

Bulut Doğan

Transformation of Higher Education in Turkey

A Foucauldian Analysis



Nomos

Politics, Society and Culture in Turkey
Politik, Gesellschaft und Kultur in der Türkei

edited by

Dr. Ayhan Bilgin
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Armagan Öztürk

Volume 5

Bulut Dođan

Transformation of Higher Education in Turkey

A Foucauldian Analysis



Nomos

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>

ISBN 978-3-7560-1567-2 (Print)
978-3-7489-4550-5 (ePDF)

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-3-7560-1567-2 (Print)
978-3-7489-4550-5 (ePDF)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Doğan, Bulut
Transformation of Higher Education in Turkey
A Foucauldian Analysis
Bulut Doğan
163 pp.
Includes bibliographic references.

ISBN 978-3-7560-1567-2 (Print)
978-3-7489-4550-5 (ePDF)



Online Version
Nomos eLibrary

1st Edition 2024

© Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, Baden-Baden, Germany 2024. Overall responsibility for manufacturing (printing and production) lies with Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH & Co. KG.

This work is subject to copyright. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publishers. Under § 54 of the German Copyright Law where copies are made for other than private use a fee is payable to "Verwertungsgesellschaft Wort", Munich.

No responsibility for loss caused to any individual or organization acting on or refraining from action as a result of the material in this publication can be accepted by Nomos or the author.

Foreword

Bulut Dođan presents the reader with a work that is the product of intensive labor. Dođan, whose intellectual interest and ability have always been of a high standard, has proudly brought to the academy a work that has theoretical depth as well as theoretical and practical unity.

In this work, higher education is analyzed in the context of the relevant literature and Turkish practice, taking Michel Foucault's theoretical approach as both a methodological and conceptual basis. After a detailed examination of Foucault's writings on higher education and the higher education studies based on his works, post-1980 Türkiye is discussed in the context of the Council of Higher Education.

Productive power relations that permeate all social relations, including subjectivation, subordination and resistance; discourses; the holism of decisions and prominent institutional structures are all explored through the concept of administrative dispositive. Through four unique categories identified by the author, the Council of Higher Education itself and its activities as an administrative apparatus are interrogated through three historical periods. The book concludes with original evaluations with theoretical and practical dimensions.

This study explores the application of Foucauldian concepts to public administration, adding to the literature of social sciences and the discipline of public administration. It is a pioneering study that may inspire future works.

This work provides valuable information and analysis on the world of higher education and the reality of Türkiye. It is a great addition to any library. We appreciate the author, Dođan, for creating such a valuable work. We hope you enjoy reading it!

Assoc. Prof. Ozan Zengin

Acknowledgements by the Author

The aim of this book is to contribute, from Foucault's perspective to the field of higher education, which has been the subject of discourse and controversy over a long historical period. From the moment I started reading Foucault, I thought about what his view of higher education in Türkiye would be if he were alive today. This question was the main inspiration for the creation of this book. In this sense, higher education is viewed as a historical phenomenon characterized by disruptions, discontinuities, and consistencies.

The book examines the changes in Turkish higher education after 1980, analyzing the period from the establishment of the Council for Higher Education (CoHE) after the 1980 military coup, the decisions of the National Security Council (NSC) on February 28, 1997, and the and political governments of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) as dispositifs. This book is a revised version of my doctoral thesis. My dissertation was written in Turkish and translated into English for international readers. This is the culmination of a sustained effort. However, it would be unfair to claim that I completed the entire process on my own. I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ozan Zengin for his extensive academic advice and support during my doctoral studies, as well as for his invaluable contributions outside of academia. I would like to express my thanks Prof. Dr. Barış Övgün and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mustafa Serdar Palabıyık contributed significantly to the proposal of my dissertation and provided valuable feedback as a member of the dissertation committee. I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Koray Karasu and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mustafa Altunok, who participated in the jury for my thesis, where they read and assessed my work. I would like to thank Assoc. Prof. Dr. Armağan Öztürk and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ayhan Bilgin for editing the book. I would like to express my gratitude to all my colleagues who provided me with their ideas and suggestions during the preparation of the book, especially Dr. Zafer Adali and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Buğra Özer. Any errors in the book are undoubtedly my responsibility.

This book was written through a process that encompassed both the joys and challenges of life. I would like to express my deep appreciation to my esteemed wife Özlem for her unwavering support and encouragement

Acknowledgements by the Author

throughout this journey, and to my daughter Vera for bringing me great joy and allowing me to relive my childhood through our playtime together. I apologize for the time I was not able to devote to them. They are the true owners of my existence and my publication. I am grateful to our extended family for their support during this time.

I hope that the reader who is curious about the reality of Türkiye, higher education and Foucault studies will benefit from and enjoy this book.

Table of Contents

Abbreviations	11
Transformation of Higher Education in Türkiye: an Introduction	13
Considering Foucault's Concepts in the Context of Higher Education Research	23
Higher Education Studies from Past to Present	26
Pioneering Studies on Higher Education	27
A Different Field: Higher Education Research	30
The Research Path of Higher Education in Türkiye	33
A New Challenge: How Suitable to Use Foucault's Concepts and Method in Higher Education Research	37
Using Foucault's Method in Higher Education	39
Insights From Foucault's Historical Methodology	44
Applying Foucault's Discourse Analysis to the Research of Higher Education	47
The Concepts: Dispositif, Power, and Other Related Ones	50
Relations Between Power - Knowledge, Subject, and Resistance.	55
Governmentality: How To Govern the Higher Education	62
Evaluation and Synopsis of the Chapter	65
Dispositif in Türkiye's Higher Education System Following 1980	77
Dispositif formed during the establishment process of the Council of Higher Education (CoHE).	83
Discourse: Nationalist and Security-oriented	84
Institutions: CoHE and related institutes	88
Administrative Decisions: redesign of the higher education system	92
Resistances: Criticism of the new era	98

Table of Contents

Evaluation of the Dispositif Established Following the Military Coup, September 12, 1980	102
The Dispositif of Higher Education After February 28, 1997, National Security Council (NSC) Decisions	105
Discourses: Secularism and Irtica	107
Institutions: NSC, CoHE and Istanbul University	110
Administrative Decisions: NSC Report and Higher Education	114
Resistances: Human Chains and Turban	120
An Evaluation of the Dispositif After the Decisions Made by the National Security Council on 28 February 1997.	121
Higher Education Dispositif During the Tenure of The Justice and Development Party's (AK Party) Political Power	123
Discourse: Freedom to National Security	124
Institutions: AK Party and COHE	130
Administrative Decisions: Reforms and Programs	132
Resistances: CoHE, Peace Declaration and Boğaziçi University	142
Evaluation of Higher Education Dispositif Formed During the AK Party Governments	146
Conclusions and Evaluations	149
References	157

Abbreviations

AEP	AK Party Emergency Action Plan
AK Party	Justice and Development Party
ANAP	Motherland (Anavatan) Party
BÇG	Western Working Group
CoHE / YÖK	Council of Higher Education
CoHEAK	The Higher Education Quality Board
DYP	True Path (Doğruyol) Party
FETÖ	Fetullahist Terrorist Organization (Illegal Terrorist Organization)
ILO	International Labour Organisation
KHK	Decree law
KPSS	Public Personnel Selection Exam
MEB	Ministry of Education
MSYK	Supreme Council of National Defence
NGO	Non-governmental Organizations
NSB	National Security Board
NSC	National Security Comitee
OHAL	State of Emergency
ÖSYM	Student Selection and Placement Centre/ Measurement Selection and Placement Centre
ÖYP	Academic Staff Training Programme
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party (Illegal Terrorist Organization)
RP	Welfare (Refah) Party
SETA	Political, Economic and Social Research
TBMM	Turkish Grand National Assembly
TÜSİAD	Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association
TÜBA	Turkish Academy of Sciences
TÜBİTAK	Turkish Scientific and Technological Research Organisation
TÜRK-İŞ	Confederation of Turkish Labour Unions
ÜSAMP	University-Industry Joint Research Centers Programme

Abbreviations

YEK	Higher Education Coordination Board
YDK	Higher Education Supervisory Board
ÜAK	The Inter-university Board
WB	World Bank

Transformation of Higher Education in Türkiye: an Introduction

This study examines the changes in Turkish higher education since 1980 through the discipline of higher education research, Foucault's historical method and the concept of the *dispositif*. Higher education has been a subject of discussion and consideration for a significant period throughout history. Since the founding of the modern university, numerous intellectuals have grappled with the concept of the university and its nature. The studies include important discussions about the philosophical foundations of the institution and specific problem areas. Since the post-World War II period, particularly in the 1950s in the United States and the 1990s in Europe, higher education research has developed as a distinct academic discipline. In higher education, topics such as massification, internationalization, marketization, university-industry relations, and advances in information and communications technology are increasingly being discussed. This has led to the development of higher education research as a distinct field of study. Higher education research focuses on the study of universities as institutions that provide research, education, and social services. It offers also perspectives for reassessing universities regarding economic and social crises, rather than focusing on the philosophical origins and nature of universities.

Applying the work of Michel Foucault, one of the most influential thinkers of the 20th century, to the new challenges in the research of higher education presents itself as a viable option. Why? We can periodize higher education through using Foucault's historical method, observe how different discourses emerge at various times, and conduct higher education through using discourse analysis. By means of the concept of the *dispositif*, we can demonstrate how and in which direction higher education works with its many parts.

This study assumes that Foucault's method should be treated holistically and that it is a historical method. In this regard, Foucault's historical method is used when discussing higher education. Here it is necessary to briefly explain what Foucault's historical method is and how it is used. In his historical method, Foucault rejects the understanding of history in a 'continuous, linear, and with a beginning and an end' manner. On the contrary, he understands and problematizes history with his emphasis on

discontinuity, coincidences, events, and peculiarities. On the other hand, he tends to tackle directly with a specific topic and events rather subscribing to a macro understanding of history. Nor does he use history to legitimize or illuminate the present. Instead, he uses the historical method to explain how transformations and events took place. Essentially, the historical method is used to discuss the changes and events that have taken place in different eras of higher education, not only as a means of legitimizing the current discourse or as a linear and unchanging expression that follows one another, but also as a means of discussion of the events that occurred during this period in different ways within their specificity.

Discourse, in the most general terms, includes speaking and addressing, making a statement about a subject orally or in writing. However, it is not limited to this. It also includes linguistic and actional articulations that are in close relationship with all social, political, economic and cultural spheres that emerge as a result of the act of discourse. From Foucault's point of view, the concept of discourse expands and goes beyond the spoken and written sphere and emerges as a method of analysis within the framework of certain events. By analyzing the discourse with Foucault's methods and concepts, it can be revealed which of the competing discourses has become dominant, how they are regularly repeated and systematized. In addition, it is possible to determine how discursive articulations are produced, how to determine the limits of what can be said, and how both the materiality and discursivity of some practices are constituted. In higher education, political-administrative power, institutions, private sector groups, and national and international organizations generate discourses that can either coincide or conflict with one another. Discourse analysis can identify the dominant discourse that is frequently repeated, establish its boundaries, and enable changes in higher education through discourse transformations. Furthermore, discourse analysis can help uncover how institutions are changed and how administrative decisions are made and implemented in accordance with the dominant discourse.

The study is deepened by focusing on and analyzing some important concepts that Foucault uses in the context of his historical method. The focus here is primarily on Foucault's concept of the *dispositif*. The main reason for referring to this concept is to indicate the emphasis it places on the administrative sphere in the context of directing the power relations formed in a certain area in a certain direction through discourses. The concept characterizes a whole or a network of heterogeneous elements such as discourses, institutions, laws, administrative measures, scientific proposi-

tions, architectural structures, legal decisions, and discourses of philosophy, morality and humanitarianism. (Foucault, 2005a: 118-155).

By examining the transformation of higher education through the concept of the *dispositif*, it is also possible to understand how the networks between discourses, institutions, administrative decisions and resistance, as emphasized in this study and uniquely classified into four categories, are formed and function. In this way, it is possible to see how the discourses created by different actors, especially the political power, on the field of higher education to address certain problem areas functioned in different periods. In order for the discourses determined within power relations to find a field of application, some new institutions need to be created. Existing institutions also need to act in line with the discourse. In this way, it can be seen which institutions exist in the field of higher education, how these institutions were created and what functions they perform within the *dispositif*. The administrative decisions taken by these institutions are also important for *dispositif*. At the same time, it is possible to identify which institutions have taken which decisions and how these administrative decisions have been implemented. It can also be seen that some significant resistance (academics, students, etc) has emerged against the *dispositif* created by all these discourses, institutions and administrative decisions. Thus, it is also important to examine how these resistances are formed and function and how they affect the *dispositif*. While examining this process, some important concepts that are considered in relation to the *dispositif* and are at a key point are also mentioned. In this context, closely related concepts such as power, knowledge, subject, resistance and governmentality are explained. It is also indicated how these are used in the field of higher education.

Power is one of the most important concepts in the Foucauldian perspective. From Foucault's perspective, power goes beyond definitions such as the state, political power or something that is possessed. In essence, it is understood that the state is not at the center of power per se, that power is not considered as a territory acquired. There are also micro-power positions. Foucault essentially focuses on power relations rather than taking power directly as the object of analysis. With power relations, the influence of political administrative powers, institutions and actors within universities in the field of higher education also becomes important. This paves the way for the inclusion of each actor in the analysis, rather than an analysis of power that operates only from the top down. In this context, we also focus on the relationship between power and knowledge (which is also directly

related to higher education), power and subject (which in higher education are academics and students) and power and resistance (in higher education these resistances come from institutions, academics and students). The issue of which knowledge will be produced and become a discipline in universities and which knowledge will be excluded is an important point in power relations. For this reason, the field of higher education is also considered as a field of knowledge-power.

Subjects and subjectivation also play an important role in knowledge-power relations in higher education. Because the subject is constituted within a particular historical context and relations of knowledge-power. In historical terms, it is possible to evaluate it within a certain objectivity established by itself or on the basis of determinations outside itself. Academics and students in higher education do not occupy an “ahistorical,” “self-formed,” and “completely free consciousness” subjectivity. Although these positions existed in different forms before, they appear as *subjects* constituted after the formation of the modern university. How these subject positions are transformed within dispositifs and how these constituted subjects are subjectivized is also important within power relations. In this respect, subjectivation can be understood as a process in which power influences and shapes the subject through various practices.

Subjects should not be viewed as completely passive. Resistance occurs when individuals develop a relationship with themselves and not accepting power directly. According to Foucault, resistance can be observed in any situation with power. These resistances are intrinsic to power and interact with it. Nevertheless, they can have an impact on authority at any time. While the powers try to take shape and position according to these resistances, it is always possible that new dispositifs are formed through resistances. As a matter of fact, there have been many resistances on higher education in different periods. The resistance could have an impact on the dispositifs that emerged both in the current and in subsequent periods. Moreover, when higher education is considered within the dispositif, it is seen that institutions and administrative decisions are effective. In addition, it is noteworthy that academics are also designed as public officials. Foucault's late works, in which he deals with issues such as the rational administration of the state and formulates them as governmentality, correspond to the administrative field. With governmentality, Foucault analyses the transition from the medieval art of governance, in which power is directly visible, to a government in which the state apparatus is rationalized in principle and practice. In sum, governmentality can be explained as the rational