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The Role of Interactive Methods in Teaching Geography

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ABSTRACT

The article provides a comprehensive analysis of international experience in geography teaching, focusing on the use of interactive teaching methods. Various models for organizing geography education in European, American, and Asian countries have been examined, and their strengths and weaknesses have been identified. Particular attention is paid to pedagogical technologies aimed at developing students' cognitive activity, their research and practical skills. The necessity of introducing interactive methods in teaching geography of Karakalpakstan, taking into account its natural-ecological and socio-economic features, has been substantiated.

Keywords: Geography, interactive methods, geographical education, Karakalpakstan, pedagogical technologies, environmental education.

INTRODUCTION

Geography is one of the fundamental sciences that studies the natural, socio-economic, and environmental processes occurring on the Earth's surface. In this regard, the content and methodology of its teaching in various countries of the world have certain differences due to the specifics of the natural environment, historical development, and educational policies of states. Analysis of global experience shows that in recent decades, there has been a transition from traditional forms of knowledge transfer to interactive teaching methods aimed at developing the student's personality, forming critical thinking, independence, and the ability to apply knowledge in practice.

In the modern context of modernizing the education system, the implementation of innovative pedagogical technologies that contribute to improving teaching quality is acquiring particular relevance. This is especially important for teaching the geography of Karakalpakstan—a region with unique natural conditions and a complex environmental situation, particularly due to the drying up of the Aral Sea. Developing students' systemic understanding of the region's natural and socio-economic processes requires the use of modern interactive methods that allow for the activation of the educational process and make it more practice-oriented.

The purpose of this study is to comprehensively analyze international experience in applying interactive methods of geography teaching and to justify their use in the geography teaching system of Karakalpakstan.

METHODS

The study employed methods of theoretical analysis and generalization of scientific literature, comparative pedagogical analysis, and the systematization of foreign experience in geography teaching. The educational systems of European, North American, and Asian countries, the characteristics of their curricula, methodological approaches, and the pedagogical technologies used were studied. Particular attention was paid to the analysis of interactive teaching methods, their role in forming students' competencies, and their potential for adaptation to regional educational conditions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In general, in developed foreign countries of Europe and America, among the subjects mandatory for all students, the type of elective courses of varying complexity is widespread.

In world practice, a three-stage education system is considered the primary one: primary schools are divided into grades 1-4, secondary schools into grades 5–9, and higher schools into grades 10–12. At each of these stages, geography education has its own specific goal. For example, if the primary goal of geography education in secondary schools at the first stage is to study the surrounding environment, at the second stage, it is to study the life of one's country and obtain information about necessary professions, as well as to form educational skills and abilities. In the third stage, general education schools are focused on studying the global problems of humanity and the world economy. In world practice, the state of teaching geography is not significant; therefore, there are supporters of two views (directions) regarding its teaching to students. Supporters of the first direction argue that geography should be taught regularly as an independent subject in curricula, while supporters of the second direction argue that geography should be taught in combination with other subjects.

It should be noted that we believe that the geography of Karakalpakstan should also be taught based on a separate program. This is because, based on the natural conditions of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, it is one of the regions in an ecologically critical state; firstly, it is important to provide students with knowledge about the natural-geographical position and natural-geographical aspects, the geological and geomorphological structure of the territory, its main minerals, climatic and hydrographic features, the organic world (soil, flora, and fauna), as well as environmental protection and conservation, environmental problems related to the drying up of the Aral Sea, and the description of natural-geographical regions. Secondly, by providing students with knowledge about the economic-geographical position, borders, and administrative-territorial structure of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, the dynamics and composition of population growth, public health issues, the development and location of industrial sectors, their role on a national scale, the development and location of agriculture, opportunities for their development, the state of public service sectors, transport infrastructure, foreign economic relations, and the characteristics of economic regions, a sense of homeland will be enhanced.

In many countries of the world, the study of subjects in general education schools is voluntary, and it is carried out according to the wishes of students. The number of mandatory subjects in this group of countries does not exceed 7-8. For example, in Finland and Sweden, Finnish and Swedish, economics and sociology, geography, chemistry, English, religion, and sports are mandatory subjects [6; -66 p].

In developed countries, the content of geography education is high in quality and is aimed at forming specific skills in students. In these countries, geographical education is more difficult to master, focusing on the study of problems, various theories, laws, and categories [4; -204 p].

In developed Western countries, the spiritual aspects of education occupy a central place in geography education. Great attention is paid to the study of the student's psyche and cognitive activity. Geography education research is almost impossible without the involvement of psychologists. Various texts, games, and imitations are widely used in geography education. For example, a student thinks as the president of a company, conducts business, solves a problem, and draws independent conclusions. In general, the main goal of such education is to prepare students for society.

Furthermore, an analysis of geography textbooks and manuals in various countries shows that several manuals are published for the same course. In most cases, they are rich in interesting information and possess informative properties. In such manuals, text accounts for 20-30%, images for 20%, statistics for 20%, and questions and assignments for 20%. The illustrations in the book are of exceptional quality; there are almost no maps in the lower grades' textbooks, and they are replaced by various map schemes. Numerical numbers are almost never encountered in the text; existing ones are also comparative in nature and are given according to criteria such as lowest, highest, smallest and longest [2; 14-15-p].

In Finland, geography is taught as one of the core subjects in school. Geography education in general education schools also has its own characteristics, and the teaching of geography is at a higher level compared to developed countries. Education consists of two stages: the first stage consists of a 9-year compulsory general education public

school, and the second stage consists of gymnasiums. In this country, students can apply their knowledge of nature in practice, and geography plays a special role in establishing the relationship between man and nature. Classless gymnasiums are widespread in countries after 9 years of compulsory education. In such gymnasiums, a student or a group of students prepares an annual curriculum. Such an annual curriculum is approved in gymnasiums by course supervisors and the administration. The academic year at the gymnasium is divided into 6 periods, each period consists of 6 weeks, the courses are organized in 32 hours, and one subject is taught in each course for one hour a day, the student studies 4-7 hours a day. Sports classes are held after the training session. At the end of each period, students' knowledge is assessed, and if a student receives an unsatisfactory grade, they choose this course again;

In almost all countries, the geography education system is linked to the socio-political and economic system of the state. For example, after the end of the Second World War, a large part of Germany's territory suffered losses from military weapons. At the government level, special attention was paid to the restoration of land resources, the proper and rational use of natural resources, and nature conservation, and these knowledges were instilled in students through the subject of geography in secondary schools. By paying special attention to the use of nature and environmental protection, Germany is today among the most economically developed and, at the same time, the most ecologically favorable countries in Western Europe. This country still attaches great importance to the teaching of geography today, and it is taught in general education schools alongside basic and fundamental subjects;

In the education system of Singapore, geography is taught in grades 3-6 in addition to social sciences. However, it is a compulsory subject in grades 7-8 (lower secondary). In grades 9-12, students choose subjects based on their interests; geography is also an elective subject in the upper grades (9-12). Since studying the geography of a country with an area of 728 km2 (equivalent to the area of a smaller district in Uzbekistan) is not difficult, students study it within 2 years (in grades 7–8) as part of World Physical and Economic Geography. Despite the small size of the country's territory, the teaching of geography as a separate subject contributed to the formation of students' knowledge regarding nature management. Singapore today is a developed country with a clean ecological environment.

The conducted analysis showed that in global geography education practice, three main models for organizing the educational process have emerged, each possessing its own characteristics, advantages, and disadvantages. The first model is characteristic of the CIS and Eastern European countries, where geography is taught based on a unified state curriculum. Within this model, geography is presented as an independent discipline and includes courses in physical and economic geography. This approach ensures the systematicity and sequence of material study, but in some cases, it may limit the flexibility of the educational process and the implementation of innovative teaching methods.

The second model is widespread in Western European and North American countries such as the USA, Great Britain, and Canada. In these countries, geography is often taught as part of integrated courses that combine knowledge from history, sociology, and economics. At the same time, there is no unified state standard, which provides teachers with significant freedom in choosing the content and methods of teaching. Despite certain advantages such as flexibility and adaptability, this approach can lead to fragmented knowledge and a decrease in students' level of geographical preparation.

The third model involves combining mandatory disciplines with the elective study of geography. It is characteristic of several Asian and European countries, including France and Japan. In these countries, geography is often studied in depth within elective courses, allowing students to choose their field of study according to their interests.

Despite differences in organizational models, a general trend toward the active implementation of interactive teaching methods is observed in developed countries. These methods are aimed at engaging students in active cognitive activities and developing skills for independent information searching and analysis. The most common interactive methods include heuristic conversations, problem-based learning, discussions and debates, situation modeling, role-playing and business games, working with statistical and cartographic materials, and the use of information and communication technologies.

In foreign pedagogical practice, special importance is attached to the psychological aspects of learning. Students are considered not as passive recipients of knowledge, but as active participants in the educational process. For example, when using the modeling method, students can

act as researchers, analysts, or managers, making decisions in conditions close to reality. This approach contributes to the development of critical thinking, the formation of practical skills, and the preparation of students for real life.

Analysis of educational materials shows that modern geography textbooks in developed countries have a distinctly interactive focus. Illustrations, diagrams, statistical data, problem-based tasks, and discussion questions occupy a significant place in them. The text part, as a rule, occupies no more than one-third of the volume, which contributes to the active engagement of students in the learning process.

The experience of individual countries demonstrates different approaches to using interactive methods. Thus, in Finland, great attention is paid to the practical application of knowledge and the individualization of learning. In Germany, emphasis is placed on environmental education and rational environmental management, which is linked to the historical characteristics of the country's development. In the USA, the integration of geography with other disciplines is widespread, contributing to the development of interdisciplinary thinking but simultaneously necessitating a revision of geography's role as an independent subject. In France, training is built on a problem-oriented approach based on the analysis of human-nature interaction. In Singapore, geography is taught as a mandatory subject at certain stages of education and is actively integrated with modern technologies.

Applied to the conditions of Karakalpakstan, the use of interactive teaching methods is of particular importance. The region is characterized by a complex environmental situation related to the degradation of the natural environment, which requires the formation of environmental consciousness and responsibility in students. In this context, geography should be taught as an independent discipline that ensures a systematic understanding of the region's natural and socio-economic processes.

Interactive methods allow for a significant increase in learning efficiency, as they contribute to the development of students' cognitive activity, the formation of research skills, and practical abilities. Using methods such as analyzing environmental situations, working with maps and statistical data, modeling economic activities, and conducting educational research allows students to better understand the characteristics of their region and realize the importance of rational nature management.

Furthermore, the application of interactive methods contributes to the formation of a sense of patriotism and responsibility for the state of the environment in students. Studying the geography of one's native land through active forms of instruction allows for not only the acquisition of theoretical knowledge but also the formation of a value-based attitude toward nature and society.

CONCLUSION

Thus, international experience demonstrates the high effectiveness of interactive teaching methods in geography teaching. Their use allows for improving the quality of education, developing students' key competencies, and preparing them for solving urgent socio-economic and environmental problems.

In the conditions of Karakalpakstan, the introduction of interactive teaching methods is a necessary condition for modernizing geographical education. The combination of traditional and innovative approaches will ensure the formation of a holistic understanding of the region in students, develop their analytical and practical skills, and enhance their environmental culture.

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