

The Impact of Feedback on Transfer of Training in Manufacturing Firms of Myanmar

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Abstract: The actual application of training outcomes or transfer of training after costly training programs is a significant problem for the organizations. Without transfer of training, the effectiveness of training cannot be evaluated. There are several factors that can support transfer of training. In this study, the main issue is to explore the importance of feedback in transfer of training. Moreover, the mediating role of motivation to transfer is an unavoidable requirement to support transfer of training. To test the proposed model, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with LISREL 8.72 was utilized. The sample of 350 employees of private manufacturing firms located in Yangon region, Myanmar was selected as respondents. The results revealed that feedback positively and significantly related to motivation to transfer and motivation to transfer fully mediated the relationship between feedback and transfer of training.

Key words: Feedback, transfer of training, motivation to transfer, utilization, feedback

INTRODUCTION

To gain a competitive advantage, human resources are one main pillar to yield that advantage. Training, a human resource function, can promote the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the employees and finally, can have a significant impact on organizational performance (Bhatti and Hoe, 2012; Batool and Batool, 2012). However, investments in training programs often fail to create the expected outcome (Kontoghiorghes, 2004). The main question is whether or not the acquired outcomes are used in the workplace or the learned skills are actually transferred to the work environment (Salas and Cannon-Bowers, 2001; Chiaburu *et al.*, 2010). If employees cannot transfer their trained skills, organizations may not benefit from the training investment (Grossman and Salas, 2011).

Manufacturing firms in Myanmar have used several strategies to upgrade human resources, including training. However, those firms often do not satisfy with the application of trained skills and employees do not fully apply their skills after the training. Some firms only emphasize the training and not the creation of favorable work environment to support the employees to utilize their skills to give feedback about their performance after the training and to motivate the employees desire to apply their skills. Thus feedback, one of the work environment factors was explored to have an impact on

transfer of training (Holton *et al.*, 2000; Velada *et al.*, 2007). The purpose of this study is to investigate, the direct and indirect effect of feedback on motivation to transfer and the transfer of training. More specifically, the following research questions guided this study:

- What are the relationships between feedback, motivation to transfer and transfer of training?
- Does motivation to transfer fully mediate the relationship between feedback and transfer of training?

Literature review and hypotheses development

Feedback: Feedback provides information to trainees or employees to compare the current and desired behavior and to motivate the individuals to promote, their effort to change their behavior or performance to meet the desired outcomes (Russ-Eft, 2002). Performance feedback is an indication about how well the trainee is performing his or her trained skills on the job (Holton *et al.*, 2000). To reduce the difference between the actual and expected performance and to upgrade the performance of individuals, feedback plays a significant role (Hattie and Timperley, 2007). Feedback is one of the post-training interventions and it has been used to increase the motivation of the trainee to transfer the learned skills to the job (Baldwin and Ford, 1988). In the study of Van den Bossche *et al.* (2010), the helpfulness of

feedback is positively related to both motivation to transfer and transfer of training. The individuals receive feedback from others in the organization regarding their performance and this feedback can influence the training transfer (Velada *et al.*, 2007).

On the other hand DeNisi and Kluger (2000), argued that feedback sometimes creates unintended and potentially damaging effects on individual performance. This study explored the importance of feedback in transfer of training by using the following hypotheses:

H₁: Feedback is positively and significantly related to motivation to transfer

H₂: Feedback is positively and significantly related to transfer of training

Motivation to transfer: Motivation to transfer is the direction, intensity and persistence of effort toward utilizing skills and knowledge learned through training in a work setting (Holton *et al.*, 2000). Motivation to transfer is one factor to decide whether the learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and abilities) are used effectively in the workplace (Salas and Cannon-Bowers, 2001). Because of the lack of motivation, unsuccessful training programs and insufficient return on training investment are faced, as the major problems by Human Resource Development (HRD) professionals and practitioners (Gegenfurtner *et al.*, 2009). Thus motivation is seen, as an essential requirement for the newly trained knowledge and skills to be applied on the job.

Chiaburu and Lindsay (2008) found that motivation to transfer is important for skill transfer and perceived training transfer is mainly predicted by motivation to transfer. In the study of Van den Bossche *et al.* (2010), motivation to transfer is significantly related to the degree of transfer of training. Because of the significant effects of motivation to transfer in transfer of training, the emphasis on motivation to transfer has raised many scholars interest such as Seyler *et al.* (1998), Kontoghiorghes (2004), Gegenfurtner *et al.* (2009), Van den Bossche *et al.* (2010) and Bhatti and Kaur (2010). This study, also tested the effect of motivation to transfer by using the following hypotheses:

H₃: Motivation to transfer is positively and significantly related to transfer of training

H₄: Motivation to transfer fully mediates the relationship between feedback and transfer of training

Transfer of training: Transfer of training is the consistent application of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are learned from training in the workplace

(Zumrah *et al.*, 2012). The transfer of training is one of the significant measurements of training effectiveness and it creates an improvement in employee and organizational performance (Bhatti and Kaur, 2010). The majority of training transfer research relies mainly on the Baldwin and Ford (1988)'s transfer of training model and Holton *et al.* (2000), Learning Transfer System Inventory (LTSI) Model. Velada *et al.* (2007), tested part of the Baldwin and Ford (1988) model and the result was that variables including feedback are significantly related to transfer of training.

Additionally in LTSI Model, feedback is considered as an environmental variable and it represents, as one of the significant and specific factors for transfer system (Holton *et al.*, 2000). Kontoghiorghes (2004) proposed and tested the model in which the selected variables have significant impact on individual or organizational performance and also have an effect on training transfer. Based on the previous literature in this study, feedback was considered as a latent variable to have the significant relationship with motivation to transfer and transfer of training in Myanmar manufacturing firms.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Questionnaires were used to collect the primary data. Except for the general information about the employees, all the variables were measured on 17 5-point Likert type scale items (1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree). Using simple random sampling, 350 valid questionnaires were included in the analysis. Of the respondents, 67.1% were male, 36.9% were aged between 24 and 29 years. Total 74.3% of respondents attended the training programs at least 1-2 times in year 2013. This study used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with LISREL 8.72 to test the relationships of the constructs. The internal consistency among the variables was checked with the Cronbach's alpha.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The proposed model represented a relatively poor fit to the data: $\chi^2(116) = 639.43$, IFI = 0.93, CFI = 0.93, SRMR = 0.07 and RMSEA = 0.11. According to the recommendations of several researchers including Hair *et al.* (2010), Williams *et al.* (2009) and Zumrah *et al.* (2012), the model fit was assessed by examining several Goodness-of-Fit (GFI) statistics indices: Ratio of χ^2 , normed Chi-square (χ^2/df), Incremental Fit Index (IFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Standardized Root Mean Residual (SRMR) and the Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA). A well-fitting model will have

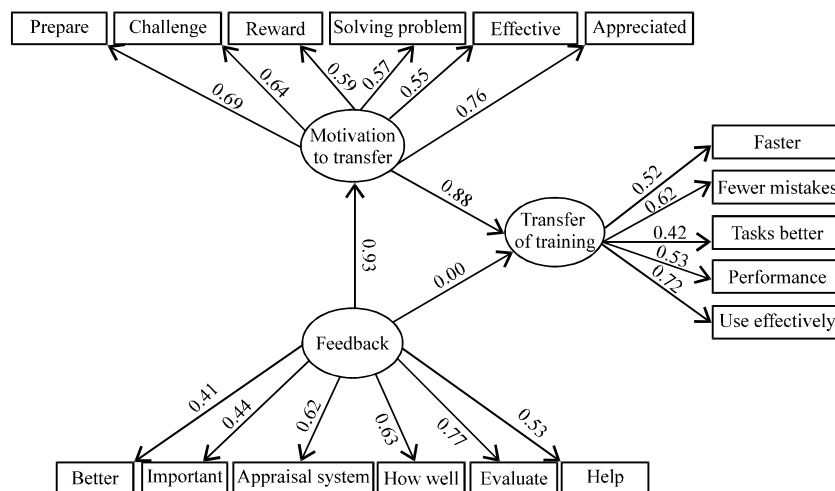


Fig. 1: Final model with results

Table 1: Means, standard deviations, reliability estimates and correlation matrix

Variables	N	Mean	SD	FB	MT	TOT	α	Item
FB	350	4.20	0.428	-			0.768	6
MT	350	4.21	0.449	0.75**	-		0.799	6
TOT	350	4.31	0.351	0.59**	0.69**	-	0.724	5

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); SD = Standard Deviation; FB = Feedback; MT = Motivation to Transfer; TOT = Transfer of Training

the $\chi^2/df < 3$, IFI and CFI values that are ≥ 0.9 , RMSEA value < 0.06 and SRMR value ≤ 0.08 to indicate appropriate goodness-of-fit (Chau, 1997; Hair *et al.*, 2010; Williams *et al.*, 2009; Chiaburu *et al.*, 2010; Zumrah *et al.*, 2012). Fit statistics of the revised model were $\chi^2 (84) = 105.25$, IFI = 1.00, CFI = 1.00, SRMR = 0.03 and RMSEA = 0.02. All χ^2 values are significant at $p < 0.01$. Mean, standard deviation, reliability estimates and correlation matrix of all variables are shown in Table 1.

This stage of analysis involved the testing of the hypothesized relationships among the latent variables. Baron and Kenny (1986)'s 3 conditions for mediation were used to test the mediating effect of motivation to transfer. Firstly, feedback had a strong direct effect on motivation to transfer ($\gamma = 0.93$). Hypothesis 1 was supported. Secondly, feedback had no direct effect on transfer of training ($\gamma = 0.00$). The result did not support hypothesis 2. Thirdly, the direct effect of motivation to transfer on transfer of training was strong ($\beta = 0.88$). Hypothesis 3 was supported. Feedback was indirectly related to transfer of training through motivation to transfer. The indirect relationship from feedback to transfer of training through motivation to transfer revealed that motivation to transfer fully mediated the relationship between feedback and transfer of training. The result supported hypothesis 4. The final results of the tested model are shown in Fig. 1.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to explore, the impact of feedback on motivation to transfer and transfer of training. Consistent with previous studies (Velada *et al.*, 2007; Van den Bossche *et al.*, 2010; Bhatti and Kaur, 2010), feedback and motivation to transfer played a significant role in transfer of training. The results suggested that motivation to transfer fully supported the success of transfer of training. Because of the full mediating effect of motivation to transfer, it is concluded that the more the employees receive feedback about their performance after training with motivation to transfer, the more they will transfer their learned skills to the real work environment. Thus to create successful transfer of training after the training programs, both feedback and motivation to transfer must be considered by HR professional and practitioners and trainers in the manufacturing context of Myanmar.

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