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Review of publications: Dziecko i nauczyciel w procesie poznania i działania [Child and the Teacher in the Process of Learning and Action]

Reviewed publication: Dziecko i nauczyciel w procesie poznania i działania [Child and the Teacher in the Process of Learning and Action] (2016), ed. K. Kraszewski and B. Nawolska, Cracow, Publishing House of Pedagogical University of Cracow, ISBN 978-83-8084-013-3, total number of pages – 176.

The education of the child in the early school age is a major challenge in both the dimension of the individual and social life. Its current shape is determined on the one hand by the development of science, mainly educational psychology, pedagogy and didactics and, on the other hand, by the changing socio-cultural, political and economic reality. These changes set new trends in early childhood education and a completely different perception of two entities – the student and teacher in the educational process. Therefore, this difficult, complex and constitutive stage should now be perceived in a multilateral, complex, multi-purpose manner, taking into account the many interpenetrating factors. Constructivism is a broad perspective combining innovative ideas concerning education and thinking about education, on subjectivity and individualization. Constructivism is based on the creative and multi-cognitive activity of students, on their knowledge and specific beliefs, creating opportunities and conditions for exploring, creating, experimenting and the critical verification of undertaken activities. Early education as an educational work requires teachers to have psychological knowledge regarding child

development – its correctness, conditions, potential opportunities, stimulating and directing this development, teaching in the form of “searching of a trace” formulating the principles guiding the learning process, creating a student as an individual who is educated in a culture that goes beyond the basic information provided and based on the events surrounding the modern world. With a predisposition to learn – (individual factors, motivational and cultural) and the factors conditioning learning, children learn to think and express their thoughts, seek out and discover new things, explain, classify and interpret different phenomena, relationships, dependencies, they learn to act, make decisions, solve problems and tasks. In contrast, school education is intentionally planned and organized, taking into account the principles of teaching, based on different methods and forms of work, on arranging conditions for learning and the use of attractive means of teaching which allows for the acquisition of knowledge by students from many areas, the transfer of key concepts, development of skills: ability to manipulate, perception, creating ideas and making symbolic operations. Therefore, this significant passage for the further biography of the individual’s life requires a high quality of education, competent teachers, optimal solutions and organisational-methodical-programmatic and systematic preparation for its active and continued participation in the real socio-cultural-information world. Early modern education will again have to face new challenges, among other things, the reduction of school age, requiring ingenious solutions in the field of educational practice. Its current status requires a thorough modification and, above all, changes to the existing teaching model used by teachers in Polish schools. This rigid and uniform style of work of teachers does not create harmonious development opportunities for pupils, just the opposite – it reduces and inhibits them, contributing to the formation of many difficulties and school failure.

In the context of the above cognitive reflections and thoughts of the authors of specific articles relating to educational theory and practice in classes I-III, an extremely interesting collective monograph was created for readers entitled *The Child and the Teacher in the Process of Learning and Action* edited by Krzysztof Kraszewski and Barbara Nawolska. The volume

consists of fourteen compatibly and interdisciplinary presented texts. The authors have taken the trouble to analyse several areas of education, i.e. language, literature, mathematics, social-natural, technical and presented opportunities to support pupils with special educational needs.

This publication begins with a very interesting text by Anna Zadęcka-Cekiera entitled *Humour in the Written Statements of Students of Classes II and III of Primary School*, concerning the subject of humorous texts and methods for inducing humour in the written statements of students in grades II-III. They were shown as the sender and recipient of humour. As senders they adopted the profile of humourists, authors of funny expressions. By contrast, the perspective of receiving is presented by the author in the results of her empirical research. The analysed subject of texts is varied, revealing a world which is fascinating and attractive for a child. The respondents have used different techniques for achieving comic effects and humour is achieved by repeating the words, sentences, actions and situations. I consider it important that the humour and comedy are present in the language of the respondents, activating creative attitudes, fantasy, creativity, motivation for observation of reality and develop creative thinking. The research is interesting and broadens the issues proposed by the author. In the second article: *Language Efficiency of Students – Future Teachers of Early Childhood Education in the Field of Storytelling* Anna Zadęcka-Cekiera assessed the language skills of students according to the characteristics, properties of exercise in speaking and writing, composition, linguistic correctness, spelling, punctuation and originality. She analysed 112 texts of students of the specialties: preschool and early childhood education, using an interesting method – the practice of writing. In light of modern Polish education methodology, much attention should be focused on practicing language skills (system, social, situational, pragmatic) obtaining interesting results. Students demonstrated a comprehensive imagination and fictional stories dominated. The article of Katarzyna Slana, *Horror Children on the Example of the Novel Ewelina and Black Bird and Do Not Wake Me Up Yet by Grzegorz Gortat* introduces the reader to the extremely interesting world of children's horror. The author focused on the summary of the two works that are presented to the

reader in a very precise, intriguing and inspiring way. She used a number of stylistic means, fuelling the imagination while reading them. Magic is a universal phenomenon with the two points of view. According to M. and W. Buchowski and W. Burszta, it constitutes a specific way of thinking and acting, a type of social and cultural practice. The child is here the subject, an active and passive recipient and sender of cultural texts. The world in the texts written by children received the power of action, as it was before and today. Magic does not disappear, but takes different forms in which it occurs. Jolanta Machowska-Goc in her very fascinating text – *Motive Powers Established in the Texts of Students of Classes II and III* – examines the motive powers contained in the works of the students of classes II and III on the enchanted plants. The presented research material includes texts – 165 works. The author has identified superior categories of motive powers in the area of the plants which the students possess, namely: magical aspect, mental-axiological and the category of ecological aesthetics of nature, which includes the following models of motive powers: verbal-action, pragmatic, imaging, play with convention, the world turned upside down, the absurd and the shortcut, spatial and temporal.

The verbal-action model includes new behaviours referring to magic in various forms. The pragmatic model focuses on the activities of the characters associated with archaic and modern forms. The pictorial model refers to the linguistic picture of the world in the form of categorization. The model of the play with convention, the world turned upside down, the absurd and the shortcut includes student performances, in which there is a language play. The last two models – the spatial and temporal concern timeframe, real and fantastic places. The plant created in the student texts has been subjected to the process of anthropomorphisation on which the possibility of magic operations were directed. An analysis of the work indicates that there is a coexistence between the human world and the natural world. Causative powers in the works of children are a blending of many cultural texts with their creativity. The world of student texts is structured in an imaginary way, which allows for a sense of security and how to reflect the magical entity. The article is very valuable and original in terms of science. Jolanta Machowska-Goc is also the au-

thor of the second text: *In the Circle of Para Literal Types of Speech at the Level of the Discourse of Early Classes I–III*. The presented text is “addictive” and motivates the reader to its acceptance by its attractive theme, the nature of the thoughts expressed in it, its competent erudition and a high scientific level. It attempts to describe the para literal types of speech on the basis of the written discourse of students in grades II–III. When it comes to written discourse, I also have doubts, perhaps a bit smaller than before. I’m not an advocate of the use of this term, especially in obscure methodological and problematic aspects, which does not mean that the author should abandon it. In the article J. Machowska-Goc uses discourse as a text category (Labocha), you can also include verbal discourse, referring to the spoken and written text, in the context of the area of education in the Polish language classes in grades I–III. Furthermore, she subjects the various types of student texts of classes II and III on enchanted plants to a thorough analysis, in which verbal behaviours on magic and dreams in their various forms are visible. They are associated with presuppositions, and mental creations have the potential significance with which you can create imaginative schemes for speech acts in subcategories. This interesting empirical material, subjected to a thorough analysis, leads to very interesting conclusions. According to Barbara Nawolska, the purpose of the contemporary teaching of mathematics is to prepare children to take up challenges and the self-construction of knowledge. The author rightly notes that the role of the teacher in this regard is to overcome the contradictions arising from the abstract character of the area and specific-figurative thinking of students starting school. At the stage of early childhood education, the student individually develops knowledge through active cognitive and creative activity. To be able to get it in a coherent and structured way, science should be in accordance with the stages of M. Hejne. The duration of this study should be adapted to the individual characteristics of the unit. This process should not be accelerated by force, because of the threatening degenerated formalism. This type of phenomenon is fully detrimental to the child due to the lack of sufficient knowledge about the importance of the use of mathematical symbols and terms. B. Nawolska’s text shows a curiosity,

clarity and integrity in making competent generalisations and drawing accurate conclusions. In the second article entitled *The Role of Illustration in Solving Mathematical Tasks in Early Childhood Education* B. Nawolska draws attention to the fact that mathematics as science requires abstract thought and deductive reasoning. Solving tasks requires language, as a thinking tool for a child and knowledge of the development stages of the language by the teacher. For students at a younger school age who are just entering the various phases of gradual possession and use of language code, the most accessible way and a great help in solving tasks are pictorial presentations of their content. Solving mathematical problems is difficult not only for students but also teachers, who, as a result of ignorance, cannot competently teach this sphere. The author assigns an important role to illustrating tasks. In her view, an accurate figure can in an accessible way express the content of the task, so that one can more quickly notice the relationship between the data and the unknowns, seeing a solution. It should be emphasized that the concreteness of the image shows the advantages and disadvantages, it facilitates thinking on issues of general and complex, but it can also make it difficult to use abstract thinking. Creating images and pictorial simulation is correlated to the knowledge, expertise and experience of the man who creates it. It is therefore necessary to verify the accuracy of the results obtained in this way. The author, by revealing the role of drawing in solving the tasks, presented some examples of tasks and their solutions. The author concluded that the need for simulation depends on the type of tasks and competences of the person solving. During solving difficult tasks simulation drawings may be necessary, the students then demonstrate the independence of action and their effective execution. I find the text interesting, precise and clear and it will certainly expand the existing knowledge of teachers of early childhood education in this field.

On the other hand, Joanna Źądło in the article on: *Support for Pupils with Special Educational Needs* presents the relevant aspects concerning support for gifted and weak students. The school as a social and at the same time open institution should comprehensively develop the child's personality of students, especially those with special educational needs,

adapting the teaching work to their development opportunities. What is important here is that the diagnosis of a child's development, determination of their strengths and weaknesses, stimulation and support, cognitive abilities, environmental conditions, relationships and interactions, cooperation with the family and the institutions that support development. In the second text entitled *Interactive Diagnosis in Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs* Joanna Żądło takes up interactive diagnosis issues emphasising its conditions, the effectiveness of the course, taking the appropriate factors supporting the development of the child and systematics. The author, having in mind special educational needs, very rightly emphasizes that for the students belonging to the group, a specialized support and assistance should be organised, appropriate teaching methods suited to their needs and psycho-physical capabilities should be used and individualized learning programs, taking into account the indication of diagnostic tests should be created. J. Żądło suggests a method of individual cases in order to be able to recognise the accurate child's situation, which will enable the reliable assessment and taking up a specific work with a specific case. The effects of the diagnosis are presented in the description of a specific case of a student of class III – Adrian, showing a lower than average level of intellectual development. The article is clear, interesting and valuable, showing the right approach and solution to the problem. I read with great interest the article written by Krzysztof Kraszewski on *Environmental and Technical Education in Preschool and Early Childhood Education*. The author brings us some "otherness" in the realisation of two very inspiring educational areas – environmental (today, the area of natural-social education) and technical (currently technical classes). In the introductory part we learn about multilingualism and multiculturalism, treated as an opportunity for common and mutual learning, occurring in kindergartens and schools in South Tyrol. We familiarise ourselves with the school system, as well as the changes concerning the functioning of these institutions. A major role is given to the co-operation of kindergartens and schools with the local University, educating candidates for the teachers of kindergartens and schools and improving already those who have a university degree. K. Kraszewski shows the multicultural world

in which culturally socialized children develop and educate, equipped with intercultural competences, getting to know the surrounding world of nature: plants and animals, neighbourhood, family, school, occupations, landscape, protection of the environment. The author demonstrates the compatibility of the natural and general technical areas which I think is completely accurate. This is because children acquire multifaceted experience through contact with reality – they work, manipulate and create through the use of various technical products, including information technology. Further part presents the objectives, tasks, educational content and curriculum framework plans obtained from local institutions. When making the reader acquainted with the various thematic circles, it underlines how important the constructive and creative activity of the child is in modern education. On the other hand, Ingrid Paško in the article titled *How to Discover and Develop Children's Interest in the World of Nature and Science* shows the essence of the teacher's work, systematically developing children's interest in nature. Students as a result of the activities are to explore the world of nature and science. The teacher, by the proper impact of education in school and excursions, walks and other interesting forms, stimulates their cognitive activity, through which they discover specific possibilities and ideas in the reporting area of learning through exploration, direct contact with reality, experimentation, problem solving, putting independent questions. Furthermore, they strengthen cognitive and emotional interests and deepen their knowledge about the surrounding world. A child learns primarily how to construct a kind of identity, consciously tries to guide their own behaviour, he/she becomes an autonomous unit, makes decisions and can justify them, shows the cognitive curiosity, self-criticism, takes new challenges, shapes norms and social attitudes, engages in a dialogue and tries to make choices. Interests, as the author rightly says, are the basis of learning and the effect of the results achieved by the child functioning in contemporary culture. In the second article, Ingrid Paško takes up such issues as: *Activating Students in the Early Childhood Environmental Education*. By referring to the methods of active learning, she indicates that the development of children's multilateral cognitive and creative activity

builds a profile of a small explorer, exploring the world in a natural, social and cultural environment. Very rightly and aptly she highlights the importance of learning through exploration and discovery in the implementation of the program content of science education and the role of the teacher – facilitator and mentor, granting conditions for the experimenter's activity. The text is a great pleasure to read, containing content which is extremely useful in work with children in classes I–III. The problem of traffic education of children in early school age in a forthcoming volume deserves special attention because it is the subject undertaken usually cursory or randomly, so the empirical research presented by Katarzyna Turaczyk in the article *Activities of Teachers Undertaken to Improve the Safety of Children on the Roads* widens the range of knowledge on the subject and complements a "gap" in research in this area. Indicating the essence of communication education and its importance, the author oscillates around the pragmatic nature of the program content and the role of teachers whose major task is to systematically equip and deepen knowledge in this area. After researching, K. Turaczyk noted the views of teachers, who, in the vast majority, recognized education of communication as a difficult and lengthy process, requiring triple subjective cooperation, purposeful and conscious activities in the transfer of knowledge on safe participation in traffic, taking various concrete initiatives and their implementation. Another also valuable cognitive reflection in the undertaken empirical studies, closely related to the merger of cognitive activity with a practical action is presented by Magdalena Burkat in the text *The Essence of Productive Tasks in Early School Teaching*. The author shows in an interesting way the role of manufacturing tasks in general technical education, being fundamental and multi-faceted, exemplified in practice, requiring a specific cycle of organisation, usage of appropriate methods or the application of the relevant phases – stages – cells from the teacher. Technical classes require students to exercise intellectual, emotional, verbal, sensorial, practical and technological skills. M. Burkat presented the results of empirical research aimed at determining the role of the productive tasks in shaping the technological skills of children. From the presented conclusions it emerges that the students

during the course of production are very active, learn new concepts and shape and improve basic technical skills.

To sum up, I believe that the choice of the subject of publication and the undertaken issues is current, valid and interesting. All of the presented articles are of interest in the cognitive sense. The content ranges between reports and scientific studies and the presented results of empirical studies, which are a valuable source of information for early school pedagogy. The authors of the volume presented an innovative look at the student and the teacher, presenting a multi-faceted issues relating to the process of learning, teaching and education, the paradigmatic transformations and the actual socio – cultural facts. The content indicates a competent knowledge of the subject matter and the specific meaning of the phenomena which are reflected in both the theory and practice of education. Coherence, legibility, clarity and precision of communication are among the advantages of this book. This publication will become a complement to existing studies for recipients. Its readers could be candidates for teaching profession, those professionally active in pre-school education and early childhood teachers and everyone who is interested in this subject.

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