

A study of work environment and perceived transfer of training: A Conceptual framework

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to gain insight into the factors related to work environment that determine the transfer of training to the work context. The present research examined the effect of the major variables on transfer of training, which are supervisor support, peer support and learning culture. The supervisor's and peer's potential to inspire, influence and encourage in the form of mentoring on how to utilize learning on the job, motivation given to initiate trainings and adequate time and right set of circumstances given for utilizing training, will inspire employees to transfer learned competencies and behaviours to the job. The objective of this research is to present a conceptual framework on the idea of training transfer with the help of variables of organizational climate. An attempt has been made to analyze the effect of factors related to work environment on the occurrence of training transfer. The results indicated that supervisor support, peer support and learning culture were appreciably related to training transfer. The results of the research also recommend that if organisations wish to improve the quality of training transfer they should focus on designing of training. Training design should be such which encourages trainees to transfer learning in the work, gives them the confidence and belief in their capabilities to transfer learning, motivates them and make it sure that the training can be retained after coming back from training environment. Proper training transfer has been identified as the most considerable hurdle for training effectiveness. Organisations invest heavily in training and they consider training transfer a very important function. There are gaps in literature as in the existing literature less studies focus on the learning culture. This research work provides a useful theoretical framework which will be helpful to the HR managers and practitioners to design

trainings more effectively and to transfer the learned skills properly with the help of positive learning environment.

Key words- work environment, peer support, supervisor support, learning culture

I. INTRODUCTION

Organisations intend to get some benefits after conducting training for the employees, to ascertain if they are getting the results or not they need to evaluate the effectiveness of the training programs. Evaluation of effectiveness is done by analyzing the changes in capabilities and knowledge of the employees. This evaluation of training help to diagnose that the desired results are being obtained by investing heavy costs in the training program. If the training is not being transferred to the organization it is useless, so it can be said that learning transfer is the ultimate objective of the training programs (Berry & Morris, 2005). The purpose of this research is to review the theory of transfer of training in organisations and develop a conceptual framework which will help the HR practitioners and managers to plan, design, and implement their training programs in a better a manner.

Interpersonal relations are very important for the employees these days and they should also have the ability to handle conflicts, stress, and other forms of problems which exists in the organization. Relevant technical skills are equally important thus, organisations focus on relevant functions that collectively develop a system with the help of which the capabilities, competencies and knowledge can be improved. As organizations are striving harder to compete favorably in the changing economy and global environment, they need to differentiate regarding the employee, knowledge, skills, and behaviour which are of utmost importance these days. Ismail and

Bongogoh (2007) suggest that the interest put on organizations to compete in a changing, dynamic and competitive market place have brought major importance to training. Training transfer is considered as the most important investments in the organization as it improves the competencies, communication, behavior and learning of organizational members (Bulut & Culha, 2010).

Training programs implemented by the organisations are a significant investment which improves capabilities and skills of people which ultimately helps them to improve their performances. They also conceive the idea that training can work as a link between management and employees for improving , behaviors, conflicts, performances which will ultimately lead to increased return on investment, higher level of performance and more effective organisations (Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Chiaburu & Lindsay 2013).

Organizational training is a very important function of major strategy of the organisation as training is becoming one of the major component of the various functions of human resource management. Human resource planning of members of the organisation against the inevitable future can only be studied with the help of sustainable and constant training of organizational members (Nadiri & Tanova, 2010).

Theoretical Background

It has been observed in researches that not all the trainings are transferred to the job and the percentage of training which is transferred is actually very less (Georgenson, 1982; Holton & Baldwin, 2000; Kupritz, 2002), thus it is very difficult for training professionals to show the significance and value of the time and energy which they have incurred in the training and development programs. (Becker, et.al.2001, Fitz-Enz & Davison, 2002). Now learning programmes in various organizations not only examine training outcomes of the training but have moved beyond to analyzing the training initiatives in terms of increased performance, merit, revenue, shareholder value, and profitability. It also evaluates self-esteem, efficiency and self-efficacy of the employees. (Baldwin & Ford 1988, Burke & Baldwin 1999, Richman-Hirsch, 2001 Fitz-Enz & Davison, 2002).

Similarly, to improve performance of the employees on the work, the motivation, competencies and behaviours learned during training must be evaluated, continued, supported, sustained and transferred to the job (Holton, 2005). If the employee have the capability

and caliber to replicate the learned skills and behaviours in the new situations training transfer can be said to have happened. (Kia & Ismail, 2013).

Organisations, these days have realized that transfer of training is very significant as organisations wish to develop and sustain the higher level of performances and improved ROIs. (Hua & Ahmad, 2011). Thus, transfer of learning can be identified as a multidimensional variable which is very important for the function of training.

Organizations are investing their valuable time and money in training and improving the organizational members. It has been comprehensively realized that improving the competencies and skills should be of utmost importance for the companies which are facing a large and wide competition from other organisations (Gallenberger, Lehtinen, & Gruber 2009).

Transfer Constructs

Researches have been conducted on transfer studies using various transfer constructs. Models on transfer of training have also been developed like the transfer model given by Baldwin & Ford and the conceptual models of Holton, Bates, & Ruona, 2000 and Holton & Baldwin, 2000. Research indicates that relying on employees to convert their training and learning into performance is only 10% to 30% effective. Holton and Bates have researched the factors that support the transfer of learning on the job and identified the most important factors that support learning programs to improve performance. These factors are capability, motivation and work environment. (Hall, Smith, Dare, 2014) Baldwin and Ford developed a training transfer construct which is comprised of trainees' characteristics variables (personality, ability, aptitudes, and motivation) and work environment variables (supportive organizational climate, supervisor, opportunity to use gained knowledge and skills, and posttraining objective setting and feedback process) that may support training transfer. This conceptual model discusses the transfer of training in three steps. The first phase is training input factors, second phase is training outcomes, and the third phase is conditions of transfer. Factors responsible for the first phase of transfer are designing of training, personality traits of trainee, and organizational climate. The second phase is about the actual training happened during a training session, it also focuses on if the trainee could retain the learned skills after training or not. The third stage talks about the conditions of transfer, which is actually the climate. If it is

positive training can be sustained for a longer period of time. All the three phases are found to be of equal importance for transfer of training.

Researchers and training experts have identified the variables and came to a conclusion about the variables influencing the training transfer to the workplace and those variables are self-efficacy, content validity of training content, support from supervisor, transfer design, and motivation to transfer (Akhtar, Ali, Sadaqat & Hafeez, 2011, Bin & Yusof, 2012, Iqbal, 2011, Simosi, 2012, Wiechman & Gurland, 2009).

Holton et al. (2000) assessed the factors which affect transfer in his learning transfer system inventory. The factor identified comprehensively are: trainee characteristics, motivation, work environment, and ability. The factors specific to work environment are performance coaching, supervisor support, supervisor sanctions, peer support, resistance to change, openness to change, positive personal outcomes, and negative personal outcomes.

Many studies have been found which focus on the basic concepts of transfer of training but not many studies have focused on the factors important in the work environment. Although many research studies have contributed conceptually and empirically to the understanding of transfer of training, few have explored the influences of the transfer variables on training outcomes. They also lack focus on training transfer at individual and organizational levels differently. (Yamhill & McLean, 2001).

Organizational alignment activities focus on ensuring that the organization supports the use of the skills and knowledge on the job. Activities like coaching and mentoring, peer support, supervisor support, connecting training to the job, and developing a learning culture. These activities were found to be of utmost importance for transfer of training (Leimbach Michael, 2010)

Supervisor Support

According to the research if the managers and supervisors encourage, inspire and strengthen the implementation of newly gained competencies, abilities and skills it is considered as supervisor support (Holton et al., 2000). Studies suggest that if employees perceive that the supervisor support the use and application of newly learned capabilities, knowledge and behaviours, they will be more inspired to transfer developed skills to the workplace (e.g. Bates et al., 2000; Brinkerhoff & Montesino, 1995; Colquitt et al., 2000; Noe, 1986; Tracey & Tews, 2005).

Baldwin & Ford (1988) in their model identified support provided by the supervisors and opportunities given to perform as important variables of supporting and maintaining trainee skills. Training would only be transferred to the workplace when there is constant support emanating from the supervisors. Support given by the supervisors will lead to employee motivation. According to Swanson & Holton (2001) the major goal of training transfer is to utilize skills, knowledge and capabilities acquired during training and to enhance organizational, group and individual performance. Support of supervisors will make employees inspired and motivated to attend more trainings in the organisation and the result will be in the transfer of skills and knowledge gained to the job (Sabir et al., 2014). Organisations should give importance to the role of supervisors that facilitate and encourage employees for developmental activities and help transfer of training. (Elangovan & Karakowsky, 1999) Training effectiveness is determined by the transfer of training which is dependent on the supervisor support and the ability of trainee also (Lancaster, DiMilia & Cameron, 2014).

One of the most significant support variables is support given by supervisor as per the in the popular Learning Transfer System Inventory (LTSI) model which was developed by Holton and Baldwin. Supervisory support can be explained as the extent to which managers support and augment use of training and learning to the workplace (Holton et al., 2000). Such support takes the form of motivation to an employee to utilize new knowledge and skills. Supervisor support provides assistance in identifying situations where such skills can be applied. Such guidance in the proper application of the learned competencies, provision of proper feedback, positive reinforcement of utilization and application of training and required improvements leads to positive transfer of training (Elangovan and Karakowsky, 1999). There are other forms of support which affects transfer are suggestions on the use of new training, involvement of supervisor with trainees. Positive feedback also plays an important role (Lim and Johnson, 2002, Nijman et al., 2006).

Lancaster et al. (2013) has given a model which explains that if a supervisor supports the employee, the role of supervisor becomes critical in all the stages i.e. prior during and after training. This may be called as "Prior During After" model.

There is a positive relationship between support given by supervisor and transfer of training (e.g. Kontoghiorghes, 1998; Gumuseli and Ergin,

2002; Cromwell and Kolb, 2004). This has been reported by Burke and Hutchins (2007) that there are studies which supports strong or moderate relationship between supervisor support and training transfer but there are studies showing mixed results, It has been suggested by the author that in future research should be conducted to understand the relationship between these variables better. Moderate relationship between these constructs. In their meta-analysis, Blume et al. (2010) observed

There is an indirect relationship between supervisor support and transfer of training, which is mediated by employees' motivation to transfer and culture to transfer. However, not much indirect association between supervisor support and training transfer. Nijman et al. (2006)

A longitudinal study was conducted on 111 employees which has proved a positive correlation between supervisor support and learning goal orientation. It was also found that other factors like self-efficacy, and motivation to transfer are also positively related to support given by supervisor. (Chiaburu et al., 2010). The above mentioned constructs impacted insights related to training, which will lead to the changes in training transfer. Subordinates' orientation towards their objectives is also influenced by their managers (Dragoni, 2005; Janssen and Van Yperen, 2004). Improved performance and transfer of training is also dependent on goal orientation of subordinates (Chiaburu et al., 2010).

Peer Support

The successes of a training program is dependent on the support from coworkers also. Peer support, transfer motivation and supervisor support are the major influencers for training transfer (Noe & Schmitt, 1986). Inspiration and motivation from peers effects the utilization of training and its transfer (Dermol & Cater, 2013). Chiaburu (2010) demonstrates that peers are more important for transfer of training in organisations than both support from the organization and supervisors. Training implementation and training maintenance are very dependent on peer support. Trainees will be able to transfer the learned skills to the job more effectively if they have supportive and encouraging peers who demonstrate such behavior continuously. For training generalizations and transfer motivation and reinforcement from peer group is found to be important. (Nijman et al., 2006). Peers can also work as evaluators and mentors for their colleagues which is possible if proper directions are given to the peers. They can

easily identify and check peer's performance if they have been given a checklist. Trainees, consequently, ought to have aim to transfer training. When trainees return to their respective jobs the prime objective is to utilize the learned competencies on the job for which they have to readjust with the work environment which may be positive to support them or negative to restrain them from utilizing the new skills. (Pham et al., 2013), The environment of the organisation constitutes of support by the peers, training transfer sanctions by supervisor, support by the supervisor, and autonomy given in the job (Pham, Segers & Gijsselaers, 2013, Colquitt et al., 2000). Transfer of training variables also include performance feedback, peer support, supervisor support which influences demonstration of training Peer support has been identified as an important construct for transfer of training (e.g. Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Holton et al., 2000; Tracey & Tews, 2005; Tracey et al., 1995). Supervisors and peer support, has been identified as the most relevant and significant for improving trainees' utilization of learning on the job (Elangovan & Karakowsky, 1999; Baldwin & Ford, 1988).

It is strongly believed among the researchers that if peers group provides proper valuable support to the trainees they will show positive transfer of knowledge, skills and competencies on their work (Nijman 2004)

Learning Culture

The learning culture includes variables of the climate dimensions and organizational culture, specifically feedback on performance, work culture, positive environment (Eskelinen, Kokkinen, Koskinen, & Tyrvaainen, 2004; Holton, 2005). Work environment can be categorized into two categories i.e. the general work environment and transfer climate. (Nijman, Nijhof, Wognum & Veldkamp 2006) General work environment deals with different workplace features like lack of systematization between various departments and boundaries related to budget between various units of the organization will also affect work environment which will finally influence transfer of learning as well. The management, peers or supervisors frequently take actions through the application of the There are some basic procedures of training like training need analysis, designing of training, and implementation of training, and evaluation of training. If the organisations wish to improve performance of employees' post training related to skills and behaviours they have to focus on such basic processes of training (Berg, Sverke & Sjo, 2000, Pham et al. 2013)

Organisational culture and organisational climate are found to be the pillars of learning culture which are directly associated with transfer of learning (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Rouiller & Goldstein, 1993; Tracey et al., 1995). As per the researches learning culture is very significant from the point of view of design of training and characteristics of individuals (Alvarez et al 2004, Baldwin & Ford 1988, Holton et al., 1997, Tannenbaum & Yukl, 1992). It has been proved from numerous studies that the organizational culture which promotes learning works as a catalyst for training transfer in organisations (e.g. Baldwin & Ford, 1988).

Transfer of training, climate and continuous organisational learning culture are the two relevant variables of work environment and it has an indicative effect on the behaviors which are demonstrated by the trainees after training. Research suggest that if employees feel that organization is concerned about the employees and management is encouraging and reassuring they will implement and utilize the new competencies on the job (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Tracey et al., 1995). Learning culture also includes constructive criticism and feedback which should be given to the employees from time to time to improve their performance (Holton et al., 2000). If observations and opinions about the gained knowledge and competencies are given there are greater chances that the learning will be positively transferred to the job (Reber & Wallin, 1984, Fardaniah 2014).

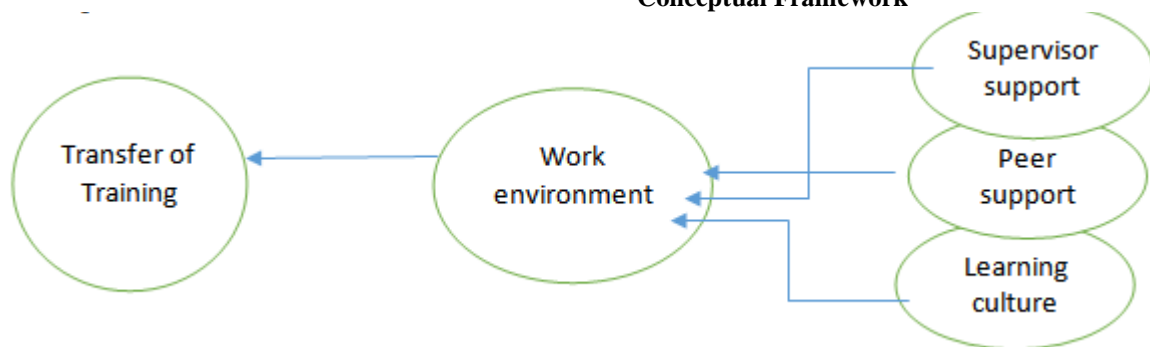
A training transfer model was developed which provided a framework for understanding transfer process. In this model motivation to transfer was introduced as an important variable to training transfer which was describes as trainees' spur, inspiration and desire to use the learned knowledge, capabilities and behaviors (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart & Wright, 2006). Self motivation and self management were found to be related to learning culture and ultimately to work environment. These constructs were later also introduced to the model given by Baldwin & Ford which was amplified with the help of these variables. (Yahya, Mansor, & Warokka, 2012).

Research Objectives and Methodology

The objective of this research is to present a novel approach to transfer of training with reference to work environment. An attempt has been made to identify the variables of work environment responsible for training transfer in organizations.

A critical review of existing approaches and literature on training transfer has been done for this research. A multidisciplinary review of researches assessing transfer of training with emphasis on work environment for various training programs are presented. A theoretical framework has been developed on the basis of review of literature. A conceptual model has been presented which aims to identify and study the varied features of work environment and its relationship with training transfer.

Conceptual Framework



Supervisor support, peer support and learning culture are the factors of work environment in an organization which are responsible for transfer of training. Though there are several other factors responsible for transfer of training but in this study work environment has been studied as one of the major constructs of training transfer.

II. CONCLUSION

If organisations wish to improve their overall performance with the help of organizational they have to identify certain things in their organisations. Transfer of training can be studied with the help of three major factors which are characteristics of trainee, design of training and work environment (Burke & Hutchins 2007). But work environment has been found to be the most

important construct of training transfer. Organizations need to ensure that training is designed such that it matches the ability level of trainees and it provides the required support in the form of supervisor support, peer support and learning culture. This will lead to utilization of the competencies learned during training. Organisations have to be supportive and nurturing so that the employees can understand and visualize that how the knowledge, skills, capabilities and behaviours can be used in general environment outside of training room. It has been observed that if organisations give constructive comments, evaluation and criticism to the employees' during training, they will retain training for longer and will perform better. A learning work culture is also an important aspect of transfer of training. If learning culture is reinforced by the organization, training transfer of newly developed capabilities and knowledge will be easier. If the employees perceive that they have the help and assistance from the organization and if they feel that they will get a constructive evaluation and appraisal transfer will become less complicated and trouble free. Thus it can be concluded that organisations should strive to develop a work culture where employees feel that training is a very significant part of their work life and it will help members of the organization to perform better.

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