

Socratic Questioning

Principles

Socrates was one of the great educators who taught by asking questions there are 6 general types of Socratic questions. These are provided as examples and suggestions of types of questions that can be utilised, it is important that you develop questioning strategies and techniques that you are feel work best for you and your style of teaching.

1. Conceptual clarification questions

Aim to get the learner to think more about what exactly they are asking or thinking about, to prove the concepts behind their argument. They are basic “tell me more” questions.

- *Why are you saying that?*
- *What exactly does that mean?*
- *How does this relate to what we have been talking about?*
- *What is the nature of...?*
- *What do we already know about this?*
- *Can you give me an example?*
- *Are you saying.....or?*
- *Can you explain that?*

2. Probing Assumptions

Probing of assumptions makes the learner think about the presuppositions and unquestioned beliefs on which they are founding their argument.

- *You seem to be assuming....*
- *How can you verify that assumption?*
- *What would happen if....”*
- *Do you agree or disagree with ...?*

3. Probing rationale, reasons and evidence

When learners give a rationale for their arguments, delve into that reasoning rather than assuming it is a given. Learners often use ‘un-thought-through’ or weakly understood supports for their arguments.

- *Why do you think that happened?*
- *How do you know this?*
- *Show me*
- *Can you give me an example of that?*
- *What do you think causes....?*
- *Are these reasons good enough?*
- *How might it be refuted?*
- *Would it stand up in court?*
- *What evidence is there to support what you are saying?*

4. Questioning viewpoints and perspectives

Most arguments are given from a particular position, so challenge the position and show that there are other equally valid viewpoints.

- *Another way of looking at this is.....does this seem reasonable?*
- *What alternative ways of looking at this are there?*
- *What is the difference between..... and.....?*
- *Why is it better than.....?*
- *What are the strengths and weaknesses of?*
- *How are.....and Similar?*
- *What would you say about?*
- *What if you compared.... And.....?*
- *What would someone who disagreed with you say?*

5. Probe implications and consequences

The argument that is given may have logical implications that can be forecast. Do these make sense and are they desirable?

- *Then what would happen?*
- *What are consequences of that assumption?*
- *What are the implications of.....?*
- *How doesaffect.....?*
- *How doesfit with what we already know?*
- *Why is important?*

6. Questions about the question or discussion

This encourages reflection about the discussion and turns the question on itself.

- *Do you have a question about that?*
- *Who can summarise so far?*
- *Why do you think I asked that question?*