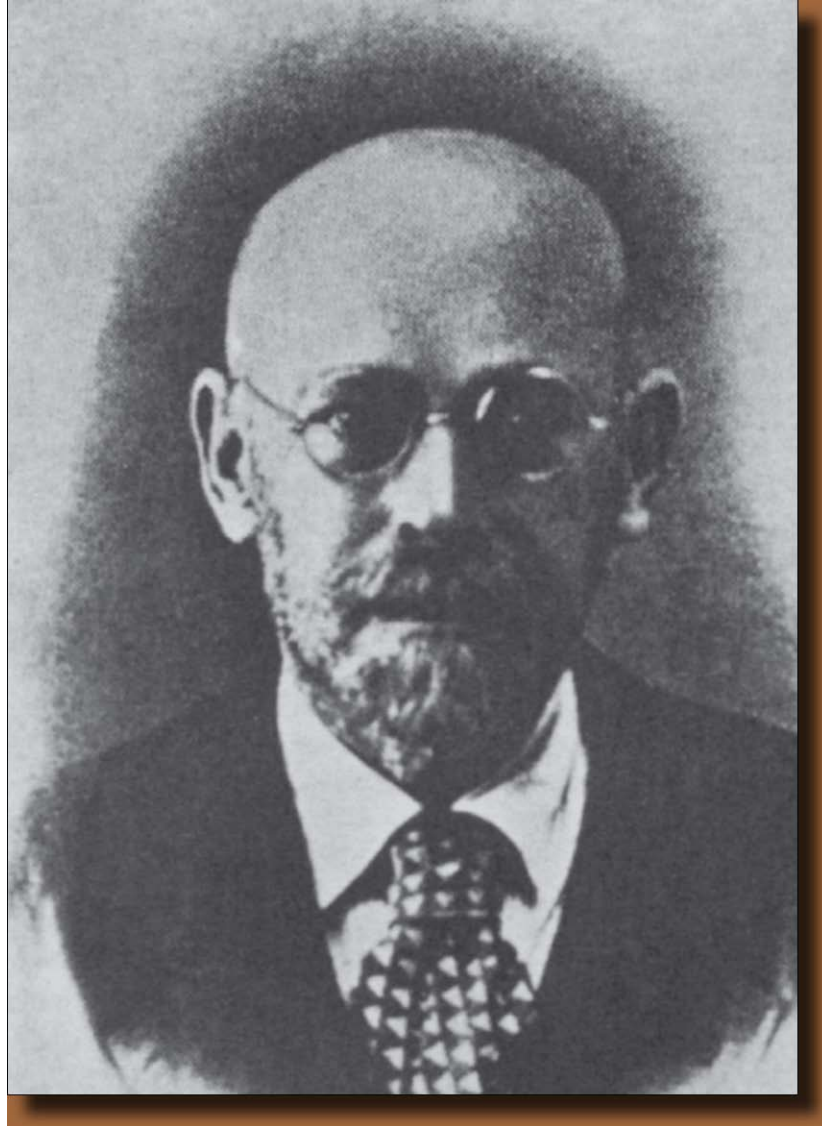


# The Polish Jewish Pioneer on Children's Human Rights



Janusz Korczak

**1878/0 - 1942**

and the rights of the child to education in the Convention  
on the Rights of the Child with a focus on training teachers

International Seminar, Geneva, 5 June 2010

Edited by Olga Biernacka and Batia Gilad.

International Seminar  
The Polish Jewish Pioneer on Children's Human Rights, Janusz Korczak (1878-1942)  
and the right of the child to education in the Convention on the Rights of the Child  
with a focus on training teachers  
5 June 2010  
in the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Poland to the United Nations, Geneva

**The Program**

9:30 – 10:00 Opening

Ambassador – Permanent representative of Poland to the UNOG  
Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child  
Chair of the International Korczak Association  
Introduction

**10:00 – 12:30 Panel 1**

*The Child's Rights to Education in view of the Convention and of Korczak.*

Moderator: Jean Zermatten

Philip D. Jaffe:

*The two General Comments on the Right of Education.*

Lothar Krappmann:

*Monitoring the Right of Education in view of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.*

Dainius Puras:

*Promotion of good mental health and emotional well-being in schools.*

Jonathan Levy

*For a pedagogical approach to children's rights.*

12:30 – 13:00 *"Korczak of the Children" –Movie. Testemonies from the Orphanage*

13:00 – 14:00 Buffet luncheon offered by the Permanent Mission of Poland

**14:00 – 16:00 Panel 2**

*Teaching Teachers – taught by Korczak and the Convention. A Challenge for NGOS.*

Moderator: Sven Hartman

Maria Herczog:

*Ways of interpreting Korczak in Hungary.*

Roza Valayeva

*Teaching future teachers in the spirit of Korczak.*

Tzipi Marhaim:

*Training teachers according to Korczak's legacy – Study case in "Avichail school".*

Kelvin Ravenscroft

*The contemplative pedagogy of Janusz Korczak and its significance for teacher education in a changing world.*

Joop Berding

*Teaching Korczak. Learning and working with students and professionals.*

16:00 – 16:15 Coffee break

16:15 – 17:45 **Panel 3**

***Challenging Intergenerational Relationship: the School as a Model. A Future Vision.***

Moderator: Kamel Filali

All participants of the former panels 1+2

18.0 Reception by Polish Mission



Geneva, June 2010

It was my great honor and pleasure to welcome you all at the second International Seminar devoted to Janusz Korczak that was organized by the Permanent Mission of Poland to the UN in Geneva in collaboration with the International Korczak Association. Let me also take this opportunity to express our particular gratitude to the International Korczak Association and its chairperson, Madame Batia Gilad, for their tireless efforts aimed at promoting and protecting the legacy of Korczak.

Janusz Korczak, who devoted his life for children, from the very beginning of his public activity stressed and realized that an education, a proper education is a key element of children's upbringing. In this context, I must stress that he perceived the children's education not in a narrow, formal way, as teaching "reading and writing", passing some knowledge. For him the children's education comprised also teaching values, moral norms. That's why the orphanages established by Korczak were democratic, self-ruled children's communities with its own parliament, press and even courts. These standards set by Korczak till today and serves us as inspiring education model for our own generation.

And this is why, for this year's seminar the chosen topic was: "Janusz Korczak and the rights of the child to education in the Convention on the Rights of the Child with a focus on training teachers". The seminar consisted of three panels. We started with the panel on the Child's Rights to education in view of the Convention and of Korczak moderated by the member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Mr. Jean Zermatten. Then we were watching a film "Korczak of the Children". In the afternoon two other panels took place: "Teaching teachers – taught by Korczak and the Convention. A Challenge for NGOs", and "Challenging Intergenerational Relationship: the School as a Model. A future Vision" moderated by Mr. Kamel Filali.

I hope your enthusiasm and interest in children's rights will lead us to the third Seminar in 2011.

**Cezary Lusiński**

Deputy Permanent Representative Counselor

**Prof. Waltraud Kerber Ganse** - Technische Universität, Institut für Sozialpädagogik - Berlin  
- Member of the German Korczak Association

## Introduction

Excellency,

Dear members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child

Dear members of different Korczak Associations or other NGOs

My task will be to give a short introduction into the program and the ideas behind.

But at first I want to thank for the second invitation by the Ambassador of the Polish Mission and the hospitality we will have the opportunity to face today. You, Excellency, spontaneously re-invited us all together last year in order to more and more find out what kind of challenge is given today by the legacy of Korczak and his practical work -- in view of further developments of children's rights in the frame of the United Nations.

I as well want to thank the staff of the Mission who had a lot to do in order to prepare the today event. Let me – as pars pro toto – mention Olga Biernacka, who was for us, for Batia Gilad and for me, the direct partner in the Mission.

Thanks a lot!

Last year we had a moving meeting of members of the Committee and of members of different Korczak Associations. Shortly I would like to refer to the pre-history. It was in 2007, at the launch party for the important edition of “Legislative History of the Convention on the Rights of the Child” that I had the opportunity to meet Andrzej Misztal, the former Deputy Representative of the Polish Mission in Geneva, who – in his opening speech – mentioned Korczak. This was so astonishing for me in the frame of the UN and of human rights that I contacted him. The idea to organize something in the Polish Mission was born. Finally we had to postpone our joint event for about a year. It took place in June 2009.

Introduction and first panelists



Now with regard to the **program**:

Batia Gilad, the chair of the International Korczak Association, and me agreed that our subject today - referring to the **Right of Education** - would be a challenging one for both: the Korczak associations **and** for the Committee. Observing the Committee for several years I found out that the subject of education is always a serious theme in the monitoring process but on the other hand there is not much time left within the deliberations of the Committee during their considerations of the written States Parties' reports together with a given State Party's delegation.

But the **first** of the meanwhile 12 official General Comments of the Committee – edited in 2001 – dealt with the **Right to Education**. And this shows the importance. But even in 1999 the Committee on the International Covenant on the economic, social and cultural rights wrote their General Comment No 13 about the article 13 of this Covenant, the **Right to Education**. Thus we will open the first panel with an introduction into these two General Comments. The speaker will be Prof. Philip Jaffe, a member of the famous master course on children's rights in Sion, Switzerland. Thank you for coming.

**Lothar Krappman** from Germany- being a member of the Committee - will give the next presentation.

He will give us some insights of the hard work of monitoring the whole Convention, especially the **Right to Education**.

The next speaker will be another member of the Committee, **Dainius Puras** from Lithuania, being medical doctor and psychiatrist. He will tell us about his professional experiences in training teachers regarding good mental health and emotional well being at schools.

The next in the round of the first panel will be Jonathan Levi from the French Korczak Association. He will speak under the title: *For a pedagogical approach to children's rights*. He will talk to us after our first coffee break. I very much hope that we will be in time so that we will have afterwards time for discussion.

But let me say: all lecturers will take part in our last panel, the third one. Thus we can discuss with them all together. This panel under the headline of "Challenging Intergenerational Relationship: the School as a Model. A Future Vision" will give an outlook of what has to be realized in future,

politically and pedagogically. This panel will be moderated by Prof. Kamel Filali, member of the Committee, a jurist from Algeria.

Now back to our second panel.

At first we will meet another member of the Committee, Maria Herczog from Hungary. She will tell us how Korczak is regarded in this country. Hungary is and was a country in transition. So she will give us, as an example, an impression how the reception of Korczak and his legacy works in a post communist country.

The four next speakers belong to different Korczak Associations. In this case Batia Gilad, as the chair of the International Korczak Association, should give us a vision about what we will have to expect in the further round of this panel. Of course - following Korczak – there is a special challenge in the **pedagogical field**.

5 June 2010

## **Introduction**

*"Years of work make it increasingly obvious[to me] that children deserve respect, confidence and kindness, that good is derived from them in the cheerful atmosphere of mild sensations, merry laughter, strenuous first efforts and surprises, pure, clear, lovable joys. Such work is lively, fruitful and attractive."*

[M. Wolins, Selected works of J. Korczak, Warsaw 1967, p. 479]

And that is why we are meeting here for the second time.

Last year for the first time we brought together, in depth, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the man who was the first to present the child as a person with his/her rights – Janusz Korczak – the physician, writer and educator. It was then that the idea was born to continue and hold a yearly seminar in this framework, dedicated to the father of children's rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was passed by the United Nations in 1980. This time we are meeting to deal with the child's right to education – with an emphasis on teacher training.

I would like to thank Ambassador Rapacki and the embassy staff, who were so kind as to hold the seminar this time as well. I hope that this seminar will become a tradition in the framework of the embassy, with complete cooperation with the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the International Janusz Korczak Association.

I would like to thank my associate, Prof. Waltraud Kerber Ganze, who did not rest for a moment until she succeeded in putting together the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle, which is this meeting today.

I would also like to thank my friends from all the different Korczak Associations and my friends from the Committee on the Rights of the Child, who came to discuss the child's right to education – in light of Korczak's legacy and how it is possible to provide this right to every child today.

Korczak placed the child at the center of the adults' thoughts. The child is no longer an object that belongs to the adults, but rather an individual. The man who treated sick children as a physician and afterwards tended them as an educator of Jewish and Polish orphans, developed work methods that



enabled children from the lowest socioeconomic sector to obtain a warm home, education and schooling.

Korczak was critical of the schools of his time. In his opinion, the schools as they were constructed and run did not take their "consumer" – the child, into account at all. The school was alienated, one sided and did not consider the feelings and needs of the children, who spent a large part of their time in this framework.

In his pedagogical writing, Korczak mainly addresses the adults – the educators. They are the ones who stand in front of the child and affect his growth and the formation of his personality, and that is the reason for the great importance of the way they are trained. His approach is very insistent and uncompromising:

***"Every child who does not fit the general law must become a legitimate exception. In this case, too, what is needed is conscious, creative and devoted thought on the part of the teacher."*** [M. Wolins, Selected works of J. Korczak, Warsaw 1967, p.454]

The educator must first of all love the child, be attentive to his needs and feelings.

The place of the educator in the twenty-first century, in the place where he, the adult- educator has ceased being the young person's sole source of knowledge, is a different role than that of the educator before the era of the Internet.

Educators today are even more significant than ever. To a great degree they fill the deficiency created in the role of the parent, who (in my opinion) generally does not spend enough time with the child to get to know him, direct him, and mainly to educate him to be an adult with values, or as Korczak called it, "a useful individual in society – a citizen".

If such is the case, the educator's job is more extensive than ever. From a teacher, a professional teacher who trains students for the future, to an educator for values, an educator who teaches a way of life and establishes the values on which the young person will grow into a responsible adult.

I hope that the discussions today will lead us to finding the right way to reach those children who do not have access to the basic right to education. We all have the obligation to continue looking for

the way, not to give up despite the difficulties, to adhere to our purpose, to disseminate Korczak's legacy, to reach the educators, and especially the children who have not yet received their due.

I very much hope that the embassy will be so kind as to host such a seminar next year as well, and that this will be a tradition that attracts other representative bodies to take part in them, and we on our part will make every effort to translate Korczak's writings into additional languages so that they are accessible to everyone.



**Prof. Philip D. Jaffé** - Director, Institut universitaire Kurt Bösch, Sion, Switzerland

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## **Child Education: There should be no escape from children's rights**

In preparing this short intervention on the child's right to education, I was tempted to comment on the UN Convention on the rights of the child, to dissect articles 28 and 29, the two most relevant articles on education, and to dutifully sketch what the thinking of the Committee on the rights of the child is regarding this fundamental right. My reasoning was that it would be an easy endeavor and that I would be able to safely rely on the Committee on the rights of the child's 2002 General comment No1 on the Aim of education. This was tempting, but I revised my game plan.

Of course, I will offer a rather classical reading of the articles and explore the richness of the right to education as it is set out in the Convention on the rights of the child. The three key areas I will concentrate on are: what is learned and how, the institutional aspects of education, and, finally, perhaps the very essence of what education should be, the notion that children learn to coexist in a social environment with the likes of their own generational comrades who they will interact with for a time that extends way beyond the life expectancy of their so-called educators. In other words, education is always a social project and a transmission of human values of and by the generation progressively checking out, adults like you and I, to the generation checking in, children. And, because the adult teaching generation is evanescent, educating children about their rights is the foundation of living human rights, those that are transmitted but also learned and reinvented by the children themselves. There is a paramount need for children's rights education. In fact, my main conclusion will be that, in the end, children's rights education is what may actually save the education system and the pursuit of knowledge.

### **The viewpoint of the Committee on the rights of the child**

Education is a fundamental human right that predates the Convention on the rights of the child. It is most notably formulated in Art. 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). The Convention on the rights of the child incorporates the language of its predecessor, above all stating that education is a right, primary education should be compulsory and free, and that it should be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. But the CRC goes much further and spells out several

dimensions that need to be summarized. Indeed, in its General comment No 1, the Committee on the rights of the child uses powerful and, dare I say it, beautiful language, insisting “(...) upon the

*need to be child-centred, child-friendly and empowering (...). (...) The education to which every child has a right is one designed to provide the child with life skills, to strengthen the child's capacity to enjoy the full range of human rights and to promote a culture which is infused by appropriate human rights values. The goal is to empower the child by developing his or her skills, learning and other capacities, human dignity, self-esteem and self-confidence”.*

Child-centered education represents a major social evolution. As the Committee on the rights of child sees it, “the key goal of education is the development of the individual child's personality, talents and abilities, in recognition of the fact that every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs. (...) the curriculum must (...) take full account of the child's evolving capacities; teaching methods should be tailored to the different needs of different children. Education must also be aimed at ensuring that essential life skills are learnt by every child and that no child leaves school without being equipped to face the challenges that he or she can expect to be confronted with in life”. This of course includes many important ingredients of which some basic skills such as literacy and numeracy, and the knowledge that is needed to meet the many challenges of globalization and of a technologically rapidly mutating world.

### **Education as an institution**

A major challenge resides in teaching all children and every child individually. Up to now, most of us would probably agree that we have done a better job at teaching all children. Indeed, we have set up schools that function like gigantic warehouses in which we have quarantined children. Philippe Meirieu (2009) in his latest book, *Lettre aux grandes personnes sur les enfants d'aujourd'hui* [translation: Letter to grownups on the children of today], refers historically to schools as a kind of mixture between soldier's barracks for normalization and religious convents for meditation. In his view, formal learning started off as a gigantic experiment inculcating groups of children as an amorphous group with no distinct entities, no individual children, and was and often still is what Paulo Freire (cited by Meirieu) called a “banking pedagogy”. This clever expression refers to an educational system that is based on the exchange of information, first distributed, meaning taught by teachers, then returned by the students as home work or exams, paid by the system with a currency called grades, without much if any appropriation by the child or personal utilization.

Then again, many pedagogical currents rapidly contested the mainstream approach. There were of course the children who were unable to learn or did not want to learn in mainstream venues and special education was invented very early on by the likes of Pestalozzi. Later on modern pedagogy

was conceptualized by precursors such as Cecil Reddie with the new school, Maria Montessori's self-directed learning, John Dewey's learning by doing, or Alexander-Sutherland Neill's Sumerhill school in which nobody is forced to learn until he or she decides to. Let me quote Neill for the pleasure: *“Old men are apt to look back sadly to find their dreams of youth unfulfilled. But I am always an optimist about children. I never despair over any child, however much he may be making no apparent progress. What makes me despair is that children never get a chance to live; their love of life is killed by an adult world that ‘trains’, that is castrates, youth (...)”* (p. 137).

### **Education as a social project**

While the CRC and the General comments by the Committee on the Rights of the child do not refer to any one method, it does not appear that they reject mainstream educational methods, what some would call learning factories. And, at the same time the Committee calls for a greater focus on the child-centred approach. And I actually believe that this is prudent, because there seems to be another pedagogical revolution currently in the making which I think is neatly captured with the Committee's reference to child-friendliness and empowerment in education. The Committee states that the goal of education is to “empower the child by developing his or her skills, learning and other capacities, human dignity, self-esteem and self-confidence”. We now know for a fact, that early education, pre-school family based education is at least as important as formal institutionalized education. The cognitive growth spurt over the three first years of life is amazing and is not captured in the least by the educational system. The extent to which a child will be in a position to develop his or her skills depends, until now, mostly on parenting skills, parenting styles, and the extent to which the child is empowered. Richard Nisbett's bestseller, hugely influential book, titled *Intelligence and how to get it: Why schools and cultures count* (2009) suggests that, among the main ingredients of the child's capacity to learn, are the quantity and quality of the verbal interactions between the child and the main caretaker. Words, vocabulary and language are crucial building blocks. But parenting styles are just as important. Praise and encouragement can fuel the child's desire to learn. Reprimand does not contribute significantly. When praised and encouraged, dare I also say respected, children are more willing to engage in a more difficult task even if they are offered easy alternatives. Some of these attitudes are found in the styles of the most successful teachers and professors. I think we can all take a wild guess and consider that we are addressing the very heart of what helps children gain self-esteem and self-confidence.

### **Education as empowerment**

Fritzsche (2007) considers quite correctly that empowerment is more than a buzz word in the field

of human rights. He also explains this concept with great clarity. It means: 1) an educational approach that encourages personal development, a sense of competence and self-confidence, 2) a process that leads people to perceive themselves as entitled and able to make decisions, 3) a means to enable people to become aware of their rights and responsibilities, 4) a process by which powerless or excluded people become aware of the power of influencing their lives, and 5) a social and human development strategy that enables women, men, and children to become agents of social change.

Obviously, this is how Korczak stands out as one of the greatest pedagogues in history because he clearly understood the notion of empowerment of children. When schools are conceived and run on principles of empowerment, participation and respect, they unlock a greater potential in children. As the Committee on the Rights of the child has expressed, “children do not lose their human rights by virtue of passing through the school gates”. But beyond this, when Children’s rights are a focal point of the education process, creatively explained and shared with children, these rights are uniquely positioned to serve as the raw material for children to build their own human rights. And even more to the point, Korczak built his work as a pedagogue on empowerment and participation, that is including children in decision-making processes, letting them live their very own human rights, while at the same time providing responsible adult guidance. Philippe Meirieu, as often, gets it just right. For him, the grand movement of children’s rights finds its origin in a “*foundational pedagogical insurrection. In the double rejection of educational abstention, on the one hand, and social normalization, on the other*” (p. 141-142).

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## **Monitoring the Right to Education by the Committee on the Rights of the Child**

The articles 28 on access to education and 29 on the aims of education are articles of special relevance, because they facilitate the understanding and the implementation of many other rights incorporated in the Convention, the right to health, the right to express one's best interests, the right to be heard, the rights to life and development, the right to protection against exploitation etc.

I cannot remember that a State party to the Convention omitted the right to education in its report to the Committee on the implementation of child rights, or that the Committee did not raise the right of the child to education as a topic in the debate with the State party about progress and shortcomings in the implementation of child rights.

Somehow, childhood is school, and this statement can be understood with critical underpinnings, as childhood apparently has become interchangeable with school to an extent, which restrains the child from the realization of other rights, the right to play, the right to cultural activities, the right to a healthy life style.

And also what the schools, which many children experience, de facto is, may be looked at with a critical approach, since these school often are far away from the interests of the child to explore and understand the social, natural and political world, in which she or he lives and in which she or he wishes to participate in a satisfying way.

We just have heard that the Committee's General Comment on the Aims of Education puts together, what education, as the Convention explains it in article 29, should offer the child. The quality aspects of education are emphasized: Education shall help the child to actively cope with the challenges "that accompany a period of fundamental change" (para. 3). Education shall be holistic, humane, human rights oriented and not only stuff taught, but insight lived. In view of the realities a German pedagogue coined a phrase, which succinctly expresses the requirement: "We have to devise a new school!"<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hartmut von Hentig (2008). Die Schule neu denken [The school - devised anew], Weinheim: Beltz.

However, when the Committee examines children's enjoyment of the right to education, priority is given to questions related to the fully established educational system and children's access to schools at all levels which has to be free of charge and compulsory for the years of primary education and gradually also for secondary education.

Usually committee members ask many additional questions, which refer to the reform of traditional curricula, the introduction of interactive learning methods, which also refer to life skills besides academic subjects, child-friendliness instead of violence, blame and harassment in school and, of course, to human rights education including child rights. I would like to do a more thorough analysis of the Committee's approach, but also without such an analysis I dare to summarize, after more than seven years spent on the Committee, that the Committee and also I myself have not tapped the full potential of article 29 in the monitoring process. We more focus on availability and access to schools than on the quality aspects of education, although the first General Comment of the Committee was dedicated to article 29 and outlined the aims of education.<sup>2</sup>

This imbalanced approach can be easily explained: More than one hundred million children are still out of school and many of those, who are counted as *in* school, are enrolled, but in reality attend irregularly, drop out, or repeat classes so often that they never graduate. Many of those, who would like to go, have no accessible school; those, who find a school, may sit in classrooms of 50, 80 or more than 100 children, often without chairs and tables, without paper and books. Absenteeism of teachers is a problem, as their salaries are so low, so that they have to do double and triple jobs. Often against the law, fees have to be paid and indirect costs incur.

Thus, many observations make clear that the Committee, when monitoring Articles 28 and 29, has every reason to urge State parties to establish a complete educational system, appropriately equipped, easily accessible, without costs, and child friendly, i.e. without corporal punishment and degrading treatment. It has to be an educational system, which meets a number of minimum standards.

The standards shall safeguard a certain quality of the educational institutions, but primarily they refer to the supply and protection side of the educational institutions and not to that, what Article 29 asks for: While Article 28 deals with the basic set-up, Article 29 defines aspects and attributes of an

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<sup>2</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child (2001). General Comment no. 1: The aims of education. Document CRC/GC/2001/1.



education, which corresponds to the concept of the child underlying the Convention: the child, who evolves his or her capacities because she/he is respected as a human being in dignity. It is opposite to the usual comprehension, which is: The child is respected, *because* she/he has learned, *because* she/he has achieved high marks, *because* she/he has demonstrated excellence.

No, the Convention turns this comprehension round: The Convention asserts that the child will learn, will be educated, because he/she *is respected* and his/her views are recognized and given weight, and consequently the child receives replies, explanations, reasons, which give the child opportunities to learn, to develop, to understand, to acquire education - but even more than that: the child gets reconfirmation that she or he is worth an answer, is included in communication and interaction as *this individual* child, hence is a young, but dignified *participant*.

It is Janusz Korczak, who opened our eyes for this kind of understanding of the Convention. Korczak regarded himself not as a pedagogue, whose responsibility it is to authoritatively teach children, but saw himself on an equal footing with children - *different* because he, Janusz Korczak, was at another stage in his particular life, but in all essential aspects of a human being a *coequal* of the children in the orphanages. He stressed that school is a place, where adults and children learn mutually from each other. Thus, *both sides* bring their questions, views and experience into the educational discourse and both sides evolve their capacities.

Korczak's three rights of the child, which at first sight irritate many people, clearly emphasize that the adults, the parent or teacher, do not encounter the child as an object, which has to be formed to be a functioning human being according to adults conceptions, but to be the child, who he/she *is*, who lives already today and not in a projected future and who lives at his/her own risk as there is a core of independence in the child, which enables the child to emphatically resist impositions he or she regards against interests.

This is my understanding of Korczak's view of children and their education and it is my understanding of a child-rights based education, which a school providing quality education has to take account of and to operationalize. Korczak imagined another school than the existing; and I am also convinced that we need a re-conceptualization of school, and that the Convention gives a lot of advice with regard to its basic parameters.

How to monitor the educational system in this regard? The first problem of monitoring is that it

starts from the existing and therefore tends to address progress or setbacks process within the educational system as described in the respective State party report. Thus quality inquiries relate to curriculum, teacher training and turning away from the cram-school type of learning. And if steps in this direction are done, they certainly go in the right direction.

Another topic of inquiry sometimes raised refers to attempts to make education more relevant for children. Committee members may ask, whether life skills have a place in the curriculum - life skills, i.e. healthy nutrition, first aid, peaceful conflict solutions etc., as opposed to academic subjects. Also some basic vocational education may belong to attempts to give information and advice in a field, which is of genuine interest to adolescents. Sometimes the committee asks, whether children are invited to express their views in the planning of topics of instruction. In general, the Committee tends to use notions like child centred or child friendly, when it addresses quality aspects of schools, but mostly without further elaborating on these aspects.

Often the delegations of State parties react positively to such explorations. But all this does not fully correspond Korczak's conception or what can be inferred from the provisions of the Convention concerning education. However, I believe that such conceptions go beyond the understanding of a good school, which are in the mindsets of the school administration. I am afraid that most of those, who are responsible for schools in the governmental administrations, would reject questions, which draw on a school, which is built on the principle that teachers and children mutually learn from each other, a school, which is not based on curricula, but on children's curiosity in all fields of interest and concern, and a school, which gives wide room for communication among and participation of children.

In my opinion committee members, including myself, have never asked such question, which challenge the school, which still treats the child a nescient and uniformed pupil<sup>3</sup> and is not built on the conception of the child as a curious student who has own ideas, experience and interests and the right that these ideas, experience and interests are respected. The Committee emphasizes the needed expansion and amelioration of the existing educational institutions, which is a respectable objective indeed. Korczak helps to realize that the rights of the child have more radical consequences for the educational process than usually comprehended.

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<sup>3</sup> From its origin the word pupil designates a dependent minor, for who an adult has responsibility. The word also refers to the lens of the eye, which reproduces the reality in small pictures: the child as a mini-reproduction of the adult. See: T. F. Hoad (1996). The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology. <http://www.encyclo-pedia.com>.

I talked about the variety of questions, which the Committee asks and may more insistently ask. The monitoring process, however, is not only an intense interrogation, although the raising of questions alone sometimes alerts responsible authorities and may have enlightening effects. The main purpose of raising such questions is to get additional particulars and data, which the Committee needs in order to draft well-informed and precise recommendations.

There is no Concluding Observation, the outcome document of the dialogue with the State party, which does not have a section on the child's right to education. There you will find the concerns of the Committee and the corresponding recommendations, which may refer to legal loopholes in the laws on education in the respective country, insufficiencies and malfunctions of the educational system, but also to quality issues of education. The Committee takes pains to be as detailed as possible and to refer to identified shortcomings of the existing system.

In my view neither the dialogue with the State party, a question, replay and probing procedure of six hours, nor the Concluding Observations are a place to "devise the school anew".

In my view the monitoring process, a question, reply and probing procedure of six hours, is not suited for a discourse, in which mindsets can be revised. It can relatively easily address hard facts, enrolment rates, gender disparities or portions of untrained teachers etc. Recommendations in this regard are useful, as they help to give priority to such issues on the political agenda. In particular, such recommendations can promote such issues, when NGOs make them a public issue in their countries. But they do not give the room for an appeal for inventing a child-rights based school, what in my view is extremely needed. State parties would remind the Committee, that it was not established to perform as a philosophical circle.

Where is the place to develop such visions and models? A seminar under the auspices of Janusz Korczak seems to be a very appropriate place. I am sure that the quantity and the quality aspects of education should not be divorced from each other. A stronger focus on closer connections of the content of education with the best interests of the child and of the learning methods with the rights of the child to be heard and respected would help to ask new monitoring questions and, in the long run, to build the new child-centred school.

**Jonathan Levy** - Specialist for the French Initiative of Change program: Education for Peace  
- Vice President of the French Janusz Korczak Association

## **For a pedagogical approach to children's rights: A teaching tool for 6 to 18 year olds**

The International convention on the rights of the child obliges nation states, institutions and all adults to pay attention to better accommodating, listening to, and facilitating respect for children and youth. Thus everywhere; school, family, social environment, and in all places of reception, society needs to reflect on providing children and teenagers much better possibilities of protection, expression, autonomy and learning of active citizenship while organizing regularly and with sincerity the learning of mindfulness and appropriateness. Consequently, the pedagogical choices must be exemplary: learning relationships based on respect, dignity and of methods which provide possibilities for children not only to participate/understand but also to express their rights. The respect and the dignity of the child depends on our capacity to accept their freedom of self-determination of identity, and not to constantly project an identity pre-determined on the child, which limits their potential of development and learning. In view of today's world and events that we witness, it seems indispensable to make more widely known the international Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC), and promote compliance with CRC Principles, and to help to make children ever more aware of the values of citizenship and solidarity.

In most countries throughout the world, children's rights are little known and often mistaken for obligations. It is of utmost importance that these rights be known and communicated. This teaching tool aims to provide teachers and instructors with a practical tool made up of experiential activities that apply to different age groups and are divided into six essential themes (social justice and equity; diversity; peace and conflict; expression and opinions; children work and education; and humanitarian work). The teaching tool focuses on two types of public, all stakeholders of this method: Childcare professionals: Teachers, instructors, supervisory staff ... are all essential in communicating essential knowledge. They have the authority and numerous opportunities to inform children on their rights. Voluntary workers: People who give their time, energy and enthusiasm to the benefit of children will be able to attend a training course so as to run teaching sessions with the aid of the teaching tool. This teaching tool has been developed for professionals who work with children aged from 6-18

years. The activities are centered on common themes and adapted to each age group so that teenagers don't find the activities too simplistic or young children are not confronted with situations that are too complex.

This teaching tool, developed in collaboration with UNESCO, is designed to enable children to understand and express their rights and place children at the centre of the learning process. Its originality consists in providing instructors with a teaching method that covers primary and secondary school cycles within both formal and non-formal settings: schools, leisure centres, vacation centres, associations ... It addresses children from the ages of 6 to 18 and involves them actively in learning their rights. The teaching method is built around introducing situations and solving problems. It enables children to consider situations and put forward their own solutions. The activities are based on total involvement and participation on the part of the children. Based on 6 different themes, this tool provides different types of activities:

- Role plays
- Simulations
- Games
- Case studies
- Etc.

According to age group. For example, the module Diversity is illustrated and enforced by a game called «Build the Face» that enables children to better understanding the similarities and differences between different cultures. The activities and examples provided can be adapted according to the user's local context.

Raising awareness of children's rights within a global teaching method can be developed into a class, school, or activity centre charter being drawn up ... or used as a basis for an information campaign on one or several themes. Equally, it can be used for writing articles for a school magazine. Everything should be done to facilitate learning, understanding and self-expression. Children can become active links in this communication chain by discussing on a child-to-child basis.

### **The Influence of Janusz Korczak**

Janusz Korczak, the precursor of children's rights had a decisive influence in the wording of this Convention. His revolt against any form of violence against children was very visible in the legal text.

As a result, the CRC may be regarded as an exemplary “text of revolt and indignation” against the idea that a child is purely a miniature adult. It was necessary to state the “specificity of childhood” and to ensure its observance. In addition, Janusz Korczak aspired to grant every child his/her “active” rights of self-expression, participation, association ... He symbolized a pedagogy centered around respect, a democratic school that promotes participation. These innovative approaches are today regarded as a universal reference. These principles, taken from pedagogical methods and principles developed by Janusz Korczak, are to be shared with those who work with children on a daily basis.

### **The key principles of the teaching tool**

The cultural situations and contexts in which a child evolves are varied. Hence it is important to offer a choice based on:

The child’s age.

The customary learning methods.

The child’s relations to knowledge and teacher/learner relations.

#### **The teaching principles are based on:**

Learning rather than only raising awareness: the activities provided encourage the children to learn by finding a meaning.

**The involvement of all the actors:** the children are not the only ones to learn. The educators and group leaders also gain from this learning process.

**Continuity:** the tool provides a range of situations to enable a better understanding and assimilation.

**Interactivity:** interaction and communication between children and group leaders is vital.

**Experience:** knowledge will be stimulated by creating “unforgettable” experiences that favor emotions.

**Expression:** the children should be allowed to express their opinions on every theme and not just what adults expect or wish to hear.

**Coherence:** between the rights of the child and the methods applied.

**Group dynamics:** respect, dignity of each person and solidarity will be at the heart of discussions.

**The freedom and identity of the child :** each child develops confidence in himself or herself and in others, and is accepted as he or she is using

Since the teaching tool is designed for many contexts and situations, it is essential that each group leader understands it and makes the required modifications that seem fit to him or her and run the teaching sessions in a way what he/she regards as the most adapted.

**Teacher relations:** The qualities that you have as teacher or educator are key to the success of the learning sessions. These essential qualities are: Patience, Tolerance and open-mindedness Objectivity, Flexibility, Enthusiasm and commitment, Empathy, modesty and mindfulness In addition, as in any teaching process it is essential to remember that the climate and atmosphere within the classroom are primordial.

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He is consultant for UNESCO on areas of education and pedagogy

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- President of the Russian Korczak Association

## **Teaching Future Teachers in the spirit of Korczak**

The struggle against authoritarianism in education as the most negative phenomenon in pedagogy and the development of ideas of liberalization and democratization of the whole school system is the core idea, which is largely characterized in the educational theory of the twentieth century in general and of today as well. Overcoming the authoritarian upbringing is closely linked with the personality of a teacher-educator, because the success of education depends on the skill, strength of character and abilities of a teacher even more than any method of teaching, more than perfect school buildings or facilities.

It should be noted that the problem of teacher's personality was always in the focus of philosophers', writers' and public figures' attention. The main emphasis in their writings is laid on characteristics required to establish humane relations in the dyad „teacher – pupil”. Humanists tried to find ways to avoid eternal confrontation of subjects of the educational process.

Let's have a look at the requirements for professional and personal qualities of the teacher in the process humanization of education. And I should note that these are Korczak's ideas. He calls this kind of teacher “a reasonable educator”.

1. An ideal teacher should be clear about the tasks facing him and children and be ready to implement them without constant supervision and endless prohibitions by consciously organized process of education
2. Realizing his goal to create conditions for the development of the child, a good teacher admits the child's right to be what he (she) is, and kindly refers to all children without exception. Understanding and tolerance are very important features of a reasonable teacher.
3. For the conscious management of children educator must constantly expand his knowledge about a child not only in theory, but in practice as well.
4. The teacher must seek fulfillment of his desires, not by pressure and orders, but by mutual consent, understanding and agreement. In organizing the life of a group of children, he should try to replace coercion and tyranny by voluntary and conscious adaptation of personality to the forms of collective life.
5. A reasonable teacher should be able to organize the life of children, their games, study and work. A possible way of organizing life of a group of children lies in the joint development of rules and laws, self-determination of the functions of child self-finding and revealing the positive aspects of



children society.

6. The teacher should be able to be critical to himself, his mistakes and achievements. Only the tutor who is able to constantly educate himself can become a tutor of children.

7. The teacher must be creative, find a reward for his work in the research and eternal search.

8. The driving force of educators must be love for a particular child, whom he has to deal with. Even to the most spoiled, corrupted child he should be able to find a good and kind word. He must keep the child in his personal development for freedom and independence, but he should be free, not serfdomed by different techniques and instructions.

9. The teacher must strive to see a good start in every child. Such teachers, who can see only bad habits in their children can be compared with Helmholtz, who had such a perfect pitch that he could not go to concerts because of confusion and impede the accumulation of harmonics of different instruments spoiling enjoyment for its overly sensitive ears.

Thus, modern pedagogy considers educator as a critical indicator of the humanist education paradigm. Only a teacher, persistently forming most of the above mentioned qualities and striving to eliminate the features of an authoritarian teacher, will be able to find answers to questions that a novice teacher asks. How to find contact with children, how to win their respect? How to get children to voluntarily implement pedagogical requirements? How to obtain among children the approval of truth, justice, kindness and humanity?

Humanistic school is impossible without the corresponding teacher. Humanistic teacher is now regarded as a significant ingredient in the educational process. Twenty-first century put forward the demand of coming to school a person who is capable not only to think, but also to feel, to experience, to act, having developed his intellectual, emotional, and volitional spheres. Attempts to change, humanizing education can be successful only under this condition.

But the question is – how to train SUCH a teacher. First of all, in my opinion, this can be done not only theorizing in lectures and seminars, but in active work, in which students – future teachers- are involved.

At the same time it must be noted that the activity itself does not provide personal fulfillment, or the development of socially valuable qualities of future teachers. This largely depends on the nature of this activity – it should be of humanistic character promoting humanistic relationships between the subjects of the educational process. It is these ideas that teachers-enthusiasts, organizers of Korczak youth movement in Russia try to realize in their work. These associations exist throughout the country: in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kursk, Vladivostok and Kazan. Young people, students and graduates, united by the name of the eminent Polish pedagogue-humanist Janusz Korczak, who died together with his pupils in the Treblinka extermination camp. The idea of serving a child, fighting

for his rights, helping disadvantaged children became the main one in the activity of Korczak organizations both in our country and abroad. For example, public organization „Pedagogical Fund

„Humanist „, was organized by teachers and students of Kursk Pedagogical University, and its initial task is the work with children ill with leukemia. In such a way students gain unique human experience that will never let them show mental hardness and intolerance in future.

Moscow students – members of Korczak society organize the annual integration camp „Nash Dom” for children from families and orphaned children, healthy children and disabled ones (blind, visually impaired, etc.).

Kazan Korczak organization first appeared in 1993 on the base of the Faculty of Foreign Languages in Teachers’ Training University. Since 30.07.2004 we are officially registered as non-profit youth Korczak organization “The sun for children”. Nowadays “The sun for children” is based on the faculty of psychological and pedagogical education of Tatar State Humanities and Education University and joins about 40 students, gradulators, teachers and other people, who want to give love and care to children.

The activity of the Kazan department is realized on the three guidelines. The First – studying pedagogical heritage of Janusz Korczak We organize lectures, conversations on views and activity of Janusz Korczak, research Korczak’s heritage in the context of pedagogical concepts of the XX century. Students of the Pedagogical university, who are the members of our department, read and analyze Janusz Korczak’s books, make reports for their own comrades, discuss different problems. It is very important that they try to compare Korczak’s views with the modern pedagogical ideas & practice. They write course and diploma papers, devoted to the analysis of Korczak’s heritage.

The Second direction of our activity is connected with the propaganda of Korczak’s views and activity before the broad pedagogical auditorium: teachers, pupils, students of universities and colleges. Usually we conduct the so called Korczak Days. On this day we organize an excursion on the exhibition, devoted to the life and pedagogical activity of Janusz Korczak. The Materials of the exhibition were sent to us by the Israel association of Janusz Korczak and we use them with great gratitude in our work. The Excursion is conducted by the student guides – the members of Janusz Korczak society. After the excursion a group of students shows musical-artistic composition, consisting of verses by B. Dizhur and V. Korostelev, devoted to the last minutes of Janusz Korczak and his children. Another group of students performs a composition in English, devoted to the right of a child to be what he is. On this day we also show our listeners video films, devoted to Janusz

Korczak: «Who is doctor Korczak?» and «Korczak» in French (they are translated by our students). These films were given as a gift to our society by the French association of Janusz Korczak. We also demonstrate on this day a film about the summer camp «Nasz Dom», organize a meeting with Kazan students and educators, who worked in this camp. We also tell about the Janusz Korczak

society, invite the listeners to join us. The second direction includes taking part and holding regular meetings and conferences to exchange the experience, discuss the rights of the child, present youth initiatives of help to the children, show the work of youth volunteers' organizations. Thus, at the Students Seminar called "Reading Korczak" Korczakians from Moscow, Perm and Kazan interchanged thoughts with one another on the context of Korczak works, gave each other the benefit of their own experience, tried to foresee the further development of Korczak's ideas in Russia in prospect. The main idea of the Seminar was to present their thoughts in a creative way: some sort of dramatization, a song, a poem, a dance, a report, a picture. Those presentations were really very exciting and nice. There were also some other conferences held in Kazan that are presented in the slides.

The Third direction of our activity is of practical character. We work in Kazan, Laishevo and Naberezhnyje Chelny orphanages. These are orphanages, in which children from 3 to 14 live. These are indigent children-orphans. Most of them are social orphans. This means that actually their parents are alive, but they are alcoholics, or lowered people, or deprived of their parental rights. These children need so much love and tenderness, and they find this attention to them on the part of our students. They visit these children every week, communicate with them, organize different games, contests, holidays. Some of them has become traditional such as New Year's Day, Saint Valentine's Day, Spring's Holiday etc. Kids always look forward to the arrival of their senior friends. They live rather isolated from the outside world and no matter how well they live, they always feel lack of communication. Especially communication with new people, young and fun, able to understand their problems. This direction of their activities Kazan students consider the most important because, as it is recognized by one of them „we always bring to these children happiness, there is a lot of us and we all as a large waves flow into the sea of noisy children. They like it, so we enjoy ourselves too”.

The specific feature of Korczak Youth Society in high school is that every year there is a gradual change of its members: some students graduate university, their place is occupied by others. It is therefore important successionbility and traditions in the society. That was the case in the Kazan Youth Korczak society "The sun for children". Every year at the very beginning of their study at the University we go to freshmen and talk about Korczak, about the tragic and high destiny of the

educator. We dramatize literary and artistic composition based on the poems of B. Dizhur and B. Korostylev, dedicated to Korczak and his children. For freshmen, this meeting is always a shock when they see their peers, excited, enthusiastic, engaged in the activity. After this meeting the first year students would come to us and say that they want to join our society. Several times annually we organize collecting of office goods for the children from the orphanage. We always find a response in behalf of the people we appeal to. These gifts are then carried to the orphanage school.

We see that activities, which involve and organize students in Korczak societies, can be very diverse. What important is their humanistic orientation, which provides to students education of high moral qualities of the person, their social upbringing.

Following the ideas of Korczak, we must remember that every minute we come into contact with children, we are responsible for them. One little girl asked Korczak: „Why does everyone love you?” „Maybe because I love everybody” – she answered without hesitation. After all, in fact, our happiness depends on each of those whom we love, and from those who loves us.

**Tsipi Marhaim** - Principal of "Avihail" Elementary School, Israel.



*This picture expresses the colorfulness we found in Korczak's ideas*

## **Training teachers in accordance with Korczak's legacy: Case study in the Avichail School**

Avihail school is an elementary school located in the Emek Hefer regional council zone.

The process we have gone through in the Avihail school is a long and consistent one changing from a standard school to a school that applies Korczak's legacy.

### **Principle role**

It is important that the leader of the process will have her/his own strong belief in the values that s/he wants to assimilate.

I bring with me a faith in people, the desire for dialogue, cooperative listening and thinking with the children and adults alike. In the same manner as Korczak, I believe that in order to improve the world we have to start with *education*. "***Strengthening the world means to strengthen the education***"

I believe that Korczak's ideas, although published about 90 years ago, still address contemporary educational problems.

Korczak talks about values and rights of the child as well as love and respect.

***"Children are not the people of tomorrow, but people today. They are entitled to be taken seriously. They have a right to be treated by adults with tenderness and respect, as equals."***

Janusz Korczak, How to Love Child. p. 19 [Hebrew Version]

Combining conflicting values is the beauty and greatness of Korczak.

- Freedom vs. commitment
- Individual vs. society

– Dialogue and listening vs. clear rules

Although, these values seem to be opposite they complement each other so that one cannot be used without the other.

### **The process in Avichail School**

The Avichail School was established in 1933 in Moshav (village) Avichail.

In the Avichail School we focus on individual development, and also on individual growth within a societal framework. We teach the students that each person has societal needs and has to consider the needs of others in society.

Since 2002 the staff has adopted a humanistic approach to education in accordance with the teachings of Janusz Korczak.

The school attained recognition as an experimental school in 2005 by the Ministry of Education. As such we have developed a model which we call "From flexibility to Fulfillment". We created a

more flexible school-timetable. Our model emphasizes the necessity of proper educational conditions, created by the teachers, to express each child's special talent.

*"Each child and his world – each child and his sounds, but each one also contains a human light, which is revealed when educational conditions are facilitative."* S.Sachs, Korczak for the Educator in the Eighties, p.42 [Hebrew Version]

### **First step at school:**

- **Identify needs** of the children at school
- **Identify strengths** - of all the partners at school : staff, children, parents
- **Identify weaknesses** - what are the problems, and try to understand what caused them.

I started by exploring the strengths of the staff: each teacher and staff member was given the opportunity to reveal his strengths, to innovate and lead. When I faced objections I tried to motivate the member using his/her strengths .

### **Second step:** Selection of a **leading team**

The **leading team** helps to conduct the process.

Every decision is taken with the staff. The leading team decides. They suggest topics for discussion with the staff. All the decisions were pooled together. Each decision was tested in practice and finalized according to the circumstances.

### **Third step:** **Determination of school's principles**

The important principles and values were determined jointly by teachers, parents and pupils. For

example, in Avichail's school the important principles are: providing freedom alongside clear limits, demonstrating acceptance of the child and providing positive incentives, providing the proper conditions to express each child’s special talent, Promoting self-fulfillment and social commitment.

**Fourth step:** Establishing frameworks to enable children to speak in the school community, enable children to choose, to set and to achieve goals.

In Avichail's school the timetable is assembled from basic syllabus and elective courses. We added 2 weekly hours in which the children chose courses according to their interests.

We established a campus with a “Resource Center” for each field of study: art, mathematics, science, music, computer, etc.

The centers are equipped with facilities that encourage the study process and cater to the needs of the students.

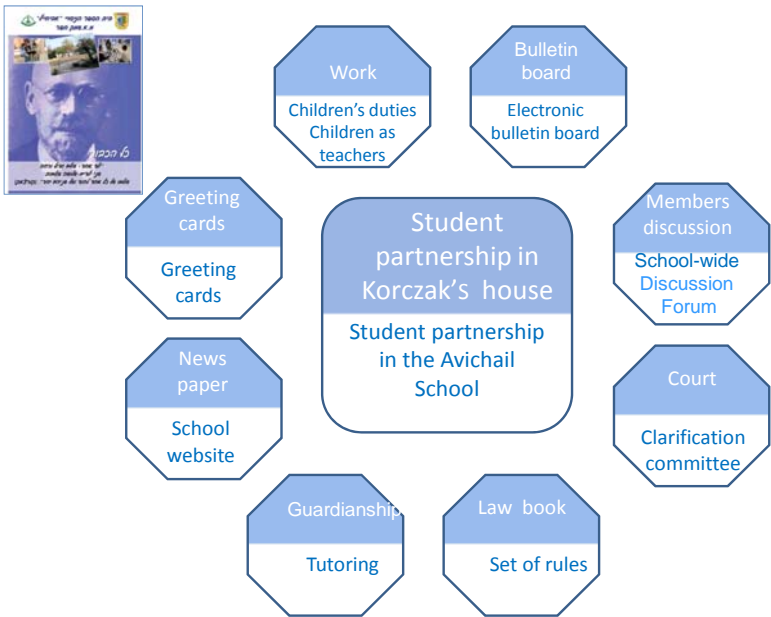
In order to implement our principles and motivate the staff to make changes it is necessary to set a constant schedule, to establish frameworks and to set a clear plan.

When we developed our model we found similarities to what could be found in Korczak's writings. We chose the relevant ideas, values and principles and adapted them to daily life at school.

***"We don't give recipes; we try and search, but don't move far from reality"***

Janusz Korczak, How to Love Child. p. 15 [Hebrew Version]

We learnt from Korczak that we can change his words in order for them to be appropriate to our reality. What were the activities that help me to incorporate Korczak's ideas?



This diagram describes the similarity between frameworks in the orphanage (in blue) and frameworks in our school (in white).

For example:

The members discussion in the orphanage is transformed into the School-wide Discussion Forum in our school.

Korczak's Court is transformed into a **clarification committee**.

Instead of the Law book – we have a **set of rules**.

Instead of a Newspaper – we have a **school website**.

Greeting cards – we designed **our own postcards** that we give to our children every month as a reward for their progress and success.

### **Adapting Korczak's Principles:**

#### **Flexible frameworks in order to implement principles.**

Partnership is the first principle that we adapted:

Achieved through participation in the "School-wide Discussion Forum".

Teachers and students discuss different issues concerning our daily life at school and suggest how to reach our goals. We also study about Korczak's legacy in this forum.

Students lead committees at our school, coordinated by a teacher.

We have Student Council Elections. The elected students organize decided actions for the benefit of all.

Other committees are voluntary.

We found that involvement of the students leads to personal responsibility.

The "Clarifications Committee" - is run by the children and gives them the opportunity to solve problems in a peaceful manner.

We believe that flexible frameworks improve our capability to pay attention to the child's needs and choices.

One of the frameworks is the "Children's Hour". For one hour every week kids teach other kids a myriad of subjects through lectures, games and activities .

All the students leave their classes and choose what to learn. The options to be chosen are published on the bulletin boards every week.



## Elective courses

We believe that the educator must give children “freedom of action” at school, and yet guide them carefully.

We give our students the opportunity to choose courses

We determine “Elective Hours” in which children are given the opportunity to choose courses, such as mathematics, art, English etc...

We also have “Objective's hour” – A process for setting personal goals.

Each child chooses a personal objective, a social objective, a study objective according to his goal, and plans how to achieve it.

*"I want to know, and will know, and will know well, and everything precisely, thoroughly. I will work and do everything myself, and then I will teach others."* Janusz Korczak, With the Child. p. 19 [Hebrew Version]

**Coping** -Achieved through “Objective's hour”. Children define goals and plan how to achieve them.

**Tutoring:** like that of the guardianship in the orphanage:

- Tutoring by teachers, selected by the pupils.
- Tutoring by pupils of other classes. Children of higher classes tutor younger peers.
- Tutoring in kindergartens. Again, Children of higher classes tutor the young.

**Promoting order,** organization and clear limits

*"Order must be. You with them can create order and to fulfill it".?* Janusz Korczak, Religious of the Child, p. 303 [Hebrew Version]

All of us - teachers, children and parents, create a set of rules, in a very long process (it took us a few months). We are all committed to following these rules.

**Nurturing educational conditions.** We believe that teachers have to create educational conditions in order to enable the children to learn at school. One of the most important tasks of the teacher is to organize the class in a way that will maximize the educational conditions in the class (books, games, computers, etc)

**Active learning:**We believe that it is necessary to have activities like games, plays, outdoors activities and etc.

*"We will establish a school where pupils will not learn dead letters from a dead piece of paper. They will learn the human way of life"* Janusz Korczak, Writings 8, p.186 [Hebrew Version]

**Diagnosis is changeable.** The teachers are encouraged to have an open mind, to listen to children's needs and make necessary changes.

*"I have read interesting books, now I am reading interesting children. Don't say 'I already know'. I read the same child once, twice, three times, ten times, and after all that I don't know much."* Janusz Korczak, Religious of the child, p. 305 [Hebrew Version]

**Results:**

After 5 years of developing our model, in which all the teachers took a significant part, we perceived changes in the school atmosphere - improvement of respect, children who are happy at school and improvement of student motivation to learn.

- The school was awarded the “Korczak Prize“ by the Korczak Association In 2008.
- The School has become a National Center for the Dissemination of study programs based on Korczak's educational legacy.

## **The Contemplative Pedagogy of Janusz Korczak and its Significance for Teacher Education In a Changing World**

Today is a beautiful day. As we gather together for this conference we are able to experience and appreciate the warmth and light of a summer's day and as the conference speakers share their perspectives on the life and legacy of Janusz Korczak and its relationship to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child we can hear the sound of birdsong in the garden outside. The French composer Olivier Messiaen incorporated birdsong into his compositions, of which his 1953 Catalogue of the Birds is perhaps his most celebrated example. As a composer Messiaen was entering into a dialogue with the natural world; he took the musical notation of modern western classical music and developed a creative synthesis with the sounds, the music, of nature. I suggest that the concept of creative dialogue is central to the work and activities of the International Janusz Korczak Association in two ways. Firstly, through scholarly study of Korczak's life, legacy and writings and in the task of exploring his pedagogical approach, we enter into a dialogue with his ideas, philosophy, moral example and his capacity to inspire. This dialogue is a process of relating Korczak to the world of today; Korczak is liberated from historical particularity and is made available to the world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. To be a Korczakian, therefore, is to be engaged in the enterprise of making Korczak a living reality so that his vision can be practically and meaningfully related to areas as diverse as, for example, teaching and learning, child care, youth work, social work, counselling and psychotherapy, human rights and the creative arts. This dialogue is ongoing and is at the heart of the work of a conference such as this.

The dialogue with Korczak also takes place when each of the delegates attending this conference returns to, for example, their home, family, local community and place of work and, following reflection upon the inspiring presentations and debates which are taking place today, makes decisions about what Korczak means to them and commits themselves to applying Korczak's principle, values and vision to their particular personal and professional situation.

In addition, I suggest that, like Messiaen and his encounter with birdsong, our dialogue with Korczak has to take seriously his understanding of, and relationship with the natural world.

Korczak's life and writings testify to the importance of engaging with and being inspired and energised by the world of nature.

Korczak wrote: "An educator who does not enforce but sets free, does not drag but uplifts, does not crush but shapes, does not dictate but instructs, does not demand but requests, will experience inspired moments with the child."

In this declaration from his work *How To Love A Child* Korczak acknowledges that at the heart of the process of teaching and learning is the capacity for teachers and students to be inspired. Inspiration can be defined as "being stimulated to creative thought or action". To be inspired means to be motivated, energised and animated to engage positively and creatively with something which has meaning and significance. We are inspired by that which has the capacity to connect with us deeply. We can be inspired by, for example, a work of art, a piece of music, a film, by the beauty and wonder of the natural world, by someone or something we love or by the example of great effort, achievement and by acts of compassion. Korczak is affirming that education, the art of teaching of learning, pedagogy, is ultimately about relationship, encounter and engagement with others and the world in which we live.

The experience of Janusz Korczak and his orphans in the Warsaw Ghetto of Nazi-occupied Poland was located in the context of an apocalyptic vision of a world which appeared to have gone mad. The old order had been subverted and a chilling ideology was systematically and clinically defining millions of people as undesirable, as being less than human, for whom the only fate was certain death.

In his 'Ghetto Diary' Korczak declared:

*"Thank you, Merciful Lord, for the meadow and the bright sunsets, for the refreshing evening breeze after a hot day of toil and struggle.*

*Thank you, Merciful Lord, for having arranged so wisely to provide flowers with fragrance, glow worms with the glow, and make the stars in the sky sparkle."*

He is offering a prayer of thanksgiving for the beauties of the earth. His cosmic gratitude is rooted in an appreciation of the natural world which, despite the sufferings of life, presented to him a vision of beauty and joy. Korczak's contemplation, reflection and meditation were undertaken in the midst of the hectic life of the orphanage in the Warsaw Ghetto at a time when the lives of he and his children hung in the balance. The future was most uncertain. Despite this Korczak took the

time to mindfully and attentively focus not solely on the challenges, stresses and strains of running the orphanage but, instead, he took the time to be grateful for each positive aspect of the children's existence. He said a glorious Yes! to life when it would have been understandable for him to have been ground down by the daily challenges he and his children faced.

Grigory Pomerants, the Russian dissident, essayist and philosopher has affirmed what he calls 'the still small voice from the great silence' and he has declared that the 'Old Adam turns away from the kind of contemplation and silence in which the deeper interior whisper can be heard'. Like Korczak, Pomerants affirms the power of being attentive, mindful and fully aware in the present moment even (perhaps especially) when all around you the world appears to be falling apart. Indeed, Pomerants has indicated that what kept him going, what gave him hope, a reason for living, during his time spent in the labour camps of the Gulag was the midnight sun in the far-North of the Soviet Union and of the beauties of nature. Despite the Gulag's challenges Pomerant's life affirms that a contemplative vision can enable people to 'discern the footprint of God, the essential thread in all things.'

Central to Korczak's vision, and at the heart of his legacy, therefore, is the recognition that in a world of unpredictability, uncertainty, and even chaos, it is imperative to attempt to create inspirational oases of calm, order and structure which provide the possibility of meaning and hope for the future. Even in the darkest situation there is the possibility of discerning meaning and hope, however small this might be. In the world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with its significant challenges and opportunities, Korczak's recognition of the requirement to create order out of chaos, meaning out of meaninglessness, is to be taken seriously.

Amidst the trials and tribulations of the Ghetto experience with the possibility of death an ever-present reality, Korczak recognised and affirmed the requirement to create and maintain an atmosphere of beauty, calm and order, particularly in relationship with the natural world. Although Korczak could easily have become overwhelmed by the enormity of the challenges he faced he was resolutely determined to give the children in his care the experience of the natural world, however limited this may understandably have been. It is clear, therefore, that Korczak had a profound respect for nature.

Point (e) of Article 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that

*“Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to ...the development of respect for the natural environment.”*

Indeed, it can be suggested that ‘respect for the natural environment’ underpins all aspects of Article 29 because, ultimately, the ‘environment’ is not restricted to the physical, material, natural world but also refers to the dynamic network of relationships and interactions, the ‘web of life’ which characterises the whole of creation.

I wish to explore the theme of “respect for the natural environment” with reference to two of the Janusz Korczak Projects I developed during the summer of 2009 which were introduced at the International Korczak Association meeting in Warsaw in September 2009 and which were subsequently distributed by e-mail to Korczakians throughout the world.

The Space for Reflection and Sanctuary Projects explore the concept of respect for the natural environment through the planning, development, creation and maintenance of natural spaces which embody the values of peace, tolerance, equality, friendship, understanding and responsibility which characterised Korczak’s life and are affirmed in the United Nations Convention. The Projects aim to explore Korczak’s affirmation of the primacy of oases of calm through the creation of Spaces for Reflection, Sanctuaries, what the Polish philosopher Henryk Skolimowski has called Oikos, a Sacred Enclosure.

The Projects have two distinct, yet related aspects to them.

**Firstly**, they aim to create physical spaces in which, for example, pupils, students, teachers, therapeutic groups and faith communities can create what can be termed a sanctuary, a space apart, a place of quiet and calm.

**Secondly**, the creation of these physical spaces is complemented by the establishment of reflective, contemplative, meditative and mindfulness-based programmes, teaching and learning activities, which aim to actively foster the positive peaceful values articulated both in Korczak’s vision and in Article 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Unused or underutilised spaces in schools, colleges or universities, for example, are identified with a view to transforming them into Quiet Spaces and Places. Alternatively, land adjacent to museums, galleries or public parks or land belonging to faith communities could be identified and selected as spaces for transformation into Sanctuaries. The Spaces should aim to be inclusive and be suitable for use by people from religious and secular traditions.

The Spaces should aim to incorporate a range of media and materials which utilise the range of skills and talents of the project group members. Consideration should be given to the impact of the appearance and layout of the Spaces in order to facilitate reflection and contemplation and they should aim to create aesthetically pleasing and environmentally sustainable quiet places which facilitate reflection upon positive values and principles such as those embodied in the life and work of Janusz Korczak.

The Spaces should aim to incorporate a range of natural media and materials such as trees, plants, shrubs and wood and stone sculptures and artefacts which utilises the range of skills and talents of the project group members. Consideration should be given to the effects of the changing seasons on the appearance and 'feel' of the Sanctuaries.

The Sanctuaries should, therefore, aim to facilitate reflection upon how the values and principles advocated by Janusz Korczak can be regarded as being meaningful and relevant in the world of today. This process of reflection can be assisted through the recording of the transformation and evolution of the selected Spaces and Sanctuaries through a range of media such as, for example, photography, film, a dvd, cd-rom or a website.

The 'Ghetto Diary' presents Janusz Korczak's powerful and poignant observations, meditations and reflections upon the experience of life with his orphans in the Warsaw Ghetto. It contains wide ranging reflections upon the joy and pain, the challenges and opportunities, presented by existence. In his 'Ghetto Diary' Korczak looks back upon his life and he reflects upon significant experiences, including those of his childhood, which have impacted upon his development.

In a profound sense the 'Ghetto Diary' is a book of memory in which Korczak attempts to make sense of his life in relation to his vocation as a children's advocate. In Polish, a diary, a book of memory, is known as a *pamiętnik*. There is a very real sense in which a *pamiętnik*, however, is not simply a factual time-line recording of events but is also a reflection and commentary upon event, upon memory. As a literary genre, therefore, it is a creative synthesis of historical and existential reflection. The past and the present are inextricably interrelated.

The Space for Reflection and Sanctuary Projects, with their aim of facilitating the development of ecological awareness and attitudes of respect and reverence can be regarded as being, in a very

profound sense, contemporary forms of *pamiętnik* because they provide students and teachers with the opportunity to relate their experience, both personal and social, to memories, ideas, questions, reflections and hopes related to their Project participation but they also act as a vehicles for rooting experience in a connection, an engagement, with the natural world. The students participating in the Projects are, therefore, through their creativity and innovation, developing new forms of *pamiętnik*.

What can be regarded as being the significance for Janusz Korczak's contemplative perspective for the education of Teachers in a rapidly changing world? It can be suggested that a key element of Korczak's contemplative approach was his recognition that the telling of stories is a powerful vehicle for exploring the world and for making sense of our experience. In works such as *King Matty* and *King Matty and the Desert Island*, together with the stories he told as the Old Doctor on Polish Radio, Korczak introduced children of all ages to the experience of wonder, inspiration, of being spellbound by the power of an unfolding story. He recognised that we all need myths, narratives, dreams to live by; they provide meaning, hope and motivation in an all too uncertain world. Where can we look as a source of stories for the young people of today?

Perhaps a starting point for exploration of such a question is that of the Universe Story of the eco-philosopher Thomas Berry (1914-2009) who has cogently and wondrously illustrated how an understanding of the origins, evolution and development of the universe can facilitate the experience of awe and wonder as human beings reverentially contemplate their place in the cosmos. Each person can begin to develop a sense that their existence is part of a much bigger picture, they are not separate from nature, they are part of the universe. Ultimately, therefore, each person belongs; they are at home in the cosmos. Berry's evolutionary framework can be a significant resource in facilitating an elucidation of what I term Janusz Korczak's contemplative pedagogy.

Korczak commented: *"I no longer wonder over the fact that God has no beginning and no end, for in him I see the harmony of an infinity of stars. It is creation which testifies to the existence of the creator, and not the priest. I have created a new religion for myself, it has no direction yet, but it is the manifestation of spirituality."*

Korczak appears to be articulating a perspective in which the existence of the cosmos, the infinity of stars, is a pointer to a transcendent reality, the ground of being of all that exists. However, he acknowledges that this ultimately spiritual perspective does not necessarily have to be rooted in a traditional theistic framework although he affirms that it is a new form of religion. Although



Korczak's perspective may be regarded as pantheistic in approach it can be regarded as the expression of an emerging view of the universe which has found its expression in Thomas Berry's Universe Story and in the insights of Henryk Skolimowski who has affirmed that *"To think reverentially is first of all to recognise human life as an intrinsic value; is to recognise love as an essential and indispensable force of human existence; is to recognise creative thinking as an inherent part of human nature; is to recognise joy as an integral part of our daily living; is to recognise the brotherhood of all beings as the basis of our new understanding of the Cosmos at large."*

In The Boarding School Janusz Korczak wrote: *"Is it not enough that I experience a feeling of joyful gratitude? as I see them grow and toughen? Is this in itself not a sufficient reward for the work done? Haven't I the right to be a disinterested worshipper of nature, to watch the shrub become green?"*

It can be suggested that programmes of Teacher Education in the world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, therefore, should have at their heart the themes of personal, social and ecological awareness, respect for others and the world in which we live and for the development of values such as respect, empathy and compassion. The Space for Reflection and Sanctuary Project proposals can perhaps be regarded as illustrating, however modestly, how the developing curriculum of the future can creatively combine academic rigour, practical skills and positive values, facilitating a contemplative appreciation of the sheer gift of being alive. Such a pedagogical approach can be regarded as being truly faithful to the radical, deeply spiritual, contemplative humanism of Janusz Korczak.

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## **Teaching Janusz Korczak.**

### **Learning and working with students and professionals**

#### **Introduction: a paradox**

The title of my presentation ‘Teaching Janusz Korczak’ is a paradox, for three reasons. First of all, Korczak himself can hardly be called a teacher in the traditional sense. When asked for solutions or precepts by his co-workers he refrained from giving them these. Instead his advise, or ‘philosophy’ was:

*Seek your own road – ‘Be true to yourself. Learn to know yourself before you attempt to learn to know the children. You should realize what you are capable of before you begin to home to the children the scope of their rights and duties. Of them all, you yourself are the child whom you must learn to know, rear, and, above all, enlighten’,*

as he says in the first lines of the second part of *How to Love a Child*, ‘The Boarding School’ (Wolins 1967, 248). Teaching in Korczak’s manner was mostly indirect, by being an example of how to deal – to live, to learn - with children. The great exception is of course Korczak’s instruction for young doctors of how to look at a frightful child behind the X-ray screen. In this case his way of teaching was direct, concrete and authoritative. The second ambiguity in the expression ‘teaching Korczak’ is that one might wonder what there is to teach. To be sure, one can tell numerous stories about Korczak’s life and strife, about the way he developed his own line of thinking and acting, about his struggles to become a teacher and educator (see esp. part 3 of *How to Love a child*, ‘Summer camps’ (Wolins 1967, 331-377.; cf. Berding 2009), about the great problems he confronted in the twenties and thirties, and about how finally as a result of the nazi regime in Warsaw his life and that of this co-workers and children ended in the gas chambers of Treblinka. These stories have been told, and will be told, and must be told, because these things must never be forgotten. But is this what we mean by ‘teaching’ Korczak, and what should be the purpose of it? And who do we address with these stories?

To my mind, as I have argued elsewhere (Berding 2009) we should be careful when ‘using’ the biographical elements in our dialogue with students and professionals. Again, to be sure, these

elements must be on the agenda when we are talking about Korczak but as an educationalist I think that the main emphasis must be on the *content*, the very rich educational and pedagogical content of Korczak's legacy. It is my experience that when we put content first – and talk about concepts such as respect, participation and children's rights – students will get interested in 'the man behind the ideas' and ask 'Who was this man?', 'When did he live?', 'Where does his wisdom, his charm, his love of childhood come from?' When these questions arise, it is the right time to tell the story of Korczak's life and death. But what I just referred to as 'content' brings us yet to a third part of the paradox, i.e. that there does not exist such a thing as a 'Korczak method'. Unlike reformers like Montessori, Petersen (of the 'Jenaplan') or Freinet, Korczak did not develop clear and cut materials, written-out methods or concrete prescriptions of ways to deal with and instruct children. What we have is his books, his observations, his stories, his statements, his phantasies, his protests, his anger, his suffering, his love .... I prefer to call Korczak an 'empirical-phenomenological' educator because of his insistence on facts about children (rather than on idealized images) and because of his efforts to describe not only the children in their lives, but also his own 'position' (and feelings etc.) toward them. I'd be happy to defend the thesis that all his life Korczak only wrote autobiography, and nothing else. But again, the question arises: what is there to 'teach'?

### **Key concepts**

In order to make Korczak's ideas workable and accessible for practical pedagogy I have reconstructed five key concepts from his work. These are:

- respect;
- justice;
- participation;
- dialogue and
- self-reflection.

The first four serve as 'anchor-points' for the presentation and discussion of the content of Korczak's pedagogy. They can be retrieved from well-known sources such as *The child's right to respect* (Korczak 1992), several parts of his *How to love a child* (Wolins 1967), and others. Korczak saw these concepts or notions as imperative in education, he not only pleaded for respect towards children, for doing them justice, etc., he *demand*ed this from educators in their daily dealings with children and from the society at large. For him, the great danger lay in the siege of the 'homo rapax', the wild animal in us that devours all. There must have been moments in his life, already in the twenties and thirties when he was terrified by what he saw around him: upcoming

antisemitism, the rise of totalitarian thoughts and movements, etc. Korczak was very sensitive to what happened in the world outside the orphanages. In this sense Korczak is very much more than 'just' father of the orphans (Bernheim 1989): he was as much a political being as he was an educative one. Nevertheless when working with students and professionals it is advisable to focus on the *pedagogical* quality of the four concepts, in order to connect to the everyday practices they are engaged in.

That is also the 'bridge' to the fifth key concept which is on the level of meta-cognitive competencies of students and professionals. One of the core-ideas of professionalism is the permanent reflection on the tasks being executed and their consequences in children and youngsters. For professionals simply 'doing' is worthless: it is the reflection, the reflective attitude that counts and that mobilizes forces to do different or hopefully better. Korczak himself was of course the prime example of what Donald Schön called 'the reflective practitioner' (Schön 1990) and he has also many traits of what Richard Sennett in one of his recent books called 'the craftsman' (Sennett 2008) (or –woman ...). Doing and reflecting, and - as Sennett proposes - making sure that (expert) knowledge constantly circulates among peers and pupils, are indispensable for a successful profession.

### **Designing a training-course**

When I developed, with a colleague, the training-course for group-leaders in daycare and after-schoolcare, I had a strong feeling that it should display the key concepts mentioned above. It's no use talking about participating without having the people participate themselves. The 'atmosphere' in the group and the organization of the activities during the course must make it possible for everyone to contribute and to share in the contributions of others. Also the course should respect the participants in their uniqueness and their professionalism, it should give space for dialoguing and should devote much attention to self-reflection. On the other hand, we should not avoid confrontations between the participants with regard to their respective outlook on and experiences in education. We have to take the plurality of our present society into account and deal with differences in opinion with regard to values, norms and practices. A growing number of professionals in childcare (and likewise in other fields of social work) has different cultural backgrounds, and whether we like it or not, this plays an important role in the way education of (young) children is conceived. Another aspect is that we should not avoid confrontations between

Korczak's sometimes provocative statements and the actual practices, experiences and opinions of the participants. We have to talk about what is difficult, or hazardous, or even threatening in the work as a group-leader, otherwise Korczak's ideas will not play any significant role. A consequence of this is that Korczak can and will function as a 'counter-voice' against (some of) the ideas that are entertained by the participants. We know the importance and the domination of settled ideas, the 'folk psychology' as Jerome Bruner calls it: the way we all think and act, because everybody else thinks and acts in the same way.

On the basis of these requirements we devised a course that consisted of presentations about Korczak by the trainers, assignments, both individual and groupwise, take-home assignments, and space for interaction, dialogue and questions. A requirement on another level was that not just one, but preferably two or more colleagues from each childcare center participate, in order not to get only individual, isolated achievements.

## **Implementation**

During about two years some 75 participants from different childcare centers participated in the training-course. We began each new course with an assignment, a week prior to the start. The assignment was to read an article on Korczak and early childhood education (Berding 2004a) and to make notes about what was familiar and what was new or 'strange'. Here are some results. Familiar: 'I talk a lot *to* children'; and 'In our center we force children to sleep and eat at designated times'; and also: 'We overprotect them'. This seems rather negatively put, or problem-oriented, but there are also remarks about the love and affection for children that is recognized in Korczak. Some see, like Korczak, order as basis for a dialogue and for an honest way of living together. What is new or looks strange focuses mostly on the children's court in Korczak's orphanage. One group-leader actually asked me if she had to institute a children's court in her group of four year olds. It is these kind of questions that 'trigger' to start a presentation on what was Korczak's idea 'behind' his court: it is the idea of justice for all, and this is a subject that can easily be connected to everyday practices in childcare, even if the children there are very young. Korczak saw justice, or the neglect of it, in precisely the 'little' things of everyday practice, in the living together of children among themselves and in relation to the educator.

The subject of respect lead to intense discussions about what it means to be an educator (cf. Berding 2004b). 'I loath you', said a young girl to a group-leader, and she used dirty words which I will not repeat here. The question here is: how much can an adult 'take' from a child, where does it cross a limit, a border. This brought about a discussion about respect in more general terms and it

became evident that Korczak not only wanted or demanded respect for the child, but also for himself as an adult, as a human being. We stated this like this: as an adult, as a group-leader, one also needs and has a right to respect. Respect (literally) means: to look after one another, to (take) care, to give space to others, and not neglect or do away with oneself. This is precisely the moment where Korczak's descriptions of his first experiences in the summercamps (Wolins 1967) become 'functional'. For most professionals experienced the same difficulties and struggles that Korczak went through as a novice educator. Elsewhere (Berding 1995) I have argued that the 'law of respect' as laid down by Korczak is supposed to function as a guarantee that everyone comes to his own, that everybody is allowed to be himself or herself without damaging others. It is clear that Korczak saw the children's court as a means of implementing this law, and as such it was a very powerful instrument in service of justice for all. The court functioned as a 'third party' between competing norms, values and interests. I hardly have to say that this is the way civilized, democratic societies deal with these things. Korczak's great innovation is of course that he supplanted this idea of the defence of justice to the world of children. With the group-leaders we talked much about possibilities of giving this idea a form in 21<sup>st</sup> century upbringing and care for children. Some already regularly organized a children's meeting (cf. Berding 2009), or a circle once a week or month to talk about the ins-and-outs of group-life. For others this was quite new and we encouraged them to try and organize something like this, beginning with a very simple talk, and then perhaps expanding it later on.

We also talked about the lack of respect of the adult towards children. Our participants gave examples like: forcing children to play with each other, although they obviously do not like each other. Sometimes shouting at children or getting angry about what are only minor problems. As stated above there were negative experiences regarding respect, but also very positive. A group-leader told that she was a bit sad about something, and the children let her be and did not bother her for awhile.

Many group-leaders find dialogueing with children difficult, they're not used to it. Mostly, however, when an adult says that a child is 'not used' to something, what she is actually saying is: '*I* am not used to it'. But what about problems between children, like the four-year olds who are fighting over a toy-car, what must I do? Solve it *for* them? Do children learn anything from that? There is a tendency to state that children will solve all problems 'by themselves', but this is not true, as Korczak like no other educator has seen. It just means that the most strong, mentally or physically, will win and make his or her interest the prevailing one. A group thus runs the risk of being divided between the strong and the weak, which means that there is not a situation of

inclusion but of exclusion. It is not overstated to say that Korczak himself was the ‘champion’ of inclusive education.

Very concrete experiences and examples come upon the table during the course. A group-leader says to the children; ‘It is our group, we all have to decide about the holidays’ program’, and then a discussion develops. Others use a letterbox for ideas and complaints. We deal with questions like: ‘If a child says “yes” to an activity, but later on he doesn’t feel like it, should I nevertheless make him join the activity?’ Birthday celebrations are also important in group-life: we hear about the dullness of it, and think about ways of making it nice and exciting.

We gave an assignment for discussion between the participants in small groups. *The case is: you’ve designed a program for the children of your group, 10-12 year olds. You’ve put a lot of effort in it, you’re proud of it, but the children say they’re not interested. What do you do?* This leads to intense debate between the participants, with arguments about being responsible for one’s choices, on the one hand, and on the other the freedom for a child to change his opinion. Most group-leaders feel that when a child has said to participate in an activity, and his or her parents have paid for this activity, the child should go along and participate in it.

A take-home assignment is to observe a child at three different moments, and if possible in different situations. Observation is of course a basic competency of professionals. As we all know most observation is prejudiced and influenced by folk-psychology. If there is such a thing as a ‘Korczak-method’ then observation would be at the basis of it. So we practice this a lot and let participants present their written-down observations in the second part of the training-course.

The social process in a training-course is very important, especially when as in our course the group-leaders come from different centres and do not necessarily share the same views on upbringing and education. The point for me as a trainer is to help them to co-operate as much as they can as a team. The next assignment was to discover shared values in education, or, more focused, in their own educational practice(s). Here are some values that were discovered: recognition of the child; recognition of the differences between the child and yourself; a sense of responsibility for the well-being of the child; taking one’s responsibility, i.e. in a crisis-situation; giving others the freedom to make choices; granting space, both physically and psychologically to the child to discover the world; co-operation with parents, sharing the upbringing of children; respect for each other, for the environment and for the play-materials. These are important aspects of everyday life, by discussing them we want the participants to have a clear(er) mind about what they feel is important in the education of children.

Another interesting everyday topic that always raises much discussion has to do with tidiness. There seems a growing tendency among group-leaders to stress the aspect of tidiness in

their work. It is untidy to mess with things, or during lunch, to spill your yoghurt. A councillor working in childcare once told me that there is sometimes a sort of fear for making clothes or furniture untidy, while in most cases it only takes a second to tidy up.

The course usually ends with ‘questions’: what would you like to ask *about* Janusz Korczak, and, more difficult, what would like to ask Korczak *himself* if he were alive today? Here are some examples of the first kind: ‘Was Korczak married and did he have children of his own?’ and: ‘Did he discriminate between boys and girls?’ Questions asked to Korczak himself are, i.e.: ‘What would *you* do with my group that I cannot get under control?’ and: ‘How does you view of children go back to your own childhood?’ and: ‘Why are you obsessed by the rights of children?’

Especially these last type of questions is interesting, take the first one; what does it mean when someone says, ‘my group that I cannot get *under control*?’ The ‘real’ work in fact now begins. What are the underlying assumptions about group-life, about adult authority? Where does this longing for control come from? Fear perhaps? At these moments we are no longer ‘discussing’ Korczak or his ‘theory’, but strong feelings and sometimes emotions in people of flesh and blood today. Here self-reflection comes in, in the true sense of the word, namely that a ‘self’ needs to be investigated. No easy job perhaps, but our ‘success’ is dependent on this activity.

## **Evaluation**

All participants filled in an evaluation-form. This contained questions about their expectations before the training-course, and whether these came true. Also we asked questions about the assignments, about the presentations on Korczak, and about the articles they had read. Also we asked for points of new actions. Here are some examples of the replies to these questions. The participants felt free to speak their mind, not only about the ‘easy’ part of their job, but esp. about the ‘hard’ parts; the course gave them new ideas, although some said they ‘were already working according to Korczak’s ideas’; they learned to see children not as ‘objects’ but as co-responsible human-beings. Some had come to the conclusion that there is no need for overall surveillance all day long. And lastly one participant reported that the preparation of the meals, the interior-decoration of rooms and the holiday-program were now discussed and acted upon in co-operation with the children.

We published a newsletter three times, and this contained a.o. observations by group-leaders, in fact reflections on the impact of the course. Here is an example of someone who works with 10-12 year olds: ‘*What I learned most about during this training-course is children’s participation. Children have the right to think along in their group. They make their own rules and*



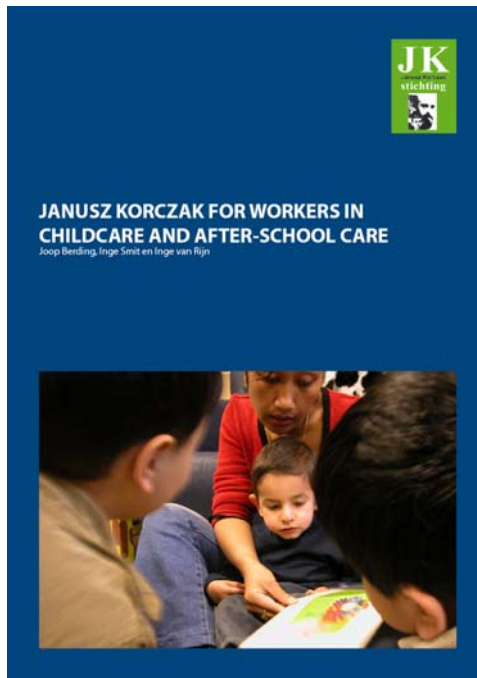
*bring forward what they would like to during the holiday's program.'* And here is another from a worker in a group with infants and toddlers: *'How am I going to put Korczak's principles into practice? I think the most important thing is to observe the child. What's keeping him or her occupies all day. Can I do something with this? For instance, when in the weekend a child has been on an outing to the Zoo, he or she may tell a story about it, or we take the play-animals from the cupboard and start playing with them.'*

All in all I conclude that the training-course set something in motion, both on the level of reflection and on the level of practice. This does not (of course, I should add) lead to the 'ideal' childcare, or practices which might meet Korczak's standards of how to deal with children. Every practice has its uniqueness and the challenge for professionals is to find out what is the situation 'at hand' and to consider and to reflect upon what is needed and adequate in this particular situation. Hopefully they will bear in mind the – much neglected - question: 'How do the children feel about it?'

### **Follow up**

This training-course was based upon my book *In de ban van het kind. Pedagogisch handelen in de kinderopvang* (Acting according to Korczak's pedagogy in childcare) (Berding 2005). In the years after we gave the training-courses and we experienced how group-leaders in childcare and after-schoolcare were inspired by Korczak's ideas. I used these experiences for a new product about Korczak, targeted at the workers in childcare and after-schoolcare. I wanted it to be a product that despite its concise form nevertheless captures Korczak's spirit and inspiration. It had to be practical, and easy accessible, and usable by students and professionals alike. This led to a booklet in Dutch, in March 2010, under the title *Janusz Korczak voor pedagogisch medewerkers in de kinderopvang*. Many organizations and individuals were interested. In two months the first edition of 750 copies was sold out.

Especially for the Geneva conference in June 2010 I had a translation made, so that I can now proudly present to you the 8-page full-colour booklet *Janusz Korczak for workers in childcare and after-schoolcare* (Berding et al. 2010). For every participant in this conference I have a copy as a gift from the Dutch Korczak Association and myself. This booklet will also be presented to the Japanese audience at the Janusz Korczak International Conference in Tokyo, August 2010.



This is what the booklet looks like.

### Closing statement

I believe that fundamentally Korczak liberated ‘his’ children from anonymity: he gave them a voice (Joseph 1999), not only in the private sphere, but especially in the public ‘space’ that was the children’s republic. I believe that by training students and professionals they also can have a voice in the public debate about what counts as ‘good’ education. In many countries this is highly topical, likewise in the Netherlands where room for free play of (young) children seems to disappear more and more under the pressure of preparation for school and adult life. To my mind, Korczak can function as a counter-voice against the still threatened freedom and well-being of children, of which he was the ‘champion’ and advocate.

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### **About the author**

Joop Berding (1954) has a PhD from The Free University of Amsterdam (thesis on John Dewey's educational philosophy and curriculum theory), and has worked as a teacher, civil servant and educational councillor. Currently he is co-ordinator of the Master's program in Education at the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences. He is on the Board of the Janusz Korczak Association in The Netherlands, and webmaster of [www.korczak.nl](http://www.korczak.nl). He has published extensively on Korczak (see for a comprehensive list and downloads his website [www.joopberding.nl](http://www.joopberding.nl)).

**Maria Jagiełło, PhD** – Member of the Polish Korczak Association

**Urszula Markowska-Manista, PhD** – Member of the UNESCO Chair of Janusz Korczak - Warsaw

– Member of the Polish Korczak Association

## **Janusz Korczak - teacher of teachers.**

### **Examples of good praxis in Poland**

Maria Jagiełło, PhD

Dialogue or monologue, two subjectivity or objectification, domination and submission, cooperation or obedience, freedom or constraint? These are still current dilemmas in the upbringing led us to reflection on the person, educator, especially as he sees it, Janusz Korczak. We believe that is the personality, morality, competence, views, understand their role, and finally, the teacher of humanity depends on good, humanistic, relationship with the graduate of the transcript, and thus its position is the correct course of development and education. This approach is very close to the humanistic orientation in contemporary Pedeutology in which they no doubt are part of Janusz Korczak thoughts. Besides, the whole educational system dedicated to Korczak is not only a child, but also educators. You could say the author of that man at all, because it is not science education of the child, but a man.

Man in particular, because of different resource experience other emotions, so, to whom good and wise grown-up person just in helping to reach the fullness of their development. The author reiterates that a good teacher is above all a man of great heart and open mind. The man who can respect, love and support of others, which is a child. The leading idea of Korczak gets cleared in the contemporary tendencies pedeutological, which is also an exponent of A. Combs, who along with his colleagues formulated a program of humanistic education teachers based on the central belief that ;"a good teacher is first and foremost a man and this fact is the most important and decisive."<sup>4</sup> For this he was also Korczak. Both in the whole of his work, and give practical expression to. He believed that anyone who dares to affect other people, to learn whether it should start to educate myself. "Be yourself - search for his own path. Know yourself before you want more children. Recognize that what you yourself are capable of before you conceive children to chart the extent of their rights and obligations. For all you are a child that you know, raise and educate first."<sup>5</sup> The author emphasized the importance of holistic approach, resulting from

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<sup>4</sup> By: H. Kwiatkowska, New orientation in training teachers, Warsaw, 1988, s. 44.

<sup>5</sup> H. Kirchner, Korczak. Thoughts., Warsaw 1987, s. 32.

combining theory with practice. He suggested that the teacher in living touch with the children gained the wisdom of life, independent thinking and careful look at each of them. At the same time warned against excessive and uncritical love of books. Further stressed that it was in a meeting with a particular child, the situation of education teacher has the opportunity to gain experience and feel the need to develop, search for optimal solutions, to learn a constant self-study, to verify their knowledge and skills. It is being acquired by such a posture, the teacher directs the child with a research question, inquiring: "What (Who) to be your man; and not with the autocratic - I'll do you a man."<sup>6</sup> &quot; <br>And here again we have seen the concept of connectivity Korczak and Combs, who also points out that the effectiveness of teacher conduct, selection of methods of education is personal and situational, which means no clichés, routine schematic. How Korczak believes it is precisely these stępiają alertness, awareness and appreciation of educators. And these qualities, together with mutual respect form the basis of a teaching personality and fitness for the profession, which certainly is not just a social function, but the mission and service. According to Janusz Korczak, it can only cope with a teacher who is able to respect a child, his otherness, weaknesses, advantages, rights and responsibilities. Teacher, who builds his authority on the respect, love, knowledge, competence and not fear, fear and power. Because of respect, dialogue, love, understanding, you can learn only through respect, in an atmosphere of understanding and love based on mutual respect. The more he is with children and for them, the more it is authentically human professional. Person who does not commit the error of identifying the child comfortable with a good and desirable. Warns us against what Korczak: "The whole modern education that the child would be convenient, consistent step by step, seeking to allay, suppress, destroy everything that is the will and freedom of the child, the spirit of fortitude, strength of its claims and intentions. Polite, obedient, good, comfortable, and without thinking about it, it will be passive in life internally and infirm."<sup>7</sup>

Looking at the Korczak's image of educators perceive more clearly the fact that the entire Korczak educational system is humanistic, emancipatory, focused on the child and very close to the contemporary concept of communication open, positive, unselfish, aimed at the needs of all its participants.<sup>8</sup> Against this background, we would like to show examples of good practice which can be implemented under the program tasks and continually incorporate the Polish Janusz Korczak Association.

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<sup>6</sup>J. Korczak, *How to Love a Child*, Warsaw 2004, s. 77.

<sup>7</sup> *Up There*, s. 19.

<sup>8</sup> More: T. Gordon, A. Faber, E. Mazlich, M. Rossenberg.

## **Part II.**

### **Examples of good praxis in Poland**

Urszula Markowska-Manista, PhD

These activities were and are realized by teachers and educators for the benefit of pupils from various areas of Poland. „Discover my world with me“ is the leading motto of projects undertaken by Korczak educators in Poland in 2010. It has been realised by allowing freedom in selecting various forms of activity, which take into account the needs and specific environments of children and teenagers with whom the members of the Polish Janusz Korczak association work. These forms present an opportunity for having a positive influence on such areas as: upbringing, the lives of children and youth, humanization and the social environment.

An example of such an activity is the „Anti-stereotype“ (Anty-schematy) project, aimed at promoting tolerance and respect towards representatives of other cultures. It consisted of visits by Polish educators to Israel, and a return visit of Israeli youth; the aim of the project was to protect and save Jewish cemeteries in Poland. Another activity, significant from the point of view of Korczak's pedagogy, was the „Kite Day“, a part of a project initiated by the International Janusz Korczak Association. Furthermore, in July of 2010 a summer camp for students of Korczak schools – „Rediscover Korczakowo“ - took place in Korczakowo, a place dedicated to the memory and ideas of Janusz Korczak.

Association members also deal with the issue of children's rights. They lead and continue workshops and other projects aimed at promoting postgraduate studies in the field of children's rights among teachers. Finally, they take part in various child support programs introduced to help the children of Africa, such as „Heart Adoption“ or „Spiritual Adoption“.

In the course of a project realized in compliance with the motto of the Polish Janusz Korczak Association for the year 2009: „Children's rights – the truth that you want to see in the world“, workshops concerning the rights and obligations of children were organized in several Warsaw kindergartens. They involved two two-hour meetings with groups of six- and seven-year-old children.

A task significant from the point of view of upbringing, and one worth paying attention to, is the popularization of Korczak's ideas and works among preschool and school children. This

activity ought to take place in Korczak schools and kindergartens, thus allowing for a further propagation of the idea of the rights of the child in view of Janusz Korczak's pedagogy.

It is impossible to discuss Korczak and children's rights by excluding children themselves. Therefore, by presenting good praxis, we aimed to speak on their behalf, in a way that respects the importance of the thoughts and experiences of young individuals. In our support of a child's development, we ought to accept the attitude of respect and humbleness in the face of pedagogical inertia. These values were metaphorically described by Korczak himself, who once said that a wise pedagogue, educator or caretaker need not infantilize him or herself and bow down to see the child properly, but that they should rather stand on their toes in order to reach the grandeur and complexity of a child's world. Children will in the future repeat what they experienced and put into practice what they learned and what they know. Thus, they will either construct a world based on emancipational rationality and common values of respect and love, or they will learn hostility and aggression from adults, along with a false and destructive belief that the stronger can do more.

Let us then listen to each other and make it so that in everyday educational practice, Korczak's pedagogy and children's rights become reality, as well as part of the natural environment inherent in a child's development, instead of being luxury items. Furthermore, rights should not release from obligations, but rather ought to constitute a framework for the children, in addition to outlining the ways in which adult caretakers are to regard the child –namely, as their main subject, possessing an inviolable worth as a human being.

Janusz Korczak – a teacher, but first and foremost a human being, chose the path of dialogue in his work with children. In the course of his professional activities, extended far beyond the traditional sphere of upbringing at home, Korczak realized the idea of changing the world, not the children. As he used to remark: "I can create a tradition of truth, order, diligence, honesty and integrity, but I cannot reshape any child into someone they are not." Korczak was aware that not only adults should determine the needs of children. Subjective ideas and impressions of young individuals are of immense importance, due to the fact that the children themselves will someday shape the image of reality.

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*International Janusz Korczak  
Association*

*Międzynarodowe Stowarzyszenie  
im. Janusza Korczaka*



**Minutes of the Janusz Korczak International Seminar  
at the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Poland  
to the United Nations Office  
Geneva, 5 June 2010**

We would like to offer our thanks to Ambassador Z.Rapacki, and his representatives Mr.Cezary Lusiński, Mr.Andrzej Misztal and Mrs. Olga Biernacka and all the staff of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Poland to Geneva, together with Dr.Yanghee Lee,



Waltraud Kerber-Ganse, Batia Gilad,  
Cezary Lusiński, Yanghee Lee

Chair of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Mr. Thomas Hammarberg, The European Commissioner for Human Rights, Prof. Waltraud Kerber-Ganse, Mrs. Batia Gilad, Chair of the International Janusz Korczak Association.

Thank you to friends from Korczak Associations from around the world and to the members of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child for joining us in the exploration of Korczak’s legacy and vision and its significance for today.

The conference included representatives from Janusz Korczak Associations representing Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom together with members of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child including representatives from Algeria, Hungary, Korea, Lithuania, Germany, Mauritius, Slovakia, Syria, Thailand, Tunisia and Uganda,

The conference programme incorporated three panels, each panel exploring a specific theme related to Janusz Korczak and the Right of the Child to Education with reference to the Convention on the Rights of the Child with a focus on the Training of Teachers. All of the presentations were delivered by members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and representatives of different Janusz Korczak Associations.



## Panel 1

Panel 1 was moderated by Jean Zermatten, a member of the UNCRC.

Philip D Jaffe, Director of Institut Universitaire Kurt Bosh, University of Fribourg, explored the nature of contemporary education including different perspectives regarding the aims of education with particular reference to the need for institutional respect for education and the role of education as a vehicle for the transmission of values.



Lothar Krappmann, a member of the UNCRC, explored the concept of fundamental freedom and its relationship to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child with particular reference to developments in contemporary education including the affirmation of a culture of learning infused with values which promote human rights and active citizenship.

Dainus Puras, a member of the UNCRC, considered the relationship of Mental Health and Well-Being with reference to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its implications for education. He illustrated how paternalistic approaches to mental health and education deny the principles of human rights, dignity and respect.

Jonathan Levy, of the French J.Korczak Association, contextualised the rights of the child with reference to social justice, equality, diversity, peace and conflict, importance of the expression of children's opinions together with the need for humanistic educators to be given powers to train others.

## Film: Korczak of the Children

Between Panel 1 and Panel 2 the film *Korczak and the Children* was screened. The film presented testimonies from graduates and teachers of Korczak's Warsaw *Dom Sierot* orphanage reflecting upon their time in the orphanage and sharing their positive memories of J.Korczak. In addition to interviews with the graduates and teachers their memories and reflections were also presented by child actors who played their younger selves.

## Panel 2

Panel 2 was moderated by Sven Hartmann, Chair of the Swedish Korczak Association. The theme of this panel was Teaching Teachers-Taught by Korczak and the Convention – A Challenge for NGO's.

Maria Herczog, a member of the UNCRC, explored the challenges and opportunities which arise from relating Korczak's pedagogical and therapeutic philosophy to contemporary experience, including current policy and practice in Hungary. Maria Herczog also affirmed the memory and legacy of Alice Miller as a champion of children's rights and of the complementarity of Miller's and Korczak's understandings of the child.

Roza Valeyva, Chair of the Russian Korczak Association, explored the concept of authority in education and the pedagogical differences between an authoritarian approach to teaching and the humanistic approach to education. Roza Valeyva showed a film of student teachers from Kazan-Russia who shared their experiences of working with young people together with their thoughts concerning Korczak's inspirational legacy. Roza's presentation concluded with the quotation "Don't be in a hurry to become a grown up".

Tzipi Marhaim, a member of the Korczak Association of Israel and Headteacher of the Avichail Elementary School, explored the theme of training teachers according to Korczak's legacy and illustrated how it is possible to actualise his pedagogical approach into the daily life of the Avichail School. Tzipi Marhaim illustrated the process of raising awareness amongst staff and parents of Korczak's educational philosophy in order for this to be embedded throughout all aspects of teaching and learning. At the heart of this transformative process is the positive partnership between teachers, parents and children.

Kelvin Ravenscroft, of the United Kingdom J.Korczak Association, considered Article 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child with particular reference to its aim of the development of respect for the natural environment. The role of contemplation in Korczak's educational philosophy was explored with reference to two of the five Korczak Projects developed by Kelvin and circulated to Korczak Associations by e-mail in the autumn of 2009 and their relationship to Article 29 and the potential for the development of Quiet Spaces to promote children's well-being.

Joop Berding of the Dutch J.Korczak Association presented "Teaching Korczak- Learning and working with students and professionals." He explored the problems associated with attempting to teach about Korczak and outlined five key concepts of Korczak's thought:

respect, justice, participation, dialogue and self-reflection. The concepts were considered with reference to the development of a training course for workers in day care and after school centres.

### Panel 3

Panel 3 was moderated by Kamel Filali, a member of the UNCRC and was dedicated to "Challenging Intergenerational Relationship: the School as a Model, a Future Vision".

Panel 3 included contributions from the members of Panels 1 and 2. The key concepts, themes and ideas that were articulated in this session included the following:

The importance of early years interventions; partnerships between teachers, parents and children; the impact of the family on children's development and well-being; the need for ecological awareness and the nurturing of children's capacity for contemplation; the importance of spirituality; the ability to accommodate and adapt to change; the need for support in responding to rapid change and the belief in the potential of children.

The Second International Janusz Korczak Seminar was a truly inspirational event which encouraged and inspired us to anticipate continuing dialogue in a further Seminar in 2011 with the continued support of the Polish Mission to the UN and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

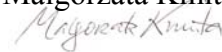
We would welcome the opportunity to dialogue with other organisations working in the fields of education and human rights.

Batia Gilad 

Chairperson

IKA

Malgorzata Kmita



Secretary-General

IKA