

Developing teacher competencies to facilitate student-centred learning

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Student-centredness means...

- engage students in active learning experiences
- increasing student responsibility and autonomy
- recognising the diversity of our students
- seeing our students as whole persons
- paying careful attention to the power relations

Student-centred teaching involves...

- rethinking the use of declarative, content-heavy lectures
- introducing short periods of discussion
- using multiple-choice quizzes or short answers tests at the beginning of a new topic to test student prior knowledge or revise key concepts
- scaffolding student note-taking with mind maps or concept-mapping
- introducing field-trips, problem-solving and applied real-world experience

Some common doubts (Attard et al., 2010)

- student-centredness is actually only possible in certain disciplines
- student-centredness is difficult to implement in large groups or high enrolment programmes
- student-centredness undermines the expertise and professionalism of teachers

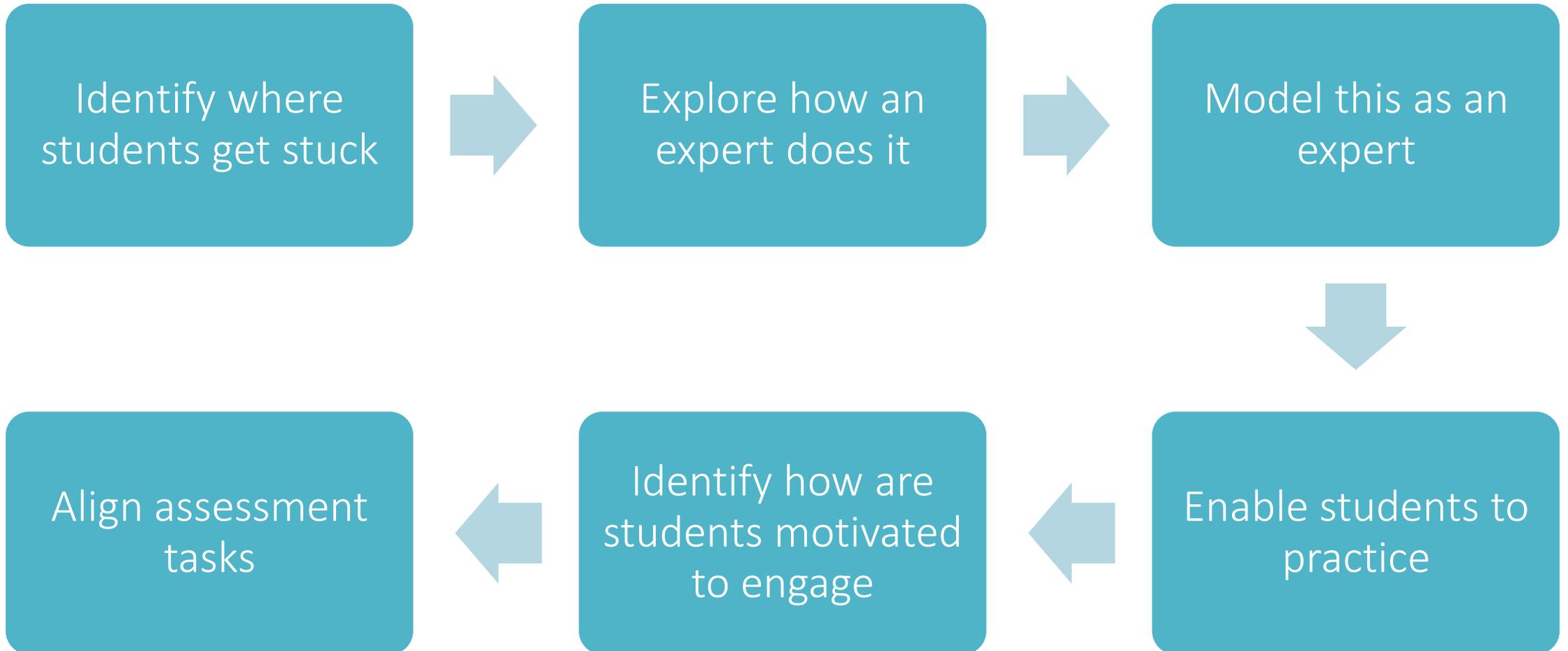
3 competencies for student-centred learning (Weller, 2015)

- 1) being **student**-centred means being **subject**-centred (Hobson & Morrison-Saunders, 2013)
- 2) paying attention to the social experience of learning through collaboration
- 3) rebalancing the power relationship between teachers and students

1) Being subject-centred

- making the disciplinary “ways of thinking and practising” accessible to students (Meyer & Land, 2003)
- challenge “seeing [students’] encounter with a discipline in terms of an all-or-nothing acquisition of an “object” (Anderson & Hounsell, 2007)
- “decode the disciplines” (Middendorf & Pace, 2004) to identify obstacles or “bottlenecks” where students’ learning can be blocked
- these “bottlenecks” can sometimes be “threshold concepts” or “gateways” that allow students to access new ways of knowing (Meyer & Land, 2005)

“Decoding the discipline” (Middendorf & Pace, 2004)



Why we need to “decode”

- “one of most effective things we can do [as teachers] is simply bring our attention onto the subject at hand, and enable our students to join us in this mutual enquiry” (Hobson & Morrison-Saunders, 2013)
- expert knowledge is likely to be highly codified and tacit
- outputs of our own disciplinary or practitioner enquiries in teaching, publications or presentations often conceals certain aspects of the process (Hay et al., 2015; Weller, 2010)

The first step in being student-centred

- defining and making visible to students the features of disciplinary thinking
- consciously modelling them for students as an expert “insider”
- breaking down and scaffolding student attempts to adopt these practices
- creating opportunities to practice and get feedback on their performance

2) Student-centred learning as social

- recognising the diverse needs and motivations of individual students does not mean student-centred learning is only possible in one-to-one settings
- in large groups, student-centred learning is possible if we reframe one-to-many as many-to-many
- exploit the opportunity for students to engage in collaborative learning in groups (Ackermann et al., 2007)

Collaborative learning activities

- create a glossary of key terms and concepts (Meishar-Tal & Gorsky, 2010)
- write and peer review reflective journal or blog of group learning in work contexts (Kear et al., 2010)
- co-write a laboratory report or fieldwork report
- use concept maps, diagrams or photographs to capture group brainstorming or group work
- collate resources into a reading pack or protocol for conducting an experiment (Parker & Chao, 2007)

3) Students-as-partners

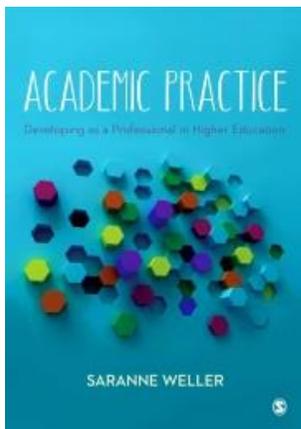
- elicit our students' prior knowledge and build on this in teaching to value the resources our students bring to learning
- engage students in designing their curriculum (Delpish et al., 2010)
- Example 1, UG Law at Liverpool John Moores University (Brooman et al., 2014)
- Example 2, UG Environmental Justice at Queen Margaret University in Edinburgh, UK (Bovill, 2014)
- emphasise the role students play in their own learning (Bovill, 2011)

Conclusion: becoming student-centred

- 1) critically reflecting and making accessing on our disciplinary “ways of thinking and practising”
- 2) exploiting the opportunities of many-to-many ways of making knowledge through collaborative learning
- 3) rebalancing the power relationships to work with our students-as-partners in learning

Thank you

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Academic Practice

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“A wealth of theoretical perspectives and exemplifying case studies “

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