

THE METHODOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES OF GENOCIDE TEACHING IN THE SCHOOL COURSE OF HISTORY

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ABSTRACT

Teaching history of genocides has taken a special place in the school history course. This article describes basic methodological principles of teaching the genocides topic in the school history course. There are defined teacher's methodical mistakes in the process of teaching the history of genocides. The article is focused in the importance of using cross-curricular themes and different aspects in teaching the history of genocides. There is a based conclusion about the necessity of the organization of teaching the history of genocides from the point of the social psychology. There is a question defined on the comparative teaching of history of genocides. KEY WORDS: *genocide, education, teaching of history, Holocaust.*

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Introduction

In the modern world in the conditions of the galvanization of the neo-Nazism tendencies, unpredictable challenges and splashes of racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism, the education and formation of tolerance, ability to stand for the own rights, negation of the racist ideas and chauvinism in the growing generation are becoming a more and more pungent and concerning task. Due to this studying the history of genocide in the school course of history is gaining a special topicality.

The history of genocides of the 20th century which has become the specific expression of the system crisis of the modern civilization, and the unprecedented character of these historic events makes them unidentified objects of didactics and methodic of teaching history at school, and demands not only the refusing of the traditional methods of teaching history, but also a specific methodological gust realization which is possible only with the efforts of the whole scientific-methodic society.

There are many researches who have been trying to change the methodic of teaching history of Holocaust and genocides. For example, D. Abowitz (2002) has illustrated the utility of sociological concepts and theory in teaching lessons on genocide and Holocaust. In her opinion, sociology provides the theoretical tools necessary for us to meaningfully integrate research, teaching and learning in this area. A. Doron (2010), C. Brina (2003) have reviewed the usage of historical parallels as a method in Holocaust and genocide teaching. P. Cowan (2013) has explored how Holocaust education has been integrated into schools and community programmes. In education of teaching genocides D. Farcas (2003) has suggested instead of a traditional teaching method (lecture, group discussion, visual resources) a usage of the method called Multisensory Instructional Package. S. Foster (2013) has explained the importance of failure to focus on what may be termed by "perpetrator-oriented narratives": narratives that focus on the actions of the Nazis and their colla-

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borators and commonly positioned Jewish people and other groups as silent and anonymous victims without agency or influence. M. Gross (2013) has highlighted the role of teachers' attitudes towards teaching history of Holocaust. Y. Auron (1994) has examined the "lessons" of Holocaust as perceived by the future teachers, their attitudes to Jewish behavior during Holocaust, the place of Holocaust in the historical consciousness of young Israelis.

There are educational models that are based on studying genocides and using historical and literary documents, and the stories of individuals and groups, to help young people discover the capacity of ordinary people who influence extraordinary events. They are such as Facing History and Remembrance Education.

In the article, we have tried to define and systematize the main methodological principles based on the lessons related to learning history of genocides should be based.

1. Theoretical discussion on the genocide

At one of the first history lessons, related to learning the history of genocides, it is advisable for a teacher to build the students' work with the context and the contextual meaning of the term "genocide" itself. In particular, it will not be excessive to present the history of the origin of this term which was signed into the international law in 1948 when the UN General Assembly adopted the "Convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide." This neologism was suggested by Raphael Lemkin who formed the word "genocide" by combining "geno", from the Greek word for race or tribe, with "cide", derived from the Latin word for killing.

The regulations of the UN "Convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide" are formulated on the basis of understanding of the mass extermination of Jews during the Second World War – the Holocaust. Under the paragraph two of this document, the elements of genocide are: "In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, such as:

1) Killing members of the group; 2) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; 3) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; 4) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; 5) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group" (Aronson, 2007).

Since its first use the existence of the term, "genocide" has shown its complexity and ambiguity. In today's public and political discussions that appear in the media, the term is sometimes used very commonly and freely, while in other contexts such as international criminal law, its value is clearly identified. In legal practice, the definition of "genocide" was first used during the Nuremberg Trials (1945–1946) – International Military Tribunal over the main Nazi war criminals.

The international law treats genocide as the gravest crime against humanity. This assessment is done due to the fact that genocide – a deliberate campaign that aims to interrupt the existence of a group – interferes with its natural reproduction, gene pool preservation, and cultural foundations of one or another community in the whole. With this in mind, various aspects of the regulations on the crime of genocide are featured in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), the Convention on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity (1968), the Draft Code of Crimes against the Peace and Security of Mankind (1961), the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998).

However, the teacher should not forget that today in the scientific community there is being a heated debate held related to the limited contents of the term "genocide" in the Convention.

The example of Holodomor is one of the many conflicts that arise in case of a legal definition of genocide in the UN Convention to the description of specific examples of mass demolition of people. The Convention was the product of a political agreement between the West and the Soviet bloc, and not the result of the academic debate. Due to the perseverance of the Soviet Union the mass murder for political reasons, which scientists call "politicide", was not recognized, probably because otherwise the USSR could be accused of genocide.

Such conflicts also arise in the case of mass murder, committed by the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, as the object of mass terror of the Khmer Rouge was the entire population, not just minorities. To show this phenomenon the word “autogenocide” has been proposed, meaning the massacre of members of the group, to which the very performers also belong (Melson, 1992: 265).

Equally problematic is the case of Rwanda. Hutu and Tutsi are not ethnic groups – they speak the same language, have the same culture and adhere to one religion. Existing social and political differences were reinforced by European missionaries and colonists, who also introduced the racist terminology. Therefore, as in the above cases, most of the scientists acknowledge the Rwandan genocide, paying attention to semantic limitations of the term “genocide”.

However, the term “genocide” remains a deeply controversial term, immersed in the social, legal and geopolitical debate. Its application to a particular case of mass violence in teaching history provides the most complete reproduction of the complexity of social and cultural relations in the history of a particular country on the territory of which there was a genocide committed, a withdrawal from the simplified presentation and explanation of the phenomenon in the history of the mankind as a genocide.

2. Teaching and genocide

Therewith, during the lessons of history in order to avoid a terminological confusion related to the existence of notions associated with the term “genocide” history teachers should not separate various phenomena studied using always new terms, but must study their relationship and talk about ethnic, political, class and other dimensions of genocide (Shaw, 2007: 19).

Concerning methodological principles that should be the basis for students while studying the history of genocides many educators and historians regard, first of all, abandoning of the position “no people in the history” when the victims of genocide are anonymous names or numbers of statistics which can be argued about: three million of the dead or seven. Anonymous victims cannot expect sympathy. The task of the teacher during the lessons, related to the study of the history of genocides, in this case, is to express the individual dimension that gripped millions of people, to form students’ understanding of the individuality of each victim. Such can be achieved only if during the learning process there is an involvement of the individual stories of specific people who are able to open the window for students to the realities of the past.

That is why Israel’s teachers during the Holocaust studies prefer to talk not about six million of the lost but about each specifically. Yad Vashem Institute’s efforts are intended to restore the name of each of the dead, where the Hall of Names is dedicated to individuals (Boersema, Schimmel, 2008). Yad Vashem specialists have developed a special workshop for educators and students called “The Jewish street”, during which the various types of social pre-war Jewish society are discussed – from a religious Rabbi to a thief-recidivist – in order to show how diverse the pre-war Jewish community was.

Another methodological principle in the study of the history of genocides by students, especially when their responsible comparative analysis is conducted, should be preventing the emergence of a class atmosphere that is called “competition among victims”.

Also, the teacher must arrange the learning process so that the events of genocide are not plucked from a broader historical context. The peoples who were victims of genocide should not appear in front of the students only in the form of “victims”, or emerge as “dead bodies”. This requires a prior consideration of issues related to the history of these peoples before a commitment of genocide.

While studying the history of genocides one of the issues that arise not only in front of historians, but spontaneously in front of students during the study of this complex topic is “Who is responsible for solving and implementing genocide?” In considering this issue it is advisable to focus students’ attention on the state’s role in preparing and carrying out genocide. Genocides, first of all, are the result of the policy that begins to exploit contradictions, biases, stereotypes that exist in the society.

On the other hand, students should pay attention to the fact that states are driven by people. So, not so much a state, as some political leaders and their subordinates are the roots of evil. Thus, in the case of geno-

cide, regardless of its specific nature, the highest government officials are always responsible for what occurs within the genocidal process: whether for a direct involvement in forced evictions, deportations and murders of people, or for initiation or omission, or for the absence of any action and thus – the destruction of a great part of humankind and condoning of the acts of genocide that take place.

Another methodological principle should be an emphasis on the choice between good and evil in the most extreme situations. During the studies of the history of genocides, the teacher should organize the learning process to show students the opportunity of each person to do the good and save humanity under whichever circumstances. The study of individuals or even groups, who in terms of genocide could come to the defense of others, makes it possible to demonstrate the power of a human action. The most revealing in this case is the action of thousands of people of non-Jewish origin who, risking their lives saved Jews from death. Studying the phenomenon of genocide at history lessons encourages teachers to involve students in analyzing actions and behavior of all the subjects of a genocide: the state, acting as the organizer of the crime, the direct perpetrators, victims and bystanders. During the genocide they are all interrelated, and the epicenter, which unites them, is persecuted and destroyed.

A common symptom is the behavior of criminals involved in the murder. But the main issue in studying the behavior of murderers is not so much the question about what methods and means of killing people were carried out, as studying the mechanism and motivation that would convert ordinary inhabitants into the killers. Many of those who with a great prowess would shorten a victims' life before the genocide used to be gentle parents and sentimental people. Some of them would become murderers, not wanting to acquire the reputation of "cowards" or "wimps".

Teacher should avoid a simplistic presentation of this issue assigning the organizers and perpetrators of genocide into the category of pathological criminals. This does not mean that among them there was not such. But, by and large, most of them were not sadists or psychopaths. The motives of the organizers and direct perpetrators require detailed analysis and the study of biographies of specific people involved in the organization and implementation of genocides.

It is also important to draw students' attention to the role played by technology in the preparation and implementation of genocides. Thus, intelligent engineers and architects, many of whom had worked in reputable and respected companies, designed and built the gas chambers in which millions died. In Rwanda the radio usage played a huge role in organizing the genocide, through which the racist propaganda and coordinated actions of criminals would spread. Pointing students' attention at the power of technology, teachers can help students understand its role that can be played in recent times, the rapid growth of its effectiveness.

Despite the variability of versions that explain the motivation of accession of "ordinary" people to those who ignored the fundamental principles of morality, it is obvious that they were guided not only by the interests of their own well-being. A teacher is not entitled to simplify the mechanisms of human behavior while explaining and discussing these issues, operating only by certain sociological schemes. With no data obtained by social psychologists, a teacher is unlikely to explain and students are to understand the phenomenon of appearance of a massive number of people who agreed to carry out criminal orders.

In particular, in terms of social psychology, all involved in the genocide, in varying degrees, experienced cognitive dissonance, which forced them to fully justify their own actions and to endow their victims in all possible sins and negative characteristics. A similar phenomenon investigated in experimental conditions which can explain the different forms of dehumanization of victims of genocide in social psychology is called "impairing the dignity of the victims". This phenomenon is the result of people of faith in a fair world. Most people tend to believe that the world, in which they live, is inherently just. The good is rewarded and the evil is punished. The consequence of this belief is cruelty to the victims of various misfortunes, as if to people who were not lucky; it means that the man himself is to blame for this. Otherwise, there is a cognitive dissonance, because if there is no luck for a good man, it means that the world is unfair.

In respect of performers, the teacher can also carry the analogy with a group of people who are part of "ordinary" criminal structures. One crime leads to another, more serious, which, in turn, leads to a third,

even more serious, and so on. People are sinking deeper and deeper into the criminal world, well aware of the actions of others, as well as an appeal to every law becomes more and more spectral, an internal growth of trust between them turns to be the most important key to the continuation of the case and in the case of particularly serious offenses which is also the key to saving lives. In the process, they are becoming more and more allies, and the possibility for someone to get out of the circle gets less likely every time. The output can even be punished by death. The more serious the offense is, the stronger the pressure on the community of performers and the smaller the chances of an individual or collective “return” to the previous rules will be.

The apparent paradox in the process of analyzing the very behavior of killers is that those who had the greatest overall impact on carrying out genocide – its definition, origin, preparation, planning and overall management are not those who directly resort to violence. And those who physically carry out genocide typically have much less to do with the preparation, planning and coordination – their work is actually limited to the executive level.

The teacher can invite students to find the answer to the question of the reasons for the participation of “normal” people in the genocide not only in the psychology of the individual or a group, but in the political and social dimensions. Under the totalitarian conditions it is especially important to have passive individuals’ conquest of the power. After all, those who were charmed by those who due to conversion to mass secured in this manner their own psychological comfort, are not only exposed to ideas imposed by totalitarian regimes, but also become the executors of a criminal will or at least passive observers.

In this regard, students should pay attention also to the fact that the implementation of the genocide is impossible without the participation of the “ordinary” citizens, as due to their acquiescence murderers remained unpunished executing their actions. The complex ethical aspects of the behavior of “observers” of genocide have led to the formulation of complex and painful issues in history lessons, the answer to which cannot be represented in the form of simple moral teachings and banal maxims.

In studying the history of genocides the question about the behavior of the victims of genocide may be equally painful and difficult. The colossal number of deaths in each of the acts of genocide forces us to seek an explanation for this behavior by the victims’ habituation to obey those who have been psychologically poisoned by the atmosphere of a totalitarian society. A group determined to be punished during genocide is often vulnerable. It is this vulnerability that may be the main reason for choosing their victims on the target role. The group which is not too strong will probably be an easier target for attacks than the influential and powerful one. But the victims are defenseless and powerless are not from the start – they become every time more unprotected during the prosecution process, so by the will of the people and institutions that support this process.

Considering with the students the behavior of the victims, the teacher may draw the students’ attention to the fact that having appeared in front of the organized coercive measures, the victims react to them mainly in three ways: 1) they may attempt to escape or hide; 2) resort to various forms of resistance or even a fight; 3) seek for the best adjust to every to me rapidly changing conditions.

But when considering the behavior of victims from the teachers and students’ side, it is unacceptable to evaluate the behavior of the latter to assess the past in categories of personal choice, responsibility and morality, because the conditions of violent extermination of these concepts cannot be applied. But just trying to imagine the specific examples, with all the horrible details, the fate of the victims, students will be able to make sense of what is genocide. Therefore, when studying the history of genocides, a teacher, if possible, should build a learning process so that students can see the statistics of the fate of specific people who preserved their dignity until the very end.

Trying to organize a discussion of this complex issue with the students, a teacher must take into consideration that many historical sources, such as photos, documents, movies, were created by very organizers of the genocide. In this regard, it may be a danger that by using them, we involuntarily will cover the history

of genocide through the ideology of its organizers, when the victims themselves will appear in a humiliating and objective perspective.

In the study of the history of genocides the principle of problematisation and complexity of a classical three-term image of the characters of any genocide: victims – performers – outside observers (victims – perpetrators – bystanders) is equally important, because the role of each person in the history is previously undefined in the script of the development of the events and is exposed to changes. After all, even in the category of “bystanders”, in the case of the Holocaust history researchers distinguish several groups: the population of the country in which the Holocaust took place; the states of the anti-Hitler coalition – the US, UK, USSR; neutral states; global and influential church organizations, they are primarily – the Vatican and the International Red Cross; Jewish communities of the free world, including the Jewish population of Mandatory Palestine. The discussion of such topics should include not only the information but also attempts to understand the various motives, emotions and behavior of all those involved in the history of genocide.

In this regard, it is important to draw students’ attention to the fact that the majority of countries occupied by the Nazis and their allies supplied approximately the same proportion of murderers, indifferent, passive and active supporters of opposition fighters. However, for example, the price for the salvation of the Jews in the West and in the East was different. In the West a relatively light punishment could take place, when for it in the East one would be certainly executed, often not only caught himself, but also with his entire family.

Discussing with students the questions about the causes of genocide, it is appropriate for a teacher to draw students’ attention to the ideological origins of genocide and the role of propaganda in the preparation and execution of the genocide. For example, the implementation of the Holocaust is directly linked to the racial theory, the authors of which divided the races into the “lower” and “higher”.

Conclusions

Learning and teaching about the history of genocides requires from a teacher a deep knowledge of his students’ psychological characteristics, careful attention to each of them. Organizing the study of the history of genocides, a teacher should be careful not to injure the delicate psyche of a teenager by the horrific events of naturalism and not to cause indifference, giving only facts and dates.

The knowledge of the history of genocides may question the values of the students towards progress, the role of morality in society. In addition, a possible consequence may be a protective reaction of students, which can manifest in various forms, including those in the form of negative feelings or even rejection of the topic. It is therefore important that the teacher be able to create an atmosphere in the classroom and protection of open space for a dialogue, allowing students to ask questions, share their emotions, feelings and doubts. History does not apply to the types of knowledge that a teacher can pass directly. It is rather a joint process of finding answers to difficult questions.

The challenges that a teacher might face while teaching the topics of a history of genocides require a clear understanding of methodological principles that define appropriate uses in educational methods, teaching methods and teaching strategies. The compliance with relevant methodological principles also places new demands to the skills of teachers to use in their lessons interdisciplinary relations of history with other academic disciplines and skills to organize students’ training activities aimed at comparative analysis of specific historical and civilizational aspects of the history of genocides.

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METODOLOGINIAI MOKYKLOS ISTORIJOS KURSO DĖSTANT GENOCIDĄ PRINCIPAI

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Santrauka

Genocido istorijai mokyklos istorijos kurse skiriamas ypatingas dėmesys. Šiame straipsnyje aprašyti pagrindiniai metodologiniai genocido temos mokymo principai mokyklos istorijose kurse. Apibūdintos mokytojų genocido istorijos mokymo metodinės klaidos. Straipsnyje dėmesys sutelktas į tarpdalykines temas ir skirtingus genocido istorijos dėstymo aspektus. Atlikus tyrimą galima daryti išvadą, kad genocido istorijos mokymą reikėtų organizuoti laikantis socialinės psichologijos požiūrio. Mokymas genocido temomis turėtų remtis geru mokinių psichologinių savybių pažinimu, reikėtų atsižvelgti ir į jų emocijas. Mokytojas turėtų apmąstyti, kaip šiuos baises istorinius faktus pateikti. Svarbu surasti ryšį su mokiniais, pateikti ne tik sausus faktus. Vis dėlto nereikėtų įsijausti į paskiro žmogaus, šeimos tragediją, per daug nesuasmeninti temos. Istorijos – genocido klausimų – žinojimas turėtų formuoti vertybinę orientaciją, ugdyti visuomenės moralines vertybes. Svarbu, kad temos baises mokinių neatbaidytų ir jie nevengtų šios temos mokytis, nebūtų atmetimo reakcijos. Mokytojas turėtų sukurti klasėje tokią atmosferą, kad mokiniai galėtų laisvai diskutuoti, pasidalinti savo emocijomis, abejonėmis, jausmais. Istorijos dalykas nėra tik sausi faktai ir jų išmokimas, jis turėtų padėti surasti atsakymus į sudėtingus klausimus. Tai yra bendras klasėje vykstantis procesas, todėl mokant genocido istorijos pamokose reikėtų taikyti įvairius edukologijos metodus, mokymo strategijas. Pui-ku, jei mokytojas geba į šią problemą pažvelgti laikydamasis tarpdalykinio, palyginamojo principo.

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