INTRODUCTION: EMPLOYEE VOICE IN EMERGING ECONOMIES: CHARTING NEW TERRITORY

Within the industrial relations paradigm, employee voice is broadly defined as the ways and means through which employees attempt to have a say and potentially influence organisational affairs about issues that affect their work and the interests of owners and managers (Wilkinson, Donaghey, Dundon, & Freeman, 2014). Whilst there is an extensive literature on employee voice in the Anglo-American (developed) world (e.g., Freeman, Boxall, & Haynes, 2007; Wilkinson, Gollan, Marchington, & Lewin, 2010), we know much less about how employee voice operates in emerging economies. This special issue of Advances in Industrial and Labor Relations explores the nature of employee voice in seven emerging economies: Argentina, China, India, South Korea, Belarus, South Africa and Namibia. The issue brings together an internationally renowned group of contributors who are experts in their field and an authority on these countries, to combine cutting edge research and theory in this essential exploration of voice in emerging economies.

There is a small body of existing research on employee voice in developing economies. For example, Huang, van de Vliert, and van der Vegt (2003) suggested that cultural norms should be taken into consideration when selecting voice mechanisms, maintaining that in countries with high power distance, employees will choose to withhold their voice (silence), even when managers strive to nurture a climate of openness; thus rendering

informal communication channels inadequate. In India, and in a similar vein, Taylor and Bain (2005, p. 273) argued that despite strong unionisation in sectors such as banking and telecommunications, a hierarchical workplace culture is typical in India's call centres where 'the absence of employee voice constitutes a democratic deficit'. Furthermore, Aguzzoli and Geary (2014) highlighted the weakness and/or absence of employee voice mechanisms in the formal labour market in Brazil. Such a deficit, alongside fragmented and ineffective unions in the informal labour market means that employees do not enjoy any protection afforded by existing employment legislation. In contrast, in China, a mixed participation model has been identified and adopted, characterised by a combination of the traditional 'iron rice bowl' paradigm with Western human resource practices (Law, Tse, & Zhou, 2003; Warner, 2004). In contrast to China, traditional collective representation is preferred to non-union employee representation (NER) such as works councils in South Korea, as NER is considered as too weak to represent workers' rights (Kim & Kim, 2004). In light of the small body of existing research on employee voice in developing economies, the purpose of this special issue of Advances in Industrial and Labor Relations is to explore and investigate:

- The nature of employee voice in emerging economies where silence may be the norm;
- Similarities and differences in employee voice mechanisms in emerging economies; and
- Whether voice in these contexts can be seized by workers or whether it is provided by management and/or the state.

The multiple purposes of this special issue enable us to challenge the predominant assumptions around employee voice drawn predominantly from Western economies and Anglo-American research, to explore and analyse employee voice more thoroughly in a range of diverse developing economies.

The experts in the seven emerging economies address a range of issues on employee voice. In the first paper on Argentina, Maurizio Atzeni explores the contradictions in Argentina between formal, institutionalised and predominantly unionised channels of voice on the one hand, versus the explosion of informal channels of employee voice on the other. These informal channels of voice have come to fruition as a result of employees' experiences of the precariousness of labour processes, and, have taken novel forms of expression such as occupation of factories, roads and public places in moments of deep economic crisis. This paper traces the multiple forms of employee voice in Argentina alongside recent social history using ethnographic research. Atzeni argues that the Argentinean case calls for a broader understanding of employee voice in emerging economies as a socially and politically mediated process through which formal and informal channels of voice are created, destroyed and recreated by the actors in the employment relationship.

In the second paper 'The Hybrid Channel of Employees' Voice in China in a Changing Context of Employment Relations', Wei Huang, Jingjing Weng, and Ying-Che Hsieh explore the changing purpose and channels of employee voice or 'democratic management' as it is traditionally known in China. In contrast to the notion of 'missing voice' or silence, they suggest

not only have the purpose and channels of employee voice changed in China, but new actors have also arisen. The rise of new actors leads the authors to consider the tensions between top-down, bottom-up and external influences on workplace democracy. They argue that these tensions have encouraged more effective employee representation and the need for a stakeholder approach to understanding employee voice in China.

The third paper 'Union Experience of Social Dialogue and Collective Participation in India' akin to the first, uses a political economy framework to explore union representatives' experiences of social dialogue and collective participation in public, private manufacturing and private services in India, in the federal state of Maharashtra. Whilst the labour relations framework in India provides a conducive environment for social dialogue and collective participation in organizational decision making (Venkata Ratnam, 2009), Vidu Badigannavar finds evidence of growing employer hostility to unions and a reluctance to engage in meaningful social dialogue with unions. These findings are interpreted within the context of a political economy framework of employment relations; considering in particular, the role of the state and the judiciary and the links between political parties and unions in India.

In the fourth paper 'Employee Voice Behavior across Cultures: Examining Cultural Values and Employee Voice Behaviors in Korea and the United States', the role of cultural values in predicting employee voice behaviours are explored, comparing employees' perceptions of cultural values and voice behaviours in the automotive industry in South Korea and the United States. Cultural values are measured as collectivism, face- saving

and conflict avoidance. The findings of the comparative study reveal that cultural values do predict employee voice behaviour; with similarities and differences across South Korea and the United States in terms of the discrete influence of cultural values on different voice behaviours. These findings reinforce Huang et al. (2003) earlier findings on the relationship between cultural norms and employee voice behaviours across cultures; particularly in emerging economies.

In the fifth paper 'Struggling to Be Heard: The Past and Present of Employee Voice in Belarus', the distinctive features of employee voice in Belarus are outlined; one of the post-Soviet transition economies and the only one included in this volume. The data demonstrate the evolution of employee voice in accordance with Ramsay's (1977) cycles of control, akin to the evolution of voice in European capitalist economies in the 19th and 20th centuries. However, direct control strategies by both Soviet and Belarusian governments have suppressed formal, independent employee voice at both national and workplace levels, and also lessened opportunities for informal voice. In summary, the paper demonstrates the effect of path dependence on the systems and exercise of voice, in this case illustrating the considerable influence of Soviet institutional and cultural ideologies on labour relations in modern Belarusian workplaces. The suppression of employee voice in Belarus is not unique however, reflecting similar conditions to transitional peripheral countries in Central Asia such as some recent evidence in China. Nevertheless, the distinctive features of Belarusian employee voice, namely the extent of direct government control over the workplace and the ability to obtain workers consent to suppress formal voice

at this level, represent significant and important additions to our knowledge and understanding of voice in emerging economies.

In the sixth paper 'From a Culture of Silence to a Culture of Insurgence: Black Employee Voice in South Africa over Half a Century', the evolution of Black employee voice in South Africa from 1963 to present is explored, and in particular, the movement away from a culture of silence to a culture of insurgence is charted. The shift in culture is explained by the socio-political and economic history of the country and the various transition points to a constitutional democracy. Despite the assumed benefits of a constitutional democracy for employee voice and Black employee voice, the paper analyses how rising expectations and entitlements of Black workers, alongside poor service delivery by the state, have led to the emergence of an insurgent culture: sabotage has become the norm in expressions of employee voice. The analysis of the exercise of Black employee voice in South Africa, utilising a socio-political approach, demonstrates the weaknesses of applying largely Western frameworks, and frameworks that are not grounded in employment relations, such as Hirschman's (1970) voice and exit model, to the study of employee voice in emerging economies. The paper concludes with a discussion of the pre-conditions for constructive employee voice in South Africa, in accordance with the current socio-political and economic situation.

Finally, in the seventh paper ''Breaking the Wire': The Evolution of Employee Voice in Namibia', utilising a similar approach to the previous two papers, the evolution of employee voice in Namibia is charted, analysing the effects of historical legacies, statutory provisions and

institutional labour frameworks on the modalities of employee voice. The analysis indicates the dualistic economic structure of Namibia's colonial era being reproduced, by authoritarian means, in a new post-colonial form, leaving Black workers to evince the memories of trade union suppression, apartheid wage levels and racist and exploitative managerial practices. Moreover, Namibian unions have been constrained in their interaction with employers and the state, inhibiting the institutionalisation of gains at the workplace. Nevertheless, autonomous and militant shop stewards in Namibia remain a beacon of hope for employees against subservience to the management and state agenda. In summary, the evolution of employee voice in Namibia is shown to be inextricably linked to broader struggles for justice and freedom, to time and space (geography), to the resources of the labour relations parties and to the institutional framework, in which the enduring, indeterminate nature of the employment relationship remains core to employee voice modalities. In this way, understanding the various forms of voice, as well as their conditions of possibility and the factors that constrain choice is critical, particularly in the Namibian situation where redressing vast and deeply entrenched socio-economic inequalities and a growing democratic deficit remain a fundamental priority.

In summary, the seven papers within this special issue demonstrate, *inter alia*, a range of important findings on employee voice in emerging economies: novel forms and channels of informal employee voice; new institutional and informal actors in employee voice; new challenges to social dialogue between employers, employees and trade unions; and, a deeply entrenched relationship between cultural norms, socio-political systems,

historical legacies and employee voice behaviours, possibilities and constraints. The major findings outlined here and embedded in the collection of papers are a timely contribution to industrial and labour relations theory and research on employee voice, and in particular, to the predominantly Anglo-American western body of evidence that currently exists. The volume provides a timely challenge to the predominant assumptions that underline the pre-conditions, nature, operation and effectiveness of employee voice in the Western world, and highlights the need for further innovative research and theorising on employee voice in emerging economies; particularly in Eastern socio-political systems and cultures.

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