

Child Labour: Policy Options

Lieten and White have brought together a number of papers examining the history, political context and nature of child labour and policy debates. The result is a unified dissertation on the diversity of ideologies, methodologies and terminology involved in child labour discourse. Regardless of the nature of engagement with this issue, whether academic, policy or practitioner based, this book serves to identify and highlight the plethora of ideological and political approaches to child labour and the problems that emerge as a result of definitional diversity.

Many of the contributions comment on the changing dynamics of discourse on childhood, child work, education and the relations between them. In academic circles, new perspectives view children not as passive recipients of experience and socialization but as more active participants and contributors to their own development and social worlds. These ideas have far-reaching implications for our understanding of children's competences, rights, responsibilities and needs, and their (potential) sources of resilience in the face of risk, adversity and abuse.

Apart from stimulating a more realistic debate on the issue of child labour world-wide, this volume contributes to the process of more empirically grounded research that will bring into the open the many social, economic and psychological aspects that are associated with children when they get involved in whatever form of work.

The papers by Cunningham and Myers provide the opening chapters for the book, placing theories and ideologies within their historical and political context and thus supplying a lucid exploration of the tensions that have emerged between competing interests. Cunningham and Myers provide a thematic framework for the papers that follow, emphasizing the inherent tendency of theory and moral sentiment in this area to be abstracted from political realities and empiricism. This theme is further elaborated by Lieten in an exploration of the definitional ambiguities that give rise to uncertainty with respect to the full magnitude and dimensions of the child labour problem. The Anker paper unravels the historical and contemporary roles of the various players in the process, and provides possible points from which each of the stakeholders may contribute to the advancement of policy dialogue at all levels.