

**The participation and influence of teacher unions on  
education reforms in an independent Namibia**

by

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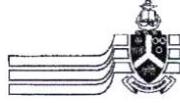
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The participation and influence of teacher unions on education reforms in an independent Namibia

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the shifting roles of teacher unions in pre-and post-independence Namibia, against the backdrop of a changing political context. My aim was to understand the roles of teacher unions both before and after independence in Namibia, and to explain how they changed in the different political contexts. To do so, I examined the teacher union roles in three distinct phases, namely pre-independence, immediately post-independence, taking in the period from 1990 to 1999, and the last decade, from 2000 up until today.

In approaching the research questions, I worked on the assumption that understanding and explaining the roles of teacher unions in pre- and post-independence Namibia could best be achieved by interacting with participants who were or had been involved in education and the teacher unions in Namibia. I argued that their experiences would be important in constructing knowledge on the unions, particularly regarding their roles before and after independence.

I chose a narrative design for the study, because it allowed me to interact with the participants to gain deeper meanings from their individual perspectives. Narrative design was appropriate to this research, because it also allowed me to trace the way events in education mirrored those in the national political arena, and to explain why particular tendencies emerged. I used the information collected during the interviews and document analysis as the data for the study.

Four themes emerged regarding the roles of teacher unions in the contexts of pre- and post-independence Namibia, around which I conceptualized the study. These were the shifting historic roles of these unions in Namibia, the institutional frameworks and modalities for union participation, the contextual factors relating to the roles of the unions, and the changed roles of the unions in contemporary Namibia.

The findings of the study suggested, firstly, that teacher unions play different roles in different political contexts, and that these roles are shaped by contextual factors. Secondly, the research established that the unions in the post-independence contexts

did not necessarily have a vision of a labour-driven process of radical strategic change, as postulated by the theory of strategic unionism. Instead, the findings suggest that teacher unions in contemporary Namibia are influenced and shaped by the broader political and social factors of a new hierarchical political culture, by political and economic middle-class aspirations, and by undefined party-government-teacher union relationships. I conclude the study by suggesting an expansion of the concept of strategic unionism to include the nuances of political and economic contexts and aspirations.

**Key words:** teacher union, teacher union participation, shifting roles, teacher union influence, education reforms, pre-independence Namibia, post-independence Namibia, institutional frameworks and modalities, changed political context, contextual factors.



## DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own original work, except where otherwise acknowledged. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Pretoria. I further declare that this thesis has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other university.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marius Kudumo'.

Marius Kudumo

Date

27/06/2011



## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, my late father, and my mother, for all their teachings about life, and for instilling the values and principles of self-discipline and self-reliance in me during my formative years.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AATO	All Africa Teachers' Organization
ACHSR	Advisory Committee for Human Sciences Research
ACN	Action Christian National
ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
AG	Administrator-General
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CTF	Canadian Teachers' Federation
ETSIP	Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme
HIGCSE	Higher International General Certificate of Secondary Education
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IGCSE	International General Certificate of Secondary Education
ILO	International Labour Organization
LaRRI	Labour Resource and Research Institute
NACTU	National Council of Trade Unions
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NAMOV	Namibia Onderwysersvereniging
NANSO	Namibia National Students' Organization
NANTU	Namibia National Teachers' Union
NAPTOSA	National Professional Teachers' Organization of South Africa
NIED	National Institute for Educational Development
NUNW	National Union of Namibian Workers
OTA	Owambo Teachers' Association
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers' Union
SWA	South West Africa
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organization
TELSIP	Teachers' English Language Skills Improvement Programme
TUN	Teachers' Union of Namibia
UNAM	University of Namibia
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

## Table of contents

<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<b>DECLARATION</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>DEDICATION</b> .....	<b>iv</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS</b> .....	<b>vi</b>
<b>Table of contents</b> .....	<b>viii</b>
<b>List of tables</b> .....	<b>x</b>
<b>Chapter 1</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Introduction and background to the study .....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Research purpose .....	2
1.3 Research questions.....	2
1.4 Background and rationale for the study .....	3
1.5 Organization of the thesis .....	6
<b>Chapter 2</b> .....	<b>8</b>
What the literature says about teacher unions.....	8
2.1 Introduction.....	8
2.2 The roles and functions of trade unions .....	9
2.3 Teacher unions and education reforms .....	13
2.4 Trade unions in post-revolutionary contexts.....	23
2.5 Brief overview of education in pre-independence Namibia and the context of post-independence education reforms .....	32
2.6 Brief overview of teacher unions in Namibia .....	34
2.7 Key role-players during the education reforms in Namibia post- independence .....	40
2.8 Conclusion .....	42
<b>Chapter 3</b> .....	<b>44</b>
Who to choose and how? The Methodology .....	44
3.1 Introduction.....	44
3.2 Research design and approach .....	44
3.3 Finding the key participants for the study.....	46
3.4 Sample and sampling frame .....	48
3.5 Data collection tools .....	52
3.5.1 Semi-structured interviews .....	52
3.5.2 Focus group and telephone interviews.....	53
3.5.3 Follow-up interview .....	54
3.5.4 Document analysis .....	55
3.6 Core questions.....	56
3.7 Conducting the interviews .....	57
3.8 Data analysis .....	60
3.9 Validity and ethical considerations .....	60
3.10 Challenges encountered during the research.....	63

3.11	Limitations of the study .....	64
3.12	Conceptual framework .....	65
<b>Chapter 4 .....</b>		<b>68</b>
Shifting roles of teacher unions in Namibia .....		68
4.1	Introduction .....	68
4.2	Pre-independence roles of teacher unions in Namibia.....	68
4.3	Roles of teacher unions in Namibia on the eve of independence, 1988 to 1989.....	73
4.4	Post-independence roles of teacher unions in Namibia, 1990 to 1999 .....	78
4.4.1	Education vision of teacher unions for a post-independence Namibia.....	80
4.4.2	Advocacy roles of teacher unions in post-independence Namibia .....	83
4.5	Roles of teacher unions during the education reforms, 1990 to 1999.....	88
4.5.1	Teacher unions and professional development of their members.....	90
4.5.2	Representation and participation roles in the institutional frameworks and modalities of the education reforms .....	93
4.5.2.1	Explanation of teacher union representation and participation.....	93
4.5.2.2	Representation and participation.....	97
4.6	Current roles of teacher unions in Namibia , 2000 to date .....	105
4.7	Assessing the influence of teacher unions on the education reforms .....	113
4.8	Conclusion .....	116
<b>Chapter 5 .....</b>		<b>118</b>
Institutional frameworks and modalities for teacher union participation .....		118
5.1	Introduction .....	118
5.2	Institutional frameworks and modalities pre-independence .....	118
5.3	Institutional frameworks and modalities post-independence.....	120
5.4	Legislative institutional frameworks.....	129
5.4.1	The Namibian Constitution.....	129
5.4.2	The Labour Act .....	130
5.4.3	The Recognition Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Namibia and NANTU .....	130
5.4.4	The Education Act.....	132
5.4.5	Partnership policy between the Government of the Republic of Namibia and civic organizations.....	133
5.5	Assessing the efficiency of the participation and institutional frameworks and modalities .....	134
5.6	Why inclusive and participatory approach to education? .....	136
5.6.1	The unity and nation-building imperatives .....	137
5.6.2	The experience and expertise imperatives .....	139
5.6.3	The imperatives of the politics of negotiated settlement and consensus .....	141
5.6.4	The imperatives of the image of the national liberator .....	143
5.7	Conclusion .....	144
<b>Chapter 6 .....</b>		<b>146</b>
Contextual factors and the roles of teacher unions in Namibia .....		146
6.1	Introduction .....	146
6.2	Pre-independence political factors .....	146
6.3	Pre-independence education factors.....	149
6.4	Post-independence factors .....	152
6.4.1	Influence of independence and democratization on teacher unions .....	153
6.4.2	Party-government-teacher union relationships .....	154

6.4.3	Appointments of union leaders and leadership vacuum in teacher unions....	160
6.4.4	New political culture and elite class formation .....	165
6.5	Conclusion .....	169
<b>Chapter 7</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>172</b>
	How do we explain the changed roles of teacher unions in post-independence	
	Namibia? .....	172
7.1	Introduction.....	172
7.2	Contestations of middle-class interests and national liberation on the roles of teacher unions .....	172
7.3	Contextual factors and the roles of teacher unions .....	175
7.4	Professionalism and the role of teacher unions.....	178
7.5	Expanding the conceptual framework of strategic unionism.....	179
7.6	Other areas of interest .....	181
7.7	Conclusion .....	183
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>184</b>
<b>ANNEXURE 1:</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>192</b>
	Ethics clearance certificate .....	192
<b>ANNEXURE 2</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>193</b>
	Letter of protocol .....	193
<b>ANNEXURE 3:</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>196</b>
	Interview questions .....	196
<b>ANNEXURE 4</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>197</b>
	Example of the transcripts .....	197
<b>ANNEXURE 5</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>203</b>
	Letters of permission.....	203
<b>ANNEXURE 6</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>206</b>
	Letters from the editor .....	206



## List of tables

Table 1: Summary of data collection tools .....	52
Table 2: Interview schedule .....	59

## Chapter 1

### Introduction and background to the study

#### 1.1 Introduction

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

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

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

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

## **1.2 Research purpose**

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

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

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

## **1.3 Research questions**

The following research questions guide the study:

### **Main research question**

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

### **Sub-questions**

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

pre-and post-independence?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 1.5 Organization of the thesis

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Chapter 2

### What the literature says about teacher unions

#### 2.1 Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The theories are:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 2.4 Trade unions in post-revolutionary contexts

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 2.8 Conclusion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Chapter 3

### Who to choose and how? The Methodology

#### 3.1 Introduction

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

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

#### 3.2 Research design and approach

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **3.3 Finding the key participants for the study**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **3.4 Sample and sampling frame**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 3.5 Data collection tools

**Table 1: Summary of data collection tools**

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

#### 3.5.1 Semi-structured interviews

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

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

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

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

### **3.5.2 Focus group and telephone interviews**

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

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

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

### **3.5.3 Follow-up interview**

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

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

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

#### **3.5.4 Document analysis**

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

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

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

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

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

### **3.6 Core questions**

I asked these core questions:

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

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

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

### **3.7 Conducting the interviews**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Table 2: Interview schedule**

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

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

### 3.8 Data analysis

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

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

### 3.9 Validity and ethical considerations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **3.10 Challenges encountered during the research**

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

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

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

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

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

### **3.11 Limitations of the study**

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

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

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

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

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

### **3.12 Conceptual framework**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Chapter 4

### Shifting roles of teacher unions in Namibia

#### 4.1 Introduction

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

#### 4.2 Pre-independence roles of teacher unions in Namibia

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

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

A participant in the study explains:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Another unionist elaborates:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **4.4.2 Advocacy roles of teacher unions in post-independence Namibia**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### 4.5.1 Teacher unions and professional development of their members

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

##### **4.5.2.1 Explanation of teacher union representation and participation**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### 4.5.2.2 Representation and participation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The specific objectives of the conference were:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thus the teacher unionist, Steven, recalls:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Another teacher unionist corroborates, this view, and elaborates:

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

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

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

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

- National Advisory Council on Education;
- Regional Education Forums;
- School Boards ;
- Teaching Service Committee;
- National Council for Higher Education;
- Advisory Council on Teachers' Education and Training;
- Council of the Polytechnic of Namibia;
- National Training Authority;
- Examination Board;
- Technical Committee on staffing norms; and
- Board on textbook policy<sup>2</sup>.

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

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

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

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

Another former teacher union leader corroborates this, and expands:

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

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

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

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

Staff members in the Ministry respond and give detailed explanations:

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

Another staff member explains:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Angula corroborates these sentiments and states:

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

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

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

#### 4.7 Assessing the influence of teacher unions on the education reforms

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

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

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

One of the unionists explains:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

One of the unionists corroborates this point, and elaborates:

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

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

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

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

## **4.8 Conclusion**

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

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

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

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

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

## 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.

## Chapter 7

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

#### **7.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I offer three main arguments with respect to the roles of teacher unions. Firstly, the roles of the unions in pre-independence Namibia were shaped by the interplay and contestations of middle-class interests and national liberation. Secondly, the unions, immediately post-independence, were influenced and shaped by broader political and social contextual factors, as they continue to be in today's Namibia. Thirdly, I suggest that the conceptual framework of strategic unionism, as used in this study, can explain the roles of teacher unions in both pre- and immediate post-independence Namibia, but is inadequate to explain their current roles. Against this background, I offer an expansion of the conceptual framework to accommodate the post-independence contextual factors. These include the emergence of a new political culture, and the contestations between class interests and unionism. I suggest that strategic unionism, which developed during the transition to democracy, needs to be extended to the post-independence period, as the context of transition may have changed post-independence.

#### **7.2 Contestations of middle-class interests and national liberation on the roles of teacher unions**

In this study, I found that the contestations of middle-class interests and national liberation influenced and shaped the roles of teacher unions in pre-independence Namibia. The dominant political and social features before independence were, on the one hand, the fight for national liberation, and on the other, attempts by the South African government to maintain the existing political system and social status quo. Against this background, the roles of teacher unions in pre-independence Namibia were located in the contested political and social environment of either supporting national liberation or advancing personal middle-class interests and aspirations. Supporting the South African government was akin to pursuing middle-class interests.

The middle-class stratum enjoyed privileges, such as high salaries and housing subsidies. The objective of creating a middle class in pre-independence Namibia was to oppose national liberation.

In the conflicting objectives of the political environment, progressive teacher unions contested the prevailing political and educational systems. Their purpose was to bring about fundamental change. Towards the end of the 1980s, these unions began, at first covertly and then openly, to identify themselves with national liberation. While not all the teachers and teacher unions openly supported national liberation, some straddled the political and education system, and opposed apartheid from within the system. Soudien (2002) suggests that teachers and teacher unions can oppose a system in which they work through what he defines as “strategic resistance”. This refers to a situation where individuals choose to subvert the system from within. Teacher unions and teachers in pre-independence Namibia used this kind of strategic resistance to fight the apartheid system.

I suggest that progressive teacher unions supported national liberation for two main reasons. Firstly, it was to contribute to the speedy independence of Namibia by joining forces with other progressive forces fighting for national liberation. Secondly, it aimed to bring about a new education system by advocating for radical change in education, once independence had been gained. The education reform agenda of these unions included democratization of education and the introduction of a relevant national education system. The unions expected the new education system to address the needs and aspirations of all the Namibian people, in contrast to the prevailed system in pre-independence Namibia.

Against the above explanation, I posit that the politics of national liberation shaped the roles of progressive teacher unions in pre-independence Namibia. My argument is premised on two points. Firstly, the role of progressive teachers was defined by the expectations of the forces of national liberation, and thereafter transformation of the education system. Secondly, the progressive unions, as Steven argued in chapter four of this study, realized that fundamental change could not take place in the context of the pre-independence reformist framework, hence the support for national liberation to bring about radical change in education.

The progressive teacher unions which supported national liberation were opposed and counteracted by other teacher unions. The agenda of the progressive unions was to unite all the teachers in Namibia in a national teachers' union. The other unions counteracted this idea by establishing the Federation of Teachers' Associations of South West Africa/Namibia. The purpose of the Federation was to bring all the teacher unions under one umbrella. I suggest that this was a reflection of the contestation in the political arena between national liberation and the maintenance of the prevailing political and education system. The contestation did not originate only with the teacher unions. Those unions which opposed national liberation were aided by the government. The South African government aided the unions which opposed liberation, by deliberately promoting the middle-class interests of teachers in Namibia before independence, as I will illustrate shortly. My research found that the South African government in the 1970s and 1980s initiated schemes to promote middle-class interests. Secondly, Ellis (1984) suggests that it was the government which promoted the establishment of the Federation of Teachers' Associations of South West Africa/Namibia, specifically to oppose initiatives to establish progressive national teacher unions.

Tapscott (2001) notes that black teachers and nurses were paid salaries and housing benefits that were on a par with their white counterparts. This was not the case with all other employees. The purpose of promoting a black middle-class was, firstly, to promote elitism, and to form a hedge between national liberation and the middle-class stratum. Secondly, as Ellis (1984) suggests, it forced some teachers to play the roles of agents of the apartheid state in the fight against national liberation and the liberation movement, SWAPO. Thirdly, it was to prepare the middle-class stratum to oppose radical transformation in post-independence Namibia (Ellis, 1984; Cohen, 1994; Tapscott, 2001).

It is possible, therefore, that the interests of national liberation and the South African government to mobilize teachers to identify themselves with either national liberation or middle-class interests were informed by the potential roles of teachers and teacher unions to advance their conflicting interests. Teachers, by virtue of their position, could influence society to support or oppose a cause. Depending on their location,

teacher unions before independence became entangled in the interests either of national liberation or the South African government.

The existing literature on teacher unions, reviewed in chapter four, does not speak to contestations of middle-class interests and national liberation. As I argued, it treats teacher unions as homogeneous, and assumes that they act in the same manner in all contexts. My research brings out the conflict between middle-class interests and national liberation, and how this shaped the roles of teacher unions. Against this background, I suggest that the roles of the unions can only be fully understood and explained, if the contestations of middle-class interests and national liberation are taken into account. I assert that the contestations shaped and influenced the roles of teacher unions in Namibia.

### **7.3 Contextual factors and the roles of teacher unions**

I will make two main arguments in this section. The first is that the immediate context post-independence created favourable conditions for teacher union participation and dialogue in education. Secondly, I argue that, despite the favourable conditions for union participation, the post-independence environment in Namibia also introduced a new political culture and new middle-class formations. These shaped, and continue to shape, the roles of teacher unions in Namibia.

I have shown that the teacher unions changed from adversarial labour relations and co-optation to the middle-class stratum, which conditioned their roles in Namibia before independence, to participation and dialogue in education after independence. I argue that these changed roles were the result of independence and the new democratic dispensation, and of the ideologies of partnership and participation introduced by the new government. The new democratic dispensation created institutional frameworks and modalities to facilitate teacher union participation and dialogue in education. National liberation was premised on democratization and participation, and these ideologies found reflection in government policies after independence. In chapter five, I showed how the Namibian Constitution offers opportunities for teacher unions in Namibia to share in policy development, and to influence public policies. It is against this background that the ideology of the new government, compared to the pre-

independence government, encouraged participation in the decision-making processes.

Secondly, I suggest that there is a relationship between the broader political context, including the power wielded by government, and the roles of teacher unions. In the case of immediate post-independence Namibia, the broader political and social contextual factors of negotiated political settlement, the principles of consensus, and the policy of national reconciliation and unity influenced an inclusive and participatory approach to education. It should be noted that the incoming government in 1990 did not have all the expertise and experience to manage a national education system. The need to pool all the available skills and experiences in constructing a unified education system informed the inclusive and participatory approach to education. Against this background, it is arguable that the contextual factors of democratization and unity defined and shaped the roles of teacher unions in the period immediately after independence. Democratization opened up spaces for teacher union participation and social dialogue in education.

I concluded from my research that the immediate post-independence roles of teacher unions of participation and involvement in the institutional frameworks and modalities have undergone changes. Teacher unions in Namibia today are not involved in education in the way they were during the period of the educational reforms. There are different explanations for the current lack of teacher union participation in the institutional frameworks and modalities for dialogue in education. Firstly, independence, in addition to ushering in favourable conditions for union participation, also introduced new cultures which limited the roles of the unions. Here, I will discuss two of the new cultures to illustrate how they constrained the roles of teacher unions in post-independence Namibia.

The first is the culture of political hierarchy. I argue that a new culture of political hierarchy emerged after independence. This culture was based on the practice of the leadership of the party or government taking decisions, and the “followers” implementing the decisions. I argue that this new culture demobilizes teacher unions in so far as taking internal independent union decisions. Teacher unions in today’s Namibia, particularly those affiliated to the ruling party, are entangled in undefined party-government-teacher union relationships, and these relationships limit the extent

to which the unions can advance their own interests outside political parties and the sphere of government influence.

Undefined post-independence party-government-teacher union relationships complicate the roles of teacher unions in the context of a new political culture, which expects the unions to follow the decisions of the party or government. It also undermines the trade union principles of internal democracy, mandate and accountability to the membership. Against this background, the unions become followers, rather than active participants in the institutional frameworks and modalities of union participation and dialogue in education. They become followers of government and subject to political party dictates.

I submit that the new political culture and its underlying hierarchical distinction between the leadership and followers offers one explanation of why teacher unions currently are not involved in education, as compared to the phase of the educational reforms. The new political culture not only influences and shapes the roles of teacher unions; it also shapes the mindset of staff members in the Ministry of Education to avoid involving teacher unions in education policymaking. Staff members in the Ministry of Education assume that the Ministry alone is responsible for making decisions, which others have to implement.

The formation of a new middle-class is another post-independence phenomenon in Namibia. The middle-class elite, as Tapscott (2001) observes, is detached from the world of poverty. They focus on materialism and wealth accumulation. The tendency in the broader society to ascend to the stratum of the middle-class elite finds reflection in the current leadership of the teacher unions. The middle-class interests and aspirations of the union leaders have two implications for the unions. Firstly, the leaders tend to focus on political issues which advance their personal ambitions in the party political structures or in government. This focus on the political parties, instead of on unionism, facilitates their rise into the middle-class stratum. Secondly, the union leaders ignore the promotion of professional aspects of teacher unionism.

## 7.4 Professionalism and the role of teacher unions

I make two points in this section. Firstly, the roles of teacher unions in the contested political environment go beyond professional roles, and include political issues which the unions drive. Secondly, teacher unions in Namibia once had a vision of radical change in both the internal organization of the unions and the education system. They were involved in both unionism and professionalism.

The formation of national teacher unions in Namibia was driven by the teacher unions, firstly, to challenge the prevailing political environment of fragmentation, and secondly, to bring about change in the internal organization of the unions. The unions drove the agenda of national unity and their relocation from the ethnic space that had defined their identities before independence. The formation of teacher unions in the Namibian context enabled progressive teachers to play roles beyond those of traditional unionism. These roles included the dismantling of ethnic fragmentation in education and in the unions. The progressive teachers drove the agenda of national, non-racial and non-ethnic unions and education system.

As in the case of the confrontation of middle-class interests and national liberation, so was the national union agenda opposed by some teacher unions. The contestation was underlined by the definition of teachers as professionals, and by opposition to the alignment of the unions with the working class. It is therefore, arguable that the roles of teacher unions in Namibia were driven by both trade unionism and professionalism.

In immediate post-independence Namibia, teacher unions began to drive their strategic educational issues. They advanced professional issues in the institutional frameworks of the education reforms. Their purpose was to bring about fundamental change in education. The strategic issues for radical change that the progressive unions advanced were; the introduction of English as the medium of instruction, equality and equity in education, and school integration and democratization of education.

I suggest that the roles of teacher unions in Namibia, and the issues that they promoted, were defined by the political context. Before independence, they focused more on unionism, and on organizing teachers into national teachers' unions. With the

advent of independence, particularly in the immediate post-independence period, the unions pursued issues of professionalism to bring about fundamental change in education. The separation between professionalism and unionism is not inevitable, as teacher unions can combine the two to advance their interests. Teachers and some teacher unions in pre-independence Namibia, for example, advanced the formation of national teacher unions and at the same time advocated for a unified education system.

## **7.5 Expanding the conceptual framework of strategic unionism**

I will make two main arguments in this section. Firstly, I suggest that strategic unionism can explain the roles of teacher unions in the context of pre- and immediate post-independence Namibia, but is inadequate to explain the current roles of the unions. Secondly, against this background, I suggest that strategic unionism should be expanded to take into account the post-independence contextual factors which influence and shape the unions' roles.

Strategic unionism, as described by Von Holdt (1994), Barber (1996) and Murray and Wood (1997), and used in this study as the conceptual framework, is premised on trade unions, including teacher unions, developing a strategic vision and response to contextual factors. The vision and response are short-and long-term labour-driven processes of strategic and radical change, the commitment to building alliances, and the formation of coalitions in dealing with contextual issues.

According to Von Holdt (1994), cited in Murray and Wood (1997), strategic unionism in South Africa developed as a response to the challenges posed by the transition from apartheid to democracy. The principles of strategic unionism were also developed, because of the inadequacies of the theory of trade unions as social movements to explain the roles of independent trade unions during the transition to democracy in South Africa.

According to Murray and Wood (1997), the strategic vision of trade unions, including progressive teacher unions in pre-independence Namibia, extended beyond the traditional roles of unions in the workplace to the sphere of national liberation. The vision and roles of teacher unions immediately after independence expanded from

concentrating only on unionism to focusing on professionalism. The unions, as I showed in chapter four, embraced the post-independence educational reforms. It was for this reason that they were represented in the institutional frameworks and modalities created to facilitate their participation in the reforms. The purpose of their participation was to influence the reforms, and to bring about radical change in the education system after independence. Given this background, I suggest that strategic unionism, as expounded by Von Holdt (1994), Barber (1996) and Murray and Wood (1997), can explain the roles of teacher unions both in the context of the pre- and immediate post-independence Namibia.

Strategic unionism suggests a vision of a labour-driven process of radical strategic change that I did not find in the current roles of teacher unions in Namibia. The situation in Namibia today, as Jenny observed, is that “the Ministry of Education tends to wait until unions raise issues, then the Ministry is caught off guard in panic,” signalling the current absence of strategic unionism in Namibia. This view is reinforced with the observation of another interviewee that teacher unions in Namibia currently “have completely lost direction.”

Teacher unions and other trade unions in Namibia today are driven by political and personal ambitions. The post-independence context, as Tapscott (2001) observed, created scope for the rapid formation of a new middle-class. What emerges from the results of this study is the existence of a new hierarchical political culture, new middle-class formations, and undefined party-government-teacher union relationships, instead of a labour-driven process of radical change. I argue that, just as the struggle for national liberation and middle-class interests in pre-independence Namibia shaped the roles of teacher unions, so the post-independence context of the formation of a new middle-class and a new political culture have had profound effects on the current roles of teacher unions. As Bendix (1998:75) suggests, “industrial relations systems are reflections of the socio-political system, and division in the socio-political system found reflection in the industrial relations system.”

The current roles of teacher unions in Namibia are shaped by the new middle-class interests and aspirations. Unionists currently access middle-class interests through their advancements in political parties, and subsequent appointment in government structures and the private sector. As a result, the values and principles of service to the

union, education and solidarity are dissolving. Increasingly, as I explained in chapter six, leadership in teacher unions is seen as a stepping-stone for personal aspirations and ambitions, and for access to the new middle-class. This suggests that the broader post-independence factors in Namibia of new middle-class formations, hierarchical political culture and undefined party-government-teacher union relationships have reached deep in the roles of teacher unions. Secondly, the post-independence contextual factors of class formations and a new political culture are currently shaping the unions to conform to the broader political and social contexts. The expected roles of teacher unions, those of conformity to political parties and governments, are very different from their pre- and immediate post-independence roles.

I hold that strategic unionism cannot explain the roles of teacher unions in Namibia against the backdrop of changed political conditions. Nor can it explain the current roles of teacher unions against the backdrop of the emergent middle-class and the new political culture. It is not yet clear what trade union theory or theories will emerge to accommodate the post-independence contextual factors which influence and shape the roles of teacher unions. This suggests that a further implication of this study could be the expansion of strategic unionism to take into account the post-independence contextual factors or to generate a new theory altogether, one which would explain the changed roles of the unions within the broader political and social context. Specifically, the contestations of class interests and unionism make the strategic aspirations of unionism hazy. In addition, political aspirations further complicate the unionist agenda, rendering strategic unionism an incomplete theoretical stance.

## **7.6 Other areas of interest**

The results of the study reveal other areas of interest. I did not address these areas, as they were not part of the research questions. Further research on teacher unions might consider investigating some of these areas of interest. They include:

- The shifting roles of teacher unions and implications for industrial relations policies and practice.
- The roles of teacher unions through the lenses of gender and race.

These are some of the questions that came to mind as I was going through the journey of conducting this study. I suggest that the shifting roles of teacher unions require new approaches to industrial relations policies and practice. It is against this background that further studies on these unions could look into how their shifting roles shape industrial relations policies and practice in different contexts. Examining the influence of the shifting roles of teacher unions on industrial relations might help governments to develop more pro-active and coherent, but flexible industrial relations policies.

In the literature review chapter, I highlighted an observation in the 2009 ILO and UNESCO report of the Committee of Experts on “the Application of the Recommendations Concerning the Status of the Teaching Personnel” that there is generally a lack of dialogue and consultations between governments and teacher unions. The problem in Namibia is not the absence of structures and mechanisms for social dialogue in education, but rather that of improving the effectiveness of the existing structures and mechanisms, so that the Ministry is not “caught off guard”, as Jenny expressed it.

The second question came to my mind, because I realized when writing the methodology chapter that my sample did not take gender and race into account. I suggest further research to look at the history of the Namibian teacher unions through race and gender lenses, as these perspectives might offer different explanations for the shifting roles of the unions.

## 7.7 Conclusion

I believe that this study, although a case study of the roles played by teacher unions in pre- and post-independence Namibia, is significant. It contributes to our understanding of the shifting roles of the unions, particularly the influence of the conflicting interests of middle-class aspirations and national liberation. Teacher unions are generally treated in existing literature as focusing either on professionalism or on trade unionism. This study demonstrates that they could simultaneously play both unionist and professional roles, and that context determines the roles they would play. It has also shown that, in the context of immediate post-independence Namibia, representation and participation of the unions in the institutional frameworks and modalities of the education reforms were key priority activities. Finally, I have argued that strategic unionism may be extended through the conscious accommodation of contextual political and social conditions. In the Namibian case, these would be the political aspirations that unionists hold, as well as the desire for middle-class comforts.

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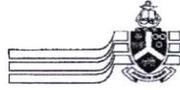
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## ANNEXURE 1: Ethics clearance certificate



UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
FACULTY OF EDUCATION  
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

**CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

**DEGREE AND PROJECT**

**INVESTIGATOR(S)**

**DEPARTMENT**

**DATE CONSIDERED**

**DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE**

**CLEARANCE NUMBER :**

EM08/09/03

PhD

The participation and influence of teacher unions on education reforms in an independent Namibia

M. Kudumo

Department of Education Management and Policy Studies

26 November 2010

APPROVED

Please note:

*For Masters applications, ethical clearance is valid for 2 years*

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

**CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS COMMITTEE** Prof L Ebersohn

DATE

26 November 2010

CC

Prof V Pillay  
Ms Jeannie Beukes

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

1. A signed personal declaration of responsibility
2. If the research question changes significantly so as to alter the nature of the study, a new application for ethical clearance must be submitted
3. It remains the students' responsibility to ensure that all the necessary forms for informed consent are kept for future queries.

Please quote the clearance number in all enquiries.

## **ANNEXURE 2: Letter of protocol**

26 March 2009

Dear Sir / Madam,

### **Letter of invitation to participate in the study**

My name is Marius Kudumo, and I am a Namibian who has registered for a PhD in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies at the University of Pretoria. I am currently conducting research in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree. My research topic is: "The participation and influence of teacher unions on education reforms in an independent Namibia."

The purpose of the study is to understand and explain the shifting roles of teacher unions in pre- and post-independence Namibia. The main research questions are:

- What were the roles of teacher unions in pre- and post-independence Namibia?
- What institutional frameworks in pre- and post-independence Namibia facilitated the participation of teacher unions?
- What contextual factors shaped the roles of teacher unions in pre- and post-independence Namibia?
- How do we explain the changed roles of teacher unions in post-independence Namibia?

Recognizing your involvement, whether directly or indirectly in education reforms and / or teacher unions in Namibia, I wish to request you to participate in the study. The request is based on my judgment of your involvement in the education reforms and / or teacher union activities. Your participation is confined to a single semi-structured interview, which is part of the data collection. The interview is expected to last for 45 minutes to one hour. I would like to conduct the interview in private / outside your work environment and time, if possible, to ensure confidentiality and to minimize any potential unintended consequences. The interview will be recorded. I will at a later stage forward the draft transcript to you for your comments.

Furthermore, I will give you the opportunity to review any data that is ascribed to you before it is finally included in the thesis.

The research will be conducted in accordance with the applicable legislation in Namibia pertaining to informed consent and the principles of the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria. In addition to the applicable legislation in Namibia and the ethical requirements, I am also expected to comply with the professional responsibilities of conducting research as outlined in the University of Pretoria: Code of Ethics for Research. The professional responsibilities include; integrity, quality and accountability. The participation in the study is therefore voluntary, and is based on informed consent. Your identity as well as the information you would provide will be kept confidential. You have thus the right to decide whether to participate in the study or not.

The principles of the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education are:

- Voluntary participation in research: Implying that the participants might withdraw from the research at any time.
- Informed consent: Meaning that research participants must at all times be fully informed about the research process and purpose, and must give consent to their participation in the research.
- Safety in the participation: Meaning that participants should not be placed at risk or harm of any kind.
- Privacy: Meaning that the confidentiality and anonymity of participants should be protected at all times.
- Trust: Implying that participants will not respond to any acts of deception or betrayal in the research process or its published outcomes.

It is in the context of the information that I have provided, and in accordance with the ethical requirements, that I am requesting your voluntary consent to participate in the study. I undertake to ensure confidentiality at all times.

Kindly indicate in writing your voluntary consent to participate in the study, and the appropriate date, time and venue of the interview. I intend to conclude all the interviews by the end of March 2009. My postal address is:

Marius Kudumo

P.O. Box 25417

Windhoek

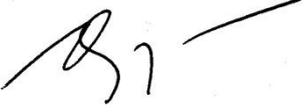
E-Mail: mkudumo@mec.gov.na or mkudumo@iway.na

For any further enquiries, please do not hesitate to contact me at 0811229015 or 061-248684(h).

**Signature of applicant**

**Date: 27 January 2009**

**Marius Kudumo**



**Signature of supervisor**

**Date: 27 January 2009**

**Prof.Venitha Pillay**

### **ANNEXURE 3: Interview questions**

1. Briefly explain your involvement and personal experience of the education reforms in an independent Namibia.
2. What participation modalities and strategies did the Ministry of Education adopt during the education reforms to facilitate the participation of teacher unions?
3. What were the roles of teacher unions during the education reforms?
4. In your experience, how did the pre-independence political and education contexts influence and shape the relationship between teacher unions and the education authorities?
5. In your experience, how did the post-independence political and education contexts influence and shape the relationship between teacher unions and the Ministry of Education?
6. How would you compare the roles of teacher unions during the apartheid era, especially during the transition from apartheid to democracy with their currently evident roles in education in Namibia? (Only for former and current unionists).
7. What are the currently evident roles of teacher unions in education in Namibia? (only for former and current staff members in the Ministry of Education).
8. Any other issue or additional information that you wish to share that we did not discuss?

## **ANNEXURE 4: Example of the transcripts**

### **Transcripts for the study on the participation and influence of teacher unions on education reforms in an independent Namibia 2009**

Interview Reference Number: DW A0016

**Position: Former leader in teacher unions**

**Question 1: Briefly explain your involvement and personal experience of the education reforms in independent Namibia.**

I started to teach in 1990 at Epako Junior Secondary School. I got very much involved in the new education reform programmes during the first year of independence as well as in the teacher unions. The unions were very critical driving forces behind some of the major education changes, which were implemented and propagated. The teacher union I am talking about is NANTU. I served at the Gobabis branch, and was later elected as the Secretary of the branch of the East Regional Executive Committee. I was involved in the education restructuring that has taken place. It was a very exciting period, and the introduction of English as the medium of instruction was quite a challenge, as most of the teachers used to teach in Afrikaans and received their teacher training in Afrikaans. NANTU was very much behind the Ministry in supporting the introduction of English as the medium of instruction. The second change that I can remember is the introduction of the new education system of learner-centred approach, as it was very much different from what teachers were trained in. NANTU was also very much behind the Ministry in supporting this change, and the process posed a lot of challenges, not only for the unions, but for the whole teaching corps. We needed to incorporate the teachers and children into the teaching system. We had to get the mindset of the children and teachers changed. There were short courses for teachers to effect that change. It was very exciting periods and very much challenging. I was able to serve on a union that was very progressive and supportive throughout this process.

**Question 2: What were the roles of teacher unions during the education reforms in an independent Namibia?**

We had a dual role. Being a teachers union, your main emphasis was to look at the conditions of service of our members and to bargain for better conditions of service. Being a progressive union, however, we decided not to only focus on the conditions of service or bread and butter issues so to speak, but also to be actively involved on the education reform side. There were very specific programmes that the union introduced to serve their members better. For example, NANTU introduced TELSIP. It was a programme that was designed to improve the competency levels of the teachers, and to make the teachers more conversant and proficient in the English language. That to me proves that we went beyond our traditional role of a union, but also improved the performance of the teachers to be good teachers in the classroom.

**Probing question: The literature suggests that the Ministry used the strategy of establishing task forces and committees to enable stakeholders to participate in the education reforms. Can you recall what the role of the teacher unions were in these taskforces and committees?**

That is a very difficult question for me, because by then, I was already serving on the regional level. 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 can be made competitive and competency based, but I cannot recall the name of the specific committee. We certainly played a very important and active role in introducing the change that was brought about.

**Probing question: How would you assess your involvement and or members of NANTU's involvement in this process? Did it make an impact?**

Generally, it did make an impact. NANTU was not invited, because it was a recognized union. It was, because we were seen as equal partners, and what NANTU said was taken on board and considered favourably. At the time when I was the

Secretary-General of the teacher union, for example, a sub-committee was established to look at the staffing norms. We had very strong opposing views with the Ministry of Education. The Ministry was suggesting increasing the teacher and learner ratio in the central and southern parts of the country, and decreasing the teacher and learner ratio in the northern and north-eastern parts for very obvious reasons. Our opinion was that one of the key principles of the Ministry was access, quality, equity and democracy, and we were opposing this idea, as one should not only be looking at access to education, as per the constitutional obligation, but have to look also at the other objectives as well. Access is fine, but it will obviously compromise quality, and that is one issue that we could not agree with. This is currently not satisfactorily resolved.

**Question 3: In your experience, how did the pre-independence political and education contexts influence and shape the role of teacher unions in education in Namibia?**

Being a Namibian of mixed decent, South African from my mother's side and Namibian from my father's side, I would not be able to say what NANTU has experienced, and how it has changed over time. This is because, I was in South Africa. I understand that NANTU was operating in the same manner that the unions in South Africa were operating at the time during the fight against colonial rule and apartheid. At the time that I come to Namibia, 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 become the ruling party and the teachers were now employed by the government led by SWAPO, and our role has changed. At the time, the leaders were mature enough and also more understanding to see how NANTU's role has changed. The role changed in an independent country, as the union is required to address issues. One does not need to align you with political parties when pushing through issues of education and rallying on issues of education.

**Question 4: In your experience, how did the post-independence political and education contexts influence and shape the roles of teacher unions in education in Namibia?**

From the teacher unions' side, that is NANTU, our role was not so much about agitating for the sake of agitating with no reasons. We aimed at nation-building and maintaining the independence of the country. We saw ourselves as the voice of the teachers and not influenced by our political affiliation. The leadership at the time was mature enough to understand the role that the union was playing. For example, the former President was sending Namibian soldiers to the DRC, and we were celebrating World Teachers Day.

I mentioned during my address at World Teachers Day that Namibia does not need a big military budget, but more teachers and education materials to educate our nation. It was not taken well by some in the NANTU leadership and other politicians, but I said it without fear, because I saw this as a role that we were supposed to play as a union. Some of the members agreed with me, but most disagreed, and it ultimately counted against me. It is with the above background, that I can say that we maintained our independence. 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 NBC radio on the issue that we were scheduled to discuss at that meeting. The Minister was very much annoyed with what I have said. I explained to the Minister that I understood that he did not like what I have 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. That is the role that we played. We were critical when it was required, but also gave recognition when things were good, and it was necessary to support for the greater good of the country. It is my belief and hope that the current leaders of teacher unions are playing the same role.

**Probing question: For clarity's sake: What exactly are we saying? Were the trade unionists more frank and open?**

Yes, I agree to that, because I cannot recall a specific instance where the Ministry officials' side would try and manipulate NANTU in whatever way in what they wanted us to say. Those political spaces come after independence that we enjoyed and made use of, for our own good, the unions' good and the members' good, but also for the greater good of education and the country in general.

**Question 5: How would you compare the role of teacher unions during the apartheid era, especially during the transition from apartheid to democracy with their currently evident roles in education in Namibia?**

As an outsider, it is difficult for me to say, but as someone from the education background, I can say that my union in particular is not so strong on issues anymore. The burning issues at the moment are the issue of conditions of employment for the teachers, which is understandable due to the high standards of living. I am not seeing my union, NANTU, being hard on issues that concern the building of education in this country. The Presidential Commission recommended that the teachers must work the same hours as the rest of the public servants. I have picked-up that teachers in the regions are working seven in the morning until four in the afternoon, because the Labour Act says that you must at least work eight hours per day, if you have got a five day working week. I feel that this issue has not been holistically addressed by the current leadership of NANTU. I was asking myself the question, how can the same employer have teachers in the north working longer hours than those in the rest of the country? This to me shows that there is a lack of understanding of the conditions of employment of teachers, and how these affect the education in the country and the teachers in general. In my understanding, teachers are a special group of people who need to be treated in a special manner. The current leaders are not hard enough to allow this specific Regional Director to take such an important decision without the concern of the union.

**Probing question by the facilitator: How can we explain that trade unions that were once so involved and active are now lagging behind, and not addressing all the issues as they used to do?**

The problems that come 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 come 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 an old leadership corps 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 obviously it was democracy, and you do not want to impose leaders on people whom the people really do not want. I think certain countries in the world have handled that better. That was our mistake. We did not handle the question of the transition from the old union leadership to the new very wisely.

**Question 6: Any other issue or additional information that you wish to share that we did not discuss?**

I would have wanted to see a situation where the teacher unions again become agents of change, and not just dealing with bread and butter issues. It is about trying to transform society. I have not heard the two teacher unions speaking out strongly on matters of concern. The question of fear, for example. Are we also teaching our children to keep quiet when you have something of concern on your mind, because of fear that you may lose your job? Especially, now, with the elections, we do not see unions coming forth and pressing on political agenda and social issues. Unions have lost the core values that kept the unions and their members together.



## ANNEXURE 5: Letters of permission



### REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

#### MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Tel. (061) 2706304

Private Bag 13186

Fax (061) 253671

WINDHOEK

Enquiries: Ms. Vicky N. Hendrick

Our Ref.:

Your Ref.:

Date 31 October 2008

31 October 2008

Mr. Marius Kudumo  
P. O. Box 25417  
Windhoek

Dear Mr. Kudumo,

#### **Permission to interview participants currently employed by the Ministry of Education**

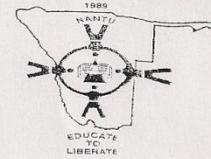
I am pleased to inform you, as per your request dated 22 October 2008, that the Ministry of Education has granted permission to you to interview participants in the interview sample, who are currently employed by the Ministry of Education for your PhD studies.

Yours sincerely,

**I.V. Ankama**  
Permanent Secretary: Ministry of Education



**NAMIBIA NATIONAL TEACHERS' UNION (NANTU)**



Date: October 29, 2008

To: Mr. Marius Kudumo  
P.O.Box 25417  
Windhoek  
Namibia

Dear Mr.Kudumo

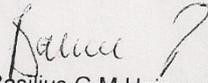
**RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ON TEACHERS UNIONS**

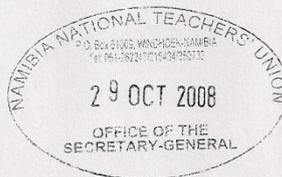
The Namibia National Teachers' Union (NANTU) as per your request, hereby grants permission to you to conduct research on teacher unions, and for participants in the interview sample to talk about the activities of NANTU.

Furthermore, NANTU gives permission to Mr. Kudumo to have access to, and use union documents such as policy documents, Congress resolutions, newsletters and reports for his research.

Thank you.

Yours Sincerely,

  
Basilius G.M.Haingura  
Secretary General  
NANTU





TEACHERS UNION OF NAMIBIA (TUN)  
P.O. BOX 13186  
DOLLAR STREET  
WINDHOEK  
NAMIBIA  
TEL: +264 61 229115  
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31 October 2008

UNESCO  
Private Bag 13186  
WINDHOEK

**Attention: Mr. Kudumo**

Dear Sir

**Permission to conduct research on Teacher's Union of Namibia (TUN)**

Teacher's Union of Namibia (TUN), as per your request, hereby grants permission to you to conduct research on Teacher's Union of Namibia (TUN), and for the participants in the interview sample to talk about the activities of TUN.

Furthermore, TUN gives permission to Mr. Kudumo to have access to, and use union documents such as; policy documents, newsletters, congress resolutions and reports for his research.

The following Exco and members could be contacted:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. [REDACTED]<br>[REDACTED]<br>Cell: 081 127 6201                          | 2. [REDACTED]<br>[REDACTED]<br>Cell: 081 127 5901 |
| 3. [REDACTED]<br>[REDACTED] Professional Development<br>Cell: 081 127 1059 | 4. [REDACTED]<br>[REDACTED]<br>Cell: 081 207 4426 |
| 5. [REDACTED]<br>[REDACTED]<br>Cell: 0855611890                            |   |

For further information please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours in Education

**G.J. Jansen**  
President

## ANNEXURE 6: Letters from the editor

John Kench

**Editor, proofreader and overwriter**

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### LETTER OF CONFIRMATION

**5 December, 2010**

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To whom it may concern,

This is to confirm that I edited Marius Kudumo's doctoral thesis, 'The Participation and Influence of Teacher Unions on Education Reforms in an Independent Namibia'.

John Kench

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Mowbray 7700,  
Cape Town  
Tel/Fax: (021) 6866590  
Email: [johnkench@xsinet.co.za](mailto:johnkench@xsinet.co.za)

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John Kench

**Editor, proofreader and overwriter**

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### LETTER OF CONFIRMATION

**10 April, 2011**

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To whom it may concern,

This is to confirm that I edited the final two sections, 'Trade unions and the struggles for democratization and political liberalization' and 'Changed political context post-independence', and the references relating to these sections, of Marius Kudumo's doctoral thesis, 'The Participation and Influence of Teacher Unions on Education Reforms in an Independent Namibia'.



John Kench

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Cape Town  
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Email: [johnkench@xsinet.co.za](mailto:johnkench@xsinet.co.za)

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