

Chapter 2

Social Partnership

ABSTRACT

This chapter explores themes surrounding social partnership, the epistemological and etymological relations of social dialogue, models, and associated themes. Theories, concepts, and dimensions of social partnership, its characteristics, emergence, and etymology are deconstructed. Various perspectives on the meaning and interpretation of associated interpretive themes such as partnership, trust, mutual benefit, and social capital are explored, including typologies of partnership. This conceptual review covering social partnership examines the discourses and knowledge associated with social partnerships and the philosophy of social partnership. The language of partnerships and social dialogue are embedded within the context of the International Labour Organization's (ILO) epistemological discourse and practice. This chapter provides a comprehensive framework for the purposes of understanding and identifying the philosophies within the current global discourses of social partnership and an appreciation of how our experiences have been influenced and interpreted through the lens of the parameters of the global discourses.

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the phenomenon of social partnerships is discussed, examining the origins and ancillary concepts associated with it. There is an exploration of the different types of social partnerships, models used and the institutional discourses surrounding how they are represented and the benefits. Building

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on this, there is a discussion on the types and models of social partnership and those exhibited in the Jamaican context. I also reflect on the different ways that social partnerships have been analyzed and linked to the global discourse on social partnerships. Finally, I explore some of the limitations of these approaches and present a basis to build a case for the utility of a network approach as an alternate yet supporting role to analyze social partnership.

What Is Social Partnership?

The Copenhagen Centre for Partnership Studies (Boyd, 2002, p.1) defines social partnership as:

a tri or multi partite arrangement involving employers, trade unions, public authorities, ... and/or others (voluntary sector). ... usually concerned with areas of economic and social policy and might be based upon a binding agreement of declaration of intent. Social Partners is the term used to designate the representative organisations of trade unions and employers.

Similarly, Iankova and Turner (2004) place social partnership within the context of an arrangement of regularized bargaining between business and labour, with the view to establish wages, work and employment standards, as well as to influence broader economic and social policy.

Regarding the etymology of social partnership, Wahl (2004) there are multiple names describing the phenomenon, such as “social contract”, or “consensus policy” which suggests that there is the establishment of relatively stable power relations and peaceful cohabitation between labour and capital. This perspective is further supported by others (Boyd, 2002; Djuric 2002; Martinez-Lucio & Stuart, 2002) who suggest that the term also characterises collective actors in labour and industrial relations but embraces a wider concept to include any process directed towards the accommodation of conflicting interests.

CONCEPTS OF SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP

Critical concepts of partnership and dialogue emerge from deconstructing the phenomenon of social partnership which are implicit in these arrangements. Boyd (2002), from his studies on European partnership models, has determined key concepts about social partnerships, namely that:

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