DIDACTIC STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING CULTURAL HERITAGE AT ELEMENTARY LEVEL OF EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Cultural heritage is recognized as a strategic resource and an important investment in social and cultural capital. As an important part of any nation's identity, the preservation of cultural heritage must be encouraged from the youngest age. This article presents the empirical research conducted among Slovenian primary school teachers at the elementary level. The aim of the research was to determine the implementation of didactic strategies when teaching about cultural heritage in Slovenian Elementary schools. Results show that the didactic strategy that teachers most often use to teach heritage content is experiential learning. Teaching heritage content outside the classroom is performed 2 to 4 times per year, mostly in collaboration with museums. The results also show that teachers believe that they are sufficiently trained to teach cultural heritage content, but there is still a tendency for additional training. Shorter teacher training courses focused on cultural heritage content lessons should be planned and implemented, using modern didactic strategies that encourage students' activity and they should be based on the constructivist theory of learning and teaching.

Keywords: *cultural heritage, primary school, cultural capital, teachers, didactics, social studies*

INTRODUCTION

In elementary school, students at the primary level get acquainted with and adopt the goals of the contents of cultural heritage in several school subjects, as the contents of cultural heritage are integrated into the curricula of various school subjects. The contents of cultural heritage are mostly and explicitly presented in the curriculum of environmental science subjects in the first three grades and social science in the fourth and fifth grades of elementary school. These two subjects are presented briefly below. The subject of environmental science is taught in the first three grades of elementary school and is intended for 315 school hours. The school subject "environmental science" includes the continuation and orientation of spontaneous children's exploration of the world and the discovery of connections and interdependence in phenomena and processes in the natural and social environment. Prior knowledge, which arises from direct experience in the environment or through the media, is formed, expanded and deepened in the classroom" [1]. The subject of social science is taught in the fourth and fifth grades of elementary school and is an upgrade of the social science goals, contents and

activities of the subject of environmental science from the first three grades. The subject contents cover a total of 175 school hours. It includes goals from geography, sociology, history, ethnology, psychology, economics, politics, ethics, and ecology. Goals are intertwined and interconnected. During the lessons of the subject of social science, students develop, among other things, an understanding of their social, cultural and natural environment in time and space, and develop attitudes and values in the context of environmental, civic and patriotic education and education for democracy and human rights. The emphasis of the subject is to get to know the relationship between the individual, society and the natural environment [2]. Both current curricula for the subject of social science and the subject of environmental science are conceived from the constructivist theory of learning and teaching. Plut-Pregelj [3] defined constructivism in education as theories of knowledge and derived theories of teaching based on the assumption that knowledge is a human construct, whether it is a consequence of human individual, narrower or broader social activity. The constructivist theory of learning and teaching derives from the idea that students must be active in the classroom, as their knowledge will be stronger and more holistic if they based on their prior knowledge and experience with the help of teachers build new knowledge and integrate it into their already existing concept of knowledge [4,5]. Therefore, the constructivist approach to teaching emphasizes the active role of students and, accordingly, teachers should choose such forms and methods of work in which students are more active than in the traditional or transmissive approach to teaching. The transmissive approach to teaching is mainly based on the transfer of ready-made knowledge, so students do not go through the cognitive process, as they are only acquainted with the findings resulting from someone else's cognitive path [6]. Schools as institutions in the future will not be able to successfully perform their function of transmitting knowledge if they do not adopt at least some principles, recommendations and approaches based on constructivist assumptions [7].

How and in what way teachers will teach the contents of cultural heritage, with which methods, forms of work or didactic strategies, depends on each teacher individually. The primary characteristics of postmodern didactics of social sciences are changing, so how to teach the contents of cultural heritage is relevant. As the essential feature of the postmodern didactics of social sciences, Židan [8] points out its constant openness, the search for new challenges and its constant dynamism. Židan (p. 39) also writes that "it is always ... important to think about the question: What (which) are the didactic paths to a more permanent social science, humanistic knowledge than human capital?" The educational environment with all the included contents and elements actively creates the individual's capital in society. It is reasonable, and Marentič Požarnik [7] agrees that teachers combine the methods they will use in the classroom according to the subject's objectives, circumstances and students.

Given the didactic recommendations and knowledge of the principles of the constructivist theory of learning and teaching, it would be expected that teachers

use the following teaching methods in which students are active: research lessons, experiential lessons, project lessons. In all these strategies, students are more active than in the traditional form of teaching, the frontal form. In defining active learning, it is necessary to consider mental activity and independence in regulating one's learning. Therefore, we can speak of active learning when most of the learning activities are carried out and regulated by the students themselves [9] Accordingly, the modern student is an active, participatory constructor (builder) of their social science knowledge, behaviors, beliefs [8].

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the study was to determine the state of teaching the contents of cultural heritage at the primary level of primary education in the Republic of Slovenia.

The authors in broader research examined more aspects and characteristic of teaching cultural heritage at elementary level. In this article authors focuses on didactic strategies that are used for teaching cultural heritage at elementary level of education.

The study was based on a descriptive and non-experimental method of empirical research and was carried out individually and anonymously. The authors included a random sample of 395 primary education teachers teaching on 1st level of elementary education in year 2018 in Slovenia.

The research sample has the largest number of first grade teachers, namely 106, which represents 26.8% of all participating teachers. 19.5% of the participating teachers teach in the third grade (77 teachers), 19.2% of the participating teachers teach in the 4th grade (76 teachers) and 18.5% of the participating teachers teach in the second grade (73 teachers). Fifth grade teachers are the least represented in the research sample, 63, which represents 15.9% of all participating teachers.

Authors compiled the survey questionnaire and it consists of two parts. In the first part, we obtained data on the generals of teachers: the length of service of their teaching, the class of teaching and the environment in which their primary school is located, in which the surveyed teachers teach. The second part of the questionnaire consists of several types of questions: dichotomous questions, multi-choice questions: questions with ranked answers, a cluster of questions, questions with verbal answers, questions with graded answers, and questions with a combination of judgments and levels. Validity was ensured with reviewing and pre-testing our questionnaire on a sample. Reliability was controlled from the start of creating questions since we were careful to provide detailed instructions and unambiguous specific questions. Reliability was also monitored when processing data since we compared the answers to content-related questions. The objectivity

of instrument was based on individual interviewing without the presence of an assessor.

Data was collected with a survey questionnaire intended for primary school class teachers. We obtained the web addresses of primary schools on the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport website and sent the schools an e-mail including the link to an online survey, carried out at https://www.1ka.si/. Once we completed the survey, there were 395 fully completed questionnaires in our database.

The data obtained from the questionnaires were analysed by using the SPSS statistics programme. For data processing, we used basic descriptive statistics and frequency distribution. For examining the differences in teachers' attitudes in accordance with their period of employment and the grade they are teaching, we used the Kruskal-Wallis test for independent samples; and for examining the differences in teachers' attitudes towards the teaching environment, we used the Mann-Whitney test.

RESULTS

How often do teachers use individual didactic strategies in teaching cultural heritage content?

Teachers were offered four strategies of teaching, for which they had to indicate how often they use them in teaching cultural heritage contents. Teachers marked the frequency of use for experiential lessons, research lessons, classic lessons (the methods of explanation and conversation prevail) and project lessons. The results are presented in the table below.

Table 1. *Numbers (f), structural percentages (f%) and mean ($\bar{x}$) of frequency for the methods of integrating cultural heritage contents during the school year*

Individual teaching strategy	Frequency of use				
	Never f f%	Rarely f f%	Often f f%	Total f f%	$\bar{x}$
Experiential teaching	7 1.8 %	152 38.5 %	236 59.7 %	395 100.0 %	2,58
Research teaching	13 3.3 %	178 45.1 %	204 51.6 %	395 100.0 %	2,48
Classic teaching	6 1.5 %	162 41.0 %	227 57.5 %	395 100.0 %	2,56
Project teaching	37 9.4 %	252 63.8 %	106 26.8 %	395 100.0 %	2,17
Other	22 52.4 %	15 35.7 %	5 11.9 %	42 100.0 %	1,60

Source: Own elaboration

The results show that teachers most often use experiential teaching to teach cultural heritage contents ($\overline{x}$ = 2.58) and also classic teaching, which focuses on the method of explanation and conversation ($\overline{x}$ = 2.48). Research teaching is used by teachers more often than project teaching ($\overline{x}$ = 2.17), which is rarely used by teachers.

Also, for this question, we performed the χ^2test for each individual teaching method for the frequency of using a particular teaching method for teaching cultural heritage contents according to the years of experience, the grade and the teaching environment. At this point, we present only those results of the χ^2-test in which it was shown that there are statistically significant differences between teachers. According to the grade, the results show statistically significant differences (χ^2 = 17,039, P = 0,030) among teachers in the frequency of use of experiential teaching. Teachers in the first three grades use experiential learning more often in environmental science than their colleagues in the subject of social science in the fourth and fifth grades. There are no statistically significant differences in the frequency of use of research teaching according to the years of experience, grade and teaching environment. There is a statistically significant difference in the implementation of classic teaching (χ^2 = 6.421, P = 0.040) among teachers based on the teaching environment, and teachers in urban schools more often carry it out. The results of the χ^2 test also show statistically significant differences between teachers according to the grade in the use of project work (χ^2 = 16,968, P = 0,030), as project teaching is more often carried out in the teaching of social science in the fourth and fifth grade than in the teaching of environmental science in the first three grades of elementary education.

How often do teachers teach cultural heritage contents outside the classroom?

Teachers chose from five answers to this question, at least once a month, once every two months, two to four times a year, once a year and never. The results show that most teachers teach outside the classroom two to four times a year (51.6%). 18.2% of teachers teach cultural heritage content outside the classroom once every two months, and 16.7% of teachers teach it at least once a month. 1.3% of teachers or five surveyed teachers never teach cultural heritage contents outside the classroom. We did a χ^2 test of differences between teachers in the frequency of teaching cultural heritage contents outside the classroom according to the years of experience, grade and teaching environment. Teachers who teach in rural elementary schools are statistically significantly more likely to teach cultural heritage contents outside the classroom (χ^2 = 10.784, P = 0.029).

Do teachers cooperate with institutions and associations, in the planning of cultural heritage content during lessons?

In the planning and implementing lessons outside the classroom, teachers can cooperate with various institutions, associations, galleries, archives, the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage and more. We were first interested in whether teachers use these options when planning cultural heritage content during lessons.

The results show that most teachers (71.9%) cooperate with various institutions, associations, etc., in planning their teaching of cultural heritage contents outside the classroom. When analysing the statistically significant differences between teachers, we found statistically significant differences regarding cooperation with other institutions in planning the teaching of cultural heritage contents outside the classroom according to the years of experience, grade, and the teaching environment. Teachers with more years of experience work more with institutions, associations than their younger colleagues with fewer years of experience ($|^2 = 10{,}757$, $P = 0.013$). Also, the difference between teachers is statistically significant according to the grade, as teachers of higher grades cooperate more with institutions and associations than teachers of lower grades ($|^2 = 12{,}522$, $P = 0.014$). Most teachers who cooperate with institutions and associations in planning the teaching of cultural heritage contents outside the classroom cooperate with museums (33.0%). 25.4% of them cooperate with various associations, and 18.1% cooperate with galleries.

CONCLUSION

According to the results, teachers most often use experiential learning when teaching cultural heritage content. Teachers in the first three grades use experiential learning in environmental studies subject more often than their colleagues teaching social studies in fourth and fifth grades. Based on the theoretical part of our master's thesis, we know that experiential learning connects direct experience (experiencing), observation, cognition, and conduct. All these elements form an inseparable whole, and a comprehensive personal experience is the most important part of this method [2]. Both curricula for environmental and social studies subjects encourage and guide teachers to carry out active learning in the form of experiential learning. Given that teachers most often use experiential learning in teaching cultural heritage content, we can conclude that in teaching cultural heritage content, they follow the principles of constructivist teaching. Therefore, through their own activity, pupils build new knowledge on the basis of their previous knowledge and experience, and incorporate it into their existing concept of knowledge. In this context, we can only assume that teachers teaching in the first triad may find it easier to teach outside a classroom because, as a rule, it is easier to implement inter-subject connections, which allows them to achieve the goals of several subjects at the same time, including outside a classroom. In the fourth and fifth grades, however, teachers expect such planning to be more demanding and, therefore, probably use it less often.

In terms of frequency of use, second place is taken by classical teaching, with the method of explanation and conversation in the forefront. In traditional or classical concept of teaching, teaching is often illustrated as one-way didactic communication: *(teaching material) – teacher – teaching material – pupils.* Therefore, the frontal form of teaching prevails. We would also like to highlight an interesting item that, considering the frequency of implementing classical teaching, the results show a statistically significant difference between teachers in terms of their teaching environment, namely, it is more often carried out by teachers in urban schools. A more thorough interpretation would require an additional analysis of all the factors influencing the occurrence of differences between rural and urban schools.

Teachers also use research-based teaching more often than project-based teaching. Research-based teaching is one of didactic strategies, where pupils are active, and which also introduces elements of scientific work into teaching [10]. In both curricula, research-based teaching is also mentioned as a guideline for teaching environmental and social studies subjects. We can summarise that teachers teach according to didactic recommendations.

According to the results, project-based teaching is the least often used by teachers in teaching cultural heritage content, and project-based teaching is more often carried out in social studies lessons in fourth and fifth grades than in environmental studies lessons in the first three grades of elementary education. In the research conducted by Jančič and Hus [11] in the 2015/2016 academic year among Slovenian teachers of social studies subject in fourth and fifth grades of elementary school, it was also found that teachers only occasionally use project-based lessons in social studies subject. Research results provided a partial answer as to why such a situation occurs, namely that teachers partly agreed with the statement that the project work is too difficult for pupils. It is also interesting to note that teachers believe that the school environment does not sufficiently encourage them to use project-based teaching, as they only occasionally receive an incentive to carry out project-based teaching. According to Novak [12], some principals encourage greater teacher's autonomy and, consequently, teachers can take responsibility for their own initiatives, personal development, and education, in spite of bureaucracy and increased teaching obligations. It is precisely due to the increasing bureaucratisation and control that some schools are afraid of autonomy.

According to the results, most teachers implement lessons outside a classroom two to four times a year. Teachers teaching in rural elementary schools statistically significantly more often teach cultural heritage content outside a classroom, and teachers teaching in rural areas also statistically significantly more often work with institutions and societies in planning lessons outside a classroom. According to the results, when planning lessons of cultural heritage content outside a classroom, most teachers cooperate with various institutions, societies, and the like. Teachers with more years of service work more intensively and carry

out a greater volume of work with institutions, societies, and others than their younger colleagues with less years of service. Most teachers work with museums. According to Trškan [13], the pedagogical role of museums in Slovenia is becoming increasingly important because many museums began offering various pedagogical activities intended for children and adolescents of all ages. Museums are resources for learning about and studying history and can be an integral part of field trips, fieldwork, or other forms of lessons outside a classroom. Trškan also writes that for teachers, a museum is an opportunity for additional extracurricular activities in which theoretical knowledge is combined with practical knowledge, and a museum also increases young people's interest in what has happened in the past [13]. The surveyed teachers also intensively cooperate with various societies and galleries. The didactic recommendations of the curricula for environmental and social studies state that the goals should also be achieved outside a classroom, by moving across Slovenia, in the field, and by field trips.

Based on the findings of our empirical research, we suggest the following activities as an upgrade to the existing practices that can, inter alia, increase the cultural capital of pupils:

It would be necessary to prepare model teaching preparations for the implementation of lessons with cultural heritage contents, which would follow the guidelines of post-modern didactics of social sciences.

Shorter teacher training courses focused on cultural heritage content lessons should be planned and implemented, using modern didactic strategies that encourage students' activity and they should be based on the constructivist theory of learning and teaching.

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