

GEOGRAPHY OF LOCAL LANDSCAPE IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN SLOVAKIA

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Abstract

Local landscape has been accorded a unique status in Slovak education. It is an issue that can be found throughout the whole education system of Geography in all educational stages. Elementary level of geographical knowledge is acquired at primary schools within the subject of Homeland studies. On the second stage, it is in the subject of Geography. The issues of the local landscape can be applied in Geography from Years 5 to 8, especially in geographical exercise and observations. The highest proportion of Local landscape Geography is presented in the 9th year at the primary school.

The aim of this paper is to assess the concept of a local landscape and to point out geography teaching at the primary schools in the Liptov region in Slovakia. The level of students' knowledge of the Local landscape Geography was assessed by means of a test, together with a survey in which participants had to answer selected questions. The point of view of geography teachers was also reviewed in form of a questionnaire where selected questions regarded the use of progressive methodology, ways, means, and forms of teaching of the local landscape.

Keywords: *local landscape, geography, Slovakia, the Liptov region, primary school*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid pace of globalisation is the trend of today's society. However, if we want to understand the world, at first we must first understand our own home. For this reason, increased attention should be paid to local landscape when it comes to teaching Geography, since it is well known to the students, because they grow up, attend school and play sports in it – they simply live here.

The issue of a local landscape is the theme that permeates the whole system of geographical education in all its stages. In the majority of schools, however, the teaching of Local landscape Geography has a traditional structure with the components of a landscape sphere, often without emphasis on the context, sometimes supplemented with selected highlights of the landscape.

The aim of this paper is to define the concept of a local landscape, to point out the teaching Local landscape Geography within the subjects of Homeland studies and Geography at Slovak primary schools and to assess Year 9 students' knowledge of the Local landscape Geography at primary schools in the Liptov region by means of a test, to review the

Geography teachers' point of view in form of a questionnaire in which participants had to answer selected questions on different ways of Local landscape Geography teaching at the second stage of primary schools in the Liptov region and to describe the possible use of more progressive methods, means and forms in Local landscape Geography teaching, which emerged from the survey.

1. BACKGROUND

2.1. Definition and characteristics of the concept of a local landscape

At Slovak primary schools, which are oriented on deepening of cross-curricular relations in various forms of integration, the concept of a "local landscape" is used as an integrating element, while its perception in the didactic terminology is not clear. In addition to a local landscape, we quite often meet the concepts of a local country, local area, local region, microregion, which are understood as synonyms and the authors characterize them from different points of view. With respect to identified inconsistency, it is very important to accept not only opinions of the experts, but also the specific conditions of particular schools and students' experiences.

The spatial aspect of a local landscape is determined by the size of a regional geographical scale. The first reference to the concept of a local landscape can be found in the subject of Homeland studies, where it is characterized as a municipality, or more precisely a part of a municipality and its surroundings (municipality's hinterland), where the school is located or the territory of other municipalities from which children commute to this school (Kancir, Madzikova, 2003). Gradually, the explored region is getting larger and we talk about wider surroundings of a municipality often missing a precise definition, sometimes using administrative (e.g. municipal boundary, several cadastres, district, region, area, state, a group of countries, continent) or natural boundaries (e.g. a geomorphological unit, drainage basin or sea drainage area, climate zone, bioclimatic zone, continent). A local landscape is the most precisely characterized as a human geographical region of a lower order, i.e. a nodal region, whose centre with certain facilities (places of work, services) binds the municipalities in its hinterland (Cief, Niznansky, 2018). The local area of major towns comprises the town itself and its hinterland. We can say that a local landscape is the environment where the rhythm of a human daily routine is applied. It represents the part of the human environment, which is a contact zone of immediate and continuous sensory cognition (e.g. a house, local district, village with basic amenities, with a zone that is perceived periodically, i.e. a municipality with more complex facilities). Based on its size it can be characterized on the interface of local and regional dimension.

The time aspect is, according to Tomcikova (2010), reflected in life experiences, which an individual acquired during their life within a certain local landscape (evolutionary potential). It is reflected in a certain emotional (mental) relationship with people who live in a local landscape. It represents their sense of home, security, and confidentiality. It corresponds with a certain perception of a local landscape by an individual and their behaviour within it. Not only physical objects that create the place are meaningful for human life in a particular place, but also events that they have experienced in the past. This aspect is best expressed by a Latin term "genius loci" (the spirit of the place). It encompasses the unity of "genius regionis" (the spirit of the landscape) and "genius populi" (the spirit of people, society), which is very important in the geography of a local landscape.

The didactic aspect of a local landscape is of great importance in Geography teaching. Deeper knowledge of a local landscape is not only an objective but also a means of geographical education. Specific geographic phenomena and their relationships within a local landscape serve as a model for the understanding of generally applicable context and

regularities. A more detailed observation of a local landscape develops the students' interest, it enables easier understanding of dynamic changes of a landscape, its specific relationships between a human and a landscape. A student, experienced in problem-solving connected with a simpler and known local landscape (e.g. a rural municipality), can solve problems of a more complicated and less known urban municipality or a larger region more easily and successfully (Tomcikova, 2010). A local landscape is a part of the real world that has surrounded us since early childhood, it offers us opportunities for cognitive development, stimuli for emotional development, formation of opinions, it is a gateway for exploration of distant countries in a time-space dimension, which can be used in cross-curricular relations.

2.2. Local landscape Geography in geographical education in primary school

2.2.1. Position of Local landscape Geography in geographical education in primary school

In Slovakia, the subject Geography is included in the educational area Man and society (together with the subjects History and Civics), under the curriculum reform effective from 1st September 2008 and the National Educational Programme. The Geography curriculum is, except for the 5th year, based on the exploration of particular regions of the Earth from the farthest areas to the closest areas, thus it builds on the foundations of geographical knowledge from Homeland studies. The education reform caused the reduction of lessons in particular subjects. The significant reduction of the number of lessons in Geography decreased already limited possibilities of integration of local landscape geography into the learning process of this subject (Csachova, 2016).

In Homeland studies in the 3rd and 4th year (2 lessons per week), students illustratively explore the main features of a municipality and its closest surroundings, they learn to understand the basic relations between nature and society in a local landscape at the elementary level. Since Homeland studies represent an elementary level of geographical education, they have a very close relation to Geography. However, we cannot completely associate it with the teaching of Geography, because Homeland studies are a complex vision of the world in the geographical as well as historical context, with a significant educational function.

The subject Geography is taught in the 5th year in the range of 2 lessons per week (66 classes per year) and in the 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th year in the range of 1 lesson per week (33 classes per year). The curriculum of a local landscape is, more or less, the interest of Geography education in each year. In the 5th year, it is applied as an incentive to understand the basic relations in particular curriculum topics, in the 6th to 8th year within exploration of particular regions of the Earth, where it is mostly compared with a local landscape. However, the highest proportion of local landscape geography is seen in the 9th year. In particular years of study, the curriculum of Geography is divided into thematic units. The overview of the thematic units can be found at http://www.statpedu.sk/sites/default/files/dokumenty/statny-vzdelavaci-program/geografia_isc2.pdf.

Thanks to the School Educational Programme, the number of Geography lessons in particular years can be increased and this increase can be used for the inclusion of the local landscape curriculum. However, it is necessary to objectively add, that schools are often not willing to increase the number of Geography lessons in the National Educational Programme, the increase usually occurs mainly in foreign languages or other subjects, which are defined as cross-curricular topics by the National Educational Programme. It is not surprising that there is no space for creativity, and the lack of time for the local landscape curriculum causes the absence of enthusiasm not only on the teachers' side but also on the side of the students.

In 2015, the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak republic released the innovated National Educational Programmes (NEP) for primary school and primary education and lower secondary education (ISCED 1 and ISCED 2). Primary schools started education under the innovated NEP from 1st September 2015, gradually from 1st and 5th year of primary school. Thus, the curriculum on Slovakia will be moved to the 8th year of primary school in two years (Karolcik, Tolmaci, 2014).

2.2.2. Objectives and the curriculum of local landscape geography in the educational process

Keeping the continuous exploration of the local landscape, however, presupposes the inclusion of regional knowledge into the whole system of Geography teaching using specific examples from a local landscape. Information about a local landscape must be adapted to psychological peculiarities of students' understanding in order to respect the natural development of children and the teaching should be based on their experience (Cief, Niznansky, 2016). The difficulty of tasks, which students should manage, as well as the difficulty and amount of information about a local landscape, should intensify with their age. Thus, a local landscape will serve as a model for the understanding of vertical and horizontal relationships and geographic patterns.

In the 5th year, students acquire basic knowledge of Geography, which should be presented to them in a motivational way and explained in a practical way. We meet with the Local landscape Geography in two thematic units: *A map and a globe* and *How nature created the most beautiful places on the Earth*.

In the thematic unit *A map and a globe*, students learn how to use a map in their surroundings, they work with a tourist map, road map, city plans and thematic maps. They also learn the orientation in the field without a map, determination of cardinal points and various possibilities of their determination. Students learn to read maps, acquire information from them and apply them in their surroundings. They will know how to use a map to acquire the needed information about the area where they live and also to find maps on the Internet and use them.

In the thematic unit *How nature created the most beautiful places on the Earth*, students have to understand how individual components of a landscape of a certain area work, they have to understand and notice differences in a landscape. It is important for students to realize the relationships among particular landscape components and how they affect each other, they can best imagine them in their place of residence. They can describe the weather in a certain time period, explore flora of a local landscape, find out what kinds of trees grow in the surroundings and why. In a certain area around the school, they can find out, draw and describe all components of a landscape and relationships among them.

In the 9th year, the thematic unit of Slovakia comprises a great part of the school year curriculum. Within the unit of Slovakia, a great part is dedicated to the Local landscape Geography. Education on a local landscape corresponds with traditional geographical characteristics, the centre of which lies in natural conditions, topography and the economic overview. However, a collection of data, description of production activities without explanation of the relationship to the potential of a landscape and wider economic relationships prevail.

The additional space for the teaching of the Local landscape Geography is provided by the cross-curricular topic of Regional Education and Traditional Folk Culture, which can be, under the curricular reform of The National Educational Programme, incorporated into optional subjects such as Regional Education or Regional History. The objective is to create conditions for students to grow and develop their sense of beauty in their region, nature, architecture, folk art and learning about the cultural heritage of our ancestors. The educational

activity is aimed at students in regional education so that they know the history but also the present of their own village or town.

2. ANALYSIS

2.1. Analysis of the students' knowledge on a local landscape at primary schools in the Liptov region

We assessed the level of knowledge of students of the 9th year of primary schools by a test at primary schools in the Liptov region. We reviewed the teaching methods of Local landscape Geography at the 2nd stage of primary school from the perspective of Geography teachers in the Liptov region by a questionnaire. 467 students and 20 teachers from 21 primary schools were involved in the survey.

The test was completed by 467 students of the 9th year in 21 primary schools in the Liptov region. Questions in the test were focused on basic information about the Liptov region. Based on the degree of difficulty, there prevailed the tasks, which required reproduction of knowledge and simple operations such as naming, sorting, assigning and explanations of the concepts. The test contained 17 questions.

The first question was focused on the position of the Liptov region within Slovakia. Students had to write in which administrative region the Liptov region is located and which 2 districts comprise it. Students managed to succeed in this task by 82.76%.



Figure 1. Position of the Liptov region

Source: [https://sk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liptov_\(regi%C3%B3n\)](https://sk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liptov_(regi%C3%B3n))

The following 8 questions were focused on the physical geographical characteristics of the region. Students had to choose from several options and circle the name of the river that flows through Liptov, what the water reservoir Liptovska Mara was named after, what caves open to the public are located in the region, at which village antimony was mined, at which village gold and silver were mined, at what village travertines are located and what is the Prosiecka valley known for. They also had to choose from options of national parks that are not located in the Liptov region.

Table 1. Success in task solving in physical characteristics

	Question focus	Success in %
1.	The river Vah	98.92
2.	The water reservoir Liptovska Mara	88.87
3.	Demanovske caves	94.65
4.	Antimony mining	37.69
5.	Gold and silver mining	34.48
6.	Besenova travertines	47.54
7.	Prosiecka valley	45.82
8.	National parks in the region	61.03

The students were the most successful in choosing the right river that flows through the towns of the region, while they could choose from 4 options. The river Vah flows through the Liptovska basin, about 80 km long, and all rivers from the Liptov hills and mountains mouth into the river Vah. It forms the axis of the Liptov region. The biggest problems were with the ore extraction issues in the Liptov region. In the Liptov municipality of Dubrava antimony was mined in the past and gold and silver were mined in Partizanska Lupca. The first reports of these minings date back to the 13th and 14th century. Nowadays the mining is not exercised, antimony mining nearby Dubrava was completed in 1992 and gold in Partizanska Lupca in 1922, therefore the students' knowledge about the location of extraction was low.

Another 8 questions were designed on human geographical characteristics of the region. Students should connect the right pairs: the town of the region and the type of industry which is typical for this town. One question focused on traffic – the name of the village in Liptov region where the motorway starts. Other issues related to tourism. We asked the students how the monument included in the UNESCO world heritage list is called and where it is located. Then we asked about the name of the village where the annual festival of folk songs and dances is held, the name of the spa municipality in the region, the municipality in which the open-air museum of Liptov village is located and the name of the hill where the remains of Celtic culture were found. Also, they had to circle the true statement - the name of the ski resort and the mountain range where it is located.

Table 2. Success in task solving in human characteristics

	Question focus	Success in %
1.	Industry	85.51
2.	Transportation	65.52
3.	The village in UNESCO – Vikolinec	56.53
4.	Folklore festival – Vychodna	68.52
5.	Spa municipality – Lucky	82.01
6.	Open-air museum of Liptov village	79.87
7.	The remains of the Celtic culture	74.73
8.	Ski resorts and mountain ranges	70.45

The least problematic for students was the question about an industry. In the Liptov region, there are 3 towns, each of them with the traditional industrial sector. While in Ruzomberok, the paper industry is further developed thanks to the company MONDI SCP, a.s., in Liptovský Mikuláš – in the traditional leather industry town, there are currently only a few private enterprises dealing with the leather processing. In the smallest town in the region, Liptovský Hradok, the wood processing industry is being developed thanks to the company Rettenmeier Tatra Timber, s r. o. Almost all students correctly assigned the paper industry to the town of Ruzomberok, however the answers were not so clear in the case of two other towns. Students were the least successful in answering the question – what the name of the cultural monument added to UNESCO's World Heritage List is. It is Vlkolinec, which lies on the outskirts of the town of Ruzomberok and it was added to UNESCO World Heritage List in 1993. It contains 40 original, still inhabited wooden houses located along a stream, which is an example of a former Slovak mountain village. Students often mistook Vlkolinec for Pribylina, where the museum of Liptov village is located, which is an open-air museum of folk architecture and medieval architectural monuments of the Liptov region.

2.2. Analysis of the teaching methods of a local landscape at primary schools in the Liptov region

By means of a questionnaire, we reviewed how teachers teach Local landscape Geography at primary schools in the Liptov region. The first part of the questionnaire contained characteristics of the respondents and the school, the second part consisted of 10 questions focused on the investigation of the status of the Local landscape Geography teaching.

20 Geography teachers from primary schools in the Liptov region were involved in the survey; they included 10 teachers from primary schools in towns and 10 teachers from primary schools in villages. There were 18 public schools and 2 church schools included in the survey. 30% of men and 70% of women answered the questions. In terms of age we found out that 15% were young, starting teachers up to 30 years old, 50 % were teachers aged 31 to 40 years old, 30% were teachers aged 41 to 50 years old and 5% were teachers above 50 years old. Finally, we investigated whether the teachers came from Liptov, i.e. from the environment where they teach. We found that 75% of teachers came from Liptov, therefore we can assume that they know school surrounding well.

Based on the survey, we found out that all respondents dedicate on average 8 lessons to the topic of Local landscape Geography, mainly in the 9th year of primary school. 75% of teachers address the issue of local landscape also in the 5th year, on average in 3 – 5 lessons, mostly continuously during the whole year, only 20% of teachers stated that they organise a field trip to the local landscape in the average duration of 2 lessons. 25% of teachers address the issue of local landscape also in the 8th year during teaching about the regional geography of Europe. 40% of teachers addressed the topic of local landscape within the extracurricular activity. Most of them during the preparation of students for the Geography Olympiad, two of them stated that they apply knowledge about the local landscape within the tourist club. 55% of teachers prefer a regular lesson to teach about the local landscape, where the majority of them follows the classic Hettner scheme. 25% of teachers prefer a field trip to the local landscape and 20% of teachers most frequently use non-traditional forms of education, mostly project education, a discussion about the local landscape but also work with maps and the Internet (Google maps).

The most attractive topics for students are the environmental issues of the landscape, tourism, natural and cultural heritage. On the contrary, they have problems with the map orientation, sorting, and processing of information from various sources into their own text, understanding of complex links among individual components of the landscape.

The most common literature that teachers use for teaching about the local landscape are monographs on particular towns or villages, which students come from. This was stated by 50% of teachers, 40% of teachers use homeland almanacs Liptov, which were published by the Liptov Museum in Ruzomberok in 1970 to 1989, but more teachers stated that they often use promotional materials from information centres in towns in Liptov. All surveyed teachers use maps during teaching, mostly maps from the Landscape Atlas of the Slovak Republic (2002), but also topographic maps at the scale 1:10 000 and 1:25 000, tourist maps of the Low Tatras, the Great Fatra at the scale 1:50 000, the Western Tatras at the scale 1:25 000. 40% of teachers use Google maps. However, all respondents stated that they would appreciate a textbook about the local landscape.

We found out from results of the questionnaire that the work with topographic, hiking or thematic maps (geomorphological division, geological structure, climate zones, geobotanical map, etc.) is a frequently used method in characteristics of the local landscape. A digital map is a modern alternative to a traditional wall map or atlas maps. There can be used applications available through standard web browsers (e.g. applications of the projects Google Earth, Google maps, Bing).

Teachers also use the project method for the description of the local landscape and its geospatial relationships. Students can use the programs PowerPoint or Prezi for the creation of presentations or they prepare poster presentations. The project education supports creative thinking and development of communication skills of students because it is focused on practical problem-solving, it awakens students' interest in the subject and gives them the opportunity to express themselves. The teacher is required to change the organization of education and try to make education more interesting and open for a discussion and cooperation.

Foreign research of Rickinson et al. (2004), Oost, et. al. (2011), Lambert, et. al. (2000), Lambrinos, Asiklari (2014) confirmed that terrain exercises should be a full-valued form of compulsory education at primary and secondary schools. A geographical field trip is a very suitable organizational form focused on exploring of specific geographical phenomena around the school. Students solve problem tasks at individual stations during the field trip, where they use knowledge not only from geography but also from other subjects. The main method during the walk is observation, while the teacher must make sure that students observe substantial and main objects, processes and phenomena and they are not distracted by details. Attention and interest of students are kept by alternating of theoretical explanation with practical activity of students. The explanation should be brief and accurate but also comprehensible to students. It should be focused on essential features of an observed phenomenon or object so they lead to the formation of relations and context about the studied phenomenon. A teacher encourages curiosity and activity of students during the walk, he/she reminds and asks mostly theoretical knowledge but also answers their questions and queries. The cooperation method is frequently used during the field trip, where students work in small groups, solve tasks, acquire knowledge, and carry out various practical activities in the atmosphere of equality and cooperation. A teacher becomes an organizer, adviser, and facilitator of independent work of student groups (Tomcikova, 2005).

3. THE PROPOSED CONCEPTION OF TEACHING LOCAL LANDSCAPE GEOGRAPHY

The aim of teaching at Slovak schools is to develop the knowledge, skills, and competencies of students useful not only in school but also in everyday life. Students must learn to think, create, reflect, evaluate and be responsible for the results of their work. Based on the survey results, we found out that these aims can be met if the traditional teaching based on memorizing a large amount of information is replaced by the teaching focused on the independent and creative activity of students in the class. It is important to realize that knowledge of facts is in itself worthless without having mastered the ability to synthesize, integrate and evaluate (superficial awareness of the content is enough at factographic questions).

Scoffham (2011) argues that teacher should be cautious about pursuing knowledge too exclusively and view it instead as just one component in a complex process – alongside understanding, skills, values, and critical and creative engagement. Many educationalists have argued that the ability to analyse and evaluate information, along with creativity and imagination are key higher-order skills. This leads him to conclude that in many ways how students learn is as important as what they learn.

Meaningful learning is a learning, in which students think of new knowledge, engage in discussion, seek solutions, then their new experience becomes the basis of the knowledge. The local landscape is close to students, because they live in it, particular geographic phenomena and their relationships in the local country serve as a model for understanding the context of general application and regularity.

Geography is more than memorizing names and places. Geographers are concerned with asking three important questions about things in the world:

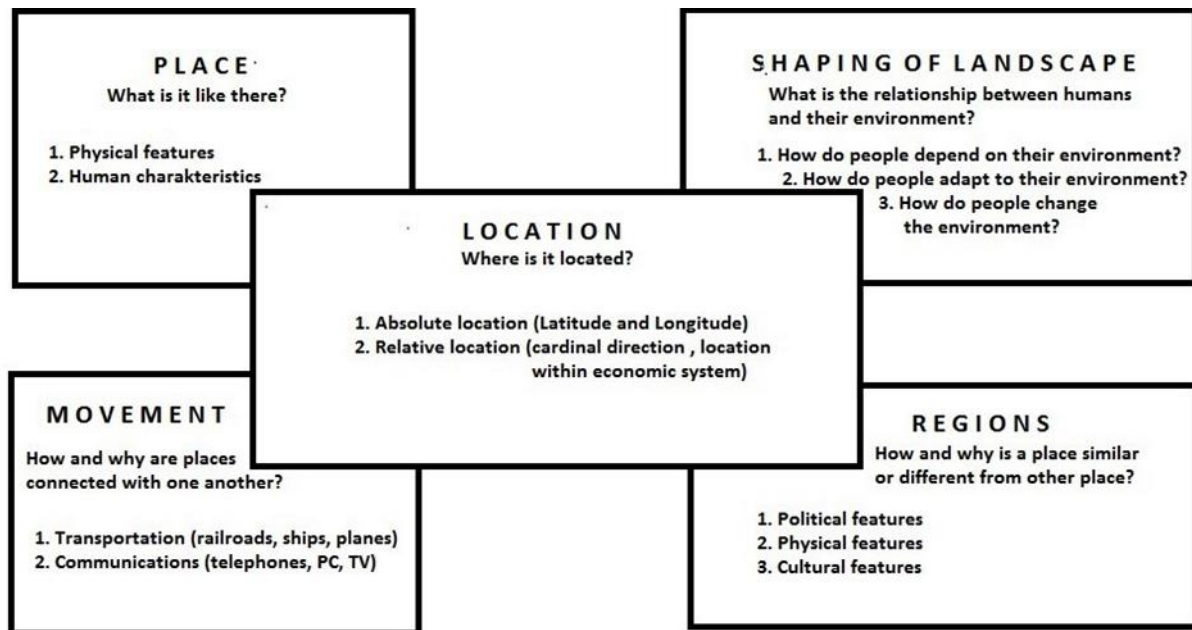
- Where is it?
- Why is it there?
- What are the consequences of its being there?

Alexander (2010) draws attention to the way that coming to knowledge is an activity which depends on experience. Teacher of Local landscape Geography must lay stress on affective objectives and through them comes to consolidating and fulfilment of the cognitive objectives. The local landscape is the part of the real world that surrounds the student from infancy, offers him the possibility of cognitive development, incentives for emotional development, the formation of opinions is a gate in discovering distant countries in the time-space dimension, which can be used in cross-curricular activities.

The five themes of geography were developed by the National Council for Geographic Education, adopted in 1984 by the Association of American Geographers, published in the NCGE/AAG publication Guidelines for Geographic Education, Elementary, and Secondary Schools to help answer these questions:

1. **Location:** Where is it located?
2. **Place:** What's it like there?
3. **Human/Environment Interaction:** What is the relationship between humans and their environment?
4. **Movement:** How and why are places connected with one another?
5. **Regions:** How and why is one area similar to another?

Not one theme can be understood without the others. The themes are connected with one another, as are all components of our world. No part of our world can be understood in isolation (Rosenberg, 2017).



Author's processing

Figure 2. Study of Local landscape Geography versus Five themes of geography

Study of Local landscape Geography begins with the **location of a place** on the earth. Location can be described in two different ways. An absolute location is a location as described by its latitude and longitude on the Earth that can be pointed to on any basic map. A relative location is a location as described by where it is compared to something else, in respect to other locations, it has a location within the economic system.

Place: Geographers study this landscape by looking at the characteristics that distinguish this place from another place on Earth. These physical and human characteristics can include landforms, waterways, people, climate, languages, communication, and transportation. Geography emphasizes the understanding of both of these factors and their integration together. Relief, climate, settlement and economy in their spatial organisation and distribution form the structure of a system. These elements are interrelated and therefore each has functions (e. g., the function of climate for vegetation, roadways for settlements, relief for roadways). The spatial systems themselves can also have functions as subsystems for other systems (e. g., city – hinterland). Each individual element of a system, and systems as a whole change through the interactions among continuous processes.

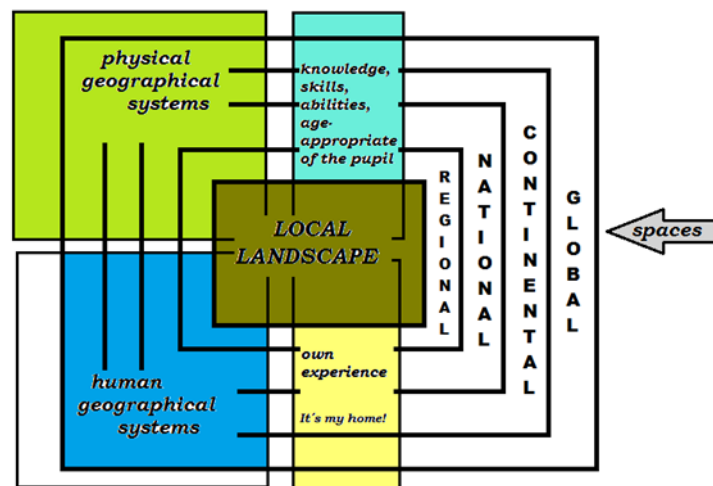
The shaping of the Landscape: The landscape of the earth is no longer a purely physical feature. Humans have an impact on every area of the earth but in varying ways. The geography of places is influenced by the degree to which humans have impacted on their local environment.

It is requested to present the students with the country in which they live, to present it in its global development - what it looked like, what the progressive human interventions were and what the current problems in the country are. It is appropriate to clarify the causes of deployment of activities, their specialization in relation to the conditions of the country, their impact on the landscape, the state of the environment and the aesthetic value of the landscape. Teaching of Local landscape Geography should be supplemented with the geographic assessment of the country in terms of the quality of the environment (the restoration plans of town / village, the location of economic activity in the country), regional planning (land use and its changes, the stability of the territory) and historical development (manufacturing tradition, culture and customs, change of the landscape during the period of time).

Movement: People are always on the move. The movement also deals with how and why people travel from one place to another. Some people travel for career, others to be close to family, and some move to escape war or religious persecution.

Region: A region is a basic unit of geographic study. It is defined as an area that has unifying characteristics. The study of regions helps us answer these questions: How and why is one area similar to another? How do the areas differ? Most regions differ significantly from adjoining areas. Some regions are distinguished by physical characteristics including land forms, climate, soil, and natural vegetation. Some regions are distinguished by human characteristics. These may include economic, social, political, and cultural characteristics.

If we want to understand the local landscape, we need to study it in a broader context. If you ask questions, for example: How does local topography affect weather in the city? How was a river valley created? What effect does the supermarket have on the local economy? However, if we want to answer these questions, we must consider the region that surrounds our local landscape. When we begin to study regional geography, we find that it is also important continental and global geography. For example, the region's weather depends on the general circulation of the atmosphere, but also on the distance from the sea; the surface and geological composition depend on orogenic processes that took place in Europe in the past and so on. Exploring the local landscape should be detailed according to the dimension of the region (higher territorial unit, a local region, village, city district, settlement). Considering that the local country is known for pupils, teaching should be based on regional knowledge and understanding of the history, present, and prospects for the future development.



Author's processing

Figure 3. Local country and its position in geography

4. CONCLUSIONS

Above-mentioned survey and our analyses showed that the teaching of the local landscape provides a lot of options to use progressive teaching methods and forms. Nowadays, students shouldn't be only passive recipients of information, but they should work independently to obtain information from their own activities, especially when working with local sources of information, often very well-known to them. The students gradually get to know the local landscape, its history, culture, natural beauty, and attractions, to acquire a sense of pride and belonging to their native land, their homeland.

During the lesson of geography, it is necessary to pay attention to the local landscape, so that students can understand and perceive the environment in which they grow up, further they can get an overview of the functioning of natural processes in their surroundings. It is important that they are sufficiently aware of the human impact on the natural environment and also the need for nature protection in their surroundings. A human can solve problems in their local region only if they know it well and when he/she has created positive relationship with the region and also with the whole of Slovakia.

Regional awareness of the students has to be developed in different forms of individual work, group work, project teaching, fieldwork, etc. Students themselves usefully work on their education. The teacher leads their work sensitively towards the objective which was defined by both of them at the beginning. Students assess the newly gained knowledge, engage in discussions, and look for solutions. This way of teaching is perceived by students as useful entertainment. It is not a boring lesson anymore.

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