

'Quality' Service to Society? Continuing Education and Training Centers in Universities: Insider Views

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Abstract


The zeitgeist of Continuing Education and Training viz. CET organizations globally is in tandem with the fast-shifting dynamics as well as altering mindsets pertaining to lifelong learning. Particularly for developing countries like Türkiye, a country which is highly heterogenous vis-à-vis its demographic structure, these changes are worthy of dwelling on. The present qualitative study intends to delve into the current practices in the CET organizations in question via seeking first-hand-information of leaders (heads / principals / coordinators / administrators) as well as those attending the said organizations with a view to shedding light to the practicum in relation to reaching out communities outside the immediate shareholders. Whilst doing so it is attempted to cast light on the challenges of novel sort too. The main research questions: 1) What leadership styles come to the forefront in CET organizations to better serve the society? 2) What are the perceived challenges and how are these addressed? 3) How is the future of CET organizations respecting catering to community needs in a quality fashion? The study is conducted with 10 leaders alongside 6 attendees of CET organizations in various regions of Türkiye, resorting to purposeful sampling and by carrying out semi-structured interviews on a one-to-one basis. The findings indicate the leaders along with the attendees of CETs as the participants of this study hold views that do not bear a lot of resemblance yet there exist some commonalities in this regard.


Keywords: Continuing education and training, educational leadership, higher education.

Topluma 'Kaliteli' Hizmet mi? Üniversitelerdeki Sürekli Eğitim ve Öğretim Merkezleri: İçeriden Görüşler

Öz

Sürekli Eğitim ve Öğretimin, yani SEÖ organizasyonlarının dünya çapındaki zeitgeist'i, hızla değişen dinamiklerin yanı sıra yaşam boyu öğrenmeye ilişkin değişen zihniyetlerle de uyum içindedir. Özellikle Türkiye gibi gelişmekte olan ve demografik yapısı bakımından oldukça heterojen bir ülke için bu değişimler üzerinde durulmaya değerdir. Bu nitel çalışma, yakın paydaşlar dışındaki topluluklara ulaşma konusundaki uygulamalara ışık tutmak

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amacıyla, söz konusu SEÖ kuruluşlarındaki mevcut uygulamaları liderlerin (başkanlar / müdürler / koordinatörler / yöneticiler) yanı sıra söz konusu kuruluşlara katılanların birinci elden bilgilerine başvurarak araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bunu yaparken yeni türden zorluklara da ışık tutulmaya çalışılmıştır. Ana araştırma soruları: 1) SEÖ kuruluşlarında topluma daha iyi hizmet verebilmek için hangi liderlik tarzları ön plana çıkmaktadır? 2) Algılanan zorluklar nelerdir ve bunlar nasıl ele alınmaktadır? 3) SEÖ kuruluşlarının geleceği, toplumun ihtiyaçlarını kaliteli bir şekilde karşılamaya nasıl saygı duyuyor? Çalışma, Türkiye'nin çeşitli bölgelerindeki SEÖ kuruluşlarının 10 liderinin yanı sıra 6 katılımcısıyla, amaçlı örnekleme yöntemine başvurarak ve birebir yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler gerçekleştirilerek yürütülmüştür. Bulgular, liderlerin ve bu çalışmanın katılımcıları olan SEÖ'lerin katılımcılarının çok fazla benzerlik göstermeyen görüşlere sahip olduğunu, ancak bu konuda bazı ortak noktalar bulunduğunu göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Eğitim liderliği, sürekli eğitim ve öğretim, yükseköğretim.

Introduction

When one contemplates at the countries that have advanced in several areas of development, the importance of education is inescapably emphasized (Ayyıldız & Yılmaz, 2021; Beycioğlu & Konan, 2008). For such development to be continuous, for individuals to progress at all ages, and for the whole society to improve, education and training must be provided in a quality manner throughout life. At this very point, lifelong learning activities manifest themselves as the key pillars of the structure (Bilsay Kul, 2012; Van Der Veen, 2006). It is known that lifelong learning activities vary within the scope of needs and available opportunities, and alternative services are produced accordingly. One of these services available is through continuous education and training centers established within higher education institutions. These centers serve within the scope of lifelong learning and help produce related policies (Bowl, 2010). Offering opportunities pertaining to social contribution, responding to social changes, meeting the needs and expectations of society, and ensuring the continuity of education constitute the basic policies of these centers. Today, continuing education and training centers are becoming more popular amongst the members of the society who are from different walks of life (Candır Şimşek, 2022).

Although continuing education and training centers appear to own similar regulations and operating processes at first sight, they change within the course of time and diversify in terms of content and structure in line with the aims and possibilities of the universities they are located in over time. Due to this, there are courses and training possessing variety in their content. In addition, as the goals and objectives of the centers alter, the stakeholders they address also change.

Without doubt, continuing education and training centers ensure services not only for individuals but also for communities. Among the service-receiving groups, there can be state institutions, private enterprises, families, and non-governmental organizations (Gülşen, 2012). With the interest in continuing education and training centers and the prevalence that occurs in this respect, issues emerge as well. Some of these problems are the inability to act in harmony within centers and together with

other centers, the barriers specific legal regulations in the establishment and operation procedures cause to happen and adopting not-that-appropriate ways to manage and operate, which leads to problems with modus operandi. Addedly, these centers were entitled different and rather non-standard names, such as Lifelong Education Centers, Continuing Education Centers, and Continuing Education Research and Application Centers (Candır Şimşek, 2022), which might result in confusion on the part of the target audience. Apart from these differences, the validity of the documents submitted by the target centers and the approval of these documents by competent institutions form problem situations (Biçer & Kurtulmuş Kiroğlu, 2011). In our country, a fair number of activities have been implemented within the scope of the Bologna process to ensure the internationalization and transformation of higher education under the leadership of the Council of Higher Education (CoHE). With the Bologna process, the services offered within the premises and boundaries of higher education organizations started to be handled in light of specified standards and competencies. For this reason, the Council of Turkish Universities Continuing Education Centers (TÜSEM) was opened in 2010 to warrant the desired coordination between continuing education and training centers and to carry out standard-based practices. A good number of continuing education and training centers then have become members of this council. Assuring standard-based practices in continuing education and training centers under the leadership of TÜSEM has also raised more awareness of the concepts of quality, accreditation and quality assurance system (Biçer & Kurtulmuş Kiroğlu, 2011).

Recently, innovations that are pertinent to quality assurance systems and accreditation have taken place, and our country has kept up with new implementations. Turkish Higher Education Quality Council (THEQC) was established in 2015 to coordinate any related implementations, and coordination was regulated by this board. The mission of THEQC is to make sure the continuous development of higher education institutions and to strengthen the quality assurance system in higher education. There are sub-organizations authorized by THEQC to conduct these transactions. These organizations monitor the services offered by universities from many perspectives and oversee certification processes to check their liability with the set standards, with the indicators and with the evidence declared through the international frameworks. In this way, all quality and accreditation processes in our country are made parallel to the global standards and international competencies. Since continuing education and training centers also serve within universities, they are studied with the help of a set of evaluation criteria determined by THEQC and certification processes are completed in accordance with these criteria. In the examinations by THEQC, it is essential to check the activities of continuing education and training centers regarding “impartiality, transparency, ethical behavior, independence, openness to cooperation, guidance, innovation, respect for diversity” (THEQC, 2022). Continuing education and training centers need to be in tandem with the rapidly changing dynamics and mindsets as regards lifelong learning. It is imperative to focus on these changes, especially for developing

countries like Türkiye, which are quite heterogeneous in regard to their demographic structures. Thence, analyzing the current situation of continuing education and training centers in higher education institutions in Türkiye employing the perspective of quality service to society will be both a meaningful and purposeful move. In this study, continuing education and training centers were explored considering two different variables. First off, an inspection was made in respect to the leaders of these centers. The existing leadership of the managers, their approaches to leadership practices, their concerns about institutional and political issues aside from quality assurance systems and practices, and their views on the future of continuing education and training centers were investigated. Managers working in continuing education and training centers play a chief role as highly good financial and physical opportunities, detailed and powerful program content are not enough on their own. That is, a leader should facilitate all the potential (Ayyıldız & Yılmaz, 2022). In the second stage, the opinions of the stakeholders who received service from the continuing education and training centers were inquired into. The expectations of these stakeholders, the quality of the services provided, and the sufficiency of the centers thinking about quality and quantity were enquired. Controlling the services provided and receiving feedback are of vital importance both for the development of centers and for that of quality assurance systems. Further, when the literature is thoroughly gone through, it is not possible to find out adequate number of studies on continuing education and training centers, through which the views of both leaders and stakeholders are taken. Within the scope of the research, it is aimed to conduct interviews with the leaders (directors/coordinators/managers) working in the continuing education and training centers and the stakeholders who receive service from these centers so as to obtain first-hand information about the practices of the continuing education and training centers. Through the research process, answers were sought to the following sub-problems:

1. What leadership styles are deployed by the leaders of continuing education and training centers?
2. What challenges are perceived by these leaders, and how are they being addressed?
3. What thoughts do leaders have about the future of continuing education and training centers?
4. How are the leaders' views on the quality assurance systems of continuing education and training centers?
5. How are the outlooks of the stakeholders who receive service from the continuing education and training centers within the scope of the research?

Method

The study endeavors to determine the opinions of the leaders working in the continuing education and training centers and those of the stakeholders who receive service from these centers. The research process was constructed by embracing routes

of qualitative research and those of the relevant approaches. Thusly, the Embedded Theory design, one of the qualitative research methods, was resorted to. This design, also known as grounded theory, seeks to make a detailed checking of qualitative application data to create themes, categories and codes to come up with a theory at the end. The concept of theory building here refers to the interpretation and meaning of research results (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018).

Research Group

The participants of the research consist of the leaders (chairmen / directors / coordinators / managers) working in the continuing education and training centers in Türkiye and the stakeholders who receive service from these centers. The purposive sampling method was used in the research. With purposive sampling, sampling was done adhering to the criteria that were the most suitable for the research (Canbazoğlu Bilici, 2019). For this purpose, 10 leaders of continuing education and training centers in several regions of Türkiye and 6 stakeholders who receive service from these centers were invited to the research. While determining the leaders, it was affirmed whether they were working in distinctive continuing education centers, had at least one year of managerial experience, and were willing and ready to participate in the discussions about education and educational leadership. 7 male and 3 female leaders participated in the research. When deciding on the stakeholders as attendees and participants of this study, attention was paid to the fact that if these individuals received manifold courses and training. The stakeholders consist of 3 male and 3 female participants.

Data Collection Tools

A semi-structured interview technique was utilized. In this context, 5 open-ended interview questions were prepared separately for both leaders and stakeholders. The interview questions were submitted to expert opinion for pre-application control, and a preliminary pilot study was conducted with 2 participants from each of the groups. As a result of the feedback obtained, the interview questions were restructured and made ready for the final implementation.

Data Collection

During the research process, the application data were collected through the interviews realized in online environments. The applications were executed over a time period of 2 months. Prior to the interviews, informed consent forms were presented to the participants and their voluntary participation was asserted. The interviews took between 10-15 minutes on average. Audio recordings were taken during the interview process and the recordings were then transcribed.

Data Analysis

The data obtained were first transcribed. Afterward coding and sorting were arranged by two of the researchers of the study. Before the coding and debugging process, a coding guide was created and a sample coding was organized in order to corroborate a high-quality coding (Özkan, 2019; Saldana, 2010). After determining the themes, categories, and codes, these were presented descriptively by making frequency tables and exploiting direct quotations. To present the participants' opinions, the participants were named as P1, P2, P3 and alike for anonymity purposes satisfying ethical conventions.

Rigor and Trustworthiness

Within the scope of the research, a number of efforts were made toward trustworthiness and rigor. Direct quotations are alluded to from time to time within the scope of credibility and transferability. For the content analysis after the interview, a coding guide was prepared, and sample coding was done. Further to these, expert opinion was sought at all stages, necessary feedback was received, and arrangements were made on this basis. To attest descriptive and interpretive validity, the data in the research process were announced in an unbiased and objective way. At the point of providing theoretical/internal validity, due care has been taken by the researchers to confirm that the concepts and categories surfaced overlap with the findings arrived at and that the applications exercised support each other (Batdı, 2019; Flick, 2009; Patton, 2014).

Findings

The findings are demonstrated through each sub-problem situation. The first problem situation of the research is “*What leadership styles are deployed by the leaders of continuing education and training centers?*” The leaders' answers to this question by elaborating on the management styles and the corresponding leadership types and frequency values are given in Table 1.

Table 1.
Leadership Types and Frequency Values

Leadership Behaviors	Leadership Type	(f)
P1: I share my power with my colleagues and want them to get more autonomous.	Democratic (Participant) Leader	5
P4: I provide delegation of authority from time to time.		
P7: I want my assistants to gain experience.		
P9: I trust laws and regulations in the management process.		
P10: I distribute the tasks insuring an equal distribution.	Bureaucratic Leader	3
P3: I use my duties and authorities within the framework of regulations.		
P5: Civil servant law and legal practices predominate for me in the management processes.		
P6: I give importance to hierarchical powers in management.	Humanistic (Relation-Oriented) Leader	1
P2: I always try to protect my colleagues during the management process. I also apply the reward-punishment system at times.		

P8: We work as a team. Hence, the responsibility belongs to all of us. That's why I think everyone is a leader.	Distributor Leader	1
Total		10

Through Table 1 it is clear that the leaders are predominantly democratic (participatory) leaders ($f = 5$), there are fewer leaders with bureaucratic leadership features ($f=3$), and there is only one leader with relationship-oriented and one with distributive leadership ($f = 1$) has been determined. The second problem situation of the research is “*What challenges are perceived by these leaders, and how are they being addressed?*”. Table 2 contains themes, categories, codes, and frequency values for these perceived difficulties.

Table 2.
Perceived Difficulties and Frequency Values

Theme	Category	Code	(f)
Political (Policy) and Legal Challenges	Implementation	* Applications are subject to a strict training process (3)	5
		* Hierarchically spread over a long period (1)	
		* Inadequate technical means (1)	
	Decision Making	* Lack of a fast and flexible decision-making system (2)	3
		* The legal processes require hard and intense effort (1)	
	Authorization	* Delegation of authority is very detailed and complex (1) * Limited power/lack of empowerment (1)	2
Budget (Structural) Challenges	Insufficient Budget	* Not sufficient budget allocated for education types (3)	6
		* Not considering the training content as the budget is being prepared (3)	
	Non-Equal Distribution	* Failure to distribute the budget equally and fairly to the centers (2)	2
	Low Income	* Centers are with relatively lower income (1) * Education types and education incomes do not overlap (1)	2
Institutional (Management) Challenges	Insufficient Staff	* Lack of qualified personnel in service delivery (4)	6
		* Personnel performing more than one task (2)	
	Lack of Experience	* Not having enough experience (1)	2
* Finding personnel in the development stage (1)			
	Superior- Subordinate Balance	* Great differences between superior and subordinate features in the management process (1) * Intense effort by subordinates to persuade superiors (1)	2
Social Challenges	Lack of Promotion	* Inadequate publicity and information on continuing education (4)	6
		* Lack of detailed information about the training contents (2)	
	Lack of Attached Importance	* Low interest in centers (2) * Believing in the power of certificates and trainings is at a low level (1) * Limited service area of continuing education centers (1)	4

Table 2 indicates the problems perceived by the leaders that are grouped under 4 different themes and 11 categories. The perceived challenges of leaders were identified as political (policy) and legal challenges, budget (structural) challenges, institutional (management) challenges, and societal challenges. The third problem situation of the research is “*What thoughts do leaders have about the future of*

continuing education and training centers?” The direct quotations from the interviews are found below.

Leaders stated that continuing education and training centers would be more powerful, if necessary, investments were made. *“P1: It has become relatively easy to access information nowadays. This expands the boundaries of education and training. P5: In the future, individuals will need more innovations and, accordingly, many new applications. If investments are made in continuous education and training centers, service areas can be expanded, and more beneficial practices can become possible.”*

Leaders emphasize the need to catch up with the international bodies and the role of coordination in continuing education centers apace with investments. This highlights the necessity of quality assurance systems and international standardization practices at the same time differentiating the function of CETs and informal/non-formal learning activities. *“P4: The jurisdictions and validity practices of the certificates issued by the continuing education and training centers should be enhanced. Trainings and education given should be different from just engaging in personal development and completing a program. P3: If individuals know that the education they have received has international standards, they will show more interest.”*

The leaders think continuing education and training centers may be equivalent to formal education offered at universities. *“P7: Continuing education centers nowadays have specific programs and these do not point to a very long-time frame. If infrastructures and staff are of good standard, a training equivalent to formal education programs can be offered in the future.”* These individuals hold the belief that continuing education centers will be an indispensable part of universities in near future. *“P6: Now these centers are with a specific content and thence with specific audience. I think these centers will have innovative practices and meet international competencies in the future. P2: Continuing education centers will need to serve through a permanent education environment instead of an alternative learning environment. P8: Continuing education and training centers can open up postgraduate services in company with formal education with the opportunities they will have in the future.”*

The leaders are of the opinion that that the recognition of the centers' being not only at the national level but also at the international level will be higher in the future. *“P10: Continuing education centers can serve at an international level if they boost their international relations and connections. P9: If quality assurance systems and international program accreditations are provided, the documents given by the continuing education centers will be of international quality.”*

It seems that the leaders have positive thoughts about the future of continuing education and training centers and that these centers can play a crucial role in many stages of higher education in the future. The fourth problem situation of the research

is “How are the leaders' views on the quality assurance systems of continuing education and training centers?” Table 3 documents leaders' ideas about continuing education centers and quality assurance systems.

Table 3.
Leaders' Views on Quality Assurance Systems

Theme	Category	Code	(f)
Positive Opinions	Certification	* Qualification of issued certificates (3)	6
		* Valid internationally (2)	
	* Providing specialization authorizations (1)		
Recognition	* International recognition (1)	2	
	* Institutional promotion and service breadth (1)		
Standardization	* Standard practices across the country (1)	2	
	* Quality assurance and clarity of qualifications (1)		
Negative Opinions	Implementation Difficulty	* Lack of coordination between and among centers (3)	5
		* Failure to provide the same quality of service in all centers (2)	
	Sustainability	* Budget allocation, personnel competency, and failure to implement sustainable practices (3)	3
		* Unstable country policies (1)	
Administrative Stability	* Managers are not competent enough (1)	2	

Table 3 displays that the leaders have positive and negative point of views on quality assurance systems, and these are classified under 2 themes and 6 categories. The fifth and the last problem situation of the research is “How are the outlooks of the stakeholders who receive service from the continuing education and training centers within the scope of the research?” Table 4 below contains stakeholder views on continuing education and training centers.

Table 4.
Stakeholder Views on Continuing Education and Training Centers

Factor	Sub-Factor	(f)
Preference Status	Quality of education	3
	Qualified faculty staff	2
	Reputation of the university	1
Education Status	Interruption of education	2
	Self-improvement	2
	Creation of alternative business areas	2
Competence Status	Have international connections	2
	Have national level implementations	2
	Adequate technical infrastructure	1
	Ordinary and insufficient level of applications	1
Quality Assurance Status	Finding accredited programs	3
	Qualification of certification	1
	Having quality assurance systems	1
	Adequacy of quality and accreditation policies	1
Management Status	Subordinate to university administration	2
	Limited powers	2
	Insufficient budget and service areas	1
	Not having an autonomous government	1
Leadership Status	Strict compliance with the law by managers	3

Lack of experience of managers	1
Managers are not field experts	1
Ineffective use of leadership qualities	1

Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations

In this research, through which continuous education and training centers are perused apropos of leader and stakeholder views, findings were attained that may shed light to the field, that is to say, to prospective studies and to policy making. When the leadership types of leaders working in continuing education and training centers are taken into account, it is seen that democratic (participatory) leadership and bureaucratic leadership are preferred intensely. It is observed that humanist (Relationship Oriented) leadership and distributed leadership are less preferred. These show that the leaders share the authorities they have, and laws are mainly obeyed in the management process, and the duties are distributed equally in the task process (Ayyıldız & Yılmaz, 2023; Yılmaz, 2021). As a matter of fact, there are a bunch of studies in the relevant line of literature (e.g., Aktaş & Özgenel, 2020; Karaca, 2017) underpinning that people who are leaders and who work in institutions such as universities oftentimes turn to democratic and bureaucratic leadership. Thence, it is witnessed that the literature supports our findings.

In a study conducted by Yıldırım and Akçay (2017), four main themes and 11 categories were identified regarding the challenges faced by leaders. These challenges were categorized as political (policy) and legal challenges, budget (structural) challenges, institutional (management) challenges, and societal challenges. The study revealed that leaders in continuing education centers encounter difficulties related to their experience with legal regulations, budget utilization, and the availability of physical facilities. It is particularly crucial to comprehend and address these challenges for the effective management and successful operation of continuing education centers. Challenges such as legal regulations, budget management, and the accessibility of physical facilities can impede leaders from effectively managing these educational institutions. Therefore, developing solution-oriented approaches in these areas is of paramount importance.

When the views of the leaders on the future of the continuing education and training centers are considered, it is discovered that the continuing education and training centers are believed to play an essential role in the future, necessary investments should be made in these centers, and studies should be designated to better linger on the improvement of the quality assurance systems. Armstrong (2013) underpinned the necessity of having internationally competent quality assurance systems in continuing education centers and italicized that these systems should be sustainable.

When the leaders' views on the quality assurance systems are reviewed, it is unveiled that the thoughts are piled up into 6 categories under positive and negative themes. Positive opinions point to certification, recognition, and standardization,

whereas negative opinions to implementation, sustainability and administrative stability.

When the views of the stakeholders who receive service from the continuing education and training centers are probed, 6 factors seem to have materialized. These factors were being preferred, training status, competence status, quality assurance status, management status and leadership status. It has been concluded that the stakeholder views are primarily positive, but they have negative opinions with reference to management and leadership situations. Candir Şimşek (2022) similarly factored continuing education centers through the rationale behind their preference, the reason behind receiving education, their role and contributions, level of awareness of shareholders, strengths and areas open to development.

The following suggestions can be made bearing in mind the findings:

1. Continuing education and training centers should be renewed on the topic of quality assurance systems, and the competencies to be gained should be certified internationally.
2. Actions that are of informative nature can be performed for the promotion of continuing education and training centers to pave the way for welcoming more individuals as attendees.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors herein report that they have no conflict of interest. The present study was carried out adhering to ethical and scientific conduct. All the referencing and in-text citations in the manuscript are in line with the related academic conventions.

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Kalkınma ve gelişme konusunda ilerlemiş olan ülkeler incelendiğinde, eğitimin bu süreçteki önemi sıklıkla vurgulanmaktadır (Beycioğlu & Konan, 2008). Kalkınma ve gelişmenin sürekli olabilmesi, bireylerin her yaşta eğitim alabilmesi ve toplumun kendi kendini geliştirebilmesi için eğitim ve öğretimin sürekli ve hayat boyu sağlanması gerekmektedir. Bu noktada hayat boyu öğrenme faaliyetleri sürece dahil olmaktadır (Bilsay Kul, 2012; Van Der Veen, 2006). Hayat boyu öğrenme faaliyetleri, ihtiyaçlar ve mevcut imkanlar dahilinde çeşitlilik göstermekte ve alternatif hizmetler üretilmektedir. Bu hizmetlerden bir tanesi de yükseköğretim kurumları bünyesinde kurulan sürekli eğitim ve öğretim merkezleridir. Bu merkezler hayat boyu öğrenme kapsamında hizmet vermekte ve buna bağlı politikalar üretmektedir (Bowl, 2010). Toplumsal katkı sunmak, toplumsal değişimlere cevap vermek, toplumun ihtiyaç ve beklentilerini karşılamak ve eğitimin sürekli olmasını sağlamak bu merkezlerin temel politikalarını oluşturmaktadır. Günümüzde, sürekli eğitim ve öğretim merkezleri gün geçtikçe daha çok tercih edilen bir konuma gelmektedir (Candır Şimşek, 2022).

Sürekli eğitim ve öğretim merkezleri ilk başlarda benzer yönetmeliklere ve işleyiş süreçlerine sahip olmakla birlikte zamanla üniversitelerin amaçları ve imkanları doğrultusunda hem içerik olarak hem de yapısal olarak değişiklik ve çeşitlilik göstermeye başlamıştır. Bu neden birçok farklı içeriğe sahip olan kurs ve eğitimler bulunmaktadır. Merkezlerin hedef ve amaçları değiştikçe hizmet sunduğu paydaşlar da değişim göstermektedir. Sürekli eğitim ve öğretim merkezleri yalnızca bireyler için değil toplumlar içinde hizmet sunmaktadır. Hizmet alan gruplar arasında devlet kurumları, özel girişimler, aileler ve sivil toplum kuruluşları bulunabilmektedir (Gülşen, 2012). Sürekli eğitim ve öğretim merkezleri hayat boyu öğrenmeye ilişkin değişen zihniyetlerin yanı sıra hızla değişen dinamiklerle kaçınılmaz olarak uyum içindedir. Özellikle Türkiye gibi demografik yapısı itibarıyla oldukça heterojen ve gelişmekte olan ülkeler için söz konusu değişimler üzerinde durulması çok önemlidir. O halde Türkiye'deki yükseköğretim kurumlarında bulunan sürekli eğitim ve öğretim merkezlerinin mevcut durumunun topluma kaliteli hizmet merceğinden irdelenmesi hem anlamlı hem de amaçlı bir hareket olacaktır. Bu çalışmada sürekli eğitim ve öğretim merkezleri iki farklı değişken dikkate alınarak incelenmiştir. İlk olarak bu merkezlerde görev yapan yöneticiler açısından inceleme yapılmıştır. Yöneticilerin mevcut liderlik durumları, liderlik uygulamalarına yaklaşımları, kurumsal ve politik konulardaki kaygıları, kalite güvence sistemleri ve uygulamaları, sürekli eğitim ve öğretim merkezlerinin geleceği konularında görüşleri incelenmiştir. Sürekli eğitim ve öğretim merkezlerinde görev yapan yöneticiler kilit rol oynamaktadır. Çünkü maddi ve fiziki imkanların iyi olması, program içeriklerinin detaylı ve güçlü olması tek başına yeterli olmamaktadır. Araştırma kapsamında sürekli eğitim ve öğretim merkezlerinde görev yapan liderler (başkanlar / müdürler / koordinatörler / yöneticiler) ve bu merkezlerden hizmet alan paydaşlar ile görüşmeler yapılması ve sürekli eğitim ve öğretim merkezlerinin uygulamaları hakkında ilk elden bilgilerin alınması amaçlanmıştır. Araştırma sürecinde şu alt problemlere yanıt aranmıştır:

1. Sürekli eğitim ve öğretim merkezlerinde görev yapan liderler ne tür liderlik tarzlarını benimsemiştir?
2. Liderler tarafından algılanan zorluklar nelerdir ve bunlar nasıl ele alınmaktadır?
3. Liderler, sürekli eğitim ve öğretim merkezlerinin geleceği konusunda ne tür düşüncelere sahiptir?
4. Liderlerin sürekli eğitim ve öğretim merkezlerinin kalite güvence sistemleri kapsamındaki görüşleri nelerdir?
5. Sürekli eğitim ve öğretim merkezlerinden hizmet alan paydaşların görüşleri nelerdir?

Gömülü teori deseni ile nitel uygulama verilerinin detaylı incelemesinin yapılması, tema, kategori ve kodların oluşturulması ve bir kuram oluşturulması hedeflenmektedir (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). Araştırmanın çalışma grubunu Türkiye'deki sürekli eğitim ve öğretim merkezlerinde görev yapan liderler (başkanlar / müdürler / koordinatorler/yöneticiler) ve bu merkezlerden hizmet alan paydaşlar oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmada amaçlı örnekleme yöntemi kullanılmıştır (Canbazoglu Bilici, 2019).Araştırmada hem liderler hem de paydaşlar için ayrı ayrı 5 adet açık uçlu görüşme sorusu hazırlanmıştır. Araştırma sürecinde uygulama verileri çevrimiçi ortamlar aracılığıyla görüşme yapılarak toplanmıştır. Uygulamalar 2 aylık bir zaman diliminde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Görüşmeler öncesi katılımcılara aydınlatılmış rıza onam formları sunulmuş ve gönüllü olarak katılımları sağlanmıştır. Görüşme sürecinde ses kayıtları alınmış ve kayıtlar daha sonra transkript edilmiştir. Araştırma sonucunda elde edilen veriler ilk olarak transkript edilmiştir. Daha sonra iki farklı araştırmacı tarafından kodlama ve ayıklama işlemleri yapılmıştır. Kodlama ve ayıklama yapma işlemi yapılmadan önce yüksek kalitede kodlama yapılabilmesi için kodlama kılavuzu oluşturulmuş ve örnek kodlamalar yapılmıştır (Özkan, 2019; Saldana, 2010). Tema, kategori ve kodların belirlenmesinden sonra frekans tabloları, grafikler ve doğrudan alıntılar yapılmak suretiyle betimsel olarak sunulmuştur. Katılımcı görüşleri sunulurken P1, P2, P3 şeklinde kodlamalar yapılmıştır.

Sürekli eğitim ve öğretim merkezlerinde görev yapan liderlerin sahip oldukları liderlik türleri incelendiğinde yoğun olarak demokratik (katılımcı) liderlik ve bürokratik liderliğin tercih edildiği görülmektedir. Hümanist (İlişki Odaklı) Liderlik ile dağıtımcı liderliğin ise daha az tercih edildiği görülmektedir. Bu sonuçlar liderlerin sahip olduğu yetkileri paylaştığı, yönetim sürecinde yasa ve kanunlara ağırlıklı olarak uyulduğunu ve görev sürecinde görevlerin eşit bir şekilde dağıtımının yapılmaya çalışıldığını göstermektedir. Nitekim alan yazında lider konumunda bulunan ve üniversiteler gibi kurumlarda çalışan kişilerin demokratik ve bürokratik liderliği daha çok benimsediğini belirten birçok çalışma (Aktaş & Özgenel, 2020; Karaca, 2017) bulunmaktadır. Bu sonuçlar alan yazın tarafından desteklenmektedir. Liderler tarafından algılanan zorluklar incelendiğinde 4 farklı tema ve 11 kategori oluşturulmuştur. Bu zorluklar siyasi (politika) ve yasal zorluklar, bütçe (yapısal) zorlukları, kurumsal (yönetim) zorlukları ve toplumsal zorluklar olarak belirlenmiştir. Yıldırım ve Akçay (2017) tarafından yapılan çalışmada da liderlerin sürekli eğitim

merkezlerinde yasal düzenlemeler, bütçe kullanımı ve fiziki olanaklar açısından zorluklar yaşadığı belirlenmiştir.

Armstrong (2013) sürekli eğitim merkezlerinde uluslararası yetkinliğe sahip kalite güvence sistemlerinin bulunmasının gerekliliğini vurgulamış ve bu sistemlerin sürdürülebilir olması gerektiğini ifade etmiştir. Liderlerin kalite güvence sistemlerine yönelik görüşleri ele alındığında olumlu ve olumsuz temalar altında toplam 6 kategoride düşüncelerin yığıldığı görülmektedir. Olumlu görüşler sertifikalandırma, tanınırlık ve standartlaşma kategorilerini oluştururken olumsuz görüşler ise uygulama zorluğu, sürdürülebilirlik ve yönetsel istikrar kategorilerinde oluşmuştur.

Sürekli eğitim ve öğretim merkezlerinden hizmet alan paydaşların görüşleri incelendiğinde 6 faktör ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu faktörler tercih edilme durumu, eğitim alma durumu, yetkinlik durumu, kalite güvencesi durumu, yönetim durumu ve liderlik durumu olarak belirlenmiştir. Paydaş görüşlerinin yoğun olarak olumlu olduğu ancak yönetim ve liderlik durumları açısından olumsuz görüşlerinde bulunduğu belirlenmiştir. Candir Şimşek (2022) benzer şekilde sürekli eğitim merkezlerini tercih nedenleri, eğitim alma nedeni, rolü, katkıları, bilinirliği, güçlü ve gelişime açık yönleri şeklinde faktörleştirmiştir.

Araştırma sonucunda şu önerilerde bulunabilir;

1. Sürekli eğitim ve öğretim merkezlerinin kalite güvence sistemleri açısından yenilenmesi ve uluslararası düzeyde yetkinliklerinin sertifikalandırılması gerekmektedir.
2. Sürekli eğitim ve öğretim merkezleri hakkında daha çok bilgilendirme ve tanıtım faaliyetlerinin gerçekleştirilmesi ve bireylerin daha fazla hizmet almasının sağlanması önerilebilir.