

## Editors' Introduction

In 2024 the UNESCO Chair named after Janusz Korczak (an important figure on the map of children's rights in our region) celebrated the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its operations at the Maria Grzegorzewska University in Warsaw. Dr Korczak was indeed an employee of this institution before the Second World War and left a significant mark on its mission and educational philosophy.

To denote this special occasion several important events took place and this special issue is the anniversary outcome of them. Amongst the activities involved, a special award, a medal for life-long achievements in the field of human rights, children's rights and education for peace was established by the University Senate and granted by an independent award Chapter. Seven UNESCO Chairs from 4 continents ratified a special Warsaw UNESCO Chairs Declaration of Education for Democracy and Peace. The theme of Education for Democracy and Peace was also present during the MOST UNESCO Academy of Young Researchers and the International UNESCO Chair summer school, that took place as well as the International Mid-Term Conference of the International Sociological Association Research Council for Language and Society RC25 ISA. A mid-term conference of the Polish Educational Research Association took place, as well as the General Assembly of IKA, International Korczak Association. In the open call for papers, we asked: let us not repeat the sad history of our nations. Let us learn from the past. Let us return peace and prosperity in our regions. Educators, social activists, and Korczakians have the tools and experience to advocate for the world's peace and prosperity and to show evidence-based case studies to the stakeholders to create true change in our communities. We asked for articles based on Korczak's philosophy and contributions related to pedagogical praxis in education for peace. We aimed to seek peace and how pedagogy may evoke the humanity, empathy and compassion, required to build strong, inclusive communities, and to foster

the agents of a better world. Comments on the current geopolitical situation were welcomed but with a plea to be respectful and provide a balanced view.

Scholars immersed in the anniversary events worked on themes supporting social inclusion, youth agency, democracy and peace through research action. They were engaging with the philosophy of Korczak and his contemporaries, looking into matters related to the sociology of education, social pedagogy, and linguistic and discursive phenomena.

The call was answered by a number of scholars from Albania, China, the Dominican Republic, Iraq, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Poland, USA, and Vietnam.

We divided the articles into two categories, research articles (based on field-oriented empirical data or desk research), and articles derived from pedagogical praxis. Here is the bird's-eye view of the overall content.

## From praxis

Amongst pedagogical praxis examples, the opening article comes from Yira Vargas, Antonella Cellucci and Aida Mencía-Ripley, who discuss the growing movement since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century advocating for the inclusion and rights of people with disabilities, leading to international conventions like the 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Authors show that many countries have implemented laws and policies to promote inclusion in higher education by removing physical barriers and providing support resources. Technological advances, such as assistive devices and alternative communication systems, have further improved access and participation for students with disabilities. Despite progress, significant gaps remain, particularly in regions like the Dominican Republic, where educational attainment for people with disabilities lags behind the general population. The article emphasizes the need for continued efforts to ensure equitable access and meaningful participation for all students with disabilities. The authors emphasise the role of the Unibe UNESCO Chair in fostering positive change in the country.

Albanian scholar, Etleva Babameto, follows the opening paper with a theoretical contribution to educational attainment and labour market. In today's interconnected, digital society, education must focus on skills and market needs. Higher education should equip students with relevant competencies for stable employment and adaptability in the labour market. This paper analyses the relationship between higher education and labour market trends, with a focus on European and Western Balkan reforms. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods, it explores the causes of the education-labour market mismatch and offers recommendations for a more effective system.

Arie de Bruin showcases how in Rotterdam, several primary schools engage in a project centred around the Jewish Children's Monument, where students research the historical context of the names inscribed on it, representing children from their neighbourhood. They explore the impacts of racism, anti-Semitism, and discrimination both historically and in their own lives. Given Rotterdam's multicultural environment, many students encounter various forms of racism and discrimination. This lecture outlines the project and highlights its outcomes, teaching children about the Holocaust while promoting mutual respect and democratic values inspired by Korczak.

Last but not least, Xi Chen, considers how children may be nurtured in rationality. This article explores this question by first presenting an anecdote, and then outlining the historical theories related to children's moral development. Two primary approaches emerge rationality and empathy, which have long been debated regarding their influence on moral growth. The author examines these theoretical perspectives and argues that children's morality should be developed by fostering both rationality and empathy.

## Research articles

In the research part, one may find the interdisciplinary examination of child governance (paedocracy) in literary and visual representations by Marta Krasucka-Betiuk. The opening article discusses the reception of Janusz Korczak's most famous novel, *King Matt the First* (1922), which inspired Iwona Chmielewska's visual narrative project, *How Hard it is to Be a King* (2018). The analysis focuses on the scholarly discourse surrounding both the original work and its intersemiotic translation (adaptation into a visual text). The study reviews critical interpretations of these works, especially those published by academics after 2000, examining them from pedagogical, philosophical, didactic, and literary perspectives. The central theme is the cultural representation of children, particularly through the concept of "paedocracy" – children's governance – as a way of rethinking children's participation in the social world. Iconic images and motifs from both the novel and the picture book are treated as examples of how childhood and child agency are portrayed in contemporary culture.

The paper by Elżbieta Górnikowska-Zwolak explores feminization of the teaching profession in Poland and the impact of androcentrism in the Polish language on women's potential. It examines how patriarchal language, often invisible, subtly perpetuates female subordination in both education and society. The dominance of women in teaching is highlighted, but their role within a language system that reinforces gender inequality is critically assessed. Despite the high qualifications of

female teachers, the profession is devalued and considered a “pink-collar” occupation. The text argues for the necessity of raising language awareness to challenge this androcentrism and empower both women and men, proposing its integration into pedagogical studies to promote gender-sensitive education.

Staying within the gender dimension, Laura Vawter discusses the female and male “gamer” identity heavily influences the language actions of ‘Multilinguals’ within the gaming community. Multilingual performance of the gamer identity maintains gender stereotypes. These stereotypes are also reinforced by community members who participate in streams of multilingual gamers. Community members, gamers, and streamers in EU-based gaming communities often reinforce the cultural gender norms and confine gender performance to male and female genders. Violation of this strict gender performance can correlate to bullying and sexual harassment by members of the gaming community. Through Computer-Mediated Dialogue Analysis of Twitch streams, we explore the language actions of ‘multilinguals’ in these spaces. We examine the derogatory language practices found in multilingual gaming communities, as well as the language practices that challenge cultural gender norms through the examination of female-centered slurs and male-centered colloquiums. The argument is presented that gaming communities, and their members, can both reinforce and diminish gender stereotypes.

Phan Thi Tuyet Van and Nguyen Duy Khang focus on the idea of the symbolic meaning of Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave” in relation to English teaching in Vietnam, highlighting the limitations in human perception and the drawbacks of current English education for non-English majors. A survey of teachers from high schools, colleges, and universities, along with input from educational stakeholders, provided evidence of these challenges. The study applied critical pedagogy to address the issues, revealing that many teachers still rely on traditional methods but desire change. The research suggests teachers should move beyond their comfort zones to improve English education and redefine the nature of teaching and learning.

Nancy DiTunnariello examines how declining university enrolment has led to campus closures in the United States and proposes a structural change to address the issue. Using action research and a case study of two departments at St. John’s University, Staten Island, the author suggests implementing a four-year course cycle to reduce costs and meet student needs. The paper reviews enrolment challenges nationwide and explores how Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs frames university education as a financial necessity. It also evaluates the strengths and limitations of the proposed solution.

Agata Aleksandra Michałowska discusses the importance of multisystemic resilience in ensuring children’s well-being amidst global challenges and instability. It highlights how resilience across systems – families, schools, countries, and eco-

systems – is essential for children's physical and mental health, development, and ability to cope with current and future stresses. Recent theories and research on building resilience are presented, along with strategies for strengthening these systems. The author encourages readers to engage within their communities to create resilient environments that support children's ability to not only adapt but thrive.

Amal Nasser Frak analyses Latino American poetry, focusing on how linguistic and discursive barriers within family traditions affect social inclusion. Through an analysis of various poems, the study explores the impact of language and discourse on identity, intergenerational communication, and cultural expression. It highlights how these elements either facilitate or hinder social inclusion, offering insights into the broader socio-cultural implications of the Latino American experience. The findings contribute to understanding Latino American poetry and emphasize the need to address linguistic barriers in fostering social inclusion.

Zuzanna Chałubińska explores the differing stances of major world religions – Judaism, Islam, and Christianity – toward suicide and the taking of life. While these religions universally oppose suicide, their attitudes toward deaths resulting from war or religious martyrdom vary. Using the example of Janusz Korczak's sacrifice during World War II, the article contrasts the praise for martyrdom with the stigmatization of those who die by suicide, highlighting the role of social stereotypes. It questions whether religions unjustly place the suffering of war victims above those in suicidal crises. The article analyzes religious catechisms and dogmas to compare their views on different causes of death.

The selection closes with Onyekachi Peter Onuoha's comments on how feminist African novels challenge social practices and gender-based exclusions, particularly focusing on women trying to conceive (TTC). In traditional African society, procreation is central to marriage, and the inability to have children often leads to stigmatization and exclusion of women. The study analyzes the portrayal of TTC women in novels like Dike's *Dear Kelechi* and Adebayo's *Stay with Me*, highlighting how narrative choices by other women create barriers to social inclusion. These narratives reinforce societal pressures, leading to suffering and marginalization of TTC women. The paper argues that these social barriers are perpetuated through interpersonal discourse within African feminist literature.

The selection of the articles is closed by the report from the Polish Educational Research Committee at the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN) prepared by Ewa Jarosz. This is a regular section of the journal and it is not available in English.

*Anna Odrowąż-Coates and Katarzyna Segiet*