

This is an executive summary of a discussion paper published by the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters in April, 2025 titled "Tiedon anatomia: Näkökulmia tiedon moninaisuuteen yhteiskunnallisessa päätöksenteossa" (Translation: *The Anatomy of Knowledge: Insights on the multidimensionality of knowledge in evidence-informed policymaking*).

The Anatomy of Knowledge

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The Anatomy of Knowledge is a conceptual tool to enhance knowledge literacy. As such it contributes to transparency in evidence-informed policymaking. Knowledge literacy is an essential futures skill that allows to critically examine, describe and interpret knowledge.

DEFINITION

The definition for knowledge is ambiguous

Understanding what knowledge is requires examination of how it is produced. The ambiguity of knowledge is highlighted by the many dimensions present in knowledge-production. Unpacking this ambiguity can be done by reviewing key features of such multidimensionality: Knowledge is a product of social interaction and historical exchange, and essentially tied to time.

- Knowledge is an accumulation of layers constituted by type, form, method and data.
- Values and value assumptions cannot be detached from knowledge – in other words, knowledge is not value-free.
- Well founded, reliable and trustworthy knowledge can stand critical scrutiny.

IMPORTANCE

How knowledge is defined affects evidence-informed policymaking

Evidence-informed policymaking has evolved from natural science based science advise to a multidisciplinary approach to public sector decision-making. How policymakers define knowledge shapes the development and execution of evidence-informed policymaking.

- The evidence base is a multidimensional foundation where various knowledge types, ways of producing knowledge, methodologies and data come together.
- Strengthening the foundation of evidence-informed policymaking requires conceptual clarity.
- A strong evidence base is built with good questions and critical scrutiny.
- Scientific experience is often valuable in critically reviewing knowledge and the evidence base.
- Knowledge in policymaking needs to be appropriate, relevant and up to date. Good knowledge is produced slowly even when decisions need to be made fast.

SOLUTION

Knowledge literacy enhances future resilience

Understanding knowledge and developing necessary capabilities to critically examine its components are crucial for approaching uncertainty in the future. The rapid development of AI and data technology have highlighted demand for critical knowledge literacy. It is essential to learn how to contextualize and review knowledge to assign appropriate informative value.

Knowledge literacy allows to

- build effective and sustainable ways to manage information.
- strengthen agency in evidence-informed policymaking and during decision-making processes.
- understand the nature of knowledge; its composition, associated ways of viewing the world or any value dependencies.
- build resilience and anticipatory capabilities in governance.
- identify relevant knowledge gaps to enhance evidence-informed policymaking.

