

Abstracts

Law and Policy on Employment: The Justification of Employment Dismissal Regulation

Takashi Uchida (University of Tokyo)

The judicial doctrine of collective redundancy dismissal is now under strong criticism from the camp of “deregulation”. In particular, “the doctrine of four necessary conditions for dismissal” is criticized for its disturbing the promotion of social mobility of the work force in Japan. This doctrine is also criticized for its inflexibility which hinders the new employment of young labour. The author of this article criticizes the indeterminacy of these kinds of policy arguments based on economic theory and points out that the confrontation in the disputes is the reflection of fundamental contradictions in the political as well as philosophical visions of society.

“Law and Economics” on Labour: Theories Reflecting Present Ratio of Organization Factor to Market Factor

Yasuo Suwa (Hosei University)

“Law and economics”, a new discipline in the legal field, has drawn the interest of Japanese scholars of labour law during the past decade. This paper explores the reasons and concludes that the ratio of organization factor to market factor in the Japanese society started to change, with the former decreasing and the latter increasing. As theories of micro-economics address the market factor, legal theories under the new environment should appropriately consider economic analysis for legal phenomena. Labour law theories have developed since its birth embracing other social science theories such as politics, sociology, and social psychology. The analysis of internal labour market has been contributing to refining various legal theories concerning employment practices in the country. Currently, “law and economics” is being introduced to “scientific advisory board” for labour law, and fairly productive fruit is expected for the both fields of labour law and labour economics.

Rules on Modifications in Working Conditions: A Dialogue between Labour Law and Industrial Relations

Michio Nitta (University of Tokyo)

This paper discusses industrial relations from the perspective of rules regarding uniform and collective modifications in working conditions, which has been a major issue in labour law. Stressing the importance of a means to express collective voices and industrial autonomy, the paper discusses: 1) effective methods of employee representation in non-union workplaces; 2) limiting term of work rules; 3) allowing offensive lockouts by employers; 4) strengthening oversight of unions for fair representation and democratic practices; and 5) establishing avenues of collective voice for non-union white-collar employees.

Limits and Challenges regarding Labour Economic Approach

Hiroyuki Chuma (Hitotsubashi University)

The current paper describes why the scope in which labour economists would be able to present their superior knowledge and views has been narrowing in analyzing main employment issues. One reason is attributed to the standardization of the sophisticated economic theories and econometric tools. Meanwhile, such standardization produces favorable benefits since the *raison d'être* of labour economists tend to be more stipulated than before by their theoretical insightfulness or competence to formulate ingenious hypotheses. In order to effectively enjoy such benefits, however, the current deep barriers between labour (or applied) economists and theorists should be broken down. Due to overall rapid globalization and emergence of networking, actual employment issues also often go far beyond the existing framework of economic theory which is the cornerstone of labour economics. The paper illustrates, based on two typical cases, the inescapability for labour economists to invest in interdisciplinary fields to cope with this situation.

Evaluation of Case Studies on Production Workshops in the 1990s

Kuramitsu Muramatsu (Nanzan University)

This paper examines whether the intellectual skills theory has been empirically disproved using study findings from production workshops provided with similar technologies. It was found that to determine the skill level of each workshop accurately, individual skill levels in routine work as well as in non-routine situations and trouble-shooting, especially in terms of dealing with quality defects, must be examined. Among the key issues still to be resolved is identifying distinguishing factors in integrated and separate skills development strategies at such workshops.

Ethnographic Studies on Labour: A Critical Reappraisal of the Scientific Status of Fieldwork Methodology

Ikuya Sato (Hitotsubashi University)

Dearth of ethnographic studies on workplace and labour process is one of the most serious problems of labour studies in Japan. This paper examines a number of factors that have hampered the development of ethnographic research on labour in this country. A critical review of eight renowned monographs treating workplaces in the United States (Blau (1955), Dalton(1959), Mintzberg (1973), Kanter (1977), Burawoy (1979), Hochschild (1983), Powell (1985), Kunda (1992)) shows that incidental observation and gradual formulation of research questions are two essential components of ethnographic studies.

A Study of Income Inequality and Households with the Elderly in Japan: A Cross-national Comparison with Industrial Nations

Sawako Shirahase (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research)

This study examines Japanese income inequality, focusing on households, within a comparative perspective. It empirically tests an increasing trend in income inequality in the 1980s and 1990s in Japan, and examines whether income distribution in Japan is more unequal than that in Britain, Sweden, Taiwan and the United States, using nationally representative micro datasets. Our analysis provides no evidence of significant expansion in income inequality during the 1990s. Furthermore, Japan was not peculiar in terms of the overall extent of income inequality compared with other nations. However, Japan was characterized as having a relatively high degree of income inequality among households with elderly. In particular, among the households that are comprised only of the elderly, income inequality was found to be higher than that in other types of households, including those without the elderly. The results of our analyses thus show greater economic diversity among households with the elderly in Japan, compared with other societies.