

SPECIFICITY OF GEOGRAPHICAL CONTENT FOR THE APPLICATION OF DEBATE IN GEOGRAPHY LESSONS

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ABSTRACT

Modern geography teaching involves a more intensive use of methods designed to encourage students to learn with reason, to think reasonably and to draw independent conclusions. One of the methods that can contribute to achieving the above goals is certainly the use of debate and its increased implementation in geography lessons. Debating is a form of dialogic method that involves a discussion between two teams and the exploration of a given topic through argumentative practice. The paper analyzes the content of geography lessons that can be learned through debating and its application in the classroom from a theoretical and practical perspective. The first part of the paper is devoted to the theoretical foundations of teaching methods, the conceptual definition of debate, the Karl Popper format and the rules that should be applied in classroom practice. The second part of the paper deals with the application of debate in geography lessons using a content analysis with concrete examples from the subject. The results of the paper show the importance of debate for the development of skills that students in Serbia lack, including argumentative reasoning, public speaking, collaboration and research skills.

Keywords: Teaching methods, Debate, Karl Popper, Geography lessons, Logical thinking.

INTRODUCTION

Although it is said that learning is the result of one's own mental activity, it must be emphasized that it depends on the way teachers teach, i.e. on the teaching methods they use in their work. Among didacticians, pedagogues and other experts there is no unanimous opinion on the definition of the teaching method. The theoretical and practical question of its classification is also not universally valid. Depending on the concept of learning and memory when teaching certain subject matter, the teacher chooses the teaching methods that contribute most to learning efficiency. Care should always be taken to choose the method that most motivates students to conscious activity and independent work. The choice of teaching methods depends mainly on the learning content, the type of lesson, but also on the students (their age and cognitive abilities), the duration of the lesson, the material conditions of the school and other factors (Vranković, 2014).

In geography lessons there are opportunities to use almost all teaching methods, and debate is certainly one of them. Debate as a form of dialogic method is a structured discussion on a specific topic between two teams, one of which advocates a certain point of view while the other rejects it. Its use in geography lessons contributes to the achievement of numerous objectives, the most important of which are: the development of critical thinking, social and communication skills, democratic behavior and self-esteem. Participating in a debate involves engaging with or exploring a topic through the argumentative presentation of positions. Furthermore, debate

requires active participation, i.e. its application in the classroom requires activity without passive participants.

The paper is based on the theoretical framework, which refers to previous research in the field of teaching methods and their application in geography education. It then analyzes the characteristics and elements of the debate teaching method, focusing on the Karl Popper format as one of the most commonly used forms of debate in classroom practice. The role of debate in the acquisition of geographical content is a special chapter of the thesis, in which the analysis of content was carried out using concrete examples within the subject.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF TEACHING METHODS RESEARCH

Considering the basic stages of the teaching process, all teaching methods can be divided into two large groups, namely: a) methods for acquiring knowledge, skills and habits, that is, methods for processing new content and b) methods for determining content (Živković et al., 2015).

Prodanović (1956) divides teaching methods into three groups: verbal-textual (oral presentation and conversation, discussion, work on texts and written papers), illustrative-demonstrational (illustrative papers and demonstrative papers) and laboratory-experimental (laboratory papers and performing experiments). According to Matas (1996), teaching methods are ways of working in teaching. "A teaching method is defined as a learned generalized pattern of behavior that can be applied in different teaching areas with the aim of facilitating and improving learning outcomes" (Vizek-Vidović et al., 2003). Research shows that the main elements of the definition of a teaching method (Terhart, 2001) are: orientation

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towards the goal of teaching and learning, orientation towards the subject (content) of learning, orientation towards the student (teaching means) and orientation towards the school as an institution (institutional framework). Mattes (2007) defines teaching methods as procedures that the teacher applies in order to structure the course of teaching and achieve defined goals.

Different opinions on the definition of teaching methods arise because they start from different positions and understandings and take different criteria regarding what the method contains. All the definitions of the teaching method mentioned are similar to each other and indicate that the teaching method should mean the path and way of acquiring knowledge, skills and habits in the best possible way with the activity of students and teachers (Živković et al., 2015). The application of teaching methods in direct work depends on the content of each teaching unit. Geography has special and specific methods that teachers use in teaching the curriculum. According to Matas (1996) they are mainly based on observation, data collection, determination, comparison, analysis, interpretation and systematization of knowledge.

RESULTS OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON THE APPLICATION OF DEBATE IN EDUCATION

Debate is a form of dialogic teaching method in which students are divided into groups that argue their views on a certain problem with the aim of solving it (Jovanović, 2019). In this way, students expand and connect knowledge from different fields, develop critical thinking and communication skills (Hall, 2011). In the debate, students express their opinions more freely and spontaneously, exchange experiences and research results. In order for the debate to be successful, it is necessary for the students to have certain data, experiences and experiences related to the topic that is the subject of the discussion. However, in addition to knowing the information, it is necessary for the students to be interested in the topic and to have a developed personal attitude about the researched problems. Therefore, the debate itself should be preceded by preparatory activities of the students. Students should be given specific assignments, tasks, preparation instructions, and sources of information on the basis of which they will be adequately prepared for the discussion (Živković et al., 2015).

During the implementation of the debate, it is possible to establish different forms of cognitive and socio-cognitive conflict through the confrontation of students' knowledge and experiences (Brown, 2015). In this way, they develop important intellectual and communicative abilities. The student develops the ability to analyze attitudes in relation to others and the ability to observe problems from the point of view of others (Brophy, 2004). In addition to the cognitive conflict during communication, there is also a relationship of cooperation that manifests itself through the joint construction

of new knowledge, attitudes and behavioral habits (Roders, 2003; Ivić et al., 2001).

The opportunity to discuss different points of view on a topic in focus has been recognized in the literature as one of the key factors for acquiring knowledge and developing competencies (Doise et al., 1975; Mugny & Doise, 1978; Doise & Mugny, 1979; Light & Perret-Clermont, 1989; Schwartz, 1995; Schwartz et al., 2000; Howe et al., 2007; Schwartz & Linchevski, 2007; Howe, 2010; Buđevac et al., 2020). However, although the analysis of different points of view is very important for the creation of socio-cognitive conflict (Doise et al., 1975; Mugny & Doise, 1978; Doise & Mugny, 1979; Buđevac et al., 2020) and the subsequent acquisition of new knowledge and development of competencies, this will not happen if understanding is not the product of an argumentative debate – a discussion in which the response to different points of view is an argumentation (Muller Mirza et al., 2009). Today's studies define argumentation, not as the result of dialogue, but as a process that is part of interaction because it is jointly constructed by the interlocutors (Kuhn et al., 1997; Arcidiacono & Perret-Clermont, 2009; Buđevac et al., 2020).

The role of argumentation and reasoned dialogue in the development of new competencies has been extensively documented in the scientific literature, but research conducted in Serbia shows that our students fail to develop this complex and relevant competency to the extent necessary to use it as a tool for learning and development (Buđevac et al., 2020). Although children participate in argumentative exchange early, well before school age (Arcidiacono & Bova, 2013; Pontecorvo & Arcidiacono, 2014), experimental research in an educational context shows that the use of argumentation at an early age is not stable and depends on numerous factors (Muller Mirza et al., 2009). One of our previous studies (Buđevac & Baucal, 2015) also showed that even seven-year-olds were able to spontaneously produce arguments within educational exchanges, without teacher support and without prior systematic preparation. However, another study conducted within the Serbian education system (Branković et al., 2013) showed that our students completely lack systemic support in developing this competence during schooling.

ORGANIZATION AND APPLICATION OF THE KARL POPPER DEBATE IN PRACTICE

The Karl Popper debate format is one of the most popular forms of debate in class, and is named after one of the most prominent philosophers of the 20th century. Debate deals with relevant and often controversial topics and emphasizes developing critical thinking skills and tolerance for different points of view. Debate participants collaborate in teams of three members, and their task is to research arguments for and against the researched topic. Each team has the opportunity to

present their arguments and ask questions to the opposing team. At the end of the debate, the judge gives constructive feedback based on what happened in the debate (Scheme 1).

Debate is a team activity, and each team consists of 3 members (Table 1). Affirmative and negative teams have the same time to present their arguments. The judge makes sure that the participants of the debate adhere to the time limits. His role is to indicate to the speakers how much time they have left during the debate. The judges decide the winner of the debate. The debate is judged by an odd number of judges, and the team with the most votes wins. The judges decide on the winner solely on the basis of the success of the arguments. They explain their decision orally, and the evaluation should be neutral and constructive.

Table 1. Implementation of the debate.

Speech A1
N3 interrogates A1
Speech N1
A3 interrogates N1
Speech A2
N1 interrogates A2
Speech N2
A1 interrogates N2
Speech A3
Speech N3

*Source: Croatian Debate Society, 2021.

It is necessary to respect the course of the debate because in this way it is ensured that the debate ends within the time frame of one lesson, and the student who measures the time is responsible for this together with the teacher. Each speaker has a specific role in the debate (Table 2). The first affirmative speaker should present arguments, evidence and define the key concepts of his team. Then there is cross-examination where any member of the negation team asks questions of the member of the affirmation team. Students who ask questions should take care to ask questions in such a way as to make a member of the opposing team admit some of the weaknesses of their positions, and these questions can also be in the sense of demanding explanations of certain parts of the presentation. The main role of the negation team is to express their team's disagreement with the stated thesis or to introduce their own definitions if they think that the affirmative ones are not objective. The first speaker of the negation begins challenging the affirmative case. All elements of the affirmative case that are not disputed by the first speaker of the negation are considered accepted and contribute to the victory of the affirmation. The cross-examination is again approached according to the same rules as in the first cross-examination, with the fact that the roles of the examiner and the examined have been reversed (Croatian Debate Society, 2021).

Affirmation in the second speech has two tasks. First, the speaker should defend his team by answering questions from the opposing team. Second, he should "attack" the team from the negation team. This means that his task is to respond to the arguments of the opposing team and to strengthen his team by further explaining the positions by using the results of the previous cross-examination in the presentation. The second negation team speaker responds to the affirmation team's arguments in terms of strengthening his team, using the results of cross-examination. His task is to build on the arguments with additional explanations, citing specific examples (Croatian Debate Society, 2021).

The third speaker of the affirmation team points out in a few sentences what his team managed to prove in the previous two speeches, and what he managed to dispute in the cross-examination of the negation team. He must not talk about new content that was not analyzed during the debate. He presents his team's conclusion and gives reasons why the affirmative team should win the debate. The third speaker belonging to the negation team is analogous to the third speaker of the affirmative team. The third negation speaker must not present new content, bearing in mind that the affirmative party does not have the opportunity to respond to it. He also summarizes the main arguments, explains them, analyzes and proves why his team was more convincing in each of those arguments (Croatian Debate Society, 2021).

Table 2. Affirmation (A) and negation (N) team.

Tasks of the affirmation team	Tasks of the negation team
proves the thesis	disputes the thesis
interprets the thesis and defines key words	accepts the definitions of the affirmation team or rejects them and proposes his own
sets and justifies the criteria	accepts the criteria of the affirmation team or rejects them and proposes his own
present arguments that defend the thesis according to definitions and criteria	challenge the arguments of the affirmative action team
they dispute the arguments of the negation team and "defend" their own	they propose arguments for their position that negate the thesis

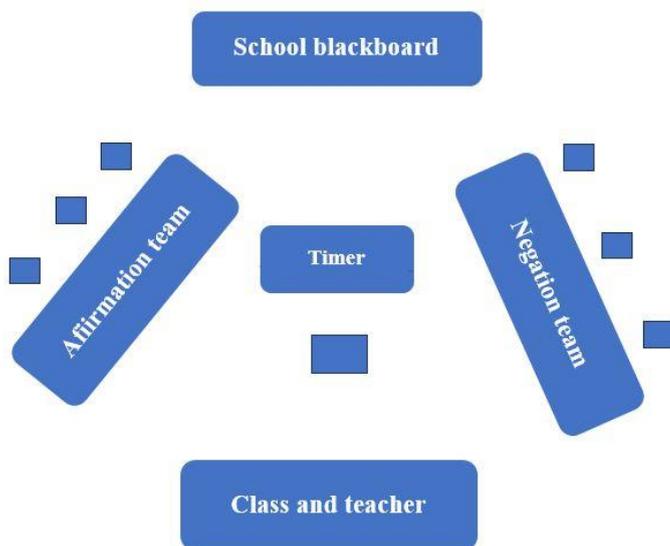
*Source: Croatian Debate Society, 2021.

The planned duration of the Karl Popper debate is 60 minutes, which is beyond the time frame of the lesson, so this format is modified in such a way that the duration of the debate fits into the duration of 35 minutes. The teacher uses the remaining 10 minutes of the lesson for the introductory part of the lesson and grading the students with an explanation of the grades. If the teacher wants to evaluate the debate

participants, then before the debate itself, he should clearly define the evaluation criteria, whereby winning the debate must not be one of the criteria (Kaluderović, 2014).

Apart from the time limit, a total of 6 speakers participate in the Karl Popper debate, and the observers of the debate are not included in the discussion. In the modified debate, other students from the class also have the opportunity to participate in an open discussion by asking questions to the members of the affirmative and negative teams and, together with the teacher, share the role of judge in the debate. Students should be introduced to the rules of the debate a few days before the lesson, and they are (Czech Debate Association, 2018):

- 6 speakers participate in the debate, 3 speakers each for the affirmation and negation teams and a student who measures the time;
- students who are not members of the teams write down the questions they want to ask the participants of the debate during the open discussion and together with the teacher participate in the decision on the winner of the debate;
- debate participants should adhere to the debate's time limit;
- after the third speech of the member of the negation team, an open discussion begins in which the teacher and other students from the class participate;
- all students should respect and respect each other and give their vote publicly to the team they think was more convincing in their arguments.



Scheme 1. Seating arrangement during the implementation of the debate. Source: Czech Debate Association, 2018.

After the presentation and cross-examination for a total of 24 minutes, and after the last speech of the third member of the negation team, an open discussion begins that lasts 10 minutes. Debate questions should be specific and clear, requiring a short answer. It is better to ask several questions with the same goal instead of one long question, because that way it will be easier to lead the opponent to the desired

answer. After the timer informs about the expiration of 10 minutes of open questioning, the students vote by raising their hands and thus choose the winner of the debate (1 minute). The teacher uses the last 5 minutes for evaluation and ends the lesson with an explanation.

THE ROLE OF DEBATE IN LEARNING GEOGRAPHICAL CONTENT

Studying the elements of the geographical environment, their mutual connections and conditioning, geography has a diverse subject matter of study thanks to the fact that it connects natural and social sciences. Complex geographical topics should be explained to students in a way that will maximally activate them and contribute to the functional acquisition of the content. Thanks to the variety of topics, geographical contents are suitable for teaching because they enable a wide application of forms and methods of work, a large selection and use of teaching aids.

For an essential understanding of the geographical topic, it is important how it is presented to the students, but also which methods are the most effective for more efficient acquisition of the content. The application of debate in the acquisition of knowledge enables the acquired knowledge of students to be more permanent and applicable. Physical-geographic topics are very suitable for teaching using debate. Their methodological particularities come to the fore because they deal with concrete elements of the geographical environment that students can obviously notice or have prior knowledge about. The application of debate in the study of socio-geographic topics can be based on the research of appropriate literature, analysis of statistical data, graphs, interpretation of maps and maximum student activity. Regional-geographic topics are complex for teaching using the debate method because the student needs to know geography as a whole, all its scientific and related disciplines, their specificities and educational value.

When processing geographical content, there are a large number of topics that can be discussed. Playing different social roles in considering a particular problem is of great importance for observing it from different aspects. For example, students can be given a hypothetical situation that a factory is being built in the local area. Teachers arrange students into groups, give instructions, assign roles, monitor the work, provide guidelines, discuss with participants and draw conclusions. Within the group, members based on their professional role (biologist, geographer, chemist, physicist, computer scientist) analyze the problem situation - the construction of a factory in the local area and find arguments for/against. One group develops arguments that the construction of a factory is necessary because of the creation of new jobs. The second group tries to challenge the given thesis by presenting

arguments that health is the most important. The third and fourth groups of students define questions that can refute the arguments given by the first and second groups, respectively. This is followed by the realization of the debate, presenting arguments for or against, asking questions to refute the presented arguments, and defending the presented arguments. The fifth group finds a compromise solution to the problem situation based on the arguments of the opposing groups and draws conclusions from the debate.

CONCLUSION

A large number of teaching methods contribute to the effective acquisition of geographical content and its practical application. The dialogic method is one of the most frequently used methods because in the teaching of geography, through conversation, you can study the content and check the acquired knowledge. Debate is a form of dialogic teaching method in which students, divided into groups, oppose different opinions and prove their views on a certain problem with the aim of solving it. Intragroup and intergroup discussion, playing social roles, solving problem situations, forming well-argued positions, mutual respect and appreciation, peer teaching, developing the skill of active listening, proposing solutions, creating new ideas, connecting content between subjects and developing critical thinking, are just some of the advantages of using debate in teaching geography.

In teaching geography, it is possible to discuss various topics from hypothetical and theoretical to practical ones such as ecological, social or economic, but it is important to choose those that contribute to the formation of students' well-argued attitudes. The debate on the topic "Building a factory or preserving the environment" is mentioned in the paper as a teaching activity in which students will be able to highlight the advantages and disadvantages of building a factory in the local environment, and on the other hand, not to pollute the environment. The paper further pointed out that the debate should be based on rules and procedures that enable the successful implementation of the lesson. The application of an interdisciplinary approach contributes to this, which through connecting the content of geography with the content of other teaching subjects, enables students to gain new experiences and knowledge about the researched topic. All of the above highlights the debate as a teaching method suitable for the achievement of educational, educational and functional goals in the teaching of geography.

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