

Can Child Work Provide Opportunities for Skill Development?

Grace Chang

Department of Social Policy

Education has always been the point of focus, especially when it comes to discussing what the youth should be spending their time on. What happens however, to children and young people who face high barriers and costs to accessing education? What are their pathways for skill and personal development? My research studies this issue through the case of child work, where children often combine work and school, and work is an immediate option for poor households coupled with weak education institutions. I study this using a quantitative analysis of children in four low- and middle-income countries which follows two cohort of children across 15 years. I am interested in

understanding on how children aged 5-19 allocate their time on a typical day between work, school, domestic chores and various activities, and how this affects their cognitive and non-cognitive development throughout their childhood. Analysing this not only brings about discussion on the nuances of child time allocation in a difficult setting, but it also questions the opportunities available for youth globally who are unable to access formal educational institutions that are intensively ingrained in society. This can feed into understanding what sort of skills are formed through work and how they are formed in order to provide context to future labour policies.