

THE SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP AND SOCIAL DIALOGUE

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ILO's Definition of Social Dialogue

“It includes all types of negotiation, consultation or simply exchange of information between representatives of Government, employers and workers, on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy.”

- ❖ The exchange of information is the most basic process of social dialogue.

Traditional Actors of Social Dialogue

- Employers and workers representatives – bipartite consultation
- Origin of Social dialogue – world of work (Workers' rights and conditions related to production)
- Government served as a facilitator, mediator, regulator or law enforcer.

Social Dialogue

Focal points

- Co-operation between the social partners
- Strengthening **Tripartism**
- Good governance in furthering democracy, social justice and developing a productive and competitive economy.
- It is built on technical competencies and capacities that enable social partners to debate wider issues beyond those of immediate interests – allows other partners to negotiate with Government on an equal footing.

Role of Government in Tripartite Consultation

- Policy making – Role of Ministry of Labour / Labour Department
- Promoting and enforcing the appropriate legal frame work by ensuring social partners' independent rights, (e.g.) freedom of association , right to collective bargaining, right to strike

Guiding Principles of the Social Partnership

- Potential societal and economic benefits to be derived from an expansion of the scope of such previous tripartite agreements.
- Identifying with the Principles of the Right to Organize and to Bargain Collectively, and ILO Convention 144 on Tripartite Consultation.

Guiding Principles of the Social Partnership

- Voluntarism: conventions and practices which have been carefully developed and followed over the years, and that remained critical to the success of any continued tripartite endeavours.

Commitment of Social Partnership to the advancing the process of Social Dialogue.

Labour

- A commitment to industrial harmony by the application of that very concept of voluntarism, and through the observance of the principles of tripartism as established by the International Labour Organisation.
- Moving the focus beyond wages and income matters, to finding ways of identifying the interest of workers for the common national good.
- Devising mechanisms that could deepen workers participation in every facet of the workings of society.

Commitment of Social Partnership to the advancing the process of Social Dialogue.

- Private sector: Moving the focus beyond profit as the bottom line. Sharing of profits.
- Government: A commitment to the ideals of the democratic principles and the process of collective bargaining.

Pillars of a Social Partnership

- Establishing a formal structure to govern - collaboration and consultation on fundamental issues affecting the individual and collective contribution to all aspects of national development.
- The development and implementation of protocols that are aimed at improving labour management relations.
- Acceptance and respect for the collective bargaining process.

Sub Committee of the Social Partners

- The Sub Committee of the Social Partners may provide a forum whereby through consultation and the exchange of information there can be the betterment of the industrial relations climate.
- The subcommittee of the Social Partners in taking such initiatives as it deemed appropriate in the resolution of industrial matters shall, however, not so act as to trespass upon the specific statutory duties of the officers in the Labour Department as stated in Cap. 23 of the Laws of Barbados.

Sub Committee of the Social Partners

- The Sub Committee of the Social Partners shall put before the Social partners for their consideration all such matters as may assist in the strengthening of the social partnership and the development of national policies to further the objectives of the Social Compact and advance social and economic progress in Barbados.
- The Sub Committee of the Social Partners shall meet once per month or as often as necessary.
- The Sub Committee of the Social Partners shall have the power to co-opt such persons as it deems appropriate to assist it in the conduct of its business.

What can be achieved through the Social Partnership and Social Dialogue

- It can create a climate of goodwill, which encourages dialogue and win-win solutions.
- It can lead to investor confidence in a country.
- It can help to bolstered the voluntaristic system of labour management relations – consultation rather than having a recourse to law.

Pitfalls of Social Dialogue

- Unwillingness on the part of Government or the social partners
- Criticisms on the part of participants or political observers
- Absence of conditions - Non sharing of information

Challenges to Social Dialogue at the National level

- Respect shown for democracy by social partners
- Accountability
- Transparency
- Broadening of dialogue beyond immediate interest – traditional work related issues
- Removal of ideological positions
- Develop a problem solving approach
- Sharing of information – communication
- Trust and respect

EVALUATION OF THE WORKINGS OF THE SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP

“The fact that the Social Partnership has withstood the test of time, is enough to satisfy all interests that the Social Partnership is the 21st Century approach to trade unionism and to dealing with problems”.

(Peter Wickham)

EVALUATION OF THE WORKING OF THE SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP

“On the question of labour management relationships, the Social Partnership as a concept needs to be widened and deepened within our society, more so at the workplace. The Social Partnership does not prevent any of the partners from exercising independence. Each partner is obligated to act rationally and responsibly towards the resolution of disputes.” (Dr. Ashwell Thomas of the Barbados Employers Confederation)

CONCLUSION

- Identify the issues in the national environment that create the need for the development of a social partnership, which through the process of social dialogue would serve the national good.