

# REFLECT



**THE REFLEXIVE PRESENCE OF EDUCATOR AS A CORE  
COMPETENCE FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN NON-  
FORMAL ADULT EDUCATION**

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## 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.*

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## Reflective space:

*The main aim of the study was*

*how to become a better facilitator of reflection process?*

*The exploration and research has shown the importance of what has been called 'the reflexive presence' of the educator, i.e. his intrinsic capacity to reflect upon himself and to hold the reflective space for himself and for his learners.*

*The main stress was put on the importance of the relationship between educator and the learner and/or the group the learners.*

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The aim of this presentation is to discuss possible improvements of educator's quintessential qualities and competences related to the 'reflexive presence' and the impact of educator's listening on the reflective atmosphere in group of learners participating in non-formal (experiential) adult education.

Here 'reflexive' point to the impact of the educator's presence on the learners and the group, to the stimulating or braking effects related to his or her relationships with the learners.

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The educator can ‘steer’ or ‘tune’ his or her presence and relationship in order to facilitate the reflective process of the learners. They called this the **chameleon-effect**: “when the educator let 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” (Jakube et al., 2016:51).

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“because then the educator in turn will start adapting himself to the qualities, attitude and attention of the learners” (Jakube, et al., 2016:52).

The chameleon-effect is created in the continued and dynamic interplay between educator and learners, a process of fine-tuning.

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Secondly the adjective ‘reflexive’ points to capability of the educator to reflect herself, not just on her own (i.e. without the group being around), but as well as in the midst of a learning group at work,

e.g. when the group is confronted with difficult events in its natural development or, and that may even be a bigger challenge for the educator, when the group is opposing his or her facilitation.

If she is able to process cognitively and emotionally what is going on in these moments, the educator’s reflexivity helps the learners to reflect more fully the individual and collective processes.

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In his Theory U. Leading from the future Otto Scharmer (2013) discerns four different levels of listening in any kind of conversations:

- habitual listening;
- object-focused;
- person-focused;
- generative listening – reflexive presence

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## **Habitual listening:**

implies a **superficial** kind of listening, as everything is **reconfirming** already existing knowledge, judgements or opinions of the educator.

If information does not conform, what she knows already or expects to hear, the educator simply doesn't 'hear and thus does not process it'.

All information is assimilated into the **educator's frame-of-reference**. "when everything you hear confirms what you already know, you are listening by downloading" (Scharmer, 2013). This happens for example when the educator is asking rhetorical questions or questions on which he or she already knows the 'right answer'.

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## Object-focused listening:

When educator really **begins to hear new information**, processing new facts and figures which broaden her perspective on the topic, she starts to listen factually.

“you switch off your inner voice of judgment and focus on what differs from what you already know. You ask questions, and you pay careful attention to the responses you get. You **disconfirm what you already know** and notice what is new out there” (Scharmer, 2013).

This kind of listening **requires an open mind** (in comparison to the first level). This happens, for example, when the educator is ‘reframing’ the answers of learners in existing theoretical models he or she wants to teach about.

Both habitual and factual listening are related to and **limited to the educator’s existing frame-of reference**: the educator is listening only for himself and his learning agenda. As a consequence the openness learners will experience in conversation is limited as well.

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## **Person focused listening:**

Scharmer (2013) calls this the **empathic** listening, a kind of listening which requires **not only an open mind, but an open heart as well.**

The educator should ‘open up’, forgetting (at least momentarily) his or her knowledge, opinions, ideas and learning agenda and enabling a direct connection with learners from within whereby she begins to see the world through their eyes.

Here the educator is learning about **the learner’s frame-of-reference.** This happens, for example, when the educator is asking open and explorative in order to understand how learners think and feel.

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## **Generative listening:**

Listening becomes **holistic** on the fourth level as it involves the whole being of the educator.

“I can’t express what I experience in words. My whole being has slowed down. I feel more quiet and present and more my real self. I am connected to something larger than myself” (Scharmer, 2013). It’s an understanding **beyond any frame-of-reference** (be it the educator’s frame-of-reference, be it the learners’ frame-of-references), in the sense that the educator begins to understand the situation in a deeper way which she could not understand it at all before. Something new is appearing. **On top of an open mind and open heart, this kind of listening requires an open will.**

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# Poem made out from report of testing project:

a moment  
I was happy  
how I was facilitating

I was holding the space for people

I allowed the time  
I waited until they were ready to speak

sometimes as facilitators  
we ask a question  
suggest an activity  
then we want answer right away,

you get anxious  
special moment for me  
living with my anxiety

then I said no this is not about you  
it's about this whole group  
you need just to hold space for them

something came at the time of the group

a nice moment

how can I give instructions  
that does not direct to particular goal  
but opens to see what is happening

not relating to myself but opening

how can you give instructions  
not turning to a particular outcome  
that was the challenge

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