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| Research Article / Araştırma Makalesi |

Knowledge Production About Educational Management in Türkiye: Lecturer Perspectives

Türkiye'de Eğitim Yönetimine İlişkin Bilgi Üretimi: Öğretim Elemanlarının Görüşleri[1]

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Keywords

1.Epistemological Beliefs in Educational Management,
2.Knowledge in Educational Management,
3.Knowledge Base of Educational Management,
4.Epistemology of Educational Management,
5.Scholarly Thinking in Educational Management

Anahtar Kelimeler

1.Eğitim Yönetiminde Epistemolojik İnançlar,
2.Eğitim Yönetiminde Bilgi,
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Abstract

Purpose: The study analyzes epistemic beliefs of field members qualitatively as to the knowledge base of Educational Management.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The research design is descriptive phenomenology, and the data collection tool has semi-structured questions facilitating epistemological reasoning and thinking in Educational Management. The questions were posed through one-on-one, face to face interviews. The participants are 29 lecturers in departments of Educational Management in 3 state universities in Turkey. The interviews were hold during the first term of 2018-19 Academic Year.

Findings: The results indicate the participants hold unique epistemic beliefs in their evaluations of possibility of knowledge, truth of knowledge, justifying knowledge and boundaries of knowledge in the knowledge base. It is observed participants' personal epistemic beliefs also bear certain commonalities.

Highlights: There is neither a priori knowledge nor absolute truth in the knowledge base implying the knowledge of Educational Management calls for hermeneutic explanations; it continues to be a struggle to study the highly dynamic epistemologies-both those of individual researchers and communities-emerging and 'filtered' and hence 'refined' in the knowledge of the field. Preserving the core of the field knowledge whilst expanding it can be realized through working in a collaborative fashion within the field and 'beyond'.

Öz

Çalışmanın amacı: Bu çalışmada alan üyelerinin eğitim yönetimi bilgi tabanına ilişkin epistemik inançlarının nitel olarak incelenmesi amaçlanmıştır.

Materyal ve Yöntem: Araştırma tasarımı betimsel fenomenoloji olup veri toplama aracı olarak "Eğitim yönetiminde epistemolojik akıl yürütmeyi ve düşünmeyi kolaylaştıran yarı yapılandırılmış sorular" kullanılmıştır. Sorular bire bir, yüz yüze görüşme yoluyla sorulmuştur. Katılımcılar, Türkiye'deki 3 devlet üniversitesinde Eğitim Yönetimi bölümlerinde görev yapan 29 öğretim elemanıdır. Görüşmeler, 2018-2019 akademik yılının ilk döneminde gerçekleştirilmiştir.

Bulgular: Araştırma bulguları, katılımcıların bilginin olasılığı, bilginin doğruluğu, bilginin gerekçelendirilmesi ve bilgi tabanındaki bilginin sınırları ile ilgili değerlendirmelerinde özgün epistemik inançlara sahip olduklarını göstermektedir. Katılımcıların kişisel epistemik inançlarının bazı ortak yönleri bulunduğu da izlenmektedir.

Önemli Vurgular: Eğitim Yönetimi bilgisinin hermenötik açıklamalar gerektirdiğini ima edecek biçimde, alanın bilgi tabanında ne a priori bilgi ne de mutlak gerçek vardır; hem bireysel araştırmacılara hem topluluklara ait olarak ortaya çıkan son derece dinamik ve "filtrelenip" "damıtılmış" epistemolojileri inceleme işi bir uğraşı olmaya devam etmektedir. Alan bilgisinin özünü genişletirken korumak, alanın içinde ve 'ötesinde' iş birlikçi bir şekilde çalışarak gerçekleştirilebilir.

> "Knowledge is a social construct, a consensus among the members of a community of knowledgeable peers."
>
> — Kenneth A. Bruffee

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INTRODUCTION

The onset of the latest millennium brought more questions of disorienting nature-if not novel crises-into the field of Educational Management. Such periods, provided they precede conflicting views, lead to 'cracks' in the epistemological sphere of scholarly work resulting in issues with recognition and legitimacy of any area (Wallerstein, 2004). Oplatka (2007) pinpointed a conflict of paradigms in the field whilst other prominent names; Fitz, (1999), Heck & Hallinger (2005), Maxcy (2001) emphasized the area suffers from unified scientific-academic understanding(s). Today, the horizon yet to preserve its rather hazy scene.

Conceptual Framework

Ensuring epistemological unity has been difficult for Educational Management, which does not date back to early years unlike the other 'autochthonous' social sciences. Being a relatively newly born area amongst the neighboring others makes things a bit more complicated. To date, the history of Educational Management has gone hand-in-hand with the epistemological developments in the field and there exists the tendency to frame it under the umbrella term of management sciences (Özdemir, 2011). Moreover, the dominance of Western philosophies in the research paradigms has been noted (Bush, 2020). All these realms have certain effects on the directions in the field. Yet, changes take place too; "there has been a significant growth in manuscripts about Asian education, accepted for publication in EMAL", (Bush, 2015: 3) *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, one of the top journals of the area where "the articles may also be seen as a barometer for the changing emphases." (Bush & Crawford, 2012: 537).

Turkey has been a center, beginning from archaic times, where knowledge is created and disseminated. Howbeit, in the contemporary world, arguably whispers, not-yet-voices are heard about Educational Management from Turkey though it has a lot to say. There are a few studies of Turkish origin reflecting epistemological thinking behind the research in Turkey. Some relatively more recent ones are as follows: Bozdoğan (2018), Bozkurt & Bozkurt (2018), Demirhan, et al. (2018), Özdemir (2018a, 2018b), Şahin & Cemaloğlu (2019), Yıldırım (2018). On the other hand, no studies have been documented from the bulk of domestic and international research which solely analyses the epistemic beliefs of field members. Having said that Buske & Zlatkin-Troitschanskaia (2019) have relatively lately investigated principals' epistemological beliefs. As once was shared by Willower (1975), today merely a number of studies analyze the epistemological essence of the area. This seemingly adds to the depression in the field that was declared by several field members. An allegory might help visualize the specific case in Turkey here in that sense, where the enclosing crisis of the whole field takes the shape of an 'adolescent crisis' for Turkey bearing in mind the emerging expertise and the cognition that is still in progress. This problem of neglecting the epistemological stances doubles with the innate characteristics of the area; its being highly context-dependent that interrupt emergence of shared perspectives (Ertürk, 2012). It is not surprising for a branch of social science to experience ontological, epistemological, and methodological predicaments (Şentürk & Turan, 2012) which endeavors to encompass both theoretical perspectives and the practical/empirical sides of knowledge (Hart, 1999) though. The turmoil of assumptions and beliefs together with what is associated with the relevant practicum i.e., managing the educational institutions along with the management of sources like people, finance and other elements that are of more abstract being such as intellect cause issues in this regard.

Aristotle, an early ancient philosopher of Anatolia pinpointed all our scientific understanding (ἐπιστήμη) pertaining to a specific area could be understood by analyzing the rationale behind the things we comprehend about that very field is to hold (Gasser-Wingate, 2016: 1). Hundreds of years later on the same land viz. Turkey a somewhat similar attempt to understand can take place for Educational Management by asking several epistemological questions: "What is the possibility of knowledge? How can truth of knowledge be declared? What are the ways (if any) of justifying knowledge?" and "Are there any boundaries of knowledge?". It is not extraordinary that such a struggle would not only be a scientific but also a humanistic one (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) for the field bringing about further discussions. For instance, whether the knowledge of Educational Management is fact or value-bond when attempting to deal with morality, rights, life, and humanity (Gunter & Ribbins, 2002: 387) is worth being searched.

Looking at the chronicle of the field enrooting in Turkey certain institutions seem influential in the epistemic development. First off, the opening of The Institute of Public Administration for Turkey and the Middle East in 1953 paved the way for the intersection of Educational Management and Public Administration reflecting the overall approach of those years. The foundation of academic divisions in two universities of the capital: Ankara University and Hacettepe University in 1965 and 1966 respectively contributed to the generating and dispersing of the knowledge in the field. While reaching almost the end of the first quarter of the new century, it is witnessed that 45 universities involve Educational Management departments in Turkey. There are other bodies and publications like *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, which is a quarterly published journal that accepts work on educational management, planning, economics, policy, and supervision. There is *EYUDER* (Association of Educational Administrators and Experts), a non-governmental organization established with a view to organizing national and international projects. This association regularly hosts a field-specific forum entitled *EYFOR* that enables academic work as well as opinions of teachers, school managers and academicians to be exchanged. Educational Administration Research and Development Association is another society, which embodies a journal of the area called *Research in Educational Administration and Leadership* (REAL) and organizes congress series of the field regularly.

Purpose

In light of what has been covered so far it might be appropriate "to ask questions as to what field members know and need to know, what is worth knowing, how they know and practice that knowing" (Gunter, 2005: 166) with a view to better analyzing the knowledge in the area, in a field taking a critical role being the producer of research itself and as a fundamental conduit for the optimal implementation of evidence-based practicum in education (Gorard, 2005: 161). This study hence intends to contribute to the efforts worldwide vis-à-vis scrutinizing the knowledge of the field through listening to real people (Patton, 2002) via giving ear to their not-yet-(well)-heard voices (Berg, 2001).

The main question of the study is: "How are epistemic beliefs of faculty members of the departments of Educational Management in the 3 state universities of the capital of Turkey?". The research questions oriented toward the said question are as follows; "How are epistemic beliefs of the participants as to:

1. Possibility,
2. Truth,
3. Justification,
4. Boundaries of knowledge of the field of Educational Management?

Research Design

Considering the potential of qualitative studies regarding obtaining data in a detailed way (Strauss & Corbin, 1997) the study aims and hopes to say 'something new' through eschewing traditional paths of research (Ludwig, 2007), anticipating the possibility of even paradigm shifts within and beyond the field (Özdemir, 2010).

METHOD

The preferred method of inquiry is Phenomenology; an approach towards understanding knowledge, knowing through intellectual engagements of meaning making, eventually arriving at rich data (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Merriam, 1998). Embracing the philosophical pathway of Phenomenology assists the researcher in discovering authentic beliefs. The design that seeks to shed light to epistemic beliefs of the participants is Descriptive Phenomenology. When it is recalled that the researcher bears witness to the participant's, who is conscious of their being, account of subjective experience carrying epistemological ramifications (Willis et al., 2016: 1188), the employment of such design can be evaluated as one that helps discover personal epistemologies of the participants. Husserl's Philosophical Phenomenological Method is also referred to since propositional statements of hypothetical nature were provided as part of the data collection instrument. These helped speculate on various epistemological dimensions of knowledge through "a philosophical type of analysis that seeks to understand consciousness as such before it is interspersed with empirical reality" (Giorgi et al., 2017: 178).

Participants and Procedures

In Descriptive Phenomenology, participants are expected to share their unique thoughts about the specified phenomenon (Kline, 2008). The participants were selected through purposeful sampling by ensuring a balanced distribution as regards gender, academic title, and affiliated university to reflect this originality. They are faculty members of the departments of Educational Management in 3 state universities in Ankara, Turkey. They were on duty during the fall term of 2018- 19 Academic Year. These universities, to wit Hacettepe University, Ankara University and Gazi University are believed to be amongst the leading ones discerning their history, capacity, transfer of *scientia* and also their being "Research Universities[4]"

The table below represents the enprint of the members of the Educational Management of the pertinent universities in the first academic term of 2018- 19 Academic Year. Of these academics contacted via email or phone, all the volunteering ones (29 individuals, 58% of the whole) are invited to the study as they reflect the parameters of purposeful sampling. These faculty agreed to sign the consent letter and permitted to have their voices recorded. They were interviewed in their offices on a one-on-basis with the help of the semi- structured interview questions.

Table 1. Potential Participants

Academic Title	Gender		University		
	Female	Male	Hacettepe	Ankara	Gazi
Full Professor	8	10	3	5	10
Associate Professor	3	8	5	2	4
Assistant Professor	2	1	1	1	1
Research Assistant	13	5	6	9	3
Total	26	24	15	17	18
Grand Total: 50					

Data Collection Tool

In-depth interviews were carried out using a form comprised of questions which were confirmed previously by 12 experts (field members, lecturers of Philosophy departments) in line with the interdisciplinary approach of the study. The questions reflect Traditional Normative Epistemology which is based on justification. Again, to acquiesce to the structure of the research and refrain from any confusions, the statements given to the participants with the questions contain elements of both Epistemology and Educational Management. It is believed that the participants then were able to conceptualize what was asked, which might otherwise be (more) difficult.

The researcher with the title of a Turkish-English/English-Turkish translator and interpreter, herself translated the interview questions and direct quotes from Turkish-the mother tongue of the researcher and the participants. Both the translated versions and the original (Turkish) phrases were checked by one bilingual colleague to see if they convey the right messages and reflect the participant's tone. In total 11 hours 17 minutes of recording was noted and this was later transcribed that makes up 887 KB of encrypted data.

Analysis Processes

Keeping in mind Husserl's *epoché,* in this Descriptive Phenomenological study, the researcher; a field member, tried to put aside and/or bracket her own experiences with the phenomenon to eliminate any prejudgments. An educational scientist (not a field member) supported the analysis process of transcription, phenomenological reduction, decision making on the themes. 10 themes out of 11 themes (90.9%) covering epistemic beliefs were agreed upon by the researcher and her colleague. The interview questions allegedly form sub-themes. To satisfy trustworthiness, authenticity criteria (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) were allowed for. All the transcribed data were checked by the participants and changes made to the transcriptions of 5 participants upon request.

Ethical Considerations

The study catered to ethical issues with design, data gathering, analysis, reporting (Edwards & Mauthner, 2012: 18). All the legal permissions were also obtained.

Assumptions

The following are the assumptions; the participants are capable of representing their own epistemic beliefs bringing on diversity, the data collection instrument makes it possible for Epistemology and Educational Management to meet as two entities.

Limitations

The epistemic beliefs are limited to the participants and what they disclose.

RESULTS

1.Possibility of Knowledge in the Field

The first question was: *Can we talk about the originality of the knowledge base of the field?* The purpose was to get participant responses in respect of the possibility of the originality of knowledge (re)produced in theoretical and practical domains in the field. The views of the participants do not cluster under a single perspective i.e., "yes" or "no", conversely, there is a balanced share under two categories.

15 participants who affirmed the non-existence of an original knowledge base justified their epistemic beliefs through these reasons: Educational Management innately owns an eclectic/multi-disciplinary territory of knowledge; there is *sine qua non* of the close, intertwined and Venn diagrams-like constructions of Educational Management and the other fields; Educational Management is like a 'hyponym' of the 'hypernym', namely, Educational Sciences, where there are 'co-hyponyms' such as Curriculum and Instruction and Measurement and Evaluation in Education; the field is inevitably located within Management, Public Administration and Business Administration especially in countries like Turkey. It was asserted by 11 that being concerned with an original knowledge base in the field is 'futile' and 8 pronounced that to dig for empirical knowledge would be more sensible. The participants had the tendency to refer to the cognitive schemas in their minds that enable metaphorical/analogical descriptions when sharing their opinions.

One participant (U2P8-hereinafter "U" represents one of the universities in the study and "P" represents one of the participants) vocalized their remarks in the following way:

> *Trying to have a defined knowledge base is a result of*
> *feeling insecure…and why to see the lack of originality as a threat?*
> *The field cannot be protected by keeping it in a 'fishbowl'.*
> *How can a field member produce educational*
> *policies without the knowledge of Economics?*
> *We have to cooperate.*

3 participants who denied the existence of original knowledge talked about the disadvantages that may even result in a loss of the field's 'scientific being'; its *raison d'être*. A participant (U1P8) eminently shared: *To me one of the most 'hapless' of all the other sub-divisions of Educational Sciences is Educational Management. It is not even recognized as a scientific discipline since we are under the 'reign of' Management, a powerful field.*

14 participants who posited the originality of the knowledge base of Educational Management underlined the knowledge is still being constructed and used these expressions: Educational institutions and their stakeholders are placed in the heart of the research which makes studies prototypical, the field knowledge remains original on the condition that it relates itself to real life, despite the interconnected/overlapping sections of the knowledge base in the form of Venn-diagrams with other sciences, the field bestows original knowledge. One quote of a participant

(U3P2) is as follows: *I do believe in that there is originality in the knowledge base of the field. I do not think in this way only as a field member or a researcher, I do so by recalling my past experiences with the field as a teacher, a practitioner.*

Both groups referred to Venn-diagrams to clarify their epistemic beliefs participants and alluded the importance of the pragmatic side of the knowledge base.

2.Epistemological Truth in the Knowledge of the Field

The second question was: *Can we talk about absolute truth in the knowledge base of Educational Management? Why/not?* and an exigent result is identified. None agreed on a form of knowledge that points to absolute truth as they all said in different ways that Educational Management is directly linked to humans.

Putting aside the paradoxical situation that such proclamations themselves may be 'sheer', it might be meaningful to elaborate on what this standpoint recites for the field. The participants talked about "multiple truths" which converge Epistemological Relativity in the knowledge base, and they shared social sciences cannot embrace absolute truth; practical truths could/should be of concern. The below representation displays what is envisaged:

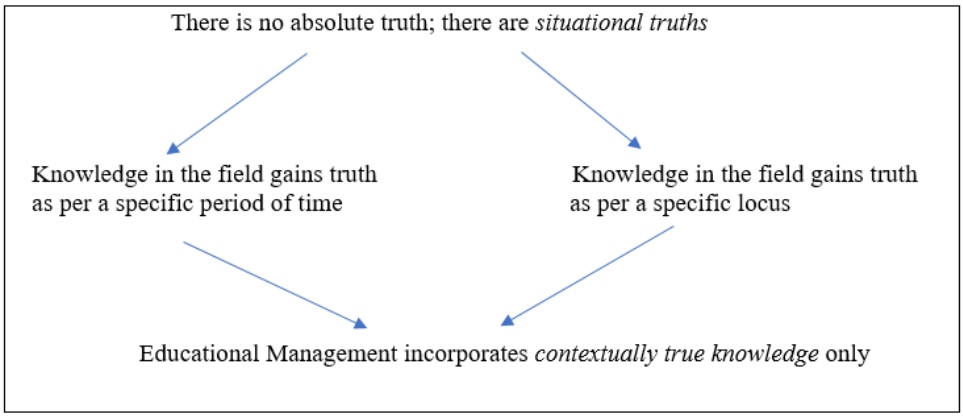

Figure 1. Truth in the Field of Education Management

3.Justification of Knowledge in the Field

The first question at this stage was: *How can you determine the truth of the knowledge circulating in the field?* The "you" herein should be deemed as "you, a researcher and field member" that puts the participant in the position of the 'agent' who makes the necessary decisions about doing research. Inarguably, the statement shared: *This school is a learning organization* accompanying the question above allowed to clear the way for epistemological thinking at the same time facilitating field knowledge. Specific criteria were provided for the participants to reach a conclusion as to the reliability, correctness and eventually regarding the truth of the statement. Epistemologically speaking these criteria were: *Coherence Theory of Truth, Consistency, Appeal to Authority, Correspondence* and *Pragmatic Theory of Truth.* The question then turns out to be a one that reads: *This school is a learning organization. Which criterion or criteria would you use to (cross)check if this statement is true?*

The results unearth that 6 participants chose to refer to Pragmatic Theory of Truth, 23 chose to refer to all the criteria. Apart from Pragmatic Theory of Truth no single criterion was selected.

6 participants who referred to Pragmatic Theory of Truth, interlineated the functionality 'maxim' of the truth of the knowledge. A participant (U2P2) said: *Providing this educational institution in the statement contributes to the development of all the shareholders, then, I could say, yes; it indeed is a learning organization. After all, isn't this the purpose of such schools?*

Majority of the participants picked up all the criteria to check the truth of the statement. A participant (U1P2) said: *Bearing in mind all my experiences in the field in years, both as a field researcher and an administrator, I would say all the criteria came in handy.* In a similar way another participant (U1P8) voiced: *It would be necessary to check all the criteria as a whole and also one-by-one because education is there with people and their realities.* Lastly the participants emphasized socio-cultural contexts (U1P4): *We have to 'stretch' the criteria. To exemplify, things would be different for each country. Even in Turkey there are regional or district-wise variations and cases that come into play amidst such issues.*

The second set of questions also came with a statement: *An efficient school manager is always good at managing crises.* The participants justified the truth of this statement in relation to the question and the given criteria: *Which criterion/criteria would you refer to so as to justify the truth in the statement? a) Visiting schools to carry out observations and interviews; b) using induction-deduction for logical reasoning, and not feeling the need for onsite visits; c) both visiting schools and evaluating the data obtained there through epistemological thinking; d) evaluating the statement with your own intuition and foresight; e) evaluating the statement with your unique and personal justifications believing this is what each researcher would do; f) doing a concept analysis of the key terms i.e., efficient school manager* and *crisis management.*

25 participants shared they would use all the criteria to justify the truth. They said they would follow this way as it would be more scientific by triangulating data, and this would be compatible with the eclectic feature of the field. Albeit, there is also the mentioning of the 'over-concern' of being scientific (U1P4): *We can always talk about the subjectivity and non-generalizability of the data here*. *Also, the data can be too contextual for the researchers abroad since our practices do not match with their theories. Thereupon, being completely scientific like natural sciences is vital.*

4 participants declared they would refer to criterion "c" as they find it beneficial to visit schools and evaluate the data obtained there with the help of epistemological thinking/reasoning. One participant (U1P3) implied onsite observations would be 'theory laden': *I would look for onsite evidence to support whether this school leader adhered to the expected behavior of the theories and also to what I know about being an efficient school manager.* Another participant (U2P8) from the same group stated that as a criterion, the "c" above would adequately fit in the general criteria of conducting scientific work: *I think one of the main functions of science is not only to report but also to explain giving cause-effect relationships.*

4.Epistemological Boundaries of Educational Management

The last two questions were about the epistemological boundaries anent the domains of the knowledge base and the scientific quintessence of the field.

The first of question was: *Do you think there are boundary lines of the knowledge base of the field? If yes, what would you say about the starting and ending points of these? How can Educational Management be situated among disciplines and areas such as Public Administration, Educational Sciences, Management?*

7 participants agreed there are boundary lines circumscribing the knowledge base whereas 22 believed there are no boundaries.

The ones who believed there exist boundary lines alleged: There is expanding contextual knowledge of the field; the research topics and their dimensions differentiate the knowledge; the knowledge base of Public Administration naturally sets the boundaries; and boundaries are rather artificial and required for academic work.

One participant (U3P2) extrapolated their beliefs through a homology:

We do not conduct research within an indefinite
area. Nevertheless, I avoid reductive remarks
here now that it is quite a work-in-progress.
It is like an ore bed, as we dig it gets larger so we
enter into novel passages.

1 participant (U2P12) sounds as if they were not contented:

There must be clear boundary lines…
Concepts of Psychology are infinite, cynicism, organizational silence,
and alike…take one and carry out a study in
Educational Management with teachers, principals,
there is no end…Nonetheless, for the field to gain legitimacy, the knowledge
base needs to have its original knowledge…
As Turkish field members, we have to chew over that very issue.

Other participants put across their beliefs in these ways: The fact that the knowledge base of the field is not confined is normal and even constituted a desired consequence for interdisciplinary human sciences. Some declared the knowledge is growing like a 'living being'.

The last cluster of questions entailed the boundaries of the field knowledge to gain a scientific outlook. This question was asked accordingly: *How can the circulating knowledge in the knowledge base be looked upon on the fact-value issue?* The participants were again given a statement: *Instructional leaders should be visionary* and were asked: *Do you think what this statement conveys can be investigated within the field of Educational Management?*

The statement is normative and furthermore the concept "visionary" seems to be abstract and perhaps too *ad hoc*. As a result, such a statement apparently fostered deeper epistemological reasoning on the part of the participants.

9 participants propounded the statement is not suitable to be studied as the use of "should" is not scientific at all; it would be better for the field to stay away from strong and imposing statements to be more realistic and humanistic.

8 believed the statement can be studied on certain conditions and opined their beliefs in the following ways: What such kinds of statements mean could determine the appropriateness of the use of "should" or obscure terms like "visionary" and this necessitates meticulous reasoning of researchers in the field.

12 participants agreed the statement can be a starting point of research and expounded their beliefs in these ways: In all sciences including Educational Management there needs to be 'cornerstones', accepted truths like the one in the statement about leaders and these truths indeed illuminate research routes.

One participant (U2P3) believed such normative statements pointing at values, not only do form starting points but also 'ending remarks' in studies:

> *We aim at the training of good individuals, citizens.*
> *There are values and gains in what we do.*
> *Humans are central to our work. At the end of the day, we are engaged in public services. These services make use of scientific data and thusly the optimal decisions are taken and recommendations are made accordingly.*

DISCUSSIONS

The first question was on the subject of the originality of knowledge and the emergent issues appeared to have relevancy to Epistemology and epistemological thinking in the area. It endorsed the comprehension of the scientific knowledge of the field by reviewing the first array of the rationale behind the creation and broadening of that knowledge (Gasser-Wingate, 2016; Kuçuradi, 1995) or as in Kuhn's and Popper's manifests, behind "the shifting intellectual stances" along with "conjectures and refutations" in the area, where the reasons to conduct research and results of research alter in an incredibly fast fashion (Levin, 1999).

The results connoted the 'ever-hot topic' of the knowledge domain showing the epistemological dilemma (Şentürk & Turan, 2012) at a small(er)-scale. Thinking about the equal share of who denied the existence and who believed in the existence of original knowledge literally represented the dispute in the area constituting an 'archetypical' pattern. Oplatka's (2007, 2010) mentions of a conflict of paradigms in the knowledge base and the related discussions of Fitz (1999), Heck & Hallinger (2005) and Maxcy (2001) are evident among this conspicuous distribution of the participants. The answers also provide insights into the meta-epistemology of the area: the knowledge of the knowledge of Educational Management. Here the answer to Rorty's (1979) and Goldman's (1986) question about the possibility of knowledge seems like a 'Schrodinger's Cat' coming out of this micro-representation of the bigger area of Educational Management since the chances of the originality of the knowledge's being possible (*alive*) are 'equivalent' according to the participant views.

The participants who warranted there is no originality of the knowledge also accentuated that the other disciplines and areas often interfere with the knowledge produced and circulate in the field. This situation reminds what Özdemir (2011) once adduced in the context of the knowledge of Management science(s) and the knowledge base of Educational Management. Some were not satisfied with this situation as they had worries about the potential threats to the academic/scientific legitimacy of the area of Educational Management. This resembles Wallerstein's (2004) arguments about the possible undesired issues with the recognition of a scientific field. Some participants seemed to attach more importance to studies with empirical outcomes, not to philosophical debates. This re-validates Willower (1975) who stated almost half a century ago that research in Educational Management most often examines topics outside the epistemological essence of the area; however, contradicts what Hallinger & Kovačević (2019) have recently said germane to the increasing interest in epistemological issues.

The other group of participants shared that one can confidently talk about the originality of the knowledge. From an epistemological point-of-view this has links to the scale that Musgrave (1993) presented; it is possible to reach a form or (one of the) forms of knowledge in which the latter has connections to the shared beliefs of the participants of the knowledge of multiple truths in Educational Management. This further reminds Developing a Communications Epistemology (Thody, 2008) through common epistemic positions of field members (Ertürk, 2012; Greco, 2007) and through the possibility of the existence of some multiple but unique domains of knowledge within both the theoretical and practical layers of the area (Charlot, 2001), in other words, a form of knowledge that touches on inquiry and practice equally (Hart, 1999).

The second of the questions was linked to famous Gettier Problem (1963): "Is justified true belief knowledge?" and the participants expressed their epistemological beliefs about absolute truth in Educational Management. All believed there is not any form of absolute truth in the knowledge base. Instead, they pointed to multiple truths that are contingent claiming that the field is wholly human-dependent. This 'absolute' and perhaps at the same time ironic standpoint of the participants that completely rejects the existence of absolute truth emphasizes diverse truths, which are products and creations of human beings (Steiner, 1963). This may also explain the socially constructed epistemological truth claims in the research community (Harris & Wihak, 2017). The participants seemed as if they 'pulled' the field knowledge away from "the conventional wisdom and orthodoxy of administration" (Hodgkinson, 1991). As a matter of fact, particularly since the end of the last century the field has actually experienced a sharp turn and new directions have come off for multiple yet-still-"true" conceptualizations of central terms like manager, management, administration and leadership as a result of scholarly endeavors (e.g., Eacott & Evers, 2014; Hoy, 1994; Gunter, 2005; Gümüş et al., 2018; Sapre, 2002; Tirado, 2006).

The third question intended to seek the beliefs pertinent to justification(s) of true knowledge in Educational Management, a fundamental issue in Epistemology (Pollock, 1974) by trying to attain their personal epistemological reasoning unique to their thinking (Lane, 1995; Plantinga, 1986; Swain, 1979). The participants are asked to give the reason(s) behind their epistemological beliefs by talking about the related evidence (Clifford, 1886) and by referring to the cognitive schemes constituting the representative(s) of truth in their minds (Garrison, 1988).

For the first set of questions of this third phase, the participants were provided some criteria of Theory of Knowledge to check the truth of the given statement which are Coherence Theory of Truth, Consistency, Appeal to Authority, Correspondence and Pragmatic Theory of Truth.

Some punctuated that they would justify the truth of the statement using only Pragmatic Theory of Truth. Their opinions appear to be in line again with the socially constructed 'realities' idea of Bates (1980) and Greenfield and Ribbins (1993) as they acknowledged the statement could become true only if that very school served the relevant community well. This thinking finds its place in different corridors of education too: instruction, learning, teaching, training alongside philosophies/approaches such as critical pedagogy and a handful of other social theories. Similarly, Evers & Lakomski (1991: 222) promulgated the pragmatic function of education in the following manner: "What counts as valid inquiry, as epistemologically progressive, is limited to what the surrounding epistemology counts as promoting well-being".

Most participants referred to all the criteria given. Amongst some claiming to have both the theoretical and day-to-day/onsite experiences in the field also uttered that they would do so for the sake of addressing the dichotomy of the theory and practice (Anderson & Jones, 2000) as sticking to one criterion could neglect either theoretical or practical aspect of the area (Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Maxcy, 2001; Ogawa et al., 2000; Slater et al., 2002). Others in the same group declared using all the criteria would be more reliable enabling the triangulation of data as it is the case with natural sciences. This discourse can be associated with the logical empiricism of the midst twentieth century that even mirrors the doctrine of Vienna Circle reminding numerous names like Griffths (1959a, 1959b) and Halpin (1966).

The others expressed they would have onsite visits and later check the data collected through their self-epistemic justifications, which directs their own reasoning in relation to the criterion: *both visiting schools and evaluating the data obtained there with the help of epistemological thinking*. Their decisions about the ways to conduct (their) research in a way indicate the multidimensional character of the knowledge base in the area (Riehl et al., 2000).

The last questions revealed epistemic beliefs regarding epistemological boundaries in the knowledge of the field.

The first question touched upon whether there are (in)visible boundary lines around the knowledge base of the area and if there are any list-like checkpoints for the field members to determine a/the basis (Resnik, 2000) and to differentiate the field knowledge from that of the others.

Several participants agreed there are boundary lines in this respect. Some phrased 'drawing' man-made boundary lines can be deemed critical to sustain the scientific quality. This hints at the fear of producing non-scientific knowledge or a delusion of producing scientific knowledge (Mahner, 2007). Others enumerated that there is flourishing knowledge within the 'boundaries' developing out of discoveries (Lakatos & Musgrave, 1968).

Others gave voice to an alternative look. They believed there are no lines in the area as expected. This school of thought is actually similar to what Bryant (1985) underlined for the field as well as to those of the other thinkers (e.g., Van Baalen & Karsten, 2012) who imparted that even Management as a broader discipline does not/cannot own any boundaries.

A participant in this group reflected their worries about a possible axial dislocation to occur in research orientations on account of the lack of boundary lines. This thesis brings to minds the importance of determining a number of epistemological standpoints (Greene et al., 2008) that embody all the aspects of the area in a coherent manner (Bush, 1999; Erickson, 1979; Labaree, 1998) at the same time emphasizing and preserving the 'nucleus of the knowledge'.

The last question series aimed to concentrate upon the fact-value dilemma in the field of Educational Management.

A group of participants advocated the statement provided: *Instructional leaders should be visionary* cannot be acceptable nor can it be a remark of the field members as it is not scientific and it is too much value focused. These field members believed there is the implicit absoluteness of the statement with the use of "should" and an abstract concept like "visionary" further pushes the statement out of the 'boundaries' of the field. This in a way refutes the belief that there are imminent domains of value found in the knowledge base of the field (Begley, 1999) and that Educational Management is an area that stresses how issues 'should be' (Willower, 1997).

Some participants happened to believe the statement in question can circulate in the knowledge base only when justified with refined thinking alongside embracing a humanistic perspective (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Evers & Lakomski, 1996, 2001, 2012; Gunter & Ribbins, 2002).

The last group put forth that the aforementioned statement can be produced/circulated as the starting point of future research. This is related to the understanding that the field has systems of values, power relations (Simkins, 1999) with subjective models philosophized (Bush, 1995) and to be philosophized.

CONCLUSIONS

The study uncovered the epistemic beliefs of the participants, field members from Turkey.

Educational Management is a field (game) where the 'rules' (of the game) have already been set; nevertheless, there are members and even 'game changers' from around the world who continue to join in and whose contributions have come into 'play' in recent years (Bush, 2015)- a case which is also evident in a significant journal of the field; *EMAL* (Bush & Crawford, 2012).

There are several different domains of knowledge which are melting points of philosophies together with the related practicum (Greenfield & Ribbins, 1993) in the field. One prominent result was the rather incongruous agreement on *a priori* knowledge and absolute truth, which was itself *a priori*: There is neither *a priori* knowledge nor absolute truth in the knowledge base implying Educational Management calls for hermeneutic explanations.

It continues to be a struggle to study the highly dynamic epistemologies-both those of individual researchers and communities-emerging and 'filtered' and hence 'refined' in the knowledge of the field. This can be realized through working in a collaborative fashion within the field and 'beyond' while also attempting to preserve the kernel of the field. This is actually of utmost importance for the future of Educational Management which can ease the maturation of the knowledge bases, in particular for locations who have taken part in the 'gameplay' mentioned earlier relatively later like Turkey.

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We hereby declare that the study has not unethical issues and that research and publication ethics have been observed carefully.

Researchers' Contribution Rate

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