

ABSTRACT

THE PRACTICE OF POWER IN THE PARTNERSHIP: THE DISCOURSE OF THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING 2004-2006 OF JAMAICA AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PUBLIC SECTOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS PRACTICE

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The MOU social partnership between the Government of Jamaica and the Trade Unions (2004-2006), agreed to the maintenance of the current size and cost of wage expenditure in the public sector, with a wage freeze, in exchange for no redundancies. However, the implementation of the Agreement, born out of mutual need, had implications for the practice of power within the partnership.

The research undertaken, sought to deconstruct this 'practice of the power', through the medium of discourse, utilizing the unique ontology of Actor Network Theory, which affords the conceptualization of the MOU as an equal actor in the network and confers it with a discourse of its own. Within the 'black box' of MOU network relations, Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis approach was used, analyzing discourses, linking 'socio cognitive 'dimensions of text production and interpretation' (Fairclough 1993, 80) with social analyses of the context of the actors.

The study revealed contests between the 'new' MOU discourse and traditional discourses of the actors. Evidence of changing discourses such as, genre mixing of entrepreneurialism within public sector modernization and their institutionalization, were explored, locating '*power in discourse and power over discourse*' (Fairclough 2003, 205).

The study highlighted the critical role of dialogue and argues for the recognition of discourse as a moment within actor-networks, towards sustained relations within and between constituencies, which strengthens *problematization* and the deepening of *interesement* towards *enrollment*, and continuous '*mobilization*'. In concluding, the need emerges for a new conceptualization of public sector management, outside of a Westminster paradigm, to address new challenges, unearthed by MOU discourse, consistent with good governance ideals, the vision of a modern public sector, combined with the attitudes and attributes of leadership, which become fundamental components towards achieving success in social partnerships.

Keywords: *social partnership, Carol Nelson, Actor Network Theory, Critical Discourse Analysis, actor-networks, Jamaica, memorandum of understanding, public sector, trade unions, industrial relations.*