

## Abstracts

### The “Job” in the Context of Japanese Labor Policy

**Keiichiro Hamaguchi** (The Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training)

Though a “job-based” employment and wage system has become a buzzword in Japan recently, the “job” was also a hot topic in employment management and labor policy in the 1950s and 1960s. At that time, the employers’ federation advocated the transition from a seniority-based living wage to a job-based wage. The government also promoted job-based wages and labor mobility. However, the Japanese-style employment management and seniority-related “ability”-based wage system focusing more on the “person” than the job came to be admired in the 1970s and 1980s. From the 1990s on, while employers have preferred performance-based pay in order to correct the situation of expensive middle-aged workers and equal pay for equal work (for non-regular workers) has become a hot issue, the “job” is now back in focus after a half-century absence.

### A Study of Industrial Relations and the Job

**Mitsuo Ishida** (Professor Emeritus Doshisha University)

Contrary to what the title suggests, this paper does not explicitly depict the relationship between the study of industrial relations and the job. The author tries to implicitly depict the relationship by relating how the focus of investigation changes between industrial relations research in the UK, where the job is embedded, and that in Japan, where the job is not embedded. Studies in the UK are characterized by a job-centered orientation and the conception that management does not expect workers to perform work beyond the predetermined job description. Here the regulation of workloads based on a job-centered orientation is exposed clearly to observers. This is congenial to the study of industrial relations. Industrial relations in Japan are exactly the opposite of those in the UK in the sense that in Japan, conflicts are minimized in order to attain mutuality and order. Because very elaborate governance structures of work are functioning behind the scenes, the study of industrial relations in Japan is forced to dig into the details of managerial processes, which is doomed to require an unorthodox approach.

### Effect of Job Specification by Labor Contract on Treatment of Workers

**Toshiharu Suzuki** (Waseda University)

In the employment of regular employees in Japan, in many cases, labor contracts are concluded on the premise of long-term employment. By not stating job details in labor contracts, employers secure decision-making authority in personnel affairs. On the other hand, employers must keep workers employed as much as possible. Norms that workers must remain employed also affect job-specific workers. For this reason, in Japan, courts often do not recognize that there was an explicit or implied agreement to specify job duties in a labor contract, even for workers who actually work in specified jobs. Job-specific agreements are generally limited to cases where a person possesses extremely advanced specialized knowledge or qualifications, or who holds a fairly high-ranking position. In addition, even if a court recognizes that there is an agreement to specify a job, the court will stipulate that the employer must take measures to avoid dismissal and assign other jobs. In such cases, the court will try to prioritize the employment of workers. It is unclear, however, whether this trend of judicial precedents will continue if job-specific employment contracts become common in Japan in the future. Most of the cases contested in the courts have been cases where there was no explicit job-specific agreement like job descriptions in Western countries. Therefore, the conclusions might have been different if there had been an explicitly detailed agreement. In addition, if mobility of employment increases in the future, there is a high possibility that court judgments will change accordingly.

Membership-based Human Resources Management and Job-based Human Resources Management: On the Future Availability of Job-based Human Resources Management in Japan

Atsushi Yashiro (Keio University)

For the last three decades, human resources management (HRM) studies in Japan have refined the model of firm internal labor markets for managerial and professional staff. That is, preference of recruiting new school graduates, intra-firm training, extensive job rotation, promotion-from-within, and annual wage increments, which are based on a people-based grade system. Such HRM in Japan has recently been labeled as "membership-based." Corporate staff members are strongly committed to the company itself, and not to the jobs they are assigned. On the other hand, this is completely different in Anglo-American countries. HRM in these countries is "job-based." Staff members have a strong commitment to their jobs, and not necessarily to the corporate community. Subsequently, although there is some internal promotion, mobility is very common. In this article, we deal with the future availability of job-based HRM and the substitutability of membership-based HRM with job-based HRM.

Gender Inequality in the Japanese Human Resource Management System: Insights from A Job Evaluation

Ayami Kamuro (Atomi University)

Discussions about jobs have been intensifying recently, especially regarding the shift from the membership-based to the job-based employment model and the reduction of disparities through the equal pay for equal work policy. Based on a review of previous studies, this paper defines "job-based employment" as the establishment of a personnel system based on job grades, and also indicates that one of the characteristics of the job-based employment model is that it can be discussed based on job classification, rather than on differences in employment management categories. Usually, job evaluation surveys are conducted to establish a job-based employment system. Based on the results of one such survey, this paper discusses the gender disparities inherent in the membership-based employment model. The job evaluation results showed that both job value and wages are higher for full-time employees at all levels. Part-time workers, however, are paid uniformly low wages that do not match their job value. One of the factors inhibiting the elimination of gender inequality in the membership-based employment model is that it is possible to diversify employment management categories according to the degree to which employees are bound to the company, even without clarifying the correspondence between jobs and wages. If a job-centered personnel system is to be developed, employees' responsibilities to the company, as well as long working hours, must be reduced. This is because it will not be possible to maintain a wage hierarchy corresponding to the hierarchy of jobs and positions in the company. The membership-based employment model makes it difficult for workers to work while doing housework and caring for children. Eliminating gender inequality necessitates the creation of workplaces where employees can care for their families and themselves while working. Discussion of the job-based employment model should be used as an opportunity to reform the workplace for better work-life balance.

An International Comparison of Japanese Jobs

Yoko Asuyama (Institute of Developing Economies, Japan External Trade Organization)

This study examines the characteristics of Japanese employees' jobs, mainly based on two international comparative surveys: PIAAC and ISSP. The main features of Japanese jobs compared to other high-income countries are as follows. First, despite the high number of opportunities to work with others, there is less mutual learning through information sharing, learning from co-workers/supervisors, and teaching and advising others, as well as less active involvement with others such as planning, persuading, or influencing other people's work. In addition, Japanese employees' evaluation of human relationships in the workplace and the social meaning of their work is relatively low. Second, although general information gathering and learning is active, there are fewer growth opportunities for learning on the job, and for effective use of skills. Third, the

frequency of paperwork such as filling in forms and writing reports is higher in Japan. These characteristics of Japanese jobs are generally observed in other recent surveys and statistical data, and are likely to be linked to the low job interestingness level and low entrepreneurship rate in Japan compared to other countries. A marked difference in job characteristics between men and women in Japan is also found.

#### The Potential of Job Crafting: A Multifaceted Examination

**Yoshiaki Takao** (Tokyo Metropolitan University)

This paper focuses on job crafting, which has received a great deal of attention among several concepts that shed light on employees' changing their own jobs, and explores the potential of job crafting based on a literature review. First, I introduce the definition of job crafting in Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), who proposed the concept of job crafting in contrast to job design theory. In turn, the reconceptualization by Tims and Bakker (2010), which contributed greatly to the rise of job crafting research, is mentioned. Next, I review the positive effects of job crafting, such as improvement of work engagement, and discuss studies that indicate that such effects differ depending on the motivation for job crafting. Based on recent studies, I also point out that job crafting can have side effects. Furthermore, the reasons why job crafting should be promoted in spite of such side effects are discussed, and some clues to promote job crafting are also presented. Finally, I mention the possibility that job crafting could be a springboard for formal job renewal and its potential.