
It is disrespectful to ask the teacher questions in the classroom				
In China students are not encouraged to ask questions in class				
Not asking questions in class is a good thing				
I feel embarrassed when I ask a question that other people think is stupid				

Table 4.1 – Initial List of Possible Topics for Questionnaire

The final questionnaire used is presented in both English and Mandarin Chinese languages simultaneously. The person completing the questionnaire is given the option of completing it manually or going online to the supplied link (Note- discontinued at time of writing). The questionnaire is divided into three sections:-

(1) personal data – teacher/student, Chinese Y/N

(2) General statements – related to pedagogical, learning and teaching issues

(3) e-learning technical statements.

Space is also provided for any additional comments – either pedagogical or technical. Statements are presented to the person who is asked to select the option from the supplied answers which most closely matches their own view.

The given options are:-

"Fully Agree, "Partially Disagree", "Mainly Disagree" and "Fully Disagree".

The person can also opt not to respond to the statement at all. (This is treated in the analysis as a 'Non Answer" - NA).

The questionnaire is reproduced in the following pages.

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Chinese students - survey

关于中国学生的调查

Improving services for Chinese students

提高对于中国学生的服务

Thank you for your help. The feedback from this survey with Chinese students and their teachers will help in the design of suitable learning materials. The survey data will help in particular in developing online learning programs and supports.

The survey consists of a number of statements. Please select the option for each statement which most closely matches your view. All information is confidential and anonymous. No personal information is gathered in the survey and all the surveys are aggregated for analysis. It takes 15 minutes to complete.

Eddie Collins-Hughes, MSc Researcher.

感谢您的帮助。对于中国学生及他们老师的调查反馈有利于帮助设计合适的教学材料。此项调查也非常有利于发展网上教学及支持。

此项调查包括以下几项内容。请根据您的情况选择最合适的选项。所有信息保密匿名。不包含个人信息，调查结果会最终收归一起，进行分析。完成此问答纸大约所需15分钟。Eddie Collins-Hughes

THIS SURVEY IS EASIER TO COMPLETE ONLINE BY CLICKING ON THE FOLLOWING WEB LINK - http://www.ridgecrestsurveys.com/sur.php?usn=hc6071l&pwd=332597a394ef

Student or Teacher ?

您是学生还是老师?

Please indicate whether you are a student or a teacher.

Student ☐ 请表明您是学生还是老师学生

Teacher ☐

Are you Chinese Yes ☐ 是的 No ☐ 不是 您是中国人吗?

General statements

一般陈述

This section deals with education and learning in general. Please select the option for each

此项问答是有关教育及学习的一般问题。请选择您满意的选项。

The Chinese education system is different from other countries, such as Ireland.

中国教育系统与其他国家有区别，比如爱尔兰。

Fully Agree ☐ 完全同意 Partially Disagree ☐ 部分同意 Mainly Disagree ☐ 大部分不同意 Fully Disagree ☐ 完全不同意

The teacher's role is more important in the classroom in China.

在中国，老师在教室的角色更重要

Fully Agree ☐ 完全同意 Partially Disagree ☐ 部分同意 Mainly Disagree ☐ 大部分不同意 Fully Disagree ☐ 完全不同意

I prefer when there is more structure and control by the teacher in the classroom.

我喜欢在教室里有更多的教学结构，老师有更多的控制与管理

Fully Agree ☐ 完全同意 Partially Disagree ☐ 部分同意 Mainly Disagree ☐ 大部分不同意 Fully Disagree ☐ 完全不同意

I prefer when I am given complete notes and materials.

我喜欢有更多现成的笔记及资料

Fully Agree ☐ 完全同意 Partially Disagree ☐ 部分同意 Mainly Disagree ☐ 大部分不同意 Fully Disagree ☐ 完全不同意

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It is easier to answer questions when given time to think before answering. 回答问题前有更多的时间去想，更容易回答问题

Fully Agree ☐ 完全同意 Partially Disagree ☐ 部分同意 Mainly Disagree ☐ 大部分不同意 Fully Disagree ☐ 完全不同意

Repeating things makes it easier to remember them. 反复重复更容易记住

Fully Agree ☐ 完全同意 Partially Disagree ☐ 部分同意 Mainly Disagree ☐ 大部分不同意 Fully Disagree ☐ 完全不同意

It is easier to learn if everything is fully explained. 如果一切都解释很完整的话，更容易去学

Fully Agree ☐ 完全同意 Partially Disagree ☐ 部分同意 Mainly Disagree ☐ 大部分不同意 Fully Disagree ☐ 完全不同意

Learning is better if learners have to research some things for themselves. 如果学习者自己做一些调查的话，学起来更容易

Fully Agree ☐ 完全同意 Partially Disagree ☐ 部分同意 Mainly Disagree ☐ 大部分不同意 Fully Disagree ☐ 完全不同意

Project work can involve too much guesswork – we prefer less guesswork 做项目研究会产生很多疑虑-我们喜欢少一些疑虑

Fully Agree ☐ 完全同意 Partially Disagree ☐ 部分同意 Mainly Disagree ☐ 大部分不同意 Fully Disagree ☐ 完全不同意

Sharing opinions and views between learners helps learning. 学习者之间互相交流学习经验有助于学习

Fully Agree ☐ 完全同意 Partially Disagree ☐ 部分同意 Mainly Disagree ☐ 大部分不同意 Fully Disagree ☐ 完全不同意

Support from fellow learners helps make it easier to learn. 同学的支持使学习变得更容易

Fully Agree ☐ 完全同意 Partially Disagree ☐ 部分同意 Mainly Disagree ☐ 大部分不同意 Fully Disagree ☐ 完全不同意

Groupwork can mean that it is more difficult to get credit for your own work. 评分学习小组使得您自己得高分的机率变低

Fully Agree ☐ 完全同意 Partially Disagree ☐ 部分同意 Mainly Disagree ☐ 大部分不同意 Fully Disagree ☐ 完全不同意

Support outside class time is very helpful. 课外支持很有帮助

Fully Agree ☐ 完全同意 Partially Disagree ☐ 部分同意 Mainly Disagree ☐ 大部分不同意 Fully Disagree ☐ 完全不同意

The most important issue is passing the examination(s). 通过考试最重要

Fully Agree ☐ 完全同意 Partially Disagree ☐ 部分同意 Mainly Disagree ☐ 大部分不同意 Fully Disagree ☐ 完全不同意

Learners need to be told how they are progressing. 学习者需要知道他们的学习进展状况

Fully Agree ☐ 完全同意 Partially Disagree ☐ 部分同意 Mainly Disagree ☐ 大部分不同意 Fully Disagree ☐ 完全不同意

Continuous assessment helps to keep learners motivated. 经常不断的小考使得学习者更有动力

Fully Agree ☐ 完全同意 Partially Disagree ☐ 部分同意 Mainly Disagree ☐ 大部分不同意 Fully Disagree ☐ 完全不同意

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Please use this area if you would like to add any other comments of your own.

如果您有任何补充想法，请利用以下空白处

The Internet in supporting learning

网络支持教学

This section deals with some aspects of online learning and support using the Internet.

此项有关网络教学及支持

Please select the option for each statement which most closely matches your view.

请选择您满意的选项

Using a search engine – such as Google – helps research and learning

利用搜索引擎，如 Google，帮助搜索及学习

Fully Agree ☐ 完全同意 Partially Disagree ☐ 部分同意 Mainly Disagree ☐ 大部分不同意 Fully Disagree ☐ 完全不同意

Downloading class notes and lectures before a class could help to improve learning.

上课前下载课堂笔记有利于提高学习

Fully Agree ☐ 完全同意 Partially Disagree ☐ 部分同意 Mainly Disagree ☐ 大部分不同意 Fully Disagree ☐ 完全不同意

Downloading class notes and lectures after a class could help to improve learning.

课后下载课堂笔记有利于提高学习

Fully Agree ☐ 完全同意 Partially Disagree ☐ 部分同意 Mainly Disagree ☐ 大部分不同意 Fully Disagree ☐ 完全不同意

Playing computer games could help to improve learning.

玩电脑游戏有利于提高学习

Fully Agree ☐ 完全同意 Partially Disagree ☐ 部分同意 Mainly Disagree ☐ 大部分不同意 Fully Disagree ☐ 完全不同意

Recorded lectures which can be downloaded to a portable player – such as an iPod – could help to improve learning.

将课堂内容录制入随身听，如iPod，能够有利于提高学习

Fully Agree ☐ 完全同意 Partially Disagree ☐ 部分同意 Mainly Disagree ☐ 大部分不同意 Fully Disagree ☐ 完全不同意

Recorded lectures - including video - which can be downloaded to a portable player – such as an iPod – could help to improve learning.

录像课堂内容及情景，如 iPod，能够有利于提高学习

Fully Agree ☐ 完全同意 Partially Disagree ☐ 部分同意 Mainly Disagree ☐ 大部分不同意 Fully Disagree ☐ 完全不同意

Online text, video and animation could help to improve learning.

网上教科书，录像及动画能够有利于提高学习

Fully Agree ☐ 完全同意 Partially Disagree ☐ 部分同意 Mainly Disagree ☐ 大部分不同意 Fully Disagree ☐ 完全不同意

Exchanging ideas with fellow learners online could help to improve learning.

与其它学习者在网上进行交流有利于提高学习

Fully Agree ☐ 完全同意 Partially Disagree ☐ 部分同意 Mainly Disagree ☐ 大部分不同意 Fully Disagree ☐ 完全不同意

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Having access to learning materials online for 24 hours a day allows flexible learning.
网上24小时的教学材料使得学习更加灵活

Fully Agree ☐ 完全同意 Partially Disagree ☐ 部分同意 Mainly Disagree ☐ 大部分不同意 Fully Disagree ☐ 完全不同意

Online help to support classroom work could make it easier to get help when needed.
网上帮助更有利于我们做课堂作业

Fully Agree ☐ 完全同意 Partially Disagree ☐ 部分同意 Mainly Disagree ☐ 大部分不同意 Fully Disagree ☐ 完全不同意

Online learning can help the learner to learn at their own pace.
网上教学可以使学习者在任何地方都能够学习

Fully Agree ☐ 完全同意 Partially Disagree ☐ 部分同意 Mainly Disagree ☐ 大部分不同意 Fully Disagree ☐ 完全不同意

Online assessment allows the learner to get feedback on their progress.
网上测试使得学习者及时得到学习进展反馈

Fully Agree ☐ 完全同意 Partially Disagree ☐ 部分同意 Mainly Disagree ☐ 大部分不同意 Fully Disagree ☐ 完全不同意

Online learning is structured and helps with steady progress.
网上教学有结构，有利于学习进展稳定化

Fully Agree ☐ 完全同意 Partially Disagree ☐ 部分同意 Mainly Disagree ☐ 大部分不同意 Fully Disagree ☐ 完全不同意

Online learning allows the learner to see what people are doing in other countries
网上教学使得学习者有机会了解其它国家的人民

Fully Agree ☐ 完全同意 Partially Disagree ☐ 部分同意 Mainly Disagree ☐ 大部分不同意 Fully Disagree ☐ 完全不同意

Online learning allows the learner to make mistakes in private, avoiding embarrassment
网上教学可以避免当众出丑，犯错误的机会

Fully Agree ☐ 完全同意 Partially Disagree ☐ 部分同意 Mainly Disagree ☐ 大部分不同意 Fully Disagree ☐ 完全不同意

Online learning helps the learner to keep up to date with new developments.
网上教学可以帮助学习者及时适应新的发展情况

Fully Agree ☐ 完全同意 Partially Disagree ☐ 部分同意 Mainly Disagree ☐ 大部分不同意 Fully Disagree ☐ 完全不同意

Online learning requires self-discipline to work well.
网上教学要求自觉性很好

Fully Agree ☐ 完全同意 Partially Disagree ☐ 部分同意 Mainly Disagree ☐ 大部分不同意 Fully Disagree ☐ 完全不同意

Please use this area is you would like to add any other comments of your own.
如果您有其它补充想法的话，请利用以下空白处

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4.3 Participants and the selection process:-

The question as to how to select people to complete the questionnaire had to be considered at an early stage. Initial investigations indicated that the best approach was to find out whom and what organisations are involved in education services with Chinese people in Ireland, and also who from Ireland is involved in education of Chinese people in China. Public information was available through the universities, IT colleges and organisations working with Irish educational institutions, such as English language schools. Enterprise Ireland and the International Education Board of Ireland were very helpful in providing details of various people and organisation from Ireland doing business generally with China and providing education services in particular.

I canvassed these organisations and a number agreed to participate in the project.

I established contact with Tsinghua University in Beijing through the good offices of the International Education Board of Ireland.

I established my own contacts with Stanford University in California, USA.

I travelled to Beijing and established a working arrangement with Tsinghua University. I also made contact with Ms Phyllis Wang while I was there – who arranged further contacts with a private college for English language training.

I timed my visit to Beijing to coincide with an Official Visit to China by Ms Mary Hanafin, T.D., Minister for Education and Science. This enabled me to make some additional contacts with Irish education providers who were in China at the time. They agreed to participate in the project.

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This process of canvassing and information gathering allowed me to put together a cross section of people and organisations who would participate in the various elements of the research. The process of its nature concentrated on relevant people, but ensured a randomization of participants, as well as a good spread across service types and experiences.

The process of getting Chinese learners involved was very educational and rewarding. Teachers – both in Ireland and China were very good at facilitating their involvement. My own part-time teaching work and my business activities also brought me in contact with Chinese people – both students and people involved in commerce.

A feature of those who participated in this project was their friendliness, very active involvement and ongoing goodwill and encouragement. All commitments made to me were honoured – something which I found particularly heartening. My experience of Beijing and of the people I met there and have been dealing with since has been uplifting and very encouraging.

4.4 Distribution of the questionnaire:

The questionnaire was distributed in the following ways:-

(A) online link to a service provided by Ridgecrest Surveys;

(B) online link to a special website I set up for this project

(http://www.wme-learn.com)

(C) by hand to the Swan Training Institute and Abbey College, both in Dublin;

(D) Both Carlow IT and the National College of Ireland distributed it to their Chinese students by letter or email or both;

(E) Direct email to a number of individuals;

(F) Ms Phyllis Wang distributed it and the online link details to her students in Beijing;

(G) Ms Sun Li distributed it to her colleagues at Tsinghua University; and

(H) Individual Chinese students told other Chinese students about the project and had them complete the questionnaire.

111 questionnaires were returned either as hard copies, emailed responses or reports from Ridgecrest Surveys.

Questionnaire results are contained in Section 5 of this report.

4.5 The interviews:-

The process of identifying people to complete the questionnaires also identified people who would be prepared to do more in-depth one-to-one interviews. Generally those who helped with the questionnaire were willing to be interviewed. A number of people who were not asked to complete the questionnaire did give lengthy interviews and offered to do subsequent ones.

36 people were interviewed during the course of this research. Most of the interviews were done on a face-to-face basis, with the others done over the telephone. The interviewees represent a similar cross-section to that for the questionnaires – ensuring a good balance of views from varying perspectives.

While the interviews were 'tagged' to the questions to the questionnaire interviewees were encouraged to speak freely. People used the facility to express their own opinions and to offer suggestions and put forward their own theories.

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The Irish people interviewed were very interested in Chinese people and had consciously involved themselves with them. They were anxious to do their best to help their Chinese students and clients/customers. They were intrigued by many aspects of the Chinese character and many saw themselves as being in a steep learning curve. The results of the interviews are contained in Section 5 – largely in the form of quotations, accompanied by an overview of key issues.

Chinese people interviewed were very positive towards Ireland generally and frequently commented on the similarities between Chinese and Irish people who they see as friendly and welcoming.

Some other people who were unavailable for interview submitted papers and presentations they had made earlier on topics they considered relevant.

4.6 The experiment:-

The purpose of the experiment is to provide an additional tool to help to test the hypothesis.

Fig 4.1 helps the reader to visualise the issues to be considered and the practical solutions proposed to address them.

Fig 4.1 – Addressing Key Factors

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Two groups of Chinese students took part in the initial experiment.

(a) The 'Belbin' group:-

The first group of Chinese students, (whom we refer to as the 'Belbin' group), was asked to look at a presentation online on a model of teamwork developed by the British Scientist, Dr Meredith Belbin. This Belbin model of teamwork is well-known in management education in western countries, and is also widely used by management consultants with their clients.

The presentation was in the form of a PDF file – with 15 slides. As with any PDF file online, the students could download it to their computers for offline use. However, they were asked NOT TO DO THIS BEFOREHAND – as the research indicates that Chinese students prefer to download handouts and learning materials before they need to use them. It was a requirement of the experiment that students were not to have this option available to them.

In addition an MP3 narration to accompany the PDF was provided online. This was in the English language only. Again, this could be played online and was also downloaded to the person's computer or portable music player for offline use. As with the PDF file, the students could only access and download these files after their viewed the PDF for the first time.

The presentation was also available as an online Flash movie – the slides being accompanied by the English language narration.

The group was asked to complete an online feedback form.

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Note:- the word 'group' is something of a misnomer. Each Chinese student was assigned the experimental work as an individual. Teachers from different educational institutions agreed to give the instructions to their Chinese students and it was left to the students to complete the experiments themselves in their own time. The word 'group' therefore needs to be interpreted in this context.

This group was not aware that other Chinese students were being asked to participate in another part of the experiment.

(b) The 'Chinese Teamwork' Group:-

The second group of Chinese students, (whom we refer to as the 'Chinese Teamwork' group), was asked to look at a presentation online on a model of teamwork based on Chinese management practices. This model of teamwork is not well-known in management education in western countries

The presentation was in the form of a PDF file – with 15 slides. As with any PDF file online, the students could download it to their computers for offline use. However, they were told that they COULD DO THIS BEFOREHAND – as the research indicates that Chinese students prefer to download handouts and learning materials before they need to use them. It was a requirement of the experiment that students were to have this option available to them.

In addition, the PDF was bi-lingual – English and Mandarin Chinese languages were supplied simultaneously.

In addition two MP3 narration files to accompany the PDF were provided online – English and Mandarin Chinese versions. Again, these could be played online and were also downloaded to the person's computer or portable music player for

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offline use. As with the PDF file, the students could access and download these files before their viewed the PDF for the first time.

The presentation was also available as two online Flash movies – the slides being accompanied by the English language narration or a Mandarin Chinese narration.

The group was asked to complete and online feedback form.

Note:- the same definitional issue as for the Belbin group applied,

This group was aware of the Belbin presentation and had full access to it.

(c) Moodle to manager the experiment:

The experiment was managed through a section of the special website for this research project dedicated to Moodle (http://www.wme-learn.com/wmemoodle). While Moddle has several language options – including English and Mandarin Chinese, unfortunately it does not have a facility to run both simultaneously at the time of writing. Given the resource limitations it was not possible to provide two complete Moodle systems running side by side – one in English and one in Mandarin Chinese.

Moddle allowed the experiment to be managed by:-

(1) providing a registration system for students (although to encourage anonymous participation students were permitted to log in as guests)

(2) presenting 'original' western-type materials and modified versions tailored to the needs of Chinese students;

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(3) allowing the 'Chinese teamwork' group to access both types of materials if they wished;

(4) seamlessly integrating different media types in a user-friendly environment;

(5) accommodated nearly all the 10 aspects identified as important for e-learning with Chinese people (as per Fig 4.1)

(6) facilitating instantaneous anonymous feedback using the forms replicated in Fig 4.2 – Belbin and Fig 4.3 – Chinese Teamwork

Appendix 2 contains the instructions on how to carry out both parts of the experiment.

Appendix 3 contains the handouts for both parts of the experiment.

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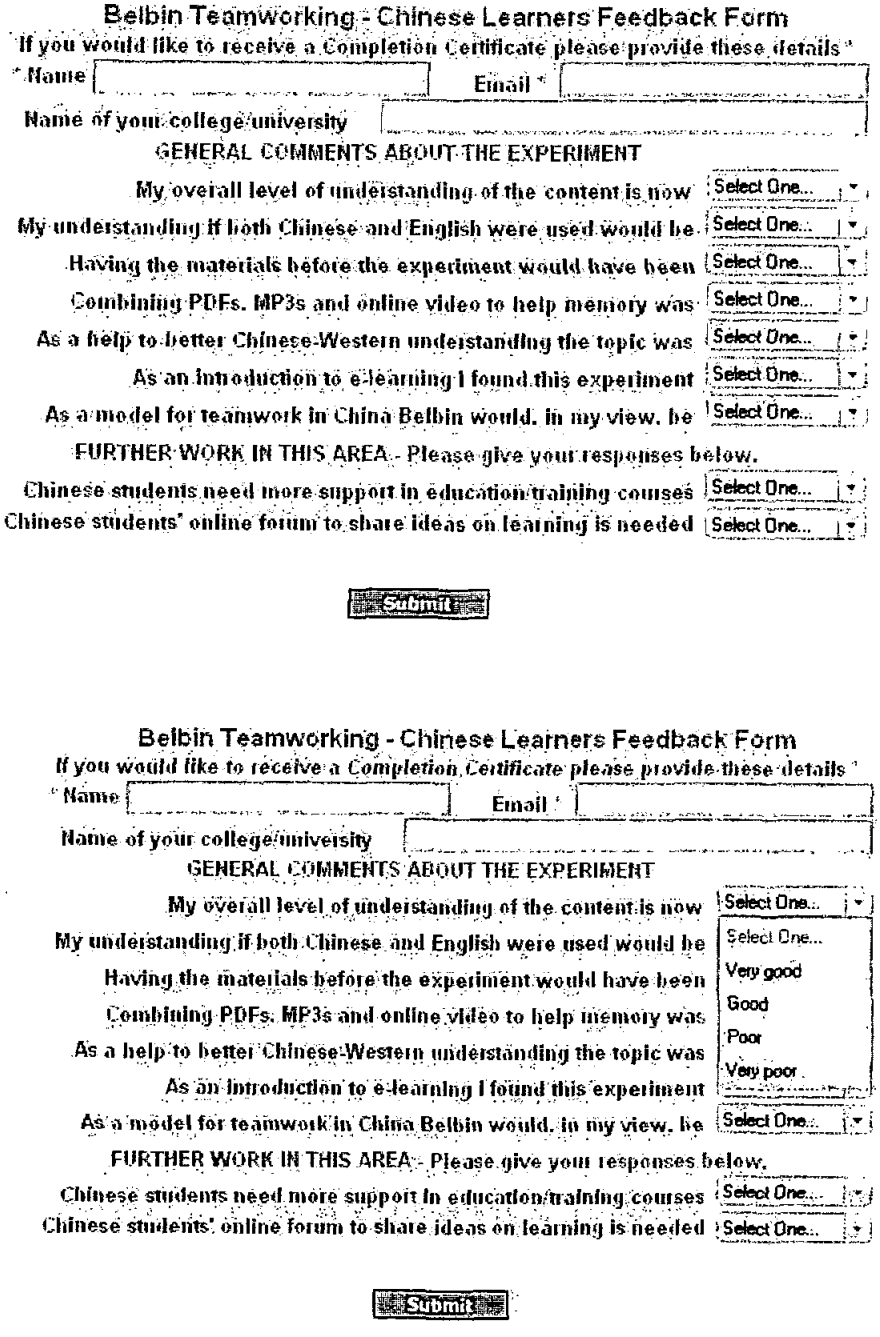

Fig 4.2 – Belbin Group Feedback Form

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Chinese Learners Feedback Form

If you would like to receive a Completion Certificate please provide these details *

* Name Email *

Name of your college/university

GENERAL COMMENTS ABOUT THE EXPERIMENT

My overall level of understanding of the content is now Select One...

Using both Chinese and English to help understanding was Select One...

Having materials available beforehand as an aid to learning was Select One...

Combining PDFs, MP3s and online video to help memory was Select One...

As a help to better Chinese-Western understanding the topic was Select One...

The link between the western and Chinese types of teamwork was Select One...

As a model for teamwork in China Belbin would, in my view, be Select One...

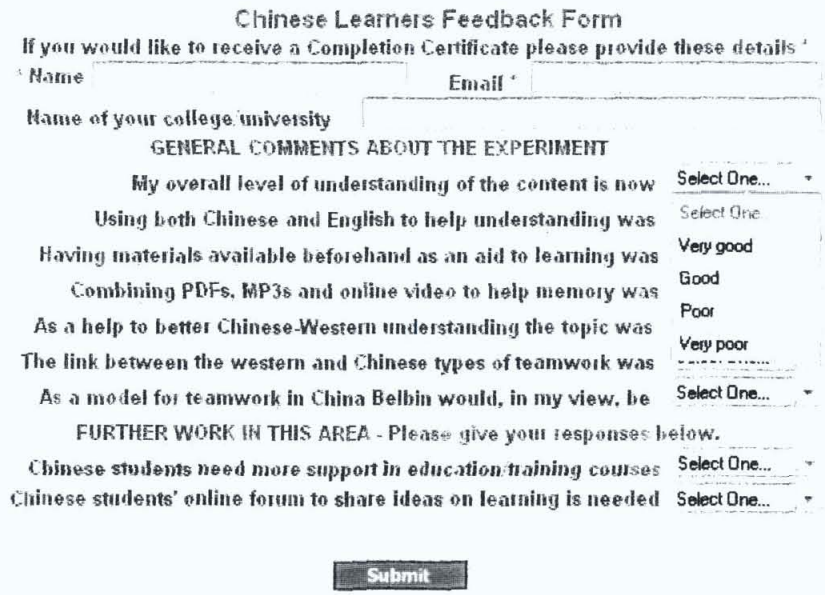
FURTHER WORK IN THIS AREA - Please give your responses below.

Chinese students need more support in education/training courses Select One...

Chinese students' online forum to share ideas on learning is needed Select One...

Submit

NORMA SMURFIT LIBRARY
NATIONAL COLLEGE
OF IRELAND



Chinese Learners Feedback Form

If you would like to receive a Completion Certificate please provide these details *

* Name Email *

Name of your college/university

GENERAL COMMENTS ABOUT THE EXPERIMENT

My overall level of understanding of the content is now Select One...

Using both Chinese and English to help understanding was Select One

Having materials available beforehand as an aid to learning was Very good

Combining PDFs, MP3s and online video to help memory was Good

As a help to better Chinese-Western understanding the topic was Poor

The link between the western and Chinese types of teamwork was Very poor

As a model for teamwork in China Belbin would, in my view, be Select One...

FURTHER WORK IN THIS AREA - Please give your responses below.

Chinese students need more support in education/training courses Select One...

Chinese students' online forum to share ideas on learning is needed Select One...

Submit

Fig 4.3 – Chinese Teamwork Group Feedback Form

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SECTION 5

RESULTS

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5.1 Introduction:-

Results were gathered from the three research methodologies as follows:-

(a) 111 questionnaire results were compiled from the various sources and the data input initially to a special database set up for the project (See Fig 5.1). The data was exported to a spreadsheet to facilitate further analysis and the presentation of results;

(b) 36 people were interviewed and their comments were compiled based on the questionnaire form; and

(c) 11 people did the 'Chinese teamwork' part of the experiment, while 8 did the 'Belbin part. Their feedback was collected online and by telephone interview.

The raw data from the questionnaire is contained in Table 5.1 in this section of the report.

The data from the questionnaire was analysed and a series of results charts are presented in Appendix 5. Some additional charts are presented in this section of the report.

The results of the interviews are presented in this section in the form of quotations.

The results of the experiments have been subjected to statistical analysis. A series of results charts, t-tests, and commentaries are included in this section of the report.

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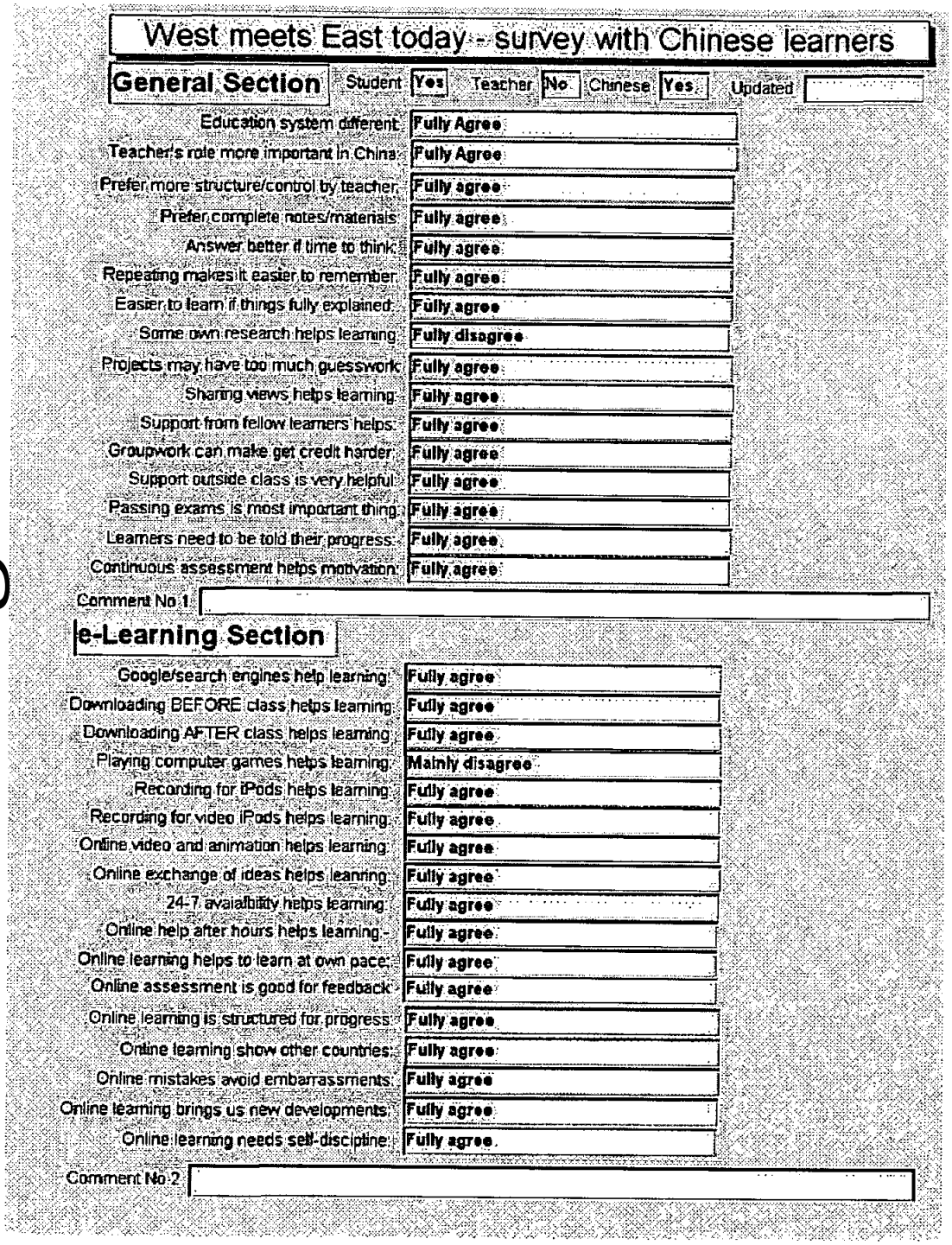

West meets East today - survey with Chinese learners

General Section | Student: Yes | Teacher: No | Chinese: Yes | Updated:

Education system different:	Fully Agree
Teacher's role more important in China:	Fully Agree
Prefer more structure/control by teacher:	Fully agree
Prefer complete notes/materials:	Fully agree
Answer better if time to think:	Fully agree
Repeating makes it easier to remember:	Fully agree
Easier to learn if things fully explained:	Fully agree
Some own research helps learning:	Fully disagree
Projects may have too much guesswork:	Fully agree
Sharing views helps learning:	Fully agree
Support from fellow learners helps:	Fully agree
Groupwork can make get credit harder:	Fully agree
Support outside class is very helpful:	Fully agree
Passing exams is most important thing:	Fully agree
Learners need to be told their progress:	Fully agree
Continuous assessment helps motivation:	Fully agree

Comment No 1:

e-Learning Section

Google/search engines help learning:	Fully agree
Downloading BEFORE class helps learning:	Fully agree
Downloading AFTER class helps learning:	Fully agree
Playing computer games helps learning:	Mainly disagree
Recording for iPods helps learning:	Fully agree
Recording for video iPods helps learning:	Fully agree
Online video and animation helps learning:	Fully agree
Online exchange of ideas helps learning:	Fully agree
24-7 availability helps learning:	Fully agree
Online help after hours helps learning:	Fully agree
Online learning helps to learn at own pace:	Fully agree
Online assessment is good for feedback:	Fully agree
Online learning is structured for progress:	Fully agree
Online learning show other countries:	Fully agree
Online mistakes avoid embarrassments:	Fully agree
Online learning brings us new developments:	Fully agree
Online learning needs self-discipline:	Fully agree

Comment No 2:

Fig 5.1 – Database Input Form

REF	Student True / False	Teacher True/ False	Chinese Person ?	Chinese education system is different from Irish	Teacher's role in c class	I prefer more structure and control by teacher	I prefer when I am given complete notes and materials	It is easier to answer if given time to think	Repeating things makes it easier to learn them	It is easier to learn if things are fully explained	Learning better if student does some own research	Projects can have too much guess-work. I prefer less guesses	Sharing views between learners helps learning	Support from fellow learners makes learning easier	Group-work makes it harder to get credit	Support outside class time is very helpful	Most important issue is passing exams.	Learners need to be told how they are progress-ing	Contin. assess-ment helps to motivate learners
1	T	F	T	FA	FA	FA	FA	FA	FA	FA	FD	FA	FA	FA	FA	FA	FA	FA	FA
2	T	F	T	FA	FA	PD	PD	FA	FA	PD	FA	MD	MD	PD	MD	PD	FD	MD	PD
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REF	Student True / False	Teacher True / False	Chinese Person ?	Chinese education system is different from Irish	Teacher's role in c lass more important in China	I prefer more structure and control by teacher	I prefer when I am given complete notes and materials	It is easier to answer if given time to think	Repeating things makes it easier to learn them	It is easier to learn if things are fully explained	Learning better if student does some work. I prefer less guesses	Projects can have too much guess- own research	Sharing views between learners helps learning	Support from fellow learners makes learning easier	Group- work makes it harder to get credit	Support outside class time is very helpful	Most important issue is passing exams	Learners need to be told how they are progress- ing	Contin assess- ment helps to motivate learners
36	T	F	T	PD	PD	MD	FA	PD	PD	MD	MD	PD	PD	PD	PD	PD	MD	PD	FA
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REF	Student True / False	Teacher True/ False	Chinese Person ?	Chinese education system is different from Irish	Teacher's role in c class more important in China	I prefer more structure and control by teacher	I prefer when I am given complete notes and materials	It is easier to answer if given time to think	Repeating things makes it easier to learn them	It is easier to learn if things are fully explained	Learning better if student does some own research	Projects can have too much guess-work. I prefer less guesses	Sharing views between learners helps learning	Support from fellow learners makes learning easier	Group-work makes it harder to get credit	Support outside class time is very helpful	Most important issue is passing exams	Learners need to be told how they are progress-ing	Contin. assess-ment helps to motivate learners
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	Using a search engine like Google helps learning	Down-loading notes/ lectures before class helps learning	Down-loading notes/ lectures after class helps learning	Playing computer games can help to improve learning	Recorded lectures to iPods can help to improve learning	Recorded lectures/ videos to MP3s can help to improve learning	Online video and animation can help to improve learning	Exchange of ideas online with fellow students can help to improve learning	24hour access to learning materials online can improve learning	Online help to support classwork can make it easier to get help as needed	Online learning can help learners the learner to learn at their own pace	Online assessment can allow the learner to get feedback on progress	Online learning is structured and helps with steady progress	Online learning shows learners what is happening in other countries	Online learning allows private mistakes to be kept up to date with new developments	Online learning helps learners self-discipline to work well
REF																
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25	PD	PD	PD	PD	PD	PD	PD	MD	PD	PD	FA	PD	PD	MD	PD	PD	FA
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33	PD	FA	FA	MD	PD	PD	PD	PD	FA	PD	PD	FA	PD	FA	PD	PD	PD
34	MD	MD	MD	PD	MD	MD	MD	FA	MD	MD	MD	MD	PD	PD	MD	FD	
35	FA	FA	FA	PD	MD	PD	FA	MD	PD	FA	MD	MD	PD	MD	FA	FA	PD

REF	Using a search engine like Google helps learning	Down-loading notes/ lectures before class helps learning	Down-loading notes/ lectures after class helps learning	Playing computer games can help to improve learning	Recorded lectures to iPods can help to improve learning	Recorded lectures/ videos to VIPods can help to improve learning	Online video and animat-ion can help to improve learning	Exchange of ideas online with fellow students can help to improve learning	24-hour access to learning materials online can improve learning	Online help to support classwork can make it easier to get help as needed	Online learning can help learners to learn at their own pace	Online assessment can allow the learner to get feedback on progress	Online learning is structured and helps with steady progress	Online learning shows learners what is happening in other countries	Online learning allows private mistakes avoiding embarrass-ment	Online learning helps learners to keep up to date with new developments	Online learning requires self-discipline to work well
37	FA	FA	FA	FA	FD	FD	FD	FD	FD	FD	FA	FD	FA	FA	FD	FA	FA
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71	FD	FD	FD	MD	MD	FD	FD	FD	FD	FD	FD	FD	FD	FD	FD	FD	FD

REF	Using a search engine like Google helps learning	Down-loading notes/ lectures before class helps learning	Down-loading notes/ lectures after class helps learning	Playing computer games can help to improve learning	Recorded lectures to iPods can help to improve learning	Recorded lectures/ videos to iPods can help to improve learning	Online video and animation can help to improve learning	Exchange of ideas online with fellow students can help to improve learning	24hour access to learning materials online can improve learning	Online help to support classwork can make it easier to get help as needed	Online learning can help learners at their own pace	Online assessment can allow the learner to get feedback on progress	Online learning is structured and helps with steady progress	Online learning shows learners what is happening in other countries	Online learning allows private mistakes & embarrass-ment	Online learning helps learners to keep up to date with new developments	Online learning requires self-discipline to work well
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Table 5.1 – Questionnaire Raw Data

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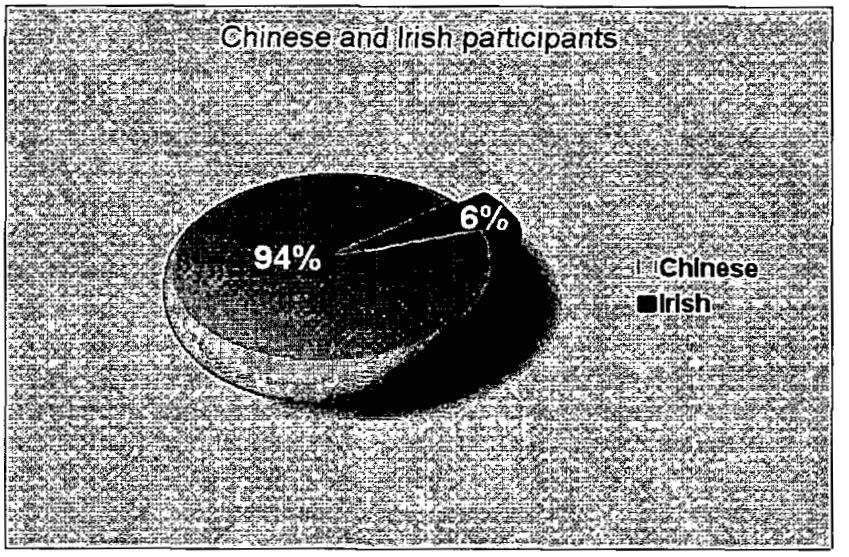
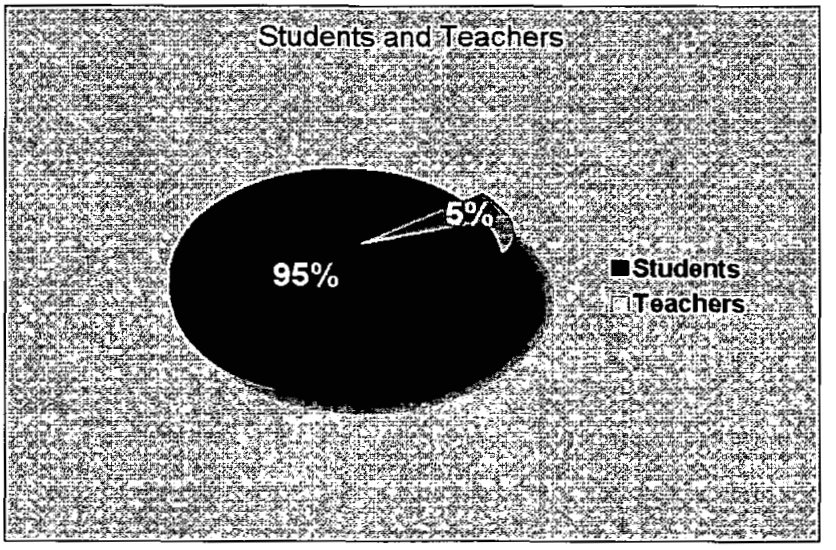
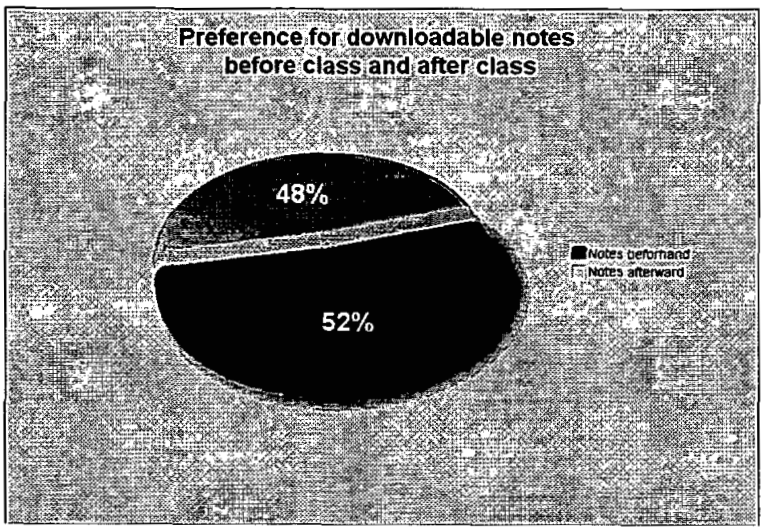
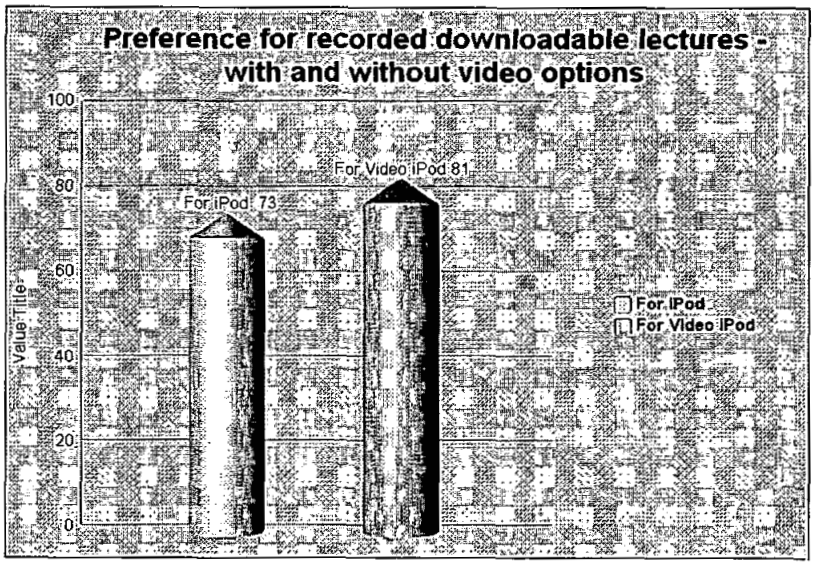
5.2 Questionnaire Results:

Below are some charts prepared from the questionnaire data analysis. (Appendix 5 contains many more charts related to the individual questions).






Preference for downloadable notes before class and after class
48%
52%
Notes beforhand
Notes afterward


Preference for recorded downloadable lectures - with and without video options
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80
60
40
20
0
Value Title
For iPod 73
For Video iPod 81
For iPod
For Video iPod

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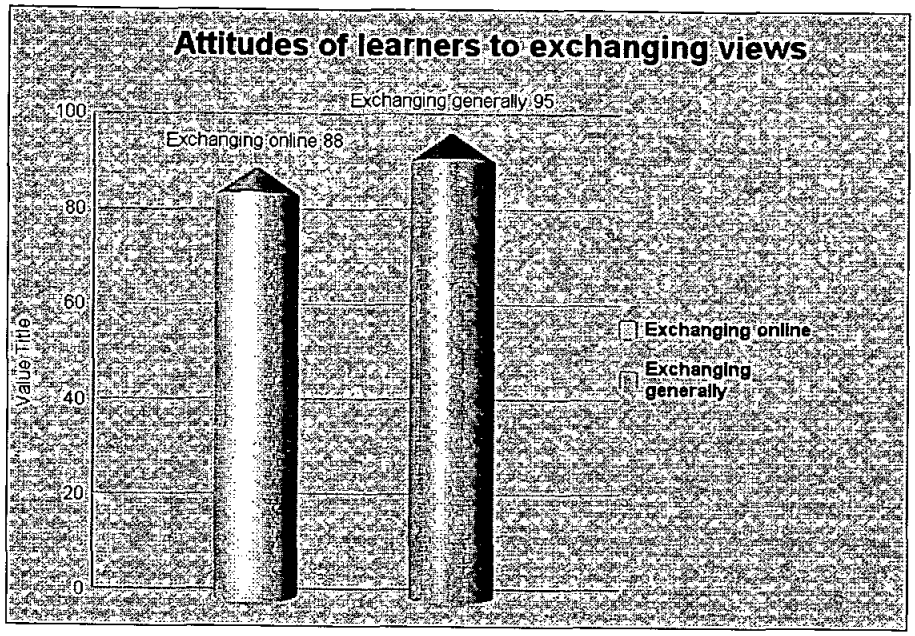

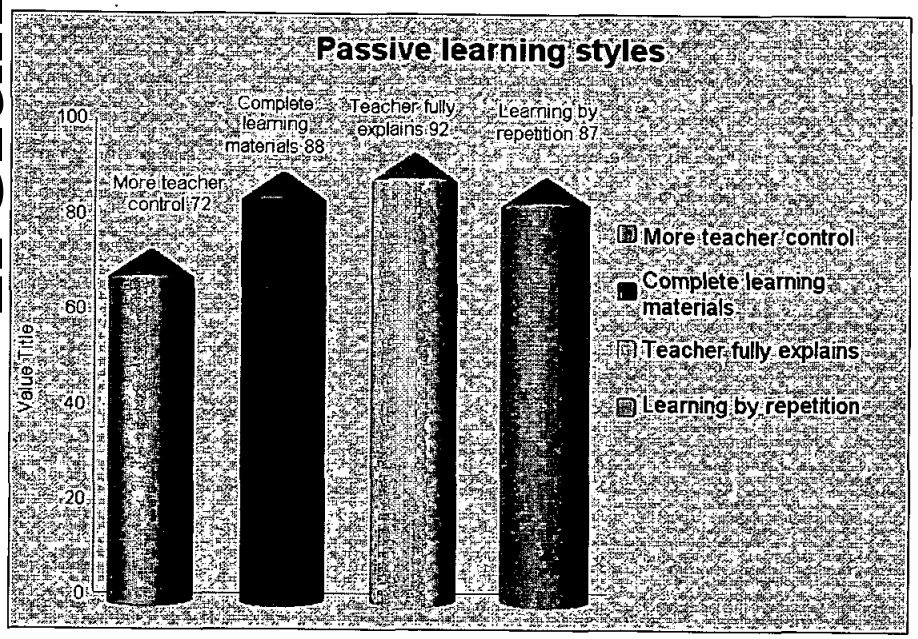

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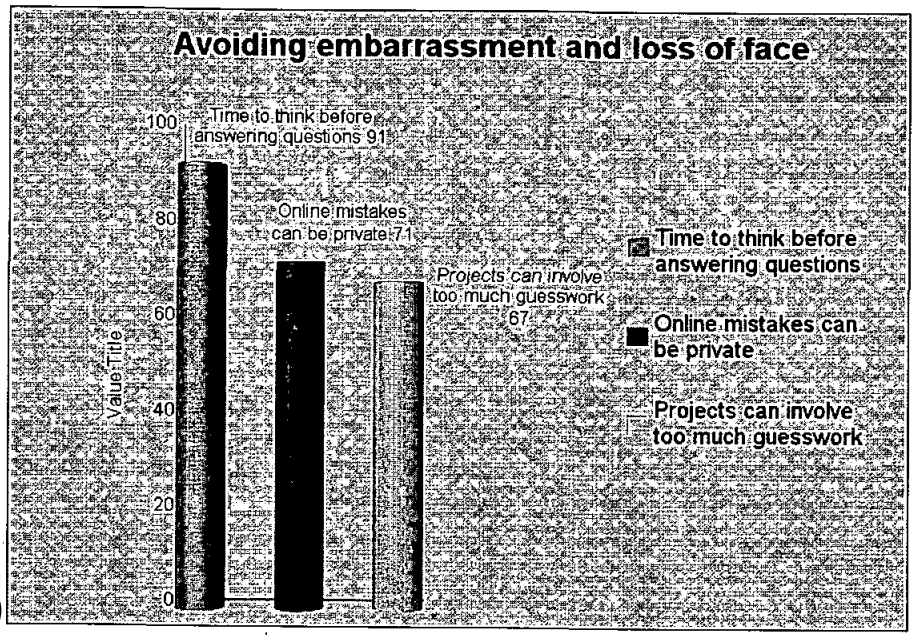

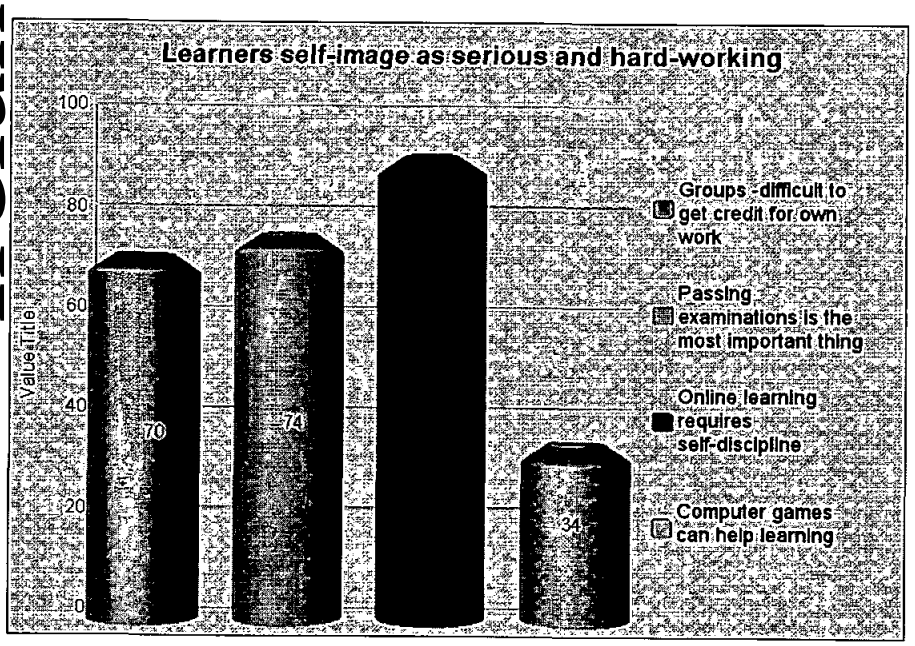

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5.3 Interview results:-

Section Summary:-

The main patterns of comments coming from the interview process are summarised as follows (not in order of priority):-

(a) Chinese students play a lot of computer games but do not see this as related to learning or potential learning;

(b) Educational material should be presented in Chinese and English language versions simultaneously, where possible

(c) Instructions for example on completing forms, questionnaires or assessments, and any LMS should be provided in Chinese and English language versions simultaneously, where possible. Moodle, for example, while it has versions in both languages, cannot operate both simultaneously;

(d) Language should be kept as simple as possible to ensure the correct meaning is carried across to Chinese people;

(e) Relationships are crucial to success. These need a lot of time, energy and commitment to establish and maintain;

(f) Relationships can be facilitated by having Chinese people who are positive towards so-called 'western' approaches, communicate with other Chinese people;

(g) Status, reputation and connections are important, particularly official connections, in facilitating relationships;

(h) Chinese people see themselves as clear-minded, focussed and serious and demonstrate tenacity and determination to get what they want. It is important that end results meet the expectations of Chinese people;

(i) The longer Chinese people have been living in Ireland or have been exposed to educational thinking and influences from western countries the more open they are generally to these;

(j) Chinese people like logical subjects, such as mathematics and engineering, but lack skills in abstract reasoning, creative thinking and the 'soft' skills required in modern management. This is largely as a result of their

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education system, the transition period as the Chinese government pursues its *'open door' policy and centuries of Confucian influence*;

(k) The development of any enterprise in China, including education, training and e-learning businesses, is subject to a classic pattern. Few foreign enterprises are permitted to establish a business in their own right – but have to enter into joint ventures with Chinese partners. This involves a lengthy process of investigating potential joint-venture partners, trying to establish good relationships with them and eventually arriving at a mutually agreeable arrangement. This goes far beyond any sort of 'localisation' arrangement foreign companies often must make for other countries. As a result, few e-learning companies have yet successfully established themselves in China at the time of writing (May 2006);

(l) Service providers need to be careful to work within the 'face' system. Avoiding embarrassment or offence, and providing opportunities for potential partners and customers/students to maintain and improve face are key necessary behaviours.

Details:-

36 people were interviewed. The breakdown of their roles is as follows:-

Ref	Context	Qty
A	Chinese students	10
B	Teachers of Chinese students	7
C	*Irish-based college/university personnel liaising with colleges and* universities in China	4
D	Representatives from English language schools in Ireland	3
E	People from commercial companies doing business in China	6
F	People from Irish public bodies dealing with China	4
G	Others	2

Table 5.2 – Roles of Interviewees

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Other people who were unavailable for interview submitted some papers and presentations they had made earlier on topics they considered relevant.

These were:-

(a) Professor Clifford Naas of Stanford University; * and

(b) Dr Dermot Campbell, Dublin Institute of Technology **

Correspondence also took place with Dr Andi DiPaolo* at Sandyford University's Centre for Professional Development, who was positive on the idea of Stanford University participating in this research project. Unfortunately, on this occasion Stanford were not in a position to fit the questionnaire or interviews into their schedule. The possibility for assistance in the future remains open, however.**

Correspondence also took place with Dr Stephen Draper, Department of Psychology, University of Glasgow, who is involved with a number or Chinese universities.

Repetition of very similar comments from interviewers are omitted to help to reduce the burden on the reader.

The interviewee comments are presented here as direct quotations.

For convenience the comments are grouped into sections

Interviews with students:-

"Chinese students like to play computer games but do not think there is any connection between these games and learning ".

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"Chinese students see the teacher as the main person in the classroom".

"A lot depends on how long the Chinese student is in Ireland. After a couple of years in Ireland we understand how Irish people think and what they mean when the say things".

"We like the way people are taught here – because the student is recognised and that motivates us".

"We get used to being asked to do groupwork and participate in class. This is very different from the way we were taught in school and university in China".

"The main thing in China is to learn everything off for the examinations. It's not important if you can't remember it afterwards".

" We like it when the teacher uses simpler words because it is easy to understand".

"I find it easy to understand most of what is said to me in English, but I find it very difficult to say everything I want to in English. I have to think out the order of the words in my mind because in China we use the word the other way around. My friends tell me not to try to sort everything out in my head before I speak and to just try to say things the way Irish people do it".

"I don't like it when the teacher asks me to answer a question in front of the class. I like time to prepare myself before the class so that I will have an answer ready when I am asked".

"I like the idea of being able to get the handouts and notes before the class".

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"We use the Internet a lot in China and we like videos and MP3s. I would like to be able to get these for my classes. I have an MP3 player that I carry around and I could listen to a lecture on that if I could download it beforehand."

"I use my electronic dictionary a lot, but I find that the teacher does not like me using it. If I had the notes and handouts in English and Chinese I would be able to improve my English at the same time as learning my lessons for class".

"I like the idea of the Wiki that you told me about. It would be great if we could all do 2 or 3 practice examination papers before the exams and share them with each other on the Wiki. I think this is a great idea".

"I get very frustrated sometimes because other people in my group are not doing their fair share of the work. I don't want to get a bad grade because they won't do their work. I prefer to work on my own, instead of with these people".

"Some people talk too much in class and waste time. I like it when the teacher keeps control and does not let these other people talk so much. I like it when the teacher goes through the pages of the book with us because I known then that we are making progress".

"I think it is a good idea to change the course around to suit Chinese students".

"I think that some people in class are very rude, They want to give their own opinions all the time and ask the teacher a lot of questions. In China we don't think it is our place to ask the teacher questions or to put forward our own ideas. I know it is different in Ireland but I am finding this very difficult to get used to".

"I know that when I came to Ireland first I was very happy here because if was so different. After a while I realised that it is very expensive to live in Ireland. I also

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found it very hard sometimes to understand Irish people and I was not feeling so good. With help from my Chinese friends here I got over this and now after three years in Ireland I am very happy here."

"When I see your questionnaire I realise that I would answer some of the questions now very differently to way I would have answered them when I first came to Ireland or when I was in China. For example I can see how playing computer games could help people to learn, but most Chinese people would not think of it that way".

"You have to understand the systems of relationships we have in China. We call this guanxi and some relationships are closer than others. Irish people do not have the same sort of relationships".

"I think there should be some sort of support and training service for Chinese people when they come to Ireland to help us to adjust to the country and the way things are done here".

"I have been here now for over four years and I have been learning some Irish. I can say 'Slán' and 'Failte".

"We Chinese people have a culture of eating and food and drink are very important in building up relationships between people. For example, when Chinese people greet each other in the morning instead of saying the equivalent of "it's a good morning" they say the equivalent of "Have you eaten yet ?. We like to socialise and eat together, and we do this often instead of mixing with Irish people. This is not always a good thing."

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"Older Irish people are very friendly and stop in the street to say 'hello' to you. That's very nice. I think younger people are always in a hurry. I don't like that".

"I need to use my English for about two hours every day to get fluent in it. I am here nearly 9 months and I can understand most of what people say to me."

Teachers of Chinese students/English Language Schools:-

"Chinese students are very nice, friendly and courteous".

"I find that I have to structure the classes and the notes I give out clearly and be very careful in the way I phrase things. Otherwise the students can misunderstand."

"I find the Chinese students very reliable and good class attenders".

"I sometimes wonder how the Chinese students can concentrate in class as many of them are working part-time to make ends meet and help repay the loans their families took to send them over here".

"Chinese people put a very high value on a western education".

"The Chinese students will very rarely ask you any questions in the early stages. They seem to think that my job is to stand in front of them and read a lot of stuff from the textbook, because this is what they are used to in China. It takes them a while to adjust to our way of teaching".

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"The Chinese students prefer when we are dealing with science and logical subjects, like maths and physics. They don't like it when they are asked to come up with ideas or solutions of their own".

"Like any group of students you can't treat Chinese students as if they are all the same as each other. Some of them are doing very well and seem to be very happy here. Others are a bit slower. The better ones can be a great help with the others if you can get them on your side".

"I divide the Chinese women form the men sometimes because they are slow to talk to you with the men around. I think it's because in China women don't have as much say as they do in Ireland and they don't express themselves much".

"Sometimes it helps to divide the class into groups of older and younger students. Some of the students have done other courses before and are well used to the Irish system. They do well and can encourage the others".

"Chinese students can get frustrated with other people in the class, such as Italian and Spanish students who talk a lot and ask many questions. The Chinese students think that this is wasting their time".

"One day after class a Chinese student offered me a chewing gum. I didn't take it and just said 'no thanks'. I didn't think anything of it – it was just a small thing which meant nothing to me. A few days later one of the other Chinese students told me that the first student felt very ashamed because I had declined his offer. In his culture I caused him to lose face. He had made an offer to me and I had refused his offer in front of his peers. You have to be very careful sometimes. It's hard to remember all these things, and I would never have known if the other student hadn't told me".

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"I have to be very careful in the words I use. I sometimes forget that Chinese people can take offence at simple things we take for granted."

"Chinese students see themselves as very serious and advanced in their thinking. I need to be careful because I'm inclined to think that our way of teaching is best and I have to remember that they don't think so".

"I have to remind Chinese students that if they use some materials they find on the Internet or in a book they have to attribute it to the author. I'm not sure if they always understand the implications of this".

"There's a lot of talk about guanxi and relationships. From a practical point of view I don't know if Chinese students are any better or any worse that Irish ones when it comes to helping each other out or sharing homework".

"It drives me mad at times when I ask a question and all the Chinese students just sit there with nobody willing to say anything. This passive behaviour really gets to me".

"It took me a while to realise the enormous pressure Chinese students can be under to succeed in their exams. If they fail their exams they will lose face with their family who have saved and taken out loans to send them over here. They have to succeed so that they can repay these costs to their family and also to avoid great shame to their families. This is very unfair to them and you can see why passing the examinations regardless of whether they actually know what they have learned afterwards, is so important to them".

"I love working with Chinese students they are very friendly, they have great respect for you and they apply themselves very well to their work".

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"A lot of the Chinese students expect you to give them complete handouts and notes on everything. They don't seem to want anything else from the teacher".

"If you have some Chinese students who will explain things to the others that's great. They often won't say anything to you in the classroom but you will see them talking with each other afterwards. It's then that the other students will explain things to them".

"This thing of not saying anything is class seems to be something they learn at home. It they have a problem or don't understand you they will say nothing in class, but talk about it amongst themselves afterwards. Your need some of the students to give you feedback about this – otherwise you would be lost".

"Because of the one-child family rule in China many Chinese students will have no understanding of the dynamics of larger families. Avoid asking any questions which would require Chinese students to think beyond the single-child family".

"Chinese students will ask a lot of personal questions – such as how much you earn and what age you are. We have to tell them that Irish people don't like to be asked these questions. They don't understand the problem".

People from commercial companies/government bodies/others:-

"Be careful not to cause Chinese people to lose face".

"Chinese officials will always want to know if you are part of the Irish Government. If you are, that will make it a lot easier for you to do business with them".

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"The Chinese take a long time to make a deal with you, but once the deal is over they know how to enjoy themselves".

"Take your time in dealing with Chinese negotiators – as they are in no rush and act as if they have all the time in the world. Just when you think you have a deal done with them they will start to re-negotiate some point all over again. This can be very frustrating for an Irish person – but that's just the way they do things over there".

"Get introduced to the right business partners at the outset – otherwise you will waste a lot of time and have no idea what type of people you are dealing with".

"The Chinese are very tough negotiators – so it is important to always hold something back. This may not be very valuable to you but when you give it to them it helps them in their 'face work' with their superiors".

"Chinese negotiators will always know exactly what they want from the deal beforehand and will be coherent and persistent in getting this."

"Status is very important to Chinese people. Senior Chinese people will only deal with senior people from a foreign organisation. In this process, having the support and backing of an official Irish body or Government Department facilitates the process of relationship-building".

"Companies must make arrangements for joint-ventures with local Chinese partners. Irish people are not allowed to become Chinese citizens and the tax laws severely discourage movement of funds or assets from China. The laws are framed in such a way as to encourage foreign companies to come to China to set

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up enterprises, develop local expertise over time and keep the business in China in the long term".

"China is so big that it is not feasible to consider the whole country for an e-learning initiative initially. Many cities have several times the population of Ireland. Concentrate on particular cities or regions. Forming relationships with the right government officials in these cities or regions and knowing how to secure the necessary permits and permissions is crucially important".

"Within China broadband services are generally fine. However, cross-border and international connections can be of mixed quality."

"It is very important to deliver e-learning in Chinese – Mandarin for most of China, and Cantonese in Hong Kong. We also need to know if the Chinese learner and those responsible for e-learning in China wish to have the programmes delivered in both Chinese and English – including the support systems and the LMS. For example, Moodle has many language versions, including two versions of Chinese. However, only one language can be used at a time. It is not possible to use both English and Mandarin Chinese at the same time, so that a bi-lingual LMS cannot be offered through Moodle. The solution is to replicate everything in both languages – a very time-consuming an expensive process."

"Language translation is also a major difficulty. Quality varies and real meaning can often be lost – even with the highest quality translators who take great care. Words simply do not mean the same things to native Chinese and native English speakers. The word order is so different between the languages that considerable care must be taken to get the meaning across.. The best approach is to keep all language in its simplest form and all phrases clear and unlikely to

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be mis-interpreted. Piloting of materials is important in identifying these problems before a full-scale launch of the e-learning project."

"Chinese people do everything their managers tell them without question. This is something which Irish people find very hard to understand."

"Chinese people love to trade – they will buy and sell anything."

"China is a very busy place. They are now building their 5th ring road around Beijing in less than 10 years. We could do with that sort of approach for the M50 in Dublin".

"You need to learn the language – and you need to get good at it very quickly. Take intensive language courses and realise that Mandarin, the official language is spoken by all senor people and officials. Unfortunately, there are many different Chinese dialects and people from different parts of China cannot understand each other – let alone understand foreigners."

"Chinese people are lovely people to deal with and Beijing and Shanghai are buzzing at the moment"

"Dealing with Chinese people is a slow process – you won't get a purchase order overnight! Be prepared to spend months dealing with many possible business partners before you feel comfortable with one or two. We met 60-70 potential partners before eventually dealing with two. Then a lengthy process of building credibility and checking each out took place before and business started."

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"Relationships are huge in China – very much more than anything else. It takes a lot of patience and commitment to get these relationships running well. Chinese people will spend a lot of time in getting to know you".

"Government contacts are very important and Chinese people will place a lot of credibility on both the government contacts you can demonstrate from Ireland and on their own government contacts in China."

"It is very important not to give offence, as causing someone to 'lose face' can have very serious consequences for them. This is why Chinese officials will spend so much time in getting to know you and in building up the relationship. They need to be certain at the end of the day that all the decisions they make can be justified and that all the fine details have been explored fully."

"Meetings are always formal and rehearsed. Exchanges take the form of statements from one side to the other, and nothing is left to chance."

"The officials will need to know your connections, especially if you have government connections, as they always pay very close attention to what their own government tells them. You also need to be aware of the status and connections of the person you are dealing with, as he will be equally concerned about yours."

"Chinese people are coming to terms with the government's 'open door' approach to economic development in recent years and this means new ways of thinking for Chinese officials. Changes in the way they think are going to take a few years yet".

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* [Lee, J-E R., Naas C., Maldnado H., Morishima Y., Brave S., Yamada R., (2005). The Case for Caring Co-Learners: The Effects of a Computer-Mediated Co-Learner Agent on Trust and Learning. Stanford University.];

** [Campbell, D.F. 2003). Delivering an Online Translation Course. Dublin Institute of Technology.].

*** [DiPaolo (September 2004). The Continuing Engineering Education Challenge: Moving to Anywhere, Anytime Learning. *Stanford University, Presentation, Beijing Conference.* &
DiPaolo (November 2004). Choices and Challenges: Lessons Learned in the Evolution of Online Education. *Stanford University, Presentation, Dublin* Conference.]

5.4 Experiment results:-

At the time of writing 8 people formed the 'Belbin' group, while there were 11 in the 'Chinese Teamwork' group. Table 5.3 contains the raw data for the 'Belbin' group, while Table 5.4 contains the raw data for the 'Chinese Teamworking' group.

REF	My overall understanding of the content is now	My understanding if both English and Chinese had been used would be	Having the materials beforehand would have been	Combining PDFs MP3s and online video to help memory was	As a help to better Chinese -Western understanding the topic was	As an introduction to e-learning I found this experiment	Belbin as a model for teamwork for China would BE in my view	Chinese students need more support in education/ training courses	Chinese students' online forum to share ideas on learning is needed
Legend:-	VG = Very Good. G = good. P = Poor. VP = Very Poor. NA = No answer. Y=Yes. N= No.								
1	G	VG	VG	VG	P	VG	G	Y	Y
2	G	VG	VG	VG	P	VG	P	Y	Y
3	P	VG	VG	G	P	VG	P	Y	Y
4	G	G	VG	VG	G	VG	P	Y	Y
5	VG	VG	VG	VG	G	VG	G	Y	Y
6	G	VG	VG	VG	G	VG	G	Y	Y
7	P	G	G	G	P	VG	P	Y	Y
8	P	G	G	P	P	G	P	NA	NA

Table 5.3 – 'Belbin' group raw data

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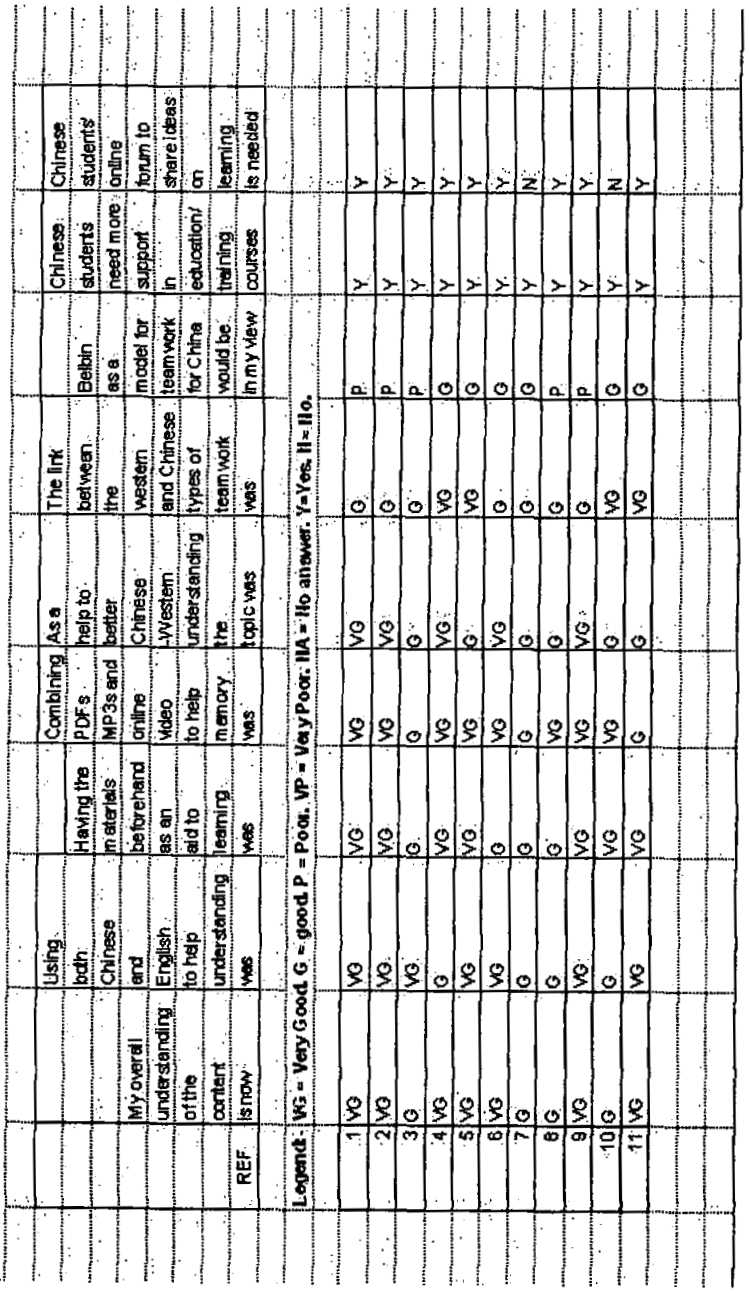
data.



		Using			Combining	As a	The link		Chinese	Chinese
		both	Having the	PDFs	help to	between	Belbin	students	students'
		Chinese	materials	MP3s and	better	the	as a	need more	online
	My overall	and	beforehand	online	Chinese	western	model for	support	forum to
	understanding	English	as an	video	-Western	and Chinese	teamwork	in	share ideas
	of the	to help	aid to	to help	understanding	types of	for China	education/	on
	content	understanding	learning	memory	the	teamwork	would be	training	learning
REF	is now	was	was	was	topic was	was	in my view	courses	is needed
Legend: WG = Very Good, G = good, P = Poor, VP = Very Poor, IIA = 'No answer', Y=Yes, N= No.										
1	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG	G	P	Y	Y
2	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG	G	P	Y	Y
3	G	VG	G	G	G	G	P	Y	Y
4	VG	G	VG	VG	VG	VG	G	Y	Y
5	VG	VG	VG	VG	G	VG	G	Y	Y
6	VG	VG	G	VG	VG	G	G	Y	Y
7	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	Y	N
8	G	G	G	VG	G	G	P	Y	Y
9	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG	G	P	Y	Y
10	G	G	VG	VG	G	VG	G	Y	N
11	VG	VG	VG	G	G	VG	G	Y	Y

Table 5.4 – 'Chinese Teamworking' raw data.

Some charts are reproduced from the data analysis.

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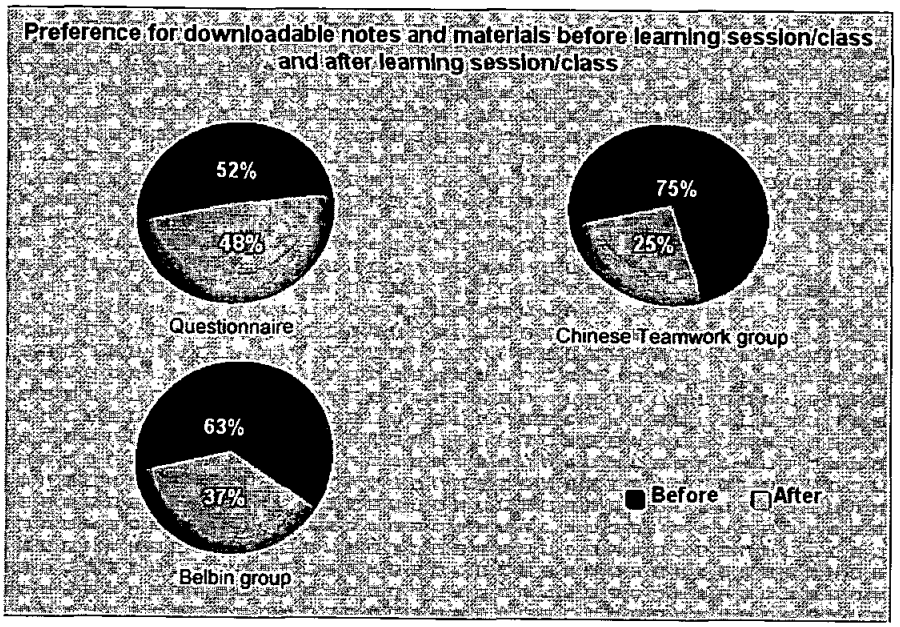

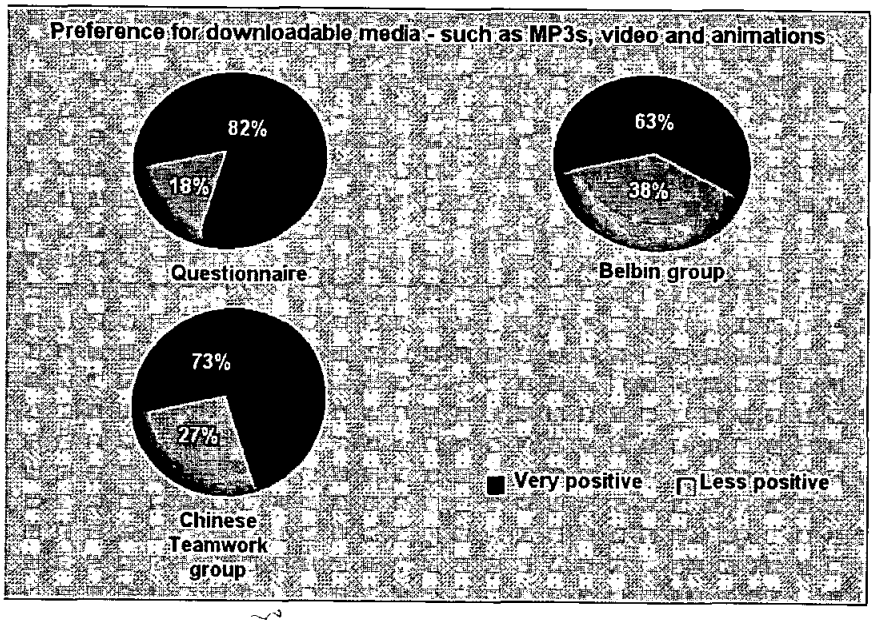

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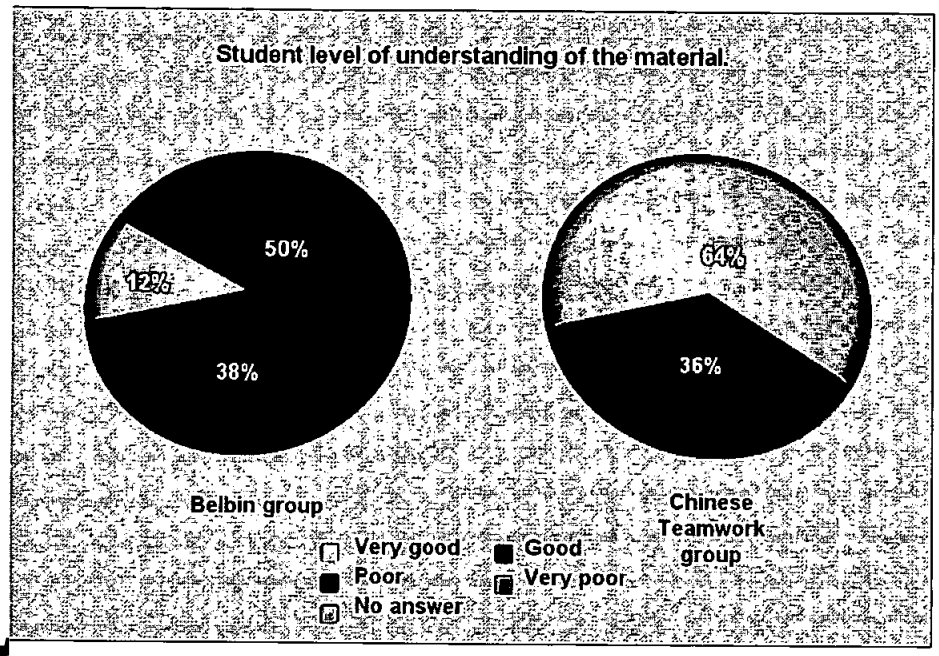

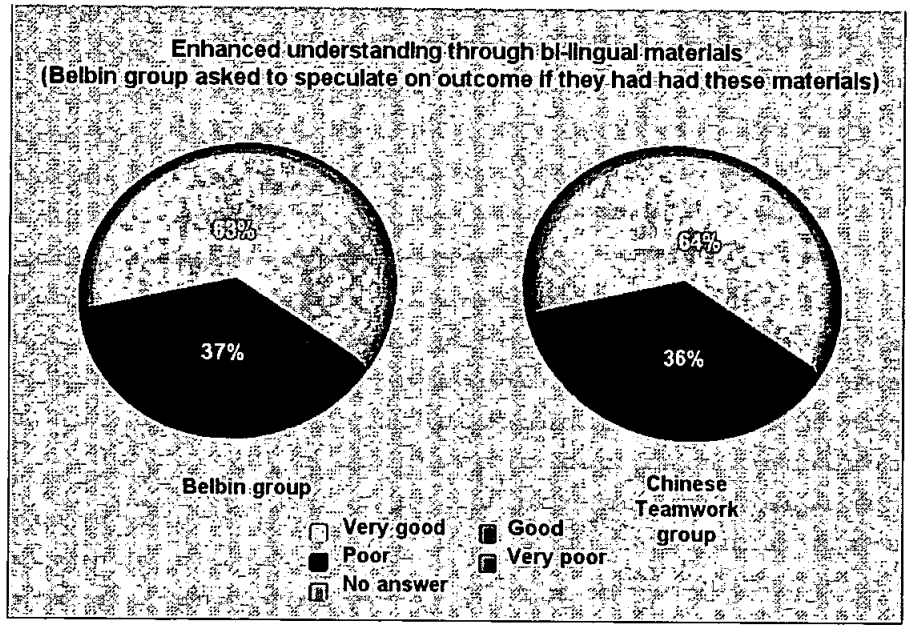

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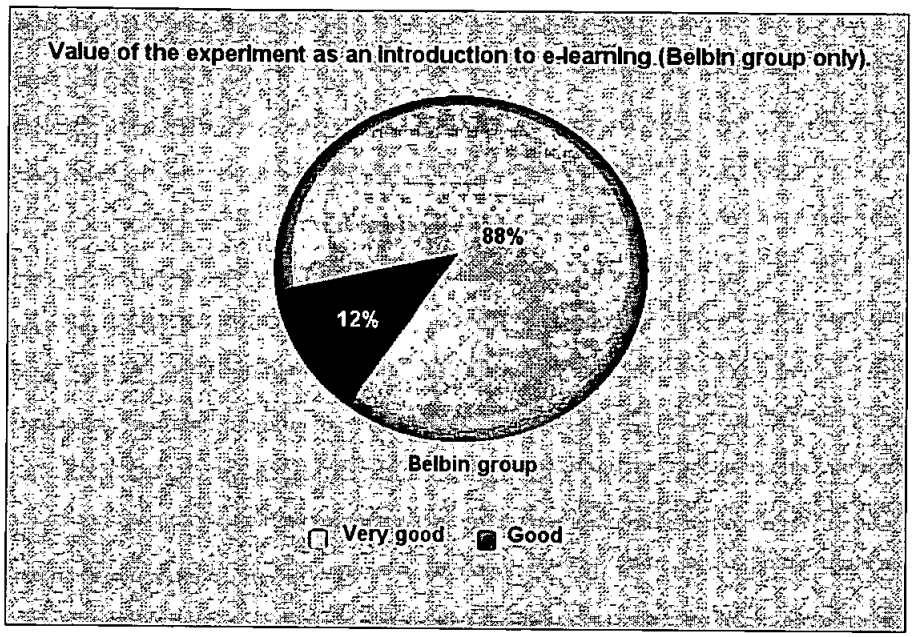

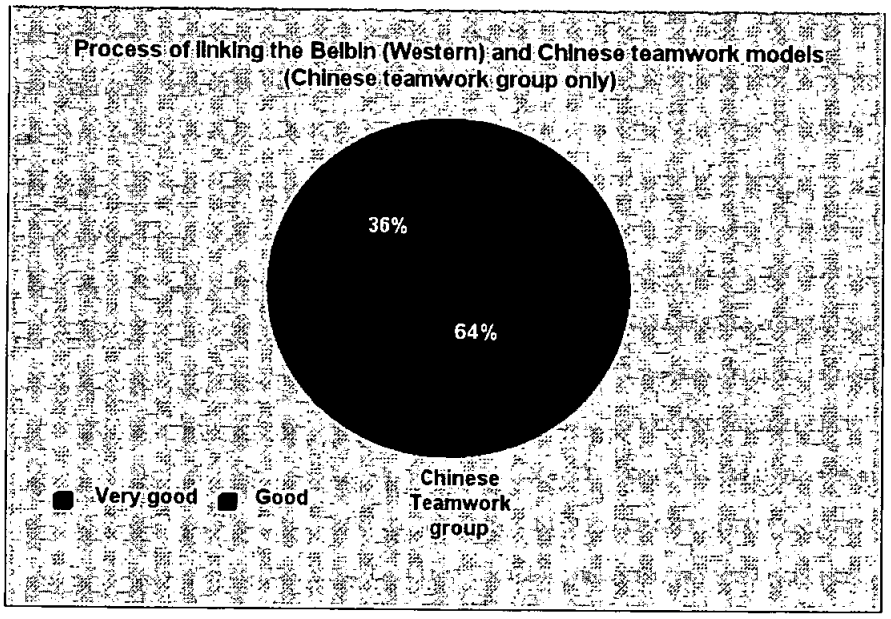

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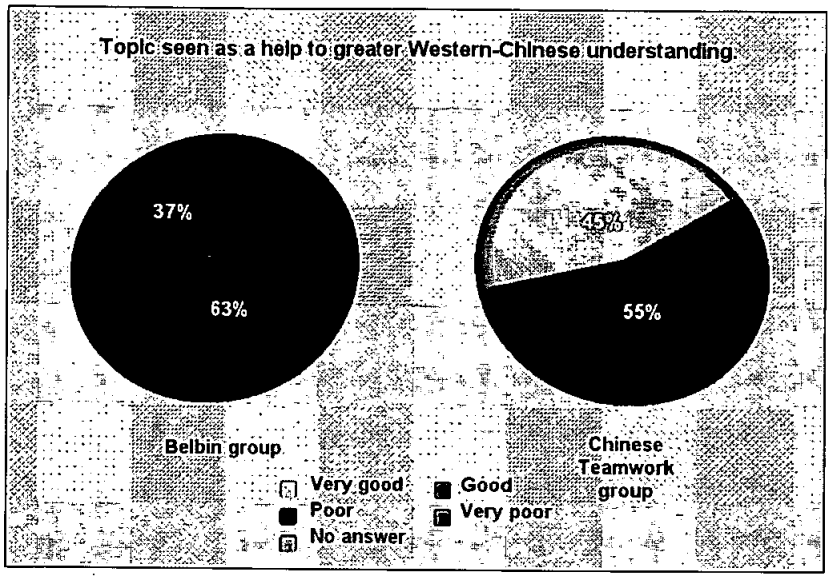

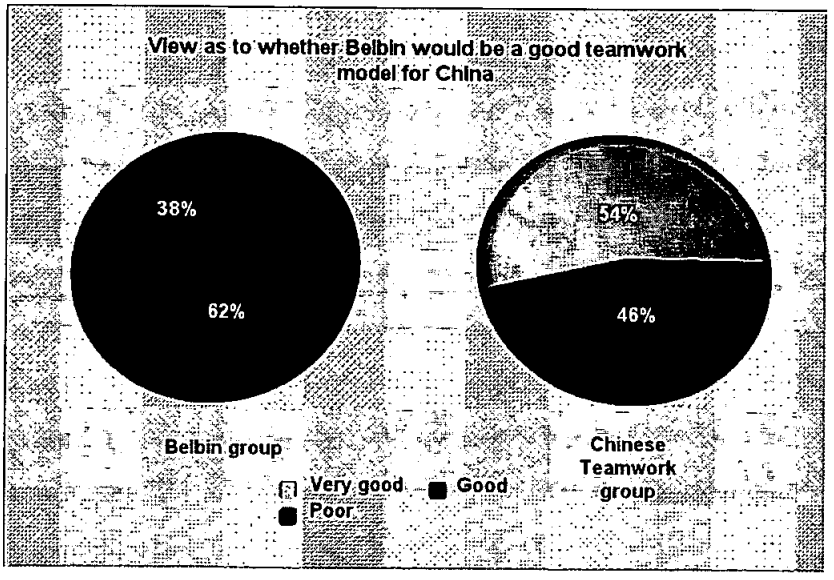

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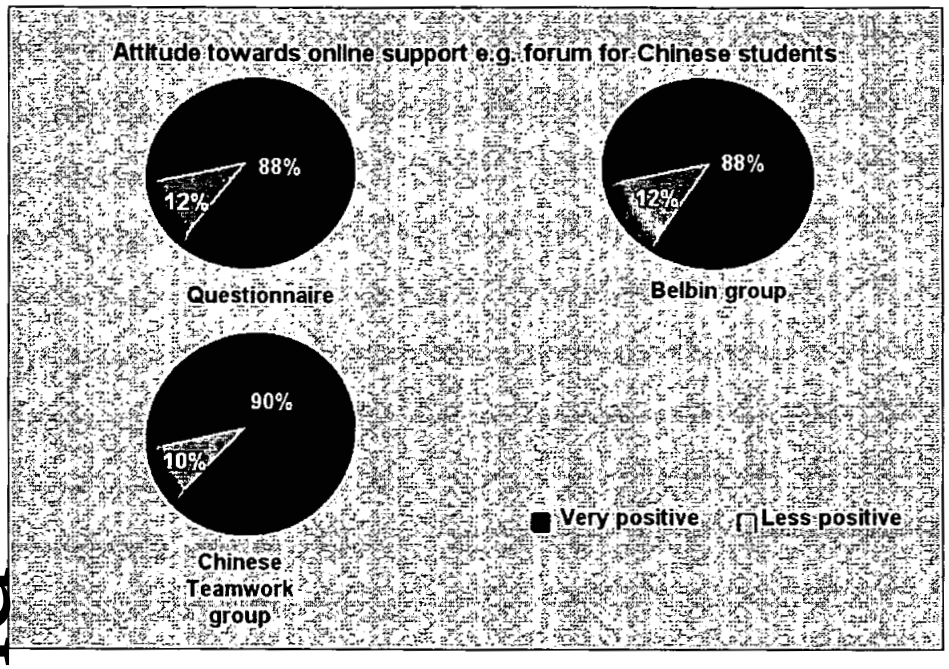

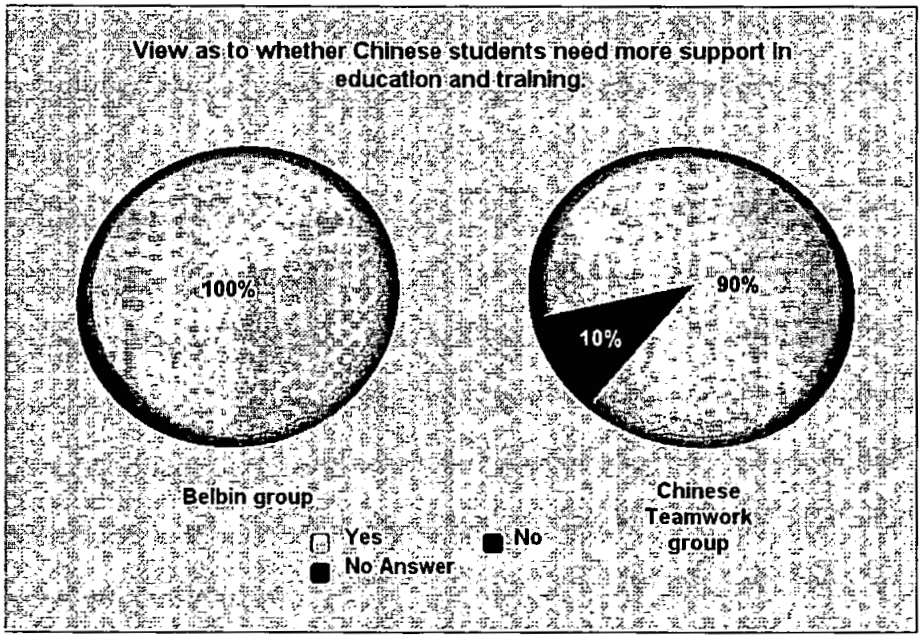

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5.5 Comparing the findings from the two groups – T-Testing *:-

OVERALL LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING OF CONTENT

***t*-Test: Results - The results of an unpaired t-test**

t= 2.82

sdev= 15.5

degrees of freedom = 14

The probability of this result, assuming the null hypothesis, is 0.014

Group A: Number of items= 8

62.5 62.5 62.5 87.5 87.5 87.5 87.5 87.5

Mean = 78.1

95% confidence interval for Mean: 66.38 thru 89.87

Standard Deviation = 12.9

Hi = 87.5 Low = 62.5

Median = 87.5

Average Absolute Deviation from Median = 9.38

Group B: Number of items= 8

37.5 37.5 37.5 62.5 62.5 62.5 62.5 87.5

Mean = 56.2

95% confidence interval for Mean: 44.50 thru 68.00

Standard Deviation = 17.7

Hi = 87.5 Low = 37.5

Median = 62.5

Average Absolute Deviation from Median = 12.5

Conclusion in this context:-

The 'Belbin' group had a statistically significantly reduced level of immediate understanding of the materials compared to the 'Chinese Teamwork' group. In terms of Kirkpatrick's First Level of Evaluation the 'Belbin' group would not be deemed to have had a successful outcome relative to the 'Chinese Teamwork' group.

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LEVEL/POTENTIAL LEVEL OF UNDEDRSTANDING IF BI-LINGUAL

***t*-Test: Results - The results of an unpaired t-test performed**

t= 0.000E+00

sdev= 12.9

degrees of freedom = 14

The probability of this result, assuming the null hypothesis, is 1.000

Group A: Number of items= 8

62.5 62.5 62.5 87.5 87.5 87.5 87.5 87.5

Mean = 78.1

95% confidence interval for Mean: 68.31 thru 87.94

Standard Deviation = 12.9

Hi = 87.5 Low = 62.5

Median = 87.5

Average Absolute Deviation from Median = 9.38

Group B: Number of items= 8

62.5 62.5 62.5 87.5 87.5 87.5 87.5 87.5

Mean = 78.1

95% confidence interval for Mean: 68.31 thru 87.94

Standard Deviation = 12.9

Hi = 87.5 Low = 62.5

Median = 87.5

Average Absolute Deviation from Median = 9.38

Conclusion in this context:-

The actual level of understanding of the 'Chinese Teamwork' group which was given materials in bi-lingual format and the anticipated levels of understanding by the 'Belbin' group if these had been available to them are not significantly different. This means that provision in bi-lingual format is highly desired by the 'Belbin' group who anticipate that their level of understanding would be very much improved as a consequence.

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TOPIC AS A HELP TO BETTER CHINESE-WESTERN UNDERSTANDING

***t*-Test: Results- The results of an unpaired t-test**

t= 4.28
sdev= 13.2
degrees of freedom = 14
The probability of this result, assuming the null hypothesis, is 0.001

Group A: Number of items= 8
62.5 62.5 62.5 62.5 87.5 87.5 87.5 87.5
Mean = 75.0
95% confidence interval for Mean: 65.03 thru 84.97
Standard Deviation = 13.4
Hi = 87.5 Low = 62.5
Median = 75.0
Average Absolute Deviation from Median = 12.5

Group B: Number of items= 8
37.5 37.5 37.5 37.5 37.5 62.5 62.5 62.5
Mean = 46.9
95% confidence interval for Mean: 36.90 thru 56.85
Standard Deviation = 12.9
Hi = 62.5 Low = 37.5
Median = 37.5
Average Absolute Deviation from Median = 9.38

Conclusion in this context:-

The topic chosen – Belbin's teamwork model – had a poor response from the *participants in terms of its usefulness in improving understanding between* Chinese people and people from western countries. The poor response is statistically significant. From a practical point of view simply presenting the Belbin model on its own would be an inadequate way of helping to improve understanding. The implication for service provider is that they cannot use this model without significant modifications for Chinese learners.

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HAVING/POTENTIALLY HAVING THE MATERIALS IN ADVANCE

***t*-Test: Results - The results of an unpaired t-test**

t= -1.00
sdev= 12.5
degrees of freedom = 14
The probability of this result, assuming the null hypothesis, is 0.334

Group A: Number of items= 8
62.5 62.5 62.5 62.5 87.5 87.5 87.5 87.5
Mean = 75.0
95% confidence interval for Mean: 65.52 thru 84.48
Standard Deviation = 13.4
Hi = 87.5 Low = 62.5
Median = 75.0
Average Absolute Deviation from Median = 12.5

Group B: Number of items= 8
62.5 62.5 87.5 87.5 87.5 87.5 87.5 87.5
Mean = 81.2
95% confidence interval for Mean: 71.77 thru 90.73
Standard Deviation = 11.6
Hi = 87.5 Low = 62.5
Median = 87.5
Average Absolute Deviation from Median = 6.25

Conclusion in this context:-

The real benefits to the 'Chinese Teamwork' group by having prior access to materials and the anticipated benefits by the 'Belbin' group if these had been available to them are not significantly different. This means that provision of materials in advance is highly desired by the 'Belbin' group who anticipate that the benefits to them would be very much improved as a consequence. E-learning service providers need to plan for this, especially in the context of 'blending with classroom-based learning.

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AVAILABILITY/POTENTIAL AVAILABILITY OF COMBINED MEDIA

t-Test: Results - The results of an unpaired t-test

t= 0.796
sdev= 15.7
degrees of freedom = 14 *T*
The probability of this result, assuming the null hypothesis, is 0.439

Group A: Number of items= 8
62.5 62.5 87.4 87.5 87.5 87.5 87.5 87.5
Mean = 81.2
95% confidence interval for Mean: 69.36 thru 93.12
Standard Deviation = 11.6
Hi = 87.5 Low = 62.5
Median = 87.5
Average Absolute Deviation from Median = 6.26

Group B: Number of items= 8
37.5 62.5 62.5 87.5 87.5 87.5 87.5 87.5
Mean = 75.0
95% confidence interval for Mean: 63.12 thru 86.88
Standard Deviation = 18.9
Hi = 87.5 Low = 37.5
Median = 87.5
Average Absolute Deviation from Median = 12.5

Conclusion in this context:-

The real benefits to both the 'Chinese Teamwork' group and the 'Belbin' group of having materials/media in various formats simultaneously is not significantly different. This means that both groups derived the same benefits from having the materials/media in a number of formats simultaneously. The practical implications for e-learning service providers are their willingness to accept that Chinese people in education or training are generally very computer and technology literate and are ready to use learning materials in a wide variety of formats and media.

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* Note on t-testing:-

For the purposes of the calculations the following values were assigned:-

Very Good (VG)	-	87.5
Good (G)	-	67.5
Poor (P)	-	37.5
Very Poor (VP)	-	12.5

For each test there were two ranges of data each with eight items.

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SECTION 6

DISCUSSION

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6.1 Introduction:-

The purpose of this research is to consider the issues e-learning service providers from so-called 'western' countries, such as Ireland, need to take on board for Chinese learners. These providers can be commercial organisations or academic institutions, or other entities and the Chinese learners can be learning in China or as expatriates in a western country, such as Ireland.

The project involved a range of research methodologies, data gathering techniques and the development of e-learning tools and initiatives. Pilot testing, ongoing improvement to tools and systems and experimentation were a feature of this project. A rapid learning curve faced this author in getting to know both Chinese people and what appear to be the important issues in e-learning with them.

This research report contains details of how the project was operationalised, incorporating detailed methodologies and tools. The findings are set out together with conclusions and recommendations based thereon. The report also considers the future in this exciting and challenging arena.

In so far as I can I have tried to set out the report to make it as readable and interesting as possible for the reader, while maintaining (I hope) the necessary academic standards. For example, in many cases I have summarised large sections of detailed analysis or discussion for the busy reader who may have to leave the detail to another time.

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6.2 Quick overview of the operationalisation of this project:-

The research involved a broad review of the field initially. People and organisations from Ireland associated with China were considered and a range of contacts were established by the author. These included people from academic institutions, state agencies, commercial companies, teachers, and of course individual Chinese people in Ireland. The author travelled to Beijing to meet representatives from Tsinghua University, China's leading university – the 'Harvard' of its country, and established a working relationship with them and with other people in China.

The research methodology involved the preparation and distribution of a questionnaire in Ireland and with people in China. The questionnaire was developed in an iterative process – with great care taken in the use of language to ensure that correct meaning was maintained. It was eventually released in a bi-lingual format – Mandarin Chinese and English languages. This was a pain-staking process, and yet some unexpected translation errors emerged. The questionnaire was distributed manually, by email, and by access through website links. A dedicated web site – http://www.wme-learn.com was set up for the project and will continue to operate.

The methodologies also included detailed interviews with a number of people in Ireland, including Chinese learners and their teachers. The author also did a number of interviews with people while in Beijing.

An experiment was carried out with two groups of Chinese learners where modifications were tested. These proposed modifications arose from an extensive review of relevant literature, analysis of the questionnaire results and analysis of the interview records. The experiment was very useful in helping to

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test the hypothesis – that e-learning needs to be modified to suit Chinese learners – with the results published in this report.

A feature of this project was the ongoing development of tools and systems. This author had to rapidly enhance a range of authoring, negotiating and diplomatic skills to co-ordinate many diverse elements. In that regard I was struck by the huge levels of support, friendly cooperation and practical assistance I received. I have tried to acknowledge all the individuals in this report, and I apologise to *anyone I may have inadvertently left off the list.*

6.3 Principal issues:

China is a very large country with over 1.3 billion people. However it has been governed under various systems as a single entity for over 2,500 years. The practical effect is this is that a number of readily identifiable philosophies and resulting behaviours permeate Chinese society. Confucian, Daoist and Taoist teachings still have major influences on the Chinese people of today.

The rapid development of China's economy under the Chinese Government's 'open door' policies has seen China join the World Trade Organisation (WTO) recently and a surge in infrastructural development. This is hastened by the plans for the Olympic Games in Beijing. The Chinese Government has placed education at the centre of its economic development as one of its key strategies. *There are major migrations of people from the countryside to cities. This, despite* the official 'one-child' policy is placing enormous strain on the education system which is simply not able to produce either the physical places in colleges and universities or the quality teaching staff required quickly enough to meet this demand.

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Within China there has been rapid development of IT and telecommunications infrastructure and China has the capacity to lead the world in these areas within a few years. Chinese people are also very Internet-friendly and pro-technology. The opportunities for e-learning against this background are very significant.

The education system has left its mark on both Chinese students and their teachers. Respect for teachers, a system of information and knowledge transfer from teacher to student and the maintenance of discipline are key characteristics of the system. Participation, active questioning of teachers and creative problem-solving are frowned upon. Passivity, memorisation, and the capacity to diligently repeat large volumes of acquired information in order to pass examinations are common approaches. Groupwork can be particularly difficult because of the aspect of guanxi (the system of relationships) which assigns some people to 'in-groups' and other to 'out-groups'. The process of 'face' is also very important. People must do 'face work' i.e. ensure that they do nothing to damage the reputation of a more senior person in the strict hierarchical structure of organisations and the education system. Face work also involves them in helping to enhance the standing of the other person: questioning one's teacher in class breaches these rules, for example. Teachers in turn try to avoid embarrassing students who are unprepared for questions, where there is potential for the student to 'lose face' in front of his peers.

Cultural differences are very important. We need to understand the process of culture shock and acculturation and their importance to education services. Culture shock and associated behaviours can have very serious effects on one's capacity to learn as a Chinese student away from one's own country. Equally, it can have major effects on the capacity of e-learning service providers to deliver services to Chinese people in China. The process of acculturation must be managed properly for successful outcomes, as success rates generally are low where there is no such care taken.

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The importance of filial piety and understanding the way Chinese organisations, including the education system, are managed is also important. In the context of a Learning Management System we need to be aware of how such a system would integrate with the Chinese management systems. Chinese organisations follow very different patterns and relationships to the ones western e-learning service providers are used to. The problems of integrating an LMS, for example in a western organisation are well documented. The issues associated with the successful introduction of an e-learning initiative on a significant scale in a western organisation are also well known. How well have we considered these issues for Chinese organisations, which are so radically different in their structure and sets of relationships?

6.4 Specific actions:-

We need to be specific in our focus and concentrate on a range of issues which require our attention. The main ones are:-

(a) Passivity of learners and non-participation;

(b) Memorisation – and its implications;

(c) 'Face' and avoiding embarrassment;

(d) Groupwork, guanxi and relationships;

(e) Support – online, offline, from teacher-to-learners and learner-to-learner;

(f) Collaboration, co-operation and teamwork;

(g) Meaning and language;

(h) Authenticity, relevance and modifications to learning materials;

(i) Availability of learning materials, objects and media; and

(j) Assessment, rewards and motivation.

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At a casual glance one might be tempted to say 'so what, we have to deal with all of these things anyway in e-learning, what's so special about Chinese learners?". The answer is – "a lot", and the detail of this report discusses these.

6.5 The principal actions addressed in this report, including the *experiments, include:*

(a) Passivity – gradually introduce the process of exchange and participation as part of a longer-term process of relationship-building. A lot of time will need to be invested in building relationships and trust. In this regard, it is wise to build very strong relationships with key Chinese learners initially who will help to facilitate the e-learning process with fellow Chinese learners;

(b) Memorisation – provide the learning materials in a variety of formats e.g. PDFs, Flash movies, MP3 and WMV video. This facilitates repeated learning in the learner's own time;

(c) Face – allow learners to get access to the learning materials before they need them – so that they can be prepared for possible questions. Online assessment facilitates privacy and re-tries until the learner feels more confident and secure;

(d) Groupwork – allow for the individual to receive recognition (and marks/grades) separate to and in addition to those for the group. Be aware of hierarchy and the concepts of filial piety. For example, older learners may be higher in the pecking order than younger ones;

(e)/(f) Support is expected but rarely requested. Set up a Wiki or other online forum and gradually make people aware of its practical benefits to them. For example, learners who use a Wiki together can allocate draft (or past) examination questions in such as way that each person only has to do one of two and then upload them to the Wiki to share and exchange with the other learners;

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(g) Meaning and language – keep everything simple and provide Mandarin Chinese translations for all the key concepts and most of the materials and LMS-related aspects in the early stages. By keeping this under review it may be possible to use only one language later on;

(h) Authenticity is crucial. Chinese learners, particularly in China, while being very interested in western culture and ideas, will not generally be attracted to materials which have no Chinese focus. The process of acculturation is facilitated by social contact, language skills and familiarity. Use materials and ways of delivering them which are familiar to Chinese people. If you need over time to introduce completely 'western' material do so through a process of linked topics. For example, in this experiment, the topic of teamwork was provided in two distinct modules – but with a linking piece of learning material to help facilitate the transition from western to Chinese material;

(i) Availability of learning materials – be creative and strive to provide these in ways which suit the Chinese learner. This may not require much more effort than one would use anyway with learners outside China; and

(j) Assessments, rewards and motivation can be very different in China. In looking at how motivation works in Chinese organisations we need to understand that China is in transition from a controlled economy to a more open one. Western ideas of the importance of the individual, initiative and personal rewards can often be frowned upon as arrogant and selfish. Nevertheless, Chinese people are acutely aware of the importance of money – particularly as part of 'face' and the public observance of one's status. Confucian thinking dictates that a learner can learn anything if he applies himself diligently enough. The diligent learner is serious and has a high moral character. Passing examinations is a public recognition of this and is highly prized as a result. A western education is particularly highly valued and families will borrow large amounts of money to pay for it. The learner in turn will be highly motivated to success – primarily by passing examinations. Continuous assessment and homework may not be highly valued as motivators – unless there is a specific value placed on them in terms of

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offset against examination marks. Respect for teachers, diligent and loyal application and a serious approach are the type of behaviours that will be demonstrated by motivated Chinese learners.

6.4 The hypothesis is proven:-

We will recall that the hypothesis is:-

'Chinese learners need e-learning which is developed to meet their culture and learning styles".

This research project strongly indicates that the hypothesis holds true and that e-learning which has been developed to meet the cultural and learning styles of Chinese learners is necessary.

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SECTION 7

FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

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7.1 Introduction:-

This research project has built on the work of other researchers and, hopefully, contributes to a better understanding of some of the important issues which need to be addressed by western providers of e-learning services for Chinese learners.

A good deal of progress was made over the relatively short timescale of the project. It is not possible in any research project to deal with every issue and there may be some important factors which have been missed or overlooked, for example.

7.2 Further work in the future:-

(a) the experiment:-

At the time of writing the experiment had been carried out on a small scale with some preliminary results obtained. The experiment should be continued and reviewed in the light of the data emerging over time. Operating the experiment is time-consuming and learners generally have to be well motivated to complete it and to ensure that they provide the feedback. We need to be sure over time that learner feedback is complete and the tendency for the 'harmony effect' arising from Confucian teaching is considered. Chinese learners may be reluctant, in the interests of harmony, to select the 'Very Poor' or even the 'Poor' answer options in the feedback. The experiment itself should be reviewed and modified as required in the light of learner feedback and operational experience;

(b) acculturation:-

This author has a sense that there may be markedly different attitudes and levels of motivation in favour of western e-learning when the Chinese learner, or the service provider, or both are in the later stages of the acculturation process. In

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other words, Chinese learners who have been in Ireland for a few years may be more used to western influences and more amenable to using western e-learning with fewer modifications. Similarly, western e-learning service providers in China should be able to improve their effectiveness over time. These are areas which warrant further investigation;

(c) LMS:-

Moodle was the LMS used for the experiment. As stated in the body of the report Moodle has a number of language options, including Mandarin Chinese and English. At present these can not be run simultaneously. This is an issue which may not be too difficult to address given the open source nature of the program and the potential willingness of programmers to make the necessary modifications to the code;

(d) learner support:-

Chinese students need support in their acculturation to the 'western' country in which they are studying. This need had been recognised and a number of initiatives are being piloted in Ireland. The Chinese Students and Scholars Association is one organisation looking at this area. Other bodies such as the Asian Institute are also involved in cultural programmes. Some commercial organisations are also looking at this area.

In addition to this type of training Chinese learners also need various online fora to exchange views between themselves. This applies equally to Chinese learners as expatriates in a country such as Ireland, or to Chinese learners in China who are availing of an e-learning service provided by a western organisation;

(e) training and prior preparation:-

The need for some sort of training and preparations for anyone who needs to work or learn in another country is well-documented. China holds tremendous

potential for western providers of e-learning. These providers need to prepare themselves through appropriate training before and during their interaction with Chinese people.

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SECTION 8

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APPENDICES

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Appendix 1

Draft Questionnaire

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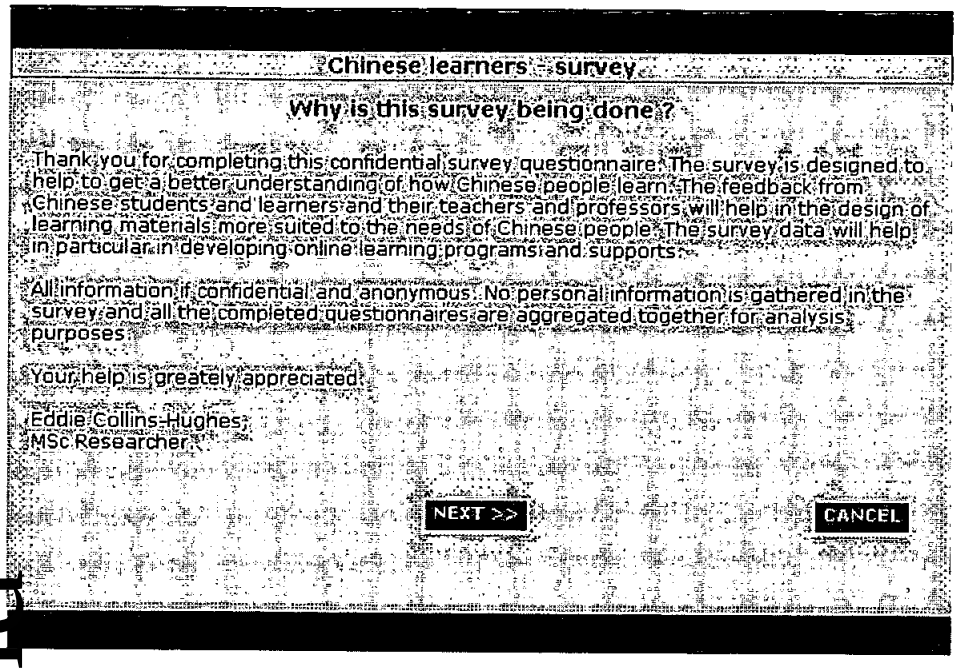

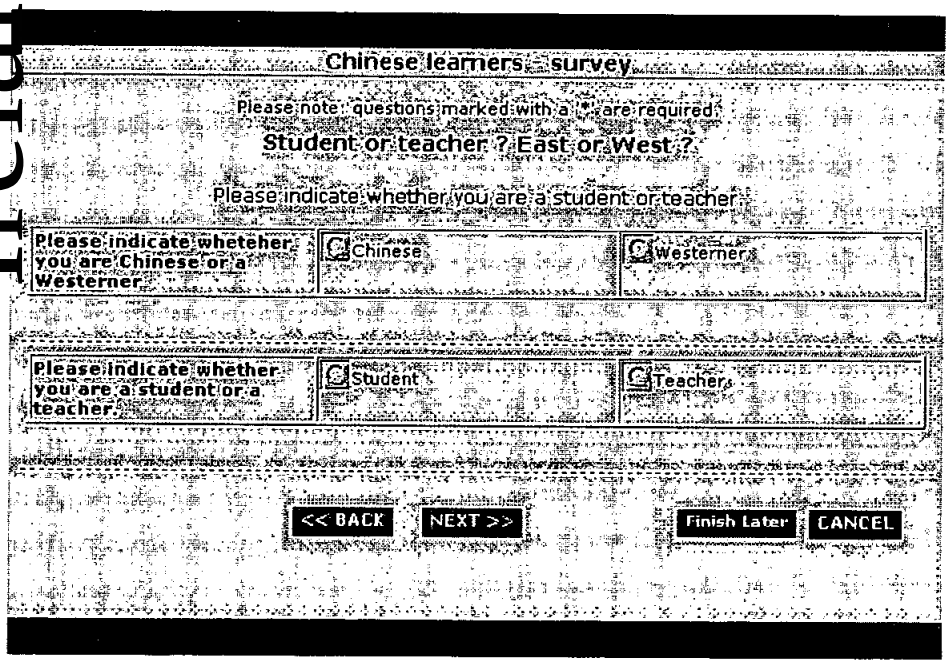

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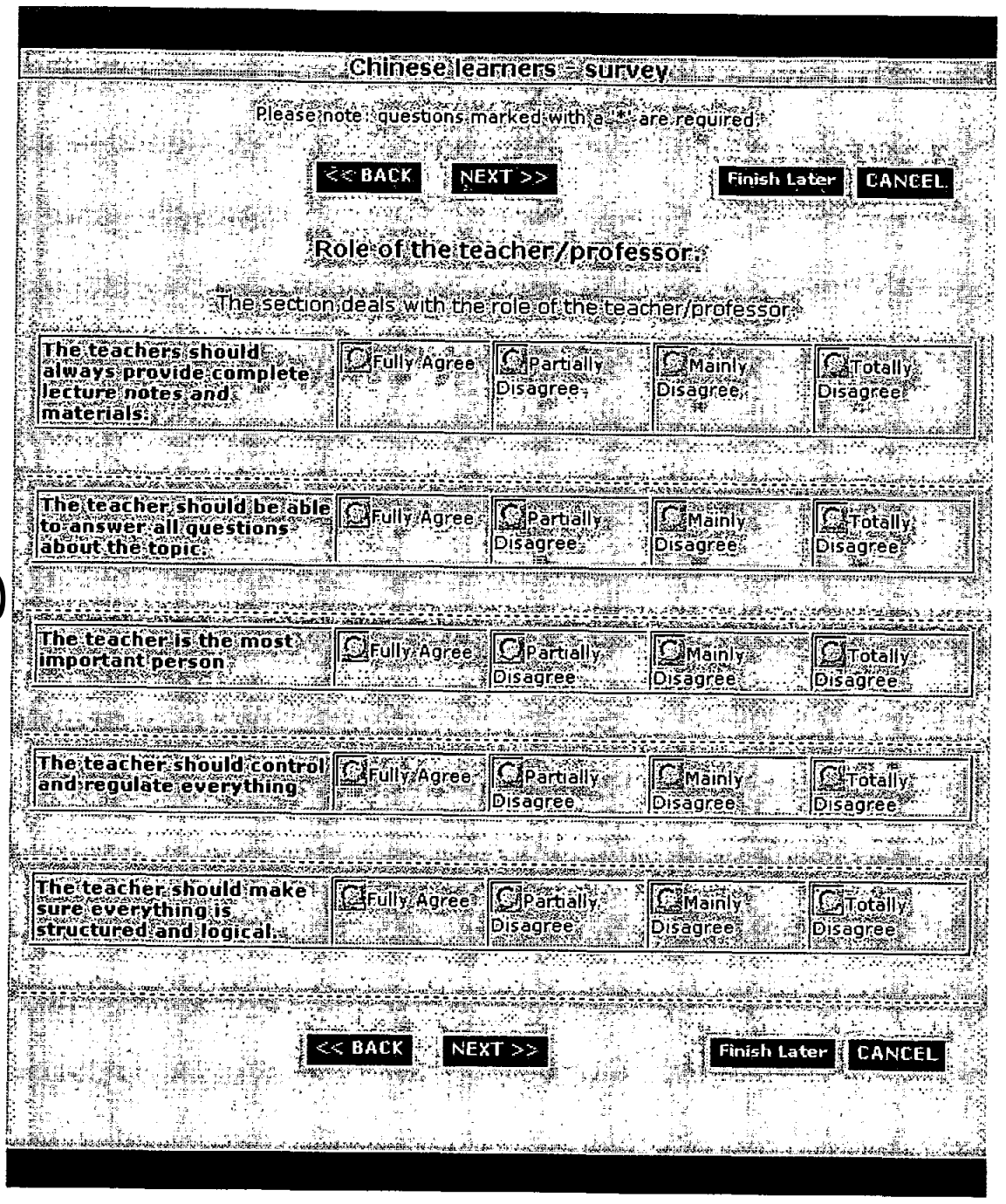

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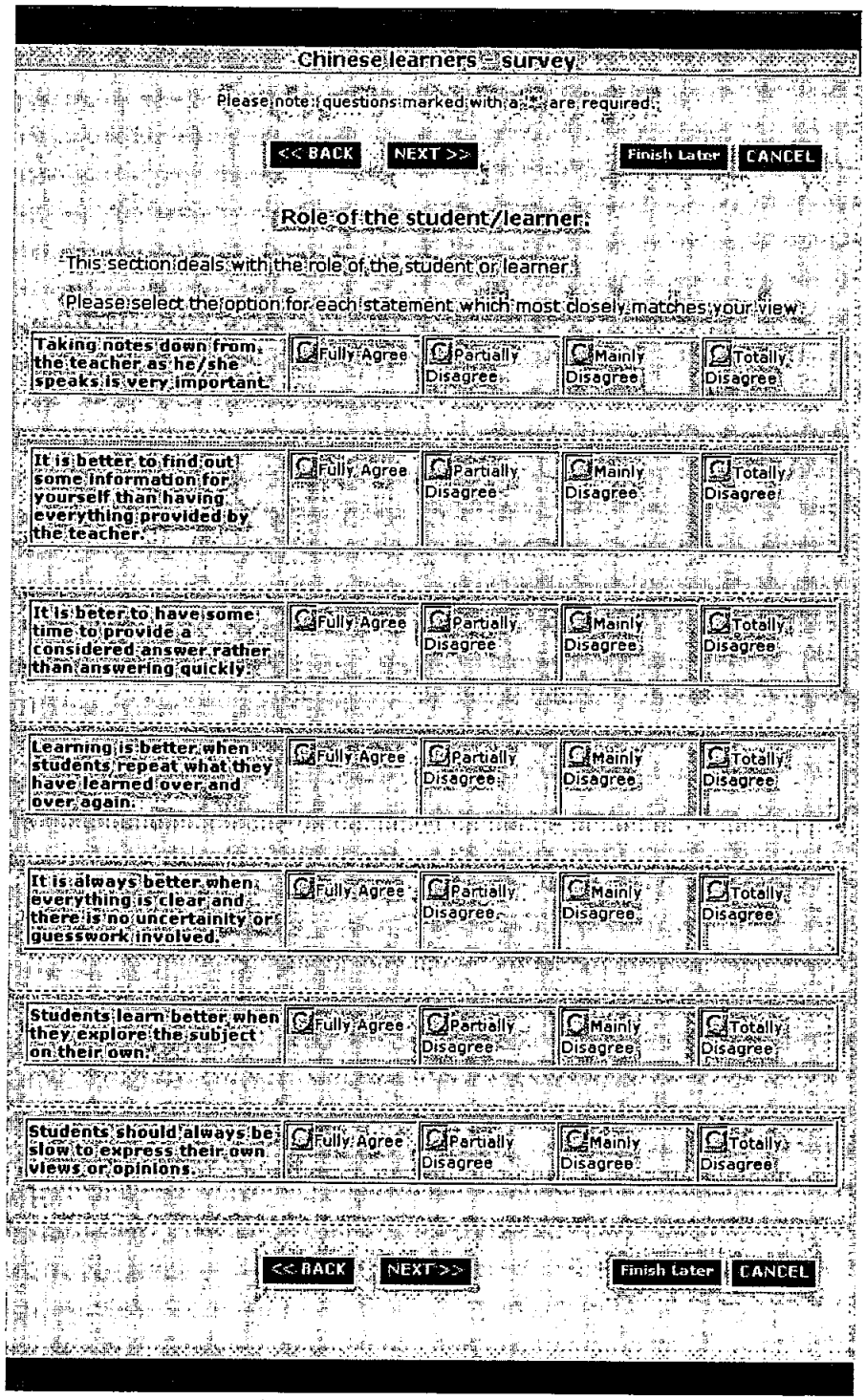

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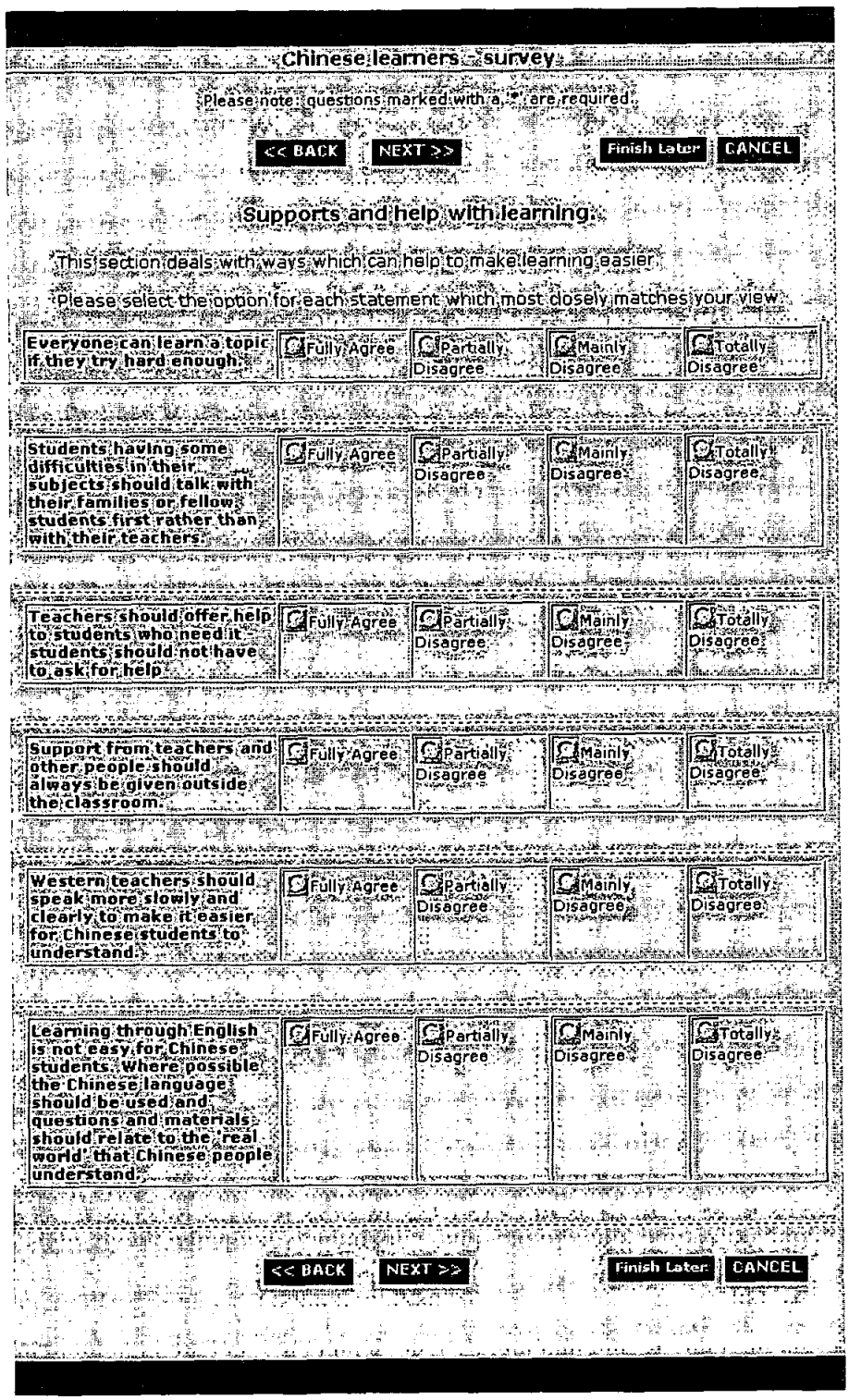

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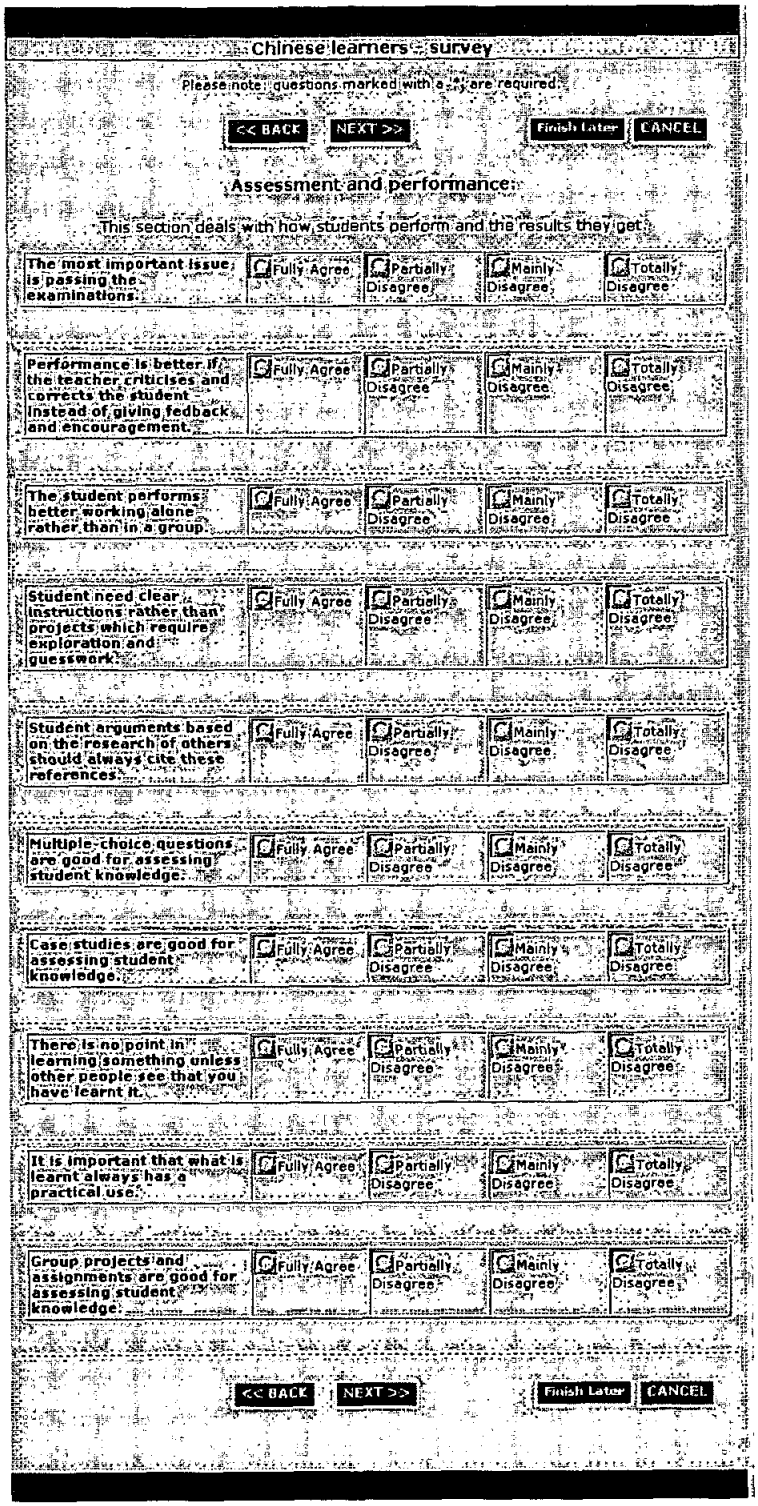

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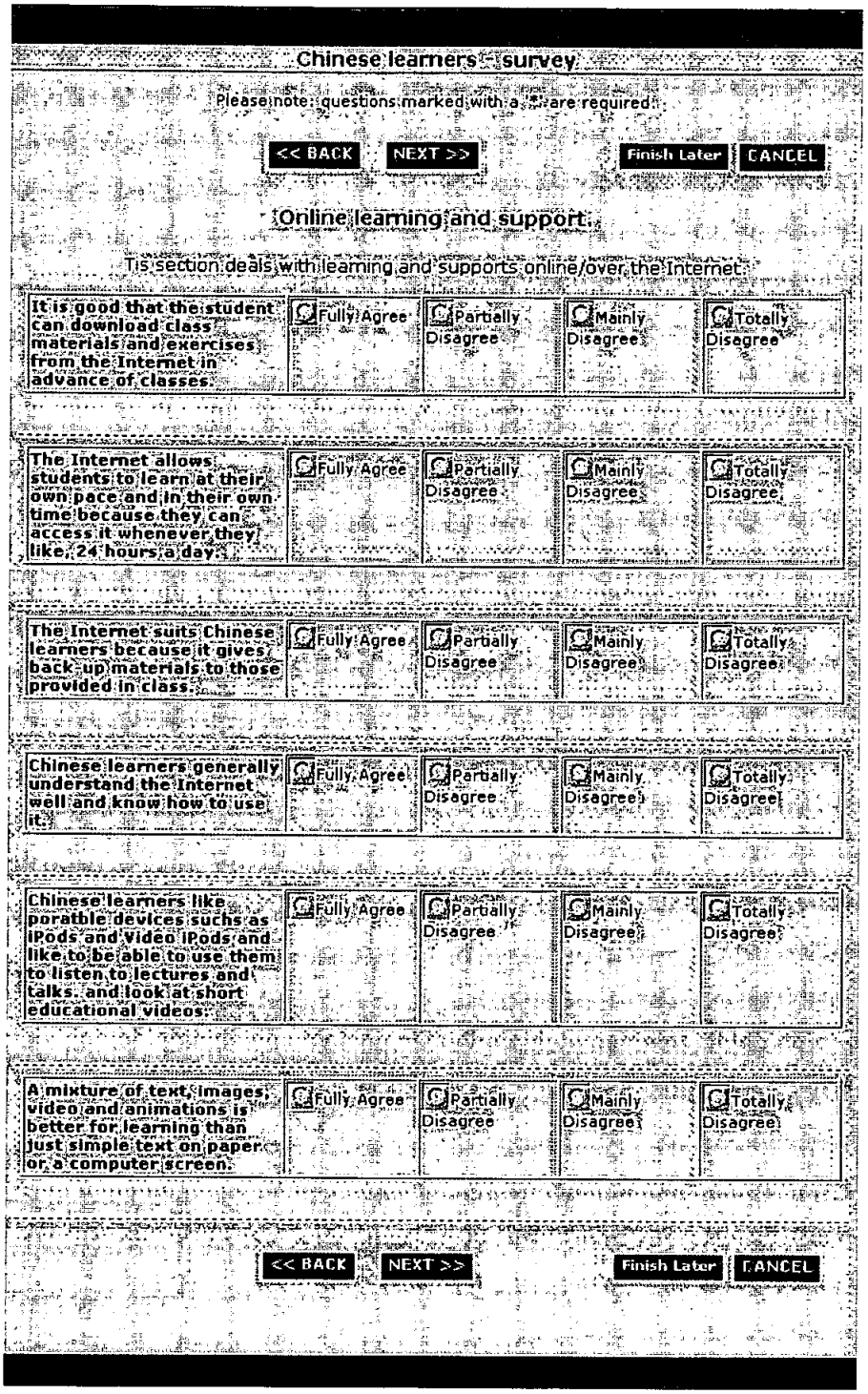

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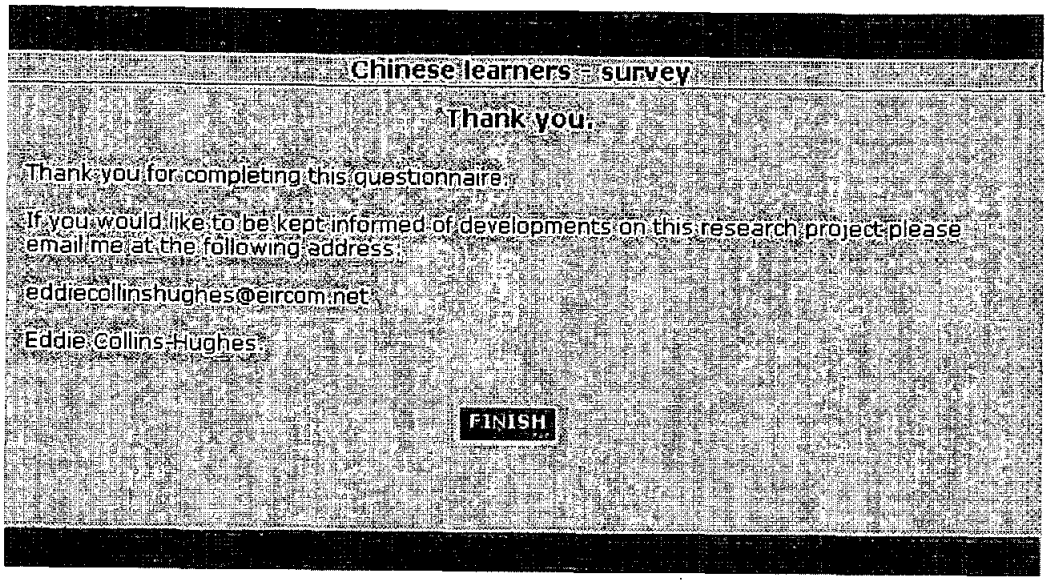

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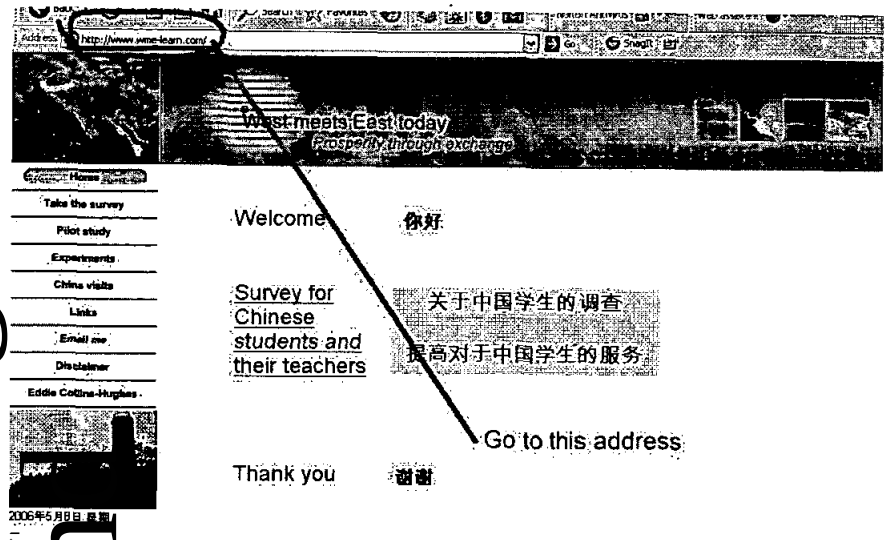
Appendix 2

Instructions for carrying out the experiment

Belbin Teamworking – Instructions

Step 1



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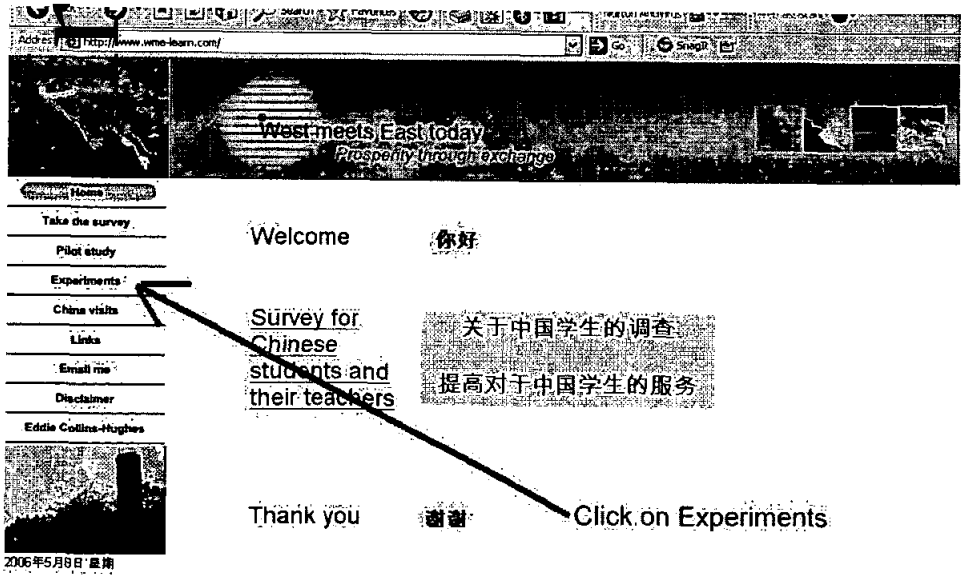

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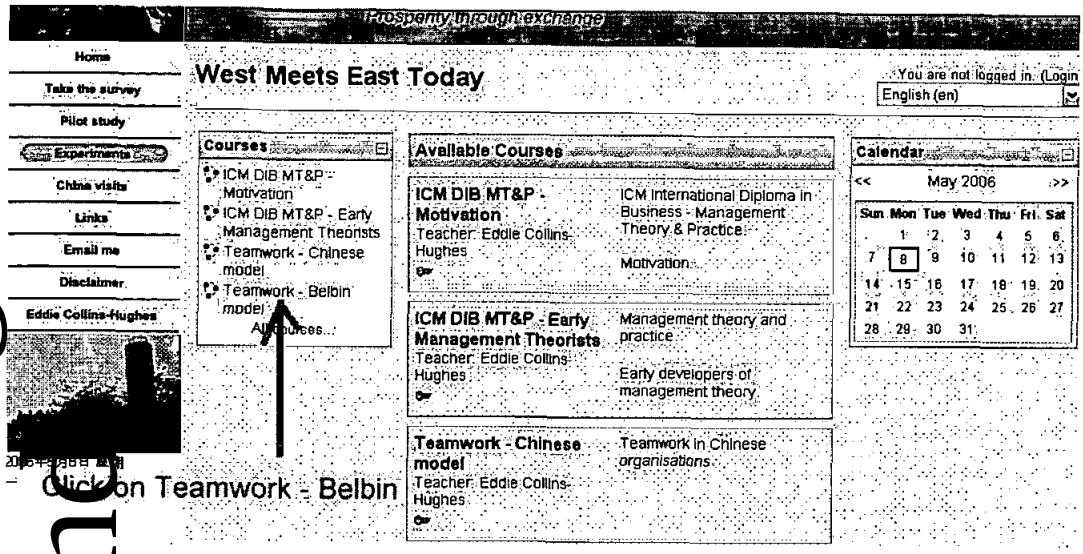

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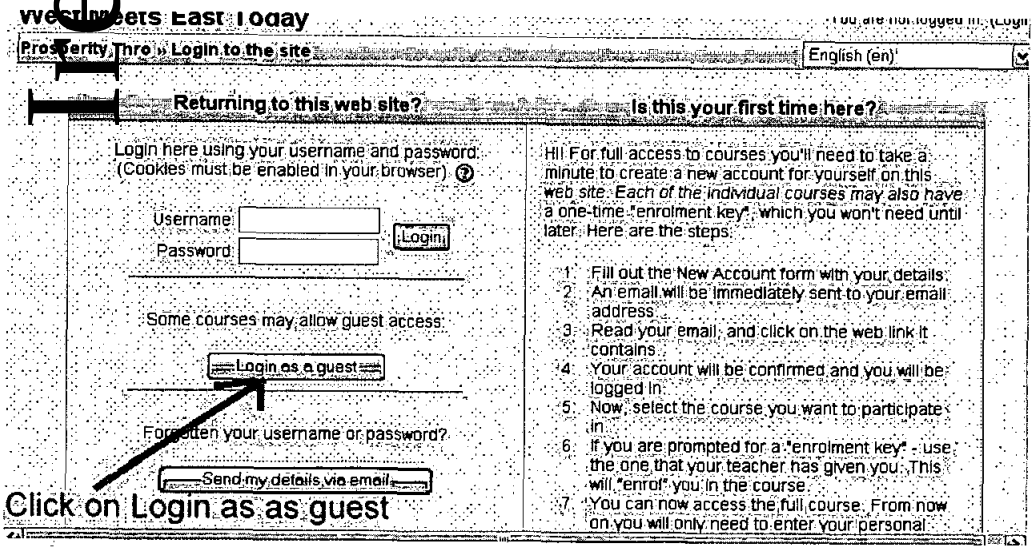

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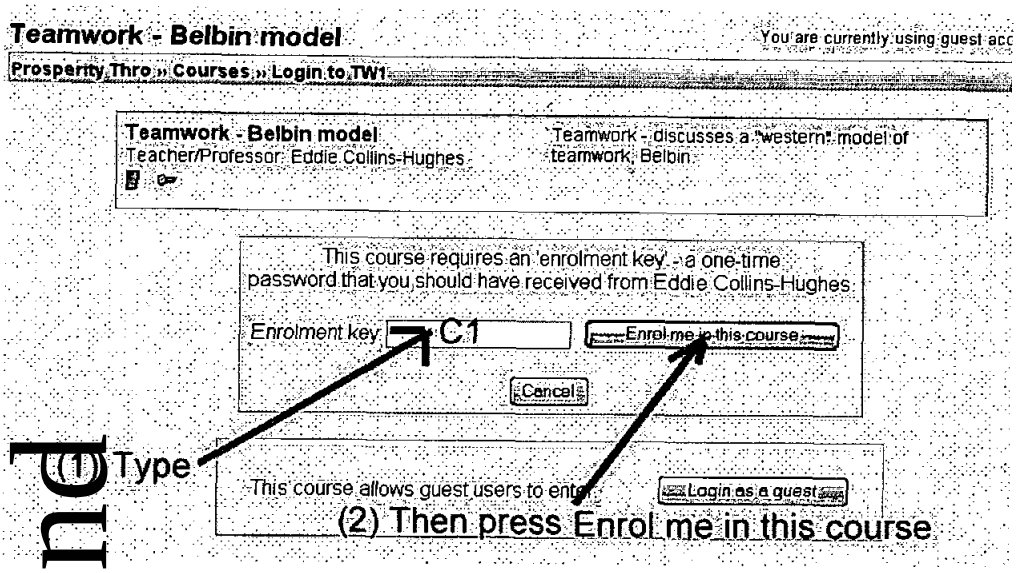
Step 5



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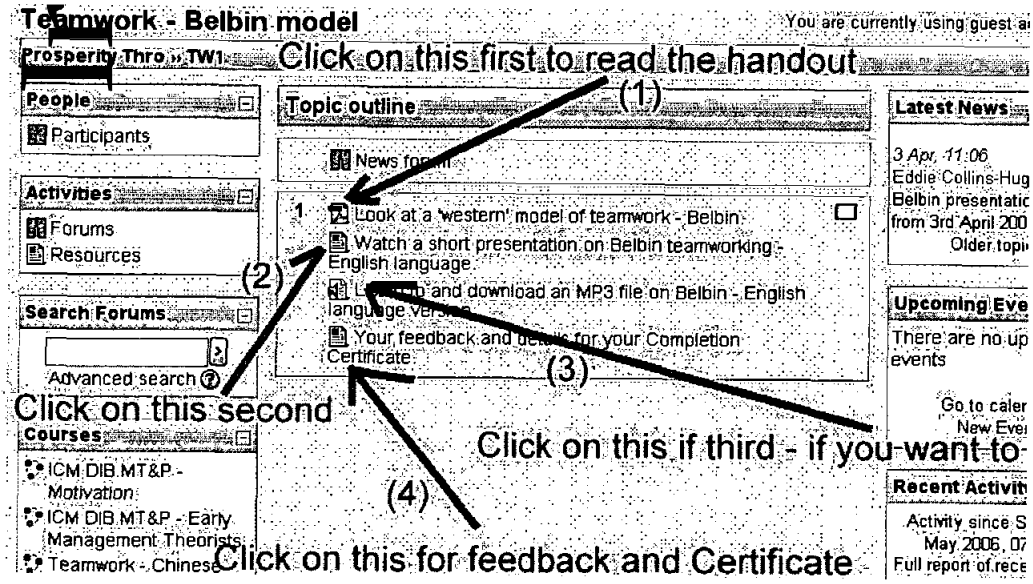
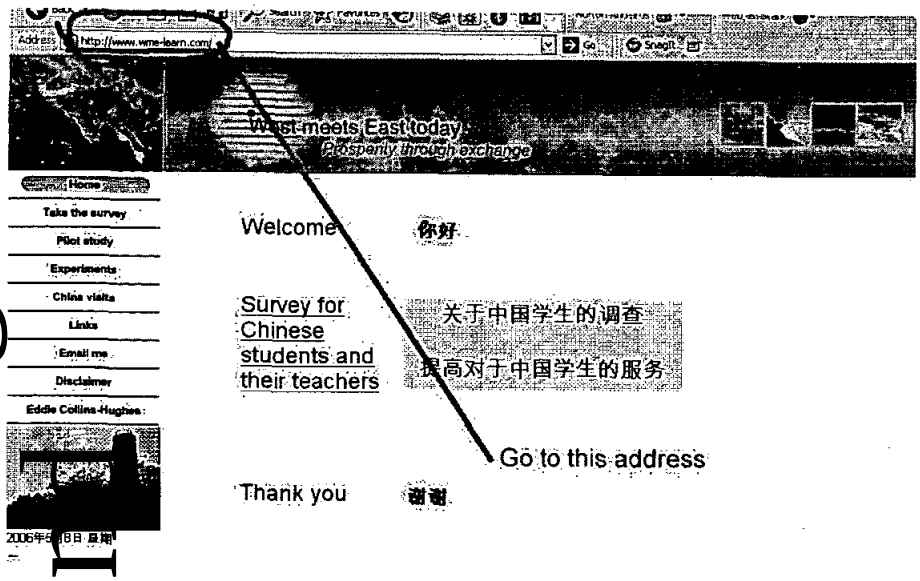


Chinese Teamworking – Instructions

Step 1



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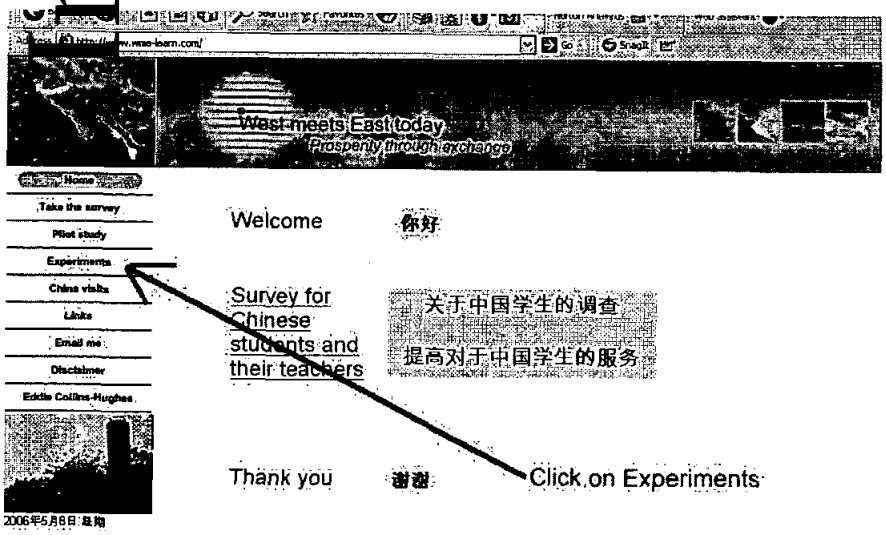

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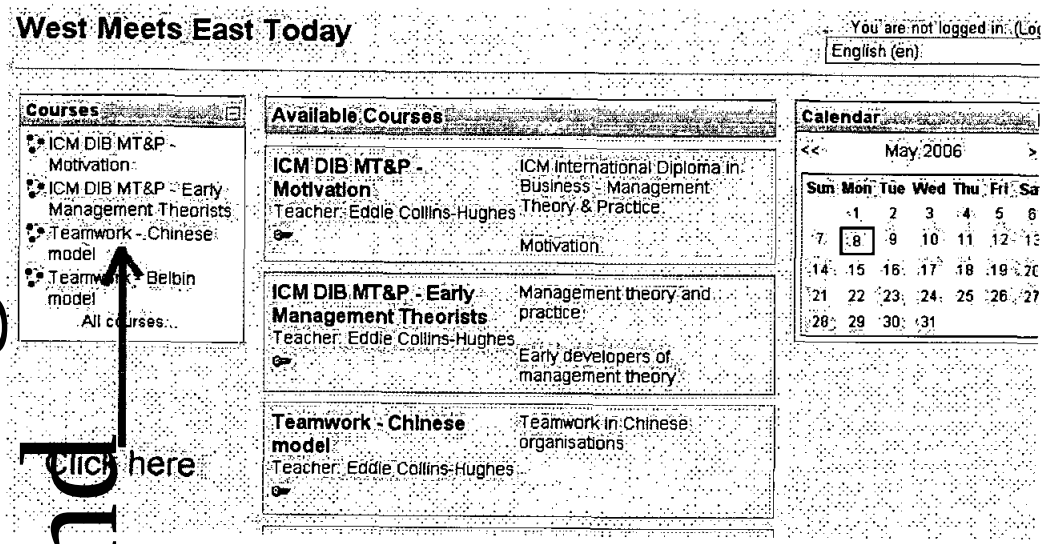

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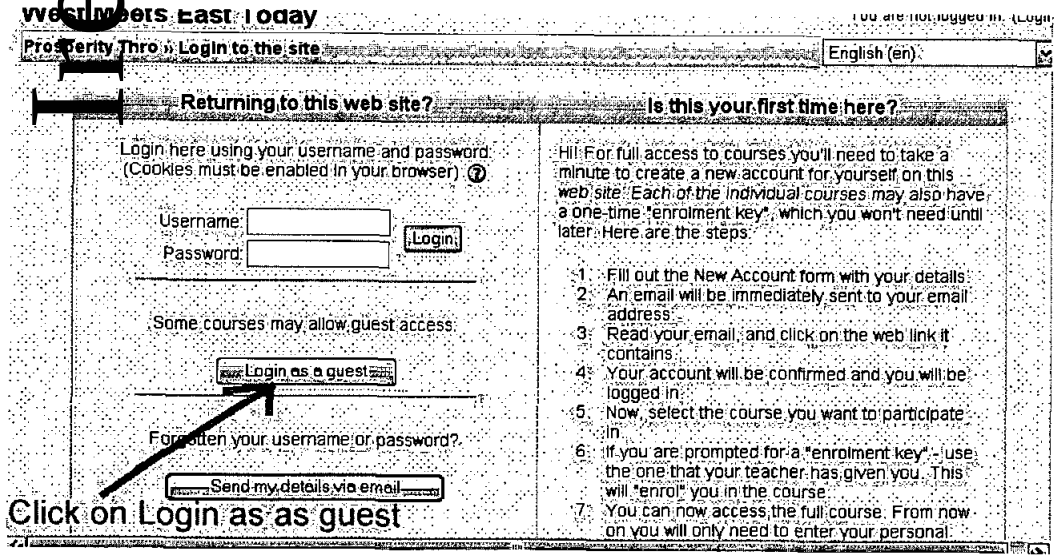

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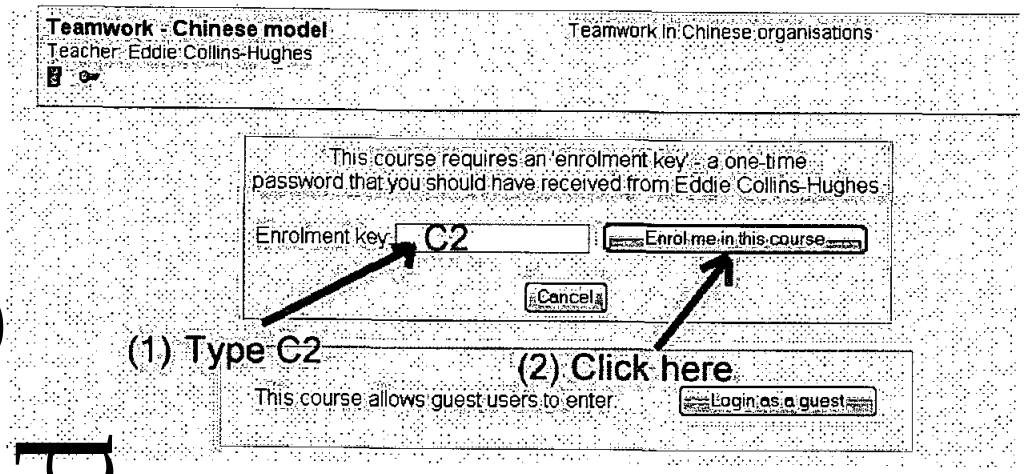

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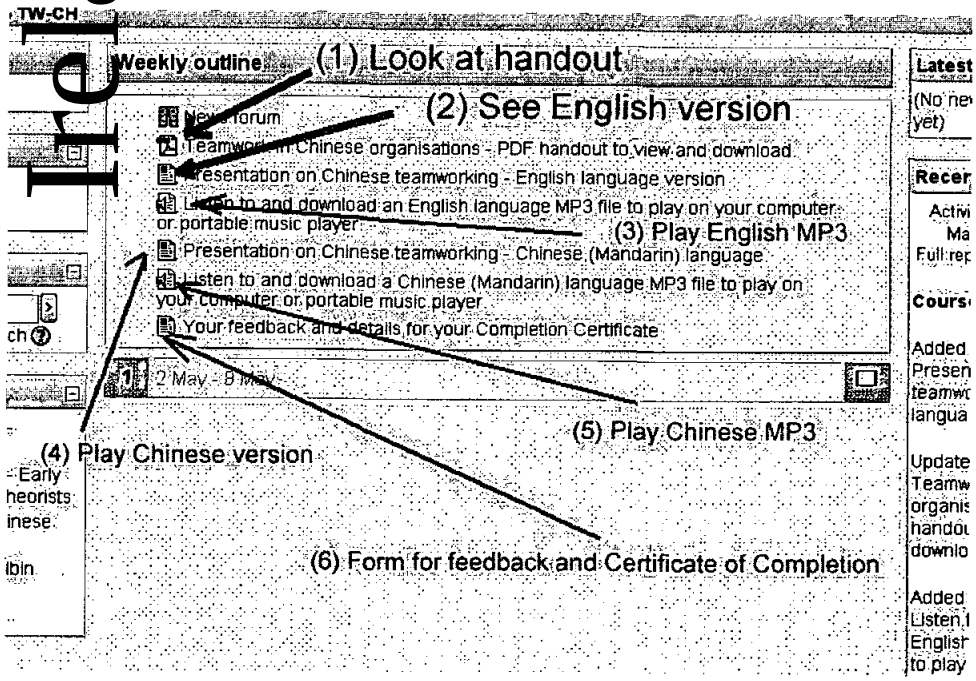

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Appendix 3

Experiment Handouts

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TEAMWORK

BELBIN'S MODEL

Of

TEAM ROLES

Eddie Collins-Hughes, April 2006

TEAMWORK – BELBIN'S MODEL

Dr L Meredith Belbin studied teams over many years and developed a theory for their success

He tells us that all successful teams are made up of a combination of individuals who perform very clear roles, which he has identified.

Eddie Collins-Hughes, April 2006

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TEAMWORK – BELBIN'S MODEL

Human being behave in various ways, depending on their core personality types, intellectual styles, and other factors.

In a team people interrelate with each other

The success of the team depend on how they do this

Eddie Collins-Hughes, April 2006

TEAMWORK – BELBIN'S MODEL

Belbin tells us that there are nine roles required for a successful team.

These are grouped into 3 clusters:-

1. Action-orientated roles
2. People-orientated roles
3. Cerebral roles

Eddie Collins-Hughes, April 2006

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TEAMWORK – BELBIN'S MODEL

1. Action-orientated roles
* Shaper,
* Implementer
* Complete Finisher

2.People-orientated roles
* Co-ordinator
* Teamworker
* Resource Investigator

3.Cerebral roles
* Plant
* Monitor-Evaluator
* Specialist

Eddie Collins-Hughes, April 2006

TEAMWORK – BELBIN'S MODEL

1. Action-orientated roles

	Contributes	Allowable Weaknesses
SHAPER	Challenging, dynamic, thrives on pressure. Has the drive and courage to overcome obstacles.	Prone to provocation. Offends peoples' feelings.
IMPLEMENTER	Disciplined, reliable, conservative and efficient. Turns ideas into practical actions.	Somewhat inflexible. Slow to respond to new possibilities.

Eddie Collins-Hughes, April 2006

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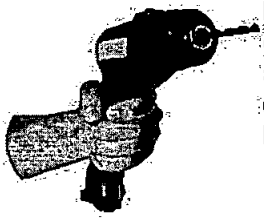
TEAMWORK – BELBIN'S MODEL

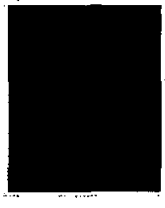
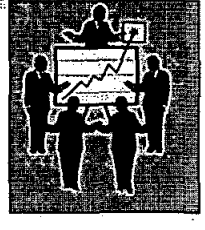
1. Action-orientated roles

	Contributes	Allowable Weaknesses
COMPLETE FINISHER 	Painstaking, conscientious, anxious. Searches out errors and omissions. Delivers on time.	Inclined to worry unduly. Reluctant to delegate.

Eddie Collins-Hughes, April 2006

TEAMWORK – BELBIN'S MODEL

2.People-orientated roles

	Contributes	Allowable Weaknesses
COORDINATOR 	Mature, confident, a good chairperson. Clarifies goals, promotes decision-making, delegates well.	Can often be seen as manipulative. Offloads personal work.
TEAM-WORKER 	Co-operative, mild, perceptive and diplomatic. Listens, builds and averts friction	Indecisive in crunch situations

Eddie Collins-Hughes, April 2006

National College of Ireland

TEAMWORK – BELBIN'S MODEL

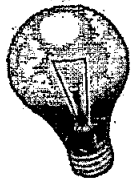
2.People-orientated roles

	Contributes	Allowable Weaknesses
RESOURCE INVESTIGATOR	Extrovert, enthusiastic, communicative. Explores opportunities. Develops contacts.	Over-optimistic. Loses interest once initial enthusiasm has passed.

Eddie Collins-Hughes, April 2006

TEAMWORK – BELBIN'S MODEL

3.Cerebral roles

	Contributes	Allowable Weaknesses
PLANT 	Creative, imaginative, unorthodox. Solves difficult problems.	Ignores incidentals. Too pre-occupied to communicate effectively.
MONITOR-EVALUATOR	Sober, strategic and discerning. Sees all options. Judges accurately.	Lacks drive and the ability to inspire others.

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TEAMWORK – BELBIN'S MODEL

3.Cerebral roles

SPECIALIST	Contributes	Allowable Weaknesses
	Single-minded, self-starting, dedicated. Provides knowledge and skills in rare supply.	Contributes only on a narrow front. Dwells on technicalities.

Eddie Collins-Hughes, April 2006

TEAMWORK – BELBIN'S MODEL

Identifying roles – who's who ?

There are a number of ways that the roles can be determined:

- Self-perception tests: these are only as good as the person's capacity to be objective about themselves
- Roles as perceived by others: various exercises and tests can be performed to help to arrive at an agreed perception of the person's role

Eddie Collins-Hughes, April 2006

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TEAMWORK – BELBIN'S MODEL

Can we change our roles ?

It is usually not easy to change a person's role in the shorter term.

Some people may be able to perform more than one role at a time

With concentrated effort a person can adapt or modify their role(s) to suit the circumstances.

Eddie Collins-Hughes, April 2006

TEAMWORK – BELBIN'S MODEL

Balancing roles with each other

Plant – great for new ideas, some of which won't work	→	Monitor-Evaluator – calmly analyses which can work
Resource Investigator – finds out what's going on and negotiates good deals	→	Complete Finisher – looks after all the fine details when Resource Investigator gets bored
Shaper – loads of initiative, drive and energy	→	Team Worker – good diplomat and soothes bruised egos
Coordinator – provides direction and leadership	→	Implementer – turns ideas into practical action and ensures delegated work gets done

Eddie Collins-Hughes, April 2006

National College of Ireland

TEAMWORK – BELBIN'S MODEL

Potential Problems

Lack of clarity: people must be clear on what their role is

Personal strengths: roles should be matched to personal strengths

Perception: how people perceive themselves and how others perceive them may be quite different

Scope: people need to be able to develop additional skills to allow them to fill new roles in the future

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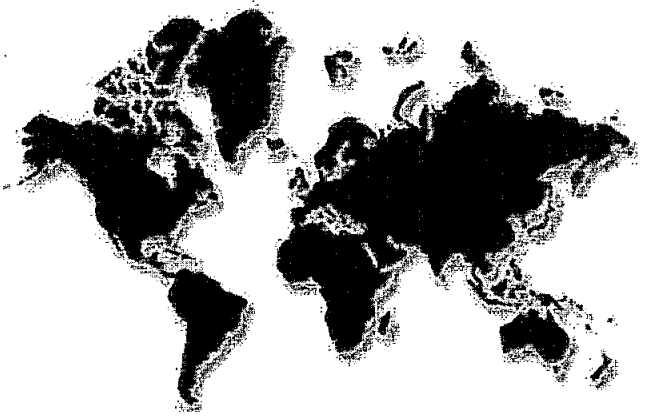
NOTE:- The early part of this presentation is adapted from a presentation by Yawen Ludden, University of Kentucky & David Ludden, Lindsay Wilson College, USA.

CHINESE TEAMWORKING 合作

Eddie Collins-Hughes, April 2006

CHINESE TEAMWORKING 合作



East and West are different in the way we see and do things.
东方和西方看问题和做事情的角度不同

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CHINESE TEAMWORKING 合作
CHINA

- Ancient culture and history
- Guanxi - personal relationships
- Renqing – human feelings in relationships
- Keqi – humility/modesty/courtesy/politeness
- 古代文化和历史
- 关系---人际交往
- 人情---交往过程中的人类感情
- 客气---谦逊/谦虚/有礼的举止/礼貌

Eddie Collins-Hughes, April 2006

CHINESE TEAMWORKING 合作
IRELAND 爱尔兰

- Island nation steeped in history
- Individual initiative is fostered and rewarded
- Task-centred, open communication styles
- Equality and pluralism with social obligations
- 历史丰富的岛国
- 鼓励与奖赏个人自发性
- 交流方式公开,以任务为中心
- 社会义务平等及多样化

Eddie Collins-Hughes, April 2006

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CHINESE TEAMWORKING 合作
CHINESE PEOPLE – CULTURAL VALUES
中国人文化价值观

- Punctual – but unhurried
- Personal relationships come before business
- Know and trust people before dealing
- Legal agreements mean less than relationships
- 准时–但不急
- 个人关系先于工作
- 做生意前,了解与信任为基础
- 法定合同没有个人关系重要

Eddie Collins-Hughes, April 2006

CHINESE TEAMWORKING 合作
IRISH PEOPLE – CULTURAL VALUES
爱尔兰人文化价值观

- Punctual – and see lateness as disrespectful
- Time is scarce – get down to business quickly
- Personal relationships separate from business
- Trust is enforced by legal agreements
- 准时–视迟到为不尊重的表现
- 珍惜时间–很快谈生意
- 个人关系与生意分开谈
- 信任建立在法定合同的基础上

Eddie Collins-Hughes, April 2006

National College of Ireland

CHINESE TEAMWORKING 合作
CHINESE PEOPLE – RELATIONSHIPS
中国人—人际关系

- Long-term relationships instead of short-term deals.
- Trust leads to best relationships.
- Negotiation involves many people collectively
- 长期关系取代短期交易
- 互相信任形成最好的关系
- 很多人卷入谈判

Eddie Collins-Hughes, April 2006

CHINESE TEAMWORKING 合作
IRISH PEOPLE – RELATIONSHIPS
爱尔兰人—人际关系

- Aim is to get the best deal.
- Is partner competent to deliver in highly competitive market ?
- Corporate relationship may lead to social relationship in time.
- 目标是取得最好的交易结果
- 合作伙伴是否胜任竞争激烈的市场环境?
- 合作关系也许会及时导致社会关系

Eddie Collins-Hughes, April 2006

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CHINESE TEAMWORKING 合作
CHINESE PEOPLE – PRACTICES/ETIQUETTE
中国人—惯例/礼节

- Shake hands only if other person offers first
- Exchange business cards and read carefully
- Offer small gift/engage in small talk
- Remain formal in using names
- A head nod means 'I hear you' – not 'I agree'
- 只有当别人先和你握手的时候,你才和别人握手
- 仔细看所交换的名片
- 递送小礼品时使用非正式谈话
- 称呼上很正式
- 点头的意思是'我明白了'或'我在听你说'

Eddie Collins-Hughes, April 2006

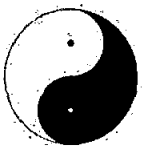
CHINESE TEAMWORKING 合作
IRISH PEOPLE – PRACTICES/ETIQUETTE 爱尔兰人–惯例/礼节

- Shake hands at start and end of meeting
- Business cards are for reminders only
- Mind is kept on the deal
- Quickly move to informality/first names
- Small talk about the weather means nothing !
- 见面开始和结束的时候握手
- 名片只作为提醒用
- 思想放在交易上
- 很快使用非正式的名字称呼
- 关于天气的非正式谈话没有任何特殊意义

Eddie Collins-Hughes, April 2006

National College of Ireland

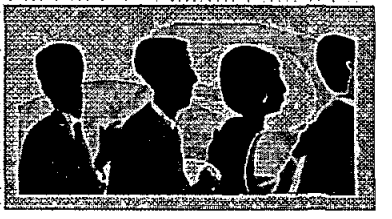
CHINESE TEAMWORKING 合作
CONFUCIAN/DAOIST/TAOIST PRINCIPLES IN TEAMWORK
孔夫子/道子/老子的合作原则



孝經 **Filial Piety**

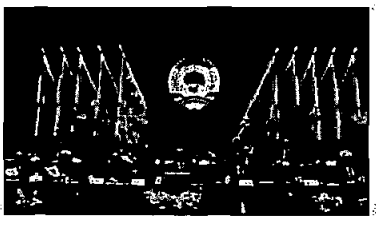
中庸 **Doctrine of the Mean**

大學 **The Great Learning**



Eddie Collins-Hughes, April 2006

CHINESE TEAMWORKING 合作
FILIAL PIETY/HIERARCHIAL AUTHORITY
孝经



孝經 **Filial Piety**

It is the responsibility of those at the top of the organisation to make wise decisions and care for everyone else. In turn they are entitled to the loyalty of everyone in the organisation and they must work together to achieve its goals.

高层领导有责任做英明决定,照顾其他人.同时,其他人应该忠诚于领导,共同合作,达到目标.

Eddie Collins-Hughes, April 2006

National College of Ireland

CHINESE TEAMWORKING 合作
HARMONIOUS RELATIONSHIPS & FACE WORK
和谐关系和面子

People work together to improve the reputation/face of the senior people in the organisation, the organisation and themselves.

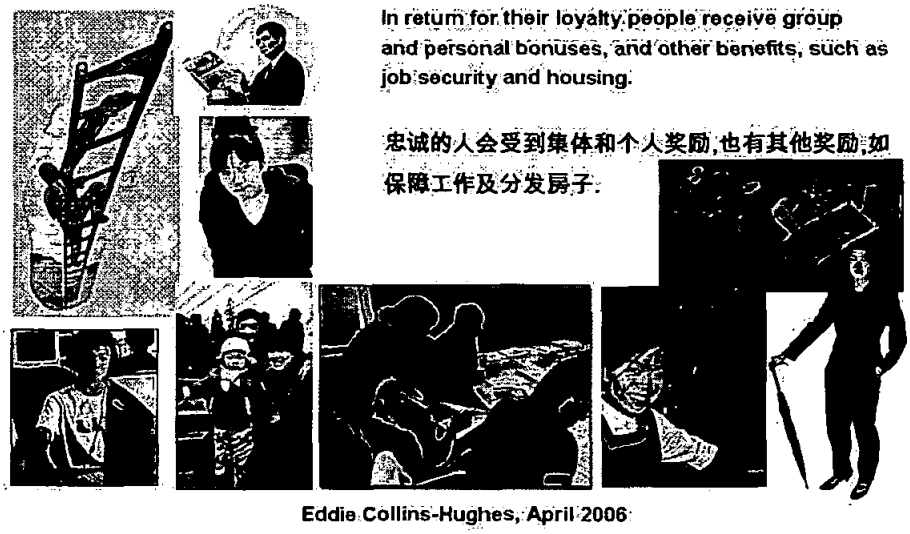
Harmonious relationships are very important.

大家共同合作提高组织机构内领导,组织及他们自己的声望与面子.

关系和谐非常重要.

Eddie Collins-Hughes, April 2006

CHINESE TEAMWORKING 合作
PEOPLE ARE REWARDED FOR LOYALTY AND RELATIONSHIPS
忠诚及关系好的人受奖赏



In return for their loyalty people receive group and personal bonuses, and other benefits, such as job security and housing.

忠诚的人会受到集体和个人奖励,也有其他奖励,如保障工作及分发房子.

Eddie Collins-Hughes, April 2006

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CHINESE TEAMWORKING 合作

谢谢

Thank You

Eddie Collins-Hughes, April 2006

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Appendix 4

Tao's 12 Golden Standards

and

12 Golden Safeguards.

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The 12 golden standards Low reminds us are as follows:

(a) be a good judge of character – and know who can be trusted. This is based on one's words, demeanour and actions;

(b) be customer-orientated – have the right attitude to customers and their satisfaction;

(c) be single-minded – stick with the chosen product or service line and don't change them arbitrarily. Be sincere. Work hard to study the marketplace and build up your knowledge. Too many products or services leads to poor management and loss of competitiveness;

(d) be captivating in sales promotion – keep an interesting and varied showcase of products/services for your customers. Keep constantly re-activating and updating your image and style to keep customers interested;

(e) be quick to respond – do not hesitate. Seize opportunities quickly when they present themselves. Change as you must to take up these opportunities;

(f) be vigilant in credit control – urgently collect outstanding debts. Good cash flows are crucial for business success. Make is as easy as possible for customers to pay you;

(g) be selective to recruit only the best – and assign work to match peoples' abilities to optimise productivity. Give employees room for growth and do not interfere much in their work;

(h) be bold in marketing the product – find bold and new ways of promoting your products and concentrate on your unique selling points. Tell the customers the value of your product to them to help you close the sale;

(i) be smart in product acquisition – be thorough in only stocking goods which have a high turnover. Only deal in quality goods – sometimes things can be too cheap – there has to be something wrong with them. Stay away from these;

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(j) be adept in analysing market opportunities – do market research to know what to buy and sell at the right time;

(k) be a corporate model – personally abide by company rules and regulations to instill confidence and trust in you. Taking the lead in these areas helps to improve trust and personal and business relationships; and

(l) be far-sighted in developing a total business plan. You need to be able to recognise market trends and implement policies and plans that are sensitive to these.

The 12 golden safeguards Low reminds us are as follows:

(a) don't be penny-pinching – invest in public relations and social concerns. Your status increases as you are seen to give something back to society – and further business opportunities flow from these actions;

(b) don't be wishy-washy – a lack of resolve will lead to stagnations. Take decisions and follow them through – otherwise you are wasting your time and money;

(c) don't be ostentatious – spend only when costs are justified. There's no point in being so generous to others that it hurts yourself;

(d) don't be dishonest – cheating and profiteering often courts disaster – some day – maybe not immediately – but you can never be sure;

(e) don't delay in collecting money owed to you – as failure to collect debts encourages others and leads to more bad debts. Don't give up in any battle of strength between creditor and debtor;

(f) don't slash prices arbitrarily – as dropping prices to deal with competitors means you may not be able to get sufficient margins in the future to sustain your business;

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(g) don't give in to herd instinct – by following what other people are doing you are not using your own sound, independent judgement. You may end up buying when everyone else is buying (at higher prices) and selling when everyone else is selling (lower prices);

(h) don't work against the business cycle – timelines are crucial in business. Get to know all aspects of the market – supply, demand and prices. Stay out when others are crowding in for example;

(i) don't be a 'stick-in-the-mud' – know what's going on in your environment and how these things can negatively impact on you. Don't over concentrate on just your main competitor(s) – but watch everything that is happening and devise strategies and tactics which suit you regardless of what they are doing;

(j) don't overbuy on credit – even when interest rates are low and credit is freely available. You may not be able to comfortably make the payments - especially if interest rates go up – and your cash flows could be severely damaged;

(k) don't under-save, keep reserve funds strong – as you can stock up goods from your own money when prices are low. When you buy at this point you know that prices can only rise again – and you will be a winner;

(l) don't blindly endorse a product – novelty values wears off in due course and customers will expect real value for their money. This will either be in the form of very high product quality or reduced prices

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APPENDIX 5

QUESTIONNAIRE

RESULTS

CHARTS

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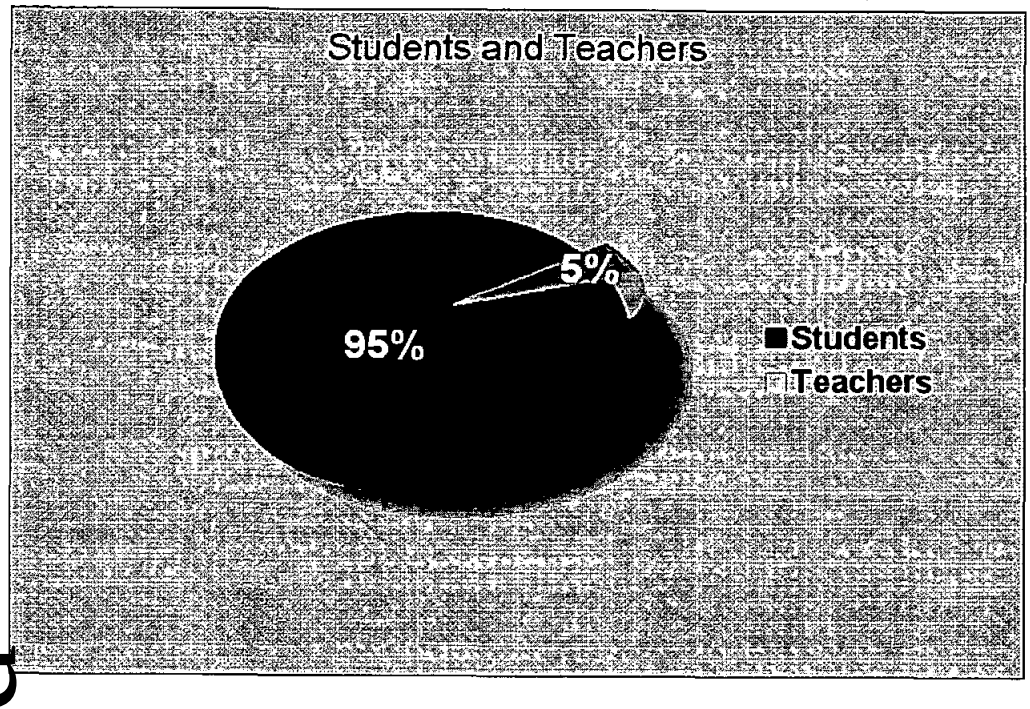

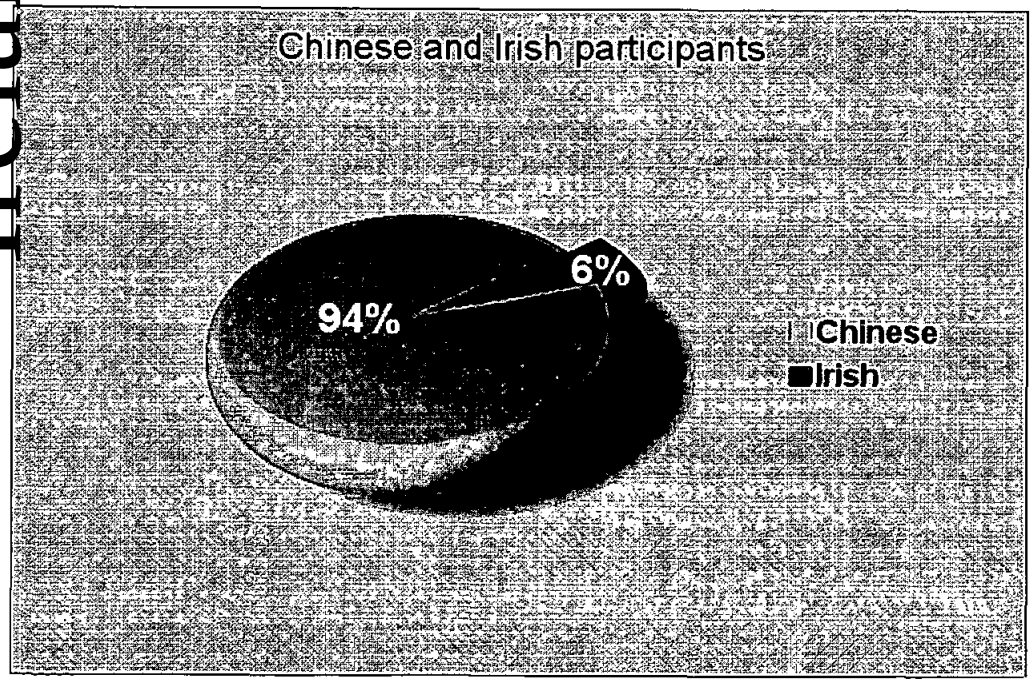

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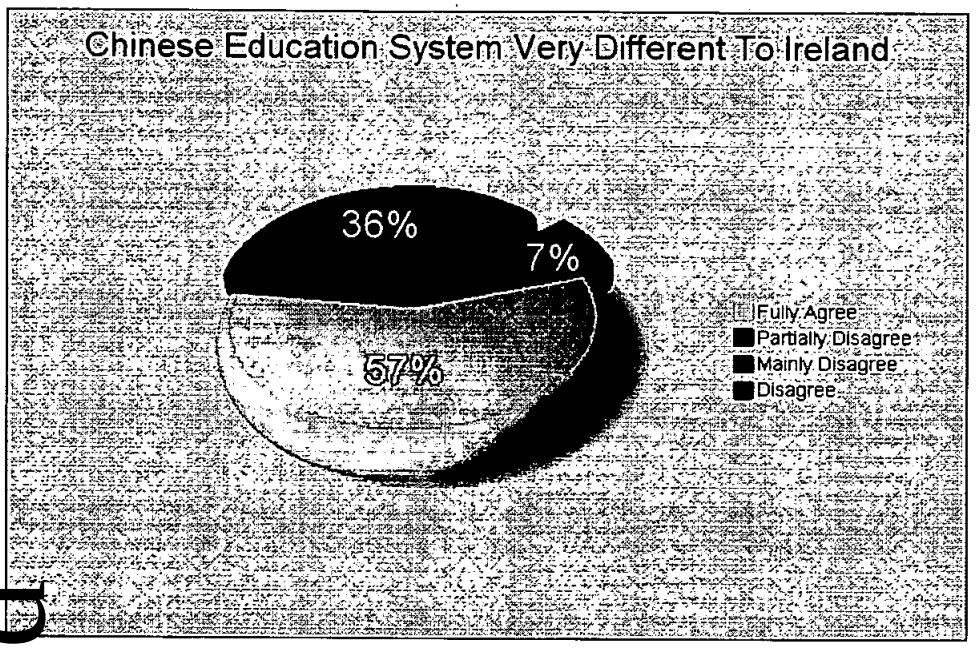

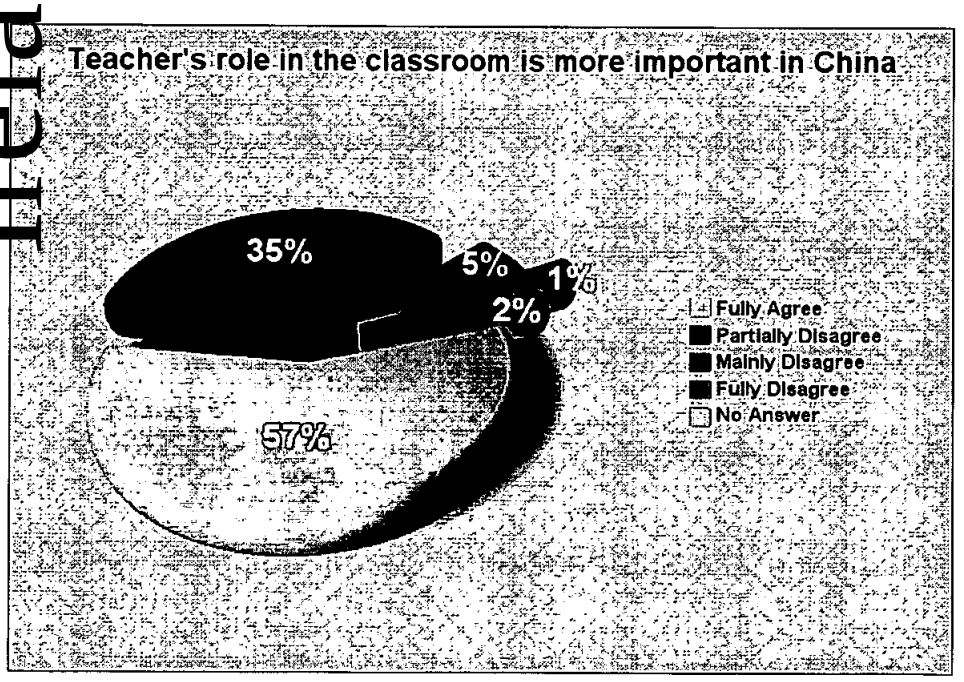

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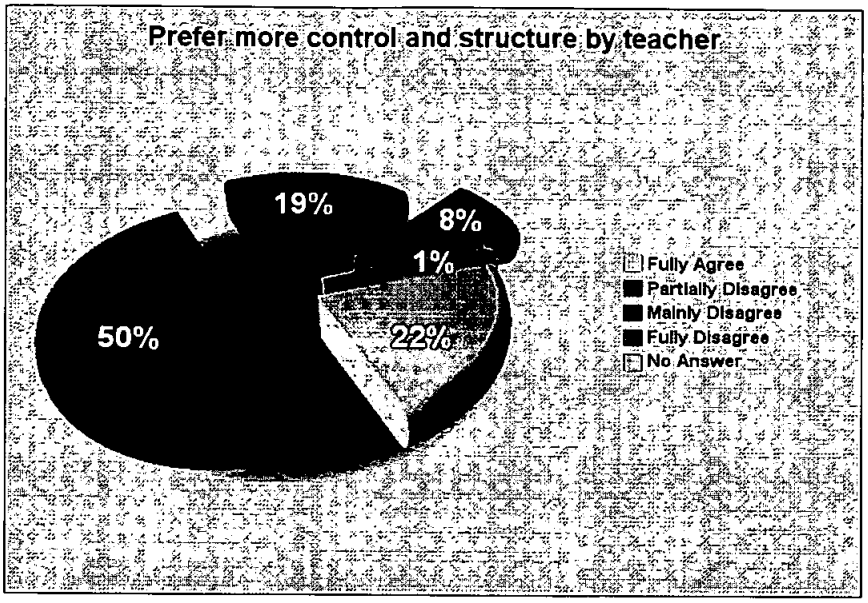

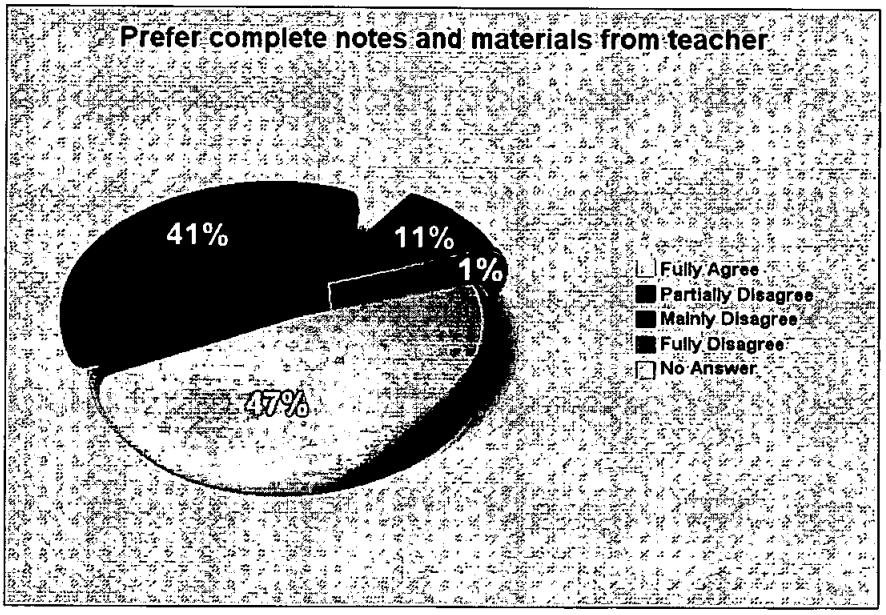

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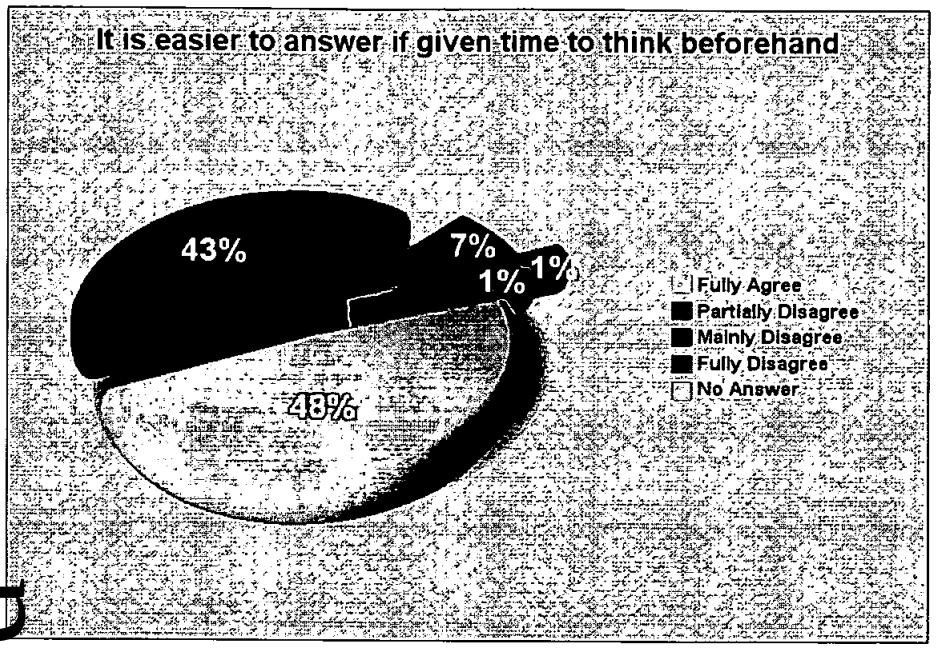

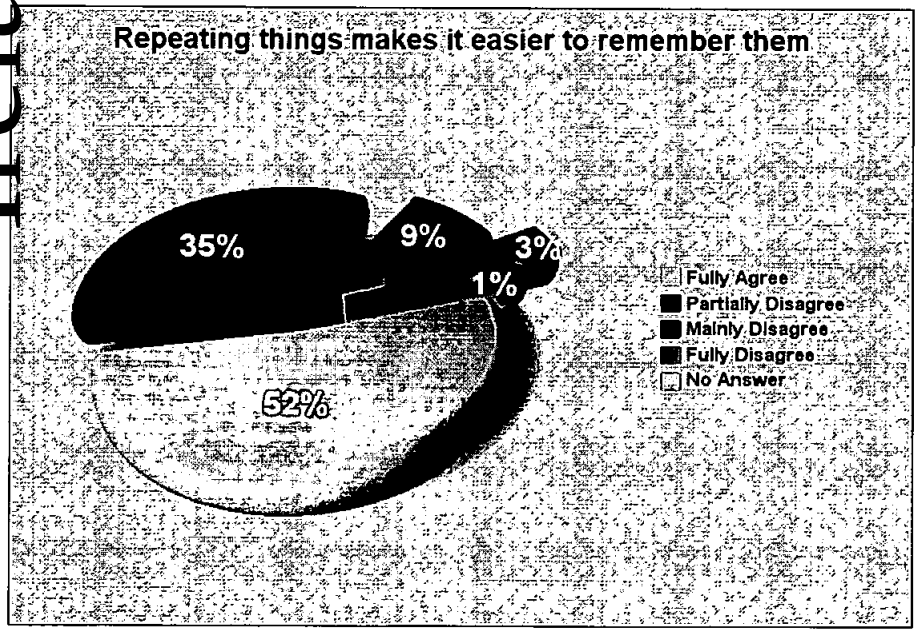

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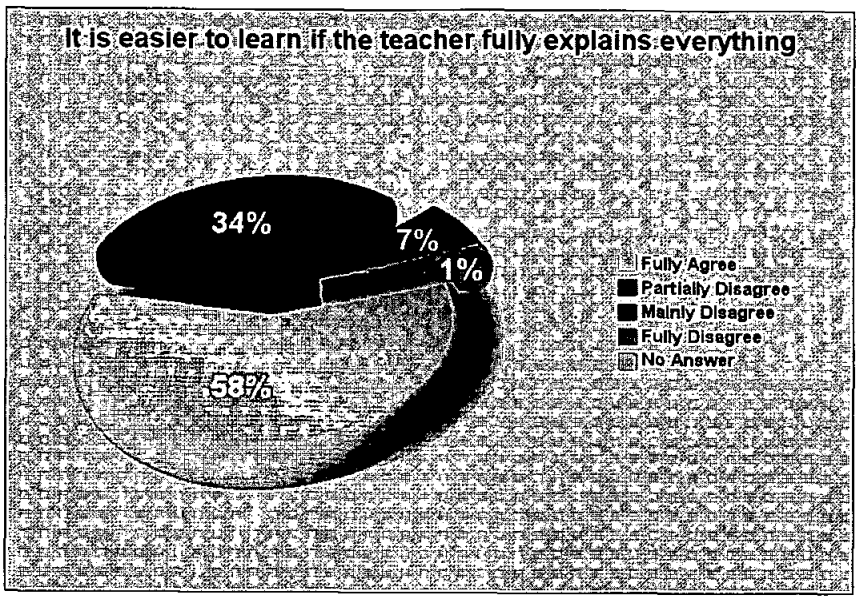

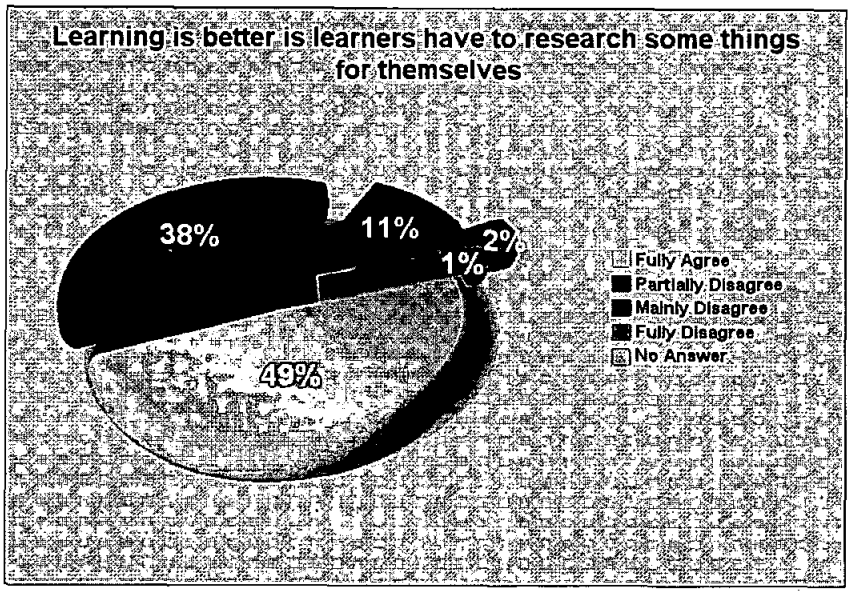

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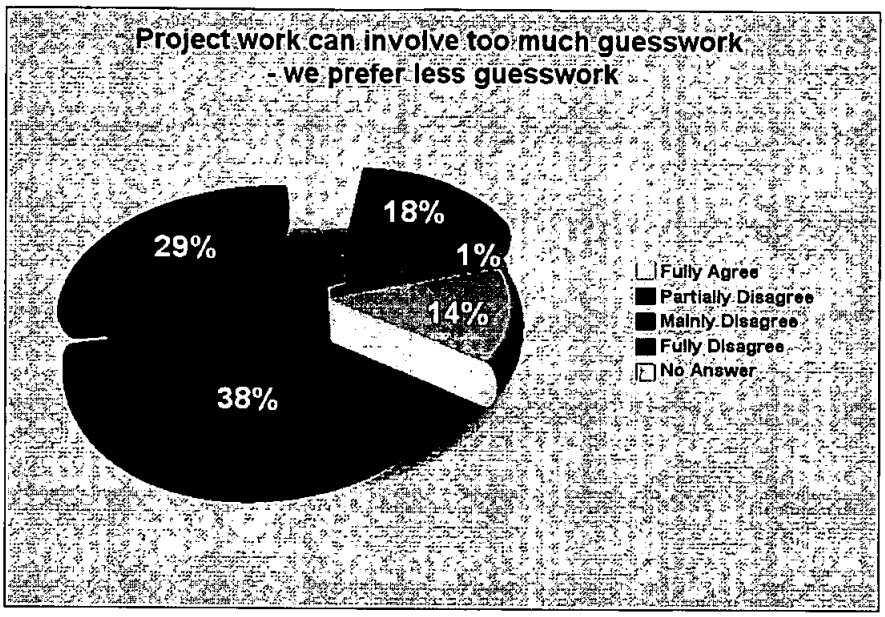

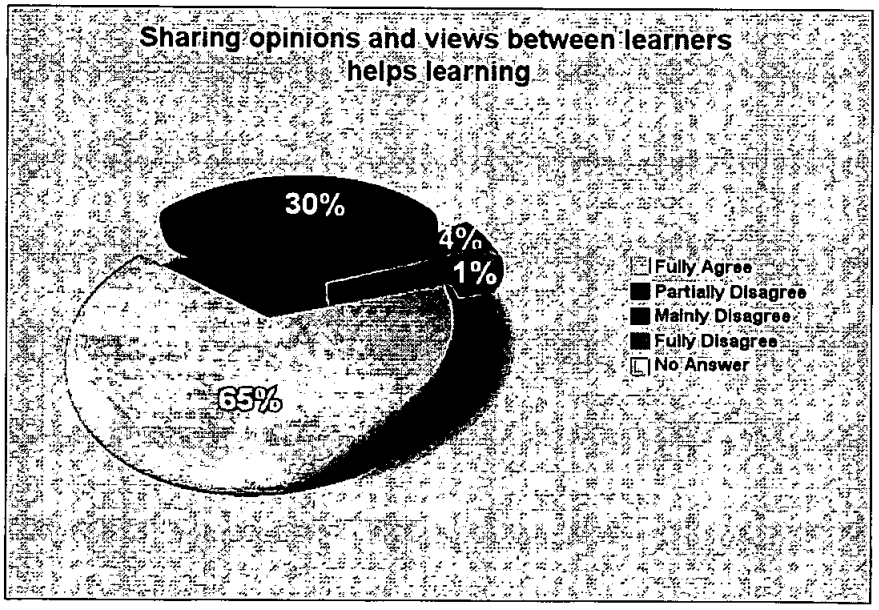

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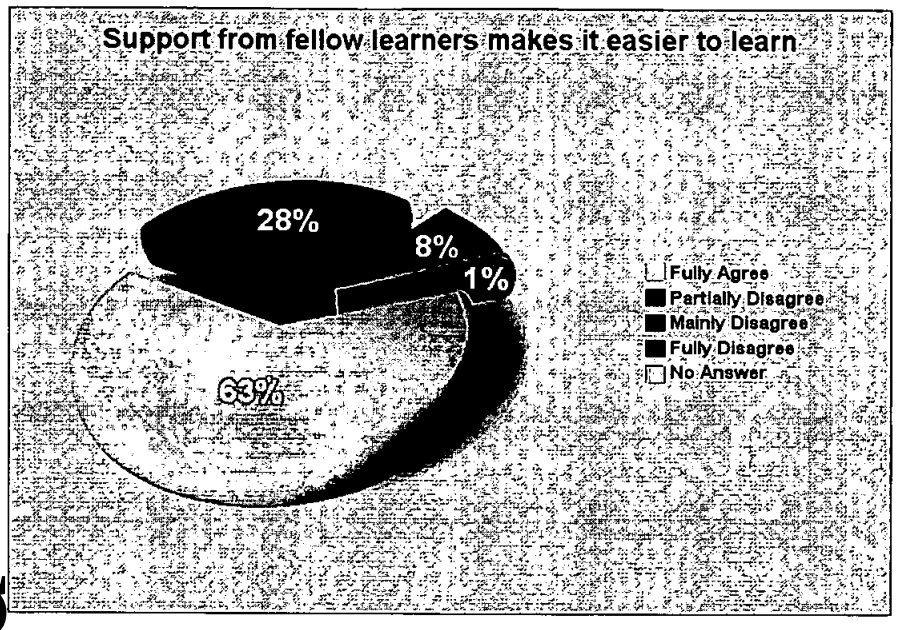

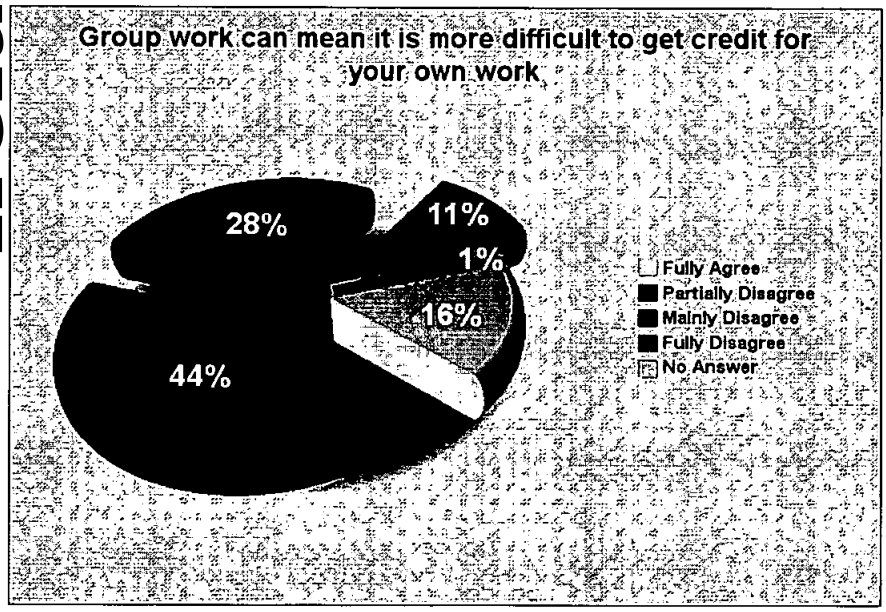

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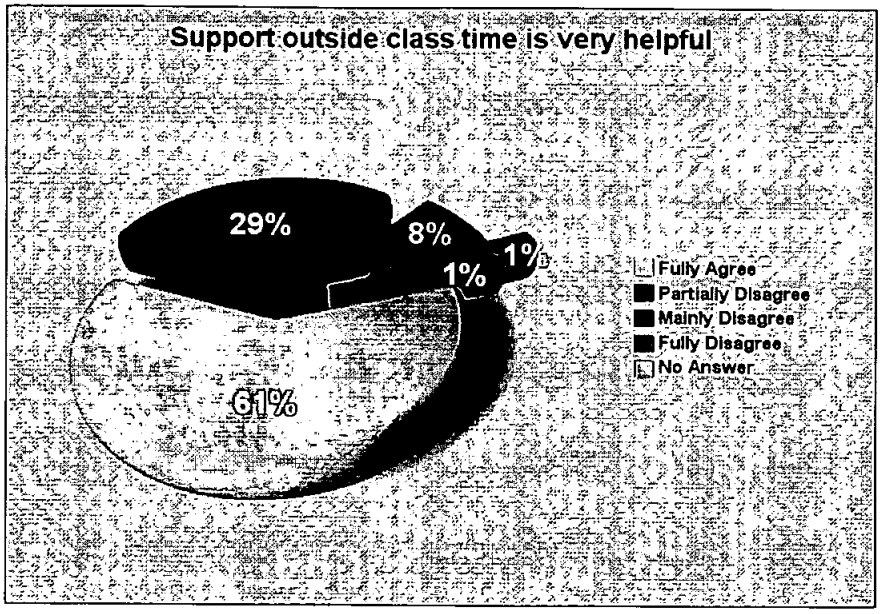

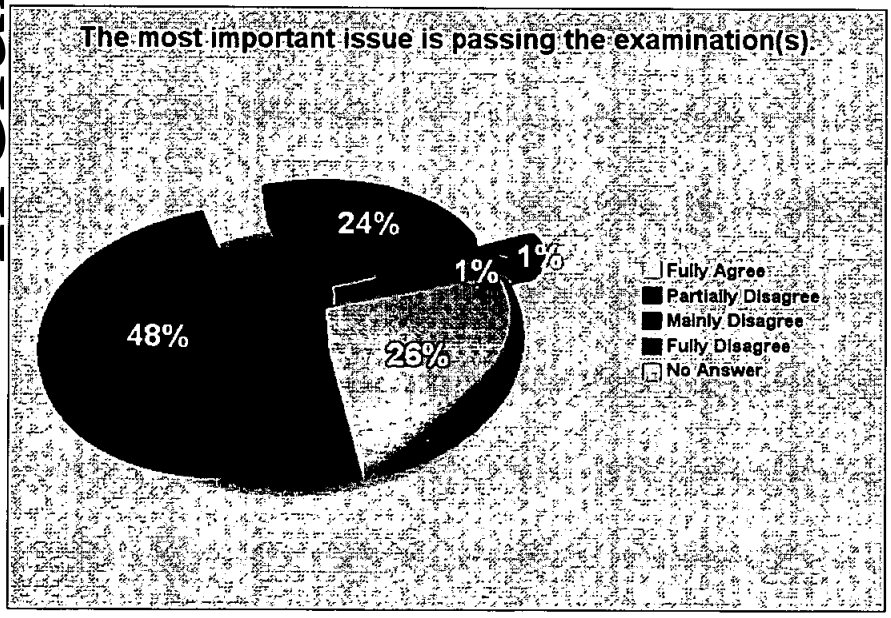

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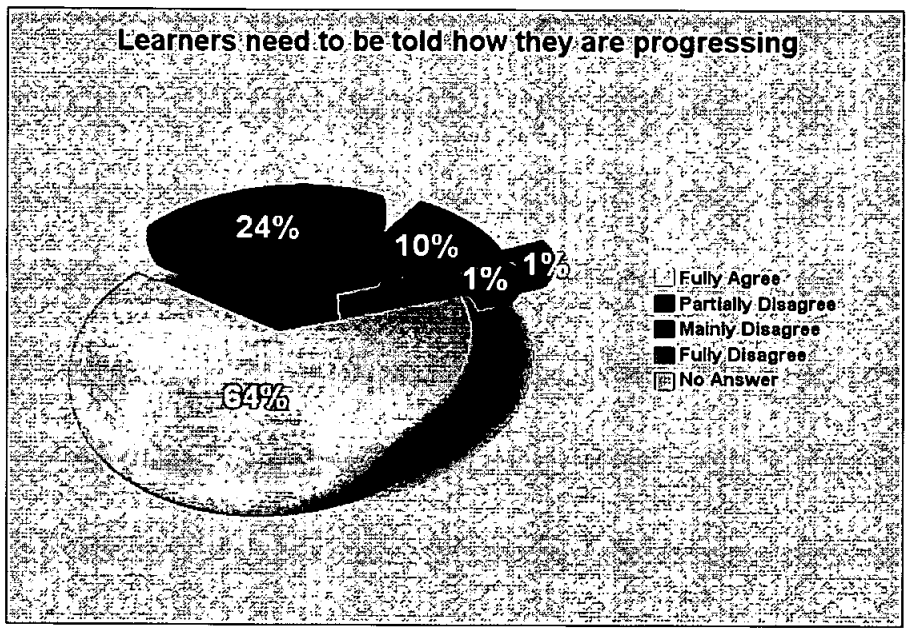

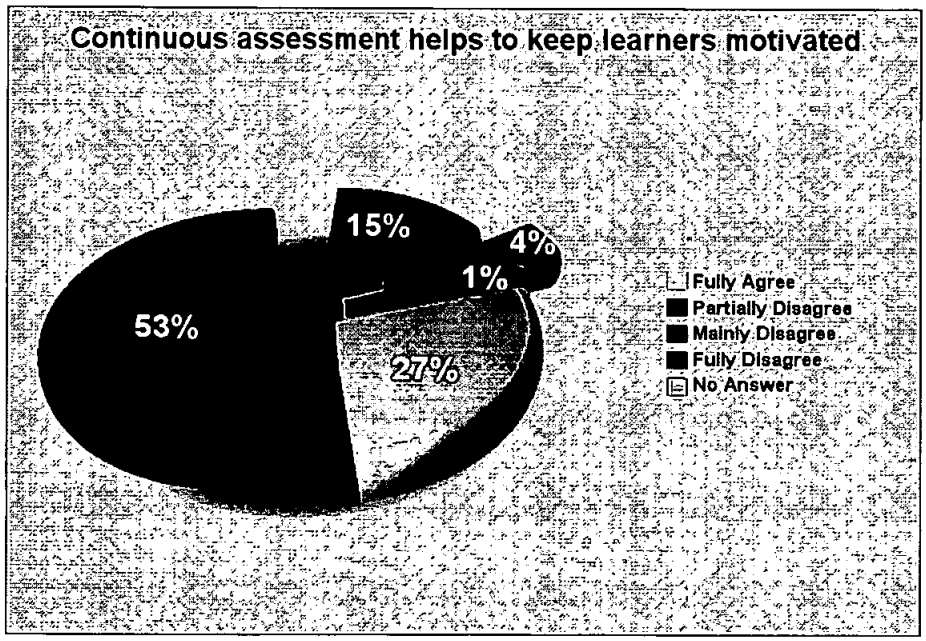

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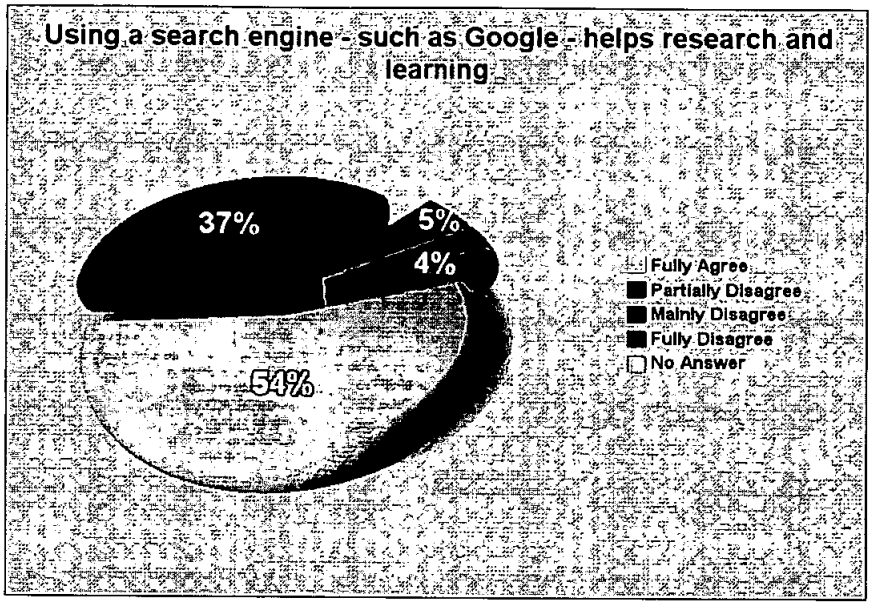

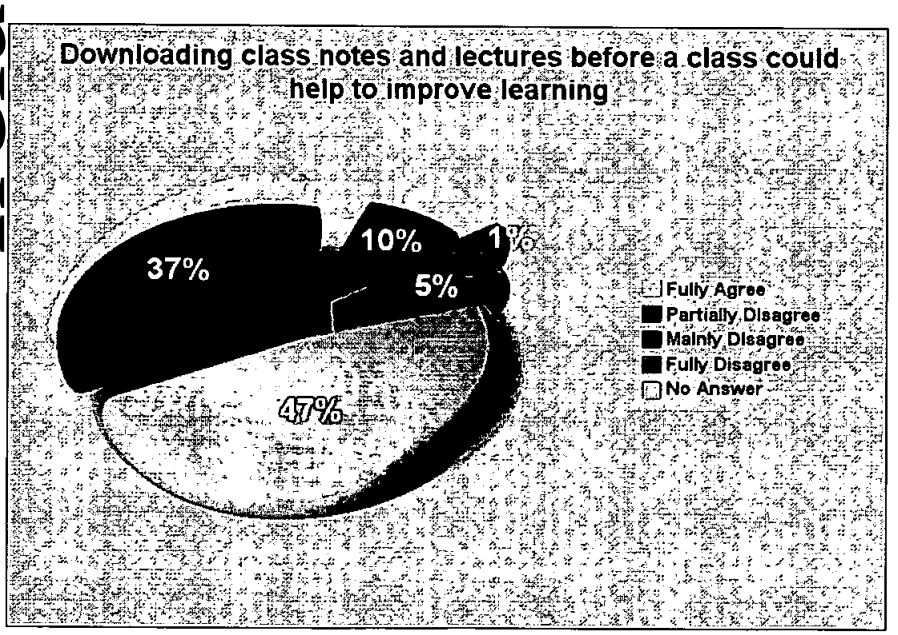

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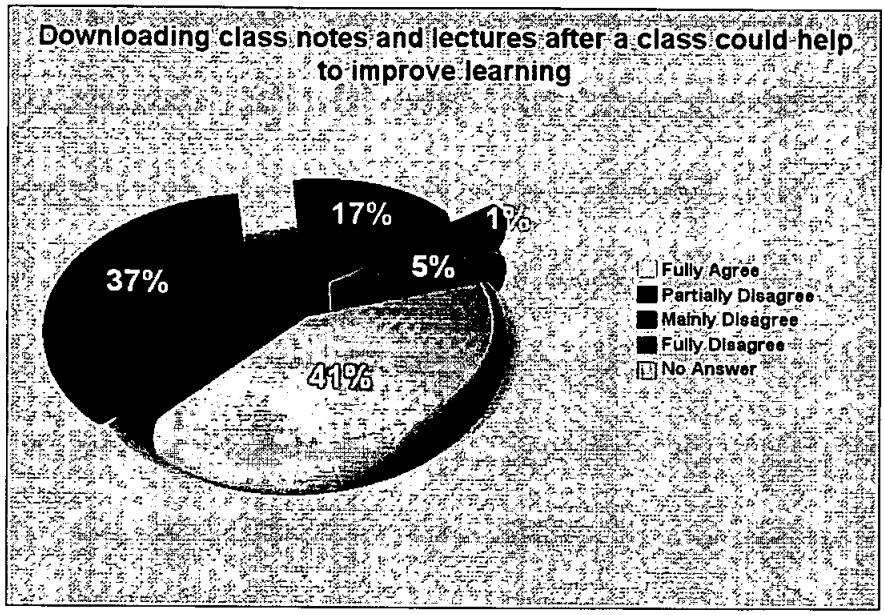

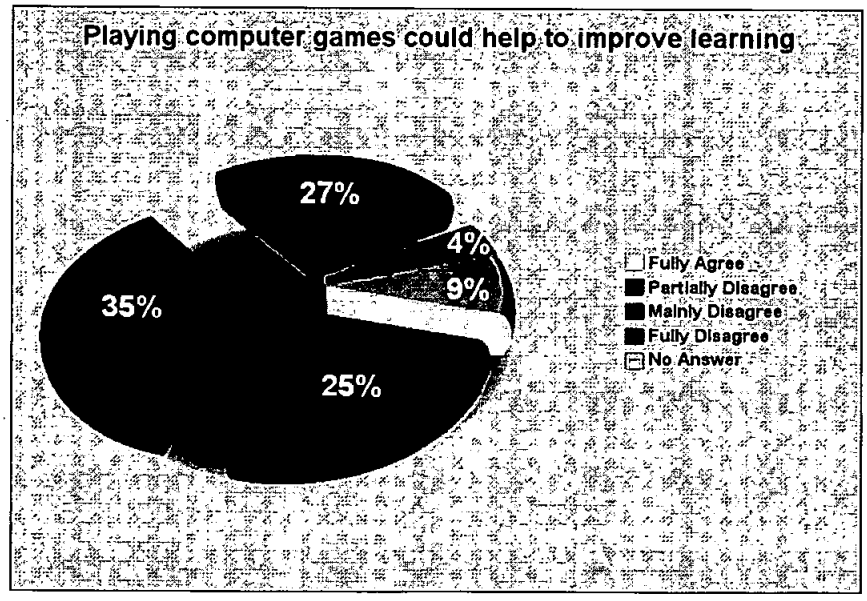

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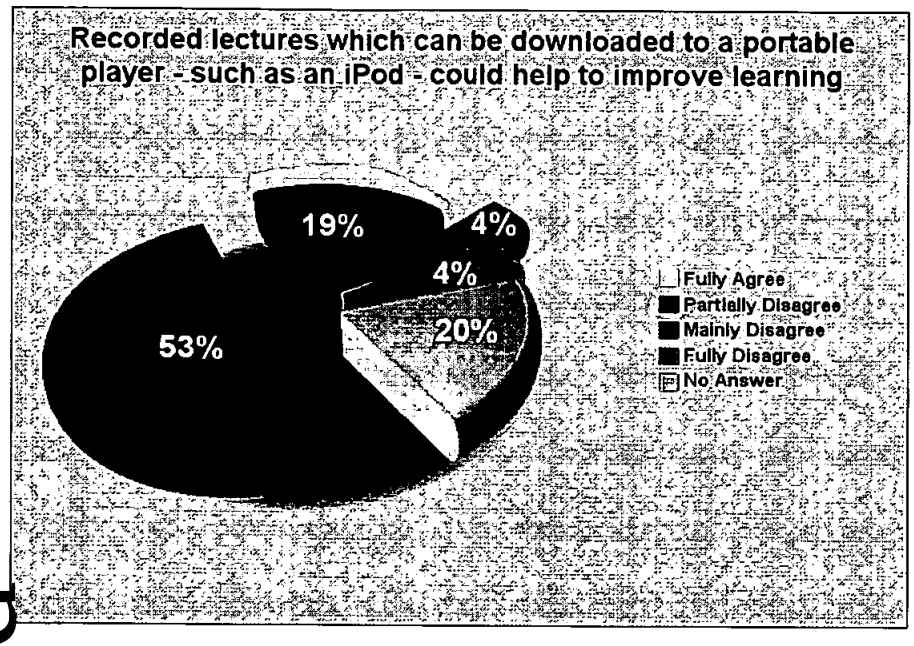

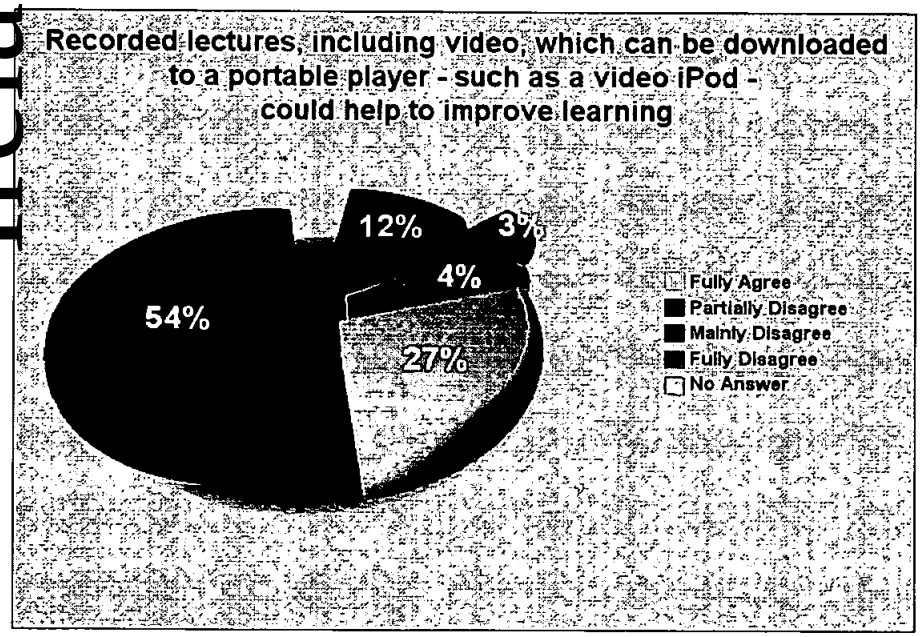

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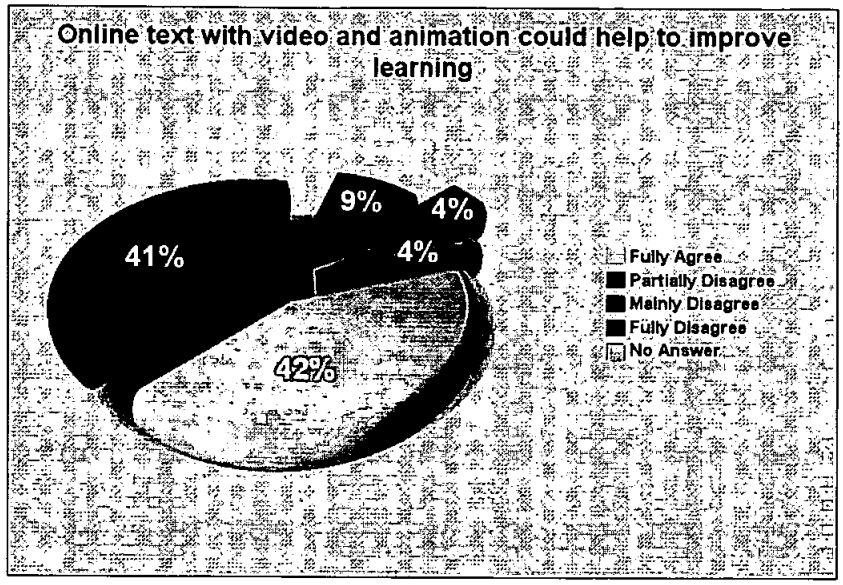

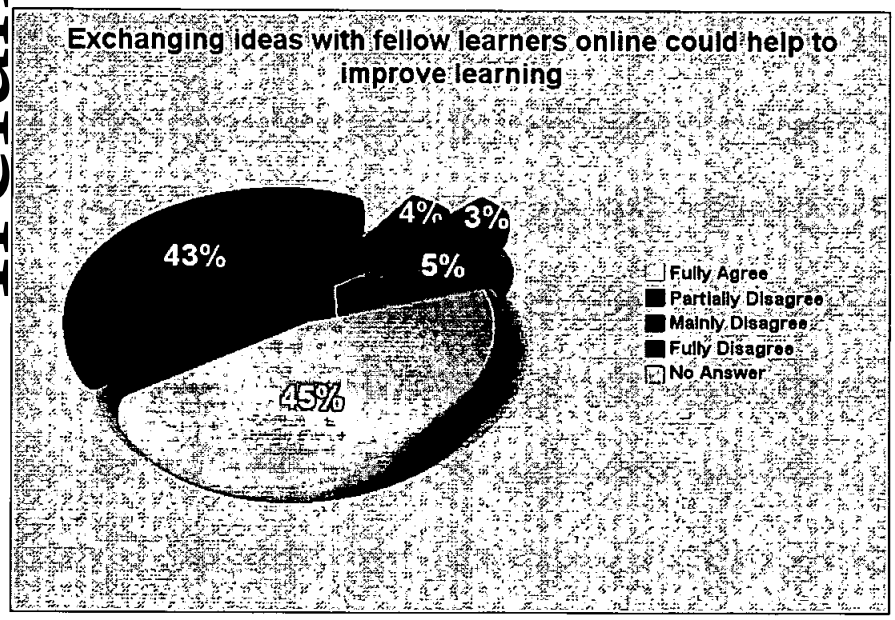

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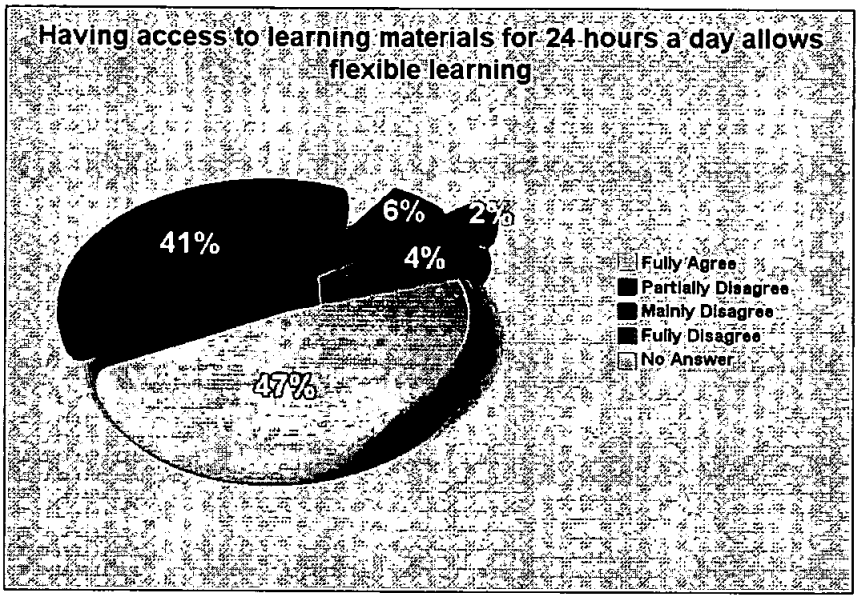

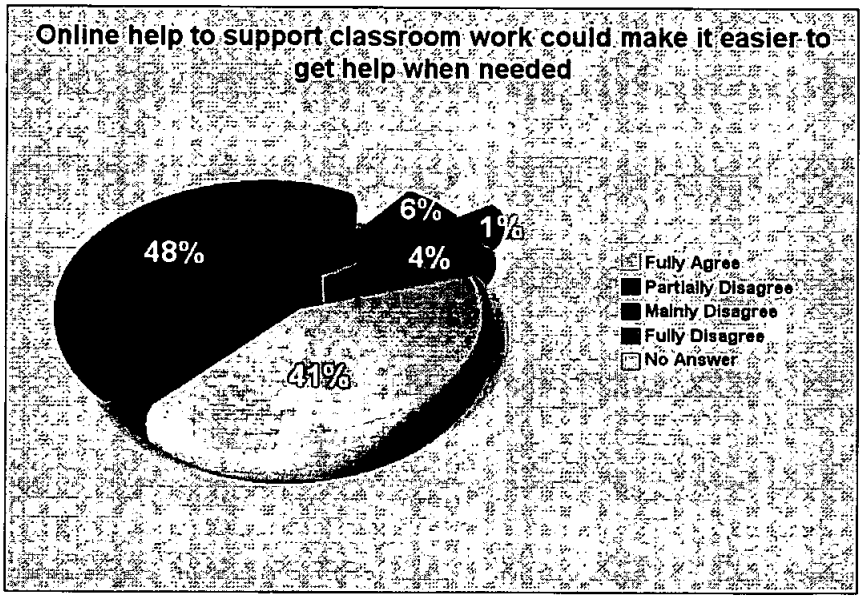

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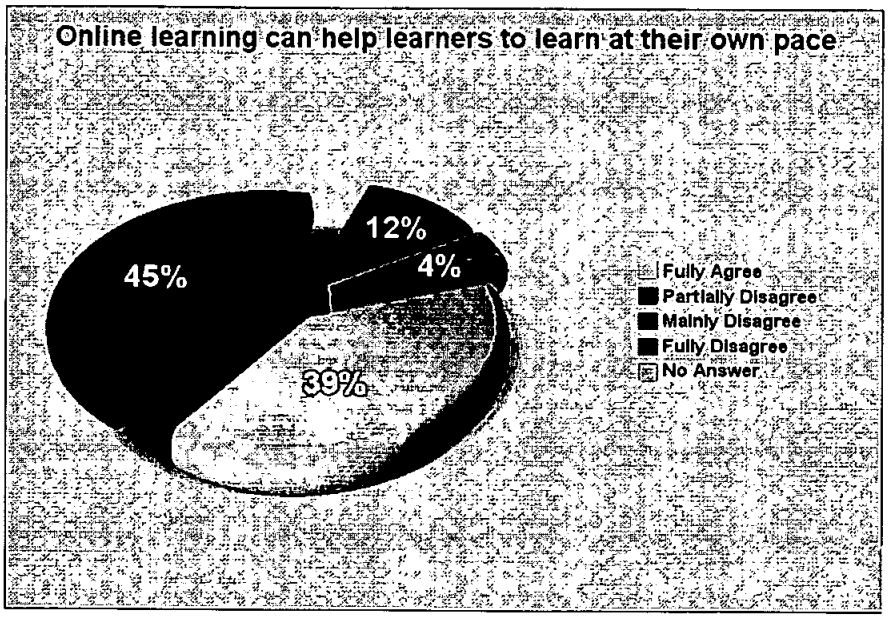

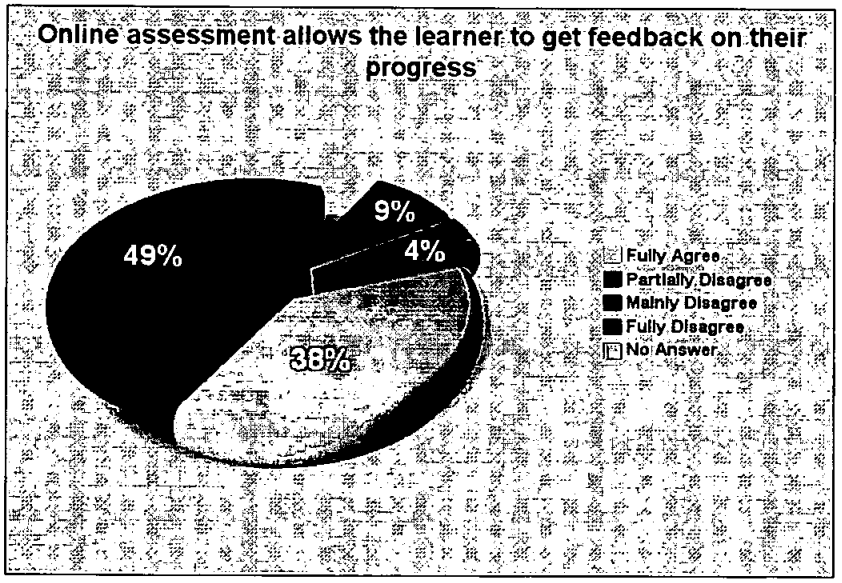

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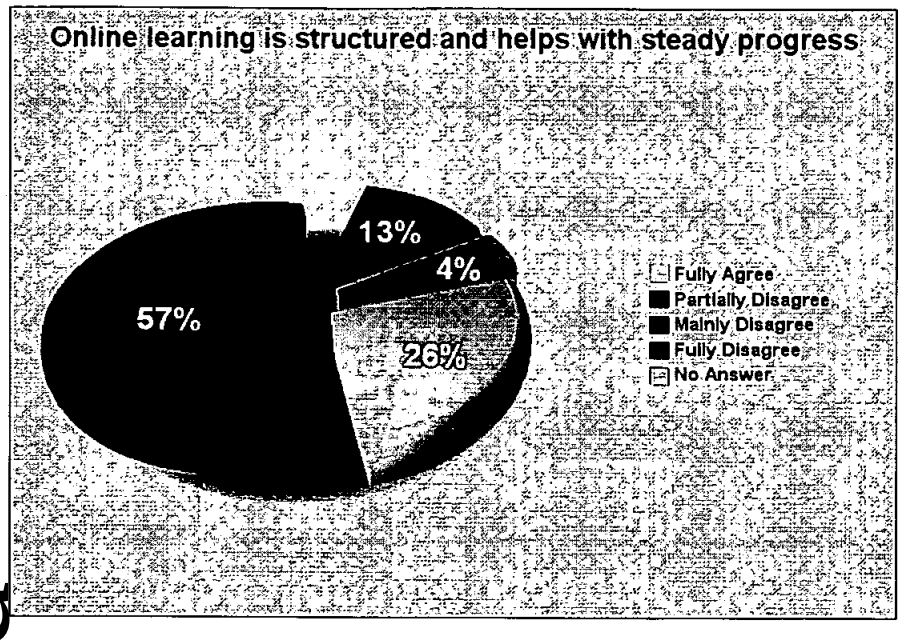

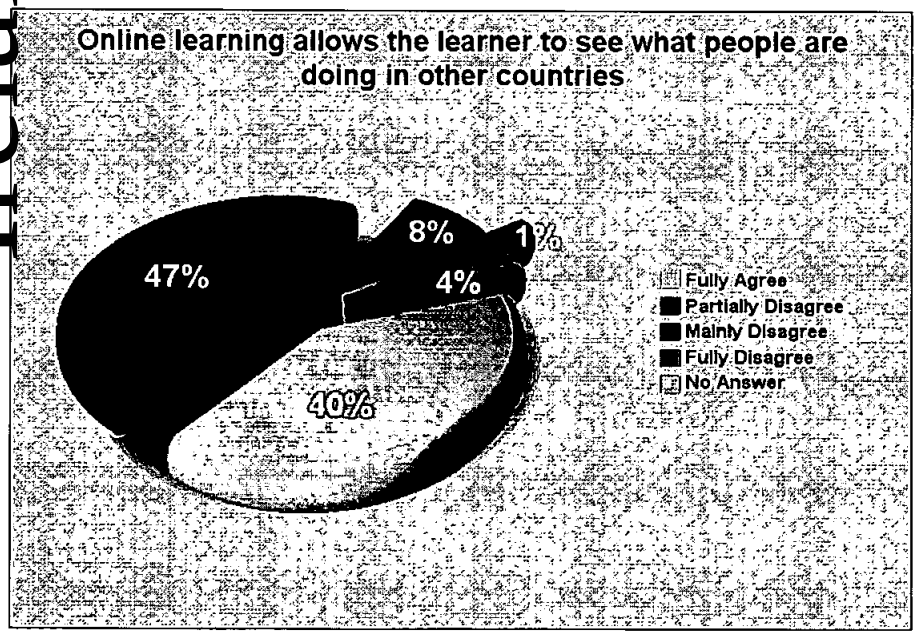

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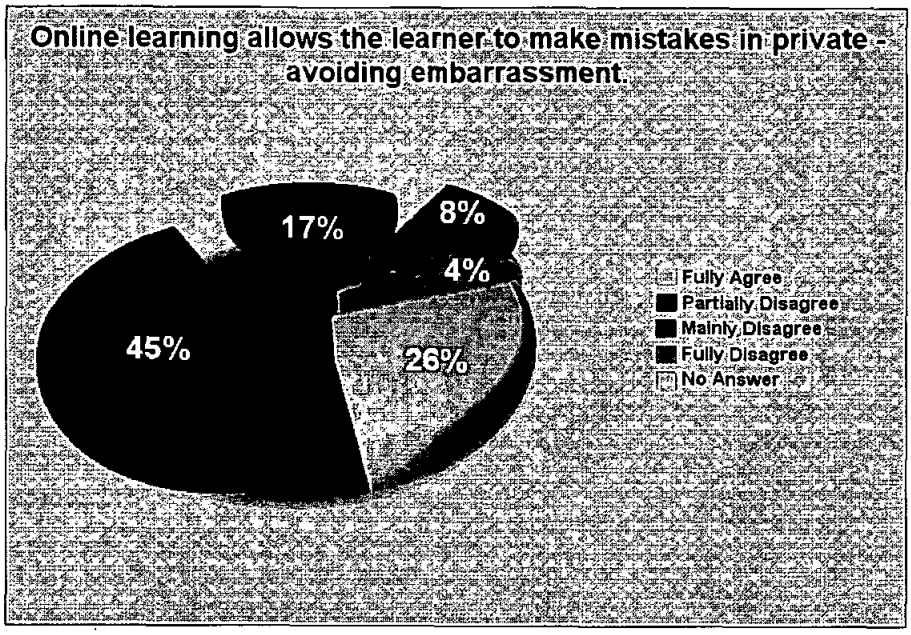

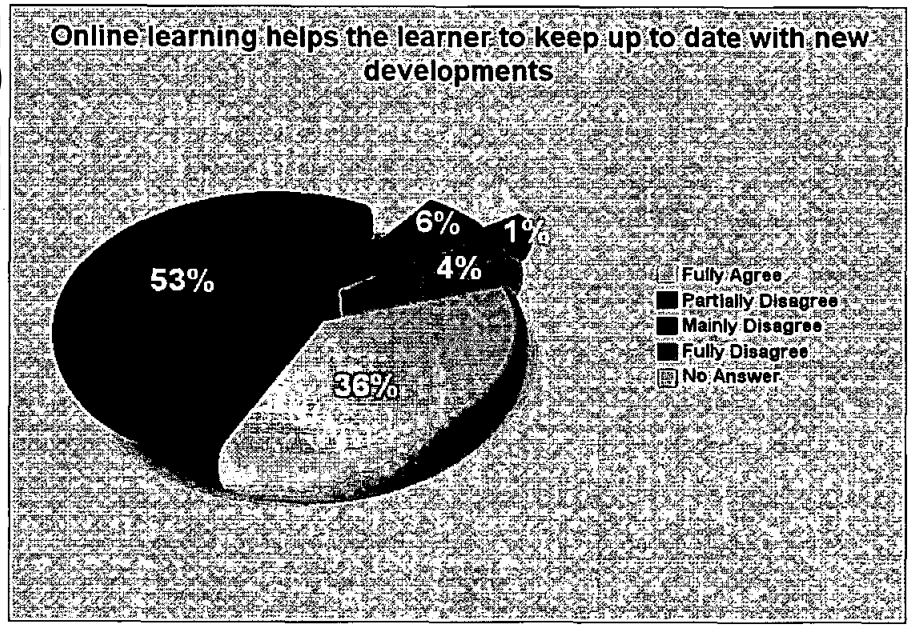
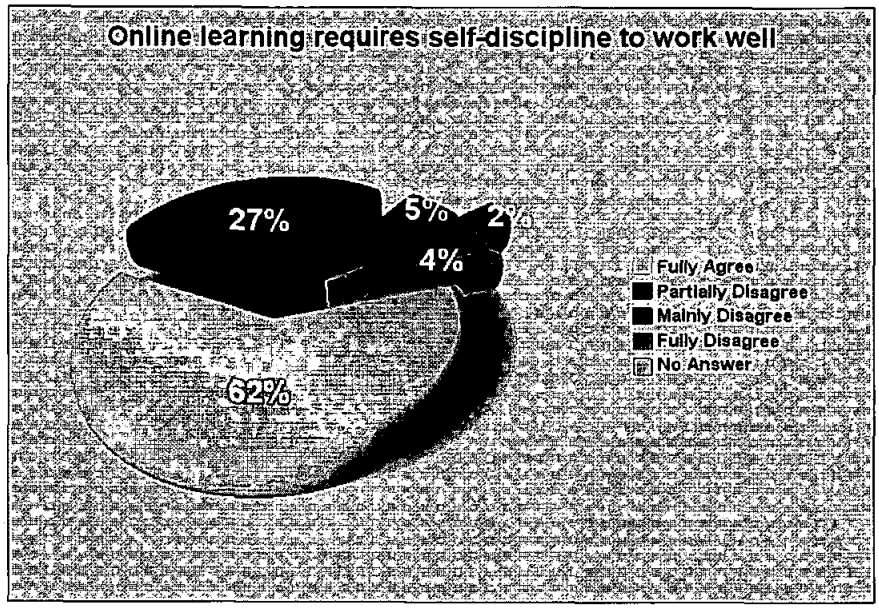
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