

**USING PARTICIPATORY METHODS FOR ACTIVE LEARNING OF GEOGRAPHY
UTILIZAREA METODELOR PARTICIPATIVE PENTRU ÎNVĂȚAREA
ACTIVĂ A GEOGRAFIEI**

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Abstract

The concept of active-participatory methods is based on the idea that effective learning is an active process that brings significant benefits, including critical thinking, understanding concepts, and practical application of knowledge. The study employed a mixed methodology, integrating both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. However, the implementation of participatory methods proved challenging, due to several factors, including a lack of resources, limited time for lesson preparation, and restricted access to modern technologies. The varying receptivity of the students necessitates the diversification of teaching methods to respond to the diverse preferences of students.

Keywords: active-participatory methods, active learning, modern technologies.

Rezumat

Metodele activ-participative se bazează pe ideea că învățarea eficientă este un proces activ care aduce beneficii semnificative, printre care gândirea critică, înțelegerea conceptelor,

aplicarea practică a cunoștințelor. Studiul a fost realizat folosind o metodologie mixtă, combinând cercetarea cantitativă și calitativă. Totuși, implementarea metodelor participative întâmpină dificultăți, cum ar fi lipsa resurselor și timpul limitat pentru pregătirea lecțiilor și lipsa accesului la tehnologii moderne. Receptivitatea diferită a elevilor determină necesitatea diversificării metodelor de predare pentru a răspunde preferințelor variate ale elevilor.

Cuvinte-cheie: metode active-participative, învățare activa, tehnologii moderne.

Theoretical Framework

Active-participatory methods have become a central aspect of modern education, encouraged student engagement and facilitating learning through hands-on experiences [3]. These methods are predicated on the notion that effective learning is an active process, wherein students are active participants rather than mere receivers of information [15]. In the context of geography teaching, these methods have been shown to confer significant benefits, including the development of critical thinking, comprehension of complex concepts and the practical application of knowledge [9].

Active-participatory methods afford students the chance to learn in a practical and contextualised manner, transcending mere memorisation and attaining an applied understanding [12]. Active involvement in projects and demonstrations allows students to develop their critical thinking skills and gain a deeper understanding of the interconnections between natural and socio-economic phenomena [4, 14]. For instance, a lesson on climate change can be made more meaningful by incorporating a case study in which students analyse the impacts of global warming and propose solutions [16].

It is imperative that field explorations form an integral part of the geography curriculum, as they afford students the opportunity to observe and record data about the environment [17]. Consequently, the link between theory and practice is reinforced, prompting students to develop their own perspectives and conclusions. Out-of-classroom activities, such as landform studies or natural resource assessment, facilitate memorable learning experiences.

Modern technologies such as GIS enhance the efficacy of participatory methods by transforming geography lessons into dynamic, interactive experiences [1]. Students can engage in the creation of maps, the analysis of spatial data, and the simulation of

resource management, thereby fostering analytical thinking and developing digital skills [11]. Consequently, participatory methods not only facilitate profound learning but also equip students with the capacity to apply their knowledge in authentic contexts.

The theoretical framework is based on the concepts of experiential learning, which emphasise the learning cycle [12]. This comprises concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation. This model enables students to engage directly with the interconnections between natural and social processes [10].

Kolb's model posits that learning is a cyclical process, whereby students' progress from direct experience to reflection, followed by the formulation of concepts and their application in novel contexts [6]. In the field of geography, this can entail observing meteorological phenomena, analysing geospatial data, and applying the resulting insights to comprehend climate change [12]. Consequently, students develop a comprehensive understanding through experience and reflection [18].

Active-participatory methods encourage personal involvement and interaction with the learning environment [13]. In geography lessons, they facilitate the exploration of complex topics such as population dynamics or urbanisation through participatory approaches [5]. By employing simulations and case studies, students can gain insight into the interdependencies between humans and the natural world and develop solutions to contemporary challenges. This approach makes learning a meaningful and applicable experience [7].

Research Objectives

The present research aims to answer the following questions:

1. How do active-participatory methods influence the degree of involvement and learning of students in geography class?
2. What are the most effective participatory methods for teaching complex geographic concepts?
3. What obstacles do teachers face in applying these methods and how can they be overcome?

Research objectives include:

- Identification of active-participatory methods frequently used in geography teaching.
- Evaluation of the impact of these methods on the learning and retention of information by students.
- The formulation of practical recommendations for the effective integration of participatory methods in the geography curriculum.

Research Methodology

The study employed a mixed methodology, integrating both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. The sample comprised 150 high school students, and data were collected via questionnaires designed to assess the degree of information and content retention. Furthermore, the study sought to ascertain the efficacy of various methods and to identify the challenges encountered in their implementation [7]. Additionally, direct observations were conducted during geography lessons to analyse the implementation of participatory methods [8]. The data were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques for the questionnaires and a thematic analysis. This approach facilitated the identification of pertinent trends and insights into the teaching and learning experiences [2].

The use of a mixed methodology proved an effective approach to gaining a more profound understanding of the influence of participatory methods on learning outcomes. The findings demonstrated that the implementation of these methodologies can enhance student engagement and motivation, thereby fostering a more interactive and dynamic learning environment. However, certain challenges were also identified, including the necessity for additional planning and the lack of sufficient resources. These issues were highlighted by the teacher.

Therefore, the study highlights the significance of striking a balance between traditional and participatory pedagogical approaches, offering valuable insights for optimising the educational process in geography classes.

Research results

The findings indicated that active-participatory methodologies markedly enhanced

students' engagement and motivation. A majority of 75% of the participants indicated that they felt more motivated and engaged when engaged in hands-on or collaborative activities, as opposed to traditional forms of instruction. Furthermore, this motivation was reflected in improved academic performance, with students demonstrating enhanced retention and application of the concepts they had learned. Direct observation revealed a greater degree of student engagement in discussion, which contributed to a more dynamic learning environment.

Additionally, the programme facilitated the development of teamwork and problem-solving skills. Students who were engaged in group projects and debates exhibited enhanced collaborative abilities. It was observed that these methods enhanced students' perception of geography as an interactive subject.

However, the implementation of participatory methods encountered certain difficulties, including a lack of resources and limited time to prepare lessons. The organisation of these activities necessitates a greater input of effort, flexibility and adaptability in the preparation of the content. Furthermore, the absence of access to contemporary technologies, such as GIS software, constituted a considerable obstacle, thereby limiting the capacity to implement effectively within the classroom setting.

A further consideration was the varying receptivity of the students. While the majority of students expressed appreciation for interactive lessons, a minority indicated a preference for the traditional method. This indicates the necessity for diversification of teaching methods to respond to the diverse preferences of students, as well as to identify suitable methods for the various learning styles of students.

Conclusions

The findings of this study indicate that the utilisation of active-participatory methodologies markedly enhances students' engagement, motivation and capacity to comprehend novel instructional content. Additionally, the utilisation of active learning methodologies has been observed to foster the development of teamwork abilities and enhance problem-solving competencies among students. As previously indicated in this study, the utilisation of participatory methodologies is constrained by the dearth of resources, the paucity of time and the scarcity of digital expertise required to prepare the

lessons. Nevertheless, the variety of teaching methods has been found to enhance students' appreciation of the lesson and their level of involvement in the classroom.

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