
A MORE COMPREHENSIVE UNDERSTANDING OF METHODS IN GEOGRAPHY TRAINING

Maya Vasileva

Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Faculty of Geology and Geography, Sofia, Bulgaria

mayawasileva@abv.bg

Abstract: Methods used in training are the means and approaches by which the teacher and the pupils adapt to natural, societal and cultural reality in school environment. The methods determine the different pathways of teaching and learning, regulate the “mediation” aspect of training process and answer the question “How is conducted the training process?”. We assume that the methods serve the purposeful acquisition and acquisition of subject (geographic) learning content, the development of thinking and learning abilities, social interactivity, the development of new perspectives and ways of behavior. On the one hand, these arguments prove the methods’ importance, but on the other hand it is the reason for a variety of complicated and confusing interpretations, concepts and notions for training methods. For example, we have an abundance of commonly used synonyms of the pointed term – forms of training, approaches in training, concepts of training, strategies of training, training style, strategies of teaching, organization of training etc. And it is often discussed the equation of training methods with ways of working which are not equivalent at all. It should be mentioned that in geography didactics we have serious problems related to: combining methods of training with geographic ones; assuming that sources of information are part of training methods although they are distinct attribute and feature of geography training. The diverse attempts to systemize and classify the training methods set a lot of questions and shape another problematic area for research. The all above-mentioned lead us to a serious ambiguity of the problem in theoretical aspect which is not result only from the influence of “fashion trends” in general didactics and its sub-fields. It is also due to comprehensive and well-reasoned scientific research which tackles important aspects of investigating problems related to lesson, school, education and training. And we step forward presenting a wider framework to explore the methods in geography training. Taking into account that the Bulgarian education is part of European educational system, the main notions used in the paper are up-to-date interpretations of the problem in countries with advanced educational systems. So the main goal of paper is to construct specific model which encompasses the methods in vertical and horizontal scale and incorporates the “big” and the “small” methods. With reference to the latter the role and place of methodical principles is examined as well as the position of methods in planning of geography training.

Keywords: geography education, geography didactics, methods of training.

Traditionally, the teaching methods in our country are defined as:

- "Ways of working with the teacher and the pupils which help to acquire knowledge, skills and habits, shape the pupils' view of the world and develop their abilities";
- "Ways of organizing learners' knowledge, providing mastering of the knowledge, the learning methods and practical activities ... of pupils in the process of learning";
- "A system of rules for pedagogical interaction determined by the principles of training and on the basis of which the teacher and the pupils choose ways and means of concrete actions leading to the stated goal. The individual training method can be defined as a model of behavior, a regulation containing a set of rules that prescribe the targeting of the activity in the training and are realized through specific actions (means of action)" ([1], pp. 44-45).

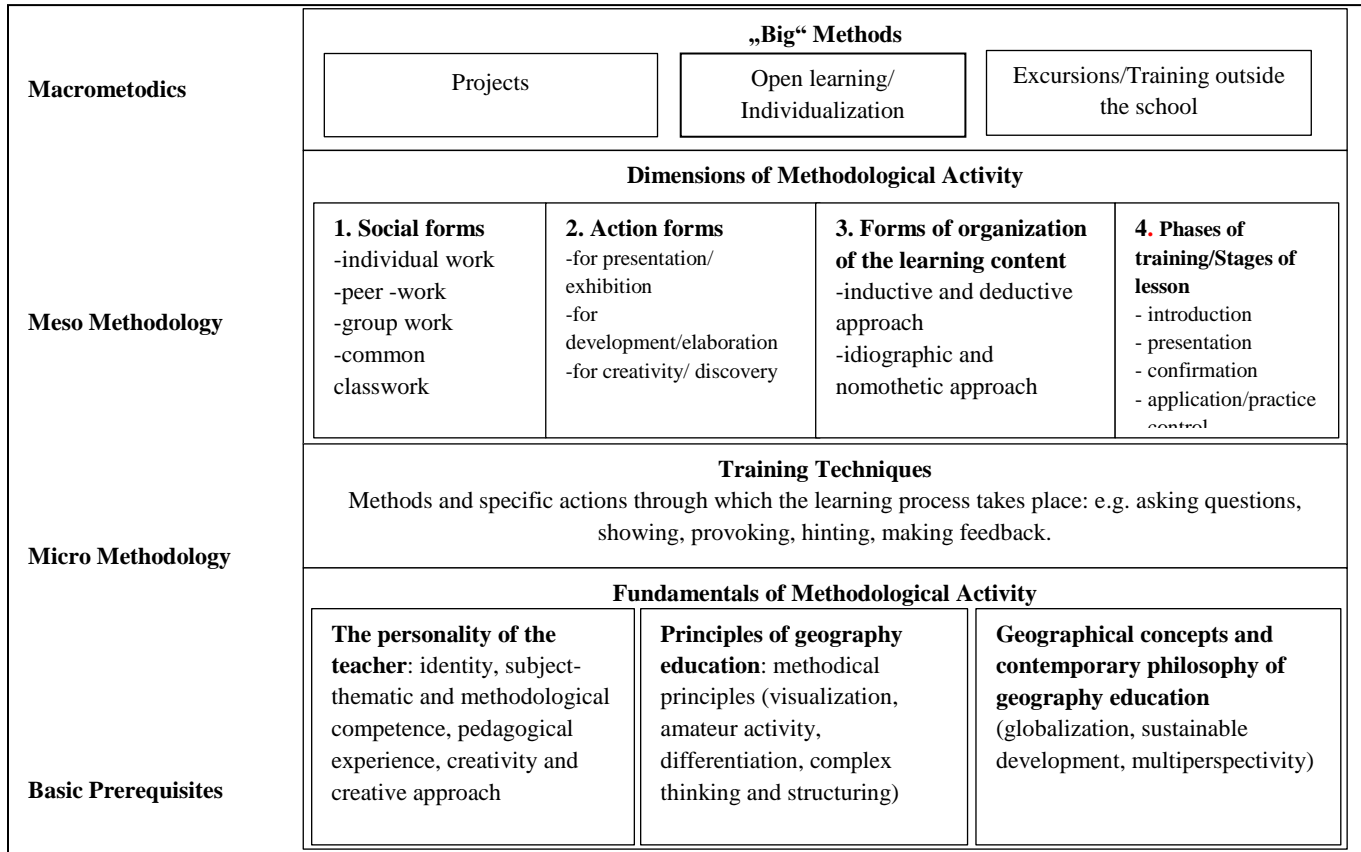
According to these definitions, some of the most important features of the methods that are of interest to us can be found and can be reflected in the design of our methodical model:

- The method involves the interaction between the teacher and the student, understood as purposeful actions for organizing the cognitive activity of the students;
- The method consists of unified individual methods and can therefore be considered as a system of targeted specific actions;
- The method is associated with specific levels of learning content;
- The methods are purposeful, operational and objectively determined;
- The effectiveness of training relates to the selection and application of methods by the teacher;
- Pedagogical interaction in methods is determined by the principles of training;
- The method is in close connection with the educational content and the form of the organization of the learning process.

Taking all these features into account implies a broader understanding of geography teaching methods. Here we define them as the ways and approaches by which the teacher and pupils adapt to the natural, social and cultural reality in a school environment. We define them as teaching and learning pathways that regulate the "mediation" aspect of the learning process that responds to the question "How does the learning process take place?". We assume that the methods serve the purposeful acquisition and acquisition of subject (geographic) learning content, the development of thinking and learning abilities, social interactivity, the development of new perspectives and ways of behavior.

This broader understanding of geography teaching methods is based on up-to-date interpretations of the problem from countries with advanced education systems. We argue with the fact that geographic education in Bulgaria is part of the European educational space.

How are the methods in our model presented? (Figure 1)



➤ The levels of accomplishment of the methods of geography training are differentiated;

➤ The dimensions of the methodical activity are outlined horizontally.

We will justify the above mentioned points in the model in general!

Its foundations are the basis of methodological activity. These are the prerequisites, conditions and factors that most affect the quality and effectiveness of geography education. The teacher's personality, training principles, geographic concepts, and the philosophy of geographic education are mentioned. We have placed first the personality of the teacher, who should possess a number of qualities: identity, subject-thematic and methodical competence, pedagogical experience, creativity and creative approach. The role of the teacher is exceptional. Good geography teachers contribute to helping students develop their abilities to master the situations in life, to develop their conscious and responsible activities. The role of teachers and education in the values of sustainable development is also extremely important in terms of developing the geographic literacy of their students.

We have laid down the training principles as an essential prerequisite for the implementation of geography training, and respectively the training methods. We believe that they are part of the training methods, although they are also a criterion for selecting learning content and using information sources in the learning process.

Geographical concepts and the philosophy of geographic education undoubtedly affect geography education. Although they are directly reflected in geographic education goals, they are implemented through

appropriate training methods. This is quite natural because it is through the methods that it is possible to develop geographic thinking, understanding globalization and sustainable development, perceiving the "key issues" of contemporary society, exploring and understanding the objects in different perspectives, etc.

In general and sub-fields of didactics training methods and techniques are often equated. In our opinion, this is not entirely reasonable as techniques are part of the methods, and according to the model they represent the smallest step and stage of the implementation of the training methods. These are ways and concrete actions through which the geographic learning process takes place. As such it may be mentioned for example questioning, showing, hinting, provoking, making feedback and more.

The methodological activity itself takes place in four dimensions: social forms, action forms, forms of organization of learning content and learning phases (lesson stages). These are the so-called "Small" methods. Perhaps the interpretation of these dimensions will suffer most criticism. The arguments are likely to be based on traditional perceptions of them as distinctive features of geography education. Here we unite them looking for the most effective way to implement in the learning process.

Social forms in geography education describe the behavior of the teacher and students while they are processing the educational content. They define the structure of interaction in class, put the "frame" of this interaction. By enabling the "action" forms, we integrate them into training methods. As forms of social interaction we can identify individual work, peer-work, group work and common classwork training. Therefore, the social dimension of learning and the lesson affect social forms and the working dimension - the action forms. These are the methods of learning in the narrow sense, precisely these are most commonly referred to as "small" methods. They relate not to all actions, modes of action, and behaviors carried out during the training or lesson but only the methodically planned actions of the teacher and the students in which information is exchanged ([7], pp. 226). We distinguish three possible action forms: for presentation - exhibition; for development - elaboration; for creativity - discovery.

The taught learning content in geography education is derived from a variety of disciplines. Given the fact that the most important source is geographic science, there are no fundamental differences between approaches in science and geography education. In this respect, the transfer of the scientific methodology at the training level would significantly enhance the teaching and learning process. That's why we think it's the right moment to look at the forms of organization of learning content. We accept them as "scientifically substantiated and science-based content and target strategies for achieving a purposeful sequence of thinking within a learning situation" ([7], pp. 235). We distinguish the following forms/approaches: inductive and deductive; ideographic and nomothetic.

Learning phases and lessons are seen as solutions to the progress of the individual steps in teaching and learning. They should, as a rule, be defined as an important part of the teaching methods as they represent the course of time, the drama, the way of teaching and learning. The methodological structure through which the learning process is carried out is traditionally studied. This is perfectly understandable in the search for the possibilities for its most efficient organization. Most often, learning and lesson is defined as a structured unity of teaching and learning in different learning steps, the passage of which is consistent over time. Here we look at the traditionally mentioned stages of lesson: introduction, presentation, consolidation, application/practice and control.

We have separated the "big" methods as a special category of methods. It is made on purpose and is due to their specificity. According to Meyer they:

- develop and improve over time;
- are institutional in nature, but at the same time they are meaningful to the teacher, pupils and parents;
- pathways for teaching and learning have been established to a greater or lesser extent;
- have different objectives and clearly distinguishable methodological components ([7], pp.177).

A particular feature is their internal structure and target orientation, on the basis of which they may be more „closed" or more „open" in nature, to be directed towards the development of cognitive competence or activity. "Big" methods consist of and combine "small" methods. Priority could be achieved through one or another social or action form. For example, excursions are most often done through frontal training and an illustrative approach, and for projects it is advisable to deploy them through peer group, group work and discovery. Given the specificity of the "big" methods, we have differentiated them into three areas. By providing for the possibility of complementing, expanding and improving each of them.

This most general characterization of our model of geographic training methods allows us to conclude that its further development and improvement will be fully justified.

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