How might trade unions use their voice to engage in the whistleblowing process?

Trade unions and voice go hand in hand. Trade unions speak on behalf of their members, as the collective voice is often more effective than an individual voice. Voice mechanisms often provide avenues for a representative of a group to speak, rather than allowing each individual member to do so. Whistleblowers will use their individual voice to raise concerns that may impact or affect a wider group of people within their workplace or wider society. Many whistleblowers face some repercussions for doing so; however, the concern may not be dealt with. If the collective voice is potentially more effective, it may be that a trade union’s voice would have better outcomes not only for the whistleblower but also the concern raised.

Lewis and Vandekerckhove (2014) argue that trade unions could provide a more expansive role in supporting whistleblowers. They suggest that the three tier whistleblowing model could be set alongside Kaines three levels of union voice model.

This however fails to take into account the actual voice mechanisms that exist which trade unions could engage with. Six key voice mechanisms are identified.

1. Individual Voice

Individual voice is any occasion where an individual is caused to use their own voice. In general, this will be an employee/worker invoking a designated procedure. In most contexts this will be a grievance procedure; however, it could be other policies, for example, a bullying or a whistleblowing policy. In some cases, it will be an individual using their voice in their own defence in disciplinary procedures instigated by an employer.

2. Collective Bargaining

Collective bargaining is predominantly undertaken by trade unions and or national trade union federations. As a voice mechanism, it seeks to reach a consensus about minimum standards and or policies (Doellgast and Benassi 2014). These will involve reaching agreement on pay, hours and holiday as a minimum but may go further to cover other terms and conditions around physical working environment and discipline.

3. Works Councils

Works councils within an organisation are institutionalised representative bodies. However, these are usually established independently of or against the wishes of management (Nienhuser 2014). The overarching aims of works councils are to represent the employees of the organisation to its management (Rogers and Streeck 1995:5) although the specific purpose can vary between countries.

4. Joint Consultation Committee

Joint Consultation Committees, whilst similar to works councils, can be distinguished on two grounds. First, they are created by management and secondly the purpose of them is the exchanging of views on matters that fall outside of collective bargaining (Pyman 2014). Furthermore, they have an indirect influence on organisational decision-making (Morishima 1992).

5. Non-Union Voice

Non-union employee representation usually occurs in organisations where there is no trade union, although in some instances it can occur where there is a trade union but that trade union is not entitled or invited to participate in the representation structure. 1. only employees allowed, 2. limited other voice mechanisms, 3.organisation provides the resources for it to exist, 4. indirectly provides representations, 5.represents all employees.

6. Public Voice

Voice can be considered to be public where the mechanism used does not seek to limit who receives the information. The information will be available to the public at large.

Below suggests ways trade unions can use these mechanisms to support whistleblowers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Voice</th>
<th>Provide Advice, Represent individuals, enforce policies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collective Bargaining</td>
<td>Ensure policy and procedures are discussed and where agreed protect whistleblowers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works Councils</td>
<td>Country Specific Seek Information on policy use and how the organisation has engaged with disclosures Push for policies and continual review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint Consultation Committees</td>
<td>Promote benefits of whistleblowing to employer Discuss effectiveness of policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Union Voice</td>
<td>Where unions have members but no recognition or rights provide advice, support and training to members to engage with voice mechanisms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Voice</td>
<td>Use the threat of public exposure to apply pressure on organisation’s Go public</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>