



THE STRATEGY OF TRADE UNION REVITALISATION IN VIETNAM

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DECLARATION

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis/project is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

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RELATED PUBLICATIONS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CPV	Communist Party of Vietnam
DPE	Domestic Private Enterprise
FOE	Foreign-Owned Enterprise
GSO	General Statistics Office of Vietnam
ILO	International Labour Organisation
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
RWGU	Red Workers' General Union
SOE	State-Owned Enterprise
TUC	Trade Union Congress
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States of America
VGCL	Vietnam General Confederation of Labour

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores strategies of trade union revitalisation in Vietnam. Since 1986, Vietnamese trade unions have played an important role as the economy has shifted from being centrally planned to market oriented, known as the Doi Moi or Renovation policy. This research provides empirical knowledge on strategies of trade union revitalisation in Vietnam, as there has been limited research on this topic in the Vietnamese context.

Union revitalisation has occurred across many nations over recent decades. In advanced industrial countries, trade unions have adopted such strategies of union revitalisation as building union-management partnerships, political action, union restructuring, coalition building, and international solidarity. In Asian countries, revitalisation of trade unions encompasses strategies including increases in union autonomy, a renewed emphasis on organising, changes in union structures, alliances between unions and civil society groups, increased member servicing, and internationalisation of union activity. Since Doi Moi, the adoption of strategies for trade union revitalisation in Vietnam appears paradoxical, because it is unclear whether Vietnamese trade unions choose a close relationship between union and management, as is the traditional characteristic of communist trade unions, or choose an adversarial relationship with management, as found in traditional theories on trade unions in advanced industrial economies. Therefore, this raises the question of what are strategies for trade union revitalisation in Vietnam during the Doi Moi era.

The present research addresses the above question with a qualitative approach, by collecting data from semi-structured interviews, unobtrusive observation, and analysis of documents. This research finds that, in Vietnam, the primary trade

unions have operated by seeking employers' support, as well as through negotiation and avoidance of direct confrontation with management. Investigating union members' attitudes and union democracy, the present research also explored that, in the Vietnamese context, decentralisation with a wide range of membership participation in union decision-making processes, equality between leadership and membership, and free communication, were apparent. However, there has been a lack of organised opposition parties within trade unions in Vietnam, because of intolerance of opposition in communist tenets. At the workplace level, while the union members appear to have had less involvement in union operations, the union leaders have played important roles in conducting union daily tasks. This passivity or less involvement of union members and active role of union leaders in union operations suggests that the appropriate model of Vietnamese trade unions is the servicing model. From the above findings, this research argues that, in the context of transitional countries such as Vietnam, the strategy of building partnership relationships between trade unions and management is appropriate for trade union revitalisation, because this strategy has been formulated by the tendency for avoidance of direct confrontation with management, the passivity of membership, the active role of union leadership, and the union servicing model.

This research advances the literature on trade union revitalisation by proposing a link between the servicing model of trade unions and the partnership strategy of trade union revitalisation, in the context of Vietnam. This research also suggests that studies on trade union revitalisation and union democracy should concentrate on the passivity of members, which is a crucial aspect in the formulation of union strategy. From this research, recommendations are offered for union activists and academics on strategies for union revitalisation in Vietnam.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Rationale of the research

The present study explores strategies of Vietnamese trade unions responding to their challenges in economic transition. Vietnamese trade unions, which have remained faithful to their traditional communist identity in a centrally-planned economy, have sought for potential strategies to operate in a market economy. In Vietnam, trade union activity is legally determined by the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL) and VGCL affiliates only, including provincial federations of labour, the district federations of labour, and numerous primary trade unions at the workplace level. Any organisation of employees not recognised by the VGCL is forbidden to be established or operate (Van Gramberg et al. 2013). Before 1986, in the centrally-planned economy dominated by state ownership, trade unions acted as a transmission belt between employees and employers, with their role being to maintain labour discipline, encourage production drive, and administer a large part of the state housing, social and welfare apparatus, rather than to represent their members in opposition to employers (Zhu & Fahey 2000). Thus, Vietnamese trade unions have had a close relationship with management and have not been in confrontation with employers. Employment relations theory of communist society has determined that employees and management work for a sole employer i.e. the party-state, which is the representative of the whole working class in communist society (Littler & Palmer 1986; Pravda 1983; Pringle & Clarke 2010).

Since 1986, the centrally-planned Vietnamese economy has turned into a market economy, namely the Doi Moi or Renovation policy, with private ownership now

tolerated. Consequently, trade unions have been placed in a situation where conflict has emerged between employees and the private employers. The problem is that, if the trade unions continue operating in their traditional mode and retain their traditionally close relationship with management, union members will not consider them bona fide trade unions, because the trade unions seem to favour employers rather than employees. The stability of this traditionally close relationship with management has created a conflict in the interests of unions. On one hand, as organisations of employees, they have to represent the membership to fight against management in order to protect the legitimate rights and interests of their membership. On the other hand, they have traditionally been trapped in a close relationship that limits their ability to confront management. To escape this dilemma, Vietnamese trade unions have recognised a need to develop appropriate strategies and tactics that will enable them to represent and protect their members as well as deal with management at the workplace level.

There have been a number of studies that relate to proposals for union strategies in Vietnam, but these suffer from several limitations. One proposal is that the trade unions should follow Western models, to operate independently from management (Kamoche 2001; Pringle & Clarke 2010; Van Gramberg et al. 2013); and that, in order to do so, the workers should have freedom of association, increasing democracy, and political reform (Cox 2015; Do 2013; Zhu & Benson 2008; Zhu & Fahey 2000). Kamoche (2001) suggests that Western models might obviate the need for Vietnamese trade unions to represent and protect their members. Examining wildcat strikes in Vietnam, Cox (2015) argues that employees have bypassed the existing trade unions and organised unofficial worker representatives to struggle against management. These organisations of unofficial worker representatives have been organised by employees but have not been registered with the VGCL. Cox (2015) claims that the employees need the right of

freedom of association to organise their own organisations without the recognition of the VGCL. The organising of unofficial worker representatives, as per Cox's (2015) suggestion, is prohibited in Vietnam. At present, the likelihood of such a law being repealed is very small, within the current ideology of Vietnamese government. According to the Law on Trade Unions, organisations of unofficial worker representatives are illegal (Socialist Republic of Vietnam 2012b). Furthermore, although the above studies suggest directions for trade unions in Vietnam to change, these suggestions do not provide any approach for realising them in practice. It is difficult to say what models may be suitable without any detail on how to apply the models.

There have been other suggestions relating to increasing union democracy, and more political reform to assist Vietnamese trade unions to operate independently from management, but these appear to be impractical (Do 2013; Zhu & Benson 2008; Zhu & Fahey 2000). Pringle and Clarke (2010) propose that Vietnamese trade unions need to change their situation of dependence on the party-state and management in order to protect and represent their members' rights and interests more effectively. To do so, adopting Western models appears to be an appropriate solution. This view is also supported by Van Gramberg et al. (2013), who argue that the trade unions should be independent of management in order to mobilise workers in labour disputes. Zhu and Fahey (2000) claim that the trade unions need to change themselves so as to have the ability to constrain the excesses of management and to increase the degree of empowerment to workers. In a similar vein, Zhu and Benson (2008) propose that Vietnamese trade unions require greater union democracy and political reform. The above recommendations, however, are not practical, because the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) is the only ruling political party in Vietnam, and it consistently expects

trade unions to retain their communist characteristics, which situation differs from that of trade unions in advanced industrial economies. Consequently, given the current political environment, any suggestion that seeks to establish an alternative trade union or an opposition trade union outside the VGCL's umbrella is not a possible solution. Meanwhile, the transition of communist trade unions has not only happened in Vietnam, but has also appeared in China (Taylor 2000; Warner 1991; Zhu & Benson 2008) and in post-communist countries in Eastern Europe (Herod 1998; Szell 1992). Hence, lessons from trade unions in those countries might provide empirical evidence for the study of the transition of Vietnamese trade unions.

Investigating trade unions in China, Warner (2008, p. 152) argues that, in the context of transition to a market-oriented economy, the future of Chinese trade unions is 'unclear and fraught with ambiguities'. Studying trade unions in Asia in comparison with Western trade union models, Zhu and Benson (2008) claim that any classification of Chinese trade unions in accordance with Western trade union models is challenged. This is because Chinese trade unions have retained 'the dual role of supporting management as well as representing workers' interests' (Zhu & Benson 2008, p. 262). In Eastern bloc countries, the transition of trade unions the trade unions completely shifted towards Western models; they did not inherit the characteristics of communist trade unions, because those countries have pursued complete political reform, i.e. they shifted from communism to capitalism (Ashwin 2007; Mrozowski et al. 2010; Ost 2007). Nevertheless, after changing their character, the trade unions in those countries have been challenged by political hostility and employer's constraints. These trade unions have yet to possess any perfect model to adopt. In other words, they have continued to seek appropriate directions in the transition from communist to capitalist models. This suggests that shifting from communist to capitalist models, as in the

approaches of trade unions in Eastern bloc countries, might not necessarily provide useful lessons for trade unions in Vietnam.

So far, the topic of strategies for trade unions to change has been of concern for both theory and practice. The currently existing theories on trade unions have appeared not to be appropriate for explaining the changes of trade unions in transition economies. In practice, lessons from the trade unions in China and post-communist countries in the Eastern Europe are insufficient to examine strategies of trade union change in Vietnam. Thus, the present study aims to advance knowledge in theory and practice on trade unions by exploring strategies of Vietnamese trade unions in transition.

Research objective and research questions

The objective of the present research is to explore strategies for trade union revitalisation in Vietnam. The attempts by trade unions in developed countries to respond to the issues they face, such as the decline in union density, have attracted a significant amount of academic research attention since the 1970s (Fiorito 2004; Gahan & Bell 1999). These attempts have been labelled either as union revitalisation or union renewal (Lévesque & Murray 2006). Although the two terms have sometimes been used interchangeably, they reveal the differing responses of trade unions. The term trade union revitalisation refers to the efforts of trade unions in responding to their issues by particular strategies (Behrens et al. 2004; Frege & Kelly 2004). These strategies include organising, building union-management partnership, restructuring organisational structure, coalition with other social movements, and building international solidarity among unions. Taking a different emphasis, union renewal explicitly refers to the process of encouraging union membership participation and union democracy, by focussing on the strategy of organising rank-and-file members in union affairs

(Fairbrother 1989, 2007, 2015; Hickey et al. 2010). The present thesis uses the term trade union revitalisation because, while Vietnamese trade unions have not systematically formulated strategies to respond to the changes since Doi Moi, the term union renewal directly refers to the strategy of encouraging union membership participation and union democracy. Thus, the term trade union revitalisation is considered more suitable for this study than union renewal.

To realise the research objective, this study deals with the following main research question:

What are strategies for trade union revitalisation in Vietnam during Doi Moi?

The strategy of trade union revitalisation relates to individual union responses and the relationship between union leadership and membership. Therefore, in order to respond to the main research question, this research addresses the following sub-questions:

1. How have individual primary trade unions at the workplace level responded to union issues?
2. To what extent do union leadership and union democracy contribute to the strategy of trade union revitalisation?

This research identifies union strategies in accordance with individual trade unions at the grassroots level. The analysis of individual trade union responses conducted for the present study relied upon Gahan's (1998) framework, which includes union goals, method, tactics and levels of formulating tactics. With regard to the broader trade union movement, the present study is based on Frege and Kelly's (2004) framework for discussing trade union strategy, which encompasses the institutional context of industrial relations, state and employer strategies, and union identities. A thematic framework based on the studies of Gahan (1998) and Frege and Kelly (2004), and

literature on union member attitudes and union democracy, guided the exploration of union strategy in Vietnam. The framework will be presented in Chapter 4.

Research contributions

The present research makes several contributions to theory and practice. In terms of theoretical contributions, the research contributes to three aspects: theory on trade union revitalisation, union democracy, and the relation between the servicing model of trade unions and strategies of trade union revitalisation. Firstly, it differs from other theories that argue that trade union revitalisation in transitional economies might succeed in changing the nature and characteristics of trade unions. In the case of Vietnamese trade unions, while the sole political party still controls society, requiring current trade unions to retain their traditions, and prohibiting any type of alternative trade union or worker organisation, the trade unions might build union-management relationships to take advantage of the favourable legal framework, which explicitly supports trade unions. This is because the trade unions cannot mobilise to change the ruling role of the CPV in order to adopt or resemble Western models.

Secondly, by capturing the dynamic role of union leadership and union membership, the present research challenges the argument that union democracy is the key factor leading to successful union revitalisation. In the particular case of Vietnam, union democracy is less likely to be a concern of union members, because the members are passive and unwilling to become involved in the union decision-making process. By contrast, in advanced industrial economies, union democracy has contributed to the success of union revitalisation because rank-and-file members are proactive and the union expands its focuses to broader social benefits rather than only workplace issues. In the context of Vietnam, union members have focussed on their rights and interests in the workplace,

so encouraging union democracy as in advanced industrial economies might not be a crucial factor for successful union revitalisation.

Thirdly, the present research proposes a link between the servicing model of trade union and the partnership strategy of trade union revitalisation in the context of transition countries. In a servicing union model, the decision on the strategies of trade union revitalisation depends largely on the leadership rather than on rank-and-file members. In the case of Vietnam, the trade union leadership prefers a union-management partnership because of their traditionally close relationship with management. Thus, it can be proposed that the servicing model of trade unions might lead to a strategy of building the union-management partnership.

In terms of contributions to practice, the present research provides evidence and recommendations for union leadership, union membership and policymakers. Firstly, the union leadership has to concentrate on and understand members' needs in order to provide better services for the members, to mobilise them, and to recruit potential members. Secondly, union members need to show their demands and their desires for trade unions to improve the capacity of union leaders to operate more effectively. Therefore, union members should focus on increasing the level of union democracy by becoming more involved in the union decision-making process. In other words, they should be more active and responsive to union activities rather than passive and reliant on their leaders. Thirdly, policymakers might have to build an effective legal framework for protecting union officials at enterprises. In addition, it is necessary to ensure and enhance the implementation of labour regulations in practice, because there have been several violations by employers which have caused labour grievances.

Research methodology

Owing to its exploratory nature, the present qualitative research used an embedded single case-study strategy (Yin 2003). The embedded single case study involves more units of analysis, with the organisation of Vietnamese trade unions as a whole, and the subunits being the primary trade unions at the grassroots level. Although the research strategy of a single case study does not offer a generalisation of phenomena, it does provide a rich picture and the ability to obtain analytical insights from the case (Crowe et al. 2011; Yin 2003). For the present research, qualitative case study research provides a sophisticated instrument for capturing the often subtle, complex, and changing ways in which primary unions operate and broader trends within the trade union movement in Vietnam.

Data collection was conducted in ten primary trade unions in various working environments, including state agencies, and enterprises with different ownerships such as state-owned enterprises, and domestic private-owned and foreigner-owned enterprises. The data were collected in two locations: Ca Mau province, the southernmost region of Vietnam; and Ho Chi Minh City, the city with the most dynamic development of its economy in Vietnam (Zhu 2005). The methods for data collection were: face-to-face semi-structured interviews, with union leaders at workplace level, rank and file members, and union officials who belong to the administration of unions at district and provincial levels; unobtrusive observation of union activities; and analysis of relevant documents, such as the Labour Code, the Law on Trade Unions, official documents of the CPV, and the Charter of VGCL.

Once the data were collected, this research used thematic analysis to analyse the data, because it allows the researcher to identify, analyse, and report themes within data, and to generalise those themes in order to respond to the research questions (Braun &

Clarke 2006). It also focuses on tacit meanings of the themes, and illustrates which themes are important in the description of the phenomenon under study irrespective of quantification of the themes (Tuckett 2005).

This thesis is organised as follows.

Chapter 1 introduces the research problem in the context of economic reform in Vietnam, the research objective, and research questions. After referring to the contributions of the research, the chapter briefly presents the research methodology used to conduct this study.

Chapter 2 presents the background of Vietnamese trade unions in the context of the Doi Moi. It includes an overview of Vietnamese trade unions in relation to national revolutions, relationship with the CPV, the ideological foundation and model, the collaborative approach in relationship with management, organisational structure, and the duties of primary trade unions as well as rights and obligations of union membership. This chapter also discusses trade unions' issues and their responses to the change of relationship with management since Doi Moi.

Chapter 3 reviews the main concepts relative to trade unions as organisations of employees, including definitions, goals of trade unions, the relationship between state, management and trade unions, sources of union power, and organisational structures of trade unions. Having presented analytical characteristics of trade union models, the chapter examines the applicability of those models to Vietnamese trade unions.

Chapter 4 specifies the issues of membership decline in advanced industrial and Asian countries, and current unclear unionism identities in Eastern European countries. The chapter then reviews the strategies that trade unions have employed to respond to these

issues. Having reviewed the explanations of trade union responses, the chapter presents the analytical themes of this research, which help to explore the strategies of trade union revitalisation in Vietnam.

Chapter 5 presents and justifies the methodology of the research. The explanation for employing qualitative research with a single case study strategy is presented. The chapter also details data collection methods and thematic analysis for the data.

Chapter 6 answers the first sub-research question by presenting the analysis of the findings on responses of primary trade unions.

Chapter 7 answers the second sub-research question by analysing the findings on union activities and indicators of union democracy in Vietnam.

Chapter 8 presents the assessments and discussion, with the implications of the findings in Chapter 6 and 7, in response to the main research question. Chapter 8 also presents the contributions and limitations of the research.

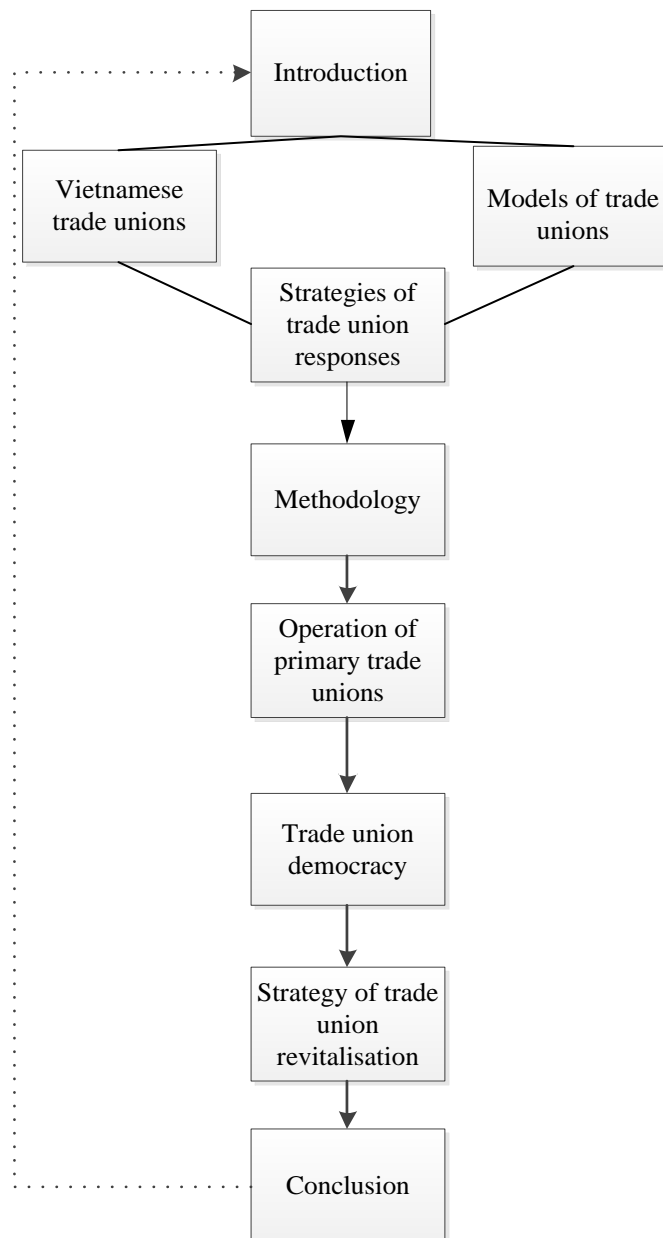
Chapter 9 concludes the research with the research question revisited, and future research. The outline of this thesis is presented in Figure 1.1.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the research problem that motivates this study, which is the deficiencies of previous studies that have mentioned strategies of Vietnamese trade unions for operating in the present period of economic transition. Vietnamese trade unions have yet to change their communist identity within a centrally-planned economy, but have been operating in a market economy since Doi Moi, with an ambiguous strategy in their revitalisation. Thus, this research has the objective of exploring the

strategy of trade unions in the Doi Moi transition period. This chapter also presented the research questions, research contributions, overview of research, methodology, and outline of this thesis.

Figure 1.1: Thesis outline



CHAPTER 2

SETTING THE CONTEXT OF VIETNAMESE TRADE UNIONS

Under colonialism, the Vietnamese labour movement was deeply imbued with ideas of socialism and national independence.

Beresford and Nyland (1998, p. 57)

Introduction

This chapter presents the background of Vietnamese trade unions in the context of Doi Moi. Firstly, the chapter reviews the economic reform, which has changed the environment in which the trade unions operate. Then, the chapter presents an overview of Vietnamese trade unions, which were closely associated with national revolutions and have retained a relationship with the CPV. This chapter also presents the ideological foundation and model of Vietnamese trade unions, the collaborative relationship with management, organisational structure, and responsibility of primary unions and union membership. Finally, the chapter discusses challenges for Vietnamese trade unions, and their responses to the challenges.

Economic reform: Doi Moi or Renovation policy

Vietnam has officially been in economic transition from a centrally-planned economy to a socialist-oriented market economy since December 1986, as a result of what is known as the ‘Doi Moi’ or Renovation policy. Theoretically, within the centrally-planned economy, the party-state controlled production and distribution (Dunlop 1993; Littler & Palmer 1986). Thompson and Smith (1992) analyse the labour process in the socialist state, stating that ‘the relations of production are based on the centralised appropriation and redistribution of the surplus through a stratum of planners empowered by the fusion of party and state apparatuses’ (Thompson & Smith 1992, p. 5). In the state-managed

economy, the party-state is the sole owner of enterprises, namely state-owned enterprises (SOEs), which dominate the economy (Pravda 1983). Wage rates or salary levels are not the subject of negotiation between employees and management, because they are decided by the party-state (Dunlop 1993). In consequence, managers and workers working in SOEs are the employees of the party-state, and they are not supposed to have conflicts of interest (Herod 1998). In Vietnam, the main aim of Doi Moi is to move from a centrally-planned economic system to a market-oriented one with a multi-ownership system of state-ownership, domestic private ownership, and foreign ownership (Beresford 2008; Zhu & Fahey 2000). Consequently, Doi Moi has resulted in a market economy operating within the socialist context of Vietnam, the so-called socialist-oriented market economy, which resembles the market economy in capitalist society (Edwards & Phan 2013). The present research uses the term socialist-oriented economy accordingly for the Vietnamese context.

One of the key pillars of Doi Moi is the emergence of a non-state sector, in accordance with the privatisation of SOEs (Beresford 2008; Clarke et al. 2007; Edwards & Phan 2013). The non-state sector encompasses domestic private enterprises (DPEs), which are owned by Vietnamese individuals, and foreign-owned enterprises (FOEs), owned by foreign investors. Domestic and foreign investors put capital into the privatisation process of SOEs, establishing new enterprises and focusing on exportation, which resulted in several new DPEs and FOEs (Collins 2009). It can be seen that pre-Doi Moi, there were only SOEs existing in the centrally-planned economy; however, post-Doi Moi, the market-oriented economy includes SOEs, DPEs, and FOEs. In consequence, the employment relations have been changed (Zhu & Fahey 1999).

One of the changes in relations between employees and management is the emergence of conflicts of interest between them (Cox 2015; Lee 2006; Tran 2007b). As previously

mentioned, before Doi Moi, it was supposed that there were no conflicts of interest between employees and managers in SOEs. However, since Doi Moi, conflicts of interest between employees and management in DPEs and FOEs have appeared (Pringle & Clarke 2010). These conflicts have occurred because employers have tended to push employees to work long hours, but they are paid low extra payments in contravention of the Labour Code (Van Gramberg et al. 2013); or the employees have suffered from harassment by the employers (Lee 2006). Like employees in other countries, Vietnamese employees need organisations that are able to protect them, such as the trade unions.

In Vietnam, the VGCL and its affiliates have the roles of protecting and representing the rights and interest of employees (Zhu & Benson 2008). Pre-Doi Moi, Vietnamese trade unions did not have to confront management; however, after Doi Moi, the trade unions have put their efforts into finding approaches to represent and protect membership by confronting management, a consequence of management's harassing treatment (Zhu & Fahey 2000). The efforts of Vietnamese trade unions are placed according to their historical development and characteristics in the context of Vietnam.

Trade unions in Vietnam

Trade unions in Vietnam have been embedded in a unique historical development, of the national revolutions. A study of Vietnamese trade unions necessarily examines their role in the national revolution, external relationship with the CPV and management, as well as internal relationship with their membership. Examining those relationships provides understanding of trade union change and strategy in the revitalisation period post-Doi Moi. To do so, this section reviews the connection of the trade unions with the Vietnamese revolutions, the ideological foundation, relationship between the trade

unions and the CPV, the close relationship of the trade unions with management, organisational structure, and the duties of trade unions and their membership.

Trade unions and the National Revolutions

Vietnam was dominated by the French in from 1858 onwards; and Vietnamese trade unions had a history of fighting against French colonisation and supporting national revolutions for Vietnamese liberation (Dang 2009; Edwards & Phan 2013; Rowley & Truong 2009). The VGCL, which is the only officially recognised trade union organisation in Vietnam, originated from the Red Workers' General Union (RWGU) in Northern Vietnam, established on July 28, 1929, in accordance with the leadership of the communist party (Dang 2009; Edwards & Phan 2008). Scholars who have studied Vietnamese history and Vietnamese trade unions are of the same opinion, that from 1858 to 1975 the history of Vietnam was the progress of fighting colonisation and regaining national independence (Beresford & Nyland 1998; Rowley & Truong 2009). In 1858, the French sent their forces into Vietnam and colonised the country (Edwards & Phan 2013; Rowley & Truong 2009). From that time onwards, there were many campaigns conducted by nationalists to fight against the French, but all did not succeed. Among these campaigns, the labour movement had been secretly organised by the Communists, in the textile, coal and transport industries and in the plantations (Dang 2009). As the result of this, the RWGU was established, related to the CPV's leadership (Edwards & Phan 2008).

Trade unionism history in Vietnam is distinguished by two periods, with quite different goals. The first period was the war, or the era known as the national revolution, occurring from 1929 to 1975. According to Nørlund (1996), Vietnamese trade unions pursued national independence as part of revolutions driving the removal of colonial power. In this period, Vietnamese trade unionism, under the leadership of the CPV,

operated to achieve the objective of national independence (Edwards & Phan 2008). Workers voluntarily organised to fight against French colonisation and later invasion by the US and its allies. The rivals of trade unions were French or American management (Edwards & Phan 2008). The trade unions organised several campaigns to protest against French and American management, under the banner of improving working and living conditions (Kerkvliet 2010). However, the pursuit of better working and living conditions was a superficial reason; the underlying reason was regaining national independence (Kerkvliet 2010). In comparative research on the trade union movements in China and Vietnam, both socialist and market economies, Zhu and Fahey (2000) state that Vietnamese trade unionism was an instrument to fight against colonisation and invasion. This suggests that in the embryonic period, the goals of Vietnamese trade unions were not simply economic but were national freedom and fighting against colonialism, as shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Varieties of Vietnamese union goals and functions

Functions Periods	<i>Goals</i>	<i>Operation</i>
<i>National Revolutions (1929-1975)</i>	✓ Pursuing national independence and freedom	✓ Mobilising workers to fight against foreign invasions
<i>Before Economic Reform (1975- 1986)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ensuring the labour discipline & improving production ✓ Organizing social activities for employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Representing members' rights and interests ✓ Defending members ✓ Transmitting policies from the state and management to employees
<i>Since Economic Reform (1986- present)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Protecting labour rights ✓ Improving workers' living conditions ✓ Assisting management to obtain economic targets 	

Source: Dang (2009, p.117)

Table 2.1 summarises the various goals and operation of contemporary trade unions in different periods. During the revolution against the French from 1929 to 1954, the VGCL propagated, and gathered members and all workers to support several actions such as absenteeism, stoppages and strikes, with the purpose of struggling against French colonisation (Edwards & Phan 2008). For instance, despite the strict control of the French, the VGCL proactively mobilised and organised its members to struggle against oppression and exploitation of the French employers. With unions' contributions, the Vietnamese revolution succeeded in eliminating French invasion in 1954 in the North of Vietnam (Nguyen 2014). From 1954 to 1975, in response to the interference of the US army, the union movement mobilised over twenty thousand participants to join strikes. The underlying purpose of those strikes was to eliminate the occupation of the US and to reunite the country (Kerkvliet 2010).

The second period was rebuilding the nation, from 1975 until the present. This period is divided into two different stages of economic transition. The first stage was the centrally-planned economy from 1975 to 1986; and the second is the socialist market-oriented economy from 1986 until the present. From 1975 to 1986, within the centrally-planned economy, the objective of the VGCL was to support the party-state to obtain the targets of the economic master plan (Dang 2009). Since Doi Moi in late 1986 until now, the VGCL has retained the same function as it had in the centrally-planned economy. Although the trade unions have to deal with new types of enterprise ownership within the new working environments of DPEs and SOEs, they have still pursued the objectives of living and working improvements, as well as focussing on individual lives of the union membership. To do so, the VGCL has made attempts to improve the living standards of workers and the working environment by paying attention to the workers' daily lives and providing social welfare, as well as to assist

management achieve production. In addition, it has educated membership about labour principles and monitored to ensure full implementation of labour regulations. It has also struggled with the negatives of bureaucracy, authoritarianism, corruption, and cuts to labour standards (Dang 2009). The reviewed literature shows that, after the war periods, since 1975, trade unions have not critically altered their practices. They have been consistent in representing members' rights and interests, defending members, and transmitting policies from the state and management to employees.

Generally, the origins of Vietnamese trade unions were rooted in the national revolutions from 1929 to 1975, with the objective of national independence. After Vietnam reunited in 1975, the trade unions have pursued economic goals. Although there have been the changes in employment relations and working environment, Vietnamese trade unions have retained their traditional character within the communist trade union model.

The ideological foundation and model of Vietnamese trade unions

Trade unionism in Vietnam is communist unionism, which follows, accordingly, Leninist notions (Pringle & Clarke 2010; Zhu & Fahey 2000). Edwards and Phan (2008) claim that trade unions play a role in mediating between the party-state and the workers, and promote worker's rights and interests under the party's control. The communist trade unions, which are underpinned by Leninist notions, have the roles of representing labour interest and mediating between employees and management, the latter being the party-state (Pravda 1983). From Pravda's (1983) perspective, the communist unions' job was to mobilise workers for production: this included maintaining discipline, and educating the workers about production, management and ideology. There could be no contradiction between labour and management in a socialist state, as seen in the follow explanation:

Whatever differences in interest divide workers and managers in the same factory have to be resolved within the same union. Theoretically, of course, such differences should be marginal since both groups belong to the corpus of the working class qua working people and therefore cannot have conflicting interest. By the same token, since they are all employed by a socialist state there can be no fundamental difference separating employees from employer.

Unions serve their members' interest not by fighting management, but by protecting workers from bureaucratic arbitrariness and by involving them in fulfilling economic production plans on which, after all, their material welfare depends (Pravda 1983, p. 244).

Taylor (2000) explains why, in communist countries, trade unions are employees' organisations that are in line with employers and do not have conflicts of interests with employers. He argues that, as the enterprise is owned by the state and the communist party, in the name of the people, all terms and conditions of employment such as wages, social insurance are determined administratively by the state. Theoretically, employers and employees all work for the state, the sole employer. Littler and Palmer (1986) emphasise that, in the communist economy, the state establishes all the conditions of the contract of labour, including the principles of remuneration for all categories of labour. In addition, Clarke and Pringle (2009) argue that the state ensures the implementation of labour policies, and the trade unions function as the transmission belt to transfer those policies to employees. It can be seen that the trade unions did not suffer from offensive management in the workplace in communist economies. This is a rationale to explain the close relationship of Vietnamese trade unions and management.

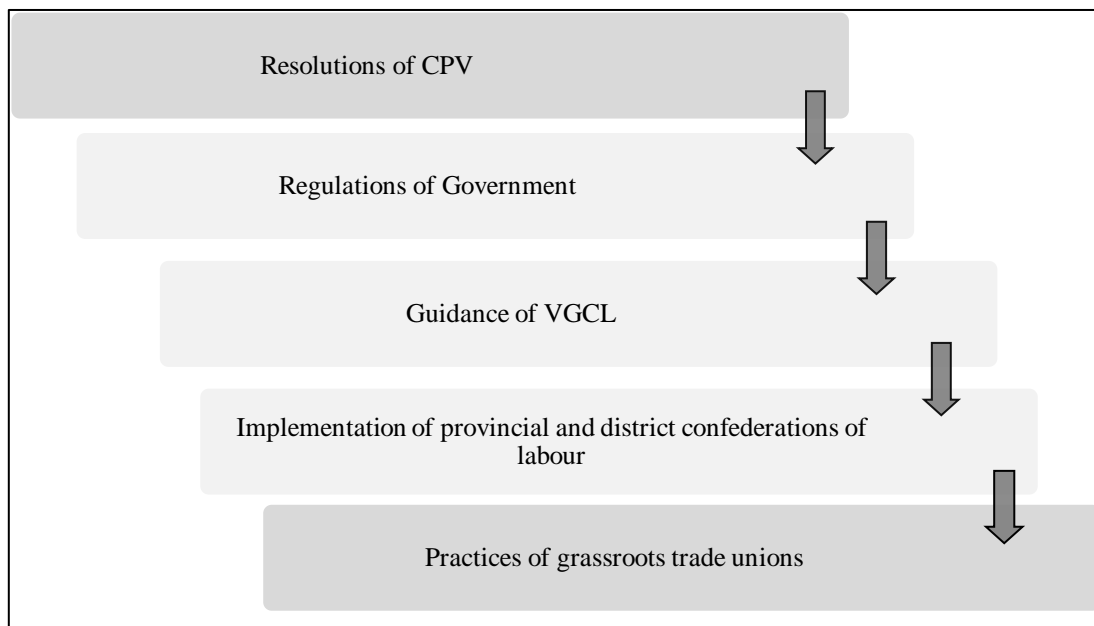
All trade unions ‘are embedded in national systems of interlocking and economic institutions’ (Phelan 2007b, p. 11). As mentioned in previous section, historically, Vietnamese trade unions were connected with national revolutions. The next section reviews the relationship of the trade unions with the CPV; which shows that the trade unions are more likely to be an integral part of the party-state apparatus (Rowley & Truong 2009).

Relationship between the trade unions and the CPV

Historically, the foundation and operation of Vietnamese trade unions was under the leadership of the CPV (Dang 2009; Edwards & Phan 2008). Currently, the VGCL has kept this close relationship with the CPV (Chan & Norlund 1998; Clarke & Pringle 2009). The close relationship between Vietnamese trade unions and the CPV could be understood from the history of the Vietnamese national revolutions (Rowley & Truong 2009). The CPV led the national revolutions, and it established and mobilised other organizations to obtain the goal of national independence. Vietnamese trade unions are one of those types of organization that are founded by the CPV, and they support the goal of national independence, which has been the major goal of the CPV (Zhu & Fahey 2000).

Responding to CPV directives, accordingly, is the VGCL’s obligation. Article 4 of the Vietnamese Constitution stipulates that the political system of Vietnam proceeds in a specific way, which begins with the resolutions of the CPV (Socialist Republic of Vietnam 2013). The government absorbs the resolutions and declares a legal framework in accordance with the CPV’s directives. Regarding the relationship between trade unions and the party-state, Figure 2.1 illustrates the process of the CPV’s influence on trade union operation in practice.

Figure 2.1: The process of implementation of the CPV's directives to union operation



In principle, the CPV has not supervised every last thing that the trade unions do; but it has determined the union's priorities, prescribed the fundamental direction of trade union work, and monitored trade union activity at all levels. The VGCL, as a political and social organisation, follows the legal framework to obtain their objectives. At the bottom, primary unions, union leaders, and union members conduct their duties accordingly to the VGCL leadership. Figure 2.1 indicates that resolutions of the CPV are the sources of the implementation of labour policies. For example, a resolution of the CPV stipulates that working conditions of employees need to be improved. Following this directive, the government enacts labour regulations that the VGCL is required to follow. Then, the VGCL requires the trade union organisations under its umbrella to follow the labour regulations. The organisations of trade unions, which are below the VGCL, encompass provincial and district confederations of labour (in the present thesis, the section, Organisational structure of the trade unions, will detail those organisations). Finally, grassroots trade unions within enterprises implement the labour regulations.

Vietnamese trade unions have a close relationship with and have been influenced by the CPV. Therefore, shedding light on the process of implementation of CPV directives to union operation assists in understanding why research on trade union revitalisation in Vietnam has to consider the CPV's directives. Zhu and Fahey (1999) argue that the communist ideology not only resulted in the transmission belt role of the trade unions but also moulded the close relationship of the trade unions with management.

Traditional relationship between the trade unions and management

Even when the economic mechanism has been changing from being centrally planned towards being market oriented, the relationship between Vietnamese trade unions and management has been one of cooperation, because the establishment of the trade unions was based on communist ideology (Pringle & Clarke 2010; Zhu & Fahey 2000). As discussed previously, the primary trade union is a part of an enterprise and operates with basics functions: representing and protecting the right and interests of workers, ensuring productivity, and educating members in socialist ideology. The trade union joins in management enterprises; and propagates information to workers to enhance productivity and labour principles (Zhu & Fahey 1999). They also look after and safeguard the rights and interests of employees, and participate in state administration and social management. They can be involved in the control and supervision of the activity of state organs and economic bodies, and educate employees to work for national construction and defence (Zhu & Fahey 2000).

To support the trade unions in their relationship with management, the Labour Code provides favourable conditions for trade union operation by forcing employers to follow labour regulations. For example, Article 190 of the Labour Code declares that an employer shall not, by economic measures or other manoeuvres, seek to interfere in the

organisation and activities of trade unions, and discriminate against workers on the grounds that they are forming or joining trade unions, or participating in trade union activities (Socialist Republic of Vietnam 2012a). Article 193 of the Labour Code states that employers are obligated to provide the necessary facilities to enable the trade unions and their memberships to carry out their activities (Socialist Republic of Vietnam 2012a). Similarly, Article 24 of Law on Trade Unions requires the employer to provide financial, material and other support to trade unions (Socialist Republic of Vietnam 2012b). Employers are also required to pay normal wages to part-time union cadres if and when they conduct union activities during work hours, and offer them the same rights, benefits, and collective welfare provisions enjoyed by other workers in the enterprises (Socialist Republic of Vietnam 2012b).

It is clear that Vietnamese trade unions are supposed to operate in a favourable environment within this supportive legal framework. Any action relating to constraining trade union operations and discriminating against union leaders is strictly prohibited. In addition, employers have responsibility for ensuring union operations, such as by providing financial support and favourable conditions for conducting union activities. Those supports from the legal framework are crucial in trade union revitalisation. It is one of the strongholds of union protection because the issue for unions is not the hostility of the government but is the unfair treatment by management.

Organisational structure of Vietnamese trade unions

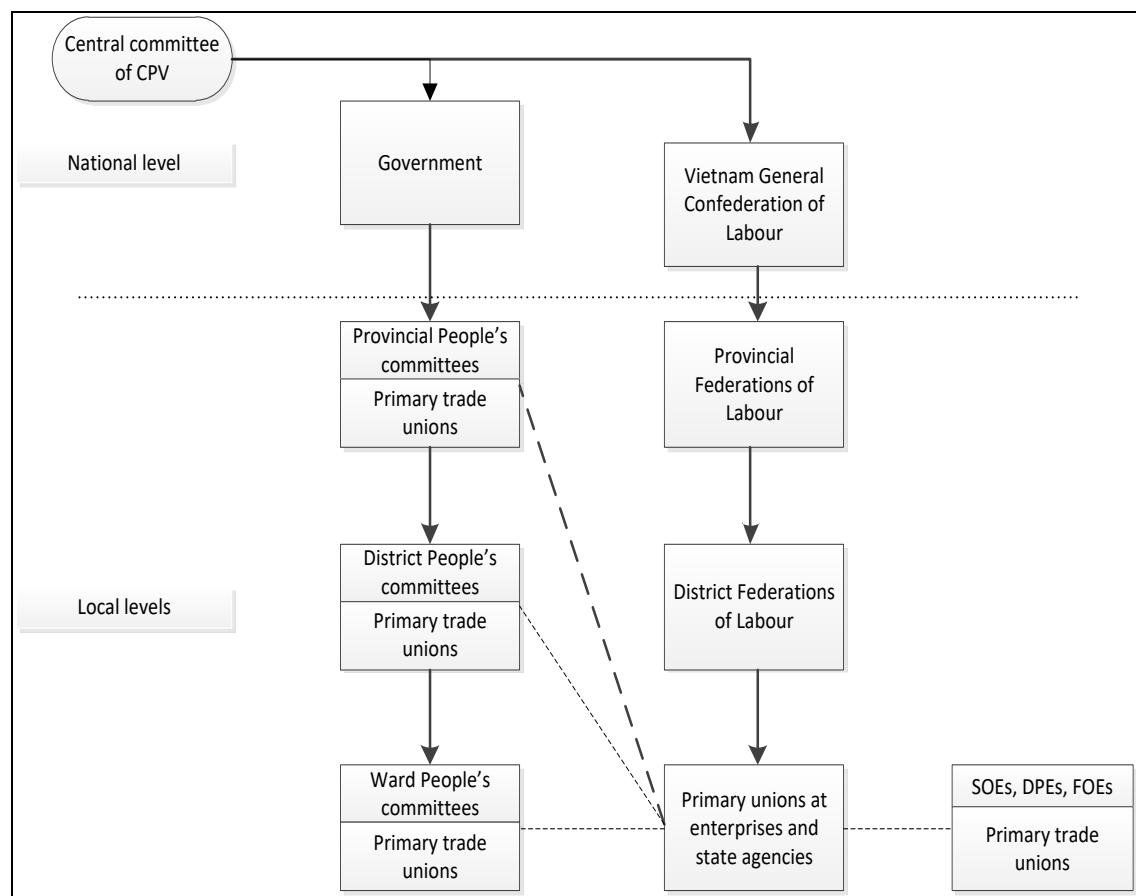
The structure of trade unions in Vietnam is presented through the organisational hierarchy of the union administration. Studying principles of organisational foundation in communist societies, Von Beyme (1975) points out that the key principle is democratic centralism, which is applied for organisational structure in communist

society; for example, all lower institutions are subordinate to and have responsibility to answer to the higher institutions, and decisions of higher organs are binding for the lower institutions. Following this main principle, the organisational structure of the unions in Vietnam is based on three principles, laid down in the Law on Trade Unions and the Charter of the VGCL. The three principles are: (1) the system is to be homogenous and presided over by the VGCL; (2) the CPV shall have supremacy over the unions and the latter shall accept the leadership of the Party; and (3) the organisational levels of trade unions shall be related to one another in terms of democratic centralism, which makes lower ranking unions subordinate to higher-ranking ones (VGCL 2013a). In accordance with the above principles, the VGCL is a unified organization at the national level, and a matrix of smaller unions, which are organised geographically into provinces, cities, counties or districts and within enterprises and state agencies at provincial, district and ward levels. The hierarchy of Vietnamese trade unions and its links with the state agencies system and the CPV is presented in Figure 2.2.

At the national level, the VGCL is a mass organisation affiliated to the CPV, and represents the working population of Vietnam. It comprises an umbrella organisation under which all local levels and primary unions operate. All unions must be recognised by the local offices of the VGCL, which functions as the country's umbrella labour organisation. At the national level, the VGCL is a powerful actor in the national policy-making arena. The VGCL has the right to propose draft laws and regulations to the National Assembly or the state agencies on any matters that may directly affect the regulation of labour (Beresford & Nyland 1998).

According to the Charter of the VGCL, the provincial federations of labour are directly under VGCL's umbrella and followed by district federations of labour. The trade unions at both the provincial and the district levels have a role in transferring the policies from the unions at the national level to primary trade unions. District labour federations are trade union organisations above the grassroots level, rallying workers located in one and the same district. District labour federations shall be established or dissolved by decision of provincial labour federations, and subject to their direct guidance. Similarly, district labour federations shall decide on the establishment or dissolution of, and provide direct guidance to, primary trade unions.

Figure 2.2: Organisational structure of Vietnamese trade unions in relation to the state agency system and the CPV



The lowest level of trade unions is grass-roots or primary trade unions, which are founded within state organs or enterprises. It is apparent that the primary trade union is

established in every state agency in Vietnam, as illustrated in Figure 2.2. However, there has been no research on unions in state agencies. Scholarly work has incorrectly claimed that the trade unions in the public sector exist in SOEs (Collins et al. 2011). In fact, trade unions in the public sector exist within state agencies, as shown in Figure 2.2.

The conditions for primary trade union foundation are favourable. Article 24 of Law on Trade Unions provides the conditions to establish a grassroots union in an enterprise or in state agencies (Socialist Republic of Vietnam 2012b). Within an enterprise or state agency, the Charter of the VGCL provides that if there are five employees or more who voluntarily establish a primary trade union, they can organise themselves and get approval from the trade union office at district level. Once obtaining this approval, this primary union has legitimacy to operate (VGCL 2013a).

The Law on Trade Unions declares wider rights to join trade unions and organize a primary union of employees. Taking advantage of the favourable legal system, the VGCL has consistently prioritised recruitment of new membership (Do & Broek 2013). The potential membership includes Vietnamese workers, employees and labourers who are wage-earners, legal freelance workers, and agree with the Charter of the VGCL as well as want to join a grassroots union: all these can apply for union membership. Those who want to join the trade union need to submit their application form on a voluntary basis. The executive committee of a grassroots union or an upper level union examines the particular cases, and issues a decision of membership recruitment (Socialist Republic of Vietnam 2012b). A target group for recruitment includes workers and labourers who are wage-earners working on a labour contract of a definite period of time from 6 months up, or contract of stable regular employment in offices and enterprises in all economic sectors (VGCL 2013a). In addition, legal freelance workers

who want to join a trade union can be recruited by a trade union. Other targeted groups can be considered for recruitment, such as individual workers who are licensed for occupational operation by a competent state management agency.

Vietnamese employees have a right to freely establish a new primary trade union, because organising and joining trade unions is voluntary (Socialist Republic of Vietnam 2012b). After its foundation, the new primary trade union must be registered with and approved by a district confederation of labour. Otherwise, any form of organised workers without registration and approval is illegal and prohibited. That registration has caused controversy over the freedom of association right, because of the requirement for approval from the district confederation of labour (Tran 2007b). One might argue that, according to the legislation, anyone is free to establish a primary trade union. The necessary condition is getting the approval from the trade union of district level. However, one might also argue that the requirement of the approval means that employees are not free to self-organise trade unions. From this perspective, the freedom of organising trade unions is considered to be that without any approval. In fact, the aim of the approval is to ensure the unity of organisational trade union system with the VGCL, the highest trade union organisation, at national level. This point sheds light on why there is sole organisational system of trade unions in Vietnam. However, this creates the debate that the Vietnamese employees have no freedom to organise trade unions by themselves (Tran 2007b). The present research does not fall into this debate, because any changes relative to the freedom of association should link to the broader change of the communist ideology, as in Dunlop's (1993, p. 23) observation: '...industrial relations were a product of their own political, economic, and ideological setting'. Instead, given the current socio-political conditions in the Doi Moi context, this

research focusses on investigating how Vietnamese trade unions are responding and what they could be doing with the changes in employment relations.

Generally, the VGCL is the national federation of trade unions. Under VGCL's umbrella there are provincial and district federations of labour. Primary trade unions are in the lowest position in the hierarchy of the trade union system. Employees voluntarily organise primary trade unions within their employment organisations. Once obtaining official approval from the organisation of trade unions at district level, the grassroots trade union and its members have rights and obligations in accordance with the Law on Trade Unions and the Charter of the VGCL.

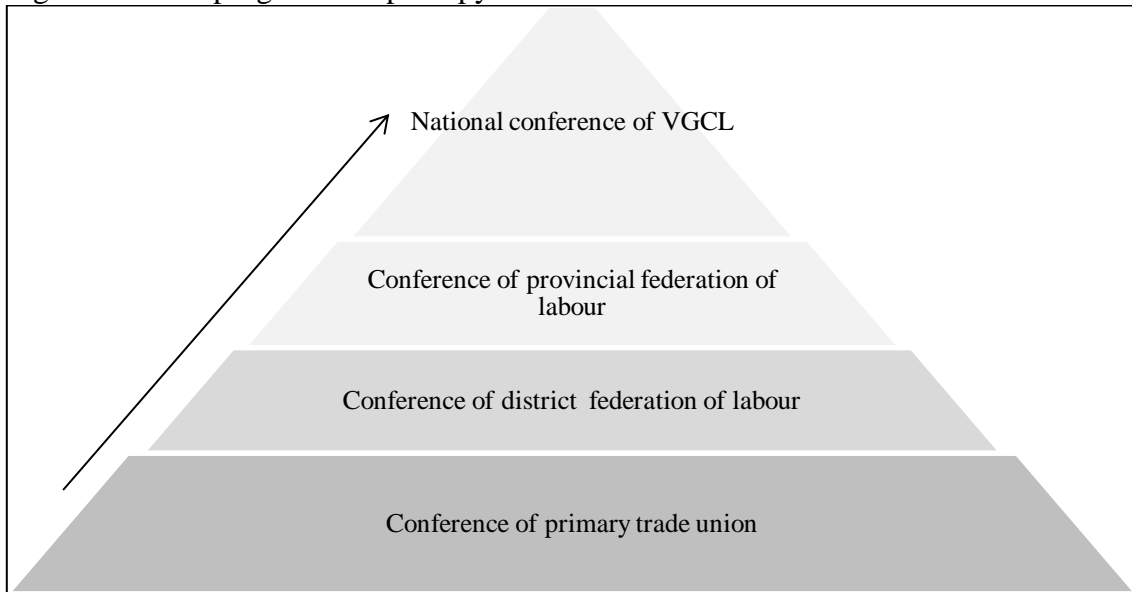
Responsibilities of primary unions and union membership before and after Doi Moi

Clause 10 of the Charter of the VGCL provides that union members elect the union leadership at trade union conferences (VGCL 2013a). Union leadership is nominated through election at the congress or conferences of the trade unions. Individuals are elected to be in a union leadership team or at the higher level through their credibility with the trade union members, and are recognized or designated by the direct higher level of the trade union system. Union election takes place from the primary union level upwards. The elected union officials or representatives at the lower level will attend the higher level union conferences, as presented in Figure 2.3.

According to Clause 13 of the Charter of the VGCL, from primary level, the executive committee of union leaders of a particular primary trade union are elected at its conference, which takes place twice within a 5 year-period. Once elected, they become part-time union leaders at those primary trade unions, but they are still employees of the employment organisations. The number of the executive committee normally includes 3

to 7 people, with one president and one vice-president, and other members of the executive committee. Among them, the president plays the crucial role in the operation of the primary trade union. The president has the right to supervise other members of the executive committee to fulfil union tasks.

Figure 2.3: The progression up the pyramid of trade union conferences



At the conference, the union members also vote in the representatives to attend the conference of the district federation of labour (Clause 10 of the Charter of the VGCL). The number of representatives is decided by the district federation of labour. Similarly, at the conferences of district and provincial federations of labour, the executive committee and representatives for the upper conferences are elected. These conferences take place once per five-year period. At the national conference of VGCL, the national executive committee is elected, and the president of the VGCL is also a member of the Central Committee of the CPV (Clarke & Pringle 2009).

Classification of the trade union leaders includes both full-time and part-time personnel. The full-time officials work at the offices of the district federation of labour, provincial federations of labour, and the VGCL. In particular, these officials detach from rank-and-

file members at primary trade unions. The part-time union leaders are elected at the primary level. They have responsibility for conducting the daily tasks of primary trade unions in enterprises and state agencies. The present research mainly concentrates on these part-time union leaders, because they are close to rank-and-file members and understand the membership's expectations.

The duties of primary unions, and the rights and obligations of union membership, before and after Doi Moi, have rarely changed. The duties of the part-time union leaders comprise two main groups of tasks: (1) representing and protecting membership in employment relations, and assuring the enforcement of government labour laws and policies; and (2) providing welfare benefits for membership (Beresford & Nyland 1998). For the first task group, the trade union leaders have responsibilities for: (1) fighting against signs of violating labour regulations; (2) being legal representative or authorized representative to protect legal and legitimate rights and benefits of labourers; (3) closely combining with trade union members and respecting ideas of trade union members at the union meetings; (4) organizing discussions between employees and employers in state agencies, enterprises or between trade union organisations and representatives of employers; and (5) holding and acting as leader of strikes, in accordance with the Labour Code (Clause 20 of the Charter of the VGCL). For the second task group, the primary trade unions have responsibilities for providing union services such as vouchers for vacations, particularly for children in the summer, pleading for financial help, or arranging a funeral. In return, union members have only the obligation to contribute to the union budget and follow the Charter of the VGCL.

The budget of the trade unions legally comes from two sources: compulsory contributions of employment organisations (e.g. state agencies and enterprises), and

membership contributions (VGCL 2014b). Firstly, according to Decree 191/2013/ND-CP in 21st November 2013, which details guidance for trade union budget contributions, the employment organisations have the obligation to deposit money for the primary union budget monthly (Vietnamese Government 2013). The remittance level shall be 2% of the salary fund, which is used as the basis for social insurance payments for employees. This amount of money is so-called contributions for the union operation. Thirty-five percent of the amount of money must directly be sent to the district federation of labour, and the primary trade union has the right to spend the rest of the money for the union operation (VGCL 2014a). Secondly, the union member must contribute 1% of their minimum wage to the primary union budget. Forty percent of the membership contribution must directly be sent to the district federation of labour, and the primary trade unions can use the rest for the union operation. It can be seen that both employers and union membership contribute to the financial resources of the trade unions. Among those contributions, the employers contribute to union budget more than the members do. This is another evidence to probate the dependence of a primary trade union on management.

In sum, the union leadership is nominated from union elections at the union conferences. The union leaders include two groups: full-time leaders working in the administration of the trade union systems from national to local levels; and part-time leaders conducting daily tasks of primary trade unions. The part-time leaders have responsibilities for representing and protecting membership as well as providing union services. Both employers and union membership have obligations to contribute to the union budget. Nevertheless, the employers contribute to the budget more than the membership do. This may result in the dependence of primary trade unions at workplace level on management.

So far, although Doi Moi has caused conflicts of interest between employees and employers, Vietnamese trade unions have inherited and retained traditional features. Inevitably, the trade unions have found difficulty in operation, because their tradition, which seemed appropriate in a centrally-planned economy, is not suitable to a socialist market-oriented economy.

Challenges for Vietnamese trade unions

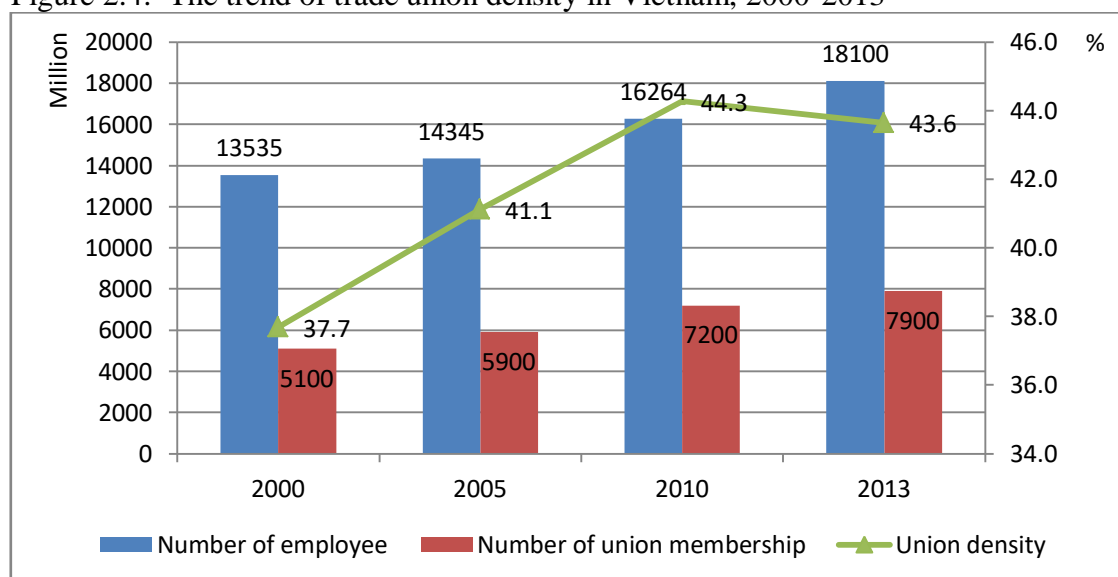
Shifting from a centrally-planned economy to market economy creates a new, different environment, as well as challenges to union operation. This means that the trade unions have shifted from the atmosphere of non-conflict of interest in the centrally-planned economy to the atmosphere of conflict of interest between employees and employers in the socialist-orientated market economy (Pringle & Clarke 2010). As previously reviewed, the conflict appears when the employers tend to increase working hours, lower wages, and offer poorer working conditions (Do & Broek 2013). In contrast, the employees desire to reduce working hours, increase wages, and obtain more secure and better working conditions. In comparison with a centrally-planned economy, this type of interest conflict rarely existed previously, because managers were also a type of employee that worked for the party-state. They simply followed working hours, wages and working conditions, which were arranged by the party-state (Kelly 1988; Littler & Palmer 1986). However, in the new circumstance, with the appearance of interest conflicts between employees and management, the trade unions as organisations of labour might become confused as to whether they are fighting for workers' rights or are more inclined towards management's interests.

The main issues for Vietnamese trade unions are a low percentage of union density in enterprises, and ambiguous strategies to operate in the new context of Doi Moi. The

former indicates that there are a large number of unorganised labour forces (Nguyen 2008). Realising the low density of membership, the CPV strongly requires the VGCL to put its efforts into organising unorganised workers. The CPV realises that, during the process of mass mobilisation for the national revolutions, workers were considered as a remarkably powerful source; thus, now in Doi Moi, it is necessary again to mobilise and organise this mass block of employees (CPV 2008). As the apparatus of the CPV, Vietnamese trade unions are the organisations to fulfil this mission, but they appear not to have been able to meet the need (Dang 2009).

Evaluating the shortcomings of the task of organizing and recruiting members, the Presidium of the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour clearly pointed out that, although the number of trade union members and grassroots unions has increased rapidly, the quantity of membership does not meet the requirements (VGCL 2013b). The rate of organizing and recruiting union members in newly established enterprises has not been catching up with the rate of enterprise development. The trend of union density appears in Figure 2.4.

Figure 2.4: The trend of trade union density in Vietnam, 2000-2013



Source: General Statistics Office of Vietnam (2015)

The above figure shows the number of employees, union membership, and percentage of union membership in relation to the number of employees. Both trends of employees and union membership have increased from 2000 to 2013, and the trend of union density has also steadily increased from 2000 to 2010. However, union density appears to have declined in 2010. In 2000, the number of employees was 13,535,000, and it reached more than 18,000,000 in 2013. Similarly, the number of employees who have union membership was 5,100,000, and it gradually raised to 7,200,000 in 2010. During the period from 2000 to 2010, the percentage of union membership density gradually raised from 37.7 percent in 2000 to 44.3 percent in 2010. It is interesting that, although union membership increased by 7,900,000 in 2013, the trend of union density dropped from 44.3 percent in 2010 to 43.6 percent in 2013. This shows the fact that, in spite of a steady increase in the number of members, union density is decreasing.

The reason for low union membership is the weakness of grass-roots trade unions, which do not attract potential membership (Nguyen 2010). Although trade unions have very favourable conditions to recruit members and operate, in practice it is difficult to do so. It appears that the difficulty in recruiting membership has occurred in DPEs and FOEs (Zhu & Benson 2008). Nguyen (2009b) examines the roles of the trade union at primary level in FOEs, observing that, although employees have known the important roles of the trade union in representing and protecting membership, they have not joined the trade union because they are sceptical about the close relationship of union leaders and management. Clarke et al. (2007) studied the challenges of industrial relations in Vietnam, exploring the dual role of union leaders in FOEs. In Clarke et al.'s (2007) research, the union leaders were chairmen of the executive committee as well as managers of the human resource departments of the enterprises. Consequently, the union members were not sure who the union leaders worked for in resolving labour

disputes. Investigating the wildcat strikes in Vietnam, Do and van den Broek (2013) claim that the potential union members felt disappointed with the current primary trade unions, so that they bypassed the unions and set up their own organisations, the so-called 'informal workers activism' (Do & van den Broek 2013, p. 786). Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, any organisation of employees without VGCL's recognition is illegal and prohibited. This shows the fact that primary trade unions at workplace level have found difficulty in recruiting new membership.

The weakness of union leaders in negotiating with employers in primary trade unions has also caused the trade unions to be less attractive. Van Gramberg et al. (2013) investigated the causes of wildcat strikes, and claim that owners of private enterprises tend to delay payment of wages and non-payment of wages for overworking time, operate illegally in dismissal processes, fail to pay health insurance contributions, and withhold agreed bonuses. When these violations happen, employees desire primary trade unions to react by effectively negotiating with employers. However, the trade unions, in many cases, do not succeed or they do not take into account members' grievances. Hence, the employees illegally have resolved their issues by themselves with the wildcat strikes (Le 2010; Nguyen 2006; Nguyen 2013). According to Tran (2007b), the trade unions have been incapable of restraining employers' violations such as ignorance of the payment of overtime with the imposition of excessive overtime, or providing a low quality of working environment and unsafe working conditions. Generally, this ineffectiveness has meant that, in terms of being protectors of employees, the trade unions have performed poorly.

Academics have argued that union leaders at enterprise level have faced a dilemma situation in fulfilling their responsibilities; consequently, they have not effectively represented and protected union members' rights and interests when these are in conflict

with those of employers (Clarke & Pringle 2009; Mantsios 2010; Zhu & Fahey 2000). This is because, on one hand, they operate as the employee's defenders. With this role, they struggle against management to protect union members. On the other hand, however, they often come from managerial staff, so they have to operate as a manager. They are thus in reality sandwiched between employees and employers, without a possible escape from this dilemma (Pringle & Clarke 2010). The trade union officials have not placed themselves in this dilemma. They are not able to choose the context, but they have to adapt to the context. As previously mentioned, the nature of communist trade unions means that the trade unions have an associated relationship with management as well as protecting their membership. In the centrally-planned economy, the union members and managers worked for the state. Hence, this associated relationship did not cause any trouble. However, in the socialist market-oriented economy, the union members intensively confront managers by virtue of conflicts of interest. Thus, the operation of the union seems to be split into two parts: one for the membership, and the other for the management.

Vietnamese workers have sought alternative forms of employee representations such as union independence, autonomy, and informal worker leaders, so-called 'black leaders' (Pringle & Clarke 2010, p.72). However, union independence or autonomy is illegal in Vietnam because the VGCL is the sole organisation of Vietnamese workers in accordance with the country's Constitution (Dang 2009). Consequently, workers rely on the 'black leaders' who secretly encourage them to join strikes (Pringle & Clarke 2010). Do and van den Broek (2013) suggest that the increase in informal worker activism has placed pressure on trade union reform because workers do not trust union officials. Van Gramberg et al. (2013, p. 264) point out one of the reasons that workers ignore union officials in labour disputes is that: 'While workers lack confidence in unions, dispute-

resolution processes which ultimately require the involvement of unions will continue to be ignored and the wildcat strike is likely to remain commonplace in Vietnam’.

Generally, Vietnamese trade unions have suffered from a vague direction of operation. Although they operate in a favourable environment, which is supported by the party-state, they have to decide whether their priority is workers benefits or management. In terms of fighting for workers’ benefits, union members do not see trade unions as organisations that have capacities to assist and protect membership against the employers. Based on their current situation, the trade unions have to find the ways to mediate conflicts of interest between membership and management as well as to protect their membership from employers’ exploitation. In so doing, the trade unions need appropriate strategies to obtain their dual aims. In short, the current trade unions have struggled with the new environment while having to retain their traditional operational role. In other words, the root of their trouble is that the communist entity has to operate in a capitalist economy.

Trade union responses to Doi Moi

In Vietnam, less is known about how primary trade unions actually respond at workplace and national levels during Doi Moi. This section reviews the responses of Vietnamese trade unions by focussing on two sources: the VGCL’s directions relative to the CPV’s directives and labour regulations; and academic work. From these sources, it is suggested that the recommendations for trade unions to change were likely to be general objectives, and that the VGCL has not detailed the strategies to achieve their objectives. Regarding the first source, at the national level, the VGCL has to follow the CPV’s directives and labour legislation. Owing to the nature of the communist regime, the CPV and the government consistently create a favourable environment for trade

unions' operations. The CPV consistently emphasises the crucial roles of grassroots trade unions in improving the quality of employees' lives and encouraging sympathy and support from employers (CPV 2008). The collection of trade union dues in enterprises of all economic sectors, to comply with the provisions of Law on Trade Unions, and labour regulations, is used for training, retraining and raising the level of political, professional, cultural activities, competition, reward, social welfare and other activities of the workers in those enterprises (CPV 2008). Following this directive, the Vietnamese government created the favourable conditions for trade union establishment and operation, as mentioned in the section, Organisational structure of Vietnamese trade unions. The mentioned resolution of CPV offered the purposes of improving employees' lives as well as encouraging manager's sympathy and support as being vital roles of trade unions.

Ironically, the VGCL has not developed any clear direction or strategy in detail. The VGCL realises that the trade unions need to further strengthen the propaganda and education to enhance political ability, and sense of self-reliance of the workers. The VGCL also has awareness that it is crucial to educate union leaders and membership to participate in the construction, modification and implementation of labour regulations. In doing so, the VGCL only offered some general tactics to deal with the daily work of trade unions (Nguyen 2009a). The VGCL has developed innovation contents, methods and improvement of the quality of training for union officials, as well as consolidated and improved the quality of the University of Unions, which belongs to the VGCL (Lan 2007). According to Nguyen (2008), the VGCL, and especially the grassroots trade unions, need to strengthen and expand solidarity through international cooperation with the working class and trade unions in enterprises across the country. Expanding solidarity may be considered an approach, as the VGCL has focussed on training and

retraining of union officials, especially grassroots union leaders (Nguyen 2010). However, these are not strategies of the trade unions to obtain their goals. The offered actions by the VGCL have likely been a short-term plan of action rather than a systematic strategy to make the VGCL's directions become reality.

In regard to evidence of union responses in academic work, there have been ambiguous suggestions. The most significant proposal is that the trade unions should follow Western models and encourage more union democracy (Do 2013; Edwards & Phan 2008; Kamoche 2001; Pringle & Clarke 2010; Van Gramberg et al. 2013). This proposal is ambiguous because to date, Vietnam has remained a one-party system, with the CPV in absolute control over the whole country. The suggestion relative to shifting the trade unions to Western models appears to mean that the current political ideology should be changed. This happened in the post-communist countries in Eastern Europe, where the political regime changed completely to capitalism (Smith & Pickles 1998). The dominance of the CPV and the rule of socialist principles, however, still have a strong influence on all activities and organisations in Vietnam (Rowley & Truong 2009). Therefore, the CPV has shown no signal for the trade unions to be able to shift to Western models of trade unions.

In addition, a commonly recommended approach for Vietnamese trade union change is encouraging union democracy at workplace level and increasing the level of democracy of Vietnamese trade unions (Cox 2015; Do 2013; Pringle & Clarke 2010; Zhu & Fahey 2000). However, it is not sufficient to recommend that encouraging democracy is necessary for trade unions, because the concept of democracy and union democracy have been differently understood in various contexts (Magrath 1959; Seidman 1958; Stepan-Norris & Zeitlin 1995; Strauss 1991). There has, furthermore, been little

research on trade union democracy in Vietnam. Thus, the suggestion of promoting union democracy has appeared to underestimate the difficulties this would entail. In addition, the debate about the concept of union democracy itself has never ended in the Western literature (Martin 1968; Morris & Fosh 2000; Stepan-Norris & Zeitlin 1995). The present study will analyse that debate in Chapter 4, in the section, Union renewal: A strategy of encouraging union democracy. As a result, the recommendations relative to union democracy as an approach for trade union revitalisation in Vietnam are likely to be problematic.

Currently, Vietnamese trade unions have not employed any systematic strategy for revitalisation. The studies suggesting Western models of trade unions and increasing union democracy as solutions for the trade unions were more likely advocating changing the ideological foundation of trade unions. This approach, however, is constrained by the control of the CPV. Therefore, reform of the trade unions is instead better considered as ‘crossing the river by feeling the stone’ (Zhu & Fahey 1999, p. 173).

Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the economic reform in Vietnam, namely Doi Moi. This transition has made changes in employment relations. The VGCL, that is the only official trade union organisation in Vietnam, has been challenged in Doi Moi. Rooted in the national revolutions in 1929, the VGCL has remained in close relationship with the CPV in accordance with the communist ideology. According to the communist ideology, Vietnamese trade unions have a close relationship with management, and retained that relationship when the economic mechanism shifted from the centrally-planned economy to the market-oriented economy. The new economic

mechanism places trade unions in conflicts of interest between the employees and employers.

Nevertheless, the current trade unions cannot change their principles of foundation and organisation. The VGCL is in the top of the organisational structure, and the organisations below are provincial and district federations of trade unions. Primary trade unions are at the grassroots level. Union members, who attend union conferences at lower levels, elect the executive committee and representatives for the union conferences at higher levels. The national conference of the VGCL is the highest-level conference, at which the union representatives vote in the executive committee of trade unions at the national level. The president of the executive committee is also the member of central committee of the CPV at the national level.

The union leaders of trade unions include two types: fulltime, and part-time union leaders. The former works at the offices of the trade unions from district to national levels. The latter works at grassroots level, and they are also employees of the employment organisations. These latter union leaders are closest with the membership.

For financial contributions to trade unions, both employers and union members are responsible for contributing to the union budget. The primary trade unions have the right to keep a part of the budget, and the rest must be sent to the district federations of labour.

Vietnamese trade unions have been criticised because of the low union density since the economic reform began in 1986. The main causes of this criticism are the weakness of primary trade unions and the dilemma position of union leadership at workplace level. This has resulted in less attractive unions, and employees have tended not to join the

unions. The trade unions have yet to respond to these issues systematically, by virtue of ambiguous strategies to operate in the new context of economic reform.

With the aim of exploring appropriate strategies for trade unions to change, the next chapter will review literature on trade union models, which is relative to actual strategies of trade unions worldwide.

CHAPTER 3

MODELS OF TRADE UNIONS

Unions remain the most important representatives of working people's class interests, and their existence continues to contribute to societal democracy.

(Stepan-Norris 1997, p. 476)

Introduction

Trade unions are mass organisations that protect and represent millions of employees. The trade union movement reflects specific strategies of trade unions in each nation in order to realise unions' goals of dignity, fairness, and justice. Across nations, trade unionism develops differently, with various identities that depend on specifically national contexts and various ideologies. This chapter argues that, in respect of association of wage earners, labour organisations in all societies, irrespective of capitalism or communism, share similar characteristics of trade union. However, trade unionism in communist economies, as with the case of Vietnam, differs from that in capitalist economies. To presents the above argument, firstly, this chapter reviews the main concepts relative to trade unions as organisations of employees, including concepts, objectives of trade unions, sources of union power, and organisational structure of trade unions. Secondly, this chapter presents analytical identities of trade union models in advanced economies. The chapter continues with the literature review of servicing and organising models of trade unions in respect of union members' attitudes towards trade unions. Finally, the chapter examines whether Vietnamese trade unions assimilate into the reviewed models.

Concepts of trade unions

Historically, the Industrial Revolution, which took place in the last half of the 18th century, gave impetus to the growth of trade unionism (Kerr et al. 1962). Britain was the first country to become capitalist, and it was there that trade unions first appeared (Hobsbawm 1964). British workers in one trade after another began to form permanent combinations and to wage strikes to protect and improve their conditions of employment (Kerr et al. 1962). Later, as capitalism developed in Europe and America, workers there formed organisations similar in character to the British trade unions. In 1917, with the victory of the Russian Revolution and the creation of Communist countries across Central and Eastern Europe, the model of communist trade unions appeared accordingly (Herod 1998; Kelly 1988; Pravda 1983).

There are some universal threads that define trade unions as a particular form of social organisation of employees (Brown 1983; Ewing 2005; Poole 1981; Webb & Webb 1894). The nature of the trade union is a collection of wage earners who sell their labour to employers. To date, trade unions are institutions, legally-constituted, collective bargaining agents, which represent workers in their relations with employers and government (Clawson & Clawson 1999).

Academics have commonly shared the idea that employees organise together to achieve common goals such as protecting the integrity of its trade, improving safety standards, and achieving higher pay and benefits such as health care and retirement (Crouch 1982; Hobsbawm 1964; Poole 1981). For example, Crouch (1982) attempted to set out a rationality of trade unionism in Britain, and argues that trade unions as associations of employees fight for four major substantive issues, which are at the heart of the workers' quest in combining. The four core issues are: improving wages, working conditions, and

other material remuneration; enhancing job security; reducing working time; and obtaining respect and dignity. Workers have to fight for their vital demands because, at the early stage of Industrial Revolution in Europe, employers, who controlled the economies, commonly treated employees very badly, with low wages, hazardous working environments, and poverty living conditions (Webb & Webb 1894). This is the reason wage earners have experienced a long history of having to fight for their legitimate rights by gathering together in trade unions (Brown 1983).

Hobsbawm (1964) studied the history of working men, and pointed out that the earliest of combinations of employees as trade unions emerged from guilds of craftsmen, who formed trade clubs to restrain trade from the mercilessness of factory-based, large-scale manufacture. After the industrial revolution in England, the workers who suffered from the inhumane and despotic exploitation of employers decided to take their fates into their hands and fight by gathering together in organisations, namely trade unions, as they are known now. In the very earliest period, trade unions were not recognised by authorities and employers. This meant that the organisations of trade unions were illegal (Brown 1983). They were illegal partly because, even before the industrial revolution, i.e. in the period of England's transition from feudalism, combinations of workers had been outlawed. The penalties for being a union member then varied from prison sentences to deportation and included, as well, execution (Hobsbawm 1964).

To survive, trade unions in England, the US and European countries conducted several protests in order to gain recognition by authorities (Brown 1983; Hobsbawm 1964). For example in England, one of the first battles of the earliest unions was to win recognition and to remove the penumbra of illegality (Hobsbawm 1964). These battles were not separate from struggles for better working conditions and wages. The repeal of the anti-

combination laws in 1824 was the first step to making trade unions recognized as legal entities, albeit grudgingly by bosses (Hobsbawm 1964).

Generally, originating from the Industrial Revolution in the last half of the 18th century, trade unions as organisations of employees have the goals of improving working and living conditions within capitalist societies. After several campaigns, trade unions have been legally recognised across several nations from advanced to emerging economies. Through history, trade unions have consistently pursued the notion of fighting for legitimate membership rights and interests.

Objectives of trade unions

The previous section briefly mentioned the underlying reasons for why employees have gathered in trade unions. It can be firmly stated that employees always seek liberty, equality and fraternity (Luce 2014). With the development of industrial relations, scholars have focussed on the question of whether trade unions try to obtain economic goals in increases of wages, the reduction of working hours, and the safeguard of employment, or whether they pursue political goals in the battle to fight against capitalism with a revolutionary class consciousness (Crouch 1982; Kelly 1988). The present research does not aim to contribute to this debate; instead, it examines strategies of trade unions in Vietnam under an economic perspective. The political aspects of Vietnamese trade unions were reviewed in Chapter 2, with their close relationship with the CPV. Contemporary politics in Vietnam has continued to adhere to the ruling role of the CPV. The present research does not aim to challenge the legitimacy of that relationship. This means that the present research limits its findings and discussion within economic approaches.

From the economic perspective, trade unions commonly aim to improve working and living conditions, and to protect their members due to interest conflicts between employees and employers (Crouch 1982). While employers attempt to increase profits, the surplus value, as much as possible, by reducing wages and increasing the hours or the intensity of labour, workers attempt, at least, to prevent a deduction of wages or safety conditions (Brown 1983; Hobsbawm 1964; Rudra 2008). In capitalism, employers who take advantages of employees try to maximise profits through wage freezes or cuts, or by raising prices, which places pressures on workers' standard of living (Dibben & Wood 2011). Therefore, workers require trade unions to be organised with specific goals that attract and retain union membership.

Theoretically, there have been four types of goods or incentives that unions offer to members in return for membership and support (Crouch 1982; Ewing 2005; Hobsbawm 1964). Firstly, material goods are provided selectively by a union, including shorter hours, decreased work-load or work intensity, and other working conditions, as well as non-pecuniary goods associated with grievance procedures and the provision of voice. Secondly, there are supra-personal goals, which are social or collective in character. A third category of goods are identity goods, which relate to the ability of individuals to identify and to be identified with the set of principles and rights for which unions are constituted, often expressed in a broader commitment to unionism itself. These form the ideological foundations of unionism itself. Fourthly are sociability goods, which are also the intangible rewards created by the act of associating and the interpersonal social bonds. Union members, as beneficiaries, might feel part of a relatively small and defined group, and thus be happy about participating in union affairs (Crouch 1982). For the present study, the four types of goods offered by unions, traditionally, have

provided conceptions for analysing membership expectations of being served by trade unions.

Focussing on what trade unions do, Gospel (2008) provides an outline of four types of benefits that trade unions bring to their membership. Firstly, the unions deliver various kinds of benefits such as provision for unemployment, sickness, and pensions. Secondly, unions seek to maintain and improve employment conditions by unilateral regulation. The workers act collectively, autonomously, and informally to control aspects of their working lives. This also appears among certain professionals such as doctors and university academics based on their autonomy in their jobs. Thirdly, collective bargaining as bilateral action with an employer aims to establish and implement a set of employment conditions. Fourthly, unions use the lobbying campaign to push the state to enact favourable employment provisions for workers by basic law.

In short, the end of trade union activity is to protect and improve the general living standards of its members, because, in employment relations, the employees are otherwise in a weak position by comparison with employers. It is not simple to obtain union goals without consideration for the collision of interests between employees and employers. To pursue their goals, union members have organised collective actions as the powerful means of fighting against the offenses of management. Thus, the next section reviews power sources of trade unions.

Power sources of trade unions

Collective action is main source of union power for obtaining union goals. Crouch (1982) argues that the power of trade unions originates from collective action or the power of the majority. It is clear that an individual employee is weaker than an employer in the employment relation. Individuals fear that negotiating with employers

for their position may cause them to lose their jobs or be victimised by employers. Being a unionist is essential for employees because, just through joining unions, individuals are afforded a collective power that they would lack if they were not union members (Brown 1983; Hobsbawm 1964). Crouch (1982) points out that one of the most effective approaches to strengthening employees' power is that the employees have the ability to collectively withhold their labour by participating in strikes.

Academia shares a common argument that withholding labour power is historically the most effective approach to generating union power (Luce 2014). Employers have to persuade or have to meet employees' need to get employees back to work. Otherwise, they cannot produce or generate profit. This is the basic nature of the relationship between employers and employees. In addition, researching the history of labour, Hobsbawm (1964) proposes that union tools are mainly collective actions, which are collective bargaining and industrial strikes. Brown (1983) determined the source of union power, and was in line with the Hobsbawm's argument that collective actions are the origin of union member power.

In the war period, Vietnamese trade unions mobilised their members to fight for national independence, as mentioned in Chapter 2. As with the tradition of union movement in labour history just mentioned, collective actions were also their source of power. For example, the VGCL propagated and gathered hundreds of thousands of workers to support industrial actions such as absenteeism, stoppages and strikes, with the purpose of struggling against French colonisation and the US invasion (Dang 2009). In an analysis of workers' protest in Vietnam, Kerkvliet (2010) confirms that strikes were the most common way for Vietnamese workers to express discontent against

French colonial rule and American imperialism during the national revolutions. This reflects collective action as the most powerful source of Vietnamese trade unions.

In sum, traditionally, trade unions worldwide rely upon collective actions to gain their objectives. Gathering together provides individual members power, and safeguards members against victimisation, because the individual employee is inevitably weaker than an employer in production. However, employees need to form in a particular, systematic organisational structure to encourage membership participation and maximise the power of such collective actions.

Organisational structure

Trade unions worldwide organise into one of either two forms, namely unitary confederations and occupational divisions (Gospel 2008). The former is a vertical dimension, which has a central organisation of trade unions at national level and organisations at lower levels. In some countries, there is only one confederation, such as the VGCL in Vietnam. In other countries, there may be several confederations, with different unions affiliated under each of the confederations' umbrellas. Trade unions in the US, the UK and Australia fall into a cluster of unitary confederations (Blanchflower & Freeman 1992). The latter is organised in accordance with occupational or industrial unions. Occupational unions are unions of teachers or nurses and so forth. Industrial unions organise in specific industries, regardless of the membership's skills or occupations, such as railway, steel or mine workers. For instance, trade unions in Germany and Italy follow the structure of occupational divisions (Blanchflower & Freeman 1992).

The implication of union structure is reflected in the level of tactical formation. According to Gahan (1998), the unions that have the structure of union confederations

often provide strategies at the national level, and the lower level of organisations have to follow the strategies in practice. For example, Darlington (2009) examines the relation between leadership and union militancy of the National Union Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers, and observes that the dominance of left-wing leadership at the national level has consequences at every level of the unions. This leads to a militant approach for the whole organisational structure of the unions. By contrast, unions with the structure of occupational divisions have formed their various tactics of union operation according to their particular circumstances. For example, conducting research on the changing influence of trade unions in contemporary Italy, Pulignano (2007) points out that the Italian trade union system divides into three main ideological lines, which link directly to different ideas, Communist, Socialist, and Christian Democracy. These three leading confederations reveal different strategies to deal with union issues in accordance with their political ideologies (Pulignano 2007). Therefore, the present research should take into account the particular structure of trade unions to examine the formulation of union tactics.

As reviewed in Chapter 2, Vietnamese trade unions are organised in accordance with the structure of national federation, the VGCL. The president of the VGCL is also a member of central committee of the CPV, which has strongly influenced the direction of the trade unions. Thus, it is supposed that the strategy of the trade unions might not be outside CPV directives. However, the VGCL is at the national level, so it is far from rank-and-file members at the workplace level. With the organisational structure of Vietnamese trade unions, the trade union responses obviously appear at the workplace level. Therefore, the present research focusses on responses of the primary trade unions in order to explore the reality of strategies of trade union revitalisation.

The organisational structure of trade unions reflects one aspect of trade unionism in a specific country. It can provide an explanation for why a specific trade union responds accordingly to its issues. However, responses of trade unions to their challenges are also shaped by the variety of trade union models (Frege & Kelly 2004). Thus, the next section examines various models of trade unions.

Varieties of trade union models

There has been a long tradition of research on trade union models. Scholars have relied on various criteria to classify trade unions into different models (Dunlop 1993; Poole 1981; Webb & Webb 1894). Based on their basic goals, trade unions are categorised into business, welfare, or social partner unionism (Gospel 2008; Hollinshead & Leat 1995). By contrast, if the classification relies on the relationship between three factors: market, class, and society, the trade union is classified into market-orientated unions, class-orientated unions, and society-orientated unions (Hyman 2001). In the particular context of Asian countries, trade unions have been categorised in accordance with the degree to which autonomous or independent worker organisations are permitted to operate in the particular countries (Phelan 2007b). Specifically, within a communist society, trade unions have organised in significantly different forms by comparison with the above-mentioned models.

In terms of the basic goals of trade unions, trade unionism in advanced countries is considered as being in one of three categories of trade unionism, namely, business, welfare, or social partner unionism (Gospel 2008). Business trade unions pursue economic aims such as increasing wages, and improving working conditions. Hence, they focus on collective bargaining and workplace issues. They represent occupational rather than class interests (Hollinshead & Leat 1995; Webb & Webb 1894). By contrast,

welfare unions organise along class lines. They rely on ‘social mobilisation to apply pressure on the state to pass laws or implemented social policies to benefit the working class as a whole’ (Phelan 2007a, p. 12). The third category is social partner unionism, which joins in national tripartite bodies that hammer out labour and social welfare issues through ‘negotiations aimed at finding consensus among the partners’ (Phelan 2007a, p. 12).

Hyman (2001) proposes that identities of trade unionism can be determined by the relationship between three factors, market, class, and society. This relationship shapes the union identities, which can be drawn into three types: market-orientated unions, class-orientated unions, and society-orientated unions. According to Hyman (2001), unions are considered to be market-orientated if their essential purposes are to obtain a high labour price and improve the welfare of members, through collective bargaining within the labour market (examples are unions in the UK, the US and Australia). The unions serve their members’ interests and obtain the goals of job security and freedom of association. Such unions move towards a sort of business union model.

In the class-oriented model, unions tend to promote social revolution. Unions are a means of class struggle between workers and capitalists. Trade unions are self-controlled by workers. Trade unions are the instrument of the party, since the union’s concern is not just wages but the wider concept of a great historical mission. In that view, trade unions are the organisations of the working class that can lead social revolution. This model is similar to welfare unionism as mentioned above. Trade unionism in Italy, Spain and France typifies the class-oriented model (Hyman 2001).

The third model is the society-orientated union, which can be seen as a social partner. Such unions strongly raise the workers’ voices in society, providing mutual supports for

their members and integrating with politics. Trade unions have the responsibility to protect not only their members but also the working class and the whole society. They educate their members for the purpose of social harmony. Among European countries, Dutch, Swedish and German unions are typically social partners (Hyman 2001).

Asian trade unions might not be categorised into above models, because the unions in many Asian countries were established in relation to anti-colonisation and national revolutions in the early part of the nineteenth century, and suffered severe violence and intimidation against them (Jensen 2006; Kuruvilla et al. 2002; Kuruvilla & Erickson 2002). Therefore, the classification of trade unionism in those countries, in accordance to the above model, becomes less useful. Phelan (2007b) suggests that the classification of trade unionism is based on the degree to which autonomous or independent worker organisations are permitted to operate in particular countries. According to Phelan (2007b), in developing countries the political party or state has historically played a decisive role in shaping the parameters of trade union practice. Therefore, trade unionism in such countries comprises three models, namely neoliberal, social democratic, and authoritarian. The neoliberal model allows trade unions to conduct their activities, but at the same time implicitly restricts them by legislation or the operation of market forces. The Korean government retained trade unions in South Korea with a unitary confederation, but with the flexibility of the labour market, several union leaders have desired multiple unions. Therefore, the trade unions are in transition towards a neoliberal model (Rowley & Yoo 2008). In contrast, the social democratic model not only permits union activity but also actively encourages it by legislation. Trade unions in Malaysia have inclined towards this model, as the trade unions represent and protect members by collective bargaining, improving members' welfare, and protecting against unlawful dismissals (Ramasamy & Rowley 2008). Regarding the authoritarian model,

trade unionism actively seeks to prevent independent worker organisation, either through state control or physical force. In China, the trade unions have a main function to promote production and protect workers' interests. The state or ruling political party supports unions as its agents. Trade unions are the subordinationary body, which operate to achieve the goals of the state or political party (Baek 2000; Clarke 2005). Chinese trade unions have retained characteristics of trade unions that have been organised in early communist society.

Chapter 2 mentioned the communist character of Vietnamese trade unions. The communist trade unions resulted from the victory of the Russian Revolution in 1917. Examining the traditional communist trade unions in Eastern European countries, Pravda (1983) argues that managers and workers alike belong to the same union, in accordance with Leninist ideology. They are employed by a socialist state; in consequence, there may be no fundamental interests splitting employees and employers. Pravda (1983, p. 245) emphasised:

The duality of the unions' interest protection and labour management functions merely reflects the general assumption that what is good for the economy – as defined by government and Communist Party - must be good for all workers and employees.

To make a clear distinction between communist trade unions and capitalist trade unions, Littler and Palmer (1986) contrasted the two models below:

Table 3.1 shows that the communist trade unions do not concentrate on resolving interest conflict as it is supposed that no such conflict exists; instead, they supervise the maintenance of stable production, support the party-state, and exclude the use of adversarial means (Littler & Palmer 1986). If one considers trade unions as previously

reviewed for Western models, this can lead to the assumption that trade unions were only in name, because Western trade unions have traditionally concentrated on resolving the tension between employers and employees (Clarke 2005).

Table 3.1: Capitalist Unions and Communist Union Contrasted

Communist Unions (Classic Dualism)	Capitalist Unions (Classic adversarial model)
1. Unitary view of economic interests. It is axiomatic that no 'industrial conflicts' exist.	1. Pluralist view of economic interests.
2. The production function is paramount.	2. Representative function is paramount.
3. Protection of members' rights is secondary.	3. Production function is either (i) not acknowledged, or (ii) secondary.
4. Subordination to the party.	4. Autonomous organisations.
5. No collective bargaining. Union practices exclude the use of adversarial means.	5. Adversarial collective bargaining is the typical process of industrial relations.

Source: Littler and Palmer (1986, p. 265)

Generally, in advanced economies, in respect of the basic goals of trade unions, trade unionism falls into one of business, class, or social models. With regard to the relationship between market, class, and society the identities of trade unions can be defined within market-oriented, class-oriented, and society-oriented models. In Asian countries, where the political party and state has controlled union practice, trade unions are classified within neoliberal, social democratic, and authoritarian models. By contrast, trade unions in communist society operate with the assumption that what is good for the economy is good for all employees. The variety of trade unions discussed here offers the robust evidence for discussing the strategies of trade union revitalisation (Frege & Kelly 2003).

Recently, in attempts to seek a suitable model for future trade unions, academics have concentrated on the concepts of serving and organising models of trade unions, based on the attitudes of union members towards their trade unions (Bacharach et al. 2001; Snape et al. 2000). The next section reviews the two models in relation to the contents of union members' attitudes towards trade unions.

Union members' attitudes towards trade unions and servicing versus organising models of trade unions

Members' attitude towards trade unions indicates union commitment (Conlon & Gallagher 1987). Union commitment is 'the extent to which an individual has desire to retain membership, exert for, and identify with the objective of his or her union' (Bamberger et al. 1999, p. 305). Union commitment has attracted research attention over the years. The significance of this topic in the US labour movement is emphasised by Gallagher and Clark (1989, p. 52) as follows:

The effectiveness of unions in organising, bargaining, retaining membership, and political action depends on level of commitment the organisation is able to build among present and potential union members. There may be no more important question facing unions and their leaders than the issue of what factors shape union commitment.

Researchers were interested in understanding the membership attitudes towards trade unions (Chan et al. 2004; Iverson & Buttigieg 1997; Snape et al. 2000). To determine membership attitudes, academics have mainly cited Gordon et al. (1980), who developed a survey comprising 30 questions, which resulted in a four-factor measure of union commitment. The four factors are union loyalty, responsibility to the union, willingness to work for the union, and belief in trade unionism (Bamberger et al. 1999;

Gordon et al. 1980; Sverke & Kuruvilla 1995; Tetrick 1995; Thacker et al. 1990). A large volume of research has subsequently utilised this framework to study trade union commitment (Friedman & Harvey 1986; Fullagar & Barling 1989; Fullagar et al. 2004; Kelloway et al. 1992; Sinclair & Tetrick 1995; Tan & Aryee 2002; Trimpop 1995).

Union loyalty consists of pride and an understanding of the advantages of membership to the union (Bacharach et al. 2001). It also indicates the degree to which a member demonstrates a sense of pride in the union. Union loyalty is determined by questioning union members about their pride in the union. Being proud of the union, the union members encourage their friends, relatives and colleagues to join the union. Members think that the union would bring them more job security, and they consider the union's problems to be their problems and seek solutions to tackle these problems. The decision to join the union is a vital milestone in their employment. Union members similarly share the union's goals and values. Hence, they retain their union membership status (Gordon et al. 1980).

Union responsibility represents the degree to which the member is willing to fulfil the day-to-day obligations and duties of membership in order to protect the interests of the union. To clarify union responsibility, the survey developed by Gordon et al. (1980) asks union members questions about their willingness to help other members and to participate in a grievance procedure without considering the burden of time and risk (Gordon et al. 1980).

Willingness to work for the union means that the member is ready to work on behalf of the union and to spend extra energy for union duties (Bamberger et al. 1999). This component indicates the enthusiasm for participation in union activities beyond the expected daily activities. The extent of willingness to work for the union is ascertained

by questioning union members about whether or not they put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected of a member in order to make the union successful. For example, they enthusiastically serve in the union committee or run for an elected office in the union.

Belief in unionism indicates ideological belief in the concept of trade unions. This factor shows the member's attitude towards both the union and the organisation. The survey developed by Gordon et al. (1980) asks union members whether or not their membership status influences their employment.

The present research does not have a main objective of investigating union commitment; instead, it seeks to determine the features of union members' attitudes towards their unions, which helps to address the questions of what strategies Vietnamese trade unions should apply to reform. To do so, the research modifies Gordon et al.'s questionnaire (1980) and uses it as a part of an interview question list for conducting semi-structured interviews. It was noticed that the original questionnaire of Gordon et al. (1980) was structured as close-ended forms for surveys in quantitative research (see Appendix 1); hence, the present study modified those questions to become open-ended questions for this qualitative research, according to the context of Vietnam.

Based on the analysis of the relationship between union and members, trade unionism falls into two models, the servicing model and the organising model (Bacharach et al. 2001; Bamberger et al. 1999). The servicing union is underpinned by a relationship of economic exchange with members, whereby the union appeals to support and deliver benefits for its members. In return, members support the union by paying fees, joining union activities and performing the necessary duties. Union leaders act as service providers, and union members are considered as customers. This model reflects the

economic exchange relationship, and characterises the traditional business union in the US (Snape et al. 2000). The organising union relies more on a notion of social exchange. The union and its members establish relationships that depend on trust and are non-contractual. The commitment is more likely to be value-based, emphasising affective commitment and social norms (Snape et al. 2000). Table 3.2 presents a summary of comparisons between the two models.

Table 3.2 shows that there have been significant contrasts between the two models. For example, in the servicing model, union leaders have to solve problems for members, while members are passive and rely on union staff. Tracing back the classical literature in 1970s, the passivity of membership was mentioned by Child et al. (1973). Passivity of union members falls into two types: content passivity or cardholders; and discontent passivity or alienated members (Child et al. 1973). The cardholders remain passive as long as they get fair wages and security. They do not join the union in order to become involved in politics or in a broader set of workplace activities.

By contrast, the alienated members include two kinds: socially coerced members, who do not personally support a collectivist ideology; and the former troublemakers who have reached a position in which they despair at ever changing union politics. The troublemakers also tend to withdraw from active involvement in union affairs (Child et al. 1973). Blyton and Turnbull (2004) examined passive membership in respect of membership participation, stating that the passivity demonstrates passive involvement in decision-making processes, passively received information, and leaving authority for decision-making. As a result of passive members, union leaders try to help union members by solving problems for them (Fiorito 2004).

Table 3.2: Comparing the servicing and organising models

Servicing model	Organising model
1. Union leadership solves problems for members on basis of complaints or requests.	1. Stimulates and involves members in problem solving in group process or collective action.
2. Total reliance on grievance and negotiation process.	2. Not limited to the bargaining process.
3. Passive membership or limited to leadership request for cooperation.	3. Commitment to education, communications from and participation in the union.
4. Reliance on specialist, experts and union staff.	4. Development and dependence on members' skills and abilities.
5. Secretive and closed communication channels.	5. Information sharing and open communication channels.
6. Centralised and top-heavy organisational structure.	6. Decentralised organisational structure.
7. Dependent on management, reactive.	7. Independent of management, proactive.
8. Makes distinctions between internal and external organising activities.	8. Makes no distinction between internal and external organising activities.

Source: Turberville (2004, p. 777)

In contrast, members in the organising model resolve their issues by themselves, and they are proactive (Turberville 2004). The function of this model depends on members' skills and abilities rather than on experts or union staff. This means that union members can resolve their issues for themselves through the union, rather than unions as an outside party resolving issue for union members.

With regard to relationship with management, Table 3.2 shows that, in the servicing model, trade unions seem to be reactive, and depend on management; while they are independent and proactive in the organising model. In terms of organisational structure,

centralised and top-heavy structure of organisations is seen in the servicing model; but the organising model has a decentralised organisational structure.

Clarification of union models plays a vital role in analysis of union strategy. Fiorito (2004) proffers that the revitalisation of trade unions also relies on whether the trade unions take shape within servicing or organising models. Taking together the reviewed literature, the next section preliminarily justifies the contemporary model of Vietnamese trade unions.

What model do Vietnamese trade unions fit into?

Vietnamese trade unions cannot fully fit into any of the union models presented above. Regarding the basic goals of trade unions, Vietnamese trade unions tend to cover several aspects of trade union models in advanced industrial economies. Chapter 2 indicated that Vietnamese trade unions have pursued improvement of working and living conditions for membership. That resembles the business or market-oriented model. With regard to putting pressure on government, trade unions have influenced the decision-making process to enact favourable labour regulations for workers as a whole. This is likely to be a welfare or class-oriented union model. Toward the purpose of contribution to social stability, Vietnamese trade unions have characteristics of the social partner model or social-oriented unions. Based on the autonomy of trade unions, although the classification of Vietnamese trade unions inclines towards the authoritarian model, the trade unions have not fully fit into the authoritarian model. This is because, while Vietnamese trade unions do not have an adversarial approach in relationship with management, the authoritarian model traditionally has a militant approach to deal with management. We see, therefore, that the classification of Vietnamese trade unions has been ambiguous. In terms of attitudes of membership towards trade unions, there has

been little research on whether Vietnamese trade unions can be classified into a servicing or organising model. By exploring whether Vietnamese trade unions have the servicing or organising model, the present study suggests possible responses for these trade unions based on empirical evidence.

It is clear that Vietnamese trade unions were established in accordance with communist principles. They have remained in the communist tradition in a centrally-planned economy, so that they have found it difficult to operate in the market economy of capitalism. In the communist system, trade unions have a collaborative relationship with management. This not only happens in Vietnam but also occurs in transitional countries such as post-communist Eastern European countries, and China. As Pringle and Clarke (2010, p. 3) state, ‘a central issue throughout the state-socialist world has been that of whether the traditional trade unions can reform or whether the future lies with new alternative trade unions’. Currently, the CPV does not allow freedom of association. In consequence, any alternative trade unions outside VGCL’s umbrella are not permitted to be established. Thus, the contemporary trade unions have to find appropriate approaches for their operation in transition.

Conclusion

This chapter presented concepts of trade unions as organisations of employees. Originating from the Industrial Revolution in Europe, trade unions are associations of employees who need to be protected from employers’ exploitation. The traditional objectives of trade unions have been relevant to the improvement of membership working and living conditions. Owing to conflicts of interest, management has ideological opposition to unions. Facing offensive management, trade unions have had a militant relationship with management. Their power comes from collective actions of

members such as strikes and stoppages. The unions can be organised into unitary confederations or occupational divisions.

Trade unions worldwide fall into various identities. In capitalist economies, trade unionism has three main identities, a market-oriented or business model, a class-oriented or welfare model, and a social-oriented or social partner model. In contrast, trade unionism in developing countries cannot fit into these three main identities, because the trade unions experienced severely hostile attitudes from both employers and authorities. In Asian contexts, the union movement might be formed as neoliberal, social democratic, or authoritarian models. In communist society, trade unions are differently organised, accordingly to Leninist ideology. These trade unions have a distinctive characteristic, of a transmission role between employees and employers/state. Vietnamese trade unions have followed Leninist ideology. Therefore, the union roles have not changed even as the economy has shifted from being centrally planned to market oriented.

In attempts to stop the declining trend of trade unions, academics have suggested two models, namely servicing and organising models, which are based on the attitudes of union members towards trade unions. The servicing model has a passive membership and active leadership. This means that union members see their trade unions as service delivery, and leaders have to resolve membership issues. In the organising model, the membership is active in resolving their issues by themselves. This model requires more union democracy. Currently, Vietnamese trade unions have not fully fitted into any single union model.

Irrespective of shaping into any model, trade unions worldwide have faced several issues. The next chapter will review the issues facing trade unions and their responses to these issues.

CHAPTER 4

STRATEGIES OF TRADE UNION REVITALISATION

Union are dead. At least that is what employers would like to believe and many Americans accept as the truth...

...They are under sharp attack from employers and an increasingly hostile legal environment.

Bacharach et al. (2001, p. ix)

Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed various models of trade unions. Although trade unions are organisations of employees, each union model has different characteristics, as they have each placed their priority in economy, politics or society. The characteristics of a particular trade union model influence the approaches each takes as it responds to its issues. This chapter reviews the issues of trade unions, and the strategies of their responses. The issues that are directly relevant to trade union health and union revitalisation encompass offensive employers, membership decline, and unclear union identities (Heery 2005; Kuruvilla et al. 2002). After reviewing the issues of offensive employers, membership decline in advanced industrial and Asian countries, and unclear union identities in modern Eastern European countries, this chapter reviews the strategies that the trade unions have employed to respond to these issues. The capacity of trade unions to respond to their issues relates to the concepts of union revitalisation and union renewal. Finally, once reviewing the explanations of trade union responses, the chapter presents the analytical themes of this research, which help to explore the strategies for trade union revitalisation in Vietnam.

Employer's offensive attitude towards trade unions

The phenomenon of offensive management has a long tradition in advanced industrial societies (Crouch 1982; Hobsbawm 1964). In the very earliest period, employers tried to destroy unionism. They used various methods to restrict union involvement in employment-relations activities. These methods included designing arrangements that subtly limited or downgraded the status of the union partner, or that explicitly curbed union power. Clawson and Clawson (1999) refer to offensive attitudes and methods of employers to deal with trade unions in the US. They pointed out that, in the 1970s, management attempted to maintain union-free workplaces by delays or outright intimidation. The managers typically used outside consultants for systematic anti-union campaigns. In the same vein, studying attitudes and behaviours of management in Europe and North America, Adams (1981) proposed tactics that employers used to react to trade unionism. Employers used some combination of the following tactics being put to use against union organisation, such as: victimisation (the dismissal of workers suspected of union sentiments); yellow dog contracts (requiring workers to sign individual contracts stating that they were not trade unionists and would not become trade unionists); company or yellow unions (encouraging pacific employee organisations designed to reduce the attraction of free unions); blacklists (the distribution of the names of workers suspected to be organisers and the subsequent refusal of employers to hire people on the list); refusal to negotiate with worker representatives; and the use of strike-breakers, lockouts and strike insurance to counteract strikes, the primary basis of union power.

Using data from a 1986 survey of employers and a 1982-83 survey of union organizers in the US, Freeman and Kleiner (1990) investigated the determinants and consequences of employer opposition to unions organizing drives. They found that strong

management opposition, as evidenced by, for example, the filing of formal charges of unfair labour practices against management, was most likely to occur when the firm had relatively low wages, poor working conditions, and supervisory problems. In research on the relationship between unions and firms' performance, Meyer and Cooke (1993) point out two main strategies of US firms, which are union avoidance, and joint union-management at the workplace level. For the former, the managers use a wide range of strategies against union organising, union election, and the negotiation of first contracts. The managers explicitly sent the message to other employees that their employment would be threatened because of union activities. For the joint-union management strategy, the managers focussed on building better relationships with unions. This relationship allowed the rank-and-file members, as well as union leadership, to be more involved in team-based activities, which strategy aimed to enhance company performance, and to improve productivity and the quality of working life. In respect of the latter strategy, the management appeared to reduce their offensive action. Thus, the trade unions were less likely to be attacked.

Generally, in respect of management offenses, Dundon (2002) summarises and analyses employer behaviour towards unions in terms of avoidance union strategies. Those strategies include union suppression, union substitution, ideological opposition to unions, blatant refusal, stonewalling, damaged limitations, and bypassing.

Union suppression indicates that the employers aim to instil a fear of managerial reprisals for possible unionisation. Union substitution is described as the management arguing that unions are unnecessary: the employers will provide better terms and conditions and sophisticated employee voice channels to resolve any grievances. For ideological opposition to unions, the management shows their ideological opposition to unions; for example, in claiming that the union will be destructive to company

performance. In blatant refusal, the employer refuses to recognise a trade union or to bargain in good faith. In a stonewalling strategy, the managers create what appear to be legitimate obstacles to union recognition, effectively employing delaying tactics. For damaged limitations, employer behaviour can take the form of ‘sweetheart’ (Dundon 2002, p. 236) deals, partially recognising moderate unions or creating internal staff associations. Finally, in bypassing strategy, employer behaviour seeks to effectively marginalise the collective employees’ voice, often through specific non-union communication channels.

In looking from the perspective of the historical relationship of Vietnamese trade unions and management, the current relationship has been segmented into two parts. Firstly, the traditional part has led to a sympathetic relationship remaining between them. Secondly, the newly emerging part, with new ownership forms such as private and foreign ownerships, involves hostility toward management. These latter managers tend to infringe employees’ rights, so they see the trade unions as barriers constraining their violations. The present study will shed light on the tactics of union avoidance in order to explore the response of the trade unions. The above strategies provide thematic terms for discussing the research results relevant to avoidance union strategies in Vietnam.

Generally, the literature review suggests that, in advanced economies, the traditional behaviours of management toward trade unions have been offensive. The management has behaved in various ways to destroy unions. If they have to tolerate a union, they want to control it. Confronted with offensive management, trade unions have striven to escape managers’ control and struggled for their survival. As collective organisations, trade unions’ survival depends on the amount of their members; however, trade unions worldwide have suffered from a decline in union density. The next section reviews the trend of decline in union density in advanced industrial and Asian countries.

Union density decline in advanced industrial and Asian countries

During the neoliberal era, trade unions have faced the concrete issues of a decline trend of union density (Heery 2005; Luce 2014; Voss 2010). The term union density, which is used in statistics of Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), indicates the proportion of union members in the total salaried workforce (Kuruvilla et al. 2002). The decline of union density has been a common problem facing trade unions in almost all continental European countries (Blanchflower & Freeman 1992). It causes the trade unions to lose their power in employment relations. According to Behrens et al. (2004), union density indicates union strength, because it reflects the share of the organised and unorganised workforce, which has implications for union legitimacy, representativeness, and bargaining power. The table below shows the union density in some developed and Asian countries from 2000 to 2013.

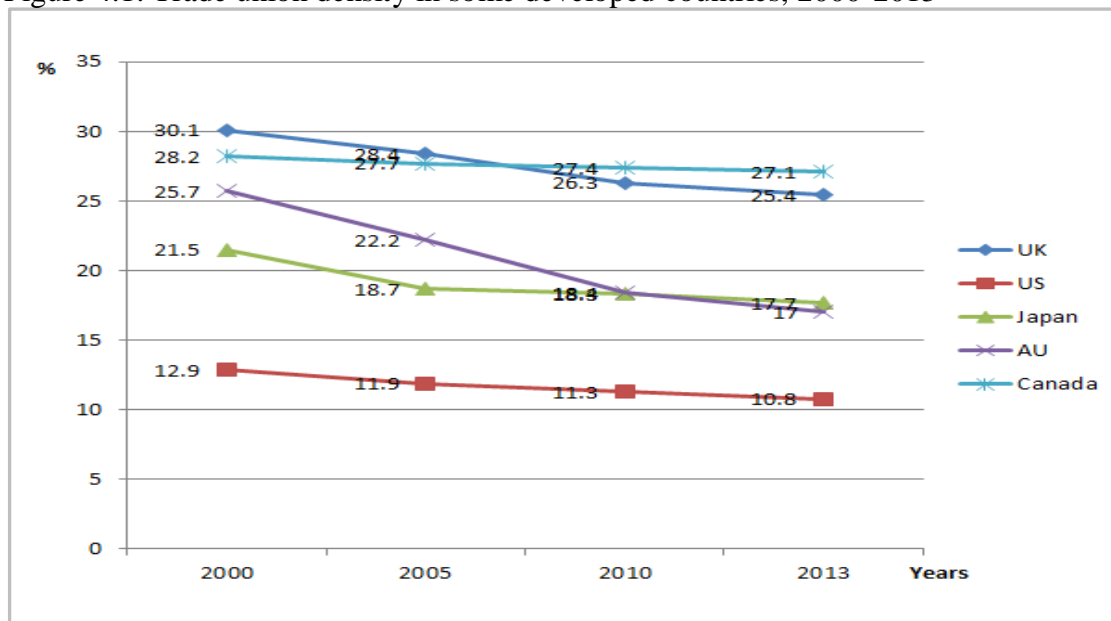
Table 4.1: Union density in some developed and Asian countries, from 2000-2013 (%)

<div>Years</div> <div>Countries</div>	2000	2005	2010	2013
The UK	30.1	28.4	26.3	25.4
The US	12.9	11.9	11.3	10.8
Japan	21.5	18.7	18.3	17.7
Australia	25.7	2.2	18.3	17
Canada	28.2	27.7	27.4	27.1
Taiwan	38.5	39.4	37.0	37.3
Philippines	27.2	26.7	11.7	8.7
Singapore	16.9	17.7	16	15.6
Korea	11.4	9.9	9.8	9.6
Malaysia	10.7	11.1	9.8	8.7

Source: OECD (2015) and ILO (2014)

In developed countries, union density has gradually declined over recent decades (Fairbrother et al. 2012; Scruggs 2002; Scruggs & Lange 2002). For example, Figure 4.1 shows the declining trend in trade union density in the UK, US, Japan, Australia and Canada from 2000 to 2013.

Figure 4.1: Trade union density in some developed countries, 2000-2013



Source: OECD (2015)

Figure 4.1 presents the decrease of union density in the UK, US, Japan, Australia and Canada. In the UK, trade union membership levels declined steadily through 2000 to 2013. The proportion of the UK employees who were in the trade union in 2000 was 30.1%, but this decreased by 25.4% over the subsequent ten years. A similar decline trend happened in the US, Japan, Canada and Australia. Significantly, the level of trade union membership in Australia fell sharply, from 25.7% in 2000 to 17.7% in 2013.

Trade unions are collective organisations; thus, the decline in membership can be perceived as a critical crisis for them, because the source of trade union power is from members and their collective actions. Membership decline means, in respect of union health, the trade unions lose their power and political influence. Studying union revitalisation in thirty-four countries, Phelan (2007b) clarifies the negative effects of

trade union decline, as the loss unions' influence in negotiating wages, hours and working conditions, and the lack of the capacity to promote political democracy, civil liberties and redistributive justice. Ebbinghaus (2004) investigates the changing union and collective bargaining trends in Western Europe, finding that a decline in membership means that unions lack financial resources to support union operations, especially in industrial disputes. In response to the decline trend, Western Europe unions have attempted to reverse membership decline, mobilising their members and restructuring their organisations. Studying trade unionism and political organisations in the US, Estreicher (2010) claims that unions fund themselves through membership dues, thus the decline in membership has weakened the trade unions in the negotiation and enforcement of collective bargaining agreements. Generally, membership decline has undermined union power.

The main factors causing trade union membership to decrease are the unfavourable legal system for union operation, and management opposition (as mentioned in previous section). The decline trend of union density may result from several causes, such as corporate restructuring, labour flexibility, union busting, global operations and supply chains, financial markets, investment, privatisation, and national laws and regulations (Luce 2014; Munck 2010). Among those causes, the unfavourable laws and regulations, as well as union-busting by offensive management, are the main causes, because 'unions operate in conditions that favour employers over workers, making it particularly for workers to organise' (Luce 2014, p. 58). This can be seen in the previous section, which mentioned several tactics that offensive employers had to diminish trade unions. Clawson and Clawson (1999) investigated what happened to the US labour movement and its renewal in globalisation. They argue that the US legal system has created more difficult conditions for unions. Evidence of this is found in terms of the right to strike,

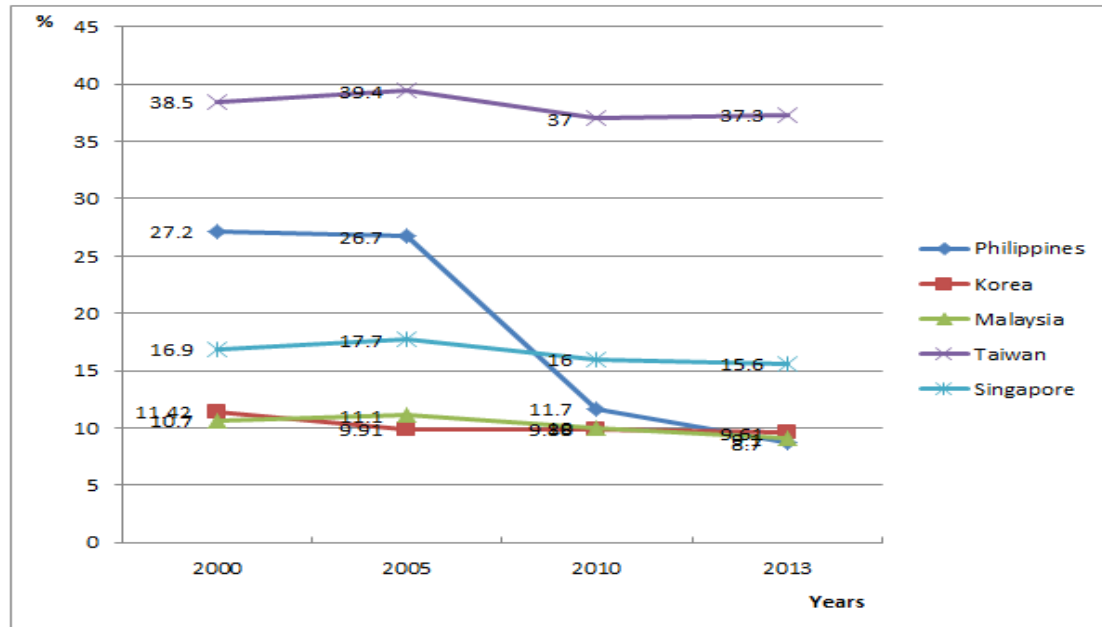
which places union members in an ambiguous position. For instance, union contracts typically last three years, with workers forbidden to strike until the contract expires. At that point, workers can legally strike to enforce their demand; but at the same time, the employers are legally allowed to hire permanent replacements in order to continue operating. Hence, while strikers cannot be fired for joining strikes, they can be permanently replaced. Furthermore, according to Luce (2014), Canada and several US states passed measures restricting freedom of association in 2011. This has also led to the decline trend in union density in those countries.

Similar to the decline trend in union density in advanced industrial countries, in Asian contexts, since the last century, trade unions have suffered a decline trend in union density, and have attempted to assess prospects for thwarting this decrease trend. For example, Kuruvilla et al. (2002) examine trends in union density and union influence in Asian countries including Japan, Singapore, Korea, Taiwan, India, China and Philippines. They find that the decline trend appeared in all those countries. Currently, for Asian trade unions, the statistics of Asian union density from 2000 to 2013 represents clearly this trend. It can be seen from Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2 shows that union density has been declining in some Asian trade unions over a 13-year period. The trends have decreased slightly in most cases, excepting an extreme decline in Philippines, since 2005 to 2010. In particular, Taiwan was the territory with highest statistic in 2000, of 38%; however, in the period of 5 years from 2005 to 2010, there was a significant decline in the number of union members as a proportion of total employment. While Taiwan fell from 39.4 to 37, with 17.7 to 16 in Singapore and 11.1 to 9.08 in Korea, a dramatic decline could be seen in Philippines, where union density deflated from 26.7 to 11.7. Similarly, the last 3 years, between

2010 and 2013, revealed a decrease trend of union density in Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia and Korea; while there was a small rise in Taiwan.

Figure 4.2: Trade union density in some Asian countries, 2000-2013



Source: OECD (2015) and ILO (2014)

Rudra (2008) points out that the underlying reason causing Asian trade unions to have difficulty in their operations is hostile attitudes from employers and states. In Asian countries, the states compete with each other as each tries to underbid the others in lowering taxes, spending, and regulation, in order to make itself more attractive to outside financial interests (Mehmet & Tavakoli 2003). This means government policies and employer actions facilitate or hinder the power of union organisations. Several nations have the goals of improving their economies and attracting foreign investment; therefore, they deregulate a wide range of restrictions on the use of labour, and reduce standards of employment conditions such as minimum wages, working safety, social insurance. Trying to weaken union power contributes to the success of implementing this race to bottom policy (Frenkel & Peetz 1998; Turner 2004).

Trade unions are collective organisations, which rely on membership as their power; hence, the decline trend in membership reveals the weakness in union health. However, decreasing union density is not the sole issue. The trade unions in Eastern European countries and China, which are also in the transition, have also faced ambiguous identities.

The ambiguity of union identity in Eastern Europe and China

After the communist regime collapsed in Eastern European countries and during transition to a market-oriented economy in China, the trade unions in those countries have been in transition and, have had to clarify their goals, and function to gather their membership (Herod 1998; Pringle & Clarke 2010; Taylor 2000; Taylor et al. 2003); however, they have found it difficult to do so, as a result of the ambiguity of union identity (Ashwin 2007; Ost 2007; Taylor et al. 2003; Warner 1991, 2001). These trade unions have been in a process of making a choice whether their identity is formed as market-, class- or social-oriented, according to Hyman's (2001) typology. As discussed in Chapter 3, union priorities are reliant on their identity, of market, class or society, which identities concentrate on economic benefits of membership, fighting for class consciousness, or stressing social harmony and stability, respectively. For example, in the transitional economic countries such as Poland, Russia, Ukraine, the trade unions have been confused in terms of their priorities. Studying trade union revitalisation in Poland in the post-communist era, Ost (2007) propounds that Polish trade unions have shifted from the communist trade union model to greater integration with Western European trade unions. They tend to be informed by class-orientated identity by several efforts in political actions. Accordingly, the focussed dimension seems to be political. For strategic choices, union leadership inclines towards social partnership, while rank

and file members have sought to organise by themselves. However, the clarification of union identity in Eastern European countries has been still unclear.

For Russian trade unions, the transformation process has become stuck within Soviet-Style subordination and the social partnership model, which give opportunity for the trade unions to negotiate with government and employers in order to regulate industrial relations (Pringle & Clarke 2010). According to Ashwin (2007), enterprises unions have tended to tackle this dilemma of union identity by attempting to serve both members and management. On the one hand, Russian trade unions strive to engage with their members by providing social services. On the other hand, the unions avoid threatening their close relationship with management by keeping away from conflicts with managers. This is a type of employer relationship-building strategy. However, the lack of evidence for its success leads to a pessimistic view of this strategy (Ashwin 2007).

In Ukraine, trade unions have faced the issues of competition between different union confederations (Kubicek 2007). The largest labour organisation, which is the Ukrainian successor to the Soviet All-Union Central Committee of Trade Unions, has competed against other union federations in various industrial sectors such as manufacturing, mining, and metallurgy. The trade unions within this organisation try to persuade the membership of other unions to give up their current union membership and join the new unions under its banner. Some small unions in this country have been modelled on the Western trade union models as the proof of union strength, but those trade unions have not worked well. The rivalries among the various trade unions have led to the fact that Ukrainian trade unions have difficulty in representing a united front against employers (Kubicek 2007).

With regard to trade unions in China, as a result of economic reforms, the transformation of trade unions over recent decades has been unclear (Warner 1991). In China, as in Vietnam, despite market economy reforms, trade unions have retained the characteristics of communist trade unions. They have sought a direction to reform with the goals of truly representing and protecting members as well as retaining their privileged position in a politically stable regime (Clarke & Pringle 2009; Lee 2006; Nørlund 1996; Taylor et al. 2003; Taylor & Li 2007; White 1996; Zhu & Fahey 2000). For example, Taylor and Li (2007) outline six mechanisms of Chinese trade unions in attempting to strengthen and coordinate labour relations, safeguard workers and staff members' legitimate rights and interests, and promote an established harmonious socialist society. These six mechanisms are: a macro-participation; coordinating labour relations at grass-roots level; democratic management; inspection of labour laws; mechanism of early warning and settling labour disputes; and mechanism of helping and supporting workers and staff members in financial difficulty. The above mechanisms appear to be specific tactics to avoid and respond to labour conflicts rather than systematic strategies in union revitalisation, because there has been no particular guidance for conducting these tactics.

In summary, in advanced industrial and Asian countries, the trade unions have faced a decline trend in union density. This trend causes the trade unions to have a weakness in representing their membership. In transitional countries such as European countries and China, trade unions have struggled to determine their identity as organisations of labour. Similar to their counterparts in the West, they have struggled to overcome the deregulation of labour standards and offensive management. For their survival, trade unions worldwide have to respond to their issues appropriately.

Union revitalisation and union renewal: Union strategy

The capacity of unions to respond to the issues discussed above has become the subject of considerable debate and research. These responses have been studied under the label of union revitalisation or union renewal (Lévesque & Murray 2006). Although the two terms have been used interchangeably, they have indicated different responses of trade unions (Kumar & Schenk 2006). Union revitalisation refers to goals and strategies of trade unions. In referring to the term trade union revitalisation, academics aim to mention the combination of an ongoing process and strategies to obtain the goals of trade unions (Behrens et al. 2004; Frege & Kelly 2003). Slightly different to this, union renewal explicitly refers to the process of encouraging union membership participation, and union democracy, by focussing on the strategy of organising rank-and-file members in union affairs (Fairbrother & Yates 2003). To avoid confusion between union revitalisation and union renewal, and to clarify the use of union revitalisation in the present research, the following sections present these two conceptions in more detail.

Union revitalisation: Varieties of union strategy

In research on union revitalisation in Germany, Italy, Spain, the UK and the US, Frege and Kelly (2003) define union revitalisation as a variety of attempts to tackle and potentially to reverse the decline trend of union membership. Similarly, Behrens et al. (2004) conceptualise union revitalisation as the ongoing process of trade union responses to their issues, with goal-revitalisation dimensions, and varieties of strategies to obtain their goals. Thus, trade unions in revitalisation may focus on one of four dimensions as their specific goal (Behrens et al. 2004). The four dimensions are: membership dimension; economic dimension; political dimension; and institutional dimension. The membership dimension is reflected through three measurable factors: an increase in membership numbers; an increase in membership density; and a change in

the composition of union membership. In addition, the attitudes and expectations of existing members are also attributed to successful union revitalisation. This revitalisation would prevent union members from leaving the union. The economic dimension consists of bargaining power, namely, the ability to achieve improvements in wages and benefits; and more broadly, labour's impact on the distribution of wealth. This dimension reflects the revitalised capacity of trade unions to collectively bargain in order to improve wages, working conditions and welfare benefits. The political dimension refers to the capacity of unions to increase their influence on the policy-making process. To do so, the union may need to have a close relationship with a political party and contribute to its campaigns. Moreover, the union should become more active in drafting and promoting legislation that enhances the union's position and its members' benefits. In terms of enforcement of the legislation related to unions organising, bargaining and defending workers' rights, the political dimension reflects the union's influence on governmental administration in the domain of industrial relations. Finally, the institutional dimension deals with unions' organisational structures, governance and internal dynamics. Unions' capacity to adjust to new contexts, internal enthusiasm to embrace new strategies, and a sense of introducing something new to the union, are the three aspects of union revitalisation in line with the institutional dimension. The union leadership plays a key role in promoting new ideas, building internal political strength, and supporting union change.

The strategies to obtain union goals vary from union to union. In a comparative research on union strategy in Germany, Italy, Spain, the UK and the US, Frege and Kelly (2004) point out that these trade unions obtain their goals by six major strategies: organising; building union-management partnership; political action; union restructuring; coalition building; and international solidarity. By contrast, investigating Asian trade unions,

Kuruvilla et al. (2002) suggest that Asian trade unions such as Japan, Singapore, Korea, Taiwan, India, China, and Philippines employ the following strategies: autonomy; increasing member servicing; organising; restructuring; and coalition. According to Frege and Kelly (2004), the first strategy of union revitalisation is organising. Employing an organising strategy, trade unions rely on such methods to increase members and union density or restrain the membership decline trend. For example, unions in the US and the UK have put their efforts in collective bargaining to restrain the decline trend of membership (Fairbrother 2007; Fiorito 2004; Heery & Adler 2004; Voss & Sherman 2000). This strategy explicitly links to the concept of trade union renewal, which indicates the strategy of organising union members at the workplace level by promoting union democracy, and concentrating on the decisive role of rank-and-file members as the sources of change and success (Fairbrother 1989). The concept of union renewal will be discussed in the section on union renewal and union democracy below.

The second strategy is building union-employer partnership, which means that the interaction between unions and employers is developed in order to obtain or increase the level of cooperation and consensus between unions and employers (Ackers & Payne 1998; Heery 2002). Oxenbridge and Brown (2002) identify three broad categories of relationship, in terms of formality: formal partnerships with explicit agreements; informal partnerships, where the term is widely used; and cooperative relationships, which may not actually be described by the parties as partnership.

Although the partnership concept has attracted a rich research literature, definitions of partnership remain a matter for debate (Ackers & Payne 1998; Guest & Peccei 2001; Lucio & Stuart 2002). Academic definitions centre around the idea of co-operation for mutual gain and reciprocity (Lucio & Stuart 2002). For Stuart and Lucio (2005b), the

idea of mutualism means that a successful employer is able to benefit all stakeholders involved. Guest and Peccei (2001) also suggest that trust and mutuality are the key components of a genuine partnership agreement. Rhetorically, at least, partnership appears to be hinged upon the proposition that, for employers, it can be both economically effective and ethically responsible to co-operate with unions and employees on issues of strategic organisational change (Lucio & Stuart 2005).

Political action is the third strategy that shows efforts of trade unions in accessing the power of the state (Frege & Kelly 2004). The trade unions rely on the union movement to influence the process of building labour legislation, in order to promulgate favourable laws for labours. Union structuring, as the fourth strategy, appears in three forms: mergers between individual unions; closer relations between union confederations; and internal restructuring (Frege & Kelly 2004). Some individual trade unions merge together in order to enhance their power or use their financial resources more effectively. Outcomes of mergers could be the elimination of inter-competition, and the increase in economic and political power. The fifth strategy is coalition-building, which refers to the connection of the labour movement to other social movements such as antiwar, environmental and anti-globalisation campaigns (Frege & Kelly 2004). Coalition with other campaigns could help trade unions in getting support from specific communities by their assistance to them. The sixth strategy is building international solidarity, which appears along with the global era. Globalisation has posed a threat to trade unions worldwide (Frege & Kelly 2004). Hence, international solidarity among trade unions helps to improve the exchange of information, enhancing union power, and facilitating the mobilisation of members in labour movements.

In the context of Asian countries, at the macro level of the trade union movement, Kuruvilla et al. (2002) rely upon the differences and changes of institutional contexts in

Asian countries such as China, India, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, and the Philippines, to argue that revitalisation of trade unions in Asian countries encompasses the following strategies: (1) increases in union autonomy; (2) a renewed emphasis on organising; (3) changes in union structures; (4) alliances between unions and civil society groups; (5) increased member servicing; and (6) internationalisation of union activity. The first strategy is increasing local union autonomy, which means that the local unions try to disassociate themselves from the national federations to obtain a more collective bargaining agenda. This strategy changes political trade unionism with external leadership to a new kind of economic activism to pursue economic goals. This strategy has a close link with more freedom of local unions. It occurs under the assumption of different interests between local unions and national federations. For example, the local trade unions in Taiwan and India gradually withdrew from the control of national federations, and thus, it turned out, came to be more independent (Kuruvilla et al. 2002). The second strategy is organising the unorganised. It concentrates on recruiting more membership in formal and newly emerging informal sectors. This strategy has been applied in Japan, Philippines, and India. For instance, Japanese trade unions have concentrated on recruiting independent workers, workers in small enterprises, and part-time and temporary workers. The third strategy is restructuring unions by merging unions. According to Kuruvilla et al. (2002), this strategy has been seen in Japan, Korea, Philippines, and India. It is hoped that the union mergers might help to increase union influence at the national level or the political voice of unions. The fourth strategy is to collaborate with other civil society groups. For example, Korean trade unions have stressed women's issues; thus, they have been in alliance with the Korean Working Women's Association, and Women's Link to fight against racism. The fifth strategy is focussing more on the membership's personal lives,

to retain member commitment. Singaporean trade unions have focussed on providing lower-priced textbooks for members, union-owned co-operative stores, union sponsored health insurance, and educational grants to needy families. In Japan, recently, trade unions have provided health care and retirement plans, and helped members in marriages, births, housing, and retirement (Kuruvilla et al. 2002). The sixth strategy is union collaboration across national boundaries. Following this strategy, Asian trade unions increase cross-border communication and contact. However, this strategy is restricted by national legislation, the absence of a well-funded treasury, the general unwillingness of employers to bargain at the regional level, and the absence of transnational bargaining bodies. According to Kuruvilla et al. (2002), there have been two factors restraining the success of international co-operation: the absence of transnational structures, forcing Asian unions to collaborate; and differences in goals between unions and other informal groups. The table below lists strategies of union revitalisation, in Western and Asian countries.

Table 4.2: Strategies of trade union revitalisation in the current literature

Strategies of union revitalisation in Western contexts (Frege & Kelly 2004)	Trends of union revitalisation in Asian contexts (Kuruvilla et al. 2002)
Building union-management partnership	Autonomy
Political actions	Increasing member servicing
Organising	Organising
Restructuring	Restructuring
Coalition	Coalition
International solidarity	International solidarity

It is seen that, in respect of similarities, trade unions in West and Asia employ organising, coalition, restructuring, and international solidarity. In respect of differences, while Asian trade unions focus on increasing union autonomy and providing more services for members, Western unions focus on building partnership

relationships with management and increasing political power. However, it is too early to judge the success of these strategies, because the union revitalisation in each country heavily depends on various changes of institutional environment and capacity of specific trade unions (Hickey et al. 2010). Therefore, it is clear that there has been an inconclusive debate about the strategies or models that fit all trade unions, as Frege and Kelly's (2004, p. 182) observe: 'There is no single strategy that works well for all union movements, irrespective of national context; the same strategy is likely to produce different results in different countries'. This means that the success of union revitalisation relies upon the specific national context, and the ability to choose appropriate strategies, of the trade unions (Behrens et al. 2004).

As reviewed in Chapter 2, since Doi Moi, Vietnamese trade unions have not systematically determined the appropriate strategies to respond to their challenges. The clarification of particular strategies of the trade unions is thus still in question. Therefore, the concept of union revitalisation is considered more suitable for this study than union renewal. The present thesis does not use the term renewal because this term is more specific than union revitalisation, i.e. union renewal directly refers to the organising strategy, which is among six major strategies in union revitalisation. If the thesis used the term union renewal, it could lead to an assumption that the strategy of trade union revitalisation in Vietnam might be considered by default an organising strategy. The next section details the term union renewal, in the literature on union revitalisation.

Union renewal: A strategy of encouraging union democracy

The term, union renewal, is used to indicate the attempts of unions to restrain the decline trend of unions across countries by focussing on membership activity (Hickey et al. 2010). Union renewal emphasises the decisive role of rank-and-file members rather

than that of union leaders. As a result, union renewal comes from the bottom-up rather than from the union's managerial level. Fairbrother (1989) developed the union renewal thesis, which focusses on workers' self-activity and self-organisation at the workplace in order to resolve the workers' issues by themselves. In the union renewal thesis, increasing union democracy by encouraging rank-and-file participation plays a crucial role in successful union renewal (Fairbrother 1989, 2007). The term union renewal has been widely used to emphasise the active role of union membership. Recently, Fairbrother (2015) has reconfirmed that union renewal is about the democratisation of union.

The research on democracy relevant to union revitalisation has proposed that union democracy is a key tool to generate collective identities for a renewal union project (Voss 2010). Union democracy will provide the extent of the responses of individual trade unions, and formulation and implication of union strategies in revitalisation (Fairbrother 2007). Fairbrother and Yates (2003) argue that one of crucial factors contributing to union renewal in the UK is union democracy. They propose that ensuring and increasing the extent of democracy at workplace level are inevitable approaches for regaining union legitimacy. Similarly, using Canadian data gathered from individual union members and their local union leaders, Lévesque et al. (2005) examine union members' evaluation of the relevance of unions and their identification with a traditional collective value frame for union action, and point out that greater union democracy is associated with less membership disaffection, regarding both the relevance of unions and their collective modes of action. The relevance of union democracy in revitalisation raises the questions of what union democracy is and how to determine it.

There have been three academic streams approaching the concept of union democracy. These are (1) focussing on membership participation in a decision-making process or decentralisation, (2) the existence of legitimate opposition, and (3) leadership responsiveness to rank-and-file opinion (Edelstein & Warner 1979; Flynn et al. 2006; Levi et al. 2009; Martin 1968; Stepan-Norris 1997).

Firstly, the concept of union democracy, which refers to membership participation in a decision-making system, indicates that membership participation is the crucial indicator of union democracy (Levi et al. 2009; Stepan-Norris & Zeitlin 1995; Strauss 1991). Trade unions are mass organisations, with the relationship being between leadership and membership. This relationship within the trade unions raises the question of whether union leaders, or rank-and-file members, hold most of the decision-making authority, because the interests of union leaders and members seem to be opposed. Thus, classically, Seidman (1958) defines union democracy as the determination of policy directly by ordinary members. From this perspective, union democracy is considered as the issue of voice and the issue of control (Flynn et al. 2006). The former refers to the influence of rank-and-file members over union policy. The latter indicates how the ordinary members exert their influence over the responsibility for implementing the union policy. According to Child et al. (1973), membership participation shows the extent and quality of union democracy. They argue that a democratic union is considered to be where there is a wide range of membership participation in a decision-making process and elections. Along similar lines, Levi et al. (2009) argue for a conception of union democracy in which the participation of members is the crucial indicator of union democracy. Membership participation might be in various forms such as discussion of union matters, voting or nominating in union elections, and control over decision-making within unions (Lipset et al. 1956; Martin 1968; Voss 2010). Edelstein

and Warner (1979, p. 29) claim that democracy is often referred to as decision-making, and they simplify this concept as: 'democracy is majority rule with minority rights'. In this concept, minority rights mean the rights to organised opposition through formal and informal channels.

Secondly, union democracy emphasises opposite groups within labour organisations. Within this stream, academics widely accept that organised opposition is the life blood of union democracy (Edelstein 1967; Magrath 1959; Martin 1968; Morris & Fosh 2000; Seidman 1958). The existence of legitimate and tolerated internally-organised opposition (factions or parties) facilitates electoral competition, keeps members informed and interested, and fosters leadership and political skills outside the leadership group (Stepan-Norris 1997). It means that there is an independent group outside of the control of the administration. This allows new ideas to be generated, ensuring individual involvement in union activities, and provides opportunities for training potential leaders (Stepan-Norris 1997). Martin (1968) contrasts the political histories of the National Union of Railwaymen and Amalgamated Engineering Union in the UK, and claims that union democracy is the survival of faction as an entity.

Thirdly, the concept of trade union democracy indicates leadership responsiveness to rank-and-file opinion (Strauss 1991). This approach means that, because trade unions are instrumental organisations, established to protect and improve the working conditions of their members, union leaders have to effectively represent the economic interests of their members. Strauss (1991) suggests that, although such responsiveness is difficult to measure, it can be examined through observing member-leader interactions at the workplace level, and through asking members how their leaders respond to member requests. Focussing on leadership responses to membership expectations, Gulowsen (1985, p. 350) suggests a sporadic concept of union democracy, namely

‘hearocracy’. That means a combination of democracy with hierarchy and hearing opinion from the membership. It is necessary to maintain the channel of communication between leadership and membership within trade unions. He proposed this concept in the context of University branches of the Norwegian Union of State Employees, where many trade union members neglected their right to influence democratic decision-making and were passive. In that context, the union leaders were supported by a silent majority, and the leadership had responsibility for membership. He claims that union democracy tends to become ‘hearocracy’ in the case of passive members. It is thus clear that there is no uniqueness of union democracy. According to Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin (1995), although union democracy seems to be the immeasurable, academics have analysed it through its indicators.

The determination of union democracy relies on four indicators, which appear in the different approaches to its concept. Those indicators are: the existence of legitimate opposition within the union; membership participation in the decision-making process; equality between leadership and membership; and free communication within unions (Edelstein & Warner 1979; Gulowsen 1985; Levi et al. 2009; Lipset et al. 1956; Morris & Fosh 2000; Stepan-Norris 1997; Voss 2010). Edelstein and Warner (1979) claim that the organisation is more likely to be oligarchic when there has been inequality between union membership and union leadership. The equality between members and union leaders appears in terms of salary, status, skill and education. The union leadership may take more advantages than membership, so that the leadership tend to detach from union members. These advantages might create favourable conditions for the union leaders to control communication within the union (Seidman 1958). This happens where workers often work on scattered jobs, such as in the building and services industries (Seidman 1958). The channels of communication allow members access to information that

allows for informed participation, and criticism of sitting officials, and enables opposition groups to communicate with members. Union democracy requires free union communication that is not controlled by the leadership (Strauss 1991).

Together, the studies on trade union democracy indicate that there have been four indicators of union democracy, encompassing: opposition; decentralisation as participation of ordinary members in union decision-making; equality between union membership and leadership; and free communication within the union. The present research seeks to explore the patterns of union democracy that reflect and contribute to strategies for trade union revitalisation in Vietnam. In so doing, it focusses on four key indicators of union democracy in the existing literature, as the themes for the study. The literature on union democracy was developed in capitalist contexts, thus it is necessary to review this concept in communist society, i.e. how democracy is understood in accordance with communist ideology, which has been the official ideology for the socio-political system of Vietnam.

The communist tenet offers a sporadic concept relative to democracy as the principle of democratic centralism (Pravda 1983; Von Beyme 1975). Democratic centralism is considered as one of the principles of internal organization used within communist countries (Pravda 1983; Von Beyme 1975). It includes two aspects: democracy, and centralism. The democratic aspect of this organizational method describes the freedom of members of the political party to discuss and debate matters of policy and direction. The centralism aspect requires that, once the decision of the party is made by majority vote, all members are expected to uphold that decision. In particular, the guiding principles of democratic centralism in organisational structure applies for a communist party, and its apparatus is the subordination of the minority to the majority, subordination of the lower institutions to the higher institutions, and lower institution's

obligation to decisions of higher organs (Pravda 1983). As well as investigating the key indicators of union democracy, the present research also considers the accounts of the democratic centralism principle as referenced to the state of union democracy in Vietnam.

In sum, the terms union revitalisation and union renewal suggest that the responses of trade unions to their issues rely not only on union leadership but also on rank-and-file activism and participation (Hurd et al. 2003). While union revitalisation focusses on the varieties of strategies that go along with union goals, union renewal emphasises the active role of membership and increasing union democracy. As a result, there has been an ongoing debate over the role of union leaders and active members relative to union democracy in processes of union change, because both leadership and membership clearly contribute to union responses.

Roles of union leadership and union democracy in revitalisation

The academic literature on union revitalisation has debated the roles of union leadership and active membership. Currently, the literature is divided into three streams: leadership-driven of revitalisation, membership-driven of revitalisation or democratisation (Fairbrother 2015), and a combination of both leadership and membership-driven of revitalisation (Bach & Givan 2008).

Leadership-driven

The leadership-driven of union revitalisation suggests that union leaders play a decisive role over membership (Heery 2005; Voss & Sherman 2000). Lévesque and Murray (2006) reviewed the papers of the International Colloquium on Union Renewal in Montreal in November 2004, and recommended the development of union leadership as a key resource in union revitalisation. Leadership refers to the ability to pursue goals of

revitalisation, but also to the ability to read and anticipate changes in a union's environment, and to develop compelling responses to those changes. It is also the capacity to read change within union organisations, to mediate a diversity of interests at play, and to translate them into a common narrative about where the union is and should be going and why. Democracy should be thought of as a goal or ideal that union campaigns can work towards. However, workers need to understand the basics of strategy and tactics before they can decide on the best course of action in any particular situation, and that union leaders have the experience and knowledge to teach workers about strategic options, as well as about the vulnerabilities of the corporations for which they work (Voss & Sherman 2000).

Scholars who support top-down policies suggest that a new style of union leadership is the key factor in successful union renewal (Bach & Givan 2008; Fiorito 2004; Voss & Sherman 2000). Investigating trade union revitalisation in the US, by conducting in-depth interviews with union organisers and staff, as well as analysing secondary data on particular tactics and campaigns, Voss and Sherman (2000) emphasise that a new style of union leadership is needed to break out of bureaucratic processes and force the trade unions to change and reform successfully. Similarly, Bach and Givan (2008) conducted research on public service trade unions in the UK, by conducting 18 interviews with union general secretaries and senior union officials in the health, social services and education sectors. They postulate that, despite attempting to rebuild workplace organisation, the trade unions had placed strong emphasis on managerial-led renewal. Fiorito (2004) studied union renewal in the UK context by conducting surveys and interviews, and states that union leadership is often the key issue in union renewal. The union renewal process relies on the top union leaders, who can attract and retain union members. Hickey et al. (2010) look more specifically at the role of rank-and-file union

member activism, in 32 published case studies of organizing campaigns in the US and the UK. They suppose that, although member activism was important in some cases, the role of paid union staff in directing and implementing organizing campaigns was universally important in all cases.

Academics have criticised the leadership-driven model of union revitalisation because union leadership seems to be an obstacle for trade union revitalisation (Fairbrother & Waddington 1990; Fairbrother & Yates 2003; Voss & Sherman 2003). The leadership tends to detach from members by virtue of having different interests from the members (Edelstein & Warner 1979). Seidman (1958, p. 37) states that trade union leader, in general, ‘dresses in a business suit, works at a desk like any other executive, and enjoys a larger income...It rarely, if ever, happens that one gives up all the advantages voluntarily’. In consequence, there is stagnation, and leaders are less likely to take risks in union revitalisation. To overcome leadership stagnation, encouraging membership activism and union democracy are referenced in the literature.

Membership-driven

Expressing scepticism regarding the role of the union leader, scholars who support bottom-up policies suggest that the path to revival is paved with increased member activism (Fairbrother 1989; Fairbrother & Waddington 1990; Fairbrother & Yates 2003). The research on union revitalisation challenges the rosy picture of leadership-driven of union revitalisation, because it is worker-driven democratic change that is prevalent in the academic work on union democracy (Corby & Blundell 1997; Fairbrother 1989; Fairbrother & Yates 2003). The strategies of union renewal that make trade unions change by replacing the top-down union decision-making structures that have alienated workers with more democratic processes that give workers a greater say

in workplace bargaining arrangements refer to a bottom-up approach (Fiorito 2004; Haiven et al. 2006; Hickey et al. 2010). Fairbrother and Yates (2003) considered union renewal to be the increase in member participation and mobilisation in which rank-and-file member activism plays a crucial role. Using Canadian data gathered from individual union members and their local union leaders, Lévesque et al. (2005) found that union democracy is a considerable factor for successful union renewal. Membership-driven of union revitalisation allows trade unions to facilitate effective workplace activism and organisation. Consequently, the rank-and-file members are empowered to undertake activities on their own behalf, rather than simply relying on paid union officials.

A critical approach to bottom-up strategies is also apparent in the literature. Barton et al. (2008) observed that, in advocating workplace activism as the solution to the challenges faced by trade unions, researchers have tended to ignore structural realities that undermine union strength. They also note that there is, in fact, no clear correlation between various union strategies, on the one hand, and membership retention and growth on the other. Some unions that have adopted a business unionism model have done better than those which have adopted the organising model (Barton et al. 2008). Similarly, Voss (2010) suggests that union leaders and staff have played a progressive role in expanding the constituency of unions to include the unorganised, and in innovating new strategies for winning unionisation campaigns. Voss (2010) concludes that union revitalisation has rarely been the bottom-up process envisaged in much of the union democracy literature.

While the debate over the two streams literature, of leadership-driven and membership-driven of union revitalisation that leads to successful union revitalisation, is continuing,

a third stream has appeared, which considers both leaders and members as crucial factors in union revitalisation.

The hybrid approach

This approach considers that both rank-and-file members as well as union leaders are drivers of successful union revitalisation. Combining the top-down and bottom-up union renewal strategies, the hybrid approach indicates that union renewal should involve both member activism and the leadership-driven approach (Bach & Givan 2008; Bronfenbrenner & Hickey 2004; Heery & Kelly 1994; Juravich & Bronfenbrenner 2000). Heery and Kelly (1994) researched changes in trade unionism in the UK, and proposed that the trade union renewal process should use the hybrid approach and focus on each of the servicing relationships, namely, professional unionism, participative unionism, and managerial unionism. Bach and Givan (2008) studied the public service trade unions in the local government and health sectors in the UK, and argue that public service union renewal should adopt the dual strategy. They emphasised the important role of managerial-led relationships, which contribute to successful union renewal. The hybrid approach explicitly emphasises the relative importance of the top-down and bottom-up strategies in campaigns to organise the unorganised. This approach suggests that success depends on a combination of top-down and bottom-up strategies; neither alone has achieved success in revitalisation.

The three streams of literature show the fact that it is inappropriate to exclude the role of leadership, either in membership or in revitalisation. However, the combination of roles of both leaders and members is not appropriate for all trade unions. The responses of trade unions by various strategies depend on the specific industrial context in which the trade unions are embedded. It has appeared that there has been no panacea for

successful union revitalisation (Hickey et al. 2010). The next section examines under what conditions and why trade unions respond to their issues.

Analytical categories in conceptualising trade union response and trade union strategy

This section focusses on the analytical categories to explain why trade unions respond differently to union challenges with various strategies. The previous section shows that the explanation of union strategies tends to concentrate on single aspects of determinants contributing to the union strategies, such as leadership choice or membership pressure. For instance, if the choice of strategy belongs to rank-and-file members rather than to union leaders, this is due to its membership pressure, and it is necessary to encouraging membership participation and increasing union democracy (Fairbrother 1989, 2007). In contrast, Ackers and Payne (1998) analysed the trend of social partnership of British trade unions, and argue that union leaders play a decisive role in building the relationship between unions and management. They quote the attempt of John Monks, the General Secretary of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) in the UK from 1993 until 2003, to build a partnership with employers. According to Monks, unions should pursue the central idea of partnership, which is the close tie between economic success and social justice, with workers, employers, and the government co-operating for the common good (Ackers & Payne 1998). Later, scrutinising two future trends of British trade unionism, namely organising and union management partnership, Heery (2002) argues that partnership agreements are founded on the active role of leadership as well as passivity of union members.

Actually, the responses of trade unions occur at different levels of the union movement. This can be found in responses of individual trade unions or unions in a particular

industry, and responses of the trade union movement across nations as union strategies (Turner 2004). In terms of responses of individual trade unions, Gahan (1998) provides a systematic framework for analysing the approaches, with four dimensions: union aims; methods; tactics; and levels of formulating tactics. In terms of union strategy, Frege and Kelly (2004) propose a rich and comprehensive framework to examine the strategies of trade union revitalisation. The framework includes institutional context of industrial relations, state and employer strategies, and union identities. For responding to the sub-research questions, the present thesis explores union responses at workplace level, in accordance with analytical themes suggested by Gahan (1998), as well as member attitude and union democracy. Regarding the main research question, the present thesis relies upon the analytical themes proposed by Frege and Kelly (2004) to discuss union strategies in Vietnam. The following subsections detail the mentioned themes, falling into thematic assessment of individual trade union operations or individual trade union responses to union issues, and thematic assessment of strategies of trade union revitalisation.

A thematic assessment of union operation

Trade unions, as other organisations, operate to pursue specific goals with specific strategies (Child et al. 1973). In research on defining a framework for union strategy and on the relationship between union strategy and union effectiveness, Boxall and Haynes (1997) provide a definition of union responses as the series of reactions to achieve defined goals. Their definition of union strategy is suited to a specific labour organisation that has objectives and approaches to obtain these objectives. Similarly, Gahan (1998) considers the strategy of an individual trade union as a set of decision-making and behavioural processes within labour organisations directed at securing objectives. Gahan's (1998) analytical framework is reflected in analysis of Australian

trade unions. He scrutinised beyond the concept of union strategy by proposing a framework for exploring how unions can orchestrate shifts in their activities to restore their position in the labour market and in the workplace. This framework includes four aspects: (1) union aims, (2) methods, (3) tactics, and (4) levels at which strategy is formulated and implemented. Firstly, according to Gahan (1998), union aims are defined as the set of objectives or goals that a union seeks to realise. For example, a union can try to increase its members' scope for doing overtime work at premium rates, or it will press for the same work to be done by the employment of a larger number of workers. These goals influence methods employed by the unions.

Secondly, union methods refer to the use of political or economic paradigms. The political paradigm refers to actions aimed primarily at influencing national policy and legislation. Political action is associated with lobbying and political interest articulation. The economic paradigm refers to efforts by unions to pursue their objectives through direct pressure on employers.

Thirdly, while union methods are the main approaches, union tactics are instruments for enforcing a given method. Tactics include: unilateral regulation, which is associated with instruments to control the supply of labour and ensure that members adhere to union rules; collective bargaining, which is associated with strike action; arbitration, which is associated with short strikes that act as a signal to other parties; as well as advocacy and legal tactics. Gahan and Bell (1999) examine the relationship between various union strategies and the ability of unions to effectively retain and recruit new members. Their research results indicate that the traditional union strategies such as strikes and political action still appear to be effective.

This last aspect is the strategic levels at which strategies are formulated and implemented. The strategic levels can be national, bargaining or functional, and workplace levels. Gahan (1998) argues that strategy, considered at the national level, involves likely directions for union movement in a specific period. Strategies at the bargaining and workplace level play a role in implementing strategies formulated at national level. At the workplace level, unions interact with companies and other organisations by diffusing various modes of operation and tactics at the workplace level.

It can be seen that individual trade union responses or individual union operations rely upon their goals and the tactics they employ to pursue these goals. The choices of tactics depend on the change of institutional context, employer opposition, and state policies. While varieties of individual labour organisations' reactions mainly rely upon their goals and tactics, the strategies of union revitalisation depend on broader determinants such as institutional context of industrial relations, state and employer strategies, and union identities (Frege & Kelly 2004).

A thematic assessment of strategies of trade union revitalisation

Strategy can be viewed as the sets of consistent behaviours by which the organisation establishes for a time its place in its environment. As previously reviewed, Frege and Kelly (2004) summarise six major strategies: organising; building union-management partnership; political action; union restructuring; coalition building; and international solidarity in advanced industrial countries. In Asian countries, Kuruvilla et al. (2002) suggest that Asian trade unions employ the following strategies: autonomy; increasing member servicing; organising; restructuring; and coalition. This raises the question of what are the explanations for the choices of strategy in union revitalisation.

According to Frege and Kelly (2004), the choices of union strategy can be explained in accordance with three independent elements, namely, institutional context of industrial relations, state and employer strategies, and union identities. Institutions or institutional context of industrial relations comprises collective bargaining structures, legal and arbitration procedures, and the political system. Differences in institutional context result in differences in strategies applied by specific trade unions. For example, trade unions in liberal market economies (such as Britain, Australia, the US), in which bargaining coverage closely mirrors union density and where pay inequality is relatively high, respond to crisis by an organising strategy (Frege & Kelly 2004). However, in coordinated market economies (such as Germany, Netherlands and Belgium), in which there has been high bargaining coverage and low earning inequality, trade unions appear to pursue a management partnership strategy (Frege & Kelly 2004).

Besides institutional context of industrial relations, state and employer strategies also shape strategies of unions (Frege & Kelly 2004). For instance, owing to state resistance in the 1980s, Spanish trade unions put their efforts into mobilising workers to influence government policies. Similarly, German trade unions pursued a political action strategy to force the reform of works council legislation in the 1990s (Frege & Kelly 2003). The unions in the US attempted to reform collective bargaining, which has been constrained by hostility of many US employers. For example, Voss and Sherman (2000) studied union revitalisation in the American labour movement, analysing the shift of strategies adopted by American unions in accordance with state policies and employer opposition. Their research strategy focussed on the responses of local unions. The research findings reveal that, during the 1930s, trade unions employed a radical tactic of sit-down strikes to seek better working conditions for workers of all skill levels. In the 1950s to 1970s, when the industrial climate was relatively favourable to unions, trade unions succeeded

in organising workers into the unions. However, after President Reagan broke the air traffic controllers' strike, employers began aggressively to oppose the unions. Consequently, union membership declined. To restrain this decline, recently, the unions have focussed on employees who have traditionally been excluded from unions, such as women, minorities, and immigrants. In addition, in revitalisation, unions pursue the broader goals of social justice such as civil rights, immigrant right, and economic justice for non-members. The unions also employed tactics such as organising departments, recruiting more full-time staff, visiting unorganised workers at their homes, teaching members to handle grievances, and initiating solidarity (Voss & Sherman 2000). In terms of levels of tactic formulation and implementation, the American labour movement has a federal structure, so local unions have a great deal of autonomy. Local unions undertake the day-to-day servicing and representation of members. Therefore, they decided the implementation of new organising tactics.

The third determinant of union strategies is union identity. The variety of union identities leads to different strategies (Frege & Kelly 2003). Union identity refers to the collective identity of a union movement in specific country. The union identity can be drawn into three types: market-orientated unions, class-orientated unions, and society-orientated unions (Hyman 2001). Market-orientated unions pursue strategies to obtain a high labour price and improve the welfare of members through collective bargaining; therefore, they tend to apply an organising strategy. Unions in the US, the UK and Australia prefer this strategy (Frege & Kelly 2003). With regard to class-orientated identity, unions tend to promote a social revolution. As a result of this, their strategies are often reflected via political and international solidarity, and coalition; for example, in unions in France, Italy (Frege & Kelly 2003). Society-orientated unions, as in German unionism, strongly raise the workers' voices in society, provide mutual support

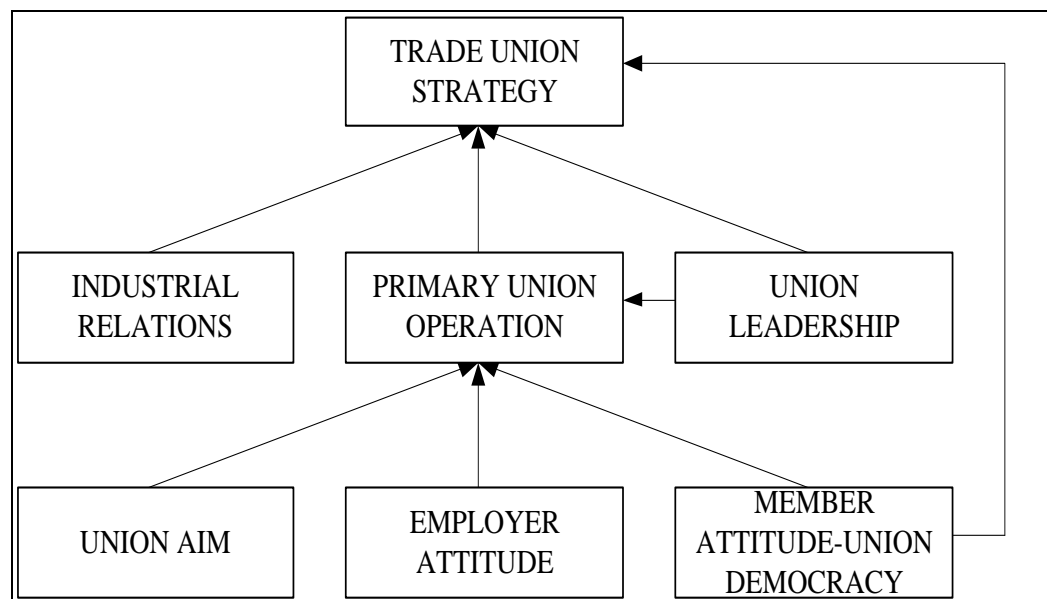
for their members, and integrate with the state and employer's organisations, so they tend to build partnerships with employers for 'a more valuable collective good than antagonistic class struggles' (Frege & Kelly 2003, p. 19).

From the above reviewed literature, choices of union strategy rely on three independent elements: institutional context of industrial relations, state and employer strategies, and union identities. The present thesis explores strategies of trade union revitalisation in Vietnam by analysing these three elements. The next section details the framework guiding this research.

The thematic framework of this research

When the existing knowledge base may be poor, and the available literature can provide no conceptual framework, thus any new empirical research is likely to assume an exploratory nature (Yin 2003). So far, the literature review relevant to union strategy in Vietnam has provided neither an appropriate conceptual framework nor hypotheses. With the aim to explore union strategy in Vietnam, the present empirical research determines a thematic framework, shown in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3: The thematic research framework



At the central point of Figure 4.3, primary union operation is explored by investigating union aim, member attitude-union democracy, employer attitude, and union leadership. According to Gahan (1998), union aim plays a decisive role in determining actions of unions. However, the literature review in Chapters 3 and 4 indicated that a particular trade union acts according to union member attitude, relative to union democracy, and union leadership. Investigating relations between membership and leadership provides evidence for levels of tactic formulation and implementation, because both membership and leadership contribute to union decision-making. It sheds light on who plays a decisive role in the daily work of a particular trade union. In Chapter 4, the literature review on offensive employers indicated that employers strongly affect union operation. Therefore, the framework employs employer attitude as an element helping to unfold individual responses.

At the top of Figure 4.3, exploration of strategy for trade union revitalisation reflects through industrial relations, primary union operation, member attitude-union democracy, and union leadership. The present research explores strategies of trade union revitalisation in Vietnam by supplementing member attitude and union democracy, and union leadership, because Frege and Kelly (2004) suggest a framework for explaining choices of union strategy without consideration of member attitude-union democracy and union leadership. In the present research, the exploration of member attitude and union democracy and union leadership contributes to discussion about union strategy because it unfolds who plays a decisive role in union decision-making relative to formulation and implementation of union strategy. Investigating industrial relations, individual trade union response, member attitude-union democracy, and union leadership avoids missing vital elements in exploring union strategy in revitalisation.

Conclusion

Trade unions across different countries have faced management opposition, decline in membership density, and ambiguous identities. Management opposition restrains normal union operation. The decline trend has appeared from advanced economies to newly-emerging economies. This decline causes trade unions to have a weakness in gaining power and political influence, because they are collective organisations that gain their power from collective action of their membership. The common causes are offensive employer and unfavourable conditions for trade union operation.

Another issue of trade unions is an ambiguity in union identity. The trade unions are unable to shape their identities, among market-, class- or social-oriented approaches, as any orientation has its own different priority i.e focussing on economic benefits of membership, fighting for class consensus, or stressing social harmony and stability. Responding to their issues, trade unions have sought to find out appropriate strategies to overcome these issues.

Across countries, the responses of trade unions to their issues are analysed under two levels: individual primary trade union responses, and the tendency of trade unionism in general. Primary union operations is analysed in accordance with union aims, union methods to obtain the aims, union tactics, and levels of strategic formulation and implementation (Gahan 1998). In respect of the general tendency of trade unionism, there have been various strategies in union revitalisation (Frege & Kelly 2004). In Western contexts, the trade union movement is widely formed into six strategies, of organising, building union-employer partnership, political actions, structuring, coalition-building, and building international solidarity. In Asian contexts, trade unions reform in accordance with strategies such as increasing union autonomy, emphasising

organising, change in union structures, alliances between unions and civil society groups, increasing member servicing, and internationalisation of union activity. There has, however, been little research on union strategy in Vietnam. Therefore, the present, exploratory research aims to explore strategies of trade union revitalisation in Vietnam, within a research framework that centres on individual union responses. The next chapter presents the research methodology for conducting this study.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Although there is no one correct way of analysing qualitative data, it is essential that qualitative researchers provide a detailed description of the procedures, decision criteria, and data manipulation that allow them to present the final results of a study.

Russell (1993, p. 128)

Introduction

The previous chapter presented a framework for exploring strategies of trade union revitalisation in Vietnam. The framework centred around individual union responses or union operation at the workplace level. This chapter aims to discuss the research methods used to open up and reveal the responses of individual trade unions at workplace level. The chapter elaborates and justifies the methods used to explore the research questions, and outlines the application of these research methods to the study. The chapter also provides a description of the ways the data were obtained, the operationalization of the constructs that were used, and the types of analyses that were conducted. Finally, an assessment of research trustworthiness is presented to ensure consistency in the data collection and analysis, with four validities, namely, construct, internal validity, external validity, and reliability.

Qualitative research

The data were obtained using a qualitative research approach. In this thesis, exploration of union aim, union leadership, management attitude towards trade unions at the workplace level, and union member attitude- union democracy, necessitates the need for hearing the voices of union leaders and members, rather than using numeric results of quantitative research, because the numeric data is unable to discover in-depth

knowledge of human behaviour (Yin 2011). Regarding this study, an advantage of qualitative approach is to allow the discovering of meanings of people's lives, under real-world conditions (Tewksbury 2009). A qualitative research approach places emphasis on understanding, through looking closely at people's words, actions and records, and by discovering meaning and concepts in the form of themes, motifs, generalizations and taxonomies relative to a social or human problem (Creswell 2007; Lincoln & Guba 1985; Merriam 2014).

The present thesis used a qualitative rather quantitative approach because the latter focusses on using established definitions of concepts and variables to test theories deductively, and to generalise with a large sample, number, and variables (Tewksbury 2009). This thesis did not test hypotheses due to the lack of theory or hypothesis on union revitalisation in Vietnam. According to Neuman (2006), rather than using a mathematical instrument to measure variables in a theory as in a quantitative research, a qualitative research design allows for the emergence of themes or theories to develop where there is a lack of theory or where existing theory fails to explain a phenomenon. Therefore, the qualitative research approach allows the research process to be flexible, with an ability to develop new hypotheses as the research progresses and new insights emerge, and can make use of multiple sources of data, such as documentary evidence or observation data (Denzin & Lincoln 2005; Tewksbury 2009).

Weighting between qualitative and quantitative inquiries, a qualitative research is suited to explore the strategy of trade union revitalisation that emerges from and presents in the words and actions of union members and union leaders.

Research strategy: Case study

It is crucial to situate the research within specific methodological strategies for conducting a particular research (Creswell 2007; Denzin & Lincoln 2005). The present research is situated in accordance with a case-study strategy. A case can have individuals, groups, organisations, movements, events or geographic units as its analytical frame and peculiarity within its real-life context (Neuman 2006; Thomas 2011; Yin 2009). The present research utilised a single case-study strategy to examine strategies for trade union revitalisation in Vietnam because Vietnamese trade unions is a peculiar case in the field of trade union revitalisation. Vietnamese trade unions retain the characteristics of communist trade unions, which traditionally operated within the centrally-planned economy of communist society; currently, however, in Doi Moi, they have been operating in the market economy that underpins capitalist society. Employing case-study research enables the researcher to explore in detail the complexity and uniqueness of the trade unions in the contemporary context of Vietnam.

A case study requires a researcher to deeply explore a programme, event, activity, or process, because of the uniqueness and interest of a particular case (Crowe et al. 2011; Thomas 2011; Yin 2003; Yin 2009). Hence, a case-study research is relevant to an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular, project, policy, institution, programme or system in a real life context, from various angles (Yin 2009). The researcher collects information from a case bounded by a particular time and activity. Case study method does not attempt to control the context; rather, it enables a researcher to study contemporary phenomena in a real life setting, where boundaries between context and phenomenon tend to be blurred (Yin 2009).

Utilising case study method, the present thesis is challenged by the weakness of case-study strategy in terms of generalisation, and in potentially containing a bias toward verification (Flyvbjerg 2006; Thomas 2011). This research overcame these weaknesses by addressing trustworthiness of qualitative research with multiple methods of data collection, including interviews, documentary analysis, and unobtrusive observations (Crowe et al. 2011; Lincoln & Guba 1985; Yin 2003).

Semi-structured interviews

This qualitative research employed face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interview technique was adopted because it allows for deeper exploration of the perceptions and opinions of interviewees regarding complex phenomena (Merriam 2014; Patton 2015). The interviews examined the following themes: awareness of union members about union goals; membership expectation; employers' attitudes; role and performance of union leadership; state of union democracy; and tactics union used in practice. The outcome is rich data that reflects the underlying reasons for participants' responses (Creswell 2007; Yin 2011). Each interview was carried out with a number of questions being prepared in advance, and lasted from 60 to 90 minutes. All interviews were conducted in Vietnamese and recorded. The quotations from the interviews in this study were translated into English.

The questions asked union members to identify their attitudes and expectations from the union, and their participation, based on the Gordon et al (1980) questionnaire used to measure union commitment. The interview questions sought to explore union democracy and the role of both membership and leadership in relevance to union strategies. Despite seeking the same themes, the interview questions varied according to positions of interviewees; for example, ordinary members and union leaders were asked

different questions; but the aims of the questions were to explore their perspectives on the same themes, relevant to opposition, communication, equality, and participation. The detail of interview questions is presented in Appendixes 2, 3 and 4.

Document analysis

The data was gathered from a diverse range of document sources. Table 5.1 lists the crucial documents for documentary analysis.

Table 5.1: List of documents used in documentary analysis

Date	Title	Issuing Organisation	Analytical contents
20/06/2012	Law on Trade Unions	Parliament of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam	Legitimacy of roles and functions of trade unions
18/06/2012	Labour Code	Parliament of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam	Legitimacy of roles and functions of trade unions
30/7/2013	The Charter of VGCL	VGCL	Rights and duties of membership; General directives of trade unions
07/03/2014	Decision No. 269/QD-TLD on the promulgation of regulations on the financial management of trade unions	VGCL	Financial resources and spending union budget
07/03/2014	Decision No. 272/QD-TLD enforcing the regulations on receipts, expenditures and management of local trade union budgets	VGCL	Legitimate management recognitions, management support primary trade unions
21/11/13	Decree 191/2013/ND-CP in 21st November 2013, which details guidance for trade union budget contributions	Vietnamese Government	Trade union budget contributions
19/01/2008	The Strategy of National Construction in the Transitional Period to Socialism	CPV	CPV's directives relative to VGCL's operation and trade unions

Information from the Law on Trade Unions, Labour Code and governmental documents guiding the implementation of the Law on Trade Unions and the Labour Code, also provided knowledge on the foundation and operation of Vietnamese trade unions. This research gathered and investigated official resolutions of CPV because the CPV has a vital role in providing directions for the VGCL's operation as previously discussed in Chapter 2. The sources of above documents were investigated from the websites of CPV, Vietnamese government, and the VGCL. The present research also analysed documents of the VGCL such as the Charter of VGCL, guidance documents, and reports.

Participant observation

This study utilised participant observation for data collection, because observation is among the key methods of data collection in qualitative research (Merriam 2014). Observation is a way of gathering data by watching behaviour, events, or noting physical characteristics, in their natural setting. The observation strategy is considered to be helpful to understand deeper “ill-defined phenomena” (Merriam 2014, p. 119). Moreover, during the progress of an interview, interviewees may not enthusiastically discuss a topic, but the observer might discover underlying reasons for the interviewees' responses. It also provides researchers with ways to check for nonverbal expression of feelings, determine who interacts with whom, grasp how participants communicate with each other, and check for how much time is spent on various activities. Overall, the data collected from an observation is helpful to understand the nature of a phenomenon (Merriam 2014; Tewksbury 2009).

After interviews, in each primary trade union, the researcher asked for permission to observe at least one union activity or meeting. The purposes of those observations were

to investigate how union members and union leaders participated in specific union activities, and the relationships between union leaders and members, and union leaders and management. The outcomes of these observations enabled the researcher to identify the state of union democracy and rank-and-file members' attitudes towards trade unions.

Among ten primary trade unions, the researcher was allowed to observe four union events: one training course in DPE-Seafood; one meeting for union election FOE-Retailer; one meeting for re-calculating wages in DPE-Footwear; and one musical event held by the primary union in SA-Ward. The other six primary unions did not organise union events during the research fieldwork period, from September to December, 2014.

Table 5.2: Focussed categories of observations

Categories	Includes	Field notes
Name of organisation: Date: Time: Approximate participation: Event description:		
Democracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion • Voting • Communication • Equality • Criticism 	
Members' attitudes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willingness to participate in union activities • Active or passive participation • Expectation 	
Employers' strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoidance strategies • Discrimination • Restrict • Support 	
Union leaders' responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tactics to deal with management • Dual role 	

To collect data, the researcher participated in the union meetings by taking an under-cover role as a subordinate role to other participants (Baker 2006). The researcher joined the event meetings but did not disclose to participants as a researcher or union

member. Instead, the researcher was introduced as the role of the person who was responsible for delivering stationery for the events such as paper, pens and so forth. Within this role, the researcher was present on the scene but did not participate or interact with insiders; hence, the researcher unobtrusively observed participants' behaviour (Baker 2006). In this context, the researcher's appearance at the union meetings was unlikely to disrupt the normal behaviour of members, the meeting dynamics or content (Merriam 2014; Tewksbury 2009). Baker (2006) suggests that a complete observer or an unobtrusive observer plays a passive role to listen and observe participants. An unobtrusive observer has an advantage to completely detach from the participants (Baker 2006). Being a complete observer, the researcher sat in the corner of the meeting room and only gave paper and pens to union members when they needed. Therefore, the participants normally discussed and behaved as usual (Merriam 2014). The researcher worked within this frame to ensure that he did not cause a negative response from any of the people being observed. Thus, the observation was employed so that union members who attended the events were more likely to behave naturally (Patton 2015). By observing union meetings, union events and union training programs, it was possible to notice matters related to the extent of membership participation, participants' attitudes, and management attitude towards the union activities. The data gathered from the observation were used in conjunction with the data from the interviews and document analysis. Table 5.2 details an example of what was observed in the fieldwork. Data from observation were not collected as a full transcript, but via notes and memos from observations. The data were then organised for analysing.

Purposeful sampling and data collection units

This research intentionally selects samples with the purpose of getting the broadest range of information and perspectives on the subject of study (Patton 2015). This

research collected data according to purposeful sampling, because this allowed the researcher to find as many informative samples as possible relevant to trade union operation and membership attitudes towards the trade unions. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), purposeful sampling in qualitative research provides more confidence that conclusions are adequate with small samples, because those samples can deliberately be chosen so as capture the varieties of population relevant to the research topic. The small sample size of random or snowball sampling cannot provide persuasive conclusions (Yin 2011).

Regarding levels of data unit collection, Yin (2011) suggests that units of data collection of qualitative research vary, from individuals, focus groups, organisations, or society. Clarification of data collection units depends on the main topic of study. The units need to appropriately reflect the main topic (Yin 2011). For example, if a study has the topic of the demise of a large firm, the large firm is a broader level of unit data collection, and practices and individuals belonging to the firm are a narrower level of unit data collection (Yin 2011, 86). For the present research, the topic is trade union strategy in revitalisation in Vietnam. As reviewed in the section, Organisational structure of the trade unions in Chapter 2, Vietnamese trade unions are uniformly structured under the VGCL's umbrella, with various practices of primary trade unions at the workplace level. The practices or the operation of primary trade unions reflect strategies of the trade unions. In addition, individual union members and part-time union leaders belong to and reflect the operation of a particular primary trade union at the workplace level (hereafter, this research uses the term union leader(s) to refer to part-time union leaders at primary trade unions, and in order to distinguish from full-time union officials). Therefore, this research mainly collected data at two levels: primary trade unions and individuals of union members; and union leaders in the

primary trade unions. In addition, to crosscheck the collected data, this research also had interviews with four fulltime union officials.

This thesis obtained data from ten primary trade unions. The ten primary trade unions varied as state agencies and enterprises operating in Vietnam, including domestic-private enterprises, foreign-owned enterprises, state-owned enterprises, and three levels of state agencies i.e. provincial, district, and ward level. The individuals included ordinary union members, and union leaders at primary trade unions. In addition, four full-time union officers in the provincial and district federations of trade unions in Vietnam were selected. There were totally thirty four interviews conducted. The justification of sample selection is presented below.

There were thirty interviewees who were union members of the ten primary trade unions, and four fulltime union officials, as mentioned above. The participants were invited by letter from the researcher. Samples from part-time union leaders and rank-and-file members at the grassroots level provided evidence on union members' attitudes and expectations towards the trade union, and their evaluation of union performance and union leadership. Information from the interviews also reflected the industrial relations climate in the enterprises and state agencies. One union leader and two rank-and-file members were interviewed in each primary trade union. This research did not sample trade union leaders at the national level (e.g. full-time union leaders of the VGCL), because they are distinct from the daily work of union at the primary trade unions, as previously discussed in Chapter 2. Therefore, they were not well positioned to observe daily union work at the level of the firm. Instead, this research investigated the national leaders' perspectives by analysing documents of the VGCL, which officially express the ideas of VGCL's leadership. The selected samples cover the wide range of diversity in the population. The rationale for choosing the above samples is that varieties of

enterprise ownership can lead to various attitudes of management towards trade unions (Vo & Rowley 2010).

The selection process for the interviewees overcame the difficulties in data collection process appearing in some previous studies (Bonnin 2010; Nguyen 2015; Scott et al. 2006); for example, the restrictions on foreign researchers who collected data from research fieldwork in Vietnam (Nguyen 2015). Those restrictions come from local authority or the fear of foreigners (Kamoche 2001). However, the data collection for the present study did not confront the above restrictions, since the investigator of this study is a domestic lecturer working at the School of Politics of Ca Mau province, Vietnam. The School has supported the researcher by allowing him to access database of the School, which stores lists of enterprises, and state agencies with detail of primary trade unions (The support letter of the School for the Ethics application is presented in Appendix 5). The researcher personally contacted the union leaders and rank-and-file members of the primary trade unions as potential samples. Once the researcher obtained approval from them, the detail of the interviews was provided, including Participant Information and Consent Forms, research aims, research questions, and interviews' schedules.

This research also considered the variety of data in terms of location. Data were collected in two different locations, namely, Ho Chi Minh City and Ca Mau province, for a number of reasons. Ho Chi Minh City is the most industrialised city in Vietnam and is well-known as a highly developed commercial and industrial area before and since Doi Moi. Workers and unions are more active and dynamic in Ho Chi Minh City than in other places in Vietnam (Collins 2009). Ca Mau province is in the southernmost part of the country and is one of the country's youngest industrial areas. It has largely remained an agricultural economy, particularly with the seafood industry. The workers

in this province are in a new phase of worker activism. The province has established factories and industrial zones in recent years, but workers' lives still retain agricultural characteristics. Investigating union members' attitudes towards their trade unions in various regions provided more lens to discover the tendency of union membership. With the variety of samples, this research aimed to draw the complete picture of trade union operation in the Vietnamese context, and to portray the general trends of union responses. The summary of primary trade unions and interviewees is presented in Table 5.3.

From Table 5.3, the samples encompassed three primary trade unions, within three DPEs, in different industries including seafood, clothing, and footwear. Those industries were chosen because they have labour intensive working environments where there have been several industrial actions (Cox 2015). In the present research, those companies were coded DPE-Seafood, DPE-Textile, and DPE-Footwear (both in Ho Chi Minh City). Similarly coded, interviews took place in two SOEs in trading and energy industries in Ca Mau province (SOE-Trading and SOE-Energy), and two FOEs in retail and construction industries in Ho Chi Minh City (FOE-Retailer and FOE-Construction).

For primary trade unions in state agencies, this research collected data from three levels of state agencies in Ca Mau province, including SA-Ward (for state agency at ward level), SA-District (for state agency at district level), and SA-Province (for state agency at provincial level). The reasons for only selecting those agencies in Ca Mau province is that state agencies operate similarly across the country in accordance with central government. In other words, there is no difference in operation of state agencies in Vietnam across the country.

Table 5.3: Organisations and number of participants

Organisations	Number of employees	Number of union members	Union density	Pseudonym of 30 informants
DPE-Seafood (Ca Mau)	1,000	300	30.0%	✓ Union leader: UL-SE ✓ 1 st Rank and file: RF1-SE ✓ 2 nd Rank and file: RF2-SE
DPE-Textile (Ho Chi Minh City)	1,687	455	26.9%	✓ Union leader: UL-TE ✓ 1 st Rank and file: RF1-TE ✓ 2 nd Rank and file: RF2-TE
DPE-Footwear (Ho Chi Minh City)	1,029	257	24.9%	✓ Union leader: UL-FO ✓ 1 st Rank and file: RF1-FO ✓ 2 nd Rank and file: RF2-FO
SOE-Trading (Ca Mau)	370	333	90.0%	✓ Union leader: UL-TR ✓ 1 st Rank and file: RF1-TR ✓ 2 nd Rank and file: RF1-TR
SOE-Energy (Ca Mau)	945	907	95.9%	✓ Union leader: UL-EN ✓ 1 st Rank and file: RF1-EN ✓ 2 nd Rank and file: RF2-EN
FOE-Retailer (Ho Chi Minh City)	700	154	22.0%	✓ Union leader: UL-RE ✓ 1 st Rank and file: RF1-RE ✓ 2 nd Rank and file: RF2-RE
FOE-Construction (Ho Chi Minh City)	532	127	23.8%	✓ Union leader: UL-CO ✓ 1 st Rank and file: RF1-CO ✓ 2 nd Rank and file: RF2-CO
SA-Ward (Ca Mau)	60	58	96.9%	✓ Union leader: UL-WA ✓ 1 st Rank and file: RF1-WA ✓ 2 nd Rank and file: RF2-WA
SA-District (Ca Mau)	72	69	95.8%	✓ Union leader: UL-DI ✓ 1 st Rank and file: RF1-DI ✓ 2 nd Rank and file: RF2-DI
SA-Province (Ca Mau)	79	76	96.2%	✓ Union leader: UL-PR ✓ 1 st Rank and file: RF1-PR ✓ 2 nd Rank and file: RF2-PR

As mentioned previously, there were 4 samples of interviewees who were full-time officials (2 at provincial level and 2 with district level of labour federations). One interviewee is President of Provincial trade union in Ca Mau province, another one is Vice-President of Provincial trade union in Ca Mau; and one is Vice-President of a district trade union in Ca Mau province. The fourth one is Vice-President of a district trade union in Ho Chi Minh City. The rationale for choosing full-time union officials is that discussed in the review of the role of full-time officials at the district and provincial levels of labour federations in Chapter 2. They are in charge of union administration in their realm, and deeply understand the practice of trade unions in reality, such as dealing with labour strikes, and overseeing the implementation of labour and union

regulations. They also join the decision-making process of trade unions at local levels, and guide union part-time union leaders at the grassroots level in the conduct of union tasks. Thus, the data from those interviewees helped to clarify the advantages and disadvantages of trade union operations in both the state agencies and companies.

Data analysis: Thematic analysis

Analysis of qualitative data might be ‘the most demanding and least examined aspect of qualitative research process’ (Basit 2003, p. 143). After the interview, data was written-up and translated into English for analysing. The object of analysing qualitative data is to determine the categories, relationships and assumptions that inform the respondents’ view of the world in general and of the topic in particular. Thematic analysis should be seen as a basic method for qualitative analysis, because it allows researcher to identify, analyse, and report themes within data, and to generalise those themes in order to respond to the research questions (Braun & Clarke 2006; Jones & Forshaw 2012). It also focuses on tacit meanings of the themes, and illustrates which themes are important in the description of the phenomenon under study irrespective of quantification of the themes (Boyatzis 1998; Tuckett 2005).

Although thematic analysis is widely used, there is confusion over content analysis (Vaismoradi et al. 2013). Rooted from content analysis, thematic analysis is able to offer the systematic element characteristic of content analysis, and also permits the researcher to combine analysis of the frequency of codes with analysis of their more tacit meaning. Content analysis is a systematic coding and categorising approach used for exploring large amounts of textual information unobtrusively, to determine trends and patterns of used words, their frequency, their relationships, and the structures and discourses of communication (Vaismoradi et al. 2013). Content analysis involves

establishing categories and then counting the number of instances in which they are used in a text or image. It determines the frequency of the occurrence of particular categories. In addition, a purpose of content analysis is to describe the characteristics of the document's content by examining who says what, to whom, and with what effect. By using content analysis, it is possible to analyse data qualitatively, and at the same time quantify the data. Content analysis uses a descriptive approach in both coding of the data and its interpretation of quantitative counts of the codes. Conversely, thematic analysis provides a purely qualitative, detailed, and nuanced account of data (Braun & Clarke 2006).

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis involves the search for and identification of common threads that extend across an entire interview or set of interviews, with a thematic map. This refers to the visual presentation of themes, codes, and their relationships, involving a detailed account and description of each theme, their criteria, exemplars and counter examples, and other similar details. As one part of data analysis, it helps with reviewing themes and achieving the aim of identifying coherent but distinctive themes (Boyatzis 1998).

One of the crucial benefits of thematic analysis is its flexibility (Boyatzis 1998; Braun & Clarke 2006). Through its theoretical freedom, thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data (Braun & Clarke 2006). Thematic analysis is not tied to a particular theoretical outlook, and so can be applied when using a range of theories and epistemological approaches.

Thematic analysis offers an explanation or interpretation that makes sense of all the elements of the data, because it holds the prevalence of themes to be so important, without sacrificing depth of analysis (Tuckett 2005; Vaismoradi et al. 2013). Thus,

thematic analysis not only forms the implicit basis of much other qualitative work, it strives to provide the more systematic transparent form of it. Generally, thematic analysis is able to offer the systematic element characteristic of content analysis, and also permits the researcher to combine analysis of their meaning within their particular context.

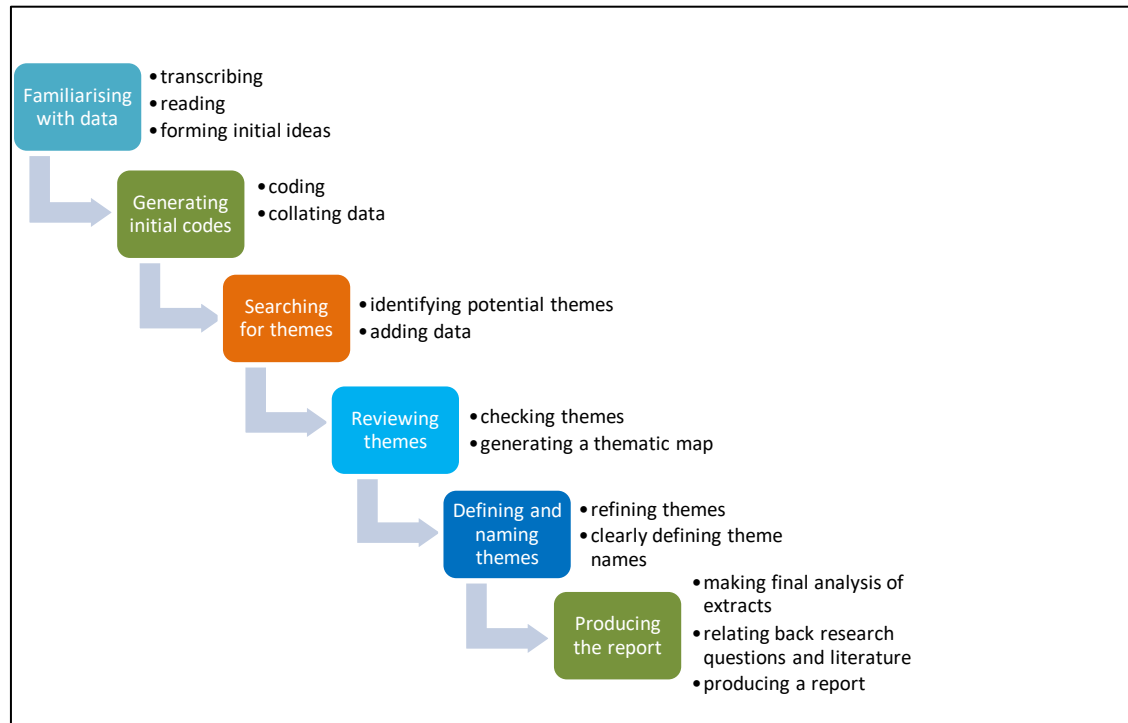
Regarding how to analyse data, Green et al. (2007) suggest four steps: immersion in the data; coding; creating categories; and identifying themes. Data immersion requires the researcher to become completely involved in the collected data by reading and re-reading of interview transcripts, and listening to recordings of the interviews repeatedly. This helps the researcher to deeply understand both explicit and latent meanings of what interviewees have responded. The second step is coding, which helps the researcher to justify codes and sort them. The third step is to create categories. The researcher has to examine similarities and differences between codes and seek relationships between them. The final step is to identify themes. A category is not a theme; a theme requires a range of categories, explanation and interpretation. The outcome of this step is to unfold the findings. In more detail, Braun and Clarke (2007) offer a systematic technique for conducting thematic analysis, with six phases, shown in Figure 5.1.

The first phase is transcribing data from verbal to written format. In this research, the recorded interviews were transcribed and translated into English. All the transcriptions were read carefully and checked back against the original audio recordings for accuracy (Braun & Clarke 2006). This phase helped the researcher to familiarise with the data. This work also provided the raw material for generating the initial codes in Phase 2.

Phase 2 began with the coding process. Coding or categorizing the data has an important role in analysis. It involves subdividing the data as well as assigning

categories. Codes or categories are tags or labels for allocating units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study.

Figure 5.1 Summarises six phases of thematic analysis employed in this research.



Source: Braun and Clarke (2006, 87)

In the present study, for each code, its name appears in the first column, a definition of what should be classified with this code appears in the second, and an example of material that should be coded with this code appears in the third column. The outcome of this phase is a coding frame containing the full set of codes that I chose to apply to the collected data, presented in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4: An example of coding frame

Code name	Definition	Extract
UNION DEMOCRACY		
Opposition	Existing factionalism Tolerating opposition group Electoral competition	
Decentralisation	Free debate Members' decision making Membership participation	
Occupational community	Solidarity among similar occupation	
Equality	Salary Position Education, skill	
Free communication	Out of leaders' control Free access to information Criticism	
MEMBERS' ATTITUDES		
Loyalty	Retaining membership status	
Responsibility	Taking union leadership position Assisting other members	
Willingness	Putting more effort to union tasks	
Evaluation union leaders' performance	Awareness of members' concerns	
EMPLOYER STRATEGIES		
Neutral attitude	No action relevant to trade union	
Support attitude	Creating favourable conditions, financial support, encouraging union activities	
Hostile attitude	Implicit restriction union activity Discrimination Illegal dismissal	
Avoidance tactics	Delaying union establishment within firm	
INDIVIDUAL UNION RESPONSES		
Tactics to deal with management	Negotiating with management Collaborating with management Struggling against management	
Serving members	Financial support	

From the data, the features of the data were identified according to themes clarified from the literature. The groups of codes were organised to reflect specific themes. This phase relied on the themes, which were data-driven and theory-driven, as some of the themes came from the collected data only and some emerged from the literature review. Table 5.5 presents an example of the coding process with extracts from collected data.

In Phase 3, the broader levels of the themes were re-focused and collated. The potential thematic map was created in order to classify the relationship between codes, between

themes, and the different levels of themes. The relationship between themes should be combined, refined or discarded. In this stage, the extracted data was also added to the themes (see Table 5.5 as an example).

Table 5.5: Coding frame with extracts

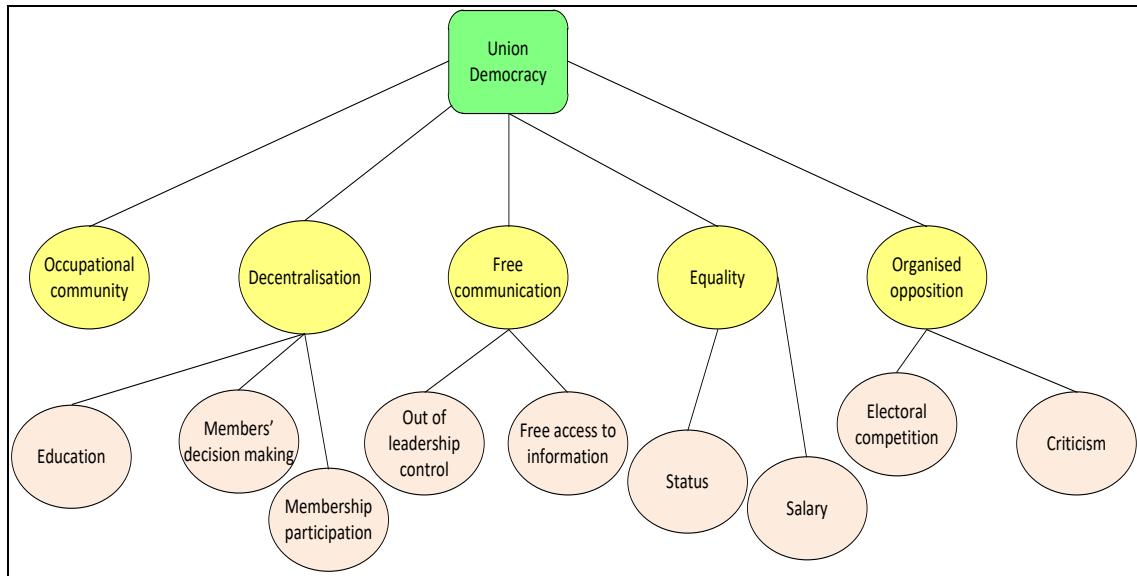
Code name	Definition	Extract example
UNION DEMOCRACY		
Opposition	Existing factionalism Tolerating opposition group Electoral competition	- The opposition in the trade union does not mean democracy in our mind. It causes the organisation trouble.
Decentralisation	Free debate Members' decision-making Membership participation	- We considered it would be democracy because we always collect ideas from rank-and-file members.
Occupational community	Solidarity among similar occupation	No evidence
Equality	Salary Position Education skill	- No, no one gets benefits from leaders due to their union position
Free communication	Out of leaders' control Free access to information Criticism	- Normally when I had some issues, I just made a phone call to union chairman and got his advice...

The analysis process continued in Phase 4 with the reviewing of themes. Given that the identified themes were cohered together meaningfully, they were reviewed in two levels of the coded data extracts and the validity of individual themes in relation to the thematic map. This phase ensured the accurate presentation of data added in the themes in accordance with the literature. It also examined the accuracy of the thematic map. The overall story would be fully told at the end of this stage. Figure 5.2 illustrates a thematic map of this process before refining themes.

Phase 5 started with defining and naming the themes. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the appearance of a theme is not necessarily dependent on quantifiable measures but rather on whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research question. That means the meanings and aspects of the themes were justified rather than quantified in the data. The interesting aspect of each theme was considered and

explained. In other words, each theme tells a story by itself, and the whole story through their combination and in response to the research questions. This stage made sure that overlaps between the themes were avoided. The outcomes of this phase were to exactly define what the themes reflect.

Figure 5.2: An extraction of a thematic map



The full report was produced in Phase 6. The thematic analysis work was written-up, and told the story of the collected data. The report included sufficient evidence of the themes within the data. The extracted data fully reflected the story and illustrated the story in relation to the research questions.

An assessment of research trustworthiness

There are a number of scepticisms related to the analysis of qualitative data. De Wet and Erasmus (2005, p. 27) argue that, in particular data analysis, outcomes of qualitative research are often seen as ‘ad hoc, intuitive and unsystematic, thus without academic rigour’. It is believed that, since qualitative research involves a smaller sample and does not deal with large datasets, hence it is essential to question the validity and reliability of qualitative research. Therefore, debate on the replacement of the concepts of validity

and reliability by trustworthiness or rigour in qualitative research has been undertaken for many years.

While validity and reliability are inappropriate in qualitative research, academics prefer to use terms such as trustworthiness or rigorousness (Lincoln & Guba 1985; Miles & Huberman 1994). Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed criteria for evaluating validity and reliability of qualitative research, which they defined with the term trustworthiness. Morse et al. (2002) suggest that qualitative research can adopt strategies of verification and self-correcting mechanisms at each stage of the research process to obtain reliability and validity in the analysis of qualitative data. Verification strategies include methodological coherence, sampling sufficiency, developing a dynamic relationship between sampling, data collection and analysis, thinking theoretically, and theory development (Morse et al. 2002). However, Gibbert and Ruigrok (2010) suggest that the major trend to ensure rigour in qualitative case-study research is to report concrete research actions rather than abstract criteria (Gibbert & Ruigrok 2010). Their proposal came from the surveys of several articles in management journals with case studies in order to find out how academics ensure their rigour in qualitative research case study.

Following Gibbert and Ruigrok's (2010) suggestions, the present qualitative case-study research strove to ensure consistency in the data collection and analysis with four validities; namely, construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability were addressed (Yin 2003). Construct validity in case study refers to the extent to which a procedure leads to an accurate observation of reality (Denzin & Lincoln 1994). Multiple sources of evidence, and establishment of a chain of evidence are typical techniques adopted to ensure construct validity (Yin 2003).

To address construct validity, the present thesis used three main sources of data collection: semi-structured interviews, unobtrusive observation, and document analysis.

This is because the responses of trade unions at primary level are reflected through the experience of membership, union leaders, and actual activities of the trade unions.

Internal validity is also called logical validity, and refers to the presence of causal relationships between variables and results (Golafshani 2003). Whereas construct validity is relevant mainly during the data collection phase, internal validity applies also to the data analysis phase. The concrete research actions should be taken to ensure internal validity. The qualitative research avoids depending on a few well-chosen examples. To do so, firstly, constant comparative method is to find another case. Secondly, comprehensive data treatment demands that all cases of data are incorporated in the analysis. Thirdly, deviant case analysis suggests that researchers incorporate into the analysis also cases that do not fit with the theoretical framework. To address internal validity, this research sampled ten cases that include primary trade unions in different organisations and enterprises such as state agencies, at the provincial, district and ward levels, for state agencies, state-owned enterprises, domestic-private enterprises, and foreign-owned enterprises. In addition, it conducted thirty-four interviews, four observations, and includes a wide range of analysed documents.

External validity or generalizability is grounded in the intuitive belief that theories and empirical findings must be applicable not only in the setting in which they are studied but also in other settings (Gibbert & Ruigrok 2010). This research addressed external validity with a starting point for theory development and proposing propositions for further research in the discussion. To provide rich context for analytical generalisation, this thesis investigated trade union operation in different working environments such as in state agencies, SOEs, DPEs, and FOEs.

Reliability refers to the absence of random error or degree of consistency in conducting a study, enabling subsequent researchers to arrive at the same results if they were to

conduct the study along the same steps again or repeat the same procedure used (Denzin & Lincoln 1994; Gibbert & Ruigrok 2010; Silverman 2005; Yin 2003). Reliability can be enhanced by transparency through maintaining good documentation. In particular, Silverman (2005) suggests tape-recording all face-to-face interviews and carefully transcribing the interview tapes. Accordingly, this study tape-recorded all the 34 face-to-face interviews. Note reports were also systematically taken for unobtrusive observations.

Conclusion

This chapter reported how and why the data were obtained, and how the data were analysed. Due to the exploratory and theory-building nature of this study, a qualitative approach is suitable because it allows an in-depth knowledge for a phenomenon. The selection of single case-study method reflected the qualitative research approach and was appropriate to answer the particular research questions regarding the uniqueness of Vietnamese trade unions as a peculiar case among capitalist trade unions. The units of data collection with purposive sampling permit this study to obtain empirical knowledge on trade union members' attitude, their participation in union events, and their unions' responses to management attitudes.

In the second half of the chapter, important aspects of data collection were considered. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with a variety of participants in different working environments, documentary analysis, and unobtrusive observation. Data analysis is a crucial aspect of a qualitative research, and this research utilised thematic analysis because of its flexibility. There were six phases to analyse the data in accordance with thematic analysis. The challenge of qualitative analysis is to generate an understanding of the data that is both rigorous and trustworthy. To ensure rigour and

trustworthiness of the data collection and analysis, the chapter responded to four validities relative to qualitative research, which were construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability. The research results, as the outcomes of utilising this research methodology, will be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

OPERATION OF PRIMARY TRADE UNIONS

...the future health of the trade union movement rests, as it always has done, on securing the twin (and closely interconnected) goals of, on the one hand, workers who are willing to join, participate in union activities, and remain union members, and on the other hand, employers who are willing to recognise trade unions...

Blyton and Turnbull (2004, p. 137)

Introduction

Chapter 2 set out the context of Vietnamese trade unions, which have fundamentally retained the communist characteristic. Chapter 3 reviewed the literature on trade union models worldwide. Chapter 4 presented the current strategies of trade union responses at individual level, and the tendency of trade unionism in general. The research methodology of this study was presented in Chapter 5.

The aim of this chapter is to answer the first sub-research question, of how individual primary trade unions at workplace level have responded to union issues. It does so by presenting and analysing findings of the empirical data from fieldwork, relevant to the themes that were reviewed in Chapters 3 and 4. Those themes are: union aim, reflected through awareness of union members about trade unions-management relationship and membership expectation; employers' attitude towards trade unions; union leadership's performance; and union operation.

Awareness of union members about relationship between trade unions and management

Trade union members have had awareness of the union-management relationship. When union members were asked about the relationship between trade unions and

management, many of the interviewees shared the idea of trade unions as a connection between employees and employers. The awareness of this relationship can be seen from primary trade unions in both state agencies and enterprises. An interviewee from SOE-Trading stated:

The trade union is a connection between management and employees. Moreover, the trade unions transfer information from management to employees. The good relationship between the trade union and management can assist management to obtain organisational goals as well as protect union membership effectively. (RF2-TR)

The interviewee was quite aware of the management connection role of the union, and that the union might help management in pursuing firm's targets. Union members in the state agencies considered the trade union to be part of the organisation. For example, a respondent in a state agency at the ward level in Ca Mau province commented as follows:

The trade union is a part of the whole organisation. It operates to obtain the organisational goals. (RF1-WA)

The union members also recognised that the trade union would bring benefits to organisations. This finding indicates the fact that the awareness of rank-and-file members in Vietnam has been strongly influenced by the communist ideology, which emphasises the role of trade unions to work to meet the target of the firms (Dunlop 1993). Expressing deep knowledge of trade unions, a union leader in FOE-Construction said:

I am one of people campaigning to establish the primary union in this company.

I have known the trade union has the goals of representing and protecting

worker rights and interests. It is necessary to establish a primary trade union in the company because this organisation will defend and take care of its members. The trade union will moderate the employment conflicts between employees and employers. The primary as the third party is able to conciliate and prevent the labour conflicts within the company. The employer should follow the labour law and the employees obey the labour discipline as well as the labour regulation.

The trade union has the function to supervise the two parties. (UL-CO)

The awareness of union members in respect of relationship between trade unions and management are prevalent. This might originate from the nature of communist trade unions, and the characteristic of Vietnamese trade unions, which is that the communist trade unions function as a transmission belt between employees and management (Pravda 1983; Zhu & Fahey 2000). Experiencing a long period with a centrally-planned economy, union members have considered the primary trade unions as a part of the organisation. Consequently, they naturally take the view that union and management is close. Even when the economy shifted to market oriented with a different nature of management, the members still keep in mind the close status of the union-management relationship.

This finding of the present research is in line with Warner's (1991) study on the relationship between trade unions and management in China. He argues that Chinese trade unions are expected to co-operate with management with the role in providing and ensuring labour productivity, worker morale and welfare. In the everyday work of the firm, the trade unions also have a role in defusing conflict between employees and employers. The similarity of relationship between trade unions in Vietnam and China is able to be understood since both trade unions are based on Leninist notions and formed as communist trade unions.

This finding is less likely to apply to the trade unions in Eastern post-communist and Western countries. In transition, the trade unions in Eastern post-communist countries completely inclined towards the Western models (Szell 1992). Theory on industrial relations in Western countries is under an assumption that a trade union is its own organisation of employees and always confronts employers because of conflicts of interest between the two parties (Crouch 1982; Dundon 2002).

Members clearly realise the relationship between the unions and management, but they hope that the relationship does not harm their expectations from the unions, or consider it may help trade unions in operating well. The ordinary union member in FOE-Construction emphasised:

We have known about the relationship between the trade union and the management. Actually, we do not much concern about it. Our main concern is that how the trade union can do the best for us with that relationship ...Hopefully...(RF1-CO)

It can be seen that the issue is not because of the relationship, but is due to how the trade union serves its membership. The investigation into membership expectation partly sheds light on that issue.

Membership expectation: Improving working and living conditions

The membership obviously expects the trade unions to provide benefits to them. Union members' need regarding economic or political goals, or both, will shape union operation and directions to change. Child et al. (1973) argue that union strategy depends on unions' function primarily to perform an economic service for their members, or the function primarily as agents for social change and as the institutional means for their members to participate more fully in democratic processes. Turberville (2004, p. 787)

investigated a credible union renewal strategy in the UK, claiming that the majority of membership wish ‘to be given support, or be serviced, rather than give support’. Similarly, the findings of this research reveal that union members perceived the trade unions to be focused on the maintenance and improvement of working and living conditions.

The respondents expected that Vietnamese trade unions have to represent and protect members’ rights and interests in terms of obtaining higher wages, more secure employment, and safer working environment. For example, a rank-and-file member at DPE-Seafood stated:

I have known the trade unions represent and protect its members’ rights and interests, so I joined this union. As I have known, my employment is more secure when I become a union membership as they commit to protect me from unfair dismissal. Uh...My salary might increase a little bit, probably. (RF1-SE)

A rank-and-file member presented his awareness on the role of trade unions:

The trade union is an organisation mobilising and gathering employees. It represents and protects its members. It also encourages employees to work productively, follow labour disciplines. The trade union contributes to the organisational performance. (RF1-DI)

Owing to considering the primary trade union in the business sector as a service deliverer, union members tend to join the union if they have found that the trade union can provide them economic and mutual benefits. When they were questioned about reasons for becoming union members, they replied that they would like to be protected if problems come up. Some referred to getting higher pay and better working

conditions. They all come to a universal response, of getting benefits, such as financial and health schemes:

I joined the union as I would like the trade union to defend me from unfair treatment, illegal dismissal or represent me in labour disputes. In addition, the trade union might assist me in some difficult circumstances. I still remain union membership ... as I have seen trade union helpfulness. Effectively protecting and supporting existing membership would help the trade union recruit more membership in the future. (RF1-RE)

Union members have found that the grassroots trade union is helpful in terms of organising and supporting its members in social activities, welfare, and working and living conditions development. The membership seemed to accept union support and mutual aid of the trade union.

The expectation of membership was reflected through the reasons that caused employees to decide to become union members. Focussing on being protected by the trade union, an ordinary member commented on reasons for becoming a union membership:

I joined the trade union because the trade union represents and protects its members. It can represent employees when the labour disputes happen. (RF1-TE)

For some respondents, their expectations were based on the fact that the trade union had brought them financial and mutual benefits. The following excerpt from an interview with a rank-and-file member of FOE-Retailer in Ho Chi Minh City is a typical response to that thought:

I have found that trade unions provide me benefits. For example, when I got sick, the union leaders came to visit and gave me gifts, or I had difficulty in financial situation, the trade union gave me a loan. In holidays, the trade union organises events or activities which are helpful... I will retain my union membership in the future as I see the trade union is a helpful organisation during my employment. (RF1-RE)

In the present study, the union members appear to see the trade union as a service provider. The membership has a common thought of the trade unions enhancing better working and living conditions. Practically, this finding is largely consistent with Torm's (2012) research findings. Torm (2012) explored that union membership expects trade unions to bring them economic benefits. In the cases of small and medium enterprises, union members get higher wages than non-union membership. In a similar vein, Cox (2015) reconfirms that workers are clearly proactively seeking avenues to voice their concerns surrounding working conditions and their basic employment rights. In comparison with research in Western contexts, this finding consists with seminal studies conducted by Fiorito (1992), Gallagher and Strauss (1991), and Waddington (2006), who share a common argument that union membership basically expects the union to provide benefits to them. They will not leave trade unions when they still get benefits from the unions.

However, the finding appears to disprove the argument that union members want more autonomous, or for freedom of association. For example, Van Gramberg et al. (2013) claim that independent trade union is the expectation of union members in order to effectively mobilise workers in labour disputes. In addition, Do (2013) states that the workers' demand is to establish alternative trade unions to represent and protest on behalf of employees. The previous studies might have looked for different aspects or

neglected the membership's needs in their daily life. Thus, those finding do not support the above argument that the union members desire alternative trade unions.

For the present study, a comprehensive summary on membership expectation can be found in the full expression of a rank-and-file member in SOE-Energy:

I would like the trade union to safeguard my employment, wages. When getting sick, I like to receive mutual support, foods and gifts from the trade union. The trade union also loans money for poverty members to improve union members' income. When I have difficulties in working, living, the union leader instantly comes to visit me. It encouraged me a lot. I feel happy with the trade union.
(RF1-EN)

This finding reveals that members' expectations are a very important reference point for the study of trade union strategy. The membership focusses on economic goals; hence, the trade unions need to operate as service providers accordingly. The union members seek economic goals; therefore, the daily operations of trade unions have to achieve those goals. However, the strategy of trade unions not only depends on membership's expectations but also management's attitudes. Hence, the next section presents the findings on management's attitudes towards trade unions, in order to give a deeper understanding on how and why trade unions need to adopt appropriate tactics to function well.

Employers' attitude towards trade unions

Traditionally, employers have employed various tactics to avoid or interfere with trade union operations (Adams 1981; Dundon 2002). This section refers to the attitudes and tactics of employers, which include neutral, supportive, and adversarial attitudes towards the primary trade unions within their enterprises.

Firstly, neutral attitudes of employers mean that the employer neither supports nor interferes with any union activities. They allow trade unions to organise meetings and events, in the case where the union leaders let them know the schedule of the events or meetings in advance. The following union leader commented:

The managers here do not show any support or hostility to the primary trade union. They imply that, whatever we (the trade union) do, they only want their signed contracts to be done on time. (UL-SE)

Another rank-and-file member in DPE-Seafood provided his opinion about the neutrality of employer's attitude. He said:

I do not know exactly what restriction is applied to the union. I just join union activities or events when I was notified. I did it freely...but I did not receive any support from my boss to do it. It was simple to do what I wanted outside working hours. (RF2-SE)

One union leader in DPE-Footwear in Ho Chi Minh City gave an example of employer approach to treat union operation within the company, as follows:

The management does not support union activities. They do not let us organise meetings, social events in working days. They allow us to do whatever outside working days. (UL-FO)

Neutral attitude is a new finding of the present research. Traditionally, in advanced industrial countries, trade unions have suffered management hostility with several anti-unionism tactics (Adams 1981; Clawson & Clawson 1999; Dundon 2002). In contrast, trade unions in communist countries were supported by management because trade unions assisted the firms to obtain production targets (Dunlop 1993; Herod 1998; Pravda 1983). The rationale of management neutrality is understandable, because the

Vietnamese legal system prohibits any kind of restriction of union activities. The management is requested to adhere to those prohibitions. The labour regulations also do not ask them to show their support to trade unions. In the above cases, the managers did not infringe the law, but they might not prefer union activities either. Thus, they kept a neutral attitude, which neither supports nor restricts union activities.

Secondly, with regard to supportive attitudes of employers, evidence was found in the interviews with members of state agencies and SOEs. A majority of the respondents from state agencies referred to the positive attitude of management. They commonly shared the idea that the working atmosphere at state agencies was friendly. This means that there was no discrimination or harassment at the workplaces. The management rarely breach the labour regulations. In addition, the management and the employees shared common goals and were in consensus regarding their work for the government. A rank-and-file member in a state agency at provincial level discussed the positive atmosphere of the working environment in his organisation, as follows:

The labour relations climate is positive in this organisation as we all work for the state. There is no conflict of interest in the organisation. Moreover, the leaders support union operations as I mentioned previously. Organisational leaders usually have lunch with other civil servants. (RF1-DI)

The union members also commented on the support of management for the trade union. They thought that, due to being part of the state agency, the trade union certainly was supported by the management and the CPV leadership. One respondent stated that:

I think they support the union because the union is a part of this organisation. If the trade union is evaluated with good performance the organisation will be evaluated with good performance as well. (RF2-WA)

Another interviewee in a state agency at provincial level echoed this view, as follows:

The managers should support the union because the union is a part of this organisation. Each year, the organisation just receives the compliment from upper level of the state agencies [the People's Committee at provincial level] in the case where the trade union has been evaluated with good performance. (RF1-PR)

In some cases, managers of state agencies supported primary trade unions by providing money for the primary trade union to organise its events. A union leader at a provincial state agency presented how and why this happened:

When the trade union runs out of money, I have to ask support from the organisational leaders. If I did not call for organisational leader support, the trade union would not have functioned correctly. They have a close relationship with other, that means the organisational performance will be better. We enthusiastically work for the organisation. We think the organisation is like our home. (UL-PR)

All the respondents from state agencies commonly replied that their supervisors supported trade union activities, and in most cases the union chairman was also an organisational leader. One of the union leaders stated:

When I suggest that the union have to arrange a meeting or organise activities in specific time, they always agree and set up the suitable schedule for the action. They let union members join the activities. In some cases, the events need more budgets and the union does not afford the amount of money, they support the union by giving money. (UL-PR)

The reason that, in the state agencies, management often creates favourable conditions for union operations is the lack of conflict of interest in this kind of working environment. This common sentiment was expressed in the comment that:

We have never faced the bitter conflict between employees and organisational leaders. We all work harmoniously. (RF2-PR)

Similarly, in the case of union members working in state-owned enterprises, all respondents referred to the positive attitude of management towards the trade unions. A union leader in a state-owned enterprise in Ho Chi Minh City commented on management's attitudes:

They are friendly. I have not been exploited. The management has not put pressure on workers. They implement labour policies quite well. The trade union does not have to argue with the management. (UL-EN)

The union leader at the FOE-Construction explained why the manager of his company has supported the trade union. He said:

The managers required us to establish a primary trade union as soon as possible. The primary trade union will go with the management to look after employees' working and living conditions because the managers cannot cover all things relative to employees. It hopes that employees will contribute to the development of this company. (UL-CO)

From the above interviews, the significant finding is that all primary trade unions in state agencies and SOEs are supported by management. This is because, in the state agencies, the management must strictly obey the labour regulations, which ensure rights and interests of employees. Hence, the primary trade unions do not have to struggle against the management. Supporting trade unions was a tradition of communist trade

unions because management and employees all worked for the party-state. In Vietnam, the primary trade unions in state agencies have retained the traditional functions of the communist trade unions. They have not shown any change in their operation as organisations providing social welfares and enriching member's life. Similarly, the SOEs are still under the control of the state, and the managers strictly follow labour regulations in terms of paying wages, extra payment for long hour working, health insurance and so forth. Consequently, the primary trade unions do not have to fight against management, and the management supports trade unions. The support of managers to the trade union in FOE-Construction is similar to some cases in Western contexts. There has been research that showed that management supports trade unions because the trade unions can bring benefits to companies. For example, in the US context, Deery et al. (1994) argue that the tenor of the union management relationship has emerged as an important influence on firms' performance. It is supposed that, if the management strictly follow labour regulations, the trade unions do not have to fight against management. Consequently, the management sees the trade unions as useful and helpful organisations, and supports trade unions. Nevertheless, favourable conditions are not found in all investigated cases.

Employers show their hostility or adversarial attitudes towards primary trade unions in some DPEs and FOEs. The respondents who worked in domestic-private enterprises and foreign-invested enterprises claimed that their managers did not seem to favour the trade union. The management often interfered with union activities in various ways, because they opposed unionism. A rank-and-file member stated as follows, about one of the tactics used by the employer to restrict union activities:

The manager knew about union activities or events which were scheduled at least two weeks in advance. He gave us a blank paper, and asked us to put our

name there if we tended to join the activities or events. We asked him for the reason to do that. He just replied that it was simply for acknowledgement and there was no more explanation. We so worried about that. You know... There were some names in it and this paper was sent to union leaders. They (management) suggested that they got the potential attendees and it seemed to be few participants. It is hard to organise union events or meetings with few participants. In consequence, the activities and events were cancelled. (RF2-RE)

In this case, the manager used the tactic of union suppression. This was the manager did not explicitly prohibit union activities; they even pretended to show that they were willing to support the union with the prepared paper containing potential participants. However, the union members might have a fear of placing their names on the paper because it explicitly indicated their pro-unionism, while the management appeared to be anti-unionist. The management used a legitimate obstacle to restrict union operation.

In cases where managers intended to restrict trade union operations, the primary trade union at that enterprise would not be able to operate normally. A rank-and-file member in DPE-Seafood provided an example of another tactic used by his management:

They [managers] did not say that they prohibit union activities but they suddenly arranged the working time out of regular schedule with the reason of finishing urgent contracts. Therefore, we do not have time to join union activities. We could not quit the job for union activities. (RF2-SE)

A union leader in DPE-Textile in Ho Chi Minh City claimed that:

As you have known, we organised those events in the weekend because we could not gather members in working days. The new labour law allow us to have at least 3 days per month to conduct the union activities. Unfortunately, we are not able to

do that because we have to work. We are not permitted to stop working to conduct union activities. The weekend events have not attracted more member participation. It is one of the obstacles constraining potential members joining the trade union activity. (UL-TE)

On this point, a rank-and-file member from FOE-Retailer explained that:

The managers do not support the trade union activities. We have to work fulltime so we are tired after work. The trade union is not able to ask managers to arrange time for union activities. We could not participate in union activities after a long working day. (RF2-RE)

A union chairman in FOE-Retailer in Ho Chi Minh City emphasised:

Unfortunately, the management does not support union activities. They do not let us organise meetings, social events in working days. They allow us to do whatever outside working days. As you know, after work, the workers just want to relax; they do not want to join any activities. In addition, managers explicitly do not encourage employees to attend union's activities. It is clear that the management does not support the primary union. As a result, the primary trade union operates difficultly. (UL-RE)

Management sometimes used stonewalling tactic to constrain union operation. The following observation on a musical event held by the primary union showed that there were approximately one-fifth of union members attending the event. The organiser explained:

They [the absent trade union members] could not participate in this event as they had to work to finish the contract at the year end. But it was a spontaneous schedule. I [as union chairman] informed the activity three weeks in advance and

got the approval from management. However, yesterday the managers noticed that workers in Factory A had to work today as there was an urgent contract needed to finish on time. So, many union members are working right now. (From observation notes)

In the above case, the manager created what appeared to be a reasonable and legitimate obstacle, the urgent working schedule, to limit membership participation. According to Dundon (2002), restriction is often applied by employers when trade unionists or members plan or implement the most basic trade union activities such as organising, recruiting, work stoppages or launching strikes. The purpose of the restriction is to cause difficulties for the trade unions, interfere in the normal activities of the trade unions, and, ultimately, destroy the trade unions. Surprisingly, the restriction applied in selected cases of this research did not result from industrial disputes. It was simply because of offensive management attitudes.

The union leader in FOE-Retailer suffered a type of discrimination. He told about how his reputation as a unionist was undermined due to his union activities. He presented:

My case happened in March 2007. I was elected as president of the company union with more than 500 members at that time. I organised trade union activities well and effectively, winning members' trust. However, due to active trade union activities, I was put down by the management in 2009, my position as a warehouse assistant was made redundant and I was transferred to work as a rank-and-file worker.

My new position in the company caused difficulties for me in two areas: my opportunities to approach [members] and organise trade union activities, and my reputation among workers and members declined. (UL-RE)

The employers in the textile company showed a hostile attitude towards the trade union by victimising union activist. In so doing, they transferred a union leader who was not in their favour to another position. The interviewee (Mr A), who used to be a union leader in the textile company, told his story as a victim of discrimination. He was union president for 2006–2011, and Director of the Administrative Office of the company in charge of administration and HR. He realised that the company did not comply with the lay-off procedure and severance pay policy. Therefore, he sent a request to the management consisting of a two-part report on the situation, the wishes and difficulties of the workers, and requiring the company to implement the termination of labour contract and workers' policies in accordance with the law and regulations. The management responded that the union executive committee, and Mr A himself as union president and Director of Administrative Office, did not share the difficulties with the company. At the end of 2008, and in early 2009, the company changed its policy on HR and restructured the company, dividing the Administrative Office into two divisions, administration, and HR, with the excuse of reorganising the production and businesses, and abandoning the title Director of Administrative Office. As a result, in January 2009, the company abandoned his title as Director of Administrative Office and signed a new labour contract with lower wages. It can be seen that, although Mr A was not fired because of his union action, what the management did clearly reflected the tactic of victimisation mentioned by Adams (1981).

In the above case, the part-time union leaders suffered victimisation. The management used a complicated approach to constrain the union leader from conducting union tasks; hence, it is hard for the labour authority to punish the employer's discrimination. They did not directly place the union leader in a difficult situation, but they did so step by step, and the result was that the union leader found difficulty in connecting with

membership and organising union activities. The obstacles that those trade union leaders suffered naturally appeared as the normal process of production. It appeared not as the employer's intention but as the condition of production. Therefore, the labour inspectors could not conclude that the employers committed union discrimination or union victimisation. It can be seen that the obvious purpose of such discrimination is to thwart union organising by discharging union organisers and warning other employees that their employment will likewise be jeopardised by actively campaigning for union representation.

In sum, employer's attitudes vary, from neutral, supportive, to hostile. The neutrality of management is a new finding, which shows that the management simply adhered to the law that prohibits any discrimination against trade unions. The management was not required to support trade unions. The supportive management has been a traditional edifice of primary trade unions in state agencies. The management not only created favourable conditions for trade unions but also provided financial assistance to primary trade unions. This phenomenon has been continuing as the nature of communist trade unions. The management showed their hostility by discrimination. The union leaders were removed from their current positions once they were appointed as the union leaders. The new position caused them to lose contact with union membership, so the normal union operation was negatively influenced.

Owing to the variety of management attitudes, at primary level union leaders have to seek feasible approaches to obtain their union's objectives. In other words, the trade unions have to find solutions to function well and meet the membership expectations. To determine how union leaders conducted the unions' tasks, the next section seeks to explore tactics that union leaders employed in practice.

What do union leaders do at the workplace level?

Chapter 2 discussed responsibilities of trade unions at workplace level through the role of union leaders with various actions. Gathering data from the fieldwork, this section presents the analysis of the dual role of union leaders, and their attempts in running the primary trade unions.

Dual role of union leaders

The union leaders responded that they are normally in a dual role, of a union leader, and a leader of a human resource or personnel management department. They commonly agreed that the dual role helped them in doing union tasks more easily, because they can combine the two duties of the primary trade union and the organisation successfully. The finding of a close relationship with management seems to be strange to a traditional Western perspective within a militant approach of trade unions. Nevertheless, again, when looking at the role of trade unions in communist societies, this close relationship is understandable. To function as a transmission belt, the primary trade unions need leadership to be able to understand both employees and management. In terms of representation of employees, the union leaders have behaved on behalf of their membership. In respect of a conveyor, the union leaders, who also belong to a department of human resource management, have the advantage of understanding the company's policies and can easily transfer these policies to their membership.

From the union members' point of view, the dual role of union leaders might not be the union's issue. Union members devote to the organisational leadership as well as to the trade union leadership if both work on employees' benefits. A rank-and-file member of the state agency at district level in Ca Mau province stated that:

At this organisation, the union leader keeps an important role in organisational operation. He encourages us to work in both roles of a public servant and a

union member. With the role of union chairman, he eases for protecting and improving members' rights and interests. With the role of organisational management, he has authorities to resolve our problems relating to employment and social activities. We find the union chairman important and trust him...(RF2-WA)

In the Vietnamese context, academics have explored that union leadership normally has dual role, in their research, but they did not have an accurate explanation for that phenomenon. Zhu and Fahey (2000) explained that it is because union leaders were chosen by management. In fact, managers do not have the right to choose union leaders. In practice, they often offer someone in their favour to be union leaders, but the right to choose candidates belongs to union members, as reviewed in Chapter 2. The underlying reasons why members often choose candidates offered by managers were not explored in their research.

The present research provides a persuasive explanation for why it is normal that union leadership has dual role in Vietnam. There appears to be two reasons: the traditional nature of Vietnamese trade unions; and the key characteristic of membership participation. The former is seen in the ideological foundation of trade unions in Vietnam. As discussed in Chapter 2, union members considered trade unions as a transmission belt between employees and management. Therefore, candidates offered by management might facilitate their functions easily with the managers' support. For the second reason, members are passive in union elections, with rare debate. They tend to choose who they were offered rather than to have a competitive union election within a factional system. This fact will be explained further in Chapter 7, in the section on Involvement of rank-and-file members in union decision-making.

In sum, the dual role of union leadership is a normal phenomenon in Vietnam. This is because of the tradition of communist trade unions and passivity of union members in union elections. The next section analyses the roles of union leader in terms of contributing to the membership's working and living conditions.

Attempts in improving employment conditions

The majority of union members commented that the primary trade union has contributed to an improvement of living and working conditions. Union members agreed that union leaders actively conducted daily union tasks, obviously contributing to the improvement of working and living conditions. For example, a union member commented:

When we ask for new scale of payment with new products, they always give our demand to the managers. The managers ask the HR department to accompany with the union representative to measure the new payment. (RF2-SE)

Another respondent made it clearer:

When workers require increase wages for specific product, we suggest to the managers and ask them to increase. They often ask the Human Resource department to investigate the case with us. We will come to an agreement which satisfies both sides. (RF1-SE)

Union leaders showed that they also were on the side of employees. For instance, they were helpful when members needed assistance. A rank-and-file member confirmed:

We often find the union leader to ask for consultation. For example, we asked why we did not receive wages on time and the extra payment was so late. We know, he (the union leader) could not directly help us but he could directly give

our comments to the HR department. He might ask for the reply as soon as possible. Then, we often get explanation from management. (RF1-RE)

Interestingly, the union leader might help to resolve individual issues of membership, such as mediating family conflicts. An ordinary member told his story:

When we suffer from difficult circumstances, we come to see union leader. For example, last month, I have an issue with my wife who also works at this company. I came to see the union leader and ask for her consultation. I felt disappointed with my wife. I thought my marriage seemed to be terrible. She listened to me and had a private meeting with my wife. Then, she explained that we misunderstood each other. Her advice was helpfulness. We really appreciated her help. (RF2-EN)

This focus on providing membership consultancy can be seen in other cases. A union leader listed another type of consultation that was given:

Union members often asked why they were appointed in an inappropriate position. They were not healthy enough to do the job. They would like to be set up in another position. I listened to them and investigated the cases. Then I advised them how to get their demands. Generally, they were happy with my assistance. (UL-EN)

In some circumstances, the union leaders help membership by calling for a charity to assist members who suffer from a severe situation such as fatal illness. A rank-and-file member in DPE-Footwear company stated:

Knowing members' difficulty, he (union leader) often called for contribution to the union budget to assist other members who are poverty stricken or have

severe sickness, asking for the improvement of safety working and so on. (RF1-FO)

The union leader explained the underlying reason of his actions, that one of the roles of unions and union leaders is to look after individual members' lives, and that they did this because they considered their membership as being like their family members. This moral obligation seems strange to the view of unions found in the Western literature, in which union leaders run the union's affairs according to an economic calculus (Poole 1981). Similarly, Edelstein and Warner (1979) suggest that the goals of union leaders and rank-and-file members are significantly different. Hence, traditionally, in the West, union leadership saw themselves as sellers of services to members.

These findings indicate that taking care of the personal lives of union membership is a traditional service provided by Vietnamese trade unions. Interestingly, Kuruvilla et al. (2002) find that one of the efforts of Asian unions is to be more relevant in their members' personal lives in order to retain member commitment. According to Kuruvilla et al. (2002), in Singapore, unions have for a long time focussed on welfare benefits for members, such as lower-priced textbooks for members, union-owned co-operative stores, or working with the employers to improve health insurance. In Japan, unions help members for marriage, births, housing, health management and retirement. However, Kuruvilla et al. (2002) claim that these richer unions appear to have made more headway than poorer unions. Although Vietnamese trade unions might not be rich unions, nevertheless these unions always pay attention to members' personal lives.

The crucial role of union leadership

The analysis of the previous section presented that union members have considered trade unions as organisations providing benefits. In practice, union leaders' daily jobs are a part of the operation. This section evaluates the role of union leaders in conducting

union tasks and pursuing better performance of the trade unions from the perspectives of rank-and-file members, the part-time union leaders at workplace level, and full-time union officials at provincial and district levels.

Firstly, the critical role of union leaders is affirmed in the present research, according to the membership's perspective. Trade union leaders appear to be change agents, who play a key role in guiding the development and future directions and strategies of trade unions. In spite of referring to membership participation, the respondents took into account the crucial role of trade union leadership. They explicitly accepted that union leadership is generally considered as the main force for union change:

Members' participation obviously contributes to the union reform but the main factor is union leadership as they have power to mobilise and encourage union members to change the trade union. (RF1-CO)

Regarding the role of union leadership in planning and conduction union tasks, a rank-and-file member in FOE-Retailer stated:

I think the role of trade union leadership is very important. They will decide plans and what we need to do and so on. Normally, we will follow them. (RF2-RE)

A rank-and-file member explicitly appreciated good leadership in the organisation:

The role of the union leadership is very important for trade union operation. It is true that if the organisation does not have good leadership, the organisation will not operate and survive. Good leaders may lead the movement and mobilise members to follow them. Union leaders need to show that they are qualified to their positions...

The role of members' participation in the union decision-making process is also important but as I mentioned previously, they tend to follow their leaders... (RF1-CO)

A rank-and-file member reaffirmed the role of union leaders:

The capacity of trade union leader is a crucial factor. Union members can express their demand but the union leaders will make the change happen. They have to show themselves as qualified leaders to mobilise union members. Then, we voluntarily follow their directions. (RF2-SE)

It is obvious that good union leadership results in the membership following. They will follow the leaders if the leaders show that they have the quality to make good decisions.

Secondly, the present study also investigated the role of union leaders at primary trade union level by asking them about how they deal with union issues. The majority of respondents who are union leaders expressed their willingness and enthusiasm to overcome current union issues. They rarely show their reluctance to do union tasks, irrespective of management attitudes. A union chairman stated:

I am a worker and a union chairman as well. I always pay attention to union issues to resolve them. I joined the training programme, applied good models from other primary unions and so on. Yet the most difficulty in doing union tasks is management attitude. If the managers create the favourable condition for the union, we will do our duties well. Otherwise, I cannot do anything for the union. (UL-RE)

The above findings show that union leaders have attempted to change to better performance. Although they have put their efforts in improving union operation, their attempts were restricted by hostile attitudes of management. This finding appears to

reject the assumption of Pringle and Clarke (2010), who claim that trade union leaders in Vietnam do not prefer changing the current situation because they have enjoined their privileged position in the political system. Their argument came from the analysis of positions of full-time union leaders who worked in the union office. Pringle and Clarke's (2010) research might not interview part-time union leaders who are employees as well as union leaders at the workplace level. The part-time union leaders who were participants in the present research were willing to improve union operations at grassroots level.

Thirdly, from the perspectives of full-time officials working in the union office at district and provincial levels (this kind of union official is likely to be that found in Seidman's (1958) classical typology), the union leaders at primary trade unions have played a crucial role in conducting the daily work of the trade unions. The Vice President of the Labour Federation in Ca Mau province emphasised:

The union leaders are very important because they will decide what necessities for union operation. Membership participation is also important to the union but they tend to follow their leaders. It is necessary to train union leaders how they gain capacities to mobilise members and convince them to join union activities.

(Interview in 5 September 2015)

In practice, the part-time union leaders at workplace level have responsibility for the existence of the primary trade unions. Membership mobilisation fully relies on the ability to convince union members of the union leaders. The full-time union officials admitted that they just train and guide the union leaders at workplace level to conduct their union daily jobs and deal with management, in accordance with labour regulations and the VGCL's directives. This means that the full-time union officials cannot touch the daily jobs of the primary trade unions.

The findings of the crucial role of union leaders are in line with the analysis of evaluation of union leadership performance in advanced industrial economies. Looking at the contexts of industrialised countries, the crucial role of union leaders is obvious in Voss and Sherman's (2000) research on the US local union revitalisation. They admitted that leaders in many cases decided strategies of trade unions. In the context of the UK, Fiorito (2004) found that leadership contributed to union revitalisation strategies, as well as being an obstacle constraining union change. Irrespective of motivation or obstacles for union revitalisation, union leadership is crucial to trade unions (Hickey et al. 2010). The finding is also enforced by Hickey et al.'s (2010) research. Analysing thirty-two cases of successful union renewal, they concluded that member activism is not a critical factor attributed for successful union renewal, and that the combination of grassroots- and leadership-driven strategies may be critical for success in some specific contexts.

Nevertheless, for Vietnam, academics have been sceptical about the union leadership role, with the argument that union leadership is more likely to constrain union revitalisation (Do 2013; Manning 2010; Pringle & Clarke 2010). For example, Manning (2010) argues that union leadership is one problem because they tend to exclude rank-and-file members with their role of human resource or personnel staff of enterprises. They tend to be sympathetic to management rather than to employees, so they reject any efforts to improve union operation. In addition, Do (2013) shares similar arguments, that trade union leadership in Vietnam does not want to improve the current union operation because they have got several advantages from the party-state's support. Union leaders fear that change may cause them to lose those advantages. However, their argument relied upon their analysis of wildcat strikes in Vietnam. Thus, this might be an inappropriate conclusion without examining membership and leadership perspectives.

It is undeniable that the part-time union leaders are not completely independent from the management, but their efforts in overcoming obstacles and improving union performance should be recognised. All four fulltime union officials who were interviewed commonly shared a similar idea related to the issue of part-time union leaders. A typical response that appreciated the efforts of part-time union leaders came from the Vice President of the Labour Federation at district level in Ho Chi Minh City:

Functioning at the primary trade union is never an easy task. They have to deal with various obstacles such as hostile management, membership doubt, and lack of finance...We really respect what they did...We have tried to lobby for safeguarding against union victimisation...Irrespective of obstacles, they are still doing their tasks. (Interview in 20 September 2015)

The above response indicates that the union leaders at the primary level have to struggle by themselves in conducting union tasks. There is still a lack of real support from the full-time union officials, although the fulltime officials seem to be powerful within the system of trade unions in Vietnam. The lobby campaigns for protecting union leaders at the primary trade unions are far from obtaining success. This finding implies that, before reaching a full protection for union activists at workplace level by the legislation, the part-time union leaders should seek appropriate approaches for self-protection.

Membership's scepticism about roles of union leaders

It is not all respondents who believe in union leadership. Some interviewees did not trust union leaders at the enterprise level because they believed the union leader was dependent on management. In the case of DPE-Textile, a rank-and-file member expressed his thought:

I often get the explanation from the union leader. It seems to me that the union leader says the voice of management not of us... (RF2-TE)

Some rank-and-file members said that the union leaders' performance was acceptable for organising social activities but was not good in terms of protecting and representing members. Membership also suspect that the relationship with management makes union leaders look like management's rather than membership's defenders. One respondent expressed this view as follows:

I think the union leader is good at organising union activities, visiting sickness members and something like that. But in terms of protecting members, I mean the struggle against management; they are lacking confidence and independence.
(RF1-TE)

The above interviewee clearly declared that, except for proving welfare benefits, the union leader at his firm could not protect membership. This is because union leadership is not quite autonomous, according to the tradition of communist trade unions. Consequently, although union membership trusts union leadership in some respects, the close relationship of union leadership with management makes membership think that the leaders do not effectively protect them. This finding is consistent with those of Do and Broek (2013) and Cox (2015), who investigated informal wildcat strikes in Vietnam. Do and Broek (2013) found that union leaders at enterprises were not able to represent workers in negotiations with employers because they were also employees who were paid by the employers. Consequently, the union members become so disappointed with the union leaders that the memberships decide to bypass their own enterprise union leaders. Similarly, Cox (2015) revealed that there was a lack of trust and confidence by workers in the trade union leaders at the workplace level. Some union leaders were unwilling to voice the concerns of workers because of fearing that it might negatively affect their jobs. From the above evidence, the present research suggests that the trade unions should seek approaches to prove that the dependence on

management has not negatively affected union operation. The next section will present evidence of union operation within enterprises.

Union operation at the workplace level

This section presents the findings for the analysis of tactics of union operation at the workplace level and the way in which these tactics are formulated and implemented (Gahan 1998). In the context of Vietnam, the findings indicate that tactics of union operation at workplace levels directly emerge from reactions of union leaders at primary level due to their daily tasks rather than from the guidelines of the VGCL. Therefore, instead of separately analysing levels of tactics, this section presents tactics of union operation with the assumption that the tactics are formulated and implemented by union leaders at workplace level, including seeking management's support, focussing on membership recruitment, and avoiding direct confrontation with management.

Seeking supports from management and upper union organisations

The results of this research indicated that union leaders tend to seek support from management to resolve the lack of financial resources. The low level of membership contributions has long been a concern of union leaders. This is crucial to increasing the union budget. The limitation of union budget makes it difficult for the primary trade union to organise a wide range of activities, events and support for union members. Many union leaders complained that the union budget was not enough for union operation. A union leader referred to the financial issue:

The union budget comes from the 1% amount of money extracted from minimum wage of union members and 2 % of employing organisation's contribution monthly. Yet it is not enough. The primary trade unions need more than that. (UL-PR)

Another union leader explained:

Actually, we just receive 60% of union fees from union membership and employer's contribution. We deposit the rest to the district union. In case there are more sick members or activities and events occurred in a month, we (the trade union) do not have enough money to afford those events. We often call support from the organisational management. (UL-DI)

The limited budget constrains the primary trade union from arranging a wide range of activities. The union chairman of a state agency detailed the amount of money spent for a typical union event and how he found the solutions. He said:

Last month, we help an event for all children of union members in the Moon Holiday of Vietnamese. In the event, we provided Moon Cakes, candies, Moon Lights and so on. In addition, each child received a small gift. We have nearly 100 children and the event costed over ten millions Vietnamese Dong (VND). You know that we just get nearly three millions VND from membership fees monthly. Therefore, we had to call sponsors to support this event. It is just a typical event, while we have to organise many events annually. (UL-WA)

The primary unions have attempted to find suitable approaches to overcome the financial issue, yet the solution presented is ambiguous. When they were asked whether the union fee is appropriate they responded that it was a suitable contribution. Thus, in order to increase union budget without getting more from membership contributions, some recommended that:

The primary trade union should have its own business such as canteen service, bike keeping service and so on. Its own business may help the primary trade union increasing the budget. (UL-WA)

In a different point from the above view, some interviewees suggested that the trade union should call support from the union branch of district level or from the local authority. They claimed that:

As the trade union is a part of the political system, and the trade union supports the political purposes so the government should give financial support for the trade union. (RF2-SE)

So far, apart from calling for support from management and union branches of district level, the primary unions appear to have no possible solution for increasing the union budget. This finding is also evident in Cox's (2015) research, which found that any increase in union fees might lead to a decrease in union membership because memberships are not willing to reduce their already low income. Thus, to recruit more membership, the trade unions should not increase union dues. However, success in membership recruitment might improve the financial condition of primary trade unions as more members will contribute more union dues. The following section will present on membership recruitment conducted by primary trade unions at the workplace level.

Focussing on tactics of membership recruitment

Chapter 2 mentioned the membership recruitment that is a prior task of trade unions in Vietnam. The task is supported by favourable conditions. The supportive conditions show that workers have the right to voluntarily join a trade union. For example, when a minimum of five workers in an enterprise agree to become union members, they can organise a grassroots trade union and get approval from the confederation of labour at district level to run a primary trade union within the firm (VGCL 2013a). In addition, the legislation also provides a framework of responsibility of employers towards a trade union in their enterprises. The Labour Code has also provided when a trade union is

established in compliance with the Law on Trade Unions and the Charter of VGCL, the employer has to recognize that organization. Employers have to closely cooperate and create favourable conditions for trade union operation, following rules in the Labour Code and the Law on Trade Unions. Employers are not allowed to discriminate against workers because of their involvement in organizing, joining and conducting trade union activities, nor use any economic measures and other tactics to intervene into trade union organization and activities (Socialist Republic of Vietnam 2012a).

The above favourable provisions create more advantages for conducting the membership recruitment task because it can be done by way of recruiting members and organizing a union in an enterprise without any agreement from the employer. In addition, the VGCL lists the specific items to guide primary trade unions at the workplace level in order to successfully conduct the task:

- Seeking active content to suit each type of trade union; identifying key tasks for priority implementation; strengthening activities to protect the rights and legitimate interests, the legitimacy of the workers, as a basis for persuading workers who are not union members to join unions.
- Supporting the holding of trade union activities with propaganda to raise awareness of the role of the employee, and the position of trade unions; actively participating in building harmonious labour relations, stability, progress; helping to build a strong trade union.
- Listening to the opinions and aspirations of members to soon resolve the problems arising; timely reports, reflecting the superior trade union of pressing issues, difficult-to-handle labour relations to have the support solution. (VGCL 2013b)

The union officials at district and provincial levels follow the guidance of the VGCL to build appropriate strategies for improving the primary union's operation and union services. They have arranged courses for training union chairmen at grassroots level quarterly. The notes from observation of some training courses reveal that the training programmes provided the union chairmen skills in negotiation and mobilising members, ability to protect rights and legitimate interests of legal workers, capacity to build the member recruitment scheme, and financial administration of union budget.

Actually, a union leader at DPE-Footwear described his approach to introduce, propagate and recruit new membership in his firm. Firstly, he would write a letter of introduction to the management to inform about the plans of the primary trade union. The plans often include scheduled meetings with employees and contents of the meetings. After obtaining the approval from the management, he would arrange a meeting. Secondly, at the meetings he would explain to employees who have not joined trade unions the benefits of the union membership. After discussion, he and his team leave behind application forms. Potential membership should fill up the form and submit to the union leader. If possible, he would make follow up meetings within two or three weeks, by which time he would hope to have a number of completed forms. Finally, he would consider each form and inform of results with acceptance or rejection to each applicant.

By contrast, a union leader at a state agency presented his simpler method of membership recruitment. He detailed:

As you have known, every state agency has a primary trade union within it. Once a newcomer prepares to sign a labour contract, we often attach an application form to become union member. Of course, the employee has the

right to reject to apply, but in almost all cases, they fill up the application form and become a union member. (UL-PR)

There is a difference in method of membership recruitment between the above two cases, because whilst management in state agencies always supports unions, some managers in enterprises do not favour union operation, as was previously explored. Therefore, the union leader needed some indirect tactics to recruit potential membership. After getting management recognition, the trade union also needed to prove that it is a helpful and attractive organisation for employees.

Some union chairmen suggested effective methods to recruit potential union members, such as conducting surveys to identify enterprises as priority for organizing a union, meeting with enterprises' owners or managers on organising a union at enterprises, or delivering application forms for potential members. An effective approach for persuading potential membership about benefits of becoming union members is that the trade union should provide an attractive range of advisory and advocacy services for existing as well as potential members, because they commonly expect that they would get more benefits as union members. A concerned rank-and-file member stated:

I have to contribute a part of my wage to the union, so I would like to get back some benefits such as being supported in difficult situations, unemployment, legal assistance and so on ... This trade union should provide more services and do it more effectively, which would attract more members. (RF2-RE)

The membership recruitment task of Vietnamese trade unions appears to be similar to the task of trade union revitalisation worldwide. Trade unions in advanced industrial countries have tried to stop the decrease trend in membership, as well as to organise the unorganised (discussed in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4). The Western trade unions have

tried to recruit new membership as well as to restrain membership leaving the trade unions (Lévesque & Murray 2006; Turner 2004; Waddington 2006).

Vietnamese trade unions have been in efforts to recruit a plenty of employees in the private sector, those have not known about or yet joined a labour organisation. This makes a fruitful environment for the trade unions to recruit more members. Previous studies and the present research did not found any signal of leaving union members in Vietnam. Therefore, it is clear that Vietnamese trade unions have tried to boost membership as several employees are unorganised. The primary trade unions have been conducting the membership recruitment task among a variety of management attitudes towards the trade unions, including neutrality, support, and hostility. This suggests that the part-time union leaders have to deploy appropriate tactics. The following section analyses how the primary trade unions deal with management in conducting their union tasks.

Negotiation and avoidance of a direct confrontation with management

Union leaders in primary trade unions have specific tactics for approaching management. The current union leader at SOE-Energy expressed his experience of trying to avoid direct conflicts with managers. He explained how to do this:

If the employers pay lower than the signed labour contracts I come to see the HR department and ask for their explanations. I often ask them to follow the contracts accordingly. Then, I inform the explanations to members. If employees desire to increase wages or welfare benefits and so forth which are not in the signed contracts, I note their demand and send an official document to the HR. In any circumstance, I also inform my action to the members. (UL-EN)

The approach of union leaders at the very first situation, normally, inclines towards sending requests and looking for manager's responses. They have not directly made the situation more intense.

The union leaders commonly shared the idea of having a cooperative relationship with management rather than adversarial relationship. For example, the workers in those enterprises often are under pressure of working overtime, with late payment. Especially at the year end the company had to finish many contracts. The managers required workers to work long hours. Some workers could not work, so they reacted negatively to the long working hours. To protect members, the primary trade union tried to claim these issues to management, as well as explained to employees that the trade union would persuade managers to pay wages on time. They also suggested to management about appropriate working schedules for workers who were not able to work overtime. These approaches indicated that union leaders at workplace preferred cooperative relationship with management.

When asked if they often call strikes or other industrial actions to protest against management, the majority of union leaders answered that calling for a strike is always the last choice after other approaches have failed. One respondent in an energy company explained:

The industrial actions such as strikes cause severe troubles for both management and us. We always seek negotiable solutions by constantly sending reasonable requests to the management. We never behave like strikes first, and then negotiate with them although they always are the first party violating labour regulations. When the best option, second best and so on... for us and the management cannot be reached we have no choice. We need a stronger approach such as a strike. (UL-EN)

The above response indicates a fact that attending strikes is not the union leadership's priority and is their final option only when other approaches do not succeed. Due to the failure of negotiation, the union leaders have the right to call for a legal strike. However, it is common that trade union leaders have regularly confronted illegal and unfair treatment of management. In consequence, they prefer peaceful approaches to militant approaches. These peaceful approaches result from the traditional thought of communist trade unions, as in Herod's (1998) words:

...they were usually denied the ability to use the one weapon which unions have traditionally used to defend workers' interests - the strike - because to do so would disrupt production at plants that were now the 'people's' and would thereby be counter-revolutionary. (Herod 1998, p. 200)

In fact, although since Doi Moi the plants have not only belonged to the state as SOEs but also private ownership such as DPEs and FOEs, the trade union leaders have not preferred strikes and they have still considered strikes or other industrial actions as final options.

Suggesting for union leaders to avoid difficulties in conducting union tasks, a respondent referred to more autonomy of union leaders in order to deal with management effectively. The union leader in DPE-Textile emphasised:

The union leader needs to operate independently. It is difficult for us to fight against employers while we have been employed by the employers. (UL-TE)

As discussed in Chapter 4, Kuruvilla et al. (2002) supposes that increasing autonomy of unions is one of the crucial strategies of Asian trade unions, as they heavily rely on management and state. This dependence of trade unions makes it difficult for them to

operate. It can be seen that autonomy is also an issue of trade unions in Vietnam, but it has a different feature, as in the following explanation of a union leader. He stressed:

To be honest, I also wonder about my employment security. We know the employers hired and paid for us. I have relied on the labour regulations to conduct union tasks. Traditionally, Vietnamese trade unions did not completely detach from the management. The detachment might happen with the change of ideology which has underpinned the foundation of the union system... I hope the union members understand and trust me. (UL-FO)

The above response shows the fact that the dependence on management is rooted in trade union ideology. Hence, if there is any suggestion for much more union autonomy, it is inevitable to consider a change in ideology. However, it is currently far to reach that point within the current ideology in Vietnam. Instead of seeking for unreachable solutions in the short term, the current trade union leaders at the workplace level utilise what they already possess in order to meet the membership needs as well as to protect them. In so doing, the union leaders often deal with management by negotiating and avoiding intensive conflicts with management. They conduct their tasks with the hope that the managers consider and improve salaries according to the union's suggestions and labour regulations. The union leaders could not fight against employers when they have been working at the company, and they have little autonomy due to their traditional dependence on management.

Answering the question of how individual primary trade unions at workplace level have responded to offensive management, the present research has pointed out that the primary trade unions have tended to avoid direct conflict with management. This is because the union members have realised that, traditionally, Vietnamese trade unions have had a close relationship with the management. This relationship is reflected in the

dual role of union leaders. In the state agencies and in SOEs, the union leader also belongs to the department of human resource management. This dual role has facilitated the daily tasks of the union leaders. However, offensive management appeared in some FOEs and DPEs, which causes the primary trade unions to operate with difficulty. The management has used fear tactics and discrimination against union leadership. The union leaders have striven to represent and protect membership as well as safeguard their employment by negotiation with management.

Conclusion

This chapter answered the sub-research question relative to union responses at the workplace level. The primary trade unions responded by seeking employers' support as well as negotiation and avoidance of direct confrontation with management. The findings show that union members realise the role of trade unions as being to protect membership rights and interests as well as to ensure the benefits of the management. They have also accepted the close relationship between trade unions and the management, because this relationship is rooted in the characteristics of communist trade unions. Union members have expected the primary trade unions to improve living and working conditions. In terms of their performance, the union leadership has had various evaluations. The majority of ordinary members appreciate, recognise and trust their union leaders. In contrast, there have been some members who do not trust union leadership because the leaders have the close relationship with management, and they thought the union leaders were not autonomous in conducting union tasks.

Fulfilling membership expectations such as the improvement of wages, working conditions and membership recruitment, are always the priorities of trade unions, but union operation was strongly influenced by management attitudes. In the case where the

management made favourable conditions for trade union operation or the employer was not anti-unionist, the trade unions were able to fulfil their tasks. The favourable conditions for trade unions can be seen in all state agencies and SOEs. However, in other types of enterprise ownership, the primary trade unions have faced hostile management, and in consequence, the trade unions have had difficulty in functioning. To overcome management opposition, union leaders at workplace level have preferred to avoid direct confrontation.

The reviewed literature in Chapter 4 suggests that the responses and strategies of trade unions rely not only on leadership but also on membership participation, which links to the concept of union democracy. The next chapter will examine the status of union democracy in relation to strategies of union revitalisation.

CHAPTER 7

TRADE UNION DEMOCRACY IN THE VIETNAMESE CONTEXT

...democracy is achieved if the members can make their will felt, if they can replace the leaders and change the policies that they dislike. Their ability to do this, however, is diminished by the low level of membership participation...

Seidman (1958, p. 36)

Leadership is the ability to influence a group towards the achievement of pre-defined goals. It is the activity of influencing people, motivating them to strive willingly to achieve group objectives. The leaders may coordinate, control, direct, guide or mobilise the efforts of others.

Sarker (1996, p. 517)

Introduction

This chapter presents findings on the status of union democracy, and responds to the sub-research question of to what extent union leadership and union democracy contribute to the strategy of trade union revitalisation in Vietnam. The indicators for analysing union democracy were reviewed in Chapter 4: decentralisation, equality, free communication, and existence of opposition or factionalism. This chapter explores the findings that opposition or factionalism has not appeared in union democracy. The other three indicators, decentralisation, equality and free communication, have been evident. This chapter presents the argument that, although opposition has not appeared, ordinary members have behaved as if there has been opposition.

Before analysing union democracy, this chapter explores the varieties of activity organised by the primary trade unions, and the extent to which the rank-and-file members are involved in those activities. Then, the chapter analyses the four indicators

of union democracy in turn. Finally, it synthesises the findings to unfold the status of union democracy in Vietnam.

Variety of union activity and membership participation

Varieties of union activity and membership participation in union activities indicate members' attitudes towards trade unions. Chapter 3 reviewed the features of union members' attitudes towards their unions in order to determine whether a particular trade union has a servicing or organising model with regard to the union-member relationship (Bacharach et al. 2001). The knowledge of union models helps in clarifying the characteristics of union leadership and members, which relates to sources of change in trade unions (Heery 2005). In the servicing union, the union appeals to support and deliver benefits for its members. Union leaders are active and act as service providers. Union members are passive and rely on union staff. The members have responsibility for paying union dues, and joining union activities. In the organising model, the ordinary members are proactive and resolve their issues by themselves rather than rely on union staff (Snape et al. 2000). This model encourages an increase in union democracy. Hence, the source of change results from the active members (Turberville 2004).

In this research, two main groups of union activity were explored. The first group were social activities or social welfare provided by the primary trade unions, such as musical or sporting events, advisory services, and financial services. The second group was crucial activities that relate to the extent of membership involvement in union decision-making processes, such as meetings for discussion about a new system of salary, working safety, and social insurance.

With regard to the first group, the grassroots trade unions organise a wide range of activities, and provide services such as advisory services, financial services, legal services, direct representation and advice, vacation vouchers for travelling, mutual aid, and training schemes. As one interviewee put it:

The trade union often organises social activities, visiting union members or their family members who suffer from difficult situations and give gifts to female employees on March 8 [International Women's Day], gifts in Tet holiday [traditional new year holiday] and so on. I always attend those activities because attending the events is one of my duties. (RF2-CO)

Another respondent added:

The trade union will provide mutual aid for its members. Members getting sick, giving birth or severe circumstances will get support from the trade union. The trade union sometime organises social and cultural events which attract member's participation. Those events are good for members to refresh after work. (RF1-WA)

It can be seen that the above interviewees shared a common agreement that their trade unions often arrange social events, and home visiting to members' families who have difficulty in life. These findings are not new, on the daily work of Vietnamese trade unions, but it is quite different from trade unions in other countries. Chapter 4 reviewed Kuruvilla et al.'s (2002) work on strategies of trade union revitalisation in Asian countries, and explored that Asian trade unions have attempted to focus on members' personal lives, such as in health insurance, help for marriages, births and retirement, in order to retain member commitment. The authors claim that those efforts are obviously seen in rich unions such as Japan and Singapore, but that they rarely happen in poorer

unions. It is hard to consider Vietnamese trade unions as rich trade unions, but interestingly, these trade unions have a long tradition of focusing on members' personal lives, and this tradition appears to be continuing. In Vietnam, taking into account members' personal lives is not because of rich or poor unions but is because of the traditional functions of the communist trade union model. This finding is consistent with the research findings of Clarke et al. (2007), which explored that more than half of the budget of the trade unions in the enterprises were used for personal workers' lives, such as weddings, funerals, sport events, and organising entertainment events for workers. They also explored that these activities helped attract more potential members. Pringle and Clarke (2010) compared trade unions in Russia, China, and Vietnam, reconfirming that these trade unions have the main role of providing housing, social and welfare benefits, and material assistance. It is undeniable that taking care of members' personal lives has been the tradition of Vietnamese trade unions.

The interviewees who were asked why they participated in union activities replied in different ways. Those in the state agencies attended union activities or events because such events seemed to be aligned with duty to the CPV; but the reason to attend union activities for those in the enterprises was to get benefits. A respondent in a state agency stated:

I have responsibility to the union, that means I have obligations as a CPV's membership.... I have never thought why I have responsibility to the trade union as I have taken it for granted. (RF1-PR)

The union members' obligation to the CPV appeared with their answers relative to the question of whether they would be willing to take a leadership position. The union members emphasised that, although they were not confident of being qualified enough to perform as union leaders, they would take a union leadership position if they were

asked by the CPV. This response is understandable, because almost all union members in all state agencies are CPV members. They have played three roles in their employment organisations. The first role is as an employee working at the state agency. The second role is union member. The third role is CPV member. Thus, they have to fulfil their duties within the organisation to which they belong.

This is a new finding in respect of research on the primary trade unions in state agencies, because of the lack of research on state agencies in Vietnam, as mentioned in Chapter 2. This finding suggests that there are many union members in state agencies who are loyal to the CPV, and accept the current trade union model. Therefore, any change of the trade unions relative to shifting the current trade unions to a capitalist trade union model would face this obstacle.

In contrast, in enterprises, the respondents only attended activities from which they expected to get benefits, or those activities that were helpful and meaningful such as visiting sick members or musical and sporting events. One respondent in DPE-Footwear stated:

I have often participated in union activities and events voluntarily. Those activities are helpful and encourage me to work more productivity. (RF2-FO)

The rank-and-file member of the trade union in FOE-Retailer made the same observation, but more clearly:

Because we see the primary trade union often organises helpful activities and events, we proactively attend in those and get many benefits from them. We can organise and join the activities and events enthusiastically. We want the trade union to organise more recreational activities for us. (RF1-RE)

Differently, a respondent only joined some interesting events, due to the lack of time:

We actually do not have much time to attend all of union events and activities. We only participate in helpful events and activities. The trade union needs to organise more interesting events and activities to attract member participation. (RF2-EN)

The above responses indicate the necessity for organising helpful activities that attract the membership's attention. This finding suggests that, if the trade unions are in pursuit of retaining current members and recruiting more members, they should proactively organise more activities bringing benefits to the membership, because getting more benefits is one of the membership's expectations from the primary trade union. This finding also indicates that the members have not actively organised union events or activities by themselves. They have expected the trade union to do it for them. This clearly reflects the main feature of the servicing model, in which the trade union is a service provider. Generally, this finding suggests that, for survival, the trade unions have to enhance their strength by their own efforts, by delivering more and more benefits to rank-and-file members.

One of the powerful weapons of employees is to strike (Crouch 1982). However, when asked if they joined in any protest against management such as strikes, some participants declined to answer. Fortunately, explaining the way in which employees react to managers who breach the labour regulations, one respondent in the FOE-Retailer stated:

Joining the strike is the last solution to resolve the conflicts as we just want a job and to be treated fairly and respectfully. However, if the managers do not treat us fairly or they abuse us, and we have raised that issue to the trade union and state agency of labour, and the management does not listen and stop their violation, we

have to join strikes. We do not care [whether] the strike is legal or illegal. (RF2-RE)

The above response indicates that union members tend to attend strikes when they have suffered unfair treatment by management, and that it would be the final option. One might argue that the interviewees who rejected answering might have a willingness to strike but did not want to mention their real intention relative to becoming strikers. Strike action has been controversial, because previous studies investigated strikes, cause and effect of strikes, legal framework for strike and so forth, but there has been a lack of research on whether workers tend to prefer strikes over other solutions when they are aggrieved by management infringement of labour regulations (Clarke 2006; Cox 2015; Kerkvliet 2010; Nguyen 2006; Van Gramberg et al. 2013). The above responses provided an explanation for the attitude of union members towards strikes.

This finding, on joining strikes as a final option of the union members, is enforced by research on causes of strikes in Vietnam. Academics implicitly mention the reluctance of strikers to choose illegal strikes because they were not able to stand for terrible treatment of management (Clarke 2006; Cox 2015; Kerkvliet 2010; Nguyen 2006; Van Gramberg et al. 2013). Clarke (2006) investigated the change in strikes in Vietnam since Doi Moi, and points out that the cause of the vast majority of strikes in Vietnam is breaches of labour regulations by the employers. When aggrieved workers were waiting for possible solutions or outcomes of negotiation processes between the trade unions and management, some informal activists spontaneously triggered wildcat strikes. Kerkvliet (2010) describes the process of a wildcat strike, which did not show the strikers to be openly and widely organised, as follows:

Without knowing the full details, one can only speculate that strike preparations probably involve quiet meetings among initiators and within their circles of

fellow workers to discuss demands, timing, and tactics. Planning might also involve preparing leaflets to be passed hand-to-hand among employees just prior to the walkout and scrawling imperatives to action in graffiti on the walls of toilets within the enterprise. (Kerkvliet 2010, 179)

Together, the rejection of answering, the careless preparation of strikes, and spontaneous participation of strikers, suggest that striking or fighting against management is not an aim or priority of the wide union members. This can be concluded from the following remarkable response of a rank-and-file member in FOE-Retailer: 'We do not want to break our bowl of rice with strikes' (RF1-RE).

The membership's attitudes towards trade unions refers to the extent of connection between the members and the trade unions (Bacharach et al. 2001). To explore that connection, the present study investigated the aspect of membership commitment to unions. Membership commitment is reflected through: loyalty to union or retaining union membership; encouraging friends to join unions; spending time and taking risks in assisting other members; and taking leadership positions in unions.

For loyalty to the trade union, all respondents replied that they wanted to retain their union membership because they still realise the trade unions are helpful organisations.

An ordinary member of the union in SOE-Energy stated:

I do not intend to leave the union as I think the union is a helpful organisation. It has taken care of my personal life. Despite it has not completely supported employees...of course; there is no organisation which completely gives you what you want...I certainly remain my union membership. (RF1-EN)

This finding is new, in the context of Vietnam, as there has been little research to explore whether the current union membership might want to leave the trade union.

This finding is different from Waddington's (2006) research result, which points out that union members in the UK left the union because of dissatisfaction with their union. Waddington (2006) explored that the members left trade unions for three main reasons: (1) little was done to improve pay and conditions; (2) union representative's poor communication; and (3) getting little support from the trade union. In the present research, the respondents did not signal for a wish to leave the trade union. This implies that the trade union should continue concentrating on taking care of improving working conditions and members' lives.

With regard to encouraging friends or relatives to join the union, the interviewees were willing to introduce and encourage their friends or relatives to join the trade union. The rank-and-file members in SA-Ward expressed this as follows:

When you are employees, you need an organisation to represent and protect you if you get trouble with employers...Now I see the trade union is that organisation, so I will tell my friends and relatives to become union members.
(RF2-WA)

This is a new finding, because there has been little research investigating this aspect of membership. Previous studies did not focus on individual relationships between members and the trade union, because they often investigated what the union did for membership and evaluated the union contribution in representing and protecting membership (Clarke et al. 2007; Lan 2007; Nguyen 2009a), or they investigated, inadequately, the union members' attitudes from the manager's perspective. For example, Do and Broek (2013) discovered that the reason for why the employees in a Japanese firm did not want to join the primary trade unions was that the employees did not want to pay union fees 'without receiving any benefits from the union' (Do & Broek 2013, p. 791). This might be inadequate, because that response was from the Japanese

managers not from the employees. Therefore, their finding might be more persuasive if the responses are from the employees. By contrast, the present research explored the attitudes of those who have been union members, and they reconfirmed they have received benefits from the trade unions. This finding suggests that Vietnamese trade unionism has a favourable condition for organising many unorganised employees who want in particular to see benefits once they have become union members. This also opens the question of how the current trade unions can take that advantage to grow in Doi Moi. It means that Vietnamese trade unions should consider the aspect of providing actual benefits for union membership when seeking strategies for revitalisation.

In respect of spending time and taking risk in assisting other union members, these members reported that they have a responsibility for helping others as membership obligation:

Helping our colleagues is our duties. I help them as obligations of union membership. It is likely to solve union's issues. The trade union here is a collective organisation, so I do not care of taking risk in assisting others. (RF2-TR)

For taking leadership position, almost all of respondents were willing to take leadership positions in unions if they could be able to contribute to the union's operation. Significantly, some interviewees in companies replied that they would take a union leadership position if they would be able to run union operations independently. This means that they would take the union leadership position if they could be free from management interference; if not, they would not take a union leader position. A rank-and-file member in DPE-Footwear claimed:

Actually, I do not quite believe the union chairman, who has not been able to perform union tasks independently due to interference from the employer in this firm. I do not want to follow that way. (RF1-FO)

This finding is consistent with the previous finding relative to membership's scepticism about the dependence of the primary union on management in Chapter 6. It suggests that, in order to improve union operation, the trade union should take into account the concern of management interference.

This section analysed the first group of union activities and membership participation in those activities. There has been a slight difference in terms of reasons for involving with union activities, in state agencies and in enterprises. Apart from getting benefits, in the state agencies the union members, who are the CPV's members, participated in union activities by virtue of obligation to the CPV. By contrast, in enterprises the union members participated in the union activities because they have expectations that those activities would bring benefits to them, such as mutual aid, recreational activities, and other services. This finding shows one aspect of the servicing trade union model, in which the members are customers and the trade union is service provider. The analysis of this section also indicates that the current union membership continues to retain their membership status as they have considered the trade unions to be helpful and protective. These findings suggest that the current trade unions should continue focussing on providing more benefits to their members. However, this is only a feature of the first group of union activities. The second group, which relates more to union decision-making processes, will be analysed next in accordance with the indicators of union democracy.

Indicators of union democracy in Vietnam

The previous section analysed the first group of union activities and membership involvement in those activities. This section focusses on the second group, relating to the decision-making processes of the primary trade unions. Membership involvement in those processes reflects union democracy, which attributes to union strategies in revitalisation, as reviewed in Chapter 4. Thus, this section presents the key requirements of union democracy that help to determine the extent of the state of union democracy and its contribution to union operation at workplace level.

The literature review in Chapter 4 pointed out key indicators of union democracy, including involvement of rank-and-file members in union decision-making, equality of salary, status, skill and education between officials and members, free communication between union leaders and members, and the existence of legitimate and tolerated internal organised opposition. These indicators are analysed in turn.

Involvement of rank-and-file members in union decision-making

Union decision-making process refers to the extent of membership participation in making decisions in trade unions (Edelstein & Warner 1979; Lipset et al. 1956; Stepan-Norris 1997). The present study found that the union members directly participated in union elections and meetings, and that union decisions were made in accordance with the majority rule. The union members tended to participate in meetings in which they discussed and made decisions on proposals of new scales of salary, claims about unfair treatment of management, requests for more labour safety, and so forth. A rank-and-file member of SOE-Energy told about union elections:

We directly vote for the executive committee of this trade union. We can ourselves nominate us as candidates or those who we think they will do the best for us. The candidates are voted by ballot. Who get the highest proportion of

voters and over fifty percent of attendants will become a union leader at the primary trade union in this company. (RF2-EN)

This response is an exemplar of elections and organisational operation in communist society, because the rule of majority or totalitarianism has been a traditional approach (Von Beyme 1975). Von Beyme (1975) analysed democratic centralism in the Soviet Union, and emphasised that one of the guiding principles of democratic centralism is the subordination of the minority to the majority. This evidence resembles China also in addition to the Soviet example just discussed, where ‘the minority had no right to pursue its view once it had been outvoted’ (Von Beyme 1975, p. 265). Later, the principle of totalitarianism in the communist system was analysed by Pravda (1983) in research on trade unions in East European communist systems. Pravda (1983) argues that totalitarianism has been the backbone of the communist system. In a similar vein, the present finding explicitly shows that totalitarianism still strongly influences organisational operation in Vietnam.

In fact, the union members were not involved in all union decisions; instead, they joined the decision-making process that was directly relevant to their employment conditions. One ordinary member explained:

The issues related to wages and working conditions must be discussed because they have a very strong impact on our lives and employment. The solutions were approved by the majority of us. Then we want to make sure that the union leaders exactly gather and express what we want to the management. (RF2-FO)

However, they only indirectly were involved in other issues that were not relevant to their employment condition. The union members were likely to be informed of the outcome of a decision-making process rather than participate in the process, when the

issues did not refer to payments or employment conditions. They admitted that they just received information or outcomes of the union's decisions and followed directions after the executive committee of the primary union notified them. A typical response is:

Actually, we do not need to involve in all decisions of the primary trade union. The decisions such as what activities should be held in union events or how to arrange them do not need to discuss so much. We do not have time for any union decision. Instead, we spend time on discussing and choosing the best solutions relevant to our salary and employment conditions. (RF2-SE)

He explained more:

When I came to work, I heard about new information from the union and asked my colleagues. They said there was an important event held by the trade union in the coming holidays. We should think about the plans for attending that event. That meant I just received the information and decided to attend or not. I did not know about it in advance. I simply follow the crowd. (RF2-SE)

This finding raises the question of whether union leaders did not allow members to participate in the process. However, the union leader at the FOE-Construction explained that concern as follows:

To be honest, we want to hold meetings to collect all union members' ideas for union decision making. But as you have known, union members were so tired after working hours so they did not want to attend the meetings. Last year, we tried to hold some meetings but the number of attendance was lower than one-third. Now we just held the meetings on the occasion of elections or very important meetings relative to introduction of the new salary scales, unfair dismissal and so forth. For other decisions, we delivered documents and collected

them back for analysis, and then went to agreement among members of the union executive board. We sent the programmes to union members and encouraged them to participate in activities or events. (UL-CO)

This explanation clearly shows that leadership does not restrict membership participation, but that other conditions objectively restrict members' involvement in all the decisions, such as the working schedule not allowing them to fully participate in the process, or the members paying less attention to certain union issues. It can be seen that the leaders have to collect the membership's requests and find appropriate approaches to help the members. In other words, the union members have not resolved their issues by themselves; thus, otherwise, union leaders have to do that.

The fact that ordinary members concentrated on and attended to decision making processes relative to their employment conditions but neglected other decision making suggests an aspect of passive membership, which is dependence on leadership (Snape et al. 2000; Turberville 2004). Discovering this passive membership provides empirical knowledge for analysing the formulation of union strategy in revitalisation.

The passivity of membership also appeared in interviews in which the union members assumed that the leadership has the main responsibility for doing the best for membership. A rank-and-file member stressed:

Trade union leaders should seek how to effectively gather more union members' ideas to develop the union power. They have to consider members' suggestions or issues and resolve the issues for us. (RF2-TR)

In addition, the evidence from observing union meetings for recalculating wages in a foreign-invested enterprise indicates that union members depended greatly on the union executive board. The representative of the union executive board read all the prepared

documents aloud. Sometimes, he read slowly and asked for the members' attention. The union members showed their agreement by showing their hands. Someone calculated the number of hands and told the number to the chairman. The decision could be reached when there was at least fifty-one percent of agreement out of the total union members.

There are two assumptions appearing in that meeting. The first one is that the union members did not carefully prepare for the meetings and that, during the meeting, they attended but agreed with what the union leader prepared. They simply showed their hand for their acceptance. The second one is that the union leaders did their jobs well. They carefully prepared documents in relation to the new scale of salary, so that in the meeting there was no argument about the proposal. This proves that the union leaders effectively convinced the members.

The members also showed their passivity in union elections. The evidence from observing union meetings for union election showed how members voted for their representative. In principle, all union members have the right to introduce candidates for union election or self-nominate themselves to be a candidate. They voted freely by ballot, and abided by the result from the ballot. In the meeting, the list of candidates was introduced and the chairman asked for introduction of new candidates in order finalise the list. He also opened the discussion about concerned issues related to union operation. The prepared list was collated by the current union leaders of the enterprise. There was no new candidate introduced, as well as was no signal of opposition in the election. The attendants fully accepted the list of candidates. There was rarely debate in the meetings. Once the new union leaders were voted, the members asked them how to make sure about the successful future of this primary trade union. The meeting ended with the list of potential solutions presented by and promises of the new union leaders.

In addition, one result obtained from the above two observations proves the previous finding, which is that the final decision must belong to the majority. Significantly, a union chairman linked the concept of union democracy and the majority:

Union democracy means we made decisions in accordance with the majority. The minority has the rights to present their ideas but at the final stage, we will vote to obtain over fifty percent of agreement ...We considered it would be democracy because we always collect ideas from rank-and-file members. For example, when there are some new policies related to union members, we call for meetings. If the meeting could not be able to be arranged we will deliver documents to all union members and ask for their comments. (RF2-DI)

This section explored membership participation in a crucial group of union activities, which is making union decisions and voting in union elections. The results in this section indicate that the priority of members is to directly participate in union elections and in decisions that link to their employment conditions. All the union decisions have been made in accordance with the rule of majority. The results also point out that the members were passive in terms of involvement in union issues, because they tend to rely on the union leaders at workplace. Consequently, union leaders need to plan union activities, get membership agreement, notify members about what is going on, and wait and hope for membership participation.

This passive characteristic of the membership might result from the nature of communist trade unions, in which the members have expected to receive benefits from the primary trade unions. The literature review on the obligation of Vietnamese union membership in Chapter 2 observed that the obligation of the membership is paying union dues; in return, the members receive union benefits. The literature review on the

communist union model in Chapter 4 also theoretically reaffirmed the communist trade unions as organisations providing services to their members.

The passivity of members complements active leadership who have played a decisive role in providing services to the members. This raises the question of whether the union leaders take advantage over the rank-and-file members due to their union leadership position. To shed light on that concern, the following section examines the equality between union leadership and membership.

Equality of salary, status, skill and education between union leaders and members

As mentioned in Chapter 4, one of the aspects of democracy is the equality of salary, status, skill and education between union leaders and members. The full-time union officers might gain more advantage due to their position. For example, long time ago, Seidman (1958) described the features of trade union officers who normally dressed in business suits, working at a desk like any executive, and enjoying a larger income. In addition, the privileged status of union officers was illustrated: ‘No King is as safe in office as a trade union official’ (Shaw, cited in Edelstein and Warner (1979, p. xi)). It appears that several full-time union officers in advanced economies might enjoy their positions. However, in the context of Vietnam, the present research investigated the status of part-time union leaders at workplace level. The findings in this research point out that there is no evidence of inequality of salary, status, skill and education between union leaders and members.

Chapter 6 pointed out that the part-time union leaders at workplace level suffered discrimination and victimisation from management by their union activities. Moreover, this chapter finds that those union leaders did not get any advantage due to their union

leader position. For instance, when asked about whether union leaders got advantages or higher salary than ordinary members, a union member responded that:

No, no one gets benefits from the management due to their union position. I do not think the union leaders receive any support from managers individually. He looks like a worker here. All employees here are treated equally in accordance with the labour policies. (RF2-CO)

The above response indicates that the trade union leaders of the primary trade unions did not get higher salary or any private benefits. If the union leaders do not enjoy any advantage, it raises the question of whether they are well educated or skilled by virtue of their leadership status. In the US context, considering equality in education as a key requirement of union democracy in the US, Strauss (1991) explored that union leadership needed expertise because ordinary members were lacking the skills to deal with management. In the context of Vietnam, all union members and leaders in the primary trade unions have the same opportunities of education. They would be promoted or trained in advanced working skills according to the requirement of their jobs not because of their union membership status. In practice, the VGCL often organises several short courses for training union officials. The observation for the present research of the short course organised by the VGCL in Ca Mau province provided evidence of the contents of training programmes. These programmes were not relevant to working requirements in specific companies; instead, the contents of the programmes were general knowledge about communist ideology, roles and functions of Vietnamese trade unions, skills to organise workers, and how to deal with management.

These findings are different from other research that has indicated that the interests of union leaders and members are often opposed and that leaders of undemocratic unions will work to benefit themselves and further entrench their own authority (Clarke et al.

2007; Pringle & Clarke 2010; Tran 2007a). For example, Pringle and Clarke (2010) argue that the barrier to trade union reform in Vietnam is union leadership getting more interests from their current situation so that they do not want to change. The union leaders just enjoyed their offices, signing in documents, and other bureaucratic work (Pringle & Clarke 2010). Nevertheless, their argument might rely on their survey of full-time union officers and the status position of the VGCL in the political system of Vietnam. There is a lack of empirical evidence from part-time union leaders and rank-and-file members at workplace level. Hence, it is inadequate to assume that the union leaders at the primary level are less likely to change because they get more advantages than their membership.

While the union leaders did not get any advantage in the union, it is necessary to investigate the status of communication between leadership and membership, because the literature review indicated that communication of trade unions also reflects the status of union democracy. Hence, the next section presents the findings emerging from the fieldwork related to communication between leadership and membership.

Free communication between union leaders and members

Strauss (1991) proposes that, once union leaders were elected, they tended to lose contact with rank-and-file members. He explained that this was a result of a different style of life and different values. In comparison of this with the present research, in terms of communication between the primary trade unions and members, one union leader in FOE-Construction detailed the way communication in the union runs. He said:

We have six hot-line telephones for workers to report all their queries, which are mostly about clarification of labour regulations or company's policies. For example, we have a line which is used for worker representative to report their colleagues' queries and demands to the meetings with the management. The list

of queries and demands should be translated, if necessary, and transferred to the management for preparation. The union leader must have sufficient time to report back to their colleagues about the management responses. (UL-CO)

The six hot-line telephones for workers shows the attempt of the primary union of that company to maintain smooth channels of communication with membership. The union leaders need to have contact with members as their duty with management and as union leadership.

A union chairman in FOE-Retailer in Ho Chi Minh City explained the ways in which he contacted his union members:

Our headquarters is in Ho Chi Minh City, workers [union members] work at fieldwork in other provinces so I often email them when there is information that needs to be sent. With purposes of gathering ideas for union activities, I often send documents to them for their direct recommendations. We will collect the documents, considering, and make decisions, and then we inform the decisions in the same way. We could not arrange meetings because workers work separately in various workplaces. I think those are effective ways to communicate with our members. (UL-RE)

Similar to the union chairman's explanation, a rank-and-file member stated:

It is not necessary to hold meetings with all union issues because we [union members] do not have free time to participate in the meetings. The union chairman has duties to resolve daily union works and we just need to know about that. The union meetings should be take place if its purpose is a union election or contributing to labour policies related to union members. (RF2-RE)

This response is consistent with the previous finding that showed that the members only want to participate in the union election meetings and crucial meetings relative to their employment. To keep contact within the union, the rank-and-file members emphasised that it is unnecessary to regularly hold union meetings, because they do not have time to attend all meetings.

Although there were difficulties in the communication, the union leaders always put their efforts into keeping in touch with members. The union leaders have not lost contact with members, as is discussed in the literature. The union leader expressed the difficulty in delivering information to membership:

I have known the union members always pay attention to the union information as they want to know how the trade union operates and serves them. However, it is difficult to provide information to union members because we all work fulltime, we could not gather all members to notify of union operation. We just send the notification via group leaders of union members. (UL-TE)

Examining the condition in which members can communicate with union leaders, all interviewees agreed that they were free to contact their union leaders. Almost all the rank-and-file members who were asked whether they could easily contact the union chairmen responded that they found no problem in the communication. A typical respondent commented as follows:

Normally when I had some issues, I just made a phone call to union chairman and got his advice. In some cases, I sent him the letter and I got back his formal response by document...The communication way was good. (RF2-TE)

This study explored that the union members do not have any restriction on communication with leadership. The above response implies that there was no trouble in

communication between union members and leaders within the trade unions. This finding has an implication that, in respect of communication, within trade unions they meet the need for union democracy. However, it is inadequate to discuss democracy without the existence of legitimate and organised opposition within organisations or a social system (Edelstein & Warner 1979; Magrath 1959); hence, the examination of union democracy continues with an important indicator, namely the existence of legitimate opposition.

The lack of internal organised opposition

Several scholars have emphasised the existence of opposition in union democracy (Edelstein 1967; Magrath 1959; Martin 1968; Morris & Fosh 2000; Seidman 1958). The function of the opposition or factionalism is to allow the members to freely vote in union elections and to criticise the union leadership (Edelstein & Warner 1979). In Vietnam, every union member has equal rights to vote in union elections (This was presented in Chapter 2). To examine union democracy, the present study took into account any the signal of opposition in the primary trade unions. Interestingly, although opposition is not tolerated or legitimate in Vietnamese trade unions, the union members are free to criticise the union leadership as a function of factionalism. In their thoughts, the union members expressed that democracy does not mean opposition. For example, a rank-and-file member in a state agency in Ca Mau province commented:

The opposition in the trade union does not mean democracy in our mind. It causes the organisation trouble. Although we have various ideas and we need to argue and come to an agreement...we do not really want opposite sides in the union. We need consolidation in both the trade union and organisation. (RF2-PR)

The above statement has a clear message, of the need for an agreement not an opposite party within the organisation. The interviewee emphasised the need for unity within the

organisation. This response reflects the fact that the respondent tended to reject opposition and preferred organisational unity. This feature reconfirms the dominance of communist ideology, which has rejected the existence of any opposite party within the society. This finding suggests that any recommendation relative to opposition and the acceptance of opposition as a key factor of democracy in Vietnamese trade unions has been challenged.

This obstacle has also appeared when the interviewees mentioned disadvantages of opposition in organisations. Responding to the question of whether it is necessary to organise an opposite group within the trade union, an ordinary member in the FOE-Retailer stressed the drawbacks of having an opposition. He explained:

We do not have an opposite organisation within this primary trade union because it makes conflicts among groups of membership. We need solidarity to protect and support each other. We do not want to fight against our comrades. Although we had different ideas to some particular issues of union, it did not mean we were factionalists. We just wanted to express own ideas and wanted leadership to pay attention to our requests. If the union leaders do something wrong, we criticise them and require them to remedy. (RF2-RE)

The above explanation reflects union members' awareness of the opposition that tends to accompany the emergence of internal conflicts among union membership. In spite of rejecting opposition, however, the respondent lets us know that the union members are able to criticise the leadership.

Moreover, union members in the investigated firms do not in fact care about what democracy is or the need for an opposition; instead, they would like their demands to

come to managers, and believe that the trade union can communicate with management on their behalf. An ordinary member in the FOE-Construction stated:

For us the most important thing is that our demands on fairness and legitimacy of wages come to the management. I think the trade union has responsibility for that irrespective of democracy. We do not need to argue so much then that no one resolves our issues or at least voices our demands. (RF2-CO)

The above response indicates that the main concern of membership is a better employment condition not fighting each other to control the union. This finding is new, in respect of research relevant to union democracy in Vietnam. However, theoretically, it is consistent with the main principle of communism, i.e. that there is no factionalism in communist ideology, which does not tolerate factionalism in party-state organisations, as discussed in Chapter 4. The principle of democratic centralism requires subordination of the lower institutions to the higher institutions, and lower institution's obligation to decisions of higher organs (Pravda 1983). Therefore, with the influence of communist ideology in Vietnam, the absence of opposition within the union is understandable.

So far, one might argue that, without internal opposition, union democracy does not exist in the contemporary trade union movement in Vietnam. For example, investigating trade unions in China, Warner (1991) argues that trade unions that are based on Leninist ideology are oligarchic in terms of union democracy. However, he did not prove his argument with the specific absence of democratic requirements. In other words, it is not clear why communist trade unions are not democratic, from his study. Nevertheless, if one argues that the functions of opposition are to freely criticise union leadership, and to vote in elections (Edelstein & Warner 1979; Magrath 1959), the members of

Vietnamese trade unions have experienced those functions. Consequently, one might argue that, in terms of freedom of criticising union leadership, and voting in union elections, Vietnamese trade unions are democratic in spite of the lack of factionalism. In addition, the other three indicators of union democracy, which are membership involvement in union decision-making processes, equality, and free communication between the membership and leadership, have been evident in the present study. The appearance of the above three indicators supports the presence of union democracy in Vietnam. It is clear that the concept of union democracy is still debatable if the analysis of union democracy only concentrates on tolerated opposition within the trade union.

In sum, the responses from the union members participating in this study suggest that the status of union democracy in Vietnam is more likely to retain the principle of democratic centralism. They have followed the rule of the majority. The members have complete freedom to discuss and criticise before any issue is decided. Once it is decided, however, everyone should implement the decision of the organisation no matter what their view. Otherwise, they will be eliminated from the organisation (Von Beyme 1975).

Status of union democracy in Vietnam

Responding to the question of to what extent union leadership and union democracy contribute to the strategy of trade union revitalisation in Vietnam, this research found that, although it is hard to conclude whether Vietnamese trade unions are democratic or not, because of the presence and absence of union democracy indicators, it is possible to appraise how those indicators contribute to the contemporary union operation and union strategy. This research claims that, irrespective of the presence or absence of union democracy indicators, the union members have fully participated in union operations,

but the union leaders have played a decisive role in conducting union tasks. This is because following reasons.

Firstly, for the involvement of rank-and-file members in making union decisions, the ordinary union members have full rights to attend in that process; and the decisions have been made in accordance with the rule of majority. The empirical finding of this chapter indicates that union members have not attended in all the processes but have only prioritised to participate in decisions relevant to their employment conditions. This suggests that the operation of the primary trade unions relies upon the union leaders. The union leaders have played a decisive role in preparing fundamental conditions for any decision proposals. As a result of this, the union leaders have tended to strongly influence the formulation of union strategies.

Secondly, with regard to equality between leadership and membership, at the workplace level the union leaders have not taken any advantage over members in terms of salary, skill, education and so forth, as the result of their leadership position. They could even have suffered from discrimination and victimisation by management. This point suggests that the union leaders have tended to make a trade-off, between their employments and fulfilling union tasks.

Thirdly, in respect of communication, the union members are free to contact their leadership to send their requests to management or suggestions for union operation. This means that the leaders do not control or constrain communication within the unions. The issue is, however, how the members take that free communication as their advantage to act more proactively in union operation.

Fourthly, organised opposition has not existed within the trade unions in Vietnam; but that might not obviously influence union operation, because the rank-and-file members

are free to vote in union elections by ballot, as well as being able to criticise their leadership. These criticisms have happened similarly to those in an organised opposition appearing in factionalist unions.

In comparison with the term ‘hearocracy’ proposed by Gulowsen (1985, p. 350), in Chapter 4, union democracy in the Vietnamese context is different. ‘Hearocracy’ refers to a combination of democracy with hierarchy and hearing opinion from the membership. Gulowsen (1985) claims that the union leadership tries to control the trade unions and restrain opposition within the unions. Nevertheless, in the Vietnamese context, although the union structure is hierarchic and union leaders also hear from the membership, the union leaders have not tried to control trade union operation. From the findings analysed in this section, the trade union leaders have played an important role in union operation. This role does not result from union leadership’s control but it results from passivity of union membership in respect of involvement in union activities.

Conclusion

This chapter presented patterns of union democracy in the Vietnamese context in responding to the sub-research question of to what extent union leadership and union democracy contribute to the strategy of trade union revitalisation. This research found that, although the union members have freedom to participate in union operation, the union leaders have played a decisive role in conducting union tasks. As a result of this, union leadership has strongly influenced formulation of union strategy.

Before reaching the above answer, this chapter explored the variety of union activity and membership participation, and indicators of union democracy. The union members have selectively joined union activities that brought direct benefits to them. They have

passively joined in union decision-making processes. Therefore, the union leaders have played a decisive role in union operation and formulating strategies.

Investigating indicators of union democracy, this research found that there has been the presence of involvement of rank-and-file members in union decision-making, equality between union leaders and members, and free communication between union leaders and members. However, this chapter found a lack of an organised opposition faction within trade unions. This is because the political systems to which trade unions belong are structured accordingly to communist ideology. This ideology does not tolerate any internal opposition. Consequently, it is difficult to conclude whether or not Vietnamese trade unions are democratic, at least according to conventional Western ideas of what constitutes democratic processes in unions.

The next chapter will respond to the main research question, by discussing the implications of the findings in Chapter 6 relative to responses of individual primary trade unions, and in Chapter 7 relative to trade union democracy in the Vietnamese context.

CHAPTER 8

UNION STRATEGY: CROSSING THE RIVER BY FEELING THE STONES

Partnership is not just about outcomes, or its potential for trade unions...partnership is a development that represents the emergence of a new approach to employment relations that attempts to reconfigure the form and content of management-union relations...

Stuart and Lucio (2005a, p. 7)

Introduction

Examining the operation of primary trade unions at workplace level, Chapter 6 found that the primary trade unions responded to management attitudes by negotiating and avoiding direct confrontation with management. Union members realise the role of trade unions as being to protect membership rights and interests, but the unions also have a close relationship with management, because this relationship is rooted in the characteristics of communist trade unions. Investigating the involvement of union members in union activities, union members' attitudes and union democracy, and union leadership, Chapter 7 found that union members have selectively joined union activities that brought direct benefits to them. Owing to the union members passively joining in union decision-making processes, the union leaders have played a decisive role in union operation and formulating strategies. Chapter 7 also presented the argument that the status of union democracy in the context of Vietnam has not much contributed to union operation at the workplace level. Following up Chapters 6 and 7, the aim of this chapter is to discuss the implications of the findings in those chapters, in order to answer the main research question of the thesis: What are strategies for trade union revitalisation in Vietnam during Doi Moi?

This chapter proceeds by discussing the implications of the responses of individual primary trade unions at workplace level. It then discusses membership attitudes and the crucial role of union leadership. The chapter continues with a discussion on the relationship between the membership and the trade unions, which suggests a servicing model of Vietnamese trade unions. This chapter then presents assessments of union strategies to answer the above-mentioned main research question of this thesis.

Responses of individual primary trade unions at workplace level: Retaining the traditional relationship with management

Chapter 6 explored that the trade unions in Vietnam have sought employers' support as well as negotiation and avoidance of direct confrontation with management. The implication of that finding is that contemporary trade unions should retain their traditional relationship with management. The present research does not fully support the argument that Vietnamese trade unionism requires an adversarial or militant approach to deal with management (Cox 2015; Tran 2007b; Vo & Rowley 2010). Instead, this research argues that the traditional relationship between Vietnamese trade unions and management still appears, and that this relationship has influenced strategies of trade union revitalisation. The argument of this thesis is based on the existence of the traditional relationship with the management, and the unions' avoidance of direct confrontation to management.

Firstly, this close relationship is rooted in the nature of communist trade unions (Pravda 1983; Zhu & Fahey 2000). It obviously shows in the dual role of the part-time union leaders at the workplace level, as discussed in Chapter 6. These union leaders expressed that they had confidence to deal with management and conduct union tasks with the status of this dual role. The dual role helps them to have contact with and transfer membership demands to management. With the dual role, union leaders actually took

care of individual members' lives and helped improve their employment conditions. The union leaders assisted their members by a variety of supports. For example, the union leaders acted as consultants or charity's advocates, to provide advice and recommendations relevant to individual member's lives. The union leaders also effectively connected with the managers to resolve issues related to wages, working conditions and so forth.

In Chapter 6, the union members showed that they have understood the nature of the relationship between trade unions and management, because Vietnamese trade unions have to retain their communist model. Understanding the nature of a communist trade union, the union members accepted that the trade unions need to rely on the status of their relationship with management in order to provide more benefits to membership, in particular improving working conditions and social welfare. Empirically, this research found that the close relationship between trade unions and management does not cause trouble for the primary trade unions in state agencies and in some firms such as SOE-Trading, SOE-Energy and FOE-Construction. It is, in fact, an advantage for trade union operation. For example, the management in state agencies often supported the primary trade unions when the union leader asked for help because union fees could not cover the cost of all the union's events. The key reason for managers in state agencies helping trade unions is that they consider the trade union to be a part of the state agency. If the trade union operates well, the organisation functions well and vice versa. The support of management also means that the management adheres to the labour regulations.

It can be seen that, when the management obeys the labour regulations, they do not make any serious conflict. Hence, employees do not turn to protest against the management. A probable explanation for this is that the state agencies and SOEs have been under control of the state, so that the management rarely breach labour regulations

(Ishikawa 1992). If the managers in those organisations breach labour regulations, they would be punished by the government. The union leader in FOE-Construction claimed:

It is necessary to establish a primary trade union in the company because this organisation will defend and take care of its members. The trade union will moderate the employment conflicts between employees and employers. The primary as the third party is able to conciliate and prevent the labour conflicts within the company. The employer should follow the labour law and the employees obey the labour discipline as well as the labour regulation. (UL-CO)

The above comment suggests that the primary trade union within an organisation might help managers to look after individual employees' lives, and employees will contribute more to the firm by adhering to labour discipline and labour regulations. Thus, it is good for the union leaders to work with the managers in order to take care of employees' lives.

A valuable insight into the close relationship between trade unions and management is that it creates favourable conditions for a certain type of trade union operation. This suggests that, if managers have been acting in good faith in their relationship with employees, the firms also have benefits from the unions' operations, because union presence does not have the same meaning with industrial actions such as strikes or stoppages and so forth, but unions exist because the employees need organisations to represent and protect them against management infringements (Hobsbawm 1964; Kelly 1988; Luce 2014).

However, the dual role of union leaders has made confusion for those who have investigated Vietnamese trade unions according to Western theories of industrial relations (Cox 2015; Lee 2006; Mantsios 2010). From the perspective of Western

theories of industrial relations, the close relationship between trade unions and management causes issues for the members and the trade unions. It has been assumed that union leaders tend to prioritise their relationship with management over their memberships' interests. In the West, this type of union leader is considered as an ally of management, working for employers instead of union membership (Kelly 1988). Research on the trade union movement in Asian countries, such as Kuruvilla et al. (2002), suggests that relying on the management or the state is an inevitable trend of those trade unions because of their historical background. Theoretically, the communist society did not place union leadership in an interest conflict (see Chapter 2); but when the communist economy has turned toward having characteristics of capitalism, the dual role inevitably creates confusion. On the one hand, union members have accepted the close relationship between the trade union leaders and management; on the other hand, they have been suspicious of the union leadership dependence on management (Clarke et al. 2007). This problem might appear when the union leaders tend to make a decision to support management rather than membership in a case where the two parties have conflicts of interests.

Secondly, the other basis for the main argument of the present thesis is that the trade unions need to respond to management interference, because such interference has clearly caused troubles for union operation. The findings from Chapter 6 indicate that the primary trade unions in DPE-Textile and FOE-Retailer suffered from management interference such as implicit restriction on union activity, victimisation, and discrimination. In any of these circumstances, the trade unions were not able to do their daily tasks normally but had to adapt for their survival. This thesis did not examine why the managers implicitly and explicitly attacked trade unions; instead, it investigated how those attacks affected trade union operation and how the particular trade unions

responded. The hostile attitudes of management towards the trade unions appears because the management has conflicts of interests with employees in terms of safety, pay levels, employment security, and working hours; therefore, the management does not want trade unions to fight against them to protect employees (Adams 1981; Dundon 2002).

Understanding the fact and the rationale of the union-management relationship provides knowledge on union responses in seeking employers' support, and negotiating with management without direct confrontation. The trade unions seek support from the management in membership recruitment. Although the legislation relative to membership recruitment creates favourable conditions for the primary trade union to recruit membership, the union leader cannot ignore the employer's support. For instance, the union leader at the DPE-Footwear had to inform of the union membership recruitment process to the management and wait for approval. It might be supposed that, if the management had not accepted the union leader's initiation, the union leader would not have conducted the plans. The above finding means that the management influences the recruitment process of trade unions, and that the union leader should take into account the management attitude in order to conduct union tasks, in particular membership recruitment.

The primary trade unions tend to prefer indirect confrontation with hostile management. The primary trade unions at workplace level concentrate on avoiding creating a direct conflict relationship with management. This approach appears to be uncommon in Western industrial relations, which traditionally incline towards a direct confrontational relationship between trade unions and management (Brown 1983; Kelly 1988). As discussed in Chapter 4, one of the characteristics of communist trade unions is the transmission belt relationship between employees and management; therefore, with this

role of being a transmission belt, the trade unions rarely choose to fight against management as their priority. Chapter 6 explored that the adversarial approach is not the priority of membership and leadership. It is suggested that the primary unions often preferred to negotiate with the management, and the union leaders strived to obtain an agreement rather than to call a strike. From the above discussion, the present study suggests that the avoidance of confrontational tactics and a preference for negotiation form the current responses of trade unions.

The avoidance of confrontational tactics may be considered as a disadvantage of Vietnamese trade unions (Cox 2015; Do 2013; Pringle & Clarke 2010). However, the present research argues that it is not completely a disadvantage, because it also has advantages which the modern trade unions in some Western countries have tried to pursue (Stuart & Lucio 2005b). In looking at trade unions in advanced economies, which have experienced many years of adversarial or militant approaches in their relationship with management and have suffered from hostile management, the effectiveness of a militant approach has been debated (Lucio & Stuart 2002). Recently, in some countries such as the UK, trade unions have shifted from a militant to a collaborative approach with management (Haynes & Allen 2001). This has not proven to be an easy way to obtain a partnership relationship with management, but these trade unions have struggled for that approach (Taylor & Ramsay 1998). In contrast, in the context of Vietnam, the close relationship with management is rooted in the history and has been underpinned by the current official government credo of communism. This suggests that contemporary trade unions in Vietnam already have a close relationship with management. The trade unions should continue this approach in order to better represent and protect their membership. Therefore, the implication is that the trade unions need to formalise that relationship in order to serve their membership.

The present research argues that the close relationship between Vietnamese trade unions and management has had positive effects on union revitalisation; and this contrasts with previous studies that were pessimistic about that close relationship (Do 2013; Pringle & Clarke 2010). Pringle and Clarke (2010) argue that one of the main barriers to trade union reform in Vietnam is the dependence of primary trade unions on management. This argument neglects the fact that, as the communist party has been a dominant force in society, the trade unions have not been able to change their characteristic, with their dependence on management. Other scholars have suggested that Vietnamese trade unions should not have collaboration with management but rather an adversarial relationship (Clarke 2006; Cox 2015; Fahey 1997; Lee 2006; MacIntosh 2013). Surprisingly, these scholars have neglected the fact that the adversarial relationship, which has existed in the West for several years, has been seriously challenged in the literature, and thus cannot be considered a panacea for union revitalisation. This is why Western trade unions have sought solutions in partnership between trade unions and employers. For instance, in looking at the West, there have been debates about co-operation and militancy relationships between trade unions and management recently (Stuart & Lucio 2005a). Hostility of management to trade unions is obvious in the literature on Western trade unions, as in Kelly's (1996, p. 65) words: 'It is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve a partnership with a party who would prefer that you didn't exist'. Industrial relations have partly been considered, therefore, a battle between employers and employees. The union is often seen as a militant organisation; hence, employers tend to avoid the operation of trade unions within their enterprises; and, in parallel, trade unions have attempted to exist in order to protect employees.

Thus, a possible alternative way in Vietnam is that Vietnamese trade unions should deploy that traditional cooperative relationship with management to operate better,

rather than getting their ‘back against the wall’ by encouraging illegal, informal activism. It is clear that Vietnamese trade unions consistently see themselves as working to secure jobs, workers’ interests, and social stability before and after Doi Moi. They have provided welfare provisions, including housing allowances, free lunch, some sponsorship of sporting activities, and so forth. These unions have also maintained a reserve fund for emergencies in members’ lives, and for financing certain social activities. All of the above benefits delivered by trade unions need to be continuous, and the problem is thus how Vietnamese trade unions take advantage of their relationship with management to more effectively serve their members.

Since Doi Moi, the traditional relationship between the primary trade unions and management has been continuing within state agencies and SOEs. Most of the interviewees in these organisations suggested a clear approach, that the trade unions should build a win-win relationship with management; instead a zero-sum solution, as expressed by this ordinary member in a state agency:

We should improve our relationships with employers. This has been a priority since the past, and has led to good results, which means that opportunities to make better working condition for membership have been obtained. (RF2-PR)

It is suggested that continuing the partnership with management might be a feasible and well-considered strategy for union revitalisation in Vietnam during Doi Moi. Looking to the experience in the West, to deal with the tension between trade unions and management several trade unions have sought a cooperative relationship, as John Monks, a leader of the TUC, stated: ‘Confrontation may have been a catchword for the 1980s, but partnership must be the watchword for the millennium and beyond’ (Taylor & Ramsay 1998, p. 115). Several academics have suggested a union management partnership relationship to replace the adversarial relationship in advanced economies

(Danford et al. 2002; Johnstone et al. 2009; Lucio & Stuart 2002; Tailby et al. 2004). Fuller and Hester (1998) argue that, in order to seek innovative ways to improve their performance, many firms have adopted a cooperative labour relations strategy, which represents a fundamental change from previous union reduction or avoidance strategies. Heery (2002) argues that, in the UK, at the state level, there are attempts to position the trade union organisations as an authoritative partner in economic and social management. At company level, trade unions try to reach a partnership agreement between unions and management, which is intended to promote a new and more co-operative set of relations within the company. Although there has been, of course, criticism and scepticism of this approach (Johnstone et al. 2009; Lucio & Stuart 2005), this tendency reflects the fact that, to date, in advanced economies, the relationship between trade unions and management should not be a zero sum game but can in fact be a win-win one.

Interestingly, in Vietnam, the present research indicates that the close relationship between trade unions and management is not new, even if it has been taken for granted in Vietnam as part of the nature of communist trade unions. In contrast to previous studies conducted by Cox (2015), Tran (2007a) and Van Gramberg et al. (2013), this research suggests that, in the transitional economy, Vietnamese trade unions should seek appropriate approaches to take advantage of and in accordance with the traditional cooperative relationship between trade unions and management. While, recently, some Western trade unions have put forward attempts to build a cooperative relationship with management, Vietnamese trade unions already have such a close relationship with management, which has been underpinned by the communist ideology and the awareness and consent of membership.

The implication of continuing the partnership with management might apply to the trade unions that have been operating in accordance with the communist tenets. These trade unions have also been in a reform process; and they have been confused in their relationship with management because their traditional relationship with management has been strongly criticised (Lee 2006; Taylor 2000; Warner 1991, 2001). Considering the strong influence of communist ideology on society, the trade unions that have operated within that society have better off deploying the traditional relationship with the management.

The present research rediscovered and explained why this traditional relationship between trade unions and management has appeared in Vietnam. However, the implication of this research has a limitation because of the small size of interviews and investigated primary trade unions. In addition, this research did not investigate the tendency of members in terms of the acceptance or rejection of the relationship between union and management, as Johnstone et al. (2009, p. 268) discussed regarding limitations of research on union-management partnership in the UK: ‘there is lack of data regarding worker responses to partnership...there has been a lack of emphasis on employee responses to partnership’. Therefore, further research which has larger sample sizes and focusses on the tendency of members towards union-management partnership might help enhance the findings of the present research.

The findings in Chapter 7 indicate the passivity of union members and decisive role of union leaders in union operation. Following this, the next section discusses how union members and leaders affect union operation.

Passivity of members, and union leadership in union operation

In Chapter 4, the literature review mentioned debates about the drivers of union revitalisation. Debates have appeared whether union leaders or members, or both union members and leaders, have mainly been responsible for union revitalisation. The present research argues that, owing to the passivity of union members, the leadership-driven source of union revitalisation is prevalent in contemporary trade unionism in Vietnam.

Chapter 7 showed that other indicators of union democracy have appeared in Vietnamese trade unions but the union members have appeared to be passive. For example, in respect of membership involvement in union activities and making union decisions, union members have been able to attend to various union activities and decision-making processes of the primary trade unions. Any decision is made according to the rule of the majority. There is no restriction on union membership involvement in union activities and making decisions, as presented in Chapters 6 and 7. Regarding equality in union, the aspect of equality clearly appears in terms of the union leadership and membership having equality in salary, education, employment position and so forth. The union leaders do not take any advantage in developing their employment condition. With regard to communication within the trade unions, the leadership and membership are free to communicate with each other. The findings indicate that, in any circumstance, membership is able to contact with union leadership to ask for assistance. In turn, union leadership is willing to help members, and attempts to keep in touch with the membership by available channels of communication such as email, phone, and post. This means that there is no restriction on communication in trade unions. In addition, despite the absence of an organised opposition within the trade unions, Vietnamese union members have been able to criticise union leaders and freely vote in new union leaders in union elections. Those actions are what an opposition needs to

perform in a democratic union (Edelstein & Warner 1979; Magrath 1959; Stepan-Norris & Zeitlin 1995). According to Edelstein and Warner (1979), organised opposition allows union membership to freely oppose union leadership through formal and informal channels, and to vote for their favourable candidates.

Despite this absence of restriction on union members' involvement in union operations, the ordinary members are likely to be passive. Blyton and Turnbull (2004) suggest that passive membership, which demonstrates passive involvement in decision-making processes, passively receive information, and leave to leaders the authority for decision-making. The findings on union activities and membership involvement in Chapter 7 pointed out that, apart from decisions related to employment conditions, the rank-and-file members left decisions to the union leaders. One could argue that the membership was not active because they were restrained in the decision-making process and implementation of union tactics. Nevertheless, the findings in Chapter 7 indicate that there was no such restriction on membership. The membership has full rights to attend to all the union's affairs, but they depend heavily on the leadership's capacity. This is because union members have considered the trade unions leaders as service providers and consultants.

From this study, it is suggested that the rank-and-file members have probably not resolved their issues by themselves. This leads to the fact that the union leaders have been involved in many aspects of members' issues at the workplace level. Looking at union operations in practice, the decisive role of union leadership is clear in conducting union operations. The members rarely showed their efforts in formulating and conducting union operations. Generally, this does not deny the important role of rank-and-file members; but in comparison with the leadership's role, the rank-and-file are less likely to be active.

This research explored the passivity of union membership, but it does not challenge the theoretically important role of membership or union democracy in union operation in Vietnam. Scholars have commonly shared the idea that the rank-and-file members play a decisive role in union reform in Vietnam (Do 2013; Do & Broek 2013; Pringle & Clarke 2010; Van Gramberg et al. 2013). Previous studies such as Van Gramberg et al. (2013), Cox (2015), and Clarke (2006) concentrated only on strikes and wildcat strikes in Vietnam. As a result of this, they concluded that the pressure from the rank-and-file members has played a decisive role in union reform. The argument of the decisive role of the rank-and-file members in union revitalisation has, however, been challenged by this research, because rank-and-file members have to be proactive in union operation in order to influence union change (Fairbrother & Yates 2003; Hickey et al. 2010). The previous studies did not investigate the aspect of daily tasks of the primary trade unions or the extent or willingness of members to be involved in union operations. Therefore, those studies failed to explore the passivity of membership. In contrast, the present research examined the willingness of members to be involved in union activities and make decisions, and explored the passive status of the rank-and-file members. This exploration has found the implications that, with the passive characteristic of membership, the trade union revitalisation in Vietnam relies upon a leadership-driven model. This is because, when the members are not proactive enough to be involved in union operations, the union leadership has continued to take responsibility for conducting union affairs.

The present research also suggests that other research investigating the aspects of member involvement in union operation or union democracy should examine whether the members are passive or proactive in union operation. Union democracy essentially requires active members (Stepan-Norris & Zeitlin 1995). Although Vietnamese unions

require more democracy, the members are passive, so this is challenging for union democracy. In the context of Vietnam, the trade unions have evident almost all indicators of union democracy, such as no restriction on membership involvement in union activities and making decisions, equality, and free communication within the unions; but the members have nevertheless not been proactive, so they have not become the main source of union revitalisation.

This research also raises the question of whether opposition within unions encourages the proactive role of members, as one might argue that the lack of opposition leads to passive membership in Vietnam, as is evidenced from this research. However, again, this research revealed that members have acted as a presence of opposition within the unions. For example, members freely criticise and elect union leaders, as though there is factionalism in existence. Further research might focus on investigating causes and effects, or the relationship between, a lack of internal opposition and passivity of union members, within unions.

It can be seen that, in spite of experiencing no restriction on contributing to union operation, the union members in the present research are passive. Consequently, they tend to rely on the union leaders. Thus, the union leaders have responsibility for union operations. Those features of union leadership and membership provide empirical evidence for the discussion of the servicing model of Vietnamese trade unions in the next section.

Relationship between membership and the trade unions: Servicing model

In looking at relationship between trade unions and membership, this research argues that the servicing model of trade unions has been evident in contemporary trade unions in Vietnam. Chapter 4 reviewed the essential characteristics of serving and organising

models of trade unions. In the servicing model of trade unions, the passive characteristics of union membership and the important role of union leadership are significant features. Moreover, in this model, the members rely upon the leaders, and the union members have mainly left their decision-making authority to their leadership. The findings of the present research unfold the passivity of union members and decisive role of union leaders in union operations. The implication of these findings is that the combination of the passive membership with the vital roles of leadership in providing union services for membership strongly suggests that the servicing model is dominant in Vietnamese trade unions. In Vietnam, the primary trade unions traditionally continue to provide more benefits for membership. Providing benefits to members is the lifeblood of any trade union, irrespective of identities or models. Without benefits, existing members will leave trade unions, and potential members will not join any union (Waddington 2006). Therefore, this aspect of delivering union benefits will almost certainly continue in Vietnam.

Tracing back the history of trade unions, it is noted that a servicing or an organising model depends on the development level of industrial relations (Boxall 2008). For example, trade unions in Western countries in the embryonic period of capitalism were formed according to a servicing model. The evidence is seen in bread-and-butter unions or business unions in the US, the UK and other European countries (Heery 2002). Now, after more than three centuries, industrial relations have changed significantly. Recently, scholars have put their efforts into seeking new models of trade unions as organising unions, which stresses the proactive role of membership, instead of a crucial role for leadership (Gall 2009; Snape et al. 2000). Therefore, one could argue that trade unions and their membership need to reach a specific developmental level to become an organising model. To date, this model has appeared partly in modern Western

unions, and academics continue to encourage it as a future for the trade union movement (Lucio & Stuart 2009; Snape et al. 2000; Turberville 2004). However, the success of the organising model continues to be debated, and has a far pathway to be successful.

The present research argues that, in Vietnam, the conditions for the organising model with a proactive role for membership have not been appeared. In the Vietnamese context, the market economy has been developing for around 30 years only, so the developmental level of employment relations has not provided favourable conditions for an organising model. In addition, the organising model has appeared in advanced industrial economies where there has been the presence of four indicators of union democracy (Danford et al. 2002; Gall 2009; Lucio & Stuart 2009). Although previous research on trade unions in Vietnam has emphasised the crucial role of union membership as the future of trade unions, those researches did not deal with the concrete obstacle of passivity of ordinary members (Beresford 2008; Do 2013; Nørlund 1996; Pringle & Clarke 2010). For instance, Zhu and Fahey (2000) suggest that unions should replace the top-down model with a bottom-up model to increase union democracy. Nevertheless, their research only concentrated on criticism about the bureaucratic leadership and the privileged position of trade unions in communist systems. They did not explore the issue of passive membership, which raises the question of how trade unions can encourage proactive roles for membership when ordinary members appear to be passive. As a rank-and-file union member in DPE-Footwear company expressed it: ‘We do not have time to join any trade union activities. We follow the union leaders whenever we see that they bring to us benefits’ (RF1-FO).

This present research is the first study proposing a servicing model for trade unions as a contribution to the literature on Vietnamese trade unions in revitalisation.

Understanding the relationship between the members and the union as well as the union leaders in this model provides pervasive explanations for the behaviours of union membership and leadership (Gall & Fiorito 2012; Mellor 1990). For example, because the members have seen the trade unions as service providers, the union leaders should concentrate on maximising benefits for the members in order to retain current membership as well as attract more employees, rather than put their attempts into changing union ideology or encouraging more union democracy in general. Those attempts may not be appropriate for the servicing model of the trade unions in the current socio-political context of Vietnam in Doi Moi.

In conclusion, Vietnamese trade unions conform to the servicing model because membership has considered trade unions as services providers, and union leadership plays a crucial role in providing services and in operating primary trade unions. Clarifying the servicing model of these unions is an important factor for assessing strategies of trade unions in revitalisation.

Assessment of possible strategies of trade union revitalisation: trade union-management relationship strategies

So far, this research explored the tendency of Vietnamese trade unions in retaining the close relationship with management, the passivity of members and the vital role of union leaders in union operation, and the servicing model of the trade unions. With the aim of answering the main research question, this section places those explorations in the socio-political context of Vietnam in order to assess the strategies of trade union revitalisation. As previously reviewed in Chapter 4, the strategies for union revitalisation include political action, organising, partnership strategy, restructuring, coalition, and international solidarity for unions, in advanced economies (Frege & Kelly 2004); and increasing local union autonomy, organising the unorganised, changing

organisational structure, being in alliances with other civil society groups, focussing more on members' personal lives, and building union collaboration across national boundaries, for Asian trade unions (Kuruvilla et al. 2002).

To discuss the strategies of trade union revitalisation in Vietnam, this thesis relied upon the Frege and Kelly's (2004) framework. This thesis found out that, in the context of Vietnam as a country in transition, apart from the institutional context of industrial relations, state and employer strategies, and union identities, the choice of union strategy clearly depends on whether the characteristic of union membership is passive or active. As reviewed in Chapter 4, Frege and Kelly (2004) claim that the choices of union strategy can be explained in accordance with three independent elements, namely institutional context of industrial relations, state and employer strategies, and union identities. Owing to the communist ideology in Vietnam, the state creates favourable industrial relations for union operation, as discussed in Chapter 2. Vietnam consistently supports trade unions as the communist credo, thus union revitalisation is not impacted by a hostile government. The question is, how Vietnamese trade unions take advantages of that favourable condition. Using Frege and Kelly's (2004) framework, this thesis investigated the employer strategy via management attitudes towards the trade unions, and unfolded the strong influence of the management on union operations. This, it was found, actually affects union strategy. However, Frege and Kelly (2004) did not concentrate on the characteristics of union membership. Thus, complementing Frege and Kelly's (2004) framework, this research also assessed the strategy of trade unions in respect of union membership characteristics. These assessments of strategy are presented as follows.

It is clear that Vietnamese trade unions have a crucial role in the political system of Vietnam. As presented in Chapter 2, at national level, the president of VGCL

mandatorily holds a position on the leadership board of the central committee of the CPV. Theoretically, that person acts for the union's benefits; for example, s/he contributes to decision-making processes relevant to labour policies. In studies of wildcat strikes in Vietnam, scholars explored that the pressures from those strikes forced the leadership of VGCL to lobby for many labour regulation amendments (Cox 2015; Do & Broek 2013; Le 2010; Van Gramberg et al. 2013). The lobbying campaign of VGCL might be considered as a political strategy. However, the outcomes of this strategy implicitly appear in legislation relative to labour and trade unions in general. The outcomes do not directly affect union daily jobs at workplace level (Do & Broek 2013). What the primary trade unions need is appropriate strategies to operate at the grassroots level. Therefore, the political strategy might be an appropriate strategy at national level, but it is detached from the workplace level. Currently, the political strategy should be taken into account as a traditional strategy of trade union revitalisation, but it is still too general.

If we consider the organising strategy as outlined by Frege and Kelly (2004), it means unions have to encourage membership participation, and union democracy plays a decisive role in revitalisation; but this strategy is not strongly supported in Vietnam. For example, the argument of union renewal proposed by Fairbrother (1989) suggests that change in unions will be driven primarily by mobilisation from below; that the main pressure on officers to innovate will stem from members and activists at workplace level. This argument is not evidenced in the context of Vietnam. In contrast, the passivity of the union members leads to the fact that the full conception of union democracy as a vital factor of organising strategy has not appeared in Vietnam. For example, opposition is not tolerated within organisations, and the members are passive. Hence, it is difficult to suggest that organising is a strategy of trade union revitalisation

in Vietnam at this moment. One could argue that internal opposition should be tolerated; in consequence, the rank-and-file members would be active and more involved in union decision-making processes. As discussed in the previous section, there has been little research affirming the connection between union internal opposition and active membership. More importantly, the CPV is still the only ruling party in Vietnam, and the country retains its characteristic as a communist society that does not accept opposition. Therefore, organised opposition within the trade unions is still far from appearing.

There was little evidence emerged during the present research to suggest other strategies. For example, there is no clear evidence showing efforts to increase local union autonomy. Increasing local union autonomy presents the tendency of increasing freedom from control by federations. The assumption underlying this strategy is that people from the national federation have different interests to those of local unions (Kuruville et al. 2002). The findings of the present research point out that union leaders from the national level as well as provincial and district levels are always aware of union membership's benefits and put their efforts into realising the membership's benefits. Consequently, it is hard to conclude that people from the national federation have different interests from those of local unions in Vietnam.

Regarding strategy of change in union structure, Vietnamese unions' structure has not changed over a long period. As reviewed in the section on union structure in Chapter 2, Vietnamese trade unions have been organised under the VGCL's umbrella, thus merging unions with each other does not mean strengthening union power, as other trade unions are organised according to occupational divisions. Therefore, currently, a restructuring strategy has not been an appropriate strategy for union revitalisation in Vietnam. This strategy might happen in the future if there are more federations outside

the VGCL's umbrella. This would require a change in the ideology of trade union foundation deriving from the senior political leadership in Vietnam, which has not happened yet.

As referred to in Chapter 2, Edwards and Phan (2008) propose one direction for union reform in Vietnam is to build international solidarity with the global union movement. Unfortunately, the present data analysis does not provide evidence for a trend of building international collaboration across unions. The explanation for this could be found in Kuruvilla et al.'s (2002) argument, that the essential preconditions for successful international co-operation do not appear in Asia; hence, building international solidarity among Asian unions is not strategy for union revitalisation in this region. The essential precondition is 'a commitment to a shared goal the attainment of which is contingent on the co-operation of individual organisations from different countries' (Kuruvilla et al. 2002, p. 455). The dearth of preconditions for building international solidarity across Asian unions does not allow Vietnamese trade unions to pursue this strategy.

This can lead to a conclusion that, although in some respects political action could be considered as union strategies in revitalisation, it shows little influence on the practice of union operation at the workplace level. Other strategies such as organising by increasing union democracy, increasing local union autonomy, reconstructing union, and building international solidarity of unions across nations, lack the preconditions to be realised. The research findings show that the trade union movement does not aim to change the official credo of communism. The primary trade unions with members and union leaders have put their attempts into seeking appropriate strategies to deal with the management at workplace level. This leads us to consider the other strategy discussed earlier: building partnership relationship between trade unions and management.

Trade union-management partnership relationship

This research argues that, among the reviewed union strategies for revitalisation, building a trade union-management partnership relationship is the pre-eminently appropriate strategy for trade union revitalisation in Vietnam. This strategy is necessarily articulated by formally well-documented agreements. One might argue that academia has been concerned with the dependence on management of Vietnamese trade unions, and that the solution for union change is to become independent unions (Kamoche 2001; Pringle & Clarke 2010; Van Gramberg et al. 2013). Nevertheless, the present thesis has pointed out that academics have not shown any potential approach for the trade unions to achieve independence within the Vietnamese context. Given the current socio-political context, this thesis straightforwardly explains the underlying reason of the union dependence, and argues that building the trade union-management partnership relationship is the most appropriate strategy for Vietnamese trade unions. This argument is built upon the traditional relationship between trade unions and management, the passivity of union membership and active union leadership, and the servicing model of the trade unions.

Firstly, the close relationship between union and management has been evident because of the nature of communist trade unions. As reviewed in Chapter 2, the CPV plays a decisive role in retaining a communist identity for the trade unions, with a close relationship between trade unions and management. The CPV explicitly emphasises that Vietnamese trade unions have to organise employees as well as maintain manufacturing and productivity, and consider benefits to both employees and employers. This means that the trade unions still remain as a transmission belt between employees and employers. Scholars studying Vietnamese trade unions have commonly shared the idea that there is no evidence to suggest that Vietnamese trade unions will change their

identity (Beresford 2008; Edwards & Phan 2013; Pringle & Clarke 2010). The present study affirms that, to date, the CPV has shown no signal of changing the identity of Vietnamese trade unions. Given the unchanged outlook of the CPV leadership in Vietnam, the communist identity of trade unions remains consistent. In consequence, the traditional relationship between trade unions and management has continued in industrial relations in Vietnam. During Doi Moi, in theory one might expect that this relationship might develop slightly differently, but in practice it remains stable.

Secondly, the passivity of union membership and active union leadership creates favourable conditions for building partnerships with management. In evaluating two current strategies for the revival of British trade unions, namely building partnership with employers and applying an organising model, Heery (2002) suggests that the partnership relationship between the trade unions and employers relies upon leadership choices and passivity of union members. In spite of encouraging the active role of membership in union renewal, Fairbrother (2007) agrees that union leadership plays an important role in creating opportunities for union membership involvement and participation in rebuilding the union. He also states that the conditions for union renewal involve the character of local leadership and the identification of problems.

The present research found that individual unions' responses show, to a remarkable extent, that in practice union leadership tends to choose avoidance of direct confrontation with management; hence, this is robust evidence leading to the conclusion of there being a partnership relationship for unions with management. This research indicates that, in fact, the VGCL does not explicitly refer to building close relationships with management as a strategy of revitalisation; yet it accentuates the need for retaining the traditional harmony between union and management. This aspect is clearly reflected in the present study. The research findings in Chapter 6 show that union leaders have

clearly put their attempts into building a good relationship with managers to facilitate their work. In the case where managers support or at least do not interfere with union activities, there might have been more opportunities for founding primary trade unions. Moreover, in those enterprises where managers support or allow trade unions to organise employees, the primary trade unions have performed well. The union leadership has shown their efforts in building a relationship with management, which helps them to do their union tasks easier.

Thirdly, this research suggests that the servicing model of trade unions is a favourable condition for building a union-management partnership. It is noted that the servicing model does not mean the trade unions certainly have a union-management partnership strategy; instead, it facilitates the formulation of that strategy. Conversely, it could be argued that a close union-management relationship might encourage the adoption of a servicing model. It can be seen that, whenever the members have been expecting the trade unions and union leadership to be services providers, the trade unions have had to take into account membership expectations as well as afford membership needs. Looking back on the statement of a rank-and-file member of FOE-Retailer in Ho Chi Minh City, presented in Chapter 6:

I have found that trade unions provide me benefits. For example, when I got sick, the union leaders came to visit and gave me gifts, or I had difficulty in financial situation, the trade union gave me a loan. In holidays, the trade union organises events or activities which are helpful... I will be a union member in the future as I see the trade union is a helpful organisation during my employment.
(RF1-RE)

The above statement indicates that union members have still expectations that the union leaders will deliver services.

The contemporary trade unions' partnership relationships with management might be challenged when one considers that, despite the current servicing model, the union members desire an alternative organisation of labour with other strategies to protect them. The evidence is that several wildcat strikes and informal worker representatives have occurred since Doi Moi (Do & Broek 2013; Pringle & Clarke 2010; Van Gramberg et al. 2013). There has been a challenge by Vietnamese government to wildcat strikes and informal worker representatives. Any form of wildcat strike and informal worker representation is illegal and unacceptable to the government at the moment. Before reaching the acceptance of an alternative organisation of labour, the contemporary trade unions should therefore take any advantage available in the current institutional context in order to serve the membership better. Hickey et al. (2010) investigated the relationship between rank-and-file activism and union organising campaigns. They did not see a consistent link between member activism and successful union renewal in thirty-four cases of union renewal in the US and the UK. In addition, it is inevitable that, with the current passivity of union membership, the alternative trade unions, if possible, might continue to have a partnership relationship with management because the present research found no evidence for active union members to resolve their issues by themselves. In addition, when union members are not active, the members might continue to see the trade unions and the union leadership as service providers. Consequently, the members continue to rely on union leadership. It is likely, therefore, that 'all roads lead to Rome' in this respect.

The argument that a servicing model creates favourable conditions for building union-management partnership needs comparative research to test the relationship between a servicing model and partnership strategy in union revitalisation. The current literature on union revitalisation affirms the leadership-driven approach to union revitalisation

(Bach & Givan 2008; Hurd et al. 2003), but it has yet to link the servicing model to the union-management partnership strategy, as in the argument of the present research. In the US, Kumar and Schenk (2006) mentioned that in the US, trade unions have shaped in a servicing model, but they did not directly link the servicing model with a strategy of building partnership between trade unions and management in union revitalisation. They claim that US union movement 'is associated with maintaining the status quo with a focus on meeting the immediate economic needs of union members through collective bargaining, partnership with employers, or legislative lobbying' (Kumar & Schenk 2006, p. 33). Apart from the research just cited, there is a lack of empirical research on relations between the servicing model and the partnership strategy of trade unions in transition economies.

Moreover, owing to the above argument being built upon a narrow range of research sample size, it is necessary to conduct further studies with a wider population to test the linkage between a servicing model of trade unions and building a union-management relationship strategy of trade union revitalisation. Testing the linkage between the servicing model and partnership strategy might be a significant topic of research for further studies on union revitalisation.

Given that the union-management partnership strategy is suitable to Vietnamese trade unions' revitalisation, this raises the questions of what this strategy looks like, and its pros and cons in the Vietnamese context. The next section will respond to these questions.

Features, advantages and disadvantages of union-management relationship strategy in Vietnam

The partnership relationship between Vietnamese trade unions and management requires a written form. The status of the relationship between union and management

of Vietnamese trade unions has not been documented, as has appeared in developed countries. Therefore, Vietnamese trade unions need to formalise and legalise that relationship as an appropriate strategy in revitalisation, because although the partnership relationship has been rooted in an underpinning ideology of communist, and has appeared in practice, that relationship has been implicitly understood and has not been formalised in a form of an official document.

The partnership relationship between primary trade unions and management at workplace level thus needs to be officially documented in Vietnam. Currently, the close relationship between union and employers has appeared as the generally accepted beliefs of society without particular documents such as a formal agreement or other similar forms. Without a formal agreement, those parties in the relationship perform with some difficulty. For example, members have heard that the trade unions have a good relationship with management to protect membership's rights and interests, but when the management does not obey the rules of the game, it is hard to apply for redress or ask them to respect the labour regulations. To resolve the vagueness of the partnership relationship, there is a necessity to legalise the partnership as a compulsory condition for enterprises to establish and operate.

Such an official document, as an agreement between the primary trade unions and the managers of specific enterprises, should contain guideline for activities that the parties in the relation have to follow. The contents of a partnership agreement encompass at least six vital principles (Brown 2000). Firstly, there should be a shared commitment to the business goals of the organisation. According to Danford et al. (2002, p. 1), the workplace partnership is about 'modernisation and getting rid of old class legacies, it's about trust and co-operation and it's about bringing employees relations into line with a company's business position'. Secondly, there should be a clear recognition that there

might be quite legitimate differences that needed to be listened to, respected and represented. In this respect, the partnership is articulated in terms of the need to move away from adversarial relations to cooperation, on the basis of a common interest between capital and labour in enterprise performance and competitiveness (Lucio & Stuart 2002). Thirdly, measures to ensure flexibility of employment must not be at the expense of employees' security, which should be protected by taking such steps as are necessary to ensure the transferability of skills and qualification. Employees are said to benefit from greater job security, training, quality jobs, good communication and a more effective voice. Benefits are paying for skill development, modernising human resource policies, and increasing job security. In addition, for trade unions the process engages union leaders at workplace level more fully in decision-making over a wider range of issues (Guest & Peccei 2001). Fourthly, partnership arrangements must improve opportunities for the personal development of employees. Deery and Erwin (1999) argue that a positive union-management relationship is associated with higher levels of work attendance. This outcome is consistent with the presence of strong and effective unionism at the workplace level. In turn, unions may benefit from increased influence, greater access to information, job security and inter-union cooperation. Fifthly, the partnership must be based upon open and well informed consultation, involving genuine dialogue. As a result, this reduces the perception of conflicting interests between employer and employee (Bacon & Blyton 2002). Sixthly, effective partnerships should seek to add value by raising the level of employee motivation. According to Haiven et al. (2006), particular employers realised that productivity could be enhanced only if worker knowledge and participation were maximised. The union was strong enough and the union-management relationship mature enough that union involvement was a sensible option. Furthermore, cooperation with management can deliver power

resources to the union if it is equipped to make use of them. These six principles are only bases for building a partnership. These can be more developed and detailed in the context of Vietnam.

It is noticed that the agreement of partnership relationship between trade unions and management differs from the collective labour agreement that has been already provided by the Labour Code. Article 73 of the Labour Code provides that:

1. Collective labour agreement is a written agreement between the employees' collective and the employer on working conditions which have been agreed upon by the two sides through collective bargaining...
2. The content of a collective labour agreement must not be against the labour law and must be more favourable for the employees than what is provided by law. (Socialist Republic of Vietnam 2012a)

A collective agreement mainly focuses on working conditions, which should bring more advantages for employees than existing conditions in the Labour Code. It is not about conditions for trade union operation. The subjects of that agreement are employees or representatives of employees and employers. At the workplace level, the representation of employees is over fifty percent (50%) of the employees who attend in the collective bargaining meeting (Socialist Republic of Vietnam 2012a). It is clear that the partnership agreement as suggested in this research is a completely new type of document relative to trade union operation at the workplace level. The differences between existing collective agreements and newly proposed agreements for partnership relationships are presented in Table 8.1.

One might argue that the official document of a partnership agreement between a grassroots trade union and management is redundant by virtue of the traditional

characteristics of communist trade unions. However, the problem is not because of the traditional characteristics, but is because the partnership is implicitly understood and conducted in practice. It can be seen in Chapter 6 that, without an official document, union operation has faced hostile management attitudes and interferences, while the trade unions have not been able to stop management interference. The management have used the tactics of union suppression, stonewalling, and discrimination to interfere in union operations; however, they were punished because of their infringements.

Table 8.1: Differences between partnership relationship agreement and collective agreement

	Partnership relationship agreement (Suggested by this research)	Collective agreement (In the Labour Code)
Subjects	Trade union and management/employers	Representative of employees and management/employers
Contents	Principles of partnership relationship (Brown 2000)	Employment conditions: favourable wages and working conditions for the employees

As with other strategies, the partnership strategy also has benefits and drawbacks for union revitalisation in Vietnam. Pessimism about Vietnamese trade unions because of their traditional relationship with management provides fertile ground for those who have criticised that relationship (Clarke 2006; Clarke & Pringle 2009; Cox 2015; Edwards & Phan 2008; Lee 2006). Similarly, in the West, critical questions of the risks of adopting a partnership strategy are inevitable. Academia has primarily been concerned with the extent to which partnership limits the ability of unions to attract members (Kelly 1996; Taylor & Ramsay 1998). Some employees may consider partnership as another union 'Trojan horse', or they might not trust the trade unions or may assume that, in many cases, management would appear to be gaining more benefits

from the practice of partnership. In other words, management appears to get more advantages than union membership in the partnership relationship.

The present study does not support the argument that the partnership with management makes trade unions weak. In Vietnam, the present research suggests that partnership may lead to benefits such as higher employee commitment to the organisation, a greater willingness to contribute to the organisation, and lower levels of industrial conflict. This argument is reinforced by Oxenbridge and Brown (2002), who suggest that the employers who accept a partnership relationship with trade unions tend to encourage workers to join the union, as well as providing better pay and ensuring better employment conditions for workers. These benefits have been clearly evidenced in state agencies where union leaders are often on the managerial board (Oxenbridge & Brown 2002). For the present research, a typical response from an interviewee of SOE-Trading affirms that union operation and their working conditions might be improved in situations where the primary trade union has a good relationship with management, as follows:

The trade union is a connection between management and employees. Moreover, the trade unions transfer information from management to employees. The good relationship between the trade union and management can assist management to obtain organisational goals as well as protect union membership effectively. (RF2-TR)

The benefits of the partnership were discussed for advanced economies by Guest and Peccei (2001), who found that co-operative relationships with management can increase rather than diminish the contact between unions and members. A range of positive impacts on union politics includes: a lower turnover rate of shop stewards; stewards

learning new skills and developing deeper insights into business issues; and increased attendance at union meetings and greater participation in union events.

Form the research findings in Chapter 6, in the section on Membership's scepticism about roles of union leaders, there were some comments from the respondents of DPE-Textile worrying about the independent of union leaders when they have close relationships with managers. However, this concern seems to be inevitable, because as discussed in Chapter 2, communist trade unions have a naturally close relationship with employers. The only option to change the existing nature of Vietnamese trade unions is to change their ideological foundation, yet there is no evidence related to ideological change appearing in this research. Studying the radical change of the trade unions in Eastern-bloc countries, those trade unions are more autonomous, but they have also been in crisis. It is supposed that autonomy is not therefore a panacea for trade union operation (Kubicek 2007; Ost 2007). In Vietnam, it can be seen that the main issue is not independent or dependent status, but rather is how union leaders take advantages of the close relationship with management to serve the membership effectively.

Again, this research found that the problem is not because of the partnership but is because of informal and undocumented agreements, as well as their unpunished application for violations. For instance, if there was a documented agreement with clear conditions of rights and obligations between the trade union and management, it could be used to apply for penalties for transgressions. The literature related to the causes of strikes and wildcat strikes in Chapter 2 and findings in Chapter 6 of this research clearly indicate that the wrongdoer commonly is management, with a variety of offence and discrimination; but they are not penalised for their violations. Therefore, the present research claims that a formal and well-documented agreement with management could help Vietnamese trade unions to effectively deal with management interference.

So far, the preconditions of building partnerships are met in Vietnam; hence, it is necessary to set up a programme to propagate the consensus of union management partnership as a strategy. The results from observation training programmes of trade unions did not include detailed knowledge on the union strategy. Training union leaders, formulating legislation for the partnership, and enhancing the implementation of labour regulations necessitate a partnership between trade unions and management in Vietnam. The content of union leaders' training programmes thus needs to concentrate more on how to deal with management. For example, the research findings referred to management opposition via various strategies. Union leaders at workplace level need to be trained to realise and overcome those strategies.

Another important thing is enhancing the implementation of labour policies that are relevant to union operation at workplace level. Studying the role of trade unions in small-and medium-sized enterprises in Vietnam, Torm (2012) claims that there is a need to improve the enforcement of regulations, while at the same time enhancing workers' awareness of their rights. One can argue that if labour regulations are effectively implemented, the trade unions might not suffer from adversarial management. Similarly, the findings of the present research show that, in the state agencies and enterprises, where management follows labour regulations, the primary trade unions operate well. Conversely, the unions at workplace level have difficulty in functioning. It is suggested that, if an official agreement of partnership were to be established, management would be forced to respect and follow it accordingly. As a result of this, primary trade unions at workplace level would perform better.

Although the concept of partnership is now widely used in the rhetoric and the practice of contemporary industrial relations, there has been debate on drawbacks of this strategy (Johnstone et al. 2009; Lucio & Stuart 2005). The controversy surrounding the

outcomes of partnerships suggest greater distance between unions and membership, work intensification, and job insecurity (Johnstone et al. 2009). However, the present research indicates that there has been no greater distance between primary trade unions and members at workplace level, and that an officially-documented relationship with management is a potential way to protect membership.

Conclusion

This chapter answered the questions of what are strategies for Vietnamese trade unions. It is argued that there has been robust evidence to propose that building union-management partnership is an appropriate strategy for union revitalisation, among other strategies. This argument is based the traditional relationship between trade unions and management, passivity of union membership and active union leadership, and the contemporary servicing model of the trade unions. Among the reviewed strategies, building partnership relationship between trade unions and management is emerging as a clearly appropriate strategy among the range of potential strategies. Other strategies such as organising, political actions, restructuring, international solidarity, and being more autonomous trade unions also are discussed, beside the partnership strategy, in order to reaffirm the suggested strategy. The political strategy has a traditional presence, but it is only helpful when the trade unions have a particular strategy such as building a partnership relationship with management, which needs a lobbying campaign to legalise the implementation of the strategy.

Among those strategies, building partnership is a possible strategy because the preconditions for formulating and implementing partnership strategy have obviously appeared in the Vietnamese context. This study argues that the material and organisational bases for partnership are: the traditional relationship between the trade

unions and management, passivity of membership and crucial role of union leadership in union operation, and contemporary union servicing model. Those bases provide more opportunities for building union-management partnership relationships. While Western trade unions have been seeking ways to build a cooperative relationship with management in modern times, Vietnamese trade unions have experienced such partnerships for a long time. The necessity for Vietnamese trade unions is setting up a programme and training their staff in order to enhance the relationship with management as well as protect union members. The partnerships should be formed in official documents between grassroots trade unions and managers of the particular enterprises. Vietnamese trade unions need to articulate the partnership with management in practice as a strategy for revitalisation.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

Introduction

The previous chapter responded to the main research question by proposing that building union-management partnership is an appropriate strategy for union revitalisation, among the range of available strategies. This chapter concludes the current research by revisiting the research questions, summarising research contributions and limitations, as well as offering suggestions for further research.

Research question revisited

This study has the main research question of what are strategies for trade union revitalisation in Vietnam during Doi Moi. To tackle this question, the study answered two sub-research questions: (1) how individual primary trade unions at workplace have responded to union issues? and (2) to what extent do union leadership and union democracy contribute to the strategy of trade union revitalisation?

For the first sub-research question, in Chapter 6 this study found that the primary trade unions responded by seeking employers' support as well as through negotiation and avoidance of direct confrontation with management. The union members have awareness of the close relationship between trade unions and the management, because this relationship is rooted in the characteristic of communist trade unions. On becoming union members, members have expected the primary trade unions to improve their living and working conditions. The union leadership have played a decisive role in union operation and in providing services for the membership. As the union operation has been influenced by management attitudes, the union leaders easily run primary trade unions when the management makes favourable conditions for trade union operations or

the employers are not anti-union. In contrast, where the employer is hostile, the union leaders suffer from discrimination and victimisation. Consequently, in dealing with management, the union leaders tend to negotiate and avoid confrontational approaches. In spite of playing a decisive role in union operation, there has been scepticism about the role of the union leaders because of their close relationship with management. It is clear that the contemporary trade unions are not able to escape this situation, by virtue of the influence of communist ideology. It is only a change in union ideology that might detach the union leaders from the management. Nevertheless, the trade unions are collective organisations with united membership. Therefore, this study examined the membership involvement in union activities and making union decisions in accordance with the concept of union democracy, in order to explore the extent to which union leadership and union democracy contribute to union operation and union strategy in revitalisation. The above contents are reflected in the second sub-research question.

With regard to the second sub-research question, in Chapter 7 this study presented the key indicators of union democracy as including involvement of rank-and-file members in union decision-making, equality of salary, status, skill and education between officials and members, free communication between union leaders and members, and the existence of legitimate and tolerated internal organised opposition. The study found that, in the Vietnamese context, decentralisation with a wide range of membership participation in union decision-making processes, equality between leadership and membership, and free communication were apparent. However, there has been a lack of organised opposition parties within trade unions, because of intolerance of opposition in communist tenets in Vietnam. The present research found that, despite this lack of opposition, union members are free to vote in union elections by ballot, as well as being able to criticise their leadership as if there was the presence of an opposition. The

answer to the second sub-research question reconfirms the crucial role of union leaders in union operations, and unfolds the passivity of union membership, which was neglected in previous research. A combination of the answers to the first and second sub-questions corresponds to the main research question.

The answer to the main question, of what are appropriate strategies for trade union revitalisation in Vietnam, is to build the union-management partnership relationship as a newly-emerging strategy. This strategy is based on the traditional relationship between trade unions and management, passivity of union membership and active union leadership, and the contemporary servicing model of the trade unions. In a servicing model, members rely upon the leaders, and the union members have mainly left their decision-making authority to the leadership. This goes with the tendency of union leaders in dealing with management interference. Consequently, the partnership strategy has been evident.

The partnership strategy in Vietnam needs to be officially formed in a document of agreement rather than to be understood merely as the nature of the communist trade unions. The documented partnership agreement between the primary trade unions and management would force the two parties to behave in good faith. Violations would be punishable according to the agreement. Of course, this strategy has both disadvantages and advantages. Until the current trade unionism can obtain changes in ideology to establish alternative trade unions outside the VGCL's umbrella, it is better for the trade unions to revive within the partnership strategy rather than to revive without any direction.

Research contributions

This research contributes to theory and practice in several ways. From a theoretical perspective, this research contributes to theories on trade union revitalisation, union democracy, and the relation between the servicing model of trade unions and strategies of trade union revitalisation. In respect of union revitalisation, a major idea that the present research brings to light is that building the union-management partnership relationship would be an appropriate strategy in transition countries. This research also sheds light on the close relationship between trade unions and management in communist trade unions in both practical and theoretical aspects. In the case of Vietnam, the trade unions with supportive party-state relationship should take advantage of the party-state's support in order to have a formal or documented agreement with management to represent and protect their members. Regarding to union democracy aspect, the present study uncovers the passivity of membership and its relevance to contributions of membership to union revitalisation. The passivity of union members recasts contemporary theory on union democracy and union revitalisation, by suggesting that studies on trade union revitalisation and union democracy should concentrate on the passivity of members, which is crucial in the formulation of union strategy. This is because union democracy has been considered as a noteworthy factor in union revitalisation, but the passivity of union members might erode the worthiness of union democracy. In addition, the discovery of passive membership in this research is linked to the servicing model of trade unions in Vietnam since the advent of Doi Moi. This leads to another contribution of the present research, that of a proposal for a link between the servicing model of trade unions and the partnership strategy of trade union revitalisation.

From a practical perspective, it has been argued that union activists should concentrate on the expectations of membership and provide what the membership needs, rather than seek a change in ideology or complain about why trade unions are not independent from management. This research also suggests a pathway for the leadership of the VGCL to achieve a union-management partnership strategy. Union revitalisation necessitates a formal agreement of the partnership, and a training programme for the union leaders at workplace level. In addition, policy makers can obtain from this research an empirical study which reveals the strategies of management to interfere union activity within their firms. The evidence from this study provides the ground for amendments of labour regulation concerning trade unions.

Research limitation and further study

This qualitative single case-study research has a limited sample size of data collection. Thus, the research results require further studies to reaffirm the tendency of partnership strategy of trade unions in wider sample size and other contexts outside the case of Vietnamese trade unions. In detail, further research might investigate the acceptance or rejection of the relationship between union and management with a larger sample size. In addition, other research investigating aspects of member involvement in union operation or union democracy should examine whether the members are passive or proactive in union operations, and confirm the link between opposition and active membership. Finally, it would be valuable to investigate the linkage between the servicing model and the union-management partnership relationship strategy in other contexts, irrespective of transitional or advanced economies, in future research.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore the strategy for trade union revitalisation in Vietnam. It was discovered that, besides political strategy as a traditional strategy, building union-management relationship is another appropriate strategy. The partnership strategy is formulated by the traditional characteristics of the communist trade unions, passivity of membership and active role of union leadership, and the union servicing model. One of the major benefits arising from this study is that it lays a foundation on which union activists and academics might find recommendations for union strategies amid the paradox of union revitalisation in Vietnam.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix 1:

Questionnaire items for Gordon et al.'s (1980) measure of union commitment

Union loyalty

I feel a sense of pride being a part of this union.

Based on what I know now and what I believe I can expect in the future, I plan to be a member of the union the rest of the time I work for [this company].

The record of this union is a good example of what dedicated people can get done.

The union's problems are my problems.

* Member of this local are not expected to have a strong personal commitment to the union.

A union member has more security than most members of management.

*I feel little loyalty toward this union.

*I have little confidence and trust in most member of my union.

I talk up the union to my friends as a great organisation to be a member of.

There is a lot to be gained by joining a union.

Deciding to join the union was a smart move on my part.

*My values and the union's values are not very similar.

*I rarely tell others that I am a member of the union.

It's easy to be yourself and still be a member of the union.

*Very little that the membership wants has any real importance to the union.

*The member does not get enough benefits for the money taken by the union for initiation fees and dues.

Responsibility to the union

Even though he/she may not like parts of it, the union member must 'live up to' all term of the Articles of Agreement.

It is the every union member's responsibility to see to it that management 'live up to' all the term of the Articles of Agreement.

It is the duty of every worker to 'keep his/her ears open' for information that might be useful to the union.

It is every member's duty to support or help another worker use the grievance procedure.

It is every member's duty to know exactly what the Articles of Agreement entitle him/her to.

It is every member's responsibility to see that other members 'live up to' all the terms of the Articles of Agreement.

Every member must be prepared to take the time and risk of filing a grievance.

Willingness to work for the union

I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected of a member in order to make the union successful.

*I doubt that I would do special work to help the union.

If asked, I would serve on a committee for the union.

If asked, I would run for an elected office in the union.

Belief in unionism

My loyalty is to my work, not to the union.

As long as I am doing the kind of work I enjoy, it does not matter if I belong to a union.

I could just as well work in a non-union company as long as the type of work was similar.

*Reverse scored.

Appendix 2:

Interview question list for rank-and-file members:

Project Title:

THE STRATEGY OF TRADE UNION REVITALISATION IN VIETNAM

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (FOR RANK- AND- FILE MEMBER)

Date:	Interviewer: Bac Phuong Nguyen
Name of state agency / enterprise:	Interviewee: Working from: (year / month)
Type of state agency / enterprise:	Position in Organisation: Time: (year / month)
Length of operation: from.....	Position in the union (if possible): Time..... (year / month)
The percentage of union members in the total number of employees:	Gender:
Structure of Executive Committee of the union at the enterprise:	Age:..... Union member from:.....(year/month)
How many people? Full-time or part-time (if part-time, then what position in the state agency / enterprise?):	
Started time: _____	Finished time: _____

Union loyalty:

- 1/ Why did you join the union?
- 2/ Do you feel a sense of being a part of this union? Why?
- 3/ Do you want to remain union membership? Why?
- 4/ Are union's problems your problem? Can you explain?

5/ Are there other people who are not union members?

6/ Do you know why they have not joined the union?

7/ Have you asked any of your co-workers join the union? Why did you do this?

8/ What benefits did you expect the union to provide? (Prompts getting supports in difficult circumstances, living conditions and social welfare, social activities ...)

9/ Has the union helped to improve working conditions and/or wages? How?

10/ Is the deduction of 2% of minimum wage to pay union fees too high, correct or too low? Is the amount of money worthy? Why?

Responsibility to the union

11/ Have you provided assistance to other members in the workplace (for example: to support or help another one in resolving labour conflicts)? Why?

12/ Are you ready to take the time and risk of filling a grievance? Why?

13/ Do you usually gather information which will be useful to the union? Why?

Willingness to work for the union

14/ Would you consider taking a union leadership position? Why? Why not?

Belief in unionism

15/What do you think are the union's aims? Or What do you think the union is trying to achieve?

16/ Do you mind you are union members or not while you work for this company? Why? Have you changed your mind then? Why?

17/Do you feel you are part of the union?

18/Do you feel you are part of the company?

19/Which one do you feel most strongly you belong to? Why?

Labour relation

20/ Is the labour relations climate positive or negative in your company/organisation? Can you give me some evidence?

21/ Do the union officials have close relationships with management? Do you know why?

22/ Do you know any union officials who receive benefits or support from management? How and why they are received those benefits?

Union participation

- 23/ Have you ever participated in union activities?
- 24/What type of activities did you participate in?
- 25/ How often have you participated in these activities?
- 26/ What do you think about strikes?
- 27/ What information does the union provide for members?
- 28/ Are you interested in reading information about trade unions? Why?

Trade union democracy

- 29/ Have you participated in meetings of the union? Do you often raise your voice? Why or why not?
- 30/ Do you allow to attend the decision making process of the trade union?
- 31/ Have you ever participated in the union election? Why?
- 32/ Do your union officials take member's concerns seriously?

Union leadership

- 33/ Who will you come to ask for assistance if there are issues in the workplace? Why?
- 34/ Do the union officials work for union members, company or for themselves? Can you give me an example? Why do you think they do this?
- 35/ Are union officials often interested in the benefits of trade union members? Why?
- 36/ Do you think union officials effectively represent and protect the rights and interests of workers? How do they do this? Have they ever organised strikes?

Union renewal strategies

- 37/Has the way the union operates changed since Doi moi? In what way? What brought about these changes?
- 38/Has the union members' ability to participate in the union changed since Doi Moi? What brought about these changes?
- 39/Do you think the union has become more democratic? How? Why has it changed?
- 40/ What roles do you think union leaders or member activist can play in changing the union? Which do you think is the most important? Why?
- 41/What do you see as the biggest obstacles to union renewal for your union?

42/What factors favour union renewal for your union?

43/In your opinion what should the union do to better meet the needs of its members?

44/ Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you.

Appendix 3:

Interview question list for part-time union leaders

Project Title:

THE STRATEGY OF TRADE UNION REVITALISATION IN VIETNAM
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**INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
(FOR PART-TIME UNION LEADERS AT PRIMARY TRADE UNIONS)**

Date:	Interviewer: Bac Phuong Nguyen
Name of state agency / enterprise:	Interviewee: Working from: (year / month)
Type of state agency / enterprise:	Position in Organisation: Time: (year / month)
Length of operation: from.....	Position in the union (if possible): Time..... (year / month)
The percentage of union members in the total number of employees:	Gender:
Structure of Executive Committee of the union at the enterprise:	Age:..... Union member from:.....(year/month)
How many people? Full-time or part-time (if part-time, then what position in the state agency / enterprise?):	
Started time: _____	Finished time: _____

Union loyalty:

1/ Why did you join the union?

2/ Do you feel a sense of being a part of this union? Why?

3/ Do you want to remain union membership? Why?

4/ Are union's problems your problem? Can you explain?

5/ Do you know why they have not joined the union?

6/ What benefits did you expect the union to provide? (Prompts getting supports in difficult circumstances, living conditions and social welfare, social activities ...)

7/ Has the union helped to improve working conditions and/or wages? How?

8/ Is the deduction of 2% of minimum wage to pay union fees too high, correct or too low? Is the amount of money worthy? Why?

Responsibility to the union

9/ Have you provided assistance to other members in the workplace (for example: to support or help another one in resolving labour conflicts)? Why?

10/ Are you ready to take the time and risk of filling a grievance? Why?

11/ Do you usually gather information which will be useful to the union? Why?

Willingness to work for the union

12/ Would you consider taking a union leadership position? Why? Why not?

Belief in unionism

13/What do you think are the union's aims? Or What do you think the union is trying to achieve?

14/ Do you mind you are union members or not while you work for this company? Why? Have you changed your mind then? Why?

15/Which one do you feel most strongly you belong to the union or this company? Why?

Labour relation

16/ Is the labour relations climate positive or negative in your company/organisation? Can you give me some evidence?

17/ Do the union officials have close relationships with management? Do you know why?

18/ Do you know any union officials who receive benefits or support from management? How and why they are received those benefits?

Union participation

19/ Have you ever organised strikes?

20/What do you think about strikes and other industrial actions?

21/ How often have you participated in these activities? Why did you participate?

Trade union democracy

22/ Have you participated in meetings of the union? Do you often raise your voice? Why or why not?

23/ Do you allow to attend the decision making process of the trade union? Why?

24/ Have you ever participated in the union election? Why?

25/ How you respond to member's concerns?

Union leadership

26/ Do the union members come to you to ask for assistance? How often? What kind of assistance do you provide to them?

27/ Do you work for union members, company or for yourself? Why do you think so?

28/ Are you often interested in the benefits of trade union members? Why?

29/ Do you think you are able to effectively represent and protect the rights and interests of workers? Why?

Union strategy

30/Has the way the union operates changed since Doi moi? In what way? What brought about these changes?

31/Has the union members' ability to participate in the union changed since Doi moi? What brought about these changes?

32/Do you think the union has become more democratic? How? Why has it changed?

33/ What roles do you think union leaders or member activist can play in changing the union? Which do you think is the most important? Why?

34/What do you see as the biggest obstacles to union change for your union?

35/What factors favour union change for your union?

36/In your opinion what should the union do to better meet the needs of its members?

37/ Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you.

Appendix 4:

Interview question list for fulltime union officials

Project Title:

THE STRATEGY OF TRADE UNION REVITALISATION IN VIETNAM

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (FOR FULLTIME UNION OFFICIALS)

Date:	Interviewer: Bac Phuong Nguyen
Name of organisation:	Interviewee: Working from: (year / month) Position in Organisation: Time: (year / month) Position in the union (if possible): Time..... (year / month) Gender: Age:..... Union member from:.....(year/month) Started time: _____ Finished time: _____

1/ Can you tell me advantages and disadvantages of union's operation?

2/ Is the deduction of 2% of minimum wage to pay union fees too high, correct or too low? Is the amount of money worthy? Why?

3/ What do you think the union is trying to achieve?

4/ What are the key determinants influencing on trade union commitment since the economic reform?

5/ Are there differences in the wages and conditions between union members and non-union employees in the company/ organisation?

6/ Do you think the financial sources are enough for union to organize activities?

7/ Does the union independently launch activities? Why do you think so?

8/ Has the way the union operates changed since Doi Moi? In what way? What brought about these changes?

9/ Do you think the union has become more democratic? How? Why has it changed?

10/ What roles do you think union leaders or member activist can play in changing the union? Which do you think is the most important? Why?

11/ What do you see as the biggest obstacles to union change for your union?

12/ What factors favour union change for your union?

13/ In your opinion what should the union do to better meet the needs of its members?

14/ Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you.