

Working Children in Iceland

Policy and the labour market

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Abstract

This article examines the labour market participation of Icelandic children and legislation on child labour. The focal point of the article is to investigate the participation of Icelandic children and youth in paid work from a historical perspective by presenting an overview of the studies conducted on the issue. The results show that Icelandic children, especially from age 13 participate in paid work both along school and, in particular, during the relatively long summer holidays. Girls work more than boys. The results also indicate the need of comparative research, in order to answer the question of whether Icelandic discourse on exceptionally economically active children is based on reality or myth. When the economic crisis hit Iceland autumn 2008 one of the issues discussed publicly was the expectation that there would be a lack of work opportunities for children during the summer. To what degree the economic crisis affects children in comparison with other age groups in the labour market is still to be seen.

Introduction

The theory of childhood, being a social construct – albeit not a natural phenomenon – gives new and important opportunities to explore children's economic status in European societies. Advocators of the theory argue that the assertion that childhood is part of a biological development and natural

in essence, is indeed a social discourse that has dominated contemporary Western thought on childhood (James & Prout 1990:179). By placing children outside the realm of production such as the workplace and inside the realm of reproduction in the home and school, modern society has created a perception of children as being economically useless and has deprived children of any economic power (Qvortrup 1995, 2001, Zelizer 1985). Moreover, behind this dominant discourse, “children’s labour has been rendered invisible” (Morrow 1996:58) or, if recognized, to a larger degree defined as a social problem (Mortimer 2007).

For the last 15–20 years, growing research in the field of childhood studies has made children’s work in Western society visible (e.g. in Engwall & Söderlind 2007, Hungerland et al. 2007, McKechnie & Hobbs 1999, Mizen, Pole, & Bolton 2001). Some of these researchers have described how they have confronted this modern discourse of children being economically useless (e.g. Solberg 1994, McKechnie & Hobbs 1999). A case in point is when Samuelsson conducted his ethnography on working children in Sweden and was confronted with a, “widespread and popular opinion,” of working children being, “a historical phenomenon, a thing of the past or at least something only existing in poor countries in the south, in developing countries” (Samuelsson 2008:6). We have encountered two competing discourses while investigating children and youth work in Iceland. Besides the dominant Western discourse of economically inactive children there also exists a localized discourse of Icelandic children being quite economically active. However, Garðarsdóttir (1997a, 1997b) has pointed out that the construction of childhood and child labour from 1930–1990 has been marked by both changes and continuities.

The focal point of this article is to investigate the participation of Icelandic children and youth in paid work from a historical perspective by presenting an overview on relative studies. Furthermore, the article aims at understanding whether the discourse on Icelandic children being exceptionally active economically is based on reality or myth. Historical studies are used to shed light on how a positive view on child labour from the traditional rural society and its rhythm of work “survived” industrialisation. In order to gain an understanding of the legal discourse, child labour policies as well as parliamentary discussions are explored. Finally, we discuss briefly the possible consequences of the economic crisis that hit Iceland in autumn 2008 on children’s paid work.

From rural to industrial society; the continuity of children's work

It is clear that Icelandic children have been participating in labour through the centuries, but the studies done by Hálfðanarson (1986) and Magnússon (1993, 1995) give valuable information about their work in the 19th and the early 20th century.

Hálfðanarson (1986) and Magnússon (1993, 1995) explored the economical and pedagogical value of children's work at a time when children learned to carry responsibility and to appreciate the value of work. Most homes were poor and by having working offspring the family's struggle for survival was reduced. Hálfðanarson, examined 129 autobiographies written by people born from 1846–99. He says, "to understand child-labour in the late 19th century we have to keep in mind that we are dealing with a society that valued work highly. Work was the goal in life ... this attitude was necessary in a poor society that struggles for existence and where the only reward for laziness is death" (Hálfðanarson 1986:137).

Magnússon (1993, 1995) examined 250 autobiographies in order to analyse the social culture in Iceland in the late 19th and the early 20th centuries. He states that the autobiographies describe both childhood and the author's experience of work during childhood in a romantic way. The children were put to work as early as possible, usually around 7 years old, and most often the work was both very physically and mentally demanding for their age. However, Magnússon points out that the descriptions of work, given in the autobiographies, were mostly positive, especially when the authors discussed the pedagogical meaning of work (Magnússon 1993).

In the beginning of the 20th century, Icelandic children worked on farms and increasingly in fish processing in small fishing villages, where fish was dried or salted. First, the fish had to be laid on the ground to dry and then collected again. According to Jóhannsson and Sverrisdóttir (1990), this was the most common job for children in fishing villages at that time, but after the middle of the century children from 13 years and older were also commonly found working in the fish factories.

Children were involved in the fishery from an early age, helping whenever they could. In addition to these jobs, girls worked as baby-sitters. It is also important to mention that children in urban areas also learned to work in farming, since it was common practice to send them to the countryside during the summer (Kristinsdóttir 1991). It was very im-

portant that the children worked while staying on a farm in order to pay at least for their keep (Jóhannsson & Sverrisdóttir 1990).

The first decades of the 20th century was a period of very rapid industrialisation and urbanisation in Iceland. During this time, the structures of Icelandic society changed radically, yet the attitudes regarding the importance of child labour had not. In the 1930s, during the great depression, people were highly concerned about unemployment amongst children and teenagers in the summertime, especially in urban areas. In 1937 and 1938, some attempts were made to run what were called *work-schools* to teach children and teenagers the value of work (Sigurðsson 1991). This was in step with the existing attitude that idleness was a real threat to the well-being of children; the same ideology that had dominated the earlier agricultural society. After World War II, Iceland saw years of high employment, but in 1948, the *work-school* in Reykjavik was re-established and formally regulated in 1951. The work-school pedagogical aims were to teach children the value of work (Garðarsdóttir 1997a). During the first few decades of the work-school, all children worked full-time until 1971 when the younger pupils worked only half-time (Sigurðsson 1991).

In 1962, there was a shortage of work for children and younger people during their summer holidays. In *Alþýðublaðið*, the Social Democrat's newspaper, one could read, "It is pedagogically valuable that children have appropriate assignments (...) and do not go around doing nothing. Lack of paid work for children is a pedagogical and social problem that the nation must take very seriously and it is necessary to take action in order to create work for these children" (*Alþýðublaðið* in Sigurðsson 1991:14). Nevertheless, some argued that child labour did not fit into modern society, but these adversaries failed to marshal substantial attention or support.

A Member of Parliament mentioned in a speech that according to a survey conducted amongst 12, 13 and 14 year-old children in the summer of 1962 only 2.3% of these children did not have steady work over the summer months (see Gardarsdóttir, this journal). Most of the children, who did work, started working as soon as school finished for the summer and did not quit until autumn and 67% of those children worked 8 hours or more. The Parliamentarian also mentioned that *Morgunbladid*, the largest newspaper in Iceland, recently visited a fishing factory where 34 children worked; thereof the youngest were 8 years old. He stated that the article had been full of admiration for the diligence of these young workers (*Alþingistíðindi*, 1964 C:148–149). Sigurðsson comes to the conclusion that, "obviously, people were not ready to reject the traditional view on the

wholesomeness and pedagogical value of child labour, despite changed circumstances due to the modernisation that had taken place in society” (Sigurðsson 1991:18–19).

One significant sign regarding the importance placed on children’s participation in the labour market is the fact that summer holidays were designed so that primary and secondary schools finished before the first spring lambs appeared and the schools recommenced in September once the harvesting had finished on the farms. This tradition was kept throughout the 20th century, with the children’s summer holidays lasting for a full three months. Furthermore, legislation gave the Minister of Education the power to dismiss all students from school if circumstances in the labour market required this (the Compulsory School Act no. 66/1995).

Until this day, all larger urban areas in Iceland operate work-schools for pupils in the upper-compulsory education (usually the 16 year olds are included now) during the summer (Eydal & Jeans 2006). Thus, Icelandic children have remained economically active, working both along side school and in summer holidays as will be discussed further in the sections below on the existing research on the volumes of children’s work.

Protection of working children

According to Therborn (1993), “...the two most important definers of childhood have been legislation concerning compulsory education and labour. A child has become someone who is too young to work and someone who has not finished his/her elementary education” (p. 247–248). Thus, most industrialised countries created legislation on child labour, but in most cases this did not cover work on farms (*op. cit.*). However, Iceland did not enact such a policy, it was first in 1932 the issue on the protection of working children was addressed in the Act on Child Protection. One of the roles of the child protection committee (child welfare committee) was to make sure that children are not exploited by working too hard or too long (Child Protection Act no. 43/1932). The Child Protection Act from 1947 stated that child welfare committees were responsible for making certain that neither children or youths were overburdened with heavy or unhealthy work, with long, late, or irregular working hours and it forbids the hiring of children younger than 15 years of age to work in a factory (Child and Youth Protection Act no. 29/1947).

In parliament in 1964, the government introduced a new bill on child protection with amendments regarding the article on child labour (Eydal 2005). A standing committee proposed provisions on limiting the working hours of children to half their age; e.g. an eight year old would be allowed to work for 4 hours and so on. It was suggested that there should be regulated restrictions on working extra hours, nights and holidays and children under the age of 15 could not be hired to work in factories, on the docks or in the construction industry (*Alþingistíðindi* 1964, A:269).

When examining the parliamentary debate of this bill, it becomes clear that parliament was not ready to put such limitations on child labour. One of the Members of Parliament declared that when the Child Labour Act was implemented in Britain it had been needed there. However, the situation in Iceland was quite different and this fact had to be taken into consideration when passing such laws. Another member pointed out that Icelandic children had different reasons for working and that they were living under different circumstances than, for example, their peers in the Scandinavian countries, who had to stay in school almost year round (op. cit.).

In opposition to this argument, the leader of the Socialist Party, Olgeirsson, provided a sociological analysis of the situation saying,

public opinion in this country still views child labour as the norm. We were a nation of farmers and seaman and the employment of the whole family was natural and necessary for survival. Yet, these ideas, created in an old society, are still dominating our moral standpoint in our modern industrialised society (...) Industrialisation has occurred during one generation's lifetime. We have not had the same amount of time – as for example the Englishmen – to change our attitudes and opinions (...) A good example of this is the bill that we introduced some years ago on not allowing children under the age of 12 to drive tractors (*Alþingistíðindi* 1964, C:94–95).

During the parliamentary debates, Olgeirsson also cited some examples of children recently killed in accidents while driving tractors or working on the docks. He also pointed out that public opinion strongly supported children's work and mentioned cases where employers had received complaints from parents when their children, who had already worked 8 hours, did not get extra hours as well (op. cit., C:99).

The bill from 1964 was not fully discussed and when it was reintroduced in 1965 the proposed restrictions concerning child labour were not included. When the bill was introduced the Minister of Education explained that such restrictions should be part of the new policy on work safety that was being prepared (*Alþingistíðindi* 1965, A:393). Thus, the new act on child protection from 1965 did not differ much from the 1947 legislation. Only some minor details were changed and the outcome of the debate can only be interpreted as parliament not being ready to set more strict rules on child labour, even as late as 1965 (Eydal 2005). Regulations on child labour were later moved to the 1980 Act on Working Environment, Health and Safety in Workplaces (Act on Working Environment, Health and Safety in Workplaces no. 46/1980, with subsequent amendments).

In the late 1990s, the EU issued regulations regarding the labour market and a debate in Iceland on child labour ensued. According to the EU provisions, children under 15 years of age were not allowed to work. Pétursson, Minister of Social Affairs, said in May 1995,

I am strongly opposed to this regulation. It is my opinion that work has in it a pedagogical value and that children benefit from working. Moreover, they and their parents are better off economically...If the regulation is to be accepted and children and teenagers sentenced to idleness, it would have the consequence that the school year would have to be extended. This would also create various social problems (Pétursson in *Morgunblaðið* 18.05.1995).

These words raised some concerns and an economist for an employers' union in Iceland, quoted in *Morgunblaðið*, was,

(...) convinced that it will not be constructive for Icelanders to place an emphasis on an international connection that restricts the hiring of children, which the labour market can hardly function without (Sigurðsson in *Morgunblaðið* 18.05.1995).

He does not argue against child labour, but is concerned about what other nations might think of Iceland in this respect as he says, "I believe that the World community would interpret our beliefs regarding child labour in the same way as they treat the beliefs of undeveloped countries where young children are chained to their looms" (op.cit). However, in 1999 the EU

Regulation on Work by Children and Teenagers was authorized in Iceland. At the same time, the Act on the Working Environment, Health and Safety in Workplaces no. 46/1980 was ammended in line with this regulation. The regulation and act applies to work conducted by individuals under the age of 18 years. Thus, from 1999 paid work of Icelandic children became regulated similar to that of other European children. However, the influence of this regulation can be questioned, not at least over the past years, which has been characterized with a high demand for labour in Iceland.

Working children in Iceland

One of the characteristics of the Icelandic labour market is high labour market participation, both among adults, youths and children. Over recent decades, it has been easy for children from around age 13 to find some work during the summer and alongside school, as the labour market has had a need for their workforce. Unfortunately, there is a lack of recent systematic research on child labour in Iceland, but in the following section we will present the main results from the few recent studies on child labour that exist, in order to gain an insight into the volumes and characteristics of children's paid work. In accordance to the EU regulations on child labour we will discuss, on the one hand, children's work during the summer and, on the other hand, children's work alongside school. Work alongside school and during school holidays is more common amongst girls than boys and the labour market is quite gender divided and older children work more than younger ones. During the school year, the majority of children work hours, which are declared as, "uncomfortable working hours," by the EU.

The amount of work during the summer

During the 1997–1998 school year, the Administration of Occupational Safety and Health in the Nordic Countries did a survey on the paid work of school children between the ages of 13 to 17 years. The same questionnaire was used in all five Nordic countries, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. The results showed that in all the Nordic countries, children aged 13–17 worked alongside school and during school holidays, even if there were significant differences between the countries regarding the type of work, the amount of participation and working hours etc. (Rafnsdóttir 1999).

Icelandic children, aged 13–17, worked much more than their Nordic peers over the summer holidays. According to the study, 92% of Icelandic children had a summer job, compared to 70% of Danish children, 42% of both Finnish and Norwegian children and 35% of Swedish children. The difference between genders was insignificant, but the older children were more likely to work during the summer than the younger ones. However 74% of 13 year old children had a summer job (Rafnsdóttir 1999).

The main reasons for children having a summer job in Iceland is the long summer holiday and the *work-schools* that most of the Icelandic communities organise for this age group. Primary school children, aged 6 to 15 years, usually start their summer holiday in the beginning of June and school recommences at the end of August. College or high school is for youths between 16 and 20 years. The college students usually start their summer holiday around the 20th of May and the school recommences around the 20th of August. This means that children in Iceland (aged 6–20) still have approximately a 2.5–3 month summer holiday, which allows ample time to participate in the labour market. As mentioned before, the communities have operated work-schools for the oldest three years in primary school and also provide various work opportunities for college students during the summer months; most commonly gardening.

Garðarsdóttir (1997a) points out that the number of participants in the Reykjavik work-school shows a clear correlation with major economic fluctuations. About 75% of the children age 13–16 in Reykjavik, by far the largest municipality in Iceland, have been “employed” by the work-school in recent summers (*Vinnuskóli Reykjavíkur*, n.d.). The general development has been characterized by a gradual increase in the number of participants during the past decades, while during the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s children aged 14 and 15 were more or less working in the open market alongside adults (Garðarsdóttir 1997a). However, according to Garðarsdóttir (1997b), 98% of 12–14 year old children had some kind of summer work in 1962. Even though our data is not fully comparable it is safe to conclude that in the 2000s it is unusual if children take on a paid summer job under the age of 13; therefore arguably children start working at a later age than they did in the 1960s.

The amount of work alongside school

A study conducted by Eydal and Jeans (2006) among 206 children aged 10–12 in Reykjavik in 2005, showed that according to their own definition, even children at such a young age work. When children that reported

receiving an allowance were asked if they had to work for it, 67% replied yes. The children were also asked if they did any other work in addition to the task they performed for an allowance, 23% of the children answered yes. Of these 23%, the most popular jobs mentioned were paper routes and babysitting, followed by working in shops. However, some of the children in the study described their summer jobs, which is interesting considering that the research was conducted in May, before the summer holiday had started, thus indicating they had worked the previous summer. Nevertheless, these children obviously defined themselves as “working” despite the fact that they were not actively employed at the time of the survey (Eydal & Jeans 2006).

There is a difference in the proportion of children aged 13–17 that report working alongside school in the Nordic countries. However, Iceland does not stand out in particular like they do regarding children and summer jobs.

Table 1. The percentage of Nordic 13–17 year-old girls and boys who work alongside school, Monday to Friday during the 1997–1998 school year (Rafnsdóttir 1999).

Country	13–17 year-old girls	13–17 year-old boys	Total
Iceland	29%	21%	25%
Denmark	63%	58%	60.5%
Finland	19%	16%	18%
Norway	27%	20%	24%
Sweden	7%	7%	7%

Table 1 shows that during the 1998–1999 school year the largest group of 13–17 year old children working alongside school Monday-Friday were in Denmark, 60.5%. Next comes Icelandic children, with “only” 25% participation and like before, labour market participation was most infrequent in Sweden. Work alongside school was more widespread among girls than boys in all the five countries except Sweden where there was no significant difference between genders, and it was more common among the older children than the younger. However, about 20% of Icelandic children aged 13 work Monday to Friday, around 25% of those aged 14–16 and about one third of the 17 year olds (Rafnsdóttir 1999). We see the same trend when comparing work alongside school during the weekends. It is most frequent in Denmark (52%), Iceland (29%), and least common in

Sweden (14%). More girls than boys work during the weekends and the 13 year old children work less than older ones.

As mentioned before, the EU child labour regulation states that children in compulsory school may not work more than two hours a day and 12 hours a week during the school year. Most of the Nordic children worked within that time limit in 1998–1999. However, 7% of the 13 year old Icelandic children worked more than the EU regulation allows, 8% of those aged 14 and 14% of those aged 15 (Rafnsdóttir 1999). Unfortunately, we do not have more recent reliable data about children's average working hours, only some indication that during the economic boom that ended in 2008 children aged 13 – 17 worked even more.

In the EU regulation, “uncomfortable working hours” are defined between the hours 20.00 in the evening and 08.00 in the morning. Children in compulsory school are not allowed to work between 20.00 and 06.00. According to Rafnsdóttir (1999) the majority of Icelandic children working alongside school work at “uncomfortable working hours”, 91% of the girls and 66% of the boys. More than half (56%) of the 13 year old children work at “uncomfortable hours” and even more among children in older age groups. Children in the other Nordic countries were less likely to work during “uncomfortable working hours”.

A number of studies were conducted among Icelandic college students in the capital area between 1998–2005 (Gíslason, Ólafsson & Sigurbjörnsson 1999, 2002, Ólafsson, Þorgeirsdóttir & Gíslason 2006). These studies showed that more than half of the college students surveyed worked alongside school, and that it was most common among girls. Of those who worked alongside school, 58% worked more than 30 hours per month.

Data from three comparable studies, called *Youth in Iceland*, collected among college students in 2000, 2004 and 2007, showed that during these years, the majority of college students work alongside school. As the studies above showed, this study revealed that the instances of girls working alongside school were higher than boys. Almost half of the girls worked 14 hours a week or less in 2000, 2004 and 2007, compared with one third of the boys. 21–24% of the girls worked 15 hours a week or more during that period and the amount of work among boys and girls were more equal. Students living outside the capital area were less likely to work alongside college (Kristjánsson et al. 2008).

Health and life style

We are in need of more data concerning the connection between child labour and well-being. The Nordic study showed that the Icelandic and Danish children between 13 and 17 were more likely than other children to state that they had had an illness caused by their work. About 27% of Danish children and 19% of Icelandic children said they had had some work-related illnesses, compared with 9% of Norwegian, 8% of Finnish, and 4% of Swedish children. In Iceland, girls were more likely than boys to complain about an illness, especially back pain, musculoskeletal diseases and headaches. There was also a correlation between working hours and illnesses; i.e. the more time they spent working, the more likely they were to complain about health issues (Rafnsdóttir 1999).

Sigurðardóttir and Karlsson (1991) also showed a connection between working hours and a lack of well-being among girls. Girls working long hours alongside school were more likely to get headaches, depressed, strained, stressed and anxious. These girls had a lower self-esteem than girls who did not work. Sigurðardóttir and Karlsson also showed a connection between working long hours and smoking and drinking behaviour as well as ditching school.

A survey conducted among college students in 2005 showed that those working more than 30 hours a week were less involved in the school environment, went later to sleep, used less time for studying and had a lower attendance rate than other students. Those working more than 30 hours a week were also more likely to own a car, to spend more money on mobile phones, cigarettes and parties. Those who had parents with a higher education were less likely to work alongside school than other students (Ólafsson, Þorgeirsdóttir and Gíslason 2006).

Individual and social motivation for work

The studies presented above show that working alongside school and during summer is a part of everyday life among many Icelandic children. But what is the main motivation for work among these children? A recent qualitative study among 13–15 year-old primary school children doing paper routes in Reykjavik showed that they perceived their position in the labour market as weak and did not view their jobs as “real jobs”. But the primary motivation for them taking the jobs was money (Einarsdóttir, 2004). This is in line with studies from the late 1980s that show that college teachers were worried about the high workload among the pupils, which they assumed discouraged their studies. But the students primary

motivation to work was, “to get pocket money”, to make their own incomes, independence and lifestyles (Broddason et al. 1987, Jónasson & Sigurðsson 1990, Sigurðardóttir & Karlsson 1991).

Value studies show that attitudes towards the importance of child labour seems to have survived the tremendous societal changes that Iceland experienced during the 20th century. In the early 1990s all Nordic nations participated in the World Value Survey and when the respondents were asked, which skill they felt is most important to teach children, Icelandic parents placed a greater emphasis on their children becoming good workers (fifth most important skill), than other Nordic parents (eleventh most important skill) (Jónsson & Ólafsson 1991). In the World Value Study, conducted in 1999–2000, 44% of Icelandic respondents choose hard work from a list of eleven qualities that children can be encouraged to learn at home compared to 12% in Finland, 11% in Norway, 4% in Sweden and 2% in Denmark (Inglehart et al. 2004). Thus, the values Icelanders place on the importance of child work still differ from that of their neighbours.

These values were put to the test last spring, when Iceland for the first time in decades, experienced unemployment rates above 10%. During spring 2009, the discussion in the media was characterized by worries about the influence the ongoing economic crisis had on children’s and student’s summer jobs (e.g. *Morgunblaðið*, 2009). Thus, the possible lack of children’s opportunities to participate in paid work during the summer was discussed both as an individual problem and a social problem. Many municipalities made a special effort to put into place schemes in order to be able to extend to children and students paid work during the summer holidays, but as the budget of most municipalities is predicted to be extremely tight for the coming years, this might not be a long-term solution. The recovery of the labour market and the economy is more likely to provide Icelandic children with real opportunities to participate in paid work, but at this point in time it is difficult to provide predictions on how long that recovery will take (see e.g. Joly, 2009).

Conclusion

Even if the studies presented here vary, they still show some common trends. They show that children have participated in paid work in the traditional rural society and the importance placed on children’s work “survived” industrialization. In today’s modern society, children start working

at a later age than before, or around the age of 13. A large majority of Icelandic children, aged 13–17, work over the summer, and studies indicate that even some younger children have a summer job as well. The amount of work decreases over the school year, although it is still common for some children to work alongside school, depending on gender, age, residence and their parents' education. What we know about the connection between working alongside school and children's well-being is based on cross-sectional surveys; i.e. they do not measure the causality in that relation. Therefore we need more data on this.

As work seems to shape childhood for a large group of children, it is very important to learn more about the meaning these children put on their participation in paid work.¹ The results presented in this article are in line with research on children's paid work in other countries, and thus, contrary to the Western discourse of economically inactive children. In addition to the Western discourse, we have mentioned another Icelandic discourse on exceptionally economically active children in Iceland. However, to be able to estimate to what extent this discourse is based on reality or myth, more comparative data on children's work is needed. In a comparative study from the late 1990s, results show that while Icelandic children are participating in paid work during the summer holidays in greater numbers than their peers in other Nordic countries, it is the Danish children that are working most frequently alongside school.

The analysis of the legal discourse revealed the ambivalence of the Icelandic legislator regarding the issue of regulating children's work in the 20th century. However, in 1999 Iceland agreed to the EU regulations on child labour but how these rules have been implemented would need further investigation. While the laws have been amended in line with regulations in other countries, Icelandic parents still place more emphasis on teaching their children the value of work compared to parents in the other Nordic countries. Still, this might change since Iceland is undergoing a deep economic crisis. To what degree the economic crisis affects children in comparison with other age groups in the labour market is still to be seen; whether unemployed adults will come first when it comes to those jobs that children and young people previously held or if a child labour force will still be needed and valued within the labour market. If the economic crisis does reduce children's work opportunities, it will affect their

¹ This will be addressed to some extent in Einarsdóttir's dissertation "Paid work of Icelandic youth: Emphasis on protection or rights" which is currently in progress.

opportunity to generate their own income, affecting their independence and their lifestyle. In the long run, it will probably influence the discourse on the importance of paid work. Thereby also influence the social construction of childhood, since paid work has been such an important component of Icelandic childhood.

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