

3 Evaluation Process

3.1 The REFLECT framework

As was intimated towards the end of Chapter 1, 'conversation' or critically reflective dialogue that connects to its context and is grounded in evidence-based practice has been the bedrock of the **REFLECT** programme - from conception to planning, management, matching, delivery, training and development. Just as 'creative conversations' have been at the core of many of the co-mentoring relationships, so has conversation and reflective enquiry formed the basis of the evaluation process. This mode of evaluation has aimed at embodying the principles and processes exemplified in the Handbook (The Sage Gateshead, 2007, pp.10 - 21; see Appendix 10.10).

What are the key principles and processes that characterise REFLECT and that might be transferable to other cross-sector contexts?

Definition of co-mentoring

Co-mentoring in **REFLECT** offers a dynamic, collaborative learning process for creative and cultural practitioners and emerging leaders in schools to engage in an equal exchange of knowledge, skills and experience with the aim of developing and sustaining innovative partnership practice and embedding creativity and creative learning in the heart of their organisations. It is a time limited relationship with a clear, agreed focus.

General principles

- Engaging in evidence-based reflective conversation that connects to the personal and professional contexts of both co-mentors
- Negotiating a mutually beneficial shared focus as a basis for the co-mentoring relationship
- Establishing boundaries within a shared learning agreement in which mutual roles, responsibilities and expectations are made explicit
- Seeing the possibilities of using a focused co-mentoring conversation as a springboard for personal, professional and organisational change and development
- Facilitating cross-sector dialogue that can result in new ways of seeing oneself, ones creative practice and ones organisation
- Building up a model of reflective co-learning that can sustain a culture of self-responsibility and self-evaluation within a cross-sector context

Principles underlying the co-mentoring learning process

- Developing a safe, supportive, non-judgemental relationship based on empathy, trust and mutual respect
- Establishing conditions that encourage openness, honesty, integrity and informality

- Creating a learning environment that supports risk-taking and innovation and is underpinned by evidence-based reflective practice

Principles underlying a reflective conversation

Reflective practice entails adopting a critical perspective about the reasons and consequences of what we do in different contexts. By focusing on the why rather than the how, this process of self-observation and self-review, rooted in evidence and experience drawn from their practice, enables each co-mentor to evaluate their starting point and to redefine their future actions.

- Making connections - asking open questions - active listening - absorbing - rephrasing - reflecting - mirroring back - responding by leading and challenging each co-mentor in a non-directive way
- Drawing out and enabling each person to step outside and become a detached spectator on their own practice and on their own learning
- Empowering each person to take responsibility for their own learning and to seek out direct evidence from their practice and experience
- Encouraging each person to develop listening and analytical skills that help them to build up a strong sense of ownership of their practice in different contexts
- Deepening each person's awareness and conviction in what they are doing by fostering a greater understanding of context and place
- Strengthening each person's ability to challenge their preconceived views, to take risks, to make new connections and to shift their perspective
- Enabling each person to clarify the principles underpinning their work, thereby strengthening a sense of critical engagement based on a continuing review of evidence and experience
- Empowering each person by asking neutral, open questions that encourage critical self-reflection, curiosity and a sense of enquiry
- Helping each person to map out a future vision that is sustainable and rooted in evidence-based practice and experience
- Encouraging each person to adopt a critical perspective about the reasons and consequences of their practice. By focusing on the why rather than the how, this learning process is fundamental to their evaluation of what they do and helps to inform subsequent action.

Principles underlying a reflexive conversation

Reflexive practice focuses on how the quality of each co-mentor's inner listening, attention and awareness can help them clarify their main purpose and motivation. This inner reflexive conversation, which sometimes cannot easily be put into words, strengthens a person's sense of identity and deepens their self-awareness and understanding of how their personal motivation, values and emotions can affect their professional practice and learning. Being able to connect ones own inner listening to that of others is central to a sensitive co-mentoring relationship.



- Helping each co-mentor to clarify their motivation and to identify their core purpose
- Enabling each person to find their own voice and to deepen their understanding of who they are
- Encouraging each person to explore and verbally articulate the emotional interconnections between their identity (e.g., artistic, creative, cultural, educational identity), motivation and professional practice
- Assisting each person to develop an understanding of their relationship with their own creativity and creative learning (e.g., What does it mean for you? Why do you do what you do? What do you care about in your creative learning? What function does creativity play in your life?)
- Helping each person to connect their self-awareness and sense of identity to their outer world - i.e., to the context in which they work and live
- Creating the possibility for each person to engage with their emotional intelligence by:
 - becoming emotionally self-aware;
 - developing the ability to manage their emotions and feelings;
 - understanding how to use emotions for the benefit of their self-motivation;
 - recognising and responding to emotions in others through the use of empathy;
 - strengthening their interpersonal skills and understanding;
- Encouraging each person to reflect on their own story, their own biography, as a means of clarifying and deepening their understanding of themselves, their history and personal and professional journey
- Connecting each person's tacit or implicit understanding with their explicit knowledge of their particular situation.

Effective co-mentoring conversations take into account the importance of the dynamic relationship between reflection and reflexivity, between the outer and inner thought processes of each co-mentor. By drawing out the interconnections between each individual's creative, personal and professional development, fundamental questions regarding identity, motivation, meaning and personal creativity become the heart of a continuing reflective and reflexive dialogue that acts as a catalyst for further change and development.

As the **REFLECT** programme is not target-driven or task-oriented, the principles and processes embedded in its co-mentoring framework are readily transferable to other cross-sector contexts. .

3.2 The place of evaluation in the REFLECT programme

The evaluation has focused especially on the following critical areas:

- The structure of the programme
- The management and delivery of the programme
- The effectiveness of the Training and Gathering Days
- The impact of the programme on individual co-mentors and their respective organisations
- The impact of the programme on children and young people

From the beginning of the programme the Evaluator has been in regular contact with the **REFLECT** team. He contributed to the Mentoring Preparation Day for trainers; observed the first round of nine Training Days throughout the country; attended all meetings of the National Advisory Group and two meetings of the Regional Advisory Groups. Throughout the process he has remained connected with ongoing developments in Creative Partnerships.

One important function of the evaluation has been to contextualise **REFLECT** within the wider national picture - especially in relation to professional development, coaching and mentoring, cultural learning and the development of creativity. Members of the National Advisory Group have been an invaluable reference point, not only for the **REFLECT** team but also for the evaluation. For example, their various perspectives have helped to draw attention to some of the ways cross-sector co-mentoring might connect to both the Government's creativity agenda and to the growing need for a comprehensive national framework for mentoring and coaching.

It is hoped that the evaluation has contributed to the national reflective conversation being generated by **REFLECT** - that the process will benefit all co-mentors and their respective organisations, as well as create a networked process of informed dialogue aimed at providing sustainability that will impact on teachers, creative practitioners, young people, schools and cultural organisations.

3.3 Structure of the evaluation process

Summary of facts

- Total number of co-mentors: 138 (i.e. 69 pairs)
- Questionnaire respondents: 49
- Interviews with co-mentors: 29
- Interviews with **REFLECT** team: 4
- Interview with **REFLECT** Lead Trainer: 1
- Interview with Senior Officer, Creative Partnerships: 1
- Testimonies from co-mentors: 13
- Case Studies from co-mentors: 2

Collection, collation and analysis of basic data

The collection, collation and analysis of basic data was carried out in December 2007 by the assistant evaluator, Dr Mark Rimmer, who was then working at The Sage Gateshead. Subsequently he left to become a Post-Doctoral Fellow at the University of Leeds. Areas covered included: background information; aims and objectives; application questions; selection and matching process; co-mentoring pairs; preparation of the Handbook; setting up the National Advisory Group and Regional Advisory Groups (RAGs); structure and delivery of Training and Gathering Days.

Questionnaires

- Questionnaires for co-mentors and RAGs were drawn up by the Evaluator and Dr Rimmer in December 2007 (See Appendix 10.1 for co-mentor questionnaire).
- Questionnaires for co-mentors were distributed at Gathering Days or by post during January and February 2008.
- Questionnaires for RAGs were distributed at the end of January 2008.
- Co-mentor questionnaires were completed and returned to the **REFLECT** team by the end of February 2008.

Analysis of questionnaires

- The analysis of 49 co-mentor questionnaires was carried out by Dr Alexandra Lamont, Senior Lecturer in Psychology of Music, and Rebecca Hale, doctoral student, at the Research Institute for Life Course Studies, Keele University.
- Their evaluation chapter and appendices of Quantitative Data - Descriptive Statistics (Appendix 10.2) and Statistical Analysis (Appendix 10.3), were completed at the beginning of April 2008.
- The analysis of RAG questionnaires was supposed to be carried out by the **REFLECT** team but there was nil return.

Interviews

- 29 hour-long interviews with co-mentors was carried out by the Evaluator (see Appendix 10.4 for questions):
 - 18 face-to-face interviews(11 creative practitioners; 7 teachers)
 - 11 telephone interviews; (6 creative practitioners; 5 teachers)
- 4 two-hour interviews with **REFLECT** team (see Appendix 10.5 for questions)
- 1 two-hour interview with **REFLECT** Lead Trainer (see Appendix 10.6 for questions)
- 1 two-hour interview with Senior Officer, Creative Partnerships (see Appendix 10.7 for questions)

Testimonies

- After the interviews 24 co-mentors were invited to write a two-page testimony about their personal responses to **REFLECT**. It was called '*Reflections on REFLECT*' and they were asked to focus especially on the following outcomes:
 - Impact of **REFLECT** on the co-mentor both personally and professionally
 - Impact on their colleagues
 - Impact on their school or organisation
 - Impact on children and young people
- There were 13 responses (7 creative practitioners; 6 teachers)
- These testimonies were a strong source of evidence and the Evaluation has drawn heavily on the observations of these co-mentors.

Case Studies

- 3 co-mentoring pairs were invited to present a short case study of their work together. 2 pairs completed this task:
 - Reflecting Ourselves (see Appendix 10.8)
 - Collage Conversations as a form of co-mentoring (see Appendix 10.9)

The subsequent discussion of the Findings and Outcomes is largely dependent on an analysis of data drawn from the questionnaires, interviews, testimonies and case studies.

