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Research article

Corresponding Authors:

Melek ÖZKAYACAN ORCID ID:0000-0001-7910-6745
Ministry of National Education, Türkiye
mozkayacan@hotmail.com

Doc. Dr. Nilay NEYİŐCI ORCID ID:0000-0002-9360-5337
Hacettepe University, Türkiye
nilbasar@hacettepe.edu.tr

Biodatas:

Melek Özkayacan is a teacher in the Ministry of National Education, Ankara, Türkiye.

Nilay NEYİŐCI is an Associate Professor at Hacettepe University, Faculty of Education, Educational Sciences Department, Ankara, Türkiye

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DECISIONS RELATED TO HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE NATIONAL EDUCATION COUNCILS

Melek ÖZKAYACAN¹
mozkayacan@hotmail.com

Nilay NEYİŞCİ²
nilbasar@hacettepe.edu.tr

Abstract

National Education Councils are the most important education meetings that shape the education system and education policies in our country and the education system in Turkey to a great extent, both with the agenda items and the decisions taken in the meeting. Due to this importance, this study has been made to examine how and in what subject content the decisions taken regarding higher education were taken in the National Education Councils. In this study, in order to determine the importance given to higher education in the National Education Councils, which are the highest advisory body of our education system, to evaluate to what extent higher education education is given in which councils, and to determine the decisions taken regarding higher education; all written policies, documents and strategies of the twenty National Education Councils held between 1939-2021 are examined, considering these strategies as the primary source."Since primary sources related to the entire content were accessed in the study and it was deemed appropriate to include all Council meetings in the research, written (printed and digital) documents on the National Education Councils were scanned and examined, and the data were evaluated with descriptive analysis and content analysis, without selecting any sample in the data search.

Keywords: National Education Councils, Higher Education, Council Decisions, Education

1. Introduction

Since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, the Ministry of National Education has created various important organizations to address the significant challenges it faced in education. Among these organizations, the National Education Council, which is the advisory body of the Ministry of National Education, stands out, as it involves educators in the planning of national education, curriculum development, determining periodic goals, and provides a platform where ideas can be freely expressed, outside the political authority (Dinç, 1999:2).

In Turkey, the National Education Councils are the highest advisory board of the Ministry of National Education and one of the most established boards where multi-faceted discussions take place and decisions are made regarding the country's education policies and future recommendations. Additionally, the National Education Council, which examines educational issues in detail and makes advisory decisions to improve the country's education system and increase its quality, is an important educational organization that takes into account the views of many stakeholders from all segments of society and whose outcomes are utilized in the formation of educational policies. From this perspective, the National Education Councils have gained a significant position in our education system from the past to the present.

Historically, the origins of the National Education Councils trace back to the Maarif Congress, which was first held on July 16, 1921, under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal in Ankara. The Maarif Congress and the Heyet-i İlmiye (Scientific Committee) studies can be considered as the precursor/initial preparatory work for the Councils (Deniz, 2001:10). This congress hosted three Heyet-i İlmiye studies, the first of which began in 1923 and continued in 1924 and 1925. These studies addressed very important issues such as "the most efficient use of national education resources, the transition to coeducation in secondary schools, and the establishment of the Directorate of Education and Training" (Deniz, 2001:12). Following these studies, the Maarif Councils held in 1939 and the National Education Councils thereafter directly influenced the education system and policies. The periods for the councils were legislated in 1995 to be held every four years, though they have varied over time based on conditions and circumstances. From 1939 to 2021, the National Education Councils have convened a total of 20 times, contributing significantly to our education system through their decisions and actions.

It has been observed that many decisions regarding education and teaching were made at the Councils, some of which were implemented while others were not. Issues related to higher education are also one of the important matters discussed in the Councils' agendas, with various decisions made in this regard. Higher education is a key element in the production of the qualified human resources a country needs, contributes to intellectual wealth, plays a role in knowledge production, and serves society by fostering learning, absorption, and renewal. Universities are important institutions that lead social change through their activities in economic, technological, and social fields, contributing to progress by influencing society with their work in these areas (Arabacı & Çankaya, 2009).

The evaluations and decisions made regarding higher education at the National Education Councils can serve as need-determining and guiding functions in many aspects of education, including higher education. In this context, determining how higher education has been addressed in the National Education Councils from the past to the present is of great importance due to its key role in the educational process. The review of postgraduate studies on National Education Councils reveals that the resolutions adopted during these councils are generally examined from the perspective of specific courses. Examples include theses on music education (Gündođdu, 2006), Turkish language teaching (Alemdar, 2007), Turkish language (Çeçen & Çiftçi, 2008), history teaching (Ayaz, 2009), preschool education (Altay, 2011), religious education (Öztürk, 1990; Efendiođlu, 2013), visual arts education (Bağ, 2017; Kayalıođlu, 2018), foreign language teaching (Yılmaz, 2019), and science education (Bakar, 2024).

In terms of broader topics and studies addressing specific time periods, examples include *The National Education Councils Held Between 1961-1987 and the Implementation of the Decisions Made* (Eriř, 2006), *National Education Councils and Educational Policies 1939–1946* (Aslaner, 2008), *An Examination of the National Education Council Resolutions in Terms of Selected Concepts* (Akay, 2010), and *National Education Councils During the Democratic Party Era* (Akgül, 2020). All these studies employ similar methods and utilize document analysis. However, it has been noted that there are only a limited number of studies covering higher education issues in relation to the National Education Councils, and there is a lack of comprehensive research covering all the Councils.

This study aims to investigate under which headings, with which conceptual contents, and in what manner issues related to higher education were addressed in the National Education Councils, and to contribute meaningfully to the literature. The purpose of this research is to

examine how concepts and issues related to higher education were addressed in the National Education Councils.

This study was conducted to investigate how issues related to higher education were addressed in the National Education Councils, under which headings, with which conceptual contents, and in what manner. In this context, the main goal of this research is to examine in detail how concepts and issues related to higher education have been handled in the National Education Councils.

2.Method

In this study, it is aimed to determine which issues constitute the agenda items of the 20 National Education Councils, the first of which was held in 1939 and the last of which was held in 2021, and how much higher education issues were mentioned in them. In addition, it was examined which decisions were taken about higher education education in the 20 National Education Councils organized between the specified years. First, the main themes related to these decisions were created and then the distribution of the sub-categories related to these themes according to the Councils was determined. A qualitative study method was used depending on the research content. Based on the results of the research, some suggestions were made for higher education within the education system.

2.1. Research Model

In this study, qualitative research model was used as the model and “documentary scanning” method was deemed appropriate for data collection. Document analysis is also known as documentary scanning and it enables the existing documents and records to be examined and evaluated and data to be obtained. Karaser (2005) defined document analysis as finding, reading, noting and evaluating sources for a specific purpose. Yıldırım and Şimşek (2013) stated that document analysis is written materials containing information about the facts and phenomena targeted to be researched.

2.2. Data Collection and Analysis

The documents compiled by the “documentary scanning” method in the collection of data on the subject of the research are the decision summaries of the twenty National Education Councils held between 1939-2021, and the resources were compiled from the written documents and online resources of these National Education Councils. The printed sources of the National Education Councils used in the research are given in the table below. The documents compiled by the “documentary scanning” method in collecting data on the research topic are basically the decision summaries of twenty National Education Councils held between 1939-2021.

Table 1. *20 National Education Councils Used in the Research*

Order No	Council	Date
1	1st National Education Council	July 17-29, 1939
2	2nd National Education Council	February 15-21, 1943
3	3rd National Education Council	December 2-10, 1946
4	4th National Education Council	August 22-31, 1949
5	5th National Education Council	February 5-14, 1953
6	6th National Education Council	March 18-23
7	7th National Education Council	February 5-15, 1962
8	8th National Education Council	September 28-October 3, 1970
9	9th National Education Council	June 24-July 4, 1974
10	10th National Education Council	June 23-26, 1981
11	11th National Education Council	June 8-11, 1982
12	12th National Education Council	July 18-22, 1988
13	13th National Education Council	January 15-19, 1990
14.	14th National Education Council	September 27-29, 1993
15	15th National Education Council	May 13-17, 1996
16	16th National Education Council	February 22-26, 1999
17	17th National Education Council	November 13-16, 2006
18	18th National Education Council	November 1-5, 2010
19	19th National Education Council	December 2-6, 2014
20	20th National Education Council	December 13, 2021

The written documents of the study consist of twenty printed and online sources obtained from the National Education Council. To develop the data collection form, a literature review was conducted beforehand. Within the scope of the study, it is assumed that primary sources related to the topic primarily including resources from the Ministry of National Education, postgraduate studies, and scientific articles were accessed. It is presumed that the accessed sources contain accurate information relevant to the study's topic and are sufficient for this research. Subsequently, in line with the research's objectives and goals, examination criteria and associated standards were established, and the study was evaluated using a data collection form focusing on higher education.

In this context, a case study was conducted, and the data obtained as a result of the Council's decisions were categorized and evaluated through descriptive analysis and content analysis. Yıldırım and Şimşek (2013) defined descriptive analysis as presenting the findings in an organized and interpreted manner to the reader. For this purpose, the data were first described in an orderly and systematic manner, and then they were explained and interpreted, with cause-and-effect relationships examined to reach conclusions.

This research is limited to decisions related solely to higher education among the resolutions adopted at the twenty National Education Councils held between 1939 and 2021. Additionally, the implementation of decisions directly or indirectly related to higher education made during the National Education Councils has been examined. During the analysis process, the agenda items and resolutions of the National Education Councils were reviewed and analyzed from the perspective of higher education, and corresponding frequency and percentage values were calculated. In the initial stage, data were collected and analyzed using a data collection tool. To ensure reliability and consistency, the data analyses conducted by the researchers were first compared internally. Finally, the contents of the reports were evaluated and presented, sometimes with interpretations and at other times through "direct quotations" within the text.

Table 2. Concepts That Are Mentioned As Higher Education Education in National Education Councils

Concept	f	%
High School (yüksek okul)	44	5.79%
Higher School (yüksek mektep)	1	0.13%
University (üniversite)	115	15.13%
Faculty (fakülte)	121	15.92%
License (lisans)	140	18.42%
Postgraduate (Undergraduate) (lisansüstü)	23	3.03%
Above High School (lise üstü)	1	0.13%
PhD (doktora)	13	1.71%
Master's Degree (yüksek lisans)	58	7.63%
Higher Institute (yüksek enstitü)	4	0.53%
Higher Education (yüksek eğitim)	22	2.89%
Higher Education (yüksek öğretim)	162	21.32%
Higher Education (yüksek öğrenim)	25	3.29%
High Teacher (yüksek öğretmen)	15	1.97%
Institute of Education (eğitim enstitüsü)	16	2.11%

In the data analysis section used in the research, it was seen that there were different concepts referred to as higher education level in many places and that conducting the research by including these concepts would reveal a healthier and more reliable research. In the data analysis obtained from this table, the frequency value of each word has different numbers, and the Councils in which the two words with the lowest frequency value are mentioned and their contents are presented as examples by direct quotation method:

In the opening speech of the 1st National Education Council, the expression “higher education” was emphasized by saying, “...Universities and higher schools, our children coming from high schools insist on their weakness in this and that point...(MEB,1939)”.

In the 11th National Education Council, in the sub-heading of the principles of the teacher education model, the expression “above high school” was emphasized by stating that “...teacher education is handled within the framework of higher education and no matter for which level they are prepared, the prospective teacher must have a higher education than high school (MoNE, 1982)”.

3.Findings

Analyses conducted to show how and under which subject headings issues related to higher education were addressed in the National Education Councils, as well as the results obtained from the data collection, led to several findings. These findings were organized into three main categories: "Findings on the Subject Headings Containing Expressions Related to Higher Education," "Findings on the Agenda Items Containing Expressions Related to Higher Education," and "Distribution of Subcategories Addressed in Relation to Higher Education Across the Councils," and were evaluated in table format.”.

3.1.Findings on the Subject Headings of the National Education Councils in which Statements on Higher Education Are Included

It was observed that in some National Education Councils, higher education was not covered at all, while in others it was covered in different numbers and at different rates. Below, the topics under which the findings related to higher education were addressed in the Councils are indicated.

Table 3. *Subject Headings in the National Education Councils with Statements on Higher Education*

National Education Councils	Subjects
1st National Education Council	Decisions Taken At The Council
2nd National Education Council	Decisions Taken At The Council
3rd National Education Council	--
4th National Education Council	Decisions Taken At The Council
5th National Education Council	-
6th National Education Council	-
7th National Education Council	Higher Education Universities
8th National Education Council	Structure of the Turkish National Education System Secondary Education Second cycle secondary education Various programs Types and Weights of Courses in Higher Education Preparatory Program and Various Programs Preparing for Higher Education Programs Preparing for Both Profession and Higher Education Horizontal and Vertical Transitions to Secondary Education Graduation Examinations and Diplomas Names of Second Cycle Secondary Education Institutions
9th National Education Council	General Structure of Turkish Education System and Programs Formal and Non-Formal Education Secondary School Weekly Course Distribution Schedule Various Programs Common Courses for All Programs Programs preparing for higher education Special Courses/Elective Courses for Higher Education Preparatory Programs Programs that prepare you for life and work Horizontal and vertical transfers in secondary education High school diploma
10th National Education Council	Decisions Taken At The Council
11th National Education Council	Major Trainings and Developments in Turkey Teacher Training in Various Countries Offers Principles of the Teacher Education Model
12th National Education Council	Transition to Higher Education Higher Education New Technologies in Education Teacher training Turkish and Foreign Language Education and Training Financing Education Appeal Decisions

	Investment and Financing in Non-Formal Education
13th National Education Council	Concept in Nonformal Education Scope and Trends Organization and Cooperation in Non-Formal Education Staff in Non-Formal Education
14th National Education Council	Decisions Taken At The Council
15th National Education Council	Primary education and orientation Restructuring in Secondary Education Reorganization of Transition to Higher Education Continuously Meeting the Education Needs of the Society Financing the Education System
16th National Education Council	Restructuring Vocational and Technical Education within the Integrity of Secondary Education Teacher and Administrator Training in Vocational and Technical Education Financing in Vocational and Technical Education
17th National Education Council	Transitions Between Levels in the Turkish National Education System Guidance and Examination System Transition between Secondary Education Levels, Orientation Examination System Mobility in Education Quality in Education
18th National Education Council	Teacher Training, Employment and Professional Development Educational Environments, Organizational Culture and School Leadership Strengthening Primary and Secondary Education, Ensuring Access to Secondary Education, Sports, Arts, Skills and Values Education Psychological Counseling, Guidance and Guidance
19th National Education Council	Improving Teacher Quality The Quality of Pre-Service Education in Teacher Education Selection of Prospective Teachers for the Profession Professional Development of Teachers (In-Service Training) and Structuring Career System Other Other Topics
20th National Education Council	Strengthening the General Structure of Vocational Education Enhancing the Reputation of Vocational Education Improving Teacher Training

As indicated in the table above, while some National Education Councils did not address higher education at all, others referred to it, either directly or indirectly, in varying proportions and numbers across different education levels and subject contents. When the findings derived from these data are examined in detail:

National Education Councils that did not address higher education or mention any findings related to the topic: the 3rd, 5th, and 6th National Education Councils.

National Education Councils that addressed higher education under one subject heading: the 2nd, 4th, 10th, and 14th National Education Councils.

National Education Council that addressed higher education under two subject headings: the 7th National Education Council.

National Education Councils that addressed higher education under three subject headings: the 13th, 9th, and 20th National Education Councils.

National Education Council that addressed higher education under four subject headings: the 11th National Education Council.

National Education Councils that addressed higher education under five subject headings: the 15th, 17th, and 18th National Education Councils.

National Education Council that addressed higher education under six subject headings: the 19th National Education Council.

National Education Council that addressed higher education under eight subject headings: the 12th National Education Council.

As can be understood from the findings above, no topics related to higher education were addressed either in the agenda items or in the resolutions of the III., V., and VI. National Education Councils. According to Evren (2018, p. 73), the aim of the VI. National Education Council was to introduce regulations and make decisions on issues such as education, the duration of education, curricula, and school types to meet the country's need for qualified labor. According to Yılmaz (2019), the VIII. National Education Council addressed the issues of secondary education and the transition to higher education. Examining the data in the table reveals that the VIII. National Education Council addressed higher education directly in its agenda items and included various educational topics related to higher education in its resolutions, categorizing them under ten headings.

3.2. Findings Regarding the Agenda Items in the National Education Councils that Include Statements on Higher Education

Table 4. *Table of Distribution of Higher Education in National Education Councils According to Agenda Items*

Council	Agenda Items
2nd National Education Council	Commitment to moral principles in higher education youth Establishing a clear basis for the dissemination of new terms in higher education
7th National Education Council	Higher Education
8th National Education Council	Reorganization of Transition to Higher Education
12th National Education Council	Transition to Higher Education Higher Education
15th National Education Council	Reorganization of Transition to Higher Education
16th National Education Council	Transition to Higher Education without Examination in Vocational and Technical Education

As shown in Table-4, higher education was directly addressed as an agenda item in only six National Education Councils, while in the other Councils it was generally included in the decisions or proposals sections of the Councils. The findings where higher education was included as an agenda item are presented below:

II. National Education Council;

1st Article, Clause (d): "Inculcating adherence to moral principles among higher education youth."

2nd Article, Clause (c): "Establishing a definitive basis for the dissemination of new terms in higher education."

VII. National Education Council;

Clause (H): "Higher Education."

VIII. National Education Council;

2nd Article: "Reorganizing the Transition to Higher Education."

XII. National Education Council;

1st Article, Section on "Turkish Education System," Clause (c): "Transition to Higher Education," and the 2nd Article of the same council: "Higher Education."

XV. National Education Council;

3rd Article: "Reorganizing the Transition to Higher Education."

XVI. National Education Council;

4th Article: "Admission to Higher Education without Exams in Vocational and Technical Education."

3.3. The Distribution of Subcategories Related to Higher Education Addressed in National Education Councils by Each Council.

Another finding obtained from the analysis of the Councils decisions from past to present is the subheadings under which higher education is addressed:

Table 5. *The Distribution of Subcategories Related to Higher Education Addressed in National Education Councils by Each Council.*

Topic Headings	National Education Councils	f	%
Higher Education Programs	1,8,9,12,15,16,17,19,20	9	11,84
Academic In-Service Training	11, 17	2	2,63
Pedagogical Formation and Certification Programs	11, 15,17	3	3,95
Scientific/Technological Studies	9,12,16,19	4	5,26
Restructuring Efforts in Higher Education	1,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20.	16	21,05
Academic Staff Appointments and Employment Rights	7,11,12,16,18	5	6,58
Academic Education (Master's and Doctorate Degrees)	10,11,12,13,16,18,19	7	9,21
International Studies/Scholarships/EU Education Programs	12,14,15,17,18,19	6	7,89
Foreign Language Education	9,12,16	3	3,95
Transition to Higher Education and Exams	7,8,9,11,12	5	6,58
Collaboration with Institutions in Higher Education	7,8, 9,11,12,15,16,18,19	9	11,84
Other Themes (Art, Sports, National Consciousness, Morality, etc.)	7,8,9,11,16,17,20	7	9,21
TOTAL		76	100

The twenty National Education Councils held from past to present have been thoroughly examined in this study, and subcategories have been created based on the subject headings of the issues brought up on the agenda. According to the findings obtained from Table-5 above, it was observed that in the 3rd, 4th, and 5th National Education Councils, no subject heading related to higher education was included. The topics that appeared the least on the agenda were: academic in-service training (11th and 17th Councils), pedagogical formation and certification programs (11th, 15th, and 17th Councils), and scientific/technological studies (9th, 12th, 16th, and 19th Councils).

Additionally, the most frequently addressed subcategories related to higher education were: higher education programs (2nd, 8th, 9th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, and 20th Councils), restructuring efforts in higher education (1st, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, and 20th Councils), collaboration with institutions in higher education (7th, 9th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, and 20th Councils), and other themes (1st, 2nd, 4th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, and 20th Councils).

4. Conclusions

To guide the course of education, open new horizons for future generations, and advance the Turkish National Education system towards a modern future by adapting to developments both in the world and in our country, twenty National Education Councils were held, with the first convened in 1939 and the most recent in 2021. It is an undeniable fact that these Councils, which have continued throughout the history of the Republic, hold great significance in the history of education and have provided guidance to our education system through the decisions made during them.

According to the results of this research, the themes addressed in the councils varied in focus and emphasis depending on the conditions and opportunities of the time and era. However, based on the findings obtained from the study and a review of the literature, it was determined that higher education received less attention in the National Education Councils compared to other education levels. Nonetheless, as Kılıç and Güven (2017) also pointed out, decisions related to higher education have been on the agenda since the first council and gained greater importance from the 1980s onwards. In particular, topics such as "higher education programs" and "transition to higher education" were addressed in ten different councils. The results obtained from this research regarding each council are presented in detail below.

When the decisions made during the 1st National Education Council are examined, the term "higher education" is not explicitly mentioned. However, the statement "Higher education institutions and faculties were affiliated with the Ministry of National Education (MoNE, 1939)" indicates a significant step taken in the education system regarding the unit to which higher education was affiliated. In the 1st National Education Council, under the subheading of the main agenda item focusing on the development of moral education in schools, the term "higher education" is used twice, with statements such as: "Ensuring commitment to moral principles among higher education youth and establishing definitive principles for spreading new terms in higher education." Here, values within higher education are addressed, aiming to enhance not only students' academic knowledge but also their moral and personal development. Additionally, the statement "Only graduates from institutions specifically training teachers in this field should be appointed to middle and high school history teaching positions... (MoNE, 1943)" makes a reference to higher education concerning teacher appointments..

In the 3rd, 5th, and 6th National Education Councils, it was concluded that no issues related to higher education were addressed either in the agenda items or in the decisions taken.

In the 4th National Education Council, higher education was not directly addressed in the agenda items or resolutions. However, in the "Decisions Taken" section, the statement "The organization of teacher training institutes and high teacher schools that prepare teachers for middle and high schools should be revised according to needs... necessary changes should be made in the curricula of teacher training institutions... (MoNE, 1949)" refers broadly to post-secondary education and universities that train teachers.

In the 7th National Education Council, the term "higher education" was mentioned both in the agenda items and in the council resolutions. A noteworthy aspect is that, for the first time in the history of the councils, "higher education" was directly included as an agenda item, with the statement: "The principles accepted by the National Education Council regarding universities and new universities to be established were generally approved. The General Directorate of Higher Education will ensure the implementation of the necessary measures in accordance with these principles... (MoNE, 1962)."

In the 8th National Education Council, the topic of higher education was directly included as an agenda item under the heading "Restructuring the Transition to Higher Education (MoNE, 1970)." Additionally, the opening speech of the council by the Minister of National Education addressed several aspects of higher education. Among these, it was noted that the structure of secondary education and the transition to higher education were reorganized, and it was emphasized that individuals should be placed in higher education institutions according to their abilities and prepared for professional life.

In the 9th National Education Council, the term "higher education" was not explicitly included in the agenda items. However, within the decisions related to secondary education, the subheading "Transition to Higher Education" stated: "Secondary education provides students who complete programs preparing them for higher education or both a profession and higher education with the right to apply to universities, academies, and colleges in line with their education (MoNE, 1974)," thus addressing the transition to higher education. Another significant outcome was the decision that "Curriculum development efforts should be approached within the framework of the course distribution chart established at the 9th National Education Council, and secondary education should be structured in two ways: programs preparing students for higher education and programs preparing students for both a profession and higher education." Additionally, it was emphasized that "Work should be conducted on the Draft Law on Higher Schools (Decision-113) and efforts should be made to expand the capacity of higher education to ensure that every willing student who has earned the right to transition to higher education has the opportunity to pursue it (Decision-114)."

In the 10th National Education Council, the term "higher education" was not directly included in the agenda items. However, in Articles 27 and 32 of the "Decisions Taken by the Council" section, the following decision was made: "Those teachers working in primary education institutions who have received higher education should be provided with the opportunity to undergo further training, as much as possible... (MoNE, 1981)." This decision highlighted the importance of teachers receiving higher education and emphasized the provision of educational privileges for them.

In the 11th National Education Council, the term "higher education" was not mentioned in the agenda items. However, the main agenda of this council was "teacher training." The council made an important decision regarding teacher education: "The duration of teacher training programs in teacher training institutions has increased in a relatively short period of time. Especially after the adoption of the 1739 National Education Basic Law, a requirement was introduced for all school teachers to have completed at least two years of higher education (MoNE, 1982)." This decision established the crucial requirement of two years of higher

education for teacher training. One of the most notable aspects of this council regarding higher education was the establishment of faculties and departments of education in universities, which provided teachers the opportunity to pursue master's and doctoral degrees either in their own fields or in various specialized areas of education. Additionally, another key point was the continuous emphasis on the collaboration between the Ministry of National Education and universities.

In the 12th National Education Council, higher education was addressed under two separate agenda items: "Transition to Higher Education" and "Higher Education." Under these headings, the following issues were discussed: the gradual elimination of exams for transitioning to higher education, the opening of new higher education institutions with an emphasis on vocational programs, and the restructuring of existing faculties, specifically the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Arts. Additionally, it was decided that deans in faculties would be selected from three faculty members, chosen by the university's rector, and that rectors would be appointed by the Higher Education Council. Other decisions included allocating more resources to higher education, revising the rights and positions of academic personnel, especially reviewing the current status of assistant professorships, and integrating teacher training institutions into the Ministry of National Education, Youth, and Sports (MoNE, 1988).

In the 13th National Education Council, while no direct reference to higher education was made in the agenda items, discussions focused on the model of adult education. It was concluded that a "National Education Terminology Dictionary" should be prepared, and that higher education should be included in adult education studies and courses, with the need to train a sufficient number of educators for these programs.

In the 14th National Education Council, the term "higher education" was not directly addressed in the agenda items, but it was mentioned in some decisions. The focus of this council was on the collaboration between educational administrators and universities, emphasizing the importance of selecting candidates for the educational administration program who possess the necessary qualifications. This council stands out as the first to truly address educational management as part of its agenda (Bulut Boz & Karatař, 2020). In this context, it was emphasized that higher education institutions should develop integrated programs in preschool education and that a "Teacher Training Coordination Committee" should be established, particularly in teacher training. Furthermore, it was highlighted that the "Universities Law" should be revised within the framework of democratization goals. The conclusion drawn from this council is that higher education was treated as a very significant component of education.

In the 15th National Education Council, the concept of higher education was addressed under the agenda item titled "Reorganizing the Transition to Higher Education." In addition to this main heading, the topic was also referenced in other sections. The most significant point emphasized here was that education in our country should be considered as a whole, with higher education having an essential place in the educational process. Issues raised included allowing students graduating from Vocational and Technical Education to continue to higher education in their fields, providing additional points and scholarships for teacher high school graduates during the transition to higher education, encouraging the growth of private universities alongside foundation universities, increasing their capacities, and subjecting them to the supervision of the Higher Education Council. Additionally, the division of multi-campus universities into smaller universities to support capacity building was discussed.

In the 16th National Education Council, the focus was primarily on vocational education, and no specific agenda item directly related to higher education was included. However,

regarding the transition from secondary education to higher education, it was emphasized that the systems jointly operated by the Ministry of National Education and YÖK should be organized to reflect the new strategies. It was also mentioned that success criteria should be used for those who graduate from vocational and technical secondary education programs and wish to begin licensing in their respective fields. Additionally, those to be trained as teacher candidates in higher education should receive pedagogical formation training. Since the vocational and technical education schools' teacher education programs were not aligned with the subjects they would be teaching, it was suggested that the teacher education programs in these faculties be revised and expanded.

In the 17th National Education Council, no specific agenda item directly related to higher education was included. According to Daş (2019), the most decisions in the Council were made in the category of teacher training and selection. However, as the first Council of the 21st century, agenda items focused on "globalization and the EU" stand out. Recommendations that facilitated globalization, such as the increased involvement of civil society in all aspects, ensuring formal and non-formal education meet international standards, adopting a fast-track policy for foreign language teaching, encouraging all public employees to learn foreign languages, and transforming universities into open universities where everyone can receive higher education, were highlighted. Additionally, according to Yazar and Keskin (2018), a decision was made to reopen the adult education undergraduate programs, which had been abolished by the Higher Education Council in 1997.

In the 18th National Education Council, there is no specific agenda item directly related to higher education. However, it was emphasized that the fundamental principle of the 2023 Vision is coordinated between the Ministry of National Education and the Higher Education Council. The need for teacher training to be addressed at the university level and the establishment of universities focused on teaching or education was expressed. Additionally, to improve the quality of teachers, it was stated that institutions training teachers should also be established at universities that lack sufficient faculty members and infrastructure, and the importance of organizing teaching professional knowledge in universities was highlighted. It was also noted that the existing professional knowledge in teaching and the faculty members and infrastructure in the relevant fields need to be reorganized. Finally, due to the inability to close performance gaps in special education, psychological counseling and guidance, and preschool teaching areas, it was emphasized that universities should focus on training teaching staff for these fields.

In the 19th National Education Council, no specific agenda item related to higher education was included again. In this context, to ensure the qualified training of teachers, it was suggested to implement student selection processes, teacher qualifications, student interests, and multi-assessment policies in teacher-training higher education institutions. According to Daş (2019), it was decided to reconsider the types of YGS/LYS scores used for student placement in education faculty programs and to apply multi-assessment methods to determine the professional interests and abilities of students enrolled in these departments. Additionally, it was proposed that technologies established by the Ministry of National Education under the Fatih Project in schools be similarly created within teacher-training higher education programs. Furthermore, in teacher-training higher education programs, especially in faculties of education, the implementation of 'extracurricular activities,' which can be defined as demonstrations, was also highlighted, in addition to courses related to professional competence.

In the 20th National Education Council, no specific agenda item related to higher education was included. However, within the scope of improving and developing vocational

education, the importance of program development efforts carried out in cooperation between the Ministry of National Education and the Higher Education Council was emphasized. Additionally, in terms of teacher training and professional development, it was concluded that coordination and cooperation should be increased between the Ministry of National Education, the Higher Education Council, universities, relevant public institutions, and private and civil society organizations, and that interdisciplinary studies should be developed.

5. Suggestions

The decisions made in the National Education Councils held between 1939 and 2021 indicate that the topic of higher education was not sufficiently addressed during this period, and that both the agenda items and the decisions made were more focused on general statements and institutional collaborations, rather than setting clear goals. Based on the findings obtained from this research, the following recommendations for the National Education Councils are made:

1. Without forgetting that education is a whole, higher education should be given more attention in both the agenda items and the decisions of the Councils, and this topic should be addressed in detail in every Council.
2. In order to increase cooperation and coordination in education and to ensure the emergence of quality education, program development efforts should be conducted in parallel across all school levels, including higher education, and interdisciplinary programs should be developed.
3. Considering the evolving technology and changing business world, higher education institutions should establish stronger collaborations with both public institutions affiliated with the Ministry of National Education and industry leaders, businesses, and educators in private institutions. These stakeholders should also be included in the Councils.
4. The extent to which the data obtained after each Council is reflected in practice should be followed not only at all school levels but also at the higher education level. The results obtained must be detailed in a report and serve as a significant guide for future Councils.
5. It has been observed that the decisions made in the Councils are contradictory, and these decisions create conflicting situations in the practices of the Ministry. Therefore, transforming the Councils into a platform where more focused, issue-oriented agendas are discussed, and concrete and measurable policies with specific targets for the identified problems are developed, through more frequent meetings (e.g., annually or biennially), would enhance their functionality.
6. The Councils primarily focus on existing problems or those inherited from the past. However, with globalization and internationalization, international collaborations, cross-border innovations, and competitive education and research must also be included in the National Education Councils. This is of great importance for both the school types under the Ministry of National Education and Higher Education Institutions.

These issues should be addressed under three main headings: security elements in future

education, future trends, and future professions:

a) Security Elements in Future Education:

Cyberbullying: Cyberbullying in schools is rapidly increasing, making cybersecurity an indispensable element. For this reason, cybersecurity awareness and training should be extensively included in higher education as well.

Recent global events, greenhouse gas emissions, and climate change occurrences worldwide have caused many negative environmental impacts. In this regard, education for a sustainable environment is becoming indispensable in general education and higher education.

b) Future Trends:

Virtual Reality and Related Popular Culture: The intense virtual interactions and the information bombardment they bring create a need to adapt people to the real world rather than the digital one. In order to fully understand and reflect this awareness across all educational levels, these elements must be included as main agenda items in the 21st-century Councils.

The Metaverse, which combines virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and internet-based interactions, connecting users in a digital universe, is also of significant importance for higher education training that brings about groundbreaking changes globally. It is crucial for this to be addressed in the Councils.

c) Future Professions:

The professions of the future such as artificial intelligence, robotic coding, data science, digital marketing, biotechnology, sustainable energy specialties, industrial digitalization, robotic engineers, and remote work experts, require digital literacy experience, agile learning ability, and professional education that can adapt to these dynamics. To drive the national economy into the future and keep up with the demands of the era, this professional training awareness should be incorporated into all levels of education and should be included in the Councils.

In this study, only the higher education section of the Council decisions was examined. It is recommended that practitioners who will conduct studies on the National Education Councils also examine the educational activities carried out by the Higher Education Council from the past to the present, in addition to just the Council decisions. These recommendations can be considered as significant steps towards ensuring that the higher education system in our country serves students more effectively and contributes more significantly to their future career success through a shared educational understanding.

Ethical considerations:

Since the data used in this study were obtained from the "National Education Councils" section of the official and updated websites of the Ministry of National Education and the Board of Education and Discipline, ethics committee approval is not required.

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