

## A CRITICAL VIEW OF ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING REVISITED: A RESEARCH FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF TRAINING PROCESSES IN ORGANIZATIONS

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### ÖRGÜTSEL ÖĞRENMEYE YENİDEN ELEŐTİREL BAKIŐ: İŐLETMELERDEKİ EĞİTİM SÜREÇLERİ PERSPEKTİFİNDEN BİR ARAŐTIRMA

**Prof. Dr. Duygu KIZILDAĞ**

İzmir Demokrasi Üniversitesi  
İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi  
İnsan Kaynakları Yönetimi Bölümü  
duygu.kizildag@idu.edu.tr  
ORCID: 0000-0001-5354-7729

**Do. Dr. Özlem YAŐAR UĞURLU**

Gaziantep Üniversitesi  
İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi  
İŐletme Bölümü  
yasar@gantep.edu.tr  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5165-5603>

#### Abstract

*Organizational learning has been considered as an interesting concept since the 1960s both for the literature and the business world. It can be observed that the studies which examine organizational learning processes are focused more on the positive results of organizational learning and attaining a structure where their employees learn and develop continuously. From the late 1990s and early 2000s, studies, examined the concept with a critical perspective. have also come to light. In these few critical studies, there are various discussions on the parties in the organizational learning experience. In this study, it is tried to investigate organizational learning from a critical point of view and determine how the unexpected results of organizational learning were perceived in organizations in accordance with the relevant literature. A focus group meeting was held with 11 senior managers received MBA and asked to evaluate the organizational learning process in the focus of the trainings in their companies. Similar with the literature, unexpected results were found due to different dimensions of learning barriers in the organizational learning process.*

**Keywords:** Organizational Learning, Learning Organizations, Unexpected Results, Critical Perspective, Training Process.

#### Öz

*Örgütsel öğrenme gerek akademik yazında gerekse iş dünyasında 1960'lerden bu yana ilgi çeken bir kavram olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Örgütlerin öğrenme süreçlerini irdeleyen çalışmalarda, örgütsel öğrenmenin daha çok pozitif sonuçlarına odaklanıldığı ve örgüt çalışanlarının sürekli öğrenerek geliřtikleri varsayılmaktadır. 1990'ların sonu 2000'lerin başından itibaren örgütsel öğrenme literatüründe pozitif odaklı çalışmaların yanında, kavramı eleřtirel açıdan inceleyen çalışmalar da görülmeye başlanmıştır. Sayıca daha az olan bu eleřtirel çalışmalarda, örgütsel öğrenme sürecindeki taraflar üzerinden çeřitli tartışmalar yer almaktadır. Bu çalışmada da örgütsel öğrenmeye eleřtirel bir bakış açısıyla yaklaşılarak, ilgili literatür doğrultusunda örgütsel öğrenmenin beklenmeyen sonuçlarının işletmelerde nasıl algılandığı belirlenmeye çalışılmıştır. MBA eğitimi alan 11 üst düzey yöneticiyle odak grup görüşmesi yapılarak, işletmelerindeki eğitimler çerçevesinde örgütsel öğrenme sürecinin değerlendirilmesi istenmiştir. Literatüre paralel olarak örgütlerdeki örgütsel öğrenme sürecinde de farklı boyutlardaki öğrenme engelleri nedeniyle beklenmeyen sonuçlar ortaya çıktığı belirlenmiştir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Örgütsel Öğrenme, Öğrenen Örgütler, Beklenmeyen Sonuçlar, Eleřtirel Bakış, Eğitim Süreci.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In our earlier article titled “Critical Review of Organizational Learning” in 2014, we made an attempt to evaluate the critical perspectives in the organizational learning literature and analyzed the unexpected results of organizational learning, referring to our other earlier conference paper presented in 2013, titled “The Dark Side of Organizational Learning”. In local literature review, the article studies between 2000 and 2016, the researchers frequently wondered employees’ perceptions of organizational learning, only a small number of papers that critically assessed the concept of it. In the studies, it was seen that organizational learning was evaluated in terms of demographic characteristics and the relationship between concepts such as organizational commitment, leadership styles, learning disabilities and business performance was investigated (Kızıldağ, 2016: 221). While designing to this research, we desired to complete an additional review to the literature again to assess further articles added since 2010. Although there are many studies in the literature on organizational learning focusing on the positive aspects, the scarcity of studies focusing on the negative aspects draws attention (e.g. Field, 2018). Therefore, it can be suggested that while positive perception is high, there is not enough understanding about unexpected negative aspects. In addition, we could not find a comprehensive critical study in the Turkish literature. From this point of view, differences in the unexpected results of organizational learning in different cultures can contribute to the literature.

Although there are relatively few studies in the field from a critical point of view, such as our earlier work, it can be observed that there is literature existing for over half a century on organizational learning as a subject of investigation. In fact, when looking further to the past, it would not be wrong to say that learning within the organization began with the use of the principles of scientific management by Taylor, to teach employees how to do their work after the industrial revolution (Wang, 2011: 16). While the term ‘organizational learning’ was used in the title of a scientific article for the first time by Cangelosi and Dill (1965), the first definitions on the concept were included in the works of March and Simon (1958) and Cyert and March (1963). These studies discussed that organizational learning occurs after the adaptation of the organization to environmental changes, and that it consists of behaviors that can spread throughout whole organization. This concept, which spread rapidly after the work of Cyert and March (1963) where they stated that “organizations learn” and that organizational learning is a concept, was adopted not only by academicians, but also by practitioners.

It is known that interest towards the concept of organizational learning has increased with the learning school in strategic management (Cyert and March, 1963; Quinn, 1980) and the emphasis put by the total quality movement on continuous improvement and increased learning (Dibella and Nevis, 1998: 2). Organizational learning, is defined as the change of organizational knowledge or behavior as a result of experience gained over time (Argyris and Schön, 1978; Fiol, 1994; Fiol and Lyles, 1985; Levitt and March, 1988), gained more importance after 1990s and became one of the most researched subjects in the management literature (Levitt and March, 1988; Cohen and Levinthal, 1990; Huber, 1991; Argyris and Schön, 1996; Garavan, 1997; Balay, 2004; Angelim and Guimaraes, 2005; Senge, 2007). However, at the beginning of the new millennium, while research on whether organizational learning has become a necessity rather than a preference for organizations continued (Garcia-Morales et al., 2007: 528), critical perspectives on the concept also started to be developed and discussed whether organizational learning is a trend or a fanciful notion (Contu et al., 2003: 932).

With reference to this considerable literature, we aimed to follow the studies on the concept of organizational learning since the 1960s and evaluate the unexpected results of organizational learning, as in the first study in 2013, in this article. As in our previous study, we investigated the unexpected results of organizational learning from five different perspectives. In this study, we also discussed the unexpected results of organizational learning by considering the basic discussions in the organizational learning literature and dimensions of doubt of reciprocity, resistance, learning barriers, forgetting and relearning more comprehensively. However, this time we wanted to make an evaluation not only from the perspective of the literature but also from the perspective of business practices. Accordingly, we tried to determine whether the unexpected results of organizational learning are reflected in organizations by taking into account the main discussions in the organizational learning literature. We evaluated the unexpected results in the organizational learning processes of organizations in terms of

learning barriers by conducting focus group interview with 11 senior executives working in different sectors and continuing to receive MBA within the focus of the trainings.

## 2. OVERVIEW OF ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING LITERATURE

Organizational learning has been studied by various disciplines however, to date, no generally accepted a single theory or model has been achieved in the literature (Fiol and Lyles, 1985; Taylor et al., 2010). For instance, Friedman et al. (2005) study presented typologies of organizational learning in terms of organization theory, organizational behavior, social psychology, management theory and knowledge management that have emerged in the recent period. Moreover, contextual conditions such as the uncertainty of the environment and the behaviors of the actors in the environment have brought up the concept of organizational learning to respond to change, gain competitive advantage, innovate, and improve quality. The concept has one of the important fields of organizational science because of evaluating organizational learning as a critical element for organizations that want to succeed and survive (Kanter, 1989; Rebelo and Gomes, 2008).

Making one of the first comprehensive studies in the field of organizational learning, Argyris and Schön (1978) defined organizational learning, which they have associated with the ability of organization to detect and correct errors, as a new body of knowledge and understanding developed for correcting errors. Organizational learning takes place as a cognitive process. Consciousness, which is the basis of cognitive learning, renders organizational learning possible by improving or changing existing processes. And, this process starts with the change in the consciousness of the actor(s) in the organization and is carried out by the actor(s). It is expected that knowledge shall be changed at the end of the learning process. In the studies formed with this perspective, it is emphasized that organizations improve their existing skills or acquire new skills as a result of organizational learning (DiBella et al., 1996: 41). However, learning does not have to increase the effectiveness of the learning subject, according to Huber's approach (1991). While learning does not have to occur consciously, it also does not have to result in observable changes in behavior. According to Fenwick (1998), learning may be considered as a chore or a waste of time in a busy work environment. Some employees may not even want to learn. On the other hand, ignoring the interests and needs of employees and compelling employees to learn in order to create a competitive advantage in the organizational learning process are considered as a new form of worker exploitation (Owenby, 2002: 53). Moreover, learning may not always produce good results. In this process, individuals in organizations may learn things that would not provide any benefit in terms of organizational development and that could be harmful to themselves, in addition to the useful information for themselves and the organization; or they may cause harm to the society with what they learn (Örtenblad, 2002: 92; Rebelo and Gomes, 2008: 302).

Daft and Weick (1984) considered organizational learning as a process that emerges from the relationship between the organization and its environment. Organizational learning is related to social learning in which relationships and communication with the environment are emphasized. Participation, which is on the basis of social learning, makes organizational learning possible through applications and practices. Nevertheless, the participation of the organization's actor(s) is required for these applications and practices. Applications and practices are formed on the actor(s) through learning, and they become institutionalized and routine as a result of this learning. In the studies formed with this perspective, learning is usually associated with the requirements of customers and the demands of the market. Organizational learning is considered as an important determinant of the performance of the company (Calantone et al., 2002: 515) and it is also emphasized that it has a significant effect on non-financial performance, too (Prieto and Revilla, 2006: 499). However, it is known that the main reason for senior management's focus on organizational learning is to increase the organization's share value. The fact that financial performance underlies the reality of learning causes the organization to have a learning agenda focused on the expectations of management rather than learning focused on the requirements and expectations of the employees. Managers who are under extreme pressure to achieve profitability targets and to maintain share values consider the benefits they shall obtain from the learning strategies as the other initiatives of the organization (Baldwin and Danielson, 2002: 24; Owenby, 2002: 53).

According to Levitt and March (1988), organizational learning is a form of learning that results from the transformation of past experiences into behavioral routines. With the development of the system's concept, Senge (1990) adapted this theory to the learning process. According to Senge (1990), who defines learning as the process of transforming of knowledge into behavior by experience, learning for organizations means learning how to learn together, according to changing situations and creating a change mindset. Similarly, Huber (1991) described organizational learning as the diversification and changing of potential behavior area of the organization through data processing. In definitions that explain organizational learning through the change in behavior, learning is affected by the structure, the system, and the culture. According to the behavioral approach, organizational learning is not the sum of employees of the organization learning. As learning is related to the creation of the same change in behavior throughout the organization, the structure, the system or the culture shall be changed as a process. In the studies formed with this perspective, organizational learning is associated with the organizational structure, system, culture, relations of power, the ability and potential of the organization for learning, and with the transfer of knowledge between the individual and the organization (Owenby, 2002: 53). It is suggested that organizational learning supports creativity, increases the potential of comprehension and application of ideas by providing the emergence of new knowledge and ideas, and forms the basis for organizational innovation (Garcia-Molares et al., 2007: 529). As with organizational learning, knowledge is transferred from the individual to the team and from the team to the organization, and it becomes easier for the employees in the organization to obtain knowledge and enable the functioning of routine processes (Jerez-Gomez et al., 2005: 283). Thus, both the individual development of the employees of the organization is ensured and the problem-solving skills of the organization are improved in parallel to the capacity of the organization to create new knowledge (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990: 130). However, not all organizations have a space for employees to learn. For example, in hierarchical structures, managers learn and then apply the information they have obtained on the organization without establishing a direct relationship with blue collar employees (Örtenblad, 2002: 93). Although organic structures are said to have more space for individual learning in this regard, organizational structure itself is not sufficient to provide learning. On the other hand, learning process can be destabilized by the reactions of either individuals or groups to reflect their emotional and political interests (Newman and Newman, 2015: 62). Also there may be normative and cognitive barriers that prevent the success of organizational learning within the cultures of the organizations. Learning does not always create opportunities, can also hamper opportunities with limit the learning requirements (Nakano et al., 2013: 290).

### **3. UNEXPECTED RESULTS OF ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING**

Cognitive, social, or behavioral definitions and discussions related to the phenomenon of organizational learning indicate that this concept includes the purpose of creating behavioral change, and that this change is considered as a process that covers both individual and organizational aspects. Even if the who and how of organizational learning has been revealed, which is supposed to have beneficial results for organizations, occurs, the assumptions about organizational learning often remain theoretical. Thus, new definitions are made constantly about organizational learning, and these concepts become contradictory (Taylor et al., 2010: 353). Fiol and Lyles (1985) argue that this contradiction stems from the definition of organizational learning in the literature by different researchers from a perspective of new knowledge, a new structure, a new system, or a new activity. It can also be considered that two different approaches prevailing in the literature have an effect on the shaping of these perspectives. For example, the preliminary studies in the organizational learning literature focused on what organizational learning are and how it occurs and has discussed the concept with a predictive approach (Easterby-Smith and Lyles, 2003: 51). In the following studies, the concept was discussed with a wider perspective with a descriptive point of view to understand the structure and processes of organizational learning. Organizational learning was associated with collective intelligence, and learning consisting of mutual relationships of individuals in the organization which constitutes a collective intelligence (Weick and Roberts, 1993: 358) was emphasized. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) put an emphasis on memory and described organizational learning as a process of adaptation to change, which is influenced by past experiences, focused on the development and transformation of work routines, and supported by the organizational memory. Together with the

strategic management literature's focus on skills, organizational learning is described as a vital ability in solving problems, creating new ideas, increasing capacity and providing continuity (Chen et al., 2003: 73; Hager, 2010: 17).

In recent years, other studies can be encountered that approach organizational learning with a critical perspective and emphasize the facts, yet to be revealed, that will be discussed later in this article. In these studies, the organizational structure in the definitions of organizational learning is considered as an autopia, and it is thought that the employees often see this structure as an impossible dream (Marsick and Watkins, 1999: 207). On the other hand, there are difficulties in the implementation of organizational learning model in organizations in the reality. The fact that learning is a necessity to improve the performance of the organization has rendered learning normative and even compelling for the employees of the organization. Moreover, the fact that organizational learning is placed on narrow empirical foundations although it is a very broad concept has caused the current perspective to turn upside down (Rebelo and Gomez, 2008: 299).

Critical literature on organizational learning emphasizes that although it is implemented with positive intentions, unexpected results may arise in practice. Based on unexpected results, critical studies questioning the rationality of organizational learning (Leymann, 1989; Easterby-Smith, 1997; Huysman, 1999; Schein, 1999; Örttenblad, 2002) have started with the questions "Who learns, how and when they learn, what is the outcome of learning?". And also, these studies have focused on uncertainty of through that the learning occurs, social concerns and on the emphasis made. The critical perspective also focuses on whether the goals of individuals and the organization are considered together, or whether the organizational learning process always has positive reflections. As we discussed in detail in our previous article, the critical literature seeks answers to all these questions from five different ways: doubt of reciprocity, resistance, learning barriers, forgetting and unlearning.

This literature emphasizes that there is a reciprocity for learning in the organizational learning process, and doubt of reciprocity negatively affects the learning. According to this perspective, employees who want to improve themselves are willing to learn and agree to take on more responsibility even learning partly result in unpaid overtime or reduce their free time (Järvensivu and Koski, 2012: 6). Individuals who are trying to learn and develop themselves are not rewarded for these efforts and that these efforts are evaluated as a necessary duty may adversely affect their desire to learn eventually. Accordingly, employees who participate in the organizational learning process and take responsibility do not want to learn because they cannot get a reward in return (Flood, 1998: 261).

At the same time in the organizational learning process, resistance may be encountered in terms of both the organization and the employees. While organizational learning is aimed to empower employees, organizational management may not want to share their power and delegate their authority and "management resistance" can be appeared (Jaffee, 2001: 183). It may not be possible to apply the things that have been learned as the managers are not always willing or flexible to change. Besides that, the managers who are expected to coach or mentor employees during the learning process may prevent the promotion of the employees to protect their authority (Marsick and Watkins, 1999: 208). Participation of employees in management may not be sufficiently supported (Örttenblad, 2002: 92). Even if there is no management resistance in the organization, not all employees in the organization may be happy with the flexible organizational structure and elements (Victor and Stephens, 1994: 479) and not all employees may want to participate in the process of organizational learning with the same desire (Örttenblad, 2002: 94-95; Järvensivu and Koski, 2012: 7). On the other hand, employees may not want to assume responsibility outside their own position, and they may resist learning by thinking that their responsibility will be increased with learning (Senge, 2007: 27-33).

In the organizational learning process, the barriers affecting organizational learning can be interpersonal, cultural, relational, and structural aspects. Mental capacity, intelligence and age prevent individuals from learning. Insecurity, the threat of power and position, or fear of uncertainty affect their learning process. The existence of a corporate culture that supports learning in the organization, strict rules and norms, excessive hierarchical structures, unclear or unspecified goals, authoritarian and non-innovative managers also cause unexpected results in the organizational learning process. (Kamařak and Yücelen, 2009: 115).

In addition to reciprocity, resistance and learning barriers, forgetting, and relearning are among the other topics discussed in terms of organization in critical literature. Because the organizations record what they have gained through learning into their organizational memory (Sinkula et al., 1997: 306). However, they may not always benefit from past experiences or not carry the knowledge and experience acquired from one point to another within the organization (Othman and Hashim, 2004: 276). The forget or loss of organizational memory experienced in such a case may prevent the sharing and dissemination of learning. When organizational forgetting is defined as the loss of organizational knowledge voluntarily or otherwise, the loss of knowledge is described as a decrease in the level of the organization's knowledge as a result of the flow of more knowledge (Fernandez et al., 2012: 158).

On the other hand, continuous learning and accumulation of more information creates different effects without forgetting has also different effects in organizations. Since the growing knowledge may lose its currency as changes occur, old information should be discarded in order to learn new information (Tsang and Zahra, 2008: 1445). Unlearning is defined as removing of old routines to make room for new ones (Pourdehnad et al., 2006: 2). Therefore, forgetting and learning take place at the same time or sequentially. Also, it is stated that unlearning may not always improve organizational performance as the available information cannot be easily removed or forgotten as expected (Tsang and Zahra, 2008: 1441).

#### 4. METHODS

This study aims to determine whether unexpected results of organizational learning are reflected in organizations. According to Noe (1999: 6), evaluating the training process from a wider perspective and encouraging continuous learning is very important for the functioning of the organizational learning process and it is the most important feature of organizations that want to be a learning organization. In this context, in order to obtain clearer results, the research was shaped by focusing on the training process that is understandable and available in many companies in the organizational learning process. For this purpose, data were collected using focus group interview, which is one of the qualitative research methods. Focus group interview is a qualitative research method that aims to obtain information about the psychological and socio-cultural characteristics, behaviors, and practices of the groups (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2005: 151). According to Krueger (1994), the purpose of the focus group interview is not to make sense, but to understand, not to generalize, but to define the diversity, not to explain the participants, but to reveal how the participants perceive the situation. In this context the semi-structured and open-ended interview approach was followed in the focus group interview.

The research working group consists of people who work in senior management positions in private and public sector companies operating in Bursa province and who are currently continuing their MBA. Senior managers were reached using the convenience sampling method and selected through the following criteria:

- All managers have an impact on the training process (planning, implementation, follow-up, and evaluation) in their companies.
- All managers have gained knowledge and idea about organizational learning during MBA.
- All managers have worked in different companies and there is no relationship / conflict of interest between them.
- All managers have had at least a year with the company that manages organizational learning processes.

The managers who accepted the focus group interview request prior to the research were determined through preliminary interviews. 9 of the managers participating in the research are male and 2 were female. The coding system was used while making one-to-one quotations from the senior managers' opinions and M stands for the manager. Also, all managers (M) were assigned a number. All managers in the focus group interview were informed about purpose of the research and rules for participation. No confidential information was requested from the participants about their companies, and the data used in the research were shared with them after the interview. A tape recorder was used for data collection. Participants were given the right to turn off the tape recorder during if they wanted. The focus group interview was held in December 2019 and lasted 65 minutes. During the interview, 4

semi-structured questions prepared by using the relevant literature were asked to the managers. The questions asked in the focus group interview are as follows:

- How would you evaluate the trainings given to employees in your company?
- How would you evaluate the trainings given to you in your company?
- Do you think the trainings in your company are sufficient? Are trainings of employees in your company achieving their purpose?
- Are there any unexpected results that you encountered during the training process provided in your company? If so, what are these unexpected results?

The interviews recorded with a voice recorder were transcribed and analyzed. Content analysis technique was used in analyzing the obtained data. In the process of data analysis, descriptive perspective concept was adopted. After the voice transcription, data was categorized based on the interpersonal, cultural, relational and structural categories according to dimensions of organizational learning barriers in the literature (Kamaşak and Yücelen, 2009). Appropriate findings were interpreted by evaluating only with frequency analysis. Considering the quantitative and qualitative constraints of the sample of the study, the findings were tabulated and interpreted without any other quantification.

**Table 1: The Relationship between Learning Barriers and Dimensions**

<b>Dimensions of Organizational Learning Barriers</b>	<b>Identified Learning Barriers</b>
<b>Interpersonal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Personal learning barriers (mental capacity, intelligence, age, etc.)</li><li>▪ Personal envy and tendency not to share</li><li>▪ Insecurity between employees</li><li>▪ The fact that information sharing is perceived as a threat by employees</li><li>▪ Concern about interpersonal loss of power or position as a result of sharing information</li><li>▪ Fear as a result of the uncertainty that may be caused by the change</li></ul>
<b>Cultural</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Corporate culture which does not support organizational learning</li></ul>
<b>Relational</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Independent group structures and strict values and norms of these groups</li><li>▪ Conflict of individual and group interests with corporate interests</li></ul>
<b>Structural</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Obstructions in the channels of access to information within the organization and excessively hierarchical structures</li><li>▪ Problems arising from the behavior of managers</li><li>▪ Lack of communication within the organization</li><li>▪ Lingering events and corporate inertia</li><li>▪ Unspecified, unclear or hidden corporate objectives</li><li>▪ Lack of adaptation to technological developments that support learning</li></ul>

Source: Kamaşak and Yücelen, 2009: 115.

## 5. FINDINGS

In the following table, information is given about the age, gender, marital status, seniority and the parts of the managers in the focus group interview group who worked as managers in the companies.

**Table 2:** Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Participant	Gender	Unit of Management	Sector	Structure of Company	Seniority in Company
M1	Man	Branch Manager	Finance	Multinational	10
M2	Woman	Human Resource Manager	Automotive	Multinational	8
M3	Man	Production Manager	Automotive	Foreign Partnership	4
M4	Man	Human Resource Manager	Food and Beverage	Multinational	5
M5	Man	Marketing Manager	Food and Beverage	Local	3
M6	Man	Public Relations Manager	Government	Local	6
M7	Man	Branch Manager	Finance	Multinational	2
M8	Man	Sales Manager	Pharmaceutical	Multinational	18
M9	Woman	Finance Manager	Service	Foreign Partnership	12
M10	Man	Sales Manager	Telecommunication	Foreign Partnership	7
M11	Man	Production Manager	Automotive	Local	5

As seen in the Table 2, the managers in the sample worked as managers of different departments in different sectors such as automotive, finance, food and beverage, pharmaceutical, service, telecommunication and government, and the average working time in their companies is 7 years. Most of the companies in which managers work are institutionalized companies with multinational (M1, M2, M4, M7, M8) or foreign partnerships (M3, M9, M10). Two companies are local family firms in the process of institutionalization (M5, M11). One manager works for the municipality, which is a local government organization (M6).

The managers in the sample were asked “How would you evaluate the trainings given to employees in your company?” in the focus group interviews. When the answers were evaluated, it was observed that managers working in multinational and foreign partner companies indicated that the trainings given in their companies were effective. Managers in the finance sector (M1 and M7) stated that the trainings in their companies are effective and the training of the employees is planned and closely monitored by the head office. Although they work in different companies each manager also said that training plans are made by collecting training requests in their companies. In both companies the realization of the training plans are followed. Trainings are evaluated by the participants, the human resources department and the managers. M2, M3, M4, M8 and M10 who work as a manager in multinational/foreign partnership companies stated that the trainings of all employees, especially employees in the talent pool, are important because trainings are integrated with activities related to talent and career management in their companies. As in the companies where M1 and M7 work, training requests are collected, training plans are made and followed, and different parties evaluate the effectiveness of the trainings after the training in these companies. In addition, M8 stated that more importance is given to the training of the field sales team.

Unlike these managers, M9 explained that the trainings in his company are effective, but not every department or every employee can receive training as often as expected. An effective training process is carried out in the company. Training requests are collected, but planning is made by focusing more on sales and marketing departments. Also, managers working in local family companies (M5 and M11) emphasized that the trainings are partially effective, because they can be affected according to the priorities. Training requests are collected in this company and a training plan is created. However, in the preparation of the training plan, the expectations and priorities of the owners/executive management are more influential than the needs of the employees. It was stated that the training was evaluated by the employees participating in the training, and it could not be evaluated by employees, human resources and managers as expected. The manager working in the local municipality (M6) said that the trainings are not effective in their institutions. He stated that the trainings are often for show and they are only done because they should be done. It was emphasized that training requests are usually collected procedurally and then the training plan is prepared, while the training activity is evaluated only by the participants after the training with a satisfaction-oriented approach.

**Table 3:** Evaluation of Trainings Given to Employees in Companies

Participants	Collect the training requests	Plan the training	Implement the training	Evaluate the training		
				By participants	By HR department	By manager
M1	+	+	+	+	+	+
M2	+	+	+	+	+	+
M3	+	+	+	+	+	+
M4	+	+	+	+	+	+
M5	+	+	+	+	+/-	+/-
M6	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	-	-
M7	+	+	+	+	+	+
M8	+	+	+	+	+	+
M9	+	+	+	+	+	+
M10	+	+	+	+	+	+
M11	+	+	+	+	+/-	+/-

When managers were asked how they were evaluating the trainings given to them, it was seen that they gave similar answers to the employee-oriented question. The managers, who said that the training processes were carried out effectively in their companies (M1 M3, M3, M4, M7, M8, M9, M10), stated that their training needs were analyzed and they participated in the planned trainings accordingly. On the other hand, M5 and M11 emphasized that since their training needs are mostly determined by the owners/executive managers of the company, they evaluate their training needs together with these managers and the process is shaped in this direction. M6 stated that his training needs were applied procedurally, and the superficial training plan was also applied to him. He emphasized that even if he expressed his expectation, satisfaction, or complaint about the trainings, it had no effect on the training process.

In the focus group interview, a question consisting of two parts was asked to the managers as the third question, and it was tried to determine whether the trainings in the company reached their goals or not. It was observed that the answers given were parallel with the answers given to the first and second questions of the interview. Managers working in multinational or foreign partnership companies stated that the trainings in their companies were sufficient. Only M8 emphasized that providing more training to different departments other than sales and marketing according to the needs will increase the effectiveness. Differently, manager M5 and M11 emphasized that the trainings were partially sufficient, while M6 emphasized that the trainings were not sufficient.

Managers were asked to explain how they determined the achievement of the training goal, while answering whether the training given to employees in their companies reached the goal or not. In this question, managers in the finance (M1 and M7) and pharmaceutical sector (M8) stated that quantitative targets such as key performance indicators or the tasks or projects related to the training were followed in achieving the goals of the trainings. M2, M3, M4, M8 and M10 emphasized that career and talent management are important in their companies and the training process is an important tool for both career and talent management. Also, it is important for all employees to reach the quantitative targets given to them after the training. If employees are in the talent pool, besides the quantitative targets, behavioral development is also followed. For this reason, the probability of achieving the goal of training increases and the trainings that do not achieve the purpose are being reviewed in these companies.

Parallel to the answers given to the other questions, M5 and M8 stated that their companies training plans are shaped by owners or executive managers who decide who will attend which training and when. Both managers stated that this intervention in the determination of the training needs and the planning process caused the real needs to be ignored most of the time and therefore the training did not always achieve the purpose. On the other hand, M6 said that the achievement of purpose of the trainings in his institution is only associated with the realization of the planned trainings. Apart from that, there is no evaluation of the impact of trainings on goals or behavioral development and there is no such evaluation concern.

The last question asked to the managers in the focus group interview is about the unexpected results of the trainings and is the most critical question prepared for the purpose of the research. In general, the expected results from trainings are emphasized in the literature and also organizations want to achieve economic or psychosocial results as a result of training. After the training, economic benefits such as increasing productivity and quality, decreasing costs, errors and wastage, improving business processes, reducing occupational accidents and saving working time are occurred. It is also known that as a result of the trainings in companies, there are improvements in the behavior of employees whose business knowledge and skills have gained, their morale, self-confidence and motivation increase, their cooperation and solidarity behaviors improve, and their creativity and job satisfaction are increased (Noe, 1999: 9; Salas et. al., 2012: 77). But in practice, at the end of the training process, unexpected results may be encountered, other than these expected results. It is seen that these unexpected results have recently been discussed in the literature from different perspectives (Leymann, 1989; Easterby-Smith, 1997; Huysman, 1999; Schein, 1999; Örténblad, 2002).

In line with the literature and purpose of the study, it was observed that managers gave similar answers according to the capital structures and sectors of their enterprises to the most critical question in the focus group interview to determining the unexpected results encountered in the training process. When the answers given in the interview are categorized and tabulated according to the dimensions of organizational learning barriers in the literature (Kamařak and Yücelen, 2009), it has been determined that all companies in the sample encountered interpersonal learning barriers as unexpected result in the process. It has been revealed that all multinational companies (1, 2, 4, 7, 8, and 9) in the study are encountered personal learning barrier, one of the interpersonal learning barriers in the learning process. It has also been determined that there are personal learning barriers in the companies where managers M3, M5, M6, M10 and M11 are working. It has been observed that there is one more interpersonal barrier of this dimension in the company where M3 works among all the processes. Unexpected results can be encountered in the organizational learning process due to the insecurity between employees in M3's company.

It has been determined that the second most common organizational learning barrier in the sample is the cultural dimension of organizational learning barriers which does not support organizational learning. It can be said that the corporate culture creates a learning barriers in both multinational (2, 4, 8), foreign partnership (3, 9, 10), local (5, 11) and government (6) companies in the sample.

The third organizational learning barriers that encountered unexpected results in the organizational learning process is structural. While this barrier stems from the behavior of owners/managers in local businesses in the form of family business (5, 11), it has been associated unspecified, unclear or hidden corporate objectives in multinational (8) and foreign partnership companies (3, 10). In this dimension, it has been observed that unexpected results have encountered due to lingering events and corporate inertia only in the government (6).

According to the answers given, no relational dimension of organizational learning barrier has been identified any of the companies in the sample. The responses received from the managers and the dimensions associated with these responses are shown in the table below for a clearer understanding.

**Table 4: Unexpected Results in Training Process in Companies**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Unexpected Results in Training Process</b>	<b>Dimensions of Organizational Learning Barriers</b>
M1	<i>“Setting time-based goals as a result of training and the pressure created by these goals negatively affect the motivation and performance of the employees. For example, sales are decreasing instead of increasing, or the service period is getting longer rather than shorter.”</i>	<b>Interpersonal</b> - Personal learning barriers
M2	<i>“Employees are not always eager to attend the trainings organized for them. Often times, employees think that they have too much workload and that their job performance will be negatively affected as a result of participating in training instead of working.”</i>	<b>Interpersonal</b> - Personal learning barriers <b>Cultural</b> - Corporate culture which does not support organizational learning
M3	<i>“There is a perception that the trainings are not beneficial as a result of the continuous training policy in the company and the employees in the talent pool who could not reach their target career steps after many trainings, they attended... For this reason, many employees do not attend training with a focus on learning...”</i>	<b>Interpersonal</b> - Personal learning barriers <b>Interpersonal</b> - Insecurity between employees <b>Structural</b> - Unspecified, unclear, or hidden corporate objectives
M4	<i>“During the training process, a training plan is particularly difficult for us... Especially the fact that the training is either on weekdays/weekends or working hours/out of work causes controversy... We find it difficult to focus on the purpose of training, especially from trying to solve overtime-oriented problems in the training of unionized employees.”</i>	<b>Interpersonal</b> - Personal learning barriers <b>Cultural</b> - Corporate culture which does not support organizational learning
M5	<i>“Employees who recently attended training often complain that they have to work overtime because their work is disrupted by training. On the other hand, they complain when training is not planned for them. We are faced with serious dilemmas...”</i> <i>“In addition, owners/executive managers’ intervention in the training plan and deciding who needs training raises problems such as the inability of some employees and units to be included in the training plan.”</i>	<b>Interpersonal</b> - Personal learning barriers <b>Cultural</b> - Corporate culture which does not support organizational learning <b>Structural</b> - Problems arising from the behavior of managers
M6	<i>“The participants of the training focus more on issues such as the place of the training and the compliments in the training, instead of questioning why they attended the training and what kind of knowledge and skills they will gain from... For example, in post-training surveys, we get feedback about the training environment rather than the content of the training... It would not be wrong to say that a small number of employees expect to gain knowledge and skills from the training provided...”</i> <i>“...In addition, most of the employees think that the new knowledge or skills learned at the end of the trainings need to change the old working order. They demand training with the approach of not bringing new pieces to the old village...”</i>	<b>Interpersonal</b> - Personal learning barriers <b>Interpersonal</b> - Fear as a result of the uncertainty that may be caused by the change <b>Cultural</b> - Corporate culture which does not support organizational learning <b>Structural</b> - Lingering events and corporate inertia

M7	<i>“Although the training given to employees, especially those who are just starting out, aims to get them used to work and to facilitate adaptation in the process, it also often creates confusion and stress in employees.”</i>	<b>Interpersonal</b> - Personal learning barriers
M8	<i>“After the trainings given to employees who have been in the sales team for a long time, we receive complaints that they received training similar to these trainings... In such cases, instead of what can be learned from training, it is questioned whether the training includes information again...”</i>	<b>Interpersonal</b> - Personal learning barriers <b>Cultural</b> - Corporate culture which does not support organizational learning <b>Structural</b> - Unspecified, unclear, or hidden corporate objectives
M9	<i>“Especially during busy times, employees do not want to participate in training or only want to participate in a certain part of the training, although they need it.”</i>	<b>Interpersonal</b> - Personal learning barriers <b>Cultural</b> - Corporate culture which does not support organizational learning
M10	<i>“Continuous learning of employees unfortunately does not provide much learning...Many of their employees do not understand why they go to training or cannot concentrate on training adequately due to workload. This situation negatively affects the achievement of the targets expected from the employee after the training.”</i>	<b>Interpersonal</b> - Personal learning barriers <b>Cultural</b> - Corporate culture which does not support organizational learning <b>Structural</b> - Unspecified, unclear or hidden corporate objectives
M11	<i>“Training can be seen by company owners as extra expense or unnecessary waste of time. According to the decision of the owners/executive management, it is believed that some units need more training, while some units do not need training at all. In this case, conflict arises between employees who receive and do not receive training. As the training expectations of the employees are not met, there are problems with motivation, productivity and performance in company.”</i>	<b>Interpersonal</b> - Personal learning barriers <b>Cultural</b> - Corporate culture which does not support organizational learning <b>Structural</b> - Problems arising from the behavior of managers

## 6. CONCLUSION

Theories on organizational learning consider learning as a tool that serves the goals and interests of the organization and as a method that shall be applied in organizations. In this respect, organizational learning process is shaped based on the employees of the organization and advances the employees. Learning behaviors of the employees change in line with development and career opportunities rather than their current positions and responsibilities. When both organizational and individual dimensions of the organizational learning are considered, it is seen that contrary to what is expected, employees shall not support learning activities that contribute to the goals of the organization, but also do not contribute to their own goals. In this case, unexpected tensions may arise as a result of the fact that the goals of the employees and the organization are not the same. According to Jaffee (2001), similar tension exists in theories and practices of management. In fact, developments in management theories arise from such organizational problems and tensions. It is emphasized that the main tension in the concept of organizational learning is caused by the conflict between the organization itself and learning. According to this perspective, organization and learning are actually opposite processes. While learning increases sophistication and diversity, organization is about forgetting and reducing diversity. Thus, Salaman (2001: 247) considers “Organizational Learning” as an expression that contains two contradictory words, and states that it is already full of contradictions. Moreover, it is difficult to realize organizational learning, and many questions remain unanswered as the proposals are abstract (Garvin, 1993: 54).

Schein (1999: 163) starts his work, where he examines the relationship between organizational culture, empowerment of personnel and organizational learning, by searching for answers to the questions that clarifies the current contradictions. He states that it is not clear what “Organizational”

and “Learning” mean and questions the meaning of the individual learning within the organizational structure. He investigates whether organizational learning is related to the organizational roles of individuals, and whether only units or the whole organization learns. He questions whether adaptation to the environment is a type of learning, whether learning is important to deal with new and unexpected events or increases creative capacity. There are different studies in the organizational learning literature that assess the concept of learning from a critical perspective and seek answers to similar questions. Whether the learners in the organizational learning process are individuals or organizations in general (Huysman, 1999: 61), whether the employees participating and taking responsibility in this process want to learn when they do not get a reward (Flood, 1998: 261), whether all employees participate in the organizational learning process with the same level of desire (Örtenblad, 2002: 94-95, Field, 2018: 252) and whether all employees within the organization shall be happy with the flexible organizational structure and elements (Victor and Stephens, 1994: 471) are also amongst the questions asked.

In this study, which was shaped according to the literature, it was tried to determine the reflections of unexpected results of organizational learning in organizations. With the research shaped in the focus of the training process in organizations, it was found out which learning barriers encountered unexpected results. It has been observed that the organizational learning barrier, which causes unexpected results in all companies in the sample regardless of its structure, is caused by the interpersonal dimension. It has been determined that cultural barriers also cause unexpected results in the organizational learning process in companies that have not yet achieved full professionalization or have problems in their training processes, especially family businesses that are in the process of institutionalization. It can be said that structural learning barriers occurred in fewer companies compared to other dimensions.

The results of this study, which was conducted with a limited sample, cannot be generalized. However, when the results obtained in the direction of the sample are evaluated, paying attention to work intensity and work-life balance, especially when planning training according to the needs, and correctly associating the training with individual and organizational career goals can also prevent unexpected results in the process. In addition, an organizational learning process that is shaped not procedurally, but according to business objectives and strategies and integrated into the organizational culture can prevent the obstacles arising from organizational culture. Ensuring that senior management understands the contribution of the development of professional employees in family businesses to the success of the company and providing training to all employees according to their needs may also prevent unexpected structural barriers.

The unexpected results of organizational learning and the consequent paradoxes shall not be evaluated as a failure to achieve the goal. It shall not be forgotten that the evaluation of unexpected results and the arising criticisms bring forth changes. When unexpected results and critical analyses in the organizational learning literature were examined, it was observed that the criticisms are capable of paving the way for a new organizational learning theory rather than being destructive (Prange, 1999: 25). Organizational learning logic includes not only knowledge, but also critical thinking and cooperative learning skills (Cranton, 1996: 25). The development of the concept of organizational learning, which contains critical thinking in its basic logic, shall also be possible through changes made as a result of criticisms and different perspectives. Therefore, further studies examining organizational learning from different perspectives, not only for organizational purposes, but also by considering the expectations of the employees, unexpected results, and criticisms of the learning, shall contribute to the development of organizational learning theory.

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