



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences &
Human Development

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK ENVIRONMENT
FACTORS AND TRAINING TRANSFER**

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Bachelor of Science (Honours)
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Statement of Originality

The work described in this Final Year Project, entitled
“The Relationship between Work Environment Factors and Training Transfer”
is to the best of the author’s knowledge that of the author except
where due reference is made.

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ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK ENVIRONMENT FACTORS AND TRAINING TRANSFER

Yap Chiew Lan

The research aims to identify the relationship between work environment factors and training transfer. The research was quantitatively design to identify the relationship between work environment factors (accountability, workload, strategic linkage and opportunity to perform) and training transfer. Research was conducted at one of the local organization that always provide training program to its employees. There were 65 respondents who involved in the research. From the reliability and validity analysis, it was indicated that the findings of research was valid and reliable. Findings of research reviewed that high training transfer was existed among the respondent of this research. Based on the results of hypotheses testing, it was indicated that there were positive relationship between wrok environment factors and training transfer. This result showed the important of work environments factors on training transfer and concerned must be put on to these factors during the implementation of training program. Lastly, the research was end with the limitation of study and recommendation for organization and future research.

ABSTRAK

PERHUBUNGAN ANTARA FAKTOR-FAKTOR PERSEKITARAN KERJA DAN PEMINDAHAN LATIHAN

Yap Chiew Lan

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenalpasti perhubungan di antara faktor-faktor persekitaran kerja dan pemindahan latihan. Kajian ini adalah berbentuk kuantitatif bagi mengenalpasti perhubungan antara faktor-faktor persekitaran kerja (kebertanggungjawapan, beban kerja, pertalian strategik dan peluang untuk melaksanakan kemahiran yang diperolehi) dan pemindahan latihan di tempat kerja. Kajian ini dilaksanakan di sebuah organisasi tempatan yang selalu menganjurkan program latihan kepada perkerjanya. Sebanyak 65 responden telah terlibat dalam kajian ini. Analisa kepercayaan dan kesahan menunjukkan bahawa dapatan kajian ini adalah sah dan dapat dipercayai. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa tahap pemindahan latihan di kalangan responden adalah tinggi. Menurut keputusan analisa hipotesis, hubungan positif wujud di antara faktor-faktor persekitaran kerja dan pemindahan latihan. Keputusan kajian memberi pengertian bahawa faktor-faktor kesekitaran amat penting dan harus diberi perhatian semasa pelaksanaan program latihan. Kajian ini dirumuskan dengan limitation kajian dan cadangan kepada organisasi dan kajian masa depan.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Nature of work tasks has change rapidly in this new era. People have to or force to do more than one task extending their position boundary. In addition, emergence of new knowledge and technology are accelerating. Hence, new knowledge and skills are needed by employees to adapt and meet the unpredictable challenges through intensive development and training interventions by organization. However, numerous unsuccessful training programs have made organization effort and millions dollar of investment appears squandered.

One of the reasons is the failure of training transfer process. Training transfer is defined as trainees' ability to effectively and continually putting what they have learned from training into practice (Noe, 2008). Training will become useless when training is unable to change or improve employee's performance and

behaviour. Typically, this problem is due to some of the Human Resource professionals who are too concern in the design and implementation of training program while forget to measure ability of trainees apply learned capabilities at work. In addition, there are also HR professionals that blindly make use success training program from other organization without examine the suitability in terms of trainee motivation to learn, readiness to learn and ability to learn. Hence, ultimately training initial objective unable to meet and leave a lot of unsettling questions on return of investment.

Today, training transfer had become one of the core issues in training and development intervention. With respect to this, many researchers had investigated the factors that influence training transfer. On the other hand, several researchers had developed theoretical frameworks on training transfer process. Baldwin and Ford (1988) described a framework that addresses generalization and maintenance aspects in training transfer process. According to their model, there are 3 main factors influence learning and transfer of training, which are trainee characteristics, training design and work environment. Among these three factors, work environment factors have getting much more concern recently if compare to previous research studies. Subsequently, Holton (1996) expanded the transfer model to include an emphasis on individual performance and organizational results. The key component of his model is transfer motivation, which is hypothesized as a key way to connect learning with individual performance change.

Given the fact that training is vital to the success of organization, ongoing investigation on the factors that influence training transfer should be done. If organization identify that training transfer level in it organization is low or negative, then some adjustment must be make otherwise there is no sense to continue invest large sum of money on training. Thus, this survey research focus on work environment factors that influence effectiveness of training transfer.

1.1 Problem Statement

Training transfer is one of the reasons why training intervention fails. In 2002, a survey data suggested that 40% of trainees failed to transfer immediately after training, 70 % falter in transfer 1 year after training, and ultimately only 50% of training investments results in organizational and individuals improvements (Burke & Hutchins, 2007). In other words, trainees were facing problems in applying what they had been learned in training on their job (Noe, 2008). This particularly happened as training programs often designed without connecting training back to the work environment although this factor seems to be most critical in facilitating transfer (Hawley & Barnard, 2005).

Research on work environment elements that influence training transfer has notably developed. Until today, numerous work environment factors that influence training transfer had been identified, for example supervisor support, peer support, technological support as well as factors of accountability, workload, strategic linkage and opportunity to perform that will be study in present research. However, these four factors had seldom been included explicitly in past well-known transfer model and theories (Holton, 1996;; Holton, Bates and Ruona, 2000; Tracey and Tews, 2005). Besides, there are too much emphasizes on social support interventions which overshadowed the importance of other work environments. For instance, in Baldwin & Fold (1988) transfer model, factors of accountability, workload and strategic linkage were excluded.

In addition, from empirical literature review it was reported that factor of accountability still an understudied work environment variable (Burke & Hutchins, 2007) and it just recently surfaced in the training literature. The role of accountability in enhancing transfer process remains unclear as too much emphasis on supervisor and peer support mechanisms in the work environment studies (Burke & Sacs, 2009).

In working environment, workload and responsibility that holds by employee determines the time and opportunity they have to use trained skills in work. However, studies that referring to this issue were so little although there

were few studies had proven that workload did influencing training transfer. Thus, a study by Russ-Eft (2001) stressed that further study on this particular issue is needed to untangle the complex relationships between workload and training transfer. Thus, in advance, more research is needed to further clarify the relationship between workload and training transfer.

On the other hand, some research findings had addressed the relationship between strategic linkage in work and level of training transfer. However this result still inconclusive and need further proven effort. Similar as indicated by Watad & Ospina (1999) in their study, more studies will help to strengthen the relationship between strategically linking training to organizational goals and training transfer.

Opportunity to perform is one of the elements in working environment that influence success of post-training. In Lim & Johnson (2002) study, it was pointed that among causes for the failure of training transfer, lack of opportunity to perform was cited as number one constraint that inhibited training transfer. In which, they had suggested further study is needed to further clarify this particular issue. In addition, study of Burke & Hutchins (2007) also reviewed that empirical support for this particular issue is still limited.

In conclusion, this research was done to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of training transfer in organization XYZ?
2. What is the level of training transfer based on demographic characteristics at organization XYZ?
3. What was the relationship between factors of accountability, workload, strategic linkage, opportunity to perform and training transfer in organization XYZ?

1.2 Objectives Of the study

1.2.1 General Objective

Generally, the objective of this survey study was to identify the relationship between work environment and training transfer in organization XYZ.

1.2.2 Specific Objectives

Specifically, this study aimed to identify:

1. Level of training transfer based on demographic characteristics in organization XYZ.
2. The relationship between accountability and training transfer in organization XYZ.
3. The relationship between workload and training transfer in organization XYZ.
4. The relationship between strategic linkage and training transfer in organization XYZ.
5. The relationship between opportunity to perform and training transfer in organization XYZ.

1.3 Hypotheses

In this study, several hypotheses were tested.

H1: There is a significant relationship between accountability and transfer of training in organization XYZ.

In a recent survey study that done by Longnecker's (2004), it was shown that one of the learning imperative to increase transfer of learning was to enhancing accountability for application. Besides, a study done by Saks and Belcourt (2006) on training activities and training transfer also proven that there was significant relationship between accountability and training transfer. In the present study, it was assumed that the greater the degree of accountability that holds by employee the greater will be the level of transfer of training.

H2: There is a significant relationship between workload and transfer of training in organization XYZ.

From previous literature review, it was shown that individual's workload was an important factor affecting training success. From the work that done by Holton et al. (1997, 2000), it was confirmed that workload did influence one personal capacity to transfer. In the present study, it was assumed that moderate level of workload will increased the level of training transfer.

H3: There is a significant relationship between strategic linkage of training and transfer of training in organization XYZ.

In a study that done at Korea (Lim & Johnson, 2002), it was found that trainees perceived higher transfer when their learning outcomes met their departmental targets. Meanwhile, in their case study, Watad and Ospina(1999) reported that a management development program that enabled participants to strategically link their local decisions and daily work operations had brought an improvement for organizational effectiveness and learning. In the present study, it was assumed that the greater the strategic linkages level the greater level of training transfer.

H4: There is a significant relationship between opportunity to perform and transfer of training in organization XYZ.

In 2002, Clarke study proven that there was a relationship between opportunity to perform skills on the job and successful training transfer. In addition, Lim & Johnson (2002) had indicated that opportunity to use the trained skills was rated as the highest form of support for learners to transfer learned skills. In the present study, it was assumed that the greater the opportunity to perform learned skills the greater the level of training transfer.

1.4 Conceptual Framework

A research framework for this study was developed based on research hypotheses. In the research, there were 4 working environment variables (opportunity to perform, strategic linkage, accountability and workload) that being hypothesized as having significant relationship with training transfer.

The researcher developed the research framework based on models of training transfer process and transfer factors found in the literature review. According to Baldwin and Ford model of transfer process, work environment was one of the elements that influence training transfer. Work environment characteristics (supervisory support, peer support, opportunity to perform, technology support) had direct influences on training transfer regardless initial

training learning or retention of the training material (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). Among these factors of work environment, opportunity to perform was investigated. It was predicted that the greater the opportunity to perform new learned skills the greater the employees' transfer achievements.

While, factors of accountability, workload and strategic linkage were recognized as work environment's components in training transfer system based on past research. It was reviewed that these factors had direct relationship with training transfer in the organizations. A complete review of the related literature supporting these relationships proposed in framework was presented in next chapter.

Specifically, as depicted in Figure 1.1, this conceptual model demonstrated relationships between selected factors (independent variables) and training transfer (dependent variable).

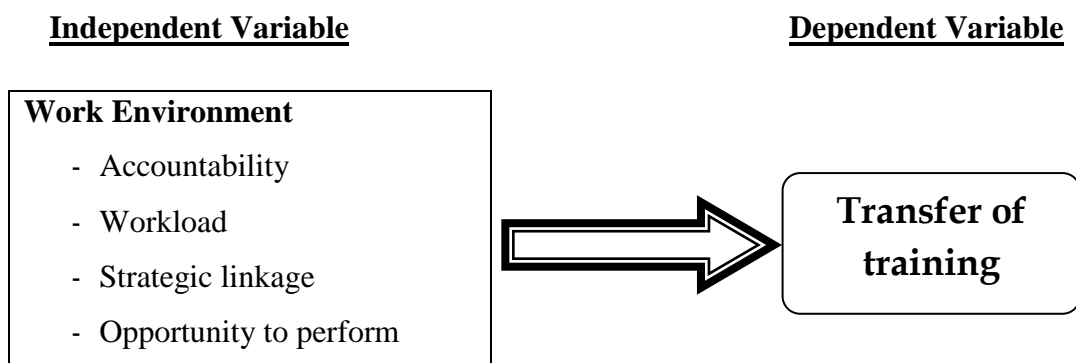


Figure 1.1: Research Framework

Source: Adopted from Baldwin, T.T. & Ford, J.K. (1988). Transfer of training: A review and direction for future research. *Personnel Psychology*, 41,63-103; Burke, L. A. & Huthcins, H. M. (2007). Training transfer: An integrative literature review. *Human Resource Development Review*, 6, 263-297; Russ-Eft, D. (2002). A typology of training design and work environment factors affecting workplace learning and transfer, *Human Resource Development Review*, 1(1), 45 – 65.

1.5 Definition of Terms

Conceptual and operational definitions for important terms used in the research were defined in this section.

1.5.1 Training

Training is an activity designed to provide learners with the knowledge and skills that needed for their current job as well as to improve performance gap (Mondy & Noe, 2005). In this study, training refers to formal courses or programs that organized internally or externally to give opportunity to employees to learned new skills or to improve the performance of specific tasks or roles.

1.5.2 Training Transfer

Training transfer is defined as trainees' ability to apply what is learned in training back to job. Transfer can be categorized into three forms, which are positive transfer, zero transfer and negative transfer (Desimone & Werner, 2005). In this study, training transfer referred to the ability of employee to:

1. Use new knowledge from training to accomplish job task
2. Willingness to apply learned skills obtained from training program
3. Performance improvement after apply learned new skills
4. More confident and self-efficacy after attend training course
5. Continuous use of learned skills & knowledge
6. Changed work attitudes and commitment
7. Eliminate particular old bad habit at work

1.5.3 Work Environment

Work environment refers to factors/elements on the job that influence transfer of training including: manager's support, peer support, technology support, the climate for transfer and the opportunity to use newly acquired capabilities on the job (Noe, 2008). In this study, work environment referred to training elements of

work in XYZ organization that enhance training transfer, which are opportunity to perform, accountability, strategic linkage and amount of workload.

1.5.4 Accountability

Accountability defined as the degree to which the organization, culture, or management expects learners to use trained knowledge and skills on the job and holds them responsible to perform the skills (Brinkerhoff & Montesino, 1995; Kontoghiorghes, 2002 cited by Burke & Hutchins, 2007). In this study, accountability was referred to:

1. Degree of responsibility to perform
2. Clear expectations for trainees to perform
3. Trainees personal control over their transfer actions
4. Sense of obligation that applied to a specific trained skills
5. Exist of plan assessments of transfer
6. Feedback received on the use of trained capabilities

1.5.5 Workload

Workload is the amount and types of work performed by an individual within a given period of time. It is both a quantitative measure of the total work performed and a qualitative measure of the person's perception of his ability to perform the work (All Business, 2009). In this study, workload referred to:

1. Amount of daily work task
2. Time allocation to finish task
3. Complexity of task performed
4. Roles hold
5. Stress in completing the assigned task

1.5.6 Strategic linkage

Strategic linkage is refers to degree of alignment of the training program with the strategic direction of the organization (Burke & Hutchins, 2007). In this study, strategic linkage was referred to:

1. Link of work department goals and training outcome
2. Congruent fit between training content with job responsibilities
3. Link between daily job and training experiences
4. Link between training goals and business goals
5. Link of performance outcome and other performance management and improvement activities

1.5.7 Opportunity to perform

Opportunity to perform is refers as chance to use learned capabilities. It is influenced by both work environment and trainee motivation to actively seek out assignments that allow them to use newly acquired skills and knowledge (Noe, 2008). In this study, opportunity to perform referred to:

1. Resources need to use what being learned will be available after training
2. Enough human resources available to use the skills acquired in training
3. Have work situations in which trainee have been able to use what have learned from the training
4. Difficulty or criticality of the trained task that needs to perform
5. Frequently pursue assignments that will utilize new capabilities
6. Often use trained capabilities in daily work

1.6 Summary

This chapter had discussed the problem statements, research questions, objectives, conceptual framework, hypotheses, significance of the study, limitations of the study and conceptual and operational definitions of important terms. In next chapter, related literature was reviewed.