

## The Identification of Training Transfer Factors among Academic Staffs of UiTM

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### ABSTRACT

Research related to factors affecting transfer of training in the public universities in Malaysia is extremely limited. Hence, this article examines the impact of employee readiness factors (attitude, organizational commitment, motivation to learn and motivation to learn), training design factors (error management and perceived importance) and work environmental factors (supervisor's role and opportunity to use) on transfer of training. Data were collected from 238 academic staffs of UiTM who participated in four training programs. The Structural Equation Modelling technique was used to test the hypotheses derived from the literature. The findings revealed that attitudes, error management, supervisor's role and opportunity to use have a significant impact on the transfer of training. Contrary to expectations, motivation to transfer did mediate partially between error management, opportunity to use and transfer of training. The implications of the results and limitations of the study are also noted, along with suggestions.

**KEYWORDS:** Employee Readiness, Training Design, Work Environment, Motivation to Transfer, Transfer of Training.

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### INTRODUCTION

Although scholars and researchers have accepted the "sticky idea" of the figure 10% as an average transfer rate, which is not based on scientific evidence [1-2] found that 87% of the worker's loss of skill within one month after the completion of sales training at Xerox and in [3] identified only 42% of 110 executives transferred the knowledge and skills learned from business writing skills training to their jobs. In a longer period of time of study, it was found 40% of the learned skills from training immediately transferred, 25% remained within 6 months and 15% within a year [4]. A study made by [5] also conveyed a similar view that teachers has rarely applied in an actual classroom situation of what's been gained from training. Furthermore, in [6] found in her study that students were encountered with academic staffs that lack of enthusiasm and imagination, poor in giving feedback about students' assignments, and bias or favouritism. Thus, the identification of variables associated with transfer of training is very imperative to prove the worth of investment in this human resource development (HRD).

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Training Transfer

Proper investment in resources, outstanding organization, training programs and materials and professionalism is stated as the all key factors for the transfer of training [7]. Several studies have found several factors leading to transfer of training such motivation to transfer [8-10], the supervisor's role [11-14], training design factor [15] and training framing [8].

#### Employee Readiness

Defined as the extent to which employees are ready or willing to attend and participate in training [16], it is a necessary element in influencing employee learning and has become the subject to be studied. Ability, attitudes, belief and motivation are all noted by [17] as the factors of employee readiness. These characteristics are necessary in order for them to learn the content of the program and to apply it on the job, and the work environment that will enable learning and not interfere with performance.

### **Attitudes**

Attitude is defined as an individual's view of something or his or her behaviour towards it [18]. It is believed to have significant impact in encouraging employees to learn and to transfer the new KSA to workplace. It is in line with [19] that identified individual's intention to perform the behaviour under consideration will be stronger when having more positive or favourable attitude and subjective norms toward behaviour and greater perceived behavioural control. When employees exhibit positive attitudes towards toward training and its transfer, they will have more behavioural intentions to learn in training, as well to apply the newly learned skill, knowledge and behaviour. Thus, it is assumed that attitudes influence the transfer of training as proposed in the hypothesis below:

H1a: Attitude has a significant relationship with training transfer.

### **Organisational Commitment**

Employee acceptance and belief with organizational goals and values can describe about organizational commitment [20]. In past decades, organizational commitment was commonly identified as one of nine factors mostly examined in training transfer issue [21]. Referring to [22], the relationship between organizational commitment and motivation to transfer has been found significant in many studies. Further, they assumed the higher the level of organizational commitment, the greater would be the motivation to transfer of the workers relatively with those who have lower organizational commitment. However, in [23] found organizational commitment was uncorrelated with the perceived training transfer, thus not supporting the assumption. Based on previous studies, it can be hypothesized:

H1b: Organisational commitment has a significant relationship with training transfer.

### **Motivation to Learn**

Individual's motivation to undergo and learn from training is a critical factor in transferring the skills [24]. In [17] referred motivation to learn as trainees' need to learn the training content. If employees received fair supports from supervisors while attending and committing training programs, it is considered as equity [25]. Perception they were fairly treated will influence motivation to learn. As a result, it will increase transferability among the employees. This transfer of training will happen when they put effort towards learning the content and applying what learnt from the training to actual work finally [26]. Thus, this study makes an assumption:

H1c: Motivation to learn has a significant relationship with training transfer.

### **Abilities**

Based on a study by [27], they stated that cognitive ability will influence job performance and also able to learn in training programs. If trainees are lacking the cognitive ability that is necessary to perform job tasks, they will not be able to perform well. In certain extents, ability to learn will influence cognitive ability and job performance. In [28] suggested that in order for the abilities to learn to occur, motivation must exist. Employee ability to apply or use the absorbed knowledge is higher when an employee has high motivation. Even though individuals may have high abilities to learn, the capacity to absorb and transfer knowledge would not happen. It is a must for the knowledge receiver to have both ability and motivation in absorbing new knowledge. In turn, a higher rating in the utilization of knowledge can be realized [29]. Accordingly, this study posits the following hypothesis:

H1d: Ability has a significant relationship with training transfer.

### **Training Design**

Training design is the process or systematic approach in developing training programs [30]. According to [31], organizations should design training that gives opportunity to the workers to transfer learning as well promoting them about their abilities to apply and maintain the training content over time. It was also recommended that appropriate feedback regarding employee job performance following training activities must be provided to them. Therefore, in [32] identified six factors in the training design that must take place such identification of learning needs, learning goals, content relevance, prominent instructional strategies and methods and self-management strategies. However, different learners may require different training design.

### **Error Management**

Error management is one of the identified variables in exhibiting training transfer by [33] although only few studies have looked explicitly the processes that underlie the effectiveness of error management training. Error management can motivate employees to anticipate or ready what can go wrong, and facilitate them with knowledge so that they will know how to handle any potential problems that may affect their performance [32]. Classified under training design, it has been found consistent with transfer of training such in a study by [34]. They found employees with error management training and provided with error instruction will show greater transfer of training as compared to those who have received error training alone. Therefore, the following is hypothesized:

H1e: Error management has a significant relationship with training transfer.

### **Perceived Importance**

According to [35], training objectives and contents should be communicated to the designated participants well ahead so that they can prepare themselves by avoiding ambiguity about the goal of the training program. It also helps them become more motivated and active in participation. Additionally, in [36] urged that training goals and materials should also be content valid or closely relevant to the transfer task. This would help the employees perceive the task learned during training to be crucial to their actual performance. Furthermore, in [37] identified that the content relevance as a primary factor for successful transfer among Thai manager in a cross-sectional transfer study. Therefore, the following proposition is suggested:

H1f: Perceived importance has a significant relationship with training transfer.

### **Work Environment**

Baldwin and Ford with their contribution to the development of Training Transfer Model in 1988 that until now is universally acceptable highlighted the environmental factors always been left behind in examining the predictors of training transfer. Many studies have named perceived organizational support or perceived supervisory support and its relationship that may not reflect the actual predictors of training transfer [9-10], which contradicted with [38] as they claimed that much should be done to the conceptual meaning and operationalization of constructs that related to the work environment. The identified constructs must also relevant to the training program.

### **Supervisor's Role**

Supervisors are given major duties and responsibilities to lead work groups in organizations [11]. This is consistent with [39] that appreciated supervisors and peer support as becoming powerful factors of effective training transfer. In [13] claimed that supervisors, colleagues and peers are the three major people-related factors in enhancing transfer as discussed previously by some studies [40-42]. Other than that, availability of a mentor [43, 15] and positive personal outcomes [14] also identified important to training transfer.

In addition, in [15] emphasized that among people-related work environment factors, there are several factors appears to lead training transfer more than others. The factors are having discussions with supervisors about applying the new learning, involvement or familiarization of supervisor in training and receiving positive response or feedback from the supervisor. However, in [44] found a negative influence of supervisor and peer support on transfer of training, although they used LTSI (Learning Transfer System Inventory) which developed by [45]. Building from previous studies, the following is hypothesized:

H1g: Supervisor's role has a significant relationship with training transfer.

### **Opportunity to Use**

According to [46], employees must be given a chance to practice or use of what they have learned in their workplace. Given such opportunity will encourage them to try out the learned skills and knowledge. Therefore, it is an employer's responsibility to always remind to their employees that it is naturally difficult and will not proceed perfectly, but they should keep trying to use the newly skills. The importance of opportunity to use can be realized by urging companies to provide adequate time so that it can enable the employees to practice and repeat the use of materials [47]. Furthermore, allocating more time to the employees will enable them to assimilate, accept and internalize of what is being learned. Therefore, the following is hypothesized:

H1h: Opportunity to use has a significant relationship with training transfer.

### Motivation to Transfer

Motivation to transfer plays an important role in motivation to training transfer [48]. Without this type of motivation, employees will not apply and retain the newly learned skills. Employees with higher levels of motivation to transfer learning will inspire or drive them to processing knowledge, either from informal or formal learning in the context of a specific job. Many studies have focused training motivation as the training outcome by testing the drivers of this motivation [49-50].

There are several factors of motivation to transfer [51, 33, 52]. Among the factors, motivation to learn, a motivating job and perceived use the newly learned skills and knowledge exhibited the most important predictors for motivation to transfer. Motivation to transfer is also identified as a mediating factor between predictors of identical elements, motivation to learn and expected utility [53], training reputation, self-efficacy and managerial support [24] with transfer of training. Thus, the followings are hypothesized:

H2a: Motivation to transfer mediates the relationship between attitudes and transfer of training.

H2b: Motivation to transfer mediates the relationship between organisational commitment and transfer of training.

H2c: Motivation to transfer mediates the relationship between motivation to learn and transfer of training.

H2d: Motivation to transfer mediates the relationship between abilities and transfer of training.

H2e: Motivation to transfer mediates the relationship between error management and transfer of training.

H2f: Motivation to transfer mediates the relationship between perceived importance and transfer of training.

H2g: Motivation to transfer mediates the relationship between supervisor's role and transfer of training.

H2h: Motivation to transfer mediates the relationship between opportunity to use and transfer of training.

### METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional research design was employed for this study and the unit of analysis for this study is individual, which consists of UiTM's academic staffs from all campuses that have attended four training courses organized by Institute of Leadership and Development (ILD), UiTM. This study employed the survey method and for data collection; a self-administered questionnaire was designed and used. Two hundred and fifty-eight questionnaires were mailed to the respondents. A total of 238 questionnaires were received and used for this analysis which translates to about a 92% response rate. Instruments used in this paper were adapted from previous research by using a seven-point Likert scale.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Using PLS-SEM, the tests were conducted based on the measurement model and structural model. The significant direct relationships were found between ability, error management, supervisor's role, opportunity to use and transfer of training (refer Table 1). Meanwhile, mediation effects of motivation to transfer were found on the relationships between error management, opportunity to use and transfer of training (refer Table 2).

**Table 1: Direct, indirect effects of motivation to transfer on transfer of training**

Path	Direct Effect Model			Indirect Effect			Total Effect	VAF	Type of Mediation
	$\beta$	T-Stat	P-Value	$\beta$	T-Stat	P-Value	$\beta$		
AT → TOT c	0.118	1.590	0.112	0.042	1.717	0.086	0.16	0.263	No effect
OC → TOT c	-0.023	0.282	0.778	-0.026	0.959	0.338	-0.049	0.531	No effect
AB → TOT c	0.194	2.572	0.01	-0.017	0.552	0.581	0.177	0.096	Direct only
ML → TOT c	-0.1	1.097	0.273	0.058	1.85	0.064	-0.043	1.34	No effect
ER → TOT c	0.198	2.975	0.003	0.085	2.575	0.01	0.283	0.300	Complementary
PI → TOT c	-0.1	1.524	0.128	0.036	1.263	0.207	-0.064	0.563	No effect
SV → TOT c	0.183	3.011	0.003	0.019	0.962	0.336	0.202	0.094	Direct only
OP → TOT c	0.201	2.261	0.024	0.146	3.244	0.001	0.347	0.421	Complementary

Direct Effect Model			
MT → TOT b	0.341	3.842	0.000
AT – →MT a	0.124	2.003	0.045
OC → MT a	-0.076	0.937	0.349
AB → MT a	-0.05	0.558	0.577
ML → MT a	0.169	2.151	0.032
ER → MT a	0.248	3.188	0.001
PI → MT a	0.106	1.254	0.21
SV → MT a	0.055	0.983	0.326
OP → MT a	0.427	6.589	0.000

Notes: β = path coefficient, AB= Abilities, AT= Attitudes, ER= Error management, ML=Motivation to learn, MT= Motivation to transfer, OC= Organizational commitment, OP= Opportunity to use, PI= Perceived importance, SV= Supervisor’s role, TOT= Transfer of training

The findings reinforce previous studies which contend that abilities, error management, supervisor’s role and opportunity to use relate significantly to the application of skills [39, 4, 54-56] among academic staffs of UiTM. Thereby, it is best to be understood that transfer of training will occur when academic staffs have physical and mental capacity for learning, provided with effective feedback about error they have made and social support from the seniors in assisting their transfer efforts to transfer. Provided with adequate resources (e.g. research grant, computer labs and research management unit) also has enabled them to be more positive in applying the skills and knowledge that they have learned from training program. Other than that, out of four employee characteristics been studied, ability was found to have direct influence on transfer of training with small effect size (0.037). However, it has no impact on motivation to transfer ( $f^2 = 0.002$ ). Hence, it can be clarified that though the readiness variables have effects on transfer of training, it could not motivate academic staffs of UiTM to apply the skills and knowledge they obtained from the training programs which in turn may lead to non-transferability among UiTM academic staffs. Previous studies have confirmed several factors for the transfer motivation to take place such; identical elements, motivation to learn and expected utility[57]; training reputation, self-efficacy and managerial support [24]with transfer of training which some of the factors did not impact training transfer in this study.

### CONCLUSION

Training is used to build a skilled workforce, including the academic staffs of UiTM. As the policy-makers of Malaysia perceive training as an investment for increasing productivity and for adopting changes in the organizations in response to internal and external forces, lack of transfer of training will ruin the human resource development of academic staffs. Therefore, with high investment been allocated to training, the needs for identification of training transfer-related factors are demanded and crucial.

### IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The first implication of this study related on the transfer of training issues itself. There was a study on transfer of training dimensions available in the current literature conducted in UiTM but comprised of support staffs of UiTM [58] with only one campus involved.

Secondly, the message to UiTM’s policy makers is very clear that in order for the academic staffs to apply the skills from training programs, they should enhance understanding among academic staff about how the training programs can be useful for their job and career planning. Therefore, it needs for UiTM to be more realistic in designing training program that perhaps will increase their preparedness for learning and training transfer. Engaging academic staffs in designing training program may help academic staffs to match their needs and UiTM’s goals. Other than that, framing training prior the program is also considered important that can motivate them to participate in the training programs so that the generalizability and maintenance of the learned skills can be executed and this can be impactful with the roles played by supervisor or senior academic staffs.

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