

## Chapter 1

### Introduction and background to the study

#### 1.1 Introduction

Modern states, especially under conditions of globalization are continuously engaged in reforming their education systems. These reforms aim to address improved teaching and learning outcomes, quality of education, equity in education, the internal efficiency and effectiveness of the education systems, and global competitiveness. They set out to make the education systems more relevant and responsive to the current challenges and future needs of nation-states.

With the attainment of independence in Namibia in 1990, the Ministry of Education embarked upon major educational reforms. These included the reorganization of the management and administration of the education system to reflect the changed political context, reform of the curriculum, the implementation of a new language policy for Namibian schools, introduction of a new examination and assessment system, and introduction of a new basic education teacher diploma. These reforms were comprehensive, and covered all aspects and levels of education. They were mostly implemented during the period 1990 to 1999.

The focus of this study is, firstly, to understand and explain the shifting roles of teacher unions in both pre-and post-independence Namibia. Secondly, I want to understand and explain the contextual factors which shaped the roles of teacher unions in these two periods. I will use the activities of the teacher unions in pre - and post-independence Namibia as the lenses through which to understand their shifting roles against the backdrop of changed political context in Namibia.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> **Footnote:** The use of "teacher unions" in this study also refers to the teachers' associations which existed in pre-independence Namibia. The first teachers' union in Namibia was only established on the eve of independence in 1989. The second teachers' union was established post-independence in 1990.

## 1.2 Research purpose

The purpose of the research is twofold. Firstly, I want to understand and explain the shifting roles of teacher unions in Namibia. I will focus on the roles of these unions during two distinct political phases in the country's history namely, the periods before and after independence, in order to understand and explain their shifting roles. The objective of focusing on the two periods is to understand the roles of teacher unions in different political contexts, and to explain why these roles in Namibia have shifted over a period of time.

Secondly, I wish to understand and explain the contextual factors which shaped the roles of teacher unions in pre- and post-independence Namibia. Through the study, I want to show the different roles played by these unions in different political contexts, and explain why the roles played in pre-independence Namibia have shifted in the context of post-independence.

Thus the thesis statement which guides this study is that the roles played by teacher unions in the context of pre-independence Namibia have shifted in the after independence period. I suggest that these unions play different roles in different political contexts, and that the roles they play in particular conditions are shaped and influenced by prevailing contextual political and social factors.

## 1.3 Research questions

The following research questions guide the study:

### **Main research question**

How can we understand and explain the shifting roles played by teacher unions in Namibia pre- and post-independence?

### **Sub-questions**

- What were the roles of teacher unions in pre-and post-independence Namibia?
- What institutional frameworks and modalities in pre-and post-independence Namibia facilitated the participation of teacher unions?
- What contextual factors shaped the roles of teacher unions in Namibia

pre-and post-independence?

- How do we explain the changed roles of teacher unions in post-independence Namibia?

## **1.4 Background and rationale for the study**

In January 1990, after the first democratic election in Namibia in 1989, but prior to independence on 21<sup>st</sup> March 1990, the shadow Minister for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport initiated public dialogue in education (Angula, 2000). The Minister published a discussion document titled: “The national integrated education system for emergent Namibia: Draft proposal for education reform and renewal.”

According to Angula (2000:14), the document was published in recognition of the critical importance of education to both individuals and communities. It outlined the national education goals, proposing a structure for a new national education system, suggested possible content of general education at various levels, and outlined the administrative and organizational structure of the proposed national education system in an independent Namibia. The shadow Minister for Education invited the public, including teacher unions, to comment on the document, make proposals, and participate in the education reform and renewal.

One of the demands of teacher unions in pre-independence Namibia, particularly during the transition from apartheid to independence, had been for the democratization of education, and the involvement and participation of teacher unions both in education and in educational decision-making processes (Labour Resource and Research Institute (LaRRI) (2000). Before the attainment of independence, teacher unions in Namibia were excluded from participation and involvement in education and educational policy-making processes.

My interest in teacher unionism emanates from my involvement in the process leading to the establishment of a progressive national teachers’ union in Namibia. I was personally involved in the steering committee constituted in 1988 to spearhead the establishment of a progressive national, non-racial and non-ethnic teachers’ union. The decision to form a national teachers’ union grew out of frustration with the

ineffectiveness of the pre-independence teacher unions, and their inability to address national education issues, especially during the 1988 education crisis.

In addition to my involvement in the process leading to the establishment of a national teachers' union in Namibia, I was also elected to the leadership of the Namibia National Teachers' Union (NANTU) when the union was launched on 11<sup>th</sup> March, 1989. I served on the national leadership from 1989 until 1995, and have actively participated in teacher union activities in Namibia. I was also employed as a staff member of the NANTU Secretariat responsible for the professional development of teachers. The Department of Professional Development had the overall responsibility for negotiations, social dialogue in education and consultation with government on issues pertaining to the professional development and other interests of teachers.

My participation in teacher unions gave me an insight into the frustrations of progressive teachers in pre-independence Namibia, and the limitations preventing them from playing significant roles in shaping the education of the country, as envisioned in the constitution of teacher unions. NANTU advocated the involvement and participation of teacher unions in education. Its constitution, for example, states that one of the objectives of the Union is to advocate for the contextualization of the curriculum and democratization of education in Namibia (LaRRI, 2000:6).

I suggest that my involvement with and insights into teacher unions in both pre- and post-independence Namibia position me to contribute knowledge to our understanding, and an explanation of the roles played by teacher unions in pre- and post-independence Namibia.

Currently, I have moved on from teacher unionism, and I am now a government official in the Ministry of Education. This move, from a position of a former insider to that of an outsider, allows me to reflect and explain the roles of teacher unions in the periods pre- and post-independence Namibia from a new and different perspective. This is the background against which I will examine the changing roles played by teacher unions in this study.

The rationale for the study is fourfold. Firstly, I want to understand the roles played by teacher unions in pre- and post-independence Namibia. Secondly, I wish to explain the shifting roles of teacher unions in pre- and post-independence Namibia. Thirdly, I

seek to understand and explain the contextual factors which shaped the roles of teacher unions in Namibia. Fourthly, I want to contribute knowledge to an area which has not been adequately focused on in existing studies (Jansen, 1995; Bauer, 1998; Bascia, 2005).

I have done extensive literature research in libraries on the roles of teacher unions, including through the Internet, with the assistance of librarians at the University of Pretoria, as well as in other libraries. I concluded after extensive search that there are limited studies on teacher unions, both internationally and in the sub-region, particularly on the shifting roles of teacher unions against the backdrop of changed political contexts.

Jansen (1995) observes in his study: “Understanding social transition through the lens of curriculum policy in Namibia and South Africa”, that few studies in Third World countries have examined the relationship between curriculum reform and social transition in post-colonial Africa. He argues that existing theoretical frameworks and insights into social transitions in developing countries since the 1990s in the context of the post-Cold War era are insufficient to account for the national, regional and global conditions facing educational reforms in late-colonial states in Africa. He calls for further research in this important area of African studies and educational scholarship. This study is an attempt to contribute to our understanding of the roles played by teacher unions in pre- and post-independence Namibia.

Murray and Wood (1997) corroborate the view of Jansen, and argue that the experience of trade unions in the so-called Third World differs from that of the West, and warn against “theoretical imperialism.” They suggest the need for appropriate theoretical approaches to trade unionism in developing societies. The review of existing literature reveals that the roles of teacher unions in developing countries, particularly during the transition from apartheid to independence, have not been adequately focused on in the existing literature.

The rationale for the study is, therefore, to understand the roles played by teacher unions in both pre- and post-independence Namibia, to explain the shifting roles of teacher unions in pre- and post-independence Namibia, to understand and explain the

contextual factors that shaped the roles of teacher unions in these two periods, and to contribute knowledge to an area that has not been focused on in existing studies.

## 1.5 Organization of the thesis

The study focuses on the roles played by teacher unions in Namibia, both pre- and post-independence. The thesis is organized in seven chapters.

**Chapter 1**, provides an introduction and gives the background to the study. The chapter also explains the purpose of the research, the research questions and background and the overall rationale for the study.

**Chapter 2**, focuses on what the literature says about the roles and functions of teacher unions, teacher unions and education reforms, trade unions in the contexts of post-revolutionary situations, education in pre-independence Namibia, and the context of the educational reforms post-independence. It offers a brief overview of teacher unions in Namibia and the key role-players during the educational reforms in an independent Namibia. The purpose of the literature review is to establish the existing knowledge base on the roles of teacher unions, and to highlight the gaps and shortcomings in the existing literature. The literature chapter thus provides knowledge on what the world says on the above themes.

**Chapter 3**, explains in detail the methodology I employed in conducting the study. I describe and explain the approach, the interview sample and sampling frame, the data collection procedures, and the data analysis. The chapter is also a reflection of the processes and procedures that I followed throughout the study.

**Chapter 4**, presents and discusses the results of the research sub-question, what were the roles of teacher unions in pre- and post-independence Namibia?

**Chapter 5**, gives the results and discusses the research sub-question, what pre-and post-independence institutional frameworks and modalities facilitated the participation of teacher unions?

**Chapter 6**, examines the research sub-question, what contextual factors shaped the roles of teacher unions in pre- and post-independence Namibia?

**Chapter 7**, deals with the research question on how we explain the changed roles of teacher unions in post-independence Namibia, and brings the results of the study together in a systematic manner in relation to the conceptual framework. The purpose is to offer explanations for the shifting roles of teacher unions in Namibia in different contexts.

## Chapter 2

### What the literature says about teacher unions

#### 2.1 Introduction

The main research question of this study is to understand and explain the shifting roles played by teacher unions in pre- and post-independence Namibia. I commenced the literature review with one question in mind. What is out there in the literature on teacher unions, particularly with regards to their roles and functions? The key words that guided my literature research were trade unions, teacher unions, teacher union participation, teacher union influence and education reforms.

Lichtman (2006) defines a literature review as an examination of what is out there on a particular topic, in order to establish what has gone before, what gaps there are in the literature, and how the new research could fill such gaps. Thus my aim in this chapter was to establish what is out there on teacher unions, and to identify the gaps and shortcomings in the existing literature.

A sifting through the huge literature, I had to decide how to go about organizing the literature review. Mouton (2001) offers six possible ways in which to organize a literature review:

- chronologically by date of study;
- by school of thought, theory or definition;
- by theme or construct;
- by hypothesis;
- by case study, and
- by method.

I opted to organize the literature review by theme or construct. I will commence the review by briefly giving a general overview of trade unions and their roles and functions, and the trade union theories which explains such roles and functions. This general overview is important, firstly, in helping me, to understand and locate the

roles and functions of teacher unions within the broader contexts of the roles and functions of trade unions. Secondly, an overview of the roles and functions of trade unions, especially the theories of trade unions, might help to explain the shifting roles played by teacher unions in pre- and post-independence Namibia.

Next, I narrowed the focus to concentrate on the key themes that relate to the research questions. The key themes are: teacher unions and education reforms, trade unions in post- revolutionary contexts, education in pre-independence Namibia and the context of the education reforms post-independence, brief overview of teacher unions in Namibia, and the key role-players during the education reforms after independence.

I locate the literature review within the international context. In other words, the review is about what the world says about the roles of teacher unions. Thus I have not focused solely on Namibia, although the study is specifically about the roles played by teacher unions in pre- and post-independence Namibia.

## **2.2 The roles and functions of trade unions**

Trade unions were traditionally established to provide frameworks for organized labour to fight for the improved economic and social well-being of their members (Vaillant, 2005; Patel, 1994; Du Toit, 1976). Hyman (1975), cited in Murray and Wood (1997:160), defines a trade union as first and foremost an agency and medium of power, developed primarily as a means for workers to redress the imbalance of power in the workplace. In a nutshell, trade unions exist to protect and promote the material and other interests of their members (Murray & Wood, 1997; Barber, 1996; Patel, 1994; Du Toit, 1976).

Murray and Wood (1997:159) remind us that trade unions developed as a direct response to the advent of capitalism, and to the new social relations which emerged between the new wage earning classes, the employees, and the owners of the productive assets, the employers. In the case of Namibia, trade unions developed as a response to the pre-independence political conditions of apartheid, discrimination and oppression (Klerck et al., 1997).

According to Murray and Wood (1997), there are six theories explaining the roles and functions of trade unions. I will follow the listing of the theories with explanations of

the underlying assumptions of each theory, as explained by Murray and Wood. I admit that the content of the summaries is not my own, but that of Murray and Wood.

The theories are:

- unitarism;
- pluralism;
- radical or class conflict;
- trade unions as social movements;
- theory of strategic unionism; and
- coterminous unionism.

Unitarism theorists draw their understanding of the roles and functions of trade unions from the functionalist tradition. They base their explanations of the roles and functions of trade unions on the underlying assumption of social consensus in society. They suggest that employers and employees share the same goals and values, and that they are united as one team in the workplaces. Given this unity and shared goals and values, the unitarism worldview argues that it is possible to have conflicts-free workplaces. Unitarism theorists suggest that it is not necessary to have trade unions in workplaces to represent the interests of the workers. Conflicts, if they arise, are a result of lack of communication and misunderstanding between employers and employees or the work of instigators. Unitarists argue that conflicts can be resolved without engaging in strike actions. My critique of this worldview questions whether the assumption of consensus in society is always real or imagined, and whether it is true that society always operates on consensus.

Pluralists view the roles of trade unions as fulfilling the functions of balancing conflicting interests between employers and employees in the workplace. The pluralism theory is underpinned by the assumption that relationships between employers and employees are inherently characterized by conflicting interests. Pluralists argue that conflicts between employers and employees are normal, and to be expected in labour relations. They assert that what is required are abilities and expertise to manage the conflicting relationships in order to minimize conflicts in

workplaces. Pluralists encourage the formation of trade unions and employers' organizations to serve as mediums through which conflicts between employers and employees can be managed.

Radical theorists argue that class conflicts underpin labour relations in capitalist societies. They see the roles of trade unions in such societies as contradictory: the unions play accommodation roles by participating in the existing capitalist power relations structure, which they are supposed to oppose and overthrow. According to radical theorists, the role of trade unions is to develop consciousness among the working class in order to challenge existing power relations both in the workplace and in broader society. They argue that working-class consciousness will lead to revolutions and the replacement of the capitalist system with another system.

The theorists of trade unions as social movements argues that unions expand their functions beyond the traditional roles of fighting for improved living and working conditions of their members. Proponents of the theory suggest that trade unions forge relationships with political groupings and community-based organizations to advance broader social interests. Webster (1994), cited in Murray and Wood (1997), argues that trade unions as social movements address both economic and political issues.

The economic issues relate to improvements in the working and living conditions, while the political issues refer to the struggles to bring about social and political change. The role of trade unions, according to this theory, is not limited only to improving working conditions. Trade unions go beyond traditional workers' interests, and combine these interests with political interests to bring about fundamental social and political change in society.

According to Murray and Wood (1997), strategic unionism developed out of the theory of trade unions as social movements. They suggest that it developed, because of the limitations of the theory of unions as social movements, to explain the role of trade unions in different political contexts. Barber (1996) informs us that in the United States of America and the United Kingdom, strategic unionism developed during the elections of free market-orientated governments in the 1980s. The governments introduced reforms and laws that curtailed the powers of trade unions. As a result, trade unions developed new tactics and strategies to deal with the new conditions and

environments in which they found themselves. This explanation suggests that the roles and functions of trade unions evolve, depending on the broader contextual political and social factors, and that they develop strategies and tactics to respond to the changing conditions and environments in which they find themselves.

In the case of South Africa, Murray and Wood (1997) observe that strategic unionism was a response to the demands of the transition to democracy. Von Holdt (1994), cited in Murray and Wood (1997), defines strategic unionism as a labour-driven process of radical change. Von Holdt argues that strategic unionism can only be achieved through building alliances between different unions, and the formation of coalitions with mass-based organizations. The explanation that emerges from the literature on strategic unionism is that trade unions change their strategies and tactics to confront new realities and conditions.

Murray and Wood (1997) argue that coterminous unionism is a South African developed trade union theory. It is underpinned by the assumption that trade unions combine democratically established and strong shop-floor structures with national institutionalized structures to facilitate union inputs to policy formulation. The coterminous theory of trade unions suggests that inputs coming from shop-floor structures are carried to the policymaking arena at the national level or national bargaining bodies.

The trend that emerges from the literature is that trade unions evolve over time, and do not focus only on the traditional functions of fighting for improved working and living conditions of their members. Trade unions, in the context of the struggles against apartheid in South Africa and Namibia and the fight against authoritarian regimes in Latin American countries, for example, extended their functions and roles to include political issues of national liberation and democratization (Vaillant, 2005; Bauer, 1998; Patel, 1994). The trade unions in these countries combined and used different theories, challenging the apartheid system in the case of Namibia and South Africa, and fighting against authoritarian regimes in the case of Latin American countries, in order to bring about democratic systems of governance.

In the case of South Africa, the workers, through the trade union movement, pressurized for freedom and democracy. The trade union movement in South Africa

campaigned against apartheid through mass actions, when many political organizations and leaders of national liberation movements were banned and silenced (Patel, 1994).

In a number of European and Scandinavian countries, it was the trade union movements that set up the labour and social democratic parties (Patel, 1994). I have highlighted the political roles and functions of trade unions to show, that in both developed and developing countries, they deal with social and political issues, and are constantly concerned with the fundamental transformation of society.

In summary, the literature shows that the traditional roles and functions of trade unions are to protect and promote the interests of their members. These roles and functions are evolving, and expand to combine the interests of their members and political and social issues in society. The social and political contexts in which trade unions find themselves influence and shape the roles and functions the unions play at any particular time. Barber (1996) suggests that unions develop strategies and tactics to respond to different conditions and environments.

The main shortcoming which emerges from the literature regarding the roles and functions of trade unions is the assumption that they function in a linear manner and focus on one particular issue at a time. I suggest that we should understand and explain the roles and functions of trade unions in an inclusive and holistic manner, as the analysis of any union might reveal features which straddle the bounds of various trade union theoretical constructs. Because of this, there could be overlaps and overflows of more than one theory in explaining the roles and functions of trade unions.

### **2.3 Teacher unions and education reforms**

Barber (1996) argues that teacher unions are engaged in both unionism and professionalism. He suggests that the roles of teacher unions are not confined to the traditional functions of improved working and living conditions, but expand to include participation in education policy. He observes that it is because of these two interrelated functions that trade union leaders sometimes make a distinction between what are termed “trade union functions” and ”professional functions.”

McDonnell and Pascal (1988), who have done comprehensive assessment on teacher union activities in the United States of America with regards to education reforms in the 1980s, suggest that teacher unions could take three possible stands towards education reform. Firstly, they could oppose or resist the reform policies which challenge their traditional interests. Secondly, they could adapt to the new circumstances and accommodate various reform options espoused by others. Thirdly, they could accept the educational reforms, and play an active role in shaping new approaches to teacher policies.

The literature reveals three contending views on teacher unions and education reforms. The first view argues that teacher unions do participate and play meaningful roles during educational reforms (Vaillaint, 2005; Bascia, 2005; Barber, 1996). The second group suggests that teachers and teacher unions are not considered, and do not participate or play any meaningful role during educational reforms (Kallaway, 2007; Reimers & Reimers, 1996). The third extreme position, represented by Lieberman (2000) and Haar (1998), posits that teacher unions are destructive and self-serving, and do not play any positive role whatsoever in education. These are the views out there in the literature on which I will focus in this section. I will conclude the section with a look at the conditions for effective teacher union participation in education reforms.

According to Bascia (2005:593), the extent to which teacher unions have made substantive contributions to educational policymaking corresponds to the authority teachers have had, historically, to shape the terms of their own practice. She also notes that most news media and policy researchers have generally portrayed teacher unions as lacking legitimate authority and being out of touch with what matters, and making it difficult for them to establish credibility and work pro-actively within the educational policy system (Bascia, 2005:597). She argues that there is limited empirical research on the roles of teacher unions relative to education quality, and that much of the education reforms have ignored teacher unions or attempted to make to do with inadequate evidence.

According to Bascia, teacher unions are in most cases absent from teacher policy analyses, except when they are regarded as obstructive to educational improvement. As a result, most of the research on education reforms has ignored the role of teacher

unions. Such research has focused on bargaining processes and collective agreements, and not on teacher unions and education reforms. Most educational policy research has viewed teacher unions as not quite legitimate decision-makers, as benign or irrelevant, but frequently obstructive, rarely visionary and tending to promote mediocrity (Bascia, 2005:594).

Kallaway (2007) corroborates this view, and argues that the inputs of teacher unions during educational reforms are not always taken into consideration in the policymaking processes. He argues that teachers and teacher unions have not been given substantive chances to be heard when it comes to establishing priorities and setting goals for education, but are blamed when things go wrong. At the 2009 tenth session of the Joint International Labour Organization (ILO) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations Concerning Teaching Personnel found that the benefits of social dialogue were still not widely appreciated. The Committee noted that “a tendency exists to blame teachers’ organizations for blocking change in education systems, without full appreciation of the contributions teachers make to education, including much of their working lives to the practice of their profession (Report of the tenth session of the Joint ILO and UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendation Concerning Teaching Personnel, 2009: 19).”

Barber (1996) observes that teacher unions in Britain, in parts of North America and New Zealand found themselves being excluded from educational policymaking in the 1980s and 1990s due to the dictates of free market forces which influenced policies. Bascia (2005:593) corroborates this view, and confirms that teachers’ organizations in Britain and New Zealand were essentially outlawed when the sweeping reforms of the past decade and a half significantly changed the locus of educational decision-making

These views are supported by Reimers and Reimers (1996) who observe that teachers who are supposed to implement educational change have been marginalized and alienated. They argue that teachers and teacher unions have little voice in contemporary educational reforms. In many instances, their substantive knowledge about the work they do every day is regarded as insignificant. Consequently, the views of other role-players, such as; policymakers, development partners and

international consultants, seem to be more influential, and inform the outcomes of educational reforms in many developing countries. The missing link, however, is that policymakers fail to comprehend the conditions under which the change is supposed to take place, as they are not conversant with the classroom situations in which the reforms are to be implemented.

Ratteree, one of the panellists who represented the ILO at the World Teachers' Day celebrations organized by UNESCO in 2008, suggested that engaging teachers and their organizations in education decision-making through effective social dialogue is the glue to successful reforms. He noted that many UNESCO Member States and international organizations ignore or create barriers to social dialogue. These barriers, according to Ratteree, include the lack of institutional frameworks and mechanisms for consultations and negotiations between national authorities and teacher organizations.

Ratteree argued that the knowledge and classroom experiences of teachers are under-utilized, and consequently national education reforms have little support from or ownership by teachers. Thompson, who spoke at the same event, noted that teachers rely on their organizations to represent them, speak for them, express their concerns and advocate for their preferred policies. For this to take place, mechanisms and frameworks for dialogue and consultation with teacher unions should exist. He agrees with Ratteree that the principles of consultation and engagement with teacher unions in education policy developments are still not observed in many parts of the world, both in the North and South.

The tenth session Report of the Joint ILO and UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations Concerning the Status of the Teaching Personnel of 2009 observed that there is general trend away from social dialogue and consultations between governments and teacher unions, especially in Africa, the Arab countries, Asia and the Pacific region, and Eastern Europe. As a result, governments in these regions implement education reforms without the involvement and inputs of teacher unions. The Committee defined social dialogue in education as “all forms of information sharing, consultation and negotiation between educational authorities, public and private, and teachers and their democratically elected representatives in teachers' organizations (Report of the Joint ILO and UNESCO Committee of Experts

on the Application of the Recommendations Concerning Teaching Personnel, 2009: 17).” I will highlight the findings of the Committee regarding emerging trends in social dialogue in education in each region.

The Committee noted that dialogue among the social partners was well established in Europe, and that institutions for social dialogue existed. Teacher unions in Europe take part in the institutions for dialogue in education. The Committee also observed that decisions reached in the institutional frameworks through such dialogue are generally respected. In the case of Eastern Europe, the Committee reported that the situation is mixed. Some countries have favourable conditions for social dialogue, but several countries in transition place restrictions on such dialogue. In the Russian Federation, for example, legal frameworks for dialogue exist, but trade unions do not always take advantage of their rights.

In North America, the Committee observed that teachers are strongly organized in teacher unions in the United States of America and Canada. All teachers in Canada have the right to collective bargaining, but the provincial governments often limit the practice of such bargaining due to government programmes to limit spending. According to the Report, the rights of teacher unions to collective bargaining and industrial action are absent in several states in the United States of America, and restricted in other states. Despite these limitations and restrictions, the Committee noted that teacher unions represent their members in both formal structures of social dialogue and through political processes.

The Committee reported that social dialogue in the Asia and the Pacific region is mixed, and generally limited. In the exceptional cases of Australia and New Zealand, dialogue in education is widely practiced. Trade unions are repressed in many countries of Asia and the Pacific region. The Committee observed that public sector unions, including teacher unions, operate freely, but legislation prohibits negotiation of collective agreements. In the case of India, the rights of public sector employees to organize and to engage in collective bargaining processes are limited.

The Committee noted that social dialogue in education is not yet a common practice in the Arab countries. Successful practices exist in Latin America, although in not all the countries. The Report cited the examples of Chile and Argentina, where both

legislative frameworks and favourable climates for social dialogue have existed since the return to democracy in the 1990s. However, the Committee noted that many allegations submitted to the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association came from Latin America.

The conditions for social dialogue in education in Africa, according to the Report, vary from very adverse to highly favourable. The Committee cited Namibia and South Africa as examples of countries in Africa which engage successfully in social dialogue through established institutional frameworks for social dialogue in education. A number of African countries allow teachers to unionize, but limit the exercise of the rights to social dialogue in education. Furthermore, Africa has highly fragmented union structures, and there is lack of institutional frameworks for teacher union participation in some of the countries.

To address the lack of social dialogue in education, the Committee recommended that ILO and UNESCO, in cooperation with the social partners, prepare materials and deliver training for social partners on the conduct of social dialogue in all its forms. Secondly, that ILO and UNESCO should actively promote establishing frameworks for social dialogue in countries where this practice does not exist. The Committee observed that several studies showed the positive impact of social dialogue in the governance of the educational system and the quality of education, and that respect for the rights of teachers to organize and bargain collectively was a fundamental condition for successful dialogue (Report of the tenth session of the Joint ILO and UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations Concerning Teaching Personnel, 2009:2).

The second view suggests that teacher unions are involved and participate in educational reforms. This view is represented by Vaillant (2005), Bascia (2005) and Barber (1996). One of the educational developments that have gained momentum in recent years against the backdrop of global commitments to Education for All is the promotion of policy dialogue and partnerships in education (Draxler, 2008; Marope & Sack, 2007; Buchert, 1998; ADEA, 1995).

According to Power, the former United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Assistant Director-General for Education, education can no

longer be seen solely as the responsibility of nation-states and governments, even if the responsibility still lies primarily with them. He argues that an important condition for sustainable success in implementing educational reforms is the participation of interested stakeholders and partners at local, national and international levels in the development and renovation of education systems. Teacher unions, in particular, continue to advocate for social dialogue and consultation in education and educational decision-making processes. According to Marope and Shack (2006), Angula (2000), and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA)( 1995), the promotion of education policy dialogue and consultation would bring about consensus. This in turn would foster ownership and broad legitimacy and acceptability of the outcomes of the education reforms.

Bascia (2005: 606) cites research by (Johnson, 1988, Murray & Grant, 1998 and Macke, 1998) on teachers' organizations in Canada and the United States of America, which found that teacher unions are more deeply and broadly involved in education reforms and in improving teacher quality than previous research had suggested. Barber, in his research on "education reform, management approaches and teacher unions" observes that in the case of England and Wales, a Schools Council existed by the end of the 1970s. The national government, local government and union representatives discussed curriculum and assessment issues in the Council. Unfortunately, the Council was abolished in 1984. In the case of Australia, Barber notes that teacher unions have retained their influence on education policies.

Vaillant (2005) observes that in the case of Latin American countries, teacher unions are both vehicles of protest and places of deliberations about teaching. According to Vaillant, teacher unions in Latin America include the professional development of teachers, as one of their core activities, hence their involvement in education. She explains that teacher unions in Latin America are concerned simultaneously with the so-called "bread-and-butter" issues of improving teachers' material and working conditions and the broader professional issues of education reforms. She argues that the roles that teacher unions play are situational: depending on the situation, the unions may follow a militant union model or a more specifically professional model.

Issues in which teacher unions in Latin America are involved include; political lobbying, collective bargaining and support for the development of new education

practices. Teachers and their organizations shape educational reforms and policies through their involvement in interest groups, and professional associations, or through government policy forums and think tanks (Vaillant, 2005).

Vaillant argues that teachers and their organizations are not only there to implement education policies, but can also generate and influence them. In the case of Namibia, Geingob (2004) observes that teachers were involved in the struggle for independence, fighting for the eradication of inequalities in education, and advocating for social equality. Furthermore, he notes that the labour movement in Namibia continues to play a role in influencing government policy.

Haar (1998: 2) contends that teacher unions are the enemies of educational reforms, because they pressurize elected law-makers and school board members to shape education policies, laws and contracts in their favour. Both Lieberman (2000) and Haar (1998) argue that trade unions are generally political organizations, with the power to pressurize elected law-makers to shape policies in their favour.

Lieberman argues that the governance of trade unions is like that of political parties, because trade unions leaders rely on the support of their members, and will not do things that would jeopardize their chances for re-election. Vaillant (2005:40) supports Lieberman, and explains that teacher unions tend to adopt corporatist practices and cronyism in that they hold their members captive, thereby enabling union officials to remain at the helm. The governance system and structures of trade unions, like those of most political parties, are dependent on the votes of the union members. The union leadership, therefore, tends to concentrate on material issues which would satisfy the union membership rather than on issues of professionalism.

I asked the question: What conditions should exist for teacher unions to participate in education reforms when assessing the contestations involved? This question necessitated further readings on what the literature has to say about prerequisites for teacher union participation.

Bendix (1991: 126) answers this question, when she argues that “the degree and type of industrial democracy and workers’ participation practiced in a particular country will depend on its own concept of democracy, based on its socio-political and economic ideology.” She argues further that “the origins and growth of the labour

movement, the amount of power wielded by labour in the system of government, the relative emphasis placed by unions on economic, social and political goals and the degree of government interference in the conduct of the labour relationship influence and shape the roles that unions will play in directing policies.”

Barber (1996:172) supports these views, and observes that in the case of teacher unions, each country has a different education system, with a different history of relations between teachers and the state, and that the responses of teacher unions are influenced by specific contexts. These views suggest that the participation of teacher unions in education depends on the social and political system and the powers of teacher unions.

Teacher union participation in educational reforms depends on the organizational strength of the unions and the professional capacities and expertise of their leaders and members to engage in complex education reform processes (Fataar, 2006; Bascia, 2005; Buhlungu, 1999). Draxler (2008) and Marope and Sack (2007) insist that expertise should exist in teacher unions in order for them to engage effectively in educational reforms and influence such reforms.

Bascia (2005:598) suggests that the effectiveness of teacher unions is shaped by formal educational policy system parameters. She argues that in the case of the United States of America and Canada, states and provinces have executive authority to define the purview and authority of teacher unions through legal frameworks.

Veerle and Enslin (2002) bring a new dimension to the debate when they argue that, in addition to expertise and organizational strength, teacher unions should also have the time and willingness to deliberate, and to engage in the educational reform process. They also suggest that proponents of deliberative democracy fail to account for the cost involved in engagement, and the dynamics of power relations that are inherent in consultative processes.

Anderson (2003:2), who is widely acknowledged as one of the authorities on public policies, explains that such policies are developed by governmental bodies and officials, although other actors and factors may influence public policy development. He acknowledges that public policymaking, although the prerogative of governmental

bodies is influenced by non-governmental public policy actors, such as; interest groups, political parties and individual citizens.

According to Anderson, non-governmental actors exert pressure, provide information and persuade official policymakers in the policymaking process. Non-governmental public policy actors perform an interest-articulation function, formulating and presenting alternative policies to the ones being contemplated by the policymakers. The notion that government bodies are responsible for public policies, and that other actors might influence policies could perhaps explain why teacher unions are excluded from education policies, as is argued by Kallaway and Reimers and Reimers.

The report of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (1995) observes that participation in education policy development depends on the stage of the policy process, the nature of the policy being considered and the abilities of the actors to influence the process. The report of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa also notes that international development partners have been able to influence education policy decisions, such as; the reform of primary and teacher education in Sub-Saharan Africa. Development partners are well organized, have strong resource bases, and can negotiate effectively. The report further suggests that international development partners negotiate from positions of superiority given credence by historical experiences, especially in their former colonies.

In summary, the trends which emerge from the literature regarding teacher unions and educational reforms are divergent. Some suggest that teacher unions participate in the education reforms (Bascia, 2005; Vaillant, 2005). Others argue strongly that teacher unions do not play any significant roles during the reforms. These views suggest that teacher unions are being marginalized and sidelined (Kallaway, 2007; Reimers & Reimers, 1996). To the extreme of these two positions are Lieberman (2000) and Haar (1998) who argue that teacher unions are destructive, self-centred and do not contribute to educational reforms in any significant way, since they are only concerned about their own vested interests. The shortcoming in the literature is that it does not account for cases of teacher unions in developing countries, nor does it explain the relationships and connections between changed political context and the role of teacher unions.

## 2.4 Trade unions in post-revolutionary contexts

Namibia was engaged in a protracted armed liberation and anti-colonial struggle that stretched over one hundred years and ended with the attainment of independence in 1990. The main research question of this study seeks to understand and explain the shifting roles of teachers unions in pre-and post-independence Namibia. I treat the post-independence phase in this study as a post-revolutionary context. This is the background against which I will examine the existing knowledge base and perspectives on post-revolutionary contexts in this chapter, to draw from it lessons and contextual factors with which to explain the roles of teacher unions in post-independence Namibia. The literature review offers a brief overview of post-revolutionary contexts in Asia, Africa and Latin America. These continents represent most of the post-revolutionary countries, and I suggest that they could speak on trade unions in post-revolutionary contexts.

Thomas (1995) observes that trade union movements in post-revolutionary contexts have been important in the defense of the interests of workers, and in some contexts in the struggle for democracy. He argues that in the current context of globalization, trade unions in large parts of the world seem to face confusion and lack of clarity with regards to their roles. Trade union movements, as significant social institutions, are almost being eliminated by the dictates of the forces of globalization. He explains that the current forms of industrial organization and management practices, in the context of the dictates of globalization, have no place for the traditional role of unions.

In the case of East and Southeast Asia, unprecedented rapid industrialization and economic development have been pursued, and partially achieved, on the basis of heavy control and oppression of the trade union movements (Thomas, Ramaswamy, Chhacchi and Hendriks, 1995). This includes forbidding strikes and exercising strong control over trade union operations. The situation of trade unions in the context of post-revolutionary East and Southeast Asia offers little scope for organized labour to play significant roles in influencing policies and industrial relations. Thus the trade unions play a passive role in the development process. The rights and roles of the workers are dictated by the conditions of macro-economic policies and global competitiveness.

In the case of Africa, Klerck, Murray and Sycholdt (1997) observe that the role of labour movements during the struggle for liberation was intertwined with the nationalist struggle. Trade unions in most colonial African states were closely aligned to liberation movements, and have joined with nationalist movements to lead the struggle for political independence (Bauer, 1998; Klerck, Murray and Sycholdt, 1997). The relationship forged during the national liberation struggles had a bearing on the structures of labour relations which emerged after independence. It was assumed that the close ties with nationalist liberation movements would result in “trade-union-friendly” policies after the attainment of political independence (Klerck, Murray and Sycholdt, 1997).

According to Mihyo and Schtphorst (1995), most post-colonial African states developed labour policies during the early years of independence which are corporatist in nature. Corporatist labour policies led to the incorporation and annexations of trade unions and other social movements to the official nation-state and ruling-party machineries. This is the context in which I will use corporatism in this study namely, the co-option and incorporation of unionists and unions in political parties, government and private sector structures, and subsequent loss of trade union identity as organizations primarily established to promote, defend and advance the interests of the working class. Most trade unions during the early years of independence did not play their roles as distinct bodies, separated from the party and state machineries. As a result, professional organizations were either weakened or outlawed (Mihyo & Schtphorst, 1995).

The late 1980s and 1990s witnessed the emergence of multiparty political systems in Africa. This to an extent was the result of the political and economic crisis. The wave of multiparty politics promised the acceptance of trade unions as social partners. Despite the acceptance of trade unions, Thomas (1995) notes that the relationship between governments and strong trade unions in Africa began to be antagonistic with the adoption of structural adjustment programmes in the 1980s. As a result, trade unions faced the risk of not being involved in policy development processes.

It was perhaps in this context that the then Secretary-General of the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU) in South Africa suggested that the role of trade unions in South Africa after liberation would be to advance the interests of the members and

working people in general, to guarantee and sustain the newly attained democracy and ensure its survival, and to ensure government accountability.

An important issue to bear in mind when analysing trade unions in the conditions of post-revolutionary Africa is that national liberation movements enforced norms of discipline, good conduct and rigorous lines of loyalty and obedience during the liberation struggle (Mihyo and Schtphorst, 1995). In the case of Namibia, Saul and Leyds (1995) and Dobbel (1995), cited in Sycholt and Klerck (1997:90), argue that SWAPO's exile politics have been characterized as authoritarian and pragmatic, and that a strong authoritarian and hierarchical streak emerged during exile.

This authoritarian character was expressed in the organizational structure of SWAPO, and the suppression of democratic practices and criticism of the party (Saul & Leyds, 1995). The conditions under which the liberation movements operated perhaps explain the enforcement of authoritarian norms and discipline. I suggest that the culture of militaristic discipline and loyalty to the party enforced during the liberation struggle had a bearing on participatory democracy in post-revolutionary contexts. This culture expects citizens, including trade unions, to follow, and not to engage critically, in policy formations.

Little literature exists that focuses on the role of teacher unions in democratization and political liberalization, especially in Africa. This is particularly the case with regard to the transition from apartheid to independence and democracy. Kraus (2007) observes that relatively few scholars have focused their attention on the impact of unions on the democratization process, and that there is relatively little theorizing regarding the roles unions have played in the second or transitional stage of democratization.

Despite this observation, this section provides a synopsis of the literature on trade unions and the struggles for democratization and political liberalization, particularly, in Africa. It also summarizes their roles during transitions to democracy and post-democratization. The brief overview focuses on the literature of Kraus, Bauer, Woods and Seekings, because they have conducted studies on trade unions in Africa which will help to position and contextualise the roles of teacher unions in Namibia both pre- and post-independence.

Bauer (2007:229) observes that in many African colonies, trade unions joined nationalist movements to lead the struggle for political independence. Trade unions in many African countries also played a muscular and seminal role in the late 1980s and early 1990s in mobilizing mass protests and strikes which led to the overthrow of authoritarian regimes and ushered in democratic transitions (Kraus, 2007:256). Some trade unions and labour movements formed the basis for new opposition political parties. This was the case, for example, in Zimbabwe, Malawi and Namibia.

Political liberalization, as defined by Kraus (2007), and used in this study, refers to the fight for civil liberties, such as; freedom of association and the right to organize, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press. The new political parties in some countries strongly, and in some cases successfully, challenged incumbent governments to bring about democracy and political liberalization. This was the case in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe (Bauer, 2007). Some former trade unionists successfully captured state power, as in the case in Malawi and Zambia. I submit that the role of trade unions in the struggles for democratization and political liberalization has been consistent, both during the colonial period, and in the transitions from one-party regimes to democracy. Trade unions continued in the post-transition period to play leading roles in public and political life in ways crucial to the vitality of democracy (Kraus, 2007: 256).

Focusing specifically on teacher unions, we observe that they, like other trade unions, played critical roles in democratization and political liberalization. In the case of the Ivory Coast, for example, teachers' associations were at the helm of the democratization process, bringing to an end nearly three decades of autocratic one-party rule. They were one of the major actors in contesting the legitimacy of one-party rule, and in criticizing the private appropriation of public resources by Africa's ruling class (Woods, 1996). This was done despite the control over associational activities during the one-party system. The control measures included; the monitoring of union activities, repression by the army and other military apparatus, and arrest of the leaders of teachers' associations (Woods: 1996). According to Woods (1996), teachers' associations in the Ivory Coast refused to subordinate their organizational interests to the state, and continued with their contestations and criticism of state educational policies in their fight for democratization and political liberalization. It is

arguable that the role of teachers' associations in the Ivory Coast, as was the case in other African states during the fight for independence and democratization, expanded beyond the narrow self-interests of the teachers.

Woods (1996) further notes that “teachers occupy a strategic, but precarious position in many African societies. On the one hand they are connected to the ruling class in so far as those in power often turn to them as a way to legitimate their rule. On the other hand, teachers are part of Africa’s fragile middle-class, since they benefit from the relatively high expenditures of African governments on education (Woods, 1996:113).” This is especially the case, because a high percentage of the budgets of ministries of education in Africa is allocated to the salaries of teachers and education employees. Salaries of teachers in South Africa, for example, absorb 90% of the schooling budget, and the education budget accounts for between 21% and 24% of the total budget, which is equal to about 6% of GDP (Seekings, 2004). The high salaries of teachers, due to their middle-class position relative to other employees in government, are the benefits to which Woods refers.

In the case of post-apartheid South Africa, the trade unions’ record in acting as a movement for the poor is shaped by their primary objective of looking after their members’ interests (Seekings, 2004). He further notes that, in the case of South Africa, “the poor comprises above all, the jobless, and that the core working class and the unionised white-collar and service occupants are certainly poor relative to managers and professionals, but at the same time they are advantaged relative to the jobless and the working poor (ibid, 2004:299). ”

To demonstrate the impact of the self-interest of teachers on the poor, Seekings argues that self-interest has led teachers and their unions in post-apartheid South Africa to oppose, block or impede some reforms which would improve the quality of schooling for poor children (ibid, 2004:22). According to Seekings, teacher unions in post-apartheid South Africa, especially SADTU, have exerted a strong influence on education policy, including the kinds of reform that are enacted. He notes that teacher unions have protected their members against retrenchment, have lobbied for wage increases, and have been strong opponents of teacher appraisal and other accountability measures relating to their performance. This led Seekings to ask: “Can

the labour movement be a movement for the poor, even if it is not a movement of the poor?” It is arguable that teacher unions, like other trade unions, fight for self-interest, and are not generally a movement for the poor.

This section also reviewed the existing literature on post-independence Namibia. The study examined the roles of teacher unions against the backdrop of a changed political context, hence the need to review the literature on Namibia post-independence. The purpose was to give the reader a very brief overview of the political, social and economic characteristics of post-independence Namibia.

The advent of independence brought an end to colonialism, and ushered in a new era of multiparty democracy and respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms. As Bauer (2007) has argued, this was unprecedented when compared to the context of the pre-independence period, when fundamental human rights and freedoms were not fully respected by the organs of the state. The Namibian Constitution provides for the Legislative Assembly, an office of the Ombudsman, a Bill of Rights and other institutions required in a democratic state (Tapscott 2001). One important provision of the Bill of Rights, in the context of Namibia post-independence and against the backdrop of the history of the country, is that “discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, colour, ethnic origin, religion, creed or social or economic status”, is outlawed (Constitution of the Republic of Namibia, 1990).

Despite the commitment to multiparty democracy, SWAPO, according to Melber (2007:110), has democratically consolidated its position by continually securing a two-thirds majority in parliament since 1994. SWAPO has complete control over the institutionalized political decision-making process in post-independence Namibia. This situation makes the Namibian post-independence political landscape a one-party dominant political system. Although the one-party dominant political system in Namibia has come about through democratic electoral processes, I argue that this is contrary to the intention of the fathers and mothers of the Namibian Constitution to build a pluralist and multiparty democratic political system. In addition to a one-party dominant political system, Tapscott (2001:322) observes that the growth of a self-serving elite and the drift towards authoritarianism in the public sphere has emerged post-independence, and has been made easier by the weakness of civil society in

Namibia. He further observes that the trade union movement, which in other contexts has been an important player in civil society, is generally weak in Namibia.

With respect to social factors, the incoming SWAPO government at independence inherited a society in which racial, ethnic and class differences were firmly entrenched, and in which political enmity and social distrust were endemic (Tapscott, 2001:313). To overcome the mistrust and divisions, and to forge a new national identity, the government adopted a policy of national reconciliation. Both Melber (2007) and Tapscott (2001) argue that the policy of national reconciliation, and the compromises made to secure the decolonization process, required acceptance of the inherited socio-economic structures.

Thus the compromises during the decolonization process constitutionally endorsed the existing ownership and property rights. The policy of national reconciliation in the context of Namibia “has reinforced the status quo by protecting the pre-independence gains of the minority, by reproducing existing relations of production and by legitimising patterns of social differentiation that had existed in the colonial era” (Tapscott (2001:313).” As a result, Tapscott argues that there is evidence of a growing class stratification which transcends previous racial and ethnic boundaries to a more considerable extent than was the case pre-independence and in the immediate post-independence period in Namibia. This new expanded class includes; senior black administrators, politicians and businesspeople.

Rosendahl (2010) corroborates Melber and Tapscott regarding class stratifications in Namibia, and notes that Namibia is one of the most unequal societies in the world, with a Gini-coefficient of 0,6. She further notes that, despite Namibia’s classification as an upper middle-income country, it is characterized by high HIV/AIDS prevalence, a low level of education, and a severe shortage of skills. Finally, Rosendahl (2010) observes that the Namibian government can pride itself, however, on a stable political, legal and institutional environment and sound macro-economic policies, and the political system has witnessed a high degree of stability since independence.

The distribution of income in Namibia is among the most unequal in the world, with 10% of households, or 5,3% of the population, consuming about 44% of the total

private consumption in households, while 90% of the households, or 94,7% of the population, consuming about 56% of the total private consumption in the households (Dubresson and Graefe, 2001:74).

In assessing the performance post-independence, Melber (2007:115) argues that, “since independence, the Republic of Namibia’s balance sheet for both the politically institutionalized culture and the culture of the political institutions as well as the socio-economic performance has been at best mixed.” The situation in Namibia post-independence is still characterized by class stratifications, high unemployment levels of the economically active population, disparities between urban, rural and remote areas in the provision of social services, low annual economic growth rates, and unequal distribution of income.

With respect to the provision of educational services post-independence, Gretschel (2001) notes that the priority of the Ministry of Education at independence was to dismantle existing apartheid structures in schooling, and to put in place a Namibian education system. The first step was thus to abolish the ten ethnic departments of education and the Department of National Education. This was followed by the introduction of a new curriculum, and the establishment of new educational institutions, such as; the University of Namibia and the Polytechnic of Namibia. The Ministry of Education post-independence focused, and continues to focus on four goals, namely; access to education, equity in education, quality education, and democracy in education.

Quantitative improvements of the education system in post-independence Namibia include; the continual increase in the budget allocated to education since 1990, and infrastructural development resulting in the growth in the number of schools from 1 325 in 1992, immediately after independence, to 1 677 in 2009. The number of learners grew from 439 325 in 1992 to 585 471 in 2009, while the number of teachers increased from 15 257 to 21 607. I submit that the Ministry of Education has achieved milestones regarding access to education, given the learner enrolment and increase in the number of schools, which facilitated increased access to education post-independence. The quality imperatives, efficiency of the education system and learner academic achievements post-independence remain challenges, as is evidenced in the

Grade 10 and 12 results, and in the results of international studies such as those carried out by the Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality and the World Bank.

In a nutshell, post-independence Namibia guarantees constitutionally entrenched fundamental human rights and freedoms. These provisions were non-existent in the pre-independence period. Despite these provisions, post-independence Namibia is characterized by a one-party dominant political system, class stratifications, unequal income distribution, high unemployment rates, high HIV/AIDS prevalence, and low economic growth rates. Regarding education, Namibia post-independence has made strides to broaden access to education. Improving the quality of education and reducing inequity in educational provision, however, remain challenges.

In the case of Latin American countries, trade unions were among the actors in the political process. According to Koonings, Kruyt and Wils (1995), the role of trade unions shifted after 1930 from focusing on the narrow interests of the workers to being vehicles for political action. In return, the interests of trade unions were incorporated in the articulation of sectoral social interests. Many Latin American countries witnessed dictatorship and institutionalized authoritarianism in the 1960s. As a result, organized labour became politically marginalized.

The relationship between government and trade union shifted from the earlier incorporation in the 1930s to exclusion from power and policy making in the 1960s (Koonings, Kruyt and Wils, 1995). During the 1960s, trade unions were de-activated and prohibited or strictly controlled by the state. The unions in Latin American countries, together with other social formations, mobilized for democracy and social reform in the late 1970s and 1980s, which eventually led to the collapse of dictatorship and the transition to democracy.

In summary, the trends emerging from the literature show that trade unions played different roles post-revolution. They were part of the state and party machineries during the early years of the revolution in both Africa and Latin America. Thereafter, trade unions were sidelined, and this led to their involvement in political formations to fight for democratic spaces. In the case of Asia, trade unions post-revolution are

controlled and oppressed. There seem to be connections between the roles of trade unions in Africa, Latin America and East and Southeast Asia and post-revolutionary policies. The policies include annexation of trade unions as part of nation-states and party machineries, and enforced control of the unions. The configuration and nature of the political systems and industrialization seem to shape and influence the roles that trade unions play in post-revolutionary contexts. As a result, the unions become passive actors, agents of change, or are completely sidelined.

## **2.5 Brief overview of education in pre-independence Namibia and the context of post-independence education reforms**

I will briefly provide an overview of education in pre-independence Namibia, and suggest that the political contextual factors pre-independence offer the context of the post-independence education reforms. According to Cohen (1994), formal education in pre-independence Namibia was provided by the missionaries and the German government from 1884 to 1915. It was followed by the South African government and more missionaries from 1915 to 1969. The provision of education from the 1980s until 1990 was the responsibilities of ten ethnic representative authorities, through their departments of education and the Department of National Education. Each of the representative authorities was responsible for the provision of pre-primary, primary, secondary education and primary-school teacher education.

According to Ellis (1984) and Cohen (1994), education during South African rule was designed to suit the politics and policies of the South African government. In this context, Gretschel (2001) observes that the policy of Bantustans in Namibia, based on the Odendaal Commission report of January 1964, was introduced to promote the policy of separate development. The Odendaal Commission recommended that each tribal group in Namibia be allocated a reserve or Bantustan of its own, where it would develop separately. In the case of education, the policy of separate development established a racially and tribally segregated school system in Namibia. Only one player, namely, the apartheid state, was responsible for education policymaking processes. The state maintained control over education in ways that were bureaucratically centralized, racially exclusive and politically authoritarian (Jansen, 2001:12).

To reinforce control over education, the South African government promulgated various educational legislations from the 1920s to independence in 1990. Some of these legislations were; Education Proclamation, Number 55 of 1921, Education Proclamation, Number 16 of 1926, the Bantu Education Act, Number 47 of 1953, Education Act, Number 47 of 1963, Proclamation AG 8 of 1980, and the National Education Act, Number 30 of 1980(Cohen,1994). The purpose of listing these legislations is not to discuss their provisions, but only to illustrate the centralized, controlled, fragmentation and unequal nature of education provision both in terms of access to education and the funding of education in Namibia pre-independence. White learners had more access to educational opportunities compared to the other ethnic groups and the funding of a white learner was higher compared to a black learner (Ellis, 1984). It is arguable that educational provision pre-independence was characterized by unequal access to educational opportunities and inequity in education on the basis of race, tribe and ethnic origin.

The role of the South African government in education in pre-independence Namibia was captured by Angula (2000) when he observed that before independence, education and culture in Namibia were the theatre for the implementation of the policy of apartheid and separate development.

Jansen (1995:1) expands on this assertion when he argues in his study: “Understanding social transition through the lens of curriculum policy: Namibia/South Africa” that the reference to Namibia as “South Africa’s fifth province” is not an exaggeration. He notes that Namibia reflected in style and substance the image of South Africa, and that the political identity of many white Namibians remains linked to Pretoria after independence. Jansen concludes that the linkage was more tangibly demonstrated in the school curriculum. All aspects of education policy development and implementation in Namibia before independence mirrored the Bantu education system in South Africa.

Buchert (1998) observes that nation-states implement educational reforms for different reasons. In some cases, it is a result of austerity measures to reduce public expenditure on education. It could also be a result of the privatization of educational services or the consequences of a changed political context. In the context of Namibia, creating a unified education system out of the eleven education administrations, which

existed before independence, establishing equitable access to quality education for all, and developing the efficiency and effectiveness of the education system seem to have been the main considerations needing immediate address after the attainment of independence in 1990.

Cohen (1994) observes that Namibia, like the case with most post-independent African countries, was confronted with pressing educational challenges at independence. These challenges included expanding educational provision, designing a new curriculum, and restructuring and reorganizing the colonial education system to create a unified system that would serve all the people of Namibia.

According to Angula (1999:3-4), at independence, schools were still segregated according to race and ethnic classification. Change was overdue. The content, pedagogy, examination procedures and the ethos of the colonial education enterprise were largely outmoded, irrelevant, and unsuited to the needs and aspirations of a new Namibia. The education reforms were designed to reflect the values of the Namibian Constitution of non-racialism, democracy and justice for all in the education system (Angula, 1999). In a nutshell, this is the context which shaped the education reforms after the attainment of independence in Namibia in 1990.

To conclude, education policies and provisions in pre-independence Namibia were premised on the notions of white supremacy, separate development, racial and ethnic separation, and unequal access to educational opportunities (Jansen, 1995; Salio-Bao, 1991; Ellis, 1984). Thus education provision was based on race from the 1920s to the 1970s. During the 1980s, it was provided according to tribe and ethnic origin, hence the establishment of ten education authorities and the Department of National Education in 1980.

## **2.6 Brief overview of teacher unions in Namibia**

Prior to independence, teachers in Namibia were organized into fragmented, ethnic and tribal teachers' unions. These unions were framed in the identities and images of race, tribe and ethnicity, which defined the identities of Namibians pre-independence. This was the result of the apartheid policies in education and other spheres of life

during this period. As I explained earlier, only teachers' associations existed in Namibia pre-independence.

Bendix (1998:165) makes distinctions between unions and associations when she states that: "Unions establish a position of equality with the employer and engage in bargaining with the employer, as opposed to associations, which do not bargain but merely talk and which have to rely mostly on the goodwill of the employer, because they do not have the power base or position to elicit concessions from him."

With the establishment of departments of education for each representative authority and the Department of National Education through proclamation AG 8 of 1980, ethnic teacher unions were also established to represent teachers according to the demarcation of the representative authorities. The following teacher unions existed in pre-independence Namibia:

- Caprivi Teachers' Association (for teachers working for the Caprivi Representative Authority);
- Kavango Onderwysersvereniging (for teachers working for the Kavango Representative Authority);
- Namibia Onderwysersvereniging (for teachers working for the Department of National Education, Tswana, Herero and Damara Representative Authorities);
- Namibia Professionele Onderwysersvereniging (for teachers working for the Nama Representative Authority);
- Owambo Teachers' Association (for teachers working for the Owambo Representative Authority);
- Namibia Onderwysersvereniging (for teachers working for the Government of Rehoboth and Coloured Representative Authority); and
- Suidwes Afrikaanse Onderwysersunie (for teachers working for the White Representative Authority).

I have highlighted the teacher unions to illustrate the extent to which teachers in Namibia were fragmented and divided according to ethnic origin, tribe and race prior to the formation of a national teachers' union on the eve of independence in 1989. According to Cohen (1994), Namibia had 12 525 teachers in 1988, but the number of teachers could have been less when the representative authorities were established in 1980. I suggest that teachers in Namibia could have been represented by one teacher union instead of seven teachers' unions.

Namibian teachers were still organized into ethnic, tribal and racial teacher unions in 1988, while other groups such as; churches and students' bodies had established national organizations to represent and articulate their interests at the national level. It was because of the fragmentation and limitations of the then existing teacher unions, which prevented them from operating beyond the scope of their representative authorities, that the Federation of Teachers' Associations of South West Africa/ Namibia was established. The purpose of the Federation, according to Ellis (1994), was to serve as an umbrella body for all the tribal and ethnic teachers' unions. Jankowski, quoted in LaRRI (2000:1), explains:

*The white association was dominant, because they had offices and resources. Their interest in the Federation was based on the fact that the Transitional Government of that time had told them that they needed 5000 teachers in order to be recognized. This is the reason why they started coming to us. There was no real desire to achieve unity. If they could have reached the 5000 mark on their own they would not have bothered with us.*

The challenges and limitations that the ethnic teacher unions faced in Namibia became evident in 1988. The South African Defence Force put up military camps near schools in northern Namibia. Kandombo, cited in LaRRI, recalls:

*The South African Defence Force put up military camps close to schools. There was a camp at almost every secondary school and apparently they were trying to prevent learners from moving out and establishing contact with the freedom fighters. The parents and students rejected the camps near schools. When freedom fighters attacked a camp near Ponthofi*

*Secondary School, some innocent learners were killed in the crossfire. This outraged the other students, who questioned the use of camps and the presence of soldiers who killed students instead of protecting them. The students demanded the removal of the camps and linked this demand to other related issues in education. They also identified the lack of unity among teachers as a problem, since teachers had remained neutral in the struggle for better education. Teachers then began to realize that they had no political or educational agenda and that they were just serving as tools of the old administration.*

The students embarked upon an indefinite national class boycott, and demanded the removal of the camps and the South African troops. According to LaRRI (2000), their demands were also linked to the independence of Namibia. As a result of the class boycotts, 60% of the black students in Namibia were unable to write their final examinations at the end of 1988. Parents, trade unions and churches met several times to discuss the education crisis.

The teacher unions were silent, and did not respond to the education crisis. The silence of the ethnic teachers' unions, their failure to challenge the apartheid education system, and to respond to the education crisis as a united front, led to discussions and consultations with progressive teachers in Namibia. These centred on the need to form a national progressive teachers' union in order to address the education crisis at the national level (LaRRI, 2000). These events culminated in the launching of NANTU as the first national teachers' union in Namibia on the 11<sup>th</sup> March 1989.

Some of the ethnic teachers' unions were voluntarily dissolved after the formation of NANTU in 1989, in order to allow their members to join the newly established progressive national teachers' union. Those teacher unions which did not disband instead established a rival teacher union in May 1990, the Teachers' Union of Namibia (TUN). The teachers' associations which spearheaded the establishment of TUN maintained that they were in principle supportive of a national teachers' union. They objected, however, to the formation of NANTU, because they argued that the process was driven by students who dictated to teachers, and this they found unacceptable (LaRRI, 2000).

According to the founding president of NANTU, the launching of NANTU on the eve of independence included preparations for the responsibilities post-independence (LaRRI, 2000). In his reflections during the celebration of the Union's ten years of existence in 2000, the founding president observed that NANTU had been formed at a time when the country was nearing the end of its long struggle for freedom, peace and justice. The transition to independence demanded that the people of Namibia, including teacher unions, prepare themselves not only to enter a new era in unison, but also to make real contributions towards nation-building and the reconstruction of the socio-economic system of our new nation (LaRRI, 2000).

Namibia has two teacher unions namely, the Namibia National Teachers' Union (NANTU) and the Teachers' Union of Namibia (TUN). The main objectives of NANTU are; to unite all Namibian teachers in a non-racial and national teacher's organization which seeks to channel teachers' democratic demands, to organize the teachers into a national body that will strive towards a relevant, non-racial and democratic form of education, and to promote students', teachers' and parents' democratic involvement in the educational process (Labour Resource and Research Institute, 2000:5-6).

The main objectives of TUN are; to vigorously protect and promote the rights and interests of its members, both individually and collectively, in their professional, personnel, social and legal positions, to strive for complete democracy in the educational system of Namibia, and to strive for optimal and equal educational opportunities and facilities for each and every child in Namibia (Teachers' Union of Namibia Constitution, 2003).

NANTU continues to be the dominant teacher union in Namibia. This dominance could be ascribed to two factors: firstly, the proof and confirmation offered by majority membership, and secondly, the recognition by the Government of the Republic of Namibia in 1995 that NANTU acts as the exclusive bargaining agent for all teachers in Namibia. The Namibian Labour Act provides that the trade union representing the majority of employees in a bargaining unit, as defined by it, will be recognized as the sole bargaining agent for all employees in that unit.

This section also provides briefly the main aims and general principles of Education International, and the stand the organization takes regarding trade unionism and professionalism of teachers and education employees. This reflection is important for two reasons. Firstly, both the teacher unions in Namibia, namely, NANTU and TUN, are affiliates of Education International. Secondly, the aims and general principles of Education International on trade unionism and the professionalism of teachers and education employees might have an influence on the roles of teacher unions in Namibia, since Education International carries out activities for affiliates on both trade unionism and professionalism. This is the background for a brief reflection on the main aims and general principles of Education International.

According to the Constitution of Education International, the main aims of the organization are to further the cause of organizations of teachers and education employees, to promote the status, interests and welfare of their members, and to defend their trade union and professional rights. Furthermore, Education International supports and promotes the professional freedoms of teachers and education employees and the right of their organizations to participate in the formulation and implementation of educational policies (Handbook, Education International, October 1995). They do this by encouraging the ratification and implementation of international conventions by national governments, by assisting member organizations to become aware of their rights, and by assisting the affiliates to file complaints at the intergovernmental body concerned in cases of violation of trade union rights.

Does fragmentation of teacher unions influence their bargaining power and relations with the government? Barber, who was one of the leading architects of the British Labour Party's education policy agenda prior to the 1997 election, and then led its implementation after the Party's election, answers this question. He explains why teacher unions in the United States of America are more powerful than those in England. He notes that there are six unions in the United Kingdom, and that they are focused on competition among themselves for members, instead of engaging with the government.

Vaillant (2005) supports this view, and cites the experience of Mexico where it was shown that having one teacher union can simplify negotiations, as it minimizes the

risks of teacher unions fighting amongst themselves instead of focusing on their engagement with government. I suggest that the assertions of Barber and Vaillant support the view that multiplicities of teacher unions limit their collective strength to engage government in social dialogue in education and in collective bargaining processes.

In summary, Namibia had fragmented, ethnic, tribal and racial teachers' unions before 1989. Teachers were organized on the basis of race, tribe, colour and ethnic origin, and their identities were framed according to the existed political dispensation. The inability of the ethnic, tribal and racial teachers' unions to participate in education at the national level, especially during the education crisis of 1988, facilitated the establishment of a national progressive teachers' union. This was designed to unite all teachers in Namibia, and to prepare them for their expected national roles in Namibia post-independence. Democratization of education and the involvement and participation of teacher unions in education and education decision-making processes are some of the stated objectives of both teacher unions in Namibia.

## **2.7 Key role-players during the education reforms in Namibia post-independence**

The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of the key role-players during the education reforms in post-independence Namibia, and to identify their key roles during the education reforms. Geingob (2004) observes in his doctoral thesis "State formation in Namibia: Promoting democracy and good governance" that there were many players who attempted to manage transition to independence in Namibia in a way that furthered their own interests. Angula, the first Minister of Education in an independent Namibia issued a discussion document in January 1990, and invited all stakeholders in education to participate in educational reform and renewal.

Angula (2000) and Jansen (1995) note the following as the key-role players during the education reforms in post-independence Namibia:

- the Minister of Education;
- staff members in the Ministry of Education;

- international experts and consultants;
- teacher unions; and
- students' organisations.

The above players played different roles during the educational reforms. According to Jansen (1995), Minister Angula played an activist role, participating in the bureaucratic operations and decisions of his Ministry. In my interview with him during the data collection for this study, Angula explained that the role of the Minister during the educational reforms was both to provide policy guidelines, and to direct the reforms.

The role of the international experts and consultants was to provide policy advice, financial support and technical expertise, especially in the areas of the reforms of general education and policy formulation (Obanya, 2000; Angula, 1999; Jansen, 1995).

Cohen (1994:392) observes that Namibia suffered from a shortage of skilled education professionals at independence, especially in planning and policy analysis. This perhaps explains why international experts and consultants carried out most of the thematic studies and surveys which informed the education reforms after independence, as I will explain in the next chapters.

Progressive teacher unions and students' organizations played the role of pressure groups and advocates for an immediate and fundamental change in education. According to Angula (2000), teacher unions and students' organizations wanted the entire education system to be overhauled overnight. He observes that these two groups were staunch allies in the process of educational change and renewal: "From time to time, we jointly met to map out the next steps. In the times of crisis, we supported and encouraged each other. Their contribution to the reform process was invaluable (Angula, 2000:17)." They also participated in the institutional frameworks and modalities established to look at specific issues of the education reforms.

## 2.8 Conclusion

The purpose of the literature review was to examine what is out there on the roles and functions of teacher unions, and on the research questions that the study examines. The literature suggests that the roles and functions of trade unions, including teacher unions, depend on the political and social context, and are ever evolving and expanding. Trade unions were traditionally established to protect and promote the interests of their members. The roles and functions of trade unions, as I have illustrated in the literature review, go beyond their traditional functions, and address economic, political and social issues. The theories of trade unions explain the ever evolving and expanding roles and functions of the unions.

With regards to teacher unions and education reforms, three positions emerged during the review of the literature to explain how teacher unions would respond to educational reforms. The first group, represented by Bascia (2005), Kallaway (2007) and Reimers & Reimers (1996), argues that teacher unions do not participate in education reforms and that their views are not taken into account during the reforms. The second view, represented by Vaillant (2005) and Barber (1996), suggests that teacher unions do participate in both trade unionism and professional issues. They cite the examples of Latin America, England and Wales and Australia to illustrate how teacher unions in these countries are involved in education reforms. The third group is represented by Haar (1998) and Lieberman (2000), who argue that teacher unions do not play any roles during the educational reforms whatsoever, and are only there to serve their own vested interests.

On trade unions and post-revolutionary contexts, the literature from East and Southeast Asia, Latin America and Africa suggest that trade unions under one-party states and authoritarian regimes during the immediate post-revolutionary period were controlled, becoming annexures of the nation-states and party machineries. The situation changed in Africa after authoritarian regimes were overthrown, and multiparty democracy was established.

Education in Namibia pre-independence was linked to the politics of segregation and fragmentation, on the basis of colour, race and ethnic origin. The South African government promulgated various legislations to centralize and control education. The

segregation, fragmentation and unequal access to educational opportunities provided the contextual factors which shaped education reforms in post-independence Namibia.

Teacher unions in pre-independence Namibia were organized and modelled according to the identities and politics of fragmentation and ethnicity. Their inability to address educational issues at the national level gave rise to the establishment of a progressive national teachers' union in Namibia. I concluded the literature review by offering insights into the key role-players during the education reforms, and by highlighting the roles that they played.

From the literature review, it emerges that there are gaps in the existing knowledge base on teacher unions and education reforms. These gaps are noticeable in the lack of focus on trade unions in the south, and on the changed political contexts. Most of the examples of the roles and functions of teacher unions in the existing literature focus on the cases of Europe and the United States of America. My extensive search, with the assistance of the librarian at the University of Pretoria, revealed that there are limited studies on the roles of teacher unions. Existing studies on teacher unions also treats such unions as homogeneous groups, which responds in a similar manner to educational reforms in all contexts. The limited literature on teacher unions and education reforms originates mostly from Europe and the United States of America, and does not account for changed political contexts in Africa, especially the move from apartheid to independence. These gaps necessitate further research to generate more knowledge on teacher unions, education reforms, and the relationship and connections between teacher unions and changed political contexts.