Training transfer:
Case study of The Institute of Public Administration’s Trainees
In the Public Organizations of Albaha District, KSA

Dr. Ahmed Hamed Aldolaimi
Assistant professor
Faculty of Administration and Financial Science
Albaha University

Abstract

Training is playing an important role in developing organizations around the world. In order for training to be effective, it should be transferred into better employee’s performance. This study is trying to investigate the factors affecting transfer of training in the government public organizations in Albaha District. What impact has trainee’s characteristics, training design, and work environment on training transfer? Data were collected from 70 of the public organizations employees who attended training programmes at IPA. The results shows that trainees were motivated about training, and they were positive about training design. However, work environment was an issue to participants. They were unconfident about their supervisors and colleagues support. A supportive organizational culture appear to be effective for the transfer of training to the workplace. The study recommended that there should be more attention from decision- makers in the public organizations in Albaha District towards work conditions.

Key words: Training transfer, Albaha University, Institute of Public Administration, Saudi Arabia

Introduction:

Current trends at the national and international levels call for taking advantage of new opportunities and respond to emerging challenges resulting from ongoing transition to an integrated information and knowledge driven global economy, which is based on science and technology. This transition requires far-reaching revisions in education curricula, job-training practices and other human development activities to upgrade individual’s productive abilities. MEP (2016)

Today’s organizations are facing severe competition from around the world as more turbulence and pressures of continuing change are imposing upon them. In this global environment, organizations are encountering globalization of their employees, as well as the business itself. This trend affects upon employee training and development in order to cope with the global needs of employee performance. Doo (2000)

Recently there has been a great demand for training and development programmes in most developed countries in order to improve the quality of human resources. Most of the modern organizations have recognised the vital role that training and development programmes play in achieving an organization’s strategic objectives, Aldolaimi (2007).

Becker (2002) states that education and training are the most investments in human capital. While education is significantly important to develop human resources for economic development and competitiveness, training is another important aspect, which preserves and improves the skills of the employees.

According to ATD (2015), U.S. organizations spent $164.2 billion on employee learning and development in 2012, which is an average, spent of $1,208 per employee.

Saudi Arabia, like any other country, is certainly in need of a highly trained and skillful workforce to exploit the country’s resources. Therefore, it has dedicated huge investment in developing its workforce through different training institutions, among which is the Institute of Public Administration.

The Institute of Public Administration (IPA) is the main government body that design and implement in-service administrative training programmes for various employment grades in the government.
Statement of problem:

The accelerated development in Saudi Arabia, because of its vast oil resources, has led to an expansion of social and economic activities at all levels. It has also led to increasing demand in the Kingdom for sophisticated technology. Consequently, qualified labor needs have become one of the issues facing the country, Aldolaimi (2007).

Transfer of training into the job is of significant concern for training researchers and practitioners. Baldwin, et al, (1988) argued that despite research efforts, there is a growing concern over the transfer problem. According to Friesen, (2009) no more than 20% of training investment actually results in transfer to the job.

With the huge investment by the Saudi Government to provide training programmes to the public organizations’ employees through the IPA, and in order for this investment not to be a waste of money and rather be cost effective, decision makers at the public organizations should pay more attention to the training transfer to the job.

The aim and objective of the study

This paper is trying to identify the factors that influence the transfer of training skills and competencies gained through on job training programmes provided to the employees of the public sector by the Institute of Public Administration (IPA) in Albaha district.

Research questions:
The following main question will help to achieve the objectives of this study:
What are the factors that effects the training transfer of the IPA’s training programmes among the public sector organizations ‘ employees in Albaha District?
The following sub questions will help to answer the main study question:
1- What are the trainees’ reasons for participation on training programmes?
2- What impact have the trainees’ characteristics on training transfer?
3- What impact have the training design and content on training transfer?
4- What impact have the work environment on training transfer?

Literature review:

Effectiveness and efficiency in the workplace is one of the main concern of all organisation. This can mainly be achieved by developing the real assets of any organisation, which is the human capital.

In this competitive world, training plays an important role in the competent and challenging format of business. Training is the nerve that suffices the need of fluent and smooth functioning of work, which helps in enhancing the quality of work life of employees and organization. Kulkarni (2013)

One objective of human resources development has been to achieve harmony between the content of training attainment on the one hand, and the fast changing labour market requirements on the other hand; and to develop the skills needed in todays’ world where the economy is increasingly driven by competition, information, and knowledge. MEP (2016)

Concept of training:

There are many definitions of training, and most of them focus on two aspects, improving skills and performance, and changing the behaviour and attitude. Training is the process that changes and improves some skills, knowledge and behaviour of any employee. Aldolaimi (2007)

According to the Business Dictionary, training is an organized activity aimed at imparting information and instructions to improve the recipient's performance or to help him/her attain a required level of knowledge or skill.

Importance of training:

Organizations are facing a tough challenge to survive in the global scenario. In order to survive, organizations need to transform themselves into learning organizations and train its members to adapt to the constant changing competitive environment. Nagaraju, et al (2015)
The importance of training for an organization is related to its contribution to the workplace. According to Hillstrom, et al (1998) organizations of all sizes have embraced training and development as a means of promoting employees growth and acquiring a highly skilled work force.

Human resources specialists can increase significantly the effectiveness of the staff of any organization by employing a wide range of training and development techniques. Training programmes are designed to modify or to develop abilities, skills, attitudes, or knowledge so that employees can acquire the competence that will enable them perform their job better. Cascio, (1998)

The intensification of global competition, the changing marketplace and rapid technological advances demand more competent workforce. Therefore, the importance of organizational training has been recognized as a strategic force in the effort to raise competitiveness. Nikandrou (2009)

Training transfer:

Training transfer, learning transfer or simply transfer are terms used to denote the level of information an employee receives from some form of training event such as in a traditional classroom training session that is then utilized by the employee to improve job-related performance. Baldwin, et al (1988)

Organizations spend millions of dollars every year on continuing education and training. Therefore, it is a challenge for the educators and trainer for decades to ensure the transfer of learning from the classroom to the workplace. Merriam, et al (2005)

Moreover as suggested by Velada, et al (2007) although time and money invested in training is huge; however training is never fully realized. Only a small percentage of the training effectively results in permanent transferability to the workplace. As a result, understanding and improving the transfer of training process has become a primary concern for training researchers.

The transfer of training is defined as the effective and continuing application, by trainees to their jobs, of the knowledge and skills gained in training. There are two aspects to this full transfer of training. The first is that trainees immediately apply all they learned in training to their jobs at least as well as they could demonstrate those skills at the end of the training program. Second, with practice on the job, the trainees’ level of skill will increase. Friesen (2009)

Moreover, Kattuah (2013) defines transfer of training as the degree to which trainees effectively apply the trained skills, knowledge and attitude gained in a training context to the job. Hu, et al (2005) argued that there are some challenges for training transfer such as:

- Negative attitudes toward training and training transfer because of lack of feel of equity and ownership, lack of motivation and inappropriate reward system.
- No feedback or punishment when employees apply training to work.
- Working environment different from training setting.

The effectiveness of a given training programme is likely to depend on the interactions and alignments between various forces, for example between the economic and policy environment, and between programme design features and individual learner needs. Palameta, et al (2011).

According to Friesen (2009) there are several factors known to affect the transfer of training. These include:

- Individual learner.
- Training programme.
- Work environment.
- Trainee's immediate manager/supervisor.

Baldwin, et al (1988) suggests that, the transfer of training process is described in terms of training input factors, training outcomes, and conditions of transfer. Figure (1) illustrates how training input and training outcomes have direct and indirect effect on conditions of transfer.
Training inputs:
Trainee characteristics:
Ability
Personality
Motivation

Training Design:
Principles of learning.
Sequencing.
Training content.

Work Environment
Support.
Opportunity.

Training outputs:
Learning & Retention

Conditions of transfer:
Generalization & Maintenance

Figure (1) Source: Baldwin, et al (1988)

For this study, more emphasis are put on training input to understand its effects on training transfer process.

Training inputs:
Trainee’s characteristics:
Velada, et al (2007) has cited from, (Colquitt et al., 2000; Mathieu et al., 1992; Noe, 1986), that there are several individual characteristics that affect the transfer of training process. Some of these characteristics include cognitive ability, locus of control, achievement motivation, motivation to learn and to transfer, anxiety, self-efficacy, and valence.

Research studies have indicated that motivational factors related to an individual’s desire and ability to learn and transfer as well as individual personality, cognitive and physical abilities are aspects that led to the individual trainee’s ability to transfer. Edwards, (2013).

Training design:
Training design has attracted more attention from the researches and practitioners. Baldwin, et al (1988) argued that large proportion of the empirical research on transfer has concentrated on improving the design of training programmes through the incorporation of learning principles. Doo (2000), cited from (Brinkerhoff & Gill, 1992) they argued that numerous researchers have studied the effect of training design on transfer of training because it is believed to be one of the most important constructs affecting training transfer.
The person who is responsible of training design should consider the credibility of the programme to achieve the required objectives, and to what extent the training will change the learning and behaviour of the targeted population. Aldolaimi (2007)

**Work environment:**

Profijt, (2015) argued that work environment includes multiple aspects that appear to be effective for the transfer of training: colleagues’ feedback, colleagues’ support, supervisor’s support, personal outcomes (negative or positive), involvement of the supervisor, degree of openness to change, exchange information with colleagues, opportunities to experiment, experiment with newly learned knowledge and time and resources.

Saleh (2011) cited from Lim & Morris (2006) that a supportive organizational culture is the extent to which supervisors/management, work groups, and trainers behave in a way that optimizes trainees use of knowledge, skills, and attitudes gained in training on the job.

According to Bin Sabrin (2016), most of the previous studies emphasize that positive transfer happens in conjunction with work environment of the trainees. Encouraging organizational climate will supports training transfer especially in term of management support.

Supervisor support is an important factor of work environment, (Elangovan, et al, 1999; Merriam, et al 2005) argued that the supervisor support enhance the transfer or training into workplace.

**Research Methodology**

**Data methods**

The aim of this study is to answer the research main question and, in order to do that a structured questionnaire were developed, through reviewing the literature on this issue, to collect extensive quantitative data.

The first section of the questionnaire was used to obtain demographic information relevant to the sample with regard to participants’ gender, nationality, qualification and years of experience in the current job. The rest four sections of the questionnaire, which contains (32) statements, were used to provide answers to the research sub questions; reasons for participation, the impact on training transfer of trainees’ characteristics, training design and content, and work environment.

The researcher is hopping that this study will help the decision makers in the government organizations in Al Baha District to understand what effects the training transfer in their organizations.

**Data collection and sample**

According to recent statistics the IPA trained (110321) of the public organizations employees in 2014/2015. Only 2% of them are from Al Baha District, and they are regarded as the population of this research. According to Punch (2005), the population refers to the total target group who would be the subject of the research, and about whom one is trying to say something. In order to gather the information from a representative sample, an electronic link that contains an Arabic version of the questionnaire was created. The link was sent to the research population from all public organizations in Al Baha District.

Participants were informed about the purpose of the research and were assured that all results will remain anonymous. Although the electronic link made participation much easier, however the researcher had a difficulty convincing the target group to participate in this research.

Without the researcher’s personal relationship the gathering for the information could have taken longer, according to Albahussain (2000), and Alqahtani (1996) in the Saudi society, the researcher’s relationships are very important in facilitating fieldwork.

The responses were weak comparing to the population of the research sample. Only 70 responses to the questionnaire were obtained. However, cited from Sekaran, (2010) according to Roscoe’s rule of thumb, a sample that is larger than 30 and less than 500 are appropriate for most research.

**Analysis and Results**

First section of the questionnaire contains information about demographic characteristics of the research sample whom participated in this research. Most of the participants hold bachelor degree.
forming 55.9% and 38.2% hold master degree. The majority 55.9% have experience more than 10 years and the rest of the sample less than 10 years. Male participants were 89.7% and, female participants were only 10.3%. For the majority 60.3% attended the training programme within the last six months and the rest attended the training within a year.

Table (1) gives the responses of the research sample and their mean ranges.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Mean range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td>1.00–1.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>disagree</td>
<td>1.80–2.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>neutral</td>
<td>2.60–3.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>agree</td>
<td>3.40–4.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>strongly agree</td>
<td>4.20–5.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (1)

In table (2), the descriptive analysis of the data shows that the main reason for trainees to participate in the training job was to ‘learn practical skills for the job’. While the least attractive reason was ‘taking advantage of money allowance from attending a training programme’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for participation</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 The programme is part of the training plan in my organization.</td>
<td>3.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Gaining points for career promotion.</td>
<td>3.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Taking advantage of money allowance after attending training.</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Learning practical skills for the job.</td>
<td>4.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Desire to change work environment.</td>
<td>3.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (2)

The participants were motivated and confident about their ability to transfer what they have learned from training into workplace. The result in table (3) shows the mean of the trainees’ characteristics. The overall mean which is (3.96) shows that the participants desire and confident to transfer was positively high. It is a reflection of their priority reason to participate in training, which was ‘learning practical skills for the job’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am confident that my ability to transfer what I have gained from training, when I go back to work.</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>1.094</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am confident that I will overcome obstacles that I might face during applying new skills when I go back to work.</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>1.215</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training to me is a tool to better performance.</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>1.112</td>
<td>Strong Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training will increase my self-confident.</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>1.133</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In general, my expectations prior training was positive towards expected benefits from training.</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>1.197</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have the desire to apply what I have gained from training when I go back to workplace.</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>1.158</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will set specific objectives to maintain skills that I have gained from training.</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>1.192</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am concern about overcoming what might prevents me from applying the new skills.</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>1.056</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall mean</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.96</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.000</strong></td>
<td><strong>Agree</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The result in table (4) shows the overall mean of the training design factor (3.45), it indicates that the participant had appositive reaction towards the training design and content. The mean of their responses ranged between (3.44) and (3.82). However, the participants were uncertain, when they were asked “I have a clear idea about training before its starts”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have a clear idea about training before its starts.</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>1.183</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before training begins the trainer, explained its objectives.</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>1.128</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training was organized and planed in a good way.</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>1.162</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There was a relation between training and my job.</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>1.298</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt that there was a relation between theoretical and practical aspects of training.</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>1.303</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The trainer way during training helped me to gain beneficial skills.</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>1.123</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training tool used during the programme was interesting and clear.</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>1.282</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall mean</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.54</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.004</strong></td>
<td><strong>Agree</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (4)

The results in table (5) shows the overall mean of the work environment factor, (3.17) reflects the participants’ doubts about the support from their supervisors and their colleagues to apply new skills at workplace. Moreover, the fear of resistance from their supervisors was clear in their responses to the statement “There is a resistance to change from my supervisor”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>mean</th>
<th>Std deviation</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I receive support from my supervisor for applying skills acquired after training.</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>1.334</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I receive support from my friends at workplace for applying acquired skills</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>1.325</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a resistance to change from my supervisor</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>1.322</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload pressure prevents from applying acquired skills in a proper way</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>1.304</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer what I have learned from training depends on my relationship with colleague at workplace.</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>1.331</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My colleagues at workplace praise me when I apply what I have learned</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>1.284</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a sufficient time to apply new skills and experiences gained from training.</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>1.239</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are no appropriate environment,) offices and equipment..etc) to apply skills gained from training.</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>1.444</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulations (incentives and allowances..) is not flexible to deal with change.</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>1.489</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I will not be rewarded when I apply new skills.</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>1.437</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those who apply new skills will have better chance of promotion.</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>1.401</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training will increase my chance in sharing my supervisors in decision-making.</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>1.490</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall mean</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.17</strong></td>
<td><strong>.775</strong></td>
<td><strong>Neutral</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (5)
Conclusion and Recommendations:

This research findings yield inconsistent results to the work environment factor. The participants were unconfident about their supervisors and colleagues support. However, they were self-confident and positive about the training design factor. It could be said, that employees at public organizations at Albaha District are aware of the role that training play in the workplace. Therefore, they showed a feeling of interest and self-motivation to apply what they have acquired from training.

The findings of this research is consistent with other studies, such as Baldwin, et al, (1988), and Yaghi, et al,(2008) who concluded that uncontrolled factors such as recognition of others can obstruct learning transfer. Moreover, as argued by Hu, et al (2005) lack of motivation and inappropriate reward system will also be a challenge to transfer the learned skills.

As concluded by previous studies such as, Profijt, (2015), Bin Saprin (2016) and Saleh (2011) a supportive organizational culture appear to be effective and essential for the transfer of training to the workplace. This requires from the decision- makers in the public organizations in Albaha District, to identify the underlying reasons of work conditions, which lead to this doubtful feeling from the participants about training transfer.

Recommendations

- This study investigates the trainees’ perceptions of training transfer further studies should discuss their supervisor’s perceptions.
- In this study, the population sample was only from Albaha District, further studies should consider researching larger sample group for better representation of the population.
- There should be more attention from the decision makers in Albaha public organizations to Improve work environment in order to benefit from training programmes presented by the IPA.

References:


