

# Utilization of Modern Methods of Teaching Geography Curriculum in Iraq<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

Geography teaching is fulfilled within the frame of a specific curriculum and in order to achieve some acquirements in Iraq. Though there are course books prepared in accordance with the curriculum and activities in order to achieve the acquirements in geography teaching, they are geography teachers who will coordinate and fulfill the curriculum and achieve the terminal behavior defined as education.

A qualitative method has been used in order to examine the teachers' effectiveness in geography teaching. In three different types of high school, 19 geography teachers were interviewed using a semi structured interview form prepared by the researchers. During the interview, the researchers asked the teachers some questions about their teaching methods, teaching techniques and materials used, skills provided, classroom management, and developments made through in-service training. The data acquired were evaluated through content analysis and some categories were formed. According to the findings, it is seen that the geography teachers are effective in education and training. According to the results obtained from the research, it is determined that the geography teachers use the materials, methods and techniques in accordance with the curriculum. In addition, it is seen that they participate in the in-service training in order to develop and maintain the effective teaching.

**Keywords:** *Effective Teaching; Curriculum; Geography Teacher; Teaching Geography; Qualitative Study*

There are some similar characteristics to define what effective teacher does and is and these characteristics can be summarized as the following;

- Contrasts the implications of various theories
- Gives the student a sense of the field, its past, present, and future directions, the origins of ideas and concepts
- Presents facts and concepts from related fields
- Discusses viewpoints other than his/her own (teaching commons, retrieved in 2017).

We can clearly see the function and differentiation of the teachers and schools in daily life. For instance; what is the underlying reason that we insistently prefer one of the two primary schools at a distance of two hundred meters or some of the class teachers who work at the same school, and that we make every endeavor in order to fulfill such demands? However, the teachers who work at these schools have received the same education, and the schools have similar physical equipment, have registered in the same central organization and applied the same curriculum. This example shows that it can be possible to make the schools and classrooms more effective environments thanks to the teachers and school principals who care about the effectiveness and love their profession despite many negative conditions. The success of the teachers will lead the schools to success; the success of the schools will lead the educational institutions to success, and the success of the educational institutions will lead the system of education to success (Can, 1998).

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Through the "Directive on Teachers' Competencies" in 2000, the Ministry of National Education has stated the model of teacher expected from the universities within the context of education-training competencies, as follows: a- Student recognition, b- Instructional planning, c- Material development, d- Teaching, e- Teaching management, f- Assessment and evaluation of the plan, g- Guidance, h Development of basic skills, 1- Providing service for the students who need special education, i- Teaching adults, j- Organizing extra-curricular activities, k- Self-improvement, l- Development of the school, m- Development of relations between the school and the environment (Tezbaيران, 2001:37-51).

All studies and researches on the characteristics of effective teachers have shown that effectiveness of the teachers is closely related to student success and satisfaction, and that they are highly effective on the quality of education-training services (Sen and Erisen, 2002:100). Being trained in accordance with the needs of the profession, having the desire for self-improvement, loving the teaching profession, putting the students in the center, clearly determining the aims and being in an insistent struggle for achieving the related aims can be determined as the qualifications of effective teaching (Can, 1998).

The American Association of School Administrators, which has examined the characteristics of the effective teachers, has achieved two main results: It has been focused on the management-education techniques and the personal characteristics (Minor, 2002:117). Willingness, friendliness, humor, trustfulness, high success expectancy, encouragement, supportiveness, Sy stemness, compatibleness and knowledgeablebleness can be regarded as personal characteristics of the effective teachers (Cruickshank et al., 1995:315-328).

On the other hand; the effective teachers' professional skills are diversity, to attract the student's attention, use the time of teaching effectively, ask questions, perform an open education, observe the student's development, provide feedback and exhibit incentive behaviors (Cruickshank et al., 1999:329-351).

According to Jensen and Kiley (2000:84—85), the effective teachers have three characteristics: 1- Effective teachers are good at making a decision concerning what and how to teach. 2- Effective teachers have a wide range of teaching skills and the ability to use them at the right time. 3- Effective teachers have an attitude which facilitates learning. A warm and positive environment immediately attracts the attention in the classrooms of these teachers.

As is seen, the effective teachers have many characteristics. It may not be possible to have all of these characteristics. However, it is certain that the more characteristics they have the more they can be effective. Though it is difficult to teach some personality characteristics such as being patient and friendly to a teacher candidate of a certain age whose personality has highly formed but who does not have these characteristics; it is possible to teach in-class behaviors such as using appropriate teaching methods, communicating through a clear and understandable language, providing feedback and focusing on the system of reward rather than punishment and to provide them with the necessary skills and knowledge (Tatar, 2004).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to examine the effect of the geography teachers, who work in secondary education institutions, on education. In accordance with this primary aim, answers have been searched for the following questions:

1. What are the teaching principles used by them in geography teaching?
2. What are the teaching approaches used by them in geography teaching?
3. What are the teaching methods and techniques used by them in geography teaching?
4. What are the skills they have provided in implementing them in geography teaching?
5. What are the teaching materials used by them in geography teaching?
6. How do they provide the classroom management?
7. Are education and training performed in accordance with the curriculum?
8. Do they provide their self-improvement through in-service education?

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Research Design**

Qualitative research approach has been used in the study, and the interview method in that approach has been applied. The interview is a mutual and interactive communication process made for a predetermined aim and based on the question answer method. In this study, the interview has been made through the interview form (Genç,

Demirkaya & Karasakal, 2010). In the study interview method used due to the nature of study and the phenomena treated. There are some characteristics of interview method. For instance, you can see the Graphic I detailing the features of them explained by Karasar (2004).

By aims	By number of participants	By strictness of rules	By people being interviewed
Cooperation	Individual	Unstructured	Leaders
Solving problems	Group	Structured	Experts
Research		Semi-structured	People

Graphic 1. Interview Characteristics (Source: Karasar, 2004)

### Study Group

The study group of the research has consisted of the geography teachers who work in Istanbul. 19 teachers, who work in Science High Schools, High Schools of Social Sciences and Anatolian High Schools, were determined on a volunteer basis through the criterion sampling method. Ten of these teachers are female, and nine of them are male.

### Acceptability and Reliability of Data Collection and Implementation Process

A semi-structured interview form was applied for the participants in the study. After the pilot scheme of the interview form, expert opinions were received from the instructors who work in the field of geography teaching, and compatibility of the questions with the interview was discussed. After the interview form was finalized, an appointment was made for the interview. The interviews lasted about 15-20 minutes.

Attention has also been paid for consistency and meaningfulness of the data acquired in order that the procedures of data collection and analysis can be acceptable. In addition, the purpose of the study has been considered from the beginning to the end of the study for consistency in the data collection tool and data analysis.

### Analysis of Data

Analysis of the data acquired was made through the method of content analysis. The main purpose of content analysis is to reach concepts and relations which can explain the data collected. Categorization of the data by coding, formation of themes, regulation and definition of the data according to the codes and themes, and interpretation of the findings are included in the scope of the content analysis (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011).

Firstly, it was initiated by examining the acquired data, in other words, the documents received from the participants. In this examination, two researchers had an exchange of ideas. Remarkable and important points of the data acquired through the interviews were determined. After this determination, codes and then categories were obtained (Demirkaya, 2009). The categories were divided into 8 groups as teaching principles, teaching approaches, teaching methods and techniques, skills, teaching materials, classroom management, and curriculum follow up, and development.

Process of the study has been described in detail for its external validity. Answers received from the teachers within the scope of this study were given through direct quotations in necessary sections without any change. The findings obtained at the end of the study were described systematically and clearly, and the descriptions were regulated and interpreted.

### Validity and Reliability

In qualitative research it is fairly difficult to measure and enhance of validity /credibility and reliability. That stems largely from the nature of qualitative researches. In qualitative practice, validity speaks to the credibility and trustworthiness of the project and any assertions or conclusions (Leavy, 2017). Transferability is the ability to transfer research findings from one context to another (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In the present study we tried to enhance these issues by using triangulation. This means that in any study data from several sources, having my study reviewed and corrected by the participants, and employing other researchers to review my procedures (Creswell, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Before completing study, we shared the results of the study with the participant and three academics who are expert on the field so as to increase the validity and reliability of the study.

## FINDINGS

### The First Finding: Teaching Principles

Teaching principles used in geography teaching provide comprehension of the purposes and achievements in the curriculum. It is necessary to take these principles into consideration in order to provide a regular and right teaching process and to reach the aims in a short time. Otherwise, education gets more complicated and cannot reach its goal.

According to the data acquired from the study; it is seen that the teachers usually use the principles of actuality (14), student centered teaching (12), clarity (12), and from induction to deduction. In addition, it is seen that they use in a certain amount of the principles called from known to unknown (9), vitality (8), from concrete to abstract (7), and sociability and entirety (5). However, the principles of activity (1) and saving (2) are rarely preferred (Table 1).

Table 1: The Teaching Principles Used

Teaching Principles	
Openness	12
Activity	
From the known to unknown	9
Integrity	5
Topicality	14
Vitality	8
According to the learners	12
From concrete to abstract	7
Sociability	5
Saving	2
Soon-away	11

### The Second Finding: Teaching Approaches (Strategies)

Strategy is the implementation of a plan developed in order to reach a goal or a path followed in order to achieve something. On the other hand; strategy in education is an approach which directs the determination of teaching models, methods, techniques and tools used in reaching the course achievements (Ünlü, 2014). Success of an education system highly depends on competence of the teacher who operates, manages and restructures this system (Kavcar, 1987).

According to the findings obtained, the most attention grabbing one is that 18 teachers have used learning through presentation. Only the 19<sup>th</sup> teacher has not specified the method of presentation. Learning through presentation is the transfer of organized information to the students regularly and meaningfully by the teachers. In other words; despite the fact that its focus is teacher, it is a method which requires an intensive student-teacher interaction.

Moreover; the approaches called constructivist learning (5), discovery learning (4) and complete learning (4) are also used by the teachers. However, the method of learning through research-examination is used only by the fourth teacher (Table 2).

Table 2: Teaching Approaches Used

Teaching Approaches	
Research-study-learning	1
Learning through invention	4
Learning through presentation	18
Mastery learning	4
Constructivist learning	5

### The Third Finding: Teaching Methods

Applying to various methods in order to provide an effective teaching has become a universal rule in our day. The number of teaching method which can be chosen by the teacher for an effective education is unlimited as every teacher can develop new methods by using her/his own creativity (Kiiqukahmet, 2000:71). Millen the teacher forms the process of teaching-learning, s/he should benefit from the methods and techniques based on the student's activity such as collaborative teaching, brainstorming, discussion, creating concept map, creative drama, programmed teaching, computed assisted teaching, and microteaching (Kuran, 2009).

When we examine the methods used by the teachers in our study; we see that all teachers, as a matter of course, use the method of narration (19) without exception. Because it will be difficult for the students to understand the course subject if it is not explained by the teacher with the method of narration. Similarly, all teachers stated that they use the method of question-answer (18). Only the third teacher said that s/he does not use this method. Though repetition method (9), brainstorming (6), demonstration method (5), problem method (4) and group discussion (3) are used by some teachers, these methods are not as preferred as the method of narration or asking questions. In addition, project based method, field survey, problem based method are used only by the teacher one for each. However; any teacher has not stated that s/he used the methods of collaborative teaching, drama, six hats, and microteaching (Table 3).

Table 3: Teaching Methods

Teaching Methods	
Six hats	
Expression	19
Field trip	1
Brainstorming	6
Drama	
Demonstration	5
Group discussion	3
Collaborative learning	
Micro teaching	
Problem solving	4
Problem based learning	1
Project based	1
Question-answer	18
Iteration	9

### The Fourth Finding: Skills

Skills are the intended abilities which need to be acquired and developed throughout the educational period and also put into practice in life. In today's education and training concept, it is important to find, use and structure

knowledge rather than to take it as it is (Ünlü, 2014). For that reason, it is not aimed to give only pure information in geography lesson. Students should acquire some achievements from the lesson. For instance; through geographical inquiry skill, the students should be taught to ask questions such as "what, where, when, why, how, who" for comprehension of the stages stated in the curriculum (Artvinli, 2010).

While geographical inquiry skill (13), map skill (13) and graph-table and diagram reading skill (14) are the most acquired abilities; the skills of observation (8) and evidence use (7) are the other acquired abilities (Table 4). The skills acquired by the students will provide them an opponent to be interested in geography and to get information which will be used by them throughout their life. In his study (2005), Akmola mentions about this issue as follows: It is also necessary to explain the function and effect of geography in our life in order that the education of geography can be effective. In other words, the education should include not only geographical information but also its contributions to our life. If the information given is not used outside the class, then the information has no validity. Thus, it is necessary to learn the correspondence of all information given on the world, in our environment and life. The most important problem in teaching geography is that the students are in a struggle for understanding the complicated information due to the students' and teachers' different perspectives on the course and that they cannot associate the information given with practical life.

Table 4: Skills Acquired

Teaching Approaches	
Geographical Inquiry	13
Observation skill	8
Graph-Table and Diagram Reading Ability	14
Map skill	13
Using Evidence	7
Time Detection	3

### The Fifth Finding: Teaching Materials

The teaching materials of geography lesson can be listed from the course book to the blackboard in the classroom, from the computer to the projector, from the maps to the stone and soil samples (Doganay, 2014). While it is necessary to observe the natural environment in teaching the physical geography subjects, there is need to observe human activities in teaching the human and economic geography subjects. Therefore, the differences between the events and processes in the natural environment and the events and processes in the human environment will necessitate the use of different materials in teaching these subjects by bringing into the classroom environment (IjçİSİk, Ünlü & Özey, 2002). For instance, models or photographs should be preferred as teaching materials in a course that the occurrence processes or appearances of geographical formations are discussed. On the other hand, the best materials are graphics in teaching the events and processes related to the population in a geography course that the subject of population is discussed. In this case, it is also important to prefer the right material in teaching the specific subject (Inel & Sezer, 2017).

In addition that the interviewed teachers frequently use the smart board as the teaching material during the courses (12), the use of presentations through computer assisted projector (11) and the use of maps (12) are highly preferred as the course materials. However, the use of globe model (5), course book (3) and blackboard (2) is rarely preferred (Table 5).

Table 5: Teaching Materials Used

Teaching Materials	
Smart board	12
Computer-Projection	11
Textbook	3
Map	12
Black board	2

### The Sixth Finding: Classroom Management

Classroom management of the teacher is highly important among the factors which affect the success of the student. A teacher who shapes education in accordance with the students' levels can be regarded as successful (Creemers, Kyriakides & Antoniou, 2013).

According to the results obtained, there are no teachers who have problems in classroom management and cannot maintain the order in the classroom within the scope of this study. Each teacher has a different style for classroom management and control system. For instance; the fourth teacher "makes an eye contact before verbal warning", the eleventh teacher "attracts the student's attention by asking questions", and the seventeenth teacher "raises his voice in noisy situations" (Table 6).

In the light of the information obtained, it is seen that the teachers who have been interviewed in our study are effective because the fact that a teacher who provides the classroom management well will show his/her efficiency in teaching the course.

Table 6: How do they provide the classroom management?

Classroom Management
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### The Seventh Finding: Following up the Curriculum

Curriculum or training program constitutes the teachers' roadmap. For that reason, following the curriculum will bring a certain success, that is, the content of the curriculum. The curriculum will meet the needs of the intended education and training for the students as it has an aim. In the interviews made, the majority (15) of the 19 teachers follow the curriculum. However, the first and the second teachers stated that they follow the curriculum partially. Though the eighteenth teacher said that s/he does not follow the curriculum, s/he teaches the lesson in accordance with a certain order (Table 7).

Table 7: Are education and training performed in accordance with the curriculum?

Curriculum Compliance	F
Teacher1	Partially yes
Teacher7	Yes

### The Eighth Finding: Providing Self-Improvement

12 teachers stated that they follow the in-service training; seminars and conferences related to their own professional developments and also read the publications at times. While a teacher (the teacher 1) clearly expressed that s/he does not do anything for this purpose, the six teachers (the teacher 2, teacher 3, teacher 6, teacher 7, teacher 17, teacher 18) expressed that they do not make any effort for self-improvement by staying quiet on the question. Therefore, it is seen that the seven teachers do not show any effort to increase their qualifications (Table 8).

As a matter of fact; Turan, Yildil'lm and Aydoglu (2012) argued that the teachers do not attach importance to their professional developments. Moreover, this qualification took place on the last rank in a similar study made with the teacher candidates (Bozkus & Marulcu, 2016). Therefore, it can be said that the lack of importance in the professional development before the service continues during the service.

Table 8: Do they provide their self-improvement through in-service training, seminars, conferences, publications follow-up?

Providing Development	
Teacher 1	No
Teacher2	
Teacher3	
Teacher4	Yes
Teachers	Yes
Teacher6	
Teacher7	
Teachers	Yes
Teacher9	Yes
Teacher10	Yes
Teacher11	Yes
Teacher12	Yes
Teacher13	Yes
Teacher14	Yes
Teacher15	Yes
Teacher16	Yes
Teacher17	
Teacher18	
Teacher19	Yes

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

It is expected that those who prefer the teaching profession will desire it by knowing, comprehending and adopting the characteristics of this profession. Such in every profession, the teaching profession has its own cognitive, affective and kinematical behavior qualities. In addition to written information and mental skills, the candidates should also acquire the affective behaviors such as loving the children, learning, teaching, and the feelings and attitudes of self-abnegation and willingness. People, who love humans especially children, are happy with their learning, development and new behaviors, patient, able to smile, forgive, caress and prefer to reward rather than punish them, should choose the teaching profession (Can, 1998).

According to Doganay (2002); principles are proven and clear ideas which make the researcher successful. Individual differences should be taken into consideration in learning. Uniformity in learning both bores the students and decreases their attention. For that reason, not only geography teachers but also all teachers should take the teaching and communication principles into consideration. According to the result obtained from the findings of the study, it is seen that the teachers cannot show themselves through different principles because the teaching principles (clarity, actuality, student-centered teaching, from concrete to abstract) used by the teachers are highly similar.

Akmoélu (2005) stated that firstly the students' attention to the course should be sufficient in order that the geography education can be effective. As far as possible, the education should be practical rather than theoretical, and inclusive land tours should be organized in order to provide the students with an opportunity to observe the natural environment. Most importantly, it is necessary to know how to teach the students the subject. The students should be asked to adapt the information given to their immediate environment and to think about it. The aim of the teacher should be teach learning.

The teachers should focus on the learning-teaching methods related to their fields of study for more effective teaching process (Avolos, 2000). The teacher is the person who guides the learning. The task of the teacher is to regulate the learning experiences and to evaluate whether the students have acquired the terminal behaviors by benefiting from various teaching methods and techniques (Fidan & Erden, 1999).

According to the findings obtained from the study, the method of narration and the method of question-answer are the most common methods used by the teachers. As a matter of fact, these are the methods which must be used by the teachers in geography education. However, there is not any teacher who prefers to use the methods such as six hats, drama, microteaching and collaborative teaching. Therefore, it is seen that they do not prefer new and different methods and do not apply different teaching method according to the relevant subject.

The teacher's personal characteristics, proficiency as the manager of learning activities, ability to follow up the learning process and to give the lesson, background, and relations with the students and other individuals affect her/his success in the classroom (Güçlü, 2002). Moreover, teaching is a profession in which the teacher is a model to the students and shows cognitive and affective behaviors and also the reflections of these behaviors through her/his own behaviors, attitudes and relations. Accordingly, these constitute kinematical (psychomotor) behaviors and characteristics. In this sense, effectiveness means the acquisition of these qualities. In today's world where the effectiveness remains on the agenda in every field of study, it is unthinkable that educational process and educational organizations, which deal with the subjects of human and human behaviors, are not affected by these developments. Effectiveness means the ability to reach the aims at the highest level and to continue for self-improvement in accordance with the expectations (Can, 1998).

### Suggestions

A well-equipped geography laboratory, well qualified teachers who are able to give the lesson in the best possible way, use of necessary materials to cover the subject, and active participation of the students will improve the teachers' efficiency on the teaching and provide them with an opportunity for more effective education in geography.

It is necessary to give particular importance to visuality in order that the education in geography can be effective. For this purpose, various tours should be organized and land observations should be made. In addition, various materials from the lands can be brought into the classroom as the today's developing technology makes it possible.

In teaching geography, useful information should be given to the students or its benefits should be explained. In addition, the students should be taught how and where the geographical information can be found. What matters is not to confuse the students through information overload but to teach them how to use the information.

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