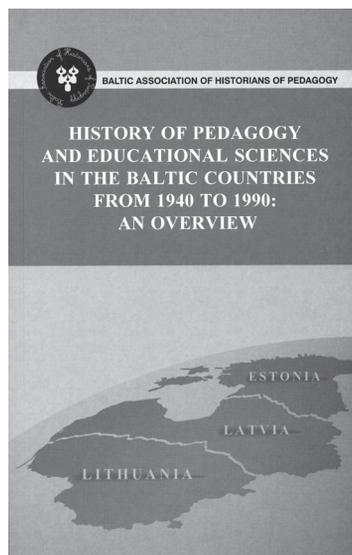


Ķestere, Iveta & Krūze, Aida (eds.)
History of Pedagogy and Educational
Sciences in the Baltic Countries from
1940 to 1990:
An Overview, Riga: RaKa, 2013,
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For the historians of education or, indeed, for anybody interested in the development of the educational systems of the Baltic States, this is an informative and therefore useful publication. As a compilation composed by about 40 educational experts covering an array of facts and details of the history of education from 1940 to 1990 in all three Baltic States, this comes near to being a veritable reference book, although of a special kind. It forms part of a trilogy of research projects run by the Baltic Association of Historians of Pedagogy (BAHP) that already treated the period up to 1940, (hopefully) to be followed in due time by a further publication on the contemporary development, that is, after the (perhaps prematurely so called) end of the cold war in 1989.

The central themes of this publication cover the educational systems of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania from kindergarten to primary and secondary schooling and tertiary education, from extracurricular activities to teacher training and a discussion of pedagogy as a scientific discipline. As a disastrous consequence of the secret protocol of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact (or Hitler-Stalin pact) of 1939, the Baltic States came under Soviet rule (1940), Nazi dictatorship (1941), and under Soviet rule again (1944). Notwithstanding the fact that both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union were totalitarian regimes, they employed different strategies to change the educational systems of the Baltic States, a fact that is meticulously and at length discussed in the different chapters, and particularly so in the treatment of teacher education and training. Obviously, any educational system has to rely especially on teachers' willingness and, in point of fact, on their obedience to the respective state's ideology in order to implement its laws and acts. While the changes pressed upon teachers and students alike by the Nazi regime were, without doubt, damaging and even barbaric, they still did not have the proportions of what happened under Soviet rule where the respective systems

were destroyed fast and ruthlessly before being adamantly restructured in accord to Marxist-Leninist ideology.

Most of the different chapters and articles of this research project are written collectively by various experts thus incorporating and encompassing a wealth of personal experience, which in all probability had to be discussed thoroughly prior to publication. Because of this, the articles gain significantly in importance and authenticity.

A further asset of this publication must be seen in the fact that the history of education is not merely described and analyzed as an account of certain phenomena, but that (as, for instance, in the aforementioned chapters on teacher education) the names of outstanding teachers and educators are given together with a short comment on their respective merits or, indeed, their destiny under occupation and dictatorship. In correspondence with that aspect, the very readable last chapter of the book offers a general evaluation of the Soviet-dominated education system emphasizing the “human factor” and highlighting the crucial role of autobiographical writing, which is “necessary for us—the former inhabitants of the Soviet empire—in order to understand what exactly happened to us, why it happened and why we are as we are today, when we have joined Europe” (p. 280).

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