

**Unionism in Schools: Blessing or Curse? A case study
of three schools in the Kavango region of Namibia**

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Abstract

This study investigates the role played by the Namibia National Teachers' Union (NANTU) in school management. It examines the challenges faced by school principals in managing schools as a result of the presence of unions. In order to understand the behaviour and impact of union representatives in schools the study makes use of literature on teacher unionism, democratic, political and ambiguity management and leadership theories.

Working in the interpretive orientation the study used semi-structured interviews, document analysis and focus group discussions. The research was conducted in the form of a case study involving three schools in the Kavango region of Namibia, and the data collected were dealt with according to case study principles.

The study reveals that the presence of the union has several benefits for the school: for example, it advances the democratic participation of stakeholders, provides feedback to the school principal on how staff members experience his or her leadership, and offers advice on labour-related matters. It was also discovered that NANTU representatives act as mediators in conflict situations, which means that teachers can become better at managing and resolving conflict through their experience of serving on the union structures.

However it was also discovered that the presence of NANTU in schools has several negative effects on schooling. For example, NANTU activities can disrupt school programmes; moreover, in some schools, neither NANTU representatives nor school principals understand their own or each other's roles, and consequently they are always in conflict. The absence of a policy regulating the representation of NANTU in decision-making structures in schools causes the conflict to escalate.

It emerged that the role of NANTU in schools is mainly determined by the leadership style of the school principal and the effectiveness of the NANTU representatives in that particular school. For example, an autocratic leadership style on the part of the school principal tends to exacerbate the conflict situation, while NANTU has been known to mobilize learners to demand the removal of school principals through class boycotts. NANTU is more concerned with defending the rights and interests of its members than any other matter affecting education.

This research is likely to benefit school managers, policy makers and implementers, and NANTU structures, as it provides clarity on what both NANTU and school principals expect from one another. The study also demonstrates that school principals need to acknowledge and consider the divergent nature of the various interest groups in schools.

Dedications

This work is dedicated to the following people:

To my mother, Reginalda Kamba Kalipa, who passed away in December 1985, for spotting my intellectual abilities at an early age.

To my father, Paulus Vitumbo Musore, for the wisdom he has continuously poured into me throughout my life.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and all the sources that I have used are properly quoted and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I also declare that this thesis has not been submitted for a degree at any other university.

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Signature

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Date

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter I introduce my research. I begin by presenting the context of the study and indicating its potential value. I then move on to discuss its motivation and its goals. Thereafter I explain and justify the choice of research paradigm within which the study was conducted, before concluding with an outline of the whole thesis.

1.2 Context

Namibia attained its independence on 21 March 1990, after 116 years of German and South African colonial rule (Jauch, 2004). During the South Africa colonial regime, the country was divided into what was known as “homelands”. This division was based on ethnicity, which meant that each ethnic group had its own administration. The commonalties in the suffering of the Namibian people at the hands of colonizers within the various ethnic administrations led to collaborative efforts by workers and the country’s liberation movements to “free” the country. The history of the liberation struggle that led to the independence of the country will not be discussed any further, since it is not the concern of this study.

Nevertheless, the colonial “divide and rule policy” left its legacy: teachers remained divided into ethnic teachers’ associations that dealt with their respective ethnic administrations until 11 March 1989, when the first national teachers union, the Namibian National Teachers’ Union (NANTU) was established (Labour Resource and Research Institute (LARRI), 2000, p. 4). NANTU was formed at a crucial period of the liberation struggle, when people had to prepare for free and fair elections for the first time (LARRI, 2000). In terms of the NANTU constitution, NANTU was mainly established to unite all teachers of Namibia into a non-racial, national

teachers' organization that would seek to channel all democratic demands of teachers and represent all teachers in Namibia.

After independence, the new South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) government introduced a democratic system of governing which made provision for fundamental human rights, including freedom of association and the right to participate in governance (Namibia. 1998). The Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) in its policy document *Towards education for all* emphasizes "democracy as the commitment to developing an education system that plays a central role in transforming society" (Namibia. MEC, 1993, p. 67). In the same document the Ministry further explains that "the education system should be structured in such a way that the organization and its participants choose to form, for example, teachers' unions and student unions in which they can play active roles alongside communities in shaping, guiding and assessing education" (Namibia. MEC, 1993, p. 42). On these principles, NANTU, being the largest teachers' union, and the Government Republic of Namibia (GRN) signed a recognition agreement and memorandum of understanding on 02 October 1995 (Namibia. 1995). These documents give NANTU the political power to participate, influence, and engage government at various levels in negotiations and bargaining on issues regarding education, and to be involved in conflict resolution at the school level.

Internationally, teachers' unions have been in existence for many years. In the United States of America (USA), for example, the National Education Association (NEA) celebrated its one hundredth anniversary in 1957 (Urban, 1993, p. 34). In Britain, the National Union of Teachers (NUT) has been in existence for nearly a hundred years (Ozga & Lawn, 1981, p. 68), and in South Africa, the Native Education Association, one of the first black unions, was set up in 1879 (Odendaal as cited in Hartshorne, 1992, p. 292).

The union's political power to influence decision making is in line with modern management theories. Bush's political model, for example, places emphasis on decision making through a bargaining process (Bush and West-Burnham, 1994, p. 40). In political models, people with the same or similar interest in an organization form 'coalitions' to defend their interests, which in most cases leads to compromised decisions. This is true of the way unions operate: unions use their power to influence decisions in the interest of their members and thereby foster greater teacher involvement in decision making processes (Bascia, 1998, p. 906). The unions' focus on

participation is also an important aspect of participative management, which seeks to find creative and effective ways of overcoming problems or reaching pre-determined goals through the participation of all organization members (Woods, 2005, p. 43). In participative management, decision making involves the broad participation of stake holders. Ozga & Lawn (1981, p. 80) argue that “unions’ participation in a democratic society is becoming indispensable, not merely to avoid resistance to government proposed transformation, 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.”

NANTU’s aim of defending teachers’ democratic rights is in line with democratic leadership principles that recognize the importance of the individual’s right to freedom (Wood, 2005, p. 43). Thus in terms of the democratic leadership model, school principals play more of a facilitating role, giving stakeholders the opportunity to contribute to decision making.

The ambiguous nature of union members’ role in schools makes it necessary to study this phenomenon through the ambiguity model (Bush, 2003). As Greenfield (as cited in Bush 2006, p. 15) argues:

Most theories of organization grossly simplify the nature of reality with which they deal. The drive to see the organization as a single kind of entity with a life of its own apart from the perceptions and beliefs of those involved in it blinds us to its complexity and to the variety of organizations people create around themselves.

Thus, looking at organization from the “ambiguous” point of view will help to uncover the uncertainty and unpredictability (Bush, 2003) of schools as organizations.

Literature on teacher unions has emphasized their focus on teachers’ job security and material benefits (Bascia, 1998, pp. 895 - 897). There is little literature that focuses directly on union involvement in school management. I was able to identify only one study with local application, by Lukubwe (2006), which examined the role of NANTU in the development of the staffing norm policy for Namibian schools. There is thus a need to address the gap that exists in terms of understanding the role of unions in school management.

This research hopes to benefit school managers, policy makers and implementers and NANTU structures, as it seeks to provide clarity on what both NANTU and school principals expect from

one another. The study may also serve as a basis for further research on the roles of teacher unions in school management, and may assist in confirming or reformulating theories of school management and leadership. In particular, the political and ambiguity models of management may emerge as useful ways for school managers to interpret schools as organizations.

1.3 Motivation for the research

The reasons for my undertaking this study are both personal and professional (Maxwell, 2005). According to Maxwell (2005, p. 16) “personal goals are things that motivate you to do the study...They can include the desire to change or improve some situation that you are involved in, or curiosity about the specific topic or event”. My curiosity about this topic of unionism in schools was stimulated many years ago when I was still a learner at secondary school, and has persisted throughout my adult life as a professional.

From my early years as a learner in a rural Secondary School (1992-1996) in the Kavango region of Namibia, I had always wondered what roles the NANTU teachers played in the school. What was interesting about these teachers was that they all liked wearing T-shirts and caps which had the NANTU logo on them. These teachers had a good relationship with the learners, especially the learners’ leadership structures (the Student Representative Council [SRC] and the Namibia National Students’ Organization [NANSO]) in the school. The NANTU teachers used to involve themselves in advising learners about the process of planning for school boycotts or demonstrations for reasons such as not having enough teachers, not having enough food in the hostel, or the alleged dictatorial leadership style of the school principal.

The most memorable incident of class boycott occurred in 1995, when we learners demanded the removal of the principal from the school. What was strange about this particular boycott was that before the commencement of the boycott, the learners, all the teachers except the school principal, and the parents, had a mass meeting in the school hall. This meeting was chaired by one of the teachers. The meeting resolved that learners were to boycott classes for an unspecified period, or at least until the school principal (who was accused of showing no respect for teachers, parents, and of making learners suffer by handing out excessive punishments) had been removed from the school. Some of the learners were violent during the boycott, assaulting the principal

and members of his family, as well as other learners who were suspected of being “puppets” of the school principal because they objected to some of the organizers’ ideas.

At the beginning of the boycott the regional office of Education refused to remove the principal from the school because according to them he was not guilty of any offence. However after three weeks of learners’ not attending school and amid escalating violence, they were forced to transfer him. As a young person growing up in this environment, I had always wondered what the functions of the NANTU leadership in schools were and hoped that one day I would have the opportunity to find out. *Why did these teachers behave in the way they did? What made them resort to using learners to get what they wanted? What made them have a stronger bond with learners than with their supervisor (the school principal)?*

As a professional, my interest in this topic resurfaced as a result of my experience in the field, having been both a school principal for the past six years and a NANTU activist for the past seven years. My job as school principal has placed me in a position of working with NANTU representatives in my school, in situations where I am confronted with opposition from union representatives to managerial decisions concerning, for example, disciplining teachers, teachers’ transfers and teachers’ appointments.

As a NANTU representative, I have also learned how other school principals struggle to cope with pressure from NANTU. These lessons have led me to ask the following questions: *Do union representatives at school level know what they are supposed to do? Are the union representatives interfering in the principals’ operational area? Or are principals trying to deny the unions the right to be involved in management of schools?*

This, then, is the basis for my decision to conduct research on this topic.

1.4 Research goals

The goal of this research was to investigate the role the Namibian National Teachers’ Union (NANTU) plays in school management. To achieve this goal I had to find answers to the following sub-questions:

1. How do school principals understand the role of NANTU in the school, as compared to the role as described in the NANTU constitution and other documents?
2. How do NANTU representatives at school level understand the role of NANTU in school management?
3. How do school principals experience NANTU activities in schools?
4. To what extent do school principal involve NANTU as stakeholders in school management?

1.5 Research methodology

This study sought to investigate the experiences of both school principals and NANTU representatives at school and regional level. It aimed to explore how these parties interpret their experiences, and what sort of effect NANTU has on school management. The study is therefore located in the interpretative case study paradigm. As Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007, p. 253) argue, “Case studies can establish cause and effects, indeed one of their strengths is that they observe effects in a real context, recognizing that context is a powerful determinant of both causes and effects”.

The intention was thus to use the interpretive paradigm to study participants’ understanding and interpretation of the role of NANTU in schools. As Berg (2004, p. 266) points out, “This orientation allows researchers to treat social action and human activity as text. In other words human activity can be seen as a collection of symbols expressing layers of meaning”. Berg (2004) goes on to say that:

This approach provides a means for discovering the practical understandings of meanings and actions. Researchers with a more general interpretive orientation (dramaturgists, symbolic interactionists, etc) are likely to organize or reduce data in order to uncover patterns of human activity, action, and meaning. (p. 266)

On the basis of these views, the data – from the three schools and other sources such as focus group discussions which involved school principals and NANTU representatives from the other

six schools – were reduced through categories as reported in chapter four, and later into a single theme as discussed in chapter five, in order to uncover the meaning of the participants’ views.

To discover the participants’ understanding of the phenomenon I used the following research tools: semi-structured interviews (Gillham, 2000, p. 65), document analysis, and focus group discussions.

Out of consideration for issues of ethics and validity, the plan as set out in the proposal was carefully followed. For example, participants signed consent documents in which they were informed about the voluntary nature of their participation in and withdrawal from the study. This was done to avoid reaching a flawed or biased conclusion due to possible personal desires in the data collection and analysis (Maxwell, 2005). I also used pseudonyms when referring to the individual participants and their schools, so as to protect their identities.

1.6 Outline of the study

In chapter two I present a review of literature on the phenomenon of unionism in schools. This literature is introduced and then discussed in terms of theories that I found to be relevant to the study.

In chapter three I outline the research paradigm, the research approach and the research techniques employed. I also provide reasons for choosing the specific methods used, and indicate how these methods and the overall paradigm suited my research. As Maxwell (2005) puts it, “Choosing a paradigm or tradition primarily involves assessing which paradigm best fits with your own assumptions and methodological preference” (p. 37).

In chapter four I present the research data in assorted categories. The data is presented by way of detailed descriptions of what participants said. In order to give a balanced view, the data gathered using the different tools was triangulated.

In chapter five I discuss the data in the light of the research question and the relevant literature which was found useful in explaining the findings of this study.

In chapter six I conclude the study by summarizing the findings of the research as they emerged from the discussion in chapter five. I also use this chapter to give recommendations for both practice and future research, and lastly I indicate the limitations of this case study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

My research aimed to explore the role of teacher unions in education provision, particularly in respect of school management. In order to provide a complete picture of the phenomenon, I devote the first section of this chapter to the historical context of teacher unionism internationally, focusing on South Africa, the United States of America, Great Britain and some Latin American countries. This section serves the purpose of adumbrating the general trends and principles guiding the activities of teacher unions all over the world. It is also my intention to use this section in order to understand the reason for teacher militancy in some countries, for example, in South Africa.

The second section of this chapter focuses on the impact of teacher unions on education provision. As outlined in the goals, the present study aims at exploring the role of a teacher union (the Namibia National Teachers Union) in school management. This section is thus central to the study in the sense that it begins to interrogate existing evidence and opinion concerning this role. In the first part of the section I present the positive impact, and in the second part, the negative impact of teacher unions on education provision.

In the last section of the chapter, I outline the management and leadership theories that help to explain the underpinning factors in teacher unionism, namely Bush's (2003) political models and democratic leadership theory. These are important theories because unionism is as much about politics as is democracy.

2.1 Historical background of teacher unions internationally

As mentioned in the introduction, in this section I present the historical context of teacher unionism. I also outline examples of the work of some teacher unions internationally. To begin with, it is worth noting that the struggles of unions are in most cases power related, especially power in terms of influencing decision-making. Woods (as cited in Heystek & Lethoko, 2001)

argues that a trade union is “an agency and a medium of power seeking to address the imbalances of power in the workplace” (p. 223). This means that the main purpose for the existence of trade unions is for members to gain power in order to influence decisions in government and other organizations.

2.2.1 Teachers and class location

The literature on teacher unionism shows that it is not easy to fit teachers into easily identifiable categories in society, as the Marxist theory of class seeks to do. For example, Ozga and Lawn (1981) argue that:

Teachers constitute a group of workers who do not fall readily into the category of labour in the same unequivocal way as workers on assembly lines in factories and by the same token, it is clear that teachers are not themselves capitalists, owning and controlling means of production, and appropriating surplus values from labour. Nor are the teachers the only workers who present difficulties in terms of class location.... (p. 48)

Because teachers are difficult to classify in terms of social class and yet are in some contexts regarded as leaders of the community, their behaviour and the behaviour of white-collar unions more generally is closely linked to what is happening in a particular society.

Govender (1996) argues that “the theories found to be most relevant in coming to grips with teacher militancy in South Africa are those relating to social class, oppressed groups (e.g. race and gender) and the state apparatuses. These theories include Wright’s formulation of the contradictory class location of certain social categories (such as teachers), theories relating to resistance and emancipation in education and society at large” (Govender, 1996, p. 9). Thus to understand the behaviours of teachers and their unions one needs to understand the history of the particular country.

The South African teachers’ unions serve as a good example. The activities of teacher unions especially that of the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) are closely linked to the role played by teachers during the apartheid years. The involvement of teachers in popular struggles and the evolution of teacher organizations in South Africa (both militant and

conservative), are best understood in terms of an analysis of teachers' class location in South African society (Govender, 1996). As Govender explains:

In this regard, teacher militancy in South Africa since the 1940s can be linked to the struggle of black South Africans, the majority of whom belong to the working class. Second, central to the location of teachers within the context of population struggle in South Africa, is the role played by the state and its agencies in shaping the political responses of teachers. Third, the upsurge in teacher militancy between 1990 and 1993, and the highly organized nature of this militancy can be further explained from a social movement perspective, in particular the emergence of SADTU, and its predominant association with teacher militancy in South Africa. (p. 9)

2.2.2 Teacher unions and militant actions

The history of teacher trade unionism in South Africa dates back to the early 1900s when the unions were divided along racial, language and provincial lines, and the Native Education Association was established as the first black teacher union (Govender, 1996, p. 27). The main purpose of establishing unions, especially for the blacks, was not only to deal with educational issues but also with social and political issues – for example, the effect of the pass laws on education, the discriminatory nature of the salaries paid to white teachers as opposed to their black counterparts with the same qualifications, the political rights of teachers (e.g. to oppose the implementation of the Bantu Education Act of 1953) (Heystek & Lethoko, 2001, p. 223). Thus from the outset, black/African teacher unions were established “to fight” the government of the day (Heystek & Lethoko, 2001, p. 224). “It was because of the above-mentioned circumstances that black teachers had a feeling that a joint effort would be much stronger than individual efforts” (Heystek and Lethoko 2001, p. 223).

From the 1980s, when apartheid structures were beginning to dissolve, there was a growing feeling among younger teachers in particular, newly politicized by the 1976 uprisings, that teacher unions had to confront the government head-on and use militancy if necessary (Hartshorne, 1992, p. 304). In the early 1990s, teachers under the leadership of SADTU began to engage in unprecedented levels of military action, such as strikes, marches and sit-ins, as they joined millions of fellow South Africans in demanding changes in education and government. Spearheaded by SADTU, this new teachers' movement played a crucial role in urging the

government of the day to effect changes in the education arena and in the broader social and political spheres (Govender, 1996, pp. 1-2).

Thus, “teacher militancy, until April 1994, has been part of the struggle against apartheid. It is argued that teacher militancy from 1990 – 1993 is finally understood in relation to the historical conjuncture in which teachers found themselves, firstly as a result of their specific class location in a capitalist-apartheid economy and, secondly, as members of the politically disenfranchised black majority” (Govender, 1996, p. 22). Consequently, the “South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) was launched in 1990 with the support of the labour and liberation movements such the African National Congress (ANC)” Heystek and Lethoko, (2001, p. 225). SADTU’s ideology is influenced by the politics of its black membership and it sees no inherent contradictions between a strong organization, able to defend and promote the rights and interests of teachers, and the professional work of these teachers (Heystek & Lethoko, 2001). This ideology is similar to that of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) in Britain, especially in the early years of its existence when it supported local associations during their disputes with the state (Ozga & Lawn, 1981, p. 68).

By 1910, NUT had been in existence for forty years and had grown from a group of 400 teachers to a large union of 68 000 teachers, doubling in size between 1895 and 1910. The Union supported local associations, for example, in Portsmouth in 1896 and West Ham in 1907 in disputes that involved striking or giving notice (Heystek and Lethoko, 2001). What is similar in both cases is the militant behaviour of teachers due to the conditions of their work. For example, the job of teachers, especially those in rural areas, was not only to teach but included other duties. Ozga & Lawn (1981) explain: “The position of teachers in the rural school was often to include church duties, such as choirmasters, sexton, organist, Sunday school teachers and even secretarial or tutorial work as well” (p. 69). These conditions forced teachers to form alliances with other progressive education forces to control or influence the local school boards, because they were not willing to be seen as mere employees (Ozga & Lawn 1981, p. 69). These conditions contributed to teachers being militant in their actions.

The situation is different in the case of unions in the United States and Canada. In both these countries unions were also initially conservative in terms of focusing on bread and butter issues

(Bascia, 1998, p. 899), but unlike their counterparts in Britain and South Africa began to focus on professional aspects of teachers' job from the early days. As Bascia (1998) explains:

A recent study of teachers' assessment of unions in the U.S reveals how contemporary teachers value union protection because, in their estimation, the conditions of their work, and the vulnerability of teaching and schooling to external regulation and authority, warrant such vigilance. In this study, all the teachers, regardless of their level of union commitment, believed union representation was necessary to enhancing the quality of teaching or at least minimizing obstructive administrative practice. (p. 900)

This demonstrates that unions do indeed seek solutions to problems affecting education provision.

2.2.3 Teacher unions and their professional responsibilities

Even though the change in approach on the part of teacher unions in the U.S came about due to escalating criticism from the public, they did respond by trying to balance their concern for personnel issues with matters surrounding professional practice, and emphasized their pursuit of better instructional outcomes (Bascia, 1998, p. 900). There is evidence that some of the major reforms initiated by teacher unions were started with this goal in mind. For example, the National Education Association's (NEA) Mastery in Learning Project, according to a staff insider, was exclusively introduced as an opportunity to demonstrate to the public and policy makers that the association cared about improving schools (McClure, as cited in Bascia 1998, p. 900).

Teacher unions are in a sense ideally placed to introduce programmes aimed at improving the quality of education, because union members are after all the implementers of all school policies.

2.2 Trade unionism in Namibia

In this section, I present a brief history of the labour moment in Namibia with a special focus on the reasons that necessitated the establishment of these movements. The first section gives an account of the historical context of unionism in Namibia generally, while in the second section, I

present the historical context, aims, structure and functions of the Namibia National Teachers' Union (NANTU) School Committee.

2.2.1 Historical context of trade unionism in Namibia

Namibian workers had to endure harsh colonial labour practices, first under the German colonial administration (1884-1914) and later under the infamous South African apartheid regime (1915-1989), in terms of which black Namibians were recruited to work on farms, the railways, and the fishing industry (LARRI, 2006, p. 1). During this period, black Namibians, especially those from the North, were not supposed to be called workers: rather, they were helpers who were helping the workers who were whites (LARRI, 2006).

Industrial action by black workers in defense of their rights has a long history in Namibia, despite the risk to individuals and their families inherent in a confrontation with authorities. As Cronje & Cronje (1979) explain, "While being denied the right to organize themselves into trade unions, workers were united by their common oppression and, in the case of migrants from the north, their hatred of the demeaning contract" (p. 77).

The most significant workers' strike in Namibia was probably the general strike of 1971-72. It involved over 13 500 migrant workers who rose against the system of pass laws and migrant labour. The strike had a devastating effect on the country's economy: the mining industry was brought to a halt and farming, commerce as well as communication and transport systems were seriously affected (LARRI, 2006, p. 3; Cronje & Cronje, 1979, pp. 77-79). Most trade unions emerged under the umbrella of the National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW), the largest trade union federation in the country, and these unions played a decisive role in mobilizing workers against discrimination and oppression, and thus in achieving independence in 1990. Due to the collaboration between workers and the country's liberation movements, "Namibia attained its independence in March 1990 after 116 years of German and South African colonial rule" (Jauch, 2004, p. 8).

However, as Jauch (2004) argues, "the colonial legacies are still visible today as Namibia is characterized by huge socio-economic inequalities that are largely a reflection of its colonial apartheid history, but also of the class stratification that has taken place since independence".

Today, the Namibian Labour movement consists of over 20 trade unions, which belong to the country's two trade union federations: the 70 000 member-strong Nation Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW), which is an affiliate of the South West African Peoples' Organization (SWAPO) (the ruling party), and the Trade Union Congress of Namibia (TUCNA,) which represents about 40 000 workers (Jaunch, 2004). The main dividing line between the rival trade union federations is the question of politics, as the NUNW has maintained its affiliation with the ruling SWAPO party while the other unions are opposed to this party political link. The NUNW was established by SWAPO in exile (Tanga in Tanzania) during the party's consultative congress in 1969-70, (Jaunch, 2004, p. 14).

The Namibian Teachers' Union's (NANTU) militant history, like that of many other unions in Namibia and South Africa, is closely linked to the country's political history (LARRI, 2000, p. 1).

2.2.2 Historical context of teacher unions in Namibia

In accordance with the colonial policy of divide and rule, Namibian teachers remained divided into ethnic teachers' associations that dealt with their respective ethnic administrations. These ethnic associations tried to unite and form one union but their attempts were unsuccessful. For example, in 1986 delegates from the Namibian Onderwyser Vereniging (NAMOV), the Namibia Onderwyservereniging (NAMOV), the Namibia Onderwyser Vereniging (NOV), the Owambo Teachers' Association (OTA) and other teachers' associations came together to discuss the possibility of forming one national union but could not reach agreement (LARRI, 2000).

The dilemma posed by teachers not having an organizational structure through which they could articulate their views was highlighted in 1988 when the South African Defense Force put up military bases close to almost every secondary school. It is believed they were trying to prevent learners from moving out of the area and establishing contact with the freedom fighters (LARRI, 2000, p. 2). "Many teachers were harassed during that time. Especially those in the north, teachers were arrested, nobody knew where they were held and some even disappeared completely" Kandombo (as cited in LARRI, 2000, p. 3). Due to these continued harassments and arrests "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” (LARRI, 2000 p. 3). Thus, teachers continued to seek a platform from which they could air their grievances as a united force and this could only be achieved through the formation of one teachers’ union.

“It was NANSO [Namibian National Students’ Organization] that took the first step towards the formation of NANTU” (LARRI, 2000, p. 3). In 1988, the NANSO leadership wrote a letter to teachers inviting them to a meeting. In this letter the NANSO leadership challenged the teachers for being passive at a time when students ‘stood up’ against the colonial authority, especially during the country-wide class boycotts of 1988 (LARRI, 2000). With the help of NANSO, NUNW and CCN (The Council of Churches in Namibia), NANTU was launched on 11 March 1989 (LARRI, 2000). The new union became an affiliate of the NUNW and played an important role in mobilizing and educating people before the country’s independence elections. As Mutorwo, a former NANTU leader and later a Minister of Education from 1994 – 2004 (as cited in LARRI, 2000, p. 20) explains, “During the registration process our members were involved in explaining the registration process and the requirements to qualify for registration. This was necessary in the areas with high illiteracy rates ...”. This shows that from the early stages of its existence NANTU’s role went beyond so-called bread and butter issues.

2.2.3 NANTU, aims, structures and functions of the NANTU School Committee

2.2.3.1 Aims of NANTU

In terms of the NANTU constitution, NANTU was established with the following aims:

- To unite all teachers of Namibia into a non-racial and national teachers’ union that will seek to channel all the democratic demands of teachers, their students and the community at large to the relevant structures.
- To represent the interests of the teachers on all issues that affect them in their educational and community situations.
- To heighten the sense of national awareness and identity, and encourage teachers to become involved in the educational, political, economic and social development of the Namibian society.

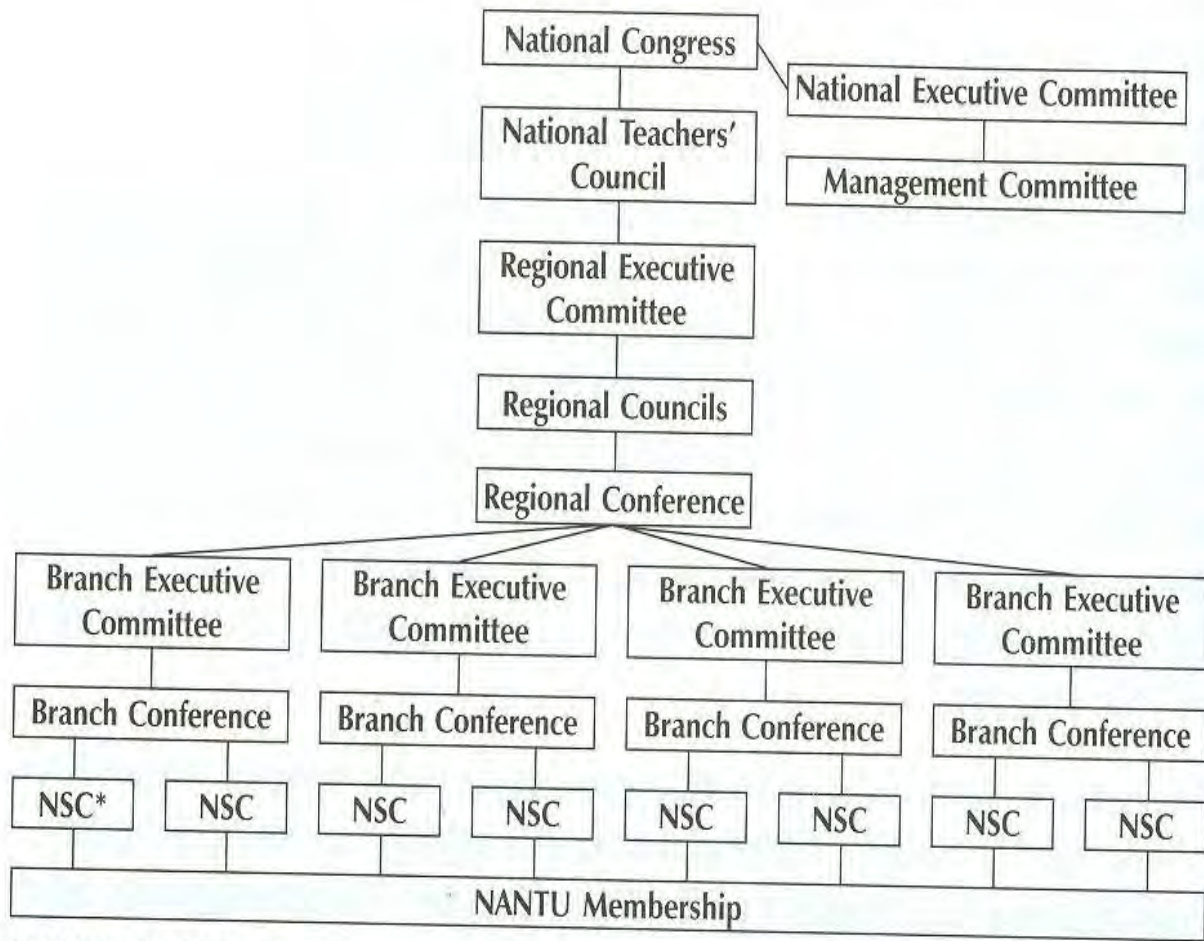
- To organize the teachers into a national body that will strive towards a relevant, non-racial and democratic form of education.
- To be part and parcel of Nation building and reconstruction in our country and to promote links with the progressive forces in Namibia such as the labour and student movements.
- To promote students' and teachers' democratic involvement in the education process.
- To act as a mouth-piece of teachers in Namibia and seek to protect the genuine interest of teachers.
- To foster closer cooperation including affiliation to participation in, and receipt [sic] of financial support from other progressive organizations which share NANTU's ideals.
- To support the principles and practice of non-racial sport and to reject cultural activities which seek to promote the fragmentation of Namibia along racial and ethnic lines.

2.2.3.2 NANTU structures

To fulfill these aims NANTU established the following operational structures:

Figure 1: Organisational structure of NANTU

Structure of NANTU



* NANTU School Committee

Source: LARRI, 2000, p. viii

2.2.3.3 Duties of the NANTU School Committee (NSC)

Among others, the duties of the NSC shall be to liaise with members at the school and represent their interests as well as to consult and negotiate on issues of mutual concern with the school authorities.

The union called for the enhancement of democracy in schools by means of establishing School Boards in all schools and encouraging a higher degree of involvement on the part of parents and the community at large (LARRI, 2000, p. 23).

In terms of the Namibian Labour Act of 1992, NANTU was duly recognized as the sole bargaining agent for Namibian teachers, and in this capacity signed a recognition agreement with the government (LARRI, 2000, p. 23).

2.3 The effects of teacher unions on education provision

The union's involvement in education, particularly in the way schools are managed, is seen by many as an obstacle to the implementation of education reforms and the general improvement of schooling. In some schools, the presence of unions makes life difficult for those responsible for management. Despite the widespread tensions created by unions in schools, very little research has been done in this area. As Bascia (1998, p. 896) comments, "much of the educational literature, even that which focuses on education policy, school governance, and teachers' work, is silent on teachers unions".

Thus it is my intention in the following section to explain both the negative effects of unionism on education and the potential value of unions to education provision, using examples from the literature. The first part of the section focuses on the negative perceptions, while in the second part I present the potential value of unions for education in general and education management in particular.

2.3.1 The negative effects of teacher unionism on education provision

The presence of teacher unions has made the job tougher for both school managers and policy planners, and unions have disturbed the progress of education reforms in many parts of the

world. For example, in Latin America unions have disrupted the whole education systems of some countries, as Vaillant (2005) explains:

The involvement of teacher unions in education provision have saddened the history of many education systems. The reasons for this are many and have to do with certain education policies as well as the general national, regional and even world contexts. However, the sticking points are related not only to the content of the reform, but also to the way in which these are designed and implemented. (p. 53)

The position of unions has been a problem in most countries, although the reasons for this vary from one country to another. Most of the conflict appears to originate from disagreements on issues such as wages, working conditions, laws on the status of teachers, class sizes, teachers' evaluation and training methods, defense for public education, outsourcing, the authoritarian nature of reform, and defense of teachers' rights (Vaillant, 2005, p. 57).

The extent of the effect of teachers' strikes and boycotts also varies from one country to another. In some countries the strikes last for many days whereas in other countries they are comparatively brief. For example, in Namibia when the previous Kavango colonial administration suspended seven teachers because of the pupils' strike of 1988, all teachers and student teachers in the region under the leadership of NANTU went on strike to demand the reinstatement of their colleagues (LARRI, 2000).

A similar situation occurred in South Africa, when many strikes took place – especially in the early 1990s, as Hartshorne (1992) explains: “1990 became the year of the ‘chalk down’, go-slow, strikes, refusal to comply with departments instructions such as filling in leave forms when teachers were absent from school on protest marches” (p. 321). Teachers in many part of South Africa went as far as refusing principals, subject advisors and inspectors access to their classes for the purpose of supervision (Hartshorne, 1992).

In Latin America the effects of teachers' unions' involvement has been devastating: for example, the length of protest (strikes) by teachers during the period 1988 to 2003 ranged from 1491 days in Argentina, to 1118 days in Brazil and 978 days in Mexico (Vaillant, 2005, p. 53). Thus, to many South Americans, the idea of teachers' unions initiating and supporting educational reform seems like an oxymoron (Vaillant, 2005, p. 53). In the

press, in the educational literature, and even among many teachers, teachers' unions are characterized as conservative organizations whose preoccupation with teachers' well-being is antithetical to student interests (Vaillant, 2005).

In some cases, the way in which change is implemented is the root cause of conflict between unions and Ministries of Education. Vaillant (2005) says that:

In Latin America, one of the major cause of opposition and conflict between teachers' unions and governments during the reform processes of the 1980s and 1990s concentrated essentially on transformations in the organization and management of the education system; and the way in which reforms were prepared and implemented, including the lack of arrangements to ensure dialogue and negotiation with teachers' organizations. (p. 60)

Conflict between unions and government is common in many countries, including those that practice democracy. As Hartshorne (1992, p. 328) explains, "Even in most democratic countries the position of teachers is not unproblematic. There will be tensions, even under the best of circumstances, between those in whom political power resides and teachers, whose concern must be for all the children in their charge".

For Hartshorne (1992), unions, government and even parents find themselves necessarily in complex and conflicted relationships:

Whatever the politics of the parents, teachers know well that education is both a messy and risky process. It is so, primarily because it has to do with people: pupils, students, parents, teachers and many others, and with their needs, wants, aspirations and perceptions, what they believe about human kinds and society, and how people interpret belief about humankind and society, and how people interpret their own, others' experience and realities. (p. 328)

The conflicting interests of different groups make education difficult to manage: as Hartshorne (1992, p. 328) puts it, "education therefore resists being tied up in neat, tidy packages, whether these packages are theoretical, ideological or managerial". For these reasons, schools can be classified as political organizations in the sense that they comprise different interest groups fighting for their own interests. For many critics, this makes it impossible for teachers' unions to be concerned with real educational matters: "For many observers, any organization with an overtly 'political' role is categorically unable to concern itself with issues of educational substance" (Mitchell & Kerchner, cited in Bascia,

1998, p. 895). However, because it makes sense to construe schools as political arenas, it is necessary to adopt a political model (as developed by Bush and discussed in the last section of this chapter) in order to manage a school effectively.

2.3.2 The positive effects of teacher unionism on education provision

Negative reports concerning the work of unions in schools of the kind described above have created a negative perception of unions in schools. This has happened, at least in part, because the media always focus on the negative part of union work, as Bascia (1998) explains: “Like the biases of media and scholarly coverage, this invisibility of teachers presents a serious threat to reform work” (p. 896). Ozga and Lawn (1981) share this view, commenting that teacher unions’ work towards the reform of public education is largely hidden behind the prevailing rhetoric that insists their purposes are fundamentally obstructive to good education practice (p. 71).

Bascia (1998) further elaborates on the negative coverage of the media by arguing that:

Media coverage of teachers is scant except during episodes of labor conflict: then the union is personified as a tough-talking president and teachers chanting slogans – sound bites that appear to have little connection to classrooms or school issues but rather emphasize concerns about teachers’ salaries and working conditions, at least implicitly portraying teachers and their organizational effects as selfish or obsessed with minutiae. (p. 895)

Yet, despite all these adverse perceptions, the negative coverage of media and the scarcity of information in the mainstream literature on the work of unions in schools, the little literature available on this topic suggests the opposite. For this reason, the following section focuses mainly on the positive contributions of unions to education.

2.3.2.1 The potential value of union involvement for teachers’ professional development

Many teachers’ unions regard the professional growth of their members as one of the most important aspects of their work. This is significant in the sense that once their members in schools are competent, they are more likely to make a meaningful contribution to the teaching and learning process. Bascia (1998) agrees, commenting that “In fact, however, many teachers’

organizations across Canada and the U.S treat their responsibility to improve the quality of teaching and learning as a major, if not the major, priority” (p. 895). This shows that unions are equally concerned with the quality of teaching that takes place in schools. The following examples illustrate how unions encourage the professional growth of their members.

In Namibia, NANTU realized that many teachers in the country lacked the competence to use English as a medium of instruction after independence, because most of them were used to teaching in Afrikaans. NANTU established a Professional Development Department that was responsible for developing programs that could help teachers improve their professional skills and qualifications (LARRI, 2000, pp. 29-30). One of the successful programmes implemented by this department was the Teachers’ English Skills Improvement Programme (TELSIP) (LARRI, 2000, p. 30).

In Canada, where educational reform is in the main not a national-level phenomenon, unions such as the British Columbia and Ontario Teachers’ Unions have each established a College of Teachers. These are independent bodies that accredit provincial teacher training programmes and require and monitor teachers’ ongoing professional learning, as well as disciplining teachers and decertifying those found to be incompetent (Bascia, 1998, p. 903). By doing this, unions demonstrate their commitment to improving the quality of teaching and learning.

In the United States, teachers’ organizations have made it their business to participate in the established structures to regulate teachers’ initial and ongoing formal training (Bascia, 1998, p. 902). For example, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA) are members of the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards; each has a code of conduct for teachers’ involvement in developing standards in particular subject areas and supports a number of local projects (Bascia, 1998, pp. 901-902). Teachers’ organizations also have contributed to teacher training and development by developing and coordinating a variety of experimental projects in the U.S., and many unions have special units or staff devoted to teacher preparation (Bascia, 1998, p. 903).

Another area in which teacher unions are involved is that of developing programs to be used in schools and programmes used to train teachers. In Canada and the U.S., some local teachers’ organizations work with colleges of education to develop school models. The AFT, in

partnership with Michigan State University and Apple Computers have piloted a new, technology-rich teacher training program in a number of Michigan School districts (Bascia, 1998, p. 902). In Chicago teachers' unions have established their own teacher training academy, while in Dade County (Florida), the union has developed a teacher education centre in collaboration with the district administration (Bascia, 1998, p. 903).

2.3.2.2 The potential value of union involvement for policy formulation

Another aspect to which unions devote their attention in their efforts to improve the provision of education is policy formulation. Unions use different tactics to influence education policies for the benefits of their members and of the education system itself. For example, in Namibia, after independence the Ministry of Education agreed to redress the vast inequality that still exist in education in terms of the equal distribution of resources such as teachers. To implement this, the Ministry drafted a policy on staff norms which recommended increasing the teacher/learner ratio from 1:30 at secondary phase and 1:35 at primary phase to 1:35 and 1:40 respectively (LARRI, 2002, p. 30; Lukubwe, 2006). However, NANTU disagreed with the Ministry's recommendations on account of already existing over-crowding in the classrooms. As a result, the teacher/learner ratio was not changed as proposed.

A similar situation occurred in Britain, when teacher unions, particularly the National Union of Teachers (NUT), demanded a reduction in the size of classes by 1980 through their conference resolution (Ozga & Lawn, 1981, p. 71).

2.3.2.3 The potential value of teacher unions' involvement in school management

Union participation in school management is an important responsibility because most of the major decisions regarding schools are taken at this level. One of the major aims of NANTU is "to promote students' and teachers' democratic involvement in the education process" (Namibia National Teachers' Union, 1997, p. 4), and to ensure that this constitutional obligation is fulfilled, the union has carried out the following programmes.

NANTU established a training programme for NANTU School Committees (NSC) in 1994, aimed at training members of the school committee through workshops covering a variety of topics relevant to the day-day operation of the committees (LARRI, 2000, p. 35). This programme ensures that NANTU school committee members are empowered to carry out their functions with confidence. It also helps limit conflict between NANTU representatives and school managers caused by a lack of knowledge about how the system works.

NANTU also provided leadership training for its members to enable them to take up leadership positions in various union structures (LARRI, 2000).

Other unions provide funds for teachers to do research on the various aspects of their schools, as Bascia (1998) explains:

Some teacher unions provide funding to teachers to conduct research in their classrooms and other education settings towards the development of curriculum or new programs or services in their schools. Unions have a long history of providing opportunities for teachers to assume organizational as well as curriculum development roles, by identifying potential “teacher leaders” and providing focused training, support, and opportunities for their involvement in union and school system affairs, with the hope that they will not only contribute to the union but enrich the school system broadly. (p. 904)

Bascia (1998) maintains that such “initiatives are very important because they work most directly on fostering teachers’ greater involvement in school decision making” (p. 906). Thus, union involvement in school management ensures the democratic participation of not only teachers and students but also parents and the community, who in some cases cannot stand up for their rights. This is important because despite the fact that the participation of stakeholders is widely emphasized in various education policies, some school managers continue not to implement these policies. The problem is that “while collective agreements, as well as district personnel, make it clear that some degree of staff participation is expected, the actual form – who is responsible for what kinds of decisions, to what degree, using what decision-making methods – is left to the school staff’s discretion” (Bascia, 1998, p. 906). Thus, it is important for the unions to be involved in order to remind school managers of their obligations in this regard.

In other countries, unions are involved in the appointment and promotion of staff members in order to ensure transparency and democratic participation in the processes. For example in the U.S. unions and government agreements make provision for teachers, students, parents, and staff to be involved in the decisions of organizations pertaining to the selection of administrators, teachers, and other staff (Bascia, 1998, p. 906).

Some unions, especially in the U.S., involve union representatives and other educational community members in regular performance assessments of the school Principal. This ensures that school managers fulfill their duties. As Bascia (1998) argues,

While many 'outsiders' see unions' concern over economic benefits and the conditions of teaching as the antithesis of educational innovation, for many teachers collective agreements are inherently, however incrementally or incompletely, about improving the quality of teaching and learning, or at least containing the 'excesses' of authority by administration to constrain or obstruct their work . (p. 906)

Thus democracy is one of the key aspects of union work at all levels, and the involvement of unions can ensure that school managers practise a democratic management style in their schools.

2.3.3 Teacher unions as political machinery

Even though unions are established to fight for labour-related objectives, history has shown that most unions go beyond the bread and butter issues. For example, in Kenya, the University Staff Union (USU) was established to fight for the rights and interests of university lecturers; however, their role has extended to challenging government on political issues. As Miinene explains, the USU was established:

To regulate and improve relationships between its members, the university council and students, to assist its members in negotiating for better salaries and improved conditions of service. However, the choice of a trade union as a forum for articulating these objectives appears to have been dictated by the political and practical expediency that can be availed by such a mode of organization. Trade unions have a widely acknowledged capacity to translate simple demands for bread-and-butter issues into a challenge to the ethos of authoritarian labour process and national political relationship. (1997, pp.2-3)

Therefore the confrontations between unions and governments in the former's efforts to influence government policies make unions political "machines" that focus not only on labour matters but also on the political system in the particular country. For example, in Namibia, the Contract Labour system introduced by the South African colonial authority through the South West African Native Labour Association (SWANLA) forced black Namibians to work under harsh conditions. This triggered the formation of the Labour Movement, which later collaborated with political movements to fight for total independence (LARRI, 2006, p. 3).

The struggle of USU in Kenya during the one party state regime is another example. When the government banned unions and student movements from operating, USU fought a political battle, as Miinene (1997) observes:

USU challenged the efficacy of the government ban on student organizations and blamed student unrest on gross mismanagement by the university administration. Secondly, it took on the government on the issue of Prof. Ngugi wa Thiong'o who had been detained by the Kenyatta regime in 1977 for organizing an open air theatre among the peasants of Kamirithu Village in Limuru. ... (p. 3)

2.3.4 Teacher unions as democratic advancement organizations

After the end of colonial rule, many African countries introduced democratic principles with the purpose of redressing the inequality created by the previous dispensation. Heystek, Nieman, van Rooyen, Mosoge & Bipath (2008) describe the situation in the South African education system after the end of apartheid rule as follows:

The political dispensation in South Africa is based on democratic principles that require people at all levels to participate in governance. This has trickled down to schools where a participatory management style has replaced the old authoritarian type management. The South African Schools Act requires the participation of stakeholders at schools (RSA 1996) and this has brought a new dimension to the development of people, allowing them to participate in areas where previously the principal acted alone. This type of management requires staff to take decisions, and to be accountable for the outcome of those decisions. (p. 169)

For many teacher unions, democratic participation of the kind described above is one of the aims of their existence. NANTU, for instance, includes in its statement of aims: “To organize 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 education process”.

As Johansson (2004, p. 2) observes, “Democracy is built on the willing co-operation of all citizens. This co-operation must in turn be built upon the free will of individuals. The school’s primary purpose is to raise democratic individuals ...”. The 1948 Swedish School Commission report (as cited in Johansson, 2004) agrees that “The task of the democratic school is to develop free and independent individuals for whom co-operation is both a necessity and a pleasure” (p. 2). Such is the importance of these principles that teachers’ unions are prepared to take militant action to ensure that their rights are respected.

2.4 Management and leadership theories

In the previous section, I outlined the historical background of teachers’ unions as well as both the negative effects and the potential value of involving unions in education. I shall now present the education theories that are most relevant to the study of unions in school management, namely the political models developed by Tony Bush, and democratic leadership theory.

2.4.1 Looking at school management through unionism

Ratteree (2001) maintains that “The realization of Education for all (EFA) objectives depends on multiple factors, but the degree of teachers’ engagement and sense of ownership of a national plan is one of the least understood and applied, despite its capital importance for success or failure” (p. 1). All countries that are signatories to EFA are required to work towards fulfilling this important goal. It requires the school management to consider the involvement of all stakeholders, especially teachers because they are a key factor in the implementation of education plans and policies. One way of involving teachers is through their unions, because unions fight for the rights of teachers.

However, in most cases, schools are still clinging to traditional management models, such as formal model in terms of which the organization is regarded as a pyramid-like entity, in which power resides at the apex, and the contributions of other individuals or groups are ignored or underestimated (Bush, 2003, p. 57). Traditional management theories such as the collegial model also fall short of addressing the current challenges facing schools. For example, collegial models assume that decisions are reached by consensus, but the reality in most organizations is that there is no consensus and powerful groups influence decisions and achieve dominance.

The key issue for most unions is gaining and maintaining the power to influence and participate in decision-making and policy implementation on behalf of their members, who are the main ‘drivers’ and implementers of the education process. In the sections that follow I present the key management and leadership theories that accept this and help to make sense of the challenge of managing unionism in schools.

2.4.2 Political models

Political models can be defined as models that “embrace those theories which characterize decision-making as a bargaining process” (Bush 2003, p. 89). According to Bush, in political models “organizations are regarded as arenas whose members engage in political activities in pursuit of their interests . . . conflict is regarded as endemic within organizations and management is directed towards the regulation of political behaviours” (Bush, 2003, p. 89). This means that in organizations using political models the task of management is mainly to mediate conflicts among opposing groups.

Morgan (as cited in Bush, 2003) agrees with this view when he argues that:

Conflict is the inevitable outcome of a clash of interests and interest groups. Conflict arises whenever interests collide. The natural reaction to conflict in an organizational context is usually to view it as a dysfunctional force that can be attributed to some regrettable set of circumstances or causes. It’s a personality problem [etc.]... Conflict is regarded as an unfortunate state that in more favorable circumstances would disappear” (p. 93)

These views are supported by Anderson and Ball, who explain that “micro politics perceive the school system as a political entity, in which informal aspects, interests, power struggles and also co-operation and support shape and define the organization” (as cited in Eden, 1997, p. 89).

In their definition of micro politics in education, Blase & Anderson (1995, p. 1) argue that “Only the micropolitics literature places the notion of power at the center of its analyses. For this reason the micropolitical literature does not demonstrate the naiveté that characterize most leadership theories in regard to power and politics”. This means that in political models the focus differs from that in other models; for example, the formal model assumes that formal leaders are appointed on merit and thus have the competence to issue appropriate instructions to subordinates with the support of their authority (Bush, 2003, p. 53). But in political models, “power is the medium through which conflicts are resolved” Morgan (as cited in Bush, 2003, p. 94). This is true of the way unions operate; unions use the power obtained through memoranda of understanding with governments to influence decisions. For example, the memorandum of understanding between the Government of Namibia and NANTU gives unions the power to negotiate issues such as salaries, working hours and conditions, allowances, leave etc. Thus it was possible for the union to use its power to block the ministry from implementing the proposed new staffing norms (teacher/learner ratios) of 1:40 at primary schools and 1:35 at secondary schools respectively. Ultimately, the matter was settled through a process of negotiation and bargaining. As Blase & Anderson agree “micropolitics deals with the realities that teachers negotiate on a daily basis” (1995, p. 1).

Bush argues that political theories “tend to focus on group activity rather than the institution as a whole” (2003, p. 91). Thus interactions between individuals or groups are at the heart of political approaches, whereas formal and collegial models stress the institutional level. This is similar to the basic ideology of unionism: people of the same or similar interests constitute unions. Union members always act as a group and they fight for the interests of their members. Most unions are built on the principles of solidarity, and for this reason slogans such as “an injury to one is an injury to all” and the term “comrade” are popular among union members, not least among NANTU members. Hoyle (as cited in Bush 2003) distinguishes between personal and professional interests:

Professional interests ... centre on commitments to a particular curriculum, syllabus, mode of pupil grouping, teaching method, etc ... Personal interests become part of the micro politics process according to the strategies to further them. The development of interest groups is a principal means of seeking and achieving individual aims: Individuals pursue interests but frequently they are most effectively pursued in collaboration with others who share a common concern. Some of these may have the qualities of a group in that they are relatively enduring and have a degree of cohesion, but others ... will be looser associations of the individuals who collaborate only infrequently when a common interest comes to the fore. (p. 92)

Thus, union members are united by their common interests, both personal and professional, and tend to fight as a group on behalf of their interests.

Unlike collegial theories, which claim that goals are agreed upon, “political models assume that the goals of the organization are unstable, ambiguous and contested” Bush (2003, p. 93). This means that in organizations using a political model, individuals, interest groups and coalitions have specific goals that they want to achieve. Such goals are open to dispute as different interest groups pursue their interests in different ways (Bush, 2003).

Formal models assume that decisions follow a rational process, whereas within the political paradigm decisions emerge after a complex process of bargaining and negotiation (Bush, 2003, p. 94). Bush further argues that in formal models, options are viewed in terms of the objective of the organization and the most appropriate alternative is selected. But within the political model, policy making is an uncertain business; interests are promoted in committees and at numerous unofficial encounters between participants, and thus policies cannot easily be judged in terms of the goals of the institution, because even these are subject to the same process of internal debate and subsequent change (Bush, 2003).

In political models the “objectives are a moving target” as Bolman and Deal (as cited in Bush, 2003) state:

Organizational goals and decisions emerge from ongoing processes of bargaining, negotiation, and jockeying for position among members of different coalitions. Decision on a subject at one forum does not necessarily resolve the issue because the unsuccessful groups are likely to pursue the matter whenever opportunities arise or can be engineered. (p. 94)

2.4.3 Democratic leadership theory

In the previous section, I described the political model and its value in managing unions in schools. In this section, I discuss the meaning of democracy and the importance of democratic leadership theory in education management, especially when one is working with teacher unions.

2.4.3.1 The meaning of democracy

According to Woods (2005, p. 1), “The origins of modern democracy lie in the recognition that neither the capacity nor the right to interpret the most important truths are necessarily confined to an elite.” The “essence of democracy” is therefore “how people govern themselves, as opposed to how they are governed by others” (Woods, 2005, pp. 1-2).

Woods (2005) explains that democracy originated from the notion of dispersed, individualized authority. Touraine (as cited in Woods, 2005, p. 4) warns that “democracy is not simply a set of institutional guarantees of majority rule but above all a respect for individual or collective projects that can reconcile the assertion of personal liberty with the right to identify with a particular social group”. Bredeson (2004) observes that democracy is somewhat more complex in practice than in theory:

Because there is consensus that we live a democratic society, I believe most people see no need to stipulate explicitly democratic ideals or principles; they are simply assumed. However, as our social history and contemporary political conflicts suggest, democracy is not something that is easily understood, realized; nor is it something that you get right and the move on. (p. 6)

In everyday practice, democracy may be more of a tendency or ambition than an actual state: as Apple and Beane (cited in Bredeson, 2004, p. 6) argue, “Democratic educators understand that democracy does not present an ‘ideal state’ crisply defined and waiting to be attained. Rather, a more democratic undertaking is not an easy one; it is filled with contradictions, conflict, and controversy”.

Closer to home, the Namibian Ministry of Education cautions that democracy “is not to say that every decision in a school must be subjected to a vote or that the roles of the younger children

will be identical to those of their parents” (Namibia. MEC, 1993, p. 42). Democracy rather means that we must all work diligently to facilitate broad participation in making major decisions about our education and how we implement them. Thus “a democratic education system is organized around broad participation in decision making and the clear accountability of those who are our leaders” (Namibia. MEC, 1993, p. 42).

2.4.3.2. The value of democratic leadership theory

Democratic leadership theory is regarded as the most relevant to the circumstances obtaining in many countries today, including Namibia, as the following statement indicates: “To develop education for democracy we must develop democratic education. To teach about democracy, our teachers – and our education system as a whole – must practise democracy” (Namibia. MEC, 1993, p. 41).

As Woods (2005, p. 5) insists, “Democracy serves neither society nor individuals. Democracy serves human beings insofar as they are subjects, or in other words, their creators and the creators of their individual and collective lives”. Thus, democracy is not merely something that is desirable in schools: it can be regarded as the backbone of humanity, to the extent that it encourages respect for human diversity, respect for the rule of law, and respect for human growth and freedom. According to the Namibian Ministry of Education, “Just as education is the foundation for development, so is it [education] a foundation for democracy. Building those foundations must be a conscious process in which all learners are engaged” (Namibia. Ministry of Education, 1993, p. 42). For example, “[i]n schools that are responsive to their communities, parents and neighbours are not regarded as generally unwelcome outsiders. Instead, the schools are organized to enable them to be active participants in school governance, active evaluators of the quality of instruction and learning” (Namibia. Ministry of Education, 1993, p. 42). Davies (as cited in Mncube, 2008, p. 79) maintains that “[a] democratic theory of education is concerned with the process of ‘double democratization’, the simultaneous democratization of education and society”. This means that without the democratic development of a society, a more democratic system of education cannot be promoted, and without a more democratic system of education, the development of a democratic society is unlikely to occur.

Woods (2005, p. xvi) summarizes the aims of democratic leadership as follows:

Democratic leadership aims to create an environment in which people are encouraged and supported to aspire to truths about the world, including the highest values (ethical rationality). Leadership therefore, as part of this, entails searching for the common human good.

Democratic leadership aims to create an environment in which people practice this ethical rationality and look for ways of superseding difference through dialogue (discursive rationality). Democratic leadership both exercises and facilitates deliberation.

Democratic leadership aims to create an environment in which people are active contributors to the creation of institutions, culture and relationships they inhabit (decisional rationality). Democratic leadership occurs throughout the organization and works to recognize and enhance this by encouraging dispersal of leadership. Crucially, dispersal of initiative amongst a multiplicity of democratic leaders – if it is to justify the description ‘democratic’ – involves the exercise of some decisional rights

Democratic leadership aims to create an environment in which people are empowered and enabled by the institutional, cultural, and social structures of the organization (therapeutic rationality). Democratic leadership contributes to the leaders’ and others’ growth towards human potential.

Democratic leadership promotes respect for diversity and acts to reduce cultural and material inequalities (social justice). These components of social justice are, accordingly, symbiotic with democracy.

These principles are compatible with the Namibian Ministry of Education’s pronouncement that: “We must structure our education system so that the organizations its participants choose to form, for example teachers’ and students’ unions, can play active roles alongside communities in shaping, guiding and assessing it. To develop education for democratic society we must develop democratic education” (Namibia. MEC, 1993, p. 42).

Starke (as cited in Mncube, 2008, p. 79) embraces the values of democratic leadership in arguing that “the school itself must be organized along democratic lines, taking into account that democracy is best learned in a democratic setting in which participation is encouraged, freedom of expression and sense of justice and fairness prevails, and democratic approaches function which allow the nurturing of qualities such as participation, innovation, co-operation, autonomy and initiative in learners and staff”. Thus it is important that schools take the lead in practising

democracy: as the Ministry of Education concludes, “To teach about democracy, our teachers – and our education system as a whole – must practise democracy” (Namibia. MEC, 1993, p. 41).

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the role of teachers’ unions with reference to certain micropolitical theories of education. My arguments have focused mainly on Bush’s political models, which emphasize the political nature of organizations today.

I have shown that individuals and groups within organizations protect their interests in various ways, for example, through negotiation and bargaining, strikes and demonstrations and sometimes manipulation. In this way, members of an organization form coalitions to defend their interests, which inevitably lead to the formation of unions. I have also shown that in most organizations decisions are not shared, because people in organizations have access to different types and levels of power, and the most powerful groups of people tend to make the decisions.

In political models, the function of the leader is that of mediator. Eden (1997) explains that in mediating among the various contesting groups, “leadership emerges when the leader manages to impose his/her meaning in a way that is ‘sensible to the led’ and followers surrender their powers to define reality to the leader, that is, legitimize the principal’s act” (p. 250).

I have also explained the essence of using democratic leadership theories in the management of teacher unions in schools. Democracy is central to the very existence of unions and its maintenance is hence their core responsibility. Unions want to be recognized as critical partners in decision-making; as (Barker, personal communication, September 25, 2009) puts it, “unions have a role to play in all kinds of management in South Africa, not only in school management”. Thus, one way of recognizing unions in school management is to involve them in school governance and decision making, and this can be done through the democratic process. I have also shown that conflicts between unions and government are more likely to occur in an undemocratic environment where the unions are not recognized or ignored.

In the next chapter, I explain the methodology used in carrying out this study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I identify the research paradigm in which this study was conducted. The chapter then discusses research methods and gives reasons for choosing those chosen.

The chapter also explains the procedures followed in carrying out the study, and ends by describing the challenges experienced during the research process.

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Research paradigm

This study is a case study in the sense that it investigates the role NANTU plays in the management of particular schools. The study focuses on how school principals and NANTU representatives at schools and regional level interpret their experiences and the perceived effect of NANTU on school management. Thus, this study is located in the interpretive paradigm and utilizes what Berg (2004, p. 7) describes as “qualitative techniques” which “allow researchers to share in the understanding and perceptions of others and explore how people structure and give meaning to their daily lives”.

Through the use of the interpretive paradigm I had the opportunity to capture the understanding of individual participants of the role of NANTU, in accordance with the views of Cohen et al.:

The interpretive paradigm is ... characterized by a concern for the individual. The central endeavour in the context of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience. To retain the integrity of the phenomena being investigated, efforts are made to get inside the person and to understand from within. (2007, p. 21)

The interpretive approach is appropriate to this study because it helps to maintain a focus on the action of individuals, as Cohen et al. (2007) point out in their argument for interpretive paradigm:

The interpretive approach, on other hand, focuses on action. This may be thought of as behaviour-with-meaning; it is internal behaviour and as such, future oriented. Actions are meaningful to us only in so far as we are able to ascertain the intentions of the actors to share their experiences. A large number of our everyday interactions with one another rely on such shared experiences. (p. 21)

The interpretive approach therefore “begins with individuals and sets out to understand their interpretations of the world around them” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 22).

3.2.2 Method

This is a case study in the sense that it investigates the phenomenon as it appears in three schools in the Kavango region of Namibia. Stake (1995, p. 4) argues that “the sole criterion for selecting a case study is an opportunity to learn”. In other words, a case study serves the purpose of helping the researcher to gain more knowledge about, and a greater understanding of, the issue being researched (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, & Delpot, 2005, p. 272). Hancock & Algozzine (2006, p. 11) agree that “through case study the researchers hope to gain in-depth understanding of situations and meaning for those involved”. Merriam (2001, p. 207) echoes this view in maintaining that “[i]n qualitative research, a single case or small nonrandom sample is selected precisely because the researcher wishes to understand the particular [case] in depth, not to find out what is generally true of the many”. Through case study one is able to observe phenomena in a real context and thereby recognize that “context is a powerful determinant of both causes and effects” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 253). The observation is more detailed than is the case with quantitative or statistical research. As Cohen et al. (2007) point out:

Case study strive to portray ‘what is like’ to be in a particular situation, to catch the close up reality and ‘thick description’ (Geertz) of participants’ lived experience of, thoughts about and feelings for a situation ... Case studies penetrate situations, in ways that are not always susceptible to numerical analysis. (pp. 253- 254)

Another strength of the case study is the opportunity it provides to use triangulation as a validity measure, “especially in terms of using multiple methods of data collection and analysis, [because] triangulation strengthens reliability as well as internal validity” (Merriam, 2001, p. 207).

3.2. 3 Sampling

The three schools were selected because of their level of instruction, i.e. Primary, Combined and Senior Secondary. I purposefully selected the three schools because I wanted to study the phenomenon as it manifests at these three levels of schooling. There are perceptions that conflicts between NANTU and school managers differ from one school to another. These differences are mostly caused by the school size, in terms of the numbers of teachers and learners, and the complexity of the issues being dealt with at the different levels. Thus studying schools at different levels of schooling had the potential to help me understand the differences in the nature of conflicts prevailing at these different levels and thus provide a richer picture of the phenomenon.

The schools were also selected on the basis of convenience, because they are not far from each other and from where I live. Thus it did not cost me much to travel to and from these schools.

3.2.4 Research participants

The participants in this study are either people working with unions or those who are in the union structures, that is, people in a position to provide relevant data. They comprise two founder members of NANTU, eight School Principals, and nine NANTU representatives. I also interviewed an Inspector of Education.

The participants were purposively selected on the basis of their positions and experience of the phenomenon being researched, and on the basis of convenience, because most of them are colleagues to whom I had easy access. Some of the participants were selected because of a history of events that had taken place at their respective schools. As Singleton et al. (as cited in De Vos et al., 2005) argue with regard to purposive sampling: “This type of sample is based

entirely on the judgment of the researcher, in that a sample is composed of elements that contain the most characteristic, representative or typical attributes of the population”.

3.3 Data collection

Data was collected by using the following tools: document analyses, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions.

The research was conducted in four stages:

- **Stage 1**
 - The first stage consisted of semi-structured interviews with two founder members of NANTU.
- **Stage 2**
 - The second stage consisted of document analysis – though this in fact continued throughout the research process.
- **Stage 3**
 - This stage consisted of interviews with school members, namely school principals and NANTU representatives.
- **Stage 4**
 - The last stage was made up of focus group discussions and interviews with a union representative at regional level, and an Inspector of Education of one of the circuits.

3.3.1 Interviews

I began by interviewing two founders of NANTU using semi-structured interviews (Gillham, 2000, p. 65). These interviews enabled me to explore the envisaged role of NANTU in school management, the historical background of NANTU, the extent to which its original aims were still relevant, and the extent to which they were being pursued. This information enriched my study in the sense that it shed light on the reasons for the conflicts between school principals and NANTU representatives. The interviews were important because the data was used to help assess how the envisaged roles were actually being performed in schools, especially when I interviewed

school principals. The founder members also provided information on documents relevant to the study which I used in the next step.

I then moved on to conduct semi-structured interviews (Gillham, 2000, p. 65) with school members. The interviews were conducted at three schools, at each of which I interviewed the school principal and a NANTU workplace representative. I interviewed school principals to find out their perceptions of the role of NANTU in school management, and the NANTU representatives to establish what role they themselves thought they played in school management.

I also interviewed one NANTU representative at regional level to find out how NANTU representatives at school level are being prepared for their jobs and what their experience was of working with school principals and Inspectors of Education. Lastly I interviewed an Inspector of Education to establish his/her experience of working with NANTU and also to find out how school principals were being prepared to work with stakeholders, especially the unions.

Interviews are important because of the ‘richness’ of communication that is possible (Gillham, 2000, p. 62). Semi-structured interviews give the richest single source of data, because they allow the interviewer to ask follow up question and interact with participants. As Gillham (2000, p. 65) maintains, it is “this very flexibility [that] makes the semi-structured interviews such a productive research tool”.

3.3.2 Document analysis

Analyzing documents fitted in well at this stage because information gained from documents informed the subsequent stages of data collection, namely semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with principals and teachers.

According to De Vos et al. (2005, p. 314), document analysis refers to “analysis of any written material that contains information about the phenomenon that is being researched”. Document analysis is important in this kind of study because studying documents such as policies and minutes may help one to understand the philosophy or logic behind decisions taken in an organization. The following documents were analyzed:

- NANTU constitution
- Recognition agreements between NANTU and the government
- The Media release on unlawful removal of civil servants from their positions issued by the Ministry of Education in Kavango region
- Letters of complaint from NANTU members (teachers) addressed to school principals and NANTU representatives
- Letter of demand from NANTU representatives addressed to a school principal on the alleged unlawful transfer of a teacher
- NANTU 4th National Congress Report of 1999
- NANTU 9th Congress resolutions of 2009
- NANTU 9th National Congress report of 2009

Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit (2004, p. 99) argue that “[a]ny document, whether old or new, whether in printed format, handwritten or in electronic format, and which relates to the research question may be of value”. Thus studying these documents provided me with data that I used to explore the phenomenon in detail.

3.3.3 Focus group discussions

This process consisted of two focus group discussions in two circuits. The first focus group discussion involved three school principals and three NANTU representatives, while the second comprised two school principals and two NANTU representatives. Focus group discussions bring people together to share ideas and experiences. According to Cohen et al. (2007, p. 376), “focus groups are contrived settings, bringing together a specifically chosen sector of the population to discuss a particular given theme or topic, where the interaction with the group leads to data and outcome”. Focus groups thus generate multiple viewpoints on a topic and allow the group to share each other’s understandings of the issue(s) being studied.

Focus group discussions were particularly important to my study because they encourage participants to express their opinions, to “speak out in their own words” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 376) and argue with one another, which is an important aspect of the political model of management on which this study is based. During focus group discussions, new meanings are

created through interaction and debate, enabling new understandings of the matter being discussed to be reached. As Kruger & Casey (2000, p. 24) point out, “you want ideas to emerge from the group. A group possesses the capacity to become more than the sum of its parts, to exhibit a synergy that individuals alone don’t possess”.

3.4 Data analysis

Data analysis was performed during and after the data collection process. Most of the interviews were transcribed immediately after they were conducted, while my memory of the conversations was still fresh.

I used induction as a mode of inference in my study. This was appropriate in the sense that I studied people’s perceptions and experiences and developed general themes and sub-themes from these. As Henning et al. (2004, p. 104) argue, “Human communication is not linear and the interpretation of meaning should not be linear either”. Before the coding process that generated the themes, all transcriptions were carefully read. The raw data was kept in a secure place throughout the research process.

3.5 Validity

Brinberg and McGrath (as cited in Maxwell, 2005) draw attention to the difficulty of guaranteeing validity by remarking that “validity is not a commodity that can be purchased with techniques”. As Maxwell further emphasis “Validity is a goal rather than a product; it is never something that can be proven or taken for granted” (2005, p. 105). I attempted to ensure validity by making use of triangulation as explained above.

One of the threats to validity in this study was the possibility of bias on the side of the researcher. Having been a unionist and school principal for so many years might have affected my study in the sense that I might have developed certain values that could inform my approach to collecting and analyzing data. It could have also affected the responses I got from my respondents. Thus, as a researcher I strived to be as systematic and thorough as possible, informing the respondents in advance of the purpose of my study and my expectations from them. As Maxwell (2005, p. 108)

puts it, “Explaining your possible biases and how you will deal with these is a key task of your research proposal”.

Data was triangulated because, as Berg (2004, p. 5) puts it, “by combining several lines of sight, researchers obtain a better, more substantive picture of reality; a richer, more complete array of symbols and theoretical concepts; and a means of verifying many elements”. De Vos et al. (2005, p. 314) confirm this perspective, maintaining that “[b]y using a combination of procedures, such as document study, secondary study observations and interviews, the researcher can much more easily validate and cross-check findings”.

Triangulation is not just about using different methods or sources of data collection; in this study triangulation was also used to blend and integrate the different sets of data in order to produce well-balanced findings (Berg, 2004, p. 21). Each data source has its strengths and weaknesses, and by using triangulation the strengths of one can compensate for the weakness of another (Patton, 2002, p. 306). Bergman (2008, p. 23) formulates this usefully: “The idea of the concept of triangulation is that by drawing data from sources that have very different potential threats to validity, it is possible to reduce the chances of reaching false conclusions”. As Maxwell (2005, p. 105) concludes “Finally, validity threats are made implausible by evidence, not methods; methods are only a way of getting evidence that can help you rule out these threats”.

3.6 Ethical considerations

To ensure that the rights of the participants were not violated, protocols with regard to the research process were followed. A letter requesting permission was sent to the Regional Director, Inspector of Education, and the school concerned.

I also ensured that participants signed a consent form which explained what was expected from them and from the researcher.

The participants were duly informed that their identity and that of their schools would remain anonymous. As Simons & Usher (2000, p. 83) caution, “The general principle may be that one should act responsibly; respecting truth, self, others and privacy; having rights, reasonable

sensibilities, norms and expectations; avoiding hurting or exploiting others”. Member checking was done to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data.

As already mentioned, my position as a school principal and a unionist was likely to have some influence on the participants and the kind of data collected. For example, participants might have felt coerced (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 63) to participate in the study and consequently provided information that they thought would suit my interests. I therefore carefully explained to them the purpose of the study and informed them of their right not to participate, or to withdraw from and/or rejoin the project (Cohen, et al., 2007, p. 55). I gave participants copies of my research plan (Hitchcock & Hughes, as cited in Cohen et al., 2000, p. 69) to ensure that they understood the purpose of the study. I also strived to establish good relations with participants by visiting the site in advance to talk to them.

3.7 Summary

In this chapter, I have explained my use of the interpretive paradigm to explore the phenomenon from the point of view of the respondents. The interpretive paradigm offers the advantage of allowing insight into the reasons underpinning the behaviour of the research subjects.

I have also argued that the interpretive paradigm focuses intimately on the action of individuals actually involved in the issue being researched. Thus the actions of individual school principals and NANTU representatives were carefully studied, using rich description and analysis of the data collected from them.

The case study method was employed in order to get detailed information on the phenomenon being investigated. Hitchcock & Hughes (as cited in Berg, 2004) list the following as characteristic of the case study:

- It is concerned with a rich and vivid description of events relevant to the case.
- It provides a chronological narrative of events to the case.
- It blends description of actors or groups of actors, and seeks to understand their perceptions of events.
- It highlights specific events that are relevant to the case.
- The researcher is integrally involved in the case.

- An attempt is made to portray the richness of the case in writing up the report. (pp. 253-254)

I have indicated that semi-structured interviews comprised one of the methods used to gather data. This tool is important because it allows for interaction with the participants through follow-up questions. I have also shown that focus group discussion was an appropriate research instrument as it served further to unearth the participants' experiences and understanding, through the interaction among the participants themselves and between participants and the researcher. It also emerged that the use of focus group discussion enables one to "understand differences between groups or categories of people" (Kruger & Casey, 2000, p. 24). This was particularly important in this study because it helped me to ascertain the reasons for the differences between school principals and NANTU representatives that cause conflict in schools. As Kruger & Casey (2000) point out, "[t]he purpose is to uncover factors that influence opinions, behaviour, or motivation. Focus groups can provide insight into complicated topics when opinions are conditional or when the area of concern relates to multifaceted behaviour or motivation" (p. 24).

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION

Introduction

In this chapter, I present the data collected from interviews, focus group discussions and documents, giving an overview of the schools and other collection sites to contextualize the study. I move on to present the data in the categories as they emerged after repeated reading and analysis of the data in the light of my research question.

4.1.1 The research sites

The study was conducted in three schools which were purposefully selected because of the grades they offer namely: a Primary, Combined and Senior Secondary School. For the purpose of this study and to maintain anonymity, the schools are given the following names; Kavango Primary School, Muruti Combined and Mandjoro Secondary School. I interviewed the School Principal and the Chairperson of the NANTU School Committee at each school. I also interviewed an Inspector of Education, a NANTU representative at regional level and two founder members of NANTU.

The plan was to conduct two focus group interviews in two different circuits. The first set of interviews was successful with three school Principals and three NANTU representatives attending. The second focus group discussion was less successful as only four of the participants, of which two were school principals and the other two were union representatives, participated. The rest of the group could not attend due to unexpected work commitments.

4.1.2 The data

I identify the participants using the following codes:

- F1 – Founder member of NANTU one
- F2 – Founder member of NANTU two

- SP1 – School Principal of Mandjoro Secondary School
- NSC1 – NANTU representative of Mandjoro Secondary School
- SP2 – School Principal of Muruti Combined School
- NSC2 – NANTU representative of Muruti Combined School
- SP3 – School Principal of Kavango Primary School
- NSC3 – NANTU representative of Kavango Primary School
- I/E – Inspector of Education
- NR – NANTU representative of regional level
- F1P1- School Principal one in focus group one
- F1P2 – School Principal two in focus group one
- F1P3 – School Principal three in focus group one
- F1U1 – NANTU representative one in focus group one
- F1U2 – NANTU representative two in focus group one
- F1U3 – NANTU representative three in focus group one
- F2P1 – School Principal one in focus group two
- F2P2 – School Principal two in focus group two
- F2U1 – NANTU representative one in focus group two
- F2U2 – NANTU representative two in focus group two

The following categories emerged from the data:

- Historical background
- The roles of NANTU
- The involvement of NANTU in school management
- Conflicts between NANTU representatives and school management
- Training of NANTU representatives and school managers
- Relationships between NANTU representatives and school management

4.2 Historical background

4.2.1 The history behind NANTU's formation

In order to study the history of NANTU's formation, I needed to unearth the reasons that necessitated the formation of NANTU as a teachers' union, the environment in which teachers operated, and the management and leadership styles in schools at the time of its formation. These facts were important for me to understand why NANTU operated as it does today. As discussed in Chapter 2, the data confirmed that NANTU was formed during the crucial time of Namibia's struggle for independence from the oppressive South African apartheid government. During this period, the country and its people were divided into tribal groups and each tribal group had their own administration, as F2 confirmed, "We were divided and ruled accordingly".

In those days, schools were managed directly by the colonial administration and teachers had no say in the way schools were managed. Respondent F2 emphasized, "During those days school were managed directly from the government or the colonial administration offices so teachers did not play any role in the formulation of policies, rules and regulations which were used in schools". Consequently, teachers in the different tribal areas formed what were known as teachers associations that aimed at fighting for the interests of teachers. As F1 explained, "The aims of these organizations, for example the Kavango Onderwyser Vereniging (KOV) which was in our region was to look at the interests of teachers and also to lobby support from the Second Tier Government [government which was responsible for the Kavango Administration].

However, these teachers associations were not effective because they used to succumb to the colonial administration as F1 remembered "... but it [KOV] was not effective because teachers and their representatives were intimidated during discussions ... and negotiations. It was like a "toothless" organization because they could not decide on matters; the Secretary for the Kavango Administration took most of the decisions". For example, appointments to some of the positions like school principal were the sole responsibility of the Inspectors of Education as F1 explained, "What used to happen was, if a post was vacant the Inspector was the sole person responsible to appoint a person to take over the post. There were no interviews conducted and in some positions people could not apply, the inspector had to appoint them".

During the same period, the struggle for liberation was intensified by the liberation movement and other progressive organizations, however teachers could not take part as a united group because they were not organized, as F2 explained “teachers did not fully participate [in the struggle] like the Namibia National Student Organization (NANSO) [did]”. Teachers then came up with the idea of forming a union as F2 put it “teachers saw the need to organize teachers under one organization”. According to F2, the idea of forming one union came from NANSO. F2 explained that it was not easy to organize teachers because some of them were proud to belong to their respective tribes; in the end NANTU was established after mobilizing the majority of teachers in the country.

4.2.2 Aims of NANTU

According to the respondents, NANTU was established with the followings aims:

- To unite all teachers of Namibia into a non-racial teachers’ union that will seek to channel the democratic demands of teachers, their students and the community at large to the relevant structures.
- To represent the interests of teachers in all issues affecting them at the educational institutions.
- To organize teachers into a national body that will strive towards non-racial and democratic public institutions.
- To be part and parcel of nation building and reconstruction in our country and promote links with progressive forces such as labour and student movements.
- To act as a mouthpiece for teachers in Namibia and seek to protect their teaching interests.

The aim of establishing NANTU was also to ensure that democracy prevailed in schools as F2 explained, “The aims were to go beyond organizing teachers; we looked at the roles which teachers will play in the management of schools”. They looked at the role NANTU would play after the country became independent. Respondent F2 said, “We looked ahead, for example, after independence what role will NANTU play in managing and running of schools, as the union believed that if teachers work happily the work at school will be effective, and if policies will continue to be imposed upon us then education will not be effective”. To fulfill this role, structures were established at all levels according to F2, “We thought of putting a structure at school level to engage the management in all school activities and also to act as “guards” or

“watch dogs” to see to it that teachers are treated fairly”. Thus, according to NR, the most important aim of NANTU is that of acting as a mouthpiece for the teachers in Namibia.

4.3 The roles of NANTU

4.3.1 The role of NANTU in schools in general

According to the Namibia National Teachers Unions (1997, p. 32) the duties of the NANTU School Committee are as follows:

- To liaise with members at the school and represent their interests as well as to consult and negotiate on issues of mutual concern with the school authorities.
- Recruit new members, explain NANTU’s policies to members at school, organize fund-raising activities and motivate members to participate in NANTU activities.

I examined the collective agreement between government and NANTU, which listed the roles, functions and duties of the NANTU work place representatives as follows:

- Workplace union representatives shall represent staff members in relation to disciplinary actions taken or about to be taken.
- Workplace union representative shall represent members in relation to the termination of contracts of employment.
- Workplace union representative shall receive and attend to complaints and grievances of staff members concerning their employment, and where necessary, report such complaints to NANTU branch, NANTU regional office or national office.
- The union shall be entitled to make representation to all committees established by the Ministry, which deal with conditions of service, educational issues or any other matter of interest to the union.

However, the interpretation and implementation of these duties differs in the three schools. The understanding also differs among the respondents. For example, at Mandjoro Secondary School the duties of the NANTU representatives include the provision of counseling to NANTU members with problems, including those who are HIV positive. As SP1 explained, “What I also see is the provision of counseling not only to colleagues who are infected with HIV and Aids but counseling in general”. At Muruti Combined the duties of the NANTU School Committee included controlling the work life of teachers, for example, making sure that teachers are

punctual and monitoring their performance. As SP2 explained, “The duties of NANTU representatives are to check the capabilities and responsibilities of the teachers at the school and to see to it that teachers are coming early to school and teachers teach their lessons in the classes”. SP2 further explained, “They [NANTU School Committee] have to make sure that learning is taking place in classes and they have to make sure that absenteeism and late coming of teachers is being controlled and discouraged”. I /E echoes these views when he argued that they [NANTU School Committee] also participate in the school management to ensure that there is quality teaching and learning, and they encourage teachers to adhere to the Ministerial policies.

According to the NANTU 4th National Congress report, the Namibian Prime Minister emphasized these roles of NANTU in his address to the congress delegates, when he explained, “Teachers are allies in the process of nation-building. Teachers must seek to both better conditions of service and also to promote the interests of pupils, community and the nation”.

At Kavango Primary School, the duties of the NANTU School Committee include representing the interests of the teachers and those who are affected by problems at work. For example as NSC3 explained, “The first one is, we act as work place representatives, the second one is, we recruit new teachers to join the union and then to convene School Committee meetings”. Most of the respondents agreed that the duties of NANTU in schools include speaking on behalf of teachers on issues affecting them at school as SP3 explained, “They are here to see to it that the rights of the NANTU members be it at management level or at staff level are respected”. This is achieved by speaking on behalf of the teachers whenever there is a case or problem as SP3 further explained:

Whenever they [NANTU members] are having a problem or when they are having an issue affecting them, it is a platform where they actually bring their views, bring it to my office or to management so that we can look into the issue until we find or get an amicable solution to the issue affecting their members.

SP3 gave an example of a case that took place at their school at the beginning of March 2009 whereby the school management wanted to transfer some teachers from their school due to overstaffing. During this process, the role of the NANTU School Committee was to ensure that the decisions taken were fair. Respondent SP3 emphasized, “To do it we needed the

representatives of NANTU so that they can see to it that the procedures were following were fair and transparent”. In this case, the NANTU representatives had to see to it that regulations regarding staffing norms were followed. According to SP3, the NANTU representatives were allowed to air their views so the NANTU representatives could not say that any one person was victimized or discriminated against. Thus, SP3 concluded, “At the end of the day all of us reached consensus that the exercise was done fairly”.

These views were also supported by F1P1 who argued that “I do think that to have a NANTU structure at school is important ... because they act as “watch dogs” to rectify some of the things the management sometimes do, in order to eliminate some of those mistakes”. However F1U1 disagreed with the use of the word “watch dogs” when referring to the work of union representatives in schools; according to him, their duty is to represent the interests of their members. As he argued “I slightly disagree with the previous speaker (F1P1) on the use of the word “watch dogs” for the union representatives’ roles, actually we not; we are representatives of our members because at some schools you might have, let us say, a staff of more than forty teachers; so not everybody can stand for a certain issue”.

According to I/E, NANTU representatives are also involved in the following activities:

- They participate in the recruitment of teachers; they see to it that procedures are followed especially on entry posts like teaching posts as well promotional posts like principal posts.
- NANTU guides school management regarding the implementation of Ministerial policies especially the condition of service of teaching staff and the management of staff members; seeing to it that the staff members are being properly treated.
- They encourage teachers and learners to maintain good discipline and ensure that school and hostel rules are implemented.

During the focus group discussions, participants could not agree on the exact roles of the union in schools. For example, according to F1P1, the roles of the union include the distribution of official documents like Ministerial policies to members; however, other participants, for example, disputed the duty. F1U1 argued:

I think the principals here are confusing the word responsibility; who should be responsible in providing these documents, we are not saying that we cannot have these documents; we can have the documents in the offices, but the Ministry is responsible to provide the union with these documents because

union members are the employees. Therefore, the employer must provide even to the union offices because the union itself is an employee of the Ministry in this regard, so the Ministry should come up with documents and provide it to the employees. We are talking about responsibility; it is the responsibility of the Ministry ... to make sure that the employees get the relevant documents because you are going to deal with them knowing that they got the understanding. ... Therefore, principals are representing the Ministry in their offices. When the Ministry sends the documents to their offices it is not to be stored in the files but to be distributed to the teacher.

4.3. 2 Fulfillment of the roles

Most of the respondents agreed that NANTU structures at school level do not fulfill their duties regarding teaching and learning and that they are more active when it comes to problems affecting their members. For example, NSC3 agreed that as the Chairperson of the NANTU School Committee, “I do not fulfill them all the time, sometimes when there is no problem at the school, then there is nothing to do but when there is a problem we have to make sure the interests and the rights are protected”. Other respondents had similar sentiments, for example, I/E agreed, “I will rate it below 50% or maybe 35%”. SP1 concurred, “To be honest with you, if I have to start with meetings since 2006 I was only aware of one meeting”. NSC1 explained, “We normally fulfill these duties if cases arise or something happens; we willingly want to acquaint ourselves”.

However, most of the NANTU representatives agreed that they do fulfill their duties regarding their role of defending the interests and rights of their members. For example, NSC1 explained that on 6 April 2008 one of their members was called for a disciplinary hearing for misconduct for using corporal punishment on a learner in class. The NANTU School Committee ensured that the charges were dropped:

When the decision was taken that the teacher had to go for a disciplinary hearing, we had to influence the decision of the management. We explained to them that it was not the intention of the teacher to beat the learner but it was un-intentionally done; so they agreed and they had to refer the teacher for counseling. Therefore, we attended to that case and in the process, we fulfilled our role.

However, at Muruti Combined School their experience is different from the one described above; the school principal indicated that she is happy with what the NANTU School Committee was

doing at the school because they were fulfilling all the responsibilities. For example, as she puts it:

Yes, especially this year the NANTU School Committee are helping the Management so much; they are helping us by encouraging teachers to come early to school; they are motivating teachers to teach learners and they even tell them about the disadvantages of teachers being absent from school. They are encouraging them to be in the classrooms and they are encouraging them on disciplinary matters and even advising them on the use of alcohol.

SP2 further explained that in their school, the NANTU representatives use their influence to the extent of protecting the school management by encouraging their members not to verbally attack the school management when they encounter problems. The members are told to register their problems with NANTU who will present their problems to the management. She explained “Sometimes they used to encourage them that whatever they are going to encounter they should not rush it to the management or attack the management but they should register the problems with the NANTU school committee”.

Some of the documents analyzed also indicated that NANTU was successful in its role with regard to teaching and learning, for example in the 4th NANTU National Congress report, the former Secretary General of NANTU appealed to the congress delegates to join forces in influencing the government to take on pre-primary education as part of its responsibilities. He stated: “The Ministry of Basic Education and Culture should be reminded to reconsider its position as far as pre-primary education is concerned. The non-governmental organizations, of which NANTU is part, should consider networking and intensifying the lobby towards influencing the final policy on early childhood education” (Namibia National Teachers Union, 1995, p. 38). In the 9th National Congress report the Secretary General reported that pre-primary education was now being implemented in schools after the government and NANTU reached an agreement.

4.3.3 NANTU School Committee as an important stakeholder

Most respondents agreed in their responses that NANTU could play a very important role in schools if they fulfilled the duties expected of them. The union is in a better position to advise the school authority in particular and the government in general. For example, F2 argued that

“NANTU can play a vital role because we have the experience in the classroom; we are the implementers of policies. So, if we identify a problem in the implementation process, we have to be listened to because we feel the “pitch”; people are pointing fingers at us”. F1 also agreed with these sentiments by advising, “The union should always be firm, and try to advise school principals even though some principals might not be easy to convince”. F2P2 also supported these views when he argued that it was important to have NANTU and other unions in schools when it comes to resolving conflicts. He elaborated, “Therefore NANTU is there to make sure that when issues of conflict are being resolved proper procedures are followed; they make sure that their members are not negatively affected and issues are tackled in a proper way and they are not personalized”. F1P3 shared this sentiment when he shared his experience regarding the presence of a union in schools. He explained that according to him it was very important for the union to be in school because they bring harmony. He explained, “It is vital for the union or this body to be in schools because it is the core whereby it brings harmony among the community in the school. Whenever we need assistance they direct us therefore I see that it is important to have this body at school”.

4.4 Involvement of NANTU in school management

4.4.1 The importance of NANTU involvement in school management

Most respondents agreed that for various reasons it was important to involve NANTU in school management. For example, NANTU’s involvement serves as a form of feedback to the school principals on how teachers feel about their leadership as F2 explained, “Sometimes it is an advantage for the principal when the NANTU school committee comes and airs their views on behalf of the teachers. Because I believe that as a leader once you know the problems affecting the subordinates you will manage better; rather than when people talk about you while you do not know”. These views are shared by SP1 who explained:

Therefore, if we look at the management part of our work, it is important because issues come through their representatives; you know the employer employee relationship; even though we are also members but my office is regarded as the employer. So, if I give out instruction it will not be taken as easily as if it came from their representatives.

F2 further emphasized, “I feel that there is a need for union representation in schools because the implementers are teachers in schools; we can have the minister and directors but the implementers are found at schools. That is why we have to organize ourselves and speak from one angle and influence some decisions the employer might take”. He elaborated by comparing the work of unions in schools to that of opposition parties in government:

It is like government whereby you have an opposition and a ruling party; so the opposition has to watch and when they see that something is not right, their role is to remind them that you are out of track. Therefore, the union plays the same role at the school level; that of advising the school management; that is why union representation at school level is very important.

F1U2 supports the view that it was important to have union representatives in schools because they represent the members on work related matters and represent the interests of members of the school, and in the process they guide the management. These views were confirmed by F1P2 who agreed that:

The purpose of having NANTU representatives at school is to provide democratic leadership, to ensure the participation of members in broader union activities and also to guide the community; for example, there are many things happening in the school therefore if we have NANTU representatives which can also representative the interest of the teachers, not only for the teachers but the entire community.

SP1 also argued that the involvement of NANTU representatives in school management is important because they help by explaining the duties of teachers to their members. She further argued that through NANTU representatives, the management makes the teachers understand what they are supposed to do. As she explained, “It is very important to involve NANTU representatives because it is through them that we get the teachers to understand our main objectives”. NSC1 agreed on this matter saying representatives were especially important when it comes to decision-making. He felt that involving the union in school management helps to avoid some of the conflicts. As he explained, “It is important for the union to be involved in the management especially on decision-making because our role is to represent teachers, so anything that does not satisfy the teachers leads to conflicts”. I/E agreed saying “it [the union] will ensure that all decisions taken by the stakeholders in the management of the particular school are based on democratic principles. So without the union then there will be no one to do the monitoring”.

According to NSC1 sometimes the union plays a role of mediating between management and the staff. After negotiation with the management, the union goes back to the staff and gives feedback then reports back to management on whatever decision is taken. As he explained:

That is why it is important to involve the work place representatives because anything that happens in the office to inform me and I bring it to the teachers; we discuss it and if teachers make comments or accept it, then have I to go back to the principal. Therefore, this relationship is vital for the smooth running of the school.

According to I/E, union involvement is important because it is a neutral body which monitors the implementation of government policies and also ensures the democratic participation of stakeholders in education. As he puts it, “I think it is important for the union to get involved in the school management because it is a neutral body outside the Ministry which ensures effectiveness as well as efficiency in terms of how schools are managed”. I/E further explained the union ensures that there is fair treatment and proper staff management so that proper quality education is delivered to the clients, which are the learners. “The union can also make sure that the parents and guardians who have children at the particular school are properly guided,” he concluded.

4.4.2 School principals’ perception of union involvement

Even though most of the respondents agreed that it was important to involve NANTU in school management, according to some respondents, most of the school principals do not willingly accept the union in their schools. As F1 explained, “Only few schools accept the presence of the union in schools”. F2 agreed with F1’s view when he explained, “Generally there is kind of a mixed feeling among school principals, some feel that it should not be there”. According to F2, schools under principals who understand the aims and objectives of NANTU do invite NANTU representatives to be part of the management because they do not see NANTU as a threat. As he puts it:

I think in schools where the principals understand the role the union has to play and understand the aims and objectives of NANTU, they do invite NANTU representatives to be part and parcel of the school management because they do not see NANTU as threat. On the other side, other school principals see

NANTU as inferior compared to their positions; this happens because they do not understand what it stand for, they see NANTU as a threat.

According to FIU1's experience, the union is involved in management in two ways; as he puts it "Either fulltime or part time; in other schools they are members of the school management in other schools they are only called in if a member is facing a disciplinary hearing or a case of misconduct".

However, I/E disagreed with this view when he explained that:

I think from my experience, the union member who is part of the committee of the particular school ... is not supposed to be part of the management otherwise it will create a conflict of interest. Unless he is in the management by virtue of his appointed post and in that case, he is supposed to relinquish his union post.

According to F1, they have experienced cases where they were denied access to some schools by principals and were even banned from establishing proper union structure in schools. He explained, "There was a case whereby the principal did not want to accept the NANTU school committee at the school. Even to the extent of leaving them in his office, but at that time the union was firm; they worked hard by following all the procedures until they resolved the problem".

4.4.3 Activities in which NANTU is involved

Activities in which NANTU is involved at school differ from one school to another. For example, at Mandjoro Secondary School, the principal confirmed that NANTU representatives were involved in cases affecting their members and in counseling members including those infected by HIV and Aids.

According to NSC1, their school practises what he refers to as participative management whereby they (union representatives) are involved in the formulation of internal school policy.. As he explained:

Teachers were involved in participative management whereby we took a decision on our own. We developed some internal policies at our school for example homework policy and study policy. ... So, in these decisions the management was not involved. You can see that the policies came from

teachers, so by us doing these things, it is as if we were also regarded as important.

At Muruti Combined School the principal explained that she used to involve NANTU representatives in whatever she did in the school, “I am on the same level as the NANTU school committee chairperson; therefore we are helping each other. I used to call him on whatever I do, for example, on decision-making, on planning, on any development, on any change or on teachers’ behaviour”. SP2 further elaborated by giving an example of a case of a teacher at their satellite school who was reported as frequently absent by the parents. As she explained, “When we heard of that information, we came together as management and then we informed the NANTU Chairperson; together we decided to go and advise the teacher as a team”. SP2 further explained that upon their arrival the NANTU Chairperson explained the policy of absenteeism and sick leave to the teacher. “We encouraged and motivated the teacher, from that that day the teacher improved” SP2 concluded.

SP2 gave another example of a case where two teachers who were NANTU members were involved in a conflict. One of the teachers registered her conflict with the NANTU representatives and then the NANTU representative forwarded the complaint to the management. “The two parties, NANTU and management came together and tried to solve the problem. It was successful, the two teachers were brought together they reconciled and the issue was resolved”.

According to the respondents, NANTU is also involved in other activities, for example, NSC3 explained that they were involved in a case where the school management and the School Board decided to transfer four teachers from the school due to over staffing. The staff members were unhappy with the decision because the management could not give them reasons for their selection. As he explained, “The situation became worse because the management could not give reasons or criteria used to select the four teachers”. The union then appealed to the regional education office in their efforts to stop the transfer. At the end of the day, no one was transferred because the management did not follow the right procedures, “So, as a union we fought until the end, the overstaffing did not affect anybody; no one left the school apart from one teacher who left the school on his own free will”.

Documents analyzed also revealed that NANTU was involved in other activities in schools; for example, the NANTU 9th National Congress report indicated that NANTU was busy reviving the

implementation of the English Language proficiency test, which is aimed at helping teachers in schools improve their use of English. The same document also indicated that NANTU engaged with the government on issues such as the multi-grade teaching and automatic promotion policy, which was in the process of being revised. NANTU has also taken a stand on the Education Sector Training and Improvement (ETSIP).

However according to most of the union representatives, school principals do not involve NANTU representatives in the school; according to them, they only involve them when it comes to cases affecting their members. As FIU3 puts it, “What I observe is that most of the time school management does not involve NANTU especially when it comes to decision-making. They just involve NANTU when there is a specific case at school”. These views were supported by FIU1 who argued, “School principals in most cases only involve NANTU when there is a case but when it comes to the running of the school and the planning of the school sometimes they forget about the union”.

FIU1 used the scenario where principals decided during a principal’s meeting that all teachers should contribute an amount of N\$10.00 to the Education Trust Fund (EDT) established by the regional office without consulting the teachers. He explained, “Certain principals tried to force teachers to pay but the teachers were not involved”. FIU1 further explained that the union tried to convince principals that they do not have the right to demand payment from the teachers.

4.5 Relationship between NANTU School Committee and School Management

4.5.1 The partnership between NANTU representatives and school management

According to most of the respondents, the working relationship between NANTU and the School Committee differs from one school to another. For example, as SP3 explained, even though there are many grievances from the teachers, their relationship with the union representatives is healthy. As he put it:

At our school at this point in time we are having a good working relationship, for example, as teachers, they are having a lot of grievances at the school but we may not know them as management at the time but NANTU representatives come and inform us. The practice we have is that sometimes

we [management], the ... School Board representing parents and sometimes we meet here in the office; we plan together if there is a crucial thing coming up.

This was confirmed by NS3 when he explained that “Actually we are working together nicely; we share information and so on”. At Muruti Combined SP2 also explained that the working relationship at the school was good:

Our relationship with the NANTU representatives is like a man with clothes. Therefore for the management to function effectively it needs NANTU; NANTU helps a lot, it is just like clothes; you need clothes in order to walk around therefore we need each other.

NSC2 confirmed the good working relationship with the management when he commented, “Our relationship is good, we inform each other when there is a problem at school, and we really help each other”.

However, in other schools for example at Mandjoro Secondary School, the relationship between NANTU representatives and the school is not healthy; they are always in conflict. As the school principal (SP1) explained, “From my experience to be honest with you the relationship has not been a healthy one; it has been fighting and fighting”. According to SP1, the fights have been caused by poor communication between the union and her office. She complained, “What I noticed causes these, is a breakdown in the flow of information from the union representatives to my office. I am never informed or invited to their meetings and the decisions taken in these meetings are not communicated to my office”. The principal gave examples of an incident where NANTU members held a meeting at the school without her knowledge and decided to replace the NANTU school committee. As she put it:

It was earlier this year; the members decided to have a meeting but I think this was a fight between them. I was not aware of this, and then a group of members held their meeting and took a decision. The next morning during the staff briefing, we just heard that there is an interim committee elected. It was a surprise to us; so this is the communication breakdown that I was talking about.

However, the NANTU representative of the same school (NSC1) regards the tensions between them as normal and feels that their relationship is good, as he put it, “Our relationship with the management let me say we are on good terms; so we are updated on anything that happens in the school”.

According F2P1, the relationship between the union and management depends on how the school principal perceives the role of the union. F2P1 explained that according to his experience, some principals have negative perceptions towards the union; as a result, the relationship cannot be healthy. He explained:

To me the difficult part that I see is the perceptions of the union by the school managers because as we said earlier we are supposed to be partners. However, the perception there is that NANTU is seen as an obstacle to management or it is seen as a spy on the management; these negative perceptions do not create a good relationship between representatives and management. Therefore, the union is under-utilized in aspects where they suppose to be utilized.

F1U1 supported these views when he argued that most principals feared the union and they do not see themselves as part of it even though they are members of the union. As he explained:

Most principals feared the union and that is when it becomes dangerous. You might mishandle it and when you mishandle it, sometime it may be difficult to control. That is why I said that if management do not see themselves as part of the union; then it becomes dangerous because if they could be part of the union, they will always work harder to bring the union on board in whatever they do.

4.5.2 The benefits of a close working relationship

According to F1, it is to the benefit of the learners of the school if the union and management work together as partners:

It works so very better if the principal and the NANTU representatives are trying to work together. I can give you an example of the former principal of school X; at first, he could not understand the role of the union. When he wanted to transfer a teacher we approached him and explained our roles but he could not understand at first. After a long “battle”, the teacher was retained at the school. Then he asked us what we could do [together] to improve the situation [of the school] because at the time there were a lot of class boycotts, stay a ways and even the learners’ discipline at school X was very bad.

F1 explained that after they developed a joint mechanism with the school management, school X became one of the better performing schools in the region and was ranked among the top ten best performing schools in the region.

NR agreed with these views when he argued that:

Definitely there is a difference because in schools that we have NANTU representatives in the management. The interests and the rights of the teachers are brought to the table at the school level but in schools where NANTU members are excluded problems are not solved they are referred to the next level where NANTU is represented due to the fact that one party is excluded; that is the difference.

In explaining the importance of involving union representatives FIP1 explained that as a manager, the principal should not make decisions alone, he emphasized that the principal should sell the new ideas to the management and later to the staff, so that an agreement is reached. The staff's acceptance of the principal's idea depends on how the principal introduces the issue. As he concludes, "That is why we are saying that sometimes you do not have to impose but you have to motivate why you want this thing to happen".

The benefits of a good working relationship were also emphasized by the former Minister of Education during the in the 4th NANTU National Congress. The Minister argued, "Teachers play a central role in education and no reform can succeed without the teachers. Therefore teachers are the key players in improving education in Namibia" Namibia National Teachers Union (1995, p. 15).

4.5.3 The disadvantages of not working together

According to F1, a poor relationship between NANTU and school management causes many conflicts in the school and may affect the performance and stability in the schools:

Sometimes the representatives go to the extent of going to the learners and instigating learners to go on class boycotts and so on. The union and even the management create problems. If they see that a certain teacher [serving on the NANTU structure] is a problem they might create, a negative image towards the specific teacher which learners might believe that is true. Even if the teacher is firm and works hard for the betterment of the school, they will use that as a tool to fight the teacher away from the school.

F1 gave a scenario whereby the school principal used the learners to get rid of a committed teacher because the teacher was serving on the union structure. He also gave other two examples, where in both these cases the NANTU school committees were involved in instigating learners to get rid of the school principal. As he explained:

The issue of school B can be used as another example because teachers were involved in instigating learners to get rid of the school principal. Even at school C, where the NANTU school committee was part and parcel of the instigation because the NANTU school committee could not accept their fellow NANTU representatives from the next level; you can see that they were involved.

According to the documents I analyzed, poor working relations between NANTU and management has resulted in devastating consequences in some schools. For example in the Kavango region, 1995 was a year of strikes and class boycotts by learners influenced by NANTU teachers demanding the removal of some Ministry officials, especially school principals, from their respective schools. A closer look at the media release by the Ministry of Education on 27 July 1995 warning learners, teachers and parents against unlawful removal of civil servants from their position revealed that there were strikes in four senior secondary schools in the region. As the Ministry stated in the introduction of its statement:

1. A certain tendency seems to be all the fashion nowadays in this region, especially in the field of education:
 - The tendency of clamouring for the removal of civil servants from their positions
 - The tendency to demand the removal of officials at schools in a spirit of lawlessness and revolt, very often for doubtful reasons and on flimsy and frivolous grounds.
 - Or even to go so far as to force them out of their positions with total disregard for correct procedures and rightful authority; self righteously and in an anarchy.
2. The time has come to caution against this tendency; to warn learners, teachers, parents and members of the community not to allow themselves to be misled or tricked into such unlawful acts (and grade 10 & 12 learners who involve themselves in such acts should remember they have only one chance per grade). No government can or will entertain and tolerate or accept and condone the unlawful removal or dismissal of its civil servants.

4.6 Conflicts between NANTU and School Management

4.6.1 Causes of conflicts

According to some of the respondents, conflicts caused by poor relations between management and the union differs from one school to another and are determined by the management's

understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the union. As F1 explained, “It differs from one school to another depending on school management’s understanding of the roles of the union”.

F2 described his experience:

When NANTU was formed in 1989, I was elected as NANTU school committee at my school. When I wanted to take an issue from our members whom we recruited with my principal, he did not want to listen. Questions were raised, for example, “where did you get the authority to speak to me on behalf of other teachers?” I could clearly see that my principal did not understand the role of NANTU.

F2 gave another example of an incident that happened at a school where the NANTU school committee chairperson was barred by the school principal from attending meetings, “The chairperson of the school committee was barred from attending any kind of meeting because the principal thought he was too talkative”. Sp3 agreed:

Yes in some schools because some of the school managers used to attack NANTU representatives, they used to chase them from the offices saying that ‘you cannot come in the office and represent this teacher’; this happens because of a lack of knowledge.

SP3 agreed that school managers cause conflict, “We have management crises in some schools; I have known some of these schools which have problems. The problem is that when they do not have a leader who is actually articulating the responsibilities and duties of everyone in the institution; there will be confusion and chaos”. SP3 further argued that the union is not supposed to intervene in the administration work of the school but they do intervene when they see that leadership is failing. As he put it:

As a result, in some schools, they do not respect the principal, the principal has low esteem as a result teachers will “ride” over him, and certain teachers may try to run the school. The union will then try to come in and try to bring everybody on board and that is what has been happening in some schools.

Some respondents suggested the opposite; they said conflicts in schools could also be caused by a lack of knowledge by both principals and NANTU representatives. For example, as NR explained, “Most of the conflicts taking place in schools and nationwide are taking place because of a lack of knowledge of their rights and interests. Sometimes NANTU representatives will demand something from the management which is not the right of the members”. F2 also agreed with NR’s views when he said that “Most of the conflicts I believe are created by the

understanding of individuals; even the NANTU school committee has a different agenda towards the school principal and vice-versa”.

According to SP1, NANTU representatives create conflict in schools because in most cases the representatives are not trained. She referred to an incident that took place at her school where teachers, under the leadership of NANTU representatives, stopped teaching their lessons and gathered to discuss a problem that affected one of their colleagues without her knowledge. A learner had reported a teacher for beating him then went home to inform his parents. By the time she came out of her office the parents of the learner were already at school and they went straight to the teacher’s class to speak to him. According to SP1, teachers had to rescue the teacher from the parents. According to her, what disappointed her so much was the way the NANTU school committee and the rest of teachers handled the matters as she explained:

The time I was here [principal’s office] with the parents this teacher went straight to the NANTU representatives and they gathered leaving the classes unattended to. This is where they started to discuss the issue; fortunately, after break we had a cleaning campaign. We had a problem getting the teachers together because they were kind of sympathizing with the colleague and they did not want to do anything. I was not aware of what was going on; after a while we managed to get them to the learners but by then it was one o’clock, when we gathered. This is when I picked-up the information. This information was already known by the NANTU Branch Executive committee, and it was like they coming to talk to me and take this issue. Then I said that currently nothing has happened yet, an investigation is still to be done.

SP1 also went ahead by giving another example of an incident that took place at her school two years ago whereby one of the Head of Departments (HOD) at the school transferred to the college. She explained that the HOD transferred in October after that she agreed with the supervisor (Inspector of Education) that they would only appoint an HOD in January the following year. However the four teachers in the department conducted their meeting and decided that they were all going to act in that position on a rotational basis for the rest of the following year. She explained that she was not happy with what the teachers decided because it was un-procedural. As she explained:

Then I said no, we could not do this, we will just ask someone to act, just to assist the management for four months before we get a permanent person. Therefore, we processed everything with the Inspector; just to be paid a

surprise visit by NANTU not the Branch Office but the Region Executive, that what we did was unfair; yes, it was surprising.

SP3 shared similar a sentiment when he referred to one teacher who is a union representative at regional level who always left the school claiming that he was going to attend to union activities while he was running his business of transporting people during working hour. According to Sp3, this staff member could leave the school without the permission from the school principal thereby abusing his union position.

At Muruti Combined School, another cause of conflict is the inclusion of the NANTU school committee in the management. At this school, the school principal had a good working relationship with the union representatives. This good relation has resulted into NANTU members not reporting their problems to the NANTU school committee chairperson of the school. They opted to report their problems to the NANTU Branch Executive Committee as the principal (SP2) complained:

What happened was learners themselves came to report to the management that the school principal insulted them in the classroom while she was teaching. Then from there, the problem was registered to the School Management then the management called the NANTU school committee to tell them what was going on. While we were busy with this arrangement, the NANTU Branch Executive came in.

NSC1 argued that most of the conflicts in school are caused by quick decisions taken by the management, “All right the causes of conflicts; ...conflicts arises from decisions that are taken quickly without proper consultation”. He used this incident by way of explanation: “It happened in 2006 when we started teaching at this school; one of our colleagues was supposed to be ‘evicted’ from this school due to over staffing. Now the comrade was not happy with the fact he was nominated ... the case was referred to the circuit office”. However, after an intervention by the Inspector of Education, the teacher was not transferred and “the blame went to the Ministry of Education because the teacher was to teach at this school but the over staffing was caused by due to the un-availability of classrooms since the school was still under construction,” NSC1 concluded.

Documents analyzed also revealed that some conflicts emerge as a result lack of consultation on the side of management. For example, according to a letter of complaint from a staff member

addressed to the union representatives dated 13 January 2006; she was informed that she was being transferred to another school without her knowledge. The last part of the letter states:

When the school reopened, I came but only to find that the subjects were already given to someone else and my name was not on the list of the subject allocation. Since the school reopened on 11 January, I have not taught and the principal never even talked to me or even told me whether I have to go to another school. Wednesday evening is when the Inspector approached me and asked me if I can cross transfer with a certain teacher.

In their response to this situation, the union carried out an investigation. After the investigation, they wrote a letter instructing the school principal to cancel the transfer and allow the teacher to continue with her duties at the school. As part of the letter states:

RE: The Transfer of Teacher M

NANTU at branch level received a complaint from the aforementioned staff member on the aforementioned subject.

As a matter of agency we decided to carry out a fact-finding investigation from (sic), thus we have come to learn the following:

1. Teacher M's transfer to school D was un-procedural, since the laid down procedure in terms of the regional circular No: 1 of 2003 was not followed.
2. The Namibian National Teachers' Union at Branch level therefore regards teacher M a teacher employed by the Ministry of Education at school T.
3. Teacher M should resume duty at school T as from Monday 30 January 2006 and her usual teaching subjects should be offered to her.

We hope that this issue will be resolved soon.

According to F1, despite the effort of writing the letter to the principal, the teacher was not accepted back at the school before the matter was resolved through negotiation and bargaining. Part of the condition of the agreement was that teacher be given her minor subjects to teach because she was accused of not performing in her major subjects.

F1 in support of the idea that some conflicts are caused by school management also sketched a scenario, which took place at their school. He explained that one of the male HODs at the school propositioned two new female teachers upon their arrival at the school. "When the female teacher refused his proposal he decided to class visit them the next day", F1 said. According to him, the reports, which the HOD wrote on these new teachers, were bad. As he puts it "We can term this as harassment; the teachers were new at the school then; one of the management

members tried to “strike” [propose] them. After they refused his proposal he paid them a class visit and gave them a bad report”.

The absence of a policy on union involvement on decision-making structures like School Boards and school management is another contributing factor to conflict in schools. As F2P2 recommended “My recommendation is that, you find that the School Board is the highest decision-making body at school but NANTU School Committee is not part of the School Board; as partners it could be good if the NANTU can become part of the School Board”. NR also agreed with this view when he pointed out:

What I can suggest is that; in future there should be a rule, which should state that in each school a union representative should be a member of the management. This is important because when you look at the national level; NANTU representatives are part of all the national committees. However, when it comes to schools, principals do not understand the role played by NANTU.

4.6.2 Ways to minimize conflicts

Most of the respondents suggested that conflicts between NANTU representatives and school managers are caused by a lack of understanding of the roles they are supposed to play in the school. This could be minimized if both parties were trained on the scope of their roles. As F1 put it:

I think it might be helpful if school managers especially school principals and NANTU school committee to a certain extent be given a workshop, which is based on conflict solving together; then this issues will be solved because everybody will understand their roles. The Principal will understand the roles of the NANTU school committee and the NANTU school committee will understand what the roles of the school principals are.

F2 shared the same sentiments when he explained, “These are conflicts which are mainly caused by the NANTU representatives not understanding the roles of the principal and the principal not understanding the roles of the NANTU representatives”. F2 further suggested, “If everybody understands what is expected from one another then we will not have the fear or being suspicious of what might happen which in my opinion will never happen”.

However, NSC2 maintained that conflict would always be there, what needs to be done is to find a way of managing it. He suggested that with the union, conflict could be minimized if managers consulted before taking any decision. As he put it, “You cannot eradicate conflicts because whenever there are two people they will always agree or disagree, but it is important for managers to consult other members on how to go about certain problems”.

SP1 suggested that conflicts can be reduced once there is proper communication, “I only have one and the one is communication, if there is an excellent flow of communication; I am sure that we might minimize some of these conflicts”.

I/E suggested the following as a way of lessening conflict in schools:

- The union leadership should institute a monitoring and evaluation method whereby people in the structures should report on activities being done.
- The school management should involve union structures in structures at school level when it comes to issues such as recruitment, discipline, selection, parental involvement and all areas involved in addressing problems including planning.
- At the circuit level, the union leadership should be acknowledged and be involved in all programs whether it is the staff matters, learners’ issues or parent participation.
- At the regional level, the union should be involved in all programs that are set up; be it academic, staff, community, parents or disputes. So, if they are fully recognized and being addressed or receive all the correspondence, I think some of these challenges might be addressed with the union.

A closer look at the documents revealed that parties should adhere to the agreed conditions in section 1 of the Recognition Agreement between Government and NANTU, as the document states:

The parties to this agreement have determined –

- (a) And are satisfied that the union has been mandated by the majority of staff members in the bargaining unit to act as their exclusive bargaining agent;
- (b) To regulate the relations between them in the interest of mutual understanding, co-operation, efficiency, productivity and fostering the educational advancement of all learners in Namibia;
- (c) To ensure the speedy and impartial settlement of disputes and grievances;
- (d) To take steps to ensure that the recognized negotiating procedure is known and understood by all staff members and the union as well as the Employer at all levels of management and that agreements reached as the result of negotiations are understood by all parties.

4.7 The need for training

4.7.1 Training for union representatives

Most of the union respondents emphasized there is very little training conducted by the union to equip the union representatives at school level with the required skills for their job. As NR puts it “For school committees, they are just elected and serve on the committee; so, they not prepared”. F2 agrees with these views when he argued, “These days I do not see any induction or training being conducted in schools, maybe it is the reason why the school committees are not doing what they are expected to do in schools”. F1 also agreed with these views when he explained that:

In every organization whenever you elect new members there should be guidelines or a framework in which they are supposed to operate. However, if you just elect them and expect that they will perform without guidelines then it is a problem. This is what is happening in our schools; the NANTU structures are there but sometimes they do not even have a Recognition Agreement, Labour Act, and even Public services Act then it is difficult for them to operate.

At Mandjoro Secondary School, SP1 complained that the NANTU representatives at her school were not trained as she put it:

I have seen as when the two representatives were elected 2006 no education or training was given; I made this appeal to the Branch Chairperson when he visited the school. ... It is perhaps important that we train these representatives so that they know what is it that they supposed to do; how they should represent and in what do they represent their members. Because if they do not understand what they are supposed to do, I mean this results in these kinds of conflicts.

In support of Sp1, SP3 agreed that “Yes, it is obvious; I think if we want to realize Vision 2030 then our people representing others must be taught how to behave”. In conclusion, NSC3 was in agreement with his principal when he explained, “It is important for us to get that training so that you know how to defend your members when there is a problem. So, if you know how to defend your members then you fulfill your job”.

The need for training for union representatives was also supported by the documents I analyzed. In the 4th NANTU Congress report the NANTU Secretary General emphasized the importance of training NANTU members “As all of us know that an uninformed member can be more

dangerous than a non-member. A union without training and a membership education programme cannot survive in this ever changing world”. This idea was reinforced by the 9th NANTU Congress resolution which emphasizes “Training programmes of the union should be regionally based and cascading thereafter”.

In support of training, F2U1 gave an example of what happened to him when he became a union representative for the first time. He explained that he was never trained thus it was very difficult for him to operate. As he put it:

It is true as it was said by the previous speakers that the union lacks mechanisms for preparing its members; let me speak from my own experience. When I became a school committee member, it was very hard to operate because I did not know anything. The only thing I can remember is that I was a NANTU representative nothing else, so this background shows you that as a union, we do less to prepare our members at that level.

F2P2 agreed with the view that a lack of knowledge among union representatives causes problems in schools. He gave an example of a scenario, which happened in a school whereby where the NANTU representatives defended a teacher who extended the leave given by a medical doctor by changing the dates on the certificate. As he explained, “What happened was, the school committee instead of correcting the member, they were trying to help by defending him, and in other words he was encouraging him. So, that is why I said that these people lack knowledge”.

4.7.2 Training for School Principals

Like the NANTU representatives, most of the respondents agree that school principals are not trained on how they should work together with unions in schools. As a result most of them fear the union or regard the union as a threat. As NR put it:

Lack of training among principals is also creating these conflicts; some principals do not want the union. They are not prepared to work with the NANTU representatives simply because they misinterpret the roles played by the NANTU school committee. Therefore, there should be workshops organized so that principals who are non-members and those who never served on NANTU structures should be workshop so that they can know the importance of NANTU school committee in the management.

F2 agrees with the views when he argues that school principals are not equipped to work with unions in schools, “It seems that schools with principals who are serving on NANTU structure have an understanding of NANTU’s aims and objectives; having these understanding they do not see NANTU as a threat. He continued to explain, “There is a need for these people [principals] to be trained because you have to deal with the person who understands the role the person plays”.

SP1 shared her experience by explaining that she was not given the opportunity to attend any training offered by the Ministry on how to work with the union. She further explained that she was in better position of understanding how the union operated because she once served on NANTU structures. She agreed with F2 on the need for school principals to be trained, as she put it:

I think there is a need also for principals as the Ministry’s representatives to be given training. I mean you will get others who totally do not know anything about the unions so it is going to create many conflicts. Sometimes you find representatives who are well informed or who are perhaps trained but then if the employer is not aware of what they are suppose do at school; it will create conflicts.

I/E confirmed the need for training for school principals, as he explained “I think there is a great need for such a program; if programs of this kind can be introduced it might alleviate problems such as “sour relationship” and not working together”.

In support of the views of training school principals FIU1 emphasized:

People are talking about training for union representatives; but also training for school managers; because of this conflicts are caused by the school managers because if school managers are not well trained on how to handle issues, to take and create harmony among staff members then conflicts starts.

I/E also agreed with the others on the need for training for school principals, as he explained “I think there is a great need for such a program; if programs of this kind can be introduced it might alleviate problems such as “sour relationships” and not working together”. F2P1 agreed with the idea of training school principals when he argued that:

I would suggest that both parties especially the NANTU leadership and the Ministry start with training specifically on trade unions, because there is a lack of training. If the Ministry manages to spend so much time on training

principals on Ministerial policies, they should start looking at how we can work in harmony with NANTU.

4.8 Conclusion

In summary, the data suggests that the leadership style of the school principal determines the role NANTU plays in school in the specific school. The data also suggests that the union representatives do not follow the roles as described in the relevant documents due to a lack of supervision and training by the responsible union structures.

It emerged that conflicts caused by poor relations between the union and management often occur in schools where the management, especially the school principals, do not recognize the union. It also emerged that there is more tension in schools which the union regards as being managed autocratically with little involvement of other stakeholders. The data further suggest that some school principals do not understand the roles and the operation of the union in schools as a result; they have developed a negative perception towards the union. Consequently, they are always in conflict with the union representatives because they feel threatened by the presence of the union.

It further emerged that even though NANTU's objectives include that of improving the quality of teaching and learning at school level, it views its role of defending the interests and rights of its members as a priority.

These findings serve as the basis for my arguments in chapter 5 where I discuss and make meaning of the data in the light of the relevant literature.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion of findings

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the data in the light of my research question. The discussion is based on the tension between political and participative models of management that emerged as the main theme in the data. I also discuss the ambiguity model as an alternative to the conflicting theories of the political and the participative.

I begin by defining the political and participative models of management, then move on to discuss the participative model as the one preferred by the Namibian government. I thereafter discuss the political model, which is apparently superseding the government agenda. Next I discuss the tension between the participative and political approaches to school management, before considering the ambiguity model as an alternative approach to the study of the role of unions in school management. The inclusion of the ambiguity model in the study was necessitated by the ambiguous nature of union roles as these emerged in the data.

I conclude the chapter by discussing the type of leadership needed in schools today to deal with the problems being experienced by the school principals involved in this study.

5.2 Tension between political and democratic leadership

5.2.1 Political models

As seen in chapter 2, Tony Bush defines political models as models that “embrace those theories which characterize decision-making as a bargaining process” (Bush, 2003, p.89). Political models place emphasis on group interests and activities rather than on the institution as a whole. In organizations managed according to the political model, people with same or similar interests form a group that acts together and fights for their interests: for example, during discussion on the school budget allocation, sport teachers might ‘join forces’ to fight for an increase in the sport budget. In this kind of organization, goals are neither stable nor clear, and decisions are

taken through compromise and bargaining. People use what power they have to influence decisions. Thus, in organizations embracing a political model, conflict is simply accepted as part of life, a result of the inevitably conflicting interests of the organization's members.

As Tomlinson (2004a) puts it, "Micropolitics embraces those strategies by which individuals and groups in an organizational context seek to use their resources of power and influence to further their interests" (p. 406). He goes on to point out that micropolitics "is characterized by coalitions rather than by departments, by strategies rather than by enacted rules, by influence rather than by power, and by knowledge rather than by status" (2004a, pp. 406-407).

5.2.2 Participative Management

Participative management refers to a mode of management in which emphasis is placed on giving people a chance to participate in the leadership or decision making of the organization. According to Stofile (2005), "Participation leads to empowerment. The people are given a chance to participate in the activities of an organization, the more they become empowered the more their capacity to perform better increases" (p. 12). Thus participation includes allowing members of the organization to take part in the management of the organization, which is the essence of democratic leadership.

Branch (2002, p. 1) maintains that "[p]articipative management addresses the relationship between the organization and its workers and stakeholders. It addresses fundamental issues of governance within organizations and the role of employees and external stakeholders at all levels of organization decision making". Thus participative management is beneficial to the organization as whole, as McMillan puts it:

A participative management style offers various benefits at all levels of the organization. By creating a sense of ownership in the company, participative management instills a sense of pride and motivates employees to increase productivity in order to achieve their goals. Employees who participate in the decisions of the company feel like they are a part of a team with a common goal, and find their sense of self-esteem and creative fulfillment heightened. (2007, p. 1)

5.2.3 The Ministerial agenda for leadership in schools

According to the literature surveyed in chapter 2, democracy is one of the major goals of the Ministry of Education in Namibia. Thus, schools and the education system in general are expected to operate on democratic principles. As reported in chapter 4, the data reveals that one of the aims of involving NANTU in education is to ensure that democratic leadership is provided in schools. For this reason, union structures have been established in schools.

The data further reveals that school management teams in the three schools do consult union representatives in some of the decisions they take. For example, in Mandjoro Secondary the union representative admitted that they were given the opportunity to develop school policies internally, without the involvement of the school management team. Their participation has created a sense of confidence among the teachers. In this regard McMillan (2007) argues that “[e]mployees are encouraged to run their own departments and make decisions regarding policy processes. It [participative management] has often been promoted as the quick cure for poor morale and low productivity” (p. 1).

As reported in chapter 4, union participation in school management can be classified into two forms: either the union is represented in management by the Chairperson of the NANTU School Committee, or the NANTU School Committee is consulted only in cases that involve their members. This representation is similar to what Robbins (as cited in McMillan 2007, p. 2) describes as:

The two most popular form of representative participation are works councils and board representatives. Works councils are groups of employees who have been elected by their peers and who must be consulted by management when making personnel decisions. Board representatives are employees that sit on the board of directors and represent labor interests.

In this instance it was discovered that the school which has a union representative as a member of the school management team experienced less conflict than those schools without union representation, and less still than those which do not involve the union in any way. The reduced conflict could be because the union representatives feel recognized and as a result work together with the other school management team members. Thus, as Sergiovanni (2007, p.118) puts it, “[w]hen leadership and friendship are linked there is usually a set of ideas, values, or purpose that knits the two together. Friendship is a way that leadership can be distributed across

individuals who are partners in the relationship”. This is the kind of relationship that the government has in mind when the Ministry of Education encourages school managers to involve all stakeholders, as reported in chapter 2.

The Ministry’s wishes concerning school leadership are also expressed in the collective agreement between government and NANTU ,which states the following regarding the function of NANTU school committees: “The union shall be entitled to make representation to all committees established by the Ministry which deal with conditions of service, education issues or any other matter of interest to the union”. This clearly indicates the Ministry’s agenda of ensuring that stakeholders participate in decision-making processes, which is in line with the participative leadership model.

As reported in chapter 4, one of the respondents (SP3) also emphasized the Ministry’s agenda when she explained her relationship between with the NANTU school committee where they (school management and NANTU representatives) often meet to discuss problems affecting teachers.

Thus the Ministry encourages school managers to be democratic in their duties and allow stakeholders to participate in the whole process of education. For this reason there are also other structures in schools in which parents and learners are represented.

However there is not enough evidence to conclude that participative management is being fully implemented in any of the schools. This can be said because of the conflicts experienced in most of the schools involved in the study (including those represented in focus groups discussions), especially those arising from poor communication regarding teachers’ transfers.

In the following section, I discuss what happens in schools in terms of the management of union involvement in school management.

5.2.4 The reality of school leadership

While the Ministry encourages democratic leadership in schools, the reality in most schools requires school principals to look beyond democratic procedures. The data in this study shows that, because of the micropolitical nature of schools as organizations, democratic leadership is inadequate to accommodate the union's aspirations. It was found that union representatives expect to be involved in the management of schools through board representation. They believe once they are co-opted into management they will be in a better position to influence decisions in the school – a characteristic ambition of all unions.

However, including union representatives in school management has yielded varying results in schools that have already implemented this strategy. The result has been more beneficial to the school management team than to the union members. The school management benefits from this arrangement in the sense that some of their duties are performed by the union representatives. For example, at Muruti Combined School (as reported in chapter 4), the relationship with NANTU representatives is good; they work as a team, as the school principal (SP) confirmed when she emphasized that “NANTU helps a lot” and compared the relationship of the school management and NANTU representatives to that of “a man with clothes”.

But the good relationship between NANTU representatives and the school management also has negative consequences. It has created a lack of trust in the representatives on the part of their members. NANTU members at this school opted not to report their problems to the school representatives, but instead reported them to the next level in the structure (Branch Executive Committee). The result is that most of the conflict in this school occurs between the school management team together with the NANTU School Committee, on one side, and individual teachers (NANTU members) at the school, the NANTU Branch Executive Committee (Circuit level) and the Regional Executive Committee, on the other. As SP2 explained (see chapter 4), in one incident the NANTU Branch Executive Committee came to the school after a NANTU member reported a case directly to the NANTU Branch without involving the NANTU School Committee.

This shows that NANTU members regard the NANTU leadership as “puppets” of the school management and as a result they ignore the school committee. As in a typical political organization, the school principal uses the union to achieve her goals in the school; she also

makes use of the union to get protection from teachers and in some cases making the union representatives do her job. For example, as reported in chapter 4, she maintained that in their school the NANTU representatives are also encouraging teachers to be in the classrooms and not attack school management when they encounter problems but report the problems to the NANTU leadership.

The leadership practised is transactional, in the sense that the school principal uses her powers to confer rewards such as promotion and references (Bush, 2003) in order to persuade the union representatives to accept her decisions. This power makes the union representatives at this school work alongside the principal because they expect to be rewarded. The union representatives therefore become part of the principal's interest group and in the end no longer serve the interests of those who put them into this position.

The data also show that both the union representatives and the principal agreed that democratic leadership is practised in this school, inasmuch as the union representatives are allowed to contribute to decision making. However in reality this could be seen as a micropolitical shift in the sense that management and the union have teamed up to advance their interests in the school. As Tomlinson (2004a, p. 406) puts it, "[Micropolitics] is an organizational underworld which we all recognize and in which we all participate. We acknowledge it when we speak of "organizational mafia", "hidden agendas", "playing politics" and "machiavellism".

The political nature of schools is also shown by the way conflicts are typically resolved: for example, as reported in chapter 4, conflicts are resolved through a bargaining process which is one of the important features of the political model, whereas the assumption in democratic leadership is that decisions are agreed upon. Micropolitics, as Tomlinson (2004a) puts it, "is the dark side of the organizational life which provides the source of much staff gossip. Ironically, micropolitics activity is engaged in by the very administrators who profess a rational theory of administration" (p. 406). The political reality is clearly at odds with the democratic ideals of school management.

5.2.5 Why is there tension between the democratic and the political models?

The data have revealed that there is tension between the two leadership models on which this study is based. The tension between the theories is created by the way in which school principals handle the presence of unions in schools and by the speed at which change is taking place in schools in particular and education in general. As Sergiovanni, Burlingane, Coombs & Thurston (1980) put it, “Twenty years ago it would have been heresy to characterize the school as a political organization; today it raises few eyebrows. For one thing, schools have changed in ways that make it more difficult to maintain the fiction that education is nonpolitical” (p.101). The different interests of NANTU, school management and other stakeholders make schools political “arenas”. In chapter 4 it was shown that the perceptions of the research participants differed: some felt that union representation brings harmony to the organization, whereas others felt that the presence of the unions served to create disagreement. As Sergiovanni et al. (1980, p. 102) put it, “When such disagreements become substantial and public, we call it political process. Issues are the starting points in our analysis of the political process. Without them there would be no need for politics. And one measure of the worth of a political system is how successfully it deals with issues that arise”. The participation of stakeholders such as teachers’ unions is the democratic ideal but it inevitably results in political activity, in terms of which teachers make use of the platform to advance their interests.

As discussed in chapter 2, schools are political organizations in the sense that they are sites at which conflict, negotiations and bargaining take place. As Sergiovanni et al. put it:

Schools are political in the sense that they, along with most other organizations, confront and respond to essentially political questions. What objectives should be emphasized? How will scarce resources, such as money or teaching talent, be allocated among various programs? And, in the memorable phrase of Harold Lasswell “who gets what, when and how?” (1980, p. 102)

This therefore contradicts the participative management paradigm, which focuses on empowerment.

The tension is further heightened by the fact that the more people are involved, the more differences or conflicts arise. As Sergiovanni et al. (1980) go on to say:

If everyone agreed upon what outcomes are desirable from schooling, making education policy would be a lot simpler. But a disagreement over what

constitutes an appropriate education is natural within any complex society. We have been socialized to value different things. Even more obviously, we hold different positions and play different roles within our society, which may lead us to take different positions on educational questions. (p. 102)

There is other evidence that points to the political nature of the union's involvement in schools: for example, union representatives are regarded by school principals as "watch dogs", which implies that they are there to watch over how management is administering the school and to ensure that their interests are taken care of. The fact that not all union representatives agree that this is their role can render their involvement even more political; for example, some union representatives compare their function to that of the opposition political parties in government. Thus, the work of the school principal becomes still more challenging, for, as Sergiovanni et al. (1980) put it, "the most difficult challenge in the area of government and politics is to find the best way to arrive at collective choices in the face of difference. Individual choices are difficult enough, as anyone who has vacillated between two new automobiles, or two careers, knows very well" (p. 102).

Principals participating in this study are unaware of the implications of some of their actions; for example, most of them think that they are practising participative management whereas to a certain extent they are operating according to the political model. For example, when the school management of one of the schools decided to transfer a teacher from the school, the union demanded that the teacher be taken back. The management thought of implementing a participative management process by involving the union. However, after the bargaining process, management agreed to bring back the teacher. To make the decision more political, the school management agreed to transfer the teacher back on condition that the teacher agreed to teach her minor subjects, a condition to which the union agreed. Such complicated settlements are seemingly inevitable because, as Sergiovanni et al. put it, "with collective choice, however, there is the additional complication that various individuals in the collectivity will prefer different outcomes and propose different outcomes and propose different ways of achieving them" (1980, p. 103).

Despite the political nature of the management exercised in these schools, they at the same time do practise democratic or participative management. For example, as discussed above, in Mandjoro Secondary School teachers were given the opportunity to formulate school policy on

homework and study. As the union representative acknowledged, being included in this process made them feel that they were regarded as important. This is what Davidoff and Lazarus (2002) mean when they say that “empowerment is important simply because it is a basic human need to feel a sense of control over one’s life. Without this assurance people tend to feel disconnected, undervalued, not engaged in their work” (p. 30). While this example can be seen as instancing a participative approach it can also be seen as political move. The teachers’ involvement became political when they went to the extent of deciding that the vacant HOD position in the school not be filled as the principal and her supervisor desired. The teachers in the department decided to act in the position on a rotational basis for the whole of the following year. This illustrates the tension that can arise between the two theories. It also indicates the differences in interests among the various groups. As Sergiovanni et al. (1980) explain:

For many years we have tried to sustain the myth that everyone wanted the same thing from the educational system and that, thus, there are no separate interests in this area. Today we see more clearly that the interests of academically talented students, the academically disadvantaged, parents, teachers, tax payers, professional administrators, and non-academic staff may not coincide.

This tension can also be seen in the decisions by principals to include or not include NANTU representatives in the school management team. The decision by some school principals to include NANTU representatives might well be a way of implementing participative management principles. However, when looked at critically it could also be a political move, a strategy to avoid confrontation with the union, as was the case at Muruti Combined School.

Another source of tension between the two theories is the fact that in political models, according to Bush (2003), the concept of power is central. The outcome of the decision is determined by the relative power of the people involved in the negotiations; for example, as discussed in chapter 4, the union uses its powers as set out in the memorandum of understanding with government to make school principals listen to its demands. This is quite different from participative management, where the focus is on empowering the subordinate to take ownership of the decisions being taken, for example at Mandjoro Secondary School, as discussed above.

According to Wood (2005) (see chapter 2), democratic leadership aims at creating an environment in which people are encouraged to aspire to the truth and the highest values, which

are meant to inform the agreed goals of the organization. But in the political model, goals are contested. Each group has its own interests that it wants to pursue in the organization. Because the union and the school management have different interests, the principals are “caught in the middle”. They are not sure whether to make the union representatives part of the school’s management, so as to give them the opportunity to participate in the daily decision-making processes. In so doing they would be pursuing democratic management principles. On the other hand, they are not sure whether to leave the union out of the school’s management, so that the two parties can be involved in a bargaining process whenever there is an issue which requires this. The latter would be an essentially political strategy.

As reported in chapter 2, in political models there is an emphasis on conflict; according to data reported in chapter 4, the principal of Mandjoro Secondary School complained of the ongoing “fights” between her office and the union representatives in the school. However the union regards this as normal because to them conflict is part of the organization. As Bush (2006, p. 12) puts it, “Political models stress the prevalence of conflict in organizations. Interest groups pursue their independent objectives, which may contrast sharply with the aims of other subunits within the institutions and lead to conflicts between them”. In participative management, on the other hand, the focus is on encouraging employees to add significant value to the organization through participation in organizational activities (Branch, 2002).

The tension is further heightened by ongoing conflicts in schools: for example, teachers influence learners, parents and the community to demand the removal of staff members (especially school principals) from their position through class boycotts and demonstrations, as reported in chapter 4. These actions demonstrate the democratic desires of the stakeholders in question. However, most of the activities are politically motivated in the sense that the stakeholders want their interests to be accommodated. For example, they want certain school principals to be replaced by other individuals who they believe would better serve their interests in the school. As Bush (2006) puts it, “political models are concerned with interests and interest groups” (p. 12). Individuals and groups have different interests which they want to pursue within the organization (Bush, 2006). According to Morgan (as cited in Bush, 2006, p. 12), “in talking about ‘interests’, we are talking about pre-dispositions embracing goals, values, desires, expectations, and other orientations and inclinations that lead a person to act in one way rather

than another”. The same applies to school principals who use various tactics to get rid of teachers they regard as causing problems in the school (see chapter 4). This happens because the principals are pursuing goals that they believe cannot be achieved in the presence of these teachers. In order to protect their interests in the school, they do whatever it takes to get rid of the teachers concerned

5.3 Can ambiguity models be a solution to the tension?

5.3.1 Defining ambiguity models

According to Tony Bush, ambiguity models include all those approaches that stress uncertainty and unpredictability in organizations. As Bush (2006, p. 18) explains, “these theories assume that organizational objectives are problematic and that institutions experience difficulties in ordering their priorities”. Bush (2003) goes on to say that ambiguity models assume that turbulence and unpredictability are dominant features of organizations. Thus, there is no clarity concerning the objectives of institutions, and their processes are not properly understood (Bush, 2003). Ambiguity models “try to highlight the complexity and the instability of organizational life” (Zelvys, 2004, p. 3).

5.3.2 Union roles as ambiguous activities

As reported in chapter 4, this study shows that the roles and responsibilities of NANTU representatives in schools are not well understood by either school principals or the union representatives themselves. Despite the fact that these roles are clearly stipulated in documents such as the NANTU constitution and the collective agreement between NANTU and the government, the data show that the way they are interpreted by schools differs from school to school. The differences in implementation could be linked to what Bush (2003) refers to as the uncertainty about goals which is one of the features of ambiguity models. The example given above, of the teachers who decided to act in the vacant HOD post for a whole year in disregard of what the management had decided, is a striking instance of confusion over the role of the union. On this occasion, as Bush (2003) puts it “there is a lack of clarity about the goals of the

organization. Many organizations are thought to have inconsistent and opaque objectives” (p. 135).

Another example is the role being carried out by union representatives in Mandjoro Secondary School as discussed in chapter 4 (p. 51) where the union representatives act as school councilor for teachers. This role is unique to this school which shows what literature refers to as “problematic technology” (Bush, 2003, p. 135) because the organizational members are not clear how outcomes emerge from their activities. In this case the principal finds it helpful because she refers all problematic teachers to the union for counseling whereas the union representatives enjoy doing it because they use it as a condition of preventing their members from facing disciplinary actions. In this way union members benefit from the confusion because there is no clear focus in the decisions taken. As Bush (2003) explains “Rather the lack of agreed goals means that decisions have no clear focus. Problems, solutions and participants interact and choices somehow emerge from the confusion” (p.139).

The data also show that there is confusion in terms of the structure of school management teams in schools when it comes to the involvement of union representatives as reported in the previous section. In some schools the chairperson of the NANTU School Committee is a member of the School Management Team whereas in other schools union representatives are not. As reported in chapter 4 (p. 70) there is no policy on the question of whether union representatives are part of the school management team or not, as a result it is implemented differently in schools mostly depending on the principal’s attitude towards the union which is a typical feature of ambiguous models. As Bush puts it “Within ambiguity models organization structure is regarded as problematic. There is uncertainty over the relative power of the different parts of the institution” (2003, p. 137).

Decisions taken in most of the schools are unplanned and in most cases, they emerge after a long bargaining process as literature suggests that in ambiguity models most decisions are unplanned. As Bush (2003) puts it:

Ambiguity theorists emphasize the prevalence of unplanned decisions. Formal models assume that problems arise, possible solutions are formulated and most appropriate solution is chosen. Proponents of the ambiguity models claim that this logical sequence rarely occurs in practice. Rather the lack of agreed goals

means that decisions have no clear focus. Problems, solutions and participants interact and choices somehow emerge from the confusion (p.139).

This is so because members are involved in negotiation processes and the outcome is usually unpredictable.

The data have also shown that there is no clarity in terms of the procedure to be followed when it comes to how to involve the union in cases such the ones for the transfer of teachers which is widely reported in chapter 4. In many cases of transfers discussed in the previous chapter ended with the school management being blamed for not following the correct procedures. This shows that there is confusion in terms of the procedures to be followed; people including the school principals do not understand how the union should be involved in this process, in what it should be involved, and to what extent should it be involved in these cases of transfer. Thus, as Bush (2003) puts it “There is uncertainty over the relative power of the different parts of the institution. Committees and other formal bodies have rights and responsibilities which overlap with each other and with the authority assigned to individual managers” (p. 139). In this case school principals are not sure of their rights and those of the union regarding the issue of deciding on which teachers to be transferred in cases of overstaffing.

Ambiguity is also evident in the confusion among school principals and union representatives in terms of their different roles; for example as discussed in chapter 4 where the two parties (school principals and union representatives) accused each other for failing to provide relevant documents such code of conducts, Public Service Act, NANTU Constitution, Education Act etc to teachers during one of the focus group discussion. As reported in chapter four, one the union representatives (F1U1) argued:

I think the principals here are confusing the word responsibility; who should be responsible in providing these documents, we are not saying that we cannot have these documents; we can have the documents in the offices, but the Ministry is responsible to provide the union with these documents because the union members are the employees....

Thus, in this case both parties are not sure of whose responsibility it is as Bush suggests “The structural ambiguity leads to uncertainty and responsibility of individual leaders and managers” (2003, p. 137). The confusion in responsibilities can also be seen in the case of Muruti Combined School as discussed in chapter 4 (pp. 51-52) whereby the duties of NANTU representatives

included making sure that teachers are punctual, teachers teach their lessons, and discourage absenteeism. In this case, the union representatives intervene in the duties of the school managers. However the data reveal that school management was happy with this arrangement because the union helps them to convince teachers to do their job.

The fact that there is no policy regarding inclusive involvement in school management is another cause of ambiguity. In this case some school principals are not sure of whether to involve the union on the School Board level since the School Board is the highest decision making body. As discussed above, one of the participants indicated that the union is supposed to be represented on the School Board but due to the absence of a guideline which is supposed to give directions, schools operate in a vacuum. Thus, union participation is fluid (Bush, 2003); they only participate when it suits them and sometimes they are only involved when it suits the school principal.

5.4 What kind leadership is needed in schools today?

The data show paradoxical interests among school management and the union representatives in most of the schools. The data also show school principals are finding it hard to manage these divergent interests of the different groups. This is so because school principals tend to expect the people in their organization to be able to share common goals and ideologies. As Lumby & Coleman (2007, p. 79) agree “There is a profound impetus to favour those who are perceived as similar and that cognitive process impel both avoidance of and negative perceptions of those deemed ‘other’”. Thus, as Lumby and Coleman further explain “Working with those perceived as like oneself is more instantly satisfying and easier. It is not surprising that theories of leadership that are found on apparently achieving common values and aims have in practice appealed more to leaders ” (2007, p. 79).

However, as reported elsewhere in chapter 4 today’s schools are made up of different kinds of people; they consist of people from different backgrounds and with different interests; thus, they (schools) require a different kind of leadership. They need leadership which is not only ready for change but also appreciates diversity in the school. This is important because as humans we can learn from people who have different views from ours. As Fullan (2001, p. 41) argues:

We are more likely to learn something from people who disagree with us than we are from people who agree. But we tend to hang around with and overlisten to people who agree with us, and we prefer to avoid and underlisten to those who don't.

As Lumby and Coleman (2007) agree:

The responsibility of a leader who truly supports diversity is to step aside from habitual blindness and to communicate fully with those who not only may perceive things differently but may also be oppressed by the decisions taken, the value promoted, the aims adopted. (p. 79)

The data have also shown how ambiguity and complexity of issues in schools make it difficult for principal to handle. Thus, today's principals are required to have a different view of schools as organizations. The idea that schools are linear, and that they operate "like systems" (Bush, 2003, p. 37), and "that managerial decisions are made through rational process" (Bush, 2003, p. 38) do no longer "hold water". Principals today should look at schools differently. For example, principals could look at schools as communities (Sergiovanni, 1994). According to Sergiovanni (1994) in community people are bonded together due to commitment not because they have to comply with the authority or to a certain structure. Therefore school principals are expected to apply different strategies. As Lumby & Coleman (2007, p. 82) puts it "a great deal is demanded of the leaders of our schools; ... They must grapple with surfacing difference and adjusting choice not to find a false notion of agreement but to ensure all are aware of reasons and implications of the choices made". Lumby & Coleman (2007, p. 112) further emphasise this when they point out that an educational leader needs the following competences to affect change in communities:

- Mindfulness, being aware of one's own thought and communication process and their impact.
- Acknowledge the need for change at personal, individual, group and organizational levels.
- Willingness to deal with emotions work.
- Willingness to live long term with uncertainty, ambiguity, partial success and partial failure.

As reported in chapter 4, the data point to the poor working relationship between the union members which shows a lack of focus on building relationship in the school from the side the of the school managers. The poor working relationship affect the teaching and learning in schools. Therefore leaders today need not only to be democratic as discussed in chapter two but also be

able to manage relationships with and among the people they lead. As Kouzes & Posner (as cited in Fullan, 2001, p. 55) put it “What separates effective from ineffective leaders, is how much they really care about the people [they] lead”.

This shows that today people are the most important asset of any organization, as Sergiovanni (2007, p. 127) argues “Corporate America has discovered anew the importance of the “people factor” in increasing competitiveness. What is different this time is the emphasis on recognizing people as key links to success indeed as valuable resources for the corporation rather than just treating [people] “nice” to avoid problems”. Thus as Bishop (as cited in Fullan, 2001,) agrees “relationship in the twenty-first century must move from product-first formula to a relationship-first formula” (p. 55). To avoid poor relationships leaders should aim at creating friendly relationships with and among their staff because “friendship is a way that leadership is distributed across individuals who are partners to the relationship” (Sergiovanni et al. 2007, p. 113).

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the roles of NANTU as a teacher union in school management through participative management theories and political models (Bush, 2003). However it was discovered that there is a tension between these theories due to the ambiguous nature of the union roles and the different interests among union members and the school management. It was also discovered that schools are not as linear as are thought to be, thus to understand them better ambiguity model was used to explain the conflicting interests of the union members and the school management.

The chapter has also explained the kind of leadership required to manage schools in these changing circumstances where stakeholders like Unions feel that even though there is no legislation that legalize their involvement; they feel that government or school management being government representatives at school level have moral obligation to include them in the management. Thus, as Riley & MacBeath and MacBeath (as cited in Tomlinson, 2004b) put it in their findings of their research project on *Effective Leadership in a time of change*:

- That there is no one package for school leadership: no one model to be learned and applied, regardless of culture or context. However leadership can be developed and nurtured.
- That school leadership is beyond the heroic undertakings of one individual.
- That school leadership is not static. School leaders do not learn how to 'do' leadership, polishing their style to perfection. Effective school leaders are often rule breakers and are willing to change in response to new sets of circumstances, and the differing needs of children, young people and teachers (p. 305).

In the chapter that follows I conclude this study by summarizing the findings.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This study set out to investigate the role of NANTU in schools. The main focus was to understand the role of NANTU in school management, how school principals involve NANTU in management of schools and also to investigate how both school principals and the NANTU representatives understand and experience the involvement of NANTU in school management.

In the first part of this chapter I summarize the findings of this study; in the second section I present recommendations for both practice and for future research. Thereafter I briefly discuss the significance and the limitations of the study. I then conclude the chapter with brief closing remarks.

6.2. Findings

6.2.1 NANTU promotes democracy in schools

The study revealed that the idea of having a union (NANTU) in schools is acknowledged to be good for the advancement of democracy by the research participants (school principals, inspector of education and the NANTU leadership at various levels). This is so because NANTU is perceived as an organization that ensures that democracy prevails in schools. As discussed in chapter two, the study discovered that NANTU ensures that stakeholders especially teachers participate in the decision making process in schools. This is done when union representatives speak to the principals on matters affecting teachers and the school in general, and also by resisting some of the decisions taken by school management. This is important to the leadership especially in organizations like school where democratic leadership is a prerequisite. As Maurer (as cited in Fullan, 2001, p.42) points out “Often those who resist have something important to tell us. We can be influenced by them. People resist for what they view as good reasons. They may understand problems about the minutiae of implementation that we never see from our lofty

perch atop Mount Olympus”. Thus, by resisting the union ensures that together with the management, they look for alternative solutions to the issue being discussed. As Fullan agrees “They [resistors] sometimes have ideas that we might have missed, especially in situations of diversity or complexity or in tackling of problems for which the answer is unknown” (2001, p. 42).

The study further revealed that the presence of the union (NANTU) is beneficial to both school principal and NANTU members. It is beneficial to the school principal because the NANTU representatives serve a “mirror” which reflects how staff members experience the principal’s leadership. This happens when the NANTU representatives confront or discuss complaints or grievances of staff members with the school principal. Thus, while they (school management) are engaged in the process of bargaining with the union representatives they also use this opportunity to learn how the staff feels about their leadership. This is what was referred to in chapter 4 where the union representatives were referred to as “watch dogs” watching how the school management provides leadership in the school. This relationship is also beneficial to the union in the sense that the union members work happily in the school because their problems are resolved speedily. In this way frustration which is usually caused by unresolved conflict and the change process is minimized.

The study also revealed that the presence of union structures in schools is important because it (union) provides support and advice to the school management especially on labour related matters thereby creating good relationships among staff members in the school. This happens most in schools where school principals are ready to develop good working relationships with NANTU structures within their schools. By accepting advice from the union members, the principal shows the readiness to work together with the union; in this way the school experiences reciprocity in leadership. As discussed in chapter 5, in these schools NANTU representative go to the extent of disciplining or reprimanding their own members when they (union members) contravene policies. This shows how much the relationship is valued. As Fullan (2001) puts it “We have found that the single factor common to every successful change initiative is that relationships improve. If relationships improve, things get better” (p. 5).

The study has further discovered that NANTU representatives at times act as mediators; mediating emotional conflict that originates from the change processes and the divergent nature

of interests among staff, and between staff and school management in the school. This is an important exercise because change in the school brings pain to some people because people fear to lose what they are familiar with. As Fullan puts it “For better or for worse, change arouses emotions, and when emotions intensify, leadership is key” (2001, p. 1). Thus, to manage change requires inclusive leadership. As reported in chapter 4, NANTU contributes to or becomes part of the leadership at the school in these cases by bringing the two parties in conflict together. By doing this, the union together with the management make the staff members to have confidence and hope in the school leadership because they (school leadership) is able to solve problems in the school. As Fullan further points out “Whatever the case effective leaders make people feel that even the most difficult problems can be tackled productively. They [are] always hopeful-conveying a sense of optimism and attitudes of never giving up in the pursuit of highly valued goals” (2001, p. 7).

It was discovered that the union prepares teachers to become better school managers. The findings on this aspect show that school principals who served or who are currently serving on the union structure are in a better position to manage conflict in the schools. This happens because in the first place, the knowledge gained from their involvement in conflict cases while serving on union structures put them in a better position to deal with conflict in their own schools. Secondly because they have respect among the union teachers; they are regarded as role models and thus, they experience less confrontation from union structures.

6.2.2 The roles of NANTU are not clear to either NANTU representatives or school principals

The study revealed that the absence of a policy that regulates the inclusive representations of unions on decisions making structure in schools, for example, the School Board and the School Management Team is a “bone of contention” to the union because the inclusion of the union representatives especially in school management teams is inconsistently done. In some schools the chairperson of the NANTU School Committee is a member of the school management team whereas in other schools he/she is not.

This study discovered that the exact role of union (NANTU) representatives in schools is not clear and not well understood by either the school principals or the union representatives. It further emerged that the roles carried out by NANTU representatives in schools are determined by the leadership style of the school principal and also the level of knowledge and effectiveness of the representatives in the particular school. Thus, NANTU's roles in schools are ambiguous making the work of school principals more complex. These complex situations demand that school principals not only to be intelligent in terms of "IQ" but more importantly they should be emotionally intelligent (Fullan, 2001) because in complex situations it (emotional intelligence) is central. As Fullan (2001, p. 71) puts it "People have always needed emotional intelligence, but in complex times people need it in spades". Thus, in ambiguous organizations like schools, to be effective leaders need to be tolerant of ambiguity.. As Fullan points out:

All this complexity keeps people on the edge of chaos. It is important to be on the edge because that is where creativity resides, but anarchy lurks there too. Therefore, effective leaders tolerate enough ambiguity to keep the creativity juices flowing, but along the way (once they and the group know enough) they seek coherence (2001, p. 6).

Therefore as Fullan (2001, p. 122) concludes "under conditions of complex, nonlinear evolution, we need more slow knowing. "Hare brained" is about chasing relentless innovation, "tortoise mind" is about absorbing disturbances and drawing out new patterns".

It also emerged that the more autocratic the school principal's leadership style is the more the resistance or challenges he/she encounters from the union. In most cases these school principals are regarded by the union representatives as those who do not recognize the union. These school principals are not ready for change; all they do is complain about the union's intervention in their jobs without reflecting on their own practice as leaders in an emerging democratic society where people expect to be involved in matters that concern their wellbeing. As Lumby et al. (as cited in Lumby & Coleman, 2007, p. 111) argue "Recognizing the need for change in oneself is not common. Many people in education assume the change that is necessary is external only; that it is other people's attitudes or structures or processes which require adjustment".

However to be effective leaders need to "create a culture (not just a structure) for change" (Fullan, 2001, p. 44). Therefore for change to take place leaders must be willing to change as individuals before they expect others to change. As Fullan (2001) further cautions "Leaders in a

culture of change value and almost enjoy the tensions inherent in addressing hard-to-solve problems, because that is where the greatest accomplishments lie” (p. 8).

It was also discovered that NANTU like many other unions is more active when it comes to issues of defending the rights and interests of its members compared other to issues affecting education in general. NANTU leadership in most of the schools is generally inactive but becomes active when there is a case that involves their members or when it comes to other issues affecting their interests.

6.2.3 Conflict arises due to the misunderstanding regarding NANTU’s roles

According to the findings, the involvement of NANTU in schools has done “damage” to education provision in some schools as a result of unresolved conflict. In these schools the conflict has resulted in school boycotts by learners. It was discovered that sometimes NANTU representatives are involved in using learners to get rid of school principals who are perceived not to be co-operative; do not involve other stakeholders in decision making or do not serve the interests of the particular community. Therefore because of not knowing the correct procedures to be followed in resolving these problems, NANTU teachers resort to instigating learners to boycott classes demanding the removal of school principals as a “shortcut” to achieve their wishes.

The findings further revealed that conflict arises as a result of lack of training among union representatives. It was discovered that there are no proper induction or leadership programmes for NANTU representatives in which they are supposed to be educated on what their roles are and how the roles are to be executed. It also emerged that the current leadership training offered by NANTU is not effective in the sense that it does not reach most of the intended beneficiaries which are teachers who are serving as NANTU school committee members in schools. The training is not conducted on a continuous basis. Therefore the lack of training was “established” to be the “chief” contributing factor to the escalating cases of conflict. It (lack of training) disrupts the teaching and learning programmes in schools. As the NANTU Secretary General by then pointed out in his report to the 4th NANTU National congress “As all of us know that an untrained member can be more dangerous than a non-member”.

According to the findings, the refusal to recognize the union by some school principals who do not know the role of NANTU is another cause of conflict. As explained above school principals who do not recognize the union experience more resistance from the union in whatever they want to implement in schools. This is so because the union wants to be recognized and use its power to influence decisions. In some cases some school principals “fear” the union or they are not comfortable working with the union. Thus, they tend to prevent the union from being involved in the activities at school; thereby creating poor relationship with the union structures in schools. These school principals avoid the union because they fear to be criticized or being questioned by the union teachers. These actions by school principals also contribute to conflict in schools.

6.3 Significance of the study

Findings of this study will be of importance to school managers and managers of other organizations that comprise people with divergent interests. The findings “shed light” on how leaders in schools experience the pressure of working with unions. The findings further suggest that the one way of managing union in schools is by accepting it as part of the stakeholders of the school if not the most challenging group of stakeholders. As Mintzberg et al. (as cited in Fullan, 2001, p. 10) put it “The best way to manage change is to allow it to happen”. Therefore, it is no longer helpful for school principals to resist unions in school.

The study enriches those who are responsible to supervise school principals and those responsible for planning in education. The study is helpful in their planning of programmes that are aimed at helping school principals manage school in the interests of the public. With Namibia experiencing a reform process through the implementation of the Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP); this study serves to remind policy makers about this crucial aspect of the complex nature of schools today. As Fullan (2001) points out “In a culture of complexity, the chief role of leadership is to mobilize the collective capacity to challenge difficult circumstances. Our only hope is that many individuals working in concert can become as complex as the society they live in” (p. 136). The study also reminds institutions that are responsible to train leaders in schools about the political nature of schools and to the fact that school management is not a linear process.

The findings of this study will also inform the unions (NANTU) leadership regarding the complexity of education process, particularly the confusion in the role of NANTU structures and the ineffectiveness of the NANTU school committee. The study points to the ambiguous nature of the unions' role in schools. Thus, these findings serve as a reflection to the union structures particularly the NANTU School Committees on how they are performing their duties in schools and it thus helps in the preparation of union representatives to work in harmony with school authority.

This study serves to provoke a dialogue between union structures, the Ministry of Education, School Board and the community at large regarding the role of NANTU in schools. It further serves as basis for further research in the field of Education Leadership and Management.

6.4 Recommendations

6.4.1 Recommendation for practice

The fact that there is no policy regulating the status of the inclusion of union representatives in the school management in Namibia means that schools follow their own lead in this crucial process. The absence of policy has caused power related conflict in schools were the union is excluded from management. I thus recommend that both NANTU and the Ministry of Education fill this vacuum by taking a stand regarding this issue in the form of a policy that will regulate this matter.

With the first teacher union (NANTU) established in 1989, unionism in schools is a relatively new concept in Namibia. Thus, the kind of leadership styles practised in some schools makes it very difficult for the two parties (union and management) to work together as partners in schools. I would therefore recommend that the leadership in schools be trained on both change management and on the role of recognized trade unions in schools. This training will help school principals to realize that having people with different views can be beneficial. As Lumby and Coleman argue:

Supporting diversity is disingenuously promoted as unquestionably in the interest of all. The possibility that supporting diversity amongst leadership

may result in a redistribution of power which will not be palatable to those who are dominant is not entertained (2007, p. 79).

I also recommend that Inspectors of Education being supervisors of school principals and the human resource section in the Ministry of Education consider including the roles of recognized trade unions in the induction programmes of school principals.

The findings of this research have further revealed that lack of knowledge regarding the roles of union representatives and school principals is the major cause of conflict in schools. I recommend that NANTU sets up programmes that will ensure that membership education as well leadership training is given to all its members and the leadership structures. I further recommend that these programmes should be carried out on continuous basis.

6.4.2 Recommendation for future research

This study mainly focused on the role of NANTU from the perspectives of school principals and union representatives. Due to do the requirements of the course (half thesis) the study could not look into the experience of other stakeholders regarding the phenomenon. Thus, in order to have a broader understanding of the whole issue of unionism in schools, broader research is needed that will include other stakeholders in schools, for example, those that were not involved in this study like the School Board, learners, parents and the community regarding their understanding of the role of teacher unions. This kind of study will be useful in exploring all stakeholders' experiences regarding this phenomenon. The study should also be able to cover at least more than one region in order to have a general idea of how the whole country experiences this phenomenon.

Another study which aims at exploring the link between leadership types and the level of conflict as was discovered in this study would be very useful because it would be able to inform the Ministry of Education in preparing school principals on their role of working with unions.

A study on the relationship between unionism in schools and learners performance will also be of great importance to the field. This is important for people to have a broader understanding of the effects of unionism on learners' performance.

6.5 Limitations

This was a small case study which was based on the role of NANTU representatives in three schools focusing mainly on school principals and NANTU representatives. As discussed above a larger study focusing on other stakeholders like parents, teachers and learners would have covered a wider range of area. Thus, as it is with all case study research, the findings of this study cannot be externally generalized (Maxwell, 2005). However as Maxwell (2005, p. 115) points out “Indeed, the value of a qualitative study may depend on its lack of external generalizability in the sense of being representative of a larger populations”.

External generalizability is not the main objective of undertaking case studies. As Erickson (as cited in Merriam, 2001, p. 210) puts it “the production of generalizable knowledge is an inappropriate goal for interpretive research”. The strength of the interpretive case study lies in its focus on the particular case. As Merriam also points out:

The search is not for abstract universals arrived at by statistical generalizations from a sample to a population, but for concrete universals arrived at by studying a specific case in great detail. In attending to the particular [case], concrete universals will be discovered ... This is, in fact, how most people cope with everyday life (2001, p. 210).

Stake (1995) refers to this kind of generalization as “naturalistic generalization”. According to Stake (1995) “naturalistic generalizations are conclusions arrived at through personal engagement in life’s affairs or by vicarious experience so well constructed that the person feels as if it happened to themselves (p. 85)”.

Therefore in these studies (qualitative studies) the “general lies in the particular; that is, what we learn in a particular situation we can transfer or generalize to similar situations subsequently encountered” (Merriam, 2001, p. 210).

Another limitation of the study is the fact that participants and the schools were purposefully selected; thus, the findings might be subjective due to the preconceptions which might have influenced the selection of participants and the data which fits the researcher’s needs. However to ensure validity, detailed descriptions of the data is given to show that the author’s conclusion

‘make sense’ (Firestone, as cited in Stake, 1995). Merriam (2001) agrees with these views when she concludes:

Nevertheless, the researcher has an obligation to provide enough detailed description of the study’s context to enable readers to compare the “fit” with their situations ... To ensure the possibility of the results of a qualitative study generalization in any ... rich, thick description so that readers will be able to determine how closely their situations match the research situation, and he/she, whether findings can be transferred. (p. 211)

6.6 Closing remarks

For many years schools have been regarded as linear organizations that can be managed through rational processes. It was believed that there were certain management styles that one needed to learn in order to manage schools better. For these reasons most school principals find it hard to manage schools which are strongly unionized because unions interfere with the work of the school managers. This is so because unions have different kinds of interests in the schools and most of the time union interests are in conflict with that of the school authority.

Thus, this study has attempted to investigate the role of unions in school management and it has found that for school principals to succeed in their work especially in schools that are strongly unionised, they have to learn that there is no ‘best’ or prescribed way of managing schools. The presence of unions introduces political elements that make schools unpredictable and ambiguous. The study has further revealed that one way of dealing with this is by accepting unionism and working with it as partners in the pursuit of educational goals.

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APPENDIX A

Semi-structured interview questions for the founder members of NANTU

1. What was the original aim of establishing NANTU?
2. To what extent are these aims being pursued?
3. To what extent are these aims relevant to the current situation in education?
4. What roles are the NANTU representatives at school level expected to play in school management?
5. To what extent are roles being fulfilled?
6. How are the NANTU representatives at school level being prepared for their work?
7. What are the causes of conflict between NANTU and school principals?

APPENDIX B

Semi-structured interview questions for school principals

1. What are the duties of the NANTU representatives at your school?
2. To what extent are the NANTU representatives fulfilling these duties?
3. To what extent is NANTU involved in school management?
4. How would you describe the relationship between school management and NANTU representatives in your school?
5. Why is it important for NANTU to be involved in school governance and management?
6. Could you describe any previous case of conflict that involved NANTU at your school?
7. What are the causes of conflict between your office and NANTU?
8. How should these conflicts be avoided in the future?

APPENDIX C

Semi-structured interview questions for NANTU representatives at school level

1. What role do you play in this school?
2. What are your roles as NANTU representatives according to the NANTU constitution?

3. To what extent are these roles fulfilled?
4. Why is it important for NANTU to be involved in school management?
5. How would you describe your relationship with the school management?
6. Could you describe any previous case (s) that NANTU was involved in at your school?
7. What caused the conflict?
8. How was the conflict solved?
9. How should these conflicts be solved in the future?

APPENDIX D

Semi-structured interview questions for the Inspector of Education

1. What role do NANTU play in school and to what extent are these roles fulfilled?
2. Why is it important for NANTU to be involved in school management?
3. How would you describe the relationship between NANTU and school managers in your circuit?
4. Could you describe any previous case (S) that NANTU was involved in your circuit?
5. What are the causes of conflict between NANTU and school management?
6. How are the school principals prepared to work together with stakeholders such as the union in your circuit?
7. What are the possible ways to resolve or minimize these problems?

APPENDIX E

Semi-structured interview questions for the NANTU representatives at the regional level

1. What are your duties as NANTU representatives at this level?
2. What are the duties of NANTU representatives at school level?
3. To what extent are these roles being fulfilled?
4. What roles are the NANTU representatives at school level expected to play in school management?
5. To what extend are these roles being fulfilled?
6. How are the NANTU representatives at school level being prepared for their work?
7. What are the causes of conflict between NANTU and school principal in schools?
8. What should be done to avoid conflicts?

APPENDIX F

CONSENT FORM

Part one

I hereby willingly agree to participate in an interview/focus group discussion with Mr. Pontianus Vitumbo Musore. I understand that he will be investigating my knowledge and experience regarding the role of the Namibia National Teachers' Union (NANTU) in school management.

.....

Signature:

.....

Date:

Part two:

I hereby give permission to Mr. P.V. Musore to record/video tape the interview/ focus group discussions I will be involved in as part of his data collection for his research that he will writing for the fulfillment of the requirement for his Masters' degree. I also understand that the transcript of the interviews/focus group discussion will be provided to me for verification and that extracts from this data will be used in the final report writing for his thesis.

I have been assured that my identity and that of my school will remain anonymous in the report. I understand that I have the right to quit the research process at any time and the contact number I can reach Mr. Musore is 081 273 3294.

.....

Signature:

.....

Date:

APPENDIX G

THANK YOU LETTER

RHODES UNIVERSITY

GRAHAMSTOWN 6140 SOUTH AFRICA

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

20 September 2009

The Research participants

Dear Sir/Madam

Letter of appreciation

This letters serves to thank you for taking part in my research. Your contributions during the interviews or focus group discussions are indeed highly valuable and thus they are appreciated.

I thank you and wish you the best.

Yours sincerely

.....

P.V. Musore

MEd student

.....

Date:

APPENDIX H

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



RHODES UNIVERSITY

Grubamstown • 6140 • South Africa

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Tel: (046) 603 8383/4 • Fax: (046) 622 8028 • e-mail: education@ru.ac.za

23 June 2009

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Permission for Mr P Musore to conduct research in your region/school

The purpose of this letter is to obtain your permission for Mr Musore (student number 09M4067) to conduct research in your region/school. Mr Musore is full-time Masters student of mine who has successfully completed the coursework section of the programme. He now needs to conduct his research and we prefer our students to investigate an issue in their own countries.

Mr Musore wants to investigate the role of unions in the management of schools. This is a very interesting and under-researched topic and I am sure his work will be of value to the schools in question and the region as a whole. May I take this opportunity of asking you to support him in any way possible. He will need permission from the Regional Director, the school principals, the Inspector of Education and the NANTU General Secretary.

As we know, doing research is no easy matter and our students need all the help they can get. I hope you are able to facilitate easy access for him.

Thank you very much.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hennie van der Mescht'.

(Prof) Hennie van der Mescht
(Course Coordinator)

APPENDIX I

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH (MINISTRY OF EDUCATION)



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
KAVANGO REGION**

PRIVATE BAG 2134, RUNDU, NAMIBIA

Enquiries : Alfons M. Dikua
Email : dikuaa@iway.na
Ref. No. : 13/4/2/1

Telephone No. : [264 66] 258 9111
Fax No. : [264 66] 258 9213/258 9321

Tuesday, 30 June 2009

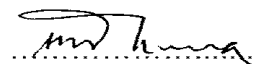
TO: The Principals
Regional Directorate of Education
Kavango Region

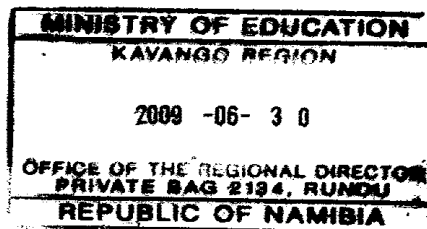
SUBJECT: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT SCHOOLS

1. Mr. P.V. Musore is a full-time student at Rhodes University in South Africa, doing his Masters Degree in Education, specializing in Education Leadership and Management.
2. Kindly be informed that permission is hereby granted to Mr. Musore to investigate the role of unions in the management of schools.

I count on your usual understanding and cooperation.

Yours in Education


Alfons M. Dikua
DIRECTOR



Cc. *The Inspectors of Education
[Kavango Region]*

All official correspondence must be addressed to the Regional Director

APPENDIX J

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH (NANTU)

NAMIBIA NATIONAL TEACHER'S UNION (NANTU)



June 30, 2009

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

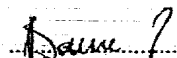
Permission for Mr.P.V.Musore to conduct research in your Schools/Region

This memo serves to inform all NANTU members and teachers in general that Mr.P.V.Musore is a full – time Masters student at the Rhodes University and he will be conducting his research on: **What is the Role of Teachers' Union in the Management of schools.**

The NANTU Head Office grants permission to Mr.P.V.Musore to conduct research at any school of his choice in the country. Therefore you are all requested to render full support to him during his research periods.

Please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned if there should be any query in this regard

Thank you very much.


B. G. M. Haingura
Secretary General
NANTU

Nantu Head Office, Katutura P.O. Box 61009, Windhoek, Namibia Tel. +(264) (61) 262247/215434 Fax +(264) (61) 261926