

The Role Of Ideological Work In Orienting And Enhancing The Effectiveness Of Social Criticism Activities Of The Trade Union

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Abstract:

Ideological work plays a crucial role in guiding and improving the effectiveness of social criticism (PBXH) activities within the Vietnam Trade Union, especially in the context of the recently passed Trade Union Law No. 50/2024/QH15. By shaping the content, methods, and scope of social criticism, ideological work enhances awareness and responsibility among trade union officials, fosters internal consensus, and strengthens the scientific and practical foundation of social criticism.

This article analyzes the relationship between ideological work and social criticism while proposing solutions to maximize the role of ideological work in these activities. In doing so, it contributes to enhancing the effectiveness of the Vietnam Trade Union's social criticism efforts, protecting workers' rights, and participating in policy and legal development.

Keywords: *Ideological work; social criticism; Vietnam Trade Union; Trade Union Law 2024.*

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I. Introduction

In the context of accelerating industrialization, modernization, and international integration, the supervisory and social criticism (PBXH) roles of the Vietnam Fatherland Front and socio-political organizations have received increasing attention (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2021). These functions serve as vital communication channels that enable the Party and the State to listen to public opinions, thereby refining policies and ensuring the legitimate rights and interests of members and various social groups (Tran Thanh Man, 2021).

As a socio-political organization representing the working class and laborers, the Vietnam Trade Union plays a significant role within the political system. The 13th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam emphasized the need for reform in the organization and operations of trade unions to align with workers' needs and aspirations as well as the requirements of international integration. This includes the task of orienting and managing workers' organizations within enterprises outside the existing trade union system (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2021, p. 166).

According to the 2013 Constitution, Article 9 stipulates that the Vietnam Fatherland Front is a political alliance comprising socio-political organizations, social organizations, and distinguished individuals from various social classes, ethnic groups, and religions, including overseas Vietnamese. The Front has the authority and responsibility to conduct supervision and social criticism, in which the Vietnam Trade Union is an important member (National Assembly, 2013). This underscores the trade union's role in monitoring and critiquing policies related to workers' rights and interests.

On November 27, 2024, the 15th National Assembly passed Trade Union Law No. 50/2024/QH15, which supplements and clarifies regulations regarding the social criticism function of trade unions compared to the 2012 Trade Union Law. Accordingly, trade unions have the right and responsibility to participate in reviewing legal documents, plans, and policies related to workers. Relevant agencies and organizations are required to acknowledge and respond to trade union critiques as stipulated by law (National Assembly, 2024, Article 17). Additionally, the law explicitly outlines the responsibilities of agencies and organizations in ensuring favorable conditions for trade unions to carry out social criticism (National Assembly, 2024, Articles 26, 27, 28). This marks a significant step forward in enabling trade unions to better fulfill their role in representing and protecting workers' legitimate rights and interests.

For trade union social criticism to be truly effective, ideological work plays a crucial role in enhancing the awareness and responsibility of trade union officials and members. This work not only provides direction regarding the content and methods of social criticism but also fosters ideological unity and coordinated action within the organization, generating societal consensus and securing support from government authorities (Vietnam General Confederation of Labor, 2023). The 13th Congress of the Vietnam Trade Union has proposed

innovative approaches to ideological work, particularly by improving communication and advocacy efforts, enhancing engagement and outreach, and actively countering false narratives to protect workers' legitimate rights.

Researching the role of ideological work in guiding and improving the effectiveness of trade union social criticism holds significant theoretical and practical importance. Strengthening ideological work not only enhances the quality of social criticism but also contributes to more comprehensive protection of workers' rights, especially in the context of implementing the 2024 Trade Union Law.

II. Theoretical Basis For The Role Of Ideological Work In Guiding And Enhancing The Effectiveness Of Trade Union Social Criticism

Concept and Role of Ideological Work

Resolution No. 5 of the 10th Central Committee on ideological, theoretical, and press work clearly states: Ideological work is a particularly important component of the Party's overall activities; it is a key field in building and reinforcing the political foundation of the regime. It plays a pioneering role in the cause of building and defending the socialist homeland and is essential in safeguarding and developing Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh Thought, and the Party's viewpoints and policies. Furthermore, it ensures that the Party's ideology, traditional moral values, and the intellectual and cultural essence of humanity maintain a dominant position in society's spiritual life (Central Propaganda Department, 2007).

Within the Vietnam Trade Union, ideological work holds a particularly important role, contributing to:

- Educating and raising political and ideological awareness among trade union officials and members: Ideological work helps trade union officials and members thoroughly understand the Party's policies, the State's laws, and the duties of the trade union organization. This, in turn, enhances their sense of responsibility, self-discipline in labor and production, and engagement in trade union activities.

- Orienting values, building trust, and unifying thoughts and actions: Through propaganda and education, the trade union directs its officials and members toward correct values, strengthens their trust in the Party's leadership, and upholds the path toward socialism. This fosters unity in perception and action across the entire system, contributing to the successful implementation of the objectives and tasks set forth by the 13th Congress of the Vietnam Trade Union (Vietnam General Confederation of Labor, 2023).

- Combating wrongful and hostile viewpoints and protecting the Party's ideological foundation: In the current context, hostile and reactionary forces are employing increasingly sophisticated tactics to undermine the Party and the State. The trade union's ideological work plays a crucial role in countering and refuting such wrongful and hostile viewpoints, safeguarding the Party's ideological foundation, and reinforcing the trust of trade union officials and members in the Party's leadership.

The Role of Ideological Work in Guiding and Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Vietnam Trade Union's Social Criticism Activities

Ideological work plays a crucial role in directing and improving the effectiveness of social criticism (PBXH) activities of the Vietnam Trade Union, ensuring that the organization effectively fulfills its function of representing and protecting the legal rights and interests of workers. In the new context, the Trade Union Law No. 50/2024/QH15 clearly defines the rights and responsibilities of the Trade Union in PBXH activities, emphasizing its role in contributing to the formulation of labor-related policies and laws. Article 17 of the law states that the Trade Union has the right and responsibility to provide opinions and conduct PBXH on draft legal normative documents, plans, programs, projects, and proposals of state agencies that directly affect the rights and interests of trade union members and workers. Additionally, the Trade Union is responsible for proposing content and implementing PBXH in accordance with the Law on the Vietnam Fatherland Front and other legal regulations (National Assembly, 2024, Article 17).

To effectively carry out PBXH duties, ideological work should focus on three key aspects: guiding the content of criticism, enhancing the PBXH capacity of trade union officials, and fostering social consensus to increase the impact of PBXH.

Firstly, ideological work helps determine the core focus of PBXH, ensuring that the Trade Union prioritizes policies that have a direct impact on workers' rights, such as wages, social insurance, working conditions, and occupational safety. This ensures that PBXH efforts are substantive and not scattered while also increasing the persuasiveness of the Trade Union's critical opinions. For instance, during the drafting of the revised Social Insurance Law, the Vietnam Trade Union proactively proposed reducing the required contribution period for pension benefits to better protect workers' long-term interests.

Secondly, ideological work plays a vital role in enhancing the PBXH capacity of trade union officials, equipping them with sharp critical thinking, logical reasoning, and effective policy advocacy skills. According to Article 17 of the Trade Union Law 2024, PBXH opinions from the Trade Union must be considered, responded to, and explained in accordance with the law (National Assembly, 2024, Article 17). Therefore, trade union

officials must have strong professional expertise, legal knowledge, and political acumen to present well-founded arguments that carry weight in the policymaking process.

Thirdly, ideological work contributes to building social consensus and strengthening the impact of the Trade Union's PBXH activities. An effective communication strategy will raise awareness among workers and society about the Trade Union's PBXH role, garnering support from state agencies, business owners, and workers alike. This not only enhances the Trade Union's position within the political-social system but also ensures that its critical recommendations have a real and tangible impact.

Thus, ideological work not only directs the content of PBXH and enhances its execution but also amplifies its social impact, helping to effectively implement the provisions of Article 17 of the Trade Union Law 2024. In the coming period, continued innovation in ideological work, aligned with practical PBXH activities, will enable the Vietnam Trade Union to better fulfill its representative role, advocating for policies that genuinely and sustainably benefit workers.

III. The Current State Of Ideological Work In The Social Criticism Activities Of The Vietnam Trade Union

Strengths

Firstly, the dissemination, promotion, and education on Party policies, state laws, and particularly PBXH-related content have been actively implemented by the Trade Union. Various levels of the Trade Union have organized numerous activities such as conferences, seminars, discussions, and training sessions to thoroughly communicate Party resolutions, legal regulations, and the Charter of the Vietnam Trade Union. As a result, trade union officials and members have gained a better understanding of the role of PBXH in protecting workers' rights.

Secondly, the PBXH activities of the Trade Union have become more substantive, yielding tangible results in safeguarding workers' rights and improving labor policies. According to the summary report on ten years of implementing Decision No. 217-QĐ/TW, dated December 12, 2013, of the Politburo, the Trade Union has actively engaged in PBXH with impressive achievements. From 2013 to 2018, trade unions at various levels organized nearly 23,000 critical review conferences, submitted nearly 25,000 comments on draft legal documents, and conducted over 30,000 direct dialogues. The PBXH content focused on key legislative drafts affecting workers' rights, such as the Vocational Education Law, Employment Law, Social Insurance Law, Labor Code, and related guiding regulations. Notably, in 2020, the Vietnam General Confederation of Labor (VGCL) led PBXH efforts on the Draft Law on Vietnamese Workers Working Abroad (Amended) and provisions related to the Labor Code. In 2021, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, PBXH was mainly conducted through research and written contributions on draft policies related to labor, employment, and social welfare. Overall, the Trade Union's critical feedback has been acknowledged and incorporated by relevant authorities, contributing to the improvement of labor-related legal frameworks (VGCL, 2023).

Thirdly, the Trade Union has made progress in gathering and analyzing the opinions, aspirations, and public sentiment of its members and workers. Various levels of the Trade Union have actively collected workers' opinions through multiple channels such as workers' conferences, periodic workplace dialogues, suggestion boxes, and hotlines. Feedback and proposals from these channels are compiled, analyzed, and submitted to relevant authorities, helping to protect workers' legitimate rights and drive policy improvements.

Fourthly, training and capacity-building programs aimed at improving PBXH skills for Trade Union officials have been initiated in some localities. Several provincial and municipal labor federations have organized specialized training sessions on PBXH, equipping trade union officials with knowledge, analytical skills, reasoning abilities, and public speaking confidence, thereby enabling them to engage more effectively in PBXH activities.

Limitations

Firstly, some trade union officials and members, including leadership, have not fully recognized the importance and significance of PBXH. A tendency to avoid confrontation, lack of proactivity, and insufficient determination in executing PBXH responsibilities still exist among certain trade union officials.

Secondly, the communication and education efforts on PBXH remain slow to innovate and have yet to meet practical demands. The content lacks appeal, and the methods of dissemination are not diverse enough, leading to limited reach and impact. Moreover, the application of information technology and social media in propaganda efforts is still inadequate.

Thirdly, the process of capturing and reflecting workers' opinions in some localities has not been timely or closely aligned with reality. Some reports do not fully or accurately represent the pressing issues faced by workers, reducing their effectiveness in influencing policymaking.

Fourthly, the number of ideological work personnel, particularly at the grassroots level, remains insufficient and does not meet practical demands. The training and development of these personnel have not received adequate attention, leading to limitations in PBXH implementation.

Causes of Limitations

Objective Causes:

PBXH is a relatively new, complex, and sensitive field, requiring time for effective implementation. Additionally, factors such as market economy influences, opposition from hostile forces, and the rapid development of technology and information explosion have significantly impacted ideological work in general and PBXH in particular.

Currently, the mechanisms and policies supporting the Trade Union in conducting PBXH remain incomplete. Although Trade Union Law No. 50/2024/QH15 has introduced more specific regulations, the Trade Union still needs to develop detailed guidelines to ensure PBXH activities are carried out effectively.

Subjective Causes:

The leadership and guidance from certain Party committees, agency leaders, and business executives regarding PBXH have not been sufficiently thorough, lacking concrete solutions to improve the effectiveness of this activity.

The coordination between the Trade Union and other departments, agencies, and mass organizations in implementing PBXH has not been strong enough, leading to limited effectiveness.

The resources allocated for PBXH in some provincial-level labor federations remain insufficient, affecting their ability to carry out critical review activities.

IV. Solutions To Enhance The Role Of Ideological Work In The Social Criticism Activities Of The Vietnam Trade Union

Raising Awareness of the Role of Ideological Work in Social Criticism Activities

Ideological work plays a crucial role in raising awareness of social criticism (PBXH) within the Trade Union, helping trade union levels, officials, members, and workers understand the importance of this activity. To achieve this, it is essential to intensify propaganda and dissemination of the 13th National Congress Resolution of the Party, the 2013 Constitution, Trade Union Law No. 50/2024/QH15, particularly the regulations on PBXH in Article 17 of the 2024 Trade Union Law.

Training programs, seminars, scientific discussions, and the publication of instructional materials should be organized to enhance awareness and responsibility among trade union officials. Additionally, Government Decree No. 145/2020/ND-CP (2020) is an important document guiding the implementation of the 2019 Labor Code, providing the Trade Union with a solid legal foundation for conducting PBXH, especially in matters related to working conditions and labor relations.

Innovating the Content and Methods of Ideological Work to Improve the Effectiveness of Social Criticism In Terms of Content

Focus on disseminating key PBXH topics as outlined in Article 17 of the 2024 Trade Union Law, clarifying the rights and responsibilities of the Trade Union in policy-making and protecting workers' rights.

Enhance training on analytical skills, evaluation methods, reasoning, and argument presentation for trade union officials to improve the quality of critical opinions.

Proactively provide information and shape public opinion on PBXH-related issues, ensuring accuracy, timeliness, and transparency.

In Terms of Methods

Diversify communication methods, combining traditional approaches (workshops, training courses) with modern platforms (social media, online forums, multimedia communication).

Establish dedicated sections on PBXH within the Trade Union's information channels, creating forums for discussion and collecting opinions from trade union members and workers.

Leverage digital technology to gather and analyze public opinion, supporting the PBXH process.

Strengthen the role of spokespersons and propagandists in mobilizing and explaining PBXH policies, encouraging active worker participation in the process.

Enhancing the Quality of Trade Union Officials in Ideological Work and Social Criticism

Intensify training and capacity building for trade union officials, focusing on data collection, analysis, and argumentation skills for PBXH.

Develop a network of PBXH experts and collaborators to support ideological work and improve the depth and professionalism of PBXH activities.

Implement staff rotation and reassignment policies across different trade union levels to enhance practical experience, ensuring that officials possess the necessary expertise and field knowledge.

Strengthening Coordination with Agencies and Organizations to Enhance the Effectiveness of Social Criticism

The Trade Union needs to closely coordinate with the Vietnam Fatherland Front, political-social organizations, and state agencies in carrying out social criticism (PBXH) to ensure that workers' voices are fully represented. According to Clause 3, Article 33 of the 2015 Law on the Vietnam Fatherland Front, the Trade Union, as a member organization, is responsible for coordinating PBXH activities related to policies that directly affect the legal and legitimate rights of members and the responsibilities of the organization itself.

Additionally, the Trade Union should actively cooperate with the Vietnam Fatherland Front and other political-social organizations to implement PBXH in accordance with Decision No. 217-QĐ/TW of the Politburo (2013). This serves as an essential foundation to ensure the Trade Union's voice in the policy-making and policy-improvement processes related to workers' rights.

At the same time, cooperation with press and media agencies should be strengthened to promote awareness of PBXH and build social consensus around the Trade Union's proposals. The Trade Union should also enhance its supervisory role in monitoring the implementation of labor policies, ensuring that the rights of union members and workers are effectively protected. In particular, Government Decree No. 145/2020/ND-CP (2020) provides specific regulations on working conditions and labor relations, serving as a legal basis for the Trade Union to engage in PBXH and advocate for the protection of workers' legitimate interests.

Improving Mechanisms, Policies, and Ensuring Resources for Ideological Work and Social Criticism

Propose the issuance of detailed guidelines on PBXH under the 2024 Trade Union Law, creating a comprehensive legal foundation for the Trade Union to effectively perform this function.

Develop regulations on PBXH activities within the Trade Union, clearly defining the responsibilities and authority of different union levels.

Ensure financial and material resources for ideological work and PBXH, particularly at the grassroots level.

Implement appropriate reward policies for trade union officials who actively contribute to PBXH activities, encouraging greater participation from officials and members.

Overall, to enhance the role of ideological work in guiding and improving the effectiveness of PBXH, the Trade Union must implement a comprehensive set of solutions-ranging from raising awareness, innovating operational methods, and training human resources to refining mechanisms and policies. Effective implementation of these measures will enable the Trade Union to fulfill its PBXH function as outlined in Article 17 of the 2024 Trade Union Law, contributing to the sustainable protection of workers' rights and interests.

V. Conclusion

Ideological work plays a key role in guiding and enhancing the effectiveness of social criticism within the Vietnamese Trade Union. Through propaganda, education, information dissemination, and public opinion orientation, ideological work not only helps raise awareness among trade union officials, members, and workers about the role of PBXH but also contributes to laying a solid foundation for the formulation and implementation of policies directly related to their rights and interests.

The synchronized implementation of various solutions-ranging from raising awareness, modernizing communication methods, and training trade union officials to improving mechanisms, policies, and ensuring resources-will enable the Trade Union to effectively carry out its PBXH function as stipulated in Trade Union Law No. 50/2024/QH15. This will not only strengthen the Trade Union's position within the socio-political system but also enhance its supervisory and critical role in labor policies, contributing to the creation of a fair and sustainable working environment that protects workers' legitimate rights.

In the new context, where labor and employment issues are becoming increasingly complex, the Trade Union must continue to promote ideological work to improve the quality of PBXH and encourage the active participation of members and workers in the policy-making process. The success of PBXH depends not only on the Trade Union itself but also on close cooperation between government agencies, political-social organizations, and the business community. Only when ideological work is carried out effectively and innovatively can the Trade Union's PBXH activities truly become a powerful tool in protecting workers' legitimate rights and interests, while also contributing to the sustainable development of the country.

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