

MODERN CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS AND IDEAS OF THE GEOGRAPHY TRAINING OF COUNTRIES IN THE BULGARIAN SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

The situational analysis of the geography training of the countries is based on new normative documents, laws, regulations, state educational standard, learning plans and curricula. The structural-content framework, the conceptual level, the horizontal and vertical links and synthesis, the conceptual ideas in the curricula for the realization of the learning purposes, the algorithm, the innovations and the traditions in the training for the countries in the new realities as a result of the educational reform in Bulgaria have been researched. The article presents the results of the complete and complex study of the field of competence „Geography of the continents and countries” according to the state educational standard and curricula. As an onto-didactic core of the analyzed is the complexity of the system in geographic training.

Applying a systematic and complex approach to unity in order to systematize learning content and expanding and deepening it, developing and building continuity between grades and stages of education. The article summarizes the cause-and-effect relationships between the individual components at the class level, stages and degrees of education and the overall geographic characteristics of the country-specific chronological unit. The didactical support for countries' geographic training is also related to the European educational framework, with curricula having a disparate structural pattern of vision and content.

The study of the geographic regions, their countries and typical representative regions, the tracking of the complex influence of natural, historical, economic, demographic and political factors on the formation of the regions, their differentiation in Europe, Asia, America, Africa, Australia and Oceania and assessing the importance of countries by region is an up-to-date and modern geographic trend - regionalization. The didactic and methodological aspects of the geography training of the countries in the context of the new educational changes and conditions were studied and outlined, outlining the objectives, the school content, the expected results and other didactical elements.

The place and role, importance and choice, the way of presentation and the algorithm for country characterization are studied, as traditional for the Bulgarian school geographic education and as a model for teaching a country. The spiral synthesis of the school content in the curriculum and its mixed model of construction require and enforce the intradisciplinary model of geographic integration and synthesis based on the introduced rules and algorithms in the training. In the study are applied content-analysis, situational and functional analysis, systematic and complex approach, authoring schemes have been developed.

For the overall analysis of the real and normative educational framework in the training for the countries in the Bulgarian school geography are applied the following methods – content-analysis, situational analysis, functional - system analysis, conceptual and

constructive analysis, complex - integrative analysis, causal analysis, comparative analysis, etc.

Keywords: school geographic education, Geography of the countries, structural-content framework, normative framework, curricula.

INTRODUCTION

An educational reform at all levels and educational degrees has been started in Bulgaria since 2016, covering the whole system of pre-school and school education and involving all participants in the educational process and institutions, as well as the relations and connections between them in order to achieve the goals of education. As a national priority, education brings together the participants in the educational process for unanimity and a three-way situated learning process for the training, upbringing and socialization of the young people. The macro framework of participants in the educational process has been expanded and decentralized to include children, students, teachers, principals, other pedagogical specialists, parents and etc.

In the conditions of educational changes, the school education system provides conditions for early development and preparation of students for school, for the acquisition of primary and secondary education and/or professional qualifications, as well as for the validation of competences acquired through non-formal training and through informal studying. [1]

The modern general education preparation in the Bulgarian schools after 2016 is carried out through the whole system of school preparation and through the study of 21 general education subjects, 10th in the sequence of the regulatory framework is the subject - geography and economics. The state educational standard for general geography preparation is a set of requirements for the training outcomes at the end of each stage and degree of education and defines

- „the aims, content and characteristics of the general education preparation;
- general education school subjects;
- the requirements for the results of training in each general education school subject for the acquisition of general education preparation”. [2]

As a consequence of the educational reform and the normative act of the unified state educational policy are introduced state educational standards (DOS) in the system of pre-school and school education - a total of 19 (Fig. 1). DOS are interdependent, complementary and mutually for different stages and degrees of education, and in the context of studying the geography of the countries in the Bulgarian school, this article examines the fourth DOS - for general education preparation in the subject of geography and economics.

The overall procedural framework of the general education preparation for the school subjects in the Bulgarian school is bound by 9 groups of key competences, with the place of the school subject geography and economics among the school subjects - Homeland studies, Man and society, History and civilizations, Philosophy, Civic education, which in functional - system unity and integration synthesis form the basis of social and civic competences (Fig. 2).

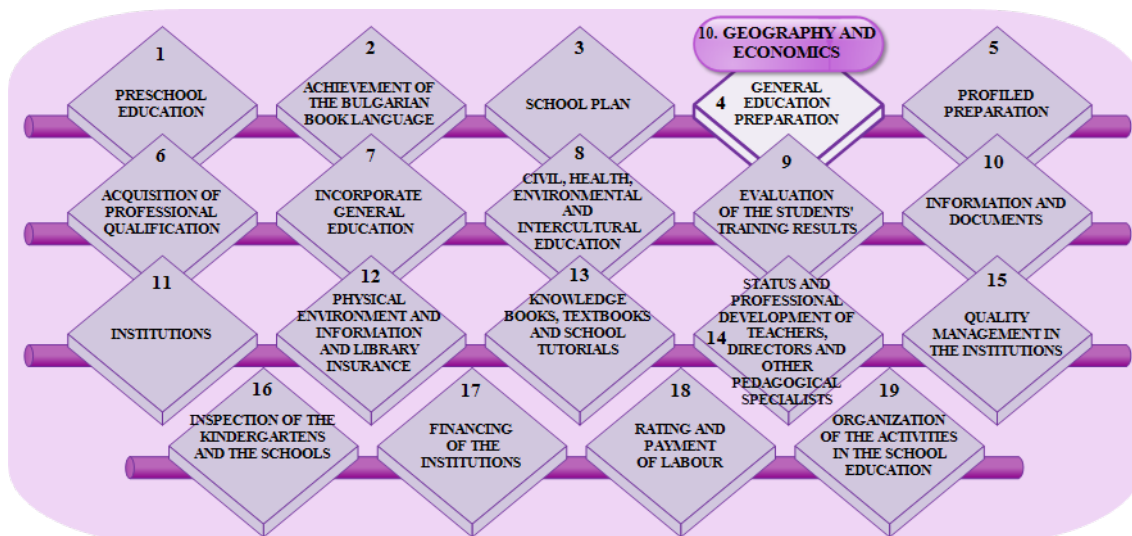


Figure 1. Macro-frame of the state educational standards in the Bulgarian school.

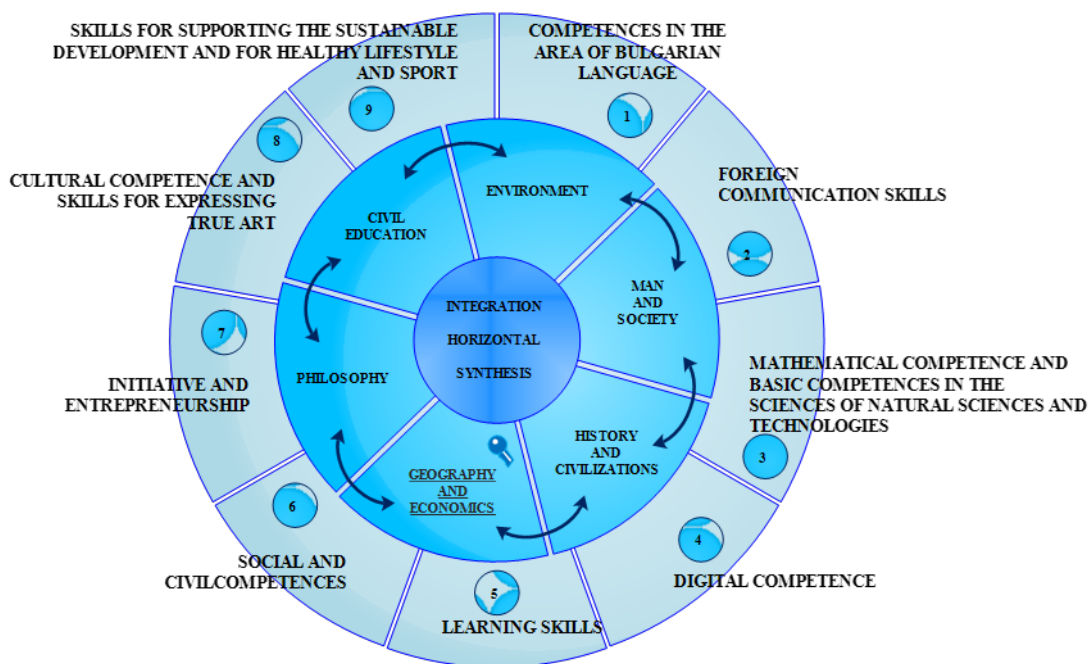


Figure 2. Integrative attachment of school subject matter and key competences groups.

Geography and economics training is part of the national educational concept for acquiring common integrative competences for:

- acquiring of key competences in learning skills, which includes understanding of the personal needs in the learning process and identifying opportunities and abilities to overcome learning difficulties, both individually and in groups;
- support for sustainable development principles, including environmental, economic and social dimensions and aiming at outlining a long-term vision for society, as well as building the ability to take personal responsibility for a sustainable future;
- acquiring competencies for critical thinking, problem - solving, decision - making, initiative, creativity, responsibility, teamwork. [2]

The last educational reform in Bulgaria continues for the sixth school year and is oriented towards diffuse unity and equalization, in which new educational elements, phenomena and processes are catching up and overlapping. Geography training is constructed on the basis of normative state educational standards, curricula and school programs in geography and economics. In the educational changes may also seek to influence the concepts and trends of global education and geographical education.

The training in geography of the countries in the Bulgarian school is constructed through a three-year phased introduction of the content vector for the curricula of the compulsory preparation in grades V, VI, VII and IX (Fig. 3, Fig. 4). The curricula for grades VII and IX are introduced in one school year. In specialized training, country training is constructed in grade XI and will be in force from the 2020/2021 school year, but is not a subject of study in this article. [3] We support the thesis that the study of the native country is part of the ideological structural - meaningful framework of regional geography and country training, but it is also not the subject of research in this article.

In two consecutive school years there are new amended and supplemented curricula in geography and economics in V and VI grade:

- 2021/2022 school year: curriculum in geography and economics for V grade;
- 2022/2023 school year: curriculum in geography and economics for VI grade (Fig. 3).

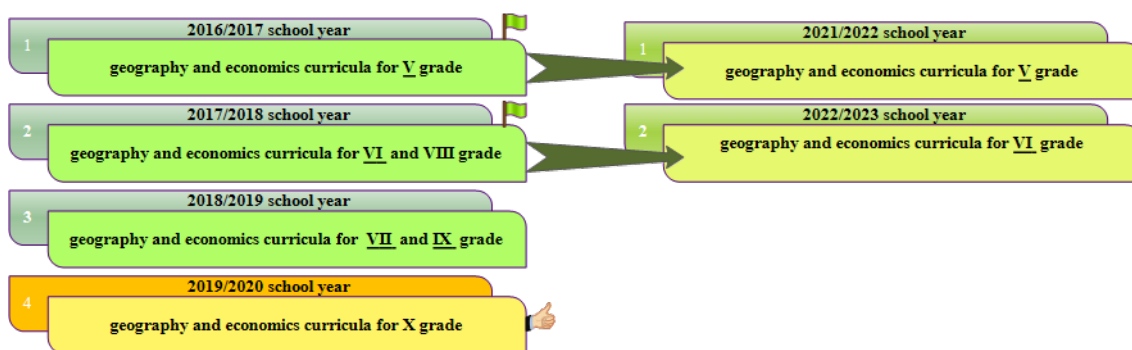


Figure 3. Chronological-educational dynamics in training for countries in the curriculums

The school content themes of the curricula and the four classes are structured in six areas of competence under the DOS, with the structural model of school geographic education 3+3, country training present in four compulsory education preparation classes, and the structural model 3+1 (Table 1).

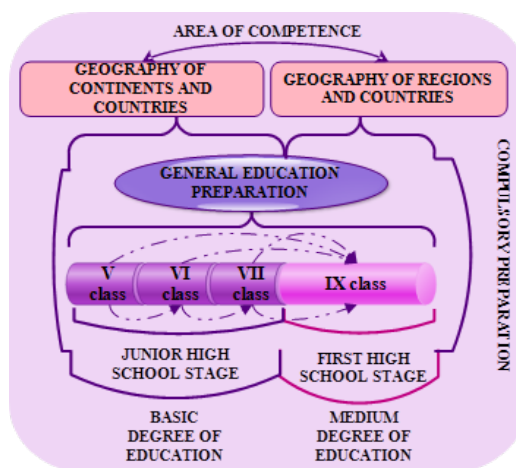


Figure 4. Geography of countries by classes, stages and degrees of education

Table 1. Place of training in geography of the countries of geography and economics by area of competence.

№	AREA OF COMPETENCE	JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STAGE BASIC DEGREE OF EDUCATION			FIRST HIGH SCHOOL STAGE AVERAGE DEGREE OF EDUCATION		
		GRADE					
		V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X
1.	The planet Earth	x			x		
2.	Geography of nature	x			x		
3.	Geography of society and economy	x				x	
4.	Geography of the continents and countries	X	X	X		X	
5.	Geography of Bulgaria			x			x
6.	Geographic information	x					x

The conceptual model of studying the continents and countries was introduced by the V grade when the subject began to be studied in the Bulgarian school as independent. The study of the countries is based on several ontodidactic bases: ways for independent acquisition of geographical information; organizing geographic knowledge through prevailing dialogues in the educational process; analyzing (critical perception of information from different sources); formulating geographical questions and answering geographical questions.

DOS for competence training Geography of continents and countries and Geography of regions and countries is situated by groups of key competences, by expected results for knowledge, skills and attitudes as a result of the training - Table. 2. [3] The expected results are formulated through B. Bloom's Taxonomic active verbs and contain the following didactic determinants of training:

- characterization of selected countries;
- characterization of a country as a rule;
- representation of a country through information technology;
- presentation of a country through text, poster, presentation;
- presentation of a country of choice;
- formulated expected results with active verbs: characterizes, explains, groups, presents, compares countries;
- characterization of countries typical of representatives of regions in the world;
- presence of the rule in the curricula in the expected results;
- commenting on the features of the natural, demographic and economic appearance of countries;
- presence of the rule in the curricula in the methodological guidelines: characteristics of the country, as a rule, the following sequence can be used: determines the geographical location; characterizes: the natural environment, government, population and economy; indicates major cities. [4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9].

Table 2. National educational standard in the training of countries by stages and degrees of education.

EXPECTED RESULTS OF KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ATTITUDES IN RESULT OF THE TRAINING	
BASIC DEGREE OF EDUCATION	MEDIUM DEGREE OF EDUCATION
Junior high school stage	First high school stage
<u>Defines</u> what geography studies and <u>describes</u> important discoveries about exploring the world and developing the geographical knowledge.	<u>Describes</u> the regional division of the world: <u>names</u> the division sign and <u>defines</u> the geographical location of the relevant regions.
<u>Characterizes</u> the geographical location and boundaries of the continents, oceans and <i>selected countries</i> .	<u>Demonstrates</u> knowledge of the political changes in the continents; <u>knows</u> the activities of international organizations and <u>assess</u> their meaning.
<u>Characterizes</u> the features of nature of the continents and oceans.	<u>Characterizes</u> by <i>algorithm</i> the specific features of the regions in the world.
<u>Characterizes</u> the political map, the population, the economy on the continents and in <i>selected countries</i> .	<u>Comments</u> the features in the natural, demographic and economic appearance of countries <u>typical representatives of regions in the world</u> .
1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9
GROUPS OF KEY COMPETENCES	
GEOGRAPHY OF THE CONTINENTS AND THE COUNTRIES	GEOGRAPHY OF REGIONS AND COUNTRIES
AREA OF COMPETENCE	

The DOS and curricula normatively integrate, relate and link areas of competence and expected training outcomes for knowledge, skills and attitudes with individual groups of key competences. The lack of links with two groups of key competences - groups 2 and 7 - is not justified. The two groups are in close interrelated and interact with the school content of geography and economics and present in the overall compulsory preparatory course.

The mixed model of the new curricula has traditionally been preserved when constructing the school content, configuration of the basic knowledge, skills and attitudes of grades V, VI, VII and IX, which have been expanded and deepened by cyclic integration geographic synthesis. [11]

In the first high school stage, geography training in countries is based on an empirical basis, which in the IX grade is generalized and in depth, but with a smaller number of deterministic countries to study. [12] The vertical link between the school content of the four classes at the two stages and the degrees of education is a reflection of the mixed model of curriculum construction (Fig. 5, Fig. 6).

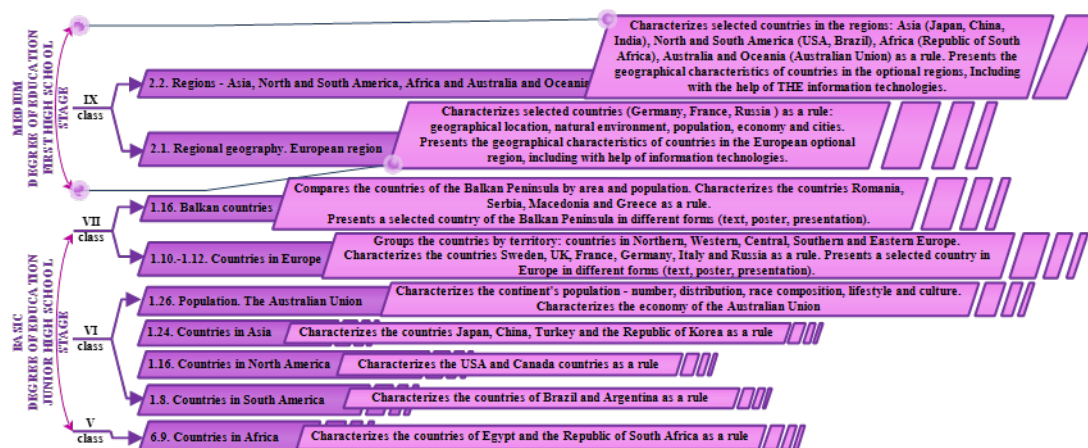


Figure 5. Macro-framework of the training geography of the countries on curricula – vertical structural-content section (at the beginning of the educational reform – from school year 2016/2017) [4, 6, 8, 9].

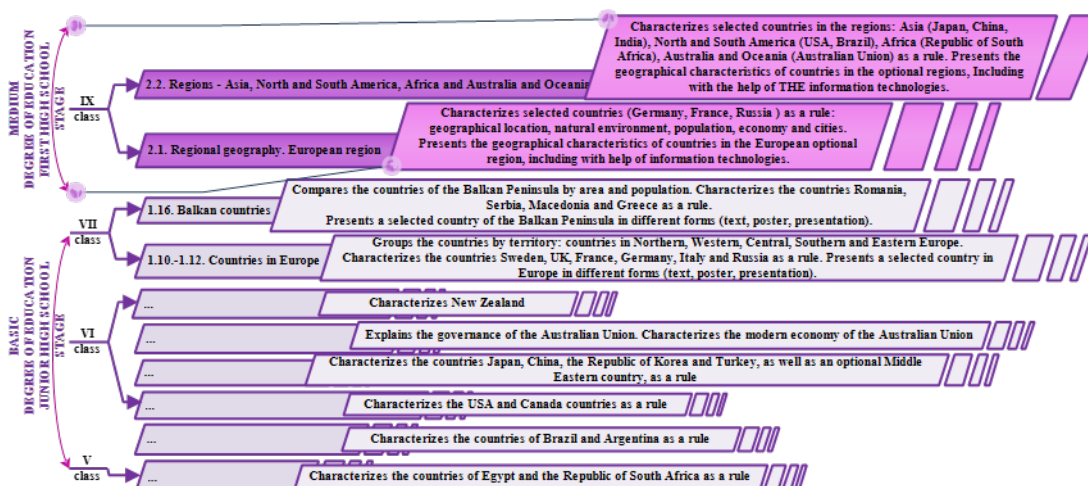


Figure 6. Macro-framework of the training geography of the countries on curricula – vertical structural-content section (in force since the school year 2022/2023) [5, 7, 8, 9].

The thematic content on the geography of continents and countries is synthesized and problematically organized around three complementary perspectives:

- the habitat of the students and its interconnections with the studied territories;
- space as an opportunity to perceive habitat in a wider context;
- environment and sustainable development - the role of everyone as to their opportunities, restrictions and geographical perspectives at local and global level.

Geography curricula for the four classes and in the overall vertical structure of country training declared a total of 32 countries for study. It is written in the curricula that there may be additional presentation of countries through text, poster, presentation and with the help of IT. For three of the classes, the same number of countries are studied and only in the first grade - V, in which geography is studied as a separate subject, only two countries are defined for study (Fig. 7). Before the educational changes in the geography curricula do not feature examples of specific countries for study, such as typical representatives for a continent or a region.

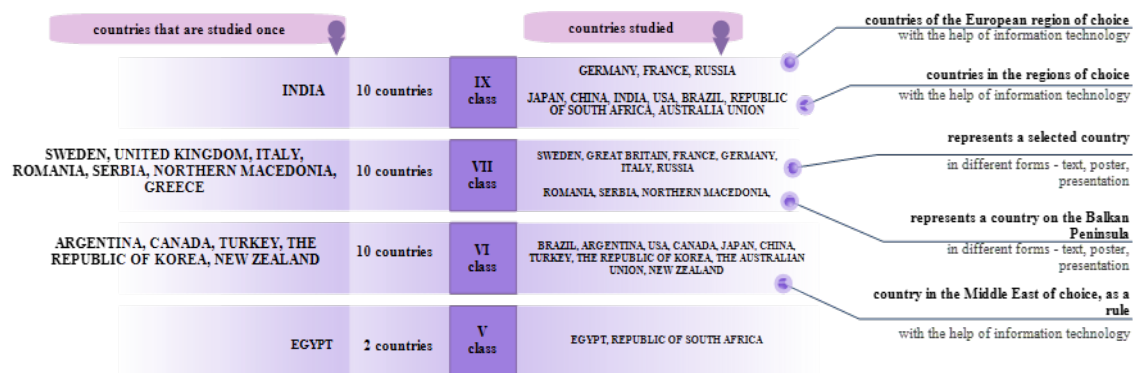


Figure 7. Normatively determined countries for studying by classes of the curricula

The specificity of country training and a new didactic foreshortening is the fixed study of a total of 14 countries once, mainly in the Junior high school stage of basic degree of education (13 countries). Only one of these 14 is a one-time studied in the first high school stage of medium degree of education - India (Fig. 7). The peculiarity of the new educational changes is the fact that out of the 14 single-time-studied countries, all neighbour countries of Bulgaria are present - 5 in total (Fig. 8). The study of the border neighbours countries of Bulgaria is determined only in the basic degree of junior high school stage of education (Fig. 8).

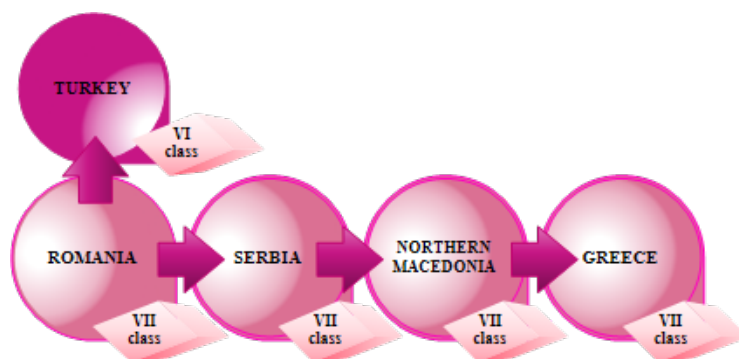


Figure 8. Normatively reglamented boundary countries for study by classes and curricula.

A specific didactic perspective in studying the geography of countries is their study in grades V, VI and VII of the basic degree and with a meaningful deployment from far to near, from Africa to Europe (Africa, South America, North America, Asia, Australia and Oceania, Antarctica, Europe), or from the unknown to the known. [13] The most procedurally fixed countries for study are the continents Europe - 10 countries and Asia - 4 countries (Fig. 9). The number of deterministic countries to study is higher in the junior high school stage - a total of 22 countries and less in the first high school stage - 10 countries. The geography training of the countries in the first high school stage is chorologically developed in the opposite direction from the near to the distant, from the familiar to the unknown - Europe, Asia, North America, South America, Africa, Australia (Fig. 10). [10]

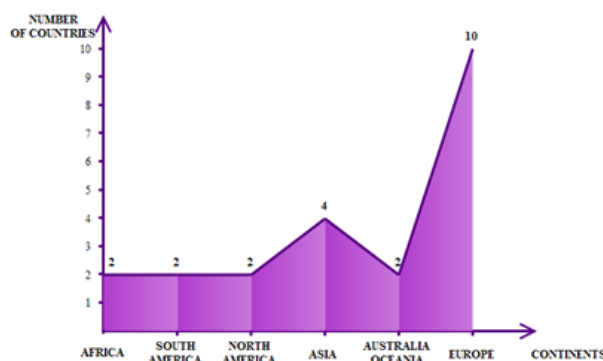


Figure 9. Number of countries to study in junior high school stage and regional vector of study Africa – Europe.

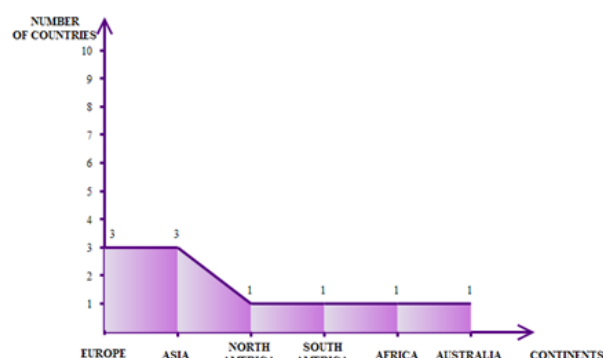


Figure 10. Number of countries to study in the first high school stage and regional vector of study Europe – Australia.

Didactic tradition in the school geography is to characterize a country in a certain sequence - rule or algorithm. [14] The geographical characteristic of a country is preserved in the new educational realities, combined with the normative competences as the expected results of training for knowledges, skills and attitudes, as well as a rule for characteristic of a country (Fig. 11). The sequence is identical for the two stages and levels of education: geographical location, natural environment, population, economy, cities. The rule for characterization of a country is an educational and didactic technology, and as a scientifically based solution for studying a country it is characterized by variability, standardization, hierarchy, complexity, consistency and dialectical unity of the steps in the rule. [10, 12, 15]

The geography training of the countries in the Bulgarian school is studied in the complex application of the following principles: regional-territorial, typological and deductive-inductive.

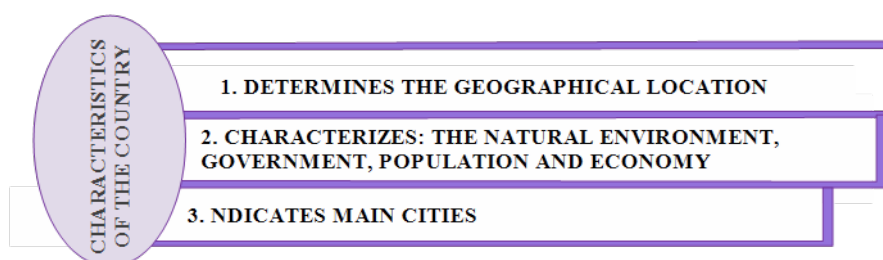


Figure 11. Rules for characterization of the country in the new curricula in geography and economics for 5th and 6th grade.

In total, in the teaching of geography of the continents and countries, the curriculum content (V, VI, VII, IX grade) is composed of 5 active verbs, applied 17 times with different frequency: characterizes, explains, groups, presents, compares (Fig. 12). Active verbs are from four of the six levels of assimilation - from the 2nd to the 5th level: 2) for understanding - explains, compares; 3) for application - characterizes; 4) for analysis - presents; 5) for synthesis - grouped.

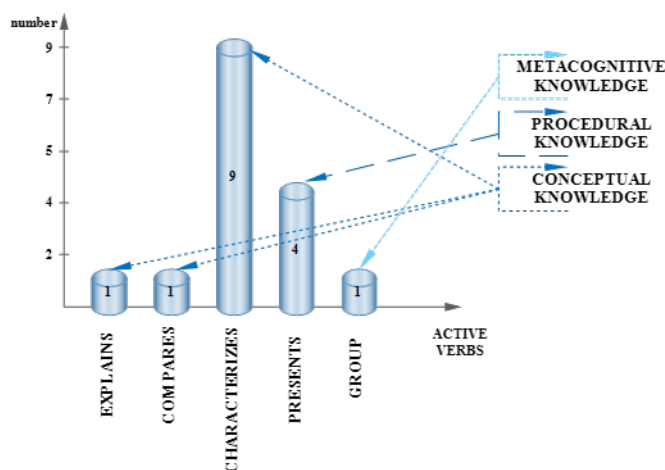


Figure 12. Model of active verbs for the formation of competencies as expected outcomes for studying countries in curricula [10]

The curricula present the horizontal connections by key competences with different repeatability, content and behavioural frameworks, classified by activity through active taxonomic verbs.

Intra - disciplinary integration synthesis in geography training in the Vth to IXth grade countries is based on a mixed model as part of the training concept of traditional school geographic education. [16] The blended model provides for systematic and expanded learning content as well as continuity at the level of linear, cyclic, methodological and holistic geographical synthesis.

For the formation of geographical culture and geographical literacy, a vertical synthesis of country training has been constructed, which provides training, upbringing and socialization in building a system of geographical knowledges. [17] The curricula have a new structure and content that realize the unity of the educational principles and goals, as well as consistency and interconnectedness between the different didactic segments of the curriculum content for countries.

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