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Publicación [International Review of Education/Internationale Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft/Revue internationale l'éducation](#)
Publisher Springer Netherlands
ISSN 0020-8566 (Print) 1573-0638 (Online)
Fascículo/ejemplar/número [Volume 48, Numbers 3-4 / julio de 2002](#)
DOI 10.1023/A:1020328610451
Páginas 265-270
Subject Collection [Humanidades, Derecho y Ciencias Sociales](#)
Fecha de publicación miércoles, 03 de noviembre de 2004
SpringerLink



[PDF \(39,4 KB\)](#)

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Without Abstract



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**CHILD LABOUR AND THE CONTRIBUTION OF WORKING
CHILDREN'S ORGANISATIONS IN THE THIRD WORLD**

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In the media and in politics it is still apparently regarded as one of the accepted truths that child labour and the rights of the child rule each other out. Governments and international organisations that stand up for children's rights therefore mostly make an effort to prohibit and eliminate child labour.

Gradually gaining in influence however is the recognition that the relationship between child labour and the rights of children is more complex. Accordingly, it is not enough to determine and complain that children work, but rather it is questioned for what reasons and motivations they work (see Boyden et al. 1998; IWGCL 1998; Liebel et al. 2001). When children work, their personal development and even their lives can be endangered, but it can also contribute to their development, help to enhance their self-confidence and prepare them to play a responsible and meaningful role in their societies. Arguably the purpose of children's rights is not only to protect them from risks and give them a responsibility-free space, but also to make it possible for them, as subjects in the legal and social sense, to find recognition and have an influence on their societies. If one accepts this argument then the question arises whether participation in economic processes is not a basic pre-requisite for this.

Especially organisations of working children that have come into being since the 1980s in Latin America, Africa and Asia have focused attention on such questions. The positions and demands articulated by them at various international meetings will be outlined here (for their development see Liebel 1998; Swift 1999), and some conclusions for human rights education will then be formulated.

Children's organisations refer to the world-wide validity of human rights, especially of the rights set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). Partly, these rights are geared to a particular context, and partly they are supplemented by new rights. An example can be seen in the "12 rights", that were formulated by West African children's organisations together in 1994 and whose fulfilment since then is verified at yearly meetings:

- The right to be taught a trade;
- The right not to have to migrate (i.e. to stay in our villages);
- The right to security when working;
- The right to access to equitable legal aid (in case of trouble);
- The right to be listened to;



International Review of Education – Internationale Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft
– *Revue Internationale de l'Éducation* 48(3-4): 265-270, 2002.
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