How to teach history today?

The manner in which we should educate about past experiences of Central East European region is a much discussed problem since the fall of communism in 1989. What means are necessary to ensure that students will learn the often complicated and traumatic past in form uninfluenced by any ideological residues and in balanced form? Is such a thing even possible?

It appears to be inevitable for Central-Eastern European educational systems that they should endeavor to keep up with the time in order to attract students, motivate them to think critically and inspire them to study the history of their region. Fast process of technological development might soon render the conventional frontal, textbook model of teaching outdated. Maybe not entirely, but students' growing technological literacy as well as limited time and space of conventional classroom is already forcing teachers and educational experts to expand their horizons and apply new patterns into practices of education. What possibilities are offered by the use of digital platforms, i.e. internet pages, interactive applications or social media like Facebook and Twitter?[1] And what are the options outside the virtual space?

Various online interactive exhibitions are proving to be productive as an alternative to conventional classroom education. An example might be interactive tour of Auschwitz-Birkenau[2] concentration camp, or soon to be launched Czech virtual exhibition of Soviet gulag camp.[3] There are also numerous webpages that serve as databases of audiovisual material, interviews and testimonies – for instance holocaust.cz. Other webpages offer articles, analyses and interpretation that aim at various groups of students and teachers. Apart from those computer-based, more compact platforms and applications seem to grow in number as well. Among these you can find e.g. virtual reconstructions of burnt out churches.[4]

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[1] See Martin, A., Smart, L., Yeomans, D(eds.). 2013. *Information Technology in History Teaching: International Perspectives*. London: Routledge.

[2] Interactive museum of Auschwitz can be approached from link http://www.remember.org/auschwitz/

[3] Facebook page of the project: https://www.facebook.com/gulag.cz?fref=ts

[4] An interactive application base on connecting to signal from nearby signs:
http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ct24/regiony/312347-v-asi-postavili-davno-vyhorely-kostel-virtualne-pro-turisty/

Similarly, the social media became inseparable components of lives of many people during last several years and it is no wonder that they too stared to generate inspiration and facilitate creativity and inventiveness. Often as a side product of joke – as it might very well be the case with popular Czech facebook page *Opráski sčeskí historje*[5] that uses grotesquely deformed Czech language to satirically comment on historical as well as current events. An example of international recognition might be *Polandball*[6] that similarly ironize political relationships and spheres of influence in Central Europe. It can be expected that these educative attempts will grow in numbers with continual increase in the use of technology.

The options of alternative approaches to education are not limited only to the virtual space. Outside of it exist numerous ways how to attract pupils to engage in active study. These might be for instance creative commented walking tours that might amuse students and reveal to them invisible histories and context of seemingly well-known cities.

It still is a question to what extent and in which manner should these strategies be implemented into conventional process of education. There are many tasks that should be dealt with – such as creation of comprehensive textual study material and development of consistent ways in work with primary and secondary sources that would teach students to approach history critically and understand multiple perspectives that allow for nuanced analysis.

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[5] Opráski sčeskí historje's tumblr page: http://historje.tumblr.com/

[6] Pollandball' tumblr page: http://polandballcomics.tumblr.com/