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## THE VIRTUAL MUSEUM SPACE AS A PLATFORM FOR STUDENT RESEARCH ACTIVITIES IN THE HISTORY OF ECONOMICS

**Abstract.** The article presents the results of theoretical justification and practical verification of modern possibilities of using the pictorial method (museum tours) in teaching the subject “The History of Economics and Economic Thought”. The article justifies the evolution of views on the range of sources on historical processes. A modern understanding of “a pictorial turn” in historical research was presented. The virtual museum as an informational resource, multimedia phenomenon, cost-effective model of museum space was considered. The educational experience of the EU countries in using modern methods of working with museum expositions to form economic thinking was studied. The need to turn the traditional paradigm of the museum as a center for preserving historical values into the educational interaction between the tourist student and the objects of the museum’s collection was proved. The article describes the content of the two-stage pedagogical experiment (between 2014 and 2018). The first stage explores the possibility of using educational museum tours and historically significant territories of cities as a method of studying the history of regional economics in the context of seminars. The author’s pedagogical product, that is regional thematic tours on the history of economics, was presented. The second stage develops and verifies the methodology of using online resources of Ukrainian museums (virtual tours, virtual exhibits) to organize the independent work of students in the context of this subject. The thematic catalog of online resources of Ukrainian museums for conducting research activities within this subject was created. The article presents research activities with the exposition of the virtual museum in the framework of the independent work of students. Based on the results obtained from the survey of students from higher education institutions of Ukoopspilka, it is proved that working in the virtual museum space implies innovative, multidisciplinary, competence-oriented research activities, as well as an effective form of organizing independent work of students.

**Keywords:** pictorial method; virtual museum; virtual tour; higher education.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

**The Problem setting.** The training of innovative professionals, defined by the Law of Ukraine “On Higher Education” [1, p.73] as the main objective of research and innovative activities in higher education institutions, requires that innovative educational technologies should be justified, verified and introduced. The presented reasoning is consolidated with the

interpretation of the quality of higher education (The World Declaration on Higher Education, 1998), which states that the characteristics of graduates and the factors in the forming of this result depend on the goals of education, content, methodology, organization, and technology of teaching and learning. Today, information technologies are most promoted among educational technologies. The ability to critically work with vast arrays of information (information literacy) and media literacy is fundamental to forming professional competency and a key component of the teacher's information culture.

In the early 21st century, another trend in organizing an effective educational process is its transcriptional visualization, which is rather important when teaching fundamental social sciences, humanities, and general economic sciences, which include the History of Economics and Economic Thought. The main task of this subject is to form economic thinking, ability to establish causal relationships and the patterns of the historical process, predict the economic future, which is consistent with Kant's thesis "the future of the past is in the future". The importance of using information and digital resources in the educational process, as well modern possibilities of visualizing the processes and phenomena of the historical past and the present is confirmed by the annual (2014–2018) monitoring of the views of those receiving educational services from higher education institutions of the Central Community of Consumer Companies of Ukraine (Ukoopspilka) on effective teaching practices. Determining the priority between teacher characteristics such as "effective pedagogical technology" and "individual teaching skills", master students (68%) choose the first one. Undergraduate students, ranking the features of teaching skills, prioritized the following ones: the teacher's ability to reasonably prove the need to study one particular subject for future professional activities (89%); the synchronization of mastering the subject and the development of relevant competencies (72%); informational and media literacy of the teacher (68%).

The search for the effective pedagogical techniques for teaching the History of Economics and Economic Thought has led to the implementation of a pedagogical experiment on the study of didactic possibilities of using virtual museum resources and virtual tours as a platform for student research. The development of pedagogical technology is justified by:

the priority of the competence-based approach to the training of professionals [1, p.62];  
the objectives of modern historical science: understanding history as a process of "living" research, expanding the possibilities of working with the authentic sources through digitalization, ability to present author interpretations of historical events when searching for the truth [2];

a change in the paradigm of a traditional museum in the 21st century [3].

The current research considers a virtual museum to be:

1) *an information resource* (a website, a web page), created by means of computer technologies, which is a digital version of the objects of material and non-material heritage in the virtual space [4, pp. 24–26]; a computer-created model of the museum, which exists in the virtual space and "reproduces the exhibits and expositions of the real museum: from the objects of art and historical artifacts to virtual collections and family relics" [5, p.48].

2) *"a multimedia phenomenon*, which implies a dynamic interaction" [6, p. 188] and is characterized by the possibility of feedback from visitors of the site, the reproduction of museum objects, the presence of three-dimensional museum exposition, which "create the possibility of a virtual tour of the exposition and its independent modeling" [5, p.48];

3) *a cost-effective model* of museum resources.

Within this research, *a virtual tour* is viewed as an organizational form of learning, which differs from a real tour by a virtual reflection of really existing objects to create conditions for self-observation, collect necessary facts, etc.; its advantages include availability (resources and cost-effectiveness), reviewing, visibility.

**The analysis of recent research and publications.** Modern scholars believe that society has entered a new era of history, in which the visual aspect is central to the social and economic life. E. Gombrich was one of the first who noted the universality of visibility, “we live in a remarkable time. We are “bombarded” with pictures from morning till night. Opening a newspaper at breakfast, we see pictures of men and women, shift our gaze from it and see some pictures on the oatmeal package” [9]. S. Lash indicates that modern society seems to be replacing literary perception with visual images, “we live in a world where pictures as basic cultural forms are replacing text” [10]. The ever-increasing mediatization, digitalization, and visualization of the world have led to “the return of the picture, symbolism and the imaginary to the front of the stage” (La Rocca) and caused a tendency to move from a text to a symbol. Thus, a group of researchers led by W. Mitchell [11] has justified “a pictorial turn” as a testimony of vizzuality as the main source of information. Due to the findings of G. Debord, F. Jameson, M. Foucault and E. Usmanova, there exists a view [12] that pictorial culture today not only penetrates all spheres of social life but also requires a thorough study since it can form new social subjects in society, where the pictorial field of the Internet and the media form the identity of a person.

However, the tradition of using visual sources to study the socioeconomic content of particular historical periods is rather unformed in the Ukrainian historical and pedagogical sciences, including higher education pedagogy, as evidenced by the lack of publications by Ukrainian researchers on educational opportunities for the virtual museum space, virtual tours, digitalized exhibits, and expositions.

Among those works describing the transformation of the mission of world and Ukrainian museums according to the information society’s demands, one should pay particular attention to the research by O. Chernenko [13], who traces the evolution of virtual museums: from the interactive exhibition of the Leicester Museum (the UK, 1983), the first museum network information web-site based on the French MINITEL system, Jonathan Bowen’s Virtual Library Museum Pages” (Oxford University, 1994) to the website of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) (1995) and digital versions of thousands of museums around the world in recent years. Analyzing the virtual space of Ukrainian museums, the author concludes, “in fact, we have just begun to modernize the museum sector of the state” [13]. The issues of typology and classification of virtual museums were studied by H. Neshovorova [14], Yu. Vyatkina [15], T. Smyrnova [16, pp. 24–26], who clearly distinguished *the websites of real museums* with video tours, 3D tours, 3D panoramas, 360-degree panoramas, digitized collections of museums and *the virtual museums themselves*, which do not have real (material) analogs. The change in the socio-cultural and educational function of museums is reflected in the writings of N. McGregor, the director of the British Museum, “in the future, museums should function as publishers of information or television companies” [17].

Once the limits of using resources of virtual museums have been clarified, one should study the educational trends in the information society [18, pp. 126–127], in particular didactic possibilities of virtual tours, new formats of museum pedagogy in the space of the virtual museum [19], the use of resources of virtual museums and virtual tours in secondary schools [20], [21]; technological aspects of creating virtual museums [22, pp.83–85]. At present, few studies, including T. Maksymova’s findings [23], have been devoted to the efficient experience of using the virtual museum space and virtual tours in higher education.

When developing the pedagogical technology of working with visual sources of historical information at the first and second stages of the pedagogical experiment, the authors of the article adhered to the standards of professional activities and the rules of professional ethics of the American Historical Association [2], the priority competencies of the New Ukrainian School [24], the key competencies of professionals until 2020 according to the recommendations of the World Economic Forum in Davos [25].

**The article aims** to justify the didactic expediency of using the pictorial method (museum tours) in teaching historical subjects; to describe the resources of Ukrainian virtual museums, virtual tours as a platform for student research on the History of Economics and Economic Thought; to show an example of research activities with the exposition of the virtual museum; to prove that working in the virtual museum space implies multidisciplinary and competence-oriented educational activities, as well as an effective form of organizing independent work of students.

**The research was conducted** with the help of such services as Google Expeditions, Google Cultural Institute, materials of the Archive Exhibitions project. The pedagogical experiment used the materials of the Google project, titled “Digital Transformation of Ukraine”, the virtual tour of Google, titled “Authentic Ukraine”, 3D tours of museums in the Street View mode on Google Maps; expositions of virtual museums, realized in the framework of the projects, titled “Ukraine Incognita”, “Museum portal”, etc.

The experiment was conducted between 2014 and 2018 and, therefore, consisted of two stages. The first stage was aimed at studying the traditional possibilities of using the pictorial method and analyzing museum expositions in teaching the History of Economics and Economic Thought. The second stage included working with resources of virtual museums and virtual tours while organizing the independent work of students. The experiment involved 1240 students of cooperative organizations of higher education institutions, including 789 students of Khmelnytskyi Cooperative Trade and Economic Institute.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODS

The theoretical and methodological basis of the research is the interdisciplinary approach integrating the strategies of various fields of scientific knowledge, namely pedagogy, history, economics, information technologies, and systems. When studying the cultural and educational phenomenon of the virtual museum, the authors of the article took into consideration the theories of post-industrial and informational societies (D. Bell, U. Eco, A. Toffler); theories of the functioning of the Internet as an information channel and its social functions (Z. Bauman, M. Castells).

Due to the use of empirical research methods, primary information on Ukrainian virtual museums was consolidated. As a result, those museums were singled out, which can be used as the basis for conducting research. In addition, direct observation of collections and expositions of virtual museums was applied and the data of search queries in information retrieval systems were studied to collect empirical material. Between 2014 and 2018, surveys were conducted to study the opinions of students in order to discover the effective synergy between traditional and innovative information methods of teaching and learning.

A two-stage pedagogical experiment was implemented based on the principles of synergetics built on the combination of classical and innovative pictorial methods of teaching and learning. The method of ranking priority competences has proved the effectiveness of students' independent work on the platforms of virtual museums. The research results were scientifically justified based on the narrative approach.

## 3. RESULTS

The traditional study of the History of Economics and Economic Thought, as well as all historical subjects, consists in the fact that both teachers and students mainly use text documents as the main source of information. However, “the pictorial turn” of the middle 20th century has radically transformed the technologies of historical knowledge. In the 20th

century, some teachers (N. Speranska, O. Vahin) used the following visual sources: the historical monuments of the past; documentary images and illustrations, including photographic portraits, documentaries and photos; works on historical painting, portraits and artistic films; caricatures and symbolic images; schematic plans and historical maps; diagrams, charts, schemes. The presented list is relevant in the 21st century, although it can be considered both in real and in a digitalized and virtual format.

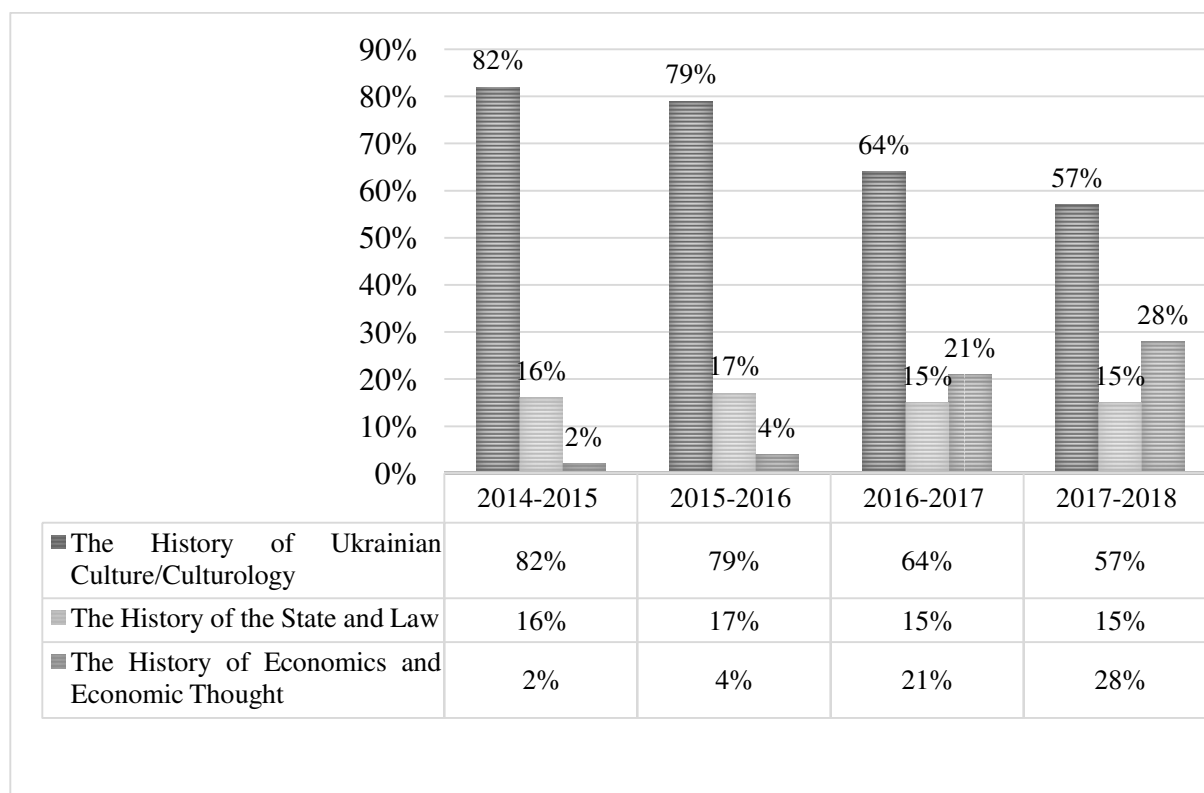
A museum is a place where all these items are consolidated. “The museum is the place where knowledge is constructed and acquired” [26]. A tour serves as the quintessence of the pictorial method in the study of historical subjects. In a practical and pragmatic sense, it involves visiting some objects and areas, familiarizing oneself with a museum exposition or sights of a particular city or region with the help of a guide. Its pedagogical task is to promote the independent intellectual activity of tourists and form their skills of independent observation and analysis of visual information and visual impressions. The technological tools ensuring the implementation of requirements for tour services are as follows: 1) logical techniques: analysis, comparison, synthesis, abstraction, generalization; 2) ways of showing: preview, panoramic display, visual analysis, reconstruction, localization of events; 3) narration methods: tour information, description, feature description, explanation, reporting, commentary, citation, literary editing.

Traditionally, a tour as a teaching method is used to teach such subjects as the History of Ukraine, the History of Ukrainian Culture, Cultural Studies. The use of this method in teaching the History of Economics and Economic Thought is complicated by the need for significant research and methodological work in order to prepare specialized tours aimed ensuring at analytical work with museum expositions, complex studies on the preserved architectonics of cities and the ability to characterize the essential features of the economic culture based on the study of artifacts of material culture, socioeconomic development of a certain historical period.

The innovation of historical and economic tours is confirmed by the lack of scientific publications on the experience of introducing this technology, as well as the results obtained from the survey of first-year students (1240 respondents between 2014 and 2018) (see Fig.1).

The increasing number of respondents who support the pictorial method in teaching the History of Economics and Economic Thought can be explained by the communication of first-year students with senior students, who probably consider this method effective and informative. The study of the EU experience in using visual aids in school education has become a decisive argument in favor of the pedagogical experiment. In historical education in Ireland, the second level of the national education system requires that pupils aged between 12 and 15 should learn to construct historical knowledge through archaeology, source study, and art. At the same time, the process of learning itself is based on the study of city-planning and fortification architecture, sacred architectural monuments and works of art. French textbooks on history for middle school pupils appear to be a short text that takes 1/3 of the study area, encourages pupils to analytically study illustrations, documents and other components of the textbook (2/3). In the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh, each thematic tour for schoolchildren implies a series of tasks aimed at studying certain expositions. These tasks are differentiated by levels and can be offered in various combinations in accordance with the educational attainment of pupils. For one, a girl can be offered to imagine herself as the wife of a wealthy bourgeois who is going to invite future business partners of her husband from the Netherlands to their house. Her family are very proud of their well-being and are trying to impress the guests with the internal arrangement of the house. The task consists of the following: it is necessary to look at some exposition and choose five items for her home to help her accomplish the task. In addition, it is required to

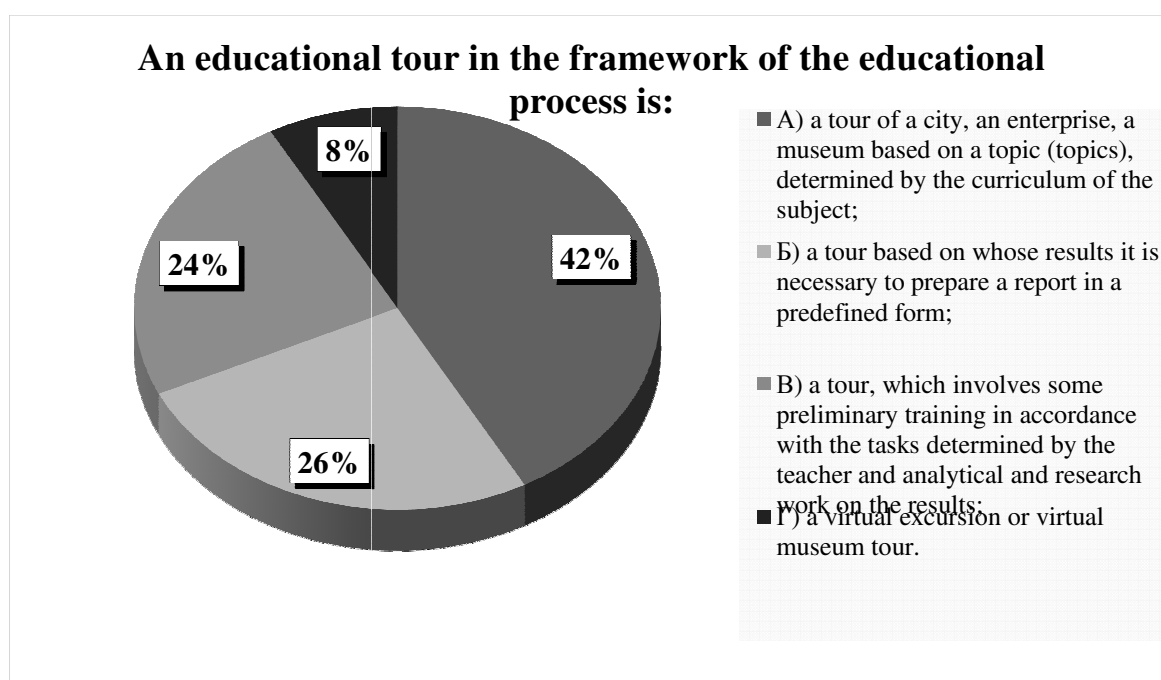
justify her choice. Such items as silver and glass jewelry or souvenirs from abroad should be drawn.



*Fig. 1 Results of the survey on the relevance of using tours as a form of educational activity when mastering subjects*

It is precisely this strategy for working with museum expositions that transforms the museum (classical, virtual, historic quarters of cities, skansens) into the space of communication and education, where “the visitor not only deals with the problems of modern society, seen through the prism of history and memory but can also respond to what is shown to him/her. Museums should not only turn interactivity into a set of questions and answers; they should attract and involve visitors in the dialogue through the exposition”[27].

The shortcomings discovered during the first stage of the experiment have become an incentive to search for new forms of implementing pictorial methods in teaching. This has become possible due to virtual museums, virtual tours, virtual city tours. The surveys conducted among first-year students between 2016 and 2018 (780 respondents) show the lack of experience (8% of respondents) in working with virtual tours and platforms of virtual museums (see Fig. 2).



*Fig. 2 The results obtained from the survey of students on understanding the content of an educational tour within the educational process*

Empirical research on the number of searches by such definitions as “virtual museum” and “virtual tour” in the Google network gave the following results (see Table 1):

*Table 1*

**Quantitative differences in search query by such definitions as “virtual museum” and “virtual tour”**

Definition	The number of queries in Ukrainian	The number of queries in Russian	The number of queries in English	Correlation of quantity of queries
Virtual museum	38,4	939	2770	1:24:72
Virtual tour	106	1120	66000	1:11:623

It must be noted that there is a sufficient number of studies on didactic possibilities of using the pictorial method and effective results of its application in various fields of humanities. However, the use of resources of virtual museums and virtual tours in teaching historical and economic subjects has not been properly studied yet.

Thus, the second stage of the pedagogical experiment (between 2016 and 2018) involved realizing the following objectives:

- to create a database of virtual tours, Ukrainian virtual museums, whose expositions allow researching the History of Economics and Economic Thought (according to the topics of the subject);

- to prepare and fulfill research tasks within the subject which are based on working with the collections of museum exhibits of virtual museums or visual information of virtual tours of cities;

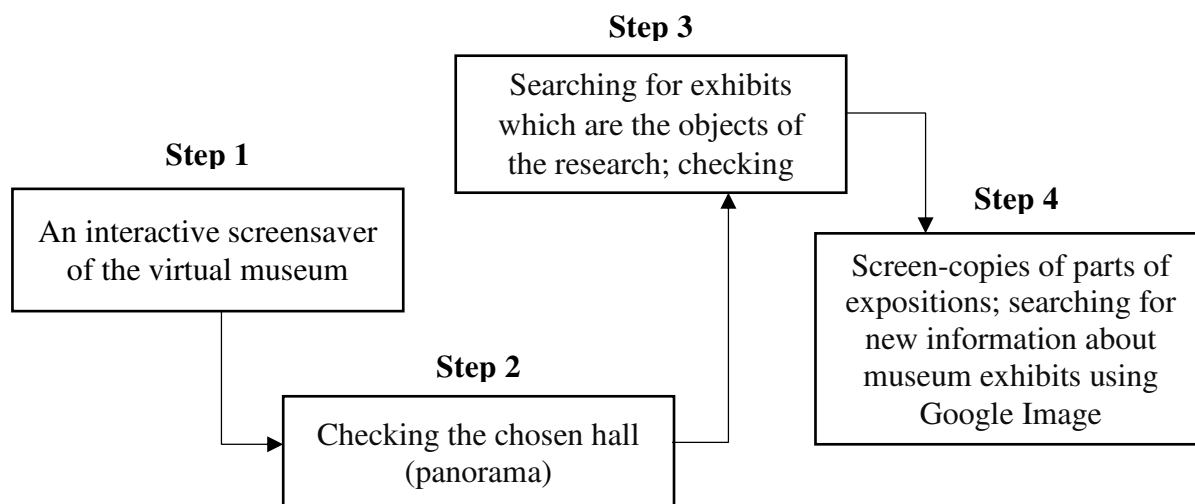
- to design a system of tasks with methodological recommendations for independent work of students, built on the analysis of expositions of virtual museums or visual information of 3D tours.

The authors of the article have attempted to characterize Ukrainian virtual museums and virtual tours in the context of informational and technical aspects. Thus, the vast majority of Ukrainian “virtual museums” implies the collections of a certain number of web pages located on one or more web servers. These pages contain the collections of panoramic photographs of exhibits. The so-called “flat” type of virtual museum is the most common type in the Ukrainian information space. Modern requirements include three-dimensional virtual museums and additional features that allow one to maximally approximate the museum exhibit and, if necessary, save the image on the computer or any other device.

A virtual tour is a combination of panoramic photographs (spherical or cylindrical), when moving from one panorama to another through an active zone (i.e., anchor points or transition points) placed directly on the images, as well as taking into account the tour plan. All of this can be complemented by foreground and background music, and, if necessary, with ordinary photos, videos, flash videos, tour plans, explanations, contact information, etc.

Creating the database of virtual museums and tours according to the problems of the History of Economics and Economic Thought, the authors of the article used such services as Google Expeditions, Google Cultural Institute, materials of the Archive Exhibitions project, materials of the Google project, titled “Digital Transformation of Ukraine”, the virtual tour of Google, titled “Authentic Ukraine”, expositions of virtual museums, realized in the framework of the projects, titled “Ukraine Incognita”, “Museum portal”, etc. [29].

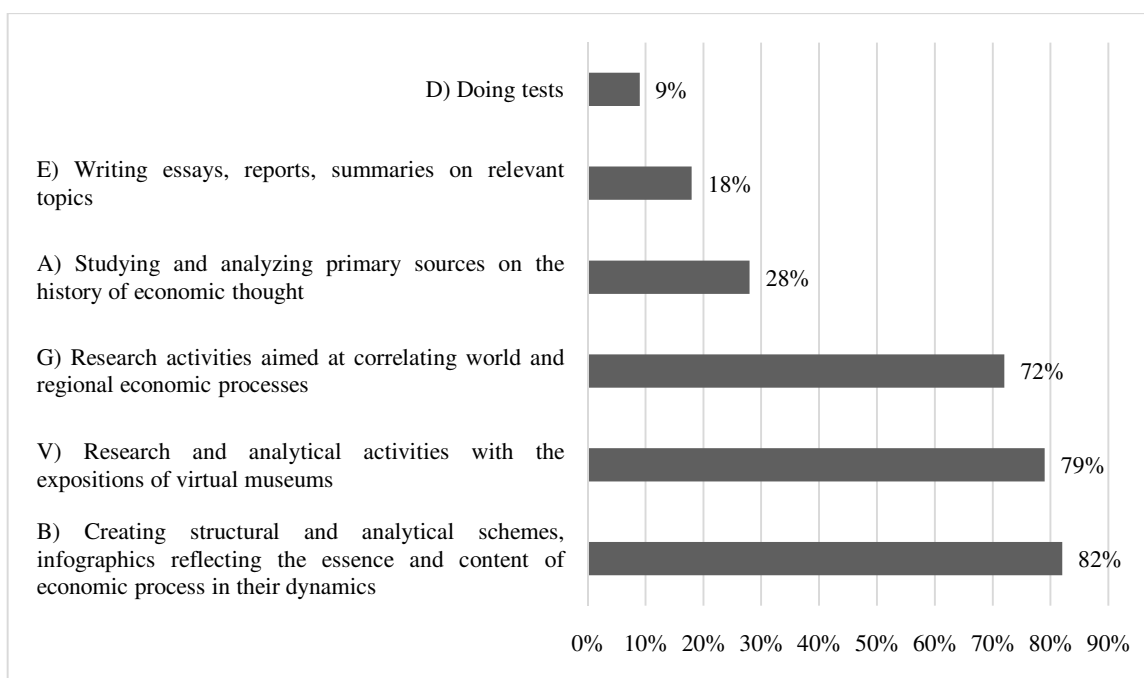
An example of the interaction between the tourist student and the virtual museum is shown in Fig. 3.



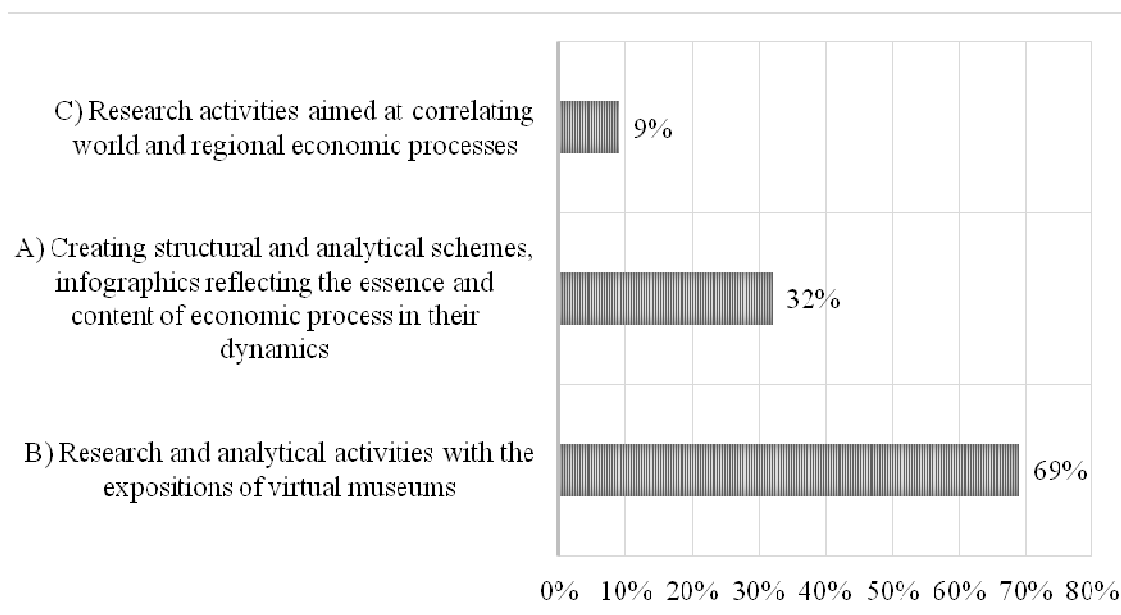
*Fig. 3 An example of the interaction between the tourist student and the virtual museum*

The effectiveness of students’ independent work built on research activities using virtual museums is confirmed by the results obtained from the final surveys (see Figures 4 and 5).





*Fig. 4 Results obtained from students' ranking of activities for developing economic thinking when performing independent tasks*



*Fig. 5 Results obtained from students' ranking of activities which require the use of the multi-competence-based approach when performing tasks*

It must be noted that when answering the following question, “Choose three competencies which professionals need in order to develop their skills of working with virtual museums”, the students mainly preferred these: problem-solving (88%), critical thinking (76%), flexible mind (32%), corresponding to the top-1, top-2, top-10 competencies required by professionals by 2020 [25]. This proves the effectiveness of the presented pedagogical technology.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

A thorough study of modern possibilities of the pictorial method, in particular, online resources of Ukrainian museums in teaching the History of Economics and Economic Thought, allows formulating the following conclusions.

The pictorial turn, as the prevailing method in Western European and American research in the second half of the 20th century – the 21st century, requires that historians should not consider texts as the main source of information. Pictorial sources (exhibits, artifacts) characterizing the dynamics of economic history are consolidated in museums. Without rejecting the traditional museum tour as an effective way of comprehending economic history, it is essential to use online resources of traditional museums and expositions of virtual museums, that is an organic component of the information society.

Virtualization and digitalization of museum objects, expositions and the museum space are the components of a new reality, a space of life of a modern person and professional. The surveys conducted at the end of the second stage of the experiment show that 79% of students consider research and analytical work with expositions of virtual museums to be effective for developing economic thinking. According to the results obtained from the students' ranking of educational activities, working with virtual museums is the most popular one (69%). The answers to the questions about top competencies of professionals by 2020, defined by the World Economic Forum in Davos, prove the effectiveness of working with expositions of virtual museums. Students believe that research activities in online museums promote the forming of such competences as integrated problem solving, critical thinking, the flexibility of mind.

Prospects of further research include studying the possibilities of using online resources of world museums with the aim to master economic history, the history of world culture, art studies, etc. It is expedient to elaborate methodological materials for relevant seminars, independent work of students based on the pictorial method; studying and introducing educational ideas and practical experience of the leading universities of the EU and the USA in implementing pedagogical technologies for working with resources of virtual museums.

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## **ВІРТУАЛЬНИЙ МУЗЕЙНИЙ ПРОСТІР ЯК ПЛАТФОРМА ДЛЯ СТУДЕНТСЬКИХ ДОСЛІДНИЦЬКИХ ПРАКТИК З ІСТОРІЇ ЕКОНОМІКИ**

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**Анотація.** У статті представлено результати теоретичного обґрунтування і практичної апробації сучасних можливостей використання візуального (музейно-екскурсійного) методу у викладанні дисципліни «Історія економіки і економічної думки». Обґрунтовано еволюцію поглядів на коло джерел з дослідження історичних процесів. Представлене сучасне розуміння «візуального повороту» в історичних дослідженнях. Розглянуто віртуальний музей як інформаційний ресурс, мультимедійний феномен, економічно ефективну модель музейного простору. Вивчено освітній досвід країн ЄС щодо сучасних методик роботи з музейними експозиціями для формування економічного мислення. Аргументовано необхідність зміни традиційної парадигми музею як осередку збереження історичних цінностей на майданчик навчальної інтерактивної взаємодії студента-екскурсанта з предметами музейної колекції. Висвітлено результати експериментального дослідження (2014 – 2018 навчальні роки) щодо можливостей застосування навчальних екскурсій музеями та історично значущими територіями міст (регіональні тематичні екскурсії з історії економіки) як ефективного інноваційного методу вивчення історії регіональної економіки. Схарактеризовано основні положення розробленої та апробованої методики використання онлайн ресурсів українських музеїв (віртуальних екскурсій, віртуальних експозицій) для організації самостійної роботи студентів з дисципліни. Запропоновано тематичний каталог онлайн ресурсів українських музеїв для здійснення дослідницьких практик з дисципліни. Представлено приклад дослідницької роботи з експозицією віртуального музею в межах самостійної роботи студентів. На основі отриманих результатів дослідження аргументовано, що навчання у віртуальному музейному просторі є інноваційною, мультидисциплінарною, компетентісно орієнтованою дослідницькою практикою, ефективною формою організації самостійної роботи студентів.

**Ключові слова:** візуальний метод; віртуальний музей; віртуальна екскурсія; вища освіта.

## **ВИРТУАЛЬНОЕ МУЗЕЙНОЕ ПРОСТРАНСТВО КАК ПЛАТФОРМА ДЛЯ СТУДЕНЧЕСКИХ ИССЛЕДОВАТЕЛЬСКИХ ПРАКТИК ПО ИСТОРИИ ЭКОНОМИКИ**

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**Аннотация.** В статье представлены результаты теоретического исследования и практической апробации современных возможностей применения визуального (музейно-экскурсионного) метода в преподавании дисциплины «История экономики и экономической мысли». Обоснована эволюция взглядов на круг источников по исследованию исторических процессов. Представлено современное понимание «визуального поворота» в исторических исследованиях. Охарактеризован виртуальный музей как информационный ресурс, мультимедийный феномен, экономически эффективная модель музейного пространства. Изучен образовательный опыт стран ЕС относительно современных методик работы с музейными экспозициями для формирования экономического мышления. Аргументирована необходимость трансформации традиционной парадигмы музея как центра сохранения исторических ценностей в площадку учебного интерактивного взаимодействия студента-экскурсанта с предметами музейной коллекции. Представлены результаты экспериментального исследования (2014 - 2018 учебный год) о возможностях применения учебных экскурсий по музеям и исторически значимым территориям городов (региональные тематические экскурсии по истории экономики) как эффективного инновационного метода изучения истории региональной экономики. Схарактеризованы основные положения разработанной и апробированной методики использования онлайн-ресурсов украинских музеев (виртуальных экскурсий, виртуальных экспозиций) для организации самостоятельной работы студентов по дисциплине. Предложен тематический каталог онлайн-ресурсов украинских музеев для осуществления исследовательских практик по дисциплине. Представлен пример исследовательской работы с экспозицией виртуального музея в рамках самостоятельной работы студентов. На основе полученных результатов исследования аргументировано, что обучение в виртуальном музейном пространстве является инновационной, мультидисциплинарной, компетентностно ориентированной исследовательской практикой, эффективной формой организации самостоятельной работы студентов.

**Ключевые слова:** визуальный метод; виртуальный музей; виртуальная экскурсия; высшее образование.

