

LIFELONG LEARNING

A FRAMEWORK FOR MENTORING

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This Framework for Mentoring has been modified from a Research Report by Peter Renshaw on *Lifelong Learning for Musicians: The Place of Mentoring*, published in May 2006 (updated June 2009) for the Lectorate Lifelong Learning in Music at Prince Claus Conservatoire, Groningen and the Royal Conservatoire, The Hague, The Netherlands (Lector – Rineke Smilde). Full details of the Report (ISBN 90-811273-2-2) and the research project, Lifelong Learning in Music can be found on www.lifelonglearninginmusic.org

The Framework has been further adapted in the light of Peter Renshaw's role as Evaluator of REFLECT, the Creative Partnerships National Co-mentoring Programme, led by The Sage Gateshead. This programme was designed for creative practitioners and teachers. See www.thesagegateshead.org/reflect and www.reflectco-mentoring.com

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This Framework is intended to act as a guide for those individuals and organisations seeking to develop forms of lifelong learning and professional development that are rooted in a culture of reflective and reflexive practice.

Definitions

The term 'mentoring' and the ways in which this process of learning is approached depend on the purpose and context in which the mentoring takes place. In this framework the following definitions are used, thereby providing a spectrum of related but distinct roles:

Buddying

Buddying is an informal, friendly 'confessional' process in which experiences and insights are shared. It offers low-level support with little sense of progression and is generally only short-term, assisting a transition to a new job or new role.

Shadowing

A job role can be shadowed by an individual teacher or creative practitioner with an interest in learning about the role, without necessarily aspiring to do that particular job. The reasons for wishing to gain experience through shadowing and observation need to be clear and understood prior to the activity taking place. Shadowing might take the form of peer-to-peer conversation about their shared observation of practice. This could develop into a continuing professional peer relationship – i.e., peer mentoring.

Counselling

At the centre of counselling lies a conversation about personal development issues that might arise from professional practice.

Advising

Advising constitutes a conversation about professional issues that arise from practice in a specific context (e.g., career orientation; possible new directions for the future; professional development opportunities; new networks and partnerships; marketing; budgeting).

Tutoring

Tutoring is an intentional, goal-oriented activity aimed at fostering the understanding and learning of knowledge through the process of questioning, critical dialogue.

Instructing

Instructing comprises a didactic form of imparting and passing on specialist knowledge and skills with little scope for dialogue – i.e., a mechanistic model of transmitting knowledge.

Facilitating

Facilitating is a dynamic, non-directive way of generating a conversation aimed at enabling or empowering a person(s) to take responsibility for their own learning and practice.

Coaching

Coaching is an enabling process aimed at enhancing learning and development with the intention of improving performance in a specific aspect of practice. It has a short-term focus with an emphasis on immediate micro issues. (e.g., How can I improve my performance in this particular area? How can I strengthen my workshop practice? What are the most appropriate ways of making my team work together more effectively?)

Mentoring

Mentoring is a more developmental process, including elements of coaching, facilitating and counselling, aimed at sharing knowledge and encouraging individual development. It has a longer-term focus designed to foster personal growth and to help an individual place their creative, personal and professional development in a wider cultural, social and educational context (e.g., Why am I doing what I do? How do I perceive my identity? In what ways does this impact on my professional life and work? Where am I going? What determines my long-term goals?).

Co-mentoring

Co-mentoring entails a collaborative learning process in which both partners engage in an equal exchange of knowledge, skills and experience in relation to a clearly defined shared focus. It constitutes a form of peer-learning.

Main elements of a mentoring process

Quality of the learning environment

- Developing a non-judgemental, non-threatening working relationship based on empathy, trust and mutual respect.
- Establishing a safe, supportive learning environment.
- Creating conditions that encourage openness, honesty, informality and risk-taking.
- Defining boundaries and ground rules before commencing the process, by drawing up a mentoring or learning agreement.
- Building rapport and a clear understanding of who does what and why.
- Allowing the person being mentored (the mentee) to determine their own agenda, to select their shared focus and shape their process of learning.

Relationship between the mentor and mentee

- A one-to-one relationship in which the mentor has the knowledge and skills to empathise and understand the position of their mentee. This relationship has to be approached with understanding and sensitivity.
- When mentoring creative practitioners it might be more appropriate to include non-verbal dialogue or exchange. Most artists have chosen their art form as their primary means of communication. In general, they connect with each other through engaging in individual or shared creative practice and less through verbal, analytical, reflective processes. This could affect the dynamics of the mentoring relationship.

For example, most musicians connect with each other through making music together. The mentoring process might include a 'musical conversation' that encourages the musician to be reflective about their music-making or improvising in the moment of action. This can help to capture those subtle nuances and implicit understandings that are caught in the moment but are not easily put into words.

- A reciprocal relationship in which the mentor respects their mentee's potential for professional and personal development, and acknowledges their motivation for engaging in critical self-review and further learning rooted in practice-based evidence and experience.
- A confidential relationship based on trust and parity of respect. Details held in confidence cannot be divulged to other individuals or organisations.
- An effective relationship depends in part on the strength and integrity of a working partnership that is bound by a mentoring or learning agreement in which mutual roles, responsibilities and expectations are made explicit.
- Clear boundaries have to be established within personal and professional domains if the relationship is to work effectively.
- The mentoring relationship should be time-based with a beginning and an end. It should not be ongoing as compared with peer professional relationships or peer mentoring.

Reflective practice

Reflective practice or 'reflection-on-action' entails adopting a critical perspective about the reasons and consequences of what we do in different contexts. By focusing on the why rather than the how, this process of self-observation and self-review, rooted in evidence and experience drawn from their practice, enables a person to evaluate their starting point and to redefine their future actions. A reflective conversation helps a person to shift their perspective, change their behaviour and develop a sense of responsibility and ownership of their professional practice in a wide range of social and cultural contexts.

Facilitating a reflective conversation that focuses on:

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

Reflexive practice

Reflexive practice or 'reflection-in-action' focuses on how the quality of a person's inner listening, attention and awareness can help them clarify their purpose and motivation. Using empathy and being reflexive in a conversation can strengthen a person's sense of identity, deepen their self-awareness and enable them to understand how their personal motivation, values and emotions can affect their professional practice and learning. Being able to connect one's own inner listening to that of others is central to a sensitive mentoring relationship.

Facilitating a reflexive conversation that focuses on:

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

Effective mentoring conversations have to take into account the importance of the dynamic relationship between reflection and reflexivity, between the outer and inner thought processes of the person being mentored. By drawing out the interconnections between the mentee's creative, personal and professional development, fundamental questions regarding identity, motivation, meaning and personal creativity become the heart of a continuing reflective and reflexive dialogue.

Characteristics of effective mentors

- Credibility and experience in the particular field. Breadth of knowledge and skills to be able to make personal, creative and professional connections.
- Being willing to let go of ego, status and authority in order to understand the work of your mentee and to adopt a listening, supportive role. The mentor must feel comfortable in this role.
- Using your empathy and interpersonal skills in order to ask appropriate questions regarding the personal development of your mentee.
- Having the skills and insight to act as a sounding board for your mentee. This is central to any learning or developmental process aimed at enabling a person to clarify their sense of direction, to identify their strengths and realise their potential.
- In the area of creativity, understanding what it is to be a creative person. Their inner creative voice can sometimes best be illuminated by observing or listening to how they engage in creative practice, rather than just talking about it.
- Aiming to develop a flexible range of language registers in order to frame appropriate questions, respond to different personal narratives and communicate meaningfully, understanding where your mentee is coming from.
- Learning to listen actively, including respecting silence, reading body language, focusing on the substance of the conversation and, where necessary, reframing and reinforcing what has been said.
- Developing the ability to be self-reflective and self-aware in order to nurture these qualities in others (e.g., questioning motivation; separating out professional from personal issues).
- Being open and non-judgemental in relation to your mentee's individual and professional context.

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