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FACTORS AFFECTING TRANSFER OF TRAINING. A CASE STUDY IN SEDC (SARAWAK ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION), SARAWAK

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FACTORS AFFECTING TRANSFER OF TRAINING. A CASE STUDY IN SEDC (SARAWAK ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION), SARAWAK.

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by

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This project is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement to obtain a Bachelor of Science with Honors (Human Resource Development) From Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development,
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ABSTRACT

FACTORS AFFECTING TRANSFER OF TRAINING. A CASE STUDY IN SEDC (SARAWAK ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION), SARAWAK

Ting Tung Han

The purpose of this study is to identify the various factors affecting transfer of training in SEDC (Sarawak Economic Development Corporation), Kuching. This study also aims to determine the significant difference between the chosen demographic factors and transfer of training. A set of questionnaire was used as a research instrument and was distributed to 50 respondents. The respondent in this study consisted of 50 trainees which had attended the Supervisory Skills Training in SEDC. The feedback collected was then analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences 7.5 (SPSS 7.5). T-test analysis is used to determine the significant difference between chosen demographic factors such as age, educational level and length of service with transfer of training. Pearson Correlation Analysis is used to find out the significant relationship between transfer of training and transfer factors such as training content, managerial support, peer support, organizational culture and trainee motivation while the Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis is used to determine the dominant factor affecting transfer of Supervisory Skills Training. The outcome of this research shows that there are no significant difference between the chosen demographic factors and transfer of training. All of the transfer factors studied is this research were found to have positive significant relationship with transfer of training. Peer support, trainee motivation and organizational culture were identified as the dominant factors affecting transfer of training. Thus, based on the findings of this study, suggestions are made on how to improve the training design, trainee's motivation, managerial support, peer support and creating a conducive organizational climate to facilitate transfer of training.

ABSTRAK

FAKTOR-FAKTOR YANG MEMPENGARUHI PEMINDAHAN LATIHAN DI SEDC (PERBADANAN PEMBANGUNAN EKONOMI SARAWAK), SARAWAK

Ting Tung Han

Kajian ini dijalankan bagi mengenalpasti faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi pemindahan latihan di SEDC (Perbadanan Pembangunan Ekonomi Sarawak), Kuching. Kajian ini juga bertujuan bagi menentukan perbezaan signifikan di antara faktor demografi terpilih dengan pemindahan latihan. Instrument kajian ini adalah borang soal selidik yang diedarkan kepada 50 responden. Responden kajian ini terdiri daripada 50 pelatih yang telah menghadiri Latihan Kemahiran Penyelia di SEDC. Dapatan kajian dianalisa dengan menggunakan Statistical Package for Social Sciences 7.5 (SPSS 7.5). Analisis Ujian-T digunakan bagi menentukan perbezaan signifikan antara faktor demografi terpilih seperti umur, tahap pendidikan dan tempoh perkhidmatan dengan pemindahan latihan. Analisis Korelasi Pearson digunakan untuk mengkaji hubungan signifikan antara faktor pemindahan latihan seperti kandungan latihan, sokongan pengurus, sokongan rakan sekerja, budaya organisasi dan motivasi pelatih dengan pemindahan latihan. Analisis Stepwise Multiple Regression pula digunakan bagi menentukan faktor dominan yang mempengaruhi pemindahan latihan. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa tiada hubungan signifikan yang wujud antara faktor demografi terpilih dengan pemindahan latihan. Kesemua faktor pemindahan yang dikaji dalam kajian ini didapati mempunyai hubungan signifikan positif dengan pemindahan latihan. Sokongan rakan sekerja, motivasi pelatih dan budaya organisasi pula dikenalpasti sebagai faktor dominan yang mempengaruhi pemindahan latihan. Oleh itu, berdasarkan dapatan kajian ini, beberapa cadongan dikemukakan bagi menperbaiki rekabentuk latihan, motivasi pelatih, sokongan pihak pengurusan, sokongan rakan-sekerja dan mewujudkan persekitaran organisasi yang sesuai bagi meningkatkan pemindahan latihan.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Emphasis on the investment in human resource training and development activities are recognized as vital strategies to maintain a competitive workforce (Blanchard and Thacker, 1999). Both the public and the private sectors allocate a large sum of budget annually for the purposes. Employees are sent for various training programmes and courses to acquire a new skill or to refine and increase their existing knowledge and skills. As presented in the Budget 2001, the Malaysian government has allocated RM2.1 billion to develop the human resources of this country.

All these involve a high cost for the respective organizations, not only in monetary terms but also in terms of time spent to conduct training needs analysis, training design and the actual training itself. Productive working hours of the employees are also sacrificed to enable their employees to take the time off to attend the training. The labour cost that is spent on training would make up the largest component of the training cost. (Wexley and Latham, 1991).

It is very clear that the various organizations that provide training for their employees bear a hefty financial cost in their investment on their human resource. Owing to this respect, these organizations expect a return in their investment in terms of creating and maintaining a pool of highly skilled workforce that would contribute more effectively to the organization and thus maintaining the competitive edge of the organization. A skilled workforce that could adapt to the various external factors such as technological change, economic factor and customer demands is very important to ensure the survival of the organizations particularly the private sectors.

To ensure that the training and development programs meet the objectives of the organizations, it is imperative that training participants are able to apply what they have learned from the training to their workplace. This is also known as transfer of training. In this study, the researcher will attempt to study the various factors which will affect the transfer of training to the workplace. Transfer of training is defined as the effective and continuing application in the job environment of the skills and knowledge gained in a training context (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).

Transfer and retention of skills acquired from training to the workplace are a good indicative to measure the success of a particular training programme. Therefore, the training department of an organization must be able to prove the value of their products, which are the training programme and its impact to the organization. The success of a training programme would justify the budget allocated for training and enhance the reputation of the human resource department as an integral part of overall business strategy of an organization.

1.2 Background of the Organization

The Sarawak Economic Development Corporation (SEDC) was set up in 1972 as a state-owned statutory body with the general aim to promote the commercial, industrial and socio-economic development of Sarawak.

The Corporation serve as a catalyst for increasing and attracting investments in Sarawak by providing advice on business opportunities and where necessary, serving as a joint-venture partner in a broad spectrum of industries including Agro and Food-Based industry, Tourism and Leisure, Realty Development, Mineral and Mining, Roads and Works, Human Resource Development and others. At the same time, it plays the role of a trust agency of Bumiputras in commerce and industry.

The vision of SEDC is to be a model Corporation in promoting and implementing both development and commercial projects in the state of Sarawak.

SEDC mission to be a reliable and reputable organization by successfully carrying out their tasks ethically, effectively, efficiently and economically (4-Es Principle).

The corporate philosophy of SEDC is to provide the best quality and value in everything through the concept of Integrity, Teamwork and Total Quality Management (TQM).

Currently, the Corporation has over 70 active subsidiaries and group assets worth over RM1.2 billion. As a Corporation that seeks to promote quality and transparency in its service to customers, SEDC has been recognized nationally, having won the prestigious Prime Minister's Award for Quality (Public Sector) in 1994, among other awards.

Structurally, SEDC is divided into 3 main Divisions, namely the Corporate Services, the Commercial Operations and the Bumiputra Commercial and Industrial Community (BCIC) Development Divisions.

The training programmmes conducted in SEDC are designed by the staff of its Human Resource Department based on the findings from training needs analysis (TNA). Occasionally an external consultant would be hired to help in the design and delivery of the training programmes.

This study focuses its attention to the Supervisory Skills Training Programmes conducted from the 17th to the 18th April 2000. This training programme is conducted with the assistant from a private consultant hired based on their experience and expertise in the field of management. The consultant also serves as the facilitator of this training programme.

1.3 Statement of Problem

It is important to ensure that a training programme is effective in developing the necessary skills needed by the employees. An effective training programme must also ensure these skills or knowledge are being applied at the workplace and retained over time. The effort of training and developing the employees is deemed futile if the employees acquired all the skills and knowledge stated in the training objectives, but are not or unable to apply them in the working environment. Such training programme will only be a waste of training budget and do not make any significant contribution to the organization.

At present, this organization in this study does not have a formal procedure for evaluating the effectiveness of its training programmes in terms of transfer of training. This has provoked much doubt from the top management of the organization on the effectiveness of training as the method for improving the performance and skills of its employees. The top management also questions the tangible benefits gained from the training programme as a high amount of money has been spent on training.

The problem faced by the organization of this study has prompted the researcher to conduct a study on the various factors, which might affect the transfer of training. It is hoped that the findings and recommendations of the study would be considered by the organizations, so that step could be taken to improve the effectiveness of its training programmes.

Most organization does not conduct a full training evaluation process due to certain factors such as inadequate budget, time and skilled manpower to conduct a full training evaluation (Bramley, 1991). A survey by The American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) found that 94% of the respondents collected trainee reaction information, 34% measured learning, 13% evaluated transfer of training and only 3% were evaluating financial impacts from training (Bassi *et. al.*, 1996, p. 58). A comprehensive training evaluation needs to be conducted at the end every training programme to prove the effectiveness of the training. Training evaluation is also important to show the HRD's value and contribution to the organization.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to identify various factors that might influence the transfer of training in SEDC.

1.4.1 Specific Objectives

Specifically, the objectives of this study are:

- To identify the level of training transfer of supervisory skills training.
- To determine the relationship between demographic variables of the respondents and transfer of supervisory skills training.

- To determine the relationship between training design and transfer of supervisory skills training.
- To determine the relationship between managerial support and transfer of supervisory skills training.
- To determine the relationship between peer support and transfer of supervisory skills training.
- To determine the relationship between organizational culture and transfer of supervisory skills training.
- To determine the relationship between the trainee's motivation and transfer of supervisory skills training.
- To determine the dominant factor affecting transfer of supervisory skills training.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

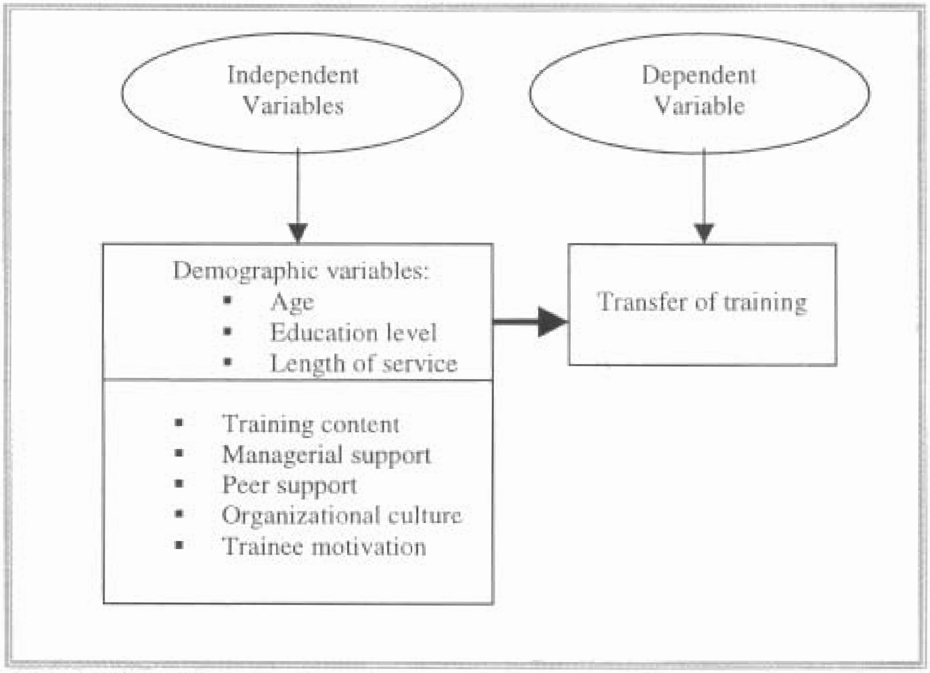
Independent Variables
Dependent Variable
Demographic variables:
▪ Age
▪ Education level
▪ Length of service
Transfer of training
▪ Training content
▪ Managerial support
▪ Peer support
▪ Organizational culture
▪ Trainee motivation

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is as depicted in Figure 1 above. The dependent variable is the transfer of training while the independent variables include training design, managerial support, peer support, organizational culture and trainee motivation. Demographic variables, which include the respondent's age educational level and length of service, are also studied in this paper.

1.6 Hypothesis

The hypotheses of this study are:

Ho 1: There is no significant difference between age group and transfer of supervisory skills training.

Ho 2 There is no significant difference between educational level and transfer of supervisory skills training.

Ho 3: There is no significant difference between length of service and transfer of supervisory skills training.

Ho 4: There is no significant relationship between training design and transfer of supervisory skills training.

Ho 5: There is no significant relationship between managerial support and transfer of supervisory skills training.

Ho 6: There is no significant relationship between peer support and transfer of supervisory skills training.

Ho 7: There is no significant relationship between organizational culture and transfer of supervisory skills training.

Ho 8: There is no significant relationship between trainee's motivation and transfer of supervisory skills training.

1.7 Significance of the Study

A better understanding of the various factors, which would increase or inhibit the transfer of training, is very important to those who are involved in the field of human resource training and development.

By taking into considerations the factors that would increase the likelihood of transfer and retention of skills and knowledge, the training programme will be more effective in producing a skilled workforce with the ability to deliver better performance and contribute more to the organization.

Transfer of training is important to ensure that the skills learned from the training programme are effectively being applied to the workplace. Therefore, organization must understand the various factors that would influence the transfer of training. Understanding of these factors would enable the training department to take up steps to modify and improve their training programmes in order to help the trainees to maximize the transfer and retention of new skills to the workplace.

Organizations that monitor the transfer of their training programme would also be able to obtain the feedback needed to conduct their training evaluation. This is because training evaluation requires the organization to measure the reaction outcomes, learning outcomes, job behaviour outcomes and organizational impact

(Kirkpatrick, 1994). Information on the degree of transfer of training can be used to assess the job behaviour outcomes and organizational impact in the training evaluation process.

In addition to those mentioned above, not much research has been done regarding the issues of transfer of training in the Malaysian context. Findings from this study would benefit the organization in terms of designing and delivering better training programmes for their employees. It would also enable all those involved in training to formulate better strategies to aid, encourage and motivate trainees to apply their new skills at their workplace. Based on the findings and recommendations of this study, it is expected that steps be taken to create a conducive working environment, which would facilitate, nurture and motivate trainees to transfer their new skills to the workplace.

1.8 Definition of terms

In this section, the conceptual definitions of important terms used in this paper will be defined to give the operational definitions of those terms to suit the practical context of this paper.

1.8.1 Transfer of training

According to Blanchard and Thacker (1999), transfer of training refers to how much of what is learned in training is transfered to the job. Cascio (1995), states that the goal of training is to achieve positive transfer to the job. There are three types of transfer of training, which are:

a) Positive transfer (where training results in higher level of performance)
b) Zero transfer (no change in job performance)
c) Negative transfer (training results in lower level of performance)

In this study, transfer of training will refer to the training participants perception regarding the level of application of knowledge and skills gained from training to their workplace. This study will try to determine whether the transfer of training that is being studied is high or low. High level of transfer implies that most trainees are able to apply their new skills and knowledge to the workplace, while low level of transfer means that most trainees are unable to apply what have been learned in training to the workplace.

1.8.2 Training Content

Buckley and Caple (1995), explained that training content involved a number of inter-related factors which include the training objectives, strategy, tactics, sequencing of presented material, learning principles, target population, constraints and other factors.

Training design in this research will focus on the trainee's perception regarding the content of the training and the relevance to the job of the material presented.

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1.8.3 Managerial Support

Managerial support refers to the degree to which trainee's manager emphasize the importance of attending training programmes and stress the application of training content to the job (Noe, 1999).

In this study, the trainees consist of supervisors. Constock (1994), define supervisor as the first line manager who directs the activities of the working level employees. Therefore, managerial support refers to the trainee's perception regarding the support, encouragement and feedback that are given by their immediate reporting officers or managers to facilitate the transfer of training.

1.8.4 Peer Support

According to Sherman and Bohlander (1992), peer is defined as individuals of equal rank who work together.

In this study, peer support refers to the trainee's perception on the support that are given by their co-workers to encourage and to provide the necessary cooperation to help trainees in applying their new skills at the workplace.

1.8.5 Organizational Culture

According to French (1990), organizational culture consists of those values, beliefs, assumptions, myths, norms and goals that are widely shared in an organization. A *value* is something prized or esteemed. A *belief* is a conviction that something is true. An *assumption* is something that is taken for granted and is similar to a belief, although it is less likely to be stated with such certainty. A *myth* is a legendary or traditional story that may be true, half true or fictional. A *norm* is an unwritten rule or standard about how people should behave. A *goal* is a stated purpose or desired result toward which people aspire.

Organizational culture in this study refers to the degree of learning culture in the organization, whereby employees are encouraged to learn continuously. This would include the trainees' perception on the emphasis of the organization in cultivating continuous learning culture, providing training opportunities and related learning materials to their employees.

1.8.6 Trainee Motivation

Greenberg (1996), define motivation as the process of arousing, directing and maintaining a behavior toward a goal (*arousal*), has to do with the drive or energy behind our action (*direction*), involves the choice of behavior made (*maintenance*), has to do with people's persistence, their willingness to exert effort until a goal is met.

In this study, motivation refers to the trainee's perception on the relevance of the training to their job, their readiness to learn new skills and their confidence and self-efficacy to apply those skills back at the workplace.

1.9 Limitation of the study

There are a few limitations in this study. First of all, this research is only done on only one training programme in an organization in a particular sector of the economy. Therefore the findings of this study might not be accurate in representing the whole picture of various factors, which might affect the transfer of training. In addition, different types of training might be influenced by different factors in transfer of training. For example, factors such as trainers, training methods and training environment could also affect the level of training transfer.

Therefore, the variables that are used in this study are limited and do not cover all the possible variables which would effect transfer of training. The level of transfer is only measured in terms of high and low. This does not indicate whether transfer of training is either positive, negative or zero level of transfer.

1.10 Summary

This chapter states the objectives, hypotheses, significance and the limitations of the study. It also includes the conceptual and operational definitions of important terms that are used in this study.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will cover the literature review on theories of transfer of training and some of the similar research that have been done on this topic. This is important to enable comparison between previous research and this research. This will also help to strengthen the validity and reliability of this study as the variables that are used in this study are based on those previous works by other researchers.

2.2 Transfer of Training

Recognizing the importance of the application of new skills and knowledge at the workplace or transfer of training, many human resource practitioners and researchers are looking into this issue to learn more about it with the intentions to design better and effective training programme. This is because transfer of training will have an impact on the performance of the employees. Thus, a positive transfer of training indicates that the training programme is successful in improving the performance and productivity of the employees.

The UK Department of Employment's *Glossary of Training Terms* (1971) define transfer of training as:
"occurs whenever the existence of a previously established habit or skill has an influence upon the acquisition, performance or relearning of another habit or skill. Positive transfer occurs when the existence of the previous habit or skills facilitates learning the new one; "negative transfer" refers to the interference by a previously learned habit or skill on new learning" (p.32).

Research that has been done by Baldwin and Ford (1988) offer a different definition where positive transfer of training is defined as the effective application of knowledge, skills and attitude gained in training context to the job. They further elaborate that, for transfer to occur, there must both include the generalization of learned material to the job and maintenance of trained skill over a period of time on the job. Generalization means the trainee's ability to apply those skills to different types of work situation, which are similar but not identical to what have been learned in training environment while maintenance is the continuing use of those skills (Noe, 1999).

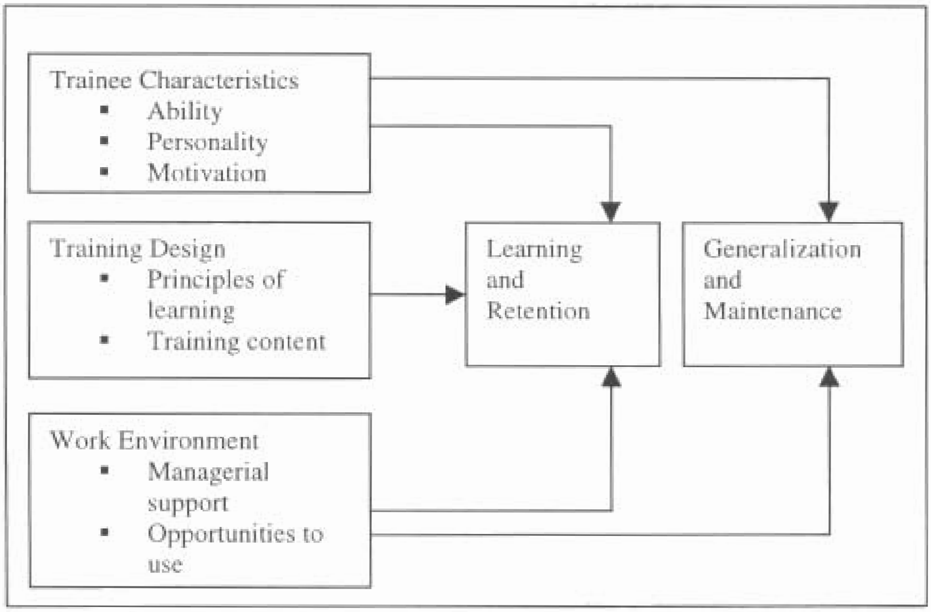
Trainee Characteristics
Ability
Personality
Motivation
Training Design
Principles of learning
Training content
Work Environment
Managerial support
Opportunities to use
Learning and Retention
Generalization and Maintenance

Figure 2: Model of Transfer Process
Source: Baldwin, T. J., Ford, J. K. (1988). Transfer of Training: A Review and Direction for Future Research. Personnel Psychology, 41, 61-103

Figure 2 above shows the model of the transfer process by Baldwin and Ford (1988). The model that they proposed contains three main categories of factors, which influence the transfer of training. These include trainee characteristics, training design and work environment.

In the trainee characteristic, several factors that are studied include the trainee ability, personality and skill. Training design consists of relevance or the usefulness of the training content to the trainee's job and the principles of learning used. Work environment would include supervisory support and the opportunities to use the newly acquired skill on the job.

According to this model, the training outcome is the learning and retention of skills. This training outcome is directly influenced by the three training factors (trainee characteristics, training design and work environment). To ensure transfer of training, trainee could be chosen based on trainee ability, personality and motivation to learn. If the trainee does not have the required ability such as intellectual skills or the motor skills needed, learning will fail. The training design also need to incorporate the right learning principles to facilitate learning. Training content also has to be relevant to the trainees' job so that they are motivated to learn. At the same time, the training environment must include factors such as supervisory support and opportunity to perform the new skill to encourage transfer of training. The conditions for transfer are the generalization and maintenance of training.

This model proposed three critical factors for training transfer to occur. However, it does not explain other factors which might also have an effect on training transfer such as the ability of trainers the deliver the training content effectively, the relationship between training environment with actual working environment and the relationship between level of transfer with elapsed time after the training.

Another training transfer model which is significant in this literature review is the Stages of Transfer Model (Foxon, 1994) as shown in Figure 3 below.

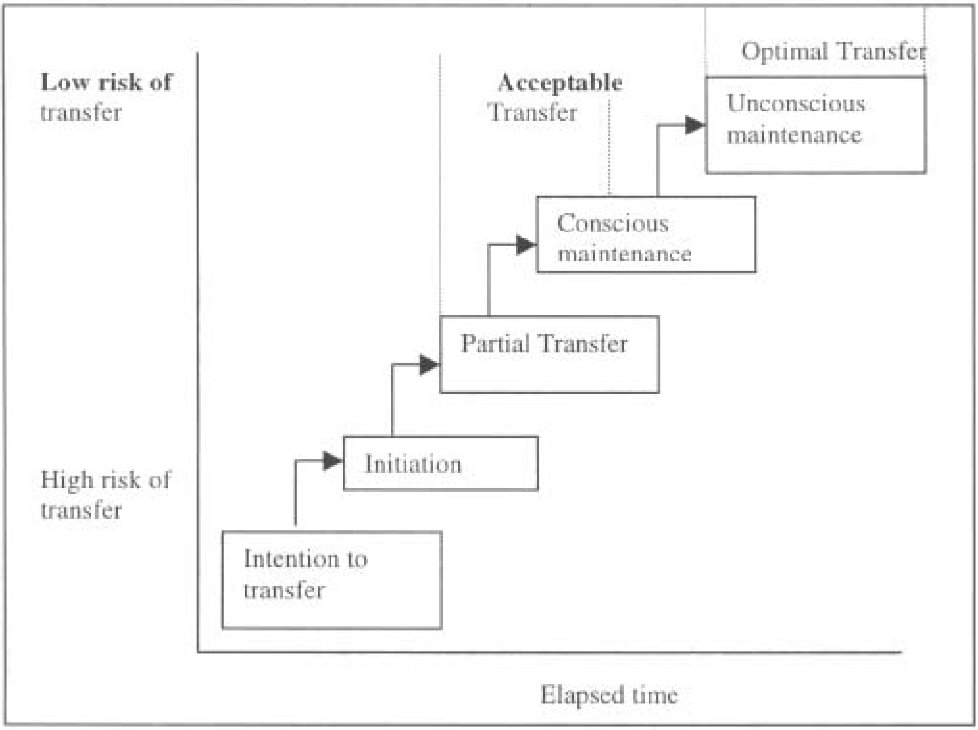
Optimal Transfer
Low risk of transfer
Acceptable Transfer
Unconscious maintenance
Conscious maintenance
Partial Transfer
Initiation
High risk of transfer
Intention to transfer
Elapsed time

Figure 3: Stages of Transfer Model
Source: Foxon, M. (1993). A process approach to the transfer of training. Part 1: The impact of motivation and supervisory support on transfer maintenance.
http://cleo. Murdoch.edu.au/gen/aset9/su93p130.html

The model above illustrates that transfer is not an outcome but is seen as process. The process begins from intention to transfer to unconscious maintenance. Each stages of the process is affected by different supporting and inhibiting factors as explained below:

Stage 1:
Intention to transfer begins when a trainee decides to apply newly acquires skills and knowledge. In this stage training transfer is affected by training environment, working environment and trainee motivation. Risk of transfer failure is high.

Stage 2:
Initiation occurs when trainee makes the first attempt to apply knowledge and skills to the job. Factors that affect transfer at this stage include organizational climate, trainee characteristics, training design and training delivery. The risk of transfer failure is medium to high

Stage 3:
Partial transfer is when the trainee applies only some of the knowledge and skills learned or applies them inconsistently. Factors affecting training transfer are the opportunities to apply and the motivation of trainee. At this stage, risk of training failure is further reduced.

Stage 4:
Conscious maintenance occurs when the trainee chooses to apply what is learned in training. Transfer if influenced by trainee's motivation. The risk of transfer failure is medium to low.

Stage 5:
Unconscious maintenance occurs when trainee apply their skills and knowledge consciously and have integrated them completely into their work routines. At this stage, transfer of training is considered successful.

2.3 Training Content and Transfer of Training

Training design refers to the factors that are built into the training programme to increase the level of training transfer. Training design will take into considerations for learning to occur such as training objective, meaningful material, sequencing of the training content. Effective training design also needs to apply transfer of training theories to enhance training transfer (Noe, 1999).

The transfer of training theories serve to give a better understanding concerning the various factors that effect transfer of training. The three main theories which would covered in this literature review are theory of identical element, general principles and the conditions of practice.

2.3.1 Identical Element Theory

This theory is first proposed by Thorndike and Woodworth (1901). They state that transfer of training occur when what is being learned during training is similar to what the trainee have to perform at the workplace. The higher the identical element at the training location with the workplace, the higher the level of transfer will be. Therefore, if the task, materials, equipment used in the training environment is identical to those at the working environment, transfer will be maximized (Noe, 1999).