

**School of Education**

**Negotiating professional learning relationships in the cross-cultural  
school improvement context of Abu Dhabi, UAE**

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**This thesis is presented for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
of  
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## **Declaration**

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

Signature:

Date: 31 July 2019

## Abstract

This study uses hermeneutic phenomenology to explore and describe the lived experiences of Western education advisors who led teachers' professional learning through mentoring in the cross-cultural school improvement context of Abu Dhabi, UAE. In 2005 the leadership of Abu Dhabi, the largest of the seven emirates within the UAE, founded the Abu Dhabi Educational Council (ADEC) in an attempt to transform the region into an innovative and resourceful knowledge-society in support of the nation's goal of economic sustainability. ADEC implemented a significant reform initiative in selected public schools referred to as the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) which aimed to increase student achievement and the overall quality of educational delivery; strengthen parent and community involvement in public education; improve and increase the number of qualified teaching staff; enhance the quality of teaching and administration of public education; and promote and strengthen national heritage and culture. These objectives were driven primarily through the employment of Western education advisors by PPP operators who were predominantly English first-language teachers and leaders. Their role was to facilitate and lead professional learning to local Emirati, Arab and Western expatriate teachers and meet key performance indicators agreed upon with ADEC.

The study specifically examines those factors that support or hinder the efficacy of education advisors in their role as change agents in a major education reform and reveals the complexities of working in cross-cultural mentoring relationships. Data was gathered from twenty-five Western education advisors, with at least six months of experience of working within the Public- Private Partnership (PPP) in local public schools, from in-depth face-to-face semi-structured interviews and structured email interviews. Van Manen's (1997) methodological structures of hermeneutic phenomenological research informed and guided this study to develop an understanding of how education advisors negotiate professional learning relationships in a cross-cultural school improvement context. Three main themes emerged from the data analysis: "Developing interpersonal relationships", "Responding to context" and "Building cultural connections".

Theme 1 provides strong evidence that the most significant aspect of negotiating

professional learning in a cross-cultural school improvement context centres around developing interpersonal relationships. Although this demanded a significant level of emotional, social and intellectual commitment, forging mutually respectful and trustworthy relationships was a key indicator of negotiating professional learning relationships successfully and this fostered positive professional collaboration to enhance teachers' capability.

Theme 2 explains that education advisors respond to a diverse range of personal and professional contexts under complex cross-cultural circumstances by using practical and action-oriented methods. Education advisors developed strong interpersonal relationships with local teachers to better understand the context. Personal, organisational and systemic complexities were managed with sensitive negotiation, creative approaches and careful management to nurture strong personal and professional relationships.

Theme 3 shows that the experiential realities of education advisors were deeply impacted by different cultural interactions, exposing inherently deep connections to their own and others' cultures. Education advisors learned that an understanding of the host nation's culture, language and communication styles is vital to bridging cultural differences in a complex cross-cultural school improvement context. Building cultural connections and developing connections with diverse people supported cultural learning about others' unique ways of thinking, being and doing.

Cross-cultural mentoring as a strategy for teachers' professional learning is a significant challenge, given its purpose in a UAE school improvement context. There is little research that exists in relation to this globalised context; viz, the mentoring of teachers in a diverse Middle Eastern cross-cultural school improvement context by Western teachers and leaders employed as education advisors by the PPP. This work therefore has international relevance relative to a diversified teacher work force and the use of cross-cultural mentors in globalised settings. The findings of this study are presented through a framework of interactions that emphasise powerful connections between three main elements of person, culture and context.

## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to my dad, Chris, a kind and gracious man who left life too soon; there is not a single day that goes by without me thinking about how much I miss your love, and how I wish that you were still with us to share our lives; and to my most precious mum, Prem, who is one of the most courageous, beautiful and smartest women I am blessed to know. Thank you for your love and encouragement, even if it has meant reminding me that you wanted to see this published before you died! I am as proud of you as you are of me.

~ Even when I have nothing, I will always have you in my heart ~

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I had, perhaps a bit too optimistically, thought that this thesis would have been completed in my late twenties but life and work got in the way as it does. As the years flew by, it became more of a distant aspiration. With the encouragement of our dear friend Lawrence Peters, I met Associate Professor Jill Aldridge in Al Ain, a beautiful oasis city in the UAE, to discuss my work and study. When she was willing to support my candidature, she didn't just open a door, she offered an opportunity. For that, I will always be grateful. Thank you, Jill, for believing that I could do this. Although this has taken longer than we both would have liked, I feel contented that the time has been well spent thinking and creating something meaningful from my Middle-Eastern adventures. Paraphrasing Sir Edmund Hillary, I finally knocked the bugger off!

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## Acronyms

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| ADEC  | Abu Dhabi Education Council (is now known as the Department of Education and Knowledge [ADEK] since September 2017 after the Ministry of Education [MOE] and the Abu Dhabi Education Council [ADEC] affirmed that unification of the educational system in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi with the federal system to achieve full harmonisation in the academic year 2018-2019 of all educational systems, policies and tracks of action in all UAE public schools plans) |
| ADEK  | Abu Dhabi Education and Knowledge   |
| CEPA  | Common Education Proficiency Assessment   |
| CQ    | Cultural Quotient/Cultural Intelligence   |
| ESL   | English as a Second Language  |
| EMT   | English Medium Teacher  |
| EQ    | Emotional Quotient/Emotional Intelligence   |
| HCT   | Higher Colleges of Technology   |
| ICT   | Information and Communication Technology  |
| IELTS | International English Language Testing System   |
| KHDA  | Knowledge and Human Development Authority   |
| KPI   | Key Performance Indicator   |
| LT    | Licensed Teacher  |
| MOE   | Ministry of Education   |

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| NCEA   | National Certificate of Educational Achievement                  |
| NCLB   | No Child Left Behind   |
| NZ     | New Zealand  |
| OECD   | Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development            |
| PL     | Professional Learning  |
| PPP    | Public-Private Partnership                                       |
| SA     | South Africa   |
| UAE    | United Arab Emirates   |
| UAEU   | United Arab Emirates University                                  |
| UK     | United Kingdom   |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| USA    | United States of America   |

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 The context I bring

Some of my most important learning has come from the times when I took the greatest risks, making decisions that allowed me to experience the world differently than I had originally imagined. Some of those choices have led to the best and worst times of my life, but throughout it all, one thing remains: it has always been the people in my life who have added to its richness.

In the winter of 2008, our small family left the shores of New Zealand to find adventure in the heat of the fast-developing United Arab Emirates (UAE). It was a choice that would impact our lives dramatically. Anyone who has lived and explored in a foreign country knows that it is an incredible life experience but I have had the added opportunity of working within and contributing to the nation's educational system; that is a privilege only some are lucky enough to enjoy and I count myself as one of them.

Having previously worked as a teacher, head of department and dean across public schools in South Africa (SA), New Zealand (NZ) and the United Kingdom (UK), I was fascinated by the swift transformations taking place in education in the UAE but particularly interested in how the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) strategised the implementation of educational reform initiatives using the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) system. Between 2006 and 2012, ADEC implemented the PPP school improvement initiative across the emirate of Abu Dhabi. This aimed to deliver a programme of educational reform to raise standards through the medium of English, modernise teaching pedagogy and improve school administration practices by facilitating and delivering school-based professional learning (PL) to teachers across public schools.

To support the work of the PPP, mainly Western-trained teachers and leaders were employed as education and management advisors from predominantly English-

speaking countries, viz. NZ, SA, Australia, the UK, the United States of America (USA) and Canada to lead teachers' PL. This study explores the lived experiences of education advisors as they navigate and negotiate professional learning relationships in a cross-cultural school improvement context, viz, Abu Dhabi, UAE. I focus on this specific culture and context using phenomenology as both a philosophy and methodology to authentically connect experience, thinking and reality.

A school-based PPP team typically consisted of a management advisor, an English Second as a Language (ESL) advisor and other education advisors for the core curriculum areas of English, Mathematics, Science and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Their role as education advisors was to facilitate and deliver in-school and classroom-based PL to local Emirati, Arab and Western expatriate teachers to raise student achievement, improve pedagogical knowledge and develop methodological expertise, through mentoring of teachers. They also encouraged and supported teaching in the medium of English and worked to improve school leadership and administration (ADEC, 2009). Some of the more popular methods education advisors used to support teachers included mentoring, coaching, modelling, team-teaching and observation. This study locates mentoring as a significant relational experience between education advisors and teachers and focuses on the use of mentoring, including coaching, as a fundamental strategy for delivering teachers' PL in a cross-cultural school improvement context.

As I engage with the research, I do so with a history of living and working in cross-cultural contexts and am coloured by my own personal and professional experiences of working as an education advisor. Creswell (2009) states, "Researchers recognise that their own backgrounds shape their interpretation, and they position themselves in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their personal, cultural and historical experiences" (p. 8). Additionally, the academic concept of "border crossing" is a very real and personal experience for me. I will share how I came to be involved in undertaking cross-cultural educational research and why I decided to explore this topic.

Born in apartheid South Africa of Indian ancestry, I am privileged to count both Gandhi and Mandela as part of my cultural heritage. Both leaders are an inspiration to

me with their extraordinary courage, their pursuit of self-determination and their willingness to forgive our oppressors. Raised in a Hindu family, I learnt that all things are interconnected and have value. The principle of “Unity in Diversity” is a strong tenet of Hinduism and my religion has taught me to recognise and respect that the world around me is characterised by multiplicity and diversity. This important teaching has shown me that, despite our individual differences, we each have something of value to contribute to humanity. Nurtured in Africa, I developed an awareness of the African concept of “Ubuntu” and grew to understand that a powerful connection exists between others and myself: “I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am” (Mbiti, 1969, p. 108). This philosophy allows me to connect myself to my community and those around me. Living in New Zealand, I am impacted by the traditional Māori worldview that life in a balanced universe is interconnected and reciprocal (Harmsworth & Awatere, 2013). This principle of “Kotāhitanga” embraces an interdependence as we strive to connect and collaborate with each other as humans. My character and culture are both complex and dynamic.

Growing up in South Africa with apartheid as a powerful adversary was a painfully difficult experience. Legal, legitimate and justifiable in the eyes of an oppressive government, apartheid prevailed through the deliberate separation of people along the lines of race and colour. It destroyed opportunities to enjoy naturally-existing human relations exemplified in the profound concepts of “Unity in Diversity”, “Ubuntu” and “Kotāhitanga” and, like so many other non-white people, I too was forced to endure the ache of exclusion, the sting of segregation and the wounds of prejudice. Leaving this discrimination behind, I subsequently made my home in New Zealand, England and the UAE at different times. The experience of living, learning and working across the globe has been a real privilege, yet I am not disconnected from the culture I was born into and the incomprehensible experiences of an apartheid South Africa are not confined to that country alone. Nor can I disregard the cultures that I have deliberately immersed myself in - all affirm my status as a global citizen and continue to influence me.

As I reflect, I understand that my personal identity has been created by cultural, social, political and historical realities to compel change and growth. As a professional, I have witnessed overwhelming social and educational changes in South Africa after the fall

of apartheid; and then, in New Zealand, the introduction of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) was a major transformation of the national assessment system at secondary school level. In the UK, I worked at a Specialist Sports College where the school was expected to “invest in people” to raise standards of achievement across the whole school. Investigating education reform in an entirely new education system in the Middle East was yet another exciting personal and professional adventure.

When I was first appointed as an education advisor in 2009 by a well-known international educational company in Abu Dhabi, the PPP had already been underway for at least two years. In this position, I worked at a local public school for two years supporting the English department with the implementation and delivery of the new ADEC curriculum. My main role as an education advisor involved mentoring local Emirati and other Arab-expatriate teachers by providing on-site PL. The aim was to improve teachers’ learning, make improvements to existing pedagogy and raise student achievement by shifting teacher-directed pedagogies to student-centred, inquiry-based learning. When the contract between ADEC and the PPP ended in 2012, I was employed by ADEC as an education advisor working across several public schools to develop the capacity of middle and senior leaders in public schools.

The reality of my own experience as an education advisor only struck me as I became more involved by working within the PPP project. The education advisor position offered me a chance to not only effect educational changes in practical terms but to use my professional sphere to influence teachers’ thinking. The prospect of supporting other educators through a change process was a unique position to be in and I quickly realised that the work of school improvement and education reform is intricate and, almost always, very difficult to implement successfully and sustainably over a short space of time. While I recognised that to be a part of such an important and unique reform was both an exciting and challenging opportunity, the role was demanding in all sorts of ways, requiring that I call on all my prior knowledge, experience, expertise and intuition to make the partnerships with both the education advisor team and teachers work. I found that I was able to connect to some better than others and, not for lack of trying, failed a good few times. Trying to define success was a daunting prospect because change in a school context is not always immediately evident,

obvious or measurable and there were additional challenges of working in an unfamiliar language, culture and context. No one thing or person could have adequately prepared me for a responsibility of this magnitude.

In the West, I had found that teaching could sometimes be a closed and isolated experience, but in the Middle East there were moments when a small transformation evolved into significantly meaningful change that made school improvement work exceptionally rewarding. I was able to see how one person – me – could bring about positive change and make a difference to how teachers thought and taught through improved and well-executed pedagogy. My decision to research the experiences of education advisors therefore emerged from a desire to understand how my colleagues confronted a cross-cultural school improvement context, how they viewed the challenges and successes of the PPP initiative and to consider how their experiences aligned with my own.

## **1.2 The purpose of the study**

This purpose of this research is to explore and describe the lived experiences of education advisors as they lead teachers' PL in a cross-cultural school improvement context. The study assesses cross-cultural interactions, studies those experiences that impact the work of education advisors and considers those factors that support or hinder the efficacy of education advisors in their role as mentors and change-agents. A subsidiary purpose of the study was to scrutinise the complexities of working in a Middle-Eastern cultural context and the outcomes of strategies that are employed to lead teachers' PL for school improvement.

A significant aspect of the research investigates the notion of mentoring as a vehicle for developing teacher quality and considers what constitutes effective mentoring practice in a cross-cultural school improvement context. This requires a close examination of how mentoring supports teachers' PL at the chalk-face as opposed to the policy-development level by connecting the lived experiences of education advisors to developing thinking and constructing knowledge around the nature of mentoring in a cross-cultural context.

The philosophy of hermeneutic phenomenology has enabled me to uncover, interpret

and reflect on the meaning of lived experiences of the participants as well as my own in the “the fulfillment of our human nature: to become more fully who we are” (van Manen, 1990, p. 12). I have sought to overlay phenomenological insights and interpretations of “being-in” the space of education advisors’ realities and their “ways-of-being” within this specific cultural and contextual reality. It is envisaged that this research will enable a deeper appreciation and understanding of their experiences of “ways-of-being” with the phenomenon as they engage with their own experiences of leading teachers’ PL in a cross-cultural context.

Research of this nature does not appear to have been conducted previously in the UAE or the Middle East. This study therefore offers a unique perspective of improvement from within the school as an organisation. This study presents an understanding of the complex nature of cross-cultural mentoring in a UAE context and suggests strategies for improving cross-cultural mentoring as part of teachers’ PL. This research opens up a world of information and knowledge by exploring the experiences of a diverse group of Western education advisors’ cultures as they sought to understand people’s unique voices, values and perspectives from different backgrounds.

### **1.3 The impetus for the study - “Turning to the phenomenon”**

My interest in researching this topic began as a way of relating to the phenomenon. As an education advisor myself, I turned to the phenomenon as a matter that deeply interested me and the need to understand the experiences of other education advisors offered me a way to gain perspective on my own positioning. Sanders (1982) explains that this “does not present a new view but a new way of viewing” (p. 359). This investigation into the experiences of education advisors became an extended exploration of my own personal and professional journey and I envisaged that a critical understanding of my “way of being” as an education advisor would help me to understand those things that I could have done better or differently. Reflecting on the meaning of the lived experiences of my colleagues and my own in the “fulfilment of our human nature” has made it possible to “become more fully who we are” (van Manen, 1990, p. 12) and who I am.

Van Manen (1990) describes phenomenological research as “being-given-over to some quest, a true task, a deep questioning of something that restores an original sense

of what it means to be a thinker, researcher, a theorist” (p. 31), suggesting that turning to a phenomenon is the first step in research. A researcher should only be compelled to undertake research by a deep and powerful thought or idea before committing to research in a way that fully consumes one, and then it becomes difficult to progress without an intense involvement to the next step of articulating research questions (van Manen, 1990, 1997). A phenomenological research question aims to question being (Munhall, 1994) and the meaning of the experience of negotiating teachers’ professional learning in a cross-cultural school improvement context. Thus, phenomenological questions are characterised by seeking to get an insight into descriptions of everyday life by drawing the reader into the phenomenon so that the researcher is deeply engaged (van Manen, 1997; Munhall, 1994).

It took me considerable time to distil my research ideas before I could clearly articulate the exact phenomenon I wanted to study. I knew I needed to understand how Western-trained education advisors, unfamiliar in many instances with the context, culture and language, impacted teachers’ PL in a Middle-Eastern culture and context. My initial attempts at formulating phenomenological questions revealed my inexperience with the methodology and I found it difficult to articulate a question to grasp the essence of what I wanted to learn and investigate. I devised several questions in the beginning, keeping open to the idea that I would eventually understand the meaning of the education advisor experience in Abu Dhabi if I was committed to my study (Munhall, 1994).

As Munhall (1994) suggests, I devised questions that “ask the ‘whatness’ of being in the experience” (p. 50). What were the challenges associated with facilitating change management in an English foreign-language context? What was the experience of education advisors working with local staff in a school improvement context? What was it like to negotiate language barriers and communication with teachers who did not speak English? How were teams of Western education advisors of different nationalities able to consolidate their personal ideologies of education and pedagogy to present comprehensive teachers’ PL that built internal capacity for sustainability? What aspects of change management practice did education advisors believe to be successful, effective and useful in leading professional learning? How does the global melting pot evident in the UAE support notions of collaboration and cooperation to

support human diversity? These musings lead us to the next section, the research problem.

## **1.4 The research problem**

This thesis considers the research problem of how education advisors who lead teachers' PL in Abu Dhabi, as part of the PPP, negotiate a cross-cultural school improvement context. A key aspect of this study is to develop a coherent understanding of how Western education advisors negotiate professional learning relationships in a cross-cultural school improvement setting. I inquire how education advisors locate themselves in a foreign context and make sense of the nature of their work by focusing on mentors' lived experiences and the factors that influence and impact their ability to manage their roles and responsibilities. Then I highlight some of the intricacies of Western education advisors working in a global education reform context and the complexities of their cross-cultural interactions. I consider how participants' cultural differences are managed to support teachers' PL and determine the impact on school improvement.

### **1.4.1 Research questions**

The main research question that forms the framework of the study is:

How do education advisors negotiate professional learning relationships in a cross-cultural school improvement context?

Two subsidiary questions set the boundaries for the study asked:

1. How does the context influence the school improvement work of education advisors?
2. How are participants' cultural differences managed to effect school improvement?

## **1.5 Research methodology**

This is a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study which interprets words and actions to reveal depictions of lived experience that invite reflection (van Manen, 1990, 2014, 2017). I selected hermeneutic phenomenology as the most appropriate methodology for this research, firstly because its philosophy resonated with me in that I value the learning of personal experience. Van Manen (1997) suggests that phenomenology encourages researchers "to gain a deeper understanding of the nature

or meaning of our everyday experience” (p. 7), providing an appropriate ontology and epistemology for investigating and understanding the human world. Secondly, phenomenology enables the study of deep human experiences by uncovering how individuals make sense of the world around them, revealing the meanings that can be ascribed to those experiences by producing rich descriptive details in a flexible manner (Blodgett-McDeavitt, 1997; Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002; Schwandt, 2001; van Manen, 1997). Jasper (1994) explains that “the research method derived from phenomenology considers that the true meaning of phenomena can only be explored through the experience of them as described by the individual” (p. 309) and stories of lived experience are complex narratives that offer ideas, perspectives, thoughts and theories that are fundamental to learning (Bryman, 2016; Creswell, 2007, 2009).

Ontologically, this study embraces the idea that the participants have multiple realities as they work in a cross-cultural context as education advisors. The characterisation of how individuals experience the world, the different ways in which they interact, and the social and cultural contexts within which these interactions occur determine how they construct their realities. Epistemologically, this study seeks to understand the phenomenon of how a cross-cultural context influences the school improvement work of education advisors working as mentors in Abu Dhabi public schools, and does this through the collection of data based on participant interviews which reveal value-bound perspectives according to their own cultures and the context in which they are immersed.

The analysis of lived experience and interpretation of human realities attempts to uncover the underlying meanings that support our knowledge of what reality is. Phenomenological themes emerge from this process (van Manen, 1990, 2002). Phenomenological studies enable people to see themes more fully through shared reflections (van Manen, 1990, 2002). Phenomenology can lead to researchers attaining a refreshed view of meanings and, possibly, new understandings, by uncovering the essential attributes of a phenomenon if experiences are revisited: “A phenomenological perspective includes a focus on the life world, an openness to the experience of subjects, a primacy of precise descriptions, attempts to bracket foreknowledge, and a search for essential meanings in the description” (Kvale, 1996, p. 38).

As I engaged with education advisor participants, my aim was to capture their realities of working in a cross-cultural school improvement context and collect data from their perspectives. Accounts of their lived experiences offer unique insights into an unfamiliar context and may serve to invite and unlock exploration into several themes. Culturally, these mentoring experiences serve as lessons of experience that can be useful in other cultural settings and understanding how meaning is constructed with reference to the challenges and successes of working in a complex cross-cultural context. The results emerging through the research process are intended to support our understanding of the complex nature of cross-cultural mentoring in a school improvement context and to encourage us to consider the sophisticated position of initiating and leading changes for this purpose (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

In summary, this qualitative study adopts a phenomenological approach. As a research design, phenomenology allows for the study of human experiences in a flexible manner while producing rich descriptive details of those experiences (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002; Schwandt, 2001; van Manen, 1997, 2002). The aim of the research is to specifically discover, identify, describe and interpret the meanings of the lived experiences of education advisors through a phenomenological lens that allows for extensive understanding of how a cross-cultural context influences the school improvement work of education advisors who work in the PPP. Information was collected using semi-structured and structured email interviews with twenty-five education advisors working in local public schools who had had at least six months of experience of working within the PPP. Interviewees were invited to participate using purposive sampling. The next section examines the elements of the conceptual framework that guide this thesis.

## **1.6 The conceptual framework**

The dimensions that guide this study draw relationships between globalisation, education reform, teachers' PL and mentoring, including cross-cultural mentoring. Based on insights from a review of the literature, the framework describes the impact of globalisation and the need for education reform. In a diverse global world, the trajectory for educational change depends on effective teachers' professional learning. I examine mentoring as a form of teachers' PL as it enables teacher learning to increase professional capital and is one vehicle to effect school improvement. I explore whether

cross-cultural mentoring is a way to increase teachers' social, cultural and professional capital by developing capacity in specific cultural and contextual dimensions, and consider its impact on diversity and internationalisation.

*Globalisation and internationalisation affect knowledge and education*

The proverb "Knowledge is Power" is now more significant than ever. The shift from the industrial age into a post-industrial knowledge society epitomises the view that knowledge is the predominant source of all future expansion and development and has resulted in knowledge being the new currency in a globalised twenty-first century world. Gilbert (2005) explains that, "Knowledge (or intellectual capital) ... has replaced other more tangible assets like labour, land, and money as the key driver of economic growth" (p. 24). Increased productivity, lucrative profits and high performance are all more likely to be increased by the development of human intelligence (Schwandt & Marquardt, 2000). As progressive governments seek to be competitive on a global stage, they aim to position their nations to develop and exploit new forms of knowledge for economic gain (Beer, Eisenstat & Spector, 1990; Davies & Ellison, 1992; Gilbert, 2005). This makes knowledge not just power but powerful.

The acceleration of globalisation has resulted in a universal exchange and movement of people, ideas and wealth which is conducive to internationalisation. Multicultural and intercultural interactions are evident through new products, practices and people with diverse identities (UNESCO, 2009). Aspects of people's identity and culture, including cultural change and cultural diversity, must therefore be considered and managed as a priority to avoid misunderstanding and misrepresentation of people's identities through appropriate individual and collective intercultural and global competencies (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2009; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2016). Education and learning both play a central role in responding to globalisation by shaping how we perceive and respond to progress, change, competition and resources. These responses affect society as new knowledge evolves, further impacting educational and societal outcomes. Education and learning will construct the future by shaping our communities and cultural identities (Desjardine & Schuller, 2006), our economic growth (Hanushek & Woessman, 2008) and our success as individuals, and that of society, in terms of whether it strengthens or damages our

citizenship and social cohesion (Aitken & Sinnema, 2008).

A synergy exists between globalisation and education. As the most important institutions in the modern world, schools create societies (Fullan, 2010; Senge, 1990). The different ways in which schools function as organisations, the ways in which teachers teach, and how knowledge, information and skills are transmitted and acquired are a result of the knowledge era. The metamorphosis of education needs to reflect that schools are driven by resourcefulness, creativity and innovation (Senge, 1990), with a strong teaching force and effective teachers who deliver high quality education (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Husbands & Pearce, 2012; OECD, 2005, 2009, 2012) through culturally-responsive learning organisations (Banks & Banks, 2004; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Little, 1999; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). A changing world, characterised by growth and development, brings an urgency for people and organisations to learn to change with it, not just keeping up, but keeping ahead.

#### *Teachers' Professional Learning [PL]*

One of the key components of educational reform is the professional learning and development of teachers (Birman, Desimone, Porter, & Garet, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2009; Elmore, 2000; Fullan, 1991; Guskey & Huberman, 1995; Hattie, 2003; Hargreaves, 2003; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Hopkins, 2007; Hopkins & Levin, 2000; Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2008). The OECD (2005, 2009) explains teachers' professional development and learning as follows:

Effective professional development is on-going, includes training, practice and feedback, and provides adequate time and follow-up support. Successful programmes involve teachers in learning activities that are similar to ones they will use with their students, and encourage the development of teachers' learning communities. There is growing interest in developing schools as learning organisations, and in ways for teachers to share their expertise and experience more systematically. (p. 49)

Teacher quality is therefore a significant factor in improving the quality of student achievement and learning in schools (Mourshed, Chijioke, & Barber, 2010; Husbands & Pearce, 2012) and a strong teacher workforce is necessary to deliver superior

education (OECD, 2005, 2012). The synergy that exists between school improvement and teachers' learning is a key component of effective school reformation. When teachers engage in their own professional learning they develop as knowledge workers by improving their knowledge of emerging educational trends (Birman, Desimone, Porter, & Garet, 2000; Guskey & Huberman, 1995; Hawley & Valli, 1999). The outcome of effective PL is that educators will be able to support the creation, sharing and transference of knowledge to facilitate the growth of intellectual or professional capital and build their capacity to innovate and transform student learning. The resultant learning culture enables teachers to adjust their teaching practices to reflect learning organisations and knowledge societies that are driven by resourcefulness, creativity, flexibility and innovation (Senge, 1990).

A significant body of evidence supports the view that education reform efforts need to be aligned with maximising students' potential where the growth and improvement of teachers significantly affects students (Busher & Harris, 2000; Hargreaves, 1994, 2003; Hattie, 2003; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Hopkins & Levin, 2000; Hopkins, 2001; Fullan, 2010; MOE, 2007; Sparks & Hirsh, 2000; Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). No improvement in student learning can take place without teacher learning (Elmore, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2009). Teachers make an enormous contribution to the teaching and learning process through their interpretation of curriculum, shaping of pedagogy and planning of assessment (Carr et al., 2000) and their roles change continually as they seek to teach critical and creative thinking skills, problem solving and digital literacy in flexible and adaptable ways (Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2008). Empowered professional teachers are equipped with the information, skills and expertise to deliver effective teaching that improves the quality of students' learning and their educational and social outcomes.

High-quality PL is able to profoundly shape and influence methods of instruction through the improvement of teachers' pedagogy (Hargreaves, 2003; Harris, 2001). Barber & Mourshed (2007) state:

The top performing school systems recognised that the only way to improve outcomes is to improve instruction; learning occurs when students and teachers interact, and thus improving learning implies improving the quality of that instruction. They understood which

interventions were effective to improve instruction – coaching, practical teacher training, developing stronger school leaders, and enabling teachers to learn from each other – and then found ways to deliver those interventions across their school systems. (p. 26)

PL as a strategy and tool for reform can sometimes be problematic, though, because it is difficult to implement at both school and classroom level. Teachers' PL should be rooted in context, linked to classroom practice and grounded in changing classroom instruction effectively (Elmore, 2004; Fullan, 2010) as teachers are powerfully connected to students' learning and development, whether the context is the classroom, the laboratory, the library, the gymnasium or the sports field. Thus, the complexity of what teachers are engaged in must be understood and supported (Bascia & Hargreaves, 2000) so that education reform supports and enhances the work of teachers, on whom the future of efficacious education depends (Bascia & Hargreaves, 2000; Fullan, 1991; Hopkins & Levin, 2000; Harris, 2001; Hattie, 2003; Hawley & Valli, 1999).

Teachers are important change-agents who occupy a dual role as both the subjects and objects of change (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). When teachers are placed at the forefront of educational change through the development of their own learning the entire organisation benefits, so educational efforts must connect teachers to the system and society in a meaningful way, “where they see themselves not just as effects of the context, but as part of the context, contributors to it, and as agents who can and must influence how others perceive, shape and support their work” (Bascia & Hargreaves, 2000, p. 20). The role and positioning of teachers are therefore pivotal in effecting change to improve schools and drive educational reform (Bascia & Hargreaves, 2000; Hopkins & Levin, 2000; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Whitaker, 1997, 2003).

#### *Mentoring as a vehicle for changing teachers' pedagogy*

Mentoring has existed for thousands of years. As a part of teachers' PL, it continues to evolve and has a significant role in the development of teachers as learners. Tang and Choi (2005) assert that, “[m]entoring contributes significantly to the professional development of [beginning] teachers and mentor teachers, and hence the quality of the teaching force itself” (p. 383). Jones and Straker (2006) describe the UK context, stating:

Mentoring has been employed as a key strategy in initial teacher training and the induction of newly qualified teachers (NQTs), based on the belief that the development of professional practice is most effective and beneficial when it takes place in the professional setting and in collaboration with expert professional practitioners, i.e. experienced teachers. (p. 165)

Collaborative mentoring relationships are central to teachers' growth because they meet the needs of both novice and veteran teachers as they prepare for modern classrooms and schools (Lamb & Ludy, 2008). Mentoring dialogue and conversations in supportive and non-threatening environments enable people to share and discover what they know, what they need to know, and how best they can access and use this knowledge (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Mentoring relationships can result in the creation of new knowledge that is collectively constructed through sharing experience, engaging in meaningful dialogue, learning by doing and networking with people with different knowledge, understanding and skill-sets (Crumpton, 2015; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Hargreaves, 1998). However, it is the nature and strength of the relationship between mentors and mentees that determines the extent of the learning conveyed and utilised (Jones & Straker, 2006).

Having emerged from the basis of human relationships, mentoring offers a broad yet flexible approach to learning under a variety of circumstances in a practical and sociable way, with and from different people. Lieberman and Pointer-Mace (2008) explain that:

People learn from and with others in particular ways. They learn through practice (learning as doing), through meaning (learning as intentional), through community (learning as participating and being with others), and through identity (learning as changing who we are). (p. 227)

In environments where teachers share knowledge, experience and expertise they grow and develop personally and professionally (Spencer, 1990); mentoring has the capacity to build intellectual capital through the development of social, cultural and professional capital grounded in social experiences. In a relational paradigm, teachers become

strong innovators as they work together in transparent, responsible, accountable and collective ways to develop and strengthen their professional knowledge. Mentoring enables social interaction that, in turn, cultivates collaborative learning relationships. When teachers build professional and social capital through collegial professional cultures schools can be re-cultured as learning organisations (Mourshed, Chijioke, & Barber, 2010).

### *Cross-Cultural Mentoring*

In the past, cross-cultural mentoring literature focused on gender and racial identities as distinctive cultural characteristics (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2002, 2004; Palmer & Rosser-Mims, 2010); however, Crutcher (2014) explains that cross-cultural mentoring relationships “[involve] an on-going, intentional, and mutually enriching relationship with someone of a different race, gender, ethnicity, religion, cultural background, socio-economic background, sexual orientation, or nationality....[T]he cross-cultural mentor guides the intellectual and personal development of the mentee over time” (p. 26). Ragins (1997) explains cross-cultural and diversified mentoring relationships as being “composed of mentors and protégés who differ in group membership associated with power differences in organizations (e.g. race, ethnicity, gender, class, disability, sexual orientation)” (p. 482) while Giscombe (2007) defines cross-cultural mentoring as mentoring someone who is characteristically different.

Cultural diversity requires appropriate mentoring relationships where learning new skills and knowledge builds greater understanding, capability and capacity in a modern world. Diversity within organisations and societies parallels the heterogenous, racially diverse and culturally complex world we already live and work in. An increasingly globalised society includes all people in a community, regardless of race, culture, ethnicity, religion and gender. Blake-Beard, Murrell and Thomas (2007) suggest that “the changing composition of the workforce means that individuals will experience more cross-race (and cross-cultural) interactions within organizations of today and tomorrow” (p. 225). Certainly, most organisations are characterised by culturally diverse people with varied race, culture, society, religion and age (Ragins, 2007). Mentors must therefore be aware of different cultural dimensions and consider the kind of cultural knowledge that provides “the lens through which teachers’ practical knowledge is viewed and interpreted” (Maynard, 2000, p. 8) because people are able

to learn from one another when their lenses are in check, their outlook is clear *and* their stance is transparent.

### *Understanding Culture*

Different cultural frameworks exist to support our understanding of culture and cross-cultural interactions (Hofstede, 2003; Lahdenperä, 2000; Rosinski, 2003; Schwartz, 1994, 1999; Triandis, 1996; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998) and allow an examination of how cultural aspects relate to teaching and learning in cross-cultural contexts. Cultural contexts influence people's cognition and social behaviour in terms of how they make sense of the world and engage in it. Culture is therefore integral to the way people develop their worldviews, are socialised to view others and to interact, communicate and develop relationships. In general, people who belong to the same culture tend to have similar worldviews and behaviours that may result in conflict and disagreeable interactions in situations in which worldviews and culture differ. Looking into a different culture presents a rich insight into better understanding of diversity and difference. Cultural dimensions offer a way to understand the role of culture and cultural values in mentoring relationships.

Neuroscience explains that while human brains are generally the same physically, people perceive things differently according to their context and environment (Bossons, Riddell, & Sartain, 2015). An individual's worldview is typically shaped by personal experiences of the world and the experiences of others that impact values and influence behaviour. In a mentoring relationship, "Whatever approach one takes, the message is clear - the context and culture of mentoring matters" (Kent, Kochan & Green, 2013, p. 212). This makes mentoring difficult to define because it is culture and context specific (Clutterbuck & Lane, 2004).

However, further insights from neuroscience suggest that the human brain is able to change and develop through different experiences, making mentoring a promising adjunct to cross-cultural development and learning. Human intelligence is developed by exposure to new experiences which require one to negotiate from the point where one is to the place where one seeks to be. This progression is possible because of the brain's plasticity, which allows the building of new neural networks which bring unconscious behaviour to conscious behaviour. Knowing and understanding culture influences

thinking, teaching and learning. Maynard (2005) observed that “knowing about the cultural context enhances the understanding of processes of change” (p. 41). As organisations respond to change, cross-cultural mentoring relationships allow people with different cultures to learn from each other with mutual respect, equal status and a shared purpose. Cross-cultural mentoring has a significant role to play in encouraging an inclusive, diverse global society in which people from different cultures and backgrounds live and work together.

### *Conclusion*

A conceptual framework has emerged from a review of the literature which makes it possible to connect aspects of the study to the research problem, purpose, methodology, data collection and analysis to establish a coherent inquiry. Although conceptual framework analysis has the advantages of flexibility and capacity for modification that supports an understanding of phenomena, its limitations include an inability to predict social phenomena (Levering, 2002) and the possibility that researchers may approach and conceive the same phenomena differently (Jabareen, 2009). The aim of this conceptual framework is to draw connections between teachers’ professional learning that occurs through mentoring and specifically, mentoring across cultures, as a distinctive way to build teachers’ social, cultural and professional capital within specific cultural and contextual dimensions. Many organisations are already characterised by culturally-diverse people with varied race, culture, society, religion and age (Ragins, 2007).



Figure 1.1: The conceptual framework

At its most fundamental level, mentoring enables social interaction that, in turn, may cultivate complex collaborative learning relationships. As organisations respond to change, cross-cultural mentoring relationships allow people with different cultures to learn from each other with mutual respect, equal status and a shared purpose. Mentoring has the capacity to build intellectual capital through the development of social, cultural and professional capital grounded in social experiences. In a relational paradigm, teachers become strong innovators as they work together in responsible, transparent, and accountable ways to develop and strengthen their professional knowledge.

When teachers build professional and social capital through collegial professional cultures schools can be re-cultured as learning organisations (Mourshed, Chijioke &

Barber, 2010; Senge, 1990). Cross-cultural mentoring relationships can have a significant role to play in encouraging an inclusive, diverse global society in which people from different cultures and backgrounds live and work together. Mentoring as a strategy for teachers' PL is a significant challenge, given its purpose in a cross-cultural UAE school improvement context. Little research has been done in relation to this globalised context; viz, the mentoring of teachers in a diverse Middle Eastern cross-cultural school improvement context by Western teachers and leaders employed as education advisors by the PPP.

### **1.7 Significance of the study**

There is a dearth of research related to the role of education advisors and mentors in large-scale education reform from a Middle-Eastern perspective; and work of this nature does not appear to have been conducted previously in the UAE. Chronicling the lived experiences of education advisors looks beyond the PPP to how education advisors were affected in their role as change agents in this specific context. Considering the limited research examining the role of education advisors who are employed to lead PL as mentors in the cross-cultural school improvement context, these research questions are exploratory.

Although this study provides an understanding of the work involved in the delivery of teachers' PL in one, specific cross-cultural school improvement context, the findings may potentially be useful in other similar contexts. This information may support the successful implementation of effective PL programmes in diverse school settings with multicultural mentors and mentees. The research provides an alternative perspective to mentoring in diverse cultural contexts particularly as research into cross-cultural mentoring in a school improvement context does not appear to have been conducted previously.

This information may be of interest to mentors, educators and policy makers and adds information to the development of cross-cultural and diverse mentoring programmes. The research findings provide new knowledge to those who are interested in mentoring as a means for instigating change in culturally-conscious and responsive ways. Public education organisations, private educational consulting companies, teachers, leaders, policy-makers and academics involved with school improvement may be interested in

the strategies implemented in UAE public schools through the PPP and experiences of Western-trained education advisors in a Middle-Eastern context. These findings have the potential to impact future development and implementation of effective school improvement initiatives, particularly in Middle Eastern and other contexts that are characterised by a diverse, international workforce.

The information may have implications for the enhancement of education advisors' own practice, particularly for those who have received little or no training prior to accepting positions to work in this context. It is hoped that this study enables a deeper appreciation of the phenomenon of cross-cultural mentoring by encouraging those with personal experiences of leading PL to understand their "ways-of-being" with the phenomenon. Employers such as educational consulting companies may review their employment processes to include the prior cross-cultural experience and professional learning of potential mentors and education advisors in school improvement contexts. This research therefore has significance for anyone who is interested or engaged in mentorship and mentoring relationships, especially in diverse cross-cultural contexts.

## **1.8 Organisation of the thesis**

This thesis examines how education advisors negotiate teachers' PL through mentoring in a cross-cultural school improvement context for school improvement in Abu Dhabi. It is organised into eight chapters.

Chapter 1 maps the researcher's orientation and discusses the motivation for the study. This chapter includes a conceptual framework that draws links between globalisation, education reform, teachers' PL and mentoring, including cross-cultural mentoring, to guide this study. The aims of the research, methodology and significance of the study are also presented.

Chapter 2 provides an educational snapshot of the UAE and discusses the issues that have prompted large-scale education reform by charting the political, social, economic and cultural contexts in detail. The triggers for school improvement are highlighted in this section. This chapter explains the role of the PPP in leading education reform, including information relevant to the strategic plans of ADEC in relation to the PPP project.

Chapter 3 situates the study in a review of the literature and explores and discusses research relevant to globalisation, education reform, teachers' professional learning, mentoring and culture. The notion of cross-cultural mentoring is considered against cultural dimensions with a view to understanding how cross-cultural mentoring supports the development of social, cultural and professional capital and contributes to a healthy diverse community.

Chapter 4 elucidates the research design and details the philosophical and methodological framework of phenomenology. Specific details and information related to hermeneutic phenomenology are discussed to clarify the processes around data collection and analysis according to van Manen (1990, 1997).

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 examine the evidence and present my interpretation and analysis of the findings as different essential understandings of the phenomena.

Chapter 5 explores Theme 1, "Developing interpersonal relationships", which shows that making connections and establishing relationships are integral to developing favourable cross-cultural mentoring relationships between mentors and mentee.

Chapter 6 discusses Theme 2, "Responding to context", which reveals different personal and professional contexts that impacted participants' experiences and describes the ways in which they responded.

Chapter 7 describes Theme 3, "Building cultural connections", which highlights the various ways in which participants bridged cultural boundaries to improve their own understanding of their own and others' cultures and their approaches to managing cultural differences.

Chapter 8 presents the conclusion of this thesis. The study is briefly summarised and limitations and recommendations for further research are proposed.

## **Chapter 2**

### **An educational snapshot of the United Arab Emirates**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Chapter 1 positions this research within a personal and professional context. The study is defined according to the purpose, research questions and methodology. A conceptual framework grounds the research with an explanation of globalisation and its impact on education reform, the place of teachers' PL in school improvement, and mentoring, including cross-cultural mentoring, as a strategy that drives educational change. The significance of the study is explained.

This chapter provides a general overview of some of the most important reasons for education reform in Abu Dhabi public schools, beginning with the impact of globalisation on the social, economic and cultural landscape of a young and developing country. Three of the most important triggers for school improvement are then discussed in detail, viz. the need for a highly skilled local labour force; educational issues that affect the UAE, including different teachers' professional issues that impact teaching and learning; and student issues affecting UAE education. ADEC's strategy in response to the issues is outlined. The chapter closes with an explanation of the role of PPP in meeting the needs of Abu Dhabi public schools.

#### **2.2 The impact of globalisation on the UAE**

Keeping pace with a global knowledge economy has significant issues for the quality of education delivered in the UAE. The leadership of the UAE is investing in education with the aim of redefining the country's education to create a sustainable knowledge and innovation economy as the basis for economic development and the future prosperity of the state and its citizens. Globalisation has impacted education in the UAE considerably, bringing a need to address student achievement, improve existing school infrastructure and examine the educational expectations of society for a sustainable future (Fox, 2007). Educational institutions, including schools and universities, are required to ensure that all students are prepared for the challenges of this new era. A quality education powerfully impacts life and society by providing

prospects for employment and opportunities for people to improve their quality of life. Moreover, educated citizens contribute positively within their local communities and globally.

Ongoing global change makes the successful implementation of educational reform a complex concept that affects not only teachers but also the culture of the schools as institutions. The UAE authorities have wasted little time in engaging in efforts to re-shape teacher-centred and exam-driven systems as more engaging student-centred approaches, enhanced by updated, modern pedagogies and improved technologies (Stephenson & Harold, 2007). Such transformations are meant to address a raft of structures, including but not limited to professional development, the designing of new curricula, and school buildings. Importantly, change initiatives must also consider the working structure of schools, including the relationships between stakeholders. The shift needs to emphasise a move away from being an industrial society with traditional views and roles of schools, teachers and students. The change needs to reflect the evolution of an information society that responds to internationalisation and economic globalisation.

### **2.3 Triggers for UAE Education reform**

Past researchers investigating the UAE educational system have suggested that, despite sufficient funding and resources, public schools are ineffective (Badri & Al Khaili, 2014; Gaad, Arif & Scott, 2006; Shaw, Badri & Hukul, 1995). Shaw et al. (1995) found that a key problem is that, although educational policies and school systems are essentially in place, the rationale lacks transparency and the actual implementation of activities is incoherent despite close monitoring and supervision. In their study of elementary schools in Dubai, UAE, Hokal and Shaw (1999) point to a lack of cohesion among three elements of the UAE education system. They concluded that the system firstly lacked the cohesion between schools and the Ministry needed if schools were to function effectively and consistently through the implementation of national policies. Then there were problems with how systems and functions operate within and across schools. Lastly, schools did not enable local students to pursue meaningful employment or careers for economic benefit.

A study by Gaad et al. (2006) that complements the study by Shaw et al. (1995)

described the infrastructure of the UAE education system and examined how well the curriculum was aligned and integrated within its context. Gaad et al. (2006) focused on the efficiency of curriculum development, curriculum delivery, and monitoring and evaluation and found that there was “discontinuity between development and delivery” which was being “rectified through the use of more comprehensive teachers’ guides and training sessions” (pp. 301-302). The study indicated that there was a strong focus on the delivery of subject material to students although the delivery of course content may not have always been cognisant of curricular goals or curriculum context. Monitoring and evaluation of teachers’ curriculum delivery was expected to be completed more effectively using more sophisticated methods; however, this study highlights the difficulties of aligning development, delivery, evaluation and feedback in an education system, because the complex nature of education reform requires several parts to interlock coherently for educational improvement (Gaad et al., 2006).

Badri and Al Khaili (2014) presented detailed information about educational issues affecting Abu Dhabi and how policies and strategies have been formulated according to research conducted by ADEC and other organisations for the purpose of education reform. Badri and Al Khaili (2014) discuss key systemic challenges that emerged from ADEC’s analysis of the education system and report that:

[t]hese challenges were related to students’ performance, teacher quality, school governance systems, the quality of school principals, teaching time and hours of instruction, teachers’ professional development, school infrastructures, curriculum standards, education data and research, the language of instruction, the quality of private education and preparing students for the job market. (p. 202)

Three major triggers for education reform and school improvement have been identified and are discussed in detail: the need for a highly skilled local labour force, professional issues affecting UAE education and finally, student issues impacting UAE education.

### **2.3.1 The need for a highly-skilled local labour force**

There is an expectation that education in the UAE will deliver a strong, successful and self-sustainable local labour force that is responsive to market requirements in a global

knowledge economy. This requires a commitment to developing an educated labour force who can contribute to economic diversification (Fox, 2007). To be truly self-sustaining, Emirati citizens will need to compete against an expert and experienced global workforce that is highly educated and resourceful, and of which many members are already resident in the country. Providing quality education for the nation is therefore a strategic attempt to create a highly skilled and creative Emirati labour force with the capacity to take its rightful place in a globalised economy as the country progresses.

Ironically, one needs to look no further than the UAE as a prime example of this shift where globalisation has directly impacted a society in terms of knowledge capability and capacity. The UAE is currently home to approximately 80% expatriate workers who form the backbone of the country's labour and services. Davies and Ellison (1999) explain that this phenomenon is a result of global competition that exports jobs and employment when there is no local workforce that can provide the high-quality thinking, analytical and technological skills which are considered useful and valuable. Thus, local people will be competing for low skilled and poorly paid work unless they embrace new ways of learning (Badri & Al Khaili, 2014; Davies & Ellison, 1999). Education will have a profound effect on the futures of children and communities as globalisation directly impacts societies in terms of its growth and capabilities - only those individuals who possess the skills, talents and ability to be lifelong learners are assured of a rewarding future (Hargreaves, 2003).

The vocational trend of importing talent and skill into the UAE is likely to continue in the foreseeable future until the country is in a position to support itself. According to the OECD (2015), UAE nationals constituted 4% of major occupation sector employees in 2008 competing against large numbers of expatriates. Al-Qubaisi (2012) reported that in 2009 the largest foreign migrant groups came from the Indian subcontinent while western expatriates come from a wide-ranging number of countries and amounted to approximately 500 000 of the population. Large numbers of Bangladeshis, Sri Lankans, Egyptians, Jordanians, Filipinos, Yemenis, Iranians and Sudanese also reside in the UAE with education levels across expatriate groups ranging from illiterate to highly skilled (Kapiszewski, 2006; OECD, 2015).

The large expatriate community in the UAE influences many other aspects of life. The relocation of expatriates to the UAE has a serious effect on existing local services and resources, including public and private schools, which the children of expatriates attend. Financially, most expatriates earn more in the UAE than they would in their own home countries; however, many send money back to their families in their home countries through remittances, which affects the economic situation of their host country. The global village has introduced aspects of international competition within the local labour market.

The Government sector in the UAE has historically been the key employer of locals, with many males finding positions in the military and police force. However, the preparation and placement of Emiratis in more private-sector work has made Emiratisation a significant challenge. In a 2012 study conducted by Global Human Resources Consultancy with over 1500 locals with high school certificates, vocational qualifications and university degrees, “[o]nly 62% of the under 25s, and 71% overall, said that their education had adequately prepared them for work, compared with 86% of expatriates” (Badri & Al Khaili, 2014, p. 206). The private sector is devoid of Emiratis and Emiratisation is “close to zero” (Badri & Al Khaili, 2014, p. 206). Additionally, those Emiratis who have no degrees felt particularly unprepared and uneasy about gaining employment. The study found that there is “a less productive workforce, suffering from the low levels of engagement expected in other countries in employees 10 years older” and that “young men were found to be lacking vital life skills, such as interacting with difficult colleagues or managers, dealing with setbacks or managing stress” (Badri & Al Khaili, 2014, p. 206). The UAE government is therefore urging educational reform in an effort to see their youth equipped with the knowledge necessary for surviving in a dynamic globalised economy. Providing quality education to the citizens is not only crucial, it is paramount for the continued success of the country as well as the citizens as they prepare for a future no longer reliant on oil.

## **2.3.2 Educational issues affecting schools**

### ***2.3.2.1 Issues of quality among expatriate staff***

One of the key challenges facing schools in Abu Dhabi lies in the quality of teaching, which directly impacts the achievement of UAE students. To achieve high quality

education within the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, ADEC highlighted the need to improve the quality of instruction within Abu Dhabi schools. A major obstacle to effective school improvement is that a large proportion of the Arab expatriate teaching force in UAE schools forms the personnel, especially in boys' schools. Many are untrained in modern pedagogies and do not have the up-to-date knowledge required to deliver basic education to students (Shaw et al., 1995). Some staff may be newly qualified, inexperienced, or have roots in regressive, rural environments. Furthermore, opportunities to improve their knowledge of current pedagogies have been limited where previous systems of monitoring by ministry inspectors insisted on compliance with curriculum (Badri & Al Khaili, 2014).

In 2008, ADEC assessed over 4000 teachers in English language skills and over 217 teachers in Arabic using an English and Arabic Language Diagnostic Analysis. The report stressed that, "Teachers do not have the skills to deliver best-in-class curricula" (Badri & Al Khaili, 2014, p. 203). While approximately 90% of teachers hold a Bachelor's degree, about 8% of teachers have no degree, which does not meet minimum standards (Badri & Al Khaili, 2014). All of these factors have important implications as these teachers are expected to facilitate and deliver the new UAE curricula to students in innovative ways. ADEC acknowledged that modern best-practice teaching standards were not being effectively implemented and utilised.

#### ***2.3.2.2 Quality of school leadership***

In 2008 ADEC, in conjunction with the Australian Department of Education and Training, assessed the quality and readiness of school leadership displayed by school principals based on equivalent international studies. Badri and Al Khaili (2014) reveal that approximately 70% of principals lack the requisite skills to lead their schools effectively and require significant professional development, while another 8% of principals are unable to provide adequate school management or effective leaderships. The authors identified 29% of current principals who could be supported to lead their schools effectively with significant professional development and training (Badri & Al Khaili, 2014). The report states that principals have poor formal qualifications with only 22% of principals holding a qualification while 50% of principals did not provide evidence of qualifications. Furthermore, 40% of principals provided no evidence of professional learning and development within the previous two years (Badri & Al

Khaili, 2014). The bureaucracy does not enable principals to appoint their own staff as this is done from a central administration. Teachers are often moved between schools and under-performing teachers are shifted between schools, when their contracts should rather not be renewed (Badri & Al Khaili, 2014; OECD, 2015).

### *2.3.2.3 Teachers' gender segregation and status of the profession*

UAE public schools are unique in that they are not only segregated according to gender but the staff employed to teach in schools come to the workplace with inherently significant social and cultural differences. It has been typical that Emirati females staffed girls' schools because teaching for women was seen as an acceptable occupation, both socially and culturally. However, very few Emirati males work as teachers because for men the teaching profession, in comparison to other government jobs, is not considered to be an attractive vocation (Knowledge and Human Development Authority – KHDA, 2010). Teaching as a career has a low status. Consequently, when Emirati men work in schools, they generally hold positions in senior leadership, school management and counselling in boys' schools. Teachers in boys' schools are for the most part, Arabic-speaking expatriate teachers from countries such as Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Palestine (Shaw et al., 1995). As a result, there are few Emirati male role models for local boys. Attracting more male Emirati to the teaching profession would not only indicate that teaching is an attractive career option but would also enable local males to be strong role models for the younger generation and encourage students to engage with their learning more positively (OECD, 2015).

The image and status of the teaching profession have been low over recent decades in the Emirates. In Abu Dhabi only about 40% of the teaching force are Emirati, and of those only 5% are male. There is a high turnover rate amongst female Emirati teachers. The teaching profession is not generally considered an attractive career path, but rather as one having a high workload and low pay (Al-Kaabi, 2005). Hourani, Stringer and Baker (2012) suggest that this gender-segregated society has impacted the roles of mothers and fathers. Cultural expectations in the UAE dictate that fathers and husbands are less involved with their children's education than their mothers, who are seen as the main caregivers in the family. Some fathers and husbands may be more involved with their son's schooling since females may feel socially and culturally uncomfortable in an all-male environment or be constrained by their male relatives from becoming

involved in such surroundings when enquiring about their child's progress and schooling.

The success of the UAE's education system is dependent on local Emirati people investing in building a culture of improvement and efficacy at all levels of schooling (OECD, 2015). The recruitment and retention of local Emirati staff has the potential to achieve this. When more locals become involved in education matters and grasp leadership opportunities to increase the efficiency of their school system, education may improve. This will, in turn, reduce the reliance on Arab and Western expatriate teachers who support the work of the few unskilled and inexperienced local educational administrators and leaders.

#### *2.3.2.4 Teachers' English language proficiency*

ADEC (2009) reported that teachers' English language abilities have had a severe impact on student achievement, especially for those students hoping to attend tertiary institutions. In 2008 when ADEC teachers were sampled in English and Arabic using an English and Arabic Language Diagnostic Analysis, the research found that, "[o]nly 13% of Abu Dhabi's teachers are proficient in English and 29% of teachers show modest English-language knowledge" (Badri & Al Khaili, 2014, p. 203). More disturbingly, the test showed that no English teachers were able to meet the minimum requirements of English proficiency set by ADEC. Less than 5% of Mathematics and Science teachers met the minimum ADEC English competencies. Arabic language test results were also concerning, as only 7% of teachers showing a "qualified" level, and amongst Arabic and Islamic teachers, 14% scored below "good" (Badri & Al Khaili, 2014, p. 203). The difficulty facing Abu Dhabi students who are poorly taught by ill-equipped or untrained teachers in the medium of Arabic has serious repercussions for their future learning and the possibility of compromising students' achievement is very real. Additionally, ADEC (2009) reported that the low academic achievement in English language meant that only a minority of students - less than 3% - scored high enough to enter university admission exams without foundation or remedial level programmes.

Fox (2007) explains that at tertiary level, a key concern is that students are capable of completing a challenging curriculum yet they are not entering with the skills to

function at this level of learning. CEPA (Common Education Proficiency Assessment) tests indicate that English language skills are lacking and school students must be better equipped with knowledge, skills and understanding to cope at higher learning organisations before they enter (Fox, 2007). The importance of English, both within the UAE and internationally, cannot be overstated. For Emiratis who wish to have opportunities for employment in international companies and locally in the private sector, a solid understanding of the English language is essential. Badri and Al Khaili (2014) note that a study conducted by the Global Human Resources Consultancy in 2012 suggested that graduates with better English language skills have greater access to work opportunities and tend to enjoy success at work. Emiratis who are uncomfortable speaking English felt at a disadvantage to others who had a better grasp of the language. Despite this finding, when parents of children attending public schools were surveyed in 2012 by ADEC (unpublished report available on request) about their preferred language of instruction, 82% of the parents indicated that they felt their children should be taught Mathematics and Science in Arabic. Regardless, students have been taught Mathematics and Science through the medium of English in public schools since 2010 so that they can be better prepared for university entrance (Badri & Al Khaili, 2014).

Hourani et al. (2012) suggest that the use of English as a medium of instruction and the employment of native English-speakers into the classroom is a cause of concern for the preservation and use of Arabic as the mother tongue. Furthermore, the use of English is seen as a barrier to communication, particularly by parents who do not always understand the changes proposed and implemented in schools as part of the education reform. However, to compete in a local and global market, students need to be secure in both Arabic and English language skills. Low scores in either or both languages potentially hinder the UAE's vision for socio-economic growth and progress, with as many as 70% of job openings now stipulating that applicants need to be bilingual (Badri & Al Khaili, 2014).

Another trend that impacts children's language proficiency is that children in the UAE are often raised by their nannies. In some cases, parents are unable to support their children's development because they themselves are illiterate (OECD, 2015). Consequently, local children are growing up without a solid grasp of their native

language. The implications for Arab and Islamic culture, identity and language are severe. As such, ADEC actively promotes bilingualism as part of protecting the national and cultural identity and heritage of the nation. ADEC emphasises that students whose mother tongue is Arabic should be learning English as young as possible so that students are fluent in both languages.

Dickson (2012) researched the views of teacher trainees in response to the changes occurring in the UAE education system and found that aspiring teacher-trainees need to be better informed about the requirements and expectations of the profession regarding its reform. This especially refers to changes in teaching Mathematics and Science through the medium of English (as opposed to Arabic), and the need for teachers to have IELTS qualifications. This study showed that first year teacher- trainee students were more positive about the education reform and 97% were committed to pursuing their teaching career, compared to only 67% of final year students who planned to teach after graduation.

#### ***2.3.2.5 Development and implementation of new and upgraded policies and curricula***

In comparison to other countries, the education system of the UAE is fairly new and was historically shaped and supported by Kuwait (Bradshaw, Tennant, & Lydiatt, 2004) and, to some extent, Egypt, in the 1950s and 1960s (Davidson, 2008). Textbooks and examinations dominated the education system and the classroom culture, characteristically dictated by the teacher, did not inspire creativity and quality learning (Suliman, 2000). Modern UAE school curricula need to dispense with the constraints of examinations and students need to instead develop skills of critical thinking, analysis and creativity as part of their learning. Curriculum and teacher instruction that emphasise rote learning and inflexible learning times that prevent rich learning experiences are obsolete (Badri & Al Khaili, 2014). Well- designed school curricula should support students' career options through work experiences, internships and apprenticeship opportunities which will enable them to make informed decisions about potential future occupations starting from school level as opposed to university level (Badri & Al Khaili, 2014).

As part of ADEC's 10-year Strategic Plan, the New School Model (NSM) was introduced in all public schools in Abu Dhabi in the 2010 - 2011 school year in KG1,

KG2 and P1-3 classes. Clearly developed curriculum progressions and student outcomes were not effectively defined at each grade level making education delivery difficult (Badri & Al Khaili, 2014). Through a gradual phasing in of new grades, it is anticipated that all grades would be following the NSM as the only model in Abu Dhabi government schools by 2016 as a new approach to teaching and learning that aims to align curriculum and assessment with professional learning (Badri & Al Khaili, 2014). The NSM will replace all other initiatives including the PPP, which since the 2010-2011 school year has supported the implementation of the new plan for education in Abu Dhabi (ADEC, 2012).

The aim of the NSM was to improve teacher quality, school environment and make bi-literate education a focus, encouraging and supporting students to speak, read, write and understand in both English and Arabic. Through a dual-pronged approach of teaching in both the Arabic and English language, ADEC aims to develop strong English and Arabic literacy and numeracy skills, improve critical thinking skills, and enhance creativity in students while simultaneously emphasising cultural and national identity among students. Mathematics and Science are also taught through the medium of English as part of equipping students for the demands of a global knowledge-based economy and achieving the 2030 Abu Dhabi Vision. Native Arabic speakers will teach Arabic language, history, and Islamic studies, thereby protecting Arabic language and heritage.

Schools are shaped not only by their history, context and the people within the organisation but by external and internal political, economic and educational policies (Stoll & Fink, 1996). Changes within learning environments are therefore a complex interplay of government policy, economic imperatives and social trends alongside the impact of technology, sustainability issues and changing pedagogy that require a clear understanding of what is important to learn, know and do (Bascia & Hargreaves, 2000). The changes envisaged through the NSM have directly affected the most important stakeholders, viz. the students, teachers and parents, and there have been numerous changes to learning environments, the employment of expatriate personnel and a change in school culture as a result. Such changes place students at the centre of learning; and student engagement has been a key priority, with teachers aiming to improve learning activities that promote exploration and experimentation by students

to develop them into independent learners who can think, analyse and create. For teachers, the focus is on using a new curriculum and updated teaching methods so that all students, regardless of learning ability and style, are catered for.

A study by Hourani et al. (2012) investigated the debate about parental involvement within the socio-cultural context of Abu Dhabi and recommended that “stakeholders, inclusive of parents, need to be empowered to be important constructive change agents” (p. 155). The perceived constraints to fulfilling the shared roles and responsibilities of ADEC, parents and schools can be bridged through effective open dialogue and communication using high-quality Arabic translation. Hourani et al. (2012) emphasise that parents are keen to be better informed about curriculum changes, assessment, new resources and instructional materials, changes in the medium of instruction from Arabic to English and other pedagogy matters so that they can better support their children’s learning.

#### ***2.3.2.6 Teaching time***

Another educational concern is that the instruction time received by students attending Abu Dhabi’s public schools is below the OECD average and below that of private schools in Abu Dhabi. In 2008, ADEC conducted an analysis of the annual hours of instruction and teaching time that revealed Abu Dhabi schools are 29% lower than the OECD average (Badri & Al Khaili, 2014). In addition, student attendance rates at many schools can be as low as 50% (Badri & Al Khaili, 2014), so the reduced teaching contact time does not support effective and adequate teaching and learning.

#### ***2.3.2.7 Management of students’ assessment***

The management of student assessment is a major area for improvement (Badri & Al Khaili, 2014). Student assessment is not regarded as a tool for student feedback and feed-forward to encourage future successes and endorse positive learning. Teaching staff seldom use assessment data to inform teacher planning and practice and data collected is not used to inform students’ learning needs and teaching requirements (KHDA, 2009; 2010). Instead, assessment is often thought of as a record for teachers and used as part of teachers’ professional appraisal to determine the renewal of teaching contracts. School leaders and teachers therefore need to learn how to plan for assessment, how to conduct assessment appropriately and for suitable purposes, and

how to use the data in order to plan for new learning and raise student achievement (OECD, 2015).

#### ***2.3.2.8 Professional learning***

Within schools, it is reported that some basic school operations function inefficiently. Staff meetings tend to be infrequent and often have no agendas. They are not seen as opportunities to develop staff professionally or to strengthen the teaching team, and teachers do not use the platform to share information appropriately (OECD, 2015).

#### ***2.3.2.9 School infrastructure***

A 2008 study conducted by ADEC identified that the physical structure and condition of some Abu Dhabi schools was old, overcrowded and lacking modern facilities, and ADEC has begun improvement initiatives across several areas (Badri & Al Khaili, 2014, p. 204). The learning environment of most schools is not aligned with new teaching pedagogies, particularly in ICT, and many school buildings and grounds require substantial improvement or replacement. In 2012 it was anticipated that by 2018 Abu Dhabi schools would have an intake of more than 150,000 students, making access to high quality schools imperative (ADEC, 2012).

#### ***2.3.2.10 Teacher attrition and attraction***

For many Arab teachers, large expatriate teacher-salaries are an enticing incentive, despite the insecurity of being on one-year contracts renewed yearly on the basis of appraisal. Previously, many expatriate staff earned significant additional earnings by providing tuition after school for local students. This was reported to have impacted the education system and students negatively and ADEC has since made the practice illegal. Threats of dismissal and non-renewal of contracts are used to keep Arab expatriates in check and this has a disconcerting and unsettling effect on expatriate teachers who work on annual contracts and whose job security is often at the whim of the citizens.

### **2.3.3 Student issues affecting UAE education**

Education and schooling in the UAE must reflect a learning society characterised by creativity and resourcefulness. To achieve this, learning must genuinely centre on students to enable children to become effective learners who can deal confidently and

creatively with new experiences, unfamiliar ideas, and changing conditions. Only those individuals who possess the skills, talents and ability to be lifelong learners are assured of a rewarding future (Davies & Ellison, 1999; Hargreaves, 2003). An effective education will provide more prospects for employment and the opportunity to lead a better lifestyle and contribute to the greater good within their communities and on the global stage in the twenty-first century.

#### ***2.3.3.1 Students' attendance***

An issue that has concerned authorities has been the irregular attendance, a high drop-out rate, and the non-completion and repetition of grades by students, i.e. only a small number of students are passing each year, which directly contribute to low student achievement, particularly amongst male Emirati students. (Badri, 1998; OECD, 2015). In the past, the dropout rate and repetition rates were higher in the UAE than in any other Gulf states (Muhanna, 1990). Significant numbers of students, particularly boys, are adversely affected by grade repetition leading to students dropping out of school and disengaging from education altogether (OECD, 2015). Al-Qubaisi (2012) states:

The potential benefits of investment in education and training by the UAE government, including the cost of educating both girls and boys, are not being fully realized as a result of religious and cultural norms and traditions which prevent many women from fully participating in the labour force. (p. 12)

Some students continue to lack motivation to remain in school, favouring government careers in the military and police; however, their lack of education, knowledge and skills, in effect impact the national goal of Emiratisation whereby nationals will work in the private sector (OECD, 2015).

#### ***2.3.3.2 Student achievement***

Between 2006 and 2008 different assessments showed that students were underperforming. In 2006, an assessment provided evidence that students in the UAE are performing below their grade level. It showed that in English Reading, only 16% of the students performed at their grade level and only 6% at their grade level in English Writing. In Mathematics, only 10% of the students performed at their grade level and 3% of the students performed at their grade level in Science (Badri & Al Khaili, 2014).

Then in 2008, ADEC, with the educational company Pearson developed and administered standardised tests in English, Mathematics, Science and Arabic called EMSA or External Measurement of Student Achievement to all students attending public schools from Grade 3 to Grade 12. While the results were poor, this record has enabled ADEC to track and monitor the progress of students as the reform continues (Badri & Al Khaili, 2014).

Information about how well students in the UAE are progressing can be ascertained by analysing the results of the 2009, 2012 and 2015 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) test results. PISA evaluates the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students across a range of countries and then compares the information across nations. The expectation of the National Agenda of the UAE is to be ranked in the top twenty countries by 2021. Through the internationally recognised OECD, governments and education departments can identify best practice as well as problems and work towards improving educational standards. By 2010, 75 countries had participated in the testing that evaluates how well students are prepared in the areas of English reading skills, mathematics skills and science literacy skills. The three-hour assessments are designed to evaluate how well students can apply their knowledge and to check how prepared students are to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

The Emirate of Dubai, UAE entered PISA in 2009 as a separate economy but the data from this entry were entered together with the rest of the UAE, which participated in 2010 after the initial assessment. The results were then collectively reported as a single entity under the UAE. The results show that the UAE is ranked 42<sup>nd</sup> in the world across all three curriculum areas. PISA records show that results are statistically significantly below the OECD average on all reading, mathematics and scientific scales.

In English, 60% of students in the UAE were estimated to have proficient reading literacy that is at or above the baseline to participate effectively and productively in life, as compared to 81% in OECD countries, on average. On the mathematical literacy scale, 49% of students in the UAE are proficient to the baseline level, that is, they are able to use mathematics in fundamental ways that can impact their future development. (The OECD average is not stated). The statistics in mathematics also revealed a significant gender-difference, with girls performing better than boys. The results for

scientific literacy recorded that 61% of the students in the UAE were proficient in demonstrating competencies in Science that enabled them to actively participate in life situations related to Science and Technology as compared to 82% in OECD nations, on average. In this respect, there was a statistically significant gender-difference that favours girls. Interestingly, this particular gender-gap was the largest recorded for the scientific literacy aspect for all 2009 and 2009+ participants.

In the 2012 PISA, the UAE results positioned the country at 46<sup>th</sup> from 65 nations, including 34 OECD countries. The UAE results for Mathematics rank at 48<sup>th</sup> with a mean score of 434, 44<sup>th</sup> in Science with a mean score of 448, and in Reading Literacy, a mean score of 442 earned a placing of 46<sup>th</sup>. Compared to the results from 2009, the average results from *PISA* 2012 showed significant improvement. Scores increased in Reading from 431 in 2009 to 442 in 2012, in Mathematics from 421 in 2009 to 435 in 2012 and in Science from 438 in 2009 to 448 in 2012.

In 2015, PISA results showed that the UAE ranked 46<sup>th</sup> in the world. The result for Mathematics was placed at 37<sup>th</sup> with 427 points, compared with the OECD average of 490 points. In Science, the results fell to 35<sup>th</sup> with a mean score of 437 points, compared to the OECD average of 493 points. Reading Literacy also fell on the scale to 34<sup>th</sup> position with a mean score of 434 points, compared to the OECD average of 493. PISA 2015 results were disappointing although an improvement on the 2012 results. Girls outperformed boys in all aspects of PISA 2015.

| <b>PISA Results</b> | <b>2009</b>  |                  | <b>2012</b>  |                  | <b>2015</b>  |                  |
|---------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|------------------|
|                     | <b>Score</b> | <b>Placing</b>   | <b>Score</b> | <b>Placing</b>   | <b>Score</b> | <b>Placing</b>   |
| <b>Reading</b>      | 431          | 42 <sup>nd</sup> | 442          | 46 <sup>th</sup> | 434          | 34 <sup>th</sup> |
| <b>Mathematics</b>  | 421          | 41 <sup>st</sup> | 434          | 48 <sup>th</sup> | 427          | 37 <sup>th</sup> |
| <b>Science</b>      | 438          | 41 <sup>st</sup> | 448          | 44 <sup>th</sup> | 437          | 35 <sup>th</sup> |

Figure 2.1: PISA Results for the UAE

Another issue of concern in educational achievement points to students' gender as girls in the UAE are outperforming boys (OECD, 2015). In all aspects, but most especially reading literacy, female students outperformed male students. This has implications for boys' education and their development of literacy skills, which are essential in

progressing to higher-level learning. This must be considered by teachers and schools to avoid a gender gap between students (OECD, 2015).

### ***2.3.3.3 Students' entrance to tertiary institutions***

A high percentage of students generally spend an additional year in foundation education prior to beginning at a tertiary institution, which signals that there is a lack of preparation of students for higher learning. In 2009, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research reported this figure to be as high as 96% of all students that fall into this category (OECD, 2015). Badri and Al Khaili (2014) reported in an unpublished ADEC report (available on request from ADEC), that in the first semester of the 2006-2007 academic year, 99.6% of students who entered the Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT) were not adequately prepared for the tertiary institution and required bridging and remediation courses. In the same year, the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU) also reported that 91% of students entering that institution required preparatory courses (Badri & Al Khaili, 2014). Without the knowledge and skills necessary for higher learning, there is the potential for students to be marginalised in an increasingly globalised environment that is the UAE (Fox, 2007). These are sufficiently important aspects that require redress so that students are advantaged by effective and useful educational opportunities.

## **2.4 Abu Dhabi Education Council's response and strategic plan**

Abu Dhabi schools were managed by the Ministry of Education (MOE) prior to the formation of the ADEC in 2005 (Badri & Al Khaili, 2014). The establishment of ADEC by the leadership of Abu Dhabi in 2005 sanctioned an aspirational vision to be recognised as a world-class education system that supports all learners in reaching their full potential to compete in the global market. The mission of ADEC is to produce learners who are prepared to meet global challenges while embodying a strong sense of culture and heritage. ADEC lists its core values as teamwork, integrity, transparency, respect, accountability and compassion, all of which contribute to a desire for continuing improvement (ADEC, 2012).

ADEC's aim is to establish a strong educational framework to support the country's goals of economic sustainability and to transform Abu Dhabi into a knowledge-society that is innovative and creative. To ensure this, ADEC plans to develop

educational institutions and implement innovative and effective educational policies, plans and programmes. A key element of ADEC is to enable educational institutions, including public and private P-12 education and tertiary education, to achieve the objectives of national development while advancing educational quality to the highest international standard (ADEC, 2012).

In 2009, ADEC revealed a ten-year strategic plan to counter problems (outlined below) faced in public schools. The plan highlights four key priorities for P-12 schools, which are to:

- improve the quality of schools in Abu Dhabi to meet international standards;
- provide access to quality education for all children;
- provide students with affordable options for quality private education;
- preserve national identity and local culture.

In meeting the challenges of reform, co-operation between the public and private sector has become essential. Perhaps nowhere else in the world is there such a conspicuous collaboration as there is in the UAE between the MOE, each Emirate's educational council, and private international educational consulting companies employed to support a country's educational initiatives and school improvement. One significant reform initiative that is currently being implemented in public schools is referred to as the Public-Private Partnership (PPP).

## **2.5 Reform implementation through the PPP**

ADEC partnered with a number of private educational companies in the Abu Dhabi region to drive the reform under the targets, or Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), that they have set according to the ten-year strategic plan. In 2010, eight private international educational consulting companies won contracts to lead reform in public schools in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. This number has varied over the years from the inception of school reform, and the roles of the companies have become increasingly varied as time progresses. Initially referred to as providers, many of these companies were then referred to as operators. Operators had the autonomy and flexibility to operate schools in a manner that they believed would best achieve the partnership's goals within guidelines set by each emirate's educational council. In Abu Dhabi, the KPIs were highly-detailed and used to track the intricate levels of school and systems

improvement. Whilst every provider had its own processes, policies and protocols to effect change in schools, all operator teams employed education advisors to work within schools to deliver on-site continuous professional development and to support staff and students as and when required.

The primary objectives outlined by ADEC and which PPP operators were evaluated against and held accountable for achieving were to:

- increase student achievement and the overall quality of educational delivery;
- increase parent and community involvement in public education;
- strengthen and increase the number of qualified teaching staff;
- strengthen the quality of teaching and administration of public education;
- promote and strengthen National heritage and culture.

The key role of the PPP was to develop educational responses that met the needs and demands of the UAE economic and educational strategies by raising standards in the medium of English, modernising teaching pedagogy, and improving schools' administration through the provision of Western-trained education advisors who facilitated and delivered PL to local teachers. PPP teams typically comprised a management-advisor, who was responsible for leading reforms in management and leadership, in liaison with the principal and extended leadership team. Education advisors worked primarily with the staff in the core curriculum areas of English, Mathematics, Science and ICT to improve existing methodology and pedagogy, increase student engagement and raise student achievement. An English Second Language (ESL) advisor typically worked with staff to improve teachers' levels of English and help them attain IELTS qualifications. Education advisors were evaluated against and held accountable for achieving the goals of the PPP. While the PPP programme focused on whole-school improvement within public schools, the PL programme needed to address all aspects of quality teaching and learning if an outcomes-based approach for effective teaching and learning was to succeed.

In the absence of a uniform national policy or any guidelines for systematic school improvement, each PPP company follows its own plans with respect to implementing educational change. Despite having no clear procedures for education advisors and

operators to follow, targets were prescribed by ADEC that operators were expected to attain. These target KPIs were used to monitor the PPP and ensure that the percentages set within the KPI framework were achieved within a three-year time-frame. ADEC explains that a shift from previous notions of inspection must be designed to ensure improved teaching and learning, and to provide a service that supports teachers and schools by reporting on strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement. Such a service also encourages self-evaluation for improved outcomes (Badri & Al Khaili, 2014).

Since the commencement of the PPP project in 2008, the KPIs have been adjusted and amended each year, with the exception of 2012. The KPIs were generic to all schools and successive amendments and evaluations largely ignored the unique context and circumstance of each school in determining whether or not a school had been successful in meeting the goals and making changes. As a result, the use of KPIs in evaluating the success of the PPP was not always appropriate to individual schools' contexts. ADEC statistics recorded 116 PPP schools, including kindergartens, for the academic year 2009-2010 in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, of which 48 were in Abu Dhabi City. In some schools, the PPP project was extended into 4- and 5-year long projects while other schools had had only two years with operator support. Therefore, the provision of PPP has been different for different schools.

After the entry of PPP into schools, new curriculum standards from New South Wales, Australia, were introduced and education advisors supported teachers in the implementation and delivery of these standards (Dickson, 2012). In 2009, large numbers of English Medium Teachers (EMTs) from predominantly Western countries were hired to teach English, Mathematics and Science by ADEC through a recruitment agency, TeachAway. EMTs were later referred to as Licensed Teachers (LTs). This effectively ended the careers of many Arab-expatriate teachers, some of whom had lived and worked in the UAE for many years (Dickson, 2012).

In 2011, the Director-General of ADEC, Dr. Mugheer Al Khaili, announced that as part of the UAE government's Emiratisation programme, ADEC planned to replace teachers with poor teaching qualifications, citing a turnover of approximately 12% of the teaching force with some staff retiring, resigning or through the non-renewal of

contracts (Ahmed, 2011). ADEC ended contracts for male teaching staff at ten Cycle 1 schools i.e. Grade 1 to Grade 5 schools and replaced them with female Emirati teachers. The feminisation of education is attributed to the large numbers of female graduates from state universities and this has been an opportunity for young female Emiratis to be employed and help shape a local education system (Ahmed, 2011).

Abu Dhabi has prioritised education, as central to the country's social and economic priorities. The UAE has indicated a desire to be among the top 20 countries worldwide challenging the best performing countries in the world for reading, mathematics and science in PISA. This self-imposed National Agenda ranking target demands that students have a solid understanding of Arabic and English while the leadership and teaching staff of schools ensure that student achievement is raised to international standards (OECD, 2015).

## **2.6 Summary**

This chapter explains the UAE educational context and describes the three most urgent reasons for educational reform, viz. the need for a highly skilled local labour force, professional aspects that demand improvement and student issues that impact learning. ADEC's response and strategic plan is discussed, and the role of the PPP as a strategic option to improve teacher quality and raise student achievement in Abu Dhabi public schools is explained.

Chapter 3 situates the study through a review of literature relevant to globalisation, teachers' PL, mentoring as a form of PL and how cross-cultural mentoring can lead to increased social, cultural and professional capital that supports globalisation, internationalisation and diversity.

# **Chapter 3**

## **Literature Review**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter situates the study within the global context of education by briefly exploring the impact of globalisation on society, schools, students and teachers. With the need for teaching to reflect contemporary expectations of learning, teachers' professional learning is an essential part of education reform and school improvement. Mentoring, as a specific form of teachers' professional learning, is discussed as an appropriate vehicle to improve schools. As a strategy, mentoring can expand teachers' capability and support pedagogical improvements as schools evolve into learning organisations. As a collaborative approach, mentoring is an investment in the intellectual or professional capital of learning organisations that enables educators to share knowledge and develop expertise. The evolution, definition, role, stages and challenges of mentoring are other key mentoring aspects that are discussed.

This chapter also investigates how mentoring and, specifically, cross-cultural mentoring, has the potential to impact the social and, by extension, the cultural capital of those involved in mentoring relationships. Accordingly, aspects of culture and its role in mentoring relationships are reviewed. Hofstede's (1984) theory of cultural dimensions is presented in the context of the UAE. Under optimal circumstances, cross-cultural mentoring has the potential to empower people to learn from each other in a supportive environment by building positive personal and professional relationships, encouraging cohesive school communities and promoting progressive, integrated societies. The phenomenon of cross-cultural mentoring as part of learning in a globalised society can also positively impact cultural understanding and cultural diversity.

### **3.2 The educational and social implications of globalisation**

As knowledge societies emerge, schools and educators are under pressure to innovate and respond to new expectations of learning and knowledge (Bascia & Hargreaves, 2000; Carnoy, 1999). Schools must envision becoming learning organisations, "where

people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together” (Senge, 1990, p. 3). As learning organisations, modern-day schools must therefore focus on generative learning that enhances and extends the capacity to create the future (Senge, 1990). Drucker (1993) explains that:

What will be taught and learned; how it will be taught and learned; who will make use of schooling; and the position of the school in society – all of this will change greatly during the ensuing decades. Indeed, no other institution faces challenges as radical as those that will transform the school. (p. 209)

This reform of learning as a result of globalisation suggests that people must cultivate the ability to learn, as lifelong learning will continue to be the most valuable capacity available to humans for their success. Davies and Ellison (1999) explain that schools are central to this new shift in education:

Schools need to develop the ability to identify and plan for fundamental changes in the way they carry out their role. Schools are, however, places where the organisational history and culture make it notoriously difficult to bring about change. If we are to do more than respond to immediate policy changes or current crises we need to identify potential trends, consider possible future scenarios and, above all, build reflective learning communities which can adapt to whatever challenges or opportunities arise. This involves agreeing on and living a set of values as a benchmark and building a set of learning skills so that opportunities can be shaped and taken rather than the schools being the victim of unforeseen changes and events. All organisations must see the need to reappraise fundamentally what they are doing as a result of the changes in the global economy. Schools are no exception. (p. 20)

It is necessary to consider the kind of future we envisage for ourselves, question our values and responsibilities as global citizens and reinvent schools to reflect these philosophies (Hargreaves, 2003). The acceleration of globalisation has both positive and negative consequences. On the one hand, people are enjoying a spread of thoughts,

ideas and beliefs as global citizens. At the same time, this sharing of information requires that people negotiate local and global values and ways of life responsibly and thoughtfully as an integrated global community that brings people of different races and cultures together. New ways of learning must support social cohesion to balance personal identities with global citizenship as a new form of education. These values and beliefs will form the foundation of future societies. Schools must therefore offer an education that aspires to the type of society we aim to create, reaching beyond employment in a labour market (Gilbert, 2005).

Additionally, as jobs increasingly become knowledge-based, future job opportunities may differ and traditional occupations in existing industries may no longer apply (Caldwell & Haywood, 1998). Globalisation has a major impact on economies, labour markets, employment rates and international migration. The impact on students through their learning and education is seriously significant (Davies & Ellison, 1999). It will be those individuals who possess the skills, talent and ability to be enduring learners who are assured of a rewarding future. In a knowledge era, those who have had a high-quality education will enjoy the advantages of lucrative employment prospects and enhanced lifestyle opportunities as educated citizens who contribute to their communities (Hargreaves, 2003).

### **3.2.1 The need for education reform**

The main purpose of educational reform is to provide citizens with lifelong skills to cope in a modern society (Issan & Gomaa, 2010). Based on this premise, schools must be enabled to innovate teaching and learning, as education creates new societies and shapes unpredictable futures (Fullan, 2010; Senge, 1990). Moreover, learners must become critical and creative thinkers, effective problem-solvers and competent communicators who can collaboratively engage in a diverse, competitive world with well-developed personal, thinking and technical skills (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009). Teachers in a knowledge society must therefore revolutionise how students learn. Instruction must genuinely centre on the child if students are to become effective learners who embrace new experiences, cope with unfamiliar ideas and respond to changing conditions confidently and creatively.

A significant body of evidence supports the view that educational reform efforts

should be aligned with maximising students' potential through their teachers learning how best to influence them (Busher & Harris, 2000; Hargreaves, 1994, 2003; Hattie, 2003; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Hopkins & Levin, 2000; Hattie, 2003; Hopkins, 2001; Fullan, 2010; MOE, 2007; Sparks & Hirsh, 2000; Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). Teacher knowledge and practice must be improved for student learning to be enhanced – in short, good teachers influence positive student outcomes (Hargreaves, 2003). School improvement therefore occurs when teachers' learning parallels students' learning (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Husbands & Pearce, 2012; OECD, 2005, 2012; Timperley et al., 2007).

However, there is some concern that teachers are unprepared for modern educational changes and lack the necessary skills and competencies to support high-level learning for all children in contemporary classrooms (Neufeld & Roper, 2003). Carr et al. (2000) discovered that the connections between curriculum, assessment and pedagogy influence the teaching and learning process and may impact students' educational and social outcomes because teachers' interpretation of curriculum, shaping of pedagogy and planning of assessment has significant impact on the teaching and learning process. As teachers seek to impart appropriate skills of critical thinking, flexibility and adaptability, problem solving and digital literacy (Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2008), high-quality PL can profoundly shape and influence methods of instruction through the improvement of teachers' pedagogy but this change must be organised systematically to bring about changes in beliefs, attitudes, teacher practice and learning outcomes for students (Guskey, 1986).

The role and positioning of teachers is pivotal in effecting educational change (Bascia & Hargreaves, 2000; Hopkins & Levin, 2000; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Whitaker, 1997, 2003). Teachers have strong connections to students, whether the context is the classroom, a laboratory, the library or on the field. Their role in school improvement begins inside their classrooms with individual students, moves outwards across the whole school and, at the organisational level, redefines the whole profession. For educational reform to be successful, the approach and complexity of what teachers are engaged in must be understood and supported because, too often, "reform efforts fail to understand the depth, range and complexity of what teachers do" (Bascia & Hargreaves, 2000, p. 4). What teachers think and do impacts on individuals, schools and society

(Fullan, 2007).

### **3.2.2 Positioning teachers in education reform as change-agents**

As the most important change-agents in educational reform, teachers occupy a dual role by “being both the subjects and objects of change” (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Lieberman and Pointer Mace (2008) explain it more simply: “Student learning needs improvement; teacher knowledge seems to be one answer” (p. 226). Teaching in the twenty-first century requires educators to shift from conventional notions of the teaching and learning process. It necessitates a critical evaluation of the content and the processes of learning and teaching because many separate elements such as curricula, assessment, pedagogy, policies and procedures interlock to form a wide-angle picture of schooling. What counts as knowledge needs to be evaluated by considering “an evidence base and knowledge base to both develop and transfer successful professional practice” (MOE, 2007, p. 2). Simply modernising school curricula, for example, is unlikely to be beneficial unless accompanied by parallel reforms in teacher education.

Fullan (2010) explains that, “In systems that go, strategies that focus on and drill down to effective instructional practices so that *all* teachers, individually and collectively, become better at what they are doing while they continue to seek even better methods” (p. 6), highlighting Hattie’s (2009) work that emphasises effective teacher practice that influences student engagement and achievement through robust instructional practices. However, merely focusing on instructional practice is insufficient to make change; to shape classroom teaching and learning Barber and Mourshed (2007) suggest three specific things that need to occur, beginning with individual teachers being mindful of their own strengths and weaknesses. Next, individual teachers must be educated about best practice through demonstration and knowledge sharing. Lastly, individual teachers must be intrinsically motivated to embrace improvement in order to impact student achievement. Teachers’ learning must therefore enable a sharp focus on understanding the teaching and learning processes and the links between teachers’ practices and students’ learning outcomes, to not just keep up, but to keep ahead (Fullan, 2008).

Teachers play a major role in interpreting curriculum, shaping pedagogy and planning assessment (Carr et al., 2000). Barber and Mourshed (2007) explain that:

The top performing school systems recognise that the only way to improve outcomes is to improve instruction: learning occurs when students and teachers interact, and thus to improve learning implies improving the quality of that interaction. They have understood which interventions are effective in achieving this – coaching classroom practice, moving teacher training to the classroom, developing stronger school leaders, and enabling teachers to learn from each other – and have found ways to deliver those interventions across their school systems. (p. 26)

Improvement efforts must therefore connect teachers to educational systems and society in meaningful ways, “where they see themselves not just as effects of the context, but as part of the context, contributors to it, and as agents who can and must influence how others perceive, shape and support their work” (Bascia & Hargreaves, 2000, p. 20). This reinforces the notion that the future of quality public education depends on teacher efficacy (Fullan, 1991; Bascia & Hargreaves, 2000; Hopkins & Levin, 2000; Harris, 2001; Hattie, 2003).

In schools that operate as learning organisations, individual teacher learning is the basis for group and organisational learning (Easton, 2008; Kamylyis, Punie, & Devine, 2015; MacBeath & Townsend, 2011; Schechter & Mowafaq, 2013; Stoll et al., 2012). “The strongest and most direct influence within the education system on the learning of children/students in both school and early childhood education is the effectiveness of teaching” (MOE, 2007, p. 2). However, Fullan (2010) cautions that professional learning as a strategy and tool for reform can be problematic because it is difficult to implement at both school and classroom level. In the classroom, application of knowledge is not always practiced and professional development sometimes does not link to classroom learning. Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) state that, “However noble, sophisticated, or enlightened proposals for change might be, they come to nothing if teachers don't adopt them in their classrooms and if they don't translate them into effective classroom practice” (p. 13).

### **3.2.3 The impact of teachers’ PL on teaching and learning**

As teachers’ roles change, Lieberman and Pointer Mace (2008) suggest that, “Teaching

as telling is no longer appropriate for a knowledge society that needs students who are prepared in problem solving, adaptability, critical thinking, and digital literacies” (p. 226). Educators who are well versed in modern methods are able to adapt to changing educational, environmental and social situations by critically evaluating the content and processes of learning and teaching and are fully equipped with new professional knowledge to deliver sophisticated learning programmes (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009). PL has several benefits for teachers. Individual teachers can develop new understandings of pedagogical content, develop innovative practices and inspire creative learning approaches motivated by new knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes.

When teachers’ learning is effectively grounded in the context of classroom, teachers are able to change classroom instruction and improve instructional practice. Elmore (2004) states that, “Improvement is more a function of *learning to do the right things* [original emphasis], in the setting where you work than it is of what you know when you start to work” (p. 73), emphasising that teacher learning happens in context and effective PL is often linked to classroom teaching and learning, and improving student outcomes. Changing classroom instruction is then prompted by the application of learned knowledge for enhanced pedagogical practice in individual teachers’ daily practices (Fullan, 2010). School improvement occurs as the quality of teachers is raised within professional learning communities that extend out across the whole organisation (Elmore, 2004; Fullan, 1997; 2010; Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2008).

The teacher’s impact is central to maximising student outcomes in a learning relationship (Busher & Harris, 2000; Fullan, 1991, 2010; Hargreaves, 1994, 2003; Hattie, 2003; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Hopkins & Levin, 2000; Hopkins, 2001; Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2008; MOE, 2007; Sparks & Hirsh, 2000; Wei et al., 2009). The impact of teachers’ PL on students’ learning ensures that students have the skills and knowledge to function in a knowledge society by learning problem- solving, critical thinking, creative thinking and effective communication skills (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009).

The quality of the relationships and nature of the collaborations will determine how well teachers and other stakeholders respond to changes in different contexts. As

teachers develop and cultivate effective learning, relationships grow between teaching staff. School improvement initiatives can then have a positive impact at organisational level as a learning network is encouraged. A sustainable education organisation depends on a collaborative learning culture and a strong professional learning community (Cuban, 1998; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Fullan, 2001a; Hargreaves, 1994).

New approaches to learning require new approaches to teaching (Hargreaves, 2003) and the concept of teachers as life-long learners is fundamental to reforming education. Effective professional learning produces a high calibre of teachers that reflects a robust and progressive profession. Furthermore, effective teacher learning ensures that educators epitomise an informed and progressive work force who can confidently and effectively deliver high-quality education (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Husbands & Pearce, 2012; OECD, 2005, 2012). Teachers must be supported and encouraged to be innovative, resourceful and creative in their methodologies so that they, in turn, can inspire and motivate their students to become highly creative and skilled innovators in the future. When teachers scrutinise themselves as knowledge workers, functioning at the forefront of educational change as they develop their own professional learning, the benefits for individuals, schools, education and society become more evident (Fullan, 2007; Harris, 2001; OECD, 2013a; Sparks, 2005; Schleicher, 2012, 2015).

#### **3.2.4 The synergy between school improvement and teachers' learning**

The synergy that exists between school improvement and teachers' learning is a key component of effective school reformation. When teachers engage in their own professional learning they develop as knowledge workers by improving their knowledge of emerging educational trends (Birman, Desimone, Porter, & Garet, 2000; Guskey & Huberman, 1995; Hawley & Valli, 1999). The outcome of effective PL is that educators will be able to support the creation, sharing and transference of knowledge to facilitate the growth of intellectual or professional capital and build their capacity to innovate and transform student learning. The resultant learning culture enables teachers to adjust their teaching practices to reflect learning organisations and knowledge societies that are driven by resourcefulness, creativity, flexibility and innovation (Senge, 1990).

### **3.3 Mentoring: A strategy for educational reform and school improvement**

Mentoring, as a form of teachers' professional learning, is a vehicle for school improvement that offers a new perspective on how teacher learning occurs (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000). Several studies confirm that mentoring is a positive form of teachers' PL (Bush, Coleman, Wall, & West-Burnham, 1996; Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2004; Higgins & Kram, 2001; Mathews, 2003). With the purpose of mentoring being to learn and develop (Gehrke, 1988), mentoring in education presents an opportunity to support teachers through a collaborative approach where educators share knowledge and information about how teaching and learning occurs.

Hargreaves and Fullan (2000) state that mentoring "is viewed not only as an integral part of development and improvement efforts within the school but part of the entire system of training, development, and improvement beyond the school" (p. 55), and suggest that, as a key strategy for teachers' professional learning, mentoring can entrench changes in educational practice through its impact on the development of the individual, the teaching profession, organisations and societies (Geber & Nyanjom, 2009).

For novice teachers, mentoring provides guidance, develops understanding and boosts their confidence and competence as teachers new to the profession, while for veteran practitioners, career opportunities become available for those who are willing to advise and guide others (Feiman-Nemser, 1996; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000; Lamb & Ludy, 2008; Little, 1990; Tang & Choi, 2005). Jones and Straker (2006), writing from a UK context, state that,

Mentoring has been employed as a key strategy in initial teacher training and the induction of newly qualified teachers (NQTs), based on the belief that the development of professional practice is most effective and beneficial when it takes place in the professional setting and in collaboration with expert professional practitioners, i.e. experienced teachers. (p. 165)

Hargreaves and Fullan (2000) add that "mentoring is a means to a larger end: that of creating a strong, improvement-oriented profession in schools, professional

associations, and teacher unions” (p. 55). As mentoring impacts both teachers new to the profession and experienced teachers, the status of the teaching profession can be positively elevated (Tang & Choi, 2005).

### **3.3.1 The concept of mentoring**

The concept originated in Greek mythology. Homer’s epic poem, *The Odyssey*, tells the story of Odysseus, who leaves his son in the care of his trusted friend, Mentor, while he goes to battle with the Trojans. Mentor’s name has become associated with the idea of a knowledgeable and trusted person supporting and guiding one who is less experienced (Cuerrier, 2004). However, in the poem it is actually the goddess Athena, assuming various human and animal forms including the guise of Mentor (Megginson & Clutterbuck, 1995), who is the genuine mentor as she uses her heavenly powers to help and protect both Odysseus and Telemachus. This ancient story heralds mentoring as a complex relationship in which an older, wiser and more experienced person, referred to as a mentor, acts as a guide, model and support for a younger, growing and less-experienced person, known as the mentee (Chesterman, 2000; Clawson, 1996; Cuerrier, 2004; Johnson, 2002; Kram, 1985; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; St-Jean & Audet, 2009). The concept of mentoring is therefore based in the act of teaching and endures as a basic human need to form connections, to teach and learn socially, across generations (Clawson, 1996).

The literature on mentoring is wide-ranging according to definition, concept, purpose, context and discipline (Savickas, 2007), making a single definition of mentoring challenging (Crow, 2012; Eby et al., 2010). Different methods of mentoring reveal its diverse nature and the contexts in which it occurs. Some researchers (Colley, 2001; Merriam, 1983) believe that the modern notion of mentoring is weakly conceptualised while other researchers (Blake-Beard et al., 2007; Brondyk & Searby, 2013; Kochan, 2002; Mullen, 2012) explain that mentoring is a complex phenomenon because of the specific connotations of how mentoring relationships are conceptualised and conducted in unique professional contexts. The term “coaching” also adds to the difficulty of defining mentoring, as the terms are often used interchangeably (Fletcher & Mullen, 2012). Mentoring however encompasses a more comprehensive and complex role than coaching (Brondyk & Searby, 2013). Clutterbuck (2008) suggests that terms like “supervisor” “instructor” and “advisor” are other common alternatives

used instead of the term “mentor” and has classified these differences accordingly.

Traditional mentoring relationships display intrinsic hierarchies that connect experienced mentors with younger, less experienced protégés for career development and the transfer of skills and knowledge (Kram, 1985; Ragins, 1989). Crumpton (2015) suggests that “mentoring is the sharing of knowledge, advice, or reinforcement of support related to a relationship between two or more people, usually in the workplace” (p. 37) that may develop career pathways or serve as induction to new positions or introductions to different organisations (Zachary, 2005). Feiman-Nemser (2001) advocates a more egalitarian view of mentoring where participants see themselves as partners in a collaborative association, each contributing to learning within the context of the relationship. The concept of co-mentoring acknowledges that both mentors and mentees have expertise and experience to offer and share which supports their mutual growth. This eliminates the notion of mentoring from a deficit perspective to endorsing mentoring as a vehicle for self-development and mutual improvement (Drago-Severson, 2012).

Mentoring models differ across countries and there are differences between European and American mentoring models (Clutterbuck, 2008) and European mentoring that extends to the USA (Kram & Ragins, 2007). In Africa the cultural concept of mentoring is based on community and connectedness, which differs from traditional Western models of mentoring (Geber & Nyanjom, 2009; Manwa & Manwa, 2007).

There are also mentoring studies based on gender. Research has found that men and women have different experiences of mentoring. A study by Goh (1994) suggested that females perceive that they receive less mentoring than their male colleagues. Crutcher (2011) argues that minority women are disadvantaged by the lack of diversity in some mentoring relationships. She suggests that black, Latina and Asian women need mentors with access to opportunity, viz. white males, as well as minority mentors, who support and understand issues and concerns particular to them as a non-majority group. Women and minorities are still under-represented in mentoring programmes as mentors and leaders in the education professions (Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011; Geber, 2003).

### **3.3.2 Defining mentoring**

Crumpton (2015) offers a modern definition of mentoring that addresses the needs of individuals and organisational requirements:

Mentoring is the sharing of knowledge, advice, or reinforcement of support related to a relationship between two or more people, usually in the workplace .... Mentoring is meant to be a purposeful learning activity, no matter what form it takes, or who initiates it. The relationship should be built so that mentors are helping build capacity in their mentees or protégés, through advising, coaching, modelling, and sharing of knowledge. Learning can occur from both mentors and mentees and should be approached as a partnership with common goals. Over time, mentoring can mature into deeper relationships that have connections with other professionals so as to expand the knowledge base. (pp. 37-38)

Research by Wang, Odell and Schwille (2008) shows the relationship between mentoring and student achievement while another study by Ingersoll and Strong (2011) shows how students benefit when their teachers engage in mentoring relationships. There is no extensive evidence that mentoring, including coaching, improves students' achievement, although it has been shown to affect the instructional capacity of schools, which is essential for an improvement in learning (Neufeld & Roper, 2003). However, mentoring has the potential to redefine the teaching profession and re-culture schools by enhancing the capacity of teachers through inclusive mentoring programmes because collegial professional cultures support the needs of all teachers to improve their teaching and learning. If we are to meet the challenges of a postmodern era, we need to appreciate that mentoring can redefine the teaching profession (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000).

The need to create opportunities for growth through mentoring as part of educational leadership is an investment in the growth of teachers which by extension is the growth and development of future leaders by enhancing internal capacity for external capability (Drago-Severson, 2012). Knowing how to create, nurture and sustain environments that support the growth of self and others leads to improved student achievement. Mentoring is one approach that supports such growth by allowing

educators to make sense of their experiences to learn, grow and change the shape of their thinking as they understand the world in new and different ways. Teachers who work together in collaborative, professional and transparent ways can become the greatest source of innovators of professional knowledge and develop greater educator capacity across school systems (Barber & Mourshed, 2007).

### **3.3.3 The evolution of mentoring in education**

As education evolved, mentoring was evident in different stages of teacher professionalism (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000). During the pre-professional stage, mentoring was largely absent and teachers were supported with verbal encouragement and tips on management. In the 1980s, policy makers saw mentoring as an important way to improve education, especially by supporting beginning teachers through this process (Feiman-Nemser, 1996), although this second phase largely emphasised teaching as a solitary and autonomous profession. Mentoring was typically provided for those teachers who were new to the teaching profession or regarded as incompetent (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000). However, this approach implied that mentoring was not considered to have a supportive role and that the teachers who received it were considered inadequate professionals (Little, 1999). Through the next stage of the collegial professional, mentoring sought to support new teaching methods and enhance pedagogy through professional learning amongst colleagues, either off-site or school-based, although this was usually disparate due to the specific needs of individual teachers and classrooms (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000).

The transition from the industrial age into the twenty-first century knowledge era has affected the nature of employment and the way organisations like schools and their staff function, how knowledge is transferred and information and skills acquired. Career demands now emphasise continuous upgrading of knowledge and skills. Mentors are potentially useful and supportive through the stages of professional development, especially in a school context, where problem solving happens through professional dialogue articulating possible solutions and the sharing of expertise and learning through PL activities (Cuerrier, 2004; Easton, 2008).

Mentoring continues to evolve in response to technology, new organisational forms and constantly changing contexts. Digital mentoring has become especially popular in

recent times. Technology has provided a new and significant platform for mentoring relationships through websites, blogs, email, chats, group discussions and social media that offer a variety of options and solutions, with the added benefits of lower costs and reduced requirement for space and travel-time (Crumpton, 2015). The use of e-mentors offers several benefits including reflection time, improved confidence, skill set and technological capability (Bamford, 2011). Investigating the role of emotions in virtual mentoring, Lopatovska and Arapakis (2011) suggest that the development of emotional intelligence skills is essential as humans engage with computers in virtual mentoring.

Higgins and Kram (2001) investigated the concept of a developmental network of mentors. Other researchers (Higgins & Thomas, 2001) have considered mentoring “constellations” and mentoring “mosaic” (Mullen, 2005). Mentoring circles (Kram & Ragins, 2007), peer-mentoring and e-mentoring have emerged as other forms of mentoring. Mentoring has also progressed from face-to-face to terminal-to-terminal, and this latter type highlights the move towards faceless mentoring as technology plays a major role in connecting people across the world. While there are some questions about whether this constitutes mentoring, an electronic form of mentoring is already prevalent and represents a form of communication between diverse groups of people.

Mentoring exists across a variety of spectrums, and different types of mentoring have been recorded. A significant body of literature exists on mentoring teachers new to the profession (Applebaum, 2000; Brockbank & McGill, 2012; Brookes & Sikes, 1997; Clutterbuck & Sweeney, 2003; Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Kram, 1983; Maynard, 2000; Southworth, 1995; De Janesz & Sullivan, 2004). Other studies focus on mentoring relationships between student teachers and mentor teachers as part of professional development (Hawkey, 1998) and new teacher induction (Clutterbuck & Sweeney, 2003; Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2004). Mentoring has been shown to improve job satisfaction and teachers’ efficacy (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Schleicher, 2015). Achinstein and Fogo’s (2015) study discussed how teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge is enhanced through mentoring. Mentoring is also effective in reducing isolation amongst teachers new to the profession (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). Well-designed mentoring programmes have the potential to lower attrition of recent graduates (Holloway, 2001).

Mentoring is also valuable for experienced teachers (Butcher, 2006; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Shea, 2001), who benefit by reducing their workplace isolation, absorbing new ideas and strategies and enhancing their own pedagogy (Clutterbuck & Sweeney, 2003; Daresh, 2003; Ehrich et al., 2004; Hobson, 2003; De Janesz & Sullivan, 2004). Induction and mentoring programmes are particularly useful for beginning teachers as they are mentored by more experienced staff (Schlechty, 2009; School has the Initiative, 2014). Ingersoll (2001) proposed that the effects of mentoring be investigated to determine whether mentoring programmes for experienced teachers reduce attrition rates before retirement. It was found that mentoring has a positive effect on teacher retention (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Some researchers believe that mentoring is an effective tool in developing leaders (Bryant, 2009; Davis, 2007; Feeg, 2008; Florentino, 2008; Godshalk & Sosik, 2007; Haynes & Ghosh, 2008; Johnson & Anderson, 2010; Marx, 2006; Melanson, 2007, 2009).

### **3.3.4 Mentoring relationships**

Mentoring is a profound learning relationship that is both multi-faceted and complex (Zachary, 2000). Its quality and effectiveness are influenced by the social and cultural contexts as well as the expectations of the relationship. The challenge is to offer a meaningful mentoring programme that is based on collegial learning relationships to improve professional practice and enable learning and growth for all members of the team, regardless of age, experience and seniority. The extent to which learners establish positive relationships with their mentors significantly affects the level of influence the mentors have and how much knowledge is ultimately conveyed to the mentee and applied by them (Jones & Straker, 2006). Useful mentoring depends on a mutually beneficial relationship where everyone enjoys positive learning conversations and educational experiences (Clawson, 1996; Janas, 1996).

Mentoring relationships may be formal or informal; both types have advantages and difficulties (Crumpton, 2015). In formal mentoring, relationships are typically organised by a third party or organisation (Hallam, Chou, Hite, & Hite, 2012). This type of mentoring may impact relationships adversely because personal connections are absent or there may be a lack of commitment to the partnership. Communication might be strained and the power dynamics between mentor and mentee may be tenuous

(Clarke, 2012). On the other hand, a formal mentoring relationship signals that a process of sharing of information and knowledge is planned, deliberate and intentional (Dos Santos, 2012).

Informal mentoring relationships normally occur freely and arise from mutual personal and professional respect (Sweeny, 2008). In some instances, informal mentoring is appropriate for supporting staff members who are new to organisations but not necessarily to the job (Clarke, 2012). Desimone, Hochberg, Porter, Polikoff, Schwartz, and Johnson (2014) examined formal and informal mentoring and found that informal mentors were instrumental in the professional learning of novice teachers as they were deliberately selected by new teachers for help and support. The collaboration and collegiality generated through informal mentoring support teachers' personal and professional lives (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Yee, 1990); however, informal mentoring relationships may be insufficient to support staff to change educational practices nor do they always enable collaboration for specific teacher improvement (Sweeny, 2008). Informal mentoring, from this viewpoint, does not necessarily offer the prospect of school improvement. Also, informal mentorship, can be seen as favouritism if opportunities are not offered to others equally, and historically mentoring has been enacted from a male viewpoint over many years (Hansman, 2002).

In their research, Desimone et al. (2014) found that formal and informal mentors provide similar functions. Mentors support teachers' development in both their personal lives and professional needs (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Darling-Hammond & Berry, 2006). Different reviews of mentoring (Healy & Welchert, 1990; Jacobi, 1991) found a variety of different functions and responsibilities of mentors, including features of support, encouragement, feedback, sharing of resources, role-modelling, coaching, and encouraging the use of reflective practice. In cases where formal mentors are aligned with mentees for subject specialisation (Ball, 1990), learning communities were potentially cultivated (Harrison, Dymoke, & Pell, 2006).

In some instances, mentoring can go wrong and relationships must be resurrected, rectified and restored. Warning signs appear when the mentor's or mentee's professional or development needs are unsatisfactorily met where the relationship is unprofitable or where there is harm in the relationship (Johnson & Ridley, 2004, 2008).

Often these issues are the result of unsuitable pairings of mentor and mentee from the outset, poor communication, differing expectations, conflicting roles, harm through exploitation or neglect, technical or relational incompetence on the part of the mentor, inappropriate attraction, crossing of boundaries or unresolved disputes. There are some key elements in the handling of difficult mentorships but mentors should ideally approach the issue with the aim of restoring the relationship. When this is not possible, a responsible termination of the relationship is likely. Aderibigbe (2014) investigated collaborative mentoring pedagogy in a Scottish education reform context and found that collaborative mentoring can be challenging when mentors and mentees have different institutional agendas, for example, between schools and universities. Conflicts such as these can be addressed by increasing the time spent together in order to focus on learning and teaching, improving relationships and communication, and engaging with honesty and trust and a clear understanding of expectations in a mutually respectful partnership (Aderibigbe, 2014).

### **3.3.5 Stages in mentoring relationships**

Kram (1983) identifies four stages in the mentoring relationship, viz. initiation, cultivation, separation and redefinition that align with aspects of organisational learning (Ragins & Scandura, 1997). Kram (1983) noted that, “Because relationships are shaped by both individual needs and organizational circumstances, interventions designed to enhance relationship building skills and to create organizational conditions that foster developmental relationships in a work setting should be explored” (p. 623). Mentoring is a potential connection or intervention of the two aspects. Since Kram’s (1983) investigation, the stages of mentoring have been further developed to examine the functions of organisational learning. O’Neil’s (2005) study, for example, focused on the position, context and type of the mentoring stages in terms of what a mentor does and how this affects organisational learning, and found that the impact of mentoring was not influenced by one’s position within an organisation.

When both mentors and mentees are adult learners involved in a partnership of iterative learning and development, the potential to foster transformation is unlimited. Although there are circumstances where it is not always possible, mutual consent is a recommended prerequisite for participating in mentoring relationships. Hargreaves and Fullan (2000) believe that mentoring will “become less hierarchical, less

individualistic, more wide-ranging, and more inclusive in its orientation than it has been viewed in the past” (p. 54). However, in fast and busy lives, establishing relationships can be difficult. People engaged in mentoring relationships may, in some instances, weigh up how they can profit from such a commitment or their attitudes may become more direct in offering what they have learned and can offer others. A mutual understanding of the relationship is important to establish so that goals are clear.

### **3.3.6 Advantages of mentoring relationships**

Many authors (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000; Holloway, 2001; Janas, 1996; Mincemoyer & Thomson, 1998; Wollman-Boniolla, 1997; Wunsch, 1994; Zachary, 2000) describe the desirability of a mentoring programme where both mentors and mentees benefit. There are mutually beneficial aspects to mentoring between older and more experienced staff who share their insights and wisdom with younger or beginning staff members, who may have current knowledge and understanding of a modern technological era (Clawson, 1996). There are benefits for mentors, who are able to support their own professional learning (Holloway, 2001).

In some instances, the information age can potentially isolate senior staff which, in turn, affects mentoring relationships because older people may experience difficulties mentoring younger people in systems they do not know or understand fully. Peer mentoring becomes an attractive option as younger people look to their peers for support. Older generations, in an effort to pass on their knowledge, insights and influence may seek mentees for this exchange. Mentor teachers can learn as they engage in a mentoring relationship by reflecting on their own teaching styles, pursue their own professional development and ponder the perspectives of beginner teachers as they nurture the professional growth of a novice teacher (Woods & Weasmer, 2002; Zachary, 2000).

The current era of technological expansion and trend towards flatter organisational structures may isolate senior people who are unable or unwilling to embrace new developments. With younger people who are more attuned to rapid changes and comfortable working with changing technologies, individual strengths can be used through mentoring for specific purposes. Reciprocal mentoring relationships would

allow a sharing of skills and knowledge between colleagues that will be beneficial to the overall capacity of the organisation. Changing teacher demographics will result in larger beginner teacher numbers, which will impact on school leadership and culture; and they suggest that inquiry-based problem solving is more effective than bestowing of hierarchical wisdom (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000).

### **3.3.7 Developing mentoring skills**

Mentors can learn skills that support individual mentoring ability (Garber, 2013) and there is a need for experienced teachers to develop their skills in the event of having to provide PL in a mentoring capacity (Zachary, 2000). Harris and Crocker (2003) suggest that, “When mentors articulate what they do, how they do it, and why they do it, the process of looking at their own thinking process allows them to reflect on their practice and make changes accordingly” (p. 73-74). Understanding a mentor’s knowledge base enables ways to improve mentors’ performance (Athanases et al., 2008; Orland-Barak, 2010). Mentors’ knowledge often targets both students and teachers (Achinstein & Athanases, 2005) and is embedded in teaching knowledge (Jones & Straker, 2006). Zachary (2002) emphasises the role of the teacher as mentor, arguing that:

As we engage in mentoring, we bring our own cycle, our own timetable, our own history, our own individuality, and our own ways of doing things to each relationship. For learning to occur, we must understand who we are, what we bring, and what our mentoring partner brings to the relationship. We must understand the ebb and flow of the learning process. (p. 37)

Many authors recommend that mentors should be trained for effectiveness (Abell et al., 1995; Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009; Roehrig et al., 2008). Other authors observe that while the skills of a good teacher and a good mentor may overlap, they are not the same (Feiman-Nemser, 1998; Freeman, 2008; Pinkston, 2008; Roehrig et al., 2008; Schwille, 2008). Formal mentoring training allows mentors to improve their expertise for maximum benefit (Coburn & Russell, 2008; Stanulis & Floden, 2009). However, studies that investigate the work of experienced teachers working as mentors are limited (Hansen & Moir, 2008) with cases where new teachers working in low-performing and poor schools are mentored by staff who are not properly trained

to be mentors. A lack of mentor training can have negative effects, including mentee resistance, inconsistent contact between mentors and mentees, confused roles and responsibilities and the potential inability of mentors to articulate and convey their knowledge and skills effectively (Little, 1990).

Mentoring relationships are a special dynamic. For positive outcomes, mentoring must be purposeful and have the right components in place. In general, mentors are people with empathetic and considerate personality and interpersonal qualities. Emotional intelligence is an essential feature of the mentor relationship (DuBois et al., 2002; Parra, DuBois, Neville, Pugh-Lilly, & Povinelli, 2002; Crumpton, 2015). Emotional intelligence is linked to the management of emotions and interpersonal skills for oneself and others and it is an important contributor to building an effective mentoring relationship (Crumpton, 2015).

### **3.3.8 Factors that impact mentoring relationships**

The quality of mentoring is influenced by the quality of the relationship between a mentor and mentee. Mentees have particular responsibilities in a mentoring relationship if they are to achieve their learning goals. They must take an interest in the mentoring relationship, communicate confidently by asking and answering questions, show initiative and follow up on tasks (Healy & Welchert, 1990). Frequent communication, through conversation and discussion, helps mentees to make sense of their classroom experiences and adjust accordingly (Orland-Barak, 2005). Some researchers (Hobson, 2002; Maynard, 2000) have observed that mentees sometimes feel that mentors communicate unhelpful and inadequate advice, leading to frustration on their part. In some cases, conflict is circumvented by avoiding open communication; however, this does not make for successful mentoring relationships (Borko & Mayfield, 1995).

While interpersonal skills vary widely among mentors, as they do among mentees, some characteristics are particularly evident in successful mentoring. Some of a mentor's primary responsibilities include investing quality time in the mentoring relationship, allocating time for discussion of needs and progress towards a mentee's goals, maintaining encouraging and supportive interactions, providing feedback in a non-judgmental manner, sharing of resources, challenging mentees to strive towards

their personal targets and goals, and encouraging the use of reflective practice (Gregoire, 2013, as cited in Crumpton, 2015; Healy & Welchert, 1990; Johnson & Ridley, 2004). Other common features of effective mentors include self-confidence, the ambition to achieve, empathy, self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, management of relationships and organisational awareness (Crumpton, 2015). A good mentor should have a solid understanding of self, be trustworthy, respectful of different values, and not undermine a mentee because of personal insecurities (Gregoire, 2013, as cited in Crumpton, 2015; Healy & Welchert, 1990; Johnson & Ridley, 2004, 2008).

Core values and beliefs manifest in mentoring relationships through personal skills and behaviours, and can impact the success of learning relationship. In developing sustainable relationships, it is prudent to recognise and accept differences in personal values and beliefs instead of expecting others to hold similar core values as oneself or to impose one's own values on others (Hale, 2000, as cited in Megginson & Clutterbuck, 2005). Insensitivity to personal values and beliefs of either the mentor or mentee harms learning relationships. Hale (2000, as cited in Megginson & Clutterbuck, 2005) states that:

It is not that values and beliefs have to be same, though it is possible that some may be so opposed that it does make the relationship untenable. It is more of an issue related to the human condition whereby we tend to look at the world and other people, starting with our own perspective. So the danger is in assuming others have, or should have, values and beliefs similar to our own. (p. 118)

Mentees are drawn to sincere mentors who emanate warmth and show genuine interest. Mentees prefer mentors who are active listeners, who give them undivided attention and support them in their concerns. A mentor who shows positive concern for a mentee is demonstrating a regard for the mentee as being worthy of their time, energy and commitment. Mentors who respect the privacy and protect the confidentiality of a mentee are highly valued. A mentor with a sense of humour helps mentees to understand humility and how to have a healthy perspective on things. In this regard, a mentor should not expect perfection; instead a good mentor expects excellence.

#### **3.3.8.1 *Building mentoring relationships through emotional intelligence***

Mentors should develop emotional intelligence skills as a crucial component of mentoring (Crumpton, 2015). Effective mentors must be able to understand and respond to verbal and non-verbal communication (Portner, 2008). Future workplaces will encompass racial, cultural, gender and ethnicity diversities that will necessitate trust in formal mentoring relationships, strong emotional intelligence and secure knowledge and ability for effective leadership (Chun, Litzky, Sosik, Bechtold, & Godshalk, 2010). The ability to decipher and recognise how different people react emotionally to culture and heritage is also significant (Crumpton, 2015).

Knowing how to use emotions intelligently enables one to be sensitive to others and to react more effectively. Emotional closeness requires an investment of time, space and energy to form genuine connections. It takes time to deepen mutual trust and respect as part of maintaining and extending such relationships, as individuals reflect and consider the next steps (Drago-Severson, 2012). Effective mentors maintain control over their emotions to develop the competencies needed to respond to situations and scenarios. There is a difference between having emotionally intelligent skills and knowing how to develop and apply them. Additionally, mentors can develop new behaviours and expertise in self-awareness and self-realisation skills which increase their ability and performance (Crumpton, 2015).

Emotionally intelligent people have many common characteristics that are useful traits to consider in the selection and training of mentors (Gregoire, 2013, as cited in Crumpton, 2015; Johnson & Ridley, 2004, 2008). Mentors who consider the learning style of their mentees and are responsive to their concerns use strategies that are appropriate and useful (Valenčič Zuljan & Vogrinc, 2007). When mentors and mentees are engaged in the same subject area or discipline, mentoring is more effective (Johnson, 2003; Luft, Roehrig, & Patterson, 2003).

#### **3.3.8.2 *Building mentoring relationships through trust and rapport***

A mentoring partnership involves people working together to achieve a task by working collegially and collaboratively (Timperley & Robinson, 2002). Several studies advocate trust, mutual respect and collegiality as essential components of successful mentoring relationships (Brewster & Railsback, 2003; Harris, 2001; Nash,

2010; Rhodes, Stokes & Hampton, 2004; Royal & Rossi, 1997; Sergiovanni, 1992; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Drago-Severson (2012) states that, “building relationships is at the heart of effectively supporting growth and leadership development in any teaching, learning, and/or professional development environment, and in any environment calling for human connection” (p. 116). In addition, research suggests that the quality of mentoring relationships is affected by trust, communication skills, gender differences, the quality of the school culture and the teaching level (Burks, 2010; Johnson, 2003).

Trust is a fundamental aspect of mentoring relationships (Nash, 2010). Trust glues community together so that sharing knowledge and experience with each other results in binding relationships (Nichani & Hung, 2002). When there is trust, knowledge can be shared and problems can be solved. It is easier to introduce change, improvements and new ways of thinking to receptive people in relationships based on mutual trust. However, Bryk (2010) explains that relational trust emerges from a commitment to the difficult work of school reform in visible and obvious ways for all to see. Nussbaum-Beach and Hall (2012) suggest that deep, trusting relationships can be created by offering opportunities to share through collective participation, connection and collaborations around individual passions. When people share personal stories, for example, they open themselves to being exposed and vulnerable but this willingness to connect with others in an authentic way allows others to know them better as human beings. This builds mutual trust and trusting relationships (Drago-Severson, 2012).

Building rapport is an important part in developing relationships based on mutual trust and understanding. Hopkinson (in Megginson & Clutterbuck, 2005) states that, “The essence of real rapport is ‘authenticity’” (p. 30), meaning the ability to relate to others by genuinely sharing common values, attitudes, experiences and expectations for learning and development (Megginson & Clutterbuck, 2005). Mentors who demonstrate a warm and approachable manner make mentees feel included, supported and accepted (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Maynard, 2000). However, in mentoring relationships where mentees feel unsafe, threatened, inferior or marginalised, the mentees’ self-confidence and development regresses and the mentoring relationship suffers (Hayashi & O’Donnell, 2010). Enjoying good rapport is a form of influence that permits people to listen and relate well to each other on the basis of good

communication.

### 3.3.8.3 *Communication and trust in mentoring relationships*

A significant challenge in mentoring relationships is communication between mentors and mentees. Communication in mentoring relationships can be difficult when contrary or conflicting ideas, beliefs and opinions about education and mentoring are revealed (Stanulis & Russel, 2000). Bradbury and Koballa (2008) explain tension and conflict as “borders” that may arise in complex mentoring relationships (p. 823). Mutually trusting relationships between mentors and mentees allow for open and honest learning conversations (Burks, 2010; Stanulis & Russel, 2000; Orland-Barak, 2005). It is important that mentors and mentees share their personal and professional ideas and beliefs through honest communication for better understanding of each other to circumvent boundaries (Bradbury & Koballa, 2008). Strong interpersonal skills that emphasise relationship building, listening, learning and collaborating lead to successful mentoring experiences (Chaudhry-Lawton, Lawton, Murphy, & Terry, 1992).

Another complexity arises from our modern-day ability to converse using technology, because email communication can be problematic if messages are misinterpreted, misconstrued and poorly worded. Communicating in this mode requires careful thought and consideration in order to protect mentoring relationships. The need to be a good listener becomes even more important because “people are becoming transmitters without becoming receivers” (Senge, 1990, p. 14). Clear and effective communication is essential for positive outcomes, especially in learning organisations where teams use dialogue to challenge assumptions and to consider new information, knowledge and skills (Senge, 1990). Burks (2010) believes that, in respectful and trusting mentoring relationships mentors are able to communicate with clear, accurate and honest feedback, but lack of trust in a mentoring relationship discourages honest and robust dialogue and hinders learning for improvement (Stanulis & Russel, 2000).

Powerful relationships stem from relational trust; its role in sustaining local school improvement work and bringing about organisational change is significant (Bryk, 2010). Developing positive relationships and a respect for autonomy are a priority in school improvement work (Timperley & Robinson, 2002). Trustworthy and

purposeful social interactions between mentors and mentees encourage strong mentoring relationships, nurture social capital to impact a mentee's outlook on educational practices (Smagorinsky, Cook, Moore, Jackson & Fry, 2004) and are a resource that produces activity and enhances learning resulting in social capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Building social capital and creating connections between teachers and across schools constitute an important resource that can promote collaboration and networking (Bryk, 2010).

### **3.4 Defining mentoring contexts**

Mentoring can take place in a variety of contexts with a diversity of approaches. Consequently, it cannot be definitively articulated as it is context specific and, therefore, culture specific. Context shapes mentoring: factors such as a mentor's language, ideas and philosophies connect to the context and influence their approach to mentoring in subject areas. To bridge the gap between mentoring theory and mentoring practice, mentoring needs to be scrutinised as it happens so that we can understand how context influences mentors' behaviours (Becher & Orland-Barak, 2018). Observing mentors, mentees and the mentoring process enables us to address the approaches and environments that form the context of mentoring, that is, the conditions under which the mentoring relationship exists and how the context influences mentor and mentee. The context base refers to the scope and limits of the mentoring role within these parameters.

Mentoring in organised working contexts typically involves a structured learning and development programme with defined roles and responsibilities that form the foundation and rationale for the mentoring relationship. Context particularly matters in regard to knowing how to create growth opportunities, whether people can thrive or develop in specific contexts, be advantaged in reconciling opposing agendas, or if conflict will be increased. Mentoring contexts generally include the traditional elements of setting, time, place and the external conditions under which mentoring occurs. Context can also be impacted by tone, mood and atmosphere. Unique contextual factors impact mentors in how they interpret the function and role of their subject because context shapes mentoring, for example, through mentors' language, ideas and philosophies that connect to context and influence their approach and the way they engage in the mentoring in specific subject areas according to their

perceptions (Becher & Orland-Barak, 2018).

Many contextual factors influence the success and efficiency of mentoring relationships. However, environments that encourage inquiry and reflection promote successful mentoring relationships, particularly in complex learning environments such as schools, where a demanding work day may leave little time for reflection. Legitimate, sanctioned time supports the need to invest quality time with mentees and allows mentors and mentees to inquire about and reflect on the most effective factors in the teaching and learning context (Lee & Feng, 2007), which can positively contribute to the teaching and learning context.

Context influences the development and shape of mentoring relationships. As noted, environments that encourage inquiry and reflection promote successful mentoring relationships. Schools that encourage and foster collegial relationships enable a more successful learning culture through mentoring (Feng, 2007). As part of the mentoring context, schools can create collegial environments by encouraging teachers to engage in collaborative activities such as observing teaching practice, sharing observations and suggestions, and discussing and considering professional issues (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986). Hawken (2005, as cited in Megginson & Clutterbuck, 2005) explains that:

The ecological systems approach is concerned with the person's ability to negotiate, accommodate, adapt and survive in their environment and the dynamic interaction between people and their environment. By considering the many and diverse systems that make up the whole environment we can expand the horizons of opportunity and understanding. Seeing the impact each system has on another, and the ripple effect, highlights the interdependence of everything. People often see where they can "make a difference" and where to put their energies (and where not to). The ecological approach fits well for those cultures, like the Maori in New Zealand, who do not compartmentalise people and the environment, who value co-operation, family and community, the "we" not the "I", the connection to the land, sky and water and the significance of things spiritual. (pp. 58-59)

The quality of mentoring relationships in a school context can make a difference to school improvement outcomes. Schools where there is little or no trust have little or no chance of improving (Brewster & Railsback, 2003). Bryk and Schneider (2003) found that “trust fosters a set of organizational conditions, some structural and others social-psychological, that make it more conducive for individuals to initiate and sustain the kinds of activities necessary to affect productivity improvements” (p. 116) in four broad ways. Teachers understand their own and others’ roles and obligations as part of the school community and need minimal supervision or external pressure in order to carry them out because they are trusted. When teachers are trusted, their sense of vulnerability is lessened as they become involved in new and uncertain changes as part of school improvement. Trust allows teachers to work together to solve problems and find solutions. Trust enables educators to consider the ethical and moral imperatives that drive school improvement and those changes that are in the best interests of our young people (Bryk and Schneider, 2003).

#### **3.4.1 The influence of organisational culture on mentoring relationships**

Mentoring relationships are impacted by organisations that support mentoring in two areas, either through the structure and systems surrounding mentoring relationships and by the nature of how mentoring relationships exist within the organisation. An organisation’s culture has an impact on mentoring relationships and if those involved in mentoring relationships have a good understanding of the environment and wider social organisation, their interactions are flexible and useful. However, there is a need to identify macro-environment factors beyond individuals’ control and then to consider what one can respond to, change and influence:

A person’s way of knowing is the lens through which all experience is filtered; it enables an individual to interpret life actively, as it dictates how learning, teaching, and all life experiences will be taken in, managed, and understood. It is the window through which we see the world, others, and ourselves. (Hawken, 2005, p. 31, as cited in Megginson & Clutterbuck, 2005)

Organisations particularly benefit from empowered staff who are learning and improving, becoming more skilful and therefore equipped to be more effective. Where mentoring is organised to be system-wide, communication improves. Enabling people

to learn is an investment in their ability and increases their capacity to develop new skills and knowledge. Such an approach enables an organisation to become a learning organisation. Mentoring impacts an organisation on two levels: the organisation has potential to develop into a learning organisation and individuals engaged in a mentoring relationship develop expertise (on the part of the mentee) and experience (on the part of the mentor).

People have different ways of knowing and the learning environment is shaped to reflect how identity and meaning are made. In general, people tend to aim for consistent and coherent ways of knowing across different roles, contexts and relationships, but this way of knowing evolves as people experience and learn from different challenges and develop more complex ways of knowing. Different people need different supports and challenges to grow. When different ways of knowing are understood, professional learning opportunities can be effectively differentiated in terms of support and challenge.

However, in mandated reform contexts, where people tend to be resistant or unresponsive to changes, mentoring relationships have a greater potential for failure. The concept of contrived collegiality (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) denotes engineered situations where teachers work together and which may or may not be advantageous. In schools with collaborative cultures and trusting, value-bound relationships, teachers are secure in their professional collaborations. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) describe positive collaboration in a school as existing when “teachers are committed to, inquisitive about, and increasingly knowledgeable and well informed about becoming better practitioners together, using and deeply understanding all the technologies and strategies that can help them with this” (p. 127). Schools that enjoy a collegial environment with a learning culture positively impact the mentoring of novice teachers (Lee & Feng, 2007).

Collaborative mentoring relationships meet the needs of both novice and experienced teachers (Lamb & Ludy, 2008). A professional culture extends this concept to describe how people pursue their purpose, together with their colleagues, and achieve their goals and targets (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) state:

Collaborative cultures are to be found everywhere in the life of schools

that have them – in the gestures, jokes, and glances that signal empathy and understanding; in hard work and personal interest shown outside classroom doors and in school corridors; in recognition of birthdays and other little ceremonies; in accepting the connection between personal lives and professional ones; in overt praise, recognition, and gratitude; and in sharing and discussion of ideas and resources. (p.113)

The process of developing collaborative cultures is largely informal as people build trust and establish relationships over time so it is essential that people are enabled to work together through the establishment of well-thought protocols and structure to support collaboration and not coercing, rushing or enforcing collaborative practice (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

### **3.4.2 Learning through mentoring builds social capital**

Learning depends on the development of professional or intellectual capital, as people acquire the capacity to work collaboratively. Mullen (2009) asserts that, “the ubiquitous energy of mentoring should be more fully utilised to connect people, reform values, affect decisions and actions, and contribute to the life, world, and future of institutions, communities, and societies” (p. 12). Through this process, mentoring facilitates the building of professional, social and cultural capital. Successful school improvement initiatives depend on positive and trusting social interactions between mentors and mentees because forming connections and building relationships are at the centre of human development and growth (Drago-Severson, 2012). Fullan (2002) states that, “Information...only becomes knowledge through a *social* process. For this reason, relationships and professional learning communities are essential. Organizations must foster knowledge giving as well as knowledge seeking [*original emphasis*]” (p. 18). This encourages a developmental and progressive method of thinking and changing as opposed to a culture that is demanding, commanding and controlling.

When educators in schools learn together, knowledge that is collectively created has more impact than the knowledge held by a single teacher. The knowledge created in this way is social capital (Hirsch, 2015; Leana, 2011). Leana (2011) states, “Social capital ... is not a characteristic of the individual teacher but instead resides in the

relationships among teachers” (p. 32). Mentoring builds social capital through social interaction between mentors and mentees as they build relationships and connections. Such relationships allow for open and accessible conversations in which mentors and mentees can discuss and share ideas and information that lead to better student outcomes. Leana (2011) explains further that:

If human capital is strong, individual teachers should have the knowledge and skills to do a good job in their own classrooms. But if social capital is also strong, teachers can continually learn from their conversations with one another and become even better at what they do.... [W]hen the relationships among teachers in a school are characterized by high trust and frequent interaction — that is, when social capital is strong — student achievement scores improve. (p. 33)

Social capital is therefore a resource in which people invest for maximum productivity (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Leana, 2011). Timperley and Robinson’s (2002) study showed that relationships strengthen when there is a shared purpose and suggest that, “the best way to strengthen educational partnerships is through mutual recognition of progress made together on valued tasks. When the task is not made explicit, the relationship itself is threatened.” (p. 146)

Intellectual or professional capital is central to approaching the future with continuous learning and a capacity to work with others. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) endorse the building of professional capital, which includes social and cultural capital, stating that:

Teachers may still actually teach alone for much of the time, but the power of the group – and all of the group’s insight, knowledge, experience, and support – is always with them. The best groups are diverse, full of unique individuals bringing their different insights, capabilities, and classroom teaching strategies together around a common purpose. (p. 143)

Outside experts and other consultants or educators also have a role to play in supporting school improvement and increasing professional capital (Leana, 2011).

Positive and trusting social interactions between mentors and mentees encourage

strong mentoring relationships and nurture social capital that can impact a mentee's outlook on educational practices (Smagorinsky et al., 2004). Nussbaum-Beach and Hall (2012) state, "The secret to creating deep and trusting relationships is providing opportunities to share. When we participate, we connect, and from those connections come opportunities to collaborate around shared passions" (p. 60), emphasising that emotional closeness is an essential feature of the mentor relationship (DuBois et al., 2002; Parra et al., 2002).

Mentoring enables a collaborative model of education reform that supports teachers working together to share professional knowledge and expertise to improve student achievement (Barth, 2006; Nussbaum-Beach & Hall, 2012). The internal capacity of teachers to teach, learn and lead in complex educational systems by focusing on not just the "what" but also the "how" of pedagogy thus increases intellectual or professional capital. Hirsch (2015) agrees that, "When educators work together deeply, with trust, over time, with sufficient resources and guided by data about what students need most, they can adapt their skills, change their practices, and create ever-improving learning experiences so that every student learns at high levels" (p. 68). Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) conclude that:

The basis of any successful large-scale reform, then, is going to be built on shared experiences, trusting relationships, and personal and social responsibility, as well as transparency. What pulls people in, teachers all the more so, is doing important work with committed and excited colleagues and leaders engaged in activities that require creativity to solve complex problems and that make a real difference. Obstacles are expected, but they inspire determination rather than inflicting defeat. (p. 151)

Mentoring can have a positive impact on all those who work in schools by improving confidence and educational practice (OECD, 2015) by shifting relationships from being intrinsically individualised towards a more deeply humanistic culture that is more satisfying personally and professionally because it is shared (Clawson, 1996). Thus, mentoring supports movement away from an individual approach towards the development of a team by focusing on collective sharing and problem solving as people from different disciplines and across borders connect and interact to build

strong relationships. These form important connections between internal and external communities involved in the teaching and learning partnership (Clawson, 1996).

### **3.5 The impact of culture on mentoring**

Peterson (2007) views the impact of culture on mentoring relationships as irrelevant in a diverse and multi-cultural, globalised world. Other researchers (Cook & Rosinski, 2008), however, believe that cultural consideration in a mentoring relationship is a normal and ethical responsibility and view culture as an optimistic opportunity for, rather than a testing obstacle to, growth, development and change. People all over the world belong to different and distinct social groups, such as family, tribal, ethnic, religious groups, etc., therefore all social groups have a culture on the basis of a common geographical area, gender, profession or organisation.

Having a knowledge of culture and cultural understanding enables mentors to appreciate an individual in the context of their social setting although the concept of mentoring, as we know and understand it, is predominantly through a Western lens. A person's individual identity is a dynamic synthesis of the various cultures one may belong to (Rosinski & Abbott, 2006), as each individual engages from a unique cultural position (OECD, 2016). Culture is a foundation of mentoring relationships in which understanding, interaction, and appreciation of another's beliefs, identity and culture are central to the learning partnership (Zachary, 2000). Mentoring relationships are influenced by culture through people's beliefs, mind-sets and behaviours and are an opportunity to learn about different cultures, respect the identities of others and embrace diversity (Rosinski & Abbott, 2006).

Many researchers have researched the impact of race on mentoring relationships (Barker, 2007; Blancero & Del Campo, 2005; Gonzalez-Figueroa & Young, 2005; Guiffrida, 2005; Hill et al., 2005; Marquardt & Loan, 2006; Karsten, 2006; Holmes, Land, & Hinton-Hudson, 2007; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004; Kilian et al., 2005; Stanley & Lincoln, 2005; Thomas et al., 2007; Walker, 2006). Thomas (1990, 1993, 2001) found that same-race mentoring was more effective in supporting mentees with similar psycho-social aspects than cross-race mentoring relationships. Other research on mentoring relationships suggests that people feel more comfortable with people they physically identify with (Thomas et al., 2005), although in some cases mentors and

mentees tend to manage their racial differences in the mentoring relationship predominantly through suppression or denial of racial issues (Thomas, 1993). The issue of race was excluded from their mentoring relationship in one study by Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (2004) despite their being aware of race and the impact of racism on society; they suggest that mentors and mentees “can act as if the barriers are not there” (p. 18) if they can establish honest and open relationships. They discuss the problems highlighted by academics who engage in cross-cultural mentoring as being related to trust, acknowledged and unacknowledged racism, issues for minority-race staff, power and paternalism, and the concept of otherness in academia. When mentors understand how mentoring can support and advocate for people of colour, they enable marginalised and under-represented minorities to attain higher positions (Blake-Beard et al., 2007).

Race can be a significant barrier in mentoring relationships as it influences access to mentors (Murrell et al., 2006). People of colour often have difficulty in accessing mentors (Blancero & DelCampo, 2005; Hyun, 2005; Kilian et al., 2005; Thomas et al., 2005). In an earlier study, Thomas (1990) suggests that mentoring relationships based on identity are important to mentees. Other researchers (Hu et al., 2008; Johnson, 2007; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004; Stanley & Lincoln, 2005) found that mentees prefer to engage with someone from their own racial or ethnic group in a mentoring relationship or with someone who shares the same cultural background (Connerley & Pedersen, 2005). This may be due in part to people of colour preferring mentors that are of the same race (Gonzalez-Figueroa & Young, 2005; Guiffrida, 2005; Holmes et al., 2007), however, the availability of same race mentors tends to be slim (Holmes et al., 2007; Murrell et al., 2006; Thomas et al., 2007).

The suggested preferences for same-race, same-ethnicity, same-culture mentors indicate that there may be potential issues arising from mentoring relationships between mentors and mentees who do not share these similarities, particularly with racial minority groups (Crutcher, 2007; Hu et al., 2008; Kilian, Hukai, & McCarty, 2005; Thomas et al., 2007). Race and culture are aspects only recently considered as impacting mentoring relationships (Barker, 2007; Hill, Del Favero, & Ropers-Huilman, 2005; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004; Murrell, Blake-Beard, Porter, & Perkins-Williamson, 2008). A key consideration in cross-cultural mentoring is the

notion of white privilege, defined by McIntosh (2001) as “an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, passports, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear, and blank checks” inherited by whites (p. 78). Occupying such a powerful position enables whites to command how others see them, which stems from their individualistic mind-set that values the individual over the group. Whites have an inability to separate from their white privilege but adds that an honest self-evaluation and self-analysis can impact the nature of cross-race mentoring relationships positively (Kendall, 2006).

### **3.5.1 Definitions of culture**

Culture is a complex concept, made more difficult by the many attempts to define it. Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino and Kohler (2003) describe culture as “a complex system of concepts, attitudes, values, beliefs, conventions, behaviours, practices, rituals, and lifestyle of the people who make up a cultural group, as well as the artefacts they produce and the institutions they create” (p. 45). For Rosinski (2003), the “group’s culture is the set of unique characteristics that distinguishes its members from another group” (p. 20). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2001) explains culture as a “set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features of society or a social group,... that ... encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs” (p. 12). Definitions of culture are closely linked to how people, groups, communities and societies define their identity, although individuals typically choose to use aspects that are personally relevant to them (Barrett, Byram, Lázár, Mompoin-Gaillard, & Philippou, 2014).

Culture is the foundation of how humans behave, make meaning and develop values. Derived primarily from the ethnic backgrounds of individuals, culture is viewed as a composite of the distinct spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of any given group that includes their lifestyles, interactions, value systems, traditions and beliefs (UNESCO, 2002). It is not the same as nationality (Ros i Solè, 2003; Sen Gupta, 2003; Streeck, 2002). Culture is socially transmitted through generations and serves as a mechanism for decision-making through all life experiences (Patterson, 2000). It is distinguished by its material artefacts (e.g. food, clothing, tools), social institutions (e.g. language, religion, history) and subjective aspects (e.g. values, beliefs and

practices) that, as a complex system of resources, equip a cultural group to relate and think about the world (OECD, 2016). Hall (1989) believed that:

Culture is man's [sic] medium; there is not one aspect of human life that is not touched and altered by culture. This means personality, how people express themselves (including shows of emotion), the way they think, how they move, how problems are solved, how their cities are planned and laid out, how transportation systems function and are organized, as well as how economic and government systems are put together and function. (p. 17)

### **3.5.2 Cultural positioning**

Culture is defined through the social activities and behaviour of individuals in a social group as members adopt, transmit and propagate useful elements of culture to others, thereby disseminating culture. Although aspects of culture endure over time and cultural orientations tend to be steady (Hofstede, 2003; Schwartz, 2006), culture is not static nor is it fixed; it evolves over time and leads to social and cultural changes for individuals as people engage, interact and relate to others (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007).

Cultural groups are heterogeneous, with individuals that embrace diverse beliefs, practices and philosophies, so we tend to see our own world as being universal. We assume that the way we see the world is the way others see it as well. In cultures that are different to our own, it is challenging to reinforce culturally-shaped values, knowledge and behaviours because an individual's cultural positioning tends to be unconsciously embedded (Newton, Yates, Shearn, & Nowitzki, 2010). However, as people traverse a variety of cultural connections, they develop personally exclusive ways of relating as they respond to the different but intersecting cultures of social groups with cultural beliefs and practices constantly changing and evolving over time (OECD, 2016). Change occurs gradually as societies adapt and adjust to various transformations such as advances in technology and connecting with diverse cultures and people but "teaching" culture is difficult.

Rather, Kramsch (1993) states that, "it is through the eyes of others that we get to know ourselves and others" (p. 222); this implies "a third place" where a person is able to

negotiate and navigate across cultures to interact positively with people who are culturally different. Cultural interactions embody “a reflective capacity to deal with cultural differences and to modify behaviour when needed” (Dellit, 2005, p. 17). Carnoy (1999) explains that:

Globalisation redefines culture because it stretches boundaries of time and space and individuals’ relationship to them. It reduces the legitimacy of national political institutions to define modernity. So globalisation necessarily changes the conditions of identity formation. Individuals in any society have multiple identities. Today, their globalised identity is defined in terms of the way that global markets value individuals’ traits and behaviour. It is knowledge- centred, but global markets value certain kinds of knowledge much more than others. (p. 76)

Culture impacts an individual’s worldview, and shapes identity. Everyone has a culture depending on their geographical origin, gender, religion, etc. and often an individual’s culture may be a fusion of many different cultures that they belong to (Rosinski & Abbott, 2006). Some people identify with more than one culture and may embrace multiple identities. Holland and Lachicotte (2007) suggest that these individuals may need to recognise one unified culture in order to avoid conflict in the face of challenge. In some instances, individuals within the same culture may have different cultural values or interpretations based on their life experiences and events in their personal environment. The content of a culture can be determined by examining the life experiences and events of particular individuals within their environment or general society to understand how their learned behaviours and beliefs evolved cultural awareness through enculturation (Linton, 1936). In the United States, for instance, culture is influenced by the backgrounds and traditions retained and practised by different races and ethnicities that converged from decades of immigration and are deeply ingrained into the members of the group so culture is consequently slow to change.

When different cultural groups work together, it is possible for culture to be socially and culturally altered through differing interpretations and behaviours (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007). As individuals become more aware of their relationship to others,

they adjust their perceptions, emotions, motives, needs, memories and feelings based on increased or newfound awareness and the resulting culture enhances social character and consciousness (Ratner, 1991).

### **3.5.3 Cultural dimensions**

Different researchers have described culture through cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 2003; Lahdenperä, 2000; Schwartz, 1994, 1999; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998), and cultural orientations (Rosinski, 2003), referring to cultural patterns and cultural variations (Triandis, 1996). Hofstede (1980, 1983, 2003, 2010, 2011) is credited with having developed a model based on national cultures that identifies six predominant dimensions. These dimensions distinguish and compare cultural paradigms of different countries through which country scores reflect the culture of a nation as opposed to its people as individuals. Hofstede's (1980) model is based on national cultures and identifies six predominant dimensions. As noted above, the dimensions distinguish and compare cultural paradigms of different countries using country scores that reflect the culture of a nation rather than of individual citizens of that nation. Hofstede's model as applied to the UAE in relation to other world cultures, which reveals the compelling drivers of its culture, is discussed in the next subsections.

#### **3.5.3.1 Power Distance Index – PDI**

This dimension describes the extent to which unequal power is accepted within a society and how this impacts those with and without power. In high power distance cultures, society is dominated by a hierarchy where everyone has a place that is unquestioned. A higher score reveals a greater distance between power and equality, meaning that a hierarchy, despite inherent inequalities, is acceptable and justified. In societies with small power distances, there is a demand for power equality. The UAE scores 90 for the Power Distance Index, which is high on the scale, denoting a high power distance culture.

#### **3.5.3.2 Individualism vs. collectivism – IDV**

In individualistic societies, people are responsible for themselves and for immediate family members. Collective societies reflect a loyalty and commitment to a group and extended relationships with family and extended family. Emirati families are tight

family units, often linked to a tribal system. Family pride and honour is integral to Arab families and there is a sense of responsibility and care for group members. The UAE reflects a collectivist culture with a score of 25.

#### **3.5.3.3 *Masculinity vs. Femininity – MAS***

This dimension refers to how gender impacts societal roles and the gaps between male and female values. The masculine reflects assertiveness and a high masculine score suggests a competitive and value-driven system where success is clearly defined as winning. On the flip side, a high feminine score shows that the measure of success is found in caring for others and improving the quality of life. The UAE totals 50 on this dimension and reflects a culture that is neither predominantly masculine nor feminine.

#### **3.5.3.4 *Uncertainty Avoidance Index– UAI***

This dimension depicts how well a society can tolerate uncertainty, and unusual, unstructured and ambiguous situations. A high score indicates a society that is very risk averse and unable to readily accept change, which can lead to people feeling anxious, distressed and threatened by unknown or vague situations. Societies that avoid uncertainty tend to have strict rules and laws, as well as strong beliefs and institutions that minimise changeable situations. Cultures that accept uncertainty more easily tend to be relaxed and tolerant of differing opinions, values, behaviour, ideas, philosophies and religions. Arab society tends to conform and is more conservative than Western society. Arab values and beliefs cross national boundaries with religion forming a cornerstone of people's lives. Muslim Arabs have a deep belief in God as the power and authority over life. The UAE reflects a high preference for avoiding uncertainty with a score of 80 on this dimension.

#### **3.5.3.5 *Long-Term Orientation vs. Short-term orientation – LTO***

This dimension explains how societies prioritise their connection to the past while they manage current and future challenges. Cultures with low scores show a strong preference to preserve and maintain their traditions and heritage while societies that score high on this dimension encourage a rational and coherent strategy to influence the future. The UAE has not been assessed on this dimension.

#### **3.5.3.6 *Indulgence vs. Restraint***

This dimension analyses how people control their impulses, desires and wishes based

on how they were raised and socialised. Indulgence reveals a weak control while restraint shows a strong control. The UAE has not been scored on this dimension.

### *3.5.3.7 Additional cultural dimensions*

Other descriptions of culture reflect different theoretical structures for examining and evaluating culture. Triandis (1993, 1995, 1996) advocates cultural variations through the identification of cultural syndromes that explain shared beliefs, values and attitudes of people. Cultural syndromes speculate on the nature and characteristics of different cultures and include aspects of cultural complexity vs simplicity, tightness vs looseness, individualism vs collectivism, vertical vs horizontal, active vs passive, universalism vs particularism, diffuse vs specific, ascription vs achievement, instrumental vs expressive, and emotional expression vs suppression. Homogeneous cultures tend to tightly impose their clear norms and customs whereas heterogeneous cultures that typify multicultural contexts are freer to adopt looseness and avoid friction (Triandis, 1996). Collective societies are tight and less complex while complex societies are loose with individualistic characteristics.

Schwartz (1994, 1999) devised a set of seven cultural values or dimensions: conservatism, intellectual autonomy, affective autonomy, hierarchy, egalitarianism, mastery and harmony. His theory of cultural value orientations compares distinctive cultural characteristics of seven international cultural regions based on socioeconomic, political and demographic aspects that highlight national differences and influence culture. These regions are categorised as West European, English-speaking, Latin American, East European, South Asian, Confucian influenced, and African and Middle Eastern. The region of Africa and Middle East as having cultural groups with typically high embeddedness and low affective and intellectual autonomy, signalling that people from these regions lean towards traditional social order influenced by group dynamics where social relationships form the crux of society (Schwartz, 2006). Other studies of the Middle East have reached similar conclusions (Lewis, 2003).

Klein (2004) devised the Cultural Lens Model, which is a framework that suggests how people from different cultures view the world and the role cognition plays in understanding cross-cultural differences. The Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness Research Programme (GLOBE) based their work on

Hofstede's (1980) six cultural dimensions and offer three additional variables. These are assertiveness, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, collectivism I, i.e. institutional collectivism, collectivism II, i.e. in-group collectivism, gender egalitarianism, future-orientation, performance orientation and human orientation.

#### **3.5.4 Developing cultural competence**

Cultural competence entails having the knowledge, values and awareness for satisfactory cross-cultural interactions. It is an important aspect of being culturally sensitive and intelligent (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs, 1989). Studies of this nature offer general insights to cultures at a national and regional level, but such portrayals can be dangerous, misleading and unhealthy if individuals within different cultural groups are casually stereotyped (Rosinski & Abbott, 2006). Moreover, Triandis (1995, 1996) explains that research on culture is primarily conducted by Westerners despite the majority of people living in non-Western cultures. Streeck (2002) suggests that:

as soon as we begin to use culture as a count noun and divide the world into a finite set of cultures, and as soon as we take the convention by which nation-states are represented on maps as an equally valid representation of culture, we are deeply mired in stereotypical thinking. We assume discreteness and distinction where in reality there are only fuzzy boundaries; we inadvertently homogenize the entities that we call cultures; we abstract from history, notably histories of migration, as well as its effects, such as cultural borrowing and hybridization; and we massively underestimate the extent to which human beings share that stuff that is indexed by culture, the mass noun. (p. 301).

Relationships are impacted by culture and cultural contexts, depending on whether the mentor or mentee come from dominant or minority cultures (Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000). When mentors embody a knowledge of cultural perspectives they are able to be more culturally sensitive in their practice. Culturally-competent mentors offer a better experience of cross-cultural mentoring relationships because they understand and appreciate the background of mentees and how they view the world (Sherman, 2007). A lack of understanding of individuals and group cultures can adversely impact a cross-cultural mentoring relationship, suggesting a need to develop knowledge of cultural diversity and differences (Kim, 2007).

Another danger is that culture is equated with nationality. Ros i Solé (2003, p. 143) suggests that “the fallacy of identifying cultures with nations should be demolished” and replaced with other factors that shape individuals’ culture such as gender and ethnic origin. The idea of “cultural systems” (Sen Gupta, 2003, p. 158) focuses on cultural plurality as opposed to the notion of “culture” as representing all individuals. Streeck (2002) explains that:

The old model of a patchwork of cultures and cultural identities, which is to a large extent a product of late-19th century anthropology and its context, colonialism, has now begun to recede, giving way to a mode of thinking about culture and social life that, in the first place, regards cultural difference as a product of human agency, not as a part of a seemingly natural order of things, and is utterly aware of the contested and shifting nature of cultural identity and cultural borders. (pp. 301–302)

Knowledge of the cultural dimensions offers insights into different cultural groups; however, it can be risky to engage in casual and careless stereotyping of people. Individuals are inherently connected to each other by being human (Rosinski & Abbott, 2006).

### **3.5.5 Perspectives of communication as part of Arab culture**

Arab cultural views of communication are significantly different to Western notions of communication (Triandis, 1995; Zaharna, 2010). Arab cultures value “associative” perspectives of communication. Zaharna (2010) states:

From the associative perspective, which stresses a relational “being” as well as the focus on the relational dynamics among the parties, the equivalent of “communication competence” is perhaps “relational communication.” Relational communication is a way of being and interacting with others that gives primacy to the relational dynamics of the communication participants and situation. The term seeks to convey a sense of valuing relationships, of maintaining a constant state of awareness of being embedded in a social and relational dynamic, of being alert to relational cues and dynamics, and having a personal disposition or talent of defining and navigating within and among

relational dynamics across a wide social sphere. (pp. 412- 413)

Communication in Arab societies is a central part of being in a relationship and is key to how one navigates interactions effectively. Relational communication and language are therefore used to connect with others through social cues and dynamic relationships. Zaharna (2010) explains that “some visitors with limited linguistic abilities fare much better than others who are fluent.... Relational communication is about learning the social cues and relational dynamics (many of which may be nonverbal) and gaining a degree of social fluency” (pp. 413-414). As collectivists, Arabs place emphasis on family and tribal affiliations and group opportunities take precedence over individual priorities (Triandis, 1995, Hofstede, 1980, 2008). Associative communication values the relationship and shared bonds in human connections that complement the communication. This type of communication assumes that people communicate because they are both vested in a relationship. Consequently, communication issues are relationship issues, not cognitive issues (Zaharna, 2010).

Relationship forms the context for effective communication and can have a major impact on cross-cultural mentoring relationships. Phenomenological aspects highlight that communication is a way of “being” in relation to others (Zaharna, 2010) as opposed to “doing” communication. This suggests that competence in communication is based on interacting with others as a way of being that values the relationship, being aware of the relational dynamics and steering through relationships with sensitivity. In the West, communication primarily means to communicate messages. Assertive perspectives of communication do not need to be enjoyed or established between parties for the transfer of ideas, information and knowledge within a relationship (Zaharna, 2009b, 2010). However, communication may not always be received effectively or appropriately in such relationships. In Arab culture, eloquent language and emotive communication are valued as this is what moves people’s emotions and thoughts to build connections (Zaharna, 2010).

Another perspective views effective communication as a multidimensional phenomenon that occurs harmoniously between diverse communicators, recognising that people are interconnected in a social dynamic (Chen, 2001; 2005; Leng, 2007; Li,

2009, Zaharna, 2010). Communication problems stem from challenges to personal status and can be solved by re-establishing harmony in the relationships and broader social dynamic. Improving communication consists in repairing, redefining and strengthening the relationship.

### **3.5.6 The impact of language and communication across cultures**

Language is at the heart of all cultures and the basis for communication, not just within a culture but across cultures. Learning a language allows individuals to move between cultures. Clear communication enables people to build trust and develop a shared understanding and minimises misunderstandings. Respectful dialogue in an intercultural conversation allows for both parties to check understanding by clarifying words, phrases and expressions. When people establish meaningful connections through language, they not only develop and extend their own knowledge and understanding but are able to value other cultures. Learning a different language can “equip them for living in a world of diverse peoples, languages, and cultures” (MOE, 2007, p. 24).

Individuals who are able to adapt to a predominant culture are able to be flexible to new ways of being, thinking, doing and acting. Such flexibility allows individuals to develop better relationships with people from different cultures. This skill is important in coping with culture shock, as different contexts and environments may present new demands and expectations; and, usefully, culture shock can be a constructive learning experience that compels one to analyse prejudices and preconceptions.

### **3.5.7 Acquiring intercultural understanding**

Bennett’s (1993) model identifies a series of stages that people move through in response to cross-cultural experiences. The term “intercultural” describes the interactions and connections between people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Lahdenperä (2000) explains that:

[I]t is the quality of cultural encounters that determines whether an interaction is intercultural, i.e. encounters where different actors are conscious that their own cultures place limitations on communication, and thus influence the possibilities for an open and equal relationship. (p. 202)

Intercultural understanding begins with a knowledge and understanding of personal perspectives that is shaped by influences such as culture, religion, education, and status, and the recognition that, through these filters, we may be able to develop an understanding of other people, cultures and perspectives (Doscher, 2012). Accessing many interconnected cultural perspectives with the ability to switch cultural perspectives, without disconnecting or confusing our own cultural identities and values, is an aptitude that enhances thinking skills, offers different ways of seeing things, and allows new approaches and solutions to issues and problems. An understanding of another culture does not oblige acceptance but this capacity allows people to see through a new lens, beyond one's own values and culture.

Different stages of cross-cultural experiences have been identified (Bennett, 1993; Bennett & Bennett, 2003). There are two stages, viz. ethnocentric and ethno-relative. Each stage has sub-stages. At the ethnocentric stage, cultural differences are avoided as they pose a threat to people's reality. This first stage is characterised by a denial that the world is diverse. People who are in this stage tend to have stereotypic understanding of cultures and show little understanding of people's differences, which are ignored or denied. These people may appear to be ignorant, uninformed, unaware or disinterested in other cultures.

In stage two, cultural differences are recognised but with a defensiveness revealed by a tendency to denigrate and discriminate others. People who are in this sub-stage consider themselves superior to others or may engage in reversal where they see their own culture as being inferior to another culture. The third stage is a difficult phase to shift from as there is a recognition and acceptance of culture but cultural differences are underestimated and trivialised by the thinking that all people are the same with minor differences. This minimisation of cultural difference highlights people's beliefs that cultural difference and peoples' lived experiences are insignificant.

Beyond stage four, the ethno-relative stage shows that people develop acceptance, adaptation and integration of other cultures. People develop an acceptance as they begin to recognise, appreciate and understand the values and behaviour of others, even if they do not accept or approve of these in stage four. In stage five, people show adaptation as they maintain their own values while behaving in culturally appropriate

ways. The cultural context is recognised and a respect for different values and behaviours is developed. Although this does not necessarily indicate acceptance or agreement with these values or behaviours, it signifies that communication across cultures is attainable, and that it is possible to look at others with an empathetic gaze from various cultural perspectives as people become more bicultural and multicultural. Individuals are able to adapt and look at cultural differences with a different lens and adapt their responses in relation to the cultural needs of others. This shift signals “intercultural empathy” (Bennett & Bennett, 2003, p. 251).

In stage six, when a person can finally hold various different points of reference to analyses and assess a variety of cultural perspectives, there is integration. People are able to move freely across different cultural groups. This is typically possible for those who have multiple frames of identity and are able to see a variety of cultural positions. There is an integration of the individual’s cultural mindset with their perceptions of cultural differences, whereby they are more open to changing cultural identities. People who move through all of these stages and sub-stages are culturally competent.

### **3.5.8 Developing cultural intelligence and competencies**

Cultural intelligence (CQ) is relative to social and emotional intelligence (EQ). CQ is developed through social capital, which is a precursor to the development of intellectual capital (Crowne, 2013; 2009; Moon, 2010). Mentoring supports both of these notions and results in learning for both mentors and mentees. Personal connections enhance social capital of mentors and mentees across cultures and build strong relationships. In mutually respectful relationships, people are trusting and more confident about learning from each other, which then enhances professional capital.

Different authors (Clawson, 1996; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000) predict that mentoring in the future will be shaped by globalisation and culture and that people will develop greater acceptance and tolerance to bring us closer. Clawson (1996) asserted:

We will also see more and more international pairs in mentoring relationships. As companies strive to develop a global perspective and a global human resource utilisation process, more and more people from different national cultures will begin to develop mentoring connections. In these, we will see people learning more about other

cultures and, it is hoped, developing a respect for them. There is a premiss that says that if a person comes to know another culture better, presumably by living in the midst of it, he or she will come to develop a respect and even a love for those people. While that is often true and there have been many who break out of their local parochialistic prejudices by living elsewhere, another possible outcome is that one comes to understand the other culture better and has a reinforced contempt for the underlying values that guide it. Mentoring, based as it is on professional connections and a parallel technical or business-related common goal, offers the promise of inter-cultural development that leads more assuredly to greater respect and broader tolerance of individual and cultural differences. (p. 11).

An individual with a global mindset is able to engage with other cultures in open and respectful relationships (Beechler & Javidan, 2007; Osland & Osland, 2006). Understanding people's identity and culture is a priority to avoiding misrepresentation of people's identities in cross-cultural mentoring relationships. A knowledge of different cultures offers a rich insight into better understanding diversity and difference. Cultural dimensions enable an examination of how cultural aspects relate to teaching and learning in cross-cultural contexts, and offer an understanding of the role culture and cultural values play in mentoring relationships but they are neither exhaustive nor definitive descriptions of individuals. Nevertheless, culture is integral to the way people develop their worldviews, are socialised to view others and interact, communicate and develop relationships.

### **3.6 Cross-cultural mentoring**

Mentoring varies culturally (O'Neill & Blake-Beard, 2002; Pellegrini & Scandura, 2006; Ragins, 2007). Cross-cultural mentoring refers to the mentoring relationship between a mentor and mentee who are from different cultures with "values, beliefs, and behaviors ... defined by nationality, ethnicity, gender, age, physical characteristics, sexual orientation, economic status, education, profession, religion, organizational affiliation, and any other grouping that generates identifiable patterns" (Bennett & Bennett, 2003, p. 150). Ragins (1997) describes cross-cultural mentoring and diversified mentoring relationships as being "composed of mentors and protégés who

differ in group membership associated with power differences in organizations (e.g. race, ethnicity, gender, class, disability, sexual orientation)” (p. 482). In the past, the scope of mentoring relationships was characterised by same- sex and same-gender relationships but mentoring in this era ranges from homogeneous towards heterogeneous, including more women and non-whites, which increases heterogeneity and diversity (Crumpton, 2015).

Crumpton (2015) proposes that mentoring across cultures and different generations requires emotional sensitivity and intelligence. Crumpton (2015) explains that mentoring must be purposefully driven with the right components planned otherwise more harm than good can be done. To build effective mentoring relationships it is important to know how to manage the self and understand one’s emotions in such relationship. This involves elements relating to other people such as communication skills, time management, project management and meeting management. Effective leaders exemplify a strong emotional intelligence characterised by self-confidence, the ambition to achieve, empathy for the team and organisational awareness. When mentors have strong self-awareness and self-realisation skills, they can develop new behaviours and expertise increasing their ability and performance.

### **3.6.1 Cross-cultural mentoring issues**

Mentoring across cultures promotes an appreciation and understanding of cultural diversity; however, when mentors and mentees come from different cultures, there is potential for conflict as different ways of thinking and life experiences collide (Stanley & Lincoln, 2005). Cross-cultural mentoring relationships can be difficult when cross-cultural differences prevent mentors from adequately supporting mentees, or cause conflict (Blanchett & Clarke-Yapi, 1999; Tillman, 2001). Those in cross-cultural mentoring relationships may face prejudice, discrimination and racism (Blanchett & Clarke-Yapi, 1999; Thomas, 1986b; Thomas, 1990).

Cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity are essential in cross-cultural mentoring relationships (Blake-Beard, 2009; Gokturk & Arslan, 2010; Kochan & Pascarelli, 2012; Osula & Irvin, 2009; Stanley & Lincoln, 2005). The challenges of mentoring across race in a tertiary context can be wide-ranging as students from racial minorities and other under-represented groups particularly need support through mentors, but the

lack of mentors from minority backgrounds amplifies the need for cultural competence in mentors from dominant majority backgrounds who are in cross-cultural mentoring relationships (Crutcher, 2007). Hussein (in Megginson & Clutterbuck, 2005) suggests that accepting, acknowledging and being receptive to cultural differences in a mentoring relationship allows mentors and mentees to accept and appreciate differences with respect and sensitivity. Mentors and mentees who bridge different cultures understand, motivate and support each other better. A cross-cultural mentoring relationship is a learning opportunity for both mentors and mentees to understand different cultures, and learn how to communicate across cultures and how to relate to others in culturally respectful ways (Hussein, in Megginson & Clutterbuck, 2005).

Cross-cultural mentoring relationships are an opportunity for those who are involved to explore cultural similarities and differences, and to grow from learning and understanding new ideas and ways of thinking (Barker, 2007). Cross, Day, Proctor, Harding and Morford (2012) studied cross-cultural and inter-cultural mentoring within social work education based on the construct of American Indian culture in which the mentor is from a marginalised, under-represented, minority background, viz. American Indian. The purpose of cross-cultural mentoring is to learn about the differences between the dominant culture and how other cultures view the world so that students studying social work can learn about working with diverse communities and how to respond to them professionally. The study emphasises that the mentor in cross-cultural mentoring situations is typically a member of the mainstream culture while the mentee comes from a different racial, ethnic or cultural heritage, highlighting that mentees gain invaluable expertise and experience from engaging in a cross-cultural mentorship with under-represented mentors by learning skills and acquiring knowledge that equips them to be professionals who are able to provide effective services to marginalised and under-represented people because they understand different cultures and worldviews from their own through this mentoring experience.

Maynard (2000) discusses how mentors need to be aware of prevalent dimensions, for example, the kind of cultural knowledge that provides “the lens through which teachers’ practical knowledge is viewed and interpreted” (p. 8). This aspect of mentoring is particularly important for both mentors and mentees. Murrell et al. (2006)

evaluated cross-cultural and cross-race mentoring and its effects on careers. Stanley and Lincoln (2005) researched their own cross-race mentorship in a tertiary setting and discuss the need for being sensitive in such a relationship and the importance of understanding white privilege, knowing the power of voice, ingrained traditions and values and how these impact successes.

Mentors who work across cultures require additional skills and methods of communication. They need to be culturally literate, knowledgeable and sensitive to mentees from different cultural backgrounds. Hussein (as cited in Megginson & Clutterbuck, 2005) believes that:

Having cultural literacy means that one understands the values, beliefs and symbols of the dominant culture and how they are reflected in assumptions and behaviours. It also means one understands the values, beliefs and symbols of other cultures and how they too are reflected in a set of assumptions and behaviours. The mentors must also understand the values, beliefs and symbols of the organisation that are reflected in the employees' assumptions and behaviours. (p. 98)

Research on the quality and success of cross-cultural mentoring has produced a range of data; however, those who have been mentored view the experience as being favourable and are more likely to become mentors (Kent, Kochan and Green, 2013).

### **3.6.2 The benefits and challenges of cross-cultural mentoring**

Cross-cultural mentoring relationships provide a platform to better understand, motivate and support others because those in cross-cultural mentoring relationships tend to develop an increased awareness, acceptance and appreciation of people from different backgrounds and cultures (Brinson & Kottler, 1993; Crutcher, 2007; Galbraith & Cohen, 1995). Developing a wider perspective is beneficial to both mentors and mentees (Galbraith & Cohen, 1995; Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, & McKee, 1978) as this awareness also allows mentors and mentees to understand that cultural differences and interactions can sometimes result in conflict (Crutcher, 2007). However, the nature of the mentoring relationship as a learning partnership provides the appropriate forum for people to negotiate their relational space through compromise and mutual understanding and sharing of beliefs, philosophy, values and

culture (Zachary, 2000).

Mentors and mentees from different cultures must manage social and cultural identities, goals, expectations, values, and beliefs. Across cultures, dominant groups have assumed power to determine history through their actions, establishing a belief that their own practices are the norm and their values are superior (Amstutz, 1999; Ratner, 1991; Seepersad, 2012). However, a mentor from a dominant culture with this perception is not fully able to support a mentee if they imagine that they are from a superior group (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2002). When mentors from a dominant cultural group are involved in mentoring relationships with other cultural and ethnic groups, discrimination and inequalities may occur (Seepersad, 2012), therefore, mentors must be aware of their own prejudices and biases towards other cultures and develop supportive, understanding relationships with their mentees. Mentors should develop a knowledge of existing prejudices amongst cultural groups so that they are able to scrutinise their own actions for possible bias in their approach to mentoring. Prejudice and discrimination do not encourage trusting relationships in cross-cultural mentoring. However, it is also possible that cultures may clash when their thinking, beliefs and philosophies differ (Cleminson & Bradford, 1996). People have different approaches to handling cultural diversity and some exhibit “ethnocentric” setbacks at different stages (Bennett, 1993).

Johnson-Bailey & Cervero (2002) discuss the importance of including social aspects as part of the cross-cultural mentoring relationship. Minority cultures may harbour ideas of being inferior to dominant cultures and may need time to adjust their own cultural identities in mentoring situations (Amstutz, 1999; Seepersad, 2012; Vickers, 2002). Exploring different cultures encourages an appreciation of cultural differences and the opportunity to reflect on preconceived notions and personal assumptions (Rosinski & Abbott, 2006). Byram (1997) counsels, “awareness that one is a product of one’s own socialisation is a pre-condition for understanding one’s reactions to otherness” (p. 52).

### **3.6.3 The impact of cultural diversity on mentoring**

When we consider our own immersion in a culture through another person’s lens, the influence and power of culture is evident as it impacts personal, professional and societal development (Rosinski & Abbott, 2006). Recognising cultural diversity

“invites us to think in terms of a plural humanity, embodying a creative potential” (UNESCO, 2009. p. V) to support sustainable human development, international co-operation and world peace. “Culture shock”, which can be triggered by anxiety, frustration and stress in culturally ambiguous situations in new contexts (OECD, 2016), can nonetheless be a useful teacher as it makes people face their preconceptions and prejudices, and analyse these behaviours with honesty and integrity (OECD, 2016). People who are able to be flexible in their thinking and adjust their attitudes and behaviour to the context are able to develop positive relationships with people from other cultures.

### **3.7 Summary**

This chapter reviews literature pertinent to the educational and social implications of globalisation to contextualise the urgent need for education reform in this century. Within the agenda for school improvement, the role and positioning of teachers as change agents is examined. Teachers’ professional learning is explored as a means to improve student outcomes, with mentoring being discussed as a credible and influential professional learning strategy that drives teacher learning through collaboration and cooperation. As this study highlights a complex cross-cultural school improvement context, cross-cultural mentoring and culture are related foci. Aspects of culture, including cultural dimensions and cultural competence, are examined to ascertain the competencies and complexities of cross-cultural mentoring. This chapter aims to suggest that when the concepts of mentoring and culture intersect through cross-cultural mentoring, there is an opportunity to promote social, cultural and professional or intellectual capital with significant impact on individual human relations as those involved in cross-cultural mentoring relationships develop an enhanced understanding and positive appreciation of others for an interconnected, cohesive globalised world.

The next chapter introduces the research design of this study.

# Chapter 4

## The Research Design

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the research design of this study. Guided by the research question, “How do education advisors negotiate professional learning relationships in a cross-cultural school improvement context?”, the study was developed within the philosophical framework of qualitative research with phenomenology as the appropriate philosophy and methodology. Taking ontology and epistemology into account, I selected phenomenology to support and reflect my research objective because phenomenology studies and interprets how people experience the world and offers a systematic yet flexible approach to conducting research of this nature. This chapter explores the general concept of phenomenology from its philosophical, historical and developmental aspects to provide context, while hermeneutic phenomenology is specifically investigated as appropriate to enabling participants’ experiences of negotiating professional learning relationships in a unique Abu Dhabi school improvement context to be better understood, conveyed and evaluated.

### 4.2 Selecting the qualitative tradition of research and choosing phenomenology as a research guide

All research is framed within major worldviews or paradigms that influence researchers through their ontological and epistemological positioning (Bryman, 2016; Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 2009). Guba and Lincoln (1994) define a paradigm as:

a set of *basic beliefs* (or metaphysics) that deals with ultimates or first principles. It presents a *worldview* that defines, for its holder, the nature of the “world,” the individual’s place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts, as, for example, cosmologies and theologies do. The beliefs are basic in the sense that they must be accepted simply on faith (however well argued); there is no way to establish their ultimate truthfulness. (p. 107)

Using personal experience as a starting point (van Manen, 1997), this characterisation of a paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) captures my own distinctive worldview and personal context as explained in Chapter 1. The subjective nature of qualitative research acknowledges that people do not all experience the same single reality and may have different perceptions depending on their own unique contexts and situations. A phenomenological research approach has therefore enabled me to understand how individuals make sense of the world they exist in and how meaning can be derived from their experiences by taking into account my own worldview, understanding of ontologic reality and concepts of knowledge from an epistemological viewpoint (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

In a socially-constructed worldview, Creswell (2007) states that, “Individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. Meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views, rather than to narrow the meanings into a few categories or ideas” (p. 20). Ontologically, there are multiple, socially constructed realities (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). People create a multiplicity of different realities as they develop their own understanding and perspectives of the world based on their experiences. The centrepiece of this study is derived from the participants’ experiences to expose and inform their realities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Phenomenological research studies the lifeworld as we immediately experience it, and before we can reflect or conceptualise it, highlighting that we take our everyday experiences for granted (Heidegger, 1996). Participants give meaning to what they think by describing their own experiences and perspectives. By making lived experience “both the source and object” (van Manen, 1990, p. 36), phenomenological research enables us to understand lived human experiences and human life more substantially by seeking “a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences” (van Manen, 1990, p. 9). Phenomenology is therefore not concerned with problem-solving or the creation of theory, as it attempts to draw meaning from experience. Van Manen (1990) states that:

*Phenomenological questions are meaning questions* [original italics].  
They ask for the meaning and significance of certain phenomena...meaning questions can never be closed down, they will

always remain the subject matter of the conversational relations of lived life and they will need to be appropriated, in a personal way, by anyone who hopes to benefit from such insight. (p. 23)

Another important principle of phenomenological research is that lived experiences are pre-reflective (van Manen, 1997). Unless an experience is described on reflection and disconnected from the immediacy of a lived experience, a person's way of being in the world is pre-reflective. Van Manen (1990) describes this as "the starting point and end point" (p. 53); and van Manen and Adams (2010) explain this concept further:

Phenomenological research is oriented to the lifeworld as we immediately experience it – pre-reflectively, rather than as we conceptualize, theorize, categorize, or reflect on it. It is the study of lived or experiential meaning and attempts to describe and interpret these meanings in the ways that they emerge and are shaped by consciousness, language, our cognitive and non-cognitive sensibilities, the ontics of meaning, and our personal, social, and cultural preunderstandings. (p. 449)

After considering different philosophical and theoretical perspectives in the design stage, I concluded that a qualitative approach from a social constructivist position best suited this study. As an education advisor during the research process, I had an insider and outsider locus that was both exhaustive and wide-ranging (Goulding, 2005). These experiences with cross-cultural mentoring relationships gave me a personal understanding of the phenomenon but an investigation into the experiences of education advisors using their own voices and perspectives allowed me to focus on their lifeworld, and to be open to their particular experiences without any presuppositions as I searched for key meanings in their descriptions.

People may construct their realities similarly or differently and this study invited others to be reflexive and thoughtful of their own experiences of being immersed in professional learning relationships in a cross-cultural school improvement context, as not only education advisors but also as teachers, learners and leaders. This study is intended to prompt others to make meaning of the experiences of education advisors and to consider other possibilities that might lead to a new appreciation and

understanding of their involvement in school improvement work by better understanding the experiences of education advisors leading professional learning in a cross-cultural school improvement context.

### **4.3 Defining phenomenology**

Phenomenology is literally defined as the study of phenomena and the lived human experience (Creswell, 2007; Crotty, 1998; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002; van Manen, 1990, 1997). Phenomenology is a uniquely engaging way to discover the meaning of people's experiences through the study of their stories as a way of understanding human existence (van Manen, 1990, 1997, 2014). Phenomenology therefore uses the personal experiences of individuals to understand and inquire into their unique ways of being and making meaning.

### **4.4 The development of phenomenology**

The term phenomenology is by no means a new concept, and different thinkers and philosophers over time have reflected on the mysteries of intentionality and consciousness, although their practice may not have been specifically referred to as phenomenology. The concept of phenomenology has evolved to represent both a philosophy and a research methodology (Patton, 1990). Applying it, Husserl (1965) and Creswell (2007) both view phenomenology as a philosophy while others like Denzin and Lincoln (1990, 2000) and Moustakas (1994) regard it primarily as a research method framework. Giorgi (1994) proposes that phenomenology is not merely an alternative methodology but offers a way to conceptualise and study experience which has consistent philosophical foundations. Crotty (1998) suggests that, being a theoretical perspective, phenomenology is not actually a method or methodology; however, van Manen (1997) disagrees, promoting phenomenology as an interpretive research methodology.

In general, there are two broadly-related schools of phenomenology that have developed from the work of Husserl and Heidegger. Husserl is credited with the development of descriptive or eidetic phenomenology while Heidegger is recognised as the originator of interpretive or hermeneutic phenomenology. A fundamental difference between the philosophies of Husserl and Heidegger lies in how lived human experience should be explored (Dowling, 2007). Epistemology was vitally important

for Husserl, who believed that people have the ability to be neutral and unbiased in the study of things and advocated the concepts of “intentionality” and “bracketing” to support these beliefs. Husserl’s philosophy of phenomenology therefore developed into transcendental phenomenology, which is predominantly eidetic or descriptive. For Heidegger, on the other hand, ontology was fundamental, believing that humans are incapable of staying neutral, unbiased and impartial. He reasoned that, based on their own special life and world experiences, people are always in a context and therefore, have related or associated meanings to those experiences.

Since its beginnings in Germany, phenomenology has spread around the world and extends its influence from the field of philosophy to psychiatry, and across sociology, nursing, health sciences and education. Phenomenology has since evolved into various genres that are now distinguished according to those that are most suitable for a researcher’s requirements and tailored according to the principles of transcendental phenomenology, existential phenomenology, linguistical phenomenology, ethical phenomenology and phenomenology of practice or hermeneutic phenomenology. The next three sections briefly describe the approach that Husserl, Heidegger and Gadamer each took in the evolution of phenomenology.

#### **4.5 Edmund Husserl**

The German mathematician and philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) began to reflect, circa the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, on the essential nature and meaning of things as they fundamentally appear. This was a move away from the rigidity of empirical research methodologies of the time and allowed new knowledge to be explored in alternative ways. Husserl (1970), often referred to as the father of phenomenology, made the radical assertion that “ultimately, all genuine, and in particular, all scientific knowledge, rests on inner evidence: as far as such evidence extends, the concept of knowledge extends also” (p. 61), in the belief that all knowledge is derived from experience (Moustakas, 1994). However, Husserl’s goal was to ensure that phenomenological research enabled an unbiased, rigorous study into human thought and experience as they appeared without the researcher’s preconceptions colouring the true essence of the phenomenon (Dowling, 2007; Converse, 2012).

Husserl argued that our only certainty is our experiences of the world, as we are always already in the world. For example, being phenomenally conscious is being conscious of the experience of a phenomenon such as pain or joy. To explain his understanding of phenomenology, Husserl developed the key ideas of “Anschauung”, “intentionality” and “bracketing”. Transcendental phenomenology emerged as a process of firstly looking at a phenomenon, referred to as “Anschauung”, in a way that is devoid of all preconceived notions, beliefs than being conscious of the phenomenon, and then separating the phenomenon from personal experiences and beliefs through the strategies of intentionality and bracketing, posing tentative ontologic issues.

Husserl (1982) advocated the concept of “intentionality” as a core theme of transcendental phenomenology and a key characteristic of phenomenology that is directly related to consciousness. Intentionality describes the consciousness of something and involves two distinct mental states that are difficult to articulate and interpret clearly, viz. thinking *about* something or thinking *of* something. Intentionality can be described as a thoughtful, purposeful and deliberate action, while a phenomenological understanding of intentionality explains how we direct ourselves and our thinking towards a thing or an object and highlights the relationship between the object and our understanding of it. Therefore, the consciousness of objects signifies an individual’s consciousness of a thing and the meaning of an object (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Phenomenology, through the concept of intentionality, connects people with the world, through a dynamic interaction that emphasises a philosophical interdependence with context when experience is constructed. The interconnectedness between the world and consciousness means that we can understand how knowledge is created and established if we understand the structure of consciousness (Husserl, 1970).

Another significant idea to emerge from Husserl was the concept of “bracketing”, a term that is consistent with his background in Mathematics. The term suggests a temporary suspension of preconceived beliefs and assumptions about a phenomenon to emphasise the relationship between consciousness and objects (Husserl, 1970). Husserl (1911 – 1965) believed that an uncluttered and clear state of mind was integral to seeing and feeling the essence of phenomena and this is evident in his maxim of “To the facts (or things) themselves” (p. 116). The process of “bracketing” takes a researcher to the point of conscious recognition, returning to things with a detached focus which

effectively brackets out preconceived notions and pre-understanding so that the researcher can focus on seeing features with fresh, unaltered senses in order to uncover the essence of the phenomenon before reaching understanding in the analysis process. The final phenomenological reduction (Cohen & Omery, 1994) resulting from a combination of looking at the phenomenon, using conscious intentionality and “bracketing” to derive meaning is referred to as epoché.

#### **4.6 Martin Heidegger**

Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), another German philosopher, and Husserl’s student, became famous for his work *Sein Und Zeit (Being and Time)*, written in 1927, in which he described the nature of “Being”, which he referred to as “Dasein”. Heidegger applied the methods of phenomenology to ontology and inquired into the notion of existence and the meaning of “Being”, asking, what does “to exist” mean? Crotty (1996) explains that Heidegger sought to reveal “the nature and meaning of Being” (p. 76) by focusing on the concept of “Being-in-the-world” and asked what it meant to be a human being in the world in the life of an individual every day.

Dasein can be translated as “existence” (literally “Being-There”); the concept of “Being-in-the-world” embodies a person with a worldview, relationships and experiences who lives in the world, allowing that each individual’s lifeworld will be situated differently (van Manen, 1990, 1997). Dasein therefore represents a cohesive integration of body, mind and spirit in which the “way-of-being” in the world is mindful of the self and consciously connected to the broader context (Southern, 2015). Heidegger (1927) argued that the concept of Dasein or human existence is embedded in a world with many meanings and interpretations, and when we face phenomena we immediately confront them in the context of a world that we are familiar with. We should therefore study the ways in which we live in the world where meaning is created through our actions.

Heidegger (1996) believed that “Phenomenology is our way of access to, and the demonstrative manner of determination of, what is to become the theme of ontology. Ontology is possible only as phenomenology” (p. 31). Heidegger (1996, 2001) explained that humans make sense of their world as Dasein or being-in-the-world and that this understanding is derived from within their own experience of being in the

world. Our existence in the world requires that we examine and clarify our role to understand the sense of “Being”. Dasein is therefore self-interpreting, searching to understand what it means to be in a moment, and captures our direct involvement and mutual relationship with the world and our unique selves.

Heidegger (1962) originated the concept of the hermeneutic circle, believing that the meaning of being is circular and that the nature of being is continuous (Heidegger, 1962; Converse, 2012). However, Heidegger (1962) emphasised that the researcher was required to have prior historical, cultural and social knowledge of the entity under investigation before interpretation could occur in the hermeneutic circle. He argued that researchers who were aware of their preconceptions and understood their foresight could influence the nature of the study (Heidegger, 1962; Converse, 2012). For Heidegger, the concepts of being, thinking, speaking and acting are connected and indivisible. In his search for knowledge of Dasein, he was influenced by Asian philosophy and with others, such as his student, Gadamer, he saw merit in the hermeneutic tradition that linked Eastern and Western ways of thinking and being. Heidegger’s philosophy shifted between the 1930s and 1940s and this is referred to as *Die Kehre*, “the turn”. Heidegger explained this as a turn in Being, not only of his thinking. Part of this change for Heidegger was a rejection of Husserl’s thinking that philosophy should abandon theory.

#### **4.7 Hans Georg Gadamer**

Hans Georg Gadamer (1900–2002), a German philosopher and student of Heidegger, adopted the position that all existence is hermeneutical and that people make assessments and develop understandings that mirror their unique language and tradition. Gadamer’s (1975) work emphasises that understanding is interpretation and, as the science of interpretation, hermeneutics fulfils the conditions necessary to establish and determine truth. When the conditions for understanding meaning are discovered, the truth may be revealed (Gadamer, 2003).

Gadamer developed four concepts, viz. prejudice, the fusion of horizons, the hermeneutic circle, and play, that when connected may have relevance to hermeneutic phenomenology as a research methodology (Gadamer, 1975). Gadamer’s theory of understanding involves the concept of prejudice or pre-judgment. As used here,

prejudice does not have a negative connotation but instead signals the stance used by individuals to understand other people and things from their own personal viewpoints, on the principle that understanding about things and others emerges from our own contexts and perspectives. As an instrument of the research, a researcher needs to be aware of prejudices (here used in its negative sense) that may influence the study through, for example, the language one uses.

Gadamer's (1975) work on understanding as "a fusion of horizons" highlights a researcher's prior knowledge or pre-understandings that make further understanding possible in the context of the research process. The "horizon" is explained as an individual's frame of reference, in relation to the past and present, which facilitates understanding. Understanding is dependent on those who engage in a hermeneutical dialogue, encompassing prejudices and a subsequent negotiation to reach an agreement or "horizon" that signals understanding. Understanding is therefore a "fusion of horizons" that is characterised by shifting prejudices which may lead to different, improved and richer understandings as a researcher may determine whether to accept, abandon, expand, develop or test a prejudice. Meaning emerges as the researcher engages with the text to determine an interpretation (Lavery, 2003).

The hermeneutic circle is a concept that enables the interpretation and understanding of a text and is characterised by things that are contextual and circular with no beginning, end, top, bottom or subject/object peculiarities. The process of interpretation draws on that which is circular rather than linear. Gadamer (1989) explains that interpretation and understanding cannot be separated. While meaning and understanding may result from engaging with a text, it is important to consider the historical, social and cultural backgrounds that an interpreter brings as they interact with a text. According to Diekelmann and Ironside (2006), humans "are always already within this interpretive (hermeneutic) circle of understanding" (p. 261). Ajjawi and Higgs (2007) view the hermeneutic circle as "a metaphor for understanding and interpretation, which is viewed as a movement between parts (data) and whole (evolving understanding of the phenomenon), each giving meaning to the other such that understanding is circular and iterative" (pp. 622-623).

This study emphasises aspects of a hermeneutic circle in that it reveals participants'

interviews as being contextual as they discussed their experiences and moved from one idea to another as they shared their stories. As I move between stories, thinking and contemplating, there is a sense of going back and forth, and to-and-from story to gather the individual and collective meanings before distilling the essence. My contemplation of the participants' narratives ended up taking longer than I had originally anticipated because understanding is difficult if there is a casual approach to making meaning. I was only able to interpret the whole and the sum of the parts of individual participants' experiences to make meaning (Gadamer, 1975) once I had plunged myself deep into the thoughtful analytical processes that phenomenology demands.

#### **4.8 Hermeneutic phenomenological research**

Hermeneutics originated with the interpretation of religious texts to enable an understanding, interpretation and appreciation of ideas that may be unfamiliar, distinctive or different from a human relational perspective. Hermeneutic phenomenology presumes that our worldly experiences are already meaning-full and this presents an opportunity to reflect on a multitude of diverse lived experiences (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; van Manen, 2014). Our personal observations originate from our own positioning, and hermeneutics recognises that the historical, social and cultural contexts that people live and exist within impact the ways in which individuals make meaning and sense of their lifeworlds. Hermeneutics or interpretation is significant in that humans can never be completely unbiased in using the concept of bracketing or epoché as advocated by Husserl therefore the hermeneutic tradition recognises that bracketing is open to question. The choice of hermeneutic phenomenology for this research study significantly impacts the analysis of participants' experiences, providing another reason for selecting this methodology.

Heidegger also believed that intentionality begins with the interpretation of pre-theoretical conditions and that all information is viewed through a variable lens of interpretation based on the idiosyncratic experiences of the observer. Heidegger (1982) conceived the term "comportment" to replace intentionality, suggesting that comportment represents a directed activity where people are part of the world. Lived experiences are typically unspoken and tacit, yet we are always involved and engaged in relationships with others and in the world, which prevents us from being completely objective and unprejudiced. The notion of understanding for Heidegger is linked to a

practical competence as opposed to a substantial cognitive activity (Blattner, 1992). The concepts of understanding and interpretation are linked through interpretation, whereby the established role of fore-structure supports understanding as it develops into itself (Heidegger, 1962).

Hermeneutics presents a broad opportunity to think, act and consider in connection with others and the world, enabling people to consider and inquire into the array of life contexts of an individual and the world. Smythe, Ironside, Sims, Swenson and Spence (2008) suggest that Heideggerian phenomenology “is not to provide answers, for that shuts down and closes thinking. It is rather to invite readers to make their own journey, to be exposed to the thinking of the authors and to listen for the call on their own thinking” (p. 1393). They add that, “Every person reading the research report will take away their own thoughts, already connecting their past experiences with future possibilities of the ‘thisness’ of their own situation” (Smythe et al., 2008, p. 1393). The interpretation, explanation and theorising of rich descriptions through hermeneutic phenomenology underscores the usefulness of this type of exploratory and investigative research as offering an interpretation rather than a description.

#### **4.8.1 An appropriate ontology and epistemology of phenomenology**

Phenomenology provides an appropriate ontology and epistemology for investigating and understanding the human world in which a research philosophy co-exists and influences the research methodology and methods selected as part of the research strategy. The philosophical foundation of research is collectively impacted by the practical considerations of ontology and epistemology (Cohen & Omery, 1994; Crotty, 1998). Crotty (1998) suggests that there is an enduring relationship between both epistemological and ontological concepts whereby “to talk about the construction of meaning [epistemology] is to talk of the construction of a meaningful reality [ontology]” (p. 10).

#### **4.8.2 Ontology of phenomenology**

Phenomenological research is essentially an ontological exploration of our lifeworld. Crotty (1998) describes ontology as “the study of being” (p. 10) which asks, “how we know what we know” (p. 8), while Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to ontology as “the nature of reality” (p. 37). These scholars describe ontology as that which exists and

can be considered real and known and which questions what reality is. Ontologically, experiences account for how the world is experienced, how personal and professional interactions occur within social and cultural contexts and the way in which such experiences are constructed into informative realities. Yet because our personal observations originate from our own positioning, they represent interpretations or hermeneutics which signify that humans can never be completely unbiased in using the concept of bracketing (epoché) advocated by Husserl. This was a major point of departure for Heidegger from Husserl's teachings.

While Heidegger agreed with the principle of "to the facts (or things) themselves" (Husserl, 1911, p. 116) and "let's get back to what matters" (van Manen, 1990, p. 184), he did not subscribe to Husserlian phenomenology's striving for calculated objectivity and interpretation-free meaning. Heidegger's phenomenological analysis contradicted Husserl's concepts of intentionality and "bracketing" in the pursuit of phenomenology that was interpretive and hermeneutic. According to Lavery (2003), "Heidegger went as far as to claim that nothing can be encountered without reference to a person's background understanding" (p. 8), signalling that Heidegger's approach was to understand how humans exist, behave and cooperate in the world. Heidegger was therefore resolute that the concept of "bracketing" was unachievable and rejected Husserl's belief that a researcher should "attempt to hold prior knowledge or belief about the phenomena under study in suspension in order to perceive it more clearly" (LeVasseur, 2003, p. 3).

Heidegger's exploration of lived experience, based on the concept of Dasein, therefore differed from Husserl's bracketed focus in understanding human beings or phenomena (Lavery, 2003). Heidegger and Gadamer both believed that phenomenological bracketing or reduction during which researchers suspend their individual bias to uncover the essence of the phenomenon was unfeasible. Ontologically, then, Heidegger sought the meaning of the experience and proposed an interpretative or hermeneutic phenomenology.

### **4.8.3 Epistemology of phenomenology**

Examining what counts as knowledge and questioning how things are known, Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 108) refer to epistemology as "the nature of the relationship

between the knower or would-be knower and what can be known”. Epistemologically, the interpretation of these realities, mines to expose the core meanings that support our understanding and knowledge of what reality is — in this case, according to the specific culture and context of this research, that of education advisors working in Abu Dhabi public schools, because they must experience multiple realities in a cross-cultural school improvement context. Phenomenology would seem ideal for accessing the experiences of these participants. However, in Husserlian phenomenology, the expectation is that a researcher will “bracket” out their pre-understandings and preconceptions to reach the essence of the phenomenon and develop a new understanding of the experience. Heideggerian phenomenology indicates more appropriately that people understand what they know and experience and researchers become aware and gain understanding through their reflexivity (Converse, 2012; Flood, 2010).

Knowledge is attained through an understanding of ways of being as opposed to ways of knowing (Converse, 2012; Sherratt, 2006). This study therefore reflects a belief that it is not only impossible but also unreasonable to “bracket” one’s beliefs and understanding in the quest to seek meaning of experience. I was conscious that my past and present experiences formed a lens through which I viewed and interpreted experiences as I reflected on the narratives shared with me as a researcher. I have been deliberately cognisant of the methods I used as a way of human understanding is to be open and reflexive in my phenomenological method (Smythe et al., 2008).

#### **4.8.4 Methodology of phenomenology**

Phenomenology presents as an appropriate and powerful methodological instrument to answer the research questions effectively. Van Manen (1984) believed that “Phenomenology differs from almost every other science in that it attempts to gain insightful descriptions of the way we experience the world” (p.1) and had earlier clarified that, “The challenge for phenomenology is to make available, through a reflective use of method and descriptions, ‘opportunities for seeing’ through the surface structure of everyday life the ground structures of common educational phenomena and experiences” (1979, p.10). The philosophical principles of phenomenology can be explained through a number of unique concepts that enable us to understand lived experiences in an organised way. There are four key themes central

to phenomenological philosophy, viz. description, reduction, essences and intentionality (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Giorgi (1985a), a psychologist assessing phenomenological perspectives as a scientific research methodology, suggested that the four themes posited by Merleau-Ponty (1962) are credible.

Phenomenological “description” describes the experiences of things as one experiences them, making the experience itself the focus of investigation. Research participants are able to fully describe their experiences while researchers are able to use reduction during analysis of the descriptions, searching for the essence of the experience that make it what it is (Giorgi, 1985a). “Essences” evolve as the core meaning of the individual experience. Van Manen (2003) defines essence as “that which makes a thing what it is and without which it would not be what it is” (p. 177). Intentionality indicates an inextricable connectedness between people and the world (Giorgi, 1985a). Some researchers (Cilesiz, 2009; Moustakas, 1994; Yüksel & Yildirim, 2015) suggest that the aim of phenomenological research is to exemplify the lived experience of individuals’ narratives by producing realistic essences of phenomena. Van Manen (1990) describes phenomenology as a study of the essence in which the nature of an experience is revealed, in some cases in ways unseen before, and states that, “The essence of a phenomenon is a universal, which can be described through a study of the structure that governs the instances or particular manifestations of the essence of that phenomenon” (p. 10), and “in such a fashion that we are now able to grasp the nature and significance of this experience in a hitherto unseen way” (p. 37).

From a methodological position, phenomenology presumes that the researcher participates in research that specifically describes people and communities through dialogue or narratives, and then explicates it within an interpretive paradigm. Van Manen (1990) explains that, “a real understanding of phenomenology can only be accomplished by actively doing it” (p. 8). While Shank (2002) understood that “phenomenological process always begins, in some fashion, with the individual person and that person’s awareness of the world” (p. 85), Moustakas (1994) suggests that phenomenology should “attempt[s] to eliminate everything that represents prejudgment, setting aside presuppositions” (p. 41), implying a more Husserlian approach.

Van Manen (2002) perceives phenomenological method as a “way toward understanding” as opposed to a set of procedures (p. 249); and as an interpretive method, hermeneutic phenomenology is relevant and appropriate to make meaning in this research. A phenomenological outlook demands an inner embodiment as the “way of being phenomenological ... ‘comes’” (Smythe et al., 2008, p. 17). This requires a researcher to engage in the study, reflect thoughtfully, respond creatively and critically, and report effectively and imaginatively. A researcher’s way-of-being obliges one to be highly sensitive, observant and thoughtful, and while the approach is not formal, nor is it casual and irresponsible. While aspects of my method may be considered unsystematic, haphazard or messy to an onlooker, my contemplation of the data has been disciplined and thoughtful to deliberately consider the texts of lived experiences. I have discovered that I am being phenomenological when I am engaged in doing phenomenology. The method of phenomenology

The phrase “the method of phenomenology and hermeneutics is that there is no method!” (van Manen, 1997, p. 30) reflects the notion that phenomenology as an abstract philosophy does not have a clearly defined and absolute research method. With no set prescriptions but a wide body of tradition, knowledge and research practice, phenomenological research warrants innovative and inventive scholarship whereby a researcher is able to “select or invent appropriate research methods, techniques and procedures for a particular problem or question” (van Manen, 1997, p. 30).

Van Manen’s (1997) framework for hermeneutical phenomenological research is grounded in six activities that simplify the research process by giving it some order and direction, while still maintaining the abstract philosophical ideas of hermeneutic phenomenology. One of the most problematic areas that emerged as I looked for ways to analyse the data was that there is not systematic, organised method that is appropriate. These guidelines however enabled me to establish a practical and meaningful research method within this paradigm and although the use of a variety of methods may result in phenomenological awakening (van Manen, 2014), for me, this method was a useful and convenient guide that allowed ideas to connect in a logical way. The six methodological themes enabled me to move flexibly between concepts and ideas as I considered how the parts corresponded to the whole. This process

allowed me to be both thoughtful and energetic in my doing of phenomenology as I needed to be creative and develop new ways to manage large amounts of data while ensuring that the results were credible and trustworthy.

The philosophical beliefs of a phenomenological study focus on three aspects: the lived experience of the participants is the focus of the study; the participants' experiences are conscious experiences; and the focus of the research is to elicit the essence of the experience through the description and interpretation of the experiences as opposed to their explanation and analysis (Creswell, 2007). However, van Manen's guidelines for data collection and data analysis were useful in providing a framework to conduct the analysis which enabled me to represent the data without manipulation.

This part of the chapter explains the research method and describes the ethical considerations, processes and procedures for data collection and the analysis that guided the study, using van Manen's (1997) methodological structures of hermeneutic phenomenological research. It explains how data was collected, analysed and interpreted in the study (Lather, 1992; van Manen, 1997). Van Manen (1997) suggests that these steps are "not to prescribe a mechanistic set of procedures, but to animate inventiveness and stimulate insight" (p. 30).

Van Manen's (1997, p. 30-31) six guidelines which informed the research and guided this phenomenological research are:

1. Turning to a phenomenon that interests us and commits us to the world
2. Investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualise it
3. Reflecting on the essential themes which characterise the phenomenon
4. Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and re-writing
5. Maintaining a strong and oriented relation to the phenomenon
6. Balancing the research context by considering the parts and whole

## **4.9 Van Manen's six guidelines of phenomenological research**

### **4.9.1 Turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world**

We should only be compelled into research when a phenomenon consumes us so deeply that we are fully committed. Van Manen (1990) suggests that the first step in

research is a deep statement that points to the researcher being driven by an idea or thought before committing to research. Phenomenological research is described as “being-given-over to some quest, a true task, a deep questioning of something that restores an original sense of what it means to be a thinker, researcher, a theorist” (van Manen, 1997, p. 31).

As a research study of the lived experiences of education advisors who led professional learning in a cross-cultural school improvement context in Abu Dhabi, the impetus for this research began with a typical, everyday family routine when my husband would arrive after a day’s work and relate his work experiences to me. At the time he was employed as an education advisor and he spoke in wonderment of his interactions, engagements and associations in this new and different school context and social culture. His uniquely lived experiences became secondary “lived” experiences for me, making me imagine and reflect on his life-work experiences, not having had such experiences or even access to such experiences myself.

Van Manen (1997) believes that personal experience is an important starting point for investigating a phenomenon but emphasises that “true reflection on lived experience is a thoughtful, reflective grasping of what it is that renders this or that particular experience its special significance” (p. 32). Despite having heard accounts of the nature of the work through my husband’s experience, it was only in the year following my employment as an education advisor that I became more involved with the PPP project and attuned to its aims that made me consider my own experiences. I found that later, as I pursued my own research, the attraction of those experiences that had initially fascinated me had not worn off. In fact, by immersing myself in this cross-cultural school improvement context, I became even more convinced that I was involved in something special and exceptional. In this search to understand a thing more fully, there is a need to have a fundamental understanding of the phenomenon before the exploration and subsequent understanding (Crotty, 1998). My own personal experience of being employed as an education advisor is what caused me to turn to the phenomenon of engaging in professional learning relationships in a cross-cultural school improvement context as a matter that deeply and personally interested me.

Although I did not begin this study during my employment, at the time I recall being

acutely aware that my work experiences were important, and understood that in time they would become more meaningful to me as I thought about them. However, as I tried to cope with living and working in a new culture and context myself, those thoughts were underdeveloped. Certainly, I was naïve about how deeply I would be affected by the whole experience and as time passes, I realise that those profound experiences have had an impact on my thinking and the shape of my persona. On reflection, my own experiences in the Middle East were an important part of my “Being” and critical to my personal, professional and academic development.

When I resumed my postgraduate work eighteen months later, my study took into account my lived experience both as education advisor and as researcher (Giles, 2008; van Manen, 1997). However, I deliberately oriented the research to investigate the phenomenon of mentoring in a complex, cross-cultural school improvement context, and away from my own narrative. I did this on the basis of my understanding of phenomenological principles and my knowledge of the insights of previous researchers and philosophers. I was able to further reflect on my own lived experiences and their effects on my being while also developing a wider and deeper understanding of the phenomenon based on others’ perspectives and experiences.

In phenomenological research, investigating experience as we live it permits the researcher the privilege of sharing experiences and situations with others. As an education advisor, my own experiences were compelling and I was keen to know if others had had similar or different experiences to my own. My exploration of the experiences of education advisors began as a probe into my own journey as an education advisor. I was interested in the context of the work but with so many different facets impacting the workplace, it was difficult to cover one part without adequately setting the broader scene of the reform context. For example, I grappled with how to consider the relatively small role Western expatriate education advisors had in leading professional learning without considering how their input within such an extensive reform effort would affect the local children learning in Abu Dhabi schools. But most especially, I wanted to know how others made sense of their lifeworld experiences. As I reflect on my own lived experiences as an education advisor and the lived experiences of other education advisors, I am searching for the true nature and meaning of those lifeworld experiences.

A powerful starting point that guides and directs the direction of the study is knowing what it is we seek to learn more about through a phenomenological question; and van Manen (1997) explains that, “to truly question something is to interrogate something from the heart of our existence, from the center of our being” (p. 43). Phenomenological questions differ in that they seek to get an insight into descriptions of everyday life by drawing the reader into the phenomenon so that the researcher is engaged. I began with the development of the research questions, and it took considerable time and thought for me to keep the questions open to all kinds of possibilities (Gadamer, 1975; van Manen, 1997). This main research study asked, “How do education advisors negotiate professional learning relationships in a cross-cultural school improvement context?” and subsidiary questions set the boundaries for the study by examining “How does the context influence the school improvement work of education advisors?” and “How are participants’ cultural differences managed to effect school improvement?”.

Research questions that are cognisant of the philosophical framework form the basis of this research. A strong central question and subsidiary questions were developed to anchor the study and set the boundaries. Van Manen (1990) believed that the method “cannot be determined by fixed signposts. They need to be discovered or invented as a response to the question at hand” (p. 29). My choice was to develop the research using hermeneutic phenomenology to gather and analyse data to present detailed, rich information, and the method selected suited the qualitative nature and purpose of this study.

#### **4.9.2 Investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualise it**

Having oriented myself with strong research questions, I sought to investigate the experiences of education advisors tasked with leading professional learning in a cross-cultural school improvement context in Abu Dhabi. With support from my supervisors and through my own study, my ideas began to distil and I was able to clearly articulate the phenomenon I wanted to study. Using my personal experience as a starting point, I focused my thoughts on the day-to-day work experiences, successes, challenges, complexities and difficulties that education advisors like myself faced. I especially wanted to find out how professional learning relationships were negotiated in a cross-cultural school improvement context to better understand the dynamics of the

mentoring phenomenon. By obtaining the experiential descriptions of others, I also wanted to understand education advisor experiences in order to better inform myself (van Manen, 1997).

Many qualitative researchers advocate interviewing as a key method of obtaining rich data about people's experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Kvale, 1996). An interview is a particularly special research method and epitomises a close personal experience. When collecting data during a qualitative interview, it "is literally an interview, an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest," where the researcher attempts to "understand the world from the subject's point of view, to unfold meaning of people's experiences" (Kvale, 1996, pp. 1-2). He claims that interviews are basically conversations and argues that, "The certainty of our knowledge is a matter of conversation between persons, rather than a matter of interaction with a non-human reality" (p. 37). Epistemologically then, knowledge can be socially constructed through conversation (Kvale, 1996; Silverman, 2003; Schwandt, 1994).

The belief that knowledge is socially constructed through language, consciousness and shared meanings is typified by the work of qualitative researchers who are interested in understanding meaning through dialogue whilst appreciating that knowledge is highly personal and uniquely subjective (Creswell, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Kvale, 1996). An interview is useful in supplementing and extending our knowledge about individuals' thoughts, feelings and behaviours or, to be more precise, how the participants think they think, feel and behave. In this instance, interviewing was the most suitable data collection method as it facilitated the collection of data that was specific and relevant to the research objectives.

I approached the phenomenon of education advisor experiences through semi-structured interviews as the main data collection method. Face-to-face interviews were followed up with email interviews to supplement the information. My original plan was to focus on Australasian education advisors, in the belief that a familiar social and cultural background between the participants and myself would be an advantage in the data collection and analysis phases. However, I re-evaluated this assumption and discounted the plan as I developed and refined my planning further, realising that such

a narrow sample, restricted by the nationality of the education advisors, did not lend itself to collection of data that was wide, varied or rich. I subsequently extended an invitation to all Western expatriates who worked as education advisors in the PPP to participate in the research study to allow for a more extensive and possibly, richer quality of data collection.

As a qualitative research method, interviews present an opportunity for a fundamental interaction between researchers and participants that can produce thick and deep information if the research question is answered appropriately by participants who have experienced the phenomenon being researched (Burns, 2000; Byrne, 2001; Cohen et al. 2000; Tansey, 2007). As a research tool, the interview offered me a direct and personal approach to gain information from participants. Since my experiences as an education advisor were similar to those of the participants I interviewed, I had a relatable and subjective context against which to conduct the gathering, analysis and interpretation of data.

My connection to the participants enabled me to collect information through interviews that explained their perspectives on working in a cross-cultural school improvement context and to capture those realities in an authentic way. It allowed me to move between the stages as I contemplated aspects of the data. As a researcher, I felt the need to be flexible in my thinking and adaptable in the employment of different approaches to analyse data in order to offer new insights and perspectives. This approach highlighted that there is no one size that fits all phenomena and keeping an open mind was crucial in the phenomenological process.

#### **4.9.3 Reflecting on the essential themes which characterise the phenomenon**

Phenomenology is a framework for understanding experience and closing in on the essential meaning of something (van Manen, 1997). Phenomenological reflection enables a fresh view and perspective of individual experiences because people's experiences matter as a way of developing knowledge, understanding and wisdom. However, according to van Manen (1997) there is a difference between pre-reflected lived understanding of meaning and a reflective understanding of lived meaning which involves pursuing the essence of a phenomenon through reflection, analysis, clarification and explication of the structural and thematic meanings of that lived

experience.

Phenomenological reflection further highlights that lived experiences can never be captured in a single idea or thought because lived experiences are multi-faceted, multi-dimensional and multi-layered (van Manen, 1997). Therefore, the description of phenomenological reflections is embedded and described in text through writing. The lived experiences in this study were analysed as phenomenological reflections through the description of themes and the aim was to characterise and exemplify the lived experiences of the participants, using their own words and thoughts.

I initially felt overwhelmed by the number of themes that emerged at the start of the data analysis, and it was a challenge to organise the volume of data efficiently and represent ideas succinctly. The vast amount of data in a qualitative investigation that came from lengthy interview transcriptions offered rich detail and several new ideas, thoughts and meanings, and after trialling and assessing different methods to systematically organise, store and access information, I decided to use Microsoft OneNote to keep all data in one file. The ease of this programme allowed me to clearly separate data into different folders and sub-folders according to potential themes, ideas, reflections and possibilities. Using this system, I was able to work more efficiently and with some degree of creativity moving data under various headings and sub-headings to make sense and meaning of my thinking. I eventually settled on a representation of the data analysis that I believe best represents this research study.

In phenomenological research the notion of theme “gives control and order to our research and writing” (van Manen, 1997, p. 79). A theme can be contextualised as a way to capture the phenomenon under investigation for understanding by describing an aspect of lived experience. Themes emerge from a need to make sense of things through insight, discovery and disclosure. Themes then are a way to arrive at a thought, meaning or idea to develop an understanding of a lived experience, although no theme can fully and completely express the complete meaning of an experience (van Manen, p. 88). It is important to keep in mind that it is the interpretation of the lived meaning that provides the insight and value in a research study.

Van Manen (1997) writes that, “a true reflection on lived experience is a thoughtful,

reflective grasping of what it is that renders this or that particular experience its special significance” (p. 32). In this interpretive research, I chose significant experiences described by participants and sought to understand their perspectives of it. It was important to understand the meaning of the experience for each person and how they were impacted by it. However, hermeneutics shows that understanding is interpretive and subject to the socio-cultural-historical horizon of the interpreter’s unique placement. Being open to personal bias and acknowledging pre-understandings allows for the consideration of different ways of thinking and alternative ways of understanding, seeking to make connections between the parts and the whole of the hermeneutic circle. Although I was conscious that the insights of the participants allowed me to be familiar with their personal experiences as education advisors, I was careful not to deliberately seek ideas that were congruent with or reflective of my own thinking. Engaging in this type of meaning-making highlighted a double interpretation of the experience by both the researcher and participant, making it a double hermeneutic.

By adapting van Manen’s (1990) research approach for my study I was able to think about how to choreograph my position in order to best present the nature of the lived experience under investigation. Van Manen (1997) highlights four phenomenological aspects that are lifeworld existential themes that serve as guides for reflection in the research process, irrespective of one’s historical, social and cultural context (van Manen, 1997). These “can be differentiated but not separated. They all form an intricate unity which we call the lifeworld – our lived world (van Manen, p. 105). These four existential themes are lived space (spatiality), lived body (corporeality), lived time (temporality) and lived human relations (relationality or communality).

Lived space, lived body, lived time and lived human relations all allow us to give particular experiences meaning (van Manen, 1997, p. 103). Therefore, lived space indicates that “the space in which we find ourselves affects the way we feel...we become the space we are in” (van Manen, 1997, p. 102), while lived body suggests how we engage with others through our bodies in a physical sense. Lived time refers to time as a subjective notion that may signal past, present and future dimensions of a person’s life. Lastly, lived human relations are explained by the relationships we share with others. All humans experience the world through these existentials, though not

necessarily in the same way.

I came to the realisation that there are several layers to how meaning could be constructed from the data through my phenomenological reflections. To determine what the most important themes were, I first organised participants' data into broad or major themes based on the meaning of the text, categorising information after holistic readings. In many cases I pondered the fact that some ideas and details could fit across many categories and I grappled with the best possible explanation, category, and what the participant was really trying to communicate. Van Manen (1984, 1997) suggested three approaches to conducting thematic analysis. Firstly, by looking at the whole text, I was able to uncover thematic aspects of the phenomenon by using a holistic or sententious approach. This required several readings as I tried to make sense of large chunks of information and find key ideas that were disclosing some sort of meaning.

Then, using that information, my aim was to capture and express the meaning and significance of the text through an important phrase as a second approach. Using selective reading, whereby I listened to audio transcripts and read the texts frequently to identify essential ideas, statements and phrases, I learnt to recognise an experience or phenomenon being described by a participant and then select appropriate text and sentences transcribed verbatim from interviews that reflected themes that I felt had descriptions that were common and cohesive.

The third approach involved detailed reading or line-by-line analysis where every sentence was scrutinised to discover the experience or phenomenon being described. On closer, more selective readings, and detailed line-by-line analysis, I was able to distinguish many other offshoots from the major themes that required sub-categories of their own. It often took several readings over some time to discern the meanings of the text and how best to categorise the information. This process led to many thought-provoking and stimulating moments considering and determining what to accept and reject. Van Manen (1990) believed that, "the purpose of phenomenological reflection is to try to grasp the essential meaning of something" (p. 77), implying that the process of identifying themes was not always explicit. He understood that, "[G]rasping and formulating a thematic understanding is not a rule-bound process but a free act of 'seeing' meaning" (1990, p. 79). As a reflexive method, phenomenology appraises

what people think and configures this analysis as data. While the method may not be precise, it is through the identification of themes that phenomena are revealed. The product of a phenomenological inquiry is therefore a description of the essence of the phenomenon, so that the experience of particular phenomena has a powerful impact on the reader.

Phenomenological themes are representative of participants' lived experiences as they have expressed them. These texts encapsulate the object of the study and are used to uncover the meaning of the phenomena (van Manen, 1990). In this study, the analysis of the data used a hermeneutic phenomenological approach in which themes related to three main categories were identified. I engaged in a systematic analysis process (see Appendices H, I, J, K and L) to clearly indicate the themes that surfaced from the data analysis process and the resulting discussion of the themes. I scrutinised each individual transcript and studied for consensus, concurrence and convergence in the information (see Appendix H, I and J). Then I analysed for divergence, conflict and difference across the data. This process allowed me to understand and situate the participants in the context of their experiences and to consider how people are impacted by socio- cultural dimensions.

The analysis of the data was a long and demanding task and I found that I used different approaches and, sometimes, all three approaches to search for thematic details that were, in some instances, difficult to discern and hard to fathom because thematic ideas can be both obvious and obscure. This emphasised the difficulty of interpretation and analysis of data from a phenomenological perspective; however, the thematic statements that emerged as part of a reflexive and analytical method allude to aspects of the phenomenon and are narrative explanations used to structure the presentation of the research (van Manen, 1997).

#### **4.9.4 Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and re-writing**

For van Manen (1997), writing is essential to method in phenomenology, and he emphasises that, "The object of human science research is essentially a linguistic project: to make some aspect of our lived world, of our lived experience, reflectively understandable and intelligible" (pp. 125-126). Written phenomenological descriptions enable a reader to access the subjectivity of rich human experiences,

inviting them to participate in heuristic questioning, deep interpretation, reflective thinking and evocative awakening (van Manen, 1997). Language, both written and spoken, is essential for communication and impacts the daily life of all people. Through conversation and dialogue, we negotiate understanding to the point where the things themselves are revealed. Writing, as an extension of language, and by its very nature, has the ability to capture the true essence of something and give it meaning and interpretation. Van Manen (1990) says that, “lived experience is soaked through with language” (p. 38). Language, then, is the way through which experiences are theorised through conversation, reading and writing (van Manen, 1997).

The concept of language is essential to phenomenology and critical in hermeneutic phenomenological studies, and plays a major role in allowing things to speak for themselves and what they mean in the world. Heidegger makes the point that language is an integral part of how humans construct and understand our world as relational beings by enabling people to express themselves through words, gestures and tone to portray feelings, emotions and thoughts. When we converse with each other, we make meaning in ways that reflect our own beliefs and thinking. We also invite and encourage a multiplicity of diverse perspectives when we engage with others through language that enables us to understand things in new ways that can shape how we think, behave and engage with others. Language is therefore able to influence who we are, how we act, how we connect with others and how we construct the world. To understand others, it is imperative that we are able to understand ourselves first and then, ourselves in relation with others. The way we use language suggests a compatibility with the notion of developing a common and shared understanding for collaboration. Language is, therefore, not only a tool but also a skill.

When language is used to describe lived experiences, communicating such an experience requires that the person telling the story must step back from the experience to explain and express it. The experience of using language to write this thesis is an example of telling stories as others have communicated them and as I understand it. In this instance, the use of language for this study, particularly writing, has required many drafts to clearly and accurately articulate, explain and describe the lived experiences of the participants. The writing of the text was often reviewed to discern whether the experiences, descriptions and reflections of the participants triggered moments of

recognition and understanding as the evidence echoed the lived experiences of education advisors. As I reflect on the interviewing process, involving both speaking and listening, I am still able to recall key moments of how participants behaved during the interview, whether they paused, laughed or deliberated before answering or explaining a certain idea or thought. Body language in face-to-face interviews added a new dimension, and more, to the whole experience.

Although this was not a feature of email interviews, where language and text do not always necessarily convey the true meaning and intent behind words, I found that in some cases language can serve a different purpose when lived experiences are recounted on reflection because of the act of writing. The process of writing and re-writing is a reiterative act that allows for deep and deeper reflection. While writing does help to make sense of experiences and facilitates clearer understanding, the challenge of interpretive writing involves not only competent writing skills but substantial critical and creative ability. Phenomenological writing evokes thoughtfulness and demands deep thinking as it describes, explains and questions notions of lived experience beyond anything a normal dialogic conversation could induce (van Manen, 1997, 2002). There is an ebb and flow to writing that implies an intense yet enduring element that made the action of writing and rewriting exhausting and time-consuming as I used language to define and re-define my thoughts, make them clearly understood, easily interpreted and more meaningful, not only for myself but also for the reader. It has all been entirely fulfilling and ultimately worthwhile.

Van Manen (1997) explains that, “Writing fixes thought on paper. It externalises what is, in some sense, internal; it distances us from our immediate lived involvements with the things of our world, our objectified thinking now stares back at us” (p. 125), therefore the method of phenomenological research. With my own work, I strove for crafted, well-articulated writing that was able to convey clear meaning with strong writing to make a credible contribution through this research. Keeping in mind van Manen’s (1997) statement, “To write is to measure the depth of things, as well as to come to a sense of one’s own depth” (p. 127), I felt the pressure to produce writing that was simultaneously thoughtful in interpretation and creative in presentation and which is adequately representative of my ability. I have aspired to simple, not simplistic, writing.

#### **4.9.5 Maintaining a strong and oriented relation to the phenomenon**

Phenomenological research is challenging and difficult, so it becomes important for a researcher to be committed to the pursuit of the phenomenon and revealing its essence (van Manen, 1997). In my analysis and interpretation of the participants' stories, I was conscious that I needed to return to the phenomenon under investigation with the aim of revealing its essential nature (van Manen, 1990). I had to maintain a strong focus on enquiring into the nature and meaning of being an education advisor working in a cross-cultural school improvement context and uncovering how this phenomenon exposed itself as a researcher with the aim of being "oriented to the world in a pedagogic way" and to "always wonder whether we did it right" (van Manen, 1997, pp. 149-151) so that I acted in ways that improved myself, my practice, and my research in order to learn from the process and experience.

To do this, I stayed focused on the research questions, always referring to the subsequent interview data that was generated, the narratives of the participants and the email interviews that were willingly gifted to me. I was therefore sensitive to this information and maintained a searching orientation to the research questions. I was also committed to hold steady to the phenomenon under investigation, without surrendering to unimportant notions and inaccuracies (van Manen, 1997), so that the experiences shared with me would connect to a reader in a relevant and legitimate way through this research.

When we orient ourselves to the phenomenon, there is a need for text to be rich and deep (van Manen, 1997). In shaping this phenomenological research, I have tried to orient to the depth of the phenomenon by using rich descriptions, anecdotes and narratives that engage, involve and invite response from the reader to the study. This has not always been easy with the vast array of data generated and available to me, but I felt that I was in a privileged position to have such good quality information to be able to carefully and thoughtfully select a variety of narratives that respond to the research questions. This has therefore been a uniquely personal investigation in a study that has absorbed me in the learning and understanding that has emerged from the research, writing and theorising.

#### **4.9.6 Balancing the research context by considering the parts and the whole**

This study required significant planning in the beginning stages to determine the direction and scope of the project, researching and reading appropriate methodologies, research techniques, procedures and literature. With the support of my supervisors I was able to consider the challenges of ethics and work out the effects on the people with whom I would engage as participants, how I would approach sensitive issues, how I would enable them to speak as openly as possible through my questioning and how I could use their generous involvement and sharing of their personal and professional stories in ways that could benefit our learning and profession.

The impact of this research on the staff, in particular, the teachers that education advisors worked with in school improvement contexts and how they would be implicated in the study was a major consideration and concern in my mind. My other concern was for the regard and reputation of the PPP companies, education advisors and ADEC itself, depending on the research's findings. My last concern was for my own welfare; the outcome of the research could have potentially negative effects on my personal and professional life. Ultimately, however, I have found that immersing myself in phenomenological research has added more than it has taken away, and this project has been a deep and fulfilling learning experience.

While a key component of this study was to explore and reveal participants' experiences of a phenomenon that describes a universal understanding in relation to the research question, reality changes with the explanation of different people's perceptions and viewpoints, including that of the researcher, making the search for an essence a dynamic and evolving phenomenological notion. Merleau-Ponty (1962) suggests that turning to the phenomena of lived experience means "re-learning to look at the world by re-awakening the basic experience of the world" (p. viii). I would also add that turning to the phenomena of lived experience also allows re-consideration of thoughts, beliefs, ideas and understanding that we may take for granted. Sanders (1982) states that this "does not present a new view but a new way of viewing" (p. 359). I accepted that being open to others' perspectives is a part of the philosophy of phenomenology and this enabled a deeper understanding of what I thought, felt and believed. I was able to connect with the participants and the realities of working and living in a foreign context, to empathise with both the problems and joys of the work

and to comprehend their fears and understand their frustrations. It was also an opportunity to appreciate their hope in trying to shape a nation's future through their work as education advisors leading professional learning in a school improvement context.

Our involvement in the world is intimately connected and meaningfully shaped by our relationships with other people, culture, heritage and history, and all of this precedes our understanding or explanation of that involvement. By gaining an understanding of the lived experiences of my colleagues, I was able to make better sense of my own perceptions and the reality of my experiences. However, according to the concept of phenomenology, a researcher must be carefully positioned to keep balance within the research context as the sum of the parts and the whole of the text is considered. Phenomenological writing includes many unique pieces of text which all add richness and validity to the overall picture. This particularly applies to the development and reflection of themes and ensuring that each experience adds rather than subtracts from the overall picture of what it means to be an education advisor leading professional learning in a cross-cultural school improvement environment. I developed several strands, fine-tuned structures and checked for smooth, logical and coherent connections between concepts and ideas. Reflecting on the research questions I felt that this scrutiny was essential to ensure that there was a healthy balance between the parts and the whole so that the sum of the parts equalled the whole. Thus, the findings from this phenomenological study ultimately reflected the sum of the ideas, thoughts and words used by the different individuals who participated in this study to describe their experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

This research has offered me an opportunity to reflect on and question my own relationships with this type of work, as an education advisor and an academic, and how I might possibly nurture innovative ways of teaching, learning and sharing with my colleagues and students within the context of any country I may happen to live and work in. My fundamental comprehension of the philosophical principles of phenomenology and its application have enabled me to think about the meanings of my and my colleagues lived experiences in the "fulfilment of our human nature" with the hope of becoming "more fully who we are" (van Manen, 1990, p. 12).

The next section explicates key aspects of the analysis and interpretation process that I engaged in as a phenomenological researcher to understand and reveal the meaning of being an education advisor in a cross-cultural school improvement context with a view to developing a deeper understanding of this phenomenon.

#### **4.10 Thilo's way: Analysing and interpreting lived experience**

This hermeneutic phenomenological study explores the phenomenon of education advisors' experiences of mentoring in the cross-cultural school improvement context of Abu Dhabi, UAE with the aim of uncovering the essential meanings of the phenomena and to understand them better (Giles, 2008). In this part, I explicate key aspects of the data analysis process I engaged in, in order to interpret the lived experiences of education advisors and uncover the meaning of being and understand the essence of being-in-the-world as mentors in a cross-cultural school improvement context more deeply. As a qualitative study adopting a phenomenological approach, I conducted face-to-face semi-structured and structured email interviews with twenty-five education advisors working in local public schools who had had at least six months of experience of working within the PPP.

The nature of qualitative data allows for the categorisation of information in order to allow coherent understanding of the information gleaned from participants. The analysed data in this study is presented as an organised thematic collection of lived experiences through individual stories of education advisors and researcher interpretations of these in relation to themes and subthemes. Hermeneutic phenomenology enables a summarisation of experiences while identifying and interpreting the essence of those experiences to provide a stronger and fuller account of the context and representation of the situation to provide a complete phenomenological study, in this case, those of education advisors as mentors in a cross-cultural school improvement context (Bryman, 2008; Creswell, 2009).

There was an intricate process of unravelling such a large body of rich data to make meaning and interpret the essence of the phenomena that emerged from this study. This process is not one that can always be easily or systematically explained so although I have tried to represent this as a stepped reflection of how I engaged with the data, the process that took place was in itself organic; it may also be described as

disorderly and untidy. I was particularly guided by the writing of van Manen (1997; 2014) to seek what is hidden in the assumptions of what we take for granted as human knowledge (Sohn, 2017) to ensure that I stayed true to the work of a phenomenologist and I believe that this process is inherently true to the work of a phenomenologist who is engrossed in the process of exposing unique insights and addressing the complexities of epistemology and ontology. This is my experience of this process and the work presented in this thesis is the accumulation of several years of thinking and reflection.

Following interviews with participants, a significant amount of time was spent transcribing the data and ensuring its accuracy. This involved reading the transcripts several times while listening to the audio-recordings, both of which allowed me to familiarise myself with the participants' stories more intimately. Engaged in this hermeneutic circle of going between parts of individual text/s, and the whole text/s, and considering all of the texts individually and collectively several times, I was able to secure a sense of the stories as well as the people behind them. This allowed me to reflect on the lived experiences shared with me as part of the investigative process into the nature of the phenomenon (van Manen, 2007). I found that hermeneutic circling was a fundamental way of engaging with the texts, and the return to texts several times over to further seek, clarify and understand was a significant in this data analysis process.

This circling was especially important for me with my own first-hand experiences of the phenomenon being studied as memories of my own experiences were often brought back to life. It meant that alongside the participants' experiences, I was developing a deeper understanding of my own experiences. As part of this understanding, the "fusion of horizons" (Gadamer, 1975; Giles, 2008; Laverty, 2008) offered the possibility to ontologic significance. The process unfolded as I thought and deliberated about developing a logical and feasible way to present what already existed in the data as interpretations that are evocative descriptions of education advisor experiences so that their stories, actions, behaviours and intentions are experiences that are familiar and comparable to the reader as human experiences (van Manen, 1997).

Disappointingly, but not unrealistically, I was not able to immediately elucidate how

I should 'break things down' to generate meaning and gain understanding. But what this circular process did for my own understanding as a researcher was to compel me to acknowledge that I didn't know for sure how best to proceed in a phenomenological way. I was, in turn, forced to think about new ways of confronting the data, realising that I could not progress the research if the data was not more thoroughly organised. My approach needed to be more systematic within a phenomenological approach. Although hermeneutic phenomenology "is a methodological approach not bound by structured stages of a method; it is how one attunes, questions, and thinks in and through evolving methods" (Crowther, Ironside, Spence, and Smythe, 2016, p. 2), I sensed that in order to be creative with my approach to analysis, I needed to first create order and construct a semblance of structure of the data in front of me.

Using van Manen's (1984, 1997) three approaches to conducting thematic analysis, I began by uncovering thematic aspects of the phenomenon by using a holistic or sententious approach by looking and listening to whole texts again. This required several readings as I tried to make sense of large chunks of information and find key ideas that revealed some sort of meaning. It also allowed me to recall aspects of the interviews where I was able to think about interviewees voices, expressions, reflections and immerse myself into their experiences, while also re-living my own experiences and understanding of the issues they raised and discussed. I decided to shape four broad categories in which to group participants' stories. I intuited that, as a starting point, these four categories could sufficiently encapsulate the education advisor experience because the categories were broad enough to allow easy classifying of information as a first step. The four categories I designated were 1. Personal Successes; 2. Personal Challenges; 3. Professional Successes; and 4. Professional Challenges.

After considering the holistic view of each transcript, I began to highlight key phrases and statements of interest that I felt alluded to a thematic idea. I extracted those ideas that I felt had substance and were worthy of consideration within the context of a big idea (van Manen, 1997) and applied it to one or more of the categories, according to my own interpretation and hermeneutic circling (Smith et al 2009; van Manen 1997). I began organising data using Word and switched to OneNote to arrange and store data as it allowed me more flexibility as I tinkered with different ways of sorting and storing

the information in sensible and accessible ways. I was able to easily sort and move information according to these categories once they were established and group ideas accordingly. However, once completing this I realised quite quickly that these four categories were insufficient for the task of detailed analysis although it offered a good measure for grouping as a starting point. The main sticking issue was that the quantity of information within each category was still substantially weighty, making it unwieldy for the purpose of interpretation because the extent of information obstructed a detailed depth of analysis and interpretation. With that much information, it was difficult to fine-tune and distil within such open categories.

Thematic analysis is therefore not simply a matter of coding mechanically but the development of themes with a nuanced focus on meaning and intent; participants' narratives personify profound themes (van Manen, 1990, 2002). Finding that the broad categorisation of main ideas was inadequate for the task of revealing the hidden meanings of the experiences of education advisors in this culture and context, I decided to try a different approach to formulating an analysis and interpretation of the data. Based on van Manen's (1997) approach again, my next step was to use selective reading, listening to audio transcripts over again, and reading parts of the texts to identify essential ideas, statements and phrases. I looked across different texts to first find similar thematic stories from participants and grouped these together. As I grew more confident in my ability to recognise meaningful experiences from participants' descriptions, I was able to discern phenomena that reflected common and cohesive themes. I then selected the appropriate text and sentences verbatim from interviews, and arranged them under a single file. I then carefully sought out stories that challenged or opposed what was being said through those narratives and these were marked accordingly, but put in the same thematic group. This process was useful as I refined the information and crafted subcategories. I also gave each subcategory a name by using a descriptive phrase, sometimes taken from a phrase or expression used by the participants as they told their stories (See Appendix H).

While this technique worked to separate and cluster ideas on one level, I again realised that a depth of thought was lacking as I reflected on the information I had collated. The emerging themes from across the stories were similar but not the same, which was acceptable, but the issue was that the finer issues in such a complex context often

overlapped, and differentiating between them required a far more sophisticated and nuanced approach. Furthermore, as I kept working with the stories I continued to think about other angles and possibilities of how the stories could be interpreted or seen from other viewpoints. This made the analysis as I envisaged it incomplete and therefore weak in my eyes. The process of reading, writing and thinking became an ongoing endeavour to distil ideas and clarify for meaning as I strove to reach a point that I was happy with the analysis. I was also determined to present the findings in a way that was both easily accessible and relevant to my readers, so thinking about the structure and format of this analysis was another major consideration for me as part of the thesis.

While the thematic ideas began to take develop organically, the shape of the information appeared more cohesive. However, it was at this point that I registered that my analysis needed to be accountable in an evidenced way. To do this, I reviewed different parts of the multi-layered and complex material to tease out and separate aspects that overlapped and crossed over. I then listed each aspect using a Word document first, and an Excel spreadsheet next. At this stage I had accumulated 35 different subcategories. As I developed the spreadsheet, I went through every transcript again, making a note each time the aspect in question was mentioned. I did this to gain the frequency of the issue being raised across participants. However, this did not establish the refined representation of the data I was after because the ontologic nature of the phenomenon is determined by the way it is presented and perceived, often found in between the lines of a life experience.

What I actually needed to do I realised, and ended up doing, was developing a new spreadsheet that recorded not just when the issue was discussed in terms of frequency, but whether participants represented the issue positively or not. In the new spreadsheet (See Appendix I), I aimed to mark the subcategory twice, once with a positive + sign and once with a negative – sign depending on the nature of the comments made by participants. Then, working through each transcript again, I carefully recorded how many times the issue was either positively or negatively positioned by the participant. By the end of this process, the number of subcategories increased from 35 to 61, which was almost twice as many than I had previously formulated. This time I was being more methodical about looking at the finer details and this accounted for the increase of additional subcategories. Working with that many subcategories became tricky so I

resorted to working by writing on paper (as opposed to a computer programme). This allowed me to physically grapple with the data. Then I transferred the information into the Excel spreadsheet which then made it really easy to develop graphs that showed frequency of ideas and associated information. The organisation and sorting of the information this way allowed me to identify at a glance those aspects that were dominant in the minds and stories of participants. This enabled me to cross-check against the themes I had previously elicited to ensure that I was on the right track with my data analysis (See Appendix J).

As I grappled with making sense of the data, I looked to Nvivo software to see if this would help me in my analysis and interpretation. I spent some time inserting and coding data, however, I was not able to harness the full power of the software to generate outputs or overviews that could have been potentially useful as part of the data analysis. While there was the potential to save time with the analysis, I found that I had more questions on how to use the programme effectively to the extent that it distracted me from the more important task of coding and interpretation of the material. This is most probably due to my lack of experience and expertise with using the programme. Furthermore, I may not have set up the coding accurately or appropriately so despite the time spent on this activity, there was no point in pursuing this effort because the way forward was unclear. I found that the computer programme was not offering me a new way of thinking about the data, just a new way of organizing it.

A Heideggerian perspective suggests that there is always a multiplicity of meanings (Munhall, 1989; Smythe et al.; 2008) so I felt a strong need to look deeper within the stories and further refine the data I had selected. I distinguished three separate major themes related to person, culture and context which allowed me to specifically focus on broad categories while using subthemes that drilled deeper into these aspects. I isolated narratives that suitably represented these thematic ideas, aiming to represent different versions under the subthemes where possible, but staying true to the main theme overall. This allowed me to represent complex data interpreted from an abundant source of information but I felt that it was an effective way to keep ideas around each theme cohesive and related (See Appendix K). The following major themes were eventually identified:

1. Theme 1: Developing interpersonal relationships
2. Theme 2: Responding to context
3. Theme 3: Building cultural connections

Within each of these themes, I further identified three subthemes related to each theme but which showed differentiation within the big idea. I extracted narratives from the transcripts as ‘hermeneutic reductions’ to best capture the themes and subthemes as findings. In doing this, I wanted to present phenomenological themes relating to participants that showed how individuals experienced the phenomena as Dasein, and to situate the essence of their experiences within the whole context of multi-layered relationships. The format I decided on after much deliberation is represented in Appendix A and shows the structure of each chapter and the three parts, each of which is reflected by two narratives.

One problem I had was working out how to give a balanced view that showed different aspects of the themes and subthemes so that both positive and challenging aspects were appropriately represented. To facilitate this, I reassessed each subtheme to ensure that it was appropriate to the theme, i.e. person, culture and context. Then, within each theme, I further categorised the subthemes. For example, under Theme 2 that relates to context, I chose to discuss personal contexts, the school context and organisational contexts all as separate subthemes in the final result. I represented each subtheme with two narratives that highlighted the ideas I was trying to convey. Selecting the narratives was a complex exercise as there were many stories to choose from. I painstakingly analysed the connections within and across the themes and subthemes by closely inspecting the nature of the relationships. I was careful to select narratives that were also engaging for the reader. After narratives were selected, the stories were crafted from the transcriptions - see Appendix G as an example.

Not completely satisfied that the findings were sufficiently represented through Chapters 5, 6 and 7, I was determined to produce a graphic that connected the findings in a simple yet sophisticated way. I felt that it was important to present the findings in a clear and concise way that would resonate with any reader. I drew many mind-maps and diagrams trying to show the connections and make links across the data set. A significant part of this process was formulating the descriptors of each subtheme using

phenomenological notions. This was harder than I first imagined. Again, after many iterations (See Appendix L) occurring right up until the submission of this thesis, I endeavoured to find the best design and descriptions of the findings. Phenomenologically, I wrote to understand (van Manen, 1990) whilst being open to new ways of understanding the phenomena but I found that sketching the different versions of the conceptual framework also distilled my thoughts and ideas to give clarity and precision to what I felt articulated the essence of the phenomena. I am particularly pleased with the crisp, three-word phrases that have finally emerged because they simply but powerfully express each subtheme. The final result of this thinking is represented in Figures 8.1. and 8.2. These diagrams are a visual way of deeply linking the three themes and showing how they complement each other within the context of the study through participants' narratives. Thus, the key features of participants' life stories are individually represented to offer a comprehensive picture (Creswell, 2007) of the phenomenon of cross-cultural mentoring in this context.

Keeping the research questions at the forefront of my mind has always been an important part of this process but the other significant phase of data analysis has required a close study of the findings to consider the implications and potential recommendations for further study. This is found in Chapter 8. As I have unpacked the ontological meaning of education advisor experiences, there is a sense that the phenomena that are evident will influence my own practice in future. Thus, my immersion in the data analysis has been a significant search for ontological meaning. The final structure that emerged is one that is satisfying because it showcases the complexity of this research context and exposes the level of difficulty required to meaningfully analyse the data set given the breadth of information available. Making sense of it all was a challenging yet gratifying exercise.

In this thesis, I have used three aspects to weave a design of connection and connectedness. I began with articulating a personal understanding of who I am as I conducted this research, living in a foreign context as an outsider. I extrapolated ideas from the philosophy of phenomenology and used concepts that are central to human existence, viz. Dasein, and the lived experiences of the participants to draw conclusions about how a constructivist theory of knowledge emerges. I then used these concepts to apply them against the findings to make meaning. I believe that this

documenting of human experience is in line with van Manen's (1990, 1997) philosophies of thinking, doing and being. As I practice hermeneutic phenomenology, I am reminded of the inherent humanity of all those who are involved in communicating the stories of life for this study, and my own need to reflect, be open and accepting to others ways of being, thinking and doing (Giles, 2007; Spence, 2016) so that we use those experiences to imagine and empathise with the experiences of others, even if we have not shared or experienced them for ourselves, so that we can understand and learn as we think and envision how things must be for others in different situations.

## **4.11 Ethical considerations**

Research contributes to a shared vision for humankind that all people can be freely educated to move away from borders that constrain us. The dissemination of knowledge generated by ethical research has the power to positively influence, improve and empower the lives of all people. As individuals depending on the resources and capabilities of each other, the issue of respect and trust lies at the core of all that we do, say and practice. This section of the chapter explains the ethical considerations of this research.

### **4.11.1 Sampling considerations and participant selection**

The participants targeted in Abu Dhabi public schools form a highly specific and specialised group of professionals. I felt that a diverse group of education advisors who could add to the rich quality of data that their multiple realities could uncover to complement phenomenological principles. Convenience sampling, as a form of non-probability sampling, enabled me to access participants who agreed to participate and were willing to respond easily (Creswell, 2009). Creswell (2009) describes non-probability sampling as "a sample that has not been selected using a random sampling method" (p. 541), implying that some participants are more likely to be selected than others. Non-probability sampling can be feasible and more informative in small-scale qualitative research (Wellington, 2000). Participant selection for this study was therefore completed using a non-probability, convenience sampling method because information regarding the number of education advisors working for the various private companies in local Abu Dhabi schools is kept closed and confidential and it was difficult to gain access. Another factor that impacted the selection of participants

was the limited time and resources available to complete this study, particularly as potential participants' employment contracts were generally short-term and the education advisor population tended to be transient.

Convenience sampling enabled me to secure a suitable sample of a broad cross-section of education advisors residing in the UAE for interviewing. As a result, all Western-trained teachers employed by the PPP as education advisors and working within the PPP project for a minimum of six months were considered to be appropriate participants and were invited to participate in the study. The proviso that education advisors had to have had six months of work experience provided some assurance that the participant had first-hand knowledge of the nature of the work within this context and culture that could be discussed and reviewed during interviews to provide access to deep and meaningful descriptions.

#### **4.11.2 Gaining access**

Eight PPP operators employed education advisors across Abu Dhabi at the time of researching. Prior to enlisting participants, the directors of the two largest PPP companies were emailed details of the research in order to request permission for access and to be informed of the nature of the project as part of seeking permission to carry out research with their employees. Permission was granted by one of the two operators and I was able to access education advisors who were employed by this company by emailing potential participants with letters of invitation that outlined details of the project. The emailed letter (see Appendix No. D) included the following information:

1. brief background information about myself, the researcher;
2. the purpose of the research; and
3. the key ethical issues pertaining to the research.

The email outlined the nature of the research and topic, aspects of confidentiality if one wished to participate, and the right to withdraw from the research process. Prospective participants were advised that their involvement was completely optional and voluntary. All participants had the choice to withdraw at any stage up until one week after the accuracy of their final transcript was confirmed and once the analytical process had begun, without supplying a reason, if they so wished. An intent to withdraw within the accepted time-frame would need to be

advised in writing, via email or letter.

#### **4.11.3 Informed consent**

Willing participants responded to the initial email and the study attracted a wide diversity of male and female education advisors who were representative of different curriculum areas, working in different schools and across different age groups within schools. At the first invitation, ten education advisors agreed to face-to-face interviews. These interviews continued until the topic was exhausted and no new perspectives of the topic were introduced. A sample interview schedule is provided in the appendix (see Appendix F).

Once the participant list was finalised, each participant was given additional information pertaining to the research so that they could better understand the process before participating. As far as possible, this information enabled participants to be fully aware of the nature of their involvement and the possible implications of being involved in such research. Informed and voluntary consent allowed the participants to be fully informed of the research study and what it entailed. Emails were sent to all participants encouraging them to make enquiries about any concerns or issues they had regarding the study. Participant rights were also emphasised. I received some queries that gave me new insight into some issues and concerns that I had not considered. I responded to queries and questions about the research on an individual basis so that participants were at ease and satisfied that they could make informed choices about their input.

The second invitation to respond to questions via email registered responses from fifteen participants. Email interviews were initiated only after face-to-face interviews were completed and questions were emailed to all education advisors employed. The fifteen participants communicated their experiences via email by answering a selection of interview questions. Altogether twenty-five education advisors participated in the research; Boyd (2001) and Creswell (1998) both consider that up to ten research participants is sufficient to reach saturation point.

#### **4.11.4 Harm to participants**

An important consideration in conducting this research was the legal and contractual

obligations of participants who were employed by PPP companies and who were contractually bound to their employers as well as ADEC. Whilst participants were not in any personal or physical danger through their involvement in this study, their employers' permission was essential and was gained from company directors prior to the participation of the education advisors. The participants had obligations to cooperate and collaborate with all respective stakeholders involved in the public education sector, i.e. the local staff and students, the employing companies as well as governmental agencies, and being mindful and aware of this aspect was vital to minimising harm to the participant, the PPP companies, the school communities and ADEC.

Potential harmful factors were addressed at the outset of each interview in order to minimise any potential harm to all groups. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, careful recording and maintenance of information was implemented to safeguard participants and their privacy. Participants were assigned pseudonyms and identity coding was used to prevent any breach of confidentiality. In those cases where reference was made to others involved in the PPP, these details were recorded in the transcripts under pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality.

Harm may potentially be caused through the reporting and dissemination of results of research. As the researcher, I did my best to ensure that such harm was minimised or eliminated through the appropriate use and analysis of all research data and the confidentiality of records during these phases of research. Confidentiality and trust were considered and monitored at every stage in the interests of safeguarding the participants.

#### **4.11.5 Socio-cultural considerations**

The subject matter of this study has potential socio-cultural implications that may be significant. Participant input is an especially important consideration when conducting research in a foreign country. As an expatriate, education advisor and researcher I had to be highly cognisant of my role, conduct and context and I strove to be sensitive and respectful of the particular constraints of conducting research in a context of which I am not a member.

Participants' comments on aspects of education reform and school improvement changes may be problematic to some elements of UAE culture, as a result of some of the interview questions, particularly those that seek information about UAE schools and teachers that education advisors work with. In the case where negative responses emerged during the data gathering stage, considerable care was exercised and difficult issues were discussed with my supervisor, Dr. Aldridge. As a critical friend, my supervisor was able to advise on how best to proceed without causing offence to the local community, private companies, governmental departments and other stakeholders. This included advice regarding the presentation of the research findings. Any issues that needed to be addressed to ensure appropriate and respectful cultural and social protocols were discussed during the data-gathering and analytical phases. Dr. Aldridge's previous and current work in the UAE provided me with access to information in relation to sensitivities regarding the UAE social and cultural framework. Care was taken, at all stages, to avoid causing humiliation, distress or embarrassment for members of the community where research was completed, and comments and information were contextualised in a sensitive and careful manner.

#### **4.11.6 Data generation through semi-structured and email interviews**

Both face-to-face interviews and email interviews were used to collect data required for the study. I was able to ask specific questions about particular issues and clarify ideas in face-to-face situations, but this was somewhat different in the case of asking questions via email. The face-to-face interviews were an opportunity to personally interact with education advisors and grasp their perspectives on the topic by presenting a rare opportunity for education advisors to discuss their views in a personal and informal setting for the purposes of research. I felt the need to be adaptable in my approach to interviewing since the participants were from diverse backgrounds and cosmopolitan so selecting semi-structured interviews allowed for a responsive and engaging interview experience.

While the nature of an interview permits participants to share personal and sensitive information, the key to eliciting relevant data lies in the skilful ability of the interviewer to ask pertinent questions that generates high-quality data (Byrne, 2001). A major challenge in constructing interviews is the phrasing of questions to prompt more information that is required and which results in new questions being solicited from the

information offered (Mills, 2003). Participants involved in this study were provided with a schedule of open-ended interview questions to invite spontaneous and deep responses that were based on the research questions for those who chose to be interviewed face to face. For others who chose to respond via email, the questions were kept short and concise to elicit thoughtful and detailed information that centred on the most important aspects of the education advisors' role in negotiating cross-cultural professional learning relationships in the Abu Dhabi school improvement context. These questions were often answered in a succinct and to-the-point manner that provided interesting insights into education advisor roles.

One of my main tasks as the interviewer was to investigate and gain first-hand knowledge from participants through face-to-face dialogue and discussion and then try to understand the meaning of what the interviewees had shared (Kvale, 1996). The interviewees were asked to describe their lived experiences with follow-up questions asked to provide clarification and further descriptions of details. Face-to-face interviews were audiotaped and then fully transcribed, with each interview transcription coded to protect the identity of the participant.

Van Manen (1990) believes that a researcher should "search everywhere in the lifeworld for lived-experience material" (p. 53) and email interviews were a quick and effective method to collect information to deepen my understanding of the phenomena. Email interviews were more suitable for those participants who had time constraints but the lack of direct contact with respondents meant that the nuances and observations that come with personal communications in face-to-face interviews were absent. Another drawback of this technique was that some respondents found writing difficult and therefore wrote in a minimalist style, which admittedly allowed them to get to the point more directly, but which also meant that not a lot was written in terms of quantity. I also found that the act of engaging in an interview that is face to face as opposed to using a digital forum enabled a more dynamic and active conversation, where the participants tended to say what came into their minds more naturally. In the email interviews the act of writing seemed to compel a sense of reflection that constrained the spontaneity of speech for some. Others were more abundant and liberal in their responses.

After conducting ten face-to-face interviews I was able to reflect on my competency as an interviewer and as a novice researcher. As an interviewer, I was able to increase my understanding of how to develop my interview skills in order to obtain detailed information from participants. I learned that my proficiency as an interviewer was strongest when I was well prepared with a solid knowledge and understanding of the topics being discussed. The literature review was a key component in supporting my knowledge and confidence to manage this requirement. Rubin and Rubin (1995) describe these qualities as complementing a qualitative researcher's philosophy in determining what issues are important, what are ethical, and which contribute to the completeness and accuracy of the results for the purpose of a comprehensive study.

Through the piloting of my prepared research questions, I realised the need to prepare interview questions well in advance and then analyse and test them for suitability. Two colleagues aided with the tasks of piloting the questions by sitting through mock interviews for me. I initially found this difficult to do well and had to practise being an articulate interviewer. As a reflective practitioner, I deliberated long and hard on my competency as a beginner interviewer and researcher. In particular, I felt that knowing the general order of questions and keeping eye contact with the participant would highlight my interest in their responses in a genuine way and would serve to maintain the flow of speech. These experiences made me understand that the process of interviewing is far more complex than merely using a script to ask questions. Sensitivity and careful listening skills are all a necessary part of being an astute interviewer and I was forced me to consider what it means to be a good listener, especially since I found that the role of interviewer is predominantly about listening to what was being revealed and then making sense of that information, but all happening without too much thinking time or time available to respond meticulously. Thus, the deliberate and intent listening skills that were involved as part of the interview process required me as interviewer to be able to quickly assimilate the information relayed by an interviewee in order to ask exploratory follow-up questions.

Once I began the interviewing process with participants, I quickly realised that my training and experience of interviewing came from the actual "doing" of the interview and this allowed me to immerse myself more confidently in the process. Each new interview was another chance to develop my technique and skill. I also became aware,

for example, that steady eye contact was an important and necessary part of maintaining a connection to the interviewee that encouraged them to keep talking. This meant that as an interviewer, I needed to know the order and logic of questions fairly well without having to glance at my notes too often. Guba and Lincoln (1981) say that the interviewer is the instrument and can be affected by factors such as fatigue, personality and knowledge, as well as levels of skill, training and experience. A competent interviewer needs to be well trained and skilful to respond to any eventuality that may arise during an interview. I found that as I did more interviewing, I became more relaxed in the role, making it an overall pleasing experience to be engaging with interesting participants willing to share their life-world experiences with me.

#### **4.11.7 Participants' validation**

Phenomenological research is valid by its very nature because it deals with the interpretation and understanding of individually unique experiences of phenomena where the aim is to identify the true essence of the lived experience. While participants may have experiences and characteristics in common, it is the recognition that all people experience things differently that gives the research validity (Banonis, 1989). Given that the nature qualitative research tends to primarily describe and explain phenomena, validity can be a complicated issue. Researchers have influence over their research (Bryman, 2016; Creswell, 2009), and the reality of conducting research means that the researcher affects and is affected by the study (Bryman, 2016; Creswell, 2009; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Wellington, 2000). In any interpretive situation, researchers should be aware that their own perceptions, as well as their personal, social, historical and cultural backgrounds may help to characterise the interpretations of the research (Creswell, 2009). Guba & Lincoln (2005) reflect that:

No one would argue that a single method – or collection of methods is the royal road to ultimate knowledge. In new paradigm inquiry, however, it is not merely method that promises to deliver on some set of local or context-grounded truths, it is also the process of interpretation. (p. 205)

A researcher's position on validity is situated as an ethical relationship according to the strength of the research's authenticity. Validity as authenticity centres on fairness,

ontology, educative, catalytic and tactical authenticities (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The idea of being a reflective researcher, i.e. one who considers their own place within the research process throughout the entire study in order to lessen their own impact on the research, constitutes an ethical attempt towards fulfilling the researcher's role and responsibility (Wellington, 2000). In studies that explore small samples of phenomena, this is particularly relevant, however, Guba & Lincoln (2005) believe that the issue of objectivity is unrealistic because "the way in which we know is most assuredly tied up with both what we know and our relationships with our research participants" (p. 209).

In this study, care was taken during the transcribing of interviews to be responsive to the linguistic differences between oral speech and written text. Participants played a key role in limiting bias by checking through their interview transcripts for accuracy and validation of their own data. The initial and final transcripts of the interviews were submitted to the participants for checking and approval. All participants were supplied with an additional copy of the final transcription for their personal reference via email. This was not necessary for interviews that were online as the text in response to the question served as a transcript of the email interview.

Conducting hermeneutic phenomenological research has the potential for bias. In this study, I critically examined my own personal bias when framing my approach to the research, and at all stages have attempted to take my positioning into account by being transparent and open about my locus, perceptions and worldview, as discussed in the early chapters of the thesis. I understand that as a human being actively engaged in the world and in relationship with others, I am inherently biased. However, my statement of my personal context as explained in Chapter 1 has allowed me to examine and investigate objectively yet sensitively.

#### **4.12 Data confidentiality, storage and management**

All ethical procedures were followed as required by Curtin University. As stipulated by the Code of Ethics of Curtin University, all information gathered was treated as confidential and all data was reported anonymously in this project. Every effort was made to ensure confidentiality of participants and while a guarantee of total anonymity is unrealistic, all participants were assured that all steps were taken to ensure their confidentiality and privacy. Pseudonyms and codes were used where required in

reports and transcriptions. In the same vein, participants were informed that the need for confidentiality required their cooperation in this mutual collaboration.

Pseudonyms and identity coding were used for all schools and private companies. Selected participants employed by the PPP across a variety of public schools within Abu Dhabi were the main data sources so their distribution throughout the region limited the risk of identification of individual participants, the PPP operator and the public schools in which they worked. Wherever information raised a risk of identification of the participants or stakeholders it was excluded. As a result, any information that divulged participants' names, addresses, schools that they worked at, PPP that they were employed by, as well as geographic and demographic identifiers remain confidential and secure.

Data collected for this study has been used for academic purposes only and any future publications that may arise from the research will continue to assure the confidentiality of participants. Apart from myself, only the supervisors of this study have had access to data. All electronic data, including transcripts, have been stored in a password-protected laptop computer. Signed consent forms, paper transcripts and audiotapes were stored in a locked cabinet.

#### **4.13 The challenge of doing hermeneutic phenomenology**

The challenge of engaging in hermeneutic phenomenology is that although it may present a façade of simplicity, it is highly sophisticated. van Manen (1990) explains that, “a real understanding of phenomenology can only be accomplished by actively doing it” (p. 8), and this type of research has permitted an opportunity to reflect on a multitude of diverse lived experiences within a unique cross-cultural school improvement context. The interpretation, explanation and theorising of rich descriptions underscores the usefulness of this type of exploratory and investigative research. There is no one clearly demarcated, preferred method of data analysis but instead the use of a variety of methods may result in a phenomenological awakening (van Manen, 2014). A researcher needs to be flexible and adaptable in their thoughts and ideas as they employ different approaches to data analysis. In some instances, the process of doing phenomenological research may appear insubstantial; but this reiterates the principle that there is no one-size-fits-all method for providing new

insights and perspectives of phenomena and lived experiences.

This requires a researcher to engage in the study, reflect thoughtfully, respond creatively and critically and report effectively and imaginatively, because being phenomenological comes through doing phenomenology. A researcher's way-of-being obliges one to be highly sensitive, observant and thoughtful, and while the approach is not formal, neither is it casual and irresponsible. I have contemplated the data mindfully and with discipline and deliberated on the texts of lived experiences without pre-supposition. I understand that a different researcher might reveal different phenomena, and acknowledge that this is typical of hermeneutical phenomenology.

#### **4.14 Summary**

This chapter explains how the research design for this study emerged through the philosophical and methodological framework to shape this qualitative research study. Phenomenology forms both the theoretical and the methodological foundation for the work with van Manen's (1997) six guidelines for hermeneutic phenomenological research selected as a systematic method to engage in the process of research. Based on this approach, I offer a detailed explanation the process of analysis that I engaged in in this study. Other ethical considerations are explained and clarified to present a coherent understanding of the research design.

The next three chapters present the findings and discussion through a selection of narratives. In Chapter 5, Theme 1: "Developing interpersonal connections" discusses how education advisors negotiate professional learning relationships as mentors in a cross-cultural school improvement context. In Chapter 6, Theme 2: "Responding to context" explains the influence of context on education advisors' work in school improvement. In Chapter 7, Theme 3: "Building cultural connections" elaborates on the effect of participants' cultural differences on school improvement. All three chapters focus on making meaning of the participants' narratives, with the aim of revealing the nature of their lived experiences as education advisors who lead professional learning through mentoring relationships in a cross-cultural school improvement context in Abu Dhabi.

# **Chapter 5**

## **Research Findings and Discussion**

### **Theme 1 - Developing interpersonal relationships**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

Chapter 5 defines Theme 1, “Developing interpersonal relationships”. Data analysis revealed that making connections and building relationships with local staff was fundamental to education advisors’ accomplishing their objective of leading professional learning in a complex cross-cultural school improvement context. Analysis showed that, although their experiences were varied, for a majority of participants developing positive relationships with mentees was a significant experience and a key aspect of leading teachers’ PL. Participants observed that the quality of the relationships they experienced as education advisors and mentors was central to achieving their purpose.

The analysis further indicated that participants set out quite consciously to develop good relationships in order to effect their professional responsibilities as education advisors, and this is evident from the narratives that follow. The ontological reality of the phenomenon of cross-cultural mentoring in a school improvement context emerged as they reflected on and described the different professional relationships that they had developed and experienced. They clearly understood that their experience of being connected through various relationships was crucial to accomplishing their purpose as education advisors and contributing to the agenda of school improvement.

This first theme, “Developing interpersonal relationships”, addresses all three research questions: “How do education advisors negotiate professional learning relationships in a cross-cultural school improvement context?”; “How does the context influence the school improvement work of education advisors?” and “How are participants’ cultural differences managed to effect school improvement?”.

This theme is organised into three parts, with each part featuring a subtheme that is further exemplified by two narratives. The narratives in each part analyse the theme,

“Developing interpersonal relationships” and the subthemes, “Forging meaningful connections”, “Networking with purpose” and “Committing to partnerships”. These excerpts demonstrate the types of interpersonal relationships that the education advisors developed with teachers. Each story recounts how education advisors built these personal connections and reflects the different ways in which we make meaning through our relationships as we cooperate, collaborate and coexist.

As researcher I had decided to use phenomenological principles to gain an in-depth philosophical understanding of the phenomenon of leading teachers’ PL through cross-cultural mentoring in a school improvement context. The phenomenological focus of *Dasein* or “Being-in-the-world” is inseparable from the notion of *Mitdasein* or “Being-with-others”, as it encapsulates a co-existence with other *Dasein* or beings. The specific relationships that exist between education advisors and local teaching staff is experienced ontologically as Heidegger’s (1927) *Mitdasein*. We make meaning of the world, our places in it and in our relationships with others in different ways based on our experiences and the ways in which we think about them. A consistent thread that emerged from the data analysis was the need to form connections and build trusting relationships.

In Part 1, the stories in “Forging meaningful connections” illustrate the ways in which professional relationships between education advisors and teachers were formed. In Part 2, the descriptions in “Networking with purpose” show different ways of establishing relationships with teachers/mentees and education advisor teams to enhance school improvement initiatives. In Part 3, the accounts in “Committing to partnerships” describe professional relationships between education advisors/mentors and teachers/mentees that had challenging, unsuccessful or problematic aspects, thus thwarting the mentoring relationship but which suggest that a committed approach to difficult mentoring relationships may still hold some promise.

## **5.2 Part 1: Forging meaningful connections**

Part 1 represents the first subtheme, “Forging meaningful connections”, and uses two narratives to illustrate the complex work of education advisors as they think, act and respond as mentors.

### **5.2.1 Mr. N: “There is no one-size-fits-all silver bullet” – Knowing the mentee**

In this extract, the participant describes the complexity of thought that absorbed him as he juggled multiple facets of school improvement work, all while attempting to bridge cultural boundaries. Mr. N explains the need to build respectful relationships as a precursor to the delivery of effective professional learning.

*Like in any classroom, the teacher needs to know his students well, know the different learning styles and ascertain which strategy will work for different students. So, there is no fool-proof or one-size-fits-all silver bullet. The job shifts from being a teacher to an advisor to a mentor to a coach to a facilitator at different times and for different teachers.*

*A vital aspect is respecting those that you work with; respect is mutual. It is never a token gesture or insincere. We would be remiss in our assessment of these teachers if we considered them as “tabula rasa”. Not only must we acknowledge what they bring to the table; we also need to be aware of respecting it and most importantly, use it as the starting point from which to scaffold all new learning.*

*The ability to build relationships is crucial to the success or otherwise of the job. This is also obviously a vital element in a classroom teacher’s tool-kit. These relationships are more than just professional. The personal side of it must be deliberately cultivated as well because the organisation and operation of systems within schools seem to be built around personalities and are dependent on individuals rather than processes.*

Mr. N’s story highlights his view that mentoring is a form of teaching (Clawson, 1996; Crumpton, 2015). He associates the role of the mentor with that of a classroom teacher who knows and understands the needs of each learner. He explains that effective mentors take the time to learn about their mentees, both personally and professionally, and to develop positive relationships with them. Continuing with the analogy, he says that a mentor must discover each mentee’s learning styles, abilities and needs by

making a thorough assessment of their prior knowledge, and suggests that it is important to get to know the learner by understanding what they know and can do, what they have to offer and what they have yet to develop. This knowledge is considered to be the foundation for future engagement and improvement. Mr. N believes that once mentors understand the learning styles of their mentees they can respond effectively to any concerns (Valenčič Zuljan & Vogrinc, 2007).

A mentor's role in this context therefore varies with the expectations and capability of each mentee. Mentors must therefore possess good intuition and recognise when to be adaptable to mentees and their personal and professional situations. Mentors need to have strong reflective skills and deliberate on the best way forward for each individual in their care because no one strategy or approach is guaranteed to be effective for all mentees. An effective mentor will therefore have a wide understanding of the different needs of mentees and a knowledgeable repertoire of skills and strategies to employ for individual mentees. Mr. N concludes that the role of mentor is necessarily varied and multi-dimensional (Crumpton, 2015; Feiman-Nemser, 1996; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000; Lamb & Ludy, 2008; Little, 1990; Tang & Choi, 2005).

Mr. N is cognisant that in this context of mandated reform teachers are operating in engineered mentoring relationships, and the potential for success is limited if people are resistant or unresponsive to suggestions and changes. The act of mentoring is a profound sharing of knowledge, information and skills, and contrived collegiality can impact this process (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Especially in cross-cultural mentoring relationships, trustworthy social interactions are critical to the process. Hopkinson (in Megginson & Clutterbuck, 2005) states that, "The essence of real rapport is 'authenticity'" (p. 30). Relationships built through rapport are influential because they are based on good communication, which includes people listening to each other. Mentoring interactions therefore need to begin with relating to others in a genuine sharing of values, attitudes, experiences and expectations for learning (Megginson & Clutterbuck, 2005).

Mr. N's insights and approach to mentoring reflect the need to be respectful of the mentee, both personally and professionally and he strongly believes that both parties in

a cross-cultural mentoring relationship can learn from each other. An egalitarian view of mentoring described by Feiman-Nemser (2001) supports the notion of educative mentoring for wider professional growth, and to meet students' learning needs and raise their achievement. Change is effected by people who are influenced through effective relationships and meaningful learning. When authentic relationships and mutual trust exist, it is easier to introduce change, suggest improvements and offer new ways of thinking (Megginson & Clutterbuck, 2005). Mutual trust is a vital part to engendering a cooperative partnership that creates open and transparent opportunities to share and discuss teaching experiences and ideas. Mentees are able to learn and develop without feeling embarrassment, shame or humiliation while mentors are able to offer advice and suggest innovations easily and informally. Powerful relationships stem from relational trust, which plays a major role in sustaining local school improvement work and bringing about organisational change (Bryk, 2010).

Mentors support teachers' development in both their personal lives and professional needs (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Darling-Hammond & Berry, 2006). Building professional relationships within a school setting contributes to the success of school improvement initiatives and improves networking and collaboration across schools within a neighbourhood (Bryk, 2010; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Leana 2011). Barth (2006) advocates the in-house establishment of warm congenial relationships as the first step towards building a professional culture that supports the sharing of expertise and knowledge for students' benefit (Nussbaum-Beach & Hall, 2012).

### **5.2.2 Mr. W: “It saved him because he was drowning” – Supporting a mentee through change**

In the following narrative the participant recounts how a struggling teacher was successfully supported through the mentoring relationship which became an important turning point in the teacher's practice and influenced his personal and professional confidence. Mr. W explains the impact his work as a mentor had on the mentee and the changes that followed in the professional life of his teacher. This narrative underscores the positive outcomes from a successful mentoring relationship and the unexpected praise and honour that may come from grateful mentees who perceive the value a mentor has added to their life.

*One teacher would just yell at his students in a booming voice, all day and every day. I don't even think he knew he was doing it. So, I worked with him constantly for about a month on some behaviour management strategies and techniques. I modelled these and then organised for him to come in and do it and set himself up. He followed what I had been teaching him and continued with that the following year. He had really listened, which is a bonus, and now that he is actually doing it, he can actually focus on teaching rather than managing his classroom, which is quite good.*

*It saved him because he was drowning. The students were starting to take over the class and at that stage, he was very grateful for the help that I had given him. He tells me this every day and he is not shy in telling everyone else as well. He knows that without [the name of the operator] in the school, and I think a few of the teachers actually understand that, without [the operator] being there, very little would have happened or changed.*

In this excerpt, Mr. W outlines the successful mentoring relationship he enjoyed with a teacher who had difficulty managing students' behaviour. He describes the detrimental impact this was having on the teacher's wellbeing, and how his poor management of students' behaviour affected their academic achievement, their ongoing behaviour and the classroom dynamics. Mr. W suggests that the teacher's lack of awareness was a key part of the problem and explains how a purposeful mentoring relationship was cultivated over time to address the main issues and rectify concerns regarding the mentee's professional practice.

Mr. W adopted a style of mentoring that included demonstration, modelling and he provided support both within and beyond the classroom as he and his mentee collaborated on strategies to address the teacher's professional limitations. The mentoring process occurred over a considerable length of time, more than a year, as the mentee practised and honed his skills. Mr. W points out that the mentee was willing to follow his advice and guidance and, over time, actively made improvements to his practice and believes that the mentee was successful because he had listened to the

advice given to him, followed up with the strategies suggested, and set out to implement and embed them in the classroom. This signals the professional growth of the teacher as a result of the mentoring relationship.

This narrative, whilst told from the perspective of the mentor, reveals significant details about the nature of the mentee and his willingness to unequivocally commit to the mentoring relationship. The teacher understood that aspects of his teaching were not going well and he recognised that an intervention was necessary. He accepted that he needed help to find a new way forward and acknowledged that a mentor could offer solutions to rectify the classroom situation. He deliberately engaged with his mentor over a significant period of time to make changes to his practice, trusting that his mentoring relationship would positively influence his professional ability. With no ego at stake, this mentee placed himself in the hands of a mentor for support and development.

While this excerpt reveals the growth mindset of this mentee, it also exposes some of the qualities necessary in an effective mentor. In this case, Mr. W showed himself to be a resourceful, patient and committed mentor who was willing to invest a significant amount of confidence, time and energy to improving his mentee's personal outlook and uplifting his professional abilities. He was supportive while being gracious, always careful not to cause embarrassment or a loss of face in what was an already difficult position for the mentee. This is an example of an enduring mentoring relationship that enabled significant change for the mentee as well as his students.

Trust is the willingness to be vulnerable in the knowledge and confidence that there is empathy, honesty, reliability, openness and reciprocity from members in a community, and this is what enables a sharing of knowledge to support problem-solving and a vision of shared goals (Tschannen-Moran, 2011). Conversely, in mentoring relationships where mentees feel unsafe, threatened, inferior or marginalised, mentee development in terms of self-confidence and self-esteem can regress (Hayashi & O'Donnell, 2010). In this example, mentoring became a deep learning experience based on enhancing professional practice (Zachary, 2000) but it also demonstrates mentoring in a supportive and non-threatening environment where knowledge was collaboratively constructed as a way to learn and develop (Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

This mentoring relationship is an example of how trust based on respectful collaboration is a major factor in collective success. Mr. W explains that, over time, using different mentoring techniques of modelling and observation, a close partnership developed between the mentor and mentee. because of their frequent interactions. The mentor gave accurate, clear feedback and through conversation the mentee was able to make sense of his classroom experiences (Orland-Barak, 2005). This mentoring relationship became an opportunity for individuals to share their personal and professional knowledge, skills and experiences, and to develop and grow through the process of mentoring (Spencer, 1996).

This account particularly highlights a mentoring relationship that is both task and relationship oriented (Timperley & Robinson, 2002), where teachers' PL is shaped by a series of tasks based on the specific aspects that need changing and improvement. This teacher was committed to improving student behaviour by learning effective behaviour management techniques. His PL through mentoring was firmly grounded in the context of the classroom (Fullan, 2010) and using the skills he had learnt, the mentee was able to sustain a positive learning environment. This allowed him to refocus his efforts on teaching students more effectively instead of solely managing their behaviour. Mentoring relationships can initiate positive results when learning is purposeful and linked to achieving specific outcomes for stakeholders as indicated in this situation where professional learning was successfully applied in the classroom context (Spero, as cited in Megginson & Clutterbuck, 2005).

This type of mentoring relationship highlights the concept of "double task" (Bridger, 1990), which is an approach that depends on two aspects of learning: the first part occurs by working through the primary task: in this example, the mentor is able to gain a comprehensive understanding of the mentee in a personal and professional context by connecting with him both cognitively and emotionally as the primary task. With this knowledge, the mentor can offer a space where the mentee can discuss, review, explore and reflect on different issues. The secondary task is an examination of the process of reflection: in this space, the mentor must connect ideas between organisational context and culture to develop situations that facilitate personal and professional adjustment to changes for a mentee. The mentor's experience of negotiating change and facilitating growth for a mentee is beneficial for both mentee

and mentor as they reflect on their personal interactions with self, each other and their context. When people are able to develop their thinking about issues and dilemmas, primary and secondary tasks can align for the change process. As new thinking, strategies and plans are enacted, the organisation becomes a place of learning and development.

Collaboration facilitates strong personal and professional skills (Mullen, 2000) yet teaching often occurs behind closed doors and this can be potentially isolating. A lack of engagement between staff members is commonly reflected in a lack of opportunities to discuss student issues, professional practice and pedagogy with colleagues. Working with a mentor offers a forum in which to engage in honest and open dialogue about the issues in teaching and learning, and other concerns about the profession. In spaces where discussion and questioning can happen safely, mentors can suggest ways to improve that mentees may choose to act on. In this narrative, Mr. W explains that this process occurred over a lengthy period of time and that much discussion, planning and strategising occurred between him and the mentee. Change eventuated because the mentee was willing to listen to his advice, accept it and act on making changes.

This narrative exemplifies two important links between teachers' PL and mentoring. The first is that the quality of students' learning increases when their teacher's PL is improved through a mentoring relationship (Timperley & Robinson, 2001). The second point is that mentoring relationships have an impact on professional relationships because they develop cooperation, enable collaboration, and extend collegiality. When teachers focus on teaching practice, issues and solutions by sharing ideas, challenging thinking, reflecting, and critically responding, they are able to improve their own personal professional practice as well as their school overall. In this narrative, a successful outcome was rooted in a positive mentoring relationship, and focused on improving a challenging classroom-based issue. Other staff saw the outcomes of this mentoring relationship as an encouraging sign for engaging with education advisors who could support them with implementing useful change in their own classroom contexts. The spin-off came from the mentee's public endorsement of his mentor and the PPP company. Mentoring relationships that begin as encouraging positive, collaborative conversations are integral to teachers' PL (Burks, 2010). Furthermore, schools benefit when effective PL shapes effective professional

pedagogical practice and influences successful teaching and learning methods (Harris, 2001).

This excerpt highlights a supportive mentoring relationship that reinvigorated a teacher's professional practice and had the potential to re-culture the classroom environment (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2002). Mr. W described how the mentee's development benefited his personal wellbeing and his ability to cope with the difficult professional issues. This improvement in turn strengthened relationships between teacher and students, as well as those between the students themselves, whose own inter-relationships had inevitably become strained because of disruptive classroom behaviour. The teacher's acknowledgement of Mr. W's support as a mentor reinforced the trusting relationship between the two, serving as an example to other staff members that change was possible if they worked collaboratively for school improvement. Publicising a positive mentoring experience added credibility and trustworthiness to the work of individual education advisors as mentors and change agents, as well as the school improvement partnership between ADEC and PPP operators. When time is invested into building trusting relationships, schools develop cultures with strong connections and a joint commitment to improvement becomes ingrained (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). However, the human aspects must be managed so that people are allowed a period of adjustment and acceptance of change initiatives in order for a supportive, collaborative community of practice to emerge.

### **5.3 Part 2: Networking with purpose**

Part 2 presents the second subtheme, "Networking with purpose", and the selected narratives emphasise the consequences of mentors and mentees connecting and liaising in authentic ways to improve professional practice and school environments. This part shows that Networking with purpose is necessary to drive positive mentoring relationships and educational outcomes.

#### **5.3.1 Mr. P: "I am working beside him" – Connecting with leadership for change initiatives**

The following narrative discusses the importance of developing a positive mentoring relationship with the principal as the leader of a school because the nature of this intricate relationship can affect the outcomes for school improvement initiatives. Mr. P

explains that he saw his relationship with the principal as a partnership based on mutual respect and trust, and a collaborative approach enabled a more responsive mindset to managing change within the school context.

*My predecessor had said that he found the Principal to be a fairly difficult and negative person to work with. I thought that this could be interesting. My daughter asked how I was going to be any different and what I was going to do. I told her that I was just going to be myself, take it quietly and not try and push too hard. I don't know what my predecessor was like but we're obviously different. I thought that I'm not going to try and be like what my predecessor might have been like. I'm just going to be myself and that seemed to work. I found that I established a good relationship with the Principal very quickly.*

*If you haven't got that relationship with the Principal then it's very difficult to get anything to happen in the school. When I took over, one of the things my predecessor suggested was to get the staff to have home rooms for Grades 8 and 9. He had spent two years getting Grades 6 and 7 up and they had only just agreed to do that. So, this was my number one priority. Within about three or four days, with the assistance of the education advisors who knew the Principal well, we were able to discuss it with him and convince him that it was worth a try. We said "Let's trial it for a few months and see how it goes and if it doesn't work well, we can revert". He said "Okay, we'll give it a go" and I thought, "Wow, that's amazing!". My predecessor had said that if we could get that priority through in the next two years then that would be a great success. I thought that we had done really well to do that so quickly. Then it was a big job, making sure all the rooms were right and getting teachers and rooms organised.*

*I've always felt that he is the Principal and I am working beside him. I have never felt like I was above him. I was there to assist them. I have always felt like he was the boss and if he said, for some reason, that we were not going to do something in a particular way, but in another way,*

*then I would have discussed it with him. If that was his final decision, then that's what we would do, but he was always very amenable to discussion.*

This narrative presents a special insight into a mentoring relationship with the principal as the school's leader and relates Mr. P's approach to finding a genuine connection with the principal to develop a purposeful and useful relationship. It highlights the importance of forming good relationships and the impact this can have on school improvement initiatives. Mr. P describes the complex and largely ineffective mentoring relationship between the school's principal and the previous education advisor, and the resultant lack of progress on school improvement initiatives, suggesting that a complex mentoring relationship can sometimes result in conflicting interactions.

In contrast, Mr. P reveals his own approach to fostering a sincere and respectful mentoring relationship with the school principal by describing his personal style for connecting and communicating. Genuine collegiality impacts teachers' professionalism in significant ways (Hargreaves, 1994) and Mr. P's approach reflects a mentoring relationship where "neither race nor gender were perceived as critical influences on the mentoring process but ... friendship, nurturance, open-mindedness, and trustworthiness are key to mentoring relationships" (Beyene, Anglin, Sanchez, & Ballou, 2002, p. 97). Mr. P engaged in a mutually beneficial relationship where his relational connections had a positive impact on the growth of both mentor and mentee (Beyene et al., 2002).

The attitudes and approaches that both mentor and mentee bring to the mentoring relationship have an impact on the development of the partnership, but being genuine in the engagement with each other is indispensable. Mentoring relationships can sometimes be complicated by how power is negotiated and Mr. P describes how he saw interventions linked to making changes for school improvement. This approach aligns to Timperley and Robinson's (2002) suggestion that:

[I]f the relationship is to facilitate the achievement of tasks, it must be structured in a way that promotes learning, mutual accountability and power-sharing .... Shifting realities demand that opportunities to learn,

mutual accountabilities and power-sharing arrangements all evolve along with the task itself. (p.143)

Mr. P explains that a collective effort by the education advisor team enabled them to secure the trust and confidence of the principal and thus to encourage significant organisational change. With the principal's endorsement, the team had to ensure that their ideas and suggestions were managed successfully. Todd and Higgins (1998, as cited in Timperley & Robinson, 2002) advocate a mentoring partnership based on the idea of "joint endeavour" (pp. 144-145), and in this case, the success Mr. P described was attributed to the collective actions of the whole education advisor team.

Several participants discussed the key role that school principals occupy as drivers of educational change in their schools. It was crucial that education advisors cultivate positive relationships with principals and other school leaders, while being cognisant of how notions of power and equality could impact partnerships (Timperley & Robinson, 2002). Mr. P's mentoring relationship was largely characterised by relational trust and respectful dialogue. He did not consider himself superior to the principal despite being employed as an advisor, nor was he condescending. His attitude enabled a trusting mentoring relationship to grow, even if he did not always agree with the principal's ideas. He would choose to discuss and debate these rather than tell the principal what to do, what to say or how to act. Instead, the act of mentoring became the vehicle through which Mr. P shaped new ways of thinking to influence his mentee's learning, and to encourage educational change over time.

When mentors monitor their own effectiveness in the role, they are able to reflect on their personal professional practice and recognise their unique learning needs as is evident in this discussion with Mr. P. His narrative indicates that he entered into this mentoring relationship with few personal expectations, having chosen to set aside his predecessor's impressions. He had a deliberate approach to begin this new relationship by being himself with his own integrity and by being of service. He developed clear ideas about his function as a mentor and how he would approach his role prior to engaging with the principal. He states that he saw himself as a mentor who worked with and alongside the principal rather than as a mentor who would tell the principal what, when and how to embed change in the school. This had a greater impact in terms

of engaging with the leadership and instigating change initiatives within the school. The outcome was a trusting and collegial relationship with the principal in which he managed to effect change based on a willingness to listen first without making demands (Barth, 2006) and a team approach. He strategically planned transformations that could benefit the organisation, and discussed them with stakeholders, including the principal, but recognised that as the leader of the school, the principal needed time to consider such changes and its ensuing impact.

Effective communication in a mentoring relationship is essential. In some instances, communication between mentors and mentees may pose a challenge, particularly when mentors and mentees have different beliefs, personal ideologies and understanding of modern pedagogies (Stanulis & Russel, 2000). Where formal and impersonal mentoring relationships are tied to set agendas, communication between mentor and mentee can impair the relationship, especially if it occurs in one direction (Clark, 2012). Some researchers (Hobson, 2002; Maynard, 2000) state that mentees become frustrated when mentors offer unhelpful and ineffectual advice, while clear, accurate and open communication between mentors and mentees cements trusting relationships and respectful collaboration. Numerous studies advocate trust, mutual respect and collegiality as fundamental to healthy mentoring relationships, which are nurtured through frequent contact, communication and an investment of time (Brewster & Railsback, 2003; Harris, 2001; Nash, 2010; Rhodes, Stokes & Hampton, 2004; Royal & Rossi, 1997; Sergiovanni, 1992; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998; Tschannen-Moran, 2001).

Mentoring conversations that lack trust may discourage deep inquiry and analysis of practice, honest self-assessment or learning for improvement. In some mentoring relationships, open communication can be constrained when mentors and mentees seek to avoid disagreement and conflict (Borko & Mayfield, 1995). The extent of “openness” and ease of sharing information with others is one of the components used to determine trustworthiness and is a key element in developing trust between mentors and mentees, specifically in conditions that make a mentee vulnerable (Brewster & Railsback, 2003, p. 4-5). Being intuitive and responding to non-verbal communication and body language also builds trust in mentees (Portner, 2008). Frequent interactions between mentors and mentees therefore increase the opportunities to communicate

with each other and find commonalities which make understanding and acceptance of each other possible (Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989).

Mentoring relationships are often complex and may sometimes result in conflicted interactions. Mentor-to-mentee relational experiences can positively or negatively influence mentees' development, beliefs and future educational practices, so establishing rapport and building trust in mentoring relationships engenders good communication through which knowledge can be brokered and problems solved (Nash, 2010; Smagorinsky et al., 2004). Developing mentor-mentee trust allows an openness to productive learning conversations in which both parties can openly, confidently and confidentially discuss problems and decide on future actions (Stanulis & Russel, 2000). Positive mentoring relationships avoid tensions that create "borders" (Bradbury & Koballa, 2008, p. 823), while collaborative conversations communicate personal and professional understanding between mentors and mentees and promote better understanding on both sides (Orland-Barak, 2005). This is integral to the development of teachers' PL (Burks, 2010). Mentoring for change is a process that is as much about the people as it is about the organisation.

### **5.3.2 Mr. B: "Together, we got that done" – Sharing the responsibility of mentoring**

The following narrative emphasises the need to develop healthy working relationships with principals as school leaders to gain traction for school improvement. As the mentoring partners learned how to relate and communicate with each other, key decisions were made about school improvement initiatives in a respectful and consultative manner. This excerpt also shows the effectiveness of using individuals' strengths for collective gains through a collaborative strategy based on mentors' particular assets.

*Some education advisors are uncomfortable seeing the Principal on their own and requesting things because it's about the relationship again. However, one education advisor gets on very well with the Principal because they used to play football together so they have a strong bond, talking about the Premier League results, and that created a strong bond between them. So sometimes I would say [to the education*

*advisor], “I want the Principal to do this” and he’d say, “Okay, I’ll go and have a word to him”, or “Come with me and we’ll make it happen”. That’s the sort of thing we did, so that education advisor played a very critical role because he had that close relationship already. So, he was able to come with me and cajole the Principal and say, “Look, why don’t we just give it a go for a while and just see how it goes?”, and then, once we got it, it’s a wonderful thing. It’s never going to go backwards.*

*We came up with this behaviour management system to try and make a student club as a reward system. It took us six months to convince the Principal that we had to move a lot of areas around the school and change staffrooms and then clean all the stuff out. So, we did that. That was a big win for us and then when we did it, it was just fantastic. He loved it and the kids loved it and the teachers liked it. Everyone that came to the school asked how we got that to happen because it had three billiard tables, PlayStations, Wii’s, table-tennis tables, table-top football and chess tables. It was a really big area where students could have a club and it was brilliant. That, you know, was a big thing for us to do jointly but together, we got that done.*

This narrative describes the intricate nature of mentoring relationships in a school improvement context, and emphasises the need for collaboration between education advisors based on the strength of individual expertise and personal relationships. Mr. B understood that because he was a newcomer to the school his relationship with the principal was not still being established and that, while he and the principal enjoyed a positive relationship, he was not yet in the position to make demands or requests, or to impose organisational changes. Others in his team were similarly uncomfortable. However, he understood that there were important changes that needed to be proposed in order to advance the school as a learning organisation.

In this context, Mr. B had a clear idea of the purpose of mentoring, viz. to encourage school improvement and innovations while supporting the principal in his development as a school leader. He also understood the importance of establishing an

effective mentoring relationship by building rapport, discussing roles and clarifying objectives. Being self-aware and thoughtful, he recognised that he and the principal were still in the early stages of forging a trustworthy mentoring relationship and that it takes time to nurture trusting professional relationships. In response to the situation, Mr. B described an alternative solution by using already established relationships with other education advisor colleagues, trusted by both himself as the mentor and the principal, to broker support and gain momentum for school improvement initiatives.

Mr. B explains how influential rapport can be in negotiating change. Mentees often need reassurance and support to negotiate workplace challenges, which are commonly presented in the form of changes to existing structures and standards. Mr. B did this by engaging the principal, as mentee, in learning conversations about potential changes within the organisation and adopting a non-directive, inclusive and conciliatory manner with him to negotiate support for the wider vision of the school. This example shows that mentoring relationships can be powerful instruments of change when mentees are convinced and supported to take calculated risks and try new ideas; in this case, a new approach to student behaviour management had a huge impact on the whole school. This narrative also shows that Mr. B's approach to mentoring is both inclusive and collaborative. Rhodes, Stokes and Hampton (2004) state that:

Mentoring also represents a peer-networking interaction (working together) which draws upon collaboration and mutual trust. It is usually a longer term relationship which can be used to support individuals or groups to embed change, improve performance, raise impact and assist in personal and professional development. Mentoring may be used to support individuals through a combination of coaching and counselling from induction through to extended professional relationships. (pp. 26-27)

Such mentoring typifies a less hierarchical platform where the potential to transform, develop and grow across the network is realised (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2002).

Mr. B shows a depth of understanding that meets the needs of both the mentee as an individual and the school as an organisation. He manages his own role by remaining objective, complying with ethical guidelines and maintaining confidentiality while having the foresight to identify likely goals that the mentee could achieve with support

and guidance. He is able to utilise the strengths of his colleagues to strategise and plan an approach without causing embarrassment or a loss of face, either his own or that of the principal, which would be a serious cultural faux pas and be detrimental to the relationship. Mr. B therefore attended to both the individual's and the school's priorities in a thoughtful and sensitive manner. This is an example of how to nurture self-direction by analysing, interpreting and adapting to different contexts from a mentor's perspective. It also shows that an effective mentoring relationship is not prescriptive but flexible and evolutionary.

An effective mentor is able to support a mentee through different phases of learning to become more confident, self-aware and self-directed by strengthening their ability to challenge assumptions and limitations. Skilful mentors exercise different approaches and styles to support mentees, and these may include listening attentively, encouraging self-learning, offering advice, supporting with networking and advising reflection. It is also useful when mentees are receptive to a mentor's support by way of their experience and expertise. In this case, the principal, as the mentee, showed a willingness to consider a new idea, take an informed risk and be open to trying new strategies which resulted in a positive outcome for the school and a useful learning experience for himself.

This example of mentoring for change highlights the considerable length of time it can take to convince a mentee to be bold and engage in innovative possibilities, in this case approximately six months. Initiating change takes time and requires trust. A belief that the plan will be successful and that the personnel will deliver appropriate outcomes is vital. In this school improvement context, the principal as the school leader understood the inherent complexities of the organisation; however, it was the mentor's role to advance the school, and prepare the leadership and staff for modern teaching and learning practices. As the mentee became more committed to the learning partnership, he began to trust the mentor more easily and to consider the advice and assistance he offered as their learning conversations developed ideas around vision and goals. This allowed him the time to consider and reassess the school's structures and systems. This account highlights the importance of working in partnership with people of influence in specific contexts to embed improvements more successfully (Rhodes, Stokes & Hampton, 2004). Effective mentoring occurs when mentors and mentees encourage a

learning environment that supports risk-taking and innovation. From the education advisor's viewpoint, convincing the principal was a major coup in advancing a project, even though it took considerable time to do so. While the mentee eventually became receptive to new ideas and willing to trust his mentors, committing to the idea hinged on the quality of his relationships with them and this took time to grow.

This story is an example of effective collaborative enterprise. It follows a significant undertaking between education advisors working as partners within their own team, and then working in partnership with the principal and staff. Mr. B indicates that the collective impact of the group in mentoring for change was powerful within the school and the team. The data analysis indicated that collaborative advisory teams often used the individual strengths of different team members to plan, innovate and implement educational changes. Positive results inspired further development as successful experiences took root, spreading motivation for change. This narrative explains how a new idea gave credence to a successful mentoring relationship between the mentor and the principal and how their commitment to working together had positive outcomes for the school. Their partnership also encouraged a culture of thinking and sharing innovative ideas for school improvement, and boosted student and staff morale. Mr. B expresses his own relief and delight in the project's success, as shown by the reactions of the principal, staff and students, and says that a major incentive for mentors is when mentees recognise and acknowledge the contribution of the mentors. An additional benefit of being a mentor is having the satisfaction of helping a mentee and witnessing their development.

#### **5.4 Part 3: Committing to partnerships**

Part 3 reflects the subtheme "Committing to partnerships" and uses two narratives that explain the difficulties of establishing effective connections when the mentoring process is deflected from its purpose. This part focuses on mentoring relationships that were compromised by poorly evolved connections and the resulting impact on mentors, mentees and the agenda for school improvement, but emphasises the need to commit to all mentoring relationships to positively impact the school improvement agenda.

##### **5.4.1 Ms. J: "Once they're there, they participate" – Engaging a disengaged**

### **mentee**

In the narrative that follows, the participant describes the challenges of mentoring relationships in which there is little investment on the part of mentees and the effect this has on Ms. J as a mentor. This excerpt also highlights the difficulties of embedding change unless mentees are fully committed to the change process and are willing to embrace it as part of teachers' professional learning for school and personal improvement.

*Getting those teachers to attend meetings, motivating them to make the change, going into the classrooms and modelling for them – I remember going into classrooms and modelling and they thought that was their time out! They did not look at it as we are having an opportunity to learn here. They looked at it as “Great! Now I’ve got a chance to do something else while she teaches the class”. So that was difficult.*

*My job is quite easy. In my current job, the difficult part of my job is getting people to come to the English Language class lessons. I think preparing the content and delivering it is quite simple because I only teach the low-level students so what I am doing is upskilling the teachers with their English language. At the end of the academic year, they will then start IELTS training so they’re not even up to the IELTS training yet. But for me the issue is getting them to come to the class. Once they’re there, they participate with the content provided and have different kinds of learning experiences.*

This story reflects the difficulties of engaging in mentoring relationships when they are viewed as an imposed collaboration rather than a useful partnership. Ms. J describes the difficulties of her work as an education advisor and the frustrations that were triggered by her mentees' lack of responsibility and commitment to the mentoring relationship. This made it hard for her to get mentees to attend English classes to develop their language skills, and when they did attend, she talks about how difficult it was to keep them engaged. She explains that she felt defeated in her role as an education advisor because her mentoring relationships lacked commitment and the purpose was slowly eroded by the lack of commitment to the learning.

A mentee's learning is central to any mentoring relationship and should be both challenging and empowering. However, the learning partnership cannot flourish unless a mentee has a purpose in seeking mentoring and is committed to the mentoring relationship. As demonstrated in the previous narrative, when mentees and mentors trust each other there is more commitment to the learning partnership. The four key stages in the mentoring process are establishing rapport, direction setting, progress making and moving on (MacLennan, 1999). Both mentors and mentees are responsible for managing the relationship. Timperley and Robinson (2002) suggest that as relationships evolve naturally, issues are resolved as partners learn more about each other and the task they are working on collectively.

A lack of commitment to a mentoring relationship reveals a lack of justification for mentoring (Timperley & Robinson, 2002). Mentoring relationships must therefore be based on a clear and shared purpose and objective. Ground rules should be established that focus on expectations, objectives and how the relationship will be managed (Clutterbuck, 2004). A strong mentoring relationship with clear objectives and an agreed plan of action has several advantages for an organisation. It can increase the individuals' and the team's commitment to the organisation and its goals, improve communication and networking and support changes in the organisational culture. When individuals gain greater insight into the way the organisation functions, professional success is more likely.

Mentors and mentees both bring beliefs and philosophies into the learning partnership that impact its development. Close relational experiences between mentors and mentees can positively or negatively affect mentees' development, beliefs and future educational practices (Smagorinsky et al., 2004). Barriers to effective mentoring typically stem from personality differences between mentors and mentees or when the prevailing organisational culture does not understand or is indifferent to mentoring. Trust grows over time and is dependent on developing mutually appropriate behaviours such as being respectful, responsible, having open conversations and keeping confidences. The least successful mentoring relationships occur when people are imposed on each other.

Mentees should consider their own responsibilities in a mentoring relationship if they are to achieve their goals and adjust their learning (Healy & Welchert, 1990). Being a mentee is not a passive experience, so mentoring relationships must be negotiated and agreed upon. Mentees should develop their self-knowledge and discuss tentative goals, plans for development and specific assistance required from mentors. Mentees should be able to communicate effectively in terms of asking and answering questions, showing initiative and following up on tasks. For a mentee, managing one's personal development and learning shows a responsibility to the process and the outcomes.

Mentors enjoy working with mentees who can work hard, learn quickly, show initiative and take their mentor's efforts to teach them seriously. When mentees learn quickly, mentoring relationships grow and mature. This allows opportunity for further discussion, debate and collaboration. Mentors may become frustrated when mentees do not accept and/or incorporate their advice because of divergent teaching philosophies (Norman & Feiman-Nemser, 2005). Aspects of mentoring relationships that cause difficulty include a lack of time for meaningful conversations and the assertion of differing educational philosophies (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). When a mentor is aware of these issues and a mentee can articulate such concerns, the mentor is better placed to support the needs of the mentee and the mentoring relationship becomes more constructive. Effective mentors recognise that change is a difficult issue for mentees because it can sometimes trigger resistance and will therefore relate changing for improvement to a mentee's goals. Rather than see resistance to change as negative, an effective mentor will support a mentee to explore and overcome the fear of change by addressing challenges and clarifying goals and values. An important aspect of mentoring is goal management, including goal clarity, goal commitment and goal alignment (Megginson & Clutterbuck, 2009).

#### **5.4.2 Mr. T: “He missed the point” – Imposed mentoring impacts motivation and outcomes**

In the following narrative, the participant discusses the difficulties of supporting teachers to make changes to their professional practice when there is little understanding of the wider goals. Mr. T explains that the complexity of school improvement requires ongoing commitment to embed and advance professional practice for student improvement. However, this narrative reveals that the momentum

of school improvement can be compromised when a mentee does not incorporate new PL as part of their everyday professional practice and expertise.

*There are a lot of unacceptable practice by some teachers like tardiness, the way they speak to the students, the way they behave around the students, the fact that they don't allow the students to express themselves so they keep them in check all the time. They keep a firm hand on their behaviours all the time. It's a bit like a military system, if you like. They don't allow the students to grow and if the students do grow, they quickly put them down because they shouldn't be growing so fast. So, there are a lot of aspects to that.*

*They don't perform, they don't plan well, they don't get excited about what they are teaching, they don't get the students enthusiastic about what they are learning, they don't generate a classroom environment where it is going to be a great place to learn. They don't generate anything that I have seen in New Zealand and Australian schools, which is a yearning to learn.*

*One of the things I started with was profiling what the teachers were capable of doing currently with the new curriculum, and what they were capable of achieving in one, two- or three-years' time. The teacher has barriers to how the students behave and how they learn. So, it's the teacher's barriers that we have to bring down because they already know the curriculum; it's just put in another format. What they don't understand is how to get the students excited about it, which is the whole purpose of us being here. We're trying to get them excited about it.*

*The high point is when you're dealing with a teacher at a certain aspect of his development and he takes it on board and he expresses it in class. You celebrate those successes and you pat him on the back and he says, "I feel good about this". And you think that change has been permanent. It's not until two or three months later when you revisit it that you see*

*that it's not practised anymore and you find out why. "I thought we had gone over this and it was cemented in place. You were really successful at it, you really understood it, you showed signs of understanding and yet you're not showing it here two or three months later. What's going on? Why have you not continued with this?" And he turns around and says, "But I already know. I don't have to do it anymore". That clearly shows he has missed the point which is that you've got to do it continuously and not just to satisfy me when I stepped into the classroom. So, that's the frustrating part of the job. They do it to show understanding at that point in time but are not interested in embedding practice and consistently applying it in the classroom.*

This narrative describes Mr. T's examination of a teacher's professional practice and suggests that it was difficult to establish strong mentoring relationships because of differing philosophies, beliefs and attitudes, making it challenging to connect with teachers who did not hold the same or similar educational beliefs as their mentor. Mr. T explains how fractured student-teacher relationships, a lack of teachers' professionalism, suppression of students' enthusiasm for learning, and unrealised student and organisational potential made building relationships difficult. Sometimes mentors and mentees are incompatible for different reasons, including having unacceptable qualities and values, different areas of specialisation, or a lack of commitment to the mentoring relationship. It does not necessarily warrant an ending of the relationship if the pairing seems imperfect. In some ways, such differences can lead to enriching mentoring experiences. Regardless of the individual personal and professional beliefs and philosophies mentors and mentees bring to the mentoring partnership, it is possible to establish a learning partnership based on clear objectives and expectations (Clutterbuck, 2004).

In this excerpt, Mr. T elaborates on his approach to mentoring, which begins with establishing what teachers know and can do. However, he explains that, despite working closely over a period of time to improve a teacher's professional practice, there was often very little consistency in mentees' application of new knowledge in the classroom. This became a cause for concern and a source of frustration for Mr. T as the mentor because expertise suggests both a knowing and doing, and mentees did

not apply their knowledge for student benefit. When the expectations of mentoring relationships are unmet because mentees lack initiative and fail to apply their learning, they have wasted both their own and the mentor's time. This can be disheartening and calls into question whether a mentee has considered what outcomes they want to achieve from engaging in a mentoring relationship. Often it is the organisation and students who suffer as a result of teachers' poor standards of professionalism.

Effective mentors are committed to mentoring relationships where they can positively impact a mentee both personally and professionally. To meet the needs of different and diverse mentees, an effective mentor must understand those needs and where necessary adjust or adapt their own behaviours and communication. Effective mentors provide thoughtful and constructive instructional support through observation, learning conversations, team-teaching, reflective practice and peer-observation. Shared experiences such as these encourage collaboration and learning conversations about improving teacher pedagogy and student learning. Mentors may occasionally feel discouraged or concerned that they are not making a difference. By periodically examining the mentoring relationship, goals and achievements, both mentor and mentee can determine whether mutual expectations are being met. Communicating and clarifying the goals and expectations of the relationship, with clear time-frames and actions, can obviate disappointing mentoring experiences.

There is often an implicit assumption that mentees are intrinsically motivated to change, that the desire to improve is powerful and changes are sustainable because the mentee is engaging voluntarily and of their own accord (Lancer, Clutterbuck & Megginson, 2016). However, being externally motivated to do something change, can be insufficiently motivating for a reluctant mentee. Mentors can address motivational issues by discussing these early in the mentoring relationship and suggesting targets and solutions based on the extrinsic goals (Lancer et al., 2016). In some cases, mentees can appear enthusiastic about mentoring but are not sincerely committed to making changes by genuinely engaging in the mentoring relationship. This too can be frustrating for mentors because learning conversations are not applied and there is little progress because often the mentee has not reflected on the need for change. A change motivation matrix can determine whether a potential mentee is complacent, or committed to change, challenge and learning (Lancer et al., 2016).

There are two types of complacency, viz. functional and dysfunctional (Lancer et al., 2016) and it is particularly difficult to shift the mind-set of dysfunctional complacency, where a mentee is not ready or willing to address issues or change attitudes. Unless there is an attitudinal change, it is better to stop mentoring and encourage the mentee to engage in discussions and explore their situation. Another strategy is to facilitate conversations between mentee and other stakeholders, who can offer them opinions, reasons, perspectives and observations to amend their complacency. When mentees fail to empower and motivate themselves it can be difficult for a mentor. Mentors take comfort from the idea that learning conversations may have instigated thoughts of personal growth and development for the mentee, and this may encourage them to persevere with the mentoring relationship (Lancer et al., 2016).

Reciprocal mentoring relationships supports individuals' development and growth (Crumpton, 2015). Being mentored is an opportunity to develop personal capacity and leadership skills and ability. Drago-Severson (2012) writes, "Building relationships is at the heart of effectively supporting growth and leadership development in any teaching, learning, and/or professional development environment, and in any environment calling for human connection" (p. 116). A mentee who responds to mentoring interactions with integrity will be able to navigate their own personal development based on the direction they set with their mentor's support. A mentee who is open to new ideas understands that this is part of their learning. Instead of rejecting new ideas and different perspectives from a mentor, an enquiring mentee will question and probe these positions to possibly develop new understandings and practice. A committed mentee will therefore have clear expectations and goals that they want to develop and achieve.

## **5.5 Summary and Conclusion**

This chapter presents the first main theme, "Developing interpersonal relationships", and is written in three parts to reflect three different subthemes. Each part discusses a selection of interpersonal relationships that reveal the experiences and observations of education advisors. For the participants in this study, developing interpersonal connections for professional goals manifested in terms of "Forging meaningful connections", "Networking with purpose" and "Committing to partnerships".

In Part 1, the subtheme, “Forging meaningful connections” explained the multifaceted nature of nurturing mentoring relationships by making a connection with teachers across cultures and contexts to engage them in professional learning and school improvement. Creating a connection with local staff depended on developing trusting relationships by establishing a positive rapport and effective communication. Participants indicated that without establishing a connection to teachers, it became very difficult to pursue mentoring relationships for the purposes of PL as there was no investment on the teachers’ part to willingly participate or fully engage in school improvement initiatives. Forging meaningful connections to establish mentoring relationships was a crucial part to gaining traction with school improvement work.

In Part 2, the subtheme, “Collaborating with purpose” revealed the different ways in which education advisors and teachers established connections with each other for school improvement purposes. This depended on the ways in which they collaborated with teachers and other education advisors/mentors by networking for specific purposes. As mutual respect and trust grew, stronger interpersonal relationships developed to better support mentoring relationships and improve teachers’ PL as mentors drew on the wide expertise of different parties involved in school improvement initiatives.

In Part 3, the subtheme, “Committing to partnerships” illustrated some of the challenges of negotiating mentoring relationships in a cross-cultural context. This part highlighted that missed opportunities are not uncommon in an education reform and the impact this can have on both teachers and their mentors. When essential relational connections were absent or failed, mentees were disengaged from their own professional learning and uninvolved in advancing the school improvement agenda. However, these findings show that even when mentoring relationships are tenuous, it is incumbent on the mentor to persevere with engaging the mentee for positive outcomes, no matter how slight, in the hope that a difference will be made. There is also a need to stay committed to mentoring partnerships for the overall goal of improving teachers’ PL and the school improvement agenda. This solidifies the need to make connections and collaborate purposefully so that there is a reciprocal commitment between mentors and mentees in a mentoring partnership.

This section has detailed the significance of the phenomenological constructs of *Dasein* or “Being-in-the-world”, and *Mitdasein* or “Being-with-others”. The connections between education advisors and teachers as mentors and mentees exemplify how Heidegger’s (1927) “Being-with-others” and “Being-in-the-world” influence the connection and affect teachers’ professional learning relationships in schools. Additionally, the phenomenological concept of “Verstehen”, or “Understanding”, expresses the situated aspect of being human where people exist in a world which they are always trying to interpret and make meaning of. Creating connections, deepening relationships and developing strong interpersonal relationships enabled deeper professional understanding of the individual’s philosophy and approach, the school culture and the reform context. Many participants felt that when they established trusting relationships they could make a difference by influencing changes by influencing the thinking of mentees and gaining momentum to enable strategic intents and purposes. A trusting and collaborative partnership between an education advisor and a mentee contributed to professional learning by the mutual sharing of information and building of knowledge, and strong collegial relationships reinforced a collaborative professional culture which resulted in progressive outcomes with regard to school improvement plans.

In this study, education advisors, as mentors, functioned as agents of change and mediators of PL by negotiating mentees’ interpretations of the professional context through mentoring. This suggests and supports different ways of thinking and acting. Their self-awareness as mentors enabled them to engage in mentoring practices and these personal experiences of mentoring further engaged them in their own learning. While they experienced mentoring relationships differently, the experience of being connected through positive relationships and networking across the school contributed significantly to school improvement initiatives because human connections that promote engaging, positive interactions are useful in learning about others, finding commonalities in experiences and sharing perspectives. A shared approach supports the management of the human aspects and allows people a period of adjustment to and acceptance of change initiatives, so that a supportive, collaborative community of practice emerges. This requires making contact, encouraging communication and investing time in relationships.

This chapter presented Theme 1, “Developing interpersonal relationships”, which focused on making personal connections for professional goals. The participants explored their personal and professional connections with local staff as their mentees and described the nature of their work as education advisors in a constantly changing cross-cultural school improvement context. While education advisors had differing experiences of developing interpersonal relationships, there was a clear indication across the data set that establishing strong relationships were the most significant aspect of negotiating an effective cross-cultural school improvement programme successfully. While each narrative is distinct, the shape and direction of the data suggest that it is only when genuine connections are made and meaningful relationships are developed that successful PL relationships are achievable. Connected and collaborative mentoring relationships therefore impact the successful delivery of teachers’ PL and influences school improvement outcomes. The next chapter, “Responding to Context”, presents the second theme in three parts.

# Chapter 6

## Research Findings and Discussion

### Theme 2: Responding to Context

#### 6.1 Introduction

Chapter 6 delineates Theme 2, “Responding to context”, which emerged from data analysis to reveal that education advisors in a rapidly transforming school improvement context are personally and professionally affected by a range of contextual complexities. The analysis showed that for a majority of participants issues arose in various organisational and domestic environments. Reflecting on their experiences, participants noted that they were able to learn from and develop their own understandings of how to respond, adapt to and advance in challenging contexts.

This second theme, “Responding to context”, is directly related to the main research question, “How do education advisors negotiate professional learning relationships in a cross-cultural school improvement context?”, and the first subsidiary question, “How does the context influence the school improvement work of education advisors?”. However, the narratives in this chapter indicate that it is not always possible to cleanly separate aspects of culture from context, therefore elements that address the third research question, “How are participants’ cultural differences managed to effect school improvement?”, also have some bearing on these descriptions and analyses.

The phenomenological concept of *Dasein*, “Being-in-the-world”, embeds human existence in a world filled with rich meanings and varied interpretations, and individuals face phenomena from within the context of a world that they are familiar with (Heidegger, 1967). This theme relates to the tenet of phenomenology that supposes each participant has unique experiences of connecting and relating within their own context, as is evident from their narratives. Shank (2002) explains that “phenomenological process always begins, in some fashion, with the individual person and that person’s awareness of the world” (p. 85). Thus, our bodies enable our action-oriented way of “Being-in-the-world” and *Dasein* determines how we cognitively perceive the social and physical world around us. The intentional, temporal and lived

experiences that structure phenomenology suggest that there is an intentional consciousness that kinaesthetically shapes our phenomenal and aesthetic experiences through sensory- motor movements. Hence, what we understand in a moment in time and space is how we understand our place and relationships in the world. Our *Dasein* is deeply influenced and shaped by our uniquely subjective social interactions.

Additionally, the phenomenological construct of hermeneutic circling occurs where understanding and interpretation between the whole and the parts (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007; Diekelmann & Ironside, 2006). The hermeneutic circle reveals participants' narratives as being contextual in their descriptions of their experiences. This further expresses the situated aspect of being human, where people exist in a world that they are always trying to interpret and make meaning from. In a changing context, the ability to engage socially and pragmatically in the world is to transfer knowledge and intelligence to different contexts by making different meanings of the world, our places in it and in our relationships with others. These narratives reveal the experiences of participants as they move between anecdotes, stories and statements. My own understanding deepened as I contemplated the narratives, by going back and forth between the transcripts in order to gain a better sense of the whole and the sum of individual experiences. This process enabled me to interpret meaning, separately and collectively, thereby engaging myself in the hermeneutic circle (Gadamer, 1975).

As in Chapter 5, this theme is organised into three parts, with each part presenting a subtheme that is further illustrated by two narratives. The ensuing narratives explore the second theme, "Responding to context", by examining how education advisors responded to contextual complexities. These stories signal a variety of responses to a diverse range of personal and professional contexts. They highlight that our existence is shaped in a practical and action-oriented way in response to our environment, which may sometimes present complex situations that involve deeper interpretation.

In Part 1, the stories in "Managing school complexities" reveal the ways in which education advisors responded to different issues that arose within the school improvement context, suggesting that it is important to assess the environment, circumstances and issues before determining the best way to proceed. In Part 2, the narratives in "Navigating personal trials" emphasise that education advisors are

affected by context in very personal ways, indicating that it is necessary to develop resilience and patience when working in an unfamiliar environment. In Part 3, the stories in “Mitigating organisational intricacies” illustrate how education advisors may be affected by organisational and systemic constructs, and how they work to reduce the impact of these. Together, the subthemes in each part demonstrate a variety of experiences which reiterates the need to respond to context sensitively in order to meet professional goals in cross-cultural mentoring relationships.

## **6.2 Part 1: Managing school complexities**

Part 1 uses two narratives to expand on the first subtheme, “Managing school complexities”.

### **6.2.1 Mr. G: “Telling them that what they have been doing is wrong!” – A mentor’s professional context**

This narrative depicts the sensitive negotiating of intricate cross-cultural mentoring relationships by a mentor whose work is also informed by an awareness of the wider needs of school improvement. Mr. G explains that the details of school improvement are multifaceted, call on all the mentoring expertise of the education advisor, and are often difficult to manage.

*There is a whole raft of peripheral and whole-school needs that must be addressed to grow capacity within the school besides the subject-specific tasks that we are asked to carry out. These are sometimes more essential than the subject-specific tasks as they will set systems in place that enable the changes in subjects to occur. One example is establishing a specific, tailor-made behaviour policy for each school. Once a consistent approach to behaviour management is established, then only is the environment suitable for the necessary change to proceed at a much faster rate.*

*Not only are we trying to encourage teachers to change their practices, we are also trying to get them to learn how this is done so that they have the capacity to develop naturally when we are gone. This occurs while we are also trying to increase student achievement and get teachers to*

*be reflective practitioners, while simultaneously engendering this same attitude in the students. So basically, while the teachers are learning these new skills, they also must teach these new skills to the students and get them to develop some of these skills as well. The hardest part of it all is the fact that we are here to tell these teachers that what they have been doing in effect for the last twenty- five to thirty years must change. Some of them see it as us telling them that what they have been doing is wrong!*

In this narrative, the participant describes the complexity of both school improvement and the role of the education advisor in an education reform setting. School improvement programmes are inherently intricate as different aspects within the school are addressed simultaneously. Priorities are continually shifting and a one-size-fits-all approach to schooling does not consistently and evenly cater for the developmental needs of schools across the board (Annan, Fa'amoe-Timoteo, Carpenter, Huckler, & Warren, 2004). The role of the education advisor in this context is not simply to have an impact on classroom teaching and learning to the exclusion of other school-wide aspects, Mr. G explains. Student behaviour, for example, must be settled for the environment to be conducive to student learning. Education advisors must therefore have a broad overview and understanding of the separate elements that make efficient school-wide systems. They must understand attitudes and implement approaches that enable a school to become a sustainable learning organisation.

Under optimal conditions, an organisation is able to generate the capacity for school improvement from within (Coburn, 2003). Changes must therefore be multidimensional with a focus on developing a positive school culture that prompts concurrent, parallel change across the school and within individual classrooms. None of this is linear or simple. Fullan (2005) regards this concept as “developing the collective ability – dispositions, skills, knowledge, motivation, and resources – to act together to bring about positive change” (p. 4). Teachers’ individual and collective capacity must therefore be developed at the same time as school capacity to improve student learning and outcomes (Stoll, Bolman, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006).

Since school improvement is a multifaceted endeavour, understanding the way

forward requires efficient organisational management. This largely depends on leaders having relevant knowledge of the big picture of school improvement, the details of what comprises the overall vision and the expertise to achieve this effectively. Stoll et al. (2006) describe capacity as a “complex blend of motivation, skill, positive learning, organisational conditions and culture, and the infrastructure of support ... [that] gives individuals, groups, whole school communities and school systems the power to get involved in and sustain learning over time” (p. 221). Building and developing capacity is dependent on effective school leadership. Shared knowledge and understanding allow leaders and teachers to be on the same page so that planned improvements and strategic outlines articulate that everyone works towards common goals. Problems are collectively addressed through planned strategy and appropriate policies so that the culture of the school is shaped cohesively within the context of the nation’s larger educational vision. Inculcating a culture that responds positively to change enables improvement and growth to occur within classrooms, in subject areas and across schools. This requires sustained effort for successful outcomes.

The multi-layered organisation of schools impacts their performance in both overt and covert ways and, by extension, on the building of capacity of the school as a learning organisation. A clear understanding of all elements is necessary to construct a vision for capacity building as part of school improvement as it must respond to the individual, group and systemic requirements of the institution. Building capacity is not just about modifying existing structures or extending programmes (Elmore, 1995). It is impacted by both internal and external factors as schools are interconnected both within and beyond their campuses, and building collective and individual capacity necessitates deep change (Honig & Hatch, 2004).

Mr. G understands that this being the case, an exhaustive investigation into the school’s specific cultural and contextual factors, including socio-economic, cultural, political and technological aspects, must occur. The impact of school leadership, local community, government and other associated agencies and other global trends on school improvement must be considered (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). Therefore, the needs of the school as a system and as an organisation must be clear. All of this will inevitably impinge on the task and expectation of the role of an education advisor.

Mentoring in the school context is intimately connected with the work of teachers and improving the function of the school. Education advisors bring important skills to the school improvement agenda. Working as mentors, education advisors must first understand the education system and the school context if they are to explore the needs and future direction of the school. Mr. G explains that there is a process of understanding the context and culture, for themselves as advisors first, especially in this cross-cultural environment. Then, it becomes important to think about how they can best impact the mentee, the school and the community by looking beyond issues and concerns, and through their decision-making by formulating creative and effective solutions.

The connection between mentors and mentees empowers both parties to develop knowledge and skills that meet their personal and professional goals as partners in learning. This learning requires mentors to challenge assumptions, question beliefs, bridge gaps and support staff to make decisions that improve student achievement and outcomes. Mentors tasked with supporting “ways of being” and “ways of doing” address attitudes and behaviour, guiding teachers to initiate changes by functioning in new “ways of thinking”. In the mode of learners, mentees are able to build their personal capacity, identify professional challenges, collaborate with colleagues to solve problems, and are encouraged to be critical thinkers.

In this account, Mr. G shows he is highly aware of the, sometimes, unrealistic expectations placed on both teachers and education advisors in this school improvement environment, particularly the assumption that local teachers will quickly adopt new pedagogical skills and strategies as part of their everyday teaching practice, and then use these with easy confidence. For many teachers, honing their teaching craft is time-bound as it takes years to learn, experiment, develop and embed teaching practices. Mr. G suggests that making change is not as easy as expecting someone to do so because they have been asked, told or shown how by an education advisor. Teachers must see sound reasons to make changes to their practice, especially since changing practices and beliefs can be very difficult (Phillips, McNaughton & MacDonald, 2002).

Mr. G explains that it is difficult to support teachers to change outdated pedagogical

and professional practices in ways that are sensitive to teachers' cultures and self-confidence. The loss of face is a significant cultural aspect for Arabs and can severely constrain relationships. Teachers may have felt that a negative slur was cast on traditional Arabic teaching by the very existence for a reform project that aimed to update and modernise schooling, because it implied that the current teachers were incompetent, unskilled and inept. Some may have experienced shame and a loss of face as their personal professional qualities and abilities were challenged. Also, teachers and mentees had to feel positive about suggested changes, and believe them to be useful and sustainable. Some teachers may well have found it difficult to cope with the superseding and recasting of existing school structures and organisational systems.

The situation as described by Mr. G sounds complicated but it is made even more so when we consider that local Emirati and Arab expatriate teachers did not all speak English, as Arabic is their first language. Similarly, the majority of education advisors did not speak Arabic, so even basic communication was a struggle. The issue that language and communication occur in different ways culturally also had an impact on the work of education advisors. For Mr. G, it was difficult to negotiate the implicit and, sometimes, explicit messages that were conveyed to local Emirati and Arab expatriate teachers, some of whom perceived the work of education advisors as telling them what they had been doing was "wrong" and therefore, unacceptable. This again had the potential to harm relationships.

Effecting change is also particularly difficult when teachers do not reflect on their own professional practice or if they see little value in adjusting their practice because they sincerely believe that how they teach is appropriate and adequate. When teachers do not understand or accept the reasons for change or do not share the vision for change, changing the way teaching and learning happens is very hard. Mr. G explains that, in such a situation, the expectations were especially demanding because teachers needed to unlearn some existing practices, replace them with modern practices and embed those in everyday classroom teaching. In addition, teachers had to ensure that their students were adjusting to new modes of curriculum delivery and learning effectively.

Another difficulty that education advisors faced as mentors was that some teachers believed that the PPP would be a short-lived initiative and changes mooted were thus

a frivolous and fleeting exercise. Some teachers merely complied with practical advice and suggestions to keep education advisors satisfied and to meet appraisal expectations. This school improvement agenda was therefore a difficult professional and emotional event for both education advisors and teachers to negotiate. It became particularly difficult when teachers' jobs and livelihoods were at stake. Education advisors found it challenging to understand their roles and responsibilities in an unfamiliar cross-cultural context with all its associated complexities. As can be seen, a great deal may be asked of teachers in a school improvement context, sometimes with very little consideration of how such changes impact people's personal and professional lives. Teachers were presented with significant changes to their professional realities in this PPP and Mr. G explains that it is understandable that they would have been overwhelmed by the many different changes that faced them.

As Mr. G shows, the role of mentoring was far more complex than the job description of education advisor. On the one hand, the outcome of the reform agenda rested on the actions determined and implemented by education advisors; however, if that work was carelessly framed or insensitively approached, local staff could disrupt the changes, compromise the outcomes or reject the education advisor and the PPP team. As Mr. G suggests, mentoring in such a complex environment was a fine balancing act that required skill and sensitivity.

### **6.2.2 Mr. B's story: "Like you've got to kneel to the person above you..." – Organisational systems impact school operations**

In the following narrative, the participant discusses teacher appraisal in the school system and the wider organisational context of ADEC. Mr. B explains that the appraisal system was a disempowering exercise that bred discontentment and unhealthy competition between Arab expatriate teachers, who had to compete for jobs that are annually contracted.

*A big problem in the system is the contracts. Arab expatriate teachers don't know until the last or the second to last day whether they've got a job for the next year. They only have a job for one year at a time. These are all the non-local teachers so it's a huge job. The other thing is that they can never be nationalised. In Oman, if you've shown that*

*you have done a good job you can get sponsored and actually get nationalised. So, there's this huge problem and it's very competitive.*

*Everything amongst the men in my school is so competitive. There are seven Science teachers and they are all competing against each other because next year there might only be five [who will get jobs] so who are going to be the bottom two? So, this is about evaluations. One of the Science teachers came to me with the HoD Science and said "[teacher's name] is very upset about his evaluation that he got. We want you to do something about it". I said, "Look, it has absolutely nothing to do with me". In my school, I helped them set it out, helped them understand how to put the information through the computer, but we [the team of education advisors] didn't want to be involved with who was getting what marks. The Principal wanted my advice around the side and that's okay, but I'm not going to be actually telling him what marks to give them, and I said that.*

*I said, "Look, I didn't have anything to do with whatever mark you got. I don't even know what marks you got". But he was very upset about it. Then about fifteen minutes later I went to see the Principal and I saw the same teacher sitting there with his back to me, talking to the Principal. I thought, "Oh, okay". Then, five minutes later he went out and I had to go in to do something and I said "Ah, was that a bad evaluation?" and the Principal said, "Yes, he was very upset because he got the bottom grade of the seven Science teachers".*

*Now, how would he know he got the bottom grade? They all get their email and they look at it and go to each other and compare their evaluations according to the criteria. So, they say things like, "Oh, I got two greens and two yellows" or "Oh, I got three yellows and one green. I only got one green!" so they very quickly work out who is at the bottom. The Principal gave the HoD Science all four greens; it doesn't matter how good he is. Then the Principal said that he gave the Arabic HoD one yellow and three greens and then when he reassessed him, he*

*realised that he can't do that because he gave all the Heads of Departments all green. If one of the other Arabic teachers got four greens, which they probably did, and the HoD didn't, then it will be ridiculous. So, they all get greened out.*

*So, it is very competitive and it's difficult because they don't know until the last day whether they're going to get a job next year or not. So, it means that they all try to outdo each other. But they also try to ingratiate themselves to the Principal and us. Things like being on duty and not missing duty, volunteering to do things, or whatever. So, it's not a healthy system. It is not everyone respecting each other for what they are. It's a power relationship, like you've got to kneel to the person above you and make sure you do everything so that he thinks you're good.*

In this narrative, Mr. B describes the impact of the newly-established appraisal system and its impact on teaching staff, particularly those who are Arab expatriate teachers, by relating his experience of how appraisals are conducted. He discusses the influence of the principal and the dynamics between teachers as they collaborate with regards to appraisal. He explains a particularly difficult situation whereby a science teacher is unhappy with his appraisal and seeks a resolution from the education advisor team, and then from the principal. Mr. B explains that, although he is willing to offer advice to the principal if asked, appraisal has nothing to do with his role as a mentor. Mr. B explains that appraisals have a major effect on Arab expatriate teachers' lives as they all rely heavily on teaching contracts to remain in the UAE for work. These teachers are employed under short-term contracts in the UAE with work for the following year only confirmed at the end of each school year. As Mr. B reports, teachers will do whatever is necessary to ensure the continuation of their contracts each year and to ensure that their appraisals cast them in the best possible light in order to secure work in the following year. Consequently, these teachers depend on the power of their personal connections and professional relationships with the principal and other key staff, including education advisors, to positively influence their appraisals and to keep them in employment from year to year.

The uncertainty of employment for Arab expatriate teachers offers them no job security and their insecure livelihoods are a constant cause of stress. Because they are not able to be UAE citizens, they cannot remain in the country if their employment contracts and work visas are cancelled. They are often given very short timeframes in which to exit the country with their families, sometimes despite having lived and worked in the country for lengthy periods, which can be a traumatic end to their lives in the UAE. The appraisal system has therefore come to represent a powerful instrument that can determine future employment or a swift exit from the host country.

Mr. B indicates that because Arab expatriates can never be nationalised as citizens there is a tacit belief that they are not fully committed to making a difference through their profession and ongoing education. The education system does not allow these teachers to grow their professional experiences in ways that add value to the schools to which they are contracted, nor can they pursue career pathways that lead to senior leadership positions in UAE schools as these are reserved for local Emiratis. Faced as they are with unstable and insecure employment, Arab expatriate teachers' job satisfaction, career progression and familial security all need to be addressed if appraisal is to be refashioned into a tool that engages, improves and advances personal and professional expertise.

Appraisal is thus at the centre of contextually difficult professional relationships and quality of teaching, learning and collaboration are all affected. Mr. B describes how teachers will collaborate with each other to determine the worth of their appraisals and to conclude which of them might win positions the following year. He explains the reasoning behind the process and suggests that it is an impossible situation where little trust exists behind the façade of collegiality. The unfortunate reality is that an unhealthy culture of both competition and collaboration exists between Arab expatriate staff who compete for work each year but who also support each other to maintain contracts. Mr. B describes how teachers will involve themselves in school activities for potential rewards and recognition so that their value as a staff member is noticeable. He adds, from his Western perspective, that these teachers compromise their personal integrity and their professional selves when they kowtow in their responses to senior staff. But for some Arab expatriate staff, the cost of personal honour and professional integrity is the price of maintaining a teaching contract.

Mr. B describes an appraisal system that has, in this context, shifted from being an apparatus for further development of teachers to a tool that forms the basis for future employment prospects. His explanation reveals an appraisal system that is distorted by the system of contracts for Arab expatriates, where appraisal is synonymous with the loss or retention of jobs. The process reveals a range of shortcomings that begins with staff keeping their individual appraisals confidential. Instead Arab expatriate teachers may face enormous pressure to reveal information about their own appraisals so that rankings can determine who could potentially lose a contract.

In the exchange between the Science teacher and the Principal, Mr. B reveals a situation wherein teachers become angry and upset if they are perceived to be of a lesser quality than their counterparts because their futures depend on the outcome of the appraisals. For an appraiser, conducting an appraisal becomes problematic because appraisals have come to represent a type of assessment that is not just professional but life-changing. Regrettably, appraisal in this situation does not focus on a teacher's professional accountability in meeting teaching expectations and standards, nor is it viewed as a mechanism to foster improvement for underperforming teachers. It is a permanent exclusion.

This situation exposes inherent power issues in the relationships between leaders and teachers that make appraisal very challenging. Mr. B reveals that appraisals lead to difficult professional relationships between principal and teaching staff, for example, as in the relationship between the Science teacher and the Principal at this school. He explains the process and justification that the Principal uses in the appraisal process when evaluating the Heads of Departments and states that those who are in middle leadership have appraisals that are "greened" out according to their status and position within the school. He also suggests that principals are under enormous pressure from staff when they are dissatisfied with their appraisals and the principal as the leader is expected to change the outcome. Appraisal therefore has a significant impact at both personal and professional levels, depending on the status and position of staff within schools.

The principal's leadership in raising student achievement and improving teachers' professional capacity is central to change and reform (Fullan, 1993, 2000, 2001, 2002;

Gurr, Drysdale & Mulford, 2006; Hargreaves & Fink, 2003). However, this narrative presents a scenario whereby the principal does not satisfactorily use the appraisal system to raise the professional capability of staff. It reveals the tangential complexity that this principal is still learning how to lead effectively. While this story exposes the challenges that face principals when conducting appraisals, it also shows that principals are unfairly placed in situations that have far-reaching consequences for their teachers. Mr. B states that the principal is presented with a difficult moral dilemma as he tries to be “fair” to his middle managers.

Appraisal can be a useful tool when it is calibrated to emphasise student learning because it can develop a culture of professionalism whereby teachers invest in their own professional capability and account for their own professionalism. This narrative suggests that appraisal in the context Mr. B describes has been subverted in its use and purpose. The function of appraisal is to provide professional accountability that teaching standards are being met, and indicates the support necessary for a teacher’s personal capability and the school’s advancement to meet students’ outcomes (ERO, 2014). However, this excerpt shows that in this school appraisal is not focussed on any of these main components. Instead, this narrative reflects a process for conducting appraisals that neither forms the basis for ongoing staff evaluation and teacher learning nor encourages teachers to improve or change their professional practice. Instead the process is obscured by a system of contracts that rewards a superficial assessment of teachers’ expertise and professionalism.

A robust and authentic appraisal system is evidence of teachers who demonstrate a genuine willingness to be involved in the school as professionals and who are sincerely committed to students and their achievement. When all staff, including leaders, have a genuine understanding and appreciation of the function of appraisal, then authentic feedback will form a strong basis for teachers’ PL. There must be coherence across the appraisal components so that policy and procedures are consistent and rational. Appraisal should be linked to strategic plans, annual plans, student targets and teachers’ PL and embedded in a self-review system that is focused on improvement (ERO, 2014). Organisational support must include training for appraisers so that the appraisal process is seen as consistent, fair and honest. In this context, it would be useful to make the goals of appraisal explicit to all staff, and guidance from education

advisors could play a role in supporting appraisers and principals through this process.

An increased international mobility amongst educators has given rise to a unique educational context in the UAE, which sponsors and engages a diverse international teacher labour force. These teachers bring valuable professional and cultural benefits to schools, and the exchange can develop rich and rewarding intellectual capital across schools. For this to happen, appraisals must give teachers control over their own sense of professionalism as well as their futures. If teachers are committed to a reasonable length of employment that allows them to settle and become genuinely involved as dedicated and caring professionals, then a stronger educational system and robust teaching profession is more likely to emerge.

The UAE government must consider the challenges of employing the right teachers and in sufficient numbers to staff schools appropriately. Determining an expatriate's sense of professional obligation to student learning over and above a job contract should be a starting point. Appraisal has a significant place in this equation by contributing to a stable and effective teaching workforce for a dynamic and innovative UAE education system. In the longer term, a logical solution would be to invest in high quality teacher training for local Emiratis to address the labour gap in schools.

### **6.3 Part 2: Navigating personal trials**

Part 2 investigates the second subtheme, "Navigating personal trials". The narratives demonstrate the nature of the personal challenges of education advisors working in a cross-cultural school improvement environment and living in a foreign cultural context. This part highlights the need to be mentally prepared for issues that may arise in this situation and explains how education advisors cope with different scenarios.

#### **6.3.1 Ms. A: "She is so disillusioned..." – Change challenges motivated staff**

This excerpt highlights the complexity of being an education advisor and mentor when things become challenging for a mentee. This narrative not only conveys the challenges for a mentee, as observed by the mentor, but also highlights how mentors who are genuinely invested in their mentoring relationships are affected when their mentees experience difficulties.

*I'm losing my Head of Department next week. She is an absolutely*

*outstanding teacher and she's stepped up this year voluntarily as the Head of Department with no recognition or incentive like a lower teaching load. She's doing as much work as the other teachers plus Head of Department. I could not ask more of her. But she is so disillusioned with what the school does that blocks her work and the teachers' work.*

*She is sick of losing teaching time every single day. She is sick of going to meetings, what feels like every single day, and none of them are achieving anything and just talking around in circles, and she's sick of being told she's going to be involved as a Head of Department with some leadership and communication and decision-making and then that does not happen. So, she's leaving. She's going. She's going to America to be with her husband who is studying over there. Her motivation to keep working hard has gone because the school is such a negative force. I really understand that. I think I would be doing the same thing. I'd be looking to transfer schools if I was in that context where I felt the school was blocking the good work that I believed in.*

In this narrative, Ms. A discusses an outstanding teacher and new Head of Department she had mentored and explains her disappointment and frustration that the woman was now leaving the teaching profession. She describes her mentee as a teacher with a strong work ethic, good leadership skills, a willingness to contribute professionally and an eagerness to make a difference in the school improvement context. Ms. A explains that her mentee enthusiastically assumed a leadership position as the Head of Department, without any time or financial recompense, and was excited to support teachers through the period of change and improvement. As her mentor, Ms. A recognised that her mentee was an outstanding teacher and supported her attempts to make a significant contribution.

However, Ms. A explains that her mentee's disillusionment with several aspects of the school leadership had eventually resulted in her resignation. With extra leadership responsibilities and a full teaching load, the teacher felt unsupported by leadership who made additional demands on her time by calling meetings during class time. This

further eroded her teaching time and in effect prevented good classroom teaching from happening. Significantly, the mentee concluded that despite many meetings, no useful outcomes or clear direction for improvement had emerged to move the school in a new direction, and she felt that it was all a waste of time and energy.

Although this teacher was initially motivated and embraced change initiatives positively, her performance was impacted by the approach of leadership to the management of the changes. Apart from her mentoring relationship with Ms. A, the mentee did not have support to work through her concerns and doubts about the direction of school improvement, which itself brings challenges of change management. The level of collaboration and consultation did not match her high level of intrinsic motivation, despite numerous meetings. In a collaborative culture, all voices must contribute and be heard. When this teacher did not have her voice and values affirmed, she believed that her contribution was unnecessary and her presence became a token gesture of collaboration. The mentee also felt that leadership had engaged in false promises of including her as a middle leader involved in decision-making and strategic direction when this did not happen. She began to feel that her contribution to the leadership team was unwelcome and undervalued despite initial indications that her voice was necessary and important. She realised that, despite stepping up to assume additional leadership duties, she was not given authentic capability to influence decisions and contribute to the school's direction. Thus, her initiative and motivation had little impact on the overall performance of the teaching team or on the achievement of the school. Her efforts to be an effective classroom teacher, lead a team of teachers and contribute to the direction of the school became an unsustainable effort that had little impact on the culture of development within the school.

Ms. A explains that things became particularly difficult for her mentee when she realised that her personal and professional values did not resonate with the organisation's direction and future. She felt isolated and lost motivation to encourage and enact change. Instead she became burdened by the lack of direction and support and effective planning for future success. With her professional capacity inadequately sustained by the leadership, and without the necessary safeguards to retain her as a teacher with expertise and a middle leader gaining experience, she found her work

extremely fraught. Faced with an intolerable situation, she decided that the school was not heading in a direction that was congruent with her own expectations and values and she left teaching to invest her time and energy into her own family.

This narrative highlights an important aspect of reculturing (Fullan, 2001) to accommodate the new changes and new personnel. In this instance, the teacher's lack of expertise as a middle leader did not signal a lack of confidence or willingness to embrace new ways of doing things. In fact, she was able to cope with a demanding workload in the classroom and at leadership level. While she initially embraced the opportunity to lead and contribute to the leadership, she realised that the institution's vision, values and systems did not synchronise with her own ideals. Her input was not reaffirmed as part of the changing culture, so despite being a potentially valuable catalyst for change, she felt alienated from the school setting. School culture and climate is important in effecting improvement (Rhodes, Stokes, & Hampton, 2004) and guidance is necessary to determine shared or common values, systems of working together and ways of moving forward with consensus. These conditions do not appear to have existed in this situation. Even with the caring support of her mentor, this mentee's resilience was exhausted. Ms. A explains that she herself understands how coping with this sort of stress can be difficult to manage, saying that in her mentee's situation she would probably have done the same thing. She empathised with her mentee's feelings of frustration, inadequacy and disappointment. From an emotionally difficult space, this mentoring relationship grew a strong bond based on trust and a respect that the mentee would make her own decisions about her future. This relationship is characterised by the perception that, despite complex cultural differences, there is a common empathy for self and others that is reflected by Ms. A as the mentor (Stanley & Lincoln, 2005).

This narrative is a sad example of how school improvement can challenge even the most enthusiastic teachers and leaders. This teacher had the potential to be a catalyst for change as a staff member who embraced challenges and went the extra mile in the quest to improve her school environment. Her influence could have made a difference to other team members as they built internal capacity through her leadership and collaboration to embed new developments in an evolving school culture. Her strong example could have motivated other staff members to follow her lead. Instead, she

became a missed opportunity to showcase positive change when she opted to leave the profession. Her departure sends a message that school leadership is responsible for the care of staff and it is necessary to affirm those teachers who work really hard and who are committed to improving student learning by improving schools. Teachers who are guided by a moral compass and intrinsic motivation to improve education are not often, easily or quickly replaced. From Ms. A's perspective, she felt the loss of this member of staff personally and professionally, as she had encouraged her to reach beyond her initial scope of work and supported her in her HOD role. Her failure to impact positive change was a disappointment for her mentor as well. That mentoring relationships reflect authentic human aspects of relationship is evident in this narrative.

### **6.3.2 Ms. L: “My oven exploded!” – Challenging personal contexts**

The following narrative is representative of situations that make the personal work and domestic situations of education advisors living in a cross-cultural environment challenging. Ms. L explains her approach to working in an unfamiliar socio-cultural context and describes how she tries to manage and negotiate the complexities of being an expatriate adjusting to life in the Middle East.

*I think the school side of things is frustrating but as long as you work within the parameters provided, recognise that you can't fight it, but work with it, change what you can and leave alone what you can't change.*

*The more difficult part of people coming here is the personal side. It's difficult leaving your family and your home. For many education advisors, they are either coming with children and have lost their support structure from home to help with their children, or with people slightly older, we're leaving elderly parents behind so that part of it is very difficult.*

*When you get here, suddenly none of the things you are used to exist. You might get somebody coming to fix something at 1.00am in the morning during Ramadan because those are the hours of work. But it's just a matter of laughing and saying, well, that's the case. Just don't*

*get upset. My oven exploded! But it's going to get fixed one day. It might take ten months to get a new oven but it will come. It will come.*

Ms. L's anecdote exposes some of the personal and professional issues of being an education advisor living and working in a foreign country. She first discusses her understanding of the professional context and what it means to be an education advisor in this environment. She states that the work can be frustrating and can present difficulties. Ms. L is realistic about the strict parameters of the culture, accepting that there is little or no scope to challenge professional expectations and boundaries. Instead she advises that it is best to be aware of the context and learn how to contribute by understanding one's sphere of influence.

Ms. L cautions that it does not pay to intervene in things that are not a part of the work mandate. She suggests that by understanding the limitations inherent in being a foreigner she is able to better cope. This knowledge allows an education advisor to work within the constraints by sticking to the things that can change and leaving alone those which cannot.

On a personal level, Ms. L discusses the difficulty of adjusting to a foreign environment without family support and structures. She observes that education advisors across all age groups miss having close relatives and friends to help them adjust to a new way of life in a different country. She readily acknowledges the heavy weight of not being able to access personal support networks face-to-face when needed because of the distance. She talks about the lack of familiar things, objects and customs that people take for granted in their home country and how coping can be a case of having an open mind, a good sense of humour and a healthy dose of optimism and patience.

Ms. L references additional changes that impact daily life in a Middle-Eastern context where during the holy month of Ramadan, for example, expatriate life adjusts to accommodate the dominant religion. She describes service people arriving or calling in the very early hours of the morning because work times revert to the night to accommodate fasting during the day. She explains with a laugh that while it may be unusual for a Westerner to experience this in their home country, it is normal practice

in this part of the world and must be accepted. Immersing oneself in a new culture is demanding and requires keeping an open mind and being flexible to new ways of doing things. Judgments must be put on hold as one learns what is acceptable and appropriate.

Ms. L encourages a positive outlook to living and working in the UAE, explaining that it is best to get used to the incongruity between what one expects life to be and how life actually is as quickly as possible. She says that there is no point becoming upset by the differences between life as enjoyed in one's home country and life in an adopted nation. She emphasises that having patience, keeping calm, being positive and staying optimistic allow one to adjust to a new context more easily. These qualities also help one to manage difficult or trying situations with better outcomes. She recommends a sense of humour as a constructive way of managing difficult contextual issues and deflecting feelings of frustration. Her advice is fundamental to adjusting and surviving a new, foreign context.

Culture shock is a major factor in how expatriates adjust and cope with cultural differences. Some people cope well with these but misunderstandings are common when cultures are vastly different. Language and culture are significant aspects of being segregated and feeling isolated in a new country. Language especially plays a significant role in adjusting to a new culture. Learning the language gives an insight into little details of history and culture that may not otherwise be visible. Communication allows engagement between people and reduces the distance so that cultural transition becomes easier (MOE, 2007).

#### **6.4 Part 3: Mitigating organisational intricacies**

Part 3 presents the third subtheme, "Mitigating organisational intricacies", and draws on two narratives that reveal systemic and organisational challenges of working as an education advisor in a cross-cultural school improvement context. This part provides a snapshot of the complex layers that comprise school improvement work, located within the school, the wider education system, and PPP companies as organisations.

#### **6.4.1 Mr. M: “There is a long way to go yet” – An evolving organisational context**

The following narrative describes a key organisational practice that has significant bearing on the role, influence and authority of the principal and overarching authority of ADEC as the educational organisation. Mr. M observes that, despite the differences in professional influence of the ADEC principals and Western principals, the education system continues to evolve and improve, with remarkable progress made in an admirably short space of time.

*I think the biggest problem that he [the Principal] has, and he knows this, is that he hasn't got the authority to hire and fire staff like we have in our Western schools. There are a lot of staff here that are not of high quality and many of the Middle Eastern teachers are not formally qualified teachers. He knows that but he can't do anything about it. So, there's a lack of commitment there to the system in some ways like because those teachers are not Emiratis. It's not their children or sometimes, it is their children, but it's not their country. So, often I feel they're just coming to teach, to make their money and then go home and relax and come back the next day. There is not the same level of professionalism and integrity. So, he would really like that ability to be able to hire the best people that he can find but, up to this stage, you just have to take whoever ADEC gives you.*

*But we have to keep reminding ourselves that this country is only young, forty to forty-five years old, I think. In my country, the educational system is 150 years so there is a long time to go yet. We can see where it has improved in the last two and a half years but there's still so much more to do. There is a long way to go but there has been a lot of improvement in the two and a half years I have been here so we are gaining traction, with a lot more to do yet.*

Mr. M's account focuses on the position, status and authority of the principal in the UAE education system. He explains the frustrations of local principals who are unable to hire or dismiss teaching staff because of the organisational processes within ADEC,

whereas this is a typical expectation of the role of principals in Western educational systems in the UK, Australia and New Zealand. He observes that these processes have a far-reaching effect on the leadership of principals and the culture of Abu Dhabi schools. These principals are in a unique situation of working with teachers that they have not interviewed or hired themselves, and who may not necessarily be the best professionals for the job. Any changes in the status of staff, including the termination of contracts of underperforming staff, lies with ADEC and this process is also not always easy or simple for principals to enact.

When principals are entrusted to employ their own staff, they are perceived as dependable leaders who are empowered to make important professional decisions which align with their school's strategic vision and student needs. Knowing individual teachers' strengths and areas for improvement, principals can plan for different options in terms of curriculum delivery and classroom instruction and reshape or redirect teaching and learning. Furthermore, when principals are responsible for the hiring of their own teachers, the responsibility of vetting personnel, monitoring and appraising staff and organising professional learning is conducive to a more wholistic experience of leadership that contributes to the overall culture of a school.

Mr. M suggests from his position within a boys' school that male Arab expatriate teachers tend to show little commitment to local Emirati and other Arab students in public schools. He surmises that this may be because Arab expatriates can never acquire UAE citizenship. He feels that there is a distinct lack of care and support for students and has observed that some teachers perform their duties quite perfunctorily. He implicitly adds in his narrative that there can be a mercenary attitude in some teachers who are influenced by the large salaries, and that many others see teaching as an easy way to earn a good living even if there is little interest in doing a good job in the classroom. This general lack of integrity supports the notion that intrinsic motivation is lacking in some Arab expatriate teachers. Many have been hired simply to fill a need and this appears to be the full extent of their professional involvement.

In the past, it was not uncommon for teachers who were poorly trained to be employed from other Arab nations to work in local schools. In local boys' schools particularly, Emirati teachers are noticeably fewer or absent because not many Emirati males are

qualified teachers so other Arab expatriate males tend to make up the teaching personnel (Shaw et al., 1995; Badri & Al Khaili, 2014). Once unqualified or poorly-trained teachers are employed in schools, the responsibility of proving a teacher's lack of competence falls on the leadership of the school. However, the authority lies with ADEC as the government agency to terminate a teacher's contract or relocate the teacher to a different school as a remedy. In the West, all teachers must have formal teaching qualifications to work in schools. On the surface, ADEC's employment processes reflect a win-win situation, irrespective of the level of commitment and integrity evidenced on both sides of the transactions – teachers are hired and gainfully employed and the education system is adequately staffed. But the greater detriment becomes evident when schools are staffed with teachers who lack any commitment to the vision of ADEC, to their individual schools and to their students.

When assessing the functionality of ADEC's process of hiring teachers, it is evident that the system's mechanisms and approach do not encourage commitment in its expatriate staff. While this strategy serves different purposes, the caveat remains that hiring of qualified staff does not necessarily equate to finding competent or committed educators, regardless of country of origin. Some minimum requirement of formal teaching qualifications must be in place for all new appointees, and current staff who do not meet the grade should be able to improve their ranking through professional learning. This approach will promote in new staff positive attitudes towards teaching and learning in the schools where they are hired.

Despite his misgivings about ADEC principals not yet being able to employ their own teaching staff, Mr. M says that the education system continues to grow and evolve, and notes that many positive changes have been made over a relatively short time-span. With some systemic changes and adjustment, leaders may in the future be authorised to make changes to key personnel. This will have a powerful effect on principals as leaders able to actively shape the culture and climate of their schools. On a larger scale, a teaching profession that is based on sound educational principles will gradually take shape, as principals and qualified teachers contribute their cultural, educational, and professional understandings to the UAE melting pot. This view of principals as knowledgeable, empowered leaders supports the country's objective of a world-class education system.

#### **6.4.2 Ms. H: “I learned so much from speaking to them” – Mentoring the mentor**

In the next story, Ms. H describes the complexities of working in a PPP context with staff who are not fully competent in the role of education advisors, and considers the implications for mentees and other education advisors who are more experienced as mentors. She explains the need for robust human resource processes in the hiring of education advisor staff so that applicants demonstrate appropriate qualifications, knowledge and experience of the type of work prior to their employment. She also suggests that there is a need for ongoing practical and effective professional learning for education advisors who are employed by the PPP.

*I really feel that there should be some sort of ongoing, probably six months, new advisors support programme, and I think that's something that probably a curriculum specialist could do or else other successful advisors within the same subject. I think that it has got to be subject-specific. I don't think it can be done by a management advisor.*

*When I came I was taking over from an existing advisor so the team around me had had two years of figuring out the job. Whether they knew the job when they got here, they had had two years of experience so I felt really lucky because I learned so much from speaking to them. When I had questions or challenges or I didn't know how to deal with the situation, I could go and speak to somebody in my team and they would have so many useful insights for me. So, I really grew as an advisor because, by chance, I was placed in an existing school, whereas there are other advisors who are placed in teams that are all new. The team leader was new, the team members were new, the school was new, so everyone was kind of making it up as they went along.*

*So, from the experience that I had, I really think that advisors need that ongoing support in the job. The induction was well meant and useful to a degree but there are some things about this job that you just can't understand or think about until you've started doing it. So, I would like to see some kind of buddying system and follow-up perhaps over the*

*first semester of the job. So, there would be somebody to check in with regularly who could help you with details, guiding you in terms of what sort of paperwork you should be keeping, looking at how you're spending your time, looking at how you're setting targets and building relationships. Team members can do that to an extent but I think it would be most effective if it was done by a very successful peer in your subject area.*

*This year we had a new advisor join our team, and for whatever reason, I have had to support her to a large extent. She hasn't got the experience or the skills to do the job that she's been employed for. She should not even have been employed for the job but she has been and she has not received a large amount of support elsewhere. So, I have had to spend a lot of time at the start of the year with her and it confirmed to me again that new advisors need support and coaching on the job because it is a different kind of job to what we have done before. So, I do think it is an area the company needs to look at.*

In this story, Ms. H discusses the difficulties of working as an education advisor in a school improvement context. She talks about the need for support and oversight of staff who are new to the education advisor role or mentoring roles in school improvement work. She describes who she thinks make the best mentors as beginning education advisors and considers how those who have had limited experience in the role can be supported. She suggests that newly appointed education advisors should come to the position adequately prepared for the role and have a good understanding of the work it entails.

Ms. H talks about her own placement into an existing PPP school and the impact of this on her own PL as she grew into her role as a new education advisor. She explains that as a novice she was able to discuss work issues she experienced with other more experienced staff. She notes the value of being able to access people who had had greater knowledge than she did of the context and culture, not necessarily because they had had previous experience in this role but simply because many had been working in the role for longer.

She describes how supported she felt in her own knowledge and growth as an education advisor by being able to talk with these more experienced colleagues, and believes that solid experience is necessary for the demands of this role. She acknowledges that learning from others has led to significant personal and professional growth for herself. Based on her own experiences of being a novice in a team of experienced education advisors, Ms. H queries the effectiveness of education advisor teams whose members are all new to the Middle Eastern school improvement context and cultural context. She suggests that teams who have a mixture of experience in this unique context are possibly better prepared to lead school improvement and change initiatives as education advisors.

It is worth noting that the circumstances of this PPP initiative were a unique and ambitious plan for education reform on several levels. The probability of being able to employ staff who had had prior knowledge of working under such conditions, and in such a specific setting, was very slim. For many Western educators who came to work in the Middle East, this was an intrepid journey, both personally and professionally. Many new employees had literally just left the classroom themselves and entering the world of education reform in a cross-cultural context was a risk-taking exercise. With education advisor roles and PPP operator expectations loosely defined, Western education advisors had to learn on the job by adjusting their own expectations, figuring out the best ways to make a difference to the staff they mentored and aligning to new expectations within their personal and school lives. The context provided a new opportunity for education advisors, even those with some knowledge of coaching and mentoring, to become more adept mentors as they led professional learning in a second-language, cross-cultural school improvement context. It is perhaps idealistic to imagine that more staff might have come better equipped to work under the conditions of the PPP but it is important to also recognise that even education advisors must start at the beginning. Ms. H's suggestion that it would have been preferable if Western teachers who were hired as education advisors were considered for this type of work on the basis of a more rigorous set of criteria and qualities.

Judging from her own education advisor experiences, Ms. H believes that the post of an education advisor is inherently different from that of a teacher and requires a different skill-set and knowledge. She suggests that the education advisor position

could have been much improved with a comprehensive induction programme and ongoing support from a subject or curriculum specialist. As part of induction, it would be useful to consider what aspects of the culture should be included as part of cultural orientation. Also, education advisors should have a good understanding of the context before they can lead learning. In a second-language context, learning some of the key basic phrases in the local language would have been particularly useful for making a connection with local teachers. Ms. H recommends a possible buddy system where education advisors could discuss work-related issues. As an example, she discusses the employment of a colleague who was unprepared and unskilled for the position of education advisor and the impact that helping her had on the workloads of education advisor colleagues who offered their support.

Ms. H's narrative highlights an important issue: human resource management needs to be more efficient if it is to hire the right person for the job. Every PPP operator needs to ensure that the staff employed have relevant qualifications, appropriate experience and suitable expertise for the specialised position of education advisor. Applicants must be carefully screened to ensure that they have the requisite skills and expertise to work in a highly demanding school improvement context. This suggests that human resource personnel too must have a solid understanding of the needs of the job if they are to appoint staff able to make a positive impact on school improvement and education reform.

Another key aspect is ensuring that those who are appointed as education advisors keep up to date with their own professional learning. When the education advisor team is functioning at a high level collectively and individually, the prospect for mentees and schools is hopeful. However, if some members of the team are ineffective leaders, mentees may feel disillusioned and unmotivated. PPP operators should therefore attest that those hired are supported by strong professional networks that are easily accessible as part of the PPP organisation. The appraisal of education advisor staff should apply just as it does for teachers so that underperforming staff are supported for improvement.

## 6.5 Summary and conclusion

This chapter sets out the second broad theme, “Responding to context”, and the various approaches to adapting and advancing in challenging cross-cultural and organisational contexts are presented through the narratives. It is written in three parts to reflect three different subthemes, “Managing school complexities”, “Navigating personal trials” and “Mitigating organisational practices”, with each part presenting a selection of contextual complexities that reveal the experiences and observations of education advisors.

In Part 1, the subtheme “Managing school complexities” explained that education advisors responded to various school improvement issues by assessing the environment, circumstances and issues before determining the best approaches to employ to overcome obstacles and reduce challenges within the school context. By addressing difficulties for teachers within the school context, cross-cultural mentoring relationships were able to function more effectively.

In Part 2, the subtheme, “Navigating personal trials” discussed the different ways in which education advisors responded to their personal contexts as a key determinant of how they would cope in difficult situations. Education advisors learned to develop resilience and nurture patience as part of understanding their life and work in an unfamiliar culture and foreign context.

In Part 3, the subtheme, “Mitigating organisational practices” revealed the assorted experiences and accompanying impact of organisational and systemic constructs on education advisors in their school improvement work. These influences, although external to the school context in which education advisors were employed, were nevertheless often particularly difficult to overcome or negotiate, and in particular, significantly impacted Arab-expatriate staff. However, through the development of strong interpersonal relationships, education advisors were able to offer support through the mentoring relationships and sought to address issues at a higher level where possible.

Phenomenologically, this chapter signals the phenomenon of relating to a place in time and the concept of *Dasein* (being-in-the-world), or “the situated meaning of a human

in the world” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 346). *Dasein* focuses on an already existing world and how people function in, relate to and are immersed in their ways- of-being in that world (Giles, 2008; Lavery, 2003). When we understand phenomena, we do so by beginning with our own perspectives, gleaned from a familiar place, world or context that is recognisable and understandable through our personal experience. The meanings of those experiences are shaped by our interactions with others, therefore, as individuals we embrace multiple realities based on our own lived experiences and within our individual situations and life contexts. Accordingly, no objective reality or singular truth can result from individuals’ lived experiences (Munhall & Boyd, 1993), because we are always in the process of evolving and changing as we engage with ourselves and others. Through this process, we make sense of our experiences by learning and thinking. Thus, the notion of existence according to Heidegger (1927) is temporal and we shape who we are in the development process. In the case of the education advisors, they are fully engaged in making sense of their experiences as they lead PL in a cross-cultural school improvement context.

Mentoring is typically associated with relationships yet it is the context that shapes and impacts mentoring relationships. Cox (2003) states that:

Every relationship is the context for other relationships. Context is influenced by cultures and subcultures, organisational mores, socio-economic conditions, the physical environments of home and work, historical and generational effects, social and peer associations, political and religious beliefs, etc. (p. 9).

Thus, the way we relate to others and the world around us reflects who we are and what we have learned through our coexistence. Responding to context enables an understanding of relationship.

This chapter outlined Theme 2, “Responding to context”, which focused on how education advisors approached different contexts, viz. within the school environment, in the home setting and within the larger educational organisations and contexts of ADEC and the PPP. Throughout the data set, it was clear that the context has had an impact on the shape and direction of mentoring relationships between education advisors and teachers. As the participants discuss and describe different contextual complexities, it is evident that their various experiences reflect intricately-tuned

contexts that impact their work as education advisors. Education advisors were compelled to respond to the context by further developing their interpersonal relationships to understand how context influences and shapes the mentoring relationship and the direction of teachers' PL for school improvement this could point to. These narratives show that such complexities can be managed sensitively and negotiated by education advisors to build partnerships, although this was not always successfully completed. While each narrative is distinct and offers a unique experience, the data analysis indicated that understanding and responding to the context when engaging in cross-cultural interactions are imperative to the successful outcomes of school improvement initiatives.

The following chapter presents Theme 3, "Building cultural connections", in three parts.

# Chapter 7

## Research Findings and Discussion

### Theme 3: Building cultural connections

#### 7.1 Introduction

Chapter 7 examines Theme 3, “Building cultural connections”. Data analysis indicated that education advisors manage cultural matters as part of the work of leading teachers’ PL and school improvement in a variety of ways. The analysis showed that for a majority of participants bridging culture was important to understand people, develop relationships and make progress with the school improvement agenda. They did this in a number of ways. Participants reflected that their experiences allowed them to bridge cultural boundaries by learning about others and their unique ways of being, doing and thinking. This impacted the way they developed themselves, as people and professionals, and building cultural connections is a key element of the phenomenon of mentoring in a cross-cultural school improvement context.

This third theme responds to the main research question, “How do education advisors negotiate PL relationships in a cross-cultural school improvement context?”, and the second subsidiary question, “How are participants’ cultural differences managed to effect school improvement?”. The first subsidiary question, which asks “How does the context influence the school improvement work of education advisors?” is also relevant because aspects of culture are often directly related to context.

Heidegger’s (1927) phenomenological notion suggests that we can better understand how people exist, behave and cooperate in the world when we understand their backgrounds (Laverty, 2003). Gadamer’s (1975) concept of prejudice or pre-judgment adds that people understand each other from their own perspectives, which emerge from how they understand their own contexts and personal beliefs. This forms the basis of an individual’s frame of reference. As individuals’ preconceptions are further negotiated to develop into different, improved and richer understandings, there is a shift that is referred to as a “fusion of horizons” (Gadamer, 1975). For myself, the “fusion of horizons” has been a new avenue allowing me to think and rethink my prior knowledge

as I have sought to understand participants' views and perceptions. I accept that people are not unconnected from the social and cultural contexts into which they are born and understand that their experiences of the world influence their interpretations of reality. I also know and accept that the social and cultural contexts people are born into may change and evolve to impact new ways of being, doing and thinking. In my own re-thinking of my pre-understandings, preconceptions and prejudices through this study, I have uncovered other, improved and deeper understandings of others and myself.

As in Chapters 5 and 6, this final theme, "Building cultural connections", is organised into three parts. Each part introduces a subtheme and explores two narratives to explain different cultural interactions that affected the life and work of education advisors and highlight how our reality is influenced by personal and individual ways of being that stem from deeper connections to culture and place. The stories depict the ways in which the participants developed cultural connections and constructed cultural bridges to enhance their personal and professional relationships with local staff. This theme aims to show how the education advisors built cultural connections to reveal the ontological meaning of the phenomenon of mentoring in a cross-cultural school improvement context.

In Part 1, the narratives highlight how "Connecting through language" is essential for communication and connection across cultures. In Part 2, the narratives in "Unearthing cultural idiosyncrasies" expand on unique cultural features that education advisors discovered or negotiated that might support or negate their professional work in this context. In Part 3, the narratives in "Embracing cultural exchange" exemplify some profound differences between living in the West and the Middle East and show how a knowledge and understanding of Arabic cultural norms can be beneficial. Collectively, the subthemes depict a range of cultural complexities that form part of school improvement work in this context and underline the significant role of culture and the need to bridge cultural divides for improved personal and professional relationships.

## **7.2 Part 1: Connecting through language**

Part 1 focuses on aspects of communication and language in relation to the first subtheme, "Connecting through language". This subtheme exemplifies the need for people to communicate on a human level as part of developing a deeper understanding

of others and cementing strong interpersonal relationships. In this school improvement context, connecting and communicating through language was essential for engagement and involvement.

**7.2.1 Mr. S: “...that we are making the attempt has greater significance” – Learning culture through language**

In this narrative, Mr. S relates his experience of learning Arabic language to connect with his Arab colleagues. He explains how this small but significant gesture had a lasting impact on his professional and personal relationships within the school context.

*The language is something I have really enjoyed playing with and trying my best to learn it. There is a language section in the newspaper magazine every Saturday and every week I try and learn the word. The best one all year was “Kieshmook”. It means, and they [the Emiratis] said, this is the word you say if you shake their hand and you pull them towards you and they said to just look into their eyes and their eyes will light up.*

*And so, I went to school on Sunday, and this was a year after I had been there and shook hands and pulled him and said “Kieshmook”. They all thought it was wonderful! So, for the first week I was doing this “Kieshmook” and that relationship-thing just strengthens. It was wonderful. They loved it, you know, so I do it all the time and I love learning a few words like that! So, the language is important. I mean it would be wonderful if I knew more words and things like that and then someone like [mentions names of two education advisors] is able to pick up the language so quickly. I’ve never been good at languages but I think they respect the fact that I enjoy trying to learn new words from their language.*

*Our team is currently trying to learn some Arabic in an attempt to bridge the gap, ever so slightly. We have a lesson a week on average from our translator and it, more than anything else, goes a long way towards building a better relationship with the teachers. Although we*

*are still not yet capable of stringing a comprehensible sentence together, the fact that the local teachers know that we are making the attempt has greater significance.*

*However, the Arab staff are very protective of their language. One guy, in particular, says that he will not speak English to me although he can speak English very well. And he tells me that he doesn't want to speak English to me but wants to teach me Arabic so that I can speak to him in Arabic. So, we always have this little interchange once or twice a week about that.*

This narrative is about having the willingness to learn a new language as part of learning about people and connecting with their culture. It highlights the idea that learning a foreign language has many personal benefits and professional advantages for the learner, particularly as a means of communication and cultural interaction. Mr. S relates his own experience of how he was able to build and strengthen cultural relationships by learning new Arabic words each week and applying them in the school context with local Emirati and Arab-expatriate staff. He explains that he had always enjoyed good relationships with his Arab colleagues but after learning new Arabic words from the column of a magazine in the national newspaper each weekend he was able to use this as a talking point with them more easily. He recounts a heart-warming story of how after a whole year of working with his Arab colleagues, he was able to increase his cultural knowledge and extend his friendships with local Emiratis by learning how to use one particularly special word in the correct context. From his weekly reading, Mr. S discovered a single word with strong association to an important cultural norm that signalled more than a mere greeting, being in fact a respectful salutation for an esteemed friend. By learning more about the context of the word and how to use it appropriately, he was able to elevate his own status as someone who had genuinely invested in Arabic language, culture and people. His newly-acquired cultural knowledge took his collegiality with his Emirati colleagues to a higher level as he looked for ways to connect and interact.

Learning a new language includes learning how to interact with people from that language's culture because it is necessary to understand their cultural norms, skills,

attitudes and beliefs for intercultural competence (Byram, Golubeva, Han, & Wagner, 2017). Language and culture are powerfully connected. Mr. P decided to learn Arabic language specifically to bridge the gap in communication. Individuals in cross-cultural contexts can adjust psychologically and socio-culturally by using strategies and skills to navigate social-cultural obstacles (Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, & Todman, 2008). One contemporary model of intercultural adaptation involves “culture learning” (Zhou et al., 2008), which impacts behaviour through the development of culture-specific knowledge, language and social skills (Zhou et al., 2008).

Brown (2000) believes that language and culture are closely linked: “A language is a part of a culture and a culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture” (p. 177). Mr. S’s language experience was so compelling that he said during his interview that if he had time in the Middle East again, he would enrol in Arabic classes so that he could communicate with others to learn more about the culture and people.

Mr. S understood that learning Arabic language was an effective way to understanding Arabic culture and to connect with Arab people; his efforts enabled him to develop new relationships and strengthen bonds of friendship. Mr. S talks about how appreciative the teaching staff were when the education advisors began Arabic lessons, even though their progress was slow and laborious. He believes that this gesture of trying to learn Arabic gained the respect of the Arabic teachers and, to some extent, their trust too. The teachers felt that the foreigners were taking an interest in their language and trying to understand their culture. These actions went a long way to enabling the advisors to be accepted, trusted and included by the staff. For the education advisors, learning Arabic was a new learning experience that allowed them to connect with each other as colleagues and to strengthen their own collaboration and collegiality as a team through their collective learning experiences. Looking in from the outside, Mr. S reflects that it must have been beneficial for the teaching staff to see the advisory staff as a group of learners too.

Language and culture are inseparable; language communicates people’s thoughts and beliefs based on their notions of culture, and culture is embedded in the language that is

used (Byram et al., 2017). We interpret messages' meanings according to how we perceive ourselves and others, and the ways in which we construct and interpret messages are attributed to our cultural membership. People of different cultures attach different meanings to messages and competent communication is not simply a matter of language proficiency in the exchange of messages; it involves an exchange of meaning through communication which is based on cultural understanding (Janík, 2016).

Cognitive responses are crucial in intercultural adaptation and learning culturally-relevant social skills for socio-cultural adaptations (Zhou et al., 2008). A competent intercultural speaker is one who can interact with others, accept their worldviews, and mediate between differing perceptions (Byram, Zarate, & Neuner, 1997; Byram & Fleming, 1998; Janík, 2014, 2016). Intercultural communication is considered competent when there is minimal misunderstanding and confusion. There must be an appreciation of differences and acceptance of others; Byram and Fleming (1998) refer to this as an ability "to interact with others, to accept other perspectives and perceptions of the world, to mediate between different perspectives" (p. 5) whereby we learn to recognise others' meanings and realities. Language is therefore crucial to the transmission of culture as people participate, describe, interpret and respond to culture and share their ideas and beliefs with others (Moran, 2001).

In a country where English is not the main language, knowing and understanding the local language has distinct advantages for communication and understanding what and how people think and feel. Some Arab teachers felt very protective of their mother tongue and believed that by bringing English into the schools, Western staff were a threat to their culture, way of life and language. When a local or national language is not spoken, there is a perceived threat to national unity (Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010). However, seeing newcomers learning Arabic countered this position, making the teachers reconsider such a position.

One Arabic teacher, who spoke good English, emphasised that he had no need to learn English and believed that Arabic should be the medium of communication between teachers and education advisors. This type of exchange implies that the teacher did not want to place greater importance on learning English over Arabic, as a matter of honour

and principle, and shows that there was some apprehensiveness that English as a global language would begin to assume dominance over Arab culture and society. The exchange between the teacher and Mr. S demonstrates the power dynamic that sometimes comes into play in cultural interactions.

Although learning a new language can be challenging, increased communication brings people together and supports social cohesion. Conversely, not being able to speak a locally significant language limits communication and constrains social inclusion. Learning a new language is a positive and respectful way of learning about others as the status of one language is not prioritised over another. In this narrative, Mr. S explained that knowing some Arabic language helped break down interpersonal barriers and was also an important part of working effectively with staff and students. Learning Arabic had other benefits. When staff saw that education advisors were dedicated to learning their language, they were appreciative and respectful of the effort, and became more open to accepting them as newcomers. Westerners, by the very act of learning Arabic language, become cultural ambassadors who are able to acquire and relate both Western and Arabic culture to others. Learning a new language functions as a linguistic bridge – a person exposed to a different language absorbs new cultural norms and different ways of thinking, being and doing, and also gains richer knowledge of their own culture. They are enabled to relate to new people and appreciate other cultures by developing understanding and appreciation of the similarities and differences of between cultures (Byram & Fleming, 1998).

### **7.2.2 Mr. R: “Sometimes we talk past each other” – Communication is crucial**

The following narrative discusses the significance of communication using a range of methods, including the services of a translator, and emphasises that clear, open communication is essential in cross-cultural interactions. The participant explains that while it can sometimes be difficult to connect with others from a different culture who speak a different language, it can also be rewarding. Mr. R believes that a willingness to learn the language of others sends a subliminal message that the language and culture are valued and respected. By extension, the individuals and group are valued too.

*While we do have a translator and an ESL specialist on our team,*

*communication would be one of the biggest issues to deal with. I make an effort to speak slower than I usually would but not too slow so as to sound condescending. I do use a pen to write down words that are proving to be difficult to be understood and we have provided all teachers with an English-Arabic dictionary. I sometimes resort to drawing what I need to explain. I also use these situations to draw the attention of the teacher to the fact that I am catering to different learning styles when I do write down or draw something.*

*I don't want a translator with me. I feel the translator hinders the staff's development by making them use their Arabic to translate into English. It may be slower but it will be better and I'm prepared to be patient and try to use words, visuals, or anything I can to get a message across. Sometimes there are mixed messages and sometimes we talk past each other. That's part of what we have to do. Using a translator is not always successful because a translator puts a third point of view in. Not always translating directly can be confusing. I use other teachers and that helps their English as well, and I'm learning Arabic as well. Between us, we're getting there.*

*The Principal and I got on really well and he has very good English skills so I didn't need a translator to be with us all the time. We could sit down and just discuss anything and that was just a pleasure, and maybe a big advantage compared to most schools where normally the Principal's level of English may not have been as good as my Principal's. I was lucky in that respect.*

This narrative exemplifies the importance of effective communication in a cross-cultural school improvement professional setting, where accuracy is crucial to common understanding. Language is the most important way of communicating, and in the context of this school improvement programme, where Arabic is the main language, translators, translation and interpretation are all essential for communication between Arab teachers and Western education advisors. Translation therefore makes communication between cultures possible (Bahumaid, 2017; Mares, 2012). Bahumaid

(2017) offers a definition of translation, viewing it “as a cross-cultural encounter in which the translator acts as an intercultural mediator” (p. 25).

In this narrative, Mr. R discusses his approaches to removing the language barrier and communicating with Arabic speakers. He says he sometimes uses pen and paper to draw rather than write, or consults a bilingual dictionary. Mr. R emphasises that he tries to speak slowly to allow time for English second-language speakers to grasp what he is saying but not so slow as to cause offence by appearing patronising. He explains that when he communicates using a different language he sees this as a teaching and learning moment and as an opportunity to cater for different learning styles. Good communication takes time. When communication skills are lacking, people talk past each other in the translation, and this can be frustrating. Mr. R explains that he was prepared to be patient and take time to ensure that he was conveying precisely the messages he intended.

Mr. R discusses the use of translators. He considers that while there is a place for a translator’s services, these are not without their own ramifications. Translation, sometimes referred to as interpreting or interpretation, can be written or oral (Munday, 2001). However, translation is not just a mere replacement or substitution of words and expressions from one language to another but a sophisticated means of communication. Language used to communicate across cultures must be kept simple, clear and coherent, especially in a fast-changing school improvement environment, where staff need to have messages communicated in an honest and open manner to ease their concerns and anxieties (Al-Saidi, 2013).

In Mr. R’s case he found that using a translator hindered Arabic teachers from learning English because they perceived no need to extend their own English-language skills, which was one of the goals of the ADEC-PPP initiative. Another major concern for Mr. R was how accurately school improvement initiatives were being communicated via translation. Translation between two languages can never be exact; and in the case of translation between Arabic, a Semitic language and English, an Indo-European language, inherent differences make them culturally unrelated and “other”. To successfully translate between English and Arabic linguistic systems, it is essential that translators are completely familiar with both worldviews and languages (Al-Saidi,

2013; Mares, 2012).

Another obstacle that Mr. R had experienced was that translators sometimes, intentionally or unintentionally, interpolated their own viewpoints and so altered the intent of the original message; and of course, inaccurate translation means messages and meanings are likely to be misconstrued or misunderstood, leading to further difficulties. This had implications for school improvement plans and processes because staff did not always fully comprehend the direction and intent of the strategies.

Mares (2012) asserts that “language is an integral part of culture because the vocabulary of a language derives its meaning from its culture” (p. 71); thus, translation offers new ways of thinking. Accordingly, the relationship between language and culture must take precedence in the training of interpreters and translators. They must possess a secure cross-cultural understanding if they are to grasp and convey implied meanings, connotations and other language-specific expressions and vocabularies (Dweik & Suleiman, 2013; Mares, 2012).

Translators add a third party to the communication equation and in this context, this location positioned them as powerful central figures who bridged two cultures. As mediators of language, translators negotiate communication between cultures and Mares (2012) observes that:

Through translation, translators become transmitters of different civilizations. Inevitably to some extent, any translation will reflect the translator's own mental and cultural outlook, despite the best of impartial intentions. Every translator has her/his own beliefs, knowledge and attitudes (p. 71).

The school improvement context of this study required that translators had a thorough understanding of both Arabic and Western cultural norms. When there is an understanding of people's cultural background and how they use language in the context of their cultural affiliation, it is possible to understand how people think and function (Al-Saidi, 2013). Cultural differences and discrepancies pose greater difficulties for translators than linguistic features because the true complexity of language is often revealed in translation (Mares, 2012). Every language is distinctive

and unique to the people who speak, interpret and understand it based on their own particular worldviews and experiences. A translator who is able to interact with different cultures confidently is better able to manage cultural differences and mitigate problems in English/Arabic translation (Dweik & Suleiman, 2013; Mares, 2012). This view of translators sees them as enriching our cultural and social capital by communicating new ways of thinking to others.

In the specific context of English-to-Arabic translation problems typically occur with culture-bound vocabulary, i.e. words that are embedded in one culture yet unknown in another (Harvey, 2003), and cultural gaps. When translating cultural expressions, inexperienced translators may encounter unfamiliar and ambiguous cultural expressions or not be able to achieve equivalence in the other language (Dweik & Suleiman, 2013). To address cultural gaps, strong cross-cultural awareness and experience are essential if translators are accurately to convey the intended meaning or to find the equivalent language by compensating for this gap by understanding the challenges and trying to locate the most appropriate or suitable translation in such instances (Al-Shawi & Mahadi, 2012; Al-Saidi, 2013; Bani-Younes, 2015). Compensation is a translation strategy that enables a translator to find suitable equivalents to convey the intended, true meaning as closely as possible (Al-Saidi, 2013). Where there are no appropriate translation equivalents between languages and vocabulary, Mares (2012) suggests that:

The translator should decide whether to use the original term to preserve the essence of meaning of the culture-bound word or to use an appropriate translation equivalent. Borrowings can often be used to fill lexical gaps but they sometimes need an explanatory gloss. Sometimes, a translation equivalent shows links between languages and can bridge the lexical gap between the source and target language. (p. 76)

A culturally aware and knowledgeable translator will be able to translate intended meanings precisely (Al-Saidi, 2013). Mr. R recommends that the translator role be shared with other staff members who have a sound knowledge of English. In this case, English teachers were given the opportunity to be used as translators, and this empowered them as staff who knew and conveyed important information within the context of the school. Sharing the burden of communication across different staff also

implied that the official translator was not the only person with knowledge about the changes and challenges of school improvement. It also ensured that information had to be consistently and carefully communicated by all staff who acted as translators for the advisory team. These translation opportunities gave English teachers a new sense of confidence that their knowledge and skills were being acknowledged and utilised. For many of them the opportunity to practise with first language English speakers improved their English language skills considerably. Other staff members viewed these interactions with PPP staff and their colleagues as positive collaborations, which served to improve relational trust and communication. It reiterated the notion that school improvement was a collective effort and that the PPP staff were committed to using the teaching staff's existing skills to galvanise school improvement initiatives.

Mr. R observes that he was lucky that he was able to communicate easily with the Principal because of the latter's good English skills. Uncommon in the UAE school context (at the time this research was conducted), this ability to communicate in English allowed the two of them to make headway with plans and proposals which were part of the school improvement agenda. He recognises that he was fortunate to be able to discuss change strategies directly with the school leadership without having to resort to a third person translating because this afforded a more authentic experience of sharing, discussion and mentoring. Mr. R observes that it is important for leaders to be able to communicate with each other one to one, without translation. However, he believes that learning Arabic if working in similar contexts would add significantly to an education advisor's skillset, in the same way as learning English would be beneficial for an Arabic speaker; clear, open and transparent communication can be eased and the responsibility would rest with both parties without the involvement of a translator.

### **7.3 Part 2: Unearthing cultural idiosyncrasies**

Part 2 represents the second subtheme, "Unearthing cultural idiosyncrasies". Both narratives in this section emphasise that all cultures have unique customs that can impact cross-cultural interactions. Knowing and understanding cultural nuances enables positive communication with people who come from cultures that are different from our own.

### **7.3.1 Ms. D: “A direct line to the most important and powerful people” – The power of “Wasta”**

In the transcript that follows, the participant describes the importance of knowing and understanding the school and community context. Ms. D discusses the powerful connections that exist within the school environment and the impact that this has on the school improvement agenda and PPP personnel.

*It's a rural school in a very powerful community and quite vociferous. The late Sheik Zayed's wife, one of his wives, Sheikha Fatima, came from the village. So, these people have got a direct line to the most important and powerful people in the UAE, and I think, more importantly, a lot of the staff in the schools may be extremely well-connected. So, you have people who are very powerful in their own community, and I don't care how much content knowledge you come with, unless you understand how those relationships work and how powerful those people are in their own context, it's really quite difficult to work.*

*I think, for us coming in as outsiders, that's the thing we lack the most – that we have all of these quite powerful people within the school context. That said, I mean there are lots of expatriate teachers there, as well, who are Palestinians with Jordanian passports. We have a lot of Egyptians and we have Jordanians there and some Syrians so there's a very large Middle Eastern staff. But there is a big difference between the power that they know that they don't have and they're very aware of the power that the locals have, in particular, the locals from this setting.*

*This kind of position and power can dramatically affect, adversely affect, the Public-Private Partnership. I think that it has. I don't think anybody's job is safe. I came in at the very beginning of the programme in November 2006 and this PPP had only begun in August. So, I came in three months into this programme and when I came in, there was an absolute resistance to it going into place. There is now less of a resistance to the change that people know is underway. They are more*

*accepting of it. They know it is going to happen. But just the same, they're an incredibly powerful people and if they resist the change, then you've got to be able to manipulate and work your way around that.*

*You do that by establishing relationships. It has to be earned because when you think about what they do and the way they work here, they work on relationships and deep respect. There's a need to show them a deep respect and there needs to be a willingness to work with their understanding of what values are. They have a very different value system to us and these people are not used to working really hard and they don't want to. I had a conversation with a couple of the senior management in the last week and they think the life we lead in the West is horrendous. They don't want what we've got, even though it seems like they're really moving towards that. So, you've got to find a balance where people are happily learning but you've got to get them into the classroom in the first place to ensure that they happily learn. It is very difficult and I think that is where the relationship building is so important.*

In this narrative, Ms. D describes the local school community that she works in as connected to power because of their relationships and ties to the ruling family. She explains that those who enjoy these influential relationships, described by the Arabic word, *wasta*, could be any member of staff with the ability to convey their ideas about school improvement initiatives to the highest levels in government. *Wasta* is a social custom that is closely linked to Arabic culture (Jenio, 2018; Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2014) and has several connotations. In the past, the term represented a person of influence who acted as a mediator by supporting family conflicts and disputes (Berger et al., 2014; Mohantick, 2017). The word also represents strong familial connections (Hutchings & Weir, 2006; Jenio, 2018) and influential social contacts (Cunningham & Sarayrah, 1993; Tucker & Buckton-Tucker, 2014). Using their powerfully connected personal, social and business networks, people use *wasta* as a tool to advantage themselves. Cunningham and Sarayrah (1993) state that “understanding *wasta* is key to understanding decisions in the Middle East, for *wasta* pervades the culture of all Arab countries and is a force in every significant decision.... *Wasta* is a way of life” (p.

209).) *Wasta* is commonly used to attain preferential treatment and *wasta* within organisations can influence practices and has the potential for abuse (Al-Enzi, Rothwell, & Cooke, 2017; Cunningham & Sarayrah, 1993).

Ms. D believes that through their powerfully connected networks, staff at her school are able to impact and influence the whole community, including the direction of the school, and the employment of PPP staff and other Arab expatriate staff members. She indicates that, by comparison, Arab expatriate staff have little or no influence and are highly aware of their own secondary positions and limited status within the school and social context. Arab expatriate staff do not occupy senior leadership positions in UAE schools and have no influence in school policy and direction. Like Arab expatriate staff, PPP staff, who are mostly from the West, are just another layer of employees. Although not directly employed by the government, PPP staff have some standing as operators in schools although they too are somewhat limited in their influence and authority as compared to the citizens.

Ms. D emphasises that understanding how relationships are formed and exist is vital for a foreigner working in the local context. She stresses that positioning in the existing social hierarchy is important in this culture and it is necessary to always be mindful of who holds power. She believes that no matter how knowledgeable one may be, this will have no impact or value in this context if one does not understand how to engage in deeply respectful relationships with local Emirati people. Conversely, she suggests that, in some cases, it's not so much what you know but who you know that can influence outcomes, alluding to the concept of *wasta* and its influence.

Ms. D explains that it is imperative for education advisors to navigate sensitively around school improvement initiatives, especially if there is resistance to ideas and plans. She talks about the resistance to educational change that began with the initial programme of school improvement (in which she was involved) and she feels that people's ideas have not changed very significantly since then. She acknowledges that there seems to be more acceptance of the change agenda in general as time has passed; however, she still cautions that the PPP agenda could be seriously jeopardised by the influence of powerful people within the school context if they are opposed to change initiatives. She feels that local people will make their dissatisfaction known to higher

authorities who can then put pressure on PPP operators. She adds that there is also the threat of job security for education advisors, as there is for Arab expatriate teachers, and suggests that no-one is safe from those in those positions of *wasta*.

As a resource, *wasta* shares knowledge, builds relationships, establishes connections and impacts performance. It is closely linked to the concept of social capital (Al-Enzi et al., 2017) as it is crucial to knowledge-sharing; yet it can be problematic in this context because *wasta* tends to influence knowledge-sharing negatively, especially when *wasta* affects personal security and safety, sows mistrust amongst colleagues and within organisations, inhibits workers' and organisational performance, promotes unfair and unequal competition and accesses private or business information unethically (Barnett, Yandle, & Naufa, 2013; Al-Enzi et al., 2017). Ms. D advises that the best way to work around such challenges is through respectful and trusting relationships with local people. This involves developing strong interpersonal relationships as discussed in Chapter 5. She believes that if the PPP staff are trusted they will have a better chance of advancing the school improvement agenda. She says that this trust must first be earned, suggesting that the PPP operators' reputation must be validated by their actions before local people will accept and allow their authority to make changes. This includes knowing and understanding local values, beliefs and customs in order to understand how local people think and feel, by engaging in what is often referred to as "culture learning" (Zhou et al., 2008).

Ms. D's view, based on conversations with local staff, is that Emiratis do not share a Western notion of success nor do they aspire to Western ideals because they are not accustomed to working hard and have no desire to do so. She explains further that the senior staff in her school understand how the school improvement changes will impact their personal and professional lives and know that they do not desire the Western lifestyle, which they consider repugnant. She suggests that this may be a reason for their resistance to school improvement changes but adds that they may not always be able to have an impact on how their lives are being changed as the momentum of global forces carries them along. Arabs view the West with mixed feelings. While they may admire its technology, education systems and affluence, they have negative sentiments in response to historic colonialism and the negativity and superiority displayed by some Westerners towards Arabs (Almaney & Alwan, 1982).

Communication between mentors and mentees can be a significant challenge, particularly when there are contrary or conflicting ideas, opinions and beliefs (Bradbury & Koballa, 2008; Stanulis & Russel, 2000). When mentors and mentees share personal and professional values and beliefs, relational trust is developed (Bradbury & Koballa, 2008; Chaudhry-Lawton et al., 1992; Smagorinsky et al., 2004; Timperley & Robinson, 2002). Successful cross-cultural mentors recognise and accept that others hold different values and beliefs, and to impose one's own worldview on others is detrimental to the relationship (Megginson & Clutterbuck, 2005). As change agents, education advisors must be aware of the dramatically changing reality to which the whole school community is being exposed, and use positive relationships to ease people through their anxieties as changes unfold and evolve. As education advisors plan for change, these cultural expectations must be considered in the delivery of new school improvement initiatives. Fears or concerns about the direction forward can then be allayed through respectful and trustworthy working partnerships.

### **7.3.2 Mr. V: “It’s similar but different” - Building relationships over a cup of tea**

In the following excerpt, the participant tries to describe the seemingly simple yet in fact highly complex nature of building relationships in the Arab world, explaining how small rituals and gestures can take on a major cultural significance in a Middle Eastern context. Mr. V talks about how the offer of a cup of tea is an invitation to establish closer relationships with others and an opportunity to get to know colleagues better.

*I think a large part of building relationships in this part of the world is linked to the food and cups of tea. So, I found that, at the very beginning, when we tried to find and make appointments or meet with the heads of Departments or specific teachers from the faculties, whenever we went into the staff rooms, we would be offered a cup of tea. And whether you accepted that cup of tea and sat down and became a part of the actual tea-making ceremony went a significant way to indicating whether you were accepted into their group and whether they would sit down and share information with you. So, if you asked a question and you left without accepting a cup of tea, you'd get a very straightforward, simple answer but if you sat down and enjoyed a cup of tea with them, then*

*you'd get more than just what you'd asked for. This was seen as part of investing time and getting to know them better. It indicated that you had time for the person and that you were not merely sticking to the agenda of the job. And it was, the way I saw it, building relationships.*

*I think that, in other places, food is also a significant part of building relationships. In the Western world, when you went to professional development sessions, what you were given at lunch-time was as important as the intellectual fare on offer. And in many cases, you'd talk to colleagues and they would say the best part of the day was the lunch. So, I think that it's similar but also different. It's similar in that in the Western world, the morning tea and lunch provided is more sustenance and whether you sat around and spoke to colleagues around that morning tea and lunch was optional, whereas in the Middle East, they take the time to get to know you around the meals and they would share their preference for the meals and talk about their favourites, more so than in the Western world.*

*I think, as the saying goes, the first cup of tea you enjoy with them is as strangers. The second cup of tea is as a friend and the third cup of tea is when you become one of them. So, to become a friend of theirs, it takes many cups of tea before they start to share their personal information and personal circumstances with you. I think when you come to accept the importance of making the cup of tea and sitting through the process of boiling the Turkish coffee and talking about the pros and cons of "chai karak" and all the various names they had for their tea and coffee they drink, then you can delve into the trickier questions. You can even talk about religious and political situations and they are willing to listen to you and give you their point of view. But only if they trust you.*

*I'm not too sure who sets out the cups of tea and who is gauging who – whether it's the local Arab teacher investigating your sincerity in the job or whether it is the Western education advisors, me in this case,*

*trying to figure out the calibre of person I am dealing with. And I think that each is feeling the other out and when you reach a happy compromise, the ground where you are happy to meet, it could be smack-bang in the middle, where you both share each other's opinions and have really honest and open conversations, or it could be more on Western terms, where it is very business-like – cut and dried – or it could be further across the border into Middle-Eastern territory, so to speak, and where you are using more and more of their cultural norms.*

In this narrative, Mr. V describes how building relationships over food and drink is very much an extension of Arabic cultural norms. He discusses how the unassuming act of being offered a cup of tea is not just a polite, simple gesture as it may be thought of in the West. Instead, there is much to be learned by accepting such an invitation, especially since in a Middle Eastern milieu, relationships are nurtured around food and conversation. A key aspect of developing cultural competence is to cope with new cultural and societal expectations and standards by successfully adapting and integrating into a new host culture in pragmatic ways (Padilla & Perez, 2003). Mr. V has learned that accepting Arab hospitality when extended, whether it is the offer of food or drink, is the first part to being accepted as an outsider. Taking a cup of tea not only exhibits polite manners to Arabs but it is the opening to establishing a closer relationship and the willingness to make the time to learn about the other person, not just to share a meal or a drink. It is an opportunity to learn about them first as an individual before developing an appreciation of their profession and business. It also offers an opportunity to show the type of person you are too, apart from the work or position that you hold in the school environment. This investment of time, over a cup of tea or plate of food, is an actual investment into a personal relationship which transcends the role and status of education advisor, by simply being a human interacting with other humans.

Tea-drinking in the Middle East is a small but significant act which has the power to influence strong personal relationships over time. Padilla & Perez (2003) explain that:

cultural competence refers to the learned ability to function in a culture in a manner that is congruent with the values, beliefs, customs, mannerisms, and language of the majority of members of the culture.

When members of the culture come to view the person as an “insider,” then we can say the person has attained complete competence in the new culture. However, acceptance as an insider is not a prerequisite for cultural competence per se. The important consideration is for the person to behave within an acceptable cultural band of normative behaviour. (p. 42)

Mr. V talks about enjoying his tea-drinking experiences with Arabic teachers as a way to cement relationships and friendships. He found that this was a valuable way to open up communication beyond the basic essentials, allowing him to be privy to information not usually shared with outsiders or foreigners and sometimes even to engage in discussions about religion and politics, once trust had been established over the teacups.

Discussing how developing relationships is different in the Middle East, Mr. V makes interesting comparisons to Western notions of how food is often regarded as simply as a means of sustenance. However, in the Middle East, sharing food is a significant part of Arabic culture and a measure of hospitality that serves as a gateway to meeting and learning about others. The welcome and level of warmth that accompany the generosity of Arabic hospitality often indicate the esteem placed on the guest. Caligiuri and Tarique (2012) investigated the competencies needed to be successful in a global environment and how these are gained, concluding that:

in both personal and professional lives, significant intercultural experiences enable us to learn the nuances of behaviour that are expected in another culture compared to our own – helping us to understand our own cultural values and assumptions. When we become sensitive to these characteristics of ourselves, as well as to the norms of behaviour in another culture, we begin to develop the intercultural competencies so very important for success in global leadership activities. (p. 620)

Thus, having a cup of tea is an opportunity for both education advisors and local teachers to learn about each other as people and professionals. For the education advisor it is about accepting hospitality graciously as a guest and an outsider, and

showing a willingness to learn more about the person behind the teacher to understand where each stand in the relationship as they work together. Whatever shape a tea-drinking occasion may take, whether it has frank, professional Western approach, or a more sociable style, the cups of tea that are drunk reflect a gracious and hospitable way of making people feel welcome, even when this may be difficult to achieve, as in the context of a school improvement programme.

Culturally diverse colleagues are able to work together by maintaining a collegial work climate and positive work relationships if they understand how people from different cultural backgrounds can become socially cohesive (Neal, 2010). Arab countries are high-context cultures (Hall, 1966) and score highly as collectivist cultures, suggesting that Arabs place great value on strong relationships and high trust (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). Building trusting relationships are therefore essential aspects for negotiating with Arabs (Khakhar & Rammal, 2013). Communication by Arabs expresses a desire for social harmony and avoids confrontation and conflict (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Khakhar & Rammal, 2013; Nelson, Al Batal, & El Bakary, 2002). It is therefore wise to understand the strategic intent and nature of the relationship to appropriately determine the level of transparency and openness that can be enjoyed. Similarly, the intent to negotiate with any kind of false, insincere or deceptive approach would be unwise as relationships will be compromised.

When communicating with high-context cultures, it is important to accept that people like to know as much as possible. Casual conversations that may seem unimportant can be significant. Miscommunication can be avoided by speaking relatively slowly and without slang, idioms, clichés, jargon or colloquialisms, as these can be confusing if English is used (Balsmeier & Heck, 1994). Participants should be sensitive to cultural differences and aware of body language and tone when communicating with members of a high-context culture to prevent messages being perceived as insincere or inaccurate. Casual conversations that seem unimportant are usually more significant than expected. As a polychronic culture, Arabs put time into cultivating strong relationships as an investment in respect and trust before formal business negotiations begin (Hall, 1966, 1981; Khakhar & Rammal, 2013).

## 7.4 Part 3: Embracing cultural exchange

In Part 3 the third subtheme, “Embracing cultural exchange”, highlights the need for strong cultural intelligence in order to advance school improvement work and develop successful cross-cultural relationships. The narratives present different approaches to working in the school improvement context and the distinctive outcomes of cross-cultural interactions which are based on an understanding of cultural characteristics.

### 7.4.1 Ms. C: “I had embarrassed them” - Losing face

In the following narrative, the participant relates an incident that appears trivial and harmless from a Western perspective, but which had a different meaning and outcome in an Arabic context. The participant describes an exam setting in which she asserted her authority as an education advisor to ensure that the rules of examination were followed by teaching staff. However, Ms. C discovered that her professional expectations and execution of her duties were not seen in the same way by the local teachers. This led to tension, resistance and conflict. This narrative highlights the predicament of crossing cultural borders without a full understanding of cultural norms and expectations, but also serves as an example of how to cope with difficult cross-cultural occurrences.

*There was one day with lots of tears. The big EMSA exam is in session and it's a no calculator exam. The exam papers don't say “No Calculators” but we've known for weeks that the rules are no calculators. The children know, the Maths teachers know – it was a given. Nobody questioned it; we knew.*

*On the day, I am just going around the school, as I thought I should, to check that everything is going okay and I see students in all the rooms are using calculators. So, the obvious thing seemed to be to say to the supervising teachers that they were not allowed and they should be taken from students. So, I went around the whole school doing this, went to the office, went back a bit later and did another lap and the students have all still got their calculators. So, this time I thought I have got to do something about this so I went in and took the calculators. I collected them off the students and put them on the front desk with the teacher*

*and reiterated to the teacher that the students were not allowed calculators because the EMSA was a national exam.*

*I went away and came back to find that the teachers have given the calculators back to the students. The teachers were determined the students were going to have calculators. Some of them were saying that the Principal told them to give the students calculators. Some of them were saying all the other schools will be giving students calculators and if they didn't they would be disadvantaged.*

*After this incident, I went and saw the teachers and even some of my teachers [that I advised] had been giving calculators to the students, saying that they were helpless to follow the rules because other teachers had given their students calculators. As far as they could see, I was the only one doing anything wrong in the whole situation so there were tears from them for hours.*

*It was just awful because as far as they were concerned, the big issue was not that they had cheated on a national exam and given the children calculators and ignored warnings from the advisor. The issue was that I had embarrassed them in front of the students. I had gone into the rooms and taken that action rather than just letting it happen and then telling them off the next day.*

*That was one of the things I just had to swallow. I don't feel that I was the only one in the role. I probably did embarrass them in front of the students and that's a much bigger deal for them than it is for us. Obviously, I didn't think of that but they cheated on a national exam and clearly went against the directives from ADEC. I learned from it and carried on the next day because I just swallowed it. I wasn't going to fight to the death over it and refuse to work with them until they apologised. That wasn't ever going to get me anywhere. So, I must have learnt something from it and it's all part of settling in here.*

In this story, Ms. C describes an incident that involved teachers and students in an examination context, and the implications of her actions. She describes her responses when Mathematics teachers knowingly disregarded an examination requirement that students were not allowed to use calculators. Ms. C explains how, in the first instance, she reiterated the expectation to all Mathematics teachers and left them to deal with the issue. After allowing the staff time to correct the matter, she found that the concern had not been addressed. In her capacity as education advisor for Mathematics she then took it upon herself to collect the calculators from students because according to the exam rules they were not allowed to use them and their teachers had failed to apply this rule in a national exam. Later, on her return to check on students in the examination, she found that teachers had redistributed the calculators to students for them to use in the exam. Aspects of this narrative suggest that cultural misunderstanding arose due to different communication styles. When people of different cultures interact, their style of relational communication varies. There are fundamental ways of processing information (Dodd, 1998) and people construct and interpret messages and meanings depending on their cultural affiliations, their relationships to those from whom messages are received, and how they perceive those people and themselves (Byram & Fleming, 1998).

After the exam, in a discussion of the issue with the Mathematics staff, Ms. C explained that some teachers were confused about what the right response was. Some teachers indicated that the directive to use calculators had come from the Principal, whose authority surpassed that of an education advisor. Other teachers gave the calculators back to students, rationalising that students would be disadvantaged without calculators, and believed that students in other schools would be using them so they allowed their students to use them. Teachers explained that they felt that they had to do what was right and fair for the students and not disadvantage them in a national exam. They did not feel that there were doing anything that was incorrect or dishonest. Ms. C talks about how even the teachers that she mentored had not followed the rules, implying that she had not predicted that they would not respect her authority as their education advisor. However, the teachers believed that it was Ms. C who was in the wrong because she had shown them up in front of their students by asserting her authority over them in a public forum. This public humiliation was, in their minds, unforgiveable and this resulted in them crying and being upset. This was not just a

case of being caught between two masters but two cultures; teachers had to take instructions from education advisors as well as their principals, placing them in vulnerable and difficult positions, as well as consider both Arabic and Western cultural expectations in their relationships with others.

Two cultural dimensions that impact interpersonal communication and lead to cultural misunderstanding are individualism–collectivism (individual vs. group dynamics) and power distance (the general acceptance of power and status inequality) (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1995). Similarly, Hall’s (1976) explanation of high- and low-context cultural dimensions highlights differences in communication and demonstrates how information is perceived on a cultural basis.

Intercultural styles of communication can be incongruent across low-context and high-context cultures as individuals rely on context cues to interpret and convey meanings of messages. Because people process information with different mindsets, intercultural communication and negotiation between high- and low-context people can be difficult. In this narrative, Ms. C explains that from her perspective she was following the rules of examination. But in the eyes of the local teachers, she had made a major error in reading the culture and context. In low-context cultures, people deliver straightforward, explicit messages while in high-context cultures, people communicate in a more indirect, cautious style and can comfortably exist in uncertain or ambiguous situations, and may use silence as a strategy to cope. Being less direct extends to an ambiguous use of “yes” to mean “no” or “maybe” as a way to save face or be polite (Lin, 1997) or “an indication of ‘yes’ can also mean ‘I hear you’ but may not necessarily be an agreement” (Dodd, 1998, p. 192).

In a Western context the incident described in this narrative would constitute cheating and would be dealt with as a serious breach of teachers’ professionalism. However, in this local context staff signalled their loss of face as a more serious offence than giving their students an unfair advantage in a national exam. Middle-Easterners tend towards a high-context cultural dimension where people are not seen as separate from the issue, therefore any criticism of the issue is an attack on the person, often bringing embarrassment or shame. It is therefore imperative for a person from a high-context culture to reduce the chance of humiliation (Dodd, 1998; Ting-Toomey, 1988). Often

people from a low-context culture may not be able to identify with the concept of loss of face because low-context cultural dimensions value making mistakes and learning from them. In low-context cultures, communication styles that separate the person and the issue sometimes come at the expense of the relationship (Ting-Toomey, 1988).

Ms. C analysed the situation from her own cultural values and professional expectations and came up with what she believed to be an appropriate solution to the problem at hand but had not allowed for the potential cultural responses to her actions. Engle and Delohery (2016) note that “cultural adaptation ability would need to include varying degrees of cross-cultural problem-solving ability” (p. 7); and in this case emotional and cultural intelligence were required as well as critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Ms. C took responsibility for the difficult task of communicating with the teachers regarding the issues when it would have been easy to avoid; and assuming this position was a positive step to improving intercultural communication as part of developing skills and improving cultural insights for intercultural competency and cultural learning (Dodd, 1998).

This incident also points to larger organisational and cultural complexities of the school improvement context of Abu Dhabi. Local teachers, with their many years of experience of how the context functions and in particular of examinations, were reluctant to deviate from previous practices. They found it difficult to adhere to changes in national examination conditions nor could they acquiesce to the requests of the education advisor because they were not accustomed to these expectations and so they continued to behave as they always had. The implication was that some aspects of school improvement changes had little impact on their day-to-day jobs because their confidence mainly rested the ways they had always conducted their work and they understood that the Principal was the key person to turn to in controversial matters. In these matters, the PPP staff had little power to influence change and not much influence in changing their thinking.

Ms. C highlights that, in a Western context, a teacher would possibly react with professional embarrassment and be censured for not following the directives of leadership, and enabling students to cheat in a national exam would be unethical and unacceptable. She acknowledges that a misunderstanding of cultural expectations led

to this conflict and that a Middle Eastern context and culture is different from her own, where the rightness and wrongness of each side is framed by each party's perspective. People on all sides felt humiliated and frustrated regardless of their cultural affiliations – there were mixed messages, misinterpretation, confusion and, conceivably, duplicity. Thus, the potential for conflict always exists in the process of acculturation (Berry, 2005), and it is necessary for people to be mutually accommodating as they negotiate and adapt to different ways of being. Intercultural communication can only be effective when there are as few misunderstandings and overlapping of meanings as possible, which requires an acceptance and tolerance of different worldviews (Byram & Fleming, 1998). Becoming culturally competent is a dynamic learning endeavour. Just learning about cultural competence is insufficient; knowledge acquired must be transferred and practised (Montenery, Jones, Perry, Ross, & Zoucha, 2013). Living in a culture that is different from your own encourages deep reflection on one's personal values, beliefs, attitudes and biases. There must be an inherent desire to acquire cultural competencies so that cultural interactions can be approached with awareness, knowledge, skill and tact.

An emotionally intelligent mentor is able to control emotions to react to others and situations more sensitively and intelligently (Chun et al., 2010; Crumpton, 2015; Drago-Severson, 2012). As part of resolving the issue and moving on in this complex context and culture, Ms. C describes her personal and professional approach to the dilemma: she took responsibility for the issues and allowed herself to put it behind her. She understood that there were several factors at play in the scenario and recognised that it was essential to redress the disconnection between herself and the teachers. She needed to gain perspective on the situation, repair the damage, limit the harm to relationships and learn from the experience so that positive PL relationships could continue. While cultural training can increase knowledge of a culture, it does not significantly impact cross-cultural adjustment on its own (Engle & Delohery, 2016; Tarique & Caligiuri, 2009). It is having experiences of and with different cultures that adds to knowledge, understanding and appreciation of other ways of being, doing and thinking. As people's awareness and their communication skills improve, unique cultural needs can be accommodated to avoid confrontation, and intercultural conflict can be managed through open and transparent communication with an emphasis on finding solutions (Dodd, 1998).

Differences in understanding, beliefs and opinions are potential causes-of conflict. When mentors and mentees hold differing ideas about teaching and mentoring and communication, understanding expectations is difficult (Stanulis & Russel, 2000). Timperley and Robinson (2002) state that, “One barrier to achieving shared understanding is that implicit definitions of the task may not be made explicit and brought into better alignment” (p. 16); they propose that “entities are in partnership when they each accept some responsibility for a problem, issue or task, and establish processes for accomplishing the task that promote learning, mutual accountability and shared power over relevant decisions” (p. 15). Avoiding conflict in the mentoring relationship may actually hinder open communication between mentors and mentees (Borko & Mayfield, 1995). Intercultural communicative competence combines language skills with a knowledge and understanding of culture that help people become “intercultural citizens” (Byram, 2008) as they interact, engage, and negotiate the complexities of intercultural communication.

#### **7.4.2 Ms. K: “They will say just how much they love her” – Adopting cultural appearances for professional advantage**

In the transcript that follows, the participant describes a Western teacher who willingly adopted traditional dress and learned Arabic language to connect with the community of students and teachers that she worked with. The participant relates the impact this had on how the teacher was received as a member of the school by the staff and students, and by local people in the community. Ms. K explains how this positive acceptance supported her work in the classroom, suggesting that embracing cultural appearances and acquiring the local language have a role to play in being more readily accepted as a Westerner.

*Originally, we only had one Licensed Teacher and she is American and her behaviour management is fabulous. She is outstanding with that but I would say for her, for her own development, I would be moving her from the front of the classroom into more group work. Everything seems to be at one level, but as I say, her behaviour management, her classroom displays and her art are outstanding.*

*She’s survived because she gets on with making relationships with*

*others and she's made relationships with the teachers, parents and students the most important thing. So, if you ask the other teachers in the school about her, they will say just how much they love her because she dresses like an Emirati. She has all the language. She uses a lot of Arabic and English in the classroom. She went to Arabic night school to learn more words so that is why she is applying them in terms of those relationships.*

In this narrative, Ms. K describes a Western expatriate teacher-mentee who made positive inroads into the school context by assimilating into the culture by adopting the local language and dress. Ms. K explained that there were some very positive aspects of the teacher's classroom practice and a few professional matters that required further development. She indicated that the main reason for the teacher's acceptance in an Arabic context was that she able to build strong relationships with the school community by learning Arabic language and chose to wear traditional dress.

Erten, van den Berg and Weissing (2018) discuss acculturation as the framework for cultural changes that occur as a result of migration. Berry (2005) describes acculturation as:

the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members... [and] that involve[s] various forms of mutual accommodation, leading to some longer-term psychological and sociocultural adaptations between both groups. (pp. 698-699)

Berry's (1980) model of acculturation highlights two key aspects of culture acquisition and culture retention which intersect with four categories of acculturation described by Schwartz et al. (2010) as follows:

assimilation (adopts the receiving culture and discards the heritage culture), separation (rejects the receiving culture and retains the heritage culture), integration (adopts the receiving culture and retains the heritage culture), and marginalization (rejects both the heritage and receiving cultures). (p. 3)

This teacher's behaviour sent an explicit message that she appreciated and valued the culture enough to embrace its customs. She is therefore able to identify with her stakeholders, making it easier to be accepted because she is able to communicate and relate to the local people. She is perceived as a teacher who is both valuable and valued, despite her teaching expertise needing development, because her main priority is to build relationships by connecting culturally. People acculturate to different degrees depending on their cultural identities and personal interpretations of cultural norms and beliefs (Padilla & Perez, 2003) and their strategies and preferences (Berry, 2005) but acculturation typically involves learning the local language, sharing food, adopting forms of dress and assuming social interactions that are characteristic of the group (Berry, 1992, 2002, 2005).

The context of reception (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Schwartz et al., 2010) describes the favourable and unfavourable attitudes that are shown towards migrants in the acculturation process (Schwartz et al., 2010). In situations where there is unfavourable reception to a migrant's acculturation, a migrant can suffer from discrimination (Finch & Vega, 2003; Williams & Mohammed, 2009), stress (Segal & Mayadas, 2005), or anxiety and depression (Berry, 2006a; Rudmin, 2009). Ms. K observes that the teacher was favourably received by the local community. When migrants are supported in their integration they are able to acculturate more quickly and easily (Akhtar & Choi, 2004). Also, a highly differentiated psychological and social life allows different people to engage in intercultural and acculturation processes more positively and those individuals who are able to integrate across cultures and can function in a differentiated social network are better adapted to live interculturally, and enjoy higher levels of well-being. In a culturally-plural globalised environment, they accept the need to be reciprocal as they develop multicultural ways of living together (Berry, 2012).

## **7.5 Summary and conclusion**

In this chapter, the third and final theme, "Building cultural connections", is described and examined in three parts, each of which reflects a subtheme that further clarifies our understanding of how cultural connections are built. For the participants in this study, building cultural connections manifested in terms of "Connecting through language", "Unearthing cultural idiosyncrasies", and "Embracing cultural exchange".

In Part 1, the subtheme, “Connecting through language”, conveyed the importance of language for communication in cross-cultural mentoring relationships and reflects the stories of education advisors who emphasised the importance of the local language and the communication methods they used to build relationships with mentees. A common language connects people across cultures, and is especially important for shared knowledge and mutual understanding. In this context, a willingness to embrace the language of others, viz. Arabic, expressed a subliminal appreciation of another culture and encouraged positive cross-cultural interactions, further strengthening interpersonal relationships.

In Part 2, the subtheme, “Unearthing cultural idiosyncrasies”, discussed the special ways of being in a culture and how Arabs develop relationships based on their cultural values. It enlightened unique Arabic customs that were uncovered and negotiated by education advisors that may have impacted school improvement work, positively or adversely. Unique cultural features and nuances are not always obvious or immediately evident in cross-cultural interactions, and may be easily overlooked or discounted in the course of cross-cultural mentoring relationships. It is therefore essential that education advisors who work across cultures possess a deep understanding and knowledge of the host culture.

In Part 3, the subtheme, “Embracing cultural exchange”, drew insights between Arabic and Western cultures and corroborated the need to bridge cultural gaps sensitively and sympathetically. It presents two different accounts of Western culture intersecting with Arab culture and the resulting outcomes when cultures connect or collide. Education advisors and teachers were able to learn about each other within the context of their mentoring relationship by developing effective interpersonal relationships, however, school improvement work was patently affected if there was a lack of cultural awareness or a functional knowledge of cultural differences. Even positive and culturally sensitive by attempts by education advisors did not always guarantee that cultural misunderstandings would not occur.

Phenomenology primarily seeks to study a “direct experience taken at face value” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000, p. 23), aiming to see as others see and to understand the meaning they make of their experiences (Kvale, 1996). This chapter

focuses on the belief that when we understand people's experiences we have some insight into the ways they behave and exist (Heidegger, 1967; Laverty, 2003). Consciousness is always directed towards something. A phenomenological approach ascribes meaning to our unique perceptions of phenomena based on our cultural affiliations; likewise, competent intercultural communication is an act of interpreting another person's ways of being to make meaning of that individual's different cultural codes and social values.

Heidegger's (1967) notions of *Dasein* or "Being-in-the-world", *Mitdasein* or "Being-with-others" and *Mitsein* or "Being-with" add further detail to the significance of building cultural connections. The phenomenological idea of "Verstehen" or "Understanding" expresses the belief that people are always interpreting the world they live in to make sense of it. These concepts are relevant to the theme of building cultural connections because education advisors make sense of their cultural interactions in order to understand new socio-cultural contexts. The participants indicated, through their narratives, that they were able to develop awareness, respect and sensitivity in their cross-cultural interactions that added to their cultural intelligence and, therefore, competence. It is essential to relate to others positively for effective outcomes, especially in a diverse cross-cultural mentoring context.

This chapter has considered and presented individuals' experiences and understanding of the world they live in, in order to investigate how cultural connections may be made. Their experiences revealed through narratives help us make sense of the phenomenon of cross-cultural mentoring relationships in a school improvement context. This theme expands on the need for improved cultural understanding and respectful acceptance of cultural differences. It demonstrates that much can be achieved by listening and sharing, and reflecting on how we act and behave with people who are different from ourselves. Such experiences and the learning they instil can lead to a greater appreciation of the diversity of people in the world. When we learn about others, racial and cultural inequities can be addressed as we develop a greater understanding and empathy. This makes at least possible a transformation of the way we think about each other, both as individuals and as the inheritors of our cultures.

This chapter examined Theme 3, "Building cultural connections", which focused on the

importance of context in building cultural connections to enhance cross-cultural understanding between education advisors/mentors and teachers/mentees. Participants encountered a wide range of experiences that tested their approach and challenged their resolve regarding the building of cultural connections. It brings forth the consciousness of cultural differences and the ways in which people are impacted by cultural differences and cultural idiosyncrasies in this context. The analysis of the data set shows that where cultural connections were built positively and enthusiastically education advisors enjoyed positive and productive relationships, but in cases where there were misunderstandings and disagreements relationships were difficult as cultures collided. While each story is unique and distinctive, the data analysis as a whole show that building cultural connections through cross-cultural interactions is a valid and promising endeavour.

Cultural interactions are fundamental to the construction of cultural connections, and necessitate a degree of knowledge and understanding for positive outcomes. In this context, cultural connections were established through a variety of processes including language, and the revelation of cultural idiosyncrasies and understanding cultural values and beliefs. Building cultural connections led to enhanced personal and professional relationships that impacted the school improvement agenda as part of the phenomenon of cross-cultural mentoring relationships. This section has presented some ways in which cross-cultural interactions and relationships were managed, negotiated and valued in an authentic school improvement context.

The next chapter, Chapter 8, presents the conclusion of this thesis.

# Chapter 8

## Conclusion

### 8.1 Introduction

Chapter 8 presents the conclusion of this thesis. It begins with a brief description of the study and a précis of the main findings based on the research questions. The limitations and recommendations of the study are then presented. Thereafter, I offer suggestions for further research opportunities associated with this study. In closing, I traverse my own perspectives and lived experiences to submit my final insights acquired on this learning journey.

### 8.2 Description of the study

In Chapter 1 of this thesis, I offered a snapshot of my ontological positioning, highlighting a unique upbringing in apartheid South Africa, and my subsequent sojourns across the globe as I made my home in other countries. These subjective experiences served to illustrate how I have come to understand the nature of the world and my place in it based on my personal values, beliefs, learning and experiences. What began as an observation of the world around me in the school improvement context of Abu Dhabi eventually grew into this study. I particularly wanted to understand how a diverse group of individuals from the West responded to the unique challenges of working within an education reform as education advisors in a Middle-Eastern context to modernise teachers' professional expertise. The aim of this research then was to explore, describe and interpret the lived experiences of education advisors as they negotiated teachers' PL in the cross-cultural school improvement context of Abu Dhabi, UAE. I investigated those factors that supported or hindered the efficacy of education advisors in their role as change-agents as part of a major education reform. A complementary aspect of the study included scrutinising the complexities of working in cross-cultural mentoring relationships in an Arabic cultural context and investigating those strategies that were successful or problematic in leading teachers' PL for school improvement.

Hermeneutic phenomenology (van Manen, 1997) offered a systematic yet flexible

approach to conduct this research by its focus on drawing meaning from experience. Phenomenology accepts that people do not all experience reality the same way and, depending on their own unique contexts, may have different perceptions and interpretations of the world framed by their unique worldview. For me as an educational researcher, my aim was to add meaning to educational thinking and practice from a new perspective within a culture and context that had not previously been exposed to research of this nature. Ontological in nature, this phenomenological investigation seeks to uncover the nature of everyday existence through phenomenological interpretation, allowing me to orient towards a situated learning experience, not necessarily to provide definite answers and solve problems, but to keep ideas open to further thinking and questioning.

The epistemological problem that questions our understanding of knowledge is framed through Heidegger's *a priori* question, "What is meant by 'Being'?" and questions how people make sense of their own human existence. Twenty-five Public-Private Partnership education advisors, each with at least six months of experience of working in local public schools in Abu Dhabi, were questioned via semi-structured and structured email interviews with the aim of generating rich descriptions of their lived experiences and what it was like to lead teachers' PL in this context. Consistent with a Heideggerian hermeneutic approach, their experiences were interpreted to intertwine with my own perspective of the data. Epistemologically and ontologically, this phenomenological research approach has allowed me to consider my own and others' worldviews to grasp concepts of knowledge, construct meaning from life experiences, and identify the nature of and approaches to cross-cultural mentoring.

### **8.3 Learning from the narratives**

This thesis set out to explore how education advisors negotiate teachers' PL relationships in a cross-cultural school improvement context. It has gathered the unique perspectives of Western education advisors who have worked in Abu Dhabi public schools and who deliver PL through mentoring. They have discussed their ideas and thoughts of how cross-cultural mentoring experiences have impacted them both personally and professionally. Against the wide frame of globalisation and the need for UAE education reform in response to emerging knowledge societies, this research attempts to make meaning of cross-cultural mentoring interactions for a purpose

beyond this localised context. The study sought to answer three questions:

1. How do education advisors negotiate professional learning relationships in a cross-cultural school improvement context?
2. How does the context influence the school improvement work of education advisors?
3. How are participants' cultural differences managed to effect school improvement?

The next section presents an overview of each theme in relation to the research questions.

### **8.3.1 Research question 1**

The first research question investigated how education advisors negotiate teachers' PL relationships as mentors in a cross-cultural school improvement context. The findings, conveyed more fully in Chapter 5, concluded that education advisors are able to negotiate PL relationships in a cross-cultural school improvement context by developing strong interpersonal relationships with local teachers and leaders by "Forging meaningful connections", "Collaborating with purpose", and "Committing to partnerships", revealing the complex nature of developing interpersonal relationships which demands a significant level of emotional, social and intellectual commitment.

The research indicated that the development of interpersonal relationships occurred in different ways for different participants, as evidenced by the selection of narratives, highlighting that there was no one consistent approach to developing interpersonal relationships in a cross-cultural mentoring relationship. Those education advisors who were able to forge mutually respectful and trustworthy professional learning relationships were able to foster professional collaboration and enhance teachers' capability to positively impact school improvement.

### **8.3.2 Research question 2**

The second research question examined the influence of context on the school improvement work of education advisors as they delivered teachers' PL. The findings, reported comprehensively in Chapter 6, concluded that context significantly influences

and impacts the school improvement work of education advisors as they respond to a diverse range of personal and professional contexts under complex cross-cultural circumstances using practical and action-oriented methods by “Managing school complexities”, “Navigating personal trials”, and “Mitigating organisational intricacies”, revealing the complex challenges within, across and between personal, school and organisational contexts that education advisors were involved in.

Contextual complexities required sensitive negotiation, creative approaches and careful management because when poorly or indiscreetly handled, the nature, shape and direction of cross-cultural mentoring relationships could be seriously compromised or threatened. Education advisors therefore had to learn how to respond, adapt and advance school improvement work in changing contexts and the best ways to use their interpersonal relationships to advantage, although this was not always possible. Context is therefore central to how school improvement work evolves and its impact cannot be ignored or deemed irrelevant.

### **8.3.3 Research question 3**

The third research question explored the effect of participants’ cultural differences in cross-cultural mentoring relationships. These findings, examined more fully in Chapter 7, showed that the experiential realities of education advisors were profoundly affected by different cultural interactions, exposing inherent connections to their own and others’ cultures while also enabling a deeper understanding of the variables of cultural differences by building cultural connections. Cultural differences, including language and communication, were understood and managed by education advisors to effect school improvement through “Connecting through language”, “Unearthing cultural idiosyncrasies”, and “Embracing cultural exchange”. Cultural interactions are demanding in curious ways; however, cultural differences cannot be ignored, overridden or erased. Making cultural connections with diverse people and learning about their unique ways of thinking, being and doing is at the heart of bridging cultural differences. Cultural connections are developed when cultural norms are embraced to enhance cultural competence, cultural intelligence and cultural capital. Done consciously, building cultural connections offers a promising hope that we can learn more about ourselves when we learn about others.

## **8.4 A framework for cross-cultural mentoring interactions**

How then might we consider these rich narratives of human experience and what does it mean for mentoring relationships in a cross-cultural school improvement context, and a wider globalised world? The essential meanings of the phenomenon “the lived experiences of education advisors negotiating PL in a cross-cultural school improvement context” have been captured from authentic, first-hand accounts of participants who have recounted and explained their experiences in varying ways to identify the challenges and successes of cross-cultural teacher mentoring. These narratives identified different elements that form and establish effective cross-cultural mentoring interactions in ways that are personally empowering, responsive to context and culturally intelligent, where teachers and mentors can both engage in learning from and about each other.

Many participants were convinced that the way forward lies in the development of strong cross-cultural mentoring relationships that demonstrate mutual care and enhanced learning. During this process of gathering, reading, evaluating and thinking about these narratives, it became clear to me that there are ways to reduce challenges and inspire more positive cross-cultural mentoring interactions and relationships in school improvement contexts. These solutions were revealed by the participants themselves and contribute new understandings of cross-cultural mentoring practices from the perspective of mentors. I accept that, because I develop knowledge through an interpretivist approach, these claims about the nature of cross-cultural mentoring may be fundamentally different from those observed by another researcher. Epistemologically, this research adds new knowledge of how the nature of cross-cultural mentoring knowledge as manifested through person, context and culture can be understood.

On the basis of my research findings I therefore offer a dynamic framework of cross-cultural mentoring interactions to explain the nature of cross-cultural mentoring relationships. I anticipate that this framework, devised and based on the day-to-day mentoring actions, reactions and interactions of education advisors in a cross-cultural school improvement context, will create a profile of what effective cross-cultural mentors may consider in practical and action-oriented terms. It therefore represents the conclusion of the research study and is intended to suggest ways to enhance cross-

cultural mentoring relationships and promote positive cross-cultural interactions across a connected, globalised world.

Figure 8.1. shows how I have understood and resolved the phenomenon of leading teachers' PL in a cross-cultural school improvement context. The distance between advisors/mentors and teachers/mentees is reduced as they connect through a cross-cultural mentoring relationship by developing interpersonal relationships, responding to context, and building cultural connections. These aspects manifest through three main elements of person, context and culture, and are elaborated more fully in Figure 8.2.

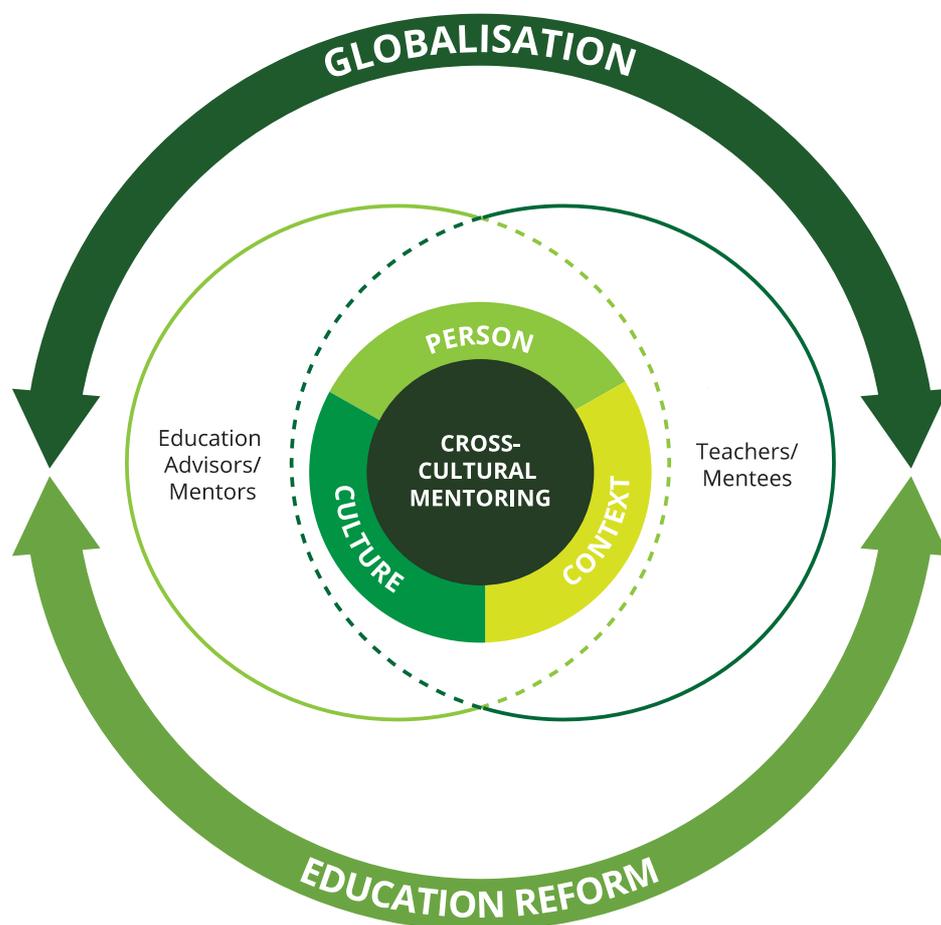


Figure 8.1: A Framework for Cross-cultural Mentoring Interactions

Figure 8.2 drills into the three elements of person, context and culture to accomplish a more comprehensive understanding of the connections within cross-cultural mentoring. Although each component within the framework exists independently, parts are interactive because ideas have been thematically grouped to keep them

relevant and useful in relation to effective cross-cultural mentoring practices.

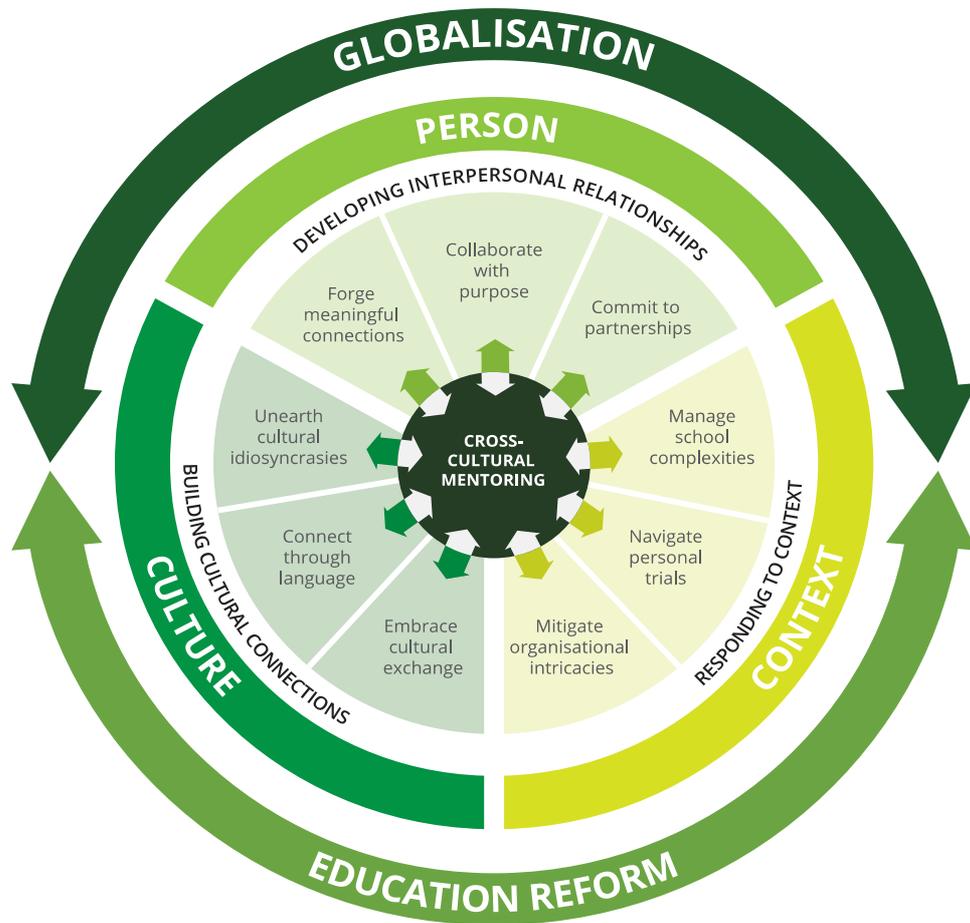


Figure 8.2: A Framework for Cross-cultural Mentoring Interactions

This framework draws a complexity of related ideas together by providing both a deep and a wide understanding of the nature of cross-cultural mentoring relationships in a way that reflects our deeper human connections and differences as people as we engage across cultures and contexts. Anyone anywhere in the world who engages in cross-cultural relationships can easily apply aspects of this framework in practical ways and customise it to their individual values, needs and expectations. It is comprehensive and relevant, with the potential to prompt discussions for further conversations around cross-cultural mentoring relationships. Taken as a whole that is synthesised to give structure, establish cohesion and create a realistic approach to investing in cross-cultural mentoring relationships and interactions, this framework offers an approach that is greater than the sum of its parts.

## **8.5 Limitations**

The limitations of this study relate to phenomenological method, the research design, the range of participants, and the researcher.

This study has allowed for multiple meanings of the phenomena but recognises that the findings cannot and should not be seen as final and absolute because interpretation by different people will open up the possibility of different understandings. The process of seeking meaning through a phenomenological method has been a long, deliberate and thoughtful process. As I examined large quantities of rich and complex data, grappling with the idea of how best to uncover, isolate and articulate themes in ways that were insightful and meaningful of the experience, I was conscious that participants' experiences sometimes resonated with my own pedagogic understanding and assumptions as an education advisor. I was therefore deliberately careful not to seek positions that necessarily reflected my own biases or were congruent with my own ways of thinking and understanding.

This was a small study comprising twenty-five participants, conducted within one major PPP organisation operating in the context of Abu Dhabi as it was the only company to allow access to their employees. It therefore presents a snapshot of how education advisors negotiate PL as mentors in the cross-cultural school improvement context of Abu Dhabi, UAE. The ability to cross-reference mentors' experiences across organisations to ascertain whether mentors in different PPP companies had similar, different or other experiences as education advisors in this context was not accessible and regrettably unachievable.

While these findings are significant in the context within which they were generated, they are not generalisable to other school improvement organisations working in Abu Dhabi or across all cross-cultural school improvement contexts or cross-cultural mentoring relationships. Contextual and relational situations are never exactly the same although there may be similarities so some aspects of this study may have application for mentors who work in or across cross-cultural school improvement contexts globally, and leaders and practitioners in other similar organisations where cross-cultural mentoring relationships exist.

It was beyond the scope of this study to examine the particulars of mentors' backgrounds, culture, ethnicity, nationality, educational experience, characteristics and previous mentoring experience that each participant identified with, in relation to the findings. Only some basic details of participants were documented as part of the interview process. However, such specifics may present a new research opportunity that interprets this information to draw other conclusions, providing further insight into the nuances of cross-cultural mentoring relationships or, possibly, how the cultural dimensions of mentors impact their work in leading school improvement in cross-cultural contexts.

As I conducted the research in a cultural context to which I do not authentically belong, I am aware that I am no cultural expert although I am cognisant of my role, responsibilities and conduct in this context. It is possible that misinterpretations may have occurred as a result of my own social, cultural and historical shaping. To alleviate hypothetical repercussions, I sought to discuss and review issues with my supervisors to ensure that social and cultural considerations were managed respectfully and sensitively.

I am also aware of my own limitations as an early phenomenological researcher and on reflection, I understand that I can only improve as I learn further. I am reassured by van Manen (1997), who encourages that:

To *do* hermeneutic phenomenology is to attempt to accomplish the impossible: to construct a full interpretive description of some aspect of the lifeworld, and yet to remain aware that lived life is always more complex than an explication of meaning can reveal...that full and final descriptions are unattainable. But rather than therefore giving up on human science altogether, we need to pursue its project with extra vigour. (van Manen, 1997, p. 18) (original italics)

## **8.6 Recommendations**

The following recommendations emerged after a careful scrutiny of the data and the findings.

### **8.6.1 Recommendations for the employment of mentors in cross-cultural contexts**

The identification, screening and selection processes of potential mentors prior to employment in a cross-cultural school improvement context must be robust to ensure mentoring competence and cultural competence.

*Mentoring competence:* Assessment for suitability may include prior formal mentoring training or previous mentoring experience to confirm appropriate mentoring skills, practicable understanding and knowledge of developing teacher capability to deliver accelerated school improvement outcomes.

*Cultural competence:* Screening and selection processes should include preliminary assessments for cultural competence to determine key dispositions for openness to cultural exchange, the ability to cope in potentially challenging cultures and contexts by assimilation and acculturation and a willingness to undertake cultural training prior and during the commencement of a cross-cultural mentorship to develop cultural intelligence that reduces cultural distance and supports the mentoring relationship.

*Personal Dispositions:* Potential mentors should display strong personal dispositions such as the ability to learn quickly, be flexible in their approaches to difficult situations, and have a sense of humour and resilience in their repertoire of skills. These should include the ability to relate, interact and work with people from different cultural backgrounds easily and comfortably; to recognise and respect people's individual differences; to be sensitive and open to different perspectives and new ways of working with people from other cultures; and to respond to changing dynamics in a positive, composed and calm manner.

*Professional Qualities:* Mentors should possess strong professional skills that include leadership and pedagogy to support teachers and leaders through in a large-scale education reform. It is recommended that education advisors show a willingness to learn the local language as a gateway into the culture and to enhance intercultural communication. This could be a component of cultural training, as knowledge of local language supports building cultural connections.

*Human Resources Processes:* An in-depth interview process to consider qualifications, knowledge, capability and willingness to update professional knowledge should be conducted prior to employment. Rigorous exit-interview processes to debrief knowledge and understanding of the mentoring process are also important. This recommendation is consistent with Von Oppell's (2016) recommendation that mentors be carefully selected for quality and engage in training that is appropriate for the setting and responsive to the culture and beliefs of teachers.

### **8.6.2 Recommendations for the support of mentors employed in cross-cultural contexts**

Effective and timely personal and professional support should be provided to enable mentors to adjust and adapt to a new culture and context, particularly in the first few months of repatriation.

*Professional induction programmes:* Different programmes, including a buddy-support system, are essential supports for cross-cultural mentors during the period of readjustment. Ongoing professional support from networks and subject-specialisation support from expert staff is valuable. Veteran mentors can provide valuable information through informal mentoring to mentors who are new to the cultural context. Mentoring networks can provide useful platforms for mentors to share and discuss authentic cultural concerns. Problem-solving real issues prepares mentors to cope with specific constraints by considering multiple perspectives and suggestions. Education advisors must also keep updated with their own professional learning as mentors. This recommendation is consistent with Von Oppell's (2016) suggestion that education advisors improve their professional knowledge of teacher practice and beliefs.

*Orientation for personal and family support:* Such training and information should provide realistic and relevant information about cultural changes such as climate, food and entertainment options. Providing opportunities to discuss and explore cultural issues and ways to cope with homesickness and communication difficulties as well as chance to share aspects of their cultural adaptation process is important for mentors' settlement.

*Designated cultural advisors:* Knowledgeable individuals can provide important knowledge and understanding of local cultural norms and expectations that guide and support newcomers to new cultures and contexts.

### **8.6.3 Recommendations for ADEC**

It is recommended that contractual obligations, the appraisal system and employment processes are reviewed for a fair and equal approach towards all employees.

*Contractual obligations:* The length of Arab-expatriate teachers' contracts should be reassessed with a view to extension beyond a year, subject to staff meeting appropriate appraisal requirements and professional standards.

*The appraisal system:* As an apparatus of continual improvement, the appraisal system should advocate a belief that all teachers can genuinely develop and improve their professionalism based on individual teachers' professional learning, and evidenced through quality feedback and feed-forward, thereby consistently and collectively improving the overall quality of the teaching workforce.

*Employment processes:* It is also recommended that principals and other school leaders be supported to lead their schools and work more closely with ADEC and other governmental agencies, especially in the employment processes of teaching staff, so that school leaders are empowered to make strategic decisions for the needs of their school, staff and students. Where possible and based on evidence, teachers who are engaged in additional services to the school should be allocated corresponding time allowances, remuneration and opportunities for further professional learning to upskill.

*Translation services:* Where translators must be utilised, it is essential that they are professionally qualified, well-trained and have a good grasp of both cultures in order to convey messages with accuracy and deliver meanings as intended, thus avoiding cultural miscommunication and conflict. High-quality translation supports the building of cultural connections.

## **8.7 Opportunities for further research**

The next section proposes potential research inquiries that arise from this study. This

research has concentrated on education advisors leading professional learning as mentors in one specific cross-cultural school improvement context, viz. Abu Dhabi, UAE. Future research might explore mentor experiences in new school improvement contexts internationally. A focus on the practices, approaches and behaviours of mentors in different contexts may provide insight in addressing particular cross-cultural differences between mentors and mentees in specific environments. An extension of such a study might consider a comparison of mentor experiences across many international school improvement contexts, allowing a wider perspective in a comparison of each setting.

This study specifically focused on the lived experiences of Western education advisors who led professional learning as mentors in a cross-cultural school improvement context. Further research could include a more detailed analysis of mentors' racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, as well as nationality and gender, to gain comprehensive understanding of how mentors' personal and cultural identities impact the mentoring process. Findings may suggest those mentor backgrounds and qualities that best complement mentees of different cultural affiliations. A study of this kind may lead to the development of guidelines that promote best practice in cross-cultural mentoring relationships in an effort to better understand and target mentor support for mentees with unique learning requirements in different environments.

The scope of this study did not extend to investigating the lived experiences of mentees in a cross-cultural school improvement context. However, a new study in the form of a collaborative action research project, for example, could examine how mentees perceive mentors from cultures that are different to their own, to better understand the dynamics between mentors and mentees, and the influence of mentorship on professional learning for mentees in a cross-cultural school improvement context.

Another possibility for a study could examine the lived experiences both mentors and mentees as they engage in professional learning relationships in a cross-cultural school improvement context. Dual perspectives will determine the successful criteria involved in cross-cultural mentoring relationships from both positions by identifying and exploring those characteristics that enable mentoring to achieve a favourable impact on individuals' performance and organisational culture. An extension of this

study could lead to an improved understanding of whether cross-cultural mentoring increases the level of cultural competence in either mentors or mentees or both through cross-cultural mentoring relationships. Research questions could ask: Do cross-cultural mentoring relationships enhance the cultural competence of mentors and mentees for improved interpersonal relationships across cultures? How have mentors' skills, attitudes and behaviours evolved from the inception to the end of the mentoring relationship? What impact has the mentoring experience had beyond your professional life? An evaluation of both mentors' and mentees' relational attributes may produce significant feedback on the necessary interpersonal skills and cultural intelligence required for best practices in cross-cultural mentoring relationships.

This research offers a base on which to consider further research in the form of a longitudinal study that investigates how a mentor's experience of working across cultures develops over their first year of mentorship, after two years and then after five years to determine how a mentor's aptitude and ability evolve over time. There is also potential to explore how mentors are impacted by local cultural and contextual issues as they work and adapt to cross-cultural contexts and whether their experiences predict an increased knowledge and appreciation for the diversity of cultures. The framework constructed from this study offers an opportunity to use the model as the basis of further research, and to determine its viability, reliability and applicability.

## **8.8 Concluding thoughts**

As people and organisations become increasingly interconnected in a shrinking globalised world, developing quality human relationships is vital to our co-existence. This study captures the phenomenological focus of being-in-the-world which by extension means being-with-others. Cross-cultural mentoring relationships offers an age-old approach to learning in a modern, technological world. Its power lies in the opportunity to nurture deeply meaningful connections between individuals across cultures to support the development of professional or intellectual capital in the context of emerging knowledge societies, as well as develop an improved knowledge of social and cultural capital to impact a better understanding of other people. It offers a way to make sense of the world by engaging with others who may be different from ourselves through respectful actions and responses. Through these interactions, and based on how we think, we make meaning of the world by our place in it, and of different people

through the ways in which we relate to them. Understanding that we share a common destiny may determine how we should engage and embrace others because we learn *from* each other when we learn *about* each other. Cross-cultural mentoring is therefore a legitimate way to connect people and cultures even if our lenses are coloured differently. As I seek to understand the shape of my own being, I have learned that the future of our humanity can be shaped through significant cross-cultural mentoring relationships which teach us that we are more similar than we are different.

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Every reasonable effort has been made to acknowledge the owners of copyright material. I would be pleased to hear from any copyright owner who has been omitted or incorrectly acknowledged.

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Graphic overview of thesis

|                 |                         |                  |  |  |   |   |   |
|-----------------|-------------------------|------------------|--|--|---|---|---|
| <b>PART I</b>   | Setting the scene       | <b>Chapter 1</b> | Introduction   |  |   |   |   |
|                 |                         | <b>Chapter 2</b> | An Educational Snapshot of the UAE                               |  |   |   |   |
| <b>PART II</b>  | Situating the study     | <b>Chapter 3</b> | Literature Review  |  |   |   |   |
|                 |                         | <b>Chapter 4</b> | The Research Design  |  |   |   |   |
| <b>PART III</b> | Drawing the connections | <b>Chapter 5</b> | Theme 1:<br><b>Developing interpersonal relationships</b>        | Part 1:<br><b>Forging meaningful connections</b> | <b>Mr. N: "There is no one-size-fits-all silver bullet"</b><br>Knowing the mentee<br><b>Mr W: "It saved him because he was drowning"</b><br>Supporting the mentee through change      |   |   |
|                 |                         |                  |  | Part 2:<br><b>Networking with purpose</b>        | <b>Mr. P: "I am working beside him"</b><br>Connecting with leadership for change initiatives<br><b>Mr. B: "Together, we got that done"</b><br>Sharing the responsibility of mentoring |   |   |
|                 |                         |                  |  | Part 3:<br><b>Committing to partnerships</b>     | <b>Ms. J: "Once they're there, they participate"</b><br>Engaging a disengaged mentee<br><b>Mr. T: "He missed the point"</b><br>Imposed mentoring impacts motivation and outcomes      |   |   |
|                 |                         |                  |  | <b>Chapter 6</b>                                 | Theme 2:<br><b>Responding to context</b>  | Part 1:<br><b>Managing school complexities</b>          | <b>Mr. G: "Telling them that what they have been doing is wrong!"</b><br>A mentor's professional context<br><b>Mr. B: "Like you've got to kneel to the person above you"</b><br>Organisational systems impact school operations |
|                 |                         |                  |  |  |   | Part 2:<br><b>Navigating personal trials</b>            | <b>Ms. A: "She is so disillusioned"</b><br>Change challenges motivated staff<br><b>Ms. L: My oven exploded!</b><br>Challenging personal contexts  |
|                 |                         |                  |  |  |   | Part 3:<br><b>Mitigating organisational intricacies</b> | <b>Mr. M: "There is a long way to go yet"</b><br>An evolving organisational context<br><b>Ms. H: "I learned so much from speaking to them"</b><br>Mentoring the mentor  |
|                 |                         |                  |  | <b>Chapter 7</b>                                 | Theme 3:<br><b>Building cultural connections</b>  | Part 1:<br><b>Connecting through language</b>           | <b>Mr. S: "...that we are making the attempt has greater significance"</b><br>Learning culture through language<br><b>Mr. R: "Sometimes we talk past each other"</b><br>Communication is crucial                                |
|                 |                         |                  |  |  |   | Part 2:<br><b>Unearthing cultural idiosyncrasies</b>    | <b>Ms. D: "A direct line to the most important and powerful people"</b><br>The power of "Wasta"<br><b>Mr. V: "It's similar but different"</b><br>Building relationships over cups of tea  |
|                 |                         |                  |  |  |   | Part 3:<br><b>Embracing cultural exchange</b>           | <b>Ms. C: "I had embarrassed them"</b><br>Losing face<br><b>Ms. K: "They will say how much they love her"</b><br>Adopting cultural appearances for professional advantage   |
|                 |                         | <b>Chapter 8</b> | Conclusion, implications and recommendations for future research |  |   |   |   |

## Appendix B: Ethical approval



### Memorandum

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| <b>To</b>      | Thiloshnee Govender, SMEC  |
| <b>From</b>    | Pauline Howat, Administrator, Human Research Ethics Science and Mathematics Education Centre |
| <b>Subject</b> | Protocol Approval <b>SMEC-30-11</b>  |
| <b>Date</b>    | 21 April 2011  |
| <b>Copy</b>    | Jill Aldridge, SMEC  |

Office of Research and Development  
Human Research Ethics Committee  
Telephone 9266 2784  
Facsimile 9266 3793  
Email hrec@curtin.edu.au

Thank you for your "Form C Application for Approval of Research with Low Risk (Ethical Requirements)" for the project titled "*Investigating the experiences of teacher-advisors in leading learning for school reform in the United Arab Emirates*". On behalf of the Human Research Ethics Committee, I am authorised to inform you that the project is approved.

Approval of this project is for a period of twelve months **21st April 2011 to 20th April 2012**.

The approval number for your project is **SMEC-30-11**. *Please quote this number in any future correspondence*. If at any time during the twelve months changes/amendments occur, or if a serious or unexpected adverse event occurs, please advise me immediately.

PAULINE HOWAT  
Administrator  
Human Research Ethics  
Science and Mathematics Education Centre

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Please Note: The following standard statement must be included in the information sheet to participants:  
*This study has been approved by the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval Number SMEC-30-11). If needed, verification of approval can be obtained either by writing to the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee, c/- Office of Research and Development, Curtin University of Technology, GPO Box U1987, Perth, 6845 or by telephoning 9266 2784 or hrec@curtin.edu.au*

## **Appendix C: Request for access**

PO Box 86907  
Al Ain  
Emirate of Abu Dhabi  
United Arab Emirates

15 May 2011

### **RE: Request for permission in gaining access to staff for research project**

Dear Sir/ Madam

My name is Thilo Govender and I am currently working towards a Master's degree in Philosophy from the Curtin University of Technology, Perth, Australia under the supervision of Dr Jill Aldridge. I currently reside and work in the United Arab Emirates and would like to enlist your expertise in the completion of my research project.

This letter is to respectfully request permission to invite Australian and New Zealand teacher-advisors employed by your company to share their experiences and perspectives of facilitating and delivering professional development in UAE public schools under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) programme.

The aim of the research is to explore the experiences and perspectives of Australasian teachers and leaders with a view to understanding how change can be effected through professional development; and how the UAE context allows for change to occur towards a student-centred model by improving teacher development and learning. The research aims to interview between four to six participants, who will be assured of their anonymity and privacy. Furthermore, all companies and schools in partnership will be accorded the same confidentiality through the use of identity coding. The research will be strictly guided by Curtin University's Human Research Ethics and all information collected will be used solely for academic purposes.

It is envisaged that research of this nature will contribute to the small amount of existing literature on educational issues in this part of the world and may help to inform practice of educational reform, leadership and mentoring in the Middle East.

If there are any objections to me contacting Australasian teacher-advisors employed by your company, please email me at [nesanthilo@hotmail.com](mailto:nesanthilo@hotmail.com) to advise me of this position.

Alternatively, you may contact my research supervisor, Dr Jill Aldridge, at Curtin University through one of the following ways:

Post: GPO Box U1987, Perth, WA 6845  
Phone: +61892663592  
Fax: +61892662503  
Email: [J.Aldridge@curtin.edu.au](mailto:J.Aldridge@curtin.edu.au)

I welcome the opportunity to discuss my project with you and may be contacted via mobile phone (+071 50 1099 673) or email me at [nesanthilo@hotmail.com](mailto:nesanthilo@hotmail.com).

It is anticipated that data gathering will commence in June 2011 and conclude by the end of August 2011. I would therefore appreciate your consideration in this matter and look forward to

a positive response at your earliest convenience.

Yours Sincerely

Thilo Govender (Mrs)

## **Appendix D: Letter of invitation**

PO Box 86907  
Al Ain  
Emirate of Abu Dhabi  
United Arab Emirates

26 May 2011

### **RE: Invitation to Participate in Research**

Dear Colleague

My name is Thilo Govender and I am currently working towards a Master's degree in Philosophy from the Curtin University of Technology, Perth, Australia under the supervision of Dr Jill Aldridge. I currently reside and work in the United Arab Emirates and would like to enlist your expertise in the completion of my research project.

The purpose of this letter is to invite you, as an Australian or New Zealand teacher-advisor working in the Public-Private Partnership project, to share your experiences and perspectives of leading learning for school reform in the UAE. The title of my research is:  
*Investigating the experiences of teacher-advisors in leading learning for school reform in the United Arab Emirates*

The research will focus on how teachers from Australia and New Zealand have adapted to the educational context of the UAE and discuss the work that they are engaged in on a daily basis. It will explore the views of teacher-advisors in effecting change through the facilitation and delivery of professional development and learning; and what impact this has for student achievement and teacher learning. This is an excellent opportunity to allow you to voice your ideas and opinions about how your contribution is impacting change in the UAE.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. The main strategy for data collection will involve an interview lasting no more than 90 minutes. If you are willing to be interviewed, pseudonyms and identity codes will be used to protect the identity of all participants, private companies and schools working in partnership. You have the right to refuse to answer any question as well as ask any questions about the study during your participation. The transcribed interview will be returned to you for a review, edit and confirmation of information. At the conclusion of the study, you will be provided with a copy of the interview transcript and a summary of the research findings.

Please be assured that while your anonymity and privacy will be safe-guarded, you may withdraw from the research process at any time, without supplying a reason, up until one week after you have confirmed the accuracy of the interview transcript. Participants will need to advise the researcher in writing, via email or letter, of their intent to withdraw within the accepted time frame. Apart from the researcher, the supervisor of the project will have access to data.

It is anticipated that data gathering will commence in June 2011 and conclude by the end of August 2011. Data collection and analysis will provide the key research data that will inform and guide the shape of this thesis and any subsequent seminars and/or conference presentations, publications and research and teaching periodicals. This research project has no relationship to any UAE Ministry of Education initiative or funding nor has it any ties to any

private company working within the Public-Private Partnership. Any dispute may be referred to the Secretary of the Human Research Ethics Committee should there be a complaint on ethical grounds through the following ways:

Phone: +68192662784;  
Email: [hrec@curtin.ed.au](mailto:hrec@curtin.ed.au)  
Writing: C/- Office of Research and Development, Curtin University of Technology,  
GPO Box U1987, Perth, WA 6845.

Alternatively any dispute may be referred to my research supervisor, Dr Jill Aldridge at Curtin University of Technology, who may be contacted through one of the following ways:

Post: GPO Box U1987, Perth, WA 6845  
Phone: +61892663592  
Fax: +61892662503  
Email: [J.Aldridge@curtin.edu.au](mailto:J.Aldridge@curtin.edu.au)

I welcome the opportunity to discuss my project with you and may be contacted via mobile phone (+071 50 1099 673) or email me at [nesanthilo@hotmail.com](mailto:nesanthilo@hotmail.com) or [thilo.govender@gemssip.com](mailto:thilo.govender@gemssip.com)

If you are willing to participate, please email me to indicate this. I will, thereafter, make contact with you to get your signed consent and to discuss any other issues or questions you may have.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Thilo Govender (Mrs)

## Appendix E: Participant consent form for research

I, \_\_\_\_\_  
(Full name)

have been fully informed of this research and willingly consent to participate in the project.

I understand that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the research process at any time, without supplying a reason, up until one week after the accuracy of the interview transcript has been confirmed. I will advise the researcher in writing via an email or letter of my intent to withdraw within the accepted time frame. Following notification of my decision to withdraw, the researcher will destroy all records pertaining to my involvement.

I understand that while no absolute guarantee of anonymity can be given, I accept that the researcher will make every effort, as detailed in the letter of invitation, to protect my identity and privacy through the use of pseudonyms and identity coding. All information shared by me will be treated as highly confidential. I understand that, five years after the conclusion of this research, the researcher will destroy any personal details which may enable my identification.

I understand that during the interview process, which will last no more than 90 minutes, I will be asked open-ended questions that will be recorded and transcribed. I may decline to answer any question during the interview. I am aware that I will have the opportunity to review and edit the transcript and will retain a copy of the final transcribed document. While ownership of the analysed data and any subsequent writings will be the property of the researcher, all raw data transcribed will be owned by me, as the participant.

I am aware that I have the right to express any concerns to the researcher and or the supervisor.

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix F: Researcher's interview statement**

### **Some Possible Interview Questions for Education Advisors**

1. Can you give a brief account of the type of work you have done prior to accepting this position in the UAE?
2. Why did you decide to accept this position?
3. What kind of skills and qualities do you think you need for this job?
4. Where do you draw your knowledge base from for this work?
5. Can you describe any training you may have had for this type of work?
6. What kind of resources and support structures are you provided with in this job?
7. Can you explain the context under which you work as a teacher-advisor?
8. What are some of the wider issues that you need to be aware of during your mentoring?
9. Can you explain some of the strategies you use in your work as a teacher-advisor?
10. From your experience, what do you think are the strategies that work best in this situation?
11. Why do you think these strategies have been successful?
12. In working with teachers who speak English as a foreign language, how do you ensure that you are communicating effectively?
13. How do you manage challenging situations?
14. What have been the highlights for you in this position?
15. What do you think needs to happen next for success for the programme?

### **Some useful Prompts**

- Tell me more about ...
- Why is that so?
- What do you mean by that?
- Can you clarify ...
- How do you know ...
- Could you give me an example ...?
- Can you explain ...
- Why do you think ...

## Some Possible Interview Questions for Management Advisors

1. Can you give a brief account of the type of work you have done prior to accepting this position in the UAE?
2. Can you explain the context under which you work as a management-advisor here in the UAE?
3. This is a change from working in typical educational positions. What made you decide to do this type of work?
4. Now that you've been in this position for a little while, what kind of skills and qualities do you think you need for this job?
5. Where do you draw your knowledge base from for this work?
6. Can you describe any training you may have had for this type of work?
7. What kind of resources and support structures are you provided with in this job?
8. What are some of the wider issues that you need to be aware of during your mentoring of the management of the schools here?
9. Can you explain some of the strategies you use in your work as a management-advisor?
10. How do you manage the advisory team and school teams so that the school functions well?
11. From your experience, what do you think are the strategies that work best in difficult situations relating to change?
12. Why do you think these strategies have been successful?
13. In working with teachers and managers who speak English as a foreign language, how do you ensure that you are communicating effectively?
14. How do you manage challenging situations?
15. What have been the highlights for you in this position?
16. What do you think needs to happen next for success for the programme?

## **Appendix G: Example of a crafted story from transcriptions**

[Comments have been added] Strikethrough indicates deletion in crafted story

### ***Version 1***

*I think PDing a teacher in a certain strategy especially classroom management, I had one teacher who would just yell at his students and I don't even think he knew he was doing it but he's got a booming voice. [A] anyway, and h[H]e would just yell at the students all day and every day. So, I worked with him constantly for probably about a month on some [behaviour] management strategies and management techniques and modelled these[.] and [I] then [organised] for him to come in and do it and set up himself. [He] F[f]ollowed what I had been teaching him but [and] not only that, the following year [he] continued with that. He actually listened, which is a bonus, that he's actually doing it [,] he can actually focus on teaching rather than managing his classroom, which is quite good. It kind of saved him because he was drowning. The students were starting to take over the class and to that stage, he was very, very grateful for the help that I've shown [had given] him[.] and h[H]e tells me [this] every day and he's not shy in telling everyone else as well. He knows that without [name of operator] in the school, I think a few of them actually understand that, without [name of operator] being there very little would have happened [or] would have changed.*

### ***Version 2***

*I had [O]one teacher who would just yell at his students and I don't even think he knew he was doing it but he's got[in] a booming voice [,]. Anyway he would just yell at the students all day and every day. So, I worked with him constantly for probably about a month on some behaviour management strategies and techniques [.] [I] and modelled these.[and] I then organised for him to come in and do it and set up himself [up]. He followed what I had been teaching him [and] he continued with that the following year. He actually [had really] listened, which is a bonus, and now that he 's [is]actually doing it, he can actually focus on teaching rather than managing his classroom, which is quite*

*good. It saved him because he was drowning. The students were starting to take over the class and at that stage, he was very grateful for the help that I had given him. He tells me this every day and he's not shy in telling everyone else as well. He knows that without [the name of the operator] in the school, and I think a few of the teachers actually understand that, without [the operator] being there, very little would have happened or changed.*

### ***Final Version***

*One teacher would just yell at his students in a booming voice, all day and every day. I don't even think he knew he was doing it. So, I worked with him constantly for about a month on some behaviour management strategies and techniques. I modelled these and then organised for him to come in and do it and set himself up. He followed what I had been teaching him and he continued with that the following year. He had really listened, which is a bonus, and now that he is actually doing it, he can actually focus on teaching rather than managing his classroom, which is quite good. It saved him because he was drowning. The students were starting to take over the class and at that stage, he was very grateful for the help that I had given him. He tells me this every day and he is not shy in telling everyone else as well. He knows that without [the name of the operator] in the school, and I think a few of the teachers actually understand that, without [the operator] being there, very little would have happened or changed.*

## Appendix H: Initial broad categorisation of data

4.1. Professional Challenges Themes [Compatibility Mode]

References Mailings Review View EndNote Acrobat

AaBbCcDd EeFfGgHh IiJjKkLl MmNnOo PpQqRr SsTtUu VvWwXx YyZz

Normal Heading 1 Heading 2 Title Subtitle Emphasis

**Contextual Intricacies**  
Thursday, February 16, 2012  
10:43 PM

**Contextual Intricacies**

The need to approach many topics with cultural sensitivity;  
The need to be patient and tolerant about issues which we would usually take for granted, like timekeeping.

Also we had to be guarded in what we said about religion and politics; this was less of a priority working on other countries.  
as with any teaching situation, there has been negotiation, but the new culture means a new way of negotiating.

Compromising values and ethics and being relatively new to educational leadership.  
Cultural differences and language barriers

4.2. Professional Successes Themes [Compatibility Mode]

References Mailings Review View EndNote Acrobat

AaBbCcDd EeFfGgHh IiJjKkLl MmNnOo PpQqRr SsTtUu VvWwXx YyZz

Normal No Spacing Heading 1 Heading 2 Title Subtitle

**First-hand witnesses of change**  
Thursday, February 16, 2012  
11:10 PM

**First-hand witnesses of change**

Seeing amazing changes taking place in all aspects;

Team building-professional collaboration, resourcing and standardizing of elements of the curriculum

Implementation of ADEC curricula and I have seen changes in individual teacher's pedagogy.

The highlights of this job have been being able to witness and be part of one of the largest reform programs. The changes that some teachers have done, in mathematics and IT, have been phenomenal. Not saying that all teachers have done a great shift to the new

4.3. Personal Challenges Themes [Compatibility Mode]

References Mailings Review View EndNote Acrobat

AaBbCcDd EeFfGgHh IiJjKkLl MmNnOo PpQqRr SsTtUu VvWwXx YyZz

Normal No Spacing Heading 1 Heading 2 Title Subtitle

**Lack of fidelity**  
Thursday, February 16, 2012  
11:11 PM

**Lack of fidelity**

There should be a more stringent selection process of employment of staff by the big companies being paid big bucks to employ us lot

The stress of being on a one year contract each year I've been here.

4.4. Personal Successes Themes [Compatibility Mode]

References Mailings Review View EndNote Acrobat

AaBbCcDd EeFfGgHh IiJjKkLl MmNnOo PpQqRr SsTtUu VvWwXx YyZz

Normal No Spacing Heading 1 Heading 2 Title Subtitle

**Forging Relationships**  
Thursday, February 16, 2012  
11:14 PM

**Relationships**

working with such a variety of professionals from very diverse backgrounds

This was a rare chance to meet and begin to understand the culture of the women in the Middle East. Their strict faith was most interesting to observe, whilst realizing that these women have exactly the same issues as other women, in terms of family (husbands - kids)/work/in laws/death, and yet they have very different ways of coping sometimes, and sometimes the same way of coping.

Met many like-minded professionals

I have worked with some great people, both on my team, with other ESL TAs, and other workers at my company. The teachers and students were, like most schools, good to work with every day, but the school where I work is very unique in that there are students from all over the Muslim world studying the Islamic curriculum. The job also brought me here to the UAE which is quite different from the other countries I have worked in; a remarkable experience.

The relationships I have formed with the teachers in the English departments I have worked with.

# Appendix I: Detailed categorisation of data

Details required:  
Subjects + marks

| THEMES & SUBTHEMES                                    | IP 1 | IP 2 | IP 3 | IP 4 | IP 5 | IP 6 | IP 7 | IP 8 | IP 9 | IP 10 | IP 11 | IP 12 | IP 13 | IP 14 | IP 15 | IP 16 | IP 17 | IP 18 | IP 19 | IP 20 | IP 21 | IP 22 | IP 23 | IP 24 | IP 25 |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| NAME  |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| GENDER  | M    | F    | M    | M    | M    | F    | F    | M    | F    | M     | M     | M     | F     | F     | M     | F     | F     | M     | M     | M     | F     | F     | M     | M     | M     |
| SUB-CATEGORIES  |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 1) Fidelity / Integrity                               |      |      |      |      |      | ✓    |      |      | ✓    | ✓     |       | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |
| 2) Values, Trust and Integrity                        |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | ✓    | ✓     |       | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |
| 3) Ethics / Social Responsibility                     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | ✓    | ✓     |       | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |
| 4) Stakeholder Relationships                          |      |      |      |      |      | ✓    |      |      | ✓    |       |       |       |       | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |
| 5) Recognition for Qualifications / Incentives        |      |      |      |      |      | ✓    |      | ✓    |      |       |       | ✓     | ✓     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 6) Expertise of staff / Prof                          |      | ✓    |      |      |      |      |      |      | ✓    | ✓     |       | ✓     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 7) Contextual-Intricacies / Business Strategy         | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    |      |      | ✓    | ✓    |      |       | ✓     |       |       |       | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |
| 8) Strategic / Operational complications              | ✓    | ✓    |      |      |      |      |      |      | ✓    |       |       |       |       |       | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |
| 9) Between Operator Employees & Employers / EL Issues |      |      |      |      | ✓    | ✓    |      |      |      |       |       |       |       | ✓     |       | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |       |       | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |
| 10) Between Different Operators / EL Issues           |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |       |       |       |       |       |       | ✓     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 11) Between Arab Nationals / EL Issues                |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 12) Between Emiratis & Other expat Arabs / EL Issues  |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 13) Between Advisors & +10 Advisors / EL Issues       |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |       | ✓     |       |       | ✓     |       |       |       |       |       |       | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |
| 14) Between Advisors and Teachers / EL Issues         |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |
| 15) Between MAs and +10 Teachers / EL Issues          |      |      |      |      |      | ✓    |      |      |      |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |
| 16) Staff Accountability / EL Issues                  |      |      |      |      |      | ✓    |      | ✓    |      |       |       | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |
| 17) Sustainability / EL Issues                        | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |
| 18) Technology / EL Issues                            | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |
| 19) Carbon Change / EL Issues                         | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |
| 20) Carbon Emission / EL Issues                       | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |
| 21) Environmental Change / EL Issues                  | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |

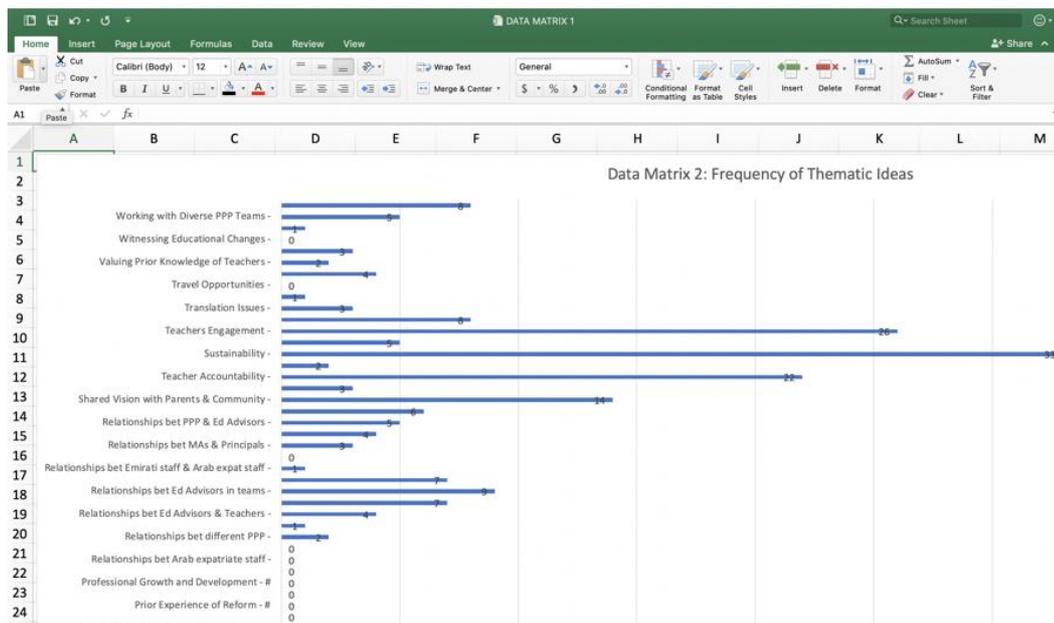
Details required:  
Subjects + marks

| THEMES & SUBTHEMES                                    | IP 1 | IP 2 | IP 3 | IP 4 | IP 5 | IP 6 | IP 7 | IP 8 | IP 9 | IP 10 | IP 11 | IP 12 | IP 13 | IP 14 | IP 15 | IP 16 | IP 17 | IP 18 | IP 19 | IP 20 | IP 21 | IP 22 | IP 23 | IP 24 | IP 25 |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| NAME  |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| GENDER  | M    | F    | M    | M    | M    | F    | F    | M    | F    | M     | M     | M     | F     | F     | M     | F     | F     | M     | M     | M     | F     | F     | M     | M     | M     |
| SUB-CATEGORIES  |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 1) Fidelity / Integrity                               |      |      |      |      |      | ✓    |      |      | ✓    | ✓     |       | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |
| 2) Values, Trust and Integrity                        |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | ✓    | ✓     |       | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |
| 3) Ethics / Social Responsibility                     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | ✓    | ✓     |       | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |
| 4) Stakeholder Relationships                          |      |      |      |      |      | ✓    |      |      | ✓    |       |       |       |       | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |
| 5) Recognition for Qualifications / Incentives        |      |      |      |      |      | ✓    |      | ✓    |      |       |       | ✓     | ✓     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 6) Expertise of staff / Prof                          |      | ✓    |      |      |      |      |      |      | ✓    | ✓     |       | ✓     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 7) Contextual-Intricacies / Business Strategy         | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    |      |      | ✓    | ✓    |      |       | ✓     |       |       |       | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |
| 8) Strategic / Operational complications              | ✓    | ✓    |      |      |      |      |      |      | ✓    |       |       |       |       |       | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |
| 9) Between Operator Employees & Employers / EL Issues |      |      |      |      | ✓    | ✓    |      |      |      |       |       |       |       | ✓     |       | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |       |       | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |
| 10) Between Different Operators / EL Issues           |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |       |       |       |       |       |       | ✓     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 11) Between Arab Nationals / EL Issues                |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 12) Between Emiratis & Other expat Arabs / EL Issues  |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 13) Between Advisors & +10 Advisors / EL Issues       |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |       | ✓     |       |       | ✓     |       |       |       |       |       |       | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |
| 14) Between Advisors and Teachers / EL Issues         |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |
| 15) Between MAs and +10 Teachers / EL Issues          |      |      |      |      |      | ✓    |      |      |      |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |
| 16) Staff Accountability / EL Issues                  |      |      |      |      |      | ✓    |      | ✓    |      |       |       | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |
| 17) Sustainability / EL Issues                        | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |
| 18) Technology / EL Issues                            | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |
| 19) Carbon Change / EL Issues                         | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |
| 20) Carbon Emission / EL Issues                       | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |
| 21) Environmental Change / EL Issues                  | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓    | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |

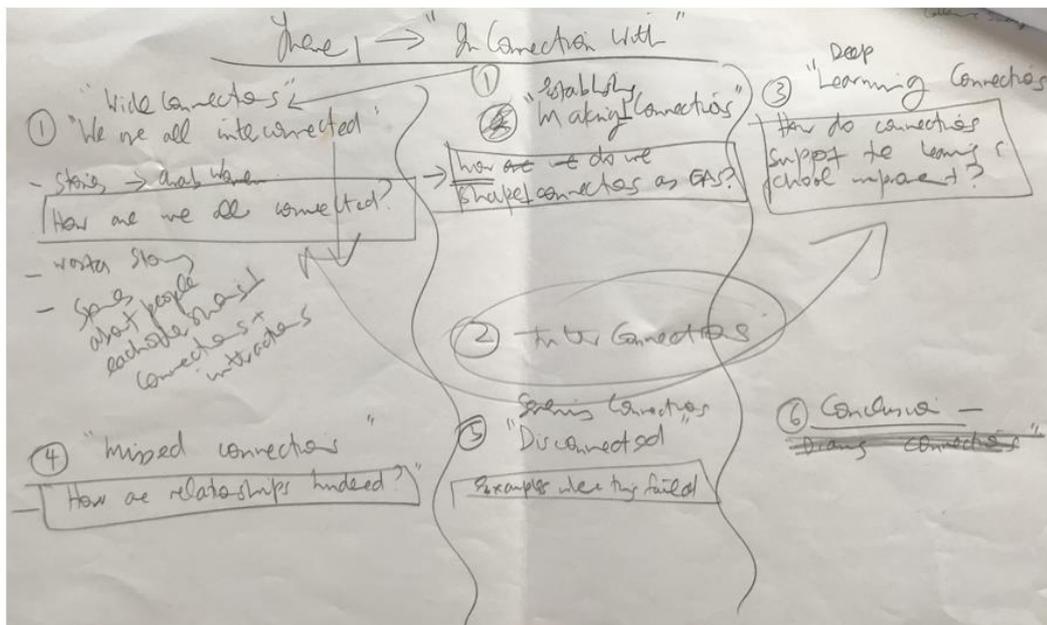
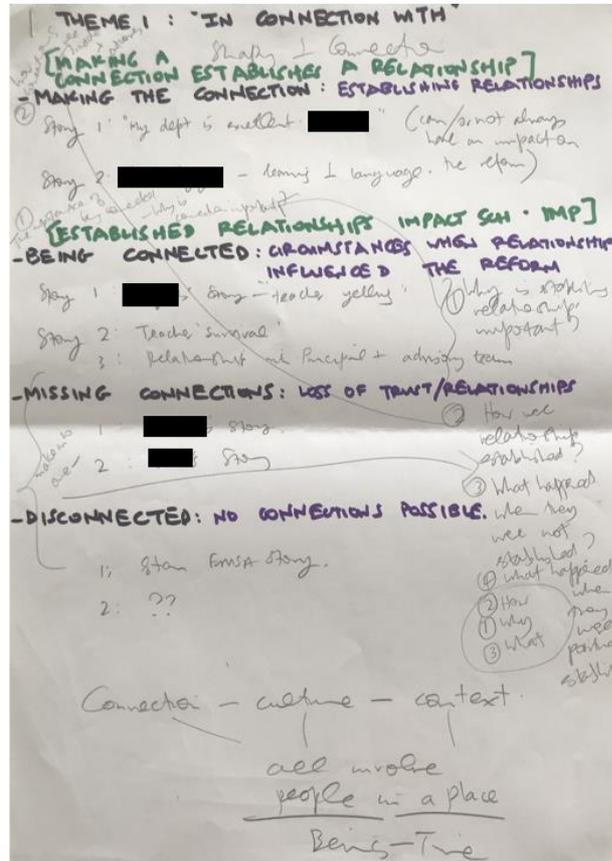
# Appendix J: Frequency of thematic ideas

DATA MATRIX 1

|   | IP1 | IP2 | IP3 | IP4 | IP5 | IP6 | IP7 | IP8 | IP9 | IP10 | IP11 | IP12 | IP13 | IP14 | IP15 | IP16 | IP17 | IP18 | IP19 | IP20 |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 1 INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT                       |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 2 NAME/CODE                                   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 3 GENDER                                      | M   | F   | M   | M   | M   | F   | F   | M   | F   | M    | M    | M    | F    | F    | M    | F    | F    | M    | M    | M    |
| 4 SUB-CATEGORIES                              |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 5 ADIC Context -                              |     |     |     | 1   |     | 3   |     | 1   |     | 2    | 1    | 2    | 1    | 5    | 3    | 3    | 1    | 4    | 4    |      |
| 6 ADIC Direction and Strategy -               | 1   | 2   | 1   | 2   | 1   | 2   |     |     |     | 2    | 2    |      | 2    | 2    | 3    | 4    | 3    | 1    | 1    | 3    |
| 7 ADIC Adjusting to the UAE Context -         |     |     | 1   | 1   |     | 1   |     |     |     |      |      |      |      |      | 1    | 3    | 3    | 1    | 1    | 3    |
| 8 Being Respectful and Flexible -             |     |     | 1   |     | 1   |     |     |     |     |      |      |      |      |      | 1    |      |      |      |      | 1    |
| 9 Being Respectful and Flexible -             |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |      |      |      |      | 2    |      | 1    |      | 1    | 1    |
| 10 Border Crossings -                         |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | 1    |
| 11 Broadened Horizons -                       |     |     | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | 1    |
| 12 Building Capacity -                        |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |      |      |      | 1    |      |      | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    |
| 13 Business Model of PPP -                    |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 1    |      |      |      |      | 2    |      |      |      |      | 1    |
| 14 Business Model of PPP -                    | 2   | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 2    |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | 1    |      | 1    |
| 15 Communication and Language -               |     |     |     |     |     | 1   |     |     |     | 1    | 1    |      | 2    |      | 4    | 3    | 1    |      | 2    | 2    |
| 16 Communication and Language -               |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |      |      |      |      | 2    |      |      |      |      | 1    |
| 17 Competition amongst Teachers -             |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | 1    |
| 18 Competition amongst Teachers -             |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | 1    |
| 19 Curriculum & Assessment Issues -           |     |     |     |     |     | 1   |     | 1   |     |      |      | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    |      | 1    | 1    | 2    |
| 20 Curriculum & Assessment Issues -           |     |     |     |     | 2   |     | 2   | 2   |     | 1    | 2    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 2    |      | 1    |
| 21 Direction of Leadership -                  | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | 1    |
| 22 Direction of Leadership -                  |     |     |     |     |     |     | 1   |     |     |      |      | 1    | 1    |      | 1    | 7    | 3    |      |      | 3    |
| 23 Embedding Change -                         |     |     | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |     | 1    | 1    |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | 1    |
| 24 Embedding English -                        |     |     | 1   |     | 1   | 1   | 1   | 1   | 1   |      | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    |      |      |      | 2    |
| 25 Embedding English -                        |     |     | 1   |     |     |     | 1   |     |     |      |      |      |      | 1    | 1    |      |      |      |      | 1    |
| 26 Establishing Relationships -               |     |     |     |     |     |     | 1   |     |     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | 1    |
| 27 Establishing Relationships -               |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 1    |      |      |      |      | 3    | 3    | 2    | 1    | 3    | 4    |
| 28 Establishing Relationships with Teachers - |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | 1    |
| 29 Establishing Relationships with Teachers - |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | 1    |
| 30 Expertise of PPP staff -                   |     |     | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |     | 2    |      |      | 1    |      |      |      |      |      |      | 2    |
| 31 Expertise of PPP staff -                   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |      |      |      |      | 1    |      |      |      |      | 1    |
| 32 Feeling Happy -                            |     |     | 1   |     | 1   |     | 2   |     |     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | 1    |
| 33 Feeling Happy -                            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |      |      |      | 1    |      | 1    |      | 2    | 1    | 1    |
| 34 Fidelity to Change Agenda -                |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | 2    |
| 35 Fidelity to Change Agenda -                |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | 1    |
| 36 Financial Security & Rewards -             |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | 1    |      |      | 1    |



## Appendix K: Progressive development of thematic material using narratives



THEME 2: "IN THE CONTEXT OF"  
 [PUTTING CULTURE INTO CONTEXT]

- PUTTING THINGS INTO CONTEXT: THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE SETTING  
 [PLACING] [CULTURE]
- CONTEXTUAL CLUES: ADAPTING TO THE CONTEXT-HOW  
 [CULTURAL] → [CONCULTURAL CLUES]
- CONTEXTUAL COMPLEXITIES: ISSUES OF CONTEXT  
 [ARISING FROM CULTURE]
- OUT OF CONTEXT: LOST MEANING; DIFF MEANINGS INTENDED  
 [IN THE CULTURE]

"In ~~the~~ context"

① "Putting things into context" (adjective)  
 into Context (noun/environment)  
 - What are the circumstances that form the setting for an event/idea/happening

② "Contextual Intelligence"  
 "Contextual Clues"  
 How do EAs adjust/adapt to the context? What do they do to build connections?

③ "Out of Context"  
 What are those things that did not meet the needs of the context?  
 ? their impact on EAs.  
 Disservice

④ "Out of Context"  
 Tom Theme 2+3 call it "Putting Culture into Context"

⑤ "Conclusion"  
 - "The context makes a difference"  
 - "Setting & Context"  
 ④ "Contextual Complexities"  
 for things that don't fit.

Theme 2 → "In the context of..."

**Theme 2: Contextual complexities**

This theme discusses and describes the contextual complexities how the contexts of the Middle East, the UAE as a nation, the contexts within individual schools and teachers' classrooms impacted the work of education advisors. This theme is directly related to the main research question and the first subsidiary question.

**BORDER CROSSINGS**

The impact of gender segregation  
Aspects of Arabs vs Emiratis  
Adaptation by EAs into Arabic culture [dress, socialisation, etc.]

**ISSUES OF LANGUAGE**

The use of translators  
English language vs Arabic language  
The teaching of English to local staff

**ISSUES OF ETHICS**

Teachers' professionalism  
EAs competency  
ADDEC's strategies and response to change  
The business model of PPP in comparison to the joint culture of public schools

**Theme 3: Across Cultures**

The third theme expands on cultural intricacies and relates to the second subsidiary research question. It discusses how education advisors negotiate and manage cultural complexities and complications as part of the work of leading professional learning and school improvement.

**GENDER SEGREGATION**

The impact of gender segregation on school leadership  
The impact of gender segregation on student populations  
The impact of gender segregation on the staff population

**CULTURAL IDIOSYNCRASIES**

Concept of "Wasta"  
Loss of face  
Notions of time  
Use of "Insha allah"  
Issues between Arab expatriates and Emiratis

**IMPACT OF WESTERNERS**

Impact of the spread of Western values  
Impact of Westerners on students

### Theme 1: Making a connection

The theme "making a connection" developed as participants reflected on the different relationships they experienced and described as education advisors. This theme addresses all research questions by expounding on the development and status of relationships in and across the learning partnership. Participants signalled that making a connection and building relationships with the local staff was vital to accomplishing their objectives as education advisors. While their experiences may have differed, the experience of being connected was significant for the school improvement partnership.

#### MAKING A CONNECTION:

What is the rationale behind EAs making a connection and building relationships

- Making a connection enabled EAs to understand the staff they were working with and the context and culture of the schools they were working in
- Making a connection enabled EAs to gain trust and respect from local staff
- Making a connection enabled EAs to gain traction with school improvement work

#### WAYS OF CONNECTING:

What are the things that EAs did to make a connection and build relationships?

- EAs had to gain trust and respect of local staff by learning basic Arabic language to communicate
- EAs had to learn about socio-cultural aspects and different ways of adjusting respectfully to local ways

**BEING CONNECTED:** What is the end product expected from making connections and building relationships?

- Teachers' learning improved - Participant W's story of how a teacher changed his pedagogy
- Teachers' across departments and the school developed better relationships and collaboration began to play a greater role in the schools
- School improvement initiatives were impacted - Participant P's story of principal's change
- Sometime relationships do not work out as well as expected - Participant K's story of disconnect

### Chapter 5 Theme 1: Making personal connections for professional goals

This theme "Making personal connections for professional goals" developed as participants reflected on the different relationships they experienced and described as education advisors. The theme addresses all research questions by explaining how education advisors negotiated and developed relationships in and across the learning partnership. Several participants signalled that making a connection and building relationships with the local staff was vital to accomplishing their objectives as education advisors. While their experiences may have differed, the experience of being connected was significant for personal and professional relationships as well as school improvement initiatives.

#### Making the Connection

- N's story: Approaching the mentoring role with care and sensitivity
- W's story: Impacting a teacher's pedagogy through mentoring

#### The ways we connect

- P's story: Connecting with leadership for change initiatives
- P's story: Sharing the responsibility of mentoring

#### Disconnected

- J's story: Mentoring challenges - Engaging indifferent teachers
- T's story: Mentoring challenges - Involving inert teachers

### Theme 2: Contextual complexities

This theme discusses and describes the contextual complexities how the contexts of the Middle East, the UAE as a nation, the contexts within individual schools and teachers' classrooms impacted the work of education advisors. This theme is directly related to the main research question and the first subsidiary question.

## BORDER CROSSINGS

- The impact of gender segregation
- Aspects of Arabs vs Emiratis
- Adaptation by EAs into Arabic culture [dress, socialisation, etc.]

## ISSUES OF LANGUAGE

- The use of translators
- English language vs Arabic language
- The teaching of English to local staff

## ISSUES OF ETHICS

- Teachers' professionalism
- EAs competency
- ADEC's strategies and response to change
- The business model of PPP in comparison to the joint culture of public schools

### Chapter 6 Theme 2: Managing contextual complexities for building partnerships

This theme discusses and describes the contextual complexities of negotiating teachers; professional learning in a school improvement context in the UAE. Contexts also includes schools and teachers' classrooms impacted the work of education advisors. This theme is directly related to the main research question and the first subsidiary question.

## Contextually difficult professional relationships

- Story 1: N's story - Telling staff what they have been doing is wrong!
- Story 2: P's story about the expatriate teachers' context – My job depends on my appraisal.

## Contextually difficult personal and social relationships

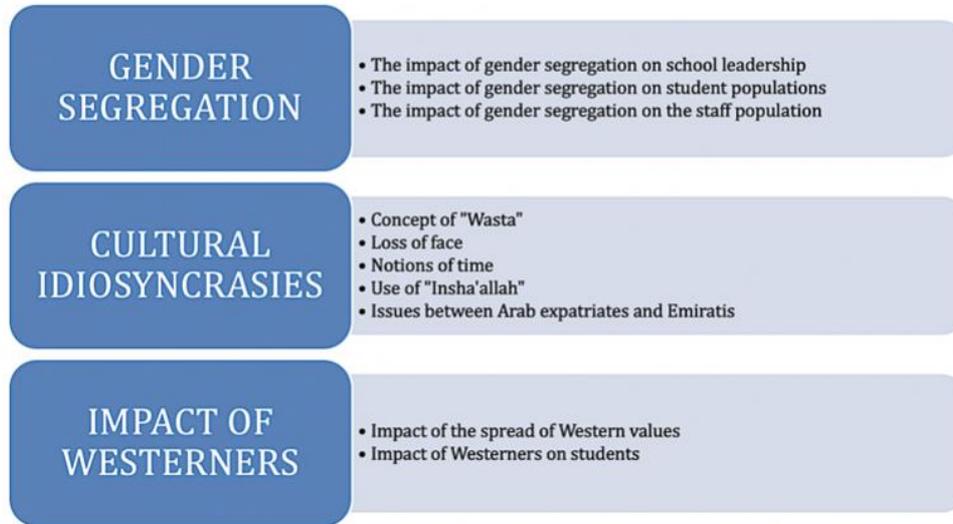
- Story 3: A's story of a tired teacher - Suffering from work fatigue
- Story 4: L's story from a personal context - Dealing with exploding ovens.

## Contextually difficult organisational relationships

- Story 5: P's story - Principals have no authority to hire staff
- Story 6: K's story - Training advisors new to the professional context

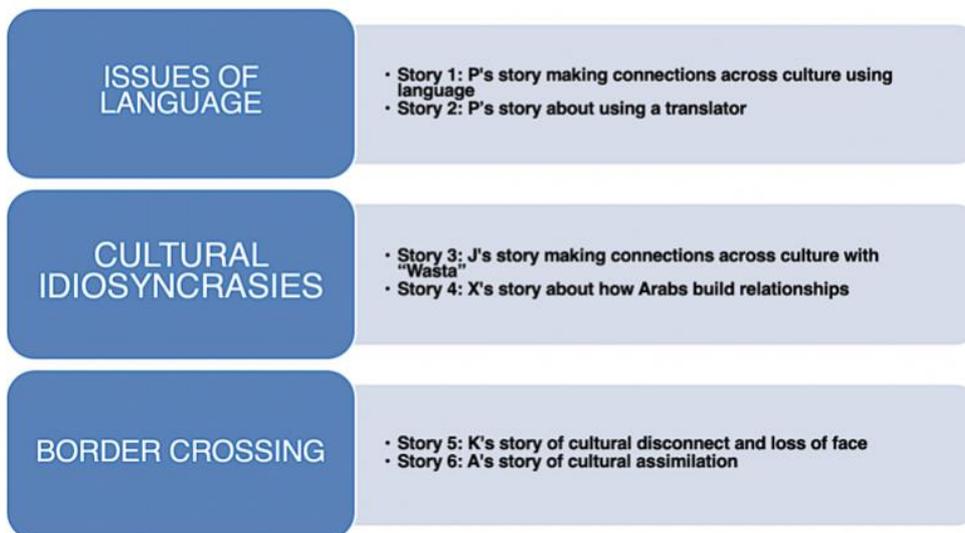
**Theme 3: Across Cultures**

The third theme expands on cultural intricacies and relates to the second subsidiary research question. It discusses how education advisors negotiate and manage cultural complexities and complications as part of the work of leading professional learning and school improvement.



**Theme 3: Making cultural connections to negotiate partnerships**

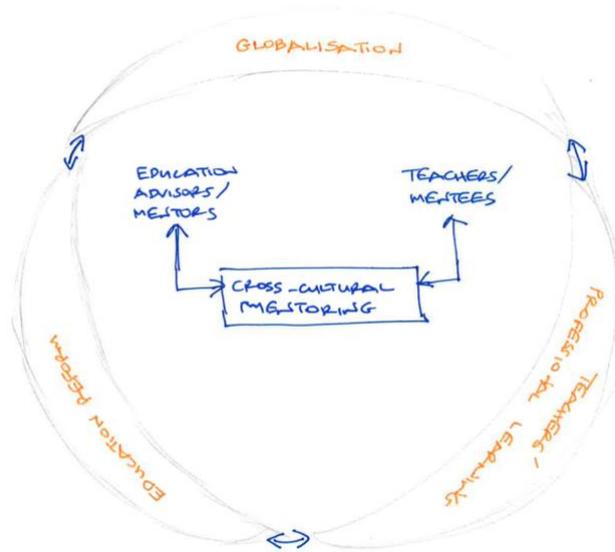
The third theme expands on cultural intricacies and relates to the second subsidiary research question. It discusses how education advisors negotiate and manage cultural complexities and complications as part of the work of leading professional learning and school improvement.



# Appendix L: Progressive development of the framework of cross-cultural mentoring interactions

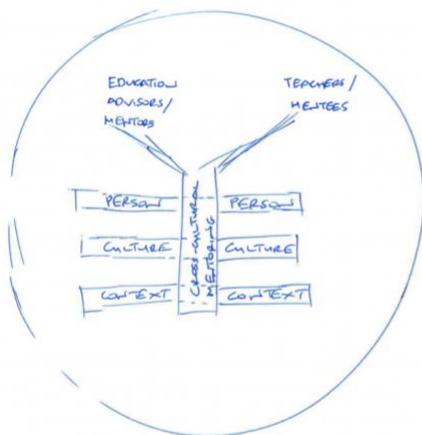
Original Version

Figure 1:



Conceptual Framework.

Figure 2A:



- A dynamic model of mentoring across cultures /
- Reducing Distance in Cross Cultural mentoring

Figure 2B:

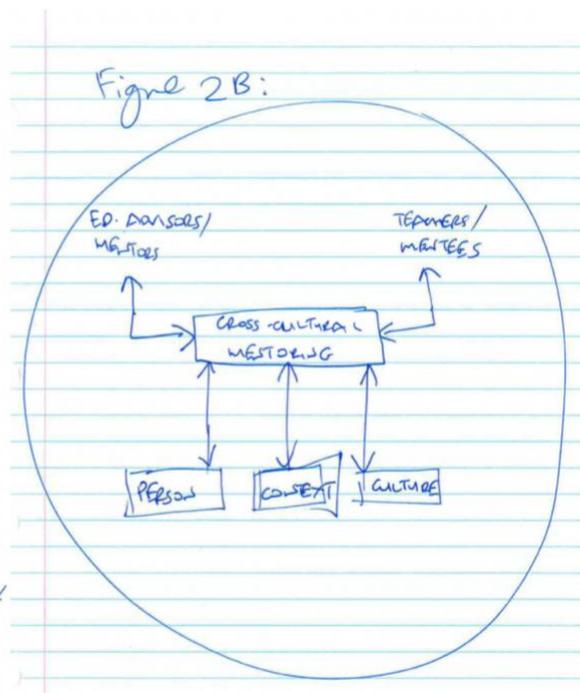


Figure 1:

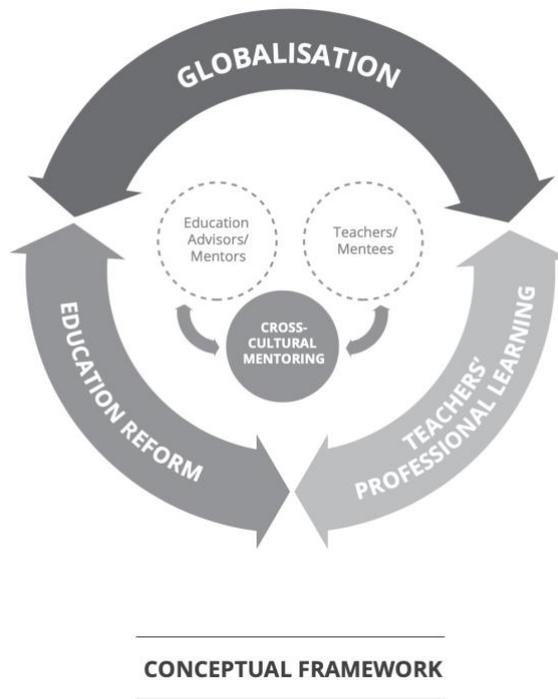


Figure 2a:

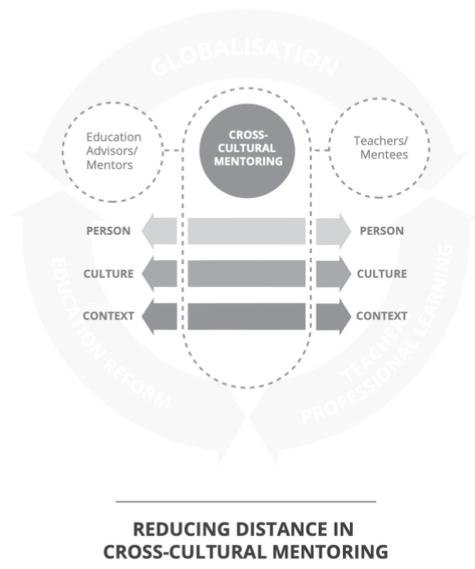


Figure 2b:

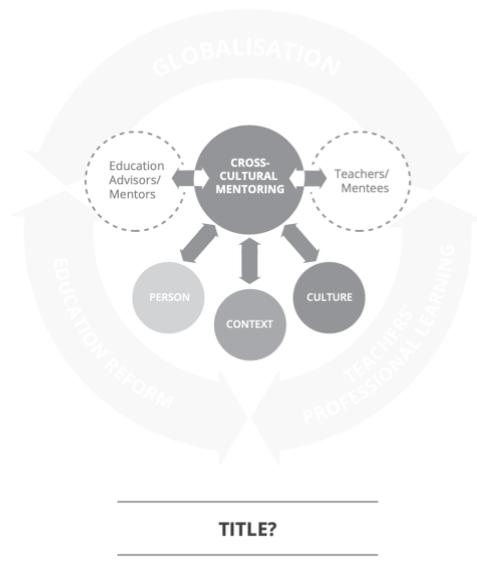


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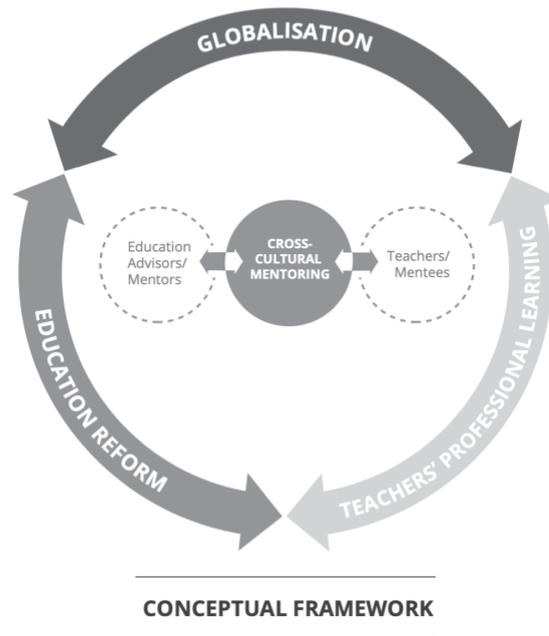


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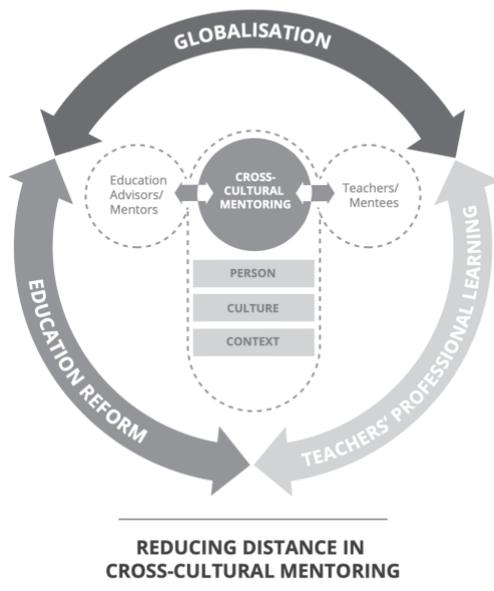


Figure 2b:

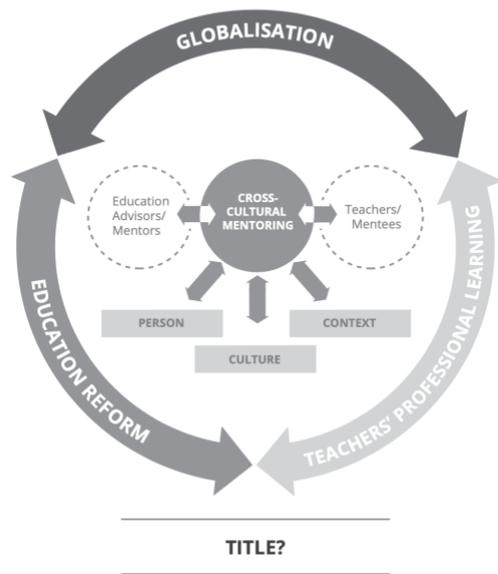


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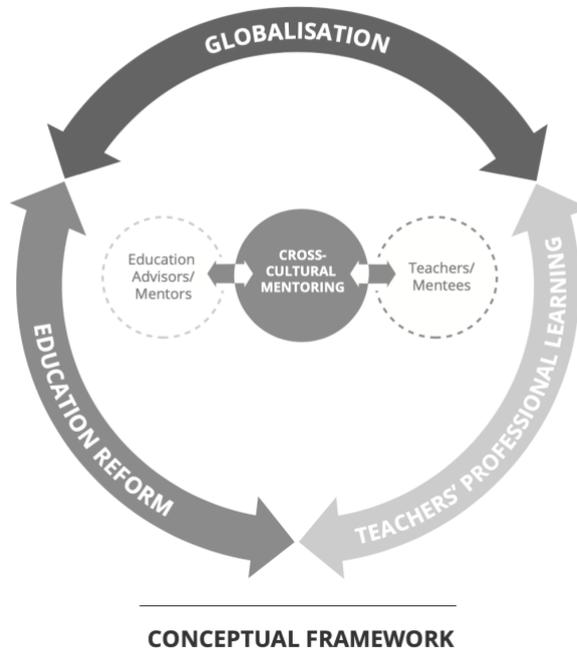


Figure 2a:



**REDUCING DISTANCE IN  
CROSS-CULTURAL MENTORING**

Figure 2b:



**TITLE?**

Figure 1:

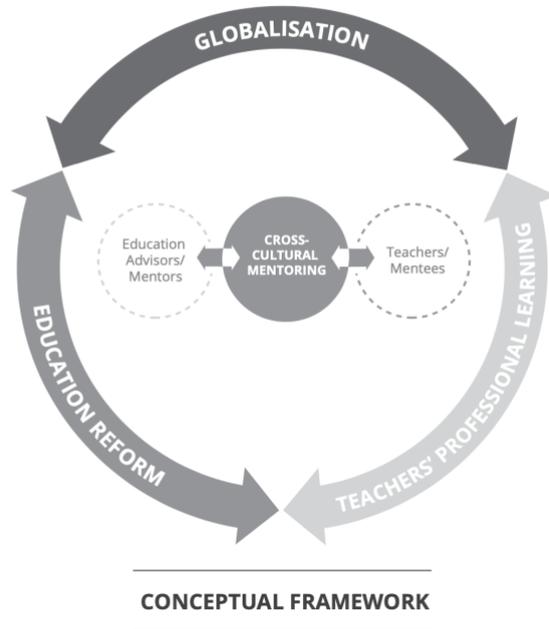
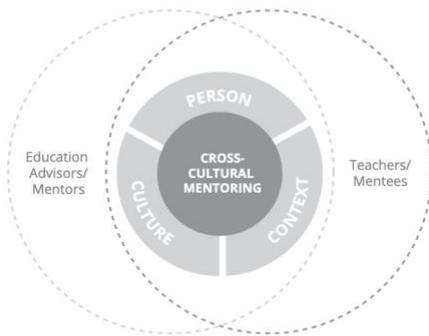


Figure 2a:



**REDUCING DISTANCE IN  
CROSS-CULTURAL MENTORING**

Figure 2b:



**TITLE?**

Figure 1:



Figure 2a:

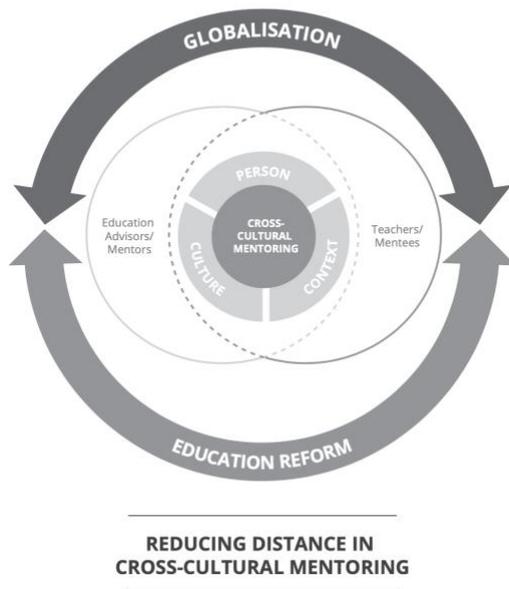


Figure 2b:

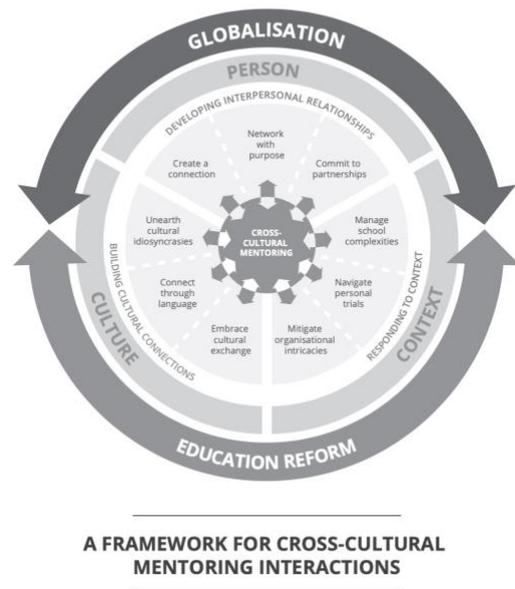


Figure 1:

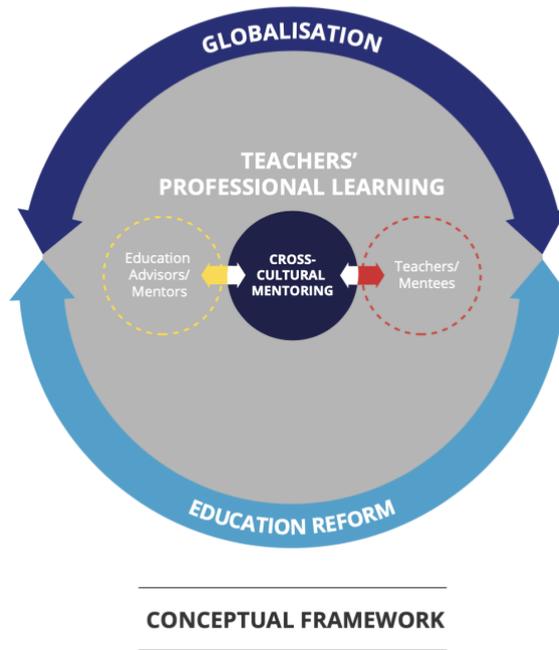


Figure 2a:

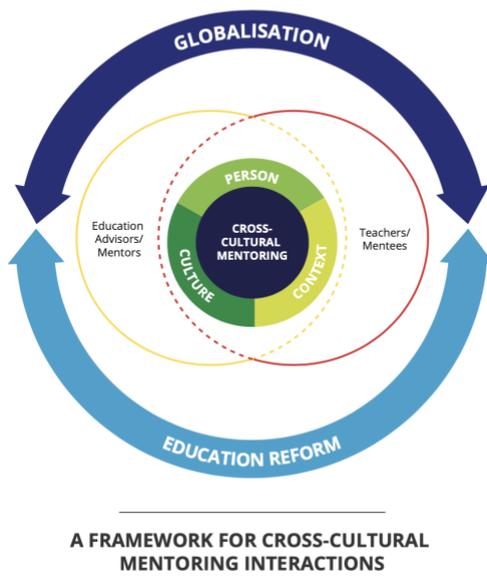


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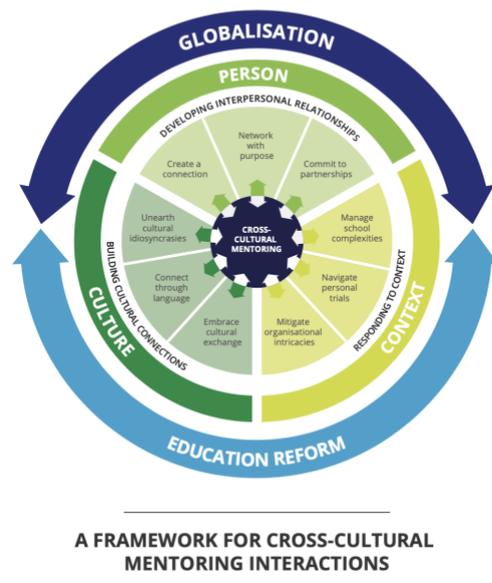


Figure 1:



Figure 2a:

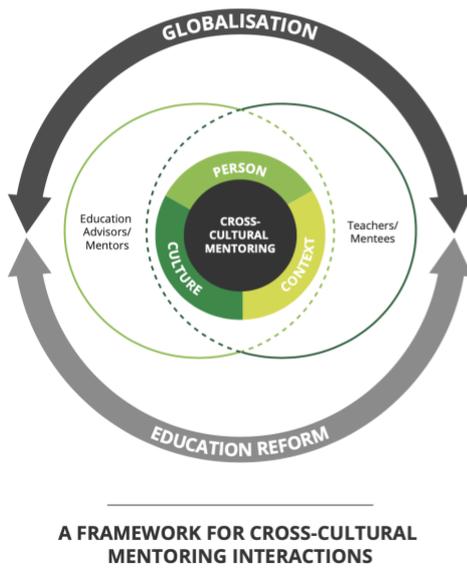


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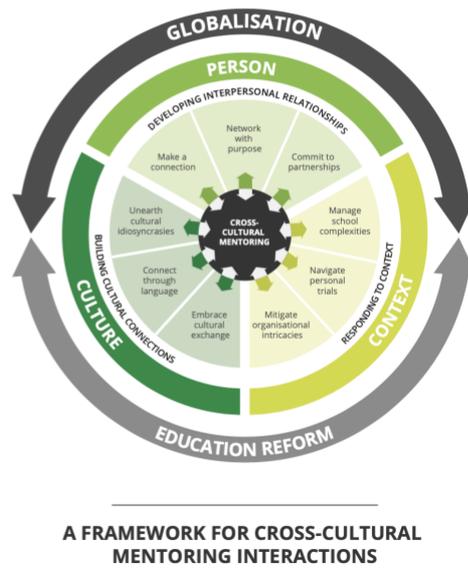
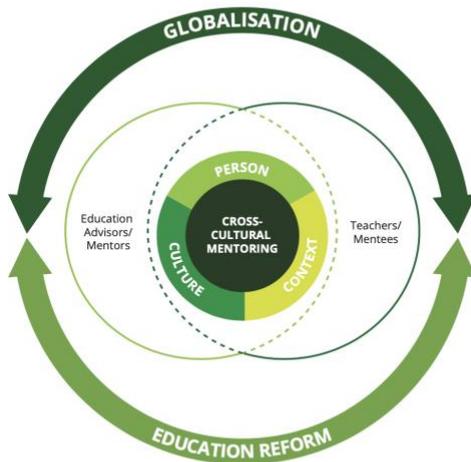


Figure 1:



**CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Figure 2a:



**A FRAMEWORK FOR CROSS-CULTURAL MENTORING INTERACTIONS**

Figure 2b:



**A FRAMEWORK FOR CROSS-CULTURAL MENTORING INTERACTIONS**