Managers’ Perceptions of the 18th National Education Council in Turkey
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Abstract

Convened between November 1 and 5, 2010, the National Education Council of Turkey assembled with an agenda to set the “2023 education visions of Turkey”, making sure that the Turkish education system was robust on the centennial of the Turkish republic. The aim of this study is to understand how the 18th National Education Council was managed, its contents, the decisions taken in the Council and their applicability, the problems and their solutions based on the views of managers and vice-managers in Provincial and District National Education Directorates. The findings of this research are thought to address important implications for a higher quality in decisions taken in national education Councils and their applicability in Turkey and it is hoped to enlighten politicians and top managers with the existing problems and coping strategies through their own perceptions and assessments.

Key Words: 18th National Education Council, Managers' Perceptions, Turkey

Education systems are hierarchical. The board of education is usually placed at the top of the hierarchy, followed by a superintendent, the principals, and the teachers. In terms of responsibility, students are responsible to teachers; principals are responsible to the superintendent, and the superintendent is responsible to the board of education. Structurally, there is a series of superordinate-subordinate relationships within an education system. The role expectations of these groups and norms ascribed to them are different from each other. Clearly, the relationships among many kinds of people in education systems are varied and complex. Functionally, this hierarchy of relationships (education board to superintendent, superintendent to principal, principal to teacher, teacher to student, and so on) is the basis for allocating and integrating roles, personnel, and facilities to achieve the goals of education. Operationally, educational organizations are people-intensive, for the process occurs through person-to-person interaction (Sergiovanni & Starratt 1988; Campell, Corbally & Nystrand, 1983).

Similarly, the Turkish education system has a traditional centralized management (Şişman & Turan, 2003). All dimensions of the education system such as goals, implementation processes, budget, infrastructure, and human recourses are formed with the decisions by the centralized management. This management style causes difficulties in putting education policies into action effectively and also in solving local problems which can take a considerable period of time. Thus, all those prevent the system of benefits to be available at desired levels. Additionally, this issue causes financial problems in education as well as the problem of quality in education. Therefore, social participation in education cannot be achieved, which causes inequalities among regions (State Planning Organization, [SPO], 1995).

In education systems, sharing responsibilities and power is at the core of social partnership and this can be achieved in the framework of three steps. The first step is that governments demonstrate their willingness to work with social partners. This can be expressed in various policies and documents and supported by appropriate legislation and practice. Secondly structures like educational Councils must be agreed together with social partners. Effective partnership goes beyond mere formal
cooperation. The motivation of the stakeholders depends on whether they believe that their voices are likely to be heard. Thirdly, to enhance their involvement, the governments must establish a vision to which stakeholders can respond (ETF, 2013).

Throughout the history of the Turkish Republic many methods have been put into action in order to support social participation in education. One of those is national education councils. In those councils, which were assembled under the title “Council of Scientists” between 1920 and 1924 and “National Education Council” after the 1940s, it has been the aim that education policies and their implementations should be determined mutually by participants (MEB, 1995).

Until 2012, National Education Councils assembled eighteen times with delegates from all parts of the society—national education top managers, representatives of the universities, representatives of civil society organizations, managers in education, provincial and district directorates, principals, representatives of education unions, teachers and parents—and those councils tried to guide the education system by taking the demands of the society into consideration. In ninety-one-year period since the first Council of Scientists assembled, a national education council has assembled on average every four years. Those educational councils assembled with a specific agenda by taking the conditions of those times into considerations and functioned as meetings which were benefited for determining national education policies (Guler, 2006). The decisions taken in national education councils are not obligatory but suggestions in terms of their quality.

Thus, the purpose of this study was to understand the way 18th National Education Council was managed, its contents, the decisions taken in the council and their applicability, the problems and their solutions based on the views of managers and vice-managers in Provincial and District National Education Directorates.

**METHOD**

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Table 1 Participants
Research Group

A purposeful sample was used because the sample derives from the researchers’ targeting of a particular group, in the full knowledge that it does not represent the wider population, it simply represents itself. This is frequently the case in small scale research, for example, as with one or two schools, two or three groups of students, or a particular group of teachers or managers, where no attempt to generalize is desired; this is frequently the case for qualitative researches such as action, phenomenology, ethnographic or case studies (Cohen, Mannion & Morrison, 2007). This study was conducted in the Antalya Provincial National Education Directorate and its districts. Twenty-three managers working at the Antalya Provincial National Education Directorate and its districts were interviewed according to the principle of volunteering.

Research Design

A qualitative approach was selected for this study because this research was more concerned with understanding individuals’ perceptions of the world and seeking insights rather than statistical analysis (Silverman, 2005). Accordingly, a phenomenological study design was selected as this allows the researcher to understand the essence of a particular phenomenon by exploring human experiences. This requires the researcher to study a small number of subjects in depth in order to develop common patterns (Creswell, 2003). A phenomenological study is one that focused on descriptions of what people experience and how it is that they experience what they experience (Patton, 1990). The phenomenological inquiry is particularly appropriate to address meanings and perspectives of research participants. The major concern of phenomenological analysis is to understand “how the everyday, inter-subjective world is constituted” from the participants’ perspective (Schwandt, 2000). Thus, the focus of this study was on the perceptions of managers on the efficiency of the 18th National Education Council and the issues related to them based on their experiences.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected from September, 2013 through December, 2013. This involved 60-120 minute recorded interviews with the informants employing initial interview questions and documents. Semi-structured interviews were used and documents related to the 18th National Education Council’s decisions were obtained. In this study, data was analyzed via qualitative data analysis methods. The findings from interviews with managers were reported. Rich text records were edited, coded, and linked with multimedia. In addition, the data analysis process was aided by the use of a qualitative data analysis computer program called Nvivo. These kinds of computer programs do not actually perform the analysis but facilitate and assist it. That is to say that Nvivo does not perform the analysis but only supports the researcher doing the analysis by organizing data and recodes and nodes etc. (Kelle, 1995; Cohen et al., 2007).

Interview Process and Mapping

The aim of this study was to understand managers’ perceptions of the 18th National Education Council, what participants’ perceptions of the problems related to content, applicability, and the way of management of the 18th National Education Council and their suggestions to solve those problems. Thus the mapping of interview questions was carried out in five categories: the applicability of the decisions taken in the 18th National Education Council, the content of the 18th National Education Council, the way of management of the 18th National Education Council, the suggestions for the problems of the way of management of the 18th National Education Council, and the metaphors for the 18th National Education Council.

Ethical Considerations

Participants were briefed about the research aims, kept informed at all stages, and were offered anonymity. A consent form was signed between researcher and each participant about the use of the data in terms of how its analysis was reported and disseminated. The researchers were careful not to
impose their beliefs on others and researchers’ beliefs were secondary and the participants free was required.

Validity and Trustworthiness

In order to ensure reliability and validity of the study, some steps were followed: data were collected from interviews (individual). Data were used as direct quotations from the interviews without making any comments on them; a purposive sampling method based on voluntarism was used in order to get opinions and experiences of the provincial and the district education directorates. Data were coded by two independent researchers and Cohen's kappa coefficient were calculated to determine inter-rater trustworthiness of themes coded—0.81 perfect agreement—for inner reliability (Landis & Koach, 1977) and records of interviews were kept for outer reliability.

FINDINGS

The Applicability of the Decisions taken in the 18th National Education Council

To find an answer to this sub-problem, frequency analysis, and the percentage distributions for the opinions of the provincial and district education directorates were identified. The main theme and the sub themes of the first sub-problem, frequencies and percentages are given in Table 2.

| The Applicability of the Decisions Taken | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N | O | P | R | S | T | U | V | f | % |
| Advisory                                | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 16 | 76.2 |
| Being non-regional                      | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 12 | 57.1 |
| Widespread failure of decisions         | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 9  | 42.9 |
| Obligation                              | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 6  | 28.6 |
| Applicability rate                      | √ | √ | √ | √ | 6  | 28.6 |
| Directivity                             | √ | √ | √ | √ | 3  | 14.3 |

Table 2

The Applicability of the decisions taken in the 18th National Education Council

When we interpreted the opinions of the provincial and district education directorates on the applicability of the decisions taken in the 18th National Education Council, “advisory” took the first place with the percentage of 76.2%. The opinions of the participants are as follows:

Decisions taken in the Councils are advisory. The decisions taken by competent people and having the qualifications of diagnosis and treatment should not be only advisory. (B1, 5)

Decisions being advisory cause that the Councils are invalid, worthless, waste of time, and the Councils become a vacation place for participants. (D1, 5)

Solutions were proposed to the problems dealt with but these solutions are not taken into consideration since the Council’s decisions are advisory. (K1, 1)

If we interpret in terms of the decisions taken, decisions are, in every term, advisory. And this obstructs the consideration of the Councils. Moreover, people who are in the implementation position do not even know the Councils. (L1, 1)

The most important problem with the Councils is that the decisions of the Councils are advisory. (M1, 1)

The most important problem here is that the decisions are advisory. And this caused not to take these decisions into consideration. (N1, 1)

“Being non-regional” was the second theme that had the highest percentage with the value of 57.1% for the applicability of the decisions made. The opinions of the participants are as follows:

The decisions taken are feasible but they don’t provide answers to the problems varied by regions because it does not have regional characteristics enough. I expect more subjective and functional decisions from a Council that has several participants from each region. Generalizations cannot be effective in solving problems (A 1, 1).

The biggest problem of Turkish education system is regional differences. (B1, 1)

The solution to the country’s problems cannot be found if they are not known region by region. (C1, 1)
So many issues are discussed as a national matter. Regional and local conditions have been ignored. I don’t approve generalized decisions taken in the Councils and trying to adapt these decisions to regions. (D1, 1)

There are contradictions in the 18th National Education Council. It is not regional but it is regarded as if it has regional qualifications. (E1, 1)

“Widespread failure of decisions” was the third theme that had the highest percentage with the value of 42.9% for the applicability of the decisions made. The opinions of the participants are given below:

Public opinion is unaware of the decisions made in the Council. The Council decisions should be shared with the public for the implementation of the requirements. (B1, 2)

No one knows about the decisions made. (C1, 2)

Even the [Ministry of] National Education employees don’t know about the decisions made in the Council. (D1, 2)

These decisions are not announced to the organization exactly; the public is not informed about it. (E1, 2)

Sub-themes “Applicability rate” and “Obligation” took the fourth place with the percentage of 28.6% for the applicability of the decisions made in Table 2. The opinions of the participants are as follows:

If the decisions are invalid and there is no sanction, taking decisions is meaningless. (C1,3)

… I think it is hard to perform the decisions taken because the public and the practitioners are unaware of the decisions. If the decisions are based on regional characteristics and detailed, their functionality will increase. If the necessary changes are not applied to existing regulations, it seems that the implementation of the decisions is difficult. (D1,3)

In Turkey, changing legislation is not very easy and it is difficult to explain the validity of the National Education Councils to the persons who will change the legislation. Therefore, National Education Council’s content should be appropriate with the regulations. This will increase the applicability and validity of decisions made in the Council. (E1, 3)

Application rate is low, a stack of irregular (complexity) decisions. (C1, 4)

I think the seventy percent of decisions are applicable (70%). (D1, 4)

I think the ninety percent of decisions are applicable (90%). (E1, 4)

Sub-theme “Directivity” had the least value in the distribution of the percentage with the value of 14.3%. The opinions of the participants are as follows:

It is also important that students should be directed to the personal achievement fields and art besides education. Students’ academic achievement will improve by dealing with sports, arts, and etc. Football, basketball, volleyball tournaments were arranged in schools in our district. Students who are successful in this tournament were placed in the sub-team of Antalya Sport Football Team. Eighty students having musical talent and forty students having art talent were detected and were directed to the appropriate units. They are like the diamond in the sand. Many children who have lost the hope of academic achievement were successful and they were directed according to their abilities. Guidance and counselling services must recognize all children in schools and direct students who have problems. Especially students should be directed during school selection period. School counsellors should not misdirect the students. (A1, 6)

Application process with its outline should be presented. (D1, 6)

In general, when interpreted the provincial and the district education directorates’ opinions on the applicability of the decisions made in the 18th National Education Council, it might be said that both provincial and district education managers agreed on the sub-themes titled “Advisory”, “Being non-regional”, “Widespread failure of decisions”, “Obligation”, “Applicability rate”, “Directivity”. The reason for this, National Education Councils might not meet the regional needs, decisions made in the National Education Councils could not do more than giving advice and might not be shared with the public and decisions taken did not have any sanctions.
The Content of the 18th National Education Council

Frequency analysis, the percentage distributions for the opinions of the provincial and district education directorates were identified for finding an answer to this sub-problem. Main theme and the sub themes of the second sub-problem, frequencies and percentages are given in Table 3.

| The Content                  | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N | O | P | Q | R | S | T | U | V | f | % |
| Variety of subjects         | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 12 | 57,1 |
| Quality of the teacher      | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 8  | 38,1 |
| Being National              |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 7  | 33,3 |
| Lack of physical hardware in|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 6  | 28,6 |
| Complexity                  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 5   | 23,8 |
| Need for teachers           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 5   | 23,8 |
| Quality of the decisions    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 4   | 19  |

Table 3

The Content of the 18th National Education Council

As seen in Table 3, when interpreted the opinions of the provincial and district education directorates on the content of the 18th National Education Council, the sub-theme titled “Variety of subjects” took first place with the percentage of 57.1%. The opinions of the participants are as follows:

Decisions made in the 18th National Education Council are good in terms of salary and early retirement. (B2, 1)

The issues which discussed in the National Education Councils are not enough. (C2, 1)

18th National Education Council is full of subjects with respect to the previous ones and almost all issues discussed in this Council. The 18th National Education Council is good with both its content and its topics but it should be extensible and localized. The competent authorities can be warned and informed by the Council thus the teachers receive provision of labour. In the 18th National Education Council it was not mentioned about allowance of the schools’ needs. Managers should be rescued from panhandling. Allowances should be provided by the government for the needs of all schools. This should take place as the main subject in the councils. If we want to step into new age through education, primarily the needs of the schools should be provided, the number of students in the classrooms should be reduced and physical conditions should be improved. These topics must be specified in details in the councils. (D2, 1)

I saw that the 18th National Education Council was full in terms of content. (E2, 1)

The sub-theme titled “Quality of the teacher” took the second place with the percentage of 38.1%. The opinions of the participants are as follows:

I am responsible for 4,500 teachers. Approximately 500 teachers are qualified in this group. There are teachers who hold their hands below for preventing image shift on the smart board. I feel so upset for my country when I see them. They should be fired. We should identify the unsuccessful teachers. (A2, 2)

In schools, teachers must be wisdom and expert of their work. Teachers should be aware of own mistakes and they must request to get in-service training on this field. Teachers should be well equipped. Teachers’ key features should set out clearly in the Councils. Teachers should be educated in accordance with these qualities on duty. (C2, 2)

Teachers should be contracted and performance-based system should be applied, thus the teachers, who are unaware of the job are unimproved and mislead the future of the students, will be left out of the system. In the Councils, the participants should be more focused on the topic of the teachers’ training, raise awareness and in-service training. (D2, 2)

Teachers should have a work contract and a performance-based system should be applied for teachers. Teachers will be constantly dynamic with performance criteria. Teachers who are lively, dynamic and have self-improvement will immediately increase the quality of education. (E2, 2)

The sub-theme titled “Being National” took third place with the percentage of 33.3%. The opinions of the participants are as follows:

Gathering various fractions from all over Turkey. (A2, 3)

Many issues were dealt with nationally. (D2, 3)

The sub-theme titled “Lack of physical hardware of schools” took fourth place with the percentage of 28.6%. The opinions of the participants are as follows:
Solutions for the lack of physical hardware has been proposed. Especially, issues on upgrading the schools’ hardware and reducing the population of classrooms were emphasized. (M2, 4)

Beneficial decisions have been made especially on physical hardware, lack of [new school] construction and lack of teachers. (S2, 4)

The main problem of the education was explained as the physical insufficiency. Implementation of what were suggested at the Council meetings will solve many issues. (T2, 4)

“Complexity” and “Need for teachers” were the fifth themes that have the highest percentage with the value of 23.8%. The opinions of the participants are as follows:

The necessity of getting well-planned for teacher education and registering students for universities according to supply-demand have been stressed. If the decision is applied, the number of unemployed college graduates from the education colleges will be decreased. (J2, 6)

Constructive solutions to unsolved issues have been developed. For years, there have been contradictions, such as the employment of currently active teachers to vacant posts instead of the unemployed ones. Teacher’s need for education has been emphasized. (M2, 6)

While there is still need for the new teachers, there are too many unemployed education college graduates in the country. Some departments in the universities no longer give education but the students graduated earlier still face unemployment problem when their large numbers are considered. (O2, 6)

Teacher education and employment is a problematic situation for years in our country. Since the education is managed in a political way, every new government is trying to teach and employ teachers in a different way so it is trying to change the education type. (V2, 6)

Tidying up the problems of organizations with such a complex and variable structure requires expertise... Teachers' education is always important... Employment has never been succeeded. Either the number of teachers hired is not enough thus many teachers are hired or there are more teachers than needed and some precautions are taken to reduce the number of teachers. These precautions are instant precautions so precautions taken bring more problems, then these problems are tried to be solved. Events become complex. This situation leads to the sacking of lots of ministers. (A2, 5)

...Because of this, the Councils are confusing and unnecessary... Low applicability and irregular collection of decisions. (C2, 5)

There are compliance issues between topics of the content and legislation. (E2, 5)

The sub-theme titled “Quality of the decisions” took last place with the percentage of 19%. The opinions of the participants are as follows:

Also, the decisions made in the 18th National Education Council seem as a copy of government programs, when reviewed. It's not bad. Maybe it can be more efficient in terms of applicability. It seems as if the decisions had been taken before and the only thing that participants would do is to confirm those decisions. I think if the quality of the participants is improved and the decisions made in the Council, it becomes more efficient. I think the realizations of the decisions are difficult because the practitioners and public don't know about the Council’s decisions. The decisions made in the Council must identify the problems and also must have solutions for these problems. Complementary decisions should be made in terms of legislation. The decisions made should be synchronized with the legislation or the legislative changes should be made in accordance with the Council decisions. This will increase the applicability of decisions. (D2, 7)

The Councils must be convened after more serious planning and must improve the quality. Different ideas and suggestions had been presented. I was glad to see many of these recommendations in the Council’s agenda. (E2, 7)

When interpreted the provincial and the district education directorates’ opinions on the content of the 18th National Education Council, both the provincial and district education managers agreed on the sub-themes titled “Variety of subjects”, “Quality of the teacher”, “Being National”, “Lack of physical hardware of schools”, “Complexity”, “Need for teachers”, and “Quality of the decisions”, in general. The reason for this might be that the content of the National Education Council was close to the government’s policy, the content had a variable and complex structure, and the content overlapped with neither legislation nor application.
The Way of Management of the 18th National Education Council

For a deeper understanding of this sub-problem, frequency analysis, and the percentage distributions for the opinions of the provincial and district education directorates were analyzed. Main theme, sub themes, frequencies and percentages are given in Table 4.

| Type of Execution            | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N | O | P | Q | R | S | T | U | V | f | %  |
| Participants' type and quality | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 16 | 76.2 |
| Frequency                     | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 12 | 57.1 |
| Necessity                     | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 9  | 42.9 |

Table 4
The way of Execution of the 18th National Education Council

As seen in Table 4, “Participants’ type and quality” is the first theme that had the highest percentage with the value of 76.2%. The opinions of the participants are as follows:

Representatives from the unions, national education bureaucrats, university representatives and teachers are attending in the Councils. These representatives were not elected in a democratic way in the previous years. People with good personal connections were selected. In recent years, the election is being performed in a more democratic way and the election is announced to the personnel. In my opinion, worthy and successful people in the field should be elected. The persons, who can offer concrete suggestions and put forth ideas by discussing issues freely, must be selected. In addition, these participants should be the people who know educational issues and offer solutions. Students and parents are involved in management through the school-parent association. They are participating to provide different ideas, not in terms of quality. The students who are the head of the school are involved in the management. Parents are involved in 10-15 percent of the management. Students are involved in 3 percent of management. The rates are relatively high in the private schools. (A3, 1)

Councils are chaired by the Minister. Participants of the National Education Council are national education bureaucrats, higher education representatives, teachers and etc. There is active participation in the Council. I wonder if the parents are involved in the Councils. In my opinion, parents should participate but not like a decision maker, only as insight provider. (B3, 1)

I think, the people are not very conscious about who participate in the Council. Participants should recognize the Turkish nation very well. Participants should know national education system and the values of the Turkish history and they should be worthy. (C3, 1)

I think national education Council includes deficiencies in terms of the way it is performed. Decisions are made ostensibly with seven people. Low rank practitioners should be more represented in the Council. I have been an educator for thirty-five years but I have never known when the workshops were arranged and if arranged who participated in those workshops. They have never asked my opinion. If government wanted serious participation and participants, the participants had been selected through announcements until now. The Councils have become traditional. The participants of Councils are selected secretly from the people close to the government. If the participants’ qualifications are improved and their decisions take place in the results of the Councils, the Councils will be more efficient. (D1, 3)

Low rank practitioners should be more represented in the Council. Neutral educators’ opinions will contribute more to the Councils’ result. There were participants from all levels of education. (E3, 1)

When interpreted the opinions of the provincial and district education directorates on the way of management of the 18th National Education Council given in Table 4; the sub-theme titled “Frequency” took second place with the percentage of 57.1%. The opinions of the participants are as follows:

The Councils are held by the Ministry of National Education every four years since 1995. (B3, 2)

The Councils are held once in every four-five years as is done for many years. (C3, 2)

The National Education Councils are the meetings that take place at intervals of four or five days and which are qualified and have a wide range of participants; moreover, they are meetings in which the educational problems and the future of the education is talked about but the decisions made have no validity. (M3, 2)

The sub-theme titled “Frequency” had the least value in the distribution with the value of 42.9%. The opinions of the participants are as follows:

I think the national education Councils are necessary. (A3, 3)
I think the Councils are unnecessary because they are not well-planned. In this case, the way the Councils are organized are unnecessary and confusing. (C3, 3)

The Councils are worthless and waste of time for the participants, thus the Councils are regarded as holiday resorts by the participants. (D3, 3)

In general, when interpreted the provincial and the district education directorates’ opinions on the way of management of the 18th National Education Council, both provincial and district education managers agreed on the sub-themes titled “Participants' type and quality”, “Necessity”, “Frequency”. The reason for this might be the fact that participants from the sub-categories did not contribute enough, the Councils were not planned sufficiently, and the Councils were regarded as a vacation for some participants.

The Suggestions for the Problems of the Way of Management of the 18th National Education Council

To find an answer to this sub-problem, frequency analysis, and the percentage distributions for the opinions of the provincial and district education directorates were identified. The main theme, the sub-themes of the fourth sub-problem, frequencies and percentages are given in Table 5.

| Suggestions | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N | O | P | R | S | T | U | V | f | % |
| Preparations must be done | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 16 | 76.2 |
| Central and local connection must be established | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 9 | 42.9 |
| Volunteer and qualified participants | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 6 | 28.6 |
| Informing | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 5 | 23.8 |
| Realistic solutions | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 5 | 23.8 |
| Daily and global problems must be focused on | √ | √ | √ | √ | 4 | 19.0 |
| Must be inclusive | √ | √ | √ | √ | 4 | 19.0 |
| Long-term decisions must be taken | √ | √ | √ | √ | 4 | 19.0 |

Table 5

Suggestions for the problems of the way of management of the 18th National Education Council

When interpreted the opinions of the provincial and district education directorates on the suggestions for the problems of the way of management of the 18th National Education Council given in Table 5; sub-theme titled “Preparations must be done” took first place with 76.2% percentage for the fourth sub-problem. The opinions of the participants are as follows:

Teachers' education is always important...Employment has never been succeeded. Either the number of teachers hired is not enough thus many teachers are hired or there are more teachers than needed and some precautions are taken to reduce the number of teachers. These precautions are instant precautions so precautions taken bring more problems, then these problems are tried to be solved. Events become complex. This situation leads to the sacking of lots of ministers.... In the councils, there are recommendations similar to a five-year plan. Educational needs can be predetermined and implemented in ten-year periods because we know the number of population, the population growth rate, the number of schools, and the number of teachers. Schools may also be in collaboration with universities in accordance with these requirements. (A4, 1)

There are so many things to talk about the legislation. Legislation should be rearranged. They must be discussed in the councils. (B1, 4)

Necessary preparations weren’t done before the council. The council should not be performed without preliminary work. Authorities in related fields should be interviewed before the council then these interviews should be evaluated and the agenda of the council should be determined. (C4, 1)

If the government wanted serious participation and participants, at least participants would be selected through announcements until today. Accession criteria would have also been determined and announcement would have been made for everyone who fits these criteria. The 19th National Education Council should be an enhanced version of the 18th National Education Council. Issues that cannot be implemented should be identified, causes should be investigated, those causes should be reassessed and the decisions taken should be rationalized. (D1, 4)

The councils should be held after serious planning and the councils' qualifications should be improved. A permanent commission should be constituted that follows the council’s way, content and application process in the Ministry of Education. The commission must perform strict preliminary work before the content determination.
Also current case determination should be analysed very well. The implications of radical changes in education should be evaluated in all aspects. (E4, 1)

“Central and local connection must be established” was the second sub-theme that had the highest percentage with the value of 42.9%. The opinions of the participants are as follows:

A unit that provides the coordination of the council should be in contact with the provinces and the Ministry of Education. This unit should also be knowledgeable, capable of checking the applicability of decisions. (A4, 2)

The units related to work area should be opened. Needs should be identified accordingly and the sections should be opened. Training should be done according to the needs. There are 120,000 teacher needs but more than 500,000 graduates. There are so many imbalances in the current case. The examination system should be improved. Also this should be decided in the Council. (B4, 2)

At least they must know a region well. Achievement cannot be expected without having knowledge on a regional profile. (C4, 2)

The sub-Theme titled “Volunteer and qualified participants” took third place with the percentage of 28.6%. The opinions of the participants are as follows:

It must be stated that the participants should be volunteer. Announcement about the participation should cover a wide range of people. The participants should be chosen through people who delegate all fractions in a democratic way. Moreover, one more consideration should be that the participants’ professional capabilities should be in a high level. (N4, 3)

It must be provided that participants should be qualified. (R4, 3)

In that stage, [the council] should benefit from the people who are professionals in their job. (S4, 3)

These studies should be handled with a team consisted of expert people. (T4, 3)

Sub-themes titled “Informing” and “Realistic solutions” took fourth place with the percentage of 23.8%. The opinions of the participants are as follows:

People who work in a provincial national education organization should be encouraged, informed for taking part in the Councils. I am sure that there are so many people who are working for the national education and do not have any information about what a Council is, what its aims are, when it takes place, what decisions made and what the content is. These can be announced to them through seminars. (J4, 4)

At least, the practitioners should be informed about the decisions made and they should periodically be checked whether they implement the decisions or not. (N4, 4)

The content must be created as a draft in advance. (R4, 4)

While choosing the issues and finding solutions, the realities of the country should be considered. (J4, 5)

First of all, the decisions made should have the quality of applicability and they have to be rescued from being advisory. (R4, 5)

The decisions taken should be suitable for the regions. Decisions should be definitely applicable and they have to be rescued from being advisory. (T4, 5)

Moreover, decisions taken should not be advisory, they have to be applied absolutely. If they are going to be advisory, there is no need for Councils. (U4, 5)

Sub-Themes titled “Must be inclusive”, “Daily and global problems must be focused on”, and “Long-term decisions must be taken” took last place with the percentage of 20%. The opinions of the participants are as follows:

The team also should be able to follow the developments in the world. (A4, 7)

…topics that are more suitable for the flow of current system emerged in the content. Content does not express exactly the current situation. (E4, 7)

More intense decisions should be taken related to personal rights and respectability. (B4, 6)

I want the decisions taken should be long-term. Negative situations related to outcomes are not visible in variable systems. I prefer instead of short-term and hasty decisions, planned, long-term decisions of which outcomes can be controlled should be taken. (A4, 8)

When interpreted the provincial and the district education directorates’ suggestions for the problems of the way of management of the 18th National Education Council, both provincial and
district education managers agreed on points “Preparations must be done”, “Central and local connection must be established”, “Volunteer and qualified participants”, “Informing”, “Realistic solutions”, “Daily and global problems must be focused on”, “Must be inclusive”, “Long-term decisions must be taken” in general. It was understood from the directorates’ discourse that sufficient preparations were not done before the meetings and the central office did not work in coordination with the local offices. In addition, it was also expressed that the topics covered in the Councils were not up-to-date, the scope of the Council was very narrow, and the solutions offered were pointless.

The Metaphors for the 18th National Educational Council

The metaphors used by the administrators were categorized under five main titles; object, food, living, institute, and other. These metaphors under this title and related categories are as follows:

1. **Object**: Button, Vase
2. **Living Things**: Cicada, Bee, Ant
3. **Food**: Sugar, Bread
4. **Institute**: Family meeting, parliament meeting, family, parliament, Ministry of National Education
5. **Other**: Serious, light halo, space, maze

Two of the provincial and district education administrators used a button and a vase metaphor for the Councils. One of the administrator’s reason for the button metaphor was that Councils were lifesaving buttons for the problems occurring in national education. Another administrator used a vase metaphor, reasoning that when a vase was empty, it was also pretty and artistic but it could function better when the flowers were in it.

Administrators’ metaphors and the reasons under the object category are as follows:

In my opinion, the Councils are similar to a lifesaving button in the sea. Because, the problems of national education are plenty much and the Councils can be a lifeguard that finds solutions to those problems. I think, the Councils are similar to an empty vase. A vase is also pretty and artistic although it is empty but it can regain its main function when the flowers are in it. The Councils are nice, qualified meetings but I think when the decisions taken in them are applicable then it will get its main function.

Three of the provincial and district education administrators used cicada, bee, and ant metaphors for Councils under the living things category. One of the administrator’s reasons for using the cicada metaphor was that the Councils have no validity so they were living things that were unnecessarily flashing like a cicada. Another administrator used a bee metaphor and the reason for that the administrator said was that the bees worked collectively and all the movements were directed toward production. According to the administrator, during the Councils, people from different sections of society came together and performed shared work. Another administrator formulated an ant metaphor, the reason for this was that the administrator thought that the ants worked as task-oriented and they were dedicated to their productions.

The participants’ metaphors for the Councils related to living things are as follows:

The Councils are similar to a cicada. No validity. Just flashing.

The Councils are similar to the bees. Because they work collectively and all movements of them are directed to the production. In a Council, people from all sections of society having different duties come together and perform a collaborative study.

The Councils are similar to the harmony of the ants’ work. I always think that ants work as task-oriented and they are dedicated to their work. If the national education Councils get their original identity, they will have these characteristics.

Two of the provincial and district education administrators used the sugar and a bread metaphor for the Councils under the food category. One administrator’s reason for the sugar metaphor was that tea could be drunk with no sugar, but if it was with sugar, it would be better. He also added that the national education could survive without the Councils but if the Councils took place, everything would
be more qualified and better. Another administrator used a bread metaphor for the Councils. He stated that because the bread made a hungry man temporarily relaxed but the hunger went on.

Administrators’ metaphors and the reasons under the food category are as follows:

I think the National Education Councils are similar to the sugar. Because the tea can be drunk without sugar, but when it is with sugar, it will be better. National education can continue without the Councils but if the Councils take place it will be better and more qualified. J

The Councils are a piece of bread given to a hungry man. This piece of bread can temporarily comfort a man but cannot resolve the hunger completely. The Councils cannot solve the problems completely also but they give ideas to the practitioners by proposing solutions. N

Five of the provincial and district education administrators used metaphors as a family, a parliament, and the Ministry of National Education under the institution category for Councils. Two of the administrators who used a family metaphor pointed out that family members periodically come together to talk about some important issues and in the family every member has different duties, different problems. In a family, solutions for these problems are sought. Two other administrators used a parliament metaphor and the reason for this was that they had the opinion that many participants from different regions came together to find solutions for problems. After long lasting meetings, decisions were made and the Councils had different delegates for making decisions from every province. Another administrator’s reason for using the Ministry of National Education metaphor was that the ministry’s studies on some problems were done in a short time period in the Councils.

Metaphors and the reasons for the institute category are as follows:

The Councils are similar to a family meeting which are gathered for a purpose. Family members sometimes come together to have meeting on some important issues but the decisions taken are usually verbal. There is no obligation for the application. K

The Councils are similar to a family. Because in a family every member has different duties. There are problems and solutions for these problems are searched for. Families which are well-planned in unity, get the good results. T

The Councils are similar to the meetings of a parliament. Because many participants come together from different regions to find out solutions to the problems. After long lasting meetings, decisions are taken. This is very similar with the type of a parliament. M

I think the Councils are like a parliament. Because it has a system for taking decisions like different delegates from every province. Here, people coming from different places took those decisions after some sort of work. U

I think the Councils are similar to the Ministry of National Education. Studies, analysis done in the ministry, are done in a short time period in these Councils. Delegates from different regions are working like they are the different departments of the ministry and solutions are sought. V

Under the other category, four of the provincial and district education administrators used serious, light halo, a space, and a maze metaphor. One of the administrator’s reason for using the “serious” metaphor for the Councils was that he believed that the Council decisions should be taken seriously. Another administrator’s reason for the metaphor “light halo” was that if a person knew how to look and understood the colors, the light halo gave new horizons. Another administrator used a dark space metaphor for the Councils. A maze was used as another metaphor by an administrator. About this metaphor, he pointed out that one could walk in a maze but could not find the exit.

The metaphors mentioned by the administrators under the others categories are as follows:

I believe that the National Education Councils should be taken seriously. I believe also the seriousness of the decisions taken. I think, the Councils are similar to the word “serious”. A

The Councils are similar to a light halo. A light halo gives new horizon to people who know to look and understand the colors. In my opinion, Councils are valuable for people who know to benefit from them. Each of the light halos are different from the other one. I think the National Education Councils are similar to them. Every day, its quality is being developed. B

The Councils are similar to “nothing”. A huge and dark space. F.
In my opinion, the Councils are similar to a maze. You walk in the maze but you cannot get a result because of being unable to find the exit. The Councils are the same. They are performed but since the decisions taken are not applied, there is no result. They are only done.

DISCUSSION

This paper analyzed the provincial and district education directorates’ opinions on the 18th National Education Council of Turkey in terms of the way of management, content, applicability of the decisions taken, and problems with the decisions and solutions for these problems by means of frequency analysis, the methods of descriptive and content analysis.

On the applicability of the decisions taken, provincial and the district education directorates’ opinions focused on few issues: widespread failure of decisions, their mandatory nature, their direction, being non-regional, and their applicability rate. When interpreted the decisions made in the 18th National Education Council in general, in Karataş’s (2012) paper titled “A Model Proposal for Turkish Education System to Provide Social Participation: Local Education Councils” it was stated that the obstacle for the applicability of decisions made was the centralized structure, which is consistent with the results of this study. This finding is also consistent with Silman and Şimşek’s findings reported in “A Metaphorical Perspective to Schools and Central Educational Organizations in Turkey and the United States” which points out that the metaphors the Turkish participants used presented more the centralized characteristics of the Turkish education system. The findings are also parallel with Günbay’s finding that some principals not only confirmed the heavy bureaucracy in education system but also complained about that the kind of structure in the education system in his study “Principals’ Perceptions on School Management: A Case Study with Metaphorical Analysis” (2011). In addition, the research, which had the title “An Investigation of Technology Policy in National Education Councils” performed by Dağhan, Kalaycı, and Seferoğlu in 2011 had the results mentioning that most of the decisions made in the National Education Councils were not applied. This finding was also in line with the results of this study.

The provincial and the district education directorates’ opinions on the content of the 18th National Education Council agreed on the terms of participants’ type and quality, necessity, and the frequency. This result is in line with Güven’s (2012) study titled “4+4+4 in Education and the Draft Law of the Project FATIH”. In Güven’s paper, it was put forth that qualified persons should conduct the Councils in light of scientific data but not in ideological ways.

When interpreted the provincial and the district education directorates’ opinions on the suggestions are consistent with Deniz’s (2001) paper titled “The History and the Effects of National Education Councils on the Educational Policies.” In that study, it was expressed that there was no scientific research on daily matters in the Council’s agenda items. Moreover, it was also stated in the study that the two-thirds of Councils could not be completed in its stated time and when the participants met in the Council, the time period for the Council was not enough to cover all the subjects in the agenda.

To sum up, this research has important implications for the improvement of quality in decision making in the National Education Councils and the applicability of these decisions in Turkey. Another goal of the paper is to enlighten politicians and top managers with the existing problems and coping strategies through their own perceptions and assessments. Additionally, the study analyzes the perceptions of education directorates on the 18th National Educational Council with metaphors and those analyzes are likely to enrich knowledge in understanding how education directorates perceive the 18th National Educational Council and what difficulties they have related to the application of Council’s decisions.

REFERENCES


