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Training Transfer Outcomes

Introduction

In the era of globalization and great competition, organisations pay particular emphasis upon the achievement of competitive edge. Attainment of skilled employees is one of the factors which play crucial role in organisations’ competitive edge. It is the reason that companies and organisations invest in their employees to train them according to modern needs (Lee, 2007). Organisations hope that their investment will reciprocate in terms of improved performance of the employees. According to research reports, the trend of investment in training by the companies has been accentuated comparative to past practices. For instance, according to Training Magazine’s 23rd Annual Industry Report (2004), £51.3 billion was spent by companies in 2003 in training investment while in 2004 it reached till £51.4 billion.

Discussion

Such vast investment by the companies in training investment has ultimately led managers to think about value of training and its effectiveness. Previously the evaluation of training was through performance sheets. Performance of trainee was analyzed by reporting number of participants and their average marks in final exam along with the reaction of trainees towards training session (Ford, and Weissbein, 1997). Now a days, organisations and management pursue the reflection of strong evidence of training effectiveness.

Particular concern for organisations and their management is to understand that how much training sessions are effective in the improvement of performance of employees and how do they help organisation as a whole to offer competition in global world (Lee, 2007). Transfer of training implies the application of knowledge and skills gained in a particular course into
practical field of knowledge. Employees are trained by the companies to change their behaviour, knowledge and basic understanding in order to impact bottom-line change. Therefore, organisations require more accountability, results and data in return of their investment in training of employees.

According to the postulation of American Society for Training and Development (ASTD’s) *State of the Industry Report* 2004, with the increased understanding between learning and performance, organisations pursue rigorous efforts to associate learning with business goals (Ford, and Weissbein, 1997). Learning resources are targeted in mission-critical statements in order to ensure employee performance through learning. Organisations make it sure that learning is effective for the company and learning measurement is helpful for improved employee performance.

Regarding the role and importance of transfer in the evaluation of training outcomes, researchers suggest that organisations measure training effectiveness through the evaluation of financial results, business results, and rate of investment particularly after training sessions. However, most popular training evaluation process is Kirkpatrick’s framework. This framework is designed to assess different training outcomes.

This study aims to understand importance and role of “transfer” in training evaluation process. Most of practitioners rely upon the measurement of employee satisfaction in terms of learning and cognitive gains in training evaluation process. However, recent studies focus upon the measurement of “transfer” in training evaluation and also to research its pertinent dynamics. Therefore, study at hand is also an effort to increase body of knowledge in related field through detailed research on the topic.
Starting with the perspectives mentioned in established research studies, first there is need to understand specific meaning of the concept “transfer of training” within strategic human resource management.

**Transfer of Training**

Transfer of training, according to Business dictionary, is the ability of a trainee to apply behaviour, knowledge, and skills acquired in one learning situation to another. Baldwin and Ford (1988) defined “transfer of training” as the extent to which trainee applies the knowledge, skills, and behaviour learned in training sessions in the context of job and furthermore to what extent it is maintained. Transfer of training is the method of thinking, perceiving, and applying information after processing (Zatsiorsky, and Kraemer, 1995). Without particular understanding and ability of transfer, employees or trainees cannot undertake logical thinking and reasoning.

Transfer is understood as the functioning of three factors. At the first part, importance of transfer is characterized with the abilities of trainees that include motivation and personal characteristics. Secondly, training design includes sequencing, principles of learning, and training content. Thirdly, work environment, for example, how much opportunities and support an employee posses for the transfer of training, how successful training outputs like learning and retention are, and to what extent conditions for transfer of training are feasible to apply knowledge.

**Transfer of Training Theories**

Prior researches done in the subject field suggest that transfer training knowledge stands with strong foundations in terms of theories. There are several theories of transfer training that discuss different dimensions of the process (Burke, and Hutchins, 2007). However, in the following
discussion, only three theories are being mentioned due to the perception that following theories cover the essence of all theories established in transfer training discussion.

- **The Identical Elements Theory**

This theory assumes that work environment and training environment are more or less same or may be the other way both are identical to each other (Cheng, and Ho. 2001). Therefore, transfer of knowledge and skills acquired during training sessions should be stable and straightforward. Moreover, since both; work environment and training environment, are identical there is greater possibility that features of work environment are predictable and constant. This theory describe “type of transfer” as “near” primarily due to the assumption that there is no significant different between work environment and training context. Example of such type of transfer can be training of pilots during on-flight trainings.

- **The Stimulus Generalization Theory**

It assumes that acquires knowledge and skills from training sessions can be applied in different work situations. For instance, this theory emphasized that training sessions possess general principles which are applicable to diverse working situations (Cheng, and Ho, 2001). Learning leadership skills in order to influence colleagues or peers, mangers learn to transform it depending on the nature of dealing. Therefore, one can say that work environment in such training modules are unpredictable and even unstable (Burke, and Hutchins, 2007). This theory explains type of transfer as “far” because working conditions are uncertain. Example of such theoretical practice is the learning of communication skills and conflict management skills.
• Cognitive Theory

As the term implies, this theory explains cognitive abilities of trainees through which they retain knowledge learned and apply it in job setting. According to this theory, all types of training and environments are applicable in this body of knowledge. Meaningful material and coding abilities help trainees to recall knowledge at appropriate time and working conditions (Burke, and Hutchins, 2007). Mostly referred example of this kind of theoretical practices is witnessed in action plans determined at the end of training programs. Due to the understanding that transfer depends upon cognitive abilities of trainees, type of transfer is evaluated as both “near and far.” Furthermore, one can understand the application of cognitive theory in goal setting, often undertaken at the end of training sessions, in which trainees apply their skills and knowledge into practical setting.

Transfer of Training Evaluation

As specified above in introductory arguments that due to heavy investment in training sessions, organisations and managers are keen to determine effectiveness and outcomes of training sessions. To evaluate training effectiveness, mostly recommended method is Kirkpatrick’s method of study. It is a set of evaluation levels described as framework in order to assess training outcomes. According to the survey conducted by Burshin and Associates (2006), 76 percent of the employers rely on measurement of learning satisfaction at the part of employees and cognitive gains after training sessions, while consensus remained on the valuable nature of transfer in training sessions.

Without transfer of knowledge and skills into practical setting, there is no use of training sessions for organisations as well as employees. Measurement of transfer means to assess the use of
knowledge and skills acquired in training sessions into practical job after a specific time period. This assessment is done through checklists, observation, evaluation of action plans, or may be conducting some other method. However, assessment of transfer is cumbersome and time-consuming method which requires stakeholder support and multiple resources. It is a valuable fact that “transfer” is a “bridge” between learning and business outcomes. Without the transfer of knowledge, there is no meaning of learning and its impact upon business results.

**Critical Analysis**

Understanding the role and importance of transfer in training sessions with the help of theoretical interpretation, one can move towards the analysis of support transfer. Understanding of the “support transfer” is necessary in course that it describes organisation’s role that how much they pay attention to support the employee in the transfer of knowledge and skills in practical job setting (Poell and Woerkom, 2011).

Organisations engage in several activities and interventions throughout the training period; before, during, and after, in order to ensure successful transfer of training. organisations apply several strategies to support transfer throughout the training process (Russ-Eft, and Preskill, 2009). Previously described strategies may had covered certain time period but recently established studies specifically those introduced by Broad (2005) suggest that strategies should be applied before, during, and after training sessions. In mostly practiced strategies before training session, training goals that are to be accomplished in specific training session is closely reviewed in order to understand that how it will be effective in the improvement of performance. Training content is reviewed again before actual start of training session (Szulanski, 1996). Example of transfer strategy undertaken before training is to make sure that employees come in training sessions with open mind and well understand the accountability.
Strategies used during training in order to support transfer include the use of mnemonic device which helps learner to memorize key concepts, words, symbols, and pictures. Moreover the presence of employees previously trained and witness of action plans encourages other participants to engage actively (Salvendy, 2012). Frequent learning assessment through the use of short question answers and feedback forms, employees are supported in transfer of their knowledge during training sessions.

Strategies employed after training sessions to help transfer support include providing trainees such opportunities where they can apply their gained knowledge (Salvendy, 2012). Also, discussions regarding transfer behaviours during performance evaluation increase the ability of employees to transfer training into practical job.

According to research studies consulted for thorough understanding in this paper suggest the importance of stakeholders in support transfer. There are obvious restrictions or even obstacles in transfer of training (Szulanski, 1996). What kind of these obstacles can be and how stakeholders play their role in the removal of these obstacles is also an important part of this study.

Stakeholders play crucial role to ensure that employees transfer knowledge to practical environment. Stakeholders are the people who have “stake” in the transfer of skills and knowledge to practical setting, thus; stakeholders are may be managers, colleagues, peers, customers and clients, and even the organisation as whole (Salvendy, 2012). Obstacles that may occur in the transfer of knowledge includes lack of feasible environment and support at work place, lack of motivation at the part of employee to transfer knowledge, interference from superiors or colleagues, and poor training sessions which impede the ability of employee to
transfer knowledge. In that context, stakeholders assume several roles, for instance, executives or leaders to apply strategies for successful transfer of new knowledge in practical job setting.

**Conclusion**

In above study, concept of “transfer” in training and its importance has been discussed. Attempt has been done to support argument with established body of knowledge and to carry out study in original manner. This study traces out that transfer of training is an emerging area of concern for managers and organisations. It occupies pivotal role in the accomplishment of the objectives of training sessions. Organisations invest heavily to train their employees in order to make them capable to meet challenges of modern world. Therefore, they expect that employees transfer new knowledge into practical job setting which ultimately impact upon organisation’s performance.

Effectiveness of training and its applicability into practical work environment are the main objectives of managers. Therefore, they want to make sure the transfer of training. For this purpose, all the obstacles in the way of transfer of training are identified. Furthermore, mangers and organisations practice support transfer in order to ensure effectiveness of training. Support transfer is multifaceted process in which managers apply strategies before, during, and after training which are helpful for transfer of training.
References


Bibliography


Method on Cognitive learning and Interpersonal Skill Generalization. organisational


