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Introduction

This paper contends that teacher unions' participation in policy making is mediated by the ambiguous and political nature of teacher-state relations, underpinned by ideological allegiance and flexibility. Key factors that shape this relationship are government and teacher unions' harnessing of the ideologies of unionism and professionalism, and teacher unions' agency in the cultivation of policy networks, especially partisan and non-partisan alliances.

Drawing on a case study of teacher unions' participation in the policy making process of the South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996[1], it is argued that while, historically, teacher unions in South Africa were divided along political/ideological lines (unionism vs professionalism; and political alignment), teacher unions are able to demonstrate flexibility in contesting for control and influence in the policy arena, especially in their relations with the state. In this regard, teacher unions' agency plays an important part, and is reflected in changes in organizational strategies/tactics to ensure their independence or prevent their marginalization. In the process, there are key lessons for teacher unions, specifically that participation in policy making is not confined to hopes of influencing policy outcomes, but is about policy learning, with implications for the organizational development of teacher unions, particularly the need for well-functioning organizational structures and policy expertise. The paper concludes by reflecting on key challenges facing teacher union-state relations in South Africa and their relevance for teacher union-state relations elsewhere in the world.

Teacher-state relations

Working definition of the state

In this paper, reference to the state encompasses both legislative structures and state departments, with a greater emphasis on the role of the latter. Thus, in referring to the notion of teacher state-relations, it is primarily a reference to teachers and the Department of Education, at national, provincial and local levels. This definition follows Dale (1989), who proposes that besides government, the state may be said to consist of 'state apparatuses', specifically publicly financed institutions: these include government departments (departments of state), education, the police, and others; it would also include the judiciary and the legal system (ibid: 54). Dale offers two relevant caveats relating to the above list. First, that it applies to both national and local states – a local education authority is as much a state apparatus as a national department of education. Secondly, it excludes institutions that are not publicly financed. Schools, for example, may be regarded as state apparatuses if they are predominantly publicly funded. Thus reference to the state in this paper refers broadly to the education department(s) of government, as well as legislative structures, such as Parliament.

The central assumption made in this paper is that teachers' participation in policy making is fundamentally shaped by the nature of teacher-state relations. In this regard, teachers throughout the world have often found themselves in an ambiguous position in their relations with the state. This is because teachers historically are accountable to the state as the largest employer of teachers; on the other hand, teachers often clash with the state to assert their professional independence, especially in the policy making domain:

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[1] Based on the author's PhD thesis, entitled, *Teachers' participation in policy making: the case of the South African Schools'Act*.

> *They [teachers] have a very limited statutory authority over educational provision….To count them as partners with government is therefore to raise questions of influence and power, and questions of professional knowledge and practice. Teachers organise themselves in order to exert a collective influence on policy, both locally and nationally. They claim something like a monopoly of professional knowledge and skills…The influence may not always be what teachers intend, and it may not always be a direct influence. Nevertheless, it can be powerful, usually as a conservative force, but not always so. (* McPherson & Raab, 1988:4)

Thus, the contestation over control and ownership of policy lies at the heart of teacher-state relations. These struggles are not unrelated to efforts to impose greater bureaucratic control on the lives of teachers as state employees. As Apple (1989:15) notes, the exact forms of centralised control "*will be dependent on the outcomes of the struggles between 'the bureaucrats' and 'the technocrats' within the state apparatus ... and of the nature and effectiveness of the teaching profession's resistance to them*" (citing Dale, 1989). In this context, teacher unions are concerned to influence and shape policy in the interests of its members and/or in the interests of the 'public good'. This may give rise to the classic tension between the 'private' agenda of teacher unions and their pursuit of more eclectic objectives, or what Torres et al (2000:32) refer to as the conflict between the "particular" and the "universal". This tension manifests itself in the ambiguous nature of teacher union/state relations. On the one hand, teacher unions participate in joint policy-making forums with the view to consensus seeking, on the other hand, they have to defend members' interests. Teachers unions', therefore, enjoy a close but ambiguous relationship with the state in the policy arena.

Teacher unionism vs teacher professionalism

An important factor in exploring teacher-state relations is teachers and governments' conceptions of the ideologies of professionalism and unionism. For many decades, the two ideologies were regarded as incompatible and contradictory, founded largely on the lingering tension between understandings of teachers as workers and teachers as professionals (Ginsburg et al, 1980; Hindle & Simpson, 1993 and Ozga & Lawn, 1981). Teacher unions have invoked their claims to professionalism as a means of impacting the policy development process and their relations with the state. Alternatively, teachers might adopt more militant strategies, thereby presenting trade unionism as a strategic choice in teacher-state relations and challenging for a more structured and influential role in policy development, primarily in the labour relations arena, but also in the broader policy domain. However, historically, the state in many countries has used the ideologies of professionalism and unionism to contain radical teacher union impulses, and hence keep a firm grip on the direction and outcomes of policy struggles. According to Ginsburg, the way in which teacher unions respond can have conservative or radical impact, and will depend on the particular political, economic, historical and ideological conjuncture (Ginsburg et al, 1980: 206).

Although its meaning is highly contested, teacher professionalism has come to be associated with issues of autonomy and control over work, ethical conduct, subject knowledge and certification, social status, high salary levels, and the question of standards for controlling entrance into a profession. Sang (2002), notes that the roles of some established professional organizations, such as in accounting, engineering and law, place considerable stress on knowledge or specialised skills as one of the main features that account for their influence in achieving organizational goals; while for teachers, the struggle for professional recognition has focused on higher pay, status, greater autonomy, increased self-regulation and improved standards of training.

While teachers use their unions in their struggle for professionalism, the notion of unionism has posed organizational and ideological challenges for teachers. For some teachers, the appropriate organizational form for teachers seeking professional goals is that of the professional association because professionalism has historically been associated with the notion of the 'ideal of service' and has become synonymous with strategies of persuasion and reason rather than force (Adhikari, 1993). The adherents to this way of thinking have distanced themselves from unionism because of its historically narrow focus on labour issues with little emphasis on the professional development of teachers.

Traditional unionism, on the other hand, has tended to focus mainly on labour issues, such as salaries and conditions of service and has become synonymous with militant strategies, such as strikes (Hindle & Simpson, 1993; Ozga & Lawn, 1981 & Sang, 2002). As Sang (2002) observes, the trade union emphasis concentrates on teachers' economic needs and teacher protection. This emphasis has given rise to the perception that teacher unions are not concerned very much with the professional dimension of teachers' work. However, a more progressive view of teacher unionism recognizes teacher unions concern with broader issues of economic and political contestation with the state (Hindle & Simpson, 1993; Ozga & Lawn 1981 & Sang, 2002). Sarason (1990, cited in Sang, 2002) observes that teachers' unions have emerged to curtail the range and content of the state's legal authority over the school system; emphasizing the centrality of power as a factor in the emergence of teachers' unions, especially the unequal power relationships that teacher unions have with policy makers in most countries. By placing the issue of political power and contestation for control of policy making at the forefront of their agendas, teacher unions have incurred the wrath of states and crossed swords with their counterpart organizations, namely, professional associations of teachers (Govender, 1996).

The traditional view of juxtaposing these ideologies has been the subject of much criticism, particularly since the early 1980s (Ginsburg, Meyenn, & Miller, 1980; Ozga & Lawn, 1981). Ozga and Lawn (1981) have argued for a more flexible approach, and have asserted that unionism is an expression of professionalism. Further, that the state may use professionalism as an ideological device to control teachers, and teachers themselves may use it as a self-defence mechanism in their struggle against marginalisation. This dichotomy has its origins particularly in Anglo-Saxon countries, such as the United Kingdom and the United States (Welmond, 1999). Welmond (citing Lawn, 1996) points out that the 'professionalisation' of teachers is a way for the state to exercise 'indirect rule' over the role of teachers as political actors. In keeping with this line of thought, a teacher in Great Britain and the U.S.A enters into a pact with the state whereby she relinquishes her "right" to play a political role in exchange for relative independence and material benefits. In this context, teachers who engage in political activism are labeled as "unprofessional".

Welmond (1999), however, observes that the experiences in Anglo-Saxon countries have shown that the anticipated benefits of the "professional pact" of status, autonomy and income have been difficult to attain, and that attempts to mould teachers into a "technical body of knowledge" have not been easy. In contrast with the relatively unstable professionalisation pact of teachers in English-speaking countries, teachers in France have entered into a long phase of accommodation with the state based on their contribution to the utopian and elitist goals of the French education project (Welmond, 1999: 44). In Kenya, teachers maintain that there are no distinctions between economic and professional issues in education, and argue that if students are to have optimal conditions for learning, then teachers must have optimal conditions for teaching (Sang, 2002). Similarly, although teacher union fragmentation in Uganda in the 1960s was characterized by the dichotomy between unionism and professionalism, it is argued that there is no contradiction in combining professionalism with militancy, and that militancy can be used in defence of professionalism (Tiberondwa, 1977).

The critique of the conservative Anglo-Saxon view of teacher professionalism has been further refined and has given rise to the notions of 'new realism' and 'professional unionism' which advocate the complementarity of both professionalism and unionism and emphasize collaboration rather than confrontation (Torres et al, 2003). The notion of 'new realism' (attributed to Martin Lawn and Geoff Whitty, 1992, cited in Torres et al, 2000) emphasizes better services to members, regaining professional status and leadership in the educational debate and developing a long-term vision on educational reform; in like vein, professional unionism (attributed to Kerchner & Mitchell, 1988), while retaining the traditional features of unionism and professionalism, goes further and recognizes the need for teacher unions to address issues of school productivity and efficiency as well as mechanisms for performance management, discipline and dealing with incompetence (Kerchner & Mitchell, 1988: 12-13).

Research methods

Historical and case study methods were used in the study. As such, the review of documents, literature review and interviews were the main research techniques employed. The case study strategy operated at various levels. Firstly, the overall study was that of teachers' participation in the formulation of SASA, a singularity. Secondly, the study recognised that the best way of capturing teachers' participation was through case studies of the two major teachers' formations, namely, NAPTOSA and SADTU; and, thirdly, in order to capture a slice of the grassroots' experience of teachers, case studies of four schools were undertaken. Thus, case studies constituted an 'intra-method strategy', in which mini-case studies of the teacher unions (two) and schools (four) were part of the research design/strategy in the context of the overall historical analysis.

The historical analysis focused on a policy that had been central to the transformation of education in South Africa post-1994, the ramifications of which are still being felt and challenged by teachers and other interest groups. It therefore constitutes a contemporary historical analysis. The use of case studies helped to draw the parameters of the historical analysis of teachers' participation in SASA; therefore, the study was confined to participation by the major teacher unions and participation of teachers from four schools. The emphasis on teacher unions' participation is informed by the general acknowledgement in the literature and the historical experience in South Africa that teachers, in the main, are represented in policy formulation processes by their union officials.

Background and context

Teacher unions and policy making in South Africa: A brief history

The pre-1994 apartheid government's approach to policy-making in South Africa was essentially authoritarian, racist and bureaucratic (Chetty, 1992; Shalem, 1992; Young, 1993).

One of the consequences of this approach was that participation in the policy process was limited, in the main, to White, mainly Afrikaans-speaking government officials, with little or no involvement by the public at large, let alone key education stakeholders. White teachers, however, participated in decision-making processes with the benefit of substantial representation in policy-making at the state level and their experiences were characterised by an ethos of negotiation, consultation and participation (Chisholm, 1999).

Black teachers, on the other hand, were deliberately excluded from participating in education policy processes. The basis for this exclusion was the absolute totalitarian impulse that characterised the development of policy by the National Party government. Initially, there was opposition to government policy, for example the Bantu Education Act of 1953, but government repression in the 1950s and early 1960s curtailed teachers' resistance until the 1980s.

The organisation of teachers also reflected the racist and undemocratic policies of the apartheid regime. Separate teacher organisations representing Whites, Coloureds, Indians and Africans had established themselves by the 1960s. The African Teachers Association of South Africa (ATASA) was formed in 1962 and comprised affiliates from the four provinces at the time, Transvaal, Natal, Orange Free State and the Cape. The Teachers Association of South Africa (TASA), with its predominantly Indian membership, and the Union of Teachers' Association of South Africa (UTASA), whose membership was drawn from Coloured schools, also emerged in the 1960s, soon after the creation of separate education departments for these groups. White teacher organisations had organised themselves since the 1920s under the banner of the Federal Council of Teachers Associations, which became known as the Teachers Federal Council (TFC) in 1986. All of these racially-based organisations espoused a traditional 'professional' approach in dealing with the education authorities, relying primarily on strategies of consultation and persuasion, while eschewing militant and 'political' action (Hyslop 1990; Govender, 1996).

In the 1980s, with the intensification of the political struggle for liberation, several progressive teacher unions emerged. The National Education Union of South Africa (NEUSA) was established in 1980, and was the first union to organize teachers nationally on a non-racial basis. Thereafter, several smaller teacher unions emerged during the educational and political upheavals in South Africa from 1985-1990, such as the East London Progressive Teachers Union (ELPTU) and the Mamelodi Teachers Union (MATU). They 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 constituted themselves as non-racial and allied themselves to the vanguard organizations of the liberation struggle, notably the ANC, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African Communist Party (SACP). A serious schism resulted between the new generation of progressive unions and the older, professional associations. The latter were labelled conservative because they prioritized their commitment to the interests of the 'child' over those of 'politics'; while the former were labelled radical and regarded themselves as 'workers' and would not balk at taking strike action (Govender 1996).

Amidst the turmoil of the democratic struggles of the 1980s, a concerted effort had been made to unite all teachers into a single, national teachers' body. The unity initiative, which gathered momentum with the signing of the Harare Accord on Teacher Unity in 1988 failed for various reasons, including disagreements on whether the new organisation should be a unitary or federal structure, a trade union or a professional body and on the question of political alignment.[2] What emerged instead was the formation of two national organisations that coalesced around different organisational principles and strategies. The progressive teacher unions, led by NEUSA, merged into SADTU in October 1990. The racially-based conservative teacher organisations united in a federal alliance under the umbrella of NAPTOSA in August 1991[3]. (See Textbox 1)

Textbox 1: Profiles of SADTU and NAPTOSA

	SADTU	**NAPTOSA**
Brief background	SADTU's origins can be traced to the early 1980s, the period of escalating education protest and resistance to apartheid in the wake of the 1976 Soweto student uprising. Dissatisfaction with the inability of the established racially organized teacher organizations to join in the nationwide resistance to apartheid education, led to the formation of several progressive and militant teacher unions that identified with the broad liberation movement in South Africa, eventually leading to a merger and the launch of SADTU in Johannesburg on 6 October 1990. Today the union is the largest teacher`s union in the country and boasts a membership of 240,000 members spread across the 9 provinces in South Africa[4].	NAPTOSA was formally launched in August 1991, a year after SADTU's formation. This followed the failed teacher unity initiative of the late 1980s (see above). NAPTOSA constituted itself as a federal alliance comprising 16 of the racially-based conservative teacher organizations that had emerged under apartheid. Most of these were from ATASA, UTASA and TFC. A major blow to NAPTOSA was the withdrawal of its White Afrikaans-speaking teacher organisations in June 1996. As a result, a third teachers' union, the Suid-Afrikaanse Onderwysersunie (SAOU), was established and duly recognised by the ELRC. Nevertheless, on 27 August 2002, NAPTOSA and SAOU entered into a working agreement for the "purposes of negotiation, consultation and bargaining".
Ideological positions	• Unionist in orientation, with its focus on improving teachers' salaries and conditions of service, while simultaneously recognising the importance of teachers' professional development; • Politically aligned to the	• Places a high value on teacher professionalism, while recognising the importance of a unionist orientation in seeking to improve teachers' salaries and working conditions; • Espouses the principle of non-alignment to political parties

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[2] The Harare Accord on Teacher Unity was the result of an initiative by the All Africa Teachers Organisation (AATO), the World Confederation of Organisations of the Teaching Profession (WCOTP), the ANC and COSATU to promote unity between the established teacher organizations, such as ATASA and TASA, and the newly emergent teacher unions, such as NEUSA, of the 1980s. (See Govender, 1996 for a detailed account)

[3] TASA was the only exception as most of its members joined SADTU.

[4] Information accessed from SADTU website: www.sadtu.org.za, 1 October 2012.

	ANC, COSATU and SACP.	

An important development post-1994 was the ANC-government's recognition of teacher unionism as part of a democratic labour dispensation, thereby guaranteeing teachers' rights as workers. At the same time, the new government invoked the notion of teacher professionalism through the establishment of professional bodies, notably the South African Council for Educators (SACE), which was responsible for the professional registration of teachers and developing a professional code of conduct. The Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC), although established to deal primarily with labour matters, also served as a forum for broader policy discussion and debate. These structures, arguably, contained teachers' activism within the confines of the boardroom, and as a result curbed, to some extent, teacher resistance and militancy in comparison to the pre-1994 period.

In summary, teachers' participation in policy making in South Africa has historically been shaped by political and ideological forces. The apartheid state nurtured an exclusive policy terrain that privileged White teachers. At an ideological level teacher organisations that espoused a professional approach to education were privileged by the state. This situation changed drastically after 1994 when teacher unionism, non-racialism and democratic policy making became institutionalised. However, the changes did not translate into teachers having a powerful influence in education policy making although it did give them a voice. Some of the constraints on teachers' influence included the government's adoption of a neo-liberal macro-economic framework and the establishment of policy making mechanisms, such as the ELRC, which, in practice, were aimed at 'managing' teacher-union state relations. Significantly, what also emerged was that the emerging ANC-led democratic government was not very much different from its predecessor in using the ideologies of unionism and professionalism in their management of teacher union-state relations. The one important difference being that the ANC-led government recognized unionism whereas the latter did not. This historical trajectory of states' manipulation of unionism and professionalism has been a characteristic of many states throughout the world (discussed earlier).

South Africa's transitional political context: A key mediating factor

In this paper, it is argued that the unfolding context of South Africa's democratic transition in the early 1990s was a key factor in the mediation of teacher unions' participation in the formulation of SASA. Besides the political conditions that shaped the transition, economic factors with global overtones also featured prominently.

Politically, the state's agenda for consensus-seeking and compromise was decisive. The negotiated political settlement in the early 1990s, embodied in the CODESA talks and South Africa's carefully crafted Constitution, provided the backdrop for the development of the South African Schools Act from 1994-1996. The compromise education clause in the 1993 Interim Constitution, section 247[5], was fundamental to the shaping of the politics of accommodation in education policy making in the years to follow. Moreover, the NP had demanded an 'education clause' which would allow parents and students to choose the language of instruction in state schools; eventually the ANC agreed to a compromise clause guaranteeing such a right where it could be ‘reasonably provided’. Nelson Mandela, as the country’s first post-apartheid President, together with former President F.W. de Klerk of the apartheid era National Party, as his Deputy, symbolized the intent to forgive and accommodate diverse interests. The appointment of Sibusiso Bengu, the first post-apartheid Minister of Education, a political conservative from the ANC, and Renier Schoeman of the National Party, as Deputy Minister, represented the same intent in confronting the challenges of education transformation. Thus, the political compromise embodied by the post-apartheid constitutional arrangements and the conservative appointments of the first post-apartheid education ministry constituted the sub-text in the policy making process of SASA.

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[5] Section 247 made it obligatory for government to engage in negotiations with SGBs if it intended to alter any of their powers and functions and avoid constitutional and legal challenges by vested interests.

Economically, South Africa’s embracing of ‘neoliberal globalisation’ was central to the ANC-led government having to compromise on its democratic impulse to foster more meaningful participation in policy work by citizens and key civil society interest groups, including teachers. This was symbolised by the shift towards neo-liberal macro-economic frameworks beginning with the ANC’s Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), 1994, and its more decisive successor, the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Programme (GEAR), 1996, both of which constituted the macro-economic context within which the SA Schools’ Act was developed.

At the same time, the government’s emphasis on democracy, non-racialism and equity in the education system was about entrenching particular principles and values. The conflict over values and principles underpinned other specific areas of contestation in the formulation of the Schools’ Act, notably around the areas of school funding, the perpetuation of the private school sector and the powers and functions of school governing bodies. (see Table 1) For example, SADTU’s call for free and compulsory education was based on the historical promise of the liberation movements led by the ANC that the provision of education in a post-apartheid, liberated and democratic South Africa would be made free to the majority of citizens who had previously been excluded. NAPTOSA and its affiliates, on the other hand, favoured a funding model based on school fees and user charges, which was influenced by the same neo-liberal economic ideas that had come to characterise government’s economic policies at the time.

Table 1: Main issues/positions highlighted by teacher unions in relation to SASA

NAPTOSA	SADTU
Devolution of more powers to school governing bodies (SGBs)	Concern over SGBs’ powers to set admission policies
Opposition to a blanket ban on corporal punishment	Abolition of corporal punishment
Protection of language, cultural & religious rights	Language, culture and religion not to be used as exclusionary mechanisms
Support for school fees/user charges	Free schooling for first 10 years
Favoured employment of teachers by SGBs	Opposed to employment of teachers by SGBs
Parental majority in SGBs	Equal representation of teachers and parents on SGBs
Retention of Model C schools	Phasing out of Model C schools

Subsidies for independent schools	No subsidies for independent schools

Overview of the policymaking process of SASA

Initially, in the policy generation phase of SASA, the development of policy represented, in the main, the aspirations of the democratic movement in South Africa and those of the ANC government, in spite of the high level of participation by the 'conservative lobby', including White teacher organisations. However, with the obligatory Section 247 consultations with existing mainly White SGBs, a consequence of the negotiated political settlement, the impact of the conservative lobby was reflected in the changes made to the second draft of the Schools' Bill. The balance of power had shifted somewhat in favour of a predominantly White middle-class constituency. This shift, however, was facilitated by a concomitant realization within government of the need to retain the influential middle-class schooling sector, including a small, but growing Black middle-class population, within the public schooling system. Hence, the inclusion of a more liberal school-funding option in the policy documents, together with other accommodations relating to language and employment of educators. Contestation in the development of SASA had reached a crossroad following the section 247 consultations and the subsequent amendments to the Bill. The democratic movement, within which SADTU was located, rallied their forces during the subsequent and crucial parliamentary phase of the process *(See Textbox 2 for an outline of the different phases in the making of SASA)*. As a result, the final version of SASA as legislated in November 1996 represented a "refined compromise", where neither the democratic movement nor the conservative lobby could claim a total victory. The state's agenda of compromise and consensus-seeking had prevailed to the end of the policy development process of the Schools' Act.

The next section focuses on teacher unions' agency in their attempts to influence the policy making process of SASA, and highlights key issues and challenges that emerged in the study relating to the mediation of teacher unions in policy making.

Text Box 2: Phases in the Making of the South African Schools Act

1. The Policy Generation Phase

Interim Constitution

White Paper 1, February 1995

Review Committee Report, August 1995 and submissions in response

Draft White Paper 2, November 1995, and submissions in response

White Paper 2, February 1996

2. The Policy Adoption Phase

2.1 SA Schools Bill and Section 247

SA Schools Bill, Draft One and responses

Section 247 meetings across the country

Meetings in Pretoria with representative organizations

2.2 Into the Parliamentary process

SA Schools Bill, Draft Two

Cabinet Approval (31 July & 7 August, 1996)

Portfolio Committee on Education: written submissions, public hearings, committee meetings, amendments proposed

SA Schools Bill, Draft Three, first debate in the National Assembly

Reconsideration by the Portfolio Committee (fourth and final draft)

Final Acceptance by Assembly and Senate

Passed into legislation as the South African Schools' Act, Number 84 of 1996 on 6 November

Discussion and analysis

Cultivating alliances and policy networks

While teacher unions in South Africa have historically being divided on the questions of political alignment and unionism vs professionalism, they have also demonstrated flexibility especially when contesting for control and influence in the policy arena. This is reflected in teacher unions' agency and changes in organizational strategies to ensure their independence or prevent marginalization, especially in the context of changing teacher union-state relations from one historical epoch to another. This was aptly demonstrated in teacher unions' participation in the policy making process of SASA, particularly their ability to cultivate policy alliances and networks. Arguably, SASA is a symbolic education marker of the transition between two historical periods in South Africa, namely apartheid and constitutional democracy.

An important dimension of teacher unions' agency in the development of SASA was the cultivation of both partisan and non-partisan alliances and policy networks. Murillo (1999) argues that factors such as partisan identities impact teacher-state relations, suggesting that both union leaders and government officials have partisan identities, preferring to deal with their allies rather than with counterparts in the opposition. As such, "*Union leaders ... tend more to cooperate if their partisan allies are in government, and more towards resisting government policies if these leaders are allied with opposition parties*" (Murillo, 1999: 47). In this case study, both NAPTOSA and SADTU benefitted from organisational alliances/networks with political parties, partisan allies in civil society and their strategic alliances with policy makers and politicians. However, such alliances do not always result in enhancing teacher unions' influence in policy making. Given the political and ambiguous nature of teacher-state relations (discussed earlier), teacher unions' policy positions are often mediated/circumscribed by the state's agenda.

Party political alliances

As is the case elsewhere in the world, for example, Argentina and Mexico (Murillo, 1999) and England (Lodge & Blackstone, 1985), political party contacts and influence are crucial in shaping the outcomes of policy making, and both NAPTOSA and SADTU engaged in extensive networking with politicians especially during the Parliamentary phase of SASA's development. (see Textbox 2)

In SADTU's case it was evident, that as an ally of the ANC ruling party, the union had easier access to the policy making organs of the state than its rival, NAPTOSA. For example, the political adviser to Minister Sibusiso Bengu, under whose watch SASA was promulgated, Thami Mseleku, was a former SADTU Vice-President, who attended the ANC Education Study Group meetings in Parliament where key debates and policy decisions were made by the democratic movement. SADTU, as a member of the MDM and ANC Education Alliance was also represented on the ANC Education Study Group whose chairperson, Blade Nzimande, was also chairperson of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Education (PPCE) at the time. Three of the most influential ANC MPs that served on the PPCE were former SADTU leaders, namely its first President, Shephard Mdladlana, ex-General Secretary, Randall van den Heever and one of its Vice-Presidents, Ismail Vadi. Therefore, SADTU was central to the ANC's education policy making machinery. As SADTU's then President, Duncan Hindle[6] reflected:

> *We've put our own people in Parliament, in the Department, it's our Minister, our Thami [Mseleku] is advising the Minister… there was a degree of confidence stemming from the realization that we've finally elected a democratic government, we've got people in Parliament, in the bureaucracies, and so on. It's not our job anymore… we knew that our government had our particular view on the issues and we had a lot of confidence in them to say "Look, they know what the agenda is here and they will come up with the sort of Schools Act we want".*

Thus, within SADTU, there was a feeling that their views would be advanced by politicians and policy makers belonging to the ANC Alliance. As a result they could afford to stand back from certain policy processes, such as SASA. As Torres (2000) notes, teacher unions often build alliances with other unions in the public and industrial sectors, and with political parties because, "*... being part of a labour association or a political party provides teacher organizations with class and ideological identities, and with greater powers to influence educational policies*" (Torres, 2000: 10).

NAPTOSA's policy, on the other hand, was that a professional teachers' organization should be politically non-aligned, which meant that although its members supported certain political parties, the teachers' federation itself would not be formally allied to a party or movement. However, NAPTOSA and its affiliates adopted a pragmatic view, and recognised that alliances with political parties were central to influencing policy deliberations. This became apparent during the parliamentary deliberations of SASA when NAPTOSA and one of its biggest affiliates at the time, the Suid-Afrikaanse Onderwysers Unie (SAOU), engaged in lobbying of the main political parties that were represented in the PPCE and the National Assembly. This included the ANC, the New National Party (NNP), the Democratic Alliance (DA), the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), and the United Democratic Movement (UDM). SAOU, for example, went to great lengths:

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[6] Interview with Duncan Hindle, former President, SADTU, Pretoria, 14 December 2004.

> *SAOU would use their Afrikaner political parties to try to get to the ANC mainly to see things their way. And it sort of also underlined friendship, national reconciliation, and those kinds of things. Even Madiba [then President Nelson Mandela] supported what the Portfolio Committee was doing. But they actually used that - in fact de Klerk at some stage had threatened to pull out of the Government of National Unity on this issue of education.*[7]

Overall, NAPTOSA was painfully aware that it faced an uphill battle in making inroads to influence the legislative process around SASA, especially given that Parliament was the site of policy struggle in which elected representatives of political parties did battle. The ANC, with its majority representation, only needed to dig their heels in on specific policy positions and by sheer weight of numbers, have their way. NAPTOSA's challenge in this regard became apparent during the PPCE hearings in September 1996, as evidenced by the following excerpt from correspondence on the South African Schools Bill with Renier Schoeman, the NP Spokesman on Education:

> 1. A copy of NAPTOSA's submission to the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Education is already in your possession.
> 2. Having experienced the climate created by the chairperson of the Committee for the SADTU presentation and his obvious manipulation of the timeframe available for NAPTOSA and other parties thereafter, as well as the somewhat ostentatious departure of a number of ANC members of the Committee between the SADTU and the NAPTOSA presentations, NAPTOSA has no illusions about the ANC's attitude to what NAPTOSA has to say on matters educational, however defensible.
> 3. *As you are aware, NAPTOSA is politically non-aligned. The following issues are nevertheless raised with you in your capacity as spokesman on education for your party, with the request that you consider raising these issues during any further debates either within the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee or in the National Assembly.*[8]*(Own emphasis)*

This is one example of several items of correspondence between NAPTOSA and opposition party spokespersons covering a range of issues relating to SASA during the parliamentary debates. NAPTOSA enjoyed a much closer working relationship, though, with education representatives of the main opposition parties, namely Renier Schoeman of the NP and Mike Ellis of the DP. NAPTOSA therefore turned to opposition parties for support when it realized that it could not win over the ANC as ruling party at this point in the process.

At best, these efforts, during final negotiations in Parliament, ensured that SASA would be a product of consensus and compromise, which was part of the ANC-led government's broader political agenda in seeking post-apartheid reconciliation and nation-building. As a result, several positions advanced by NAPTOSA and SAOU prevailed, especially their support for the perpetuation of the private school sector and Model-C schools, that school financing be a joint state and parental responsibility (a position underpinned by the same neo-liberal economic philosophy that had influenced government's GEAR policy framework), and the recognition of religious observance in schools. They were also satisfied that parents would comprise the majority constituency on SGBs. The crux of the compromise that was reached in Parliament was captured in the interview with Blade Nzimande:

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[7] Interview with Blade Nzimande, former Chairperson, Parliamentary Portfolio Committee for Education, Johannesburg, 24 February 2003.

[8] NAPTOSA National Archives, Pretoria, Letter dated 6 September 1996 from the desk of NAPTOSA's Executive Director, Dr E.H. Davies, addressed to Mr R.S. Schoeman MP, NP Spokesman on Education and copied to Mr M.J. Ellis, DP.

> *There was a lot of influence. For instance there was a compromise first to begin with in terms of SAOU and maybe to a certain extent NAPTOSA. This was made around the powers of school governing bodies, in which we provided for two groups of governing bodies, the Section 21 schools, mainly Model C schools which enjoyed maximum powers because they had the necessary capacity, whereas many Black schools had limited capacity and so fewer powers. The compromise, however, was to take away or curtail certain powers of Model C schools, for example, on language and admission. Its got its own problems I admit, because it's building a 2 tier system of SGBs based on differential powers and functions. So they had some influence.*

Thus NAPTOSA devoted much time and energy in building and consolidating networks with both partisan and non-partisan allies, while SADTU focussed primarily on maintaining its partisan alliance with the ruling ANC.

Alliances with other civil society formations

Besides cultivating strategic political alliances in the case of SASA, teacher unions cultivated networks with parents, students and religious bodies. The affiliates of NAPTOSA understood the importance of this collaboration with parental interests, especially the White Afrikaans-speaking teacher affiliates who worked closely with the Suid-Afrikaanse Stigting vir Onderwys en Oopleiding (SASOO) (South African Foundation for Education and Training) and the Federasie of Afrikaans Kultuurvereeningings (Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Organisations) (FAK), a Broederbond offshoot, in their mobilization initiatives against key aspects of SASA, namely clauses relating to language and religion. Both SASOO and FAK were concerned with the preservation of the Afrikaans culture, religion and language in their schools. NAPTOSA's alliance with these civil society formations presented a formidable opposition to policy makers, and resulted in the accommodation of their concerns, particularly in ensuring the survival of Afrikaans-medium schools (cf. *Table 1*).

SADTU's participation as part of civil society in the development of SASA occurred primarily through its involvement in the political education organs of the ANC, namely, the ANC Education Alliance and the ANC Education Study Group, which was located strategically in Parliament.[9] Overall, SADTU's involvement in policymaking in the 1994-1996 period was as part of this broader coalition to support the ANC-led government in introducing new policies. A great deal of time and energy went into Alliance meetings. In comparison with NAPTOSA and the White Model C lobby, SADTU and the ANC Alliance were at a disadvantage because proper structures were not in place or were in a state of transition. For example, community-based structures of the MDM, such as the National Education Co-ordinating Committee (NECC), had been dismantled during this period[10]; and SADTU itself was a fairly new union, at the beginning of consolidating its unification of several smaller unions, and building its infrastructure (SADTU, 1998 Congress Report). SADTU also continued its close working relationship with the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) which had been forged during education protests of the 1980s. However, COSAS, like SADTU, was part of the ANC Education Alliance, and its influence as an independent organisation was also mediated by virtue of being an ally of the ruling party.

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[9] The ANC Education Alliance was founded on the historical compact of education social movements of the 1980s. The main aim of this alliance was the eradication of apartheid education and its replacement with a non-racial, non-sexist, democratic system of education in South Africa.

[10] The NECC had disbanded in 1994 in favour of the ANC Education Alliance.

Nevertheless, the participation of teachers "*as collective actors in organizations and in policy networks that represent a professional interest in the policy process*" (Raab, 1992: 87), constitutes an important dimension of teachers' involvement in policy making. Teachers' power to influence policy making appears to be more effective when alliances with other education stakeholders are formed, when their interest is advanced as a collective interest of civil society, especially parents whose support is critical for the legitimisation of particular policy options. This kind of networking is reminiscent of the importance attached to networks in education policy making in Britain through "*the creation of organizations, and the formation of innovation-producing alliances*" (Raab, 1992: 83).

SADTU, ironically, given its record of championing the cause of the oppressed working class, was accused of acting against the interests of mainly Black parents in demanding that teachers and parents have equal representation on SGBs. This emerged during the Parliamentary deliberations, specifically during meetings of the ANC Study Group, of which SADTU was a member. SADTU's alliance partners contended that parents should be the key (and majority) decision-makers in education, a position that was consistent with the democratic struggle's emphasis on the empowerment of the working-class. Thami Mseleku, who was party to the ANC Education Study Group's deliberations recalled:

> *I remember that the chairperson of the Study Group – Comrade Blade [Nzimande] pulling the carpet under SADTU's feet by saying, "There are very serious contradictions here because the parents are the workers, the working class of this country who must actually be leading the reconstruction of education and development. I don't understand why we, who say we are actually a teachers' union and part of the working class, can argue that the working class is ignorant and therefore shouldn't be given the power and the authority"*[11]

SADTU's allies within the Study Group, ANC MPs and others therefore rejected SADTU's contention that parents not be considered more important than other stakeholders. This was a bitter pill to swallow given SADTU's professed commitment to the working-class struggle. Arguably, its decision to place the private interests of its members above those of the union's public interests contributed to SADTU's lack of influence in shaping key clauses relating to SASA, notably on governance and finance (where it was forced to surrender to the Alliance's position on school funding, which resulted in the union excluding reference to 'free' education in its submission to the PPCE).

As a result, SADTU started to question its close links with the ANC Alliance and began to challenge key government positions relating to SASA. Its opposition in the final negotiations stage resulted in some accommodation of its concerns, notably the clause on the composition of SGBs was reworded such that parents would have a relative majority, not an overall majority, and the Minister would set norms and standards for the exemption of parents who could not afford school fees.[12] Thus, the move towards 'independent organizational' participation came much later in the process for SADTU.

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[11] Interview with Thami Mseleku, former Political Advisor to Education Minister Bengu, Pretoria, 14 July 2003.

Overall, both SADTU and NAPTOSA were forced to review their principled positions regarding political alignment and partisan alliances. In the course of the development of SASA, as a tactical maneuver, NAPTOSA established relations with partisan allies within the main opposition political parties, as well as the ruling ANC, in an attempt to influence policy debates in Parliament. The federation, as a result, learned the value of political lobbying and the use of policy tactics. This was closely related to its overall policy intervention strategy, in which lobbying and networking with key players in the development of SASA became central. The most influential policy actors, such as the Chairperson of the Review Committee, Peter Hunter, the Chairperson of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee for Education, Blade Nzimande and senior policymakers from the national Department of Education (DoE) were targeted. SADTU on the other hand was unashamedly allied to the ANC and regarded party political alignment as central to its overall operations. At the same time, SADTU realized that having partisan allies in government, both within political and education structures, did not automatically translate into a favourable position in the shaping of policy. By the end of the policy development process of SASA, SADTU recognised the importance of lobbying and protest action irrespective of which political party was in power. This was part of a growing realization of the labour movement in South Africa that policy disagreements with political allies in government were integral to policy development.

In summary, the cultivation of strategic partnerships and networks with a range of allies, especially political parties and parent bodies, in the development of SASA, had been a strong feature of teacher unions' agency, and had contributed substantively to their organizational capacity. As Jones (1985: 241) argues, "*professional traditions lock into and reinforce the union's reliance upon the achieving of educational progress, not through combativity or political partisanship, but through alliance with the broadest possible forces*". In similar vein, the findings in this study depart from research in Argentina and Mexico which found that both union leaders and government officials have partisan identities, preferring to deal with their allies rather than with counterparts in the opposition (Murillo, 1999). NAPTOSA, for example, cultivated working relationships not only with like-minded allies in opposition parties, but also sought to win over members of the ruling ANC, whom it was ideologically and politically opposed to.

The challenge of state cooptation

An important issue that emerged from the study in relation to teacher union-state relations is the challenge of cooptation. Arguably, this was/is more of a challenge for SADTU, given its political alliance with the ruling party in government. Internationally, while many teacher unions have successfully fought against cooptation, many have been unable to resist it (Giyamah-Boadi, 1994). At the same time, teacher unions have had other options besides the prospect of cooptation. In broad terms, the following options are identifiable:

> ***Option 1****: Teacher unions may be incorporated and coopted into the ruling party machinery, and thus be lost as a significant civil society voice (e.g. The Ugandan Teachers' Association in the 1970s* (Tiberondwa, 1977), *and*

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[12] SADTU National Archives, Matthew Goniwe House, Johannesburg, SADTU Report on the SA Schools Bill tabled at a meeting of its National Executive Committee held in Johannesburg from 24-25 October 1996.

> *teacher unions in France (Welmond, 1999)). In Mexico, the National Union of Education Workers (SNTE) was seen to be part of the incumbent Institutional Revolutionary Party, thereby forgoing its autonomy);*
>
> ***Option 2**: Teacher unions may be marginalized or incapacitated and eventually eliminated (e.g. teacher unions in Tanzania have been largely excluded from policy making processes since the country's independence and it is only in recent years that attempts have been made by the education authorities to involve teacher unions in policy making)*[13]*;*
>
> ***Option 3**: Teacher unions may remain a strong oppositional stronghold outside the state and ruling party machinery in the policy domain (e.g. teacher unions in Argentina in the early 1990s (Murillo, 1994:44)); or*
>
> ***Option 4**: Teacher unions may bargain within the education system, a notion described as the "education sub-government" (Manzes, cited in Lodge and Blackstone, 1985) as is often what happens in England.*

None of the above adequately describes the South African process. On the one hand, the larger of South Africa's two unions, SADTU, was caught between cooptation because of its alliance with the ANC and retaining some degree of independence from the state to allow the union to pursue the 'private' interests of its members and continue to be a critical voice as its predecessors did under apartheid. As such, in SADTU's case, a different option is applicable: being coopted and yet able to retain an independent, oppositional base to the state and ruling party machinery. This is, to a large extent, a combination of the first and third options described above. Although SADTU's independence and influence as a civil society constituency was compromised through its alliance with the ANC government, the union was not coopted to the extent of losing all its independence. Its cooptation, therefore, was limited and not comparable with teacher unions in other countries, which became almost fully incorporated within the ruling elites of their post-independent governments. This was partly because SADTU was affiliated to a powerful and influential trade union movement, COSATU, which itself was concerned about the issue of independence, and partly because SADTU was competing for membership with a rival teachers' union that placed a high premium on political independence and professionalism. Therefore, SADTU's "alliance" to the ANC could be interpreted as a weaker version of the 'cooptation' strategy.

On the other hand, the smaller teachers' federation, NAPTOSA, fits into the third and fourth categories, namely existing as a strong opposition to the state and the ruling ANC. NAPTOSA was not hamstrung by SADTU's dilemma because, in principle, the federation was opposed to any party political alignment, although it might have exploited the benefits of strategic political alliances. This made it easier for the union to engage in oppositional politics despite the emergence of a more benevolent state. The federation was forced to position itself initially as an independent civil society entity and in the latter stages of SASA's development it came to realize the importance of courting elements within the ruling party, even if their political and ideological principles were fundamentally different. Most of NAPTOSA's affiliates had some experience with being part of formal state policy making structures and initiatives under apartheid. They had evolved as part of the state-teacher unions' compact (Welmond, 1999) or the education sub-government, and had long learned the importance of being a partner to government in education policy making. As such, the nature of teacher union-state relations that emerged at the time of SASA's development represented a complex array of oppositional, cooperative and cooptational forces. This reflects a very different picture to state-civil society relations in, for example, Ghana, where there is a tendency for government-aligned civil society associations to prosper and for independent and autonomy-seeking ones to decline (see Gyimah-Boadi, 1994: 125).

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[13] Discussion held with officials of the Tanzanian Teachers' Union (TTU) in Dar-es-Salaam on 28 March 2006 as part of the South African Education Labour Relations Council's study trip to investigate education policymaking processes in developing countries. The author was a member of the research team that visited Tanzania and Zanzibar.

Towards professional unionism in South Africa?

As highlighted earlier, teacher unions may invoke their claims to professionalism as a means of impacting the policy making process. Alternatively, they may adopt unionist strategies and challenge for a more structured and influential role in policy development. In this case study, teacher unions in South Africa demonstrated similar recourse to unionist and professional strategies. However, unions adopted different and flexible strategies based on historical experience and new challenges.

Although SADTU and NAPTOSA had historically been identified with seemingly opposing ideologies, unionism and professionalism, from the mid-1990s, their experiences in the policy making domain, including processes relating to SASA, forced them to re-examine traditionally-held views on unionism and professionalism. This re-examination sowed the seeds for a potential trend towards 'professional unionism' in determining the nature of teacher union-state relations in South Africa from the late 1990s.

NAPTOSA began to embrace the unionism rhetoric once it had become apparent that the ANC government would legalise trade unionism. In reappraising its organizational identity, the federation attempted to strike a balance between professionalism and unionism as it grappled with the changed socio-political realities of the day. In England, the National Union of Teachers had faced similar challenges in the early 1980s when it sought "*to develop a new strategy that in its basics revives and consolidates its traditional outlook, and yet also faces problems that require responses more associated with trade union than professional forms of struggle*" (Jones, 1985: 234) As a result, NAPTOSA, in spite of maintaining a political distance from the ANC, was able to convince education policy makers of its worth in the policy domain.

For SADTU, the challenge was to develop an identity that blended traditional unionism with a more professional approach in developing an appropriate policy intervention strategy as a result of the changed nature of teacher union-state relations post-1994. Given its strong unionist background, its initial focus was on labour-related issues, such as salaries and better conditions of service. By 1995 and during the policymaking processes of SASA, SADTU became quite concerned over its narrow unionist and political focus. As a result, the Union resolved to pay more attention to building policy capacity within the organization to meet the numerous policy challenges of the day. This included the appointment of an Education Officer in 1994 and an Education Administrator in 1996 (SADTU, September 1996), Education Specialists and a Researcher were only appointed in February 1998. This would be followed by the establishment of a Legal department.[14] While embracing the 'professionalism' rhetoric, however, SADTU struggled to translate that into concrete programmes of professional development, for example, improving members' policy analysis skills, which remained a challenge for the Union for several years (NALEDI, 2006).

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[14] Interview, Jon Lewis, SADTU Research Officer, 18 October 2002; & SADTU National Archives, Matthew Goniwe House, Johannesburg, SADTU, *Secretariat Report, Book 2, 5th National Congress*, ICC, Durban, Kwa-Zulu Natal, 8-11 September 2002.

NAPTOSA's policy intervention strategy, on the other hand, was shaped by a broader concern to modify its organisational identity in response to the new, emerging democratic ethos in South Africa without forgoing its traditional organizational roots. In particular, with the processes of union fragmentation and loss of membership to its rival, SADTU, together with a less than congenial relationship with the new ruling party, the federation had to review its tactics to prevent its marginalisation in the policy domain. This translated into an organizational identity that stressed its professional contribution to the policy challenges faced by government, while simultaneously developing a more robust and militant organizational face, as was shown during its engagement with the newly-elected ANC government post-1994[15], and during the policy development process of SASA. NAPTOSA and its affiliates, such as SAOU, thus gave careful attention to the preparation and submission of its written inputs, meetings with the Ministry and Department of Education, lobbying of key individuals and political parties, and, particularly, making full use of the Section 247 public meetings to register their opposition and protests against key aspects of the Schools Bill in May and June 1996. They therefore exploited every opportunity for resisting and influencing the development of SASA. Thus, in spite of the political ascendancy of SADTU and its allies, it was the politically hostile, predominantly White unions, under the umbrella of NAPTOSA, and their supporters, not SADTU, that had a greater impact in shaping the development of SASA under the ANC government.

A fundamental lesson for SADTU was that as a teachers' union with some claims to professionalism it needed to raise its level of policy preparation, develop its capacity and expertise and ultimately, become more resourceful and imaginative in challenging for a stake in policy making. In this regard, there was a growing realization that traditional unionism was not the best preparation for effective participation in policy development. Certainly, organizing and planning union strikes were useful when it came to labour-related issues, such as when negotiating for higher salaries. However, influencing broader education policy development processes required different strategies. In particular, analytical and technical policy skills were required to be able to engage with draft education policy and legislative documents such as White Papers, Bills and Acts. Moreover, there was a need for legal advice to interpret Bills and Acts that were couched in legal language. Although legal expertise could be commissioned, which is what SADTU did, a number of NAPTOSA's affiliates had in-house legal expertise with sound understanding of educational law and its processes. As a result, NAPTOSA was able to respond to policy analysis and make its submissions to government far more effectively. This is all the more significant given the short timeframes usually provided within which submissions have to be made.

Another related lesson for SADTU was that policy intervention strategies, such as lobbying, mobilization of allies and having an effective presence as opposed to mere representation on policy committees and forums, were all ongoing activities in the politics of policy work. In this regard, the Union's complacency during the section 247 consultations, while the White Model C lobby and rival teacher unions were active, appears to have cost the Union dearly. Even with partisan allies in government, SADTU realized the importance of continuous lobbying and protest action. Of-course, these were not unfamiliar tactics to the Union as revealed by its own militant history. SADTU was therefore quick to respond to these challenges, which led to a review of its policy intervention strategy. The consequences for SADTU were two-fold: it led to a re-examination of its relationships with government, its political allies and rival teacher unions, as well as a critical appraisal of its effectiveness in the policy domain. This in turn raised questions about its approach to policy development more broadly, and an interrogation of its bargaining power. A key lesson for the Union, therefore, was that policy making was as much a technical process as it was a political one.

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[15] In addition, to its resistance stance during the formulation of SASA, NAPTOSA clashed with government in 1997 when it forced an agreement with the employer over partisan behaviour during collective bargaining; and then, for the first time in August 1999, affiliates of NAPTOSA and SAOU joined forces with SADTU in strike action over salary increases (Govender, 2004: 279-280).

Overall, though, while embracing an ideological approach based on professional unionism, teacher unions in South Africa have adhered to their traditional ideological roots. This meant that for SADTU, while recognising the need to develop its policy expertise and general professional profile, its policies and actions would be shaped primarily by a unionist ethos. For NAPTOSA, while adopting unionist strategies and tactics, such as public protests and strike action from time to time, its engagement with the state would be influenced essentially by adherence to teacher professionalism through consultation and persuasion.

Conclusion and comparative significance

The following key challenges/lessons for teacher-union state relations in South Africa emerged from the study, and were central to the mediation of teacher unions' participation in the policy making of SASA and their ability to influence policy outcomes:

- The challenge of state cooptation;
- The challenge of balancing 'public' versus 'private' interests;
- Professional unionism as a framework for teacher union-state relations; and
- The importance of developing policy analysis skills and expertise within teacher unions.

In reflecting on the relevance of the above challenges for teacher union-state relations elsewhere in the world, it might be possible for teacher unions and other civil society formations to negotiate a greater policy making role, in the context of nation-building and consensus-seeking, similar to the South African experience. The transitional/post-conflict/reconstruction and development contexts, for example, of countries in Southern and North Africa, and the Middle East, come to mind. The exact nature of what can be negotiated, the ability of teacher unions to influence policy outcomes, and the extent or degree of possible state cooptation, however, will be shaped by specific national histories and socio-economic and political conditions at the time of political transition from one historical epoch to another. It will also depend on teacher unions' agency in responding to changed political and economic conditions, their organizational capacity, as well as their policy expertise and experience.

Teacher unions will always be confronted by the challenge of balancing 'public' versus 'private' interests. While being called upon to be a partner with government in ensuring the provision of good quality education, teacher unions are continuously faced with addressing the concerns of its members - the teachers who are at the receiving end of policies and demands that are not always easy to comply with because of poor working conditions, lack of educational resources and support, and other challenges encountered in the arena of work. In this context, it is suggested that a framework for teacher union-state relations based on professional unionism offers a possible solution. Arguably, South Africa has already embarked on this road. Structures such as the SACE and ELRC are state attempts to formally recognize both teacher professionalism and unionism, and are aimed at advancing teachers' professional interests, as well as provide appropriate forums for resolving disputes.

Nevertheless, there are challenges to be confronted. One critical challenge remains the question of the use of strike action by teachers, especially in a context where the education system is seen by many stakeholders as failing its citizens and learners. One possible approach, which seeks to balance teacher unions' right to strike (private interests) with learners' right to education (public interests) is the recommendation of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The ILO suggests a "minimum-service profession" approach, whereby, during strikes at least a core of minimum staff would continue to provide teaching services.[16] This recommendation is worthy of consideration and consistent with the professional unionism framework already highlighted.

Finally, many teacher unions, especially those with a strong unionist background, may not have the requisite policy analysis skills and expertise to contribute optimally to policy making processes. While unions generally take responsibility for developing in-house policy expertise, joint teacher union-government skills training should also be prioritized, especially in countries where teacher unions and civil society participation in policy activities has not been common practice.

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[16] Kloppers-Lourens, J. (2012, June 29-July 5). New call to prioritise teaching, *Mail & Guardian*, p.46.

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