

## **Cross-cultural Risk Communications of Alien Labor Dispute --A Taiwan's Example of Alternative Dispute Resolution**

Fengming M. Chang  
Dept. Industrial Engineering & Management, Tungfang Institute of Technology,  
[michael@mail.tf.edu.tw](mailto:michael@mail.tf.edu.tw)

Shih-Chien Chien  
International Business and Trade, SHU-TE University, [cscsyh@mail.stu.edu.tw](mailto:cscsyh@mail.stu.edu.tw)

Ching-Yuan Huang  
International Business and Trade, SHU-TE University, [chiyuan@mail.stu.edu.tw](mailto:chiyuan@mail.stu.edu.tw)

### **ABSTRACT**

This study presents several propositions about the perception of Taiwan Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) organization deal with alien labor dispute problems under the viewpoints of cross-cultural and risk communication. Researches are based on the researches of Cultural Constraints in Management Theories (Hofstede, 1993) and Risk Society Theories (Beck, 1992). The purpose of this article tries to address a mechanism based on cross-cultural, risk communication, and ADR concepts to solve alien labor dispute problems.

**KEYWORDS:** labor dispute, cross-cultural, risk communication, Alternative Dispute Resolution, Cultural Constraints in Management Theories, Risk Society Theories

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

According to the global competition trend, Taiwan's industries are facing on the pressures of high manpower cost by degrees. This high manpower cost causes the decreasing of competition advantages. So many Taiwan's industries moved oversea, such as Mainland China and countries of southeastern Asia. This condition impacts the growth of macroeconomic performance of Taiwan directly. From 1991, Taiwan government allowed alien workers from southeastern Asia, such as Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Malaysia, working in Taiwan. From 1999 to present, the population of alien workers in Taiwan maintains about three hundred thousand, 3% of Taiwan worker population. Indeed, alien works solve the high-works industries problems, however, communication of language and culture factors cause social problems raised. The most serious problem is labor dispute. The degree of this problem is increasing year by year. From 1997 to 2002, increasing rate of labor dispute cases is about 2000 people per year. Although this rate cut down in 2003, it's still higher than of Korea or Japan (see Table 2). According the high population of the alien worker, the social problems caused by alien labor dispute are more and more important. Number of the alien worker that skulked from job has up to 9688 people (see Table 3). It's a research topic that if the alien worker skulking caused by labor dispute.

Because the increasing of the alien labors and the cross-cultural interaction cause

kinds of social problems and easily cause labor dispute, based on the Cultural Constraints in Management Theories (Hofstede, 1993) and Risk Society Theories (Beck, 1992), this studies aimed on the perception of risk among employers, labors, and so on in the labor dispute cases that dealt with by Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) organization.

According to the above theories, it is necessary to have the concept of cross-cultural management in dealing with alien labor dispute. It's more import to adapt and decrease the difference among multiple cultures. The before hand planning is helpful for the avoiding risk communications in the alien labor dispute. A full information system can afford a controller to solve labor dispute for enterprise, society, Taiwan, and alien labor home countries.

Table 1. The number of alien labor in Taiwan from 1994 to 2003.

Year	Total	(from) Indonesia	Malaysia	Philippines	Thailand	Vietnam
1994	151989	6020	2344	38473	105152	0
1995	189051	5430	2071	54647	126903	0
1996	236555	10206	1489	83630	141230	0
1997	248396	14648	736	100295	132717	0
1998	270620	22058	940	114255	133367	0
1999	294967	41224	158	113928	139526	131
2000	326515	77830	113	98161	142665	7746
2001	304605	91132	46	72779	127732	12916
2002	303684	93212	35	69426	111538	29473
2003	300150	56437	27	81355	104728	57603

Table 2. Numbers of labor dispute case among Taiwan, Korea and Japan.

Year	Taiwan	Korea	Japan
1992	1803(1747)*	235	263
1993	1878(1856)	144	252
1994	2061(2021)	121	230
1995	2271(2211)	88	209
1996	2659(2581)	85	193
1997	2600(2532)	78	178
1998	4138(4043)	129	145
1999	5860(5806)	198	154
2000	8026(6579)	250	118
2001	10955(7405)	235	---
2002	12393(7768)	---	---
2003	9869(4546)	---	---

\* ( ): Number of case dealt with by government.

Table 3. Number of alien labor skulked from job in Taiwan from 1994 to 2003.

Year	Grand total		Indonesia		Philippines		Thailand		Vietnam		Malaysia	
	person	skulked ratio	person	skulked ratio	person	skulked ratio	person	skulked ratio	person	skulked ratio	person	skulked ratio
1994	5,922	3.90	136	2.26	1,865	4.85	3,787	3.60			134	5.72
1995	11,424	4.56	232	4.27	3,599	6.59	7,495	5.91			98	4.73
1996	7,424	3.49	263	2.58	3,000	3.59	4,131	2.93			30	2.01
1997	5,508	2.32	334	2.65	2,962	3.25	2,194	1.66			18	1.58
1998	4,677	1.82	493	2.80	2,450	2.27	1,728	1.32			6	0.87
1999	4,057	1.44	760	2.54	1,882	1.63	1,403	1.03			12	2.23
2000	4,268	1.37	1,680	2.93	1,303	1.19	1,234	0.88	35	0.72	16	12.13
2001	5,089	1.58	2,804	3.21	1,048	1.22	942	0.68	293	2.75	2	2.54
2002	7,079	2.31	3,809	3.99	643	0.93	1,042	0.86	1,584	7.79	1	2.76
2003	9,688	3.23	3,411	4.62	873	1.17	1,171	1.09	4,233	9.63		

## 2. RESEARCH METHODS

The research method of this study is using literature review with the Cultural Constraints in Management Theories (Hofstede, 1993) and Risk Society Theories (Beck, 1992). It aims on the affection of the dealing with results in labor dispute that is using the ADR mechanism and the addressing of the relative propositions.

Enterprises in Taiwan have taken up positions for global business. The development for employ market is multiple ways. The adhibition of alien labors are easy to cause labor dispute. Before further discussion, the relative purposes of this research are shown as the following:

1. The alien labor culture affection for the risk communication in labor dispute.
2. The risk communication in cross-cultural and the bias of cognizance in labor dispute.
3. The communication effect analysis for the ADR organization.
4. The cross-cultural affection for the communications.

For the further analyze and resolve alien labor dispute problems, this study addresses three concepts, including viewpoint of cross-cultural values, measurement of risk communication, and measurement of risk perception. These three concepts are shown in Fig. 2 and develop seven propositions as the following:

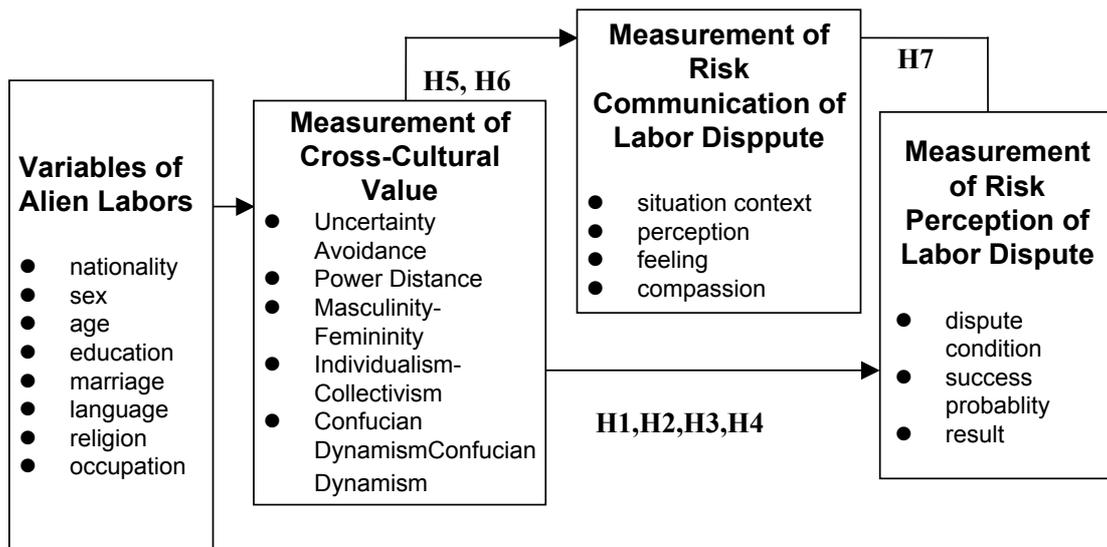


Fig.1 The framework of research and propositions

### 3. CROSS-CULTURE AND LABOR DISPUTE

**Proposition 1: The amalgamation degree of cross-cultural can affect effect of result of dealing with labor dispute.**

Culture is a gang of behaves system. The culture core is a setout of traditional concept, especially of value viewpoint system (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952). Culture is a fixed living style for adapting environment by a group of people. Culture is also a aggregation of minds and thoughts (Hofstede, 1980; Alder, 1983). Taylor (1871) pointed out that culture consists of knowledge, belief, art, ethics, law, conventionality, and habits. Generally, culture can be used to identify different group of people who have different life styles (Adler, 1983). For alien labors in Taiwan with different cultures, they have different culture backgrounds with various life styles, believes, habits, and so on. Such it's easy to cause chasm. Sarangi (1994) though intercultural is an intermediate culture; it consists of characters of both home culture and host culture. These characters are independent each other whatever they are shared by cultures-in-contact. So the amalgamation degree of cross-cultural can affect effect of the result of dealing with labor dispute

**Proposition 2: Communications in cross-cultural labor dispute have to be based on the same language.**

Some national cultures are hard to be adapted than the others'. This condition is so called cultural distance (Church, 1982). Under the assumption of cultural distance, different styles of communications are used. Communication is an offspring of culture, but culture is also an offspring of communications (Nakanishi, 1986). McGuigan (2002) pointed out that the behavior of cross-cultural is a danger bridge between different believes. The most important balk for communications between countries is language (Knapp and Knapp-Pothoff, 1987; Dean, 1997). Advocated that the difference between intra-cultural and intercultural is language, and so are among alien labors in Taiwan.

**Proposition 3: Due to different viewpoint values, it's easy to cause labor dispute in cross-cultural working environment.**

**Proposition 4: The difference of culture between manager and employee is easy to cause labor dispute.**

The most important balk for communications among countries is language. It's always happened between employer and employee from different countries. It's also easy to cause labor dispute. The research results of Hofstede (1980) showed that the mother cultural affects job value viewpoint more than age, sex, and occupation factors do. More important is that Hofstede (1980) is well known for his work on four dimensions of cultural variability, named as "Hofstede's Dimensions." These include: Uncertainty Avoidance, Power Distance, Masculinity-Femininity, Individualism-Collectivism, and Confucian Dynamism.

#### **4. CROSS-CULTURE AND RISK COMMUNICATION**

**Proposition 5: It needs the same perceptions, situation context, and suitable organizations for resolving labor dispute.**

The coming of risk society means our value viewpoint has been changed from benefit of traditional industry society to the avoiding of risk. Risk is defined as events with uncertainty. Risk communication is the interaction of information exchange between employer and employee. The communication is effective if employer can recognize what employee thinks (Sandman *et al.*, 1988; Slovic, 1987). ADR organization is a unit that can deal with labor dispute out of government. It's more suitable to deal with labor dispute than government.

**Proposition 6: It needs clear strategies of risk communication for the avoiding of labor dispute.**

As risk is complex and uncertain, it's hard in communication. According the uncorrected perception and unknown about alien culture, it often gets fail in the labor dispute communication and causes sequel difficulties. It needs clear strategies of risk communication for the avoiding of labor dispute. The main targets for risk communication are as the following (Keeney & Von Winterfeldt, 1986):

- A. Effectively educations for labors, employers, and ADR about the concepts of risk, risk analysis, and risk management.
- B. Effectively educations for labors, employers, and ADR about special risk and behave of decreasing risk.
- C. To encourage the measurement of decreasing individual risk.
- D. To improve the perception about alien labors culture values and their concerning affairs.
- E. Increasing trust for each other.
- F. To resolve chasm and issue.

#### **5. RISK COMMUNICATION AND LABOR DISPUTE**

**Proposition 7: To resolve labor dispute, information deficiency and information asymmetric have to be avoided.**

Risk perception is based on Psychology; it's affected by individual characters and society. Risk perception is defined the bad expression affected by individual experience and information. Government and enterprise policymakers can recognize people's perceptions and habits from the information integrated and then constitute effective strategies to cut down risk perception.

From the viewpoint of the actual alien labor's working environment, most of the working environments are not good. Especially alien labors lack environment of human interactions. Alien workers' perception abilities are bias under above bad environment. To integrate information and to afford full information can decrease risk communication and resolve alien dispute problems.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Alien labors working in Taiwan have been near 15 years. Social problems caused by alien labors are often happened. While the number of alien labors increasing, this problem is more and more important comparatively. This study tries to address a conceptual model based on cross-cultural, risk communication, and ADR theories to solve alien labor dispute problems. Several propositions are also addressed in this research. Summary above study, first, it can effectively decrease risk communication and solve alien labor dispute problem by amalgamating multiple cultures, common language, and similar value viewpoint. Second, it's necessary to have clear strategies and fully integrated information to avoid the aggravation of labor dispute. Final, to deal with labor dispute problems by objective and internationalized ADR organizations is fairer.

In the future, we will intend to discuss the propositions with evidence analysis and propose the roadmap to guide the government policy .

## REFERENCES

- Adler, N.J., "Cross-cultural Management Research: The Ostrich and the Trend," *Academy of management Review*, 8, 1983, pp.2.
- Beck,U., "Risk Society:Towards a New Modernity," *Translated by Ritter, M.* Saqe Publishing, London, 1992.
- Church, A.T., "Sojourner Adjustment.," *Psychological Bulletin*, 91, 1982, pp.540-571.
- Dean, J., "Dealing with problems in intercultural communication: A study of negotiation of meaning in native-nonnative speaker interaction," *Netherlands: Tilburg University Press*, 1997.
- Hofstede, G., "Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values," Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1980.
- Hofstede, G., "Cultural Constraints in Management Theories," *Academy of Management Executive(AEX)*, 7(1), 1983, pp.81-94.
- Keeney, R.L. & von Winterfeldt,D., *Improving Risk Communication.Risk Analysis*, 6, 1986, pp.417-424.
- Knapp, K. & Knapp-Pothoff, A., "Instead of an introduction: Conceptual issues in analyzing intercultural communication. In K. Knapp," W. Enninger & A. Knapp-Potthoff (Eds.), *Analyzing Intercultural communication*, Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1987, pp.1-15.
- Kroeber,A.L., & Kluckhohn, C., *Culture: A critical review of concepts and definitions*, Cambridge: Mass, 1952.
- McGuigan, G. S., "When in Rome: A rationale and selection of resources in

international business etiquette and intercultural communication,” *Reference & User Services Quarterly*, 41(3), 2002, pp.220-227.

Nakanishi, M., “Perceptions of self-disclosure in initial interaction: A Japanese sample,” *Human Communication Research*, 13, 1986, pp.167-190.

Sarangi, S., “Intercultural or not? Beyond celebration of cultural differences in miscommunication analysis,” *Pragmatics*, 4, 409- 427, 1994.

Slovic, P., “Perception of risk”, *Science*, 26, 1987, pp.280.