
Questioning as we learn: An introduction to critical thinking

Material for Higher Education students in Sierra Leone by INASP, UK



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Unit 1 - Snippet 17

Richard Paul and Linda Elder of the Foundation for Critical Thinking developed 'A Thinker's Guide to The Art of Socratic Questioning', in which they distinguish between different types of questions a critical thinker should ask.

[Paul, R; Elder, L. (2007). 'The Thinker's Guide to the Art of Socratic Questioning.' The Foundation for Critical Thinking, ISBN-13 978-0944583319.]

We will go through these types of questions. That's the first type:

1) Questions of clarification

Clarification questions help you to get a clearer understanding of what is meant by what is stated. Such questions may ask for further explanations or relevant examples so that the intended meaning is not misinterpreted, and so that you understand the main issue and how it relates to what is being discussed. Some examples of such questions are:

- a. What do you mean by this? Could you explain (further)? Could you say it in other words/ differently?
- b. What would be a relevant example of this? Is this a relevant example (that I am offering)?
- c. What is the main point here? Do you mean this or do you mean that?
- d. How would you sum up what has been said?