

Teachers' perceptions of union leadership in Limpopo Province

By

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Ponko Collen Mathebe (student number 27460798), hereby declare that this dissertation for the degree Magister of Education at the University of Pretoria, has not previously been submitted by me for degree purposes at this or any other university. This dissertation 'Teachers' perceptions of union leadership in Limpopo province' is my own work in design and execution and work from other sources has been duly acknowledged as complete references.

Signature.....

Date.....



DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my lovely mother; Lydia Mamokawane Mathebe (**Motlogolo wa baphuthi**) for all the support she gave me. The sacrifices she made in her life to ensure that I reach my goals deserve this achievement.

My colleague; Tebogo Kekana (**Tlou letebele, morwa koma a ngwato**) who his passion for school politics and teacher unionism encouraged me to research this topic. This achievement is due to his words of advice and encouragement through those difficult times of the study.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AATO :	All Africa Teachers' Organisation
AEU:	Australian Education Union
ANC:	African National Congress
ATASA:	African Teachers' Association of South Africa
BEC:	Branch Executive Council
COSATU:	Congress of South African Trade Union
DA:	Democratic Alliance
DBE:	Department of Basic Education
EEA:	Employment of Educators Act
EI:	Education International
ELRC:	Education Labour Relations Council
HSRC:	Human Science Research Council
LRA:	Labour Relations Act
NANTU:	Namibian National Teachers' Union
NAPSG:	National Association of Parents in School Governance
NAPTOSA:	National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa
NATU :	National Teachers' Union
NEA:	National Education Association
NEC:	National Executive Council
NEUSA:	National Education Union of South Africa
NLRA:	National Labour Relations Act
NTS:	Natal Teachers' Society
NUEW:	National Union of Education Workers
OSTF:	Ontario Secondary Teachers Federation
PSBSC:	Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council
SACP :	South African Communist Party
SADTU:	South African Democratic Teachers Union
SGB:	School Governing Body
SMT:	School Management Team
SSC:	Site Steward Council



- SSTU :** State School Teachers Union
- SWAPO:** South West African Peoples' Organisation
- TTA:** Transvaal Teachers' Association
- TUATA:** Transvaal United African Teachers' Association
- US:** United States of America
- WCOTP:** World Confederation of Organization of the Teaching Profession



Teachers' perceptions of union leadership in Limpopo Province

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate concerns raised by some union members that SADTU leadership is not reporting the progress or non – progress in policy formulation forums. These concerns are in contrary to the national union leadership claim that its ability to organise about 255 000 members is an indication that their members have confidence in the leadership of the union. The argument raised in the study is that SADTU as an associate of ANC may be speaking or diverging from its members interests in the ELRC and PSCBC. In an effort to understand whether the relationship between the union leaders and their members was of individualism or collectivism; a qualitative case study was undertaken with teachers who belonged to SADTU in Limpopo Province.

An overwhelming number of participants perceived the leadership as entrenching a culture of individualism. The poor attendance on union activities organised by the branch leadership seems as a sign of discouragement by the union members on their leadership. The participants perceive the alliance with the ANC as the underlying cause of their union leadership not to promote the interests of its members.

Keywords: Cadre deployment, collectivism, individualism, maintaining independence, political alliance, SADTU, union leadership and union members



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CHAPTER ONE

1. ORIENTATION AND STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Teachers are highly unionised workers and their trade unions exert an influence in the shaping and implementation of education policies (Stevenson, 2003:431). The teachers' trade unions, through their leadership, bargain with the employers on behalf of the union members (teachers) and negotiates labour contract (collective bargaining) with the employers. Be that as it may be, Moe (2006:26) argues that although union leadership attracts a lot of attention in the media and amongst the public, not a lot of empirical studies have been done on members' voice on their union leaders.

In the United States (US), teacher unions use the National Labour Relations Act (NLRA) that was passed in 1935 to define how teachers organise and are represented, what constitutes unfair labour practice and defines the range of issues that can be negotiated, whether strikes are legal and the process used to resolve an impasse (Henderson, Urban & Wolman, 2004). This may be closely related to South Africa where new governance and labour relations dispensation relationships were introduced into the education system to regulate teachers' conditions of work and appraisal.

Soon after the first democratic elections in 1994, new legislations were put into place to replace apartheid laws that were intended to advance whites and suppress the African majority. Govender (2004:267) mentions that "given the changed nature of the state, teacher-state relations also changed". The collapse of apartheid in South Africa paved the way for major changes in our education system. The promulgation of these laws meant that teachers' trade unions were now allowed to participate in the development and formulation of education policies in the country.



As a result of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) Labour Relations Act (LRA) campaign, the new LRA was finally implemented to extend full labour rights to public service workers. The main purpose of the Labour Relations Act No. 66 of 1995 is to provide a framework within which employees and trade unions, employers and employers organisations can collectively bargain to determine wages, terms of employment and other matters of mutual interest, and to promote the participation of employees in decision-making in the workplace as well as the effective resolution of labour disputes. Every employee has the right to join a trade union of their choice. African teachers were now able to organise themselves as members of the unions and be fully represented in the bargaining council.

Whilst there are other teachers' unions in the country, this study focused more on the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) because it is the most prevalent where the study was conducted and is an associate of the tripartite alliance. SADTU in its opposition to apartheid structures and officials used militant teachers to oppose accountability measures such as inspection and even managed in some cases to oust principals who were seen as anti-union. This was the beginning of SADTU's influence on policy formulation.

One of the main objectives of SADTU as stipulated in its constitution is "to seek and to maintain itself as a union, to be recognised by the education authorities and to negotiate on behalf of its members, to advance their individual and collective interest by entering into collective bargaining relations with the education authorities for the purposes of negotiating and entering into collective agreements".

Amtaika (2013:108) mentions that "SADTU partly spearhead change in the education system and partly deal with the welfare of teachers as workers." On the other hand, Liwane-Mazengwe (2012:69) contends that many stakeholders in education see SADTU's partnership with government as the main underlying cause of educators' unprofessional conduct and also as a drawback to the education reforms in the country. Although national SADTU union leadership receives much attention in the media and by the scholars, we



know surprisingly little about the perceptions of teachers regarding union leadership at district level.

The purpose of this study was to explore the views and perceptions of teachers about their branch union leadership in Limpopo Province. In an effort to have an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon, a qualitative case study was undertaken in SADTU sites around Sekhukhune district.

1.2 THE PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' perceptions and views of SADTU branch leadership in Sekhukhune district, Limpopo Province.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) and the Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council (PSCBC) were established to regulate public service labour relations, their main purpose being the enhancement of sound relationships and labour peace between the department and teachers and to provide a platform for dialogue and collective bargaining on issues of common interest (Masenya, 2013:03). In these forums, union leadership is assumed to be speaking on behalf of their members by both the government and the public. SADTU as an associate of the ANC may be playing a dual role in these forums; they may be bargaining for educators interests as well as showing their political support for the ANC. The question is: is the union leadership speaking for or deviating from their members' interests in these forums?

The collective bargaining agreements between teachers' unions and the government may shape the delivery of educational services and show how the unions will support educational reforms. One may argue that union leaders not only influence the policy but are part of the policy itself. Leadership activities and voices are heard most often in the literature and in the media. Branch union leadership is supposed to report to its members



on the progress or non-progress on policy discussions with their employer, but seemingly this is not the case at district level.

Reference is made to the 2010 national public strike when SADTU leaders are alleged to have announced the suspension of the strike in the media to the disapproval of some of their members (Gentle, 2010:3). Some of SADTU members accused union leadership of being sell-outs for reaching an agreement with the employer against their (union members) instructions (Gentle, *ibid*). This misunderstanding between union leaders and members may increase the crisis in our education system.

Moe (2006) argues that although union leaders at international and national level attract more attention in the media, the voice of their followers (teachers) is understudied by education scholars. In support, investigators such as Compton and Weiner (2008) and Rotterdam (2008) admit that research on teachers' voice on their union leadership is thin and needs immediate attention by the researchers.

In my attempt to understand whether the relationship between union leaders and union members is one of individualism or collectivism, this study was aimed at exploring teachers' views and perceptions of their union leadership at one district in Limpopo Province.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In an attempt to explore teachers' understanding of their union leadership, this study was guided by the following research questions:

- How do teachers who are ordinary members perceive their branch union leadership?
- How do branch union leaders perceive their roles in education?
- What roles do teachers play in their union's decision-making, policy formulation and activities?



1.5 THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To explore the perceptions teachers have on their branch union leadership;
- To understand the union leadership perceptions of their own role in education and
- To explore the roles teachers play in the unions' decision-making, policy formulation and activities.

1.6 RATIONALE

The unionisation of teachers has been one of the most significant trends in public education over the past 34 years (Rose & Sonstelie, 2010:438). However, there has been little research on union-member relations by education scholars. Prior research in the South African context have focused more on the relationships between teachers' unions and school leadership as well as teacher unionism and education stakeholders according to Patillo (2012) and Masenya (2013). These studies have focused on teacher unionism at national level, and not at district level as is the case with this study.

There are concerns over union leadership, but these concerns are based generally on international literature and sadly only on South African media reports. A study by Cooper and Sureau (2008:91) in the United States of America (US), states that teachers are angry that most key decisions about education were being taken without consultation with them, and teachers have realised that working for seven hours a day is a kind of forced labour. In addition, Stevenson (2012:12) in Britain mentions that teachers are concerned about the agreements made at national level as they are hard to be implemented at local level.

In South Africa, the City Press newspaper as published on the 27 April 2014 reported that there are allegations against SADTU leadership concerning job-promotion racketeering. Their reporters, Masondo and Harper (2014:4) write that SADTU leadership is manipulating the education system across provinces to control teachers' appointments, retirement packages and transfers in return for bribes. The involvement of the unions during the redeployment process is not aimed at ensuring the smooth running of the



process but at preserving the interest of the ruling class (Zengele, 2014:475). Moreover, teachers were not happy to hear from reports in the media that the 2010 national strike was over.

The literature states that the voice of teachers on their union leadership is completely ignored and therefore needs immediate attention according to Moe (2006) and Rotterdam (2008). Masenya (2013) suggest that it will be interesting for future research on SADTU leadership to focus on teachers as other stakeholders in education that might be biased against the union.

The researcher argues that there is a need to study union leadership given the power teachers unions' have in collective bargaining chambers. The burning issue raised by unions' critics is: the power union leaders wield at district and school levels. This is reinforced by Amtaika (2013:113) who writes that "the abandonment of classes by teachers to attend the court case in support of their union leaders illustrates that SADTU has a stranglehold on our education system". It is against this background that the need to explore teachers' perceptions and views of their union leadership developed. The study aims to give new insight on how teachers view union leadership in the South African context at the district level.

1.7 WORKING ASSUMPTION

I worked on the assumption that the participants may perceive or view the branch union leadership as promoting the interests of the teachers and education system. There is a claim by the SADTU National President that their ability to organise about 255 000 members is an indication that their members have confidence in the leadership of the union. The national leadership also claim to have the ability to represent and advance the members interests. Based on this claim, it is my assumption that the growth of the union implies that the members have a cordial relationship with their leaders.



1.8 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study has adopted a conceptual framework I developed to guide my research and help to focus the study on the research questions posed. In developing this framework, various studies in existing literature that relates to the topic were considered.

It is from this critical study that some few key concepts were identified and a conceptual framework to focus the study on the research questions was developed. Compton and Weiner (2008:95) argue that there are few teachers' organisations anywhere across the globe that can honestly claim to have a broad, sustained and positive relationship with its members.

This brings us to the two concepts I have adopted that are of importance in this study. The relationship between union leaders and their followers (members) may either be negative or positive. Firstly, the union leaders may be seen to be bargaining for their own interest in education chambers. This is what is referred to by Lussier and Achua (2001:431) as individualism, and they define it as "the belief by leaders to value their own interest". For the purpose of this study, individualism is the idea that the interests of the individual are ought to be paramount (Lussier & Achua, *ibid*).

In the study, the concept has been used to show how branch union leaders are perceived to focus on their own interests and do little for union members and the teaching fraternity at large. It is thought that people should prioritise the good of society over the welfare of the individual. The decisions that branch union leaders make should benefit all the people. Leaders who value their own interests only are perceived to be practising individualism. Leadership is seen to have lost sight of the lofty feelings of the minions in the trenches who pay the dues (Brimelow, 2003:201). Henderson *et al.* (2004:99) contend that this may increase the distance between the leaders and teachers. Leaders are perceived to shove their decisions down the throats of their members.

On the other hand, leaders who value the relationship with their followers may be classified under collectivism (Lussier & Achua, 2001:431). In this case, union leaders may



be seen to bargain collectively for their members and have no personal agendas to achieve. It is thought that people should prioritise the good of society over the welfare of the individual. The decisions that branch union leaders make should benefit all the people.

In this study, collectivism refers to a situation where branch union leaders are committed to promote the interest of teachers and the education system of the country. The leaders promote the interests of the organisation. They sacrifice and commit themselves to the mandate of their members. This show the healthy relationship leaders have with teachers.

1.9 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

There is an agreement in literature and amongst other scholars that until recently, there had been little research by education scholars on union–member relations at district level. The most recent studies on teacher unionism in the South African context have focused more on the role of teacher unions in policy formulation and implementation at national level (Zengele, 2013 & Liwane-Mazengwe, 2012). Furthermore, other scholars in the country have focused more on the relationships between teacher unions and school leadership/ management as well as examining the relationship between teacher unions and other stakeholders in education (Patillo, 2012; Msila, 2013 & Masenya, 2013).

The findings of this research might have implications for policy–making. Stakeholders in bargaining chambers might find the results of this study helpful in future collective bargaining. Participants might also have an opportunity to share their unheard stories and thus add new perspectives. Knowledge of how teachers perceive their branch union leaders might be vital to the well–being of both the organisation and its members.

It might enhance the understanding between teachers and union leaders in order to communicate their expectations and what they have to offer to each other more effectively. Union leaders might also learn from this study to how create more flexible and participative structures. The mutual relationship between teachers and union leaders might reduce the crisis faced by our education system, more especially in Limpopo.



The teachers perceive branch leadership as bargaining collectively for the benefit of everyone. The branch leadership show the principle of sacrifice and commitment for the good of the organisation and teachers at large as suggested by Kudumo (2011:160).

1.10 PARADIGM

This study was conducted using an interpretive research paradigm. According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011:5) an interpretive paradigm “assumes that the social world is constantly being constructed through interaction, and thus social reality can be understood via the perspectives of social actors enmeshed in meaning-making activities”. The use of this paradigm allowed me to do the research with the participants and listen to their own interpretation of how they view or perceive union leadership of SADTU Moutse-East branch in the Sekhukhune district, Limpopo.

1.11 CONCEPTS CLARIFICATIONS

1.11.1 Union leader:

A union leader may be described as a person ‘with two masters’, namely the employer and the membership who elected him or her as a worker leader. Lane (1982:7) describes the union leaders’ role in two ways: Firstly, the rank and file press him/her to resolve their grievances and management press him/her to contain his/her members’ grievances. For the sake of this study, union leaders are the elected teachers who serve in the branch leadership. They are assumed to be spending their time with their fellow constituencies in the workplace trying to assist them in dealing with a wide range of issues which affect them as individuals and as a collective. The important question raised in this study is: whose interest are these leaders serving?

1.11.2 Cadre deployment:

Patillo (2012) defines cadre deployment as an unwritten policy of patronage-based political appointments to school leadership and top management. According to Zengele (2009) it refers to the undue influence that SADTU leadership use to have active union members promoted to senior positions at the expense of deserving and better qualified educators.



1.11.3 Political activism:

Masondo (2012) defines political activism as the relationship that union leaders develop with the political parties in an effort to exert an influence in policy decision-making. Union leaders are assumed to use their political connections to either accept or stop reforms in the education system. Anti-unionists blame the relationship between unions and a political party for the dysfunctional education in the country.

1.11.4 Union activism:

It refers to the participation in union activities in return for an incentive in the form of deployment to senior positions within the DoE (Patillo, 2012). In this study, it relates to SADTU leadership using their involvement in strikes and union meetings to advance their chances of getting promotional posts in schools, circuits and district offices.

1.11.5 Site:

According to the SADTU Constitution as Amended in 2010; site “refers to the registered scope of the applicable legislation of the employment of educators and other institutions where there are members of the union”. All the schools sampled for this study had union members on their records and were therefore regarded as SADTU sites.

1.11.6 Site stewards:

These are the democratically elected representatives who carry the mandate of the union members at the sites and report it at the site steward council meetings. In turn, they will report to members on the policies, decisions and activities of the union. Their existence in schools is alleged to cause animosity, as they are neither accountable to the principal nor the department of education, but only to SADTU (Zengele, 2009).

1.12. STUDY PLAN

The study consists of seven chapters divided as follows:



CHAPTER 1

In the first chapter of this dissertation the purpose statement, problem statement, research questions, rationale, conceptual framework, concepts clarifications, significance of the research, the research methods and limitations are stated.

CHAPTER 2

This chapter contains the literature review relevant to the activities of union leadership internationally and locally.

CHAPTER 3

Research methods and the design employed in this study are discussed in chapter three. The chapter includes the sampling strategy used to obtain participants, data collection technique and how data was analysed.

CHAPTER 4

The views and perceptions of participants on the involvement of SADTU in politics are discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER 5

The involvement of union leadership with the Department of Basic Education activities is presented in chapter 5.

CHAPTER 6

This chapter discusses the activities that union leadership may be organising for the members at the branch level.

CHAPTER 7

The findings and recommendations for future research are discussed in this final chapter.



1.13 CONCLUSION

This study was undertaken to explore and understand the phenomenon of branch union leadership-member relations at district level in the South African context. The main focus of this chapter was to state the problem statement and the rationale behind my selection of this topic. In addition, it provided an outline for my research topic and stated the research questions as well as the aims of this study. The following chapter focuses on the literature review of the topic. In the next chapter, international and local literature will be reviewed in an effort to find out what has been written by academic scholars so that the researcher can pinpoint the gaps and see recommendations for future research relating to this phenomenon.



CHAPTER TWO

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

A literature review is an examination of what is out there on a particular topic in order for the researcher to establish what has gone before, what gaps are there in the literature, and how the research could fill such gaps (Babbie, 2008:124). It is therefore the purpose of this chapter to examine the existing literature on this topic. Literature reviewed on this study included an international context, and is a review about what the scholars and media publications have written about how union leadership is viewed.

The key themes that emerged from the critical study of the literature that relates to the research questions that the researcher posed in chapter one will be discussed in this section. The first theme to be discussed in this chapter focuses on the relationship union leadership have with the government of the day. Secondly, this chapter will briefly narrate scholars' and researchers' arguments on teacher unionism and industrial actions, then submissions based on teacher activism and cadre deployment will be dealt with. Finally, a conclusion will sum up the whole chapter to reveal gaps identified in the literature.

2.2 UNION LEADERSHIP AND POLITICAL ACTIVISM

There is general agreement in the literature that the relationship between the teachers' trade unions through their leaders and the political parties are context specific. Masenya (2013:41) reminds us that "in most countries, the development and the history of teacher unionism is closely related to the political relationship with the government of the day". In some countries, there is a mutual relationship between union leaders and the government, while in others the partnership with the government is alleged to be the cause of the decline of teacher unionism. In this section of the study, the researcher describes the two relationships between the union leaders and the ruling parties (governments).



Bauer (1998) cited in Kudumo (2011:154) argues that organised labour in many post-colonial African states are subordinates to the state or absorbed in party machinery. Alexander (2000) corroborates this argument when he submits that labour-led parties in Zambia and Malawi had the ability to win elections in their respective countries with the influence of teacher unions. Teachers in both Zambia and Malawi do not feel that they have a voice in education decision-making beyond their immediate teaching or school environment. It should however be reported that the study is silent on whether the focus of teachers' union leadership on politics have led to the decline of teacher unionism in both Zambia and Malawi.

In the United States of America (US) the local unions have been thought to be amongst the most politically active. This is eloquently represented in Suster's (2013) study titled 'Teacher unions at the crossroads: Can the assault on teachers be rebuffed?' He writes that "delegates of National Education Association (NEA) voted to endorse President Obama's re-election some fifteen months before the actual vote" (Suster, 2013:65). According to him, the union leaders of NEA still see no choice but to accept the Democrats' version of the education reforms as a lesser evil to the Republicans' open hostility to labour (Suster, *ibid*). The researcher contends that it may also be the case with the members accepting the education reforms without a choice.

In the case of Latin America, Murillo (2000:136) submits that "the alliance between labour parties and the teachers unions shape the national policy system". The study reveals that the labour movements in Argentina, Mexico and Venezuela have a long-term affiliation with the union leaders. Issues with which teachers in Latin America are involved include political lobbying and support for the governing parties. A recent study by Larreguy, Monteval Olea and Querubin (2014:3) suggests that the "SNTE's leadership controls more than 320 000 teachers over whom it exerts pressure to mobilise voters to support the candidate it is aligned to". Their findings reveal that that the candidates supported by the machine of the teachers' union experience a significant increase in their vote share when a polling station is located in a school (Larreguy, *et al.*, *ibid*).



The amount of time that the union leaders spend on lobbying for their political allies may shift their (union leaders) focus from the needs of union members.

In a Namibian context, Kudumo (2011) shares that “the leaders of Namibian National Teachers’ Union (NANTU) joined forces with the South West Peoples’ Organisation (SWAPO) to fight against apartheid in the country”. Since the independence of Namibia in 1990, many leaders of NANTU have filled the new government structures and are working in the education department. He cites that this led to a vacuum in the capacity of the current union leadership to influence the policy formulation in that country (Kudumo, *ibid*). This may be synonymous to South Africa, where the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) through its affiliation to the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) helped the African National Congress (ANC) to defeat apartheid. Masenya (2013:41) writes that “as the struggle against apartheid intensified, schools became staging grounds, and they became terrains for the struggle. Some teachers took part in political activism, thereby politicising the teaching profession”.

This led to some members of SADTU in the national leadership positions been rewarded with key positions in the new government departments as a thank you for campaigning for the ANC. For an example, Mr Membathise Mdladlana was appointed the first minister of labour after the first democratic elections in the country. However, studies reveal that the relationship between the teachers’ unions and the government is blamed for widening the gap between the union members and their leaders. It is argued that the national union leadership tends to agree with the government without the mandate of the union members in the bargaining chambers and policy formulation.

Despite the on-going partnership teachers unions have with the government of the day, questions have been raised on the union leadership’s influence on education policy. The researcher took note that the scholars on union leadership activities reveal that there are concerns about the lack of teachers’ union leadership capacity to engage constructively with the government on education policies.



According to Mannah and Lewis (2008:177, in Compton & Weiner, 2008), it is of no benefit to the unions to be included in the process of policy formulation without the ability to change the macro-economic policy framework. Masenya (2013:41) contends that “the highly politicised atmosphere within which the SADTU leadership operates has led to a situation where most in society believed that the union is only concentrating on politicking and furthering the ambitions of their leaders rather than improving the standard of education in schools”. It is the researcher’s view that this perception may weaken the relationship between teachers’ unions and their members. Teachers may feel let down when their leadership fails to influence in education forums. This may also cause tension in schools because teachers may see their leaders as sell-outs.

A worrying issue in the literature is the close relationship between the national union leadership and the political parties. It is argued that this has compromised the strength of the union leadership in bargaining chambers and policy formulation. A trend by the union leadership to pursue their personal agendas is assumed to have undermined the strength of teacher unions in South Africa, hence the gap between union members and their leaders (Masondo, 2012:119). The union leadership may no longer be bargaining collectively to promote the interests of ordinary members.

Henderson *et al.* (2004:105) contend that participatory decision-making structures between the national union leaders and the employer (DBE) is merely window dressing, their agendas and procedures are been manipulated while real decision-making rests in the hands of a small number of people or even an individual. Yet, teachers as union members play an important role on the functionality of the unions; we hear little in the literature on what kind of relationship they share with their leadership both nationally and at the local level. This study was conducted in an effort to listen to the unheard voices of teachers who are the union members and the union leadership in one district in Limpopo province. The current partnership between the union leaders and the ruling political parties is alleged to be the cause of the decline of the strength of labour organisations (Kudumo, 2011:166; Buhlungu & Ellis, 2012:263).



In the context of this study, the researcher argues that this may also be the case with teachers' union. This argument is succinctly revealed in Kudumo's study in Namibia in 2011. He contends that "the teachers' unions support for the new political leadership has created the space for the movement to struggle to make substantial real gains for public service workers (teachers)" (Kudumo, 2011:166).

In the same vein Buhlungu and Ellis (2012:263) submits that the overlap of leadership will affect the independence of the teachers' trade unions. A failure by the union leadership to bargain in good faith for their members is said to be the cause of the decline of teacher unionism. As a result, members may lose faith in their leadership and that may weaken the relationship between the two. The leaders of teachers' unions may spend more time in talks with government, instead of interacting with their members at their workplace.

In the case of South Africa, this may be closely related to SADTU leaders who also associate with the ruling party (ANC) in the country. It is alleged that these union leaders do not want to ruin their friendship with the employer who in this case is the ruling party (Masondo, 2012:110). It is alleged that these leaders are too political and worry about their own political interests and is therefore leaving behind the mandate of the union members. Buhlungu and Tshoaedi (2012:17) ask "how can workers participate meaningfully in the democratic institutions when they are not well informed about the broader issues that their leaders are involved in?"

Despite such allegations, SADTU claims that their membership continues to grow. According to the recent estimates on their website (www.sadtu.org.za) and in 2015 SADTU diaries, the membership of the organisation stands at 246 947 members. One may ask: why do the union continue to grow irrespective of the allegations against its leadership? The relationship between union members and their leaders may only be understood from those who are within the union. The researcher therefore argues that the members of the union and the union leadership may tell a story regards to what kind of the relationship they have. In addition, the sample of the studies referred to above differ from the current study.



Firstly, in the case of Kudumo's (2011) study, the scholar focused on the national union leadership of NANTU and the staff in the ministry of education of Namibia. In the studies of Buhlungu and Ellis (2012) and Buhlungu and Tshoaedi (2012), they focused on national union leaders who fall under the umbrella of COSATU. There is no clear evidence on whether the union leadership of SADTU also participated in that study. Due to SADTU's affiliation to COSATU, the researcher assumed they may have formed part of the population. The current study was however aimed at listening to the voices of the union leadership and the union members at the grassroots level to address the gap in the literature. This allowed the researcher to tell a different story on the union leadership activities at a district level; as presented in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

Kudumo (2011) points out that in Namibia, the lack of capacity of union leadership is the main reason that causes a decline on teachers' union power to influence in policy discussions. He cites that lack of vision amongst the current union leadership has led to teachers' unions been unable to influence educational policy formulation (Kudumo, 2011:108). This argument is reinforced by Masondo (2012:114) who submits that "the loss of many union leaders to government institutions as the underlying cause of a vacuum on the strength of teachers' unions".

In the US, the literature reveals that lack of focus by the union leaders on important union issues has widened the gap between the union members and their leaders (Brimelow, 2003 & Henderson *et al.*, 2004). Teachers' union leaders are alleged to be pursuing their political and economic interest at the expense of their organisation and the members at large. This has led to a situation whereby the distance between the teachers' union and the members is increasing as argued by Henderson *et al.* (2004:99).

This sentiment is also shared by Brimelow in his 2003 study. He wrote that the average member is less involved and aware of the union activities than at any time in the past (Brimelow, 2003:201). The researcher argues that if there was any time when the union members were involved and aware of the union activities, it has been less reported in the literature.



Education scholars are silent on the relationship teachers share with their leaders. Focus has more been on the national union leadership activities and less is reported on the relationship the union members have with their leaders at the grassroots level.

The power of the teachers' union relies on its membership number. A reference is made to an earlier research study in Latin America which reports that teachers' unions are perceived to be promoting the interest of union leadership and do little to implement education reforms (Murillo, 1999:40). Murillo (*ibid*) cites that "union leaders fear loss of membership which will cripple the unions' power to influence policy-making". The opposition to education reforms is alleged to have shifted the focus of union leadership from servicing their members.

Another incident highlighting the power of union leaders worth mentioning took place recently in Mexico. Larreguy *et al.* (2014:04) report that the SNTE leader; Gordilla, was using the large membership of the union to sell votes to candidates she was aligned to. This led to her downfall and eventual arrest for corruption in 2013. Relating the incident to South Africa, the dismissal of former president of SADTU comes into the picture. Sechaba Ka'Nkosi of SABC News reported on Wednesday 21 May 2014 that "Comrade Ntola was dismissed from his position on Monday after he failed to attend the union's disciplinary hearing in April". Comrade Ntola was expelled on charges relating to his misrepresentation, abuse of his position for personal gains and corruption amounting to R4 million (SABC News, *ibid*).

Although teachers' union leaders are alleged to be concerned with expanding their bargaining and political power; the literature is silent on the voices of those union members who are represented by the union leaders in the bargaining chambers and in other education forums. The studies are also silent on the views of the ordinary union members on how they feel about their leaders focussing on expanding the membership of the union at the expense of servicing the current members in their records.

In summary, the education scholars discussed in the literature review focused more on the activities of union leadership at a national level. For instance, in Latin America, Larreguy *et*

al. (2014) reported more on the relationship between national union leaders and the ruling party. The views of ordinary union members are less reported on in the study. In the case of Namibia, the findings are based on the views and experiences of the former and current national union leadership of NANTU. We hear little about how ordinary union members have experienced the changes in the education system of pre- and post-apartheid Namibia. Moreover, the study is silent on whether the involvement of NANTU national leadership in policy formulation of the education department affected their relationship with ordinary members at the grassroots level.

The studies in South Africa also focused more on the national union leadership of SADTU and understudied the activities of the union leadership at the branch level. Therefore, the researcher felt it was important to focus his study to those participants whose voice is less heard in the empirical studies; that are teachers at the grassroots level. The union leadership and the union members based at branch level in one district in Limpopo, South Africa were therefore considered in doing this research.

2.3 TEACHER UNIONISM AND PUBLIC STRIKES

The relationship between union leaders and their members may determine whether teachers participate in strikes. In cases where leaders and the members share a cordial relationship it is likely that the union membership will reach consensus to go on strike. On the other hand, in situations where there leadership and members share an unhealthy relationship, members may not support the call for the strike.

The power of teachers' unions to win battles against the employer is often seen during the public strikes. For the sake of this study, public strikes refers to "demonstrations by teachers in a form of displaying placards, the singing of protest songs and chants, marches, mass gatherings and picketing" (Grogan, 2010:389).

The literature reveals that in some situations, where the union leadership and their members enjoy a healthy relationship, there has been a collective effort to organise marches against the employer (Taberand, 2015; Joubert, 2014 & Fleisch, 2010). In the



US, the Ontario Secondary Teachers Federation (OSTF) organised a strike for some days against new sex education. The study reveals that all the members of the union participated in the strike.

A similar case is reported in Puerto Rico. Joubert (2014:22) submits that “the announcement of pension reforms aroused strong resistance by all the teachers on the Island”. Teachers belonging to various unions in the country took unanimous resolution to boycott the first opening days in January 2014 (Joubert, *ibid*). In cases where the union leadership and the members share common interests, the members are more likely to support the decision of the union to call for industrial action.

In Western Australia, a number of schools closed for a day in late February when members of the State School Teachers Union (SSTU) union attended a half-day stop work meeting in demand for a 20% wage increase over three years (Holden, 2010:18). It is also reported that in other states within Australia, members of the Australian Education Union (AEU) took strike action in pursuit of an annual 10% wage rise over three years. The president of the AEU’s branch said that school teachers have not had a pay rise since October 2006. The study shows that a large number of members belonging to the unions supported the union leadership’s call for the strike.

South Africa is not unique to such relationships between union leaders and the members. The largest teachers’ union in the country is alleged to use its huge membership to protest against the employer. Reference is made to an incident in Soweto in 2009. According to Fleisch (2010:125), union leadership of SADTU Soweto branch orchestrated a strike for two weeks when their demands were not met. Teachers belonging to the union joined their leadership in the strike.

The voices of dissent against the strike were raised by other stakeholders in education. The Democratic Alliance (DA), the National Association of Parents in School Governance (NAPSG) and the Gauteng Department of Education condemned the union embarking on a strike on issues that involves SGB’s and the district office on appointment of school managers.



The reliance on newspaper articles (Fleisch, 2010) prompted me to conduct one-on-one interviews with teachers who belong to SADTU in the Sekhukhune district as they may shed more light on whether teachers support activities organised by the union leadership. This decision was taken based on the recommendation by Fleisch (2010) who recommended that if interview data is collected it may provide insights into the views of teachers and alternative explanations may surface, hence the need for a qualitative case study on teachers' perceptions of their union leadership.

Recent studies in South Africa reveal that sometimes the protests by teachers are violent and destructive (Patillo, 2012:64; Msibi & Mchunu, 2013:3). Patillo (2012:64) alleges that SADTU members who supported the union leadership in Kwa-Zulu Natal stormed into the office of the district manager. The manager was accused of lack of support of strikes and meddling over the appointment of principals in Umlazi district, Kwa-Zulu Natal (Patillo, *ibid*).

A similar sentiment is shared by Msibi and Mchunu in their 2013 study. They refer to a national strike in 2010 which saw teachers beating learners who were studying and attacking other teachers who were continuing to teach in model C and township schools (Msibi & Mchunu, 2013:3). Be that as it may, the studies focused on the provincial leadership and not on the branch level as is the case with this study. The reports of these studies may be contextual in nature, and therefore apply to the provincial leadership in the province where the study was conducted. The researcher contends that a study in a different province such as Limpopo may reveal new perspectives on the relationship between teachers and their union leaders. Union leaders are assumed to use the mandate of their members when they make decisions on union activities.

It seems as if this was the case in the 2010 national strike when the majority of teachers who belonged to SADTU are reported to have forced the strike on their union leadership (Amtaika, 2013 & Wills, 2014). Amtaika (2013:109) reports that the union leadership was reluctant to call for a strike with the hope that the Minister of Public Administration will increase the offer on the table. Their hope was based on what the Minister did in 2009, when he offered the public servants a 10 % salary hike immediately after the general

elections. However, teachers complained openly about the union leadership when the national strike was suspended without their mandate (Wills, 2014:155).

The contestation between the union leaders and SADTU members were played out at a national level. The studies are silent on whether the relationship between teachers and their leadership at the grassroots level was also affected by the suspension of the strike. The researcher therefore assumed that giving teachers and their leaders at the branch level the opportunity to share their views may shed light on what kind of the relationship they have.

It seems as if whenever SADTU embarks on industrial action, it earns a bad reputation with the public. According to Heystek and Lethoko (2001:224) the public normally has a negative view of union activities because of the manner in which they organise industrial action. SADTU is the union which is synonymous with teacher militancy and this has led to a negative attitude from the public towards unions in general.

The study reports that a SADTU official who participated in the study believes that when negotiations come to a deadlock, a strike may help to achieve what teachers want, regardless of how much of learners' time is wasted. It seems as if teachers support strikes called by their union leadership with the hope that their demands will be met.

2.4 TEACHER ACTIVISM AND CADRE DEPLOYMENT

In the context of this dissertation, cadre deployment refers “to the placement of teachers' union leaders who are actively involved in union activities into senior positions in the Department of Education” (Patillo, 2012:58). A recent study reveals that cadre deployment has led to some contestation taking place between members and non-members of the unions, rank-and-file members and their leaders (Buhlungu & Tshoedi, 2012:3). The contestation is over teachers' unions providing incentives for union leaders to prioritise unionism over effective leadership.



It is alleged that union leadership has therefore used teacher activism as a stepping stone to career mobility. Pienaar and Van Wyk (2006:548) assert that it is the task of the union leadership to make sure that the needs of union members are met. They write that educators who are union members may show higher efficacy because they are confident that the union will be willing to intervene in their interest, should it become necessary (Pienaar & Van Wyk, *ibid*). In contrary, the new trend to deploy union leaders who are actively involved in union activities and politics may shift the focus of union leaders from promoting the interests of ordinary union members. According to Patillo (2012:60) there will be tactics used to disqualify anyone who they do not think was actively involved in union activities.

Zengele (2013:88-94) mentions that union representatives are hijacking the redeployment process to place their comrades in promotional posts when such posts become vacant. Diko and Letseka (2009:230) allege that the loss of teachers to the private sector may be the result of poor implementation of recruitment policies.

For the sake of this study, teacher activism refers to “the participation in strikes and union meetings in return for an incentive in the form of deployment in senior positions within the DoE’ (Patillo, 2012:83)”. There are concerns that leaders tend to use teacher activism, political alignment and corruption to get senior positions for prominent union leaders at the expense of ordinary union members.

Researchers argue that such appointments may cause tension in schools and education and therefore may ruin the relationship between union leaders and the teachers (Murillo, 1999:47 & Kudumo, 2011:162). Murillo’s analysis of teachers unions in Mexico shows that the union leadership of the National Union of Education Workers (NEUW) served as the political arm of the ruling party, and because of that relationship, the union leadership was rewarded with political appointments to school leadership (Murillo, *ibid*). It is alleged that the union’s control over new management positions in education has fuelled tension amongst teachers in the country.



The performance of education became increasingly inefficient because teachers knew that their supervisors were appointed on a union ticket and not based on their skills and capacity to manage the department. What makes matters worse is that educators may be increasingly resistant to being managed by the products of nepotism (Liwane-Mazengwe, 2012:112).

In line with what Murillo (1999) contends other scholars such as Kudumo (2011:162) shares a similar sentiment. In Namibia, the appointment of NANTU leaders to the government and private sector weakened the power of the union to engage in the institutional frameworks and modalities of union participation (Kudumo, 2011:162). He blames the lack of informed leadership on the appointment of new leaders of teachers' unions who do not have a proper understanding of the history and vision of the teachers' unions.

It is my view that the union leaders may therefore be unable to submit the mandates of the members in the bargaining chambers. This may also lead to an unhealthy relationship between union leaders and the members because the interests of the union may be compromised. Educators may feel betrayed at local level as they take note of the ascension of union officials to top posts, with active union members being recommended to senior positions.

In the case of South Africa, this may be the case with the deployment of COSATU union affiliates in government structures and senior positions. Reference is made to Patillo's study in Kwa-Zulu Natal, where key union members are said to be deployed in school management positions as a result of their active participation in union activities. The alleged practice in South Africa began in 1994 when the ANC took over the reins in government. It is alleged that union leaders who helped the party to win the elections were rewarded with senior positions in government. There is however concerns over the deployment of union leadership into senior positions within the schools and the government. Concerns on the deployment of union leaders into senior positions are based on the failure of the new leadership to promote the interests of the organisation.



The new leadership may struggle to promote the interests of the workers as they lack the experience to run the organisation. The union leaders who are deployed may have left the organisation with a leadership vacuum. This sentiment is well argued by Masondo in his study titled, 'The sociology of upward social mobility among COSATU shop stewards'. Masondo (2012:114) criticize cadre deployment as it causes the unions to lose its seasoned leaders and therefore leaving the organisations with a 'brain drain'. It is alleged this has affected the relationship between union leaders and the union members. The members see their union leaders as focusing more on advancing their (union leaders) personal careers at the expense of the organisation.

The image of the union may also be dented as a result of new leaders failing to deliver according to the expectations of the members. However, according to the SADTU website 'the national union leadership of SADTU claim their ability to organize about 255 000 members and to represent and advance its members' interests is an indication that their members have confidence in the union leadership' (www.sadtu.org.za). The study is aimed to explain and understand the relationship between union leaders and ordinary members at branch level.

Although the studies allege that teachers are not happy with their leaders being deployed into senior positions, the researcher contends that the findings may be based in the context of the environment where the studies were conducted. In addition, the studies were focused on national union leaders and are silent on the views and perceptions of rank-and-file members at the grassroots level. The researcher argues that a study in a new location may add new knowledge on how the union leadership is perceived by its members.

History shows that the deployment of COSATU affiliated union leaders by the ANC in the national and provincial parliaments began immediately after the first democratic elections. Shop stewards of various unions under the umbrella of COSATU exited the labour movement for greener pastures into managerial positions in the workplace and deployment by ANC into local government as municipal councillors (Masondo, 2012:111).



According to Buhlungu (1994:27), most of the shop stewards and union officials were under pressure “to prove to their families that the sacrifices they have made over the years in the name of struggle were worthwhile”. The loss of union leaders through deployment did not only undermine the strength of the organisation, but it has also created the perception that being a shop steward is a springboard for promotions and career mobility (Masondo, 2012:119). The decline of teacher unionism is seen by Masondo (ibid) as part of the capitalist project to consolidate its hegemony by weakening trade unions. He alleges that management embarks on a vigorous process of identifying stronger site stewards for promotion, in order to divide workers and weaken the unions.

The researcher argues that this may be the case with SADTU leadership which saw a number of leaders appointed into senior positions after the 1994 elections. The mass exodus of its leadership may have resulted in the feeling of betrayal by those teachers who were not appointed. The feeling of betrayal is reinforced by Liwane-Mazengwe (2012:112) who argues that “the feeling of betrayal stems from the fact that hardworking and senior educators are reportedly disregarded when it comes to promotions”.

There is widespread anecdotal evidence that some teachers are dragging their feet in their workplace due to the job racket allegedly masterminded by some SADTU officials nationally. Masondo (2014:6) reported in City Press that some SADTU members were unhappy about principal posts being sold for cash. The newspaper alleged that the principals appointed as a result of the job scam may compromise the quality of education offered to students. Teachers in the affected schools may refuse to take instructions from the principals.

Another case was reported in Mpumalanga in 2012, where teachers were up in arms after they discovered that their principal was appointed without any advertisement and had not been interviewed (Harper, 2014:27). This may be the reason why some teachers want to leave the teaching profession rather than to be managed by people who are not properly qualified, as argued by Liwane-Mazengwe (2012:156).

In some cases, the union members have resorted to taking the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the union to court to contest some of the organizational decisions that had been taken by the highest structure (www.sadtu.org). Reference is made to the Eastern Cape where the NEC ordered an investigation into some of the circumstances surrounding the provincial conference. It is alleged that some leaders get imposed to stand as immovable movers above the organisation. The move to take the union to courts was however condemned by the union secretary (www.sadtu.org, *ibid*). He said “the union condemns the new tendency of abusing courts to resolve differences without exhausting internal remedies available as per SADTU Constitution”.

The researcher contends that there is no empirical evidence that the mass exodus of seasoned leaders may be the cause of divisions within the union. The allegations based on anecdotal evidence may too unfounded to be used by education scholars. One may ask the following:

1. Firstly, how do the current union leaders serve their members with the exodus of seasoned leaders into circuits, district and local government offices?
2. Secondly, why do members continue to vote and support the current union leadership? This is what the researcher would like to know from the members at the grassroots level.

The researcher therefore gave teachers who are working with the union leadership an opportunity to tell their story on how they perceive union leaders. Furthermore, current union leaders who filled the void left by their former union leaders were given the opportunity to explain how they perceive their own role.

Recent studies in South Africa reveal that teachers’ unions’ leadership tend to use undue influence to have active union members promoted to senior positions in DBE to the detriment of deserving and better qualified educators (Patillo, 2012:59 & Zengele & Coetzer, 2014:22). Union leaders allegedly tamper or throw away applications in the district offices (Patillo, 2012:59). Zengele and Coetzer (2014:22) concur when they submit that “teachers’ union leadership gives principals the instruction to appoint a certain



member”. The researcher argues that this may cause tension amongst teachers who are union members and those who are not affiliated to any union.

This is also in contradiction of the Employment of Educators Act of 1998, which stipulates that “union representatives shall be observers to the process of shortlisting, interviews and the drawing up of the preference list”. The scholars argue that this may lead to some teachers deciding to leave the teaching profession.

The focus on the recent studies in South Africa on the national union leadership may mean that the voices of ordinary union members have been left out. For example in the case of Zengele and Coetzer (2014:22) study in Gauteng, key SADTU leadership was sampled to collect the data. Patillo’s (2012:59) focused her study only on principals who were either former or current union leaders of NATU and SADTU respectively. The current study however, included both the union leaders and the rank-and-file members of SADTU to listen to both sides of the story on how union leadership is perceived at the branch level.

2.5 CONCLUSION

The literature indicates that the partnership union leadership have with the government of the day has led to the decline of the strength of teachers’ unions. The focus by the union leadership on advancing their careers at the expense of the ordinary union members is alleged to have widened the gap between union leaders and their members. I have referred to countries such as Mexico, United States of America and Namibia.

In cases where the union leadership shares a cordial relationship with the members, the unions were able to organize public strikes to force the government to meet their demands. Most of the studies I reviewed focused on national union leadership and activities at the branch level are less reported. This study was therefore conducted to address the gap in the literature.



CHAPTER THREE

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Guba and Lincoln (1994:108) remind us that methodology asks how the researcher can go about finding out whatever he/she believes can be known. This is supported by Crotty (1998:3) who explains that “research methodology is the strategy or plan of action which lies behind the choice and use of a particular method”. Therefore, methodology is concerned with why, what, from where and how data is collected and analysed.

In this chapter, I describe and explain the process of identifying participants, the sample, the preparations and the process of conducting interviews, the research questions and data analysis. In addition, I offer arguments and explanations as to why a particular technique and process was chosen. Finally, the challenges and limitations faced in this study are discussed.

In an effort to understand how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences, I followed a qualitative approach as proposed by Merriam (1998). The participants were seen as experts who agreed to share their stories on branch union leadership activities with me. I listened to their voices on how they perceive branch union leadership in the Sekhukhune district, Limpopo province.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

This research was conducted using an interpretive paradigm to understand the phenomenon through accessing the meanings that participants assign to the research questions. The interpretivist approach is based on understanding the society from the standpoint of the participant in an action rather than the observer (Morgan, 1980:608).



The teachers who work with branch union leadership or who are in a branch executive council were assumed to be in a position to state their views and perceptions of union leadership activities in the Sekhukhune district in Limpopo province, South Africa.

Epistemologically, since my stance as a researcher is that of constructive-interpretivist, the knowledge was socially constructed by an interaction with branch union leaders and rank-and-file union members. The interview sessions I had with the participants were deemed to be enough to compile the meanings of perceptions or views that the participants hold on the branch union leadership activities.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research consists of a qualitative case study design. The aim of qualitative studies is to see the world through the eyes of the participant, as they can be a valuable source of information (Maree, 2010:87). This study is concerned with understanding how teachers perceive branch union leadership in one district in Limpopo province. For me to gain an in-depth understanding of branch union leadership activities in the district, I had to use the research approach which allows interactions with participants who have observed or experienced the phenomenon under study. The idea was to understand and analyse the world from the respondents' perspective.

For the sake of this study, a qualitative approach rendered itself appropriate as it allowed me an opportunity to interact with participants while collecting the data. I interacted with teachers who work with branch union leadership and those who are in branch union leadership positions, hence my choice of a qualitative study. These teachers were seen as experts who will share their knowledge on union leadership activities in the district.

A case study which, according to Yin (2003:13) "allows the researcher to explore individuals or organisations within the real – life context' was utilised". A case study was found to be advantageous for this study as it allowed me to gather a great amount of knowledge on branch union leadership activities within the context it was taking place. In



addition, the design allows the researcher to develop close collaboration with the participants, while enabling participants to tell their stories (Lother, 1992; Robottom & Hart, 1993 cited in Baxter, 2008). These stories enable the researcher to better understand the participants` actions.

3.4 SAMPLE

Merriam (1998:61) describes purposive sampling “as based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned”. The selection of participants was based on my personal judgement on who will share his/ her knowledge of branch union leadership activities. These participants were purposively selected based on the following criteria:

1. I assumed that teachers who are working with the branch union leadership have observed the role and activities of these union leaders.
2. They might have directly or indirectly witnessed some of the activities the union leadership dealt with. I therefore thought they would be likely to possess rich information and would be able to share their knowledge on the union leadership activities in the district. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research (Patton, 1990:169).

Two primary schools and four secondary schools were selected as research sites. The schools were sampled for the study because they had the branch leadership in their records. As a union member, I knew these schools had the union leadership because the leaders were appointed in the branch meeting I had attended. These are the schools which afforded the researcher greater depth of interaction with each participant and they were accessible given the researcher’s available time for the study.

In order to get an in-depth output on the research questions, individual interviews were conducted with eight branch union leaders and twelve rank-and-file union members. In total, 20 participants took part in one-on-one interviews. The process of identifying union members who participated in the study was done with the help of a branch secretary of the



union in the district. I organised a private meeting with him/her and explained the purpose of my study and the research questions. I further elaborated to him/her characteristics of the people whom I was intending to include in the study. I requested him/her to help me identify union members who have been actively involved in the union activities in the past 5 years or more. I also explained to the secretary that our focus will be on those teachers who are working with the current union leadership. The idea was to identify those union members who have information - rich on union leadership cases.

In terms of the branch leadership; they are elected at the mass meetings and I knew exactly who to approach. All the union leaders in the branch executive council were assumed to possess the rich - information on the role of union leadership in the district hence they were elected to lead the branch. I stopped the interviews after realizing that I have reached the saturation point, that is, there was no more new data emerging from conducting the interviews.

The position of participants at their work stations was also not considered in the identification of participants. Be that as it may be, I realised that one union leader was a principal in one of the schools where I had to conduct the interviews. I noticed this when I visited the school to request permission to conduct the interviews. The principal was treated as a union leader once he gave me permission for the interviews to be conducted.

In summary, purposive sampling was used to identify key participants. Union members and branch union leaders were identified based on the assumption that they were likely to provide information-rich responses on the activities of union leadership in the district. The accessibility of participants to me also played a role on the finalisation of a list of participants in the study.

3.5 DATA GATHERING

Qualitative researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behaviour or interviewing participants (Creswell, 2009:175). My selection of the data collection technique is influenced by Lekgoathi (2007:226) who argues that few



exceptional studies that explore teachers tend to concentrate on formal organization for which documentary evidence is readily available, thus relegating the main subjects within those organisations, teachers, to the margins.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with union members and branch union leaders from purposively selected sites. A follow-up focus group interview was held with some participants to get clarity on some of the issues that emerged during transcribing and data analysis. This also helped in increasing the validity of the study. The data collection technique and the follow-up interview are discussed below.

3.5.1 Semi-structured interviews

I used semi-structured interviews as a data-gathering technique for this study. De Vos, Strydom, Delpont and Fouche (2011:352) advise that “semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to follow up a particular interesting avenue that emerges in the interviews and the participants are able to give a fuller picture on the subject under the study”. It is for this reason that I suggest that this technique is appropriate for this study. Semi-structured interviews allowed me to use probes which gave me an opportunity to persuade the participants to give more information about the phenomenon being studied.

Participants were perceived as experts on the branch union leadership activities and were therefore allowed the maximum opportunity to tell their stories. A digital voice recording device was used in order to allow me to ensure that I do not miss anything said by the participants. The device was used with the permission of all the participants. Digitally recording the interviews ensured completeness of the verbal interaction and provided material for reliability checks (Mc Millan & Schummer, 2010:360).

Prior to finalising the interview questions, I pilot-tested the interview questions with two former union leaders and two rank-and-file members in the district. The functionality of the digital voice recorder was also checked during the pilot study and I found that the device



had no problems. The suggestions made during that stage were incorporated into the final interview questions.

In summary, semi-structured interviews were selected as the means of data collection because it is suitable for the exploration of perceptions and opinions of participants regarding sensitive issues and enables probing for more information and clarification of answers. Kutame and Mulaudzi (2010:11) warn that “teachers perceive matters relating to labour issues as sensitive”. I therefore opted for the tool that will allow me to probe and get clarity on these sensitive issues.

The use of interviews is also suitable for qualitative research methods because they are designed to study human behaviour. This is corroborated by Carruthers (2007:65) who says that “semi-structured interviews have the advantage of being reasonably objective while still permitting a more thorough understanding of respondent’s views”.

3.5.2 Follow-up interview

Polkinghorne (2005:143) says that “qualitative interview data involves multiple sessions with participants, including follow-up interviews to clarify and expand participant description during the analytic process”. It also came to my attention while listening to the recorded interviews and during the transcription of the interviews that there were some issues that needed further clarification. I therefore decided to conduct a follow-up in the form of a focus-group interview. The participants were co-operative in granting me another opportunity for the second interview.

There were two themes that emerged from the collected data that were contradicting each other. The participants perceived the branch union leaders as representing the employer while at the same time acknowledging that the branch union leaders were organising some activities for the members. I therefore organised one focus-group interview with some of the participants whom I interviewed earlier. During the discussions with these participants they acknowledged that this was actually how they view the branch union leadership in the district.



3.6 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

De Vos *et al.* (2011:352) mention that “open-ended questions should be asked to allow the participants to express themselves freely”. I therefore opted for semi-structured interviews which allowed me to have a choice in the wording of each question and also in the use of probes. Questions starting with ‘what and how’ were chosen in this study. The interview questions that supported those in the main questions mentioned in chapter one are listed in Appendix D. (I rephrased some of the questions in Appendix D, depending on how the interviews developed, though the content of the questions was still generally the same).

The questions were asked to union leaders and union members in an effort to understand their views on union leadership activities in the district (branch) level. I used the interview questions as a guide in all one-on-one interviews but with the main emphasis being on understanding union leadership activities in the district (see Appendix D). These questions were asked in all the interviews. The participants’ responses are interpreted and discussed in the next three chapters.

3.7 CONDUCTING THE INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

I started to make arrangements with identified participants as soon as I was cleared by the ethics committee at the University of Pretoria to continue with the fieldwork. The invitation and informed consent letters were forwarded to all participants. The letters explained the purpose of this research and invited union members and branch union leaders to participate. All the invitations were done through formal communication (See Appendix B).

Ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality and the right to withdraw were also outlined in the invitation letters. I hand-delivered some of the letters to participants and others were emailed. I also requested permission from the principals of participating schools. Furthermore, the request to conduct this research was granted by the Limpopo Department of Education before I commenced with the interviews.



Permission was given by the circuit manager in his capacity as the head of all the schools that were sampled for the study. A list with participants, interview dates, venues and times was created. The responses by the majority of those invited to participate in the study, as well as the confirmation for the interviews required patience.

Contact via telephone and email was used by participants and myself to cancel or rearrange the interview sessions and became a valuable link between the sample group and myself. In other cases, there were some delays and I had to politely convince some participants to take part in the study. I allowed for rearrangements and some interviews were even conducted on weekends to accommodate some participants.

There were a few withdrawals by participants due to various reasons. In one school, the union member withdrew after realising that the union leaders were also part of the study. She mentioned that she did not want to cause tension between her and the union leader. I however managed to get a replacement at the same school. Another prospective participant could not continue with the study because she was transferred to another school at the end of 2014. She was relocated 100 kilometres away. Due to travelling cost, I had to get someone in her place. Additionally, one union member cancelled at the 11th hour citing personal commitments. Efforts to rearrange the session with him were fruitless after I tried on numerous occasions. I also had a challenge doing the interviews at the Branch unions' office. The full discussions on the challenges met in the study are dealt with in section 3. 13.

The participants were given the opportunity to decide on the venues and the times where they will feel comfortable to be interviewed. Therefore, the venues and time for each individual interview was agreed upon between me and the participants. It should however be made clear that all the participants were encouraged to agree to have the interviews at their schools. Once all the arrangements were completed, the first interviews were conducted with the branch union leaders. I decided to start with the branch union leaders after I was informed of their busy schedule. The branch leadership office was about to prepare for an elective conference in few months' time.



During the first interview, I was nervous but I kept my composure and stayed focused on the job at hand. I explained the purpose of the study fully, as well as the ethical requirements of the University of Pretoria. Even though I was tense on the day, the union leader shared his views openly with me. He even offered to recommend other participants to take part in the study. I gained thick-description information on how union leaders operate at the branch level. The interview lasted for almost an hour. I also made it clear to the branch union leader that the digital voice recorder will be used in order to allow me to be sure that I do not miss anything that has been said.

I explained that the collected data will only be used for academic purposes, which are the writing of this dissertation, article publications and in seminar and conference presentations. The explanation to the union leader was repeated with all other participants.

According to Polkinghorne (2005:142) the interview conversation should consist of a give-and-take dialectic in which interviewer follows the conversational threads opened up by the interviewee and guides the conversation toward producing a full account of the subject under investigation. This advice was adhered to by using probes and rephrasing questions to encourage participants to share more stories on branch union leadership activities.

Those participants who have been union members for a number of years were the ones who shared rich-information on branch union leadership with me. They were able to describe some of the developments in the lifespan of SADTU in the branch. There were, however, a few participants who were not willing to talk that much fearing that they may say incriminating things about the union leadership. I continuously reminded these participants that their identity will not be made known to anyone and that the study was mainly for academic purpose. Interviews in the study lasted between 30 minutes and hour depending on whether the participant was open enough to share their information. Be that as it may be, all the collected data contributed to the success of this study.



3.8 TRANSCRIPTION OF DATA

Mc Millan and Schummer (2010:360) describe transcription as “the process whereby notes taken and information recorded is converted into a format that will facilitate data analyses”. All the recorded data were transcribed verbatim by the researcher. The process was time-consuming and the researcher listened to the recordings several times to check and edit what he had already transcribed.

3.9 DATA ANALYSIS

According to Creswell (2009:184), qualitative data analysis is an on-going process involving continual reflection about the data, asking analytic questions and writing memos throughout the study. The process of data analysis began with the transcription of the data. I personally transcribed all the interviews. I listened to the recording numerous times and read the transcripts more than once. Corrections and editions were made as soon as errors were identified. I continuously read, reflected, coded, reviewed and refined during the data collection and analysis process, as suggested by Bazeley (2013:15).

Miles and Huberman (1994:49) mention that “analysis during data collection lets the researcher cycle back and forth thinking about the existing data and generating new, often better quality data”. I went through all the collected data whenever I prepared for the next interview. The continuous analysis whilst busy with the interviews was helpful in realising that I have reached a saturation point.

This is succinctly argued by De Vos (2002:341) who contends that qualitative data analysis cannot be divorced from the data gathering stage. Constant comparative analysis was used to code the data. Analytic themes were developed from the codes. The collected data was constantly revisited after initial coding, until it was clear that no new themes were emerging (Hewitt -Taylor, 2001:39).

In summary, data collection and analysis are interwoven in qualitative research. Carey (1995:488) suggests that data should also be analysed as promptly as possible after



collection so that qualitative elements of the encounter recorded in the data can be recalled as accurately as possible. I therefore began the process of data analysis before completing the fieldwork, with preliminary analysis performed immediately after the interviews were transcribed. In an attempt to have quality data analysis, repeated coding was performed to review interpretations, in the light of new data gathered and as new codes were generated, until no new insights were being gleaned (Riley, 1990 cited in Hewitt -Taylor, 2001:40).

The categories or themes derived from the interviews were clustered around each research question they contributed to answering. I identified the following themes as important in answering my research questions:

- Political alliance
- The involvement of branch leaders in Department of Basic Education activities
- Union activities

3.10 VALIDITY

In an effort to validate the interpretation of the response and the emerging findings, the following factors were considered:

Firstly, the continuous meetings I had with both my supervisor and co -supervisor to review and comment on the progress I was making contributed to data validity. I constantly improved my work based on their comments and advice. They were involved from the development of the research proposal, the ethics application process, the drafting of this dissertation and were available in the finalisation of this project. The critiques and comments made along the journey were used to improve the quality of this product.

Secondly, I attended the branch union meetings and some branch union activities organised by the branch union leadership while busy doing the data analysis of the collected data. The process was not part of data collection but I assumed it may help me in understanding the responses of the participants. The meetings and activities organised by the union at the time of data analysis contributed to data validity, as it expanded my

understanding of branch union leadership activities and therefore added to the information collected from individual interviews with union leaders and union members. I made some notes on all the activities that I attended and they can be made available should they be required.

Finally, I went back to participants for member-checking in an effort to assess the accuracy of the findings. In qualitative research, there is a debate concerning the use of member-checking to establish the quality of the research. Silvermann (1993:60) indicates that member checks are not necessarily adequate to achieve complete accuracy of the findings.

It is however my view that member checks contribute to the validity of the research. This is corroborated by Nolan and Behi (1995, cited in Hewitt -Taylor, 2001:40) who submit that in qualitative research, the findings should be presented to participants so that their views can be explored. The transcripts were forwarded to all the participants in order for them to check the accuracy of the statements. Some transcripts were emailed while others were personally hand-delivered to participants.

All the participants were given enough time to go through the transcripts. It was during this process that changes were made as needed. Some participants felt that what was transcribed reflected what they said during the interviews. In addition, the findings of the study were also mailed to participants for them to check if my interpretation of the transcripts mirrored their responses. Majority of the participants supported the findings. Other masters' students offered valuable comments when I discussed with them the data collected. Therefore, member-checking was therefore a valuable strategy I used to enhance the validity and accuracy of the findings.

3.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Corty, Day and Backhouse (2000:6) point out that "research should, as far as possible, be based on participants' freely volunteered informed consent". This implies a responsibility to



explain fully and meaningfully what the research is about and how it will be disseminated. Participants should be aware of their right to participate; understand the extent to which confidentiality will be maintained; be aware of the potential uses to which the data might be put; and in some cases be reminded of their right to re – negotiate consent (Corty, et al, *ibid*).

As a researcher I made an effort to comply with the ethical considerations of the University of Pretoria. I waited for the Ethics Committee to grant permission before I started the field work. I also got permission from the Department of Education in Limpopo Province. I sent a letter of informed consent to all participants and requested them to sign to give their consent to participate in the study. With regards to voluntary participation, I let the participants know that should they wish to withdraw from the study, they are at liberty to do so at any time. No participants were coerced to take part in the study.

In terms of confidentiality; Baez (2002:37) emphasises that “discussing this issue at the outset is necessary for acquiring informed consent and building trust with the respondents”. He stresses that confidentiality should be upheld as a means to protect the privacy of all persons, to build trust and rapport with study participants, and to maintain ethical standards and the integrity of the process (Baez, *ibid*). According to Crow and Wiles (2008:2), it is important in social science research for researchers to assure participants that every effort will be made to ensure that the data they provide cannot be traced back to them (participants) in reports, presentations and other form of dissemination. In addition, they suggest that the primary method that researchers can use to preserve anonymity and confidentiality is the use of pseudonyms and also changing the reported character of participants.

All the participants were given assurance that their involvement in the study was confidential. I informed participants that pseudonyms will be used when reporting the findings. Furthermore, I made it clear that their anonymity will be respected and all the records of interviews will be kept in safe place and be destroyed after some time as per University of Pretoria regulations. I ensured that the procedures I used to elicit the

information did not interfere with participants' privacy. The digital voice recorder was only utilised after the participants agreed to the usage of the device.

The participants' rights were given a priority in this study. The information that participants divulged during the interviews that is not related to the research was treated as private. The findings of this study will be disseminated in the form of a dissertation and a journal article. I may also produce a seminar and conference presentation when the opportunity arises. The Branch Executive Council (BEC) of SADTU will receive a copy in order to hear the voice of the teachers in the district. The circuit manager who granted me permission will also receive the copy he requested so that he can also enjoy a bird's eye view of what I have experienced. Another copy will grace the shelves of the University of Pretoria library for other scholars to use as a reference on union matters.

3.13 CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED DURING THE STUDY

The process of conducting this research came with some challenges. Doing the interviews at the Branch unions' office was a mammoth task. In addition, the withdrawal of some participants had a negative impact on the progress of the study.

The Branch Executive Council is composed of union members who are stationed in various sites and who are working as teachers. In the afternoons, they go to the branch unions' office to attend to union matters and programmes. This is also the time that they allocated me to do the interviews. This however raised concerns on a number of ethical issues. The site stewards walked in to discuss some disputes with the secretary just before we could begin with the interviews. I could not continue with the session because the privacy and identity of the participant was going to be affected. I had to reschedule the session and conduct the interview at another convenient time in order to protect the identity of the participant.

I finalised the lists of participants immediately after permission was granted by the Ethics Committee of University of Pretoria. Unfortunately, there were some withdrawals by some participants after they had initially agreed to take part in the study. The recruitment of new



participants was challenging. I assume that the sensitivity of the topic may have led to some participants being reluctant to take part in the study. After some delays, I managed to get some replacements and the study was concluded within scope of time.

3.14 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, qualitative research is not concerned with how much data was gathered or from how many sources, but whether the data collected is sufficiently rich to bring refinement and clarity to understand the subject under the study. Individuals who can share relevant stories on branch union leadership activities were judged to be those who are working with or are in union leadership. Therefore, the participants were selected to provide their views, opinions and perceptions about union leadership activities. Finally, the research process was an iterative one, moving from collection of data to analysis and back until I reached saturation point, as suggested by Polkinghorne (2005:140). The discussions and interpretation of data is dealt with in the next chapters.



CHAPTER FOUR

4. THE POLITICAL ALLIANCE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 2 of this dissertation the relationship between the union leadership and political parties was discussed with a view of understanding how that partnership impact on the running of teachers' unions. In South Africa, the largest teacher union, the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) is affiliated to the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) (Letseka, Bantwini & McKenzie; 2012:1197). The latter is a partner in the ruling tripartite alliance that includes the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) (Letseka *et al.*, *ibid*).

In this chapter, I seek to explain the views and perceptions of teachers on unions' involvement in politics. The involvement of SADTU in politics is divided into two sub-themes as emerged from the interviews. These sub-themes are: the political alliance in the post-apartheid era and maintaining independence. The data for this chapter is based on the analysis of the interviews I had with the SADTU members and their leaders in one district in the Limpopo Province. The overall aim is to understand how the involvement of SADTU in politics affects its relationship with its members.

4.2 THE POLITICAL ALLIANCE IN THE POST- APARTHEID ERA

Amtaika (2013:108) submits that "SADTU became COSATU's education wing, partly to spearhead change in the education system in South Africa and partly to deal with the welfare of teachers as workers". The collapse of apartheid in South Africa, allowed SADTU to form a partnership with the government of the day, which resulted in notable achievements around salary increases and parity, thereby addressing historical inequalities based on race and gender (Govender, 2004:279).

Despite these gains, words of warning and caution were raised prior to the 1994 elections and after the subsequent elections. Patel (1993:23) warned that “the attainment of democracy may result in weakening of organised labour”. Mannah and Lewis in their (2008:190) study argued that it will be pointless for SADTU to continue to operate in its 1990’s style while the government has embedded its neoliberal principles in policy and implementation.

There was an ambivalent response from participants on the involvement of the union in politics. On one hand, participants felt that it was important for a teachers union such as SADTU to be involved in politics for the benefit of its members, while on the other hand, some participants were of the opinion that SADTU is failing to make real gains for its members because of the alliance. Conversely, there are those who were not sure of whether the alliance is failing the members or benefiting them.

Choene, a union member states that it is proper for each and every individual to be actively involved in the politics of the country. He elaborates further:

Remember there is saying that goes like ‘if you don’t become active in politics do not even complain whenever unpopular decisions against you are made’. In actual sense, it is proper for each and every person to be politically active and at the same time have a say even though it might not be something in principle but in the running of the government of the day (sic).

Choene supports the involvement of SADTU in politics so that the union may have a say in influencing the decisions in policy formulation. In addition, he argues that teachers who are not actively involved in politics may not complain when the government introduces policies that are not in their favour (teachers).

Kapama, one of the union leaders expands on the need to have the alliance in post – apartheid period:



I find the relationship of our union with COSATU and the ANC indeed working because we are sharing the same background in terms of addressing the well – being of the people and their welfare. We would support the ANC to see the well – being of the people and we would support COSATU to unite workers in fighting the poverty that the people are experiencing in our community. So this alliance is strong and alive and it was well informed (sic).

The views by Kapama corroborate those of Choene. Their explanation suggests that the alliance between SADTU and the ANC is to the benefit of the people, teachers in particular. According to their views, the involvement of the union in politics will help in alleviating poverty experienced in the communities. I suggest that active participation of teachers in politics of the country may help in getting people educated so that they are responsible citizens.

Another union leader (Makonye) recalls that teachers have actually been involved in politics for a very long time and there is a need to continue doing so in post-apartheid era:

When you go back in the formation of all these political parties, they were formed by the educators. We need to belong to politics, and hence we are now participating in the form of an alliance. It is very important to be politically conscious. For instance, most of our councillors are not educated and we are saying as educators we also need to be recognised to participate in council chambers and to participate in the legislature so that we educate politicians who are not educated. We understand that education is power (sic).

The explanation by this union leader may suggest that the leaders' involvement in politics may be for a different reason than pursuing the interest of the members. It appears as if leaders are strategically positioning themselves for career mobility. Reference can be made to Masondo's (2012:111) who cites that "shop stewards exit the labour movement for greener pastures through promotion into managerial in the workplace and deployment by political parties into local government municipalities". Therefore, the union leaders may be joining politics so that they may be deployed in senior positions by their alliance



partner. Despite the support by some participants on the union involvement in politics at the district level Tau, the branch political head, says that the branch is not actually involved in politics:

In politics we are slightly involved, why do I say we are slightly involved is because we are an affiliate to COSATU. Issues that are relating to politics most of the time are debated at the level of COSATU. As a union we are an affiliate to COSATU, that is why I am not directly involved as a branch chairperson. The person who is directly involved in most of the time is the president of the union and the secretary of the union. Most of us, we are doing it as a part – time activity. We are not full – time participant in the union issues. For instance, when we discuss issues relating to salary increment; it is not debated by the chairpersons of the branches but the leadership at the level of national office is taking care of such (sic).

The view of Tau suggests the alliance between the union and the ANC is played out at a national level. This may be the case as some of the former SADTU national leaders were elevated to ministerial positions in the new government of ANC. A leader such as Thulasi Nxesi, who is a former general secretary of the union, currently serves as Minister of Public Works. I contend that it may be for this reason that some participants perceive the alliance as not working for the entire union membership, but only for few individuals.

This is a sentiment shared by Modupe, one of the union members in the study. He revisits how Thulasi Nxesi was once a prominent leader of SADTU before he was offered the ministerial post. Modupe in his response on how he sees the partnership union leaders have with the department of education, said:

The relationship between union leader and the employer is not good at all. In 2007, the union was led by Thulasi Nxesi, he was on the forefront of the strike and then he was offered a ministerial post. He is now a changed person (sic).

An explanation that seems suitable for Modupe's submission is what Masondo (2012:127) calls co-option. He cites that "co-option of influential working class leaders is one of the oldest tactics by those who own the means of production to weaken and suppress worker's organisational strength". In the case of this study, influential SADTU leadership are alleged to be co-opted to government by the ruling party to weaken the strength of SADTU. The practice of co-option is not welcomed by some participants as it only benefits the union leaders.

Going back to the earlier words of warning and caution, I refer to Gall's study in 1997. He argues that "while the union leaders are under pressure to represent members' interests and meet their high expectations, they are also politically linked to the ANC which imposes significant restraining influences" (Gall, 1997:215). A union leader, Tlake, shares her feeling and views on what might cause the union to operate different from its inception.

The only thing that maybe makes the union not be the same as it was before is because we have aligned with the government. It is like the government is part of our parent and it becomes difficult to fight your parent. Sometimes you have to consolidate for whatever you are fighting for. The tripartite alliance, I think it is the one that makes it (union) not to be the same as it was in the past (sic).

The explanation by Tlake, who is a union leader, suggests that the early warnings by the labour scholars may be starting to emerge in the post-apartheid period. The union leadership may be finding it difficult to keep the balance in representing the members and showing their support to the ruling party. Tlake acknowledges that the union is no longer operating the same way as it was in the past. This may suggest that the strength of the union has declined in the post-apartheid era.

The submission by Tlake also corroborates with Modupe's assertion that the relationship between union leaders and the employer is not good. The alliance that SADTU has with the ruling party is perceived to be beneficial to only the union leaders. A similar argument is raised by Kgobane, a union member in the study.



The political friend is the employer and it will be difficult for people to fight a friend. In this case, the workers union will find it difficult to fight the employer who is their counterpart in terms of agreements. Unions used to win some time ago but now, may be it is the change in politics or so eish the winning is no longer there (sic).

The view of this union member suggests that the political relationship SADTU share with the ANC was beneficial to union members in the early days of democracy. He cites that the change in politics is a result of union members not 'winning anymore' from their political friend. I suggest that this may be due to the culture of individualism. In the context of this study, individualism refers to "union leaders who believe that they deserve to live a better life at the expense of union members and they should prove in material terms that the sacrifices they made by joining the union were not in vain" (Buhlungu & Tshoaedi, 2012:14).

They also argue that in the current socio-economic context in South Africa, where there is growing materialism and individualism, the interests of leaders are influenced by the desire for upward social mobility and personal accumulation of wealth (Buhlungu & Tshoaedi, 2012:14). I suggest that the unions may be used as stepping stone for individual social mobility. In addition, the government may be co-opting the union leaders in the form of deployment as discussed in the literature review. The alliance in the post-apartheid era may be that of materialism and individualism where the interests of union members are sacrificed. This argument is supported by Leilane and Mapheke respectively. They argue that the current leaders join the union and politics for wrong reasons:

The alliance is strong and alive but if you look at our young comrades who are growing and joining the politics of late. They are actually joining for a very wrong reason (sic).

The reason being that I join the union in order to make a living out of it but politics and union is about looking at the well – being of the people of the country and to make sure that they get what is best for them. The union



leadership is making use of their positions to window – dress themselves to be able meet the politicians (sic).

The views by this union leader and the union member corroborate those of Tlake and Kgobane. The current union leadership of SADTU may be pursuing their own personal interests in the bargaining chambers at the expense of the union members. I argue that the loss of senior union officials to the government department and municipal offices might have set a new trend to current union leaders. My argument is supported by Masondo (2012:114) who contends that the loss of some leaders did not only undermine the strength of the union but also created a new perception that being a site steward is a springboard for promotion and career mobility.

The findings from the responses of the participants might be against the researchers' working assumption that leaders may be perceived to be promoting the interest of teachers and education system. The submission by the participants that union leaders join the politics and unions in order to make a living out of it is seemingly in support of the literature. The union leaders seem to be active in union activities and politics so that they can be deployed in government. Therefore, the relationship between union members and their union leaders may be that of individualism whereby union leaders promote their own interest at the expense of ordinary union members.

Mpoti, a union member elaborates on the danger of the alliance to ordinary union members. In her response on how she feels about the unions' involvement in politics at district level, she said:

Eya that is where the problem has started according to my input (perception). We are now in a way not free to tell if they are wrong (the ruling party) because we are an alliance with them. That it is why they are doing all these kind of things that we do not want. They are not solving our problems and there is nothing we can say about that because we are an alliance with them (sic).

The emerging explanation from this union member may be that it appears as if teachers' union members have accepted the phenomenon of individualism by their union leaders



and they (union members) are more tolerant of ambition for upward mobility on the part of shop steward representation.

I contend that this may however have weakened the strength of the unions, and therefore the gap between union leaders and the members have widened. There assertion that the leadership is not solving the problems of union members and that there is nothing that members can say about it, raises eyebrows on the strength of the union. According to Mpoti, the alliance has weakened the strength of SADTU.

Garson (2000:203) observes that SADTU's relationship with the ANC has brought advantages, but at the cost of its leaders becoming perceived as having a 'cosy' relationship with their 'comrades' in government. A sentiment reinforced by Kudumo (2011:159) who cites that "lack of role clarification in the context of the post-independence could result in leaders of teacher unions being accountable to government, and not to their members". This argument may explain the perception of Mollo, who submits that:

The poor attendance on union activities by some union members may be because of discouragement. This discouragement is the factor that is leading because at some point you push for the demands ne..... then you fight but by the time you are at the climax; then you should stop whatever you were fighting for. They would say they have resolved the issue politically whereas members are not satisfied (sic).

The explanation from this participant suggests that the union leaders may be practising corporatism. In the context of this dissertation, corporatism refers "to a way union leaders are becoming the voice of the employer, instead of addressing and promoting the interests of the members in policy development" (Kudumo, 2011:159). I suggest that it may be that the union members are no longer interested in union activities because they fear that the union leadership may not address the issues raised during those meetings.

Mputle warns of the disadvantages of corporatism to teacher unions in post-apartheid era:



The tripartite alliance is killing our union because we no more negotiate in terms of being teachers' unions. These politicians know that they can talk to people (union leaders) in power. They are later going to give them posts that they (union leaders) have been eyeing. So if they (politicians) give those union leaders the post there is no way that the union leaders can go against what is feeding them (sic).

The perceptions of this union member corroborates other submissions made earlier in this section that the leaders may no longer be promoting the interests of the union members. It seems as if the culture of individualism affects the power of teacher unions to make independent professional inputs to policy formulation, and to articulate and promote the interests of their members without first considering what the ruling party or government might think (Kudumo, 2011:161).

The participants in the study perceive the political alliance in post-apartheid in two different ways. On one hand, participants perceive the involvement of union leadership in politics as a good thing because it will allow the leadership to influence the decisions in education forums. They argue that the union leadership may help the government to alleviate poverty in communities. They mention that teachers work within the communities and they may therefore help the ruling party in educating the mass of South Africa.

In contrast, it seems as if other participants perceive the union leadership to be doing less in promoting the interests of union members. The participants perceive their leaders as using the alliance to promote individual social mobility. The emerging findings from the majority of participants seem to agree with the literature I reviewed. Leaders are perceived to be active in union activities and politics so that they can be co-opted into government in the form of deployment. This practice is perceived by participants as an underlying cause for the decline of SADTU.



4.3 MAINTAINING INDEPENDENCE

It is my view that the growing gap between union leaders and union members may have resulted in a call by some members for the union to be independent from political affiliations. According to Gall (1997:215) “the union leadership may be restrained in responding to the rank and file pressures politically and in terms of personnel because the ANC and COSATU are much intertwined”.

In the case of this study, there was a diverse response from the participants on the union’s involvement in politics. On one hand, participants called for the union to be independent from any political party, while other participants were of the perception that masses need political alliance to defend democracy won in 1994. I firstly discuss the perceptions of those participants who suggest that the alliance should discontinue.

Sebata, a union leader in the study suggests that the alliance is not working for the members. In his response when asked how he feels about the unions’ involvement in politics, he said:

Eish the alliance is bad because there are some leaders who are using the union for their benefits. They are not there to serve the members but they serve themselves. Even at national level, we are not winning SADTU all the years is not winning because SADTU, COSATU and ANC is one family; if were like AMCU; I think the union was going to work effectively so (sic).

The explanation by this union leader suggests that some union leaders at a branch level may be using the alliance for their own benefit hence the growing gap between union leaders and the members. The reference that SADTU should operate like AMCU is a good testimony that some members are not happy with the alliance at the moment. It appears that the members of the union think it will be better if the union was independent from the tripartite alliance so that it solely focuses on the interests of the working class.

The call for SADTU to be independent from the ruling party was also made by Moruti, another union member who took part in the study. He states that:

I believe as teachers; we should be independent. The ANC is the governing party; so if they (SADTU) are aligned to the ANC obviously somewhere somehow; they will tend to agree with the ANC instead of looking at what is it that teachers need and what is it that teachers do not need from them.

The submission by Moruti implies that the involvement of SADTU in the alliance reduces the power of the union to speak on behalf on the working class. The union leadership seems to agree with the employer at the expense of the union members. Nthavi, a union member shares a similar view of discontinuing the alliance, he suggests that:

They should operate as a union not as an affiliate to a certain political party and when they negotiate with the government; they then negotiate as a union not a friend or allies (sic).

The explanation by Nthavi corroborates the suggestions made by Sebata and Moruti in their call for SADTU to withdraw from the alliance. The participants feel that the union will be able to negotiate better for the members if they are not aligned to any political parties. The emerging finding from the responses of the participants seems to agree with the literature I reviewed in Chapter 2. The scholars say that the current partnership between union leaders and the ruling parties is alleged to be the cause of the decline on the strength of the labour organisation.

Noko, one of the union members in the study argues that the alliance causes the union to focus more on politics. In her response to the same question asked to Sebata, she said:

This nowadays is more of politics than fighting for the workers' rights (sic).

The focus by the union leadership on politics seems to be a worrying factor for the participants. The explanation from this union member suggests that the workers' rights



may be compromised as a result of the union leadership focusing more on politics. Based on the submissions of these participants, it seems as if they want their union to discontinue with the alliance.

According to another union member (Monang), the union leadership joined SADTU to advance their political careers. He contends that:

There are people who are using the union for their own benefits so I am not happy with the structure now. Some leaders say I am representing SADTU as a union now but in the next five to ten years I want to see myself in COSATU or ANC. So they are no longer representing our members at the branch level (sic).

As a reminder to the reader, I mentioned in the introduction of this chapter that SADTU is an affiliate of COSATU which has an alliance with the ANC. The submission by Monang seemingly implies that some union leaders joined the union with the hope of graduating to either COSATU or ANC. Monang argues that this will cause the union leaders to not represent ordinary union members at a branch level. This statement is in support of those participants who are calling for the union to withdraw from the alliance.

The data of this study was collected at the time when the 2015/2016 salary negotiations were underway. Mollo, one of the union members in the study relates to the deadlock in the salary negotiations when the government negotiators reduced the initial offer of 5.8% to 4.8%. She blamed the alliance for the employer reducing the offer. She elaborates further:

You see now, because of the alliance they are taking 4.8 % from the employer. May be they promised them something..... There is no need for this alliance; my view is that we need to have a union which represents workers apart from this department (sic).

The perception of this union member supports responses by Sebata and others who think that SADTU must discontinue the alliance with the ANC. The member perceives the union



leadership as not bargaining in good faith for the members. They responded that the union leadership may agree with the employer (ANC) without considering the interests of the union members.

The emerging findings from the responses of participants suggest that the union leadership is entrenched in the politics of individualism where union leaders cease to be the servants of the workers but see being elected into positions of leadership as an opportunity to network with those in the alliance and thus allowing them to access its resources.

Despite the call by some participants for SADTU to discontinue its alliance with the ANC, there were few participants in the study who felt that the alliance was necessary in order for the union to influence some decisions in policy formulation. Kwena, a union leader who has been with the union since 1993, confirms the need for the alliance by saying:

I joined the union so that we can advocate the policies of the ruling party and influence some of the decisions from the education fraternity (sic).

This explanation is partly in line with Amtaika's (2013:108) view that SADTU was established as the education wing of the ANC. There are two issues that emerge from the submission of Kwena. Firstly, SADTU may be in the alliance to influence policy formulation in the education sector. This implies that the union is helping the ANC to hear the voices of teachers' in education policy formulation. Secondly, the leadership is perceived to be advocating the policies developed by the ANC without the mandate of the union members

Reference can be made to curriculum changes in the country without proper consultation with educators who are expected to implement the new policies. This sentiment is reinforced by Serutle, a union member who complains that the department does not listen to educators. He blamed the government for changing the curriculum continuously but giving teachers little time to workshop on that new curriculum. Be that as it may be, Lebo is of the opinion that the alliance may help the union to win something for the teachers in bargaining chambers.



We are likely to win in most cases, like if we ask for something from our friend we will expect to get; that is the advantage in our counterpart. Whatever we say, they should be able to supply.

The view by Lebo implies that having an alliance will result in the union winning something. However, he is not clear what that might be. I suggest that having an alliance with the aim of winning something from the employer may create false hope for the members. The working force might turn against the leadership when they fail to win something from the employer. This in turn can also weaken the relationship between the union leaders and the members. The call to continue with the alliance was emphasised by another union leader in the study. He believes that alliance may be used to defend the democracy. He elaborates further:

It is very important for all of us in particular the educators to become the members of the ANC and SACP so that we are able to defend our democracy and our revolution (sic).

The explanation of Makonye's submission indicates that SADTU is acting as the political machine for the ANC. SADTU may be using its large membership to lobby support for the ruling party during elections. I discussed in the literature review how SADTU helped the ANC to win the first democratic elections in the country. It seems as if Makonye perceive the alliance as a tool to help the ANC to stay in power and therefore defend democracy. A sentiment corroborated by Kapama, another union leader in the study who argues that:

It is teachers and this union SADTU that together with other progressive movements like ANC, SACP, COSATU, NEHAWU and other unions which are very progressive to make sure that in all spheres and around the country people are educated so that we are having responsible people who are leading this country (sic).



The submission by this participant corroborates with the others made by Makonye, Lebo and Kwena, who submitted that the alliance is necessary to advocate the policies of the ruling party and help the ANC to educate the masses of South Africa. SADTU is the largest teachers' union in the country, which means that the majority of learners in South Africa are taught by members of SADTU. It may for this reason why some participants think teachers may help the ruling party to educate the people and have responsible citizens in the country.

4.4 CONCLUSION

The findings from the interviews with the union members and their leaders reveal that the SADTU's alliance with the ANC affects the relationship union members have with their leadership. An overwhelming number of participants allege that the alliance SADTU has with the ANC makes it difficult for the union leadership to focus on representing the interests of the union members.

The leadership is criticised for focussing on advancing their careers at the expense of ordinary union members. The leaders are alleged to use their union positions as a stepping stone to move to senior positions. Participants allege that the union leadership tend to agree with the employer on policy formulation without their (members) mandate. The call for the union to withdraw from the alliance was also made by most participants. The participants cite that the tripartite alliance has weakened the strength of SADTU. They argue that the alliance makes it difficult for SADTU leadership to contest the decisions of the government because it is their political friend. They think that SADTU leadership will be able to promote the interests of the members if they are independent from any political party.

However, there were other participants who felt that the alliance is necessary in the post-apartheid era to address the wellbeing of South African people and their welfare. The participants allege that teachers played a role in the formation of the ANC and should therefore continue to do so in the post-apartheid era. Moreover there are those



participants who think that the SADTU and ANC relationship is alive, strong and should be maintained in the post-apartheid period.

In summary, based on the majority of participants being against the alliance, the findings from the responses of the participants seem to support the literature I reviewed. It seems as if the strength of SADTU has declined because of the alliance. Participants perceive the union leadership as unable to promote the interests of the union members hence the call for the union to maintain its independence from any ruling party.



CHAPTER FIVE

5. LEADERS' INVOLVEMENT WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Govender (2004:267) says that “the change in the political landscape in South Africa allowed teachers’ unions to have a closer relationship with the government that they did before 1994”. The unions are represented in joint policy-making forums such as the ELRC and PSCBC. They also have two representatives each in the DBE, who are employed to ensure collaboration and sharing with the employer on behalf of the union members (Govender, *ibid*). In my problem statement, I stated that SADTU may be playing a dual role in these educational forums. The question asked was: is the union leadership speaking for or diverging from their members’ interests in these forums?

This chapter therefore aims to tell the story of how teachers perceive the role of branch union leadership in education forums. The chapter describes the partnership union leadership have with the department of education in the district. I have divided how leaders are perceived in their partnership with the department under the two sub headings. Firstly, the remuneration of teachers is discussed and then the participants’ responses on the involvement of union leadership in appointment and promotions of teachers will be explored.

5.2 REMUNERATION OF TEACHERS

The PSCBC was established in terms of section 35 of the Labour Relations Act, 1995 (LRA). Section 35 stipulates that “there will be a bargaining council for the public service as a whole, to be known as the Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council”. The leadership therefore bargains on behalf of its members on a number of issues such as remuneration of teachers.



A number of participants in the study perceive the union leadership as bargaining more on the side of the employer rather than representing the interests of the union members. On the other hand, there are those who are of the view that the union leadership plays a crucial role in the improvement of educators' salaries. Even though the branch union leadership is not directly involved in the salary negotiations in the PSCBC, the mandate of union members is assumed to begin at this level. It is against this background that I felt it is important to report on their (participants) perceptions as they emerged from the interviews. There are concerns raised by participants on how the leadership bargains for the remuneration of teachers. Mputle explains the feeling at the grassroots level:

As members at the grassroots, we have realised that immediately when they got into power our office – bearers become greedy. For an example, if we say they should negotiate for an increment and we say we want a two digit increment. They will go and negotiate looking after themselves and forgetting the members; the people who put them into the office (sic).

The concern by Mputle suggests that the union leaders have forgotten about the needs of the union members. Mputle accuses the union leadership of being greedy and focusing on their interests. This may imply that the union leadership is diverging from the members' interests in bargaining chambers. Lebo, a union leader in the study, said in his response about the concerns members have raised with the leadership:

Now members start to have doubts when we talk about the salary increase of the educators. The educators want the double digit salary but because of the economic system of our country, the union will sit around and discuss and talk about the CPI plus 1% and when the salary increment is to be effected on teachers, they get something like 5 % but when they go to media and listen to our political leaders in parliament, they find that those guys are given 15% increase and that is where comrades will start to say why is possible for this to get 15% and we are getting only 5% (sic).



The explanation by Lebo suggests that the union leaders may not be bargaining in good faith for their members. Lebo's submission is in support of Mputle's concern that the leaders are unable to get the percentage they were mandated to bargain for by their constituencies. This may imply that the union leaders are unable to promote the interests of union members. Kapama, another union leader describes the concerns of union members at the branch level. He states that:

There is a concern on the ground that is why people would love to see the SADTU divorced from COSATU. It is what the leadership in the higher offices are doing when negotiating on behalf of the masses because of these Curriculum Vitae that they are having. Twice members will go on strike and do not get what they demanded but rather docked for the no – work - no - pay that they were on industrial action. This says that at the certain level, we are not negotiating in a good faith for our people (sic).

There are two issues emerging from Kapama's submission. Firstly, the union leaders at a branch level are aware that the union members are not happy with SADTU being an affiliate of COSATU. This corroborates an earlier discussion in the previous chapter that SADTU must be independent from the alliance. Secondly, the union leadership is perceived to be negotiating in bad faith on behalf of the union members. It seems as if the leaders agree with the employer in bargaining chambers in return for deployment in senior positions within the government. A similar concern is shared by Noko, a union member who mentions the following:

When it comes to salary negotiations, we send a team to go and negotiate on our behalf. The very same members of the team; some of them when there is another round of salary negotiations; they are on the other side. So in this case, they will be negotiating on the behalf of the employer; that is something that is disturbing especially when coming to union matters because some of the leaders are not been honest to the members (sic).



The concern by Noko corroborates those raised by Mputle, Lebo and Kapama. It seems as if the leadership gets involved in bargaining chambers only to advance their careers. The leadership may have a hostile relationship with union members. According to Brimelow (2003:201) such leaders have lost the sight of the lofty feelings of the minions in the trenches who are paying their dues every month. I suggest that the union leadership may be promoting a culture of individualism, whereby the leaders stand to benefit for supporting the government wage offer against the will of the members.

In December 2012, the Department of Basic Education issued circular 117 announcing the end of rural allowances to teachers in remote, rural, poor and no-fee schools in the Limpopo province (www.ioi.co.za). Minister Angie Motshekga was quoted in the online newspaper saying that the dispute emanated from budget shortages in the province which resulted in some teachers receiving the subsidy and others not.

However, on 26 May 2013 (www.sanews.gov.za) reported that the DBE and SADTU have reached the agreement and that the department would withdraw circular 117, which Limpopo teachers were up in arms over and which relates to a rural allowance given to teachers. Despite the withdrawal of the circular, some participants point fingers to their union leadership on who gets the subsidy. Monang submits her concern:

Sekhukhune was declared a rural area by the then President Mr Thabo Mbeki, so teachers in Sekhukhune land were supposed to get what we call a rural allowance but it was not like that. Schools were hand-picked. Why can't they implement this rural allowance to all schools in Sekhukhune land because it was declared as poor of the poorest district? They (union leaders) are not telling them (employer) anything, they (leaders) want to protect their positions (sic).

The concern by Monang suggests that the union leadership may be causing division amongst the teachers. It seems as if there are teachers within the same district that is regarded as a rural area who are treated differently in terms of who is getting the rural allowance. There are teachers who are paid the subsidy while others are not receiving it. The concern on rural allowance is substantiated by Serutle. He states that:



The issue of rural allowance was not treated with honesty. They tell you that the lawyer is representing you but there are no court transcripts to show and there is no progress report from the lawyers (sic).

The submission by Serutle corroborates the concern raised by Monang who stresses that teachers are treated differently. Serutle perceives the union leaderships as not being honest with the union members. Mapheke thinks the dispute may be resolved if the union leadership up their game to influence the DBE in the entire district.

An article published in *The Sowetan* newspaper on 17 July 2015 captured a similar concern to that raised by participants with regard to the leaders not representing the union members in the structures established by the government. The head of the Presidential Remuneration Review Commission said that the union representatives had not written any submission to the commission (*Sowetan*, 2015:3). As a reminder to the reader, the commission was established by the President of South Africa to inquire into the remuneration and conditions of service for public servants, with the educators receiving priority. The concern by the commission's head is in line with what Nthavi is worried about. He laments that:

The structure where everyone is represented by a union, according to me it does not work because at the end members feel like that they have been failed because their mandate does not go their way. The employees become discouraged and they point fingers to people who represent them in negotiations (sic).

The explanation by this participant suggests that union leadership is failing to make positive inputs in the structures established by the government to improve the remunerations of educators. Although the deadline for submissions is looming, the various unions in the public sector have delayed their submissions. I assume SADTU as a public servants union may be amongst those who failed to make the submissions to the



commission by the time of finalising this dissertation. The union members at grassroots level may therefore not be actively involved in the decision-making process of the union. The top-down communication channel system adopted by the current union leadership is solely to be blamed in this case. According to SADTU's website (www.sadtu.org.za) the 8th national SADTU conference made a resolution to update union members with a cell phone message from the national office on the latest developments in salary negotiations. The national secretary of the union, Mr Maluleka was tasked with the responsibility of sending the messages to all the union members. A number of messages were sent to union members during the 2015/2016 salary negotiations. Moruti is concerned with the way the leaders communicate with the union members. He submits that:

When there is salary negotiations, I have not seen them coming back to the masses at the ground and ask them as before they agree, to say do you want us to sign or not. They tell us that they have already sign the deal without consulting with us first whether we take the percentage that the government is offering or not. So I am concerned and I believe that they should communicate with us more before they make those decisions (sic).

This expression by Moruti supports the concern by Nthavi. The union members may not be actively involved in decision-making process of the union. The mandates of the union members may not be taken into account by the union leadership. Therefore, the relationship between union members and their leadership may be a negative one, where members' interests are not promoted by the union leadership. The emerging findings from the responses of participants suggest that the leadership is diverging from the members' interests in the bargaining chambers.

On 02 June 2015, SADTU released a report which condemns Circular 1 of 2015 of the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) on the implementation of the salary adjustment for public service personnel (www.sadtu.org.za). In the circular the employer directed Departments to implement a 6.4% salary adjustment instead of the 7% which had been agreed to. In addition, the SADTU national secretary informed the union members through cell phone messages that the leadership intended to withdraw from the



entire agreement if DPSA failed to implement the 7% as the parties in the PSCBC agreed to on 19 May 2015. It may be against this backdrop that some participants perceived the union leadership to have won recent battles to increase the salaries of educators. Choene is of the opinion that the union leaders are bargaining in good faith for the members. He submits that:

Eya, even though currently the outcomes when coming to salary negotiations is not hundred % satisfying to the majority of the union members but anyway we are optimistic that one day things will go according to how we planned as members. The other thing that I also need to share with you is that our new teachers are reaping the very same rewards because if you look at the entry salary for an educator is very massive especially when you got into the system in the past five years. Those are the achievements of the very same union that we are talking about (sic).

The submission by this union member is in contrast with other participants in the study. He alleges that the union leadership is working collectively to promote the interests of the educators, especially the members of SADTU. The involvement of the union leadership in bargaining chambers may therefore be to the benefit of union members. The leadership is showing the principle of sacrifice and commitment for the good of the organisation and teachers at large. The support to leadership on the issue of remuneration was also made by Tau. Tau mentioned that members were concerned about poor remuneration but emphasised that the leadership was looking into the matter.

He elaborates further:

The issue of remuneration, I think the President has put in a place the committee to check as whether educators are paid appropriately or not. That is why we are saying that concern is at least given attention, then we will see the report the committee will give as soon as they report back to the cabinet in relation to the remuneration. I can just say, all these concerns are raised in ELRC and the department is eager to take care off such concerns (sic).



There is one issue that emerges from the explanation by this union leader. The concerns of union members in relation to poor remuneration are submitted in education forums established by the DBE. This may imply that the union leadership may be promoting the interests of the union members by forwarding those concerns with the relevant structures. Choene and Tau are optimistic that the poor salaries received by the educators will be addressed the government in future.

As I was finalising this dissertation, the public sector unions managed to convince the employer to implement the 7% that they agreed upon in the chambers. Teachers were paid the 0.6% that was not included in their June and July salaries respectively. SADTU as a major public sector union in the country appear to have influenced the employer to implement the agreement as signed in the PSCBC on 19 May 2015. This implies that they are speaking to promote the interests of the union members in educations forums.

Based on the submissions made by the participants in this section, it seems as if most participants perceive the union leadership as not promoting the interests of union members in the chambers. The leadership is perceived to be diverging from the members' interests and supporting the government wage offers against the members' mandates. The views and perceptions of participants were not limited to the involvement of union leadership in the remunerations of teachers. Other participants raised their views about the involvement of leadership on the appointment and promotions of teachers, which I will discuss next.

5.3 APPOINTMENTS AND PROMOTIONS

In South Africa, the appointment and promotion of teachers is regulated by Employment of Educators Act (EEA) of 1998. Chapter 3 of EEA of 1998 stipulates that “any appointment or promotion to any post in the educator establishment may only be made on the recommendation of the governing body of the public school, if there are educators in the provincial department of education concerned who are in excess of educator establishment of a public school due to operational requirements, that recommendation



may only be made from candidates identified by the Head of Department (HOD), who are in excess and suitable for the post”.

In this section of the dissertation, I discuss the responses of participants on the role branch union leadership plays in terms of appointments and promotions of teachers at grassroots level. On one hand, some union leaders claim to assist the Department of Basic Education in appointments and the promotion of teachers. On the other hand, the analysis of the interviews I had with the union members and union leaders reveals that the union leadership tend to influence the final decision on who gets appointed or promoted. I first report on participants who perceive the union leadership as supporting the DBE on appointments and promotions of teachers, and then on those participants who allege that the union leadership is using its alliance with the ruling party to get senior positions is discussed.

Kwena describes the bilateral partnership with the DBE at grassroots level. In his response when asked how he will describe the partnership the Branch Executive Council has with the DBE, he said:

At the branch level where I am operating we have Circuit Task Teams (CTT), where the branch secretary and chairperson sit with the circuit managers and some of the representatives from the principals within the circuit to discuss the deployment of teachers.

This submission of Kwena, who is a union leader, suggests that the union leadership is working collectively with the DBE on appointment and promotions of teachers at grassroots level.

It seems as if the union leaders are involved in resolving the disputes that may arise during the appointment and promotion of teachers. I therefore suggest that their involvement with the DBE on appointment and promotion is to the benefit of union members. This may create a positive relationship between the union and their constituency. Another union leader (Makonye) explains the role of union leadership in



addressing challenges experienced by teachers when it comes to appointments and promotions:

I have received complaints from educators who are supposed to be placed in certain schools and the principals refused to absorb them. At the branch level; we communicate with the circuit manager to address such matters and if we cannot find each other with the circuit manager; we will take the matter to our regional full-time shop steward who will take the matter to the district (sic).

The intention by the union leadership to address the concerns of educators who struggle to get permanent appointments suggests that the union leaders may be promoting the interests of teachers who are union members. Makonye substantiate the role of union leaders described by Kwena. The union leadership may be speaking collectively on behalf of union members in education forums such as CTT. The effort to get educators in permanent posts in DBE is articulated by Lebo, a union leader who participated in the study.

Normally when I have the meeting with the principals I advise them that once they hire a temporary teacher on a promotional posts, when his/ her contract is about to be terminated rather negotiate with another principal in another school where there is a substantive post so that you move this comrade to a substantive post so that this comrade could be permanent (sic).

The explanation by this union leader suggests that the union leaders may be able to influence the principals (employer) to appoint teachers in permanent positions. In doing so, the union leadership will therefore be promoting the interests of the union members. This may build a collective relationship between union leaders and their members.

This is however contrary to Chapter 3 of EEA OF 1998 that I mentioned in the opening of this section. It is the responsibility of the school governing bodies to recommend the appointment and promotions of teachers in schools. Zengele (2013:88-94) alleges that “cadre deployment in South Africa has led to the situation of the emergence of a new type



of educational manager whose main criteria for promotion is not suitable qualification but readiness to lead political connectedness and affiliation to a particular teacher union". This is the allegation that was shared by most participants who perceived the union leadership as joining unions and politics to advance their careers. Kapama explains:

We find that many of our leaders, even on the ground, not only in the higher offices saying in order for you to go up there you must brush shoulders with people in the top office. People will then say I am joining the union in order to see myself there in a national office. I am joining politics in order to be deployed in municipality, forgetting that our intent was to make sure that people on the ground are well taken care off and this careerism thing is becoming even worse (sic).

The perception of this union leader suggests that the union leaders are joining the union to advance their own careers. The union members may be contesting for positions of leadership in an effort to increase their chances of been appointed or promoted into senior positions in DBE and other structures of government. The participant argues that the interests of the members on the ground may be compromised because of careerism. This argument is corroborated by Choene who contends that:

We don't know who is a dedicated cadre or who is pushing his own selfish interests. You find that a person is extremely vocal, familiar with how the union operates, knows how to interpret the policies of the union but at the end of the day; deep in his heart or mind, the very same individual knows that he is having curriculum vitae under his armpit.

Eya, he knows that if that particular circuit manager vacates the post, he is eyeing it. Then whenever, you are fighting for comrades eyeing something then your fight is illegitimate (sic).

This explanation by Choene, a union member, may mean that the members have lost trust in their leadership to promote the interests of ordinary union members. This corroborates

the argument of Kapama who submitted that leaders join the union to advance their careers. It seems as if participants have doubts on their leadership's capacity to advance the union members' interests. This doubt on whether union leadership can serve the interests of rank-and-file members is also shared by Nthavi, who submits that:

I think that certain leaders are there to lead but at one stage; they want to secure their future. Their needs may be the recognition at that political party so that at one stage they will get a position; so that is why at the end you find other members feeling that they were sold out (sic).

The emerging issue from the explanation by this participant may be that leaders use their political alliance with the ANC to get senior positions in either DBE or other government structures. This is in line with Zengele's (2013:88-94) submission that undue involvement of unions during the filling of promotional posts seems to be rife and spreading. The participants therefore seem to perceive their leaders as not promoting the interests of union members but few individual leaders. Mputle agrees with Nthavi that some leaders are eyeing senior positions in DBE rather than representing the workers. This is how she described the role of union leadership in the district:

I can say they are now redundant because they are just in the middle. They do not know whether to support the government or to support the members who put them into the office. These people are afraid to voice our views. They are not telling those people what we want at the grassroots level. The reason being they are eyeing for promotions. In other words, I can say our leaders are now sell-outs, they are just selling us out (sic).

The submission by this participant discloses that the mandates of members are not carried out by the union leadership when they negotiate with government officials. It seems as if the strength of the unions to negotiate in good faith on behalf of the members has been compromised by the new trend on leaders advancing their interests. The alleged focus by union leaders on getting senior positions in the DBE might have caused strain on the relationship the union members have with their leadership. The leadership is perceived to



be selling-out union members in an effort to strengthen their (leaders) chances of career mobility. The submission made by Mputle is supported by Leilane, who states that:

You will see people losing interests in what they knew to be represented because you will obviously not representing them well since you shall be having your curriculum vitae when talking to the government officials. You will not want to be seen going against those who are going against the workforce but will love to be seen as a leader who is understanding and once you are understanding; it means the interests of the workers are been compromised by your own selfish individual interests (sic).

Leilane's view supports the allegations made by Kapama, Choene, Nthavi and Mputle against the union leadership focussing on getting senior positions in DBE. The emerging findings from these participants are in agreement with the literature I reviewed. It seems as if the trend of cadre deployment is also applicable at grassroots level. However, at grassroots level, the union leadership is perceived to use their alliance with the ruling party to advance their careers. I contend that this may cause tension amongst the union members as only few individuals will be deployed. In addition the strength of the union may also decline. Another voice of dissent against the role of union leadership in appointment and promotion of teachers is that of Noko:

Unions normally send their representatives to attend interviews for appointments but in many cases they tend to try to influence the final decisions. They use their muscle against the deciding teams, leaving members doubting their leading role (sic).

There are two issues emerging from Noko's submission. Firstly, Noko is aware that the unions must attend the interviews as prescribed in EEA of 1998. The Act states that the unions may attend the selection process and interviews as observers. Secondly, he perceives the union leadership as using their power to influence the decisions. The largest teachers union in South Africa is SADTU in terms of its membership. The allegation

against SADTU at this level implies that the members may doubt the involvement of SADTU in EEA implementation.

In summary, it seems as if the majority of participants are concerned by the involvement of SADTU in the appointment and promotion of teachers at grassroots level. Participants perceive the union leadership as not negotiating in good faith on behalf of the members. Allegations that the union leadership is advancing their careers in the partnership they have with the employer outweighs the submissions that the union leadership represents disgruntled permanent teachers at the DBE. This may mean that the union leadership is diverging from the members' interests in bargaining chambers.

5.4 CONCLUSION

The focus of this chapter was to understand the partnership union leadership have with the DBE. An overwhelming number of participants perceived the union leadership as not bargaining in good faith on behalf of the union members. It is alleged that the focus of the union leadership on advancing their careers and getting senior positions in government has undermined the strength of the union to promote the interests of union members. The leadership is perceived to have forgotten about the members who put them into the office.

On the other side, there were few participants who felt that the union leadership is actually promoting the interests of union members. The unions' effort on improving the salaries of teachers was raised as a sign of how the leaders are bargaining positively on behalf of union members. The effort by the union leaders to help teachers get permanent posts was also given as a testimony that leadership is promoting the interests of teachers, especially those who are union members. Be that as may be, based on most participants perceiving the union leaders as not bargaining in good faith, I argue that the leadership is diverging from the members interests in bargaining chambers.



CHAPTER SIX

UNION ACTIVITIES

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I discuss the activities and programmes that union leadership organise for their members. The chapter answers the research question: What roles do teachers play in union decision-making and activities? The chapter is divided into the number of activities that union leaders are supposed to organise for the members at the branch level as per SADTU Constitution as amended in 2010.

The chapter focuses on four sub-themes that emerged from the analysis, namely: the union meetings, health awareness, sport activities and dispute management. I will conclude the chapter by discussing whether teachers actually play a role in union activities and decision-making. The sub-themes have been selected based on the interviews with the union members and union leaders.

6.2 UNION MEETINGS

According to the Constitution of SADTU of 2010, there are a number of meetings which the branch leadership is supposed to organise. The main aim of these meetings is to communicate the decisions and policies of the union to its members. In this section of the dissertation, I will discuss the three main meetings that are supposed to be organised at branch level as they emerged from the interviews. Tau explains how they are supposed to organise the meetings at branch level:

*As a union, we are expected to organise structural meetings. The structural meetings are as follows: we have branch executive meetings, we have site council meetings, which we call Site Steward Council (**SSC**) meetings, we have to organise branch mass meetings. In these meetings, what is expected from us*



is to ensure that we update our members on issues relating to the union but we are not a stereotyped union. For instance, if the education department is changing any rule or is coming up with something new, it is our responsibility as union leaders to ensure that our members are also put on board in relation to what is to be implemented in the education department (sic).

This explanation suggests that this union leader is aware that they (union leaders) are supposed to organise union meetings at branch level as stipulated in the Constitution of the union. It is assumed that it is during these meetings that teachers, as the members of the union, should play a role in decision-making. I will therefore discuss whether the teachers do indeed play a role in decision-making. I begin my presentation on the meetings organised at site level. In the context of this study, sites are the schools which have union members and union leaders belonging to SADTU.

6.2.1 Site meetings

In South Africa, SADTU is alleged to be the only teachers' union which is characterised by shop-steward unionism (Dlamini, Smit & Loock; 2014:218). This view is reinforced by (Southall & Webster, 2010:137) who submit that "SADTU is characterised as a shop-floor union because the union, just like other unions affiliated to COSATU, developed its own democratic structures around the principle of worker control, accountability and the mandating of worker representative".

A central practice of shop-steward unionism is "to receive and attend to complaints of workers concerning their employment and where necessary to report such complaints to the BEC" (SADTU Constitution, 2010:12). Furthermore, site-steward unionism allow branch union leaders to communicate the decisions and policies of the union to members (SADTU Constitution, *ibid*).

In order for this doctrine to work for the unions, the union leadership is supposed to organise meetings at the workers stations, which are called site meetings. Although the SADTU Constitution emphasises the need for site meetings, the data analysis of the



interviews I had with the union members and union leadership belonging to SADTU tells a different story. The responses from a number of participants reveal that there are some challenges when site meetings are to be organised. These challenges relates to permission from the school management team and the capacity of site steward leadership. Kapama elaborates:

Eya, on sites union members must meet more often to update each other (union members) on matters of the union, new policies to be implemented and to look into other issues that affect them at their work. So principals sometimes deny them to say no, you will have the meeting during lunch forgetting that these are Constitutional rights to participate in union activities (sic).

There are a number of issues emerging from the explanation by Kapama. Firstly, the union leadership seems to be aware that they have to report back to their members at the branch level on new developments in union activities and government policies. On the other hand, it appears as if the union leaders are not aware that union activities must not disrupt teaching and learning. It seems as if the principals are doing the right thing by denying the leaders request to organise the meetings during normal teaching time. This implies that the leadership may be lacking the knowledge on how and when to organise the meetings at this level. Lebo thinks that the lack of meetings between the school management team and the leaders is the cause of the union members not to get a chance to be involved in union activities. He states that:

The site committee and the school management team (SMT) do not have regular meetings. Now that if a site committee and the school management team do not sit around to discuss issues that affect them at their school. It is where you normally have a problem with the membership because the site structure of the school has to have bilateral with the SMT. The site structure must first meet with the teachers so that teachers could voice out what is not done well in a particular school, then the site steward will start to resolve the issues at sites; then when they are unable to resolve those issues at the site level, it is then that matters could be brought to the branch (sic).



The explanation from this union leader suggests that the union members do not get enough opportunities to participate in union activities at school level. The poor organisations of site meetings may widen the gap between the union and the members as argued in the literature by Brimelow (2003) and Henderson *et al.* (2004). Teachers as members of the union appear to be less informed on the latest developments in the education system.

Union members rely on their leadership to report on the new developments in policy formulation in the education system. Therefore, the responses from the participants may agree with the literature that teachers are less informed in union activities, therefore the gap between the union leaders and the membership has widened. I suggest that union leaders should organise the meetings at the time that does not cause the disruption of classes. This may reduce power contestation between the school management team and the union leaders. In addition, it may also give union members a chance to be actively involved in union activities. Kwena, a union leader elaborates on the challenges posed by organising members at the school level.

Mmmm we use to have what we call site meetings. The SADTU Constitution is very clear; you must have a site meeting once per month but I am not saying those meetings are taking place because there is a contestation or fear by some principals which will try very hard to make sure that that those meetings do not take place. That is why we still need to educate our site stewards or capacitate them because some of them are still fearful of their principals (sic).

The above explanation suggests that union leaders find it hard to organise the union members at branch level. Besides the difficulty experienced by the union in getting permission from the school management, the capacity of the union leadership to lead the structure at the site is also questionable. Kwena cites that the leaders at the site need to be educated. It seems as the union leaders and the principals do not have a healthy relationship at the site. This may have spread to teachers hence the site stewards finding

it hard to organise at this level. However, Sebata acknowledges that union leaders do organise meetings at the site level. He describes what occupies most of their time:

Meetings meetings, they do take our time. Internally we have teachers who are problematic, they will come late to school on Monday, they will take leave without permission of the school manager (principal), some will not mark all the scripts of the learners which is a misconduct, so that takes our time, we have to deal with those issues (sic).

There is one issue that emerge from the contending submissions by the participants. The union leadership do organise site meetings but only when there is a dispute to resolve at the sites. This means that the union members do get involved in union activities when they are in trouble. This explanation relates to Masenya's (2013:107) study in Gauteng which revealed that SADTU is seen to be protecting their members even if they are guilty of misconduct. Some union members are alleged to join the union just to be on the safe side of the law. This is corroborated by Moruti who submits that:

He was recruited to join the union so that when there is a dispute, the union will be able to protect him.

The findings on the responses from the participants and the literature seem to agree with the working assumption that SADTU promotes the interests of their members. The organising of site meetings when there is a dispute at the workplace may be assumed to be protection of the members. The discussion on dispute management by the union leadership is addressed in more detail later.

6.2.2 Site Steward Council (SSC) meetings

The activities of the unions and other organisations are guided by their Constitutions. In the case of Site Steward Council (SCC), the Constitution of SADTU stipulates that 'meetings of the SSC shall take place on dates and times fixed by the chairperson and



secretary, or insofar as practicable, in conjunction with other members of the Branch Executive Council' (SADTU Constitution, 2010:14).

The functions and powers of the SSC in a branch shall include:

- a. Disciplining members including the suspension or expulsion of members for conduct detrimental to the interests of the union and its members.
- b. Ratifying, amending or reversing any decision of the BEC.
- c. Attending to the grievances of members and disputes that might arise both amongst members and with the educational authorities.
- d. Reporting to members on the policies, decisions and activities of the union.
- e. Giving effect to the policies and decisions adopted by the union at regional, provincial and national level.
- f. Ensuring compliance by members with the aims and objects of the Constitution.

From the analysis of the data, it seems as if the union leaders are aware of some of the functions and powers of the SSC in the branch. Kwena, when asked how members understand the role of union leadership in the district, explains:

In order for them to understand our roles as their leaders, we usually call what we call SSC, we call them Site Steward Council meetings, where all the site stewards from each school or each sites meet together with the (BEC) Branch Executive Committee members and that is where we teach them or empower them about their roles so as that when they encounter a problem at their site, if they can't resolve those problems they must elevate them to the Branch level and we teach them about the procedures so I am confident that our members understand the role of SADTU that is why in every working station or in most of the schools if as a manager you are not following the procedures teachers will tell you from point blank that they will inform their union (sic).

The explanation of this union leader suggests that the union focuses on attending to the grievances of members and disputes that arise at schools. The focus of SADTU on such issues may be linked to the argument made by Zengele (2013:88 - 94) who argues that



“SADTU has taken over the control of South African education system by influencing the appointment of school managers”. This may lead to managers agreeing to SADTU terms to protect their new positions.

However, the focus of the SSC on resolving disputes at schools is not welcomed by some of its own members. Mollo explains:

I can't say there is a relationship as such because the only time when we see them is when there is a grievance that is taking place but I don't think that is a relationship as such. I feel like they are working but not working with what I feel should be concerned with the law, because most of the time they are working with cases that colleagues they have put themselves into problems and they are not concerned a lot with the core business that teachers should be doing (sic).

The argument by this union member suggests that members are not actively involved in union activities except when there is a case to be resolved by the leadership. He, however acknowledge that union leaders do organise the relevant meetings. It seems as if most of the meetings organised at lower level focus on grievances of the members. The intention of organising members at this level is done in effort to discuss matters of common interests of the members. The union leaders argue that they do organise other SSC meetings to look in the interests of the entire membership of the union. Leilane names other meetings organised by the SSC:

In most cases for example, when we talk about education portfolio, there is a committee, that is composed of site stewards who attend that portfolio. In a gender portfolio, there are also site stewards who attend the gender portfolio meeting. In a political education, we used to attend a provincial shop steward whereby we invite all shop stewards to attend that political meeting. In other words, there is an involvement of the entire membership so that those site stewards who have attended a workshop they cascade the information to the grassroots so that members are getting the information (sic).



The explanation by this union leader shows that the union organises its meetings so that they are linked to each other. Site stewards who attend SSC meetings are expected to report back to their constituencies. In addition, the meetings organised at site level are expected to involve rank-and-file members so that they can give their inputs on union activities. Be that as it may be, based on the collected data from the union members and the union leaders, there is less evidence that teachers do play a role in decision-making and union activities at the branch level. Another structural meeting worth mentioning in this dissertation is discussed in the next section.

6.2.3 Branch meetings

The challenge of organising meetings by union leadership is not only limited to SADTU sites, some participants feel that there are problems with attendance of the branch meetings. Union members are of the opinion that meetings should be brought forward to an earlier time to accommodate everyone, but the leadership thinks the increase in the number of commuters has led to the drop in meeting attendance. Tlake emphasises the need for branch meetings:

The branch meetings are to be organised once per every term. In the period under the study, the branch has been able to hold Constitutional meetings of the BEC and branch general meetings (sic).

Despite the ability of the branch union leadership to organise the meetings as described by the union leader, the attendance to those branch meetings were poor. Mollo explains what may be leading to poor attendance by union members to some activities organised by the branch leadership. He alleges that:

The members see the early knock-off as a bail out to go home early. It is their benefit but learners are suffering (sic).



The explanation by this union member suggests that the union members use time for union activities for their personal interests. This may send a negative message to the public that teachers are abandoning classes to attend to their own needs. The image of the union may also be dented as the public may perceive the union members as ignoring the future of their children.

Noko adds to what may be the cause of poor attendance and also give suggestions to solve the problem.

I think the first thing that they should do is for them to schedule the meetings at the time when is convenient for most of us because you find that normally when they call the meeting; meeting will be at 1 o'clock and then at 2 o'clock most teachers they use common transport and they want leave. So even those who want to be there could not make alternatives arrangements as far as transport and other logistics are concerned in advance. So if they can tell us a week in advance or two weeks in advance 'here is the approval from the district office for such date which is in two weeks to come' then we can come to meetings.

The suggestion by this union member is in line with the SADTU Constitution which stipulates that "a branch mass meeting may only be called on through written notice to members of the date, time, place and business of the meeting at least seven days prior to the date of the meeting". The emerging issue from this suggestion is that the union leadership is issuing circulars for branch mass meetings at the eleventh hour, leading to poor attendance by the union members. Some union leaders think the issue of members' commute might be having an impact on poor attendance of union activities. Tau elaborates further:

I think we are a branch which is not the same with other branches. We see much of our members commuting between the provinces. Comrades who are working in our province as Limpopo who are living in Gauteng; some are living in Mpumalanga and every time there is supposed to be a union activity; comrades will find that as an opportunity to be home earlier than usual and if



you look at the number of those who are commuting it is indeed a huge number and then you will find some union activities not be well represented (sic).

Mannah and Lewis (2008:192 cited in Compton and Weiner 2008) warned that it will be pointless for SADTU to continue to operate in its 1990's style. This warning may be suitable to explain why some of the union activities are not well attended. One may ask: why SADTU does not devise some means to accommodate their members who are commuting? It seems as if teachers who used to reside near their working areas are now travelling to and from work. I argue that if the suggestion of Noko is taken into consideration, it might resolve the decline of teacher unionism in the branch. The issue of commuters was also raised by Lebo, who mentions that:

We still have a problem with teachers who are commuting, commuters feel isolated because these activities are performed after hours and some of our teachers by that time they will want to go back home (sic).

The explanation by the union leader suggests that the leadership may be failing to organise activities in such a way that it will accommodate all the members. It seems as if commuters feel isolated because the activities are being organised at a time when they are supposed to go back home. Despite the challenge of teachers who are commuting, Serutle blames the alliance on the decline of SADTU in the branch. He explains:

The union has some sort of relationship with government and that is what makes members sometimes not be able to like the union. They think the union is selling membership to government and that is where we normally have comrades having some doubts to say why things are done like these at the national level, at provincial level and when we are not really involved in those particular decision-making (sic).

In the post-apartheid era, SADTU has formed part of the alliance through the umbrella body COSATU (Amtaika, 2013:108). What may be worrying to the members are the terms of the partnership? The explanation by Serutle suggests that the members at grassroots

level are less involved in the decision-making of the union. It seems as if the majority of decisions made by SADTU are made by the upper structures of the union. The initiative by the National Secretary- General of SADTU to update union members through text messages is a testimony to this argument. The union at branch level is alleged to focus more on other activities such as dispute management which, I will discuss next.

6.3 DISPUTE MANAGEMENT

The relationship between union leaders and union members at branch level is defined by the role played by the unions on behalf of its members. The leadership is assumed to be in a position to carry out the functions and powers delegated to them as per the SADTU Constitution as amended in 2010. The SADTU Constitution stipulates that the leadership must attend to the grievances of members and disputes that might arise both amongst the members and with the educational authorities. Most union leaders appear to be carrying out this function. In their response to what occupies most of their time, their stories paint the same picture. Kwena elaborates:

We are ever busy boss and we are always or almost two or three time a week out of the school to go and deal with these labour issues ... labour issues from various workstations where you find that there are disputes between teachers and their immediate supervisors that is their managers (sic).

Kwena's submission implies that the union leadership spend most of its time dealing with disputes at the branch level. This is in line with the unions' Constitution which stipulates that the "union leadership must attend to grievances of members and disputes that may arise both amongst members and with education authorities". Sebata elaborates how the process unfolds when there is a dispute or crisis to resolve at the branch level:

We will ask the secretary of the site to write a letter to the branch whereby we invite the branch leadership to intervene and we sit as panel of the site and a branch leadership with the teacher concern and a manager who is the principal,



whereby we listen to the side of a manager and a union member which is a teacher and come with a suitable solution for both of them.

The explanations suggest that union leaders and members work collectively when there is a dispute at SADTU sites. It seems as if they are aware that they should attend to disputes in schools as per their constitution. This may imply that the relationship between union leaders and the members is one of collectivism. The findings of this explanation seem to be in support of the researcher's working assumption that union leadership may be perceived as promoting the interests of the teachers and the education system. The disputes or crises that branch union leadership deals with are not limited within the schools. The Branch Executive Committee also has bilateral meetings with the circuit managers within the district to arrest crises when they arise. Lebo explains the role of the unions in the bilateral:

We have actually agreed that we have bilateral meetings, where we are discussing problems that affect different schools because the site stewards are managing schools at their sites. When they have a problem, they will write to me; so I will go through their submissions; then areas that needs the attention of the circuit manager; will be forwarded to the manager. To say circuit manager; let's have bilateral talks, there are problems in school A, school B or school C and together we sit and see how we can assist that school.

Tlake expresses the role of branch leadership in fighting for teachers interests in this way:

The branch that I am attached to is so powerful, if it comes to a push they fight been a branch on its own. Like the time when we were fighting for temporary teachers that are now often been prolonged not been absorbed in the system; not been paid. We stood alone as a branch ... Moutse-East and fight for that and that gave birth to a resolution which was taken to say all temporary teachers who were having four years in the system should be absorbed without even going for interviews (sic).



The views by the two union leaders suggest that the union leaders are actually promoting the interests of teachers and the education system. The views from the participants seem to disagree with the scholars' arguments. The participants seem to confirm the researcher working assumption that participants may perceive the union leadership as promoting the interests of union members. Based on these submissions, the researcher therefore assumes that there may be a cordial relationship between union leaders and the members. SADTU branch leadership may be promoting the interests of union members, hence the growth of the union.

Despite the involvement of branch union leadership in resolving disputes at the schools, some union leaders express that they follow protocol and do not hijack the running of schools, but only get involved when the site leadership is experiencing some challenges. Tau elaborates further:

The members of the executive committee will only be involved when the site leadership at the level of the school are having challenges in terms of resolving that particular problem. We will always tell them of the protocol, because we also have a protocol in a union. Issues are not only brought to us as just like that; there is a procedure that has to be adhered to in terms of bringing the issues to the executive committee.

This explanation suggests that the union leaders only intervene per invite as described earlier by Lebo. The leadership may not be disrupting teaching and learning. Their focus may only be on promoting the interests of the union members. In contrary, Moruti argues that that the leaders are protecting some teachers even if they are guilty of misconduct:

They are only concern with labour disputes most of the time, that's what they are doing and I don't remember the union saying let us come with an attempt that let schools have textbooks, I don't remember them coming with initiatives that says this is what we can do to over curb overcrowding in our schools. The only time that they are active is when there is a labour dispute or a former colleague is in trouble that is when you get to see or hear about them (sic).

Nthavi shares similar view:

Ahh, in most cases if you don't have any crisis at work or a dispute you don't just feel like you are a union member (sic).

Two issues emerge from the participants' views. Firstly, union members may continue to have a relationship with the union because they know the union will protect them (union members). This will result in the union remaining strong in terms of membership as claimed by the national president. Secondly, the union members may be misinterpreting the role of union leadership. It seems as if members want their leadership when there is a crisis and leadership may be lacking the capacity to engage members fully on their role

6.4 HEALTH AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

According to the press statement published on the *Educators Voice* on 01 May 2011, "SADTU has directly experienced and witnessed the effects of the HIV pandemic amongst its members and community through its daily interaction with the learners in the workplace in a manner that they could not look away, but continue to find ways to act to reduce its impact". It is the researchers' view that it is against this background that SADTU raises health awareness for its members at the branch level.

A number of participants in the study mention that the Branch union leadership organise campaigns to raise health awareness for the members. It was during the thorough analysis of the collected data from the interviews that the HIV/AIDS awareness programme emerged as the main focus of the branch in their fight against the stigma and discrimination on those infected and affected by the virus. Mollo elaborates:

In most cases the leadership on the site or cluster level, they go with burning issues that are on the calendar for instances especially when there is awareness on HIV/AIDS campaign nationally; even the union they also cover



those campaigns. They organise workshops to educate or create awareness to teachers.

But the only one that I am definitely sure, that it is on the calendar is HIV/AIDS. Nationally when they create awareness they are also able to create awareness at the branch level (sic).

Other union members are also aware of the health awareness campaigns by the Branch union leadership, but they were not certain of what actually happens during those campaigns. Modupe shares his views:

They also help in HIV/AIDS awareness and other important dates on the calendar but I don't have enough information on them.

Monang mentions another campaign:

There was a campaign sometimes last year whereby male comrades were advised to go for circumcision at the hospital.

The emerging issue from the explanations by the union members suggest that the branch union leadership commemorate World AIDS Day on December 1 to honour those living with HIV/AIDS, their families, their friends, caregivers and communities who support them as well as those who have lost their lives to AIDS. The organising of health issue activities for the union members implies that the leaders are working collectively to promote the interests of members. The responses from the participants confirm the researcher's working assumption that participants may perceive the union leadership as promoting the interests of teachers and education system.

The HIV awareness campaign by the union leadership may increase the educators' knowledge about the disease and therefore curb the spread of the pandemic. The involvement of the union on such campaigns suggests that the union leadership shares a positive relationship with their members irrespective of their status, hence the growth of



the union. Sebata explains what they do during the Candle Light Ceremony as the campaign is called by the union:

We have Candle Light Ceremony. We remember people who died in the past because of the disease of HIV/AIDS. Eya... we remember them and we tell our members about the virus and we also encourage them to go to the nearest clinic to test whether they are positive or not. In short we are trying to make them aware of the virus and support them (sic).

The view of this union leader is in line with the SADTU intervention programme established in 2005 (*Educators' Voice*, 2011:6). SADTU established the intervention programme, whereby 12 000 SADTU educators were trained in a five day HIV awareness programme as peer educators on stigma and discrimination (*Educators' Voice*, *ibid*). At the time of finalising this dissertation, SADTU published its HIV and AIDS objectives in its 2015 dairy distributed to its members. The union aims to provide members with information and skills enabling them to make healthy choices about their lifestyles, to maximise their wellness and access to health and treatment services early to promote a better life for all.

The programme was launched based on the findings of the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) in 2005 which suggested that about 12 000 educators were living with the virus in South Africa. In addition, SADTU as an affiliate to both COSATU and Education International (EI) continues to commit itself to mobilise its members in support of global campaigns to defeat HIV/AIDS. In their effort to reach their aims, the union has established the gender desk that is responsible for all health issues affecting their members. Mapheke lists other health issues organised by the gender desk at the branch level:

Normally in Gender Committee (GENCOM), we have programmes where we address issues that affect men and address issues on illness; your sugar diabetes and your breast cancer. We invite other people from health to deal with some of the things that affect health of our members (sic).



Leilane who heads the GENCOM in the branch mentions other programmes under her desk:

Union also organise gender based issues, the women celebration, HIV/AIDS day and then during that day nurses will be organised so that one could go and test for different diseases. All the chronic diseases, be it sugar, be it high blood and be it HIV but with this one (HIV/AIDS) it is still an issue and a challenge. Men do not want to go and test. They will tell you we will rather survive like we are now. We do not want to know our status. Much ratio that goes and test is normally experienced at the side of women (sic).

It seems as if the involvement of the union on health awareness issues is yielding positive results in the reduction of the prevalence of the virus in the country. South Africa's third national HIV prevalence, incidence and communication survey in 2012 has found that there is a decline by 35% in the 15-49 age groups. The study also revealed that there is high number of the working class in the country which fall within this age group. The findings from the responses of the participants and the scholarly survey seem to support the working assumption of the researcher which states that participants may perceive the union leadership as promoting the interests of teachers and education system, hence the positive relationship between the union leadership and the members.

6.5 SPORT ACTIVITIES

According to pillar number one of the SADTU 2030 vision, the union intends to prioritise member service with member wellbeing being one of the ways in which this can be achieved (*SADTU Dairy*, 2015:7). The national general secretary of the union Mr Mugwena Maluleka says that getting the union members involved in physical activities can go a long way towards a healthy lifestyle (*SADTU Dairy*, *ibid*). It seems as if it is against this backdrop that the union organise sport activities for its members at the branch level. There is convergence in participants' responses. The union leaders and union members disclose that the branch leadership organise sport activities for the members.



'We do have a sport activity; where we invite other sites to participate in sport' (Sebata). Lebo says, 'We organise sport as you can see around here, we normally have our teachers playing games up to provincial level'.

Noko in her response on activities organised by the branch leadership, said *'the second activity is all about sport where they encourage educators to exercise to reduce the level of stress as you know learners causes a lot of stress for teachers'*. Mpoti said, *'...they normally have soccer matches'*.

However, few union members allege that the branch union leadership no longer organises sport activities like they (leadership) used to do in the past. Mputle explains, *'...there was also this sporting activity that the organisation was organising. In the past three years, I did not see those sporting activities that they were doing before'*. Kgobane states *'there are no more activities organised for the members'*.

The explanations by the participants suggest that the branch union leadership do organise sporting activities for the union members. The branch leadership show the principle of sacrifice and commitment for the good of the organisation and teachers at large (Kudumo, 2011:160). The responses from the participants may therefore be in support of the researcher's working assumption that the branch leadership may be perceived as promoting the interests of the members. It seems as there is a healthy relationship between union leaders and the members.

A number of participants mention the benefits of sport activities organised by the branch leadership. Leilane explained, *'...we organise sport activities so that we keep our comrades physically active. Most of our teachers are old and we need to keep exercising'*. Sebata replied *'we have realised that a sport is a culture so what we are doing we are using soccer as an activity on getting together. It benefits our members on the side of health'*. Serutle said, *'...the sport one for me like I said, they are very good because they help us come conscious about our health and make us want to be fit'. 'I think it has to do*



with refreshing our mind because a mind is something that needs to be refreshed more especially when one work hard and another is part of exercising' Modupe responded.

On the other hand, there was one union member who felt that there is no connection between branch union leadership and members because of lack of sport activities. Mollo elaborates, '*...you know connectivity is wanted. It brings people together. When you meet every now and then; you feel now that you belong together and you are one and the same but for now there is nothing that can make you really join the union'*.

Despite the voice of dissent by this union member, it is my view that the explanations by the participants shows that the branch union leadership is promoting the interest of its members. The submissions by most participants that the sport activities organised have health benefits, may be testimony to my contention.

On the other hand, participants allege that the sporting activities are poorly attended by union members. Monang explains:

The sport day I have to say as much as they were fun for some of us; the attendance was very poor. Most of the colleagues do not bother to come there and we have about 30 or so teachers being there except those who are playing and others they normally see it as time off (sic).

Kapama describes what might be the cause of poor attendance in sporting activities:

This activities are performed after hours and some of our teachers by that time they will want to go back home. So you will not guarantee that you will do it 100% for the members but it is in our interests that all the members should exercise so that they can stay long on the system (sic).

There is one issue emerging from the submission of these participants. It seems as if not all the teachers are actively involved in sporting activities. This may imply that the branch leadership is failing to organise the sport activities in such a way that they will benefit all



the union members. Therefore, the responses by the participants may be disagreeing with the researchers' working assumption that participants may perceive the union leadership as promoting the interest of teachers and education.

6.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I discussed the union meetings organised at branch level, such as site meetings, site steward council and branch meetings. In addition, other activities that emerged from the analysis of the interviews were discussed. These activities include: dispute management, health awareness campaigns and sport activities. Participants acknowledged that the union leadership do organise the above mentioned activities at branch level. However, there was a concern that the activities are poorly attended.

There were some participants who allege that the union leadership lack the capacity to organise its members. On the other hand, other participants named the alliance leaders have with the ruling party as the main cause of shifting the leaders' attention from focusing on union activities. However, the leadership assume that the number of commuters in the branch has led to a decline in attendance of union activities. The leadership was also perceived to be active when their members are in trouble. The participants allege that the only the time leaders seem to be active is when there are disputes in schools. In summary, activities organised at the branch level are poorly attended, therefore teachers play less of a role in union-decision, policies and activities.



CHAPTER SEVEN

7. FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

In this chapter, the research findings on the teachers' perceptions of union leadership in Limpopo, South Africa are presented. The findings of this study are therefore an endeavour to provide responses to the research questions. The conclusions were made based on the source of the data collected and analysed from the interviews with the union members and the union leadership of SADTU at the branch level.

The purpose of this chapter is therefore to outline the findings of this study and the conclusion made on completion of this study, as well as how these conclusions were reached. In addition, the chapter checks whether the findings answer the research questions and whether the research has achieved its purpose.

7.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

In Chapter 1, the research problem was stated clearly and in detail. It is therefore important to substantiate whether the study really addressed the research problem and whether the research purpose and research questions were answered by the data collected from the participants.

7.3 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The findings presented in this chapter reflect the perceptions of union members and union leadership of SADTU in the district where I conducted the study. They are therefore not presented as the absolute truth or as being exhaustive in the generalisation they make about the subject under the study. However, they may provide empirical evidence on the relationship teachers have with their union leadership at branch level. The findings arising

from the literature and the data collected are hereby presented as empirical evidence on how the union leadership is perceived or viewed.

The findings are presented in detail in order to determine whether they have responded to the research questions and whether they are consistent with the existing literature. The findings must be able to respond to the research questions stated and address the aims of the study.

7.3.1 The findings from the literature

The findings from the literature reveal that teachers' union leaders are alleged to be pursuing their political careers at the expense of their organisation and ordinary members (Kudumo, 2011:166; Buhlungu & Ellis, 2012:263). According to a study by Kudumo (2011:166) "the teachers' union's support for the new political leadership has created a space for the movement to struggle to make substantial real gains for public service workers (teachers)". This argument is reinforced by Buhlungu and Ellis (2012:263) who submit that the overlap of leadership may affect the independence of teachers' trade unions. The scholars argue that the union leadership may fail to bargain in good faith for their members in cases where they (union leaders) share a close relationship with the ruling parties.

The researchers also criticise the deployment of top union leaders into senior positions of government and municipal offices (Masondo, 2012:114; Kudumo, 2011:162; Liwane-Mazengwe, 2012:112). Masondo (2012:114) criticise cadre deployment as it results in the unions losing its seasoned leaders and therefore leaving the organisation with a 'brain drain'. This sentiment is shared in an earlier study by Kudumo (2011:162) which states that "the appointment of new leaders of teachers' union to fill the vacuum created by their predecessors has undermined the strength of the movements".

The new leaders are alleged to lack proper understanding of the history and vision of the teachers' unions. Moreover, union leaders appointed into senior positions may receive

resistance in schools (Liwane-Mazengwe, 2012:112). She argues that “hardworking and senior educators who are reportedly disregarded when it comes to promotions may become increasingly resistant to be managed by the product of nepotism” (Liwane-Mazengwe, *ibid*).

Scholars in US such as Brimelow (2003:201) and Henderson *et al.* (2004:99) contend that the focus by the union leadership on advancing their political careers may widen the gap between the rank-and-file members and the top leadership. Be that as it may be, the focus of the studies discussed was on national union leadership; hence the study at grassroots level was conducted to address the gap in the literature.

7.3.2 The empirical findings

These are the findings that are directly related to the research questions I posed in Chapter 1. They are also the findings that specifically speak of branch union leadership in one district that I conducted the research. The purpose of this study was to explore teachers’ perceptions and views of SADTU branch leadership in one district in Limpopo, South Africa. The following objectives were therefore addressed:

- To explore the perceptions of ordinary members have on their branch union leadership;
- To understand the union leadership perceptions of their own role in education and
- To explore the roles teachers play in the unions’ decision-making, policy formulation and activities.

Generally speaking, the participants perceived the union leadership of SADTU in the branch as entrenching the culture of individualism. There, were, however few participants who felt that the leadership value the relationship with their followers. The perceptions of the participants are in line with the main two concepts devised in chapter one to guide this study. The common concern raised in the responses of the participants was the alliance that the union leadership has with the ruling party.



The participants perceive the union alliance with the ANC as the underlying cause of union leadership advancing their careers at the expense of ordinary union members and not promoting union members' interest. The overwhelming response from the participants was the perception of an entrenched culture of individualism, a belief by the union leadership that they made sacrifices in joining the struggle and that this was not in vain. These are some of the direct quotations from the participants who feel that the alliance has weakened the union.

The only thing that maybe makes the union not be the same as it was before is because we have aligned with the government (sic).

The political friend is the employer and it will be difficult for people to fight a friend (sic).

The tripartite alliance is killing our union because we no more negotiate in terms of being teachers' unions (sic).

The alliance is strong and alive but if you look at our young comrades who are growing and joining the politics of late. They are actually joining for a very wrong reason (sic).

They are not solving our problems and there is nothing we can say about that because we are an alliance with them (sic).

In chapter 4, I discussed other responses from the participants in detail. The alliance between union leaders and the ruling party is perceived by the participants as the underlying cause of a negative relationship between union leaders and their followers (members). I found that most participants perceive the alliance as affecting the relationship union members have with their union leadership. Participants allege that the alliance SADTU has with the ruling party makes it difficult for the union leadership to promote the interests of the working class. The union leadership is alleged to use their union positions to further their careers.



The concern by the participants has led to the majority of them calling for the union to withdraw from the alliance with the ANC. The participants perceive the union leadership as focusing more on politics than fighting for the workers' rights. Members of SADTU in the branch believe that the union should be independent as this will allow the leadership to bargain in good faith for the members.

There were, however, few participants who perceived the alliance as strong, alive and thought it should be maintained in post-apartheid era. I make use of few quotes from some of the participants below.

We need to belong to politics, and hence we are now participating in the form of an alliance (sic).

We would support the ANC to see the well – being of the people (sic).

These participants argued that teachers were involved in the establishment of the ANC and therefore SADTU must continue to operate as an education wing of the ruling party. They allege that SADTU may be used to educate the masses of South Africa and defend the democracy won in 1994. They believe that the union should be used as the driving vehicle to advocate the policies of the ruling party. These participants perceive the relationship between the union leaders and the members under collectivism. They argue that the union leadership need the alliance to promote the good society over the welfare of the individual. The full discussion on the political alliance the union share with ruling party was dealt with in chapter 4.

In Chapter 5 of this dissertation the analysis of leaders' involvement with the DBE was made. The idea was to understand the role of union leadership in education. The majority of the participants perceived the union leadership as bargaining more on the side of the employer than representing the interests of the union members. For instance one participant shared that *"They will go and negotiate looking after themselves and forgetting the members; the people who put them into the office (sic)*. One of the union members reinforced the submission made by the participant in this way *"Twice members will go on*



strike and do not get what they demanded but rather docked for the no – work - no - pay that they were on industrial action (sic). Another participant cried foul on the union leadership when he mentioned that *“When it comes to salary negotiations, we send a team to go and negotiate on our behalf. The very same members of the team; some of them when there is another round of salary negotiations; they are on the other side. So in this case, they will be negotiating on the behalf of the employer (sic).* Participants perceived the union leadership as unable to achieve the salary increment that they (leaders) were mandated to bargain for.

The issue of the alliance was raised again by participants as the underlying cause on the decline of teacher unionism at the branch level. One of the leaders in the branch acknowledged that the members want the union to withdraw from the alliance. He stated that *“There is a concern on the ground that is why people would love to see the SADTU divorced from COSATU (sic).* The same concern was made by another participant who submitted that *“They (union leaders) are not telling them (employer) anything, they (leaders) want to protect their positions (sic)”.* *“The structure where everyone is represented by a union, according to me it does not work because at the end members feel like that they have been failed because their mandate does not go their way (sic)”* another participant lamented.

The findings also reveal that the involvement of union leaders in appointments and promotions of teachers at branch level was questionable. Most of the participants perceive the leaders' involvement in appointment and promotions as only benefiting those who are in union leadership positions. To support these findings I include some of the quotes from the participants. A participant in the study mentioned that *“People will then say I am joining the union in order to see myself there in a national office. I am joining politics in order to be deployed in municipality” (sic).* Similar issue was raised by another participant who said *“We don't know who is a dedicated cadre or who is pushing his own selfish interests” sic.* The negative perception on union leadership also came from some members in the branch leadership. A union leader submitted that *“I think that certain leaders are there to lead but at one stage; they want to secure their future” (sic).*



They alleged that the focus of union leaders on getting deployed in senior positions in DBE and other government structures is the cause of the hostile relationship between union members and their leaders. The union leadership is perceived as sell-outs who only want to advance their chances of career mobility.

On the other hand, the union leadership perceived their involvement with DBE as a way of advancing the members interests. The leaders argued that they were fighting for the members' interest by making sure that teachers get permanent posts in their respective schools. These are some of the quotes from the participants who feels that the leadership is practicing collectivism. The leader stated that "*I advise the principals that once they hire a temporary teacher on a promotional posts, when his/ her contract is about to be terminated rather negotiate with another principal in another school where there is a substantive post so that you move this comrade to a substantive post so that this comrade could be permanent*" (sic). One of the branch executive shared how they try to help the teachers in this way "*At the branch level; we communicate with the circuit manager to address such matters and if we cannot find each other with the circuit manager; we will take the matter to our regional full-time shop steward who will take the matter to the district*" (sic).

They also contended that the current benefits in terms of better remuneration of teachers were the victory of SADTU. The union leadership was perceived to be speaking collectively on behalf of union members in education forums such as the Circuit Task Team. In a nutshell, these participants perceived the union leadership as promoting the interests of union members. The concept of collectivism raised in chapter one was supported by this participants.

The analysis of union activities organised by the union leadership revealed that the lack of capacity of union leaders at the branch level lead to poor organisation of some union activities. The findings reveal that the union leaders were unable to organise the activities in such a way that they accommodate all the union members. One of the participant was worried by the situation at the site level. He mentioned that "*The site committee and the school management team (SMT) do not have regular meetings. Now that if a site*



*committee and the school management team do not sit around to discuss issues that affect them at their school. It is where you normally have a problem with the membership because the site structure of the school has to have bilateral with the **SMT**" (sic). This story was also raised by another participant who said that "Mmmm we use to have what we call site meetings but I am not saying those meetings are taking place because there is a contestation or fear by some principals which will try very hard to make sure that that those meetings do not take place" (sic). "The members see the early knock-off as a bail out to go home early. It is their benefit but learners are suffering (sic)". The issue of poor organisation of union activities may indicate that the relationship is not a collective one.*

The findings also revealed that poor attendance of union activities organised by the branch leadership by union members, was a sign of union members being disheartened about their union leadership. This is one quote that shows that members are not happy with their union leadership. *"The union has some sort of relationship with government and that is what makes members sometimes not be able to like the union" (sic). The study shows that a number of activities organised by the branch union leadership were ignored by a large number of union members in the branch.*

The branch union leadership acknowledged that the capacity of the leaders at this level needed some attention. The power relation between union leaders and the school management team was also mentioned as the cause for the union failing to actively include its members in union activities. The participants perceived the top-down communication system adopted by the national executive of SADTU as the cause of the union members being less involved in union decision-making, policy formulation and activities. Although the activities organised at the branch level have some benefits for the union members, they need to be organised in such a way that they accommodate the entire membership in the branch.

The union leadership may be trying to promote the interest of union members by being involved in dispute management when the members are in trouble. This is in line with the union Constitution, but some participants perceive the involvement of union leaders as a



way of keeping the union strong. Members are alleged to continue to have a relationship with the union because they know the union will protect them.

7.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The first limitation was that I purposively selected union members and union leaders from the six schools which had the Branch Executive Council members in their ranks. Other teachers who previously worked with former union leaders and those who were in union leadership positions might have shared their in-depth information on union leadership activities. The study did not capture the stories of those former union leaders and teachers in the district.

In addition, the study only focused on the branch union leadership activities of one union in the province. I therefore suggest that future studies on how teachers perceive union leadership activities should consider including other unions in the province as that may add more knowledge on understanding union leadership.

The second limitation was that I used a case study. Case study results may not be generalised to other contexts other than where the study was conducted. I do not claim that the findings of this study apply to union leadership in other contexts, since this was not the purpose of the study. Although case study findings may not be generalised, they may play an important role in advancing a field's knowledge base, as suggested by Merriam (1998:41).

7.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Based on the main findings of this study the following recommendations are made for future research:

- A study on teachers' perceptions of SADTU branch leadership may be extended to other provinces in South Africa. The aim is to determine if the findings in this study



represent the problems in other parts of the country. Identifying such problems may help the union to understand the concern of its members and resolve them.

- SADTU may revive the union branches by conducting research on how to capacitate leadership at the branch level. The aim of such a study may be to improve the way the branch leadership organise and communicate with the members at this level.
- A quantitative research methodology could be useful in investigating the effects of the relationship teacher unions share with the ruling party on its members. The study may help the national union leadership to determine if there is still a need to continue its alliance with the ruling party.

7.6 CONCLUSION

The strength of branch union leadership is under threat as the result of the alliance SADTU has with the ANC. The branch union leadership was perceived by an overwhelming number of participants as unable to organise the union members at branch level. The involvement of leadership with the DBE is perceived by many as a way of advancing the union leadership's career mobility. Participants are of the idea that the union should discontinue their alliance with the ruling party and focus solely on fighting for the rights of the working class.



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APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

DEGREE AND PROJECT

INVESTIGATOR(S)

DEPARTMENT

DATE PROTOCOL APPROVED

DATE CLEARANCE ISSUED

CLEARANCE NUMBER :

EM 14/10/C2

MEd

Teachers' perceptions of union leadership in Limpopo Province

Ponko Collen Mathibe

Education Management and Policy Studies

28 November 2014

26 August 2015

Please note:

For Masters applications, ethical clearance is valid for 2 years

For PhD applications, ethical clearance is valid for 3 years.

**CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS
COMMITTEE**

Prof Liesel Ebersöhn

DATE

26 August 2015

CC

Jeannie Boukes
Liesel Ebersöhn
Prof E Weber
Dr ST Mampone

This ethical clearance certificate is issued subject to the following condition:

1. It remains the students' responsibility to ensure that all the necessary forms for informed consent are kept for future queries.
2. The protocol you were granted approval on was implemented.
3. The Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education does not accept any liability for research misconduct, of whatsoever nature, committed by the researcher(s) in the implementation of the approved protocol.

Please quote the clearance number in all enquiries.



APPENDIX B: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION LETTERS

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Department of Education Management & Policy Studies

Dear union leader

INVITATION AND INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH PROJECT.

I am a masters' student in Education doing a dissertation at the University of Pretoria. One of the requirements is that I conduct a research and write a report about my work. You are therefore kindly requested to participate in interviews which I will conduct. The title of the research is: **Teachers' perceptions of branch union leadership in Limpopo, South Africa.**

Your participation in the study is voluntary and confidential. I will not ask you to reveal any information that will allow your identity to be established. You may withdraw at any time. With your permission the interview will be recorded in order to allow me to be sure of taking down everything you say. The research will be conducted after school hours on the days that are suitable to you. The interviews will last for 60 – 90 minutes. The project will not interfere with teaching and learning of your school. Pseudonyms will be used in the dissertation and academic publications. I may also make seminar and conference presentations. If you have questions about this research, feel free to use details below to contact my supervisors Professor Weber and Dr Mampane.

.....

.....

FULL NAMES OF PARTICIPANT

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE OF SIGNING:.....

CONTACT NO:

Yours faithfully

MATHEBE P. C.....

DATE:



STUDENT NUMBER: 27460798

CONTACT NO: 073 375 8566

SUPERVISOR: Prof Weber

CONTACT NO: 012 420 5591

Signature:

CO – SUPERVISOR: Dr Mampane

CONTACT NO: 012 420 2499

Signature:



APPENDIX B: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION LETTERS

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Department of Education Management & Policy Studies

Dear Teacher

INVITATION AND INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH PROJECT.

I am a masters' student in Education doing a dissertation at the University of Pretoria. One of the requirements is that I conduct a research and write a report about my work. You are therefore kindly requested to participate in interviews which I will conduct. The title of the research is: **Teachers' perceptions of branch union leadership in Limpopo, South Africa.**

Your participation in the study is voluntary and confidential. I will not ask you to reveal any information that will allow your identity to be established. You may withdraw at any time. With your permission the interview will be recorded in order to allow me to be sure of taking down everything you say. The research will be conducted after school hours on the days that are suitable to you. The interviews will last for 60 – 90 minutes. The project will not interfere with teaching and learning of your school. Pseudonyms will be used in the dissertation and academic publications. I may also make seminar and conference presentations. If you have questions about this research, feel free to use details below to contact my supervisors Professor Weber and Dr Mampane.

.....

.....

FULL NAMES OF PARTICIPANT

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE OF SIGNING:

CONTACT NO:

Yours faithfully

MATHEBE P. C.....

DATE:



STUDENT NUMBER: 27460798

CONTACT NO: 073 375 8566

SUPERVISOR: Prof Weber

CONTACT NO: 012 420 5591

Signature:

CO – SUPERVISOR: Dr Mampane

CONTACT NO: 012 420 2499

Signature:



APPENDIX C: LETTER OF PERMISSION

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Department of Education Management & Policy Studies

The Principal

Request to conduct a research project in schools at Sekhukhune District.

Dear Sir/ Madam

I am a masters' student in Education doing a dissertation at University of Pretoria. One of the requirements is that I conduct research and write a research report about my work. I therefore request permission to conduct research at this school. The topic of the research project is: **Teachers' perceptions of branch union leadership in Limpopo, South Africa.**

Participation by teachers in this project will be voluntary and confidential. Participants will not be asked to reveal any information that will allow their identity to be established. Should teachers declare their willingness to participate in individual interviews, confidentiality will be guaranteed. They may decide to withdraw at any stage of this research should they wish not to continue.

The research will be conducted after school hours on the days agreed upon between me and participants. The research project will not interfere with teaching and learning of this school. Participation in this research will cause no harm to educators and their safety will be guaranteed. The identity of participants and their school will not be made public. Pseudonyms will be used in the dissertation and academic publications. I may also make seminar and conference presentations. Interviews will last for 60 – 90 minutes. If you have questions about this research, feel free to use details below to contact me, my supervisors Professor Weber and Dr Mampane.



I ask you to sign this form, giving your consent for me to conduct the research at your school.

Principal: Date:

Yours Faithfully

Mathebe P. C: Date:

Student no: 27460798 Contact number: 073 375 8566

Supervisor: Professor Weber Signature.....

Contact number: 012 420 5591

Co – Supervisor: Dr Mampane Signature

Contact number: 012 420 2499



FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Department of Education Management & Policy Studies

The District Manager

Private Bag X8605

Lebowakgomo

0470

Request to conduct a research project in schools at Sekhukhune district.

Dear Sir

I am a masters' student in Education doing a dissertation at the University of Pretoria. One of the requirements is that I conduct research and write a research report about my work. I therefore request permission to conduct this research in schools in the Sekhukhune district, Moutse Circuit. The topic of the project is: **Teachers' perceptions of branch union leadership in Limpopo, South Africa.**

Participation by teachers in this project will be voluntarily and confidential. Participants will not be asked to reveal any information that will allow their identity to be established. They may decide to withdraw at any stage of this research should they wish not continue with the project.

The research will be conducted after school hours on the days agreed upon between me and participants. The project will not interfere with teaching and learning of participating schools. Participation in this research will cause no harm to educators and their safety will be guarded. The identity of participants and their schools will not be made public. If you have questions about this research, feel free to use details below to contact me and my supervisors Professor Weber and Dr Mampane.

Yours Faithfully

Mathebe P C

Signature

Student no: 27460798

Contact no: 073 375 8566



Supervisor: Prof Everard Weber

Signature:

Contact no: 012 420 5591

Co – supervisor: Dr Sharon Mampane

Signature:

Contact no: 012 420 2499



LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Nest to Sanel
Passing Magistrate Office
SEMPUPURU
Denilton
1030



Private Bag's 8605
GROBLERSDAL
0470
Tel: (013) 980 0765/7/8
Fax: (013) 980 0769

MOUTSE EAST CIRCUIT

Kgora ya Thuto

Umyango wamfundo

Department van Onderwys

SEKHUKHUNE DISTRICT OFFICE

ENQ: STEWART B.Z

Mr Mathebe P.C
Department of Education Management and Policy Studies
University of Pretoria

Dear Sir

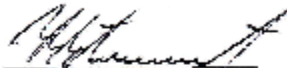
REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH PROJECT IN SCHOOLS OR OFFICES OF THE LIMPOPO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION:

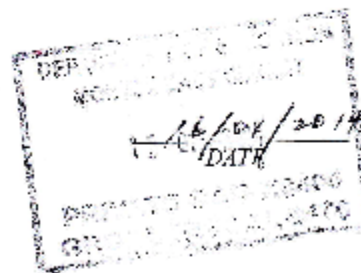
Receipt of your request to conduct research in our schools is hereby acknowledged and appreciated.

1. Your request is highly comprehensive and very detailed on how you are going to do it, and that encourages us to give you permission to venture into it instantly.
2. We shall be pleased to have a copy of the final product so that we also enjoy the bird's eye view you shall have experienced.

God luck to you with your academic endeavor!!!!!!

Yours faithfully,


CIRCUIT MANAGER





APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

DATE: TO BE CONFIRMED

RESEARCHER: MATHEBE P C

Participants: Teachers

Research Title: Teachers' perceptions of branch union leadership in Limpopo, South Africa

Interview questions: Semi – structured

1. What motivated you to join the union?
2. For how long have you been a member of the union?
3. What role does union leadership play in your district?
4. How do you feel about the unions' involvement in politics?
5. Which union activities took place in your branch in the past three or four years?
6. Were you involved in those union activities? If yes how? If not, why not?
What happened?
7. Describe the effects and consequences of these union activities.
8. What suggestions can you make to union leaders to assist you to become a better teacher?
9. What relationship do you have with the union leadership?
10. What is your understanding of the partnership union leaders have with department officials in your district?
11. Whose interests do you think are promoted by those partnerships? Please explain.
12. Is the union leadership fulfilling your expectations?
13. What does it mean to you to be represented by union leaders in education forums in this district?
14. What else can you tell me about the activities of the union leadership in your district?
15. How can the union leadership be improved?

Thank you for your participation.



FACULTY OF EDUCATION

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

DATE: TO BE CONFIRMED

RESEARCHER: MATHEBE P C

Participants: Union leaders

Research Title: Teachers' perceptions of branch union leadership in Limpopo, South Africa.

Interview questions:

1. What motivated you to join the union?
2. For how long have you been a member of the union?
3. What activities does the union usually organise?
4. What occupies most of your time as a union leader?
5. How do members understand the role of union leadership?
6. What roles did the union leadership play in collective bargaining in the past three to four years?
7. How do you feel about the unions' involvement in politics?
8. Which union activities took place at your branch in the past three to four years?
9. Were you involved in those union activities? If yes how? If not, why not?
What happened?
10. Were these activities in the interests of teachers? Education? Please explain.
11. What is your view about the relationship you have with the teachers in this district? What challenges exist?
12. How will you describe the partnership the Branch Executive Committee has with the Department of Education? Please explain.
13. Whose interests do you think are promoted in those partnerships? Please explain.
14. Could you tell me about the concerns members have raised with you?
15. What is the union leadership doing to address those concerns?
16. What do you think about representing teachers in the education forums in this district?
17. How can the union leadership be improved?

Thank you for your participation.



APPENDIX E: EXAMPLE OF TRANSCRIPT

Transcript for the study on teachers' perception of branch union leadership in Limpopo, South Africa

Transcribed interview: union leader 4

Question 1: For how long have you been a member of the union?

I started to be a qualified teacher in 1993 and upon arrival in the field in 1993 I registered my subscription to SADTU as member of the union. So it means that I am now having 21 years as a member of the union. I also served the union both as a member and as a leader. I served 12 years solid years as a leader.

Probing question: Could you describe the role you played in the two portfolios you headed in those 12 years?

For the period of 10 years I was in the education desk dealing with education issues precisely; in the sense that our point of focus was not to deal with union issues but with also to deal with upgrading the standard of the education in the area. So I served in the education desk for 10 years and I assisted both the two circuits in ensuring that the desk contributes positively in ensuring that the results are where they are expected. That is why you will see that we had good results in 2012 and a number of years. So the union contributed positively to ensure that the learners are supported, educators are supported and also parents are also encouraged to take a role ... to play a fundamental role in the education of their learners. So that is why we were able sustaining good results for a number of years when I was the education convenor.

Probing question: What were some of the challenges during that time?

The challenge was the lack of resources. When we talk about the lack of resources; most of the time the resources that we will run short off the textbooks, sometimes schools are receiving insufficient textbooks, sometimes you find that the other challenge that we had most was the allocation of the subjects. You find that the person has qualified to teach this particular learning area but in terms of allocation as done by the school. You find that the



school is allocating a person a different subject altogether; but what caused that is sometimes informed by the lack of human resources. The shortage of educators in the teaching fraternity; in schools in particular; you find that educators are no longer delivering in accordance to their field of their specialisation. They are allocated learning areas just to get the ball rolling, that is where we come across the challenges but the educators although they were allocated wrong subjects; they happened to deliver. How did we notice that they have delivered? The good results.

Follow – up question: What did you do to help those teachers to produce good results?

Surely the in - service training that the teachers received from the education department, from their schools in terms of capacitating and inducting them, I think that is the positive contributory factor that made educators to achieve good results, that is what I can Although they were allocated wrong subjects but because they were guided accordingly; they were guided appropriately hence they were able to survive in terms of ensuring that results are produced; not only results but good results.

Follow – up question: What led to the drop of the results since you left the education desk?

The change in the curriculum, the change in the education system, the lack of consistency in what the educators are doing. That is why now our results, now were staggered form, they were fluctuating. In this year you will find that the performance is good, the other year is dropping. The challenge there; was primarily because of lack of consistency in the curriculum itself. You will remember when after 1994; the curriculum 2005 was introduced with its own challenges. One challenge was that the educators were not correctly brought to those changes; transformation was irregular on the side of educators hence it was also reviewed. We had national curriculum statement which was also implemented with its own challenges and the review committee was put in place to review the curriculum; we had the revised curriculum statement and now of late, the CAPS are introduced. So the lack of consistency in the education system, the curriculum itself is also a contributory factor in the lack of sustainability in as far the results are concerned. But generally because I am taking focus on the two circuits, Moutse -East and Moutse – Central, we are trying our



outmost best to ensure that even if there is a drop; that drop is very slight it is not huge, but if the curriculum can be consistent I am sure; I am speaking with confidence that if the curriculum can be consistent, our results will always show growth in terms of performance.

Question 2: What motivated you to join the union?

You know I joined the union because even at the college I also participated in the structures, in COSAS I participated. I wanted to continue with my participation in the structures. Participating in structures for instances in union; unions are having a way of capacitating their members. So like when I was in the education desk I was fully capacitated by the union. So how did I then fully realise that I was capacitated by the union? When I was appointed to be a principal in 2003, it was simple for me to implement the policies of the department because I was capacitated by the union. I did not join the union simple because I wanted to be unionised, I joined the union because I wanted to be given information; relevant information towards what I am doing at the level of the school.

Question 3: What activities does the union usually organise?

For instances as a union we are expected to organise structural meetings, the structural meetings as follows: we have branch executive meetings; we have site council meetings, which we call (SSC) Site Steward Council meetings, we have to organise mass meetings; in this meetings what is expected from us is to ensure that we update our members on issues relating to the union but we are not a stereotype union. We also update our members on issues relating to education because our focus area is on education. For instance if the education department is changing any rule, if the department is changing any policy, if the education department is coming up with something new; it is our responsibility as union leaders to ensure that our members are also put on board in relation to what is to be implemented in the education department.

Question 4: What occupies most of your time as a union leader?

Most of my time is occupied by union activities because I have to attend scheduled meetings of the union; I have to attend to challenges faced by the educators' at their different sites. So it is consuming but is not impacting on my work schedule. I am able to prioritise on how these challenges are attended to. For instances; most of the time I



ensure that the challenges that the educators have in their respective schools I attend to those challenges when I don't have to attend periods because I am the principal; I am the teacher at the same time.

I have to prioritise all these activities because every activity has to be given an equal share. One activity as a union leader should not be compromising the school as a school principal. I must ensure that the activities of the school are attended to; they are not compromised by the activities of the union. It just a question of proper planning, coordination of those activities and the implementation of those activities that I have to attend to and let me rest I assure you that as a union leader I am not compromising the school. I ensure that all of what is expected of me is done.

Question 5: How do members understand the role of union leadership?

We usually in our meetings; we cascade our roles, we explain our roles because we also have the time off given by the department of education. We explain clearly our roles as leaders but at the same time what we also encourage our members to do because we have structures at the level of the site. We always encourage our members to also not to overload the leadership. We request them to try their outmost best in ensuring that the problems are tackled at the level of the school. The members of the executive committee will only be involved when the site leadership at the level of the school are having challenges in terms of resolving that particular problem. We will always tell them of the protocol; because we also have a protocol in a union. Issues are not only brought to us as just like that; there is a procedure that has to be adhered into in terms of bringing the issues to the executive committee.

Question 6: How do you feel about the unions' involvement in politics?

In politics we are slightly involved, why do I say we are slightly involved is because we are the affiliate to COSATU. Issues that are relating to politics most of the time are debated at the level of COSATU. As a union we are an affiliate to COSATU, that is why I am not directly involved as a branch chairperson. The persons who are directly involved in most of the time is the president of the union and the secretary of the union. Most of us, we are doing as a part – time activity; we are not full – time participant in the union issues. So that



is why; it will not have an impact because I am not directly involved. So like for an instance, when we discuss issues relating to salary increment. It is not debated by the chairpersons of the branches but the leadership at the level of national office is taking care of such; that is why as a leader at the level of the branch you don't directly impact on the day to day activity of the school. You can be the chairperson but sometimes people cannot even see that you are the chairperson until you tell that person that I am a chairperson of the branch because there is not any conflicting move as far as there the activities are concerned. So like I said earlier that we prioritise the activities, we don't impact negatively. So there is no harm in terms of that.

Clarity seeking question: So are you saying that the union leaders are less involved in politics at the level of the branch?

Yes they are less involved at the branch level.

Question 7: What is your view about the relationship you have with the teachers in this district? What challenges exist?

The relationship obviously needs to be good because you cannot represent a person whom you are not having a good relationship but how do you build the relationship with your members? First you have to respect them so that you can also get back that respect so it is just a mutual kind of a relationship. They must respect you; equally you are expected to respect them so that when there is that mutual relationship the union will be able to run with understanding and the union will be able to achieve its goals but in short I can answer the question by saying the relationship between the leadership and the entire membership is sound relationship; it is very good relationship. Like I said; how one creates that relationship by just ensuring the members are equally respected, dignified and they also respect and dignify the leadership.

Question 8: How will you describe the partnership the Branch Executive Council has with the Department of Education? Please explain.

So the partnership that we have with the circuits; its intended goal is to minimise problems in various schools because our participation there; we are trying to be proactive in trying to identifying issues that might be a challenge at the level of the school and immediately deal



with them at that level so that they don't escalate to district level and provincial and so on. So our participation in there is very critical and very important. It is vital because we are able to deal with the issues at local level and we are able to resolve them at the level of the circuits. So our participation in there is very helpful to ensure that education run smooth without any challenges because we are there to deal with problems as they emerge.

Question 9: Whose interests do you think are promoted in those partnerships? Please explain.

The partnership like I said earlier on; our intention is to ensure that we produce results; as a matter of fact our interest is always based on learners. To say the learners that we provide with information; skills and knowledge are prioritised. Our interest in the those activities or in our participation in such structures; we prioritise learners; we say like for an instance I am a union member but the interest of my members and my own interests they become secondary because our main aim is to ensure that we uplift, we change the standard of living of this learners that we are giving to take care off. That is what we discuss to say; because these learners they are not affiliates to any union, so we must not abuse that; we must in fact defend them. So that is why; as a union we have a campaign to register our learners in public schools. We also participate in the back to school campaign. So if ever we were just serving our interests; we could not come with such campaigns. So we must make it a point that all learners who qualify to be schools they must be seen to attend the school if they don't attend it is the duty of the union to say why these learners are not in schools. That is a simple to say we are prioritising them. In fact in politics our participation is very minimal, our greater interest is in the children; it is in the learners.

Question 10: Could you tell me about the concerns members have raised with you?

The concerns that they raise most of the time are the poor remuneration. Educators/ members are saying they are not paid as equal to the job. One other concern is the job allocation; they have the concern that they are overloaded, they have the concern that they have too much paperwork to deal with and the real work that they are supposed to do; to teach learners is minimal because they have to concentrate on the number of work



that is given to them. So those are the issues but other concern; the general working conditions and one other concern is the safety of educators in the public schools. For instance; they are complaining that their safety is not taken care off. You can make reference in the case where educators are been beaten by learners. They are been harassed by learners, so those are the complaints but the general key complains are those relating to remuneration; those relating to overloading, overcrowding. Some of the classes are overcrowded. What is happening is that educators have a view that the department is saving money at their expense. How that is proven because our classes are overloaded, our educators are given too much subjects. These also contributes negatively because if you are overloaded. If there is overcrowding, overworked then that also contributes on poor performance because you don't perform to your expectations because of overcrowding and overloading with subjects and sometimes with the wrong subjects.

Probing question: What about the allegations that the union is not doing enough to push the employer to reach the members' needs?

That is a perception and a perception sometimes is correct and a perception sometime is wrong but in this regard I will say the perception is not correct because we have negotiators who are engaging the department in terms of ensuring that salaries are been negotiated for. It is not that we must have an understanding as union members; to say that apart from giving us increment, the department has also other responsibilities, like for instance ensuring that textbooks are bought, ensuring that schools are renovated, ensuring that classrooms are built; so the money that is allocated may not meet all the demands that are given. So we should be sharing the resources. So we can't be negotiating in bad faith, we must negotiate in good faith. What is negotiating in good faith simple means; we should also bear in mind that we have other responsibilities to take care off. We also have other things to achieve; the government has other things to achieve but we are But every day in our structural meetings we are correcting that perception that we are now on the side of the employer. As a union we are not on the side of the employer but what I can say it is just that we are negotiating in good faith. As guided by the laws of the country.



Probing question: How about the issue of 0.5 % disparity between educators and other public servants?

I think that is a process matter, our submission as a union we said it is not yet over. We are still engaging the department of education in ensuring that matter is sorted out; because the department is not refusing altogether to deal with those differences but like I indicated is a question of lack of resources. I think as soon as we have accumulated resources; those challenges that we are sharing; the department will deal with such challenges.

Question 11: What is the union leadership doing to address those concerns?

We are engaging the department to say more educators should be hired/ employed in order to deal with overcrowding, resources such as textbooks and other relevant resources; they should be provided for. The issue of remuneration; I think the President has put in a place the committee to look into it to check as whether are educators paid appropriately or not. That is why we are saying that concern is at least given attention; then we will see the report the committee will give as soon as they report back to the cabinet in relation to the remuneration. I can just say; all these concerns are raised in ELRC and the department is eager to take care off such concerns, the department is promising to ensure that such concerns are resolved but our understanding is also that some of these challenges and concerns cannot be resolved over a night but it is a matter of how our members are talking because some of the issues are long overdue. Our understanding is that the members will also understand to say we are in the process of ensuring that all these issues that were raised all long ago are resolved.

Question 12: What is your input on principals who are failing to implement some policies, for example the issue of R and R?

I think that might be a true statement to say principals are failing to implement what is expected of them but on that regard I will put the blame solely on the DoE because what the DoE usually does, they appoint the principals into those positions but after appointments are done; no one is capacitating these principals.



They just hit the road running, which is why sometimes they get confused because they don't know how to approach different information. So it is not the question of whether they are sceptical when they are dealing with what is expected of them. The challenge is how to deal with the situation because the department is just making appointments; after those appointments are done no one is eager to capacitate those who are given better or responsible positions. Positions of responsibility and accountability; that one I can bear testimony to say these principals they are all on their own. They are all by themselves; they lack guidance, they lack in-service training. They are just appointed and assumptions are that they will do the job. Some of them they can't even interpret those policies; they were not taken through in terms of those policies.

So they are just struggling on their own; so one other reason that makes our schools not to perform is that leaders are leading by fear; because if you lead by fear you can't lead by policies. Because yourself you are not sure of what you are doing. So it is just that the DoE must take care off, they must induct every person not only the principal; newly appointed educators should be inducted; HOD's; education specialist at the level of the school should be inducted, and the deputy principals. People's job description should be clarified and whose responsibility? It is the employer responsibility to ensure that those things are taken care off and as soon as those things are taken care off; we are going to have good leaders, we are going to have our schools been run as expected and as a matter of fact those schools goals set for themselves will be achieved or attained. The principals cannot run schools on assumptions that things are going well when they are not like that.

Probing question: What I actually want to know is what the union leadership is doing to help those principals who are union members and failing to implement DoE policies at their work stations?

We are having a programme; in fact we have been doing these yearly after realising that the department is failing our members. Every year we have a programme of capacitating our members who are in positions of leadership; like for instance this year the leadership that will just be coming in must ensure that principals in particular because they are in those critical positions have to be capacitated; they have to be given workshops on the

areas that we have identified to have challenges. For instance, the issue of leave forms some principal do not know how to deal with them and how to deal with conflict; some principals do not know how to deal with conflicts; they become also part of the conflict instead of assisting the situation. We assist them on how to attend to those challenges when they are confronted. So SADTU has those programmes; like I said our main objective is not only to unionise members but is also to educate them because we can have members who are members of SADTU but as long as they do not have necessary information and then it is dangerous. We make a point that our members are given appropriate information. The reason why we are giving members appropriate information so that they are able to take decisions decisively without favour or fear? Those are reasons why we are capacitated them. In fact we are not only capacitating the principals. In terms of CAPS curriculum we are taking a leading role in terms of ensuring that educators are brought on board on issues relating to curriculum, on issues relating to management and leadership. We are there In fact we are assisting the department. Sometimes we are first to implement whatever has to be implemented before the department can do. We are proactive.

Question 13: What do you think about representing teachers in the education forums in this district?

You see like been there, you are able to influence decisions using strategies and tactics. You are able to influence the decisions that will be in favour of educators, like you spoke about R n R; so we are able to influence so that the implementation of the programme is done accordingly, the implementation of the programme is not abused, the implementation of the programme is not serving individual interests, the implementation of the programme is done procedurally and accordingly. So our participation there; I can say it is a strategic participation to ensure that decisions are influenced and correct decisions are taken at that level.

Question 14: How can the union leadership are improved?

We need to As unions we need to induct our members. Induct them in relation to issues relating to leadership, we must also encourage them to participate in various activities; that is where we need to improve. We need to encourage them to participate in

structures that are put in place by the unions at all levels. Like for an instance at the level of the school; we have got site stewards, we encourage our members to participate because their participation will also automatically make them to improve; their participation should not be dormant; they must also assist the school. They must not behave as an opposition to the school; they must assist the school in terms of contributing positively because when they contribute negatively they will not improve but we need to encourage them to participate positively. Because positive participant is also growing intellectually; so we need them to participate so that they are able to grow intellectually.

So that is why SADTU is able to produce many leaders that start somewhere. Let me give reference, Mdladlana was a principal of a school at one stage and he ultimately became the minister. The current minister of public works Mr Thulasi Nxesi; he comes from the level of the school, he was groomed by SADTU, he was moulded by SADTU, he was motivated by SADTU, in fact SADTU on its own is a school where leaders are been groomed. So we groomed quite a number of leaders to perhaps mention a few. We are not only dealing with how we are going to attack the employer but our focal point is how we are going to assist the employer. That is why we have such leaders that we have produced as a union and we are also anticipating more who will be assisting the education department and the state in general because SADTU is a school for information and knowledge.

Question 15: Which union activities took place at your branch in the past three to four years?

U L 4: Unfortunately we did not organise at the level of the school but we organise at the level of the branch wherein last year we organised a women's day and we also organised HIV awareness campaign. We are involved in those campaigns.

Last year only we organised woman's day and we also organised HIV campaign because we are a brought church. We want to give information to the client; to our entire community that is how we extend our participation. We are not only talking at the level of the school; that is why we even encourage our members to be part of the structures at the level of the community with sole purpose of guiding and advising those community members. So our participation is a brought participation. Our union also participates in activities like I have indicated last year we had a women's day and HIV campaign and other campaigns.



Question 15: Please tell me of anything that relates to union leadership that I may not have asked you?

You see the policies of the department of education that are used today; SADTU contributed almost a very huge percentage. I am not sure of the percentage that I can put in place but the policies of the department we are making use of today it is SADTU's contribution. So do you see that we are not a destructive union, in fact we are there to build the nation. We are there to ensure that quality education is provided. That is our campaign; our campaign it is ensure that we provide quality education. What we try all the time we encourage our members to be on time at work, we encourage our members to teach upon arrival at their workstations, we encourage our members to go an extra mile to assist. If you can check; I am giving you an extra task now, on Saturdays; teachers who are working on Saturdays, teachers who are working on Sundays, teachers who are conducting morning classes, teachers who are conducting afternoon classes; all those teachers are members of SADTU, because we are a majority teacher organisation. So we said, we cannot afford to compromise the future of these learners, we must ensure that our contribution is positive and is tangible. That is what we are doing and lastly, people should stop destructing SADTU because it is contributing positively to the economy of this country. How do we contribute positively to the economy of this country, because of the learners that we make them to pass. So our contribution should be commented as a union, so we are making a huge contribution as a union. Unfortunately we don't have those who are bold enough to say we appreciate SADTU on positive thing that is doing but our contribution is huge.



APPENDIX F: LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Date: 24 August 2015

I, Berdine Smit, ID 7712190011083, hereby certify that the Magister Education dissertation by Mr Ponko Mathebe:

“Teachers' perceptions of union leadership in Limpopo province”

has been edited by me according to the Havard Author-date System.

BERDINE SMIT

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