

## **Cross-Cultural Mentoring: A Pathway to Building Professional Relationships and Professional Learning Beyond Boundaries**

Helen DeWaard  
*Lakehead University*

Rekha Chavhan  
*Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey (SNDT) University*

### **Abstract**

This paper offers insight from an informal cross-cultural mentoring experience of course development in higher education framed by the UNESCO Chair on Open Technologies for Open Educational Resources and Open Learning project. The Open Education for a Better World is a tuition-free international online mentoring program established to unlock the potential of open education in achieving the United Nation Sustainable Development Goals. Drawing from mentor/protégé conversations and reflections and examining the experiences of mentoring in the development of an online course for Indian teacher education faculty development, the authors illuminate a pathway toward building professional relationships and professional learning beyond borders and boundaries. This paper describes how mentorship can develop digital competencies foundational for transferring tacit knowledge about planning, designing, recording, implementing, and evaluating teaching and learning in education. Explicit knowledge-building for professional learning within a supportive mentoring relationship is explored.

### **Background**

Education is recognized for its important contribution to global growth, the expansion of an educated workforce, and sustainable economic development (Montoya, 2018; Seely Brown & Adler, 2008; UNESCO, 2012; Wilson, 2011). Building an open and global network in education

is projected as one hope for the equitable, accessible and inclusive use of resources and practices in education in order to meet the United Nations sustainable development goals (SDGs) for Education by 2030 (UNESCO, 2012). Technology, digital media, and mobile access have changed how people learn, yet a position paper from the European Literacy Policy Network indicates that “many teachers lack competence, confidence and knowledge of effective strategies to harness the potential of diverse technologies to enhance digital literacy teaching and learning, and to foster young people’s resilience to the risks associated with digital technology” (Lemos & Nascimbeni, 2016, p. 3). Today’s students want to be engaged and self-directed with digital content available anytime and anywhere (Krutka et al., 2016). Higher education systems around the world are incorporating open educational resources (OER) into online learning contexts in efforts to provide course offerings to accommodate diverse needs in learning (Bates, 2018). The COVID-19 global pandemic has expanded and exacerbated the need for digital teaching and learning skills and fluencies.

Educators and instructional designers face challenges as they create online learning experiences, both for ongoing learning and for the emergency remote teaching (Hodges et al., 2020) being developed as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Teachers are perceived as essential agents of change (Butcher, 2014; Crawley, 2018; Karpati, 2011) yet face numerous difficulties to transform their teaching practice to meet rapidly shifting technological conditions in teaching and learning (Gruszczynska et al., 2013; Nelson et al., 2018). Owing to the growing importance of lifelong learning, openly accessible learning opportunities such as professional learning networks (Tour, 2017) and cross institutional open learning projects (Nerantzi, 2019) are offered as options for both students and educators alike.

Digital teaching and learning is not just for students. Educators who have traditionally taught in physical, face-to-face classrooms now need to pivot to online and digitally enabled instruction. This trend is taxing higher education support services in their efforts to assist university faculty and instructors who have little experience with online learning. Fewer yet have opportunities for mentoring in this shift to digitally enabled teaching and learning. Faculty support services, like centers for teaching and learning in higher education, need to transform how they support these current dramatic shifts in teaching and learning practices to meet higher than usual demands in this time of rapid deployment of online instruction in order to effectively enhance digitally enabled educational skills and competencies (Borthwick & Hansen, 2017; Tondeur, 2018). Shifts in practice involving the leveraging of technology include open educational practices (OEP) (Gruszczynska et al., 2013; Lohnes Watulak, 2016; Roberts et al., 2018; Seward & Nguyen, 2019) and connected teaching and learning (Bali & Caines, 2018; Lohnes Watulak et al., 2018). One mechanism to support this shift in practice, yet to be fully researched, is the integration of technology supported cross-cultural mentoring programs to enhance professional growth (Dorner, 2012). This paper explores one such project from the perspective of both the mentor and protégé, sharing insights for globally connected, technology enabled, mentoring supported, professional learning.

In this paper we examine definitions and conceptions of open education and OER before introducing the United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Open Education for a Better World (*OE4BW*) project. We define cross-cultural mentoring as it applies to professional learning within this *OE4BW* context. We identify theoretical frameworks for teaching and learning that are applicable to e-mentoring experiences. Our unique *OE4BW* project is described and reflections shared. Finally, we discuss the impact of mentoring within a global, cross-cultural context that supports open, ongoing, digitally enabled professional relationships and professional learning.

## UNESCO and OE4BW

Since the *Cape Town Open Education Declaration* in 2007 (Hodgkinson-Williams & Gray, 2009) and the *2012 Paris OER Declaration* (n.d.), the United Nations and UNESCO advocate and promote the use and creation of OER to uphold open education initiatives in support of the SDGs in education (UNESCO, 2012). In 2017, the *Ljubljana Action Plan* provided direction in building capacity, ensuring inclusive and equitable access, and developing sustainability models for the development of policy and environments for OER (Creative Commons, 2017). In 2019, the UN General Conference adopted a recommendation outlining five areas of action for OER: (a) build capacity to create, access, re-use, adapt and redistribute OER; (b) foster supporting policies; (c) inspire inclusive, accessible, and equitable OER; (d) develop models to sustain OER; and (e) accelerate international teamwork (UNESCO, 2019). The Open Education for a Better World (*OE4BW*) project was developed to respond to UNESCO's open education initiatives and support SDGs in education.

Now in its third year, the *OE4BW* is an “international online mentoring program, supporting the development and implementation of freely accessible modules and resources,” (*OE4BW* website, 2020). This project is free to both mentors and protégés, and concludes with a face to face experience where project developers meet and share their work. The *OE4BW* team matches individual project developers, who have a plan for an OER construction, with a mentor who can support their project to completion within a six-month time frame. This paper is the result of one of these mentor/protégé partnerships from the 2019 *OE4BW* cohort.

The *OE4BW* project presented here was conceived by a teacher educator identified as R.C., located in Mumbai India. The project plan was to design an online course about collaborative instructional design for faculty, educators in public systems and higher education, corporate trainers, and school managers. The emphasis of the course was on learning theories that impact classroom instruction, models of instructional design, and instructional design for online learning. The course—*Designing Collaborative Instructional Design with OERs* (DCID)—was developed and delivered in partnership with a mentor, identified here as H.D., who is a teacher educator in Canada. The matching protocol used by the *OE4BW* project team is unknown. The *OE4BW* project timeframe was January to June 2019.

There are various OER's available which teachers can use for designing instruction. It is important to learn the skill of how to find relevant OER's, how to redesign and remix OER's applicable to course context and participants' learning needs, and how to design and develop OER's using various free and openly accessible software technologies. The purpose of the DCID project was to design a series of digital modules and learning resources focusing on learning how to use instructional design and technologies that supported online courses, learning modules, and resources. This DCID course was developed using open educational resources (OER) with a focus on a constructivist approach to learning. Several collaborative and individual-work activities incorporated concepts of universal design for learning and differentiated instruction, in order to bring awareness to the needs of diverse learners.

## Open Education Within the OE4BW Context

While a fuller exploration of open education and OER are beyond the scope of this paper, these terms require some definition in the context of this *OE4BW* project. Open education includes the “simple and powerful idea that the world's knowledge is a public good and that technology in

general and the Web in particular provide an extraordinary opportunity for everyone to share, use, and reuse knowledge” (Geser, 2012). Through openly available technologies, education and scholarship are a “shared enterprise, a communal act” (Blomgren, 2018, p. 64). From this vision, the integration and application of the five R’s of reuse, revise, remix, retain, and redistribute (Wiley & Hilton, 2018) into educational practices that include open educational resources is foundational to *OE4BW* projects. For the purpose of this paper the following conceptualization of open education is used:

Open education is a way of carrying out education, often using digital technologies. Its aim is to widen access and participation to everyone by removing barriers and making learning accessible, abundant, and customisable for all. It offers multiple ways of teaching and learning, building and sharing knowledge. It also provides a variety of access routes to formal and non-formal education, and connects the two (Inamorato dos Santos, 2019, p. 6).

Open educational resources (OER) are free, openly accessible, openly licensed educational materials (text, media, and digital assets) that can be used for teaching, learning, research, and other purposes (UNESCO, 2019). The term OER describes publicly accessible materials and resources available under license formats that frequently include Creative Commons licensing frameworks. While the use and application of OER has transformative potential when the benefits of sharing across institutions and countries are fully realized, it relies on individuals in educational settings to become open in the ways “they produce and share knowledge, in the way they teach and assess students, and in collaborating with others” (Inamorato dos Santos, 2019, p. 7). As experienced by this mentoring dyad and shared in this paper, this vision for open education and OER is realized in this *OE4BW* project as a way to initiate ongoing professional relationships and continued professional learning.

## **Mentoring in Cross-Cultural and Digitally Enabled Contexts**

There is a long history of mentoring in education, yet a clear definition eludes researchers. Mentoring theory outlined by Kram suggests that mentoring functions for career and psycho-social purposes, and that relationships evolve over time through phases of initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition (Daniel et al., 2019). Mentoring themes include trust, relationship building and skill development, yet these are frequently ill-defined in duration and intensity. Mentoring in educational contexts is often deployed as a human resource development strategy to address cognitive, behavioral and affective factors (Schunk & Mullen, 2013). Mentoring relationships are established to be supportive and reciprocal while fostering knowledge building (Mullen, 2004, 2012). In education, mentoring can focus on self-efficacy (DiRenzo et al., 2010) or self-regulation (Schunk & Mullen, 2013). The foundation of any successful mentoring relationship is trust. However, forming a trusting relationship in cross-cultural digitally enabled mentoring is problematic, more so than in same-race or face-to-face mentoring relationships (Palmer & Rosser-Mims, 2010).

Much of the mentoring that occurs in organizations tends to be on an informal basis and occurs between diverse groups (Palmer & Rosser-Mims, 2010). The mentoring described in this paper developed on a semi-formal basis, organized by the *OE4BW* program. Mentoring across cultural boundaries is an especially delicate dance that juxtaposes group norms and expectations

with individual personality characteristics. It is reciprocal in nature when trust is built between the mentor and the protégé (Palmer & Rosser-Mims, 2010).

Technology enables new models of mentoring to occur beyond static boundaries of time and space (Kochan & Pascarelli, 2003). E-mentoring occurs within digital and electronic mediums where email, chat, text message, video calls, and collaboration tools gain primacy in mentoring communications (Loureiro-Koechlin & Allan, 2010). E-mentoring is impacted by the affordances and constraints of the digital tools, the digital skills and fluencies of the mentoring dyad, and shifting notions of temporality and rhythms of participation (Loureiro-Koechlin & Allan, 2010). In global e-mentoring projects, levels of cultural awareness and understanding can be an additional barrier to positive mentoring outcomes.

The *OE4BW* mentoring program is designed with a cross-cultural, e-mentoring framework that involves an “ongoing, intentional, and mutually enriching relationship” where “shared values, virtues, and vision that undergird the mentoring relationship enable one to transcend differences and create commonalities that provide new pathways to inclusive excellence” (Crutcher, 2014, p. 26). By finding common ground within values, virtues, and vision, mentors and protégés establish foundations for trusting, caring, and supportive relationships (Crutcher, 2014). The attributes of selflessness, active listening, honesty, nonjudgement, persistence, patience, and comfort with complexity and diversity (Crutcher, 2007) are all valuable assets to the success of *OE4BW* mentoring experiences and support the development of professional relationships and ongoing professional learning.

## Theoretical Frameworks

This *OE4BW* mentoring project is framed within the field of education applying the foundational learning theories of Dewey and Piaget (DeVries, 2008) who posit that teaching and learning should be an active, experiential process. Social-constructivism, as advocated by Vygotsky (Roth & Lee, 2007) extends constructivist frameworks to include social and historical context into the learning equation. Further theoretical positioning includes Papert’s theory of constructionism (Papert & Harel, 1991) who contends that learning occurs through the active construction and engagement with objects which can be manipulated in time and space.

The content and design of the DCID course is supported by theories of adult learning (Knowles et al., 2012), instructional design (Reigeluth & Carr-Chellman, 2009) and theories of online learning (Anderson, 2016). The experiences described by the authors of this paper is supported by theories of mentoring and e-mentoring (Mullen, 2004). This theoretical grounding frames this reflective story about the *OE4BW* project.

## Our Mentoring Story

Studies indicate that mentoring relationships are advantaged when partners have similar backgrounds, values, and cultural beliefs. Consequently, the relationship between a mentor and protégé works best when both share similar experiences and cultural background. In our case, although we both teach in a faculty of education, we belong to different backgrounds and cultures. We share a similar understanding of philosophies of education, but our practices are framed by our differing contexts. The foundation of our successful mentoring relationship was fully dependent on an ethos of care (Noddings, 2010), grounded in elements of trust and understanding. Open dialogue, flexibility, mutual respect, awareness about mentor/ protégé roles, and active listening were factors that influenced the success of our mentorship journey.

Our story is framed by mentoring research and shared in this visual graphic (see Figure 1) containing several elements for consideration: qualities of care when mentoring, how to engage the protégé, mentoring competencies, ethical principles in mentoring experiences, and characteristics in culturally integrated mentoring (Geber & Keane, 2017; Johnson, 2017; Sanyal, 2017). These are further explored as we describe our mentoring experience and how it impacts professional learning in digitally supported environments.

### *Mentoring Before the DCID Course*

Our mentoring journey started with our first Skype meeting scheduled in the month of Feb by our hub coordinator. We were both a bit nervous as we were meeting with another educator from a different country. For RC this was the first time she was meeting and interacting virtually. In this first meeting we focused on the project rather than spending time getting to know each other. As the work progressed the meetings shifted to every week, settling on Sunday as our chosen day. When deciding the weekly time to meet, we considered time zone differences and work/life commitments.

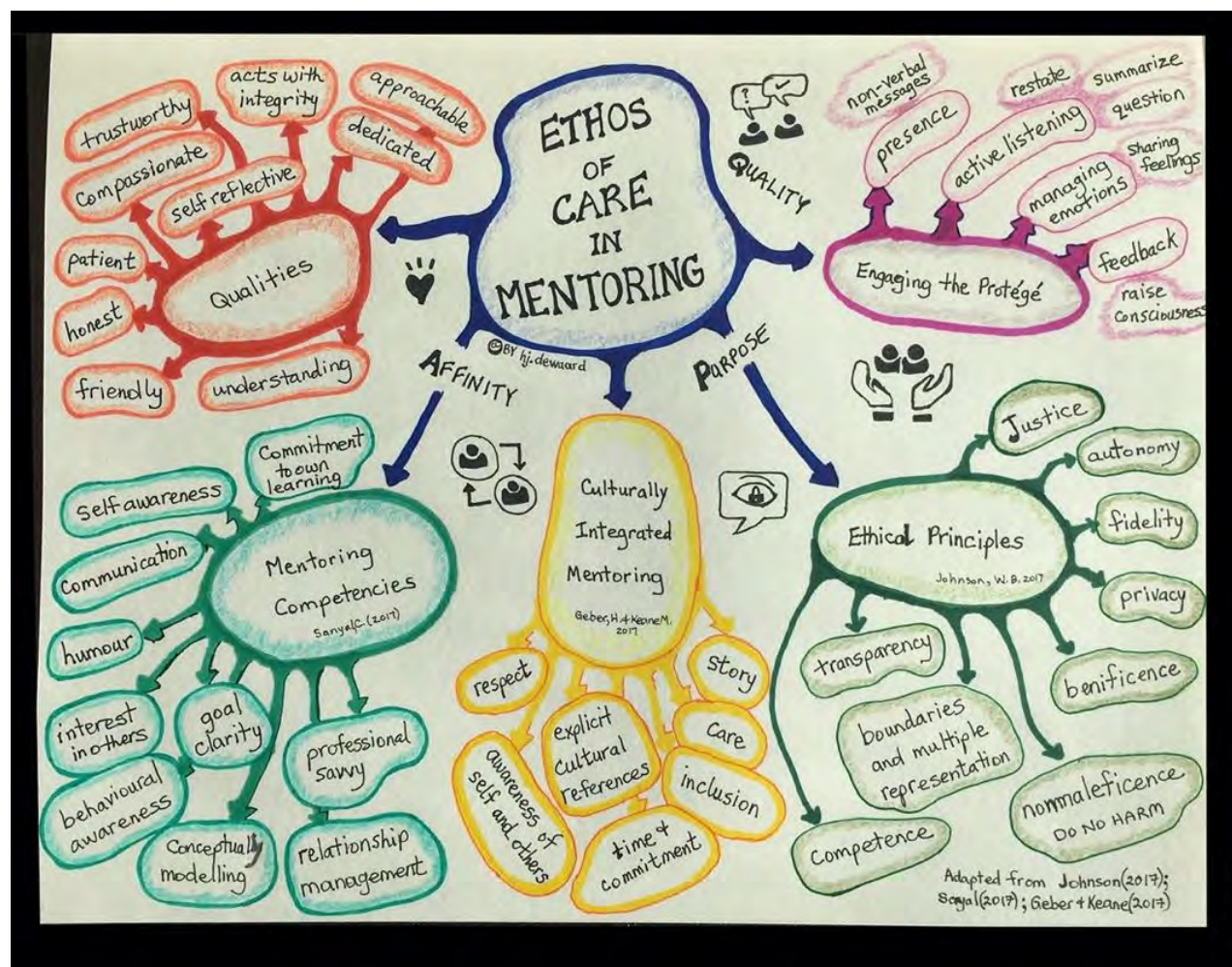


Figure 1. An ethos of care in mentoring.



In the next several meetings, we discussed the delivery of the content, determined the types of activities, resources and assignments to use, and discussed options for platforms for the course delivery. The DCID course, as originally proposed by RC, had a three-module framework for content delivery. After careful deliberation, it was decided to use mooKIT, a learning management system (LMS) designed and developed by the Indian Institute of Technology and supported by the Commonwealth of Learning. This online platform was familiar to RC and adapted to the limitations of bandwidth in Indian contexts. RC was the primary contact with the mooKIT system administrators and access to this LMS was granted to HD.

Collaborative Google docs were used to share the outline and content for module development of the DCID course. These Google docs became OER and were shared with course participants as a secondary means of disseminating module information. After extensive discussion and collaboration, it was decided to extend the content of the DCID course into a four-week schedule with four modules. Planning was done to gather OER resources and materials focusing on the selected topics. Pre and post course surveys were conducted using Google forms. The pre-course survey helped RC and HD better understand the participants' background and previous knowledge of the content.

The delivery of the DCID course used a dual-layered model (Crosslin et al., 2018) due to the constraints experienced in the mooKIT LMS. Participants were encouraged to use additional web-based digital resources to engage with the content such as Padlet, Answer Garden, and word cloud generators. RC was aware of some of the content creation tools suggested by HD, but many were new to her. RC was encouraged and supported by HD to create an instructor introduction video using WeVideo technology. This was shared with participants as they began the DCID course. In this way building professional skills and proficiency with using and creating OER were embedded into this work together.

### ***Mentoring During the DCID Course Delivery***

We made a commitment to meet weekly to discuss and make decisions about the strategies being used in course delivery. The journey of learning, exploring and implementing various tools was a part of this four-week course for RC and the course participants who were unfamiliar with many of the digital resources suggested by HD. As the mentor, HD played the role of guide, supporter and facilitator by scaffolding RC's experiences throughout the course delivery. An explicit decision to have RC as the primary course facilitator for the participants modelled her co-learning stance. In order to respond to course participant questions, RC created a What'sApp group since this is a familiar and accessible digital tool for communication in India. HD explicitly chose not to be part of this WhatsApp group in order for RC to be recognized as the primary instructor. Text messages within MOOKIT LMS were a secondary means of responding to issues.

### ***Mentoring After the DCID Course***

When the four-week course ended, HD continued to mentor RC to prepare a presentation to deliver at the annual *OE4BW* conference held in Slovenia. Since this was the first time RC was travelling internationally to present at a conference, the mentoring discussions shifted from presentation planning to travel arrangements. Since HD had some experience travelling internationally, she shared advice, tips and digital technologies. This extended the care and concern that developed during this mentoring experience.

We continued to engage in mentoring while collaboratively writing this article. Our time spent as mentor and protégé have provided opportunities for much needed self-reflection and professional learning. Indeed, both mentor and protégé can learn and grow from being exposed to another culture and the challenges of stepping outside of comfort zones. Constructive and honest feedback given by HD helped RC, as the protégé, in developing professional skills, enhancing confidence, and extending teaching efficacy. When applied ethically and morally, mentoring can be effective and beneficial to the mentor, protégé, and the organization in general. The mentor can facilitate the type of learning and insight that will reap substantial benefits for the protégé.

### ***Framing the Mentoring Story to Highlight Professional Learning and Relationships***

Here we focus on the development of our professional learning and relationship as framed by the seven principles of culturally integrated mentoring outlined by Geber & Keane (2017). These principles include awareness, time and commitment, respect, explicit cultural references, inclusion, care, and story. Ethical practices (Johnson, 2017) and an ethos of care (Noddings, 2010) are infused into these reflections. A mentoring relationship is like any other relationship—it takes time to develop, and like other relationships, it will grow faster and stronger if both parties take the time to get to know each other as people. We build trust by learning about each other.

#### ***Awareness***

**RC:** For me the first thing was to understand my mentor and her style of working, while at the same time helping her understand my culture and context. Our ways of working are often habitual and culturally framed. Here in Indian context, the system of education is different from the system of education in Canada. While developing the course I had to consider not only my own cultural context but that of my mentor. In India, technology is not used to an extent that it is used in other countries. So while designing the course I had to consider the constraints of using technology as well as the awareness of the target audience for various technological tools. I was not familiar with many digital tools that were introduced by my mentor so it was a learning process for me. I was learning along with the participants in the DCID course as we were introduced to these new technological tools such as Answer Garden, WeVideo, Padlet etc. I was so proud to show HD the instructor introduction video after my first time recording myself using WeVideo, without any assistance from anybody.

**HD:** As this project began, I was very cognizant of my role as a supporter and mentor, diligently working to ensure that RC remained the primary focus for my efforts. Each time we met, I became more aware of RC's vision for her *OE4BW* project and the specific elements that could be included in the DCID course. While I am not a trained instructional designer, I brought my depth of experience in teaching and learning in face-to-face and online settings into this mentoring relationship. I actively listened while asking open and probing questions to build my awareness of the geographic, contextual, and technological affordances in RC's teaching and learning landscape. I became aware that many digital tools and processes I take for granted were not part of the Indian teaching context for RC. This awareness helped me understand that decisions for course content and course structure needed to rely on RC's professional experiences in Indian higher education instruction. Knowing that RC needed to experience open and accessible technologies, I provided options and opportunities to expand RC's awareness of tools and processes for open, online course design. I shared my own course designs that integrated open web resources as a way to provide examples of how to potentially include these into the DCID course. As the project progressed, I became more aware of my role as a catalyst for RC's professional learning.



*Time and commitment*

**RC:** We both respected and valued each other's time so a convenient time for both of us was chosen for our regular Skype meetings. Many times, because of our busy schedules, meetings were postponed, but we both used the time to complete the set of tasks required. In this way timeframes and deadlines to accomplish tasks were followed by both of us.

**HD:** This *OE4BW* mentoring experience has increased my awareness of time and commitment when taking on an e-mentoring project. Loureiro-Koechlin and Allen (2010) suggest that time becomes fluidly fast and slow, with a rhythm of engagement that shifts from absence to presence. In my mentoring experience, I was consciously aware of missed time early in the project when I found it difficult to fit mentoring work into the flow of other commitments in my teaching and family life. As time slipped into March, I realized that the selected times we were planning to meet were not fitting well into my schedule, so RC and I looked for alternatives. Once we found a mutually agreeable time that could consistently work for both of us, I became dedicated to the rhythm of this project. Time appeared to speed up as we ramped up to the kickoff date for the DCID course release. During the DCID course delivery, my time shifted into a rhythm of engagement similar to my online teaching experiences, except everything was happening ten hours ahead of my own time zone. Continued use of the World Time Buddy app became an essential strategy in figuring out the international time zones. This helped me make accurate commitments to be visibly present to participants in the course along with RC and not get lost in time.

*Respect*

**RC:** We both had a great sense of respect for each other. HD listened to my ideas and contributed her ideas to develop the course. Humility, generosity, and patience were some of the virtues we both showed during the process of our interaction. Sometimes we agreed to let our discussions and video interactions go on for more than the agreed hour. This is how we were building a respectful relationship.

**HD:** Geber and Keane (2017) describe respect as listening intently and deferring to decisions and actions from another person. There were times when I pushed RC to consider my ideas and options, knowing full well that final decisions were hers to make. At the same time, I continually checked myself to ensure that I was not speaking from a privileged position or insisting that my way was the only way. Recognizing RC's autonomy and deep experience in Indian higher education was only a starting point. Recognizing privacy and boundaries of engagement was a secondary means of demonstrating respect. For example, by deciding not to engage in the WhatsApp group set up by RC for course participants, I demonstrated respect for RC's primacy as course provider rather than potentially being perceived as being the 'external expert' in this digital space.

*Explicit cultural references*

**RC:** While designing and developing the course I discussed with HD how things work in Indian context. I felt HD listened intently as she asked for additional information and appeared curious to know more about how things worked in my context. This shows respect for my cultural context by giving me freedom to do the things the way I thought they would work best.

**HD:** I truly enjoyed when RC shared her unique cultural experiences, particularly her family's preparations for the festival of Diwali. While the majority of our mentoring journey was

focused on the DCID course, there were times when our conversations meandered into family, holidays, university experiences, and our personal backgrounds. I comfortably disclosed details of my family and special events. My cultural awareness and critical analysis of colonial cultural legacies within Indian and Canadian contexts was heightened through this experience. My story, as a daughter of European immigrant parents, was diversely different than RC's, but threads of dominant colonizing culture were evident in our conversations.

### *Inclusion*

**RC:** When my mentor introduced me to join her network when I joined Twitter, it was a great feeling of acceptance, inclusion, and encouragement. By doing this she promoted my academic linkages beyond the boundary of India. It was through her network that I also came to know about one specific academic journal for publishing our article. By communicating with the editor to ask about the procedure for publishing an article I gained a sense of being included in global academic spaces. This is one way in which mentorship has enhanced my professional relationships and promoted professional learning. HD introduced me to the OER20 conference and the OTESSA network and encourage me to participate. We presented about our reflective, collaborative mentoring journey at the OER20 conference. It was the first time in my life I got a chance to give presentation at the international event. We prepared our presentation and yet again, HD introduced me to a new recording tools for me to try. This is how my professional growth and development has continued. HD scaffolds, motivates and encourages me, further enhancing our professional relationship.

**HD:** Geber and Keane (2017) describe actions that enhance feelings of inclusion from a physical context, but my story with RC shapes how to build inclusion into e-mentoring spaces. Described as explicitly and warmly welcoming a protégé into events and communities where the mentor participates (Geber & Keane, 2017) connects to my introduction of RC to my Twitter network once RC set up a Twitter account. There is reciprocity in how RC and I share and include each other in networked spaces. While I was introducing RC into OER and OEP focused networks such as Creative Commons, FemEdTech, Virtually Connecting, while building inclusion into our OER20 and OTESSA conference presentation, RC in turn, was introducing me to others in her Indian higher education network.

### *Care*

**RC:** My understanding of care is the underlying modality that underpins interconnections. In my case caring is an expression of the relationship. Weiner & Auster (2007) emphasize the principles of caring defined as close observation, precise listening, responsive questioning, and committed engagement and action. These principles were reflected in our relationship. When I designed the online course, I discussed with my mentor about the structure, mode of delivery and course content. While deciding the modules for the course, I was given freedom to decide the content to include. HD made a point to not overpower my decisions related to this course. She took painstaking effort in reviewing the content for the course. This shows her close observation relating to my ideas and course plans. She listened to whatever I shared and responded to queries well. This helped make our emotional bond stronger and developed beyond our mentor and protégé relationship. When deciding about which platform to choose for the course, I was allowed to explore various platforms HD presented and she supported my decision to select the platform with which I was comfortable.

**HD:** My understanding of what it means to care in a mentoring relationship has grown as I worked with RC. Noddings (2010) emphasizes the reciprocal and relational aspects of caring in

global spaces. I made a conscious choice to invest time and care into RC's project, grounded myself in a desire not to 'other', but to take actions that would benefit her professional learning while enhancing her experiences using and creating OER. As suggested by Weiner and Auster (2007) my engagement shifted beyond empathy into an ethos of care where generative action supported my emotional commitment. I've acquired a deeper understanding of what caring means in e-mentoring relationships.

Care in mentoring does not specifically indicate a fiduciary relationship as suggested by Johnson (2017). From my experiences with the *OE4BW* mentoring, fiduciary responsibility is less about legal or rule bound ethics, but more grounded in a caring relationship based on trust, confidence in each other, and acting in the best interest of the protégé. I realize the importance of bringing the best of me and my characteristics into the fullness of the mentoring experience. For example, elements of good mentoring as suggested by Sanyal (2017) include being "friendly, approachable, understanding, compassionate, dedicated, patient" (p. 3/13) and acting with integrity. I believe these are exhibited throughout our mentoring journey.

### Story

**RC:** "When you see two people together you think: Ah, there is a story there!" (Geber & Keane, 2017, p. 505). Telling stories is a powerful way to learn and relate, to share and to explore. My story is one of our developing cultural understanding. This mentoring relationship did not end with the project. It is not in the past, but in the present and into the future, since we continue to engage in various academic activities like participating and presenting papers in international conferences and writing papers to publish. So this professional learning is continuing into the future. In this whole journey I continue to build my identity, with some reflection of my mentor's persona. When HD shared the OER20 social bingo activity, I saw and admired how she introduced herself, thus gaining insight into her professional and personal story.

**HD:** Story production requires extensive self-reflection and awareness. My mentoring story with RC helps me see this e-mentoring opportunity as a means of developing our story into something beyond the six months we were matched for the *OE4BW* project. By pushing ourselves to create and share our experiences, we continue to build new ways to learn together. My professional relationship and mentoring efficacy with RC continue to develop. Our collaborative writing has come out of my belief that our e-mentoring story is a worthy one to share, a story through which others may learn about the potential and possibilities for professional learning found in cross-cultural mentoring experiences.

## Discussion

In this final section we will share some insights gained from this cross-cultural mentoring experience in order to inform others planning to develop cross-cultural professional relationships and professional learning opportunities. The *OE4BW* mentoring project in general, and our specific project, are grounded in supporting the UNESCO SDG Goal 4 to improve global education outcomes. Implementing mentoring as a means of sustainable development of professional learning holds hope for the future of education. While this *OE4BW* project focuses on the creation and delivery of an open online course using OER, it was also an opportunity to learn about mentoring by doing mentoring. Learning more about mentoring extended our professional learning.

Sanyal (2017) suggests that effective mentoring is a reciprocal relationship and that the mentor's capabilities and commitment are crucial to success. Mentoring relies on building rapport,

clarity of purpose, the quality of the learning exchange, and the functional and relational capabilities of both mentor and protégé (Sanyal, 2017). Mentoring relationships also rely on an ethos of care (Noddings, 2010; Weiner & Auster, 2007) and a mentoring ethic (Johnson, 2017) that reach beyond empathy or sympathy.

While cultural differences are often perceived as a barrier, the experience shared here shows that a caring approach founded on ethical principles can support building digitally enabled teaching and learning experience, focused on professional learning. Johnson (2017) presents ethical challenges for mentors that need careful attention and consideration when engaging in mentoring relationships for the purpose of professional learning. These ethical principles include beneficence, nonmaleficence, autonomy, fidelity, justice, transparency, boundaries, privacy, and competence (Johnson, 2017). When engaging in digitally supported mentoring relationships, privacy and confidentiality can impact trust and feelings of security for both the mentor and the protégé. Adhering to a mentoring code of ethics can not only enhance mentoring relationships, but the ongoing professional relationships of educators. For example, when learning and trying new technologies for the first time e.g. instructor video production since using video to communicate to students can be transformational, a trusted professional mentoring relationship can encourage and support risk taking that would not otherwise occur.

An ethos of care in mentoring is usually present when in a physical or face-to-face relationship. With physical distance and e-mentoring, care can easily be forgotten. When beginning or maintaining a mentoring relationship within technology enabled contexts, caring needs to be explicit and reflective, starting with “neither the collective nor the individual” (Noddings, 2010). One of the unique challenges of mentoring within global contexts and across cultures is the consideration of time and the impact of time zones when meeting. Modeling awareness of time zone differences and prioritizing the importance of the scheduled times for professional learning is one way to demonstrate care for others. Developing a routine makes it easier to negotiate scheduling changes when competing events arise. In this way mentors and protégés demonstrate respect and honour the gift of time given to each other.

Building understanding of personal identity and sharing personal stories is essential for the development of mentoring relationships and needs to be given time and space in conversations. Cross-cultural hurdles can be overcome by giving freedom of expression to each other, through sharing personal and professional stories, and respecting cultural beliefs and practices. By enacting active listening strategies to communicate empathy and build trust, mentors can demonstrate an unconditional regard while confirming the protégé’s experience (Weger et al., 2014). Remembering rules of reciprocity means that neither the mentor nor the protégé dominate the conversation spaces, wherever these may digitally occur and that intentionally equitable hospitality is enacted (Bali et al., 2019).

## Conclusion

As digital learning expands exponentially due to global circumstances, stretching into cross-global opportunities for collaboration such as the *OE4BW* project, it is essential that those who experience mentoring beyond traditional boundaries share their stories and experiences. In this way, those who hope to continue building bridges for mentoring to develop professional relationships and extend professional learning through collaboration (Nerantzi, 2019), as the *OE4BW* organization has done, the path forward is illuminated for those who follow. While the experiences explored here have unique qualities, there is much that others can learn from this story. The opportunity to

extend mentoring projects into professional learning experiences may not be generalizable to other contexts, yet these observations provide a course of action that may not otherwise be considered.

The mission and vision for the UNESCO SDG 4 looks to ensure “inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (UNESCO, 2012). The *OE4BW* project aims to create mentoring relationships and enhance professional learning beyond traditional institutional contexts into open, globally connected, digitally supported, and collaborative professional learning spaces. Furthering this work by building a learning community within the *OE4BW* network could extend and expand the potential for building professional relationships and learning opportunities. The *OE4BW* project currently matches two individuals and continues to develop collective learning opportunities within the mentor/protégé dyad experience, but little is done beyond the culminating face-to-face event. Strategically supporting mentor and protégé development using digital technologies, as they shift through the stages of the mentoring experience as suggested by Kram (Daniel et al., 2019), can further enhance professional learning.

Cross cultural mentoring can “strengthen trust, transparency, professional autonomy and the collaborative culture of the profession” (OECD, 2018 p. 19) which can extend and enhance professional relationships in learning events. With global pressures for effective digital teaching and learning resulting from the COVID-19 crisis, cross cultural mentoring within digitally enabled learning communities of educators and instructors may be one opportunity waiting to be re-discovered. In the expanding pursuit of a better world, education should help learners and educators “select, critique, and process information in the creation of knowledge and meaning for responsible citizenship and a satisfying life” (Wilson, 2011, p. 34), while recognizing that educators are also life-long learners navigating into new, and sometimes troubling, digitally enhanced professional relationships and professional learning spaces.

## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to acknowledge the planners, initiators, advisory board members and hub leaders of the *OE4BW* organization, as well as other project participants both mentors and protégés, for their continuing efforts to realize the UNESCO SDG goals and their support for this and future mentoring stories.

## References

- Anderson, T. (2016). Theories for learning with emerging technology. In G. Veletsianos (Ed.), *Emergence and innovation in online learning*. Athabasca University Press.
- Bali, M., & Caines, A. (2018). A call for promoting ownership, equity, and agency in faculty development via connected learning. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 15(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-018-0128-8>
- Bali, M., Caines, A., Hogue, R., DeWaard, H., & Friedrich, C. (2019). Intentionally equitable hospitality in hybrid video dialogue: The context of virtually connecting. *ELearn Magazine*. <https://elearnmag.acm.org/archive.cfm?aid=3331173>
- Bates, T. (2018). The 2017 national survey of online learning in Canadian post-secondary education: Methodology and results. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 15(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-018-0112-3>

- Blomgren, C. (2018). OER awareness and use: The affinity between higher education and K-12. *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 19(2).
- Borthwick, A., & Hansen, R. (2017). Digital literacy in teacher education: Are teacher educators competent? *Journal of Digital Learning in Teacher Education*, 33(2), 46–48. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21532974.2017.1291249>
- Butcher, N. (2014). Technologies in higher education: Mapping the terrain [UNESCO]. *UNESCO Digital Library*. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000231138>
- Crawley, J. (2018). “Mapping backward” and “looking forward” by the ‘invisible educators’—Reimaging research seeking “common features of effective teacher preparation.” *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, 23(1), 23–34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13596748.2018.1420684>
- Creative Commons. (2017, October 2). *2nd World OER Congress + 2017 Ljubljana OER Action Plan*. Creative Commons. <https://creativecommons.org/2017/10/02/2nd-world-oer-congress-2017-ljubljana-oer-action-plan/>
- Crosslin, M., Dellinger, J. T., Joksimovic, S., Kovanovic, V., & Gasevic, D. (2018). Customizable modalities for individualized learning: Examining patterns of engagement in dual-layer MOOCs. *Online Learning*, 22(1). <https://doi.org/10.24059/olj.v22i1.1080>
- Crutcher, B. N. (2007). Mentoring across cultures. *Education Digest*, 73(4), 21–26.
- Crutcher, B. N. (2014). Cross-cultural mentoring: A pathway to making excellence inclusive. *Liberal Education*, 100(2), 26–32.
- Daniel, A., Franco, S., Schroeder, N. L., & Cenkci, A. T. (2019). Cross-cultural academic mentoring dyads: A case study. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 27(2), 164–189. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13611267.2019.1611286>
- DeVries, R. (2008). Piaget and Vygotsky: Theory and practice in early education. In T. L. Good (Ed.), *21st century education: A reference handbook* (pp. 184–193). SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412964012.n20>
- DiRenzo, M. S., Linnehan, F., Shao, P., & Rosenberg, W. L. (2010). A moderated mediation model of e-mentoring. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 76(2), 292–305. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2009.10.003>
- Dorner, H. (2012). Mentoring innovation through online communications in a digital culture. In S. J. Fletcher & C. A. Mullen (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of mentoring and coaching in education* (pp. 169–183). London: SAGE Publications Ltd. Retrieved from [http://sk.sagepub.com/reference/hdbk\\_mentorcoachedu/n12.xml](http://sk.sagepub.com/reference/hdbk_mentorcoachedu/n12.xml)
- Geber, H., & Keane, M. (2017). Ubuntu and transformational mentoring in South Africa: 7 principles of a culturally integrated mentoring response. In D. A. Clutterbuck, F. A. Kochan, L. Lunsford, N. Dominguez, & J. Haddock-Miller (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of mentoring* (pp. 501–507). SAGE.
- Geser, G. (Ed.). (2012). Open educational practices and resources: OLCOS roadmap 2012. *Research EduMedia*. [https://www.olcos.org/cms/upload/docs/olcos\\_roadmap.pdf](https://www.olcos.org/cms/upload/docs/olcos_roadmap.pdf)
- Gruszczynska, A., Merchant, G., & Pountney, R. (2013). Digital futures in teacher education: Exploring open approaches towards digital literacy. *Electronic Journal of E-Learning*, 11(3), 193–206.
- Hodges, C., Moore, S., Lockee, B., Trust, T., & Bond, A. (2020). The Difference Between Emergency Remote Teaching and Online Learning. *Educause Review*. Retrieved from <https://er.educause.edu/articles/2020/3/the-difference-between-emergency-remote-teaching-and-online-learning>
- Hodgkinson-Williams, C., & Gray, E. (2009). Degrees of openness: The emergence of Open Educational Resources at the University of Cape Town. *International Journal of Education and Development using Information and Communication Technology*, 5(5), 101–116.

- Inamorato dos Santos, A. (2019). Practical guidelines on open education for academics: Modernising higher education via open educational practices based on the OpenEdu framework (No. JRC115663). Joint Research Centre (JRC), The European Commission Science and Knowledge Service.  
<https://doi.org/10.2760/55923>
- Johnson, W. B. (2017). Ethical considerations for mentors: Toward a mentoring code of ethics. In D. A. Clutterbuck, F. A. Kochan, L. Lunsford, N. Dominguez, & J. Haddock-Miller (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of mentoring* (pp. 105–118). SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526402011>
- Karpati, A. (2011). Digital literacy in education. *UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education*. Retrieved from <https://iite.unesco.org/pics/publications/en/files/3214688.pdf>
- Knowles, M. S., Holton, E. F., & Swanson, R. A. (2012). *The adult learner: The definitive classic in adult education and human resource development* (7th ed.). Routledge.
- Kochan, F. K., & Pascarelli, J. T. (Eds.). (2003). *Global perspectives on mentoring: Transforming contexts, communities, and cultures*. Information Age.
- Krutka, D. G., Carpenter, J. P., & Trust, T. (2016). Elements of engagement: A model of teacher interactions via professional learning networks. *Journal of Digital Learning in Teacher Education*, 32(4), 150–158. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21532974.2016.1206492>
- Lemos, G., & Nascimbeni, F. (2016). ELINET position paper on digital literacy. *European Literacy Policy Network*. Retrieved from [http://www.eli-net.eu/fileadmin/ELINET/Redaktion/Amsterdam\\_conference/ELINET\\_Position\\_Paper\\_on\\_Digital\\_Literacy.pdf](http://www.eli-net.eu/fileadmin/ELINET/Redaktion/Amsterdam_conference/ELINET_Position_Paper_on_Digital_Literacy.pdf)
- Lohnes Watulak, S. (2016). Reflection in action: Using inquiry groups to explore critical digital literacy with pre-service teachers. *Educational Action Research*, 24(4), 503–518.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2015.1106957>
- Lohnes Watulak, S., Woodard, R., Smith, A., Johnson, L., Phillips, N., & Wargo, K. (2018). Connected teaching and learning in K-16+ contexts: An annotated bibliography. *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education*, 18(2), 289–312.
- Loureiro-Koechlin, C., & Allan, B. (2010). Time, space and structure in an e-learning and e-mentoring project: EMPATHY Net-Works. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 41(5), 721–735.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8535.2009.00975.x>
- Montoya, S. (2018, September 12). Meet the SDG 4 data: Indicators on school conditions, scholarships and teachers. *UNESCO*. Retrieved from <http://uis.unesco.org/en/blog/meet-sdg-4-data-indicators-school-conditions-scholarships-and-teachers>
- Mullen, C. A. (2004). *Mentorship primer*. Peter Lang.
- Mullen, C. A. (2012). Mentoring: An overview. In S. J. Fletcher & C. A. Mullen (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of mentoring and coaching in education* (pp. 7–23). SAGE.
- Nelson, A., DeCarlo, M., & Murphy-Judy, K. (2018, March 19). Getting comfortable working in the open: A panel discussion for authors, teaching faculty, and students. *Virginia Tech: Invent the Future*. Retrieved from <https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/handle/10919/82733>
- Nerantzi, C. (2019). The role of crossing boundaries in collaborative open learning in cross-institutional academic development. *Research in Learning Technology*, 27. <https://doi.org/10.25304/rlt.v27.2111>
- Noddings, N. (2010). Moral education in an age of globalization. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 42(4), 390–396. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-5812.2008.00487.x>
- OECD. (2018). *Education at a glance 2018: OECD indicators*. Paris, France: OECD.  
<https://doi.org/10.1787/eag-2018-en>
- Palmer, G. A., & Rosser-Mims, D. (2010). *Facilitating cross-cultural mentoring*. Adult Education Research Conference, Sacramento, CA.



- Papert, S., & Harel, I. (1991). *Situating constructionism*. Retrieved from <http://www.papert.org/articles/SituatingConstructionism.html>
- Reigeluth, C. M., & Carr-Chellman, A. A. (Eds.). (2009). Instructional-design theories and models, volume III: Building a common knowledge base. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203872130>
- Roberts, V., Blomgren, C., Ishmael, K., Graham, L., & Ferdig, R. E. (2018). Open educational practices in K-12 online and blended learning environments. In K. Kennedy (Ed.), *Handbook of research on K-12 online and blended learning* (2nd ed., pp. 527–544). Carnegie Mellon University: ETC Press. [https://kilthub.cmu.edu/articles/Handbook\\_of\\_Research\\_on\\_K-12\\_Online\\_and\\_Blended\\_Learning\\_Second\\_Edition\\_/6686813](https://kilthub.cmu.edu/articles/Handbook_of_Research_on_K-12_Online_and_Blended_Learning_Second_Edition_/6686813)
- Roth, W.-M., & Lee, Y.-J. (2007). “Vygotsky’s Neglected Legacy”: Cultural-historical activity theory. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(2), 186–232. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654306298273>
- Sanyal, C. (2017). The effective mentor, mentee and mentoring relationship. In D. A. Clutterbuck, F. A. Kochan, L. Lunsford, N. Dominguez, & J. Haddock-Miller (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of mentoring* (pp. 143–155). SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526402011>
- Schunk, D., & Mullen, C. (2013). Toward a conceptual model of mentoring research: Integration with self-regulated learning. *Educational Psychology Review*, 25(3), 361–389. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-013-9233-3>
- Seely Brown, J., & Adler, R. P. (2008). Minds on fire: Open education, the long tail, and learning 2.0. *Educause Reveiw*, 43(1), 16–32.
- Seward, T. P., & Nguyen, H. T. (2019). The digital imperative in the 21st century classroom: Rethinking the teacher-learner dynamic. *Issues in Teacher Education*, 28(1), 80–98.
- Tondeur, J. (2018). Enhancing future teachers’ competencies for technology integration in education: Turning theory into practice. *Seminar.Net: Media, Technology & Life-Long Learning*, 14(2), 1–13.
- Tour, E. (2017). Teachers’ personal learning networks (PLNs): Exploring the nature of self-initiated professional learning online. *Literacy*, 51(1), 11–18.
- UNESCO. (2012). Shaping the education of tomorrow: 2012 report on the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, abridged. *UNESCO Digital Library*. Retrieved from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000216606>
- UNESCO. (2019, November). *UNESCO Recommendation on Open Educational Resources (OER)*. Retrieved from <https://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-recommendation-open-educational-resources-oer>
- Weger, H., Bell, G. C., Minei, E. M., & Robinson, M. C. (2014). The relative effectiveness of active listening in initial interactions. *International Journal of Listening*, 28(1), 13–31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10904018.2013.813234>
- Weiner, S. J., & Auster, S. (2007). From empathy to caring: Defining the ideal approach to a healing relationship. *Yale Journal of Biology and Medicine*, 80(3), 123–130.
- Wiley, D., & Hilton, J. (2018). Defining OER-enabled pedagogy. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 19(4). <http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/3601/4769>
- Wilson, S. E. (2011). Education: A door to a better world. *Journal of the International Society for Teacher Education*, 15(1), 34–41.