

Patriotic Celebrations in Educational Commemoration Practices in Ukraine

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- School commemoration is an organized process influenced by social memory discourse
- Holiday celebrations reflect the transformation of the official holidays calendar
- Complex relations exist between school patriotic rituals, official aims and civic identity
- Military conflict influences the strengthening of patriotic character in school celebrations
- Patriotic rituals display elements of contradiction between citizenship and patriotic education discourses

Purpose: This study aims to provide information on the main tendencies across the transformation of the official holidays calendar in Ukraine over the last decades and to demonstrate its influence on school celebrations. Also discussed here is the role of these factors in the parallel but sometimes contradictory processes of the students' civic identity formation.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The article is based on documentary analysis, an interdisciplinary literature review and an examination of current practices with regard to national holidays in Ukraine. Patriotic rituals are analyzed through examples and evidence of school celebrations of the main calendar dates, including audiovisual materials in different school settings. The authors' observations have been corroborated with evidence from Ukrainian students and teachers as seen in the results of the questionnaire. These reflect their perception and experience of school celebrations.

Findings: The results demonstrate that the transformation of the official holidays calendar in Ukraine has had an impact on school commemoration practices. This in turn has become a factor in the formation of students' civic identity. School patriotic rituals reflect a contradiction between the discourses of citizenship, patriotism and national upbringing in an emergent democracy in the continuing context of military conflict.

Key words: Ukrainian holidays celebrations, commemoration, patriotic rituals in school, civic identity, patriotism, citizenship education, democratic values.

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1 Introduction

During the 20th century Ukraine experienced many political changes which influenced celebrations in both the political and educational context¹. The political transitions since the proclamation of independence 1991 in Ukraine and its border areas respectively affected the practice (and application) of historical memory, introducing different and controversial historical narratives in the public sphere. It has also been reflected in the formation of a new system of holidays, and a new structuring of the past.

The work of Paul Connerton (1989) on the construction of social memory in a sense provides both an underpinning and a working hypothesis for our research. He concludes that social memory construction is impossible without the respective ceremonies. Connerton interprets political rituals as operating within political contexts in which power is distributed in a systematically unequal way, so that rituals may be understood as exercising cognitive control by providing the official version of the political structure with symbolic representations. In the modern period national elites have invented rituals that claim continuity with an appropriate historic past, organizing ceremonies, parades and mass gatherings, and constructing new ritual spaces. Ritual actions should be interpreted as exemplifying the kinds of cultural values that are regarded as currently politically acceptable, perhaps by a majority. Commemorative ceremonies play a significant role in the shaping of communal memory.

Steven Lukes (1975) suggests using the term “ritual” concerning activities and deeds where people are guided by the rules of the symbolic character in such a way that the attention of participants is attracted to certain ideas and feelings which are assigned a special meaning. Pierre Nora (2005) fine-tunes this by drawing on the paradigm of decolonization, specifying the type of decolonization intrinsic to the peoples who were under the reign of totalitarian regimes. The process of freeing their historical memory from ideological frameworks of a totalitarian kind is seen as a necessary condition of socio-economic and political freedom, as well as offering the possibility of forming new frameworks.

The holidays topic represents various issues, significant for understanding the transformation of Ukrainian society in the independence period after 1991. The cardinal political and socio-cultural changes in Ukraine of the last decade have caused the formation of the new festive calendar. The controversies and contradictions of post-Soviet, post-colonial and Ukrainian national historical narratives became the distinctive features of memory policy in Ukraine across the years of independence and these features were reflected in the emergent patriotic commemoration practices in schools.

In the latest Ukrainian research into the dynamic political and socio-cultural changes there is an increasing interest in the festive culture, and consequently attempts have been made to reinterpret the holidays discourse critically (Tarapon, 2016; Hayevska, 2012; Lymanska, 2003; Malooka, 2017; Liubarets, 2016; Kyrydon, 2017). Researchers consider the most characteristic definitive feature of the ritual and festive canon to be its symbolism, because every ritual consists of a system of actions which appear as symbols (signs) of certain social ideas, values and norms. Through rituals and ceremonies stereotypical forms of mass behavior are developed, and this takes place to normalize automatic involvement in the dominating system of regulations. Ceremonies affect not only the intellect, but also the feelings of their participants (Tarapon, 2016). Rituals, holidays, customs and traditions always act as a special



form of communication among people, performing cognitive, educational, emotional-psychological and aesthetic functions. "Holiday" as a social phenomenon carries a special functional load in the transitional periods of the society development (Kyrydon, 2017).

In the post-Soviet countries some dates are of great significance in the collective memory, the traditions of celebrating which originated in the Soviet Union and which still have or have had a partial ideological basis:

Defender of the Fatherland Day (February, 23) (originally known as Red Army Day) was celebrated in Soviet Union on February 23rd since 1918. It was initially dedicated to veterans and members in the Armed Forces, though it is known as Men's Day and commonly treated as a celebration of all men.

International Workers' Day (May, 1-2) was a public holiday and was celebrated with huge parades in cities in former Soviet Union.

The Victory Day (May, 9) commemorates (and indeed celebrates) the end of what was known in the Soviet era as "The Great Patriotic War".

Wagner, Davis and Osborn (2011) pointed out that celebrations are important organizers of the school calendar and all its activities, in the sense of serving as an axis of collective memory and of time in general, because a number of school activities are scheduled according to these dates and commemorations.

In our research, special attention is paid to the commemoration of the most politically instrumentalized holidays – the Defender of the Fatherland Day and the Victory Day. In some countries, like Russia, the Soviet versions of these dates – Defender of the Fatherland Day (February 23) and the Victory Day (May 9) are still alive. In Ukraine, these calendar dates have been undergoing an intense revision in the last years reflecting commemoration practices in schools. The new practices of celebration of these holidays in schools (8 May – the Day of Memory and Reconciliation, 9 May – the Day of Victory over Nazism in Europe, the Victory Day; 14 October – the Defender of Ukraine Day), and additionally the development of the new traditions of celebration in Ukraine – of the Day of Dignity and Freedom (November 21) will also be examined.

2 Contradictions in World War II commemoration practices in national identity construction.

The remembrance of World War II is characterized by controversy and contentedness in the collective memory of the Ukrainian people and its neighbors. As Wilfried Jilge (2006) noticed, the heroic narrative of the "Great Patriotic War" was one of the Soviet Union's legitimizing myths. The maintenance, modification, or re-evaluation of this myth since the end of perestroika (Ukrainian: *perebudova*) remains among the most controversial key issues in the Ukrainian debate over the past.

"Battles of memory" are an important element of the commemorations of 8/9th of May [*Victory Day, Ukr. - Den' Peremohy*] in Ukraine and their commemorative practices are connected with political interests and identity issues. The core theme in such conflicts is the attitude to the Soviet past and its heritage. On the other hand, such struggle for establishing a certain version of memory in the public space testifies to not only to the development of civil



society, but also to the implementation of the democratic principles of pluralism and freedom in Ukraine's socio-political sphere, in contrast to those of Russia and some other post-Soviet countries where heroic memory about the Great Patriotic War became a sacred part of the authoritarian policy of the state apparatus and accordingly, raised the memory of World War II above the possibility of any component which favored critical scrutiny.

It is worth pointing out that there is an ambivalence in the practice of commemorating memorable dates of the World War II in Ukraine which is manifest in the co-existence of different models of memory – post-Soviet, national and European ones. In particular, the post-Soviet tradition of the analysis of World War II events in the light of the Soviet ideology considers it as the Great Patriotic War which started on June 22, 1941 with the attack of Germany on the Soviet Union, but the European model broadens and back-dates the chronology of war to an event which started in 1939. In addition to the present post-Soviet model of memory of the World War II elements of Soviet identity (the Soviet myth of “Great Patriotic War” as a symbolic resource for ‘consolidation the entire people of Ukraine’) (Jilge, 2005), in the years of independence in Ukraine, the Ukrainian national perspective of memory of the World War II has grown in significance.

After the Revolution of Dignity² of 2014 [Ukrainian: *Revoluciya hidnosti*] the memory policy and public perception of the Soviet heritage in Ukraine underwent radical changes. The reinterpretation of the Victory Day celebration took place in 2014. It was connected with the hybrid war in the East of Ukraine and active appeals of the pro-Russian separatists for the revival of Soviet models of memory about the World War II (Liubarets, 2016). Ukraine together with Europe and the world began honoring the memory of all the victims of the World War II of 1939-1945 on May 8, which was officially proclaimed the Day of Memory and Reconciliation according to the Law of Ukraine “On memorialization of the victory over Nazism in the World War II of 1939–1945”. On May 9, the state holiday is marked as the Day of Victory over Nazism in Europe, the Victory Day. It should be mentioned that this addition of May 8 marked a move away from the narrow Soviet tradition of victory celebrations to a recognition that there can be an international or transnational dimension to patriotic commemorations.

3 How do patriotic and citizenship education discourses influence the schools' patriotic celebrations?

Traditionally school is one of the main places where processes of socialization take place, which results in forming the sense of social belonging and the ability to perform one's social role successfully. Schools themselves can be part of the transition away from authoritarianism. Schools can affect the community to some extent and be affected by it; any policy of education, and particularly the one under consideration, both reflects and conditions the political culture that generated it (Gregg, 2015).

New states are an interesting arena in which citizenship education can be examined, as these states tend to give priority to the nation-building policies in the first decades of their existence—i.e. to policies promoting cultural unity and unconditional loyalty to the state (Coulby, 1997; Green, 1997). A key question that providers of citizenship education must face is the extent to which they should be involved in accepting the polarities which would result from a difficult choice between promoting either critical attitudes or allegiance to the state, or



whether there should be a different approach consisting of a more creative construct which combines criticality with loyal citizenship (McCowan, 2004).

Discussion about the dimension of patriotism in Ukraine, its connection with national, state and civic identity is reflected in many publications over the years of independence. The researcher considers patriotism as a spiritual and moral principle of a person's life activities which is characterized by the responsible attitude of a person to the native land, to Motherland, to people (Chorna, 1997; Ihnatenko, Popluzhnyj, Kosareva, & Krytska, 1997; Vyshnevskyi, 2003; Korkishko, 2007).

In pedagogical literature considerable attention is paid to the importance of calendar holidays and anniversaries as a means of national and patriotic upbringing of youth. In particular, Korkishko (2007) notes that a great cycle of folk, religious, family traditions and holidays contribute to enriching students with patriotic feelings which reveal the emotional attitude of a child to himself/herself, to the world around them, to people, to Motherland, to national values. Silenko (2015) does not stress the importance of criticality, but emphasizes that enriching students with patriotic feelings takes place in the process of familiarizing themselves with the history of the heroic past of the Ukrainian nation. Kovalchuk (2013) emphasizes that the main objective of celebrating in schools is the consolidation of society and its cohesion around the national idea, education of students' patriotic feelings.

The above-mentioned approach to patriotic education by means of school celebrations reflects the tension between the discourses of active citizenship, patriotism and national upbringing in educational practice in schools in the context of the dichotomy of "constructive versus blind patriotism" (Schatz, Staub and Lavine, 1999). Blind patriotism is described as a stiff and uncompromising belonging to the country characterized by indisputable positive evaluation, convinced loyalty and intolerance to criticism, and constructive patriotism is a kind of belonging to the country characterized by an attitude of "critical loyalty" (Schatz et al., 1999).

This notion of constructive patriotism as contrasted to blind patriotism, can influence the formation and successful functioning of civil society. Russian researcher Anna Sanina (2016) points out that the militarized character of contemporary Russian state policy in the patriotic upbringing sphere shows the dominance of blind patriotism in society, with an obvious accent on militarism. In the framework of patriotic upbringing Russian citizens have no possibility to develop critical thinking or the "critical loyalty" that is characteristic for constructive patriotism, and also the related decision-making skills, based on a clear understanding and realization of one's actions. The lack of any opportunity to question a mythic master narrative, or even suggest that the national story might be more complex, is part of the problem.

A particular challenge in Ukraine is seeking to reconcile a revised post-Soviet national narrative with the survival in parts of Eastern Ukraine of elements of the older allegiances and interpretations, and in a way these form two parallel heroic narratives, an old and a new. In the West and Centre of Ukraine the old heroic version is contested, but this discussion is permissible in the new democratic state. However, a new attitude to what it means to be 'heroic' in the present is needed, more of a civic definition and one that goes beyond ethnicities.

It should be mentioned that the critical reinterpretation of patriotic education in modern socio-cultural conditions is insufficiently represented in Ukrainian pedagogy, with the



exception of several works by Sukhomlynska (2010), Mudryi (2009), and Kendzor (2016). Mudryi conflates patriotism with gaining personal ownership of a tailor-made kind of citizenship. Patriotism today is not only a moral category, not only a type of experience, but to a greater extent it is an ability and competence to act in the contradictory world, preserving at the same time one's identity and dignity. Mudryi (2009) writes that it is not heroic or tragic rhetoric, neither endless conversations about "struggle" which will have a positive effect on the youth, and historical knowledge itself will not have any educational importance until its significance has become understandable for a specific person.

Patriotic education of school students in a modern (democratic) society, in the opinion of Sukhomlynska (2010), should not be driven solely by the academic ideas of patriotism in corresponding sets of abstract knowledge constructions, but should offer alternative plans to allow students to get involved in active volunteer exercises free from evaluation, where shared democratic values can be expressed not just intellectually but emotionally and for the benefit of society.

Similarly, Kendzor (2016) flags up doubts about whether interest in one's own history, folk traditions, coloring in state symbols or other state infrastructure objects, using the elements of national clothes in everyday practice, etc., are sufficient properties of a modern Ukrainian patriot. Therefore, there is a recommendation that the ethnic nature of Ukrainian patriotism should be transformed into a different sense of citizenship which can be defined principally through the development of civic identity in an individual personality to reflect the conditions of a democratic political system.

It worth pointing out that apart from the work of these critics, there was not a widespread reinterpretation of the cultural-historical dynamics of the holiday phenomenon in the context of pedagogy, neither in the patriotic nor the civic education of students. The changes and influence of the state memory policy on commemoration practices in schools have been overlooked by the researchers.

The Crimea's annexation⁴ (February-March 2014), and the military events in the East of Ukraine since 2014 have emphasized or certainly contextualized the actualization of patriotic upbringing of youth at the levels of both state policy level and of commemorative practice in schools. It has had an impact on how the concept of national and patriotic education for children and youth should be defined and developed. In Order No. 641 which followed there is a distinct move away from a heroic to a civic definition of patriotic citizenship.

The Government's Order No. 641 which defines the concept, was adopted on 16 June 2015 by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. The Concept stipulates that the aims and objectives of the patriotic and civic education elements in the education (and upbringing) of children and youth, should be the following:

- to strengthen patriotic values and beliefs in the consciousness and feelings of an individual;
- to realize the interconnection between individual freedom, human rights and an individual's responsibility;
- to promote the ability to determine the forms and ways of their own participation in the life of civil society;



- to cooperate with governmental and social institutions;
- to abide with the laws of the state and protect human rights;
- to be willing to take responsibility upon oneself;
- to develop the capacity for solving conflicts according to democratic principles; to adopt a tolerant attitude towards other nations, cultures and traditions;
- to recognize a sense of humanistic morality as the basis of civil society (Concept of National Patriotic Education).

There are clearly messages here for understanding other states with empathy, recognizing why change has not happened, and that under authoritarian regimes, such as the neighboring Russian Federation, heroic narratives persist, and freedom of speech and multiple interpretations are not possible. There are messages here too for Ukraine, to celebrate the opportunities which belonging to a democratic state can offer, and not least, while embracing the new democratic freedoms and the changes to the nature of holidays, the necessity of adopting a critical, self-aware and open stance towards its own history. This assumes that being democratic in everyday life is an alternative to being heroic in a military sense, or perhaps at least recognizes that it should remain as a strong supplementary imperative in a society where military activity is a continuing necessity for national defense.

At the same time it should be mentioned that the ideas of directing the prospects of patriotic education development in Ukraine towards a constructive and critical approach are indeed being implemented in practice by the academic and pedagogical community (in effect universities, colleges and schools and their corresponding local communities) in developing education for democratic citizenship, and this has gained in importance in Ukraine since independence and especially following the Dignity revolution (2013-2014).

Regulatory and legislative bases of citizenship education in Ukraine are stated in the new Law of Ukraine "On Education", and in the directions of citizenship education. These are described in the National Strategy of Promoting the Development of Civil Society in Ukraine for 2016-2020 and the National Strategy in the Sphere of Human Rights. Article 12 of the Law of Ukraine "On Education" defines 12 key competences, in particular, "civic and social competences related to the ideas of democracy, justice, equality, human rights, welfare and healthy lifestyle with realization of equal rights and possibilities", as well as critical thinking as a cross-curricular competence (Law of Ukraine Nr. 2145-VIII "On Education", 2017).

Taking into account all the above-mentioned, we consider that the prospects of patriotic education development in Ukraine should be directed at building up a civic nation based on interpersonal trust among citizens, cooperation and joint actions for the benefit of the society. Ukrainian patriotism should be the result of practical implementation of the responsible sense of citizenship based on democratic values. In order to fulfill this task, teachers should seek to draw on their skills to develop the competences of a democratic culture which will enable students effectively to meet the demands of the associated social challenges. Democratic values should be at the core of the process of student identity-building in these commemorative practices. As a result, patriotic feelings should become for the Ukrainian youth not only a firm and conscious association of identity with the native country, but also the readiness for responsible active democratic participation.



4 Commemoration practices in schools in Ukraine

4.1 The Day of Memory and Reconciliation and Victory Day commemoration

As a rule, commemorative practices in schools have been preserved since the Soviet Union period, although there have been considerable changes in their content and in their outward forms in the post-Soviet countries since the times of independence. In particular, much of the systematic character of commemoration in schools still reflects the shape of the Soviet tradition.

The procedure of public holiday commemorations in Ukraine is regulated by official documents such as the Presidential Decree № 84/2017, “On commemorating the Day of Memory and Reconciliation” and, according to the order given to the administrative heads of regions, at the levels of region and city there are details about the nature of the plan of events devoted to the Day of Memory and Reconciliation and Victory over the Nazism in the World War II. The Ukrainian National Memory Institute, in the framework of commemoration of memorable dates in secondary schools, has developed information materials on marking the Day of Memory and Reconciliation.

The main commemorative practices on marking the Day of Memory and Reconciliation on May 8 and the Day of Victory over the Nazism in the World War II on May 9 are a meeting with veterans, laying flowers at the Unknown Soldier’s grave, a whole school assembly-requiem and a festive concert. School students visit surviving war veterans and victims of Nazi persecutions, and ensure that monuments, memorials and war burial sites of the victims of World War II are preserved in good order.

Here are several examples of how the Day of Memory and Reconciliation is commemorated in the schools of Ukraine. This video of May 4, 2018 demonstrates a concert requiem devoted to the Day of Memory and Reconciliation and the Victory Day in school № 16 Kremenchuk (Poltava region in Center of Ukraine).

In Bakhmut school № 5 in the Donetsk region (close to the military conflict zone in the East of Ukraine) besides the memorial solemn event, visiting the Unknown soldier’s grave and laying flowers at the burial place of the innocent citizens who perished in the years of the World War II, the school students participated in the whole-school action, “Good morning, veteran!”, during which they made greeting postcards for the veterans and the children of war and greeted them personally. Besides that, students participated in the “memorable race” and in the city streetball competition.

Commemoration of the Holocaust victims is an important component of the Ukrainian nation’s memory. In remembrance of the Holocaust in Ukrainian schools the International Day of Holocaust victims’ memory is marked on 27 January. Thus on January 26, 2018, on the day preceding the the Day of Holocaust victims’ memory, in the 10th grade of school № 19 of Mykolayiv a demonstration lesson was held, where the students talked about the Righteous people of the nations of the world. The students lay the flowers on the place of tragedy in Mykolayiv. “This event made me realize better the tragedy of the Jewish nation and understand more what a cruel fate this nation endured. We learnt plenty of interesting things and made useful conclusions for us”, pointed out the 10th grade student (Kostjuk, 2018).



Picture 1. Concert devoted to the day of memory, reconciliation and the day of victory regarding 9th of May (11th May 2017 - Bakhmut) [city near conflict zone at the East Ukraine].

Where a situation of military conflict exists, the process of school celebrations is clearly influenced by children's relationship to war and the place of war in children's lives. These are difficult topics to broach as they raise complicated questions about agency, responsibility, rights, ethics and care, and this has been examined by Woodward (2004) and Horschelmann (2016).



Picture 2. The 10th grade students of school № 19 commemorate the Day of Holocaust victims' memory (26th January, 2018 - Mykolayiv) [a city at the South of Ukraine].

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The specific characteristic of commemorative practices in Ukraine in the last years is the relationship between these commemorations and war, and the participation of children in such ceremonies. Thus, non-governmental organizations initiate commemorative practices in schools, in particular those which have elements of a military character. The Day of Memory and Reconciliation commemoration activity for the students of the 9th grade in Chernihiv secondary school № 7 (North of Ukraine) was conducted by NGO volunteers in the format of a practical training session aimed at acquiring basic skills in first aid treatment, in tactical medicine and in the initial level of using the protecting weapon. Victory Day is a set of volunteer activities for students of the secondary school № 15 in Pokrovsk (Donetsk region in East of Ukraine), again close to the ongoing military conflict in East of Ukraine. Clearly, in an area still affected by military conflict elements of the past still affect the present, and NGOs consider that commemoration should take practical forms.

4.2 Commemoration of the Defender of Ukraine Day

The Defender of Fatherland Day is one of the most popular holidays, the traditions of celebration of which originated in the Soviet Union and which had an ideological background. The tradition of celebrating the day of February 23 as an anniversary of setting up the Red Army comes from 1919. However, the continuous celebration of this holiday starts from 1922 under the name of "The Day of the Red Army and Fleet". In 1991 this holiday was not included in the list of public holidays in Ukraine. The day of February 23 became a public holiday in 1999. Four years before this (in 1995) the day of February 23 was nominated as the Defender of Fatherland Day in Russia, which can testify to the imitation and re-appropriation by the Ukrainian government at that time of some elements of the Russian Federation's memory policy. At the level of everyday life the holiday gradually started being celebrated as "the Men's Day" and a kind of an analogue of March 8 (International Women's Day in Ukraine), quickly having lost its ideological meaning as a celebration of the Soviet armed forces (Liubarets, 2016).

In 2014 in Ukraine by the decree of the President P. Poroshenko, celebrating the Defender of the Fatherland Day on 23 February was cancelled and a new holiday was established – the Day of Defender of Ukraine (October 14). The date of 14 October was chosen not incidentally, but precisely because on this day an Orthodox holiday is celebrated – The Intercession of the Holy Virgin [Ukrainian: *Svjato Pokrovu*]. Also, since 1999 this important date in the calendar of holidays was given extra significance, being named the Day of Ukrainian Cossacks⁵. In addition, on this date the creation of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army⁶ is also celebrated. The holiday appeared on Ukraine's calendar for the first time in 2015.

Here are some examples of a school commemoration of the Day of Defender of Ukraine. Among the festive events in Brovary school № 10 (Kyiv region in Center of Ukraine) there were held: a book exhibition, competition between the 10th grades in shooting an air rifle, a festive concert.



All the people who were killed during the Revolution of Dignity (2013-14) and in military actions in East of Ukraine were honored by a period of silence. In the [video](#), it shows the members of the local center of the National scout organization “Plast” (Scout) in Irpin (Kyiv region) playing a game, celebrating the Pokrova holiday and the Defender of Ukraine Day. A “flash-mob” activity and games took place on 14 October in the school of settlement in the Krakivets, Lviv region (West of Ukraine).



Picture 3. Games for the Day of Defender in Ukraine (13th October, 2017 - Krakivets) [a city at the West of Ukraine].

The events devoted to the Defender of Ukraine Day in educational establishments in Bakhmut (formerly named Artemivsk on the border with conflict zone in the East of Ukraine) reflect the military situation in the East of Ukraine. For example the students of Bakhmut boarding school №1 [visited the military border guards](#). Also on the Defender of Ukraine Day the students of Bakhmut educational (“upbringing”) complex № 11, celebrated on the delimitation line – in frontline Myronivsk. In Bakhmut school №7 lessons on first aid treatment were given by a military doctor from the military hospital.



Picture 4: Lessons on first aid treatment are given at Bakhmut school №7 (9th October, 2017 - Bakhmut) [a city near conflict zone at the East Ukraine].

The students of Bakhmut school № 18 met with the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) representatives. The members of the “League of future policemen” played a friendly football match within the framework of the project “East and West Together”.



Picture 5. Meeting with the OSCE representatives (7th October, 2017 – Bakhmut).

This [Video greetings](#) was prepared by students of school № 4 in Pokrovsk of Donetsk region in East of Ukraine for the defenders of Ukraine in the ongoing military conflict. Students expressed their hope for peace and solving the conflict.

4.3 New commemoration tradition in Ukraine. The Dignity and Freedom Day

According to American sociologist Jeffrey Alexander (1990) the key notion in the thesaurus of patriotism is the factor of solidarity which includes the subjective feelings of being integrated inherent in individuals as members of social groups. And it is worth mentioning that the commemoration of Dignity Revolution in the situation of ongoing military conflict in the East of Ukraine is an example of such solidarity and mutual respect among Ukrainians, bringing them around a common goal to defend their choice of European orientation based on democratic values.

Dignity and Freedom Day is a new national holiday introduced after the Revolution of Dignity (February 2014), and this reflects new approaches towards celebrations significantly moving towards symbolizing the protection of human and civil rights and freedoms, based on Ukraine's choice of European democratic values. The holiday is marked annually on November 21 pursuant to the Decree of the President of Ukraine №. 872/2014. It is established in honor of the commencement on this day of two significant and fateful events in the contemporary Ukrainian history: the 2004 Orange Revolution and the 2013-2014 Revolution of Dignity. The Day of Dignity and Freedom became a kind of successor to the Freedom Day holiday, which was celebrated in honor of the Orange Revolution on November 22 from 2005 to 2011 but was later cancelled and replaced (Degree of Ukrainian President № 872 "On Day of Dignity and Freedom", 2014)

On this day citizens and students commemorate both the participants of the Revolution of Dignity and those who have been involved in the military conflict in the East of Ukraine, who currently defend Ukrainian sovereignty and independence. In the framework of commemoration activities of Dignity and Freedom Day, the students of Cherkasy school №3 (Center of Ukraine) on 21 November 2017 prepared a composition honoring the heroes' memory, conducted an action "Peace Tree" and organized a patriotic "flash mob" which symbolizes the unity of all corners of the country. During the so-called "information hours" of the teaching day, teachers focused their attention on the values which are worthy objects of this struggle. The day before the Dignity and Freedom Day this school was visited by the



volunteers who told about their work in the conflict zone. The students honored the memory of the Heavenly Hundred Heroes [Heroyi Nebesnoyi Sotni] (people who were killed in Kyiv during the Revolution of Dignity on 20-21 February 2014), by laying flowers to the monument to the Fighters for Freedom of Ukraine. The high school students participated in the “brain-ring” for “World Figures who Fought for Freedom” (Den Hidnosti ta Svobody [Day of Dignity and Freedom], 21.11.2017).



Picture 6. Celebration of Dignity and Freedom Day in the school (21th November, 2017 - Cherkasy) [a city in the Center Ukraine].

It should be noted that some examples of commemorating this date in Ukrainian schools reflect a contradiction between the democratic ideas and values of the society that has chosen both a democracy for its further development and a military character for its patriotic celebration given the situation of ongoing military conflict in the east of Ukraine.

In Mariupol secondary school № 30 (on the border with the military conflict in East of Ukraine) on 21 November 2016 there was a festive event for the Dignity and Freedom Day with the motto “Ukraine is the territory of dignity and freedom!”. After the festive event the officers of civil-military cooperation conducted for the students some practical training in learning the technical characteristics of light weapons and the safety precautions for conduct with potentially lethal explosive containers (Civil-Military Cooperation of Armed Forces of Ukraine, 2016). On the portal “school life” there are scenarios of festive events which were held in different educational establishments devoted to the Dignity and Freedom Day.

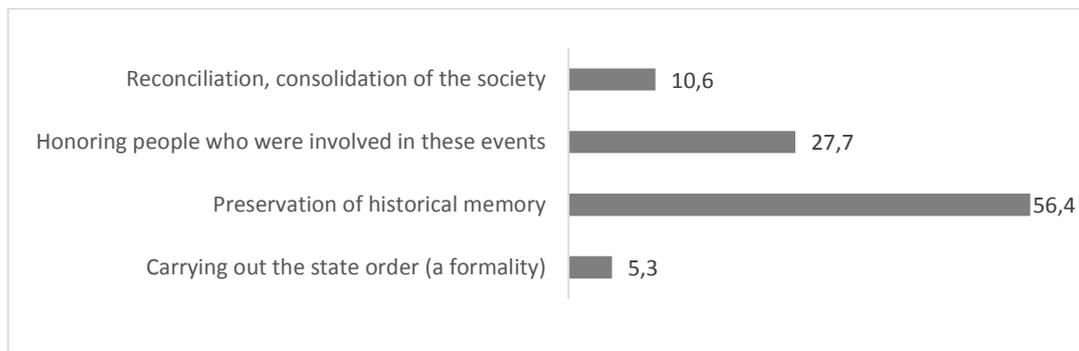
5 Patriotic celebrations in schools: personal dimension

With the aim of finding out the attitude and perception of public holiday celebrations and patriotic rituals an online questionnaire of students aged 14-17 and teachers was conducted in April-May 2018. The participants were 287 school students and 62 teachers from different regions of Ukraine. The following regions of Ukraine were questioned: the city of Kyiv, and the regions of Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Luhansk, Lviv, Mykolayiv, Rivne, Ternopil, and Kherson. It should be mentioned that Donetsk and Luhansk regions are bordering the conflict zone in the East of Ukraine.

In the respondents' opinion the aim of celebrating the memorable dates in school is preservation of historical memory (56,4%); honoring people who were involved in these events (27.7%); reconciliation, consolidation of the society (10,6%); carrying out the state order (a formality) – 5,3%; reinforcement of the role of state – 0%.

Figure 1. Attitudes of respondents at celebration of the memorable dates in school

What is the aim of celebrating the memorable dates in school (%)



The students' answers to the question about the sources from which they obtain information on memorable dates of the festive calendar that are marked in school turned out to be quite interesting. They claimed to choose from among the following information sources: mass media, accounts of friends and acquaintances, reading fiction, school celebrations, and history lessons. Surprisingly, school celebrations themselves as the source of information about the commemorative event were mentioned by the smallest number of students (1,1%).

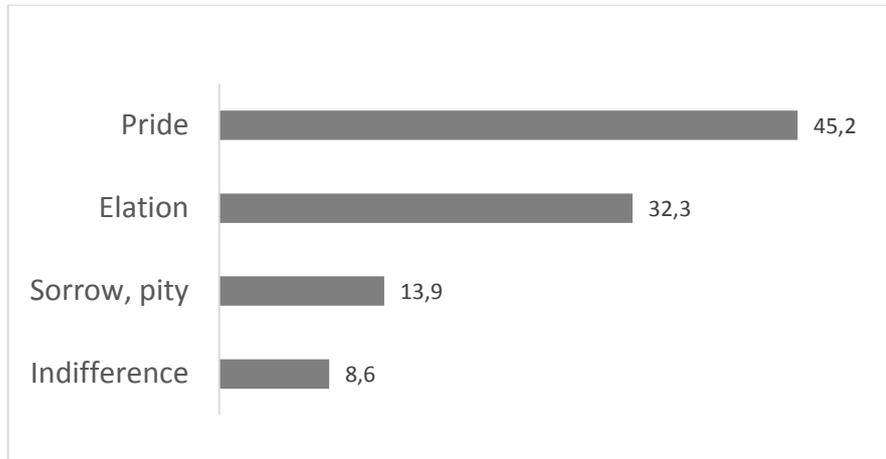
However, the students prefer and trust more the stories told by their relatives (69,9%), history lessons in school (66,7%) and the information from the Internet (53,8%), to a smaller extent the mass media (40,9%). These results from one side prove the importance of history teaching in the context of patriotic education of students, and from another – the low effectiveness of traditional forms of patriotic rituals in schools.

The answers to the question "Which feelings arise during the celebration of memorable dates in schools?" were divided in the following way: pride – 45,2%; elation – 32,3%; sorrow, pity – 13,9%; indifference – 8,6%.

Observations about the role of effective and emotional components in patriotic discourse can be found in scientific researches (Mackie, 2009; Rosa & Bresco, 2017; Zadora, 2017). The discourse is reliant on the distribution of a unified version of the national past, typically presented through a series of stories with a strong emotional and moral content, aiming at encouraging national feelings (patriotism, sacrifice, honor to heroes, etc.) and, above anything else, a social representation of a more or less unified way in which we are separated from other different groups – if not enemies – of our nation (Rosa & Bresco, 2017). Emotions engendered by belonging to a group play a structural role in identification and are a part of human behavior for individuals to aspire to a valorizing collective identity within a group (Mackie, 2009).

Figure 2. Feelings that arises during the celebration of memorable dates in school

Which feelings arises during the celebration of memorable dates in schools? (%)



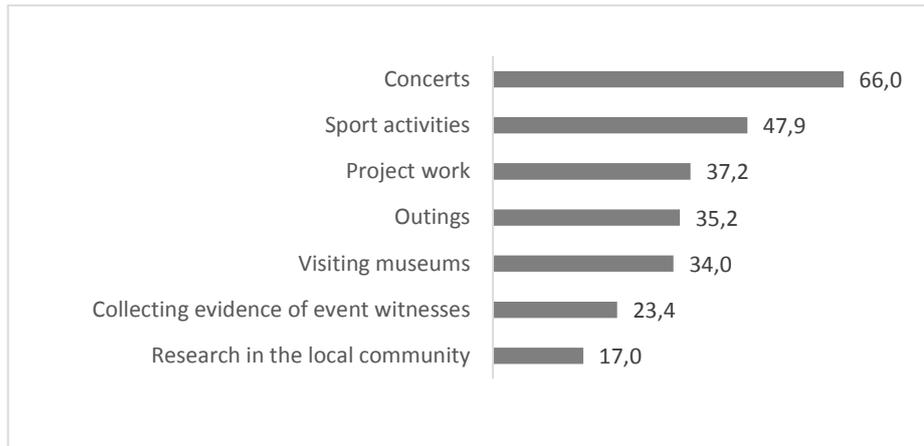
In the context of current conditions of military conflict in the East of Ukraine another factor worth considering is what Clark (2008) has described in an Australian context as a kind of national spiritualism associated with students' emotional interest in military matters, resulting in a strong motivation to visit the sites linked to war, particularly the sites of engagements in the Gallipoli campaign (1915) in which ANZAC (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) losses had been so high (Clark, 2008; Sheehan and Taylor, 2016). This had not been a military success for Australia but had represented a national coming of age and the birth of national self-awareness on a far shore.

We consider that the students' patriotic feelings connected to a sense of belonging to their native country should be formed not only at the level of sensation and emotional experience but also on the basis of respect for dignity and rights of others, critical understanding as well as readiness for a responsible civic action. In this respect, the commemoration practices in school should be implemented in innovative forms aimed at developing a student's motivation and the competences needed for active democratic participation. There can however be no underestimation of the difficulties associated with reaching out to the wider community or engaging in psychological "border-crossing" when the community beyond the border or even in some instances within the border is seen as hostile. The most positive attitude however is seen in the activity of "honoring" the memory of veterans of previous conflicts, although as can be seen below even the teaching methods are not without problems in some cases.

This statement is partly confirmed by the students' answers. Thus the most interesting forms of commemoration of memorable dates in the calendar, in the respondents' opinion, to a certain extent differ from the traditional practice of holding them in school. While in Ukrainian school practice the most widespread forms of commemoration are school assemblies, visiting of memorial complexes, meetings with veterans, for the respondents – students are interested in: concerts – 66%; sports activities – 47,9%; project work – 37,2%; outings – 35,2%; visiting we museums – 34,0%; collecting evidence of event witnesses – 23,4%, research in the local community – 17,0%.

Figure 3. Most effective forms of memorable dates commemoration in schools from the student's perspective

What are in your opinion the most effective forms of commemoration of memorable dates in schools? (%)



Teachers of these students who participated in the questionnaire confirm a similar picture although they give priority to educational goals through such celebrations. Particularly, the teachers from their experience defined the following most effective forms of memorable dates commemoration in school: project work, concerts, meetings with the events witnesses, sports activities, visits to museums, excursions, outings, conducting researches in local community, and participation in city programs. The teachers unanimously expressed their opinion concerning the form of event commemoration in school: it should be the principle of honoring, not a celebration.

Informative were the answers to the open questions to teachers concerning the basis of commemorating of the mentioned dates. Here we quote some answers, taking into consideration the anonymity of the respondents: "... the basis of development of citizens of Ukraine should be only respect, honoring and defining common values" (Respondent A); "... it is necessary to search for common values" (Respondent B); "... unfortunately, in our history mainly problems, enemies and negative things are elucidated and one can seldom discuss with students achievements, find the events around which all people can be united. Teachers do not pay attention to this fact, don't encourage children to hold a reasonable discussion, but impose their own position on children" (Respondent C); "... in our society such a trait as implacability dominates not only concerning the enemies, but also concerning each other. That is why the commemoration of these dates is turned not into honoring, but into the confrontation of values. Here we need a more tolerant policy concerning the memorable dates" (Respondent D); history must not be rewritten and edited! There should be only honoring and common values (Respondent E).

The teachers' answers concerning the influence of the commemoration of memorable dates in school on forming students' values were critical. The majority of teachers mentioned dignity, independence, pride and respect for the country, honor, hope, belief in future; attitude with respect to the family, the elders, patriots, defenders; forming of historical memory, raising civic qualities, defining one's national identity.

This can be set against an awareness that parents have their views too. For example, parents' committees in 2014 in Lviv demanded an end to the marking of Soviet holidays in schools. Parents' committees of Lviv schools sent official appeals to the local Educational Board with the demand of prohibiting school celebrations of the International Women's Day (March 8) and the Defender of Fatherland Day (February 23). Parents say that such remnants of the past do not contribute to raising patriotic values in their children. This was included in the news in the first West-Ukrainian news "Daily overview" on the [TV Channel ZIK](#).

Reflections on the questionnaire results

Changes for the younger generation need appropriate methodology. In spite of the dynamic process of socio-cultural and political transformation in Ukraine and changes in the content of celebrations, the associated methodology and pedagogy of school celebrations has mainly remained in its old forms. Organization of the celebration of holidays in school within the framework and timetable of out-of-class activities is extra work for teachers. Clearly, the overloading of teachers is an obstacle for quality in this process.

Values and attitudes should be learned, experienced and practiced. Not limiting patriotic celebrations to patriotic feelings or emotional competence, we consider that youth in democratic society needs practice in skills, experience in expressing attitudes and in critical thinking development in order to take responsibility and participate in decision-making process during schools' commemoration activities. Students should define for themselves the goals and motives of their participation in these activities, in particular, what, why, and how they commemorate memorable dates in their schools.

It is very important to develop skills enabling students to be involved actively in improving their life, participating actively in the life of society at a local level by means of active pedagogy. Teachers should provide opportunities for discussing controversial and sensitive issues of the past (related to holiday content) with students on the basis of multiperspectivity, taking into account different points of view, respecting different opinions and valuing diversity and dialogue.

Taking into account all the above-mentioned, we consider that patriotic and citizenship education in the democratic society should be oriented at developing a constructive, critical and competency-oriented approach to commemoration practices in schools, and this should be aimed at students' civic identity building, based on democratic values

Conclusions

The results of the conducted research allow us making the following conclusions. On the basis of the analysis of school commemorative practice in Ukraine one can see that the organization and commemoration of such holidays is a systematic and organized process connected with the practice of historical memory and the political discourse.

The holidays topic unites a wide range of problems that are important for understanding the transformation of the Ukrainian society in last decades. The controversies of post-Soviet, post-colonial and Ukrainian national historical narratives became the distinctive features of memory



policy in Ukraine across the years of independence and these features were reflected in the patriotic commemoration practices in schools. These socio-cultural transformations which involve both old and new landmarks have been outlined and the nature of their value markers has been examined. The shift from celebrations to commemorations is a remarkable feature of this treatment of holidays both at the state and school level.

Two sets of these rituals: 1. 8-9 May (a) 8 May - the Day of Memory and Reconciliation, (b) 9 May – the Day of Victory over Nazism in Europe, the Victory Day; and 2. 14 October - the Defender of Ukraine Day, display a certain conceptual and thematic continuity: they refer to events dealing with Soviet heritage and the building of national identity in the period of independence.

The third calendar date analyzed in the paper, the Day of Dignity and Freedom (21 November) which was introduced in Ukraine after the Dignity Revolution of (21 November 2013 - 24 February 2014), demonstrates another direction which cultural memory and official discourse has taken with regard to the dates of the official and school celebrations. It reflects the democratic ideas and values of the society that has chosen a democratic direction for further development: the defense of democratic values, rights and individual freedoms of citizenship, as well as the national interests of our state and its choice to be European.

Patriotic rituals analyzed in the paper through a diverse manifestation in the given examples of school celebrations of the main calendar dates integrates an emotional indeed almost spiritual attitude of a citizen to the country associated with state, civic and national identity. Contradiction between the discourses of citizenship education, patriotism and national upbringing have an influence on the educational practice of the state calendar commemoration. Thus, critical discussion of patriotic rituals is crucial for educational and political discourse in Ukraine.

School plays an important role in the process of integration across society under conditions of developing respect for different identities on the basis of democratic human values, giving the young personality the freedom of critical thinking and choice. Voices of Ukrainian students and teachers, as the results of questionnaire demonstrate the low effectiveness of traditional forms of commemorations and the influence of collective memory and history teaching on students' perception and attitudes with respect to historic events that are celebrated.

Commemoration activities in schools reflect contested differences in perception and draw on a range of controversial memories of representatives from different ethnic, religious, and regional backgrounds, as well as different cultural traditions at the level of both family and wider society. These activities also have potential in the process of declaring and sharing common values and responsibility for society, setting up relationships based on trust for all students, and consequently having a wider impact for parents and civil society.

Citizenship education is the main means of society's development in an emergent democracy, but it has become a crucial factor in young democracies seeking to survive in conditions of military conflict. The military conflict in the East of Ukraine has undoubtedly influenced the strengthening of patriotism behind commemoration practices. In this situation the issues of consolidation and integration are a challenge for modern Ukrainian society. In 'normal' peaceful circumstances – but these are not in that category – formulating the crucial tasks for citizenship education concerns the selection of adequate and effective pedagogical tools which



provide a general social synergy as a basis for forming in young people a responsible civic position and constructive patriotism.

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Pictures:

Picture 1: Baxmutska Miska Rada [Bakhmut town hall], 11.05.2017
<http://artemrada.gov.ua/news/16596>

Picture 2: Mykolaiv School №. 19 [Mykolaiv school №.19], 28.01.2018 <http://mzzso19.osvita-mk.site/?p=14918>

Picture 3: Yavir.net Informacijnyj Portal [Information Portal], 13.10.2017
<http://www.yavir.net/novunu/suspilstvo/item/1004-do-dnia-zakhysnyka-ukrainy-v-krakovetskii-shkoli-vidbulys-kozatski-zabavy>

Picture 4: Upravlinnya Osvity Baxmutskoji Miskoyi Rady [Administration of the educational department of Bakhmut], 07.10.2017 <http://artemosvita.klasna.com/uk/news-4319-3881/>

Picture 5: Upravlinnya Osvity Baxmutskoji Miskoyi Rady [Administration of the educational department of Bakhmut], 07.10.2017 <http://artemosvita.klasna.com/uk/news-4316-3881/>

Picture 6: Cherkaska shkola №3. [Cherkasy School №3], 21.11.2017 <http://school3.ck.ua/den-gidnosti-ta-svobodi/>

Endnotes:

- ¹ The process of Ukrainian state formation had lasted for centuries. Ukraine has complicated history partially conditioned by the absence of its own state and the different character of its regions which in the past were separated by the borders of different countries. The Eastern and Western parts of Ukraine have been ruled by different states for centuries, so the regional differences in Ukraine have been very significant. Ukraine became independent in 1918. After the First World War and the defeat of the Ukrainian revolution as the result of Bolshevik invasion Ukraine became the part of Soviet Union., which was deemed completed only around 1954, when Crimea was transferred to the Ukrainian SSR. In 1991 Ukraine proclaimed itself an independent state and the decolonization period of its history started, which had contradictory strands in the search for meaning in its political structure and its identity. Despite its newly earned independence, Ukraine has remained as an inefficient hybrid of the old Soviet and new oligarchic structures in its management and leadership. In addition, rampant corruption among the elites accelerated the state's social and economic deterioration. Central and Western Ukraine were influenced by Europe, whereas Southern and Eastern Ukraine by Russia. Even after its independence, the regionalism of Ukraine lingered on as the critical agenda, and this continued to have the potential to splinter the unity of the nation (Shveda & Park, 2016).
- ² The largest civil protests in Ukraine since the Orange Revolution of 2004 (also known as Euromaidan), in Kyiv of the winter 2013–2014, the focus and motivation of those who were assembled was firstly the fate of the European Union Association Agreement, the abrupt policy shift from pro-European to pro-Russian, and in addition, corruption. The rapid and dramatic expansion of the civil resistance was due to the extremely critical attitude of the people about the policies that were being implemented by those in power, as well as the authoritarian use of power (Shveda & Park, 2016). A total of 106 protesters were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded as the criminal authority led by Viktor Yanukovich resorted to a crackdown on the Ukrainians using security and police officers
- ³ Decree of the president of Ukraine № 169/2015 “About the measures of commemoration in 2015 of the 70th anniversary of Victory over the Nazism in Europe and the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II” of March 24, 2015.
- ⁴ The Euromaidan events were followed by Russia's annexation of Crimea (March 2014) and military hostilities in East of Ukraine resulting in thousands of killed, wounded and displaced persons. Pro-Russian separatists took control of the cities of Donetsk and Luhansk in eastern Ukraine (April 2014 – to present). Russia moved in and backed the separatists fighting Ukrainian forces for several months (Ellis, 2018). The situation in Ukraine escalated into an international crisis, putting the United States and the European Union (EU) at odds with Russia. In July 2014, when a civilian Malaysian Airlines flight was shot down over Ukrainian airspace, killing all 298 onboard, by what Dutch air accident investigators concluded in October 2015 was a Russian-built surface-to-air missile. Since February 2015, Ukraine, Russia, France, and Germany have attempted to broker a cessation in violence through the Minsk Accords, which include provisions for a cease-fire, withdrawal of heavy weapon, and full Ukrainian government control throughout the conflict zone. However, efforts to reach a diplomatic settlement and satisfactory resolution have been unsuccessful (Global Conflict Tracker, n.d.). The military conflict in the East of Ukraine also has taken the form of the hybrid war supported by a propaganda and information war.
- ⁵ Ukrainian Cossacks used to be a predominant driving force in Ukrainian history for more than three centuries, particularly from 1489 till complete liquidation in 1775. They united into self-



organized military units in the lower basins of Dnieper and Don rivers. Thoses were free territories between Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Crimean Khanate and the Moscow Kingdom. Cossacks defended Ukrainian lands from the Tatar and Turk forays; excited national rebellions against socio-economic and religious oppression of Ukrainian people under the Polish rule; controlled commercial roots; participated in military campaigns and defended borders of the neighboring countries. Their main historical merit is an attempt to construct an independent Ukrainian state. In 1775 Zaporizhya Sich were abolished by Catherine II, Russian Empress, and all Cossacks' leaders were either killed or expelled. The rest of cossacks spread along the cost of Black and Azov seas. Some of them were later sent to Kuban in modern Russia (Lambert, 2018).

- ⁶ Ukrainian Insurgent Army was an Ukrainian nationalist military and later partisan army that during World War II fought against Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. The army originally formed in Volyn region (northwestern Ukraine) in the spring and summer of 1943. But officially the day of creation is the Day of the Intercession of the Holy Virgin that is celebrated in Ukraine on 14th of October (The 69th anniversary of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, 2011).

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