Conceptualizing Labour Union Revitalization

Martin Behrens, Wirtschafts-und-Sozialwissenschaftliches Institut
Kerstin Hamann, University of Central Florida
Richard W. Hurd, Cornell University

Publication Date
2004

Abstract
[Excerpt] Unions have engaged in revitalization efforts in all five country cases that form the basis of comparison of this book, though they differ in the strategies they have pursued and the level of success they have had. Some of the strategies have been promising or even successful in terms of their immediate outcomes; others are still waiting to be fully implemented; and still others have failed to live up to the original expectations. While in many countries union activists are eagerly developing strategies to turn their fate, they are also facing some doubt or even resistance by politicians and academics alike who question the need for a strong and unified representation of labour. Here, we set out to provide a conceptual framework to understand better these various efforts at revival of national union movements.

The following section discusses existing analyses of union revitalization and argues that a comparative perspective is well suited to shed light on unions’ revitalization efforts. We then introduce different analytical perspectives on the role of labour in the economy, politics, and society to help identify the significance of unions in an ever more global economy. The next section outlines the parameters of crisis for unions by tracing indicators of union strength over time. We then suggest a framework for conceptualizing union revitalization as a multidimensional process and argue that revitalization has different meanings depending on the specific national context.

Comments
Required Publisher Statement

Suggested Citation

Part 2 Union Revitalization What is union revitalization? Why should unions revitalize? The immediate challenge to Philippine unions Do unions in the Philippines see the need to revitalize? Role of union leadership and other factors in the union state of aairs What are the core dimensions of union revitalization? 13. iv. Understanding the importance of union leverage in URev URev strategies that enhance organizational capacity Which actions comprise union revitalization? What is the link between labor revitalization and social movement unionism? Part 3 Social Movement Unionism What is a social movement? Concepts of Social Movement Unionism. What are the various perceptions regarding SMU? What is APL’s Concept of SMU?