


Knowledge Production in the Field of Educational Administration in Turkey: Evaluation of Dissertations within the Context of Habermas's Knowledge Taxonomy

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Abstract

In recent years, significant efforts have been made by Turkish researchers to contribute to knowledge production in the field of educational administration to match the scholarly endeavor of their international peers. The main purpose of these scientific studies, including dissertations, is to produce knowledge and offer original alternatives to solving problems through several philosophical approaches. Consistent with this effort, the present study aims to evaluate the dissertations produced in the field of educational administration epistemologically as well as ontologically, in respect of Habermas's knowledge taxonomy. The research was conducted using document and discourse analysis, which are qualitative research methods, and 215 dissertations prepared in 23 different universities accessed from Council of Higher Education Thesis Center database were analyzed. The results show that Eskisehir Osmangazi, Hacettepe and Ankara Universities take the lead in the production of

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dissertations. It was found the number of males was higher in both researcher and supervisor positions, that mainly quantitative research methods were used, and that empirical-analytical knowledge was produced. The limitation of historical-hermeneutical/interpretative and critically oriented knowledge types is another original finding. The dataset included only dissertations and excluded other sources from Turkey. The authors believe that this study will serve as basis for a better understanding of the current features of the field. In addition, this study, which was conducted in a non-Western country, is expected to affect the knowledge production trend in the field of educational administration and support the diversity of knowledge in dissertations, which are detailed studies shedding light on the future.

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Introduction

One of the main features of scientific studies is that they give causal explanations, which researchers aim to do by making use of plentiful sources and referring to different techniques. Questioning the knowledge produced before, during, and after this intensive process is also an important task of researchers. Feyerabend, (1991; 2011) argues that being the slave of incomprehensible, repetitive, far-off catchwords may lead to being trapped in a narrow-minded ideology. This also points out that scientific studies considering/questioning the



understandings, approaches, and thought systems of the field to which they aim to contribute is indeed a scientific activity in itself.

It is expected that studies on education, an area which has been emphasized, contemplated and studied for years, constitute a wide scientific field based on an important background and also intend to produce solutions to problems (Russell, 1926; 2013). The response to this very expectation is the production of studies of original and innovative nature (Popper, 2017). To that end, one of researchers' meaningful acts is to discuss the work conducted in their field, to explain the progress, and to analyze the big picture (Bush, 2020; Fazliogullari & Kurul, 2013; Gunter, 2006) in a holistic fashion. Producing knowledge is possible by performing all scientific activities with a scientific attitude—from small-scale studies to comprehensive studies such as dissertations.

At this point, it becomes necessary to focus on dissertations, which are written with a considerably high level of effort, in particular bearing in mind the production and circulation of knowledge of the specific field, discipline, or area of study. These studies are generally the ones through which information is refined and where solid solutions to problems are expected to appear. Kuhn (1962/1995) defines science as a process, and in this direction, dissertations are among the most important of scientific studies; they are one group of comprehensive studies proposed with the claim of generating novel forms of knowledge. They are, in their most basic form, studies presented at the end of doctoral programs. In addition, dissertations are scientific activities involving academic endeavors in which *factual* (*descriptive*) and *theoretical* (*explanatory*) processes are conducted with the help of scientific referencing, research, and methods in a unified manner. The understanding of continuity as well as revolution in

scientific studies is of great importance with respect to dissertations and for the fields in which, and for which, these dissertations are written.

Educational administration (EA) is an important field that has made significant progress apropos of theory and practice in relatively recent years (Bush, 2021; Hallinger & Kovacevic, 2021; Uslu Cetin & Ozdemir, 2021), and it has attracted significant attention with its main study subjects such as leadership, management, performance, and decision-making (Oplatka, 2016). Thus, scientific studies in the field of EA cast light on numerous areas, from the management of educational institutions (Bush, 2018) to teacher training (Kaya, 1984) and from addressing theoretical knowledge (Beycioglu & Donmez, 2006, Evans, 2022) to examining organizational factors (Kosar & Calik, 2011). In fact, studies in the field of EA are progressing with great momentum in certain territories. One of the countries that have accelerated its contribution to the field in this regard is Turkey (Oplatka & Arar, 2016).

In fact, various studies, including dissertations, have indicated that Turkey is one of the countries to have significantly contributed to EA literature (Kazanci Tinmaz, 2020; Mertkan et al., 2016). Moreover, avoiding repetition, preserving continuity and innovation, and maintaining the transcendental attitude aim in the studies of the EA field are evidenced in Turkey, as is the case with different countries. Nevertheless, it is observed that a good many studies prepared in the field of EA are also criticized (Cimen et al. 2020; Karadag, 2010). It is emphasized that especially dissertations written in the literature of EA generate several problems in influencing education policies and producing knowledge (Ozdemir, 2017; Ozdemir & Aypay, 2022), and they also show similar characteristics in general (Balci & Apaydin,



2009). According to researchers (Aksu, 2020; Evers & Lakomski, 1996; Fazliogullari & Kurul, 2013), the reasons for this are the insufficiency of tendencies other than positivism and the limitation of self-critique studies. These views raise critical concerns about the epistemic characteristics of the dissertations prepared in the field of EA in Turkey.

Bourdieu (1997/2016) explains scientific attitude as producing original research by deactivating *the mind police*. The inevitability of achieving the *epistemological break*—i.e., reaching the quality outlook that will produce problems instead of solving ready-made problems—supports his aforementioned explanation. At this point, these views strengthen the necessity for the examination of dissertations in the field of EA. Thereupon, the problem of producing solutions in the field of EA and in its study topics proposed by Archbald (2008), Heck and Hallinger (2005), and Oplatka and Arar (2016) reveals *the relevance of an examination* of dissertations as stated in studies in the context of Turkey (Cimen et al., 2020; Kazanci Tinmaz, 2020).

Scientific features of studies, viz. being functional, useful, and explanatory (Griffiths, 1959), are also indispensable for EA, which in and of itself is a scientific field of study (Mialaret, 2018; Oplatka, 2016). It is also innate for science to consider this indispensability as to theoretical accumulation. As a result of this necessity, researchers handled the studies in the field of EA from systematic or bibliographic (e.g., Bellibas & Gumus, 2019; Gunter, 2006; Hallinger & Kovacevic, 2021; Mertkan et al., 2017) and epistemic (e.g., Ayyildiz, 2019; Eacott, 2019; Ozdemir, 2017; Sahin, 2018; Turan et al., 2014) aspects. It is known that the limits of the assumptions surrounding the epistemic accumulation draw the limits of scientific studies (Evers & Lakomski, 1991). From this perspective, it would not be wrong to believe that it is

beneficial to examine the studies in the field of EA through Habermas's (1994) knowledge taxonomy, which is an original epistemic approach that affects many scientific studies. According to this taxonomy, scientific research produces empirical-analytical, critically oriented, or historical-hermeneutic/interpretive knowledge. That said, the investigations about this taxonomy—particularly in the field of EA—are restricted in the national and international contexts. Considering these, the examination of dissertations based on this knowledge taxonomy offers an opportunity to review the boundaries of knowledge produced in the field of EA.

Evaluating the quality of the studies that are the sources of education—and more specifically, the ones in the area of administration of education with regard to theory and practice—gives important clues about the course of education (Archbald, 2008; Beycioglu & Donmez, 2006; Evers & Lakomski, 1996; Oplatka, 2016, Uslu Cetin & Ozdemir, 2021). When the necessity of the epistemic analysis of the knowledge produced in the field of EA and its potential contribution to the literature are taken into account, the importance of the current study becomes more visible. In this regard, the study was executed to evaluate the dissertations in the field of EA through Habermas's knowledge taxonomy. In this way, it is believed that the present study will serve to emphasize the epistemic aspect of EA studies prepared in a non-Western society for international readers. Examining the dissertations in the field of EA in Turkey will guide knowledge to be produced by other researchers in the future. Furthermore, efforts toward knowledge production in the field of EA can be strengthened, and types of knowledge produced by the relevant dissertations and trends in this production can be specified.



EA and Knowledge Production in Turkey

EA is a scientific theory and practice field that emerged in the USA at the end of the nineteenth century. Especially with the period of the *Theory Movement*, the production of knowledge reflecting the identity of this field in Western countries in education management accelerated (Ozdemir, 2018). Turkey is one of the countries where many studies are conducted in the field of EA, and significant contributions are made to the literature accordingly.

In recent years, Turkey has been drawing attention with its investments in higher education and EA programs that have developed/diversified in parallel with these processes. This parallelism is also reflected in the knowledge produced within the field of EA in the country. Assuredly, studies prepared in the field of EA contributing to theory and practice are remarkable in this regard; these studies, including dissertations and through which *scientia* is produced in the field of EA, have been discussed by many. Methodological and conceptual analyses (e.g., Fazliogullari, 2012; Isci, 2013; Karadag, 2009; Ozdemir & Aypay, 2022) as well as knowledge-based analyses (e.g., Gulmez et al., 2020; Gumus et al., 2019; Uslu Cetin & Ozdemir, 2021) have also been made. However, among knowledge-based analyses, the existence of studies dealing with dissertations prepared in Turkey in terms of the type of knowledge produced is rather limited. Hence, using the knowledge taxonomy developed by Habermas (1994) while analyzing dissertations can open up a novel chapter in “the collectively written book of EA.”

Habermas’s Knowledge Taxonomy

Scientific studies intend to produce quality solutions to the problems researched. The solutions proposed become further specified

with the effect of theoretical accumulations (Kuhn, 1962/1995). Arguably, a fundamental source of originality in generating solutions in this manner is Habermas with his knowledge taxonomy (Wulf, 2010). It is inevitable to herein mention the *Frankfurt School* to contemplate Habermas and his school of thought thoroughly. Frankfurt School is the widely used name of the *Institute for Social Research* established within Frankfurt University.

Criticism of positivism and opposition to the hegemony of any theoretical background are the main characteristics of the Frankfurt School (Balkiz, 2004; Ozdemir, 2017). Representatives of the school, including Habermas, offer comprehensive views on this issue. Habermas is a scholar known for his studies on *Theory of Communicative Action* and *Knowledge and Human Interests*. In particular, he discusses the views on the dominance of the ideas of the ruling class (Engels & Marx, 1846/2013) the logic of social sciences (Habermas, 2011), and epistemic processes (Habermas, 1994) in detail. It can be argued that he tries to position critical thinking at the intersecting points of the fields of science and philosophy rather than *against* science.

The assumption that *every scientific attempt involves traces of its researcher* (Guba, 1990), which has long been the subject of discussion in epistemic terms and which has been examined by Habermas as well, brought original dimensions to the studies on the production, classification, and function of knowledge. Habermas attempted to develop a knowledge taxonomy within this context, matching knowledge to human interests. According to this taxonomy, studies are divided into three categories regarding the type of knowledge they produce: (i) empirical-analytical, (ii) critically oriented, and (iii) historical-hermeneutic/interpretive (Habermas, 1994; Terry, 1997).



Empirical-analytical knowledge is based on technical interest, which comprises the objective field of science, and it has the purpose of controlling; conversely, *critically oriented knowledge* is taken as an emancipatory interest (Bottomore, 2013, p. 74). Relief from unconscious pressures is defined as the basic function of critically oriented knowledge (Cevizci, 2018, p. 245). *Historical-hermeneutical/interpretive knowledge* is the language-based, practical interest within individuals or social groups of various sizes, and it serves to understand historical artifacts, cultural, and social accumulation. This knowledge is intertwined with human history and hence has been predefined. This taxonomy, which Habermas (1994) calls *cognitive strategies*, also resembles the triple paradigm (positivist, constructivist, and critical) proposed by Guba (1990). It regards *action* as self-interest and *discourse* as the search for knowledge itself. Knowledge, with a critically oriented discourse, becomes the center of searching for freedom, and the knowledge provided by the critically oriented production notably serves not for exclusion but for the discovery of the idea (I).

Purpose

The attitude about originality in the effort to find solutions to the problems in practice is an acknowledged *raison d'être* of the universities and of the knowledge they produce (Oplatka, 2016). In this context, answering the questions *where we are* and *what we are doing* is vital to reveal the state of scientific knowledge in universities. In this way, preventing unwanted repetitions and even errors can be realized in the knowledge produced in fields, including EA. Studying the dissertations prepared in universities in a country such as Turkey, in which important studies have been presented to the EA literature in recent years, can decipher the knowledge production trend of the field

in Turkish universities. Moreover, such a review may help introduce the non-Western society of the field to an international readership—e.g., to researchers and practitioners—at a time when studies on an international knowledge base in the field of EA are gaining importance. The purpose of this study is then to address the dissertations of the field of EA in Turkey in connection with Habermas’s knowledge taxonomy and answer the following questions:

1. What are the basic features of dissertations in EA?
2. What are the research methods used in dissertations in EA?
3. In the context of Habermas’s knowledge taxonomy, what are the types of knowledge produced in dissertations in the field of EA?
4. What change is observable in the types of research methods utilized and knowledge produced in dissertations in the field of EA by year?

Method

Design

In the current study, document and discourse analysis, which are qualitative research methods, were combined and used. *Document analysis* is a qualitative research design used in the analysis of written/digital materials (Yildirim & Simsek, 2016), which scholars (e.g., Merriam, 2018; Patton, 2015) believe to be a suitable design for the evaluation of scientific materials such as dissertations and their content; therefore, we attempt to identify, classify and analyze documents. *Discourse analysis* is a qualitative research design that unearths what the subtext is instead of the apparent form of a(ny) text



as well as what purpose the writer of the text serves with this work (Gee, 2010) similar to document analysis. The suitability of discourse analysis to decipher texts—in other words, documents that include dissertations (Balci, 2016)—influenced the preference for this design. Furthermore, this approach allows to bring the diversity of meanings to light (Elliott, 1996). Habermas's (1994) discourse analysis is also connected with *hermeneutics*, which finds a place for itself in knowledge taxonomy. The analysis of the words and sentences within the text, the reconstruction of the meaning by revealing the relations between these, and the uncovering of prominent themes can be described as the essence of this design. Language is closely related to thought (Wittgenstein, 1953/2015) and has a structure that gains functionality through its socio-cultural contexts (Elliott, 1996). Discourse serves to *create insights* through language (Balci, 2016), and it would not be wrong to accept discourse analysis as a language-based analysis method. Habermas (2011) also punctuates that the expressions are not solely sentences, but they do have a background. It turns out that discourses are social realities that must be analyzed rather than simple entities formed by statements. Discourse analysis is the study of language to this spot; however, this analysis requires advanced analysis looking at syntactic and semantic features. The factors that shape, limit or develop thought are clarified through discourse analysis. The language used is at this point is handled with a critical examination and interpretation (Sozen, 2017).

Data Collection Instrument

A data collection tool developed by the researchers was used in the study according to its design framework. While developing the data collection tool, the basic features and classification details of previous studies related to studying dissertations were taken into

consideration. For the development of this process, a broad spectrum approach was taken, and a fair number of studies (Balci, 2008; Balci & Apaydin, 2009; Bellibas & Gumus, 2019; Cimen et al., 2020; Ozdemir & Aypay, 2022; Turan et al., 2014) were checked. In addition, when analyzing the dissertations concerning the types of knowledge they produce, Habermas's (1994) knowledge taxonomy was the main source of reference. Moreover, the view about qualitative studies proposed by Lincoln and Guba (2005) underlining these, which relies on an interpretative/critical paradigm, and the notion that quantitative research is based on a positivist paradigm have been counted on.

Further, studies by Chen and Hirschheim (2004), Guo & Sheffield (2008), and Uysal (2013) are other important pieces of research that guided the process. The details of the types of knowledge produced have been clarified in the data analysis section by referring to the studies by Dijk (1985), Habermas (2005), and Terry (1997). In this case, the researchers developed dissertation evaluation criteria (Figure 1) and coding instructions about the knowledge produced (Table 1) for documental and discursive analysis and then consulted two experts who conducted qualitative research in the field of EA. The dissertations were examined utilizing these two media and Microsoft Excel software.

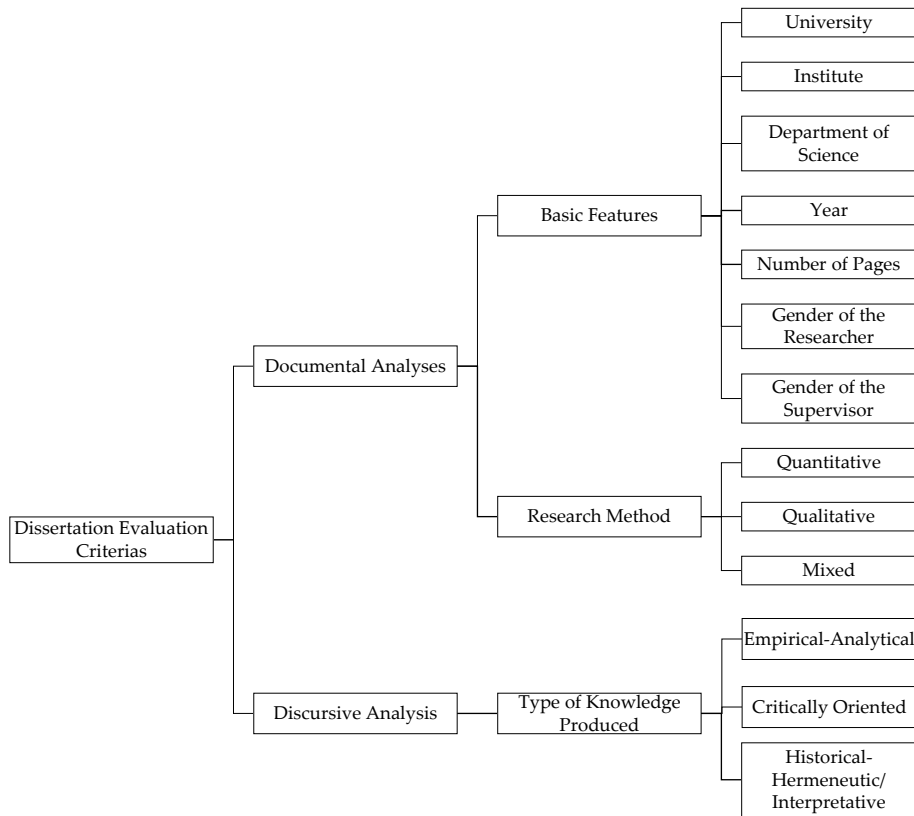


Figure 1. Dissertation Evaluation Criteria

Table 1.
Dissertation Coding Instructions

Basic Features	University, Institute, Department of Science, Year, Number of Pages, Gender of the Researcher, and Supervisor and Characteristics	
		Type
Research Methods	The apparent existence of numerical data, mathematical operations/measurements.	Quantitative
	Using interview forms, not processing the information clearly with numbers.	Qualitative
	Simultaneous use of quantitative and qualitative research methods.	Mixed
Knowledge Type	Prediction and control mechanisms by which research questions are answered; relationships between factors are analyzed.	Empirical-Analytical
	Using authentic language with ideological and political discourses; expressing elements such as freedom, egalitarianism, inadequacy, and discrimination.	Critically Oriented
	The opinions and judgments of the participants are studied, and the cases are handled with positivist and non-critical methods.	Historical-Hermeneutic / Interpretative

Identification of Sources

The sources/documents of the study are the dissertations in the field of EA in Turkey, which have been accessed from the database of the Council of Higher Education Thesis Center (CoHETC). Within the scope of the study, dissertations prepared between 2015 and 2019 were selected as the main sources. The main reason of choosing these years is the economic attitude that must be adopted when generalizing results to larger units, as has been foregrounded in similar studies (e.g., Aydin & Uysal, 2014; Karadag, 2010). It is emphasized that this approach can also methodologically strengthen external validity (Balci, 2016, p. 95), and it was expected that taking the dissertations

completed between the years mentioned above as the source would make it easier to make an inference about the population (Ozmantar Keser, 2018). Another reason for not taking all the dissertations prepared as the source was to be able to work on a different year range. Existing studies on dissertations in the field in Turkey (e.g., Cimen et al., 2020; Fazliogullari, 2012; Isci, 2013; Karadag, 2009; Karadag, 2010; Uysal, 2013) already include dissertations previously prepared and do not investigate the aforementioned time period. In the limited number of studies that refer to dissertations in the recent years (Aksu, 2020; Koksall, 2019; Ozdemir & Aypay, 2022; Uslu Cetin & Ozdemir, 2021), an approach like the one in the present study was not adopted. Thus, we aimed to evaluate the current dissertations prepared between 2015 and 2019 and used the *detailed search>department* tabs in the related database with an eye to obtaining dissertations prepared in the field of EA in different institutes and departments. From here, dissertations in various departments with the inscription of EA were obtained (Table 2).

Table 2.

Data Regarding Dissertations Prepared in the Field of EA

Departments	Years					Frequency
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
EA		1	9	6	15	31
EA, Inspection, Planning, and	21	22	13	15	21	92
EA and Inspection				1	1	2
EA and Supervision	8	13	22	14	14	71
EA and Investigation	2	5	2	3	7	19
Total	31	41	46	39	58	215

As seen in Table 2, 215 dissertations from five different departments were obtained in this study and constituted the source.

Data Analysis

The first sections of the dissertations to be addressed were the *title, purpose, and method*. Then, *discussion, results, and suggestions* were examined. As for observing the stability of the measurement (Patton, 2015), the researchers were careful not to study a dissertation under several types of information at the same time. In the research, to determine the basic characteristics of dissertations, (i) *university*, (ii) *institute*, (iii) *department*, (iv) *year*, (v) *number of pages*, (vi) *gender of the researcher*, and (vii) *gender of the supervisor* were analyzed.

To determine the research methods of the dissertations examined in the study, those in which numerical data were used abundantly alongside designs such as surveys and correlational or experimental research were coded under the (i) *quantitative* study category; qualitative studies and non-empirical conceptual studies using interview forms were coded under the (ii) *qualitative* study category; and studies in which quantitative and qualitative methods were used together were coded under the (iii) *mixed methods* study category. Studies employing quantitative methods and collecting data in a qualitative manner with some questions toward the end of the study were not taken as mixed methods studies; instead, the main method that dominated the dissertation was taken as the basis.

In the specification and categorization of the type of knowledge produced by the dissertations, the researchers conducted examinations from the keywords section all the way to the reference section. Acknowledging discourse analysis involves a process that provides the whole picture of a subject, concentrating on the connections of information, and analyzing meaning through concepts (Dijk, 1985); these aspects were deemed essential. Habermas (2005) makes the following statements on this subject:

The approach of empirical-analytical sciences carries technical cognitive interest. Critically oriented sciences contain the liberating cognitive concern at the root of traditional theories, as we have seen. The approach of the historical-hermeneutical/interpretive sciences, on the other hand, include the practical one (p. 314). (...) The methodological framework that determines the meaning of the validity of critically oriented knowledge is formed by the concept of (self-reflection). This frees the subject from dependence on hypostatized forces. Self-reflection is determined by a liberating cognitive interest (p. 316). (...) Empirical-analytical knowledge is therefore a type of knowledge that is dependent on possible prediction. However, the meaning of such predictions is determined only by the rules (that we reach by obtaining data from the field, making analyses, and interpretations) by which we apply the theories to reality. Because in the controlled observation that takes the form of an experiment, we create the initial conditions, and measure the results of the operations performed under these conditions. Empiricism tries to base the objective illusion on the observations described in basic statements. (...) Access to facts from a historical-hermeneutical/interpretative perspective is provided not by observation, but by understanding of meaning. In empirical-analytical sciences, there is interpretation of texts while verifying hypotheses (p. 315).

The above information, confirmed by Terry (1997), has been the main reference in coding the following type of research under the category of studies that produce *historical-hermeneutical/interpretive knowledge*: (i) dissertations in which hypotheses are tested, the relationship between factors is found, and deterministic indications are indicated; dissertations with numerical data and statistical methods (generally using quantitative designs); studies that produce *empirical-analytical knowledge*; (ii) dissertations loaded with language

and content values, aiming to liberate human beings by highlighting inequalities and irregularities (generally using mixed methods); (iii) studies that construct *critically oriented knowledge*; (iv) dissertations that facilitate understanding/description of phenomena where they are examined in their own circumstances (mainly using qualitative research methods). Discourse analysis is built on questioning and interpreting philosophical foundations. Wherefore, what is aimed is not to create categories but to emphasize the existing ones, clarifying the details under the relevant categories (O'Connor, 2006). Resultantly, determining the type of knowledge originated in the relevant dissertations based on the available data, completing the categorization process following the coding directive, and finally questioning the knowledge produced in the current study point to the core of data analysis.

The attitude adopted to enhance the validity of this research involved paying attention to not coding a document under different categories of knowledge, years, or methods simultaneously. Yet another measure taken to boost the validity and reliability of the research is to work merely on the dissertations available at CoHETC. One of the first procedures performed within the scope of the validity and reliability procedures of the study was to get to the bottom of the epistemic and methodological details of the discourse analysis design as discourse analysis is an activity where qualitative methods are evident and in which the goal is to understand how discourse is constructed. Viewed in this way, this analysis is a design in which situations open to discussion, rather than the final results, are proposed. In reality, although discourse analysis does not claim to have the last word on important questions, it can contribute to a certain standpoint (O'Connor, 2006).

Results

The answer to the first question of the study, “*What are the basic features of dissertations in EA?*” is presented alphabetically in Figure 2 and Table 3. Thereby, the basic features of dissertations are provided.

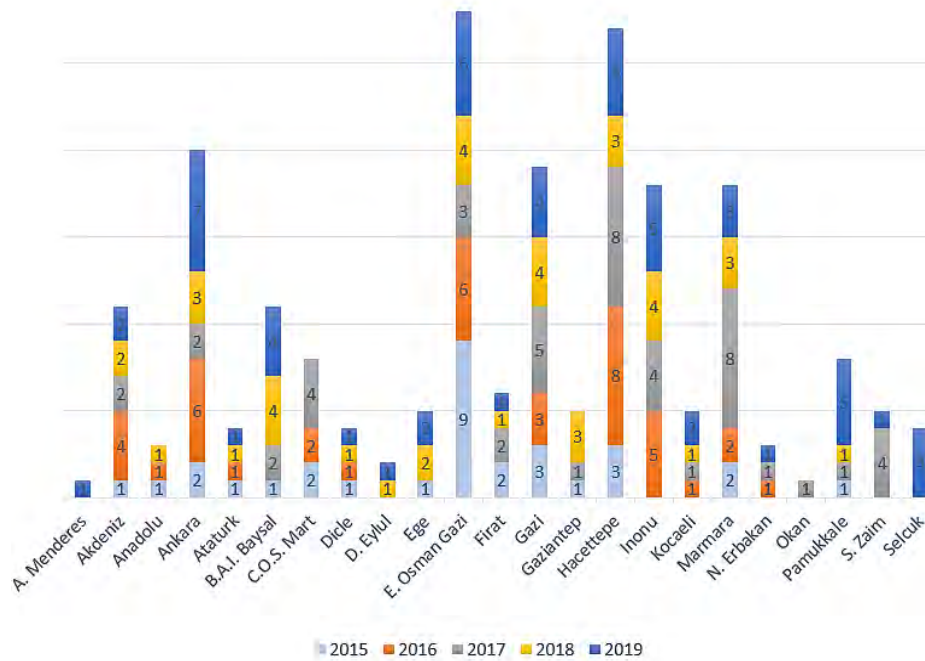


Figure 2. The Studies by Year and By Universities

Table 3.

Basic Features of Dissertations

University	Frequency	%
Adnan Menderes	1	0.5
Akdeniz	11	5.1
Anadolu	3	1.4
Ankara	20	9.3
Ataturk	4	1.9
Bolu Abant Izzet Baysal	11	5.1
Canakkale Onsekiz Mart	8	3.7
Dicle	5	2.3
Dokuz Eylul	2	0.9
Ege	5	2.3

	Eskisehir Osmangazi	28	13.0
	Firat	6	2.8
	Gazi	19	8.8
	Gaziantep	5	2.3
	Hacettepe	27	12.6
	Inonu	18	8.4
	Kocaeli	5	2.4
	Marmara	18	8.4
	Necmettin Erbakan	3	1.4
	Okan*	1	0.5
	Pamukkale	6	2.8
	Sabahattin Zaim*	5	2.3
	Selcuk	4	1.9
Institute	Institute of Educational Sciences	203	94.4
	Institute of Social Sciences	12	5.6
Department	EA	31	14.4
	EA, Inspection, Planning, and Economy	92	42.8
	EA and Inspection	2	.9
	EA and Supervision	71	33
	EA and Investigation	19	8.8
Year	2015	31	14.4
	2016	41	19.1
	2017	46	21.3
	2018	39	18.1
	2019	58	27.0
Number of Pages	100-150	9	4.2
	151-200	51	23.7
	201-250	57	26.5
	251-300	59	27.4
	+301	39	18.1
Gender of Researcher	Male	124	57.7
	Female	91	42.3
Gender of Supervisor	Male	144	67
	Female	71	33
Total		215	100.0

*Foundation Universities

When the basic features of the dissertations are examined in Table 3 and Figure 2, it appears that 55 dissertations (25.6%) prepared at Osman Gazi and Hacettepe University constitute most of the dissertations produced in the last 5 years, and the ones prepared at Adnan Menderes and Okan University are merely one dissertation for each. Almost all dissertations (97.2%) discussed were prepared at state



universities, and foundation universities take a small part with six dissertations (2.8%). It was found that dissertations prepared in educational sciences institutes are much higher in number (203; 94.4%) than dissertations prepared in social sciences institutes. Within the scope of the study, dissertations in different disciplines were examined, too, provided that they contained the phrase *EA* in their titles. It is thus noteworthy that the number of dissertations prepared in the fields of EA, inspection, planning, and economics (92; 42.8%) is superior to that of the dissertations prepared in the field of EA (2; 0.9%), and inspection constitutes the smallest part of the related dissertations. The distribution of the dissertations by years highlights a regular increase in the number of dissertations (except for the year 2018), so much so that the 55 dissertations (25.6%) prepared in 2019 are almost twice as many as the 31 dissertations (14.4%) prepared in 2015 (Figure 2). With regard to the number of pages, 59 studies (27.4%) with a range of 251–300 pages represent the largest group of dissertations, and with regard to gender, most researchers are male (124; 57.7%), and so are most supervisors (144; 67%).

The answer to the second question of the study, “*What are the research methods used in dissertations in EA?*” is presented in Table 4.

Table 4.
Research Methods Used in The Dissertations

Research Method	Frequency	%
Quantitative	110	51.2
Qualitative	45	20.9
Mixed	60	27.9
Total	215	100.0

It is noticed that more than half of the dissertations (51.2%) were prepared using the quantitative research method. Mixed methods research was utilized the most, followed by the quantitative research

method, with 60 dissertations (27.9%). Conversely, 45 dissertations (20.9%) applied the qualitative research method.

The answer to the third question of the research, “*In the context of Habermas’s knowledge taxonomy, what are the types of knowledge produced in dissertations in the field of EA?*” is shown in Table 5.

Table 5
Types of Knowledge Produced in The Dissertations

Types of Knowledge	Frequency	%
Empirical-Analytical	176	81.9
Critically Oriented	3	1.4
Historical-Hermeneutic/Interpretative	36	16.7
Total	215	100.0

When the dissertations prepared between 2015 and 2019 are examined with reference to the types of knowledge that they produced, it appears that empirical-analytical knowledge was produced in 176 dissertations (81.9%), followed by historical-hermeneutical/interpretive knowledge, with 36 dissertations (16.7%). Nevertheless, it was reported that the smallest group of produced-knowledge type in the dissertations was critically oriented. Critically oriented knowledge was produced in only three dissertations (1.4%).

The answer to the fourth and last question of the study, “*What change is observable with the types of research methods utilized and the knowledge produced in the dissertations in the field of EA by year?*” is presented in Figure 3.

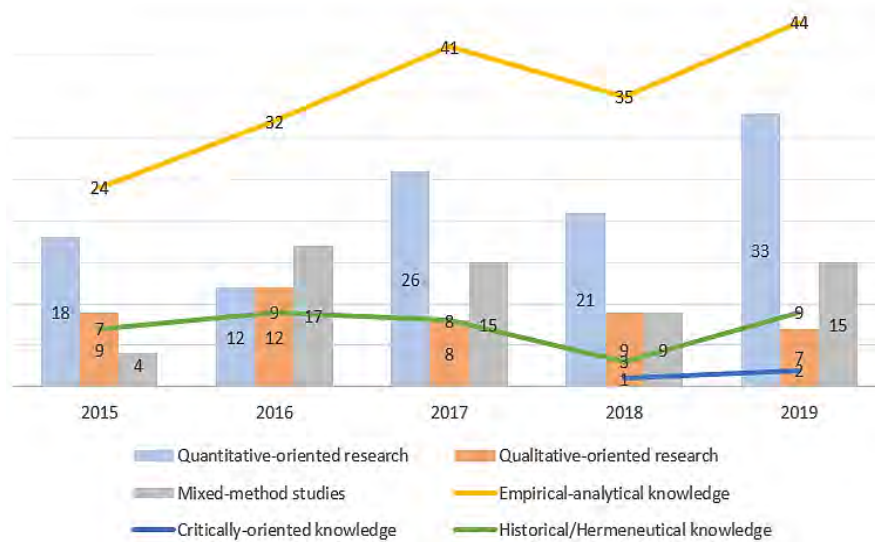


Figure 3. Research Methods and Type of Knowledge Produced by Years

Figure 3 shows the rather fluctuating rise in—and the use of—quantitative and mixed research methods and empirical-analytical knowledge production as well as the limited rise in critically oriented knowledge and the steady course in the use of qualitative research method and historical-hermeneutical/interpretive knowledge production.

Conclusion and Discussion

In this study, dissertations in the field of EA were examined by alluding to the term “knowledge taxonomy” developed by Habermas (1994). In so doing, we intended to draw attention to the knowledge produced in the universities in the field of EA of Turkey as a non-Western country. Within this frame of reference, 215 dissertations prepared between the years 2015 and 2019 were discussed. The basic features, that is to say, the methods used, and the type of knowledge produced in the relevant studies have been clarified. In the following,

the key findings and limitations of this study are discussed, and recommendations for the field are offered.

The present study comprises four questions. The first is about the basic features of dissertations. As per the main characteristics of dissertations prepared in the field of EA, it is perceived that prominent institutes were educational sciences/state universities, while foundation universities made a limited contribution to knowledge production in the field of EA. Moreover, the majority of both researchers and supervisors were male. Taking a closer look at previous studies that examined the gender of researchers, the results of this study seem to align with their findings (Balci & Apaydin, 2009; Baykara, 2019; Fazliogullari, 2012; Ozdemir & Aypay, 2022). These are notable contributions vis-à-vis revealing the dominant role of educational sciences institutes and male researchers in the field in Turkey.

The second question is about research methods. It is observed that 110 (51.2%) of the 215 dissertations examined had been prepared using a quantitative research method. Similar results had been obtained in previous studies (Archbald, 2008; Balci & Apaydin, 2009; Fazliogullari & Kurul, 2013; Uslu Cetin & Ozdemir, 2021). Demirhan (2015) emphasizes that the dominant research tradition in the field of EA is to make measurements based on opinions, perceptions, and attitudes, and it is suggested the parts are brought together in the studies where research questions/hypotheses are tested. A number of studies in the field of EA (Isci, 2013; Karaca, 2018; Koksall, 2019; Turan et al., 2014) point out that studies deploying quantitative methods, where empirical data are frequently analyzed, are abundant. The present study agrees with the related studies; this may be an original dimension of our research given that the dissertations we disclose in the Turkish context still embrace quantitative research methods.



Consistent with this, another original facet of our study is that it shows how mixed methods research was limitedly preferred but nevertheless preserved its place in the dissertations prepared in Turkey (Bellibas & Gumus, 2019). From this, it can be claimed that Turkish researchers should go beyond their frequently selected research methods to produce more refined knowledge.

The third question is about Habermas's knowledge taxonomy and the types of knowledge produced in dissertations. The findings indicate that dissertations producing historical-hermeneutical / interpretative and critically oriented knowledge represent about one-fifth of the total number. This result implies that a significant portion of the studies are empirical-analytical, for which quantitative methods are used frequently, and that practically oriented studies are prepared. This unbalanced distribution of produced knowledge confirms the conceptualization that no consensus exists on the pathways of knowledge production (Beycioglu & Donmez, 2006, p. 328; Heck & Hallinger, 2005) or on research strategies (Baykara, 2019) in the field of EA. This result is particularly interesting in the Turkish case since the recent research highlights the dramatic performance of Turkish scholars in EA studies (Gulmez et al., 2020; Mertkan et al., 2017). This picture may imply that EA research, which has gained momentum in Turkey in recent years, has an epistemic problem when it comes to dissertations. This is also supported by many studies on dissertations (Fazliogullari & Kurul, 2013; Kazanci Tinmaz, 2020; Ozdemir & Aypay, 2022). Similar to Eastern societies (Oplatka & Arar, 2017), although several Turkish researchers have focused on doctoral programs and dissertations, they have produced restricted hermeneutic/interpretative and critically oriented knowledge in the field of EA in Turkey. The historical-hermeneutic/interpretative knowledge, with the limitation of critically oriented knowledge,

produced in the discussed dissertations assures a skeptical and concerned approach that criticizes the knowledge and cognition style in previous studies (Orucu, 2006; Turan & Sisman, 2013). An earlier study by Osguthorpe and Wong (1993) demonstrates that this is veritably not special to Turkey, and it has a decades of history. Thus, recent studies (Evans, 2022; Ozdemir, 2017) underline the epistemological challenges experienced in the field of EA. In this respect, the current study fills the epistemic criticism gap in the literature that is needed by EA studies both nationally and outside of Turkey.

The fourth question of this study concerns change in the types of research methods utilized and knowledge produced in the dissertations by years. The results illustrate the rising position of the quantitative research method and empirical-analytical knowledge production by years. Considering the research results in general and bearing in mind the relationship between the literature studied and the type of knowledge obtained, it is thought that an original look at the literature and an analysis of it by taking a distinctive stance are essential to arrive at divergent information and consequently disparate formats of knowledge. Thus, there exist studies (Fitt, 2011; Karadag, 2010; Ozdemir & Aypay, 2022) proposing that even the literature discussed in the dissertations is similar to a great extent. In addition, it is thought that problems pertinent to faculty, programs, and opportunities offered at universities may arise, and as a result, dissertations are mainly produced at certain universities—an argument endorsed in other studies (Fazliogullari & Kurul, 2013; Isci, 2013; Karaca, 2018) as well as in ours. When considered in view of access, this situation suggests the problem of delivering and obtaining an equal opportunity for education that continues at the graduate level, that is, in doctoral programs. We argue that the boundaries



between theories and methods are not yet clear in the debate as to which type of knowledge some studies produce in their aspirations toward knowledge production. This may be because the formal environments where educational activities are attained are open systems and are designed in unpredictable structures (Balci & Apaydin, 2009). Should there be a claim at this juncture, it would be that the knowledge production practices in the field of EA are heretofore stuck in solely a single area, even though the tendency appears to have relatively decreased. As a natural consequence of this situation, in the EA area, where a few methods are thought to have been limiting the maneuverability of researchers in producing knowledge, and where conventional methods are predominating, this way of thinking becomes somewhat stronger.

This research has two limitations. First, albeit many recent dissertations have been reviewed, the data source of the study could have been larger. In this vein, conducting research that includes different types of work based on a wider time period may be possible. Notwithstanding, we believe that our epistemological taxonomy can make significant contributions to the understanding of supervisors, doctoral students, and researchers and eventually to knowledge production in the field of EA. Second, at first glance the evaluation and philosophical context of the *modus operandi*—and even of “rituals” of knowledge production through dissertations from Turkey only—may not catch the interest of the international members. Nonetheless, we know that the field of EA has been the home of situational knowledge, and the structure of our study may allow international field members to make comparisons through the studies provided (e.g., by checking them against Arabic, African, Asian, and Latin American ones). Finally, we also encourage studies that produce historical-hermeneutical/interpretative and critically oriented knowledge

encompassing elements such as social justice, egalitarianism, inadequacy, and discrimination as well as cases that must be handled with (more) critical methods.

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