



Mainstreaming Labour Relations with Social Protections at the Workplace: Challenges and Prospects for Social Partners.

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Abstract

It is argued in this paper that as fundamental components in the pursuit of decent work in the workplace, effective labour relations and social protections have become critical area of concern within the context of contemporary workplace, even with the attendant ‘precarity’, as influenced by neo-liberal framing. Social protection has a fundamental connection with employment protection thereby assuring social cohesion at the workplace. However, as workers are exposed to the vagaries of labour market reforms, influenced by the competitive labour market environment; concerns remain on how to cohere workplace labour relations practices with social protections in a manner that assure income security, workplace safety, and other social measures that protect work-life balance for workers. This has also become indispensable in ensuring equities and opportunities for both genders at the workplace. Thus, within the context of workplace regimes, the challenges remain on how to promote labour relations principles and practices in a manner that address the issues of workplace tensions and interest of stakeholders. Indeed, in the context of emerging neo-liberal dictates, the process of mainstreaming the two prospects; both at organisational and national employment relations levels raise simultaneous challenges to social partners; on how to integrate the two seemingly contrasts, against the backdrop of the precariousness in employment. This paper therefore analyses these challenges and prospects. The paper contends that it is imperative to cohere labour relations practices with social protections at the workplace. Efforts at integrating workplace labour relations practices with social protections must be seen as integral to decent employment, and therefore be given its deserved attention by the social partners; in promoting the ethos of decent work in the workplace.

Keywords: Neo-liberal Workplace, Labour Process, Social Dialogue, Social Cohesion, Employability

Introduction

In utilizing much of the remit of Neoliberalism as analytical tool, and alongside the process of neoliberal framing broadly, especially in contemporary work organizations, there are also the micro-processes of workplace re-organisation. These processes of restructuring, in the context of neo-liberal logic, have entailed a

shift in the traditional patterns of work processes at organisational level to a system of flexible arrangements; requiring the ability of work organisations to adjust work-process as dictated by the new challenges emerging both from the labour and product markets. Noting this development, Kelly (2000) had argued that characterising the flagships of neo-liberal reforms

have been an aggressive push, leading to a new dimension, characterised by labour liberalization and de-regulations. Thus, the contemporary dynamics in the workplace, and employment relations practices, also associated with work-process changes, occasioned by increasing challenges of global dynamics have entailed “labour de-regulations” and introduction of new arrangement in the workplace labour relations practices. Labour de-regulations include such employment arrangements as sub-contracting, and hiring of casuals, which “empower” management to easily re-adjust the size and composition of workforce according to product market demands. Workplace labour relations practices of this new arrangement includes; multi-skilling, job-levelling, team work, shared services and other work arrangement that privileged employers to shift and shuffle workers around the workplace in order to fit emerging dictates of work-place requirements (McGovern et. al. 2004). The emerging employment relations practices manifest in a wide range of forms as the work processes are embedded in neo-liberal production processes. In the evolving context of neo-liberal work process and reforms of work arrangements, labour market de-regulations and liberalization are ‘drummed-up’ as not only inevitable, but also seen as positive and progressive imperative for the survival of organisation in the emerging contexts. Neo-liberal markets of both labour and products, have introduced uneven development, cyclical patterns, uneven demand and unstable supply of labour (Felstead, 1999). In other words, the extensive rise in non-standard employment continues to raise questions about the future of wage employment and its quality in the workplace. The new categories of workers of traditional permanent employments, and that of the increasing non-standard types, that characterised the emerging labour market de-regulations are not only historically and spatially contingent on the selective impacts of neo-liberalism, but are also constantly shaped by the new development in the management of workplace labour processes (Felstead, 1999).

However, while the new arrangements of “tiered” system in the labour market may have brought

“fatter” and more stable profits for the employers, the opposite was the case for workers of the two categories. Indeed, the “deficit”, is even more for the non-standard employment type. The arrangements further heightened the threat of job security, work intensification, untenured employment, falling incomes, and greater social insecurity and diminished social remits for the non-standard jobs. Consequently, workers in the non-standard employment constitute the “endangered species” in the new labour management relationship in contemporary workplaces. In Kellerberg’s (2000, cited in McGovern et al 2004) conceptualization, non-standard employment otherwise referred to as temporary employments are characterised with low pay, no access to health insurance or pension benefits and no promotion opportunities. It is work, and work-conditions typical of secondary and peripheral segments of the standard traditional labour market. Contributions to this understanding have been both theoretical and empirical. For instance, to McGovern et al (2004), “de-standardization” of labour represents strong evidence of emerging new risk dimensions for workers and of commodification of labour. Such theoretical and empirical statements from McGovern et al (2004) have given reason to equate temporary employments with “bad” jobs from the point of view of workplace labour relations and labour process understanding. As noted by McGovern et al. (2004), the basic characteristics of temporary employment are low commitments, low autonomy and a lack of opportunities to develop skills. Thus, the emerging labour casualization tend to mirror and reinforce existing hierarchies in the workplace, and the larger labour market, thereby reflecting a broader tendency of insecure, low-wage jobs held by workers with diminished bargaining capacity for social security and protection (Carre et al, 2000).

While the traditional protective mechanisms that characterised standard employment management are increasingly being eroded and diminished in the context of neo-liberal workplace reorganisation, the fate of the non-standard employment type has further generated high levels of unpredictability, insecurity and

inequality for the emerging “under-class” of employees. Generally, non-standard jobs and the embedded features are high precariousness and uncertainties through which this category of workers, have to endure significantly inferior conditions of employment, with a non-existence of training and career prospects. Lack of collective representations and social protection that characterised the process of temporary employment is further intensified by the fragmentation of the workforce (McGovern et al, 2004). Within the context of emerging workplace labour relations, therefore, work relations are increasingly ‘structured’ in a manner whereby protective mechanisms and administrations, are shaped and re- shaped by the regulatory distinctions between “standard” and “non-standard” employment. Largely, non-standard employment relationships tend to be “externalized” with the risks and costs that the former has to “internalize”. In other words, the regulatory mechanisms inherent in the standard employment not only largely protect this category of workers, but also seek to ‘absorb’ them off the vagaries and risk that characterised the temporary employment. As a result, tensions in the workplace are invariably created between the “formal” types and the “informal” types of employment relations. In this context, and from the perspective of temporary employees, it is “vulnerability” and precariousness, rather than “flexibility” (as against the rhetoric contained in neo-liberal workplace agenda) that usually characterised his/her experiences of work. Indeed, in Heery and Salmon’s (2000) “insecurity thesis”, there are identified and coherent set of narratives about the nature, causes and what has become the burden of the temporary employment workers. Key factors of the “insecurity thesis” (Ibid 2000) are that economic risks and burdens of the workplace are increasingly being transferred from employers to employees, through shortened job-tenure, contingent employment and remunerations. Job insecurity is thus damaging to employees accentuated by lack of opportunities, mistrust and low commitment (Heery & Salmon 2000).

Neo-liberal workplace and Social Protection Deficits: conceptual clarification

Indeed, while work intensification and its deficits have become the hallmark of contemporary workplace labour relations, extant labour practices, and social protection framework in the workplace are equally deficient in assuring decent work for the workers. For management, in the context of neo- liberal workplace reorganisation, the objective is to promote employment relations with conditions that are infinitely ‘mutable’, on a daily basis (Hepple, 1993). Indeed, the steady de-regulation of institutional framework of employment regulation such as the effort-bargaining process that now characterised workplace labour relations has not only led to the decline in strength of negotiation process, but also to the absence of social protection schemes in employment relations. The decline in the social protection roles of employment regulations and collective bargaining is increasingly sustained by neo-liberal workplace discourse and practices. In an explicit analysis, Watson (1995, cited in McGovern et al 2004) has provided a useful distinction between “diffuse” and “restrictive” employment relationships in the context of workplace neo-liberal restructuring. According to him, in the latter, the implicit employment contract relation is highly specified; the employee is given detailed work content and the relationship is based on low-level trust. And this is characteristic of temporary employment. In the “diffuse” employment relationship, the implicit employment contract is more general; allowing the job holder a measure of discretion and autonomy, and in which the relationship is based on high level of trust (Ibid). The “restrictive” employment relations that exemplify the significant dimensions of labour de-regulation and non-standard employment also signify absence of labour protection. It established what has been referred to as “regulated precariousness”. The precariousness of such employment relation contract represents a flexible workforce with a size, composition and functionality that meets the requirement of flexible production arrangement (Watson 1995). Under the flexible production arrangements,

work process becomes flexible and malleable, which then give the employers the prerogative to modify the size and composition of the workforce according to product market imperatives (ibid). It allows lay-off, and re-absorption of a category of workers called “peripheral workforce”, while maintaining a stable few “core” workers. As noted by Cottenier et al (1990), “flexibilization” of the workforce may take the form of internal arrangement concerning job contents and organisation of work for regular workers. Characteristics of the internal or “core” labour flexibility are devices such as routine overtime, twenty-four hour rotating shifts, week-end shifts – all aimed at maximizing the use of labour-power, and accelerate the “optimal value” of the workforce through work intensification (Cottenier et al 1990). In the emerging context, neo-liberal workplace labour process re-organisation has brought about the normative narratives of job re-classification and re-description into multi-skilling, task-sharing, job-leveilling, teamwork, quality circles with follow-up proviso that such work-processes become managerial imperatives, within the organisation (ibid). Invariably, this usually paves the way for redundancies and lay-offs with heightened social tensions in the workplace. ‘Numerical’ and ‘functional’ flexibility in the work process has also heralded ‘flexible’ wages with variegated salary schemes, and incentives systems that combine individualized-pay, with performance. However, as noted by Maller (1999) the “new” work arrangements and production processes are just an ‘altered’ method of exploitation designed to obscure the marginalization and alienation of workers under the guise of improving productivity. Under the “new” work arrangements, employees are ostensibly seen to have “responsible autonomy” and “direct control” (Friedman 1977), and at the same time “increasingly pressed” to take additional responsibility for quality and efficiency. While describing these managerial practices as “mendacious rhetoric”, Hyman (1997) notes that the new managerial discourse of empowerment and flexibility are new dimensions of “managerial offensive” designed for continued expropriation of surplus-values from workers in the context of social relations of production. To

Cottenier et al (1990), therefore, every increase in the rate of surplus-value represents an increase in rate of exploitation. Flexible production arrangements under neo-liberal work re-organisation represent a “zero-tolerance” of “slack” in the process of production; emphasising “need” for an efficient utilization of means of production with strong focus on parameter of profit-maximization. This can only be achieved through intensification of workers efforts, with “down-the path” implications on social protection in the workplace.

Roles of Trade Unions in the Context: weakened one?

Coupled with the “flipside” implications of flexibility of work process, as enumerated above, is also the decline in trade unions representational roles and activities in the workplace. Even though the new workplace arrangement may have benefited a small segment of the permanent employees, flexible work arrangement, in the main, has intensified wage differentiation, with steady erosion in employment relations benefits for the majority of the workers. In such circumstance, where there is a weakened or lack of organised voice for labour at the workplace, management retains a freer and greater “elbow-room” for unmitigated expropriation of the surplus-value (Cottenier et al, 1990). Temporary workers are paid below minimal, are un-unionised and consequently have no channels to complain. From the perspective of neo-liberal workplace normative assumptions, emblematic features of new production arrangements such as; continuous process production, total quality, and participatory management systems are conceived as being able to advance the fulfilment and normative expectations of modern work organisation. However, while accomplishing all this, it has also succeeded in squeezing more absolute surplus-value from workers (Hyman 1997). It has succeeded to further “control” as well as “discipline workers”. As noted by McKay (2001), what workplace reorganisation has attained for the products market and production system is directly proportional to the “wreck” it brings to the workers.

Mainstreaming Social protections with Employment Relations: Challenges and prospects

As demonstrated in the preceding sections, to the extent that workers are increasingly exposed to the vagaries of labour market reforms, occasioned by neo-liberal ethos, it is to the same extent the impact and implications on workplace relations and issues of social protection have become significant in analysing and understanding the deficits such as income insecurity, workplace safety, health work, family health and other benefits that are constantly undermined. These have therefore become challenges in the context of contemporary workplace employment relations system, particularly on how to evolve approaches and new framework for mainstreaming workplace labour relations with social protections for the workers. At the frontiers in which neo-liberal reforms task employment relations, the concern to develop acceptable workplace labour relations practices that cohere the interest of both parties appear to be more pressing (Lee 1996). Cohering the workplace interest of workers with labour relations practices assured the much-desired social protections for workers in the context of emerging challenges. In the context of current debate over the challenges of neo-liberal workplace re-organisation, and implications on employment relations, the concept of social dialogue has been identified as sustainable framework not only for addressing the concerns of workers, but also as more acceptable path to cohering the interests of actors in the workplace (Fashoyin 2004). In this “bipartite framework”, social dialogue is conceptualized as a form of “corporatist interest’s mediation”; the goal being to align the interests of workers with the goals of the organisation. Indeed, as observed in Fashoyin’s (2004), challenges facing social partners in employment relations transcend workplace labour relations, encompassing non-workplace interests of workers. Social dialogue has therefore become a sustainable framework through which social partners are encouraged to express their view and make their own contributions in specific labour relations practices and implementations (Ibid). It has been identified as the “enduring practice”

espousing the virtues of bipartite relations in the resolution of conflicting positions between labour and management in employment and non-employment relations matters. Institutional framework of social dialogue as described by Fashoyin (2004) has the enduring character to promoting negotiation, consultation and exchange of information on employment relations matters. As a framework, it covers not only the traditional arena of employment relations involving collective bargaining of distributional interest, but indeed issues of broad social protection nets. From this perspective, social dialogue process could be interpreted as more relevant and resilient in the context of challenges facing labour market dynamics, on issues relating to social protection of both “core” workers and ‘temporary’ employees. In a context where issues pertaining to effective workplace labour relation practices and social protection are at the “front burner” for promoting decent work and quality work life-balance, social dialogue process broaden negotiations and consultation beyond workplace issues. As shown in Fashoyin’s (2002, 2004, 2009), the institution of social dialogue at workplace level has helped to promote inclusive employment relations in which broad consensus are mutually gained on issues such as wage-restraints, and commitment to improved productivity and training programmes for the workers. Thus, while neo-liberal workplace restructuring has become inevitable, social dialogue process has become a sustainable institutional framework for addressing the social implications of emerging workplace regimes. It has the potential and resilience of overcoming long standing traditional adversaries of labour relations, as the dynamics of work-place relations unfold, thereby creating a climate of confidence amongst social partners. Generally, where it has been demonstrated to work successfully, value of social dialogue process is seen, not only to have contributed to enhancing peace and industrial harmony at enterprise level, but also in advancing social protection for workers, Fashoyin (2004). However, the sustainability of such social arrangements in promoting workplace democracy depends largely on recognition on the part of the social partners of its value in enhancing interests in both economic and non-economic matters of

labour relations. Also, as observed by Nesporova et al (2003) a bipartite relation between labour and management in the workplace facilitates necessary improvement in employment relations thereby promoting acceptable negotiated agreement that contain inclusive social protections. While it accommodates work-process adjustment in the context of neo-liberal agenda, it also provides acceptable employment security for workers.

Employment Protection Nets (EPN) and Inclusivity: objectives of Social Dialogue process.

The concept of Employment Protection Nets (EPN) is understood, here, to refer to the outcomes of social dialogue process that relate to employment and non-employment protections such as income, safety and security at work. As contained in Nesporova et al's (2003) analysis, the primary task of such employment protection at work is to assure decent employment and income security to workers, both in the current jobs and in the case of redundancy. Employment protection policies oblige employers to offer internal redeployment, and to co-operate with trade unions in giving advance notice in case of redundancy as last resort. While workers are expected to be willing to accept the challenges of technological changes and possible internal work process re-arrangement, employment protection nets should be expanded to encourage investment in human capital thereby upgrading workers skill formations (ibid). In this way, employment protection provisions strengthen workers 'tenure' and attachment to the organisations through re-training and skills upgrading which would lead to higher labour productivity and internal flexibility for the workforce. As noted by Piore (1986), employment protections, promoted through skills-upgrading for workers at the workplace, has a 'moderating influence' on resistance against the introduction of production requirements and new working practices. This is because, through the enhancement of functional flexibility of workforce, provided by retraining and skills formation, alternative solutions to redundancies would have been provided, thereby adding to stronger motivation of workers in the context of

workplace re-organisation. Employment protection nets also provide job assurance and tenure to vulnerable group in the workplace who otherwise would have been laid off in period of redundancy. These groups include older workers with long years in employment, women on employment during pregnancy and maternity leave, disabled workers and other groups. Employment protection nets; promoted and sustained through the framework of social dialogue help mitigate inequality and discriminations against these vulnerable groups; enhance their employment-stay, and social security in periods of organisational restructuring (Piore, 1986). Consultations and mutual understanding among the social partners, promoted through instrumentality of social dialogue ensure job stability, better workplace adaptation, and constant training while at the same time promote equitable income, quality work-life, and fight against discrimination between sexes in the workplace (Ichniowski et al 1997, Nickell and Layard 1998 in Nesporova 2003). Where such employment protection is provided, job tenure increases with age while the risk of losing jobs declines (Ibid). A well accepted social dialogue framework between labour and management contributes towards smoother internal labour market adjustment, more social stability, sharing of burden of restructuring and faster adjustment to production challenges. The theoretical model of social dialogue framework therefore suggests a more stable employment relation thereby reducing the inherent tensions that characterises neo-liberal workplaces. The institutional framework of social dialogue facilitates the process of workplace labour relations policy-mix and practices that focus on how to achieve acceptable balance between flexibilities of the organisation, and acceptable employment security for workers, employment promotion and social protection (Fashoyin 2004). Through this, a regime of social rights and protection within the ambit of extended collective bargaining in which compliance with core labour standards become essential, are also guaranteed and maintained. Prospects of such arrangements should aim at maintaining social cohesion and welfare safety-net to mitigate the

undesirable consequences of neo-liberal work-reorganisation.

While demonstrating the empirical relevance of institutional arrangement where collective bargaining has been incorporated with social dialogue processes, Vecernik (2001) observes that in protecting workplace employment, the employer is obliged to inform the workers, represented by trade unions, of the intended work process changes concerning rationalization measures that might lead to redundancy of employees. In selecting employees to be laid off, through consultative framework of social dialogue, the employer shall consider employees work performance, chances to advance professionally, and years of service with the organisation. In Vecernik's (2001) empirical evaluation, the collective bargaining arrangement within the ambit of social dialogue framework promotes opportunity for the care and protection of vulnerable groups such as single parents in employment, disabled employees and aged workers cohort. In his empirical report, other topical measures pursued through collective bargaining processes and social dialogue aimed at ensuring employment protection include; retraining of employees, including retraining of those who are laid off previously due to organisational changes or job-related disability, ensuring jobs for young school leavers and training of new unskilled employees. The measure also includes "subsidized employment" i.e., creation of what is referred to as socially effective jobs (Vecernik, 2001). Collective agreement which is the outcome of such consultative relations also stresses the right of employees to apply for a vacant, or a new job within the organisation, based on new skill-formation of the employee, job requirements, experience, health and status of the employees. Contributing to the desirability and how workplace labour relations practices could be mainstreamed with social protection processes, Majid (2001) noted that decent employment relations in the workplace must be cohered in four major dimensions; employment, security, rights at work and representation. As observed by Majid (2001), employment for workers is important for allowing him to realise "decent-

returns" from his labour-power investment in the workplace. Security in the workplace cover physical working conditions, but more importantly, protective security nets inside and outside the work nexus. Work rights in the workplace allow for social conditions of work to be improved, and discrimination between sexes removed (ibid), thereby giving all workers the opportunity to achieve work life-balance from work. Social dialogue remains innovative and resilience in achieving all this, and also underpins the processes of achieving the collective interests of workers, and many other objectives of workplace labour relations practices. The objective of decent employment in the workplace ultimately aims at achieving organizational objectives for the organisation, by allowing for efficiency, and equity considerations on all matters of employment relations. Decent employment in the workplace, as argued by Majid (2001), involves making positive interventions in these enabling-dimensions of socio-economic living that affect the various ramifications of labour and personal characteristics of the worker. Such interventions are critical in improving the lived-work experience of workers in the context of prevailing precarity of world of work. It should aim at improving both the work and non-work experiences of the workers. Mainstreaming the workplace labour relations practices with the four dimensions of decent employment through the consultative forum of social dialogue deepens social protection of workers. It also improves the ability of individual employees to realise their potential both inside and outside the workplace.

In a recent empirical analysis of the relevance and effective working of 'consensus-bargaining' in the context of social dialogue framework, Rychly (2009), has also evaluated its remits in Nigeria. According to him, the Nigerian labour market in the last three decades has experienced decline in employment opportunities as a result of workplace re-structuring generally, resulting into employment insecurity. As a result, the concern for both parties at organisational levels have been how to protect the existing jobs. The large-scale unemployment both in the public and private enterprises became key issue of employment

relations. In Rychly's, evaluation, trade unions in Nigeria pushed employment security to top priority, as bargaining objective, with considerable energy and commitment to persuade employers not to reduce their workforce, but more importantly, to encourage a more positive disposition to workers (Ibid.). During the period of recession, and workplace re-organisation, contemporary workplace managements usually applied a variety of measures such as work relocation, training and re-training, as ways of mitigating the impacts of work re-organisation (Richly, 2009). Notable features of the formal and informal workplace consensus-building was found to include flexibility in manpower utilization, designed to ensure greater job security. Such bilateral approach to job protection became part of emerging approaches in the management of labour relations in the context of prevailing economic realities. This arrangement under 'social partnership' and social dialogue at workplace has therefore had to involve co-operation between unions and management in their efforts to deal pragmatically with the implications and consequences of the re-organisations. Thus, in Nigeria, for instance, the concern for the survival of the work organisation, on the one hand, and protection of employment with desirable social nets for the workers influence the capacity of both employers and workers organisations to embrace the bilateral framework of "concession bargaining" in a manner that positively represent the interest of their respective constituencies (Richly, 2009). Diminished expectations of workers in a period of workplace re-organisation tend to facilitate mutual appreciation for the need for internal consensus-building not only within the unions as workers representatives, but also between the unions and the management. "Consensus-bargaining" promoted through social dialogue processes of bipartite relations therefore lead to compromises, trade-offs and "win-win" agreements that consequently mitigate the social hardship of the workplace changes (Richly, 2009).

Conclusion

In the deployment of neo-liberal analytical tool, attempt has been made in this paper to show that,

in context of neo-liberal workplace re-organisation, concerns for employment security and protection remain on the top of agenda of social partners in the workplace. It is also shown that emerging concerns have also shifted from the traditional means of negotiating terms and conditions of employment to the integration of institutional framework of social dialogue in addressing the diverse impacts of neo-liberal reforms on employment relations, (Fashoyin, cited in Haipeter 2009). While the traditional role of collective bargaining structure and process is still a primary arrangement in the workplace, integrating it with mutual understanding, in tackling the concerns of parties within social dialogue process have become acceptable to parties under the current circumstances. Review of empirical illustrations have demonstrated that "consensus-bargaining", when integrated into the concept and framework of social dialogue, have succeeded in reducing employment cuts, ensuring social protection and sustainability of work organisation (Fashoyin, 2004). Empirical evidence has also shown how the positive manners in the use of social dialogue processes have addressed issues of employment insecurity in the workplace. As noted by Fashoyin, cited in Haipeter (2009), while the traditional collective bargaining architecture concerns itself with how to deal with, and implement 'job-cuts' agreement, severance pay, and early retirement, for instance, use of social dialogue framework have become resilience and innovative as alternative routes at securing jobs and ensuring tangible forms of employment protection. Conceptualised as "innovation oriented" approach, it has aimed largely at reducing tensions that often characterise employment insecurity. Also, as an approach for innovative oriented bargaining strategies; integrated into social dialogue process, it has the potency to reduce labour costs through improvements in work process arrangement and other induced, 'fall-outs' of changes in the organisation, thereby protecting incomes and jobs (Fashoyin 2009, in Rychly 2009). As neo-liberal logics continue to shape and reshape work processes, what is therefore needed for social partners in the bipartite relations of social dialogue is to strengthen the institutional arrangement so to as to continuously pursue and

achieve the needed employment protections and sustainability at the workplace in the context of neo-liberal framing. The concern for “innovative approach” on employment protection, and sustenance of the organisation requires the capacity of the social partners to tackle the wider issues involved with needed commitment and expertise. This way, the actors will be able to secure the minimum employment standards, Haipeter (2009). Also, in dealing with the impact and consequences of workplace changes occasioned by reorganisation, social partners within the framework of social dialogue should give adequate attention to implementing negotiated issues. Social dialogue, intergrated with collective bargaining, embracing innovative oriented approach has the capacity to deal with the social consequences of neo-liberal workplace re-organisation. It has the capacity and potential to progressively deal with issues of extending social safety nets, not only to the permanent employees but also the vulnerable groups such as temporary workers, self-employed and women workers. When conceptualised and deployed in a holistic manner, social dialogue process also addresses the concerns of those in “atypical-employment” relationship; in guaranteeing them employment security and incomes. The essential components of social dialogue process such as information sharing, consultation and joint collaboration have the potential to anticipate and mitigate collective grievances and potentially damaging industrial strife, thereby promoting social cohesions. Indeed, its utility and promotion as ‘non-judicial component’ of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) (Haipeter, 2009), processes and practices, not only strengthen the confidence of social partners, but indeed provide the acceptable platform to deal with both individual grievance and collective disputes in the workplace; especially in regards to the social implications and impact of organisational changes. Even though the traditional framework of employees’ representation hinged on labour-management relations of collective bargaining is being challenged and threatened by emerging dictates such as ‘individualised employment arrangement’; arising from changes in the workplace relations, process of production, and work re-organisation, social dialogue framework

remains potent as enduring and resilience means through which employment relations and workers voice could be strengthened and enhanced.

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