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The Roles of Interest and Pressure Groups in Developing Sustainable Educational Policies in Turkey

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Abstract: The main aim of this research was to determine the roles of interest and pressure groups in the development of sustainable educational policies in Turkey. To that end, the research was conducted with a qualitative research design. The data were gathered by using a semi-structured interview technique and analyzed with content analysis technique. For this purpose, seven teachers and six school principals determined with a maximum variation sampling technique were interviewed. Results of this research reveal that, in general, interest and pressure groups were classified into three categories as: business and self-interest groups, professional groups and identity groups. When the development of educational policy in Turkey is concerned, it was indicated that especially self-interest groups have some political agendas, and they provide support and work with the government closely in order to realize their political agendas and their own memebers' interests. It was also remarked that these groups are necessary and have influences on the development of sustainable educational policies and leadership. It can be recommended that although interest and pressure groups are essential in the current system, the effects of these groups should be limited for the sake of educational and scientific principles.

Keywords: sustainable educational policies; interest groups; pressure groups; teachers; school administrators

1. Introduction

Developing sustainable educational polices to improve the educational system in most countries is a complex and important part of their system for the global world of work. Although developing policies in education is under the responsibility of policy makers, in most cases interest or pressure groups are active in this process. In this manner, interest or pressure groups are kinds of organizations which are loosely formed and organized in order to attempt to affect public policy in their favor [1]. Matthews [2] indicates that these groups are organized ones which aim to influence public policy. In fact, regarding education, they carry out important functions in realizing their members' demands at all times to achieve greater sustainability. Hence, with their supportive efforts, they may provide great contributions to both the educational system itself and leadership practices conducted at school. If these groups cooperate with school leaders appropriately, educational results may be improved, because of their resources and support. Their main interest is to translate social power into political power which is equated to legislative action. Similarly, Zeigler [3] claims that these groups are formed to fulfill a need in the society which is not met by the established institutions (p 3). Anderson [4] also defines these groups as organizations that strive to influence the actions of government officials (p 304). As they are of political and scholarly relevance because of their influence in politics [5,6],

the communities in these groups have also been composed of business leaders, religious leaders, teachers, administrators, parents and other activists [7].

Although their aims and functions may change according to the society in which they operate and time period they function, when policy development in education is concerned, their purposes may be similar in most countries. For example, in some societies, their supportive efforts provide fruitful benefits for developing sustainable educational policies both in education itself and in leadership practices. They also function in the Turkish educational system and from time to time they become basic determinants in the policy development process in the Turkish educational system. Even though some of these groups support school systems with their influence in their involvement in the process of educational policies, some others may function vice versa. They sometimes prioritize their members' self-interests more than generally settled upon educational goals, which may harm the system in the long term. Therefore, especially regarding the Turkish educational system, it is a question of importance as to what their real roles are in developing sustainable educational policies. For this reason, it is significant to research what roles pressure and interest groups play when developing sustainable educational policies in Turkey.

1.1. Interest and Pressure Groups

Interest or pressure groups are kinds of organizations which are loosely formed for certain purposes. In general, they are formally organized for some common concerns in order to attempt to affect public policy in their favor [1]. Matthews [2] indicated that these groups are organized ones which aim to influence public policy. On the other hand, Zeigler [3] claimed that these groups are formed to fulfill a need in the society which is not met by the established institutions (p 3). Their main interest is to translate social power into political power which is equated to legislative action. Similarly, Anderson [4] defines these groups as organizations that strive to influence the actions of government officials (p 304). As they are of political and scholarly relevance because of their influence in politics [5,6], the communities in these groups have also been composed of business leaders, religious leaders, teachers, administrators, parents and other activists [7].

1.2. The Types of Interest or Pressure Groups and Motivation Behind Them

These groups are kinds of social gatherings that have purpose for mutual support of their members [8]. They may be grouped regarding to their aims:

(i) economic groups which are individual firms and business organizations;
(ii) professional groups like trade unions;
(iii) identity groups which include religious communities;
(iv) public interest groups that are composed of human rights, environmental and other groups [9–11].

Mawhinney [12] expressed that the composition of these groups may change according to time, issue and political conjuncture. Therefore, Gray and Lowery [13] expressed that the population of these groups may be fluid. For example, while members of groups at universities, hospitals and schools can be active in their engagement in lobbying, membership-type organizations may end their existence as soon as their lobbying efforts drop. It is considered that if lobbying is well-organized, it is a much more effective instrument than any others. Here, lobbying was described by the OECD [14] as the pursuing strong motives to affect government policy and legislative decision-making. In addition, Pedersen and Binderkrantz [15] largely categorized these groups in Table 1 as follows:

Table 1. Group categorizations and descriptions.

Group Label	Description	
Business group	Economic companies or organizations	Economic groups
Institutional group	Organizations which provide education, health, or culture services	
Trade union	Organizations which negotiate their members' salaries or other benefits	
Professional group	Groups that help their members' careers or professional development	Citizen groups
Identity group	Groups that are based on the physical, social and mental needs of their members	
Leisure group	Groups that meet their members' hobbies or personal entertainment needs, like sports associations	
Public interest group	Groups that function for specific issues such as environmental or humanitarian organizations	

In this context, economic groups represent well-defined membership groups, and are expected to be interested in their members' benefits. As for trade unions, they negotiate salaries, wages and working conditions of their members. Additionally, citizen groups are groups who are relatively more concerned with affecting agenda-setting. The purposes of citizen groups are broad and include addressing problems such as poor treatment of elderly, child abuse or humanitarian disasters [16]. Although the more obvious actors have commanded scholarly attention, sets of less obvious actors await examination such as foundations, research centers, policy institutes and think tanks [17,18]. While all groups have different goals, the balance between goals may vary [12,15,19].

1.3. The Influence of Interest and Pressure Groups

These groups are effective regarding government policy or legislation and there are several reasons as to why these groups are effective. One of the reasons is that they have a status. They can have policy success when the party they supported gains a success in elections [20]. Another reason is the electoral power which they command [21]. According to Maddox [22], another measure of their influence is their organizational, structural and financial situations. In this regard, a well-organized and financially strong group can appeal more effectively than any other disadvantaged group which lacks money, expertise and coherence. Their influence is determined if the group can use their social power or their ability while passing or keeping others from passing a legislation [23].

The influence of these groups can be observed as the result of an exchange of resources between interest groups and gatekeepers in politically relevant arenas. At the most basic level, groups supply decision-makers with relevant resources and in return gain influence [24–27].

Malen [28] mentions that although judgements about the relative power of interest groups vary, there is reason to believe interest groups, at all levels of the system, are important. For instance, Cibulka [17] states that the politics of education in most countries has changed in recent decades with the influence of these groups. Regarding the Turkish society, these groups are characterized by the existence of many tens or hundreds of legal and illegal groups which are independent of government and attract people with shared interests and activities with the aim of influencing the policy process [29].

1.4. The Tactics Used by Interest or Pressure Groups

According to Martini [30], interest or pressure groups use some legal or illegitimate tactics to reach their purposes. Aitken et al. [31] and Campos and Giovannoni [32] note that these groups organize

meetings, give advertisements, write letters to the editor and interview spokespersons on current affair programs on television or radio. They also design public activities to draw attention of the public and the media. For this reason, politically they acquire status, organize campaigns in elections either directly or indirectly, negotiate with other groups, build alliances and attract members and funds.

Moreover, Byrt [33] and Milbrath [34] underline that these groups use tactics such as testimony at hearings, direct or indirect contacts with officials, participation in coalition with others, helping to implement policy, discussion with journalists, assistance in the drafting of legislation, inspiring letter-writing campaigns, mounting grassroots lobbying campaigns, advertising in the media, contribution of work or personnel to the electoral campaign and public endorsements of candidates.

1.5. Educational Policy

Policy is an activity which determines timing, implementation and scope while setting organizational policies, rules and regulations for governing planned purposes. In this context, according to Bursalıoğlu [35] educational policy consists of a set of rules and regulations that lead to decisions taken for educational institutions. The fact is that education affects the quality of people's lives with the knowledge and understanding obtained through the educational process. Also, the quality of a society's education system reflects the values of the society.

1.6. The Roles of Interest or Pressure Groups in Developing Educational Policies

As each group hopes to establish the society according to their values, there is a great interest from several groups regarding the development of educational policies in any educational system, as well as in the Turkish educational system. In Turkey, there are societal demands for an updated and modern education reform to reflect its attitudes and requirements. It naturally attracts a great deal of attention, comment and contribution from people and groups at all levels of the society [21]. In this context, regarding the development of educational policies, there are some obvious actors like teachers, administrators, school board associations as well as parent and citizen, business, religious and political interest groups and trade unions in Turkey. However it is a matter of importance to figure out to what extent these groups are influential in setting agenda in educational policies. For this reason, the main purpose of this study was to explore the roles of interest and pressure groups in the development of educational policies in Turkey.

2. Materials and Methods

The current research employed a phenomenological research design which is also defined as qualitative research. These kinds of research are conducted to find out how a concept or a phenomenon is experienced and understood by individuals [36]. These research methods are also used to gain in-depth knowledge in a study [37,38]. The phenomenological approach suggests that participants should be regarded as individuals who create their own meanings in the social environment in which they live and the relations they have established; they are re-creators of their social worlds with their own subjectivity [39–41].

2.1. Study Group

The participants of the research were 15 teachers and principals who were chosen with a maximum variation sampling method. When using a maximum variation sampling method, the researcher selects a small number of units or cases that maximize the diversity relevant to the research question [42,43]. By using this method, it was aimed to select one participant per group, which allowed the researchers to preserve multiple perspectives based on both the status in the program and critical demographics. So, out of 15 participants, different teachers and principals were selected in order to display different dimensions on the following demographic characteristics: gender, post, school type and trade union membership.

As presented in Table 2 above, eight participants were men and seven participants were women. Regarding their post, while eight participants were teachers seven were school principals. Concerning their school type, while seven were working at primary schools, eight of them were working at secondary school. When their trade union membership is concerned, eight had trade union membership and seven did not have membership.

Table 2. The participants' demographics.

Gender		Post		School Type		Trade Union Membership	
Men	8	Teacher	8	Primary School	7	Yes	8
Women	7	Principal	7	Secondary School	8	No	7
Total	**15**		**15**		**15**		**15**

2.2. Data Collection and Analysis

In this study, the data were obtained with a semi-structured interview technique. By employing such a technique, the respondents frankly explain their ideas about some certain topics [44,45]. For gathering the data, in the first place, the respondents were e-mailed to ask if they would like to join in this research process or not. As a result, 15 academic teachers and school principals agreed to participate in the research voluntarily. The volunteer participants were confirmed just after they were assured of the safety of the data to be gathered from them. The participants were assured that their identification and institution names would be kept safe and would not be shared with anybody else. After that, the interview days, times and places were determined. On the agreed upon day, they were called on. After receiving permission, the interviews were recorded, and each interview lasted nearly 40–50 min.

After completing the interview, the data analysis process was commenced. The gathered data were analyzed with content analysis technique. This technique generally aims to analyze similar data on a particular subject and have comments on it [46]. During this analysis process, first of all, the raw data were organized. That means each interview record was re-analyzed several times by listening to recorded audiotape in order to confirm the rightness of the data. Each participant's interview transcript was later analyzed according to the data analysis procedures described by Bogdan and Biklen [47], which call for development of coding categories, mechanical sorting of the data and analysis of the data within each coding category.

In this process, each participant's interview was coded separately in accordance with their opinions. At the same time, new emerging and repeated themes were categorized into three as categories: definition, exemplification and codification regulation. Here, the answers to each question were disunited into meaningful categories. Then, they were coded. The separated codes were also compared with that of the researcher and the consistency was calculated (90%). In the second place, the conceptualized statements were assembled. In the third place, they were organized to avoid repetition of the words. Finally, the determined results were expressed and relationships were provided between them. Establishing a cause–effect relationship among the existing parts was also attempted. The teachers' and principals' views were coded as T1, T2, T3, T4, etc., and P4, P2, P3, P4, etc., respectively.

The constant comparative approach was administered in the data organization and analysis process, which results in the saturation of categories and the emergence of theory. Theory may emerge through continual analysis and doubling back for more data collection and coding [47,48]. By using this method, each set of gathered data was re-examined regarding key issues, recurrent events, or activities. Each respondent's data were re-analyzed several times in order to confirm and contradict statements until the data were organized into satisfactory categories and sub-codes to address the research question. In this respect, the answer of this question was researched. What are the roles of

interest and pressure groups in the development of sustainable educational policies in Turkey? In order to reach this aim, the answers to the following questions were researched:

1. Can you define interest and pressure groups? Do you think there are interest and pressure groups in education? If so, who do you think they are?
2. Do you think interest and pressure groups are necessary in education? If you think so, in what way do you expect they should perform?
3. What are the basic concerns of these groups? Do you think they have positive or negative influences on "agenda-setting" in developing sustainable educational policies?
4. Do these groups influence your personal and professional attitudes and behaviors? If so, how do you react to these influences?
5. What tactics do these groups frequently use while setting agenda in developing sustainable educational policies? And which of these tactics work better?
6. Do you think the actors who develop sustainable educational policies both from Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and Higher Education Council (YÖK) are influenced from the pressures of these groups while setting agendas in education? If so, how are they influenced?

2.3. Trustworthiness and Rigor

In order to provide trustworthiness and rigor, some precautions were taken. First of all, the researcher here was in the role of facilitator and listener. In this process, the interviewer only asked questions and recorded the teachers' and school principals' responses. They did not lead the participants. The interview questions were analyzed by five experts who were specialized in qualitative research in order to provide content validity. The questions were finalized after the experts' feedback and recommendations. Moreover, the participants' hesitations about the confidentiality of the detailed answers were eliminated. Also, in order for participants not to be influenced by some power relations, the interviews were conducted outside school buildings.

In addition, in order to provide validity and reliability to the research, some further precautions were taken. In the first place, the interview form was finalized after a full literature review to ensure a good contextual framework. After interviews were transcribed, each interview transcript was sent back to the participant for self-checking. In the second place, for increasing external validity of the research, the research design, participants, data collection, analysis and interpretation were described in a detailed way. In the third place, in order to provide internal reliability, all data were transcribed having no interpretation. Moreover, the raw data and coded data have been preserved by the researcher and other researchers are welcomed to examine them. The coded data were compared with that of the researcher and the consistency was calculated as 88% [49].

2.4. Limitations

This study has some limitations. Firstly, in this study, qualitative research design was preferred. These studies aim to gather in-depth answers about a situation, event or phenomenon. As a requirement of a qualitative research design, it is not possible to generalize obtained results to be universal. Secondly, in this study group the participant teachers and school principals were volunteers and they may not represent other administrators within other groups. For this reason, the conclusions drawn here can be limited to this group of participants. Therefore, while transferring these results to other populations, it is necessary to be careful. Thirdly, the data analysis and interpretations of the results reflect the researchers' perspective. Another researcher may infer differing results with same data sets [47,50]. Lastly, even though the researcher aimed at interviewing an equal representative sample, it was impossible to provide full equality.

3. Findings

In this part of the research, teachers' and school principals' views on the roles of interest and pressure groups in developing educational policies in Turkey were presented below each question.

3.1. Definition of Interest or Pressure Groups

The participants were asked to define interest or pressure groups. In general, the participants categorized them into three groups, as business and self-interest groups, professional groups and identity groups. These groups are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Interest and pressure group categories *.

Theme	Code	f
Business and self-interest groups	Firms, industrial companies, self-interest foundations and their representatives	11
Professional groups	Trade unions	9
Identity groups	Political parties and religious groups	3

*A participant participated in more than one view.

As seen in Table 3, participants of this sample categorized business groups as firms, industrial companies, self-interest foundations and their representatives; professional groups were categorized as trade unions; identity groups were categorized as political parties and religious ones. The participants underlined that these groups are social groups that are organized to prioritize their self- interests. Besides, a teacher expressed, "*These groups are inevitable in a democratic society, but in Turkey they are generally religious ones who try to realize their goals through development of educational policies (T6).*" The participants were then asked if these groups were legal or illegal ones. Their categorization is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Definition of pressure groups *.

Theme	Code	f
Illegal organizations	Some illegal political and religious groups	12
Legal organizations	Political parties, foundations, trade unions, non-governmental organizations (NGO), parents' associations	11

*A participant participated in more than one view.

As shown in Table 4, participants classified the groups into legal and illegal ones. Regarding illegal organizations, they are composed of some illegal political entities and religious groups. Their main interest is to influence educational policies according to their basic concerns. Concerning legal organizations, they are some political parties, some self-interest foundations, trade unions, NGOs and parents' associations. The participants held that although these groups function legally, their basic interest is not to help educational institutions. Rather, they aim to design educational programs and environments as consistent to their own members' self-interests as well. In this regard, a principal stressed, "*Both legal and illegal organizations have indirect influences on education policies (P2).*"

3.2. Necessity of Interest or Pressure Groups

The participants were asked if interest and pressure groups are necessary in education and in what ways they expect that these groups should function. The answers are given in Table 5 below:

Table 5. Necessity of pressure groups *.

Their Necessity and Current Interests	How They Should Function	f
• Necessary but function negatively.	• Expected to meet societal expectations without affecting educational policies in their own-interests.	15
• Influence organizational goals negatively.	• Expected to support teachers and school. • Expected to develop educational quality and provide financial support, keep schools motivated.	16

*A participant participated in more than one view *.

As presented in Table 5, most participants consider that interest and pressure groups are necessary in the current system if they function correctly. Most participants consider that these groups should exist. A participant underlined,

> *"If they do not exist, we can sometimes neglect our responsibilities. They should support school administration, help the school to be more effective. When these groups ask better things, expect higher educational quality and provide financial support, it may keep schools motivated (T8)."*

They are also supposed to be fair, effective, innovative, supportive and helpful. Another participant remarked, *"We want these groups to support teachers and school without affecting educational policies in their own-interests (P16)."*

However, they function badly, ignoring meeting societal expectations. They try to suppress school administrators. Therefore, some participants claim that there should not be pressure groups in education. A principal said, "*These groups have destructive influences on schools (P7)."*

3.3. Main Purposes of Interest or Pressure Groups

The participants were asked what the basic purposes of these groups regarding influences on "agenda-setting" in the educational policy development process. Their views are given in Table 6 below.

Table 6. Main purposes of interest or pressure groups *.

Group	Main Purpose	f
Public	• Limited to their own interests • In fact, they should support and help to train human resources of a country.	12
Individual	• Religious groups set agenda with only their own concerns • Put pressure on government	15

*A participant participated in more than one view.

As shown in Table 6, the main purposes occur in two phases: public and individual phases. For the public one, their public purpose is limited to their own interests. Hence, a participant hoped,

> *"We want them to support and help to train human resources of a country, but they are usually interested in realizing their own purposes. We expect these groups to focus on solving real problems in education concerning full-time schooling expectations and crowded classrooms (P11)."*

Regarding the individual phase, there are some religious groups who aim to set agenda with only their own concerns, and they have pressure on the government with their power in the electoral system.

On one side, most teachers underline that pressure groups have positive contributions while setting educational policies agenda. In this context, another participant stressed, "*They have positive influences on the agenda-setting process of developing educational policies by affecting the government. Their contribution to setting agenda is valuable (P20)."* However, they may prioritize their own concerns and have a negative influence. A principal remarked, "*When they prioritize their self-interests, they sometimes have negative influences and destroy balances at school (P6)."*

3.4. Influence of Pressure or Interest Groups on Participants' Personal and Professional Lives

The participants were asked if these groups influence the participants' personal and professional lives and how they react to these influences. The views are presented in Table 7 below.

Table 7. Influence of pressure groups on participants' personal and professional lives.

Influences	The Way They Influence	f
Positive	• No positive contributions in the current system	10
Negative	• Families—create competitive atmosphere • Laws—Encourage failure • Uncertainty and frequent changing educational policies • Frequent ministry changes • Non-participatory decision-making process	16

As shown in Table 7, almost all participants consider that as these groups mostly prioritize their own self-interests, they have no positive contribution in their professional and personal lives with their implementations. In this regard, a participant claimed,

> *"Parents create a competitive atmosphere around educational settings. When their children fail in any field, they create pressure on the school as if the school caused the failure itself and start lobbying to change the laws. As a result of these pressures, the government changed the law and no student can fail now. In such a system, our personal and professional efforts become meaningless (P1)."*

In addition, they find uncertainty in educational policies problematic, which demotivates them both professionally and personally as well. When educational policies are concerned in the Turkish educational system, daily changes are common rather than a planned change. The Minister of Education frequently changes. For example, a teacher uttered,

> *"For the last 17 years, there have been ministry changes seven times. Each minister change influences the system change totally. After each change, we feel under pressure, because there is uncertainty. We do not guess what is going to happen. Our decisions are not taken seriously (T9)."*

On the other hand, a teacher underlined, *"These groups do not influence our personal and professional lives (T13)."*

3.5. Tactics Interest or Pressure Groups Use To Influence

The participants were asked what tactics these groups frequently use while setting agenda in educational policies and which of these tactics work better. The views are presented in Table 8 below.

Table 8. The tactics that interest and pressure groups use and their effect.

Ways	Tactics	Work	f
Social media	Reach authorities directly Used to influence teachers, administrators and the ministry	Work better	18
Face-to face meetings	Trade union meet ministry authorities. They have direct meetings	Limited effect	9
Lobbying	Chamber meetings, Preparing reports and presenting these reports to the press	Limited effect	10

As shown in Table 8, almost all participants consider that these groups use social media tools to influence teachers, administrators and the ministry officials. By using this method they can reach millions of people directly; because schools are giving importance to meet these kinds of pressures,

this approach is effective. Most participants think that trade unions meet ministry authorities to influence agenda-setting regarding educational policies. A participant stated, *"Some groups start lobbying by organizing chamber meetings, preparing reports and presenting these reports to the press. Although their effect is limited, they use these tactics in agenda-setting (P4)."*

3.6. How Actors Are Influenced by Interest or Pressure Groups

The participants were asked how actors who develop educational policies both from MoNE and YÖK are influenced from the pressures of these groups while setting agendas in education and how they are influenced. The views are presented in Table 9 below.

Table 9. How actors are influenced by interest or pressure groups.

Level	How Influence	f
Individual Level	• Pressures causing the professionals feeling worthless	• 16
Administrative/professional Level	• Management problems because of these pressures. • Problems in teacher and principal autonomy • Limit administrative initiatives because of political connections. • Active in professional promotions • Use of political power against principals and teachers	• 15

As seen in Table 9, the influences happen at two levels, the individual and the administrative levels. In individual level, it can be commented that teachers and principals feel worthless because of pressures. A teacher uttered, *"Under such pressures, we cannot feel free individually. Especially, teachers' work requires autonomy, but they are intervened by the parents' associations and trade unions very often (T5)."* In the administrative and professional level, both principals and teachers feel under pressure as well. They claim that these groups suppress the participants' administrative decisions, because they are especially active in the school principal appointment process with their political power. When their demands are not met, they may hamper one's promotion. A principal said, *"If a principal is not approved by the trade union, it is impossible to be promoted as a school principal anymore. Therefore, we feel obliged to meet their demands although we do not want to (P12)."* On the other hand, a teacher considers that the actors are not affected (T15).

4. Results and Discussion

The current research was conducted to determine the roles of interest and pressure groups in the development of sustainable educational policies in Turkey. In this context, some results were obtained.

One of the results revealed that participants categorized interest and pressure groups into three types as business and self-interest groups, professional groups and identity groups. In this manner, while they defined business groups as firms, industrial companies, self-interest foundations and their representatives; professional groups were defined as trade unions and identity groups as political parties and religious groups. In this study, results revealed that most participants accepted these groups as inevitable elements in a democratic society. However, they underlined the dominance of religious groups regarding the development of educational policies in Turkey. The participants also defined some of these groups as illegal ones whose main interest is to influence educational policies according to their basic illegal concerns. Moreover, the participants defined some legal organizations like political parties, self-interest foundations, trade unions, NGOs and parents' associations which are also influential concerning the development of educational policies in Turkey. The participants in this study claimed that although some of these groups function legally, their real aim is to design educational programs and school environments as consistent with their own members' self-interests. Similarly, Şirin [51] discovered that some NGOs highly take part in the decision-making process about education. Özcan [52] found that while pressure groups like public enterprises, some big business enterprises, courses and parents contribute to schools, trade unions, endowments and associations

do not. The effects of pressure groups can change according to the level and the type of school, its location, success and parents' profile.

As far as the necessity of interest or pressure groups is concerned, most participants remarked that they are necessary in a democratic society. It is claimed that if these groups do not exist, schoolteachers and principals can sometimes neglect their responsibilities. With their possible fair, innovative and supportive behaviors, schools can be more effective and teachers and school administrators more motivated. However, they sometimes function negatively and have destructive influences on schools. In a study, Titrek [53] found that teachers believe that innovation management in education is highly important and that organizational culture and structure is the most important area in innovative school development.

Most participants underlined that interest and pressure groups have positive contributions while setting agenda in educational policies. In this context, some school administrators believe that their contributions to setting agenda are valuable unless they prioritize their self-interests. According to Tandberg [54], the findings provide evidence of the significant impact of interest groups and politics on state fiscal policy in regard to higher education. Opfer [23] also argues that a connection exists between organizational maintenance and the participation of their members in the organization's influence activities.

According to another result, almost all participants considered that these groups have no positive contribution to teachers' and principals' professional and personal lives. Currently, as parents create a competitive atmosphere around educational settings, this results in student failure at schools. As a result of their lobbying efforts to change the laws, teachers' and school principals' personal and professional efforts become meaningless. In a competitive educational atmosphere, it is too difficult to discover a child's real talents, because students are measured with only central test scores. Teachers and school administrators are also evaluated with these scores, which puts pressure on schools and teachers to train their students in order to be able to succeed in central exams. In fact, in this atmosphere the teachers' and school principals' main interest becomes to develop themselves in test techniques. Similarly, Bonal [55] argues that the dynamics of interaction between voters and politicians influence policy making and implementation processes.

Another result showed that when educational policies are concerned in the Turkish educational system, there is often uncertainty. In this context, rather than a planned change, daily changes are more common. For example, frequent minister changes occur and when a minister changes, the system changes totally. Since ministers try to design educational policies according to their own political perspectives rather than with a scientific way, after each change both teachers and principals feel under pressure. Few participants claim they are not affected personally and professionally. As Cibulka [17] notes, the new politics of education create tension among teachers and administrators.

When the tactics of these groups use are concerned, they used social media tools more often in order to influence educational policies, which works effectively. By using this tactic, they can reach millions of people directly or indirectly, because schools are more sensitive to these kinds of pressures. Besides, trade unions also influence agenda-setting by organizing meetings with ministers. Moreover, despite its limited effect, some groups used lobbying by organizing chamber meetings, preparing reports and presenting these reports to the press. Gül [56] and Kogan [57] found that according to teachers' and administrators' perceptions, pressure groups have a "limited" effect on schools.

A final result showed that the influences happen at two levels: the individual and administrative levels. At the individual level, teachers and principals feel worthless because of the pressures they face from trade unions, media, parents and politicians. As a result of these pressures, their autonomy is questioned in the current system. When parents complain about teachers, no matter if it is reasonable or not, teachers find themselves under an investigation to comfort the parents, which is claimed to create a great pressure on them. In the administrative and professional level, it gets worse for both principals and teachers. As trade unions have active roles regarding the school principal appointment process, they may suppress administrative decisions. For example, when their demands are not met, they may

hamper administrators' promotion. Once a principal is not approved by the trade union, it is too difficult for them to be promoted as a school principal anymore. Therefore, principals feel obliged to meet the union demands although they do not want to. On the other hand, very few participants consider that actors are not affected. Similarly, Urun and Gökçe [58] revealed that parents, trade unions, politicians and religious groups have certain demands from the school principals. However, Martens et al. [59] explain that although they have an influence, trade union participation was weak. In a similar study, Baskan and Ayda [60] discovered that there are political concerns on education based on self-interest and favoritism in education, which affects educational processes negatively.

5. Conclusions

This paper purposed to determine the roles of interest and pressure groups in the development of sustainable educational policies in Turkey. To that end, the results of the present study revealed interest and pressure groups have direct and indirect influences on the development of sustainable educational policies. In this manner, although few participants perceived these influences as positive, most participants reported negative influences. As far as the development of sustainable educational policies in Turkey is concerned, it was found that especially self-interest groups have some hidden political agendas and they support the government in order to realize their hidden political agendas and their own members' interests. In practice, each system has some general or specific goals and the essential purpose of schools is to realize these objectives. Nevertheless, interest and pressure groups may sometimes intend to prioritize their own interests rather that the objectives of the system. This can result in deviation in basic goals and also creates tensions between the objectives and self-interests of these groups. For example, when the MoNE intended to evaluate teachers' performance in Turkey, trade unions and their members priotirized their own interests and put a great pressure directly on decision makers and finally prevented the implemantation of the law. Hence, in order to provide a sustainable improvement in an educational system, teachers' performance evaluation is one of the compulsory actions. Another negative influence of pressure groups occurred when the MoNE asked both current and candidate school principals to take an examination in order to be appointed as a school principal. Nevertheless, trade unions and their members objected to the regulation by putting political pressures on decision makers and ultimately violated the regulation as well. As a result of this violation, the current principals were exempted from taking an exam and only principal candidates were obliged to take such a test. It is thought that even these two implementations did not help pursue sustainable develeopment of the system.

On the other hand, these groups have some positive influences on developing sustainable educational policies. In this regard, these groups can help schools and their leaders develop better educational policies. For instance, when schools cannot affect decision makers directly or indirectly, interest or pressure groups can bring up their demands to the agenda of policy makers. Since these groups are usually organized, policy makers cannot reject their demands easily. Therefore, in order to realize schools' sustainable educational policies, from time to time schools may take the advantage of the pressures these groups put. Nonetheless, schools should be careful about their negative influences. Their negative influences should be eliminated by the system or its representatives with certain administrative precautions. For this purpose, school principals and educational supervisors should be chosen and trained according to the philosophy of the current educational system. It can also be said that some of these groups aim to influence educational policies according to their political considerations or interests, which may harm the educational system in the long term. By means of positive influences of pressure groups, schools can better realize sustainable educational policies. These groups may also help leaders establish good relations among different groups to get their support. These groups have a broad range of economic and social power in the Turkish society and school leaders can provide their contributions to improve their institutions. When school administrators work with these groups in both developing sustainable educational policies and implementation of these policies, their members have a tendency of participating in the school management process. To sum

up, the results of the current research revealed that some of these groups are not aiming at developing the educational system and carrying it forward. The recommendations reached through the results obtained in this study and implications for further research and practice are below:

- School principals and teachers should be empowered against political pressures.
- School administrators' administrative promotions should be based on their qualities and qualifications rather than political considerations and influences of these groups.
- Policy development in education should be envisioned by policy makers, educational leaders, teachers, parents, unions and other stakeholders.
- The political pressures and influence of these groups should be limited regarding developing sustainable educational policies in the field of education.

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