

# Developing Sustainable Communities of Reflective Practice



## A handbook for facilitating reflection within hub clusters



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## Introduction

### Developing a sustainable 'Community of Reflective Practice' (CORP)

Reflective practice has been a key theme underpinning the development of the SAGE programme. Reflective practice has been embedded within the training and module support materials for Hub Volunteers. Hub-level reflection has been established with the support of School Buddies who have been trained in facilitating Hub-based reflective practice. The primary aim of reflective practice is to support learning by reflecting on experience. As we have all experienced, this can happen individually or collectively, as part of training or through collaborative working within our teams.

As the SAGE programme moves towards transition to community management, **cluster-level** reflection (where local hubs come together) provides a supportive network of practitioners to provide support, learning and ongoing development of the SAGE programme.



**Figure 1** A model of cluster-level reflection

This handbook draws together a number of resources to support the establishment of cluster-level reflection which consists of three components:

- Collaborative** Working together as local hubs to identify and overcome challenges
- Reflective** Thinking about aspects of our work as educators, identifying areas for improvement
- Practice** Developing our approaches as educators to support learners more effectively

You can use this handbook on its own, or in conjunction with the **SAGE Professional Development programme**.

The nine CORP themes you will learn about in this handbook cross reference with the six SAGE Professional Development programme themes as follows:

- Establishing the teaching and learning programme
  - Making learners feel welcome
- Teaching and learning on SAGE
  - Building my teaching and learning skills
- Assessing learner progress
  - Identifying learner needs
  - Recognising learner progress
  - Supporting learner progression
  - Strategies to support learners who are struggling
- Supporting individual learners
  - Including all learners/supporting all learners
  - Supporting students with specific needs
- Supporting learners at a distance
  - Maintaining effective relationships
- Developing professional practice
  - More information can be found in this Developing Sustainable Communities of Reflective Practice (CORP) handbook.

You will find more detail about the nine CORP themes in **Appendix 1** of this handbook.

## Establishing cluster-level reflective-practice meetings

### Who?

Cluster-level reflective-practice meetings will be established with the support of your local SAGE coordinators. Clusters will usually be comprised of three hubs and their volunteers (Community Educators and School Buddies, Literacy Leads and Numeracy Leads).

Cluster-level reflective-practice meetings should be facilitated by School Buddies, and it is suggested the facilitation of meetings be rotated amongst the School Buddies whilst the process is established (i.e., Meeting 1, School Buddy A. Meeting 2, School Buddy B, etc.).

### When?

Meetings should happen monthly, providing the opportunity to come together to share practice and to identify and overcome challenges collectively.

### Where?

Meetings need to happen in accessible contexts. Face-to-face meetings should be established and alternated within and between host hubs (allowing colleagues to visit and experience the working contexts of colleagues). Alternatively, they could happen online via WhatsApp if this supports greater levels of access and participation for all.

### What?

The purpose of the meetings is to collectively and collaboratively engage in reflection upon identified areas in need of development i.e., environment, resources, approaches, relationships, outcomes (see **Appendix 1**).

This can be achieved by adopting the process outlined in the 'Cluster Reflection Process' below:

- Step 1: Clusters convene
- Step 2: Clusters engage in reflection
- Step 3: Identify and record key learning points
- Step 4: Identify and record key actions
- Step 5: Agree timing for next meeting and commit to actions
- Step 6: Review actions and progress
- Step 7: Reflect upon actions to identify learning
- Step 8: Identify effective and less effective actions
- Step 9: Consider what learning is helpful to share more widely and how
- Step 10: Prepare for next cycle of reflection
- Step 11: Plan

## The 11-step cluster reflection process

### **Step 1: Clusters convene and are facilitated by a School Buddy**

As a cluster, choose an aspect of work from the list below that you believe it would be helpful to reflect upon (**Appendix 1** has a list of themes and questions to support reflection).

Clusters are free to identify their own priorities, including aspects of work not covered by the categories below:

- Making learners feel welcome
- Identifying learner needs
- Including all learners
- Supporting all learners
- Recognising learner progress
- Strategies to support learners who are struggling with literacy
- Strategies to support learners who are struggling with numeracy
- Supporting students with specific needs
- Building my teaching and learning skills
- Supporting learner progression
- Support learners with specific needs (including disabilities).

It will be necessary to draw upon specific cases (case studies), or examples from practice, to support your reflection.

### **Step 2: Clusters engage in reflection on aspects of current practice in relation to the chosen theme**

Work as a cluster for an agreed amount of time (recommend 45 mins) reflecting on the practice of hubs in relation to your chosen theme. Here, the School Buddy acts as a facilitator supporting reflection. They encourage hub volunteers to reflect on different aspects of the hub where they can effect change, including:

- Environment
- Resources
- Approaches
- Relationships
- Outcomes.

### **Step 3: Identify and record key learning points arising from reflection**

Recap and identify key learning points, areas for development and potential courses of action (make a written note of these for all to see).

**Step 4: Identify and record key actions arising from reflection**

As a group, agree and record the priority actions arising from the reflection (e.g., via a reflective log and commitments to action). Who is going to do what, how and when?

The record of actions may be displayed as a poster in the hub so that visitors or coordinators are aware of the hub's area of reflective practice.

**Step 5: Agree timing for next meeting and commit to actions in the intervening time**

Agree a time and date for Meeting 2. Leave enough time for actions to be implemented.

**Step 6: Review actions and progress**

Led by the School Buddy, the group reviews the commitments to action it made in Meeting 1 using the reflective log.

**Step 7: Reflect upon actions to identify learning and areas for further development**

The group, supported by the School Buddy, reflects upon each commitment to action and how it translated to practice, identifying what went well and why.

It identifies how any actions were modified to enable them to have greater effect. It also identifies the actions that had less impact or were in some way detrimental.

**Step 8: Identify effective and less effective actions**

The group moves on to identify which actions should be adopted in the long term, which actions/issues need further consideration and which actions should be abandoned.

**Step 9: Consider what learning is helpful to share more widely and how**

The group identifies ways to communicate its learning more widely across the project, including sharing insights with Hub Development Committees, SAGE Coordinators, etc. The group might produce a digital poster, make a short film, etc.

**Step 10: Prepare for next cycle of reflection**

The group looks forward to the next cycle of meetings, including which areas for reflection should be carried forwards and what new areas are deemed worthy of consideration.

**Stage 11: Plan**

Set the dates and times are set for the next cycle of reflection.

## Working through the reflective process

The reflective process has been designed to support focused, action-oriented reflection. A list of themes to provide focus for the meeting has been provided as part of the outline process. However, it is envisaged that when the process becomes more familiar, established groups will identify their own themes for reflective meetings.

### Facilitating reflection

Facilitating reflection requires a range of skills and abilities. Beyond holding the boundaries of:

- Time – allowing adequate time and space to work through the process
- Task – clarifying and encouraging the group to focus on the task at hand
- Territory – hosting the session in an appropriate space, whether face-to-face or online.

The key skill of the facilitator is to create a space where participants feel able to speak and be heard. This will inevitably involve some degree of encouragement and support. However, ultimately the reflective process must be seen as worthwhile and productive for the participants themselves, if they are to engage fully. On the part of the facilitator, this will require patience, the ability to listen and promote listening. The ability to reflect back to participants what is being said and understood and, where necessary, intervene to refocus the process.

### The facilitator's role

The role of the facilitator is to support the reflective process within the reflective meetings. Two main ways the facilitators can do this is by asking exploratory questions and encouraging commitment to action.

Examples of exploratory questions include:

- What has been our experience?
- What factors have been important in shaping our experience? (e.g., environment, resources, approaches, relationships and outcomes)
- What have we done to assist the situation?
- What remains challenging?
- What do we need to improve this situation?

### Reflection into action

An important element of this process is moving through the reflective cycle, and the facilitator has a key role to play here within the meeting. Ensure adequate time is given to



identifying and planning for action. By the end of each meeting, the participants should be leaving with a renewed plan of action.

### **Principles for supporting reflection on practice**

Encourage volunteers to:

1. **Be learner-focused:** The primary focus of your support should be learner-focused. It is easy and understandable in difficult circumstances to become distracted by a wide range of issues. Placing learners and their needs at the centre of your reflections helps clarify the focus of the conversations and subsequent action.
2. **Be solution-focused in your responses:** It is important to focus on solutions to identified issues or problems, rather than dwell too long on the problem itself. Once the problem is understood, you can move on to identifying actionable solutions.
3. **Be realistic:** Unrealistic expectations can be unhelpful. Work with the hub volunteers to identify realistic expectations. Unrealistic expectations will result in over concentration on problems and issues.
4. **Share learning and good practice beyond the cluster itself:** The SAGE community has a great potential to share its learning across its operation and beyond. Please encourage and support this. This can be done via posters, video, case study, newsletter.

## Appendix 1: Themes for Communities of Reflective Practice

The following themes are purposefully broad and they also link to the six **SAGE Professional Development** themes (see p.4 for more information).

Theme \ Focus	Environment	Approach	Resources	Relationships	Outcomes
<b>Making learners feel welcome</b>	Is the hub a stimulating and engaging environment?	Are you welcoming to all girls?	Are there adequate resources for all learners to participate in activities?	Do you give time for relationships to form across the group?	How do you know learners feel welcome?
<b>Identifying learner needs</b>	Are you able to observe the participation and progress within the hub? What might you need to change to the hub layout to assist in this?	How do you engage each learner to assess and understand their individual needs?	What resources have you secured/adapted to meet individual learner needs? What resources do you need to adapt to meet learners needs?	How do you promote relationships between learners that support them in meeting their needs?	How do you know all learners' needs are being met?
<b>Including all learners</b>	Is the learning hub inclusive and accessible? What physical obstacles are there to inclusion? What physiological/emotional barriers might there be?	What features of your approach do you think helps to engage all learners? What aspects of your approach could be improved?	Are there adequate resources for all learners to participate <b>effectively</b> in all activities?	What have you done to ensure all learners are engaged? How have you managed pairs and groups to promote learning relationships across the group?	To what extent do you feel you have been successful in including all learners? What challenges have you faced? What issues remain a challenge?

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<b>Supporting all learners</b>	Are the individual needs of all learners being recognised and met?	How do you engage each learner to assess and understand their individual needs?	What resources have been secured/adapted to meet individual learner needs? What resources do you need to adapt to meet learners needs?	How do you promote relationships between learners that support them in meeting their needs?	How do you know all learners' needs are being met? How often do you review this?
<b>Recognising learner progress</b>	How is learner progress being considered? On a daily/weekly/termly basis? Formally and informally?	How do you engage each learner to assess and understand their individual progress?	What resources have been secured/adapted to support learner progress? What resources do you need to adapt to meet learner progress?	Who is best positioned to support the progress of individual learners?	How do you know the support is effective? How often do you review this?
<b>Strategies to support learners who are struggling with literacy</b>  <b>Strategies to support learners who are struggling with numeracy</b>	What specific strategies are in place at the hub level to support learners who are struggling with literacy/numeracy?	How do you engage each learner to assess and understand how and why a learner is struggling with literacy/numeracy?	What resources have been secured/adapted to support learners who are struggling with literacy/numeracy?	Who will provide the various elements of support needed?	How do you know the support is effective? How often do you review this?
<b>Supporting students with specific needs</b>	What specific strategies are in place at the hub level to support learners who have specific needs?	How do you engage each learner to assess and understand their specific needs?	What resources have been secured/adapted to meet specific learner needs? What resources do you need to adapt to meet specific needs?	Who will provide the various elements of support needed?	How do you know the support is effective? How often do you review this?

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<b>Building my teaching and learning skills</b>	What skills do I need to develop in order to effectively support learners?	How will you recognise the areas of development needed in your teaching and learning?	What resources have been secured/adapted to develop teaching and learning skills?	Who will provide the various elements of support needed?	How do you know the support is effective? How often do you review this?
<b>Supporting learner progression</b>	How are learners supported into new opportunities following participation in SAGE?	How will you assess the aspirations of learners regarding their progression?	What resources have been secured/adapted to support learner progression?	Who will provide the various elements of support needed?	How do you know the support is effective? How often do you review this?

### Focal points for reflection

Focal points provide tangible areas for reflection and action in relation to the major themes. In each area, the reflective cycle 'Plan, Do, Assess, Review' can be worked through both by looking back and planning forward.

The most relevant focal point to the theme should be chosen by the group as its primary point for consideration. However, all focal points should be considered so a more holistic approach to reflection and action is considered.

**Environment** – relates to both the physical and psychological/emotional environment created for learners.

For example:

- Plan**            How did I organise the learning environment?
- Do**                Was the environment supportive of the activity the learners we engaged in?
- Assess**        What could have been done to improve the environment?
- Reflect**        What would I change about the environment for similar activities in the future?

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**Approach** – relates to the way(s) in which you have approached an activity with learners i.e., working in small or whole groups.

**Resources** – relates to all the resources you draw upon directly within the hub or beyond to support an activity, including material resources (workbooks, posters, place values counters, etc.) and human resources (Learning Assistants, School Buddies and the wider community).

**Outcomes** – relates to the learning taking place. What evidence do you have that individual learners are learning? This will involve both the formal assessment activities such as initial and mid progress assessments and your day-to-day assessment of learning.

## Appendix 2: Cluster Reflection Recording Template

Please keep a record of meetings and outcomes using template below.

Cluster: Hub A, Hub B, Hub C					
Date/Module	Meeting	Attendees (Include hub, name and role)	Facilitator	Reflective framework theme/hub focus	Outcomes/Learning/evidence
	Meeting 1				
Against each action/outcome, record: <b>What?</b> <b>Who?</b> <b>Where?</b> <b>When?</b>	Actions:	Action 1:		Outcome:	
		Action 2:		Outcome:	
		Action 3:		Outcome:	
	Meeting 2  Online via WhatsApp				