
TOK Essay Sample

TOPIC:

DOES IT MATTER THAT YOUR
PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES
INFLUENCE HOW SERIOUSLY YOUR
KNOWLEDGE IS TAKEN?



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Does it matter that your personal circumstances influence how seriously your knowledge is taken?

Knowledge is always subjected to critique and deep observations due to the importance that it holds in a human being's life. It helps to make sense of the world around us. The TOK title points towards the relationship between personal circumstances and knowledge. From the title, it can be understood that there is a hint towards the importance of personal circumstances of a person. This can be seen by the usage of the word "matter." The word "influence" hints towards the degree to which these personal circumstances affect their opinion on a particular matter of concern.

By gaining knowledge, we can widen our horizons of understanding and we can also grow into becoming better human beings by way of that. When we have knowledge, we are effectively able to talk to the other person and make good communication.

There are a lot of factors that affect our knowledge and one of them is personal influence. This is what essentially leads us to the title of our TOK, which is "Does it matter that your personal circumstances influence how seriously your knowledge is taken?"

In order to better be able to analyze this topic, I will first shed light on the important terms of the title. The first one is personal circumstances. These refer to the conditions of a person's life at a point in time. These can be related to family life, monetary status and even physical well-being. The second key term in the title is knowledge.

Knowledge is a concept that cannot be explained in a few words. It is a very broad concept, but in order to understand it better, it can be said that knowledge is the facts and skills that people acquire by way of getting education or learning through experience. This can be his or her own experience or also the experience of other people. Gaining knowledge is extremely important for a person, since it helps to develop a person intellectually. It makes a person much better in order to live in a society and in order to make his interactions with other people much better.

By keeping in mind what these two terms mainly entail, we can simplify what the topic of this TOK mainly entails. It talks about how the personal circumstances of a person at a particular point in their life affects how seriously their knowledge is taken. It is talking about the direct relationship of personal influence and knowledge and how this factor can have a positive or negative effect on knowledge. We can derive our knowledge question from an in depth understanding of this topic, which states that “are positive personal circumstances are needed for a person’s knowledge to be taken seriously?”

By taking a look at what is happening around us, it can be seen that people usually tend to believe those people who are authoritarian figures whose personal circumstances are good. They are where they are due to the fact that they come from influential backgrounds and they also have a good financial backup. Those people who don’t have very good personal circumstances, their knowledge is generally not seen to be given as much importance to.

In order to delve deeper into understanding this topic in detail, I will be looking at two areas of knowledge which are history and human sciences. I feel that I am more knowledgeable in these two topics as compared to the rest and so I feel I will be able to make my point in a much better way if I use these two areas of knowledge. In addition to that, the work of knowledge that I will be using to make my point is reasoning.

Moving on to the first area of knowledge, which is history, I will shed light on the works of Thucydide. He was a very famous historian who contributed to giving a detailed historical account by the name of the “History of the Peloponnesian War.” His work has been given a lot of importance to and he has been recognized as a really great historian. In order to give an objective account of the incident, he took many interviews as well. Thucydide came from an influential background. It was seen that he has many gold mines and it was through that wealth that he was able to finance all of his masterwork (Greenspan, 2016). Part of the reason why his work was given this much recognition was the fact that he was extremely sound financially and had positive personal circumstances. This real life situation shows that it really was his personal circumstances at that point in time that got him this much recognition. From this example, it can be seen that positive personal circumstances really affect the way a person’s knowledge is taken or given importance to.

A counterclaim to this is that of Abdul Sattar Edhi. As a man, he had absolutely nothing in his possession. He came from a very poor background and dedicated his entire life to working for the poor. He began humanitarian work in 1947 and helped

save so many lives since then (Saleem, 2016). When he began working for this cause, he had nothing on him except a total of \$500. He worked extremely hard and created a fleet of his own ambulances so that he could rescue people and help them. In 2016, he died and was given a state funeral. Even during his life, he was given so much respect by everyone. This is an example that shows that positive circumstances do not influence how seriously a person's knowledge is taken in many instances. There are definitely more examples of situations where personal circumstances affect how seriously a person's knowledge is taken, but then there are a few examples of the likes of Edhi and Mother Teresa where this does not hold true.

I will now move on the second area of knowledge which is human sciences. Within this broad area of knowledge, I will be focusing on psychology. A real life situation that can be seen here is that of Anna Freud. The only Freud that comes to mind when we hear the name Freud is Sigmund Freud due to the important contributions that he made in the field of child psychology. However, the lesser known Freud is Anna Freud who was his daughter. No one barely even known her despite the fact that she made really important contributions in the field of psychology. She not only developed on her father's ideas, but also developed the field of child psychoanalysis (Cherry, 2019). A lot of other thinkers have been influenced by her ideas. From this example, it can be seen that it was due to the fact that she was a famous psychologist's daughter that she got overshadowed. Her work was thus not given the importance and credit that it should be given. From this example, we can see that it was mainly due to her personal circumstances that her work wasn't given as much importance as it should be.

Another example is that of the Indian actress Deepika Padukone. She has been very open about how she suffered from depression for the longest time. Everyone took her word for it and they believed everything she said. A very major factor for this was that she is a very famous actress who is loved by a lot of people. She has taken to a lot of public forums to talk about her mental illness. She talked about how mental illnesses are a taboo in this part of the world and society should now become more accepting of it.

A counterclaim to this is seen in Ivan Pavlov's example. He was a very famous psychologist who is mainly known for his work on conditioned reflexes. He initially came from a very poor background. When he got married and had children, he lives in a very small bug infested place. His father was a priest in a small village of Russia and that is what he wanted his son to do as well. Despite the fact that he didn't come from very positive personal circumstances, his work was given a lot of importance to.

From all these examples, it can be seen that it is definitely true that when a person hails from very positive personal circumstances, then their knowledge is definitely taken seriously as opposed to when they hail from negative personal circumstances. In order to reach these conclusions, the work of knowledge that has been used is reasoning. By reasoning out, we can see that the majority of circumstances are such that the people who hail from influential backgrounds, their knowledge is given much more importance to. There are examples like the counterclaims mentioned here that don't fall into this category and are the ones whose efforts are recognized, but these

are few in number. So, we can say that personal circumstances really do affect knowledge greatly. Positive personal circumstances will lead to acceptance of knowledge and vice versa. It is commonly observed that people mostly consider the pieces of knowledge of those people who are authoritarian figures or those who hail from very influential backgrounds. The exceptions to this are very few in number.

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