Chính sách Phát triển

Bài viết số 2

Ngày nộp: 24/03/2015

Câu 1: Nghèo là gì? Phân biệt giữa nghèo tương đối và nghèo tuyệt đối? Hai kết quả nghiên cứu của Dollar và Kraay (2002) và Marc Wuyts (2011) bổ sung cho nhau như thế nào?

Câu 2: Nghèo động hàm ý điều gì? Căn cứ vào đánh giá nghèo Việt Nam (2012) của Ngân hàng Thế giới với tựa đề "*Khởi đầu tốt, Nhưng Chưa Phải Đã Hoàn thành: Thành tựu Ấn tượng của Việt Nam trong Giảm nghèo và Những Thách thức Mới*", thách thức mới đang nổi lên về vấn đề nghèo ở Việt Nam có phải thuộc về những dạng nghèo động này không? Giải thích.

Câu 3: Bất bình đẳng là gì và đo lường như thế nào? Nếu các kết quả nghiên cứu từ bài đọc của Wilkinson và Pickett (2009) và của Gabriel Palma (2011) là đúng thì theo bạn, bất bình đẳng có ngày càng trở nên là một vấn đề đáng lo về mặt chính sách? Giải thích.

Câu 4: Từ bài viết "Has China Reached its Lewisian Turning Point?" đính kèm cuối bài tập này, hãy cho biết:

a.   Mô hình Hai Khu vực Thặng dư Lao động của Lewis nói gì?
b.   Câu trả lời cho tựa đề bài viết được trả lời như thế nào và lập luận của tác giả là gì?

Câu 5: Cơ sở lý thuyết cho chiến lược công nghiệp hóa "Cú Hích Lớn, Tăng Trưởng Cân Bằng" khác gì với chiến lược công nghiệp hóa "Tăng Trưởng Không Cân Bằng"?

Ghi chú: Hãy cố gắng trả lời thật ngắn gọn và đầy đủ theo nhận thức của chính bạn, có tham khảo thật cẩn thận tài liệu đã phát. Câu trả lời cho mỗi câu hỏi không nên dài quá 02 trang A4.

Has China Reached its Lewisian Turning Point?

The Lewis Model of Dualistic Development

In his paper "Economic Development with Unlimited Supplies of Labour" published in 1954, Sir W.A. Lewis rejected the neoclassical assumption of limited labour supply, and postulated that in developing countries, an unlimited supply of unskilled rural labour from the "subsistence" or agricultural sector is available for employment in the growing "capitalist" or industrial sector in the early stages of economic development. The labour surplus in the agricultural sector allows the expanding industrial sector to obtain the required labour at constant low wage rates and grow through capital accumulation. However, when the surplus runs out, wages will start to rise in both sectors, such that the inter-sectoral wage differences will begin to fall. The point of reversal was later termed the "Lewisian turning point".

Applying the Lewis Model to China

China's spectacular economic growth over the last three decades, driven in part by large-scale labour migration from the low productivity rural sector to the high productivity urban sector, appears to fit Lewis' model of dualistic development. More recently, the concept of the Lewisian turning point has gained widespread traction in discussions of China's future growth prospects, prompted by reports of worker shortages in the major industrial areas.

Proponents of the Lewisian turning point have pointed out that the current labour shortage arises from a decline in the working-age population. They argue that China is reaching the turning point as a result of its demographic transition from a largely rural society to a predominantly urban population. In the early stages of the transition, when mortality rates start to fall before fertility rates do so, the economy will benefit from the demographic dividend as the GDP growth rate rises due to the growing proportion of working-age people in the population. Eventually, however, fertility rates decline, the population begins to age, and the Lewisian turning point kicks in when surplus labour is exhausted.

Apart from the demographic transition, Cai (2008) observed that China has experienced a further fall in thenatural population growth rate since the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s, which caused a dip in the growth rate of the working-age population twenty years later. This was aggravated by the one-child policy introduced in 1978. The United Nations estimates that the proportion of the working-age group in China's total population started to fall after 2010, and that the size of the cohort will begin to contract by around 2015. In contrast, Cai (2008) reckoned that China had reached its Lewisian turning point as early as 2004, and that labour shortages would be widespread by 2009.

The findings of nation-wide surveys also support the view that China has run out of surplus rural labour. For example, a 2005 survey conducted by the China Development Research Centre of the State Council indicated that, although the rural surplus was about 100 million, many of these workers were middle-aged and unsuited for relocation to the industrial sector. About three-quarters of the villages spread across 17 provinces responded that "all the young workers in the village that are capable of working away from home have already left".

Other studies have noted that the shortage of migrant workers is pervasive across China, and not merely confined to the eastern coastal regions. According to the 2009 Peasant Workers Monitoring Survey by the National Bureau of Statistics, the number of migrant workers in the Pearl River Delta fell by 22.5% y-o-y, while it grew by 33.2% in the Central region and 35.8% in the Western region. Since then, economic growth has soared in the latter areas, thus pushing China nearer to full employment and the Lewisian turning point. According to data from the China Household Income Project (CHIP), nominal migrant wages rose by more than 9% p.a. from 2006 to 2009.

Evidence Against the Lewisian Turning Point

Sceptics have disputed the claim that China has exhausted its pool of surplus rural labour because soaring wages could be attributed to an apparent shortage of migrant labour in the cities which was caused by policy barriers rather than demographic factors. They cite empirical studies that show that there is still an abundant supply of labour in the rural regions. For instance, the World Bank asserted that a tightening of the Chinese labour market was not imminent, based on estimates of annual labour entrants of 8 million and 24 million in rural and urban areas respectively. Knight et al. (2011) also found that there are 80 million rural people who are potential migrant workers, while Mai and Peng (2009) deduced that the pool of rural surplus labour will expand as agricultural labour productivity continues to grow.

Leveraging on a survey undertaken by the Rural-Urban Migration in China and Indonesia project (RUMiCI), Golley and Meng (2011) concluded that there still is an abundance of rural workers who are under-employed with low income, and that rural-urban migration would remain a major source of economic growth for China. As compared to studies which downplay the distortions caused by the hukou (registration) policy, Golley and Meng (2011) conclude that the policy is a formidable deterrent to the migration of workers from the countryside to the cities.

If the Lewisian turning point has indeed arrived, the gap between the wages of rural unskilled and urban skilled workers would have narrowed. Yet, Golley and Meng (2011) find that the wages of urban skilled workers have soared by over 90% from 2000 to 2009, while those of migrant workers only increased by 30%. They therefore surmised that urban-rural wage differentials were not converging precisely because of regulatory barriers that prevent the free mobility of labour in China.

Conclusion

Although the empirical evidence on the Lewisian turning point is mixed and does not lend overwhelming support to either camp, the truth is likely to be somewhere in between. Rising wages in China could be attributed to a confluence of factors—depletion of surplus rural labour in some regions, labour immobility due to policy barriers, and increased productivity of labour. Nonetheless, Lewis' hypothesis remains useful in predicting the future interactions between wage differentials, labour supply, and rural-urban migration in China.

As China's urban population surpassed that of the rural areas for the first time at the end of 2011, the Lewisian hypothesis suggests that wage hikes are likely to accelerate further, and that the need to review policies which can sustain China's economic growth assumes greater importance. The policy options to increase labour supply in China include raising the retirement age, reforming the hukou system to grant citizens equal access to social amenities such as schooling, healthcare, and housing, and increasing investment in education and training to boost productivity.

References

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