Collaboration
=
Harnessing and Managing Difference

Relevant conference theme: concepts and methods

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Harnessing Difference...1

The point of collaboration is to combine different skills or attributes

Harnessing Difference…2

These may be

- disciplinary strengths, such as combining the skills from sociology, biology and statistics

- personal attributes, such as combining the attributes of someone who is task focused and someone who is a good people manager

and so on…

The Challenge

Collaborators do not just come with desirable differences

Some differences get in the way of collaboration and must be managed for the research to proceed
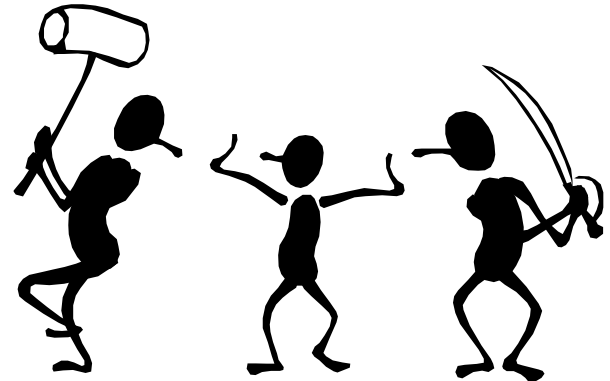
Managing Difference

The differences to be managed are often personal, i.e. so-called personality clashes

But they may be intellectual, e.g. different epistemologies

Whether a particular difference is desirable or undesirable

(and therefore to be harnessed or managed)

depends on the particular collaboration.

For example

Multiple epistemologies

may be the difference to be **harnessed** in one collaboration,

but the difference to be **managed** in another.

Methods for Harnessing and Managing Difference… 1

Recognising difference is a first step. There are existing methods covering differences in:

- personality
- cultural norms
- mental models
- emotional intelligence
- team role skills
- epistemologies.

These need to be compiled into useful toolkits.

Methods for Harnessing and Managing Difference… 2

Dialogue methods are also likely to be useful.

An existing compilation is:

McDonald, D., Bammer, G., Deane P. 2009 *Research Integrement Using Dialogue Methods*, ANU E-Press; http://epress.anu.edu.au/dialogue_methods_citation
(see separate digital poster)

Methods for Harnessing and Managing Difference... 3

Nevertheless...

There is still much work to do on developing and compiling methods for harnessing and managing difference.

References

Bammer, G. 2008 'Enhancing research collaboration: Three key management challenges' *Research Policy, 37,* 875-887

Bammer, G. 2013 *Disciplining Interdisciplinarity: Integration and Implementation Sciences for Researching Complex Real-World Problems*. ANU E-Press.
http://epress.anu.edu.au/titles/disciplining-interdisciplinarity

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