

**FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF
TRAINING AMONG ACADEMICS IN UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA
SARAWAK**

by

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ABSTRACT

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF TRAINING AMONG ACADEMICS IN UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK

Wong Moi Hua

This study was aimed at determining the perceptions of academics towards the effectiveness of training and the factors associate with the perception towards the training effectiveness. This study was conducted in a public university in Sarawak that is Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). A survey methodology was used in collecting the data and 100 academics that have undergone the Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching and Learning were selected as the sample in this study. Statistical analysis such as frequency, percentage, t-test, ANOVA, Pearson Correlation and Linear Regression Analysis were used to analyze the data. This study reveals that 68% of the respondents possess positive perceptions towards the effectiveness of training. The findings also reveal insignificant difference among respondents with selected demographic characteristics in term of their perceptions towards the effectiveness of training. The findings of this study also reveal that there are significant relationships between respondents' perceived effectiveness of training and trainee's trainability ($r = 0.540$, $p = 0.000$), trainer's competency ($r = 0.450$, $p = 0.000$), training method ($r = 0.333$, $p = 0.000$), training environment ($r = 0.434$, $p = 0.000$) and management support ($r = 0.551$, $p = 0.000$). Linear Regression Analysis also shows that the trainee's trainability is the most dominant factor that influences the academics' perceptions. Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching and Learning was perceived as effective, well accepted and favored by the academics attending the training program. Apart from this, trainee's trainability needs to be given greater attention in assuring higher training effectiveness. It is recommended that the management and the human resource development department should put more effort to increase the trainees' motivation and abilities before urging them to participate in the training program.

ABSTRAK

FAKTOR-FAKTOR YANG BERKAITAN DENGAN PERSEPSI KEBERKESANAN LATIHAN DI KALANGAN PENSYARAH UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK

Wong Moi Hua

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenal pasti persepsi pensyarah-pensyarah terhadap keberkesanan latihan dan juga faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi persepsi pensyarah-pensyarah terhadap keberkesanan latihan. Kajian ini telah dijalankan di salah satu universiti awam di Sarawak iaitu Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). Kaedah soal selidik telah digunakan untuk mengumpul data kajian ini. Seramai 100 orang pensyarah yang telah menghadiri latihan "Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching and Learning" telah dipilih menjadi sampel kajian ini. Analisa statistik seperti frekuensi, peratusan, Ujian-t, ANOVA, ujian Korelasi Pearson dan Analisis Regresi Linear digunakan untuk menganalisa data. Hasil dapatan kajian mendapati bahawa 68% responden mempunyai persepsi yang tinggi terhadap keberkesanan latihan. Hasil dapatan kajian juga menunjukkan tidak terdapat perbezaan signifikan di kalangan responden dengan ciri-ciri demografi terpilih. Walau bagaimanapun, hasil dapatan kajian ini menunjukkan signifikan korelasi antara persepsi responden terhadap keberkesanan latihan dengan keupayaan pelatih ($r = 0.540$, $p = 0.000$), kompetensi jurulatih ($r = 0.450$, $p = 0.000$), teknik penyampaian latihan ($r = 0.333$, $p = 0.000$), persekitaran latihan ($r = 0.434$, $p = 0.000$) and sokongan pihak pengurusan ($r = 0.551$, $p = 0.000$). Hasil analisa Analisis Regresi Linear telah menunjukkan bahawa keupayaan pelatih merupakan faktor yang paling dominan dalam mempengaruhi persepsi pensyarah-pensyarah terhadap keberkesanan latihan. Berdasarkan kepada hasil dapatan kajian, disimpulkan bahawa latihan "Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching and Learning" adalah berkesan iaitu diterima dan disukai oleh para pensyarah yang telah mengikuti latihan tersebut. Selain daripada itu, keupayaan pelatih harus diberi lebih perhatian. Oleh itu, adalah dicadangkan agar pihak pengurusan UNIMAS dan juga Bahagian Pembangunan Sumber Manusia mengambil tindakan untuk meningkatkan motivasi dan keupayaan pelatih sebelum memilih mereka untuk menyertai program latihan.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Training has always played an important and integral role in furthering many kinds of human learning and development. Goldstein and Gilliam (1990) as well as Rosow and Zager (1988) maintained that “Training is one of the crucial strategies for organizations to assist employees to gain those necessary knowledge and skills needed to meet the challenges” (cited in Wei, 2004, p.52).

As twenty century approaches, training continues to be an essential element for organizations striving for excellence. With the new emerging organizational reality where change, competition, workforce demographic changes and business upheavals are eminent, training and development is becoming ever more an important method that equips organizations with the flexibility, adaptability and durability required for survival. (Ridha, & Mahmoud, 1997). Realizing the fact that training can make an important, if not crucial, contribution to organization effectiveness, all types of organization are beginning to do long-term investment in this human resource development activity.

Higher education institutions such as colleges and universities make no exception. Viewing tertiary education institution from an organizational perspective, training programmes for lecturers are important for university improvement, such as accountability or curriculum development. Professional development may be a more appropriate term for training program provided for academics. Nonetheless, for the purpose of this study, the term “training” is applied to generalize numerous forms of education for teachers, varying from one-day or half-day workshops through to extended courses. Thus, training in this research means an ongoing process of education, development, learning and support activities which is taking place in either external or work-based settings, aimed mainly at promoting learning and development of professional knowledge, skills and values as well as the valued changes in teaching and learning behavior and thus achieving an agreed balance between individual, school and national needs (Bolam cited in Earley & Bubb, 2004, p.5).

Grudy and Robison (2004) maintained that training for teaching profession is essential for three basic functions: extension, growth and renewal. Extension means introduction of new knowledge or skills into a teacher’s repertoire. For example, introducing ICT knowledge to the teachers. On the other hands, growth is the development of greater levels of expertise. Growth usually involves updating and extending the professional’s knowledge and skills on new developments and new areas of practices to ensure continuing competence in the current job and in preparation for a more senior post. Finally, renewal is achieved through transformation and change of knowledge and practice. Renewal usually is linked with ageing teachers. While their age profile clearly gives them depth of experience, there are concerns that it is also leading to a lag in teachers’ professional knowledge base as well as skills base. Thus, effective training is important for teachers with older qualification to update and improve their knowledge of expertise and skills to meet the demands of current challenges.

In order to enhance job performance, the skills and behaviors learned and practiced during training have to be transferred to the workplace, maintained over

time and generalized across context. Consequently, there has been growing concern regarding the costs and effectiveness of training and organizational development programs. As has been reported by Georgenson (1982), “While approximately \$100 billion are spent annually on organizational training programs, only an estimated 10 per cent of this investment results in actual behavioral change on the job” (cited in Elangovan & Karakowsky,1999, p.268). This fact underscored that training could be a waste of money and effort if it is not effective, that is the knowledge, skills and abilities gained in the training context are not applied to the job.

For the reason above, the effectiveness of the training program offered to the teachers or academics is another issue of concerned. Guskey (2004) pointed out that interest in assessing the effectiveness of the professional development has grown in recent years. This is because training programs influence on students’ learning is accomplished through direct effect on teacher’ knowledge and practices. Training has to improve teachers’ knowledge and skills, otherwise, little improvement in students learning can be expected.

1.1 Background of the Study

As stated in the Ninth National Plan (9MP) Report unveiled in Parliament on 31 March 2006, the Prime Minister reported that:

“Investment in human capital will be given greater emphasis during the Ninth Malaysia Plan (9MP) from 2006 to 2010 to sustain economic resilience and growth, drive a knowledge-based economy as well as foster a community with an exemplary value system. Besides that, emphasis will also be given to the development of entrepreneurial skills at all levels of education and training to facilitate the creation of an entrepreneurial society”

One of the strategies that will be adopted by the government to thrust towards enhancing human capital is creating universities of international standing and ensuring that tertiary institutions meet the needs of employers. This signifies an important and heavy responsibility being put on the higher education institutions as well as the teaching professions.

Nevertheless, the fact is that there is a growing public skepticism that our nation's universities are preparing individuals adequately for the demanding challenges facing the current and future workplace. According to Muszafarshah and Wong (2004), "current institution, it is argued, is generating students and graduates with good memorization skills but cannot think "out-of-the-box" due to the exam oriented system. The current problem of high graduate unemployment is a manifestation of this phenomenon" (p.1).

There are compelling reasons why continuous training or professional development is imperative to teaching professions. Fortunately, Partington (1994) reported that "Higher education in the 1990s is providing more than ever before for the training and development needs of academic staffs".

Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), like all other public institutions of higher learning in Malaysia, has an array of short courses designed as part of its staff development programme and delivered via the Centre for Applied Learning and Multimedia (CALM). CALM is a centre that provides a variety of services to enhance the quality of both conventional and online teaching and learning processing among the academics and students. UNIMAS through CALM is putting an extra emphasis in ensuring quality university education by incorporating new approaches and utilizing state-of-the-art technologies in teaching and learning. This is in line with the requirements for all public universities in Malaysia to install quality assurance mechanism in their academic programs.

The Academic Staff Development Unit under CALM offers staff development programs such as Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching and Learning and Strategic Course Development and Assessment Management Workshop to newly hired academics and junior lecturers who have just returned from their graduate studies. These professional development programs are designed to continuously upgrade the knowledge and skills of the academics, especially in the area of pedagogy and instructional technology, so that they will be competent in their teaching profession.

CALM puts in enormous effort to provide academics with quality training. However, it somehow raises questions such as “How effectively does it provide for them?” “Did they like it?” “Will it be useful?” and etc. Thus, this research is conducted to find out the academics’ perceptions towards the effectiveness of the training or staff development programs provided for them. This research focus mainly on the academics reaction level towards the training program, in other words, how much they liked it and their feelings about the structures and content of the training as well as the method employed. Therefore, the outcomes of this research will serve as basis to evaluate the effectiveness of training programs and help in identifying the factors that need to be improved or maintained in order to enhance the effectiveness of the training programs.

1.2 Problem Statement

It is of great importance to upgrade and extend academics’ teaching skills in order to better equip them to respond to changing work environment and to remain competitive. Moreover, academics have the most direct, sustained contact with students, as well as considerable control over what is taught and the climate for learning. It is reasonably assumed that improving academics’ knowledge and skills is one of the most critical steps to improve student achievement.

However, providing training and encouraging the academics to attend training does not ensure enhancement of teaching skills. This is because there are various factors that may influence the learning in the training program.

Thus, for the purpose of this study, the researcher wanted to find out the answers to the following questions:

1. How do academics perceive the effectiveness of training that have been conducted by UNIMAS?
2. What are the factors that influence their perception towards the effectiveness of training program?

1.3 Objectives

1.3.1. General Objective

This study aims to examine the perception of academics towards the effectiveness of training program that are conducted by UNIMAS and the factors that influence their perception.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

Specifically, the research objectives are:

1. To describe selected demographic characteristics of respondents.
2. To identify trainees' perceptions on the effectiveness of training.
3. To identify relationships between demographic variables and perceived effectiveness of training among academics in UNIMAS.
4. To identify the relationship between trainee's trainability and the perceived effectiveness of training among academics in UNIMAS.
5. To identify the relationship between trainer's competency and the perceived effectiveness of training among academics in UNIMAS.
6. To identify the relationship between training method and the perceived effectiveness of training among academics in UNIMAS.
7. To identify the relationship between training environment and the perceived effectiveness of training among academics in UNIMAS.
8. To identify the relationship between management support and the perceived effectiveness of training among academics in UNIMAS.

9. To identify the dominant factor(s) that influences the perceived effectiveness of training among the academics in UNIMAS.

1.4 Conceptual Framework

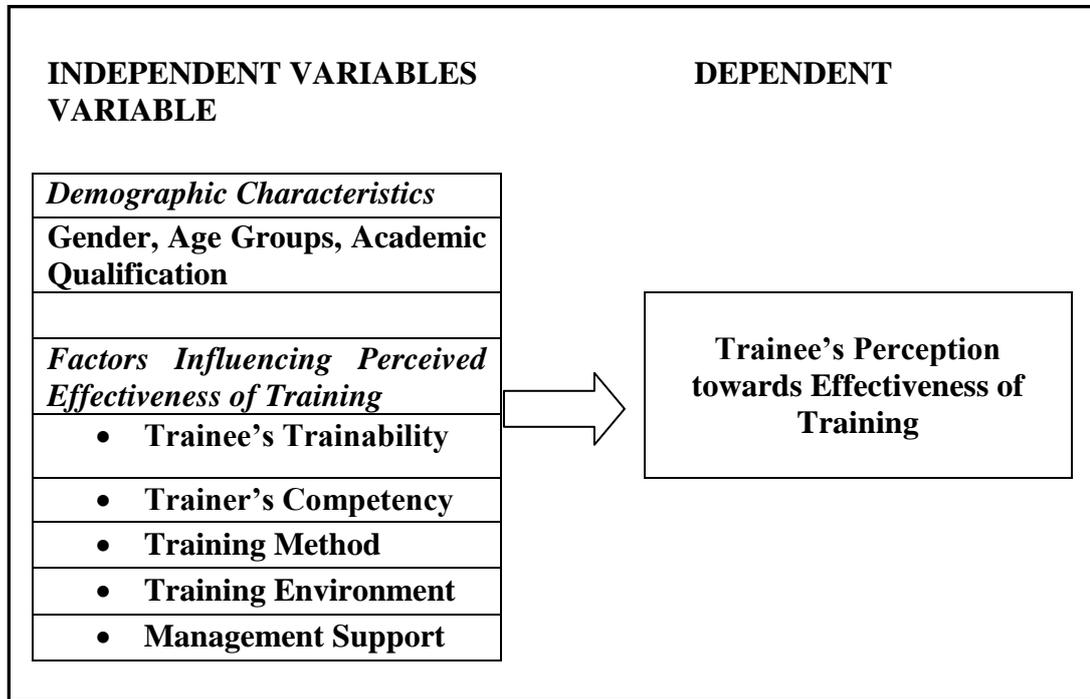


Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework

Figure 1.1 above illustrates the conceptual framework of this research. According to the framework, the independent variables consist of selected demographic characteristic and factors influencing the effectiveness of training. The selected demographic characteristics are gender, age and academic qualification. Factors influencing the effectiveness of training are trainee's trainability, trainer's competency, training method, training environment and management support. On the other hand, the dependent variable is trainee's perception on the effectiveness of training.

1.5 Hypotheses

The hypotheses of this study are based on the statement of the problem and objectives to be achieved as mentioned. The hypotheses of this study are as follow:

- H_{o1} : There is no significant difference between the male and female academics in UNIMAS in term of their perception towards effectiveness of training program.
- H_{o2} : There is no significant difference between the academics in UNIMAS of various age categories in term of their perception towards effectiveness of training program.
- H_{o3} : There is no significant difference between the academics holding Master Degree and PhD in term of their perception towards effectiveness of training program.
- H_{o4} : There is no significant relationship between the perceived effectiveness of training among the academics in UNIMAS and trainee's trainability.
- H_{o5} : There is no significant relationship between the perceived effectiveness of training among the academics in UNIMAS and trainer's competency.
- H_{o6} : There is no significant relationship between the perceived effectiveness of training among the academics in UNIMAS and training method.
- H_{o7} : There is no significant relationship between the perceived effectiveness of training among the academics in UNIMAS and training environment.
- H_{o8} : There is no significant relationship between the perceived effectiveness of training among the academics in UNIMAS and management support.
- H_{o9} : There is no one factor that is dominant in influencing the academics' perception towards the effectiveness of training.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study could give an overview to UNIMAS on the effectiveness of the training among academics in UNIMAS. Subsequently, the value of dollars invested in training so far could be determined whether it was worthwhile or otherwise.

It is hoped that this study could raise the awareness on the needs of the academics and thus attempt to identify the intervention strategies to improve the policy and practice pertaining to teaching career development.

1.7 Term Definition

1.7.1 Perceived Training Effectiveness

Perceived training effectiveness refers to the point of views of the academics in UNIMAS on the extent to which they like and feel about training and knowledge and skills acquired by them. In addition, it also refers to their attitudes toward the usefulness of training programs

1.7.2 Academics

Academics refer to both male and female lecturers in UNIMAS whose age is between 25 to 55 years old, either Master Degree holder or PHD holder and their length of service are less than three years.

1.7.3 Selected Demographic Characteristics

These refer to the background of the academics who are also the respondent in this study. Selected demographic characteristics refer to the specific demographic variables which are used for measurement and data analysis. Selected demographic characteristics in this study refer to gender, age group and academic qualification.

1.7.4 Trainee's Trainability

Trainee's trainability refers to the academics readiness to learn new knowledge, skills and abilities. Trainee's trainability also refers to the trainee's motivation to attend a training program.

1.7.5 Trainer's Competency

Trainer's competency refers to the trainer's ability to communicate his or her knowledge clearly, use various instructional techniques and motivate others to learn. Trainer's competency also refers to the trainer's ability to create a comfortable learning environment through the utilization of various skills, such as, questioning skill, listening skill and providing feedback to trainees.

1.7.6 Training Methods

Training method refers to the techniques or the ways used by the trainer to deliver the training programs. There are various training methods such as lecture, discussion group, case study, simulation and etc.

1.7.7 Training Environment

Training environment refers to the learning climate where training takes place. It includes the seating arrangement, physical comfort level and potential physical distractions.

1.7.7 Management Support

Management support refers to the commitment of management in UNIMAS to help the trainees learn knowledge, skills and abilities in the training programs. These includes the training benefits, allowances or rewards, opportunity to use the learned knowledge, skills and abilities after back from training as well as the management's confidence to the trainee that he/she is able to complete the training program.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

This study is not without limitations. The primary limitation is this research focuses only on five factors (i.e., trainee's trainability, trainer's competency, training methods, training environment and management support) whereas there are many other factors such as training content, training facilities, training climate and etc that can influence the perceived effectiveness of training.

Secondly, this research is done by selecting few academics from each faculty in UNIMAS. Therefore the findings of this research might not be accurate in representing all the lecturers in UNIMAS.

Thirdly, this research will be carried out in UNIMAS only. Findings of this study as regards to the perceived training effectiveness are generalized only to academics in UNIMAS. Thus, comparison with the perceived training effectiveness of academics in other local universities cannot be made.

Fourthly, this research will used questionnaire to collect data. Thus, the accuracy of the data collected strongly depends on the honesty and conscientiousness of the respondents in answering the questionnaires.

Finally, this research was aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of training at the initial level, which is the reaction level. This research does not attempt to investigate the others evaluation levels of training (learning, job behavior and results) as suggested by Kirkpatrick's Model due to time constraints.

1.9 Summary

This chapter aims at providing an introduction on topic to be studied and discussing on the background, statement of problems, objectives and conceptual framework of the study. In addition, this chapter also stated hypotheses to be