

International labor market and high placement fees: Failure of price control in respect of TITP migrants in Japan

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As Japan has ratified ILO Convention No. 181, domestic laws prohibit workers from paying placement fees but allow high placement fees to be paid by migrants from other countries. The Technical Intern Trainee Program (TITP) accepts a high initial fee of JPY542,000 on average. The average initial fee rises to JPY880,000 for persons who have absconded from their workplaces. The placement fee is strongly associated with the absconsion ratio.

While movement of persons under the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) stipulates that no placement fees shall be borne by a worker, the TITP continues to operate with a high placement fee, which constitutes a double standard among receiving systems. In addition, despite the Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC), under the revised TITP Act, the disparity between the Philippines, where there are no recruitment fees, and countries with no upper restrictions is stark. This indicates that Japan's migration policy lacks consistent basic principles and price control mechanisms.

The TITP maintains a well-developed financial market with an extensive network of sending organizations that makes high placement fees possible. The problem in the international labor market is that high placement fees such as those charged in Vietnam and Myanmar, are highly preferred by receiving organizations. Low placement fees, such as those under the EPA, are shunned in favor of high placement fees for TITP which keeps total costs for receiving organizations low. This reverse preference is nothing short of ironic. However, high-cost placement will not only impose a tremendous economic and psychological burden on workers but will also lead to high social costs due to lower productivity and high absconsion rates. The current vicious cycle of high preference for workers with high placement fees is not beneficial to the worker, the company, or Japanese society. Reduction of absconsion rates should not be treated as a individual problem but rather as a social problem. High placement fees can only be eliminated through price control mechanisms aimed at overcoming the failures of the international labor market.

Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis: Some Methodological Reflections

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This article revisits the author's doctoral research (2006-2011), and more specifically its qualitative data collection and analysis. The research topic was inter-firm relations in the automotive industry, with case studies in two major automobile clusters in France/Germany and Japan. I chose an empirical and qualitative approach that involved interviewing 56 company representatives and observing the labor process in 50 factories. The data collection and analysis mainly derived from the elaboration of an interview guide with reference to previous theories directly or indirectly related to the topic. Roughly twelve years later, I reexamine and compare this analytical framework with some guidelines from grounded theory, a major methodological approach to data collection and analysis in social sciences. Contrary to the conventional viewpoint that an extensive literature review prior the data collection helps the researcher to define his/her perspective and focus, it postulates that the social scientist can "discover" or generate hypotheses and theories from the systematic comparison of data and creation of codes without the interference of previous theories. In this view, the literature might obstruct the generation of theories grounded in the data. This attempt to consider and examine the contribution of grounded theory to conducting qualitative research is also an invitation for young social researchers to bear in mind the relevance of the systematic, iterative, and dynamic dialogue between the collection of empirical data and prior theories.

A Study on Class Distinction by a French Middle Class Muslim

Yasuyuki YAMASHITA

While second-generation immigrant Muslims of North African origin continue to be marginalized in contemporary French society, where Islamophobia as a form of racism based on cultural differences is a serious problem, they have become an increasingly diverse group in terms of educational background and occupation. Studies of representations and identities of French Muslims are often based on the dichotomy of power relations between Muslims and non-Muslims, which tends to ignore the heterogeneity of the Muslim population.

Based on an interview with a highly educated French Muslim man of Algerian descent, Hakim (pseudonym), who works for a well-known global company, this paper examines how a middle class Muslim differentiates himself from and stigmatizes working class Muslims. We will analyze how he characterizes himself as open to cultural diversity from the immigrants and their descendants in the “banlieues” (suburbs of large cities), where the working class is concentrated. In doing so, we will pay particular attention to the influence of French republicanism, the national ideology that de-legitimizes the notion of ethnic identity and community, and also to the upper middle class culture that is sympathetic to neoliberalism, which is strongly oriented toward educational and economic success based on personal initiative.

Reception of Modern Social Thought in Non-Western Societies: Influence of Max Weber in East Asia as an Example

Chenjia JI

The modern social sciences in East-Asian societies were initially founded largely through the importation of social thinking that has its origin in the West. In this study, I focused on the structure of perception during the reception of western social thought among non-Western intellectuals, so as to establish an analytical typology of the theoretical approaches in the East-Asian social sciences. The different readings of Max Weber's theory in the Japanese and Chinese social sciences are taken as examples of the applicability of this analytical framework.

During the introduction of modern social thought, two factors have had a major influence on the perception of non-Western scholars. One is 'the duality within modernity'. This refers to how the modernization of a society can be perceived both as a process of 'subjectification', in which an individual achieves liberation and independence, and as a process of 'objectification', characterized by increasing subordination and a growing sense of alienation. The development of this dual aspect of modern society is a theme throughout the genealogy of social thought that has continued since the advent of the modern era.

However, intellectuals in Asia also face another factor, which in this study is referred to as 'the duality of non-Western'. It originates from the divergence between the hegemonic but alien western-originated knowledge system, and the local but unvalued knowledge tradition. When trying to form an understanding of modern society, non-western intellectuals are forced to face these two essentially heterogeneous value standards which are difficult to reconcile. By considering the common awareness found in the works of W. E. B. DuBois, F. Fanon and Y. Takeuchi, I discuss the appearance of the duality of non-Western in different specific scenarios.

The combination of these two dualities led to the development of four ideal-typical approaches to western social thinking among the non-western intellectuals: the Enlightenment, the new traditionalism, the criticism of cultural hegemony, and the postmodernism. Different ways in which Weber's theory have been interpreted in East Asia are considered to illustrate these types of approaches.