



# EFFECTS TO LEARNING TRANSFER IN IT AND ITes INDUSTRY: FACILITATORS, INHIBITORS AND STRATEGIES

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## Abstract

Transfer is important concept in learning theories because most education and training aspires to transfer. The end goals of training and education are not achieved unless transfer occurs. Evolving trends of development in the area of research on transfer of learning from the training environment to the workplace environment have been drawn together and summarised in this review to introduce this important area of human performance support. The related literature and previous studies geared towards the process and strategies of facilitating the application of knowledge, skills, and attitudes from training to job. It is clear that organisations are still facing some problem with regard to some fundamental steps to ensure the transfer of training; these steps include the development of an overall learning transfer plan, a strategy for reinforcing the application of learning post-training, a clear way to measure if and to what extent learning is applied on the job, and manager involvement during the pre- and post-learning phase. The study suggests that organisations should committed and engaged in the transfer of learning, but upon further questioning, one finds that hope and reality are two very different things when it comes to the transfer of learning in the workplace.

**Key words:** Transfer of training, transfer of learning. HRM, HRD.

## INTRODUCTION

During the last ten decades in the training development field, it has seen many rapid changes and still continues experiencing them in its head long rush to keep up with the evolutionary process of adaptation to an ever changing world and its ever changing technology. With this comes the never-ending process of developing new learning process and methods to meet this changing technology. Human resource development (HRD) is a critical factor for organisational success. Training is the most common form of HRD that helps organisations to enhance workforce effectiveness and productivity by means of specified learning geared towards performance improvement. However, most training outcomes fail to produce full and sustained transfer of new knowledge, skills, and attitudes to the job.

The field of human resource development (HRD) and HRD professionals are responsible for developing effective HRD programmes within

organisations. According to Werner and DeSimone (2005), there are a number of challenges to HRD, including increasing workforce diversity, competing in a global economy, eliminating the skills gap, meeting the need for lifelong learning, and facilitating organisational learning. The increasing complexity of the workplace demands more on-the-job training and a more educated and trained workforce (Hudson, 2002; Newman & Hodgetts, 1998). With the increasing costs for advanced training, many organisations are trying to become more aggressive in determining the value of training upon employees' performance, and in turn the value of the employees' performance upon the continuous growth of the organisation.

Transfer of learning, the degree to which trainees apply to their jobs the knowledge, skills, and behaviours learned in training, is now widely acknowledged to be the paramount concern of organisational training initiatives (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Tannenbaum & Yukl, 1992). Persistently low estimates of the application rates generated from



corporate training expenditures suggest that, despite an explosion of literature attention to transfer in recent years, the “training problem” remains acute (Anthony & Norton, 1991; Garavaglia, 1993). Unfortunately, estimates suggest that no more than 10 percent of these expenditures typically result in transfer to the job (Baldwin and Ford, 1988; Holton & Baldwin, 2000; Kupritz, 2002).

It's clear that organizations are still missing some fundamental steps to ensure the transfer of training; these steps include the development of an overall learning transfer plan, a strategy for reinforcing the application of learning post-training, a clear way to measure if and to what extent learning is applied on the job, and manager involvement during the pre- and post-learning phase. The research has resulted in a proposition of factors influencing learning transfer are suggested following terms, (1) Facilitators (which denominate factors with positive influence), (2) Inhibitors (factors with negative influence) and (3) Strategies (action plan).

### **Transfer of Learning (TOL):**

The terms ‘transfer of learning’ and ‘transfer of training’ are usually found mutually exclusive in training and development literature. However, transfer of learning relates to generating knowledge and information through education, which refers to the capacity to generalise and learn by analogy. Active learning is an important criterion for transfer to occur. Active learning requires the learner to be involved in the learning process by making conscious effort to learn. The psychological processes of logical thinking and reasoning facilitate the process of recognising and solving problems in new contexts by applying the solution or analogy from the previously acquired knowledge and skill (Misko, 1999). This process is also called ‘case based reasoning’ in transfer of learning.

Learning transfer is perhaps one of the biggest challenges facing the learning and development field. Research shows that 60 percent to 90 percent of job related skills and knowledge acquired in a programme still are not being implemented on the job (Phillips et al., 2004)

Transfer of learning is a fundamental assumption of educators. We trust that whatever is learned will be retained or remembered over some interval of time and used in appropriate situations (Ripple & Drinkwater, 1982, p.1947).

Transfer of learning is the application of skills and knowledge learned in one context to another (Cormier & Hagman, 1987)

Transfer of Learning is the application of skills, knowledge, and/or attitudes that were learned in one situation to another learning situation (Perkins, 1992)

Transfer of learning refers to the process of transferring the competencies acquired in the plan of training to the workplace both effectively and efficiently. It is generally acknowledged by the training practitioners that three critical elements are needed to promote transfer of learning: ability, willingness, and opportunity. Recent studies in cognitive psychology show that performance can already be automated during the training if the trainee has the possibility to practice new behaviour (Goldstein and Ford, (2002), Shiffin and Schneider (1997) May and Kannweiler (2000).

### **Major Facilitators, Inhibitors and Strategy of transfer of learning from the place of training to the workplace:**

#### **Facilitators:**

The facilitators, who teach or instruct programmes, need reaction and learning data immediately after the programme is conducted. This input allows them to make necessary adjustment. Later, they need summary information about application, impact, and Return on Investment (ROI) data, if available. A facilitator is an individual whose job is to help to manage a process of information exchange. While an expert's role is to offer advice, particularly about the content of a discussion, the facilitator's role is to help with how the discussion is proceeding. In short, the facilitator's responsibility is to address the journey, rather than the destination.

#### **Inhibitors:**

Inhibitor is a substance that retards or stops an activity. Sometime lack of facilities or resources



and lack of higher authority encouragement also includes in inhibiting factor.

### **Strategy:**

Strategy is an action that managers take to attain one or more of the organisation's goals. Strategy can also be defined as, "a general direction set for the company and its various components to achieve a desired state in the future. Strategy results from the detailed strategic planning process"

Facilitating factors of Transfer of Learning are -favourable transfer climate, supervisory support, sufficient resources, support for freedom, support for creativity and co-worker attitude.

Inhibiting factors of Transfer of Learning are heavy workloads, lack of supervisory support, lack of timely and proper feedback, rigid rules and conservativeness of the organization, lack of freedom to introduce change, lack of encouragement for innovation and lack of facilities and other resources.

### **IT and ITeS Industry**

The IT and ITES industries in India are increasingly being viewed as a growth engine of the Indian economy, contributing substantially to increase in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), urban employment and exports. As a proportion of national GDP, the sector revenues have grown from 1.2 per cent in the financial year 1998 to an estimated 9.8 per cent in the financial year 2016-2017.

According to the NASSCOM Indian IT-BPO Industry 2019 report, the Indian IT-BPO industry is estimated to achieve revenues of US\$ 287.7 billion in the financial year 2019, with the IT software and service industry accounting for US\$ 140 billion of revenues. Furthermore, direct employment in the sector will reach nearly 3.37 million, an addition of 4, 73,000 employees, while indirect job creation is estimated to touch 12 million. This amounts to the net value-added by this sector, to the economy as 5.5–9.7 per cent for the financial year 2019.

### **Transfer of Training: Literature Review**

Formal employee training typically involves learning new knowledge, skills, attitudes or

other characteristics in one environment (the training situation) that can be applied or used in another environment (the performance situation) (Goldstein and Ford, 2002). Presumably, what was learned in training should be applied to performance on the job. However, a common experience is that learning from a formal training program is not carried back for application on the job. In their study of sales training at Xerox, Rackman and Ruff (1991) reported there was an 87% of loss of skills within one month of the completion of the training. Baldwin and Ford (1988) note some estimates that suggest only 10% of training outcomes are transferred back to the job. With reported annual training investments exceeding \$50 billion in the United States (Industry Report, 2000), the amount of dollars wasted by non transfer can be staggering.

The issue of carry-over from training to the performance situation is referred to as the problem of the "transfer of training." Baldwin and Ford (1988) define the positive transfer of training "as the degree to which trainees effectively apply the knowledge, skills and attitudes gained in a training context to the job" (p. 63). This basic definition has been elaborated in two related ways. First, there can be transfer to "near" situations (similar to the training conditions) and/or to "far," dissimilar situations (Laker, 1990). A second elaboration is that of generalizing learned skills to different settings, people and situations (far transfer) as well as maintaining the application of learned skills over time (Ford and Weissbein, 1997). Given the stakes involved, it becomes very important to understand the dynamics of transfer in order to look for ways to minimize transfer losses while improving the yield from any training program. While the question of transferability of training has been present in the field of applied psychology nearly from the start (e.g., Thorndike's work in the early 1900's considered the transfer of learned behaviors from one setting to another), specifically focused interest on transfer in the context of formal organizational training only surfaced in the mid 1970's. This paper was intended a primer on transfer of training in work settings. The early theoretical musings on transfer was examined first,



followed by a review of the ways by which transfer was operationally measured. Then, the research literature on transfer was examined. Finally, the research findings were summarized in a series of propositions about managing transfer of training

**Literature summary and research gap:**

The proposed research on the topic, ‘Effects to Learning transfer in IT and ITeS industry: Facilitators, Inhibitors and Strategies’ is still in its infancy stage. So far the researcher reviewed nearly 58 research articles on the proposed topic. Out of these 47 articles reviewed thirty one are foreign studies and eleven are Indian studies. No much study conducted on transfer of learning in IT and ITeS industry. Further, almost all articles examined but not much link between present research areas. No much study on proposed topic was made in software industry in India or in Karnataka. Therefore, it could be stated at this stage that the proposed field of investigation was under researched area.

**STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

The proposed study ‘Effects to learning transfer in IT and ITeS industry: Facilitators, Inhibitors and Strategies were undertaken for further investigation.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- Factors which facilitated transfer of learning from the training place to workplace settings;
- Inhibiting factors to transfer of learning from the training place to workplace settings;
- Implications for designing and delivering training that nurture transfer of learning
- Effective strategies for facilitating transfer of learning.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study was qualitative in nature. It is partly explanatory and partly diagnostic in nature. Here attempt was made to identify whether training and development programmes are contributing in results as to prove that expenditure of training or an investment on human capital which will yield rich dividends in the long run through gathering and interpreting from purposive sampling of

25 to 30 IT and ITeS industry which includes software, hardware BPO and call centre. The data collection process involved approaching different organizations by using available industry directories. NASSCOM has mentioned few best IT and ITeS industry in India and was taken such industries for further study. Here random sampling method used and target audience included those employees who received training from their company from recent past, that is, within two years. The nature of workforce includes executives and non- executives in each selected industry and selected 20 to 30 respondents representing from each category of industry with a help of pretested structured written questionnaire was personally administered.

**SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The study concentrated only to IT (Software) and ITeS( BPO/BPM and Call Centre) industry in Karnataka. The conceptual framework adopted by this study includes Transfer of Learning, facilitators, inhibitors and strategies. Since the geographical domain of the study was confined only to Karnataka State, the research conclusions drawn based on the findings of this research study could not be generalised so as to make them applicable to other parts of the country or other nations of the world. The study threw sufficient light on predictors of employee learning aspect after taking related training from the same industry or sponsored company.

**SURVEY METHODOLOGY**

Here conducted an e-mail survey consisting of close-ended questions to decision makers and influencers of learning in IT and ITeS sector. The survey was distributed throughout Karnataka state and mentioned sector employees replied to the survey; however, not all respondents answered every question. The survey was anonymous unless respondents elected to receive results, in which case specific contact information was required.

**FINDINGS:**

- There is no (69.5 percent) formal process or system for ensuring that training is applied successfully at your organization.



- More than 72 percent of training or learning is applied back on the job, on average.
- The primary method utilized to prove or measure this estimate of learning transfer is Informal feedback-39.3 percent, simply a guess-25.6 percent, surveys-22.3 percent, Formal interview/discussion-10.1 percent and detailed analysis-2.8 percent.
- It is observed that more than 64 percent of the respondents opined that there is a systematic approach in an organization that prepares a trainee to transfer or apply learning after training to their job and workplace environment.
- It is found from the survey that, there are program design strategies adopted by the organisation to ensure that the trainee is able to transfer the learning to the workplace, such as, design the training program around organization's business needs-49 percent, establish specific goals between trainee and their direct report/manager- 37 percent, The specific learning activities to specific business outcomes-14 percent.
- More than 77 percent of the employees expect managerial support involvement required as part of the learning transfer process.
- In the survey clearly showed that more than 63 percent of the respondents opined that a trainee's peer groups, or co-workers, positively or negatively influence the ability to apply what they've learned at your organization and remaining 37 percent said that it does not influence.
- Of all the main strategies, employees felt the most important strategies for the transfer of

learning at their organization are Trainee's ability (time, resources, responsibilities) to apply 37 percent, Manager support 24 percent, Instruction/training approach simulates actual work environment 20 percent, Post-instruction reinforcement 07 percent, Reward/consequences for transfer of learning 5 percent, Preparation in advance of training instruction and other 7 percent.

## CONCLUSION

Transfer of learning is the objective of most learning programs and it has important effects for the extent to which a learning program will benefit an organization and provide a return on investment. Organizations can improve learning transfer by including various activities before, during, and after learning. Activities at all three time periods were found to predict the learning transfer, especially those that occur before and after. The good news is that they are relatively easy to implement and they are not costly. Organizations have much to gain by including transfer-relevant activities. Therefore, it might be useful to conduct a learning transfer audit to determine the extent to which our organization currently uses the different activities before, during, and after learning, and on the basis of our findings, determine what activities we need to include and when. While learning transfer continues to be a problem for many organizations, it is possible to do something about it. By incorporating transfer activities, organizations can lower the barriers to transfer and increase the probability that employees will return to work ready, willing, and able to apply what they learned to their job.

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