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Analysing Employee Training Policies of the High Revenue Companies: Examples From Turkey

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Abstract

Purpose: The present study explores the primary characteristics of employee training practices by way of analysing the employee training policies of the top two companies with the highest sales revenue in Turkey. The primary characteristics of employee training practices are examined within the scope of the corporate employee training activities and the practices to cope with the challenges in the organization of employee training.

Methods: Employing qualitative approach, document analysis was conducted within the context of two cases. The two companies with the highest sales revenue in Turkey were selected as cases in the study. The companies were determined through criterion sampling in line with the financial performance based on net sales revenue, stability of financial performance and potential for corporate training policy development criteria. The six years of sustainability and activity reports of the companies were analysed through thematic analysis. The documents were analysed through thematic analysis using open coding. Employee training policies and practices were presented under the sub-themes of personnel training types, subjects of personnel training, training infrastructure, factors considered in the design of training processes and supportive practices for training processes.

Findings: Employee training of the companies mostly consists of formal and non-formal training activities designed according to the needs of employees. These training activities

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aim at both occupational and personal development of the employees. The training activities, which are mostly organized with the use of internal resources, also allow employees to make their own personal development plans. The dominant common aspects of the employee training policies of the companies show that the successful integration of employee training to the career management systems increases the efficiency of training activities. The study results also illustrate that the employee training policies can be strengthened through corporate capacity development activities.

Conclusion: Institutionalization of training practices that contribute to workplace learning has an important role in the financial gains of highly competitive organizations. The success of corporate training practices for employees requires both an effective design in terms of content and process and a strong establishment of corporate training infrastructure. The provision of formal and informal learning opportunities structured according to employee needs through a strong corporate training infrastructure and planning the career development of employees based on the outputs of training activities are the indicators of successful company performance.

Keywords: Employee Training, Workplace Learning, Financial Performance, Corporate Training Policies, VET, Vocational Education and Training, Turkey

1 Introduction

The financial performance of a company is determined by its profitability, growth, advantageous position in the market regarding quality and its readiness for competitive and challenging conditions (Matzler et al., 2010). There are various factors that determine the quality of products and services of companies and as a result enable them to improve financial performance. Employee training activities are among these factors that have a positive effect on company performance (del Valle et al., 2009; McCartney & Fu, 2022; Simpson et al., 2004). Employee training is, "the systematic effort by an organization to teach its employees new skills, to introduce them to new approaches to work, or to shape their attitudes" (Micari, 2004, p. 207). It is considered as a way to increase productivity, profitability and efficiency (Campbell, 2006; Kyriakidou & Maroudas, 2010; Reynolds et al., 2014; Zheng et al., 2007).

Changes in information and communication technologies along with the changes in working life have made it necessary for organizations to train a workforce with sufficient competence in responding to these changes (Tynjälä, 2008). Employees are expected to demonstrate competence especially in technology and media literacy (Soliman et al., 2022; Wang & Han, 2018), teamwork, entrepreneurship and leadership (Robles, 2012; Saniuk et al., 2023; Wilson & Marnewick, 2018), and change management (Saniuk et al., 2023; Stensaker & Meyer, 2012). Among these competence areas, media literacy, which provides the ability to access

and analyse messages in various contexts (Livingstone, 2004), and change management, which supports the creation of a collaborative working system by reconfiguring existing business processes (Windsor, 2003) are competence areas that reflect the change in our age. Consequently, it has become a requirement for organizations to have control over the efficiency of their workforce (Micari, 2004). The potential of companies to continuously develop and train their employees is a critical factor to attain a competitive edge in today's information economy and business world (Galanaki et al., 2008). Continuous learning at workplaces is becoming a leverage for meeting the changing demands of the dynamic labour market (Nilsson & Rubenson, 2014). It is the most important trigger of innovative and creative thinking skills required by the dynamic labour market. Workplaces are therefore starting to take on more active roles in the strengthening of the connection between training and economy (Fuller et al., 2004). Companies that are active in the competitive arena are investing more in the training of their employees and are responding to the requirements of competition by way of workplace training practices (Schøne, 2007).

The organizational and structural characteristics of different sectors define how workplace learning is organized (Stroud & Fairbrother, 2008). The methods with which organizations provide employee training are identified through company specific factors such as innovative activity, technical and technological status as well as market competition (Roshchin & Travkin, 2017). Therefore, companies operating in competitive sectors and using high technology require a more systematic, institutional and sustainable training approach compared to companies operating in areas where competition is weak and do not require high technology use.

New forms of business organizations are recognized as a potential catalyst for learning and workplaces are considered as areas for learning (Fuller & Unwin, 2011). However, it is necessary to develop a suitable training policy as well as to provide required conditions for learning to make workplaces an area of learning. The most important reason for this necessity is that the participation of employees in training activities is shaped based on the interaction of their occupational attributes and the characteristics of workplace environment (Nilsson & Rubenson, 2014). Therefore, it is quite important to determine the qualifications of a successful employee training policy in order to provide both effectiveness and efficiency at organizational level. Since successful employee training policies could result in better quality product and service delivery depending on the development of employee competencies (Kyoon Yoo & Ah Park, 2007), one of the areas where the outputs of these policies could be observed is the financial performance of companies. The improvement in product and service quality may contribute to the revenue growth in companies over time. The fact that the impact of employee training on the financial performance of companies depends on the development of employees' competencies and professional performance makes it difficult to directly observe the connection between employee training and financial performance. However, the employee training policies of high revenue companies are of particular importance

in that they reveal the organizational learning approach that permeates business and management processes in companies. Therefore, examining the employee training policies of high revenue companies may provide an insight into employee training practices that have the potential to contribute to financial performance.

In this study, the practices of the companies with the highest sales revenue in Turkey were examined, taking into account the literature on the difficulties encountered in employee training. In other words, the training policies that could be a solution to the employee training difficulties of the companies were analysed. Defining the scope, opportunities and implementation processes of employee training in high revenue companies could shed light on policies that could help meet these challenges. Accordingly, the present study investigates the fundamental characteristics of employee training practices in the context of employee training policies of Turkey's top two companies with the highest sales revenue. The question of the study is as follows: How are employee training practices that enable workplace learning carried out in the companies with the highest sales revenue?

This study may contribute to the relevant literature by expanding the knowledge in two main areas. First, the study will contribute to raising awareness about training activities that can ensure financial performance improvement by analysing the training activities of high revenue companies. Second, revealing preventive and supportive practices that explain how companies respond to the challenges in the management of employee training will shed light on policies for ensuring the effectiveness and sustainability of employee training in companies.

2 Theoretical Framework

Theoretical explanations regarding the workplace learning and challenges in employee training, which are included in the theoretical framework of the study, are given in the following sections.

2.1 Workplace Learning

Workplace learning is a concept that should be considered in terms of innovation and profitability of organizations as a necessity of responding to changes in skills, technology and human relations in the knowledge society (Vaughan, 2008). Workplace learning can be explained at the managerial level based on the human resources management approach and at the organizational level based on the organizational learning approach. According to Illeris (2011), human resources management approach, also known as the human resources development approach to reveal the learning tendency, emphasizes the importance of human resources, but is more of a management approach. Hence, it considers workplace learning

from the perspectives of management, organization and finance (Illeris, 2011). Learning organization and organizational learning theories provide a general framework for the proper analysis of workplace learning opportunities and context (Tynjälä & Häkkinen, 2005). Organizational learning that emphasizes the learning of organization members is a second perspective that explains workplace learning. In this perspective, the organization focuses on how the best learning environments can be formed formally and informally (Illeris, 2011). Organizational learning sets up a conceptual bridge between workplace learning and organizational performance (Fuller & Unwin, 2011). The learning activities at workplaces play a role in the transformation of workplaces to learning organizations by enabling a more flexible and rapid response to environmental and technological changes as well as increasing productivity (Matthews, 1999).

Workplace learning occurs through formal and informal learning activities (Bratton et al., 2008; Detsimas et al., 2016). Companies either organize or purchase training for their employees (Galanaki et al., 2008). According to Nilsson and Rubenson (2014), organized training can be classified as formal and non-formal. Formal training is carried out in a structured way in an educational institution. Non-formal training, on the other hand, is carried out in and out of an educational institution in a structured way, usually focusing on job and life skills, and does not have the ladder system in formal training. The formal training programs of companies encompass "structured training courses", "seminars and workshops" and "professional training" (Kotey & Folker, 2007, p. 221). However, attending courses, workshops, seminars, and organized workplace training can be considered within the scope of non-formal training (Nilsson & Rubenson, 2014). Consequently, organizations can organize various training activities such as workshops and seminars that can be evaluated within the scope of both formal and non-formal training. Whereas informal learning is the acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding by employees either individually or through interactions with other individuals (Nilsson & Rubenson, 2014). Informal training programs include "on-the-job training", "job rotation" and "apprenticeship and traineeship" programs (Kotey & Folker, 2007, p. 222).

2.2 Challenges in Employee Training

Companies expect to increase service and product quality and innovative activities and also productivity due to faster adaptation of employees to new conditions, as a result of investment in employee training (Dearden et al., 2006; González et al., 2016; Mathews, 2002; Taylor & Davies, 2004). The fact that the structure of organizations has become more complex over time and the need for new skills due to the expansion of the job descriptions of employees has made the provision of employee training widespread (Knoke & Yang, 2003). The revenue growth of companies depending on the increase in the productivity of employees as a result

of skill development after training programs encourages the companies to invest in employee training (Jacobs & Bu-Rahmah, 2012; Knoke & Yang, 2003). However, companies face many difficulties in the process of investing in employee training and ensuring its sustainability. In order to overcome these difficulties, companies develop policies for both training activities and supportive practices that enable the implementation of training activities. Companies adopt various corporate training policies depending on their economic strategies, human resources policies (Lambert & Vero, 2013).

The difficulties of employee training are discussed in the literature in the context of continuing training (Buyens & Wouters, 2005; Lambert & Vero, 2013), training effectiveness and evaluation of training programs (El Baroudi et al., 2018; Kucherov & Manokhina, 2017), and the impact of employee training on organizational performance (Dermol & Čater, 2013; Hansson, 2007). One of the difficulties that companies experience in training processes is employee absenteeism in training. To deal with employee absenteeism, companies need to design training programs in which employees manage their own learning processes. Thus, it could be ensured that training programs respond to employee needs (Wan Hooi, 2010). To ensure continuous participation of employees in training programs, it is also necessary to employ practices that motivate employees. Providing financial rewards based on engagement in training, linking training programs with career goals, and allowing employee participation in planning processes are some effective motivating practices (El Baroudi et al., 2018). In the context of motivational policies, organizational incentives such as continuous communication with employees during training processes should be put in place to ensure employee engagement in training programs (Dermol & Čater, 2013). By designing programs that are sensitive to employee needs and morale, training processes that meet the needs of employees and companies together could be sustained (Wan Hooi, 2010). Training programs that are compatible with employee needs not only increase the learning potential and morale of employees, but also help increase internal productivity of the company (Lai Wan, 2007).

While companies are implementing their training policies, they also experience the problem of high personnel turnover. Employee inflow and outflow, in other words, turbulence in the workforce is a determinant of the quality of training activities in companies (Forrier & Sels, 2003). The possibility of using knowledge and skills gained by employees as a result of training programs in another company that produces similar products or services is a significant risk for companies (Roshchin & Travkin, 2017). There is no guarantee that employees who receive qualified training will stay in the company for a long time. Although they see training as career advancement, it is not the only determinant of their stay in their jobs (Acton & Golden, 2003). As a result, employee turnover could be a substantial cost as companies invest in employee training (Hansson, 2007).

Another difficulty that companies experience in ensuring the effectiveness of training activities is evaluation procedures. Evaluation of training activities by companies is not an

easy task. It is difficult to determine the extent to which employees are able to apply what they have learned and to what extent what they learn affects company outcomes (Buyens & Wouters, 2005). In this regard, it is beneficial for companies to adopt cost-benefit analysis policies (Wan Hooi, 2010). Internal control systems need to be designed to provide feedback on training programs based on cost-benefit analysis policies (Dermol & Čater, 2013). Evaluations carried out in line with previously determined targets enable decision-making about the suitability of employee training for company needs (Wan Hooi, 2010). The data collected as a result of the evaluation of training needs of employees also allow the revision of future training activities (Elbadri, 2001) within the scope of feedback on employee training. Formalizing the evaluation of training programs makes training more meaningful for employees. Hence, the purpose of evaluation and its contribution to company should be clearly stated (Kucherov & Manokhina, 2017).

The education level of employees is one of the determinant factors in the provision of employee training (Zheng et al., 2007). However, the necessity of companies to provide appropriate training to employees with different education levels is among the issues that challenge companies in training processes. While highly educated employees benefit more from formal training in the workplace, low-skilled employees are generally content with in-company and job-specific training (Ahlgren & Engel, 2011). As a result, instead of offering standard training activities, it has become a necessity to diversify training programs and offer alternative training activities (Wan Hooi, 2010) such as job rotation (Ahlgren & Engel, 2011) and cross-training (Abrams & Berge, 2010). In order to avoid low productivity and increased costs, companies should include role-specific formal training in employee training processes while supporting employees through informal learning initiatives (Detsimas et al., 2016). The establishment of internal academies within the company and the combination of formal training provided through these academies with on-the-job training has also become widespread (Pozzi et al., 2023). Increasing digitalization requires digital transformation in today's working life (Dobricki et al., 2020), and in this context, offering training sessions (Gupta & Singh, 2021) and e-learning opportunities (Wan Hooi, 2010) in virtual environments has become a challenging necessity. The needs of companies to offer different training alternatives to their employees have necessitated collaborative work with various institutions and organizations. Depending on the expansion and diversification of training market, companies need to cooperate with specialized training institutions, professional associations, vocational schools and colleges, business training firms, chambers and unions (Buyens & Wouters, 2005; Elbadri, 2001; Knoke & Yang, 2003). The difficulty of collaborating continuously and effectively with such organizations requires companies to make extra efforts in employee training processes.

Considering the current situation in Turkey regarding employee training, it can be stated that employee training is related to financial performance (Collings et al., 2010). Torlak et al.

(2018) stated that well-designed and managed on-the-job and off-the-job training programs in Turkey increase employee engagement and productivity, while increasing company profit and growth rate. Training is also considered as an important component of corporate social responsibilities and sustainability is included in the training agenda of companies (Özcüre et al., 2011). However, as Yüksel (2020) stated, lack of technical skills and experience is one of the most important challenges in Turkey as in many developing countries. Inan et al. (2022) noted that problems with low-skilled employees in particular require not only providing training, but also establishing a participatory corporate culture and empowering employees in Turkey. One of the major challenges faced by human resources departments in Turkey is the evaluation of training effectiveness, as employees are satisfied with promotion-related training rather than performance improvement training (Aycan, 2001). On the other hand, it is considered a risk that employees leave the company after gaining knowledge and experience as a result of training provided by the company (Inan et al., 2022). In order to avoid such risks in the context of training policies, companies undertake challenging processes such as giving employees autonomy to choose training programs, designing training programs based on employee needs, offering training alternatives such as informal training (Özçelik & Uyargil, 2022), receiving training from supplier companies (Inan et al., 2022), designing practice-based professional training programs that include contemporary and diverse methods (Köksal, 2006). Through such policies, employees' commitment to their companies is increased by enabling them to work in an environment that is sensitive to their needs and makes them feel valued.

3 Methods

Document analysis was conducted within the context of two different cases in the present study, employing a qualitative approach. Document analysis provided an opportunity to make detailed descriptions on the training policies and practices of companies examined. Within the scope of document analysis related to organizations, records containing policies, statistics or plans belonging to organizations are examined. Examination of records is an effective method for understanding the policies and practices of an organization without being affected from the intentions of individuals (Bohnsack et al., 2010). Hence, document analysis provided the means to conduct a comprehensive and objective analysis on the training practices of companies.

3.1 Research Context

The training practices of the companies were examined in the context of Turkey in the present study. Criterion sampling method was used for determining the companies. Accordingly, three primary criteria were determined to be used in a progressive manner. The first criterion

for the analysis of the practices of high revenue companies was that the companies should be in the top three among the Turkey's largest companies by revenue in 2020. In the ranking of largest companies by revenue in 2020, the net sales revenue of the companies that come after the top three is less than half of the net sales revenue of the first ranked company. Therefore, the reason for focusing on the top three companies is to ensure that there is no big difference between the financial performances of the companies examined. The financial performance of companies could be evaluated according to total assets, owner's equity, annual net sales amount, earnings before interest and tax, earnings before tax or export revenue (Fortune Turkey, 2020). However, net sales amount is an important component of a company's overall finances as it shows a company's net earnings after all deductions such as sales taxes and allowances. Therefore, the financial performance of the companies included in the study was evaluated according to the annual net sales amount in Turkish Lira, as it presents a more holistic financial picture. Fortune Turkey's (2020) ranking of the largest companies by revenue already takes into account annual net sales.

The second criterion was that the companies should be in the top three during the past five years to select the companies that are stable in terms of financial performance. Following these criteria, the rankings of the Fortune 500 Turkey list, in which Turkey's largest 500 companies by revenue are listed, between 2015 and 2020 (Fortune Turkey, 2020; Yılmaz, 2021) were examined in order to select the companies to be included for the analysis of training practices. Based on the review of the rankings, two companies were selected which met the predetermined criteria. Company A was ranked number two in 2020 in the list of the companies with the highest sales revenue and remained at the number one ranking for a period of four years during 2016-2019. Company B was ranked number one in the list of the companies with the highest sales revenue in 2020 and remained in the second place for a period of four years during 2016-2019.

The third criterion is that companies have a wide range of training policies that are publicly published. Both companies, which were determined according to the first two criteria, also meet the third criterion.

Case 1 – Company A: Company A is active in the oil sector. The mission statement shared through corporate web site indicates that the company is an establishment leading the sector through innovative practices. Based on the 2020 sustainability report, the company had a total of 5.354 full-time employees in 2020. More than half of the employees were between the ages of 30 and 50. The training programs carried out were stated as average hours in the company reports. Depending on employee and company needs and also global developments such as the Covid-19 pandemic, the company organized an average of 70, 44 and 17 hours of training per person in the last three years, respectively. These training activities were organized for employees at all levels of the company.

Case 2 – Company B: Company B is a market operator in the energy market, including the electricity, natural gas and environmental markets. It ensures that market buying-selling transactions are carried out transparently in accordance with regulations and a reference price is established. Transparent and sustainable operations were emphasized in the mission statement of the company included in the 2020 activity report. Based on the 2020 activity report, the company had 220 employees as of the end of 2020. More than half of the employees were between the ages of 31 and 40. Since company B is an energy market operator, the number of employees is quite low compared to companies operating in other sectors. The training programs carried out were stated as numbers in the company reports. The company organized 55 training programs in 2018, 82 training programs in 2019 and 90 training programs in 2020 for its employees. These training activities were organized for all employees of the company. Training activities for market participants are also carried out by company employees within the scope of market training programs.

3.2 Data Collection

The study data were collected via document analysis. The documents to be analysed should first be decided in document analysis. The accordance of the documents with the research questions or the theoretical framework of the study should be taken into consideration during this decision stage (Bowen, 2009). The documents to be analysed were decided in the present study based on their potential to answer the research question.

In the context of the research question, employee training policies of companies are analysed through a combined evaluation of corporate training activities and practices to cope with the challenges in the organization of employee training. It was understood as a result of the preliminary readings of the activity and sustainability reports of the companies that the reports have a rich content that can meet the demands of the research question. Accordingly, it was decided to analyse the activity and sustainability reports shared publicly by the companies. Although the reports of companies are called by different names such as activity report and sustainability report, these reports are actually annual reports that aim to share the annual activities of the companies with a sense of accountability.

Company A shares its activities and goals annually within the scope of the sustainability reports published at its website. Company A considers sustainability as a management element and shares the social, economic and environmental impacts of its annual activities and the results obtained from these activities in its annual report. The contributions of the company's activities to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals are also indicated in the report. The report describes the social, economic and environmental activities of the company under the headings of management approach, environment and waste management within the scope of responsible production, talent management, Research and Development

(R&D), innovation and digital transformation, value chain management, social development and performance data. Sustainability reports covering a period of six years between 2015 and 2020 were analysed within the scope of the study for Company A. A total of 425 pages were analysed in this scope.

Company B shares its yearly activities as part of the activity reports published at its website. Company B's annual reports include information on market activities, strategies and objectives, information technology activities, R&D and business development activities, corporate risk management, corporate capacity building and development activities, international activities, and internal audit and market surveillance activities. Activity reports covering a period of six years between 2015 and 2020 were analysed within the scope of the study for Company B. A total of 550 pages were analysed in this scope.

The reason for starting the analyses with the year 2015 was that Company B has been established in 2015. The reason why Company B is among the high revenue companies in a short time is that it is a market operator company. The company, which operates as a power exchange, provides the platforms where power purchase and sale requests can be made and creates reference prices. It was considered that the yearly social, demographic, and economic developments may have made an impact on the training activities of the companies. Hence, it was deemed appropriate to analyse the reports of both companies for the same years to ensure that the training activities are considered within the context of the same social and economic processes.

While there are specific sections in the reports that mainly describe the training activities of the companies, all sections were analysed throughout the reports to comprehensively examine the training activities as well as the policies supporting these activities. Therefore, the explanations under all headings in the reports were evaluated and analysed in terms of their connections with the training processes and practices.

3.3 Data Analysis

The data collected from the documents were analysed via thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is suggested to ensure rigor in document analysis. Guided and repeated readings can be carried out, codes and categories can be structured, and uncovered data can be evaluated through thematic analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Subject-related procedure was applied during the thematic analysis process. The focus is only on the topics in the document during this procedure with no emphasis given on the authors or the circumstances in which the document was written (Schreiner et al., 2021).

Open coding was employed in thematic analysis. There is no predetermined code list prior to the coding in this approach. The codes emerge and are updated during the analysis (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). As suggested by Saldaña (2016), analyses were conducted

in two-stages: During a priori coding stage, the documents were analysed and the starting codes were identified. Words were taken as units for a priori coding. Following the completion of the comparisons for the starting codes identified by the researchers, second round of focused coding was conducted during which repeated encodings were made and themes and sub-themes were determined. In the presentation of the findings in line with the coding, the training policies of the companies were explained with a descriptive approach based on the codes associated with sub-themes.

A regularly updated code schema was used throughout the analyses to ensure that the coding work was conducted properly through systematic comparisons regarding coding studies. Table 1 presents a cross-section from the code schema used during the analyses.

In the annual reports of the companies, there is not enough information about the challenges they face in the employee training processes. Instead, the reports include what kind of practices the companies have implemented to ensure success in employee training. Therefore, while determining the codes indicating the practices of the companies, it was taken into account that they have the potential to respond to the challenges stated in the literature regarding employee training. As a result, the codes under the sub-themes express corporate activities and practices that prevent and eliminate the difficulties related to employee training. Table 1 also includes the definitions regarding how the corporate activities and practices expressed by the codes are related to the challenges faced by the companies in employee training.

Table 1: Code Schema Used in Coding Studies

Themes	Sub-Themes	Definition of Sub-Themes	Sample Codes	Challenge Area
Corporate Training Activities	Personnel Training Types	It includes the types of the training activities conducted under the control of the company for personal and professional development of employees.	*Periodic orientation training *Specialized training	Carrying out employee training programs in the required context and at the targeted competency level by ensuring continuous employee participation.
	Subjects of Personnel Training	It includes the subjects of the company-controlled training towards personal and professional development of company employees.	*Leadership *Occupational health and safety	Increasing the effectiveness of employee training activities with the versatile development of employees.
	Training Infrastructure	It illustrates the training structure set up by the company to conduct systematic and planned training activities.	*Online training via training portal *Certified training programs	Conducting employee training programs with a scientific approach in the capacity and quality that could produce the targeted outputs.

Practices to Cope with the Challenges in the Organization of Employee Training	Factors Considered in the Design of Training Processes	It encompasses the approach adopted when designing the training practices and the principles that shape the implementation processes.	*Providing equal opportunity *In-company demands	Meeting the needs of the employees and the company together in the training programs and ensuring a planned operation in the training processes.
	Supportive Practices for Training Processes	It includes practices that are not directly training programs but which support the learning processes for company employees.	*In-house library *Mentorship	Preventing monotony in employee training and providing continuous training opportunities at the individual level to strengthen the achievements of regular training programs.

3.4 Trustworthiness

Studies for identifying and acquiring the related comprehensive documents (Friedensen et al., 2020) were first conducted to ensure trustworthiness of the study. In other words, firstly, the appropriate documents that have the potential to answer the research problem and the ways to reach these documents were determined. It was not considered necessary to access a large variety of documents. Because the sustainability and activity reports of companies are quite comprehensive documents incorporating data from various corporate documents related to the activities of the company. As suggested by Friedensen et al. (2020), the researchers got together throughout the coding process to make comparisons between the findings and comments. They used a detailed code book containing the code schema was used during the coding process by updating regularly.

An agreement study (Gwet, 2014) was conducted by two different coders to ensure the rigor of coding work. It is sufficient to code data units representing between 10% and 25% of the data set for multiple coding. A subsample should be selected at random or justifiable criteria should be used for representing the whole data set (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). In the present study, 20% of the reports of both companies were chosen as random sample after which they were analysed by two coders. Cohen's kappa statistic, which takes a value between +1 and -1 (Fleiss, 1971), was calculated for inter-coder reliability through Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). While the expected agreement proportions are found as in the Chi-square tests, Cohen's kappa statistic is calculated using the following formula (Bland, 2012, p. 2):

$$K = \frac{p - p_e}{1 - p_e}$$

p: "the proportion of units where there is agreement"

p_e: "the proportion of units which would be expected to agree by chance"

Cohen's kappa value was calculated as 0.92 for inter-coder reliability. Hence, an almost perfect agreement level (McHugh, 2012) was reached in the coding studies.

4 Findings

Findings on Company A and Company B were presented respectively based on the themes of corporate training activities and practices to cope with the challenges in the organization of employee training.

4.1 Case 1 – Company A: Corporate Training Activities

The corporate training activities of Company A were examined on the basis of personnel training types, subjects of personnel training and training infrastructure.

4.1.1 Personnel Training Types

The personnel training activities provided by Company A within the scope of in-company training cover a wide range of training activities from pre-employment training to training provided as part of different projects. The training process of employees starts with the training they take part in prior to starting employment. Employees are also required to attend a training program after completing their first year of employment. Throughout their professional life at the company, they take part in occupational training, periodical orientation training and on-the-job training. In addition to these training activities designed in a standard manner for all employees, specialized training activities are provided to the employees based on work processes and career planning activities. Employees of the company also take part in training organized by different institutions and establishments in cooperation with the company. Training as part of projects, training of non-governmental organizations and master's degree programs carried out in cooperation with universities are among such training activities based on cooperation.

When the training activities provided to the employees by the company are evaluated holistically, it is clear that the training activities have diversity in terms of attendance requirement, schedule and support or development purposes. Therefore, the learning processes of the company's personnel have become sustainable through obligatory and periodical training as well as supportive and complementary training. The fact that master's degree programs are provided in cooperation with universities as well as training specialized based on career planning results shows that training policy is not only related with work processes but is shaped for providing a more comprehensive development.

4.1.2 Subjects of Personnel Training

The personnel training covers three different subject areas including subjects related to the company's field of activity, technical issues regarding work-related processes and personal development and social issues. The subjects related to the company's field of activity are included in the occupational training for employees. The training that encompasses technical issues regarding work-related processes includes corporate risk management, basic data analytics, corporate entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship methodologies, information security, occupational health and safety, innovation, emergencies, protection and intervention and process safety. Whereas training designed for personal development and also covering social issues includes leadership, human rights, communication, ethics, self-recognition, team and work management, mentorship and development, cooperation and team development, healthy life and preventive measures, environment, and future oriented development issues.

Training focusing on personal development along with social issues occupies an important place among the training activities of Company A. This is an indication that the focus is on the holistic development of the employees rather than focusing only on their professional development.

4.1.3 Training Infrastructure

The opportunities offered by the training infrastructure of Company A have increased considerably recently. An Academy, which was planned to be officially opened in 2021, has been constructed within the company to ensure technical and professional development. Workshops, training classrooms, a conference hall and a library are included in the Academy. Classroom training could not be conducted due to the Covid-19 pandemic, however online training has started within the Academy. It is intended through the establishment of an Academy inside the company to provide more systematic training to the employees. In addition to the information in the company's analysed reports, it is worth noting that the Academy started operations in 2021 as planned.

The company has the mission of directing its policies based on data analysis, that is, operating as an analytical company. Therefore, data analytics centres have been set up at the techno cities of different universities to have access to qualified employees who are able to work in the field of data analytics and to be close to the academic world. In the meantime, a comprehensive training program was prepared for this purpose.

The company has an online training platform. Thus, it can organize systematic online training for its employees and put into effect its online internship practices. The online internship practices enable remote field trips accompanied by the training activities. Even though the online internship practice is mainly organized for students, it also contributes to the development of the employees who are the mentors of the practices. The company provides

remote facility training through online image and sound transfer. Business processes have accelerated thanks to remote and online training practices thereby increasing efficiency. The company organizes offline training in digital environment in addition to online training.

4.2 Case 1 – Company A: Practices to Cope With the Challenges in the Organization of Employee Training

The factors considered in the design of Company A's training processes and its supportive practices for training processes were explained within the scope of coping with the challenges in the organization of employee training.

4.2.1 Factors Considered in the Design of Training Processes

Company A gives utmost importance to the principle of equal opportunity when designing its training processes. Providing coaching programs and leadership training for women can be considered as the outcome of efforts to provide equal opportunities.

The training programs designed by the company focus on the development of skills and competencies of the employees within the context of their professional and personal development. Accordingly, it is aimed to improve the technical, professional, and behavioural competencies of the employees. The competencies and needs of the employees are taken into consideration when identifying the training activities that employees should take part in. The company also organizes programs that enable the employees to conduct personal training planning. Training activities specialized for employees are structured based on the career plan outcomes. Hence, the company gives importance to provide need-based individualized training services in addition to the standard training services provided. The psychological state of the employees is of significant importance for the providing of training services and hence, the results of surveys conducted by industrial psychologists are taken into consideration for the organization of training practices.

The preparation of training and development plans is given specific importance to ensure the professional and personal developments of the employees. During this preparatory process, company-specific training programs are designed. Planning activities are conducted by considering the implementation alternatives and infrastructure requirements in the design of the training activities.

4.2.2 Supportive Practices for Training Processes

Certain practices that help in designing training processes are also conducted by Company A. Establishment of work teams within the company for ensuring that employees continue on-the-job learning along with the organization of workshops including the idea generation workshops are among practices that directly support training processes.

The performance and career management systems of the company can be characterized as supportive mechanisms for training. Together with career planning system, the performance assessment system supports the design of personal and occupational training by providing feedback on employees. Training specialized for employees can be designed based on the career planning results.

The company has a talent management system specific to its own structure and needs. The company's aim with this system is to discover talents at different levels and to ensure the sustainability of corporate and individual development by way of interdisciplinary learning opportunities. The employees involved in the talent management process through the talent management system take part in a two-year development program. Coaching service of development is provided to the employees in this program and the employees can conduct their own individual development plans. In the meantime, a mentor is appointed from among senior executive members of the company for each talent. In the talent management system, the employees take part in on-the-job learning practices and continue their learning processes within the collaborative work teams.

Rotation is another practice that the company effectively uses for attaining employee development. In this regard, the company designs rotation processes for enriching the learning experiences of its employees. An announcement system has been developed for ensuring that the rotation processes can be conducted. In this way, the employees are notified of the empty positions in the organization to which they can apply. The rotation programs are monitored within the scope of the talent management system implemented by the company and the talents of the employees are adopted to the strategic backup plans of the organization.

An in-house entrepreneurship program is also carried out by the company to ensure employee development. In-house entrepreneurs who attend this program take courses on entrepreneurship as well as support of entrepreneurship mentoring. In-house entrepreneurs work more efficiently by transferring the experiences they acquire to their jobs even if they do not continue the process. Over time, internal mentorship training has been organized within the company and thus it is intended to ensure that in-house mentors support the company projects and provide mentoring on in-house entrepreneurship activities. Volunteer employees from various levels in the organization make up teams of innovation volunteers by way of the idea unit portal of the company. Special training sessions and work programs are organized for this team during which the primary aspects of innovation and

corporate entrepreneurship are shared. The company has also developed a refined suggestion system for taking suggestions from employees thus aiming to improve their creativity and productivity skills.

4.3 Case 2 – Company B: Corporate Training Activities

The corporate training activities of Company B were investigated on the basis of personnel training types, subjects of personnel training and training infrastructure.

4.3.1 Personnel Training Types

Company B structures its corporate training for employees within the framework of occupational and personal training activities along with training activities for which attendance is obligatory. These training activities provided by the company are presented in diverse ways to the employees including in-house and external training. External training is part of the corporate training activities, since it is also organized by the company.

Employee development is the goal through on-site training approach in one-to-one training which is another type of training offered to the employees. On-the-job training is provided within the context of human resource management to all candidates with the potential to work in the company even if this training is not related to every field of duty. On-the-job training is conducted in the guidance of a specific training program. The company enables its employees to receive certification training to raise their level of knowledge to the international standards.

4.3.2 Subjects of Personnel Training

The training programs provided by Company B are mostly organized in two different areas including training that is related to occupational and technical subjects and training on technical subjects which may support the proper administration of work processes.

Training programs are provided on the following subjects regarding the proper technical administration of the company business: Electronic document management system, market-related issues, use of corporate language in correspondence, processes and management of newly established Internet platforms, software development, corporate architecture awareness, corporate risk management, business continuity management, information safety management system, information technologies, debt law and contract analysis.

The company also provides occupational health and safety training, which is a legal obligation. It strives to provide information exchange between market actors and professionals by organizing training activities to develop a literacy specific to the field in which the company operates.

4.3.3 Training Infrastructure

Company B has set up a training academy by giving importance to forming a strong training infrastructure. The purpose of setting up this academy is to collect all training and development activities in the company under a single roof and to raise the labour force that will be required in the future. In addition to training activities for the company employees, the academy organizes training for the employees of related institutes and establishments to improve human resource's quality for the sector. The training activities in the academy are organized to ensure the continuity of the competence development of employees and the attainment of individual development of the employees as well as organizational development. Preparing the on-the-job training programs for candidates who may work in the company is among the first activities of the academy.

The company took part as an organizing partner in a certification training program aimed at the sector professionals abroad and provided support by sending trainers to this program. The company has a training portal, and it continues its online training activities as well. The company provides market training in digital environment. It also makes use of video conference and webinar practices for supporting its remote teamwork.

4.4 Case 2 – Company B: Practices to Cope With the Challenges in the Organization of Employee Training

The factors considered in the design of Company B's training processes and its supportive practices for training processes were explained within the scope of coping with the challenges in the organization of employee training.

4.4.1 Factors Considered in the Design of Training Processes

The company designs the training processes in line with certain principles by considering the objectives of training activities. Since the planning of training processes primarily focuses on developing the personal and professional capabilities of the employees, certain activities are carried out for determining the required training activities. Training activities focus not only on the development of current employees, but also on raising the human resources that the company will need in the future. Company training practices also contribute not only to the development of company employees, but also to the development of human resources in the sector.

Some of the company training activities allow market actors and professionals to come together. These training activities provide an interdisciplinary quality through the information sharing between the market actors and professionals. The company strives to organize

the training activities predominantly through the utilization of its internal resources. For this purpose, a company trainer inventory has been created to ensure that the training activities are solely company based. Although the use of internal resources is the primary choice in the organization of employee training, joint training activities are carried out outside the company with associations, institutions and organizations that have an important place in the sector. The company has prepared a training plan and catalogue to optimize the required training and to focus on the development areas of its employees. Accordingly, the training activities can be followed up in a more systematic manner. The training programs can also be personalized during the preparation of the training plans.

One of the factors that is taken into consideration when designing training processes is the demands from inside the company. The employees can be sent to training activities both in and outside the country based on the demands from the company departments. Particular attention is paid to raising sectoral awareness and ensuring organizational development together with the individual development of employees during the activities for increasing the knowledge of the employees.

4.4.2 Supportive Practices for Training Processes

Company B includes supportive practices in the company processes to facilitate the learning processes of its employees and to conduct the training activities in a more focused manner. Performance management and career management systems have been established to conduct the human resources processes more effectively and performance management and career management modules have been included in the software used for human resource processes. A backup system has been planned which organizes the career and development plans of employees who can take charge of critical positions in the future depending on career management practices. Training organized based on these practices serves to increase corporate performance with a more focused approach.

Research reports concerning the sector in which the company operates are prepared and these reports are shared for internal briefing. A training management directive has been developed for identifying, planning and executing the required training activities. In addition to the organization of the training that is obligatory for the employees depending on the legal regulations, the directive enables the sending of employee to training programs, seminars, and conferences both inside and outside the company to support their personal and professional development. A performance assessment directive has been developed for measuring the individual performance of company employees as well. Thus, periodical performance assessment can be conducted for the employees based on goals and competencies which leads to the specification of the training that they need for career advancement.

The company subscribes to sectoral periodicals as well. Reference books and academic articles are included in the company inventory to establish a library inside the company. The company attaches significance to organizing conferences and seminars to ensure the sharing of information. Scientific studies are shared with the company employees for the purpose of informing as well as increasing sectoral awareness. The company also hosts and sponsors various forums, summits, and workshops.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

The first two companies with the highest revenue in Turkey were examined within the scope of exemplary practices regarding the training policies of companies with high sales revenue in the present study. In determining exemplary practices of high revenue companies, the potential of these practices to respond to employee training challenges was considered. Therefore, these exemplary practices may demonstrate how companies respond to employee training challenges so that training processes are conducted in a way that may contribute to company productivity. The examples of two companies examined in the study show that workplace training and learning processes are effectively managed as a result of corporate commitment to employee training and corporate awareness of training challenges.

In this study, employee training emerged as a success factor with a wide range of influence that develops other success factors for companies. There are various factors that affect the success of companies such as organizational and service culture (Gebauer et al., 2006), infrastructure and knowledge acquisition (Kalenda et al., 2018) and technological complexity and management (Çetin et al., 2004). The findings of the study show that employee training is aimed at more effective use of technology, working in collaboration with management and creating a culture based on communication. Therefore, the companies give special importance to employee training to increase their income depending on their organizational performance. They strive to implement developmental and precautionary policies that support and expand employee training to improve company performance based on growth in sales revenue. The training policies of the companies support the continuous learning of their employees by establishing an environment suitable for workplace training. According to the institutional approach in job training, workplace policies and practices are determining factors for participation in workplace training programs (Mishra & Smyth, 2015). The employee training activities of the companies indicate that an institutional approach has been adopted for employee training. However, the institutional approaches of the companies have a different quality from the dominantly defined institutional approach in the literature. The approaches of the companies are based on a training and development process in line with the current competencies, needs and preferences of the employees. The employee-oriented structuring of institutional approaches of the companies also prevents the emergence of many

potential problems such as the inability to ensure the engagement of employees in training and the inability of employees to achieve the targeted gains as a result of training. The goal of the institutional training programs arranged by organizations is to improve the knowledge, attitudes and skills related to either the current professions or the future professional requirements of the employees (Waqanimaravu & Arasanmi, 2020). One of the distinguishing features of the companies' employee training policies compared to many company policies in the literature is that they aim not only to develop the current workforce, but also to train the workforce of the future. This future focused policy related to training activities supports an institutional and sustainable training approach and therefore has the potential to make a significant contribution to financial performance.

Employee training programs of the companies are mostly formal and non-formal training activities such as induction training, job training, orientation training and personal development training along with formal programs such as diploma and certification programs. Training sessions that may otherwise be non-formal can be conducted with a formal training approach since the companies have in-house training academies and they organize their occupational training programs in a planned manner. Training academies structured with in-house resources stand out as an innovative practice in the context of formal training of employees. Kotey and Folker (2007) stated that the formal training activities increase as the scale of the companies increases. Employees of well-known companies receive positive results from company training programs and wish to continue their studies since their company training initiatives are structured in a formal manner (Devins et al., 2004). Although formal training programs carried out in cooperation with training institutions outside the compony are very common, it is an innovative approach to conduct employee training with a completely formal approach by using own resources. This situation also facilitates the solution of technical and managerial difficulties encountered in employee training and strengthens the competitive power and brand value of companies.

Formal training activities may reduce over time following the initial growth phase of the companies (Kotey & Folker, 2007). Hence, integrating formal and informal learning into business activities provides a more effective performance. The companies also display a successful performance in integrating formal and informal learning. Informal training, of course, occurs naturally in many companies. However, it is noteworthy that the companies examined in this study also follow and encourage informal training processes through training policies. The fact that companies put into practice policies that support the training processes as well as the psychological, social and cognitive development of their employees further strengthens the informal dimension of employee training. The companies bring a different perspective to employee training by providing services such as coaching and work teams that support the emotional and social development of employees, especially in terms of strengthening informal training. Undoubtedly, supporting employees in different areas of

development also prevents problems related to commitment to training activities. Providing an environment that enables active participation and learning along with the utilization of network and interaction strategies may lead to effective results in the development of employee training (Schraeder, 2009). In this study, the rotation procedure attracts attention as an effective informal training practice. The rotation procedure allows for the implementation of the cross-training approach. Cross-training, applied as a workforce development strategy, refers to the training of individuals to perform multiple roles within the company. This development approach further extends the scope of the skills of the employees (Abrams & Berge, 2010). Rotation is an informal training practice implemented in many companies. However, as determined in this study, performing the rotation within the scope of talent management and carrying out the application system in line with the interests of the employees bring a systematic and new understanding to the relationship between rotation and training.

The common issue that both companies pay attention to in the design of their training processes is to decide on the employee training programs based on employees' needs and to enable the employees to make personal development plans. The individual differences between the employees such as demographics, areas for improvement or learning style are taken into consideration more over time during the training processes thus enabling a better response to the needs of the employees (Micari, 2004). Training content should be considered to be satisfactory by the employees in employee training programs (Kyndt et al., 2013). For this purpose, the knowledge and competence levels of the employees should be determined and necessary arrangements should be made in training activities as a result of the assessments made prior to the training (Schraeder, 2009). Considering the competencies of employees in the design of employee training programs is quite common in the training policies of companies. However, preparing an individual plan based on the analysis of employee competencies and directing employee training individually is a more professional corporate training policy. The design of employee training in a structure sensitive to individual differences also prevents the emergence of many problems in terms of breaking the resistance of employees towards development and ensuring the sustainability of training activities.

Another interesting common feature of the companies is that they include not only occupational training but also training for personal development. Both companies also utilize career management system as an application that supports the training processes. Workplace training that is positively correlated with career development is a critical factor for the development of the capacities of the employees so that they fulfil their roles successfully and for the sustainment of their employment (Detsimas et al., 2016). The vision of the workplaces related to career development and the provision of organizational support to the employees are among the fundamental approaches used for developing the workforce (Fuller & Unwin, 2004). The companies actively utilize workforce development approaches by integrating

career development practices with a learning vision, and providing organizational support in both career development and participation in training activities.

Both companies predominantly organize their training activities themselves and hence they mostly prefer to use internal resources for the presentation of training services. Large companies that provide continuous training to their employees perceive the qualitative benefit of outsourced training less (Galanaki et al., 2008). Organizations implement training policies towards organizing training activities and seminars in-house or purchasing training programs tailored to meet their own needs, since the training provided by external training institutions cannot meet the special demands of employees (Echiejile, 1993). For this purpose, both companies have prioritized the establishment of an academy for conducting training activities. Moreover, policies such as creating an in-house trainer inventory using solely internal resources to meet training needs, cooperating with universities and providing support for the graduate education of employees strengthen the learning organization structure. The use of internal resources by companies in employee training is a critical policy in terms of ensuring the continuity of training activities. However, the training of company employees as trainers to organize their internal resources is a good example of internal resource creation. Thus, they gain an advantage in overcoming the difficulties related to the continuation of in-company trainings in the targeted structure and quality. Both companies also utilize supportive technological tools as a strategy for improving the quality of training (Chiang et al., 2005) and provide flexibility for workplace learning through the inclusion of blended learning (Georgsen & Vange Løvstad, 2014). These training practices indicate that the companies aim to provide sustainable corporate training programs by utilizing internal resources.

Considering the results of the study in general, it is concluded that the distinguishing feature of the training activities of the companies is that they are outcomes of a sustainable training policy. Sustainability-oriented training policies differ significantly from common training policies that are based on periodic needs of the companies. Sustainability is especially ensured through the creation and use of internal physical and human resources, the organization of training not only for company employees, but also for the potential and active workforce in the field of activity, and training-oriented collaborative studies with various institutions and organizations. Consequently, the establishment of a corporate training policy with a future-oriented perspective facilitates the solution of the difficulties encountered in the organization of employee training.

The design of formal and informal training programs in a way that supports each other and mostly using internal resources is also effective in overcoming the difficulties arising from the lack of continuity of training processes. Moreover, training activities that are carried out even at the individual level in line with ensuring the versatile development of the employees help the training process not to be interrupted. The policies of the companies regarding

training activities, which include topics related to work setting and occupation as well as topics of personal development, differ from the usual company policies.

One of the reasons for the potential of employee training to contribute to the performance of the companies is that integrating training processes into the career management system encourages workplace learning. As a distinctive company policy, the classification of employee training programs according to the career stages of employees could also be a solution to the problems related to the failure of training activities to produce the expected outputs. It is concluded that designing the training processes in accordance with the needs of both the employees and the company ensures the continuity of workplace learning, while increasing the social and financial efficiency of the training activities.

6 Implications and Limitations

Our study points to the practical implications as it illustrates how continuous learning of employees can be supported through corporate employee training policies and thus avoid employee training challenges. The companies examined in the study have provided inspirational practices by structuring and enriching various currently known training policies from a different perspective. The results of the study indicate that formal and informal training practices should be structured to reinforce each other in the design of employee training programs that promote workplace learning. The outcomes of training activities should be considered as an indicator when planning the career development of the employees. Career management system should incorporate personalized training programs rather than training programs that address all company employees in general. Hence, pre- and post-training competencies of the employees should be followed up and periodical needs analyses should be conducted to determine the occupational and personal training needs of the employees. Regular needs analyses may guide the company in designing a distinctive talent management system. In order to provide corporate training practices within the company, corporate capacity building studies should be carried out to train in-house trainer staff and to design training programs with a scientific approach. Companies need to develop cooperation policies with universities to conduct such corporate capacity development studies and to establish training academies. Policies regarding such practices could be effective in solving many problems related to planning and management of training processes, employee engagement, and the quality of training outputs.

It should be noted that there is a limitation in the study concerning the examination of the training processes and policies in line with the annual reports of the companies. The analysis of the activities and policies of the companies regarding employee training to the extent that they are conveyed in the company reports can be considered as a limitation in terms of the scope of the findings. It should also be taken into account that the reports may be subjective,

since the corporate practices including in the reports are expressed by the companies, not by external observers. Therefore, in-house observations on employee training or interviews with managers who organize training processes can be conducted in future research.

The financial performance of companies also depends on various factors other than employee training. However, this study focused only on employee training. For this reason, it is recommended to examine employee training policies together with other factors that may be related to financial performance in future studies.

The education levels of the employees in the companies and the ages of the companies were not taken into consideration in the present study. The corporate training activities of the companies may vary with regard to scope and organizing approach depending on the education levels of the employees and the company age. In addition, the type of sector in which the companies operate is another factor that can be effective in this regard. Thus, future studies should also examine employee training policies of companies based on these factors.

Ethics Statement

The processes of this research were carried out in accordance with the principles of research ethics. The documents examined in this document analysis study are open access and publicly available. The documents do not contain any private or confidential information. Throughout the research, no judgmental or critical language was used. Data collection and analysis processes were explained transparently, the findings were presented objectively without subjective interpretation and studies were carried out to ensure trustworthiness in the research processes.

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