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**Applying Public Support as Effective Strategies in the Lobbying Process of
National Education by Interest Groups**

(On the example of National Educational Interest Groups, US. 1990-2015)

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Introduction

United States is known as a country of political associations, so called interest groups, which are active agents in the political environment of the United States. The structure and the system of influencing political decision-making in the U.S. based on the principles of pluralism allows interest groups to become a significant actor on the political arena. Using lobbying methods and strategies interest groups can get actively involved in the legislative and executive processes and therefore become a part of the Check and Balance system in the United States. The role of political associations in the United States is constantly growing, developing new forms and scales for their acts.

Unlike political parties, that are aiming to win power, interest groups only affect the decision-making legislatures. The wider representation of social needs of interest groups widens the multifaceted relationship between society and the state. In contrast, the narrowing of the field of action of interest groups, crafting the obstacles for citizens to form the associations and isolating the ruling elite from the population, create preconditions for the establishment of the dictatorship.

Interest groups have a broad set of resources for influencing the power answering the requests and needs of the population. Those interest groups that are able to maintain constant communication with the government often become an integral part of social management mechanism. In contrast, the desire to influence the authorities by a number of marginal, non-traditional groups of interests, ignoring the norms and values accepted in society, can have a devastating effect on the political management of society and the system tries to reject it.

Participation in associative and institutional groups instills citizens with such political skills and forms of cooperation that are necessary for a well-functioning society. People learn the methods of organization, expression of their interests, cooperation with other people for the sake of achieving common goals. They also learn that the political process is no less important than immediate results. Therefore, a system of energetically active associative groups is capable of weakening the development of disordered or nonassociative interest groups. Participation in the activities of the group can open the way to politics for citizens with insignificant personal resources. Group activity helps citizens to develop and clarify one's own preferences, it gives them important information about political events and provides a clearer and more adequate articulation

of their interests than parties and elections. In other words, the active involvement of the public in various interest groups prepares fertile ground for the development of democratic politics.

As the interdependence of the political and economic conditions of different countries grows, attention is also being paid to the development of a worldwide civil society that reflects new processes in the economy and political life. Individuals and groups from the same country come into contact with citizens and groups from other countries who are concerned with the same problems, which enhances the effectiveness of their individual actions. Thus, environmental organizations of developed democracies help relevant organizations of developing nations with the expertise and organizational resources necessary to solve the problems facing their countries. National groups meet at international conferences and forums on political issues, and the network of public relations spreads over national borders. This is an additional evidence of the widespread growth of the importance of the international context of domestic policy.

One of the problems faced by the countries of Eastern Europe and other nations that have just recently embarked on the path of democratization is that they need to create a system of associative groups with a rich and diverse life in societies where for a long time organized groups were suppressed or controlled. These countries have been dominated by communist parties and state bureaucracy for more than 40 years, and the government has regulated associative forms of activity, directing them to a channel that meets its own purposes. The process of building new, independent associative groups designed to articulate the special interests of various categories of citizens is already and will play an important role in democratic transformations. Likewise, many economically underdeveloped nations have an acute need for the formation of a civil society of associative groups in order to involve citizens in the political process and to ensure the articulation of their interests. Only in this case, the democratization of such countries has a chance of success.

One of the largest and most popular public associations in the United States are the groups that are united around the problems of education. Their impact on the education policy of the government is constantly growing and this is natural because the American community has always been actively involved in education policy and controlled its quality.

The educational interest groups face a really hard task in modern society comparing to other interest groups. The educational system policy in America is majorly based on the state and local legislative bodies. Therefore the federal and national government play limited role in the constructing the educational strategies. The actual tools of lobbying of the educational interest groups on the Congress and the White house may be limited and thus it distinguishes them from

other types of active political organizations. Since the educational interest groups are largely dependent on their inner membership that is the major resource of the educational interest groups budget their main tool of lobbying mainly is dependent on public support

The purpose of present research is to investigate the impact of interest groups on the development of the educational system in the United States focusing on the national educational groups. The research intends to explore their new lobbying strategies and evaluate effects.

The study aims to highlight the importance of the national educational interest groups as a separate politically active groups, and explore their relations with the United States government, examine the ways they try to influence the Congress members and lobby educational interests of different social groups. Also, the dissertation intends to study educational group effectiveness in the development of the national strategies and their role in the enforcement process of the innovations in the sphere of education.

Novelty

It has to be mentioned that no particular research which studies the problem of lobbying investigates the interest groups focused on national education. For the first time, the new social media methods of creating interest groups were studied; Also, the methods of extending their networks, the strategies and tactics of strengthening their influence used by the interest groups and particularly educational associations are investigated. With the high involvement of Georgia in the international processes and the opportunities to share the experiences in the field of education it becomes obligatory to conduct a survey that will study the major issues and concepts, strategy and tactics of interest groups in the United States and their lobbying tools to implement and adjust them in Georgia socio-political environment.

According to the previous passages the following questions are shaped:

- 1) What is the role of the interest groups in the political system of the US?
- 2) What are the aims and functions of interest groups in the US?
- 3) What are the types, structure and the organization of the educational interest groups?
- 4) Which political and social tools are exercised by national educational interest groups to influence government decision-making process?

- 5) How do interest groups influence the political decision making process in the United States through web-social networks?
- 6) How did modern media technologies used by the interest groups change the methods of influencing public opinion?
- 7) How does the government of the United States respond to the problems raised by Educational Interest Groups?
- 8) What are the reasons for malfunctioning of educational interest groups in Georgia in responding to social demands?

The research also aims to observe the importance of effective functioning of the educational interest groups in Georgia which will be analogues to the American one. How should American interest group lobbying strategies be implemented in Georgia?

Research problem is to study the importance of educational interest groups in the political environment of the United States and their influence on the national education system. Modern requirements for the educational interest groups and their innovative lobbying strategies using web-social networks in the US and Georgia will be examined.

Goal of the research is to investigate the policy, management and modern techniques used by the American Educational Interest Group to persuade public and influence government decisions. The study aims to identify the main tactics and problematic issues raised by the interest groups in the United States and offer the strategy that may positively affect the interest-groups activities in Georgia.

Practical value of the research could be analyzed in Georgian reality, and a phenomenon of an American educational interest group could be considered as one of the effective strategies for Georgian society to influence, direct and monitor the ongoing processes in the field of education in Georgia.

The outcomes of the conducted researches can be used by public organizations, professional associations and NGOs as guidelines or the concepts for methodologies. The work can be used as a guideline for interest group start up-projects in Georgia. Research will be useful for policy-makers, educators, school directors, and head of educational institutions who will gain knowledge of the importance of active participation of the civil society in shaping education policy of the country.

Theoretical value. The present research attempts to analyze and critically assess the role of interest groups presented in the works of: A. Bentley, S. Pareto, Gregory S. Battler, and James D. Slack., but the theoretical discourse regarding educational interest groups has been developed within the framework of the present research by us. A new theory of how interest groups achieve their goals with the help of web-social networks technologies has been examined and considered. This is the first attempt not only in Georgia but in America as well to study the problem from this point of view and identify the IGs new strategies through application of modern web-technologies to persuade public and influence government.

The research will evolve round two main hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1:

The aims and goals of the society whose active participation in educational policy is highly important could be successful in case it is consolidated, sets up interest group with adequate structure, strategy and tactics, and is dedicated to fulfillment of its aims for the benefit of broader social groups and the society at large.

Hypothesis 2:

In case the web-social networks possibilities are applied purposefully by interest groups, it could be highly effective either in persuading wide circles of society, or creating the fake image of public interest, thus presenting new threats of manipulation of society and driving people's attention over the false problems.

Limitations of the research:

The conducted research has a main goal to be set as a manual of action for the interest groups to set up the strategies for the further implementation in organizing the proper strategy of influencing the public opinion. The main focus of it is the practical methodology of the interest groups in the United States and their example. The research is not based on the theoretical background of the political environment, rather uses the current tendencies of it. The political theories are not reviewed and analyzed in the set problems which the dissertation is seeking to find solution for.

The interest groups commonly are not willing to disclose their lobbying information to the outsiders. This limits the possibilities of the internal investigation. Nevertheless in the research are used the data which is based on the declarations of professional active members and researchers of the interest groups. Moreover since the main focus of the dissertation is the influence on public

opinion, the methodology of investigation will be conducted from the point of view of a member of public and members of the interest groups to keep it subjective, therefore the data analyzed is taken from the open resources that each member of the society can get familiar to.

Research methodology

The conducted research on the topic will use both qualitative and quantitative methodologies in order to achieve the final goal. *Qualitative* means will be used in order to study the problem deeper and look at the particular issue with many different angles. *Quantitative* data is necessary to shape and study statistics of achievement and failures of the various practices used in education of gifted learners. Mixed research methodology is the best compromise in the case when the subject needs deep and the same time accurate analysis.

Research sample involves a comparative study of several educational interest groups in the USA. Development of the interest groups` lobbying strategies and structures will be studied and defined which path is more successful and why. *Survey* with the participation of 100 *randomly selected* members of the educational interest group will be used as a quantitative method in order to shape general stereotype of the interest group structure and lobbying methodology, importance of the public support in the United States. Later, this stereotype will be either proved or denied and using the conclusion based on the previously reviewed literature and examples will be defined and offered the solution for the optimization of the interest groups in Georgia. ***Ethical principles and the rights*** of all participant of the research will be considered, and participants will be informed about the anonymity. No names will be disclosed in order to make participants shape their opinion in more details and express their critical attitude.

In the course of the study a wide range of literature will be used. Most of the used literature devoted to the description of the results of several studies in the field of politics and sociology.

Structure of the Disseratation

The thesis will address the following issues:

Introduction –the problem statement, main values of the research, research questions and goals of the conducted research

Chapter I. –literature review; problem history: the role of interest groups in the political environment of the United States, main methods of lobyng and strategies.

Chapter II.- Modern web-methods and strategies of setting and influencing the public opinion.

Chapter III.- The case studies of American and Georgian interest groups. The analysis of the results of the conducted research, survey and questionnaires. The gained data are analyzed and the comparison is be drawn with current Georgian political environment. Some valuable suggestions are offered regarding the effectiveness of educational interest group policy and strategy.

Conclusions

List of References

Chapter 1. Literature Review on the methods and dynamics of lobbying among the interest groups in the U.S.

In this part of the research the definition of the interest groups is given based on the theories of the influent Scholars of the Political Science. Different categories of the interest groups and the principal characteristic of pressure groups are presented, the main method and tool of lobbying used by the interest groups to influence the author decision making process and the structure of the United States education and the main challenges faced by the National Educational Interest Groups are described.

Such groups include: trade unions of workers and employees; farmer (peasant) organizations and unions; professional associations of entrepreneurs; feminist, environmental, human rights, pacifist, etc. unions of veterans; philosophical clubs and societies, etc.

The following two functions serve as priority pressure groups:

First, it is the selection, generalization, formulation and articulation of the main interests of its members;

Secondly, a purposeful influence on the institutions of power with a view to meeting especially significant interests. At the same time, all branches of power act as objects of this impact, but above all legislative and executive branches, as well as parties that control this power. Significant importance is attached to appeals to public opinion and its mobilization.

Directions of influence of pressure groups on power and its environment:

Impact on the government.

Impact on parties that control power.

Impact on public opinion affecting the power.

Pressure groups are of great service to society, directing the aspirations to the appropriate channels, which often take an unorganized and violent form without it. But, at the same time, pressure groups can lead to disorganization of society.

The notion of "lobbyism" or "lobby" is closely related to the notion of pressure groups. In the broadest sense, both of these concepts are most often used as synonyms. As a specialized type of

activity "lobby" - is the impact of any legal or natural person, most often for a fee, on the processes of taking administrative and legislative decisions in favor of another legal or natural person.

As legal, lobbying activities take the form of: Speeches at hearings in parliamentary committees and commissions; Submission of draft laws and other normative acts, results of scientific research and expertise; Conducting propaganda campaigns in the press and other media outlets;

Organization of demonstrations, marches, picketing, etc.

Illegal (criminally punishable) actions include:

A bribe as a one-time act or bribing a legislator or an official for a long period;

Blackmail, duplication of knowingly false or distorted information, etc.

In democratic countries, lobbying is regulated by special legislation, which gives it the character of legal activity stemming from the constitutional right of citizens to petition the authorities.

Political interests are an expression of the needs of society, a social group, and political organization, movement in the social and political sphere. Interests serve as a source, motive for certain actions, for example, participation in elections, organizing and holding a rally, the work of political institutions, etc.

Political relations do not arise on their own, but around certain interest. For example, the main objects of educational politics are set around national, regional and state interests. In turn, the national interest is understood as the conflicting duality of state and public interests, since the internal policy of society-state is the result of the interaction of the internal interests of various political forces.

Interests can be personal (individual), group and public. However, in order to defend their interests, people must unite in "groups of interests": political parties, social movements, etc. A single leader in politics has no chance of success unless certain social and political forces, whose interests he expresses, support him. Political interests unite people who share common value orientations, needs, views, goals, and separate (contrast) people who have incompatible interests. Their special interests may have state institutions, political parties, socio-political organizations and movements, interest groups, etc. Interest groups are primarily voluntary organizations and associations that seek to realize their special corporate interests through state institutions and indirectly through parties, parliamentary factions or the media.

The United States is famous for its developed educational system and the public concerns over the educational issues. The mentioned issues and problems of education become the focus of the educational interest groups in the United States. The interest group act as the medium point between the educational system and the government. The educational system has to be engaged in the political environment of the country even though the education in the United States is considered to be very secular from the national power.

The focus of the research is whether the strategies of those interest groups change with the development of modern technology and what new and effective methods of lobbying can be identified in the nowadays realm. The technology and internet world have developed the systems of various spheres of life and becomes means of spreading the ideas among the public. The following chapters discuss what changes have been introduced by the modern technologies in the sphere of politics and social influence on public opinion.

Chapter 2. Modern Web-techniques of Influence on the Public Opinion used by the Interest Groups in the United States.

Communication plays one of the major roles in the process of influencing the public opinion. The dialogue with the public is very important for any governmental and non-governmental organization. As it is known, the supporters is the muscle of the organization and directly indicates to the increase of its power. The major asset of organization is the human resource and new media acts as a “weapon of mass attraction”. With the development of the media, the opportunities to mobilize more supporters around the main goal of the interest group were increasing. To understand the effect of the involvement of the citizens into politics it is important to analyze the development of the means of communication.

The widespread use of new information and communication technologies is an irreversible trend of world development, and scientific and technological revolution of the last decades. A special role in this process belongs to the global Internet that, as a specific interactive method of media communications, is already widely used in the political process, challenging its traditional means of communications and political mechanisms which originally included mass media, traditional lobbying, mailing, public conferences. According to Ceila Livermore, Internet is already changing the methods of influence on the political decision-making. Since a technical invention, it has become an absolute phenomenon that affects all aspects of human life. The development of Internet technology has opened up to the public multiple perspectives and gives opportunities for a qualitative breakthrough in various fields. Interest groups from the very beginning started to use the new media. The main purpose of using Internet for political purposes by the interest groups is informational. Its essence is the penetration of the required political information into the network. In general it means the wide application of the sites of public organizations, newspaper and magazines, as well as purely electronic publications and websites of analytical and research organizations.

One of the main mechanisms in politics today is the impact through public opinion. If we consider the impact of technology on the decision-makers through public opinion, we can distinguish the following conditional stages of its formation:

- Preparation of an information base of influence;

- The creation of a provocative situation;
- Involvement of groups in political work;
- Implementation of controlled impact.

The political struggle of social movements, carried in the network space, transforms the Internet into a new organized horizontally space reign. The prospect of further development of civil society institutions formed in the industrial age institutions lies in the possibility of building a dialogue with the social factors of the new networks. The companies and political organizations cannot neglect the rising influence and the power of the new media. In the case of internet the organization have to adapt to the formed structure and get involved into the web-society otherwise they risk to fall behind the social progress. It becomes essential today for the companies and organizations to have a web-site, answer the criticism of the user in the social media, and participate in the online-projects.

The most important features of the new virtual reality are its global nature and interactivity. Internet does not recognize the sovereignty of the state conventions, forms of political participation, hierarchical structures, political parties and other institutional subjects of politics. The political implications of network usage are contradictory and ambiguous. On the one hand, the internet allows to take the geographical and structural constraints of direct political participation, collective action to eliminate the distance between citizens and decision-makers, to expand the horizons of civic culture. On the other hand, it is necessary to consider that modern information technologies, with the expansion of their scope of application in everyday life, make society more vulnerable to political control, promote capacity and improve the tools of political domination, creating the potential for authoritarian socialization and manipulative influence on personality. The multi-faceted problem of regulation of these processes has technical, political, moral, economic and legal aspects. At times the internet technologies done by the interest groups include “black” activity on the web.

Generally, the Internet "black" technologies are so closely interwoven with each other that they can be considered in most cases as the aggregate. These technologies can be divided into specific – that can be applied only on the Web, and the ones that are transferred there from the off-line. Their use extends to the point of conflict with the law or contrary to it, so the web is limited only by rules of individual morality of the users. This can be considered as problem since the legal

status of the Network has not yet been fully clearly determined, both within the state and at the international level. It determines in most cases, the impunity of the application of these technologies, even if their author is known. The most widely used "black" technologies on the Internet are the following: the manipulation of public opinion, the injection of anxiety in society, misinformation, creating a negative attitude to a political subject. The main reason of this unethical actions is to get the public attention to the important issue set by the interest group and receive the public support, to influence the public opinion and recognize the target group.

A Manipulation of public opinion –is one of the most common political technologies on the Internet especially manipulation with ratings. The possibility of the Internet for collecting and gathering statistics simulation is truly limitless. The scheme of the black techniques is following. The meters of visiting exist on almost every web page that secure each access of a user to a given resource. Their data is often cited as proof of the popularity of the Internet resource. But these parameters can be set to optimize web pages for search engines in such a way that any user request of such resource will put the web page out as the first in the search results. Even if the user only enters and immediately leaves the web-site, the meter still registers it as a visitor. There are many companies offering the fictional popularization of sites. However, the possibility of such manipulations on the part of the search engine are virtually limitless, using them or not depends only on the moral principles of concrete people, the owners of such search engines.

The second method is the manipulation of statistics -the possibility of placing and carrying out all kinds of online surveys and polls. Here the creators of the site themselves may well simulate these processes. This raises the question about the reliability of such data, and most importantly - the right to use them. The site owners are well aware of his audience, who, as a rule, initially are loyal to them. Moreover, the reliability of the results of surveys conducted using the Internet resources can be put in doubt.

Nevertheless holding survey Internet is a very promising direction, if they are carried out using scientific methods. This is a serious exercise that requires specific knowledge and skills of the organizers, but the result is worth it - as the world practice shows, the results of such surveys are most persuasive. At the same time internet provides great opportunity to conduct the online petition to the government. With the development of the virtual signature and filling up the citizen`s personal information the petition on any issue can gather the great number of signatures in just several days.

One of the Political Technologies using simulation as one of the basic properties of the Internet, and in a negative sense, is technology of simulating an active interest group (Livermore, 2012). The first impression, which arises from the visitors of simulative web-page, is that it is a page of a very close-knit organization with a clear structure, hierarchical, as well as an interest in a wide range of social problems. This creates the impression of a skillful constructed pages. The color saturation, and graphic solution of the site form an image of a young, dynamic and decisive public association. In this case, the form of some of the active subject are established in any sphere of social, political or social life, creating a site that describes the frantic activity of the subject, attracting the attention of traditional media. The subject may in this case be omitted. The presence of site mimics minded team work and implies the presence of the actor, which is enough to create newsworthy in some media. Thus, it is the manipulation of public opinion, since the Internet users, citizens are convinced that it is an existing organization, they did not know, that really that the project it represents, is acting in the interests of political forces. Possible results. It is practically impossible to calculate the possible effect of the black information techniques. But the question is whether IG benefits or loses from its effect in the long term perspective. The positive aspect of the free space that it also put in the light the truth and manipulation. Once the truthfulness is questioned the rest also falls under rigid consideration.

Nevertheless the advantages of the online lobbying and using them to influence the public opinion cannot be neglected. Online-lobbying is the most recent development of lobbying strategies of the Interest groups. It started in the beginning of the 2000s and has gained the increasing popularity as it showed itself as one of the most effective, time-saving, resource-saving strategies. Among other advantages Internet technologies offer new possibilities for the transformation of the institute of lobbying in the direction of democracy and protection of the public interest. In the classic lobbying system can be witnessed the absence of civil lobbying or ignoring public opinion. Internet networks as the global accessible information resources can and should be used to disclose the "secrets" of lobbying mechanism for active pressure on the power structures. With their help, an interest group and its members can work quickly together to solve any issue, to articulate the interests of the wider community, consult with competent people. Computer communication can thus stimulate the development of civil society institutions to assist in the formation of civic consciousness.

The future lobbying is information expansion. Lobbying process often requires a highly skilled activity, which has a political meaning and legal basis and is an integral part of a democratic political system. The Institute is intended to implement the lobbying interests of different groups

(unions, associations) organized by citizens on the impact of legislative and administrative activity of the state bodies. Based on this definition, lobbyists may be, in most cases, professionals, lawyers, former officials, journalists, with ties and experience in the political decision-making. The success of the lobbying activity is largely determined by the breadth of relations of lobbyist in a certain organ of power, his gift of persuasion.

When using computer networks as a lobbying tool, the emphasis changes: professionalism of the lobbyist does not play the most important role, competition of ties and incentives gives the way to competition of information quality and the ability to work with it. Probably, it is appropriate to include the new technological definition of lobbying. Lobbying through computer networks - is an information expansion of one or more persons with the use of computer communication technologies, focused on a specific audience and designed to realize the interests of various groups, organized by citizens to provide the needed legislative and administrative activity of the state bodies. Defining the role of computer networks as a lobbying tool and the use of them in this new capacity can already be observed. Achievements in such disciplines as: network technology, social psychology and political science make it possible to predict the prospects of some phenomenon. At the moment, there are three main areas with such prospects: the use of computer networks as an information resource for lobbying, direct pressure information via computer network, personal computer-mediated communication with people taking political decisions.

The distinguishing feature of a professional lobbyist is the awareness of the power system. The lobbyists should know the decision-making scheme, should coordinate the duties and competence of each of the current system agents, should track the terms of coordination at every stage of decision-making, and recognize the personal characteristics of decision-makers. It is necessary to know in advance about upcoming decisions of the authorities, to prepare arguments and public opinion to influence them. In case of a closed channel of influencing the power, the absolute majority of the population is left out of the political process. So the new approach of the internet lobbying expands the possibility of quick two-way communication in which the information flows not Interest Group to the decision makers but also from the officials back to the interest groups. The publication of information required for lobbying could significantly improve government interaction with citizens. As the advantages of network information are its relative cheapness, efficiency, accessibility and interactivity of the provision of information.

For information of a negative character anonymity is important. The network may well provide this condition. The easiest way of working with networks of lobbyists is replicating the necessary information in the network. Thus, the public and politicians attention may be brought to the urgent

problem, argued the adoption of a political decision or prepared the ground for any lobbying action. Replication mechanism is simple: on any server is placed the information to which reference is posted on the most visited sites of the right audience, the web-links to it are also posted in popular mailing lists and newsgroups. It should be noted that the anonymous organization of information in the propaganda campaign is particularly widely used by all sorts of interest groups.

Social networks also work as a powerful to attract the wider circles of supporters. The term "social network" was introduced long before the advent of the Internet and a modern internet networks, in 1954, by a sociologist from the "Manchester School" James Barnes. The modern concept in the simplest form is a circle of friends a person where there is the man himself in the center of a social network, his friends - the branches of the social network and the relations between these people - connection. The online social network is a software service platform for interaction between people in a group or groups. As applied to the Internet it is a virtual network which is a means of providing services related to the establishment of relations between its users and between users and the interests of their respective information resources installed on the sites of the global network.

The interest group following the needed requests of the social media can form and successfully monitor its own achievements in usage and spreading the required information among its members and outside of its membership. Moreover, social web-networks provide an easy and cheap way to gain the public support and thus the heavier weight in the grassroots politics is gained. Nevertheless in the analysis of the social network impact, a very important factor is to study the actuality of the popularity of the social network profile and work with its popularity within the search engines. In such case the interest group can win over vast public support over the required issue.

Nowadays almost each and every active interest group in the United States is using social media and the social media monitoring tools. The National Education Association, which is one of the largest professional interest group in the United States, actively upgrades the content on their web-page and also monitors the Social Media pages. The interest group encourages its members to regularly check the update of the content on their web-pages and social media accounts. It is not hard to find their web-site in the internet as using Google their position in the list of the typed key words "education, interest groups" is one of the first. So a person who wants to learn more about the interest groups connected with the educational system of the USA will first get enquired with their web-pages. The web-page tracks the information of the amount of membership in the Association (which is 2,963,121), and also includes the forum where the members can discuss the

important issues of the interest group`s activities. The responses and the comments to the articles published on the web-page and in Social Media are monitored by the team of moderators and the responses are provided by the interest group official representatives. This makes the work of the interest group more effective, which leads to better results in achieving the interest group`s goals.

Initially if in the past century the members of associations were supposed to be the “muscle:” of organization. In the era of social media the higher value is placed on wider public support. Though this mass of supporters could be fictional, artificially incorporated. The popularity the interest group gains through modern internet technologies such as blog, social networks, web-sites, is much faster, which on the other hand puts a shadow on the reliability of the mass media opinion. Virtual world acts like two invisible hands and its power is in creating the illusion of pluralism of opinions ad mobilizing the masses round the target problem, directing it in a predetermined way.

Does it mean that modern technologies embodies a kind of threat which helps the interest groups to use its strategies more effectively and reach its goal, however ambiguous or even dangerous it could be? Still in the dawn of the U.S. democracy Thomas Jefferson expressed his deep concerns regarding role and function of interest groups. This attitude has been expressed by many politicians who considered it a threat to democracy.

One of the strongest features of interest group is the number of its supporters which mean that the idea is shared by great number of people. This concept could be questioned because it is not easy to investigate the truth, which is being lost in the labyrinth of Internet. The “shadow-bloggers” create virtual number of supporters not rarely concentrated round the target problems.

While extending our doubts and critical remarks towards the new social media techniques we see great advantages in use of this information sources which are exemplified by our case study within the framework of this dissertation. Namely the National Education Association interest group which is a perfect example of how the abovementioned social media techniques have been successfully applied to address the most vulnerable problem accumulated in education. This is the area of towards which the public interest is almost always very high. Based on American history the community has always felt directly responsible for the support and successful development of educational institutions. This is still a part of American culture witnessed by a high involvement of community in education.

Chapter 3. Comparative studies of the United States and Georgian Interest Groups.

In the 3rd Chapter a comparative study of two educational interest groups was conducted - The National Educator Association (USA) and Young Pedagogues' Union (Georgia). Additionally, in order to study the overall environment of interest group activity and their influence, a questionnaire was provided to the randomly chosen educators both in USA and in Georgia. In the previous parts of the research were discussed the importance of the interest groups and their effects and used strategies in both countries. Thus, the main target groups of the research were the educators in the United States and teachers of various educational institutions in Georgia. The main purpose of the research was to compare the responses obtained from the both groups of educators about the influence of the interest groups in USA and in Georgia, and to indicate whether there is a necessity of changing strategies of the interest groups to gain more support of the public opinion and get better result in the relations with the government. The research was conducted with full awareness of the participants in the anonymity of their answers.

The results obtained from the research proved that Georgia still has the underdeveloped structure of the interest groups which negatively reflects on their activity. Even though, both target groups admit the importance of the development of the interest groups, though Georgians admit that there is a lack of financial support and technological strategies. The required solution is: 1) to use the internet sources not only as a source of providing information but also as a tool of gaining bigger public support 2) to build up the new strategies of spreading the information based on modern technologies 3) To develop the system of public financial support of the interest groups to make them more independent.

The higher cooperation of interest group and the government is also contradictory in Georgia. A large number of educators claim that the communication between the NGOs and the government is necessary for the successful achievements of their goals. Moreover, in the educational system professionals acknowledge the lack of cooperation with the government in Georgia, some even argue that the active participation in the political activities is not even necessary. It is thought provoking that the educators of Georgia do not give due evaluation to the effectiveness of the activities of the interest groups, 6% to 8.5 % of the United States results. It is required for a specialized new technology involving strategies of influencing the public opinion to be built in Georgia using the example of strategies of the interest groups lobbying in the U.S. The U.S. example showed the high rate of effectiveness in pressuring the governmental decision

makers. This can serve as a founding basis for the development of interest group-government, interest group-media and interest group members' cooperation relations with each other. The majority of the educators participating in the research also pointed out the importance of internet sources in the discussion process over the issues concerning the problems of education. In this cases Georgia expressed higher focus on the social media sources while in the United States with more developed system of web-programing more popular source are web-pages.

The lack of proper methodology and strategies of bringing wider circles of supporters to the interest groups creates a huge problem for the achievement of the goals of the organization. The research indicated the problems of raising wider circle of supporters of NGOs organization in Georgia. In this case the share of experiences between the interest groups of both countries becomes an important issue. Of course, in the frames of the research it is not possible to cover fully the criteria of the successful strategic program of raising the public support, nevertheless some conclusions could be drawn based on the gained data. Interest group program requires more structural approach to the problem. The interest groups can not just rely on their relations with media. It is required that they act not only as a generator of the ideas, but also as media source itself, to popularize its ideas using the modern technology tools. In the process of bringing a lot of attention to the idea introduced by the interest group, a full chain of cooperation is required between the NGOs, internet, media, lobbyists and government.

The conducted research pointed out the major structural problems of the interest groups activities in Georgia, the summary of recommended solution is to implement the practice of the USA and European countries of building up strategies of brining higher involvement of wider circles of supporters, develop the new media tools for spreading those ideas and setting the necessary political environment, specialized methodology that suits the socio-cultural background of the country, financial support of the interest groups by its members and creating politically independent organization to be free in expressing its views.

As shown in the results of research, public consciousness in Georgia, which has deep roots in communal and socialist psychology, hardly perceives the effectiveness of NGOs and interest. But even today it can be stated quite definitely: if democratic processes are developing in Georgia, civil society will be formed, then lobbying will take its place in the Georgia political reality, because it acts as a kind of a satellite of democracy.

Conclusion

Interest groups occupy an important place in the political systems. Their successful functioning is based on the developed civil political culture of the population and is guaranteed by civil liberties. Among the methods used by interest groups to achieve their goals, one can single out persuasion and coercion. The technique of persuasion methods can include both open and hidden techniques, various lobbying tactics, including direct pressure on legislators and government officials. Just as governments and parties, interest groups use propaganda to convince the public of the legitimacy of their demands for society as a whole. For example, a pressure group that seeks to make a legislative decision in its favor can organize a special propaganda campaign in the internet combined with public actions, rallies and demonstrations, involving well-known respected people, covered by media, increasing its circle of supporters and membership. The range of coercive methods used by interest groups, varies from protest actions (street processions and demonstrations, strikes, etc.) to active lobbying. It is believed that these methods are mainly used by those categories of people who do not have other opportunities to bring their point of view to the attention of the authorities. The conduct of such actions is dictated by the desire to mobilize public support in favor of the position of certain interest groups and is a common practice.

How is the interaction of interest groups occur with the decision-makers? Through what channels it is done? Three main ways can be distinguished: direct impact on state structures (top-down pressure) and two indirect channels of influence - through political parties (support of the legislatives during the elections) and through public opinion (down-top pressure). The predominance of one or another method, among other things, depends on the nature of the group itself. Organized advocates of material interests, for example, concentrate their efforts directly on the executive bodies, and especially on the responsible representatives of the bureaucracy. But groups engaged in promoting ideas that have a broader social result, prefer to influence public opinion. Direct contacts between interest groups and authorities can take place at different stages in the process of formulating and implementing a policy. But the result depends majorly on the political weight of the interest group itself, which is represented in its public support. So in case interest groups wants to implement a change in education system, it is most important for it to get consolidated around its major interest and get wide range of supporters. So the goal of the people engaged in the educational policy is to consolidate and set up interest group with adequate structure, strategy and tactics, so it would be dedicated to fulfillment of its aims for the benefit of broader social groups and the society at large.

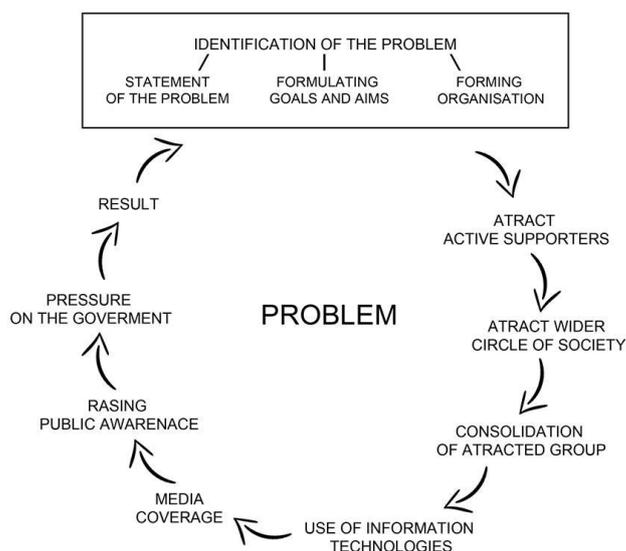
In modern Georgia, efforts are also being made to optimize the system of representation of organized interests in the structures of state power. The interest groups start to evolve to the new level of gaining wider support. However, in general, the process of institutionalizing of the interest groups, as well as the procedures for coordinating positions with their participation in Georgia, is far from being complete. The scope of group activity in legislatures depends on their real role in the political process. To achieve these goals, various lobbying techniques are used. Providing financial support to individual politicians or political parties during elections is one of the most effective ways of interest groups' lobbying. Depending on the specifics of the national legislation, financing of election campaigns by interest groups can become one of the most important channels of influence, both for legislative and administrative activities of the state. Another type of activity at the post-parliamentary stage involves the implementation of judicial instances. The organization can appeal against a law or an administrative decision that infringes the interests of its members. In the U.S. where strong independent judicial systems operate, cases of cancellation of legislative and administrative acts by courts of various levels as a result of appeals from representatives of interest groups are not uncommon.

As the research pointed out the influence of interest groups on public opinion to influence the decision-making process also occurs at different levels and in different ways. Success requires a differentiated prediction of the reaction of individual segments of the public: people forming public opinion (politicians, senior officials, journalists, bloggers etc.), politicized categories of ordinary citizens, passive voters. Purposeful formation of public opinion can be a very effective way of influencing public policy. To achieve this goal, various propaganda techniques are used, as well as organized PR campaigns that allow manipulation with public consciousness. An increasingly prominent place in this activity is given to the media and web-media. If the political system provides a certain level of freedom of the media, interest groups have opportunities to express their positions and effectively influence the decision-making process through the press, radio, television and the Internet. It is clear that in this case the impact is not direct, and rather indirectly, through public opinion reaches its results. This method is especially preferable for groups promoting some ideas or values. As learned from the examples of Georgian and American interest groups, they have their own newspapers, and some control radio or television channels through which they inform people and form public opinion.

According to the result of the questionnaire can be learned that important factor is the material resources that the group has. These include not only financial resources, but also organizational

structure, strength and quality of pressure group members (activity, solidarity, discipline, influence of leaders, etc.). The importance of financial resources can vary greatly depending on the situation. In the United States where interest groups openly compete with each other for influence, this factor is usually not decisive, giving way to such issues as the functional importance of the group or its public recognition. While in Georgia, where political corruption is widespread, finances acquire additional force of influence. The majority of the NGOs in Georgia are not active and those which are, are mostly financially supported via winning the international grants or get governmental aid. Contrary to the U.S. example where the bigger part of the interest group budget is based on the donations of their members, in Georgia the interest groups are financially dependent. Nevertheless again the new technologies may work as an active solution to these problems, as the people using the online banking system can easily start to support the programs they share the interest in.

Modern technologies and media in the democratic society to which both U.S. and Georgia are referred to - nowadays become the new “weapons of mass attractions”. The new era of internet has changed the whole idea and system of the political environment shifting the focus of the election campaigns as well as legislations into populist sphere. The scheme below expresses the summary of active problem solving and goal reaching process by the interest group in the realities of modern political structures.



Based on the examples of the U.S. interest groups, the scheme that determines the successive steps to achieving the goals was developed.

- 1) Identification of the problem or setting the main interest this step includes 3 stages.
 - a) Statement of the problem, that is required to be solved
 - b) Formulating goals and aims by setting the strategy to achieve the positive result
 - c) Forming organization by building up a team and administrative structure that will work on solving the problem
- 2) Attracting supporter. As mentioned in the dissertation the members of the interest groups are its muscles. Not only can they support the group by sharing the ideas and opinion. Moreover based on the monthly donation the interest group can be financially capable of fulfilling the organized program and remaining politically neutral
- 3) Attracting wider supporter group, including the non-members of the organization. This stage includes the incorporation of the lobbyists and followers of the ideas among the wider circle of the public.
- 4) Consolidation of the wider group is required to bring people to a certain focus on a particular goals and aims. This stage requires the next use of media resources to explain the problems and also the means of manipulation of public opinion.
- 5) Use of information technologies is the core stone of the effectiveness of the interest group in its goal to reach wider range of public support. With the progress of the media the interest group has to adapt to the new realities and new technologies. The wider use of the media by the public is witnessed, the higher chances there are in achieving the required result. Nowadays the rising influence of Internet, web-sites, social media, and blogs require the interest groups to actively use this resource.
- 6) Media coverage – after the idea is set in the virtual sphere the traditional media coverage is needed to bring greater numbers of the supporters to the issues. The problem of the new media is that internet is filled with information in which there is hard to push the required piece of it to the necessary level of attention. The relations with the journalist and media-press companies may drive the public attention to the pointed information.
- 7) With the rise of public awareness changes the political environment. The pressure on the officials from the public is set. The interest group created the bases for the implementation of its lobbying strategies.

8) The officials experience pressure from the bottom, also with the methods of lobbying described in the dissertation it can press the official from the top, bringing the process to the final stage. With the pressure from both sides, which I called the theory of “hammer and anvil”, the officials are pressed between the grassroots and elite forces, requiring them to act accordingly to the major interest of an organization.

9) At the end, the final result of the interest group is achieved. Though, usually the interest groups have a whole set of various aims on which they work on simultaneously. The order of priorities of those goals is set according to the necessities and political situation in the state.

However, the scheme may also work as a form of deceiving the public by bringing the false problems and by creating fake organizations. As it was mentioned in the research, several “black web-social media techniques” like, fake web-sites, fake social accounts, incorporated bloggers, are usually implanted by the interest groups in order to raise public interest to the problems of the interest groups. Unfortunately, since the interest groups express usually the opinion of a certain minority group, this may lead to the falsification of news and agendas to get wider circle of supporters. In the environment of the overflow of information that is witnessed in modern web-media, usually such data is spread unchecked. With modern web-social networks possibilities, the interest groups can use them effectively in order to persuading wide circles of society or creating the fake image of public interest, thus presenting new threats of manipulation of society and driving people’s attention over the false problems.

The research mainly focused on the issues of the educational interest groups both in Georgia and in the United States. In both states the educational interest groups have to face different problems. The system of organizations of the interest groups in the United States is more set and developed which gives the opportunity to use its example and practically implement its cases in Georgian political environment. The democratic system of both countries allows this experiment to be set. At the same time, the research identified, plus to the main education system problems, the main structural target issues that the educational interest group faces today.

The results obtained from the research proved that Georgia still has the underdeveloped structure of the interest groups and their activity does not meet the requirements set forth by their members and the society at large.

The closer cooperation of interest group and the government is contradictory. Large number of educators claims that the communication between the NGOs and the government is necessary for the successful achievement of their goals.

The lack of proper methodology and strategies of bringing wider circles of supporters to the interest groups creates a huge problem and hinders the process of achieving the goals by the organization.

It is supposed that, with the use of the above described scheme and strategies, the problems can be partially solved, as the level of the activity of the interest group in the United States in practically similar democratic, though rather developed democratic, environment is much enhanced.

Interest groups and education are the main engines that pull the process of democratization in the country. With the development of both spheres of social and political life the whole process of democratization of Georgia will become more rapid and effective. Progress is inevitable; and adaptation to it is a must. With the changes in technologies and media, the lifestyle and political environment are also changing. In the modern reality of new networks, which includes the highest rate of public activity known in history, the evolution of the political organizations becomes a matter of survival. The development of interest group institution triggers the development of educational system, which, in its own, accelerates the progress of democratization in the state.

List of Publications:

Kurdashvili. L. , (2015). The Tendencies of Technological Political Culture of The Depression Era in the Movie “The Wizard of Oz”. *Journal in Humanities, International Black Sea University, Vol 4, Issue 1, p. 19-22.*

Kurdashvili. L., (2016). Origins of Civil Religion of the United States and Political Religion of the Soviet Union. *Journal in Humanities, International Black Sea University, Vol.5, Issue 1, p. 37-40*

Kurdashvili. L., (2016). Culture Industry vs. Fandom. Approaches to the American Broadcast Media. *Journal in Humanities, International Black Sea University, Vol 5, Issue 2, p. 40-44*

Kurdashvili. L, (2017). The effectiveness of the on-line lobbying as of the innovative strategies of the American Interest groups. *Journal in Humanities, International Black Sea University, Vol 6, Issue 1, in print.*