Rethinking the Employee Representation in Taiwan: the Role and Future of Trade Unions

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Introduction

- Trade Union Law stipulated in 1929
- Promotion of new ‘labour-management partnership’ since 2000
  - Increasing labour-management committees vs. declining trade unions
- How have the employee representative systems been structured and implemented, no matter trade unions played an important role or not?
  - Examine features of employee representation in TW
  - Discuss future of unions in TW workplaces
Trade Unions in Taiwan

- Unions initially to support industrial strategies
- Industrial unions
  - >30 workers in same workplace, industry, factory
  - Chunghwa Telecom Workers’ Union
  - 952#, 15.9% (Sep 2009)
- Craft unions
  - >30 workers with same professional skills
  - Taipei Translators and Interpreters Union
  - 3,566#, 52.5% (Sep 2009)

Federation (regional), general federation (national)
Collective Bargaining in Taiwan

- Collective bargaining is very limited, ‘rare and underdeveloped’
  - Only unions legal to negotiate with management
  - 49 agreements signed but 4,735 unions in Sep 2009
- Right of collective bargaining was statutory but voluntary
- Modification of Trade Union Law, Collective Agreement Law, Settlement of Labour Disputes Law
Non-Union Representation in Taiwan

- 4 statutory committees
  - Labour-management committees
  - Employees’ welfare committees
  - Labour safety and health committees
  - Supervisory committees of worker’s retirement reserve funds

- Worker Director
  - Initially proposed by union
  - Only regulated for state-owned enterprises to represent state capital
Research Cases and Methods

- **Case ‘C’**
  - Privatised steel corporation
  - Largest single-plant union
  - Participant observation, in-depth interviews, survey, documentation analysis

- **Case ‘S’ and Case ‘F’**
  - ‘S’: state-owned sugar producer, unionised
  - ‘F’: private petrochemical company, nonunionised
  - In-depth interviews, documentation analysis
Discussion

- Statutory committees are implemented in all kinds of enterprises
  - An indicator of external assessments
  - Main channels of employees to voice in private companies

- Trade unions may formalise internal committees to support labour representatives
  - Nominating and electing labour representatives
  - Pre-meeting before any formal meeting with management
- Implementation of collective agreement
  - Depending on union’s power and trustworthiness of both sides

- Worker director
  - Suggested by union
  - Internal consultative committee

- Mechanisms formalised by businesses
  - Departmental meetings
  - Quality circles, etc.
Conclusion

- Non-union representation gradually developing
  - Kind of good impression and social responsibility
  - Absence of unions results in ineffective channel
- Union manipulates non-union representation and proposes new representative mechanism
  - Supporting labour representatives and strengthening union recognition
- Future role of craft unions?
  - Currently less attention to craft unions
Thank You!

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