



## **Roles of Trainee Characteristics and Work Environment in Training Transfer: A Conceptual Extension of Baldwin and Ford Model with Job Attitude Factors in Nigerian Context**

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### **Abstract**

In today's world of competitiveness, training and development has become an integral part in most of the global organizations and it contributes significantly to the success and effectiveness of these organizations. The aim of this research work is to develop an extended framework on the concept of transfer of training through the indicators of trainee characteristics and work environment. Organizations are more increasingly concerned about the investment made in training and this has necessitated it to be justified in terms of improved employee and organizational performance, such as higher profit, enhanced market share, higher productivity, and reduced error and safety climate. However, aiding employee development, providing employees with meaning and purpose, providing a supportive work environment and providing training opportunities are the basic principles of gaining commitments from the workforce. Moreover, the supervisor's and peer's ability to provide encouragement and support such as guidance on how to use training on the job, encouragement given to attend training programs and sufficient time and opportunities provided for applying training, would motivate employees to transfer training knowledge and skills to the job. Baldwin and Ford worked in analyzing the impact of training design factors, trainee characteristics factors and work environment factors on the occurrence of training transfer. Arguably, this is a way forward in propelling the learning and training transfer system.

**Keywords:** Transfer of Training, Organizational Commitment, Job Involvement, Supervisor Support, Peer Support

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## Introduction

Organizational employees need to learn interpersonal relations and the ability to handle conflicts, stress, and many activities that form a system of communication through which their skills and knowledge can improve. Nowadays, organizations conceive training programs, not only as an investment in improving competencies and capabilities of employees to perform their job functions better, but also as connecting tools for improving behaviors and job performance to increase higher organizational performance and effectiveness of the organizations (Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Chiaburu & Lindsay 2013).

However, the increased concern by organizations about the numerous training investments does not provide reasonable justification on the basis of higher organizational performance, which includes reduced error, increased profit, improved marketable share, higher productivity, and safety (Salas & Cannon-bowers, 2001). Equally, organizations hope that their employees will be able to learn and acquire something new in the event of training and effectively transfer or rather utilize the training knowledge and skills obtained through training back to the workforce (Petty, Lim & Zulauf, 2003). Consequently, the basic aim of this work is to review the existing studies and later develop the extended research framework on the concept of transfer of training through the indicators of trainee job attitude characteristics and factors of work environment in relation to training transfer.

## Literature Review

### Transfer of Training

As organizations are striving harder to compete favorably in the global economy, differentiation regarding the employee motivation, knowledge, skills, and attitude takes on an increasing utmost importance. Ismail and Bongogoh (2007) contend that the interest put on organizations to compete in a competitive market place have brought about the nonstop need to improve employee's productivity. Transfer of training is a standout amongst the most imperative investments in light of the fact that it upgrades the learning, abilities, mentality and conduct of employees (Bulut & Culha, 2010).

Initially, the training transfer model was developed through the work of Baldwin & Ford (1988) for the proper understanding of transfer processes. The processes of transfer of training were presented on the grounds of trainee characteristics or contribution components which include personality, motivation, and trainee cognitive ability; training design components such as sequencing, learning, of the training program, and training contents; and work condition of transfer i.e. supervisor support and peers support.

Organizational training is turning into the center component of the functions of HR management, accompanied with other relevant HR functions, for instance rewards, selection and recruitment. Successful planning of the organizational employees against the inevitable future can only be realized via sustainable and constant training of employees. In other words, the organizational training is a key aspect of organization's strategy (Nadiri & Tanova, 2010). Similarly, to enhance employee performance on the work, the knowledge, skills, and attitudes (KSA) acquired in the training must be maintained, and transferred back to the place of work, and summed up crosswise over contexts (Holton, 2005).

It has been comprehensively realized that the training transfer is of most extreme importance to build performance and gain higher return on investment for an organization (Hua & Ahmad, 2011). Hence, training transfer is observed to be multidimensional construct within the training context. The transfer of training is the degree to which an individual employee has the capacity to repeat the learned behaviors from training session under new circumstances (Kia & Ismail, 2013). Gegenfurtner, Festner,

Gallenberger, Lehtinen, & Gruber (2009) stressed that nowadays organizations invest significant amount of money in developing their HR, so it is important for those organizations that are faced with wider range of competition to enhance employees' KSA. Accordingly, researchers and training experts have concentrated on the variables influencing the training transfer to the workplace. For example, self-efficacy, content validity, transfer design, training transfer motivation and the employee's reaction towards training (Akhtar, Ali, Sadaqat & Hafeez, 2011; Bin & Yusof, 2012; Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Iqbal, 2011; Simosi, 2012; Wiechman & Gurland, 2009).

### **Trainee Characteristics**

Trainee characteristics is defined as the employees' intended efforts to best utilize the imparted knowledge and skills in training session to a real situations of work through one of its predictors or a combination of its predictors (Noe & Schmitt, 1986). Many researchers (see Alliger, Tannenbaum, Bennett, Traver, & Shotland, 1997; Velada & Caetano, 2007) identified several trainee characteristics (job attitudes) that influence the training transfer process. Some of these characteristics include job involvement, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational cynicism. Trainee attitudes, values, interests, and expectations can influence training effectiveness (Cheng & Ho, 2001; Salas & Cannon-bowers, 2001). Chiaburu (2010) further outlined the individual employee or trainee characteristics as self-efficacy, locus of control, cognitive ability, motivation and achievement, conscientiousness and anxiety (Mathieu, Martineau, & Tannenbaum, 1993).

### **Organizational Commitment**

The concept of organizational commitment alludes to the employees' related emotional strength, identification and involvement in a particular organization (Langkamer & Ervin, 2008). The progress of worldwide competition, corporate restructuring, technological advancements and conditions of economic fluctuations are compounding on organizations, which result in increasing need for organizations to adapt and learn, to make improvements in their performances (Nizam & Yusof, 2011). Accordingly, facilitating employees with meaning and purpose, aiding development of employees, establishing a supportive working environment and providing training opportunities are the basic principles of gaining commitment from the workforce (Hall & Mirvis, 1996). This implies that, trainees with higher level of training motivation would acquire knowledge and skills compared to those employees with lower level of training motivation (Fardaniah & Aziz, 2014).

However, it is seen that with decreasing organizational commitment, worker productivity also comes down (Dahl, Nesheim, & Olsen, 2009). Employees, at times, fail to meet their expected performance level due to unforeseen circumstances. When employees feel that the organization does not carry them along, they do not exhibit behaviors that show their full concentration on the organizational goals (Jehanzeb, Rasheed, & Rasheed, 2013). Employees are unlikely to transfer their knowledge and behavior when they believe that they can competently execute their jobs, however, the organization is not acknowledging their improved performance levels (Ikeanyibe, 2009).

As such, organizations hold the primary assignment in distinguishing the day by day customary and short-term employee inadequacy, and report such inadequacy to top level authorities or employers who are responsible for conducting and organizing training programs to serve as a panacea to the shortcomings of employees (Madi, Abdullah, Ismail, & Baroto, 2012). Hence, employees who show a large amount of organizational commitment may not be engaged in the intentional turnover process as they are more involved in and focused on, both the job goals specifically and the organizational goals in general (Jaros, 2007).

## Job Involvement

Job involvement refers to the capacity to which employees competently identify themselves with their daily work and importance of this work to their future self-image. Colquitt, LePine, & Noe (2000) described job involvement as the extent or degree to which people or employees feel psychologically attached to their jobs or measurement to what extent and how often an employee participates in a job. Job involvement is at times conceptualized as a cognitive psychological state of employee's level of identification with the job (Kanungo, 1982).

Moreover, involving personnel in doing innovative jobs will make them highly motivated in performing their jobs (Kanungo, 1982). The frequency of the employees' involvement in their jobs will have a greater impact on the training transfer to the workplace (Sabir, Akhtar, Ali, Bukhari, Nasir & Ahmed, 2014). Employees are more worried about their current job performance which makes them to constantly look for ways to improve their work effectiveness (Uygur, 2009). They may exhibit lesser absenteeism, and unnecessary lateness as compared to employees who are perceived to have lower job involvement levels (Leung, 2009). Such employees with high job involvement are more beneficial for the organization (Mohamed, Munirah & Mustapha, 2014).

Top performing organizations encourage the idea of job involvement as employees who are committed to their jobs display better performance by adapting to newer challenges, improving the customer base and staying committed to the organization. This, in turn, helps organizations to attain competitive advantage. Therefore, it is important in today's dynamic business world for employees to acquire effective training in order to transfer the new knowledge, skills and aptitudes (Alam & Mohammad, 2009; Egan, Yang, & Bartlett, 2004; Janssen & Van Yperen, 2004).

## Work Environment

The work environment includes variables of the climate dimensions and organizational culture, specifically the supervisor's support, learning culture, feedback on performance, supervisor sanctions and peer support (Eskelinen, Kokkinen, Koskinen, & Tyrvaainen, 2004; Holton, 2005). Furthermore, Pham, Segers & Gijssels (2013) asserted that the work environment construct can be determined by peer support, sanctioning of training transfer, preferred support, job autonomy and supervisors support (Colquitt *et al.*, 2000).

Nijman, Nijhof, Wognum & Veldkamp (2006) categorized work environment into the general work environment and transfer climate (specific), i.e. supervisor support which means the behavior of supervisor in optimizing training transfer. General work environment deals with numerous workplace characteristics that have been observed to influence training transfer, namely, lack of coordination and budget restrictions between different units/departments in the organization ranging from management to peers or supervisors.

Nonetheless, the management, peers or supervisors frequently take actions through the application of the basic processes of the training needs analysis, designing, and implementing courses of training programs, and lastly, evaluating it in order to overcome and improve employees' shortcomings in terms of knowledge and skills (Berg, Sverke & Sjo, 2000). Supervisors and peer support, has, therefore been identified among the most powerful and vital tools for enhancing employees' utilization of training (Elangovan & Karakowsky, 1999; Baldwin & Ford, 1988). Support that begins from the supervisors is considered to have a periodic progress checks, a punctuated or a verbose character, with transfer, during, before, and after training (Chiaburu, 2010).

### **Supervisor Support**

Baldwin & Ford (1988) in their model identified support emanating from supervisors and opportunity provisions to perform as important components of supporting and maintaining trainee skills. Training would only be transferred to the workplace when there is constant support from the supervisors. Support from supervisors for such developmental activities enhances employee motivation. According to Swanson & Holton (2001) the critical objective of training transfer is full utilization of new knowledge, skills, and aptitudes to enhance group and individual employee performance within an organizational workplace. Such supervisory support will make employees motivated to attend the training program and this will result in the process of transferring knowledge and aptitudes learned to the workplace (Sabir *et al.*, 2014).

Elangovan & Karakowsky (1999) urged on the need to consider the significance of the role of supervisors that facilitate and encourage employees in transferring training to the job. Training effectiveness is determined by the trainee ability (Lancaster, DiMilia & Cameron, 2014).

### **Peer Support**

The successes of conducting training program, its utilization and transfer seems to be heavily dependent on encouragement and support from peers which is realized by employee implementation of learning, joint identification and also the learning applications (Dermol & Cater, 2013). Peer support is revealed to be affected by trainee transfer motivation and transfer of training (Noe & Schmitt, 1986). Peer support reflects the behaviors of the peers to provide trainee with support, reinforcement and encouragement for transfer of training (Nijman *et al.*, 2006).

In light of this, peers could receive training as coaches and be provided with some checklist to evaluate periodically their fellow colleagues on their performance. Trainees, consequently, ought to have aim to transfer training. At the point of returning to the working environment after attending training, employees needs to adapt to the work environment changes that may restrain or help in the utilization of knowledge and skills acquired (Pham *et al.*, 2013).

The study of Chiaburu (2010) demonstrates that peer (co-workers) are more important for transfer of training, generalization, and maintenance than both support from the organization and supervisors. A study conducted by Hua (1997) has proved that support from working peers can positively affect the employee perceived training transfer and trainee motivation to transfer.

### **Extension of Baldwin and Ford's Model**

Huczynski & Lewis (1980) depicted and developed a model of training transfer which illustrated the interaction of individual trainee motivation to transfer, training contents, and work environment factors. Their model determined three stages of training: (i) the pre-training course stage which is characterized by initiation of motivation and training needs; (ii) the during-course or training stage which is characterized by absolute instructions delivery; (iii) the post-training course stage which is characterized by proper management of employees work environment so as to promote and improve training transfer.

Thereafter, in an attempt to further develop a training transfer model with respect to existing empirical evidences and provide a framework for understanding transfer process, Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart & Wright (2006) came up with the construct (variable) of transfer motivation (as synonymous with motivation to transfer) and they further viewed it as trainees' desire or intent to use the KSA learnt in the training on their daily jobs. In view of this, Baldwin & Ford's model was expanded to include strategies of self-management and learning which are related to

evaluation of training climate and training design, as being the vital elements in examining and assessing the construct of work environment (Yahya, Mansor, & Warokka, 2012).

More so, Burke & Hutchins (2007) have identified three primary indicators of training transfer, namely work environment (climate), trainee characteristics (individual) and training design (enabling). However, Chiaburu, van Dam & Hutchins (2010) revealed that conscientiousness, cognition ability, control, trainee motivation, anxiety, achievement motivation, self-efficacy are determinants of individual trainee characteristics.

Gunu, Oni, Tsado, & Ajayi (2013) studied the case of State Universal Basic Education Board, Bauchi-Nigeria and found that the emphasis on acquiring new KSA by employees is a tricky task because of the fact that workers originates from diverse and dynamic cultures. Undoubtedly, employees of Universal Basic Education Board, Bauchi-Nigeria have not been able to enhance their KSA despite the fact that they have been attending many types of training programs. These job attitude factors of employees' trainee characteristics and work environment may have an impact on transferring training. Thus, the researchers found it necessary to advance the discovery of the relationships of these variables.

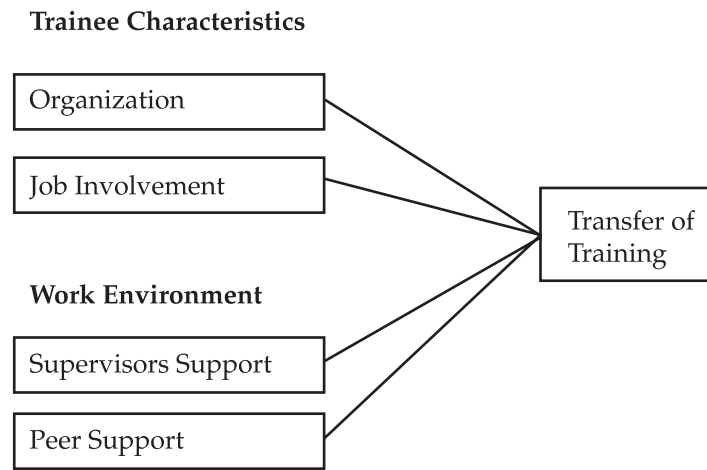
### Research Gaps and Contributions

From the theoretical viewpoint, past researchers have focused more on the training design factors and paid minimal attention to trainee personal characteristics and work environment factors (Arthur, Bennett, Edens & Bell, 2003; Chiou, Lee & Purnomo, 2010; Velada & Caetano, 2007). The review of extant empirical literature on the transfer of training uncovers that most studies have, by and large, centered around recognizing the relationship through the earlier established predictors which influence the transfer of training and found inconsistent findings (Chiou *et al.*, 2010; Pham *et al.*, 2013; Tziner, Fisher, Senior & Weisberg, 2007). Though, these predictor variables have been investigated separately (Berg, Sverke, & Sjo, 2000; Ramay, 2007), there seems to exist a comprehensive dearth of empirical research that have studied the individual characteristics on the basis of job attitude factors and their contribution via transferring training to real work settings. Therefore, studies on the transfer of the training program are generally rare so far and the role of organizational commitment and job involvement (job attitude) in training transfer has received little attention of researchers.

Based on these issues in the past literature of training transfer, this research work would contribute empirically to the established body of knowledge (transfer of training) in order to redress the inadequacies in the past literature which mostly focused on three identified factors of Baldwin and Ford's earlier model. Notably, this study could reinforce the notion of empirical evidence on the training transfer that called for the importance of inclusion and further examine the determinants of individual job attitude and employee work environment factors from other parts of the globe. Thus, this research work illustrates a case in Nigeria's educational context.

Thus, the reason for advancing the Baldwin & Ford's (1988) model was borne out of the conviction that the growth of knowledge in the field of transfer of training is essentially a cumulative and ongoing process in which new insights and contributions are added to the existing stock and body of knowledge and unsupported or false hypotheses are eliminated (Hopper & Powell, 1985a). Hence, this study contributes on the conceptualization of the extension of the Baldwin and Ford (1988) model by synthesizing Baldwin and Ford's (1988) model and past empirical study findings on transfer of training. Besides that, the depicted framework below (Figure 1) shows the association between trainee characteristics measured by organizational

commitment and job involvement and work environment measured by supervisor support and peer support transfer of training



**Figure 1. Extended Baldwin and Ford's Model**

### Conclusion

The most predominant model in the discipline of training transfer has been the one developed by Baldwin and Ford (1988) and the above discussed model has additionally been subjected to numerous empirical investigations (Burke & Hutchins, 2007). As per this model, transfer of training is dependent on three variables. The first variable (construct) mentions training design and it incorporates standards of learning and objectives of learning, content of training, its relation and similarities to the real jobs. The next variable (construct) discusses the trainee characteristics which concentrate on employee ability, transfer motivation, self-efficacy toward oneself and some attributes of personality. The third set of variables (construct) is concerned with work environment, supervisor and peer support and chances to utilize what has been learned.

Several researchers emphasized on the vitality of approaching the concept of training transfer from trainee job attitudinal factors such as organizational commitment and job involvement rather than repeatedly examining the already established determinants of trainee characteristics of the training transfer (Salas & Cannon-bowers, 2001). Consequently, the researchers have come to an understanding that these factors will help organizations like State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), Bauchi State, Nigeria to upgrade the application and use of the newly learned skills, knowledge, and aptitudes in the organizations (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009).

### Limitation of the Study and Scope for Further Studies

The present study only identified and examined few predictors of trainee characteristics and work environment (i.e, organizational commitment, job involvement, supervisor support, and peer support) but excluded other predictors in the hypothesized model. The omission of some important predictor variables in this research might limit the general understanding of the factors that determine transfer of training. This study focused exhaustively in assessing the dimensions of training outcome from the transfer of training perspective. However, the current study was unable to outline and examine the effect of trainee characteristics and work environment on

other dimensions of training outcomes such as employee job performance and learning reactions (Colquitt *et al.*, 2000).

Future researchers should embark on post training empirical evaluation of the model through quantitative approach in the Nigeria's Education context. They should also incorporate other factors of job attitude such as job satisfaction and organizational cynicism into the training transfer model. Additionally, future investigators are encouraged to focus their empirical studies on examining the generalizability of this extended training transfer model in the context of different organizations and continents apart from educational sector and Africa respectively.

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