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**THE METHOD OF EDUCATIONAL PROJECT
IN THE OPINION OF THE GEOGRAPHY TEACHER**

Abstract: This study presents selected results of research into utilizing the educational project method in geographical education.

Key words: effectiveness of geographical education, key competence, educational project method

INTRODUCTION

Since 2009/2010 school year there has been present the new geography core curriculum on the third educational stage – „Gimnasium”/junior school/ in Poland. In this curriculum the knowledge and abilities are described, according to the European qualification frames, in the language of educational effects. In the comments to the Core Curriculum in junior school (Czerny, Szkurłat 2009) the main objectives and ideas of geographical education are described. In these comments we can see that we should resign from encyclopedia teaching in aid of educational geography values and abilities forming. The detailed analysis of aims and assumptions of geographical education points to the establishment of key competences.

Geographical education is to be done by practical knowledge of geography-showing the relation between school geography and life. This pragmatic aim is a very important criterion in the choice of educational methods (Czerny, Szkurłat 2009).

In the Decree of Minister of Education on 20 August 2010 the method of educational project has been introduced to obligatory use in junior schools since 1 September 2010. It is clearly written that: „ students of junior school have to take part in the implementation of educational project. The educational project

is a team, planned action which aim is to solve the specific problem.. the range of the project may concern the chosen teaching program... or fall outside it....”

Bearing in mind the main assumptions of the project method, such as: laboratory role of the teacher, subjective treatment of the student, the comprehensive and open to social practice apprehension of teaching material, resigning from both the traditional way of estimating students knowledge and class-lesson system (Szymański 2000; Muszyński 1998; Mikina, Zajac 2006) this method should be recognized as the best one in reference to forming key competences in the teaching of geography.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this dissertation there have been presented the results of introductory study made by the author. The study concerns the usage of project method in school practice. The study has been made with the method of the diagnostic survey. The material has been enlisted with the usage of the technique of a questionnaire form.

The group of 200 geography teachers from junior schools in Poland taking part in the project e-Academy of The Future (Wydawnictwo Szkolne and Pedagogiczne S.A.) have been asked to fill in this form. The mentioned above project has been present in 200 junior schools in Poland since 2010/ 2011 school year and is to be finished in 3 year time. Project e-Academy of The Future aims to form key competences of the chosen subjects, including geography, among students. They can use e-learning units as well as the method of educational project.

In the survey there are 12 questions concerning the usage of the project method to teach geography. First of the asked question was if the teachers had ever used the method of project in their work. (fig. 1).

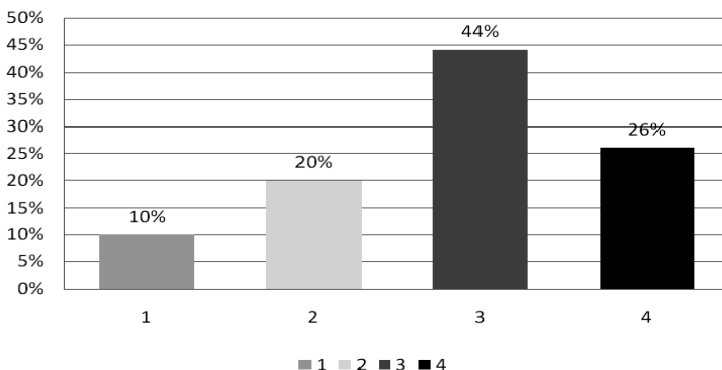


Fig. 1. Do you use the project method in your work?

1– never; 2 – yes, once; 3 – twice or three times; 4 – four times and more

Almost 90% of questioned teachers at least once have used this method. 10% of surveyed from 20 schools have never used it while working with the students. In the next part of the survey the number of questioned teachers is 180.

From the analysis of the material concerning the standardization of conducting projects (fig. 2) we can see that because of the projects' aims there are more research projects done. There comes a question why? What makes us to choose this type of project?

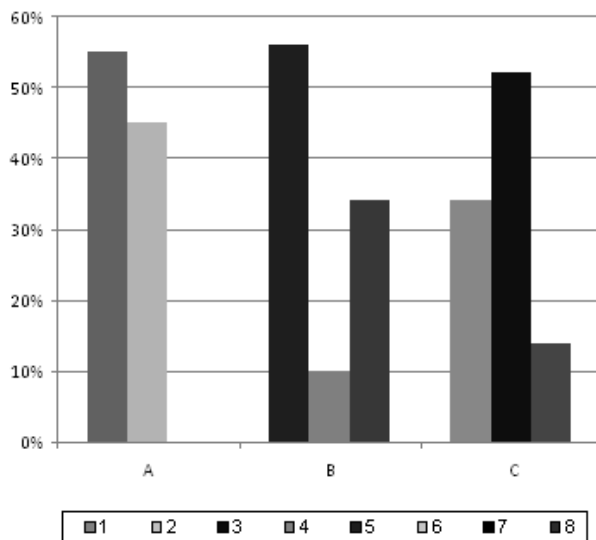


Fig. 2. Characterize educational projects conducted by you according to the following criteria

A – project aims: 1 – research projects; 2 – local activity projects,

B – range of curriculum: 3 – subject projects; 4 – modular projects; 5 – interdisciplinary projects,

C – educational content: 6 – ecological and environmental protection; 7 – about regional education; 8 – subject-based

Due to the range of educational material we can see, that among questioned ones, there are the most of subject projects. They estimate more than a half all conducted geography projects.

By dint of the used assumptions in the project method the biggest percent of answers is given in the category of regional education (fig.2). According to the author this result should refer to the geographical content of the region where a student lives not the entire geographical education in geography which can be also understood as one concerning continents or chosen countries. The lowest result we can see in the category of – subject based content.

It seems very important, from the point of geography didactics, to educate the detailed subject based content chosen to be conducted by the way of project method.

While estimating the suitability of project method to conduct specific types of educational classes the surveyed put on the first place additional school classes or extra curriculum classes (fig. 3). It seems quite interesting to check why this project method is not conducted during school classes.

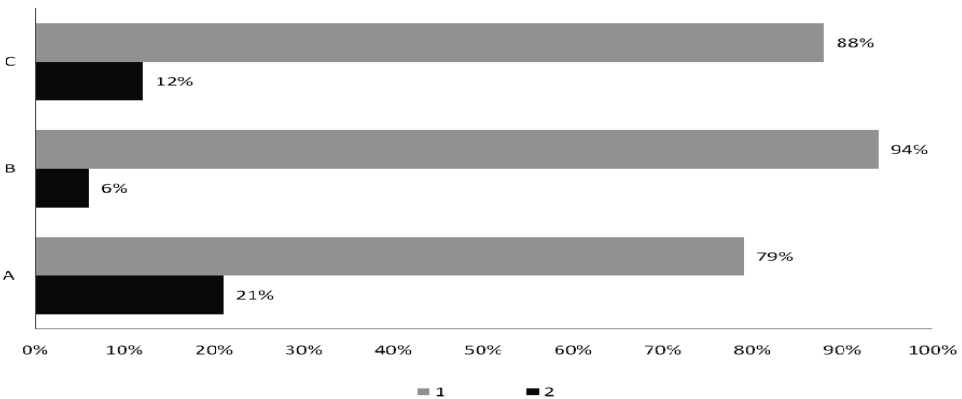


Fig. 3. Asses the usefulness of the project method referring to the completion of the types of classes:

1 – high; 2 – low; A – classes; B – additional school classes; C – extra curriculum classes

The method of projects is not an easy one. Its multi-sided and different areas of activities may cause many difficulties, while conducting its stages, both for teachers and students. From the gained answers concerning the main difficulties while conducting particular stages of the project method we can see that most often teachers find it difficult to prepare the project manual (fig. 4).

On the second place they put the project evaluation. It is widely known that evaluation – even in class-lesson system- is very difficult. It can't be easy when it concerns different students' activities while conducting project issues. It seems valid to recognize, in a more detailed way, the areas of evaluating and their criteria used while conducting this method. The gained results may help us to prepare the objective evaluation instruments in reference to knowledge, abilities and students behavior while conducting the project.

In the pedagogical literature (Gołębniak 2002; Fazlagić 2002) we can notice different restrictions while conducting educational-upbringing process in school. Bearing in mind external factors in conducting the project method the surveyed teachers were asked which of them they find to be the most crucial

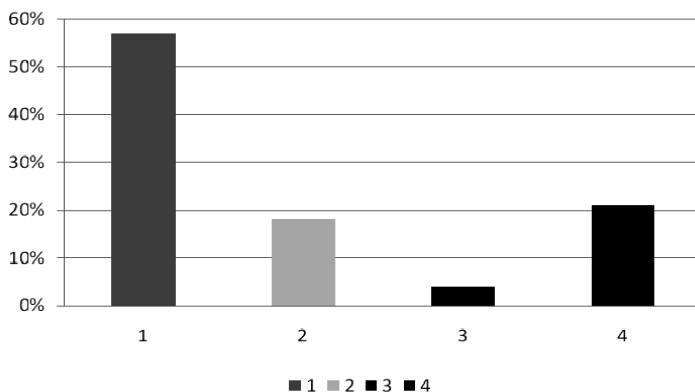


Fig. 4. Which of the stages of the project causes the most potential difficulties?
 1 – preparing the project manual; 2 – conducting project tasks; 3 – project presentation;
 4 – project evaluation

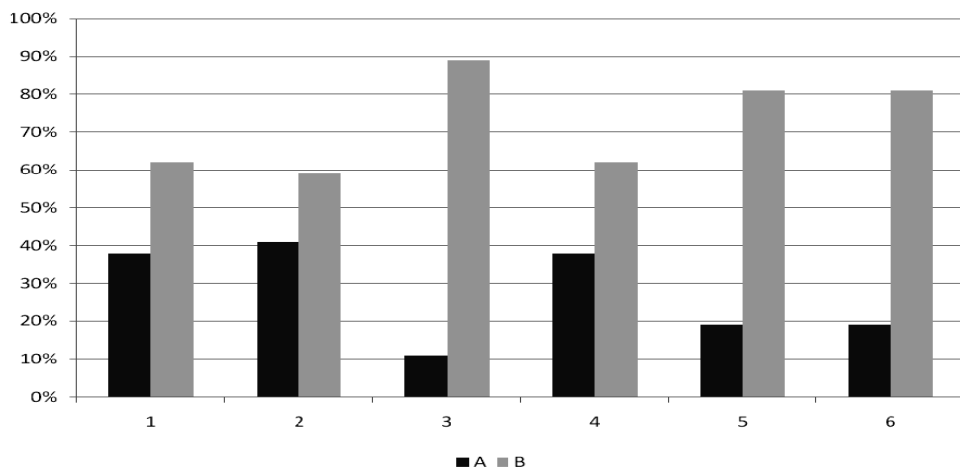


Fig. 5. What are, in your opinion, the basic difficulties in conducting the project method at school?

A – unimportant of little importance; B – important very important

1 – students’ little interest; 2 – students’ flesh in the pan; 3 – significant involvement of teacher’s free time; 4 – no support from the head teacher and the staff; 5 – lack or too little money; 6 – organization of school work according to class-based system.

ones. The received results point to the main meaning of such factors as: significant involvement of teacher’s free time, lack or too little money, organization of school work according to class-based system (fig. 5).

SUMMARY

According to the obtained results we can state that the surveyed group of junior school teachers know the assumptions on the project method but use this method of work with different frequency. The teachers are aware of some difficulties and restrictions concerning this method of work in reference not only to their own workshop but also to school conditions. They can identify the restricting factors. The obligatory introduction of the project method to the third stage of education will increase its usage while teaching-learning practice but the question still remains: will the effectiveness of geography teaching increase? The answer to this question may only be obtained by conducting the survey in this field.

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