Press release of the MA Childhood Studies and Children’s Rights on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
November, 20, 2019

Scientific accompaniment of children’s rights practice.

Graduates and alumni contribute to making children’s rights real/a reality for children

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was an essential impulse to develop and offer the international, interdisciplinary advanced Master study programme MA Childhood Studies and Children’s Rights (MACR). As such, an issue for all people involved in the programme is to honour the Convention- a reason to celebrate.

Today, more than 300 graduates of our Master programme contribute to realising children’s rights around the world. The children’s rights professionals work inter alia in practice, politics, NGO programming, in own initiatives, in direct work with young people as well as in research and teaching.

Concrete examples of the fields of activity are for example: child protection officer at UNICEF, school and kindergarten direction, foundation and direction of e.g. the „Projektwerkstatt Perspektiven e.V.“, an association for disadvantaged children and young people in Berlin-Neukölln, in the media or in positions in politics as for example office leader at ministries, etc.

Childhood is multifaceted

In Germany and internationally, the MA Childhood Studies and Children’s Rights contributes to the development of critical children’s rights studies and research which is relevant to children’s rights practice.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is an international, universally valid treaty. We interpret the Convention in light of different contexts and living realities and advocate for a culturally sensitive implementation of the treaty.

Due to its history, a concept of childhood prevails in the Convention which is oriented to the Western image of childhood as a protected, carefree and secure stage in life. In our programme childhood is understood as a permanently changing construct, which is changeable and can be different according to cultural contexts and environments as well as over generations. Hence: childhood is not childhood, it is multifaceted.

Thinking and implementing children’s rights from children’s perspectives

Children’s rights are closely related to societal questions. This manifests itself in the principle of giving children’s best interests primary consideration in all actions concerning them (Art.3, CRC). As such, children’s rights are a cross-sectional theme, which can be grasped holistically only by practice and research together and only from various disciplines and practical fields. The interaction and cooperation in these areas is indispensable for the realisation of the rights of children.

Therefore, the MACR addresses questions on childhood and practice-oriented children’s rights research from political-, juridical/legal and pedagogical perspectives as well as their anthropological, ethnographical, medical, journalistic dimensions, just to name a few. The participants (students), with their different resources, globalised biographies and divers practical experiences contribute to the MACR and the development of competencies, to understand children rights as subjective, living rights, which can only be filled with life by the children and young people themselves.

In order to enable children to enjoy and make use of their rights, adults and in particular the politically responsible persons are obliged to create circumstances to enable this. Without such conditions the Convention on the Rights of the Child remains dead paper.

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