

## Connecting Theory of Knowledge (TOK) and Creativity, Action, Service (CAS)

Theory of knowledge brings CAS into its classroom discussion as readily as it draws on the academic subjects, to enrich the students' growing overview of what it means to know. The learning approach of CAS stresses experiential knowledge—students learn about themselves as human beings, both as individuals and in relation to others, through personal experience of creativity, action and service.

### Experience and Reflection

Students find out about themselves through doing, often through stretching themselves to take on experiences previously outside their experience. The strength of these CAS experiences often lies in their capacity to startle. The student who discovers an unexpected ability as an ice skater could never have acquired this self-knowledge through classroom reflection. Students who work with disadvantaged members of society may discover personal capacities for communication and support they did not know they possessed, and gain at the same time an increased respect for the people they are helping and their strengths.

There is an analogy here with the ancient examples of learning to swim or ride a bicycle: you can read or talk about these things as long as you like but you will only really learn what's involved through doing it, through gaining a feel for what works best (sports coaches talk of developing "muscle memory"). This kind of learning, this way to knowledge, can be argued to work largely through sense perception and emotion (bypassing reason/the intellect), unlike most students' more dominant experiences of academic subjects. CAS, therefore, and its consideration in TOK, could be argued to provide a counterbalance to overly rational accounts of learning and knowledge.

Both CAS and TOK expect experience to be followed by reflection, but of a different kind and scope. In CAS, student reflection is focused on their own learning:

- What did I learn?
- How can I generalize this to other situations I might meet?

In TOK, reflection on CAS is focused at a higher level of generality on the knowledge students have gained. It asks how knowledge gained through personal experience compares with knowledge gained from others:

- How reliable is it as knowledge?
- How does it affect my other knowledge?
- Does it carry implications for future attitudes and actions?
- Does it use different ways of knowing (sense perception, emotion, reason, language) or perhaps the same way differently?

### Broadening Ideas of Knowing

TOK may also draw on the three components of CAS for ideas on knowledge relevant to particular parts of its course and for a synthesis of knowledge that crosses conventional subject boundaries.

The component of **creativity** may raise questions about ways in which creativity is involved in renewing knowledge in all areas (for example, a new proof in mathematics, a fresh hypothesis or new theory in the sciences, or a revised interpretation of an event in history). It has special relevance in discussion of the arts, especially since not all students undertake a subject in IB group 6 within their choice of IB subjects. Their personal experience of creating their own paintings, dance, theatre production, writing, or the like can ground TOK discussion of this area of knowledge. Students may even be surprised to discover the range of ways of knowing involved in creation.

The component of **action** raises, again, numerous questions of knowledge, perhaps notably the distinction between knowing that something is the case and knowing how to do something. TOK questions on knowing how to play a team sport, for instance, can open up consideration of different forms of human ability, even different forms of talent or genius. Knowing how to respond to social need with appropriate action, also experiential in CAS, could be argued to bring together almost all other forms of knowledge in its combination of understanding and application:

1. Understanding the background
2. Identifying the problems from different perspectives
3. Gathering accurate further information

4. Tracking down causes and figuring out solutions
5. Planning ethical and practical action
6. Communicating with others to include them and gather support
7. Cooperating with others to do the action
8. Fulfilling any consequent obligations
9. Following up with an appraisal
10. Learning to do better next time

Clearly, this component of the CAS program, like the others, can provide students with some fine TOK reflection on differing forms of knowing and the way they combine in practice, in knowing, in their lives.

The component of **service** particularly raises knowledge issues in the area of knowledge of ethics, of how human beings should treat each other, even if they do not always do so. In undertaking activities with children with special needs, for example, or providing companionship for the aged and lonely, or responding to community needs through cleaning and building, students gain a grounding in personal response and reflection that combines with their other life experiences to anchor TOK exploration of ethical knowledge in a variety of ways:

- What exactly does it mean to make the world a “better” place?
- What kinds of arguments can be made for a responsibility to others?
- What implications for action might exist for students accepting such a responsibility?

Students’ own observations and emotions can make important ethical issues less remote and cerebral and ground them in their own personal experiences and interests.