Book Review

Understanding the Filipino Worker and Organization, 2nd ed., edited by Ma. Regina M. Hechanova, Mendiola Teng-Calleja, and Vanessa C. Villaluz. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 2017. Pp. 449. ISBN 9789715507899.

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The second edition of *Understanding the Filipino Worker and Organization*, edited by Ma. Regina M. Hechanova, Mendiola Teng-Calleja, and Vanessa C. Villaluz, is a comprehensive collection that tackles key topics in organizational psychology and behavior and human resource management. Chapters include, among others, key topics on human resource management and development, labor employee relations, and organizational development. In addition, there are special topics on contemporary issues affecting the work organization: generations at the workplace, managing expatriates, women and gender issues, ethics and corruption, spirituality in the workplace, and corporate social responsibility. These special topics suggest that the discipline of human resource and industrial/ organizational management has expanded to include key issues encountered in the workplace in the twenty-first century that hitherto were not given emphasis. This is one of the strengths of the book.

What is distinct about this volume is its focus on the particularities of the Filipino business organization and worker. The dearth of literature on organizational behavior and human resource management in the Philippine context certainly makes this volume an important and exciting contribution to the discipline and its practice.

After reading through the chapters, I find the textbook an excellent reference for some of the courses on labor and industrial relations: organization and work, organizational behavior in industrial relations, human resource development at the firm and national levels,

and the design and administration of training programs. Each of the chapters contains a brief theoretical discussion of a particular topic, which is then contextualized in the Filipino organizational setting and values system. For example, in Chapter 1, "Political, Economic, Environmental, and Cultural Influences on Organizational Behavior," Edna P. Franco analyzes, using the open systems theory, the changes that are taking place in the economic and business environment in the Philippines and their impact on business organizations and Filipino work values. The inclusion of empirical studies, which are authored by Filipinos, further enriches each chapter and provides a more nuanced understanding of the topic. For example, in Chapter 7, "Motivating the Filipino Worker," Ma. Ligaya M. Menguito identifies several key studies that have contributed to a deeper understanding of Filipino work motivation. These include the works of Cauton (2012); Enriquez (1993); Ilagan et. al. (2014); Martires (1988); and Yao, Franco, and Hechanova (2005) among others. In addition, I find the workplace application cases included in some of the chapters, which showcase organization-specific experiences. They provide practical examples of how good and innovative organizational and/or human resource management interventions can be designed, implemented, and improved (see for example pp. 208–209). The discussion questions at the end of each chapter help students synthesize their learning. Many teachers in the discipline may find the cases in the last section of the book a good complement to their course program. Finally, the writing is reader-friendly, and can be understood by non-specialists.

While several chapters of the book acknowledge the collectivist nature of the Filipino worker, the book would have benefited with the inclusion of a chapter on the voice of the worker. In any organization that employs workers, a key challenge is the balancing of competing interests in the employment relationship: efficiency, equity, and voice (Budd 2004). The inability of organizations to effectively balance competing interests in the employment relationship often leads to conflict. The authors of Chapter 15, "Conflict," however, do not mention that the lack of opportunities or venues for worker voice and the reasons for it may also cause conflict in the workplace, particularly between the workers and the management. I am left guessing if the authors' proposed intervention of establishing "a fair and mutually acceptable decision-making process" (p. 246) to address structural conflicts is what they had in mind as a form of worker voice.

Hirschman (1970) defines voice as a complaint mechanism for employees. On the other hand, advocates of high-performance human resource practices embrace an employee-involvement perspective which sees voice, through problem-solving teams and other methods, as a way to improve organizational performance. The research conducted by Frese, Teng, and Wijnen (1999) and LePine and Van Dyne (1998) found that exercising voice in the workplace is related to positive attitudes toward jobs and organizations. Blyton and Turnbull (1998, 227), citing McGregor (1960), concur that employee voice initiatives stem "from the principles of human relations management, the connection between communication, consultation and increased worker commitment, higher job satisfaction, and motivation."

To labor advocates, collective bargaining and other activities pursued by trade unions are viewed as the only legitimate forms of employee voice. Budd (2004) and Befort and Budd (2009) advocate for an inclusive definition of worker voice that sees employee voice as expressing opinions and having meaningful input into work-related decision-making. This broad conceptualization of voice includes individual and collective voice, union and non-union voice, and voice mechanisms that cover not only employment terms, but also work autonomy and business issues.

Trade unions are organizations for collective worker voice, albeit they have been on the decline in the last two decades. Workers, including Filipino workers, have agency. They can self-organize to have a worker voice in the workplace that is often characterized by power asymmetry between the bosses and the workers, with the former wielding more power. This power asymmetry relates to Hofsteds's (2001, 14) concept of "power distance."

Mendiola Teng-Calleja, in Special Topic 1, "Generations in the Workplace," points out the existence of three generations—Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y or the millennials—in many of today's workplaces. Workers belonging to Generation X and Generation Y, according to Teng-Calleja, value egalitarianism and "greater and meaningful participation in organizational activities and decision-making" (p. 325). The former relates to Budd's (2004) equity issue and the latter to worker voice. To the extent that the majority of Filipino workers are young workers with the average age of 26, the need for providing opportunities and venues for worker voice is crucial to the stability and success of an organization. This is particularly

important in the growth sectors (e.g., information technology, telecommunications, call centers, fast food chains, and the hospitality industry) as identified in Chapter 1.

Venues for worker voice can also be company-initiated and individually-oriented. In Chapter 7, Ma. Ligaya M. Menguito provides an example at IBM Philippines' Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) unit: To keep the agents motivated, the company discusses with them possible opportunities and avenues for growth in the industry (p. 120). In Chapter 10, "Productive Behaviors and Employee Relations," the authors include, as a positive behavior, an employee's act of suggesting innovative ideas to improve work operations, which fosters favorable organizational performance (p. 166). A recent survey done by Salvaña (2016), involving 209 employees from 13 information technology-business process outsourcing (IT-BPO) companies in Metro Manila, identified a mix of individual (e.g., survey, e-mail memo correspondence, individual briefing, ethics hotline) and group or collective (e.g., team/department briefing, town hall, large scale staff meeting) voice schemes, and processes. The use of individual-based voice mechanisms, particularly survey, email memo correspondence, and individual briefing, tends to be the dominant practice in the IT-BPO companies she surveyed. Salvaña (2016) argues that employees can still express opinions and have meaningful input into work-related decision-making, including flexible working time arrangements, through individual-based voice mechanisms. She points out that the IT-BPO companies appeared to be following an employee-involvement perspective more as a way to improve organizational performance than as a complaint mechanism for employment-related issues.

Another key development in the work organization in the twenty-first century is the rise of non-standard forms of employment and new forms of work. This topic is weakly developed in the book; in fact, these trends are only mentioned in passing in Chapter 1 and are not included among the special topics of the book. The International Labour Organization (2016, 7) defines non-standard employment as "work that falls out of the realm of the 'standard employment relationship,'" understood as work that is full-time, indefinite, as well as part of a subordinate and bilateral employment relationship. Non-standard forms of employment include contractual and/or project-based employment, casual employment, seasonal employment, and forms of employment that involve a triangular or multiparty employment relationship (e.g., agency-hired work). As the standard employment

relationship is also associated with a single worksite (distinct from the home), work performed at multiple worksites (or multiple employers) in short or fixed periods of time may also be considered as non-standard employment. New forms of work, on the other hand, are those types of work that are often related to the rise of the digital economy. They include internet-based work (e.g., Amazon Turk, Upwork, Facebook, Alibaba, Lazada, etc.), platform-based jobs (e.g., Grab, Uber), and other jobs in the service sector that are highly dependent on the use of digital technology and artificial intelligence (AI).

In the manufacturing sector, jobs that increasingly require competency in the use of AI, and to a lesser degree, robotics, are on the rise as well. These changes in the nature of work have impact on the workplace behavior of the Filipino worker and the business organization: How do organizations manage the careers of non-standard workers? How does job insecurity affect worker behavior, worker motivation, and performance management? How is conflict addressed in an organization where a multiparty employment relationship exists? Without doubt, today's organizations grapple with these questions.

On the whole, *Understanding the Filipino Worker and Organization* is a good read despite its limitations because of its excellent case studies and clear writing. It is a publication that is bound to attract the interest of a variety of audiences. Every social scientist with an interest in understanding the Filipino corporate culture and worker behavior will find it theoretically and analytically stimulating.

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