

## CONTENTS OF STUDY COURSES “HISTORY OF PEDAGOGY” AND “LITERATURE DIDACTICS” IN THE 40IES AND 50IES OF THE 20TH CENTURY – PROMOTER OF STUDENTS’ HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE

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### **Abstract**

During the soviet times pedagogy in Latvia develops in difficult and controversial conditions. It becomes a specific area of influence and a propaganda tool, in which ideologised guidelines of soviet pedagogy prevail. So far Soviet experience in education theory and practice (1940–1941, 1944–1990) has not been fully identified and evaluated because it is “recent” history. People living during the soviet times have developed self-experience, based on which conclusions can be made. At the same time young people develop this experience in their daily life (communicating with people, watching and reading in the mass media), thus based on other people’s experience. One of the sources promoting teachers’ historical experience is study courses The History of Pedagogy and Literature Didactics, in which future teachers gain knowledge about the historical development of pedagogy, learn different ideas proposed by famous educators, acquire skill in analysing pedagogical ideas in the context of a particular historical period, assess different offerings of pedagogy and their application in nowadays pedagogical situations. At the same time in the study course Literature Didactics future teachers enrich their knowledge about the development of Didactics of Latvian Literature during the soviet period, master their skills in critical evaluation of study contents, study programs, materials, additional materials, study aims, methods and approaches as well as teacher student interaction during the lesson.

KEY WORDS: experience, self-experience, indirect experience, study courses history of pedagogy, literature didactics, soviet period pedagogy.

### **Anotacija**

Per laikotarpį, kai Latvija buvo Sovietų Sąjungos sudėtyje, pedagogikos raidos sąlygos buvo prieštaringos ir sudėtingos. Ji tapo specifiniu idėjų propagandos šaltiniu, sovietų ideologinės pedagogikos pagrindu. Sovietmečio laikotarpio švietimo teorijos ir praktikos patirtis (1940–1941, 1944–1990) iki šių dienų mažai pažinta ir įvertinta, bet tuo domisi įvairių šalių pedagogai. Žmonės, turintys gyvenimo SSRS patirties, geba savarankiškai vertinti švietimo ir pedagogikos vystymąsi šiuo laikotarpiu. Jaunų žmonių nuomonė apie tą laikotarpį formuojasi remiantis vyresnės kartos patirtimi ir tuo, ką perskaito spaudoje bei internete, tai yra svetima patirtimi. Vienas būsimų mokytojų istorinio patyrimo pažinimo būdų – studijų programos Pedagogikos istorija ir Literatūros didaktika: studentams gali suteikti žinių apie pedagogikos raidos procesą, jie gali studijuoti klasikos kūrinius, įgyti pedagoginių idėjų analizės istoriniame kontekste įgūdžių, kad galėtų įvertinti, ar įvairios naujos ugdymo idėjos tinka dabartinėje situacijoje. Studijų programoje Literatūros didaktika būsimieji mokytojai turi galimybę papildyti savo žinias apie literatūros didaktikos raidą sovietmečiu, ugdyti kritinio vertinimo įgūdžius vertindami dalyko turinį, ugdymo programas, išteklius, ugdymo priemones, metodų ir mokymo formų tikslus, mokytojo ir mokinių bendradarbiavimą pamokoje. Straipsnyje analizuojama, kaip žinias apie literatūros didaktikos raidą ir ugdymo proceso turinį XX a. 5–6 dešimtmečiais, įgytas studijuojant programas Pedagogikos istorija ir Literatūros didaktika, galima panaudoti rengiant šiuolaikinį mokytoją.

## Introduction

Experience is an essential component in cognition process. It expands and enriches the world vision of an individual. Experience may be of two sorts: self-experience obtained through direct perception and indirect experience obtained through language and communication, which most often is other people's experience. Historical experience (meaning the time in which man himself has not lived) is indirect experience.

Everyone of us is the creator of present-day history and our attitude towards past culture and history only stimulates the preservation of national and historical traditions. It is a matter of honour for every nation. The present generation of young people was born in free Latvia and educated in an independent country belonging to Europe and therefore life under the conditions of authoritarian fascist or communist regime to students is alien and distant. More often than not it can be observed in the study process that future teachers lack knowledge in history, the skill and experience for critical analysis of historical research, sources and literature published in the soviet period and the evaluation of a specific pedagogical problem from the present-day perspective. When studying the history of literature and in the study courses "The History of Pedagogy" and "Literature Didactics" one can come to the conclusion that students, for instance, uncritically transfer the literature process evaluated in the publications of the soviet period to the present day and do not understand that the problem has been considered from the viewpoint of soviet ideology. Whereas, in the study course "Literature Didactics" and graduation papers one comes across the inability of students to perceive objectively the evaluation of literary work of separate writers interpreted according to the standards of ruling soviet ideology. As seen from the university lecturers' experience in the above-mentioned studies, future teachers find it difficult to present scientific analysis of sources and literature where they have to deal with research, study aids and special methodological aids issued in diverse periods of literature didactics.

Therefore, in educating future teachers it is important to stimulate their comprehension about the processes of history, education and culture, events and values of the past, as well as rouse respect towards them. Getting to know literature, the history of pedagogy and literature didactics of various periods, the future teachers may perfect their knowledge in history, didactics, culture and literature, improve

their skills of reasoning, analysis, synthesis, evaluation and comparison. Special attention is paid to the pedagogical processes of the soviet period emphasizing the changes in education in the 40ies–50ies of the 20th century which was a time of great transformation in pedagogical system.

The aim of the article is to analyse the content of lectures and classes of the study courses “The History of Pedagogy” and “Literature Didactics”, based on the unpublished materials of the Latvian State Archives, to reveal essential changes in the pedagogical process, especially in literature didactics in the 40ies–50ies of the 20th century, as well as to evaluate how the acquired knowledge stimulates the formation of students’ historical experience.

The method of the research is hermeneutics applied in the analysis of sources and literature, the works of prominent literature methodologists; the analysis of the documents of the Latvian State Archives (LSA); the analysis of pedagogical, psychological literature.

Theoretical novelty – the relevant concepts of the pedagogy of history and literature didactics have been evaluated in the context of the soviet period and the provision of the study process of modern literature.

Practical need – the content of the approbated study course “The History of Pedagogy” and “Literature Didactics” on pedagogical processes in education, especially in literature didactics, approach can be used by university lecturers. In the development of indirect historical experience students’ ability to evaluate critically diverse interpretations of facts is of great importance.

## **1. Experience as Essential Component in Developing World View**

Experience is a relevant component in developing world view. The notion of experience is always essential in cognition process. Experience develops as a result of man’s attitude towards the world, other individuals and himself. Cognition object and subject are mutually interactive in this process. The object is subordinated to the subject’s active, practical, evaluating, cognitive and transforming action. The object, being part of cognitive relationship, plays an important role to ensure the continuity of the subject’s experience. As a result of cognition experience is acquired, expanded and renewed (Grundmane, 2005). The acquisition of experience is the individual’s autonomous self-activity. The emergence of experience is an individual’s active confrontation with the world and it is linked with independent activity and responsibility for learning. The process of developing experience should be interpreted as the author’s activity. It is connected with consciousness and characterizes man’s uniqueness as regards content and situation.

People cannot include in their experience finished solutions. The content of new experience should be linked to previous experience (Brigmane, 2013).

“Experience can be of two sorts:

- self-experience acquired through perception,
- indirect self-experience acquired through language and communication – most often it is other people’s experience” (Koķe, 1999, p. 42).

Self-experience is defined as “the knowledge acquired and evaluated during life activity, the skills and attitudes that have become personally important values” (Spona, 2006, p. 161).

## **2. Study Course “The History of Pedagogy” – Promoter of Developing Experience about Study Course Pedagogical Process of Soviet Period**

So far soviet experience in education theory and practice (1940–1941, 1944–1991) has not been fully identified and evaluated because it is “recent” past, however, these processes are of genuine interest in the world, as well as in the former soviet space. Those living in the soviet time have developed self-experience on the basis of which conclusions can be made. In their turn, young people develop experience (indirect experience) in daily life (by communicating with people, watching and reading mass media) and it is based on what other people have experienced. Historical experience (keeping in mind the time in which man did not live) will always be indirect experience. Study courses “The History of Pedagogy” and “Literature Didactics” are among the sources promoting future teachers’ historical experience.

By emphasizing the development of pedagogical experience in the soviet period, the article reveals a general insight into the pedagogical processes that students gain while studying “The History of Pedagogy” (one lecture): comprehension about the soviet system of education, pedagogical process, development of personality and teachers’ work. While studying the course “The History of Pedagogy” students gain general insight into the pedagogical processes of the soviet period only?: comprehension about the soviet system of education, pedagogical process, development of personality and teachers’ work. To characterize the period more attention is paid to the 40ies and 50ies of the 20th century when the changes were most radical. Structural and content-based changes affected all the spheres of education and pedagogy. School boards were substituted by People’s educational departments with the functions of coordination and inspection. The system of education was reorganized by unifying it in the whole of the USSR – 6-year primary school was replaced by 4-year primary school and, by adding three more grades, incomplete secondary school was established. There were 5-year secondary scho-

ols in the school year 1940/41. Significant changes affected school syllabus and the curricula existing in the USSR were introduced. Reorganization work was interrupted by World War II. Work on new curricula was continued in 1944. Ideologically political education with its final objective – an all-round and harmoniously developed personality devoted to the ideals of the communist party (Zelmenis, 1978) was one of the most essential school tasks. Therefore teachers considered disloyal to the regime were discharged (the “purge” started in 1940) and study contents was subjected to the objectives and tasks of soviet education determined by the guidelines of the communist party and the supreme executive institutions of the USSR (Zukovs, 1999).

The content of the lecture introduces students to essential processes in soviet pedagogy in the 40ies–50ies of the 20th century. The follow-up seminar deals with historical sources. From the methodological point of view, students in classes most often master critical approach to sources. The moment of valuation and appreciation is very important in historical cognition, students must realize that the past, to a certain extent, is the researcher’s personal past; history is in contact with people who arouse either liking or dislike, it affects valuation, therefore the subjective moment is often present (Varslavāns, 2001). Historical facts are complicated (can be analysed from different viewpoints), are connected with other facts, endless variety of facts exist, including legends and concoctions which should be separated from objective reality. Therefore, especially in the 40ies–50ies of the 20th century, when the soviet power used lies, distortion and concealment of historical facts to strengthen its ideology, critical appraisal of sources and literature becomes significant. Students are presented with several types of historical sources: written, oral and visual. For instance, in the category of written sources students analyse O. Vācietis’ novel “Tās dienas acīm” (Vācietis, 1959), trying to state the time of action, looking for culture signs and features characterizing the pedagogical process in the late 40ies of the 20th century. In order to evaluate the credibility of the sources, students are offered various pedagogical articles both in the soviet press and in the periodicals of exile. Students have to compare, answer important questions in the criticism of sources, such as: who the author is; where and when the source was created; in which social and political context it was created; why and in whose interests it was created. As oral historical resources they have to analyse interviews with teachers and schoolchildren about the processes in education in the 40ies–50ies of the important to explain to the students that the interpretation is subjective and cannot be absolutely objective, however, objectivity is the aim to strive for, because history is search for truth (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2007). In the process of developing students’ experience photographs are also applied as the inherited material values carry information. The inner connection of past

and present provide an opportunity to develop a true scene of the historical past. In order to facilitate critical evaluation students are offered to analyse original photographs taken in the 40ies–50ies of the 20th century, as well as those created nowadays reproducing that time. On the basis of what they have heard in the lectures and read in literature, students have to spot the differences.

Though very little time in the study process is allotted to the comprehension of this complicated time and the promotion of developing experience, yet, while mastering the course “The History of Pedagogy”, students not only gain general view of teaching and educational processes in different periods (including the soviet times in the 40ies–50ies of the 20th century) but also enrich their historical experience in the cognition process. The acquired theoretical basis enables students to research independently the historical development of education; to analyse the significance of a specific pedagogical phenomenon; to assess historical pedagogical values viewed from the present-day perspective, as well as to obtain, select and analyse the information on the issues of the history of pedagogy, discover and use various sources (documents, press, statistics, pictures). In the development of indirect historical experience students’ ability to evaluate critically diverse interpretations of facts is of great importance.

### **3. Contents of Study Course “Literature Didactics” on the Changes in the Subject of Literature in the 40ies of the 20th Century – Developer of a More Specific Students’ Experience**

The contents of the study course “Literature Didactics” stimulates a more specific development of experience. Students acquire information on the pedagogical system of the soviet period and find out about radical changes in the contents of education in the 40ies of the 20th century, especially in the contents of literature as a school subject. One of the first classes of the study course is devoted to the development of the history of Latvian literature didactics. Though only one lecture and one practical seminar have been planned for the above theme, students get an insight into the history of Latvian literature didactics and discover the rules of its development which have been integrated into the process of literature didactics nowadays. The author of the course Elita Stikute has researched and studied the periods of development of literature didactics in her Doctoral Thesis “Didactics of Latvian Literature: Historical Experience” (Stikute, 2010). They are as follows: the prehistory of the didactics of literature (50ies–80ies of the 19th century); the origin of the didactics of Latvian literature (end of the 19th century; beginning of the 20th century); developing theoretical basis for the didactics of Latvian literature (20ies–30ies of the 20th century); the contemporary period (beginning with

the 90ies of the 20th century). During the study course students have to familiarize themselves with the contribution of the most outstanding methodologists to the development of literature didactics.

The information presented to students is based on the documents of the Latvian State Archives available in Fund No. 700 (circulars, orders and guidelines on political, ideological, teaching and educational work at school, budget issues; plans and overviews on teaching separate subjects; organizing teachers' conferences; teacher course plans, overviews, programmes; curricula of subjects for the school year 1941/42; elementary school curricula; junior high school and high school exam themes etc.), the article ("Implementation of the Tasks Set in the Educational Programme at Literature Reading Lessons") available in the personal fund of H. Grase (LVA, 1130. f.), as well as the concepts of historians (D. Bleiere, I. Butulis), historians of pedagogy (A. Staris, L. Žukovs, J. Anspaks, I. Kēstere) and experts of literature didactics (M. Gaile, H. Grase, Ē. Zimule).

School and the teaching content was convenient for supporting the soviet policy, especially literature as an effective means to influence students' consciousness which was subjected to politically ideological doctrines.

One of the first objectives of the soviet policy was to educate and bring up the masses in the spirit of communism and draw attention to the soviet moral principles (LVA, 700.f. 1.apr.). For this purpose the masses had to be provided with the necessary literature. School library "cleaning" began. The works of the authors whose personality and creative work was "nationalistic" or did not comply with the class and party-based principles (E. Virza, Z. Mauriņa, A. Grīns, A. Eglītis, V. Eglītis, Z. Lazda, V. Strēlerte, M. Zīverts and others) were removed from literature and withdrawn from the libraries which were supplied with the works of Marxism-Leninism classics available in Latvian and in Russian (complete works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, selected works or separate works, Stalin's book "Issues of Leninism", biographies of party and state leaders, as well as other books and brochures on political-social matters). (LVA, 700.f., 1.apr., 393.l.)

As the school was to become a weapon of class annihilation and building of communist society, all sorts of campaigns, socialist competitions, pioneer and Komsomol activities were organized, including other exaggerations aimed at bringing up citizens in the spirit of communist internationalism and collectivism, obedient and submissive to the totalitarian power. For instance, the activities in honour of the 17th day of V.I. Lenin's death and the commemoration day of the 9th January 1905 were organized (LVA, 700.f., 1. apr., 8.-14.lp.). Or a mass-scale celebration of the Red Army anniversary at school with a report, meeting army representatives, songs, recitations, music and sports performances. Teachers of lit-

erature took an active part in organizing commemoration days of revolutionary authors and writers' jubilees.

Teachers' work was coordinated, guided and strictly supervised by very precise guidelines. The documents of the LSA (Latvian State Archive) prove that for steering the writers' ideology in "the correct" direction of teaching elaborate scenarios for various activities came "from the top" and literature teachers had only to implement them (for instance, the directions of the head of the school board on the celebration of writer E. Birznieks-Upītis 70th jubilee with the following programme:

1. The address of the Principal or Vice Principal. Report: E. Birznieks-Upītis – the Educator of Young People. The writer's merit must be highlighted because the majority of his literary works were devoted to working youths.
2. It is preferable that students should read excerpts of the works, e.g., "Zem ābeles" ("Under the Apple Tree"), passages from "Pastariņš skolā" ("Pastariņš at School") etc.
3. It is preferable to decorate the rooms of celebration by placing the writer's portrait there.
4. It is preferable to arrange the writer's corners in the classrooms where the author's books, snapshots etc. are to be displayed.
5. Issue the school wall newspaper devoted to E. Birznieks-Upītis (LVA, 700.f., 1.apr., 393.l., 85.lp.).

In order school and teachers could successfully educate and teach soviet citizens, free courses were organized. Lectures about policy issues of the party and government and the international situation prevailed in the methodological work as regards the aspect of content. However, there were also reports on the theoretical and historical issues of pedagogy, analysis of the curricula and textbooks, discussion of the best lesson plans, organization and analysis of the demonstration lessons, familiarizing with the experience of the best teachers and its popularization (LVA, 700.f., 1.apr.II, 397.l., 68.lp.).

Because of the gradual transition to the subject teaching system every teacher had to practise in his/her subject, therefore courses and seminars to improve one's skills were organized. During the advanced training high school teachers of the Latvian language and literature turned to such themes as the fundamentals of communist education, the fundamentals of didactics in soviet schools, the lesson as the main form of work in the teaching and educational process, assessing and documenting students' knowledge, reasons for poor progress, campaigning against students repeating a year, socialist competition to enhance progress in studies, educational methods and content, Komsomol, pioneer and student organizations, and planning the teacher's work. Although teacher training was strongly influenced by



ideology, especially in its content, it must be noted that the requirement for professionally and methodologically well prepared teachers remained true also during the soviet period.

In order to popularize the most successful experience of literature teaching district pedagogical rooms were developed with sets of teaching aids, travelling cinemas, film projectors with collections of pictures and slides for school use. Pedagogical exhibitions were arranged in these rooms displaying the most useful materials for teaching children, materials reflecting the practices of best teachers – descriptions about various teaching and methodological issues, accounts of separate lessons, teachers’ diaries, published works, students’ work samples, teaching aids, interesting materials of pedagogical experience arranged in special sets to be sent to methodological associations or individual schools.

For the purpose of propagating soviet culture schools had to be supplied with teaching aids corresponding to “the new (soviet) school”. A team of teachers was organized to design a chrestomathy of the Latvian language in compliance with the new circumstances. To ensure a more efficient work, the teachers involved in designing the chrestomathy (Ozoliņš, Znotiņa, Sleine, Bičolis, Būce, Kuplis, M. Alksnis) were released from all social duties in and out of school. The book included literary works of classical literature (Doku Atis, A. Upīts, Valdis, L. Paeģle, E. Birznieks-Upītis, Plūdonis, J. Jaunsudrabiņš, K. Skalbe, P. Rozītis, V. Lācis, A. Austrīņš, R. Blaunānis, J. Poruks, A. Pumpurs and others), methodology of compositions, methodological guidelines in chrestomathy, history of foreign literature, world literature classics (Hugo, Andersen, Shakespeare, Moliere, Schiller, Pushkin, Byron, Balzac, Zola and others), literary theory and especially the works of soviet authors depicting soviet patriotism and the positive hero (A. Kononov “Stories about Lenin”, A. Lapidjevsky “The Chelyuskins”, A. I. Uļjanov “The Childhood and School Years of Ilyich”, soviet children’s letters “How Do We Live?”, M. Gorky “The First of May”, Mamin-Sibiryak “Life by the Icy River” etc.) (LVA, 700.f.,1.apr.,147.lp.).

Literature had a significant place in school as it helped achieve the objective of soviet school – to bring up well-educated and cultured people who would unselfishly serve their Soviet Motherland in life and work. It was impossible to avoid the vulgar-sociological approach prevalent in literary theory at school according to which “correctness” of the content and one-sided, narrowed interpretation of literature prevailed, ignoring the artistic value of literary work and distorting the essence of the creative work. The above-mentioned factors created a several-decade-long break in the true teaching of literature as it failed to fulfil the role of literature as art, the carrier of national and humanistic values (Zimule, 1987).

The lecture method prevailed at literature lessons because there were not enough teachers prepared for the new soviet conditions and objectives, corresponding textbooks and curricula. However, the use of only a lecture method caused serious drawbacks in literature teaching and educational work: due to the shortage of history of literature textbooks students were forced to take down the teacher's lectures which was time-consuming and there were difficulties in covering the material and the analysis was limited. Students had little time to deal with literary samples and delve into the world of literary images and ideas and this meant that literature did not fulfil its role in ideological education. Such lessons did not stimulate the development of skills for independent work.

An essential problem was the shortage of literary works for reading. They had not been published and were not available. Students did not go delve into the problems as they had not read the works and that was the reason for their concise and general knowledge. Therefore, a strict requirement was put forward in the didactics of literature – to prevent a situation when the literary work which students have not read is being analysed in class (LVA, 700.f., 5.apr., 43.l.,75 lp.)

The requirements of the new soviet school were reflected in the students' examination themes. Composition themes of 23 May 1941 prove how class- and party-based principles under soviet conditions were forced upon literature and its teaching at school. For instance, the examination themes in the Latvian language for Grade 7 of adult school, Latvian SSR were connected with the construction of the new life and sounded like slogans: "Mēs jaunu pasauli sev celsim" ("We Are Going to Build a New Life for Ourselves"), "Pirmais maijs Padomju Savienībā" ("The First of May in the Soviet Union"), "Šķiru pretišķība tautas dziesmās" ("Class Antagonism in Folk Songs"), "Socialistiskās sacensības nozīme" ("Significance of Socialist Competition"), "Pirmais pavasaris Padomju Latvijas laukos" ("The First Spring in the Countryside of Soviet Latvia") etc. (LVA, 700.f., 1.apr., 477.l., 7.lp.,15.,154 lp.).

On 27 May 1941, some of the state examination themes in the Latvian language for Grade 7 were: "Socialistiskā celtniecība Padomju Latvijā" ("Building of Socialism in Soviet Latvia"), "Socialisma idejas Leona Paegles darbos" ("Ideas of Socialism in the Works of Leons Paegle"), "M. Gorkija bernības dienu tēlojums autobiogrāfijā" ("The Portrayal of M. Gorky's Childhood in His Autobiography"), "Oskars – zvejnieku dzīves reformators V. Lāča "Zvejnieka dēlā" ("Oscar – the Reformer of Fishermen's Life in the Novel "The Fisherman's Son" by V. Lācis"). On 20 May 1941, the state examination themes in the Latvian language for Grade 11 were the following: "Kapitalistiskās iekārtas dzīves ainas M. Gorkija autobiogrāfijā" ("The Scenes of Capitalist Society in M. Gorky's Autobiography"), "Revolucionārās cīņas motīvi Raiņa lirikā" ("Motives of Revolutionary Struggle in the Lyrics of

Rainis”), “1905. gada notikumi A. Upīša darbos” (“The Events of Year 1905 in the Works of A. Upītis”), “Brīvības ideja Raiņa drāmā “Uguns un Nakts” (“The Idea of Freedom in Rainis’ Drama “Fire and Night”) and so on. These facts prove that teaching literature at school was a convenient weapon in the hands of soviet authority to instil the “correct” ideology.

During the Nazi occupation (1941–1944) there were also attempts to adjust education to their needs and interests. The Nazi regime tried to press their ideology and culture on Latvia and emphasize the significance and superiority of German culture, simultaneously neglecting and diminishing the achievements of Latvian culture (Bleiere, Butulis, Feldmanis, Stranga, Zunda, 2000). Despite the German ideological education aimed at bringing up members of “New Europe”, not Latvian patriots, the Latvian people managed to maintain their culture and identity.

After the renewal of soviet power (1944) the intensive work of creating a unified school system, which was begun in 1940, was continued developing further the fundamentals of soviet school and education policy, determining general development direction in education and increasing soviet influence in the post-war period. Drastic rearrangements took place in the content of school work, and the concepts of soviet pedagogy were introduced into education. Unfortunately, the pedagogical concepts of the democratic world were unavailable to teachers, and the main authorities were soviet educators (A. Makarenko, V. Suhomlinskis, later S. Amonasvilli, M. Skatkins, I. Lerner and others). However, “Latvian teachers by discarding the stock phrases of communist ideology in the works of the above-mentioned authors could and borrowed from them several concepts and skilfully applied them in practice” (Zukovs, 1999).

Getting to know about the development of Latvian literature didactics under the conditions of paradigm change in the early 40ies and 50ies of the 20th century, students acquired the knowledge experience that literature, to a great extent, helped to achieve the objective of soviet school – to bring up educated people for the Soviet Motherland; therefore as a school subject it had an important role in the soviet education system. As literary works help develop the scientific world outlook, instil moral and aesthetic values in students, in literature, unlike in any other subject, the creative work of writers could be adjusted to the postulates of soviet ideology and used as a weapon to popularize class and party-based principles, friendship of nations, portrayal of social hero, reflection of revolutionary battles, glorification of leaders, peace in the whole world, liking towards outcasts and children left at the mercy of fate, and the like. Therefore the mentioned aspects were used as a means to achieve ideological aims.

## Conclusion

Classes in the study courses “The History of Pedagogy” and “Literature Didactics” on general transformations in the Latvian educational space in the 40ies–50ies of the 20th century and changes in the subject of literature provide students with knowledge thus enriching their experience about the history of Latvian pedagogy during the soviet period in the context of the history of European pedagogy, about the development of pedagogical thought in this period and significant changes in teaching literature at school. Based on the acquired theoretical foundations students should be able analyse the historical significance of a particular pedagogical phenomenon and to assess pedagogical value of history in its modern aspect. The acquired skills are essential in selecting and independently analysing the information on the historic issues of pedagogy during the soviet period, finding and using diverse sources of information (documents, the press, statistics, pictures), analysing various processes in the history of soviet pedagogy, assessing critically different interpretations of facts, comparing phenomena of pedagogy (educational institutions, teacher’s profession, pedagogical process etc.) in the 40ies–50ies of the 20th century.

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