

## **The learning challenge**

### **Introduction**

“The 21<sup>st</sup> century is an age of learning. It’s not the information age. It’s not the mechanical age. This is a learning age. So we need to focus a bit more on learning or we just won’t be anywhere near the front of the queue.

”21<sup>st</sup> century learning for me is about ingenuity and collegiality and ambition and risk. And that’s very different from accumulation and reproduction.”  
Professor Stephen Heppell

Professor Stephen Heppell is a passionate advocate of learning and of using technology to make learning accessible and exciting.

Speaking to a group of teachers and learners from the further education (FE) system, he inspired them with his vision and enthusiasm and set them an unusual and challenging activity.

### **Aim**

The aim of the activity was to engage the group in an experience that challenged traditional ideas about teaching and learning.

### **The activity**

Teachers and learners worked collaboratively in groups of six. Each small group was provided with a camera, a mobile phone and a laptop computer. Their challenge was to tell a story in a sequence of eight images, adhering to a strict set of rules. The theme of the story was ‘The surprise’.

#### **The rules:**

- The story must be told in exactly eight images.
- The participants must take the photos in the order in which they would be shown.
- The participants were not allowed to use text or speech.
- The images were to be accompanied by music.
- Each member of the group was to appear in at least one picture.

Groups could source their images from wherever they chose and capture their own pictures from anywhere inside or outside the building. They were constrained only by the time they had available.

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**Developing the expert learner**

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After 60 minutes, the 'stories,' complete with soundtrack, were presented to the whole group who then voted for their favourite.

**Learning outcomes**

The labels 'teacher' and 'learner' became irrelevant. Participants in each group contributed according to their skills.

'Learners' had knowledge and skills that the 'teachers' did not have. Some groups initially felt uncertain and stuck. For teachers, this was an insight into how their learners might feel when faced with an unfamiliar task. The strict rules raised awareness of the constraints of the many traditional approaches to teaching and learning that use a very limited range of media. In our multimedia age, there is scope for more imagination. Today's learners expect it!

"We've got 21<sup>st</sup> century learners ... and they've got pockets full of stuff that let them learn together ... that let them be imaginative and creative. They're not going to power down to come to learning. So if we don't power up learning to meet them where they are, they'll get on with learning ... it just won't be with us."

Professor Stephen Heppell

**How you might use a similar activity**

There are three aspects to this activity that you might consider when you think about using this activity:

- use of technology
- working in a group (particularly, working in a mixed group)
- thinking about a theme.

All three aspects could be incorporated into induction activity: An example of this would be to take 'Safety' as a theme and give small groups of learners the task of compiling a sequence of pictures taken around the premises. You may like to devise your own set of rules for this.

You could use a similar approach as a way of raising awareness of particular topics within your curriculum area.

If the use of technology is your focus, you could make the activity more demanding by devising rules that require learners to do some editing, adding music and/or voiceover, or displaying in a PowerPoint presentation.