DEMYTHOLOGISING SADTU

Historical Significance of SADTU as an Educational Vehicle of Change and Continuity

By
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Formed in 1990, the South African Democratic Teachers’ Union (SADTU) provided, during the apartheid years, a professional body for teachers to fight against colonial education. Does SADTU reflect a particular ideology, a particular political position, and a certain epistemology? How does SADTU enhance policy deliberation and coordination? Many of the questions raised can be resolved if ‘democratic’ is defined as fighting against oppression and exclusion, as opposed to its original meaning of relating to or supporting democracy or its principles, characterised by social justice. Democratic is a dialectical term or concept that encompasses the broad historical facts of domination and determined achievement of freedom – but also highlights the realities of a nation state and a people emerging into a new political context of social equality.

The experience of apartheid colonialism typically encouraged the development of a new political culture which radically disrupted the ethos and the ideology of the colonial state, and, at the same time, affirmed the goals of the Freedom Charter. The term ‘democratic teachers union’ puts the emphasis on conditions that define the national system of teaching and learning. It also specifies a historical situation, and the cultural formations that determine the national educational system in which the post-apartheid state is required to operate – one heavily weighted towards the common good. More radically, ‘democratic teachers union’ in South Africa today names a professional and political position which embodies an active concept of intervention within unequal social relations. It combines the professional, social and cultural transformation of the educational system with a political critique of the condition of inequality.

SADTU is a policy instrument that facilitates deliberation on interconnected education policy activities in a society of severe inequalities and differences. Its legitimacy stems from the fact that, for most people, it represents an enduring feature of policy deliberation processes in knowledge economies. It is a
vital means to fundamental change. It is linked to the notion of deliberative, epistemic communities, and brings together a network of professionals and activists with an authoritative claim to policy knowledge within a framework of multiple perspectives. SADTU is an advocacy group that promotes policy learning in the education sector in South Africa. Since its inception, SADTU has focused on how teachers engage with government and other civil society organisations, how they focus on immediate and concrete policy problems at ground level. It is within this vast historical mutation that we can appreciate the whole significance of SADTU’s interventions.

To deepen the understanding of the strategic value of SADTU, we should understand the mix of government structures and people's networks, the diffusion of accountability, the limits and possibilities of representative democracy and bureaucracy, the challenges of policy coordination, and the creation of new policy partnerships. As the democratic governance narrative has grown in popularity, it is not surprising that SADTU is receiving so much support. First, it reduces policy uncertainty in that it develops relationships that provide more in terms of mutual recognition and reasoned consensus against the uncertain world of political and economic dynamics. Second, it provides intellectual capability by involving a range of policy actors. Third, it provides flexibility in policy making and assessment, certainly in the education sector. Fourth, more and more people gain access to information and knowledge of a diverse nature with greater facility than executives constrained by vertically integrated government.

SADTU provides a comprehensive perspective on the governance of teaching and learning and its implications for development and freedom. Providing an overview of the governance of education in South Africa, SADTU appeals to policy makers, policy implementers, policy beneficiaries, teachers, learners, activists, and experts.

Muxe Nkondo (Prof)
21 February 2019
Executive Summary

This book offers a rich account of teachers’ perspectives on the first democratic workers’ union in the education sector. It also reports on the Demythologising of the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) focusing on its historical significance as an educational vehicle of change and continuity from the 1980s to 2014.

The case study is based on grassroots teachers who belong to the organisation and have been active in the operations of the union. Research on the history of the union dispels the myths that surround the organisation’s history and its operations regarding the road to its formation, and its launch in 1990. In 1991 teachers fought for its recognition by the government and it was eventually legally recognised by the state. SADTU’s history in South Africa has been characterised by misinterpretations in terms of its pre-history, the way it was launched, and the manner in which the leaders operated the organisation. The mythologies have their genesis in the apartheid government’s ideological machinery that attempted to discredit the organisation, teachers in general and the educators within the union itself. This book addresses such myths by presenting and discussing how SADTU, throughout history, portrayed its significance based on the mode in which it operated as a vehicle of educational change and continuity. This book addresses such myths by focusing on the voices of teachers in the organisation and their representation of the history of the union. It teases out the silences and juxtaposes them against the policies of the organisation.

There is a dearth in the field of the study of SADTU’s social history in terms of demythologising the organisation. Hence, this book tries to fill that gap by drawing data through open-ended interviews. Purposive sampling was used and 200 teachers were interviewed. The research represents ordinary members of the organisation tracing its history, the significance and change and continuity to help in pinpointing myths people have about SADTU. Interviews are juxtaposes against secondary sources to correct misunderstandings.
that numerous people have in order to represent SADTU as an organisation that has been used as a vehicle of transformation in South Africa. Furthermore, the book seeks to debunk mythological dynamics and assumptions of issues of corruption, race and gender within the SADTU organisation. The policies of SADTU adhere to non-racialism, non-sexism and corruption free principles, but elements within the organisation continuously betray the constitution of the organisation. Through the perspective of the sampled participants the book underpins and identifies ideological changes and continuities within the SADTU organisation. In doing so, the book aims to depict a holistic history that seeks to exemplify a demythologised history of SADTU as an organisation in relation to its members.

These findings have far-reaching implications for future research in terms of harnessing more studies on other levels of membership within the organisation and how they perceive the history of the organisation and also charting a way forward on how to deal with misrepresentations.
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Above all SADTU would like to thank all its members for their continued support, which proved indispensable for the completion of this project in the midst of countless challenges. Their continued financial support and loyal membership to the organisation allows SADTU to be a home for all educationists who believe in social justice, transformation in the education fraternity and South Africa at large. The organisation acknowledges with gratitude and appreciation the following people for their unwavering contribution towards the completion of the book:

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To you, SADTU would like to say: “Phambili ngomzabalazo… (Forward with the struggle…)” – the struggle of transformation in education and South Africa at large.

‘Education is public good’.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to all SADTU members who have worked tirelessly in the establishment and development of the organisation. It is dedicated to the 260 000 teachers and education personnel who worked and contributed their all in ensuring that the organisation is where it is today. SADTU is a home for education lovers and the assembly of unionists who persisted through resistance and tenacity to ensure that the history of the organisation, as documented in this book, corrects myths that both outsiders and insiders have about the union.

This book is written from the point of view of multiple perspectives embedded in narratives behind the history of the organisation. Many such teachers were interviewed for the purpose of documenting their narratives in this book. Their inputs produced a manuscript that is rich with the history from below – teachers and personnel that are normally disregarded when history is written about an organisation.
Acronyms

AATO – All Africa Teachers’ Organisation
ATASA – African Teachers’ Association of South Africa
AME – African Methodist Episcopal
ANC – African National Congress
CATU – Cape African Teachers’ Union
CATA – Cape African Teachers’ Association
COSATU – Congress of South African Trade Unions
CTPA – Cape Teachers’ Professional Association
DEIC – Dutch East Indian Company
DET – Department of Education and Training
DETU – Democratic Teachers’ Union
ECTU – Eastern Cape Teachers’ Union
EDASA – Education for a Democratic and Aware South Africa
EI – Education International
ELPTU – East London Progressive Teachers’ Union
ELRC – Education Labour Relations Council
ETDP SETA – Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority
HOD – Head of Department
IFP – Inkatha Freedom Party
IQMS – Integrated Quality Management System
MATU – Mamelodi Teachers’ Union
MDM – Mass Democratic Movement
MEC – Member of Executive Council
NAPTOSA – National Professional Teachers’ Organisation of South Africa
NATU – Natal African Teachers’ Union
NATU – National Teachers’ Union
NCM – National Council Meeting
NEUSA – National Education Union of South Africa
NITS – Natal Indian Teachers’ Society
NEC – National Executive Committee
NECC – National Education Crisis Committee
NUM – National Union of Mineworkers
OFSATA – Orange Free State African Teachers’ Association
PAC – Pan Africanist Congress of Azania
PTL – Progressive Teachers’ League
SA – South Africa
SACE – South African Council of Educators
SACP – South African Communist Party
SADTU – South African Democratic Teachers’ Union
SAITA – South African Indian Teachers’ Association
SGB – School Governing Body
SONAT – Society of Natal Teachers
SRGBV – School Related Gender Based Violence
TASA – Teachers’ Association of South Africa
TAT – Transvaal Association of Teachers
TUATA – Transvaal United Teachers’ Association
UDF – United Democratic Front
WCOPT – World Confederation of Professional Teachers
WFTU – World Federation of Trade Unions
WECTU – Western Cape Teachers’ Union
ZP – Zulu Police
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This study’s approach to the history of the South African Democratic Teachers’ Union

Introduction

The South African Democratic Teachers’ Union (SADTU) was once considered a powerful organisation, instrumental in the transformation of the education system in South Africa, however its popular allure is gone. From its inception in the 1990s SADTU was a peculiar and progressive teacher union for both teachers and non-teachers who longed for liberation in South Africa. The African National Congress (ANC) endorsed the formation of SADTU and in the words of Nelson Mandela, “The ANC is happy to be associated with SADTU; this is a beacon of hope for the representation of the teachers’ expectations; hope for the laying of the ground for a unitary education system and hope for the burial of the apartheid system” (World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) 2010:1). However, when South Africa became a democratic country in 1994, SADTU began attracting negative publicity due to the stance that it took in trying to resolve the many challenges that faced the education system. SADTU fought very hard to improve the working conditions and the salaries of teachers. The combative style that the union adopted attracted a lot of criticism from its opponents and some members of the public (Paddy and Jarbandhan 2014).
Research shows a multiplicity of opinions on how people perceive the union. Some authors see SADTU as having contributed positively by playing a role in improving education standards but negatively through the union’s participation in strike action (Paddy and Jarbandhan 2014; Jansen 2011 and interviewees in this book). Similarly, others think of the union as merely fighting for improved salary levels and defending nonconforming educators (Paddy and Jarbandah 2014). Others allege that SADTU is responsible for aiding the process of politically motivated appointments of educators to senior positions (Paddy and Jarbandah 2014, Ramphele 2009:18, Zengele 2013). According to Diko and Letseka (2009) and Fleisch (2010) SADTU victimised and threatened those who were opposed to its approaches in resolving the issues that faced teachers. The unionisation of teachers has been blamed by those opposed to SADTU as the key in the destruction of education. As put by Ramphele “[w]e have the highest level of teacher unionisation in the world – but their focus is on rights, not responsibilities. It’s on employment, not professionalism. And the rights only pertain to the teachers, not the pupils” (2009:18). On the other hand, scholars like Paddy and Jarbandah (2014) criticised Ramphele's view as presenting a narrow and limited understanding of the purpose of teacher unions, and SADTU in particular. From the literature surveyed, no research has been undertaken on the history of SADTU looking at it from the demythologised perspective. More so, tracing its history from the precolonial era. Tracing the history of SADTU to the precolonial period assists in engaging effectively with the union's significance. It explains the reasons why members are able to fight persistently, they are familiar with the history of South Africa that was characterised by the struggle for freedom even before the arrival of European colonists. We term the longing for a past that can help in transforming South Africa, the ‘usable past’. Hence this book draws narratives from the perspective of the ordinary members of the organisation to understand the operation and their perceptions about their organisation. The idea of a “usable past”, as articulated in a 1918 essay by American critic Van Wyck Brooks, argues that the past can be used to interpret and understand the present
This book tries to contribute to the unravelling of mythologies surrounding perceptions about unions, using SADTU as an example, and illustrating that there are mythologies embedded in the perception of the organisation that need to be unearthed in order to understand its operation and historical significance.

This book covers from the period before SADTU was established, to its recognition in 1990 and the dispensation of the post-apartheid period, where we witnessed its operations at its peak till 2014 when the union celebrated its 20th anniversary. The book reflects on the union’s original vision and mission statement – to promote quality education by ensuring that educators receive the necessary support and improved working conditions. Our project has been to comb rich sources for evidence of the union’s core values and ethics. This book is about perceptions, operations, structures and social interactions with SADTU as a union. It is about the historical significance of SADTU, focusing on how it has changed over time by employing the lens of social constructivism theory, about the educators, about the union, linking the core visions and missions of the union throughout history.
The views expressed by Ramphele (2009) dramatically illustrate some of the misconceptions about SADTU’s unionisation. The problems of education in black schools are blamed on SADTU. It is not correct to put the blame on the organisation for its members bad behaviour. This implies that people cannot distinguish between an organization and its members. There is failure to distinguish between the organisation and devious individuals acting in their own capacity. These then become mystifications about the organisation and require debunking.

Tracing from its conception to the development of radical teacher organisations in the mid-1970s, it is clear that SADTU was established on the firm vision of transformation at its helm: the vision of uniting teachers, parents, learners and everyone concerned in building a just and democratic South Africa. The unity of the learners during the 1976 uprising motivated teachers to engage aggressively in transforming the racist and unequal education with which they were faced.

There were then breakaways in the 1980s of so called ‘progressive’ teacher groups from the established African teacher organisation, the African Teachers’ Association of South Africa (ATASA). Another organisation was the Teachers’ Action Committee, which comprised of teachers from Soweto who resigned from their posts during the 1976 Soweto uprising. As the plight of education became worse, teachers established non-racial unions like the National Education Union of South Africa (NEUSA) in 1980. The state of segregation became worse and teachers focused on more stringent ways of transforming by establishing more unions. Amaoko (2013) mentions that by 1985 there were many radical teacher unions established including the Progressive Teachers’ Union (PTU), the Mamelodi Teachers’ Union (MATU), the Progressive Teachers’ League (PTL), the Western Cape Teachers’ Union (WECTU), and the East London Progressive Teachers’ Union (ELPTU). Moll (1991) argues that the NEUSA and ELPTU were conglomerated with the United Democratic Front (UDF), which at this stage was at the forefront of the emancipation struggle, and identified themselves with the countrywide liberation movement. There were major
ideological differences between the established teacher organisations and the progressive unions (Moll 1999). The progressive unions saw the established teacher organisations as being too lenient to the apartheid state. On the other hand, the established unions saw the progressives as undifferentiated radicals concerned only with liberation and the formation of a single union for teachers (Amoako 2013). The conflict was resolved by the African National Congress and the World Confederation of Professional Teachers (WCOPT) by initiating talks to ensure unity among South African teachers. Moll (1989) mentions that the talks took firm root from 1987 after the Harare conference which laid the foundations for future teacher talks. This led to the formation of SADTU on 6 October 1990.

This background informs the objectives of the establishment of SADTU as a product of complex and lengthy negotiations within racially divided teacher organisations. The organisations fused with intent to pursue one reformist vision. The mission was to protect, and fight for the enhancement of teachers’ work environments and a clandestine political objective to align its struggles with the national democratic struggle to end apartheid rule (Amoako 2013). Such objectives are clearly highlighted in the speech by Nelson Mandela to herald the formation of SADTU: “Organisations like the South African Democratic Teachers’ Union are an appropriate expression of the struggle against apartheid. They are also a means through which we entrench our opposition to apartheid” (SADTU 1991). The launch of SADTU saw thousands of teachers from at least eighteen organisations from all corners of South Africa, signing the union into existence. A historical event described by then and current teachers as, “the day of victory” (Interviews 2013). SADTU became the first national non-racial and non-sexist union formed in South Africa. The leadership of SADTU continuously pursued and tied its objectives, as well as its education development programmes to the broader politics of the liberation struggle. This is evident in that many SADTU leaders have moved into key strategic positions in government and society in the post-apartheid era.

Education has been the battleground of those who fought against
apartheid policies. SADTU’s history points to its policies that fought against the extraordinary intensities of inequality that branded the socio-political state of undertakings in South Africa, and its schooling system. The core of historical forces and complex socio-political waves that compelled SADTU’s formation was the Bantu Education Act, enacted in 1953. This legislation divided South African society by implementing state control over education, with the intent to protect white privilege and power. The consequences were negative for the African teaching force – yielding low qualifications and poor morale. The social history approach used to investigate the historical significance of SADTU as a vehicle of change and continuity is key to demystify the perceptions held by many about the organisation. The social history approach brings to the fore the views of ordinary members of the union and reveals social justice as it allows for the voices of ordinary people to be heard.

This book deliberately focuses on the perspectives of members about the operation before and after the union’s recognition, until 2014 when South Africa celebrated 20 years of its democracy. The period of study begins in the 1950s when young militant teachers protested against Bantu Education. It ends in 2014 when SADTU was at its peak and making itself felt in the political spectrum of South Africa. The quote below indicates the unjust political, social and economic conditions in which black South African teachers found themselves. They also had to fight with their all to ensure that their life of poverty and discrimination was alleviated. SADTU thus became the vehicle of fighting against unequal wages and working conditions in the education fraternity. As appropriately described by Horsten and Le Grange:

Many teachers are expected to work in extremely difficult conditions where they face overcrowded classrooms, unsafe and unsanitary schools, shoddy housing and a shortage of the most basic classroom resources. Teachers are “at the mercy of bureaucracies” which appear to them to be “irrational, unpredictable and unresponsive” and they feel that the system, and even their own principals, are disempowering them (2012:519).
SADTU’s historical context

To understand the history of SADTU in South Africa, it is vital to follow its development contextually. In the South African context, the inferior African livelihood was largely the result of segregatory laws and policies that were introduced for both political and economic reasons by the white-dominated government. This government used education as a device to discriminate and disempower black people. Education is key in any country that envisions progress because “it is through education that one is introduced to modern culture, its technological know-how, its sophisticated ways of communication” (Venter 1999:437). It is in this context that the history of SADTU has to be understood – grounded on inequalities that pigeonholed the social, political and economic state of affairs in South Africa, and its schooling system. Due to the South African historical context of segregation and apartheid that surrounded and founded a fraught education system, unions like SADTU had to emerge to fight against such injustices. The nature of apartheid education allows for an understanding of the emergence of teachers’ politics and the forces that compelled the formation of the unions. SADTU is a creation of innate historical political services that fought against the discrimination of black people. It is part of the complex socio-political waves that transformed South Africa.

Many scholars of South African history have a habit of locating the start of colonial rule as the commencement of South African history. While colonial rule manifests a different phase in history, pre-colonial South Africa was inhabited by several indigenous communities that form part of groups which make up the country’s population – the San and Khoikhoi, amaNguni, and Basotho (Cameron 1991). The Khoisan were hunter-gatherers while the livelihood of the amaNguni, Basotho and Batswana was based on cultivation of food, cattle and animal tending. Their education was based on orality. The absence of formal education, such as schools, did not mean that there was no education taking place. Molema (1920) contends that the kind of education that was received during this period was referred to as traditional. This education system
kept the pre-colonial society progressing. Molema (1920:122-123) explains the stages and processes undertaken in traditional education as follows:

Firstly, the child was formally educated by members of the family at home; and secondly, every three, four or five years, boys between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one were gathered into regiments to undergo the rites of circumcision. These boys were isolated for a period of three months under the supervision of older men who lectured them on tribal traditions and customary laws. Girls also, between the ages of sixteen and twenty, were isolated for a corresponding term as boys, under the austere matrons, who taught them rudimentary principles of motherhood.

The responsibility of the education of the children was placed on the whole village that is – biological parents and all adults with whom children came into contact (Luthuli 1981 and Nkuna 1986). With the arrival of the European settlers at the Cape, transformation occurred and westernisation followed – formal education was then implemented.

The European settlers demanded that the white race had special rights to education, positions of public responsibility, ownership of land and wealth based on attitudes of racial dominance (Lewis and Steyn 2003). During the period of Dutch rule (1652-1806), little was done with regard to education, especially indigenous people’s education. Behr and MacMillan (1971) and Du Plessis (1965) mention that on 17 April 1658 the first community school for slaves was established. The teachings concentrated mainly on the slave’s intellectual, religious and moral welfare. The education system was based on enforced labour principles, the colonial culture and economic makeup. Christie (1991) opined that although there was little going on with regard to indigenous education during the Dutch East Indian Company (DEIC) epoch, the education that was delivered was adequate to meet the needs of that particular society. In 1792 Britain was engaged in a war against France which led to the British occupation of the Cape in 1795. The British came to occupy
the Cape Colony for strategic purposes because it feared the Cape might fall into the hands of the French enemy (Davenport 1977).

With the occupation of the British government from 1806-1910, numerous normative alterations were experienced – the abolition of the slave trade, and the laying down of rules to govern the Khoikhoi. Amid the modifications the British brought to the Cape, they introduced a system of public education for white children and paid missionary societies small subsidies for educational work and the teaching of black people (Thompson and Prior 1982). As a result, the obligation of providing education to black people fell into the hands of the missionaries. There is a wide-ranging agreement by historians that formal education was introduced in South Africa by missionaries (Horrel 1964, Thompson and Prior 1982). Du Plessis (1965) and Behr (1952) point out that the education offered during this period could not be distinguished from religious teaching, meaning that they perceive the education system of this period as dogma where religion was synonymous to the core formal education used to indoctrinate people. The only subject taught was simple arithmetic (Seroto 2004). This shows why the curriculum, even during the apartheid epoch, was driven by religious instruction which would obviously be a cause for rebellion for some indigenous teachers who were not proponents of Christianity. Seroto (2004) maintains that missionary education, which was not formal education, could not cater for the indigenous people as they relied principally on subsistence farming. Missionary education mainly supported the colonialist government ideals of using Africans for cheap labour therefore catering mainly for males and excluding women. In 1853 ground-breaking institutions such as Inanda Seminary in Durban, Lovedale School for Girls, Victoria Hospital (Lovedale Mission Hospital) in Alice (Southall 2014) were established where many women were able to learn assertiveness and independence.

The education system, as indicated in the 1863 report under Mr Justice Watermeyer, was also considered discriminatory in terms of race as there were schools that were not racially integrated (Lewis 1999). The commission led to the establishment of The Education
Act No 13 of 1865 (Cape of Good Hope 1865). This Act instilled further discrimination in education by dividing schools into three types. Behr and MacMillan (1971) mention that the schools that were mainly apportioned for whites were regarded as category ‘A’ while type ‘B’ schools were primarily church organised schools attended by poor whites and coloured learners and the ‘C’ schools attended mainly by African pupils, such as mission schools. According to the Interdepartmental Commission on Native Education (1935-1936) such regulations were used as a vehicle to enforce educational discrimination and prevent missions from opening their schools to all races (Union of South Africa 1936). Some mission schools were not funded by the colonial states before 1841 and eventually closed (Scholtz 1975). This indicated the reluctance that government authorities had towards financial provision of education to black people. To illustrate racial discrimination, provision was made for white children in 1904 in both the Cape and Natal where laws were introduced to enforce compulsory education for all white learners between the ages of seven and sixteen (Seroto 2004). Numerous historians are of the view that Natal, in terms of education, is the place where segregation as a definite policy began (Dube 1985; Legassick 1995). This explains the rudimentary foundations of teachers’ struggles and fight for freedom in the imminent centuries. The Interdepartmental Commission on Native Education (1935-1936) alluded to the fact that 67 separate and unequal schools aided in rigidifying racist lines of separation which up until the expansion of capitalist industrialisation had still remained somewhat slack. Resistance and protests to white domination became rife during the last quarter of the 19th century, chiefly as a contest to Cecil John Rhodes's expansionist economic policies and activities (Duncan 1997). The endemic resistance was also precipitated by the emergence of a black elite educated at mission establishments. As a result, there was the development of momentous influence of African nationalism post 1910 (De Gruchy 2009).

The Union Government (1910-1948) continued with segregationist education in South Africa placing the education of Africans under the administration of the Department of Native Affairs.
Racism was used to determine the quality of education that different races qualified to obtain. Black people played a major role, especially in the 20th century, in a fight against racism and prejudice against black society. Since the church was instrumental in politics, racism was profound in such ministries and some African clergies turned to the ideology of Ethiopianism. According to Appiah (1999) the Ethiopian ideals were not solely based on a theological school, or a political programme but a cluster of ideas, traditions and norms to describe the range of the black man's determination to advance their religious, educational, and political status in society. The ideals were shared by some Christian leaders in Africa in the period from 1890-1920. There was no strident boundary to the movement, but it sheared off into other groups. Ethiopian roots can be traced to text in the Bible, Psalm 68:31. This text was used by proponents of African independence to demonstrate black presence in the biblical text which says 'Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God' and the then known regions of northern Africa. The text (Psalm 68:31) captured a sense of cultural and political identity amongst black people, throughout the African continent, as a confirmation of the place black people have in God's salvific plan (Duncan 2015). The Ethiopian movement was one of a kind as it was an association that was dominated by teachers and clergy to fight injustices against blacks. This association later formed the African National Congress in 1912 (Dubow 2000).

The impact of Ethiopianism in the struggle against segregation in education shows why the founders of the ANC were against the limited African education in mission schools. They attributed segregation in education to the state as it limited opportunities for Africans to be educated by not funding their education. Similarly, the church was blamed for forcing African Christians out of the orthodox denominations through factionalist, and paternalist, as well as segregationist means. It shows that those who embraced Ethiopianism were of the view that mission education stifled the ambitions of Africans and hindered their success (Chirenje 1987). They advocated for an inclusive secular education that would construct ideas and attitudes that would meet the unique needs of
the African community. Ethiopians demonstrated African agency by establishing independent schools such as Bethel in Cape Town and the Wilberforce Institute in Evaton. The curriculum in those schools comprised of anticolonial content that depicted the failure of white missionary schools to meet African needs. The African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church stood as a shining example for the African denominations that explicitly expressed in their policies, an understanding of the connection between education and the African liberation (Shepperson 1953). The values of Ethiopianism shaped the resistance politics against segregation in education and such tenets were stringent from the 1950s as blacks resisted the Bantu Education Act.

The National Party rule from 1948 came with promises of transforming the education status of blacks. It established a Commission of Inquiry headed by Dr Eiselen in 1949, to transform African education. The Commission recommended the establishment of the ‘Bantu Local Authorities’ in the reserves and white urban areas comprising of chiefs and nominated members. These bodies were established to play an active role in carrying out educational plans, as well as to control the labour force in the reserves. In 1951, the Bantu Authorities Act was enacted. Two years later, in 1953 the Bantu Education Act was propagated. By 1954, the Act was amended to eradicate missionary schools and training colleges such as Adams College, Lovedale and many other schools. Government subsidies were terminated and missionaries were offered an option to sell their schools to the government.

The period between the mid and late 1950s was a critical turning point for education in South Africa with the implementation of Bantu Education. It sparked the African struggle against the implementation of the Bantu Education Act. The 1953 Bantu Education Act consolidated control of black education. According to Thomas (1996) in 1975, expenditure on the regular white learner was more than 15 times higher than that of the average black student. An activist of the latter policy, Dr Verwoerd asserted in his views that:
The bantu teacher has to be involved as an active factor in the development process of the bantu community, in order to serve and build this community. He must not learn to feel himself above his community, so that he will want to be integrated into the white social life and become frustrated and rebellious if it does not happen, so that he will make his community dissatisfied because of such wrongly directed ambitions foreign to his people (‘volksvreemd’) ... Previous policies and practices did not bring native teachers to accept that the circumstances of their community had to be the point of departure for teaching; they rather wanted to show off the feathers of their English education, actually preparing pupils for a life outside their community and for posts which did not exist; creating an elite class who thinks that they are elevated above their own community ... (Cited in Venter 1999:438).

The above quote illustrates that racially separated education was a chief pillar sustaining the apartheid system in South Africa. It divided the South African society by implementing state control over education, with the intent to protect white privilege and power. The state had taken charge of the education system, by eliminating missionaries, who were for the most part of the earlier periods, responsible for educating Africans. This caused uproar amongst the missionary educationists and resulted in further protests. The consequences were negative for the African teaching force, yielding low qualifications, poor morale and unequal development of black South Africans. The apartheid government's conception of development was constructed around the fact that there was a vast gap between white progression and black backwardness, which denoted the need for supervision of white over black (Venter 1997). The National Party government inherited the ideal of a ‘volks republiek’ from the Afrikaner Enlightenment heritage associated with totalitarianism. The Afrikaner ‘volks republiek’ attempted to encompass all aspects of human life within the confines of the ‘volk’ – all of which are western ideas rooted in the eighteenth and nineteenth century (Venter 1997). This ideology asserts an ideal of one people, one state, with its own government that separated races. The separation of people according to their ethnicities was not
well received by the majority of black people. Southall (2014) terms racial segregation as cruel, dehumanising and the enemy of *Ubuntu*, the spirit of togetherness and progress of Africans. At this stage, the African struggle was increasingly characterised by the classic language of protest that fused the old Ethiopianist conception of education with African self-upliftment.

Once Bantu Education was implemented, proponents for equal education began to advocate for a common syllabus. This accounts for more militancy from the 1950s as intense discrimination was more evident through the laws. One marked feature is that of the ‘Black Power’ campaign in the 1970s which fought against apartheid and unequal education.

This book will trace the core educational philosophies of SADTU from indigenous epistemology to the pre-colonial education status that was informal but was relevant to the communities in South Africa at the time and catered for their economic, political and social needs (SADTU’s National General Council October 2017). As indicated by Molema (1920) such an education empowered people with ethics and fulfilled their needs at the time. But subsequent educational offerings from the colonial, unionist, to the apartheid state had some problems as they were geared to building Africans to be European and serve whites (Chirenje 1987). Through the ideals of the Ethiopian movement Africans were encouraged to be more conscious about African nationalism. As clearly put by Afigbo (1971), in the 19th century when Ethiopianism started it did not have immediate political effect but it served to awaken and encourage political opposition to European control throughout history. This infers that teachers and other community members drew from it to fight against discrimination in the education system in South Africa including those who later established the SADTU organisation. It is safe to conclude that to understand the history of SADTU, one has to trace it from the pre-colonial period to now. It is also pivotal to note the significant role some of the churches played in teaching people about the ills of discrimination and assisted with training ground used for organising, administering public speaking and committee work, etc.
Two histories from below:
A Socio-Africanist historical approach

A historical narrative, as much as a journey, has an approach it uses to understand historical stories. Since practitioners of social history and Africanist scholars have claimed to write from below, it is interesting that they have not encountered each other more often especially when researching about trade unions like SADTU. The perceptions of the lower class workers are normally not the point of focus. Hence, the marriage of the two approaches in this book help in unlocking and decolonising social history to embrace the knowledge and ideals of the lowest stratum of the society – the black workers in this instance. Therefore, for the social historians of South Africa, the lowest group of the country is comprised of black workers and peasants. For Africanist historians, in addition, the knowledge process of such people is taken into consideration. But, equally these schools of historians have pursued to demonstrate that the history of those at the lowermost has been repressed, their voices flouted and their agency unrecognised. Surely, most works in both schools have revealed too few suggestions that the fields might overlap, however, they must be brought together for the benefit of both schools.

The essential role of the Africanist approach to South African trade union history is not evident in most writings on the subject. The works of scholars like Donaldson (2011), Moll (1991), Paddy and Jarbandhan (2014) and Zengele (2013) have paid close attention to the significance of unionism of blacks and their agency in fighting discrimination in education. Yet much work still needs to be done on probing the indigenous perceptions when writing such history. During the 1970s and 1980s, South African social historians focused on matters of political economy, particularly the proletarisation of Africans (Jacobs 2003). Without repudiating their contributions, their concentration does not give sufficient attention to some very important issues in black unionism, such as decolonisation of policies, workers’ perceptions and the operations of such unions, and tracing their historical significance as agents of change and continuity in the African communities. Although structured disparities are key
themes in South African history, Africanist ideals have been absent too often from the master narrative. Decolonisation writing agendas are central in the growing body of writing on the history of Africans. As Mazana has argued:

Although most Africans, on the Continent as well as in the Diaspora, have, at least in theory, put an end to colonial rule to which we were subjected for many years, we nonetheless still find ourselves in a state of mental subjugation … The reason for this is that colonisation was not simply an enterprise of economic exploitation and political control … but also an on-going enterprise of conceptual distortion and invasion leading to widespread confusion, and ultimately, mental incarceration (2003:3-4).

The Africanist approach attempts to assert the importance of Africans in the making of history. Social historians also depict the agency of Africans as an important position in the history of workers. However, it sometimes fails to study the workers’ history from within its culture. This drawback is covered by the Africanist writings as it demystifies themes relating to indigenous people from their own perspectives and shows that they also played an important part in the making of their own history. This nuanced Africanist historiography with its sensitivity to cultural and social issues, offers useful models to social history. As Saunders has argued, Africanist writers wanted to Africanise South African history by writing a history that would be looked back on with pride (1988). However, the drawback of the genre is that it emphasises blame (Gebhard 1991). This then shows that change occurs with every generation and that people’s perceptions need to be analysed before being disparaged.

**A Socio-Africanist History of SADTU: Methodology and Approach**

More often than not, many researchers have difficulty in relating a theoretical framework to a research work. That being so, the concept ‘theoretical framework’ needs elaboration. In this regard, Imenda (2014) defines a theoretical framework as the theory
that a researcher chooses to guide their research. Consequently, a theoretical framework is the application of a theory in an effort to offer an explanation of an event, or shed some light on a particular phenomenon or research problem. It can be the theory in whole or a set of concepts drawn from the same theory that are tied together but serve to illuminate the issues surrounding the phenomenon. This book uses demythologising, historical significance, cause and consequence, and continuity and change as conceptual frameworks. They are linked with a phenomenological approach to research, which is qualitative because it draws from open-ended interviews.

**Phenomenology and SADTU as a Socio-Africanist history case study**

The research method used involved observation through archival and oral sources and the analysis of interviews via close reading techniques. The research used a phenomenological approach, which is qualitative, because it allows the researcher to produce rich information and to understand community beliefs from within and not judge their beliefs or practices – which Ryba argues, is not possible with scientific endeavours (1991). Qualitative research examines the way people make sense out of their own concrete real-life experiences in their own minds and in their own words (Cropley 2015). It also speaks to the phenomenological approach as it gains understanding from the lived experiences in a particular social environment. As clearly put by Ryba (1991) phenomenological study is a strategy that strives to comprehend an experience from the participants’ point of view. The focus is on the contributors’ insights of the event or situation and tries to answer the question of experience. This study is conceptualised around the phenomenological design and appears to be more appealing to investigate the history of SADTU from the workers’ perspective. This is because the tenacity of the phenomenological approach is to throw light on the specific issue, to identify phenomena through how they are professed by the players in a situation and when related to humans, this translates into gathering ‘deep’ information and perceptions through inductive, qualitative methods (Embree 2009 and Padilla-Diaz 2015).
The interviews are semi-structured, with due consideration given to the constraints of this method. The strengths of the method include its ability to classify and group widely divergent data in such a way that an overall view can be obtained of the group’s beliefs and historical experiences (Ryba 1991). Hence, an attempt is made to depict perceptions of individual experiences and their perceptions about their organisation (SADTU) in order to construct the history of the union. This method takes the voices of ordinary people seriously, and illuminates much of their day-to-day life experience. Tosh mentions a major limitation of oral history when he states that, “it is naive to suppose that the testimony represents a pure distillation of past experience, for in an interview each party is affected by the other” (1991:213). So this methodology is used in conjunction with archival and other secondary sources in order to fill the gaps created by interviewees and the myths created by their nostalgia.

Questionnaires were not used because the researcher believed that face-to-face contact is useful in developing a good rapport with interviewees in order to help them communicate what they believed and experienced by belonging to SADTU. However, as Abrams and others observe, such close encounters have some limitations because:

[the close encounter may make the voices louder; it does not ... make their meaning clearer. To that end, we must turn back from ‘their’ meanings to our own and to the things, we know about them, which they did not know, or say, about themselves (Cited in Tosh 1991:214).

Various sources were consulted in order to address the limitations of this method. Fieldwork was conducted by Dr Vusumuzi Khumalo and Ms Dineo Skhosana, PhD student from Wits University. Interviews were conducted all over South Africa from 2013 to 2016 with active SADTU participants who have a long-standing membership with the organisation. The sample size of interviewees is 200 men and women. The number chosen was determined by the availability of interviewees. The criteria used in
choosing informants was that it had to be people who were actively involved in SADTU and have knowledge of the operations of the organisation. Interviewees chose interview locations, normally their homes where they felt most relaxed. Questions were used to stimulate discussion. The researcher used open-ended interviews because, in this researcher's experience, many interviewees prefer open discussions to a prescribed format and thus much more information is attained via this process. A tape recorder was used to get the authentic voice of the person interviewed. Data was collected and weighted in terms of the archival research, which proved vital in contextualising and bridging logical gaps. Unpublished commissions, reports, familial data and the like were utilised in conjunction with official government reports and newspapers.

**Conceptual Framework: Demythologising History and Decolonisation approach**

The essence of Africanist writing is to decolonise indigenous knowledge. As opined by Saunders, Africanist writers wanted to decolonise South African history by recording history that depicts agency of Africans in making their history (1988). This fits well with phenomenological studies because it focuses on “how people perceive and talk about objects and events, rather than describing phenomena according to a predetermined categorical system, conceptual and scientific criteria” (Pietkiewicz and Smith 2014:18). In this context, phenomenology occupies a transcendental area in the new paradigms of science: to systematically inquire into the mind and human experiences to reflect the essences of phenomena as well as the intentionality of conscience. It is important thus to delve into the lives of workers of SADTU to understand their perceptions in order to construct their meanings of the history of their organisation. The study uses the framework of demythologising SADTU in order to unearth the ideologies and practices aligned with the organisation.
Through demythologising the act of reinterpretation occurs and messages conveyed in stories are conveyed to have meaning for people engaging in or with such myths which suggests that the process of demythologising “includes different possible meanings in different contexts” (Rahner in Barnes 1994:27).

African epistemology is often categorised as myths since its ideologies and beliefs were not initially written down. Many SADTU members are from indigenous communities of South Africa and it is therefore noteworthy to say demythologising people’s perceptions of the organisation in order to understand the history of the organisation is crucial. Therefore, understanding myths is pivotal as they are used to promote stories and identity constructions. As put by Waardenburg, through myths “the world and life can be seen in their real nature. Profound truth is communicated in the form of a story”, and that “in myths what is authentic is not the details of the story itself but the deeper meanings which become present to both teller and listener only in the act of telling” (1980:53). It implies that, what is chiefly communicated through mythologies is the meaning of life and how people can engage in that cosmos through the use of stories, rituals, actions and gestures. More so, expounding that only through such communication can those involved in telling and listening understand the gist of the stories. Hence, Mason argues that:

[one]…[m]ight perceive myth to be not a mere untruth but a story rooted in a place where one has been in the past and that one has to reach urgently in the present and that someone at a crucial point on the way says does not exist. It is a story, like most, of facts familiar to oneself but to which, until something happens to make returning to them impossible in the familiar way, one gives almost no thought. Furthermore it is in a foreign world beyond them that one discovers the possibility of an entirely gratuitous and perplexing challenge to one’s assumption about their reality (1980:15-19).

There has been much disagreement over the authenticity of myth in terms of historicity, with historians and anthropologists such as
Raglan arguing that myths are simply untrue historically. Opinions such as these obscure what is perhaps the essential aim of myth in all societies: being a teaching tool for past, present and future generations (cited in Schrempp 2002). This means that myth has history in itself and gives people a sense of identity and direction (Wiesel 1980). Mason takes this further by arguing that the history in myths is illustrated in the way it “brings us across such artificial distances as time and space, and translating us from ourselves to them” (1980:16). Myths tend to die if they do not play a role in supplying people with answers concerning questions such as those pertaining to the meaning of life. Waardenburg argues that myths take time to disappear if they have religious dimensions because religion is a powerful tool used by people to understand the meaning of life (1980).

Religion is defined in this context as a way of life. This is also the case in relation to people's perceptions of how unions operate as myths have been used on a day to day basis as a means of constructing identity and preservation of the organisations’ reputation and also destruction of it. Such myths led to unions like SADTU being misunderstood and the essence of its vision and mission mistaken, thereby ending up being controversially referred to as self-serving. This was argued explicitly by Jansen at the 2011 Franschhoek Literary Festival that “[s]elf-serving ‘political’ organisations like the South African Democratic Teachers’ Union needed to be driven from schools if the standard of the country’s education is to improve” (Donaldson 2011). Looking at the policies of the organisation and the interviews of some of the members who ensured quality education through SADTU, it is evident that the organisation has played a major role in schools to improve education. This is clearly illustrated by the works of Paddy and Jarbandham (2014) who did research on two schools in Soweto. They found that both schools had high numbers of SADTU members, however one school had excellent academic performance and the other had poor academic performance (Paddy and Jarbandham 2014). This infers that there are many myths surrounding the operations, policies and membership behaviour of SADTU that need to be delineated.
**Historical Significance and Cause and Consequence as analytical tools of SADTU’s history**

Historical information can be organised in the form of first (substantive knowledge that focuses on events and historical concepts like revolution, communism and so forth) and second order concepts that help to give flesh to historical events and people (empathy, cause and consequence, continuity and change, historical significance, indigenous knowledge and so forth). Unlike first order concepts, second order concepts tacitly arise in the act of doing historical inquiries (Runia 2006 and Hammarlund 2010). They are not the ‘content’ of history but are essential when engaging research and to unearth historical narratives or interpretations (Levesque 2005). Hence they are seldom discussed in text or presented in the works of historians and are largely ignored in school history. Without substantial and procedural knowledge and understanding of the concepts, procedures, and skills, history would fail its scientific meaning and structure thus rendering itself as a subject null and void (Barth et al., 2002; Runia 2006). In understanding the history of SADTU, such second order concepts like significance and cause and consequence are employed to unearth the organisation’s operational procedures throughout its history.

Historical significance from the literature surveyed shows that some scholars accentuate historical significance on people or events and others on both. Scholars that emphasise historical events as significant, advocate that the events in history are more significant than the people who participated in the events (Counsell 2004). Events are those opinions in history when a deed, pronouncement or natural phenomenon transformed or informed the course of people’s development. Partington (1980) and Counsell (2004) focus on events as being historically significant and justify people as being influenced by the event as opposed to influencing the event, thereby rendering the role of the person or people inconsequential. This downplays the agency of people in events as emphasised by Africanist and social historians. Profundity and quantity of the event
determine significance because they speak to how deeply peoples’ lives were affected and how many peoples’ lives were affected (Partington 1980). The focus on people deduces that without the particular individuals who responded in the way that they did, history would have possibly unfolded in a different way, and thus events are significant because of the individual person or people involved (Dawson 2003; Bradshaw 2006).

Historical significance concentrating on people proceeds to emphasise the works of historical characters mainly on the official history recorded in history books, textbooks and can be researched on the internet. Such significant people are chosen because their legacies continue to spread as folktales through oral history such that they are remembered long after they have passed on. General notion of this argument is that people are more historically significant than events since people are victims of their circumstances until they resolve to respond to their conditions and take a position, thus speaking to the inevitability of agency (Triandis 1995). Persons vary and as such their reaction to situations always differs, it is on this basis that some people end up being significant. As opined by Dawson (2003) and Bradshaw (2006), for a person to be historically significant it is essential that they altered happenings in history during the time they lived.

Other scholars who propagate the historical significance emphasising both people and events argue that people and events go hand in hand and the one lacks significance without the other (Bradshaw 2006; Cercardillo 2006). For instance, Bradshaw (2006) states that an event and the people involved in an alleged event have to be considered ground breaking. Ground breaking in this context refers to the effect and resonance of a supposed event through peoples’ actions and reactions based on three criteria: the impact it has on the people living at the time and future generations, the amount of people affected and the duration of the effect. This book adopts the view that events and people are equally important because they influence each other. This theory fits very well with SADTU’s history as events and people throughout history have led to the establishment of the organisation.
Another important theory relevant to understanding the history of SADTU is that of cause and consequence because it helps to explain how events in history unfolded and the consequences thereof. Literature shows that there are diverse theories on how events emerge. There is a view that maintains that events occur because of great causes, which are impersonal, and such reasons normally manipulate evidence (McCain and Turner 1997). Such causal determinism normally treats historical causes as if it is natural science – put things together and the inevitable will happen as an example.

Other theories adhere to Hegelianism by arguing that events occur because of the history of succession of things whereby an invisible hand is blamed. This adheres to Darwinian evolution, the chaos theory that maintains that events occur randomly. In this instance, causes are sometimes seen as everything that has happened before. The other theory is based on New Hegelianism which focuses on human agency in causing events based on re-enactment (Hegel and Sibree 2004; Stern 2000). Collingwood maintains that in history, what happened and why it happened is equally important (Collingwood 1994). This is supported by Wineberg who argues that, at the heart of historical enquiry is the question of cause as it depends on the teacher (2001). This shows that cause and consequence are not a linear reaction but multiple acts working in combination. An intricate network of actions and factors relate to causes and consequences – the whole story can never be known but both concepts stem from unique combinations. The theory of historical re-enactment is relevant to SADTU’s history as it shows the urgency of blacks in making their history that is also in line with the Socio-Africanist history.

Change and continuity are two intertwined concepts that assist in describing the changing of events over the course of time. Historiography helps with the explanations of how historical interpretations change over time. Change refers to something that is obviously different from what occurred previously. The term continuity is widely used across disciplines and has various
connotations. In the context of organisations, it has been defined as the connectedness over time amongst organisational efforts and a sense or experience of continuity (ongoing) that links the past to the present and the present to future hopes and ideals (Nasim and Sushil 2011). This indicates that things change at varying rates and are caused by a wide range of factors. Change can be for the better (progress) or worse (regress), it can be intended or unintended and does not happen in a strict sequence.

Thus, change is a historical concept that can be better understood by people in relation to different times; however, their appreciation of the nature and scope of change varies from person to person (Thompson 1984). Showing that change is the gradual transformation of a situation, it is not the same as progression. It is sophisticated, and requires a high level of understanding. This explains the relationship between historical significance, change and continuity in that they all focus on historical times and explain how to understand the past, present and the future. In that, what occurred in the past can be used to understand the present and the future. As clearly put by Wineburg (2001), historical change holds the potential of humanising people, which means that through lessons of the past and corrections in the present, people in the future get transformed. This infers that, historical change depends precisely on peoples' ability to circumnavigate the uneven landscape of historical thought to negotiate the bleak terrain that lies between the poles of familiarity and distance from the past.

Burchell and Kolb (2006) mention an important aspect of change by drawing from systems of thinking where they associate change with differentiation and stability with integration. For them such systems bring stability and create sustainable organisations for the future, which means that learning from the past and integrating such lessons can ensure quality change and continuity. In analysing the perceptions of teachers within SADTU’s history, it is envisaged that demythologising the stories that the workers tell will bring lessons that will strengthen and ensure quality change and continuity within the organisation (Burchell and Kolb 2006).
Kaplan and Norton (1992) however, noted an important aspect that may infringe quality change and they propose that these continuity forces are continued by default and if not consciously managed may inhibit constructive change.

**Terminological considerations**

A few concepts that are of particular importance are explained here.

**Black:** A classification referring to all those who were racially excluded from political power by the policies of the National Party. These include Africans, Coloureds, Indians and Chinese as they were sometimes referred to as non-white or non-Europeans.

**African:** Refers to all indigenous blacks of South Africa i.e., Sotho-Tswana, Nguni, Tsonga, Venda and the Khoi-San. All inhabitants of South Africa who have South African citizenship status are referred to as South Africans.

**Ubuntu / Botho:** A concept explaining the essence of being human and what is necessary for human beings to grow and find fulfilment (Shutte 2001). It maintains that a person ‘becomes human’ through participation in a community and other important components like environment, religion, culture and tradition. A complete human being is thus determined by the way the individual interacts with others and the environment.

**Chapter outline**

This book concentrates on the demythologisation of the history of SADTU by drawing from the teachers belonging to the organisation. The period under study is 1990 to 2014 when South Africa celebrated its 20 years as a democratic country.

After the introduction provided by this chapter, Chapter 2 focuses on the roots of SADTU in the 1980s. Fragmented teachers’ unions during this period are discussed to explain how SADTU came into being. Similarly, the Civil Movements that were established in the era are discussed as a venture that assisted in the formation of
SADTU. The role of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) is also discussed to illustrate how it contributed to the formation of the union and how it facilitated unity among all teacher unions to form SADTU. The international organisations’ support and contributions to the establishment of SADTU is laid down in this chapter to illustrate a globalised trade union of teachers.

Chapter 3 focuses on the launch of SADTU in 1990. The problems associated with the launching of an organisation are discussed – leadership formation, division of assets, mistrust among staff and denial of unity by other unions.

Chapter 4 describes how after the union was formed another hurdle that SADTU faced was fighting for its recognition by the apartheid government and Bantustans’ Education departments. Problems associated with recognition as a trade union are also highlighted such as funds, resistance by the union through marches and how other teachers’ unions also fought against SADTU’s recognition.

Chapter 5 takes a look at SADTU policies in order to understand how the union operates. Chapter 6 builds on Chapter 5 by explaining the different desks of SADTU’s operations. The diverse operational spheres are divided along gender, education and sports and culture. Here diverse myths depicted in the interviews are discussed and the demythologising of such narratives are addressed.

Chapter 7 includes the conclusion where the major findings are summarised and we further question the use of this case-study as offering a “usable past”.

**Conclusion**

The central aim of this book is to investigate SADTU’s history as a lens into historically constructed perceptions surrounding its operations through its ordinary members. The book explores the historically contingent concept of SADTU as an organisation by ordinary teachers who are staunch members and perceptions surrounding the operations of the organisation. The book seeks to show that although many people perceive SADTU as a dysfunctional and
debased organisation, the members perceive it as viable and effective in dealing with trade union matters and uplifting the education status of South Africans. The research shows that, although SADTU and trade unionism have received historiographical attention, they have received little analysis through the Socio-Africanist lens. The Africanist dimension has been lacking in such investigations and this book will hopefully contribute to filling that academic lacuna. Equally, a historiographical fissure exists in the understanding of historically rooted and contingent perceptions of education and the operations of the union in this context. This is part of the Socio-Africanist history of a decolonisation initiative that is growing in historiographical weight in South Africa and to which this study seeks to contribute by its investigation of changing perceptions of social identity in relation to SADTU as a trade union within the specific context of discrimination and liberation within the ordinary workers of the union in South Africa. Throughout the research, social, political and economic injustice that blacks and black workers suffered through discrimination is highlighted, which prompts the recommendation of the book that demythologisation and decolonisation of issues pertaining to workers must be adopted in order to assist blacks in their pilgrimage towards building and preserving their trade union.
The roots of SADTU: Developments in the 1980s

Introduction

The political situation in South Africa in the 1980s was very tense in the aftermath of the June 1976 student uprising. The state clamped down on the Black Consciousness Movement and other organisations that offered resistance to apartheid. The National Party was having its own internal problems and power struggles, such as the Information Scandal in 1978, the bitter contestation for party leadership after the resignation of John Vorster and the formation of the Conservative Party led by Dr Andries Treurnicht who became Transvaal leader after Dr Connie Mulder resigned (Barber 1982). To a certain extent, they had succeeded in creating ethnic enclaves for African groups. Through the Group Areas Act, they managed to create residential areas for different racial groups in the urban areas separated by major roads, rivers and railway lines. The system sought to permanently deny Africans of their South African citizenship and give them that of the Bantustans. Africans were only accommodated in South Africa on a temporal basis as labourers and were expected to return to their homelands after their contracts expired. The type of accommodation provided for them in the cities was not designed for family life. The salaries offered to African workers was enough for them to survive as single men with no family responsibilities. Moodie aptly makes this point by saying that “the major burden of industrialisation in South Africa was borne not by these whites
but by a mass of black men who were moving into the cities along with them … the average earnings of whites in the mines was eleven times that of non-whites” (1975:206). In spite of all efforts by the state to move all Africans to the homelands, the numbers of African urban dwellers continued to grow and the state was compelled to create designated areas for them and offer basic services.

When quizzed by the South African Broadcasting Cooperation about the idea of one-man-one-vote, the then foreign minister Pik Botha argued that South Africa is a country of minorities. The underlying narrative was that all other groups were to be led by whites, thus entrenching white supremacy. In fact, “Afrikaners came to believe that God had sent them to South Africa, to evangelise and ‘civilise’ the entire continent” (Chirenje 1987:9). In their quest to consolidate their hold on power, the National Party government introduced the tricameral parliament as part of their restructuring package where Indians and coloureds were included in the South African parliamentary system. The tricameral system gave Indians and coloureds limited franchise while at the same time entrenching African disenfranchisement. The Indian and coloured houses were subject to the authority of the House of Assembly (white). The move was met with stern opposition and resistance from many anti-apartheid organisations, including religious leaders of various faiths. The groundswell of opposition to the tricameral parliament culminated in the formation and launch of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in 1983, whose slogan was ‘UDF Unites – Apartheid Divides’. The formation of the UDF and the establishment of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in 1985 were two of the main events that would define the struggle against apartheid in the 1980s. During this time calls for economic sanctions against South Africa were also gaining momentum.

The aim of this chapter is to provide a context within which SADTU emerged as a game-changer in labour relations in the education sector. SADTU’s primary objectives were to offer support to teachers to do their jobs well. In their dealings with the Department of Education, there was never any confrontation, especially with regard to salaries and their conditions of service.
The state of politics in the 1980s

During the 1980s the South African government was under increasing pressure from the international community to reform and include the black majority by giving them a say in the affairs of the country. This pressure included United Nations’ resolutions and economic sanctions, as well as pressure from the local black population that was becoming more militant and impatient. President PW Botha, instead of capitulating, devised plans to consolidate the National Party dominance of the white South African political arena. The introduction of the tricameral parliament was part of the strategy to divide and rule the oppressed. He demonstrated great resolve by clamping down on all opposition. In 1985 Botha imposed a state of emergency in 36 districts and another one in 1986. During the states of emergency the state was able to detain suspects without trial for ninety days. These measures escalated violence within the country. On the East Rand, Natal and Zululand the levels of violence increased and there were allegations that this violence was sponsored by the state. Such political instability affected the delivery of education in areas where black people resided.

Resistance also escalated with the formation of the UDF and COSATU. COSATU was a different type of trade union. It refused to be confined to workplace issues and defined itself as a voice for the working class. In 1985, COSATU and the resurgent congress aligned unions, together with the mighty National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), joined together to form COSATU (Mannah and Lewis 2008). Those unions that were aligned to the Black Consciousness Movement did not join the new federation because they did not agree with the idea of being aligned to the ANC that was adopting the Freedom Charter. Clearly, COSATU defined a very clear political role. A considerable amount of time was spent debating whether to adopt the congress program, which COSATU did. It was evident that they had aligned themselves with the ANC, and they saw it as their responsibility to fight for and consolidate the National Democratic Revolution. The UDF was a coming together of many anti-apartheid civic, youth and faith-based organisations. Even though it came into
being as a response to the introduction of the tricameral parliament, it took the responsibility of organising different communities against the apartheid system. The UDF put much emphasis on non-racialism and the ideal of a unitary state. Resistance was carefully planned by activists in these organisations to undermine the state. Various boycotts were organised as part of the strategy to mobilise and unite people for the cause of their freedom.

Toward the late 1980s the UDF, COSATU and other like-minded structures formed themselves into the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM). They organised public events together. The MDM was disturbed by the detention of its leaders. It is interesting to see how different parts of the movement came together to support families of those who were detained or killed by the security forces. The security forces routinely interrupted church services, funerals and other gatherings. On 14 August 1989, PW Botha resigned as state president after a minor stroke. He was replaced by FW de Klerk who embarked on a programme of political reform. The significant part of his political reforms was the unbanning of political organisations (the ANC, PAC, SACP, and all subsidiary organisations), the release
of political prisoners, and normalisation of political activity in South Africa. *The New York Times* (14 August 1989) had this to say about Botha’s sudden resignation:

His announcement, delivered in a disjointed and rambling address in Afrikaans on national television, followed a Cabinet meeting this morning in which the 73-year-old Mr Botha lost a confrontation he had forced with FW de Klerk, his successor as leader of the governing National Party. At issue was Mr de Klerk’s right to travel to Zambia later this month to meet President Kenneth D. Kaunda without getting Mr Botha’s approval first. Nevertheless, this was overshadowed by a wide perception among politicians, journalists and ordinary South Africans that the President had been trying to undercut Mr de Klerk since the latter succeeded him as National Party leader about six months ago.

The ANC in exile encouraged people to intensify the struggle against white minority rule. In a statement on 15 August 1989, it said:

Yesterday, one of the principal architects of the apartheid system, PW Botha, almost exactly four years after his infamous Rubicon speech of 1985, crashed out of the political life of our country, a failed and embittered politician of racism.

The MDM continued with mass mobilisation for the rest of 1989. They organised a number of massive marches and rallies in the latter part of the year. Through these marches and rallies, they showed that the anti-apartheid movement was widely supported in South Africa. The *Sunday Times* (3 September 1989) reported that the police responded with a show of force when a huge crowd led by the patron of the UDF and President of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, Dr Allan Boesak marched on the South African parliament. It was reported that 1 000 people were arrested including Dr Boesak. This is the political context from which SADTU emerged.
The state of education in the 1980s

The apartheid policy recognised that education was an important element in shaping people’s worldview. Soon after the 1948 election victory, the National Party set up the Eiselen Commission, which recommended that the education of Africans be under state control in order to produce the types of blacks that would be of use to the white economy and supply all the labour needs. “The education Africans received was poor in quality and designed to keep them out of the modern sector of the economy thus ensuring a steady supply of cheap labour, particularly for the agricultural, mining and domestic sectors” (Fiske and Ladd 2004:42). This was the beginning of the politicisation of black education. The funding and administration of black education was to be transferred from mission schools to state schools. Some of the mission schools were accused of having been infiltrated by liberal propaganda and were giving unrealistic hopes of equality to black children. The Bantu Education Act of 1953 ensured that the content of the curriculum in these schools was consistent with the goals of apartheid – developing pride in their ethnic group and history, in order to show that they are different to other ethnic groups. In fact:

The Bantu Education Act stipulated that all black schools would
have to be registered with the government, and that registration would be at the discretion of the Minister. This measure enabled the government to close any educational programmes that did not support its aims (Christie and Collins 1982:66).

The state was not concerned about the quality of education that black children received. The amount spent on black education was a tenth of what was spent on white education. The curriculum was designed to create self-hate among African learners. Such was clearly visible in the teaching of history where African historical figures were portrayed in a negative light. This point is well demonstrated by Bayo Oyebade, “In the history of intellectual thought, the Eurocentric paradigm has often assumed hegemonic universal character, and European culture has placed itself at the center of the social structure, becoming the reference point, or the yardstick, by which every other culture is defined” (1990:234). African identity was thus defined in terms of European identity.

In 1980 there were several education departments, with each of the ten Homelands having its own department. The House of Delegates (Indian), the House of Representatives (coloured), Department of Education and Training (Bantu Education) was responsible for the education of Africans in the townships. The unfortunate thing about this arrangement was that these departments did not communicate, this was not by mistake but by design. The apartheid ideology used education as a mechanism to divide and misinform. The
framework of this education system was built on fear and mistrust. It was therefore imperative for the new government, after the 1994 elections, to establish one national Department of Education.

Crisis in education

The continuing and sustained state repression led to the emergence of militant student organisations and other youth structures. During this period, there was a growing number of militant young people who were convinced that the struggle against apartheid was a sacred cause more important than their education. Bantu Education was criticised as inadequate and that it had to be replaced. Linda Chisholm observed that, “From 1976 to 1981 … these students mounted a sustained attack on Bantu Education, on apartheid and more explicitly, in 1980 at least, on capitalism” (1982:362). It became evident to students that “educational transformation required societal transformation” (Kruss 1988:8). Bantu Education was identified as education for domination, whose aim was to make blacks a permanent underclass with no real prospect of liberation and economic advancement. The decade between 1976 and 1986 could be seen as a turning point for South African education. During this period there was growing awareness about the relationship between education and liberation, capitalism and exploitation and the need for change. Education reached crisis proportion between 1984 and 1986 when there were widespread boycotts and schooling was disturbed. In fact, “a major debate developed within the anti-apartheid movement over the issue of ‘liberation before education’ versus ‘education for liberation’. Since schools were instruments of white control, some felt it important to boycott them and in effect shut them down” (Fiske and Ladd 2004:49). Furthermore, “… student boycotts in the 1980s took on a new significance when they became linked to demands and campaigns around community and shop floor issues” (Mannah and Lewis 2008:182).
The National Educational Crisis Committee (NECC)

The NECC was founded in March 1986 by people from a cross-section of anti-apartheid organisations. It was made up of “over two hundred community, youth, educational, trade union, religious members and other structures” (Mannah and Lewis 2008:182). The major concern at the time was continued state repression and the deteriorating conditions in township schools. There were school boycotts and disturbance of the academic programme. The central tenet of the NECC programme was the notion of the advancement of what they termed ‘people’s education’. The vision of NECC was to have education that served the interests of all South Africans by creating a social consciousness that embraced the values of freedom and equality. Such an education system would be instrumental in the development of a revolutionary consciousness that is central to the attainment of the national democratic revolution. The centre of their critique of Bantu Education was that it did not promote critical thinking but rote learning.

The struggle for quality education was not seen as separate from the struggle for liberation. There was a realisation that education was critical to the attainment of liberation and future democracy. The NECC believed that it was incumbent upon teachers and students to challenge the system of education from within. In other words, they could subvert the system from within. The conditions were repressive but the NECC felt that it was going to benefit the struggle in the end. They began to talk about ‘People’s Education for People’s Power’ and ‘Education for liberation’. This was clearly a positive view of education as a source of empowerment for democracy. The NECC needed the participation of progressive teachers and their organisations for the vision to be realised. “The call by the United Democratic Front in the early 1980s to make South Africa ungovernable and accelerate the demise of the apartheid state had a particular resonance with black students who were struggling against the imposition of an inferior apartheid education system” (Mannah and Lewis 2008:180). The NECC had its eye on the demise of the
apartheid system while simultaneously creating a new education system that would be inclusive and cater for the needs of all South African people regardless of their race, culture or religion.

**Unity talks**

The liberation movement recognised education as one of the main pillars for building a strong post-apartheid nation. Teachers were recognised as the main players in the provision of education. Unity of vision among teacher organisations was going to make it easier to implement the necessary changes to the education system for a democratic South Africa. Since there were many education departments, teacher organisations were fragmented and had different visions of what needed to be done with education. According to Moll (1989) about half of the roughly 250 000 teachers in South Africa were organised, but their organisations were divided and fragmented. There were 27 teacher bodies located in 17 ethnic education departments. Apartheid education created ethnic and linguistic divisions as the basis on which the officially recognised teacher organisations were built. It has also meant that progressive, unrecognised teacher organisations emerged in a number of small, isolated bodies rather than in one national body (Moll 1989).

The anti-apartheid movement believed that one of the key elements of its weaponry against the apartheid government was maximum unity. The basis of such unity was a subject of discussion in the various meetings that were held by the various structures. In the education sector, it was crucial for there to be unity among teacher organisations. According to Ian Moll (1989) as early as 1987, calls were made by the UDF, COSATU and NECC for teacher organisations to be united. The problem, though, was that “the old divisions between the recognised and the non-recognised teacher bodies remained, although they were no longer expressed as antagonistically” (Moll 1989:68).

Logan Govender, in explaining some of the complications in the failed attempt to have a unified teacher union in South Africa, identified ‘professionalism’ vs ‘unionism’ and ideological orientation
as core issues that could not be overcome. In the 1980s, with the intensification of the political struggle for liberation, several progressive teacher unions emerged. These unions adopted a strong unionist approach in dealing with educational change and policy. From the outset, the progressive unions had a combined political and educational agenda. They constructed themselves as non-racial and allied themselves to the vanguard organisations of the liberation struggle, notably the ANC, COSATU and the South African Communist Party (SACP). The alignment with particular liberation movements became a bone of contention during the talks. They attacked the ‘professional’ associations for their conservatism and apolitical stance (2004).

Teacher organisational unity was not a smooth sailing process as it happened within a repressive and manipulative system. The state responded with brute force to attempts by workers or civil society organisations to mobilise people to resist apartheid. Firstly, the government banned one of the progressive unions, NEUSA, in January 1988 after it had resolved its internal disputes and was going to promote the idea of teacher unity among its members. Secondly, ATASA, one of the largest teacher organisations insisted that unity be based on a charter for teacher unity that they had developed. Progressive unions rejected the charter, as its contents were similar in spirit to those contained in the De Lange Commission of 1981.

The De Lange Commission was set up by the government as a response to the aftermath of the June 1976 uprisings and its impact on education in black schools. The Commission made some critical findings and made recommendations. Firstly, the majority of black teachers were underqualified, i.e., they did not have the minimum qualifications to teach. Lack of qualified teachers coupled with the high teacher pupil ratio made the situation even more critical. Secondly, there was a lack of qualified Mathematics and Natural Science teachers. Thirdly, the disproportionate government spending between black and white pupils, as well as huge salary discrepancies between black and white teachers exacerbated the situation. The De Lange report recommended, among other things,
the establishment of a single ministry of education to look after all population groups. It also asserted the rights of universities and technikons to decide on the admission criteria and the racial make-up of their student bodies.

The All Africa Teachers’ Organisation and World Confederation of Organisations of the Teaching Profession convened a meeting with representatives of various teacher organisations from South Africa in Harare in April 1988. At the meeting, there were representatives from the ANC, representatives from progressive teacher unions, and COSATU. According to Harold Samuel (2008) the success of the Harare talks should be attributed to the negotiating skills of Jay Naidoo, the then General Secretary of COSATU. These two organisations were concerned that unity talks were not progressing well and unity was eluding the South African teaching fraternity. “After a week of intense discussion, all parties at the meeting unanimously agreed that the set of guidelines … should be taken back to their organisations as the basis for future teacher unity in South Africa” (Moll 1989:69).

Subsequent to the Harare talks and the guidelines, COSATU convened the first round of unity talks as prescribed by the document adopted in Harare in August 1988. It was evident in the meeting that there were many points of agreement by the various parties involved. The second round of talks was held in December 1988 where an English-speaking teacher organisation also expressed their desire to join the talks. Unfortunately, unity talks did not result in a single national teachers’ organisation but the formation of the National Professional Teachers’ Organisation of South Africa (NAPTOSA) and the South African Democratic Teachers’ Union (SADTU). According to Logan Govender:

Three key factors led to the demise of the unity initiative: failure to reach consensus on the question of political alignment, of which a strong undercurrent was differences over the ‘political’ role of teachers, both within and outside the classroom; disagreement on whether a unified body should be based on unionism or professionalism, encapsulated SADTU’s insistence
on the teacher’s right to strike as opposed to NAPTOSA’s emphasis on the learner’s entitlement to uninterrupted learning; and, whether the united organisation should be a federal or unitary structure (2004:272).

**Formation of SADTU**

The South African Democratic Teachers’ Union had multiple functions. According to Amoako, SADTU was formed not only to protect and fight for the improvement of the conditions under which teachers worked, but also had a covert political mandate to align its struggles with the national democratic struggle to end apartheid rule (2014).

![Figure 5: A call on all teacher unions to amalgamate under the umbrella of SADTU. Available at https://twitter.com/sadtunational. [Accessed 27 April 2018].](image)

**Conclusion**

This chapter has provided the context within which SADTU emerged. It is a very complex political context with a number of competing ideas and interests. The negotiations for a unified teacher organisation did not yield the desired fruit because of these competing interests. Instead of the formation of one unified teacher union, a powerful teacher union emerged that would change the face of employer-employee relations in the education sector. Furthermore, the chapter outlined how the struggle for liberation in South Africa formed a critical backdrop to the development of SADTU.
The 1990s represented a contestation of narratives premised on the paradigm shift from apartheid to democracy. The struggle for a unitary, non-racial, equal and democratic system of education, representative of all race groups, coincided with South Africa's struggle for liberation (Amoako 2013). Prior to the formation of SADTU, there was an existing teachers’ union called the Teachers’ Association of South Africa (TASA). It was the biggest teachers’ union in South Africa at the time, under the presidency of Poobie Naicker, consisting of Indian teachers. Education in South Africa
was polarised along racial lines; Indian teachers were therefore predisposed by the prevailing circumstances to affiliate with TASA. Membership was not open to other race groups. Ironically, TASA pursued a non-racial agenda and its constitution clearly stipulated that it was accommodating of all South African teachers irrespective of race.

On the other hand, coloured teachers had to bear the strain of racial oppression. They were under-paid, overworked and inadequately capacitated to deal with the spectrum of challenges in educational circles. The African Peoples’ Organisation which was the watchdog of the coloured peoples’ interests and Harold Cressy Abdurahman, spearheaded the formation of the Coloured Teachers’ Association known as the Teachers’ League of South Africa as far back as 1913 in Cape Town, aimed at addressing the plight of coloured teachers. TASA was persistent in its attempt to unify all teacher unions in South Africa. Such efforts led to the formation of SADTU in 1990. SADTU gained TASA’s membership, secretariat, support service, resources and a 15-storey building in Durban. The South African Democratic Teachers’ Union was a proliferation of all teacher formations that identified with the democratic ideals it sought to achieve. In 1989 more than 6 000 South African teachers embarked on their first strike demanding the employment of more teachers, reinstatement of teachers who had been previously dismissed, a reduction in the number of teaching periods as well as a salary increase of R500.00 across the board. As the process towards unity talks unfolded, there were a number of meetings within the respective teacher associations and teacher unions.

What the established teacher associations and the emergent progressive unions found difficult to deal with, was the repercussions of their engagement in the unity talks. The established associations had to come to terms with the realities of dissolving their organisations and amalgamating with SADTU, while the progressive teachers’ unions on the other hand, had serious reservations about joining teachers who were labelled as apartheid collaborators. Despite such misgivings, SADTU showed potential of becoming a
single teacher organisation with a projected membership of more than 200 000. A decision was then taken during the 7th round of National Teacher Unity talks on 23 and 24 June 1990 in East London, to launch this giant union which unified all teacher organisations pursuing the same cause. Criteria was then developed to determine the eligibility of membership (Zengele 2013). The following teacher organisations were part of the unity talks and were willing to sign up with SADTU: African Teachers’ Association of South Africa (ATASA) comprising Cape Teachers’ Association of South Africa (CATU), Natal African Teachers’ Union (NATU), Transvaal United African Teachers’ Association (TUATA), Orange Free State African Teachers’ Association (OFSATA), National Education Union of South Africa (NEUSA) in Natal, Transvaal, Orange Free State, Eastern Cape and Transkei. Teachers’ Association of South Africa (TASA) in Natal, Transvaal, Eastern Cape and Western Cape. Mamelodi Teachers’ Union (MATU), East London Progressive Teachers’ Union (ELPTU), Eastern Cape Teachers’ Union (ECTU), Western Cape Teachers’ Union (WECTU), Democratic Teachers’ Union (DETU), Education for a Democratic and Aware South Africa (EDASA), Progressive Teachers’ League (PTL), Progressive Teachers’ Union (PTU), Transvaal Association of Teachers (TAT), and the Society of Natal Teachers (SONAT). The following areas were demarcated and earmarked as SADTU regions: Northern Transvaal, Southern Transvaal, Natal, Orange Free State, Northern Cape, Eastern Cape, Western Cape as well as South Western Cape. The first major challenge that SADTU was faced with, was the formation of strong and purely democratic SADTU branches in the above regions. Further regional demarcation would be considered as and when the need arose (Chrisholm 1999).
The launch of a union

Figure 7: The poster indicating the advertisement of the conference about the launch of SADTU in 1990. Available at http://www.sahistory.org.za/sites/default/files/DC/pos19901006.043.053.0471/pos19901006.043.053.0471.thumb.gif. [Accessed 24 April 2018].

The South African Democratic Teachers’ Union was officially launched on 6 October 1990 in Johannesburg, after lengthy deliberations aimed at uniting the once racially polarised teacher organisations into a unitary structure with a common vision and purpose which entailed the re-alignment of South Africa’s education system along democratic principles. The launch was attended by teacher representatives and educationists from around the world. These delegates welcomed the birth of SADTU as an important step towards meaningful change in education. Among the international delegates were: Tom Bediako of the All Africa Teachers’ Organisation (AATO), Mary Futrell of the United States of America, president of the Canadian Teacher Federation, K O Kallaghan, president of the Swaziland National Association of Teachers, Albert Shabangu and the president of the Botswana Teachers’ Union, Mr Mothusi. In his keynote address, Nelson Mandela expressed his concern about the inequalities that characterised the education system in South Africa. He further stated that it would be in the best interest of the country to resolve this crisis. SADTU was not only formed to fight for and protect the rights of teachers, as a product of the political struggle it was mandated to join forces with the national liberation struggle to orchestrate the demise of apartheid.
SADTU was launched with signatories from more than eighteen organisations, despite mounting tension from the opposition ranks. Other teacher organisations which were part of the unity talks, reached an impasse on the dissolution of their structures except for the Western Cape Teachers’ Union and a couple of others. The majority of the established teacher associations with the notable exception of Teachers’ Association of South Africa (TASA), organised themselves into a separate union called the National Professional Teachers’ Organisation of South Africa (NAPTOSA). Coming from different maps of the past, it became difficult for some teachers’ organisations to find common ground. They could not identify with the philosophy, vision and mission of SADTU. The African Teachers’ Association of South Africa (ATASA) for example, declared its intention to dismantle its office. On the other hand, the Cape Teachers’ Professional Association (CTPA), declared its differences with SADTU and withdrew from the union (*The Leader* 1990). In 1991, during the Temporary Teachers Campaign in the Western Cape, CTPA did not identify with such a course and persuaded its members to withdraw from SADTU. One of the reasons CTPA cited was placing professionals and unionists in equal proportions.

Soon after its launch, SADTU had serious clashes with the Department of Education and Training (DET) and the Ministry of
Education and Culture when it embarked on a defiance campaign against the departmental regulations on inspection and evaluation. SADTU called for the expulsion of school inspectors and demanded an immediate curtailment of inspection and evaluation in order to create a healthy working environment for the teachers and restore their dignity.

**Practicalities of the birthing process**

Pivotal to the formation and launch of SADTU, were the challenges of diverse magnitudes emanating from the hostile political climate in which the country was engulfed in the 1990s (Cameron 1991). In KwaZulu-Natal for instance, it was difficult for the union to get its programme of action off the ground. Schools in the province were controlled and managed by the KwaZulu government. Police brutality and the presence of the Zulu Police (ZP), made it almost impossible for SADTU to form branches, and they were circumstantially compelled to operate underground. The lack of free political activity was exacerbated by the factional fights between the African National Congress (ANC) and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) supporters. The unbanning of political organisations and the release of political prisoners, particularly Nelson Mandela, fanned the flames of political violence in the country.

The growth of SADTU was somewhat hampered by the topsy-turvy political situation in the country’s provinces. In Atlantis for example, SADTU structures were only formed in 1993 in response to the government’s policy of rationalisation, the establishment of the white Model-C schools as well as the reduction of the state subsidy which divided education along racial and economic lines. In essence, this meant the redeployment of teachers to remote areas, where most of the schools were inadequately resourced, the exclusion of learners from poor backgrounds who could not afford the exorbitant costs of the Model-C schools, which were adequately resourced and better positioned to offer high quality education. Cuts in provincial and departmental education budgets alongside the retrenchment of teachers due to budgetary constraints, compounded
the problem. Teachers across the country mobilised and formed SADTU branches in order to ensure equal representation of union members and to intensify the struggle against the education system riddled with various forms of discrimination and segregation.

Teachers nationwide were obliged to call meetings under the banner of SADTU, to discuss the crisis in South Africa's education system. The outcome of these meetings allowed the reality to set in that SADTU was the only union that was sufficiently capacitated to respond to the needs and demands of teachers in the country. These sentiments were echoed by John Gasty, an interviewee who was principal at Robinhood Special School. He remarked:

We still came from the meeting empty, after that meeting we realised that these people will not take us anywhere, we must become part of a more progressive structure. Me and the other three people were in the executive sports union. We were only four and started to organise the SADTU branch. We started talking amongst ourselves about SADTU, we contacted the provincial people and set up a branch here in Atlantis in 1993, almost sixty percent of the teachers joined the union.

In Northern Natal, a paradox unfolded when the Minister of Education in KwaZulu-Natal, Lionel Mtshali visited the region. As a staunch member of the Inkatha Freedom Party, he launched a scathing attack on SADTU when he visited Siyamukela High School in 1992, likening SADTU members to barking small puppies. Such remarks infuriated teachers including the affiliates of the Inkatha Freedom Party, who jointly criticised Mtshali for lacking professionalism and sensitivity to the plight of the teachers. They eventually joined SADTU, thus forming a new branch in eMadadeni. They would visit schools against the will of the principals and demand to address teachers (SADTU News 1992).

Mobilising teachers and establishing branches was not so difficult, because of an already existing progressive union named the East London Progressive Teachers' Union (ELPTU). In the Western Transvaal, the following comrades were instrumental in organising
SADTU branches in that region: Oupa Sebolai, Lucky Tsagai and Jobie Motumi. Recruitment and mobilising teachers presented challenges. During a scheduled interview with Jobie Motumi, he pointed out that there were other logistical problems with which they had to grapple. They did not have sufficient office space to carry out administrative duties of the union. They were rescued by one educator who was in charge of the Teachers Centre. He allowed them to utilise it for their meetings and other administrative obligations. Authorities in the former homelands and self-governing states particularly KwaZulu-Natal and Ciskei compounded the problems SADTU was faced with by their intransigence. The teacher activists as well as the cadres, were not deterred by such intransigence, they continued tirelessly to mark the territory of SADTU in those regions.

The defiance of DETs regulation on inspection was intensified. The SADTU branch in Witbank for instance, persuaded teachers, principals and learners to prevent school inspectors and departmental officials from gaining access to the school premises. It further ordered schools within the area to conduct an internal examination in contravention of the DET’s arrangements. The state responded by instituting legal action against SADTU. The Minister of Education and Training at the time, Stoffel van der Merwe, sought an interim order from the court to restrain the union from persuading principals, teachers and learners to defy departmental orders. The court requested SADTU to provide a convincing reason for such instigation. Subsequent events suggested that the union did not comply with the court’s request. In December 1990, matters came to a head when the DET subjected members of the union, particularly temporary teachers to disciplinary action for refusing departmental evaluation and inspection of their work, thus threatening them with dismissal. SADTU condemned these threats in the strongest possible terms, however, DET went ahead and dismissed teachers for non-compliance including those who supported the move (Anders 1990).

It is apparent that the challenges that SADTU was confronted with since its inception, were deeper than the surface suggests.
Testimonies by some interviewees during the interviewing sessions conducted across the country, clearly attest to this. For example, Mr Mahlangu who worked for SADTU from the 2nd March 1998 as Regional Administrator for the Western Transvaal Region mentioned that the top priority at the time was to establish regions. It was difficult to get the process off the ground because of the lack of office space in which to operate. The union members had to carry out administrative duties from their homes and sometimes their cars came in handy. As time progressed, regional offices were established and the province provided for the basics. However, furniture was in short supply, each office was given six chairs, one typist chair, a computer including a stand, a photocopier and a Canon printer, just enough to start off. In 1998, Regional Administrators were hired on a one year contract, earning R1 500.00 per month. As the regions grew rapidly, so was the demand for Regional Administrators. Their positions were therefore converted to permanent employment.

SADTU was obligated to consolidate the unity of teachers including the sustenance of its growth and development. It also needed to change the perception of the national and perhaps international communities about its vision and mission. It was mostly viewed as the union that sought to destabilise education in the country, perpetuating the abdication of academic responsibilities by its members. It began with the promotion of constructive engagement in the schooling system by teachers and learners. Cultural events for instance, were organised alongside sporting activities and music competitions. On the music front, SADTU took it upon itself to organise competitions, prescribe songs, book venues, and buy trophies and ascertain equal representation of all the branches. These competitions would commence at regional level and thereafter proceed to provincial and national levels (Bot 1992).

According to Peter Sibusiso Shube, who was elected in 1993 as SADTU’s Provincial Secretary in Mpumalanga, the initial challenge for him was the amalgamation of almost fifteen regions into one provincial structure. Communicating with comrades was a logistical nightmare, because there was no data available for contact purposes,
reliable means of transport or appropriate office space. Although there is no concrete evidence to determine the veracity of such claims, Shube’s version of the narrative suggests that the amalgamation of regions continued to pose challenges for the union. Coming from the former homelands namely Kwa-Ndebele, Ka-Ngwane, Gazankulu and KwaZulu, presented ethnicity as a challenge. It became difficult to draw parallels among these ethnic groups, uniting them into one structure. Trade-offs were made quite often in order to transfer expertise accordingly and to consolidate the leadership of SADTU across all regions. Another important task that was difficult to carry out because of financial constraints was the growth of the union through mobilisation and recruitment. On the administration front, there was reluctance in processing the membership forms, probably due to the transitional phase the country was undergoing, which necessitated the merger of all departments. The fluidity of the political situation had a detrimental effect on the consolidation of the union’s structures. The monthly submissions of stop orders, for instance, were not consistently adhered to by new members, resulting in a dire financial position. Progress was hampered by these limitations, without dampening the morale of SADTU’s activists. As time progressed, money started trickling in, gradually swelling the coffers of the union. Shube recalled that each month the union collected not less than R15 000.00. The union managed to raise 40% in subscriptions, which enabled it to open its own office at Ka-Mkholo on the 5th floor, with one desk, two chairs and a typewriter. Shube and Foster who were Administrative Officers, continued their recruitment campaign despite such limitations.

Elements of regionalism played out in SADTU’s dealings with the former homelands particularly Kwa-Ndebele and Ka-Ngwane. During the wars fought with the Department of Education and Training, comrades from these regions felt proud about their contribution to these wars. They went further to recognise comrades from these regions as their leaders. Peter Shube remembers how union activists from other regions were marginalised and were not considered for leadership positions. He once worked in Ka-Ngwane, then joined DET and therefore got support from both sides. The
element of regionalism brought to the fore the need for unity, given the resultant administrative conundrum. The centrality of SADTU’s Mpumalanga office was another cause for concern. There were two suggestions; one block preferred Middleburg and the other block advanced a political argument that, either Nelspruit or Witbank should be considered for the central office of the union, because they were both viewed as capitals of Mpumalanga at the time. Some of the factors that were worth considering for Nelspruit to house SADTU’s central office were, accessibility to the Members of Executive Council (MEC’s) for Education office and the fact that most of the union’s activities were taking place in Nelspruit. On the contrary, other comrades felt that the office of the union should be in Middelburg, chiefly because the Department of Education was establishing its administration office there. Access to both offices would be much easier and cost effective. Eventually the union decided to establish its central office in Nelspruit (Moll 1991).

One of the responsibilities with which the union was charged, was changing the national and international perception about its vision and mission. SADTU’s mission was deeper than the surface suggested. It did not only represent the aspirations of educators in the country, but also ensured the proper functionality of other structures within the sphere of education, such as the learner representative structures as well as the School Governing Bodies (SGBs). While most educators were employed on a temporary basis indefinitely, there were those who were appointed permanently right from the outset. The politics of the Bantustans was another hurdle to overcome as dealing with principals from those areas, was a logistical nightmare as they were rigid and obstinate. SADTU’s perceived alignment with the African National Congress (ANC) and the United Democratic Front (UDF), accounted for the victimisation of its members. The political climate in the early 1990s was not favourable enough for the union to openly espouse its political ideologies and aspirations. The Bantustans Authorities on the other hand, had so much power over other structures of the liberation struggle, which enabled them to dictate terms in some quarters. According to Nonyane and interviewee, there were instances of brutality by the
hit squad called the Mankweng Boys, who enforced the regulations imposed on people by the Bantustans Authorities atrociously. There was clearly no free political activity at the time. Union activists would be arrested for organising marches and participating in them. Knowledge of human rights and effectively dealing with their abuse and violation was essential in the circumstances (Amoako 2013).

The leadership structures of SADTU deemed it fit to empower union activists across branches to tackle human rights issues with precision. They were also familiar with the rights of the educators and learners, as well as the legal framework of the governing structures such as the SGBs. Another challenge that SADTU faced, was to educate teachers on the policies of the union, their job description, code of conduct and other aspects relating to administration and professionalism. Effective mechanisms had to be put in place to ensure compliance. Nonyane's version does negate the notion that SADTU condones ill-discipline of union members and their abdication of professional responsibilities. Leadership training was formalised to further capacitate union members in various structures. They therefore underwent training at Ditsila Training College in Gauteng. Another aspect which posed a challenge to the union's composition, was gender. SADTU has been gender sensitive since its inception in 1990. However, most women who were earmarked for leadership positions within the union were reluctant to take them up, probably due to some societal stereotypes. The union went on to protect women from the gross violation of human rights, particularly by the Department of Education in the Bantustans, which deprived female educators of the right to pregnancy. They were not allowed to go on accouchement leave and the union managed to curtail this infringement of natural rights (The New Nation 1991).

SADTU's militancy was, by and large, informed by the injustices perpetuated by the apartheid system of education. Pat Zwane, the Director of an FET College in Mpumalanga and one of the leaders of the union, recalled some of the instances of gross human rights violation particularly in the basic education sector. Some principals would abuse their positions by creating unfavourable working
conditions for teachers, which included among other things, getting paid on time. In one instance, recalled Pat Zwane the principal and his wife who was also a teacher at the same school, would leave the school early at month-end, to collect teachers’ cheques from the circuit office. They would spend a couple of hours shopping and running errands, return to school around 13h00 and convene a staff meeting, making it difficult for teachers to cash their cheques. Teachers at the time were not treated with respect and dignity. Life in the rural areas was easily manageable for teachers. There was reliance on agricultural products so less money was spent on food, there were no bonds and educators could therefore live within their means. The circumstantial trekking from rural to urban areas, presented a new set of challenges. The cost of living became high, bonds were unbearable resulting in serious cash-flow problems, and alcohol abuse and other related socio-economic problems emerged. Departmental inspection of teachers’ work was another source of discontent. There was a file called the Green File and teachers were to comply with the requirements thereof. Teachers were required to state their lesson objectives, scheme of work, methodology, teaching aids, assessment tasks and so forth, in the Green File. They were threatened with dismissal for non-compliance (Chrisholm 1999).

Figure 9: SADTU teachers march in Gauteng in support of their wage demands on the 12 May 1995 (picture by W Matlala).
Fighting against the country's oppressive education system became a collaborative effort. All teachers who were victims of such oppression, even those who were not affiliated to SADTU, identified with its cause. Learners were also affected by the unjust system of education and they joined in the national struggle for a non-racial, equal and democratic education. Setting the liberation struggle in motion required some insights into the essential realities of a democratic education system (Christie 1991). The union had to draw on the experiences of other countries both nationally and internationally. Workshops were organised by SADTU's leadership structures on the unionisation of teachers, financial security and management, administration, leadership, ethical and professional conduct, as well as rights and responsibilities of educators. Gender imbalance was another issue to be tackled. The position of principal in secondary and high school was traditionally a male-bastion. Female principals were confined to primary schools under the pretext that they were incapable of providing leadership at a higher level. In its infant stages, SADTU was charged with so many responsibilities, which called for capacity building. The union, therefore, advocated a system that ensured transparency, fairness and integrity when effecting appointments across the board. Professional qualification, leadership qualities, experience relevant to the position applied for, were some of the sole determinants of appointments as opposed to gender and political affiliation. Furthermore, SADTU introduced an Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) aimed at developing teachers holistically. Educators were given the latitude to select assessors and query the results of assessment based on their performance. Teachers accepted this system of evaluation.

There were many other challenges that precipitated the unionisation of South African teachers. In an interview Regina Mhaule, MEC for Education in Mpumalanga and former SADTU chairperson at the Hazyview branch, shared her insights into the operational glitches that the union had to overcome during the initial stages of its formation. Gender was an issue in the leadership structures of SADTU (Regina Mhaule Interview 18-06-2014). Female comrades were not trusted with leadership positions.
They felt marginalised to the periphery of the liberation struggle. There were disparities between male and female educators particularly on salaries. Male teachers earned more than their female counterparts. Married women were paid less than the unmarried ones, based on the assumption that their husbands were taking care of them. White teachers earned better salaries than their black colleagues for doing the same kind of job. The union had to address such disparities right across the racial spectrum. Negotiations for parity started. It became difficult for SADTU to get through this challenge, because the beneficiaries of the apartheid system were reluctant to shed their benefits for parity purposes. Reducing housing subsidies and car allowances for example, was problematic. Some form of compromise had to be resorted to and consequently the union declared a moratorium on 100% subsidies for all teachers irrespective of race, gender or political affiliation. Educators who were already in the system would retain their benefits and the new rule would only apply to those entering the system.

Legitimising membership of SADTU was another challenge. The Department of Education and Training would not effect stop orders so as to authenticate and recognise the union’s membership. It regarded SADTU as a political party seeking to destabilise the country’s education system. The union continued to swell its membership despite these hurdles. Arrests were rise after the formation of the union. SADTU activists were arrested for holding public meetings, organising marches, mobilising teachers as well as campaigning for membership and support in their fight against the ills of the country’s education system (The Leader 1990). They were also subjected to various forms of police brutality and atrocities for their political activism. The primary objective, according to Regina Mhaule, was to halt the operational capacity of SADTU, by targeting the powerful and most influential leaders of the union such as Sipho Sukati, David D Mabuza and Brains Zulu. The volatility of the situation then, compelled union activists to go into hiding. A place called Kuruman in Hazyview, which was a deserted village, seldom visited by people became a sanctuary for comrades evading arrest.
The amalgamation of regions into Mpumalanga province after 1994 was another challenge. Comrades were not familiar with the political background of their new leaders and there were serious gaps in the historical knowledge of SADTU. They only recognised and respected those leaders whose political roles they knew and with whom they identified. There were instances where comrades refused to be led by leaders coming from particular regions. Mhaule maintains that the distorted version of the history of SADTU, accounted for this confusion. An objective and properly documented history would shed some light on the political activists who made a viable contribution to the formation and functionality of SADTU. The lack of free political activity in the last vestiges of apartheid hampered the effective operations of the union. Comrades had to conceal their political identity for fear of reprisals. The unbanning of the African National Congress as well as other political organisations in the early 1990s, unleashed another spectre of challenges for the union. People surfaced from nowhere and claimed leadership positions within the structures of SADTU. The political situation was manipulated to achieve selfish ends and the distortion of history therefore became inevitable in the circumstances. It was unclear whom the pioneers of the struggle for equality in education were, and whose prestige the leadership of SADTU was supposed to be building upon. The union was obligated to recognise leadership icons whose track record proved impeccable.

According to the experiences of Shindo Tswala, who is currently Chief Negotiator of SADTU for Mpumalanga province, upward mobility within the ranks of the previous education system, was cause for concern. Teachers were restricted to post level one for a much longer period, despite good qualifications and a proven record of excellence in their fields of expertise. Circuit managers and departmental officials would promote those teachers who were in their good books to the Head of Department, Deputy Principal and even Principal positions. The second issue was salary. Teachers were generally underpaid, and to worsen matters, were not paid according to their qualifications. The salaries earned by teachers at the time, did not match the volume of work they did or their productive capacity. In some cases, the bureaucratic structure that ideally influences the
functionality of schools was flawed at a fundamental level. Teachers had no say in the running of these institutions of learning and dictatorship seemed to be the preferred style of leadership by most principals. The lack of basic resources affected teaching and learning largely. The appalling state of the classrooms, lack of physical resources such as telephones and fax machines, made life difficult for both teachers and learners. Most schools in the Tweefontein area where Shindo Tswala was teaching were functioning without electricity and classrooms were dilapidated. The creation of a conducive environment for effective teaching and learning was one of the major challenges with which SADTU was faced. These issues were raised with the relevant structures within the government over a lengthy period, but nothing was forthcoming (The New Nation 1991). Political activists like Shindo Tswala were compelled to galvanise teachers into action. They sought representation in order to fight against the ills of the education system which entailed inter alia, the unfavourable conditions under which teachers worked, the victimisation of those educators who were vocal about such abuses and the autocratic style of leadership by most principals. Heads of departments were not appointed according to their fields of specialisation. The quality of the professional services rendered was therefore compromised. The issue of representation culminated in the formation of the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) for all registered unions. However, the ELRC could not cater for the needs and demands of all its members, because they had different goals to achieve. The prime objective of the ELRC was to tackle educational issues and facilitate the signing of collective agreements which would later become the law that would govern the country’s education system. Furthermore, the ELRC sought to narrow the existing gap between blacks and whites in various respects, although its success rate was minimal. Admittedly, the union did not have a good grasp of the essential realities of unionism. The rationale behind the joining of SADTU was another challenge (Paddy and Jarbandhan 2014). Some teachers joined the union simply because of its popularity, as opposed to understanding its vision and mission. According to Shindo Tswala, they did not comprehend ideological
orientation. There had to be a clear line of demarcation between professionalism and workerism. It was imperative for union members to be educated in these ideals so they could understand what set SADTU apart from other unions. Getting workers to come to real terms with exploitation for instance, was a mission.

As recalled by Shindo Tswala, there was lack of commitment among union members, evidenced by poor turnout for meetings. Political education in his view was an absolute necessity. It would capacitate teachers to deal with operational issues effectively, they were not schooled enough in the ideals of unionism in general and SADTU in particular. Some members would manipulate the union’s agenda in order to achieve their own selfish ends. The goal posts were therefore shifted and it became difficult for the union to actualise their set goals and objectives. Another challenge was SADTU’s alliance with the ANC. In some quarters, there were serious reservations about SADTU being an appendage of the ANC. Teachers who were not affiliated to the ANC found it difficult to embrace the political ideology of the union independent of the ANC which left them with no option but to join other unions, thereby swelling the ranks of the opposition. SADTU had to clearly demonstrate its independence and the specific areas where commonalities prevailed, with regard to its alliance with the ANC. Although the policies of the union were informed and influenced by the political agenda of the ANC, SADTU needed to convince its entire membership that it was a trade union charged with the responsibility of ensuring better working conditions and the welfare of its members across the board. There were other factors that hampered the operational capacity of SADTU. The bureaucratic structure for instance, was not so clear on the specific roles and responsibilities of the office bearers. Tswala further maintained that even the constitution did not provide specific guidelines on the duties assigned to the desks, the appointees thereof did not understand what was really expected of them.

Nomvula Ngcobo, an interviewee, and a member of SADTU in Kwa-Mashu, KwaZulu-Natal, gave her insights into the challenges that union members went through after the formation and launch
of SADTU. The rising of the union was suppressed on all fronts within the KwaZulu government. Inspectors and principals were set on curtailing the growth of this emerging union, by denying union affiliates permission to hold meetings. They were referred to as members of Umkhonto Wesizwe and their subscriptions for union membership were not taken. In essence, their membership was not endorsed; they were muzzled from espousing their discontent and what they stood for (Chrisholm 1999). Ngcobo recalled fighting for the reinstatement of teachers who were fired because of their active participation in one of the strikes. Teaching and learning came to a standstill particularly in Kwa-Mashu and Entuzuma schools. The march was divided into three branches namely: Inhlakanipho, InqabakaZulu and Ntuzuma. The strike lasted for two months. There was a contingency plan in place for the matric learners in the affected areas. The union members embarked on a catch-up programme from 1pm to 5pm on weekdays in order to salvage the situation and ensure quality passes for the matric learners. Ngcobo further cited abuse of power and gross violation of human rights by the circuit inspectors and principals as compelling reasons to join SADTU. The few cases of challenges facing the union after its formation pushed SADTU into militancy. The challenges of the birthing process were progressing with rapid strides. At some point, there were competing perspectives on the ideological orientation between the National Teachers’ Union (NATU) and SADTU particularly in KwaZulu-Natal. According to Mthoko Mthembu’s version of experiences as a SADTU member in the Uthungulu region, who also played a pivotal role toward the formation of the union, new teachers were intimidated by their principals to join NATU (Interview 17-02-2014). Prospects of membership growth for SADTU in that region were looking bleak. The union leaders had to devise effective recruitment strategies in order to counteract NATU’s modus operandi. The challenge was deeper than the surface suggested. Political affiliation was an issue in places like Ulundi and Kwa-Nongoma. At one stage, more than two hundred teachers were fired in Kwa-Nongoma for being affiliates of SADTU, recalls Mthoko. SADTU negotiated for their official release and had to find
vacancies for them in Empangeni and Durban. It was a challenge to recruit teachers to join SADTU in areas that were strongholds of the Inkatha Freedom Party. The leadership of the union in the Uthungulu region fought against all odds to swell the membership of SADTU particularly in Kwa-Nongoma and Ulundi. They also worked very hard to reduce hostility in those areas and make the environment worker-friendly. Furthermore, they increased their recruitment strategy by capitalising on the vulnerability of teachers especially in rural areas. These educators were often threatened with dismissal for challenging the authorities on the conditions of service which were found wanting. They sought protection and recognition as professionals, which SADTU promised to provide (Sorour 1992).

David Qonge, one of the interviewees who was a counsellor at Umhlathuze Municipality, recalled one incident in Kwa-Qgikazi, where the issue of fired teachers was tabled in a full seating of the IFP. The common goal that united all members of that community at the time was the re-instatement of those teachers, following the resultant plight of their families, as most of them were breadwinners. The union therefore assured the community that it would fight tooth and nail for their re-instatement. Such commitment was enough to earn the respect of the Kwa-Qgikazi community. SADTU membership in that area grew stronger despite the different political backgrounds of teachers. Added to that David Qonge and Mthoko Mthembu went further to challenge the criteria particularly on the appointment of principals (Interview 17-02-2014). A meeting was convened by the Department of Education and Training, to announce the newly appointed principal without following standard procedures and laws governing such appointments. Taking such bold steps often resulted in victimisation. The newly-appointed teachers would wait for six months to get their salaries. SADTU fought against the wanton practice that had a demoralising effect on teachers. The union’s resolute action against the ills of the apartheid education system, accounted for its membership growth. Mthembu and Qonge went beyond recruitment for membership as an ultimate goal for starters, to fighting corruption and unethical conduct among teachers (*The Natal Mercury* 1991).
Mthembu and Qonge were set on protecting the image of SADTU and demystifying the notion that it only sought to disrupt education and perpetuate corruption, radicalism as well as unprofessional conduct within the teaching fraternity. During the formative years of the union a spectre of challenges occurred which required drastic measures. Confronting authoritative principals who were mostly affiliated to NATU, was indeed a problem. The union’s agenda was clear to everyone; it was representative of the plight and aspirations of all teachers despite their diverse political orientations. The common goal for all was total emancipation from the shackles of apartheid which had a bearing on the education system. Most leadership, administrative and management positions were held by NATU affiliates, who were also responsible for the processing of SADTU’s membership application forms. In some cases, the union’s subscription forms would be discarded, but nevertheless, the membership continued to grow reaching the highs of six thousand between 1999-2003. Pivotal to the functionality challenges that the union was faced with since its inception, was the competing recruitment strategies between SADTU and NATU across the Natal regions. In essence, there was fierce competition for political space between the ANC and the IFP. There was also intimidation and political violence particularly in the Kwa-Nongoma and Ulundi regions, recalled Nene who was a member of SADTU and the provincial organiser of the union in KwaZulu-Natal. Teachers continued to join the union, however they halted their activities for fear of victimisation by the rival union. It really was a mission to sell the union’s political ideology, which was congruent with the vision and mission of the ANC, particularly in the erstwhile IFP strongholds namely: eMadadeni, eNquthu, eNkandla, as well as, Bergville. Another spectre of challenge in the birthing process was capacity. As SADTU was growing in leaps and bounds in Northern Natal, there were not enough leaders to service all the structures. Northern Natal was, therefore, divided into two regions namely: Inland Region and Northern Natal. The Inland Region comprised Vryheid, Paul Pietersburg, Phongolo, Ulundi, Kwa-Nongoma, Melmoth, eNkandla and Babanango. Northern Natal consisted of
Escort, Bergville, eMnambithi, Washbank, Dundee, Newcastle, Osizweni, Dannhouser and eNquthu. The total number of leaders at the time was twelve, as time progressed, especially after the launch of structures, it was reduced to eight. Co-ordinating the affairs of the union through meetings, was a logistical nightmare in the circumstances. Nevertheless, the leadership structures of SADTU fought against all odds to consolidate their recruitment campaign aimed at swelling the membership of the union across all regions. It was quite apparent that NATU presented itself as a formidable union seeking to monopolise the unionisation of all teachers in the former Natal province (Amoako 2013).

Edmund Nxumalo, a SADTU representative from eMpangeni, shared his perspectives of the challenges faced by the union immediately after its formation in 1990. One of the major problems was communication. The union leaders had to travel long distances in order to get information across which was exacerbated by the difficult terrain in most parts of the province. They relied on one car for travelling across the Natal regions by the chairperson, co-ordinating the affairs of the union. He would travel from Jozini to as far as Stanger, just to attend a meeting and return on the same day. Other leaders who did not have cars of their own, had to use public transport and put up with the limitations thereof. Nxumalo recalls spending a night on his way to a meeting venue, because of the lack of transport. Political strife in most parts of the province, was one big logistical challenge which confronted SADTU. Many regions were polarised along political lines, degenerating into a tug of war between the ANC and IFP. In Jozini for example, the IFP outnumbered the ANC in terms of membership. It therefore became difficult for the union to carry out its recruitment campaign under such conditions. One of the strategies used by SADTU was political education, with the assistance of the ANC leadership. They offered such education to their members and the communities at large. Their strategy was appropriately timed as the country was undergoing transformation. It was much easier for people to identify with the union’s transformation agenda, because they were yearning for change (Zengele 2013).
The safety of SADTU members particularly in areas that were predominantly IFP was another cause for concern. The union leadership had to put some mechanisms in place in order to quell intimidation and other related intolerances. Unfortunately these mechanisms were unsuccessful due to the prevalent culture of eliminating competition in the province. The flow of information from the officials of the Education Department down to the teachers was another challenge. Circuit inspectors would not release all information meant for teachers. The union leaders had to find ways to keep their members well informed about issues of fundamental importance, even if it meant bridging protocol at some point. They were left with no option but to challenge the bureaucratic practices of the education system. In essence, the birth of SADTU posed a serious threat to the political forces underpinning the education system at the time. It sought to dismantle the apartheid patterns which manifested themselves in the country's educational policies. When one ponders the practicalities of the birthing process of SADTU, featuring clearly mapped out objectives, it stands to reason that the transformation of South Africa's education system which, entailed inter alia, equal distribution of resources, change of the curriculum, creating a conducive teaching and learning environment as well as support structures, was the core business of the union since its formation. The contextual factors in Natal were somewhat peculiar compared to the magnitude of challenges that SADTU was confronted with in other provinces. The union had gone to greater lengths to prove its mettle by surviving the onslaught.

The issue of rationalisation and severance packages was another area of contestation between SADTU and the Department of Education and Training. The main objective was to address overstaffing especially in urban schools, whereas schools in the rural areas remained understaffed. However, teachers did not view the redeployment process in the same light. The criteria was somewhat manipulated by some principals in order to eradicate the trouble makers. The union considered that practice as a gross violation of teachers rights and an infringement of their freedom of expression. The victims of this kind of abuse were often those teachers who
challenged the ills of the education system, as well as the autocratic administration of some principals.

John Gutsy, the principal of Robbenhood Special School in Atlantis, Cape Town, shared his perspectives on the challenges faced by SADTU during the first five years of its formation. There was a change of mindset after the regime change in South Africa. Political education enabled teachers to understand the essential realities of democracy particularly on the education front. The cause that SADTU sought to champion was clearly understood by educators across the board. As the majority of South Africans identified with the vision and mission of the ANC, it became a lot easier for teachers to buy into the political agenda of SADTU. The union took it upon itself to challenge the manner in which rationalisation of teachers was carried out. It called for transparency, fairness, consultation and accountability (Bot 1992).

One of the key values of SADTU was curriculum transformation and delivery. As the union was mounting pressure on the government for a new curriculum that would meet the needs and demands of a democratic South Africa, it also exerted the same kind of pressure on its members to deliver the curriculum without fail. The public needed to be convinced that SADTU did not endeavour to disrupt education as was perceived by many, but to fast track...
radical transformation of education in the country. Union members in the Western Cape worked very hard in fulfilling their contractual obligations in order to get a positive message across about SADTU’s agenda. They made sure that their struggle for a non-racial, equal education for all South Africans did not interfere with their academic responsibilities. Unlike in the former Natal province, the main competitors for membership and recognition in the Western Cape were SADTU and CTPA. Contextual factors were different in the sense that, political and ideological differences between the two unions did not culminate in violence that claimed human lives. However, there were issues of intimidation and victimisation, which characterised the unionisation of teachers in the province. Despite the magnitude of these challenges, SADTU managed to grow its membership and convince teachers who were affiliated to other unions to identify with its cause. Similarly, the majority of schools in the Western Cape were run by principals who were members of CTPA. It was difficult for SADTU to raise its head in the circumstances. It had no option as the rising union but to challenge the abuse of power by such principals, who compelled teachers especially the new ones, to take up membership with CTPA.

The capacitation of union members was one of the top priorities. Capacity-building workshops were organised in order to compensate for the skills gaps among teachers. Charles Mafinesen, former office bearer of SADTU in Atlantis and school principal, attested to this move by the union and added that teachers were empowered to respond effectively to the challenges posed by the previous education system, which also affected their functionality in the school environment. Political education was offered by helping teachers to understand their contexts better. Another challenge facing the rising union was to deal with conservative principals who demonstrated a sense of entitlement, creating an impression that they literally owned the schools. The majority of schools in the Western Cape were therefore inaccessible for SADTU’s activities including recruitment for membership. Mafinesen conceded that CTPA, which was predominantly coloured, was racist in its
composition. SADTU appeared to be the union that represented the aspirations of all teachers, irrespective of race, in its struggle for a radical transformation of the country’s education system. Non-racialism, equal education, equitable distribution of resources, to mention but a few, were core values that underpin the agenda of SADTU. The union’s clearly espoused goals were more appealing to the psychology of the teachers across the political spectrum, thereby threatening the sustainability of its rival, CTPA in the Western Cape. It was quite apparent that all attempts at sabotaging the rise of SADTU in the entire country were aborted due to the unrelenting stance taken by the union against any form of opposition (The Leader 1990).

The Free State province had its own version of challenges following the birth of SADTU. Disebo Mabota, who had been teaching in the Free State province before the formation of SADTU, recalls the gross violation of teachers rights by the principals who were members of the union called the Orange Free State African Teachers’ Association (OFSATA). They would compel teachers, especially the new ones, to join their union. Non-compliance in that regard resulted in victimisation, which entailed inter alia, denial of promotion and other opportunities for growth and development. Mabota conceded that OFSATA was a union that represented the aspirations of the employers more than the employees. These problems called for union intervention. The birth of SADTU was characterised by common challenges in most of the country’s provinces. The processing of membership forms by the Department of Education officials was a logistical nightmare even in the Free State. The aim was to stifle the growth of SADTU. Stop orders were not authorised in order to legitimise the union’s membership. Such acts of sabotage did not deter the union from pursuing its transformation agenda. A substantial number of teachers, who were affiliated to the rival unions, joined the ranks of SADTU at an alarming rate. The appointment criteria presented serious challenges, as there was a lack of transparency with regard to the standard procedures to be followed. OFSATA members were often earmarked for senior positions and unduly appointed.
The leadership of SADTU advocated for transparency, fairness, honesty, integrity as well as merit as the sole determinant of appointments. The onus was therefore on the union to adequately capacitate their members, thereby enabling them to achieve high levels of competence in their fields of expertise. Union members were also obligated to uphold high moral and ethical standards. They were expected to adhere to the code of conduct prescribed for all teachers by the South African Council of Educators (SACE). Furthermore, they were educated on the kinds of consequences they would face for non-compliance. Such commitment by the union debunked the myth that SADTU was just a radical union seeking to destabilise the country’s education system, by eroding professionalism in the teaching fraternity, perpetuating ill-discipline and defiance of the departmental orders. The general impression created in the Free State province was that SADTU was fighting for a just cause, hence the swelling of its membership in the entire province. Ntombizanele Sifuba, a SADTU member from Bloemfontein, who was also chairperson of the branch, conceded that the Department of Education at the time thought less of teachers. They were not treated with respect and dignity by the school inspectors. The conditions under which educators worked were precarious enough to push SADTU into militancy. The union resisted this kind of injustice unreservedly. On the question of redeployment, the Department of Education and Training did not take the geographical factors into consideration. SADTU challenged this move and recommended that teachers who were declared to be in excess must be transferred to schools that are located within a 30km radius from their homes (Christie 1991).

The issue of gender was another area of contestation within the parameters of the union. It was challenged to break the circle of marginalisation of women. As SADTU was rearing its head in the early 1990s, women were not given the latitude to showcase their leadership expertise, and were put on the periphery, witnessing the game they ought to have been playing. When the union finally recognised women, earmarking them for leadership positions, it gained sufficient grounds to challenge issues of gender. It made
great strides in that sphere and developed a gender policy. The first breed of women who were trusted with leadership positions achieved high levels of excellence in the execution of their duties and responsibilities. Coaching, motivation and capacity-building workshops on leadership organised by SADTU made a viable contribution to the efficiency in women leadership within and outside of the union. However, some men within the leadership structures of the union were still trapped in patriarchal notions, not accepting of women leadership. Nana Masukela, a SADTU Gender Convener from Klerksdorp in the North West province, shared her experiences. The first challenge that Masukela had to deal with was the marginalisation of HIV and AIDS infected teachers.

Stitisho Reutlwile who was a regional secretary of SADTU in a region called JB Max in the North West province, conceded that teachers had long been disgruntled, following various forms of abuse they were subjected to by the authorities serving under the apartheid education system (Diko and Letseka 2009). The formation and launching of SADTU in 1990 coincided with the teachers’ protest on 6 March 1990, against the oppressive practices and punitive measures of the Education Department. They took to the streets demanding an end to the Green File, which was used as a performance-assessment tool in their areas of specialisation. Teachers were adamant that it was more of a punitive rather than a developmental measure (Fleisch 2010). There was a general tendency among most principals, to suppress the activities of SADTU in their schools. They were totally opposed to the radical transformation of education in the country, swimming against the tide, seeking to maintain the status quo. The biggest challenge faced by Stitisho in his school as an active member of SADTU, was to erode the conservative systems and replace them with much more liberal and democratic ones. A leadership conundrum was one of the vicissitudes that SADTU had to overcome during the initial years of its existence.

The agenda of SADTU was informed by political factors that were
prevalent in various parts of the country, prior to 1990. Oupa Sebolayi, a former SADTU member, currently working for the Department of Education in Potchefstroom, echoed the same sentiments. He recalls how arrests were effected on the basis of political activism. There was a gross violation of teachers’ rights and injustices were perpetrated by the education system. SADTU members got along with rapid strides unabated, chiefly because there was no free political activity in a pre-democratic South Africa. The country’s citizens particularly the oppressed majority, were muzzled from espousing their political aspirations and ideological stances. Teachers in schools were left with no option but to respond to the dictates of the apartheid education policies. The Potchefstroom context was somewhat peculiar, in the sense that the majority of teachers were white. The only black teachers allowed to teach in those schools were those who taught Setswana. Sadly, some of those white teachers did not have the required qualifications and were not certified to teach in schools. Their background was in the military. Potchefstroom was a highly militarised area and schools were guarded by soldiers. There was no room for political activism of any kind. It was difficult for teachers who were politically conscious to challenge existing systems. Those who were brave enough to vocalise their discontent were dismissed. One of the first tasks that SADTU performed immediately after its formation in 1990 was the reinstatement of all the teachers whose services were terminated, following their active participation in politics (Letseka, Bantwini, and King-Mckenzie 2012).

One of the common challenges that SADTU was confronted with during its embryonic stages, was pushing a transformation agenda in schools run by conservative principals, who were manipulated by the apartheid system of education to achieve its own selfish ends. Mekeni who is a SADTU member and teacher at Zanoxolo Primary School in Port Elizabeth, conceded that most principals prior to the formation of SADTU, abused their powers to stifle the transformation process. Teachers were expelled for challenging the injustices of the education system. The teacher unions that existed long before SADTU could not represent the interests of their members and protect them from various kinds of abuse. Even though the violation of teachers’ rights
by inspectors and principals persisted, there were exceptions. Mekeni once taught in a school where teachers were treated with dignity and respect. The principal gave them the latitude to join unions of their choice. They were supported fully to deliver the curriculum efficiently. Their morale was often high, because the SMT took care of their needs. The ethos in the school was conducive to effective teaching and learning. When SADTU emerged in the midst of political strife in which the country was engulfed, it came across as a recalcitrant union, seeking to destabilise education, hence the resistance it had to endure from the adherents of the apartheid system of education. The union sought to make the entire education system responsive to the challenges, needs and demands of the country. There was a strong conviction in the country that the ideals cherished by SADTU would someday come to fruition. The union continued to attract membership even from the opposition ranks. Further exploring the Port Elizabeth context, Metha Jubane, a retired teacher and regional treasurer of SADTU, maintained that the union's top priority since its formation, was teaching and learning. There has always been a call for teachers to put the interests of learners first. The union leadership made it clear that the availability of teachers in schools was worthless if they were not in the classrooms teaching the learners, thereby ensuring the production of quality education. However, the leadership terrain of SADTU was male-dominated and linked to patriarchal notions. The calibre of challenges that Jubane experienced as regional treasurer of the union landed credence to this supposition. Male comrades for example, demanded money from her without following the standard procedures. It took some time for women within the union to be recognised and given leadership positions. Male domination cut across many sections of the basic education sector. Female principals were confined to primary schools, whereas males took up principal positions in high schools. It was comparatively rare for female principals to be trusted with managerial and leadership responsibilities at high school level. Over time, gender parity in all spheres prevailed within the ranks of SADTU's structures in response to the gender-based politics (Christie 1991).

Tinazwa Mhlaba, a SADTU leader in the Peddie branch, a small
town between King Williams Town and Grahamstown, added that the union came up with a principle that advocated for at least three women per leadership structure, which later changed to 50/50. She also alluded to the rigidity of some principals in an endeavour to stifle the development of SADTU. They ran schools with an iron fist, victimising teachers for challenging their authority. The union was compelled to intensify its militancy in fighting the scourge of human rights violations, which mostly affected women. Single women were dismissed for falling pregnant. Married ones were only given leave for a week or two after childbirth. Another source of frustration for teachers was the Scheme Book, an annual record of lesson plans and learners’ activities. The inspectors demanded full compliance with the requirements of this document, whereas the realities dictated a reasonable degree of flexibility. The impression was created that the inspectors themselves were not adequately capacitated to provide the necessary assistance and support to the teachers. The payment of teachers by cheques was also cause for concern. It empowered principals to decide the fate of educators.

According to the insights shared by Bruce Damos, a principal at Sophia Primary School in Port Elizabeth, who was also a Regional Secretary of SADTU, the majority of the union members were young. They went through irresponsible stages and made mistakes, which manifested in the work dynamics of the union. The conservative block perceived them as being incapable of union leadership. They conceded that the behaviour patterns exuded by these young, energetic and vibrant activists would undoubtedly compromise quality education, professionalism and integrity. The onus was on SADTU to change such perceptions. Building strong capacity around curriculum delivery, coupled with adherence to the Code of Conduct, featuring high ethical and moral standards, received priority. The union had great mentors who conducted capacity-building workshops aimed at equipping their members with the necessary knowledge and skills. It was a great school of education for Damos and other union adherents.
Leadership formation

Leadership formation was a complex undertaking, chiefly because SADTU had to consider other unions immediately after its launch, in order to foster some kind of collaborative effort towards the envisaged transformation of South Africa’s education system. The structure of the union was divided into 15 regions, with several branches. There was a compelling reason for the union to craft an Appeasement Policy that would guide the election of an inclusive leadership structure, representative of all the existing teacher organisations. The union needed to tread carefully on the election of office-bearers. Some form of compromise had to be resorted to, in order to accommodate leaders from other well established teacher associations. Dimaza in his testimony conceded that SADTU’s leadership structure was tailor-made to appease leaders from other teacher organisations. There was, for example Vice President of Education, Vice President of Sport, etc. Some of them were presidents in their unions. SADTU deemed it fit to create leadership positions for them within the union. Such considerations were of absolute necessity, in order to alleviate divisions and intensify the struggle for equality, non-racialism, gender parity and curriculum transformation. Another challenge was the recruitment of staff members. The staff membership had to be representative of all the teacher organisations and associations in order to harmonise work dynamics within the structures of the union. However, most of the leaders from these organisations had reservations about this incorporation as they were concerned about their leadership positions (Zengele 2013). Anthony Moonsamy, who was transferred from TASA to SADTU, was worried about his future. He thought his race would disadvantage him, but his fears were allayed by the treatment he received from the union.

The lack of resources made it difficult for the union leaders to perform their duties and responsibilities. Communication was one of the major challenges experienced by the leadership structures. Disseminating information to all regions and branches was a logistical nightmare. At some point the General Secretary Thulas Nxesi
and some members of the National Executive Council, visited certain regions to educate their members in the ideals of SADTU. The capacitation of this joined leadership in order to effectively respond to the needs and demands of the members was essential. They needed to share the same perspectives on issues of fundamental importance. As they were coming from different maps of the past, it was necessary for them to find one another in the process of pursuing common goals. At one stage, SADTU drew on the experiences of the other teacher organisations and associations in dealing with specific challenges. It drew on the earlier engagements of NEUSA with curriculum issues to explore and recommend other alternatives. The Education Desk was established in an endeavour to set the union's educational priorities straight and efficiently regulate policy responses. Curriculum Development, Teacher Appraisal and Teacher Development, were some of the priority areas. The Education Desk received a bigger slice of the budget, because of the shared conviction that it constituted the leadership backbone of the union. The most common challenge that SADTU was faced with after its formation was the lack of capacity around leadership throughout the country. Most teachers were not politically conscious and needed some basic education on their rights, responsibilities and the role of a union in their professional lives. Intensive leadership training was required at branch level, for better performance at provincial and national levels. Gender sensitivity was essential at the beginning stages of the union, as the leadership structures were becoming male-dominated. There were few women at the time in leadership positions. In challenging these discriminatory practices, the union organised a workshop on gender issues, which was attended by representatives from all the 15 regions. It was conducted by Pinky Mbowan, who was Vice President for Gender. The main areas of focus included, accouchement leave, childcare, sexual harassment in schools, as well as affirmative action (Moll 1991).

The union created the following programmes, designed to empower leadership structures at grassroots level: setting up local offices, communication skills, conflict resolution skills, financial management, presentation skills, collective bargaining, negotiation
skills, bureaucratic structure, rights, responsibilities, contractual obligation, funding, research, organising teacher development as well as professionalism across the board. These programmes were clearly not an end in themselves, but rather the means to an end. Furthermore, union leaders in various capacities had to familiarise themselves with the relevant Acts and their implications, for the purposes of active participation and providing input during the deliberations. When the Public Sector Labour Legislation was reviewed after 1994, SADTU participated in the reviewing process. Teachers’ rights to strike and to participate in the socio-economic protests according to Section 77 of the Labour Relations Act of 1995 were articulated. The union leaders were charged with the responsibility of directing the course of the struggle for emancipation from the shackles of the apartheid education system. The incorporation of other teacher organisations and established teacher associations into SADTU was necessitated by the common cause for which they were fighting. Collaborative effort took precedence over diverse political ideologies and agendas that defined them.

SADTU’s achievement of unity within diversity demonstrated its potential to swallow all other teacher unions and emerge as a “giant union” in the country. As the majority of South Africans identified with the cause of the African National Congress from the early 1990s and Nelson Mandela as the symbol of unity, SADTU became magnetic to the majority of teachers who were aspiring for political freedom despite their ideological differences. Although reservations reigned supreme when the idea of amalgamation of teacher organisations and established teacher associations into one unitary structure, first occurred. There was resistance from these organisations and associations to join SADTU for fear of losing their infrastructure, offices, cars and other resources. The Labour Relations Act of 1995, which gave teachers the right to strike and to participate in protests, was another cause for concern (Fleisch 2010). The established associations viewed these rights as posing a serious threat to professionalism in the teaching fraternity. They clung to the belief that teachers must teach by example, embarking on strikes and protest actions was a sheer contradiction of this fundamental
principle. The greatest challenge in this regard was the competing perspectives between the conservative and the liberal schools of thought. The conservative block perceived young teachers who were liberal-minded as lacking in discipline, morality, professionalism and integrity, labelling them as the “lost generation”. It became very difficult to reconcile the two opposing camps and unite them around a common goal.

Despite these challenges of merging, fostering teacher unity became a possible eventuality. They were able to put aside their political and ideological differences and focus on intensifying their struggle for liberation. Their political consciousness enabled them to realise that they were actually fighting a common enemy. In the main, all teachers in the country at the time were weary of oppression, discrimination, segregation, the abuse of power by the apartheid education system authorities, particularly school inspectors and principals, irrespective of their political backgrounds and ideological orientations. SADTU drew strength from the country’s political landscape, which called for a fierce fight for equality, non-racialism, protection from any violation of human rights, curriculum transformation and so forth. The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the ANC assisted in the establishment of a single, unitary teachers union, representative of the interests, needs and aspirations of teachers’ across the board. Although SADTU came across as a “giant union”, capacitated to eradicate inequalities within the education system, some teachers did not identify with its political agenda. Rival teacher unions were formed as a direct consequence of ideological differences. SADTU continued to grow stronger in membership and stature, despite attempts to stifle its development (Amoako 2013).

**Division of assets**

South Africa’s liberation struggle was all-encompassing. SADTU and the ANC were in pursuit of a common political agenda. Their programme of action was almost similar, although they were fighting on different fronts. SADTU made great strides in the education
sphere, grooming leadership for future use within the ranks of the ANC. The new system of education for which the union fiercely fought, necessitated a strong relationship between the union and the government. There was communication on matters and issues of common concern. The White Paper on the newly constituted Ministry of Education clearly stipulated that all stakeholders in education including teacher unions, were responsible for the reconstruction and development of the country’s education system. They were expected to regard no sacrifice too great in pursuit of a transformation agenda on the education front. It was expected of the new Ministry of Education to be open to ideas from the teacher unions, because they were in touch with the trends and developments in the education sphere. The prevailing political circumstances called for a division of assets. SADTU was better equipped in terms of leadership capacity, given the period of its formation, four years before the ANC took over the reigns as the ruling party in 1994 (Cameron 1991). The union had ample time to groom its leadership structures from branch level, right up to the national level. The spectre of challenges and the magnitude thereof, sharpened their leadership prowess. They were ready for greater leadership challenges in the upper echelons of government.

In April 1995, a decision was taken at SADTU’s National Council Meeting (NCM), that some union members and officials who exhibited great leadership qualities in different capacities of the union’s leadership should be released to actively participate in various structures of government. There were fears that this move might culminate in the paralysis of the union’s leadership structures, while presenting opportunities for achieving success in its endeavours. The involvement of the union in structures of government would provide the latitude to exert a profound influence on the transformation of the country’s education system. Furthermore, the lines of communication would remain open between the union and the government. It would be a lot easier to address issues of fundamental importance directly with the relevant structures of government than to be subjected to a bureaucratic line-function, which could be cumbersome (Fleisch 2010). Some of the
union leaders who were seconded to take up top leadership positions within the Department of Education included Luki Nkonka, who became the provincial Head of the Department of Education in the Free State; Kevin Nkoane, who became the provincial Head of the Department of Education, in the Northern Cape; Rej Brijraj, was appointed as the Chief Executive Officer of the South African Council of Educators (SACE). SADTU was eager to contribute resources to the ANC’s victory and success as the ruling party. Some of the union’s leaders were deployed to the ANC National Election list, namely: Shepherd Mdladlana, its first President, Randal van der Heever, its first General Secretary, Duncan Hindle, the Vice President in charge of education, Ismail Vadi and Thami Mseleku.

The deployment of SADTU leaders to the ANC could be viewed as a strategic move to fast track the transformation agenda on the education front. They were empowered to deliver on the political mandate of their constituencies. They were also better positioned to influence government decisions particularly on educational matters, which fell within their sphere of interest. However, these developments presented a new set of challenges for the union. There was a leadership vacuum within the ranks of the union. It had to earmark a new breed of leaders who were capable of taking the union beyond liberation. It was imperative for SADTU to choose leaders who had the capacity to build upon the prestige of their predecessors.

Mythologies among staff members

The unity of teacher organisations and established associations called for a high level of trust. SADTU as a unitary structure representative of the interests and aspirations of all the like-minded teacher organisations and associations had an obligation to convince these structures of its trustworthiness. The previous polarisation of these organisations and associations necessitated a strategic fusion of political ideologies and agendas into one unit. However, the practical dimensions thereof pointed to different directions. When the incorporation of these structures came to fruition,
different kinds of reservations were expressed by the leaders. They were coming from different maps of the past, trying to find some common ground. Ideally, the amalgamation of structures demands an abandonment of previously cherished ideals and the adoption of common visions and goals. The staff members of SADTU, serving in different capacities within the leadership structures of the union, were expected to honour this fundamental principle. It ought to have been the basic premise to move from, in pursuit of the new political agenda. They were now united by a common goal, sailing in the same boat, with minimal differences and disagreements. Pivotal to the duties and responsibilities of SADTU, was to map out its new vision and mission, thereby allaying fears of any possible loss of previously held leadership positions, resources and valuable assets. The continuation of the work started by these teacher organisations and associations, with all the dedication and commitment, formed an integral part of their expectations.

It was essential for the union to be cognisant of such realities and devise strategies that would regulate the work and power dynamics within the leadership structures. The magnitude of challenges confronting the union called for a strong leadership base, with adequate capacity to fight the scourge of oppression and injustices on the education front. Divisions in various respects would render the union vulnerable to abuse of power and political manipulation from the opposition ranks (Chrisholm 1999). The chances of success in all its endeavours would be slim, thereby defeating the overall purpose of incorporating teacher organisations and associations into SADTU. The onus was on the union to tread carefully on the newly-incorporated leadership, build trust among staff members, boost their morale, give clear guidelines in terms of their duties and responsibilities, as well as ensuring their comfort around colleagues in different leadership capacities. However, on the practical side, these idealised values fell by the wayside. There were cases of mistrust among staff members in various respects. They did not always agree on issues thought to have been of common cause, given the shared political agenda they were pursuing. In some quarters, integrity was compromised, landing credence to the supposition that some union
members were not trustworthy. Clearly, there was a serious trust deficit within the leadership structure of the union, which had a detrimental effect on its productive capacity. Another challenge that the union faced was changing popular perceptions about its vision and mission (Bot 1992).

When SADTU was formed in 1990, it appeared to be a union that sought to disrupt education in the country and erode professionalism in the teaching fraternity. Challenging the systems of apartheid education was perceived as advocating for anarchy in the country’s education system. The union was compelled to respond to these mythologies through performance in all spheres. The conviction held by the conservative block was that SADTU was perpetuating abdication of professional responsibility by its members, making schools ungovernable, tarnishing its image. The capacity-building workshops organised by the union for the empowerment of their members in all respects helped improve their performance in schools. They delivered the curriculum effectively and produced results of high quality. Some of the testimonies of the interviews conducted by Vusumuzi Khumalo clearly attested to these realities. The union members put their struggle for equal education and contractual obligations in equal proportions which was a strategic way of striking a balance between work and politics.

Some setbacks, sabotage, but SADTU unrelenting

It is imperative to note that SADTU’s Programme of Action did not always yield fruitful results. At some point, it was tantamount to grabbing a bull by the horns, risking death and abortion of the best laid plans. One of the strategies of the union, at the beginning stages of its formation, was to build a strong leadership capacity, informed by the magnitude of the challenges with which it was confronted. The political affiliation of teachers in different provinces of the country was cause for concern. In the former Natal province, schools were battle grounds for party politics. The affiliates of NATU, which was IFP-aligned and those of SADTU, which was ANC-aligned, often
clashed over ideological issues. Human lives were lost while others were seriously threatened. The functionality of schools in areas where these political battles were fought was hampered. The school principals in virtually all schools in the province belonged to NATU. They created a hostile environment for SADTU members. Further attempts were made to stifle its growth and development. Other provinces presented similar challenges to the leadership of SADTU. Some members would be arrested for organising and participating in protest actions and others would be dismissed from work for political activism. There was no communication between the union and the Department of Education and the latter was not open to ideas especially from the union. The leaders of SADTU had no option but to defy orders of the education authorities, just to make their voice heard. There were also various kinds of victimisation meant to dampen the morale of the union members (Letseka, Bantwini, and King-Mckenzie 2012).

**Conclusion**

The survival of SADTU was often threatened from different angles. The strong and resilient leadership that the union had built over the few years after its formation was taken from it by the national government. The union decision to transfer its dynamic leaders to the national government structures crippled the leadership structure of SADTU. It further led to the collapse of some regions. The union was severely bankrupt of effective leadership personnel. Its strength was seriously compromised by shedding its leadership capital. The achievement of the set goals and objectives was below expectations. Some of the newly groomed leaders could not build upon the prestige of their predecessors, that created a dangerous loophole for the union. The extent of the leadership vacuum orchestrated its possible demise. In the face of these challenges, the union was almost on the verge of collapse. It was also running the risk of losing its magnetism, both in political and educational circles. SADTU almost lost credibility with the national and international communities. The greatest responsibility then, was to resuscitate its image and regain
the confidence of the nation and consequently, it had to revisit its programme, identify problem areas and tie up the loose ends. The union was able to rise to the challenge, despite these vicissitudes that almost culminated in its destruction. It therefore embarked on a rigorous programme that reaffirmed its dynamic character. The quality leadership that was lost to Parliament and local government structures was replaced by young leaders who were progressive enough to revive the strength of SADTU, restoring it to its former glory. The union did not succumb to the adversities that seriously threatened its survival. It came across as the ‘giant union’ that fought for the transformation of the country’s education system.
Chapter 4

Impediments to SADTU’s recognition: A fight for acknowledgement

Introduction

After the launch, SADTU adopted a confrontational stance toward the educational establishment of the apartheid system. The interface between education and politics in the make-up of SADTU made it unattractive to the apartheid government and those within the teaching profession who wanted a clear separation between the two. For SADTU, education and politics were intertwined – this was attested to by the disparities of government spending per child according to racial group. The state insisted that a teacher should not be politically active. The policy objectives of SADTU were on a collision course with apartheid. In fact, SADTU had adopted a clear and unambiguous policy aligning itself with the forces of progressive change, and it was not surprising that those who stood to benefit from a preservation of the status quo criticised SADTU’s militancy as irresponsible and “unprofessional” (The struggle for recognition – SADTU no date:71). Luti (1991) quoted the general secretary of SADTU, Randall van der Heever, making the point that membership to a trade union does not make teachers unprofessional. For him, the principle of the union would help in easing conflict between teachers and the departments of education. SADTU made a number of representations to the state for recognition but instead the state used its extensive bureaucracy to delay the process.
Reasons for non-recognition

After its formation and a successful launch, the struggle for SADTU had just began. The government through its various formations refused to give it official recognition. According to Samuel (2008:231) “the state as the third force denied SADTU official recognition and did its best to cripple the union”. Amoako (2014) reported that SADTU’s struggle for recognition spanned over a two-year period. The various Education Departments placed various impediments to recognition. At this point SADTU was in financial difficulties with limited sources of funding and the government refused to grant it permission to raise money through membership subscriptions. The ability to raise funds through subscriptions would have given SADTU financial stability and the ability to carry out the mandate of its members and influence the direction of the country’s politics and future education system.

Reasons for the delay in the recognition of SADTU can be explained in various ways. One of the main issues that the apartheid government had was that SADTU was openly political (affiliation to COSATU that had an alliance with the ANC). At the heart of the founding principles of SADTU was the desire to dismantle apartheid and its education system, which perpetuated racial segregation. The policy was in keeping with one of the pillars of apartheid, the idea of separate development. Teachers in the nineteen ethnic education departments were not paid equally. They were paid according to race and gender – female teachers were often paid less than their male counterparts for the same work. SADTU wanted to dislodge the apartheid system and replace it with a single Department of Education with the same curriculum for all South African learners. In fact, “from the onset black/African teacher unions were established ‘to fight’ the government of the day” (Heystek and Lethoko, 2001:223). Furthermore, “for SADTU, the transformation and development of education comes first, and hopefully they will make use of their bargaining power to also influence what goes on in the classrooms” (Heystek and Lethoko, 2001:225). The point is further elaborated by Rensburg who pointed out that:
The evolution of the collective identity of SADTU is closely tied up to the organisation's project to transform the political culture of teaching, teacher mobilisation, collective action and organisation, curriculum, schooling, and school organisation and management. The issues tracked and studied here are therefore ideological and reflect the emergent identity of SADTU. These are: (i) non-racialism, (ii) evaluation and curriculum, (iii) professionalism and unionism, and (iv) the unilateral restructuring and rationalisation of education by the state in the dying moments of apartheid (1996:148).

According to the DET Director-General Dr Bernard Louw, SADTU was often accused of “campaigning for the suspension of professional standards for teachers” (Molefe 1991). SADTU leadership argued on various platforms that unionism and professionalism were not mutually exclusive. They refuted accusations and claims that they intended to revoke professional standards for teachers. There are reports that when SADTU was launched in October 1990, the expectation was that it would have a membership of approximately 150 000 but in the middle of 1991 it was sitting with a membership of about 30 000. Non-recognition was cited as the major reason why members of the associations and bodies that amalgamated to form SADTU were sceptical to join. They felt that without any formal recognition, it would not be able to represent their interests. The issue of professionalism also emerged as a concern and reason for not joining the union. This was probably a class issue. For a very long time teachers saw themselves as professionals and not workers. Teachers saw themselves as different to blue-collar workers who were organised by traditional unions. Some were concerned at the prospect of embarking on industrial action, which at the time, was the sole preserve of blue-collar workers.

**Fight-back against education departments**

The schooling system in South Africa in the late 1980s to the early 1990s was in a state of disarray in black urban areas. The abolition of influx control resulted in the influx of people from the rural hinterland
to the major urban centres. There were overcrowded classrooms, lack of basic resources (libraries, laboratories, books), and in some cases lack of toilet facilities. SADTU started a defiance campaign against “all departmental regulations regarding inspection and evaluation”, which “encouraged the forceful expulsion of inspectors from schools and declared non-cooperation with school principals and heads of departments” (Amoako 2014:150). The Departments of Education responded to such resistance with teacher victimisation and issuing threats of expulsion, especially against temporary teachers for refusing to allow their work to be evaluated. Threats by Education Departments were extended to teachers who supported those who refused inspection.

In the Bantustans, there was resistance against SADTU’s attempts to recruit teachers in their employ. *The Sowetan* (18th March 1991) reported that in Gazankulu, delegates of the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) were expelled from talks at a local boarding school. High ranking officials refused to continue with the meeting while these delegates were there. The situation in KwaZulu-Natal was marked by political tensions between the IFP and the UDF. These political tensions resulted in many people being killed for political reasons. SADTU was seen as a front for the ANC and COSATU. According to Hindle (1991) teachers in KwaZulu-Natal were forbidden to belong to SADTU. Mngadi (1991) reported of a law signed by President de Klerk that prohibited teachers in the schools under the jurisdiction of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture from joining any trade union. If teachers were found guilty of this offence, they would be expelled without any recourse from the courts of law. *The New Nation* (27 September - 3 October 1991) reported that 120 teachers were dismissed for participating in activities organised by SADTU. In the Transkei, one of the major sticking points was equal pay for men and women.

In the midst of the SADTU struggle for recognition, the government became friendly with NAPTOSA. According to Amoako, “Black and white teacher organisations that formed NAPTOSA were indifferent to the political struggles of the period.
The a-political stance and its quiescence on the intensified mass agitation to end apartheid placed it in the good books of the embattled government” (2014:154). SADTU leadership held a number of meetings with different people in the Department of Education, including one with the minister Louis Pienaar. All the required documents were submitted as early as November 1990 but a year later, no recognition was given. Indications are that SADTU met all the requirements for recognition but a political decision was taken to stall it. In 1991, SADTU approached the office of president de Klerk for his intervention on the matter but no positive response came from the interaction. After all these frustrations, SADTU leadership concluded that the government was not going to give them recognition.

The leadership resolved on embarking on national action to demonstrate their seriousness about recognition. It was resolved that a national strike would take place in May 1992. It was the first strike in the history of education in South Africa. According to a SADTU statement on the strike and the related mass action, “the union was careful, however, to ensure that the campaign should not lead to a disruption of education activities in the schools” (The struggle for recognition–SADTU no date: 69). The key issues that SADTU raised as grievances were; (i) the disparity of salaries paid according to racial groups and parity of pay for female teachers, (ii) the non-recognition of the union (SADTU) by the nineteen Departments of Education, (iii) being able to negotiate improved salaries and conditions of service for members, (iv) being able to defend members against victimisation, and (v) the establishment of a national collective bargaining mechanism for teachers (Amoako 2014). These issues were non-negotiable to SADTU.

The first national strike by SADTU was supported by thousands of its members across the country amid threats and intimidation by the authorities. The message was delivered to the authorities that the union was serious about its grievances. During this strike SADTU leadership demonstrated sophisticated negotiation skills akin to the trade union movement (Strachan, 1993). Leadership was able to extract some concessions from the government.
Victories after the strike

Even before SADTU was officially recognised, it fought against injustices perpetrated against its members. This was one of the concerns of those teachers who were reluctant to join the union initially as Mtshali (1991) reported that it successfully negotiated the re-instatement of six teachers from Potchefstroom who were expelled by the Department of Education and Training (DET) in December 1990. The national strike consolidated many of those struggles and articulated them. Soon after the strike, the authorities in all nineteen departments granted SADTU official recognition. The union could then operate legally and recruit members. As a direct consequence of recognition and the track record that SADTU had in its short history, many teachers joined the union. The phenomenal growth of membership led to the growth of revenue and the union became financially independent. Before SADTU could be financially self-sufficient, support came from teacher organisations from Norway, Sweden, and Canada (Samuel 2008). The fortunes of SADTU changed rapidly from relying on 12% of their funding from local sources to being self-sufficient without any need for foreign donor funds after it was recognised and able to collect subscriptions from members’ salaries.

Battleground for recognition

SADTU had to undergo many milestones before the apartheid government legally recognised it. This is because the union stood for democratic principles of equality while the apartheid government policies endorsed separation of races. The apartheid state was not the only hurdle for SADTU’s recognition NAPTOSA was opposed to the confrontational stance against the state and believed in negotiation and engagement that was non-threatening and non-confrontational. Similarly, the South African Indian Teachers’ Association (SAITA) also felt that SADTU was not going to serve its members’ interests since it was aligned with the ANC. However, all these hurdles did not deter SADTU to fight for recognition.
NAPTOSA anti-enclosure

The National Professional Teachers’ Organisation of South Africa (NAPTOSA) did not encounter the same hurdles in its application for recognition from the National Party government. Recognition was officially granted on 25th July 1991 by the National Minister of Education (*The New Nation* 1991). The significance of official recognition was that NAPTOSA could potentially be represented in all boards of the Ministry of Education.

SADTU’s struggle for recognition yielded unexpected results. The general impression that was created over time was that all teacher organisations and established associations aspired for legitimisation. In the main, all these structures were fighting one enemy and were united by a common goal, despite their diverse ideological orientations. When the idea of recognition occurred, there was no room for any negative sentiments from other structures representing the interests and aspirations of teachers in different political spheres. Furthermore, great strides had already been made to unify all these structures into one single unit. However, some of these structures had reservations about SADTU’s recognition drive. They were aware of the implications of such a move. The union would be better placed to influence government decisions on the issues of fundamental importance. Recognition would give the union a voice and platform to raise matters of great concern with the relevant leadership structures of the national government in general and the Ministry of Education in particular. Despite the advantages connected to the recognition of SADTU by the national government, other teacher organisations and established associations felt that their leadership structures might be compromised, as well as their leadership positions. The political agenda they had been pursuing could fall by the wayside (Bot 1992). They clearly doubted SADTU’s capacity to be the custodian of their values and underlying philosophy. The greatest challenge for the union in that respect was to win over these leadership structures from the opposition ranks in order to strengthen its capacity, putting it in a better stead for recognition.
It was within the political agenda of the ANC to advocate for the recognition of all public teacher unions. Freedom of expression was one of its legitimate grievances, informed by the lack of free political activity, which was one of the dominant features of a pre-democratic South Africa. Public unions needed a voice in order to deliver on the mandate of their constituencies. Freedom of association was also needed, particularly in the union circles as one of the contributory factors to the building of a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa. The application for recognition was not confined to the national government. It was stretched to other provinces as well. In the former Natal province, there were competing perspectives to the political agenda of SADTU. It was perceived as representing the interests and political ideologies of the ANC, more than the values and aspirations of all teachers in the country irrespective of their political affiliation (Letseka, Bantwini and King-Mckenzie 2012). SADTU and IFP were diametrically opposed in terms of their political agenda. The union experienced similar challenges with the leadership structures of other organisations and associations that SADTU wished to bring on board. The delaying tactics of the national government in granting the union recognition became unbearable. SADTU had no option but to embark on rolling mass action. It had to be careful not to disrupt education in schools, lest it glorified its critics. NAPTOSA openly declared its stance as the strong rival of SADTU. Its political agenda did not resonate with the vision and mission of SADTU. The union criticised the recognition of NAPTOSA, which asserted itself as a home to established teacher associations and refused to be incorporated into SADTU.

**Non integration of other unions**

Other unions were adamant that SADTU was incapacitated to serve their political interests, chiefly because of ideological diversities. Although they were fully conscious of the common goal they sought to achieve, they could not resolve their political differences. The union made great strides in its fight for equal education, transformation of the curriculum, non-racialism, gender equity, protection of teachers
from various forms of abuse, etc. It even challenged policies of the Department of Education which promoted injustices of various kinds within the country’s education system. In some quarters, SADTU fought for social justice, fair treatment of teachers by the Education Department authorities, particularly school principals and inspectors. Despite all these efforts, the rival unions could not trust SADTU with their political agenda. Non integration was the best option for them, in the circumstances. They were also convinced that their cause was just. SADTU was perceived as a revolutionary structure seeking to destabilise the country’s education system, to perpetuate abdication of professional responsibilities by its members and to promote radicalism within the education structures. The apartheid regime took it upon itself to weaken political activism within various teacher organisations (Fleisch 2010). The government identified teacher organisations that were not hostile to it. Such unions were recognised and provided with financial support in exchange for loyalty to the government’s political agenda. Organisations like SAITA that was formerly known as the Natal Indian Teachers Society (NITS) was established in 1925. It later disintegrated due to political influences and changed its name to Teachers’ Association of South Africa (TASA). Despite the union’s efforts to align itself with the progressive forces in order to radicalise the transformation of South Africa’s system of education, it was labelled as the main contributor to deepening the crisis in education. It was widely criticised in both educational and political circles. Its critics included NAPTOSA members, members of the public, media commentators and the Department of Education officials.

SADTU demonstrated its broad vision and mission in various respects. It went beyond challenging the injustices of the country’s education system. Fostering unity within diversity formed an integral part of its agenda. Although the integration programme that SADTU initiated failed in its endeavour to unite all public teacher unions, organisations and established associations around common goals, it portrayed the union as a unifier of all unions, irrespective of diverse political ideologies and backgrounds. It further demonstrated that unity is achievable through a shared vision. The failed integration of unions by SADTU did not dampen its morale.
The recognition of SADTU

The resounding victory that the ANC managed to secure on 27 April 1994 as the ruling party changed the political landscape of the country. SADTU’s long battle for recognition was over. It was now fully recognised as the “giant union”, representing the interests and aspirations of its members throughout the country. There was a paradigm shift from politics of resistance to the politics of engagement. Communication channels were open to all leadership structures of political organisations, teacher unions, political parties as well as trade unions. There was freedom of expression and association, thereby enabling representatives of leadership structures to engage with the national government structures on issues of fundamental significance. The recognition of SADTU provided a platform to table matters of grave concern to the relevant structures of government and influence decisions thereof. The change of the country’s political climate did not halt the transformation agenda that the union had been pursuing during the years of the liberation struggle. It was only the strategy that changed, even the magnitude of militancy (Christie 1991). The union had to come to terms with the essential realities of a democratic system of education. Capacity-building workshops were of absolute necessity in this regard. Union members needed some education in the ideals of democratic processes underpinning the education system. The union had to revive its leadership programme and to ensure its congruence with the democratic trends. Greater emphasis was put on curriculum delivery and the productive capacity of the education system.

Conclusion

There were still a number of unresolved issues within the country’s system of education. SADTU had to strengthen the leadership capacity from branch level, right up to the national level. The knowledge and understanding of democratic processes assisted union members to some extent, to challenge the relevant structures of the national government on specific issues, without disrupting education in schools. SADTU, as a recognised and
legitimate structure with its large membership, provided guidelines on procedures to be followed when addressing issues with the authorities concerned, without compromising professionalism and ethical conduct. Another challenge facing the union was to conduct workshops frequently in order to make sure that its members are in touch with the current trends in education, keeping abreast of the developments thereof. Being a “giant union” did not exonerate SADTU from challenges emanating from the political agendas of other structures, particularly the rival unions. It managed to sustain its membership growth and between 1993 and 1995, it grew to 80 000 members. As more teachers identified with the union’s agenda, convinced of its capacity to deliver effectively on its mandate, SADTU managed to swell its membership growth to 200 000, in 1999.
Chapter 5

Operational agenda: SADTU’s policies on educational development

Introduction

The main purpose of this chapter is to examine the SADTU policy position and its relevance in driving the agenda of educational transformation in South Africa. While it focuses on the policy position in the broader context of SADTU, it attempts to locate it within a wider national context, in particular the debates around demythologising perceptions and how it relates to democracy. Since this chapter seeks to examine issues around policies that have shaped the union for the past two decades, the review will pay particular attention to issues of teachers’ rights as part of redress. This chapter begins with an examination of the myths and the historical significance of the educational value as the union’s key focus. This is followed by a critical review of SADTU’s policies on education post 1994.

The historical significance of SADTU

The pre-1994 political framework was racist and promoted white supremacy. Education was one of the most potent tools that the Afrikaner Nationalist leadership used to perpetuate racial, ethnic, and linguistic divisions in South Africa. SADTU was better placed to contribute to the process of dismantling apartheid education structures and put in place new structures that reflected the non-racial vision of the liberation movement.
It was perhaps in this context that many former SADTU members understood the vision and mission set up to advance the interests of the members and the working class in general. The rationale behind was to guarantee and sustain the newly attained democracy while ensuring its survival and to ensure government accountability. An important issue to bear in mind when analysing trade unions in the conditions of post-revolutionary Africa is that national liberation movements enforced norms of discipline, good conduct and rigorous lines of loyalty and obedience during the liberation struggle.

Figure 11: Depicts some of the resolutions of SADTU in 1993 (SADTU News 1993).
Policies on education

SADTU’s vision sought to create an education system whose intention is to nurture talent and realise the potential of those who go through the system. Government must be the guarantors and primary provider of education to all and ensure that free and universal accessible education is well resourced and accessible. Social values of education require the state to protect the education sector from the neo-liberal agenda of privatisation and commercialisation. The union has reached 24 years, a milestone of policy making processes through its General Councils, Congresses and Conferences to develop comprehensive Policies on education. These Policies draw from all existing SADTU resolutions to form a coherent policy document.

One of the aims of SADTU as a teacher union is better education for all South Africans that can only be delivered through clear government policy. This remains a powerful symbol of unity and sustainability for the union. Most members should make a direct contribution to this course and understand that this union was built through sacrifice and around common identity. The union policy position seeks to galvanise teachers around the theme of unity in diversity. A stronger union is good and has tremendous influence on the course of teacher core needs and aspirations. Most members were unanimous on the idea of their influence in government, provincial, and local level where policy imperatives are shaped and implemented.

In the initial stages of SADTU, it was not such a powerful player in the policy game, but by 1993 it had developed positions on the main policy issues in education. Unlike many of the other policy statements that emerged during the transition period, SADTU’s vision was strongly rooted in the values and principles of People’s Education, and emphasised changes in curriculum, methodology, language policy, system and structure of schooling, resources and evaluation of both learners and educators (Govender 1996). The union advocated 13 years of free and compulsory schooling, including a year of pre-school. SADTU felt that the state had to bear the primary responsibility of financing and providing education. COSATU took the same stand. In contrast to NEPI and the ANC, SADTU proposed a major increase
in the overall education budget. It shared with NEPI and the ANC a commitment to redress and redistribute resources to areas of greatest need, but also carried a more radical view of what should be done with private schools (SADTU 1993). Neither NEPI nor the ANC saw the abolition of private schools as necessary at the time considering that there were many competing interests within their ranks. SADTU proposed that state subsidies to private schools should be drastically reduced and that former ‘Model C’ schools should revert to being state schools. There was more militancy and radicalism in most of SADTU’s proposals, which called for drastic changes in the education system (SADTU 1993). This trend continued after the establishment of the new democratic government where, in some instances, SADTU felt that the pace of transformation in the education sector was too slow and that the poor people who sacrificed the most to fight for the freedom and democracy of the country had been let down by the government.

SADTU’s approach to its policies is underpinned by the concept of human rights, inclusive education, equality in education and society, and high professional status for teachers. SADTU’s education policy served as a call to action and highlighted the challenges to be addressed by concrete initiatives and strategies using the following guidelines:

- Promoting of education as a human right and public good.
- Improving the quality of education.
- Promoting equality education through inclusive education.
- Promoting teaching as a profession.
- Strengthening education trade unions as essential partners in civil society.
- Promoting solidarity in education at the international level.
- Using technology for quality education.
- Promoting of adult education and training.
- Promoting of African Languages as a medium of instruction.
Policy on HIV/AIDS

The SADTU policy on HIV/AIDS was reviewed twice. A group of nine experts reviewed the original version. A second and more developed version of the policy was distributed at a later stage to a smaller group of three experts (SADTU 2014). Greater emphasis will be placed on the latter analysis as it dealt with a newer policy, but some of the comments on the first version will be raised.

SADTU’s HIV/AIDS policy of 2004 is a refinement and an extension of its first policy on HIV/AIDS. This policy is an acknowledgement by SADTU of the negative impact of HIV/AIDS on the socio-economic development of the country, as well as prejudice, stigmatisation and ignorance that go with the pandemic. The policy is also a response by SADTU to the call made by the state for all institutions, sectors and organisations to play an active role in the campaign against HIV/AIDS (Ngoepe 2011).
The strategic framework of SADTU with regard to HIV/AIDS is very clearly promulgated in the policy document as part of the bigger programme they have towards this pandemic. The policy states that:

SADTU is dealing urgently and purposefully with the HIV and AIDS emergency in and throughout the education and training system. The education sector represents the greatest concentration of understanding, knowledge and skill in the country. SADTU is making greater use of this in the response to HIV and AIDS. Every sub-sector within the union, and every educator, from the village must become aware that they have a role to play in creating a cycle of preventive education and care and support that goes out from schools to communities and back again to school. SADTU is one part of interventions that help our beloved country find its way into a world without AIDS. Even more, every one of SADTU’s members in the union, is working together to lead our country into a future without AIDS. SADTU’s HIV and AIDS Programme, is located within the Gender Desk but is driven by four departments: Gender, Media, Research, and Education. SADTU has appointed an HIV and AIDS Coordinator who works with the above mentioned departments to implement the union’s HIV and AIDS Programme.
HIV/AIDS has a direct impact on the demand, supply and quality of provision, access, and delivery of education services in most communities (Kelly 2002). It has the potential to reduce the quality of skilled professional teachers, administrators and other critical education sector personnel. The implication of this on the quality side is that educators’ mortality and morbidity from the scourge has been proven to deprive the education sector and students of the sector’s most revered and experienced senior educators and managers (Coombe 2000).

SADTU has been involved in awareness campaigns championing attempts to create awareness among its members on the HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa. The impact of this crisis indeed has huge implications for teacher supply and demand that in turn destabilises the provision of quality education in schools. Research conducted by Govender (2003) reveals that government employees (including teachers) were the most vulnerable group to HIV/AIDS in terms of registered infection rates. In response to this phenomenon, SADTU began to invest much of their resources on developing a comprehensive health strategy that has practical policy guidelines to combat this pandemic (Govender 2004).

The union identified several related concrete issues that could inform the policy to respond directly to the staggeringly high rate of infection. The policy is geared towards linking the promotion of attitudes and practices as part of minimising HIV transmission. In order to achieve this, the policy has identified the role that can be played by campaigns that promote gender equality as well as women empowerment.

The overall sense of SADTU’s HIV/AIDS policy is to provide a strategic approach in the understanding, management, caring and support of its membership, staff and society in general in dealing with chronic diseases including HIV/AIDS. It seeks to reduce the crippling effects that the spread of HIV/AIDS has on its membership and other organs of civil society including education institutions. The policy emphasises campaigns to increase awareness of the effects of HIV/AIDS and thereby to contribute towards changes in
lifestyle of its members and ultimately the community in general. The policy is also meant to protect its members who are affected by or infected with HIV/AIDS against all forms of prejudice such as discrimination (Ngoepe 2011).

The policy on HIV/AIDS prioritises training of all affected and infected union members as part of an effort to reduce new infections and unnecessary deaths. The policy deals with HIV/AIDS in the workplace and states that:

SADTU recognises that the AIDS epidemic is very likely to have far reaching economic effects on employers, employees and South Africa as a whole. AIDS will affect workplaces because of its impact on productivity, costs and the national economy. Absenteeism and loss of morale will reduce productivity. Costs will increase if the employer has to pay additional employee benefits; the loss of skilled workers to AIDS means there will be a need to train new employees. As a result of the impact of the pandemic on the education sector SADTU should also be prepared to address HIV and AIDS issues pertaining to the workplace. This is a real concern for all unions working in the education sector, as more and more experienced teachers are infected and affected and the quality of education suffers.

**Collective Bargaining Policy**

Collective bargaining is at the core of any trade union business and is a major reason why members want to join or retain their union membership.

The SADTU constitution clearly states that issues of gender discrimination should be defeated as part of its vision, aims and objectives. The objectives of SADTU (SADTU 2006) will be to seek and to maintain itself as a union, to be recognised by the education authorities and to negotiate on behalf of its members, to advance their individual and collective interests by entering into collective bargaining relations with the education authorities for the purposes of negotiating and entering into collective agreements.
The advent of democracy saw renewed interest from SADTU to heighten its membership’s anticipation of its potential to transform the education landscape and teacher profession. An interview with a staunch SADTU supporter and loyal member from Zululand district highlights many possibilities that kept them focused on the potential takeover of SADTU as a union of choice in South Africa. It was understandable that they needed to unite the entire teaching community under one common vision as reiterated by one woman who indicated that there was much riding on their success of the teacher union. She pointed out great disparity between the salaries of male and female teachers at the time of her struggle before they could launch the union. The majority of her male counterparts were vindicated to use the concept of gender as the main bargaining weapon to market their ideology and to discredit the status quo. Their participation gave the entire SADTU leadership a chance to fight for equal pay across the divide to normalise the unjust system. These and other concerns were the product of sexual division of labour instituted by the apartheid regime and that perpetuated the exploitation of labour in capitalist society.

The recent policy is clear about equal rights, equal pay and equal opportunities for everyone regardless of colour, race and creed (SADTU 2013). The programme of action in SADTU saw the eradication of unpaid maternity leave that was very painful for the majority of female teachers. This practice led to temporary loss of pension and limited their prospect for promotion. This, and other gains, saw the majority of women mobilising behind SADTU to campaign for their rights, which was a major milestone that benefitted women teachers economically.

The struggle for emancipation of women in particular is an interesting success story for the union in South Africa, as one participant from Zululand District indicates that women needed to take a leading role in SADTU bargaining matters. The massive recruitment drive of female membership, which was widely celebrated meant that the union must include women representatives in the bargaining structures and negotiations’ task
team. The power of women cannot be overemphasised, as most participants acknowledged that the increased presence of women as leaders in positions previously dominated by men inevitably brought new excitement to the organisation and began to question existing norms in society. The idea behind the elevation of a women’s agenda in the union highlighted a sense of urgency and the recognition of women’s issues in collective bargaining in the union. The policy of equal gender representation in the union’s top leadership structure began to pay off and in some quarters became an achievable reality as more and more women leaders were given top posts in the union.

The central position taken by SADTU to elevate women in the collective bargaining process was the acknowledgement of the impact certain agreements have towards women. In an interview, one woman made reference to the consequences of the redeployment strategy of the union on women teachers. She seems to believe that during the initial stages of SADTU’s reign issues of domestic and caregiving roles were neglected but now the union is stronger as the majority of women teachers accepted the redeployment policy with an open mind as it now addresses their most pressing challenges as women teachers. In another interview, a woman leader spoke highly of the current leadership under the stewardship of women who are prepared to listen to women’s fears and issues of discrimination in the workplace. If it was not for the open policy that SADTU adopted, she acknowledged, she would not have managed to raise certain intricate issues in a male dominated set-up.

The current state of affairs reflects a much more encouraging picture for women in society and in other sectors including the private sector. Thompson and McHigh (1995) in their analysis of women’s role in SADTU, spoke of rationalisation and intensification that has compelled the system to reward the experience teachers have which has been seen as good practice even in the private sector. The current state of the union is as a result of critical voices of women leaders who advocated strongly for the implementation
of the South African Employment Equity Act (55 of 1998), which compels gender equality in the workplace. This critical observation has further heightened consciousness for deserving women leaders to be aware of the collective advantage they have as women teachers.

**Policies that support women empowerment**

The SADTU constitution encapsulates progressive and gender-sensitive vision, aims and objectives, which give the organisation its formal authority to wield its power. Hence, the SADTU constitution has created conducive intentions for the union to advance and achieve equality. Accordingly, the Preamble of the SADTU Constitution (SADTU 2006: 5) states that:

> Further, recognising the deeply embedded class and gender disparities in South African society, SADTU commits itself to eliminating all gender and class based discrimination in education in South Africa. To this end, SADTU shall endeavour to inculcate the values of egalitarianism and social justice among its members and the broader society.

The union’s mission in the education sector seems to be that of a leading role-player in accelerating the economic empowerment of women especially for the girl child. Such a goal can only be achieved by creating programs that motivate young women and create awareness about the possibilities at their disposal. Young women should also be empowered to understand their basic human rights in order for them to play a leading role in the world of work and society in general. The reality that faces all unions around the globe is that there are still places where pay parity for the same work is not in place. The situation in South Africa is more challenging as there is a disproportionate number of males in senior positions as compared to women.

One of the objectives in the SADTU policy seeks to deal with gender discrimination that is:

> To eradicate discrimination based on gender, sexism and the sexual harassment of teachers, education workers and learners.
This objective sets the tone for the union to eradicate the ills that have been besetting the teaching profession for millennia. SADTU’s policy remains the best in the country compared to other unions when it comes to women empowerment. Govender (2004) states that most teacher unions in South Africa are doing everything in their power to address the question of women empowerment. In recent times, SADTU as an affiliate of global union Federation Education International (EI), joined in celebrating women’s emancipation under the theme: “A woman’s place in her union for economic justice and empowerment” (SADTU 2017). This was an important international achievement for the union to demonstrate its popularity and influence to the world. This day offered an opportunity to raise awareness of inequalities that still exist in the education sector while acknowledging the amount of work that still needed to be done towards the attainment of gender equality.

In SADTU, the main obstacle is to bring gender equity within the leadership in line with a 50-50 gender representation policy adopted by the union. This policy directive should be implemented in the union’s leadership before it is enforced in lower leadership levels such as provincial and regional. The lesson learned from other unions elsewhere is that sometimes good policies do not automatically translate into implementation. For these policies on
gender to materialise, the union needs to begin with introspection in order to change its culture, values, norms and attitudes for members to embrace gender power relations.

An interesting initiative as part of the practical strategy was the setting up of the Gender Desk where issues of school related Gender Based Violence (SRGBV) are given priority. This pandemic affects millions of children and adolescents throughout the world. The policy on gender states that “gender violence is one of the worst manifestations of gender discrimination and violates a wide range of children’s rights”. In fact, education empowers and transforms the lives of all young people, especially girls, yet widespread gender-based violence in and around schools seriously undermines the achievement of quality, inclusive and equitable education for all children (SADTU 2017).

In its endeavour to advance gender equality, the rationale for supporting its establishment was grounded in the union’s conceptual shift from a “women’s structure” to a “gender structure”.

**Sexual Harassment Policy**

The union established a Sexual Harassment Policy and a Child Care Policy to promote gender equality in the union. The Sexual Harassment Policy is very clear on how to deal with transgressors in all sectors of society. It states that:

SADTU acknowledges the seriousness of sexual harassment in the union, workplace and in society at large. The union also acknowledges that every member or staff member has a right to a workplace or union environment free from harassment and bullying. Sexual harassment impacts negatively on the psychological aspect of individuals, it has a destructive effect on the workplace environment, individual well-being and solidarity in the union. SADTU also acknowledges the deafening silence, injustice, dehumanising nature, disrespect, lowering self-esteem that sexual harassment is causing amongst its leaders, membership and staff members. SADTU has the moral obligation to eradicate sexual harassment in the union. The union
encourages, promotes and is committed to the implementation of policies and procedures that will lead to the creation of an environment that is free of sexual harassment, where members, leaders and staff members respect one another's integrity, dignity, privacy and the right to equity in the union.

This policy resulted from the national legislation on the Prevention of Family Violence Act 133 of 1993 and policies set up to address gender imbalances. The sad reality though is that gender-based violence, including sexual harassment has escalated to the highest proportion in recent times in schools despite receiving heightened media attention (*Sunday Times* 20 August 2017). Researchers such as Green (1999) argued that, in many cases, it is the state, its ideology and its laws, that perpetuate and promote violence against women. The South African Constitution promotes the rights of all citizens, in this case, both victims and perpetrators. In this regard, it is the responsibility of the state to ensure that the justice system pays closer attention to issues of gender. The idea of targeting a particular month where issues of gender violence are highlighted remains a serious concern for the union. The union together with government should uphold the policies that they impose, such as affirmative action, to enable more women in the teaching profession to take up leadership jobs and participate in gender related matters (Akua, Britwum and Sue Ledwith 2014).

Union members have acknowledged that schools are sites of desexualised labour of schedule caste women, however, dynamics in this sector remain too complicated and difficult to explore. In schools and other union sites, it is impossible to have sexual division of labour and as such both men and women perform identical tasks in the teaching profession. The main issue for SADTU, however, is women members experiencing sexual violence every day and in most cases not reporting it to the law enforcement authorities due to fear of reprisal (Akua, Britwum and Ledwith 2014).

In an interview conducted with a member of SADTU, who considers herself a stalwart, a very gloomy picture about her experiences of sexual harassment in schools was painted. In her
case, the experiences of sexual harassment constantly recurred. The compulsion to work because you have to provide for your family as a breadwinner or sometimes the need for additional income to support the family, exposed many women in the union to frequent soliciting, from senior colleagues and fellow employees. This female veteran explained her experience like this:

    When I started working as a teacher in the late 1980s, I got my job through the Principal of my school at the time. After a year, permanent jobs were available in other schools outside of my circuit. At this time, the Principal asked me for sexual favours in return for him recommending my name to fill the vacancy. The fact that I was married and had two beautiful daughters did not protect me from the advances of this man. I discovered later down the years that many women were employed through the same means and they faced these problems.

A widowed female member of SADTU said that:

    The senior management of my school understand my situation at home. They always want to help me all the time with an intention to take advantage of my vulnerability. They put pressure on me to have sex with them.

    Women employed in many South African schools are not keen to report sexual harassment, but now through the establishment of this policy on sexual harassment, more cases are reported to this desk and are processed through the relevant authorities. It is surprising that whether permanent or temporary, it knows no boundary. This issue of HODs and other SMTs to increase or decrease the workload of certain employees and their position of authority allows them to perpetuate such harassment.

    SADTU also realised that there is a sense of shame attached to being a victim of sexual harassment. In theory, one union member said, the fact that it is necessary to work as part of our democratic right, the fear of social repercussions keeps women silent on issues of sexual harassment. She continued by saying that in SADTU we have finally broken the silence on this issue in particular because we have
elected a woman to head this important portfolio. The chair of this desk understands that most members in the union know fellow members who have experienced these issues, while some have often experienced it themselves. The SADTU anti-sexual harassment policy states that:

Any member who feels targeted by harassment must be able to speak up and know their concerns will be responded to immediately in accordance with SADTU’s policies, resolutions and complaint procedures. Grievances can be handled either formally or informally.

**Informal procedure**

The member, leader or staff member should make it clear to the perpetrator that s/he finds the behaviour offensive and ask that it be stopped. This above action can be done personally either in writing or verbally with a witness or a third party. If the behaviour recurs or persists or if the member does not feel safe in approaching the perpetrator directly s/he should speak with the designated official and ask her/him to act. If no official has been designated, the member should speak with the official in charge to ask that one be appointed. If the matter is not resolved and/or continues then a formal procedure will be followed.

**Formal procedure**

The complainant will lodge a complaint formally, in writing and provide the relevant information. The complaint should then be directed to the relevant secretary of the immediate executive structure. The executive structure will then refer it to the relevant disciplinary committee. Once the matter is referred to the disciplinary committee then normal disciplinary procedure as outlined in the guidelines for the functioning of disciplinary committees will follow. Confidentiality in dealing with such a matter must be observed at all times.

A SADTU member and one of the interviewees shared her experience after the union declared war on violence against women and children, and vows that with her comrades, they will defeat this scourge in SADTU:
The level of harassment in the workplace was very high; can you imagine women talking about being solicited by a man at the workplace? Husbands won’t accept it and this will become a huge source of frustration which women point out was the source of frustration. Outside your home, people will begin to ask questions and husbands will shift the blame to their wives for collaborating in the issues.

More complaints keep coming from victims of sexual harassment from our members, and this has managed to shame these powerful men and some of them have been removed from their posts.

All our members had to realise the importance of working closer with the union on these sensitive matters. Equality in the labour environment requires vigilant pushback from all leaders and this can change the vulnerability of women from sexual predators at school and other workplaces.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has attempted to project a realistic approach to the contribution of SADTU in the formulation of various significant policies that have shaped education in South Africa. At the outset, it was suggested that policy formulation is a highly contested terrain and requires persuasion of ideas that may stem from many different angles. In this regard, different priorities needed to be discussed extensively to give the correct perspective through which SADTU has managed to affirm its position in the education sector.

The last two decades have been characterised by many conferences, workshops and consultation processes with the view to align its policy with the values of the constitution of the Republic. The development of a policy making process has been a never ending one and needed to set a tone about how the union wanted to influence education. To this end, the union has been engaged in many policy formulations which are crucial to underscore in this discussion as part of the drive for many changes taking place in
education. At first, it must be pointed out that the union was not strong and could not influence the policy direction in the early years due to limited expertise. The majority of the founding members focused on the recruitment of more members at the expense of policy. In this summary, the main focus is on the education policy, Bargaining Council, gender discrimination and HIV/AIDS.

The education policy was seen as the most critical area. The union fought very hard to influence education in order to make its footprint known. There were many challenges facing the education sector that needed policy intervention from the union, such as unity in the diverse and unequal education system. Teachers were not united in the workplace, were discriminated against along racial lines and opportunities to strive were reserved for the few elite members in society. The union managed to formulate policy to fight discrimination in schools in many shapes and forms. Almost all teachers across the spectrum were given voices for the first time to report any abuse that might be perpetrated against them by their superiors.

The idea of rooting out discriminatory practices that existed in the curriculum policy was realised. The policy that advocated for separate education and the idea of inferior and superior education was to be rooted out completely. The union had to fight for equal education, free from discrimination, prejudices and malice. These discriminatory practices were orchestrated against the majority of black people and were systematically based on an unjust funding formula to exclude black schools from mainstream education. Linked to this was the unequal resourcing and evaluation of learners and teachers. The union's policy was clear that such draconian methods of discrimination should be abolished completely in the education arena.

Contesting for an increase in education funding and better remuneration for teachers remained primary objectives of SADTU. The system treated teachers unequally. Teachers were paid different salaries based on their race. This crisis was confronted head on through the union intervention in the policy of recruitment and
remuneration of teachers and other support staff in the Department of Education. It was not only the remuneration that was a crisis, but the low salary scales of teachers was concerning. As it was inevitable that the union was gaining momentum to be the biggest union in the history of South Africa, it started the idea of a Bargaining Council for salary increases for teachers across the entire education landscape.

The second area that was highlighted was the issue of HIV/AIDS and policy intervention. This emanated from the impact HIV/AIDS has on the wellbeing of their constituencies as well as the socio-economic development of the country. In short, HIV/AIDS has had a direct impact on the demand and supply of teachers and therefore, the union started campaigns throughout the country as part of an intervention to curb the pandemic. In the policy, the issue of attitudes and practices was raised as part of the strategy towards the minimisation of HIV/AIDS transmission. It was significant to note that the policy prioritised training of all infected and affected union members as part of the effort to reduce new infections and deaths.

In relation to the collective bargaining, the policy is very clear that an injury to one is injury to all. The success of the union was based on the mobilisation of teachers around the common cause, which saw the fight for better remuneration of teachers realised for the first time in South Africa. Linked to this issue, the union had to fight for the total elimination of all gender and class discrimination in order to make way for the flexible labour laws that recognise the role of women in all spheres of life. The policy made progress in addressing women’s rights and the advancement of the South African Gender Equity Act (55 of 1998) which advocated for gender equality in the workplace. The other major highlight of the policy was advocating for the 50-50 percent gender representation in positions of power and in education. The most problematic area that also needed policy intervention was the prevalence of sexual harassment of women in education. The union recognised the need for its members to work in an environment free from harassment and bullying which has been characterising education for millennia.

In a nutshell, SADTU as the union of choice for the majority
of South Africans, championed the promotion of education as a human right and public good. Linked to this was a desire to improve the quality of the education offering which many commentators felt was greatly compromised during the policy formulation.
Chapter 6

Demythologising the historical significance of SADTU

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to examine key concepts that inform the structural factors of the organisation. It is from these key concepts that a discussion on the identity and role of the organisation will be developed. It is within these structural factors of leadership, gender, bargaining council, education and sports that have shaped SADTU but more so, the development and application of its policies. There is an internal and external perception regarding the identity and role of SADTU, internal as in how SADTU is perceived by its members and external regarding how SADTU is viewed within the society in which it serves. Internal and external perception plays an integral component in identifying the paradigm shift of the organisations’ ideology of unity. Accordingly, there are many silences and gaps that may exist within the organisation that are constructed based on perception. It is within the structural factors where individualistic ideology in comparison to organisational ideology is identified and discussed through the demythologisation of each structural factor.

Historical change and continuity: SADTU’s vision and mission

The formation of SADTU on 6 October 1990 fostered a new era in teacher politics by bringing together the conservative teacher
associations with militant teacher unions. Change and continuity within the context of SADTU serves as a lens of transformation and development that seeks to identify and understand growth of the organisation. The conceptualisation of historical change and continuity are interrelated and make sense in relation to each other (Kvande and Naastad 2013; Seixas 2005 and 2006). Historical change is viewed as a process that differs in both paces and patterns (Seixas and Morton 2013), thus there are turning points when history changes or shifts direction. To help identify historical change, Seixas (2005) argues that it is critical to establish one phenomenon in contrast to another that is continuous. In doing so, the phenomenon in this case, SADTU, as a union is contrasted with societal perceptions of SADTU thus influencing the identity of the organisation. A process of change and continuity serves as a crucial factor for introspection of an organisation such as SADTU to self-assess, self-reflect and self-correct. It is through introspection that the organisation can identify whether or not the objectives of the organisation have been fulfilled. It is through self-identification that an organisation is able to grow but more significantly can identify key elements that the organisation can improve upon or develop.

The characterisation of SADTU as a vehicle of change within the social and political landscape was likened to a ‘socialist vision’ that encompassed three different political traditions. The political traditions became the foundation that grounded and defined SADTU as a union. These traditions consisted of (i) the national democratic tradition, (ii) the shop floor tradition, and (iii) the black consciousness/Africanist tradition (Webster and Adler, 2001). However, the emergence of a unified non-racial and non-sexist union was not without opposing ideological views. According to Whittle (2007:81), “SADTU, like the ANC, demanded the formation of a national education forum where aspects of the future educational system could be negotiated”. It is within the demythologising of SADTU and its historical significance as an educational vehicle of change and continuity that the underlying assumptions of the vision and mission of the union are grounded and encompassed by its members. Woods (1999) views teacher unions as agencies and a
medium of power that seek to address the imbalance of power within the workplace. However, arguments discussed by Poole (1997) explain that unions are faced with two dilemmas, the educators’ own interests and the public’s interests. The leadership of SADTU explained the kind of unionism they subscribed to as the following:

We need a unionism that not only restricts itself in traditional union concerns, such as wage bargaining and conditions of employment, but also to address broader issues, such as ownership and the role of the state and what our role is within the state (SADTU National Executive Committee Meeting, 13-14 August, 1998:21).

Figure 15: Picture describing the news about SADTU post 1991.

In every organisation there are good and bad people. In the media space, perceptions abound about the role of SADTU in destabilising the delivery of quality education. There are individuals who pursued narrow personal interests and in the process damaged the name of the union. In media reporting, there is no delineation between the policies of the union and actions of individual members. Within every organisation there are conflicting arguments regarding the
direction the organisation must take. Perception is a crucial factor that not only shapes the identity of a union but how it is viewed (Heywood 2003). Unifying individuals under one umbrella who believe and adhere to the vision and mission of a union is a huge undertaking. According to Heywood (2003), “whether consciously or unconsciously, everyone subscribes to a set of political beliefs and values that guide their behaviour and influence their conduct”. Over time individuals within the union went against the very nature of what SADTU was built on thus altering and interrupting the vision and mission of the union not because the vision or mission had changed but the individualistic agenda had set in.

Role of leadership

The aim of leadership within an organisation is not only to guide but to serve as the voice of its members. The ideology within any organisation is to move towards the premise of collectiveness in achieving the vision and mission of the organisation. According to Mathebe (2016:15), “the relationship between the teachers’ union and government is blamed for the widening gap between the union members and its leaders”, it is within this argument that a notion of disconnect emerges within the organisation. It is argued that SADTU leadership within the context of government tended to make decisions for its members without the mandate of its members (Mathebe 2016).

Bush (2007) discusses leadership as grounded on an individual who influences others’ actions in order to achieve the intended ends. “Leaders are individuals who distinctively outline the goals, motivations, and actions of others. Commonly they initiate change to reach existing and new goals ... leadership ... takes ... much ingenuity, energy and skill” (Bush 2007:392). The vision and mission within a union provides a crucial sense of direction that underpins the organisation’s leadership role and direction. Within the South African context, SADTU is affiliated to COSATU, an ally to the ANC (Zengele 2009). Subsequently, in order for the vision and mission to be fulfilled SADTU members understood that they had to align
themselves with the ANC (Zengele 2009). There was a perception that SADTU is a predominantly African union. This was confirmed by an interviewee, Nonqeba Nduna, who said that SADTU “is predominantly having black comrades and you find NAPTOSA predominantly coloured, you see, and the fact that we align ourselves with ANC and the other people they align themselves with DA, it is having an effect”. Based on the argument brought forward the affiliation to COSATU and ANC provides the notion that SADTU is subsequently for African members which is reflected in the large membership of Africans. Masenya (2016:16) argues that, “the highly politicised atmosphere within how the SADTU leadership operates has led to a situation where most in society believe that the union is concentrating on politicking and furthering the ambitions of their leaders rather than improving the standards of education in schools”.

After 1994 many SADTU members propelled into leadership positions in the newly formed national and provincial departments. Having a close relationship with the governing party, union leaders were rewarded with management positions in the education bureaucracy and appointed to key legislative and executive levels (Murillo 1999). Murillo’s argument creates a notion that union leaders were automatically rewarded due to their affiliation with the governing party. A contrasting notion is that SADTU has produced good leaders who were identified by those in the leadership of the country to contribute to the greater good of all. Magqaza, an interviewee, discusses how,

It is very difficult to force a Comrade to vote for a certain organisation. That is one thing I should start from...certainly as a leader of this trade union, or any other that is affiliated to COSATU or ANC. You can’t afford to be a member of another party as the leader now, maybe as a member you can, because trade unions organise everything according to political lines. But at the end of the day as a leader you cannot afford to be affiliated to another party because you cannot do justice in terms of... organising non ANC members who are SADTU members, to come and vote for ANC.
Vadi (2015), who was once part of the SADTU organisation states that:

SADTU leadership is seen as a stepping stone for a promotion post and SADTU plays sometimes a very negative devious role in that process sometimes bordering on intimidation to make sure that people get appointed that’s not the role of SADTU. So negative trends and tendencies have set in and the leadership must speak out against that you must correct; you must have corrective measures.

Moe (2006) argues that union leaders at international and national level attract more attention in the media thus overshadowing the voices of educators. The role of union leaders whether at national or provincial level is to promote the interests of the educators including the education system it serves. The purpose of leadership amongst educators within a trade union is to act as a bargaining collective for everyone (Mathebe 2016).

It is through the political affiliation that contestation within the union emerges where the societal discourse that once grounded the ideology of SADTU has been overshadowed by politics. Van Vuri argues that people:

Join SADTU, not to join the union, not for the union to fight for what they think is necessary, they join SADTU because they want posts. They want posts there and there, especially principal posts. That’s why they come and join SADTU, to get to the top. They use it to climb the ladder. And I told them not once but in each and every SADTU meeting, I said, “I think, you are not doing justice to this union. You are making this union look like a stepping stone for people to get into those posts”. And that’s how they get into those posts. Please be people comrades, be careful with that.

It is through the internal politics of members within the union that mislead and misrepresent the union as a whole. In order for the vision and mission of the union to be achieved, it was important for SADTU to have greater impact and influence within the educational system. According to Heywood (2003:3) “political ideas are not
merely a passive reflection of vested interests or personal ambition, but have the capacity to inspire and guide political action itself and so can shape material life”. Union leaders especially in SADTU play an integral part in bridging the gap between its grassroots members and leadership and in doing so members can work to participate in making meaningful contributions to broader issues in the union. Thus, requiring SADTU leadership to steer its unionism towards a political flat form that seeks to foster such ideology. According to Heywood (2003:3), “people see the world as a veil of ingrained beliefs, opinions and assumptions”. Opposing arguments regarding the very nature of trade unionism and political association have been questioned in terms of ideological views of individuals in concealing the contradictions of the intended purpose of a trade union.

**Gender as a critical social operational tool**

To demythologise a concept requires meaning and understanding of not only the term but also the context in which it is set. Gender within society serves as a social indicator and social category in which an individual is placed but more so how they function in society. Each individual, regardless of the social context in which he or she is born, is governed by the norms, beliefs, and values that they are born into thus shaping their identity. The term ‘gender’ has broad scope in terms of the conceptualisation, in order for individuals to be classified within society a biological determinism is used to identify male or female.

Gender as a critical tool of social functioning points to the pervasiveness of the patriarchal ideology in all spheres of South African society. However, SADTU sets to dismantle and demythologise the silences surrounding ‘gender’ within the union from the grassroots level to leadership positions. Societal perceptions and social language regarding ‘gender’ have fostered a perception that the ideology of SADTU is shaped by societal views. Consequently, individualistic hegemonic ideology brings forth an understanding that women are subordinate to men not only socially but also culturally. An individual’s hegemonic views regarding
‘gender’ is practised at home and is reinforced within society thus creating a norm of acceptance in gender roles. As a result, SADTU seeks to show within the union that societal discourse of ‘gender’ does not represent what the union stands for. The intention of the union to dismantle gender imbalances and discrimination is eloquently captured in the Preamble of the SADTU Constitution (SADTU 2006:5):

We, teachers of South Africa, having committed ourselves to the transformation of education and dedicated ourselves to the development of an education system which is fully accessible, equal and qualitative, free of apartheid legacy and which is the just expression of the will of the people, as enshrined in the Constitution of the country, hereby proclaim the need for a single teachers’ union in our land. Further, recognising the deeply embedded class and gender cleavages in South African society, SADTU commits itself to eliminating all gender and class based discrimination in education in South Africa. To this end, SADTU shall endeavour to inculcate the values of egalitarianism and social justice among its members and the broader society.

Gender inequalities exist in a range of ways, from income and wealth to social honour and cultural authority. SADTU’s stance regarding ‘gender’ within the organisation is viewed as having its own struggle for both women and men. SADTU policy rejects gender inequality. The practice within the union has been a contradiction of its policy, as a result women in the union had to struggle for their place in leadership. The internal contradictions and struggles on gender inequality in SADTU place it in a more favourable position to advance the struggle in broader South African society.
Historical constructions of gender within SADTU

Gender issues and gender equity became central to transformation, and given the significant involvement of females in the profession, SADTU placed gender concerns high on its agenda. Teaching was and still is one of the few professions that women occupy in large numbers. In 1991, women made up 71% of the teaching profession in DET primary schools and 42% in secondary schools. Women were rarely promoted to become HODs and principals.

They were also discriminated against in terms of salaries and conditions of service. For instance, they were not remunerated the same salary as their male counterparts for similar positions, and did not enjoy the same benefits, such as housing subsidies, medical aid, retirement funds and other fringe benefits. In its attempt to fight for gender equality, SADTU convened a workshop on 27 September 1993, which was attended by representatives from all 15 regions. The workshop was conducted by Pinky Mbowane who was then the Vice President for Gender (Kumalo and Skosana 2014).

The workshop focused on various issues, including paternity and maternity leave, childcare, abortion, harassment at schools and...
affirmative action. One of SADTU’s earliest tasks was the building of grassroots structures. This included empowering members with skills to establish branch structures, become effective site stewards, promote membership participation and ensure that all members understood their rights (Kumalo and Skosana 2014). It is within the framework of social transformation that SADTU embarked on developing different ‘desks’ within the union that sought to redress different consciousness that manifested in the union. In doing so, the gender desk emerged as a means of exposing and dealing with the patriarchal ideology within SADTU. Subsequently, these desks were tasked with developing and implementing policies such as HIV/AIDS policy, sexual harassment policy as well as child care policy that fostered gender equality within the union.

**Gender Desk and Gender Issues: The silences?**

The development of policy within any organisation has no bearing if the application of such policies are not fostered or achieved. It is through its ideology of equality and ensuring equity in the union that a gender desk was established. The aim in establishing a gender desk was firstly because women teachers constitute a large number in terms of membership within the organisation and secondly they occupy lower level positions in the organisation (Mannah 2008). It is within this context that the gender desk sought to identify and understand the experiences of women in the union, including the impact on progressing the gender struggle that women encounter.

The position that the gender desk holds in the organisation is crucial to development and application of gender equity. This programme has been developed so that gender imbalances within the organisation could be addressed. Since 1997, such programmes consist of gender consciousness raising workshops. The adoption of a policy to set measurable targets for women’s advancement within the union was established in 2002. Quotas for attendance of training workshops and meetings within the organisation have been operational since 2003 (Mannah 2008). However, the struggle
of gender imbalances within the organisation is not without its shortfalls as research findings have demonstrated that women still encounter racial, social and cultural preconceptions that ultimately shape their identity and roles within society but more so within the union. It is within such a shortfall that women are predisposed to societal discrimination outside the scope of the union. In fact, the discrimination experienced by women is fuelled by perceptions that are grounded in the hegemonic patriarchal ideology of South African society. According to Mannah (2008:163), “The research findings indicate that racial and cultural cleavages still exist in post-apartheid South Africa and continue to fragment women’s identities that challenge their agency”. Gender politics within an organisation construct an identity but also create an unintended consciousness towards women regarding how they are viewed in the organisation but more so, their place in the organisation. It is within these assumptions that there is a perception within the organisation that SADTU is a male orientated union guided by patriarchal assumptions. Perception plays a pivotal role in the function of any organisation. It is through perception of SADTU that grassroots members perceive that gender politics in the organisation will always subjugate women to lower level positions.

**Gender constructed positions**

Perception in the social, political or economic sphere plays an integral aspect in creating an identity based on an individual’s ideas or notions. It is within these ideas and notions that the identity of SADTU has been constructed. The conceptualisation of perception is not necessarily based on facts or speculations. To demythologise an identity of a union such as SADTU requires an in depth analysis of various positions, desks and departments.

The emergence of SADTU during a contentious era in South African history served to dismantle social prejudices within society but more so within the education system. During the 1990s, gender and racial imbalances regulated the type of employment and the positions held by women. It is during this era that women were not
eligible for positions of management or leadership positions. In 1999, a study conducted by SADTU illustrated that many women were disturbed by the union’s poor record of gender equality (Chisholm and SADTU 1999).

To achieve equality in the structures of the union, policies surrounding gender were put in place to address gender imbalance. Such imbalances are inclined to cultural and racial ideology that exist within society but more so transcend the organisations. One of the core aims in the creation of gender policies within the union is to execute gender mainstreaming within the structures with the objective of addressing women’s empowerment as well as equity within the union. The strategies behind SADTU’s Gender Policy (2017:14) were to “promote gender action plans with adequate budgets, promote sensitive and responsive gender budgets as a tool to attaining gender equality, develop capacity building programmes, support strategic resource mobilisation for gender programmes”. It is within such strategies that SADTU created a gender policy that encompassed gender governance, representation, and participation of gender within the union:

Such components addressed implementing a 50/50 policy to achieve gender balance. To design mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating progress and assessing the impact of the 50/50 policy. Furthermore, invest in capacity building programmes for women in leadership in order to equip them with the skills necessary to enable them to play effective leadership roles in the union, schools and society. As well as investing in research on barriers, future trends and conditions required for women’s participation in decision making. To develop and implement programmes to eliminate discriminatory attitudes and practices that discourage women from holding decision making positions at all levels. Therefore, promote capacity building and mentoring for young women and men to motivate them to take up leadership positions at all levels. Subsequently, promote exchange of information and sharing of experiences between women leaders in all levels of the union, regionally and internationally.
Lastly, develop and strengthen support systems for women in leadership positions (SADTU’s Gender Policy 2017:8).

The table below illustrates the ratio of male to female in leadership positions within the national level of SADTU as of 2007 (Mannah 2008:122).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Office Bearer</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Office Bearer</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Office Bearer</td>
<td>Deputy President</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Office Bearer</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Office Bearer</td>
<td>Deputy General Secretary</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Office Bearer</td>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Office Bearer</td>
<td>Vice President for Education</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Office Bearer</td>
<td>Vice President for Gender</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Office Bearer</td>
<td>Vice President Sports, Arts and Culture</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 17: Table illustrating Gender breakdown of SADTU NEC (2007).

Within SADTU, there is a general acceptance and assumption "that the highest positions of power in the union are reserved for the black African male. The multiple levels of racial and cultural oppression affect and dictate the role of women within society. It is within the multiple levels that women are exposed to ‘triple oppression’ of race, gender and culture of which each consists of norms and standards that women are guided by. It is within the realms of ‘triple oppression’ that women are exposed to socially constructed perceptions and stereotypes associated with race, gender
and culture. Women in the union recognise their gender oppression; however, racial and cultural differences make them vulnerable to male influences, constraining potential for unity on the basis of sex alone” (Mannah 2008:163). Research findings conducted by Mannah (2008) maintain that experiences of women leaders illustrate that across different cultures in South Africa male leaders intentionally manipulated the union’s patriarchal culture and masculine traditions to further their agendas. Thus, creating a notion that the policies set in place are ‘window dressing’ hiding patriarchal ideologies that in turn are perceived as the norm or standard of SADTU.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provinical</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gauteng</td>
<td>Chairperson</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Cape</td>
<td>Chairperson</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limpopo</td>
<td>Chairperson</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mpumalanga</td>
<td>Chairperson</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Cape</td>
<td>Chairperson</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Cape</td>
<td>Chairperson</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>Chairperson</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free State</td>
<td>Chairperson</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kwa Zulu Natal</td>
<td>Chairperson</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 18: Table indicating Gender breakdown of SADTU provincial level (Mannah 2008:122).
The analysis of Figures 17 and 18 illustrate the gender politics of patriarchy within the organisation but more so the ratio of male to female is alarming. The positions illustrated in Figures 17 and 18 demonstrate a high level of males in both national and provincial levels. Based on the policy of gender governance, representation and participation it is evident that there is a disconnect of what is in the policy and the practicality of the policy. Gender equality and equity are not fully practised within the organisation.

This also reveals how social ideology has thrived within the union thus creating a notion that leadership positions within the union are gender biased. It is this notion of gender politics that the principles and ideology of the union are not implemented and practised thus, establishing a narrative that policy versus practice has been sidelined and that individualistic ideology has overshadowed the policy of the union. The patriarchal culture within the organisation creates an assumption that leadership positions are reserved for male figures. However, a common notion in post-apartheid that is embedded within society is that not all women oppose the patriarchal culture and it is within this acceptance that some women oppose women in leadership positions. According to Mannah (2008:138), “the women leaders argue that the behaviour of the women during the 2002 Congress perpetuated stereotypes of women and dealt a major blow to the struggle for gender equality in SADTU”. It was during this Congress that women came together to debunk gender stereotypes by uplifting and breaking down barriers that hinder women in leadership positions. The aim of this meeting was to bring women together to build positive gender consciousness among Congress delegates with the aim of nominating and voting them into national leadership positions (Mannah 2008). However disagreements amongst women attending the roundtable emerged. Thus, perpetuating the cycle of gender inequality within the union but more so the positions in the union.

The national level leadership positions are a clear reflection of how gender politics through social ideology has thrived within the organisation thus creating a notion that leadership positions
are solely reserved for male counterparts since the inception of the union. It is within this notion that SADTU seeks to demythologise that the policies and principles of the organisation are not subject to gender biases.

**Bargaining Councils and Gender**

Due to a contentious apartheid past, the emergence of Bargaining Councils was regulated according to race. This meant that selected or limited groups were awarded the privilege of having Bargaining Councils. This resulted in different racially divided departments that serviced each race group that was mandated by the apartheid system. The new administration was subsequently tasked with a huge undertaking to improve the quality and access of education to disadvantaged schools or racial groups (Rezandt 2015). In doing so, the rights of both educator and learner were to be upheld in order for a conducive learning environment to be created. Based on the Labour Relations Act (LRA) section 213 the conceptualisation of Bargaining Councils refers to:

A written agreement concerning terms and conditions of employment or any matter of mutual interest concluded by one or more registered trade unions, on the one hand and, on the other hand –

(a) one or more employers;

(b) one or more registered employers’ organisations; or

(c) one or more employers and one or more registered employers’ organisations.

The role of SADTU within the collective Bargaining Council was to provide equality not only within the work space but within the realms of their constitutional mandate of equality. Within the Bargaining Council policy SADTU’s main aim is to implement strategies and measures that enhance equality. The core aims of the policy serve as a guideline that displays the policy commitment of SADTU that it shall:
Implement measures for ensuring women’s representation and participation with men in collective bargaining teams and matters.

To achieve this objective SADTU will undertake to:

- Train women delegates to enhance their capacity in negotiations.
- Sensitise negotiating teams to women’s issues and gender concerns.
- Monitor gender impacts of provisions generally in collective agreements.
- Collect data on gender trends in education such as in promotions to underpin the agenda.
- Ensure that gender neutral language is used in drafting or writing of collective agreements.

Identifying SADTU’s many key operational aspects is the task of Thami Mseleku and the Collective Bargaining Council that was formed in 1992. The aim of the Collective Bargaining Council within SADTU was to address and resolve issues including retrenchments, early retirement packages and the freezing of posts that were encountered by educators. African teachers were at a disadvantage based on race, and were paid lower salaries. However, African female teachers experienced “double jeopardy” of race and gender within the profession. The salary of a teacher was contingent on race but African female teachers during the apartheid regime had it tougher than their male counterparts as their salary was based on not only race but also gender. The Bargaining Council under SADTU made great strides in fostering equality but more so challenging the working conditions of black female teachers. This led to an increase in followers and membership from African female teachers.

The Bargaining Council made great strides in the organisation however, the shortfalls on leadership positions within organisations and in schools is still evident and “the women leaders agree that the union has not made gender a central principle in its collective bargaining processes” (Mannah 2008:147). Gender representation
within the organisation and schools has not been compulsory within the Bargaining Council as the ratio between black men and women in leadership positions has not been challenged. According to Mannah (2008:148):

SADTU’s collective bargaining achievements are concentrated mainly on bargaining traditional issues like teacher salaries. However, arguments brought forward by women leaders state that, “despite the fact that SADTU services a predominately female membership, its collective bargaining structures and negotiators’ task team fails to include women representatives”.

The women’s heightened consciousness has awakened an awareness of the potential for the union to effect change that would explicitly benefit women as a gender. The Bargaining Council has not successfully considered the broader aspect of gender. Struggles encountered by women are more than just salary disputes as they include the roles in which they are placed within the organisation. Leadership positions are mainly gender related and the ideology of the patriarchal system is fostered.

**Education and SADTU**

The role of education within South Africa fostered the social conditioning of different race groups. The use of education during the apartheid era served as a crucial process in training individuals from different race groups sociologically. Subsequently, individuals inherited and adhered to the norms, beliefs and ideologies of not only society but how they function in society.

It is within such a context that SADTU alongside various unions and organisations fostered change. “It subscribed to the idea that a union amongst other roles should improve the conditions, which affect teachers at work such as long working hours, victimisation and lack of job security” (Sanger 1990 cited by Sibiya 2017:4). However, the methods of change or communication within the education system were synonymously associated with the culture of militancy. Based on SADTU’s use of radical and militant methods, “SADTU
appears to disregard or overlook the existence of these policy documents leading to the general collapse of school functionality and effective learning and teaching in township schools…” (Sibiya, 2017:4). Thus, overlooking the core elements of professionalism, teaching and learning, elements that embody education.

The history and policies regarding education serve as the backbone of SADTU. Amtaika (2013) further argues that SADTU’s objectives of fighting for quality education was derailed by focusing on material gains and political achievements. The purpose of SADTU amongst other unions was to fight for the rights of black people to have access to education, which is encompassed within the Constitution and Bill of Rights, Act 108 of 1996. The South African Council of Educators (SACE) Educator Code of Conduct, states that educators must commit to their duties.

Ishmael Vadi (2015) argues that there are voices within SADTU that are critical of what some members did. In most cases, such individuals were in violation of the policies of the union and the code of conduct. Ishmael Vadi represents the critical voice that does not reject the union but wants it to self-correct. He raises issues on the manipulation
of promotion procedures to favour SADTU affiliated teachers. Nevertheless, the argument brought forward by Vadi states that SADTU is no longer visibly making policy statements in local media. For him, SADTU has been disconnected from the people on the grassroots level.

SADTU branch in Lenasia, if I take this whole year, you got three local newspapers in Lenasia, one is a weekly and the others are bi-monthly to monthly. In 12 months in this year, its 11 months I cannot recall a single article of SADTU or the branch. I can't remember them reporting a single article yet, in the early years we built relationships with local newspapers which had education issues all the time. Policy issues, struggles, fights at the school, somebody chowing money somewhere, we go fight with the principal there's still issues but as I said I live in Lenasia in 9 months I haven't seen a single public commentary by the SADTU branch on any educational matter in my committee. Those were key for us to relate to SADTU over the years. SADTU has changed and sometimes I look back and think that I am very disappointed. It was a very vibrant organisation in the early years both on the professional and union side. My sense now is that SADTU, somehow rightly or wrongly, I'm not saying it's my perception, but there's an image out there that SADTU will only make a big noise if it is about salary increase, but it doesn't comment widely on education issues. I really don't see the professional component of SADTU coming out strongly, the real developmental side of teachers on the ground (Vadi 2015).

While the role and impact of SADTU during the apartheid regime is still respected by African teachers and the ANC, its role within the current education background of South Africa is questionable (Wills 2014).

**Ubuntu, an ethic of participation:**

**Core values in SADTU**

The philosophical underpinnings of *Ubuntu* stem from the contentious past within South African history. It is through such a contentious past that the core values and beliefs of *Ubuntu* have become a benchmark of freedom and unity. The use of *Ubuntu*
transcends various cultures but it is through differences that humanity and nation building emerges. The conceptualisation of *Ubuntu* derives from a Nguni (isiZulu) aphorism: *Umuntu Ngumuntu Ngabantu*, which can be translated as “a person is a person because of or through others” (Moloketi 2009:243). The promotion of *Ubuntu* within the African and South African ideology as a nation-building concept is fundamental in building towards a democracy. *Ubuntu* forms the basis of African collective cultural life. It expresses the common humanity and the accountability of individuals to each other (Koster 1996:99-118; Nussbaum 2003:21-26). Over time, the principles that underpin the ideology of participation within the union have not been upheld. The application of the *Ubuntu* philosophy within the policies of the SADTU organisation should be used to challenge any discourses that go against the values and principles of the organisation.

It is through such values and principles that SADTU would seek to redress the challenges encountered by the organisation. In doing so, it will strengthen the notion of why and how SADTU was born. According to Sibiya (2017:16), "the first teachers’ strike that was also joined and supported by ordinary people in 1989 where more than 6000 South African teachers made various demands to the apartheid government…". Sibiya makes a critical point that the strike was supported by ordinary people. Vadi has lamented the disconnect between the union and the people. In other words, the union does not speak to issues that relate to people at grassroots level. Such an event required more than active participation of educators but an element of self-sacrificing for a greater good of social change. The core assumptions that underpin *Ubuntu* are that the philosophy speaks to and addresses all regardless of race, class and gender. *Ubuntu* as an agent of ethical participation instils the values that once shaped the ideology of SADTU as an organisation. The *Ubuntu* philosophy unlocks the egalitarian atmosphere of an African culture in which individuals express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, humanity and mutuality in the interests of building and maintaining communities with justice and communalities (Poovan, Du Toit and Engelbrecht 2006:23-25). The notion of returning to the roots
of *Ubuntu* will re-establish SADTU's representation within society, communities, grassroots members and leadership as a whole. It is through the philosophical underpinnings of *Ubuntu* that SADTU will be able to address and self-correct not only the perception of the organisation within society but to re-teach and re-learn. By re-teaching and re-learning the concept of *Ubuntu*, SADTU can be transformed into an organisation that serves the community and not narrow individual interests. Under the umbrella of unity, the values of SADTU and the ideology of *Ubuntu* both have a conception that the community is more important than the individual that it is within. The application of the values of *Ubuntu* on SADTU practice has potential to transform and sensitise it to the needs of the people. It will promote a sense of engagement with the community.

**Sports as culture within SADTU**

Under the apartheid regime, movement of the oppressed was restricted and regulated under the Group Areas Act. The dismantling of the apartheid education system required access to different areas and it was through sports that the movement emerged. Sport remains a cornerstone of all nation building and brings people together. The interconnectedness of sport within the SADTU organisation has great significance towards the history of the formation of the union. It was through sports that members of the union were able to move around and bring about change within the education system during the apartheid regime. According to Hoppers (2005:1), “culture is best understood as the totality of socially transmitted behaviour patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions and all other products of human work and thought”. It is through socially transmitted beliefs that sports serves as an integral component of social development that transcends racial, gender and class barriers.

The emergence of sports within the organisation is more than just sport but a culture that fosters unity within the organisation. It was through unity that sports was key to instilling social values, which created a sense of belonging, owning our cultural background, working together and creating trust amongst communities.
(SADTU). The country is sometimes described as a ‘sports-mad’ nation. It was during the post-apartheid period that sports served as a common denominator amongst South African citizens that broke cultural and racial barriers and fostered unity. It is from the unity and culture of the sport that SADTU’s vision, mission and ideology of education was born not through boardrooms or confined spaces but grounds/land on which sports were used to unify a community. Through shared values of educational reform, sports was not merely a game but a culture on its own.

Sport is a universal phenomenon that carries huge significance in projecting cultures but more so cultural identity in different communities. According to Parlebas, (2005:13), “the game is a kind of emblem of a culture, for that reason the deep knowledge of playful practices is an important element to know a society”. It is through knowing society that SADTU would bring individuals from different cultural backgrounds to interact with each other but more so practising cultural beliefs and an ideology of *Ubuntu*. Under the apartheid era sports alongside culture became a source of identity and freedom. According to Nongogo (2016:66), “South Africa has a long and rich historical tradition of sport participation, both amongst South Africans within the country and internationally.” Although the essence of culture serves as a binding agent that seeks to embody interconnectedness of individuals within society it is important to practise such values.

The purpose of developing sports within the policy is to foster unity and it is within this aspect that the application of sports has failed to retain the interconnectedness of its members and community involvement. Policies within any organisation serve as a foundation and provide guidelines that not only shape the union but the members within. Subsequently, the policies that are constructed serve a purpose that requires active participation from all through practice.
Conclusion

Literature identifies gaps that exist between the organisation and its members thereby reshaping the role and identity of the organisation within the pillars that exist within the union. The critical voice and standing that once served as a beacon of change has resulted in questionable actions. It is through such actions that factions within the organisation begin to dismantle the solid foundation of unity that once formed the organisation. Subsequently, there are many questions surrounding gender issues between policy and practice within the SADTU organisation. It is within these distinctions that a fundamental question of gender relations, related values and attitudes surrounding equality and equity within the organisation are raised. Within contemporary society preconceived norms and beliefs embodied by individuals create a social division that alters gender roles, behaviours and occupations and in doing so, create a social context that women cannot be in positions of power or leadership. It is within this discourse that the ideology of equality embedded within the SADTU policies has struggled to dismantle but more so, radically change and educate its members and leadership. It is the responsibility of not only the members but, also the leadership to create a shift in prevailing gender issues in contemporary society.
Chapter 7

Usable demythologised past: SADTU’s milestones and resolutions

Introduction

The chapters assembled in this book represent years of reflection about SADTU’s historical past by staunch members of the organisation through the eyes of five historians and social scientists who wrote this book. It provided a lens through which to view problems of perennial interest by interviewees who are loyal members of the union and the public represented in literature by scholars on the organisation. Empirical data on which to argue the pros and cons of SADTU’s operations and reforms in history through the lens of demythologising and decolonisation have been missing from the debate. Anecdotal evidence has been cited, but the scholarly arguments are rarely grounded in the happenings of actual policies, resolutions and the ordinary members of the union. There is virtually no literature on such conclusions pertaining to the union. The book has so far concentrated on the revival of the union by tracing its historical roots from a precolonial African past to its inception in 1990. It has been shown through the insights of scholars and those who were interviewed that the contribution of SADTU to the education system in South Africa has been both positive and negative. On the positive side, SADTU made critical contributions to the design of the post-apartheid education system and the conditions of service for teachers. On the negative side, SADTU has been accused of fermenting chaos in the schools – through strikes, fighting for positions and defending
non-performing educators (Paddy and Jarbandhan 2014; Jansen 2011; Ramphele 2009; Zengele 2013, interviewees in this book). Evidence has shown that some members of the organisation tainted the image of the organisation by acting in ways that served their narrow personal interests and not adhering to the agreed code of conduct and procedures. Because of its militant posture and overt political position, SADTU has been blamed for most of the problems in South African education.

Should an organisation take the blame for the misbehaviour of its members? It has happened on many occasions to SADTU. Such views have led to misunderstandings of the union, its role, and policies thus overshadowing the positive achievements of the union, for example, improved academic performance of students, standard of education and working conditions for all teachers in South Africa (Amoako 2013; Paddy and Jarbandhan 2014). As we conclude this book, we surmise that there is a need to demystify the union by looking at the contributions it has made through its resolutions and milestones. These contributions whether negative or positive are the ‘usable past’ that can aid in charting a way forward – in reevaluating the union’s position amongst educators but more so the communities in which it serves. This is because literature and the members interviewed in this book argued that SADTU contributed to the transformation of education and labour relations in the education sector (Amoako 2013; Paddy and Jarbandhan 2014). The ‘usable past’ of the organisation has much to teach members who defile its operations and to enlighten people about how SADTU functions. Consequently, it is valuable to think of history as a resource that is both empowering and constraining for teachers as citizens. Hence, the purpose of this book is on demythologising the perceptions about SADTU through the eyes of its members.

**SADTU’s resolutions and demythologisation**

The last two decades for the union have been characterised by many conferences, workshops and consultation processes with the view to align its policies with the values of the constitution of the Republic. The process of policy-making has been a never-ending one and needed to set the tone of how the union wanted to influence
education. To this end, the union has been engaged in many policy formulations, which are crucial as part of the drive for the many changes taking place in education. At first, it must be pointed out that the union was not strong and could not influence the policy direction in the early years due to limited expertise. The majority of the founding members neglected rules of the organisation and mainly focused on the recruitment of more members at the expense of policy (Paddy and Jarbandhan 2014). In this summary, the main focus is on the education policy, Bargaining Council, gender discrimination and HIV/AIDS.

The education policy was seen as the most critical and challenging to the union. The education system has made great strides in developing educational policies that encompass quality and inclusive education for all. However, certain challenges within education policies have manifested in the form of socio-economic issues such as quality of education, infrastructure and issues surrounding xenophobia. Policy initiatives such as the Education, Training and Development Practises Sector Education and Training Authority (ETDP SETA) and Funza Lushaka Fund are programmes that fund and place skilled educators into disadvantaged schools. The union fought very hard to influence education in order to make its footprint known. There were many challenges facing the education
sector that needed policy intervention from the union, such as lack of unity among teachers and an unequal education system. The system still treated teachers according to racial categories, there was discrimination along racial lines and opportunities for career advancement were only for an elite few. The union took it upon itself to fight such inequalities through participation in the formulation of policy to eradicate all forms of discrimination from the school system. The major pillars of the new policy were non-racialism and non-sexism. This policy empowered teachers and learners to report cases of abuse by their superiors without any fear of reprisals. The main objective was to create a conducive environment for teaching and learning which fostered open channels of communication.

The idea of implementing a curriculum that encompassed redressing past imbalances by rooting out discriminatory practices and disparities in the curriculum policy, was realised. The policy completely removed all remnants of separation in education. The union had to fight for equal education, free from discrimination, prejudices and malice deeply rooted in the system. These discriminatory practices were orchestrated against the majority of black South Africans and were systematically based on an unjust funding formula to exclude black schools from mainstream education. Linked to this was the unequal resourcing and evaluation of learners and teachers. The union’s policy was to abolish all policies that entrenched discriminatory practices of the previous era.

Equity in the funding of all schools, improved remuneration of teachers, and better working conditions were the primary objectives of SADTU. The apartheid system treated teachers unequally as race and gender hierarchies were used as a measure to pay teachers. Black African and women teachers found themselves at the bottom of the pay scale. Through the intervention of the union, the policy of recruitment and remuneration of teachers and other support staff in the Department of Education was changed. As it was inevitable that SADTU was gaining momentum to be the biggest union in the history of South Africa, it started the idea of a Bargaining Council for salary increases for teachers across the entire education landscape. This assisted in improving salaries and conditions of employment for all teachers.
SADTU’s milestones and demythologising

It is of paramount importance that an organisation occasionally re-evaluates and re-assesses its positioning amongst its members from grassroots to the leadership. For an organisation to move forward, key assessment aspects need to be identified for growth to take place. In doing so, the application of the values and mission statement of SADTU regarding fundamental pillars such as leadership, gender, Bargaining Council, education and sports need to be discussed. There is a prevailing narrative that SADTU is responsible for all the ills in the schooling system ranging from protecting ill-disciplined teachers to corruption in the making of senior appointments at schools. The dominant perception in the media is that SADTU has been bad for education. The book has tried to strike a balance between the negative aspects and its successes (Interview; Ishmael Vadi 2015; Paddy and Jarbandhan 2014). The core essence that foregrounds SADTU is quality education, however, the perception or image that is presented in the media has resulted in the union losing its stance within the scope of education as well as in society.

In order for SADTU to develop it has to ensure active participation of all its members in addressing the notion of perception versus reality within the organisation. It is one component to perceive a notion and another when those perceptions have transcended into the organisation and are viewed as true. Like myths, perceptions are lessons and they ring with truths. It is within these truths that the structures that exist within the organisation are viewed as being grounded on hegemonic ideology embedded within the patriarchal system. Ishmael Vadi (2015) maintains that:

… because new generations have come, new teachers have come, the system has stabilised, but I really think that the professional dimension is lacking quite a bit. Even the union side, the workers’ benefits can’t be just about salary and housing allowance and that kind of thing. One needs to move with the times and look at other kinds of needs. Okay, I’m sure that they got their own insurance policy so other kinds of benefits have come through from the union with the private sector. I
really don’t see the developmental side, there are many things that have gone right in politics but there are also worrying signs of corruption in government departments, in SGBs, misappropriations of funds, inefficacies in the systems and I don’t see SADTU on the critical edge.

An organisation may have encountered many successes of historical significance but over time, those successes become overshadowed by negative connotations. SADTU should use the negatives to self-correct. In Chapter 6 it is pointed out that there is no coherence between the ideology pursued by the union and what is happening on the ground. There seems to be a disconnect between the union and the communities where it is based.

It is due to failure to connect with constituencies that organisations lose support. In essence, it seems that SADTU leadership has isolated itself from union members and the public as there appears to be no meaningful engagement. Most members believe that SADTU’s vision of volunteering and fighting a greater cause and serving a community over the years has lost its voice. President Maphila (2016) recollects that in the early years of SADTU, members volunteered and even used their personal resources to advance the cause of the organisation:

We used the resources of Comrade Nick Matlala, he was the only one who knew how to drive in the urban areas here, and he had a van so there was no problem of us getting into the back of the van. I am not sure if comrades today are willing to travel more than 300 kilometres at the back of a van just on voluntary basis, just to do work for the organisation.

There is a disjuncture between what is contained in the policies and the application of such policies. It is within these paradigm shifts that SADTU has deviated from its intended policies and practices. It is within such disjuncture that the role and identity of the organisation has become a playground for individualistic ideology. Members pursuing narrow individual agendas have tainted the image of the union. Unity and shared values underpin the very nature that SADTU stands for however, an element of ‘self’ or individualistic values have become a
norm for joining and existing members. In doing so, the concept of shared values, of “Ubuntu” based on collective active participation has over time been reduced to ‘self’, thus, altering the vision and mission statement that was foregrounded in the union. It is through this outlook that the identity and role has been tainted from one generation to another. In fact, the policies did not fail the organisation and the people it serves, but the failure is the lack of application of the policies. The essence of unity in all spheres of SADTU has lost its true sentiment, as it is through unity that the construction of policies that seek to liberate all now serves an individualistic ideology. One of the central ills that needs to be eliminated from the organisation is that of individuals who joined the organisation in order to use it to satisfy their ambitions because such attitude diminishes the organisation’s identity, role and legacy.

**Successes and Failures**

SADTU as the most influential union in the country ought to admit that the road to successful policy-making was characterised by many successes and failures that will be unpacked in this section. In certain instances, the policy choices faced resistance from both internal and external stakeholders who were supposed to implement them. It is indeed ideal to identify possible successes and failures that have contributed in making SADTU a strong and resilient organisation. In this conclusion, a few critical challenges and opportunities are worth highlighting in order to give a proper account of what happened during the policy formulation process.

We have identified successes that are evident in the policy position for the union.

- Fight for better remuneration and working conditions for educational workers. In this instance, SADTU has registered sufficient victories in the design of the teacher union recognition agreement, teacher unity negotiations, successful bargaining for better working conditions for its members and growth in membership numbers.

- SADTU has consistently fought against apartheid education policies and its management, which had been carefully
structured to divide the education sector based on race. To fight this awful system, SADTU needed a sophisticated transformation paradigm. It was able to gain an understanding that the disintegration of apartheid’s hold on social co-existence is an ideological matter.

- Ground breaking labour legislation was introduced to pave the way for the union to champion teachers’ rights to collective bargaining and strike action. The legislation guaranteed teachers’ rights in the Labour Relations Act of 1995 to embark on strikes to fight for better conditions of service including remuneration.

- Again, one of the significant highlights for SADTU as a trade union was this phenomenal growth in membership as more teachers joined its ranks, especially younger generation black teachers.

- SADTU’s growth in membership led to the improvement of its financial autonomy since 1993, which meant that it could develop its policy and research capability.

- SADTU’s strength was its awareness and responsiveness to the political dynamics in education. The experience has taught SADTU that neglecting professional matters is a source of weakness and it made concerted efforts to correct this weakness. By 1998, education and research departments had been established, and more recently, a legal department to deal with legal matters facing teachers and those that threaten the existence of the union.

We also identified failures that are evident in the policy position for the union.

- Research shows that SADTU’s reticence in providing better quality services to its members contributed to the loss of membership and income.

- SADTU as a union can be criticised for having laudable policies but little to show for it in terms of heading the discourse. The
evidence presented from the literature shows that women continue to endure impediments as they try to ascend the ladder in the union.

- The study by Mama (1996) and Ora (2006) outlines a very serious paradox facing SADTU as the organisation run by male dominated ethos. These issues continue to perpetuate patriarchal structural policies, procedure and organisational structure to secure male control of the union.

- There is a lack of gender parity in SADTU, which is the symptom of many other unions in South Africa.

- Some of the failures relate to the culture and policies of the union, which in most cases seems subtle. In this regard, this institutionalised sexism manifests in organisational rules, rituals, symbolism and cultural messages about women’s roles in society.

- It has been noted that, one of the weaknesses or failures is that, despite the fact that SADTU services the majority of females, its bargaining structure and negotiation task teams fail to involve women representatives.

**SADTU’s usable past**

The past teaches about the future and enlightens on what to reform and reawaken. The past also helps to detect myths and works towards revamping the wrongs identified through such fables. Tracing through the history of SADTU, one detects both negative and positive outcomes and through that the union has the opportunity to revive and reform. More so, it has the opportunity to demythologise any of the beliefs that are not in line with the actual operations of the organisation. For SADTU, education remains the responsibility of all stakeholders who reside in South Africa; whether black or white, woman or man, rich or poor. The policies endorse that “an injury to one is an injury to all” and the spirit of *Ubuntu* (collaborative working) and that for the success of every child, all South Africans must play an active role as education is the foundation of every quality and progressive country.
Conclusions

The aim of the book is not only to demythologise perceptions and the identity of the organisation, but also, serves as an instrument of self-reflection within the organisation. The core basis of self-reflection is to re-evaluate, re-establish and re-assess the application of the set policies. It is through the lens of its members that SADTU is able to not only identify issues within the organisation but to proceed, to self-correct. Hence, the authors depict opposing interpretations and experiences regarding the role of SADTU within the education sector and in the communities of which they serve. The core recommendations that SADTU needs to adhere to as attested by interviewees in this book are going back to basics by rereading, reviewing and revising its history to better the future development of the organisation. In an era of decolonisation of education, SADTU is better placed as an organisation to chart forward ways on how the education system can transform by integrating indigenous values and themes in the education system. This is because the very teachers and students who brought the end of apartheid through riots, petitions and negotiations were later members of the union. The same spirit of reconstruction that they used to bring apartheid down can be utilised in dismantling the traces of colonisation in
the education system. Firstly, teacher development and creating a system especially within an era where the quality of teachers that are placed in schools are monitored. Secondly, ensuring that a channel of communication between parents, teachers and SADTU is in place. Thirdly, restructuring individuals into positions that are suited to their strengths and who believe and can apply the intended values and policies of the organisation.
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