

Comparative Ethical Values in Labor Policies between Thailand, Singapore, Japan and Germany

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Work has various perspectives. It should not be defined as an economic activity or seen as manufacturing processes of goods and services only, besides, it is social activity with psychological dimensions and democratic compensation. Most of people are related with works, ethical and spiritual aspects of work should be recognized too. In the world, which values free-market and competition, “labor” is viewed as production cost, which should be kept as the cheapest. While the industrial revolution came to Europe and brought wealth to the continent, European workers begun their fight for quality of life. Since 1944, “Labour is not a commodity” was specified in the ILO’s Declaration of Philadelphia. At the same time, Carl Polanyi’s *The Great Transformation* was published and indicated that labor is fictitious commodity and should be protected as human being. Therefore, labor population should be acknowledge as workers with human dignity, as well as vital human resources. Furthermore, among global SDGs context, Thailand’s 20 year national strategy plan aims to be society with “Security, Prosperity, Sustainability”. However, becoming aging society with two third of workers without social security, Thailand might grow old before grow rich. This study aims to compare labor policies between Thailand, Singapore, Japan and Germany, which have the same population structure. By analysis of international labor standards, four ethical values: equity, voice, ethics of care and virtue, constructed conceptual framework for this study. Initially, for comparison purpose, four related policy issues are selected: wage, freedom to association and right to collective bargaining, maternal protection right and worker with responsibilities. Each policy issues would be presented with related ILO’s conventions. Systematic reviewed are consisted of examination of ratification by country and verification of conventions contents within each country’s policies. It was found that, each countries have difference balance of ethical values, which lead to difference outcome. While German aging society accept the significance of migrant workers and acknowledge the importance of care work, Japan is more nationalist and expand job markets for women instead of migrant workers. However, social security and health policy are not supported japan working women enough, because of traditional gender bias. Singapore work and reproduction health policy are friendly for young workers, but not for migrant workers, though its economic dependence of migrant worker forces. Additionally, Thailand has challenges in all ethical aspects, which reflects through all related labor policies. Furthermore, policy gaps between Thai policies and policy recommendation from labor movement would be analyzed using surveys and focus groups. Ethical values defined by normal workers would be explored and compared with those within state policy.