

Chapter 9

MOU Convergence: Governance, Institutions, and Discourse

ABSTRACT

The Monitoring Committee (MC), consisting of both government and union officials institutionalized dialogue as a practice in the governance of the implementation of the MOU. The MC demonstrated value by becoming a responsive mechanism and sounding board for preventative, dispute resolution, and for engaging in joint decision making. The unions rejuvenated their own discourse practice and acquired new avenues of influence in relation to public administration policy decisions. While the private sector occupied a position of self-exclusion, leadership engendered collaborative governance obfuscating the political divide, enabling the Monitoring Committee to consolidate the accord. The inclusion of discourse as a moment in actor networks is advocated as a means to reveal the inner operations and network interactions within the “black box,” rendering the impenetrable, penetrable.

THE INSTITUTION OF THE MONITORING COMMITTEE (MC)

The Monitoring Committee was valued as a tool to oversee the process of social dialogue and became an effective mechanism for public sector problem solving, promoting a shared responsibility (Ballantyne, 2004) and authority by the Partners, within a framework of engendering transparency, fact and information sharing. As a structured forum, the Committee was valued for

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allowing freedom of expression, the resolution of issues and by being an avenue that facilitated greater inclusion by the unions. As an established forum for joint decision making at the highest level, this inclusion by the unions was exploited in the form of influencing government decision making at the policy level. The Partners successfully managed to militate against and avoid long incidences of social and labour unrest, which assisted in maintaining fiscal stability and stymieing a mass separation of employment in the public service.

Viewed as a new territory of learning in partnership interaction, the MC's institutional legitimacy has been retained and endorsed by Cabinet, with its role consolidated and integrated within the existing bureaucracy of government and union partially due to its value in stemming potential industrial disputes. The Committee promoted an operational framework and standard conduct in supporting partnership arrangements— involving respect, honesty, mutual respect, collaborative, frankness and consensus building.

The regularizing of and increased dialogue and equal participation at the highest level' through the mechanism of the MC, could represent a template for such arrangements at the bureaucratic level between managers and staff through the replicated mechanism of the CSCs meetings and the increased union interface at the lower levels of the organization.

The MC demonstrated in part, the institutional framework of what could be a working model of good internal governance, which is consistent with the overarching good governance discourse of Government and the larger role of the involvement of stakeholders as joint partners in public sector development. Legge (2002, p. 78) argues that a central actor is always in danger of being taken over by a potential ally and as “such networks are never completely fixed and stable, but rather fragile and transient and, hence, require hard work on the part of those who seek ...to develop and maintain [them]”.

As a partner to the MOU Agreement mention has to be made of specific dimensions of the Government as an actor. You may recall the circumstances, socio economic environment and structural context foregrounded in the MOU negotiations leading to its formation. These issues were discussed pertaining to the state in chapter 1 and the political culture with low social capital (Brewster, 2007; Brown, 2002; CAPRI, 2009; Fashoyin, 2001) which is further reflected upon by Schoburgh (2006) who notes that:

The development of the island's political system was marked by divisions and confrontations between groups ... suspicions which were to have lasting effects on the ability of Jamaicans to trust each other and to work together

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