

Recent Labor Relations and Collective Bargaining Issues in Thailand

Chaturong Napathorn (Corresponding author)

*Department of Human Resource and Organization Management
Faculty of Commerce and Accountancy
Thammasat University, Rangsit campus, Klongluang
Pathumthani 12121 THAILAND
Email: chaturon@tu.ac.th*

Suchada Chanprateep

*Department of Microbiology, Faculty of Science
Chulalongkorn University, Phayathai Road, Patumwan
Bangkok 10330 THAILAND
Email: suchada.cha@chula.ac.th*

ABSTRACT

During the recent economic crisis, globalization including economic and financial liberalization affects labor–management relations in Thailand, especially at the national level, with respect to various aspects, such as the application of numerical and functional flexibility, which leads to mass layoffs, lower job security, and more confrontational collective bargaining between employers and workers, and the roles of mass media, which broadcasts several cases in Thailand regarding unfair labor practices to people across the globe. In additions, the fragmentation of labor organizations and the inability to merge them together is a critical problem that will weaken the labor movement within the country.

Keywords: *Labor Union, Industrial Relations, Labor Relations, Collective Bargaining Issues, Thailand*

1. INTRODUCTION

Labor relations are considered the study of the relationships existing in the workplace between employers and workers or between workers, the organizations that represent employers and workers, the government, and other types of institutions in society as a whole (Dunlop, 1958). In addition, the field of labor relations includes the study of personnel management, collective bargaining, labor laws, and social insurance systems. Hence, understanding all of the sub-fields of labor relations as mentioned above will provide us with insights into the real world of work and how to solve the problems existing within such a world, (Kaufman, 2006) such as workplace disputes between employers and labor unions, strikes, and lockouts, to promote fairness, efficiency, and a satisfying relationship between the two parties as well as to foster win-win solutions for the labor-management problems in the workplace.

Labor relations are often country specific (Caulfield, 2004). That is to say, labor relations are considered a system and tend to be different between countries. Thus, understanding the labor relations system as well as the collective bargaining situation in each country will also help our understanding of the nature of the economy, industry, production methods, technological and socio-cultural dimension, as well as the background and development of such a country (Kuruvilla, 1994a). On the other hand, understanding the external developments, economic expansion, and other stimuli and changes affecting each country also helps us better understand the labor relations system in a specific country as well. The study of labor relations and collective bargaining should therefore not be overlooked.

One of the significant developments affecting the labor relations system in each country is globalization (Caulfield, 2004). Globalization is viewed as the process of greatly intensified business expansion across the globe. Such business expansion also fosters deregulation, economic integration among different regions and nations, financial liberalization, freer flows of capital, and the movement of labor across countries. That is, the production processes that were once unified in one region or country are dispersed to different parts of the world, and the manufacturing base of several multinational companies tends to move to low-wage countries (Moody, 1997). Globalization also affects the labor relations system and the collective bargaining situation in Thailand in several ways. For instance, globalization leads to new types of employment among informal workers, who are the majority of workers in Thailand, such as part-time employment and outsourcing (Pholphirul, 2009). Such