TRADE UNIONS and THEIR SEARCH FOR ALTERNATIVE FUTURE

Mehmet Saim Ascı[1]

[1]Istanbul Medipol University, Business School, İstanbul, Turkey

Corresponding Author: msasci@medipol.edu.tr

Abstract

In a time when change is accelerating and an awareness that dictates that values and organisations to be reconsidered, and the concepts of the industrial society such as workmanship and employership are being re-studied as phenomena that change with new transitions, union managers too clearly state the need for restructuring.

Due to technological development, the rate of white-collar workers in the workforce has risen against the blue-collar workers. An important change that has been a factor and a result of the change in economic prosperity and transition to high technology has been the rise of average levels of education and learning. The workforce, comprised mostly of highly-skilled white-collar workers who are better educated than previous generations and possess a higher income level, has seen a change in attitude and behavior in the matters of unionization and labor struggle. In addition to this, business managements also develop management techniques such as human resources management that enable employees to participate, and develops conflict free relationships by establishing a direct dialogue with employees with applications such as quality circles, team work and satisfaction surveys. Trade unions are required to create new organizational structures to satisfy the needs of rapid change in technology and the new position of the workforce with knowledge.

On the other hand, developments in the aftermath of the 1980s led to neo-liberal policies taking over the whole world. Dismissals under the name of flexible labour market, subcontracting, precarious work and unregistered employment are becoming more and more common. The working class has lost the benefits it gained through organized struggle. In the face of the fact that traditional trade union organization is constantly weakening, it is a necessity to discuss alternative searches.

If the workers' unions will exist in the future, it will be extremely difficult for them to achieve this with their current traditional identities. In this respect, the time for the workers' unions to create a new vision is long overdue. In this study, a conceptual study on alternatives for the future vision search of unions will be presented.

Keywords: Trade unions, Unionism, Workforce, Neo-Liberalism, Flexible Labor Market

1. INTRODUCTION

The fact that the laborers started to organize in the 20th century and both the acceleration and the flourishment of this development led to trade unions rising all around the world and becoming a force that protects labor against capital. Thanks to this empowerment, the rights of the labourer have been secured a little more. The right to strike has improved the power of labor thoroughly.

However, with developments after the end of globalization and the Cold War, even countries with a high tendency to unionize traditionally did not have a rising rate of unionization in the 80s when neo-liberal policies took over the whole world.

Continuous contraction in employment, flexible employment forms, the increase of women - young workers among white-collar workers due to technological developments, the threats by Multinational Companies to employees about shifting prodution to foreign countries, the silence of the working class in negative situations for fear of losing their jobs, the indifference for traditional

unionization in labor-heavy fields such as agriculture and construction, small business climate being incompatible for union organization, policies against the laborers, legislations against unions, flexible and precarious work, informal work, the failure of unions that insist on using traditional union policies to develop new forms of struggle and organization policies have resulted in the majority of laborers distancing themselves from unionized organization and the reduction of faith and trust put into unions.

The decline in the trade union orientation of the workers that began to intensify since the 1980s caused the discussion focused on the future of the unions. Whether unions will exist in the future is one of the main issues of evaluations today.

2. RELATED LITERATURE

According to Akpınar (2016), it is sensible that the working class, who has lost its gains from the organized struggle, discuss the search for alternative organizations and a healthy analysis of the process of disunionization on the way to new searches on the subject of trade union organization is also essential. According to lipietz (1982), it is important that local reality is not ignored in these studies.

According to Centel (1996) it is difficult to say that, despite the difficulties of the labor unionism today, it is completely eliminated or that it will be. It is an undeniable fact that workers' unions are affected by change to a certain extent. Therefore, however, it can be said that the trade unionism movement has experienced a change of understanding and structure. Indeed, this situation is not a fall in the crisis of the workers unions in change, but a fall of the difficulties brought by the difficulty of complying with changing conditions.

According to Dereli (1975), union leaders in Turkey are generally seen to be leaders rising from the bottom. According to Koray (1992), it is seen that union leaders from the workers' base are very successful in terms of their pragmatic choices and problems, as well as the working conditions of the unionized workers. However, in order to achieve long-term goals for the trade unionism movement, this situation also creates disadvantages from time to time. Social goals, from a more comprehensive policy point of view, are not the same success of the union leaders from the grassroots. According to Bingöl (1990), it is observed that the workers' unions have successfully exercised their right to strike and bargain collectively, but are indifferent to unorganized workers.

According to Davis (1988), unions often do not respond adequately to individual needs; for example, the idea of individual differences disappears within the demands of standardization, uniformity and equality in all aspects of trade unions. In the face of pressures that want everything to be considered from a global perspective, problems turn into statistical symbols to be solved in central offices, while individuals are forgotten in a corner. According to Koray (1992), particularly white-collar workers are heavily influenced by their middle class values and individualist approach and they are often indifferent to unions. According to Krasucki (1987), a unionism that takes into account what the employees are and how they feel, is required.

In this context, the *"stakeholder"* and *"organization"* strategies, which have key differences among them, have been proposed by various thinkers in order to revive the unions.

According to Kelly (2004) the concept of stakeholder can be seen as essentially a pursuit for a "collaboration" or "mutual win" between labor-capital or between workers-employers. Employers have adopted stakeholder strategies in order to prevent strikes and similar collective actions and to create a flexible workforce with a non-conflict working environment.

The trade unions, on the other hand, have shown tendency towards the stakeholder strategy to strengthen the conditions of business security and the union orientations of employees, and for the prospect of having a say in business strategies. Ackerse and Payne (1998) emphasise that trade unions aim to expect a better wage and better working conditions through their stakeholder engagement.

According to many thinkers, the practices carried out in the context of stakeholder strategy are intensively and predominantly in favor of employers (Bacon and Storey, 2000; Guest and Peccei, 2001; Kelly, 2004; Kesslee and Purcell, 2003; Waddigton, 2003). According to Kelly (2004), the stakeholder relationship did not meet the expectations and improvements in neither job security nor other work areas. According to Brown (2000) stakeholder practices have led to the already weakened trade unions becoming weaker. According to Kılıç (2016), the output of the discourse of the partnership has never revealed a view for the workers and the trade unions.

According to Visser (2006) since the 1980s, trade unions have been losing members in almost all over the world. According to Kelly (1998), the main reasons for these member losses are the irregularities created by state policies, the intensification of employer resistance and the contraction in the mobilization capacity of the unions. According to Bronfenbrenner (2009) and Gall (2004), a large number of workers wanted to join the union in this process, but were denied membership – even losing their jobs as a result. According to Robinson (2008), workers' need for unions have increased tremendously. The stakeholder strategy failed to meet the expectations of the workers. According to Kelly (1998), the main reason employees become union members is not to co-operate with employers in better terms, but to protect themselves from employer's injustice.

According to Tilly (1978) organization is the most basic form of representing the common interests for trade unions. Because the organization mainly involves centralization of the field of power and representation. The organizational strategy is based on the emphasis on workplace injustice and conflicting interests, contrary to the stakeholder strategy based on common interests.

According to Kılıç (2016), it should not be expected that trade union revival can be achieved solely with the adoption of the organizational strategy. The success of the organization is directly linked to the strength of the unions. The implementation of the organization strategy by supporting some additional strategies (social movement unionism, trade union mergers, open-source unionism, community unionism) will also contribute positively to the success of the strategy.

3. METHOD

In this study, the effects of change on unions, the difficulties faced by the traditional model of organization and the unions' search for vision against these effects; the fact that the insecure working practises that have become common due to neo-liberal policies making union organization more difficult, despite creating the need for such unions, and the possibilites created by the rising awareness among the middle class despite frauds impeding unionization among such employees will be investigated.

In this study, the related studies for the last 10 years will be examined in detail. In this conceptually designed study, it will be discussed whether new developments in trade union operations can be possible.

4. CONCLUSION

The unions can influence the established economic and social order and announce their weight in society by means of the vast numbers of members and their wealth and the strike/lockout powers granted to them.

However factors such as some effects stemming from the change in the workforce structure as well as the subcontracting brought by neo-liberal policies, flexible and insecure work practises becoming more common, the disunionizing policies of employers and the fact that the unions are becoming more and more distant to their members reduce the faith and trust put into trade unions, reduce the level of commitment and result in the laborers distancing themselves from unionized organizations.

In order to overcome these problems, trade unions should reorganize the Union-member

relationship by taking into account the sociological data and develop more challenging policies on the changing working conditions.

It would be an accomplishment for our country if this tendency would result in a healthy organization that surpasses criticism such as "Unionism in Turkey has never developed freely or in accordance to structural requirements, it has always been manipulated (Tuncay, 1979).

REFERENCES

Ackers, P., And Payne, J. (1998). British Trade Unions And Social Partnership: Rhetoric And Strategy. The International Journal Of Human Resource Management, 9(3), 529-550.

Akpınar, T. (2016). Sendikal Harekette Alternatif Arayışlara Dayanak Oluşturacak Sosyolojik Gerçekliğin Bilgisine Sahip Miyiz?. Emek Araştırma Dergisi, 2016/2, 51-67.

Bacon, N. And Storey, J. (2000). New Employee Relations Strategies İn Britain: Towards Individualism And Collectivism. British Journal Of Industrial Relations, 38(3), 407-427.

Bakır, H. (2018). Neo-Liberalizmin Hegemonyası Altında Türkiye Emek Piyasası. Çalışma Ve Toplum, 2018/

Bingöl, D. (1990). İşyeri Disiplini Ve Çalışma Barışı. Basisen Eğitim Ve Kültür Yayınları, Yayın No. 21, İstanbul.

Bronfenbrenner, K. (1997). The Role Of Union Strategies İn Nlrb Certication Elections. Industrial And Labor Relations Review, 50(2), 195-212.

Brown, W. (2000). Putting Partnership İnto Practice İn Britain. Cambridge: Esrc Centre For Business Research, University Of Cambridge.

Centel, T. Değişim İçinde Sendikalar. Mercek, Türkiye Metal Sanayicileri Sendikası Dergisi, Nisan 1996, 41-47.

Coşkun, M., K. (2017). İşçi Sınıfı Kültürü, Deneyim Ve Gündelik Hayat. Emek Araştırma Dergisi, 2017/1, 41-54.

Davıs, K. (1988). İşletmede İnsan Davranışı. Çev. Kemal Tosun Vd. İstanbul: İ.Ü. İşletme Fakültesi Yayın No. 199.

Dereli, T. (1975). Aydınlar, Sendika Hareketi Ve Endüstriyel İlişkiler Sistemi. İstanbul.

Dereli, T. (1992). Endüstri İlişkilerinde Çatışmadan Uzlaşma Ve İşbirliğine Dayalı Sistemlere Geçiş. Mess İşveren Gazetesi, Ekim 1992.

Drucker, F., P. (1994). Kapitalist Ötesi Toplum. İstanbul: İnkılap Kitabevi.

Erbaş, H. (2017). Sınıf Çalışmalarında Kültür Ve Gündelik Yaşamın Yükselişi: Tarihsel Bir İzlek Ve Gelecek 'Umudu'. Emek Araştırma Dergisi, 2017/1, 9-30.

Gall, G. (2004). British Employer Resistance To Trade Union Recognition. Human Resource Management Journal, 14(2), 36-53.

Guest, D., E., And Peccei, R. (2001). Partnership At Work: Mutuality And Balance Of Advantage. British Journal Of Business Ethics, 261-278.

Kantaş, Ö. (2017). Sendikalaşmayı Kültürlerarası Psikoloji Çerçevesinde Ele Almak: İşsizlik Ve Milli Gelirin Ötesinde Kültürün Etkisi. Çalışma Ve Toplum, 2017/2, 721-740.

Kaya – Millioğulları, Ö. (2017). Sendikaya Bağlılık Üzerine Bir Alan Araştırması. Çalışma Ve Toplum, 2017/4, 2069-2092.

Kelly, J. (1998). Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism And Long Waves. London: Routledge.

Kelly, J. (2004). Social Partnership Agreements İn Britain: Labor Cooperation And Compliance. Industrial Telations, 19(5), 400-414.

Kessler, I., And Purcell, J. (2003). Individualism And Collectivism İn Industrial Relations. P. Edwards İçinde, Industrial Relations: Theory And Practice (2b., S.313-337). Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Kılıç, S. (2016). Sendikaların Yeniden Canlanması İçin İki Rakip Strateji: Paydaşlık Ve Örgütlenme, Çalışma Ve Toplum, 2016/3, 1203-1230.

Koray, M. (1992). Endüstri İlişkileri, Basisen Eğitim Ve Kültür Yayınları, İzmir.

Krasuckı, H. (1987). Çağdaş Sendikaya Evet. İstanbul: Amaç Yayıncılık.

Lıpetz, A. (1982). Towards Global Fordism?. New Left Review, 132, 33-47.

Robınson, I. (2008). What Explains Unorganized Worker's Growing Demand For Unions? Labor Studies Journal, 33(3), 235-243.

Tuncay, M. (1979). From the introduction of "Sendikacılık ve Siyaset", written by Alplaslan Işıklı.

Vısser, J. (2006). Union Membership Statistics İn 24 Countries. Monthly Labor Review, January, 38-49.

Waddıngton, J. (2003). Trade Union Organization. P. Edwards İçinde, Industrial Relations: Theory And Practice (S. 214_254). Malden: Blackwell Publishing.