

DISCUSSION CLUB - UN-FORMAL EDUCATIONAL PROJECT

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Abstract

The educational project, "Unijunior at TSU", was established at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Tbilisi, Georgia in 2007. In order to reach the goals of "Unijunior at TSU" its Director, Dr. M.Lomouri (TSU Rector's Adviser), manages a variety of educational programs. Idea was proposed by Prof. A.Berdzenishvili and was implemented by the team: K. Murusidze, G. Grigolashvili and M.Gabelia, students of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, TSU. We choose "Discussions Club" as a form of teaching and learning methodology to familiarize the schoolchildren with the subject area of "Social Sciences". During this project schoolchildren have a chance to make a report. After each lecture there are very strong debate about various social themes. The major advantages of discussion method are: Visual Learners, Auditory Learners, Kinesthetic Learners. The main task of Unijunior at TSU today is - to give more schoolchildren, especially from the remote regions, possibility to take part in any scientific and educational events.

Keywords: educational project, university, schools, social sciences, educational method.

Methodology

The educational project, "Unijunior at TSU", was established at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Tbilisi, Georgia in 2007, in order to achieve close cooperation with schools to boost youngsters' interest in science and knowledge, to raise motivation in learning and to help schoolchildren to develop the basic mental skills - understanding and discussing any ideas ore meanings.

The activities of Unijunior at TSU are focused on:

- Offering pupils access to exact, natural and social sciences and other subjects in order to give impulses for new interests;
- Attracting interested pupils to the University, helping them to realize their inherent mental potential;
- Getting acquainted with diverse educational programs offered at TSU, assisting them in choosing the future profession.

In order to reach the goals of "Unijunior at TSU" its Director, Dr. M.Lomouri (TSU Rector's Adviser), manages a variety of educational programs. One of the educational program is a "Discussion Club", which was founded at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, TSU. Idea was proposed by Prof. A.Berdzenishvili and was implemented by the team: K. Murusidze, G.Grigolashvili and M.Gabelia, students of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, TSU.



Figure 1. Audience of the Discussion Club. Every year there are 50-60 participants.

We think, that trying different methods of learning may prevent children from feeling frustrated and inadequate, when they are not able to work up to their potential. Familiarizing with different learning styles and environments may improve child's accomplishments and understanding of their future educational choice and options.

We choose "Discussions Club" as a form of teaching and learning methodology to familiarize the schoolchildren with the subject area of "Social Sciences", to develop the skills of scientific and critical thinking, reasoning and problem solving.

The Discussion Club has been in existence for 2 years. The program gives schoolchildren, who are interested in social sciences such as political science, sociology, psychology, social work, international relation, geography and journalism, the opportunity to participate in the Discussion Club. The program lasts for one academic year from October to June. Every person who wants to participate in that program, must fill out the application form. Applicants indicate not only personal information, but also the reason, why he/she wants to be involved in the program.

The team determines the list of participants and the content of the educational program. This information is publicly available.

Discussion Club's program consists of two parts. The first part covers the period from October to February. During this period schoolchildren will receive a lot of information about the social sciences. Schoolchildren get more information about sociology, political science etc, they listen to the lectures about the different fields of social sciences.



Figure 2. Teaching process. In order to apply the theoretical knowledge and understanding of the visual method - "Information Society and Information Theory".

The second part covers the period from March to June. During this period schoolchildren get information about various social science theories. For example: What real freedom or individualism means? What is an informational age or informational society? What defines the human mood? They are also introduced different theories such as, theories of society and theory of democracy. During the program, students learn a lot of new things such ideas of great thinkers like Aristotle, Plato, Max Weber etc. Of course, schoolchildren will receive information that corresponds to their level of development. Lectures are held in the following form: the reporter will make a report according predefined themes to the program and then begins the discussion. All participants have the right to express their opinion. After the lecture the schoolchildren have a task to read some articles or watch some documentary films and write essays.



Figure 3. Participants have the opportunity to read the report on the topic of their interest - *“Human Rights”*.

During this project schoolchildren have a chance to make a report. Normally in this situation coordinator helps schoolchildren to make a report. Every year Discussion Club holds a conference, where successful participants give reports on various social issues.

After each lecture there are very strong debate about various social themes, for example - about gender roles and gender equality in Georgia, Georgian democracy and integration with the Western countries and so on: it should be noted that, one team considered, that because a man has traditionally privilege, the gender role of woman is discriminated, so Georgian government must develop some positive course which protects women.



Figure 4



Figure 5

After the lecture - *“The principles of journalistic ethics”*, participants are engaged in the discussion.

The major advantages of discussion method are:

- It teaches interpersonal skills such as understanding and communication;
- It is person It is focused on individuals thought it provides an opportunity for pupils to learn from each other, thus encouraging teamwork;
- It promotes tolerance and helps to understand, that there are many aspects or opinions to any topic;
- It also helps to develop leadership, speaking and listening skills.

Besides discussion, there are several methods, used in the Discussion Club. For example:

Visual Learners - Visual learners are those who generally think in terms of pictures. They often prefer to see things written down in a handout, text or on the overhead. They find maps, graphs, charts, and other visual learning tools to be extremely effective. They remember things best by seeing something written.

Auditory Learners - Auditory learners are those who generally learn best by listening. They typically like to learn through lectures, discussions, and reading aloud. They remember best through hearing or saying items aloud.

Kinesthetic Learners- Kinesthetic, also called tactile, learners are those who learn best through touching, feeling, and experiencing that which they are trying to learn. They remember best by writing or physically manipulating the information.



Figure 6

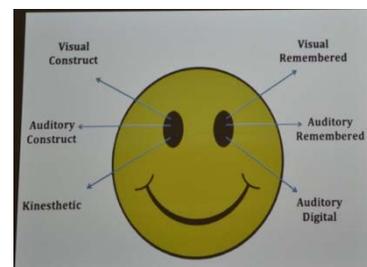


Figure 7

The visual method - “Sociology. The doctrine of society”, “Sociology. The doctrine of society”.

Discussion Club pursues the aim to improve the social responsibility and consciousness of a person. The main task of Unijunior at TSU today is - to give more schoolchildren, especially from the remote regions, possibility to take part in any scientific and educational events. For that purpose we transferred many popular programs, first of all, the Discussion Club’ events to schools far from Tbilisi, because the Discussion Club is the best place to develop main skills to be an active contemporary citizen, so we expect a lot of benefits for our participants.



Figure 8. At the end of the course every participants will be awarded by certificate.