

InThinking Theory of Knowledge Workshop

For Experienced IBDP Teachers

Barcelona, Spain

Friday 19th - Sunday 21st February 2010

Workshop Leader: Richard van de Lagemaat & Ric Sims

Overview

The aim of this workshop is to build on existing good practice by exploring a variety of topics and approaches relevant to teaching TOK. The focus throughout will be on the nature of knowledge issues and effective strategies for stimulating class discussions. We will also consider how ICT can be used to enhance TOK teaching. Since we can all learn from one another, we hope there will be plenty of opportunity for group discussions and the sharing of ideas and experiences.

Provisional Agenda

1. TOK & the Hexagon: Hard Core or Soft Centre?

TOK is often described as the “cornerstone” or “flagship element” in the Diploma programme”; and as subject guides across the curriculum are updated, references to TOK are being made explicit. In this introductory session we consider the extent to which practice reflects theory and look at a range of integration strategies for bridging it.

2. Talking Back to Statistics

The philosopher Bertrand Russell once observed that the “The mark of a civilized human is the ability to look at a column of numbers, and weep.” Among the issues that will be discussed in this session are the importance of statistics, common statistical fallacies, and the implications of bad statistical reasoning for our beliefs about the world.

3. Modelling Knowledge

Models are a feature of many of our areas of knowledge. But are they also a good model of knowledge itself? In this session we explore knowledge issues arising from models and modelling through examples taken from Physics, Economics, Music and other areas of knowledge.

4. TOK Tech

“Technology will never replace teachers - but those who use technology will replace those who do not.” In this session we look at how teachers can use technology to organise and plan their lessons, and how technology can be used to enhance student learning.

5. Economics, WOKS, & AOKs

In this session we take Economics as a case study to illustrate the relevance of the four Ways of Knowing - Language, Sense Perception, Reason, & Emotion - to the Human Sciences. We will also make connections between economics and all of the other Areas of Knowledge.

6. The Anatomy of Knowledge Issues

Knowledge issues are the central feature of the TOK essay and presentation. The focus of this session is the knowledge issue in relation to the TOK essay task. What exactly is a knowledge issue? Why is it that not every question that can be asked in an area of knowledge is a knowledge issue? We shall look at the anatomy of knowledge issues in some detail. A ToK essay will be dissected and knowledge issues will be extracted and discussed.

7. Progress as a Linking Theme

The belief in progress is a distinctively modern sensibility which was unknown to the ancients. The twin questions guiding this session are: (1) Does knowledge progress? and (2) Is progress “a good thing”? Our discussion will be illustrated with examples taken from science, the arts, and ethics.

8. Reason & Rationality

There is a wide gap between the sort of formal reasoning that is often presented in TOK and the actual process of making judgments in the real world. The latter might be called ‘rationality’. This session focuses on bridging this gap by investigating classroom strategies for exploring human ‘rationality’.

9. Presenting Presentations

In this session we take another look at Knowledge Issues - this time in the context of the Presentation. A number of actual student presentations will be used as the basis for discussion.

10. Books & Burning Issues

As well as dealing with any outstanding issues in this final session, we also devote time to looking at some useful TOK books. You are each asked to bring with you an inspirational TOK-related book (excluding TOK textbooks) and be willing to discuss it for a couple of minutes.