

Measures and Suggestions of Advancing Urban-Rural Dual Employment System Reform of China

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Abstract

The formation of the urban-rural dual employment system of China has an extremely deep historical reason. The urban-rural dual employment system mainly reflects in three aspects such as the policy support dualization, the management service dualization and the employment access system dualization. In the following work, the urban-rural dual employment system of China must be reformed and perfected through some measures like establishing the equal employment access system, the perfect employment training mechanism, the unified employment service system and the effective labor guarantee mechanism so as to advance the further development of Chinese modernization.

Key words: Urban-rural dual employment system; Employment access system; Employment training mechanism; Labor guarantee mechanism

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INTRODUCTION

As far as the economic development history of China is concerned, in 1949 when People's Republic of China was just founded, under the influence of Marxist classic ideology and the economic development experience of Soviet Union, China chose the road to preferentially develop the heavy industry. On the basis of Chinese poverty and blankness of the day, if a big traditional agricultural country wants to be a leading industrial nation, its sole choice is to take the development mode of letting agriculture support industry and letting the country support cities. Under the influence of this development mode, Chinese government implemented a series of measures and means in succession including drawing the agricultural surplus capital to develop industry, restricting the rural population from flowing into cities through the strict household register system, uniformly purchasing and selling the agricultural products, along with the exclusive urban welfare system. Those policies and systems restricted the agricultural and rural development of China, and gave rise to the agricultural comparative recession and the rural commodity economy decline. Besides, the proportion relationship between industry and agriculture had been ruined, and the situation of the urban-rural separation and segmentation had been increasingly deepening. Furthermore, the dualization in the economic field had been continually diffused into the political and social fields, which results in the formation and the continuous solidification of the dual economic and social structure of China. Though since the 16th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2002, China has begun to amend the deflection of the previous development mode, and creatively put forward the new development strategy of letting industry support agriculture and let cities regurgitation-feeding the country. At the same time, the investment in agriculture and the country has

been continuously increased. Chinese government hopes to offset some negative effects coming from the previous policies. But, considering the detailed implementation situation, at least the present policy effects are not obvious, and the age-old malpractice resulting from the traditional policies are hard to be eliminated within a short time. The urban-rural dual economic and social structure and system of China are still deep-rooted, and the urban-rural dual employment system is just an outstanding reflection. The urban-rural dual employment system not only seriously restricts the right realization of Chinese farmers, but also has an obviously unfavorable influence on the future development of the country and the advance of Chinese modernization process. Consequently, this paper mainly focuses on the existing problems of the urban-rural dual employment system of China, and gives the corresponding measures and suggestions to impel the system reform.

1. PROBLEMS OF URBAN-RURAL DUAL EMPLOYMENT SYSTEM OF CHINA

China is the most populous country in the world and its labor force resources are in abundance. Since 1980s, with the promotion of the household contract responsibility system and the advancement of the agricultural productive technology, the agricultural productive ability of China has got a great improvement, and thus a great lot of surplus labor forces appear in the vast expanse of the rural areas of China. Those surplus labor forces continuously enter cities and the non-agricultural industries, and accordingly form the “the rural migrant laborers tide” phenomenon with the Chinese characteristics. In the process, as a result of the influence of the various factors, the separate urban-rural dual employment system of China comes into being therewith, and its problems are mainly the following:

1.1 Policy Support Dualization

Cities have been the core of the employment work for a long time, while the development and management of the rural labor force employment have been overlooked at all times. For example, the employees of cities and towns are able to enjoy the systematic professional training, while the rural labor force are not capable of enjoying the vocational skill training with the governmental support in a comparatively long period; Though China has introduced some training planning for the rural migrant laborers in cities in the recent years, those training planning is faced with a big gap whether in the capital quantity or in the training scale when compared with those for the employees of cities and towns.¹ Furthermore, the government implements a lot of preferential policies to solve the laid-off and unemployment problem in cities and towns, but there is the absence of the special support capital and items for the transfer employment of the rural labor force in most regions of China.

1.2 Management Service Dualization

Because the information service for the rural migrant laborers to enter cities to seek jobs is not perfect and the related employment service institutions are unsound, one of their chief job searching channels is still relying on their relatives and friends to introduce the relative jobs. The employment channels of the rural migrant laborers are classified into four categories by scholar Han Changbin: the job introduction through their relatives or acquaintances, the job introduction by the intermediary institutions, the job hunting and applying for a job by themselves, along with other job hunting ways. His questionnaire results demonstrate that the proportion of the job introduction through their relatives or acquaintances is 60.37%, the highest one; the proportion of the job introduction by the intermediary institutions is 14.25%; the proportion of the job hunting and applying for a job by the rural migrant laborers themselves is only 12.14%.² The lawful rights and interests of the rural migrant laborers in cities are often harmed. However, as the rural migrant laborers in cities have not enough abilities to safeguard their own legal rights and the state is devoid of a perfect legal aid system, it is hereby difficult for the lawful rights and interests of the rural migrant laborers in cities to be protected effectively.³ Besides, the supporting service for the employment of the rural migrant laborers in cities is relatively backwards, especially the children entrance problem of the rural migrant laborers in cities has not been resolved fully. If the children of the rural migrant laborers in cities intend to enter the public school, they will face more complex procedures than those the children of the townsfolk do; some schools even take advantage of the chance to charge them a sum of money in the name of the sponsorship fee or the temporary schooling fee. Therefore, a good many children of the rural migrant laborers in cities are capable of entering the non-publicly funded schools only. Some scholars carried out an investigation and survey about the education situation of the rural migrant laborers' children in ten cities nationwide, and the data indicates that for the migrant children with the rural household register in the ten cities, 41.1% of them attend the public school and 58.8% of them attend the non-publicly funded schools.⁴

1.3 Employment Access System Dualization

The employees of cities and towns are able to take up and change an occupation freely, whereas the transfer employment of the rural labor force faces a lot of restrictions and regulation set by some local governments artificially. Some restrictions are completely unreasonable, and some regulation is even discriminatory. For instance, it is prescribed in some regions that the rural migrant laborers entering cities to hunt for a job must go through the various procedures, and some registration items and a variety of irrational certificates and cards are even specially designed for the rural migrant laborers; some

areas take advantage of the occasion to charge the rural migrant laborers a sum of money in the name of the various fees that should have not been approved, which increases the cost of the rural migrant laborers to hunt for a job in cities.⁵ Of course, the biggest employment access threshold among those restrictions and regulation is the strict household register system. In the recent years, under the leadership of the overall urban and rural development idea, the household register system, whose fastness is just like that of a block of the fast ice, has been gradually broken, but its restrictions on the employment access of the rural migrant laborers in cities are still very obvious as a whole.

1.4 Summary

Just because of the existing policy support dualization, management service dualization as well as the employment access system dualization, the urban and rural labor force market of China has been separated for a long time and thus greatly restricts the rural surplus labor force to flowing into cities. Although for the partial rural migrant laborers who have found a job in cities, they are not able to blend in cities really, and even in some megalopolises appears the peculiar “new dual social structure”,⁶ which affects the urbanization process of China. So, for the farmers who have circulated out the rural land, if they lose the rural land, the last living guarantee, and are incapable of gain a foothold in cities indeed, their daily life will be directly influenced and they will even face the risk of “re-entering poverty” sharply.

2. MEASURES AND SUGGESTIONS OF ADVANCING URBAN-RURAL DUAL EMPLOYMENT SYSTEM REFORM OF CHINA

To promote the free flow and the fair competition of the urban and rural labor force, improve the ability of the rural labor force to obtain employment in cities and blend in cities, and realize the urban-rural integrative employment and development, the present urban-rural dual employment system must be reformed. The reform includes four aspects referring to the employment access system, the employment training mechanism, the employment service system as well as the labor guarantee mechanism. The detailed reform measures are the following:

2.1 To Set Up Equal Employment Access System

Setting up the equal employment access system is the first-line premise to realize the urban-rural employment integration. To establish the subject status of laborers in the employment market, promote the free flow and the fair competition of the labor force between the urban and rural areas, and make the competency itself of laborers be the

main basis of their employment, the present various access “threshold” existing in the urban-rural employment of China must be eliminated. At the present stage, all kinds of obstacle that adhere to the urban and rural household register system should be removed first, and the restrictive regulation of the rural migrant laborers to hunt for a job in cities should be abolished thoroughly, for example, “the employees of cities and towns first, the rural migrant laborers in cities second”; “the local laborers first, the nonlocal laborers second”. Next, the present various unreasonable certificates specially facing the rural migrant laborers to hunt for a job in cities should be simplified or cancelled as much as possible, and the unreasonable fees aiming at the rural labor force should be decreased or called off as much as possible, which can alleviate the burden of the rural migrant laborers in cities.

2.2 To Set Up Perfect Employment Training Mechanism

In a perfect market economic system, the chief factor to determine the employment success or failure should be the quality level itself of laborers. As far as the present whole situation of China is concerned, it is an objective fact that the quality of the labor force is not high, especially the quality of the extensive rural labor force, which demands that we must further increase the related input, establish and perfect the sound urban-rural labor force employment training mechanism, and constantly improve the employment skills of the rural labor force.

The main tasks of the present urban-rural labor force employment training are comprised of three aspects. First, the training objects should be enlarged. Not only all the newly increased labor force of China in the future five years are able to obtain one comparatively systematic training, but also the training aiming at the rural migrant laborers in cities, the rural surplus labor force and the farmers who lose their rural land should be strengthened and stressed. Second, the training contents should be enriched and the training quality should be improved. According to the different condition of the training objects and the change of the supply-demand situation of the labor force market, the training contents should be adjusted without delay to ensure that the different training objects can get their needed training contents. At the same time, the vocational skill training and the non-skill comprehensive quality training should be effectively combined. Third, the various social forces should be mobilized to take part in the training. On the basis of continually reinforce the construction of the governmental public training institutions, a variety of the nongovernmental vocational education and training institutions with the qualification should be supported to participate in the training. Meanwhile, the social responsibilities of employers should be intensified, and enterprises should be encouraged to supply the pre-job training and the on-the-job training for the rural labor force.

2.3 To Set Up Unified Employment Service System

First, the human resources market construction should be enhanced. The human resources market is the principal carrier and the employment platform of the urban-rural employment system. At present, based on the existing human resources market, the market function and scale should be continuously enlarged so as to make the human resources market to be a comprehensive market centralizing a lot of functions such as the job introduction, the skill training and the computer network.

Second, the urban-rural unified labor force market information network facing all the laborers and employers should be constructed. Through the construction of the labor force market information network, the centralized management and sharing of the urban-rural labor force resources can be realized to facilitate the smooth flow of the labor force market information. For instance, in the process of coordinating the urban-rural employment, the labor force market information network of Chengdu had realized its online resource sharing with the labor and social security stations (offices) that are in the centralized residential zones of farmers, communities and 1144 streets (villages and towns) of 20 districts (counties). Till 2006, the labor force market information network of Chengdu had achieved the total coverage of the whole city, and the centralized management of the labor force market throughout the whole city and the information resources such as social security and employment had been basically achieved. The Chengdu experience is worthy of attention and popularization.⁷

Third, the grass-roots employment work network should be perfected. The grass-roots employment system in counties (districts), streets (villages and towns) and communities should be set up and perfected. It should be encouraged to build up the work network with all levels of the job introduction institutions and the training institutions so as to boost the urban-rural integration employment. Moreover, the special staff should be equipped and the corresponding fund should be solved.

Last, the effective employment assistance system should be established. In the process of entering cities to hunt for a job, most of farmers are often confronted with a lot of difficulties and problems, for example, their employment rights and interests are harmed. Accordingly, it is urgently needed that the government should play a part in this process. That is to say, the government should enhance its assistance to the various employment groups, which includes not only the assistance of directly supplying the employment positions for some groups that have difficulties in their employment like the older labor force and the disabled, but also providing the related assistance for farmers from the angle of the policy consultation and the legal assistance.

2.4 To Set Up Effective Labor Guarantee Mechanism

The effective labor guarantee mechanism is the important condition to advance the urban-rural integration employment. First, the system of equal pay for equal work should be build up. Employers should treat the rural labor force and the urban employees equally without discrimination in their salary, and ensure that the rural labor force will be able to receive their labor reward in full payment on time. Second, the effective labor guarantee system should be set up. The governmental competent departments should strictly manage and supervise the employment actions of employers, especially the labor contract system should be in the standardized administration. It should be regulated that when employers sign the labor contracts with the rural migrant laborers in cities, they must use the same contract text and apply to the same contract provisions as that for the urban employees, and strictly pay for the social security, such as the pension insurance, the medical insurance and the work injury insurance, according to the governmental related regulations. Third, the working and living circumstances of the rural labor force should be actively improved. Employers should be encouraged to improve the working and living conditions of the rural labor force, and make the conditions accord with the national regulations on the safety production, the occupational health and the environmental protection. At the same time, employers should enhance the occupational protection of the labor force, and create a fairly good living circumstance including housing, entertainment and exercise for the rural migrant laborers in cities so as to make them blend in the city living as soon as possible.

CONCLUSSION

The formation of the urban-rural dual employment system of China has an extremely deep historical reason. The urban-rural dual employment system mainly reflects in three aspects such as the policy support dualization, the management service dualization and the employment access system dualization. With the establishment of Chinese market economic system and the gradual deepening of the reform and opening-up policy, the urban-rural dual employment system has become a vital factor to restrict the future development of China. Therefore, in the process of boosting the urban-rural overall development of China, the urban-rural dual employment system must be reformed and perfected. At present, the corresponding measures mostly concern four aspects, namely, to set up the equal employment access system so as to promote the free flow of the urban-rural labor force, to set up the perfect employment training mechanism so as to improve the quality of the rural labor force, to set up the unified employment service system so as to provide

the convenience for the rural migrant laborers to enter cities to seek jobs, to set up the effective labor guarantee mechanism so as to guarantee the due rights of the rural labor force.

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