

"Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed."
[Constitution of UNESCO, 1946]

Workshop Description

Students sometimes complain that Theory of Knowledge is irrelevant and has nothing to do with the real world. This one day workshop seeks to answer that complaint by using critical thinking skills to reflect on some of the knowledge issues behind world events since September 2001.

Topics Covered

1. **Mental Maps** We begin by looking at maps of the world. How accurate are they? What conventions are built into them? How are they culturally biased? We then raise the same questions about our mental maps of reality which also contains various inaccuracies, conventions and cultural biases. Given this, we would do well to distinguish the map from the underlying territory.
2. **Information & Disinformation** Despite its obvious benefits, the internet raises as many problems as it solves about what we should believe. For it is not only an information super-highway, but also a disinformation super-highway. We look at a variety of internet rumours, and then try to establish some criteria for distinguishing reasonable from unreasonable beliefs.
3. **Double-edged Knowledge Tools** In TOK, we say that there are four primary knowledge tools : language, perception, reason and emotion; but each of these tools is double-edged and can sometimes distort our picture of the world. Keeping our theme in mind, we focus on four main issues: (a) the difference between freedom fighters and terrorists; (b) the unreliability of eye-witness evidence; (c) the role played by reason in decision-making and risk assessment; (d) the extent to which reason is the slave of emotions.
4. **How to Watch TV News** We rely on the news media for information about world events, but they are not always objective. We look at various media biases, and focus in particular on the way in which the media can reinforce clichéd and stereotypical thinking.
5. **Torture & Tolerance** The last section of the workshop focuses on values. We look at how two different ethical theories might approach the question of whether torture is ever justified. We conclude with a discussion of the value of tolerance and the limits of acceptable diversity.

Dr. Richard van de Lagemaat runs an educational consultancy service called *InThinking* (www.inthinking.co.uk) which promotes critical thinking skills in international schools. With twenty five years experience in international education, Richard has run workshops for schools and organizations in fifty countries. (For a list of clients and recommendations see: <http://www.inthinking.co.uk/richard-van-de-lagemaat.htm>) His book *Theory of Knowledge for the IB Diploma* published by Cambridge University Press has sold more than 20,000 copies.