

Chapter 5

Institutional frameworks and modalities for teacher union participation

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I seek to explain the institutional frameworks and modalities established in pre- and post-independence Namibia to facilitate the participation of teacher unions. I outline the institutional frameworks and modalities, and examine the extent to which they provide avenues for teacher union participation. I will examine both the institutional frameworks and modalities created by the Ministry of Education, especially during the education reforms, and those created through legislative frameworks. I will also explore the reasons why the Ministry of Education created frameworks and modalities for teacher union participation in post-independence Namibia. The data for this chapter are drawn largely from interviews with staff members in the Ministry of Education and in the teacher unions. The data are supported by appropriate document analysis. In analysing the frameworks and modalities, I take into account the suggestion of Bendix (1999) that the lack of union influence on the decision-making processes could be ascribed to the absence of structures through which the unions could participate in order to influence educational policies.

Case studies of education reforms in Guatemala, Honduras and the Dominican Republic in the 1980s and 1990s have shown that government-union dialogue is only possible through established mechanisms and spaces designed to foster consensus on educational reforms (Vaillant, 2005). Against this background, I examine the institutional frameworks and modalities for teacher union participation in Namibia.

5.2 Institutional frameworks and modalities pre-independence

Until the late 1970s, black Namibian workers in pre-independence Namibia were not allowed to belong to unions. According to Bauer (1997:68), the 1952 Wage and Industrial Conciliation Ordinance provided for the organization of trade unions in the territory, but excluded black workers from the definition of “employee”, precluding

their effective participation in trade unions. The first trade unions in Namibia were established in the 1980s. In the case of the teachers, Namibia did not have unions that could represent their interests and articulate their aspirations at the national level until 1989. As I showed in the literature review chapter, teachers' associations in Namibia pre-independence were organized within the identities and frames of race, tribe and ethnic origin.

As Bendix (1998) notes, teacher unions can establish a position of equality with the employer and engage in collective bargaining, while teacher associations merely talk and rely on the goodwill of the employer. Securing the goodwill of the employer was difficult, if not impossible, pre-independence, as the ideology and policies of the South African government involved centralization of power and control, and exclusion of Namibians from the educational policymaking processes (Jansen, 1995; Cohen, 1994; Ellis 1984).

The ideology and politics of centralization and control did not allow participation in education processes, hence the absence of institutional frameworks and modalities for teacher union participation before independence. According to Cohen (1994:83), as a result of the Treaty of Peace and South West Africa Mandate Act, No. 49 of 1919, South Africa assumed civil responsibilities and control over South West Africa, and began to place the education system under centralized control, and control which continued until 1990. Thus institutional frameworks and modalities to facilitate teacher union participation did not exist before independence. There was only one player in educational policymaking processes, namely, the South African government. Moyo, a unionist, elaborates on the pre-independence policymaking process:

Most of the time when it came to conferences, they would only talk about service conditions and the policies were given from South Africa, Pretoria (interview with Moyo, 12 April, 2009).

The absence of teacher union recognition and the space to participate in education and educational policymaking were among the contextual factors which shaped the formation of a national progressive teachers' union in Namibia. One of the objectives of the national union was to fight for the democratization of education, and to promote teachers' democratic involvement in the education process (LaRRI, 2000).

A former unionist elaborates:

The ethnic teachers' associations were ethnically structured and linked to ethnic authorities, and could therefore, not address national issues. You end up becoming very limited in outreach and in representing the sectoral interests of the group of teachers in a particular ethnic administration. That influenced the thinking of unity amongst teachers who saw the limitations, and who saw the national unions and industrial unions under the umbrella of the NUNW as well as the students' organization, NANSO, who were far more effective in addressing the burning national issues, and not trying to look for reformist solutions that could not work within this colonial framework (interview with Steven, 24 March ,2009).

Steven notes important limitations of teacher unions pre-independence in addressing educational issues at the national levels. Firstly, the unions were located within ethnically and tribally defined frameworks. This limited their power and their authorities to go beyond ethnic boundaries. This confinement, according to Steven, influenced the teachers' thinking about national unity.

5.3 Institutional frameworks and modalities post-independence

Bauer (1998) observes that one of the most innovative and a distinct aspect of democratization in the new Namibia, as compared to the pre-independence context, was the emergence of favourable political and legal environment to enhance labour relations. I suggest that independence, freedom and democracy ushered in a new dispensation, one conducive to teacher union participation in educational policy and decision-making processes. A unionist explains the post-independence space as follows:

Those political spaces came after independence that we enjoyed and made use of for our own good, the union's good and the members' good, but also for the greater good of education and the country in general (interview with Boys, 15 March, 2009).

The above comments affirm that the post-independence context opened up spaces for teacher union participation. This might explain why the Ministry of Education after

independence took a participatory and inclusive approach to education in general and educational reforms in particular. Subsequently, the Ministry created different institutional frameworks and modalities to facilitate teacher union participation, especially during the reforms from 1990 to 1999. These frameworks included; the establishment of taskforces/task teams, curriculum and subject review panels, the convening of consultative thematic conferences, and the promulgations of presidential commissions on education. I suggest that these frameworks and modalities facilitated the participation of teacher unions in education. Angula elaborates:

As I said earlier, our strategy was this, that when we had an issue, for example, language in education, we would put up taskforces/task teams. The teacher unions and students' unions served in those task teams, such as on; language in education, teacher education, examinations or curriculum (interview with Angula, 19 February, 2009).

Angula's view on the creation of institutional frameworks and modalities to facilitate teacher union participation in education is supported and corroborated both by staff members in the Ministry of Education and by the unions. I give the views of two staff members in the Ministry of Education and two teacher unionists to substantiate the claim that such frameworks and modalities did indeed exist. The staff members in the Ministry of Education recall:

The first thing during the education reforms was to create working groups, which were inclusive of everybody. The working groups included those who were key to the implementation of Bantu education as well as teacher unions (interview with Mutopenzi, 10 March, 2009).

Teacher union representatives were included in working groups and taskforces developing new strategies, developing plans, for example; for in-service education, for pre-service education, for curriculum for schools, on language committees, etc. (interview with Mary, 19 March, 2009).

The teacher unions corroborate the views of the staff members in the Ministry of Education on institutional frameworks and modalities to facilitate union participation:

But I know that given the very good and cordial relationship that existed between the Ministry and the union, NANTU, members were always consulted and invited to sit on these committees. One that I can remember well is when NANTU was approached to look into how the education profession could be made competitive and competency based, but I cannot recall the name of the specific committee (interview with Boys, 15 March, 2009).

We as teacher unions had representation on those committees, be it curriculum committee to transform new subjects or be it teacher training. We had direct representation on those various committees. This is why it was exciting. We were not only told, but were active participants in the various committees (interview with Wiseman, 18 March, 2009).

The above views from the Ministry of Education and the unions confirm the existence of institutional frameworks and modalities for union participation during the educational reforms. Boys notes that the relationship with the Ministry of Education was cordial during the reform process. This cordial relationship, as Boys suggests, explains why the teacher unions were always invited, and represented on the institutional frameworks and modalities.

Data from document analysis shows that working groups and task forces were constituted during the education reforms, and that they focused on:

- a broad curriculum for the junior secondary phase in 1990;
- a curriculum guide for formal basic education in 1992;
- a curriculum coordinating committee on teacher education in 1992; and
- the implementation of the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) and Higher International General Certificate of Secondary Education (HIGCSE) at Senior Secondary Schools in 1993.

In addition to taskforces /task teams, the Ministry of Education also utilized major thematic conferences, as institutional frameworks and modalities for teacher union

participation. One participant, a former staff member in the Ministry of Education, recalls:

We also had a very important conference called the Etosha Conference in 1991 where we invited every level and every stakeholder to workshop the finer details of the unification of the Ministry and unification of the programmes. Thereafter, the Ministry of Education started to decentralize its operations (interview with Brown, 5 March, 2009).

According to Angula, the aims of the consultative conferences were, firstly, to bring stakeholders with divergent views together under one roof to share their knowledge and experiences, and secondly, to find common ground and understanding of the educational policy intentions and processes that the Ministry of Education planned to introduce (interview with Angula, 19 February, 2009). My review of the reported proceedings of the thematic conferences, corroborated by Angula (1999), reveals that the major thematic conferences were convened to deliberate on education issues during the educational reforms, as reported in chapter four of this study.

Suffice to state here, that it is evident as reported in chapter four that thematic conferences were used by the Ministry of Education as frameworks and modalities for participation in the education reforms. It is debatable whether the conferences achieved their objectives of finding common ground for divergent views, as highlighted by Angula, but it is reasonable to assume that they contributed to the sharing of knowledge and experiences. In addition to finding common ground and sharing knowledge and experiences, Angula suggests that the conferences in some instances, served other purposes:

Some of the conferences were just legitimizing exercises, so that you can say that you participated in that conference. Why are you protesting now, and why did you not say it there when you were in that conference? You should know that people had different worldviews those days, and to create a common framework, somehow you have to bring people together (interview with Angula, 19 February, 2009).

Angula raises an important point about the purpose of some institutional frameworks and modalities for participation in education. It is arguable that some of the policies in

education, including some of the policy consultation processes, were carried out for symbolic reasons, the policies having already been decided upon by the policymakers. Thus some conferences during the reforms aimed only at symbolic consultations and dialogue, the objective being to avoid contestations over policy development, the real decisions having already been taken

Curriculum and subject review panels were the other frameworks through which teachers in Namibia participated in education, in addition to the other institutional frameworks and modalities. The functions of these panels were to review the curriculum and subject content being developed by the Ministry of Education. Brown, a former staff member in the Ministry of Education, elaborates on the role of teacher unions in the development of the curriculum:

In education, the teaching staff or teachers were the main movers of these things like curriculum development. The teachers played an important role, because first of all, they were able to understand what was written about the subject matters. The teachers even acted at their school level, such as in committees, and discussed these things (interview with Brown, 5 March, 2009).

With regard to presidential commissions on education, documentary evidence reveals that the President of the Republic of Namibia promulgated two presidential commissions on education in 1991 and 1999 respectively. The mandate of the 1991 Presidential Commission on higher education was to:

- establish the needs, demands and scope of higher education in Namibia;
- determine the organization and structure of higher education system, including the nature and location of higher education institutions, and
- determine the extent of the higher education system in the medium and long-term in relation to national human resources needs (Higher Education in Namibia: Report of a Presidential Commission, September 1991).

The Secretary-General of NANTU served on this Commission, but the other teacher union in Namibia, TUN, was not represented. I will give possible reasons in latter sections why TUN was excluded from some committees for teacher union participation. The mandate of the 1999 Presidential Commission on Education, Culture and Training was to review education, culture and training in Namibia since independence, and to make recommendations for improving the education system in the country. The president of NANTU at the time was a member of the 1999 Presidential Commission, as it has been the case of the NANTU Secretary-General with the 1991 Commission. TUN was once again excluded from direct representation on the Commission. I will shortly describe the feelings of the representative of TUN on this exclusion, and offer possible explanations for it. Suffice it to say that the union did not appreciate its exclusion from critical committees.

Despite the creation of institutional frameworks and modalities, a representative of TUN continues to feel strongly and emotionally that his union is being excluded from key participation frameworks and modalities:

Yes, in some of the smaller implementing committees we are involved, but in some of the crucial committees, such as the Teaching Service Committee, we are excluded. With the Council on Higher Education, the comments have come to the unions, and we are represented there. We have to continue advocating for the involvement of the unions. As citizens, we have specific responsibilities and accountabilities towards the education of this country. You can exclude as much as you wish, but if the person believes in what he is doing, you will not succeed. For example, SWAPO was oppressed by the colonial rulers, but they believed in the freedom and independence of the country and won the battle. It does not mean that you have achieved anything by consulting only some members of societies. Numbers do not make the idea, it is also possible that the ideas that can help the government can come from the excluded minority. Exclusivity will not take us anywhere. We have to define open and inclusive forums and be open and democratic (interview with Mwatjavi, 13 March, 2009).

Mwatjavi feels that TUN is being excluded from the institutional frameworks and modalities for teacher union participation and social dialogue in education. He suggests that the exclusion of his union from some crucial committees deprives the Ministry of Education of the divergent ideas which could help in the development of educational policies.

How do we explain the perceived exclusion of this union by the Ministry of Education from some of the participation institutional frameworks and modalities? I offer two explanations. The first revolves around the concept of an exclusive bargaining agent, as defined in the Labour Act of Namibia, Act No.11 of 2007. Prior to this Act, the Labour Act No.6 of 1992 was in place. It was amended in 2007, and became the Labour Act No.11 of 2007. The Namibian Labour Act provides that a union representing the majority of employees in the bargaining unit, as defined by it, shall be recognized as the exclusive bargaining agent for all the employees in that unit.

NANTU was recognized as the exclusive bargaining agent for all teachers in Namibia in 1995. This exclusive status sometimes leads to the exclusion of TUN from some committees, particularly those dealing with limited representation and collective bargaining processes. The Ministry of Education and government sometimes interpret the recognition agreement between the Government and NANTU to mean that NANTU speaks on behalf of all the teachers in Namibia. This interpretation is a possible explanation for the perceived exclusion.

Mwatjavi, however, argues that the exclusion was because of political influence:

After independence, the government had to come up with strategies of recognition agreements, which led to a degree of union exclusion. Political influence led to the lack of participation in various forums (interview with Mwatjavi, 13 March, 2009).

It is important to explain the context in which TUN was established after independence in order to understand the political overtones and undertones regarding teacher unions in Namibia. Murray and Wood (1997:174), using the apartheid identities and frames of colour, explain that TUN grew out of those associations which did not dissolve before independence, particularly those for white and “coloured” teachers. As a result of this historical genesis, TUN has a

disproportionately high number of white and “coloured” members and a relatively lower numbers of black members. Given this background, TUN is regarded by progressive forces in Namibia as well as among some staff members in the Ministry of Education as a conservative and pro-apartheid union. Staff members in the Ministry of Education explain how they perceive TUN:

The fact of the matter is that Namibia has two main teachers’ unions, with NANTU obviously aligned to SWAPO and the other union not necessarily aligned with an opposition party, but has a more conservative stand , and is saying that not all of the old system was bad (interview with Amos , 20 February, 2009).

Brown, a staff member in the Ministry of Education corroborates:

One union was pro-government and the other union was more pro-the old system, although not apartheid. Their representations were very well and necessary during the education reforms, because with a teacher union that was seen to be mainly pro-independence and pro-government, you could easily come to an understanding. Both, however, contributed in their own ways (interview with Brown, 5 March, 2009).

The views of both Amos and Brown confirm that NANTU is perceived to be pro-government, because of its pro-national liberation and independence stand. TUN on the other hand, is seen to be pro- the old system. Brown observes that, despite the differently perceived political stands, both teacher unions contributed in their own ways to education in Namibia. It is arguable that this is one of the explanations why NANTU was always represented on the presidential commissions in addition to majority membership.

Moses explains the roles of the two teacher unions in Namibia regarding education change:

NANTU in my view appeared to have been more supportive and embracing of the changes that were brought in than the other group. TUN was a little bit hesitant. NANTU was seen by the education administrators

as partners in bringing about change in education (interview with Moses, 21 April, 2009).

Moses confirms the view of the other staff members in the Ministry of Education that NANTU is perceived to be supportive of educational change, while TUN is “hesitant” about such change.

Here, a unionist explains the reasons for teacher union exclusion:

What is the meaning of that motive of exclusion, which is based on ideology? The government feels more comfortable and manipulative when they operate with their own people and fear or feel threatened to deal or work with independent sectors of civil society organizations such as unions (interview with Mwatjavi, 13 March, 2009).

According to Mwatjavi, the exclusion of TUN is a result of the alignment of NANTU with government. He suggests that government is comfortable working with the union closest to it. I suggest that the claim of independence and non-alignment needs further explanation, since it could be used to hide ideological and political sentiments and alignments.

According to LaRRI (2000), the Namibia Onderwysersvereniging (NAMOV), one of the teacher unions that spearheaded the establishment of a rival teacher union in Namibia, criticized the political stance of NANTU, and expressed the desire to form another union which would serve the teachers of Namibia in a “responsible and professional manner.” I suggest that the notion of “responsible and professional manner” needs to be positioned in the pre-independence political context of Namibia.

The division of teacher unions on the basis of the ideologies and identities of teacher professionalism is not limited to pre-independence Namibia. Kallaway (2004) observes that an office bearer of the National Professional Teachers’ Organization of South Africa (NAPTOSA) expressed similar views. He observed in 1991 that members of his organization were “not politicians, but educators.” He wanted to make the distinction between professionalism and the emerging progressive teacher unionism in South Africa, which combines unionism and professionalism. He regards this type of unionism as politics, and in his view, teacher unions are not supposed to

be involved in politics, and should leave politics to the politicians. It is arguable that the pro-apartheid identity of TUN continues to influence its relationship with the Ministry of Education in Namibia, hence its perceived exclusion, with the roles of the Ministry and union contextualized as an adversarial labour relationship.

5.4 Legislative institutional frameworks

In this section, I examine the legislative institutional frameworks that exist in the context of post-independence Namibia which facilitates teacher union participation and social dialogue in education. I draw the data mainly from document analysis. Legislative frameworks here refer to the laws and policies promulgated and developed, and which speaks to teacher union participation and dialogue in education.

Bauer (1998) observes that one of the most innovative and a distinctive aspect of democratization in Namibia was the emergence of favourable political and legal environments to enhance labour relations. Adler (2000) in: “The labour movement in contemporary South Africa” draws parallels with the case of South Africa, noting that one of the most innovative aspects of South Africa’s democratization was the emergence of institutions and processes through which workers and unions could engage the state. These features were unprecedented, since prior to 1994, the workers had been systematically excluded from decision-making processes.

5.4.1 The Namibian Constitution

Article 21(e), in chapter three of the Namibian Constitution states, that “all persons shall have the right to freedom of association, which shall include freedom to form and join associations or unions, including trade unions and political parties.” Furthermore, Article 95(c), in chapter eleven, which deals with the principles of state policy, says that the state shall adopt policies aimed at active encouragement of the formation of independent trade unions to protect workers’ rights and interests, and to promote sound labour relations and fair employment practices. Article 95(k) also provides that the state shall adopt policies aimed at encouraging the mass of the population, through education and through their organizations, to influence government policy by debating its decisions (Constitution of the Republic of Namibia,

1990). I posit that the Namibian Constitution offers avenues to facilitate teacher union participation.

5.4.2 The Labour Act

In addition to the Namibian Constitution, both the Namibian Labour Act, Act No.6 of 1992, and the amended Labour Act, Act. No.11. of 2007, provide frameworks and structures for trade union participation, including that of teacher unions. These include; the tripartite Labour Advisory Council, the labour courts and recognition agreement mechanisms, as provided for in the Labour Act to facilitate collective bargaining between trade unions and employers.

Trade unions in Namibia are represented on the Labour Advisory Council, together with representatives of government and employer organizations. Trade unions engage with employers and government in industrial relations through this institutional framework. The main function of the Labour Advisory Council is to advise the Minister of Labour on labour-related issues. It has further role in investigating issues, such as; the formulation and implementation of national policies, and the promotion of collective bargaining (Klerck, 1997:281). The Council also advises the Minister of Labour on issues arising from the ILO. Teacher unions in Namibia are indirectly represented on the Council through the umbrella trade union federations to which they are affiliated. The role of the labour courts, insofar as the facilitation of trade union participation is concerned, is to adjudicate disputes between employers and employees.

5.4.3 The Recognition Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Namibia and NANTU

The Government of the Republic of Namibia and NANTU entered into a recognition agreement in 1995. This agreement recognizes NANTU as the exclusive bargaining agent for all teachers in Namibia. Its other role is to regulate the relationship between the parties to the agreement in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation. Furthermore, the agreement provides for collective bargaining machinery between the government and the union. It also stipulates that it aims to foster the educational advancement of all learners in Namibia (Recognition Agreement between the

Government of the Republic of Namibia and the Namibia National Teachers' Union, 1995). I suggest that the purposes and principles of the recognition agreement facilitate social dialogue in education and teacher union participation.

Subjects for negotiations between the Government of Namibia and NANTU, as provided for in the recognition agreement, include:

- principles and procedures of appointments, promotions, transfers and discharges;
- housing;
- leave and leave pay;
- hours of work;
- disciplinary and grievance procedures;
- rates of pay; and
- any other matters relating to terms and conditions of service.

The subjects for negotiations seem to focus more on conditions of service than on the professionalism of teachers. As, I will illustrate shortly, the Namibian Education Act offers further avenues for teacher union participation in education. I submit, both from my own involvement in teacher unions, and from examining the institutional frameworks and modalities for union participation, that teacher unions in Namibia participate in dialogue in education and consultations. Negotiations between the government and the recognized teacher union are not limited to the subjects for negotiations, as stipulated in the agreement.

I want to emphasize that the recognition agreement between the Government of Namibia and NANTU provides that parties to the agreement can negotiate on “any other matters relating to terms and conditions of service.” This provision allows teacher unions to bring educational matters for discussion. The agreement also states, as a principle, that the parties to the agreement have determined to foster the

educational advancement of all learners in Namibia (Recognition Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Namibia and NANTU, 1995).

As I explained, the recognition agreement between the government and NANTU is contested by TUN, the other teacher union in Namibia. TUN suggests that the agreement is a tool for exclusion and manipulation. They argue that it ignores the views of minority unions, and thus excludes them from critical institutional frameworks and modalities for participation and dialogue in education. This exclusion has legal, historical and political contexts.

5.4.4 The Education Act

The Education Act (Act No. 16 of 2001) establishes institutional frameworks for teacher union participation in education. These frameworks include; the National Advisory Council on Education, Regional Education Forums and School Boards. The main function of the National Advisory Council on Education is to advise the Minister of Education on education, and also to deal with issues referred to it by the Minister. I have verified with the two teacher unions in Namibia that both are represented on the National Advisory Council on Education. Other members of the Council include; all the chairpersons of the Regional Education Forums, representatives of churches, NGOs , the University of Namibia, the Polytechnic of Namibia, and people living with disabilities.

Angula (1999) suggests that the implementation of education policies and programmes during the educational reforms turned out to be confined to bureaucrats, without the involvement of stakeholders, and this led to the establishment of Regional Education Forums and other institutional frameworks. The functions of the Regional Education Forums, as defined in the Education Act, are: to advise the Minister of Education and Regional and Local Authority Councils in each region and local authority area on matters concerning education. A further role is to initiate and facilitate educational development in the regions (The Education Act, Act No. 16 of 2001).

The Education Act provides for the representation of recognized teacher unions on the Regional Education Forums. Both the two teacher unions confirmed that they are represented on the Regional Education Forums. Thus the Regional Education Forums

create avenues for teacher union participation and dialogue in education at regional levels.

Another institutional framework of the Education Act for teacher union participation is that of the school boards. Every government school in Namibia is obliged, as per the provisions of the Education Act, to establish a school board. The booklet published by the Ministry of Education to explain the roles and functions of the school boards states that “one of the critical tasks of school boards is to work with school authorities to make sure that quality education is provided to all children.” The other functions are:

- to develop the vision and policies of the school;
- to recommend the appointment of teachers;
- to mobilize and control school finances; and
- to develop the school infrastructures (The work of the school board: A booklet for school boards in Namibia, 2001).

5.4.5 Partnership policy between the Government of the Republic of Namibia and civic organizations

A further framework that teacher unions can use to promote teacher union participation and dialogue in education is the Partnership Policy between the Government of the Republic of Namibia and civic organizations. This aims to facilitate the participation and engagement of civil society organizations in policy development. The policy states four objectives, namely:

- to create a greater commitment for civic participation through the promotion and encouragement of active citizenship;
- to enhance the environment for civic participation and partnership;
- to bring the government closer to the people and create partnership opportunities that benefit the government, civic organizations and civil society; and

- to enhance the capacity of partners to enter into partnerships and jointly respond to development challenges and opportunities in an efficient, effective and sustainable fashion (Government of the Republic of Namibia civic organizations partnership policy, 2005:10).

The aims and provisions of the policy offer avenues for civil society participation and dialogue in the development of policies. The stated objective of the policy is to enhance the environment for civil society participation and partnerships, and it is arguable that teacher unions could use the policy to promote consultations and participation in educational policymaking processes.

In summary, legislative frameworks exist in Namibia to facilitate teacher union participation and dialogue in education. These include; the Namibian Constitution, the Labour Act, the Education Act , the recognition agreement between the government of the Republic of Namibia and NANTU, and the Partnership Policy between the Republic of Namibia and civic organizations .

5.5 Assessing the efficiency of the participation and institutional frameworks and modalities

On the evidence of this study, I submit that the institutional frameworks and modalities created by the Ministry of Education functioned well during the early years of the education reforms, namely, from 1990 to 1999. Some of the original frameworks, such as the taskforces/task teams and thematic conferences, are rarely used today. Mary, a former staff member in the Ministry of Education elaborates:

My sense is that over the years that role seems to have faded. The Ministry might have felt that they have consulted enough, and the unions might have felt that they have made enough inputs and started concentrating on other things (interview with Mary, 19 March, 2009).

Jenny explains that the Ministry of Education is currently too relaxed in its interactions with teacher unions, as compared to the immediate post-independence years:

The government tends to wait until the unions raise issues of concern, whether it is the issue of compensation or general working conditions (housing and salary, etc.) before it reacts. I want the government to have this as part of the system. My observation of the Ministry of Education is that we are rather too relaxed at the Ministry level until the unions raise issues or demand improvement, and then we are caught off guard and panic. The unions should also not allow the government to sleep. There should be that spirit of working together, unity and demonstration of commitment to revive the spirit of confronting issues of development as a sector of education (interview with Jenny, 18 March, 2009).

The views of Jenny confirm those of Mary who suggested that the institutional frameworks, created by the Ministry of Education during the educational reforms to facilitate union participation and dialogue in education, seem to have faded. Mary explains that the current lack of structured dialogue between the Ministry of Education and the unions perhaps reflects the attitude that the Ministry has already adequately consulted or that the unions have provided enough inputs.

In response to my question about the efficiency of the institutional frameworks and modalities for union participation and dialogue in education, the unions responded as follows:

In the previous time, the Ministry of Education used to consult the union, but this is not happening any longer. Currently, in most cases, the Ministry is just coming up with policies without consultations with the unions. It is our mandate as the union to remind the Ministry whenever they are coming up with a policy to involve us in the process. The only policy that I can clearly recall is the HIV and AIDS workplace policy that we were fully engaged in right from the beginning, and we appreciate that (focus group interview, 11 August, 2009).

These views of teacher unionists during the focus group discussion corroborates those expressed by Mary and Jenny, that the institutional frameworks and modalities for teacher union participation and dialogue in education no longer work efficiently or in a coherent manner. The focus group interview suggested that the Ministry of

Education is developing policies without involving the unions, as was not the case previously during the immediate post-independence period.

Mwatjavi explains the consultations between the Ministry of Education and teacher unions, particularly in relation to the officially recognized union, NANTU:

After independence, the process of consultations was lacking from the government's side. Even NANTU which has the status of an exclusive bargaining agent is complaining about this. This shows that the other partner does not take you seriously (interview with Mwatjavi, 13 March, 2009).

The view of Mwatjavi suggests that consultation between teacher unions and the Ministry of Education is not working properly. He ascribes the current inefficiency to the lack of commitment to consultation from the government.

In summary, both teacher unions and the Ministry of Education agree that the institutional frameworks and modalities for teacher union participation are not currently efficient. They ascribe this to the absence of a coherent and systematic plan for government-teacher union engagement, and a lack of commitment to dialogue and consultation. It is also arguable that the Ministry of Education believes there was adequate consultation during the immediate post-independence phase, while teacher unions feel that they have provided sufficient inputs.

5.6 Why inclusive and participatory approach to education?

In this section, I ask why the Ministry of Education deployed an inclusive and participatory approach to education, especially during the educational reforms. The purpose is to gain insights, and to explain the rationale for an inclusive and participatory approach to education and educational reforms. The data are drawn from the interviews and document analysis. In this study, “inclusive and participatory approach” refers to the involvement and participation of diverse stakeholders in education and educational reforms. It is an approach which includes everybody, and attempts to involve many people in education.

5.6.1 The unity and nation-building imperatives

At the attainment of independence in 1990, Namibia emerged from a history of fragmentation and divisions in education, as I described in the literature review chapter. The practices among the eleven education departments which existed before independence obviously varied widely. With the attainment of independence, the Ministry of Education had to establish a unified education system out of the eleven departments. Angula explains the immediate post-independence dynamics:

I remember that the first conference that I had was at the former Windhoek College of Education where the University of Namibia is now. Clearly when people came there, especially, the blacks, they were very sceptical, because there were too many whites. To the point that some people in Ongwediva demonstrated, and said that we have been sold out. It was not an easy thing to do, if you have to carry on with the people that you found around, so that things do not collapse. But your own people are also suspecting that you have abandoned them, that you have sold out and that you are now working with the whites. So, you have to see the polarity of the atmosphere, and because people were polarized, and to create some form of common understanding, you have to bring people together. One needed to bring the entire people together to work towards a common goal (interview with Angula, 19 February, 2009).

Angula explains that, given the polarity of the context during the phase immediate post-independence, it was necessary to unify the people, and to create a common understanding in bringing about a unified education system. In the light of his explanation, I suggest that the imperatives of unity and nation-building informed the adoption of an inclusive and participatory approach to education in Namibia after independence.

Mutopenzi, a staff member who was involved in the educational reforms, elaborates on the unity and nation-building imperatives:

It was important to include everyone, because we were in the process of building a nation. Given our history of the past system of black and white, the new government was looking at including everybody regardless of

their colour or race, as long as you find yourself in this country and call yourself a Namibian (interview with Mutopenzi, 10 March, 2009).

Both Angula and Mutopenzi agree on the divisions inherited from past policies, and that the need to build a new-nation found reflection in the reform of education, hence the inclusive and participatory approach.

Steven, one of the unionists, explains the implications of the imperatives of unity and nation-building on the systematic redress of the apartheid legacies in education after independence:

NANTU had expectations of systematically redressing the colonial legacies in education. The incoming government took a slightly more cautious approach. It was influenced by the notion of national reconciliation. It was also influenced by the emerging class divisions that had been downplayed up until the point of independence (interview with Steven, 24 March, 2009).

Transition in Namibia was characterized by high expectations for redress of the legacies of apartheid education, as described by Steven. At the same time, there were attempts to retain privileges, especially among white Namibians. I suggest that managing these conflicting interests contributed to the adoption of an inclusive approach to education.

Geingob, in his doctoral thesis on “State formation in Namibia: Promoting democracy and good governance”, recalls:

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

for the whites. If they could be given to the whites there would be no problem (Geingob, 2000).”

It could be argued that the desire to unite and build a new nation out of a divided society, and the different expectations with regard to education, influenced the approach to education, hence the participatory and inclusive approach to the educational reforms. Such approaches, as Angula observes, create frameworks for sharing experiences and for forging a common destiny.

In summary, the educational reforms in an independent Namibia took place in the broader political context. I suggest that the reforms were shaped by national policies in the post-independence period. These included the policies of national reconciliation and nation-building that the government adopted. I posit that the frames of nation-building and reconciliation, with their underpinning assumptions of managing transition, shaped the adoption of an inclusive and participatory approach to education and educational reforms in Namibia.

5.6.2 The experience and expertise imperatives

Namibia developed a new education system from scratch in the years following independence. According to Cohen (1994), at independence, like most post-colonial African states, the country did not have adequate qualified staff, especially in education policy formulation and analysis. This is one of the possible reasons why the Ministry of Education used an inclusive and participatory approach to educational reforms in order that experiences and expertise could be pooled. Mutopenzi, a senior staff member in the Ministry of Education, confirms this view:

The people who were running the former education system were whites, and we needed their experience, because they had been there and they knew how to run the government (interview with Mutopenzi, 10 March, 2009).

The view of Mutopenzi explains one important factor, namely, that some of the people who took positions in the administration of education post-independence, and were excluded from managing an education system due to past apartheid policies and practices, lacked the experience to administer a national education system. This is

understandable, since education pre-independence, as Cohen (1994) points out, was centrally administered and coordinated, and excluded many people from education decision-making processes. Cohen (1994) also notes that almost all the directors of education in the Departments of Education of the Representative Authorities were white and male, and in most instances seconded from South Africa.

Mary corroborates this, and elaborates on the experience and expertise imperative:

I think, because of the fragmentation that occurred before independence between the different administrations, and in trying to unite all, and merge all these different administrations in one ministry, it was felt necessary to listen to these various groups. There were differences in experiences among the groups. It was necessary to bring those perspectives to the table, because a new system had to be developed from scratch, and it was crucial to be inclusive and consultative (interview with Mary, 19 March, 2009).

The above explanations of Mutopenzi and Mary suggest that the Ministry of Education recognized the expertise and experiences of the people who had administered education pre-independence. Against this background, it was deemed important to take account of their different experiences, expertise and perspectives, in developing the new education system.

The experiences of teachers and teacher unions, in addition to those of the bureaucrats from the pre-independence education authorities, were not forgotten during the reform process. Steven explains why the Ministry of Education involved the unions in the inclusive and participatory frameworks of the reforms:

To some extent, government recognized the resources and the potential amongst people that are employed for curriculum development, but there were particularly teachers who had the practice of many years of teaching, and who had a vision of what needed to be changed. Involving them was definitely seen as enriching the process and getting a better curriculum at the end of the reforms (interview with Steven, 24 March, 2009).

The apartheid education policies and practices had not allowed Namibians, particularly black Namibians, to be in charge of the education system. The expertise and experience at independence came either from the ethnic education authorities or from those who had run the SWAPO schools in exile. I contest, as Cohen (1994) has also argued, that this expertise and experiences was inadequate to run a national education system, due to its ethnic and race location, and limitation in scope.

The 1983 report of the Advisory Committee for Human Sciences Research (ACHSR) to the Department of National Education, cited by Ellis (1984), confirms my contestation that administrators of ethnic education systems did not have the expertise to administer the new education system. Indeed, the ACHSR report admitted that the ethnic education authorities could hardly administer their own system (Ellis, 1984:30).

Cohen (1994) observes that the schools administered by SWAPO in exile were limited in number and scope, and could not provide the skills and experience needed to manage and administer the national education system at the attainment of independence in 1990. Given the limited resources at the time, there was clearly an imperative to pool all the available expertise and experiences in crafting a unified national education system.

5.6.3 The imperatives of the politics of negotiated settlement and consensus

It is important to recall that Namibian independence was attained through the United Nations Security Council Resolution 435, which involved a protracted process of political negotiations. These negotiations included different role-players, among them, SWAPO, the internal political parties in Namibia, the Western Contact Group, the United Nations, and at a later stage, Angola. The negotiations leading to independence, and the drafting and adoption of the Namibian Constitution, were underpinned by the principles of negotiation, compromise and consensus.

Brown, who was the chairperson of one of the taskforces of the education reforms, explains how the principles which underpinned the transition to independence and the drafting of the Namibian Constitution influenced and shaped the work of the educational reforms. He highlights the centrality of consensus during the reforms process as follows:

I once made a mistake, and had people vote on one critical issue. They voted in favour of the matter, and there were dissenting votes, which was quite a number of votes. I decided to report to the Minister. I reported that this is what had happened. The Minister decided and told me never again to have a vote. He said that I will give a guideline on this one, but if there is no consensus, do not bring it to a vote. Just bring the case to me. It was important, the Minister said, because even our war was not fought and concluded through fighting. It was again consensus in the negotiations of Resolution 435. The Constituent Assembly did not vote in favour of the acceptance of the constitution. It was accepted by consensus, and it is that consensus principle, which was taken by government that everything would go by consensus (interview with Brown, 5 March, 2010).

The experience of Brown during his work on the taskforce illustrates the centrality of negotiation and compromise during the education reforms in post-independence Namibia. His reference to the negotiations of United Nations Security Council Resolution 435 and the consensus principle during the drafting and acceptance of the Namibian Constitution confirms that these processes influenced and shaped the reforms.

During the 1989 elections, none of the political parties obtained the required two-thirds majority votes. Securing such majority votes would have enabled the party concerned to implement its policies without negotiating with the other parties represented in the Constituent Assembly (Jansen, 1995). As a result, the drafting of the Namibian Constitution and the work of the Constituent Assembly were shaped by the principles of compromise and consensus.

Melber argues, in his contribution in “Namibia: A decade of independence, 1990 - 2000”, that both the Lancaster House Agreement in the case of Zimbabwe and the independence arrangements negotiated by the United Nations for Namibia brought what he termed “the so-called Western Contact Group entrenched constitutional provisions.” They are designed to secure controlled change. Such change, according to Melber, takes place in the context of the constraints and limitations imposed by entrenched constitutional provisions on the new government in designing and implementing its policies.

5.6.4 The imperatives of the image of the national liberator

The attainment of independence was seen by the majority of Namibians as the end of their long and bitter struggle for freedom, independence and democracy. According to Harlech-Jones (2001: 142), Namibian independence, although the product of substantial compromises, was, and still is, an essential part of SWAPO's political attractiveness. It helped to propagate its image not just as a political victor, but as the national liberator. As such, SWAPO had to act decisively in key areas. Educational reforms, as a study by the United Nations Institute for Namibia illustrates, was one of the key areas in which SWAPO was expected to act decisively in order to bring about fundamental changes. The study "Namibia: Perspectives for national reconstruction and development", emphasized that the new education system would need to correct the wrongs perpetrated by the illegal apartheid regime. The report states that an alternative education policy must therefore view the need for change as its central theme (United Nations Institute for Namibia, 1986:521).

According to Gretschel (2001:114), the priorities set for education at independence aimed to dismantle any existing apartheid structures in schooling, and to put in place a genuinely Namibian educational system, no longer geared to South Africa's political, economic and social conditions. Against the background of SWAPO's image as the national liberator, I posit that the inclusive and participatory approach to education and the establishment of institutional frameworks for teacher union participation served two purposes. Firstly, it announced the arrival of the national liberator, as suggested by Harlech-Jones. Secondly, it signified that the Ministry of Education in the new Namibia would be democratic in its approach to, and practice of education, as compared to the pre-independence administration.

Steven outlines how progressive teacher unions viewed the image of the national liberator in relation to the educational reforms following independence:

So, the views in 1988 and 1989 were that we will need independence to address the issues of education as well. Thus, let us get first this independence, then change and reform education (interview with Steven, 24 March, 2009).

Moses further elaborates on the aspect of democratic participation in education:

If you look at the document “Toward Education for All”, there is emphasis on democratic participation in education by all. Therefore, inclusion was necessary, because the Ministry could not force the system down the throats of the partners, and also to ensure ownership. As a country guided by democratic principles, it was the right approach to take (interview with Moses, 21 April, 2009).

The views of Moses supports the assertion that the Ministry was democratic compared to the centralized control of education pre-independence. I will highlight three points that Moses raised to illustrate the democratic nature of the Ministry of Education. Firstly, the policy document of the Ministry “Toward Education for All”, is premised on democratic participation, hence the inclusive and participatory approach to education. Secondly, the Ministry, unlike the pre-independence administration, wanted to involve partners in the development of a new education system. Moses argues that this was done to ensure ownership of the new education system, and to avoid imposing the system on the people. The aim of involvement and participation pursued by the Ministry of Education were very different from the education practice pre-independence, and I contend that they further promoted the image of the new government, constituted by SWAPO, as the national liberator.

It is clear, then, that the Ministry of Education post-independence wanted to break away from the South African policies of centralized power and control of education. Lungu (2000: 92) notes that during the long history of apartheid, South Africa systematically excluded blacks from policy structures and processes. This led to a strong desire in the democratic movement to create more inclusive and transparent policy processes.

5.7 Conclusion

The Ministry of Education in post-independence Namibia created institutional frameworks and modalities, especially during the educational reforms, to facilitate teacher union participation and dialogue in education. In addition to the frameworks and modalities created by the Ministry, Namibia also has legislative frameworks which provide further avenues for union participation and dialogue. The extent to which all the teacher unions take up these opportunities is contested. One of the

unions, TUN, argues that it is being excluded from the critical committees of the Ministry of Education and government which were designed to facilitate such participation.

The creation of institutional frameworks for teacher union participation and dialogue in education is not peculiar to Namibia. In Guatemala, for example, union participation in educational reforms was facilitated through the creation of working committees with the mandate to design and define the new reforms (Vaillant, 2005). In the case of South Africa, Lungu (2000:99), in: “The educational policy process in post-apartheid South Africa: An analysis of structures,” observes that post-apartheid South Africa has put in place one of the most elaborate and inclusive public policymaking processes in Africa in order to enlist inputs from the public.

I agree with Vaillant (2005) that the political, social and cultural dynamics of each country determine the emergence of spaces for dialogue and consultation between teacher unions and government. The return to democracy after authoritarian rule in Guatemala and El Salvador fostered the creation of institutional frameworks and modalities for dialogue in education between teacher unions and government. It is arguable that independence and democratization in Namibia and South Africa, and in post-revolutionary Guatemala and El Salvador created considerable spaces for union participation and dialogue in education.

Finally, different explanations are offered for the creation of institutional frameworks and modalities to facilitate teacher union participation and dialogue in education in post-independence Namibia. I suggest that broader historical and national political and social contexts of democratization, the politics of nation-building and unity, the imperatives of expertise and experience, and the image of the national liberator are among the factors which influenced and shaped the inclusive and participatory approach to education in the new Namibia.

Chapter 6

Contextual factors and the roles of teacher unions in Namibia

6.1 Introduction

I will respond in this chapter to the research question: “*What contextual factors shaped the roles of teacher unions in pre-and post-independence Namibia?*” I will focus on the political and educational contexts pre-independence, as the factors which shaped the roles of the teacher unions. I will also examine contextual factors which emerged post-independence, and show how these factors shaped, and continue to shape, the roles of teacher unions. The emerging contextual factors include; the influence of independence and democratization on the unions, party-government-teacher union relationship, the appointment of union leaders, the leadership vacuum, the new political culture, and the formation of a new middle-class elite. The aim is to explain how these contextual factors shaped and continue to shape the roles of the unions since independence.

Soudien (2004:222) suggests that people interpret their environments, and learn how to live within them by negotiating their way around the circumstances in the environments. I resonate with Soudien and posit that pre- and post-independence contextual factors and the environment shaped and continue to shape the roles of teacher unions in Namibia. Before and after independence, the unions shaped the environment in which they found themselves, as they continue to do. It is against this historic background that I examine how the contextual factors influenced the roles of the teacher unions.

6.2 Pre-independence political factors

I begin with a brief look at the historical background of the administration of Namibia. The purpose is, firstly, to familiarize the reader with the context in which I locate the factors that shaped the roles of the unions before independence. Secondly, I will explain how the political context helped to form the roles of the teacher unions.

Cohen (1994) relates that Namibia was administered by Germany from 1884 until 1915. The German administration was followed by the South Africa administration. South West Africa was a mandated territory under the supervision of the League of Nations from 1915 until 1966. Thereafter, the territory came under the South African rule until independence on 21 March, 1990. In the meantime, South Africa made attempts to seek internal political solutions to the Namibian question, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s (Ellis, 1984; Cohen, 1994; Tapscott, 2001).

This was particularly the case when the United Nations formally revoked South Africa's mandate to govern Namibia in 1966, bowing to mounting internal and external pressures on South Africa to withdraw (Ellis, 1984; Tapscott, 2001). The International Court of Justice confirmed in 1971 that South Africa's continued occupation of Namibia was illegal. The settlement attempts of South Africa in Namibia included internal elections, the establishment of an Interim Constituent Assembly, repeal of discriminatory laws in 1977, followed by the establishment of eleven second-tier ethnic authorities in 1980 (Tapscott, 2001).

The policies of the South African government in Namibia were premised on notions of racial and ethnic segregation, as well as separate development. According to Cohen, attempts were made during the 1970s to establish an interim administration consisting of the ethnic authorities, designed to lead the country to independence. Tapscott (2001) suggests that this was a response to internal resistance to the South African rule, and to mounting international pressure against South Africa to withdraw from Namibia.

During the 1980s, South Africa established eleven representative authorities for the ethnic groups in Namibia, by proclamation AG 8 of 1980. Cohen (1994) observes that the apartheid ideal was still perpetuated with the establishment of the representative authorities. She argues that the only difference was that multiple ethnic divisions replaced the segregation of coloureds, blacks and whites.

It is arguable that the political factors of segregation, fragmentation and ethnic divisions in pre-independence Namibia shaped the establishment of racial, tribal and ethnic teacher unions. The fragmentation of the unions in ethnic administrations and departments of education defined their roles, identities and location, consistent with

the political context in which they found themselves. Tuaepepa confirms the racial and ethnic identities of the unions when he explains that “there were a lot of second tier governments pre-independence, and as result we had teacher associations such as; for the coloureds, Nama, Damara, Owambo administrations, etc. (interview with Tuaepepa, 16 March 2009).” As a result of the fragmentation and ethnic divisions, teacher unions before independence could not address issues, including educational matters, as a united entity at national level. This was a direct result of the imposition of racial, tribal and ethnic identities (LaRRI, 2000).

Moses collaborates this, and observes that “the policy of apartheid that was in the country before independence has led to the establishment of ethnic teachers’ associations.” Given this background, I concluded that the factors of racial, tribal and ethnic fragmentation and division shaped the establishment of ethnic, tribal and racial teacher unions in line with proclamation AG 8 of 1980.

Proclamation AG 8 established eleven representative authorities for the ethnic groups in Namibia. As a result of the political factors and the initiatives of the 1970s and 1980s of seeking internal solutions to the Namibian question, the South African government promoted the establishment of a federation of teachers’ associations. This was modelled on the Interim Constituent Assembly. The ethnic teacher unions were represented in the federation. This was in line with the political decision to establish a Transitional Government of National Unity in the 1980s (Ellis, 1984), hence my contention that political developments pre-independence shaped the establishments and the roles of teacher unions.

Consistent with the pre-independence South African government policy of excluding black workers from trade unions, public service workers in Namibia were forbidden by law to join trade unions. Instead, they had to join staff associations (Murray & Wood 1997:169). By implication, the political factors influenced teachers to belong only to teacher associations and not teacher unions. This explains why teacher unions in Namibia were only formed either during the transition from apartheid to independence or after independence. I suggest that the restriction of the teachers to belong only to staff associations reduced their roles to one of consultation, if any, and not to collective bargaining and dialogue in the development of education policies.

6.3 Pre-independence education factors

Gretschel (2001:113) observes that the separate development and division of the population along geographical and political lines was applied to schooling, culture and language. It was applied by means of the Bantu education system, which aimed to establish a completely segregated and racially specific school system. Gretschel suggests that the separation of school systems according to ethnic criteria reached its cynical culmination in 1980, when Proclamation AG 8 provided for cultural sovereignty for all eleven ethnic groups, including separate schools for learners from each group. I have quoted Gretschel to give the context in which we should understand the educational factors before independence, and how they shaped the roles of the unions.

Thus the unions before independence did not play significant roles in the development of education policies. This was due both to the notions of control and centralized system of educational management and administration and to the policies of exclusion, as Cohen (1994) has observed. According to Jansen (1995) and Cohen (1994), educational policy development and administration, both in pre-independence Namibia and in South Africa before 1994, were based on centralization and exclusion. The state maintained control over educational policy in ways which were bureaucratically centralized, racially exclusive and politically authoritarian. There was only one policy player within the apartheid state (Jansen, 2001:12). Against this background, I posit that the pre-independence contextual factors of control and centralization of education policy development and administration reduced the teacher unions to being inactive stakeholders in educational processes.

It is against this background that Steven argues that the ethnic unions were irrelevant in terms of national politics and education policies, because of their identities and location in ethnically defined spaces (interview with Steven, 24 March, 2009). The ethnic governments and representative authorities were also not responsible for determining their education policies. Thus the educational context and system of educational management and administration in pre-independence Namibia rendered both the ethnic representative authorities and the teacher unions irrelevant.

Cohen (1994:108) notes that the key difference between the Van Zyl Commission of 1958 and the Odendaal Commission report of 1964 was that the earlier Commission sought change within the existing educational structure in South West Africa, while the Odendaal Commission recommended management of black and coloured educational services through the relevant bureaucratic bodies in South Africa. In other words, the determination of education policies was transferred to South Africa following the recommendations of the Odendaal Commission.

The Van Zyl Commission was appointed to set up an education system for black and coloured Namibians. According to Ellis (1984), it recommended:

- the introduction of South Africa's Bantu education syllabus in Namibia;
- the handing over of church schools to the state;
- an education levy on Africans, and
- the setting up of a separate education department for Africans, including a language bureau which should be headed by a white person.

The difference between the Van Zyl and the Odendaal Commission recommendations was that the Van Zyl Commission recommended the application of Bantu education in Namibia, because of “a striking similarity in the background of SWA natives and that of the Bantu of the Union of South Africa (Ellis, 1984).” The Van Zyl Commission did not recommend the transfer of the administration and control of education to South Africa. The Odendaal report, on the other hand, recommended the transfer of the control of education for blacks to South Africa.

The factors of segregation, racial and ethnic identities shaped the ethnic teacher unions, and mirrored them to the political arena. The unions failed to play significant roles in education, until teachers in Namibia established national teacher unions in the late 1980s and early 1990s. According to Jenny, both political and educational forces shaped the formation of these unions. She explains how this took place:

Unionism is an effect. It was a reaction to a situation that the teachers found themselves in. It was a situation not only of educational nature, but

also a political and cultural situation. The situation was informed by the divide-and-rule politics and practice of the then South African regime. The divide-and-rule politics was encouraged by both the political and education system. As a result, Namibians were organized not only at the political level, but also at the professional level (interview with Jenny, 18 March, 2009).

Jenny's explanation supports the suggestion that the formation of teacher unions was a response to contextual political and education factors. Teacher unions, as Soudien argues, interpret their environment, and find ways of overcoming the challenges in their environment. I posit that the formation of national teacher unions was one way of overcoming the challenges of fragmentation on the basis of tribal, racial and ethnic divisions in pre-independence Namibia.

The other educational factor, which significantly shaped the roles played by teacher unions in pre-independence Namibia, was the introduction of Bantu education. Angula argues that the introduction of Bantu education triggered responses from various actors, including the unions. He explains:

You will recall that apartheid expressed itself most forcefully in the cultural levels of education. The whole notion of Bantu education stirred a lot of emotions, because of its denial of access to education for the black majority. In fact many of the young people who joined the struggle did so, because of that. So, it was a rallying point for the youth, and in fact that created the context for the reform, because everybody hated Bantu education (interview with Angula, 19 February, 2009).

Angula suggests that the introduction of Bantu education, and the hatred of the system by many Namibians, created the context to fight for an alternative education system. Progressive teacher unions were part and parcel of the fight for such system. It is arguable that the introduction of Bantu education provided the catalyst for the teacher unions' demand for a relevant education system. One of the first national teachers' unions showed its opposition to the fragmented education system and Bantu education when it was established in the late 1980s.

In summary, both the political and education pressures shaped the roles of teacher unions before independence. The policies of fragmentation, ethnic and racial identities, which were expressed in both the political and education systems, shaped teacher unions into ethnic, tribal and racial teacher unions. Fragmentation in education was extended to ethnic classifications with the Proclamation of AG 8 of 1980, forcing unions to be organized on ethnic, tribal and racial lines with the establishment of the representative ethnic authorities in 1980.

South Africa attempted internal political settlement of the Namibian question. Moves were made in the 1970s and 1980s to establish an Interim government and an interim Constituent Assembly composed of the ethnic authorities. These political developments also shaped the organizational structure and identities of teacher unions. The South African government attempted to promote a federation of teachers' associations consisting of the ethnic teachers' associations. The roles of the unions until the late 1980s were shaped by the political and educational contexts of fragmentation and division. However, the environment of segregation in turn inspired some progressive unions to think beyond ethnic locations, beyond pre-independence context, and plan the establishment of a national teachers' union, which would be national in character, non-racial and non-ethnic.

6.4 Post-independence factors

The post-independence environment, like the pre-independence context, shaped teacher unions in Namibia in different ways. One positive aspect of the political context after independence was that it opened up spaces for teacher union participation and dialogue in education. At the same time, the changed political dispensation brought about unprecedented fundamental human rights and freedoms, which the teacher unions had never enjoyed in the history of the country. The new context, in addition to the rights and freedoms it brought about, also ushered in challenges for the unions. In this section, I will discuss the factors of independence and democratization, party- government- teacher union relationship, the new political culture, and new middle-class formations in post-independence Namibia. The purpose is to explain how these contextual factors influenced and shaped, and continue to influence and shape, the roles of teacher unions in Namibia since independence.

6.4.1 Influence of independence and democratization on teacher unions

With the attainment of independence, the democratic space for participation and dialogue in education opened up, allowing teacher unions to participate in education and educational policymaking processes. Bauer (1998:7) observes that the political and legal environment had improved markedly since independence. The constitution guaranteed important rights, and the labour legislation created institutional frameworks and mechanisms for teacher union participation, and engagement in collective bargaining processes.

As I have mentioned previously, these frameworks had not existed hitherto in Namibia. This implies that the arrival of independence and democracy ushered in labour and other freedoms and rights for teacher unions which had never existed before. Mutopenzi explains the significance of the post-independence space for teacher union participation:

The partnership was already established pre-independence, and the new government was not establishing the relationship with the unions for the first time. They were part of the liberation struggle, and they needed to see that the efforts of the government were their own efforts. If the new government fails, the unions saw themselves as failures. So, they needed to support the undertakings that the new government was doing, because they saw themselves as part and parcel of the whole process. It is for this reason, and because of the constitutional rights of those in the unions to be consulted in any reform that the government needed to push forward (interview with Mutopenzi, 10 March, 2009).

Mutopenzi confirms that independence and democratization created considerable room for teacher union involvement and participation in education policy formulation. For the first time in the history of Namibia, teacher unions were regarded as partners in education. I argue that the creation of institutional frameworks and mechanisms, and the new relationship of partnership in education, defined new roles for teacher unions, which were very different from their adversarial and militant roles pre-independence. The progressive unions, especially during the transition from apartheid to independence, had been characterized by political activism and agitation, which

included demonstrations and boycotts. After independence, they became partners in education, participating in the institutional frameworks for dialogue in education. Thus the teacher unions in Namibia contributed to educational reforms, as I explained in chapter four.

6.4.2 Party-government-teacher union relationships

The relationship between the trade unions and political parties are context specific. They are shaped by the history of each country. In Costa Rica, Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela and El Salvador, for example, the creation of trade unions was closely linked to political parties and movements. In Chile, Argentina and Colombia, on the other hand, such unions are independent of political parties, and act autonomously, although they maintain ties with the different political parties. Trade unions in Brazil and Guatemala, however, act independently and outside party structures (Vaillant, 2005). These variations support the assertion that the relationships between trade unions and political parties and governments are influenced by history and socio-cultural context of each country.

In the case of the United States of America and Britain, Barber (1996) observes that the National Education Association has supported the Democratic candidate at each American presidential election in the 1980s and 1990s, while the leadership of the National Union of Teachers in Britain has been sympathetic to the Labour Party. In the context of Africa, many trade unions, as I explained in the literature review chapter joined nationalist movements during the struggle for liberation. The aim was to fight for political independence. After the attainment of independence, Bauer (1998) argues that organized labour in many post-colonial African states was subordinated to the state or absorbed in party machineries. This is perhaps one of the explanations why trade unions in post-independence Namibia seem to be weaker when compared to their stance in the pre-independence phase.

The purpose of highlighting these examples of party-government-teacher union relationship is to show that such relationships are not peculiar to Namibia. They exist in many countries, and are influenced and shaped by historical and socio-cultural contexts. One teacher union in pre-independence Namibia supported liberation, and aligned itself with the liberation movement, SWAPO, pre-independence. The

leadership of the union argued that the alignment with SWAPO would contribute to national liberation, and help to bring about a democratic education system after independence (LaRRI, 2000). Thus progressive teacher unions in pre-independence Namibia aligned themselves to SWAPO, and supported SWAPO during the first internationally supervised election in 1989. The purpose of the political alignment, as the founding president of NANTU explained, was to defeat apartheid at the ballot box (LaRRI, 2000).

Post-independence political alignment to the liberation movement, which is now the government in Namibia, might have posed challenges to the teacher unions who were aligned to SWAPO. The new post-independence context necessitated redefinition of roles, and of the relationship between teacher unions and the former liberation movement, SWAPO, which is now both a political party and the government. The absence of defined roles and relationship might have resulted in what Bauer (1998) observed in many post-colonial African states, namely, the subordination of trade unions to the state and the political party machineries. This limits their power to promote the interests of their members.

Boys explains the importance of redefining party-government-teacher union relationship in the post-independence context:

The leadership was very adamant and consistent in supporting the liberation movement SWAPO. But now, the liberation movement has now become a political party. Our role and alignments we had with the liberation movement have obviously changed. SWAPO became the ruling party, and the teachers are now employed by the government led by SWAPO, and our role has changed (interview with Boys, 15 March, 2009).

Boys argues for the redefinition of roles and party-government-teacher union relationships on two main grounds. Firstly, SWAPO is not a liberation movement anymore, but a political party and government. As such, it is also now the employer of teachers in Namibia, hence the suggestion of Boys that redefining the relationship between the unions and the party and government needs to take into account the changed role of the former liberation movement.

The changed position of SWAPO, from liberation movement to a political party and government, and its relationship with the teacher unions, are contested. Some of those I interviewed for this study suggested that it was important post-independence to maintain the pre-independence relationship between SWAPO and the progressive unions after independence. The other group in this study suggested that the relationship needed to be redefined in the context of the changed political environment. The debates on party-government-union relationships, and the roles of teacher unions post-independence, generate different views, which can be explained from different perspectives.

Here, I present the different views on the party-government-teacher union relationship following independence. Piet, one of the unionists, explains how the role of SWAPO, both as a party and government, posed challenges to the unions after independence:

At the present moment, it is a little bit challenging. People say that the union does not want to take up the issues, because of the affiliation of the federation to the ruling party. The government of the day is now the government of everybody, regardless of the political party you belong to. The government does not easily listen to what the unions have to say (interview with Piet, 5 February, 2009).

Piet suggests that, because of the changed role of SWAPO from a liberation movement to a political party and government, it is now responsible for everybody. As a result, the government has different constituencies, of which the teacher unions are only one. On the other hand, the unions are being accused of a “softy approach” to labour relations, as Piet explains, due to the affiliation of the labour movement to the political party, which is also the governing party. These are the issues which faces the unions in redefining the party-government-teacher union relationship in the changed political context. The challenges are how to relate to the party and government, without being accused of leniency in challenging their former comrades in the liberation movement, who are now in government.

The redefinition of roles and party-government-teacher union relationships that Namibian teacher unions face finds a parallel in a similar challenge to teacher unions in South Africa. Garson (2000:203) observes that SADTU’s relationship with the

African National Congress has brought advantages, but at the cost of its leaders becoming perceived as having a “cosy” relationship with their “comrades” in government. Possibly, this stems from a lack of differentiation by the teacher unions between their alignment and support of liberation movements pre-independence, and the changed context of the political parties post-independence.

Whether teacher unions in Namibia have clarified and defined new roles and relationship with SWAPO, as a party and government, is contested, as I mentioned previously. There are divergent views on the extent to which the alignment and relationships of the unions to political parties, and the lack of redefinition of new roles, are advantageous or disadvantageous to the unions. Steven explains:

The accord between NUNW and SWAPO seems to oblige the union not to criticize the leadership in public, and that they should discuss issues internally, because they are in the same board. This ideology and practice contributed to the demobilization of militancy. Unlike in the colonial era where unions have to fight, they are now comrades and should thus talk. Even if these talks lead to minor concessions (interview with Steven, 24 March, 2009).

Three issues emerge from Steven’s explanation. Firstly, it suggests that the contextual factor of undefined teacher union roles and party-government-trade union relationship after independence contributed to the demobilization and depoliticizing of trade unions. Steven argues that the accord between NUNW and SWAPO limits the role of the NUNW in publicly articulating the issues affecting its work, as it defines how trade unions should behave. Secondly, the post-independence contextual ideology of partnership between the party and trade unions in Namibia altered the existed pre-independence militancy of unions. Trade unions are expected to talk to the government and party, instead of expressing their views outside government and party structures. Thirdly, the post-independence party-government-teacher union relationships have diluted the roles of the unions, including those of representing and promoting the interests of teachers, as it has changed teacher unions from union structures to corporate structures. Corporatism encourages the leaders of teacher unions to spend most of their time in talks with government, instead of interacting with their members in their workplaces. In the case of Namibia, this is a major shift

from the approach of the unions in the contexts of the late 1980s and immediately post-independence.

Bauer (2007) argues that in many instances, political independence in Africa led to the rapid demobilization of trade unions. This is being done in different ways. These ways include:

- the absorption of trade unions into ruling political parties;
- the co-option of trade union leaders into government;
- the implementation of restrictive labour laws and/or state of emergency; and
- the selection of trade union leaders by government appointment rather than rank and file election (Bauer, 2007:229).

One of the other consequences of independence and democratization, and the undefined party-government-teacher union relationship following independence, has been the emerging culture and tendency of corporatism in trade unions, including teacher unions. Leaders of teacher unions became more accountable to the government and party structures than to their membership. Bertha, a unionist, corroborates this, and explains how the accountability of teacher unions to government increased after independence:

I can recall that at times we had to consult with the Minister or the government before we could go to the press for a press statement. In a way it is constraining the union, because some people will end up dancing to the tune of the government (interview with Bertha, 27 March, 2009).

The view of Bertha that teacher unions sometimes had to consult ministers and the government before articulating their positions on issues confirms the tendency to corporatism. Teacher unions are supposed to derive their mandate from their members through their structures and not from government ministers. This is perhaps what Steven and Bauer observed, as demobilization and weakening of teacher unions in the post-independence period.

Boys, a unionist, elaborates, providing an example of how teacher unions experienced difficulties in accounting to their members:

I was also interviewed on the staffing norms, and I was critical about what the Ministry wanted to introduce. The Minister listened to it on the radio, and before his meeting with us, he lectured and lashed out at the Secretary-General of NANTU who was interviewed on the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation radio on the issue that we were scheduled to discuss at the meeting. The Minister was very much annoyed with what I had said. I explained to the Minister that I understood that he did not like what I had said, and that it might have been wrong, but that I had the mandate from the teachers whom I was representing, and that they were against what the Ministry wanted to introduce (interview with Boys, 15 March, 2009).

The comments of Boys confirm my suggestion that the undefined party-government-teacher union relationship, and the lack of role clarification in the context of the era post-independence could result in leaders of teacher unions being accountable to government, and not to their members. Corporatism, which is an emerging trend in Namibian trade unionism, is shaping the roles of teacher unions from being those of workers' organizations to representing the voice of the employer. Corporatism also alters and dilutes the purpose of unions as agencies and mediums of influence for addressing the balance of power in employment relations. Finally, corporatism in teacher unions undermines the principles of trade unions of internal democracy, mandate and accountability. I suggest that post-independence contextual factors of independence and democratization without defined roles could lead to teacher unions moving away from their core functions and principles.

Other views in the study suggest that the current alignment and relationship with the party and government is advantageous to the teacher unions. Wiseman, a former unionist, argues:

We have come to realize that, look; we now have got the freedom and democracy. So what? We are taking advantage of that to say, look; now that we have freedom and democracy, you can choose and belong to any

political party that you have. We almost lost it with that type of understanding when teacher unions are not politically focused. This may reverse the gains that we have made. For a teacher union that does not have political clarity, it is difficult to provide proper leadership (interview with Wiseman, 18 March, 2009).

Wiseman justifies the continued party-government-teacher unions alignment and relationships on the grounds of past historical factors. He explains that the purpose of continued alignment and relationship to the party and government is for the party and government to provide political leadership. He also suggests that the aim of continued party-government-teacher union relationship is to consolidate the gains made by the party and government post-independence. It is arguable that some of his views are problematic in the context of what Steven and Bauer observed, namely, the demobilization of militancy in trade unions and their weakening post-independence. Questions arise as to whether the political leadership provided by the party or government since independence is consistent with the working-class ideologies that trade unions promote.

While appreciating the sentiments of Wiseman, I submit that advancement of common interests can take place without indirect affiliation of teacher unions to governing political parties, as in the case of NANTU. The affiliation, if not defined and clarified, could take teacher unions back to the early years of post-colonial Africa, where trade unions were incorporated, annexed and absorbed into party machineries and nation-states. As Mihyo and Schtphorst (1995) suggest, this can destroy the power of teacher unions to make independent professional inputs to policy development, and to articulate and promote the interests of their members without first considering what the party or government might think, as Boys explained in his encounter with the Minister of Education on the staffing norms.

6.4.3 Appointments of union leaders and leadership vacuum in teacher unions

The post-independence context of democratization shaped the roles of teacher unions by opening up opportunities for unionists in government and the private sector, which had not existed prior to independence. Some teacher union leaders, as the result of the

post-independence opening up of opportunities, were appointed to senior positions in government, including ministerial positions. These appointments were opportunities for the teacher unions, but at the same time presented challenges for them. I will illustrate the contradictions between opportunities and challenges with examples of how the participants in the study saw the post-independence appointments of teacher unionists in the government and the private sector.

Wiseman, one of the former unionists, sees the appointments as more advantageous to teacher unions, relative to the loss of experienced teacher union leaders:

For us belonging to teacher unions, and also belonging to the SWAPO party, quite a number of the teacher union leaders were called upon by the party after independence to perform national duties with the party's new assignment of governing the country. We lost them as teacher union leaders for the party, but it was a gain, because we knew that this was what we fought for. We needed people who understood the issues to be assigned, and these are our members (interview with Wiseman, 18 March, 2009).

The above views of Wiseman acknowledge both the advantage and disadvantage of the appointments of teacher unionists to government and the private sector in the context of post-independence Namibia. It was advantageous, because the union leaders appointed to government understood the issues, particularly in education, that needed to be addressed. Wiseman recognizes that the appointments of teacher unions to government were a loss to the unions, but were a gain at the same time. This is why I suggest that the appointment of teacher unionists to government and the private sector was a two-edged sword. It was a gain, because teacher unions had people who knew the issues which concerned the unions, but on the other side, the unions lost experienced leaders with commitment and expertise.

One factor that Wiseman's views bring to the fore is that the pre-independence adversarial role of the teacher unions shifted after independence to participation and accommodation in the state machineries of government, hence the appointment of some union leaders to government. Thus the dawn of independence and

democratization opened up opportunities for union leaders to move up in positions and opportunities created in the new government and private sector.

This view is corroborated by document analysis. Some leaders of teacher unions, for example, were drawn into Cabinet, National Assembly, national and regional structures of government (Murray and Wood, 1997). Others have become Directors of Education, members of the Public Service Commission, and other senior positions in government and in the private sector.

I posit that the move of unionists to government and the private sector affected the unions in different ways. Firstly, it weakened the unions, as it robbed them of experienced unionists, as Amos and Boys will explain shortly. Secondly, they lost unionists with the expertise needed to participate and engage in dialogue in education. I suggest that experience and expertise in teacher unions were critical, as the unions shifted from pre-independence militancy and antagonistic labour relations to participation and engagement in the changed post-independence political context. Against this background, the appointment of union leaders to the government and private sector, notwithstanding its advantages, weakened the power of the unions to engage effectively in the institutional frameworks and modalities of union participation. Secondly, it impacted on the calibre of leadership needed in the unions to drive their vision regarding education.

Köβler and Melber (2001) notes that the extreme scarcity of skilled and trained people at the attainment of independence in Namibia resulted in government drafting people who had gained some expertise in NGOs into the government service. He contends that this tendency may have contributed to the persistent weakening of structures and organizations of civil society, including teacher unions. Amos elaborates on how these appointments affected teacher unions:

Many leaders of NANTU became leaders in the Ministry in one way or another. These are people one assumes who were mindful about what the interest of the teachers were. This caused a complication. It left the teacher union without a very strong leadership. There is a dilemma there. I think it somehow weakened the direct role that the teacher unions might

have had in the reforms that took place (interview with Amos, 20 February, 2009).

The views of Amos regarding the leadership vacuum in the unions, as a result of the appointments of teacher unionists, confirms my position that appointments of teacher unions to government and the private sector, despite its advantages, created a leadership vacuum in the unions. Secondly, it weakened the ability of teacher unions to participate in education policy developments, as unions leaders with expertise, knowledge and experiences were no longer in the unions.

In the case of South Africa, Garson (2000: 204) observes that, whereas spontaneous militancy in the early 1990s was enough to force change, an informed research-driven-policy is now called for, if the unions are to deal effectively with the rationalization agenda with the state. This view suggests that contextual factors of changed political context shifted the pre-independence roles of teacher unions. Teacher unions post-independence are expected to participate in policy formulation by engaging with government, hence the shift from militancy to participation. Research, which was not required in militant engagements, and which was not a particular focus of teacher unions pre-independence became critical in the context of post-independence Namibia.

Mary, a former staff member in the Ministry of Education, confirms the importance of research in the Namibian teacher unions:

Often in meetings, I was a little bit discouraged and disappointed, because, on critical issues, teacher unions would not be prepared and well informed, because teacher unions could not have done their homework. They could not have done their research, and they could not have looked at the literature, despite these links and opportunities that they could draw on. I am talking of the latter years, not initially. It was not previously the case. This has to do with leadership. Leadership is either a great facilitator or leadership could be great inhibitor (interview with Mary, 18 March, 2009).

The observations of Mary confirm the critical role of research for teacher unions participating and engaging in dialogue in education. Informed leadership in teacher

unions is critical in influencing and shaping the roles of the unions. According to Mary, such leadership can facilitate or constrain the roles of teacher unions in the institutional frameworks and modalities for union participation. She suggests that the leadership and expertise in teacher unions in Namibia have weakened as compared to the early years of independence.

Boys, one of the unionists, corroborates the vacuum in the leadership of teacher unions; he explains the cause of such vacuum in one teacher union:

The problems that came in were the issue of continuity at NANTU, which resulted in the changing of leadership for the sake of changing. Some of the new leadership who came in did not have the right grounding to understand where the union was coming from. If we were more careful, this would not have happened. For instance, if we had the old leadership that would guide the new leadership, and guide them on where NANTU is coming from and what we aim to achieve. Obviously, we were not strong on that, because it was democracy, and you do not want to impose leaders on people whom the people really do not want. That was our mistake. We did not handle the question of the transition from the old union leadership to the new wisely (interview with Boys, 15 March, 2009).

According to Boys, teacher unions in Namibia, particularly NANTU, did not handle the issue of leadership continuity appropriately. There was no transition plan for the systematic infusion of new blood in the leadership or to allow the old leadership to guide and mentor the new leadership. Boys argues that, because of the absence of a systematic plan to manage leadership succession in the unions, some people were elected to the union leadership without a proper understanding of the history and vision of the unions.

Mutopenzi, one of the officials in the Ministry of Education, comments on the current leadership in teacher unions:

We have seen very distinct differences in the leadership of the past, and current leadership of unions. We have seen shifts going from key issues of national development to personalities where you are losing your core business, and getting into positions of leadership not to serve, but as

stepping stones for better things to come. There has been that lack of strong leadership that understands what a union is supposed to do. We have seen weakening of the leadership, whether it is because of fear or self-righteousness, we do not know, but they are not as aggressive as we would want them to be (interview with Mutopenzi, 10 March, 2009).

According to the above views of Mutopenzi, post-independence contextual factors introduced new values and interests in the leadership of teacher unions. These values, as Mutopenzi notes, include; a focus on personal interests and exploiting teacher union positions to advance other interests. According to Steven, before independence, the leadership of the unions was driven by commitment and sacrifice in the interest of the members and the organizations. It is arguable that these values of the leadership of the union have shifted in post-independence Namibia. The principles of sacrifice and commitment for the good of the organizations seem to have faded, and other interests, as Mutopenzi observed have emerged in teacher unions in Namibia.

Wiseman explains the qualities needed to lead teacher unions:

To lead a teacher organization is not so much about status. It is not about using it as a springboard to get into the government structures, but a service. It is the people that we serve in those structures that would elevate us. If we have that attitude that you serve, and that the people whom we serve would reward you, then we would be better leaders (interview with Wiseman, 18 March, 2009).

I suggest that the value of service, as Wiseman explains, is disappearing among many leaders of teacher unions in today's Namibia. It is arguable that personal interests and leadership in teacher unions began to intersect. Consequently, some leaders of teacher unions use the unions to advance their personal interests.

6.4.4 New political culture and elite class formation

Steven suggests that the changed political context following independence brought about a new social and political culture. The broader contextual factors of materialism and accumulation, and a hierarchical political culture, are shaping the roles of teacher unions. Steven explains the new cultures:

There are broader forces that shape society. With independence, the government had a clear vision of actively demobilizing mass movements. It was a return to hierarchical politics. We have the leaders who decide, and the members were basically expected to approve and implement what the leaders were telling them. A very different political culture and I think that clash of political cultures of bottom-up democratic approaches that have driven NANSO, NANTU and NUNW in the 1980s clashed fundamentally with the approaches of the leadership in government, especially the exiled SWAPO leadership (interview with Steven, 24 March, 2009).

Steven here sums up the characteristics of the new political culture. It is premised on political hierarchy, and members are expected to implement the decisions of leaders without questioning. I concur with Steven that this new political culture fundamentally alters the principles of trade unionism, of internal democracy, mandate from the members and accountability of union leaders to the membership. Steven's views on the new political culture suggest that, despite the advantages of changed political context post-independence, which heralded in a new era of democracy and legislative frameworks for union participation, it also introduced new cultures which limit the effective operations of the teacher unions.

Teacher unions by their nature operate on the principles of membership participation and involvement in decision-making processes. It is arguable that the politics of hierarchy emerging after independence, as Steven has explained, reduce the public space for teacher unions to engage in debates. The new political culture expects the unions to approve and implement, and not to engage, which is the nature of teacher unions as organizations. This becomes problematic in situations, where the unions are indirectly affiliated to the political party in government.

Tapscott (2001:319) confirms the emergence of the trends of a new political culture in post-independence Namibia. He observes that the elections of 1994 returned SWAPO to power with an increased majority. According to Tapscott, SWAPO obtained the support of some three-quarters of the electorate. He notes that there is increasing evidence that, with this consolidation of power, there has been the resurgence of a

strain of authoritarianism which was latent within SWAPO's leadership ranks during the struggle era.

Geingob (2004) corroborates the views of Steven and Tapscott, and notes that "presidentialism", which he defined as "the systematic concentration of political power in the hands of one individual, in this case in the hands of the president", started to emerge in Namibia after the second election in 1994. He observes that after 2004, the President developed a tendency not to consult the Prime Minister and Cabinet on many issues. Presidentialism, as used in this study, refers to the concentration of political powers in the hands of one person.

I suggest that the new hierarchical political culture and emerging authoritarianism have the potential to demoralize teacher unions in Namibia, as authoritarianism and presidentialism stifle contending views not consistent with those of the ruling party and government. Leaders of teacher unions are scared to interrogate broader questions of social justice and to raise controversial public issues. Lack of principled leadership and populism seem to inform, in most instances, the current actions of teacher unions in Namibia. Against this background, it is arguable that the new political culture together with the leadership vacuum, might explain the current lack of engagement of teacher unions in dialogue in education in Namibia.

Bertha, a unionist, explains how the new political culture shaped the roles of teacher unions, particularly its implications regarding the leadership of the unions:

Another issue is that, if you are not cooperating with the big guys politically, then you will be kicked out. It is affecting the status of the union. It is making the union the laughing stock, and is demoralizing the teachers to join the union. It is painful, and I know that it is painful for those that have established the teacher unions. It is spreading from somewhere, and it is from the top (interview with Bertha, 27 March, 2009).

The comments of Bertha support Steven and Tapscott in confirming the existence of a hierarchical political culture in Namibia. Bertha explains that this new political culture is affecting and shaping the operations of teacher unions due to political interference in their internal operations. She suggests that this interference ensures

that only union leaders who cooperate with the political leadership retain their leadership of the unions. As I have argued earlier, this undermines the trade union principles of internal democracy, mandate and accountability.

Jauch (2007) in: “Between politics and the shop floor: Which way for Namibia’s labour movement?” gives examples of how the removal of leadership from teacher union positions has occurred in Namibia, and how it was orchestrated through political interference. The internal SWAPO political dynamics of the presidential elections in 2004 created factions in the party, and these dynamics, because of the hierarchical political culture extended to teacher unions. Jauch explains:

During the NANTU congress in September 2006, those who were seen as being part of the “Hamutenya group” received only about one-third of the congress votes and lost their leadership positions. Once again, the “Nujoma group” had gained the upper hand.

In addition to the emergence of a political hierarchical culture, the culture of materialism and accumulation, particularly among the middle-class, seems to influence teacher unions, as Steven explains:

The first generation of NANTU leadership was driven by the belief that we sacrifice our own interests for the organization. So, when there was no vehicle, we used our own vehicles to travel to the regions. When there was nowhere to sleep, we slept on the floor. When there was little money in the organization, we got allowances instead of salaries with benefits, especially the fulltime staff. Today, there is a huge difference between the NANTU of today and the NANTU of the early years, although there are quite a few individuals in the organization that have the outlook of the old struggle. The country’s political culture is in a way reflected in the teacher unions (interview with Steven, 24 March, 2009).

Steven confirms that the post-independence culture of materialism and accumulation among the middle-class elite found reflections in the teacher unions. He suggests that the belief in sacrifice which drove the early generation of the leaders of teacher unions is generally absent in the current generation of unionists.

Tapscott (2001:314) in: “Class formation and civil society in Namibia”, argues that there is evidence of a growing class stratification which transcends previous racial and ethnic boundaries, to a more considerable extent than the case in the context of the immediate post-independence Namibia. The class stratification, as observed by Tapscott, relates to the emergence of new elite, comprising much of the existing elite together with expanded organizational elite of senior black administrators, politicians and business people, who inhabit an economic and social world largely divorced from that of the majority of the urban and rural poor.

The evidence from Steven and Tapscott confirms, firstly, the existence of a new middle-class elite in Namibia. Secondly, this new middle class inhabits a world concerned with materialist accumulation. Thirdly, the interest of these elite finds reflections among leaders of the teacher unions. I suggest that these contextual factors of political hierarchy and materialism have shaped and continue to shape teacher unions in post-independence Namibia. The contextual factors are a move away from the values and principles which Steven highlighted, those of sacrifice in the interests of the organization and for the common good. According to Mutopenzi, the current leaders of the teacher unions use their positions primarily for individual material and social gains.

6.5 Conclusion

The pre-and post-independence political and educational contexts influenced and shaped teacher unions in different ways. Before independence, the political and educational contexts limited and constrained the unions from engaging in dialogue in education at the national level. This was the result of the policies of control and centralized educational policymaking, and the location of the teacher unions in racially, tribally and ethnically defined spaces. Teacher associations were allowed, but were forced to operate according to the prevailing political frameworks. The South African government in pre-independence Namibia attempted to co-opt teachers to the middle-class stratum. The identities of traditional professionalism shaped some teacher unions to align themselves with the South African government, while a few progressive teacher unions and individual teachers aligned themselves with the liberation struggle.

According to Tapscott (2001: 310), the South African government, faced with internal resistance to its rule in Namibia and mounting international pressure to withdraw, engineered internal solutions to the problem of Namibia's independence through reformist policies in the 1970s and 1980s. One of these policies was the creation of a black middle-class, intended to act as a hedge against the growing militancy of the masses, and as part of an anti-SWAPO coalition. The internal political attempts to find solutions to Namibia's independence shaped teacher unions in Namibia. The South African government promoted a federation of teachers' associations to which all teachers' associations were expected to belong. The federation was shaped by the political model of the Interim Constituent Assembly. The fragmentation and divisions among teachers, and opposition to the ethnically-based education system, led progressive teachers to launch a national teachers' union in 1989.

The post-independence contextual factors shaped teacher unions in both positive and negative ways. It shaped them in a positive way, because independence and democratization opened up spaces, and created legislative and other frameworks for teacher union participation and dialogue in education. The new freedoms also facilitated the mobility and appointment of teacher unionists to the structures of government and in the private sector. This was seen by the unions, as advantageous, as these leaders understood the issues of teacher unions. It was assumed that they would be better able to address the issues. The disadvantage was that the appointment of teacher unionists to government structures and the private sector left a leadership vacuum in the unions themselves. Thus experienced and knowledgeable unionists, who understood the history of teacher unions, and had a vision of where to take them, were lost to government and the private sector.

Contextual factors of the emergent political culture of hierarchy and elite class formation continue to shape teacher unions in Namibia. These new cultures shift the accountability of union leaders from the membership to government and political parties, especially in the case of those unions which were aligned to national liberation. The formation of a new black middle-class has influenced and shaped the roles of teacher unions, as the values and lifestyles of the new middle-class elites find reflections in the unions. The values of sacrifice in the interests of the organization, which characterized the roles of teacher unions during the period of the immediate

post-independence era, are shifting to the values of self-interest and of exploiting the unions for personal advancement. Teacher unions in Namibia are thus being shaped by the broader societal pressures of a new political culture and class formations, which aspire to materialism and accumulation.