

Chapter 10

Reflections: Social Partnership and Governance Under Crisis

ABSTRACT

This chapter contemplates governance and condenses salient themes operable from the perspective of the implementation of the MOU social partnership agreement, its discursal effect, and governance effect upon the relations of the partners in the network. Reflections are made on the implications of the MOU social partnership agreement as a governance mechanism for the partners—the public sector, the trade unions, and industrial relations practice—and their discourses in all their dimensions, which encourages change engendering the deepening of governance.

BACKGROUND

The shift from government to governance represents one of the important theoretical developments in political science and sociology during the past two decades (Pierre, 2000). Governance is theorized as the creation of structure or order not externally imposed but results in the interaction of a multiplicity of governing actors (Kooiman, 1993) while O'Brien, et al., (2000) indicates that the phenomenon of governance, is broadly, the sum of ways which individuals and institutions manage their collective affairs. According to (Hertin J, et al., 2000).

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-8961-7.ch010

governments have become nodes for communication and decision-making, constantly interacting with concerned groups. Policymakers must acknowledge the need for complex and simultaneous processes of bargaining involving several policy areas, in order to improve efficiency between levels. Barriers to co-operation and questions of competency, transparency and legitimacy need to be recognized and overcome.'

Emerging in significance to deal with the traditional state's inability to cope with a range of contemporary social problems and crisis, a governance approach is adopted to solve issues collectively through the sharing of tasks and co-managing responsibilities between political and social actors (Jones, 1998).

The concept of governance has evolved to identify and explain new modes of problem solving and decision making that fill gaps created by the failure of traditional forms. The process infers participation, where policies and institutions are redesigned in the national interest, within an environment of trust, towards mutually satisfying ends. Governance is also seen as interactive between the governed and the governor (Nettleford, 2002) intrinsically connoting shared, meaningful dialogue and changing relationships between government and the rest of society. The decline in the state capabilities propelled by financial crises and diminishing financial resources in the 1980s and 1990s and later macroeconomic challenges due to increases in public expenditures, economic restructuring and efforts to stem falling state revenues have created limitations resulting in the co-opting of private interests into public service delivery and the blurring of the public private divide.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU): A New Discourse—A New Governance?

Pending crisis resulted in the MOU being created between the Partners, which reconstructed relations between the public sector and labour. These were driven by the economic imperatives and fiscal concerns of the Government vis-a-vis the labour concerns for the preservation of employment and continued efforts of developing the public sector by the JCTU. The Government and the JCTU responded consensually to the logic of the dialogue and consultation in an effort to avert further macroeconomic decay and to minimize the risk of loss. The arrangement brokered, the Public Sector Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or social partnership agreement linked intertextually with the discourse

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