
Developing the expert learner

Introducing the expert learner

Target audience

This activity is designed for individuals, teams or groups. Participants might include teachers*, curriculum teams, and information, advice and guidance professionals. If you are leading the session, you will benefit from having reviewed the whole resource first.

*We use 'teaching and learning' and 'teacher' as generic terms to include:

- teaching, training and learning
- teachers, tutors, trainers, lecturers and instructors in the further education (FE) system

Purpose of the activity

The activity is designed to raise teachers' awareness of some of the characteristics associated with expert learner and to re-evaluate their beliefs about what learners are capable of.

Introduction

You might use this activity to introduce the concept and stimulate discussion of what it means to be an expert learner. It is designed to support the **Developing the expert learner video**, but a similar approach could be used with other video clips in this resource.

Resources

- **DVD: Developing the expert learner video** from the resource box or from the expert learner webpage at <http://excellence.qia.org.uk>
- Poster 2 from the resource box or as a downloadable.

Indicative timing: 30 minutes.

Starting points

This activity assumes no prior knowledge or experience of the concept of the expert learner. It would serve as a starting point for more detailed exploration of the teachers' role in developing expert learners.

The activity lends itself to use in:

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- network meetings
- individual or small group sessions with a Subject Learning Coach
- staff meetings
- twilight sessions.

Suggested approach

The discussion is structured in a way that:

- invites individual reflection on a common experience
- uses these reflections as the basis for shared sense-making about the meaning of the expert learner
- enables participants to challenge each other's beliefs and share experiences.

Step 1: Teachers briefly brainstorm their current ideas on the meaning of the term 'expert learner'. The facilitator records their responses on a flip chart, which will be available as a reference point in Step 3.

Step 2: Teachers watch the video **Developing the expert learner** and before discussing it with anyone, they each write down three points that they recall from the video.

Step 3: They share in plenary what they have recalled and ask each other questions such as:

- Why did it stick in your mind?
- How is it different from what you currently think and believe?
- Did anything surprise you?

They might refer to the comments recorded on the flip chart to help their reflections on what was different about the content of the video clip.

Step 4: Working in groups of three to four, teachers discuss their emerging understanding of the expert learner.

Step 5: Each small group feeds into the whole group the outcomes of their discussion.

Next steps

The purpose of this activity is to raise awareness and stimulate interest. It should be followed as soon as possible with a commitment to doing something. Some possible 'next steps' are to:

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- engage teachers in the continuing professional development activity: **Expert learner and the learner journey**
- invite teachers to explore the web-based resource **Developing the expert learner** <http://excellence.qia.org.uk>
- encourage teachers to observe each other's sessions; to explore ways in which learners could be directly engaged in learning how to learn and assessment for learning
- invite teachers to work together on resources for a session that incorporates elements of active learning.

Notes for facilitator

- This activity is intended to draw attention to the concept of the expert learner. If you are working with a very small group, you might facilitate a discussion around the questions in Step 2 and move on to **Expert learner and the learner journey**, which can be downloaded from the **Learner journey** webpage in **Developing the expert learner**.
- When asked to note two points that they recall from the video extracts, teachers may offer a critique of what was said. They may make comments such as 'It's all very well but....' or 'It wouldn't work with my learners...'. If this happens, encourage them to identify precisely what they recall and then help them to explore their own beliefs and expectations. Involve other members of the group in challenging the limiting beliefs that individuals may hold.
- Teachers often believe that the expert learner is a learner engaged in higher level qualifications such as 'A' level or Level 3 courses. This is not the case. There is ample evidence that Entry Level and Level 2 courses can learn how to learn. So the role of the facilitator is to challenge this belief and to encourage teachers to develop strategies to help learners at any level to develop their learning skills.
- Offer to observe a teacher's session and to discuss aspects of the expert learner that can be developed in the classroom.

Taking part in this activity can form part of your 30 hour (or pro rata) annual CPD requirements. For more ideas on how you can plan CPD go to **Supporting your CPD**.