

A Good Learn

Purpose:

To discover some of the key sources of learning among the participants (and in general)

Materials: Marker pens and flip chart paper, *Sources of Learning* handout

Time required for session: 50 minutes

Activity

Part 1 (10 minutes):

Write three words: “*A Good Learn*” on the flipchart. Ask the group to work in pairs.

One person should ask their partner for an example of a time when they learned something significant, perhaps it’s always been useful to them or they simply can’t forget the experience. It can be from any time in their life from earliest memories to just before they started this programme. They should not just think about formal learning experiences although these can of course be included in the examples.

After about three minutes of telling their partner about ‘a good learn’ they should listen to their partner’s story for about three minutes.

Part 2 (10 minutes):

Now ask each participant in turn to say what the *source* of their learning was, i.e. was it a direct experience, a person (if so, who), a book, a TV show, etc. Care is needed to avoid people re-telling the whole story that they shared with their neighbour. Take care to identify the source of learning correctly, e.g. if an experience takes place in the playground at school, the source of learning could be the people (or the experience or the reflection) rather than simply ‘school’.

List the “*Key sources of learning*” on a flipchart, e.g.

- **direct experience**
- **mother**
- **friend**
- **reflection after experience**
- **own observation**
- **radio programme, etc.**

[For those who are interested, this is a genuine piece of (qualitative) research. The participants’ stories represent *raw data* and the flipchart list is *processed data*. From this data we can begin to develop our own theory on *which sources of information are most significant to us*.]

NB The data will usually demonstrate that we learn mostly from our own experience, observation and reflection (i.e. *the experiential learning cycle*). After that, we tend to learn best from people who are close to us (i.e. *known and trusted people*).

Part 3 (15 minutes):

Now ask participants, in groups of four or five, to draw a diagram, picture or any graphic to show what they think are the most significant sources of learning **based on the data shown**. It is important to insist on these data, otherwise people will tend to lapse back into what they *think* are the most significant learning sources, such as school, college, TV, etc. (these may well appear on the diagram of course).

Remind them to work quickly as time is short. You can let them know that some people tackle this problem by drawing a graph, others draw a triangle, a spiral, a landscape with cartoons on it; 'the answer' is however they decide to depict it.

Ask each group to choose a spokesperson.

Part 4 (15 minutes):

Each spokesperson in turn presents their graphic to the whole class (maximum three minutes each). Remember to ask if any other group members want to add anything to what was said and allow one or two questions depending on time.

Ask the whole group, was anyone surprised by the outcome of the exercise? Or did it confirm what they already knew about learning sources?

Distribute handout with *Sources of Learning* diagram.

*Of course, we cannot predict what the outcome of this exercise will be **but** this exercise has been carried out among a wide variety of people in four different continents and it usually produces a remarkably similar list of learning sources. Own observation is the most frequently cited source followed by people who are well-known to the learner (e.g. parents, friends, neighbours). After this there are other people (teachers, strangers) and, perhaps surprisingly, the fewest examples come from media such as TV, books or radio. School and college are also absent from the list on many occasions!*

The 'one-way' and 'two-way' arrows in the 'Sources of Learning' diagram provide a clue as to why people may not cite TV (or much of school) among their significant learning episodes.

*The findings reinforce the fact that your learners will learn best by **doing it themselves** and they will be most likely to listen to (and learn from) people that they **trust** rather than those who are simply placed in authority over them.*

(Source: Original material by Paul Vare, Learning South West)



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