

The Knowledge Framework

Scope

This element focuses on exploring the nature and scope of the different themes and areas of knowledge. It explores how each theme/area of knowledge fits within the totality of human knowledge, and also considers the nature of the problems that each theme/area of knowledge faces and tries to address.

Examples of knowledge questions relating to scope include the following.

- What motivates the pursuit of knowledge in these themes/areas of knowledge?
- What practical problems can be solved through the application of knowledge from these themes/areas of knowledge?
- What are the key current open/unanswered questions in these themes/areas of knowledge?
- What makes this theme/area of knowledge important?

Perspectives

This element focuses on the importance and influence of perspectives and context. This includes reflection on the students' own perspectives and what informs them, as well as how different people or groups view or approach knowledge in the different themes/areas of knowledge. It also includes reflection on historical perspectives and how knowledge changes over time.

Examples of knowledge questions relating to perspectives include the following.

- What is the significance of key historical developments within these themes/areas of knowledge?
- What do these themes/areas of knowledge identify about knowledge that is rooted in particular social and cultural groups?
- Are some types of knowledge less open to interpretation than others?
- Is an understanding of the perspective of other knowers essential in the pursuit of knowledge?

Methods and Tools

This element focuses on exploring the methods, tools and practices that we use to produce knowledge. This includes the building of conceptual frameworks, the establishing of traditions and practices, as well as the methodologies employed by formal disciplines. It also includes consideration of the cognitive and material tools that we have available to help us in the pursuit of knowledge, and of how these tools have changed as a result of technological developments.

Examples of knowledge questions relating to methods and tools include the following.

- What assumptions underlie the methods of inquiry used in these themes/areas of knowledge?
- Does what is seen to constitute "good evidence" vary from discipline to discipline and culture to culture? How is knowledge produced and communicated in these themes/areas of knowledge?
- How important are material tools in the production and acquisition of knowledge?

Ethics

This element focuses on exploring ethics and the ethical considerations that have an impact on inquiry in the different themes and areas of knowledge. This includes aspects such as the relationship between facts and values, and how ethical and epistemic values are built into the quest for knowledge. It also includes questions relating to knowledge and inequality and injustice. It is crucial that TOK discussions about ethics focus on the knowledge questions that are woven into, and implied, in the ethical issues being discussed, rather than the focus being on debating the ethical issues themselves.

Examples of knowledge questions relating to ethics include the following.

- Should the pursuit of knowledge in these themes/areas of knowledge be subject to ethical constraints?
- What responsibilities rest on the knower as a result of their knowledge in these themes/areas of knowledge?
- How can we know when we should act on what we know?
- Do established values change in the face of new knowledge?