

The contribution of teacher unions in the restoration of teacher professionalism and the culture of learning and teaching

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The enhancement of the culture of learning and teaching (COLT) is important in education. To achieve this aim teachers play an important role because they are responsible for the one crucial part namely teaching. The teachers' motivation to perform well and their professionalism in the delivery of a high level performance is important in this aspect. A positive attitude and highly motivated teachers may have a positive effect in enhancing a positive COLT. The professional attitude of teacher and the perspective of teaching as a profession can also play an important role in the enhancement of COLT. In these circumstances it is important to recognise the role that the teacher unions can play in the enhancement of COLT as well as in the professionalism and motivation of teachers. This article focuses on the role of the teachers unions in the improvement teacher motivation and professionalism as prerequisites for a positive COLT.

Introduction

One of the main goals in education today in South Africa (SA) is to restore the culture of learning and teaching (COLT) in schools with the net result of improving examination results in the matriculation (school leaving) examination and the general standard of education. The culture of learning and teaching refers to the attitude of teachers and learners towards learning and teaching (Smith & Schalekamp, 1997:4). The following positive characteristics of COLT in schools can provide the background to understand the role of the unions in restoring COLT, teacher professionalism and for the evaluation of the union activities:

- A positive COLT means the commitment, willingness, preparedness and determination of teachers to perform their duties, whereas for learners COLT means their commitment, preparedness and

determination to learn and to be taught (Lukhwareni, 1995:15).

- In addition, Chisholm and Vally (1996:2) refer to COLT as "those school going habits and values which characterise both teachers and learners, these refer to regular attendance, punctuality and acceptance of authority".

This research project focused on the teachers because they are responsible for the teaching process in schools and one of the main contributors to enhancing COLT. There are many problems associated with the situation of teachers in schools that may have a negative influence on COLT. The following are examples of the problems:

- the safety situation for teachers and learners
- the qualifications and professional ethos of teachers
- political factors like the role of unions
- salaries and lack of facilities as well as the poor management of schools (Smith & Schalekamp, 1997:4; Hartshorne, 1992:80).

The professional ethos of teachers may be an important factor that has an influence on COLT.

In the next section we discuss the history of trade unionism in the teaching profession, in order to highlight the controversy that clouds trade unionism today. Maile (1999:7) points out that the Labour Relations Act of 1995 and the South African Constitution of 1996 support the existence of unions (section 23).

The history of trade unionism in South Africa

A trade union is an agency and a medium of power seeking to address the imbalance of power in the workplace (Wood, 1999:7). The history of teacher trade unionism in South Africa dates back to prior to the 1900s. The first unions were divided among racial, language and provincial lines. Although they considered themselves as professional unions, there were already some activities that could be described as unionist functions. The first unions could be described as child-centred with a more professional approach than a worker-orientated philosophy (Myburgh, 1999:25). The first black teachers' union was established in 1879 and it was called the Native Educational Association (Govender, 1996:27). The main reason why this association was established was to deal not only with educational issues, but also with social and political issues of the day. For instance the effect of the pass laws on education provision, the discriminatory nature of the salaries paid to white teachers as opposed to those of their black counterparts who held the same qualifications. In the following years the unions paid attention to many other unsatisfactory conditions which came with the Bantu Education Act of 1953 and other apartheid legislation (Burrows, 1986:14; Moll, 1989:63; Maile, 1999:1). It was because of the above-mentioned circumstances that black teachers had a feeling that a joint effort would be far much stronger than individual effort.

History has shown that the major aim of the establishment of teacher unions, especially black unions, was to fight for the rights of teachers, (e.g. to oppose strongly the implementation of the Bantu Education Act of 1953) and to pursue political interests of African teachers (e.g. the abolishment of the pass laws). From the 1980s, when apartheid structures were beginning to dissolve, there was a growing feeling among younger teachers in particular that teacher unions had to confront the government head-on and use militancy if necessary. These young teachers were politicised by the 1976 uprisings, many of whom were still students at that stage (Hartshorne, 1992:304).

This implies that from the onset black/African teacher unions were established "to fight" the government of the day. Even today the ideologies of those unions with a majority of black teachers differs from that of white members as it shall be demonstrated later — there is a conflict between "militant" and "professional" perspectives (Hyslop, 1986:91). Teacher professionalism is currently linked to the teacher unions in education although this link does not always seem logical. This link will be discussed later in the article as well as the role and the impact of the teacher unions may play in this situation that

may have an influence on the restoration of a positive COLT in schools because they are working with the teachers.

Research problem

The following questions will be addressed:

- What are the characteristics of a profession and is teaching a profession?
- What is the contribution of education unions in the professionalism of teachers, their motivation and enhancement of COLT?
- What plan of action do unions have which is specifically aimed at the improvement of teacher professionalism and COLT?

The following paragraphs examine the professional status of teachers and the role of the unions to improve the professional status and to improve the positive COLT in schools. The discussion below is based on both the literature study and interviews with the three senior officials of the three teachers unions in South Africa.

Teacher professionalism

The question about teaching as a profession is important for the restoration of COLT. If teaching is a profession in the true sense of the word, teachers will reflect the characteristics of a professional person and that will link directly to the traits of a positive COLT. To enhance COLT, motivated, self-disciplined people with a true professional attitude are needed.

The question of whether teaching is a profession or not has been dealt with by numerous academics for many years (Schreuder, Du Toit, Roesch & Shah, 1993:11; Badenhorst (ed.), 1988:143; Mangla, 1992:10; Ornstein, 1981:196-197). There have been many contradictory statements and disagreements on this matter. To determine the status of teaching as a profession, it may be compared with the following characteristics which are normally associated with a profession:

1. A high income, prestige and respect
This is not true for teaching in South Africa because of the historical development of education. The low numbers of students enrolling in higher education institutions to qualify as teachers is an indication of the low esteem of education. The issue of salaries is the teachers' most important complaint for a long time (The Educators Voice, 2000).
2. Specialist knowledge based on scientific research and theories
There is already a well-established research and knowledge base for education and teaching in this country, which includes journals such as *Indicator SA*, *South African Journal of Education*, and many others.
3. A long period of training and high qualifications
The majority of teachers do not have a four-year teaching qualification which presents a problem. According to the Department of Education (2000:1), 85501 teachers are below the Required Education Qualification Value (REQV) 13 benchmark qualification, that is 23.9% of the teaching force. In order to address this problem, the Department of Education and the teacher unions with the assistance of teacher training institutions are working on a qualification which will help these teachers. The four-year teacher training which has started from 2001 may not be regarded as long enough as compared to the training of medical doctors or engineers, but it is specialised training.
4. Autonomy and mechanisms created by its members in respect of control, entry standards and selection
The South African Council for Educators (SACE) has been established to fulfil this function. However, due to financial constraints SACE has not been able to perform all its functions, which include the establishment of the minimum criteria for the registration of teachers, keep a register of the names of all persons who are registered or provisionally registered, promote professional development of educators, many other functions (Department of Education: 1998a:5).
5. Administration by members and control of their own rules of

conduct (code of conduct)

SACE is also endowed with the responsibility to "establish a code of professional ethics which shall apply to all registered or provisionally registered educators" (Department of Education 1998a:5). This code of conduct document has been distributed in all the schools countrywide and each school in the country is expected to have one. The three union officials interviewed agreed that all the teacher unions also have their own codes of conduct, which is expected to be in line with that of SACE.

6. A highly rated and indispensable service and ethos to others
This means that the interests of the client come first — this is not true for teaching because South African legislation allows teachers to participate in industrial action, unlike e.g. the medical profession. In this situation the interests of teachers become more important than the interest of the clients (learners and parents).
7. Conditions of service are laid down for the practitioner of the occupation

The Educators Employment Act of 1998 is the legislation which is aimed to look into the employment of educators, the regulation of their conditions of service, discipline and many other important teacher related matters. The seven hour workload resolution is also another mechanism which has been established to ensure that teachers do not leave work at any time (Department of Education 1998b:7)

According to the above evidence it may therefore be argued that teaching may be a semi-profession and is striving to become a true profession. The employment of teachers in a bureaucracy and the association of teaching with two groups with low status in society, namely women and children, make it difficult for teaching to be recognised as a true profession. Another problem for teaching is the lack of clear boundaries between professional and lay activities (Kercher & Cauffman, 1995:108). In South Africa the emphasis on parental involvement in school activities may be the best indication of the above-mentioned problem. The distinction between the areas of governance and management in schools with respect to the role of parents and the school governing bodies is not clear. A professional like a lawyer will not ask a layman to assist him/her with their professional activities. This grey area creates problems for teaching as a profession.

Unionism is normally associated with industry and workers. Professionalism and unionism are normally not seen as partners. According to Maile (1999:3) and the Republic of South African Constitution, 1996:section 23, it is a human right of teachers to belong to a union. It is this fact and the professional performance of teachers that can create a problem in the restoration of COLT. Some of the unionist activities like stay-aways and strikes are counter-productive to the enhancement of COLT.

Unionism was incorporated in education with all its characteristics like industrial action, collective bargaining and lobbying. Although unionism was able to free teachers from the domination of local communities, especially in rural areas, it created problems for the professional development of the activities of teachers (Kercher & Cauffman, 1995:111). This statement indicates the tension between the role of a union to care for the interests of its members and the professional function of the teachers. Union activities add a moral issue to the professional activities of teachers. The public normally has a negative view of union activities because of industrial action. To motivate the strikes the unions indicated that strikes are in favour of the learners for example they go on a strike to get an improved teacher: pupil ratio (Maile, 1999:11). Mr. Willie Madisha, the president of SADTU, emphasised this tension when he said that he wants teachers to be proud of their work because they have a noble profession. In the same breath he indicated that he feels that teachers have the right to participate in strikes because they are workers and they will not allow anybody to trample on them (Makatile, 1999:18, 19). This emphasises the dual role of teacher unions and why it is difficult to characterise teaching as a true profession.

A development towards professional unionism may be a possible

solution in this situation. Professional unionism is when the teachers and management work together; it is no longer "they versus us", but "we". Joint committees, peer review, training and development, and changes in bargaining are characteristics of this professional unionism (Kercher & Cauffman, 1995:111).

In an attempt to answer the question as to how far the unions have contributed to the professionalisation of teaching and the restoration of COLT in schools, three officials of the three prominent unions in South Africa, namely, South African Teachers Union (SATU), the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU), and the National Professional Teachers Organisation of South Africa (NAPTOSA) were interviewed and the results of the interviews are discussed here.

Research methodology

The interviews with the officials of teachers' unions are part of a larger research project to determine the role of the teachers in improving the positive characteristics of COLT in schools. The factors that motivate teachers and their professional status as part of the restoration of COLT are the key issues for the research project. These interviews were conducted face-to-face with the officials. The data were filled in on a structured interview schedule which was structured in a questionnaire form. This implies that all the officials were asked the same questions, and there was also room for extra details that the interviewees had. The content for the interviews focused on the teachers' working conditions such as safety, crime and violence, benefits, salaries, etc., the code of conduct, teacher motivation, COLT, industrial action and teacher professionalism, and some perceptions about unions.

The following union officials were interviewed, namely the Assistant Director on behalf of NAPTOSA; the General Secretary (Gauteng Province) on behalf of SADTU and the Executive Officer of SATU. These three unions are officially recognised by the Education Labour Relations Council. These union officials were interviewed in an attempt to determine the role of that unions play in the professionalisation and motivation of teachers, with the aim of enhancing COLT in schools.

Analysis and interpretation of the results obtained from the interviews

Membership and aims

The issue of the composition of each union is significant because the majority of membership has some influence on the policies, ideologies and beliefs of the union (Table 1).

Table 1 Composition of SATU, SADTU and NAPTOSA

Name of Union	Membership (%)			
	Black	White	Coloured	Indian
SATU	7	90	2	1
SADTU	75	4	6	15
NAPTOSA	75	20	2	3

SATU

According to the SATU official, SATU is a predominantly white teachers' union dominated by Afrikaans-speaking membership mostly in the former white, coloured and Indian schools. Its membership is 90% white, 7% black, 2% coloured and 1% Indian. SATU places a huge emphasis on teacher professionalism and the improvement of the performance of learners and also the satisfactory working conditions of teachers (SATU documents, 2001). Its aims are listed as follows:

1. empower educators with regard to professional responsibilities;
2. assist educators in the process of guiding their pupils to their maximum potential as responsible citizens of a democratic state;
3. further the use of the mother tongue (Afrikaans in this case) as the medium of instruction whether in single, double, or parallel medium schools;

4. establish a service whereby members' interests and rights are improved and protected;
5. note the educational needs of pupils and strive for the improvement of these;
6. ensure that the interests of learners are not adversely affected by the actions of workers; and
7. perform any function which the Constitution requires (SATU documents, 2000).

NAPTOSA

According to the NAPTOSA official NAPTOSA is a national federation of unions comprising nine teachers' organisations that all have non-racial membership and non-discriminatory constitutions. Its membership is 75% black, 20% white, 3% Indian and 2% coloured. NAPTOSA and the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) have the same percentage of black membership, that is 75%. However, these two have different ideologies, principles and policies. NAPTOSA has attempted to force ambivalence between the two unions and to capture the "professional" element of teaching. According to Myburgh (1999:25) and Hindle (1991:73) the unionist and professional activities create tension in this organisation as well as between different unions. The official indicated that during the struggle against the previous government and its education system, black principals were seen as collaborators with the white government and therefore they were not acceptable to be members of SADTU. Although this is not the situation anymore, this historical event still may have an influence on the attitudes and activities of the unions. That is why the slogan of NAPTOSA is "teach with dignity". The aims of NAPTOSA are listed below:

1. a non-discriminatory system of education;
2. an equitable system of education;
3. effective compulsory education;
4. professional responsibility of educators;
5. gender parity and elimination of backlogs;
6. serving the interests of a child; and
7. the promotion of co-operation with parents and community as well as the professional development of teachers (NAPTOSA documents, 2001).

SADTU

According to the SADTU official, SADTU is the largest teacher union in the country. Its membership is 75% black, 15% Indian, 6% coloured and 4% white. SADTU was launched in 1990 with the support of the labour and liberation movements such as the ruling party (the African National Congress, ANC). SADTU is the union which is synonymous with teacher militancy and this has led to a negative attitude of the public towards unions in general. SADTU describes itself as "a union of professionals". Nkomfe and Moll (1990:23) indicate that SADTU openly identified with the political agenda of the ANC and with the educational transformation based on principles of peoples' education. Hindle (1991:72) also states that SADTU's ideology is influenced by the politics of its black membership and it sees no inherent contradiction between a strong organisation, able to defend and promote the rights and interests of teachers and the professional work of these teachers.

The aims of SADTU are listed as follows: "We teachers of South Africa having committed ourselves to the transformation of education and dedicated ourselves to the development of an education system which is fully accessible, equal and qualitative, free of apartheid legacy and which is the just expression of the will of the people — as enshrined in the Constitution of the country — hereby proclaim the need for a single teachers' union in our land" (SADTU documents, 2001).

According to the above aim the focus is not on improving teachers' professionalism. For SADTU, the transformation and development of education comes first, and hopefully they will make use of their bargaining power to also influence what goes on in the classrooms.

Union policies

All the union representatives confirmed that they all had policies. They all participated in the formulation of policies with both the Department of Education and the Minister of Education. These policies include the working conditions of teachers such as safety and protection against violence, benefits (pension, housing allowances), salaries, the workload resolution, the establishment of the South African Council for Educators (SACE), ELRC and others.

Teachers as professionals

The question of whether teachers are professionals was answered positively by all unions. NAPTOSA and SATU insisted that their existences are dedicated to the professionalisation of teaching. The formation of SACE and its Code of Conduct was cited by all the unions as a reason why teachers are professionals. Once again, SATU put its emphasis on qualifications as it believes that to a certain extent qualifications contribute to the teacher's motivation, performance and professionalism. Besides SACE's code of conduct, each union has its own code of conduct which is in line with that of SACE.

It is important to note the fact that SACE's and the unions' codes of conduct do not automatically make teachers professionals. Teachers must adhere to the codes and the unions and SACE must enforce the codes, otherwise the codes cannot contribute towards the professionalisation of teachers.

SADTU believes that if the teachers' working conditions, salaries, facilities in schools and proper functioning of the Department of Education are satisfactory, then they can start talking about professionalism. However, they agree that teachers are professionals even though they reflect very little of those characteristics which make teachers professionals. Even though 75% of NAPTOSA's membership is black, unlike SADTU, the former emphasises professionalism to mean a refusal to engage in industrial mass action. Hindle (1991:74) says that the Africanist leadership in NAPTOSA is deputised by conservative Afrikaner. Therefore in a certain respect, NAPTOSA and SATU have more or less the same principles such as professionalism and "concern for the child".

SATU believes that teachers are professionals and it places special emphasis on the qualifications of its members. Ninety-nine percent (99%) of its membership is composed of teachers who have teaching qualifications. SATU pointed out that its members are not strike-oriented, but prefer negotiations and mediation as their teachers are learner-centred — "the success of the learner is crucial to its members". Hence the excellent performance of the previous Model C schools which house the majority of SATU members.

NAPTOSA and SADTU confirmed that the working conditions of their members are more important than their professional status. Both unions agree that the unions are paid to take care of the working conditions in its broadest sense and it is the function of the principal to take care of the professional status of teachers. For SATU the professional status of their members is the most important factor. This may be explained as follows. SATU members are mostly from well-equipped schools and they have fairly good working conditions and they are well qualified for their tasks as teachers. The same is not true for the SADTU and NAPTOSA members because of the historical development of education in the country. These two unions placed more emphasis on working conditions, qualifications and salaries and hope this may contribute towards more professional teachers. The working conditions and salaries are not the most important factors in determining the professional status of teachers and therefore the unions must also pay more attention to the qualifications and training of its members.

Teacher motivation

The following table (Table 2) explains the factors which, according to the different unions, may motivate or de-motivate teachers to perform well in schools. The unions must use these factors to the benefit of education to improve the standard of education.

Table 2 Factors motivating and de-motivating teachers

SATU	NAPTOSA	SADTU
Motivators		
Satisfactory working conditions (safety, facilities)	Salaries, working conditions, facilities	Salaries, working conditions
Good career pathing which includes promotions	Achievement of learners	The learners' willingness to learn
Acknowledgement from the employer	Public approval	The teachers' knowledge of the environment where teaching takes place
De-motivators		
The heavy workload	Poor salaries	Poor salaries
Poor teacher-pupil ratios which is disastrous in black schools	The collapse of discipline of learners	Lack of discipline in teachers and learners
Lack of guidance for teacher in OBE	Lack of interest of communities in education	Negative interpretation of corporal punishment
Lack of discipline for learners	Poor functioning of the Department of Education	Politics in education
	The Department of Politics	The Department of Education's lack of capacity building for principals and teachers
		No school visits from the Department of Education officials
		The re-deployment and rationalisation process

The SATU representative confirmed that one of SATU's aims is to assist in the professional growth of the union's members through seminars, conferences, congresses and debates. They organise, for example, seminars on outcomes-based education training and a conference for principals on labour relations to improve the skills and knowledge of their members. Since most of its members are from previously advantaged schools, the union does not have a hard time motivating teachers because their schools are well equipped, the pass rates are excellent and these teachers are used to working hard for seven or even more hours.

NAPTOSA has two principles which can motivate teachers to work hard. These are a high level of professionalism on the part of all teachers and the enhancement of all aspects of the working life of teachers. This implies that NAPTOSA is concerned about the teachers' working conditions — their safety, satisfactory salaries, workload and others. Since NAPTOSA is a federation, the different unions in it organise seminars, conferences and competitions in schools. During the year 2000 NAPTOSA looked specifically at those schools in the townships which have performed badly — workshops for matric teachers in such schools were held so as to motivate the teachers.

SADTU has organised teacher forums whereby teachers discuss their problems regarding their teaching, employment and conditions of service. For SADTU, the teachers' working conditions are much more important than the teachers' professional status. This idea is supported by the fact that if teachers are satisfied, they are more likely to teach effectively and show professionalism towards their work. Hence, COLT will be restored. SADTU's argument is that teachers are the primary agents of education for they do the actual teaching, so if they are paid sufficiently, have adequate benefits (pension, housing allowances) and feel safe in schools, they will be motivated to perform better.

This argument does not really take the definition of a profession into consideration. Salaries and good working condition do not make a person a professional and will not automatically improve the standard of teaching.

Improvement of COLT

Table 3 has been taken from the interview schedule. It contains the questions which were asked of all the union officials.

Table 3 The improvement of COLT

		HS	S	U	HU	U/D
1.	The union has organised workshops, seminars, or conferences specifically meant to motivate teachers	1	2	3	4	5
2.	The union has a code of conduct which is observed by all its members	1	2	3	4	5
3.	The union encourages teachers to set positive examples to learners and the community	1	2	3	4	5
4.	The union cares about the teachers' and learners' rights equally	1	2	3	4	5
5.	The union emphasises the professionalism, dedication and motivation of teachers	1	2	3	4	5
6.	The union has a plan of action/activities to help restore COLTs in schools	1	2	3	4	5
7.	The union cares about the qualifications of its members and encourages those lagging behind to further and improve theirs	1	2	3	4	5
8.	The union prefers negotiations, mediation and arbitration rather than industrial actions	1	2	3	4	5

HS = Highly satisfactory
 S = Satisfactory
 U = Unsatisfactory
 HU = Highly unsatisfactory
 U/D = Uncertain / Do not know

The responses of the union officials to these questions were:

- All the unions were highly satisfied that they have organised workshops, seminars or conferences specifically meant to motivate teachers.
- All the unions were highly satisfied that they had codes of conduct, although some unions did not reinforce them properly.
 SATU pointed out that they have a code of conduct which is fully observed by its members. SATU mentioned that there is no problem in teacher discipline or class attendance for them. SADTU was highly dissatisfied with this because all their members do not know the code of conduct, with the resultant problems. NAPTOSA said that they were satisfied with their members and their observation of the code of conduct.
- All the unions agreed that they encouraged their members to set positive examples to the learners.
- SATU and NAPTOSA were highly satisfied that they care about both teachers and learners rights equally. SADTU, on the other hand said that teacher unions are established to care for teachers' rights. When that has been accomplished, then the learners' rights will be in line also.
- SATU and NAPTOSA, as it has been mentioned earlier are mostly dedicated towards teacher professionalism, dedication and motivation. SADTU says that the teachers' welfare, working satisfactory working conditions and satisfactory salaries can encourage teachers to be more professional, dedicated and motivated to teach.
- All the unions are involved in COLT projects and also HIV/AIDS projects, although none of them has specific projects which they have organised themselves.
- All the unions highly agreed that they care about the qualifications of their members, and encourage them to further their studies.
- SATU and NAPTOSA are highly satisfied with this statement. SADTU is satisfied with this statement, and asserts that if it were not for negotiations, there would be more strikes.

All the unions were involved in the promulgation of the South African Schools Act (SASA) which is for the benefit of both learners

and teachers and participated in the establishment of SACE, ELRC and the redeployment and rationalisation process of teachers. All these steps have been taken in an attempt to improve the working conditions of teachers. If the working conditions are conducive, the teachers are much more likely to be motivated, hence COLT will be improved.

For the rationalisation and redeployment process, SADTU asserts that it is a good idea, badly implemented by the bureaucracy in the Department of Education. Since black teachers have not really known how many hours they should work, the workload resolution has helped to define the teachers' workload and this can help to increase the effectiveness of teachers. Thus the expectation is that this resolution may enhance COLT because teachers know they must be at the school and they will not dodge classes any more.

SADTU added that the in-service training of teachers and the capacity-building of new managers and principals in schools could help to improve COLT in the schools.

The standardised working hours can have a positive influence on COLT but if the teachers do not have a professional ethos they may still only attend school. However the level of teaching and activities in schools may still be a problem. Working hours do not restrict professionals like doctors and lawyers from working long hours and providing a service to their clients.

Industrial action

Industrial actions include strikes, chalk-downs, class boycotts and sit-ins.

According to SATU, the union has never organised industrial action, but the union members participated on one occasion in a strike because they feel that industrial action degrades the teaching profession. SATU teachers made up for the lost time during that strike and never participated again.

Likewise, NAPTOSA has never organised industrial action, but participated in a strike once. NAPTOSA does not support strikes through which teaching is detrimentally affected and learners are left to roam in the streets. NAPTOSA believes that if teachers really care about teachers' rights, strikes and marches should be organised during school holidays or over weekends or after official school hours. It may be that only the incompetent teachers enjoy the industrial action.

SADTU mentioned that "The day our militancy stops, so will our existence." This fact is proved by the magnitude of strikes occurring in the country which are organised by SADTU. SADTU believes that all industrial action has a purpose, with the result that it cannot degrade the teaching profession. SADTU teachers also make up for the lost time during holidays and weekends. SADTU disagreed with the allegations that unions provide refuge for incompetent teachers and that unions neglect learners' rights. However, they agreed with the fact that SADTU, which has the majority of black membership, is active in industrial actions. SADTU reasoned that history has given blacks a lot of disadvantages, thus they have more to complain about. Hence, SADTU will continue to use industrial action if all else fails.

Critical comments: Industrial action is not part of the culture for SATU because their members were not disadvantaged in the past. Their members did participate in one strike and it may become more important for them in future to participate in these types of activities if the situation for their members changes drastically. A problem with catching up time after a strike is that learners are not always available during weekends or holidays. Effective communication does not always exist between teachers and learners and this may prevent the extra classes from being held.

Conclusion

It is not the main aim of the unions to improve the professional status of teachers, perhaps with the exception of SATU because their members are well qualified as well as the fact that SATU developed from professional teachers organisations to a union because of new labour legislation. SATU stated that 99% of its membership is from previous

Model C schools, whose performance continues to be excellent. The teachers in such schools are motivated, dedicated and professionals who are willing to work even outside school hours if necessary. Thus, SATU, as a union, might participate in COLT-related activities because it is now a national outcry. SATU said that their members adhere to the code of conduct, know their work and the learners' performance in previous Model C schools bears witness to that.

NAPTOSA, like SADTU, has a lot of black members (75%) from all kinds of schools including township schools. However, its principles are mainly focused on teacher professionalism, and its slogan is "teach with dignity". NAPTOSA asserted that its black membership does not support industrial action, and they believe in negotiations rather than in strikes to solve problems. Hence their limited participation in strikes. NAPTOSA seems to be aware of a lack of COLT in schools and the lack of professional ethos in the teaching corps. As a result, they have decided to organise workshops for teachers in those schools which do not perform well.

SADTU is one union which is notorious of its militancy. They are very much aware of a lack of COLT in schools and the lack of professional ethos in teachers. However, they strongly believe that if the teachers' grievances could be met, then the teachers will be able to contribute positively to COLT and enhance their professionalism. SADTU believes that when negotiations come to a deadlock, a strike can help them to achieve what teachers want, regardless of how much of learners' time is wasted. The issue of teachers' strikes has brought so much controversy that some people feel that the Labour Relations Act of 1995 needs to be amended, especially because learners are the ones who suffer at the end of the year.

Recommendations

Unions like all other stakeholders in education have an important role to play in the restoration of teacher professionalism and COLT. As a result, the unions must make their members aware of the different codes of conduct. It must be enforced with the assistance of all the role players in schools like parents and the Department of Education. Teaching may be declared an essential service which will limit the industrial action with the resultant negative influence on COLT. If this happens it is essential that the unions and the employers (Department of Education) establish a good relationship, have the same aims and goals with respect to education in the country, and meet each other half way, so as to avoid strikes which waste the learners' time and taint the image of the teaching profession. Unions should also organise activities which will help to restore COLT in schools, such as motivational talks from famous speakers, awards for the best performing teachers. Such activities can help teachers to boost their professionalism and COLT can be enhanced because the teachers will be willing to do their best.

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Customer service factors of a Telematic Learning BBA degree

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Traditional educational boundaries at tertiary institutions in South Africa are fast becoming more flexible and as a result, quality distance learning is becoming more accessible to the market. The challenges of the distance education market reside not only within the traditional academic system in South Africa, but also with the accessibility of quality tertiary education via distance learning programmes of foreign institutions. In order to supply the ultimate learning experience to students, the concept of client relations is becoming increasingly important. Client relations should not be regarded as a surrogate for academic excellence but it certainly enhances the value gained through distance learning on a tertiary level. In view of this exciting transformation process a vital Department of Telematic Learning Systems was established at the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (PU for CHE). This department delivers and administrates all the degree and diploma programmes constructed by the academic departments at the PU for CHE. This department adopts a strong customer aligned approach as a strategic thrust and students are treated as valued clients of the university. Continuous client satisfaction research is conducted and this article reports on the results of one such a research project. Apart from supplying the demographic profile of students, the article reports on the service levels that undergraduate Bachelor in Business Administration (BBA) students experienced during their 1997 year of study. The statistical technique, factor analysis, was employed to determine underlying communalities of these specific services. Eight factors were identified from the varimax rotated factor matrix. As a result of the reliability statistical procedure: Cronbach's Alpha coefficient (value of 0.928), a favourable cumulative variance of almost 60% is explained. The results obtained could be of significant value, firstly, to the PU for CHE which attempts to improve the service that is rendered to students. If they understand the client relationship and its service levels, they should be able to concentrate more energy in these areas. This reasoning also applies to other universities who wish to enter distance and/or open-learning educational systems. Secondly, students should profit from efficiently trained front-line staff who are educated in client's expectations of service levels. Thirdly, other researchers in service quality could use the results as a basis for future research since they provide a comparative foundation.

Introduction

In a new millennium universities should not be functioning in traditional cocoons where educational boundaries exist. Traditional geographic borders are fast becoming obsolete and universities no longer

serve their immediate communities exclusively (Rossouw, 1998:2). This traditional approach restricted part-time students to the immediate geographical area of the university (apart from students housed in hostels or nearby private accommodation) and as a result tertiary studies at institutions of personal choice were not accessible to many prospective students living in remote areas. This is especially true in South Africa where the majority of the population is from previously disadvantaged communities. Governmental policies on education of the so-called Apartheid's Regime did not foresee tertiary education being accessible to financially disadvantaged prospective students, the majority coming from the black communities of South Africa. Although universities were built in the black communities, they were all residential universities. The result of this policy was very little increase in tertiary education student numbers since the financially disadvantaged student could still not attend. The only tertiary institution that served the market properly was the University of South Africa (UNISA), a distance education institution and even though their student numbers soared to 140 000, the capacity is insufficient for the South African need for tertiary education.

The Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (PU for CHE) realised this need of students for a wider choice in selecting a tertiary institution for further studies. The university thus transformed to expand their traditional residential educational boundaries by entering into telematic learning as delivery platform. This visionary step not only increased the accessibility to graduate studies, but it also made university studies more affordable. Traditional residential boundaries are surmounted and students from all over the country are enrolling for the courses offered via the telematic learning system as a delivery platform. The possibility to expand internationally also exists and, during 1997, 0.5% of enrolled students were from outside the RSA borders.

Telematic learning implies a distance learning system whereby state of the art technology is available to students such as live satellite television broadcasts, inter-active electronic communication networks and value-adding video tapes (opposed to traditional distance learning that mostly uses study guides and text books). Study Centres are established throughout the RSA and students attend sessions hosted by appropriately qualified facilitators who are selected and appointed by PU for CHE. These sessions take place under the guidance of the academic course co-ordinator where relevant academic topics are included in frequent group discussions. A student attends four facilitation sessions per course unit followed.

The specialised approach of telematic learning is relatively new