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Exploring the landscape of reflection

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Holding the space

Facilitating
reflection and
inner readiness
for learning

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Ginte Jasiene
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Bert Vandenbussche (eds)

Holding
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REFLECT

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INTRODUCING REFLECT

Written by Aurelija Jakube (Vilnius University), Mark E. Taylor and Bert Vandenbussche (LUCA School of Arts)

Welcome to *Holding the Space*! Our handbook for educators who want to go deeper into the theories and processes of reflection in learning. Based on two years' working in an international team of formal and non-formal educators and researchers in the project *"Reflection as a core transferable competence in higher education and adult education"* (REFLECT) under the action of Strategic Partnerships financed through the Erasmus+ Programme (project No 2014-1-LT01-KA200-000547).

We would be happy to hear about your reflected experiences with 'holding the space'.

SCOPE OF THE PROJECT

REFLECT started in December 2013. In a meeting at LUCA – School of Arts in Ghent (Belgium) six people from higher education and non-formal organisations of Lithuania, Italy, Iceland and Belgium came together to set up the scope for the project which was finalised in March 2014 during three days of collaborative writing in Vilnius. The project was initiated with a strong belief that reflection is one of the most important generic and transferable competences for learning, especially for personal and professional lifelong learning. In general terms, the scope is the following:

Scholars recognise that in formal education reflective practices became a real hype since the turn of the century. At the same time, research paradoxically shows that the quality of most reflection by students in formal education is moderate to bad and it doesn't necessarily bring forth the expected learning outcomes (Kinkhorst 2002, Pauw 2007, Luken 2010). Strikingly, a similar problem analysis can be made within the fields of teacher and adult education (Buiskool a.o. 2010). So clearly, something is missing!

What's the consequence of this deficit? After graduating students are not successful (enough) in transferring their knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired in higher education into specific labour situations. According to Kitokie projektai, one of the partner organisations here, this is due to the absence of 'inner readiness', a concept they discovered shortly before the project was created and one which became a central theme as the project developed. To formulate things a bit categorically, one could say that formal education approaches competence-based learning by transferring knowledge, training skills and discussing attitudes. And at the end competences should be measured and proven in an objective way.

This is very valid approach, we think. However, it's also disregarding the more subjective aspects of learning. With the concept of 'inner readiness' REFLECT explores one path in this area.

In order to provide some starting points, we first looked at the causes of the moderate quality of reflection. Based mainly on the articles "Problemen met Reflecteren/Problems when reflecting" (2010) by Tom Luken and "From Reflection to Presence and Mindfulness" (2009) by Fred Korthagen and Angelo Vasalos, we distinguished four essential causes. Firstly, it's generally assumed that learners already know how to reflect or will learn it quickly by simply doing it. As a consequence, little to no effort is given by educators to show learners how to reflect properly. So the first thing needed, according to Luken (2010), is an adequate learning environment where learners connect the content of the course with themselves.

Secondly, Korthagen and Vasalos (2009) notice how reflection is often equated by educators as well as learners with rational, structured thinking (especially in academic settings). This often led educators to have learners think about their feelings instead of feeling the feelings. "We noticed that the tendency to focus on rational thinking had serious consequences for the actualization of core qualities. People may cognitively know or understand that they possess the quality of care, or the quality of decisiveness, but this is rather different from being in touch with these qualities, really experiencing your strengths and acting upon them. Moreover, if there is an obstacle to actualizing one's core qualities, this also requires more than just cognitive insight into these obstacles." So the second thing needed for REFLECT is a broad(er) understanding of reflection.

As a consequence of this type of understanding that can be too rational, reflection is thirdly regularly understood in a very narrow functional way: you describe a problem, think logically about it and then you'll find a good answer to solve the problem. However, by focusing on quick solutions, educators are missing the deeper levels and underlying phenomena, as Korthagen and Vasalos state clearly (2009). After much interesting discussion, the partners of REFLECT link another aspect to this. Within this functional, problem-solving perspective on reflection, assignments are often developed as standardised Questions and Answers for assessing competences. So learners' reflections are evaluated with a base of product- and result-orientation. However this way of assessing doesn't do justice to the complexity and holistic nature of the reflection process. Considering reflection as a matter of only fulfilling a linear, causal and logical thinking process which can be tracked and evaluated easily by a lecturer by, for example, reading written assignments, can be non-productive for stimulating genuine reflection processes. So the second third thing needed is an understanding of reflection that stimulates reflection processes in its spontaneous, non-linear and hazardous ways. This should be combined with a corresponding perspective on assessment that does not confine reflection to a narrow frame of results and competences.

Fourthly, Luken (2010) mentions also how learners withdraw from assignments by the 'reflection coercion' in education. In this matter, he quotes Kinkhorst: "students have to make too many reflection assignments, whether they are appropriate or not, whereby they start to dislike reflection, making it into a mandatory routine with few results". Learners don't engage seriously in the reflection process anymore and give it as little effort as possible. So the fourth thing needed is the personal involvement of students, to link again with their innate and intrinsic motivation for learning.

Taking all of this in account, the major questions of REFLECT became the following: what is inner readiness about? How does it connect to competence-based learning and to reflection? Which principles or guidelines will inspire educators to facilitate reflection, taking into account the four needs just mentioned? Which perspective on blended learning will support reflective learning? What would be an alternative perspective for assessing reflection? Or to summarise all of these question in one major concern: **how can a lecturer or trainer help learners to reflect more appropriately in both formal and non-formal education?**

In this way, project REFLECT fits to the 2011 EU Modernisation Agenda for Higher Education, stating that higher education should equip graduates with the knowledge and core transferable competences they need to succeed in high-skill occupations. It also fits to the demand for better initial and continuing professional development of teachers and lecturers.

Furthermore, by developing a blended learning approach to support reflective learning and practices, the project also fits to the EU 2010 Digital Agenda demand to exploit the transformational benefits of ICTs and other new technologies to enrich teaching, improve learning experiences and support personalised learning. Thirdly the project also fits to the Erasmus+ demand for appropriate assessment. Finally REFLECT also positions itself within the process of Tuning Educational Structures in Europe (http://www.unideusto.org/tuningeu). One of the main features of the Tuning process is a student-centred approach. A student-centred approach means a learning culture that, first of all, encourages willingness to unlearn and change mental frameworks, an open, objective attitude, time for reflection and questioning (Sanchez & Ruiz 2008). Student-centred learning is deep learning, which means that learning results have to be personally meaningful and significant. And this can be achieved by employing reflective methods in education (Jakubė, Juozaitis 2012).

The search for deep personal learning has taken us into an area which has not been emphasised too much over the last years: the psychology of learning. Exploring inner readiness has shown how to raise awareness through reflection of learning.

In this way we hope to demonstrate, really, just how can educators facilitate reflection!

PARTNERS IN THE PROJECT

This project brings together four non-formal and four formal higher education organisations from Belgium, Iceland, Italy and Lithuania. These organisations are the following:

- **Outward Bound Belgium**
- **LUCA School of Arts, Belgium**
- **University of Iceland**
- **Askorun, Iceland**
- **Padova University, Italy**
- **Kameleonte, Italy**
- **Vilnius University, Lithuania**
- **Kitokie projektai, Lithuania**

It is important to note that the formal sector is represented by two educational departments, one social work department and one from the visual arts; and the non-formal sector is represented by four independent organisations mainly working on experiential learning provision for business, NGO's, ministries and schools – all four of them are members of the "Via Experientia" consortium which developed an international curriculum of experiential learning under the previous Grundtvig programme and which continues to be offered to this day.

Collaboration in the project and a sharing of the reflective practices of the eight partner organisations, revealed existing similarities and distinctions between the formal and non-formal sectors.

Firstly, one of the major differences which became evident as the project started, was how formal and non-formal education put a different focus within their reflective practices. One could say that the former emphasises more content and subject matter (e.g. by studying authors and integrating more theoretical models), whereas the latter concentrates more on the personal level (e.g. by exploring more deeply the personal narratives, emotions and relations within a group). Of course, this is a gross generalisation, as formal educators also stress the importance of including the personal level and non-formal educator the need to integrate sometimes theoretical models.

A second, more nuanced difference came to the surface by looking more closely at the reflective practices at LUCA-school of arts and how they differ from the practices described by the other partner organisations. LUCA-staff member Nancy Vansieleghem elaborated on this, with the aid of some others, as the following: "it is perhaps interesting to refer to the distinction between a form of thinking that situates itself at the level of a movement one makes towards oneself versus a movement of the self to the world.

a. **Reflection as movement towards the self.**
   The starting point is that the truth is hidden (within the self) and needs to become enlightened. Reflection is a method or technique in order to

acquire knowledge (of oneself). Knowledge is understood as a form of freedom: if I know myself, I can manage my life in a better way. In this sense one often speaks about Socratic maieutiek. So, freedom is linked to knowledge, situated in oneself. The person is thrown back towards him/herself.

b. Reflection as a movement towards the world.
This is not about the wellbeing and emotions of a person form the focal point, but attention for (something in) the world. It is a movement in which one is taken away from the self (one's emotions, ideas etc.). Not in order to disclose oneself in a psychological sense, but in order to become interested in something that is beyond oneself. It is a form of transformation of oneself. It means that something else (a part of the world) becomes a part of us. Not like new knowledge that is added to the knowledge we already have. It is not something we can appropriate or acquire (social constructivism). It is a moment in which we experience that 'how' we think, say or do is no longer obvious and self-evident. Hannah Arendt refers in the sense to the notion 'inter-esse'. She uses the '-' to emphasize that it is about ways of co-existence. It is not the question 'Who I am' that is at stake, but 'Who are we?'. This *we* does not refer to me and my friends or my environment, but for instance to 'we as people who are addressed to become the managers of our own life…'. In arts we are interested in exposing these kinds of questions. Here reflection is thus directed towards interrupting dominant roles, discourses, ways of seeing, thinking… so that these roles are no longer experienced as evidence, but are interrupted in their functionality. A certain distance/interruption is created that opens the possibility to say and do something else: to act differently. It is an affirmation of the potentiality to speak and act. This form of reflection is not linked to self-consciousness, but literally with taking a next step."

The differences between the perspectives of the partner organisations posed challenges but also enabled us to explore and discover new horizons, as is indicated by a couple of insights from the testing report, written after the testing phase of the project:

" *The diverse group of participants allowed the experience of multiple understandings of reflection and how they needed to make meaning of it in relation to their contexts. They also talked about the difference being not whether reflection was being used in formal or non-formal educational settings. It was more about the different purposes and surroundings of the reflective process.*"

" *Dialogue and fruitful conflict between non-formal and formal participants brought the group's attention to the impact of atmosphere and environment on the quality of reflection and the reflective methods we can employ in our practices.*"

One of the major thrusts of the current Erasmus+ programme is to encourage cross-sectorial cooperation. Different discourses, different practices, different principles – how to discover what is really meant when people

say the same thing and eventually you discover it does not have the same meaning? An example drawn from our experience: a book is a book, right? BUT which books (or 'literature') are perceived to be "valid" enough to be included in a "Literature Review"? The more academic among us require a form of "scientific grounding" in order to accept certain theories and practice ('if it includes references, it's valid'); whereas those more non-formal practitioners require a practical confirmation of what they are doing ('if it works, it's valid').

In the end, we think the partners in this project did indeed manage to achieve a level of cross-sectorial discourse which enabled them to learn from each other and to co-create advances in both their theoretical and practical approaches.

REFLECT: THE PROCESS

REFLECT was organised in a vertical series of meetings and events which brought all partners together regularly over the two-year period. Thematic "homework groups" were set up to work between meetings in order to provide a rich series of contributions to the outputs of the project and which were constantly under development and discussed at each meeting.

- **Phase One: Creating Common Ground. (January – August 2015)**
  During this phase, problems and needs related to reflection were discussed. We shared and analysed our reflective practices, collected literature sources on reflection, distinguished crucial sources that influenced our reflective practices and developed our stance on reflection and inner readiness. Draft principles and guidelines of and for reflection were developed as a core element of our work.
- **Phase Two: Training, sharing and Testing Phase (September 2015 – March 2016)**
  Four or five people from each partner organisation participated in two training and sharing events. At the first one, we looked at principles and guidelines, inner readiness and methodologies. Then participants went home and tried out different approaches in their educational practices, labelled 'testing projects'. At the second event, experiences were shared and focus groups were employed to produce source material for the testing evaluation report.
- **Phase Three: Finalising. (April – June 2016)**
  The testing report was produced using narrative enquiry (a new approach in the project) to analyse the results. It is important to emphasise here that the report is not a normative assessment, rather a qualitative assessment: it does not state which practices were "good" or bad", but attempts to explain what was happening during the different reflective experiences. This was also the period to finalise the other main outputs of the project, namely:
  - Analysis of existing practices, crucial sources and research on reflection in higher and adult education

- ▪ Publication on reflection and inner readiness
- ▪ Report on testing projects
- ▪ Guidelines for reflective educational practices by means of blended learning
- ▪ **Phase Four: Dissemination (July – October 2016)**
  In the last phase of the project we'll be finalising the web site and activating the learning community. Several dissemination events will be organised. Staff members will present lectures to conferences and meetings, as well as write project-related articles. Finally, a joint training module 'reflection in higher and adult education' will be developed.

THIS PUBLICATION – find your way in the puzzle

Holding the Space! has been written by all the people involved in the project, brought together in thematic, cross-sectorial working groups. Our texts are meant to inspire and challenge – not as a kind of recipe book! You as a reader will make your own choice where to start to put together the puzzle of reflection. We have chosen an order to present our ideas and findings, so let's see what's here:

- ▪ **Letters from our REFLECT correspondent**
  the central Principles and Guidelines agreed on during the project, written in the form of letters. They are meant to follow the idea that it is good to "slow down" sometimes, to allow ideas to sink in. Read a letter a day – could keep the doctor away!
- ▪ **An inspirational box**
  an introduction to a collection of inspirational stories from REFLECT's testing phase. About how, when and where to apply reflection in educational practices.
- ▪ **The landscape of reflection**
  the contextualisation of REFLECT. This part looks at the literature and is meant to show what is available about reflection in theory and practice and how does REFLECT fit in.
- ▪ **Developing a concept of inner readiness**
  written as a story to show where the concept comes from and the chronological development of it. A work in progress.
- ▪ **Careful assessment**
  looking at the care that is needed when introducing assessment of reflection.
- ▪ **Possibilities for reflecting on and off-line**
  blended learning and reflection: how does it work?

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LETTERS FROM OUR REFLECT CORRESPONDENT

Written by Bert Vandenbussche (LUCA School of Arts) with the aid of Hervör Alma Árnadóttir (University of Iceland), Angelica Paci (Kamaleonte), Jakob Frímann Þorsteinsson (University of Iceland) and Björn Vilhjálmsson (Askorun) and the staff of REFLECT.

During the project we gradually built a framework of principles and guidelines on how to facilitate reflection in formal and non-formal education, starting from the needs analysis (see the section in the introduction titled 'scope of the project'). These principles and guidelines were written down as a series of 10 letters, in the form of essays to be read one per day. In this way, we aim to slow down the pace of reading and allow ideas to sink in differently (compared to a more academic text of similar length). Just before finalising the publication, we decided to add one more letter. Or actually, it's more of a post scriptum connecting the framework of principles and guidelines with the idea of inner readiness. This last pages serves as an appetiser, so to speak, of what's still to come.

LETTER 1 WELCOME TO PROJECT REFLECT

Dear reader,

This is the first posting out of a series of ten you that will receive daily from today onwards. Slowly these postings will tell you about our perspective on facilitating reflection processes in both formal and non-formal education. Bit by bit they will build up a set of principles and guidelines. However, it's important to realise from the very beginning that these are not developed as step-by-step didactics, to be applied rigorously in order to guarantee certain reflective output at the end of your course. Rather, all of this should be understood as a **framework of principles and guidelines which need to be 'translated' (i.e. examined closely and if needed adjusted) into your practice as teacher or trainer.** When doing so, we believe **you will create a fertile learning environment for reflection to 'happen more spontaneously'.** In order to exemplify how (some of) these principles and guidelines have already been put into practice, we will add to these letters several stories about the testing projects that were run in both formal and non-formal education settings during REFLECT.

As you will read within a few days, 'slowing down' is an important aspect for reflection to occur. That's why we would like to ask you to **read these postings in a slow manner.** We suggest that you read them when you're not busy arranging babysitting for the children, sending mails to colleagues and preparing your course for tomorrow. Really take some time for considering the writings more thoroughly. And while reading, be attentive to how you relate to the writings: what's new compared to your own experience as an educator? What do you possibly already recognise? Which paragraph, sentence or word

seems to arouse your interest? Which further thoughts and associations are elicited? Notice what's going on in your mind…. and maybe even this invitation is not appealing to you. So be it. Just read it then the way you want to.

Some short explanation is needed about the vocabulary used in these postings. When talking about *principles and guidelines*, the former are about general ideas (expressing the vision of where to go) while the latter are about practical applications (expressing how to get there). All principles are important and therefore need to be put into practice by applying them with guidelines. But the list of guidelines is not meant to be exhaustive, nor will they be always and everywhere applicable due to cultural and organisational differences. They are more of a kind of suggestion how to translate the principle into practice: practical pointers so to speak, based on our own experiences. And sometimes it may be necessary for you to invent other guidelines which are still expressing the 'spirit' of the general principle but at the same time fitting better to your specific context. Secondly, the terms educator and learner are used in a rather formal way. *Educator* refers to teacher as well as trainer, *learner* to both students and participants. The terms refer to the formal role one takes in education. However, as will become clear later on, we do not want to fix the position nor the attitude of the educator and learners during the reflection process. Quite on the contrary, we strongly advocate to understand **educators and learners both as participants in the educational experience: they are both taking part in the learning process, i.e. co-constructing as well as getting involved in the experience that leads to learning.** However, when quoting authors directly, we will be using their terms. Thirdly the term *learning group* is referring to both the classroom- and outdoors-setting. Finally, we have always used the pronoun 'he', although this obviously does not exclude 'she'.

Let's start writing something about reflection itself. In the last few decades, reflection has been defined in a lot of different ways. Each definition goes along with a specific methodology on how to foster reflection (Schön, Kolb, Korthagen, Mezirow, Boud…). With project REFLECT we are not aiming to add a new definition nor a corresponding methodology. Rather we hope to explore a **specific perspective on the relationship between reflection and inner readiness and, as already mentioned, a corresponding framework of principles and guidelines to facilitate reflection processes.** This perspective and framework can be beneficial to, and integrated, into already existing methodologies in both formal and non-formal education.

So how reflection actually 'looks like', can be different depending on the methodology applied. And it may not be a surprise to you that also between the 8 partner organisations of REFLECT similarities and differences exist concerning their understanding of reflection. Nevertheless, after our first project meeting in January 2015 in Ghent (Belgium) we created a broad and generic description of reflection:

" *Reflection is a multi-layered process of identifying, clarifying, exploring "that-which-is-at-stake". It's a process in which one goes deeper, making connections and meaning, gaining insights between different meaningful 'events' (in the broadest possible sense, both internal and external to the reflecting person). As such it leads one to*

greater awareness: you become more conscious about your relationship with yourself and/or with the outer world. Therefore, reflection is stimulating for personal growth and/or professional development."

During the project we also came to stress the difference between reflecting and thinking. One general way of explaining this difference is the following:

"   Reflection involves the whole person, connecting more body and mind so to speak: thoughts, feelings, values, intuitions and experiences are taken into consideration when reflecting. It's a more holistic process whereas thinking is a more rational process, relying solely on logical reasoning (e.g. problem solving by straightforward, objective cause-and-effect-reasoning). Therefore, reflection is usually indicated by some kind of emotional intensity in which learners demonstrate the connection between themselves and that-which-is-at-stake (the actual topic of reflection). This intensity can sometimes be expressed only in their non-verbal body language. As thinking involves more logic and rationality, this emotional intensity is usually missing."

With this distinction, we don't want to argue that one is better than or preferable to the other in learning processes. But their educational value is different and should not be confused, as sometimes happens. In his research on the efficiency of reflection in formal education, the Dutch educational researcher Tom Luken states explicitly how the quality of reflection in formal education is moderate to bad due to several factors. One of them is how the reflection assignment is unintentionally leading learners to a merely rational way of 'solving a problem' or 'becoming better'. As such the responses of learners appear to be superficial, focusing more on an objective description of the problem and logically responding to it (instead of, for example, exploring more broadly the relationship between themselves and the situation). Therefore, these 'reflection assignments' do not lead in most cases to actual 'learning', marked by a change in the way they think, feel or act. After training several decennia people in the Core Reflection-methodology Korthagen and Vasalos (2009) mention as well how reflection "does not function well if the person reflecting uses it as a purely mental exercise: in each stage, thoughts, feelings and needs (or desires) have to be addressed, and brought into full awareness". As you will notice, this distinction between reflection and thinking is at the basis of many of our letters, although in a more implicit way. In posting 7 we will return to this distinction more explicitly.

To all of this we'd like to add one more remark to conclude this first letter. According to us, reflection is an important catalyst for so-called ***deep learning*** which means that learning results have to be personally meaningful and significant to learners. In this respect, *depth* does not mean 'more profound' or 'better' comparing to other learning approaches (which then supposedly by contrast could be labelled 'superficial). Rather ***depth* refers in this context essentially to a learning approach that brings the personality of the learner, his 'internal' experiences, feelings, values, intuitions and/or assumptions into the range of awareness and thus make them available to meaningful learning.** As such, and this is crucial, it

does not make sense to use reflection for other aims and other approaches. Reflection find its maximum gain when being part of a student-centred learning approach, which first makes explicit, and then adjusts, their frames-of-reference which determine how they perceive themselves, others and/or the (both personal and professional) world(s) they live in.

Sincerely yours

Your REFLECT correspondent

This letter was informed by the following writings:

Korthagen, Fred & Vasalos, A. (2009). From reflection to presence and mindfulness: 30 years of developments concerning the concept of reflection. *Teacher education*, 1-17.

Luken, Tom. (2010). Problemen met reflecteren. De risico's van reflectie nader bezien. In Luken, Tom & Reynaert, W. (2010) Puzzelstukjes voor een nieuw paradigma? Aardverschuiving in loopbaandenken. Eindhoven-Tilburg: Lectoraat Career Development Fontys Hogeschool HRM en Psychologie, 9-34.

LETTER 2 ON CREATING A REFLECTIVE ATMOSPHERE

Dear reader,

It's generally assumed that learners already know how to reflect or will learn it quickly by simply doing it. As a consequence, little to no effort is given to teach learners how to reflect properly: educators just give the reflection assignment and learners are supposed to fulfil it easily. However, research indicates that most **learners don't know by themselves how to reflect properly.** So the question seems to be how to teach learners to reflect well? Generalising one could say that most educators would advocate classical didactics, i.e. he first teaches about reflection in a theoretical way, students have to understand and integrate this knowledge and only then can they begin to reflect. When the reflection process is too structured, this approach risks that reflection is understood in a manner that is too rational, eliciting often merely logical thinking whereby learners don't connect their thinking, feeling, intuition and experience properly.

That's why REFLECT wants to propose another approach, a more indirect didactic by not teaching learners anything at all, but slowly letting them 'grow' into reflection by **facilitating what we would like to call a reflective atmosphere.** We have modelled this term from a base of Martin Ringer's work. In his *Group Action: the dynamics of groups in therapeutic, educational and corporate settings* (2008) he talks about **the reflective space as some kind of attentive reflectiveness** which at certain moments becomes present. To be clear, this reflective space has no physical form whatsoever. It is, according to Ringer, on the contrary a tangible and precarious phenomenon, to be experienced when **associative chains of thoughts and feelings appear spontaneously.** What's actually happening at those moments? According to us, learners are taking some distance from that-which-is-at-stake due to the attentive reflectiveness. They are constructing 'on the level of thought' some open space, so to speak. In this respect Ringer talks about an 'unconsciously held internal companion' with whom learners can have a conversation. As a consequence, answers are not that easily taken for granted any more, that-which-is-at-stake is looked at from different perspectives and thorough questioning begins. Learners don't consider things in a logical, linear way of thinking any more, but in a more open, associative and holistic way of reflecting. At this point it's also important to notice that this reflective space is not merely an individual phenomenon, but a collective one as well. And both are essentially interdependent of each other: the conversation with one's internal companion is fostered by the conversation with the companions in the learning group (be it the educator or other learners) and vice versa. According to us, this highlights the importance of the group as an essential factor for stimulating reflection processes. Therefore, we propose not to focus solely on the relationship between educator and individual learner, but rather on the triad relationship between educator, learner and group. It also highlights how, in our view, the educator becomes, in a way, less important: the reflective space will start doing its work for the learners, even without the educator and in spite of all his knowledge on the topic and/or his expertise to facilitate reflection.

You have probably noticed a small difference in wording: while Ringer talks about the 'reflective space', we mentioned in the beginning of the previous paragraph the word 'reflective atmosphere'. Although closely linked, both terms are not interchangeable. The reflective atmosphere refers to a more general climate within the learning group, to the general way the educator and learners interact with each other. The reflective space (as that tangible but nonetheless precarious phenomenon) solely points to the specific moments when attentive reflectiveness has appeared and learners express their thoughts and feelings in a more open and associative flow. As such, the reflective atmosphere is quintessential for the reflective space to actually occur.

Interestingly, Ringer does not mention didactics nor methods as essential factors for building the reflective space, but he rather stresses the capability of the educator to reflect himself (i.e. the capability to take some distance and to question things differently himself) and to facilitate the psychology of learning processes in groups: "when the leader successfully facilitates secure containment and effective linking (within groups), groups are likely to support the development of reflective spaces. Leaders who themselves have a robust capacity for sustaining their own reflectiveness are likely to be able to facilitate reflectiveness effectively in their group." We'll come back to these qualities of the educator in the penultimate letter. Here we just want to make the point that the reflective atmosphere cannot be 'constructed' by any tricks, methods or teaching didactics applied by the educator, but can only be developed slowly and authentically within the learning group by both educator and learners by taking care of some crucial conditions for deep learning. After long talks we have summarised these deep learning conditions as following:

1. Raising awareness within learners to 'own' their learning in personally meaningful way (it is not about taking over the expertise of the educator!)
2. Developing a relationship between educators and learners based on trust, openness, empathy, transparency, dialogue and feedback
3. Co-creating the reflective process
4. Managing to keep up the steering paradox of intrinsic learning processes
5. Directing the reflective attention of learners
6. Slowing down and valuing moments of not-knowing
7. Deepening your questions progressively
8. Recalling that reflection can never be imposed, only kindly invited
9. Always considering reflection as a broad, deepening and holistic process
10. Being careful how to assess reflection (or not at all).

These conditions are at the same time the general principles of REFLECT's approach on how to facilitate reflection processes and we will come back to them more extensively in the next letters. At this point it suffices to state that creating an appropriate reflective atmosphere is about facilitating a

particular way of being present during the course for both educator and learners, a way of being together that is conducive to that reflective attentiveness about which Ringer talks. That's why the primordial focus of the educator should **not be narrowed to directing content solely (i.e. teaching), but rather broadened to directing the 'surrounding' conditions of learning processes** in order to enable a reflective way of being. Ringer is very explicit in this matter: "leaders who provide too much information or interpretation too soon will reduce the reflective space in the group." This kind of facilitation is called **process-directivity**: it's about the educator being attentive all the time and responsive to the process of both the learning group and the individual learners as they develop.

Sincerely yours

Your REFLECT correspondent

This letter was informed by the following writings:

Luken, Tom. (2010). Problemen met reflecteren. De risico's van reflectie nader bezien. In Luken, Tom & Reynaert, W. (2010) Puzzelstukjes voor een nieuw paradigma? Aardverschuiving in loopbaandenken. Eindhoven-Tilburg: Lectoraat Career Development Fontys Hogeschool HRM en Psychologie, 9-34.

Ringer, Martin. (2008). Group Action: the dynamics of groups in therapeutic, educational and corporate settings. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Suggested reading related to 'creating the reflective atmosphere':

We will conclude most of the letters to come with a short list of suggested reading. These should not be taken as readings to 'explain' the topics discussed more deeply. Most of the time they just have a general link to the topics, as the literature review within our project pointed out. So they basically really are just tips for further reading.

Andresen, L., Boud, D., & Cohen, R. (2000). Experience-based learning. *Understanding adult education and training*, *2*, 225-239.

Aronson, L. (2011). Twelve tips for teaching reflection at all levels of medical education. *Medical teacher*, *33*(3), 200-205.

Baker, M. (2005). Landfullness in Adventure-Based Programming: Promoting Reconnection to the Land. *Journal of Experiential Education, 27*(3).

Boud, D. (1994, May). Conceptualising learning from experience: Developing a model for facilitation. In *Proceedings of the thirty fifth annual adult education research conference* (pp. 49-54).

Mann, K., Gordon, J., & MacLeod, A. (2009). Reflection and reflective practice in health professions education: a systematic review. *Advances in health sciences education, 14*(4), 595-621.

LETTERS FROM OUR REFLECT CORRESPONDENT

A story on the reflective atmosphere (and reflecting more spontaneously)

Written by Björn Vilhjálmsson from Askorun (Iceland)

My test project consisted of a 6-day training course for leaders in youth-work, teachers and others who work with young people in non-formal and sometimes formal educational settings. This course was sponsored by several National Erasmus+ Agencies of the smallest EU and EEC counties. In the announcement of the training, it is stated how we would explore "the power of sport, the possibilities that it brings to attract young people and to use it as an educational tool. We will use the extraordinary setting and landscape of the Troodos region of Cyprus to merge outdoor learning with the power of sports. In the training there will be time be out of doors, to do sport, talk about sport, learn about sport and its effects on participation, inclusion and other societal issues."

In non-formal learning situations, I always try to organise the time, the frequency, the atmosphere and the method of reflection in such a way that it becomes an accepted, interesting and joyful activity for my participants. Usually in the non-formal learning processes the facilitator has a shorter calendar time with his group of learners but longer hours together while the process lasts and can explore all different facets of the reflective process.

In formal educational settings reflection can often become something different for people, as it can become something that contains little fun, does not interest you personally and can be a chore that the learner is forced to do and he knows that he will be assessed by his, usually, written reflection. And finally even the word "reflection" creates a reluctance in the learner to enter this process of reflection and the learner will actually miss out on "digest-

ing and personalising" their individual learning process. So what I wanted to do in this training course, was to never (or hardly ever) use the word 'reflection' but still reflect a lot. So I used many methods of reflecting without actually calling it "reflection". Instead I would often use a description of the process or something else, like 'learning buddies', using a diary, keeping notes, creating 'your' textbook, being attentive to your own processes, dive into the now, etc.

At the end it became very natural to the participants to be 'reflective' and to use every opportunity to work in their books / diaries, whether it was prompted or whether it was an invitation by me. Some of them came to me during the training course to tell me how interesting and worthwhile they found to be invited for 'random diary moments' and working so deeply with reflective diaries or preserving their immediate perceptions or thoughts in this fashion.

LETTER 3 — ON THE IMPORTANCE OF 'OWNING UP' AND THE STEERING PARADOX OF INTRINSIC LEARNING PROCESSES

Dear reader,

Since the beginning of the century, reflection became a real hype, especially in formal education. It became integrated in curricula and applied in courses by teachers just too enthusiastically. As a consequence, so the research of Dutch educational scientist Kinkhorst demonstrates, "students have to fulfil too many reflection assignments whether appropriate or not, whereby they start to dislike reflection, making it into a mandatory routine with few results." Also in non-formal education participants complain of too many reflection activities during debriefs, possibly also at a moment experienced as being inappropriate to them. **When reflection is 'imposed' by the educator, learners soon start to experience this as a kind of reflection coercion and will most of the time withdraw themselves**: they don't engage in the reflection process anymore, give it much less effort. It becomes just one more 'assignment to fulfil'.

Authentic reflection requires the development of a personal point of view on the topic, a deep insight or _felt sense_ in which learners connect thoughts, feelings, values, intuition and/or experience. This can only be done appropriately when learners 'plug into' their intrinsic motivation for learning. Therefore, **the principle of 'owning up' is crucial to foster reflection.** To be clear, this 'owning up' has no connotation of guilt, in the sense of 'being responsible for something which went wrong'. It has, simply put, to do with the way in which learners make the reflection their own, i.e. connecting it to what they feel to be important for their learning process. When doing so, they start to fulfil the assignment and answer the questions not because the educator told them to, but rather because it's appealing for their personal and/or professional development. Therefore, it's important for the educator to **fine-tune with learners at the beginning which questions are relevant to them to pose right now, what evokes their attention and energy concerning the learning topic, and what makes sense for them personally here-and-now in their learning process.** For sure this will differ between individual learners, and so will the exact point within the timeline of the course when they find out about it. This kind of differentiation very much fosters the creation of the reflective space as learners experience the openness to be personally involved, to share their questions and at least partly co-decide with the educator which content is important to reflect upon.

Here we are at the heart of **the steering paradox of the intrinsic learning processes: the educator needs to steer the learner to the point where the learner steers himself.** He cannot take over the steering control, nor can he let go of it completely as he is (co-)responsible for the learning process of his learners within the educational context. This **balancing between steering and not-steering, controlling and not-controlling is the crucial factor in order to raise learners' inner readiness.**

It provides learners the freedom to relate to the knowledge, skills and/or attitudes in such a way that they can make them their own…. or not when they do not relate to it (for whatever reason). In any case, all of this points to **a fundamental reciprocity in the relationship between the educator and the learner** concerning what, when and how to learn: if he wants them to learn intrinsically, he cannot impose his learning agenda on them. He can only 'invite' them in all possible ways to be personally and intrinsically involved in the learning process (and for sure this 'invitation' should sometimes be a firm one, a kick start so the speak). At the end it's always up to the learner to acknowledge the invitation (or not), after which the educator can continue to facilitate the learning process from that point onwards. So finally, balancing the steering paradox is about finding a common ground between educator and learners about the reason and goal to meet.

This underlines, according to REFLECT, **the importance of the reflective atmosphere as an indirect approach (not a method!) to stimulate reflective and intrinsic learning**. In themselves reflection assignments or debriefs are (most of the time) not the problem as such. More likely they are often too linear, functionally organised and the educational context in which they are presented makes them intrinsically unappealing to learners. For example, asking for a compulsory reflection report at the end of the course or internship without previous engagement with reflection, transforms the assignment into some kind of evaluation which blocks the reflection process. Although some learners may connect to it in a personal meaningful way in spite of the educational context, many will only engage from extrinsic motivation in order to get a grade. That's why it's essential to integrate the reflection assignments within the 'larger' reflective atmosphere. Reflection will not be experienced as a compulsory task separate to the rest of the course, but rather as something which is happening by itself. Asking for a reflection report at the end of the course would then be perceived as being in line with the whole course, within the reflective atmosphere, and will connect more easily with their intrinsic learning (as they were already used to be present in the course in this way).

This leads to the following guidelines to deal with the steering paradox of intrinsic learning and fostering 'owning up':

1. **Be attentive and responsive to learners' reactions.**
   E.g. You notice how learners react, both individually and collectively, on what's happening in your course. It reveals their (lack of) interest in certain topics within your course. Follow these cues as all of this links with the idea of 'owning up'.
2. **Try to 'personalise' the questioning to something which makes sense to learners individually.**
   E.g. 'what have I learned?' can be perceived as too generic, needs to be personalised toward 'why do I feel attracted to this particular project of visual artist Renzo Martens?' or 'why don't I take the lead in this group, why is no one taking the lead in our group, even though it's clear for everyone that we do need a leader?'

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3. **Develop assignments in an open way in which students can 'personalise' the output of the reflection task, both on the level of content as well as format.**
   Multiple intelligence research clearly indicates how people reflect and process information differently according to their intelligence profile. E.g. someone with a strong kinaesthetic intelligence reflects better when doing something (like modelling clay), whereas someone with a strong interpersonal intelligence reflects better when talking to someone. Consider encouraging learners to propose an appropriate reflection assignment themselves at a certain point in the learning process.

4. **Stop reflecting, or don't even begin reflecting, when the learning context is not appropriate** *(e.g. bad timing, not enough input for students to reflect upon, too many (reflection) assignments, goals of the course don't match the reflection task, students are not 'present' enough …)*

5. **'Start reflecting less, but in a better way',** *so the literature review on efficiency of reflection in formal education by the Dutch educational scientist Tom Luken concludes! [too many reflection activities 'kills' the flow of reflecting]*

6. **Consider not mentioning the word 'reflection' immediately as it may become a barrier and raise resistance within learners** *(due to the 'reflection coercion' they experience in some curricula). Just start questioning and conversing with learners, connecting with their curiosity and let them experience the appropriate reflective atmosphere.*

Sincerely yours

Your REFLECT correspondent

This letter was informed by the following writings:

Kinkhorst, G.F. (2002). Routineus reflecteren leidt tot weinig leerresultaat. *HBO-journaal*, 36-37.

Luken, Tom. (2010). Problemen met reflecteren. De risico's van reflectie nader bezien. In Luken, Tom & Reynaert, W. (2010). Puzzelstukjes voor een nieuw paradigma? Aardverschuiving in loopbaandenken. Eindhoven-Tilburg: Lectoraat Career Development Fontys Hogeschool HRM en Psychologie, 9-34.

Suggested reading related to 'the steering paradox of intrinsic learning processes and the importance of 'owning up'':

Freese, A. R. (2005). Transformation Through Self-Study. In *Making a difference in teacher education through self-study* (pp. 65-79). Springer Netherlands.

Korthagen, F., & Vasalos, A. (2009). From reflection to presence and mindfulness: 30 years of developments concerning the concept of reflection in teacher education. In *13th Biennial Conference of the European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction (EARLI), Amsterdam*.

Mortari L. (2012). Learning thoughtful reflection in teacher education. *Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice, 18, (5)*, 525–545.

Korthagen, F. A., Kim, Y. M., & Greene, W. L. (2012). *Teaching and learning from within: A core reflection approach to quality and inspiration in education*. Routledge.

Smith, E. (2011). Teaching critical reflection. Teaching in Higher Education.16(2). 211-223.

Dear reader,

Learners often experience their relationship with educators as being hierarchical as the latter decide which content is important to learn, how the learning process should be organised and which final evaluation and grade is appropriate for the learning results. As such the learning process is basically centred around the expertise and the knowledge of the educator and is directed in one-way. Although these kind of relationships can be valuable for teaching certain knowledge and training certain skills, according to REFLECT it is not appropriate to create an adequate reflective atmosphere.

Rather, as already mentioned in the previous letter, **we favour a less hierarchical, more 'two-and-more-ways-relationship' between educator and learners in which they are equally important to each other** (i.e. equally important concerning the possibility to decide what's important for the learning process). However, this equivalence does not assume that they have equal roles to play in the learning process (in general it can be said that the educator is mainly facilitating the learning process, the learner is mainly involved in learning). We believe such relationships can only be built with a base of **mutual trust, openness, empathy, transparency, dialogue and feedback between educator and learners**. These are big words that are easily written down, but really have to be put into practice one way or another, as they are quintessential qualities which help to develop the reflective atmosphere within the learning group. For one thing, these qualities let learners experience how the educator is receptive to their ideas and feelings (as well as the other learners of course). They do support, connecting again with Ringer, "not only talking about ideas and feelings, but also support the participant actually *having* these ideas and *experiencing* the feelings". When failing to create these qualities and relationships in the learning group, it "not only prevents the voicing of ideas, but also seriously inhibits the thinking of ideas and the experiencing of emotions".

The bottom line is that all of this comes down to **developing a kind of 'interconnectedness'**, so Ringer states, assuring sufficient linking between the many parts of the learning group as a system (educator, learner, group-as-a-whole, task, role, place and time). When these connections are positive and directed to the learning purpose, at certain moments they will start to form the reflective space which "at the same time is 'taken inside' […] by group members and nurtured by them. Once the reflective space has begun to form, it is accompanied by a growth of participant attachment to the group and a sense that 'the group is working' grows as thinking and feeling in and between group member takes the form of associative chains." Quite interestingly, Ringer mentions as a first indicator that the reflective space is operational in a group is the moment when the educator "him or herself experiences an attentive alertness that welcomes input from the group". However, this attentive alertness is on its own not enough. The

second indicator according to Ringer is the occurrence of **an associative flow of ideas without any intervention on the part of the educator**: "the group conversation is relatively free-wheeling so that not every idea expressed is deliberately linked with the one before it". What's happening at these moments is that learners start to feel addressed by that-which-is-at-stake. This links with the idea of the Belgian educational scientist Jan Masschelein about how education should "ensure that you feel addressed to by something, or that things get authority. Not 'authority' as power, but authority rather as 'something that speaks to you/is meaningful to you'."

This leads to the following guidelines to take into consideration:

1. **Participate in the reflection process yourself.** Question your thinking in front of the learners, or allow learners to question your thinking. Become a learner among learners (at least at some times during the course).
2. **Explicitly value the input of the learners.** Especially when a new element or perspective is introduced by them.
3. **Direct dialogue in such a way to include different learners' points-of-view.** Don't let the conversation get fixed one-on-one, nor let the dialogue be centred around your knowledge and expertise as an educator, but stimulate learners to dialogue with you as well as with each other. As such this will strengthen their awareness of being a learning group and they will benefit from the collective intelligence.
4. **Make space and time during or at the end of the learning process for genuine feedback between you and the individual learner and/ or within the group of learners.** Feedback is not about evaluating and assessing in a one-way direction (from the educator towards the learner), but is a two-way dialogue in which learners can take the ownership of the feedback process, both as 'transmitter' as well as 'receiver' (or not…).

Sincerely yours

Your REFLECT correspondent

This letter was informed by the following writings:

Luken, Tom. (2010). Problemen met reflecteren. De risico's van reflectie nader bezien. In Luken, Tom & Reynaert, W. (2010) Puzzelstukjes voor een nieuw paradigma? Aardverschuiving in loopbaandenken. Eindhoven-Tilburg: Lectoraat Career Development Fontys Hogeschool HRM en Psychologie, 9-34.

Masschelein, Jan & Piessens, Ann. (2013). Op school ontdekken nieuwe generaties de wereld. *QuaJong* (2). 2-6.

Ringer, Martin. (2008). Group Action: the dynamics of groups in therapeutic, educational and corporate settings. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Suggested reading related to 'the relationship between educator and learners':

Boud, D. (1994). Conceptualising learning from experience: Developing a model for facilitation. In *Proceedings of the thirty fifth annual adult education research conference*. 49-54.

Korthagen, F. A., Kim, Y. M., & Greene, W. L. (2012). *Teaching and learning from within: A core reflection approach to quality and inspiration in education*. Routledge.

Mann, K., Gordon, J., & MacLeod, A. (2009). Reflection and reflective practice in health professions education: a systematic review. In *Advances in health sciences education,* 14(4), 595-621.

Smith, E. (2011). Teaching critical reflection. In *Teaching in Higher Education*.16(2). 211-223.

LETTER 5   ON DIRECTING THE REFLECTIVE
                ATTENTION AND VALUING
                'ATTENDRE' & NOT-KNOWING

Dear reader,

When giving an assignment or simply asking a question to learners, educa-
tors sometimes have the right solution or answer already in the back of their
mind as they have 'deduced' the answer from the 'bigger story' they want to
teach. Accordingly, they will evaluate the answers of learners by comparing
them to this 'right answer'. When the aim is simply transferring knowledge
or training skills, this can be very valuable: the logic that underpins the right
answer can be easily explained and understood. However, **when it comes to
personal reflection, you cannot as an educator expect any kind of 'right
answer' deduced from the bigger story**. Reflection is a different way of creat-
ing knowledge compared to logical thinking. For one thing, it processes (at least
partly) information unconsciously in contrast to logical thinking that processes
information consciously. Tom Luken (2010) links important consequences to
this distinction:

" […] *conscious thinking covers only a small part of the capacity of our brain.
Unconscious processes have much more capacity. According to Dijksterhuis […] we can
process unconsciously 200 000 time more quickly comparing to conscious processing. The
conscious works serial whereas the unconscious brain works with parallel processes. The
conscious brain should necessarily limit itself to a few aspects, whereby there is always a
certain arbitrariness. […] The conscious thinking is inclined to use logic, also for ques-
tions, paradoxes and dilemma's that can't be answered with logical thinking. One of the
consequences is that in order to get to a solution inconsistent information gets 'pushed
away', whereby the eventual decision is based on a distorted representation [of reality]."*

According to us this different way of processing is essential for reflection to get
to deep personal learning. So it's of the utmost importance for the educator
to allow these unconscious, parallel brain processes to start functioning. He
can do so by **directing the reflective attention in the learners' mind.** They
should not focus on chasing quick, logical and/or problem-solving answers, but
rather **slow down and take time to question the assignment or question
thoroughly from a deep, personal level: "what's my personal 'right an-
swer'?"** Most of the time, this answer will not be clear from the very beginning
('it's not a quick yes or no'), but will rather unravel itself through enquiry dur-
ing the learning process. So directing the reflective attention is essentially ask-
ing learners to start questioning and considering that-which-is-at-stake more
broadly and from different perspectives.

In this respect it is interesting to mention that the word 'attention' is con-
nected with the French verb *attendre*, which means 'waiting'. Two remarks need
to be made here. Firstly, it's important for the educator not to close down this
process of questioning too soon by providing definitive statements or interpre-
tations. "Exploration is stifled when participants or the leader jump in with
hard and fast answers," Ringer mentions (2008). "When there appears to be

only one answer to any question, no further space exists for curiosity or enquiry, with a consequent loss of the reflective space. Therefore, any person who consistently makes definitive statements about what is true in the group will potentially close down the reflective space. In particular, leaders who respond to the group's implicit request to tell them what is going on, will reduce the room in the group for open reflection and enquiry. Thus, leaders who provides too much information or interpretation too soon will reduce the reflective space in the group […]."

Secondly, reflection-as-a-kind-of-waiting also implies that one should value moments of not being sure and not-knowing. In this sense, talking about Socrates' maieutics, the Dutch author Jos Kessels (2006) is accentuating how **"in a certain way you need to lose your mind… in the conversations of Socrates this not-knowing – the moment of indecision, the recognition and experience of your own ignorance – is a condition to gain genuine insight."** This not-knowing helps, according to Kessels, learners to progressively unfold a good quality dialogue with themselves, constructing 'poetic arguments' (quite different from 'logical reasons' as you can imagine).

When reviewing the pedagogy of his theoretical seminars on sociology at the international renowned dance school P.A.R.T.S. of Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker in Brussels, Belgian professor Rudi Laermans (2012) talks as well about the importance of not-knowing: 'doing theory [at P.A.R.T.S.] differs from just learning or instructing [at the university]. For the accent now decisively shifts to the living encounter between theoretical concepts […] and the students' co-thinking. Theory thus changes from a firm body of knowledge into a verb, an open dialogical practice that again and again faces its own contingencies. This 'thinking aloud together', with or against particular ideas, initially aims at a heightened awareness of, e.g., the socially constructed and intrinsically complex nature of phenomena […]. Yet when the teaching really goes in the direction of 'doing theory' a collective situation emerges in which something genuine may happen because the public thinking of both teacher and students leaves behind canonical problems and validated answers, willingly becomes uncertain, and deliberately takes the risk of ending up in a zone where […] the experience of not-knowing is openly affirmed. A theory class may thus open up a common space for possible reflection that never closes off the sense for 'the possible': no definitive Truth can stop the public process of inquisitive questioning."

We would like to conclude these paragraphs by referring once more to Ringer (2008) who states explicitly how "the reflective space is supported by a tolerance for and space for not-knowing (and) enquiry […]."

This leads to the following guidelines:

1. **Look for an appropriate context for 'slowing-down the pace of learning'.** This may include: the physical setting (e.g. a pleasant environment that could be related to the topic to reflect upon, learners able to look at each other etc); being patient and allowing moments of silence after questioning (instead of continuing teaching or giving the answer immediately) and splitting up the learning group to reflect in small groups or individually.

2. **Don't go along too easily with very obvious and straight forward answers from learners.** A quick 'yes or no' only reveals their attempt to assimilate the question to their prior knowledge. Just continue your questioning a little bit further to go 'deeper'. Play the so-called devil's advocate and put forward the complete opposite point of view, or 'confront' learners with their circular way of reasoning.

3. **Allow yourself as educator to express moments of not-knowing.** This is linked with the idea of becoming a learner among learners yourself.

4. **Allow and value the learner's moments of not being sure and not-knowing.** Don't evaluate moments when the answer is not given (quickly enough), as that something has gone wrong in the learning process. This is linked with the importance of trust and emotional safety within the relationship between educator and learners.

5. **Keep your assignments and questions as educator 'open'.** Don't have the right answer in the back of your mind.

Sincerely yours

Your REFLECT correspondent

This letter was informed by the following writings:

Dijksterhuis, A. (2008). Het slimme onbewuste. Denken met gevoel. Amsterdam: Bert Bakker.

Kessels, Jos. (2006). Het poëtisch argument: Socratische gesprekken over het goede leven. Amsterdam: Boom Filosofie.

Laermans, Rudi. (2012). Teaching Theory and the Art of Not-Knowing. Notes on Pedagogical Commonalism. *Krisis, journal for contemporary philosophy* (1). 63-74.

Luken, Tom. (2010). Problemen met reflecteren. De risico's van reflectie nader bezien. In Luken, Tom & Reynaert, W. (2010) Puzzelstukjes voor een nieuw paradigma? Aardverschuiving in loopbaandenken. Eindhoven-Tilburg: Lectoraat Career Development Fontys Hogeschool HRM en Psychologie, 9-34.

Ringer, Martin. (2008). Group Action: the dynamics of groups in therapeutic, educational and corporate settings. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Suggested reading related to 'directing the reflective attention and valuing '*attendre*' & not-knowing':

Freese, A. R. (2005). Transformation Through Self-Study. In *Making a difference in teacher education through self-study* (pp. 65-79). Springer Netherlands.

A story on slowing down and not-knowing

Written by Nancy Vansieleghem and Filip De Roeck from LUCA School of Arts (Belgium)

'As long as I'm Walking (a protocol as a tool)' was delivered as one of the many art projects during the first week of November within our school. The project took four full days and was open to all LUCA-students and alumni of the different disciplines (visual arts, audio-visual, music, drama, dance and teacher-training in art). The project was voluntary. The general aim of this project was experiencing and thinking about the educational/artistic potential of moving and being/becoming moved by something, as well as creating a space and time of experiencing and becoming present in the present. As a test project within REFLECT we aimed at: experimenting with the meaning of 'inner-readiness' as an attitude of becoming present in the present and to disclose/alter the gaze; experimenting with exercises and techniques to maintain the experience of presence instead of neutralising it (by using it for realising a predefined outcome (i.e. making a beautiful drawing); exploring ways of 'pointing' and 'giving instructions' as ways of disclosing/altering the gaze and finally exploring the role of the teacher/mentor/coach in realising moments of attention for what there is to see and feel.

During the introduction of the project we made a general presentation. We emphasised the use of a protocol as one of the main elements/conditions of the project to succeed – experiencing the artistic/education potential of moving and maintaining the experience. Then we watched the movie 'Five Obstructions' (2003) by Lars von Trier and Jorgen Leth as an inspiration and form of preparation (to get ready). After this we proposed an exercise on using a protocol (as form of preparation and experiencing what a protocol can do/bring about) and presented the protocol by introducing the rules/instructions to be followed. Afterwards students left the school individually and went travelling for 3 days according to their specific protocol.

There was a clear difference in 'inner readiness' to use a protocol as a tool between the students of mixed media and the teacher training programme. One of the differences between both groups is that the first group were students of the bachelor programme while other participants had already received a master degree in the arts and were involved in the teacher training programme. A remarkable difference was that the students of mixed media rather neglected the question to follow a strict protocol, while the students of the teacher training programme seemed rather to be intrigued by it. This became clear during the individual interventions. At random moments we called all the students individually by phone (3x a day), listened to their experience and reflections, asked about their protocol and, when needed, gave instructions. Some students of mixed media responded that they don't work like this, that they rather prefer to follow their intuition instead of following an instruction that 'limits their creativity'. While the students of the teacher training programme were prepared to use it, and thus were inner ready, choosing and using a protocol didn't always seem to be easy for them. When we called our students, they responded that they did not yet find a good/right protocol and were still exploring. Others told us about their destination. Others were mainly fascinated by the protocol as a tool that could bring them to somewhere unexpected. Instead of functioning as a tool to disclose the gaze – and to look at what there is to see and to hear, the protocol to a large extent functioned as a navigating tool.

With our interventions (occasional phone calls) we attempted to focus the gaze and to register what there we to see. We asked questions such as: what are you doing? What do you see? What do you hear? What do you feel? We asked questions in such a way that we forced the participants to speak only about these things they saw, heard, felt, smelt, ... and to become attentive to what is there.

After the first day, and more in particular in the afternoon of the second day, the students were tired and confused. They began to have some doubts: "what are we doing? Why are we doing this? It does not really seem to have some kind

of artistic effect. It is cold. I am hungry. I am sick. I don't know where to go anymore and what to do." Some students no longer tried to stick to the protocol. This was a crucial moment. They were tired and exhausted. The stress of using the right protocol disappeared and some kind of feeling of disconnection or discomfort happened. Some students decided to stop and to do something else, no longer thinking about a protocol. Just drawing, filming, thinking... The place and the moment had an effect. That moment was no moment of reflection (active) or sorrow, but of acceptance (passive). It was a moment in which they experienced themselves no longer as an object, but as a subject. This means that they no longer tried to control the situation and their destination, but became part of it. Amazingly, at that moment, it appeared that the students really began to speak about what was happening, and not about what they had expected to happen.

One can say that the strongest protocol was time and exhaustion. The students of mixed media often neglected to use a strict protocol, but on the other hand the protocol was there and had its effect. All the students made an individual travel of three days, without returning home. Not being used to travel this way, they left their comfort zone and other ways of doing, acting and thinking became a part of them.

When the students returned on the third day, they shared their experiences. All students were exhausted and also confused. They spoke about remarkable things that happened on their journey They were confused, and talked about how the phone calls and the protocol had an effect on their journey. Only one participant talked about an artistic result. For the other participants it was totally unclear what the journey resulted in. They wrote/painted/drew/recorded/sewed... a lot, but whether these activities strengthened their artistic competences or awareness was unimportant at that moment. However, some months later, students signalled that they wanted to talk about the project once again: that it changed their way of looking at things and that it brought them to new approach to artistic work....

Our role as lecturer/coach/guide was one of experiencing that 'we don't know what we don't know' (Socrates). Taking this assumption seriously means that in the first place we tried to respond to what is happening, instead of interpreting the situation: interpretation is always related to preconceived knowledge based on experience, or scientific research, but does not start from the assumption of not knowing.

Dear reader,

In the previous letter we proposed to slow down the pace of reflection. This helps prevent quick, logical and sometimes obvious answers to that-which-is-at-stake. Authentic reflection needs time to look at things from a broader and deeper perspective: for a certain kind of waiting in order to be able to explore the limits of what you already know and what's beyond in the realm of not-knowing: to lose one's mind (as Kessels puts it). As it's an important aspect of creating a reflective atmosphere, we would like to continue today to write something more about directing the reflective attention of learners.

Questioning is obviously an important tool for educators to direct the reflective attention of learners. Generally, it should help you and your learners to enquire more in depth that-which-is-at-stake. Several strategies are possible. For example, don't be satisfied with short, general answers which usually come up first. Dig a little bit deeper in order to get a more nu-anced or detailed view on the underlying arguments, assumptions or values, which let learners answer the way they do. Sometimes even a simple 'is it really like this?' followed by some silence, can do the work (at the same time this is an invitation from the educator to 'own' the question by the learner). Secondly, when you are discussing the theory of a certain author, just ask-ing tentatively how they connect his ideas to their personal experiences will direct attention to the learners' personal frames-of-reference. Another possi-bility for deepening the process is to introduce the opposite perspective (by yourself, or by referring to another author, or by giving extra attention to a remark from a learner with a different point of view). This can be fruitful when learners are agreeing very quickly on one particular way to look at that-which-is-at-stake. Doing so, you should be careful not to get (too quickly) in a 'what's right or wrong?' dialogue when introducing a different perspective, but rather try to encourage open minds, suspending their judgments and to really begin exploring. A final questioning strategy we want to mention here is to stimulate learners to question each other as well: 'is it clear for you what Mark is saying now? What do you think about Mark's point of view? Is he not saying the opposite to you?'

However, when deepening the questioning in the learning group, you should be careful not to impose your questioning too much. Find the balance by being attentive on how learners react to your question, also non-verbally: "do they take the question to go deeper? Or not? Why could that be? Have I questioned them too much? Is the questioning maybe less relevant to their learning process? Or are they just in a lazy-Monday-morning-mood?". Maybe the following metaphor can help you to find this balance: **questioning and answering can be understood as a spontaneous process of flooding new land.** By questioning you are digging a bed or watercourse for the water to run into. An essential fact is that the water should not be limited to the bed, but has the possibility to inundate and fertilize the surrounding environment. So, by questioning you are not building a preconceived structure of dams

and canals to control the water completely, but rather you are engaging in a sort of spontaneous evolving play with the low and high tides of the stream. **Questioning this way requires you to be very clear on the learning context and goals of your course** (which content, which goals, which engagement?). It's determining a sense of direction for the reflective process and function as a kind of 'point of validation' for questioning: which questions make sense, which do not? The learning context lets you know where to start digging riverbeds.

At this point of balancing, we would like to add an important pitfall. Understanding reflection as creating personal meaning and insight can lead educators to question the personal level too exclusively. As a result, **learners are focusing too exclusively on their thoughts, opinions, feelings and experiences without taking the surrounding context (sufficiently) into account, or to put it more generally, 'the bigger world'.** They are getting trapped within themselves as their attention is directed solely to the internal world of the subjective 'I'. We would like to name this with a self-invented word the **'pitfall of** *subjectification***'.** This is especially the case when one understands our central concept of inner readiness merely as some kind of internal process in learners that needs to be changed, regardless of the outside world. To avoid this pitfall, it's important for the educator to balance the learner's attention for what's going on within the 'subjective inside' with what's going on in the 'objective outside'. This 'objective outside' can be understood both literally (e.g. how other people are reacting within a certain situation, what's actually happening, the task to be fulfilled etc) as well as symbolically (e.g. the practices of other artists as presented by the lecturer or the discourses about good and bad art as written down in a book). As such personal meaning and insight are not the outcomes of a solipsistic process of looking solely at oneself. On the contrary, for developing a genuine reflection process, it's essential to relate the 'I' with the 'World'. Or to put it in the words of Volkmar Mühleis, as he described in his testing project for REFLECT: "The interiority of the person should not be the only focus, but also on stimulating affections (from the outside world as well) […]. 'Inner readiness' is about an opening to the world, not about a 'key' in the person itself. One might say: the key to the inside lies in the outside." And it speaks for itself that the opposite pitfall is possible too: **'objectification' happens when learners pay attention too exclusively to what's going on outside themselves without relating properly to themselves** (as when they only think logically and are personally detached for example).

In all of this, and this is important to underline, deepening your questioning is not that much about asking continually more and more complicated and sophisticated questions. Rather, it's about exploring more in depth how learners look at that-which-is-at-stake (be it themselves, be it the world in the broadest sense of the word as 'theory' can also be understood as a 'window' to the world). As a consequence, we take to heart the advice by Jeff Clement (2015) for building a reflective space: don't bother too much with good or bad questions, but rather **use your interest in learners as the motor of your questioning.** Be curious to know about how they see, think, feel about that-which-is-stake and let your interest and curiosity guide you

spontaneously to your next question. In this way your questioning will be explorative and process-oriented. Principally the effect will be that learners start questioning thoroughly that-which-is-at-stake, to really start dialoguing with their internal and external 'companions' by taking some distance from their first thoughts and feelings. In doing so they will naturally start building the space to reflect within (simultaneously individual and collective). That's the reason why we propose **to let their attention become reflective in a more spontaneous way, i.e. not by instructing or imposing, but by directing it to deepen their learning process**. In this respect, the receipt of an answer is as essential as questioning itself: take learners' answers for what they are. Avoid (always) judging them as being right or wrong, but understand them as possibilities to tune into 'stance' where learners are in their learning process.

This leads to the following guidelines to take into account:

1. **Balance and be diverse in your questioning:** questions directed to the 'subjective inside' versus 'objective outside', conforming/comforting vs confronting, short vs long questions, questions for one individual vs questions for the whole group etc. Alternate between open and closed questions in a chain of continually widening & narrowing. Too many open questions can lead to chaos, whereas too many closed questions lead to limitation.
2. At some points let learners take over the lead from you. **Allow learners at certain points to create and/or choose the relevant questions for themselves**, here-and-now about that-which-is-at-stake.
3. **Be careful with rhetorical questions.** Rhetorical questions are valid of course to let learners find out the educator's perspective on that-which-is-at-stake. But as they imply an answer that is already known, they don't leave space for learners to reflect personally. Rhetorical questions are not explorative and by nature content-directed: they want to transfer knowledge. Too many rhetorical questions that are generally spoken undermine the openness of the reflective space.
4. **Frame your question in such way that it fits to what learners are talking about** (both on the level of content and process). Try to have your questions 'tuned into' their learning process without imposing your learning agenda. Take into account the learner's reflective competence.
5. **Let the dialogue be co-created** and never forget it's not only about questioning. It's also about answering: allow silence after a question and wait for what's happening (don't respond with an answer yourself and don't continue to question too quickly); explicitly value the input of the learners; reply to their answers as a learner yourself; add some new content to look at the topic from a different point-of-view; don't judge their answer (too quickly) etc.

    Sincerely yours

    Your REFLECT correspondent

This letter was informed by the following writings:

Clement, Jef. (2015). Inspirerend coachen. De kunst van dynamisch en uitdagend communiceren. Leuven: Lannoo Campus.

Mühleis, Mühleis. (2015). REFLECT case study: Reverse Perspective, report testing project not published.

Suggested reading related to 'deepening your question progressively':

Baker, A. C., Jensen, P. J., & Kolb, D. A. (2005). Conversation as experiential learning. Management Learning, 36(4), 411-427.

Korthagen, F. A., Kim, Y. M., & Greene, W. L. (2012). *Teaching and learning from within: A core reflection approach to quality and inspiration in education*. Routledge.

Smith, E. (2011). Teaching critical reflection. *Teaching in Higher Education.16(2). 211-223.*

Marshall, J. (1999). Living life as enquiry. *Systemic Practice and Action Research*, *12*(2), 155-171.

A story on directing the reflective attention

Written by Unnur Gísladóttir and Jakob F. Þorsteinsson from University of Iceland

For the very first time we ran a one-day course on the value of effective good outdoor games and activities for pedagogical work in leisure time and in schools. Our aim was to open students' eyes to the fact that "more" can be found in these, exploring how reflection and experiential learning can make the process of learning through games and activities meaningful. Therefore, we intentionally gave more space to discussion and reflection than to the actual games and activities.

We opened the day by telling them something about ourselves and giving space to the students to tell everyone about themselves as well. Although it was only one day, it was important that we based the day on trust, openness, empathy and honesty.

Throughout the day the main focus was on these questions and themes:

- What did you see?
- Did nature affect you during the process?
- Did the distribution of the group or the way you were divided into groups affect you?
- Did you reflect during the exercise? How?
- Is it realistic to reflect in this situation?
- How did you 'upplifa'/experience the day?
- What was your input into the project?
- Is there something that is left unsaid?
- What did you feel? Does feeling matter?

These questions were used to identify the individual learning needs, to give them a clear focus in their reflection process. They also gave us guidelines to work deeper on experience and connect the process outside of the learning situation. We addressed these themes at the end of

the day and asked if they identified with it and did they spot these themes in our programme.

Related to this, when finishing a complex game called 'defusing the bomb' we also gave them a project that connected to reflection and specifically the REFLECT project. In that, we asked the student to discuss in what order "good", "practical" and "logical" reflection is done. These questions were designed with the REFLECT-letters in mind. The way in which they set up these questions was the foundation for discussing reflection as a method of learning, and in which way to address reflection. The questions were:

▪ What were their needs, what did they think was of importance?
▪ How did you feel? How did these feelings affect you?
▪ What was the project about? What was its content? What was the reason and goal?
▪ Did the project do anything for the group or affect it? How? Why?
▪ Did you manage to finish the project and assignments, what affected the outcome?
▪ How was the communication in the group? What characterised them?
▪ How do you draw learning and experience from this project? How do you place the learning and experience onto to other circumstances?
▪ On a personal level what did the project do for you?
▪ Was there something or someone who interfered with your learning or experience?

The outcome of this discussion and dialogue was diverse but there were a few themes. Most importantly all students identified feeling and discussion of feelings as being an important part of starting a reflective conversation.

A story on silence and directing attention differently

Written by Mario D'Agostino and Gabriele Cespa from Kamaleonte (Italy)

We had a two-day course for leaders of a pharmaceutical multinational company based on experiential learning and outdoor activities. The aim of the course was to reinforce team identity and to share best ways to communicate with each other. We used this course as our test project for REFLECT. During an activity we wanted to integrate a short silence wherein participants can experience the "not doing". The meaning of "not doing" is about creating moments, a few minutes, between the activities or before, where participants are invited to "not do" anything, just stay with their self and the context around them. The objectives we had in mind were to observe if this practice of "not doing":

▪ Allows participants to develop a sense of being present in that specific moment, with themselves and others (this logic is based on mindfulness and Theory U stage of presencing).
▪ Empowers learners, through achieving a presencing stage, to be inner ready for new actions.

My usual practice is to use silence as an activity, or after an activity, but never with the objective of helping people to be inner ready.

So, on the first day of the training during an outdoor activity (they were paddling in a Dragon Boat in the middle of a lake) we stopped the group and we asked them to "not do anything" and to be silent for 5 minutes. Silence served as a privileged space for noticing rather than giving a specific reflection assignment. I didn't ask any questions to direct the attention of the participants towards a specific issue (as I would have done in other experiential learning projects previously). I just asked them to observe and notice what resonated in them in relation to the context (environment and group), inner state and body responses to the inner and external stimuli.

In the evening, after a whole day of activities, during the debriefing we asked participants to share the significant moments of the day. For seven of them (the majority) those 5 minutes of 'not doing' were the most significant, because:

- They realised where they were and with whom they were in that specific moment.
- They realised the importance, also during working time, of taking time to reflect about where they want to go and how they want to work together, in order to make their actions more fluent and coherent.
- They realised that they never take time to reflect during their daily work.

One of the participants noticed that after their pause in the middle of the lake, they started to paddle again in a more harmonic and fluent way among them, without any rational decision to do so. How could this have happened?

Personally, I think they experienced co-presensing (from Otto Sharmer theory U). Presensing is the stage of being fully present (emotionally, physically and mentally) and at the same time perceiving with all full senses what is going on. The day after, a very important business meeting was planned between them. Before starting the meeting, they were invited to perceive the group needs and situation through reflection and through sharing in couples.
For sharing in couples, we used an exercise called "empathetic walk" on the beach. After this moment, they decided to change their agenda. They realised that the need of the group was to keep time aside to go deeper in the reflection on how they were working together as a team, sharing wishes and a common vision, before holding the business meeting.

In that specific moment, when they agreed to change the agenda, they realised their need to go deeper in interpersonal exploration and exchange, in order to be inner ready to work together.

LETTER 7   ON TRIGGERING REFLECTIVE PROCESSES

Dear reader,

In both formal and non-formal education reflection is often organised as answering standardised questions after a practical course, internship or activity. Typical questions are following: 'how have you executed the task and what have you learned?', 'what went well/poorly?', 'what can you do differently and better?'. Within this framework reflection is understood in a very narrow functional way, generally speaking: you describe a problem, think logically about it and then you'll find a good answer to solve the problem (or when there is no problem, how to get even better). Research shows however that this procedure doesn't work most of the time. Firstly, the distance between question and answer in these standardised formats is just too short. Reflection is narrowed down to 'remembering' and 'evaluating', asking solely for linear thinking that can be too rational. The format does not engage learners to look at what was experienced in a more detailed way. Secondly, as a consequence, learners often experience these Q&A's as writing down what they already know. Thirdly, reflection assignments are given to all learners at the same standard moments within the semester planning or at the end of the day at a non-formal course, thereby not taking in account the concrete and individual situation of learners (do they have enough input and personal experience to reflect properly at that time?) (Luken 2010 and 2011).

According to REFLECT reflection is not just about 'solving problems and becoming better'. It's also about gaining insight in oneself and the world, eg. concerning one's personal assumptions and reaction habits, the overall context in which one finds himself (be it at school or in an organisation), the linking between theoretical knowledge and reality etc. So in this respect reflection is essentially about raising awareness (in the broadest possible meaning), both for personal and professional development. As such we don't believe in standardised Q&A's implying merely logical thinking. Rather we want to advocate a broad perspective on reflection connecting thinking with feeling, values, intuition and experience. This is needed if reflection wants to foster deep personal learning.

In many cases the essential catalyst for deep reflective learning is not the way of questioning nor the theoretical models the educator is relying on. It's something else, something that 'triggers' learners personally and intrinsically, something unexpected, powerful, maybe paradoxical and/or challenging. Donald Schön writes in his cardinal *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983) how reflection usually starts when something unexpected occurs, something that doesn't fit into one's way of understanding himself, others and the world. In *A Handbook of Reflective and Experiential Learning (*2004) Jennifer Moon reframes this idea by highlighting the importance of powerful experiences for the reflective process, experiences that are able to bring the learner to deep *emotional insight,* which "would seem to be characterised by the change of a particularly significant frame of reference that results in a considerable reorientation of many frames of references that

affect significant areas of life." These quotes imply that it only makes sense to reflect when there is something to reflect about: some kind of experience that is challenging, confronting or puzzling learners one way or another.

On this point we would like to put forward a broad definition of the word 'experience'. Although this word refers of course to experiential learning, it does not solely refer to climbing mountains or exploring caves. A strong 'experience' can also be understood, so we believe, as: getting a 'challenging' assignment to create something; as reading a book or even hearing a presentation by a lecturer. In terms of the material of learning, we propose that educators take care to create possibilities for this unexpected and/or powerful educational experience to happen. Of course there will be an important difference in this respect for formal and non-formal education in how to organise this. Generally speaking, we think it's useful for both of them to organise the learning process in a non-linear way in order to increase the possibility for these strong experiences to happen more spontaneously. **Reflection occurs, so it seems, more easily when the content of the learning process is not over-structured by the educator.** That is to say: the learning process is not preconceived as a linear, logically developing story, but rather as a sequence of apparently loose elements required by educator and learners to create the so-called red line of learning themselves (this is also an important aspect of owning-up the learning process by learners).

We would like to add one more remark to conclude this posting. In his article on sense and non-sense of reflection in formal education the educational scientist Tom Luken (2010 and 2011) concludes with a clear statement: **start reflecting less, in a better way**. It only makes sense to engage in reflective practices when you have the possibility to facilitate the reflection process of learners, at least partly on an individual basis, so Luken believes. In line with his opinion, we also believe that creating a reflective atmosphere does not make a lot of sense if you have to teach big groups of learners without any possibility to engage individually with them, e.g. by talking to them during the lecture or by giving personal feedback. His remark also makes sense within other contexts, for example within the context of experiential education and its background in the thinking of Kolb. Participants sometimes complain about some kind of 'reflection coercion' when every 'action' needs to be followed by a 'reflection' as Kolb's circle or reflection suggest when understood literally. When starting reflection in both formal and non-formal education educators need to be attentive to the willingness of learners to engage with it and, if needed, try to trigger or motivate them to do so. But if this is not working it makes no sense to impose the reflection as quality will be poor. So concluding this posting, we can summarize by saying that educators should only start reflecting when there is something to reflect upon and the conditions allow it to be done in a good way.

Sincerely yours

Your REFLECT correspondent

This letter was informed by the following writings:

Luken, Tom. (2010). Problemen met reflecteren. De risico's van reflectie nader bezien. In Luken, Tom & Reynaert, W. (2010) Puzzelstukjes voor een nieuw paradigma? Aardverschuiving in loopbaandenken. Eindhoven-Tilburg: Lectoraat Career Development Fontys Hogeschool HRM en Psychologie, 9-34.

Luken, T. (2011). Zin en onzin van reflectie. *Supervisie en coaching tijdschrift voor begeleidingskunde*. 28 (4), 153-166.

Moon, J. A. (2004). A handbook of reflective and experiential learning: Theory and practice. London-New York: Routledge.

Schön, Donald. (1983). The Reflective Practitioner: How professionals think in action. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Suggested reading related to 'triggering reflective practices':

Boud, D. (1994, May). Conceptualising learning from experience: Developing a model for facilitation. In *Proceedings of the thirty fifth annual adult education research conference* (pp. 49-54).

Hovelynck, J. (2000). Recognising and exploring action-theories: A reflection-in-action approach to facilitating experiential learning. *Journal of Adventure Education & Outdoor Learning, 1*(1), 7-20.

Smith, E. (2011). Teaching critical reflection. *Teaching in Higher Education.16(2).* 211-223.

Lucas, U., & Tan, L.P. (2013). Developing a capacity to engage in critical reflection: students''ways of knowing' within an undergraduate business and accounting programme. *Studies in Higher Education, 38, (1),* 104–123. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2011.569706.

Mortari L.,(2012). Learning thoughtful reflection in teacher education. *Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice, 18, (5),* 525–545.

Hubbs, D.L. &Brand (2005). The Paper Mirror: Understanding Reflective Journaling. The Journal of Experiential Education,28 (1), 60-71.

LETTERS FROM OUR REFLECT CORRESPONDENT

Dear reader,

We have come to a complicated issue which we have been discussing throughout the project. 'Complicated' because on the one hand assessments are a valid tool for tracking the learning process of learners, especially in formal education. But at the same time we think assessments can have a negative impact on the quality of reflection, something which is sometimes underestimated. Even just the bare fact that learners know that they are going to be assessed can have a profound impact on the way they explore (or not) that-which-is-at-stake. Therefore, we want to advocate that the educator is at least aware about the possible impact of the classic assessment (including grading) and/or to consider a careful alternative to it.

Reflection assignments are often developed within the existing framework of assessing competences. Therefore, it is usually based on a quantitative, result-oriented logic: assessment is verifying in which way and to which degree the learner meets the pre-existing standards concerning knowledge, skills and attitude. What's good already? What needs to be better? And what isn't good enough? In some cases, this is of course a very valid way of assessing. However, when reflection comes down to learners exploring their deeper thoughts, feelings, values and assumptions, this way of assessing doesn't always do justice to the complex and holistic process of reflection. Firstly, learners are starting to align their answers to what they think is expected because they want a good grade at the end. Secondly, too much emphasis is put on the actual content as the objective, measurable result of reflection. But what about learners who have engaged in an authentic enquiry and are confronted with a moment of sincere not-knowing (and to be clear: this 'I don't know' is in sharp contrast to the all-too-easy 'I don't know and I don't care')? To put the question sharply: should they get a lower grade for ,or possibly even fail, the assessment as they do not produce enough content?

With REFLECT we have started to explore a different path for assessing reflection. Further on in the publication, we will elaborate this path more in its specifics, but at this point it suffices to make a general statement. We're proposing to **align the assessment with the ideas of process-directivity, owning up and dialogic relationship between educator and learners.** Therefore, we firstly propose a shift from a one-way-directed assessment to a two-ways-directed assessment: it's not just the educator who takes an objective distance to evaluate the learner, rather educator and learners have a dialogue to explore the learning process together. Doing so, they continue the equal relationship they have built up during the course (instead of falling back to a top-down relationship in the former way of assessing). It's important to underline at this point, the purpose of this dialogue is not to convince one another about the 'objective truth' of what is learned, but rather to develop a kind of intersubjective judgement by allowing to be mutually influenced by each other. This requests an openness from both educator and learner.

Secondly, we also propose that the focus of assessment should first and foremost be put on the reflective process leading to the content instead of the content itself (e.g. as being right or wrong). This implies a shift from what is called summative (result-oriented) to formative (process-oriented) assessment. Arguing how assessment of the result cannot be separated from assessment of the process in arts education, Susan Orr states convincingly in this respect how "it is essential that you know something about who that person is and what they are trying to do, what they think they're doing in order to measure the quality of what they've done." The same is true for reflection, so we think. Therefore, the educator directs his attention towards the intensity by which learners engage themselves in the reflection; the attention they give to that-which-is-at-stake and the way they personally own the reflected knowledge, skills or attitude. He does so to explore (rather than to objectively measure) the quality and depth of the personal learning processes, more than the content as a measurable result (to put it very black and white).

Sincerely yours,

Your REFLECT correspondent

This letter was informed by the following writings:

Luken, Tom. (2010). Problemen met reflecteren. De risico's van reflectie nader bezien. In Luken, Tom & Reynaert, W. (2010) Puzzelstukjes voor een nieuw paradigma? Aardverschuiving in loopbaandenken. Eindhoven-Tilburg: Lectoraat Career Development Fontys Hogeschool HRM en Psychologie, 9-34.

Orr, Susan. (2012). Art and Design Assessment. A journey from accuracy to zing. Lecture on the conference 'Artistiek Evalueren', to be downloaded on www.luca-arts.be/portfolio/%E2%80%98art-and-design-assessment-%E2%80%93-journey-accuracy-zing.

Suggested reading related to 'assessing reflection':

Boud, D. (1994, May). Conceptualising learning from experience: Developing a model for facilitation. In *Proceedings of the thirty fifth annual adult education research conference* (pp. 49-54).

Hovelynck, J. (2000). Recognising and exploring action-theories: A reflection-in-action approach to facilitating experiential learning. *Journal of Adventure Education & Outdoor Learning, 1*(1), 7-20.

Smith, E. (2011). Teaching critical reflection. *Teaching in Higher Education.16(2). 211-22.3*

Lucas, U., & Tan, L.P. (2013). Developing a capacity to engage in critical reflection: students' 'ways of knowing' within an undergraduate business and accounting programme. *Studies in Higher Education, 38, (1),* 104–123. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2011.569706.

Mortari L. (2012). Learning thoughtful reflection in teacher education. *Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice, 18, (5),* 525–545.

Hubbs, D.L. & Brand. (2005). The Paper Mirror: Understanding Reflective Journaling. *The Journal of Experiential Education,*28 (1), 60-71.Lim, L-A.,Y., L.(2011). A comparison of students' reflective thinking across different years in a problem-based learning environment. *Instr Sci* 39, 171–188. DOI 10.1007/s11251-009-9123-8.

Wittich, C.,M. et al.(2013). Validation of a Method for Measuring Medical Students' Critical Reflections on Professionalism in Gross Anatomy. *Anatomical Sciences Education,6,* 232–238.

Wittich,C.,M.et al.(2013). Measuring Faculty reflection on medical Grand Rounds at Mayo Clinic: Association with teaching experience, clinical exposure and presenter effectiveness. *Mayo Clinic Proceeding,* 88(3), 277-284.

Dear reader,

With this letter we'll finish REFLECT's framework of principles and guidelines. Whereas the previous principles and guidelines can be understood as the actual building blocks that have to be put one on top of and/or next to the other, the last principle is different. Let's say it's about the colour that unites all building blocks. Or actually it's about two colours. But before starting to write about them, we would like to summarise all the principles once more. Remember that they are meant to create a reflective atmosphere, experienced and shared by educator and all learners in the learning group:

1. Raising awareness within learners to 'own' their learning in personally meaningful way (it is not about taking over the expertise of the educator!)
2. Developing a relationship between educators and learners based on trust, openness, empathy, transparency, dialogue and feedback
3. Co-creating the reflective process
4. Managing to keep up the steering paradox of intrinsic learning processes
5. Directing the reflective attention of learners
6. Slowing down and valuing moments of not-knowing
7. Deepening your questions progressively
8. Recalling that reflection can never be imposed, only kindly invited.
9. Always considering reflection as a broadening, deepening and holistic process
10. Being careful how to assess reflection (or not at all).

Have you ever heard about Catharism, a movement of Christian mysticism appearing mostly in southern France in 12th and 13th century? As the Roman Catholic Church considered them as a heretic threat to their one and only true faith, they started in 1208 a crusade against this alternative Christian movement. This was done with success, as somewhere around the year1250, Catharism was considered eradicated. However, what's really interesting about Catharism is the fact that it was not organised like Roman Catholicism as a hierarchical pyramid, but quite contrary in a much more 'vertical' structure, more precisely in autonomous dioceses. So it happened regularly that the presiding kathar bishops did not agree on certain matters of faith. Interestingly enough they did not seem to bother too much about these disagreements. They did not issue a "one and true credo" as Roman Catholicism had done nor did they want to convince other kathars. They simply allowed different explanations and practices. Why was this? Because they valued the particularity of the individual experience of their faith as being the most important. Or to put it differently: they allowed space for 'owing up' the mystical Christianity that they were talking about.

Similarly, it's important for you as an educator to own up REFLECT's principles and guidelines. Don't consider them as the one and only true explanation of the bible on reflection to be followed word by word, but rather look carefully into them, reflect on what makes sense to you (and what not) and how you can put them into practice within your professional context. As every educator has a different personality and works in a different professional context (formal versus non-formal to start with), we strongly believe that a certain kind of creative adaptation needs to be done in order for the principle and guidelines to be of use. So try to grasp, as it were, the 'spirit' of REFLECT and express it into your facilitation of reflection process. Engaging yourself personally in this way is maybe even the most important factor for creating a reflective atmosphere as a fertile learning environment for reflection to grow and flourish naturally. And at the end there will be no two facilitators alike!

Next to creativity comes playfulness as the second crucial 'colouring' of all principles and guidelines. At first hand it may seem very simple, very basic and maybe even tricky when it comes down to just being the easy going, funny educator. But this is not what we mean. Rather it's about balancing the seriousness of learning with some kind of playfulness on part of both educator and learners. In this line the Belgian experiential educators Johan Hovelinck and Luk Peeters are arguing in "Laughter, Smiles and Grins: The Role of Humor in Learning and Facilitating" how for example humour helps develop relationships among educators and learners and hence the relational safety needed for deep personal learning. Secondly, they state how humour can also play a role in creating a workable distance to more sensitive learning issues and offer new and unexpected perspectives on certain topics. We'd like to add one more reason to this: when enjoying being in the learning course, it helps learners to tune into their intrinsic pleasure of learning. Learning will no longer be exclusively associated with seriousness. They'll simply just like to be there.

Sincerely yours

Your REFLECT correspondent

This letter was informed by the following writings:

Hovelynck, Johan and Peeters, Luk.(2003). Laughter, smiles and grins: The role of humor in learning and facilitating. Journal of Adventure Education & Outdoor Learning, 3: 2, 171 — 183.

Dear reader,

By now you have read all there is to say about REFLECT's framework of principles and guidelines for creating a reflective atmosphere. It may be clear that the educator plays an essential role in all of this. At the end of his chapter, Ringer states explicitly how one key characteristic of the educator stands out for creating reflective space: **"the intrinsic capacity to hold inside oneself a durable reflective space that stands up to the inevitable challenges that occur in the life of most groups".** This is essential to consider, as it implies the following: if the educator is able to hold the reflective space within himself, he will be able to hold it for the learners and the learning group too. Or to put it another way: there would be no reflective space without an educator willing and able to co-create it with his learners. And we would like to add one more essential remark to this: neither will there be a reflective space when learners are not willing nor able to co-create it with their educator! So, educator and learners are dependent on each other and interconnected in a very fundamental way.

This deserves some white space…

Why they are so dependent on each other for creating a reflective atmosphere and space? **Call it the chameleon-effect which comes down to 'what you give is what you get'.** When the educator lets his learners experience trust, openness, empathy and transparency, when he demonstrates a dialogic, inquiring attitude and when he's attentive to direct learners' process by deepening questioning, learners will at a certain point start mirroring these qualities, attitude and attention back to the educator. This mirroring does not imply that they should exactly copy the educator (in the sense of replicating his ideas, qualities and actions, please don't!), but rather that learners have themselves 'modelled' by a specific kind of mimicry, comparable indeed to a chameleon adapting to the colours of his environment. Please notice the passive construction of the previous sentence: 'have themselves modelled' indicates that this

is generally more an unconscious process of adaptation. One could say that learners become influenced by the educator's qualities, attitude and attention, additionally by his particular way of being present as an educator. And at a certain point they start taking it over, transforming it meanwhile into a personal way of being present.

But this is not the end, because then the educator in turn will start adapting himself to the qualities, attitude and attention of the learners. So further on 'in the life of the group', as Ringer says, educator and learners evolve to a continually fine-tuning to affect each other. It's a kind of dynamic interplay so to speak, which enables them to steer together the learning process in the direction needed for the aims of the course. As if they are dancing partners who are continually reacting to the dancing of the other and passing the lead between each other. This is how the circle of interdependence and interconnectedness fully closes.

We would like to define **this particular way of being of the educator as a 'reflexive presence'**. In the dictionary 'reflexive' has several meanings, but we limit ourselves here to two meanings. Firstly, it means **'marked by or capable of reflection'**. In this respect it refers to the ability of the educator to hold the space for reflecting about that-which-is-at-stake. The second meaning of the word brings us to social theories. There reflexivity refers to circular relationships between cause and effect: the cause leads to an effect which become the cause of the effect and so it goes on. It's a phenomenon whereby, according to the dictionary again, things are **'directed or turned back on themselves'**. "A reflexive relationship is bidirectional with both the cause and the effect affecting one another in a relationship in which neither can be assigned as causes or effects. […] (Therefore), reflexivity comes to mean an act of self-reference where examination or action 'bends back on', refers to, and affects the entity instigating the action or examination" so one can read on Wikipedia. When the reflective space becomes operational within the learning group, leading to this associative, free-wheeling flow of ideas about which Ringer was talking, it's not clear any more (nor is it important) to be able to distinguish what's cause and effect within the process of reflective enquiry.

So, the 'reflexive presence' shows us how the educator is not only capable of holding the space and reflecting himself, but also an understanding of how this affects the overall atmosphere in the learning group and the individual learners. It's the so-called 'first stone' from where the reflective atmosphere will be co-created. So, if the educator sets the appropriate reflective tone, learners will tune into it and start mirroring it back, resulting in an increase of the qualities, attitude and attention needed for reflection. As a result **learners gently model themselves as well as being modelled by the reflective atmosphere into a similar reflexive presence.**

This brings us to the final conclusion: it's not just about having the appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes in order to facilitate the reflection process (although they are very well needed of course), it's also about the **inner readiness as an educator to connect with your learners in a reflexive way in order to feasibly raise their inner readiness to reflect** (and here the adjective 'feasibly' is really important. We'll come back to this in the chapter on inner readiness)

This leads us to a short elaboration of some important qualities of the reflexive presence of the educator (not an exhaustive list):

Trust

Our staff member Angelica Paci gave an inspiring description of the quality of trust: "Trust is about trusting the potentiality and capability of learners to engage in the learning process in a meaningful way. It's rather a general, overall kind of trust. As such it has not that much to do with the more specific expectation if learners will meet the established standards or not. This broad trust is not related to the 'pass or fail' issue." A similar idea is expressed by the already-quoted Rudi Laermans (2012) about his classes of sociology at the dance school: "Trust is actually the cornerstone of each instance of pedagogical communalism. The teacher has trust in every student's ability to respond to the issued invitation to become part of the eventually generated common; and the students trust the teacher that the proposed thought object is indeed a worthy one, and that s/he will be instrumental in the sustainment of the created intellectual togetherness."

Openness

Within Kamaleonte, one of the partner organisations of REFLECT, Theory U by Otto Charmer proved to be a very inspiring entrance to the idea of the reflexive presence (see the chapter on the development of the concept of inner readiness as well as their workshop on inner readiness and theory U, as written in the inspiration box). On the topic of openness, Charmer (2009) distinguishes three levels of the human psyche so to speak: open mind, open heart and open will. And to be open and/or to create openness one needs to practice 'generative listening': being receptive and open to the thoughts, feelings and deepest layers of involvement of oneself and others. He concludes by stating that "effective listening requires the creation of open space in which others can contribute to the whole." Therefore, openness goes hand in hand with a non-judgmental attitude towards learners: you accept the different answers they give, tune into them and direct the learning process further. And this acceptance and tuning-in does not imply that you always agree with learners, you simply don't correct them. You take the answers for what they are. Also this doesn't mean you should not have judgements (we all obviously have them), rather that you suspend your judgements (for a little while). Correcting and judging always involve a hierarchical relationship which most of the time is not beneficial for creating a reflective atmosphere.

Empathy

Empathy is needed especially when educators are asking their learners to expose their more personal thinking, feelings and experiences in reflections. Empathy can generally be described as the ability of the educator to truly understand the learner. Fred Korthagen (2009), founder of Core Reflection

for training educators, stresses for the educator to be attentive for verbal and non-verbal behaviour of the learner. "The educator puts his feelings and opinions aside and moves himself into the feelings of the (learner)". This should result in the learner feeling himself fully understood by the educator. Consequently, the emotional safety to express oneself increases a lot. Furthermore, so Korthagen continues, empathic responses on behalf of the educator can function as an eye-opener. They function "on the emotional level where there's often a clue for further exploration of the quintessential question or of the learner's problem. (Empathy gives) space to the feeling and when this is expressed, it can get another meaning."

Transparency

Transparency involves the ability of the educator himself to be open towards learners, to share his own thinking, feeling and experiences. It's important to stress here one needs always to be careful not to impose these. Really share your thinking, feelings and experiences as being equal to the learners', leave some space for them to 'take or leave them'. Maybe it will prove to be of value to their learning process, maybe not. And if so, allow them to think differently. Furthermore, it's equally important for the educator to be congruent in front of his learners. If you say you're interested in the ideas expressed by one of the learners, but you don't look and act interested, it leads to incongruence. One needs to keep the coherence between what one says and what one does, between what one asks his learner to do and does himself. So, how do you deal with ambiguity and not-knowing as an educator in front of your learners?

Curiosity

In the sixth posting on deepening the questioning we already mentioned the importance of the educator's curiosity. Being curious about how learners see, think and feel about that-which-is-stake is a powerful engine for process-oriented exploration and enquiry. Jef Clement (2015) describes the profits of curiosity in others as the following: "when someone is genuinely interested in and starts exploring your ideas, your questions, your plans or your problems, your openness and willingness to show yourself increases". The bottom line is that curiosity expresses the involvement of the educator in the learning of the learner. And by being involved yourself, you consequently affect learners to become involved themselves.

Attentiveness

When facilitating reflection, we have noticed ourselves how we sometimes become very focused: 'What are the objectives of reflection and what should the learning outcomes be? What could the most useful questions be for initiating and processing the reflection? Which methods are best for activating, for example, different profiles of intelligences?'. When exaggerating, this focus on external aspects narrows the educator's attention, risking the loss of

contact between himself and the learners. In order to avoid this, we propose to practice a process-oriented attentiveness which will give the answers to your questions by focusing on what's happening within the learning process: "What are learners actually talking about? In which direction is the dialogue evolving? How are they balancing 'inside' and 'outside'? How does all of it fit to the development of the learning group?".

Sincerely yours

Your REFLECT correspondent

This letter was informed by the following writings:

Clement, Jef. (2015). Inspirerend coachen. De kunst van dynamisch en uitdagend communiceren. Leuven: Lannoo Campus.

Korthagen, Fred, Bob Koster, Ko Melief & Anke Tichelaar. (2009). Docenten leren reflecteren. Systemische reflectie in de opleiding en begeleiding van leraren. Soest: Uitgeverij Nelissen.

Laermans, Rudi. (2012). Teaching Theory and the Art of Not-Knowing. Notes on Pedagogical Commonalism. *Krisis, journal for contemporary philosophy*. (1). 63-74.

Ringer, Martin. (2008). Group Action: the dynamics of groups in therapeutic, educational and corporate settings. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Scharmer, Otto. (2009). Theory U. Leading from the future as it emerges. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

A story on holding the space and the reflexive educator

Written by Dirk De Vilder from Outward Bound Belgium

In November 2015 I ran a two-days course for a Belgian non-governmental organization with the aim to create an inspiring vision for the future of a well-functioning team. Before the course started, I had several meetings with the director of the organization. He felt a bit uncomfortable with the course because there was some anxiety, mistrust and conflicts as there had been quite some changes in the organisation in the recent past. Therefore, it was important not to dig too much into the problems that had been going on for a while. We chose to work with Appreciative Inquiry, a model for analysis, decision-making and the creation of strategic change which was developed by David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva in the late seventies. They felt that the overuse of 'problem solving' as a model often held back analysis and understanding, focusing on problems and limiting discussion of new organisational models. Furthermore, we decided also to use outdoor activities to explore and discuss the interactions and relations between the team members and to use operating manuals to give the participants the possibility to explain their needs and how they liked to function in the team and get some feedback on their behaviour.

From the start of the session participants were co-creating a reflective process where I had to facilitate the reflections only in the beginning. We started with stories on their personal experiences within the organisation: "describe the best moment you had in the team in the last year? What happened? Who was there? Why was this moment so powerful for you?" Participants interviewed each other to get a clear idea. Participants were talking and discussing in a deep manner what they appreciated in the team, what created a deep reflection and a positive atmosphere. After the interviews we shared the essence of the stories and built up the DNA of the team success. This created awareness on what works, and resistance was replaced by openness and energy.

My role as a trainer was only to give structure to the session, introduce the activities and facilitate the debriefs and feedback sessions. By giving participants a structure and letting them work alone, in duos and small groups with a clear task, they did not depend on my 'smart' questions to reflect. I only was there to support, appreciate, confront, be curious... After the session they told me that my presence gave them a feeling of safety. I was the safety net if things became difficult. Even during the feedback session, I had only to be there. They were asking each other questions, were giving feedback.... I sometimes had to keep an eye on the time and help them focus and to not get lost in details and history.

Also, during the debriefs after the outdoor activities, I asked simple questions that gave them the opportunity to react intuitively. For example, by using a method called 'finger shoot' (people show their satisfaction with the process of co-operation during the activity by 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 fingers: the more fingers, the more satisfied they are). They took responsibility to discuss and to confront each other. I helped them to structure and not get lost in details of what happened two years ago and to stay in the here-and-now.

Dear reader,

Coming at the end of our series of letters, you may still be wondering what the reflective atmosphere and space, all these principles and guidelines have to with inner readiness? And what exactly is it? We will come more extensively to the definition of this concept later in the publication (see the chapter 'developing a concept of inner readiness'). In this final letter we just want to give you a general idea what it is about. We would like to do so by writing down two stories, one from formal education and one from non-formal education. Both stories describe moments which are illustrative for the change in the inner readiness of the learners involved.

Story one about a student of visual arts

During the first meeting of the theoretical course on 'community arts' at LUCA-School of Arts (Belgium) we discussed the artistic practices and art works made by a visual artist in collaboration with local communities. The main questions were: 'which collaboration processes were used, how did the artist relate to the participants, what's there to say about both artistic and social outcomes of these projects?' The aim of the course for the students is to elaborate a personal point of view on this topic. On that particular day somewhere halfway through the course, we were watching the controversial documentary 'Enjoy Poverty' (2008) by Renzo Martens. This Dutch visual artist is travelling to Congo, apparently in order to try to help local people. In a provoking way he states how poverty should be understood as the main resource for the Democratic Republic of Congo. He does so, only to explore how the mechanisms of politics, global trading, NGO-work, media and last but not least also his documentary are creating a system which creates and maintains poverty in the African country. And slowly it becomes clear how he's making a performance out of the documentary: he's performing how all help from the Western world (including his help) is eventually bound to be based on self-interest. In the central scenes of the documentary Martens is travelling to a remote Congolese village where he organises a party with the local habitants to celebrate his message. In the centre of the village he erects a kind of pop-up sculpture, using coloured TL lights communicating 'enjoy poverty, please!'. From our western point of view this is highly ambiguous: African people, living in what is clearly a poor village with no electricity, are partying to Martens' slogan. Who's benefitting from all this? The people themselves? The artist? Or the Western public at home who can 'enjoy' this documentary? After the documentary we had a vivid group discussion on the different aspects of the documentary (ethically, visually, socially…). The educator and learners were all expressing their experience of the documentary, which sometimes were completely opposite. At the core of the discussion was the paradox between 'this is a great, thought provoking documentary' versus 'you don't treat the African people like Renzo Martens does' (when travelling to the Congolese village,

Martens wore classic white, colonial clothes, having black people carrying his equipment; he's clearly the 'important white artist' with a mission). At a certain moment during the discussion one student expressed very clearly: "I could not make community art at the expense of others. It's just not worth it. Now it makes much more sense to me how the artists discussed in the previous meetings were organising their projects." She became very expressive in her body language. You could notice how this documentary touched something that was of great value to her. At the same time, she realised that she would like to participate in a community arts project. Seeing the documentary of Renzo Martens appeared to be the paradoxical, unexpected experience that clarified some of her personal values as a visual artist. It also changed somehow her view on the artists that were discussed previously. So obviously something changed in the way that she looked at community arts. By reflecting on the practice of several visual artists, something has changed inside her, raising her inner readiness to be the visual artist she wanted to be herself.

Story two about a woman on an 8m high balance beam

During a five-day course for adult women with an eating disorder at Outward Bound Belgium, there was one participant who was always ready to help and support others, both during the challenging activities as well as during the conversations which were sometimes emotional. However, each time that she got emotional herself, she stepped back, saying 'it's nothing, it's nothing'. Although she voluntarily subscribed on the course to learn something about herself, she always avoided the exploration of her emotions. During the fourth day of the course, participants were climbing the rope course. She chose to climb an 8-meter-high balance beam (being of course safely secured by a top rope system). But when she arrived at the beginning of the beam, she froze completely. Fear was getting too much for her. And she started wondering 'why do I have to walk on a beam this high? Why am I here participating in this course at all?' However, she didn't get down immediately. The trainer asked her, if possible, to stay there a little bit longer. Together they were enquiring how she always stepped back when emotions were getting too intense, not only during the course, but at home as well. She recognised this pattern, but this still did not change anything for her to start walking the balance beam. She just wanted to get down and go home. The other participants were encouraging her to take at least one step forward, but none of their arguments were persuasive enough. The woman was convinced that it had no sense, and what's more, it was just too high, so she really could not do it: 'it's just too challenging!'. Just before getting off the beam, someone reminded her of something she had said before she started the course: how different quality of life was when she was not in the grip of her eating disorder, how life and emotions could give more fulfilment in contrast to the 'empty days' when eating excessively was just a way not to feel anything anymore. In a split second something changed inside the woman. She immediately looked different to herself standing at the 8-meter-high beam. It was no longer just a meaningless activity, but it offered

the possibility to once again take the step in her life which was needed to deal with emotions and the eating disorder, to move again in the direction of 'better days ahead'. Her posture became more upright, her energy level raised and some short time later she took one step forward.

What's remarkable in both cases is the fact that the change only came after a while. In both cases the educator and learners were first taking care of the essential conditions for the reflective atmosphere to be co-created in the learning group. Meanwhile, continual questioning broadened and deepened the learning process of learners (although in a different context and with a different aim of each course). And then suddenly, the so-called **'pieces of the puzzle' connected somehow for both learners**. In a very personal way they linked things already known and discussed before with the current experience. And it wasn't in a straightforward logical way, quite on the contrary, it was done in a personal reflective way whereby they were completely owning the learning process at those precise moments. Due to this re-connecting, **that-which-was-at-stake was perceived in a way that was unknown and unexpected beforehand**, reminding us of the famous quote by William Blake 'the eye altering alters all'. As a consequence, both learners were able to act in a different way than before (be it immediately for the woman on the balance beam as she took a step forward, be it later for the student as she did not engage in a community arts project immediately). It's important to stress at this point how this change in the ability to act had **nothing to do with gaining new knowledge, skills or attitudes.** It had only to do with the way that both learners personally related to and owned the here-and-now experience. Or to put it from a different perspective, how the documentary and the balance beam were addressing that-which-is-at-stake so strongly that it started to speak in a very personal and deep way to both learners, different than ever before (reminding us of the quote of Jan Masschelein, see letter 4). **This (dis)ability to act (whatever one's knowledge, skills or attitudes are) is exactly what inner readiness is about.** Facilitating the reflective atmosphere is, according to us, a very good tool in raising the possibility to make a change in one's inner readiness.

Sincerely yours,

Your REFLECT correspondent

EXPLORING THE LANDSCAPE OF REFLECTION

Written by Daniela Frison, Monica Fedeli, Tino Concetta and Erika Minnoni (University of Padua)

Dear reader,

In the letter describing the guidelines and principles of reflection we have presented our approach on facilitating reflection processes. In the following chapter we invite you to look at our perspective in a broader context. We will give an overview of the main features of reflection as a generic skill, and provide guidance to particular theoretical models which have inspired and enhanced the use of reflection in education and professional practices.

In addition, the selected references to this section clarify the background of the approach of the REFLECT community. This chapter is built on crucial sources selected and agreed upon by the project partners. The selected sources enabled us to strive for a common and shared definition of reflection as well as to explore different purposes and forms of reflection and to discuss strategies to develop reflective attitudes. Moreover, the analysis of the collected literature encouraged the partners to go further in exploring the topic. They distinguished and emphasised the attitudes in teaching and learning which have often been overlooked in academic literature but are however crucial in creating the space for genuine reflection and achieving outcomes which are personally meaningful and significant to learners.

1. Reflection as a generic skill in Higher and Adult Education

Within the framework of modernisation of the European Higher Education system, universities are invited to go beyond a knowledge-based perspective focused on disciplinary approaches, and to encourage generic skills and creative learning outcomes such as complex thinking, social skills, participatory learning, and personal shaping of knowledge (European Commission, 2013). This focus on generic skills concerns also non-formal settings.

In this framework, close attention has been paid to literature for the definition of generic skills, a definition that differs across disciplines, contexts and, sometimes, nations, as De Villiers states (2010). For example, Bennet, Dunne, and Carré (1999) define generic skills as those which "support any discipline (generic), and which can be transferred to a range of contexts, in higher education or the workplace" (p. 71) and Kearns (2001) explains them as skills "essential for employability at some level for most" (p. 2). Furthermore, Bridgstock (2009) underlines that these skills have also been

variously named as core skills, key competencies, transferable skills or underpinning skills. Referring specifically to the European context, the Tuning Educational Structures' proposal for the assessment of generic competences distinguishes three types of generic or transversal competences: the instrumental ones, that are "means or tools for obtaining a given end", the interpersonal ones that "enable people to interact well with others", and systemic ones concerning "the comprehension of an entire set or system. They require a combination of imagination, sensibility and ability to see how the parts of a whole are inter-related" (Villa Sànchez & Poblete Ruiz, 2008, p. 60).

Within the debate on definition, encouragement, and assessment of generic skills, reflection is recognised, under different labels (e.g. critical reflection, reflective thinking, reflective skill, etc.), as one of the most important competences for academic and professional life (Buiskool et al., 2010) and the Tuning's model mentions the reflective thinking among the interpersonal competences, identifying it as the recognition of "how we go about addressing a task or problem, and to take steps that will lead to growth in our way of thinking" (Villa Sànchez & Poblete Ruiz, 2008, p. 94).

2.   Reflection: a literature overview

Within the REFLECT Project, the staff group has analysed the main models of reflection offered by literature, in order to achieve a common and shared definition of reflection. Indeed, the models traced by Boud (1994), Mezirow (1991, 1998), Schon (1983, 1987), and by the phenomenological approach (Bleakley, 1999; Fay & Riot, 2007; Lewis & Farnsworth, 2007; Mortari, 2012) have been mapped and explored.

First, Boud's model (1984) describes a way to think about learning from experience and how it can be facilitated. Briefly, Boud states that learning is always rooted in prior experience and any attempt to promote new learning must in some way take account of that experience. "Learners bring with them to any event their personal foundation of experience […]; it shapes the intent we have which guides our priorities" (Boud, 1994, p.2). Furthermore, he declares that the process of learning from experience involves learners taking an active part in the process. Engagement and intervention are known as learning milieu (i.e. the social, psychological and material environment in which the learner is situated).

Second, according to the Mezirow's model (1991), *critical reflection* has been developed as the major objective of adult education. Synthetically, Mezirow defines reflection as "the process of critically assessing content, process and premises of our efforts to interpret and give meaning to an experience" (1991, p.104) and he identifies three forms of reflection:

- on content: a reflection on what we perceive, think and act;
- on process: a reflection on how we perceive, think, and act together with the assessment activity;

▪ on premises: a reflection on the premises foresees the awareness of the reasons why we perceive, act and feel in a specific way. We reflect on the reasons and consequences of some mistakes that occurred during the process.

All three forms of reflection involve critique, but premises reflection is central to the empowerment and emancipation processes.

Third, by his model, Schön (1983) introduced the concept of *reflective practice* as a critical process in refining one's artistry or craft in a specific discipline. He put reflection into the centre of the understanding of what professionals do. *Reflective practice* involves thoughtfully considering one's own experiences in applying knowledge to practice while being coached by professionals in the discipline. The notions of *reflection-in-action* (which takes place whilst you are involved in the situation) and *reflection-on-action* (which involves a stepping back from the situation, meaning that it happens at some moment after the situation has occurred) are central in Schon's model.

A fourth model has been explored: the phenomenological one (Bleakley, 1999; Fay & Riot, 2007; Lewis & Farnsworth, 2007; Mortari, 2012). Literature concerning this model highlights that phenomenological practices enable one to stop, dissociate from inertia, change the perspective of attitude, and focus attention on the expression of the world in specific authentic experience instead of referring to common practices and authorities. Genuine motivation and personally meaningful activities are created as a result of such a pause. Passive and inert life is replaced by rational and free existence.

Within these four models, suitable literature was collected. Starting from 65 papers, a literature overview based on 30 selected articles – 16 conceptual and 14 empirical – guided the REFLECT staff group to clarify terms, theoretical orientations, and practical implications on reflection and the reflective process. Three descriptions of practice were also explored, considering their centrality in the REFLECT group's practices and experiences in non-formal settings and the relevance of the experiential learning approach (Kolb, 1984; Korthagen,1985; Vermeylen, 2005).

2.1 A definition of reflection: the "developmental" dimension of reflection

First of all, the selected articles offer the possibility to explore different purposes and forms of reflection, and strategies to teach or train it.

As Boud, Keogh, and Walker (1985) have underlined, educators are becoming more and more convinced of the importance of reflection and teachers are interested in understanding how to incorporate some form of reflection into their classes. In fact, Gall, Jacobsen, and Bullock (1990) highlight that "learning how to learn cannot be left to students. It must be taught" (p. V). So, as Ertmer and Newby (1996) ask: "how does a learner acquire this abil-

ity to question and/or reflect? How can teachers promote and support the development of reflective thinking in their students?" (p. 19). The contribution by Ryan and Ryan (2013) is concerned with both how, and at what level, learners reflect and also with reflective strategies or activities which can be used to develop deeper or more complex levels of reflection. This is also echoed in the work by Smith (2011), focused on teaching critical reflection.

With a specific focus on health education, Mann, Gordon, and MacLeod (2009) distinguish reflection models in two major dimensions:

▪ "an iterative dimension, within which the process of reflection is triggered by experience, which then produces a new understanding, and the potential or intention to act differently in response to future experience" (p. 597): for example, Boud's and the Schon's model;
▪ "a vertical dimension, which includes different levels of reflection on experience. General the surface levels are more descriptive and less analytical than the deeper levels of analysis and critical synthesis" (p. 597): for example, Dewey's, Mezirow's and the Moon's model, with the latter being focused of the role of reflection into the learning process.

Another topic that is traceable in literature concerns the different levels of reflection. Atkins and Murphy (1993), and Moon (1999) distinguish three main stages of reflection. The first one is "emergence of unpleasant feelings and thoughts due to the experience being outlived and the need to solve the situation that caused these experiences" (Bubnys & Zydziunaiuté, 2010, p. 62). The second stage is "critical and constructive analysis of a problem or specific situation as well as own feelings, which involves possessed and necessary new knowledge to solve a problem" (Bubnys & Zydziunaiuté, 2010, p. 62). The third stage is development of a new viewpoint to a situation by projecting possible ways for acting in particular future situations. In this stage, emotional and cognitive changes, which lead to behaviour changes, take place (Bubnys & Zydziunaiuté, 2010, p. 62).

Wittich and colleagues (2013a) propose an empirical study focused on the validation of a method for measuring medical students' critical reflections on professionalism based on an instrument firstly elaborated by Kember and colleagues (2000) and Mann, Gordon, and MacLeod (2009). This instrument considers four levels of reflection (Kember et al., 2000; Mann, Gordon, & MacLeod, 2009): habitual action, "a perfunctory feat that through repetition has become automatic"; understanding, that is "using existing knowledge without critically appraising that knowledge"; reflection, that is exploring past experiences to develop new understandings; and critical reflection, "a deeper form of reflection where a person's perspective is changed" (Wittich et al., 2013a, p. 233).

Concerning levels of reflection, Ryan and Ryan (2013) propose a model for teaching and assessing reflective learning in higher education based on a reflective scale with four levels, named as the 4Rs: Reporting & Responding (make an observation, express a personal opinion, ask a question); Relating

(relate or make connection between the issue and the personal skills, professional experience, or discipline knowledge); Reasoning (highlight important aspects related to the issue and explain why they are important); Reconstructing (reframe future practice or professional understanding).

Similar to this model, the ALACT model proposed by Korthagen and Vasalos describes the ideal process of learning in and from practice by five ideal phases: Action; Looking back on the action; Awareness of essential aspects; Creating alternative methods of action; Trial, that is a new action and the starting point of a new cycle (2009).

2.2 The assessment of reflection

Second, some interesting papers, selected during the literature review process, focus on three main aspects related to the assessment of reflection:

1. *The self-evaluation*, with a specific focus on the metacognitive process (Ertmer & Newby, 1996; Mortari, 2012). Referring to Shön's model and comparing the approach of learning of an expert and of a novice learner, Ertmer and Newby (1996) show how the model is based on a metacognitive control as continuing reflection (self-regulated) allows the learner to be a promoter of his/her academic achievement. It includes aspects such as planning, monitoring and evaluating. Mortari (2012) – referring to the phenomenology theory – highlights that "reflection is a way for cognition to analyze itself", it is the "thinking that thinks on itself", it is "the practice of a rigorous self-examination" (p.528).
2. *The way to assess reflection through some models* (Kitchenham & Chasteauneuf, 2009; Lim, 2011; Ryan & Ryan, 2013) or tools (Aronson, 2011; Smith, 2011; Wald et al., 2012). Kitchenham and Chasteauneuf used Mezirow's framework to examine reflection in teacher-candidates' e-portfolios concluding that "critical reflection of assumptions and critical self-reflection on assumptions are extremely valuable elements of the reflection process […] but they are also effective descriptors for the types of reflection that occur in teacher education, in general, and in e-portfolios, in particular" (2009, p. 142). In another study, the four levels of reflective thinking – *Habitual Action, Understanding, Reflection, and Critical Reflection* (Mezirow, 1997) – were used by Lim (2011) to examine reflective habits of students at different stage of their studies within a problem-based learning context. Furthermore, Ryan and Ryan (2013) introduced a model for *Teaching and Assessing Reflective Learning* (TARL) based on the notion of pedagogic field, considered as a set of strategies combined to the assessment of learning. The model foresees the selection of the most suitable strategies, during the students' progress, within a programme that makes them increasingly exposed to disciplinary concepts and practices. The model based on reflective scale by Bain and colleagues (2002), offers some indicators related to the 5Rs of reflection: *Reporting and Responding, Relating, Reasoning, Reconstructing*. They are 5 levels of reflection that can be considered a systematic approach. In

addition, critical reflection could be stimulated, observed and monitored through reflective tools (Smith, 2011), and built on some key indicators connected to the four domains of reflection (personal, interpersonal, contextual, critical). It could be encouraged also through a combination of methods: using validated and reliable scoring rubrics and a narrative way such as individual, group, faculty, or peer feedback, underlining the adequacy of the reflection according to the assigned topic, and suggesting next steps (Aronson, 2011). Wald and colleagues (2012) talked about a reflect rubric too, built through iterative cycles and based on five levels of reflection: Non reflective/Habitual Action, Non reflective/Thoughtful Action, Reflective, Critically reflective and Transformative Learning. These kind of rubrics are considered by the authors the best way to assess the level of reflection since they are built according to a theory and they can be tailored and made for specific purposes.

3. *The validation of instruments to assess reflection*, especially in medical education contexts (Mann, Gordon, & MacLeod, 2009; Wittich, et al., 2013a; Wittich, et al., 2013b). Wittich and colleagues (2013a; 2013b) developed and validated an instrument for assessing students' reflections on gross anatomy, based on a previously validated instrument (Kember et al., 2000; Mann, Gordon, & MacLeod, 2009) based on four levels of reflection: habitual action, understanding, reflection, and critical reflection. Kember and colleagues (2000) and Mann and colleagues (2009) define: habitual action as a perfunctory feat that through repetition has become automatic; understanding as the use of existing knowledge without critically appraising that knowledge; reflection as exploring past experiences to develop new understandings (Boud et al., 1985) and critical reflection as a deeper form of reflection where a person's perspective is changed (Wittich, et al., 2013a). Mann, Gordon, and MacLeod (2009) conducted a systematic review of the research literature in the area of reflection and reflective learning in health professional education and practice. To evaluate the premise that reflection and reflective practice are essential components of competence in health professionals, they developed some questions to follow. Among them they focused on this one: "Can reflective thinking be assessed?" (Mann, Gordon, & MacLeod, 2009, p. 600). Starting from analysed studies, they state that "it appears that reflection can be assessed and different levels of reflection discerned. […] Students do not have the same opportunities as professionals do for reflective practice in authentic settings and therefore some questions remain regarding whether what is being measured (e.g. text) is a valid indicator of reflective activity, when one considers the influences of context and culture" (Mann, Gordon, & MacLeod, 2009, p. 605).

Starting from this overview of literature on assessment of reflection, it appears that the attention on assessment and development of reflection is wider in medical education and health professions education contexts rather than in general courses of Higher Education, where still very little has been done in this sense.

2.3 The context of reflection

Another topic has been explored concerning reflection: the reference to the context as supportive factor of the reflection process. For example Boud (1994) – explaining his model of reflection – considers the setting where the process is realised as a very important factor. In fact, the model recognises the *learning milieu* – made of the "social, psychological and material environment in which the learner is situated" (p.2) – as the condition to promote an active learning from the experience. The importance of an authentic and supportive environment is mentioned also by Mann, Gordon and MacLeod (2009) who consider a supportive environment – both intellectually and emotionally – as the condition to enhance the development of reflection and reflective practice. To identify some crucial elements of this supportive environment: for example, an accommodation for individual differences in learning styles; mentoring; group discussion; support and free expression of opinions. Critical reflection should take place in an environment of thinking, reflecting and connecting the old with the new, as a skill that crosses all the disciplines of learning. By creating a reflective environment for and with students, it is possible to build the foundations of a critically reflective member of the world community (Colley, Bilics & Lerch, 2012). The necessity of taking care of the learning environment is marked also by Lim (2011) who tested that the Problem Based Learning (PBL) environment not only develops students' reflective thinking habits, but also it encourages a good degree of critical reflection. Even if there aren't so many studies on the relation between context and reflection habits development, the main aspects here mentioned are strong enough to support the idea that the reflective environment is really connected with all the parts of the learning process, and therefore with the development of reflection and critical reflection abilities. As Vermeylen underlines, it is crucial to offer "activities and reflection moments where individual themes and interaction patterns can (again) be underlined and become more visible" (2005, p. 4).

2.4 The role of emotions and feeling

The collected resources underline also the crucial role played by emotions and feelings in the reflective process.

According to Boud (1994), reflection is not simply a process of thinking. The reflective process involves also feelings and emotions which can inhibit or enhance the possibilities for further reflection and learning. Positive feelings can enhance motivation and desire to pursue further learning, while negative feelings can block understanding. Also Hubbs and Brand (2005) focus their attention on feelings and on the role that reflection can play in order to link the student's understandings and feelings and to understand their own inner world and meaning. Furthermore, Korthagen (2013) and Korthagen and Vasalos (2009) devote a strong attention to the emotional level. Concerning his above mentioned model, the *core reflection* encourag-

es a step forward from reflection as "thinking" to awareness of the whole human being. According to the authors, the "model does not function well if the person reflecting uses it as a purely mental exercise: in each stage, thoughts, feelings and needs (or desires) have to be addressed, and brought into full awareness" (p. 8).

3. Discussion and critique

The analysis of the collected literature offered to the REFLECT group an overview of the main approaches to reflection, in order to encourage and/or to assess it, through different methods or tools, with reference to different models and settings, both formal and non-formal. Starting from the quoted authors and the referred articles, it is evident that the most part of the literature concerns the formal context, with a specific focus on Higher Education and, specifically, to the medical sector and to teachers' education. Under this frame, the contribution of the REFLECT group aims to enrich the discussion on reflection with a specific attention to the non–formal setting, where the Inner Readiness concept, presented below, has been developed. The REFLECT group also gives more attention to the role of context and emotions in encouraging reflection which has been often overlooked in the literature. Lastly, REFLECT focuses on an another element: that of the role of the facilitator and his/her attention to choose and design coherent and effective reflective activities, according to his/her aims, both in formal and non-formal settings.

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DEVELOPING A CONCEPT OF INNER READINESS

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Dear reader,

Several people involved in the REFLECT project had already been working with the idea of inner readiness before the project was given the green light to start. We felt strongly that exploring the concept and describing it further would bring fresh insights into both the need for reflection in learning processes **and** ways to describe it better for others. Drawing heavily on principles of the psychology of learning was essential in this task. See what you think! This is the tale of our joint journey undertaken in the project...

WHY DID INNER READINESS BECOME IMPORTANT FOR US?

We think there are two "missions" of the inner readiness concept:

1. Inner readiness is a basis for explaining why reflection is needed.
2. Inner readiness helps us to compile a set of techniques (or tools) which show how we can empower people to express their potential in the here-and-now and over longer periods.

WHY "INNER READINESS"

When working with their clients and partners in Lithuania, Kitokie projektai always had to explain what they do and why they do it in a specific way: in a reflective, experiential way. Because usually it was different from the mainstream training or education programmes in business, NGO's and in formal education in their country. They were/are trying to explain that they avoid just creating an illusion that participants "learned a lot"; instead they try to promote learning as something that makes a change in life. Maybe a little change, but a real change nonetheless. They used different forms of explanations. Sometimes it was tiring, sometimes exiting, but always pushing colleagues to define their educational approach. Through this 'it' became clearer to them because they had to name what they had previously felt intuitively. This also involved drawing on different theoretical concepts. At first they explored the main ideas of experiential learning: Kolb's circle was helpful, comfort – stretch – panic zones helped a lot, explanations from their colleagues from Outward Bound Belgium

were crucial. It was very useful in explaining **how** they do things and the logic of this **how**. But it was not enough for the **why** in the wider context of education.

Then, especially when Kitokie started working with higher education institutions, they were introduced to the framework of competences. Competence, in this case is seen as the ability to act in a specific way in specific professional life situations or in life generally and this ability is to be grounded by a needed set of knowledge, skills and attitudes. (We don't aim in this text to define and discuss the concept of competence therefore we only mention our understanding of it here). This helped them to see the main layers to be covered in order to empower trainees to act. It also gave a terminology for the **why** question. So, the more they worked in the field of education the more they felt that the competence model was proving its use. For example, the students are provided with all the information they need. They get it by reading, by listening to the lectures, etc. Even the skills are trained in some cases, when more practical content is trained. The attitudes of the students are covered during seminars and individual sessions with them. But yet – it doesn't cover all the content of education according to Kitokie projektai.

It seems the traditional understanding of competence and of education doesn't cover the changing nature of our life and the changing nature of the person. Any context and any competence doesn't last forever. So the essential question is **how can we learn to be ready to live and to act at every different moment of our changing reality**. The traditional approach also doesn't cover the content of "what is happening with the student". And in "kitokie projektai" they believe that we start acting not because something (for example slides) are projected on the wall, but because something is projected within the person, something is happening within them. Until then, this content was unnamed but often felt to be crucial for Kitokie's theory and practice: now they call it "inner readiness".

What was interesting was that their regular long-term clients could recognise what they are working with. For example, one client called to request a language training for one of their managers. Kitokie replied "we don't teach languages". The client insisted and so Kitokie looked into the case further: the manager had good *knowledge* of vocabulary and grammar; he had the *skills* to construct sentences according to the grammar; but he became stony silent when he had to talk with foreigners. Clearly the problem was not about knowledge, not about skills. It was about his inner readiness. So it is not about providing people with information, not about training a skill. It is about getting into an interpersonal relationship and dealing with inner readiness in a supportive, encouraging, reflective and experiential way. It was this that Kitokie's client felt was within their field of competence.

So "inner readiness" as a term was created (at first in Lithuanian they called it "vidinė parengtis") because of the need to explain what Kitokie really do and also because of the need to explain when reflective-experiential

methods are relevant. And later, when sharing this idea and this term we found out that the term serves people in at least two ways:

1. For those who have a feeling that the field of education doesn't cover "something important", it gives a preliminary answer or direction of what is not covered.
2. It gives a preliminary shelf to place this content: where to put it in the wider context of education, how it is related with other layers of competence and how it is related to different methodologies used in education.

Just providing the term and the shelf is not enough. We need more:

▪ a definition of it,
▪ a description of mechanisms,
▪ practical recommendations on how to deal with it in the field of education.

That's why the REFLECT project is a fantastic opportunity to move forward with a great international team from different countries and from both the academic *and* the adult education sectors.

THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION IN DEVELOPING THE CONCEPT

Having discovered this nascent concept from Kitokie, international colleagues started to experiment with its use in training courses, seminars and conferences throughout Europe and in the EuroMed region. There was a magnificent resonance felt by many participants and colleagues everywhere – at last, here was a way to describe crucial elements of competence which up until then had been hidden! Gradually, it was possible to see an increase in the use of the term at least in non-formal educational circles.

This acceptance has given encouragement to some authors to already use the term in educational publications, for example, in the introductory section about learning and competences in "Graphic Express – first steps to graphic facilitation in youth work", published by SALTO Resource Centre for EuroMed in 2014 within the framework of Erasmus+ Youth in Action Programme. More extensive use is made of the term in the forthcoming publication about supporting learning in one-to-one relationships to be published by SALTO Resource Centre for Training & Cooperation.

WHAT IS INNER READINESS?

Our definition so far of inner readiness:
Inner readiness is the ability to express a personal potential in a specific time and space, in a concrete "here and now".

The potential is developed by gaining knowledge, skills and useful attitudes. However, the potential itself is often not enough to empower us for being ready to act out the potential. The missing link between potential and the acting-out moment we call "inner readiness". We use "Inner" next to "Readiness" because it stands for intra-personal processes.

Mechanisms of inner readiness

During our discussions within the project Reflect and in Kitokie projektai, we were trying to identify and to describe the main factors influencing readiness to implement personal potential and readiness to act (inner readiness). We did it by reflecting on our own experience as learners and educators.

One of the main factors influencing Inner Readiness is a <u>uniting quality</u> of our nature. The uniting quality is empowering us to act in a specific time and space.

By <u>uniting quality,</u> we mean our ability to connect our owned competences with a specific context and with our reaction habits, which empowers us to act now.

We all have a different *set of* possible abilities (potential) within us, and we all have different experiences collected in our past, different visions of our future and different ways to understand the meaning of what we do now. We also have different sets of reactions, habits or behaviour patterns accumulated when interacting with different people in different situations.

Let's have a look at one story through the lens of inner readiness…

TO UKULELE OR NOT TO UKULELE? THAT IS NOT THE QUESTION

Salvi is a European-level trainer in non-formal education in his late 30's. When he was a child he was told repeatedly at home and at school "you are useless in music, you will never be able to play an instrument (he tried to learn piano but gave up) and you are a terrible singer!". Unsurprisingly, although he enjoyed listening to music a lot, when he became an adult he was convinced that he would never ever be in the position to produce music himself.

A couple of years ago, about 20 trainers were gathered for a seminar in the town of Braga, Portugal. Several of them had brought their ukuleles with them, for use in the informal parts of the programme. On the second evening, a group of people sat together playing ukulele and encouraging others to try. Salvi was clearly curious, but refused offers to even hold one of the instruments. He did, however, sit down and watch others joining in.

The next day we found out that Braga was the home of the cavaquinho (the Portuguese 4-stringed guitar which sailors had taken to Hawaii in the 17th century and which was then transformed into the ukulele). Some of the participants found a shop selling cavaquinhos made in Braga and then made the discovery that ukuleles are nowadays also made there! And beautifully so! And not expensive. So they bought a couple. Salvi is also known as "the man in black" – always wearing clothes of that colour. And he discovered a black ukulele – which he suddenly decided to buy. Together with some others he sat on the steps of one of the many churches in Braga and someone offered to show him the first chords to Leonard Cohen's song "Hallelujah". He played those chords and promptly burst into tears of happiness and joy!

"Aha" thought the ukulele enthusiasts in Braga "Salvi now has the inner readiness to start playing".

Fast forward 18 months. Salvi goes to Berlin for a meeting about starting a project called "Ukulelefication". The idea is to use the ukulele as a metaphor for learning to learn and change in education. The others arrive with their ukuleles. He does not have his with him, offering the excuse that his niece stole it!! During the meeting he politely refuses to play any of the ukuleles present. He does buy a little egg slicer in the form of an ukulele in Leleland.

Fast forward another 6 months. A conference of trainers where 8 people will play a song for the assembled masses. Salvi brings his egg slicer.

Fast forward 4 months. Another meeting of "ukulelefication". Salvi brings his ukulele and always "forgets" it in his room. Only after a lot of encouragement (and the threat of physical violence) does he finally bring his ukulele with him and start to play with everyone. And he enjoys doing so!

What about inner readiness in the story of Salvi?

Salvi learned to play ukulele, so the potential was there. But the old reaction habit in the form of doubts about himself and in the form of the thought "I am useless with music" was blocking him. After receiving a lot of support and encouragement he started to develop a new reaction habit in the form of joy of playing, in the form of trusting himself and in the form of thought "I can play". But it seems that those two reaction habits are still opposing each other and the negative one "I am useless in music" might stop him from enjoying playing music especially in front of others. So when Salvi is able to connect his potential with supportive reaction habits and with the situation where the supportive reaction habit and has potential come together – he can play. When he is facing an unsupportive situation and/or when stopping reaction habits come forward, he cannot connect his potential to play the ukulele in that "here and now".

So inner readiness is present only when those possible abilities, experiences and habits mentioned above are connected at a specific moment and place. We don't mean any extra-sensorial or esoteric quality, and we don't mean any kind of altered states of mind. We mean a simple quality to unite, to connect our potential for a now moment. *This quality to unite (connect) becomes possible when we raise our awareness of now during the reflective practice. Reflective practice can be done alone or in interaction with others.*

Let's take another example.

EXAMPLE TO ILLUSTRATE
THE MECHANISMS OF INNER READINESS

This experience is quoted from one of testing projects of the participants of the Reflect project. The description of that experience is worked through the method of poetic inquiry (Prendergast, 2009) in which this participant's story was distilled from a focus group interview into a poetic form. From there, members of the REFLECT PROJECT used their insights and knowledge of working with reflective practice to develop this analytical narrative. In the beginning we allow you to read the poem for your interpretation, following it up with our analytical story and description of how it relates to the concept of inner readiness.

5-day course
14 students of psychology
group dynamics
they contributed

activities
reflecting on the activities
reflecting activities

second day
student stepped backwards
not into the activity

afterwards I asked her something
she was struggling with words
being confused

she said
I don't know what is happening
my focus was valuing the not-knowing
it came as a present
I felt oh wow here it is

I could go and comfort her

so the nasty feeling at that moment
would be more bearable

or start to ask a lot of questions
then she would leave the feeling
I described what I saw
I described it as a moment
she was not-knowing what was happening
it was okay

I saw a relief without her taking it away
I invited her to explore
see what happens
it won't stop
she doesn't have to find the answer

I left it like this
the next day she came back to it
she shared with the group
feeling different
something reminded her of other things
she was bumping on a pattern

it went on during the days
the fourth day
they had a solo walk
she did something totally different
she was conscious about it
she was physically not able to do it
instead of stepping out she stepped forward
she had to ask for help

she was proud of herself
there were two moments
would the same have happened
if I reacted otherwise?

it was her thing

it happened as a present
somebody saying
I really don't know what is happening
I think in the course that I gave before
there must have been moments like this
but they passed more for
now I see the value of them
it was a present
afterwards

her continuing during the days
being proud
doing something else
experimenting with it
her being proud of herself

The poem interpreted from the perspective of inner readiness

In exploring this participant's experience from the perspective of inner readiness we see an educator entering her work situation. She is taking 14 sociology students on a five days' course. The content of the course is group dynamics. The educator has just returned from a workshop on reflective practice where she became more aware of the importance of valuing the not-knowing in the learning process. For this course, she decides to explore the valuing of not-knowing as it emerges in these five days she is spending with her students. This educator has both the knowledge and the skills needed to organise a course like this. She knows that in a 5 days course you can expect a certain group process to take place, and she organises activities accordingly to help students think about their experiences. She has prepared activities for the group to go through during the courses as well as provides a structure to reflect on the activities. In addition to that she incorporates reflective activities into the process.

On the second day, students can encounter frustration, inner hindrances towards the aim of the course and the facilitators. The natural response is to pull back, feeling hopelessness and uncertainty. Even more, the feeling of blaming and anger can emerge: why are they putting us into these situations? In this group, one student steps backwards. She is not ready to participate in the activities. The facilitator decides to intervene asking how she was doing. The student is in a state of confusion, struggling to find words.

"I don't know what is happening" she replies.

The facilitator realises that this is the moment. She has a particular focus on valuing the not-knowing and now it is her opportunity to explore what is happening in these moments. She slows down. On the spot, she goes through the options she has to respond to this situation. She could try to comfort the student so the nasty feeling becomes more bearable. She could also start asking the student a lot of questions so the feeling will dissolve through their dialogue or she could describe to the student what she sees in the moment, allowing the student to live through this moment of uncertainty. At this moment, the facilitator is also going through the phase of not-knowing, having to let go of the control and is ready to learn from the experience. In situations like this, educators also have to step back, observe, be present but allowing the moment to be. This educator decides to describe what she sees. She tells the student that she sees what is happening: her not-knowing. She reassures the student that this is okay. While describing this to the students, the educator observes the effects it has on her student. She notices a sign of relief with-

out taking the feeling away. The educator then invites the student to explore her experiences, to see what happens. She also tells her that the feeling will not go away. In the end, the educator reassures the student that she does not have to find an answer to the experiences she is going through.

The educator leaves the situation like this, giving the student a space to rumble with her experiences. In the next days, she observes how the student takes action to work through her situation. On the third day, the student shares with the rest of the group how she is feeling differently and that she is colliding with different experiences. Through her words emerges an inner struggle. She is trying to change something within herself in the context she was put into. At the moment she finds it difficult to do something she has little experience of doing. It continues on like this. The student explores and experiments with her feelings. On the fourth day, there was an activity called a 'solo walk'. Then this student consciously takes a different action. In approaching an activity, she was not physically able to do, she stepped forward and asked for help to complete it. In the end, she was so proud of herself. Through this process the student was given the space to own her experience.

Afterwards the educator reflects on what has happened. She sees two things emerging within these experiences: the moment of the educator when she experiences the student's struggle and how through valuing her state of not-knowing she gives the student an opportunity to live through her feelings, and the moment in which the student rises through her state of not-knowing and stepping back from challenging activities, to challenging herself and taking actions to complete the tasks in front of her. The educator takes notice of how proud the student is of herself. This experience has empowered her. In return, the experience fills the educator with gratitude for noticing this moment and working through it. The educator wonders if the same would have happened if she had reacted otherwise.

From this experience the educator begins to reflect upon her former experiences. She wonders if moments like this have emerged in her prior courses. She is sure it has happened before but they have passed away unnoticed because she was not paying attention to them. Now, after this experience, she sees the value of paying attention to and living through moments of not-knowing.

Interpretation of the story

From this story we can see how this reflective practice of noticing and becoming more aware of moments of not-knowing may bring both the educator and the learner to the readiness to act in a new way. In that way the feeling of new inner readiness allows the educator and the learner to develop new ways of interaction with the group of learners. It happens because: (1) at first the educator stops herself from automatic reaction of avoiding what she calls the not-knowing moments; (2) she stops herself to reflect on what is happening, and reflect on what she would usually do; (3) it brings

her to the level of more awareness of the situation and (4) to her ability to choose from different ways of responding to the situation – to experiment or to act in usual way. The educator probably knew from the books about the value of letting the process go, but now she has connected this statement, this knowledge with herself and only because of this she became ready from the inside to act in this way. This, her readiness, allowed the learner to go through the similar process of: (1) stopping herself from reacting automatically (behaviour pattern) to avoid the ambiguity by stepping back, avoiding her feeling of being weak. With honest and supportive help of the educator she could (2) stop to reflect on her reactions in relation to that situation. (3) This brought her to the new level of awareness and the (4) possibility and ability to choose another way of acting – asking for help instead of rebelling.

THEORETICAL MODELS TO DESCRIBE THE MECHANISMS OF INNER READINESS

When trying to identify the mechanisms influencing inner readiness we could also connect it to different theories we are familiar with. We are aware that there are many theoretical models from psychology, education, anthropology, etc. that can explain the mechanisms influencing personal inner readiness to act, so here below are some examples. We have chosen the ones that "speak" more to us and we are more familiar with. By this we want to underline the message that we don't believe in 'The One Theory' explaining the mechanisms of inner readiness. And by this we also encourage others to choose their own theoretical models that suit them better.

From the existential point of view (May, 1950; Tillich, 1952, 1987) inner readiness could be influenced by courage or vitality, with which we act despite the fear/anxiety of being rejected, losing something important, or finding no sense in what is happening. Inner readiness is the state before making the choice (in the mind and in the action). This balancing act between courage and fear/anxiety serves as a main factor influencing our readiness to act or not to act, to be or not to be.

From the Gestalt therapy point of view (Woldt & Toman, 2005) inner readiness can be influenced by the ability to get in contact in order to fulfil the specific need. The cycle of meeting needs and interruptions in it are natural processes within us. We can learn to raise awareness of our own needs and we can learn to transform habits as interruptions into the habits, as communication strategies, or as strategies to get into contact. It happens by reflecting our experience. Reflection helps us notice our habits of reacting in an interruptive way and then we can learn to react in constructive way instead of reacting in a "frozen" inadequate way.

From the Multiple intelligence theory point of view (Gardner, 2011) would suggest that inner readiness is based on a potential state of mind that permanently resides in us, until a specific inner and external condi-

tion and experience moves it to leverage our action/s. When the environment around us and the stimuli we receive are matching our "profile of intelligences", most likely our inner readiness activates for change and learning. We can become more aware about our self-reflecting processes. Each of us reflects in different ways and, according to the different Intelligences, we can achieve a deep reflection according to our different natural styles. For example: moving or walking for kinaesthetic intelligence; with music for musical intelligences, in a group with interpersonal intelligence or writing for verbal linguistic intelligence.

From the Theory U point of view, when talking about human potential we refer to it as all the possible abilities residing in us that manifest in the moment we are inner-ready to act them out. The moment for us is the here-and-now, the present in which the individual is operating, or is about to operate. That's why, as the "Presencing" (Scharmer, 2002) state enhances, we need to focus "on feeling, tuning into and bringing-into-the present all future possibilities". In other words, we need to bring our potentialities into the present, adequately expressed in the here and now inner and outer context.

From a sociocultural point of view (Purcell-Gates, Perry and Briseno, 2011) inner readiness is perceived as an individual (or collective) ability to explore and negotiate the socio-cultural context people live or work within in accordance to their intention, beliefs and desires. From this standpoint, inner readiness can be invoked and/or nurtured at different levels. First, individuals can increase their sense of inner readiness by paying attention to their action in response to a given situation and the underlying reason for that action. What am I doing? Why am I doing it? How does it help me in the current moment? Second, the sense of inner readiness can be increased by exploring external factors influencing the situation. How do I understand this situation? Are there other ways of understanding this situation? What choices do different understandings (or perspectives) give me to respond to the situation? Thus, one way to increase individuals' inner readiness to respond to various situations that they are confronted with on a daily basis and in their professional lives, is to find ways to become more aware of how internal and external factors influence the way they think and act within specific moments.

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOW TO DEAL WITH INNER READINESS IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION, OR CAN INNER READINESS BE DEVELOPED?

For some actions we are always ready. Like watching TV for example. But for some actions we need stronger inner readiness. Let's say a public speech in front of a new audience. Those who have done it, they can admit, that it is always a special moment even if one does it again and again. The right questions can be raised at this point: can we develop the

inner readiness then? Can we develop inner readiness, let's say for public speaking?

Our answer is "Yes, but no but...".

We cannot train or guarantee it mechanically, because actually inner readiness stands for the **changing nature of human abilities, and the changing nature of our competences**. This changing nature is not exactly under our control (See more in "How do we understand human nature" in Appendix 2). However, we can increase a possibility for inner readiness for a specific way of action. We can increase this possibility by raising awareness at least in three directions by **reflecting** on:

- **the level of ownership (integration, incorporation) of competences;**
- **the self or our reaction habits;**
- **the context of action.**

the level of ownership of competence   **the context of action**

Raise awareness by refelection on

our reaction habits
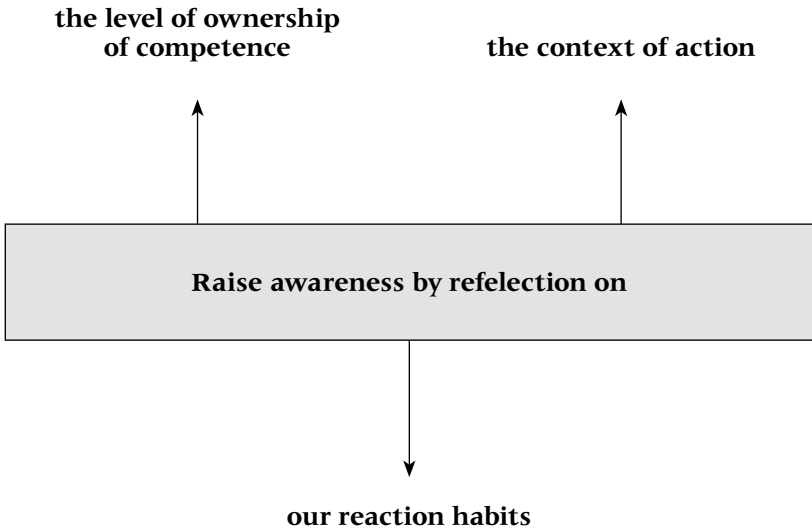
REFLECTING ABOUT OWNING
(INTEGRATING, INCORPORATING) COMPETENCES

At an early stage of developing the concept of inner readiness we believed that it could be understood as the additional or hidden layer of competence.

We still believe there is some truth in it. Let's take the same example about a man who had all the knowledge he needed of English and he had the skill to speak English, he even had the right attitude – he wanted to speak and he understood the importance of it in his work. But yet, he didn't speak! So there had to be a reason for it – and this reason is related to the hidden layer of competence, a hidden layer of our nature. It is related to inner readiness or, as we say now, with the ability to connect competences with a specific context by overcoming inner barriers, (for example, fears) and by finding supportive habits (like the need to grow etc.). We suggest the path of learning is to reflect on the level of ownership (integrating, incorporating) of competences.
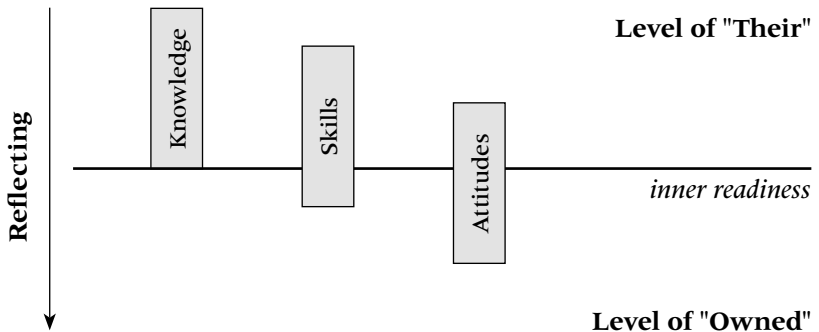
As shown in the picture, at the initial level of gaining competences we start from "Their": their knowledge, their skills, their attitudes. By "their" we mean any others whom we are influenced by – it can be teachers, can be facilitators, can be parents, friends, books. Anybody who is influencing us. Only when knowledge, skills and attitudes are "owned" by a person, or when it is all connected with the subjectivity of that person, only then can it connect with all our psychological mechanisms and it gets a chance to be expressed in a specific situation when needed. Only "owned" competences can become a part of a talent of a person. And the way to "own" the knowledge, the skills and the attitudes is to become more aware of them through reflection. We believe we reflect in different ways when it comes to different layers of competence, because knowledge, skills and attitudes have different natures and they have different levels of

subjectivity. The level of subjectivity is expressed by how high above the red line it is placed. The level below the red line stands for more subjective nature. Let's say attitudes are the most subjective. They have an objective part as well. For example, for public speaking we need a courageous attitude, but the way we feel courage and the way we express our courage can be very different and subjective.

REFLECTING ON OUR REACTION HABITS.

For describing how the possibility of inner readiness can be increased by becoming more aware about our reaction habits, we turn back to the understanding that:

Inner readiness is influenced by personal habits of responding to outside stimuli (social context) and inside stimuli (experience) in the here and now; this combination of 'habits to respond' allows the expression of one's own potential in a specific moment and context through an action, or blocks the expression.

By 'habits to respond' we mean our emotional, cognitive and bodily reactions that are repeated regularly and often tend to occur automatically as certain behaviour patterns. In order to illustrate this, let's again take the same example of the man who doesn't speak English. It seems that in certain situations, the habit to react with fear and what rises to the surface is the will to protect, to restrain himself. And so the man stops himself from action. As we described before, we can see what was so frightening in the context. And then we can try to influence the context in order to make it more helpful – in this case – for speaking a foreign language. But we can also try to learn more about the habit to react with fear and with restraint. We can reflect on how it happens and we can see if there are other ways to react. Sometimes there are. And by becoming aware of our habits to react we can start experimenting with other ways to react. So in this way we can again increase the chance for inner readiness to speak (for example a foreign language) in other situations and not only in a situation that is completely acceptable for us.

REFLECTING ON THE CONTEXT OF ACTION

When reflecting on our successes and failures sooner or later we notice that in one kind of situation we act more fluently than in other situations. For example, in the case of the man who had a rich vocabulary in English (a foreign language for him), he knew its grammar, he was able to construct sentences in English, but he couldn't speak with foreigners. Of course we can try to learn even more grammar and more words in a foreign language. But when discussing with him we found out that in some contexts he can talk in English. He can talk with one foreigner, when somebody from his

own country is next to him. So we found out what in that context is stopping him, and what is supporting, and because of this we found out how he can influence the context to make it possible for him to act. Through this assisted process of reflection, he increased his readiness to speak a foreign language.

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A story on co-creating the programme of a training course and inner readiness

Written by Artūras Deltuva from Kitokie projektai (Lithuania)

My test project was a training course on individual leadership for first level managers. It actually consisted of three components: a learning needs analysis (1 day), the training course itself (2 days) and the follow-up session (1 day). The learning needs analysis session was organised differently than previous times. Usually we focus on the question: "what do you as a participant want to improve?". But in this case we started from the question of "what is happening in your work? What does this situation require from you as a manager? How prepared are you to respond to the needs of the situation?" and only then.. "what do you have to strengthen in yourself in order to respond to the situation in the best possible way?" So I especially encouraged the participants during the needs analysis to reflect on the specific situation in their work and to formulate their learning objectives on the base of this reflection.

I believe that this kind of reflection before learning increased the readiness to learn and learning became more focused. Good energy was felt after the needs analysis and it was kept throughout the programme. Participants felt co-creators and 'owners' of the programme. They understood the intention of the training programme from the very beginning and there was no need to motivate them anymore. Furthermore, they also stressed in their evaluation questionnaires that they appreciated the efforts to connect the learning process with their daily life during the needs analysis and during the training course as well.

I also noticed how the first day on learning needs analysis created a base for a relationship between educators and learners. Trust, openness, empathy and honesty were not "told", but expressed in action.

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INSPIRATION BOX

STORIES ON REFLECTIVE PRACTICES

Dear reader,

During REFLECT we shared a lot of experiences on facilitating reflection in formal and non-formal education in different European countries. Along the way we've been asking staff members, as well as participants in our testing phase, to write short stories about these experiences. The idea was not so much to write down the formats or the methods used, but rather to look back at meaningful moments during the reflective practices and to consider retrospectively what happened: "what did you do as educator? How did learners react? In which way were you amazed, puzzled, surprised…?" As such, these stories give diverse inspirations, so we hope, on how principles and guidelines are translated into different professional contexts in formal and non-formal education.

Throughout this publication we have printed some of these stories. You'll find more stories in the inspiration box on our website: www.reflecting.eu .

WORKSHOP ON INNER READINESS

This workshop was designed and carried out in order to explore how our theory on inner readiness could be put into practice through educational activities. The workshop derives from a series of activities that have been trialled by some of the partners of the project. It was run for the first time in February 2016 during the second training event of project REFLECT at Santa Severa (Italy).

Aim of the workshop

The aim of the workshop is to clarify the meaning of inner readiness and to let people experience how it is possible to increase the possibility to be 'inner ready' through dynamic activities and reflective practice. The workshop intends to explore how, by directing our structure of attention, we can increase the possibility to become more aware of:

▪ our context of action
▪ our personal resources (or to what extent we own the competence)
▪ our reaction habits.

This condition of awareness enables us to increase the possibility to be 'inner ready' to act in a specific time and space (in the here-and-now).

The different steps of the workshop are organised taking into account that:

- **Inner readiness is the ability to express a personal potential in a specific time and space or, concretely, in the "here-and-now". One of the main factors influencing inner readiness is a connecting quality of our nature.** *By" connecting quality" we mean our ability to connect our owned competences with a specific context and with our reaction habits empowering us to act now, in a specific time and space.*
- **Inner readiness cannot be trained, as it is a connecting quality of our nature therefore permanently residing in us. However, we can increase the possibilities to be 'inner ready' through reflective practices that contribute in making us more aware.**

The workshop is organised in different phases:

1. To run an activity that allows participants to be in touch with themselves, the others and the context. These three elements for us constitute the CONTEXT OF ACTION.
2. To provide participants with tools for becoming aware of their level of listening to themselves, the others and the situation.
3. A challenging, dynamic activity for the group to practice their level of listening.
4. A moment during the group activity where participants stop and reflect in action, to reflect on their way of listening in order to became more aware of their reaction habits and their sources of energy.
5. Providing an opportunity to accomplish the task by applying the participants' insights after having reflected.
6. To check with participants if the workshop:
   - supported them in being in contact with their inner source and in being more aware about themselves in the here-and-now
   - supported them by providing a tool (the 4 levels of listening) to align the intelligences of 'the brain, the heart and the belly' for acting in a coherent and authentic way.

Time frame: approximately 3 hours
Group size: 10 participants
Group type: Trainers and teachers that are participants and partners of the Erasmus+ Reflect project

STEP	WHAT WE DID	OBJECTIVE	BACKGROUND THEORY AND/ OR INSPIRING PRACTICE/S	TIME	WHERE	FEEDBACK FROM PAX
1	Participants are invited to explore their context of action in what we call "The Village". • The external context • The people around them • Themselves During the activity they are invited either to walk, stand still or sit in a given space. They are invited to explore the context of action by using the three possibilities mentioned above and by practicing them alone or in the proximity of somebody else. This means participants can walk, stand or sit next to someone else, but they can't obstruct the others. After approximately 10 minutes, participants are invited to introduce a new ritual in the Village and to greet anybody they encounter by chance as they move around. They are asked to salute the encountered person by stopping in front of her/him, bow down by slightly inclining their head and shoulders, coming back up and stopping for	Allow learners to: • perceive, sense and observe the context of action with new eyes • become more concentrated in the here-and-now and more focused on the context of action.	For this stage we used an activity inspired by "The Village", a practice of social presencing theatre developed under the leadership of Arawana Hayashi for the Presencing Institute and is meant to enhance the application of Theory U. The true movements of the body are meant to celebrate the "not knowing", to cut through the usual and arise from an arena that is bigger than our own small, personal perspective, as it comes from an awareness of the "field" in which we are acting.	30 min	Outdoor (it could also be done indoor)	

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STEP	WHAT WE DID	OBJECTIVE	BACKGROUND THEORY AND/ OR INSPIRING PRACTICE/S	TIME	WHERE	FEEDBACK FROM PAX
	a moment to look the other person in the eyes, in order to acknowledge and appreciate the person.					
2	Participants are invited to reflect on what has happened for them during the activity. We ask them what they have noticed about the context around them and about themselves and what resonates in them the most.	Allow learners to notice their 'structure of attention' (and the field from which they are operating	Reflection practice (after action)	20 min	Indoor	They said that they have noticed things around them, in people and in themselves that they had not noticed before the activity.
3	Introduce the 4 levels of listening from Theory U by Otto Scharmer	Highlight the importance of noticing the field of action and explain how the structure of our attention affects the different ways of listening and being present to oneself and the others. See template and explanation below for an overview of the 4 levels of listening.	The 4 levels of listening from Theory U by Otto Scharmer ("Addressing the blind spot of our time" – An executive summary of the new book by Otto Scharmer "Theory U: Leading from the future as it emerges". www.presencing.com)	25 min	Indoor	They said: "Interesting tool to read our own way of listening to ourselves, to others and to the context of action".

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4	Participants are invited to challenge themselves as a group by having to achieve a common task. Participants had to go as a group from one side to the other of a rope placed on the ground. Everybody's feet had to touch the ground at the same time on the other side of the rope.	Provide learners with a common experience	Low Ropes activity usually used in experiential learning programmes	10 min	Indoor (it can also be done outdoor)
5	Participants are stopped in the middle of the action and are invited to take note of their level of listening and what voice (whether judgment, cynicism or fear) was hindering them from shifting towards generative listening.	Create a moment of stillness, during which learners can focus their attention on what is the context around them (the task to be achieved, the other group members and the resources available). What are their reaction habits to stimuli coming from outside and inside and what are the personal resources they were activating?	This is a practice of reflection inspired by Donald Schön's 1983 book. The Reflective Practitioner and other authors such as John Dewey.	5-10 min	Indoor (it can also be done outdoor)	Participants feel they are much more aware of what is happening in them and around them. Most of them reveal that after that moment of stillness and reflection, they are more inclined to express their potential in that specific moment and context through an action, no matter what the result is going to be.
6	Participants are invited to continue the activity until time allocated for accomplishing the task has come to an end.	Allow participants to step into action again after the pause for reflection. Allow participants to engage in	Our reflected practices show us that awareness of context, reaction habits and personal resources can increase the	10 min	Indoor (it can also be done outdoor)	

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STEP	WHAT WE DID	OBJECTIVE	BACKGROUND THEORY AND/ OR INSPIRING PRACTICE/S	TIME	WHERE	FEEDBACK FROM PAX
		the action with a different level of awareness in order to express their potential.	possibility for inner readiness.			
7	Introduce our concept of inner readiness.	Inform participants about the background theory of inner readiness.		20 min	Indoor (it can also be done outdoor)	
8	Participants are invited to reflect at a meta-level on their awareness and actions after reflection.	Investigate if the different steps of the workshop support participants to increase their level of awareness and if this increased awareness enables them to be 'inner ready', thus to express their potential in the here-and-now moment.		40 min	Indoor (it can also be done outdoor)	

To summarise what the workshop was about, here follows a template that shows what is needed, how we can create a reflective environment where individuals can become more aware and be empowered for being ready to act out their potential.

WHAT WE NEED	WHAT TO DO	HOW TO DO IT
To be in contact with our inner source of energy being aware of ourselves in te here-and-now.	By letting go of the 3 voices (voice of judgement, cynicism and fear) that impede listening in a generative way	To know the 4 levels of listening by Otto Scharmer (Theory U)
To feel and to be connected with the context of action	By opening our mind, our heart and our will	Reflection in action, mindfulness and meditation can support this stage
To behave/act in a coherent and authentic way	Connecting our heart, mind and will	Sensing, listening to the deeper source from which we are functioning, letting go of the non-essential aspects of the self, letting the new come in and the transformation of the old and follow the flow.

THE 4 LEVELS OF LISTENING

FIELD	MICRO	MESO
Structure of attention	THINKING (individual)	CONVERSING (group)
Field 1: Operating from the old me-world	*Listening 1:* Downloading habits of thought	*Downloading:* Talking nicely, politeness rule-re-enacting
Field 2: Operating from the current it-world	*Listening 2:* Factual, object-focused	Debate: Talking tough, rule-revealing
Field 3: Operating from current you-world	*Listening 3:* Empathetic listening	Dialogue: Enquiry, rule-reflecting
Field 4: Operating from the highest future possibility that is wanting to emerge	*Listening 4:* Generative listening	Dialogue: Collective creativity, flow rule-generating

In order to move from a reactive Field 1 or 2 to a generative Field 3 or 4 response, we must embark on a journey and move along by letting go of our three enemies:

- **the voice of judgment that is the habit of judging based on past experience**
- **the voice of cynicism that is the incapability of opening one's heart**
- **the voice of fear that is the fear of the unknown.**

The first movement is to "observe, observe, observe." It means to stop downloading and start listening. It means to stop our habitual ways of operating and immerse ourselves in the places that have the most potential, the places that matter most to the situation we are dealing with. Observation needs an open mind by suspending our voice of judgment (VOJ). That means opening up a new space of enquiry and wonder. Without suspending that VOJ, attempts to get inside the places of most potential will be futile.

The second movement is referred to as "retreat and reflect: allow the inner knowing to emerge." Go to the inner place of stillness where knowing comes to the surface. We listen to everything we learned during the "observe, observe," phase and we heed what wants to emerge. We pay particular attention to our own role and journey.

In order to connect to the deeper forces of change through opening our heart, we should open up and deal with the resistance of thought, emotion, and will; it is about intentionally reintegrating the intelligence of the head, the heart, and the hand in the context of practical application.

The third movement is about "acting in an instant." This means to prototype the new, in order to explore the future, by doing.

Similar to the inner enemies (voice of judgment, voice of cynicism and voice of fear), there are the three old methods of operating: executing without improvisation and mindfulness (reactive action); endless reflection without a will to act (analysis paralysis); and talking without a connection to source and action (blah-blah). These three enemies share the same structural feature. Instead of balancing the intelligence of the head, heart, and hand, one of the three dominates: the will in mindless action, the head in endless reflection, the heart in endless networking. Connecting to one's best future possibility and creating powerful breakthrough ideas requires learning to access the intelligence of the heart and the hand—not just the intelligence of the head. (Extract from the Executive summary of Otto Scharmer's book: Theory U: leading from the future as it emerges).

Inspiring theories and practices for planning a workshop

One of the theories we find very inspiring in terms of raising awareness is Theory U by Otto Scharmer (2009), at the core of which is the hypothesis that the quality of our actions is a function of the quality of the awareness

we bring to those actions. By increasing awareness and letting go of pre-conceptions, we tap into our wiser self and into the greatest potential of a situation. Awareness gives us leverage. It gives birth to insight, innovation, and skilful action.

The other theory and practice that we find very inspiring is Mindfulness, a way of beginning to become more attentive to the present moment, to the actuality of being alive and participating in that actively being alive. A way of being engaged, deeply connected and tapping into one's owns inner resource, that we have simply by virtue of being humans. Mindfulness is the awareness that rises when we pay attention to purpose, in the present moment in a non-judgmental way. It's not some fixed static state. It's very alive when it's informed by awareness. By practising mindfulness, we can more skilfully meet those moments of being out of balance, as it reveals to us our habits and our patterns. That kind of understanding leads to changes in the way we handle the situation.

There are three elements for mindfulness:

- **Attention – choosing to be awake in each moment of our being alive.**
- **Intention – the choice to do that. It's our purposeful choice.**
- **Attitude – the open curiosity that we bring to what we are aware of in the moment.**

The last theory we referred to is Donald Schön's ideas on the reflective practitioner (1983), that's to say thinking about or reflecting on what we do. It is closely linked to the concept of learning from experience, in the sense of: 'we think about what we do in action and also on action', what happens and decide from that what we would do differently next time. Thinking about what is happening or has happened is part of being human. However, the difference between casual 'thinking' and 'reflective practice' is that reflective practice requires a conscious effort to think about events, and develop insights from them. Reflective practices refocus our thinking on our existing knowledge and help generate new knowledge and ideas. As a result, we may modify our actions, behaviour and learning needs.

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CAREFUL ASSESSMENT

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Dear reader,

We would like to introduce you to a delicate and ambiguous topic. In the letter on assessment (see letter 8 from our REFLECT correspondent) we've already put forward the complicated situation concerning the assessment of reflection: on the one hand assessments are a valid tool for tracking the learning process of learners, but on the other hand we've experienced in our partner organisations how assessments can have an often underestimated negative impact on the quality of reflection. In this chapter we want to explore how to deal with assessment of reflection in an alternative way, questioning even the possibility to assess reflections (especially in the case of exposing personal feelings and experiences).

AMBIGUITY OF ASSESSING REFLECTION

Assessment as such, and assessment of reflection in particular, is a delicate and important part of the learning process and has a strong impact on learner's motivation to explore further the inner and outer world. Careful and proper assessment that is done on time could encourage the learner to enhance quality of their reflections, helping to find new meaning, motivation and ways to reflect; while inappropriate, too harsh or formal assessment of personal reflection may demotivate the learner to reflect further and may distort the educator-learner relationships.

Discussion within REFLECT's focus groups on assessment of reflection

The topic of assessment of reflection raised ambiguous thoughts and feelings within REFLECT. At the end of the testing phase in February 2016, the University of Padua organised two focus groups with some of the participants who had run a test project in their organisations. The facilitators of these two sessions led the groups through a question about assessment: to what extent can you assess reflection? Concerning this point, it's interesting to notice how during the discussion different positions emerged.

The first one referred to the possibility to assess not reflection itself, but the process of reflection or the "elements that are involved in the reflection process".

The second opposite position was represented by the participants who stated: "You don't assess reflection process, teamwork process, you assess the case, the results not the process. It is the same with reflection: you have to

reflect, but you don't assess the reflective process". According to this vision the process can't be assessed because "reflection is a part of the learning process, you don't assess the reflection but the learning process." Close to this vision, a participant said: "There are some indications that can tell something about the reflection, if it takes place or not, but 'assess them' for me it is too much".

A third position underlined that the assessment of reflection cannot be done by separating it from the process and from the facilitator. This idea was supported by the participants who said: "I think the assessment of reflection is not the evaluation. It is about how the process was, if it was useful, how it was and what the facilitator did. It is not about grading, but just evaluating how it was in order to improve next time."

Additionally, there was a fourth perspective according to which assessment is not connected to a way of grading, but to the possibility of registering some changes occurring in the learners "and learners themselves feel, agree, see that things are changing or have changed and they see themselves looking at the world in a different way." In this perspective assessment is not an "objective measurement, but it is a kind of 'felt' judgment: you feel something, or you don't feel that something has changed".

Then a fifth position emerged considering the actions "to assess and to reflect" as part of "human ability, human nature", because "humans are reflective. Everybody is reflective, but to different degrees". It would mean that "we are constantly assessing, like we are naturally reflecting."

Finally, the sixth position highlights that there is a difference between evaluating one's own reflection or others' reflection: "I am able to assess my own reflection, but as a teacher we are always evaluating the students, but it is totally different". Furthermore "[…] assessment works in a distractive way. The feeling of being judged stops reflection". It could mean that assessment doesn't support reflection, but on the contrary obstructs it.

From this intertwined discussion appears a strong feeling on how assessment of reflection can be difficult and at the same time a challenge for all teachers/educators. In fact, the participants of the testing phase talked about the process of reflection, about some elements that support reflection, some changes that can occur during a process of learning, of a strategy of improvement, but not one of them talked about the assessment of reflection itself. The discussion that took place within the two focus groups suggests that there is still much hesitation and caution related to the assessment of reflection.

Literature on assessment of reflection

This difficulty is demonstrated also by the available literature; in fact, few papers are focused on the assessment of reflection, with those available divisible into three categories:

1. Self-evaluation, with a specific focus on the metacognitive process;
2. The way to assess reflection through models or tools;
3. The validation of instruments to assess reflection, especially in medical education contexts (see the previous chapter "Exploring the landscape of reflection").

Starting from this overview of literature on assessment of reflection, it appears that the attention on assessment and development of reflection is wider in medical education and health professions education contexts rather than in general courses of Higher Education, where still very little has been done in this sense.

For example, during the focus group, partners tended to recognise that reflection was a competence but at the same time admitted that it was impossible to assess it. They would argue that they could recognise if the reflection was happening, but they weren't able to assess the extent or level of it. That reflection was not a product but a process, so then how would they assess the quality of the process? Reflection helped with the learning of the learner, but assessment of reflection would obscure the reflection. It meant they wouldn't assess reflection, but if they wouldn't assess the quality of reflection, how could they improve it?

We believe that the development of assessment guidelines and the assessing reflection that follows them, to be one of the ways to improve the quality of reflection. While developing guidelines for assessment of reflection we departed from the REFLECT principles. These principles involve: the importance of the creation of a reflective atmosphere; the development of a personal point of view and a kind of 'interconnectedness' between the educator and the learner; valuing "not knowing" and openness to things that were unforeseen and an increased inner readiness to reveal the personal potential in a certain situation. Aspects of reflection mentioned above are described in the chapters "Letters from our REFLECT correspondent" and "Exploring the landscape of reflection".

EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT OF ASSESSMENT

Reflection is used as a means for learning, both in formal and non-formal education, when the learner is given assignments to reflect on the processes, experiences, attitudes and learning in order to achieve other goals. But formal and non-formal education having different traditions creates completely different contexts for reflection in the field of assessment.

Assessment in formal education is generally about establishing to which degree learners meet certain educational standards. Measured achievement of a certain quality level, comparison and grading takes place. A procedure of grading itself is connected with judging from "those who know", or at least could be easily perceived as such, and is contrary to the non-judgmental atmosphere and equal dialogue which are so important for reflection.

Non-formal education usually has no strict requirements for assessment. The focus of assessment is mainly on the progress of the individual learner or the group of learners, or they focus on the usefulness of the learning process for the learners.

On summative and formative assessment

To proceed further with the topic of "Assessment of reflection", we will rest for a while on assessment itself. In the Cambridge Dictionary, assessment is defined as the act of judging or deciding the amount, value, quality or importance of something, or the judgment or decision that is made. In education, the term assessment refers to the variety of methods or tools that educators use to evaluate, measure, and document the learning achievements, learning progress, skills, or educational needs of learners.

Assessment can be done in both summative and formative ways. Summative assessment is "assessment activity which results in a mark or grade which is subsequently used as a judgement on student performance. Ultimately judgements using summative assessment marks will be used to determine the classification of award at the end of a course or programme" (Irons, 2008). Formative assessment is referred to as a task or activity which creates feedback for learners about their learning. Formative assessment does not carry a grade which is subsequently used in a summative assessment (Irons, 2008). Black and William (1998) suggest that formative assessment refers to "all those activities undertaken by teachers (and by their students in assessing themselves), which provide [formative] feedback to shape and develop the teaching and learning activities in which both teachers and students are engaged". Formative assessment should: provide positive learning opportunities; encourage dialogue and discourse between learners and educators; enhance the learner's learning experience and provide motivation. One of the goals of formative assessment is to improve learners' metacognitive awareness of how they learn.

It is interesting to mention while talking about reflection assessment that reflection of the learning process itself is a type of formative assessment (e.g. reflection journals that are reviewed periodically).

Reflection can be invited by creating a non-judgmental reflective atmosphere, but it cannot be imposed. Also, marking/grading affects reflection. The moment the learner learns that her reflection is going to be graded, the genuine reflection stops, or reverts back to attempts to fit with the educator's expectations. Reflection can't be marked because it is unquantifiable, it can be assessed only qualitatively, unless it becomes an aim (object) of learning.

Keeping in mind the principles developed during the REFLECT project we could say that reflection should be assessed in a formative rather than summative way of assessing.

In both formal and non-formal educational settings, the usefulness of reflection can be assessed in a formative way together with the learner by looking at the learning process as a whole. Reflection is only one step in the learning process; it is used together with active experimentation, knowledge gaining and the development of new skills in the learning process in order to achieve certain learning aims. For example, if reflection has been used for the enhancement of competence to cooperate and work in teams, then reflection was good or high quality if it contributed to the development or improvement of abilities to cooperate and work in a team.

Summative assessment and grading is an inevitable feature of formal education. There are different sets of standards which have been historically and socially developed and which are constantly renewed, e.g., there are some standards for higher education (some are national, others institutional), there are standards developed by professional communities, e.g., psychologists, doctors, lawyers, engineers etc. Formal education institutions issue diplomas, certificates and take the responsibility to guarantee that the graduate would meet those standards. Here we see the control function of the educators: they are like gate keepers that permit the candidate into professional circles (or not, if they fail to meet the required standards). This control function implies the use of power: the educator has power over the learner and the relationship between the learner and the educator is unequal. The danger is that this power can be misused and this is the main reason for the learners' distrust and dishonesty. This is a very important dynamic of which we must be aware while discussing the use of reflection and an assessment of the quality of reflection in formal education.

When there is pressure to assess learning in a summative way we recommend the assessment of whether the leaning goals of the certain subject have been reached, keeping assessment of reflections formative unless reflection becomes an aim (object) of the teaching/learning. In this case, the primary goal is to enhance the learner's ability to reflect and somehow measure the progress. Anyway we should be very careful about assessment of reflection and shift from summative assessment as the focus of learning from both teachers and students.

WAYS OF REFLECTING

While assessing reflection it is important to keep in mind that depending on the different aims, reflection happens on different levels of intimacy. These levels range from descriptive accounts about external phenomena, to different levels of mental and emotional processing, to intensive reflection of inner reality. At times reflection in the learning process involves changes: changing ones' views, attitudes, and behaviours; accepting and incorporating new ideas; improving communication, changing relationships etc. At other times, we use reflection in the learning process to get more knowledge on the specific subject without any expectation of personal change.

It's a kind of puzzle in the field of education, that we use the same term 'reflection' for a process of personal disclosure in an intimate conversation and also for a written reflective analysis of an external phenomenon for example an art exhibition or a migration crisis. The educators participating in the testing phase of the project agreed that reflection on personal issues is much more sensitive to assess than reflection of external things, and should be assessed much more carefully.

There are also different forms that reflection takes which affect reflection and the possibilities to assess it. An individual reflection, where the written form is preferred to the oral, is more often used in formal education. In this case an educator usually does not see the process of reflection and perceives understanding about a learner's reflection only from the written text he provides.

In a group reflection which is more often used in non-formal education, the educator is usually taking part and moderates the process. In that case, the educator can witness the process, sometimes noticing simply from the nonverbal signs if the person is reflecting now or not, and at the same time this strongly affects the quality of reflection.

FOCUS OF ASSESSMENT

The major question of the REFLECT project was: how can educators support learners to reflect more appropriately in formal and non-formal education? While thinking about assessment of reflection we focused on those aspects of reflection which, when explored and taken into consideration, could help educators to support learners' reflection.

Consequently, reflection in formal and non-formal education is one of the steps in the learning process: it is a tool for reaching the learning goals, helping learners to learn, however it is not an aim in itself. That's why while assessing reflection it is crucial to concentrate on how useful reflection was for learners in the specific process of learning.

To do that, we as professional educators should be able to firstly designate some indicators that reflection is happening; secondly, to find ways to decide how useful reflection was for the learning; and thirdly, to assess the context of reflection including our own input (the process and involvement of the learner, the efforts and conditions created by the educator, the relationship and interaction between the learner and the educator). We think it's useful to assess all those aspects if we want improve the quality of reflection and increase the probability of reaching broader learning aims.

Was there actually reflection?

Thinking of indicators that reflection was happening, it's necessary to bear in mind all the various reflection aims, forms, learners' backgrounds and the fact that reflection could be planned and organised or could happen spontaneously. For example, it could vary from individual written reflection about external phenomenon, to a group expressing through drawing unspoken thoughts and hidden feelings. It is also important to understand that the process of reflection is not equal to the process of the expression of it.

Here is a list of possible indicators which could show that the learner is reflecting:

Being present. For reflection of any phenomenon to happen it is crucial to be in contact with that phenomenon, or to say it in a more poetical way, to be present or "to be". Instead of expressing themselves, individuals can be impressed by the world, having to slow down to be immersed in the context and the flow of the living moment, embodied. The importance of being present is stressed by the authors of the phenomenological model (Bleakley, 1999; Fay & Riot, 2007; Lewis & Farnsworth, 2007; Mortari, 2012) as well as in the report of the testing phase of the REFLECT project. ¶ On the language level it could be reflected through much more personal use of language of the learner ("I think", "I felt…"), expressing specific authentic experiences. The learner dissociates from inertia and stops using clichés ("Usually people…", "We did it, because we felt like a team…"). The learner focuses attention on the expression of the world in a specific authentic experience, instead of referring to common practices and authorities. He identifies phenomena which are touching him on a personal level. ¶ On the behavioural level the learner also intercepts inert behaviour and engages in reflection. This could manifest itself in a diversity of ways: the learner could slow down, take time, contemplate phenomenon, listen attentively or he could be very active in trying to reach understanding of "What is really happening?" ¶ On the emotional level this could be marked with emotional intensity, which usually follows a revelation of a new (previously undiscovered) and personally important thing. The learner is in contact with his feelings more strongly than usual.

Not knowing. Analysis of testing projects during the REFLECT project revealed experience of "not knowing" as an important part of the process of deep reflection. The learner experiences "not knowing" while dissociating from the habitual behavioural models or clichés. The learner could "not know", how to name what is happening; even what he is feeling. In an article for Coyote Magazine Mark Taylor adds how not-knowing implies a certain kind of 'stuckness': it's a "time when you are confronted with a problem or a dilemma and you really do not know what to do or which way to proceed. To put it mildly, the feelings associated with this

moment are pretty uncomfortable, even painful: confusion; frustration; fear of being laughed at; embarrassment; nervousness; being out of balance and so on. As such, most people want to pass this stage as quickly as possible and get back to their comfort zone."

Being able to name things. In the model of critical reflection (see the literature review), Mezirow defines reflection as "the process of critically assessing content, process and premises of our efforts to interpret and give meaning to an experience". (1991, p.104) ¶ The learner's ability to name/recognise what he perceives, what he thinks and how he acts is an important grounding for other parts of reflection. The learner can describe the issue or incident to be explored in detail, recalling actions, words, feelings, thought etc.

Exploration from different angles. The learner is exploring an issue or incident from different perspectives, trying to understand how others could perceive the situation or phenomenon.

Connecting. An ability to connect different aspects of inner and outer reality was mentioned as an indication of reflection by almost all the participants of the workshop on assessment of reflection. ¶ The learner is making connections between the incidents, discipline, knowledge other external or internal phenomenon, and his own experience, attitudes, personal ideas and outer world. ¶ The learner connects with the topic or process on the personal level: recognises the situations and moments when her opinions and attitudes were challenged or reinforced. ¶ The learner makes connections between his experiences during the course with real life or in work situations. The learner is trying to find how, what and when he could apply his learning. ¶ The learner refers to relevant theory and literature supporting his reflections.

Reasoning. The learner is trying to understand and explain the reasons behind a specific phenomenon which he is reflecting upon. The learner is naming factors underlying the reflected phenomenon; exploring why they are important. ¶ The learner reflects on the reasons and consequences of the process. She becomes aware of the reasons why we perceive, act and feel in a specific way (Mezirow's (1991) model of critical reflection).

The learner takes **ownership and responsibility** of the learning process, using reflection to explore topic of interest. The learner expresses his opinion and attitude, explains them, gives his arguments in support of the specific opinion or attitude.

4.   How useful was reflection for the learner?

While assessing the usefulness of reflection for the learner it is important to do that in open dialogue with the learner, exploring how much the learner

has moved towards his or her learning goals with the help of reflection. This part of assessment is focussed on the learner's self-evaluation based on metacognitive process (see chapter "Landscape of Reflection).

Here are examples of questions which might be helpful in assessing the usefulness of reflection for the learner. After answering each of these questions with short initial answers, it is recommended to explore further details.

▪ Have you, while reflecting, discovered new things about … (the content of learning – hereafter CL)?
▪ Does the reflection help you to deepen/broaden/ground your understanding of …(CL)?
▪ Did you have other personally meaningful moments during reflection?
▪ Which way (if at all) has the reflection influenced your attitude, opinion towards …(CL)?
▪ Does reflection support your ability to express or act out your potential (knowledge and skills) in a specific situation?
▪ Does reflection enable you to connect your owned competences with a specific context of your life?
▪ Which skills, knowledge or attitudes have changed somehow during/after your reflection?
▪ Did you learn something from your reflection? (What did you learn you're your reflection?)
▪ How do you think you will take something for the future from this experience and reflection of it?

5. In which way did the reflective atmosphere foster reflection?

One of the educator's tasks is helping the learner to reflect or to support their reflection. While assessing reflection and looking for further possibilities for improvement, it is crucial to have in mind the entire picture of reflection including the whole atmosphere which is affecting reflection. This reflective atmosphere encompasses: the impact of the educator; the relationship between the learner-educator-group; a particular educational system and the other contexts of reflection.

Assessing the impact of the educator

One responsibility of the educator is to take the initiative in building a relationship between educator and learners based on trust, openness, empathy, transparency, dialogue and feedback (see letter no 4), direct the reflective attention of the learner (see letter no5), encourage the learner to take ownership and responsibility for the learning and learning results (see letter no 3). While assessing the impact of the educator (or me if I'm an educator) it could be helpful to look at some of the following aspects which the educator could follow to support reflection:

- Did I explain the principles of reflection for the learner? Did I and the learner have a common understanding of what reflection is?
- Is the reflection that I am inviting others to do appropriate or not? It might be that it is becoming just an obligatory routine for the learner.
- Did I give the reflection assignment in a way which is possibly 'appealing' for learners personal and/or professional development?
- Can I give learners the possibility to choose a focus (topic) of reflection?
- Have I created enough of a trusting relationship for reflection to happen? Am I basing my relationship with the learner on openness, dialogue and empathy?
- Did I "hold space" for reflection – "a supportive environment both intellectually and emotionally, an authentic context" (these points are going to be described in more detail later on a paragraph devoted to assessment of the context of reflection)?
- Have I asked questions which have helped the learner to reflect? Was I deepening my questions progressively?
- Did I give enough tools/knowledge which could help the certain learner to reflect?
- Did I invite and stimulate learners to dialogue with me as well as each other? Am I creating a dialogue that accounts for multiple perspectives and allows meaningful learning to take place?
- Can I and do I give the learner a possibility not to reflect on this topic if he does not need or want to?
- Can I accept the "not knowing" of the learner and support him in this experience?
- Can I give power and control of the reflection results to the learner? Can I let go of the control and follow the flow in reflection created by the learners?
- Can I guarantee confidentiality of spoken or written personal reflection?
- Am I participating in the reflection process myself? Am I open enough and sincere?
- Am I aware of myself and my feelings in the reflective process?
- Am I a person the learner can trust?
- If I'm intending to assess reflection, did I explain to the learner which aspects of his/her reflection will be assessed and how I'm going to assess?

Assessing the Context of Reflection

The reflection process requires learner's openness and honesty to articulate and explore uncomfortable issues or conflicting feelings which may arise. All contexts of reflection could have a huge impact on such an intimate and personal process, so it is important to look at the elements that possibly enhance or hinder the reflective atmosphere.

- Does the particular educational system (format of course), or study programme allow the building of a trusting relationship with the learner and in between learners?
- At some point of the educational process, did the learners learn how to reflect?

- Is the environment of reflection supportive both intellectually and emotionally? (Is it welcomed to have different opinions, make mistakes, express feelings?)
- During the process of reflection did the learners have moments of not doing anything and silence?
- Is the level of trust and safety between the group members sufficient for reflection to be openly and authentically expressed?

Each group is a complex entity of people, relationships, dynamic, and has a certain stage of development, with a different culture and tasks to do. There could be many distinct reasons why the level of trust among the particular group of learners is, or becomes, low. We as educators may always look at possible causes seeking to enhance that level, and therefore possibly quality, of reflection.

Some areas to consider:

- Do they know each other well enough for feeling safe in the group?
- Do we reflect in the same group or are members of the group constantly changing?
- Do they have burning conflicts or other issues, which probably should be resolved before reflection can take place?
- Do we create a group culture of sharing and listening to each other with respect? Do the norms of the learning group allow individuals to have a different point of view, being different both from their peers and from the educator?
- Is the group small enough to talk and share reflections?
- Are the ways or methods we are using for reflection appropriate for this particular group of learners?

Another group of contextual factors is purely external, but sometimes they can play an important role in the quality of reflection, especially for some learners. These are items such as inappropriate place, a constant noise and other interruptions, an external observer, bad timing, a lack of time etc.

To summarise, if while assessing the reflection atmosphere, including an input of the educator, we are answering "No" to most of the prior questions, it is more a miracle than a norm that sincere and profound reflection is still happening.

CONCLUSION

Ending the chapter about assessment of reflection we would like to stress the recommendation to not use summative but formative assessment while assessing reflection: to spot indications and moments which could be important for the quality of reflection and to explore this in open dialogue with the learner. Another way to call this form of assessment could be "Reflection of Reflection".

In educational process (both formal and non-formal), mostly reflection acts as a tool not as an aim in itself. Thus, the main attention while assessing a reflection should be paid to how useful it was for the learner's achievement of his learning goals, (or in finding new, unexpected achievements) and how the process of reflection could be supported in the future by the educator.

In those cases, when we should assess the learner by the grade, we recommend to assess his knowledge, skills and understanding of a certain subject, but not the way that the learner reflects in the process of getting there.

So, dear reader, be careful each time when you enter through the open learners' door to the land of personal discoveries and especially while assessing them!

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A story on owning the learning process and careful assessment

Written by Ruta Sargautyte from Vilnius University (Lithuania)

I integrated the test project within an undergraduate course on the 'psychology of ageing' on which I lecture at Vilnius University for Erasmus and Exchange students, mainly 2nd and 3rd year students from bachelor programmes in social sciences. The overall aim of the course is to prepare students to understand and meet the needs of the elderly. Taking into account that ageing is a sensitive topic, and that elderly in many societies are stigmatised, it was considered to be quite appropriate to use reflection as a tool to explore the attitudes of students in order to combat the negative stereotypes and introduce contemporary knowledge on psychological processes of ageing and strategies of successful aging. My particular aim of the test project was to verify the value of reflection as an assignment, which can serve as a substitute to the formal traditional assessment of knowledge.

The course consisted of 32 academic hours of lectures and 16 hours of seminars. The course was optional. Lectures were delivered in a traditional format using power point and seminars, including discussing reading materials, watching videos, visiting nursing houses etc., i.e. some activities also outside the classroom. In the course of semester students were required to work in pairs to prepare a Power Point presentation on a selected topic. As a non-compulsory assignment, I proposed to students to reflect on lectures/seminars/recommended materials in between the meetings. There were 10 reflection assignments in total, all of them submitted in written form to the teacher in virtual environment. In my previous courses I had asked students to reflect orally in a group on the video watched in class and on the visit to the nursing hospital for elderly. This time I decided to give the possibility to reflect individually on a regular basis, after each meeting. I prepared the reflection assignment that I gave each time after classes and

placed it into the virtual environment of university. First, it was explained what was meant by reflection. Second, two or three guiding questions were formulated for each reflection assignment. Different questions for different activities were formulated: "what did you notice? How did you feel about it? How it is related to your personal experience or cultural background? And what could be done to make the things better?" Students could submit reflections in one week until the next lecture/seminar.

Students had a choice either to submit a reflection in one week after the event (visit, lecture, video, etc.) and have less questions to answer in the final exam test, or to take the full exam after completing the course. This motivation, however, didn't seem to be sufficient to write many reflections as it really required time and effort. It was challenging. Analysing the evaluation of the course we could see that those who submitted reflections reported better satisfaction with the course, were proud of themselves and felt as if they had really learned something new. It was also noticed that some students submitted reflections even when they were absent at the lecture/seminar. Probably, it was a good way for them to learn the missed material by reflecting.

I consider the outcomes of the test project to be quite interesting and promising. The reflection assignment was not compulsory for my students, but nearly all students decided to do it, and lessen the burden of the final exam test in this way. On the other hand, the assignment was challenging enough to equate it to the assessable part of an exam.

Reflections were not compulsory. I wanted to find out how many students choose to write a reflection. Statistics: there were 63 reflections submitted in total, 6 reflections per student on average for each assignment (out of 15 students), and the fluctuation in the number of reflections was not big: 3-8 reflections each time, with no increase by the end of the semester (!). I would like to interpret it as an interest in writing reflections and as valuing the responsibility to choose the topic for reflection. Only 2 students submitted 0 or 1 reflection during the semester, and the other 13 submitted from 3 to 6.

I would like to raise the point that students were not aware of one another's submissions as it was performed in a virtual environment.

It was my task to find out whether reflection can be assessed in the same way as exam knowledge. Reflection had to be solid and challenging enough; otherwise, all the students do it every time to earn points for their exam. On the other hand, guiding questions should be formulated very carefully to get a complex reflection, not to get a pure confession...There should be a clear criterion for writing reflection in order to be able to grade it. In my case, I could grade only Pass/Fail; it means Reflection/No reflection. However, every student got feedback to their comments (at least for the first reflections).

POSSIBILITIES FOR REFLECTING ON AND OFF-LINE

Written by Bert Vandenbussche (LUCA School of Arts, Belgium). This is a short-ened version of a longer text that can be found on www.reflecting.eu.

Dear reader,

Since the turn of the century, e-learning is without any doubt transform-ing the landscape of formal and non-formal education. Digital technology is proving to be an efficient means to support learning processes in several ways, including by sharing learning materials, enabling online communica-tion and stimulating research. Based on the integration of e-learning tools, courses are being categorised on a continuum of didactic models from ful-ly face-to-face, to those including some web-based tools, to fully online. The first part of this text deals with the general pedagogical approach that would best suit the REFLECT-framework for facilitating reflection processes in higher and adult education. The second part deals with more particular experiences concerning reflecting on and off-line within REFLECT, ending with a specific story of a blended learning test project.

IN SEARCH OF A PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH

E-learning for instructional learning

In general, the discourse on e-learning emphasises the enhanced possibili-ties for student-centred learning. In this respect, the Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) is a good example. MOOCs are mostly fully online courses, consisting usually of a series of web-lectures and discussion forums, and have open access, allowing everyone to participate (as long as one has inter-net connection). MOOCs are student-centred in the sense that they enable learners to learn what and when they want to learn, independent from one's location or educational institution. In a preparatory, non-published text for the first training event of REFLECT in September 2015, staff member Nancy Vansieleghem (2015) points out how MOOCs in general "focus on acquiring pre-structured knowledge and skills according to a step-by-step plan and with programming the best way in which the transmission of clear-cut and fixed objectives can be achieved. […] Digital technology is used to con-struct a learning environment where knowledge is available as a resource for fast, efficient and effective learning – an environment without any noise or disturbance."

In general, they focus on acquiring pre-structured knowledge and skills according to a step-by-step plan. With programming they can provide the best way in which the transmission of clear-cut and fixed objectives can be

achieved. Digital technology is used to construct a learning environment where knowledge is available as a resource for fast, efficient and effective learning – an environment without any noise or disturbance.

This pedagogical approach is clearly linked to a classical teaching and lecturing model: digital learning is organised in the best possible instructional way for transferring information. All of this, however, does not fit to 'learning by reflection', as learners shouldn't 'duplicate' outcomes already predefined by the educator, but should essentially 'make sense' themselves of the subject matter. As already mentioned in the first letter, we see reflection as an important catalyst for so-called *deep learning* which means that learning results have to be personally meaningful and significant to learners.

Blended learning as an integrated pedagogical approach towards reflection

We prefer to advocate for a blended learning approach. The term 'blended' refers in general to the combination of traditional face-to-face and on-line contact between educators and learners (in contrast to the fully online e-learning activities without off-line contact). This approach gives better opportunities to co-create the reflective atmosphere, as it's easier as an educator to 'warm' your relationship with learners, letting them experience the necessary trust, openness, empathy and transparency. Furthermore, blended learning also suits better the need of process-directivity, e.g. by being able to notice learners' non-verbal communication, by allowing slowing-down and by fine-tuning the questions during face-to-face meetings which can be taken home for individual e-reflection.

During the test phase, several blended learning test projects were conducted. It became clear that the e-tools for reflection need to be sufficiently integrated as a part of the course. In this respect, Evelien Maris and Saskia Nauwelaerts (2016) from Outward Bound Belgium had an interesting experience. They reported how during a five-day course on group dynamics their last year Master students in occupational psychology did not use the proposed e-tool for valuable reflection, but more for having fun and sharing about relaxing subjects. They mentioned two reasons for this: "[firstly] we think that this is due to the fact that the students already reflected during the day about their experiences and that it was a 'reflective overkill' to ask them again in the evening." Secondly they also mentioned the gap between the natural outdoor context of their five day course and the online tool: "the students preferred to keep the connection between the 'natural experience' and the corresponding reflection/debriefing more closely in the same authentic context. They mentioned that they were relieved to not be bound to social media and technology for four days." As Maris and Nauwelaerts continued to reflect afterwards, they could see how the reflection activity with the e-tool was not sufficiently integrated enough in the course. It was just one extra reflection activity added to an already existing programme.

In general, this experience stresses the importance of an integrated pedagogical approach concerning blended learning: the crucial factor is the embedding of e-learning tools within an overall didactic concept, consistent with the learning objectives of the course. In this respect we connect to the definition of blended learning, as offered for example by Dziuban, Hartman and Moskal (2004):

" *It's our position that blended learning should be viewed as a pedagogical approach that combines the effectiveness and socialization opportunities of the classroom with the technological enhanced active learning possibilities of the online environment, rather than a ratio of delivery modalities. In other words, blended learning, should be approached not merely as a temporal construct, but rather as a fundamental redesign of the instructional model […]." (p.3)*

Subsequently they distinguish three important characteristics of blended learning. Firstly it presupposes a shift from lecture- to student-centred learning in order to empower students to become active learners (not only concerning the online-contact, but through the entire course, so concerning the face-to-face contacts as well). This matches the first principle of REFLECT's framework: raising awareness within learners to 'own' their learning in a personally meaningful way. In a test project on the topic of visual essays in the arts, learners reported a remarkable change in their engagement: "we were more passive consumers during the first two lecturing classes in group [which were classic lecturing]. With the reflection assignment on the padlet (i.e. an e-tool, more explanation will follow) in small homework-groups, we were more active and looked more attentively to the pictures and documentaries. The discussion in these small groups also gave everybody the possibility to engage. You had more personal input in the conversation." (Vandenbussche 2016)

As a second characteristic Dziuban, Hartman and Moskal mention how blended learning should enhance interactive learning. The use of e-tools should increase the interaction between educator-learner, learner-learner, learner-content and/or learner-outside resources. This is a response to several authors mentioning the loss in efficiency and quality in learning when learners are addressed only individually by e-learning (Bliuc, Goodyear & Ellis 2007). This relates to REFLECT's second principle, which emphasises the importance of dialogue and feedback for deepening the reflection process and for facilitating the group of learners essentially as a learning community. In the same test project students also reported the importance of sharing their views with one another via the padlet. It stimulated them to look beyond what they first saw and to notice different things in the discussed visual essays. In this respect, Alessio Surian also talked about what he calls the enzyme-quality of the online-postings of his learners: "the mood of some on-line posts is a combination of providing reflection with ideas/opportunities for further exploration and/or action to themselves and to their colleagues. This sparks an interesting thread of reflection by other students."

Finally, Dziuban, Hartman and Moskal advocate just like REFLECT for a broader approach concerning assessment: blended learning requires sometimes not only summative assessment, but formative as well. For more detailed arguments about this, please see the chapter on 'careful assessment'.

The presence of the educator within blended learning

Student-centred and blended learning imply more autonomy of learners (compared to classical lecturing). Learners are no longer fully 'dependent' on the contact with the educator, but can decide themselves (usually within particular limits) 'when' to fulfil the e-learning activities and 'how' to integrate them in their personal learning process. However, this does not mean that educators are becoming less important, quite the contrary. Anne-Marie De Jonge (2013) points out how the educator's job no longer consists of solely transferring content, but also of coaching learners in their personal questioning in order to bring the essence of their thinking to the surface.

Garrison and Vaughan also underline the crucial role of educators in *Blended learning in Higher Education: Framework, Principles and Guidelines* (2008). More specifically, they distinguish three different 'presences', all of them required in order to enable a high quality educational experience: social presence, cognitive presence and teaching presence. It's worth going more into depth in their ideas, highlighting the relation with REFLECT.

Educators should firstly establish *social presence* within the learning community. This is about creating solid social relationships among learners. As social presence enhances a sense of belonging, open communication and group cohesion, it's considered by Garrison and Vaughan as a sine qua non for the learning process. It supports the learning process in an essential way by enabling risk-free expression of thoughts, encouraging collaborations and expressing emotions. All of this relates to REFLECT's principle of developing a relationship of trust, openness, honesty and empathy between educator and learners, essential for the reflective atmosphere to be developed.

Although emotional bonding and camaraderie are to be considered the ultimate experience of this social presence, Garrison and Vaughan point out clearly that blended learning involves more than "social online chatting". As such, social presence does "not structure and focus academic interests among the students. […] Higher levels of learning inevitably require purposeful discourse to collaboratively construct, critically reflect, and confirm understanding." This is the area of what they call *cognitive presence*, needed for exploring, integrating and finding solutions. Here reflection comes into play: "cognitive presence is basic to the inquiry process. Inquiry includes the integration of reflective and interactive processes. […] (It) is a recursive process that encompasses states of puzzlement, information exchange, connection of ideas, creation of concepts and the testing of the viability of

solutions". Although we encounter here the solution-driven approach of their inquiry model, all of this connects with important principles of the REFLECT-framework as well: valuing not-knowing, dialogue and feedback, deepening the questioning progressively etc.

Finally, they describe the teaching presence as bringing all elements together by designing and organising a course, by instructing learners and facilitating the discourse. "Teaching presence is essential to provide structure, facilitation, and direction for the cohesion, balance, and progression of the inquiry process," Garrison and Vaughan (2008) state. "(It) provides the design, facilitation and direction for a worthwhile educational experience. […] Teaching presence establishes the curriculum, approaches and methods; it also moderates, guides, and focuses discourse and tasks. It is the means by which to bring together social and cognitive presence in an effective and efficient manner."

As indicators of the teaching presence they describe the setting of curriculum and methods, focusing discussion and sharing personal meaning by educators. This relates to several important aspects of REFLECT's framework: co-creating reflection, directing the reflective attention of learners and slowing-down and deepening the questioning progressively. Garrison and Vaughan really emphasise the importance of the teaching presence by referring to recent research indicating clearly that blended-learning demands strong teaching presence by educators.

In conclusion, we want to point to the fact that the social, cognitive and teaching presence that Garrison and Vaughan talk about, partly overlaps with REFLECT's notion of the 'reflexive presence' (as described in letter 10). With this 'reflexive presence' we want to stress first the capability of educators to reflect themselves, secondly the contagious impact of 'putting into action' the essential qualities of trust, openness, empathy, transparency, curiosity and attentiveness, and thirdly the reciprocal influence between the educator and the learners in co-creating a reflective atmosphere. When integrating e-tools for reflection, we believe it will be essential for any educator to uphold this reflexive presence.

Testing e-reflection for an integrated blended learning approach

Within REFLECT nine educators decided to experiment with e-learning tools, most of them in formal education. In general, these tools can be divided into two categories. Firstly, there are the individual digital journals or log books which are offered by the online learning platforms of the partner organisations, such as Moodle or Toledo. They are the digital reprocessing of classic diaries, adding the possibility to share the individual writings with other learners, and for them to react. Secondly there are the already existing e-tools, to be found on the internet. In the full text on blended learning on our website, we offer a survey of these e-tools. The online tool which was

experimented with the most during the test phase, was padlet (see www.padlet.com). This is a 'virtual wall or bulletin board' which can be used by learners to express their ideas, thoughts and opinions in an interactive way. Also, they can easily share pictures, videos, texts and react to all of these by adding comments which look like sticky notes.

In general educators as well as learners within the test projects expressed several reasons for the added value of the e-reflection activities. Firstly, e-reflection makes it possible to leave more time between the topic discussed and the reflection afterwards. It brings some distance which sometimes helps learners to reflect more deeply. Learners can also more easily take the time they need to develop and express their thoughts, feelings, questions and/or remarks (in contrast to the sometimes limited time during face-to-face meetings). In this respect, Alessio Surian pointed out as one advantage of using a digital learning log in his story on blended learning: "not everything posted on-line is reflection but a lot of the posts are more reflective than what happens in class." Secondly, when shared in the learning group, e-reflection also helps to involve the quieter, introverted or shy learners, resulting in an important increase in the amount of interactions between educator and learners. Thirdly, as e-reflections can be stored easily, they proved also helpful on several occasions for learners to look back at things discussed and reflected later on during the course.

Another test project stood out, as it clearly illustrates how some principles and guidelines are translated into an integrated blended learning approach in the teacher education department of LUCA School of Arts. The test project was run by Filip De Roeck and Nancy Vansieleghem.

"We ran our test project in 'Labo', a regular course within our teacher training curriculum in the arts implying some kind of micro-teaching. Within this course, students can experiment with preparing, teaching and reflecting. Students were divided into groups of three and had to prepare together a lesson in advance. The target group is their peers. The prepared class takes about 1 hour 30 minutes. The group is free to choose the subject of the lesson. Afterwards the complete group takes about one hour to reflect upon the given class. We wanted to explore during the test project the potential of the e-tool padlet as a technology that brings oneself closer to the experience of teaching and being prepared. Each group of three students prepared their lesson on a padlet-wall.

During the course, the focus to facilitate reflection shifted from the padlet to the concluding conversation that we had at the end of every labo/micro-teaching session. This is a concluding conversation with the students who were teaching their peers that normally provides feedback on the lesson that just happened. Gradually, while experimenting with the possibilities to stimulate and accommodate moments of reflection, this conversation shifted from a feedback moment (direct comments to improve the teaching) to a conversation about a situation.

There was a shift in focus. Instead of talking about what we thought that should have happened, we tried to see and speak about what was actually happening.

We organised our test project as following. Firstly, we introduced padlet as a collective tool to prepare a micro-teaching class. Secondly, we divided the students into groups of three to prepare a micro-teaching course together. Thirdly, as students were not only organised in groups of three but also paired in buddy trios, these buddy trios were given the assignment to observe the lesson and to moderate the conversation at the end of each session, using only their observations.

The introduction of the padlet, and working in groups of three, was an important shift away from how we previously worked in our labos. Immediately noticeable through conversations was the cooperation between students in preparing a lesson together or collecting material on their padlet. The contents of the lessons were much more mature than in previous years. Students were confronted with their different opinions on certain topics, they were confronted with each other's knowledge of images, techniques, and approaches to the artistic process.

The groups tended to start more quickly to prepare a lesson. The padlet made it possible to visualise and prolong the collecting, brainstorming phase of creating a lesson. The visual nature of the padlet invited them to make associations towards each other's materials, the topics, suggestions, etc. The information/material became much more layered than previous years.

The process of preparing the lessons (creating steps, goals, a sequence of assignments, …) didn't happen only on the padlet. Every group met in real life or used another tool to communicate more directly with each other. The padlet was more the space where they worked on the architecture of a lesson: collecting the materials, putting up structure, hierarchy within the information, leaving notes and sharing ideas with each other.

Because most students were preparing their project sooner than in previous years, students were also perhaps more involved in reflecting on their lessons than previous years. As described above, at the end of each labo there was a concluding conversation about the experiences of the labo lesson that just happened. This conversation was moderated by a buddy-trio who observed the lesson.

The concluding conversation was no longer a moment in which difficulties or problems were discussed. While previously the buddy-trio often gave tips and tricks that can improve the teaching, they began to speak more and more in terms of a practice taking place.

It was specifically this potential shift, from consuming information 'how to teach better', towards reflecting on what was present in the labo, that challenged us to fcilitate a more profound personal reflection. Our other test

project 'As long as I'm walking' was in many ways very inspiring to facilitate this shift. It introduced a focus outside of ourselves. It introduced the possibilities and potential of capturing, seeing what happens (movements, patterns etc) and not to start interpreting immediately.

So instead of just asking the buddy-trio to moderate a conversation about the labo lesson, we started to formulate the following:

▪ You will not express your personal opinion.
▪ You will not address a person directly.
▪ You will try to make the lesson/ what happened visual and present in the conversation.

This focus on the concluding conversation allowed for it to not be about opinions, but about disclosing the teaching practice and to think about it. When we were able to hold focus and try to see the experience as a thing – something we could walk around, turn over – ideas were revealed that never could exist while only reflecting, specifically on competences of the teacher. Because of this shift in focus all the students became equally important in contributing to the conversation and in answering the question 'what can teaching mean?'. In this respect, it proved to be necessary to create a situation where not-knowing and doubt, daring to make a mistake, can be part of a group conversation. While exploring the possibilities of the concluding conversation, it became clear that we need to alter the gaze from knowledge to not-knowing. It is not losing the focus but rather shifting it to the present experience. Not looking for: "what did I do? How did I do it? What should I have done?" But rather seeing what did actually happen.

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A story on blended learning

Written by Alessio Surian from the University of Padua (Italy)

At the university I run a course on group dynamics and transformative learning for an international group of 40 Master students. For the test project within REFLECT, I invited students this year to make use of an on-line forum space on Moodle (i.e. the internet platform used by the university) to share a 'learning log' with each other and to explore reflection by other students both on-line and face-to-face based on the learning log. So far I had not used the log space in a structured way, it was just one 'loose' support tool. Now I proposed it to students as an explicit learning tool and kept track of strengths and weaknesses of this approach.

   I encouraged students to keep track of what happened in class by volunteering (one by one) to post into a common Moodle Forum a daily log of what happened. After I had encouraged them (in a small working group) to run activities for the rest of the classmates, I encouraged each working group to post the agenda/outline of what they did; and I encouraged all the students to use the Moodle Forum to post both comments and feed-back to the activities and how they were run as well as personal questions and contributions and process and on content issues.

   Furthermore, I also intentionally 'warmed' the feed-back and reflection process in class by encouraging students to share in pairs and in a circle their feelings and thoughts about the class activities. I tried to act as a facilitator and to create a "circular" communication without playing the role of the one who has the right answer, the final word, or is there to judge. Also I chose explicitly NOT to assess reflection, but to let it loose from any evaluation and teacher-learner dynamic. This helped to develop a certain atmosphere of trust, openness, dialogue and feedback.

Retrospectively I recognise three strengths of this blended learning approach:

1. The DIACHRONIC dimension of posting comments, thoughts, links and questions. Not everybody is 'ready' for face-to-face feed-back during or after an activity. The on-line forum provides an opportunity to include more people and especially shy/introverted people (and people who need time to turn their thoughts into English/ second language in my case). Not everything posted on-line is "reflection" but a lot of the posts are more reflective than what happens in class.
2. DEPTH: the time-lapse after the activity often allows students to elaborate more on their reflective thoughts and feelings.
3. ENZYME: the mood of some on-line posts is a combination of providing reflection with ideas/opportunities for further exploration and/or action to themselves and to their colleagues and this sparks an interesting thread of reflection by other students.

There's also one weakness I want to mention: few students find the time to 'reflect' through Moodle as they don't see it as an everyday activity.

Thanks to REFLECT's Testing Team!

During the second phase of the project the core team invited some extra colleagues from the partner organisations to participate in REFLECT. We are grateful for their involvement and valuable feedback.

In total 35 persons participated in the testing team.

REF⅃EƆT

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Holding the Space

Learning facilitators
are more than spectators

Reflection in learning
is an issue that's burning!

Results from researching,
testing, discussing, drawing -
it helps to have a look
in this little book!

What do you need to know
before you put your toe
into the water?

Do you have the steadiness
for inner readiness?

Can we confess
we know how to assess?
Carefully!

Coming together
from formal and adult education
brings great illumination

REFLECT's determination -
to give you inspiration!