TOK ESSAY SAMPLE

WRITING METIER

TITLE

DOES OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO ACQUIRE KNOWLEDGE VARY ACCORDING TO THE AREA OF KNOWLEDGE?

TOPIC: Does our responsibility to acquire knowledge vary according to the area of knowledge? Discuss with reference to history and natural science.

Knowledge is among mankind's most significant and essential responsibilities. It has resulted in the invention of valuable assets within different sectors of society and enabled man to acquire vital information on societal issues. However, it is essential to point out that the extent to which this responsibility is underlined can be rather contrastive across different areas of knowledge. For example, history and natural science are the two areas of knowledge, and they show essential differences in terms of the object of knowledge and the ways its acquisition is justified and used.

This essay will examine whether the obligation to obtain knowledge differs depending on the field of knowledge in history and natural sciences. Comparing the nature of knowledge in these fields and the effects of those fields on society and the individuals who engage in the study, one can understand how the responsibility of acquiring knowledge, as depicted in the media, might be different. Finally, in this analysis, the primary purpose is to unveil the assorted peculiarities of acquired knowledge in different fields.

History:

Historically, there is a common claim that acquiring knowledge is one of the most critical tasks, as it determines the recognition of human beings, culture, and civilization. Historical literacy helps people understand the development of societies, the reasons for and outcomes of wars, and the successes and losses of mankind. This understanding helps in creating identity and a sense of belonging and, at the same time, produces a critical consciousness of history in the present and towards the future. To clarify, one of historical knowledge's crucial purposes is to build societal memory needed to preserve the culture and identity of individuals within societies. It is a useful activity for people to study history as one can gain much knowledge about people, their actions, ways of ruling society, and the causes and effects of different developments.

An excellent example of the necessity of historical analysis is the holocaust case. The most remembered and the most tragic event of World War II[1] was the systematic genocide of the European Jews – six million people. Learning about this time can help people, and societies in

[1] Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. "World War II." Encyclopædia Britannica, 2023, https://www.britannica.com/event/World-War-II.

particular, how some rulers can be corrupted and dangerous, how discrimination and hate could lead to disasters, and, importantly, how one has to stay watchful to protect people's rights. In addition, the Holocaust is a reminder of such issues as the principles governing individual actions and the importance of understanding and discussing the tragedies of the past to avoid repeating them in the future. Holocaust education initiatives like those that are run within the framework of formal education across the globe have a primary goal of passing on lessons on tolerance, the significance of diversity as well as the necessity of anti-authoritarianism and racism. Besides narrating the stories of past violations and discrimination victims, these programs also make the students more empathetic and ethical.

A counterclaim also exists that history can be pointed out as a certain social construct, and authors' views and experiences can influence their writing. This feature distorts the real course of events, as only some aspects of the history are illustrated. The differences in historians' perception of an incident can be attributed to ethnicity, bias, and orientation of his or her personal history. Additionally, it can be argued that applying historical knowledge to the present life is problematic because historical events do not necessarily correlate with current challenges. Society is constantly evolving; therefore, using history and applying historical state data to contemporary conditions may seem irrelevant and unimportant, and thus, the study of history may seem less relevant to current decision-making processes.

This can be illustrated by the controversy about which sides had the right to interpret the American Civil War[2]. Some myths have been compiled on the war, including the ones highlighting states' rights and the other concentrating on the issue of slavery. This analysis shows how weird the interpretation of history is and how it is possible to come across essentially opposite conclusions while using history as an argument. For instance, some history lovers are convinced that the primary goal of war was to maintain the Union and to strengthen federal authority. In contrast, others are sure that the main idea of war was to eliminate slavery and to bring race equality. Such differences in the approach to evaluating historical events may cause controversy and politicize the matter.

Consequently, acquiring historical knowledge means solving the issue of determining reliable source readings as a critical thinking task. It calls upon people to read more than one source, doubts the credibility and impartiality of history, and learn more.

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[2] Library of Congress. "Civil War and Reconstruction (1861-1877) - Overview." United States History Primary Source Timeline, Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/united-states-history-primary-source-timeline/civil-war-and-reconstruction-1861-1877/overview/.

Natural Science:

As in natural science, the onus rests on individuals to get knowledge due to the chance to offer solutions to some of the world's most contemporary problems and enhance human lives. Education plays an integral part in scientific discovery by providing the means of ascertaining a body of knowledge about the universe and increasing in size technologically, health, and scientifically, providing solutions to environmental problems. Science is expected to be an activity that is free of bias and pursued based on evidence and fairness of method. The objectivity and concern with the scientific approach allow natural science to yield facts and knowledge that can solve many human needs and issues anywhere and anytime. The development resulting from natural science for the better solution of health problems can increase life span and elevate living standards worldwide.

The creation of vaccines is considered to be the best illustration of the effects that the acquisition of scientific knowledge can produce. Most diseases that were fatal in the past have been controlled through vaccination exercises, including smallpox, polio, and measles. The responsibility highlighted in the text is wherein the scientific community has been dedicated to the study of pathogens and the creation of immunization, just as it demonstrates the immense duty of science in benefiting the world. The accelerated progression of vaccines against COVID-19[3], apart from proving the importance of scientific activity in combating pandemic threats, demonstrates the need to focus on developing science in the modern world. The global cooperation of scientists, the use of advanced biotechnology, and strict testing and approval procedures envisage how employing scientific knowledge, a response to global threats such as a pandemic can be organized quickly, and people's lives can be saved as well as societies can get back to the process of their development. This case, therefore, depicts not only the utilitarian values of scientific wisdom but even more the moral duty of inventing such wisdom for the paramount advantage of man today and in the future.

On the other hand, while gaining scientific knowledge may have advantages, controversies concerning morality and the community cannot be overcome. Some scientific activities may result in negative outcomes, ethical questions, and an increased level of concern among the population.

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[3] World Health Organization. "Coronavirus." World Health Organization, 2023, https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus.

Issues of morality play an essential role in the concept of science and must be analyzed with potential bias toward humans or animals, modifying genes, altering the environment, and more. Also, the use of science may be rooted in monetary concerns on the part of specific groups, which does not necessarily benefit the larger population. The increase of scientific discoveries and technology available in the market implies that the primary goal of its production and distribution can be the maximization of profits for the companies and not necessarily the benefit of society, and it can even worsen the situation regarding fairness and equality.

The controversy elicited by modified foods genetically normally allegorizes such apprehensions. Thus, although GMOs can improve food security[4] and minimize the negative consequences of agriculture for the environment, they also put into question the appropriateness of modifying natural organisms and raise questions about the negative impacts on health in the long run. The release of GMOs into the food chain has raised issues regarding the health effects and GMOs' effects on the environment, together with the issues of Genetically Modified organisms. Moreover, large-based companies tend to dominate the GMO market, thus raising issues of economic injustice and denial of GMOs to smallholder farmers. Most of these companies can genetically modify specific seeds and own the patent for them, thus making it expensive for farmers to buy them; they cannot reproduce these seeds, putting them at the mercy of these companies and financially vulnerable. This example proves that scientific advancements and their usage should be together with ethical considerations on how they should be implemented. By balancing innovation and the practicality of applying science and technology within the global society safely and equally, as well as striving to make the best use of the available information, one can solve the identified problems and improve the situation.

Thus, the distribution of the effective motive concerning knowledge acquisition depends on the area of knowledge due to the specifics of particular fields and the significance of the acquired knowledge. Education in history ensures the preservation of identity and provides a set of rules to avoid negative experiences while considering the individual approach to interpreting the event. In natural science, knowledge acquisition is essential for various improvements, most notably technological and medical improvements. Still, these should not be gotten to the detriment of ethical standards, not to mention equity. By considering these differences, the means of obtaining and using knowledge can be more effective in benefiting society and

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[4] Devex. “Are GMOs the Key to Global Food Security?” Devex, 2023, https://www.devex.com/news/are-gmos-the-key-to-global-food-security-91862#:~=For%20scientists%2C%20GMOs%20are%20not,food%20options%2C%E2%80%9D%20Trigueros%20said.

accommodating the difficulties of each sector. The constant conversation between these fields shows that our role as knowledge-seekers and -users is complex and ever-evolving.

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