On The Reform of Teaching Methods of Geography in Universities

Qiu-Min ZHAI1,a, Zhi-Yong GUO2,b,∗, Ming-Yue PANG3,c, Jia-Ping YING3,d, Hai-Xia CHEN3, and Xiao-Bing ZHANG3

1Environment and Planning Department, Henan University, Kaifeng, Henan, China
2Environment and Planning Department and Educational Science Department, Henan University, Kaifeng, Henan, China
3Environment and Planning Department, Henan University, Kaifeng, Henan, China

a zhai1998@henu.edu.cn, b guozhiyong@heun.edu.cn, c 2532410858@qq.com
∗Corresponding author

Keywords: colleges and universities, geography, teaching methods, reform

Abstract: In the era of deepening education reform and promoting the innovation of education, the reform of teaching methods is not only adhering to the current concept of education reform, but also promotes the continuous improvement of geographical teaching methods in universities. Taking geographical teaching methods as research object, with comprehensive analysis of our country college geography teaching method, we are making efforts to cope with problems, like single teaching methods existing in the way of teaching, backward geography textbook construction, unreasonable utilization of course-ware and practice courses and other issues. Thus we intend to establish the idea of contemporary geography teaching with great attention to the heuristic and inquiry teaching. At the same time, we employ modern information technology and update the geography curriculum system reform path to make contribution to the development of national college geography teaching practice.

Introduction

Geography is a special subject over liberal arts and sciences, which is comprehensive and far-ranging[1]. The appropriateness of geography teaching methods is one of the important factors that influence the improvement of teaching quality. Along with the development of the reform of higher education in our country, elite higher educational teaching method has not been able to satisfy the changing requirements of the society. Therefore, in order to promote the continuous innovation of geography teaching in universities, we say, innovation of concept, contents, methods, etc., universities need to positively change the traditional geography teaching method based on the geography characteristics and the development of students’ body and mind. Only in this way, can we improve the quality of geography teaching and optimize geography teaching effect.

The Current Situation

The Geography Teaching Method Has Made Some Difference and the Importance of Practice Teaching Still Calls for Consolidation

The traditional geography teaching method of “cramming education” ignores the student's dominant status and overemphasis on students’ mastery of basic knowledge of geography theory. And it also neglects the cultivation of students’ ability to apply theory to practice, thus making theory deviate from the geographical practice. As the traditional geographical teaching methods are restricted by internal factors and external conditions (the rapid development of the knowledge economy), making
geography teaching realize that the traditional geography teaching mode can not meet the need of practice teaching. Therefore, universities start to strengthen the cultivation of student's geography practice ability and to absorb the geographical knowledge into practical ability, so as to create the unity of learning and practicing.

**Efforts Are Made to Ensure the Diversity of the Teaching Methods**

As a subject, geography is compatible with arts and science. With the reference of geography teaching material contents, classroom standards and students' psychological development characteristics, we adopt the direct or indirect way to perceive comparatively vivid specific geographic things and geographical phenomena. At the same time, with the rapid spread of computer technology and communication technology, network, remote education and computer assisted instruction plus modern education technology develop rapidly. For example, “Internet+”, MOOC, micro-class, flipped-class and the micro-standard teaching are in rapid promotion. All of these help geography education get rid of the single mode and gradually make geographical teaching methods diversified.

**The Problems in Geographical Teaching Methods of Universities**

**Teaching Methods Remain Humdrum**

With the ever deepen reform of the curriculum, higher education needs geographical teachers give full play to the subjective initiative and change the traditional tedium teaching methods[2]. Due to the ineradicable traditional teaching notion, many colleges and universities continue to adopt “spoon-feeding” method into teaching. And teachers stand high to perform while students are passive audiences. To make things worse, many students in universities play mobile phone on class without reviewing and copy key points when a test is coming and totally get refreshed after tests, which greatly lower the quality of geographical teaching.

**The Design of Geographical Textbook Falls Behind**

In our country, those geography teaching materials and curriculum adopted by all universities are uniformly formulated by State Board of Education, etc. In order to meet the national standards, geographical teachers’ teaching thoughts are restricted that they cannot achieve the differential treatment in education, thus ignoring the personality development of students. Since college students have active thinking with have strong ability to accept new things, some of them learn more advanced knowledge than the teaching materials in colleges and universities. Without original and high-technology teaching materials, it is difficult to inspire students’ interest in learning, thus restricting the students from geography knowledge.

**The Application of Teaching Course-Ware is Unreasonable**

Multimedia course-ware has dominated in geographical teaching in colleges and universities. It carries with the teaching content and is important for the quality geographical teaching. However, there are many problems in using the teaching course-ware. Such as, stereotyped materials, ambiguous difficult points and insufficient interactions. At the same time, some teachers have come to rely too much on teaching course-ware and even follow course-ware for course-ware’s sack. In the long run, teachers become the commentators of course-ware, lacking in independent initiative, ignoring the auxiliary status of course-ware, neglecting the importance of “the three boards” and body language played in geographical teaching.

The reform of new curriculum insists that the value of theory is planted into the practice. For a long time, it can be seen in almost all universities that practice runs far behind theory[3]. With too much importance attached on theory teaching, universities neglect practical courses. And even though some colleges and universities indeed set up practice courses, it is still difficult to expand the geographic practical teaching and broaden the practice section due to several reasons, such as tedium form (touring and excursions), shortage of open classroom and teaching materials as well as material security and human support.
Measures to Reform Modern Geographical Teaching Method

To Establish Modern Geographical Teaching Idea and Change Geographical Teaching Thoughts

Under the new background of higher education, it is important to set up to the new educational concept to follow the trend of the times and make clear the role of teachers and students. Firstly, we must set up a new teaching model. That is, students play the main part of the class and they are given priority to take part in teaching activities with the guidance of teachers. Secondly, the equal relationship between teachers and students need to be established to create a kind of loose, democratic and harmonious learning atmosphere. Thirdly, teachers in colleges should fully understand the students' mental development characteristics and pay attention to the improvement of the students' practical ability and social adaptation ability.

To Switch the Traditional Teaching Mode into the Heuristic and Exploratory One

Geography is a cross discipline with strong social practicality, which has wide contents and abstract knowledge. In the process of teaching geography, we should break the traditional single teaching way to bring in heuristic and exploratory teaching mode. On the other words, we should flexibly adopt "communicative" teaching, namely “discussion-based teaching, PBL teaching, Seminar”, Capstone Experience as well as Case Study teaching method to achieve the ideal combination of the teaching method. Then we can guide students to think and to analyze and stimulate students' ability of exploring and reasoning, thus improving students' learning efficiency.

To Use Modern Information Technology Creatively and Utilize Multimedia Teaching Equipment Skillfully

Geographical computer technology and communication technology develop rapidly, making the modern educational technology, such as network and remote education plus computer assisted instruction grow in popularity. Among that, “Internet +”, MOOC, micro-class, flipped-class and the micro-standard teaching are in fully run. New technology puts forward new requirements for teaching methods and teaching instruments. At the same time, geography is a practical comprehensive discipline, involving knowledge of politics, economy, culture and society. Students are getting depressed and bored due to the abstract contents. But things will be changed if multimedia technology is employed to create specific contexts and tri-dimensional dynamic geographic environment to specify the abstract knowledge. The abstract image embodiment of knowledge. Then students are able to initially perceive and understand the knowledge visually and audibly in an active atmosphere, thus making geographical teaching results pleasant.

To Update the Course System and Strengthen the Integration of Theory and Practice

Course is the basic element of educational activities while course reform is a hot field that all colleges and universities may pay close attention to. To ensure the renewal of the development of geographical knowledge, universities should timely update the discipline knowledge in course system and merge geographical theory teaching with practical teaching based on the characteristics of geography. For a long time, geography teaching in colleges and universities unreasonably emphasizes theory outputting over practical teaching, making theory deviate from practice. In order to enhance the integration of theory and practice, universities can respectively establish recording and micro-standard classroom to strengthen educational practice. We can actually do a lot to help students improve their educational teaching practice ability imperceptibly with abundant curriculum system and practicing opportunities, such as innovating the way and contents of internship, extending the internship process, hosting “in-class teaching demonstration”, “geographical course-ware competition”, “geographical teaching”, “excellent teachers parody” and other activities.

To Cultivate Students' Innovative Ability and Thoughts by Creating Question-Oriented Contexts
Problem situation teaching refers that teachers purposely create certain affective problem scenarios to inspire students to explore and to think with critical and dynamic eyesight until their innovative ability and thoughts get improved. In the geographical teaching process, some principles need to be kept in mind that situations should be objective and faithful to common life and then we can present them in pictures to enable students to explore and think actively, provide students with a chance of independent exploration and thinking. Teachers can adopt the question situational teaching method to cultivate students' innovative ability and ensure the teaching quality.

**Conclusion**

Teaching method reform is the key and difficult point of innovating teaching methods in universities, which has no rules to follow. All kinds of teaching methods their advantages and disadvantages. Therefore, in reforming geographical teaching methods with various measures, we should work along both lines. On the one hand, we need to pay attention to students' individual differences and take every student's studying initiative and ability into consideration. On the other hand, with the reference of the actual current situation of national geographical education in colleges and universities, we should make full use of our advantages of teaching resources to innovate our teaching model reasonably. Meanwhile, teaching methods from aboard can also be very helpful, which is an effective way to advance our teaching standards in universities. Just as the old saying goes, an advice from others may help one's defects. In the further innovation of teaching method in universities, we should aim at studying teaching matters in depth and innovating teaching strategies.

**References**