



Comparative Evaluation of the Decisions of the Turkish National Education Council and Indexes of the Journal of Announcements Between 1980-2014

Sezen Tofur ¹, Ahmet Aypay ², Cemil Yücel ³

Abstract

This study aimed to examine Turkish education policies between 1980-2014 through the decisions in the meetings of the Turkish National Education Council and the indexes of Journal of Announcements in terms of Fullan's Educational Change Model. Historical research, a qualitative research method, was used in the study. The data obtained from the written documents were coded using the five dimensions of the Educational Change Model, and agenda items were retrieved. Frequency distributions were obtained and percentages were calculated. The scope of the study covered the period between 1980-2014. The decisions by the National Education Council and 33 indexes of the Journal of Announcements published after 1980 were examined in terms of the agenda items. The results showed that the most frequently addressed item in the meetings of the National Education Council was the dimension 'improving the conditions of work' and in the indexes of the Journal of Announcements it was the dimension 'curriculum'. The decisions related to the dimension 'teacher learning' were the least addressed items both in the Journal of Announcements and the National Education Council. The meetings of the National Education Council held between 1980-2014 did not include agenda items that represented all dimensions of the Educational Change Model. This shows that the council decisions regarding teacher learning are not paid due attention during implementation. It can be argued that in structuring and development of educational policies, all dimensions of educational change should be attached the same level of importance and studied as a whole.

Keywords

Education policies
National education council
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Introduction

Policies are plans that guide decisions and practices regarding an issue (Aypay, 2015). Education is within the scope of politics. Education policies consist of a set of decisions and principles related to education. Every country has an education policy that suits its needs and characteristics (Şişman & Taşdemir, 2008a). The primary agenda of educational policies includes issues such as infrastructure investments of educational institutions, size of schools and classrooms, individuals school preferences, specialisation in education, teacher education, teacher recruitment, teacher salaries, curricula, teaching methods, educational priorities, and basic values that should be taught to students (Aypay, 2015). The primary determinants that form the Turkish national education system are the related laws, development plans, the National Education Council (NEC), decree laws that regulate certain issues, terms of reference, regulations, circulars, and directives, (Şişman & Taşdemir, 2008b). Decree laws, regulations, circulars and directives appear in the Journal of Announcements that is published every month. The issues of the Journal of Announcements include the decisions of the Board of Education and Discipline (Cihan, 2010). In this study, the issues of the journal and the decisions of the National Education Council that are accepted as the determinants of national education policies in Turkey were examined and evaluated.

The meetings of the National Education Council have an important place in the history of Turkish education. The council meetings function as the highest advisory body of the Ministry of National Education and the Turkish national education system. Important policy decisions about national education are made in these meetings. Such decisions are of a kind that can develop and improve the education system as well as solve its problems (Deniz, 2001). Although the meetings of the National Education Council, the first of which was held in 1939, are those in which problems related to education are discussed and important decisions are made, the fact that most of these decisions seem to be repetitive resulted in not being able to solve the problems completely (Eriş, 2006). Consequently, the problems of the education system have left unsolved because necessary steps did not, or could not, be taken with respect to 'putting the council decisions into practice'. A considerable proportion of these decisions were either not implemented or postponed to a later date to implement. Some of the decisions were abandoned after a few years, whereas opposite steps were taken regarding some decisions (Deniz, 2001).

In the existing studies on Turkish education policies, the indexes of the Journal of Announcements and the meetings of the National Education Council have been a primary point of reference for researchers. Although there are Master's and doctoral theses that examine the decisions of the Board of Education and Discipline, and the meetings of the National Education Council from different perspectives, the studies either mostly covered a short period of time, or did not incorporate more than one type of documents. The fact that more than one type of documents were not examined comparatively formed the basis for this study.

This paper was compiled from a dissertation¹ that was written to evaluate Turkish education policies of the 21st century based on the Journal of Announcements, the decisions of the National Education Council, and the Development Plans of the Republic of Turkey. Fullan's conceptualisation of Educational Change Model formed the basis of the study that addressed the research question "*Do the orientation of Turkish education policies in the 21st century are consistent with the decisions of the National Education Council and the indexes of the Journal of Announcements?*". It is thought that the current study would provide educational researchers the opportunity to examine the decisions made in the indexes of the Journal of Announcements and the meetings of the National Education Council from a broad perspective in a scientific and comparative manner.

¹ Tofur, S. (2015). *21. yy Türk eğitim politikalarının oluşturulmasında kaynaklık eden belgelerin Fullan'ın kavramsallaştırması açısından değerlendirilmesi: 1980 - 2014 [Evaluation of 21. century Turkish education policy documents based on Fullan's conceptualizations: 1980 - 2014]* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Eskisehir Osmangazi University, Institute of Educational Sciences, Eskisehir.

Conceptualisation of Fullan's Educational Change Model

In this model, Fullan (2003) tried to address the dynamics of the change model applied in Canada and England in terms of both policy and action.

Accordingly, there are three sets of educational policies that are needed and related to each other in any case. Each set has two basic issues that should always be considered:

- i. High quality policy and application of each set are necessary,
- ii. The impact of each set will be weakened unless interaction and learning occur across the policies.

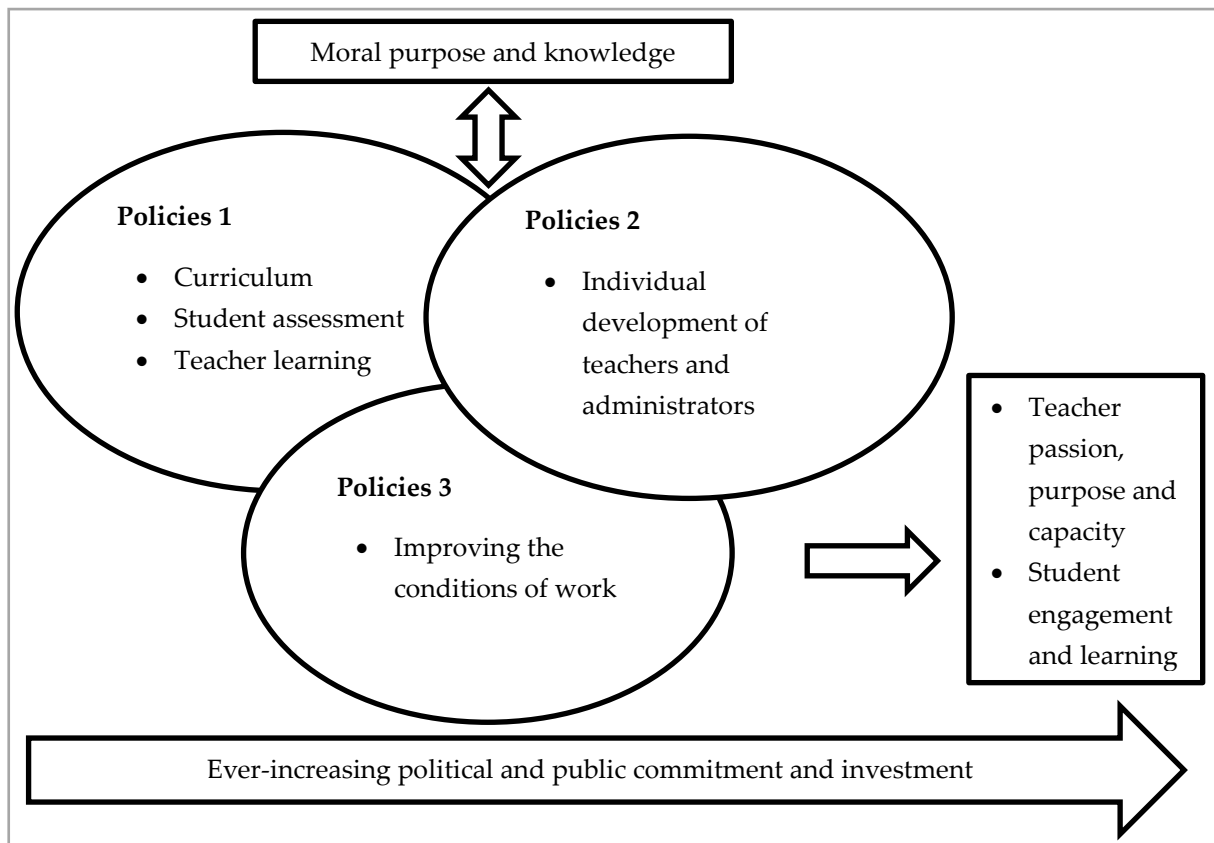


Figure 1. Three Policy Sets of Educational Change (Fullan, 2003, p. 71)

The first principle of the Fullan's Educational Change Model include the curriculum that students need to learn, how this curriculum should be evaluated and what kind of teacher learning is needed for this evaluation. These policies should be made compatible at the state level and implemented by providing teachers experiences through new practices and beliefs. The second and third principles are more general and basic. These two principles prescribe the constant improvement of educators' basic capacity and working conditions without adhering to a certain curriculum. What is more important is that the first principle cannot be achieved without the support of these two principles. Sustainability in education is in a way the transformation of the system. Parents and the society want to see schools being improved, and this is only possible through the constant improvement of the capacity and conditions and their re-structuring with these three reform principles. The efforts of improvement in education should be guided by the new ideas from teachers and experts (Fullan, 2003). The dimensions and their explanations regarding Fullan's Educational Change Model are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Dimensions in Fullan's Educational Change Model

Dimensions	Explanation
Curriculum	Curriculum development is a process that is affected by the elements of organisational structure, organisational commitment, time, material, shared values and effective leadership (Fullan, 1994, p. 65). Traditions, social values, and students' needs and preferences are the issues that should be considered while forming the curriculum. It can be seen as the institutional future of the school. What the school teaches its students is included in the scope of the curriculum (Hallinan, 1987).
Student assessment	Measurement and assessment studies that inspect, clarify and support the transformation makes the biggest contribution to the innovation process (Stiegelbauer, 1994, p. 40).
Teacher learning	Teacher learning is mostly related to the professional learning of teachers. Professional learning is a process that require continuity, and it should be turned into daily life practices for educators instead of professional development (Fullan, 2007).
Individual development of teachers and administrators	It covers the policies for strengthening the teaching profession, inclusive of administrators, through basic ways. These policies include titles such as undergraduate education, graduate education, scholarship, salaries and recruitment (Fullan, 2003).
Improving the conditions of work	Reducing teachers' and principals' workloads, increasing the time that teachers spend while not teaching and that they allot to education, auxiliary staff support in instruction, monitoring schools, etc. (Fullan, 2003).

While the moral aim of education is to create chances of different experiences in the micro level, it is to contribute to social development and democracy in the macro level (Fullan, 2005). Sets of curriculum, student assessment and teacher learning lead to meaningful differences in students' lives only when they are surrounded by moral aims and knowledge. Teachers' passion, aims and capacities strengthen their desire to teach, which is parallel to student commitment and learning. This aspect can increase the instructional quality (Louden & Browne, 2005, p. 147). Therefore, the passion, aims and capacities that teachers have directly affect students' commitment and learning.

Method

In this study, historical research that is a qualitative research method was used. This type of research is conducted to determine the facts about past events, emphasize their results, and synthesise and evaluate their findings objectively and regularly (Cohen & Manion, 1994). Through historical research studies, it is possible to examine a historical occurrence and seek after the pieces of proof that will form a base for the solution of existing problems (Hayman, 1968). In such studies, most of the research period is spent in gathering the resources, reading these resources and writing the data manually. The researcher follows certain steps throughout the research process. The five steps of historical research also implemented in this study are as follows (Johnson & Christensen, 2012):

- i. Defining the research title, clearly posing a problem statement or research question
- ii. Gathering resources, literature review
- iii. Evaluating resources
- iv. Synthesis of data
- v. Finalising the report

Resources in historical research studies can include documents, numeric records, oral statements and remains (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). i. *Documents*: Written or printed materials created in certain forms. Materials such as printed or unprinted annual reports, bills, books, books, directives, court records, dairies, legal records, newspapers, and magazines. ii. *Numeric records*: Population census reports, school budgets, similar numeric printed records. iii. *Oral statements*: People's oral statements that include stories, legends, tales, chants, and other forms of oral expression. iv. *Remains*: Resources that include buildings, monuments, and artworks and provide information about the past

In this study, documents, which is a type of research in historical research, were focused. The decisions of the National Education Council and the indexes of the Journal of Announcements within the last 35 years were examined and evaluated as written documents by means of the historical research method. The data were reported and interpreted after an analysis based on Fullan's Educational Change Model. In this study, it was aimed to identify the relationship between the past and the present, seek after answers to existing problems, and reveal the unknown.

During the examination of the indexes, the open and axial coding that was used in identifying the agenda items related to the dimensions was consistent with the analysis methods of content analysis and embedded theory, but not with the research method of this model. In the study, frequencies and percentages were calculated.

Data Sources

The data resources of the study consisted of the documents belonging to the decisions of the National Education Council and the written documents of the Journal of Announcements. In the scope of this study, the resources published after 1980 were included. Specifically, the resources comprised of the following:

- i. The indexes of the Journal of Announcements published in 1980 and later were included in the study. The indexes of the last 35 years were examined. However, 33 indexes were analysed in the scope of the study because some of the indexes (1998 and 2003) could not be obtained.
- ii. The decisions made in the meetings of the National Education Council in 1980 and later were included in the study. Although 35 meetings were held in the last 35 years, only nine of them could be examined. The 19th meeting of the National Education Council could not be included because the decisions of the 19th meeting held in December 2014 were not yet published, and the 2015 index of the Journal of Announcements were not yet prepared during the research process.
- iii. In order to enhance the reliability of the study in the analyses, three field experts in educational sciences were selected and participated in the study. These experts checked the coding process regarding which items fell into which dimensions in the analysis process.

Gathering Data Resources

The data resources were accessed and gathered by the researcher. The resources related to the Journal of Announcements were downloaded as PDF files from the web site of the Directorate General of Support Services of the Ministry, and obtained from the archive library of the Turkish Education Board. However, the 2015 index could not be included in the study because it was not published at the time of the study.

The resources regarding the decisions of the National Education Council were also downloaded as a PDF file from the website of the Turkish Education Board.

Evaluation of the Resources

The resources gathered in historical research studies are evaluated by the researcher with a critical eye. The researcher cannot be sure about the authenticity and accuracy of the resources, and thus, applies external and internal criticism. In *external criticism* that refers to determining the authenticity, validity, and credibility of a resource, the researcher is concerned with by whom, where, for what purpose, when and in what conditions the resource was written (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). The fact that the decisions of the National Education Council being downloaded from the website of the Turkish Education Board, and the indexes of the Journal of Announcements from the website of the Directorate General of Support Services of the Ministry enhances the validity and credibility of the resources.

Internal criticism that refers to identifying the accuracy and reliability of the information in a resource is also related to how well the data in the resource are interpreted (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). In this study, the meetings of the National Education Council and the Journal of Announcements were accepted as detailed information resources about educational policies because the former was seen as a body in which problems related to education are discussed and important decisions are made, and the latter included decree laws, directives and announcements related to education.

Data Analysis

In historical research, researchers usually find ways to reveal meanings from a large amount of data, and synthesise their findings in a meaningful way. Some researchers suggest categorising the information they gather for content analysis by organising it with a theoretical model in a way that helps them. On the other hand, some other researchers prefer to keep the information to themselves until they are suggested phenomena and themes, in that a coding system can be beneficial in such cases. Lately, some researchers have been observed to use quantitative data to enhance the validity of their interpretations based on documents (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006).

In this study, the decisions of the National Education Council and the indexes of the Journal of Announcements, which were stored in the computer environment, were analysed by the help of the five themes determined based on Fullan's conceptualisation. These themes are; i. Curriculum, ii. Student assessment, iii. Individual development of teachers and administrators, iv. Teacher learning, v. Developing working conditions.

The analysis and interpretation of the data were conducted in nine steps. These steps are as follows:

Analysis and Interpretation of the Decisions of the National Education Council

i. The agenda items belonging to the meetings of the National Education Council were put into a table, and which item fell into which dimension in the Educational Change Model was determined through colouring (see Table 2). The dimensional analysis of each item in the council decisions were done by means of the table prepared. Each item in the table were highlighted with the colour that represented whatever dimension it fell into in the Educational Change Model. In this process, the dimension 'developing working conditions' was marked with blue, the dimension 'individual development of teachers and administrators' with pink, the dimension 'teacher learning' with gray, the dimension 'student assessment' with green, and the dimension 'curriculum' with yellow.

Table 2. Sample Dimensional Analysis for the Meetings of the National Education Council

DIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS OF 10 TH MEETING OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION COUNCIL	Curriculum	Student assessment	Teacher learning	Individual development of teachers and administrators	Developing working conditions
Education of 5-year-old children (0 – 60 months) in preschool education	X				
Preschool classes not being taken as a compulsory level, but then being made compulsory over time					X
Aims and functions of preschool education					X
Preschool classes being made widespread in the countryside and slum areas in a way that emphasises Turkish education					X
Taking the legal measures in making preschool education widespread across the country to ensure the cooperation of the Ministry of National Education with other departments and the contribution of these departments to preschool education					X
Developing curricula for preschool education	X				
Preparing guidebooks for preschool teachers	X				

ii. In the second step, frequencies of agenda items belonging to every NEC meeting was identified based on dimensions and combined in a single table.

iii. Dimensional percentages for the overall result revealed from all council items were calculated.

Analysis and Interpretation of the Indexes of the Journal of Announcements

i. The indexes of the Journal of Announcements were examined under five titles by using Fullan's conceptualisation of Educational Change Model. The indexes were firstly put into a table and grouped based on years.

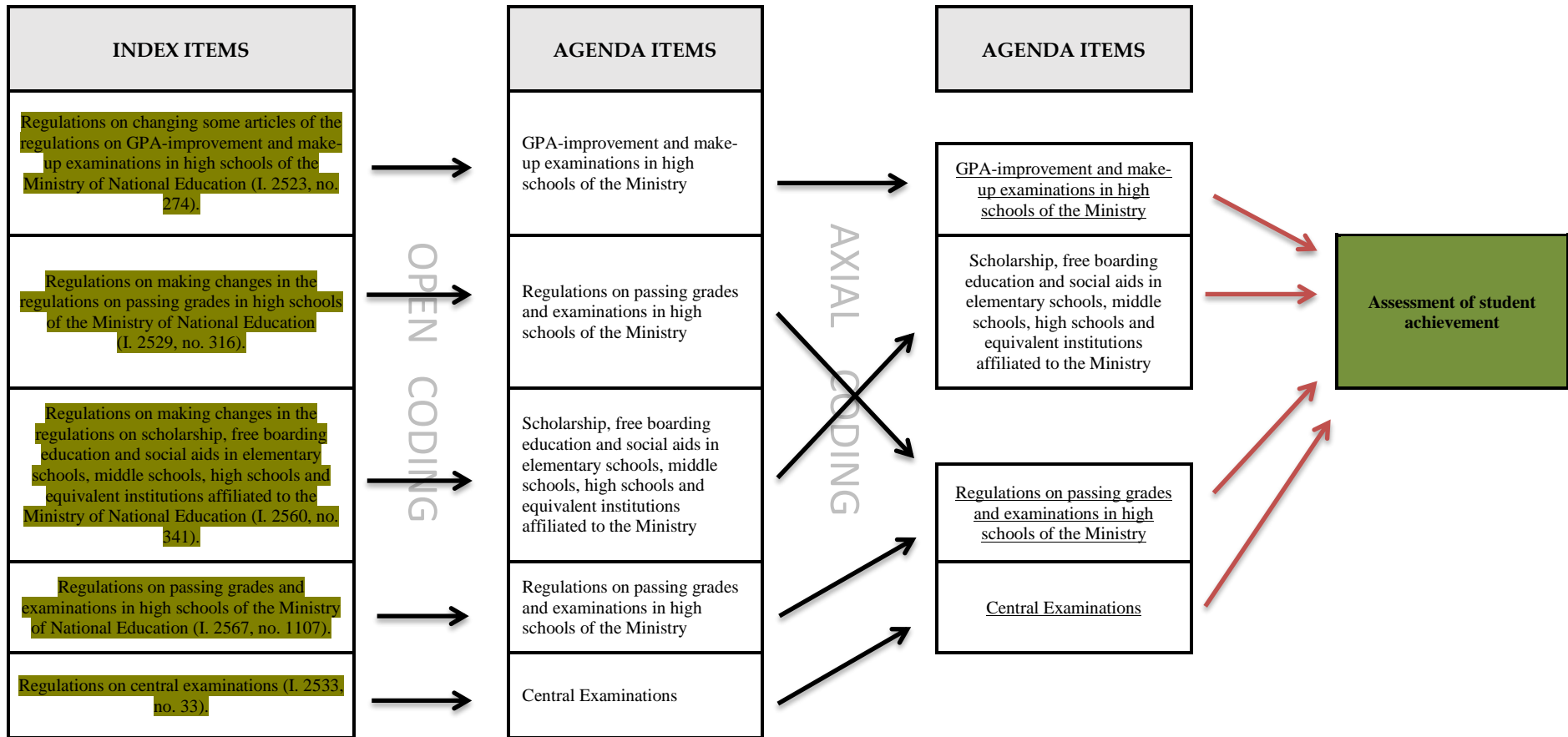
ii. Each item in the table was then highlighted with the colour that represented whatever dimension it fell into in the Educational Change Model (see Table 3).

Table 3. Sample Analysis for the Index Items of the Journal of Announcements

Index items of the Journal of Announcements in 1983	Index items of the Journal of Announcements in 1984	Index items of the Journal of Announcements in 1985
Regulations on training elementary school inspectors through in-service training (I. 2129, no. 1)	Curricula for 9 th , 10 th and 11 th grades workshop courses of the textile-spinning section of Aydın Söke Vocational High School for Girls (I. 2155, no. 1)	Approval of 10 th and 11 th grade tourism management course curricula (I. 2180, no. 1)
Work programmes of the 1982-1983 school year (I. 2129, no. 6)	Regulations on changing Article 11 of the regulations on assignment and dismissal of field service administrators of the Ministry of National Education (I. 2156, no. 33).	Regulations on determining and collecting student fees in private schools (I. 2181, no. 33)
Regulations on changing some articles of the regulations on registrar chiefs of the Ministry of National Education (I. 2133, no. 55)	Changing temporary Article 2 of the regulations on grade passing and examinations in middle schools, high schools and equivalent institutions (I. 2158, no. 57).	Changes made in weekly teacher class schedule of military high schools (I. 2181, no. 35).

iii. In the third step, the index items of the Journal of Announcements that were coloured were analysed through open and axial coding. The coding was done among the items that were highlighted with the same colour. By means of open coding, items were divided into specific sets involving less similarity. In axial coding, the groups revealed through the open codes that showed heterogeneousness to a certain extent were turned into more homogeneous group titles, and the agenda items were found. A sample of forming agenda items is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Sample Coding for Agenda Items Belonging to the Dimension of Student Assessment



iv. The frequency distribution of the dimensions regarding the indexes of the Journal of Announcements was calculated through the final agenda items whose percentages were found.

v. In the fifth step, the NEC timeline showing the years when the meetings of the National Education Council were held was prepared (see Figure 2).

vi. The percentages of the dimensions belonging to the decisions of the National Education Council, and those the dimensions belonging to the indexes of the Journal of Announcements were determined, and put into a table for comparison.

Validity and Reliability of the Study

In qualitative research, internal validity is known as ensuring consistency (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). In other words, it can be described as credibility or reputability (Şencan, 2005). In this study, internal reliability was ensured by bringing together the codes formed during the identification of the agenda items related to the dimensions for the indexes of the Journal of Announcements based on the characteristics of internal homogeneousness and external heterogeneousness. Ensuring the conceptual unity of the codes that constitute the agenda items, and not grouping the agenda items in a way that they would represent the items with the same characteristic are of significance in terms of the internal validity of the study. In addition, the fact that the dimensions of the council decisions were determined by three independent experts also contributed to the internal validity.

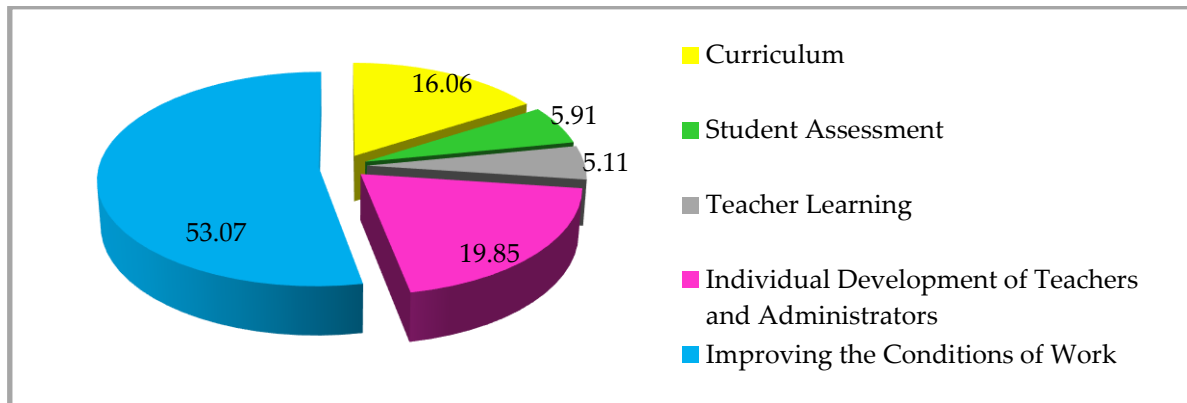
In qualitative research, external validity is the generalisation of findings to outside events or environments (Neuman, 2010). It is also known as transferability (Şencan, 2005). In order to ensure external validity (transferability) in this study, the aim and data resources of the study, and the steps of gathering data resources, evaluating the data resources, data analysis and interpretation were presented in detail.

Internal reliability is revealing the same findings on an issue by different researchers. However, in qualitative research, every researcher's perception and interpretation of events are different (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). Therefore, to ensure internal reliability, the issue under investigation was thoroughly examined by working on it for a long period of time. The selection of the dimensions used in the analyses was done based on the conceptual framework formed beforehand and that was explained in detail. With respect to which items represented which dimensions, from which items each code could be formed, and which agenda items the codes would represent, the data were confirmed by taking the approval of the field experts.

External reliability is the state of consistency in the characteristics of findings and results even after a certain amount of time (Şencan, 2005). In this study, external reliability was ensured by presenting the method and problem statement, how the data were coded, how the analysis was conducted, and the analysis and interpretation processes in detail. In this way, it was aimed to guide researchers who would carry out a similar study in the future.

Findings

Percentages Regarding the Meetings of the National Education Council Between 1980-2014



Graphic 1. Percentages of Dimensions Regarding the Meetings of the National Education Council Held Between 1980-2014

In this sub-section, the findings regarding the percentages of the decisions made in the meetings of the National Education Council held between 1980-2014 are presented in Graphic 1. It was found that 16.06% of these decisions were related to curriculum, 5.91% student assessment, 5.11% teacher learning, 19.25% individual development of teachers and administrators, and 53.07% improving the conditions of work. In this period of 35 years, the most frequently focused items among educational change dimensions were improving the conditions of work, and individual development of teachers and administrators, whereas the least frequently focused items were teacher learning and student assessment.

Agenda Items in the Meetings of the National Education Council Held Between 1980-2014

In this sub-section, the decisions made in the meetings of the National Education Council held between 1980-2014 are presented in Table 5. The items were coloured as indicated in the method section according to the dimension in Fullan's Educational Change Model. Accordingly, as is seen in Table 5, agenda items related to every dimension were not included in every meeting of the National Education Council.

Table 5. Agenda Items in the Meetings of the National Education Council

AGENDA ITEMS OF THE COUNCIL MEETINGS HELD BETWEEN 1980-2014*									
10 th NEC Meeting (1981)	11 th NEC Meeting (1982)	12 th NEC Meeting (1988)	13 th NEC Meeting (1990)	14 th NEC Meeting (1993)	15 th NEC Meeting (1996)	16 th NEC Meeting (1999)	17 th NEC Meeting (2006)	18 th NEC Meeting (2010)	19 th NEC Meeting (2014)
Turkish National Education System Preschool Education Elementary School Education Middle School Education	Development of teacher education	Turkish Education System a)Elementary School Education b)General, and Vocational and Technical High School Education c)Transition to Higher Education d)Assessing Student Achievement	Concepts, Scope and Trends in Non-Formal Education	Educational administration and educational managing	Elementary Education and Orientation	Re-structuring of Vocational and Technical Education within the Higher Education System	Transitions Between Stages, Orientation, and Examinations in the Turkish National Education System Transitions Between, Orientations, and Examinations in a) Special Education b) Preschool Education c)Elementary School Education d)High School Education	Training, Recruitment and Professional Development of Teachers	Curricula and Weekly Class Schedules
Curricula within the Coherence of the System	Pre-service problems and suggestions in teacher education	Higher Education	Organisation and Cooperation in Non-Formal Education	Preschool Education	Re-structuring of High School Education	Vocational Education and Recruitment in Schools and Businesses	Turkish Education System in the process of Globalisation and European Union a)Lifelong Learning b)Mobility in Education c)Quality in Education	Educational Environments, Institutional Culture, and School Leadership	Improving Teacher Quality
Rules Regulating Student Flow	Training of education experts	Teacher Training	Investment and Financing in Non-Formal Education		Re-Structuring of Transition to Higher Education	Training Teachers and Administrators for Vocational and Technical Education		Strengthening Primary and High School Education, Providing Access for High School Education	Increasing the Quality of Administrators
Teacher Training	In-Service Training of Teachers and Experts	New Technologies in Education	Personnel in Non-Formal Education		Constantly Meeting the Educational Needs of the Society	Transition to Higher Education in Vocational and Technical Education Without an Exam		Sports, Arts, Skills and Values Education	School Security
	Problems of teachers and experts, and solutions	Turkish and Foreign Language Teaching a)Turkish Language Teaching b)Foreign Language Teaching			Financing of the Education System	Financing in Vocational and Technical Education		Psychological Counselling, Guidance and Orientation	
		Financing Education a)Financing Resources of Turkish Education b)Education Investments							

* The colouring of the agenda items included in the meetings of the National Education Council were determined by considering the decisions made with regard to those items in the respective meetings.

Frequency Of Dimensions Regarding The Meetings Of The National Education Council Held Between 1980-2014

In this sub-section, the findings regarding the frequency of the decisions made in the meetings of the National Education Council held between 1980-2014 are presented in Table 6.

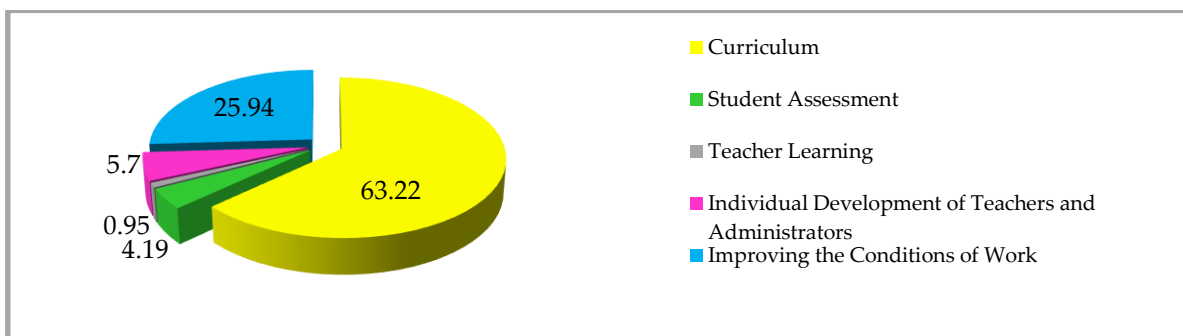
Table 6. Frequency of Agenda Items in the Meetings of the National Education Council Held Between 1980-2014

	10 th NEC Meeting (1981)	11 th NEC Meeting (1982)	12 th NEC Meeting (1988)	13 th NEC Meeting (1990)	14 th NEC Meeting (1993)	15 th NEC Meeting (1996)	16 th NEC Meeting (1999)	17 th NEC Meeting (2006)	18 th NEC Meeting (2010)	Total
Curriculum	10	10	55	8	3	31	37	15	51	220
Student Assessment	2	3	15	1	1	22	6	9	22	81
Teacher Learning	4	7	3	1	3	8	14	10	20	70
Individual Development of Teachers and Administrators	4	109	29	6	5	31	21	22	45	272
Improving the Conditions of Work	20	33	144	27	26	193	117	106	61	727
Total	40	162	246	43	38	285	195	162	199	1370

The decisions made in the meetings of the National Education Council held between 1980-2014 were examined in nine items. There were 1370 decisions belonging to nine meetings. It was found that 220 of these decisions were about curriculum, 81 decisions about student assessment, 70 decisions about teacher learning, 272 decisions about individual development of teachers and administrators, and 727 decisions about improving the conditions of work.

Percentages Regarding the Indexes of the Journal of Announcements Published Between 1980-2014

As is seen in Graphic 2, the findings related to the indexes of the Journal of Announcements published between 1980-2014 showed that Fullan's dimensions of educational change were not focused equally in every period. While the dimensions of curriculum development studies and improving the conditions of work were repeatedly addressed every year, the dimensions of teacher learning, student assessment, and individual development of teachers and administrators remained in the background in frequency.



Graphic 2. Percentages Regarding the Indexes of the Journal of Announcements Published Between 1980-2014

Comparative Analysis of Agenda Items in the Decisions of the National Education Council and the Indexes of the Journal of Announcements Between 1980-2014

The findings in this section are summarised in Figure 2 and Table 7. In the timeline between the years 1980-2014 as presented in Figure 2, the meetings of the National Education Council are highlighted with red. On the other hand, percentage information regarding the meetings of the National Education Council and the indexes of the Journal of Announcements are presented comparatively in Table 7.

As can be seen in Table 7, there were differences between the percentages of the dimensions revealed in the council decisions and those found in the indexes of the journal. The largest differences in percentages were in the dimensions of curriculum, and improving the conditions of work. In overall, the percentage of curriculum was higher in the Journal of Announcements, whereas the percentage of improving the conditions of work was higher in the council decisions.

The largest difference regarding the assessment of student achievement was in the 12th and 18th meetings of the National Education Council. Student assessment constituted 6.10% of the decisions in the 12th meeting of the National Education Council, whereas it was 13.6% in the indexes of the Journal of Announcements. In the 18th meeting of the National Education Council, the same dimension constituted 11.06% of the decisions, whereas it was 13.6% in the indexes of the Journal of Announcements. While the decisions related to the dimension of teacher learning showed an increase in the 14th, 16th, 17th and 18th meetings of the National Education Council, this dimension showed a decrease in the indexes of the journal in the same years.

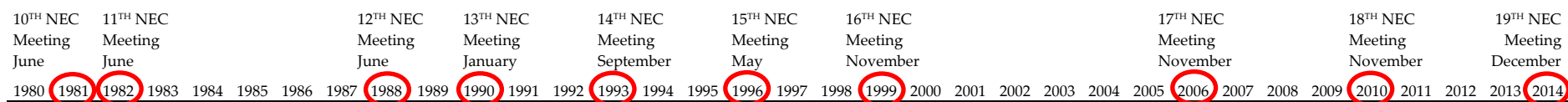


Figure 2. Timeline of the NEC Meetings Held Between 1980-2014

Table 7. Percentages of Dimensions in the Decisions of the NEC Meetings Held Between 1980-2014 and Those in the Indexes of the Journal of Announcements Published in the Same Years

	10 th and 11 th NEC Meeting	1983-1987	12 th NEC Meeting	1989	13 th NEC Meeting	1990-1992	14 th NEC Meeting	1994-1995	15 th NEC Meeting	1997-1999	16 th NEC Meeting	2000-2006	17 th NEC Meeting	2007-2010	18 th NEC Meeting	2011-2014
Curriculum	%9.9	%53.38	%22.36	%71.05	%18.60	%80.75	%7.89	%62.42	%10.88	%53.91	%18.97	%64.95	%9.26	%53.59	%25.63	%76.94
Student Assessment	%2.48	%3.54	%6.10	%13.16	%2.33	%4.53	%2.63	%5.45	%7.72	%4.69	%3.08	%3.26	%5.55	%3.69	%11.06	%2.51
Teacher Learning	%5.44	%2.57	%1.22	%0	%2.33	%0	%7.89	%3.03	%2.80	%0	%7.18	%0.69	%6.17	%0.39	%10.05	%0.25
Individual Development of Teachers and Administrators	%55.94	%4.82	%11.79	%0	%13.95	%3.40	%13.16	%6.67	%10.88	%5.47	%10.77	%5.50	%13.58	%6.99	%22.61	%3.51
Improving the Conditions of Work	%26.24	%35.69	%58.53	%15.79	%62.79	%11.32	%68.42	%22.42	%67.72	%35.93	%60	%25.60	%65.43	%35.34	%30.65	%16.79

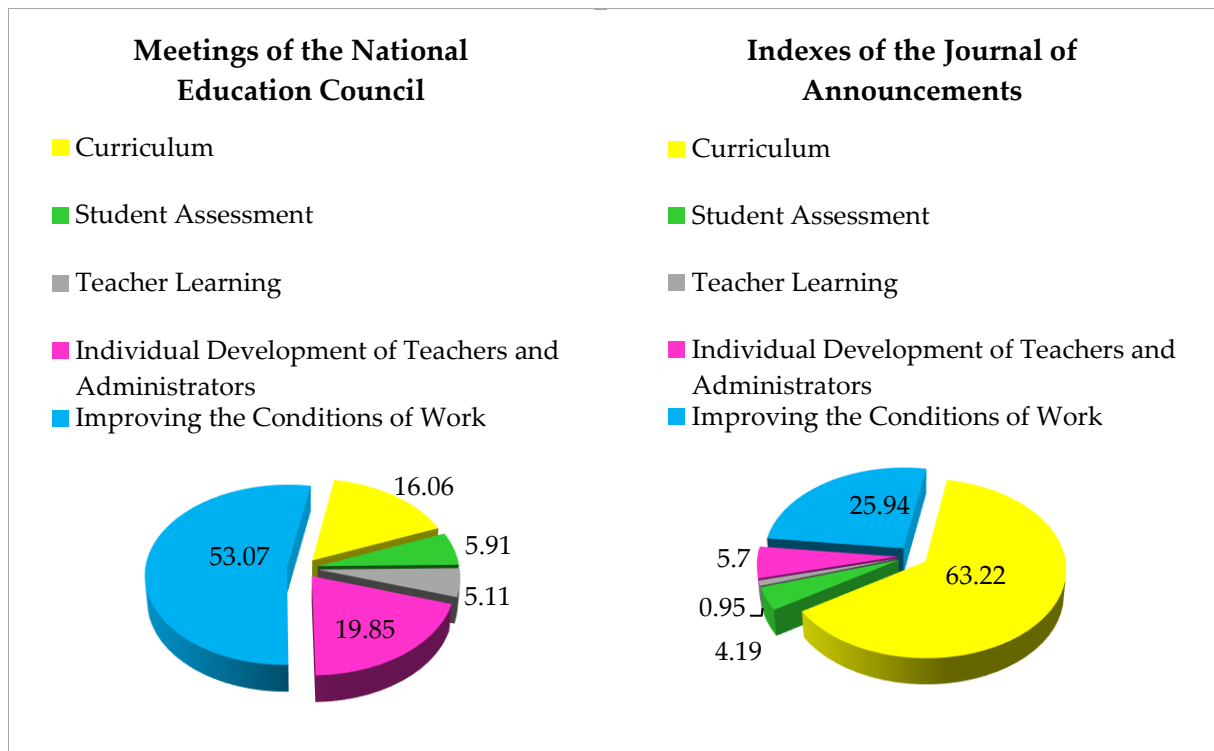
Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

The meetings of the National Education Council are important events in which problems of the education system are evaluated and discussed, reforms and regulations that should be implemented with respect to education are determined, and suggestions are offered in this regard. Besides, the changes made in the education system are published in the Journal of Announcements in the form of regulations, directives, circulars, and guidelines (Şişman, 2007; Şişman & Taşdemir, 2008b). The indexes of the Journal of Announcements are the indicator of whether the decisions made in the meetings of the National Education Council have been put into practice. Research showed that although the decisions made in the council meetings focus on the solution of problems that exist in education, most of them have not been reflected in practice (Akay, 2010; Eriş, 2006). Today, what is most needed in education is a decisive educational policy (Tural & Karakütük, 1991). The National Education Council has a forum-like and far-reaching structure that seeks solutions for real and multidimensional problems of our education system. On the other hand, the fact that the solutions offered and decisions made in the councils are not always applied, or only partially applied has caused the practical results of the meetings to remain in a vicious cycle.

In this study, ten meetings of the National Education Council held since 1980, and 33 indexes of the Journal of Announcements were examined and compared to determine the orientation of Turkish educational policies. The dimensions in Fullan's conceptualisation of Educational Change Model were used in this comparison. As a result of the analysis, it was revealed that agenda items that represent all educational change dimensions were not included in the meetings of the National Education Council held between 1980-2014. In both the council meetings and the journal indexes examined, the least emphasized dimension was teacher learning.

Teacher learning refers to constant and professional learning that enables teachers to follow changes in education and instruction. Generally, teachers are observed to make more effort for professional learning and research in the early years of their profession (Fullan, 2003). Today, various workshops, courses, and programs are organised for professional development. New ideas, skills and activities targeted with professional development may not be acquired through professional learning that is a process that requires continuity. In this respect, teachers should be provided environments that will enable them to turn professional learning to daily life experiences (Fullan, 2007). It is thought that teachers knowledge and skills can be constantly developed by transforming these environments to cultures of learning (Fullan, Cuttress, & Kilcher, 2005). Teachers and administrators should see professional learning as a key for curriculum efforts and increasing educational quality (Fullan, 1994, p. 63).

In the study, the proportion of the teacher learning dimension in the agenda items was 5.11% in the council meetings while it was 0.95% in the journal indexes. At the same time, when the decisions made in the recent meetings were examined, it was found that there was a proportional increase in the agenda items related to the teacher learning dimension (see Table 7). In the council meetings where existing problems are discussed and decisions towards solutions are made, the increase in the importance attached to teacher learning in recent years can be seen as an indicator that this dimension has started to come into prominence. It can be argued that in order for the decisions to be implemented, the quality of teacher learning should increase and new educational policies related to this dimension should be developed. Fullan (2003) emphasized that teachers should be presented experiences through new practices and beliefs in increasing teacher learning, and in this respect, policies should be made compatible at the state level and implemented.



Graphic 3. Percentages Regarding the Meetings of the National Education Council, and the Indexes of the Journal of Announcements

When the agenda items of the council meetings were examined in terms of the decisions made, the most emphasized educational change dimensions were found to be improving the conditions of work, individual development of teachers and administrators, curriculum, student assessment, and teacher learning, respectively (see Graphic 3). Comparing the percentages of the educational change dimensions for the council meetings and the indexes of the journal, the dimensions of improving the conditions of work, individual development of teachers and administrators, and teacher learning were found to decrease in the journal. However, there was an increase in the curriculum dimension. This can be due to factors such as not being able to put the decisions into practice, not including the decisions in national educational policies sufficiently, ministers' practices, not being able to develop suitable policies for the solution of problems in the national education system, and implemented government programs. Gelen and Beyazit (2007) pointed out that the teachers in their study were not qualified enough to serve for the educational goals, and thus, should be trained on a regular basis. They also indicated that school working conditions that would facilitate the implementation of curricula should be improved. These conclusions are consistent with the results reported in the current study.

The data showed that the dimension of student assessment was in values close to each other in both examinations, but these values were low. This indicates that the importance attached to measurement and assessment in Turkey has decreased in both the decisions made and practice. As for the dimension of curriculum, it revealed to be higher in the council decisions than in the indexes of the journal with a large difference. The most emphasized agenda item in the journal was the dimension of curriculum which was focused more in practice compared to other dimensions. Studies examining the Journal of Announcements support the finding that the issues related to this dimension (curricula, coursebooks, teacher class schedules, etc.) are focused more than those related to other dimensions (Akalin, 2011; Cihan, 2010). Şıvgın and Akbaba Altun (2012) examined the issues of the Journal of Announcements between the years 2000-2010 in terms of the policy decisions and practices. It was inferred from the results that the decisions published in the issues of the Journal of Announcements mostly included course schedules, changes in these schedules, instructional curricula and tools. The

results are in parallel to those reported in the current study. While there was an increase in the percentages of all dimensions except the dimension of improving the conditions of work in the meetings of the National Education Council held after 2005, there was a decrease in all dimensions but the curriculum dimension in the issues of the Journal of Announcements. After 2005, the percentage of the curriculum dimension showed an increase in both the issues of the Journal of Announcements and the meetings of the National Education Council. This increase in the curriculum dimension is thought to be due to the transition to new educational programs in the period following 2005.

As a result, it can be argued that all dimensions regarding educational change should be examined as a whole with the same level of importance in practices related to structuring and developing educational policies. This study is of significance in terms of presenting a comparison of the meetings of the National Education Council in which important decisions about education are made, and the indexes of the Journal of Announcements in which practices followed in education are published. Besides, covering a period of 35 years increases the importance of the study in that it enables looking at a wide range of educational policies. It can be suggested to replicate the study in the following years as the meetings of the National Education Council are held and the indexes of the Journal of Announcements are published. Another suggestion can be to replicate the study by adding the decisions of the 19th meeting of the National Education Council and 2015 index of the Journal of Announcements which were not published at the time of the study. Further studies can be conducted to see whether the decisions made in the meetings of the National Education Council were put into practice to solve the existing problems, or reveal whether the issues published in the Journal of Announcements were addressed in practice.

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