

Book review
by Reinhard Golz & David Whybra

Tatyana V. Tsyrlina-Spady, & Peter C. Renn (Eds.) (2019). *Nurture, Care, Respect, and Trust. Transformative Pedagogy Inspired by Janusz Korczak*. Gorham, Maine: Myers Education Press. 375 pp., ISBN-13: 978-1-9755-0131-0 (Paperback)

It must be said in advance that it is not possible to do justice to the richness of content, the interdisciplinary diversity and the many pedagogical inspirations in this book. We can only try to give a brief overview of the basic ideas and some of the contents of this book, which is aimed at educational scientists, educational policy-makers and practical pedagogues, but also at philosophers, psychologists and other representatives of the humanities and social sciences.

In the cover text it says rightly:

The book provides answers to timely questions of how to respect children's rights in K-12 schools, community centers, summer camps, and colleges; how to create an atmosphere of trust and safety, and provide social-emotional learning in the classroom; how to become a genuine child advocate; and how to support growing child agency.

The title of the anthology chosen by the editors refers to central categories in the pedagogical heritage of Janusz Korczak and his timelessly inspiring professional-ethical attitudes as a true humanist in the horrible circumstances during the Nazi German occupation of Poland, especially in the Warsaw Ghetto, where Korczak had run orphanages for Jewish and socially neglected children.

Many of the countless publications which have appeared about Korczak in the meantime have described the life and work of this Jewish-Polish paediatrician, pedagogue and writer, and have also reminded us of his attitude during the transport of the children from his orphanage to the extermination camp Treblinka. There are various descriptions of this situation by contemporary witnesses, but they all agree on one thing, namely that Korczak, although he was offered the opportunity to leave, did not abandon the children entrusted to him and went to his death with them.

The depiction of this touching scene in the last days of Korczak's life raises new questions about the professional ethics of the educator in every new generation. Whenever there is talk about Korczak in teacher training, in socio-pedagogical events, in schools etc., one cannot avoid these questions and one must not avoid them.

Sometimes the actual pedagogical-practical achievements, visions and questions of Korczak recede behind the memories and representations of Korczak's death march and the children entrusted to him. But there are still so many thoughts, still undiscussed, challenging questions and tasks for prospective and practicing teachers to discover regarding their own professional and personal development and in the interest of their students. This book offers both an impression of the man Korczak and his work and also - in addition to the contributions - in annexes numerous didactic materials for teaching and learning in schools and other educational institutions.

Korczak developed a pedagogical concept which is described in the pedagogical historiography with different terms. There is talk about "caring pedagogy", "care pedagogy", "orphanage pedagogy" or of "pedagogy of respect"; there is also talk about "psycho pedagogy", "empirical pedagogical diagnostics", and there are works about Korczak as the "Pestalozzi from Warsaw" etc.

This not only points to the complexity and fatefulness of his life and work. It also indicates the specific nature of his contribution to the contemporary national movement of "New Education" in his time, which in Poland was also known as "Ruch nowego Wychowania", in Germany as "Reformpädagogik" and more internationally as "Progressive Education".

Korczak dealt extensively with the problem of children's rights in theory and practice. The most important of these is the "right of the child to respect", which also plays an important role in some contributions to the book under discussion here. Various other rights are assigned to this fundamental right, including the initially irritating "right of the child to die". Korczak's commentary is known, that we for fear that the child may be taken from us, we deprive it of life. His attitudes on this problem are worthy of discussion today and in the future and make us think again and again. It is about the development of independence and self-determination, about scope for own experiences which are in principle risky and about recognition of the right to make mistakes and failures. Apart from the right "to death" understood in this way, the child has, in Korczak's view, the right "to this day" and the right "to be a child". The rights of the child and their contemporary pedagogical interpretation find fundamental consideration in articles of the book under discussion here.

In his pedagogical fiction Korczak often quite deliberately only raises questions and inevitably leads the reader into the situation of thinking more deeply about the answer itself. His books are not strictly theoretical rules of educational methodology, but rather a stimulating contrast to it.

The contributions in the book edited by Tatyana Tsyrlina-Spady and Peter C. Renn, each in its own way, provide just as many suggestions for dealing with the work of Janusz Korczak both from a historical perspective, and to make it useful for present and future educational problems and tasks.

The book consists of contributions from educational scientists, practical pedagogues, representatives of several disciplines of human sciences, educational politicians and others interested in Korczak and the contemporary discussion of his visions. It is introduced by two prefaces, the first by Marta Santos Pais, UN Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children. She reminds, among other things, that Korczak is one of the promoters of the first international agreements and declarations on the Rights of the Child (1924; 1989) adopted by the United Nations. The second foreword was written by Amy Spangler, a practical educator and director of schools with over 30 years of experience in these areas. She is convinced that reading this book can be a step "in the right direction towards making Korczak's dream for all children a reality today" (p. 20).

The introduction by Tatyana Tsyrlina-Spady and Peter C. Renn is subtitled with "A Letter from the Editors: Ten Reasons to Read This Book" (pp. 23-27). Of these "Reasons..." here are just a few in a nutshell: Often the "legendary final act of love, commitment, and sacrifice to his children" serves to describe Korczak, but there is much more to learn from his personality. The message of the children's right to respect is very timely in the face of the still existing maltreatment in the world today. Korczak reminds us that educators "are not miracle-workers (...), "they renounce hypocritical longing for the perfect child". For beginners in education with high expectations, but also with the feeling of not being sufficiently prepared for disappointments, the knowledge of Korczak's belletristic literature in the educational reality helps. It is especially important to read Korczak's "The Child's Right to Respect", not only for students of pedagogy and trained educators, but also for parents and all those who have responsibility for children (ibid.)

At this point and generally, the thematic breadth and at the same time accuracy of the book's title once again becomes particularly clear; it is about "Nurture, Care, Respect, and Trust".

The individual contributions of the book reflect the pedagogical inspirations of Janusz Korczak in many ways, and the editors have assigned them to five parts. Unusual, but also not without charm, is the recommendation of the editors to the readers to begin the study of the book first with the part that corresponds most to their own interest. The reviewers follow this recommendation in that they

list the titles of the five parts of the book as well as the titles of the individual contributions in order not to discuss the different intentions of the authors in advance, but to get straight to the point and facilitate orientation for reading.

Part 1 "**Learn and Follow: Korczak, a Life Story of Dedication and Love**" (pp. 24-62) deals with aspects of the historical background of Janusz Korczak's life and personality. There are the following articles on this:

Elisabeth Gifford "The Good Doctor of Warsaw: A Historical Novel about Janusz Korczak" (pp. 29-35); Agnieszka Witkowska-Krych "The Home for Orphans during WWII: A Micro-History of Perseverance and Care" (pp. 37-42); Marcia Talmage Schneider "Janusz Korczak: Sculptor of Children's Souls" (pp. 43-49); Lillian Boraks-Nemetz "On Becoming Korczak: A Short Reflection" (pp. 51-53) and Mark Bernheim "Korczak: From Dijon to Seattle - an Odyssey" (pp. 55-62).

The articles in Part 2 "**Advocate and Win: Korczak as a Champion of the Rights of the Child**" (pp. 63-112) are dedicated to the development of the rights of the child formulated and practiced by Korczak up to the present time as well as their philosophical and pedagogical interpretations.

This part concerns the contributions from:

Kenneth Bedell "Starting with the Rights of the Child" (pp. 65-71); Marek Michalak "The Rights of the Child and the Order of Smiles: Korczak's Influence in Today's World" (pp. 73-78); Ewa Łukowicz-Oniszczyk "Two UN Conventions and their Fathers: Janusz Korczak and Raphael Lemkin" (pp. 79-89); Ewa Jarosz "Echoes from Korczak: The Participation of Children Today" (p. 91-101); Tatjana Tsyrlina-Spady, Peter C. Renn and Amy Spangler "Human Rights Library" (p. 91-101); Ewa Jarosz "Echoes from Korczak: Human Rights Library: An Interview with Jonathan Levy" (p. 103-112)

Part 3 "**Nurture and Care: Early Childhood as a Basis for a Happy and Successful Life**" (pp. 113-166) and Part 4 "**Respect and Inspire: From School Years to College**" (pp. 167-244) include articles on Korczak's philosophy and pedagogy and their "different perspectives on his approach and educational interventions in working with children", according to the editors (p. 27).

The following contributions should be mentioned here:

Angela M. Kurth, Darcia Narvaez, and Mary S. Tarsha "Meeting Basic Needs and Getting Children on Track to Fulfill Their Potential" (pp. 115-126); Gilles Julien and H  l  ne (Sioui) Trudel "The Canadian Model of Community Social Pediatrics: Respecting Children's Rights to Quality Education" (pp. 127-137); Hillel Goelman "Janusz Korczak and Developmentally Appropriate Practice" (pp. 139-148); Ljubov M. Klarina "Preschoolers as Explorers: How to Ensure Respect for their Rights" (pp. 149-156); Helma Brouwers "Why Should Children Learn to Take Risks" (pp. 157-165); Sara Efrat Efron "Responsibility for Self, Others, and the Community: Practical Implications of Korczak's Educational Vision" (pp. 169-184.); Mark R. Silverman "Korczak's Ideas and Practice of Moral Education" (pp. 186-196); Joop W.A. Berding "Janusz Korczak and John Dewey on Re-Instituting Education" (pp. 197-208); Shlomi Doron "Lessons from Korczak: The Post Office as a Case Study" (pp. 209-215); Kristin R. Poppo "From Dispair to Agency: The Call from Janusz Korczak" (pp. 217-226); Tatyana Tsyrlina-Spady, Peter C. Renn, and Ami Spangler "Found Poetry: An Interview with Julie Scott" (pp. 227-235); Tilar J. Mazzeo "Bringing Irena Sendler and Janusz Korczak into the Classroom: Contemporary Topics for Curricular Integration" (pp. 237-244).

Part 5 "**Transform and Play: Creating Different Educational Realities Inspired by Korczak**" (pp. 244-305), together with the extensive appendix of the book (pp. 307-366), deals with various suggestions and possibilities for the practical implementation of Korczak's pedagogy in school and other educational everyday life. To this end, the contributions of:

Tonia Bock, Darcia Narvaez, Ralph Singh, and Mary S. Tarsha "Guiding Children for Virtue" (pp.247-259); Wojciech Lasota "Bets and Postcards: Fostering Children's Self-Efficacy" (pp. 261-272); Tamara Sztyma "It Is Hard to Be in Charge: What can we learn from *King Matt the First?*" (pp. 273-282); Irina Demakova "Nash Dom Camps: A Unique Space of Childhood" (pp. 283-289); Shirane L.A. Halperin "The Janusz Korczak Contest of Youth Literature" (pp. 291-298); Lukas Ritson and Caitlin Murphy "Respecting and Developing Children: A Valuable Collaboration with Janusz Korczak" (pp. 302-305).

At the end of each part, the editors have inserted assignments for students, which can be used to recapitulate the contents. As already mentioned, there is an extensive appendix with interesting yet challenging and stimulating examples of practical educational work in the Korczak context by Julie Scott "Found Poetry Project" (p. 309 ff.) and Ira Pataki "Youth Courts and Post Cards: Incorporating Korczak and Principles of Restorative Justice in a School Youth Court" (pp. 315-366).

The Book concludes with short information about the 38 authors and a subject and name index concentrated on the Korczak topic. From the point of view of the reviewers, critical references refer only to insignificant things, such as the fact that the headers do not mention the names of the authors additionally to the short titles of the individual articles, that the final list of contributors sometimes contains only cursory information about the authors' origins and their current place of life and work.

For various reasons, authors from Germany and other countries with Korczak societies interested in the same subject could not participate in the conference organized by the editors and held at Seattle Pacific University (2018; see: [Conference Announcement – IDE Journal](#)) which laid the foundation for the contributions of this book. In Germany alone a lot of publications about Korczak's life and work have been published and bibliographed. The topics and sources discussed in this book will now further enrich not only the relevant literature, but also the discussion on the contemporary significance of Janusz Korczak's literary and pedagogical-practical heritage.

This book has its specific meaning for the study of pedagogy and its sub-disciplines (historical, comparative, general pedagogy, intercultural, interreligious education, social pedagogy), but also for the study of other human sciences such as philosophy, psychology and sociology.

The contributions are characterized by new impulses for the worldwide implementation of children's rights. This book should not only belong in the stock of libraries of educational institutions, it is addressed to all people who are committed to the worldwide implementation and effective compliance of children's rights.

About the Reviewers

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