

We all have a voice... But do we really hear all voices around us?

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The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Article 12(1) stipulates that "States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, with due weight accorded to the child's age and maturity." This provision enshrines the child's right to participate in decision-making processes and have their opinions heard and valued (General Comment No. 12, 2009). However, despite its significance, Article 12 appears to be often overlooked in contemporary societies across Europe and beyond. This raises critical questions regarding the extent to which children's voices are genuinely heard and integrated into decision-making processes that affect their lives. How can we foster meaningful child participation in educational settings and across various sectors of society? Janusz Korczak's pioneering work has had a profound impact on the development of children's rights globally (Markowska-Manista, 2020). His philosophical approach and contributions significantly influenced the codification of children's rights within a humanistic paradigm (Valeeva & Demakova, 2015), as enshrined in the UNCRC. Although Korczak did not participate directly in the UN sessions (he was murdered at Treblinka during World War II), his ideas fundamentally shaped the Convention's underlying assumptions. Informed by Korczak's paradigm (Maier-Höfer, Markowska-Manista & Stellakis, 2023), this study aims to investigate the practical implementation of Art. 12 in various contexts, including homes, schools, universities, and society at large. Specifically, we will examine whether this right is exercised universally, with a particular focus on children in vulnerable situations, such as those in care, with migrant or refugee backgrounds, or experiencing poverty and social exclusion. Additionally, we intend to explore the significance of integrating the CRC, including Article 12, into the studies of future teachers, highlighting the importance of embedding children's rights into educational and university curricula.

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Short CVs

Urszula Markowska-Manista - PhD habil., researches childhood and education in diverse environments, employing inclusive and participatory approaches. She has held various leadership roles, including director of the MACR program (2016-2021) and head of the UNESCO J. Korczak Chair (2017-2018). Currently, she is a PhD professor at the University of Warsaw, leading the Interdisciplinary Research Center for Intercultural Education and Communication, and a member of the Ombudsman for Children's Rights Team for Developing Children's Participation in Poland.

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Claudia Maier-Höfer, Dr.phil., is a Professor for Childhood Studies at Evangelische Hochschule Darmstadt, Germany. Her research focus is ethics and agency of children in the fields of education, inclusion and sustainability. She is working with concepts of psychoanalysis of Lacan and Mannoni and the poststructuralist approaches of Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari. She is member of the Scientific Council of the journal 'Jewish Studies. Almanac' published by the Zamosc Academy and member of political advisory board of federal organisation for studies in social pedagogy of Protestant Church in Germany.