

Achievement of the POSITIVE (Participation-Oriented Safety Improvement by Trade Union Initiative) Activities in the Philippines

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Abstract: The POSITIVE (Participation-oriented safety improvement by trade union initiative) programme was introduced into the Philippines in 1995. The monitoring of activities was carried out in 2004 among core trainers who had been trained before. The results of the questionnaire survey showed that the core trainers evaluated their activities satisfactory in general, and particularly the training activities were considered excellent. Also, the union workers who had been trained by the POSITIVE programme implemented improvements at the rate of around 5 examples a year on average. It was of note that the installation ratio (the number of installations/that of plans) was higher in small- and medium-sized enterprises than in larger companies, although the numbers of plans and installations of improvements were greater in large enterprises. Together with the previous findings, the present results suggest that the POSITIVE-style participatory training program is effective and efficient for workers to take actions for the OSH in not only larger enterprises but also small enterprises.

Key words: Participatory training program, Occupational safety and health, Work condition improvement, Trade union, Philippines

Introduction

ILO published the guideline on occupational safety and health management system (OSHMS) in 2001¹⁾. The guideline expects organizational and local efforts to tackle the occupational safety and health (OSH) with the risk assessment of work-related factors at each workplace, because the ordinary countermeasures such as legislation are necessary but have become insufficient in keeping and improving the working conditions as technological process and intense competitive pressures rapidly change.

The importance of participatory approach has recently been emphasized to improve the OSH according to the ILO's

guideline for the OSHMS. Kogi²⁾ contrasted the action-oriented participatory OSH activities with the ILO's guideline, and revealed the similarity between them. Earlier studies have reported that the participatory approach with practical and low-cost measures had considerably high availability and validity in the work improvements at local workplaces^{3–8)}.

It is considered that workers' involvement is essential for the participatory action, as was mentioned in the ILO's guideline. In this context, the trade unions are required to play positive roles in organizing, enrolling and training workers to take action to improve their work conditions. In fact, the trade union networks were powerful, as Kawakami *et al.*⁹⁾ mentioned, for multiplying the effects of the action-oriented training program, because trade union leaders and members knew the workplace potential approaches leading

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to concrete workplace actions.

The POSITIVE programme, a participatory and action-oriented training programme for the OSH under the initiative of the trade unions was produced with the cooperation and collaboration between the Japan International Labour Foundation (JILAF,) and the Institute for Science of Labour^{10, 11)}. The programme aims to train the trainers to develop local participatory efforts in improving the working conditions, using simple and practical tools such as an action-oriented checklist, small group discussion, and local good examples. The checklist consisted of 6 technical areas to survey and improve the work conditions: materials storage and handling, machine safety, workstation design, physical environment, welfare facilities, and environmental protection. The JILAF has been organizing and conducting the project since 1994 to spread the POSITIVE programme into several Asian countries, Bangladesh, China, Mongolia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam, together with the national centres of trade unions in each country as a counter partner¹²⁾.

The POSITIVE programme was introduced into the Philippines in 1995. The Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP) has intensively and vigorously conducted this program, with the support of the JILAF. At the 1st step of the project, it aimed to nurture and train “core” trainers who were key persons to train and support local trainers organizing and facilitating the participatory activities for the occupational safety and health at each workplace. Japanese experts have also joined the project to train the core trainers for POSITIVE programme since the year 2000.

In order to follow up and assess the activities by the core trainers who had been trained, two workshops were held in Quezon and Cebu City in the Philippines in 2004. Based on the information collected at these workshops, the present study shows the present situation and achievement of the POSITIVE activities so far, and the validity of the program aiming the participatory approach to improving the working conditions.

Participants and Methods

Forty trainers participated in the workshops held in Quezon and Cebu City (15 and 25 trainers, respectively) in June 2004. All of participants were leaders or officers of trade unions. Among them, thirty-five had attended the workshops held before, and were requested to respond a questionnaire. The data from the rest of participants were not used for the analysis, since they were the first time attendants at the workshop.

The questionnaire was composed of 5 categories (unions' roles on OSH, establishment of OSH system, risk evaluation and communication, participation in workplace improvement, training activities), and 5 items were assigned to each category

in Table 1. The respondents evaluated the items with 5-grade scale from 1 (poor) to 5 (implemented).

In addition to the items mentioned above, the respondents were also requested to describe the numbers of plans for and installations of work condition improvements at the enterprises they were concerned with.

Statistical analysis was accomplished using the SPSS 11.0J for Windows.

Results

Sixty percents or more of the respondents considered their activities to be at grade 4 or higher in all items except for the one, “there is a safety committee or the place where you could discuss OSH issues and the meeting holds regularly” (Table 1). The item, “POSITIVE seminars or OSH seminars conducted by the trade union” was evaluated as grade 4 or higher among 78% of the respondents. Average score of each item varied between 3.30 and 4.56.

Mean score was calculated in each category consisting of 5 items, and the score reached greater than 3.6 in all categories (Fig. 1). The score of “training activities” was higher than those of the other groups.

The core trainers introduced the POSITIVE programme into 45 enterprises, and the number and contents of work improvements were recorded in 34 enterprises. The total numbers of planned and installed improvements since 1995 reached 427 and 218, respectively, in these 34 enterprises (Fig. 2). Eighty-eight percents of the enterprises where the improvement activities were performed were enrolled in the year of 2000 or afterwards. The numbers of planned and installed improvements were not so different among 6 technical areas, although slightly smaller in the technical area of environmental protection than those of the others.

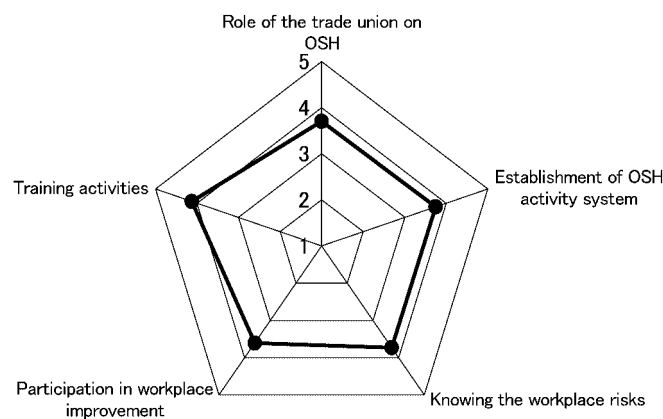


Fig. 1. Mean score of the evaluation in each category among the core trainers.

Mean score was obtained by sum of scores being divided by 5 in each category.

Table 1. Responses to the 25-item questionnaire among the core trainers who attended at the workshops held in the Philippines.

Category	Items	Grade of evaluation (1:poor–5:implemented)					Average score
		1	2	3	4	5	
1	Role of the trade union on OSH						
	-1 Trade union has (a) special officer(s) for OSH and conduct OSH activity based on trade union’s own action plans.	2	1	4	10	17	4.15
	-2 Trade union officers conduct walk through inspection.	4	6	4	7	14	3.60
	-3 Trade union informs union members and workers about their OSH activities.	0	4	5	7	17	4.12
	-4 Trade union participates the safety committee of your factory.	5	4	2	11	12	3.62
	-5 TUCP central office supports your OSH activities.	5	2	2	7	16	3.84
2	Establishment of OSH activity system						
	-1 There is a safety committee or the place where you could discuss OSH issues and the meeting holds regularly.	8	1	6	9	9	3.30
	-2 Workers can say their opinions at the safety committee.	2	2	0	12	16	4.19
	-3 The safety committee makes safety policy and the action plan.	2	3	5	8	13	3.87
	-4 The decision of safety committee is used for improvement of the workplace.	3	1	4	5	17	4.07
	-5 Female workers participate the safety committee.	3	1	1	10	17	4.16
3	Knowing the workplace risks						
	-1 Unsafe operation and hazardous resource are examined regularly and the workers have information about the result of the examination.	8	1	3	13	9	3.41
	-2 The workers are informed the record of the past industrial accidents and occupational diseases in the factory.	5	2	5	10	12	3.65
	-3 The workers are informed the measures against the past industrial accidents and occupational diseases of the factory.	4	2	3	11	14	3.85
	-4 Labour and management discuss the unsafe or unhealthy operation in the factory.	5	1	2	12	12	3.78
	-5 The health of female workers and pregnant women is considered in terms of maternity protection.	2	0	5	10	17	4.18
4	Participation in workplace improvement						
	-1 The workers participate the discussion on OSH improvement.	4	3	2	11	14	3.82
	-2 Low-cost improvement was implemented by addressing workers’ suggestion.	5	2	1	12	14	3.82
	-3 Labour and management collaborate in activity of OSH improvement continuously.	7	1	4	8	13	3.58
	-4 The workers are informed OSH activity and examples of OSH improvement in the factory.	5	1	3	10	15	3.85
	-5 All of workers including female workers, aged workers and handicapped workers participate OSH activity.	7	1	1	10	14	3.70
5	Training activities						
	-1 Your collages know that you participate POSITIVE program.	0	1	4	7	22	4.47
	-2 POSITIVE seminar(s) or OSH seminar(s) conducted by the trade union is (are) held	4	1	2	8	17	4.03
	-3 The trade union participates to make plans for OSH training.	0	0	3	8	21	4.56
	-4 Safety campaign (e.g. poster, convention etc.) is conducted with cooperation of the trade union	3	2	0	9	20	4.21
	-5 Female workers participate OSH training in the factory.	5	1	2	7	18	3.97

Numerals show the number of respondents in each score. The numeral on the far right column indicates the average score in each item.

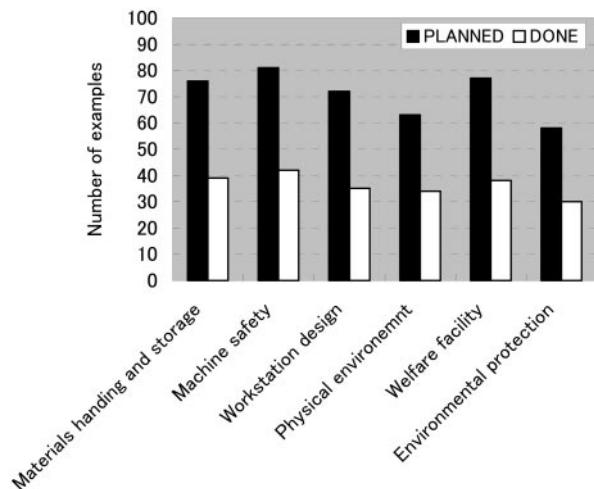


Fig. 2. Numbers of plans (solid column) and installations (open column) of the improvements in each technical area in 34 enterprises.

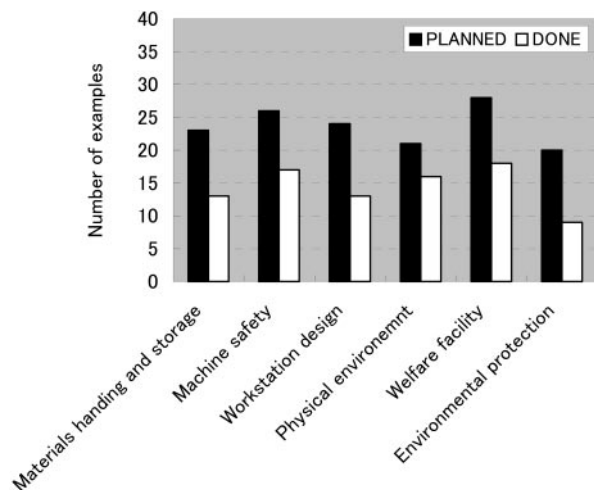


Fig. 3. Numbers of plans (solid column) and installations (open column) of the improvements in each technical area in 15 small and medium sized enterprises.

The trainers failed to precisely monitor the activities in 11 enterprises, but they mentioned that the improvements were installed even in some of those workplaces.

The total numbers of plans for and installations of improvements were 142 and 86, respectively, in 15 small- and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) with less than 200 employees (2, 2 and 11 enterprises with less than 50 employees, 50–99 employees, and 100–199 employees, respectively), while they were 266 and 125 in 17 larger enterprises (8 and 9 enterprises with 200–499 employees, and 500 or more employees, respectively). Data from two enterprises were not used in this comparison, because the size of these companies was not described. The number of improvements in each technical area in SMEs varied between

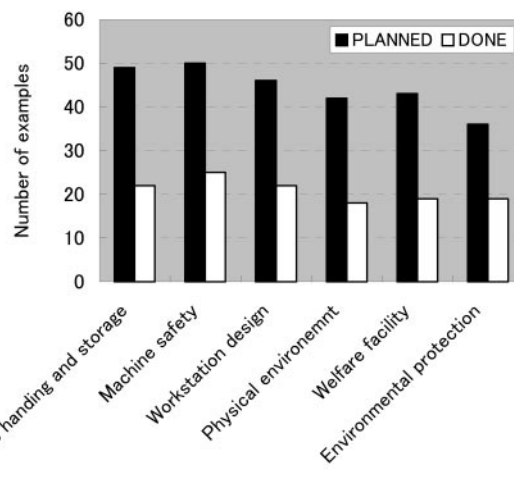


Fig. 4. Numbers of plans (solid column) and installations (open column) of the improvements in each technical area in 17 large sized enterprises.

20 and 28 in plans, and between 9 and 18 in installations, and it was between 36 and 50 in plans, and between 19 and 25 in installations in the larger enterprises (Fig. 3). The percentage of realization of plans, the ratio of the number of installations to that of plans, was thus higher in the SMEs than in larger companies (60.6% in SMEs vs. 47.0% in larger enterprises in total).

Discussion

By the questionnaire survey, it was indicated that the scores of the evaluation of their activities were high in all items of the questionnaire. The OSH training activities were particularly highly evaluated among the respondents. In addition, many of them mentioned that they had applied the POSITIVE programme to the workplaces as a training method for workers. In fact, 78% of the respondents evaluated the item, “POSITIVE seminar(s) or OSH seminar(s) conducted by the trade union is (are) held” as 4 or 5 in the score. The findings suggested that the core trainers recognized the POSITIVE programme as a useful training method to motivate workers to improve their working conditions.

Some items were still considered necessary to improve further, although the evaluation was generally high in all items, as mentioned above. Especially, establishment of safety committee or alternative opportunities, and regular survey of unsafe operation or hazardous resources and dissemination of the information on the results were assessed relatively lower than the other items. It is expected that the information concerning the OSH should be more disseminated to workers and that the place such as the safety committee should be set up to discuss the OSH between

workers and managers.

In many enterprises enrolled in the POSITIVE programme, workers successfully made up plans for the improvements, and implemented them. Union workers could implement around 3 plans and 1.8 installations/enterprise/year on average in the enterprises into which the POSITIVE programme had been introduced since 2000, although the number of improvements broadly varied among individual enterprises. In the WISE (Work Improvements in Small Enterprises) training course held in Cebu, the Philippines, Kogi demonstrated that 77 (71%) of 108 proposed improvements were actually installed in 24 enterprises during the short term of only one year^{13, 14)}. If the annual rates of these improvements calculated, the numbers of plans and installations reached 4.5 times/enterprise/year and 3.2 times/enterprise/year, respectively. The annual rates and installation ratio (number of installations / that of plans) of improvements in the present results were lower than those observed in the WISE course. It should be noticed that the trade unions and union workers have small difficulties in installing the improvements and need a little more time to do it, because they have to have dialogue and negotiate with the management for the improvements. Nevertheless, they were able to propose and implement considerable number of improvements. It was implied thus that the POSITIVE programme, action-oriented participatory training methods under the initiative of the trade unions was valid for promoting workers to improve the working conditions, similar to the achievement in the WISE course.

Workers and managers in small- and medium-sized enterprises sometimes tend to claim it difficult to improve the working conditions because of the shortage in finances, human resources, and technology. However, previous studies demonstrated that the activities shown in the WISE and other participatory project obtained a lot of improvements in the small-scale enterprises and the informal sector with low cost and effective measures³⁻⁷⁾. Also, in the present study, it was noteworthy that the installation ratio was greater in the SMEs than the larger enterprises, although the numbers of improvement plans and installations were lower in the SMEs. The findings may indicate that it is easier and more efficient for workers in the SMEs to implement the improvements, once the management side accepts the participatory approach. From these results, it is certainly possible to take action to improve the OSH conditions even in the SMEs and the informal sector. The core trainers are expected to more vigorously train local trainers in the SMEs so as to promptly realize effective improvement plans at the workplaces.

The numbers of improvement plans and installations were not so different among technical areas. For example, the number of plans in each technical area ranged between 13–19% of the total number of plans. This indicated that the improvements could be implemented based on multifaceted

aspects of risks existing at the workplace.

It is interesting that the POSITIVE programme has been introduced in 88% of the enterprises since the year of 2000 when the TUCP started to more intensively train core trainers in cooperation with Japanese experts. This implies that the nurture of core trainers is necessary and important to activate the local efforts to promote the OSH activities.

Finally, the results of the present monitoring in the Philippines suggest that the POSITIVE programme is an effective and efficient tool to encourage and promote union workers to take actions to improve the working conditions together with the management, in accordance with the results of the POSITIVE programmes in other countries reported by Kawakami *et al.*⁹⁾, in which the authors described that the participatory training tools used in the POSITIVE programme were commonly applied in different local situations and participatory approach adopted in the program was useful for providing practical problem-solving measures on the local trade union's initiative. In the global strategy on occupational safety and health¹⁵⁾, ILO revealed the importance of developing practical and easy-to-use training materials and methods focused on the train-the-trainer approach, and acknowledged the validity of WISE -like training methods to establish the occupational safety and health activities in the enterprises. The present findings strongly support the view of ILO. It should be recommended for the OSH personnel to utilize action-oriented participatory training programs to promote the improvement of the OSH conditions in both managers and workers.

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