

Chapter 3

Who to choose and how? The Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Mouton (2001: 56) reminds us that research methodology focuses on the research process and the kind of tools and procedures to be used for the study. In this chapter, I account for the design of the study, and the procedures and techniques I used to collect and analyse the data. I also describe and explain the process of finding the participants, the sample and sampling frame, the preparations and conduct of the interviews, development of the research instrument, the core interview questions and data analysis. I further offer explanations and arguments as to why a particular process, tool or technique was chosen. Finally, I reflect on the challenges I encountered in conducting the study.

In a study of this kind, there is an interactive bond between the researcher and the participants. The key participants were actors in the collection of data and construction of knowledge. They narrated their stories, and shared their experiences with me on the roles played by teacher unions in pre- and post-independence Namibia. The narrative design was important in the knowledge construction of the study, since it is about the roles played by teacher unions in Namibia in different political contexts, and the participants had direct experience of these.

3.2 Research design and approach

This is a qualitative study, which uses a narrative design. The main research question of the study was to understand and explain the shifting roles of teacher unions in the contexts of pre- and post-independence Namibia. Both qualitative studies and narrative research design require exploration, understanding, representation and explanation from the perspectives of the participants who experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2005). The roles of teacher unions in Namibia before and after independence are the focus of the key questions of the study, and this explains why I opted for a qualitative study and a narrative design characterized by exploration and the search for a deeper understanding.

Creswell (2005: 474) explains that a narrative, as a distinct form of qualitative research, typically focuses on studying a single person, gathering data through the collection of stories, reporting individual experiences, and discussing the meaning of those experiences for the individual. He further suggests that we use narrative research when looking for personal experiences. This study looked at the personal experiences of former and current teacher unionists and staff members in the Ministry of Education regarding the roles of teacher unions in pre-and post-independence Namibia, hence my choice of a narrative research design. According to Gall, Gall and Borg (1996), qualitative studies facilitate an investigative role, allowing the researcher to interact with the participants in the study. I interacted with the participants who had experienced the roles of teacher unions, hence the choice of a qualitative study. Cohen (1994) suggests that a narrative research design makes it possible to trace the way in which events in education mirrored those in the local political arena, and explain why particular tendencies have emerged.

This is a case study of the shifting roles of teacher unions in Namibia, calling for an investigative approach. It traces the roles against the backdrop of the pre- and post-independence political contexts. I suggest that a narrative research design is appropriate for the study, as it traces political events, and explains why particular tendencies have emerged. Narrative research design helps to explain the roles of teacher unions in Namibia in different contexts, offering explanations as to why these unions played particular roles in different contexts.

I also draw from Welman and Kruger (1999) who explain that gaining deeper understanding of a social phenomenon from the perspectives of the actors who were involved in the matter under investigation is a characteristic of qualitative studies and narrative research design. This study is about gaining a deeper understanding of the shifting roles of teacher unions in pre- and post-independence Namibia. I can only gain such an understanding, if I use a research design which allows interactions with the participants who were involved in the issues being investigated. In this case, the research design renders itself appropriate for interaction, to gain deeper understanding, and offer explanations for the shifting roles of teacher unions.

According to Creswell (2003), qualitative research is used when the inquirer makes knowledge claims based on meanings of individual experiences and interpretations of

the world. I have made claims in this study on the meanings and interpretations of the individual experiences of staff members in the Ministry of Education and of teacher unionists, hence the choice of qualitative study and narrative design, because of their appropriateness to making knowledge claims on the basis of the meanings of experiences and interpretations.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007: 22) suggest that, for the interpretive researcher, the aim of scientific investigation is to understand how reality goes on at one time and in one place, and to compare it with what goes on in different times and places. This study explores the shifting roles of teacher unions by examining the roles they played in pre- and post-independence Namibia. I contend that the use of a narrative research design lends itself to understanding and explaining the roles of such unions in different political contexts, namely, pre- and post-independence.

My research required interactions with key participants who were or are involved in education and teacher unions in Namibia, to narrate and share their experiences, and to construct the knowledge needed to understand and explain the shifting roles of these unions. According to Creswell (2005), narrative researchers collaborate with participants throughout the process of the research, and the inquirer actively involves the participants in the inquiry as it unfolds.

In summary, the choice of a qualitative study and the narrative design is informed, firstly, by its investigative and interactive nature. Secondly, as Welman and Kruger suggest, qualitative studies and narrative design allow the researcher to gain deeper meaning of the phenomenon being studied, from the perspectives of the key participants who were involved in the phenomenon. Here, it is from the perspectives of teacher unionists and staff members in the Ministry of Education.

3.3 Finding the key participants for the study

I used a twofold, but integrated approach at the initial stage to identify and find the key participants for the study. The approach was a combination of my own reflection on who could speak on the shifting roles of teacher unions before and after independence.

My reflection was based on my own involvement in teacher unions, and my knowledge of education in Namibia. During my reflection, I requested key purposively identified former and current teacher unionists and staff members in the Ministry of Education, whom I judged to have been involved in teacher unions and education, to recommend potential key participants for the study. I explained what I was researching, particularly the main research question of the study, and why I had selected them to recommend key potential participants for the study. As Creswell (2005) suggests, narrative researchers collaborates with the participants throughout the process of research. He explains that the collaboration may include explaining the purpose of the research, and deciding which types of field texts will yield helpful information.

The criterion for approaching the teacher unionists and staff members in the Ministry of Education to identify potential participants was their knowledge of education in Namibia and of the teacher unions. I asked teacher unionists to give me the names of key former and current unionists and staff members in the Ministry of Education who were knowledgeable about the roles of teacher unions in the period under investigation.

I requested both former and current staff members in the Ministry of Education to recommend only key people who could speak on education in Namibia. However, I felt that officials in the Ministry of Education might not be knowledgeable about potential key teacher unionists. For this reason, I did not ask them to recommend names of unionists, since I knew that the former and current unionists could do that adequately.

I explained the purpose of the study and the research questions, either at meetings with the unionists or staff members in the Ministry of Education, by e-mail or through telephone conversations. I explained the criterion, which they should follow in suggesting potential key participants; this was that the suggested unionists and staff members in the Ministry of Education should have had experience of the roles of teacher unions in both pre- and post-independence Namibia, and should be able to speak confidently on education and teacher unions in the country. During the meetings, in my e-mails, and in the telephone conversations, I explained that I was looking for potential key participants who could answer questions on the education

reforms, on teacher unions and education, and on the roles of teacher unions in both pre- and post-independence Namibia, including their current roles.

After I had received suggestions from some of the teacher unionists and staff members in the Ministry of Education whom I had approached, I drew up a list of 43 possible participants. Not all the people I approached responded, but the information that I did receive was useful in my twofold integrated approach to identifying the key participants. The purpose of involving other participants in the selection of potential participants was to help identify only those whom they assumed possessed rich information.

The next step was to identify the 15 key participants from the list of 43 suggested names. I used the frequency of the appearances of the names and my knowledge of their involvement in teacher unions and education as the criteria in selecting the 15 key participants for the study. The assumption was that the names which appeared several times would be those of people who were already key figures in education and teacher unions, particularly in the period under study. I thereafter proceeded to constitute the interview sample for the study.

3.4 Sample and sampling frame

I selected the sample from the population of former and current staff members in the Ministry of Education and former and current teacher unionists who were or are in the national leadership of teacher unions, given that in Namibia, social dialogue in education and consultation between the Ministry of Education and teacher unions are centralized. The educational reforms in post-independence Namibia were also centrally managed, mainly from Windhoek. Through my own involvement and experience of teacher unions and education, I knew that it was the national leadership of teacher unions in Namibia which assigned representatives to the institutional frameworks of consultation and social dialogue in education. Normally, teacher unions assign centrally located representatives to serve in the institutional frameworks for such consultation and dialogue. The information about teacher unions and educational reforms, as well as the roles of teacher unions in Namibia before and after independence is centrally available. The management cadre in the Ministry of Education and the national leadership of teacher unions, who are mostly Windhoek

based participated and continue to participate in the social dialogue in education and consultation frameworks. These were the reasons why I selected the key participants for the study from the Khomas region in Windhoek, which is the central region of Namibia.

My initial interview sample thus consisted of 15 key participants. They were purposively identified on the basis of two main criteria. Firstly, they had had direct involvement and experience of education in either pre- or post-independence Namibia, and involvement in the leadership of teacher unions at the national level. The second criterion was the location and the accessibility of the key participants. The first criterion was based on my judgment, and also on the suggestions of the people whom I had approached to recommend key participants for the study. I assumed that those who had lived through and experienced the education reforms or had served in the national leadership of teacher unions were likely to possess rich-information, and would reflect and share their experiences of the educational reforms and the roles of teacher unions. Creswell (2005) suggests that narrative research allows a researcher to select participants who can provide an understanding of a phenomenon, because he or she has personally experienced a specific issue or situation.

The second criterion was to limit the key participants to those based in Windhoek in the Khomas region, given that all the key participants on my list, and most of the recommended potential key participants, were based in Windhoek. The likelihood was that I could obtain the information I needed from the participants in Windhoek. According to Sycholt and Klerck (1997:113), collective bargaining in the public service in Namibia tends to be centralized, because of the highly centralized structure of government. This is also the case with education, as educational policy matters, consultations, and social dialogue in education are handled at the central level. For these reasons, I limited the key participants to Windhoek in the Khomas region.

With regards to sampling, I chose to use purposive sampling. My choice was informed by the explanations of Gall, Gall and Borg (1996) and Welman and Kruger (1999) that such sampling is used when the researcher wants to select only those cases from which he or she can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the study. Creswell (2005:204) further explains that in purposive sampling, the researcher intentionally selects individuals and sites in order to learn or understand the central

phenomenon. He asserts that the standard used in choosing participants and sites is whether they are information-rich.

The emphasis in these explanations and in purposive sampling is on the judgment of the researcher to make decisions on the selection of his or her sample. Using purposive sampling for this study enabled me to rely on my own knowledge and experience of education, the education reforms in post-independence Namibia and teacher unions, in order to purposefully identify the key 15 participants who would constitute the interview sample.

I considered that staff members of the Ministry of Education who were not involved in education and the educational reforms in post-independence Namibia, and unionists who were not or are not involved in the national leadership of teacher unions where teacher union representation roles are assigned would be unlikely to provide information-rich cases from which I could learn. The choice of purposive sampling allowed me to identify only those participants who were or are directly involved in education management and leadership of teacher unions and from whom I could learn a great deal.

The next question that cropped up after selecting the choice of the sample and sampling frame was the sample size and representativeness of the sample. Could the 15 key participants provide information-rich cases from which I could learn about the issues I was investigating? In answering this question, I drew inspiration from DeJaeghere (1999) who argues that the sample size is not as important a criterion of rigour as the quality of the data from the sample. Creswell (2005:207) corroborates DeJaeghere, when he argues that it is typical in qualitative research to study few individuals or cases, because the overall ability of a researcher to provide an in-depth picture diminishes with the addition of each new individual or site. The objective of qualitative research is to present the complexity of the information provided by the participants, and larger numbers according to Creswell (2005) can result in superficial perspectives.

The size of the sample and its representativeness, although important, were not criteria for the selection of the sample for this study. The criterion was rather to select key participants who could provide information-rich cases to answer the research

questions. I argue that, in the case of this research, it would not have been worthwhile to use a sampling frame which would select participants who were not or had not been involved in education and teacher unions, as they would not be in a position to provide information-rich cases.

One aspect for further research is the consideration of gender and possibly of race in the context of fragmentation and divisions in the history of Namibia. I did not consider the dimensions of gender or race in selecting the sample, and only reflected on them during the drafting stage of the thesis. My main consideration when constituting the sample was involvement in teacher unions, knowledge of education in both pre- and post-independence Namibia, and the educational reforms. Incidentally, the sample included white and black Namibians, as well as males and females, although in different proportions. Twelve of the participants in the original sample were black Namibians and three were white. In terms of gender, three were females and twelve were males.

I acknowledge that the dimensions of gender and race, as I have highlighted in the limitations of the study, were areas to which I should have paid attention in the constitution of the sample for the study. Different groups might have offered different experiences in understanding and interpreting their realities and the world around them.

In summary, I used purposive sampling to constitute the interview sample. I used three criteria to constitute the sample: firstly, the opportunity and ability to provide information-rich cases to answer the research questions; secondly, involvement and participation in the education reforms, education and teacher unions; and thirdly, the opportunity to reflect on and share the lived experiences of teacher unions in the historical contexts of pre- and post-independence Namibia.

3.5 Data collection tools

Table 1: Summary of data collection tools

Research question	Data collection tool	Data sources
What were the roles of teacher unions in pre- and post-independence Namibia?	Individual interviews, focus group interviews and document analysis	Interviewed former and current staff members in the Ministry of Education. Interviewed former and current teacher unionists. Focus group interviews with teacher unionists. Literature and documents.
What institutional frameworks and modalities in the contexts of pre- and post- independence Namibia facilitated the participation of teacher unions?	Individual interviews, focus group interviews and document analysis	Interviewed former and current staff members in the Ministry of Education. Interviewed former and current teacher unionists. Focus group interviews with teacher unionists. Literature and documents.
What contextual factors shaped the roles of teacher unions in Namibia pre- and post-independence?	Individual interviews , focus group interviews and document analysis	Interviewed former and current staff members in the Ministry of Education. Interviewed former and current teacher unionists. Focus group interviews with teacher unionists. Literature and documents.
How do we explain the changed roles of teacher unions in post-independence Namibia?	Individual interviews , focus group interviews and document analysis	Interviewed former and current staff members in the Ministry of Education. Interviewed former and current unionists. Focus group interviews with teacher unionists. Literature and documents

3.5.1 Semi-structured interviews

I used semi-structured interviews, as one of the data collection tools for the study. According to O'Donoghue (2003), semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to engage in conversation with participants through more down-to-earth questions, while the participants are also allowed to express themselves freely on their experiences.

I suggest, given this explanation, that semi-structured interviews are appropriate for this study, because of their usefulness in generating deep and meaningful insights which could reveal new perspectives on the roles played by teacher unions in pre- and post-independence Namibia. Such interviews also provide space to probe some of the responses, and enable the researcher to obtain detailed and meaningful information. Semi-structured interviews also allow the participants to express themselves freely, and provide additional information.

I pilot-tested the interview questions on four participants, two staff members in the Ministry of Education and two unionists, before I finalized the interview questions. The suggestions made during the pilot testing were incorporated in the final interview questions. The emphasis was mainly on one question which sought responses on the contextual factors which shaped teacher unions. The participants felt that it was overcrowded, since it asked about both political and educational contextual factors in the period in question. They felt that it could lead to ambiguous answers.

I decided to split the question into two, with one question focusing on the situation before independence, and the other on post-independence Namibia. The interview questions contained almost the same questions for staff members in the Ministry of Education and for the unionists, with the exception of two questions. In this case, I posed separate questions to the teacher unionists and staff members from the Ministry of Education, since these questions were only relevant to them. I used the interview questions during the interviews as a flexible guide, and made adjustments depending on how the interviews were progressing.

3.5.2 Focus group and telephone interviews

I conducted one focus group interview with six representatives of teacher unions. One member had been part of the original 15 interview sample, and had already been interviewed, while the others five had not been involved in the first round of the individual interviews. The purpose of the focus group discussion was to follow up, and seek further explanations, especially on, the current roles of teacher unions in Namibia. Many of the participants both teacher unionists and staff members in the Ministry of Education, were critical during the individual interviews, saying that the teacher unions were not currently playing significant roles in education.

I noticed that I had not interrogated this question sufficiently during the individual interviews. It was for this reason that I requested the Secretary-General of one of the teacher unions to invite teacher unionists to the focus group interview, based on the guidance that I provided to him. The selected teacher unionists should be able to speak confidently on the roles of teacher unions, especially their current roles. I explained that the participants to be invited should be teacher unionists who were involved in the activities of teacher unions. The Secretary-General agreed to my request, and invited five members, including himself to the focus group interview, which took place at the union offices. I also conducted telephone interviews with two representatives of the other teacher union in Namibia. This was after several attempts to organize a focus group interview failed.

The procedure for identifying the participants for these interviews was the same like the focus group interview. I explained the purpose of the telephone interviews to the president of the teacher union, and requested him to identify leaders of his union for the interviews. I explained the criteria for selection. Firstly, the identified participants should have been involved in teacher unions, especially during the educational reforms. Secondly, they should be in a position to speak confidently about the advocacy roles of the teacher unions during the educational reforms and the issues that the teacher union promoted. The purpose of the telephone interviews, as with the focus group interview, was to gather more information about the current roles of teacher unions in Namibia. This involved clarifying some of the issues that the participants in the study raised, which in many instances suggested that teacher unions were currently not playing significant roles in education in comparison with the period of the educational reforms. Understanding was also sought on the advocacy roles and issues promoted by this teacher union post-independence, especially during the education reforms.

3.5.3 Follow-up interview

I realized both while listening to the recorded interviews, and during the transcription, that certain issues that the participants raised during the interviews or that were contained in the literature on the educational reforms and teacher unions needed further clarification. It was against this background that I have decided to conduct a

follow-up interview with the Prime Minister, who was the first Minister of Education in Namibia post-independence.

The purpose of the interview with the Prime Minister was to seek further clarification on issues that were not clear during the first interview. The follow-up interview focused on the role of consultants during the education reforms. I wanted to understand why most of the studies and surveys during the reforms had been conducted by international experts. I also wanted to discover if there had been tensions during the education reforms, and if so, how those tensions had been managed. These issues had not been adequately addressed during the initial interviews. The follow up interview clarified many of the issues, and also provided additional information that was useful in answering the research questions.

3.5.4 Document analysis

Document analysis in addition to the interviews, was one of the data collection tools for this study. Document analysis serves two purposes; firstly, it provides additional information to that provided by the participants during the interviews. Secondly, in some instances, it corroborates the interview information. Creswell (2005) warns that narrative researchers need to be cautious about the authenticity of the stories and experiences they record. Document analysis serves the purpose of triangulating the data. Welman and Kruger (1999) suggests that attempts should be made to corroborate the findings from conversations, interviews and documents with other evidence, hence the combination of interviews and document analysis for this study.

The interviews were concerned with a time span of nine years post-independence, and the possibility existed that some participants in the study might not recall the roles played by teacher unions, especially pre- and immediately post-independence. The combination of interviews and document analysis helped to fill the gaps left in their recall of the events.

The document that I analysed included; minutes of teacher union meetings, teacher union congress reports and resolutions, proceeding reports of some consultative conferences and meetings convened during the education reforms, written submissions of teacher unions, and newspaper articles and books, especially on education and educational reforms and transition in Namibia. I also sourced

information on the roles played by the teacher unions in the period of transition, and the contextual factors which shaped the roles of the teacher unions.

I obtained the documents from the teacher unions, the Ministry of Education, from libraries and from individuals and institutions who possessed documents and materials on teacher unions and education. During the interviews, I asked the participants to provide me with documents relating to the study or refer me to individuals and institutions who might have relevant information. I also relied on the Internet, on the librarians from the University of Namibia, the teachers' resource centre in Windhoek, and the University of Pretoria, with regards to documentary sources. The requests for specific materials were in most instances communicated by e-mail. Document analysis constituted a major part of the data collection side of the study. Accessing some of the documents was a major challenge, as I will explain in the section on the challenges encountered during the research. The teacher unions for example, did not keep proper records or filing system for the minutes of the deliberations of their decision making structures. I did not receive any documents from one particular union, despite various attempts, and I obtained documents relating to another union from an individual who kept her own records at home.

3.6 Core questions

I asked these core questions:

- What were the roles of teacher unions during the education reforms in an independent Namibia?
- How would you compare the role of teacher unions during the apartheid era, especially during the transition from apartheid to democracy, with their currently evident roles in education?
- What participation modalities and strategies did the Ministry of Education adopt to facilitate teacher union participation?
- In your experience, how did the pre-independence political and education contexts influence and shape the relationship between teacher unions and the education authorities? (I followed-up this with the same question, but replaced pre-independence with post-independence).

- Any other issue or additional information that you wish to share that we did not discuss?

I rephrased some questions, depending on how the interview was developing, though the content of the questions was generally the same. I also used the interview questions as a guide for the focus group interviews, but with particular emphasis on the current roles of teacher unions in education, and the institutional frameworks and modalities for teacher union participation.

3.7 Conducting the interviews

The next step, after I had identified the interview sample and developed the data collection tools, was to make arrangements for conducting the interviews. I started by writing letters to all the key participants for the study. The letters explained the purpose of the research and invited them to participate, particularly in the interviews. All the participants were requested by official communication to participate in the study (see annexure for an example of the letter). The letters also contained the ethical requirements under which I conducted the research, as prescribed by the University of Pretoria, namely, informed consent, confidentiality and the right of the participants to withdraw from the study at any time.

The letters were either hand-delivered or sent by fax or by e-mail. I also asked permission from the heads of specific institutions to interview their staff members, without disclosing those to be interviewed in instances where permission was necessary. This applied especially to staff members in the Ministry of Education and the teacher unions. I also requested the unions' permission to conduct study on their history and roles (see annexure for an example of the letter).

I created a schedule for myself to manage the interview process before I delivered the letters (I have the schedule, and can submit it upon request, as it contains the names of the participants). The list included the names of the participants, the delivery date of the letter, the interview date, venue and time of the interview. The responses of many participants to the invitation, to participate in the study, as well as to confirm an interview date and venue, were slow. I had to follow-up by e-mail and by telephone to get the dates for the interviews and to agree on the venues. I was flexible with regards

to the venues, as it was difficult for me to insist on specific venues, both because of the seniority of some of the people involved, and out of respect for the personal preferences and conveniences of the participants. I did not want to create inconveniences for the interviewees, hence my flexibility in agreeing on the venue.

Thus the venue for each interview was decided upon in a consultative manner, and incorporated the suggestions of the participants. Nine of the original interviews took place in the offices of the participants, two in my office, two at the homes of the participants, one at a hotel, and one at a resource centre at the Ministry of Education. One follow-up interview took place at the Office of the Prime Minister, while the focus group interview was held at the office of the teacher union.

The third step after I had finalized the dates, times and venues, was to conduct the interviews. I recall that my first interview was with the Prime Minister at his Office. I interviewed him in his capacity as the former and first Minister of Education in an independent Namibia, and not as the Prime Minister. I remember how nervous I was, as this was my first visit to the Prime Minister's Office. Three questions concerned me: whether he would agree for me to record the interview, whether he would have enough time for the interview, and whether I would be confident enough to engage him in follow-up questions.

I discovered as the interview was progressing that my fears were groundless, as he had time for me, despite his busy schedule and also agreed to my recording the interview. I kept a notebook during all the interviews in which I recorded the important points the participants made for follow-up questions, and for further reading on issues which were important to the writing of the thesis. The interview with the Prime Minister increased my confidence level, as it was conducted in a relaxed atmosphere. It lasted about 30 minutes. I suggested at the end of the interview that I might come back to him to follow up on issues, if it would be necessary, and he assured me that I could come back to him any time. He also wished me well with my studies.

All the interviews that I conducted followed a similar sequence. Firstly, I explained the purpose of the study and the ethical requirements. Secondly, I asked permission to record the interviews. Initially, I had selected an interview sample of 15 participants,

intending to conduct 15 interviews. As the interviews progressed, however, I was referred to someone who was not originally in the interview sample. One of the interviewees recommended this person to me, and suggested that she might have information-rich cases on the current roles of teacher unions. She is involved in a major education and training sector improvement programme in Namibia. I decided to add her to the sample. By the end of the interviews, as shown in the schedule below, I had conducted 25 interviews instead of the 15 I had initially envisaged. The 25 interviews included the one person to whom I had been referred, the follow-up interview with the Prime Minister, focal group discussions with six representatives of teacher unions, and the two telephone interviews.

Table 2: Interview schedule

Name	Position/organisation	Venue	Date
Nahas Angula	Prime Minister and former Minister of Education	Prime Minister's Office	19 February, 2009 Follow-up interview: 27 July, 2009
Mutopenzi	Ministry of Education	His office	10 March, 2009
Amos	Ministry of Education	My office	20 February, 2009
Mary	Ministry of Education	Residence	19 March, 2009
Moses	Ministry of Education	Teachers' Resource Centre	21 April, 2009
Jenny	Ministry of Education	Her office	18 March, 2009
Brown	Ministry of Education	Residence	5 March, 2009
Steven	Unionist	His office	24 March, 2009
Boys	Unionist	Hotel	15 March, 2009
Uncle	Unionist	My office	12 April, 2009
Bertha	Unionist	Her office	27 March, 2009
Wiseman	Unionist	His office	18 March, 2009
Piet	Unionist	His office	5 February, 2009
Tuahepa	Unionist	His office	16 March, 2009
Mwatjavi	Unionist	His office	13 March, 2009
Sustjie	Ministry of Education	Her office	28 August, 2009
Focus group discussion:			
Mukwetu	Unionist	Union office	11 August, 2009
Comrade	Unionist	Union office	11 August, 2009
Muhako	Unionist	Union office	11 August, 2009
Mabos	Unionist	Union office	11 August, 2009
Mayimbwe	Unionist	Union office	11 August, 2009

Dawid	Unionist	Union office	11 August, 2009
Mokwetu	Unionist	Telephone interview	15 September, 2010
Simson	Unionist	Telephone interview	15 September, 2010

3.8 Data analysis

The data analysis began with a transcription of all the interviews (see annexure for an example of the transcriptions). I used a transcriptionist to transcribe the interviews, but listened to all the recorded interviews, following them against each transcript. The purpose was to ensure that the transcriptions were properly done, and to make any corrections and additions. I listened to the recordings several times, and also read the transcripts several times. I did this for two reasons, firstly, to make all the necessary corrections and editorial changes, so that the ideas were coherently represented. Secondly, to begin to make sense of the interviews as a whole, and to identify emerging ideas to be developed into the themes of the study. I entered the transcripts after corrections, and I used the Atlas.ti programme to code the data. The coded data were then organized in themes. Using the research question as a guide, I identified the following themes as important:

- Role of teacher unions in pre- and post-independence Namibia;
- institutional frameworks and modalities for teacher union participation;
- teacher unions and changed context; and
- pre- and post-independence contextual factors that shaped the roles of teacher unions.

3.9 Validity and ethical considerations

This section explains how I dealt with the questions of the validity of the study and with the ethical issues. According to Creswell (2005), a researcher needs to make sure throughout the process of data collection and analysis that the findings and interpretations are accurate. He defines validation of findings as the process through which the researcher determines the accuracy and credibility of the findings.

I addressed the question of validity by using six strategies. Firstly, I asked all the participants the same questions during the interviews, and thus the questions were repeatedly asked of different participants. I did this to ensure that the data provided by the participants is compared with the information of the other participants in order to enhance the validity of the study.

Secondly, I used three data collection tools, namely individual interviews, focused group interviews, and document analysis. The use of three data collection tools contributed to the validity of the study, as it allowed for triangulation to corroborate the information in the sources. The document analysis, focus group interviews and individual interviews complemented each other, ensuring that the information obtained from more than one source, would enhance validity.

Thirdly, I did follow-up and focus group interviews after I had listened to the recordings and read the transcriptions several times. One of the objectives of the follow-up interviews and focus group interviews was to validate the information collected during the interviews. I have explained that I felt that the information on the current evident roles of teacher unions seemed to have been one-sided, so the focus group interviews were also used to validate the views expressed. Thus the use of follow-up interviews was also a strategy for enhancing the validity of the data.

Fourthly, I was involved in lecturing students in the labour diploma while writing the thesis. The students were unionists from all the trade unions in Namibia. I presented a module on trade union organisational development. My interactions and discussions with the students helped me to gain particular insights into the roles of trade unions in Namibia. This process contributed to data validity, as it broadened my understanding of the roles of trade unions, adding to the information from the interviews and document analysis.

Fifthly, I used member checking to assess the accuracy of the findings. Creswell (2005:252) defines member checking as a process in which the researcher asks one or more of the participants in a study to check the accuracy of the account. I forwarded the interview transcriptions to the participants, particularly where they have been cited, and asked them to check the accuracy of the statements. The majority indicated that the transcriptions were accurate. A few suggested changes, while three of the

participants did not come back to me. I also held discussions with people who were involved in the negotiations and social dialogue in education with teacher unions, but were not participants in this study. The aim of this interaction was to obtain more information, particularly on assessing the effectiveness of the participation of teacher unions in the institutional frameworks and modalities for dialogue in education. Member checking was one of the strategies I used to enhance the validity and accuracy of the findings.

Sixthly, my supervisor was involved in reviewing and commenting on the research, from the project proposal to the writing of the thesis. The research proposal was also subjected to a defense at which academics provided feedback, particularly on the theoretical framework. I took their comments into account during the writing of the thesis. In addition, fellow doctoral students offered valuable comments during seminars in which we presented our draft research proposals.

In conducting the study, I was aware of my position in relation to ethical issues. I was aware that I would be dealing with a research topic in which I had my own views, as a result of my involvement in the teacher unions, NANTU, my connections with the struggle for national liberation and my location in Namibia, as a black person. I tried to deal with this by constantly reminding myself of the risk of subjectivity during the research process, by being critical with the information, and by giving voices to participants from both the Ministry of Education and the teacher unions.

I dealt with the ethical issue of informed consent and voluntary participation by explaining the purpose of the study, and asked the participants to give their consent to participate in the study. I dealt with confidentiality and protection of the anonymity of the participants by using codes during the interviews and transcription of the data, but changed these codes into pseudonyms during the drafting process. I wanted to associate the statements with people and not with codes. I felt it was not necessary to use a pseudonym for the Prime Minister, because of the public office he holds both as a former Minister of Education and as Prime Minister. I also disclosed and explained the purpose of the research and the ethical requirements of the University of Pretoria, both in the invitation letters to the participants, and before the start of each interview.

3.10 Challenges encountered during the research

As often the case, I experienced challenges in conducting the research. These related to recalling and accessing information. A further challenge was that of conducting the research while working at the same time.

Some of the participants in the study could not recall all the information that I requested. For example, one participant whom I wanted to include in the study advised that she would not be able to recall all the events, both because she had not been involved at the national level and because of the distance from the time span under study. This challenge also arose during an interview where some participants could not answer one or two questions, especially those dealing with the phase before independence, as they had been in colleges or simply could not recall the events. I managed this challenge by being flexible, and by rephrasing the questions, so that the interviewee could answer on the basis of what they had read or on the experience of others, if they had not been directly involved themselves.

A second challenge I encountered had to do with the systematic filing and keeping of records. This was especially the case with the teacher unions. Some minutes, congress resolutions and reports of teacher unions were not available at their offices, nor were they able to provide me with them when requested. Important records tended to remain in the hands of individuals, and the offices of teacher unions either did not have some of the records or there was no systematic filing system. I managed after some struggles to secure some of the records that I needed. My personal files from when I had been in the leadership helped, as they contained all the minutes and records from 1989 to 1995. The former Secretary-General of one of the unions had kept all the union's documents, and provided me with all her records. Another teacher union, however, did not provide me with all the records to which I hoped to have.

A further challenge was in studying while working at the same time. It was very difficult to pay attention to both work and the study. I managed to overcome this challenge during the drafting stage by taking study leave, and by relocating to the University of Pretoria. The move away from the work environment helped me to focus, and to draft the chapters in good time.

Finally, the issue of access to some of the participants was a challenge, because of their hectic schedules. As I have explained, through repeated follow-ups, I finally managed to conduct the interviews with all the participants.

3.11 Limitations of the study

The focus of this study was on understanding and explaining the shifting roles played by teacher unions in pre- and post-independence Namibia. The first limitation was that the study was confined to the roles of teacher unions within Namibia, and the results could not be generalized to political and social contexts that were not similar to those of Namibia. I do not claim that the results could be applied to, and replicated for teacher unions in other contexts, since this was not the purpose of the study. Although the results cannot be generalized, nevertheless, the study could offer insights into how changed political context shapes the roles of teacher unions. From this, something valuable could be learnt.

The second limitation was that I purposely selected key former and current participants from the Ministry of Education and teacher unionists, as my data sources. I may therefore have omitted some key role-players who could have provided valuable information. The study did not capture the lived experiences of many people who were or are involved in education and teacher unions.

The selection of the sample, although it seems to be limited, is a sampling choice, and as Dejaeghere (1999) argues, the sample size in qualitative studies is not as important a criterion of rigour as the data from the sample. The choice of the sample in this study was based on the criterion of access to information-rich cases. The size of the data was therefore not the major consideration. Nevertheless, I suggest that future studies on the roles of teacher unions should consider including ordinary members of such unions, as their perspectives might well differ from those of the leadership.

The third limitation of the study is that I did not consider gender and race, as lenses through which to look at the roles of teacher unions. I only started to reflect on the issues of gender and race when I was drafting the thesis. I recommend that future research on teacher unions consider the dimensions of gender and race, as female and male, black and white may have different experiences of the roles of these unions.

Finally, the study was confronted with what I term the “difficulty of recall.” Some of the participants were unable to respond to questions on, particularly, the ones related to the pre-independence period, because they were still young, in college, or simply could not recall the events, because of the lapse in time. The techniques of probing and triangulations became critical in filling these gaps.

3.12 Conceptual framework

This study focuses on the roles played by teacher unions in the historical contexts of pre- and post-independence Namibia. The aim is to understand and explain the shifting roles in these periods against the backdrop of the political context. I will first explain the theory of strategic unionism, how it developed, and then, justify why I suggest that it is the appropriate conceptual framework for this study.

In order to conceptualize the shifting roles of teacher unions in Namibia before and after independence, I make use of Von Holdt (1994), Barber (1996) and Murray and Wood (1997) notions of strategic unionism. This refers to the abilities of unions to redefine their roles, and develop alternative strategic approaches to dealing with contextual issues. Strategic unionism is also about developing a short- and long-term vision of labour-driven process of strategic change. I suggest that the theory of strategic unionism, because of its focus on the redefinition of roles, and on new strategic approaches that unions make, offers a framework for explaining the shifting roles of teacher unions in Namibia. These roles can be explained against the backdrop of new strategic approaches to addressing contextual factors.

I suggest that strategic unionism as the conceptual framework for this study could explain the roles played by teacher unions both before independence, when faced with the apartheid state and its policies of fragmentation and segregation, and after independence, when teacher unions were confronted with a new political context, and they had to develop alternative roles and approaches to their pre-independence roles.

In choosing strategic unionism as the conceptual framework for the study, I take note of Heyman’s advice (1979), cited in Murray and Wood (1997) on appropriate theoretical frameworks to trade unionism in developing societies , given the radically different social and political conditions. New theoretical frameworks, according to Murray and Wood (1997) are required in which to analyse the Namibian trade union

movement, and they suggest that the theories of trade unions as social movements, strategic unionism and coterminous unionism are useful.

Barber (1996) traces strategic unionism in Britain and the United States of America to the 1980s and 1990s, and observes that it developed due to powerful social forces at work, and the collapse of corporatism in many countries. Corporatism, according to Barber assumed teacher union involvement in policymaking. The ascendance to political power of market-orientated governments in the 1980s, especially in Britain and the United States, and the focus on market reforms, dismantled the traditional structured relationship between teacher unions and government (Barber, 1996: 174). The powers of teacher unions to participate in education policymaking were subsequently curtailed. The underlying aim of these government decisions, according to Barber, was to weaken the unions, as they interfered with the doctrine of a free market. As a result, unions have to seek solutions to the challenges they face, and at the same time have to seek ways ahead in uncharted territory (Barber, 1996:185). This is the context of the development of strategic unionism in Britain and the United States.

Teacher unions in these cases have had to redefine their roles, and find alternative strategic approaches on how to respond to the contextual issues. Strategic unionism, as conceptualized by Barber (1996), is underlined by the assumption that unions look beyond the immediate contextual factors, and begin to strategically focus on the future. Strategic unionism is about unions seeking new strategies and redefining their roles to deal with contextual issues of change. I suggest that strategic unionism, because of its response to contextual factors and its focus on the future, can explain the shifting roles played by teacher unions in pre- and post-independence Namibia.

In the case of South Africa, Murray and Wood (1997:166) observe that strategic unionism developed, as a response to the demands of the transition to political democracy. Von Holdt in his article: “The rise of strategic unionism”, notes that strategic unionism started with the campaign against government’s 1988 amendments to the Labour Relations Act. COSATU and NACTU wanted to prevent the amendments, but failed. According to Von Holdt (1994), once the amendments were promulgated, the unions were faced with the dilemma of whether to fight for the restoration of the old Labour Relations Act, of which they were critical, or to put

forward new proposals. The unions proposed immediate short-term amendments to the law, and long-term proposals on workers' rights. Von Holdt (1994:30) defines strategic unionism as the emerging unionism, involving a vision of labour-driven process of strategic change. I use this definition for the purposes of this study to explain the contextual issues driven by teacher unions in pre- and post-independence Namibia, and to explain the shifting roles of these unions and their strategic vision in different political contexts.

In summary, I chose the conceptual framework of strategic unionism for this study, for two reasons. Firstly, it explains trade union responses to dilemmas posed by contextual factors, and how unions develop new strategic approaches and tactics. Secondly, I argue that teacher unions in pre- and post-independence Namibia faced dilemmas, and suggest that the conceptual framework can explain our understanding of their shifting roles. Strategic unionism looks beyond the immediate, and I submit that it can explain the historical changes in the teacher unions, taking into account the contextual factors which shaped the roles they played in Namibia.

Chapter 4

Shifting roles of teacher unions in Namibia

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the roles of teacher unions in pre-and post-independence Namibia. The chapter answers the research question: “*What were the roles of teacher unions in pre- and post-independence Namibia?*” I will divide the roles for the purposes of analysis according to phases, namely, pre-independence, immediately post-independence during the education reforms from 1990 to 1999, and their current roles from 2000 until to date. In examining the roles, the chapter focuses on six themes namely, the pre-independence roles of teacher unions in Namibia, the educational vision of the teacher unions post-independence, the education advocacy roles of the unions, their roles during the education reforms, and their current roles. I will conclude the chapter by assessing the influence of the teacher unions on the education reforms in an independent Namibia. The themes have been selected on the basis of the data, which reveals that these were the key roles which the teacher unions played in pre- and post-independence Namibia. The overall aim is to gain insights into the roles played by the teacher unions in Namibia in different political contexts.

4.2 Pre-independence roles of teacher unions in Namibia

Teacher unions in pre-independence Namibia found themselves in a dilemma due to conflicting and competing expectations. The South African government expected teachers to support and promote its policies, and to oppose the objectives of national liberation. Liberation movements and progressive forces in the country, on the other hand, expected the teacher unions and teachers to support national liberation.

The 1983 report to the Department of National Education by the Advisory Committee for Human Sciences Research (ACHSR), cited by Ellis (1984:38), noted that teachers at primary schools experienced many acute conflicts in their work. On the one hand, they were entrusted with the hopes of the parents, on the other, the South African government wanted to use them as agents of the apartheid state.

A participant in the study explains:

Teachers had a very complicated role to play. They knew very well that, although they were placed by South Africa with a certain intention, they could not fulfil that intention fully. So, the South African government did not have the capacity to supervise every classroom. In this role, the teachers became pivotal people with a leadership role where they have to judge how far they can go. This made teachers astute politicians (interview with Amos, 20 February, 2009).

This explanation suggests that teachers were aware of their environment and of the conflicting expectations. As a result, they had to make choices in executing their roles, both professionally and in their communities. According to Ellis (1984:29), the South African government made serious attempts to promote a small, but significant black middle-class in Namibia. He observes that teachers were the third group of the potential middle-class that the South African government wanted to promote. The other groups were managers and trainees in transnational companies. Ellis (1984) observes that the creation of a middle-class was also promoted through the appointment of prominent black people to the boards of directors of local companies. Ellis (1984) and Cohen (1994) note that among the strategies used was that of increasing the salaries of black teachers, nurses and other professionals. This strategy continued throughout the 1980s. I suggest that this was done to promote the middle-class stratum of teachers, and to alienate them from the agenda of national liberation.

A unionist notes and explains the focus of teacher unions before independence:

Politically, we know that the education was on an ethnic basis, and teacher unions were also ethnic based, and I do not think they have played any role, as far as education policy formulation was concerned. They would only talk about the service conditions most of the time when it came to conferences (interview with Moyo, 12 April, 2010).

This explanation suggests that there are different views on the roles played by teacher unions in pre-independence Namibia. One view is that the teacher unions played different roles, including political roles. These roles, however, were dependent on the environment in which the teachers and their unions found themselves. The other view

holds that the unions only focused on conditions of service, as Moyo explains. I suggest that the focus on conditions of service has to do with the ideologies of professionalism and the middle-class stratum, as promoted by the South African government before independence.

The objective of creating such a middle-class was to ensure the collaboration of black teachers in opposing the liberation movement, SWAPO. Cohen (1994:53) corroborates this view when she argues that the intention of fostering a black elite in Namibia was, so that the black elite could oppose the then “scientific socialism” prescribed by the liberation movement, SWAPO. It was also an attempt to create a group of Namibians with a stake in neo-colonial political economy who would resist the pressures for any radical transformation of the Namibian economy after independence. These plans did not always work out, particularly, as the South African government was suspicious of the political allegiance of teachers, especially in the northern part of Namibia.

Thus the teacher unions in Namibia pre-independence were caught in a dilemma, that of choosing either to support national liberation or to submit to a kind of apathy based on the conflicts of being middle-class. Ellis (1984) argues that it would be a mistake to assume that teachers had swung to favour the South African government. This view is supported by the 1983 report to the Department of Education by the ACHSR, cited by Ellis. The report made the following points regarding teachers:

- The motivation of some teachers is very low, because of their hostility towards the curriculum and the authorities; and
- The occupying army in the north often suspects teachers of being SWAPO supporters (Ellis, 1984: 37-39).

These were the dilemmas that the teachers faced pre-independence. It is evident that some supported national liberation, despite their middle-class status, while others supported the South African government. Soudien (2004:221), in his reviewing teachers’ responses to the introduction of apartheid education, suggests that people live in contexts that both shape and are shaped by individuals. They measure and negotiate their way around the specific circumstances they come across. He concludes that teachers in the fifties in South Africa learnt how to live in a hostile environment,

making careful estimates of where space existed for them to speak back to the forces seeking to dominate them.

In the case of Britain and the United States of America, teachers responded in the 1980s to the dismantling of the traditional structured relationship between their unions and government (Barber, 1996). Teacher unions began to develop alternative strategies which went beyond the traditional roles of trade unions to respond to contextual factors. Teacher unions in these contexts, according to Barber, began to focus on influencing the democratic process of changing governments, when direct lobbying failed to change the government ideology.

I contend that, as in South Africa, and faced with similar conditions in a hostile environment, teacher unions in pre-independence Namibia learnt how to negotiate their way around specific circumstances. A participant in the study who was a unionist before independence confirms negotiating around such circumstances; he states:

I told these guys to use the law to fight the same law and policies. The Education Act of Owambo said that no teacher or management person or executive member of OTA should criticize the Chief Minister unless at a meeting opened by the Chief Minister or Minister of Education. He will open the meeting and go, and we would regard that as opening the platform for us (interview with Brown, 5 March, 2009).

This explanation confirms Soudien's suggestion that individuals shape their contexts to negotiate their way around specific circumstances. The Owambo Teachers' Association (OTA) was able to shape a hostile environment by using the same law to advance their interests of fighting the pre-independence government. The participant explained to me their strategy for criticizing the government and the education system at their meetings during the interview. This was to invite the Chief Minister or Minister of Education to open the conference, after which he would leave. The union members would thereafter continue with the conference, criticizing the system by using a law that allowed them to do so, if the meetings were opened by the Chief Minister or Minister of Education.

Document analysis, however, reveals that this was not the case with all teacher unions in pre-independence Namibia. My review of the minutes and correspondence of the Federation of Teachers' Associations of South West Africa/Namibia, which was the umbrella body of the ethnic teachers' associations, suggests that the Federation focused mostly on the conditions of service of the teachers. I have not come upon any correspondence or resolutions showing that they deliberated on education or criticized the government. The approach of the Federation was to talk to the government on conditions of service of teachers. This is what Kerchner and Mitchell, cited in Barber (1996), call the "meet-and-confer" generation of teacher unions in which the unions established their right to organize, and to be consulted on issues affecting their members, but not to engage in educational matters in the case of pre-independence Namibia.

This is perhaps the background about which Kaiyamo, who assisted with the formation of industrial unions in Namibia, including teacher unions, was quoted in LaRRI (2000:2), as follows:

There were organizations such as NAMOV which were already well established but lacked the liberation ideology. They were tools used by the Boers to continue with the status quo. Teachers were really afraid. They thought of their salaries and possible promotions.

This confirms that not all teacher unions in pre-independence Namibia supported national liberation. Some indeed supported the South African administration.

A former staff member in the Ministry of Education expands on this by explaining the apathy of teacher unions in this period:

Before independence, teacher union participation was partial and incomplete, because of the fragmentation that existed. Before independence, I was not aware of much activity, because of the prevailing politics of the time that did not encourage teacher unions and the potential for teacher unions, and what they could contribute. The political situation in this period might have led that these unions did not have much to contribute due to their fragmentation (interview with Mary, 19 March, 2009).

Against the background of the data and the explanations that I have quoted, I posit that many teacher unions did not play significant roles in pre-independence Namibia, until 1989 when a national teachers' union was established. A few teacher unions attempted to play roles outside the confines of the expected South African government roles. The lack of significant roles could be ascribed to the contextual conditions under which the unions found themselves at this time. As, I have illustrated, they faced conflicting choice of roles. On the one hand were apathy and collaboration through the middle-class stratum, and on the other hand, the expectations of the liberation movements and progressive forces in the country that they identify themselves with national liberation.

Accepting the middle-class location and co-option through continuously increased salaries and other benefits might explain why some teacher unions opted to collaborate with the state, while other teacher unions and some teachers in their individual capacities supported national liberation. Teacher unions as organized groups under the then prevailing political conditions played different roles. Their choice was either to support the South African government or national liberation.

Kihn (2004:327) observes that, in the case of South Africa in the 1980s, the reform agendas of the traditional teacher associations proved unacceptable to some teachers. Responding to the heady political and social contexts, these activist teachers organized outside of their traditional ideology of professionalism, and began to establish alternative teacher unions. This was also the case in Namibia on the eve of independence. According to Murray and Wood (1997:173), NANTU developed as an alternative to the Federation of Teachers' Associations of South West Africa/Namibia and its ethnically, racially and tribally divided teachers' associations.

4.3 Roles of teacher unions in Namibia on the eve of independence, 1988 to 1989

The establishment of the first national teachers' union in Namibia took place within the broader political context of the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 435. Resolution 435 paved the way in 1989 for internationally

supervised democratic elections for an independent Namibia. What were the roles of teacher unions against the backdrop of the political context of the move from apartheid to independence?

Hausiku, the founding president of NANTU, quoted in LaRRI (2000), explains:

The role of teachers in this situation will be to join the masses of our people and organize and campaign for the coming elections to ensure that apartheid is defeated at the ballot box. It should also be defeated in their daily teaching practices. Education should be democratic, liberating and relevant to our context. It should be non-racial, non-sexist, free and compulsory at primary and secondary levels, as part of the struggle for a non-racial society free from exploitation and oppression.

Wiseman, a former unionist, corroborates this, and elaborates on the roles of teacher unions on the eve of independence:

Specifically, referring to ourselves as teachers, we saw our role as using our operational areas, which were the schools or classrooms, to prepare and educate the people that the pre-independence political system was inferior, and that we could not see ourselves as one Namibia. We had to use the classes to educate the people that the SWAPO Party, as a liberation movement, was fighting to do away with the apartheid laws and the inferior education system (interview with Wiseman, 18 March, 2009).

The publication of LaRRI (2000) quotes Mutorwa, one of the former unionists, who recall:

During registration, our members were involved in explaining the registration process and the requirements to qualify for registration. This was necessary, especially in areas with high illiteracy rates. When the United Nations Transitional Assistance Group members held information meetings on various aspects of the independence process, NANTU members actively participated. Teachers also played a very important role at their respective schools and in the communities by verifying the age and documents of students as required by the registration law.

According to Kihn (2004: 330), the new professionalism in the case of South Africa, saw the class location of teachers as workers, and that their organizations were unions as opposed to associations. I suggest that the roles of progressive teacher unions in Namibia on the eve of independence in view of the explanations of Hausiku, Wiseman and Mutorwa shifted from the traditional ideologies and identities of professionalism and middle-class location to what Kihn (2004) defines as the new professionalism. New professionalism as defined by Kihn, and used in this study, refers to the location of teacher unions in the broader community, and their association with broader political and societal issues instead of only focusing on the middle-class comforts and interests. New professionalism thus identified teacher unions with the broader society, and began to ask questions about the relevance of education in the contexts of both Namibia and South Africa.

According to Hausiku, Mutorwa and Wiseman, the role of progressive teacher unions in Namibia on the eve of independence were; firstly, to identify and associate themselves openly with national liberation. Secondly, they were to engage in mass mobilization with the objective of defeating apartheid, and to bring about a democratic and non-racial society. Thirdly, progressive teacher unions participated actively in educating the learners and communities at large, especially with regard to the requirements of the law and the registration process during the first internationally supervised election in Namibia.

In the 1980s, progressive teacher unions in South Africa began to look beyond the dominant ideologies of teacher union professionalism and middle-class location, and began to respond strategically to the political context, and to redefine their location and roles within the liberation and mass movements, and in the context of the situation in post-apartheid South Africa (Kihn, 2004). This was also the case with NANTU in Namibia, and I suggest that the political similarity between Namibia and South Africa explains the coincidence of progressive teacher union responses to apartheid, and their repositioning against the political context at the time.

In the case of NANTU, a former unionist explains the repositioning of teacher unions in Namibia post-independence:

NANTU was thus formed with the particular focus of becoming the voice of teachers in their social and political arena, and was clearly linked to the demands for independence and national liberation and complete change in education. So, the views in 1988 and 1989 were that we will need independence and national liberation to address the issues of education as well. Thus, let us get first this independence, then change and reform education (interview with Steven, 24 March, 2009).

Steven confirms the thinking of progressive teacher unions in Namibia and their focus on getting national liberation and independence first, and dealing with educational reforms after the attainment of political independence. It also explains why progressive teacher unions were involved in the implementation of Resolution 435. They understood the importance of linking their demands for educational change to the broader national liberation.

Angula, one of the SWAPO leaders during this period, recalls, and explains the relationship between national liberation and the establishment of progressive teacher unions in pre-independence Namibia:

You might also know that the formation of teacher unions like NANTU was influenced by the liberation struggle. Some of the political leaders of the liberation movement were requested to assist with the formation of the teacher unions. There was an organic relationship between the formation of progressive teacher unions and the liberation movements. So, that organic relationship was further strengthened when independence was achieved. Everybody has a task to do away with racial and ethnic division (interview with Angula, 19 February, 2009)

I have quoted Angula to illustrate the relationship between liberation movements and progressive unions, especially the commonality in their thinking at the time with regards to non-racism in education. The explanations of both Angula and the teacher unions suggest that the liberation movements and the progressive teacher unions had a vision of unifying the education system, dismantling racial and ethnic divisions in education, and bringing about fundamental change in education post-independence.

How did other teacher unions and the government respond to the shifting roles of teacher unions from traditional professionalism to new professionalism, as defined by Kihn, and the involvement of progressive teacher unions in national liberation? The existing teacher unions attempted to oppose the formation of a progressive national teachers' union on the pretext of the ideologies and identities of traditional teacher professionalism. This was demonstrated by NAMOV, one of the teachers' associations in pre-independence Namibia, which opposed the formation of a national teachers' union.

NAMOV requested a meeting with the coordinating committee responsible for overseeing the formation of the new teacher union. According to LaRRI (2000), this meeting was held on 26 January, 1989. NAMOV maintained that there was no need to form a new national teachers' union, and suggested that NAMOV itself should emerge under a new name, and function as the national teachers' union (LaRRI, 2000). This idea was not accepted, hence the formation of a second teachers' union, TUN, in the mid 1990s.

As I explained in the literature review chapter, NAMOV opposed the formation of a new teacher union, for two main reasons. Firstly, NAMOV felt that teachers, as professionals, were not supposed to be involved in politics. They regarded the new teacher union as political. Secondly, they objected to the fact that the idea of forming the teacher union was initiated by the students, and teachers, as professionals, were not supposed to be led by students (LaRRI, 2000). These were the reasons why NAMOV resisted the formation of a national teachers' union.

The government responded harshly to the formation of a progressive national teachers' union in 1989. Firstly, the Administrator-General, who was the representative of the South African government in Namibia, prohibited in 1989 what he termed "politics in the classroom" and political activities on the premises of educational institutions (LaRRI, 2000). Secondly, he directed that government officials should not take part in public political debates. NANTU rejected these directives, describing them as a violation of the teachers' rights to freedom of speech and association. Other responses, according to LaRRI (2000), included threats, intimidation, suspensions and the dismissal of teachers who were perceived to be involved in politics.

To summarize, during the pre-independence period, teacher unions faced dilemmas, and had to deal with conflicting expected roles. The South African government expected them to collaborate with its policies, while liberation movements and progressive forces expected them to identify themselves with national liberation. Many teacher unions, as organized mediums of teachers, did not play significant roles in national liberation during the pre-independence period. This situation changed during 1988 and 1989, when a national teachers' union was established that shifted its role from traditional professionalism to new professionalism. The new professionalism combined professionalism and unionism, and began to locate the roles of teacher unions in the broader context of national liberation and independence, defining the roles of teacher unions post-independence. New unionism contests the class location and identity of teacher unions, and locates their roles within the broader context.

4.4 Post-independence roles of teacher unions in Namibia, 1990 to 1999

The role of progressive teacher unions on the eve of independence was to mobilize and organize the teachers and the masses of the people to support national liberation, and to defeat apartheid at the ballot box, as the founding president of NANTU has explained. In this section, I will explore the roles of teacher unions during the educational reforms in post-independence Namibia. I focus on these reforms, because they represented the major activities of unions during the 1990 to 1999 period. Bertha explains the roles of teacher unions post-independence:

The role of teacher unions since independence has been that of a partner of government by trying to assist, and not as watchdogs of the government. Practically, we were there to assist the government as partners without compromising our rights (interview with Bertha, 27 March, 2009).

Another unionist elaborates:

In the past, trade unions were seen as entities that just bite. There is definitely a change in the frame of thinking. Now they can see that the

trade union can play a very important role in the education reforms. Even the fact that the union was invited to the Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP) played an instrumental role in education reforms (interview with Tuahepa, 16 March, 2009).

Teacher unions after independence, according to Bertha and Tuahepa, saw themselves as partners of government in education. This was a major shift from the antagonism and adversarial labour relations pre-independence. I suggest that the common goals of redress and change in education, as articulated by progressive teacher unions in the context of pre-independence Namibia, which resonate with the objective of the Ministry of Education as stated in the study by the United Nations Institute for Namibia: “Namibia: Perspectives for national reconstruction and development”, shaped the concept of partnership between the Ministry of Education and teacher unions following independence. The study of the United Nations Institute for Namibia asserts that an alternative education policy in an independent Namibia must review the need for change as its central theme, to correct the wrongs perpetrated by the illegal regime (United Nations Institute for Namibia, 1986).

Angula (1999:4) notes that educational reform and renewal in post-independence Namibia were guided, among other goals, by:

- equity of access and opportunities;
- democratization of the education enterprise; and
- new educational ethos of a non-racial, united and integrated education system.

I suggest that there was commonality in the vision and expectations of progressive teacher unions of the post-independence education system, and the education vision of liberation movements. Bendix (1998) argues that basic to any industrial relations are certain commonalities of interest. Where commonality of interest exists, a certain measure of cooperation is guaranteed.

4.4.1 Education vision of teacher unions for a post-independence Namibia

I posit that progressive teacher unions supported national liberation, as Wiseman and Steven have argued, to bring about independence, and also to bring about fundamental changes in education. Teacher unions in Namibia, as a result, had a vision of the education system that they wanted to see post-independence.

Kandombo, quoted in LaRRI (2000), explains the roles of teacher unions after independence:

After independence NANTU was assisting the education reform process. There was close co-operation between NANTU and the new Ministry of Education and Culture. NANTU had a vision and an agenda, and knew exactly which changes the new government should put in place. Minister Nahas Angula consulted with NANTU at all levels. There were also many meetings at regional level between the Ministry and NANTU to discuss teacher training programmes, educational policies, teacher upgrading programmes, etc. Any problems affecting teachers were negotiated between the regional office and the regional NANTU committee.

Kandombo's explanation corroborates the views of Tuaehepa and Bertha, who also see teacher unions post-independence as partners in assisting the Ministry of Education during the education reforms. According to Kandombo, teacher unions in Namibia post-independence co-operated with the Ministry of Education to advance the educational changes they wanted to see implemented.

One teacher union, for example, produced a draft education and training policy in 1990 before the commencement of the education reforms. The draft education policy document is comprehensive, and articulates the vision of education, outlining the following:

- education as a right of every Namibian and not a privilege;
- a system of universal, free and compulsory education for all in an independent Namibia;
- the medium of instruction shall be English;

- total democratization of all educational institutions;
- encouragement of teachers, parents and student relationships at school through the establishment of structures for liaison between teachers , parents and students;
- one unified education system for the whole country;
- equity in the distribution of human and material resources to schools; and
- establishment of teachers’ centres to facilitate continuous professional upgrading and in-service training of teachers (draft NANTU proposed education policy document, 1990).

I will elaborate further on the draft policy document when discussing the advocacy roles of teacher unions post-independence. The purpose of outlining the content of the document was to show the educational vision of teacher unions. The progressive unions advocated for policies, such as; education as a right, English as the medium of instruction in schools, democratization of education, continuous teacher upgrading, and equity in education.

To what extent were these issues part of the teacher union advocacy roles in Namibia post-independence? A unionist elaborates on their vision of education:

When we launched the teacher unions, especially NANTU, we asked ourselves the issue of liberation, and came up with very interesting answers and concepts of educating and liberating the minds. Some asked the question: What about after independence? The answer was that we must still educate to liberate the minds, to decolonize the minds. Liberating the mind to understand what freedom is namely, the responsibility to build the country, including through studying hard (interview with Wiseman, 18 March, 2009).

Another unionist elaborates on the inappropriateness of the pre-independence education system in relation to the educational vision of teacher unions:

At the national level, we had our first contact with the first Education for All Minister, Nahas Angula, in 1989 during the election campaign when he returned from exile at the general meeting of the NUNW in Katutura. He was particularly speaking on the question of education for all. It was still a general term, and it was a broad concept still when we had enough of the colonial education inequalities, and we wanted a relevant education system that is equitable, and which promotes economic social justice (interview with Steven, 24 March, 2009).

Wiseman and Steven point to the vision and expectations of progressive teacher unions after independence, namely, that they expected a relevant education system. These expectations are consistent with the vision of teacher unions which emerged on the eve of independence. At a special congress of NANTU convened in July 1989, for example, the congress resolved to break away from tribal and racist fragmentation in schools and society at large, and to fight for the democratization of education (LaRRI, 2000). It appeared feasible that the education vision of teacher unions before independence would be pursued by the unions post-independence.

A staff member in the Ministry of Education corroborates the views of teacher unions, and provides the context of the post-independence educational vision:

Remember that the 1976 Soweto uprising was the key element of protest against Bantu education. It was anti-establishment. It was to say that we do not want second class education and to be treated as second class. Secondly, the key for them was to change the mental processes that were related to the system that showed that we did not have the mental capacity to be like the whites, and therefore were not capable to get a better education system. Therefore, the idea was to change this way of thinking by fighting for a better system. This was to create opportunities to ensure that we are equal and able to compete with the white person (interview with Mutopenzi, 10 March, 2009).

The above reference to the Soweto uprising illustrates the expectations for education in post-independence Namibia against the backdrop of Bantu education. Bantu education was also introduced in Namibia, hence the reference to it in explaining the

vision of post-independence education. The vision of both the Ministry of Education and progressive teacher unions, as illustrated by Wiseman and Mutopenzi emphasizes mental liberation, taking responsibilities in our own hands, and equal opportunities for all. In relation to expectations, teacher unions hoped that the post-independence education system would provide relevant and equitable education. I contend that the inappropriateness of the previous education informed the vision and expectations of the post-independence education system.

4.4.2 Advocacy roles of teacher unions in post-independence Namibia

Teacher unions in post-independence Namibia engaged in advocacy roles to advance both their professional and their trade union interests. According to Vaillant (2005:42), the ability of teacher unions to negotiate validly with government is conditioned by the varying levels of professionalism of the unions and their links with other influential players in the political system. Contacts between unions and governments occur sometimes very informally. It is against this background that I examine the advocacy roles of teacher unions post-independence. These advocacy roles of the unions might have influenced the roles they played during the education reforms. I will focus in this section on the advocacy roles relating to education, and offer explanations why teacher unions in Namibia advocated for particular issues.

A unionist explains the advocacy roles of the unions during the education reforms:

NANTU was a kind of a pressure group during particularly the first five years of independence. They made concrete proposals pointing to the areas that they needed to change in consultation with the members, and thus expressed the views of members as well. Secondly, the teacher unions, especially NANTU in this case, were pro-active in dealing with issues of equality in education, of regional policies, of questions of skills of teachers and the recognition of teachers' qualifications. The role of the teacher unions was one, in the policy arena as pressure group, and number two, representing the particular interests of its membership. Of course any good union has to do that (interview with Steven, 24 March, 2009).

Here Steven explains that one of the roles of teacher unions in post-independence Namibia was education advocacy. Teacher unions, in consulting with their members identified the educational issues they wanted the Ministry of Education to address. The advocacy roles of the unions focused on equity in education, school integration, representation and participation in educational reforms, and teachers' professional development.

My analysis of documents on teacher union advocacy reveals that the unions used media briefings and press releases, structured meetings with the Minister of Education and other officials in the Ministry, and submission of proposals as part of their education advocacy roles. Angula (1999) recalls that the Ministry initiated briefing meetings with teacher unions and students' organizations to provide a forum for the organizations to express their views on the educational reforms. He elaborates that the initiatives did not come only from the government, but that students' organizations and teacher unions also took initiatives. The advocacy roles targeted both the Ministry of Education and the public, as Steven confirms:

NANTU was visible beyond its members and it was a respected union, because it played the role of being the voice for students, parents and the communities in general on educational matters in areas within which teachers operated (interview with Steven, 24 March, 2009).

One of the changes for which teacher unions advocated in post-independence Namibia was systematic redress of the colonial legacies in education. The 1989 NANTU congress, for example, resolved to:

- relentlessly break-away from tribal and racist fragmentation in schools and in society;
- strive for a unified education system, and the opening up of all doors of learning to all teachers, students and parents;
- enter into partnership with government in reshaping the education system by demanding representation on relevant bodies; and
- open up of all schools (1990 NANTU congress resolutions).

These resolutions illustrate the point that teacher unions advocated for fundamental change in education. Progressive teacher unions insisted on the opening up of schools for all learners. As I explained in the literature review chapter, education in Namibia pre-independence was on a racial, tribal and ethnic basis. As a result, teacher unions advocated for redress and fundamental changes, so that schools in Namibia would be opened for all learners. A unionist explains why the call for the opening of all schools was important to the progressive teacher unions:

Most of the former white schools were well resourced in terms of facilities and human resources in comparison to the other schools. If there was no integration, the learners at resourced schools will perform better than the other learners. The union assisted the Ministry to implement integration of schools (interview with Piet, 4 March, 2009).

Teacher unions, according to Piet, advocated for school integration to achieve two objectives: firstly, access to resources and facilities for all learners, and secondly, to achieve equity and redress. The situation in Namibia at independence was:

Very well equipped former white schools in town, very well equipped few private schools, second rated township schools and third rated rural schools (interview with Steven, 24 March, 2009).

This is the background against which the progressive teacher unions advocated for immediate redress to ensure equity in education. Former white schools had places that were available, but resisted opening the available spaces, hence the call for integration in schools. The chairperson of the taskforce constituted by the Minister of Education to investigate spaces in schools, especially former white schools, confirms:

We decided that, if a parent comes and says that my child should enrol, we decided not to turn the parent away, but make place for them, as the Constitution allows for free education. Therefore, it was necessary for us to completely open the schools. We decided to go to the former white schools. I was personally appointed and sent by the Minister, and was accompanied by various members in the education sector, namely, NANTU, a student from NANSO and a regional deputy director from the then Windhoek Education Region. We went out to schools and hostels to

physically look at available places, and we reported to the Minister that there were places for many children. This was to ensure that children got placement in schools where places were available (interview with Brown, 5 March, 2009).

Brown's view illustrates two points. Firstly, the opening of schools was to ensure access to education for all children of school-going age, against the backdrop of the pre-independence context of limited access to education. Secondly, it was an attempt to ensure that the educational facilities in post-independence Namibia were utilized to the maximum extent. School integration, as an advocacy agenda of progressive teacher unions was not limited to learners. These unions also advocated for the integration of teachers in schools, as one unionist explains:

We also took issue with government about the slow pace of the change of the teaching staff. We felt in NANTU at the time that former white schools needed to be broken from within, and that real change could not occur, if the predominantly white staff would be retained in place. NANTU suggested a policy to the Ministry of shifting teachers around, but not to retrench, and to open up schools for black teachers at the white schools that had almost white staff at the time. The Ministry was very reluctant in both justifying it in terms of national reconciliation (interview with Steven, 24 March, 2009).

Steven's view is that progressive teacher unions in Namibia also advocated for integration of teachers in addition to the integration of learners. He argues that the Ministry of Education did not support the shifting around of teachers. According to him, the politics of unity and national reconciliation were possible explanations for the stand of the Ministry. As Jansen (1995) explains, gradualism in policymaking was one of the characteristics of educational reforms against the backdrop of the dictates of a negotiated political settlement. This limited political parties to implementing their policies without negotiating with other political parties. As a result of the outcome of the 1989 election in Namibia, no political party obtained the two-thirds majority of the votes needed for it to formulate and implement its own policies.

I suggest that the teacher unions' advocacy of shifting teachers around could have been influenced by the experience of the first black learners who were integrated in former white schools. Angula recalls the experiences of these learners:

Now 19 years after independence, if you tell people that these were the things that happened in the past, they will say no. Do you remember the first black children who went to Windhoek High School? The teachers did not know how to handle them. So invariably, they sat them in the last row of the class. We heard about this, and told NANSO to make noise, and to go there and verify whether it was true. They made noise, and we started to investigate. Of course the school board was embarrassed. If you go back to Windhoek High School these days, there is none of these kinds of things happening (interview with Angula, 19 February, 2009).

Here Angula indicates that the demand of teacher unions to integrate teachers was informed by the experiences of the integration of learners in former white schools at independence. The situation has improved 19 years after independence, but I contend that there are still barriers to equity and access to quality education for all. Teacher unions not only advocated for educational issues, but also advanced the protection and promotion of the interests of their members. This was particularly the case, according to Steven, with regard to teacher qualifications, and protection of the jobs of unqualified teachers. After independence, the Ministry of Education, for example, mooted that all teachers should obtain professional qualifications by a certain time or lose their jobs. The unions contested the policy of the Ministry of Education on professional upgrading of teachers and possible termination of their jobs, as Steven explains:

NANTU in principle supported the idea, but said that we must be reasonable, in firstly, offering teachers wherever there are the possibilities to obtain these qualifications on a distance basis, because they cannot just leave their jobs to go to UNAM or the teacher training colleges. We said that it was government's obligation to create possibilities, and not just to punish teachers who under very difficult circumstances very often had to carry the burden on their own shoulders (interview with Steven, 24 March, 2009).

The above illustrates the response of teacher unions on the policy on the professional upgrading of teachers. Firstly, they argued that the policy was unreasonable, taking into account that facilities for teacher upgrading were limited. Secondly, they contended that it was the responsibility of government to provide the facilities for teacher upgrading. In addition to school and teacher integration, as well as defending the interests of teachers regarding teacher qualifications, the unions also advocated for the introduction of English as the medium of instruction in all schools. I will discuss this matter in the next section when dealing with the role of teacher unions during the education reforms.

To summarize, one of the roles played by teacher unions in post-independence Namibia was advocacy in the education policy arena. The unions advocated for the opening up of schools and the integration of teachers and learners. They also defended their members with regard to professional teacher upgrading, and against possible job losses. They aimed at addressing issues of equity and fundamental change in education against the backdrop of the pre-independence education system which discriminated on the basis of race and ethnic origin.

4.5 Roles of teacher unions during the education reforms, 1990 to 1999

Teacher unions in post-independence Namibia participated in the institutional frameworks and modalities of the education reforms. The purpose was to influence the direction of the reforms, and to ensure a fundamental change in education.

Bendix (1998) suggests that unions attempt to achieve their objectives through different methods. These methods include; collective bargaining, collective action, representation on, and affiliation with other bodies. I will offer explanations in this section why teacher unions in Namibia post-independence participated in the institutional frameworks and modalities of the educational reforms. I will also indicate the institutional frameworks on which teacher unions were represented, and through which they participated in the reforms. I will also briefly explain the methods the unions used during the education reforms to participate in the frameworks.

According to Bascia (2005:7), successful implementation of educational reforms requires the support of teachers for an education plan, hence dialogue with teachers'

representatives is essential. She argues that many reforms failed, because they did not have the backing of teachers. Angula corroborates this view and elaborates:

Teacher unions are very critical to any education reform. If they do not embrace it, at the end of the day, the reform might not manifest itself at the classroom level. If there are no commitments on the part of teachers, for example, it will not happen at the classroom level. They can make your policies nice paper and nice documents, but in terms of implementation, it is not going to happen, if there is no support from the teacher unions. So they are critical allies in any education reforms (interview with Angula, 19 February, 2009).

The trend which emerges from the views of both Bascia and Angula is that successful education reforms at the classroom level are dependent on the participation of teacher unions. They indicate that teachers have the power to undermine the effective implementation of education reforms at the classroom level, hence the critical need to involve the unions in educational reforms, if these are to be successfully implemented. Soudien (2004:222), in: “Teachers’ responses to apartheid education”, confirms that by the time apartheid education reached the classroom and the school, it was significantly different from the policy designed in the bureaucracy. I suggest that teachers interpret, reword and reconfigure policies, and can implement them differently in their practice in the classroom.

Bascia (2005:29) corroborates Soudien, and argues that classroom work is the prime area for the expression of union opposition. This is where teachers have the power and control to legitimize or undermine curriculum reform. Thus, it is important to involve teacher unions in education reforms, so that they will embrace and support the reforms at the classroom level. My examination of teacher unions in the context of post-independence educational reforms is informed by the views of Angula, Bascia and Soudien regarding the critical role the unions play in the reforms. I seek to understand and explain their part in the reforms, taking into account the critical roles of both unions and teachers in any educational reform. I suggest that the reasons why the unions participated, and were represented in the frameworks of the reforms were, firstly, to give their own inputs and to advance their own interests, and secondly, to give their support to the reforms.

4.5.1 Teacher unions and professional development of their members

One of the roles played by teacher unions in Namibia during the educational reforms was to support the professional development of their members. This was particularly the case during the introduction of English as the medium of instruction in Namibian schools. Progressive teacher unions advocated for the introduction of English after independence, as I explained in the section on the advocacy roles of teacher unions. My review of teacher union minutes and congress resolutions revealed that the introduction of English as the medium of instruction was one of the issues discussed at almost all the teacher union congresses pre-independence. It was also included in the NANTU draft education and training policy of 1990.

I will first offer an explanation of why English was introduced as the medium of instruction, before discussing the roles of teacher unions and professional development of their members. Three factors influenced the dramatic change from Afrikaans as the medium of instruction to English at independence. Firstly, Article 3(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia states that the official language of Namibia shall be English. It was therefore, introduced as the medium of instruction in response to the constitutional requirements. Secondly, it was a response to the demands of progressive forces; such as; teacher unions, students' organizations and mass-based organizations in pre-independence Namibia, for the immediate introduction of English as the medium of instruction in schools. Thirdly, it was a reaction against the label of Afrikaans in pre-independence Namibia as the language of the oppressor. Harlech-Jones (2001:132) observes that Afrikaans was perceived as "the language of the oppressor", and as a device to restrict students from accessing all but conservative, South African-produced academic materials and ideas.

I suggest that these are factors which influenced the dramatic switch from Afrikaans to English medium of instruction after independence. The progressive teacher unions demanded the introduction of English, and thus the introduction of an English proficiency programme for their members. A unionist explains why the unions introduced the English language proficiency programme:

Being a progressive union, however, we decided not to only focus on the conditions of service or "bread-and-butter" issues so to speak, but also to

be actively involved on the education reform side. There were very specific programmes that the union introduced to serve their members better. For example, NANTU introduced the Teachers' English Language Skills Improvement Programme (TELSIP). That to me proves that we went beyond our traditional role of a union, and also improved the performance of teachers to be good teachers in the classroom (interview with Boys, 15 March, 2009).

It was against this background that NANTU, in collaboration with the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) and All Africa Teachers' Organization (AATO), initiated the Teachers' English Language Skills Improvement Programme (TELSIP) in 1990. According to Boys, the objectives of the programme were; to improve the English proficiency and competency levels of teachers, and to make them more conversant with the English language. Many teachers in Namibia were trained in Afrikaans, but after independence were required to teach in English. Against this background, progressive teacher unions introduced English language proficiency programmes to assist them. Vaillant (2005) observes that in some countries, the unions have included the professional development of teachers' in-service training as one of their basic functions. This was also the case in Namibia during the education reforms.

Another unionist explains the language situation at independence, and elaborates on why the teacher unions introduced the English proficiency programme:

After independence others had also a bit of uncertainty with the change, and the fear of the unknown in terms of their own future, because they have been trained and have been teaching through the medium of Afrikaans. Professionally, they had also the fear, and find it difficult that they now have to teach in a language in which they were not trained. That was the challenge for us as leaders at that time to allay those fears, and it is why we had to introduce, as a teacher union, in-service training for our members to meet the new challenge (interview with Wiseman, 18 March, 2009).

The views of the two unionists confirm that in addition to improving the proficiency and competencies of teachers to teach through the medium of English, the programme

also served the purpose of confidence-building. It aimed at building the confidence of teachers to use a language in which the majority had not been trained. An official in the Ministry of Education confirms:

We retrained teachers, as some teachers were not comfortable with English as the medium of instruction. Teachers were taken through workshops at NIED, and we had to guide them on the new curriculum and education system (interview with Brown, 5 March, 2009).

The introduction of English as the medium of instruction in schools created anxieties and fears among teachers, hence the need for professional development and confidence-building. Angula elaborates on the effect of the introduction of the new medium of instruction policy on teachers:

There are many things that threaten people, and at one point when we introduced English as the language of instruction in secondary schools, we saw a migration of teachers from secondary schools to teach at primary schools. You go to a school and see a principal running away from you, and he or she fronts up the young people who can speak English to talk to you (follow-up interview with Angula, 20 April, 2009).

In addition to the English programme, one of the teacher unions commissioned a reputable academic from the University of Namibia (UNAM) to develop a position paper on teacher education and training in Namibia. The paper was tabled at the national congress of the union for consideration and approval, as the union's position on teacher education and training. The policy emphasizes the need for increased teacher training at all levels and the creation of the necessary conditions for the professional development of teachers (LaRRI, 2000).

The union also introduced tutorial centres in Oshakati and Rundu to assist under- and unqualified teachers to upgrade their qualifications. The subjects covered were English, Mathematics and Science. The union also engaged a newspaper in 1999 to publicize a weekly education column targeting Grade 10 learners. The purpose was to prepare them for examinations. These activities confirm that teacher unions were engaged in promoting professional development of their members and education in general.

In summary, teacher unions implemented the English language programme to enhance the professional development of teachers, and to promote the proficiency and competencies of teachers who were mostly trained in Afrikaans to teach in the English medium of instruction. In addition, the unions were engaged in other activities to enhance the professionalism of their members, and to improve education in the country. Thus the unions introduced these programmes to contribute to their vision and their demand for the introduction of English as the medium of instruction in schools, and quality education for all. In addition to promoting the proficiency and competencies of teachers, the English programme also aimed at allaying the fears and possible resistance to the implementation of English as the medium of instruction.

4.5.2 Representation and participation roles in the institutional frameworks and modalities of the education reforms

4.5.2.1 Explanation of teacher union representation and participation

One of the roles played by teacher unions in Namibia during the educational reforms was to seek representation and participation in the institutional frameworks and modalities of the reforms. The aim was to represent the interests of the unions, and to make suggestions and proposals to influence the direction and outcomes of the reforms. Angula explains the roles of the unions in the frameworks of the reforms as follows:

They participated there, and they assigned their own members to participate in those taskforces/task teams, and could make their inputs to influence the direction in terms of policy development (interview with Angula, 19 February, 2009)

Angula's explanation suggests that teacher unions participated in the frameworks to achieve two objectives, firstly, to make their inputs to the education reforms, and secondly, to influence the policy direction of the reforms. Bascia (2005) emphasizes the importance of union participation in educational reforms. She suggests that union participation is becoming indispensable, not merely to avoid resistance by unions to government-proposed transformations, but also to ally them to the decision-making processes and take advantage of their views in the preparation of diagnoses, action strategies and evaluation methods(Bascia, 2005: 80). This is the background which

informs my exploration of the representation and participation of teacher unions in post-independence Namibia in the institutional frameworks and modalities of the educational reforms.

The union participants whom I interviewed for this study suggested that they had made it one of their roles to be represented during education reforms, and to participate in the institutional frameworks and modalities of the reforms. Wiseman, one of the unionists, elaborates:

We as a teacher union made it a must to be part of these reforms. We were part of most of the committees that were established in an independent Namibia. We were not only told, but were active participants in the various committees. We had nominated members of the unions to those various committees to represent us on various committees, including subject committees (interview with Wiseman, 18 March, 2009).

The objective of union representation and participation in the frameworks and modalities of the educational reforms, according to Wiseman, was to represent the interests of their members, and make inputs to the reform process. I would suggest that the unions were also included in the discussions, because of their classroom experiences and the knowledge that they could bring to the reforms.

Mary, a former staff member in the Ministry of Education, explains why the unions were included in the frameworks and modalities of the reforms:

Their input at that time was very crucial, because of the fact that the Ministry was trying to unite teachers from various administrations. Within the Ministerial structures, there was not very much knowledge about how teachers experienced and perceived their roles and responsibilities at that time. It was crucial at that time, because they brought the teacher perspectives and experiences to the table (interview with Mary, 19 March, 2009).

Jenny, another staff member in the Ministry of Education, elaborates:

Within the teacher unions, there were members of the SWAPO national cadres. They were not only politically aware and well informed, but also professionally knowledgeable of the relationship between education and society and development, and also of the problems that have confronted the processes of learning, teaching and of education leadership and the challenges of education and development (interview with Jenny, 18 March, 2009).

The explanations of Mary and Jenny confirm my earlier view that classroom experience, professional knowledge of the challenges that faced education, and the need to take the perspectives of teachers into account were the major reasons why the Ministry of Education involved teacher unions in the frameworks and modalities of the educational reforms.

In the context of Namibia, it is important to remember that most of the leaders of teacher unions were inside the country during the struggle for national liberation. As a result, they had direct experience of the pre-independence education system, compared with the leaders in government post-independence. Many of the leaders in government had been in exile before independence. This is the background against which Jenny explains that leaders of teacher unions were knowledgeable about the relationship between education and society.

I also submit that the pre-independence demands of teacher unions for the democratization of education, and the democratic involvement of teachers, parents and students in education played a role in the inclusion, representation and participation of teacher unions in the frameworks of the reforms.

How do teacher unions further explain the reasons for their involvement in the institutional frameworks and modalities? Steven, one of the teacher unionists explains:

The Minister saw that NANTU is not an enemy of change, but that NANTU would be a possible ally. But government also saw that NANTU was challenging them, and that NANTU was not a “laptop” that could be switched on an off, as the need arose, but that NANTU had its own

policies and its own thinkers that could challenge the government at the national level (interview with Steven, 24 March, 2009).

Two main points emerge from Steven's explanation as to why the Ministry of Education involved teacher unions in the educational reforms, on which I would like to elaborate. Firstly, the Ministry of Education recognized teacher unions as key partners in the educational reforms. Secondly, the unions, according to Steven, were critical partners who challenged government by making policy proposals to influence the reforms.

Jenny, a former staff member in the Ministry of Education, offers a perspective on how the Ministry of Education involved teacher unions in the frameworks and modalities of the education reforms. She also elaborates on why an inclusive and participatory approach to the reforms was adopted in post-independence Namibia:

To ensure an education system that is inclusive of people's aspirations, dreams and expectations, and people's values for an independent education system, as opposed to the apartheid-led education system (interview with Jenny, 18 March, 2009).

According to Jenny, the involvement of teacher unions and other stakeholders in education aimed at creating an inclusive education system, one that represented the values and dreams of an independent Namibia.

To summarize, the involvement of teacher unions in the education reforms was informed by a number of complementary reasons. Firstly, it was because of the classroom experiences and knowledge that the unions could bring to the process of the reforms. Secondly, teacher union representation and participation aimed at enriching the content of the reforms, and making it relevant to the classroom situation. Vaillant (2005) suggests that a questioning approach is a must, if unions are to participate effectively in the framing of public policies. According to the explanation of Steven that I have reported, teacher unions in Namibia participated in the education reforms with a questioning approach. Thirdly, I suggest that the unions were represented, because of the challenging and questioning approach that they adopted, as this could enrich the process through critical reviews of the policies and documents produced during the reform discussions.

4.5.2.2 Representation and participation

Teacher unions were represented during the education reforms on the panels responsible for developing the curriculum and content of the new education system. They were also represented and participated in taskforces and working groups established to investigate particular reform issues. Angula confirms the representation and participation of the unions, and recalls:

In terms of the role of teacher unions and students' unions, they were very critical, because they were the allies of the Ministry of Education at that time. When we put up task teams/taskforces to investigate specific reform initiatives, teacher unions and students' unions were part of it, and that became a collective responsibility. Of course, as the Ministry, we have to take leadership in providing the broad policy frameworks (interview with Angula, 19 February, 2009).

Angula highlights two important points. Firstly, the realization by the Ministry of Education that teacher unions and students' organizations are partners in education. Secondly, that education is a collective responsibility, hence the need to involve stakeholders in educational policy development post-independence. As I explained in the literature review chapter, education policymaking before independence was the exclusive domain of the government.

Mary, a former staff member in the Ministry of Education, gives an overview of some of the institutional frameworks and modalities on which teacher unions were represented during the reforms:

In the beginning, and I think that it is something that we have lost over time, but I think we will get to that. In the beginning there was so much passion. It was much more consultative and inclusive process to educational reforms. Unions were a lot more involved. Teacher union representatives were included in working groups and taskforces developing new strategies, developing plans, for example, for teacher issues such as; in-service education, pre-service education, new curriculum for schools, language committees, etc. (interview with Mary, 19 March, 2009).

My review of the Ministry of Education documents confirms that the unions were represented on the taskforces and working groups during the reform process. Angula (1999:8) observes that within the Ministry, taskforces were formed to coordinate policy initiatives. These taskforces included teacher union representatives, students' representatives as well as academics from institutions of higher learning and experts from international organizations. Some of the working groups and taskforces established during the educational reforms, and on which the unions were represented, were:

- Broad curriculum for the junior secondary phase ,1990;
- Broad curriculum for formal basic education , 1992;
- Broad curriculum for basic education teachers' diploma, 1992;
- Implementation of the Higher International General Certificate of Secondary Education(HIGCSE)and the International General Certificate of Secondary Education(IGCSE) at the Senior Secondary level; and
- Taskforce on the new career structure in the teaching profession, 1993.

It is evident that teacher unions were represented and participated in the educational reforms. Representation of course does not necessarily imply an effective participation or an influence on educational policies and the direction of the education reforms. I will examine the effectiveness of union participation later in this chapter, when I assess the influence of teacher unions on the educational reforms. In addition to representation on the institutional frameworks and modalities of the education reforms, the unions also participated in the review of the documents developed during the process. Piet, a unionist, elaborates on the role of the unions in the review of documents, and how they played this role:

The Ministry would come up with policy proposals, and the proposals were sent to the unions for review and analysis, and the teacher unions commented on the aspects that they were not satisfied with. Through this channel, they were able to give their inputs (interview with Piet, 5 March, 2009).

Moses, a staff member in the Ministry of Education, agrees with Piet, and elaborates on the unions' methods of reviewing documents:

Draft policies were sent out, and then meetings called to discuss the policy documents. The unions also had to consult their members before coming to the meetings (interview with Moses, 21 April, 2009).

An important point which arises from Moses' explanation is the issue of mandate in teacher unions. Moses recalls that teacher unions discussed the policy documents in their own structures. I suggest that consultations with the members of the unions was an important aspect, ensuring that the union representatives obtained a mandate from the members on the position to be taken, and the issues to be raised in the frameworks of the reforms. This should be compared with Vaillant's (2005: 40) observation that teacher unions tend to adopt corporatist practices and cronyism. Under these practices, the unions operate like corporations, where the leadership takes decisions without the participation or involvement of the members.

The Ministry of Education, in addition to taskforces, and review of policy document mechanisms, also used the convening of thematic consultative conferences, as one of the institutional frameworks and modalities during the reforms. My review of the reports of the thematic conferences revealed that unions were represented, and participated in the conference proceedings. In addition, the unions also made presentations at some of the conferences. The aim of the presentations was to give the perspectives of the unions on the themes under discussion at the conferences.

The major thematic conferences, and at which teacher unions were represented, were:

- The Etosha conference towards basic education reform ,1991;
- Sensitization seminar on educational management and administration,1992;
- The Namibia national conference on the implementation of the national language policy for schools ,1992; and
- Conference on the implementation of the Higher International General Certificate of Secondary Education(HIGCSE) and International General

Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) in Namibia, 1993.

The first major thematic conference convened by the Ministry of Education during the education reforms in an independent Namibia was the Etosha conference towards basic education reform. The Ministry of Education, with the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), organized the conference. According to Angula (1999), the broad objectives of the thematic conferences were to share information with stakeholders regarding policy development, and to solicit inputs from stakeholders. He suggests that the conferences were platforms for consultation and dialogue.

The purpose of the Etosha conference, according to Shortlidge, the former USAID representative to Namibia, was for teachers, teacher educators, policymakers, administrators, parents, labour unions, community leaders, businessmen and businesswomen to work together in order to articulate a broad-based national strategy for basic education reform (Consultation on change: Proceedings of the Etosha Conference: First national consultative conference on basic education reform, 1991).

One of the expected outcomes of the conference was the unification of the basic education programmes. The delegates also discussed the way forward, outlining strategies for the implementation of the recommendations and action plans adopted at the conference. The reports of all eight thematic working groups identified teachers and teacher unions as key stakeholders in education reforms in post-independence Namibia. The conference recommended the setting up of a national curriculum committee, the establishment of a teaching service commission to improve the image of teachers, and subject panels to develop subject curricula in a democratic way (Consultation on change: Proceedings of the Etosha Conference: First national consultative conference on basic education reform, 1991). It seems from the conference recommendations that there was a genuine desire in post-independence Namibia to adopt an inclusive and participatory approach to education reforms.

The second major thematic conference, convened in collaboration with the British Overseas Development Administration and the British Council in Namibia, was the Namibia national conference on the implementation of the national language policy

for schools. Teacher unions in Namibia were represented, and participated at the conference.

The specific objectives of the conference were:

- To provide a forum for informed debate and free exchange of ideas; and
- To facilitate widespread understanding of the policy and its implementation (Report of the Namibia national conference on the implementation of the language policy for schools, 1992).

The third national thematic conference was convened to deliberate on the implementation of the HIGCSE and IGCSE in Namibia. The report of the conference proceedings indicates that teacher unions were invited, and participated in the conference. The teacher unions and the students' organizations, in addition to their attendance, also made presentations at this conference. The presentations of the unions, according to the report of the conference proceedings, highlighted the impact of inequities in education, and expressed the fear that the new examination and assessment system would perpetuate such inequities. The unions were also concerned about the lack of facilities, such as; laboratories and libraries at formerly disadvantaged schools, and the effect this would have on the effective implementation of the new examination and assessment system. Many black schools lacked adequate teaching and learning materials, and were not in a position to offer HIGCSE.

The other frameworks for teacher union participation in education were those of the presidential commissions appointed to investigate education issues, and make recommendations. The President of the Republic of Namibia post-independence, and during the reforms, established two high-level presidential commissions on education. These were the Presidential Commission on Higher Education, established by proclamation No.1 of 1991, and the Presidential Commission on Education, Culture and Training, which was appointed by proclamation No. 13 of 1999. As part of their representation and participation roles, teacher union representatives were appointed to serve on these high-level commissions during the reform process. I have noted in reviewing the reports of the commissions that in addition to the representation of one teacher union on the commissions, the unions also made written submissions, and appeared before the commissions to make oral representations. This confirms that the

roles of teacher unions during the educational reforms, in addition to participation and representation, included making written submissions and oral representations on education matters.

In reviewing the minutes of the meeting between one teacher union and the Minister of Education, held on 20 February, 1991, I noted that the union was not happy with the composition of the Presidential Commission on Higher Education, despite the representation of the union on the Commission. The union released a press statement deploring the fact that Namibians were not properly represented on the Commission. The Minister of Education assured the unions, however, that the work of the Commission was only to obtain information from the public and to make recommendations, and that the unions already had adequate avenues through written and oral submissions to articulate their views.

This suggests that, despite the representation and participation of teacher unions in the educational reforms, they were sometimes suspicious and concerned about the composition of the members in the institutional frameworks and modalities, particularly, regarding whose interests the members would serve. The fear of the teacher unions was whether the foreign experts would have sufficient knowledge about apartheid education in Namibia to make appropriate recommendations on the establishment of a national university.

According to Angula, a further role of teacher unions during the education reforms was that of “neutralizing” opposing forces. This view suggests that the unions played “neutralizing” roles by supporting Ministry policies which resonated with union policies, but contested and opposed other groups who were against some reform initiatives during the educational reforms. Angula explains the “neutralizing” roles of teacher unions during the reforms:

But in negotiations on problematic issues such as; language reform, the Ministry had to get the teacher unions and student unions to buy into our positions, so that those forces that were opposed could somehow be neutralized. It was the same with the integration of schools that we take for granted now. It was not like that during those days, especially the integration of former white schools was quite problematic, and for that we

needed teacher unions' support, especially from progressive forces
(interview with Angula, 19 February, 2009).

Two roles of teacher unions emerge from this explanation. First, the unions formed ideological alliances with the Ministry of Education on common issues during the reforms. The purpose of these ideological alliances was to advance the reform agendas on which they resonated. Secondly, some issues of the reforms were not smooth sailing, but were contested. As a result, the Ministry of Education relied on ideological partners both to push through the contested policies, and then, to implement them. Two issues that Angula highlighted and that teacher unions pursued in their advocacy roles post-independence, were the implementation of a new language policy for schools and the integration of schools.

I will conclude with three examples, from government, the Afrikaner community and the teacher unions, to illustrate the contested nature and environment of the reform process following independence, offering the context in which to understand the neutralizing roles of the unions during the educational reforms. Angula recalls:

In the middle of the reforms, when those who came from the old regime realized that this reform is serious and is going to affect them, then there was a big group of people. They used to barricade themselves in Marie Neef Building in central town, saying that their children are being used as guinea pigs for the educational reforms, and talking about watering down of standards and all sorts of things. They decided to go to the private sector to sell insurance policies when they found themselves threatened by the reforms (interview with Angula, 19 February, 2009).

Geingob (2004:122), in his doctoral thesis, recalls:

During the confidence-building period before the drafting of the constitution, I discovered that some whites would seek to reserve some of the privileges they had enjoyed during the apartheid era. This came out during the courtesy call I paid on Mr. Jannie de Wet of ACN with a view to getting to know what his fears were. Mr. De Wet was very happy to meet me. He told me that the whites would be happy if the education system and standards were maintained. He identified fifteen schools that

he would like to be reserved for the whites. If that could be given to whites, there would be no problem, he said. White parents with whom Mr.De Wet had talked to took this issue further to the Administrator-General. What the parents demanded were three conditions: Christian character of education, maintenance of the standard of education and instruction in mother tongue, especially in Afrikaans and German medium schools.

The quotes above illustrate the contestations between the different constituencies during the educational reforms. We had progressive forces, such as; progressive teacher unions and students' organizations, who wanted fundamental change in education, and others, like some members of the white community, who wanted to retain their privileges. In this context, the progressive unions formed ideological alliances with the Ministry of Education to counter the forces that were opposed to the reforms and to change. Against this background, this explanation is relevant to the observations of Vaillant (2005:48) that trade unions have many roots and frames of reference. They have both ideological and practice-based components, anchored in several and often conflicting universes. Teacher unions are not only concerned about conditions of service and professional issues, but also deal with political and ideological issues. In the case of Namibia, progressive teacher unions partnered with the Ministry of Education on ideological issues where they resonated during the educational reforms to advance their collective interests.

Thus the teacher unionist, Steven, recalls:

At times, the meetings between NANTU and the Minister of Education were quite heated. At the time, of course, the Minister saw that NANTU was not an enemy of change, but that NANTU would be a possible ally (interview with Steven, 24 March, 2009).

These three examples demonstrate the complexity and context of the education reforms post-independence. There were high expectations for change and redress from those who had been disadvantaged by apartheid, and resistance to change from those who had been privileged by it.

In summary, teacher unions played various roles during the education reforms. These roles included advocacy to bring about redress and fundamental change against the legacy of the pre-independence education system. Secondly, the unions supported the professional development of their members by implementing an English language skills improvement programme. Thirdly, they took representation and participation roles in the institutional frameworks of the educational reforms. Fourthly, in some instances, they formed ideological alliances with the Ministry of Education to advance reform agendas with which they resonated. These were the roles played by teacher unions in Namibia during the educational reforms.

4.6 Current roles of teacher unions in Namibia, 2000 to date

This section discusses the roles of teacher unions in Namibia from 2000 up until to date. The aim is to understand the roles of the unions after the educational reforms, and after almost 10 years of independence. This period represents a different political context in relation to the pre- and the immediate post-independence period. The purpose is to gain insights into whether the roles of teacher unions have changed from those that they played during the first nine to ten years after independence. I will examine their roles by focusing on union representation and participation in today's Namibia. I draw the data for this section mainly from interviews, but occasionally also use document analysis.

The data reveal divergent views on the current roles of the unions. Some views suggest that the unions continue to be involved in education, while others argue that they have completely lost direction, and are thus not involved in education. A third group argues that they do not know what the unions are focusing on currently, but somehow suggest that they are not involved in education. I will discuss these views, and give an explanation of what informs each group's perspective. I will commence with the group which argues that teacher unions continue to play roles in education.

Some of the leaders of today's teacher unions argue that the unions play various roles in education. I will present examples of what the two teacher unions in Namibia say on their current representation and participation roles:

There is a total difference. The frames of thinking of the unions have also changed. Instead of addressing the employment conditions of their members only, the unions are now involved in topical issues concerning education, such as; involvement in taking decisions on education (interview with Tuahepa, 16 March, 2009).

Another teacher unionist corroborates, this view, and elaborates:

NANTU as a recognized union has structures in place and those structures are functional. NANTU is invited to be represented on any matters concerning education, particularly, from grassroots level. NANTU has to check all the policies, and to monitor them. At the regional level, we also have representatives in the Regional Education Forums in each region. The regional offices are also represented at their level. Coming to the national level, the Ministry recognizes us, and we are consulted on most of the meetings, particularly on ETSIP. Currently, we are talking about decentralization, and NANTU is being consulted, although we were not involved at the beginning. NANTU was also invited to formulate the HIV and AIDS policy (focus group discussion with teacher unions, 11 August, 2009).

These explanations pinpoint specific activities to show that teacher unions are involved in education. The examples that the unionists cite are participation in the Regional Education Forums, and participation in education policy development processes, such as; in the formulation of the HIV and AIDS policy in education. Other frameworks in which teacher unions are currently involved are ETSIP and decentralization. It is evident from the views of both teacher unions in Namibia that frameworks for teacher union participation do exist.

I have also reviewed documents to establish and verify whether teacher unions currently serve on other bodies of the Ministry of Education, in addition to the frameworks that have been highlighted in the quotations. The information from the document analysis was also verified by the two teacher unions in

Namibia, revealing that the unions are currently represented and participate in the following education bodies:

- National Advisory Council on Education;
- Regional Education Forums;
- School Boards ;
- Teaching Service Committee;
- National Council for Higher Education;
- Advisory Council on Teachers' Education and Training;
- Council of the Polytechnic of Namibia;
- National Training Authority;
- Examination Board;
- Technical Committee on staffing norms; and
- Board on textbook policy².

In terms of institutional frameworks and modalities for representation and participation, teacher unions, as they did during the education reforms, have frameworks for participation. Not all the unions, however, are represented on all the institutional frameworks and modalities. I will deal with the perceived exclusion of one teacher unions from some frameworks in chapter five.

² **Footnote:** Only NANTU is represented on the Teaching Service Committee, Council of the Polytechnic of Namibia, Examination Board, National Training Authority and technical committee on staffing norms and Board on textbook policy

The second group argues that teacher unions in Namibia do not currently participate in education. I will highlight the views of the unions to explain the basis of these contestations. One of the current union leaders explains:

From pre-independence to the early years of independence, one could see that teacher unions were very vibrant. From 1990 to 1997, one could commend the unions. The influences that the unions were making were evident. From 1999 to now, unions have just lost direction completely. Not only the teacher unions, but all the trade unions. I do not know what is wrong. I do not know whether it is because of untrained trade unionists that are not passionate for trade unions (interview with Mwatjavi, 13 March, 2009).

Another former teacher union leader corroborates this, and expands:

They have become rather immune to broader economic and social issues. We do not hear them talking about inequalities and disparities, as demonstrated by the examination results every year, and implications thereof on youth unemployment, as our school leavers do not find employment in the economy. I have not heard the teacher unions, including NANTU, addressing the issues publicly and in a systematic way. That in terms of being relevant in the public arena, you have to be able to say something about those issues, and come up with proposals of what needs to be done (interview with Steven , 24 March, 2009).

It is arguable from the language and tone of both Mwatjavi and Steven that teacher unions are currently not involved in education. Mwatjavi in particular seems to be emotional about the issue. He states that unions have “completely lost direction”, and he attributes the current lack of teacher union involvement in education to a loss of direction. There are similarities between the current and former unionists in explaining the present lack of union involvement in issues.

Both relate the lack of involvement on broader economic and social issues to a lack of vision among the union leadership. I suggest that the lack of direction manifests itself in what Steven calls the “immunity” of the unions to addressing the broader economic and social issues of inequalities and disparities in education. As I explained in the

section on the advocacy roles of the unions post-independence, especially during the educational reforms, equity and equal opportunities for all were key advocacy issues of the unions during the education reforms. It seems as if these issues are no longer on their agendas. These views were from former and current unionists; what are the views of the Ministry of Education regarding the current roles of teacher unions?

Staff members in the Ministry respond and give detailed explanations:

At the moment what I find, and this is not exceptional to the education system, but it is to all, is that almost everybody has become a business person. Teachers own taxis. They own kindergartens, which I thought was a conflict of interest. Including ministry officials are owning kindergartens, even advisory teachers turn to give advice at private schools after official work. That is conflict of interest, because you are getting paid to advise teachers at public schools, but advising teachers at private schools to make extra money. At the moment teachers are having two businesses, of teaching the children and doing business for extra income. This is also done by their supervisors. I think this is a big problem, because I believe that teachers in the colonial times were better, because they were prohibited from having businesses (interview with Brown, 5 March, 2009).

Another staff member explains:

The current role is highly influenced by economical and political interests and ambitions. I used to see frequent conferences and meetings of teacher unions at which teacher unions were putting forward their strategies, inviting participation of all their members to ensure that all the members are included, and communicating in one language on how and where they want to see the education reforms going (interview with Jenny, 18 March, 2009).

The explanations of Brown and Jenny suggest that current roles of teacher unions in society have shifted, and focus now on economic issues and political advancements. Previously, the unions advocated for educational issues in addition to the unionism issues of advancing and promoting the interests of the members. These roles are

different from those they played pre-independence and during the education reforms. Jenny, for example, argues that the roles of teacher union leaders have shifted to economic and political interests. She suggests that this shift of focus explains the absence of teacher union conferences and meetings to focus on education, to develop education strategies, and to influence education policies.

Moyo, one of the unionists, gives advice on what the current roles of teacher unions should be, and how the unions should operate in changed political context:

We should be more pro-active as a union, and take the initiative. We have a lot of problems in education. We should form an educational forum where we take the initiative and invite experts and sister organizations and formulate policies outside that of the government, and take it to the government. We are taken by surprise on many occasions where the government, together with the consultants, formulate policies and ask us to review them. Sometimes you do not have an option, but to agree, because you are not well prepared (interview with Moyo, 12 April, 2009).

The views of Moyo resonate with those expressed by a staff member in the Ministry of Education who called for teacher unions in post-independence Namibia to be more pro-active, and to develop alternative policies outside government. It is possible that this is one of the ways in which teacher unions could engage government, and influence the process of formulating public policies in education.

Some unionists explain that the calibre and change in leadership post-independence are some of the factors contributing to the failure of the unions to play significant roles. Boys explains that “the problem that came in was continuity, which resulted in changing leadership for the sake of changing.” He argues that some of the incoming leadership did not have a solid grounding in trade unionism or know where the union was coming from (interview with Boys, 15 March, 2009).

Another former unionist explains the impact of leadership on the current roles of teacher unions:

In NANTU’s case, I will say very clearly that the strength of the union was based on the quality of people that the union had in its early years. The

quality was in analytical terms, in terms of commitment, in terms of vision about the role of teacher unions, and not only just narrowly serving the immediate interests of members, but also serving the broader process of change in Namibia (interview with Steven, 24 March, 2009).

Steven believes that the lack of vision and a strong leadership are among the contributing factors which explain the current lack of drive among teacher unions to play significant roles in education in Namibia. Moyo and others argue that the unions are also not pro-active about taking initiatives. Piet, a leader in one of the unions, acknowledged during the interview that the unions are currently not pro-active. The second point that contemporary unionists raised was that the Ministry of Education previously consulted the teacher unions, but that currently, the Ministry is coming up with policies without consulting the unions, further encouraging their lack of involvement in education.

The third group maintains that they do not know the current roles of teacher unions in Namibia. Former staff members in the Ministry of Education predominantly expressed this view, which they articulated as follows:

If you are just a member of the public, the public thinks that the only time that you hear from teacher unions is when a demonstration is being planned, and when there is a dispute over salaries and conditions of service. But having been inside in the ministry, I know that it is not the full picture. This is where unions could be much more pro-active, so that they are not perceived as defending certain things while overlooking other things (interview with Mary, 19 March, 2009).

Angula corroborates these sentiments and states:

Unfortunately, for now I am not there. I only see the teacher unions' roles when they bargain for their conditions of service, because that is negotiated partially through my office. But at the professional level, in terms of teacher professionalization or in terms of issues such as discipline, I cannot say, because I am not there (interview with Angula, 19 February, 2009).

These sentiments indicate that some people view teacher unions as focusing only on conditions of service, and neglecting the professionalism of the teachers. This seems to be a return to the focus before a national teachers' union was established on the eve of independence in 1989. The national teachers' union focused on both unionism and professionalism. This tradition was continued after independence, especially during the educational reforms. I suggest that the current roles of teacher unions, as perceived especially by; former unionists, some current unionists and staff members in the Ministry of Education, seem to be the reverse of the pre-independence era's ideologies and the identities of traditional professionalism and middle-class location.

In summary, three different views emanate from the data on the current roles of teacher unions in Namibia. The first group suggests that the unions continue to be represented and participate in the institutional frameworks and modalities of education. They acknowledge, however, that the unions are not pro-active, and that sometimes the Ministry of Education does not consult them in the development of education policies. The second group argues that teacher unions have completely "lost direction" in terms of their mission and functions, and are therefore not participating in education. This group suggests that the current focus of teacher unions is on economic and political interests. Finally, the third group holds that the public do not know what the current roles of teacher unions are, and that the unions are only focusing on conditions of service. I will revisit some of these issues in the next chapter, where I will examine the contextual factors that shaped the roles of teacher unions in pre- and post-independence Namibia.

4.7 Assessing the influence of teacher unions on the education reforms

Different views emerge on the extent to which teacher unions influenced the educational reforms in post-independence Namibia. The question is whether the participation of the unions in the institutional frameworks and modalities influenced the reforms. Some views suggest that the unions did have such an influence, while others argue that they did not. There is also a middle view which says that it was dependent on the expertise, knowledge and commitment of the representatives that the union sent to represent them in the institutional frameworks and modalities of the education reforms.

Here I highlight the explanations as to why the contending groups argue differently on the influence of the unions on educational reforms. A former staff member in the Ministry of Education explains:

The unions have underutilized their roles. If you sit in a curriculum council or examination council, then it should be taken up seriously, and I do not think that it has been taken up seriously (interview with Amos, 20 February, 2009).

One of the unionists explains:

My perspective is that teacher unions were not much involved. It was more a government and outside international experts process. I remember perhaps one conference that took place in northern Namibia in Owambo where teacher unions were involved, but it seems for me that the teacher unions were not much involved in the formulation of policies. It was more the government and the foreign “experts” (interview with Moyo, 12 April, 2009).

Two main issues emerge from these explanations. The first suggests that teacher unions did not influence the education reforms in post-independence Namibia, because they did not take their representation on the institutional frameworks and modalities for teacher union participation seriously. This explanation may be valid, but is a generalization that is not well evidenced. It is possible that the influence was

dependent on the calibre of the representatives in terms of knowledge and expertise, and this should be taken into account when assessing the influence of the unions on the reforms.

Lungu (2000:92) observes that stakeholder input to education policy processes presupposes that the participants have the knowledge, skills and interest to engage effectively in policy debates. I agree with Lungu, and suggest that the lack of knowledge, skills and interest could be among the explanations in some instances for the lack of teacher union influence on the educational reforms.

The second issue is the claim that teacher unions were not much involved, and that it was mainly the government and foreign experts and consultants who drove the reforms. My aim here is not to dispute the claim, but to offer an explanation from Angula as to why foreign experts and consultants were involved in the educational reforms:

As you know, when I invited people to a conference in Lusaka prior to independence, the people who were responsible for teacher education in Namibia before independence were suspicious about my intentions. They thought that this was indoctrination by SWAPO. You should put yourself in the position of that time. You cannot go there, as SWAPO, and think that people are going to cooperate. So, you have to use other whites, so that people could cooperate and for you to get the information (follow-up interview with Angula, 27 July, 2009).

The view of Angula explains two roles of the international experts and consultants during the educational reforms. Firstly, because of the tense race relations and suspicion at independence and during the reform discussions, the Ministry had to rely on international experts to obtain the information needed for the reform process. Secondly, they also played legitimizing roles in some of the proposed reforms. Thirdly, the role of the international experts and consultants, in addition to providing technical support and financial resources, was to bring cooperation and consensus among Namibians on contentious issues of the reforms.

The major studies and surveys conducted by international experts and consultants during the education reforms were contentious in nature, and their studies informed

policy developments. I posit that the assumption was that the international experts could bring neutrality to contested issues from their international perspectives and experiences. Some of the studies were:

- John Turner, *Education in Namibia*, 1990;
- Thelma Henderson, *English in Namibia*, 1990;
- George Bethel, *Evaluation of examination needs of primary and secondary schools*;
- Inger Anderson, et al, *Teacher education reform for Namibia*, 1991; and
- Presidential Commission on Higher Education, 1991.

The issues of changing the medium of instruction, replacing the Cape Matriculation Examination system, and establishing a University of Namibia were contentious, and I suggest that this explains the involvement of the international consultants against the backdrop of a constrained political environment involving radical policy shifts.

The group which argues that teacher unions influenced the education reforms explains:

Generally, we did make an impact. NANTU, for example, was not invited, because it was a recognized union, but because we were seen as equal partners, and what NANTU said was taken on board and considered favourably (interview with Boys, 15 March, 2009).

One of the unionists corroborates this point, and elaborates:

At that time, I can confidently say that indeed, we made a very serious impact. For example, in the teacher training curriculum, we agreed on the transitional teacher training qualifications. Our views were certainly and definitely heard, and we could see the results ourselves. We were not decorating these committees. We did have an impact (interview with Wiseman, 18 March, 2009).

The middle way argues that it was dependent on the calibre of the representatives:

In terms of the influence of NANTU, for example, it depended very much on the capabilities and strength of the individuals involved. That has to a large extent been a problem in Namibia in many organizations. This is the case even today in many NGOs and unions where you have four or five key people who represent the ideas of the organization. The influence of the union was visible and strong when the quality of the people that NANTU could delegate was so strong that they could influence. In some cases, it seems as if we had people there, but because they were either quiet or shy or not certain about roles, it became almost negligible (interview with Steven, 24 March, 2009).

Steven argues that teacher unions made an impact and influenced the education reforms, but that this was depended on the capabilities, skills and knowledge of the representatives. He suggests that in cases where these capabilities were absent, the unions did not make an impact, and did not influence the reforms. This explanation links the dimensions of quality and adequacy of capabilities and skills in teacher unions to their influence on education policies.

4.8 Conclusion

Teacher unions played different roles in pre- and post-independence Namibia. The roles were dependent on the social and political environments in which the unions found themselves in different historical contexts. It is clear that the unions responded in different ways to their environments. During the pre-independence era, the strategy of the government was to co-opt the unions to the middle-class stratum against the backdrop of the ideologies and identities of traditional professionalism. The aim was for teacher unions to collaborate with the state, and to oppose the objectives of national liberation. Progressive forces, on the other hand, expected the teachers and unions to identify themselves with national liberation, and to locate their roles in the emerging professionalism that regarded teachers as part of the broader social and political context in which they operated. The conflicting expectations and subsequent need for redefinition of roles led to the establishment of the first national teachers' union in Namibia in 1989. Established within the broader political context of the move from apartheid to independence, the union identified itself with national

liberation. The union leadership argued that they needed independence first to reform the education system and to bring about fundamental changes.

Progressive teacher unions in post-independence Namibia had a clear vision of what needed redress and change during the education reforms. They had clear aims for which they advocated. These issues included; the introduction of English as the medium of instruction in schools, integration of schools, and equity in education. The unions in Namibia played different roles during the education reforms. These roles included advocacy that focused on redress and fundamental change in education, professional development of teachers, representation and participation in the institutional frameworks of the educational reforms and alliances and cooperation with the Ministry of Education to advance common strategic interests, especially when their common ideological positions were contested. It is beyond argument, however, that teacher unions played significant roles during the educational reforms to bring about a unified education system.

The extent to which the unions influenced the educational reforms after independence is contested. Some views suggest that they had an impact on the reforms. Others argue that the extent to which they influenced the reforms was dependent on the particular strengths and capabilities of their representatives in the institutional frameworks of the reforms. A third group maintains that teacher unions did not influence the educational reforms, and that the reforms were instead dominated by foreign experts and consultants.

The chapter also explored the current roles of teacher unions in Namibia. There are divergent opinions on this matter. One group suggests that the unions are focusing on economic and political interests, and thus ignoring issues of professionalism. This was not the case on the eve of independence and during the educational reforms, as teacher unions focused on both unionism and professionalism. The other group, particularly the current leaders of the unions, argues that they continue to represent the teachers, and participate in the current frameworks dealing with education. They acknowledge, however, that the unions are not pro-active, as they used to be during the transition from apartheid to independence and the education reforms. Teacher unions ascribe their failure to participate to the Ministry of Education, which sometimes develops policies without consulting the unions for their inputs.