



The Didactic Conditions For The Use Of The Technology Of Moral Dilemma And Discussion (On The Example Of Historical Material)

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on historical material, the article analyses the didactic conditions for the use of the technology of moral dilemma and discussion. A six-stage structure of the technology is elaborated, specifying for each stage the task, the action of the teacher, and the potential risk together with the means of eliminating it. The method of moral education through image and situation in the legacies of Yusuf Khass Hajib and Abdulla Avloniy is compared with the research of L. Kohlberg, E. Turiel, J. Rest, D. Hess and A. Reisman. Two principal methodological risks of moral evaluation in the history lesson — anachronism and presentism — are analysed, and three didactic conditions for their elimination are substantiated. Criteria for the selection of a historical dilemma are elaborated.

KEYWORDS: Moral dilemma, discussion technology, history lesson, anachronism, presentism, conflict of values, reflection, interactive learning, history of pedagogical doctrines, national pedagogical heritage.

INTRODUCTION

Moral education in the history lesson is most frequently realised in two opposing forms. The first is didacticism: the teacher supplies a ready-made moral evaluation of a historical event and expects the student to assimilate it. The second is moral neutrality: the facts are set forth, while evaluation is avoided altogether. Neither approach forms in the student the skill of moral reasoning: the first substitutes memory for reasoning, whereas the second does not even open up the moral question. A third path — the technology of moral dilemma and discussion — makes it possible to resolve this contradiction.

The normative basis of the problem has been established: the document adopted within the framework of the priority directions of the country's development through 2030 designates the formation of a high-quality education system as a strategic task, while the Law "On Education" defines the legal foundation of relations in the sphere of education. The aim of the article is to elaborate the didactic structure of the technology of moral dilemma and discussion and to substantiate the conditions for its application. The tasks are as follows: to analyse the theoretical foundations of the technology; to determine the criteria for selecting a historical dilemma; to identify the stages of the technology; and to substantiate the conditions for eliminating the risks of anachronism and presentism.

Literature Review And Methodology



Moral education through situation and image constitutes a foundational method of the national pedagogical tradition. In Yusuf Khass Hajib's "Qutadghu Bilig", ideas are disclosed not in the form of abstract exhortation but through conversation and debate among four personified figures. The very structure of the work is thus discursive: differing positions collide, each is substantiated, and the reader arrives at a conclusion in the course of this debate. In present-day terms this is an early form of the methodology of dilemma discussion. In "The Turkic Gulistan, or Morality", Abdulla Avloniy expounded each moral quality as a separate essay and reinforced it with examples and situations drawn from life. The didactic principle underlying Avloniy's experience — that a moral concept is assimilated not through definition but through a concrete situation — constitutes the very basis of dilemma technology. The modern theoretical foundation is constituted by L. Kohlberg's conception. The author elaborated a system of moral reasoning consisting of three levels and six stages and interpreted moral education not as the memorisation of norms but as a process of raising the level of reasoning. The effectiveness of this approach has been verified empirically: in an experiment conducted by M. Blatt and L. Kohlberg, students participated in twelve hours of discussion of moral problems over twelve weeks; in comparison with the control group, the experimental group was found to have attained a higher indicator with respect to the level of moral judgement. This constitutes one of the earliest experimental proofs confirming the educative effectiveness of dilemma discussion.

In selecting a dilemma it is necessary to take into account the distinction substantiated by E. Turiel: moral norms are connected with harm caused to another person and possess a universal character, whereas conventional norms rest upon the agreement of a particular community and are variable. If the situation submitted for discussion is in fact conventional in character, the discussion will generate not moral reasoning but a mere debate about custom. J. Rest's model, for its part, clarifies which process the discussion affects: moral conduct is a four-component process comprising sensitivity, judgement, motivation and character, and dilemma discussion primarily affects the second component. Account is taken of the specific character of history as a discipline on the basis of the conception of P. Seixas and T. Morton: among the foundational concepts of historical thinking the authors distinguish historical perspective and the ethical dimension of history. It is precisely the joint application of these two concepts that distinguishes a historical dilemma from a general moral dilemma: in a historical dilemma the evaluation must invariably be related to the context of the period.

The methodology of organising discussion has been elaborated in the research of D. Hess: the author substantiated the proposition that the purposeful use of controversial issues — rather than their exclusion from the educational process — constitutes the foundation of democratic education, and analysed the question of teacher neutrality separately. A. Reisman, for her part, investigated whole-class text-based discussion in the history lesson and demonstrated the mechanism of drawing students into the historical problem space. The conception of K. Barton and L. Levstik makes it possible to connect discussion with civic responsibility. The research methodology comprised theoretical analysis, retrospective analysis of sources relating to the history of pedagogical doctrines, didactic modelling and the systemic-structural approach.

Discussion And Results

The first result of the research consists in the elaboration of criteria for selecting a historical dilemma. Four criteria were identified in the course of the analysis. The first criterion is genuine contradiction: at least two well-founded values must collide within the situation; if one solution is clearly preferable, this is not a dilemma but a question-and-answer exercise. The second criterion is moral character: the situation must belong to the moral domain in E. Turiel's sense, that is, it must be connected with the interests of another person. The third criterion is historical groundedness: the situation must be a real case confirmed by sources, since an invented plot does not form historical thinking. The fourth criterion is age-appropriateness: the choice confronting the protagonist must lie within the range of experience intelligible to the student. The second result of the research consists in the elaboration of a six-stage didactic structure of the technology (see Table 1).

Table 1. The didactic structure of the technology of moral dilemma and discussion

Stage	Task	Action of the teacher	Risk and its elimination
1. Disclosing the situation	To set forth the situation of historical choice	Presents the case on the basis of sources, without supplying an evaluation	Premature disclosure of the teacher's evaluation — refrain from stating a position
2. Reconstructing the context	To ascertain the conditions and constraints of the period	Poses guiding questions	Anachronism — do not proceed to evaluation until the context has been reconstructed
3. Identifying the alternatives	To enumerate the courses open to the protagonist	Enters each alternative in a table	Bipolar oversimplification — require at least three alternatives
4. Conflict of values	To determine which values are in conflict	Assists in naming the values	Conflation of moral and conventional norms
5. Substantiating a position	To defend one's own choice with evidence	Evaluates only the quality of the argumentation	Voting — do not accept the majority opinion as correct
6. Reflection	To become aware of how the evaluation was formed	Has students compare their initial and final judgements	Shortage of time — do not curtail this stage

The second stage in Table 1 — the reconstruction of context — constitutes the supporting element of the technology. It is precisely this stage that distinguishes a historical dilemma from

a general moral dilemma and eliminates the risk of anachronism. In practice, however, teachers frequently proceed directly to the third stage in order to save time; as a consequence, students evaluate a decision of the past by the norms of the present, and the discussion loses its historical substance. The third result of the research consists in the analysis of two principal methodological risks. Anachronism the evaluation of past events by the norms of the present day produces in the student a simplified and linear conception of the historical process and leads to the perception of people of the past as "less intelligent than ourselves". Presentism, for its part, is the interpretation of the past solely as an instrument serving present-day requirements; it induces the selective use of historical material and the disregard of contradictory evidence. Three didactic conditions for eliminating these risks were substantiated. The first condition is the obligatory nature of context: moral evaluation is undertaken only after the conditions of the period, the available possibilities and the existing constraints have been ascertained. The second condition is the sufficiency of alternatives: at least three alternatives are considered, since otherwise the discussion is reduced to a bipolar choice and complexity is lost. The third condition is that evaluation should proceed from the quality of substantiation: the teacher works not with the student's conclusion but with the student's evidential base and logic.

The third condition raises the question of the teacher's position. If the teacher states an evaluation in advance, the discussion, although formally continuing, is in substance at an end: instead of reasoning independently, students begin to search for the expected answer. For this reason, during the first five stages of the technology the teacher manages the process but refrains from evaluation. At the same time, neutrality is not unlimited: positions that deny human dignity are not admitted as objects of discussion, and this boundary is explained clearly to the students in advance. The fourth result of the research consists in substantiating an approach to the assessment of discussion. In traditional assessment, the student's conclusion is evaluated as either correct or incorrect. In the approach proposed, three criteria are applied: the degree of reliance upon evidence, the consideration of alternative positions, and the capacity to acknowledge contradictions in one's own reasoning. These criteria make it possible to measure the cognitive and the emotional-axiological components of the moral worldview simultaneously. In discussing the results obtained, two limitations must be noted. First, the empirical data adduced were obtained within a different education system and a different cultural context; the effectiveness of the technology under the conditions of Uzbekistan requires separate verification. Second, the technology demands a high level of methodological preparedness on the part of the teacher: unless the skills of managing discussion, maintaining one's position and allocating time are specifically taught, the technology degenerates into a formal exercise.

Conclusion

The theoretical research conducted has made it possible to arrive at the following conclusions. First, the forms of moral education in the history lesson represented by didacticism and moral neutrality do not form in the student the skill of reasoning; the technology of dilemma and discussion makes it possible to resolve this contradiction. Second, a historical dilemma must satisfy four criteria: genuine contradiction, moral character, historical groundedness and age-appropriateness. Third, the didactic structure of the technology comprises six stages; the stage

of reconstructing the context constitutes the supporting element, and its omission leads to anachronism. Fourth, the risks of anachronism and presentism are eliminated by means of three conditions: the obligatory nature of context, the sufficiency of alternatives, and the assessment of evaluation according to the quality of its substantiation. Fifth, moral education through discussion and situation is not alien to the national pedagogical tradition: the debate-based structure of “Qutadghu Bilig” and Avloniy’s method of situational exposition constitute the historical evidence of this.

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