

MODES DE LA CONNAISSANCE | FORMAS DE CONOCIMIENTO
WAYS OF KNOWING | FORMAS DE CONOCIMIENTO

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Demystifying TOK

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Main themes

- **What is TOK and why is it important?**
- **What sort of things do students do in TOK lessons? How is TOK assessed? How can we improve student performance in, and enjoyment of, TOK?**
- **How can we improve links between TOK and other subjects? How can we engage all teachers with TOK ideas more effectively?**



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What is TOK?

If someone asked you what TOK is,
what would your reply be?

What image does TOK have in your
school?



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What TOK is:

- A course that explores the central question “**How do we know that?**” in a variety of contexts
- An opportunity to highlight that things are often more complex and less certain than they may initially seem
- A way to encourage students to question their own assumptions
- An opportunity to make links to, and draw comparisons between, different disciplines and areas of knowledge

What TOK is not:

- A pure critical thinking course
- A technical philosophy/ epistemology course
- About encouraging students to adopt a particular stance on issues



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Ways of Knowing: reason, sense perception, emotion, intuition, imagination, language, memory, faith

Areas of Knowledge: natural sciences, human sciences, the arts, ethics, mathematics, history, religious knowledge systems, indigenous knowledge systems



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**What makes something a TOK
question rather than just a really
interesting subject question?**



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Example 1

Subject question:

- What is a twin study in psychology and why might it be used?



Image taken from <http://www.matr.vcu.edu/research/why-study-twins.html>

Knowledge question:

- To what extent are experiments in the human sciences limited by the ethical considerations involved in studying human beings?



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Example 2

Subject question:

- Compare and contrast the economic theories of Lewis and Galtung



Image taken from <http://s43789.gridserver.com/webcast/>

Knowledge question:

- On what basis might we decide between the judgments of experts if they disagree?



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Three features of knowledge questions:

- They should be **about knowledge**; rather than focusing on specific content, they should focus on how knowledge is constructed and evaluated
- They should be **open** questions; they should be debatable questions to which there is more than one plausible answer
- They should be phrased using **general** rather than subject specific terminology.



Why is TOK important?

- It develops skills such as thinking skills and communication skills
- It helps students to make connections between subjects
- It encourages students think about how individuals and communities construct knowledge
- It is an opportunity to explore diverse cultural perspectives
- It encourages students to be more aware of, and to critically reflect on, their own beliefs and assumptions



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“The aim of education should be to teach us rather how to think, than what to think – rather to improve our minds, so as to enable us to think for ourselves, than to load the memory with thoughts of other men.”

– John Dewey



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What sort of things do students do in TOK lessons?



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Sense perception examples:

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ORoTCBrCKIQ> (QI)
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G-IN8vWm3m0> (McGurk effect)



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Example: “Dialogue in the Dark”

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Examples of discussions

- Can we rely on sense perception to give us knowledge given that we experience illusions and hallucinations?
- What impact is technology having on changing the limits of our senses?
- If perception is an active, interpretive, and selective process, what implications does this have for the reliability of eyewitness testimony?
- Links to observation in the scientific method



How is TOK assessed?

- 1600 word **essay**

“Technology both enables us to produce knowledge and limits the knowledge that is produced.” Discuss with reference to two areas of knowledge.

Can we have beliefs or knowledge which are independent of our culture?

- Oral **presentation**: applying TOK to a real life situation



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Global Impression Marking

From 2015 onwards TOK essays and presentations will be marked using a global impression marking approach. Judgment of the TOK essay is underpinned by a single question:

Does the student present an appropriate and cogent analysis of knowledge questions in discussing the title?



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How can we improve student performance in TOK?

- Ensuring that students understand what knowledge questions are
- Making the “TOK-ness” more explicit in their essays and presentations. A presentation on whether euthanasia should be legalised could easily turn into an ethics presentation, not a TOK presentation.
- Practice essays
- Make TOK fun ! Exploit the huge range of engaging resources that are available.



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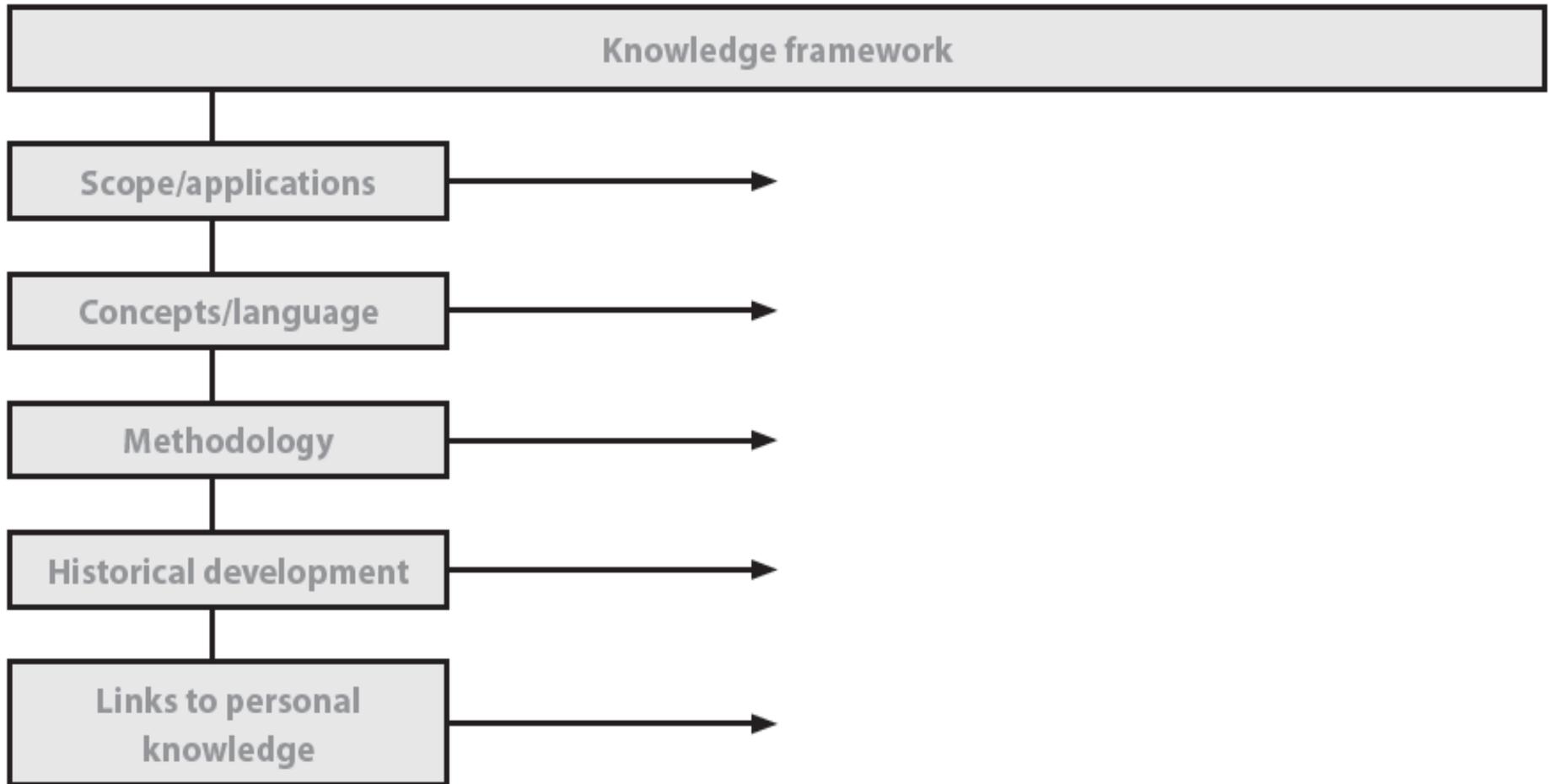
How can we improve links between TOK and other subjects, and engage all DP teachers in TOK more effectively?

- It should be a two way process. TOK should both **support**, and **be supported by**, other subjects
- There are increased links to TOK in new subject guides
- In history we have gone further and have a TOK inspired final section for the new internal assessment task
- Collaborative planning
- In school initiatives to raise the profile of TOK



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The Knowledge Framework





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- He took on the role of deputy chief examiner for TOK for several years.
- When he retired he moved to London and became a part-time TOK teacher.

