

6 Outcomes

6.1 Introduction

The main thread running through **REFLECT** is that the personal and the professional are inextricably linked throughout the whole co-mentoring programme. The synergy between the personal and professional is mirrored in the reflective dialogue that has characterised every aspect of the programme - from conception to planning, management, matching, delivery, training, development and evaluation. Although the learning agreement and shared focus have acted as a starting point for each co-mentoring journey, the emphasis on making new connections, on asking searching questions, on active listening, on taking risks – basically on engaging in shared reflective enquiry rooted in a cross-sector context – has resulted in unpredictable outcomes that have effectively transformed practice. The principles and processes embedded in **REFLECT** (see Chapter 3.1) are challenging and rigorous but they have enabled the co-mentors to be responsive to the subtle nuances of their personal, creative, professional and organisational development.

One of the significant features of **REFLECT** is that it has been process-oriented with conversation lying at its heart. Paradoxically, for a process that has not been prescriptive or target-driven, the outcomes have been clear, tangible and uncompromisingly pragmatic both for individuals and organisations. A key to this success has been the balance that has been achieved between lack of prescription and maintaining a clear structure. To reiterate, the main elements contributing to the effectiveness of the programme have been:

- the **REFLECT** framework acting as the key touchstone
- the management and delivery of the programme including
 - handling the matching process, using the expertise of the Programme Managers supported by the knowledge of the Regional Advisory Groups
 - ongoing monitoring of the programme by the Programme Managers
- the clear structure of the programme including
 - the range of activities and processes engaged in by co-mentors on the Training and Gathering Days
 - making a learning agreement
 - setting a shared focus (linked to the first payment of the honorarium)
 - establishing a minimum number of co-mentoring meetings
- lack of prescription in terms of allowing open-ended outcomes

REFLECT has demonstrated that if a professional development programme gives people time, space and permission to pause, to reflect, to reconnect and

to reappraise, they are likely to see themselves and their professional life in a new perspective. The dialogue and shared activities experienced by the co-mentors in this programme have enabled them to shift their ways of seeing, to reconnect with their creative energy and to reengage with the workplace in a qualitatively different way. By positioning the programme in a cross-sector context, **REFLECT** has provided a rich model of professional development that is readily transferable.

The outcomes are drawn largely from an analysis of testimonies, case studies and interviews with the co-mentors. Special attention is given to the impact of the programme. The structure comprises:

- Personal and professional learning
- Reflective practice
- Collaborative learning
- Impact on colleagues and organisation
- Impact on children and young people
- The transformative power of the unexpected
- Transferability of **REFLECT**

6.2 Personal and professional learning

6.2.1 The connection between reflective co-mentoring and fostering personal, professional and creative learning.

The **REFLECT** programme has had an impact on my personal creative practice by providing an exchange which has focused on process in an often outcome-centred educational context. Having the 'space' to talk, think, relax and share perspectives with another professional has enriched my thinking, motivation and creative practice (**Creative Practitioner**).

The words of this creative practitioner sum up the views of those co-mentors interviewed who feel that they have benefited from being given time to reflect on questions connected to motivation, purpose, meaning and future direction. For example, asking the question 'what if?' has enabled them to imagine a range of new possibilities in their professional practice. The link between the personal and the professional is highlighted by another creative practitioner who clearly sees the benefits of her collaboration with a headteacher.

My initial motivation for taking part in the programme was to further my professional development, but at the first meeting with my co-mentor I quickly realised that the project may bring about personal benefits as well. ... We both agreed that revitalising our personal creativity was something that we wanted to actively pursue and that by keeping sketch-books, we could visually record our progress throughout the project, which may assist in this process. (My partner) was always very determined that anything that helped us personally would inevitably have a positive ripple effect into our professional life (**Creative Practitioner**).

It is illuminating to juxtapose the headteacher's response to her co-mentoring relationship with the above creative practitioner. Their shared focus concentrated on the place of visual art in the Primary curriculum and they found that the sketchbook 'log' was a very significant part of their reflective journey. They demonstrated that 'words' are only one way of describing and recording a shared experience.

- My co-mentor and I decided to maintain a sketchbook 'log' of our partnership. This has reawakened my own imaginative and creative skills and has been invaluable in providing opportunities for independent and shared reflection.
- Visits to my co-mentor's workplace and interaction with her curator colleagues, have enriched and inspired my creative vision in an environment completely different to my own place of work.
- My co-mentor's visit to my school, together with her questions and views, has given me a fresh perspective on aspects of school life and of myself as a leader.
- Visits we have shared to museums and an art gallery have stimulated discussion and reflection about ourselves and our work
(Headteacher).

It is relevant to note that creative environments have inspired co-mentors to have creative conversations. Another headteacher, with a focus on career transition, found that a visit to a museum prompted a conversation with her co-mentor that challenged her personal, creative and professional development.

My co-mentor used story to facilitate a reflective conversation which helped me understand my relationship with my own creativity, deepening my understanding of myself and my personal and professional journey. This proved an ideal exercise for uncovering professional direction. My co-mentor allowed me to adopt a critical perspective about reasons and consequences of my actions both personal and professional **(Headteacher).**

Question: How far are CPD programmes providing opportunities for cross-sector co-mentoring that aims to strengthen the links between personal, professional and creative learning?

6.2.2 The importance of deepening the quality of professional learning by giving teachers and creative practitioners the space and time to engage in a process of shared reflection that is not target-driven.

A recurring theme in the testimonies and interviews is the importance of space and time as a necessary condition for quality reflection. One creative practitioner, concerned with finding effective ways of communicating the services of her organisation to potential clients, found that **REFLECT** offered her "orchard time ... i.e. a zone where ideas are allowed to grow and be cultivated at a slower pace – and a space that is very fertile. A space to continue to develop my own creative thinking processes". Another creative practitioner searching for ways of balancing artistic practice with daily

functional roles, found that **REFLECT** confirmed her view that “one-to-one dialogue in a ‘safe’ space can change someone’s life in a radically short space of time”. One partnership felt especially empowered by the ethos of **REFLECT** because it gave them permission to engage in serious personal and professional reflection. They agreed to “prioritise space just for me - my own personal development”.

Having quality space and time, unfettered by external constraints and performance targets, might appear a ‘luxury’ in the pressurised world of schools and cultural organisations, but this was seen as a major strength of the programme. As one headteacher said “the luxury of having uninterrupted time and space to share our thoughts, feelings and possibilities without the expectation of producing measurable outcomes at the end of the process was totally liberating and in itself promoted creative thinking”. With her special interest in nurturing creativity in others, she made the valid observation that:

I have come to realise the extent to which my opportunities to be creative in the workplace have been constricted by external initiatives and imperatives. The constant balancing act between being accountable to the Government and to the Local Authority, while truly listening and responding to children’s needs and wants is exhausting. The added responsibility of developing financially sustainable childcare and a whole raft of other initiatives means that I have little time to genuinely reflect on what I am doing. The **REFLECT** programme has given me the time and space to really think about these tensions and it has motivated me to look for creative solutions (**Headteacher**).

Another teacher with 37 years in the profession endorses this view when she points out that “never before in my teaching have I been asked to ‘reflect’ on my practice and to be given time to do it! ... The pressure that all teachers are under today means that we have very little time for reflection”. This particular teacher was also involved in the pilot mentoring programme developed by Arts Inform in the East Midlands in 2005 – 2006 (see Chapter 1.2). Drawing on this dual experience she comments that “what distinguishes the (**REFLECT**) programme from the previous one is that we are not expected to produce a practical outcome. This runs counter to all my previous experience and feels quite alien”. But despite not being task driven, **REFLECT** has enabled this teacher and her co-mentor, whose shared focus was on using film archives as an educational resource, to produce some very practical outcomes.

We are already working with staff at my school to research how Film Archive Materials can be used within teaching and learning. We both see our working relationship continuing after the **REFLECT** project is over when we can develop these initial ideas further. It has been a great experience as it has certainly made me reassess my teaching and my views on education (**Art Teacher**).

Question: To what extent do CPD programmes aim to achieve a balance between performance-oriented activities and processes that allow space and time for shared reflection in cross-sector contexts?

6.2.3 The need to provide development opportunities that nurture the creative voice of teachers and creative practitioners.

The un-prescriptive nature of **REFLECT** has given co-mentors the freedom to question why and what they do in their current practice and it has encouraged them to explore new avenues for the future. As one teacher says, the shared process has opened up the possibilities of the unpredictable by re-engaging them with “the excitement of serendipity that says the future is yet to be discovered or is at the mercy of our own creative imaginations”. The processes embedded in **REFLECT** have allowed all participants to pursue their own creative journey. They have been encouraged to be self-directed in a context that values trust and serendipity. In the words of one creative practitioner, “the best things lie in quirky corners”! **REFLECT** has respected the value of this personal journey and in no way has it wanted to stem the flow – “quirky mishaps” must be allowed to happen.

The improvised process of an experienced visual arts teacher/practitioner and a dancer illustrates what can be learnt from a shared creative journey. Although their shared focus was concerned with developing new work around parenting, having met a couple of times and visited the teacher’s school, they decided to spend a day together in a studio extending their own horizons by exploring different creative processes. This was a rich opportunity to build up trust and listen to each others voices – a process that could only enrich their shared creative work with the children in the teacher’s school.

We started with a physical warm up (led by the dancer). Enlivened by music and movement, we knew that we wanted to move between methods and get down on paper what was coming out of the session. We made a mind-map of the qualities and values and potential of our relationship. This led naturally to an exercise (where) we imagined a journey and drew it in the form of a single line punctuated by events. Taking the drawing as an instructional map, we each created a short movement piece, adding additional details as we went along. We shared maps and performed our pieces. We noted the similarities and differences in our journeys, our values and our ways of working. It was natural then to look at the potential of working together (**Art Teacher/ Practitioner**).

This vignette illustrates the creative possibilities that can accrue from the developmental work of teachers and creative practitioners when given the opportunity to engage in shared activities that will extend them both personally and professionally.

Question: How far do CPD programmes enable teachers and creative practitioners to engage in self-directed, developmental creative work in laboratory settings?

6.3 Reflective practice

6.3.1 Definition of reflective practice

As indicated in Chapter 3.1, the notion of 'reflective practice' underpinning the work of **REFLECT** is made explicit in the framework within the Handbook (The Sage Gateshead, 2007):

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. A reflective conversation helps each person to shift their perspective, change their behaviour and develop a sense of responsibility and authorship of their professional practice in a wide range of social and cultural contexts (p.14).

The principles embedded in 'reflective practice' have helped to guide the wide-ranging conversations and activities of the co-mentors. One creative practitioner, whose shared focus was on analysing their practice in a peer learning relationship, emphasised the value of the **REFLECT** framework.

I found the Handbook/framework offers a good place to keep returning to in order to draw out the principles and values that are also becoming more significant for our small organisation. **REFLECT** has helped me become clearer in articulating my own language to describe my practice and therefore this influences the shaping of my organisation, its values, principles and approach (**Creative Practitioner**).

Question: To what extent are cross-sector development programmes informed by the principles underlying reflective practice?

6.3.2 The value of reflective learning through the practice of co-mentoring.

REFLECT has provided the opportunity for teachers and creative practitioners to engage in reflective conversations and structured dialogue about their professional and creative practice. Any reflective and reflexive process is challenging because it prompts people to ask fundamental questions about their identity, motivation, values and beliefs. A key question running through **REFLECT** was 'why do you do what you do?' This opened up further questions about the source of their motivation. What is their driving force? What underpins their commitment to their vocation?

One creative practitioner illustrates the impact of this questioning approach in his work:

The programme has given me the opportunity to slow down and step back a little from my constantly hectic working life, allowing me to consider why I do what I do, and to re-examine my motivation for being involved in creative learning. Some of the reflective activities we participated in on the Gathering Days were immensely helpful (particularly 'what if?') and one or two of these led to the realisation that I needed to make some urgent changes in my professional life (**Creative Practitioner**).

The deepening of self-awareness is central in an effective co-mentoring relationship and this can contribute towards a shift in practice. One teacher, focusing on mapping paths for organisational success, has a long commitment to reflective modes of learning and she felt that her experience of co-mentoring broadened her perspective on critical reflection:

The value of reflective practice for me personally is that I have a sharper vision for the future, based on thorough critical review of what has been achieved (or not achieved). A dialogue for reflection, however, is not only kinder and less critical of flaws, but it also offers a second objective view of perceived successes. My co-mentor has a more balanced view of my work and vision and adds a dimension of creativity to what can be somewhat formulaic methods of my familiar style of reflection (**Teacher**).

A reflective conversation can also be seen as a fruitful way of reappraising styles of leadership. The Headteacher concerned about career transition, began to question whether her passion for creativity was clouding her view of leadership and she saw **REFLECT** as an opportunity to redefine her approach to leadership.

I never really stopped to think about why I was doing things in a particular way. I was not a natural reflective practitioner and often had to build time into meetings to ensure I adopted a critical perspective about the reasons and consequences of what I or my staff did in different contexts. (The **REFLECT**) programme looked as if it would make me stop and think about my leadership and by experiencing a co-mentoring relationship with a cultural partner (this) would strengthen my ability to challenge my preconceived views, perhaps take more risks, make new connections and even shift my perspective. Hopefully it would help me map out a future vision that is sustainable and rooted in practice-based evidence and experience (**Headteacher**).

It is important to note that the experience of engaging in **REFLECT** raised the critical connection between reflective practice and leadership. During a visit to one co-mentor's school the teacher made the apt comment that for reflective practice to work, the culture and leadership of the school, including the Board of Governors, have to understand and support it. She felt that by virtue of their mechanistic training and the target-driven culture of education, many young

teachers in particular have been infected by a 'transmission virus' which prevents them from engaging in reflective practice. Cross-sector co-mentoring is just one way of opening the doors to more reflective and creative ways of working.

Question: How far is reflective practice seen as a central pillar of CPD programmes for teachers and creative practitioners?

6.3.3 The impact of critical reflection on professional practice.

From the interviews with co-mentors it is clear that the approach to mutual learning embedded in **REFLECT** has been applied to different work environments. One deputy headteacher in a Primary School felt that her co-mentor, from the world of physical theatre, had taken her to a space in which reflection is now at the forefront of her personal and professional development. By focusing on shared creative processes that might be used to illustrate, document and support colleagues, this has enabled her to strengthen her awareness of listening to other points of view through group interaction. She has shifted her approach from a transmission mode of conveying information to a more reflective form of drawing colleagues into a constructive dialogue – their voices are now respected in staff conversations.

Drawing on their experience of mutual learning from their co-mentoring conversations, there is evidence of teachers and creative practitioners being determined to find new ways of creating more reflective space in the life of their schools and organisations. They are beginning to challenge the point and effectiveness of many meetings and they are searching for ways of providing staff with opportunities to engage in reflective conversations that might qualitatively enhance practice.

The reflective process has also raised questions regarding the respective management styles of co-mentors. One creative practitioner made the valid point that "headteachers have to learn how to facilitate staff to be creative, whereas line managers in arts organisations have to learn how to manage creative staff". Adopting a reflective stance on these issues is critical to strengthening the quality of management practice.

Reflecting through the eyes and ears of another person is seen as a very powerful form of generating ideas by another creative practitioner. She valued the opportunity to engage in conversations that connected to deeper meanings in her practice without any pressure to fit into a box. For her, 'questioning', 'talking', 'listening' and 'connecting' were becoming an integral part of her professional life.

Question: How far are CPD programmes aiming to deepen the quality of professional practice through focusing on cross-sector reflective conversations?

6.4 Collaborative learning

6.4.1 Shared focus

Chapter 4.5 gave examples of the shared foci selected by co-mentors. These ranged widely to include creativity, specific areas of the curriculum, partnerships and collaborative ways of working, professional and personal development, and organisations and leadership. Having a learning agreement with a shared focus has been a pivotal part of **REFLECT**. Whilst the cross-sector orientation of the programme has resulted in some significant outcomes that could help to inform future developmental work between teachers and creative practitioners - work that could have a direct bearing on the learning of children and young people.

The challenge of exploring a shared focus within a cross-sector context has enabled many co-mentors to put their own creative practice back into the heart of what they are doing. Teachers especially have found this empowering in so far as the programme has given them permission to build on their own creativity as an artist. Of special interest is that the process of documenting the exploration of the shared focus has sometimes moved into a crossover area of reflective dialogue and the non-verbal, where text has been juxtaposed with visual images and physical artefacts. Several examples will be given.

The first example draws on material taken from the first Case Study - *Collage Conversations as a form of co-mentoring* (see Appendix 10.8).

In our co-mentoring relationship we wanted to explore our different textual and visual experiences from business, fine art and childhood. Our focus was to explore the processes involved in the integration of visual and textual languages - 'visual thinking'. Collage became our medium of conversation.

.... Testing ourselves to invent our own integrated visual/textual language we randomly selected two books to use as private journals. We modified, enhanced and destroyed the pages. Stimulated by odd juxtapositions, new thoughts and visual practices would begin to surface. The published book is held in high regard; cutting and modifying it means negotiating with the nature of image making, ideas and thoughts in a wider context, reflecting and mirroring back who we are and how we think visually and textually. Images, thoughts and ideas are not fixed, not to be idolized; they help us to evolve and grow, and like people, they need to be challenged, given space and time and experienced in a nurturing environment.

Learning and our ability to reflect has been enhanced by direct intervention in the pages of the book and thoughts are richer. The tactile quality of the pages provokes continual engagement and reflection, developing confidence and understanding of the self in relation to others (**Creative Practitioner**).

The need to reaffirm their creativity was a powerful source of motivation for the partnership in the second Case Study (see Appendix 10.9) - *Reflecting Ourselves* - where the teacher, a deputy head, was keen to redesign the curriculum so that it offered children a more creative learning process. In the words of the Creative Practitioner:

Our learning agreement focused on aiming to 'create a window of time to enrich and inspire ourselves as creative practitioners' and 'prioritise ourselves rather than focus on facilitating creativity in others'. I was captured by the notion of having a conversation without words, which was the focus of our first gathering. This inspired our partnership and gave me permission to play with ideas, objects and images as a way of sharing our perspectives on the world and themes important to our current practice (**Creative Practitioner**).

Commenting on this creative process, the Teacher responded very positively to a productive working relationship that benefited from not having a static focus. She found this "a positive feature which has contributed to our ability to be creative in our thinking".

The time to bounce ideas around, to be creative with materials and to engage in reflective practice has been invaluable. We have met more frequently than the budget would allow and this has enabled us to go on an exploratory journey with many interesting detours. Remarkably, through meeting another **REFLECT** co-mentor our journey has come full circle - back to the initial seemingly impossible goal of redesigning the curriculum to offer children a more creative learning process....

Having dialogue with another creative adult, free of the constraints of a school setting, gave rise to new perspectives allowing fresh possibilities. Often I would come away from our meetings with ideas buzzing in my head, re-evaluating our school practice and being enthused. There was a dynamic energy created from, at first rather guiltily, finding time to be creative ourselves - either by making gifts for each other or by arranging a session where anything could evolve (**Deputy Headteacher**).

The initial focus for another partnership was to examine the place of visual art in the Primary curriculum. The stimulus of both co-mentors using sketchbook 'logs' inspired the creative practitioner to record information in different ways.

I have suggested alternative forms of documentation, one of which was to set 'Creative Challenges' - using visual means to describe the sort of day we've had or what personal circumstances impacted on our work, life, etc. We both now keep a daily log, building a 'patchwork', using colour, shape, pattern and occasionally words to document the main events of each day.

I don't always feel able to communicate my thoughts in an articulate manner and sometimes words alone aren't sufficient to describe how I'm feeling. It's been great that (we) have a shared dialogue through a more visual means, which is not totally reliant on words (**Creative Practitioner**).

Question: To what extent are CPD programmes largely task focused or do they allow space for participants to have a shared focus that can be explored creatively, possibly using non-verbal language?

6.4.2 Shared values

Collaborative ways working are especially effective when values are shared, but joint reflective engagement is also a positive way of coming to understand the different perspectives embedded in many partnerships. The experience of **REFLECT** demonstrates that a non-judgemental co-mentoring relationship based on parity of respect provides a strong basis for sharing values and exploring different points of view. The predominant shared values of both teachers and creative practitioners in **REFLECT** include:

Valuing creativity

- Believing in inclusive access to quality creative experiences in many different contexts
- Enriching personal experience by giving space to creative learning across the curriculum
- Enabling teachers, creative practitioners and young people to see and make connections through creative thinking and reflective learning
- Understanding that order and structure are necessary conditions for fostering creativity
- Focusing on creativity as a way of enabling children's learning to go beyond such external constraints as targets and SATs
- Bringing creativity into every aspect of education (e.g., learning, teaching, planning, inclusion)

Valuing the arts

- Seeing the potential of the arts for transforming the quality of lives
- Engaging in the arts as an imaginative way of expressing a young person's sense of identity
- Using the arts as an effective way of getting young people to think outside the box and to raise challenging questions
- Harnessing the arts in order to unlock the creative voice of young people

Valuing shared principles

- Commitment to diversity, social inclusion and equality of access
- Commitment to parity and mutual respect
- Commitment to fostering the autonomy of young people
- Commitment to truth and to the integrity of what one knows

Despite their different professional perspectives, the **REFLECT** interviews show that the collaborative work of teachers and creative practitioners are underpinned by shared values and a shared commitment to creativity.

Question: To what extent are CPD programmes exploring collaborative ways of working that are strengthened by a commitment to shared values and perspectives?

6.4.3 Shared vocabulary

The success of **REFLECT** has been partly dependent on the effectiveness of the language used by the facilitators, the Programme Managers and the co-mentors themselves. Comprehensibility was the main aim and any slippage into 'education-speak' or arts jargon was immediately challenged by fellow co-mentors. Problems of meaning were explored directly in a non-technical way, using practical everyday language that was accessible. There was respect for finding a shared vocabulary that worked – that promoted the shared understanding necessary for a successful collaboration.

The search for effective forms of communication was a challenge to all co-mentors. Often a balance was achieved through marrying aspirational, reflective conversation with grounded pragmatic language. This flexibility in using language was found to be a good way of sharpening up the process of shared thinking and exploring layers of meaning that made sense to both co-mentors.

As can be seen from the discussion of the 'shared focus' (6.4.1), some co-mentors found their shared vocabulary within the area of non-verbal modes of communication. **REFLECT** opened up new ways of thinking and recording reflections, especially in sketchbook format with visual images, photographs, collected pieces, diagrams and mind-maps. It was found that a learning notebook of visual images, supported by a clear text, can be a powerful form of reflective learning. It gave co-mentors confidence to articulate their feelings and reflections in a form that was meaningful to them.

One co-mentoring pair developed a shared vocabulary that used verbal and non-verbal processes as well as valuing the place of silence. They were both sensitive to the meaning that is often implicit in the space between words. They saw this as an integral part of their reflective conversation. A similar point was made by the co-mentors who embarked on their journey through the 'collage conversation' discussed earlier (6.4.1). The aim of making the collage was to provoke a deeper level of thinking via the visual images. Through their reflective process they found a third area of meaning in which they searched for connections within the space between the visual images.

Question: How far are CPD programmes opening up possibilities for teachers and creative practitioners to explore different forms of shared vocabulary in their collaborative practice?



6.4.4 Reciprocal vulnerability

It might be assumed that a dynamic co-mentoring relationship between two people from different sectors might result in negative feelings of vulnerability. But this was far from the case. Despite marked differences between co-mentors, **REFLECT** succeeded in creating conditions (e.g., supportive, trusting, listening, empathetic, enabling, non-judgemental) where both partners could learn from each other in a context of equality and parity. The structures and processes at the core of **REFLECT** encouraged openness, curiosity and responsiveness, and this ethos helped all participants to build up the confidence and trust to share any feeling of vulnerability or lack of knowledge.

Nevertheless, further observations were made that can inform our understanding of some of the complexities arising from cross-sector mentoring. For example, one headteacher acknowledged her feeling of vulnerability when working with her partner in the comparatively alien environment of a gallery. But as she began to leave herself open to chance and creative possibilities, she no longer felt threatened. Both co-mentors discussed the question of vulnerability, respecting each others confidentiality and openness to ask searching questions and they found that this opportunity to engage in reflective dialogue was seen as a very positive outcome of the **REFLECT** process.

In most cases co-mentors had the confidence and self-awareness to share any feeling of vulnerability, but there were others who were reluctant to acknowledge it in a professional context. In such instances some individuals hid behind a barrier of words, which tended to limit development and impede collaborative learning.

As part of the **REFLECT** process co-mentors were encouraged to visit each other's workplace. In one instance an experienced director of a studio, no longer regularly making art, put herself in the challenging position of working with her co-mentor in the studio alongside her practising colleagues. By shifting role from director to artist she immediately felt her vulnerability as she was fearful of her colleagues being judgemental. This helped the Teacher, with her comparative lack of experience, to see herself in a different way. This shared experience required each co-mentor to take a risk and their future relationship was strengthened through the way in which they responded together to their feeling of reciprocal vulnerability.

Question: To what extent are CPD programmes preparing teachers and creative practitioners to understand and manage issues of vulnerability that might arise from cross-sector collaborations?

6.5 Impact on colleagues and organisation

6.5.1 Generating new developments

One of the strongest impacts of **REFLECT** has resulted from the way in which co-mentors have taken key aspects of their creative and professional learning back into their respective organisations. The emphasis on collaborative

learning, cross-sector practice and reflective dialogue has transformed ways of approaching work in their schools and cultural organisations. The testimonies provide evidence of successful new developments, of which co-mentoring is at the core.


In one arts organisation staff have shown a keen interest in developing its own co-mentoring programme. Their director, whose shared focus was on partnership working, points out that:

The **REFLECT** Co-mentoring Scheme is not 'rocket science'; it is basically a simple, common sense, cost effective approach to professional development. We are planning to integrate the scheme into our own work by linking members of our education team to local teachers over a two-term period beginning in September 2008. We will invite two teachers to join the scheme in the summer term and through negotiation agree a point of focus for each pairing and arrange reciprocal visits to our own organisations with three joint visits to cultural venues. These might include a gallery, museum, arts organisation or a visit to view a public art work.

Our own organisation is giving mentoring a higher profile in its development planning to see how it can be used to support other team members and local artists. Where possible, funding permitting, we will build mentoring opportunities into project planning as well as looking at discrete co-mentoring links between members of our staff and other cultural organisations (**Creative Practitioner**).

Another creative practitioner, exploring visual art in the Primary curriculum with her headteacher co-mentor, used her art gallery as a stimulus for creative work linked to writing and drama. They also included pupils, parents and staff in the shared evaluation of the content and delivery of the creative sessions in the gallery.

My co-mentoring relationship has meant that we've been able to pilot three different sessions with six of (the Headteacher's) Key Stage 2 classes (212 pupils) at the gallery. Having (the Head's) critical and honest feedback has proved extremely useful and our sustained contact means that we can continue to trial new things together. (The Head) and other staff members have attended twilight CPD events at the gallery and will be holding a whole-school INSET at the gallery in the summer. We will soon bring together the Maths Co-ordinator and artists from the gallery's Creative Practitioner team to work collaboratively to develop new sessions that support numeracy through art-based activities, which will be piloted with pupils before added to the gallery's programme (**Creative Practitioner**).



This particular partnership has been especially strategic and proactive in its response to **REFLECT**. In her testimony the headteacher projects into the immediate future:

Our linked secondary school is to apply for specialist college status for the expressive arts. I have already met with the Headteacher and Head of expressive arts to consider how the outcomes of the creative element of this co-mentoring partnership can be developed and supported through to secondary level. Two 'feeder' primary schools and two special schools are to be approached. Benefits for transition between Primary and Secondary school will be considered together with 11 - 16 links supported by the Learning and Interpretation team at the gallery.

The Local Authority has indicated that some funding (£2,000) may be available to support the work of my co-mentoring partnership. An interest was also expressed in my talking about the programme at the Local Authority Headteachers' conference.

Similarly, as a result of an article in (the gallery's Learning and Interpretation) magazine about our co-mentoring partnership, a colleague from another Local Authority has asked to hear more about my experience of the programme, on behalf of his headteacher network (**Headteacher**).

For the Director of an arts company, her co-mentoring experiences of finding effective ways of communicating the services of her organisation to potential clients, have prompted her and her colleagues to strengthen their cross-sector work. In her testimony she states that:

As a result of working with the **REFLECT** process I have been considering ways in which some of the principles might be applied across the people that (our company) works with. I am now looking at frameworks where pairs of artists from different disciplines might be facilitated to work together with a view to both collaborative working practice and towards having someone who will provide personal challenges to your work.

The other scheme that I am moving towards is a cross-sector (tri-part) facilitation. I started this work in (our region) some time ago where I brought together inter-sector groups from Cultural Services, Education and the Arts sector. I would now like to move this work forward with the **REFLECT** process helping to provide some of the initial consultation moments (**Creative Practitioner**).

Creating new cross-sector links has been one of the most important outcomes of **REFLECT** and the following example illustrates the potential of capitalising on a growing partnership between an arts organisation and an arts College. In this case the shared focus was on exploring a wide range of alternative professional development experiences and approaches for teachers and artists.

The organisation will benefit from this relationship in a number of ways; it now has an established link with a specialist arts College.... and this provides the opportunity for us to discuss what issues a school might face when visiting us from further a field. It has strengthened the relationship between our organisation and the (area) consortium which may have a beneficial impact on our involvement in developing future programmes regarding 14 - 19 Diplomas (**Creative Practitioner**).

In a Secondary school **REFLECT** has had an immediate effect on practice as the teacher, who was focusing on using film archives as an educational resource, found that it provided a strategic opportunity to experiment with new ideas. For example:

- It has highlighted the possibilities available to improve teaching and learning to the headteacher and the teachers planning the curriculum
- It has given me a way of illustrating practically the effect creative ideas and actions can have on staff and students alike
- It has given me some autonomy within the school to change teaching and learning through the influence of Creative Partnership proposals and other similar initiatives within the Education Authority
- It has given teachers the opportunity to talk to each other about creative thinking and to explore different ideas singularly and on a cross-curricular basis
- (It has strengthened) staff and student's learning in partnership together (**Teacher**).

The emphasis in **REFLECT** on questioning and facilitating reflective dialogue has impacted on approaches to exercising leadership. In one Primary school, for example, a senior teacher whose shared focus was on mapping paths for organisational success, totally transformed her way of conducting meetings.

I have given much thought to the way in which we open discussions, not only in this **REFLECT** programme, but also in my daily life as a school leader. I no longer open my meetings with a dictatorial style of information delivery, but instead introduce agenda topics with questions. For instance, instead of telling staff that we needed to raise the standard of children's writing as it was much lower than the standard of reading, I phrased the question "What do we do in the teaching of reading that makes it so successful, and how might we adapt this to the teaching of writing?". The discussion which followed was engaging, informative, enthusiastic and productive. Every participant gave several ideas and we have found ways of incorporating elements of the suggestions into our teaching. My next question will be "What improvements are we able to measure against the strategies we are using?" which will not only give participants a chance to talk about what they do, but also how they know that they are successfully improving standards in children's writing (**Teacher**).

Finally, in another Primary school its Governors have shown a keen interest in **REFLECT** and they supported their teacher co-mentor to use the £500 honorarium to start a weekly Entrepreneur Club. Subsequently, a further £450 was raised to strengthen the activities of the club, the idea for which grew out of the 'Every Child Matters' initiative.

Question: How far are CPD programmes maximising their capacity for developing creative initiatives through cross-sector collaborations?

6.6 Impact on children and young people

In some ways it is too early to demonstrate the tangible outcomes of **REFLECT** on children and young people, but from the previous discussion of its impact on personal and professional learning, on reflective practice and collaborative learning, and on colleagues and organisations, it is clear that the creative dialogue generated by the co-mentoring process will lead to more informed practice in their respective schools and cultural organisations.

One thoughtful observation was made by a creative practitioner when considering the impact of the programme on the young people his organisation works with:

One immediate realisation is that we try to do too much. By trying to cover too much ground there is never enough time to pause, reflect and think about opportunities lost and possibilities for future development. One personal resolution is to do less frenetic project delivery and to build in more time for thinking. By adopting the principles behind **REFLECT** there will be a more thoughtful approach to the planning of activities for young people, with the obvious benefits of making the delivery of our work more effective, of higher quality and more personally rewarding (**Creative Practitioner**).

Another creative practitioner felt that the quality of his organisation's work with young people would be enhanced as a result of 'regular habitual reflection'.

The young people I work with will benefit from my increased knowledge about how children learn (after observing and discussing with my co-mentor who is a Special Educational Needs teacher) and from the excellent new resources I have discovered as a direct result of the **REFLECT** programme. ... Since I have been involved in **REFLECT** our organisation is becoming better informed and more confident in its approach to schools when offering to deliver creative music and drama workshops, and we are now considering specifically tailoring some of our projects towards the needs of younger children with special educational needs. Our current experience of delivering such projects only extends to young people aged 14 and above, so this would represent a new and untried area of work for our organisation (**Creative Practitioner**).

A similar positive result of **REFLECT** can be found in the work of a creative practitioner who is in the process of designing a vocational training

programme in physical theatre for young men. The emphasis in **REFLECT** on dialogue, questioning, sharing thoughts, ongoing evaluation, modes of presentation and ways of leading and recording meetings has helped to shape the new programme.

Many of the co-mentors interviewed found that **REFLECT** confirmed their belief in the prime importance of creative learning in schools as it:

- Improves behaviour, strengthens motivation and raises self-esteem
- Improves literacy through fostering an imaginative approach to learning vocabulary (noting the importance of ‘reading for pleasure’)
- Improves numeracy through creating an imaginative physical learning environment (**Teacher**).

An especially perceptive observation was made by one creative practitioner who could see the strategic benefits of the **REFLECT** programme.

REFLECT has impacted on (my organisation), influencing the shape of our project delivery, therefore strategically benefiting young people in the schools that we already work with and those we will work with in the future.

REFLECT has reiterated to me how important SPACE for ideas and conversations to develop is with both young people and adults. As my practice often involves working with adults who support and work daily with children, the strategic work I do to resource activities that nurture teachers and adults working in education, feels even more important to fight for as time is such a precious commodity.


REFLECT continues to remind me that committing to listen, talk, relax and enrich ourselves as creative thinkers is essential if we are to shape creative experiences for those with whom we work (**Creative Practitioner**).

Question: To what extent are CPD programmes focusing on the development of cross-sector collaborations that aim to raise the quality of young people’s work through reflective and creative learning?

6.7 The transformative power of the unexpected

From the responses to the interviews and questionnaires it is clear that many co-mentors entered the programme with an open mind, uncluttered by preconceptions. For them the ‘unexpected’ was the norm and this enabled them to engage in the process responsively and creatively. This attitude was summed up well by a creative practitioner:

I came to the programme with an open mind and therefore tried not to have expectations, except that I would go on an exciting journey of some sort with someone whom I had not personally picked to travel with, and yet we trusted each other to go on that journey! So the programme hasn’t been unexpected or exceeded expectations, it has been what it is and that is enough (**Creative Practitioner**).



The fact that **REFLECT** was not task or project-oriented succeeded in opening up co-mentors' thinking about their practice in a qualitatively productive way. The lack of pressure for specific outcomes has encouraged a creative approach. This was unexpected for many co-mentors because their previous professional development experiences were found to be more circumscribed and failed to promote reflective dialogue.

A significant thread that runs through **REFLECT** is the emphasis placed on the personal within the framework of professional development – for many co-mentors this was totally unexpected, although very much valued. For example, the Headteacher of a nursery school found the reflective process enabled her to reappraise her role, no longer seeing herself as 'only a Nursery Head' but as a fully autonomous mature adult. This strengthened her sense of self-responsibility and self-esteem which immediately impacted on her style of leadership, making her more open to colleagues.

A creative practitioner with considerable experience in mentoring found the co-mentoring process challenging in so far as it deepened her own self-understanding and brought her in touch with a vulnerability that was unexpected. It also strengthened her feeling of responsibility towards her partner, both of whom intend to continue the relationship in the future.

With the emphasis on creative learning in **REFLECT**, the Headteacher of a primary school is now aiming to adopt a more creative approach towards assessment (especially in relation to SATs) by observing creative work and asking children for their reflections on what they have been engaged in. Quite unexpectedly, **REFLECT** has helped her to value her own creativity and to confirm what she believes in. This head now hopes to develop more creative approaches towards performance management for the Governors of the school.

Again, being part of **REFLECT** has created new professional development opportunities for some participants who have gained unexpected support from senior management and external bodies. For example, a senior teacher on the National Professional Qualification for Headship Programme was given financial assistance from her school and Creative Partnerships through the CP Enquiry Programme.

There is no doubt that the **REFLECT** programme has opened up new avenues for personal and professional development that have led to unexpected creative and organisational outcomes. It has succeeded in having a strong transformative effect on individual co-mentors and their organisations alike.

Question: How far are CPD programmes sufficiently open to allow space for unexpected personal responses that can enhance reflective and creative learning?

6.8 Transferability of REFLECT

The **REFLECT** model of co-mentoring is based on the principle of enabling two practitioners from different sectors to engage in a reflective conversation around a shared focus in which both partners take equal responsibility for the process. The evidence gained from the evaluation demonstrates that the key principles and processes underpinning **REFLECT** (see Chapter 3.1 for the **REFLECT** framework) are clearly transferable to those cross-sector training and development programmes aiming to deepen the quality of professional and creative practice.

The same principles also resonate with the new wave of CPD programmes for school leadership. For example, long-term reflective practice models for leadership are now being developed by the National College for School Leadership in such programmes as Leadership Pathways, Leading from the Middle and Heads for the Future.


The danger with models is that they can be regarded as a set of recipes that are readily replicable. But in the case of **REFLECT**, if the conditions are right - if the participants are open, flexible and ready to engage in reflective enquiry; if the space feels safe and trusting - the principles can be applied to many different contexts, although the experience itself cannot be replicated.

REFLECT has challenged participants to think differently and many of the organisations connected to the programme are now building reflective modes of practice into their creative and professional development programmes. Co-mentors are blending what they have learnt into existing practice. The principles of **REFLECT** are seen as transferable and in no case has any interest been shown in developing a mechanistic toolkit.

One of the strengths of **REFLECT** is that it has been person-centred giving co-mentors space and time to engage in a 'fluid' developmental process - something that is impossible to achieve in a more mechanistic training programme. Many of the co-mentors in senior management positions in schools or cultural organisations are now aiming to build the principles of **REFLECT** into their future CPD programmes. They see the point of giving staff the opportunity to ask such fundamental questions as 'why do you do what you do?' They understand that this process can act as a springboard for change based on reflective practice. Moreover, some of these leaders are intending to broaden the perspective of their staff by moving into the area of cross-sector co-mentoring.

Within the education domain **REFLECT** has reinforced the view that schools would benefit from introducing a system of peer partners in which teachers work alongside each other and explore their practice together. A process of reflective dialogue would shift the climate in many schools and help them to address the possibilities of moving towards shared leadership and shared responsibility. Some schools are considering using the **REFLECT** Handbook as a reference point for further strengthening the place of creativity throughout the curriculum. In those schools where dialogue between staff is already the norm, an internal co-mentoring scheme could add an extra dimension to developments within the school.





One important final outcome is that there was wide agreement that the principles and processes of **REFLECT** could form the basis of a training and development programme for co-mentors and facilitators. The skills of connecting, questioning, listening and reflecting are central to this kind of training. Co-mentors gave examples of what other training programmes could learn from the **REFLECT** process:

- It raises fundamental questions about personal, professional, creative and organisational development
- It fosters reflection through another person – acts as a reflective mirror
- It creates space so there is no pressure to fit into a box
- It facilitates depth and breadth of learning through connecting conversations
- Having no specific outcomes, it allows participants to get ‘to the heart of the matter’
- It fosters a trusting environment in which insecurities can be shared

Co-mentors also identified other areas where the principles of **REFLECT** could be used to guide practice:

- Reflective learning for young people
- Institutional conversation within organisations
- Development of critical friends
- Intergenerational dialogue

There is no doubt that the structure and approach of the **REFLECT** Training and Gathering Days, together with the principles underpinning the co-mentoring process, could fruitfully be replicated in other cross-sector CPD programmes. What was important in **REFLECT** is that participants were given space and time to think and to explore their shared focus at their own pace and in their own way. They were not expected to work towards a specific task and yet, paradoxically, the process of shared reflection and creative learning produced tangible pragmatic outcomes. This principle is both powerful and regenerative.

Question: How far might the principles underlying REFLECT be used as a guide for other cross-sector training and development programmes?