

In the 21st century wars still take place all around the world and totalitarian regimes appear in many countries, but politicians of developed nations take a blind eye about it. Consequently, the conclusion can be made that the history lessons of former times, especially 20th century, have never been truly learnt. As far as I am concerned, the greatest factor in this problem is archaic methods of teaching History. Monotonous stories, which include countless dates and unfamiliar terms, do not promote the curiosity to learn History among students. Unfortunately, these are our realities at History lessons: students do not realize the importance, consequences or benefits of learning the subject. Therefore, our research paper aims to investigate which methods of teaching History are unprogressive and ineffective and to suggest more innovative ones.

History is an essential subject in school curriculum, which deserves more attention. It gives us greater insight to our own individual and national identities. History is a background of all political, economic and social processes, which exist in modern world. It also offer us ideas on how to solve burning problems in our society, because we can look to the past to find solutions to similar problems today.

The current situation in Ukraine, related to Russian-Ukrainian war, has shown that not everyone has enough patriotism and self-awareness as a citizen of his or her country. As far as I am concerned, the main subject in school curriculum, which had to nurture these feelings, is History. We have noticed that students are not curious about the history of their nation and cannot self-identify themselves due to the lack of knowledge of basic facts and events. We suppose that this problem is common in other countries all around the world and that is why it is high time we took an action about that. In order to investigate, in student`s opinion, which methods of teaching History at schools should be changed to make it more effective, we have conducted a questionnaire. We have interviewed 50 students of 11th grade of Olena Pchilka Kovel Lyceum, Volyn region, Ukraine.

The first question “Do you think that History is one of the most important subject in school curriculum?” aims to demonstrate the real attitude of students to the subject. The statistics say that 62% do not, and only 38% do (Addition A). The society, especially younger generations, has undergone a number of changes, but the

educational system remains the same. Students have to memorize a huge amount of dates and learn terms by heart without understanding how they influenced the world and what impact they have on development of nowadays society. Therefore, learning History is not determined by knowledge of dates without context. It is the background for a young person to identify him-/herself as a citizen of his/her country and to realize the involvement to the development of it.

By the second question “Do you think that 1 or 2 History lessons per week are enough to fully understand historical events, phenomena and processes?” we wanted to demonstrate the lack of sufficient lessons per week in the official program offered by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. Students learn History at a rapid speed and do not have time to absorb and reflect upon all the information, which they are given. For instance, in one lesson, a student heard new dates and terms and at the second one, he or she had to learn other ones instead of realizing the consequences and making his or her own conclusions. In this way, learning History turns into familiarization of common dates, but, crucially, not the development of critical thinking. Experts, such as winner of Global Teacher Prize Ukraine Vasyl Diakiv, state that the lack of History lessons is one of the main reasons of many events that took place in Ukraine after 2014.

According to the statistics of the questionnaire, 60% of students think that 1 or 2 History lessons per week are enough to fully understand historical events, phenomena and processes, while 40% do not (Addition B). In my opinion, this is explained by the fact that 40% of students are conscious about the importance of History, but simultaneously, they have become victims of ineffective methods of teaching. While the choice of 60% serves as further proof to the statement that students are not interested in learning History.

In the next question “In your opinion, which changes should be made to teach History at school better?” we offered the interviewers some common concepts and principles of teaching History which could either be rejected or accepted (Addition C). They are stated beneath:

- Teaching History of Ukraine in the context of European and world development

- Rejection of the concept “Ukrainians suffered throughout their whole history”
- Rejection of the concept “There is a permanent enemy to Ukraine”
- The increase in the emphasis not on political, but social history and history of everyday life
- Demonstrating pluralism in the life choices of historical leaders
- Teaching History in the complex (fashion, literature, music, natural phenomena etc.)

It turned out that the most acceptable principle for students is “Teaching History of Ukraine in the context of European and world development”, which was chosen by 58% of the respondents. Experts claim that historical events in one country are tightly connected to general development trends of the world. Furthermore, some processes in one country can become reasons, prerequisites or consequences of events in other ones. For instance, in order to understand the reasons of Afghan War, Caribbean crisis or Korean War, students should realize that these were the manifestations of the confrontation between the USA and USSR known as “Cold War”.

The second statement “Rejection of the concept “Ukrainians suffered throughout their whole history” was chosen by 28% of students. This concept is commonly used by historians to tell the whole history of the Ukrainian people. According to Vasyl Diakiv, students are taught about the independence of Ukraine only in 10th and 11th grade, but during 5-9th grade, they learn about various attempts of the Ukrainian people to build their country, which initially turned out to be unsuccessful. As a result, many 9th grade students do not understand the importance of the independence and statehood and imagine the idea of being “Ukrainian” as simply unsuccessful attempt at creating a national identity. Therefore, we would like to suggest teaching History by concentric approach (offered by Iryna Vasylykiv, the author of History textbooks). This means that historical periods are taught repeatedly, so that every student can realize the whole concept of world history. According to this approach, teachers should emphasize the topic of independence and success of statehood throughout the whole course of History to nurture feeling of patriotism and appreciation of everything “Ukrainian”.

Our next suggestion is “Rejection of the concept “There is a permanent enemy to Ukraine”, which was chosen by 28% of the respondents. Due to current events in

Ukraine and the world as well, we need to talk about integrity of the whole humankind. Throughout the whole history, different peoples and states were considered enemies to Ukrainians, but it is imperative not concentrate on the past, but instead think of the ways to cooperate and integrate cultures nowadays. During different periods, Ukrainians had numerous misunderstandings with the Polish people; these events were characterized by cruel fighting. However, nowadays both nations have demonstrated their shared desire to live peacefully, forgive one another for past wars and establish firm, friendly cultural and political relationships.

The statement “The increase in the emphasis not on political, but social history and history of everyday life” was chosen by 44%. In my opinion, for average people it is less important to fully know political events, but rather how these events influenced wider society and which lessons have been learned from these events. Usually, only one section is dedicated to history of everyday life in a year course, but this knowledge is essential to be aware of consequences of events, which take place in modern world.

The next concept “Demonstrating pluralism in the life choices of historical leaders” was chosen by 36% of respondents. It is important to realize that all people have advantages and disadvantages and sometimes one group might make mistakes, just as historical leaders do. While learning History, we strictly divide historical figures into two groups: positive and negative. However, as usual not everything is binary in nature, so mainly positive heads of states or movements can make mistakes or those leaders, who we suppose to judge, can do great things. It is essential that students acknowledge both the faults and strengths in respective leaders when learning about their histories.

The last statement “Teaching History in the complex (fashion, literature, music, natural phenomena etc.)” was chosen by 40% of the students. Overall, History is not only about battles, movements or debates, it is also about everyday life of average people, their attitudes to fashion, music etc. History is a study about our past, and is not limited to notable political events. For example, it is worth knowing how natural phenomena and elements influenced lives of our ancestors and how they affected political and economic processes. Another reason why History complex is so important, is the fact, not every student is interested in History in the way it is taught.

However, if everyone specialized in an area of interest specific to them (literature, architecture, connection to Geography etc.), more and more students would be curious about learning History.

In the next part of our questionnaire, we asked the respondents suggest their own ideas of how to make History lessons more exciting and engaging. The responses were: “Use more interactive task on computers during lessons”. “Make competitions with classmates on different historical topics. “Discussing and compering historical events of different centuries”. “It would be better if teachers provide the similarities between historical events in different ages and explain a relation of these to our times”. “Learning in a more interesting and entertaining way, using innovative methods and techniques”. “Recitation of self-created presentations on the topic of the lesson; team work; tournaments as a way to sum up the studied topics” (Addition D). This demonstrates that students are eager to realize historical events and find similarities between them, use different ways to cooperate, summarize the material and remember it for practical use.

In the last question of our questionnaire, we offered the respondents to select innovative methods and techniques, which should be used at History lessons to make them more interesting (Addition E). The methods and techniques are following:

- Trips to the historical sites and museums.
- Use entertaining memory aids to help students remember dates.
- Transform History Classes into Stories.
- Group and pair discussion.
- Learn History in STEM-laboratories and 3D-cimenas.
- Put up reenactments of famous battles and important historical events.

The first statement “Trips to the historical sites and museums” was chosen by 54% of the respondents. In Kovel, my hometown, there is a historical museum, where I have been twice to collect certain data for my research papers. However, I am sure, that the majority of my classmates have never been there. It is important to encourage young people to learn about past of their town and History lessons are the thing, which should contribute to this.

We have stated before that dates are not the most important thing in History, however it is worth saying that some significant ones should be memorized by students. Therefore, the statement “Use entertaining memory aids to help students remember dates” was chosen by 42%. The best way to memorize dates is by using interactive apps on the phone so that students can do this anywhere.

Sometimes a narrative of a teacher turns into a boring story with a number of dates, terms and facts. This is one of the main reason why students do not master the material. As a result, the statement “Transform History Classes into Stories” was chosen by 42% of the respondents. It would be more beneficial for students when a teacher builds their narrative as a story, which stirs up emotions, is motivating and develops cognitive sphere of the listeners.

The results of the previous questions showed that students offered competitions, teamwork, tournaments as the ideas how to improve History lessons. Evidently, students seek cooperation. For this reason, the statement “Group and pair discussion” was selected by 40% of the respondents. Experts say, that the educational system, which makes students work on their own during lessons and, especially, exams, kill their team skills. Team skills are key ones in adult life, which help improve all other significant skills.

Due to computerization of all spheres of our lives, students want to use modern technology at the lessons. The statement “Learn History in STEM-laboratories and 3D-cimemas” was selected by more than a half of the respondents (58%). In Ukraine, certain science classes are provided with innovative equipment. In my opinion, it is worth creating STEM-classes in not only Physics or Chemistry classrooms, but also Humanities classrooms (History as well). They can include 3D-battle layouts, relief maps and video reenactments of ancient cities or significant historical events.

It is scientifically proven that learning under emotions, is memorized better. Therefore, we suggest a method of putting up reenactments of famous battles and important historical events, which was selected by 42% of respondents in the questionnaire. From our point of view, costumes, decorations and soundtracks related to the topic of the lessons would help students take a short glimpse into a particular historical period and encourage them to learn more about it.

In summary, we have conducted a questionnaire among students of 11th grade. It has demonstrated that more than a half of students do not consider History as one of the most important subjects in school curriculum. In addition, we have found out that there is an insufficient number of lessons per week for students to fully process all the material they are given. In the questionnaire, we have offered some conceptions and principles how to improve teaching History. Students also had an opportunity to share their own ideas. The next step was to determine innovative methods and techniques that students could identify themselves, with the goal of applying them in History lessons to make them more interesting.

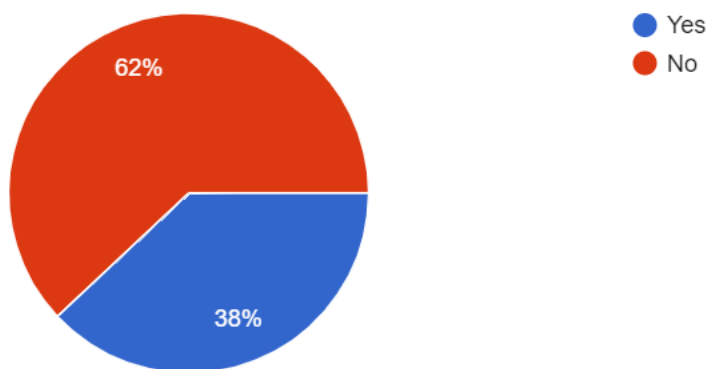
Overall, History gives us greater insight of the function of the world in the past. This knowledge can be then applied to the problems of today, giving those who study the past a distinct advantage. Younger generations face a number of difficulties learning History, but we have found out that there are hundreds of ways how to improve History lessons and make them more interesting, exciting and innovative. As the aforementioned research has unequivocally concluded, students are ready for such changes and have a strong desire to participate in their implementation.

In order to write this research paper, I used such illustrative material:

- <https://nus.org.ua/articles/vasyl-dyakiv-pro-te-chomu-vyvchennya-istoriyi-cherez-nabir-dat-shkodyt-i-chomu-pochynaty-temu-nezalezhnosti-v-starshij-shkoli-tse-zapizno/>
- <https://osvita.ua/blogs/61652/>
- The results of the questionnaire:
<https://forms.gle/Us5w7MKp3ecEaXzG9>

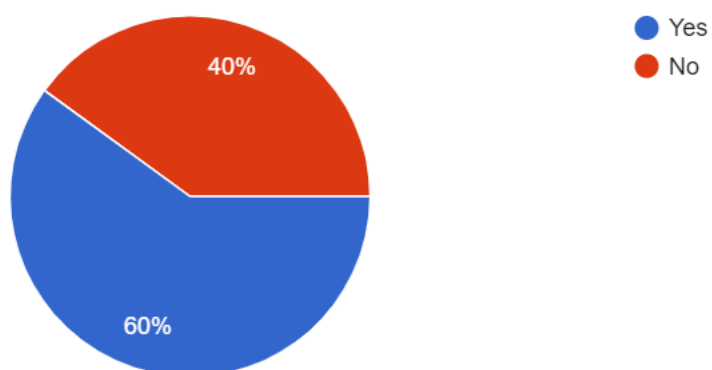
Do you think that History is one of the most important subjects in the school curriculum?

50 responses



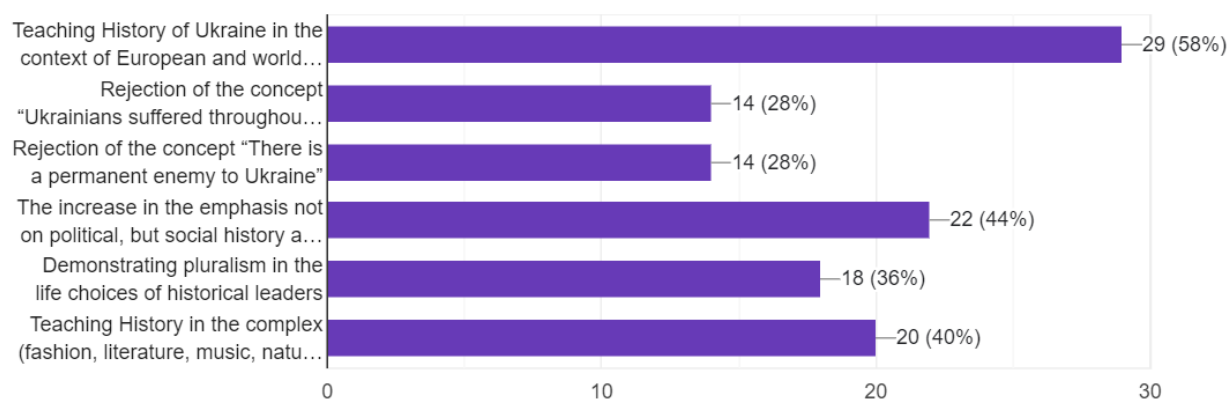
Do you think that 1 or 2 History lessons per week are enough to fully understand historical events, phenomena and processes?

50 responses



In your opinion, which changes should be made to teach History at school better?

50 responses



What other changes can you suggest for teaching History at your school better and making it more exciting and interactive?

History events, projects, trips

Make competitions with classmates on different historical topics. Discussing and competing historical events of different centuries

It would be better if teachers provide the similarities between historical events in different ages and explain a relation of these to our times.

learning in a more interesting and entertaining way, using innovative methods and techniques

Декламування власноруч створених презентацій на тему уроку; командні роботи ; турніри , як спосіб підсумувати вивчені теми;

In your opinion, what innovative methods and techniques should be used at History lessons to make them more interesting?

50 responses

