

“Janusz Korczak. Educating for Justice” by Joop W. A. Berding is a passionately written book devoted to the life and legacy of Janusz Korczak’s contribution to the world of pedagogy and education.

This book is appropriate for modern times even though many of Korczak’s writings come from the early 20th Century. The book illustrates that the vision of Korczak has no time limits.

The book will appeal to people who may not know much about Janusz Korczak as well as those who studied and know him well. It is because of the systemic analysis of Korczak’s contribution to pedagogy and education in the context of socio-political structures that Berding captures and fully reinforces Korczak’s contribution to humanity and justice.

Berding refers to the “Korczakian” understanding of the value of children in society. Like Korczak himself the book recognises the meaning of Social Pedagogy and Praxis as fully connected with educating children as citizens of the world. Berding recognises that contribution to education based on justice is not just based on theories and philosophy alone but on practice which encourages human growth and development grounded in the ability to relate, participate and collaborate. In this way Berding makes the reader think and wonder whether the sacredness of justice and childhood go hand in hand in creating a better world.

Berding refers to Korczak’s desperate call to create a world in which education needs to be reconstructed to awaken our hearts and minds to the importance of the concept of the Common Good. It is through a democratic education and the relational narrative of pedagogy that we may find pointers for everlasting participative futures of our children and the future generations of young people.

Berding refers to Korczak’s martyrdom and Korczak as the legend; truly committed educator, doctor, story teller, writer and citizen who dies with 200 children in the Nazi Extermination Camp of Treblinka. It is for this reason and in order to avoid such future tragedies that we need to emphasise Korczak’s principles and perennial values of forgiveness, respect, participation and striving for human justice in order to see the generations of children beyond market values or as mere consumer by-products.

Berding refers to many past educators or philosophers who shared some similar values and beliefs to Korczak’s; Pestalozzi, Dewey, Arendt... and whether Korczak modelled some of his thoughts on them or not, the author of the book draws us to conclusion that Korczak is a relational, humanistic, participatory educator, who was not afraid to use experiments in living, for example summer camps, exercises in justice and youth court systems which instil hope and feed our longing for a better world.

I recommend this book to all educators, philosophers of education and students of education as well as those concerned with creating a better world for children and adults.

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