

Technology and the sharing of knowledge



Competition Question

Why is Theory of Knowledge important to the 21st century international student?

Aims

- To explore the way in which shared knowledge is shaped by the technology used to share it.
- To understand the link between the effectiveness of this technology and the nature of the group to whom this knowledge is available.
- To understand that knowledge that does not lend itself to sharing through this technology is likely to remain available to a small group or remain personal knowledge.

Lesson

1. In groups answer the question: what are the five greatest inventions that allow us to share knowledge? (Have in mind answers such as the invention of language, the invention of written language, the invention of paper, the invention of the printing press, the invention of radio, the invention of the internet and so on)
2. For each invention think of two examples:
 - a form of knowledge which can be shared more effectively through the use of the invention
 - a form of knowledge which cannot be shared through the use of the invention
3. What do the inventions have in common? (In some sense the most effective inventions are those that allow knowledge to be produced in a digital form: writing, knots in an Inca quipu, zeros and ones in a computer network or support this operation: paper, printing press, internet and so on)
4. Reflect on what happens to knowledge that is intrinsically difficult to share? (Have in mind answers such as it remains available to few people – or it remains purely personal knowledge. This knowledge is vulnerable to being lost)

Speculative questions to end the class

- In what way do recent advances in information and computing technology change the form in which knowledge is produced? (Students might like to reflect on the use of social networking, blogs, the use of standard software packages by the corporate world, the replacement of print by electronic media and so on)
- What are the implications of this for the 21st century world?

Ric Sims, 9th October 2013

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