feedback

DEVELOPING THE PRACTICE OF FEEDBACK TO ENHANCE LEARNING THROUGH ARTS

TITLE

FEEDBACK – An introduction of the practice of feedback to enhance learning through Arts

SCOPE

FEEDBACK is an international project, supported by the European Commission under the Erasmus+ programme, and aims to set the foundations to define a clearer model of feedback to enhance learning and therefore act as leverage for the design of new learning programmes.

This document intends to summarize the results that the FeedBack Project's partners gathered in primary research through direct contact with learners and learning facilitators, and through the gathering and review of insights from available literature on the topic.

The main goal of this document is to provide a baseline for the next stages of the FeedBack Project.

PARTNERS

Advancis (Portugal), Politecnico di Milano (Italy), Inova Consultancy (UK), Regenerus (UK) and the International School for Social and Business Studies (Slovenia) are working to develop innovative, artful, cross-cultural and accessible learning resources on the practice of Feedback for educators and trainers.

CO-FUNDING

SUMMARY

INTRO 1/2

There is limited evidence of Art based learning being applied to feedback in either the educational context or in the workplace. Within the teaching profession examples are more likely to be found in art-based subjects.

Educators use feedback to support individuals to move forward in their learning journey whether in the class room or the work place. Often it is a process rather than a passion. Using innovative feedback can enhance the experience for the giver and receiver of feedback.

A key challenge is "Change". Often educators will work with what they are familiar with and may be reluctant to try new ways of working, including new ways of giving feedback. In a busy environment the time to implement new ways of working can, in itself, become a barrier.

Although part of a national and sometimes transnational accreditation system, grades alone are not a fulfilling way to give students feedback. Grades can form part of the summative feedback, however if formative feedback is also used effectively during the learning journey, this can enhance the learning experience and deliver impact on the overall achievements of a student and a positive experience for both the receiver and the giver of feedback.

Feedback can be innovative, it can take into account differentiation and it can also build strong relationships between tutors and their learners. Creating respect in the learning process is key as the learner is more likely to value the feedback of someone they respect. By giving feedback that is channelled to the needs of the learner, that is relevant, timely and appropriate, the learner is more likely to act on the feedback received and in doing so improve their end result and their learning in specific subject areas.

Making the feedback process innovative and creative is a challenge. However the benefits of doing so can be rewarding for both the tutor and learner and new innovative methods applied in the class room and also in the work place can lead to increased productivity, improved work life balance, job satisfaction, mutual respect and a feeling of "value".

Feedback is an important part of the teaching and learning cycle. Without feedback how do we progress or change bad habits? Feedback is imperative and we suggest educators be encouraged and supported when aiming for continuous improvement in this field. Innovative and creative ways of giving feedback demand further consideration, as when planning online courses there is the additional challenge of reduced levels of interaction with the educator. Creative and innovative feedback approaches can contribute to make any learning environment, whether the workplace or the classroom, becoming more interesting, dynamic and engaging.

THE PRACTICE OF FEEDBACK IN THE LEARNING CYCLE

COMMON UNDERSTANDING

At the primary stage of the FEEDBACK Project, partners worked on a common understanding of the meaning and appliance of the practice of Feedback in learning experiences, despite individual differences – context, knowledge, experience. And we are very proud of what was agreed so far: 'Feedback is a gift. An energy to go on. It leads to a process of transformation that arts based learning can enable through the facilitation of moments of reflection and, consequently, self-assessment which can support individuals to improve, change and develop.'

This is the common understanding of the FEEDBACK Project partners regarding the practice of Feedback when applied to the learning cycle. This is our starting point to guide this three year project and lays the foundation for our commitment to develop artful and innovative digital learning resources to support the practice of Feedback for educators and trainers.

UNDERSTANDING THE MEANING & THE ROLE

From an in-depth literature review, undertaken by partners, evidence suggests that feedback should be formative and form an integral part of the learning process, ensuring learners stay on target to reach their goals - Burgess and Mellis (2015).
Hill (2007) identifies that 'feedback plays an important role in helping learners move round the learning cycle. For example, feedback supports the process of reflection and the consideration of new or more in-depth theory. Through a process of negotiation, feedback can also help the learner plan productively for the next learning experience' (Multiprofessional Faculty Development, 2018).

Feedback is most effective when it takes place alongside the learning cycle of the learner. The learner has the ability to make changes and learn from the feedback. Feedback is most useful during 'reflective observation' where it can help the learner identify issues and reflect on their experience. Feedback can be either summative (outcome-orientated), given at the end of the completion of the task, or formative (process-orientated) which focuses on the student's learning and their thinking process. Gjerde et al., (2017) found that process-oriented feedback tended to have a 'more positive impact on student performance than outcome-orientated' and

was rated highly by students who found it useful for their learning as 'it showed students what they needed to change in order to perform better instead of simply highlighting what was incorrect with the answer they provided'.

So why is the practice of feedback in learning still lacking in learning experiences?

In a second phase of the research conducted by the FEEDBACK Project partners, teachers (from kindergarten to higher education), managers, coaches, higher education learners, researchers, tutors and vocational trainers were invited to take part in focus groups organised in the four countries of the partnership and share their thoughts and experiences regarding the practice of feedback and how it applied to learning. Although the context and the experiences of each participant differed, the results were surprisingly similar particularly regarding the positive opinion about feedback and also the doubts about its application in the learning experience. In addition, results suggested the need to build a common language for and between tutors and learners, to help to demystify the topic of feedback when applied to learning. The main results from these European based focus groups are presented below.

Whether the focus groups took place in an educational or professional context, the practice of feedback is described as a "response to a stimulus or a response given in relation with something that one has done". Considering context, feedback was recognised as an integral part of the learning process; it is used to remove uncertainties, give space for reflection and clarify what the next steps are for the learners.

Keywords about 'How do you understand feedback?'							
As a... Learning Opportunity							
Active Listening	Appraisals	Assessment	Change Management	Context	Continuous Improvement	Critical (carefully analytical	Concrete
Follow Up – Long Lasting-Impact	Guidance	Honest	Learning Path	Motivational	On-Going Process	Rational	Reflecting
Removing Deficiencies/ Uncertainties	Review	SMART Goals	Strategy	Strengths And Weaknesses	Two Ways	Understanding	Up-To-Date
As a... Challenge							
Complex	Follow Up – Long term	Formal Vs. Informal	Grading System Duality	Rejection	Respecting Singularities (Emotional vs. rational)	Time (Timing And Frequency)	Verbal vs. written

HOW

According to all participants who took part in the research activities, feedback processes should include all parties involved in order to have a long lasting impact on the learners experience and the structure they evolve within.

Educators agree that the practice of feedback should be a two way process, whether it is viewed as a formal or informal practice; people and the organisation as a whole can benefit from a circular practice of feedback. Responses suggest that it is important for trainers to give learners space for reflection so as they can "own the feedback they receive"; feedback should be an open conversation where all parties involved can explain their ways of doing before deciding together which steps to take. Further, it was noted that without informed consent from the receiver, the feedback might never be implemented by the learner.

Teachers and especially those working in higher education find that learners are saturated with feedback; whether it is quantitative or qualitative feedback i.e. an assessment, or a meeting with a professor, lecturer or teacher.

Research results also suggested that it is also important that feedback givers understand the whole picture so as to set learning objectives and this can only be done by receiving feedback from learners themselves.

All focus group participants reported similar understanding of effective verbal feedback, which is summarised as follows:

Understand the context	�« Where does the learner stand on their learning path? ➷ Make sure the person receiving feedback has a positive mind-set and won't take feedback as personal critics but as as opportunity to learn and grow ➷ Understand the person's sensibility, tailor your feedback: a feedback is unique and individual, avoid comparison
Have an open discussion	➷ Give time to reflect onto feedback ➷ Provide clarifications or explanations when necessary ➷ Teach how to celebrate success
Set SMART objectives	➷ Specific ➷ Measurable ➷ Attainable ➷ Result-Oriented ➷ Time-Bound

WHEN

Most focus group participants expressed difficulties regarding how to deliver feedback. Although many models exist, giving feedback depends on people's sensibility and position in their learning path. Being "critical and fair" whilst being "open to the discussion" and respecting everyone's "sensibility" can be challenging. FeedBack project Focus Groups' participants shared with us their feedback best practices as "givers" and as a "receivers".

Qualitative feedback activities often supplement quantitative assessment; students get grades and employees have a numerous quantitative variables they can look into to know where they

stand (e.g. deadlines or targets such as how much/many or something is produced or achieved). However, "assessment is raw feedback" and teachers regret the "finality" of grades, that "merely evaluates the past practice of a student" and does not give input to the students on how to learn better. The same problem can occur in the workplace when simply evaluating "performance but not understating the whole picture.

Participants from the focus groups shared their views on the appliance of feedback at different stages of the learning experience, as presented below.

Plan the feedback	🦐 Find the right time to deliver feedback 🦐 At the end of the learning cycle/activity 🦐 Agree on the frequency	🦐 Decide on the most appropriate settings 🦐 Group feedback into themes 🦐 Give specific examples
Ask questions	🦐 Asking the learner how they think they're doing and what they think they could do to improve can help them take ownership of the feedback and involved in the learning path setting	
Follow-up	🦐 To ensure ongoing development 🦐 Understand that change can take time (e.g. structural boundaries, strong mind-sets)	

MODEL OF FEEDBACK TO ENHANCE LEARNING

From the literature review and the analysis and interpretation of different experiences and perceptions shared during the focus groups, the FEEDBACK Project partners identified the key elements to be considered when applying feedback in learning programmes. The model presented here will support the next stage of the project: the development of digital learning resources to support the practice of feedback, incorporating artful based learning methods.

THE BASIC MODEL

As highlight by Paulson, Padgett, Skinner (2017) Ilgen, Fisher and Taylor (1979) conceptualized the feedback process as a special case of the more general communication process. The factors influencing feedback effectiveness fit into three broad categories:

➤ the feedback source - as part of the learning process according to the goals defined by the educators / learning facilitators and flows through a communication channel

➤ the feedback recipient - tied to the needs of the learner

➤ the feedback message - useful and supportive

Feedback flows through different channels following various directions in a web of actors acting to reach a clear and common goal.

FEEDBACK MODEL

channel · actor · actor · channel · actor · channel · actor*

CONTEXT
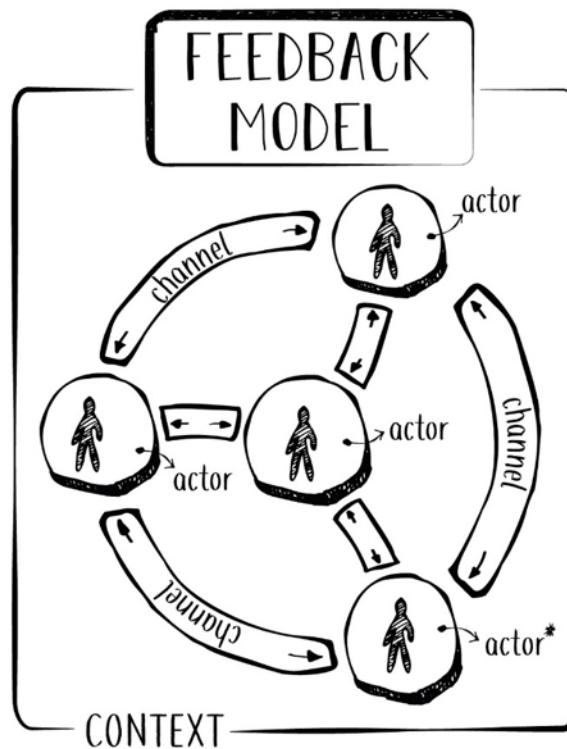
** any actor is unique in terms of needs and characteristics*

Feedback is an integral part of the learning process. Both the receiver of the feedback, in this case learners and the tutors need to work together to make sure that feedback meets the needs of the individual. Often 'teachers see feedback in isolation from other aspects of the teaching and learning process, and consider feedback to be primarily a teacher owned endeavour' - Spiller (2014).

There is no point getting feedback if it is provided too late, or does not help in the formative learning process of the learner i.e. it is not useful or cannot be used to implement improvements during the learning cycle. Learners should be supported to understand the importance of feedback and it needs to tie in to their needs – providing it on time, making sure it is useful and ensuring it develops the skills of the individual to help them to be more successful in the future.

THE FEEDBACK PROCESS

Like a gift, feedback is effective if:

➤ it's accurately designed by the feedback source, being linked to specific goals and being appropriate for context/recipients. (STEP 1 – FEEDBACK DELIVERY)

➤ recipients are ready to receive it and to reflect on it (STEP 2 – REFLECTION),

➤ recipients act on it to improve their future work and learning (STEP 3 - REFOCUS)
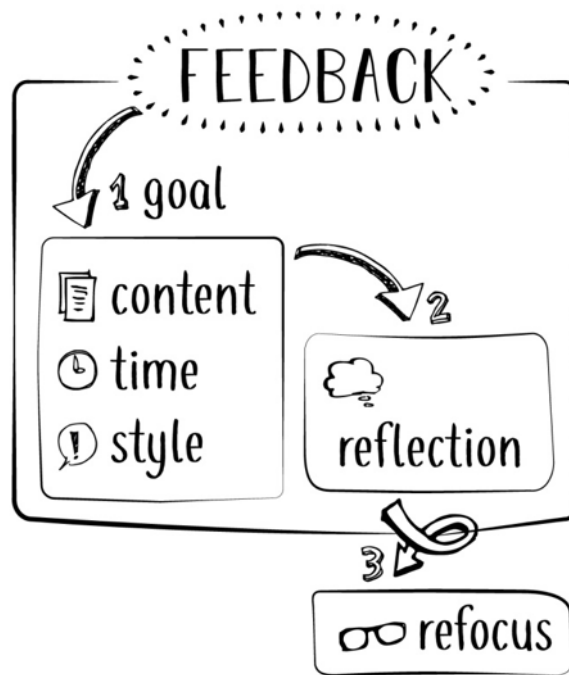
FEEDBACK MESSAGE DESIGN

How to design a feedback message?

Having a clear idea of:

🍃 the main characteristics and needs of the source(s) and the recipient(s)

🍃 the clear and common goal to reach

Design feedback considering three dimensions: the CONTENT, the TIME, the STYLE

CONTENT

Feedback content has to be linked to Specific (learning) goals in terms of:

🍃 knowledge or skills to be acquired (both hard and soft skills), (WHERE AM I GOING?)

🍃 process used in reaching the goal (HOW AM I GOING?)

🍃 steps forward which will be useful to reach the goal (WHERE TO NEXT?)

🍃 in order to be pertinent, sufficient and detailed enough, based on concrete observation and

materials to support the reflection and refocus Phase.

! Feedback can be linked to the purpose of the specific task assigned and the criteria used for the task assessment, therefore it's useful to have a clear "criteria sheets", also called ("Grading Rubric", "grading schemes", or "scoring guides") that makes explicit a range of assessment criteria and expected performance standards on which to base the feedback.

TIME

Feedback has to be provided:

- in a way that is timely
- in different moments of the process (periodically, frequent) alongside the learning cycle with the proper duration (give time to feedback!)

! Feedback is most useful during the 'reflective' phase of each (learning) process where feedback can help you identify issues and reflect on your experience.

! Feedback moments have to be scheduled in advance before starting the task/process but the schedule has to be flexible (in terms of moments and duration) according the needs arising during the work in progress.

STYLE

Feedback has to be provided with the proper style which is composed of:

- the form (written and oral)
- the tone (formal, informal)
- the channel (live, digital)
- the media (video, text, image)

! There is no right answer: adopting the style of the recipient will put them at ease, but sometimes it's not the right choice (e.g.: you need to adapt to the context)

! Using different forms (e.g.: both written and oral feedback), channels, media can better support the process

THE GENERAL MODEL
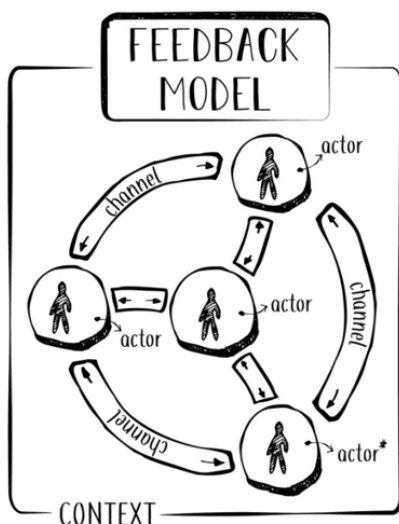
* any actor is unique in terms of needs and characteristics

FEEDBACK 10 GOLDEN RULES

Good feedback:

- is tailored to the recipient's needs and characteristic

- affirms the worth of the receiver

- is linked to a clear (learning) goal

- is accurate, direct and clear leaving little room for misinterpretation

- focuses on the positive aspects and not just the negative ones

- gives suggestions on which the receiver can act

- bases comments on concrete observable behaviour or materials – not generalisations

- is timed appropriately and promptly

- does not push a receiver to feel a certain way but offers considered views which are open to rejection

- does not act as an authority, uses comments like 'I feel…when you…'

FRAMEWORK FOR THE ART-BASED APPROACH TO LEARNING

The goal of arts-based learning is not to teach people to be artists, but to create intense immersive learning experiences through artistic processes that facilitate new insights and perspectives (Nissley, 2010).

Taylor (2008) specifies four essential advantages of arts-based learning:

- they correspond to tacit/embodied forms of knowing and experiencing;
- these experiences can be understood holistically instead of through logical and systematic processes;
- they foster meaning-making linked to personal experiences;
- they may have lasting impacts as a result of being shareable and enjoyable.

Arts based initiatives don't aim at serving arts education goals (e.g. understanding technical or historical contents), their primary goal is not to produce a work of art but to design "creative learning through an alliance with art-based pedagogical processes" - Kerr, Cheryl and Lloyd, Cathryn (2008). This product oriented approach aims at facilitating arts based initiatives that are "thought-provoking and capable of engaging people into reflection, self-assessment and development of a new and different knowledge of the organisational issues" and can therefore be linked to the practice of feedback – Schiuma (2009).

We consider that the appliance of the practice of feedback throughout the learning cycle, arts based initiatives can also assure a continuous impact if applied in a sustainable way, in line with a strategic direction and with the acknowledgement that when fulfilling an experience at the individual level, this can also be propagated at group level and subsequently at community/public level.

CONNECTED TO THE PRACTICE OF FEEDBACK

According to the Arts Value Matrix presented by Schiuma (2009), there are different "categories that identify the possible impacts that an arts based initiative can have in terms of benefits related to people change and/or of the benefits linked to an organisational infrastructure development".
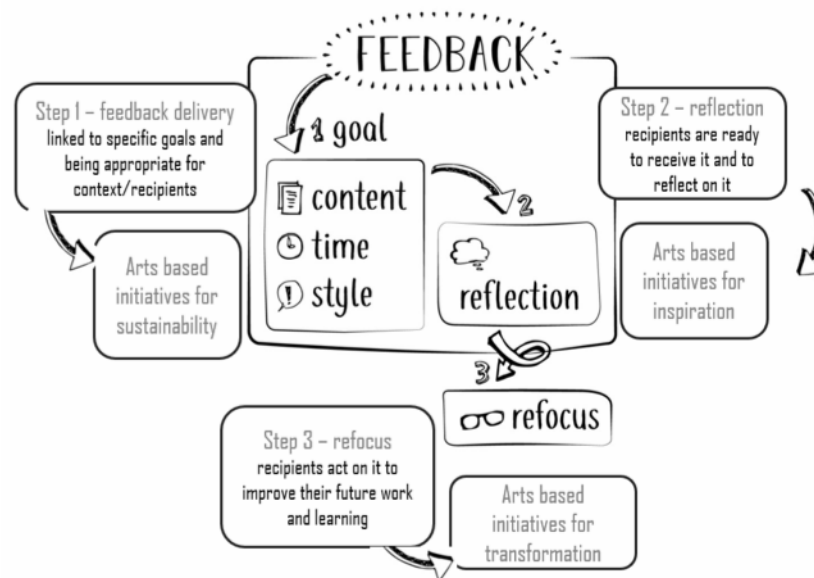
ART BASED INITIATIVES FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Feedback through arts based initiatives is effective if it designed with sustainability in mind:

STEP 1 – FEEDBACK DELIVERY
linked to specific goals and being appropriate for context/recipients

ARTS BASED INITIATIVES FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Arts based initiatives foresee a sustainable impact and benefits at individual and group levels, but it has to be seen as a continuous project itself. It is not meant that learners produce art work, but that the use of already existing art work (films, poems, paintings – products and processes) catalyses the motivation to reflect and refocus.

Thus, depending on the specific goals of the learning and for the learner(s), arts based initiatives can be planned considering time, intensity and nature to directly guide learners in the learning path.
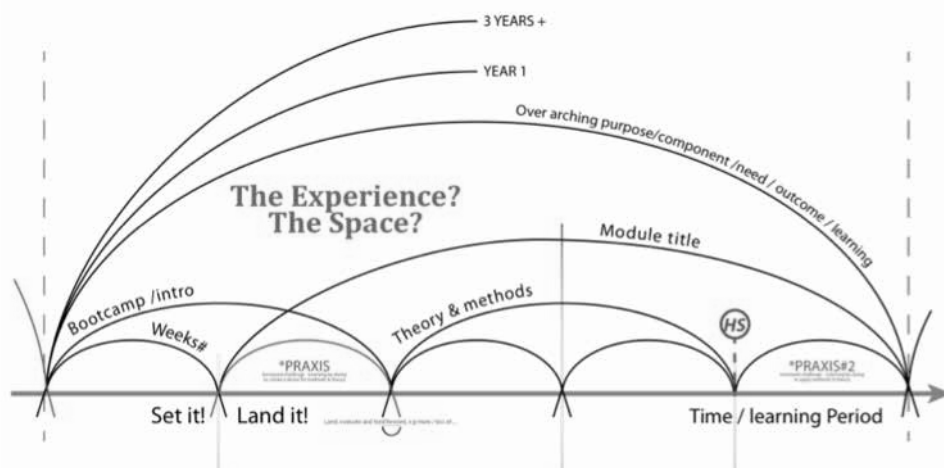
Source: University of the Arts London

"Kaospilot is a hybrid business and design school, a multi-sided education in leadership and entrepreneurship. Our teaching programmes are not designed simply to shape students to fit the future, but to help them create it." – www.kaospilot.dk

Designing learning experiences for Kaospilots is an artful process which considers that if each learning moment (captured in arches) must be launched or learners they will need to land it in order to be ready for a new learning moment. To land "allows the students to feed forward their learning, explore what they want to learn more of and dig deeper into [during the remaining arches or simply create links to help understand the importance of what they have just acquired in relation to the master arch and over all purpose/goal or vision."

To know more about it: https://medium.com/@jakobwolman/creative-leadership-a-course-at-kaospilot-a80f1b97c112

ART BASED INITIATIVES FOR REFLECTION

Feedback through arts based initiatives is effective if it enables reflection:

STEP 2 – REFLECTION
recipients are ready to receive it and to reflect on it

ARTS BASED INITIATIVES FOR INSPIRATION

Reflection can be defined as a cognitive process in which the person attempts to increase his or her awareness of personal experiences and therefore his or her ability to learn from them (Gordon & Smith Hullfish, 1961). Arts based initiatives allow learners to have the time and space to step back from action and provides them with inspirational resources to help them think through feedback and identify what they have to relearn, improve and refocus on. Arts based initiatives act as a trigger, provoking "people to question the way they act. They encourage self-assessment, self-discipline, self-efficacy, self-confidence, selfesteem and reflection on life, which in turn drive the development of personal attitudes and behaviours" - Schiuma (2009).

EXAMPLE:

"Hyperisland designs transformative learning experiences to enable growth – for individuals and for businesses. They equip students and participants with an open mind and relevant skills that they will actually use." - www.hyperisland.com

Considering the goal of each feedback activity applied throughout the learning experiences, Hyperisland shares some examples of arts based initiatives that involve participants in the artistic creative process to generate ideas, to co-build new projects and concepts, and to follow up the learning with self and group assessment moments.

An example of feedback practice through arts based initiatives is to build a map of interactions between team/class members during the learning path – for each interaction, each participant draws a line that links him/her with the other participant and adds 1 or 2 words that characterise the interaction. In the end, participants can visualise a map and run a feedback session (written or spoken) considering the 3 main characteristics of the interactions occurring in that time period. The results allow participants to reflect on their performance considering the learning process, the individual acting and the team efficacy.

To know more about it: http://toolbox.hyperisland.com/
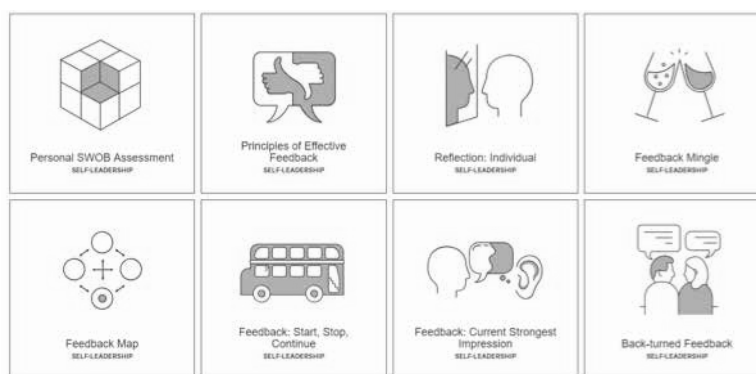
ART BASED INITIATIVES FOR TRANSFORMATION

Feedback through arts based initiatives is effective if it enables transformation:

> **STEP 3 – REFOCUS**
> recipients act on it to improve their future work and learning

> **ARTS BASED INITIATIVES FOR TRANSFORMATION**

Change can be understood as a disruptive moment for growth in knowledge, behaviour and/or attitude. Once understanding what can be improved (Step 2), learners can take a step with the gift of feedback to transform themselves, the learning, the professional practice, etc.

Arts based initiatives support learners taking quicker decisions on which next step they can take; seeing things in different ways opens the possibilities of paths in order to refocus on the initial learning goals and move towards the future work and learning.

The Artful Leader project was created to develop the new generation of servant leaders through arts. - www.artfulleader.eu

The servant leadership model is based on a set of characteristics that "as a management style for the redefined business world of today, can serve as a cornerstone for organisations wishing to build corporate structures based on stewardship, empowerment and trust." – (van Dieren-donck, 2011). The use of arts as a product applied to each one of the servant leadership characteristics allows learners to be exposed to art (movies, paintings, artists' testimonials, etc.) and so reflect on how they can improve their attitude/behaviour as leaders.

An example is the activity which uses the video of the Royal Opera House interviewing different directors to discuss their roles in stage and screen. Understanding the challenges these directors face on stage, helps learners to be aware of the moments when the leader takes control and when he/she stands back and lets the team get the credit – demonstrating the benefits of being a leader that cares about the team's needs and success.

Watch this video here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wc5IpN3PgvM
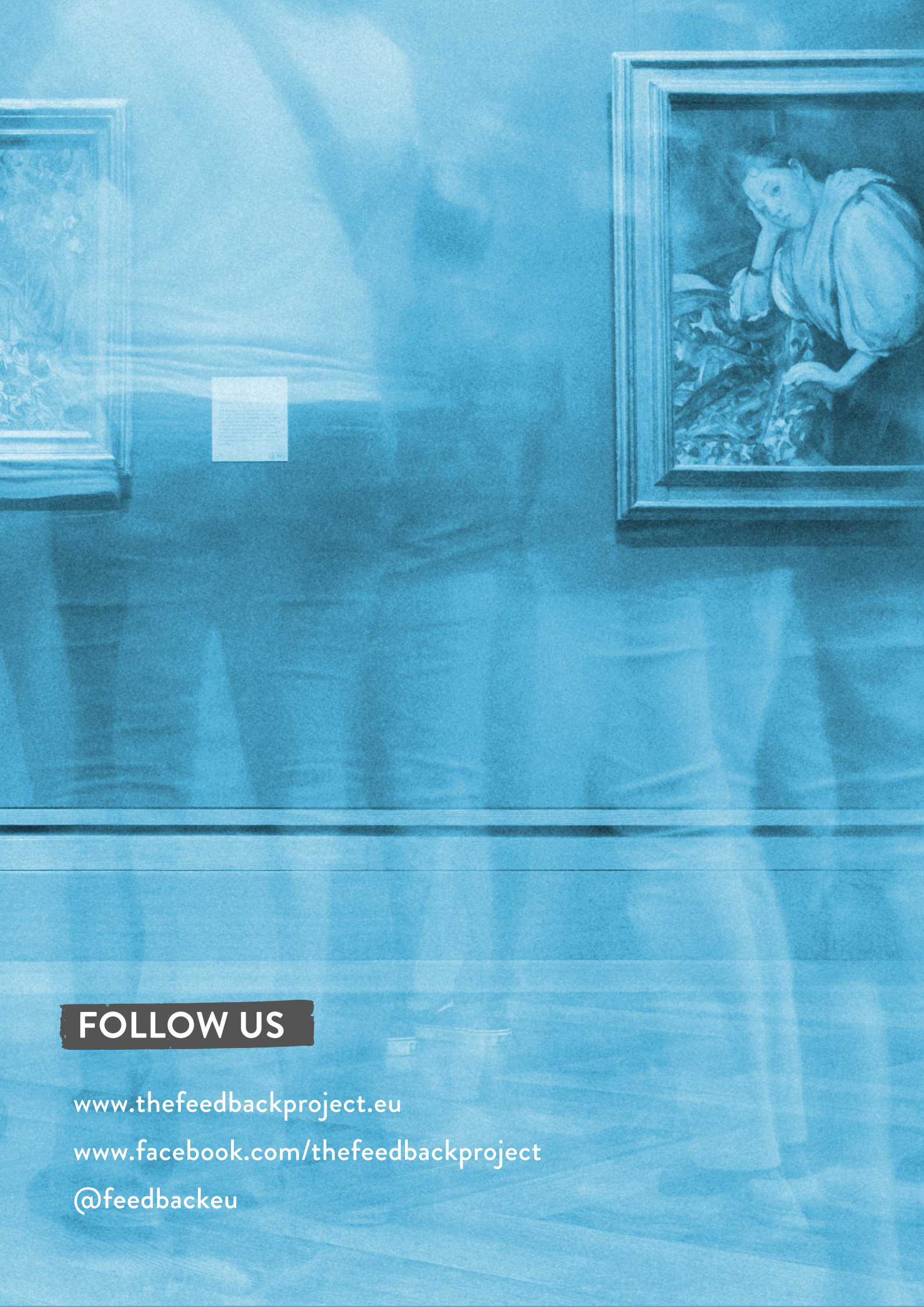
DELIVERY, REFLECT, REFOCUS

HOW WE'LL PROCEED

Feedback is used everyday by all of us, but is it well accepted and applied? How much do we think about the content, the time and the style we use to deliver feedback? Is there a safe space to practice feedback? Are learners willing to receive feedback? Do they know how to listen, to understand and to respond? Are they using the space for learning or for performance?

We don't pretend to deliver a magical pill to transform educators and learners into feedback experts, rather we aim to deliver the inspiration and the resources to help them understand and explore the practice of feedback to improve learning experiences, engaging both educators and learners in the learning experience and grow as global citizens.

We are delivering this brief document now. We are reflecting on this link between the Feedback model and the arts based initiatives. We will refocus our next activity to deliver a new product - a digital toolkit to support the development of best practices and greater results from learning programmes that will include the practice of Feedback using arts based learning approaches to enhance learning and nurture more self-effective learners.