

Labour Markets & Employment

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Preface

This book consists of the selected papers presented at the International Conference of Political Economy, the third in a series of political economy conferences. As the previous two, the third conference was held in Kocaeli, on September 15-17, 2011 and organized by Kocaeli University in collaboration with the University of Westminster, UK, Slesian University in Opava, Czech Republic, and IRES Piemonte, Italy. The conference has been supported by a range of institutions including Social Research Foundation (SAV), Turkish Social Sciences Association (TSBD), Journal of İş Güç, Akademia Sosyal Bilimler Indeksi (ASOS), Journal of Çalışma ve Toplum, Ijopac Publication, and financially assisted by Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey (TCMB), Petroleum, Chemical and Rubber Industry Workers' Union of Turkey (Petrol-İş), Kocaeli Chamber of Industry (KSO), and Türkiye İş Bankası (İşbank).

We would like to thank all supporters and contributors to the conference, including the invited speakers and the scientific committee, as well as other participants.

Introduction

Labour Markets & Employment

General level of wages and employment would come into mind when talked about labor markets. Significant changes have been taken place in both areas, especially in recent years partly due to global developments. While general level of real wages has been decreasing, especially in the countries where neoliberal policies have been put in practice, employment levels have not been able to grow sufficiently to fulfill the expansion in labor markets, particularly in the industrial sector. Despite this negative and exigent situation in the working life, it seems unlikely to talk about an organized intervention by trade unions across the world. While we mention these two areas to point to the basic problems labor markets face today, we do not mean to ignore a series of other problems specific to countries, regions, market characteristics, and the qualities of labor as the basic elements of markets.

Another issue that affects labor markets profoundly is unemployment which has increased excessively as a trend, especially since the 1970s and affected the markets negatively. In other words, the welfare era for many countries has come to an end, and replaced by strategies of poverty put forward by global organizations.

We have seen that, mainstream economic theories have been insufficient in terms of finding solutions for the unemployment problem within labor markets. These theories lean their solutions on the applications of policies based on flexibility; the same old promise claiming that the problems of labor markets would be solved through self-regulation.

The papers in this book indispensably cover a range of topics related to the main theme of the conference, titled “labor markets and employment”, from globalization to migration, unionization to policy implementation, and women’s labor to child labor and ethnic issues in employment. The studies, taken place in these areas, explore different aspects of labor markets and employment covering various parts of the world namely Australia, Bulgaria, Check Republic, England, European Union, Nigeria, Romania, Turkey, and the United States, and thus address the issue at the global level.

The studies in the first part of the book deal with globalization. In his paper, titled “The Impact of Globalization and the Global Economic Crisis on Labor and the Labor Force Structure in the United States”, Berch Berberoğlu investigates the transformation of the international division of labor through the globalization process. Focusing on the changes in the labor force structure, he reveals the impacts of this process on employment patterns, occupational structure, wage levels, working conditions, and benefits. Emphasizing the shift in employment from the advanced industrial to less-developed economies through outsourcing of production, Berberoğlu draws attention to the continuing recession and the related issues such as job loss, unemployment and underemployment in the U.S. He argues that the state has to play the crucial role to create jobs in the public sector as the private sector would not have the ability or willingness to do that in the era of neoliberal globalization.

Mike O’Donnell looks into globalization through social movement activism and makes a compara-

tive analysis of social movement radicalism and cosmopolitan liberalism in terms of what they can offer for fundamental global change. Broadly placing them both within the center left, he discusses the differences and similarities of the two groups in terms of ideologies, agencies, strategies, tactics, and directions for global change. O'Donnell argues that although integration of the two approaches would not provide a full agenda for an alternative globalization, they offer some substantial elements of a more just world order such as human rights and related institutional reform and the powerful level of local and organizational democracy.

Part II considers neoliberal transformation in terms of employment. In this context, Nilay Etiler investigates the outcomes of neoliberal policies on health work employment, by focusing on the decentralization and deregulation of health care and various types of privatization and commercialization practices in health care systems. All these have led to different forms of employment which gave way to job insecurity, lack of benefits, longer and flexible working hours and such. She also emphasizes the importance of the ideological discourses that were used to change the perceptions regarding health care, such as making it an individual matter, and not a right but a need.

Focusing on teachers' employment, Derya Keskin Demirer looks into the impacts of neoliberal policies on education systems. Emphasizing the prevalence of informal education systems where unemployed teachers seek employment opportunities, the paper draws attention to the new forms of employment both in private tutoring centers as well as in state schools which have led to professional deterioration and stratification among teachers.

Papers in part III take a look at the relationship between labor and place in terms of migration and localization. Betül Yüce Dural and Meriç Subaşı Ertekin analyze the dynamics of the migration from Bulgaria and Romania to the western members of the European Union and draw attention to the positive and negative outcomes of this process especially in the sending countries. While the study points to the declining and ageing population and labor shortage due to migration in the sending countries, it also reveals the positive results of migration such as decreasing level of unemployment and foreign direct investment inflow attracted by skilled labor force and economic growth driven by that inflow.

Lubomír Nenička's study draws attention to the changes of the immigration Policy and labor market in Europe and Czech Republic. According to the study, Czech and Czechoslovak immigration policy had historically been influenced by international position of the country, and immigration was more of a political issue during the interwar period, however; economic aspects of immigration became dominant after 1989. Nenička argues that today there is a clear effort to learn from the experiences of Western countries in the Czech Republic and the new approach emphasizes individual integration to the culture and values of the host country.

The paper titled "Implementing Policy for Place: Delegating Labor Market Policy Decisions to the Local Level" compares two different regional Australian labor markets to analyze diversity and its impacts. Focusing on the need for place-based labor market policies, the writers P. K. Basu, John Hicks, Denise Conroy and Richard B. Sappey argue that policy decisions by governments are more likely to be

relevant when ‘targeted’ locally and enabling place-based policy would enhance the policy role of local government to assist higher level government policy formulation.

Part IV deals with sustainability, unemployment and flexibility. Mustafa Erdođdu’s paper focuses on sustainable development in terms of both global warming and global economic crises. Based on Keynesian economics, Erdođdu argues that the best solution for a depressed economy is to create employment in areas with potential for a sustainable development. In this context, governments should play the crucial role to keep production and employment at the normal levels by increasing government spending and/or cutting taxes. Thus, according to Erdođdu, it is possible to fight with climate change and global economic crisis simultaneously with the right policies which would lead to the right type of employment and green growth.

Applying regression models, Olanrewaju Adewole Adediran explores the relationship between human development index and parameters of the Millennium Development in Nigeria. He points out that, although human development is perceived as an important indicator for economic growth and development of the countries, there are some problems related to the measurements of Human Development Index. The writer finds some unexpected correlations in his study and suggests that the government should conduct its own HDI instead of relying on international institutions which seem to be politically biased.

In the paper titled “Concept of Flexicurity in the Conditions of Labor Market of the Czech Republic” Halásková, Halásková and Slavata explore the flexicurity concept in its original and general sense and different implementations of it in Europe emphasizing the shift in the international division of labor and the increasing number of flexible forms of employment which necessitate new forms of security. The writers then examine the conditions for regulating the labor market in the Czech Republic based on flexicurity policies.

Part V considers a number of intersections in labor markets, and reveals some of the issues regarding minorities, women and children in labor markets. Kuvvet Lordođlu’s study, titled “Interview Notes and Remarks on Ethnic Discrimination in Labor Markets” traces evidence of ethnic discrimination through face to face interviews in various cities in the Southeastern Anatolian and West Anatolian regions. The study finds out that even though there are other groups who face discriminations due to their ethnic or religious roots, Kurdish workers are the primary victims of ethnic discrimination in labor markets, as well as in many other areas of life. Another important finding of the study is the perception of ethnic discrimination by those who are subject to it. According to the study, having a job is regarded as a privilege and thus ethnic discrimination would have a secondary importance in regions of high unemployment rate and for those who have been unemployed for a long time.

Berna Ak Bingül and Rengin Ak attempt to explain women’s participation in the labor force both in urban and rural areas through the factors of income level, changes in general prices, age and education. Using statistical models, the writers come to the conclusion that, in terms of a rise in income level, rural women’s labor participation decreases, while no significant relationship was found for urban women.

However, both rural and urban women's labor participation increases with a rise in the general level of prices. Age and education factors are found to be generally determinative for rural women, and not determinative for urban women.

Burak Kahraman and Fatih Kahraman investigate the financial and social aspects of child labor in Turkey through literature review and global and national reports regarding child labor. Starting from the concept of child work in general, the study focuses on the general status of working children, reasons to work, and negative impacts of working life on children. Emphasizing the poor family backgrounds of working children, the writers suggest the implementation of policies to prevent the employment of these children and to provide help in keeping them within education. They draw attention to the responsibilities of the government, trade unions, chambers and professional institutions as well as corporations in order to achieve this.

The papers in the last part deal with the issues of unionization. In her study, Mehtap Tosun examines the factors causing the representativeness gridlock for unions and trade unionist representativeness focusing on the fragmented structure of the working class and the impacts of this fragmentation on trade unions. According to Tosun, trade unions cannot incorporate this fragmented structure of the working class, caused by new production and employment forms which came as a result of the crisis of capitalism. This process has revealed other identities of workers, such as race, ethnicity and gender and made them the new ground for their interests.

Based on interviews that took place in four sectors including automotive, food, medicine and white goods, Esra Köten Peker's research focuses on the unionization problems of white-collar workers from a sociological perspective. The findings of the study reveal the reasons that affect the white-collar unionization process in a negative way. The study emphasizes the consciousness problem and mistrust in trade unions among white-collar employees as well as lack of knowledge about union and unionization. According to Peker, white collar employees perceive themselves as middle class, rather than laborer, and closer to the managers, not to the blue-collar workers. Another finding is the prevalence of the loyalty and feelings of belonging to the company they work for.

As will be seen, despite the wide range they come from, almost all papers draw attention to the radical changes in employment policies and practices around the world, and many of them point to global neoliberalism as the source of this transformation process, one way or another. We believe that revealing the dynamics of this process and putting forward possible alternative policies and practices across the world would provide significant contribution to solving the problems of labor markets and employment, as the papers in this collection attempt to do.

Labour Markets & Employment

As the outcome of the third international conference of political economy, the papers in this volume cover a range of topics, related to the conference theme of “labor markets and employment,” from globalization to migration, unionization to policy implementation, and women’s labor to child labor and ethnic issues in employment. Despite the wide range they come from, almost all papers draw attention to the radical changes in employment policies and practices around the world, and many of them point to global neoliberalism as the source of this transformation process, one way or another. We believe that revealing the dynamics of this process and putting forward possible alternative policies and practices across the world would provide significant contribution to solving the problems of labor markets and employment, as the papers in this collection attempt to do.



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