

SOME ASPECTS OF TEACHING METHODOLOGY FOR THE POPULATION COURSE

Abstract

The article is devoted to the problems of teaching methods of the population course at the university across various programmes including the MA programme at the TSU Institute for European Studies. There are discussed the main components and organization of the teaching process of the 'population' course. The current problems of demographic policy in the countries across various regions of the world and their reflection in the educational process of the university are also studied.

An important prerequisite for the economic, intellectual, and political development of any region is the demographic factor as an independent fundamental component of society. The population acts as the main producer and consumer of spiritual and material goods. At the same time, it is the main driving force of economic development, the physical, intellectual and spiritual basis of society. For the development of territories of any scale (from global to local) the study of the functioning of the demographic system of the population with all its characteristics and accumulated experience and information is a necessary component of building a strategy for further socio-economic development. Leading Master programme students to the profound comprehension of the mentioned issues requires application of effective teaching methods that will be discussed in the article.

Keywords: Effective teaching methods; Population course; Demography; Master programme Students.

Introduction

Studying the population requires a teacher to deeply humanize knowledge and emotional efforts that generate a value attitude of students to the perception of educational material.

The population is considered to be a set of people living within certain geographical boundaries. The population is the main spiritual and material component of society. One of the most important characteristics of population is its size. Here students learn new concepts for them – reproduction of population, natural and mechanical movement of population. At the same time, it should be emphasized that the population as an indicator reflects the diverse conditions and factors of the development of society and the state.

The population as a system has deep structural characteristics. The structural features of population reflect the natural-historical and socio-economic aspects of social development. In population studies it is necessary to solve not only cognitive tasks, but also ethical and ideological problems. Therefore, the study of gender and age composition, ethnic and confessional structure, territorial organization and mechanical movement of population should be based on students' understanding of the stable connections of natural-historical and social factors that form territorial social systems. For these reasons, when studying "Population", it is necessary to use a variety of sources of demographic information (statistical data, a large number of thematic maps, diagrams, new to students, etc.).

I. Overview of the course content and the teaching methodology used by the course author

The methodology of teaching demography at university is one of the disciplines of the system of pedagogical sciences. It studies the content, patterns, methods and means of organizing the process of teaching students

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the basics of demographic science and should adapt scientific demography to the needs of university education, make it a university subject.

The general objectives of the teaching methodology of demography are the following:

- Selection of the scientific material that is necessary and suitable for the students of the university in general and the MA program of the Institute for European Studies, in particular;
- Bringing the material into a certain sequence;
- Development of the system of methods of presentation, study and assimilation of the material.
- Development of the system of methods for consolidating, repeating and verifying students' knowledge.

Among the main tasks of modern economic and social demography should be noted the study of population, its size, structure and distribution across territories and settlements of various levels.

It is obvious that the population density indicator is extremely important to characterize the degree of development of the territory, as well as the percentage of urban population – to show the degree of industrialization.

In the university and its Institute for European Studies, teaching of economic demography, students' acquaintance with the category "population" has its own characteristics and should be built as a living story about the population of a particular country. The pictures of the life of population of different countries, regions, districts, localities that the teacher creates in the classroom must be combined with quantitative indicators, which include population density, population size, birth rate, mortality, etc.

Giving an economic and demographic characteristic of a country or area, the teacher should show the main features of the location of settlements, their forms and types in different regions of the world. At the same time, it is necessary to take into account national peculiarities, since they are of economic importance (labor skills, differences in education, technical qualifications).

Particular attention should be paid to the division of population into urban and rural, their percentage ratio. The distinction between urban and rural populations is of paramount importance for economic demography. However, in order to form a complete picture of the country's population, one must also have data on the class and occupational composition.

At present, the process of teaching demography at the TSU Institute for European Studies needs to be made more lively and interesting and in order to achieve this, more attention should be paid to the study of population, especially when characterizing the region of Europe and separate countries.

The answer to the question: "How do people live?" includes a lot: culture, everyday life, customs, political system, and social order. Having illustrated the main feature with two or three specific examples, it is possible to create a general idea among students about the peculiarities of the national character of peoples.

Here are a number of methodological recommendations for one the topics of this course, which is "Geography of the world's population":

1. Considering the broadness of the topic, my experience shows that minimum six hours are to be dedicated to this topic. The main provisions of the topic should be further developed in the subsequent lessons – when a student gets acquainted with the regional overview and the section "Global problems of humanity".

2. Students are prepared for the assimilation of new knowledge when studying the content of courses, when they get an idea of population density, forms of settlement, natural and mechanical movement, labor resources, urbanization, agglomeration, etc.

3. The purpose of this topic is to introduce new concepts such as "demographic policy", "religious composition", "sex and age pyramid", etc. Particular attention is usually paid to the ability to obtain information from demographic, geographical, statistical and cartographic sources. The main work with students is to be carried out in the classroom, however they are to be assigned with homework as well.

4. Students develop the ability to listen to lectures based on the plan and theses. At lesson, students receive special tasks aimed at highlighting key issues, revealing the main provisions. Using the example of the proposed outline schemes, they learn to fold information, acquire skills of self-control over the assimilation of the content of lessons and the consolidation of new material.

5. Tasks allow for a differentiated approach in teaching at each lesson and individual stages of the lesson. But special attention should be paid to the possible options for the creative work, taking into account the

different inclinations of students. This can be mapping, preparing abstracts, working with the media.

6. Test tasks can be used to test students' knowledge.

A properly developed teaching methodology will allow students of different levels to better assimilate the knowledge and facilitate the formation of the necessary skills. In addition, students will get an idea of the objective picture of the world, realizing that the population is the main link between nature and society.

The teaching methods used by the teacher play a huge role in the development of the intellectual capacities of the student. Purposefully forming the student's mental activity skills, the teacher simultaneously develops their thinking, independence, depth, breadth, speed, criticality, flexibility and systematic approaches. At the same time, the attention, memory and imagination of the student are developed and improved.

The mandatory minimum of the content of the population course includes the in-depth knowledge of the following issues:

Population growth, large races and peoples of the world; Theory of ethno-genesis; Geographical differences in density and the quality of the life of population; Types of settlements; Religions; Civilizational regions of the world; Population size and reproduction; Natural growth and its types; Population aging; Demographic policy; Gender, age and ethnic composition; Large nations and language families; International migrations and migration policies; Urbanization and its forms, rates, levels; Major cities and urban agglomerations of the world; The level and quality of life of the population of large countries and regions of the world.

The leading ideas that students should draw from the topics included in the population course are the following:

1. The population is the basis of the material life of society, an active element of our planet.
2. People of all races, nations and nationalities are equally capable of participating in material production and spiritual life.

Once students understand it, next, I feel enabled to present the main scientific knowledge of the field, in particular:

1. The concept of population reproduction. The essence and features of the natural movement of the world's population.
2. The essence and features of the gender, age composition of the population, labor resources.
3. Classification of the peoples of the world by language families and the main features of their distribution.
4. The main features of the population distribution on the territory of the terrestrial land and the reasons for its unevenness.
5. Types of population migration and the main areas of external migration, labour migration, brain drain.
6. The concept of urbanization. Levels and rates of urbanization worldwide and in separate regions.
7. The idea of the geography of the population as a branch of economic and social demography.
8. Keywords of the topic: a) reproduction of the population; b) types of reproduction; c) demographic crisis (depopulation); d) demographic explosion; e) demographic policy; f) demographic transition; g) quality of life of the population; h) economically active population; i) ethnos; k) one-nation and multinational state; l) labor migration, m) brain drain; n) urbanization; o) urban explosion.

As a result of mastering the material on the above topics, students should acquire the necessary knowledge and practical skills: apply indicators of reproduction, population composition, levels and rates of urbanization; use maps, graphs and tables to analyze, concretize and prove certain provisions of the text, while making the necessary calculations and comparisons; read and analyze the sex and age pyramid; independently formulate tasks on the text; prepare a short oral message on the topic; make an annotation on the read text.

The key challenging tasks, which a teacher faces during discussion of the topics, are as follows:

- 1) Introducing students to one of the branches of the socio-economic demography of the world – the geography of the population – and the main objects of its study, including: number, movement, composition, placement;
- 2) Introducing the new concepts: population reproduction, demographic policy, emigration and immigration, religious composition, world and national religions, etc.;
- 3) Ensuring continuity in working with maps and geographical material, teaching students to read and

analyze maps, sex and age pyramids, bar charts, graphs reflecting the natural movement of the population;

4) Developing the ability to listen to lectures while having on mind the targeted tasks, working independently with various sources of information, reporting on the work done;

5) Making students aware that without knowledge of national and religious characteristics, as well as the cultural heritage, it is impossible to understand the diverse modern world; They have to understand that the demographic problems have to be solved by each state; labor resources have a direct impact on the economic development of the country; the concentration of population in cities is the main feature of modern demography, and the management of urbanization processes is one of the global problems.

At the university it is possible to fully and comprehensively implement such properties of demographic knowledge as integrality and interdisciplinarity. In this regard, comprehensive demographic workshops, seminars, and conferences should occupy a special place in teaching. Practical training in demography should be considered in the broadest aspect – as a system of practical work with statistical material, with maps, diagrams, tables, etc. These works should be based on the independent activity of students. Seminars and conferences can be held both independently and in the system of lecture and seminar forms of training. Students' activities should be aimed at solving demographic problems. Attention should be paid to the creative work and independent search for answers to questions.

The teacher's task is to achieve an optimal balance between factual and theoretical material, single and general concepts, the formation and assimilation of these concepts by students. The tasks of students are to master the mandatory minimum content of the course of demography, to acquire the ability to independently apply this knowledge when performing certain practical tasks, in preparation for seminars, conferences, interdisciplinary lessons, etc. All these lead to the development of the new ways of self-education of students.

Currently, there is a radical reform of educational courses and programs, including the one on demography, which is associated with the processes of humanization and sociologization of education. In the field of economic and social demography, humanization means the rejection of a purely industrial interpretation of the subject, a departure from the idea of the population only as a labor resource and consumer of products and food. Teaching of demography should include, along with the elementary basics of economic demography, the geography of cultures and religion, ethnic and historical geography, combined in a general civilizational regional synthesis.

The second cross-cutting direction in the content of the population course is closely related to humanization - sociologization. It reflects attention to the personal factor, to social systems. When drawing up a population program, it is necessary to proceed from the well-known position of N. N. Baransky, who believed that demography should acquaint not only with the growth, placement, composition and resettlement of the population, but also answer the main question: "How do people live?" The latter, in turn, includes: culture, everyday life, customs, political system, and social order. In accordance with this, social aspects concerning the social composition, racial, national, religious problems, employment, quality and standard of living of the population should be strengthened as much as possible in population topics.

In modern school demography, the population problem is presented quite consistently in the content of all courses. This is, for example, the topic of equality of races, the section on the population of continents, the topic of the "Geography of the world's population". Students and teachers can find many essays of socio-demographic content in the "Geographical Picture of the World" by V. P. Maksakovsky. As a positive factor, I would like to note the increased interest in ethnographic concepts, which will contribute to improving the level of social culture of young people.

From our point of view, the whole variety of topics reflecting the problems of the world's population can be divided into three major blocks: 1) demographic state of the world: population size and dynamics, reproduction, gender and age composition, migration and population placement, urbanization; 2) geography of cultures, religions and civilizations (interethnic and religious relations, ethno-linguistic composition); 3) quality, standard of living of the population and global problems.

The first block of the topics is widely presented in two main textbooks on the economic and social demography of the world: V. P. Maksakovsky as well as Yu. N. Gladkiy. In the mentioned scientific literature we read about the key concepts and mainstream processes, such as the population dynamics, population reproduction, demographic explosion and crisis, depopulation processes, economically active population,

population migration, urbanization, as well as the causes and factors of these processes, their geography and problems are considered in some detail, logically and easily.

The second block of topics related to the geography of cultures, world religions, civilizations, and ethnic groups is also reflected in V. P. Maksakovsky's textbook, where such information is given in an additional text (under the 'interesting facts; section) after each section or the topic. In the textbook by Yu. N. Gladkiy, a separate chapter is dedicated to the "Geography of cultures, religions, civilizations". Definitions of such new and insufficiently established concepts in science as civilization, geography of culture are also discussed here. The importance of studying the geography of cultures and religions is justified by the fact that both have an impact on a life, a work activity of a person and a specialization of the economy. The chapter talks about the connection between religion and culture, about the main features of various religions, civilizations, and their geographical distribution.

The geography of the lifestyle of the population is almost completely devoted for the first time to a book for reading, addressed to students of the master's program, "Economic and social geography of the world", published in the series "Behind the pages of the textbook". The chapters to them corresponding to the parts of the world: "Europeans and their way of life", "Asians and their way of life", "Americans and their way of life", etc., contain many interesting messages, for example: "Washington of the dark-skinned", "Brazilian Carnival", "The City of the Good winds." The book will be a set with any school textbook on the course "Economic and social geography of the world". It can be used in preparing for lessons, writing essays, and for those who love geography, travel, we recommend reading it just for the soul.

K. Bruce Newbold also owns a textbook for students: "Population Geography: Tools and Issues". Newbold's Population Geography continues to provide undergraduate students with the latest debates and updated information on global population dynamics. Whether seeking to understand mortality figures, fertility trends, or migration flows, readers will come away with the core concepts necessary to understand population geography. The author presents important population research themes at different spatial scales with great clarity, skill, and balance. Among the most interesting topics of the textbook it is worth noting the following: "Geography of Religions", "Humanity is a mosaic of peoples", "The special role of European civilization", "Features of traditional African civilization", "Geography of Cultures of modern America".

The second thematic block is also presented in the "Global Geography" by Yu. N. Gladkiy, where the topic "Geography of Mankind" talks about the geography of ethnic groups, races, religions (with a brief description of each of them) and the geography of civilization.

In the "Global Geography" in the topic "North – South: the problem of backwardness" it is said that these concepts are used to determine the degree of backwardness of the population of various countries, that poverty affects not only the physical, but also the spiritual life of people. The topic "Food problem" describes the types of nutrition of the population of different regions. On the flyleaf at the beginning of the textbook, for the first time in the practice of population course, there is a map of civilizations identified on a religious basis with Huntington (a representative of civilization theory, who expressed a controversial and very widely discussed opinion about the obligatory conflict between civilizations). On the flyleaf at the end of the textbook there is an equally interesting map "Geography of regional types of nutrition" by G. Careyel. The problems of ethnic crises, human health and longevity, and the problems of urbanization are highlighted in separate topics.

In the textbook "Geography. The population and economy of the world" has a separate chapter dedicated to the above issues: "Problems of consumption. The level and quality of human life". Here the concepts of living standards, quality of life, and the human development index are specifically characterized; it is said about the place of various countries, and in particular Russia, in the world according to this indicator.

II. Students Assessment

In modern pedagogy of higher education, there are various approaches to determining criteria for evaluating the results of students' cognitive activity. In teaching our course we use the following system for assessing students' knowledge, skills and abilities: "excellent", "good", "satisfactory" and "unsatisfactory".

A student who has a comprehensive, systematic and in-depth knowledge, owns the ability to independently perform tasks provided by the program, is familiar with the basic and additional literature recommended by the program deserves an excellent grade. Such an assessment also presupposes the student's assimilation of the relationship between the basic concepts of the discipline and their significance for the acquired profession.

The “good” rating is given to a student who has mastered the educational and program material in full, successfully performs the tasks provided by the program, has processed the main literature recommended by the program, that is, to a student who has shown the systematic nature of knowledge in the discipline and is capable of their independent replenishment and updating in the process of further academic work and professional activity.

A student who has a found knowledge of the basic educational material to the extent necessary for further study and upcoming work in the profession, is able to perform tasks provided by the program, familiar with the basic literature recommended by the program deserves a “satisfactory” assessment. As a rule, this assessment is given to students who have made mistakes in the answer to the exam and in the performance of exam tasks, but have demonstrated the ability to eliminate them.

The assessment “unsatisfactory” is given to a student whose knowledge has gaps, who has made fundamental mistakes in performing the tasks provided for in the program, that is, a student who is unable to continue his studies or begin professional activity after graduation from a higher educational institution without additional classes in the relevant discipline.

IV. Conclusion

Undoubtedly, the problems of the level and quality of life of the population and their indicators, which are of such great importance for the characteristics of people's lives, need to be developed in every possible way in population courses and the selection of the proper teaching methodology is important here. In general, we can hope that more attention will be paid to the study of population and human problems via choosing the effective teaching strategies and the population course will finally turn into a whole, harmonious course focused on a person and his/her life.

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