



WHEN SADTU SNEEZES, THE WHOLE NATION CATCHES FLU: TEACHER UNION INFLUENCE ON INTERNAL SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Zwane, Thembinkosi Trevor¹ 

1. University of Johannesburg; South African Research Chair in Teaching and Learning

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Teacher unions have typically been analysed through the lens of labour relations and collective bargaining; nonetheless, their impact on the governance of internal school matters in public schools is inadequately theorized. This study aims to investigate the influence of teacher unions, especially dominant unions, on internal school management processes in South African public schools. This study is framed by Anthony Giddens's Structuration Theory, offering an analytical perspective on the interaction between institutional structures and human agency in school management contexts. A qualitative research methodology was employed, based on data collected from principals, School Management Team (SMT) members, and representatives of the School Governing Body (SGB). Thematic analysis was employed to investigate the impact of union involvement on internal management processes, encompassing decision-making, conflict mediation, communication, and organizational functioning in schools. The results indicate four interconnected themes: (1) teacher unions as mediators of internal school management and organisational coordination, (2) teacher union influence on decision-making and organisational practices, (3) challenges and tensions in teacher union involvement in internal school management, (4) opportunities for strengthening collaborative and effective internal school management in unionised contexts. In contexts with fragile institutional support, unions serve as alternative centres of authority, altering internal management dynamics and leadership roles. Union involvement enhances organisational stability and professional support; however, it also poses challenges to leadership autonomy, accountability, and the effective management of internal school affairs. The metaphor, "when SADTU sneezes, the whole nation catches flu," is used to illustrate the extensive impact of teacher unions on the management processes within schools. This research enhances the understanding of educational leadership and school management by redefining teacher unions as institutional actors at the system level, whose impact extends to internal organizational practices within schools. This underscores the necessity for balanced management frameworks that acknowledge the dual enabling and constraining effects of union involvement, aiming to enhance leadership effectiveness and foster sustainable school improvement.

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

School governance and leadership are pivotal in current discussions regarding educational effectiveness, institutional functionality, and learner achievement across various educational contexts.¹ Recent scholarship views school governance as a complex, multi-layered process influenced by the interactions among various institutional actors, such as school leaders, School Governing Bodies (SGBs), policymakers, communities, and teacher unions.² In the changing governance landscape, leadership transcends formal authority structures and is recognized as a negotiated and relational practice, shaped by competing interests, institutional norms, and power dynamics within the education system.³

Debates have primarily centred on macro-level governance structures; however, there is increasing acknowledgment that the management of internal school affairs including decision-making, conflict resolution, communication, and organizational functioning are part of the operational core through which governance and leadership are implemented in daily school contexts. Institutional actors interact directly within these internal processes, shaping the realities of schools and influencing their effectiveness. Teacher unions have become important entities in educational systems, influencing not only traditional labour relations but also internal school management processes, leadership practices, and institutional decision-making. Recent studies demonstrate that teacher unions are essential in interpreting policies, advocating for professionals, and safeguarding educators' rights, which significantly affects the implementation and negotiation of policies within schools.⁴ This expanded role indicates a redefined understanding of unions as integral institutional

¹ T Bush and D Glover, 'School Leadership Models: What Do We Know?' (2021) 41(1–2) *School Leadership & Management* 1–19.

² P Hallinger, 'Leadership for Learning: What We Have Learned from 30 Years of Empirical Research' (2020) 48(1) *Educational Management Administration & Leadership* 49–63.

³ A Walker and H Qian, 'Developing a Model of School Leadership in Policy Contexts' (2020) 48(1) *Educational Management Administration & Leadership* 3–21.

⁴ H Stevenson, B Carter and R Passy, 'New Professionalism, Workforce Restructuring and the Politics of Teacher Unionism' (2020) 35(5) *Journal of Education Policy* 601–620.

actors, whose activities are closely connected to the daily operations of schools.

The South African educational context provides a significant opportunity to analyse these dynamics. Post-apartheid education reforms implemented decentralized governance structures, particularly through the establishment of SGBs, aimed at enhancing democratic participation, accountability, and community engagement in school governance. Empirical evidence indicates that these structures frequently function under considerable constraints, such as limited governance capacity, socio-economic inequalities, and political interference, which diminish their effectiveness.⁵ The challenges are particularly evident in rural and under-resourced schools, where governance and leadership practices are exacerbated by resource scarcity and insufficient institutional support.

In constrained environments, teacher unions have taken on significant roles in mediating relationships, influencing decision-making processes, and shaping the management of internal school affairs. Studies indicate that teacher unions enhance school operations by fostering communication, aiding educators, and encouraging professional collaboration.⁶ Their involvement introduces complexities concerning leadership authority, accountability, and organizational control, especially when union priorities intersect with managerial responsibilities and internal school processes.⁷

The empirical evidence from school contexts highlights the significant role of teacher unions in internal school management. The current study demonstrates that in environments marked by inadequate institutional support and governance capacity, teacher unions frequently serve as alternative centres of authority, mediating conflicts, shaping decision-making, and, in certain instances, replacing formal management structures. Participants emphasized the function of unions in addressing workplace

⁵ J Heystek and Terhoven, 'Motivation for Teacher Participation in School Governance' (2020) 40(3) *South African Journal of Education* 1–9.

⁶ N Bascia, 'Teacher Unions and Educational Change: Reconciling Competing Narratives' (2021) 35(4) *Educational Policy* 589–609.

⁷ JR Malin, C Lubienksi and E DeBray, 'Shaping Education Policy: Power and Process in Policy Networks' (2021) 35(1) *Educational Policy* 5–28.

conflicts and enhancing communication in situations where leadership structures were viewed as ineffective or lacking. In some instances, unions emerged as the main source of support for educators when institutional backing was insufficient. The findings indicate that teacher unions play a significant role in governance processes and are integral to the internal organizational structure of schools, influencing daily management practices. The extensive influence of teacher unions is effectively illustrated by the metaphor, “when SADTU sneezes, the whole nation catches flu,” highlighting the significant impact of union actions on internal school management, leadership practices, and institutional dynamics. The metaphor highlights that the impact of dominant unions transcends individual interactions, influencing wider patterns of behaviour and decision-making in educational institutions.

Although teacher unions are increasingly recognized as significant participants in education systems, current research is predominantly fragmented and limited in its understanding of their influence. The existing literature predominantly examines teacher unions in the context of labour relations, collective bargaining, and policy advocacy, while neglecting their impact on the management of internal school affairs, where governance and leadership are implemented.⁸ As a result, the influence of teacher unions on the daily operations of schools, encompassing decision-making, conflict resolution, communication, and organizational practices, remains inadequately understood.

In South Africa, this gap is exacerbated by structural challenges within school governance systems, including limited capacity of School Governing Bodies (SGBs), socio-economic disparities, and political interference. Despite extensive documentation of these challenges, there is a lack of empirical investigation into how teacher unions engage with these contextual factors to influence internal school management processes.⁹ It is unclear whether teacher unions primarily serve as supportive institutional actors that improve internal management and organizational

⁸ BS Cooper and J Sureau, ‘Teacher Unions and Educational Reform’ (2020) 34(1) *Educational Policy* 5–25.

⁹ N Spaull and S Van der Berg, ‘Learning Losses and Educational Inequalities in South Africa’ (2022) 90 *International Journal of Educational Development* 102552.

functioning, or if their influence leads to tensions, role ambiguity, and limitations on leadership authority within schools. Moreover, research on teacher unions as system-level actors is limited, highlighting their influence on internal organizational processes that shape daily school operations. This indicates a significant deficiency in the literature, as it fails to account for the relational and dynamic aspects of internal school management in unionised environments. Without this understanding, initiatives aimed at enhancing school leadership and governance may inadequately consider the influence of teacher unions on institutional practices.

In this introduction section, we provided the context on the problem and the original contributions that the study sought to make considering the teachers unions influence on internal school management and sustainable development. In the next section, we then conceptualised internal school management and sustainable development, including recommendations. We also shared the gaps in existing internal school management and sustainable development before providing the study's concluding remarks.

2. AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study investigates the impact of teacher unions on the management of internal affairs in South African public schools.

2.1 The following objectives were formulated:

- To critically analyse the influence of teacher unions on internal school management processes, encompassing decision-making, communication, and organizational functioning.
- To examine the impact of teacher unions on internal decision-making processes and the subsequent effects on school operations.
- To inspect the function of teacher unions in mediating and managing workplace conflicts in educational settings.

- To analyse the effects of teacher union involvement on leadership authority, accountability, and organizational control in educational institutions.
- To study the effects of teacher union influence on the efficacy of internal school management and the overall functioning of schools.

3.0 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This research examines the impact of teacher unions on the governance of internal school operations within South African public schools. This study analyses the influence of unions on decision-making processes, conflict management, communication, and organizational functioning, emphasizing how internal school dynamics are negotiated and enacted through the interactions of institutional actors. This highlights the frequently neglected role of teacher unions in the day-to-day administration of schools, which extends beyond conventional views that limit unions to labour relations. Based on Anthony Giddens's Structuration Theory, this study offers a detailed analysis of the dual role of teacher unions as both enabling and constraining factors in educational settings. This illustrates the reciprocal influence of unions and internal school processes, contributing to both the reproduction and transformation of institutional practices. This study provides a conceptual framework for analysing the dynamic interaction between structure and agency in school management. The study advances scholarship on educational leadership and school management by redefining teacher unions as institutional actors at the system level whose impact extends to the operational core of schools. The necessity for balanced, contextually responsive management strategies is emphasized, acknowledging unions' influence on organizational dynamics while ensuring that leadership effectiveness and accountability are maintained. The study offers insights that can guide policymakers, school leaders, and union stakeholders in developing collaborative and effective internal management practices to enhance sustainable school improvement.

4.0 LITERATURE REVIEW: TEACHER UNIONISM AND INTERNAL MANAGEMENT OF SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The literature review seeks to critically analyse existing scholarship on teacher unions, school governance, and internal school management to position the study within current academic discourse and identify gaps necessitating further exploration. This review provides a conceptual and empirical foundation by analysing the transformation of teacher unions from traditional labour-oriented organizations to significant institutional actors that influence organizational processes and decision-making in schools.¹⁰ Attention is focused on the intersection of union involvement with internal school management processes, such as communication, conflict mediation, and organizational functioning, particularly in contexts marked by institutional complexity and resource limitations.¹¹

This study examines the role of school leadership in managing union influence within internal school contexts, highlighting leadership as a relational and negotiated practice influenced by various stakeholders.¹² The review examines Structuration Theory to emphasize the dynamic interaction between institutional structures and human agency in influencing internal school processes.¹³ This theoretical framework offers a perspective for understanding teacher unions as both facilitating and limiting factors in school management. The review also examines the broader contextual and systemic factors influencing internal school management, such as governance capacity, socio-economic conditions, and institutional support, especially within the South African educational context.¹⁴ These factors are essential for understanding how teacher unions operate in schools and how their influence is shaped by contextual realities.

¹⁰ Bascia (n 6).

¹¹ TM Moe, *The Politics of Teachers Unions and Education Reform* (Cambridge University Press 2022).

¹² Hallinger (n 2).

¹³ R Stones, *Structuration Theory* (Palgrave Macmillan 2005).

¹⁴ Heystek and Terhoven (n 5).

The literature review is organized into key thematic areas: the role of teacher unions as institutional actors within education systems, their influence on internal school management processes, leadership and organizational dynamics in unionized school contexts, and the enabling and constraining effects of union involvement in school operations. This thematic organization integrates pertinent literature and creates a cohesive framework that shapes the study's theoretical perspective and directs the analysis of results.

4.1 Teacher Unions as Institutional Participants in Education Systems

Teacher unions have traditionally been viewed as labour organizations focused on collective bargaining and safeguarding educators' rights. Contemporary scholarship increasingly views teacher unions as institutional actors within education systems, with their influence extending beyond labour relations to governance, policy processes, and organizational practices.¹⁵ This change indicates a broader rethinking of education systems as environments involving multiple actors, in which authority and influence are shared among stakeholders.

Research demonstrates that teacher unions engage in policy interpretation, advocacy, and the formation of professional norms, thus impacting the implementation of educational reforms at the school level.¹⁶ In this context, unions function as proactive agents that influence institutional processes and educational outcomes, rather than merely reactive entities. Their participation in educational systems is both structural and agentic, consistent with theoretical frameworks that highlight the dynamic interaction between institutions and actors.

In South Africa, teacher unions hold a significant position owing to the historical and political context of organized labour in the education sector. Research indicates that unions play a role in shaping policy discourse, influencing governance practices, and representing the professional

¹⁵ Bascia (n 6).

¹⁶ Stevenson, Carter and Passy (n 4).

interests of educators in schools.¹⁷ This influence is complex, often mediated by contextual factors including socio-economic inequalities, institutional capacity, and political dynamics.

4.2 Influence of Teacher Unions on Internal School Management Processes

The literature predominantly emphasizes the macro-level influence of teacher unions; however, there is growing acknowledgment that their effects are most clearly manifested in internal school management processes. These processes encompass decision-making, communication, conflict management, and the coordination of organizational activities, all of which are essential to the daily operations of schools. Empirical studies indicate that teacher unions affect internal school processes by influencing how decisions are negotiated, contested, and implemented within schools.¹⁸ Union participation in decision-making frameworks can enhance participatory governance and guarantee representation of educators' perspectives. Such involvement may complicate decision-making, especially when competing interests arise between unions and school leadership.

Teacher unions significantly mediate workplace relations by addressing grievances, managing disputes, and fostering communication among stakeholders.¹⁹ The mediating role is particularly significant in contexts marked by weak institutional support, wherein unions serve as intermediaries between educators and management. The extent to which this mediation influences organizational cohesion or conflict is still a topic of discussion. The impact of teacher unions on internal school management is both functional and contested, highlighting the complex nature of organizational processes within educational institutions. This highlights the necessity of analysing union involvement at both the policy level and in the daily practices that influence school operations.

¹⁷ C Soudien, V Reddy and J Harvey, 'The Impact of COVID-19 on a Fragile Education System: The Case of South Africa' (2022) 26 *Education as Change* 1-15.

¹⁸ WL Poole, 'Leadership and Teacher Unions: A Complex Relationship' (2021) 49(3) *Educational Management Administration & Leadership* 375-391.

¹⁹ Bascia (n 6).

4.3 Leadership and Organizational Dynamics in Unionized School Contexts

The existence of teacher unions adds complexity to school leadership and organizational dynamics. In unionized educational settings, leadership is typically defined by negotiation, collaboration, and contestation, as school leaders interact with unions as significant institutional entities.²⁰ This redefines conventional leadership concepts, moving away from hierarchical and authoritative models to emphasize a relational and distributed approach.

Effective leadership in unionised environments necessitates the capacity to navigate competing interests, manage relationships, and facilitate collaboration among stakeholders.²¹ School leaders must navigate the necessity of maintaining organizational control while also engaging constructively with unions that represent the collective interests of educators. Union involvement may simultaneously affect leadership authority and organizational coherence. Research indicates that conflicts may arise when union priorities clash with school management goals, leading to difficulties in policy implementation and organizational decision-making.²² The tensions underscore the necessity of understanding leadership as a practice embedded in specific contexts, shaped by institutional dynamics and stakeholder interactions. Leadership effectiveness is closely associated with school leaders' capacity to manage organizational complexity, cultivate trust, and establish environments that promote collaboration. This is especially pertinent in contexts where unions significantly influence internal school processes.

4.4 The Enabling and Constraining Effects of Teacher Union Involvement in School Operations

The literature highlights a central theme: the dual nature of teacher union influence, which operates as both an enabling and a constraining force

²⁰ Bush and Glover (n 1).

²¹ Poole (n 18).

²² Moe (n 11).

within educational contexts. Teacher unions positively influence school operations by promoting professional support, collaboration, and advocacy for educators' rights.²³ Their participation can improve teacher morale, aid in professional development, and promote communication among stakeholders. Conversely, union involvement may pose challenges for school management. Research indicates that unions can lead to role ambiguity, conflicts of interest, and tensions in leadership authority, especially when their priorities differ from those of school management.²⁴ Union actions can sometimes be viewed as detrimental to organizational control or as complicating decision-making processes in educational institutions. This duality illustrates the intricate nature of institutional dynamics in education systems, where participants function within intersecting and occasionally conflicting frameworks of accountability and authority. This underscores the necessity for a nuanced, context-aware understanding of union influence, acknowledging that its impacts are not inherently beneficial or detrimental but shaped by organizational and contextual factors.

The reviewed literature reveals several important insights. Teacher unions have developed into important institutional entities, with their influence reaching beyond labour relations to encompass governance and organizational processes. Their impact is most prominently observed in internal school management processes, where decisions are negotiated and organizational practices are implemented. The relationship between teacher unions and school leadership is characterized by complex organizational dynamics that necessitate negotiation and collaboration. Teacher union involvement is inherently dual, offering both opportunities and challenges for effective school management.

²³ Stevenson H Carter B and Passy R, 'New professionalism, workforce restructuring and the politics of teacher unionism. *Journal of Education Policy*', (2020) 35(5), 601–620.

5.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: TOWARDS STRUCTURATION THEORY

This study is based on Structuration Theory, formulated by Anthony Giddens, which offers a strong analytical framework for examining the interplay between social structures and human agency in institutional settings. Structuration Theory is based on the concept of the duality of structure, which asserts that structures both enable and constrain human action, while simultaneously being reproduced and transformed through these actions.²⁵ This theoretical perspective conceptualizes structures as consisting of rules, norms, and resources that direct behavior within social systems. These structures influence individual interpretations of roles and responsibilities, while individuals, through daily practices, either reinforce or alter these structures.²⁶ Thus, social systems, such as schools, are perpetually created and recreated through the interplay of structure and agency.

Structuration Theory has been extensively used in educational contexts to analyse how institutional actors navigate governance arrangements, leadership practices, and organizational processes.²⁷ Schools are dynamic social systems rather than static entities, characterized by the continuous negotiation and enactment of policies, leadership practices, and stakeholder interactions. Structuration Theory is pertinent to this study as it offers a detailed framework for analysing the intricate and relational aspects of internal school management. The management of internal school affairs, including decision-making, conflict resolution, communication, and organizational functioning, is shaped by interactions among various institutional actors within established structures.

Teacher unions should not be viewed merely as external entities exerting influence on schools. They serve as embedded institutional actors, exerting influence through both structural and agentic dimensions. Unions

²⁵ A Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Polity Press 1984).

²⁶ Stones (n 13).

²⁷ Walker and Qian (n 3).

function within defined rules, policies, and organizational frameworks that influence their interactions with schools. Conversely, they influence internal school processes through advocacy, negotiation, and intervention. Structuration Theory is suitable for this study as it facilitates an analysis that transcends binary interpretations of teacher unions as either advantageous or disadvantageous. This perspective allows for an understanding of unions as both enabling and constraining forces, whose impact is contingent upon context and shaped by continuous interactions with school leadership and other stakeholders.²⁸

The theory offers a conceptual framework for analysing power, authority, and control dynamics in educational settings. It highlights that power is not confined to formal leadership structures but is dispersed among actors who possess resources and the capacity to influence decision-making processes.²⁹ This is especially pertinent in unionized school environments, where leadership authority is frequently negotiated rather than exercised unilaterally. This study employs Structuration Theory to elucidate the influence of teacher unions on the management of internal affairs within South African public schools. The theory offers a framework for analysing the influence of institutional structures on internal school processes, shaped by the agency of key actors, including school leaders, teachers, and union representatives.

6.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is situated within the interpretivist paradigm, aiming to comprehend social phenomena by examining the meanings individuals attribute to their experiences in particular contexts.³⁰ The interpretivist approach is suitable for this study as it facilitates a comprehensive examination of the impact of teacher unions on the management of internal school affairs, as perceived and understood by essential stakeholders within educational institutions.

²⁸ Bascia (n 6).

²⁹ Giddens (n 25).

³⁰ JW Creswell and CN Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (4th edn, Sage 2018).

A qualitative research approach was utilized to elucidate the complexity and context-specific characteristics of internal school management processes. Qualitative inquiry provides a detailed understanding of organizational dynamics, especially concerning decision-making, conflict management, and stakeholder interactions in educational settings.³¹ This method effectively analyses the relational and negotiated aspects of union influence in educational settings.

6.1 Research context and participants

The study was conducted in selected public schools in South Africa, representing contexts with varying levels of resources, governance capacity, and union participation. The settings provided a relevant framework for examining the influence of teacher unions on internal school management processes. Participants were deliberately selected to ensure the representation of key stakeholders involved in school management and governance activities. The sample comprised a total of 12 participants, including 4 members from the school management team, 4 members from the school governing body, and 4 teachers affiliated with the South African Democratic Teachers Union.

6.2 Sampling techniques

Purposive sampling was utilized to select participants possessing pertinent knowledge and experience in school management and union involvement.³² This ensured that the generated data were rich, relevant, and aligned with the study's objectives.

³¹ U Flick, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* (6th edn, Sage 2020).

³² MQ Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods* (4th edn, Sage 2015).

6.3 Data collection method

Data were gathered via semi-structured interviews, enabling participants to articulate their experiences and viewpoints regarding teacher union participation in internal school management. Semi-structured interviews offer flexibility, allowing researchers to explore responses while remaining focused on essential research questions.³³ The role of teacher unions in school management includes their influence on decision-making processes, conflict management and mediation, as well as implications for leadership and organizational functioning. Interviews were conducted to promote openness and depth, enabling participants to offer comprehensive accounts of their experiences.

6.4 Data analysis

Thematic analysis was conducted in accordance with the methodology established.³⁴ This approach entails the identification, analysis, and interpretation of patterns (themes) within qualitative data. The analysis adhered to a systematic methodology: acquaintance with the data, creation of preliminary codes, and identification of themes. Thematic analysis was suitable for this study as it facilitated the identification of recurring patterns concerning the influence of teacher unions on internal school management processes. The generated themes corresponded with the study's objectives and theoretical framework.

6.5 Validity and reliability of the study

To maintain the rigor and credibility of the study, the trustworthiness criteria established by³⁵ were utilized:

³³ S Kvale and S Brinkmann, *Interviews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing* (3rd edn, SAGE Publications 2015).

³⁴ V Braun and V Clarke, 'Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology' (2006) 3(2) *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 77-101.

³⁵ YS Lincoln and EG Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry* (SAGE Publications 1985).

Credibility is established through extended interaction with participants and the incorporation of verbatim quotes to accurately represent their viewpoints. Transferability is improved through the provision of comprehensive descriptions of the research context and participants. Dependability is established by providing a clear and transparent account of the research process. Confirmability is achieved by anchoring findings in data and reducing researcher bias. The strategies employed ensured the findings are reliable and accurately represent participants' experiences.

6.6 Ethical Considerations

The study strictly adhered to ethical principles. Participants were apprised of the study's purpose and their voluntary involvement. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained through the following utilizing pseudonyms for participants, securing data effectively, and ensuring that responses remain untraceable to individuals or educational institutions. The research complied with both institutional and national ethical standards for studies involving human subjects.

6.7 The study limitations

The qualitative design yielded detailed insights; however, the findings are context-specific and may lack generalizability across all school settings. The study depended on participants' self-reported experiences, which may be subject to personal perceptions and biases. Nonetheless, these limitations are intrinsic to qualitative research and do not diminish the study's contribution to a comprehensive contextual understanding of teacher union influence on internal school management.

7.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Four interrelated themes were identified to facilitate data analysis and interpretation, namely

- Teacher unions as mediators of internal school management and organisational coordination.

- Teacher union influence on decision-making and organisational practices
- Challenges and tensions in teacher union involvement in internal school management
- Opportunities for strengthening collaborative and effective internal school management in unionised contexts

To maintain participant confidentiality, codes were utilized in place of names when presenting the findings. Participants were designated School Management Team member (SMT1), School Governing Body representative (SGB1), and Union Representative (UR1).

7.1 Theme 1: Teacher Unions As Mediators Of Internal School Management And Organisational Coordination.

The findings indicate that teacher unions serve a pivotal function as mediators in internal school administration, especially in enhancing communication, managing stakeholder relationships, and ensuring organizational coherence inside schools. Across participant groups, there is significant consensus that unions serve as relational intermediates, facilitating relationships among instructors, school leadership, and governance institutions. Participants constantly highlighted the importance of unions in facilitating communication and preserving organizational cohesion. A participant remarked:

“Unions from my experience... smoothen the relationship between stakeholders and educators. They also drive values in the school and ensure that there is understanding between management and teachers.” (SMT2)

Another participant emphasized the role of unions in coordinating and maintaining balance in the workplace.

“Primary function of teacher unions is to ensure smooth and effective relationship between the employer and employees...”

ensuring collective agreement and stability in the workplace.”
(SGB3)

These accounts indicate that unions function as organizational connectors, influencing the quality and flow of interactions within educational institutions. Their mediating role encompasses not only conflict resolution but also the coordination of communication channels, facilitating the transmission of information and concerns across various levels of the institution.

The coordinating function is further supported by participants who identified unions as essential actors in navigating institutional processes.

“They are tasked to serve the interests of teachers... stand for them in high decision-making meetings... acting as the first line of report when issues arise.” (SGB2)

“They liaise between the site committee and the branch... ensuring that issues are communicated properly and addressed.” (UR3)

These accounts illustrate the degree to which unions are integrated into the operational structure of schools, serving as both formal and informal means of communication and coordination. In situations where institutional capacity is constrained, this role assumes particular importance, as unions frequently address deficiencies in formal management frameworks.

While there is substantial consensus on the positive mediating role of unions, the data also indicates significant divergences. Several participants expressed concerns regarding the limitations of union mediation, especially in relation to accountability issues.

“They act as a buffer between educators and leadership... but the problem is when they defend unprofessionalism. Some

educators rely on the union even when they are wrong.”
(SMT2)

Discussion on theme 1:

This theme identifies teacher unions as key mediators in internal school management, especially in communication facilitation, stakeholder relationship coordination, and organizational coherence maintenance. These findings, interpreted via Structuration Theory, support the notion that school processes arise from the dynamic interplay between institutional structures and human agency.³⁶ Unions mediate this duality by functioning within established organizational rules and norms while also influencing their implementation in daily school practices. The findings align with the literature that reconceptualises teacher unions as institutional actors rather than solely labour organisations.³⁷ Participants' descriptions of unions facilitating relationships and promoting understanding between management and teachers support the literature's claim that unions significantly influence organizational processes and governance in schools. This perspective posits that unions are integral to the institutional framework of schools, shaping the structure and maintenance of relationships. The identified mediating function supports literature on unions' roles in communication facilitation, workplace relations management, and conflict mediation.³⁸

Participants described unions as intermediaries that "liaise between the site committee and the branch" and serve as a "first line of report," illustrating their role as communication conduits within the school system. This indicates that internal school management is not limited to formal leadership structures but is shared among various actors who affect information flow and decision-making processes.³⁹ The findings enhance the literature by demonstrating that union mediation is integrated into the regular coordination of organizational processes, rather than confined to

³⁶ Giddens (n 25).

³⁷ Bascia (n 6).

³⁸ Bascia (n 6).

³⁹ Malin, Lubienski and DeBray (n 7).

occasional interventions. Internal school management involves decision-making, communication, and organizational functioning.⁴⁰ Empirical evidence shows that unions influence these processes by coordinating interactions, ensuring representation, and maintaining organizational balance. This is significant in contexts with institutional complexity and resource limitations, where unions often fill gaps in formal management capacity, as noted in your review.⁴¹

The findings align with literature that views school leadership in unionised contexts as relational, negotiated, and distributed.⁴² Unions as mediators alter leadership practices, necessitating ongoing negotiation and collaboration from school leaders instead of dependence on hierarchical authority. Unions mediate and shape organizational dynamics, where authority is collaboratively constructed through stakeholder interactions.

The findings reveal significant tensions that illustrate the dual nature of union influence noted in the literature. Unions are recognized for promoting organizational cohesion; however, participants expressed concerns regarding their role in shielding unprofessional behavior and undermining accountability mechanisms. This supports research showing that union involvement may lead to role ambiguity, conflicts of interest, and challenges to leadership authority.⁴³ This demonstrates that structures facilitating coordination and support can also limit effective management, contingent on their enactment in particular contexts. The findings empirically support the argument that union influence is more evident in everyday organizational practices than at the macro-policy level. This study illustrates that union involvement in governance and policy processes significantly influences the daily operations of schools, affecting communication, relationship management, and the maintenance or challenge of organizational coherence.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Moe (n 11).

⁴¹ Malin, Lubienski and DeBray (n 7).

⁴² Walker and Qian (n 3).

⁴³ Moe (n 11).

⁴⁴ Stevenson, Carter and Passy (n 4).

This theme confirms and extends existing literature by showing that teacher unions act as relational and organizational mediators in schools, influencing internal management processes through structural and agentic mechanisms. Their influence illustrates the complex, context-dependent nature of institutional dynamics, with unions contributing to both organizational stability and potential disruption. This highlights the need for a nuanced understanding of union involvement, as its impact on internal school management depends on how mediation is implemented in particular institutional and contextual settings.

7.2 Theme 2: Teacher Union Influence On Decision-Making And Organisational Practices

The findings indicate that teacher unions serve as important decision-making bodies, significantly impacting internal school management processes and organizational practices. There is significant agreement among participant groups that unions are not only consulted in decision-making but are also actively involved in the negotiation, formulation, and execution of decisions within schools. This influence encompasses policy enactment, staff welfare, and the coordination of institutional practices. Participants consistently identified teacher unions as mechanisms for collective representation and participatory governance, facilitating the inclusion of educators' voices in organizational decision-making. A participant articulated:

“They ensure that teachers’ voices are considered in policies... they influence decision-making through consultations and participation in school governance structures. They negotiate on behalf of teachers to ensure that leadership decisions align with educators’ best interests.” (SMT3)

Another participant highlighted the strategic role of unions in decision-making processes.

“Teacher unions serve as the primary line of report... they stand for educators in high decision-making meetings and negotiate on their behalf... ensuring that their interests are represented at all levels.” (SGB2)

These accounts indicate that decision-making in schools is becoming more collective and negotiated, as opposed to hierarchical and leader driven. Teacher unions operate as institutional entities that redistribute decision-making authority, influencing both the processes of decision-making and the resultant outcomes. This is consistent with current research that views unions as significant actors in governance and organizational processes. While the participatory role of unions is recognized, the data indicates significant variations in the degree and consequences of their influence. Several participants characterized union involvement as a means of improving organizational coherence and inclusivity.

“Teacher unions... encourage teamwork in decision-making... no one is an island. They make sure that decisions are shared and implemented across the school.” (SGB1)

This viewpoint emphasizes inclusive organizational practices characterized by distributed and collaborative decision-making. From an inclusive pedagogical perspective, these practices align with principles of participation, voice, and responsiveness, indicating that unions could enhance the democratic and inclusive nature of school environments. Conversely, other participants expressed concerns regarding the possibility of union influence extending beyond mere participation to encompass directive authority, potentially altering internal management processes.

“Teacher unions make sure that decisions taken from the union are implemented... influencing how things are done in the school.” (SGB1)

“They influence leadership decisions to align with educators’ interests... ensuring that management decisions are negotiated before implementation.” (SMT3)

Discussion on theme 2

This theme highlights the role of teacher unions as key decision-makers in internal school management, influencing the negotiation, formulation, and implementation of organizational practices. These findings, interpreted through Structuration Theory, illustrate the recursive relationship between structure and agency, highlighting how unions function within institutional frameworks while also shaping decision-making processes in schools.⁴⁵ Decision-making is not a fixed managerial function but a socially constructed and negotiated process involving various institutional actors. The findings align with literature that reconceptualises teacher unions as active participants in governance and organizational processes, rather than solely as labour-oriented entities.⁴⁶ Participants indicated that unions ensure “teachers’ voices are considered in policies” and represent educators in “high decision-making meetings,” supporting the literature’s claim that unions are central to policy interpretation, advocacy, and the development of professional norms in schools.⁴⁷

This highlights that unions enhance the democratization of decision-making, facilitating wider participation and representation in school governance. The findings support research indicating that union involvement improves participatory governance and inclusive organizational practices.⁴⁸ The portrayal of decision-making as collaborative indicates a transition from hierarchical leadership models to more distributed and relational organizational management forms. This aligns with literature on leadership in unionised contexts, emphasizing the importance of negotiation, collaboration, and stakeholder engagement in developing effective organisational practices.⁴⁹ Unions facilitate shared

⁴⁵ Giddens (n 24).

⁴⁶ Bascia (n 6).

⁴⁷ Cooper and Sureau (n 8).

⁴⁸ Poole (n 18).

⁴⁹ Walker and Qian (n 3).

decision-making, enhancing organizational coherence and promoting collective ownership among educators. The findings contribute to the literature by demonstrating that union involvement in decision-making is not only consultative but also integral to the execution and enforcement of decisions. Participants noted that unions "ensure that decisions... are implemented," indicating their role as active agents in the procedural and operational aspects of decision-making.

This supports the argument that internal school management processes, including policy enactment and organizational coordination, are shaped by ongoing negotiation and contestation rather than unilateral leadership action.⁵⁰ In contexts of institutional complexity, this role positions unions as co-governors of organizational practice, influencing both decision-making and implementation. The findings reveal critical tensions reflecting the dual nature of union influence identified in the literature. Unions promote inclusivity and representation; however, participants expressed concerns that their influence might encroach on directive authority, potentially limiting leadership autonomy and modifying established management processes. Research indicates that union involvement can lead to role ambiguity, conflicts of interest, and reduced decision-making efficiency, especially when union priorities differ from school management.⁵¹

This tension demonstrates that structures facilitating participation and representation can also limit organizational effectiveness, contingent on their enactment within particular institutional contexts. The findings support the argument that decision-making in schools is increasingly relational and negotiated, rather than strictly hierarchical. This indicates changes in educational leadership and governance, characterized by distributed authority among various actors and shaped through interaction.⁵² Teacher unions play a significant role in redistributing power and altering organizational dynamics, highlighting that power in

⁵⁰ Malin, Lubienski and DeBray (n 7).

⁵¹ Moe (n 11).

⁵² Hallinger (n 2).

education is diffuse and rooted in social relations, rather than being concentrated in formal leadership roles.⁵³

7.3 Theme 3: Challenges And Tensions In Teacher Union Involvement In Internal School Management

The preceding themes highlight the facilitative role of teacher unions in mediating relationships and influencing decision-making. However, the findings also indicate a variety of ongoing challenges and tensions related to their participation in internal school management. The tensions primarily arise at the intersection of professional accountability, leadership authority, organizational coherence, and communication, highlighting the complex and frequently contested nature of union influence in educational settings. A primary concern among participants is the belief that union protection might unintentionally undermine professional accountability and work ethic. This issue is clearly expressed in the subsequent account:

“Over protection and support given to educators by the teacher union let our educators become spoiled... reluctant to be self-motivated to do extra work given or allocated... affecting the day-to-day running of school activities.”
(SMT1)

Another participant reinforces this sentiment by highlighting the unintended consequences of job security.

“Job security is misconstrued for looking away when teachers disregard their core functions... teacher apathy and indolence are not reprimanded... all in the name of job security.”
(SMT1)

The accounts indicate a convergence regarding the tension between protection and performance, suggesting that the safeguarding of educators' rights may, in certain cases, compromise accountability and

⁵³ Giddens (n 24).

professional standards. This prompts essential inquiries regarding the equilibrium between individual rights and collective responsibility in the context of school management.

A notable tension pertains to the development of competing or parallel authority structures within educational institutions. Participants indicated that union involvement could disrupt existing leadership hierarchies, resulting in ambiguity regarding roles and responsibilities.

“Challenges... include creating dual leadership at school... where unions stand for members even when they are wrong... this creates confusion in how the school is managed.” (SMT2)

“Conflict of interest where unions impose their own agenda on the school... undermining the current leadership and creating tension in decision-making.” (SMT4)

The findings indicate that union influence may reach beyond participatory engagement, potentially assuming directive or oppositional roles, which could lead to a fragmentation of organizational authority. In these contexts, leadership is characterized by negotiation and contestation, rather than by clear definitions and enactments.

Communication breakdowns exacerbate these challenges, especially concerning the coordination of information and decision-making processes.

“Challenges are that messages or information are received in a short period of time... this leads to communication breakdown between the employer and employee.” (UR2)

“Communication breakdown... time frames... affect how decisions are taken and implemented in the school.” (SMT2)

These accounts suggest that although unions aim to enhance communication, their participation can occasionally lead to fragmented or inefficient communication processes, especially when coordination mechanisms are inadequate. The data reveals significant disparities in equity and representation within internal school management. Although unions are acknowledged as representatives of teachers, certain participants expressed concerns regarding the marginalization of other stakeholders.

“Non-union staff members may feel suppressed when decisions taken by union representation affect them... unions only look after the interests of teachers and not learners and parents.” (SGB4)

Discussion on theme 3

The previous themes highlight the supportive and participatory roles of teacher unions; however, this theme uncovers the inherent tensions and contradictions in their involvement in internal school management. According to Structuration Theory, these tensions illustrate the duality of structure, indicating that institutional arrangements facilitating union participation can also limit organizational effectiveness and leadership coherence.⁵⁴ The identified challenges professional accountability, leadership authority, communication, and representation highlight the complex nature of union influence in schools. The findings reveal a significant tension between protection and professional accountability. Participants' concerns that union protection may lead to complacency and diminish work ethic align with literature discussing the unintended consequences of robust union representation in organizational settings. Teacher unions promote professional support and protect educators' rights.⁵⁵

However, existing research warns that this protection may lead to role ambiguity and diminish accountability, especially when professional

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

⁵⁵ Stevenson, Carter and Passy (n 4).

standards lack consistent enforcement.⁵⁶ The findings contribute to the literature by illustrating how these tensions appear in daily school operations, where the protection of rights may occasionally conflict with performance and responsibility expectations. The emergence of parallel authority structures, referred to as “dual leadership,” was noted by participants within schools. This finding is consistent with existing literature on leadership and organizational dynamics in unionized contexts, indicating that union involvement complicates traditional hierarchies and redistributes authority among various actors.⁵⁷ Redistribution may enhance participatory governance but can also cause role confusion, fragmented decision-making, and tensions between unions and school leadership.⁵⁸

This illustrates the dynamic and negotiated nature of power, where authority is not static but is continually shaped through interaction. When poorly managed, these interactions can undermine organizational coherence and leadership effectiveness. The findings underscore communication breakdowns as a significant challenge linked to union involvement. While literature identifies unions as facilitators of communication and mediators of workplace relations, empirical evidence indicates that their involvement can lead to fragmented communication, especially when information flows are poorly coordinated or hindered by time constraints.⁵⁹ This supports the view that internal school management processes, including communication and decision-making, are complex and necessitate aligned structures and clear coordination mechanisms for effective functioning.⁶⁰ In contexts lacking alignment, union participation may unintentionally worsen organisational inefficiencies. The findings highlight the importance of equity and representation in internal school management. Unions are identified in the literature as tools for collective representation and participatory governance.⁶¹ However, participants expressed concerns regarding the possible marginalization of non-union

⁵⁶ Malin, Lubienski and DeBray (n 7).

⁵⁷ Bush and Glover (n 1).

⁵⁸ Moe (n 11).

⁵⁹ Bascia (n 6).

⁶⁰ Malin, Lubienski and DeBray (n 7).

⁶¹ Stevenson, Carter and Passy (n 4).

stakeholders, such as learners and parents. This highlights a significant limitation in the representational capacity of unions, which primarily focus on the interests of educators. The findings complicate inclusive governance by revealing uneven and contested representation, especially in contexts with intersecting stakeholder interests.

These tensions highlight the dual and context-dependent nature of teacher union influence, a key theme in the literature. Union involvement functions as both an enabling and constraining force in educational settings.⁶² The empirical evidence supports this duality, showing that unions provide support, advocacy, and participation, but may also create challenges in accountability, authority, and organizational coherence. These findings support the Structurationist view that institutional life involves continuous negotiation, contestation, and transformation. The identified tensions reflect the dynamic and relational aspects of school management, involving multiple actors within intersecting power structures. In South Africa, schools operate under institutional constraints and socio-economic complexities, which may amplify tensions and affect the enactment and experience of union influence.⁶³ This theme contributes to the literature by detailing the challenges and contradictions of teacher union involvement in internal school management. Union influence should not be viewed in simplistic or binary terms; it requires analysis as a complex, contextually mediated phenomenon. The findings advocate for a balanced approach that acknowledges the importance of union participation while emphasizing the necessity of accountability frameworks, coherent leadership practices, and inclusive governance structures to address the identified tensions.

7.4 Theme 4: Opportunities For Strengthening Collaborative And Effective Internal School Management In Unionised Contexts

Despite identified challenges and tensions, the findings reveal opportunities for enhancing collaborative internal school management

⁶² Malin, Lubieniski and DeBray (n 7).

⁶³ Heystek and Terhoven (n 5).

through strategic engagement among school leadership, teacher unions, and broader stakeholders. Participants emphasized that well-managed relationships aligned with shared goals enable teacher unions to effectively enhance organizational functioning and school improvement.

Participants converge on the significance of collaboration based on a shared vision and mutual trust. One participant highlighted this as follows:

“They can effectively collaborate by establishing shared goals, fostering open communication, building trust, and engaging in collaborative decision-making... this helps in making progress in the school.” (UR1)

Another participant emphasized the importance of structured engagement platforms:

“Annual bosberaad... symposiums between union leaders and management... mentorship programmes... these help bridge the gap and improve how the school is managed and developed.” (SMT1)

These accounts indicate that effective collaboration necessitates deliberate structures and ongoing engagement mechanisms. These practices correspond with the principles of transformational leadership, highlighting the importance of establishing a shared vision, fostering collective commitment, and aligning stakeholders with common organizational objectives. In this context, leadership is not diminished by union involvement; rather, it is reconfigured as a facilitative and relational practice. Participants emphasized the importance of teacher unions in facilitating professional development and organizational learning, which are essential for effective school management.

“Unions must be given a bigger platform and resources to conduct professional workshops... supporting collaboration between teachers from different schools and improving practice.” (SGB4)

“Through training workshops and mentorship programmes... teachers are able to improve their practice and contribute better to the school.” (SMT1)

These findings identify teacher unions as facilitators of capacity building, enhancing the professional development of educators and, consequently, the advancement of organizational practices. This indicates a commitment to responsiveness, support, and the elimination of barriers to participation, though it operates within a professional rather than a learner-centred framework.

The data highlights the significance of effective communication and stakeholder engagement in improving internal school management.

“Establishing clear communication avenues... using technology and social platforms... ensures that all stakeholders are informed and involved in decision-making.” (SMT4)

“Policies must not come as a surprise... collaboration ensures that educators understand and implement them effectively.” (SMT2)

The insights underscore the significance of communication as a fundamental component of organizational coherence, facilitating alignment between policy and practice. Transparent and inclusive communication reduces the potential for conflict and enhances the efficiency of organizational processes. Participants emphasized the necessity for broader stakeholder inclusion, specifically highlighting the involvement of parents and communities in governance processes.

“Engaging parents and local communities... creates a more inclusive approach to school improvement... ensuring that learners get the support they need.” (SMT3)

Discussion on theme 4

This theme highlights the potential for reconfiguring teacher union involvement as a positive and transformative influence in internal school management. According to Structuration Theory, these opportunities demonstrate how institutional actors can reshape structures via intentional and collaborative practices.⁶⁴ Current findings indicate that through strategic engagement, unions and school leadership can collaboratively create organizational environments that facilitate effective management and school improvement, contrasting with previous themes that emphasized tensions and constraints. The findings highlight the significance of shared vision, trust, and collaborative engagement as essential conditions for effective internal school management. Participants' focus on "shared goals" and "open communication" corresponds with literature that defines leadership in unionised settings as relational, negotiated, and distributed.⁶⁵ Union involvement, when aligned with collective objectives, transforms leadership into a facilitative practice that emphasizes coordination, inclusivity, and mutual accountability, rather than diminishing authority. This aligns with scholarship that views school leadership as integrated within interaction networks, where authority is derived from collaboration instead of hierarchical control.

The findings support existing literature identifying teacher unions as institutional actors that contribute to organizational development and governance.⁶⁶ Structured engagement platforms, including *bosberaads*, symposiums, and mentorship programs, illustrate how intentional institutional mechanisms can improve coordination and alleviate tensions between unions and school leadership. These structures function as interaction sites for developing shared understanding, reinforcing the Structurationist view that organizational practices are perpetually produced and reproduced through social engagement. The findings position teacher unions as facilitators of professional development and organizational learning. Participants' focus on training workshops and

⁶⁴ Stones (n 13).

⁶⁵ Walker and Qian (n 3).

⁶⁶ Bascia (n 6).

mentorship programs corresponds with literature emphasizing unions' influence on professional norms and educator development.⁶⁷ This broadens the conventional perspective of unions, framing them as capacity-building agents that enhance teaching practices and organizational effectiveness. In contexts with limited institutional support, like many South African schools, this role is critical, reinforcing the argument that union involvement can mitigate systemic constraints.⁶⁸

The findings highlight the critical importance of communication and stakeholder engagement in enhancing internal school management. Participants emphasized the necessity of clear, transparent, and inclusive communication channels, aligning with literature that recognizes communication as essential to organizational functioning.⁶⁹ Technology and structured communication platforms enhance organisational coherence by improving information flow and aligning stakeholders. These findings indicate that effective communication facilitates decision-making, reduces conflict, and enhances policy implementation, addressing challenges identified in earlier themes. The involvement of broader stakeholders, especially parents and communities, adds a crucial aspect to inclusive governance. The literature recognizes unions as representatives of educators, but the findings highlight the necessity of incorporating diverse stakeholder voices in school management.⁷⁰ This aligns with broader views of educational governance as a multi-actor system, where effective school improvement relies on the alignment of interests among various stakeholders. These opportunities demonstrate the transformative potential inherent in the duality of structure. Structures may limit action but also offer resources and frameworks that enable actors to innovate and reshape organizational practices. The findings indicate that constructive engagement between unions and school leadership can facilitate a shift from conflict to collaborative, context-responsive management strategies.

⁶⁷ Stevenson, Carter and Passy (n 4).

⁶⁸ Spaul and Van der Berg (n 9).

⁶⁹ Moe (n 11).

⁷⁰ Bascia (n 6).

8.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The key empirical findings are that in the contexts with fragile institutional support, unions serve as alternative centres of authority, altering internal management dynamics and leadership roles. Union involvement enhances organisational stability and professional support; however, it also poses challenges to leadership autonomy, accountability, and the effective management of internal school affairs. Teacher unions significantly and intricately influence the management of internal affairs within South African public schools. As integral institutional actors, they engage with governance, leadership, and organizational practices, functioning both as representatives of educators and as active participants in the development of school processes. This study illustrates the pivotal role of teacher unions in mediating relationships, influencing decision-making, and shaping organizational dynamics within educational institutions. Their participation enhances organizational cohesion, facilitates participatory decision-making, and protects the rights of educators. Their influence simultaneously poses challenges concerning professional accountability, leadership authority, communication inefficiencies, and inclusivity. This duality highlights the intricate and context-sensitive characteristics of teacher union participation in school management. Utilizing Structuration Theory, the study confirms that internal school management is a dynamic and relational process influenced by the interplay between institutional structures and human agency. School management practices are shaped by contextual factors such as resource constraints, power dynamics, and differing leadership capabilities, which collectively influence the degree and nature of teacher union participation. The effectiveness of union participation depends on the quality of leadership, clarity of roles, and the strength of institutional coordination. In this context, leadership should transition from compliance-driven methods to strategic engagement, framing teacher unions as collaborative partners instead of adversaries. Leadership is redefined as the ability to align various stakeholder interests, cultivate trust, and maintain organizational coherence.

Based on these findings, several recommendations can be made. School leaders ought to implement transformational leadership practices that emphasize collaboration, trust-building, and alignment among

stakeholders. Establishing clear role delineation between school leadership and teacher unions is essential to minimize ambiguity and prevent the emergence of competing authority structures. Schools ought to establish formal communication and coordination mechanisms, such as regular consultative platforms and collaborative planning processes, to enhance organizational coherence. Teacher unions should engage constructively with school leadership to balance the protection of educators' rights with the promotion of professional accountability, ensuring that organizational effectiveness is maintained. Policymakers and educational authorities should facilitate collaborative professional development initiatives that emphasize leadership, conflict management, and organizational effectiveness, enhancing the capabilities of school leaders and union representatives. Internal school management processes must be inclusive, integrating the viewpoints of non-union staff, parents, and communities to improve equity and participatory governance. Additionally, it is essential to address contextual and structural constraints in under-resourced schools by enhancing governance capacity and providing ongoing institutional support.

The study indicates that the impact of teacher unions is not categorically positive or negative. The impact is determined by the negotiation, enactment, and integration of union involvement within internal school management processes.