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, TEACHING CHILDREN RIGHTS - RULES AND TYPES OF APPROACH

ÎNVĂȚAREA DREPTURILOR COPILULUI: PRINCIPII, ABORDĂRI ȘI EXPERIENȚĂ INTERNĂȚIONALĂ

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One of the primary goals of every democratic state is to guarantee freedoms and human rights and show due respect to human dignity. Every child becomes a citizen from the very moment of birth, rather than becoming one in the future. Thanks to this, they are entitled to certain rights and freedom based on internal and international rights rules. A child who is aware of its rights can deliberately use them. What is more, it begins to understand if it's treated subjectively instead of objectively; it learns about its rights that shall be respected. The child aware of its rights can more efficiently protect itself against violence, abuse, discrimination and knows the institutions that help children. We often learn about the children's rights in cases of abuse or when we hear about violence and children suffering. The critical step to change this situation is to start educating children about their rights early.

While considering the right path for children rights education, it is worth answering a few questions: Who is responsible for this? What are the specific teaching goals? Which approach and methods would be the best? The essential thing is to explain and teach what children rights are, what their origin is, how they correspond with the real needs of children, who is to assure them, and what the protection mechanisms are.

The notion of children rights has been disputed and considered by many great minds and pedagogues. One of such prominent figures was Janusz Korczak, a worldwide known Polish pedagogue and the first spokesman for the rights of the youngest. He constantly stressed the importance of perceiving children as humans instead of the ones that will eventually become them. Due to this fact, he argued that children need to be entitled to rights in exactly the same way as adults. He shared the belief that children should be treated equally, with tolerance and respect to the needs of the youngest. Korczak drew particular attention to the inequality of children as members of a society and their dependence on adults. He demanded to consider children as fully-fledged human beings since their birth through every stage of their life and have the sole right to be themselves as they are. Such ideas set the proper ground for Korczak's vision of a modern education system - the antiauthoritarian one that respects children's needs, supports their goals and at the same time triggers their activity and independence.

Children rights are based on the relations "state vs child". In practice, it means that the state's role is to allow the child to use its laws. At the same time, all the national institutions and their representatives, e.g. doctors, lawyers, teachers, administrative workers, etc., should respect these laws because so is the law. The most important legal document that determines children rights is the Convention on the Rights of the Child. All countries that decided to ratify this document are obliged to respect and implement the provisions of its law.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child gives a precise definition of the children's rights and describes the conditions essential for their proper development. It assumes that children are not fully grown and aware of taking responsibility for themselves, and because of that, they require particular help and attention. The main ideas of the creators that shaped the Convention were: children welfare shall be put first, all children are equal in the name of law, no matter of their origin, ethnicity or religion. Article 29 of the Convention states as follows: "children's education shall be aimed at (...) developing respect for the human rights and basic freedoms (...)". Both The Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as and its separate laws can serve as the basis for projects and educational activities implemented at school or kindergarten.

Teaching children rights is said to be an essential element of creating a civil society. Therefore, starting from the earliest age, it is crucial to pass the knowledge about children rights as well as teach the youngest how to use it properly. This all together gives them the chance to develop social responsibility, to participate actively in the life of a local society, and to contribute to its welfare. Moreover, educating about children's rights helps the youngest develop a set of values and critical thinking skills.

The positive effects of such activities will be visible if we allow for educating the most significant number of children and teenagers while ensuring that the process of teaching is not limited only to formal school-based education. Educating children about their rights serves to achieve particular skills instead of being only a practical set of knowledge. Such competencies can be further used to transform their close environment by ensuring that all children can use their rights. Children who participate in such initiatives are said to be more aware, active and creative, which translates to presenting an active and engaged approach in their adult life.

To be effectively communicated, the idea of children's rights must be understood and adopted by adults - teachers. They should know in the first place that the concept of children's rights is not directed against adults, does not infringe the authority of parents and teachers, and does not mean that the child is over-privileged. The child as a subject of rights also has responsibilities, but the child's rights and responsibilities are two separate things. Whether a child has the rights set out

in the Convention does not depend on whether he or she carries out his duties or not. Therefore, a child cannot be deprived of the possibility of exercising his rights, even if they do not fulfil the undertaken or imposed tasks. However, the enforcement of obligations is a separate issue.

The function of a modern school is to become an institution that educates and implements children rights in practice. The child should experience respect and obedience of children rights in practice, and this experience will be crucial for acquiring competencies in this area. The child should be the subject and not the object of the educational process. The notion of children rights, like a cross-sectional one, falls within the scope of many subjects.

When we wonder "How to teach about children rights?" the answer is quite apparent: most naturally and practically. The teaching methods should be based on everyday situations and contexts that the child is familiar with and well adjusted to the specific age group. On the one hand, the knowledge of children rights is the same as the curriculum content of other school subjects and should be taught clearly, and understandably. On the other hand, however, we have to remember that the theory is only the starting point for shaping the attitude of commitment and realizing that the rights apply in everyday life, instead of being only a record in a document - a theoretical construct. An essential principle of education about children rights is the engagement of children and young people. It cannot be learned from textbooks. The school should allow students to participate and co-decide on matters that concern them. The educational task of schools, teachers and educators is to develop the children's ability to recognize their rights and obligations, present their judgments, opinions, improve the student self-governance and express tolerance towards the views expressed by others. The example of implementing children rights at school is, among others, providing children with the possibility to hold democratic elections to the student government authorities, ensuring that the members of student self-government can share their opinions and proposals with the headmaster and pedagogical council attendees. The teachers, educators, and the school head are responsible for teaching and observing the student's rights and the child's rights. They should ensure that children's rights are included in the documents that define the school's work.

Only the combination of theory and practice, knowledge and experience will give a chance to educate about children's rights effectively. The basis and principle of all educational activities are the universal values of the modern concept of human rights and children rights - freedom, equality and dignity of every person.