

To be or not to be Unionized: A Case Study

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Abstract: This study aimed to shed light on how union activities should be conducted based on the views of teachers and administrators, what expectations teachers and administrators have of the union, whether these expectations are related to the core objectives of union activities or are simply intended to address personal issues or fulfill their desires, and reveal the strength or weakness of education workers' ability to act in an organized manner in Turkey. The research was planned as a holistic single case study using qualitative research methods. The study group consists of 12 participants, and among the purposive sampling methods, criterion sampling and maximum variation sampling methods were used. The interview form used in the study was designed by the researchers as a result of the literature review. The data were analyzed through content analysis. The codes and categories obtained from the interviews on union activities were grouped under four themes; the reasons for being or not being a member of a union, views on unions, positive benefits and negative practices of union activities, and suggestions on union activities. According to the collected data, recommendations have been made, including that unions should unite under a single roof and make a division within themselves at the branch level; they should exert pressure on the formation of a just, merit-based system for appointment and relocation.

Key Words: Union, organization, teacher, administrator.

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Introduction

The changes in the economic infrastructure brought by the industrial revolution have affected many higher institutions in society. Working and living conditions began to change with the transition from manual power to machine power and the change in the role of man in society. Participation of women and children in business life, unfavorable working conditions, exploitation of labor by those who own the means of production have urged workers to pursue their rights. This tension between workers and employers resulted in favor of the worker, and social and economic rights, defined as second generation rights, and the welfare state phenomenon emerged (Işıklı, 2003; Ünal & Sarpkaya, 2020). Workers have been in an effort to organize especially in Western European countries. Governments and employers have implemented measures and regulations to prevent these workers' attempts to organize. The purpose of workers' organizations was realized primarily in the context of cooperation. In cases such as illness, old age, work accident and leaving the job, the difficulties of the workers made it necessary to cooperate (Özkiraz & Talu, 2008). Over time, this form of organization has turned into a structure in which issues related to profession and working conditions are discussed and action is taken regarding the problems experienced. This new situation has created unions that have an impact on issues such as claiming rights, improving working conditions, and ensuring income justice.

A union is a social organization that aims to enhance the working and living conditions of its members, represents its members against the management, promotes their professional and personal development, and protects their social, economic and employee personal rights (Talas, 1975; Taş, 2012). Unions are an indispensable element of the information society. The unions, which play an important role in shaping both the working life and the future of society, are the most crucial pillars of the fight for rights (Serinoğlu, 2004). The first example of union activities in the world was seen in England in the second half of the 18th century, then in the USA in 1792, in France in 1790, in Germany in 1820, in Belgium in 1838, and unions started to open in Italy, Switzerland and Sweden in 1850 (Keskinöglü, 1996).

It is seen that unionization in the field of education in Turkey emerged later than in European countries, which are pioneers in this regard and have a history of union struggle. Union activities started in the 18th century in France and in the 19th century in Germany within the scope of professional solidarity. Organizations founded by primary school teachers in France date back to 1831. The National Union of Teachers in England was established in 1870 (Eraslan, 2012a). Since the middle of the 20th century, there have been regulations regarding the legal rights of public unions in Turkey and western European countries (Cindemir, 2017; Cooper, 2000).

Due to the late start of the industry in developing countries such as Turkey, union activities remained insufficient. Union activities in Turkey emerged at the beginning of the 20th century and the first legal regulation regarding unions is Law No. 5018 on Workers' and Employers' Unions and Union Associations, which came into operation in 1947 (Tokol, 1994). From the point of view of teachers, teachers were first organized under the name

of society and later by associations or unions during the Ottoman Empire. The common aim of the societies or associations at that time was to protect the teaching profession and to improve the existing situation and raise the country to the level of modern countries (Kurt, 1994). An important step was taken for teachers in 1948 with the National Federation of Teachers' Associations in Turkey, and with the Law No. 624 on Civil Service Unions published in 1965, organization among teachers began to organize more formally. The most important teachers' union of this period was the Turkish Teachers' Union. Teachers, who were restricted by Article 27 of the Civil Servants Law No. 657 and Article 236 of the Turkish Penal Code, started a new era with the Law on Public Servants Unions of 2001 and union activities picked up speed (Gülmez, 2002; Tok, 1996).

Unionization of teachers and administrators has many positive aspects: It can provide legal protection and advice; protects from political changes; creates staff opportunities; provides integration; provides support, guidance and advice; gives a voice to current education trends, debates and issues that make them feel empowered; joining a union empowers the union's bargaining position for contract and worker negotiations; unions offer various discount program opportunities and professional development opportunities including life insurance benefits, credit card deals, mortgage assistance, etc. (Gaille, 2017; Meador, 2019).

Although unions have many benefits for teachers and administrators, there is a negative perception of education unions in Turkey. Among the reasons for this can be counted as the fact that the unions have assumed an equivalent meaning with politics, they act with the philosophy of partisanship, they are insufficient in solving problems and they are the main actors in nepotism practices (Can 2012; Tok 1996). It is seen that education unions are not sufficient in expressing the problems of teachers and getting into action. Education unions spend their energies on the selection of administrators and the relocation of teachers (Arabacı et al., 2015). Dermenci (2020) states that rather than undertaking a mission that improves and develops education, unions are moving away from the problems of education by exerting influence in the political arena.

When the literature is examined, many studies related to education unions are found. Kurt (1994) identified the reasons for teachers' not joining a union as the lack of a relevant law, the unions' political activities, and the failure of the teacher organization in the past in his study that examined the union tendencies of the teachers. In studies examining the reasons for teachers and school administrators' organization; improving education, improving working conditions, protecting legal rights, protecting and developing professional dignity, raising the social position of the profession, protecting employment security, ensuring impartiality in appointment, gaining the right to participate in decisions regarding education were determined (Acuner 1994; Erdem, 1996; Tok, 1996). Baysal (2006) found that teachers and administrators' perspectives on unions are political. Çınar (2008) argued that unions are inadequate in terms of in-service training activities and that they are beneficial for the development of democracy in Turkey. Gökçe (2009) concluded that teachers who are not members of any union generally have a negative attitude towards unions. In the study conducted by Can (2012),

it was revealed that teachers and administrators do not actively participate in professional and civic organizational activities. Studies have shown that union activities in schools are positive in terms of providing legal support to teachers, improving employee personal rights and supporting school management; but they also have negative effects such as unethical behaviors, political polarization among teachers and communication problems (Gök & Bozbayındır, 2020).

When the studies in the foreign literature are examined, Hoxby (1996) lists the reasons for teachers being members of unions in two factors: First, the organization of teachers for the success of students; the second is to improve working conditions. Moe (2001) concluded that unions should fight for better wages and better working conditions for their members. In the study conducted by Aidt and Tzannatos (2002) it was revealed that the lack of a clear and transparent policy of the unions creates problems, and they should not have harmful effects on the rights of the employees. Redman and Snape (2006) found that teachers who are members of a union have higher job satisfaction and professional commitment levels. Rose (2009) concluded in her study that teacher unions contribute to the development of education by acting as a pressure factor. West and Mykerezi (2010) concluded in their study that unions play an active role in salary and economic rights. Mausethagen and Granlund's (2012) study concluded that unions could not take an active role in teacher specialization. In their study, Ghosn and Akkary (2020) investigated the problems experienced by teachers' unions and revealed that the social justice role of the unions is limited, and they cannot take an active role. Wagner and Elder (2021) examined the relationship between teachers' unions' collective bargaining contributions and pension systems in their research and concluded that there is a positive relationship between them.

In this context, It is important to reveal the perception of teachers and administrators related to unions and all aspects of the current situation of the unions which aims to protect the professional status of teachers, improve their employee personal rights, protecting and developing their common professional and economic interests, strengthening the sense of national unity and solidarity, and work for the realization of a national, democratic, modern and secular education system. It is important to reveal how the union activities should be conducted, to what extent it is known, according to the opinions of the teachers and administrators, what the teachers and administrators expect from the union, and whether these expectations are related to the essence of the union activities or to the solution of the individuals' problems or the fulfillment of their wishes in order to determine the strength or weakness of organized action in the field of education in Turkey. The purpose of this research is to examine the opinions of school administrators and teachers about union organization. Within the scope of the research, answers to the following questions were investigated:

- 1- What are the reasons for being or not being a member of the union according to the views of the administrators and teachers?
- 2- What are the views of administrators and teachers about unions?

- 3- According to the opinions of administrators and teachers, what are the positive aspects and negative practices of union activities on school, administrator and teacher?
- 4- According to the opinions of administrators and teachers, what should be done to make union activities more efficient?

Method

Research Design

In this study, it was aimed to gather information in the light of the experiences of administrators and teachers by referring to their views on union organization. The research was designed as a case study, one of the qualitative research designs. In the case study, the researcher aims to describe a situation or reveal situation themes by collecting detailed and in-depth information about real life, a current limited system, or multiple limited systems in a certain time through multiple sources (Creswell, 2021: 99; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021). Case studies focus on the dynamic and multifaceted connections that arise between human relations, events, and other external factors (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2008). In case studies using multiple data sources, it is possible to reach deep insights about the perspectives of the participants (Tellis, 1997). In this study, a situation whose parameters were established was determined as a holistic single case study that carefully examines the environmental conditions (Creswell, 2021; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021).

Characteristics of the Situation/School Studied

The school where the research was conducted is a primary school consisting of 723 students, 36 teachers, a principal and 2 vice principals. The primary school teachers range in seniority from 6 to 32 years, and it has been determined that they have worked in the same school for 2-17 years. The lesson hours of primary schools are between 08:20 and 14:20. The school building has 2 floors. The garden of the school is 2148 m². The school where the research was conducted is in the district center and there are no deficiencies in terms of physical conditions.

Study Group

Purposive sampling method was employed in this research, which aims to reveal the views of teachers and administrators on unions in the field of education. With the purposive sampling method, it is aimed to examine the information-rich situations in depth (Patton, 2018: 230). Criterion sampling and maximum variation sampling methods were used among the purposive sampling methods. Criterion sampling involves determining certain criteria and people, events or situations that meet these criteria (Baltacı, 2018; Büyüköztürk, 2012); maximum variation sampling aims to find and define themes that contain some differences (Merriam, 2019).

In the study, while selecting the teachers and administrators, the criteria were determined as being a member of different unions and not being a member of a union. Diversity in terms of task was aimed for maximum variation, and the school principal, vice principal and teachers were included in the research. The selection of the participants for the study was made on a voluntary basis and the criteria of the participants' working at school for five years were taken into consideration. At the same time, attention was paid to the selection of participants from different genders and seniority.

Table 1.

Characteristics of the participants

Code Name	Duty	Age	Seniority	Education	Whether or not being a member of a union
K1	Teacher	41	17	Bachelor degree	Not a member
K2	Teacher	29	7	Bachelor degree	Member
K3	Teacher	50	32	Bachelor degree	Member
K4	Teacher	37	14	Bachelor degree	Not a member
K5	V. Principle	41	16	Bachelor degree	Member
K6	Teacher	49	27	Bachelor degree	Member
K7	Teacher	52	26	Bachelor degree	Member
K8	Teacher	36	14	Bachelor degree	Member
K9	Teacher	55	21	Master degree	Member
K10	Teacher	51	25	Bachelor degree	Member
K11	Teacher	53	33	Bachelor degree	Member
K12	Principle	47	20	Master degree	Member

Data Collection Tools

In the study, a semi-structured interview form prepared by the researchers was used as a data collection tool. The interview form used in the study was designed by the researchers as a result of examining the literature review. Expert opinion was taken for the prepared interview form. The Views of Managers and Teachers on Union Organization interview form consists of 12 questions in total, excluding the probe questions. Before starting the research, sample interviews were conducted with the

participants who were not in the study group that participated in the pilot study. In this context, the interview questions were reconsidered. Some of the questions in the Views of Managers and Teachers on Union Organization interview form used in the study are as follows:

1. What does the word union mean to you? Can you explain with examples?
2. How do the activities of unions cover the teaching profession? How can it be made more effective?

Data Collection and Analysis

The data of the study were collected by the researchers in the spring semester of the 2021-2022 academic year. The interviews lasted an average of 40 minutes. The interviews were audio recorded with the permission of the participants. A total of 70 pages of qualitative data were obtained from the interviews.

In the editing of the research data , the Google microphone program, which converts the audio recordings to text, was used and it was made ready for analysis by the researchers. The content analysis method was used to analyze the raw data obtained in the study. An inductive approach was preferred, and codes and categories were created from the data (Punch, 2005). The categories obtained were then combined into themes and two faculty members who were experts in qualitative research and educational sciences were consulted for their thoughts. At the end of the analysis of the interview data, 4 themes and 61 categories emerged. These categories are shown in a table, and the views of the participants are presented as direct quotes.

Credibility, Transferability, Consistency and Confirmability of the Research

To ensure validity in qualitative research, long-term participation and continuous observation, variation, disclosure of researcher biases, member control, rich and intense description, expert opinion; and in order to ensure reliability the strategies of the consensus among coders, the researcher clearly determines his/her own position, and explaining the characteristics of the participants are used (Creswell, 2021: 252-257; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021).

In this context, to increase the quality of the study, each stage of the research was explained in detail and detailed descriptions were made. The method of the study, the participants, the data collection tool and why the data analysis was preferred were explained. Confirmation was obtained from the participants regarding the credibility of the findings and interpretations. Expert opinion was sought at many stages from the preparation of data collection tools to data analysis processes. After the data were analyzed and interpreted separately by the researchers, they were brought together. At every stage of the study, it was tried to show the necessary sensitivity to be objective and consistent.

The Role of Researchers

At the beginning of qualitative research studies, the position of the researcher and possible biases that are thought to affect the study should be explained. In this context, if the researchers have any tendencies, assumptions, past experiences or prejudices about the study, they are explained in this section (Creswell, 2021: 253).

One of the researchers in this study is an expert academician in the field of qualitative research and educational administration, who has done many studies and directed research and theses. The other researcher is the vice principal and doctoral student working at the school where the research was conducted. The third researcher is the vice principal and doctoral student working at a vocational high school since the 2013-2014 academic year. The fact that one of the researchers is an expert and experienced academic contributed to the healthy conduct of the study in technical terms. The fact that the other researcher works at the school where the research is conducted makes a positive contribution to the study.

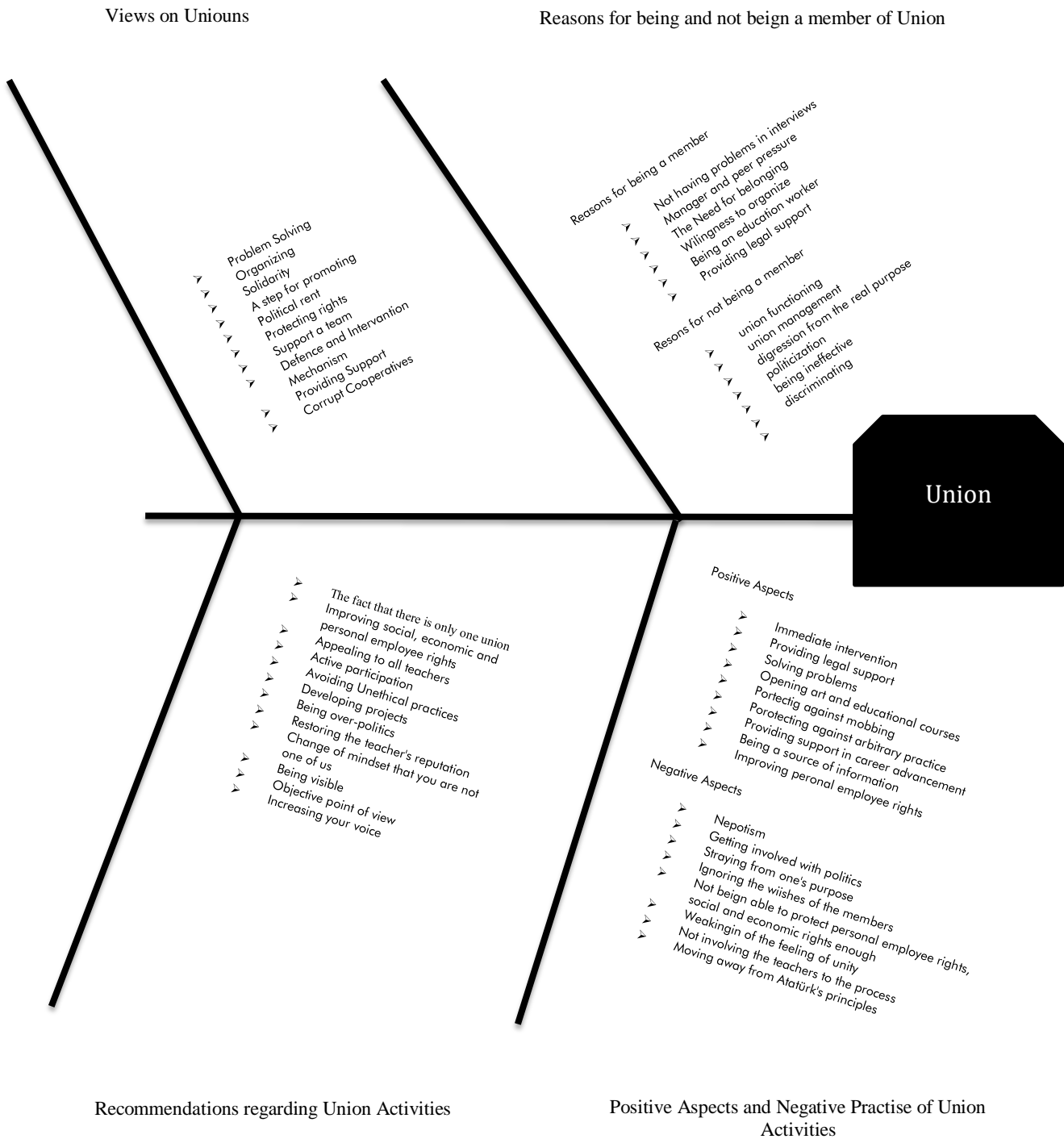
Ethical Issues

In all studies involving people, there are some ethical principles such as informed consent, confidentiality, respect for private life and not harming, not deceiving, not misleading and staying true to data (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021: 104-105). In this context, the process was explained in detail to the participants in the current study. Participation in the study was based on voluntariness. A consent form was signed by the participants. The interviews were audio recorded with the permission of the participants. The school of study was kept confidential, and a code name was used for the participants. In addition, an ethics committee report was obtained for the research.

Findings

The research findings were evaluated in the context of teachers' and administrators' views on the union. The findings of the study are presented as themes, categories and subcategories. Within the scope of the research, four themes were obtained. These are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1.
Themes Regarding Views on Union Activities



<p>Views on Unions Problem Solving Organizing Solidarity A step for promoting Political rent Protecting rights Support a team Defence and Intervention Mechanism Providing Support Corrupt Cooperatives</p> <p>The fact that there is only one union Improving social, economic and personal employee rights Appealing to all teachers Active participation Avoiding Unethical practices Developing projects Being over-politics Restoring the teacher's reputation Change of mindset that you are not one of us Being visible Objective point of view Increasing your voice</p> <p>Recommendations regarding Union Activities</p>	<p>Reasons for being and not being a member of Union</p> <p>Reasons for being a member</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not having problems in interviews • Manager and peer pressure • The Need for belonging • Willingness to organize • Being an education worker • Providing legal support <p>Reasons for not being a member</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • union functioning • union management • digression from the real purpose • politicization • being ineffective • discriminating <p>Positive Aspects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate intervention • Providing legal support • Solving problems • Opening art and educational courses • Protecting against mobbing • Protecting against arbitrary practice • Providing support in career advancement • Being a source of information • Improving personal employee rights <p>Negative Aspects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nepotism • Getting involved with politics • Straying from one's purpose • Ignoring the wishes of the members • Not being able to protect personal employee rights, social and economic rights enough • Weakening of the feeling of unity • Not involving the teachers to the process • Moving away from Atatürk's principles and reforms <p>Positive Aspects and Negative Practices of Union Activities</p>
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As can be seen in Figure 1, four themes emerged from the interviews on union activities. These are the reasons for being or not being a member of the union, views on unions, positive aspects and negative practices of union activities, and suggestions regarding union activities. Detailed findings on the themes, direct quotations, and sub-headings are given. Each theme is discussed in detail below.

Views on Reasons for Being a Member and Not Being a Member of a Union

The findings obtained from the explanations of the participants regarding the reasons for being a member and not being a member of a union are presented in Table 2 in categories.

Table 2.

Views on Reasons for Being a Member and Not Being a Member of a Union

Reasons for being a Member	Reasons for not being a Member
Not having problems in the interviews	union functioning
Manager and peer pressure	union management
The need for belonging	digression from the real purpose
Willingness to organize	politicization
Being an education worker	being ineffective
Providing legal support	discriminating
fear of being alone	

As can be seen in Table 2, the reasons for being a member of the union according to the views of the participants are grouped into six categories. The reasons for being a member consist of the categories of not having problems in the interviews, pressure from the manager and peers, the need for belonging, willingness to organize, being an education worker, and getting legal support. Reasons for not being a member are union functioning, union management, digression from the real purpose, politicization, being ineffective, and discrimination. The opinions of some participants on this subject are given below.

K1: *"I had a membership before. I resigned from the union because the operation and management of this union did not suit me very much".*

K2: *"...My manager gave us various directions at school. We also had interviews at that time. As you know, in the interviews, it was claimed that due to this union, the purchases were better and we could pass the interviews. That's why we became a member of this union. I haven't debuted yet, I'm still in this union. In this way".*

K3: *"To get support. So they can guide me legally. So, when something happens to me or I want to learn something, they can help more easily. I became a member so that I could be together with people who have deep knowledge of the legislation on this subject".*

K7: *"First of all, I am an education worker. I became a union member in order to protect my economic, social democratic and cultural rights and because I wanted a free democratic working life".*

K9: *"Because I prefer to be in a group rather than being alone, at least I think it is better to be a voice together in terms of protecting my rights".*

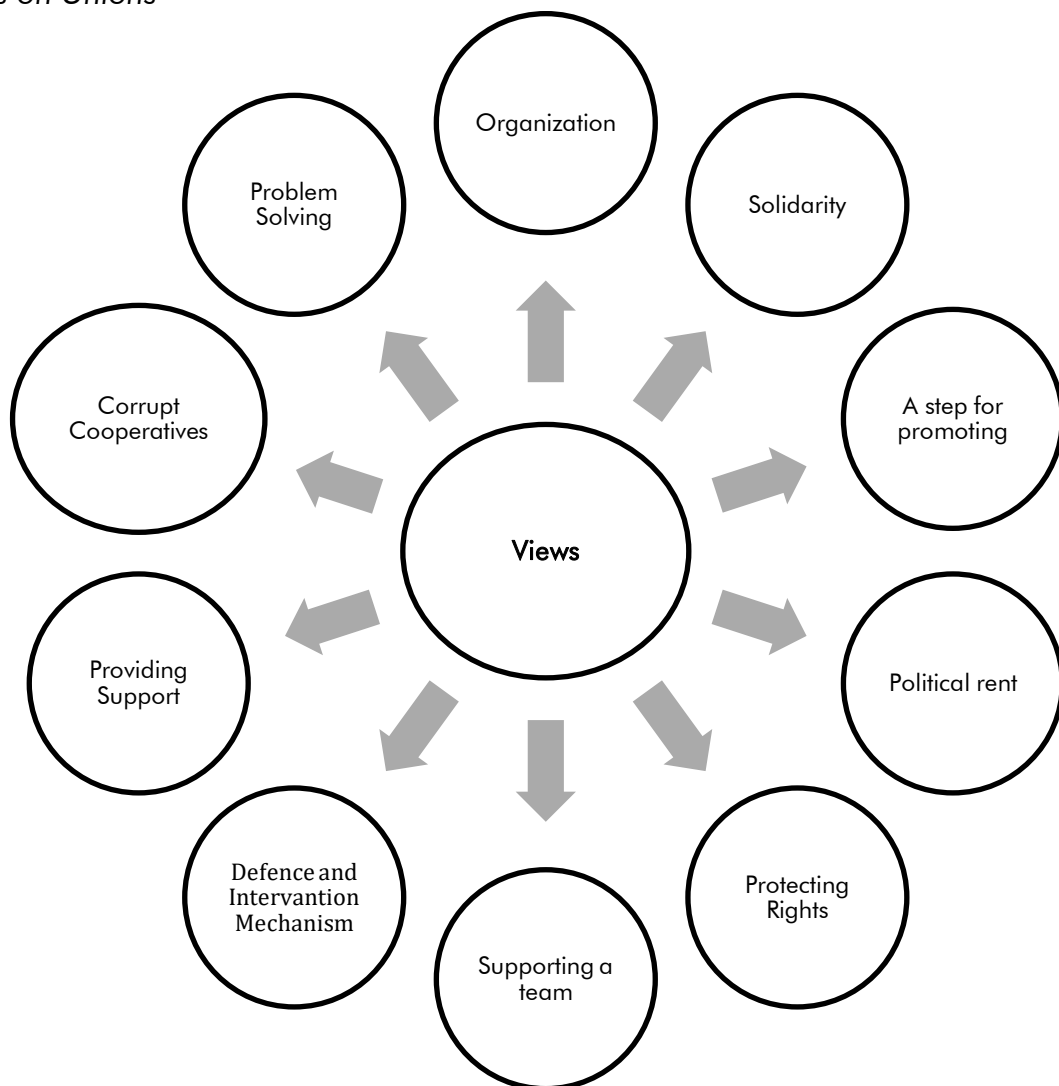
K12: *"I became a member of a union because I thought that civil servants would also feel stronger, depending on the purpose of the unions".*

Teachers, who are education workers, should be members of unions in order to protect their rights, benefit from them, and receive support. When the reasons for membership of the participants are examined, it is necessary to become a member of the dominant union in order not to experience pressure from the manager or have problems in the interviews; it can cause both teachers and unions to deviate from their aims. At the same time, when the reasons for not being a member are examined, the politicization and ineffectiveness of the unions can be important factors that lead teachers to be alone in the difficulties they face and to change the union or remain without a union.

2. Views on Unions

The findings obtained from the explanations of the participants regarding the unions are presented in Figure 2 in categories.

Figure 2.
Views on Unions



As seen in Figure 2, according to the views of the participants, the views on the union are grouped under ten categories: problem solving, organization, solidarity, a step for promoting, political rent, protecting rights, supporting a team, defense and intervention mechanism, providing support, and corrupt cooperatives. The opinions of some participants on this subject are given below.

K7: "First of all, it evokes togetherness, traveling together, contributing to education together".

K5: "By God, in the shortest definition, I think the word union in our country has become something like supporting a team. You know, like Galatasaray, like Fener, you become like a person supporting Trabzonspor when you support a union. Socially, there is an image attributed to you in your social circle."

K4: "An institution or an organization that protects all the rights that teachers have is an organization that can protect us against the state in every way behind us".

K6: "For example, when I cannot defend my right on my own in case of injustice or when this is beyond my power, the union can defend my rights on my behalf. Apart from that, it allows me to be together with friends who are suitable for my education and teaching methods, and who are suitable for my worldview."

K3: "If the word union actually serves its origin, union is a very important thing. It's a community that serves people to solve their problems together, but I don't think it works that way. In other words, just like the corruption in every field in our society, for example, cooperatives are also a very good thing, but just as cooperatives have been turned into a tool for ripping people out. I do not approve of the unions as they create a political ground in the union and turn it into a political rent-making mechanism. I don't want anyone to promote by stepping on my back".

K12: "For me, the word union means coming together in a collective sense and empowering individuals in proportion to their interests".

As can be seen in the quotations above, the word union refers to a community to be resorted to when confronted with cooperation and injustice. The perception of the union only as an aid mechanism may be due to the fact that they concentrate their work only on these areas. However, the union is an organization that contributes to the personal and professional development of teachers as well as protecting their personal rights, and that should work for the improvement of education.

Table 3.

Liked and Disliked Characteristics of the Activities and Practices of the Unions of Membership

Liked Characteristics	Disliked Characteristics
Communication	Relationship with politics
Bonding	Nepotism
Having a say in the union	Not getting ideas from the base
Planning courses and studies	Organizing too many activities
Supporting Atatürk's views	Being indifferent
Knowing the legislation	Being an ally for the government in power
Being dynamic	Posting progress late
Being brave	

The likes and dislikes of teachers and administrators regarding the activities and practices of the unions they are members of are given in Table 3. Some of the participants' views on this issue are as follows.

K1: "For example, teachers and teachers who are members had a very good communication with each other. You know, this is also the case in unionism, a bit like patriotism. As if you treat them as fellow citizens from our country, it was the same in the union. You know, when you meet, maybe you can establish a closer communication with people. Even if you don't know each other, there is definitely a different kind of communication like this union. Let's say most of our teachers were people who were really close to communication and friendship. That's why I liked that aspect."

K3: "It is very politicized. In other words, when members from the same union come together, let's say teachers who are members of the education union come together, they talk about politics rather than education and personal rights".

K5: "The aspect that we dislike the most is that the people in the upper committee only sit on the bargaining table with the determinations they make in exchange of views without getting opinions from the grassroots".

K8: "Being young, dynamic, excited, doing their job very well, never deviating from Atatürk's principles, being fair people, being energetic. So a youth, a union that shows a generation doing well as teachers..."

K11: "Unity is very important to us. At any event, everyone is notified. Come and give your opinion, these are good things. You know, you feel valued, you get a message, you call, join you, we have a meeting, let's share our ideas. These are good, when we are together, we can do good things. I think we are brave..."

K12: "...First of all, it attaches importance to national and spiritual values, and the union, which I am a member of, in this sense, to protect our values despite the negativities brought by technology in the social sense. You know our values, I don't need to say them one by one, I can say even one of them. I am in this union because the name of bringing the love of the country to the forefront in order to bring feelings such as love, respect, peace, brotherhood to the fore, fits my views and my world views.

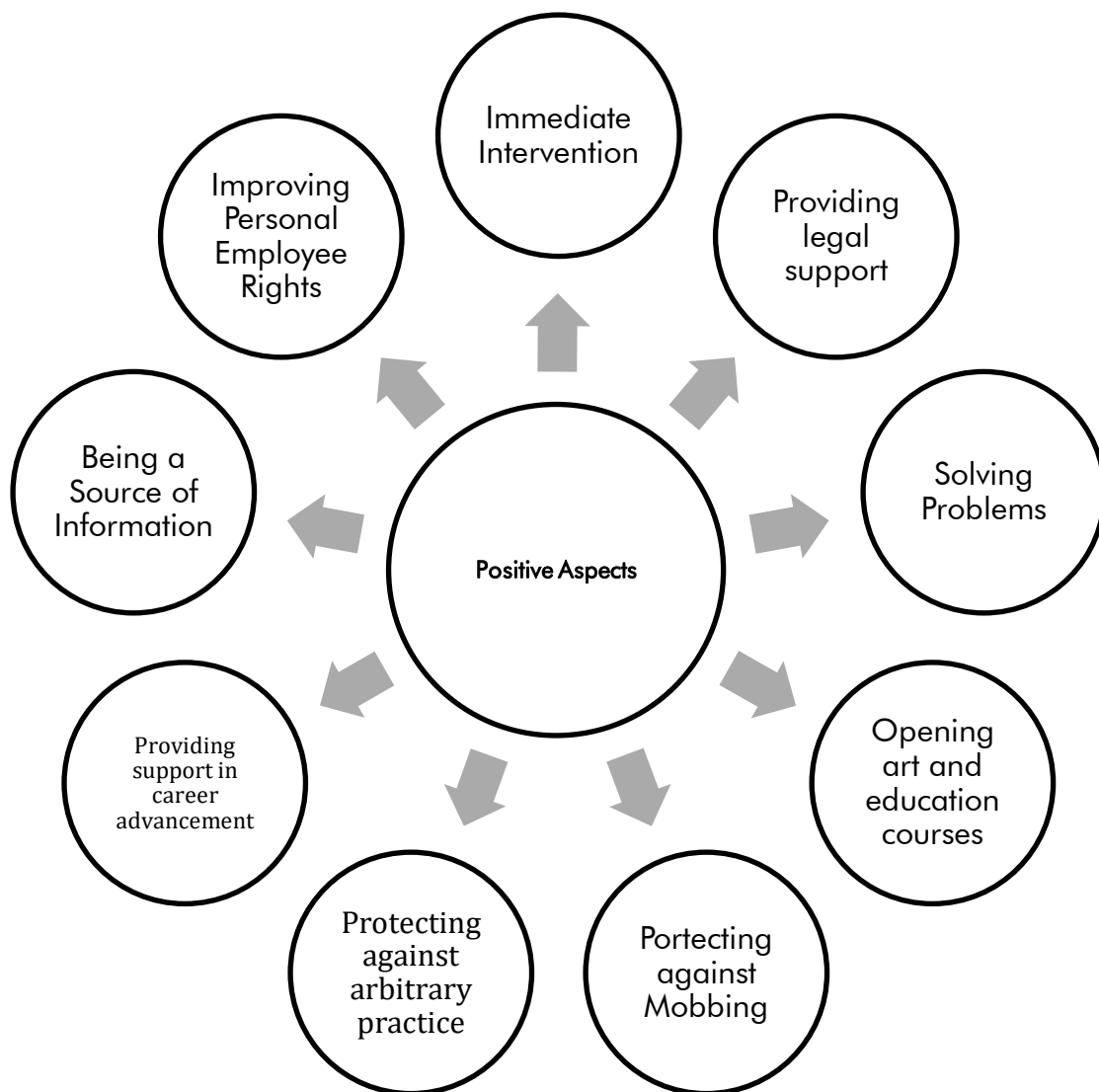
As can be understood from the direct quotations, the participants mostly like the sense of unity of their unions and the intense communication. The most disliked features of the participants are relations with politics and nepotism.

3. Views on Positive Aspects and Negative Practices of Union Activities

The findings obtained from the explanations of the participants regarding the positive aspects and negative practices of union activities are presented in Figure 3 in categories.

Figure 3.

Views on Positive Aspects of Union Activities



As seen in Figure 3, the positive aspects of union activities, according to the opinions of the participants, are grouped under nine categories as immediate intervention, providing legal support, problem solving, opening art and educational courses, protection against mobbing, protection against arbitrary practices, support in career advancement, being a source of information, improving personal employee rights. The opinions of some participants on this subject are given below.

K5: "... before people were appointed here as the assistant manager, the assistant manager was appointed with the lists. At that time, I got the information about the schools that were in need of assistant principals from my own union..."

K4: "It's nice to be together, so to gather under one roof..."

K2: "For example, there was an origami and mathematics and Turkish teaching course. I attended that course and it was very effective. It was a nice environment. We met various people there. It was also really beautiful. I realized that I could make different activities for children..."

K3: "...for example, my friends who have been dismissed from the profession are suffering and they are supported, even if it is for a while. After that, legal consultancy attorney fees are given to those who have legal problems. After that, I don't know, when there are problems with the school administration, he supports the teacher as much as he can..."

K6: "It is very nice that we have fun together in good times and bad. It's so nice on our picnics together. It's great when we fight together. This is me or us, I'm speaking plural, but it gives strength..."

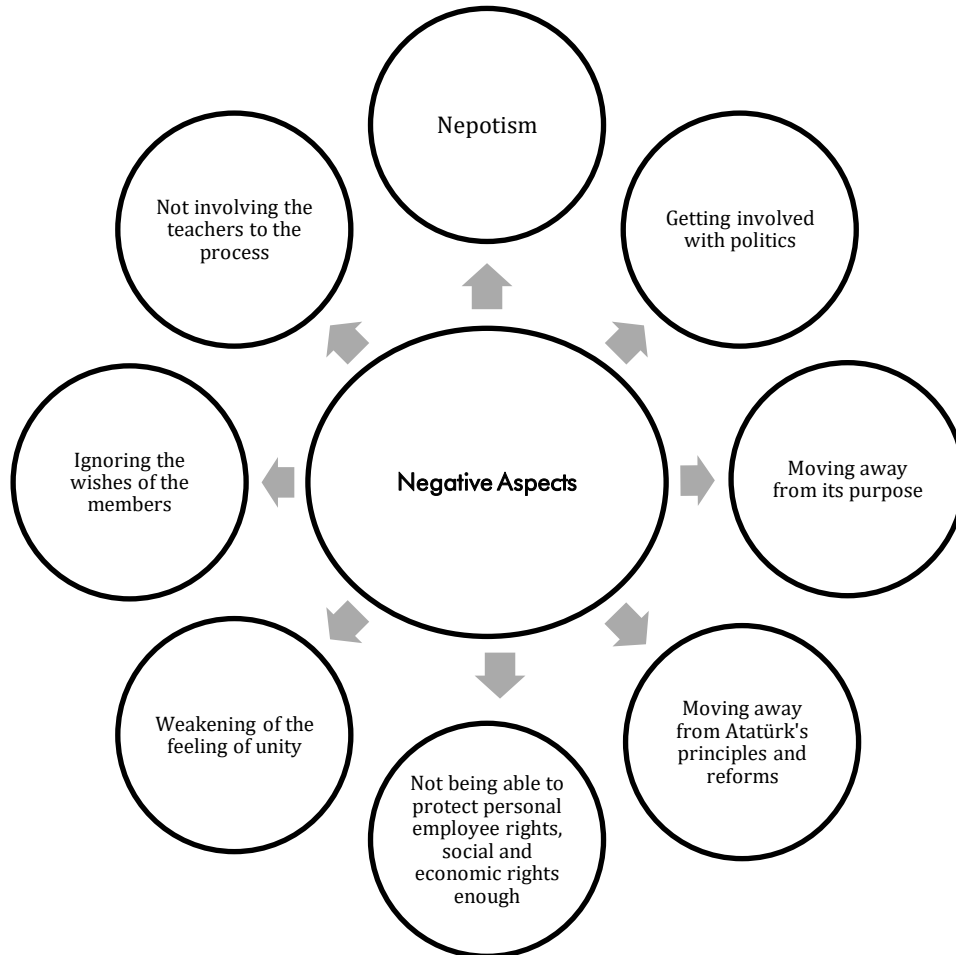
K12: "...Union means seeking rights. But seeking rights should not be by usurping someone else's right..."

K9: "... My union is at the same distance to everyone, certainly, when another friend of mine has any problem, I don't directly address the injustices of his/her education work or their complaints at work. I'm listening to his, and I'm also forwarding it to our union president here. He also comes here, he is talking with the education manager again, trying to solve the events in a way, we are definitely talking..."

As can be seen in the direct quotations, it is seen as important by the participants that the unions have a strong communication aspect, learn everything that happens in the field and transfer it to their members, and always provide the necessary support to the teachers.

Figure 4.

Views on Negative Practices of Union Activities



As seen in Figure 4, according to the opinions of the participants, the negative practices of union activities are gathered under eight categories as nepotism, being involved with politics, moving away from its purpose, ignoring the wishes of the members, not protecting the employee personal rights, social and financial rights adequately, weakening the feeling of unity, not including the teachers in the process and moving away from Atatürk's principles and the reforms. The opinions of some participants on this subject are given below.

K7: "... The yellow union incident has always irritated me. So if there is an organizational structure, it should really do what it takes. You know, we shouldn't act with such a herd psychology, because we are not sheep. In other words, everyone should hit the table hard for our own personal rights, for the rights of our children regarding education. We can't do it..."

K6: "...I don't like taking the job under the name of union activity with unnecessary things. Therefore, it would be better for the unions to implement their main goals, and it would be better for them... That's why unions should narrow their framework a little more and act more in line with their main purpose..."

K2: "Personal discrimination. Here, it is unpleasant to see different behaviors towards me while different behaviors are observed towards this person from the union. One of the points that I am most angry and angry about is the realization of human favouritism, together with its political content."

K4: "... It's just time to listen to the teachers more, it's time to collect votes, when whoever is going to be the president of the union, then instead of visiting schools, they should listen to the problems of the teachers every 2 months or 3 months at work and find solutions to the problems they experience. It's just show business... frankly, but I also know that some people really use it. I know this is nepotism at work. Yes, I think there are people who are useful."

K12: "The union needs to be able to express itself better in today's society, especially when economic problems come to the fore. He needs to analyze expectations and perspectives much better. Today, a union is reflected in a socially intertwined situation with political organizations. An expression is used as if you are from that union, you are the man of that. It is necessary to explain very well to people that this is not the case, it is necessary to explain this with various examples, that we need to understand very well that the purpose of the union is not based on politics, but on the interests of its members..."

K9: "First of all, everyone should have a single purpose, and that should be to defend the rights of the education worker teacher and to serve them in the best way, but unfortunately there are so many unions in Turkey that it is as if each different union should aim at something different. It is thought and differentiated as if it should have a vision. That's why I would like to say this to the managers in general. You are all under one roof, you are all unions, you have only one task, do not deviate from your purpose, do not make discriminatory statements."

As can be seen in the direct quotations above, the participants stated that the fact that the unions move away from their essence and the founding values of the country and ignore their members negatively affects their union activities.

4.Suggestitons Regarding Union Activities

The suggestions obtained from the explanations of the participants regarding the union activities are presented in Figure 5 in categories. When Figure 5 is examined, the suggestions regarding union activities are collected in twelve categories: being a single union, improving social, financial and employee personal rights, appealing to all teachers, active participation, avoiding unethical practices, developing projects, being above politics, restoring the reputation of the teacher, changing the understanding that you are not one of us, being visible, having a neutral point of view, and making your voice heard.

Figure 5.

Suggestions regarding Union Activities



Some opinions of the participants on the subject are given below:

K1: "It will be a bit of utopia, but it could be something like this. What can happen, for example, not really different branches, but a single union in order to unite them all".

K7: "First of all, I would do my best for teachers to regain their lost reputation. Because there is a discrediting".

K5: "... he organizes frequent meetings with union members. Besides, their troubles, the problems they have at school, if there are trainings and seminars for the methods we can solve the problems, I would make sure that those gaps are closed in this way..."

K4: "There are many people of ethnic origin in Turkey. It is an environment open to different opinions, where everyone is together without being separated and marginalized. In fact, it should be a supra-political organization..."

K6: "...: Equality of opportunity, free education, we should be able to do something about it, mostly all together, but it happens in unions that do not join when we invite them. We invite them with the logic that unity is stronger, but they may not participate. Yes, even though we are more crowded and we can hit the same place with our fist at the same time, these rights apply to all of us, regardless of the union. We don't want it for ourselves, we want it for the whole teacher community..."

K8: "First of all, everyone should have a single purpose, which is to defend their rights and serve their teachers in the best possible way, but unfortunately there are so many unions in Turkey that it is as if each different union should aim at something different. I think it should be considered and separated. That's why I would like to say this to the managers in general. You are all under one roof, you are all unions, you have one duty, do not make discriminatory statements about people who do not deviate from your purpose..."

K10: "Right now, I think that the teaching profession is very much trampled on, but I think that many professions are trampled underfoot in the teaching profession. I'm going to say something very simple, you can't even raise a slight tone of voice, for example, in class. Right now, parents' complaints are cimers and bimers, so I really expected our reputation to be increased a little more..."

K11: "Equality of opportunity, free education, we should be able to do something about it, mostly all together, but it happens in unions that do not join when we invite them. We invite them with the logic that unity is stronger, but they may not participate. Yes, even though we are more crowded and we can hit the same place with our fist at the same time, these rights apply to all of us, regardless of the union. We don't want it for ourselves, we want it for the whole teacher community..."

K12: "I think that if we want this country to rise to the level of contemporary civilizations, both economically and technologically, in line with Atatürk's principles and reforms on national values, we need to take responsibility and protect our values. Because I think that if we had protected our value, we would have applied the concept of respect, love and justice well there."

When the direct quotations of the participants are examined, the common point of the suggestions is that the unions should be gathered under a single roof. The participants, who think that marginalization will harm education and education worker teachers more, stated that unions that gather under one roof and thus make their voices heard more strongly will support the reputation, rights and development of teachers more.

Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations

In the research, the reasons for teachers to become members of the union are manager guidance, not having problems in interviews, pressure from managers and peers, the need for belonging, willingness to organize, being an education worker and receiving legal support. There are studies that support these results. Arslan (2015) states that teachers mostly become members of unions in order to protect their legal rights. Söylemez (2019) emphasizes that teachers become members of a union in order to be able to provide legal support for problems arising from administrators, colleagues and parents that they may experience in the school. Aksoy (2013), in his study with high school teachers, concluded that teachers are members of a union in order to be organized in terms of defending rights and making gains. Moe (2001) concluded that unions should fight for better wages and working conditions for their members. Pogodzinski and Jones (2012) state that it is important for unions to act according to the interests and expectations of new teachers. The understanding of the union, which takes

the expectations and demands of the newly appointed teachers, will be effective in the teachers' participation in the union struggle. The anxieties experienced by teachers play a role in their tendency to union membership. The need to provide job security, which is the basis of the reasons for being a union member, can be cited as the reason for this concern. Bamberry (2008) also concluded in his study that the most important reason for being a member of a union is job security. It can be said that teachers who have just started teaching become members of unions that they see as close to the political authority in order not to have problems especially in the process of removing their candidacy. In fact, this situation makes it difficult to establish unity of purpose in union activities, since the members who do not accept the struggle for rights as a priority in union activities are unionized. Dilbaz and Erkiş (2021), in their study, stated that the unions were insufficient to implement practices for the common goals they set forth in the collective agreement.

The reasons why teachers do not become members of a union emerge from the practices and approaches of union management, the fact that unions move away from their real purpose, become politicized, become ineffective and discriminate. Arslan (2015) states that among the reasons why teachers do not become members of a union, the unions keep up with politics, pursue union interests and do not adequately defend the rights of teachers. Gökçe (2009) also emphasizes that the fact that unions act as a branch of politics is an important reason why teachers are not members of unions. Since unions are seen as an extension of political parties, teachers develop a negative perception of the concept of unions. Aksoy (2013) concluded that there is a separation of teachers' unions according to political tendencies in the absence of high school teachers being union members. On the contrary, Özyayın and Han (2014) state that the first priority of public officials in choosing unions is their political preferences. Although teachers criticize the politicization of the unions, the fact that they prefer unions with close political views when choosing a union can be considered an indication that teachers approach this issue from a more individual point of view.

Teachers state the communication aspect of unions, establishing bonds with their members, having a say, planning courses and activities, and giving the necessary value to Atatürk as positive characteristics. Eken (2014) concluded in his study that teachers' unions increase unity and solidarity. In this way, strong bonds can be formed between members and between members and the union. Poole (1997) states that teachers expect unions to contribute to professional development. As seen in the results of this research, teachers want unions to plan courses, trainings and conferences for the development of teachers.

Söylemez (2019) emphasizes that educators expect their unions to have Kemalist and national values. Unions with national values and national sensitivities will consider the benefits and development of the country and the education system as much as they consider the gains of teachers in their decisions. This situation will contribute to the determination and implementation of education policies and the development of education programs in accordance with society from a new perspective.

In the research, teachers state that unions have close relations with politics, behaving favorably, not getting ideas from teachers, being indifferent to problems and communicating developments late to their members as negative characteristics. Murillo (1999) states that in areas where there is more than one union, ideological separation and relations between politics and unions increase. In some cases, unions carry out activities that will ensure the acceptance of political party policies in society (Govender, 2004). In his study, Eken (2014) concluded that teachers' unions do not act fairly and impartially in terms of assignment, relocation and advancement in the profession. This situation is in line with the results of this study, as it will cause people to be favored. Söylemez (2019) emphasizes that teachers expect to be informed by unions on issues that concern them. It is important to convey the developments on issues that concern teachers in a timely manner and by choosing the right communication method. It is understood from the results of this research that the unions should pay more attention to this issue.

Particularly, it is necessary to get the opinions of all teachers before the action activities are carried out (Söylemez, 2019). Action decisions taken only by senior management may have a political nature or may not share the common concerns of all teachers. In this case, participation in such actions is low, and the general objectives of the union are not acted upon. As a result of the increase in actions that do not serve the general purpose of the union, teachers who are members of the union may approach action decisions that may be meaningful and beneficial with skepticism. In the study conducted by Aidt and Tzannatos (2002) it was revealed that the lack of a clear and transparent policy of the unions, the inclusion of teachers in the process create problems, but they should not have harmful effects on the rights of the employees.

Teachers' unions find it useful in helping teachers, providing legal support, improving employee personal rights, reducing arbitrary practices and responding to problems immediately. Söylemez (2019) states that teachers think that unions are effective in making gains in subjects such as salary increases, shift wages and promotion wages. Yıldız (2021) concluded in his study that teachers think that unions play an active role in protecting personal and financial rights. Hoxby (1996) concluded in his research that teachers became members of the union in order to improve their working conditions. Moe (2001) concluded that unions should fight for better wages and working conditions for their members. Rose (2009) concluded in her study that teacher unions contribute to the development of education by acting as a pressure factor. West and Mykerezi (2010) concluded in their study that unions play an active role in salary and economic rights. As seen in the results of this research, teachers want unions to plan courses, trainings and conferences for the development of teachers.

Unions provide both moral and legal support to their members even in the smallest problems they have with school administrations. Union representatives support their members by contacting the authorized persons in the institution of the member who has problems without wasting time. Unions are the biggest supporters of their members in their struggle for rights, whether it is legal guidance or legal support on issues that cannot be resolved through dialogue. In the study conducted by Ulutaş and Sönmez (2011), the

majority of teachers emphasize that unions are the organization that most considers the rights of teachers. The active presence of unions in the field also prevents managers who can be flexible in complying with legal regulations from turning to arbitrary practices. The administrators, who anticipate that the teacher, who encounters an unfair practice, will seek official complaints and rights with the support of the union, pay attention to being fair and within the framework of legal regulations while making decisions.

In the research, teachers' suggestions for unions can be distributed on different topics. These recommendations can be summarized as follows; they can be classified as increasing school visits, approaching all teachers the same, acting according to ethical rules, encouraging active participation, being impartial, being above politics, developing educational projects and making their voices heard more. In the study of Eken (2014), teachers expect unions to be independent and impartial organizations that offer suggestions and put forward ideas. Taş (1995) concluded in his study that teachers think that the work and activities of the unions should be announced to the whole society through the press and other communication channels. Making the voices of the unions heard more and more often can lead to effective results in the struggle of teachers for their rights.

In order to encourage active participation in unions, they need to be governed in a democratic structure. Members who are aware of their right to have a say in decisions and who experience this in practice will be willing to actively participate in union activities. Çınar (2008) states that the democratic functioning of the unions is also effective in the formation of a culture of democracy in society. Eraslan (2012b) emphasizes that unions can lead the democratization of society with their historical background. For this, union management needs to develop supportive discourses that will ensure their members' active participation in union decision-making processes, give importance to internal criticism and be open to criticism.

Suggestions for Practitioners

Unions can gather under a single roof and make divisions within themselves at the branch level. Unions can increase training activities for the personal development of teachers through their union activities. Unions can act as a press for a fair, merit-based system of appointment and relocation.

By holding regular meetings with teachers and administrators, unions can learn about the current problems and expectations of education workers and plan activities and events on these issues. Informing teachers about the importance and impact of organizing can increase teacher participation in union activities in terms of quantity and quality. The fact that all unions act by creating a common framework for teachers' financial and employee personal rights can ensure that teachers' expectations in these matters are met.

Suggestions for Researchers

In the study, a more general framework was tried to be drawn by taking the opinions of all teachers without separating the teacher and the administrator. By dividing the working group into administrators and teachers, a study on unions can be conducted and the views of administrators and teachers can be researched comparatively.

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