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Tool nr. 23 - material

Developed by: University of Tartu

Name of the material

DON'T TEACH. ASK PROBING QUESTIONS

Sources

Goldberg, M.C. Expert Question Asking: The Engine of Successful Coaching, *The Manchester Review*. http://www.inquiryinstitute.com/pdf/Feb_Coaching_Article_MR.pdf

Purpose of the material

To help colleagues in a PLC state their question in the best possible way; Also, to make students fully understand the learning process.

The important thing is to never stop questioning. A Einstein

Material

In order to realise something fully, we should ask questions, because they

- are prerequisite to learning
- release our creativity and insight.
- motivate fresh thinking.
- challenge outdated assumptions.
- lead us further on.

If you want your question to be powerful and probing, you should find a way to make up a question that

- stimulates reflective thinking
- is thought-provoking
- generates energy and a vector to explore
- channels inquiry, promises insight
- is broad and enduring
- touches deeper meaning
- evokes more questions

How to make questions powerful?

First, think if your questions has **high** or **low power**. "Power" of the questions depends



on how reflective they are.

Close-ended (yes/ no) questions usually have low power, e.g.

Are you feeling ok?

Where/ which/ when /who questions have a bit higher power, e.g.

Where does it hurt?

How and **what** have more power still, e.g.

How are you feeling in general?

Greater reflective speculation can be added using conditional tense rather than the present tense, e.g.

What can we do? > What could we do?

The highest power has the question **why**, e.g.

Why do you suppose you aren't feeling well?

More power can be added when we encompass more people, more volume, more time and more concerns, e.g.

How should we manage our staff?

How should we manage the planet?

How you can use this material in your practice

In order to **frame better questions**, you should ask yourself:

- Is this question relevant to the real life and work?
- Is this a genuine question, i.e. a question to which I really don't know the answer?
- What "work" do I want this question to do? What kind of meanings and feelings do I imagine this question will evoke?
- Is this question likely to invite fresh thinking/ feeling? Is it familiar enough to be recognizable and relevant, yet different enough to call forward a new response?
- What assumptions or beliefs are embedded in the way this question is constructed?
- Is this question likely to generate hope, imagination, engagement, creative action, and new possibilities or is it likely to increase a focus on past problems and obstacles?



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Does this question leave room for new and different questions to be raised as the initial question is explored?

Debrief - reflection and metacognition

Feedback on the use of the tool