

DOCTORAL THESIS

A port-based evaluation framework of trade facilitation policies: case study of the Pearl River Delta Region

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Abstract

In the past two decades, as regional free trade agreements prevailed between states and governments, there is an imperative need for the concerned trade control authorities to minimise non-tariff trade barriers. Trade facilitation policy becomes one of the essential tools to enhance the competitive strength of a state in the global market. As the common yardstick adopted to assess policy effectiveness, the global trade efficiency indicators seem to reflect that state-level trade facilitation policies may not be generating the expected results. Not only the validity of such indicators have been challenged by some scholars, their application in port-level studies are also questionable. This project develops an evaluation framework that consists of a qualitative and a quantitative assessment tool to evaluate port-based trade facilitation policies. The qualitative analytical instrument examines how trade facilitation measures affect port-based supply chain. The quantitative research tool measures the extent of these policies may impact on the supply chain activities of port-related firm, infrastructure, and institutional stakeholders. The evaluation framework is applied to investigate the effects of trade facilitation policies on hub ports of the Pearl River Delta (PRD) region. Such framework not only provides an instrument to measure policy impact, but also illustrates how a trade facilitation programme may affect the competitiveness of port supply chain. The qualitative tool by adopting multiple supply chain perspectives, contributes a consistent and comprehensive assessment method for trade facilitation studies to extend the research scope to port level. The quantitative instrument provides a mechanism that could facilitate an accurate measurement of the trade facilitation policy impacts not only in a single port but also in a networked ports' environment.

Keywords: Trade facilitation, Port supply chain, Hub port, Free trade zone, Performance measurement, Pearl River Delta region

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