

Project Reference: RES-000-22-3653

Project Title: Innovative Management Practices and Firm Performance: A Quasi-natural Experiment within a Private Manufacturing Firm in China

HK Principal Investigator: Prof Xiangdong Wei (Lingnan University)

UK Principal Investigator: Professor Stan Siebert (University of Birmingham)

The project will study "high performance work systems" and company performance in the plants of a large Chinese food/noodle manufacturing firm. The principal investigators are Stan Siebert and Xiangdong Wei (Lingnan University, Hong Kong), with John Heywood of Wisconsin-Milwaukee as co-investigator.

The aim is to find the root of China's world-beating productivity, and in particular to assess how the company has adapted to China's relatively high levels of labour regulation. (as measured, for example, by the World Bank's current Ease of Doing Business Report). The company is experimenting with various innovative labour practices such as team-working and incentive pay schemes, and the results will be tracked. A further aspect of the research is assessing the consequences of these practices for workers, by conducting periodic job satisfaction surveys.

The project addresses central concerns of personnel economics and strategic human resource researchers. The evidence on the high performance paradigm tends to be distorted by omission of the management ability factor which our quasi-experimental approach avoids. In fact, our results may well not support the paradigm, or support a "contingency" view whereby high performance practices improve outcomes when applied to some worker groups (eg full-timers), but not when applied to others.