Theory of Knowledge

From Simple Studies, https://simplestudies.edublogs.org & @simplestudiesinc on Instagram

I. General Questions about Theory of Knowledge

- What is Theory of Knowledge (TOK)?
 - A two-year course focusing on the Theory of Knowledge (ToK)
 - Dissects the factors of Creativity, Activity, and Service component (CAS) and the Extended Essay (EE).
 - Creates opportunities for full IB Diploma students to hone strong thinking and communication skills
 - Fosters balanced open-mindedness and to help you become more active risktakers.
 - O Develops the whole person, not just the student part of you.
- What are the aims of Theory of Knowledge (TOK)?
 - Encourages students to formulate answers to the question "how do you know what you know?" in a variety of contexts, and to see the value of that question.
 - Encourages students to critically reflect on their own beliefs and assumptions,
 leading to more thoughtful, responsible and purposeful lives

II. TOK Curriculum

In a very real sense, the curriculum is you, the knower. In another sense, the curriculum can be understood to consist of:

- An examination of knowledge itself, through the linked lenses of both personal knowledge and shared knowledge.
- EIGHT Ways of Knowing (language, sense perception, emotion, reason, imagination, faith, intuition, memory.
- EIGHT Areas of Knowledge (mathematics, natural sciences, human (social) sciences, the arts, history, ethics, religious knowledge systems, indigenous knowledge systems.

- A detailed guide on how to form a **knowledge question** along with formulate, evaluate and attempt to answer them.
- The TOK Essay and TOK presentation

III. Assessment Percentages

TOK contributes to the overall diploma score through the award of points in conjunction with the extended essay.

 A maximum of three points are awarded according to a student's combined performance in both TOK and the extended essay. (IBO.org)

Type of assessment	Format of assessment	Weighting of final grade (%)
External		
Part I: Essay on a prescribed title	One essay on a title chosen from a list of six prescribed titles.	67
Internal		
Part 2: Presentation	One presentation to the class by an individual or a group (max of three persons); approximately 10 minutes per student. One written presentation planning document for each student.	33

<u>IV Paradigms</u> and

Culture

- Paradigm (Bird, 2018)
 - A theory or phenomena
 - A generalisation
 - Different interpretations of the same situation
 - <u>Classic Paradigm:</u> states humans are at the center of the universe as they were placed on Earth by God to follow certain religious practices
 - Modern Paradigm: Leans more toward scientific aspects as to investigate the universe.

- <u>Postmodern Paradigm:</u> Humanity was created by accident and we are only one of the billion biological species. No God, no path of truth.
- Cultural Values Lead to Customs
 - A culture has certain norms which its members are expected to obey. These norms may seem different to someone else.
 - A common culture exists within a country, but can also exist within groupings.
 - o Paradigms are an unavoidable part of the human condition.

V: Knowers & Knowing: The Nature of Knowledge

- Knowledge: justified true beliefs
 - o the subject believes the proposition
 - o proposition is true
 - o subject is justified
- Truth: an objective requirement for knowledge
- <u>Belief:</u> a subjective requirement for knowledge

Information can be an unconnected set of facts where knowledge has connectors between the facts, and comes with understanding.

The 3 Ss:

- <u>Source:</u> reputation, qualifications, accountability
- <u>Statement</u>: clues to reliability
- Self: inclination to accept or reject
- <u>Fallibility of experts</u>: Experts can be **fallible** as every individual has **different perspectives** so no one would agree with each other. (Lagemaat, 2014)
- Bias in the media: Pieces and work released by the media are written by different people
 as everyone holds different perspectives and no one can satisfy everyone's needs and
 ideas.
- <u>Framing</u>: Giving **false information** that supports a theory; finally, the theory falls apart. This creates different **choices and acceptance**

VI. Knowledge Issues

- Knowledge issues are issues **about** knowledge.
 - apply to any aspect of knowledge and may refer to the acquisition, production, shaping, classification, status, and acceptance or rejection of knowledge
 - o **open-ended** questions that admit more than one possible answer
 - o explicitly about knowledge in itself and not subject-specific claims
 - couched in terms of TOK vocabulary and concepts: the areas of knowledge, the
 ways of knowing and the concepts in the linking questions—belief, certainty,
 culture, evidence, experience, explanation, interpretation, intuition, justification,
 truth, values
 - o **precise in terms** of the relationships between these concepts

Students are required to address knowledge issues in both their essays and their presentations. In both cases it is helpful for students to be able to explore and analyse knowledge issues that will demonstrate their understanding. Given the vast range of knowledge issues that could be addressed, it is appropriate to offer guidance as to what types of knowledge issue are most likely to support high levels of achievement in both essays and presentations.

V. Types of Knowledge

- Personal Knowledge
 - Knowledge can be viewed as the production of one or more human beings.
 - Gained through experience, practice and personal involvement
- Shared Knowledge
 - The work of a group of people working together or, more likely, separated by time or geography.
 - Highly structured, is systematic in its nature and the product of more than one individual.

 Changes and evolves over time because of the continued applications of the methods of inquiry

In many languages, the verb "to know" has two first person forms: "I know" and "we know". "I know" refers to the possession of knowledge by an individual—personal knowledge. "We know" refers to knowledge that belongs to a group—shared knowledge. It can be useful in TOK to draw a distinction between these two forms of knowledge

- Why is personal knowledge hard to share?
 - Ignorance: The illusion that you understand something in detail when you do not inspect
 - Apathy: Attached to our beliefs because they are familiar and because it reflects our identity
 - o **Bias:** Different perspectives blind our own
 - <u>Fantasy:</u> Convince yourself something is true because you believe it is true;
 <u>Peer pressure:</u> Your beliefs are affected because of the people around you
- Why is shared knowledge hard to share?
 - Authority worship: Believing that something is true because an authority says so
 - o Group think: Similar to peer pressure
 - Power distortion: figure of an authority is perceived in a certain way
 - **Fragmentation:** parts that come together to form a whole.

VI. Ways of Knowing

There are arguably many ways of knowing (WOKs), TOK identifies eight specific WOKs: language, sense perception, emotion, reason, imagination, faith, intuition, and memory.

Language:

- o To understand the symbolic nature of knowledge
- To distinguish the complex relationship between language and knowledge
- Symbol system, engaged in representing the world, capturing and communicating thought and experience.

Sense Perception

- To understand the nature of senses and how our perception of stimuli may either mislead us or enable us to understand and remember more
- Do senses vary between or within species?
 - Definitely! Example: snakes cannot see with their eyes, but their sense of smell and hearing is much better compared to us humans.
- How reliable are our senses?
 - Sense perception, without it, humans will not be aware of things around us, and lose the capability to perceive certain things. However, the result varies; for example, our eyes might see a certain situation like the way it sees, but the situation might not be what we thought.
- Are senses actively selective?
 - We cannot perceive every single sensory stimulus that comes to us; we only select ones that are relevant and close enough to us. Research the monkey basketball experiment for more information.
- Are our senses interpretive?
 - Our senses are what actually perceive different things and it interprets what our senses tell us and transmitted to our brains. (actively interpretive and causes us to be deceived)

Sensory Overload: many stimuli are shut out by our bains protectively

Informative Overload: dilemmas about dealing with the knowledge

We, humans, perceive objects visually as meaningful patterns or groups, rather than as collections of separate parts. => simplify visual information, grouping it into patterns.

Emotion: A mind and body's integrated response to a stimulus of some kind. Perception is a complex process. Our experience of the world is affected by what is out there, but also by the structure of our sense organs and our minds.

Objective: inform consequences, put two perspectives into account

Subjective: provoking emotions and opinions

<u>Backfire effect:</u> The behavior of some people to resist accepting evidence that conflicts with their beliefs.

- Core beliefs are the beliefs people cherish deeply from life experiences
- Changing people's minds are more effective than others.
- We cannot separate emotional cortex and logical one because we refuse things that are superficial in our beliefs.

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<u>Common sense realism:</u> the position that perception is passive and relatively straightforward. The notion that perception gives us an accurate picture of reality.

<u>Cannon-Bard Theory:</u> The theory that an emotion-arousing stimulus simultaneously triggers physiological responses and the subjective experience of emotion.

<u>Two-factor Theory</u>: The Schachter- Singer theory that to experience emotion, one must physically aroused and cognitively label the arousal. Many would say that the emotions involved physiological arousal, expressive behaviors, and conscious experiences; therefore, emotions can be both physical and emotional.

Emotions influence our ability to judge and give reasons. However, it would be very hard and lacking if we don't have emotions in our lives as it is very difficult to understand what others think and feel. We can utilize emotions as a perceptive tool in which it affects the way we process and feel towards others ideas. On the other hand, emotions can also be an obstacle to knowledge. They tend to be unreliable as a way of knowing because emotions are completely based on one's current condition and thoughts. In addition, other people's actions can also affect our own emotions. Therefore, we must know how to control our emotions effectively.

Reason

 Deductive reasoning: general → specific (Deductive allows us more certainty in our logic and reasoning.)

- <u>Inductive reasoning:</u> specific → general
- <u>Informal reasoning:</u> logical outside of formal settings.

<u>Fallacy:</u> A mistaken belief, especially one based on an unsound argument.

- Ad Hominem: discrediting an opponent instead of his or her argument.
- Faulty cause-&-effect: The belief that if event B occurs just after event A, then A causes B
- Either-or: There are only two possibilities for any given situation, rather than more
- Guilt by Association: Attempting to discredit an idea, person, a belief by associating it with an undesirable person or group.
- Loaded Question: A loaded question phrased so that it forces an answer based on a fase or controversial promise.

<u>Further reasoning - causal inference:</u>

- o cause is inferred
- o makes connections between existing pieces of info
- Often leads to creation of a hypothesis

Hypo-deductive reasoning:

- used in problem-solving and testing
- o In problem-solving, a range of possible solutions need to be considered
- Involves a cycle of conjecture, testing, and elimination.

Intuition: means "knowledge from within", instinctive capacity and ways our brains interpret sensory info. → <u>consists of three types: emotional, logical, memory</u>

What we are perceiving as intuition is actually other Ways of Knowing (WOKs) acting quickly and unconsciously. A lot of our knowledge is gathered through intuition.

• Heuristic: A mental or general rule we use to make judgments

- Automatic: Fast, unconscious, intuitive, and inflexible
- Reflective: Slow, conscious, deliberated, and flexible

Advantages	Disadvantages	
Quick decision	Unreliable	
Cannot make decisions based on reasonings	Emotional Bias	
Creativity	Inaccurate information & overused	

- <u>Folk intuition</u>: This is our instinctual, natural, uneducated intuitions that can be often be false
- Expert intuition: Intuition based on knowledge, memory, practices, expertise and objectives. This type of intuition tends to be less often incorrect.

Intuition is tricky because it can be hard to notice exactly when something is intuition, rather than reason or emotion. It can be thought of as insights provided by the subconscious mind. It is also associated with instinct, and innate knowledge, and is linked to ethics and knowing instinctively the "right" and the "wrong" way to behave. However, intuition could influence our ability to reason; but it can be very helpful in survival situations that require fast decisions.

Imagination: a narrow sense as the capacity to form a mental representation of something without the stimulus of sense experience.

- Helps us solve problems
- Appreciate different realities presented to us in the arts
- Has limitations: money, power, time pressure, emotions and faith
- Egocentric bias: The tendency to look at everything from our own perspectives and thinking it is always correct (major barrier to empathy)

Faith: core or elemental belief on which you rely or fall back on whenever you need reassurance. Faith is a constant, a blind belief of something or someone, because this faith has only recently been considered a way of knowing, as it can greatly affect your perception, both in senses and opinion.

- High authority or figures like God or a religion.
- Having confidence in another individual or group
- Does not rely on evidence like reasoning or intuition, but rather somewhat related to emotions or memory.

Memory: faculty which allows us to retain information and reconstruct past experiences. In order to form new knowledge, one must rely on previous knowledge in order to form a new one, and one does that by using memory.

- Shapes personal & shared knowledge
- Closely associated with history (based on eyewitness recollections of events)
- Human sciences: perceived accuracy of a witness's memory may determine whether someone is found innocent or guilty in a criminal trial
- In conjunction with other ways of knowing, memories can help us to establish-or at least bring us closer to-the truth.

<u>Memory as connection to the past</u>: refers to knowledge of the past and history that comes available to us humans.

Memory as a personal phenomenon: personal memory gives you your sense of identity.

Memory as a social phenomenon- lots of historical events and national heroes are reinforced in historical memory

- What factors can play a role in affecting our memory?
 - Attention (memories is formed when we observe something with our own eyes, and without close attention, the truth maybe twisted and affect with its validity),
 Time (memories that happened too long ago in the past can be inaccurate) Health (science aspect/ unhealthy minds can twist the truth and validity or it)

Memories are <u>not 100% reliable</u> and cannot reflect the truth. There are many exceptions where we are unable to recall certain memories and results in false validity. Furthermore, memory can be flawed because **each individual perceives a memory differently** (a Vietnamese will recall the war differently compared to how an American recalls it). In addition, memories tend to be **more subjective**, instead of objective, because they have a <u>strong link to our emotions</u> that we might experience during that certain time.

VII. Areas of Knowledge

Areas of knowledge are specific branches of knowledge, each of which can be seen to have a distinct nature and different methods of gaining knowledge. TOK distinguishes between eight areas of knowledge: mathematics, the natural sciences, the human sciences, the arts, history, ethics, religious knowledge systems, and indigenous knowledge systems.

In order to understand each thoroughly, students are suggested to fill in the <u>Knowledge</u> Framework for each Area of Knowledge

Scope/ Applications

- What is the area of knowledge about?
- What real-world problems can be solved through this area of knowledge?
- What makes this area of knowledge important?
- Is there widespread agreement, or controversy, or ambiguity, about the purpose or scope of this area of knowledge? Are there communities or non-dominant alternative paradigms who draw the scope of this area of knowledge differently?
- What counts as true in this area of knowledge? What is the role of truth in this area?
- What are the current open questions in this area? important questions that are currently unanswered? current important areas of academic research?

	• Are there ethical considerations that limit the scope of inquiry? If so, what are they?				
Language/	• What role does language play in this area of knowledge?				
Concepts					
	• What are the roles of the key concepts and key terms that provide the building blocks for knowledge				
	in this area?				
	• Are there communities or non-dominant alternative paradigms who use alternative conceptual or				
	classificatory frameworks in this area of knowledge?				
	• What metaphors are appropriate to this area of knowledge?				
	• What is the role of convention in this area?				
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Methodology	• What are the methods or procedures we use in this area and what is it about these methods that generates knowledge?				
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	• What are the roles (if any) of reason, intuition, sense-perception, memory, emotion, imagination and				
	faith in these methods/procedures?				
	• What are the underlying assumptions in this area of knowledge or subject? (these are not testable				
	within the area/subject)				
	• Are the methods we use culture-specific? Are alternative methods used by other communities or				
	non-dominant alternative paradigms?				
	• What roles do models play in this area of knowledge?				
	• What ethical considerations constrain the methods used to gain knowledge?				
Historical	• What is the significance of the key points in the historical development of this area of knowledge?				

Development	What 'stages' has this area gone through to get to where it is now?				
	• How would knowledge questions in this area have been answered, say, 100 years ago? • How has the history of this area led to its current form?				
	• How much of the knowledge in this area is contingent, has been discovered serendipitously, or is a social or cultural construction? how much is 'universal'?				
	• What knowledge, or purported knowledge, has been abandoned over the course of this historical development?				
Links to	• Why is this area significant to the individual?				
personal knowledge	• What is the nature of the contribution of individuals to this area?				
	• What responsibilities rest upon the individual knower by virtue of his or her knowledge in this area?				
	• What are the implications of this area of knowledge for one's own individual perspective? How does				
	it affect one's life?				
	• What assumptions underlie the individual's own approach to this knowledge?				

Natural Sciences:

- o A body of knowledge: natural sciences and human sciences
- Main Ways of Knowing (WOKs) used in Natural Sciences are sense perception, reasoning, intuition.
- Associated well with the scientific method (observation → hypothesis → predictions → tests → observations → repeat)
- How does natural sciences compare to **Homeopathy**?
 - Homeopathy utilizes characteristics and factors of science to develop further.
- Theories/General Laws

- A generalization of the data collected (or simplifications)
- Enable us to make sense of the world, but also influences our vision
- Explain and connect many scientific fields
- Always exceptions
- Language of Natural Sciences
 - Common symbols in naming systems
 - Words used in science can have different meanings to the non-scientists.
- Emotion: Can be negative or positive motivational or demotivational
- Imagination & Creativity: creation of models, kebule's dream
- <u>Intuition:</u> The first glimpse of a pattern
- Sense perception & reason: Making and interpreting observations

Human Sciences:

- Scientists use scientific developments to explore the scopes of new beliefs
- What is **self-awareness?**
 - Clear understanding of your personality, strength, and weaknesses, and be able to respond to situations around you to survive.
- What problems with the Human Sciences experiments do the mirror test highlights?
 - Human behaviors vary based on different personalities.
 - Folk psychology: capacity to explain and predict the behaviors and mental state of other people.

History:

In terms of how history is recorded, it can be determined through many aspects and reasons to determine the outcome of that historical fact. The most important contribution to <u>creating the historic "fact"</u> is that you need many resources from many and <u>different points of views</u> in order to <u>form a connection and similarity between the perspectives.</u> Only in that way can the historic claim can be somewhat accurate and unbiased.

• Role of Historian

- Objective The idea that there is truth or reality that is independent of my own
 personal perspective; for example, the claim that there are objective truths about
 the past.
- Subjective The idea that truth and reality depend upon my own personal
 perspective; for example, the claim that what I know about the past is based on
 my own thoughts, feelings, imagination and interpretation.

Art: encompasses the creative productions of humans and encompasses the visual arts, the performing arts and the literary arts.

- explore the <u>experience and reality</u> of being human and are an essential element of culture.
- Banksy's art a popular anonymous street artist, vandal, etc in the 1990s. (student should research more about Banksy, it could be a great real-life situation for the TOK essay or the TOK presentation)
 - valuable without context and identity
 - His artworks have several meanings and people can use their personal perspectives on observing his works.
 - the moment people capitalize it, art loses its true value.
- What makes up art and how is a piece considered to be art?
 - o man-made
 - the intention of the artists, quality of the work, and the reaction of spectators and without the context
 - Art is <u>subjective</u>; an art piece without a meaning/concepts would create different opinions since the audience won't be able to fully comprehend the art meaning and give an inference based on what is in the art.

Art can be about the openness for participations so people can be engaged in the work to explore the messages and immerse themselves in the value arts. The meaning and significance intended for the artwork is accentuated with the context and not just purely determined by the content itself.

Ethics (from Greek <u>ethikos</u>) is one of the following branches of philosophy.

- Metaphysics: What is the nature of existence and being?
- Epistemology :what can we know and how do we know it?
- <u>Logic</u>: an attempt to clarify values, to define, that which is right from that which is wrong, and to guide us in how we should behave.

Moral vs. Ethics

- very closely related.
- Morality- a spiritual aspect: the system of rules for the superego.
- Ethics- real life execution of such ideals and virtues.
- Ethics refers only to professional codified behavior while morality applies to life outside the workplace.

<u>Utilitarianism</u>: The belief that ethics can ultimately be reduced to the principle that we should **maximise happiness.**

<u>Cultural Imperialism</u>: a powerful foreign culture imposing its values on a weaker indigenous culture

<u>Self Interest Theory/:</u> the claim that human beings are universally **selfish**.

<u>Duty Ethics</u>: The belief that ethics is fundamentally a matter of doing your duty and **fulfilling** your obligations.

<u>Altruism:</u> <u>selfless behaviors</u> where we put other people's welfare before our own <u>Criticism:</u> biological proof that we are empathetic and genetically show altruism.

Motive over consistency Believed that it was the reasoning rather than the feelings / emotions behind an action or behavior.

- How have religions shaped people's moral beliefs?
 - There are all moral principles which should be followed irrespective of the context.

• <u>Rule worship:</u> Blindly following moral rules irrespectively of whether or not they are appropriate.

VIII. Knowledge Questions

The chart below provides learners with the ultimate "formula" to form a **knowledge question**. *Students should use this with attention (based on the real-life situations, or conditions given). Click on this <u>link</u> to be directed to a document with great sample knowledge questions divided into different Areas of Knowledge.

Question Starter	AOK	wok	TOK Term			
How	Human Sciences	Sense Perception	Justification			
To what extent	Natural Sciences	Memory	Validity			
Under what circumstances	History	Reason	Bias			
What role does	The Arts	Emotion	Reliability			
How far	Mathematics	Language	Certainty/uncertainty			
	Religious Knowledge Systems	Faith	Belief			
	Indigenous Knowledge Systems	Imagination	Evidence			
	Ethics	Intuition	Shared/personal knowledge			
			Value			
			Culture			
			Truth			
			Limitation			
			Knowledge			
			Experience			
			Interpretation			
			Method			
			Explanation			

Beside from the Ultimate "Formula" for a knowledge question, students should also ask themselves these questions in order to form a good knowledge question. In addition, students should consider the Real-life situation (RLS) given - it should contain knowledge claims.

- Is it open-ended not yes or no?
- Is it about knowledge and not in an overly specific subject such as science, human sciences or ethics?
- Does it integrate ToK vocabulary such as belief, certainty, culture, evidence, information, experience, explanation, interpretation, intuition, justification, truth, values and the ways of knowing and areas of knowledge?
- Is it precise about the concepts so that it makes sense as a question?

IX. The TOK Presentation

- Approximately 10 minutes per student.
- The presentation in class
- Written self-evaluation report (PPD)
 - a concise description of the presentation
 - answers to the questions provided on the form.
- Step 1: Describe the real-life situation
- Step 2: Outline the implicit and explicit Knowledge Claims
 - What is the underlying issue?
 - What makes TOK radar go off?
- Step 3: State your central Knowledge Question
 - Explain connection and significance of KQ to the RLS
- Step 4: Identify perspectives and exploring your KQ gender, age, AOK, WOK, etc
- Step 5: Examples, argument, counter-arguments, implications, conclusions.
 - Discussion is focused in exploring perspectives to your KQ.
 - Consistently apply the exploration of your KQ back to the RLS
- Step 6: Show how your conclusions have significance to your RLS
 - : Show hoe your work empowers you to act or understand in real life
- Step 7: Show how your conclusions have significance to other RLSs.

: outline any other implications or unanswered questions

IX. The TOK Essay

- Choose title
 - This should be a title that you are actually interested in, or have thorough ideas on AOKs, WOKs, and RLSs, do not choose one because it sounds easier.
- Identify key terms
 - Define the key terms within the prescribed titles
- Identify the claim made in the title and create the opposing claim
- Identify the relevant part(s) of the knowledge framework, WOKs, and AOK.
- Identify relevant knowledge questions pertaining to #4 above.
- Identify perspectives/theories related to #5 above.
- Ask second-order knowledge questions
- Answer them
- Conclude

Students should always look at the rubrics and grading criteria while writing the essay to ensure doing what is required. There is the so called term when writing a TOK essay referred to as the four C's or:

Creativity – You must develop independent and personal thought.

Content – You must understand and be able to write on the knowledge issues.

Clarity – You must be able to write a well-structured essay.

Critical thinking – You must submit enough arguments and counter arguments to convince the audience in your point of view.

Introduction Paragraph

• attention -grabber first few sentences

- outline what you are going to write
- state prescribed title
- thesis statement
- state knowledge question(s) and sub questions
- include WOKs and AOKs
- general to specific

Body Paragraphs

- state arguments & counter arguments, rebuttal if possible
- follow claim → explain → examples (shared or personal knowledge)
- theory & theorists are MUST
- link to prescribed title

Conclusion

- create closure for the readers
- repeat (in different words) what you just said
- implications
- limitations
- significance
- strong conclusion
- must take a side
- perspectives and extensions

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