Case Study of Workers’ Education in China

Introduction

The strategy to rejuvenate the nation through science and education is one of the most important state policies in China. Workers, as the biggest group in any industrializing and industrialized country, play a very important role in the development of a country. Obviously, the workers’ education, to some extent, determines the country’s rise and decline. As the country with the largest number of workers around the world, China puts much effort into workers’ education. This case study will try to answer the question about the future of workers’ education in China, and, more specifically, how a chosen organization implements the workers’ education activity.

In this case study, the first part will be a brief summary of the workers’ education in China. It concludes with the definition, organization and current situation of workers’ education in China. The second part focuses on the case in a railway company, and describes the content and format of the activity they organized.

Workers’ Education in China

1. Definition of workers education

Before discussing the definition of workers’ education, it is significant to confirm the exact meaning of each term in a specific area. In China, the literature specifically on workers’ education is not often used, but several related terms are widespread. In general, the Chinese education system can be categorized into three education systems, which are the “school education (xuexiaojiaoyu)”, the “adult education (chengrenjiaoyu)” and the “vocational education (zhiyejiaoyu)”. These different education systems have different target groups, education range and contents, which are organized by various organizations (see table below).

Table 1: General categories of education in China

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education system</th>
<th>Target group</th>
<th>Sub categories</th>
<th>organizations</th>
<th>contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School education</td>
<td>Primary school students, middle</td>
<td>Preschool education (xueqianjiaoyu), Primary education (chudengjiaoyu)</td>
<td>Government, Primary school, middle school, high school, college, university, academic institutions</td>
<td>General education system refers to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
school students, high school students, college students, and post-graduate students.

Secondary education (zhongdengjiaoyu), Higher education (gaodengjiaoyu), compulsory education (yiwujiaoyu).

The continuation of compulsory education and is admitted by the national unified entrance exam in secondary and higher education system.

Adult education

Working staff who need skill improved, illiteracy, professionals and managers who need further education, adults who need various daily skills obtained.

Further education (jixujiayo), community education (shequjiayo), social education (shehuijiayo), adults higher education (chengrengaodengjiayo).

Government, the China Adult Education Association (zhongguochengrenjiaoyuxie hui), educational bureaus, trade union, enterprises, training school, social associations, colleges, universities and related institutions.

The broaden definition of adults education refers to a process of education that can improve the adults skills, knowledge, capability and profession.
According to the literature review on the meanings, purposes, forms and contents of workers’ education (Luciole, 2012), the workers’ education in this case studies will based on a broad definition, which is compositied by Hopkins’ definition and Spooner’s definition. It refers to a “programme of adult learning associated from or originated from trade unions, co-operative movements, political parties associated with organized labour or social movements, which caters for adult in their capacity as workers”. And in order to focus the scope of the research, the research project will exclude labour school, colleges and universities from the definition.
In this perspective, the Chinese Workers Education would be a part of Adult education system and Vocational education system, and only focuses on the training provided by government, enterprises, trade unions as well as other social organizations.

2. Organizations for workers education

According to the “The Education Law of People’s Republic of China”, Article 29 stipulates that “the local governments and related administrative department as well as employers should develop and protect various vocational training and vocational school education for citizens.” More specifically, in “The Vocational Education Act of People’s Republic of China” (Central People’s Republic of China, 2012), Articles 18, 19, 20, 21 indicate that the government should not only conduct vocational education, but also should direct the employers to organize vocational training. The vocational education and adults education department of Chinese ministry of education is the main department responsible for the development of workers education (Ministry of Education, 2012). The document “ Further opinion on the role of industry, enterprises in vocational education and training” (Ministry of Education, 2012), issued by Ministry of education, State of Economic and Trade Commission, and Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, emphasizes that the employers should build the employers vocational training system and plan, conduct the further education for workers through training system. Meantime, the employers should organize vocational skills competition, “Master apprentice” system, “on the job” training system as well as school training system to cultivate large amounts of skilled workers. These Articles and documents claim one point: The government plays a very important role in creating a sound circumstance (?) for the education system, establishing relative policy and law, guiding employers to implement workers education and training, combining social resources to support the conduction of education.

Other social organizations and associations are also encouraged to build vocational institutes. As for the trade unions, according to the “Trade Union Law of People’s Republic of China” (Central of Government, 2012), Article 7 indicates that “trade unions should educate workers to improve the level of thought morals, the technical service and the cultural and scientific qualities”. In the document “ Further emphasis on the decision of the establishment of trade union caters school” issued by All-China Federation of Trade Unions, it indicates that various levels of trade unions school should educate them in the content of trade union theory, trade union practice, policy and law and economics (ACFTU, 2012). And in the trade union, there
is a specific department named “propaganda and education department” which is responsible for these specific issues. As for other social associations, the China Adult Education Association is one of the main associations who actively involve the work of workers education. Its objective is organizing all the adults education organizations and workers to conduct the researches and activities in the theory and practice of adults education (Baidu, 2012). Thus, the general relationship between these organizations can be showed below (see graph 1).

Graph 1. relationship of organizations for workers education

Source: own compilation

3. Workers education in present

The situation of workers education in China is very complicated, because various organizations are associated with each other and involved in various activities. In this part, the general situation and content of workers education will be presented.

As mentioned above, the department of Vocational and Adult Education in the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China is largely responsible for the workers education in China. There are five main tasks of this department currently, according to the interview of the director Mr. Huang (Ministry of Education, 2012): (1) to push forward the employers to conduct workers’ education (2) to further stimulate the vocational certificate system (3) to push forward the employers to organize various education activities (4) to enhance management and organization (5) to connect the workers education in enterprises and in communities. Thus, the government normally does not conduct workers’ education, but provides technical and theoretical guidance for the enterprises.

The pedagogical method that the Ministry of Education suggests is (1) conducting various thematic education activities, (2) establishing sound platform for workers to learn from each other, e.g. organizing skilled completion. (3) Promoting self-studying and reading activities. (4) Utilizing distance education and other social networks with various vocational training agencies. However, whether the activity can be implemented or not largely depends on the enterprises themselves.

Besides of that, The Ministry of Education holds several large scale activities in the national range. One of the most important activities organized in recent years is the “establishing
learning organization, try to be knowledgeable worker”. This activity asks for “improving
the workers learning skills and practical skills as well as creative skills, protecting the
worker’s right of study and development, pushing forward the knowledge level of workers’
class and providing enough human brains for fully establishing moderately prosperous

The workers’ education in enterprises are various in a perspective of ownership. For those
state-owned companies, normally there will be a department specifically focused on
workers education, which will implement all the pedagogical activities according to the
guidelines from Ministry of Education. For multinational companies, worker education
largely depends on the rules of the company itself. In most of the companies, the human
resources department will take the responsibility to train the labourers either before or on
the post and provide relative self-training plans either by workshop or distance learning
(Xie, 2003). As for those private-owned companies, the education task may depend on the
decision of the director. In fact, most of the companies do not have a specific education
system, and there are no activities for workers’ education either in skills improvement or
political consciousness. (Yang, 2012)

Trade unions’ effort regarding workers education can be generally separated into two parts.
The first one is providing theoretical courses for trade union cadres in various trade union
college. Take the China Institute of Industrial Relations as an example, which is a college
affiliated to the All-China Federations of Trade Unions. It provides training courses for
specific grassroots trade union cadres. In 2011, the college conducted 27 trainings for about
4600 trade union cadres. The content of the training includes the Labour Law, labor
economics, trade union theory, labour and trade union policies, etc. Besides, lectures and
seminars about labor contract law, enterprise management, and state-owned company
reform, there are also guest lecturers who are invited to speak during the training period
(China Institute of Industrial Relations, 2012). Additionally, the college also provides full-
time degree programmes for those front-line workers who won the “National Model
Worker”(a special and honored name for selected workers who is excellent in both skills
and personalities. There are about 2000 workers who can own this honor every year.).

The second part is organizing vocational training in each level of trade union. The activity
normally is brought about by the All-China Federations of Trade Unions. Local union
federations or grassroot trade unions will implement the education activities according to the guide as well as the enterprise situation. In July, 2012, a new program named “vocational qualification training for national workers” began at the national level, which aims at training 2 million workers in the next five years. This programme is based on “2010-2020 cadres Education and Training Reform Programme”, issued by ACFTU (All China Federations of Trade Unions), MOHRSS (Ministry of human resource and Social Security) and the Ministry of Education. According to this programme, the core duty of workers' education is to improve the ideological, moral and professional quality of workers (ACFTU, 2012).

In the political perspective, trade unions have the duty to teach ideology and political education (Qiao, 2011). The General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and General Office of the State Council forwarded to the public a document issued by Propaganda Department of the Communist Party of China, the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council. This document, named “Strengthen and improve the whole process of the ideological and political work in state-owned enterprise under the new situation”, claims that “… enterprise unions and other organizations should actively play an important role in carrying out ideological and political work”. This means the ideology and political education is one of the significant tasks for trade unions currently.

Case study

In this section, a case of railway workers’ education in China will be presented in four parts. The first part explains why and how this unit of analysis (UI) is of interest and suitable for this research. The second part briefly introduces the organization’s background: structure, function and members. Thirdly, Workers’ education activities in this organization will be described based on structured interviews. In the final part, a brief assessment of, and suggestions for, the workers’ education will be provided.

1. Unit of analysis

The Unit of analysis (UI) in this case study is the “three departments (Workers Education office, grassroots Trade unions and grassroots Party-Committee)” who is responsible for workers’ education in Wuchang Passenger Train Depot of Wuhan Railway Bureau. There are two reasons for choosing this education group (the “three departments”) as the UI.
Firstly, this kind of education group is very typical in all the state-owned enterprises in China. During the last three decades, China experienced fundamental reform not only in economics but also in labour relations. Trade unions are becoming more involved in workers’ activities and worker’s rights, and play an important role in workers’ education. As for the political workers’ education part, both Party-Committee and trade unions are responsible for conducting the ideology and political education for workers in these state-owned enterprises. Therefore, it would be very interesting to investigate whether those ideological and political educational activities have an effect on workers. As for multinational companies and privately-owned companies, as mentioned above, workers’ education largely depends on the company’s own rule (?) political education.

Secondly, the education object of this education group is also typical. They are railway workers, the blue-collar workers, representing the frontline workers in China who need skills and political education urgently. Besides, although the education object of this UI is the railway workers only in Wuhan Railway system, the workers in other Railway system in China can experience the similar education system. From this point of view, the UI is also representative in the whole Chinese railway system.

2. Organization’s Background

Before introducing the organizational structure and function of the UI, it is necessary to describe the Company itself and its interior organizational structure. The name of this Company is WuchangPassenger Train Depot of Wuhan Railway Bureau (Wuhan tie lu ju wuchang ke yun duan); it is a son-company of Wuhan Railway Bureau. And the Wuhan Railway Bureau (Wuhan tie lu ju) is one of the 18 Railway Bureaus in whole Chinese Railway system, which is managed by Ministry of Railways of People’s Republic of China.

Within the Wuchang Train Depot (Wuchang ke yun duan), there are 22 departments conducting various organizational functions. The “Workers education office” is the main office that takes the responsibility of providing vocational training courses. The “Trade union office” is, on one hand, one of departments of the company; while on the other hand, also a separate grassroots trade union, which is affiliated to an industry union: The National Railway Federation of Trade Unions (QuanguoTie lu Zonggonghui). The “Party Committee” is managed by two organizations. One is the Wuchang Train Depot and the other is the Party
Committee of Ministry of Railway. Under this organization structure, there are 18 manufacturing shops, where Most of blue-collar workers work. (See graph below)

There are about 2.07 million railway workers in China (Ministry of Railway, 2012), 97,000 workers in Wuhan Railway Bureau and about 3,500 workers in Wuchang Train Depot (Baidu, 2012). Most of them are blue-collar workers who fill different positions, for example: ticket-taker, filter, electrician, etc. All of them automatically become trade union members. But only few of them can be Party members.

**Graph2. Organizational structure of Railway system in China**

Source: own compilation

3. Workers’ Education Activities

In this Part, the specific activities and events that these three education groups organized will be described and analyzed in detail. Firstly, the information of the structured interviews will be introduced, because all the data are based on these interviews. Secondly, the aims and definition of these education groups will be emphasized. The third part focuses on the pedagogical activities that they organized, the content they provided and the method they used. The next part look at participation, which will try to answer the question of “how and why do workers participate in the educational activities”. The final part will present the impact these educational activities have on the workers and the workers’ feedback.

- Interview details
  
The first group of interviews was conducted in early June, 2012 by telephone. The six interviewees are working in totally different areas and play different roles in pedagogical activities, which provide plenty of opinions from various perspectives. The second group of interviews was made in July, 2013. In order to fully understand and further investigate the meaning of what the interviewees said last time, some of the interviewees were interviewed several times. Besides, two new interviewees who are both party members were added to the second group, which makes up for the deficiency of educational activities of the grass-roots party organizations. The age difference (ranging from 26 to 49) also explains for different perceptions. Here is the basic information of those interviewees. In order to protect the personal privacy, the names of the interviewees in this article are aliases.
Table 2. Information of Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mei</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Workers education trainer</td>
<td>Organizer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mu</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Coordinator and Party member</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xiang</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Steward and Party member</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yin</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Trade union committee member</td>
<td>Organizer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gong</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Personnel and Financial specialist</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhong</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Logistics workers</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ai</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Logistics workers and Party member</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meng</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Workshop workers</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: own compilation

• Definition and Aim of Workers’ Education

The definition of Workers’ Education in the UI (the three departments) is mainly consistent. The 4 areas of core education are: preparing and training the workers on the knowledge according to their own positions; providing and improving the workers’ vocational skills and labour productivity; enriching workers cultural life and fulfilling their spiritual demands; and finally, developing the political and ideological consciousness. It is a process that improves the comprehensive skills of workers and provides the platform foundation for workers to learn and accumulate.

However, the three departments of this UI have a specific division of labour in education. As the workers education trainer Mr Mei says:

“The Workers’ education concludes the training on general quality (zonghesuzhi), vocational skills and ideological education. But each of the department has limited capability to function in all parts, thus it is better for each of our offices only focusing on one part of the education. For my parts, the main aim of the education is to make the workers truly understand the instruction and the mission of the work theoretically or practically, thereby making them perform more efficiently. While for the trade union and party committee, they also have their own aims in education.”
To sum up, the main aim of the education in this UI is to increase labour productivity, while each of the departments has their own smaller goals in order to finally achieve the big goal. The workers education department aims at improving the workers’ stores of knowledge and comprehensive ability in its specific profession. The trade union aims at providing enough spiritual assistance for workers. The party committee office’s goal is to unify the political and ideological consciousness of workers.

- Pedagogical activities

The content of pedagogical activities provided by the UI will be presented by three departments separately. Within each department, the activities will be introduced by different types of methods it used.

Table 3. Pedagogical activities in contents, methods, participations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Office</th>
<th>Types of activities</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workers education office</td>
<td>“Theme”Lectures</td>
<td>Explain and publicize the “Rule and regulations for production safely”</td>
<td>Required 80% participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Training in Training Base</td>
<td>Organize special training for certificate of professions</td>
<td>Optional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theoretical and practical training for Competition</td>
<td>Organize workers to participate national skill Competition</td>
<td>Selected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade union office</td>
<td>Watching movies</td>
<td>Play relative political movies in special political festival</td>
<td>Optional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Culture and art event</td>
<td>Organize sports and entertainments activities based on a specific theme</td>
<td>Optional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party committee office</td>
<td>Conference</td>
<td>Hold reference for party members to grasp the political and ideological instruction from superior party committee</td>
<td>Required but only for party members</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Workers education office in Wuchang Train Depot takes large amounts of educational responsibility. For each production workshop, there is one workers education trainer who is responsible for the educational of about 400 workers in this shop. Mr Mei, the workers education trainer in one workshop, says:

“Most of the activities are based on the superior instruction. The whole flow would be: firstly the Workers education department of the Ministry of Railway will confirm a theme. This theme normally will involve with production safety, because the safety is the most important thing for our railway system. Then, 18 railway bureaus will arrange different activities in their own companies and continuously implement this mission into subordinate department. Then the task goes to the Depot, to the workshop, and finally to the working team, which is consisted with about 20 workers.

Generally speaking, there are three types of activities that this office provides according to the method used in the education. The first one is providing lectures. The theme of the lectures normally concerns production and safety. In each of the workshop, the trainer will discuss with leader of each working team, and then determine the exact time and place of the lectures for different working teams.

“This is because the production is always on the top of the list, and the education course should not affect workers’ daily work. Normally the training will be taken in one of the afternoon when the workload is not too much, and workers will come in shift to protecting the regular production” said Mr Mei.

This activity will cover at least 80% of the workers because this is the requirement. The workers are requested to take notes during the lectures and to memorize the main content of the lectures after the course. An exam is held each month. The logistic workers, Mrs Zhong says:

“I have taken part in this kind of training many times. Although the test questions are different, the core contents are similar. For us, I have been working in this company for more than 20 year; I have known all this knowledge as common sense. But it is important because each year there are new workers coming in our company,
it is necessary for them to understand the significance of the core knowledge in production and safety. “

Normally, each of the “Theme” lecture activities last about 3 months, but sometimes even longer due to the currently situation. At the end of the activity, worker leaders will be asked to write a brief report to summarize the process and opinions of its working team. The member of Female workers committee, Ms Gong described her experience as following:

“Specifically speaking, for example, when the summer is coming, the theme will involve with “Safely production in Summer time” or “How to protect from sunstroke in high temperature”. Last year 23th of July, there was a huge train crash happened in China, large numbers of people died in this tragic event, thus during the following six months, the theme is focusing on the “How to prevent the event and produce safely”. At the end of that activity, the superior leader came to the workshop several times. The leader of working teams was even asked to take part in special lectures in Saturdays.

The second kind of activity is associated with the training agency, which provides education at a training base. The training base is a kind of special place where workers live and study for a certain period of time. After finishing this training given by the training agency, workers will come back to the workplace and live at home as normal. Although the training varies in different professions, the aim of this kind of training is to help the workers obtain a certificate. This certificate is the pre-condition for anyone who would like to continue working in their current position or to be promoted in the future. Normally, there is a de facto rule for workers to be promoted in a certain number of years once he/she has passed the exam and obtained the required certificate. Therefore, in each year, those workers who maybe potentially promoted will be selected to participant the training in the training base. The logistic worker, Mrs Zhong says:

“My work involves in materials management. In my work area, each of us needs to get the certificate of “Senior Technician”. If I pass the exam, there are no more tests later. But for skilled worker who works in workshop, they need not only to get the certificate of “Senior Technician”, but also have to pass the selective examination every year. Only they pass the selective examination every year, they can earn the
extra subsidy every month. If they failed once, they cannot have it anymore. Therefore, they must participate the training actively and frequently. “

The third method is organizing special training for those workers who are selected to be a participant in the national skilled competition. This kind of training only follows the instruction from the superior department once a year. The workers education trainer Mr. Mei says:

“For those selected workers who are already skillful enough at their professions, I will focus on theoretical points that normally are tested in the previous competitions. After a short period of training, those selected workers will represent our depot to compete with other workers in our Wuhan Railway Bureau, till the top level. “

The trade union office’s work concerns issues that are more spiritual. The trade union in China is not very similar as trade union in most of the western countries who is wholly independent, because Chinese trade unions accept and implement the instruction and guidelines of the Chinese Communist Party. Although the labour relations in China is currently experiencing reform, the fundamental change cannot be seen in recent years due to the uncertain political environment. Therefore, in these state-owned enterprises, the feature of trade unions, unlike in western countries, such as collective bargaining function, strike and demonstration function are not apparent.

The grassroots trade union of Wuchang Train Bureau implements its educational function by playing movies with political themes and organizing sports and entertainment activities in some political festivals. According to the interview of MrsYin, the trade union committee members, the activities of trade union aims at improving the labour productivity by providing more spiritual and political assistance. Thus these activities are organized for a certain theme. At the end of the activity, the workers are encouraged to write report about their ideological and political consciousness.

Comparing with the frequency “few-times-a-year” of watching movies, the frequency of organizing sports and entertainment event is much more often. There are several types(?) of sports game within one month. The games could be basketball competition within the bureau, or the badminton competition between the workshops, or table
tennis competition in a work team. For each event, six trade union committee members in the depot will first confirm the place and the date. Then the whole competition plan which will be shown in the public board. After that, the trade union activists in each workshop will be encouraged to propagandize these activities among the other workers. Finally the event will be held under the supervision of trade union on a certain date. The trade union committee member Mrs Yin says:

“Each of the events has a specific theme. Take basketball competition as an example, we will put a long and huge banner which will be written the theme of this event. It aims at improving the understanding of workers on this theme. It is very clear. It can show our goal. When the workers play the games, they will experience while playing, they will keep thinking these problems. I believe this can change something.”

“It is not hard to make a theme for each of the event. For example, last month, we made a basketball competition; it is called “The month of safe production, it is depended on our all” (an quan sheng chan yue, yi qie kao da jia). You know, in our company, Safety is the most important thing. Thus it will never be wrong if we make some theme concerning about Safety. As for the activities itself, it is does not matter if there is connection between activity and theme. All we want is that workers can have a idea about the theme when they take part in the activity.” Mrs Yin added in the second times of interview.

The work of Party Committee office is a very small part of the whole education work; however, it is the most important. The method that the party provides education for workers is holding conferences.

In China, every state-owned company should have a party organization (Dang zu zhi), which leads the operation of the company and make decisions of the personnel affairs. In Wuchang Train Depot, the Party committee holds meetings at regular interval, normally it takes after a big event has happened on a national scale. The grass-roots party committee holds smaller meetings once a month, which organized by Party Branch Secretary.

Under normal conditions, there is a routine for the content of a small conference. Firstly, the party secretary will announce some breaking news which has had a strong social influence recently. Then, some important documentation issued by the Party Central Committee will be read, then the secretary will explain the details of the
document, emphasis its effect on daily work and summarizes the core point of the conference and emphasize the core ideology of the superior guidelines. During the conference, the workers will be given handouts where one can make his note on. There is no specific discussion time for participants; but each participant should express his / her opinion on the event concerning its own situation one by one. Finally, the ideological and political report will be asked to hand out to the superior after the conference, and those reports will be collected in a special folder for each party member. There is a specific name for this report: ideological report (Si xiang hui bao). The party member Mr Meng says:

“This kind of conference will prevent the corruption by keeping emphasizing the importance of honesty. It is very important. “

Besides this, the Party Committee also organizes some other activities to educate workers. For example, the Essay Competition is one of the most popular activities. The topic of the recent Essay Competition is “Devote myself to the Party”. The workers can optionally write an essay on this topic and submit it to the Party Committee before the deadline. The grass-root Party Committee will select those outstanding essays and send them to superior Party Committee. Finally, the best essay will be published on the official website of the Ministry of Railways and collected in internal journals. Other selected essays will be published on company level internal website. The party member Mr Mu says:

“Although this is an activity that allows the entire worker participant, most published essays are written by selected party members. They are very good at writing or had experience of writing essays. The Content they write is required to focus on “Exemplary deeds” (Xian jin shi ji). For example, some essay describes that a steward who devote himself to his career and always helping others. Some essay tells the story of the railway worker give back the wallet which he picks up from the street to the owner. All these essays should reflect a specific theme, and make a model of a person. Then this kind of polished story can be a good case for workers to emulate. Since the atmosphere (Feng qi) at the moment is not good enough, there are not many people to do good things actively; people need some encouragement, praise and support. In this way, the workers can know what is encouraged and what is discouraged. “
Participation and Impact on Workers

Participation in workers education is very important, because there is a relationship between the motivation of educators (teachers?) and the impact of education on workers. Activities can be categorized into three types: required activities, optional activities, selected activities (see table 3).

The “Theme” lectures provided by workers education office and the conference organized by party committee are required educational activities. For the lectures activity, not all the workers are required to participate, but lectures should cover at least 80% of the workers. In this way, it seems that all the workers have experienced the lectures, which may indicate that this kind of activity can have a very positive impact on workers. However, based on the data of interview, the result seems to be the opposite. The workers education trainer Mr Meibelieves that this is because workers only care about whether the lectures effect their salary or possible promoting. The workers who have lower education background normally stay in a low level position. They show no interest on this kind of activities because there is not many promotion opportunities on his/her career path. He says:

“Some workers are very indiscipline. They do not pay attention in the class and even play the games on the Mobil phone. Maybe this is because they do not have high education, studying for them is very hard and boring. I keep telling them to shut down the Mobil phone, but it is useless.”

While MsYin, the trade union committee member, points out another possible reason. She says:

“Some content of the training is always the same. Although It is important, people can still feel tired of that. One of the reasons, I think is that the teaching method is not specific for different kinds of workers. I mean they are not special. For some of the workers, they can learn things very fast, they like learning new things and accept new knowledge faster than others; while some of the workers are not good at learning, they need to be attracted and feel interested.”

As for the conference organized by Party committee, the participation is nearly 100%. Each party member is required to take part in every conference, accepting the instruction from superior party committee. But participants do not seem to be affected
in terms of their ideology. The logistic worker and also the party member, Ms Ai says:

“The conference is as normal as other administrative conference. Of course I have learned something from it, but I do not feel so much change on ideological consciousness. This kind of conference does not concern about politics at all. Since our country is a nation with one-party system, there is not anything that violates the path of the party. Therefore, it is too empty to talks about the meaning of founding a party or something about class struggle that we talks about in old days. We take part in this meeting, because we can know news about the personnel affairs or accept administrative request. This is much more concern about my work, which is what I really cares about. For the others, politics, democracy, or something like political education, that is just a slogan, we do not take it seriously actually.” And another logistic worker Ms Zhong says:

“I do not think we normal workers need extra ideological training. We are very normal people who know our place. We do not have any rise and falls in our ideology. Unlike those private companies, we are state-owned companies. We will not do the strikes or demonstrations like those workers in western countries. I think there is no need.”

From the above opinions, it is clear that a party committee conference is just a very formalized and superficial event because it simply announces the subordinate’s work request. It is nothing about political influence. Besides, even the word that we formerly used to describe the ideological consciousness is not the same meaning any more. Mr Mu says,

“... the spirit of the Party Central Committee means the guideline that the subordinate to achieve. For example, understand the spirit of the party means understand the economical index of the party, the GDP increasing rate request of the Party. It is not the spirit that we talked on the times of reform-and–open.” said Mr. Mu.

The training for certificate and two types of activities organized by trade unions are optional activities. As for the training for the certificate, the workers are very active. One reason may be because of the requirement of their position. As mentioned earlier, if they cannot get the certificate, they will not keep their position any longer. Thus this
request may become a motivation for them to participate in the training actively. Another reason may be their concerns about a promotion in their career and enhancement in salary. As the workers education trainer Mr Mei says:

“Some workers do not study, this is because they have no pressure and always study passively. Once the workers study from a passive way to a forward way, there must be something stimulating them.”

Trade union’s activities are also good examples of workers would like to study things that attract them. Although these activities are optional, many workers choose to participate, especially the watching political movies are their favorite educational activity. The logistics worker Mrs Ai says:

“The work of trade union is more practical and interesting comparing other activities. I like watch movies. Most of time I have no spare time to watch movies in the cinema, but the trade unions will play movies in the noon break, this is very good. The movies with political theme is also good, I am interested in understanding these things. For example, last year in the national day, the trade union played a movie named “The funding of the republic”, I liked it very much. “

Lastly, is the optional activity of Essay writing / competition The party committee chooses the suited people to write requested essays, because it hopes to educate workers on ideological perspectives by using the method of establishing a moral model and advertising exemplary deeds. However, the workers have their own opinion. Ms Gong said:

“I do not think this activity has any influence on my mind. For me, life is just do things well, do things that I need to do, to own for a living. I will take part some activities after work, but that’s it. The situation is already like this, so we have to accept it, this is the only thing that we can do. Nothing can be changed. So, what I will do at the moment is to do my job, own my money and do not think about anything else.”

The interviewee seemed to not want to continue discussing this topic. She keeps saying that things cannot be changed, this is the reality. And this opinions is expressed by some other interviewees too. The steward Mr. Xiang said,
“Something that you asked about is what we will not talk with others. We only talk about work and entertainment. People know the situation, but people do not have the capability to change. So... If I talk about this ideological thing, this political thing or other similar word, I will be identified as a cynic man (Fen qing). But I am not actually. I am satisfied with the situation to some extent, and I can also benefit from this atmosphere. The only problem is, There is still some blindside in the society, and I cannot change that.”

Mr Xiang is very hesitant to answer the question at the first stage. But finally he states his own opinion, which can represent many workers’ opinion: People find that each coin has two sides. On one hand, they can take advantage from the current situation; but on the other hand, they also realize there is some limitation for them to make the situation better. They believe it is useless to discuss it. So most of the people choose to be silent and persuade themselves to accept the reality. From this point of view, the Chineseworkers have a pragmatic attitude toward their lives.

The other selective activity is the training for competition. Only few of the workers are allowed to participate in this kind of training, because they have to be good enough in both theory and practice to compete with other candidates. The participant rating of this training is 100%, because candidates are likely to benefit from this education. This is because after training, the candidate can be selected to participate in the competition and may win. After the special training, they can have better practice in their professions, and they can have higher possibilities to win the competition and honor, which are desired for those workers.

4. Assessing
To sum up, there are some points that we can conclude from the above case study. Firstly, the content of the worker’s education in this IU covers both the vocational-oriented education and ideological education. But its ideological education does not have an apparent effect on workers. Those political topics are too sensitive for workers to talk about, let alone to think about. The workers in IU, at the moment, only care about the activities that can promote their position or increase their income. They do not want to be involved in political issues. Secondly, education covers all workers, but for different types of workers, the involvement of the educational activities is different. The party members have more chances to take part in activities, while normal workers have less chances. Thirdly, the education indeed enriches the spiritual life of workers in entertainment perspectives. But there is no apparent effect on political perspectives.
From what we discussed above, the workers’ education in this UI is a kind of education toward the economic production and social stabilization. The whole aim of the education is to improve the productivity of labour under a stable social environment. But lack of political consciousness stimulation will be one of the important limits for this UI to contribute their efforts on the global workers development.

**Conclusion**

One of the tasks of this paper is to identify how the workers’ education impact on the workers’ political consciousness is in China. Based on the empirical evidence presented, we conclude that there is no apparent impact on workers’ class consciousness. Within the last few decades, although more and more workers are becoming not afraid to talk about the politics, the consciousness of politics is not deeply planted in most of Chinese workers’ mind. The word “politics” is still a sensible topic for workers in China under the uncertain political surroundings.

However, it is interesting to see that more and more education organizers realize that political and ideological education is important for improving the comprehensive quality of the workers. More and more political activities are organized by trade unions and party committee in the enterprises, which plenty of workers can directly benefit from. This situation is consistent with the general future plan of Ministry of Education and All-China Federations of Trade Unions.

Therefore, it is popular belief that the workers in the future can benefit from more knowledge either in skills but also in ideology. Under a more free (democratic?) political system, the trade unions can better represent the workers, and can even better educate the workers from a political perspective.

**Reference**


Annex: Interview for the second phase of the research

In order to further understand what workers think of political consciousness and how much are they influenced by workers educational activities, more interviews are conducted. Here the interview summary for the second phase of the research is presented. The questions are shortly shown as Q, and representative answer is noted as A. The names of the interviewees are concealed.

Q: Are you a party committee member? If yes, can you please tell me about the activities that party committee organized? And how often does this activity take places?
A: Yes. I have been joined party for many years. We have a lot of meetings. Theoretically speaking, each grassroots party committee should hold meetings at regular interval. For our company, we normally take part in it once a month.

Q: What do you normally do in the meeting?
A: Normally party secretary will read some breaking news which had big social influence recently. Then, we need to talk about it considering our own situation. Or he will show us some important documentation issued by the Party Central Committee and explain it.

Q: Why the secretary organizes the meeting in this way? And what do you think of this kind of meeting?
A: This is just the routine. There is nothing to say how I think about it. The secretary reads the document to us, because he wants to emphasis its effect on daily work and emphasizes the core ideology of the superior guidelines. Then we need to follow these guidelines and achieve the request of the superior.

Q: Are these meetings required or optional? Do workers actively participant or not? And why?
A: yes, it is required. All the party members need to attend. As for the activeness, I think it depends on the workers. For example, for those blue collar workers, they cannot get useful information they want from the meeting, then the meeting is not that meaningful for them. But for those who in the high position, this kind of meeting is very important. They will know how the core spirit of the Party Central Committee and how to achieve the request.

Q: What do you mean by the core spirit or ideology of the Party Central Committee? Can you explain it in details?

A: It is actually a kind of quantitative index, which needs to be achieved. It is also can be seen as an evaluation. Have you finished? How much have you achieved? And how have you achieved? These questions should be answered in the report, and the superior will review this report. We can understand it as this way: the spirit of the Party Central Committee means the guideline that the subordinate to achieve. For example, understand the spirit of the party means understand the economical index of the party, the GDP increasing rate request of the Party. It is not the spirit that we talked on the times of reform-and–open.

Q: Do you think this meeting has influenced on your political view or ideological consciousness?

A: no, this kind of conference does not concern about politics at all. Since our country is a nation with one-party system, there is not anything that violates the path of the party. We do not like western countries, they have multi-party political systems. For us, we (the party), there is only one task, that is the development. “

Q: do these meetings talk about the theory knowledge of the party?

A: sometimes. But there is no necessary. Because it is too empty to talks about the meaning of founding a party or something about class struggle that we talks about in old days. We take part in this meeting, because we can know news about the personnel affairs or accept administrative request. This is much more concern about my work, which is what I really cares about. For the others, politics, democracy, or something like political education, that is just a slogan, we do not take it seriously actually.

Q: Do you think these activities that party committee organized has influence on you? And what kind of influence?
A: I do not think this activity has any influence on my mind. For me, life is just do things well, do things that I need to do, to own for a living. I will take part some activities after work, but that’s it. The situation is already like this, so we have to accept it, this is the only thing that we can do. Nothing can be changed. So, what I will do at the moment is to do my job, own my money and do not think about anything else.

Q: Why do you say, that nothing can be changed? What kind of things?

A: For example, there are some articles on the internet, which makes many critical comments on the government. Of course, the government knows that there is some problems. But the government cannot change the situation. Although people can speak freely, it is useless when nothing is changed. At present, people are accustomed to tolerant. This is already a tendency. We always try to comfort ourselves, like Mr. Q did. We just live for ourselves; we do not think about others...it is quite hard to explain...It is too complicated.

Something that you asked about is what we will not talk with others. We only talks about work and entertainment. People know the situation, but people do not have the capability to change. So...If I talk about this ideological thing, this political thing or other similar word, I will be identified as a cynic man (Fen qing). But I am not actually. I am satisfied with the situation to some extent, and I can also benefit from this atmosphere. The only problem is, There is still some blindside in the society, and I cannot change that.