

Distributed Co-Mentoring as a means to Develop Culturally Inclusive Online Learning Communities

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28 th ICDE World Conference on Online Learning
3-7 November 2019, Dublin , Ireland

Co-Mentoring Definition

“Comentoring gives a name to supportive assistance provided by several connected individuals.” Placing the prefix “co” before “mentoring” reconstructs the relationship as nonhierarchical; “co” makes mentoring reciprocal and mutual...Comentoring names a dynamic that may evolve within collaborative learning. Both comentoring and collaborative learning are social, active, and appreciative of differences among individuals in terms of their backgrounds, talents, and learning styles”

Bona, Rinehart, and Volbrecht (1995, p. 119)

Agenda

- The Study
- Research Questions
- Research Method
- Findings and Discussion
- Conclusion

The Study

- Two case studies of distributed co-mentoring in the context of two faculty development programs implemented in Sri Lanka to help faculty/academics learn how to facilitate and mentor online

The Study

Case Study 1

a cross-cultural online co-mentoring program between graduate students in the U.S. and Sri Lankan academics and professionals in organizations offered as part of the National Online Distance Education Service (NODES), Sri Lanka

Case Study 2

a cross-border faculty development program between participants from Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Mauritius with US and Sri Lankan co-mentors offered by the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL)

Research Questions

- Question 1:
What co-mentoring roles emerged during the process of online knowledge construction?
- Question 2:
What are the challenges to cross-cultural co-mentoring?

Conceptual Framework

- Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), a central concept in Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory
- Community of Practice (CoP) in Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning theory

Cross-cultural Co-mentoring Design

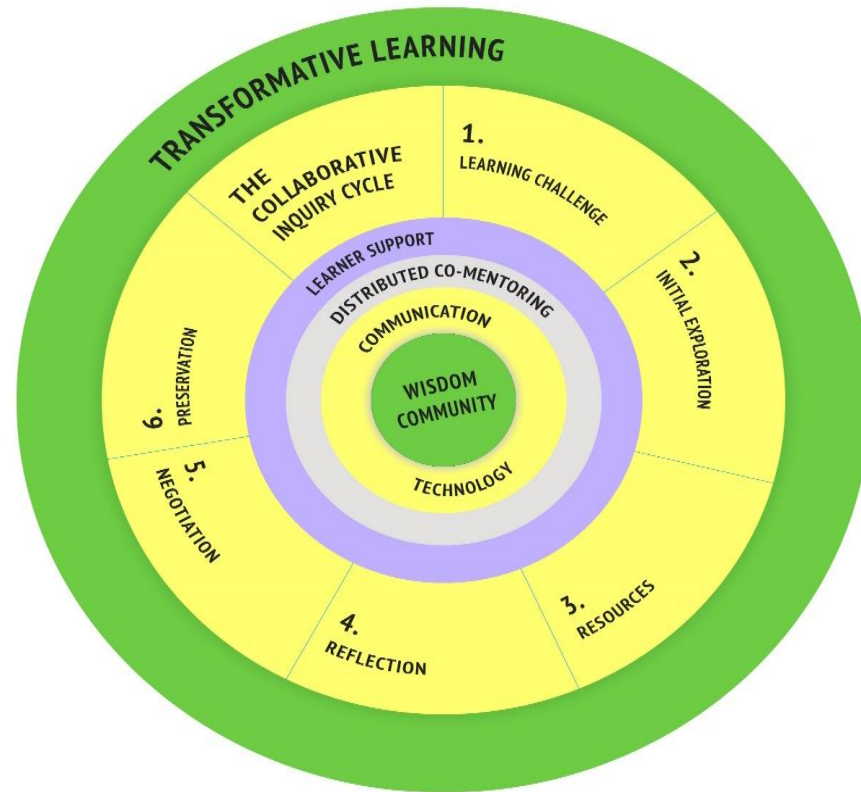


Figure 1. WisCom Design Framework in Gunawardena, C. N., Frechette, C., & Layne, L. (2019). *Culturally Inclusive Instructional Design: A Framework and Guide for Building Online Wisdom Communities*. New York: Routledge. Used with permission

Colectivo Co-Mentoring & Collaborating

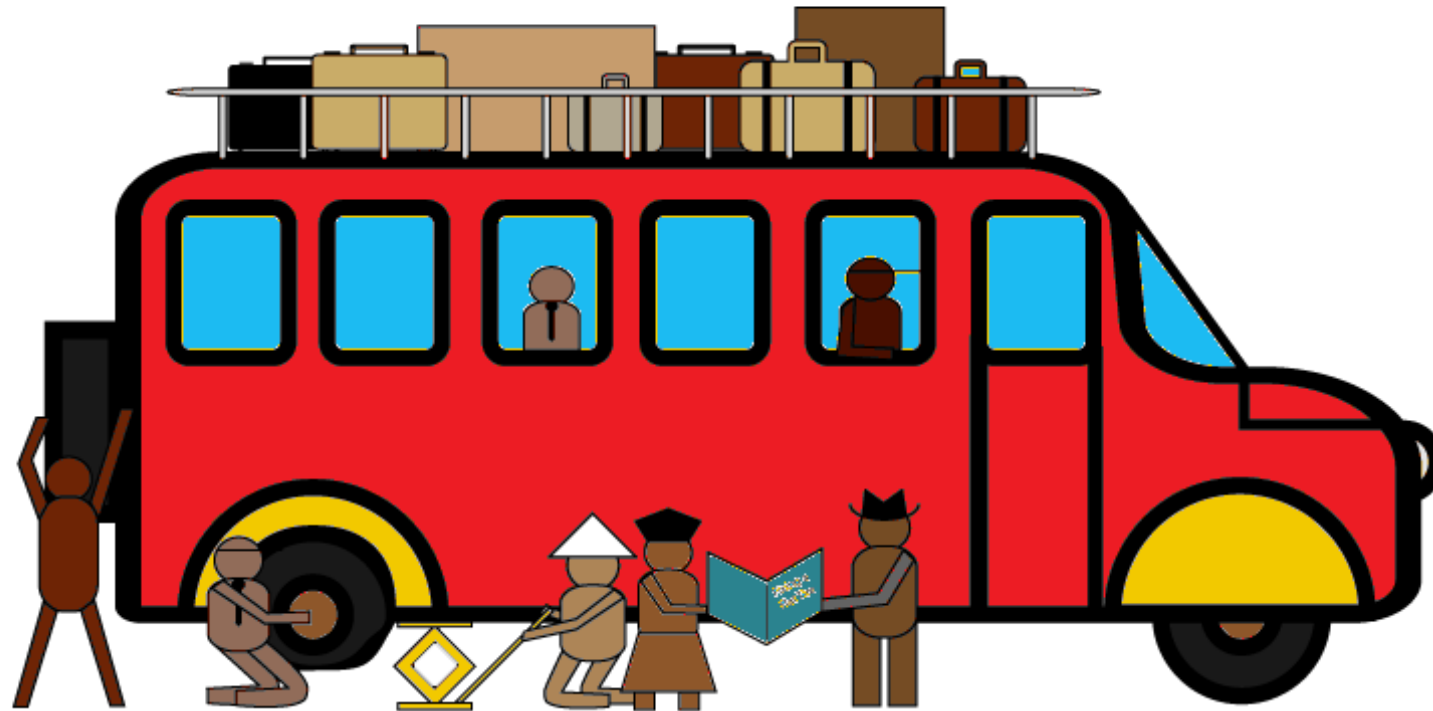


Figure 7.1 Page 97. Gunawardena, C. N., Frechette, C., & Layne, L. (2019). *Culturally inclusive instructional design: A framework and guide for building online wisdom communities*. New York: Routledge

Research Method

- **Design – Qualitative**
- **Data Sources**
 - a) transcript analysis of online discussions using the Interaction Analysis Model (IAM) - Gunawardena, et. al (1997)
 - b) mentor reflections in a focus group, and email communication
 - c) mentee journals and email communication, and
 - d) mentee evaluation of the mentor's online activity in the final course evaluation

Case Study 1

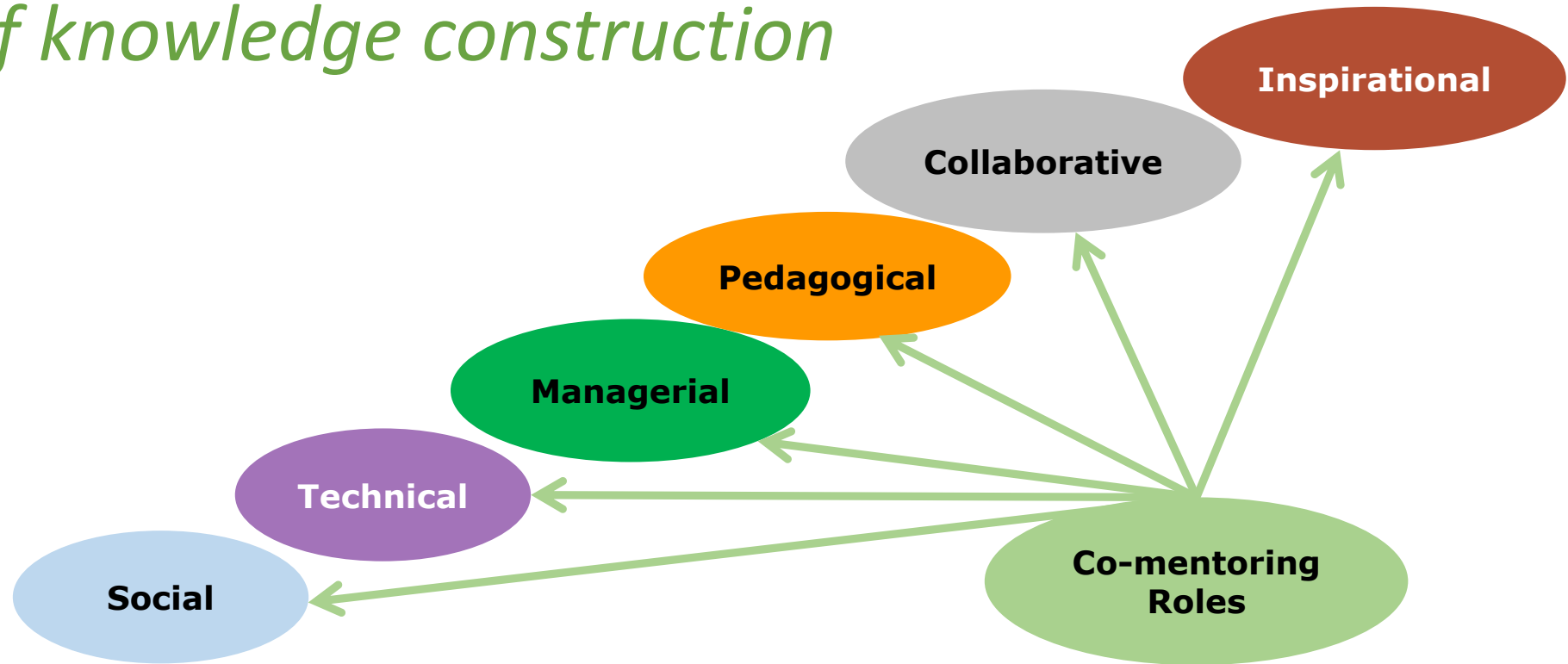
- 10 tutor mentor training programs begun in 2007
- Delivered through National Online Distance Education Service (NODES) in Sri Lanka
- U.S. e-mentor, one Sri Lankan e-mentor at large, and local Sri Lankan mentors who shared the co-mentoring role per group of 10 participants

Case Study 2

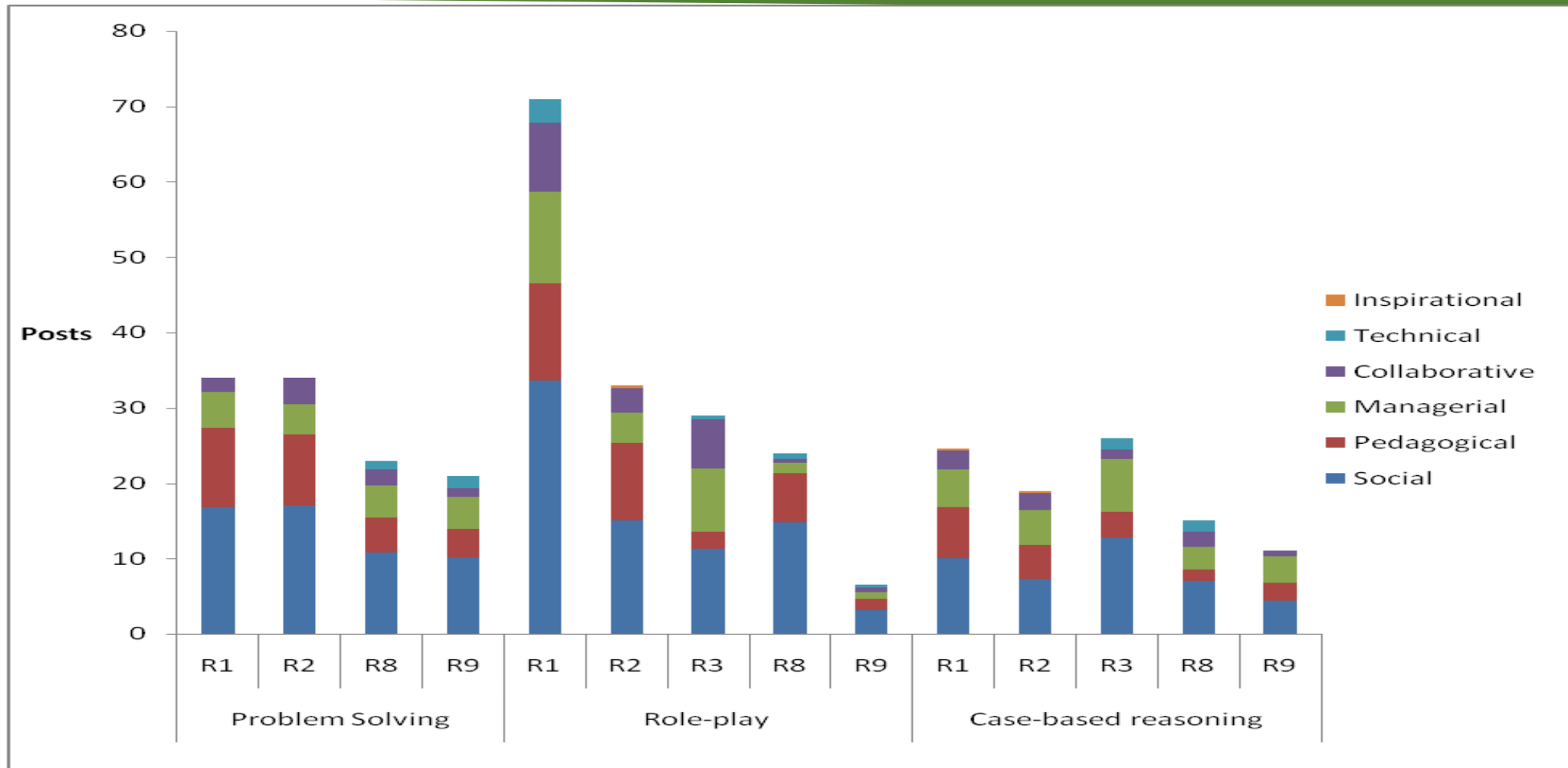
- Delivered by the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL)
- 4 U.S. e-mentors and 3 Sri Lankan e-mentors
- Mentees - academics from universities in Pakistan (9), Mauritius (10) and Sri Lanka (11)

Findings and Discussion

- *Q1 - Co-mentoring roles that emerged during the process of knowledge construction*



Co-mentoring roles that emerged during the process of knowledge construction



Case Study 1 (Jayatilleke, et al, 2012)

Pedagogical Role

... it looked interesting for me to interact with my fellows, reading their comments and discussing on the task given to us. It gave me courage and new dimensions to think on my own expertise as a teacher and the improvements which I can bring in my teaching style

(Reflective Journal Entry – Pakistani Female Participant)

Pedagogical

Case Study 2

Inspirational Role

*Thank you for the opportunity to work and learn with you and your students. It was an honor to participate in the learning challenges of this class. If it is possible, I would like to offer my stipend as a donation to an organization in Sri-Lanka, Pakistan or Mauritius that is helping street children. Children in crisis anywhere are a priority to me... Respectfully
(Email communication - International e-mentor Female 2).*

Inspirational

Case Study 2

Inspirational Role (2nd example)

*The example of self-sacrifice on their part helped me to be determined that I too should be like that
(Reflective Journal Entry – Sri Lankan Female Participant).*

Inspirational

Case Study 2

Collaborative Role

This experience also gave me much training in interacting with peers, which is quite different to a mentor/tutor role. When posting comments I had to be extremely cautious and not appear too domineering or authoritative, and at the same time urge the others to try and complete the work. So I believe this experience has enhanced my learning curve (Reflective Journal Entry – Sri Lankan Female Participant).

Collaborative

Case Study 2

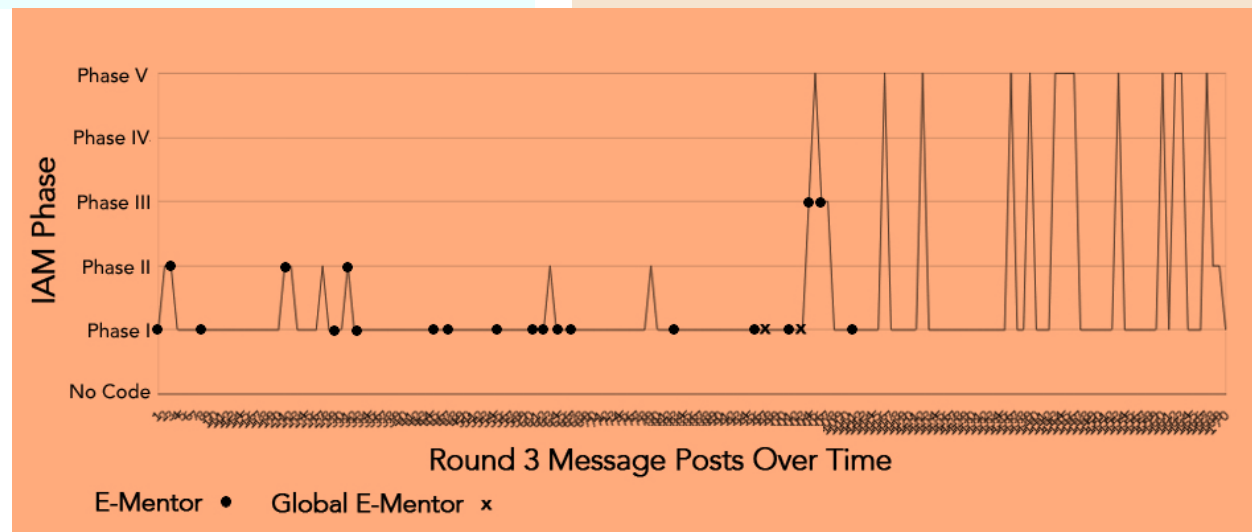
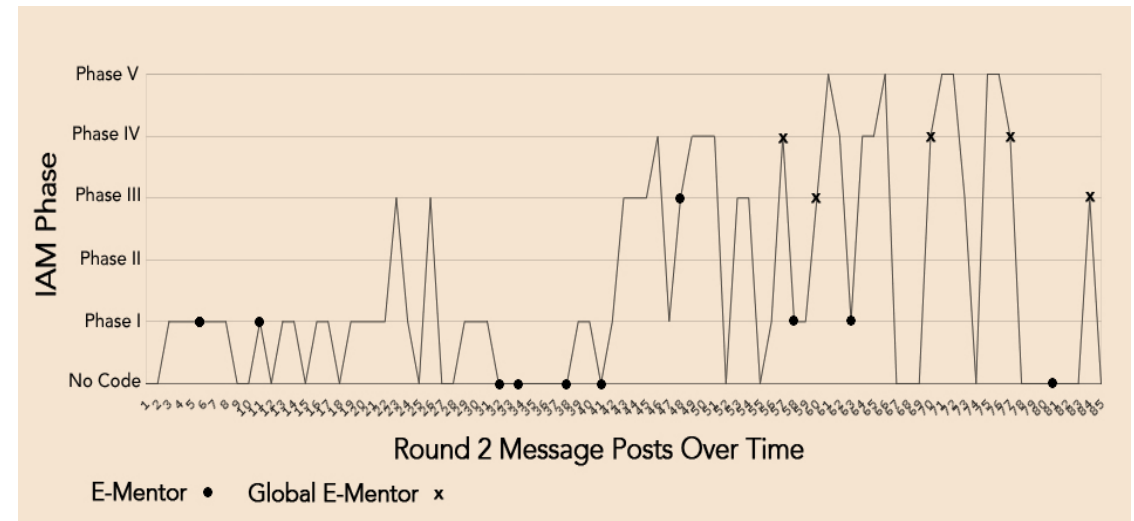
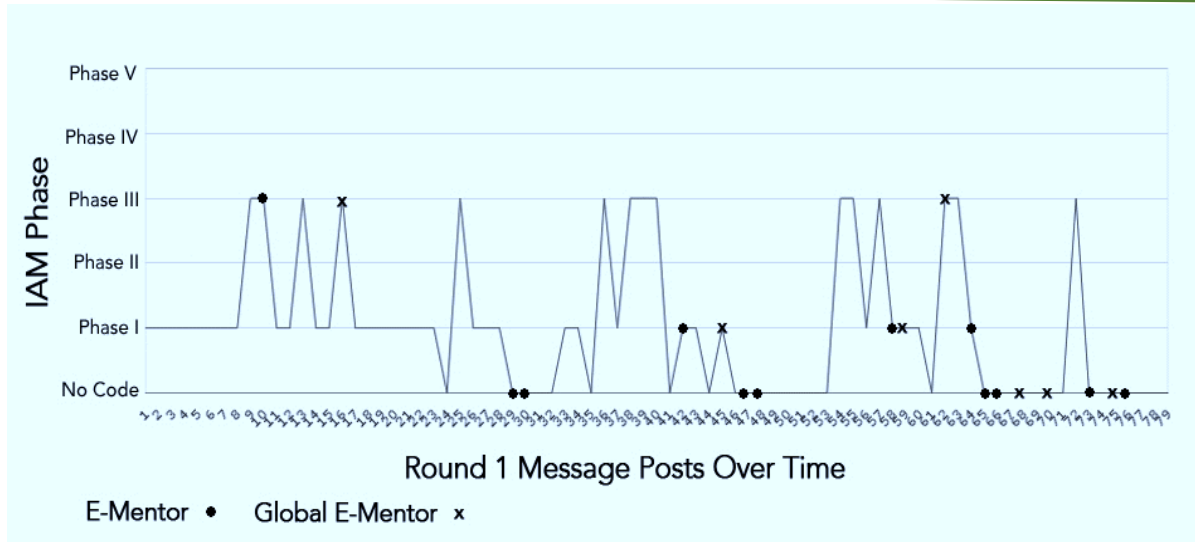
One co-mentor's approach

"My role as mentor and coach is to guide you through the learning process and encourage your participation and to be a fellow learner. Questions for you: What would you like to learn about yourself through this activity? What would help you to stretch as a learner? What support do you need to work at your best, from the mentor, fellow colleagues, your personal life? If you could have me be the best mentor for you what would that look like?" (E-mentor, Round 3, Group 2, Forum 1, Post 1).

E-mentor

Case Study 2

Co-mentoring facilitating social construction of knowledge



Cross-cultural co-mentoring techniques to facilitate community & knowledge building

Social and community building e-mentoring techniques	Pedagogical and knowledge building e-mentoring techniques
Greetings	direct questioning related to the issues in mentees' own country (curiosity and openness)
Self-introductions	explaining cultural attitudes in relation to the culture of the mentees
Acknowledging each other	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• elaborating on unique culture specific terms• comparison with other countries on the basis of their experience• simplifying and paraphrasing
Polite expressions	relating authentic examples, stories, etc.

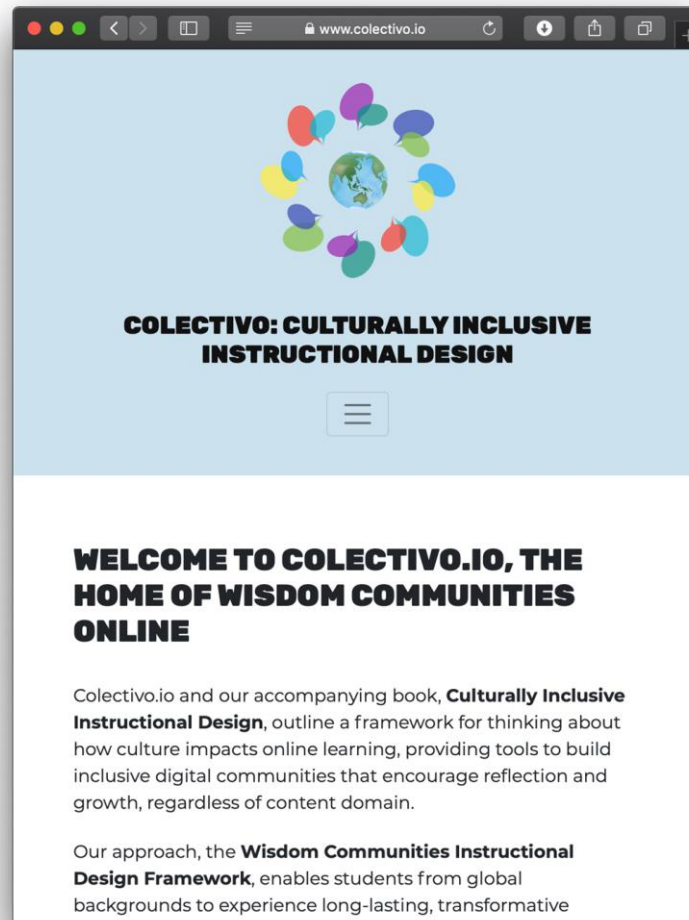
Challenges to cross-cultural co-mentoring

- Identification of mentee characteristics and matching mentors
- Linguistic difficulties. Those with limited language proficiency were less likely to participate.
 - Translanguaging when both groups know two languages will allow for the full expression of linguistic repertoire
- Expectation of direct guidance from mentees who are more accustomed to teacher-centered learning
- Providing timely feedback due to volunteer mentor's time constraints and international time zones

Conclusion

- Results showed co-mentoring can support online knowledge construction and the development of a cohesive community
- In the second case study, participants commended the design based on WisCom, and the learning challenge which identified problem/case/issue
 - Participants felt empowered to engage
 - Those who participated fully showed gradual development of thinking processes
- Issues to consider in design are:
 - mentee needs and characteristics;
 - linguistic difficulties;
 - expectation of direct guidance; and
 - the commitment to providing timely feedback
- Meaningful co-mentoring partnerships can be established across cultures if there is mutual respect and willingness to learn from each other

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Thank you