

## Book Review

Alakh N. Sharma and Rejendra P. Marngain (eds.) (2009). *Labor Markets and Employment in Asia: Emerging Issues and Challenges*. Daanish Books, New Delhi, 211 PP, Price Rs. 475. ISBN: 978-81-89654-79-5 (Hb).

While growth has always been prime concern among academia and policy makers, the evidence demonstrates that growth does not automatically pull the employment up and hence there is a need to analyze the issue of employment considering both growth and labor market dynamics. In this book, a detailed analysis has been employed to explore the issues of growth and employment in context of selected Asian economies viz. Australia, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. This book provides the issue relating to labor markets, growth and employment of nine different countries. Several authors have contributed their paper on emerging issues and challenges on this editorial volume.

The Introduction part, which the editors of the book itself have contributed, provides a glimpse of emerging issues in labor market. The authors observed a heterogeneous pattern of unemployment rates across the Asian countries ranging from 2-4 percent to as high as of double digits though there are methodological differences. Though unemployment rates vary across the countries but there is a similar characteristic on employment with relatively very high incidence of unemployment among youth and educated labor force. On labor migration issues, it is found the asymmetric movement of capital and labor, especially the movement of unskilled labor from the developing countries which authors argued 'a contrary to the expectation of free movement of both capital and labor under globalization'.

After the main observations of homogeneous as well as heterogeneous characteristics of labor markets in selected Asia-Pacific Economies, the book subsequently highlights the various issues of labor markets across the countries. The Australian Economy (the only developed nation under discussion) has behaved same as western economies with a case of high unemployment in recessions (e.g. early 1970s and 1980s), however, it took many years to recover from the shock of recession, by which time another recession was in horizon. This article also highlights the issues of challenging falls in job opportunities for men with relatively low levels of formal education and substitution of part-time for full-time employment.

In case of Bangladesh, the author is mainly concerned about a good economic policy that promotes employment in the country. He argues the importance of demand and supply side of labour market. According to him, on the supply side, effort must be made to improve the employability of the workforce by enhancing their marketable skills and tried to link with poverty issues. The articles also highlights the demand for medium to long-term policies to be within the umbrella of human resources development investing more on education, health, social welfare and labor itself. There has been acceleration in

employment growth in late 1990s and early 2000s as compared to early 1990s in India. However, there has been slower structural change in employment than in GDP, in terms of the share of different sectors. The article has suggested number of actions to improve the labour market and employment situation of the country. While discussing the Indonesian cases, the author argues for employment policy for more productive job, effective policy for human development resources and separate policy and protection for the more vulnerable groups. The share of women in the national labour force is very low but one of the interesting parts of the article related to Iran is to look the dimensions of unemployment from certain cultural characteristics of Iranian society then simply looking from the usual route of demographic and economic features. Discussed in similar issues of 'challenges of unemployment in Malaysia', the author has highlighted various issues of youth, female, graduate unemployment, retrenchment of workers and migrant workers. Likewise the next articles under 'challenges of unemployment in the Philippines' discusses the various challenges of unemployment that include providing adequate education and training, building labor market institutions, promoting employment opportunities, private sector participation, focus on globalization-led opportunities, promoting the dignity and welfare of workers etc.

While discussing the employment situation of Thailand the author highlighted that as Thailand is faced with globalization and economic crisis that increase the unemployment and underemployment rate in the country. With the intervention of the government by adopting appropriate policies the situation has improved gradually but still has to wait to reach the previous situation. The labour force participation rate in Vietnam is recorded high than the international standard mainly because of the high rate of participation of females compared to other countries where low leaving standard is considered another factor for it. Among the labour force youths either educated or uneducated are suffering more from unemployment problem. Likewise, underemployment is a common features of rural Vietnam and serious for the young people. On the other Vietnamese workers are also suffering from wage gap by gender and place of work.

In brief, this editorial volume provides an insightful discussion on the various issues of labor markets and employment that integrate growth dynamics to cultural issues on the selected Asian economies. It has been able to bring growth strategy that aims at employment creation and equitable development into the arena of labor markets dynamics. However the book has not provided detail analysis of labor migration issues which has been one of the emerging issue in developing countries like Bangladesh and Philippines. A regional level analysis of labor migration issues could certainly have added the value of the book. Nevertheless, the volume is an excellent piece of paper for the readers, academia and policy makers on providing the issues of labor markets and employment in Asia.

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