

OUTSOURCING OF UNIONIZED FIRMS AND THE IMPACT OF LABOR MARKET POLICY REFORMS***

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Abstract

This paper shows that outsourcing of parts of workforce in unionized firms leads to wage moderation both in the case of strategic and flexible outsourcing. As long as the share of the outsourced workforce is not too large, this wage-moderation effect on domestic employment outweighs the direct substitution effect so that domestic employment increases in unionized firms as outsourcing costs fall. With respect to the impact of labor tax reforms changes in the wage tax rate, the tax exemption and the unemployment benefit payments affect domestic wage setting in the same way as in the absence of outsourcing. Furthermore, increasing the degree of tax progression by keeping the relative tax burden per worker constant continues to be good for employment. However, except for low outsourcing activities, the impact of these policy measures will become smaller as outsourcing costs fall.

Keywords: outsourcing, union wage-setting, employment, labor tax reform.

JEL classification: J41, J51, H22.

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1. Introduction

Wage differences are enormous across countries and constitute a central explanation for the increasing dominant business practice of international outsourcing across a wide range of industries.¹ In high-wage countries with high unemployment rates due to labor market imperfections there are deep concerns that foreign jobs may replace domestic jobs. Indeed, there is a direct crowding out when domestic and foreign jobs are substitutes.² But this may not be the whole story as the threat of outsourcing may force trade unions to moderate wages.

Outsourcing can take two alternative forms. First, firms may write long-term contracts that fix the amount of outsourcing before the trade union sets the wage. If there is a high degree of substitutability (complementarity) between the activities in the home country and in the host country, it is likely that foreign direct investments reduce (increase) negotiated wages so that domestic workers lose (benefit) (see Skaksen and Sørensen 2001). Second, firms may be flexible enough to decide later on simultaneously upon the amount of outsourcing activity and its domestic labor demand after the domestic wage is set by the trade union (see Skaksen 2004 and Braun and Scheffel 2007).

Our paper discusses both types of outsourcing when domestic and foreign labour are perfect substitutes and show that outsourcing directly reduces domestic labor demand and increases the wage elasticity of domestic labor demand. This limits the mark-up trade unions can set above the opportunity cost of labor. We show in the first part of our paper that this *indirect* positive wage moderation effect will be stronger than the *direct* substitution effect as long as outsourcing costs are not too low so that domestic employment in outsourcing unionized firms increases when economic integration leads to a further fall in outsourcing costs. This confirms previous results of e.g. Skaksen (2004) and thus proves that the model may be adequate to analyze the impact tax policy measures have on outsourcing decisions.

In the second part, we extend the model in the second part to analyze the consequences of increased outsourcing opportunities for domestic labor market policies, which, when direct controls are ruled out, are mainly restricted to changes of the labor tax system, by altering labor taxes and workers' tax exemptions, or the generosity of the unemployment insurance

scheme. The extent to which outsourcing limits the impact labor tax reforms have on domestic employment in unionized firms will be analyzed for two different outsourcing scenarios. Firms may write long-term contracts that fix the amount of outsourcing *before* the trade union sets the wage – which we will call the case of strategic outsourcing – or alternatively, firms may be flexible enough to decide upon the amount of outsourcing activity simultaneously with domestic labor demand *after* the domestic wage is set by the trade union. We analyze how three isolated labor tax policy changes and one labor tax reform that all have proven as employment enhancing in the absence of outsourcing (see Koskela and Vilmunen 1996, Koskela and Schöb 1999, 2002a,b). It turns out that, when domestic labor and outsourcing are perfect substitutes, both the negative effects of the wage tax and the generous unemployment benefit payments on domestic labor demand and the positive effect of the tax exemption for workers on labor demand prevail. However, for any given labour demand elasticity the magnitude of changes critically hinges on the share of outsourcing activities. If outsourcing occurs but still plays a minor role for the firm, the effect of domestic labor tax policies on domestic employment in unionized firms becomes stronger than in the absence of outsourcing.

We proceed as follows. Section 2 presents the theoretical framework and lays out the time sequences of various decisions on labor demand and wage setting. In section 3 strategic outsourcing is presented and the effects of labor tax instruments and tax reforms are analyzed in section 4. Section 5 then analyzes the case of flexible outsourcing. The analytical results are illustrated by some numerical simulations in section 6. Finally, section 7 concludes.

2. Basic framework

We first consider the case where the firm writes a long-term contract that fixes the amount of outsourcing before the trade union sets the wage. At stage 1, the government behaves as a Stackelberg leader and fixes the two labor tax parameters. To raise revenues, the government can employ a wage tax t , which is levied on the gross wage w , minus a tax exemption a . The tax base per worker for the wage tax t thus equals $(w - a)$. In the presence of a positive tax

exemption a , the marginal tax rate t exceeds the average tax rate $t(1-a/w)$ so that the tax system is linearly progressive. The net-of-tax wage the worker receives is given by $w^n = (1-t)w + ta$.

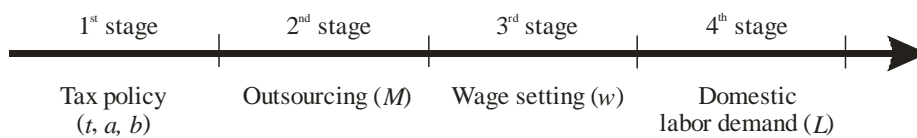
At stage 2, the firm decides about how much of the workforce to outsource. The firm produces a final good with labor only, whereby, for analytical convenience, domestic labor L and foreign labor, i.e. outsourcing, M , are assumed to be perfect substitutes. To derive an explicit solution, we postulate the following decreasing returns-to-scale production function:

$$(1) \quad f(L+M) = \frac{\delta}{\delta-1} (L+M)^{\frac{\delta-1}{\delta}}, \quad \delta > 1.$$

The price of the final good is normalized to unity.³ Profit is given by $\pi = f(L+M) - wL - C(M)$, where $C(M) = 0.5cM^2$ is a convex cost of establishing capacity M abroad. This captures the idea that the exploitation of the marginal cost advantages associated with production in low-wage countries typically requires irreversible investment into the establishment of networks of suppliers in the relevant low-wage countries.⁴ For analytical convenience we set the marginal cost of producing abroad equal to zero.

At stage 3, the monopolistic firm-level trade union sets the gross wage.⁵ It takes both the tax parameters and the outsourcing decision of the firm as given and anticipates the consequences that the wage setting will have for the domestic labor demand of its firm in stage 4. The time sequence of these decisions is summarized in Figure 1. The decisions at each stage are analyzed by using backward induction. The analysis of the case where domestic labor demand and outsourcing are decided simultaneously is delegated to section 5.

Figure 1: Time sequence of decisions: strategic outsourcing



2.1 4th stage: labour demand

In the 4th stage, firms hire domestic workers according to the first-order profit maximization condition, which is $\pi_L = 0 = f_L(L + M) - w$. Using the production function (1) this leads to

$$(2) \quad L(w, M) = w^{-\delta} - M .$$

More extensive outsourcing will *cet. par.* decrease domestic labor demand. This feature is fully consistent with empirical evidence (see Görg and Hanley 2005 and Hijzen et al. 2005). Apart from the direct substitution effect $dL = -dM$, there is an additional indirect effect on domestic employment because outsourcing also affects the wage elasticity of labor demand

$$(3) \quad \eta(M, w, \delta) \equiv -\frac{L_w w}{L} = \delta \frac{w^{-\delta}}{L(w, M)} = \delta \left(1 + \frac{M}{L(w, M)} \right) \equiv \frac{\delta}{1 - \alpha} ,$$

where $\alpha = M/(L + M)$ indicates the share of the workforce that is outsourced. Without outsourcing this elasticity is constant, $\eta|_{\alpha=0} = \delta$. Domestic labor demand becomes the more elastic the larger the share of outsourcing is, i.e. we have $\eta_\alpha = \eta/(1 - \alpha) > 0$ ⁶ and becomes sensitive to changes in the domestic labor cost, i.e. the gross wage w : using equation (2) we have: $\eta_w = \eta \frac{\delta M}{wL} > 0$.

2.2 3rd stage: wage setting

Wages are determined by a firm-level monopoly trade union, which maximizes the sum of its N members' income that consists of the net-of-tax wage income of employed member and some unemployment benefit payments b for those being unemployed. We assume that from the viewpoint of a small firm-level trade union b is exogenous. Denoting the objective function of the trade union by V , the maximization problem of the trade union is

$$(4) \quad \underset{(w)}{\max} V = (w(1 - t) + ta)L + (N - L)b \quad \text{s.t.} \quad L = w^{-\delta} - M ,$$

from which it is straightforward to calculate the optimal wage

$$(5) \quad w = \frac{\eta(M, w, \delta)}{(\eta(M, w, \delta) - 1)} \frac{(b - ta)}{(1 - t)} \equiv \frac{\eta(M, w, \delta)}{(\eta(M, w, \delta) - 1)} \hat{b}$$

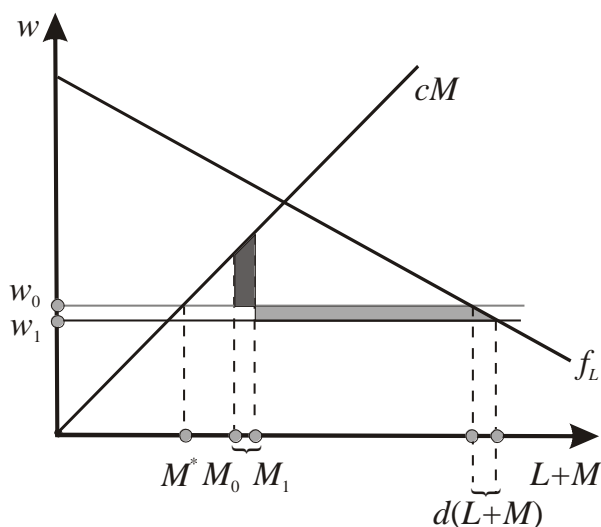
The comparative statics – taking into account that (5) is only an implicit function – shows first that outsourcing leads trade unions to moderate wages because the outsourcing activity M positively affects the elasticity of labor demand and thereby negatively the wage rate via the mark-up $\eta/(\eta-1)$: $w_M < 0$.⁷ When the share of outsourcing increases, a wage rise benefits less domestic workers for any given number of wage-induced lay-offs. It is thus beneficial for the trade union to lower the wage when outsourcing has increased exogenously.⁸

The effects of wage tax and tax exemption changes on wage formation are qualitatively the same with and without outsourcing, i.e. we have $w_t > 0$ and $w_a < 0$, although the effects are smaller in absolute terms when the firm engages in outsourcing.

2.3. 2nd stage: strategic outsourcing

In the second stage, the firm maximizes profit with respect to outsourcing activities taking into account its implication on the trade union's wage setting and the subsequent decision on domestic labor input. From $\pi = \delta(\delta-1)^{-1}(L+M)^{(\delta-1)/\delta} - wL - 0.5cM^2$, we obtain the first-order condition $\pi_M = w - w_M L - cM = 0$ and thus $cM > w$. Since $w_M < 0$, it becomes profitable for the firm to increase the outsourcing above the level where the marginal outsourcing cost cM equals the domestic gross wage w . Higher outsourcing reaps an additional benefit for the firm in forcing its trade union to lower domestic wages. Figure 2 illustrates the reasoning.

Figure 2: Strategic outsourcing in the presence of trade unions



When the firm increases its outsourcing activity from M_0 to M_1 in Figure 2, it replaces the same amount of domestic workers at the given initial wage w_0 , and it increases the production cost by the trapezoid shaded in dark grey. Since this leads the trade union to moderate wages in stage 3, it will increase total employment by $d(L+M)$ and save a domestic wage bill equal to the area shaded in light grey. Therefore the optimal outsourcing is where the two areas are of equal size (for marginal changes). The strategic component of outsourcing in Figure 2 is indicated by $M_1 - M^*$. This result can be presented in

Proposition 1: In the presence of a domestic firm-level trade union, the firm will exceed its strategic outsourcing activity beyond the level where domestic and foreign marginal labor costs are the same.

3. Increased international integration

Now we are interested in how domestic labor market policies are affected when the possibilities to outsource part of the workforce increase due to increased economic integration that lowers the outsourcing cost parameter c . A lower c has a positive effect on outsourcing, $M_c < 0$, which in turn moderates domestic wages because $dw/dc = w_M M_c > 0$: a trade union in a firm that can engage in outsourcing will moderate wages to alleviate the consequences of increased economic integration. By contrast, the effect on domestic labor demand is not as clear-cut as might be expected:

$$(6) \quad \frac{dL}{dc} = L_w \underbrace{\frac{dw}{dc}}_{-} + \underbrace{L_M}_{-1} \underbrace{M_c}_{-} = -M_c [1 - L_w w_M] \left\{ \begin{array}{l} > \\ = \\ < \end{array} \right\} 0 \text{ as } \alpha \left\{ \begin{array}{l} > \\ = \\ < \end{array} \right\} \frac{1}{\delta + 1},$$

where

$$(7) \quad 1 - L_w w_M = 1 + \frac{L_w w}{[(\delta - 1)L + 2\delta M]} = 1 - \frac{\delta(L + M)}{[(\delta - 1)L + 2\delta M]} = \frac{\alpha(\delta + 1) - 1}{\alpha(\delta + 1) - 1 + \delta}.$$

When the outsourcing cost parameter c falls, we have the direct effect of substituting foreign labor for domestic labor. This effect is counteracted by the indirect wage moderating effect, which may be stronger as long as the share of outsourcing is small in the sense that

$\alpha < (\delta + 1)^{-1} < .5$. At $\alpha = M = 0$, we have a strong effect of outsourcing on wage moderation, which in turn has a large effect on domestic labor because of the initially high employment level. As the share of outsourcing increases, the wage moderating effect decreases, i.e. $w_{MM} > 0$ as well as the impact of wage moderation on domestic employment, i.e. $L_{ww} > 0$. At $\alpha = (\delta + 1)^{-1}$ when $L = \delta M$, direct and indirect effect are of equal size. In this special case, a further increase in international integration would not affect domestic employment but a further economic integration would then have unambiguously adverse effects on domestic employment in outsourcing firms. These findings can be presented in

Proposition 2: Increasing economic integration that leads to a fall in the outsourcing cost parameter c will moderate domestic wages set by the union and increase domestic employment in unionized firms that engage in outsourcing as long as the outsourcing share does not exceed the critical value $(\delta + 1)^{-1}$.

4. Effects of labor tax policy

Tax policy instruments affect domestic labor costs and the wage formation directly and indirectly via the strategic outsourcing options of the outsourcing firm in stage 3. The indirect effect alters the total employment both via the induced wage rate change and the direct replacement of domestic workers by foreign workers.

For the strategic outsourcing decisions of the firm, it is straightforward to calculate the following qualitative results. First, we have $M_t = -\pi_{Mt}/\pi_{MM} > 0$. In the case of tax exemption, we have $M_a = -\pi_{Ma}/\pi_{MM} < 0$. A higher wage tax increases outsourcing while a higher tax exemption for workers lowers outsourcing. A more general unemployment benefit system makes the domestic trade union more demanding thus increasing outsourcing $M_b = -\pi_{Mb}/\pi_{MM} > 0$. All these effects work via their effect on domestic gross wages. If the domestic gross wage rises (decreases), then outsourcing activities *cet. par.* rise (decrease). Increases in the domestic wage tax or the unemployment benefit payments increase outsourcing because the domestic wage rises, while increases in the wage tax exemption decreases outsourcing because it decreases the domestic wage.

4.1 How single tax instruments can work on wage formation and employment

The *total* effects the tax policy instruments have on the wage setting by monopolistic trade unions consists of the *direct* wage effect and on the *indirect* effect via the impact these instruments have on the strategic outsourcing decision of firms and thereby also on the wage rate. For a change in the wage tax rate we obtain,

$$(8a) \quad \frac{dw}{dt} = \underbrace{w_t}_+ + \underbrace{w_M M_t}_- = w_t - w_M \frac{w_t}{w_M} A = w_t(1 - A) > 0,$$

with

$$A \equiv \frac{M[(\delta - 1)L^2 + 2(\delta - 1)ML + 2\delta M^2]}{[(\delta - 1)L + 2\delta M][(\delta - 1)L^2 + ML + 4M^2 + 4\delta ML + 4\delta M^2]} < 1.$$

In the presence of outsourcing the total effect of a wage rate change on the wage setting becomes smaller as we have $w_M M_t < 0$. A wage increase due to an increase in the wage tax makes outsourcing more attractive. This in turn reduces the impact the tax rate has on wage setting and lowers the benefits of a wage increase for the trade union. Analogously, the effect of changes in the tax exemption and the unemployment benefit payments are moderated by the same factor $(1 - A)$ so that we have

$$(8b) \quad \frac{dw}{da} = w_a + w_M M_a = w_a(1 - A) < 0$$

and

$$(8c) \quad \frac{dw}{db} = w_b + w_M M_b = w_b(1 - A) > 0$$

Now we can determine the total effects of the wage tax and the tax exemption both via the wage effect and via the outsourcing effect on domestic employment. Using (6), we obtain

$$(9) \quad \frac{dL}{dt} = \underbrace{L_w}_- \underbrace{\frac{dw}{dt}}_+ + \underbrace{L_M}_- \underbrace{M_t}_+ = L_w w_t + M_t [L_w w_M - 1] < 0.$$

From the first equation we can unambiguously sign the employment effect of a wage tax increase. Employment falls when the wage tax rises. The second equation decomposes the

effect into the employment effect for a given amount of outsourcing activity M and the effect of a change in the strategic outsourcing. Using equation (7)), we obtain

$$(10a) \quad \frac{dL}{dt} \begin{cases} < \\ = \\ > \end{cases} L_w w_t \text{ as } \alpha \begin{cases} > \\ = \\ < \end{cases} \frac{1}{\delta + 1}.$$

as a condition for the direct effect of outsourcing. As long as the share of outsourcing in the workforce is relatively small, $\alpha < (\delta + 1)^{-1} < .5$, the induced outsourcing leads *cet. par.* to an increase of domestic labor because, as explained above, the indirect effect via the change in the wage elasticity is stronger as long as the share of outsourcing is small. If the degree of outsourcing relative to domestic labor demand is high enough then the impact of a tax reform will become stronger for any given η . This is always the case when more than 50 percent of the workforce is working abroad. An analogous argument can be made for the case when the tax exemption or the unemployment benefits changes. Using equation (6) we have

$$(10b) \quad \frac{dL}{da} = L_w w_a + M_a [L_w w_M - 1] > 0$$

and

$$(10c) \quad \frac{dL}{db} = L_w w_b + M_b [L_w w_M - 1] < 0.$$

Employment increases when the tax exemption rises (unemployment benefits fall). In addition, domestic employment is substituted for outsourced labor. The second equation isolates the strategic outsourcing component and it becomes obvious that the magnitude of α (see condition (10a)) also determines whether

$$\frac{dL}{da} \begin{cases} > \\ = \\ < \end{cases} L_w w_a \text{ and } \frac{dL}{db} \begin{cases} > \\ = \\ < \end{cases} L_w w_b.$$

To determine how a marginal change in the tax policy measures affect employment in terms of outsourcing costs, we have to calculate $d^2L/dt dc$, $d^2L/dt da$ and $d^2L/db dc$. Here it turns out that we have no unambiguous result. When outsourcing just becomes attractive for the

firm, i.e. at $\alpha = M = 0$, a marginal reduction of the outsourcing costs that makes outsourcing attractive strengthens the impact tax policy measures have on domestic labor, i.e. we have

$$\left. \frac{d^2L}{dt dc} \right|_{\alpha=0} < 0, \quad \left. \frac{d^2L}{dad c} \right|_{\alpha=0} > 0, \quad \text{and} \quad \left. \frac{d^2L}{dbdc} \right|_{\alpha=0} < 0,$$

because in this case we have a strong effect of outsourcing on wage moderation, which in turn has a large effect on domestic labor because of the initially high employment level. A sufficient (but not necessary) condition for a reduced impact of marginal tax policy changes is that outsourcing is sufficiently important in the sense that $\alpha > (\delta + 1)^{-1}$. We thus have a non-monotonic impact of strategic outsourcing on the efficacy of tax policy changes. These results can be summarized in

Proposition 3: In the presence of strategic outsourcing, the qualitative effects of domestic labor market policies on domestic labor demand are the same as in the absence of outsourcing. If the share of outsourcing is sufficiently close to zero, the impact of domestic labor market policy changes on domestic employment in outsourcing firms increases while, when outsourcing activities are sufficiently large, the impact becomes smaller when economic integration increases.

4.2 Increasing the degree of tax progression

Is tax progression is good for employment? To answer this question in this framework, we look at a tax reform that increases the degree of tax progression while keeping the average tax burden per worker constant, i.e. we assume

$$(11) \quad t - \frac{ta}{w} = t^a$$

to be constant. An appropriate way to define tax progression is to look at the average tax rate progression $ARP \equiv t - t^a$, given by the difference between the marginal tax rate t and the average tax rate t^a . The tax system is progressive if ARP is positive, and tax progression is increased if the difference increases (see Lambert 2001, chapters 7 and 8). The government

can raise the degree of tax progression when it increases the wage tax and adjusts the tax exemption upwards such that t^a remains constant. By using equations (8a) and (8b) we have

$$(12) \quad \left. \frac{da}{dt} \right|_{dt^a=0} = \frac{\left(w - a + \frac{ta}{w} \frac{dw}{dt} \right)}{\left(t - \frac{ta}{w} \frac{dw}{da} \right)} = \frac{\left(w - a + \frac{ta}{w} w_t (1-A) \right)}{\left(t - \frac{ta}{w} w_a (1-A) \right)} > 0.$$

First we analyze the total wage effects of this tax reform. If we raise tax progression according to (12), we have $dw = (1-A)[w_t dt + w_a da]$. Dividing by da and substituting the RHS of (12) for da/dt gives:

$$(13) \quad \left. \frac{dw}{dt} \right|_{dt^a=0} = \frac{(1-A) \left[w_t + \frac{(w-a)}{t} w_a \right]}{\left[1 - \frac{a}{w} w_a (1-A) \right]} < 0.$$

A higher degree of tax progression, keeping the relative tax burden per worker constant, will decrease the wage rate both in the presence and in the absence of outsourcing, but the wage rate change is smaller in the case of strategic outsourcing because $0 < A < 1$.

If we raise tax progression according to (12), the employment effect is, using equations (9) and (10),

$$(14) \quad \begin{aligned} dL &= [L_w w_t (1-A) + L_M M_t] dt + [L_w w_a (1-A) + L_M M_a] da \\ &= L_w (1-A) [w_t dt + w_a da] - [M_t dt + M_a da]. \end{aligned}$$

The first term indicates the effect the wage rate change has on domestic employment, the second term indicates the induced outsourcing (recall that we have $L_M = -1$). Dividing (14) by dt and substituting the RHS of (12) for da/dt gives after some calculations:

$$(15) \quad \left. \frac{dL}{dt} \right|_{dt^a=0} = \underbrace{L_w \frac{dw}{dt} \Big|_{dt^a=0}}_{+} - \underbrace{\frac{dM}{dt} \Big|_{dt^a=0}}_{-} > 0.$$

The wage moderating effect increases domestic labor demand, given the level of outsourcing. This effect is represented by the first term. Wage moderation also makes it attractive to lower

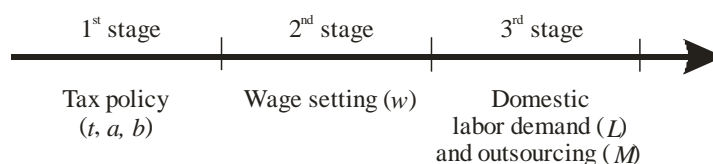
the outsourcing activities and replace outsourced labor by domestic labor. Hence both effects work into the same direction so that tax progression remains good for employment when firms have the opportunity to outsource their workforces according to (15).

Proposition 4: In the presence of strategic outsourcing, increasing the degree of tax progression increases domestic employment.

5. Flexible outsourcing

Rather than writing long-term contracts that fix the amount of outsourcing before the trade union sets the wage, the firm may be flexible enough to decide upon the amount of outsourcing activity only after the wage is set by the trade union. The time sequence for this case is described by Figure 3.

Figure 3: Time sequence of decisions: flexible outsourcing



In this case the strategic outsourcing aspect disappears and all equilibrium values of w , L , and M differ and this makes it difficult to compare the two equilibrium outcomes directly. We therefore focus on the question to what extent the change in the time sequence affects our qualitative results. In the last stage, the firm maximizes profits with respect to L and M . This leads to two standard results. Total employment is set where marginal productivity equals the wage rate. This leads to a demand function similar to equation (2), i.e. we have $L + M = w^{-\delta}$. Since outsourcing is decided after the wage is set, the profit maximizing outsourcing is given by the equality $cM = w$ instead of the inequality $cM > w$ in the case of strategic outsourcing. As a consequence, for any given ratio M/L , the wage elasticity becomes larger:

$$(16) \quad -\frac{L_w w}{L} \equiv \eta^{fo} = \frac{\delta w^{-\delta} + \frac{w}{c}}{w^{-\delta} - \frac{w}{c}} = \delta \left(1 + \frac{M(w)}{L(w)} \right) + \frac{M(w)}{L(w)} = \frac{\delta + \alpha}{1 - \alpha}.$$

where $\alpha = M/(M + L)$. In the second stage the trade union set the wage taking into account the labor demand function as defined by $L = w^{-\delta} - wc^{-1}$. Using (16) we obtain

$$(17) \quad w = \frac{\eta^{fo}}{(\eta^{fo} - 1)} \frac{(b - ta)}{(1 - t)} \equiv \frac{\eta^{fo}}{(\eta^{fo} - 1)} \hat{b} = \frac{\delta + \alpha}{\delta + 2\alpha - 1} \hat{b}.$$

The effect of an increase in international integration on domestic employment is

$$(18) \quad \left. \frac{dL}{dc} \right|_{\alpha=0} = -\frac{2w}{c^2(\delta - 1)} < 0, \quad \left. \frac{dL}{dc} \right|_{\alpha=1} = \frac{1}{2} \frac{w}{c^2} > 0 \quad \text{and} \quad \frac{d^2L}{dc d\alpha} > 0.$$

As in the case with strategic outsourcing, an increase of economic integration has a positive effect on domestic employment when the share of the outsourced workforce is small but when the share increases it becomes eventually negative. Qualitatively, the results are rather similar to the case of strategic outsourcing but the maximum domestic employment levels differ. At the outsourcing share where domestic employment reaches its maximum (i.e. at $\alpha = (1 + \delta)^{-1}$) with strategic outsourcing, domestic employment continues to rise as c falls in the case of flexible outsourcing.

The analysis of changes in the wage tax, the tax exemption and the unemployment benefit payments consequently yields similar qualitative results in the case of flexible outsourcing. But the derivatives simplify as we do not have to take into account the feedback effect of the wage tax, the tax exemption and the unemployment benefits payments via outsourcing on employment, i.e. we have

$$\frac{dL^{fo}}{dt} = L_w \frac{dw^{fo}}{dt} = L_w w_t^{fo} = L_w \Delta^{fo} \frac{b - a}{(1 - t)^2} < 0,$$

and

$$\frac{dL^{fo}}{da} = -L_w \Delta^{fo} \frac{t}{1 - t} > 0, \quad \frac{dL^{fo}}{db} = L_w \Delta^{fo} \frac{1}{1 - t} < 0,$$

with $\Delta^{fo} = [\eta^{fo} - 1 + \eta_w^{fo} w / \eta^{fo}] > 0$. Hence the signs of the impact labor market instruments have on employment do not change in the presence of flexible outsourcing. This leads to

Proposition 5: In the presence of flexible outsourcing, the qualitative effects of domestic labor market policies on labour are the same as in the absence of outsourcing but lower in absolute terms.

The analysis of the tax reform that keeps the relative tax burden per worker constant gives us two conditions similar to the conditions (12) and (13), namely:

$$(19) \quad \left. \frac{da}{dt} \right|_{dt^a=0} = \frac{\left(w - a + \frac{ta}{w} w_t \right)}{\left(t - \frac{ta}{w} w_a \right)} > 0.$$

$$(20) \quad \left. \frac{dw}{dt} \right|_{dt^a=0} = \frac{w_t + \frac{(w-a)}{t} w_a}{1 - \frac{a}{w} w_a} < 0.$$

where $\left(w_t + \frac{(w-a)}{t} w_a \right)^{fo} = -\Delta^{fo} \left[\frac{w(1-t) + ta - b}{(1-t)^2} \right] < 0$. The increase in tax progression

lowers the domestic wage, which in turn increases domestic employment, i.e.

$$(21) \quad \left. \frac{dL^{fo}}{dt} \right|_{dt^a=0} = L_w \frac{w_t + \frac{(w-a)}{t} w_a}{1 - \frac{aw_a}{w}} > 0.$$

These results for the tax reform are qualitatively the same as in the case of strategic outsourcing so that we have⁹

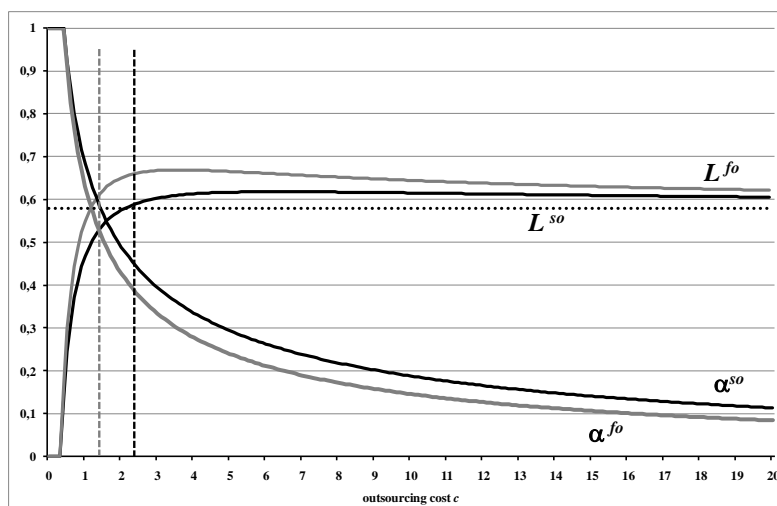
Proposition 6: Irrespective of whether the firm determines outsourcing before or after the wage setting by the monopoly trade union, increasing the degree of tax progression is always good for domestic employment.

6. A numerical illustration

The analytics has shown that, initially, an increase in economic integration followed by an increased outsourcing share has a positive effect on domestic employment because the possibility to outsource moderates wages and this wage moderation effect outweighs the negative impact of outsourcing on domestic employment. The analytics, however, does not allow us to say much about the difference between the two scenarios of strategic and flexible outsourcing. We therefore conducted a numerical for the following parameter values, $b = .8$ and $\delta = 3$, the latter providing a cost share of labour equal to $2/3$.

In Figure 4 the black lines illustrate how domestic employment and the outsourcing share in the case of strategic outsourcing (so) depends on the outsourcing cost parameter c . The grey lines illustrate respective values for the case of flexible outsourcing (fo). The qualitative results are the same: domestic employment first rises when economic integration increases (c falls) and only eventually falls when c becomes very small. The maximum domestic output level is reached at lower levels of c when outsourcing is flexible, and so is the absolute level of domestic labour input. The reason is that the impact of flexible outsourcing on labor demand elasticity is stronger than in the case of strategic outsourcing because in the predetermined case, making domestic labor demand more elastic is more costly as the firm has to raise M above marginal cost.

Figure 4: Numerical illustration of strategic vs. flexible outsourcing



If outsourcing were impossible our numerical simulation model would give us a mark-up of 50% so that the wage rate would be $w|_{c \rightarrow +\infty} = 1.2$ and $L|_{c \rightarrow +\infty} = 0.58$. In Figure 4, the horizontal dotted line indicates this benchmark employment level. Even for high values of c and thus a small outsourcing share α , the wage moderating effect is substantial and so is the effect on domestic employment. For $\alpha = .1$, the wage moderation effect is 6.0% in the case of strategic outsourcing, which results in 8.5% more domestic employment. The respective figures for strategic outsourcing are 4.8% and 4.2%. Only when c becomes sufficiently small, domestic employment eventually falls. In the case of flexible outsourcing, the domestic employment level is higher for all $c > 1.6 \cdot b$ or $\alpha < .57$. In the case of strategic outsourcing, this is the case at $c > 3b$ and $\alpha < .44$. These figures, although meant for illustrative purposes only, indicate that in unionized firms outsourcing can have a very strong disciplinary effect on unions that benefit domestic employment. Simulations on the magnitude of tax policy changes indicate that increased economic integration reduces the impact of labor market policy measures in the whole range so that these result are not reported here.

7. Conclusions

When outsourcing, firms can either write long-term contracts that fix the amount of outsourcing before the trade union sets the wage or they are flexible enough to decide upon the amount of outsourcing only after the wage is set by the trade union. In both cases outsourcing leads to wage moderation but it is stronger in the case of flexible outsourcing because the domestic labor demand is more elastic then.

As long as the share of the outsourced workforce is not too large, the induced wage-moderation effect on domestic employment outweighs the direct substitution effect: domestic employment increases in unionized firms within a wide interval of outsourcing costs when outsourcing costs fall. Within our framework we could identify an upper boundary for the outsourcing share. As long as the outsourcing share does not exceed $(\delta - 1)^{-1}$, where δ indicates the total labor demand elasticity, domestic labour increases with outsourcing in unionized firms.

With respect to the impact of labor tax reforms on such firms, the qualitative effects of changes in the wage tax rate, the tax exemption and the unemployment benefit payments are the same as in the absence of outsourcing. Furthermore, increasing the degree of tax progression by keeping the relative tax burden per worker constant continues to be good for employment. Except for very small outsourcing activities, however, the impact of these policy measures on outsourcing unionized firms' domestic employment are diminished when outsourcing costs fall.

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Endnotes

- ¹ See e.g. Sinn (2007) for an overview or Stefanova (2006) concerning the East-West dichotomy of outsourcing. Amiti and Wei (2005) emphasize the huge difference in labor costs as the main explanation for the increase in outsourcing of both manufacturing and services to countries with low labor costs.
- ² Outsourcing may be beneficial for domestic jobs when foreign jobs are complements or substitutes to domestic jobs. See Skaksen and Sørensen (2001) for a theoretical treatment and e.g. Leahy and Montagna (2000) for empirical evidence.
- ³ Lommerud et al. (2006) show how international mergers might curb the market power of unions giving socially excessive incentives for international mergers, unless products are close substitutes. We do not focus on the simultaneous presence of imperfections in labor and product markets, and thus neglect changes in the product market.
- ⁴ Lommerud et al. (2009) justify such a cost function by postulating a continuum of inputs that are increasingly difficult to outsource.
- ⁵ Since tax parameters are exogenous for firms and trade unions, it does not matter whether they bargain over gross or net-of-tax wages (see Koskela and Schöb 2002b).
- ⁶ See Slaughter (2001) and Hasan et al. (2007) for empirical evidence according to which higher outsourcing increases the wage elasticity of labor demand.
- ⁷ Detailed calculations can be found in Koskela and Schöb (2008).
- ⁸ Egger and Egger (2003) study the impact of a decline in trade barriers on outsourcing of low-skilled labor and find empirical evidence that outsourcing decreases wages of low-skilled labor. See also Feenstra and Hanson (1999) and Hijzen et al. (2005).
- ⁹ Koskela (2008) shows that the qualitative findings carry over to the case of Nash wage bargaining between the firm and the trade union in the presence of flexible outsourcing.