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Evaluation of the National Education Council decisions in line with the components of inclusive education: from 1939 to 2021

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to evaluate the National Education Council [NEC] decisions made from 1939 to 2021 in line with the components of inclusive education. In this context, the NEC decisions were examined in line with the themes of access, support, and participation, which are the components of inclusive education. In this study, document analysis was used and thematic analysis was performed. Access, support, and participation were determined as themes in this study. When the findings related to the access sub-theme are examined, it is seen that the decisions about equality of opportunity, special edification, rural-urban differences, disabled children, and technological support stand out. There are more decisions related the teacher education in the support sub-theme, and more decisions related the learning process in the participation sub-theme. According to the findings obtained from the study, it is seen that there are more decisions regarding inclusive education, especially since the 9th NEC. The highest number of decisions were taken at the 20th NEC. Considering that the NEC is an important meeting where decisions on education policies are taken for Turkey, it is recommended to increase systematic efforts to achieve the goals of inclusive education.

Keywords: National Education Council; education policies; inclusive education; equal opportunity in education.

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1. Introduction

Inclusive education, which emerged with the motto of education for all, has gained popularity in the field of educational sciences in recent years. When the definitions of inclusive education in the literature are examined, it is seen that the concept of inclusive education is used together with the concepts of students with disabilities and special education (Ünal & Yel, 2019). However, UNESCO (1994) aims to make “all schools truly inclusive for every child”. Therefore, inclusive education is not just about planning and adaptations for the education of children with disabilities or refugees. Within the scope of inclusive education, arrangements should be made for all students and even all stakeholders of education. Therefore, today, inclusive education means the right of every child to benefit from quality education opportunities with all their diversity (Thomas, 2013). According to Boroson (2017), to create a learning environment suitable for inclusive education, it is necessary to raise awareness among all stakeholders and to employ teachers, auxiliary staff, and families. Inclusive education is structured around giving place to the experiences and differences in the lives of different people rather than a common culture, ethnicity, language, and indigenous identity (Kozleski, Artiles & Waitoller, 2011). For this reason, inclusive education sees the differences in the classroom environment as an opportunity to create a rich teaching environment rather than a problem (Ünal & Aladağ, 2020).

Children may be exposed to discrimination in the educational environment due to reasons such as gender, disability, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic factors, and geographical region differences. This situation causes some children to become disadvantaged in the educational environment. In addition, disadvantage situations are often observed as intertwined and multiple situations (Yüksel & Uyanık, 2021). Although the public rights of legally disadvantaged groups have been tried to be guaranteed, it is a debatable issue whether these groups can benefit from the education system adequately or not. In this context, it is more accurate to define inclusive education as a teaching service that enables all disadvantaged students to live together with their non-disadvantaged peers and receive education under equal conditions (Banks, Shevlin & McCoy, 2012).

Providing educational opportunities for all children, regardless of their ethnic origins, individual characteristics, or differences in learning abilities, should be seen as a necessity (UNESCO, 2005). Inclusive education refers to a wide variety of strategies, activities and processes that seek to realize the right to universal, relevant, and appropriate education (Moriña, 2017; Ralabate, 2011). Components of inclusive education are presented below in Figure 1.

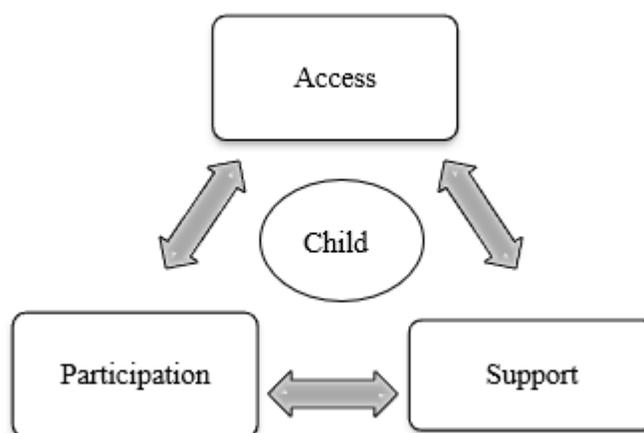


Figure 1. Components of inclusive education

Source: Barton and Smith, 2015

As seen in the figure, inclusive education has three interrelated components, which are child-centered, access, support and participation. **Access:** It refers to the physical and educational arrangements made in order for all students to benefit equally from educational opportunities without making any discrimination among students. For this purpose, regulations are made by considering universal design principles (We Are Together in Education, n.d.). For example, the construction of ramps to facilitate the access of a physically handicapped student to school or the use of mobile libraries for students living in rural areas. **Participation:** refers to the active participation of the student in the decision-making and learning processes (We Are Together in Education, n.d.). An example can be given by a teacher who uses the silent animation technique for the participation of the student who cannot speak Turkish fluently yet. **Support** is the information and training activities offered to teachers, administrators and families in the name of inclusive education (We Are Together in Education, n.d.). In-service training given to teachers about inclusive education can be presented as an example for this component.

As a country that is ethnically, religiously, linguistically and culturally diverse, the diversity of Turkey's education system has not yet been fully realized (Karsli-Calamak & Kilinc, 2021). However, the developments in recent years have necessitated change in the political field. Changes in the political field have had reflections on education as well as causing changes in other fields (Polat & Kılıç, 2013). In the light of these reflections, the changes in the field of education are discussed with the decisions of the council. National Education Councils [NEC]: It is the highest level meeting of the education community in the national context, where decisions are taken on the structuring and development of the education system. According to the NEC Regulation, "It is the highest advisory board

of the Ministry. It examines the issues related to education and training in order to improve the Turkish national education system and improve its quality; makes recommendations.” (National Education Council Regulation, 2014, art.5). In this context, 20 National Education Councils were held from 1939 to 2021. Learning about the evolution of the education system and how students who are different in terms of race, gender or ability are treated can guide all educators to move forward (Borosan, 2017). Inclusive education also requires countries to restructure cultures, policies and practices to respond to the diversity of students in their regions (Stubbs, 2008). Education policies play a key role in the success of inclusive education (UNESCO, 2017). National Education Councils are meetings where experts, scientists, education administrators and representatives of relevant institutions, who make up Turkey's knowledge in the field of education and culture, come together and direct the Turkish Education System (Dağhan, Kalaycı & Seferoğlu, 2011). Therefore, it can be said that council decisions set a general framework for education policies. For this reason, it is important to examine the council decisions, which are an important part of the education policies of the countries, in the context of the inclusive education principles, which have been very popular in recent days. The fact that council decisions have not been examined according to the components of inclusive education makes this study very important.

In this context, the aim of the study is to evaluate the NEC decisions made from 1939 to 2021 in line with the components of inclusive education. In line with this main purpose, answers to the following questions were sought:

- What are the NEC decisions in terms of the access component of inclusive education?
- What are the NEC decisions in terms of the participation component of inclusive education?
- What are the NEC decisions in terms of the support component of inclusive education?

2. Method

In this study, document analysis, which is one of the qualitative research methods, was used. All official and unofficial records can be used as documents in the document review, which includes the analysis of the examined event or phenomenon through written materials (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). The documents discussed in this study are the Decisions of 20 National Education Councils that were carried out from 1939 to 2021.

2.1. Documents Reviewed

In document analysis, data are obtained from documents and records (Sak, Şahin Sak, Öneren Şendil, & Nas, 2021). Within the scope of this study, the NEC decisions made

from 1939 to 2021 were used as a data source. The documents (Council Decisions, n.d.) accessed from the official website of the Ministry of National Education are presented in Table 1 along with the meeting date, the council chair and the agenda.

Table 1. Descriptive information on national education councils from 1939 to 2021

Council	Meeting Date	Council Presidency	Council Agenda
1st National Education Council	17-29 July 1939	-Hasan Ali YÜCEL	1. Plan and principles of 1st Republic Education 2. Examining the instructions of the institutions of various education degrees 3. Examination of all curricula
2nd National Education Council	15-21 February 1943	-Hasan Ali YÜCEL -İhsan SUNGU -Rüştü ÜZEL -Cemil BİRSEL	1. Development of moral education in schools 2. Increasing the efficiency of mother tongue studies in all educational institutions 3. Examination of history teaching in Turkish education in terms of methods and means
3rd National Education Council	2-10 December 1946	-Reşat Şemsettin SİRER -Rasim KADIRGAN -Rüştü ÜZEL -Ord. Prof. Sıddık Sami ONAR -Şefket Aziz KANSU -Tevfik TAYLAN	1. Commercial secondary schools and high schools program and regulation 2. Program and regulation of male art secondary schools and institutes 3. Girls' institutes program and regulation 4. Istanbul Technical School regulation 5. Adjustment of the legislation on teachers and instructors of secondary and higher technical education schools with current needs 6. Taking necessary measures to ensure cooperation between family and school
4th National Education Council	August 23-31, 1949	-Dr. Tahsin BANGUOĞLU -Besim KADIRGAN -Rustu ÜZEL -Ord. Prof. Celal SARÇ -Prof. Hülki EREN -Prof. Hikmet BİRAND	1. Examination of the primary school curriculum, which has been implemented since the 1948-49 academic year 2. Examination of the new secondary school program project 3. Determination of high school course subjects according to the four-year organization 4. Organization of training institutes and higher teacher training schools that train teachers for secondary and high schools according to needs 5. Reviewing the democratic principles based on education and training
5th National Education Council	04-14 February 1953	-Tevfik İLERİ -Reşat TARDU -Bekir TURK -Ord. Prof. Kazım İsmail GÜRKAN	1. Examination of pre-school education and training program and regulation prepared for kindergartens 2. Determining the necessary measures to be taken regarding health in primary schools 3. Examining the report prepared for children in need of special education, the regulations of orphanages and reviewing the law on children in need of protection and investigating the parts that require amendment 4. Examining the draft Primary Education Law and planning compulsory primary education 5. Revision of the primary school curriculum 6. Examining the draft of the New Primary School Regulation 7. Examining teacher training for primary schools, teacher schools and village institutes new curriculum and professional maturation 8. Other issues that concern primary school teachers and primary education problems in general
6th National Education Council	18-23 March 1957	-Prof. Dr. Ahmet ÖZEL -Osman Faruk VERİMER -Prof. Dr. İzzet BİRAND -Prof. Dr. İlhami CİVANOĞLU -Prof. Fehim FIRAT	1. Vocational and Technical Education 2. Public Education
7th National Education Council	5-15 February 1962	-Hilmi İNCESULU	1. Primary Education 2. Secondary Education 3. Girls' Technical Instruction 4. Male Technical Instructor 5. Trade Teaching 6. Measurement and Evaluation in Our Education 7. Various Maturity Exams 8. Higher Education 9. Private Schools 10. Foreign Culture Relations 11. Education and Training Related to Religion 12. Physical Education and Health 13. Education and Training Related to National Defense 14. Educational Foundations
8th National Education Council	28 September-3 October 1970	-Prof. Dr. Orhan OĞUZ	1. Establishment of Our Secondary Education System 2. Reorganization of Transition to Higher Education
9th National Education Council	June 24 - July 4, 1974	-Mustafa ÜSTÜNDAĞ	1. Programs within the integrity of the National Education System 2. Rules governing student flow
10th National Education Council	June 23-26, 1981	-Hasan SAĞLAM	1. Turkish National Education System 2. Training Programs in the Integrity of This System 3. Rules Governing Student Flow 4. Teacher Training
11th National Education Council	8-11 June 1982	-Hasan SAĞLAM	Teachers and education experts from the National Education Services (situation and problems) 1. The development of teacher education 2. Pre-service problems and suggestions in teacher education 3. Training of education specialists 4. In-service training of teachers and experts 5. Problems, solutions and suggestions of teachers and experts
12th National Education Council	18-22 June	Hasan Celal GÜZEL	1. Turkish Education System

Education Council	1988		-Prof. Dr. Orhan OGUZ -Assoc. Dr. İhsan SEZAL	2. Higher Education 3. Teacher Training 4. New Technologies in Education 5. Turkish and Foreign Language Education and Teaching 6. Education Financing 7. Curriculums
13th National Education Council	15-19 January 1990		-Avni AKYOL -Prof. Dr. Orhan OGUZ -Assoc. Dr. Nihat BILGEN	1. Concept, Scope and Trends in Non-Formal Education 2. Organization and Cooperation in Non-Formal Education 3. Investment and Financing in Non-Formal Education 4. Staff in Non-Formal Education
14th National Education Council	27-29 September 1993		-Nahit MENTEŞ -Dr. Yusuf EKINCI -Abdullah NİŞANCI	1. Educational Administration and Educational Administration 2. Preschool Education
15th National Education Council	13-17 May 1996		-Turhan TAYAN -Ramazan Cetin DAGLI -Prof. Dr. Reşat GENÇ	1. Primary Education and Orientation 2. Restructuring in Secondary Education 3. Rearrangement of Transition to Higher Education 4. Continuously Meeting the Education Needs of the Society 5. Financing the Education System
16th National Education Council	22-26 February 1999		-Metin BOSTANCIOĞLU -Bener CORDAN -Prof. Dr. Cevat ALKAN	1. Mainly Restructuring of Vocational and Technical Education within the Integrity of Secondary Education System 2. Vocational Education and Employment in Schools and Businesses 3. Training Teachers and Managers for Vocational and Technical Education 4. Transition to Higher Education without Examination in Vocational and Technical Education 5. Financing in Vocational and Technical Education
17th National Education Council	13-17 November 2006		-Assoc. Dr. Huseyin CELIK -Prof. Dr. İrfan ERDOĞAN -Prof. Dr. Ali BAYKAL	1. Transitions Between Levels and Examination System in the Turkish National Education System 2. Turkish Education System in Globalization and EU Process
18th National Education Council	1-5 November 2010		-Nimet ÇUBUKÇU -Merdan TUFAN -Prof. Dr. Mehmet ŞİŞMAN	1. Teacher Training, Employment and Professional Development 2. Educational Environments, Institutional Culture and School Leadership 3. Strengthening Primary and Secondary Education, Ensuring Access to Secondary Education 4. Sports, Art, Skills and Values Education 5. Psychological Counseling, Guidance and Guidance
19th National Education Council	2-6 December 2014		-Nabi AVCI	1. Curriculum and Weekly Course Schedules 2. Increasing the Qualification of Teachers 3. Increasing Managerial Qualification 4. School Safety
20th National Education Council	1-3 December 2021		-Prof. Dr. Mahmut ÖZER -Petek AŞKAR -Cihad DEMİRLİ	Equal Opportunity in Education 1. Equal Opportunity in Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education 2. Improving Vocational Education 3. Professional Development of Teachers

Source: (MoNE, 1939; 1943; 1946; 1949; 1953; 1957; 1962; 1970; 1974; 1981; 1982; 1988; 1990; 1993; 1996; 1999; 2006; 2010; 2014; 2021)

When the table is examined, it is seen that the National Education Councils meet under the chairmanship of the Minister of National Education of the period -as mentioned in the NEC Regulation, 2014, article 4-, with different agenda topics and at least once in a maximum of seven years.

2.2. Data analysis

In the analysis of the data obtained from the study, thematic analysis was performed using the Maxqda qualitative data analysis program. Thematic analysis is a systematic qualitative data analysis method that allows to examine the presence of certain themes (patterns) in the data, their temporal changes and the representations of thematic situations (Bowen, 2009; Glesne, 2012; Patton, 2014).

In this study, which aims to examine the decisions of the NEC in line with the inclusive education components, the components of access, support and participation were determined as themes, and these themes were examined in the council decisions. In addition, the incidence of these themes in the period from 1939 to 2021 is presented by comparing them over time. There are different views on the qualitative data analysis process. In this study, the qualitative data analysis protocol recommended by Creswell

(2014) was followed. In the study, first, the decisions of the 20 National Education Councils, which were held from 1939 to 2021, were scanned and filed. Afterwards, all council decisions were read. Filed Council decisions were loaded into the Maxqda qualitative data analysis program and coded by dividing them into sub-themes within the framework of the themes of access, support and participation, which are the components of inclusive education. The findings were interpreted and reported with code maps and sample decision statements.

2.3. Validity and reliability

It is aimed to contribute to the validity of the study by describing the documents examined within the scope of the study and the way of accessing the documents in detail. For the reliability of the study, scanning reliability and thematic analysis reliability were ensured by conducting an inter-coder reliability study. Inter-coder reliability was calculated using the formula “consensus/ (agreement + disagreement) x 100”, which was introduced to the literature by Miles and Huberman (1994). At the stage of determining the scanning reliability of the study, the decisions of the NEC were scanned by two different researchers. There is a 100% consistency between the two researchers. For the thematic analysis reliability, 30% of the examined documents (7 council decisions) were randomly selected and analyzed by the second researcher. The thematic analysis reliability of the study was calculated as 85%, and data analysis was continued until 100% consensus was reached between the two researchers.

2.4. Ethical Considerations

Scientific research and publication ethics were complied with in this study. Ethics committee permission was not obtained because the documents examined within the scope of the study were open access on the Official Website of the Ministry of National Education Board of Education and Discipline (Council Decisions, n.d.) and the data were not collected from a living creature.

3. Results

In this study, the NEC decisions made between 1939-2021 were examined under the themes of "Access", "Participation" and "Support", which are considered as components of inclusive education. Therefore, the main themes of this study are “Access”, “Participation” and “Support”. The findings of the study are presented by including the changes in the decisions taken on inclusive education in council decisions over the years and sample items. Thus, it is aimed to reveal the temporal change patterns in the decisions taken regarding inclusive education over the years.

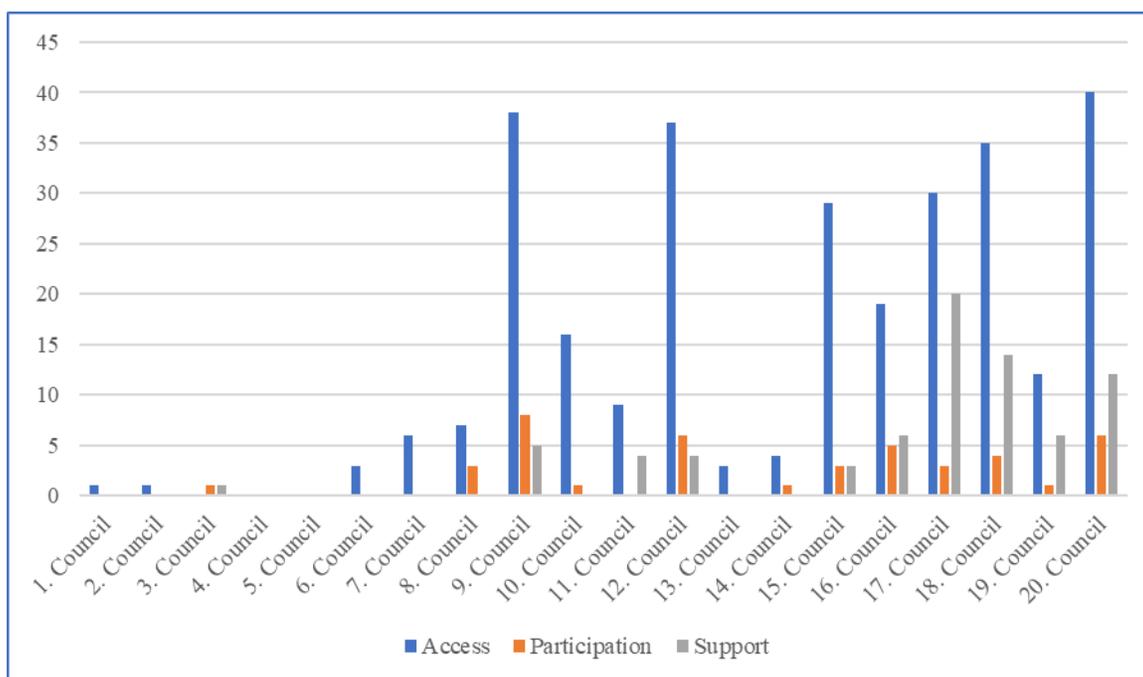


Figure 2. The temporal variation of the decisions taken on the components of inclusive education in the NEC

When the decisions of the NEC between the years 1939-2021 were examined, no item related to inclusive education could be found in the decisions of the 4th and 5th Council. According to Figure 1, it can be said that in the first Councils, inclusive education were not included or it was handled more generally. For example, the item in 13th council that “The scope of non-formal education should be quite broad in terms of its target audience” could not be placed under any theme because the details of the target audience were not given in it. However, it was seen that the decisions in the next councils were more detailed and explanatory. Especially in the 20th council there were decisions regarding inclusive education.

Some of the decisions were examined under several themes. For example, the item of 20th Council that “87. Encouragement should be applied to ensure that students with special education needs benefit from skills training and internship opportunities in enterprises” was examined under the themes of learning process, special edification and social awareness raising.

“Family education, social awareness raising, teacher education, manager education” are the sub-themes of the Support theme; “decision making process and learning process” are the sub-themes of the Participation theme. The Access theme was examined under the sub-themes of “transportation to school, affective support, physical arrangement, technological support, material support, positive classroom climate, rural-urban differences, disabled children, special ability, gender, economic level, language, religion, race, ethnic differences, child worker, immigrant children, juvenile delinquency, addiction, relatives of martyrs and veterans, school dropout , special edification, equality of opportunity” (Figure 3).

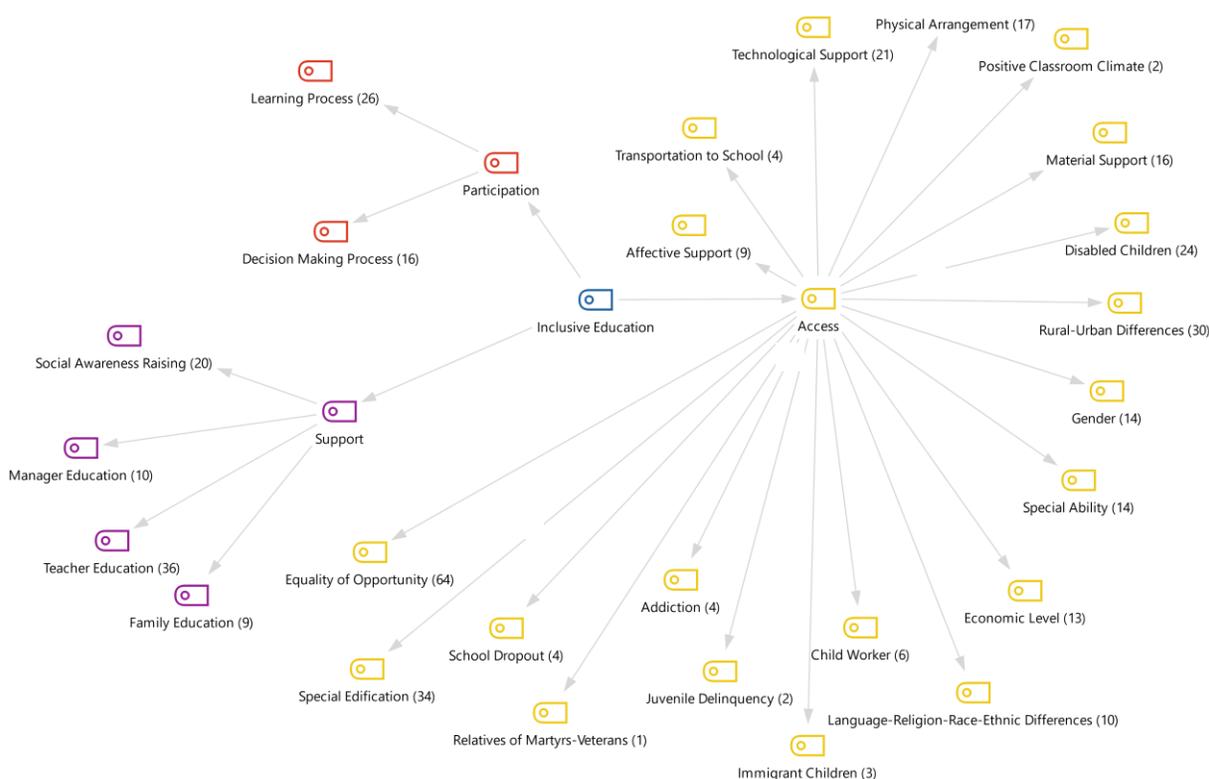


Figure 3. Analyzing the decisions of the NEC according to the access, support and participation components of inclusive education

According to Figure 3, 75 codes for the support component; 42 codes for the participation component; 292 codes for the access component have been created. In this case, it can be said that in the council decisions, the most emphasis is on the access component, and the least emphasis is on the participation component.

The sub-theme of the access theme is as follows: “transportation to school, affective support, physical arrangement, technological support, material support, positive classroom climate, rural-urban differences, disabled children, special ability, gender, economic level, language, religion, race, ethnic differences, child worker, immigrant children, juvenile delinquency, addiction, relatives of martyrs and veterans, school dropout , special edification, equality of opportunity”. When the decisions regarding the "transportation to school" sub-theme were examined, decisions were taken for students who had difficulties in accessing school for various reasons. Examples of decisions are presented below.

15. Transportation services should be provided with appropriate personnel and shuttle vehicles designed for physically disabled students. (20th Council)

27. Taking population, transportation, etc. of special education and rehabilitation centers into account, it should be ensured that its concentration in certain centers is

prevented, and it should be encouraged to establish in settlements where there is no institution. (20th Council)

In the sub-theme of “*positive classroom climate*”, sensitivity to cultural differences and the adoption of a culture of peace were emphasized. An example decision is presented below.

27. Practices aimed at developing basic human, moral, social, cultural, and democratic values should be emphasized at school, and to create a democratic school culture and classroom atmosphere, teachers and students should be sensitive to cultural differences. (18th Council)

When the decisions regarding the “*Affective support*” sub-theme are examined, to provide affective support, there are decisions about increasing support models such as mobile RAM, disadvantaged regions, special education teachers, and teachers working in big cities. A decision taken in this context at the 20th Council is presented below.

16. It should be expanded alternative support models (mobile RAM, technology products, etc.) in appropriate service areas to increase the accessibility of psychological counseling and guidance services. (20th Council)

Items not related to the physical arrangement in inclusive education are not included in the physical arrangements sub-theme. For example, “*Educational buildings and facilities should be planned in accordance with technological developments, regional and climatic conditions, and quality buildings and education facilities should be constructed*” (15. Council-Decision 19), “*Maintenance and repair schedules should be prepared for all educational buildings and facilities, and periodic maintenance and repair should be started.*” (15. Council-Decision 20) When these items are examined, these are related to the physical arrangement of school. On the other hand, when the items related to the physical arrangement in inclusive education are examined, they are handled in the context of support education rooms for children with special education needs, making institutions suitable for universal design principles, regulations for disadvantaged regions, regulations for disabled children, and regulations for social activities. For example, “*In order to ensure accessibility, educational institutions should be made in accordance with universal design principles. (20th Council-Decision 39)*” is an item related to physical arrangement in inclusive education.

When the decisions in the sub-theme of “*Technological support*” are examined, there are items about providing access to education with technological support for students who cannot access education for any reason. In this context, the use of mass medium in education is emphasized. There are also decisions regarding activities to improve digital content in disadvantaged areas. Sample decisions are presented below.

1. The use of television in education with all its channels as much as possible. (12th Council)

17. Blended (hybrid) education models including online lessons should be developed for students with chronic illness. (20th Council)

When the decisions in the sub-theme of “*Material support*” are examined, there are items regarding material support for students with special education needs, young people with disabilities, gifted and talented children, all schools but especially in disadvantaged regions, and regions with low population. In addition, in this sub-theme, developing a diagnostic tool for the special students is highlighted. For example,

21. Necessary special tools and equipment should be provided for the implementation of appropriate education and training methods for children with disabilities in special education schools. (12th Council)

When the decisions in the “*Rural-urban differences*” sub-theme are examined, there are decisions for children, teachers and administrators living in rural and urban areas. When the decisions for students are examined, there are decisions for equalizing the educational opportunities of students in rural-urban areas. When the decisions for teachers and administrators were examined, it was determined that the decisions were related to encouragement for working in rural areas. For example, the item 85 in 17th Council “*In order to increase the quality of students, regional differences should be taken into account, and administrators and teachers should well recognize the social, economic and cultural structure of the regions.*” It is a decision to consider individual differences, which are important components of inclusive education.

When the decisions regarding the “*Disabled children*” sub-theme are examined, it has been seen that this issue was discussed for the first time at the 7th Council and the Regulation for Children in Need of Special Education was examined and accepted. In the council decisions, the issues of opening special education programs, supplying materials that can be used for children in need of special education, increasing the projects related to this subject, making arrangements for social activities, training of people in need of special education at various job training centers and providing internship opportunities have been mentioned. An example item is presented below.

23. Studies should be carried out for the employment of people in need of special education, considering their abilities and skills in their vocational training. In this direction, cooperation should be developed for various employment models. (20th council)

When the decisions regarding the “*Special ability*” sub-theme are examined; it has been seen that the subjects of admitting students to physical, art and music education departments with aptitude exam, implementing special programs for gifted and talented children, planning studies to identify talented students at an early age, and popularizing science and art centers have been mentioned. In this context, the decision taken at the 18th NEC is presented below.

38. Special education schools that are programmed according to the talents and abilities of gifted children should be opened. (18th Council)

When the decisions regarding the "Gender" sub-theme are examined; regulations aimed at increasing female administrators and providing access to education for female students draw attention. In addition, there are items on not making gender discrimination in educational institutions and providing equal opportunities for women and men. Sample decisions are presented below.

3.2.12. Positive discrimination in favor of female in appointments to manager positions (19th Council)

34. Encouragement should be provided to increase the number of female administrators in the appointment of school administrators; considering the characteristics of the schools, a norm staff should be allocated for women, guidance training should be provided to the advisory teachers. (18th council)

38. Encouragement should be provided to participate that especially female students in vocational and technical education programs. No discrimination based on gender should be made in textbooks and other course materials. (16th Council)

When the decisions regarding the "Economic level" sub-theme are examined; it has been seen that the subjects of giving free books, grant, scholarships for poor students, equipment and technical maintenance and repair support were mentioned. In the 9th Council, this subject is addressed as follows.

Necessary aids are provided to ensure that successful students who lack financial means receive the highest education levels. (9th Council)

When the decisions regarding the sub-theme "Language, religion, race, ethnic differences" are examined; it was emphasized that the efficiency of native language studies should be increased, religion courses should be optional, and education institutions should be open to everyone regardless of language, race, gender, and religion. Sample decision is presented below.

Educational institutions are open to everyone regardless of language, race, gender, and religion. No privilege can be given to any person, family, group, or class in education. (9th Council)

When the decisions regarding the "Child worker" sub-theme are examined; It has been seen that the issue was discussed for the first time at the 12th Council. There is a decision in 15th Council about arrangement of "Apprenticeship and Vocational Training Law" considering the contract on the Rights of the Child. When the other council decisions are examined, there are items on regulations for child workers and their families (access to education, rehabilitation, financial means). An example decision is presented below.

14. In cooperation with the Ministry of National Education, local administrations, social services and related voluntary agency, studies should be carried out to provide education, rehabilitation, and financial opportunities for the families of children living on the street and working (17th Council)

When the decisions regarding the "Immigrant children" sub-theme are examined; there are three decisions on this issue: The decisions are about the development of education programs for Turkish immigrant children in other countries (10th Council); about teaching Turkish to foreigners (12. Council) and ensuring the attendance of immigrant children to school and preventing drop-out (20. Council). Since the immigration situation in Turkey has emerged in recent years, there are not many decisions regarding this sub-theme. An example decision is presented below.

45. Technical and structural arrangements should be improved to ensure the access and attendance of education for at-risk and disadvantaged students. Precautions should be developed in cooperation with other relevant institutions and organizations to solve the problems of absenteeism and school dropout due to reasons such as child worker, seasonal worker, and immigration.” can be presented as a sample statement (20th Council)

There are not many decisions regarding the sub-theme “*Juvenile delinquency*”. (Item 4.3.14 19th Council- Item 28 18th Council) The decisions are related to the recognition of children in the home and family environment and add the courses that can meet the needs of penal institutions to the curriculum. An example decision is presented below.

28. Educational activities in penal institutions should be organized in cooperation with the Ministry of National Education, and studies should be carried out to add courses that can meet the needs of these institutions to the curriculum in education faculties. (18th Council)

There are not many decisions regarding the sub-theme "Addiction" (18th, 19th, and 20th Council) In the decisions, it is emphasized that public service ads and educational content are created to raise social awareness about addiction, and deterrent arrangements in disciplinary regulations are made to prevent drug use. In the 18th Council, this issue was discussed as follows.

19. Personnel who will provide support in matters that require special knowledge, skills, and practice such as drug addiction and probation should be trained, and cooperation should be established with relevant institutions and organizations providing services in this field. (18th Council)

There is only one decision regarding the sub-theme “*Relatives of martyrs and veterans*” and the decision is aimed at meeting the educational needs of these children. The decision is presented below.

37- Especially in our Eastern and Southeastern regions necessary studies will be started and concluded to increase the aid provided to the families of the martyred teachers, and to meet all kinds of education expenses of their children. (14th Council)

The decision on “*dropout*” was seen for the first time at the 18th Council. Decisions on this issue are aimed at solving the problems of absenteeism and school dropout due to child labour, seasonal agricultural work, and immigration. The sample decision in the 18th Council is given below.

20. For the children who live on the street, are employed, seasonal workers, etc. psychological counseling and guidance service models should be developed and for them new arrangements should be made to ensure that they access secondary education. (18th Council)

When the decisions regarding the “*special edification*” sub-theme are examined, it is seen that the items are related to developing programs suitable for students' interests, talents and abilities, offering elective courses, opening skill-oriented courses and developing a model for vocational orientation activities. An example decision is presented below.

94. A model for career planning-based vocational orientation activities in line with the potentials of all students from pre-school to higher education should be developed and put into practice (20th Council)

When the decisions regarding the “*Equality of opportunity*” sub-theme are examined; It is seen that various arrangements are emphasized to provide improvement in education and physical opportunities for children who are disadvantaged. Sample decisions are presented below:

13. To facilitate the access of children who have difficulties in accessing secondary education, the capacities of students' hostels should be increased, some schools (for example YİBO) that are in a state of closure should be transformed into students' hostels, and necessary precaution should be taken to ensure access for girls. (18th Council)

32. Free lunch or nutritional support should be provided in schools. (20th Council)

The theme of “*Support*”, another component of inclusive education, was examined under the sub-themes of “*Family education, social awareness raising, teacher education, manager education*”.

When the decisions regarding “*Family education*” are examined, there are items related to ensuring the effective participation of families in the education process, preparing public service ads that will raise awareness among parents, and providing trainings for the families of the disabled children. Sample decisions are presented below:

18. Informing the parents about the situation of their children and the occupations and fields of knowledge that will be beneficial. (12th Council)

12. Educational activities for the families of the disabled should be programmed. (17th Council)

When the decisions regarding “social awareness raising” are examined, there are items related to the popularize of social awareness activities related to special education. Sample decisions are presented below:

1. Disabled youth should be specifically monitored and supervised during their education processes in workplaces, and workplaces should be enlightened about the disabled people, and wrong attitudes towards disabled people should be eliminated. (16th Council)

31. Educational content on addiction should be prepared by considering the age and developmental characteristics of the child. (20th Council)

Under the subtheme of "Teacher education", there are decisions regarding social diversity, current needs, providing teacher training that will reintegrate disabled people into society, and increasing the number of special education teachers. When the relevant decisions are examined, it is seen that pre-service education related to inclusion in higher education institutions is mentioned in the 20th Council (Items 97, 99). Therefore, it can be said that it is important to start the efforts to raise the awareness of teachers about inclusive education during their education process. In addition, it is emphasized to plan regarding the structuring of professional development programs based on current needs in relation to teacher education. The following decision was taken in the 16th Council regarding this issue.

13. To integrate disabled people into society, to make them productive and to benefit from manpower, preservice teachers in education faculties should be trained as people who recognize the characteristics and limitations of disabled people and can teach them appropriately. (16th Council)

In the title of "manager education", like teacher education, arrangements for training administrators to work in multicultural environments and improving their foreign language skills are included. Below is a sample decision regarding manager education.

49. It should be ensured that education administrators get to know different societies and cultures, are trained to work in multicultural environments, and improve their foreign language skills. (18th Council)

The theme of "Participation", another component of inclusive education, was examined under the sub-themes of "decision making process and learning process". When the decisions belonging to the decision-making process sub-theme are examined, there are items for making the school boards more active and ensuring the participation of students, teachers, parents and the environment in the management and decision processes at school. On the other hand, it was determined that some of the decisions

taken ignored student participation (For example, 17th Council Item 1). Sample decision related to the decision-making process sub-theme is presented below:

8. Students and parents should be more active in the management and decision processes at school. (18th Council)

When the decisions related to the "learning process" sub-theme are examined, it is mentioned that the assignment of support education personnel or facilitators for all students with special education needs in case of need. The facilitator is an example of an application abroad, and for the first time, a decision regarding this application was taken at the 20th Council. In addition, in the council decisions, the preparation of special education programs for gifted students, individuals with special education needs and children abroad and the preparation of programs for vocational acquisition for individuals with special education needs according to the children's interests, talents and abilities were mentioned. Sample decisions are presented below:

18. For all students with special education needs, studies should be conducted to assign support education personnel and/or facilitators when needed. (20th Council)

64. Screening and periodic evaluations should be carried out to identify risk groups in early childhood, and early intervention programs should be prepared within the framework of the results. (20th Council)

4. Discussion and conclusion

Although inclusive education is accepted in many countries, it encounters structural obstacles (Alzahrani, 2020). Education policies are of great importance in eliminating these structural barriers (Hardy & Woodcock, 2015). The decisions taken in the National Education Council, which is accepted as the highest level meeting in terms of the Turkish Education System and directs the education policies, play a major role in this context. In order to benefit effectively from this powerful policy tool, the decisions of the NEC should be reflected in practice. Therefore, in this study, the decisions of the National Education Councils that took place from 1939 to 2021 are discussed in the context of the inclusive education principles -Access, participation and support-, which have gained popularity in recent years. From 1939 to 2021, in 1939, 1943, 1946, 1949, 1953, 1957, 1962, 1970, 1974, 1981, 1982, 1988, 1990, 1993, 1996, 1999, 2006, 2010, 2014, 2021, a total of twenty NEC meeting was held once.

According to the findings obtained from the study, it is seen that there were decisions regarding the access component of inclusive education in the 1st and 2nd National Education Councils. In the 3rd National Education Council, the components of participation and support were mentioned for the first time, and there were no decisions regarding inclusive education in the 4th and 5th National Education Councils. It is known that with the proclamation of the Republic, great developments were experienced

in the field of education, as in many other fields. However, these developments are generally at the primary education level, which requires immediate improvement (Vatandas, 2010), and there has been limited progress in terms of inclusive education. In the councils before the 9th Council, either there were no articles on inclusive education or there were articles for only a few components. Since the 1950s, the education of individuals with special needs has ceased to be seen as a health problem and has been handled as a subject of education and transferred from the Ministry of Health to the Ministry of National Education (Kargın, 2004). However, it is seen that this development is not sufficiently reflected in the National Education Councils. As a result of the examination of the council decisions, it is seen that there has been an increase in the decisions taken on the components of inclusive education since the 9th National Education Council, which was the first council where decisions were made regarding all three components of inclusive education (access, participation and support). It can be said that this situation reflects the developments experienced especially in the field of special education in the 1980s (Kargın, 2004).

The Council with the highest number of decisions regarding inclusive education is the 20th Council. The reason for this situation is that equality of opportunity in basic education is on the agenda of the 20th Council. With the Syrian civil war that started in 2011, there has been an intense flow of immigrant population to Turkey. In addition, Turkey hosts many irregular migrants from the Middle East, Asia and Africa (Ünal & Aladağ, 2020). The phenomenon of migration brings with it many problems. According to the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Turkey is also a party, the education of immigrants, asylum seekers and children under temporary protection is guaranteed. As a reflection of this situation, an increase in the decisions taken in the 20th NEC regarding children who are victims of migration is striking.

When the council decisions are examined in terms of the components of inclusive education, it is seen that the most decisions are made for the access component. The access component refers to all arrangements made to ensure that all individuals have access to equal educational opportunities. Therefore, it is an important component of universal design principles, which are necessary for all children to receive quality and inclusive education. Because according to universal design principles; It is necessary to convey the educational content with diversified methods, to develop different support mechanisms for different students, to offer alternative ways to show students what they know and skills, and to provide diversified information and tools that appeal to students' interests (Tunca, Kesbiç, & Gencer, 2021). These regulations aim to provide access to education for all groups, including disadvantaged groups. Support and participation, which are the other components of inclusive education, are related to raising awareness of the society and the participation of stakeholders in the process. On the other hand, it has been observed that there are not many decisions regarding these components in the council decisions. The component with the least decision is the participation component.

However, Dağhan, Kalaycı and Seferoğlu (2011) examined the decisions taken in the National Education Councils in the context of technology and criticized the inclusion of the stakeholders who will be directly affected by the decisions taken in the National Education Councils. Therefore, it is necessary to give more space to the decisions regarding the support and participation components. It is possible to interpret this situation as follows. In Turkey, where inclusive education regulations are still new, once all disadvantaged individuals are provided with access to education in the same way as non-disadvantaged individuals, it will likely be more emphasis on the principle of support in the following stages by focusing on the principle of participation with the active participation of stakeholders in the process and the information and training activities offered to all stakeholders of education.

Although the right to education has the authority to demand education, in current international law, not only the right to education, but also the right to qualified education is mentioned (Bingöl Schrijer, 2020). Therefore, it can be said that while providing access to education, it is necessary to provide access to quality education. In this context, decisions to increase the quality of education have been included in the National Education Councils. As a matter of fact, the emphasis in council decisions on providing access to schools for disadvantaged groups, making physical arrangements, increasing technological and material support, making arrangements to create a positive classroom climate and providing emotional support supports this situation. In a positive class climate, sensitivity to cultural differences and emphasizing the adoption of a culture of peace are important, especially in order to prevent the negative effects that may arise due to the increasing cultural differences in recent years. The emphasis placed on the development of sensitivity by the teacher in the council decisions to create a democratic school culture and classroom atmosphere supports this situation. Considering the necessity for teachers to have proficiency in many fields in order to develop their knowledge, skills, attitudes and values in order to ensure equality of opportunity (Koru, Ardakoç, Dönmez & Taşkan, 2021), it is important to take decisions regarding the arrangements to be made for teacher education in this regard. Especially in the context of the support principle of inclusive education, the decisions regarding the education of teachers, administrators and families are included in the last meeting. It can be said that it is important to start the efforts to raise awareness about inclusive education during the teacher candidacy process, as well as to try to increase the competencies of teachers with in-service training.

Since inclusive education is based on inclusive education for every child, it aims to provide equal opportunities for disadvantaged groups. When the council decisions are examined, as disadvantaged groups, children living in rural-urban areas, disabled children, children with special abilities, gender difference, children with low economic level, children with language, religion, race, ethnic differences, child worker, immigrant children, juvenile delinquency children, addiction children, relatives of martyrs and

veterans, school dropout, special education, children of broken families, children of families living abroad and children with chronic diseases and chronic diseases were mentioned. In the “Students and Access to Education” report, which evaluates the access to education and social services provided by the school during the epidemic (Covid-19), children who need special measures to access education are “in need of special education support, refugees, working children, in the penitentiary system, in the village school, in the minority school, and children in need of protection” (Tunca, Kesbic, & Gencer, 2021). In this context, it can be said that the groups addressed in the council decisions are handled in a very wide range compared to the groups that deal with providing access to education in other reports.

It includes school-age children who cannot benefit from the principle of equal opportunity in education due to the disadvantage of inclusive education, as well as adults who cannot benefit from educational opportunities. When the council decisions are examined, it is important for inclusive education to include regulations for adults within the scope of the principles. As a matter of fact, one of the Sustainable Development Goals of "Quality Education" determined by the United Nations for Turkey is to promote lifelong learning opportunities for everyone (United Nations Turkey, 2022).

The importance of increasing technological support activities and developing blended education models for the improvement of digital content in disadvantaged regions has been seen once again, especially after the epidemic process. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out activities in line with the decisions taken regarding these decisions going forward. Another important issue is the importance of identifying children from disadvantaged groups with special educational needs. Article 12 regarding the improvement of diagnostic tools in council decisions is given here. It is a positive development that studies on this subject are increasing in Turkey.

When the council decisions were examined, it was seen that there were decisions about the exams to be made in the selection of gifted children. On the other hand, it can be said that there is a need for expansion and regulations in the assessment and evaluation of children with special needs in accordance with their individual needs. The creation of a truly inclusive education environment will be possible by arranging suitable educational opportunities for all students without any discrimination (Acar, 2020).

In summary, especially in the decisions taken in the last council meeting, attention is drawn to the importance of ensuring that all children receive qualified and inclusive education. Inclusive education should be integrated with general education instead of being considered separately from general education. In this case, more decisions on inclusive education should be taken and put into practice at the national education council, which is the highest level meeting where education policies are determined for Turkey. All stakeholders of the education system, from policy makers to teachers, students, administrators and parents, should lead together for an equal, qualified and

universal education for every child. In addition, since different student groups may become disadvantaged with new events that may occur over time, rapid decision-making and implementation mechanisms should be kept active and adequate support should be provided for each student. As a result, education should reach all children in a qualified manner and be presented in a differentiated way to meet the needs of all children. For this reason, it can be said that with the implementation of the decisions taken on this issue in the council decisions, important steps will be taken for the integration of universal design principles for learning into teaching.

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