

THE POSSIBILITY OF APPLYING THE PRINCIPLES OF INTERESTING AND ATTRACTIVENESS IN GEOGRAPHY TEACHING

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Abstract: *Modern didactic reality imposes the need to develop modern teacher to knowledge of theoretical orientations and following developments in the current theoretical power to think outside the practice of his time and thus, take a new approach to the interpretation of certain facilities, for new form of activities, modern teaching tools and methods. The development of geographic science has imposed the need for modernization of geographical education. Factography and saving the tremendous teaching material that has dogged the students, caused the need for modernization. The aim is to examine the possibility of applying the principle of interesting and attractive in teaching geography through a variety of examples and in different ways, and to consider learning and pedagogical reasons for this commitment, respecting all norms and rules prescribed and planned curriculum. This paper the authors argue for the introduction of this principle in education as a compulsory teaching of principles, which would make demands of contemporary geographical theory and practice are fully met.*

Key words: *didactic principles, teaching geography, interesting and attractive, teacher, student.*

INTRODUCTION

Didactic principles are guidelines for teaching process and they represent principles which can not be deviated from. They are derived from the goals and objectives of teaching, patterns of teaching process and patterns of the psychophysical development of students (Bakovljević, 1998).

Successful teaching must be based on didactic (teaching) principles, which are relied on by all teaching systems, methods, forms and teaching tools. Regardless of the num-

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ber of didactic principles, taking into account the rationality and productivity of teaching organization of the particular teaching discipline, teachers are opting for those principles that are most suitable for those teaching areas.

As pointed out by Đurdjica Komlenović (2007), “socio-economic conditions in the 20 and 21 century were reflected in the education system in most countries of the world. Teachers are given their freedom in conducting teaching process, to plan and determine the type of the lesson, teaching methods, techniques, tools and principles.”

The first attempt to introduce the principles of interesting and attractiveness to the teaching process was the one of Žarko Simeunović (2004), who developed some basic theoretical assumptions of this principle, analyzed its use in education in general, leaving methodologists of particular teaching disciplines possibility and to some extent freedom to integrate this principle in different, but certainly appropriate ways in specific education and scientific areas.

BASIC THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

In geography education there are usually specified nine didactic principles, which are mutually combined in order to improve teaching process.

According to M. Bakovljević (1998) those are:

1. The principle of scientific value
2. The principle of systematizing and ordering
3. The principle of taking account of the age of the students
4. The principle of taking account of individual differences of students
5. The principle of student activities
6. The principle of the obvious
7. The principle of coherency of theory and practice
8. The principle of permanence of knowledge, skills and habits
9. The principle of effectiveness (economical suitability).

Certainly, many other didactics, teachers, methodologists, studied the basic principles, their classification, discussing the advantages and disadvantages of existing, and stressing the need to introduce new ones.

The process of teaching is not easy at all, and every element of the process is in some way connected with the rest of them. On one level, it requires a lot of preparation, hard work, attention, and at the same time it offers the possibility to improve education, and thus gives a chance to make it interesting and attractive using different teaching tools, forms and their combinations.

The point, and somehow the definition of the principle of interesting and attractiveness comes down to this: “Education should be organized in the way that students find it interesting, attractive, exciting, unique, it should evoke curiosity about its contents, and become fun” (Simeunović, 2004).

Words interesting and attractive are partially synonyms, because their meanings are practically correspondent and complementary. Nevertheless, there are two contrary as-

sumptions. The first one says that every contents can be interesting and attractive or dull and unattractive per se. That implies that interesting and attractiveness are independent from human being and that characteristics of every content are immanent. The second opinion is completely opposite and it says that interesting and attractiveness are psycho-subjective categories and they depend on human being so he can have an effect on them (Simeunović, 2004).

The human being (in teaching process this means the teacher) is the one who interprets the contents, he is the one who makes it interesting or dull, so that is why the second opinion is adopted. The student interest and quality of assimilation of knowledge, are depending on how teacher organizes the class, how he teaches, what questions and assignments he puts in front of his students. This is why the principle of interesting and attractiveness should be introduced to teaching process. If the teaching contents were, per se, interesting or dull, more or less attractive, than there would be no need to introduce this principle. Because we are witnesses that geography is such scientific discipline where any contents can be made interesting, only if it is presented in right way, and presented in that way provoke more interest with students, there are actually grounds for introducing this principle to teaching process. In favour of that, there are numerous and varied teaching tools, such as maps, globes, pictures, etc., as well as modern technical equipment (computers and means for presenting multimedia content).

Not everyone finds the same content equally interesting, and because of that, the teacher is obliged to present content to provoke interest in all of the students. This was also pointed out by Jan Amos Komenski, stating that class should not begin if the interest is not aroused, and that it can be achieved using the principle of interesting and attractiveness (Simeunović, 2004).

WHY THE PRINCIPLE OF INTERESTING AND ATTRACTIVENESS SHOULD BE INTRODUCED TO TEACHING PROCESS?

Most methodologists claim that teaching should not be monotonous and dull, but more interesting and attractive to students, to provoke their interest, desire for knowledge, and if we see it that way, the principle of interesting and attractiveness is not a great mystery. However, we are witnesses that everything that is not mandatory will not be fully applied, so many people would not comply. Therefore, the essence and goal of this paper is to present effort to highlight the need to formally introduce this principle in teaching geography so it becomes mandatory for all teachers. If this should not happen, teachers would be free, but not obliged, to apply it, and that would likely lead to a situation where small number of teachers do but most don't use this principle in the classroom, due to the additional efforts and commitment this principle requires.

Goals and objectives of teaching and learning are certainly formed in accordance with the society, its development in space and time. Teaching is a dynamic process, and so is education, and this is why it has to be taken in account the importance of developments in education, psychological development of the child and the modern knowledge about it. It should be noted that the position of school, as educational institution,

changed in past adapting to the social changes. Modern school must be in constant interaction with its environment, however, today's school is in unenviable position in relation to the abundance of information, generally less useful, by various advertisers (television, radio, internet). Today, so-called mass media distract children from school as a source of information, which are certainly more credible, more accurate, and most importantly, in accordance with students' age. School should not ignore this fact, but should fight for the interest of the students, and a good way to do this is to introduce the principle of interesting and attractiveness in teaching in general, and therefore in teaching geography. At the present time there are a number of software and software packages that provide shallow knowledge to students, but if we fit them into one segment of teaching process and continue using them in the right way, we will make teaching more interesting and thus more attractive to students. If teaching and presenting teaching contents becomes more attractive, therefore the knowledge acquired in this way will be long-lasting, because this type of teaching leaves teachers more space to be flexible, and leaves enough space for students to do independent work, and to learn through self-discovery.

Accordingly, Simeunović (2004) properly concluded that "there is evidence of a correlation between didactic principles, and their permeation and combining in teaching process. Should this principle be introduced, greater efficiency of existing ones could be achieved, and it can be claimed with great certainty, that we could (if teaching became more attractive and interesting) achieve a much higher obviousness, longer-lasting knowledge, skills and habits, and increase motivation to encourage conscious activity of students, which is insisted on at the present time."

Eminent research in Europe and the world have shown that acceptance and processing of information to a large extent depends on the way information is sent. Students in lower grades have a lower ability to receive information over a longer period of time and, therefore, it can be claimed that with applying this principle in the teaching process, we could very likely increase the students' attention, and thus acceptance of information.

According to the trends of recent pedagogical and didactic theories, which advocate for changing the roles of teachers and students, it is highlighted that there is a need for higher student activity. The students would be much easier to accept this innovation if the teaching process became more interesting, and also the final outcome of the teaching process would be much better and longer-lasting.

What we encounter daily is a large concentration of various commercials, which we are more or less attracted to, depending on how they are made and how their content is presented. Accordingly, it is evident that the teaching content presented in interesting and attractive way, provoke more interest with students, and therefore, knowledge acquired in this way will be longer-lasting (Simeunović, 2004).

Indeed, there are a number of facts that support the introduction of this principle in teaching process, and it is, therefore, necessary to consider the possibilities of its application in a variety of educational and scientific disciplines as soon as possible, and the next part of this paper will be dedicated to this matter. Simeunovic suggested several ways in which teaching process can be made more interesting and attractive, and in the following paragraphs we will consider the possibility of applying these methods

in teaching geography. We will not be considering a separate module, but the possibility, in general, that this principle is first introduced in the teaching geography, and if that would to happen, then we can consider its application within each teaching topics and units separately.

POSSIBLE WAYS OF APPLYING THE PRINCIPLE OF INTERESTING AND ATTRACTIVENESS TO TEACHING GEOGRAPHY

Žarko Simeunović (2004) suggested in his paper 12 ways and possibilities to apply the principle of interesting and attractiveness in teaching process, and in this paper we will investigated possibilities to apply this principle in geography, with two additional ways, so there are 14 possibilities, but it should be pointed out that it is not the final number, but only a starting point for introducing this principle in teaching process.

It should be noted that each teacher chooses and creates a method according to specific work conditions and pedagogical and methodological principles. Of course, there are a number of tools, methods and forms of teaching that could be used to make teaching process interesting and attractive.

1. Introducing game in teaching process

Geography is introduced to teaching process in the fifth grade, and what should be kept in mind is that children in this period have only 11 years, and in the nature of children at this age is to play and need to be able to socialize in relaxed surroundings. On the other hand, the contents covered in the fifth grade are very complex and crucial for certain segments of geography, they require some important scientific definitions, all of which must be adapted to children's age, so that this principle, along with principle of scientific value is conducted. The goal is, however, to teach children as many things as possible. This principle would be conducted in the best possible way if the school had a specialized classroom for geography, with all necessary equipment, including a computer with a video screen. One of good ways is to introduce the game to the teaching process, but certainly a game that was designed and functionally compatible with the objectives of the teaching process.

There are a number of good examples of the individual software packages, and perhaps the best example is the Encarta World Atlas, which has a whole package of different interesting games, which are designed differently (images, text, animations), and can serve as tool for the processing a new unit, and as tool to practice something that has already been learned.

There is also a special CD editions with different games that are suitable for the children's age, and some of the games can be found on the internet (in relation to plate tectonics, for example www.cbc.ca/kids/games/continentalrift). If the school does not have the ability to use computers in the classroom, the teacher can design a game that would last a few minutes. The students would be much more interested in teaching contents, and therefore, teaching process would take place in more economically efficient and rational way. For example, teacher can use the well-known game "Interesting geography"

where he could allow students to use maps and atlases, and note that students search terms only on the European continent, for example, and write for each term in what part of Europe (the sixth grade) they are located. In that way, he would conduct more than one didactic principle, and students would surely show more interest in learning, and they would be able to memorize facts which they figured out themselves easier in more interesting way, opposed to teacher working frontally, using monologue method, mainly or fully, presenting the whole teaching unit.

2. Avoiding patterns (routine) in teaching process

Each routine presentation of any contents brings boredom, and it is therefore necessary to apply, as often as possible, various methods and tools in teaching process. It is desirable to change the methods and techniques during each class. When teaching physical-geography contents there is a good base for applying various tools and methods. For example, when presenting a form of erosion it can be used monologue method, illustrative-demonstration, with some other form a film, video-animation, monologue method, with the third form usage of relief models (which can be made by teachers and students together) can be an obvious, yet very interesting way to present an erosion. The teaching units related to the volcano can be practically done with the help of a model, students can watch a short film about the eruption, lava pouring, also they can see various examples of volcanoes, and than teacher can give students a task of describing a phenomenon, which could help them to come to conclusion what features characterize the particular type of volcano. Also, when explaining the layers and the internal structure of the Earth, so that students can easily envision and understand, teacher can make a comparison with a watermelon and note that watermelon rind represents the Earth's crust. In this way, students can observe and investigate, layer by layer, from the core to the crust.

Avoiding routine in teaching process is something that should definitely be applied, not only to conduct the principle of interesting and attractiveness, but to make teaching process more obvious, to activate students, and to achieve permanence of knowledge, skills and habits.

3. Stories and anecdotes

The stories and anecdotes from the lives of scientists and people related to a scientific discipline generally provoke more interest in students, so it is useful during class, in an interesting and humorous way, to tell how a scientist came to a knowledge which students today learn to master and use. Moreover, it would be desirable to do it in the beginning of the class, so that students would listen to a particular teaching unit with more attention, and the anecdotes can later serve as an association, when they repeat the lesson at home. Anecdotes, of course, can be related to the teacher himself, who can, during class, tell something from his practice, which is related to the specific content and can make class more attractive.

Teachers can make interesting comparisons using experiences of some scientists, they can paraphrase parts of their books (works of Milutin Milankovic – “Through Space and Centuries” and “Through the Realm of Science”, biographical parts from the collected works of Jovan Cvijić, etc.)

4. Changing a form of activities

This possibility can be related to evaluating students, which is mostly patterned and often makes students dread and fear, while students who do not need to be examined are mostly bored. During a class, a much higher efficiency can be achieved if all the students are involved, because it creates a pleasant atmosphere in the classroom. In fact, teacher can form groups and give each group a specific task. After the tasks are done, groups can mutually comment each others work, and students can evaluate each other in their own group. In the end teacher gives his judgment. Also, students can question and evaluate each other, and this is a way to avoid monotony, and also to evaluate more students during class. Teacher can organize classes which are dedicated to systematization of every teaching unit. Students are divided into groups, and each group is working on a teaching unit which they later present to the other students, and each group gets different teaching forms and tools. Of course, all of this can be applied to classes which are planned for presenting new teaching units. In this way, the students would practice and get used to evaluating their own work, choosing the means and methods (maps, atlases, models, sketches), and teaching process would be more interesting, as the attention would be higher, because the class itself and evaluation would depended only on them.

5. Students competing in knowledge and skills

This possibility is suitable for teaching regional-geographical contents, where during the presentation of a new region students can be given a task, individually or in groups, to find general characteristics of particular region (position, relief, climate, hydrology, pedology, biogeography, basic social characteristics), based on prior knowledge and the principle by which the teacher has been working so far, which will be evaluated at the end of class. Also, students can be assigned a homework, which will require to prepare needed materials (they can be given a list) to create a relief model to work on during the class and later be evaluated. Teacher should divide them into groups, observe the operation, and thus realize extent of students' imagination, attention to details. In the end the teacher can present the teaching content, while students determine how successful they have been, and find out what they missed, etc.

This kind of work may cross the limit, and may develop a conflict between students, and is sometimes desirable to give descriptive marks, or to give only comments making a column for each student individually, and the end of the semester included all comments in the final grade. This can certainly encourage students' motivation, interest, as every class and teaching content will bring something new.

6. The use of modern teaching tools, methods and forms of work

Some teaching tools used in teaching process are certainly inevitable, such as chalk and blackboard, however, these are not the only tools of operation. Whenever there is an opportunity it is necessary and advisable to use a more modern equipment, more modern tools, methods and forms of work, in the form of computers, video projectors, well designed, didactic and pedagogical eligible films. Students should, as often as possible, use a geographical map, atlas, and one of the good programs is Google Earth, which can make some teaching contents much more interesting (we already mentioned Encarta).

The more animations, videos, a variety of schemes that will follow teacher's presentation of teaching contents, the better. Also teacher should not be speaking all the time, he should use dialogical method too, that is to involve students in the class to provoke greater interest, he should ask them questions that would require descriptive answers, as they would be guided to more thinking, and any knowledge they gain would be longer-lasting.

Special innovations in geography are geographic information systems and the use of GIS tools. Students can be presented the main characteristics of this method, and can be introduced to some basic steps to use it. Also, it is desirable to train students (at least in higher grades) to use the GPS method (Global Positioning System), navigation and orientation in space, they should be demonstrated that in nature, which will provoke more attention and interest.

Microsoft made the "Partners in Learning" program that enables schools and teachers to receive programs and packages that allow them to independently make and create digital movies for teaching process, which would definitely increase students' interest and make teaching more attractive and modern.

7. Changing the surroundings (stepping out of the classroom)

Geography is discipline in which many teaching contents can be presented outside the classroom, in the near or distant surroundings, and in that way teaching process or individual teaching units could be handled much better. There is almost no teaching unit or at least a teaching module that can not be done in nature. In this way, in order to avoid monotony, the presentations would certainly be more interesting. Teacher can determine in advance teaching units that can be performed in the vicinity of school, but also those that could be presented in some distant destination, which requires more preparation and planning.

For presenting some physical-geographical contents students can be taken to near surroundings, where they can be introduced to basic biogeographical characteristics, hydrological characteristics (show them and explain the banks of the river, water meter rail, line of defense against flooding, why are bridges located in particular places, etc.), forms of relief, forms of erosion (denudation or linear depending on the slope), rural households, they could be taken to the nearest weather station, where they will be explained how the forecast works, and so on (depending on the school surroundings).

Even the classroom itself can be equipped with different tools, school boards, new maps, which will bring innovation to class (students can also try to make boards). Teaching contents will thus be presented more interestingly and attractively, but teacher should be careful and keep students focused on teaching contents, and not distracted by surroundings. This can be achieved by giving specific tasks upon returning to the classroom, which will apply to contents presented during this class. Teacher is obliged to inform students in the beginning of the class so they know they need to carefully observe and record certain phenomena.

8. Changing the pace and rhythm of work

This possibility is mainly connected with other ones, especially with possibility of changing tools of operation and avoiding routine in teaching process, and it brings bet-

ter atmosphere in the classroom. This can be achieved by shifting moving and static activity, referring to both teachers and students. A good example is the explanation of the rotation and revolution of the Earth by placing students in the position of the sun, moon and planets, and demonstrating movements.

The teacher should not sit during class, he should ask students to find objects on the maps, and in that way he would maintain concentration and alertness in class, and by conducting some different activities, class would be more interesting. The teacher should pay attention and control the students, especially in the older grades, because class should not become a recess or class of extracurricular activities.

9. More flexible teacher's attitude towards students during class

In recent years, it is insisted on a more flexible relationship between teachers and students, but certainly within allowed limits, so a teacher would not become friends with their students and allow them too much, because in this way he would undermine his own authority and slowly lose control over his students. Teachers should not always be strict, or always punish some student "excesses". They should be used to break up monotony in class, it is way to get students relaxed, or it can be used as an association (the speed of the Danube is 1 km per second, Moldova is located in Africa, and similar student answers) that will help in giving correct answers to some questions. During the geography class there can be heard a series of illogical responses, errors in pointing objects on the map, that the other students find amusing, but they only need to be redirected and it will probably have a positive effect, the class will be more interesting.

10. A quality atmosphere in the classroom

It takes a great effort to make the atmosphere in the classroom during class pleasant for work, and this greatly affects the students, their attention, commitment, motivation. You could say that we have feedback and response, because if the atmosphere in the class is good, the class will be more interesting, and if a teacher is committed to making his presentation interesting, the students will pay more attention, and thus will be created a positive atmosphere in the classroom. Geography is such a discipline where many of its contents require a vivid lessons, presentations, where teachers should give more examples, ask students if they have some examples themselves, ask them to comment on the answers of each other, which will make each class more interesting and attractive contrary to monotonous monologue and strict teaching method.

11. Making short breaks during class

It is proved that students of different ages have different predispositions concerning concentration, and ability to follow teacher's presentation in class, and therefore it is particularly important to pay attention to the younger age groups, students of the fifth grade. Making short breaks of 2-3 minutes to students get a moment of rest, regain concentration to continue with lessons, and to break the monotony. The teacher should estimate when is best to take a break.

Of course, students do not have to keep quiet during break, but can only focus their attention on something casual, something interesting from some magazines (Nation-

al Geographic), teacher could ask questions - how they feel, if they are tired, if they find teaching contents interesting, if they find it hard to follow, etc.

12. Flexibility of annual and operative plans

The curriculum must be followed by all teachers, but it allows certain adjustments and modifications, depending on the teaching unit. Not all of the units are suitable for working for 45 minutes, some take longer and some take less than one class. Teacher assignment is to make a good plan for every next class, which follows the previous one, taking into account the age of his students, all tools at his disposal and fit it in the best way possible. In particular, teacher should be more careful with students in the fifth grade, because they are encountering for the first time with geographic content, and sometimes it should be paid more attention and time to certain contents than it is planned in curriculum, including some extra tools to make class more interesting and so the students could easily remember what was presented during class. For regional-geographical contents, most of the attention should be paid during the first class, because then each next class will be simpler and easier, and students will be able to deduce on their own, when they learn how each regionalization is done, etc.

ADDITIONAL POSSIBLE WAYS OF APPLYING THE PRINCIPLE OF INTERESTING AND ATTRACTIVENESS TO TEACHING GEOGRAPHY

As stated by Živković and Jovanović, “based on the fact that the quality of education is determined by the quality of teaching, there is a justified need for constant innovation in the teaching of geography. Traditional processing of geographic content, with their uniformity and routine, needs to be modernized through the use of multimedia resources, thereby overcoming certain weaknesses in their processing. The curriculum in geography, designed and coordinated by the standards and principles of active learning methods require involvement of various human capabilities and skills. Using these methods children of different intellectual abilities, skills and talents can be activated. In the same time the acquisition of complex knowledge, skills and techniques through timing customized for one person, group or team is achieved. Well planned and directed activities that are age-appropriate influence the development of all segments of students character. Thus, in the teaching process there is more respect for developmental needs and interests of students.”

In addition to those 12 ways that are suggested by Žarko Simeunović for education in general, and with the possibility of its application in teaching geography, it is possible to single out at least two more possible ways in which the principle of interesting and attractiveness can be applied to teaching geography.

1. Teachers' teamwork

Teamwork is a form of work that is particularly demanding, because of its contents, technical and time preparations, but its characteristics may contribute to the attractiveness of teaching. Connections of geography with other disciplines are great, espe-

cially with the history and biology, and nowadays with information technology, so the work of teachers teaching these subjects can be combined when conditions are favorable. Some of geography teaching units require prior knowledge of biology, understanding things in a particular historical context, and vice versa, so it is possible to process those units through teachers' teamwork. This is possible especially in the fifth grade, when students learn the basics of physical geography which include multi-disciplinary content, because they will thus focus on the right things, by connecting facts. Explaining the range of some plant and animal species, vegetation zones, geographical discoveries, cultural and historical monuments of the neighborhood, are just a few areas suitable for this kind of work. All this requires many compromises, more time, more preparation, but if this kind of work is planned on time, students will pay more attention and show more curiosity, and also the exchange of experiences will affect the durability of the acquired knowledge.

2. Use of the Internet and various social networks

One of the possibilities that can be joined with the other ways, already mentioned, is the use of the Internet in teaching and learning process, as well as various social networks (*Facebook, Twitter*), which are the means of mass communication for the people, which, if properly used, can bring a lot of good and useful to the students. Within this, the teacher can set up a group that will contain all of its students, and in which he will give his students various information, answers to their questions, give a useful material for learning teaching content, links for finding good maps, etc. For the same reason, the teacher can set up a web site with geographic features, or put up geographic contents of an existing school sites where you can organize exhibitions, give prizes for the best themed pictures or animations (landforms, erosion, weather and climate), students papers, and etc. Many of these things can be given as homework or in class where the best papers could be presented, noting that all of this would not be consuming more than ten minutes of class, and the effect would be much more durable. Of course, teacher should pay attention to the age of the students and be careful when using these methods and tools of operation.

The possible ways listed are not the only ways, one can find a lot more, and most importantly, start applying them in the classroom.

CONCLUSION

Geography is school subject that truly offers the possibility of applying the most diverse tools, methods and forms of teaching that can make teaching process more interesting and attractive.

Introducing principle of interesting and attractiveness to teaching process would be rather effective move, because the educational goals and objectives would be better implemented and executed, which is the most important thing in the teaching process process.

As stated in the paper, there are many ways to apply this principle in teaching process, and the teacher has to choose one to suit the specific situation and the specific edu-

cational content that he presents. Of course, one should keep in mind that the technical capabilities of schools are not always at their highest, but they are not crucial, as there are many other ways that depend only on teachers, their skills and ideas that can make teaching more interesting to students.

As with any innovation, we should expect difficulties in implementation, especially as this principle requires further and better engagement of teachers, a lot more innovation, creativity, different combinations of methods, forms and tools of operation. However, it must be insisted on, if it is to follow the course of the modern teaching and education process, if we want to achieve more conscious activity of students, leading to more permanent acquisition of knowledge and skills, which is the essence of teaching process. Teachers need to use geographical teaching units that are more than suitable for the application of this principle, and do it as soon as possible, to part with the way of learning by memorizing facts which leads to verbosity, and not to quality, logically acquired and permanent knowledge.

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