Chapter 7

MOU Convergence:
Public Sector Discourse and Practice

ABSTRACT

The origin and elements contributing to the emergent characteristics of "traditional" public sector discourse and practice are explored contextualized to the Jamaican state. Dimensions of these traditional characteristics are subsequently altered and contested in the process of the public sector actor network being translated through convergence into the MOU actor network of relations. Text, representative of struggle, and discoursal contests emerge, reflective of the rigour of the convergence process. Texts reveal outcomes in terms of governance for the sector as the public sector responds to the inscription as well as embracing new genres and social practices with the operationalization and inculcation of MOU discourse and practice. CDA is valued as an approach to examine and probe the nature of the connectivity in and between actor networks of the MOU social partnership and reveal the implications for the traditional discourse and practice of the public sector.

INTRODUCTION

In exploring the MOU construed as an actor network, ANT provided an explanation as to the MOU network's mechanism and relations, being 'a social construction of social relations' (Lowe, 2001) and the dynamics operable within it. The MOU Agreement, given ANT's ontology is enabled to represent its own discourse as an actor, with the intermediary of text as

the discourse of the MOU, seeking to inscribe other actor-networks into the MOU network, to achieve black box and macro social status.

The MOU actor network emerged as black box consisting of "punctualized actors" according to Law (1992, p. 385) to the point of having one voice by means of accession to the dominant discourse, whereby authority is given for the macro social focal actor to "speak or act on behalf of another actor or force" (Law, 1991, p. 151). Winner (1993, p. 365) indicates that the term black box 'in both technical and social science parlance is a device or system that, for convenience, is described solely in terms of its inputs and outputs, and one need not understand anything about what goes on inside such black boxes'.

Moving Forward

Discourse as a unit of analysis, has value by its use to reveal, deconstruct and examine relationships and the practice of power in the connectivity of the MOU network and within the black box that are now brought to light and by which the nature of the inner fabric of social partnership power relationships can be observed. The nature of the struggle between the different discursive practices and discursive endowments of the actors, have to become engaged in the derivation of consensus, modulated and encapsulated within the 'black box' of network interactions. This has implications for the durability of arrangements made. The positioning of discourse as a moment in the actor network provides for the use of discourse as text, as a unit of analysis and CDA methodology, to explore in depth the nature of the actor network interactions and connectivities during the process of translation, portrayed in dimensions of discourse and text.

Within the formation of the MOU network of relations, translation and network strategies for change required discourse and narratives that would be operationalized, enacted or inscribed as new ways of being, new identities and materialized as new ways in space and time (Fairclough 2005).

Several themes and implications arise, in probing the black box of network interaction revealing the nature of the interface between the traditional public sector discourse and that of the MOU discourse.

The MOU emerging as the macro social actor influences representation, social practice, enactments, identities, etc., all played out in the realm of the struggle and inner dynamics of the connectivity or the discoursal linkages,

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