

TEACHING GEOGRAPHICAL METHODS AND FORMS IN THE UNITED STATES, ICELAND AND SLOVAKIA

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Abstract: Teaching methods can be characterized as a deliberate arrangement of teaching content and activities of teacher and student, which is heading towards achievement of the educational and training objectives. The teaching form is understood as an organizational form of teaching by which the teacher implements the teaching process through various methods in different environments. Diversity of educational systems of the United States, Iceland and Slovakia predetermines the differences in teaching methods and forms. As the teaching in individual countries is quite different, the aim of this paper is to compare school education system. Iceland is currently a very popular destination for many tourists and is a compact location, for which reason we present on its example one of the outdoor teaching forms of regional landscape geography, a proposal for a geographical excursion. Its application and use is possible within the framework of interdisciplinary relations of natural as well as social sciences.

Keywords: USA, Slovakia, Iceland, geographical methods, school education system

1 Introduction

Education has been undergoing massive development from the past, with all countries, whether advanced or less developed, striving for the best possible education systems, according to their economic capacity and cultural orientation, since well-functioning education systems are an important prerequisite for the country's further development. It also leads to the globalization of education in the world, as globalization is increasingly becoming increasingly internationalized, and this causes the convergence and interconnection of education at the international level (Grežo, Petrovič, 2019). Governments are increasingly guiding the development of their own education systems based on the use of knowledge about the development of education systems in other countries. For example, it is currently an effort, in many countries, to ensure that education systems behave as part of public services.

On the other hand, education systems in the world are very specific, unique and different. Even in countries that are similar in their economic or political situations, we find many individual features. In particular, education systems are heavily dependent on historical, cultural and religious traditions.

We define the education system as "the sum of all levels, types and types of institutions that fulfill all the educational functions. At present, however, the concept of education system has a broader meaning as it not only reflects the institutional structure, but also school management and governance, the curriculum and the political, social and economic context expressed in education policy (Horák, Kolář, 2007).

2 Methodology

The first step was field research, which we attended at two elementary schools in Iceland, where we learned how Icelandic education works through personal meetings with several local

teachers. They also provided us with a wealth of materials, a textbook and a workbook to teach the local landscape. Field research has also been conducted at the Travel Agency in Iceland - D Travel and the largest accommodation company in Iceland which provides AirBnB rental for tourists in four regions of the island (capital region, western region, southwest region and southern region). Interviews with the owners of both companies were conducted in the capital of the island because of the necessary information on the state of tourism in recent years. By analyzing the information we pointed out the current state of not only education but also the tourism industry in Iceland. Using the method of collecting both electronic and print information, we chose the ones that were most important for us when writing our work. In electronic form, these were mainly Icelandic and American websites related to Iceland's education and protected areas. Printed materials were obtained through one of the local libraries in Reykjavík (Borgarbókasafnið Menningarhúsi í Reykjavík), from primary school teachers - Lækjarskóli in Hafnarfjörður and Fellaskóli in Reykjavík, and last but not least, the local population provided us with many books. The work used comparative method for comparing acquired information. We analyzed the information and phenomena to look for common and different features. We used this method to compare the school system in Slovakia, Iceland and the USA. Mathematical - statistical method was used for quantitative processing of acquired data. Thus, it was possible to accurately describe, synthesize and draw conclusions when processing statistical data. These were obtained using the databases of the Statistical Office in Iceland and the USA.

3 School education system

In Slovakia, education consists of two parts - regional education, which consists of pre - primary, primary and secondary education, and school facilities providing educational and support functions. The second part of the Slovak education system is represented by higher education, which forms a substantial part of the development and research potential of the Slovak Republic. Currently, education legislation uses the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) to classify education. In Slovakia, compulsory school attendance according to Act no. 245/2008 Coll. on education and on the amendment of certain acts (Education Act) for 10 years. The Constitution of the Slovak Republic provides free education at primary, secondary and university level for all citizens. There are four levels of schools in Slovakia: kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools and colleges / universities.

The school education system in Iceland is similar to Denmark or other Scandinavian countries and consists of four levels of education. Compulsory school attendance is from 6 to 16 years old in Iceland, the school year lasts 9 months and pupils have summer holidays in June, July and August. Education is traditionally public sector oriented, and there are only a few private schools in the country. The first level is represented by kindergartens ("Leikskóli") intended for children aged two to six (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2002). The kindergarten is followed by compulsory education ("Grunnskóli"). Teaching is divided into ten years. Iceland does not have lower and higher primary education, but is part of a single level of education, mostly in one building. The Icelandic education system emphasizes equality between all pupils and seeks to include these pupils in the normal education process among other pupils, with special teachers to help pupils with special needs (Helgason, 2011; Emilsson, 2018). Upon completion of compulsory education, upper secondary education ("Framhaldsskóli") is intended for pupils aged 16 to 20 but is not compulsory.

The American education system is one of the best in the world. It requires 12 years of elementary and secondary education before entering university or college. The US education system

and its hierarchical system are similar in each of the 50 US states, but each state has its own school system within its jurisdiction, where general national requirements are implemented through local state districts, managed by a local school board of their choice citizens. Each US state thus organizes its education independently of the other. There are also differences in education between countries. This can last from 16 to 18 years of age. Up to 30 countries have compulsory education up to the age of 16 (Ward, 2005; Spring, 1994; studyusa.com, 2017).

The difference in the American and Slovak school system is also noted in grading, respectively. In Slovakia, the rating system is numbered 1 (best mark) to 5 (worst mark) (minedu.sk). US grading is based on percentages A, B, C, D, and F (failed), each letter being further divided into + and -, for example, A+, A- (educationusa.state.gov, 2017). In Iceland, the grades for the fourth year of primary school are also written, later, from the fifth grade with the letter A - D, with A being the best grade and D the worst. If a pupil in Slovakia shows insufficient results in one or more subjects during the school year and fails to defend his / her knowledge even at the commissions exams, he / she will repeat the year again. In Iceland it is not possible to repeat the year. In the 4th, 7th and 10th grades, comparative examinations are held between elementary schools in Iceland. They also determine which pupils are weaker and whether the pupil needs an assistant teacher in the class (Blöndal, 2014).

3.1 Teaching geography

Slovak state educational programs are divided into individual ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education). We will deal with ISCED 1 - 3. We use the ISCED which is followed in Europe and is also accepted by other international organizations (UNESCO, OECD), to develop the SEP and the content of education according to individual levels of education. It expresses the main principles and objectives of the educational policy of the state, as well as the democratic and humanistic values on which national education is based. It defines the general objectives of schools as key competences (competences), in the balanced development of pupils' personalities and the framework content of education (modurmal.com, 2019). In addition to describing the approach to teaching geography, American educational standards are also focused on the general issue of what a particular standard deals with, and also focus on selected examples of what pupils should be able to master after class. Many experts from various institutions worked on their creation. They were released in 1994, but in 2012 they were upgraded to a newer version of standards. These educational standards also have a different structure from ours. They do not have specific standards for each level of study like us, but consist of eighteen standards, which are divided into three educational levels: grades K - 4 = approximately equivalent to our ISCED 1 (primary school); grades 5 - 8 = approximately corresponds to our ISCED 2 (grade 2); grades 9 - 12 = roughly corresponds to our ISCED 3 (SS) Each standard for a given level of education consists of two parts: a) what the student should know at the end of the degree b) what the student will be able to create at the end of the degree, having a skill. The student thus acquires knowledge, which he then transforms into skills. US standards for teaching geography: 1. How to use maps and other geographic information, tools and technologies to retrieve, process, and write information in space. 2. Using mental maps to organize information about people, places and environment in spatial contexts. 3. How to analyze the spatial distribution of people, places and the environment on Earth. 4. Places and regions. 5. Places and regions - People create regions to explain the complexity of the Earth. 6. How culture and experience affect the human perception of cities and regions. 7. Physical processes that form the Earth's surface. 8. Characteristics and spatial distribution of ecosystems and biomes on the Earth's surface. 9. Systems in human society - characteristics, distribution and migration of human population on the Earth's surface. 10. Characteristics, distribution and complexity of cultures on Earth. 11. Worldwide economic interdependence. 12. Processes, organization and functions of human settlements. 13.

As a cooperation, but also conflicts between people affect the division and control of the Earth's surface. 14. How human activity modifies the human environment. 15. How natural systems affect human activity. 16. Changes that have occurred in the use, distribution and importance of resources. 17. How to use geography to explain the past. 18. Use of geography in choosing a place for future life, work and rest. 19. Use of geography in choosing a place for future life, work and rest (Heffron, Downs, 2012). In Iceland, pupils also encounter the teaching of the local country at the first level where they use the textbook "Komdu og skoðaðu", "Come and see". The geography of the local country itself takes place in the fifth year, mainly in the second semester of the school year. The focus of the course is based on the pupils' independent work on tasks, projects and various individual assignments assigned by the teacher on the current topic. The regional geography of the local country is taught in Iceland in the fifth grade at primary school and is included in a subject called "Samfélagsfræði", which means "social sciences". This course is taught throughout the year from the fifth to the ninth year. It is taught in both semesters in each school year, with most schools teaching History in the first semester and Geography in the second semester. In some schools this order is reversed. Geography is taught three times a week at most of the schools (54 hours per semester). Students have a textbook and workbook at their disposal. However, the textbook is mainly used by the teacher, who prepares different games, projects, group work, map work and various other activities for each subject. The aim is to lead pupils to self-reliance, to teach them to search for information independently, not to learn curriculum (Helgason, 2011). Geography and methods have been taught in the past by many authors such as Holtz, 1917; Lidstone, Williams, 2006 or exploring and teaching land via GIS also Boltziar, Chrastina, 2018.

4 Results and discussion

The aim was to point out the diversity of education systems in Slovakia, Iceland and the USA. Working on the basis of the many resources available to us, it provides the current state of education in each country. The theoretical part of the thesis was based on print sources, for the research part it was field research, internal interviews with competent persons and questionnaire surveys. Finally, we can say that the diversity of education systems in all three regions is considerable. We compared all three school systems while the Slovak and American school systems were more focused on ISCED comparisons, and in comparing the Slovak and Icelandic schools, we focused on the diversity of teaching the regional geography of the local country. In the work where we dealt with Icelandic education, we also focused on the extremely growing tourism in Iceland and its consequences not only on the population but mainly on the landscape and protected areas.

Iceland has seen a sharp increase in tourists since 2010. In 2017, the country was visited by 2.2 million tourists, 6 times more than number of inhabitants. This annual growth causes many problems in the country, especially environmental (Dysková, Šolcová, 2018). Therefore, we focused on protected areas and the impact of tourism on them. This issue was also dealt with by Chalupa, Veselovský (2018). According to the OECD, the country is under high pressure due to the high growth of tourism. Some areas are so disturbed that it will take several hundred years to recover. At the expense of this, many "tourist attractions" have already been closed, which is also borne by local residents. According to the Environment Agency in Iceland, biodiversity and landscape conservation expenditures increased by almost 30% in the five-year period (2011-2016) (Umhverfisstofnun.is, 2017). This is one of the reasons why we designed a professional route in Iceland for pupils of different degrees of study as well as for tourists. It is one of the teaching forms applicable in teaching the geography of the local landscape.

4.1 Proposal routes to Iceland with a focus on the teaching of regional landscape geography

Since Iceland has been a very popular destination for many tourists in recent years, we have created a map of the most interesting and famous places on the island. The route has a circular character and consists of twenty stops. The design of the route (Fig. 1) has a circular character. The meaning of the route is to get to know the most beautiful and well-known places on the island. The route is designed to provide observation of the whole country. The estimated length of the circuit is 1,720 km and consists of twenty stops. The island's round trip is called number one or Ring Road. It is not demanding and no special off-road vehicles are required, as it would be for a tour inland or the West Fjords region. Estimated route length is 4 - 7 days. The route was designed to be accessible to all ages. A professional guide is required at stops number 7 - in the Jökulsárlón glacier lagoon and number 13 - in the Langjökull glacier tunnel. There are many travel agencies available in Iceland that offer various island tours. One of them is the Slovak travel agency D-Travel with a Slovak guide.

Fig. 1: Design of a circular route in Iceland



The author: Dysková by ArcGIS 10.2, 2019

List of stops of the proposed route through Iceland:

1. Keflavík
2. Bridge between two continents
3. Blue Lagoon
4. Geothermal area Krysuvík
5. Seljalandsfoss and Gljúfrabúi waterfalls
6. Waterfall Skógafoss
7. Dyrhólaey and Reynisfjara Black Beach
8. Glacier Lagoon Jökulsárlón and Diamond Beach
9. Egilstaðir
10. Dettifoss waterfall
11. Lake Mývatn
12. Akureyri
13. Hraunfossar and Barnafoss waterfalls
14. Langjökull glacier
15. Þingvellir National Park
16. Strokkur Geysir
17. Gullfoss waterfall
18. Crater Kerið
19. Hot springs in Hveragerdi
20. Reykjavík

The start and end of the route is at the Keflavik International Airport on the Reykjanes Peninsula, from where we continue eastwards. The second stop is near Keflavik, and it is a bridge between the two continents, which was built as a symbol for connecting Europe and North America. Twenty kilometers from Keflavik is the famous Blue Lagoon, which is visited by more and more tourists every year. Booking is required at least one month in advance during the summer season. From Blue Lagoon we move to the geothermal area Krysuvík (Fig. 2), where you can swim in the thermal river. Close to Krysuvík is a 46 meters deep maar with a diameter of 350 meters. This maar is of green color, which is caused by algae. On this route there are the most famous and most beautiful waterfalls on the island. The south

coast offers us three waterfalls. The Seljalandsfoss, Gljúfrabúi and Skógafoss are in close proximity to each other. Only thirty kilometers from the Skógafoss waterfall is Iceland's southernmost peninsula - the 120-meter-high Dyrhólaey rock massive, which has been created due to severe erosion in recent centuries (Grunewald, Gilbertas, 2012). Only a few meters away from the massive arch is the Black Beach - Reynisfjara in Vík, which is of volcanic origin, as evidenced by its surroundings formed by basalt columns, caves, lava formations and cliffs. The next stop is the glacier lagoon Jökulsárlón (Fig. 3), after which a boat trip is possible. The icebergs from the Vatnajökull glacier, which reached through the Jökulsárlón Lagoon to the nearby beach, look like diamonds on the black volcanic sand. Therefore, this famous beach is called Diamond. From the southern region, the route leads to the calm east of the island, to the surrounding area of Egilstaðir in the east of the island, where there are 28 hiking trails for waterfalls, canyons, caves, lakes and many other natural beauties (Guðmundsson, 2007; 2018). From the eastern part of the island we move to the northeast of the island. North of Route 1 is the massive Dettifoss Waterfall. In the area of active volcanism, near the Krafla volcano, there is a shallow lake Mývatn, known for its high incidence of various birds and insects. This is followed by the "capital of the north" - Akureyri, where several museums (museum of art, industry, aviation, Icelandic folk museum, old toy museum and city museum) are located. In the mountainous surroundings above the town there is the possibility of skiing on the slope Híðarfjall (Evans, 2014; gamma.is, 2018). In the western region there are interesting waterfalls Hraunfossar and Barnafoss located only sixteen meters apart. Hraunfossar Waterfall means "Lava Waterfall", and Barnafoss is "Children's Waterfall", named after two children who had fallen long ago into this waterfall and were not found. The board in front of the waterfall informs about this unfortunate event (guidetoiceland. 2017). Near the waterfalls there is the Langjökull glacier, where a professional tour of the glacier tunnel is possible. The next stop will take us again to the southern region, to the southeast of Iceland, where there are five more stops. The first is the Þingvellir National Park, which creates beautiful nature and is the only UNESCO World Heritage Site on the island. The Golden Triangle, or the Golden Ring, is complemented by the Strokkur Geysir and the Gullfoss Waterfall. To the south of the Golden Triangle is the famous Kerið Crater, whose caldera and slopes, as well as other volcanic rocks in the area, are red to black. This means that iron deposits are still geologically fresh (Bergmann, 2004; guidetoiceland, 2017). The southern region closes the penultimate stop of the whole route - the geothermal area Hveragerdi. Geothermal energy is transmitted by the deep circulation of groundwater and the movement of tectonic plates, which exits to the surface in the form of hot steam or water. The last stop of the route is the capital itself - Reykjavik, where you can visit, among other things, the well-preserved historical architecture of the country in the old part of the city. It is interesting that Icelandic cities do not have squares (extremeiceland.is, 2018).

Fig. 2 Geothermal area Krysuvík



The author: Dysková, 2018

Fig. 3 Glacier in Jökulsárlón lagoon



Source: extremeiceland.is, 2018; edited by Dysková, 2019

5 Conclusion

Every country in the world has its own education system, whether it is a high-level education system or one that is still developing and shaping in some way. Education is also one of the areas that significantly influence the development of the

society. When comparing the individual systems we found diametrical differences between the Slovak and American school systems. The most significant difference is the number of years of each degree.

School systems also differ in the number of years of compulsory education, with us being 10 years and in the US 12 years in most of their countries. Another difference is that there is no "intermediate level" between primary and secondary school in the United States. We also think that the American education system has a very interesting system in that students can choose what other subjects, besides the compulsory ones, they want to study because each pupil is individual. This is also possible in Iceland. Some pupils are more focused on languages, for example, others on the technical sphere, and therefore have the opportunity to better improve what they enjoy. On the one hand, this is good, because more ambitious pupils who want to go to a chosen university can better prepare by focusing mainly on the subjects that are important to them. On the other hand, many students, especially in secondary schools, abuse this system by choosing relatively simpler subjects.

The curriculum in Iceland is not as extensive as in Slovakia, but it promotes creativity and equality between children. Compulsory school attendance lasts 10 years as well as in Slovakia. Creativity - that is, pupils are evaluated primarily on the basis of their own work in lessons, for the various tasks and projects they work on and then present to others. Education works on a well-elaborated e-learning method, which means that pupils receive from their school their own tablets or notebooks, which they use not only to work on lessons (ie they do not use workbooks) like pupils in our country, but also work on their occasional homework. Equality - that is, all pupils are equal, which is largely pointed out by teachers, but most importantly, pupils who are handicapped or otherwise disadvantaged are in the classroom together with regular students.

Nevertheless, the excursion is a very suitable and effective outdoor teaching form of geography of the local country usable in all three countries, ie in Iceland, Slovakia and the USA. Based on our research, we found that excursions are most used in Slovakia and least in Iceland.

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