



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**TRANSFER OF LEARNING OF BUSINESS WRITING SKILLS IN A
PRIVATE ORGANIZATION IN MALAYSIA**

JALILAH WAHIDIN

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**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

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**TRANSFER OF LEARNING OF BUSINESS WRITING SKILLS IN A
PRIVATE ORGANIZATION IN MALAYSIA**

By

JALILAH WAHIDIN

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor Philosophy**

December 2007



DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my parents,

Wahidin Mohd Ghauth & Mah Wan Kechik Chee Din.

This is but a small contribution and dedication to the ones I love,

who have made many sacrifices,

who have faced many hardships, and

who have undergone many challenges.

This is just a small token of my love & affection

and undying gratitude & appreciation for all that both of you have done for me.

Thank you and May God bless both of you always.



ABSTRACT

TRANSFER OF LEARNING OF BUSINESS WRITING SKILLS IN A PRIVATE ORGANIZATION IN MALAYSIA

By

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December 2007

Chairman: Professor Habibah Elias, PhD

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The study examines transfer of learning, determines the catalysts and barriers to transfer and identifies the learning transfer factors such as trainee characteristics, ability, motivation, work environment and personality that contribute to transfer of learning in the context of Corporation X. Transfer of learning was measured five months after the trainees attended a training program entitled the 'Business Writing Skills Workshop'. Holton, Bates and Ruona's (2000) Learning Transfer System Inventory (LTSI) scales and Goldberg's (1999) International Personality Inventory (IPIP) scales were used to determine the catalysts, barriers and transfer factors.

The LTSI and IPIP questionnaires were administered and collected during and at the end of the training program. Transfer of learning was measured using retrospective pretest methodology. Data were gathered from 110 executives working in Corporate X. In determining the catalysts and barriers to transfer, the trainees' responses to the 16 LTSI



variables indicated that 10 variables were catalysts and six (6) were barriers. Among the catalysts, the strongest being motivation to transfer and transfer design. All the six (6) variables identified as barriers came from the work environment factor with supervisor sanctions being the most severe. In identifying which transfer factors contributed to transfer of learning, statistically significant relationships existed between transfer design and opportunity to use learning and transfer of learning. Statistical significance was not found in the relationship between IPIP personality traits and transfer of learning. The study found that the trainees transferred 42% of the knowledge and skills learned in the training to their jobs.

This study suggested that transfer of learning was influenced by motivation to transfer learning, transfer design, and opportunity to use learning. This result indicated that although work environment was passive, the individuals still made the final decision to transfer the learning. From the finding, it can be inferred that transfer design gave trainees the ability and confidence to transfer the learning back to their job. The presence of opportunity to use learning further enhanced the transfer. Further insights showed that the characteristics of the individual that is motivation to transfer learning played a vital role in the learning transfer. This study recommends that Corporation X prepares its managers/supervisors with a fundamental understanding of the importance of their role as leaders, facilitators and role models in the transfer of learning of their staff and institutes improved incentives that recognize and reward staff that transfer learned behaviors to the workplace.



ABSTRAK

PEMINDAHAN PEMBELAJARAN KEMAHIRAN PENULISAN BUSINES DI SEBUAH ORGANISASI PERSENDIRIAN DIMALAYSIA

Oleh

JALILAH WAHIDIN

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Kajian ini bertujuan meneliti pemindahan pembelajaran, mengenal pasti pemangkin dan penghalang kepada pemindahan pembelajaran dan mengenal pasti faktor faktor peramal pemindahan pembelajaran seperti ciri pekerja, kebolehan pekerja, motivasi, persekitaran kerja dan personaliti yang menyumbang kepada pemindahan pembelajaran dalam konteks Korporat X. Pemindahan pembelajaran diukur lima bulan setelah para pelatih tamat mengikuti kursus yang diberi nama “Woksyop Kemahiran Penulisan Busines”. Skala yang digunakan untuk mengenal pasti pemangkin, penghalang dan faktor-faktor peramal pemindahan pembelajaran ialah “Learning Transfer System Inventory” (LTSI) ciptaan Holton, Bates dan Ruona (2000) dan “International Personality Inventory Pool” (IPIP) ciptaan Goldberg (1999).

Soal selidik LTSI dan IPIP diedar dan dipungut semasa dan diakhir sesi latihan. Pemindahan pembelajaran diukur menggunakan pengkaedahan pra-ujian retrospektif.



Data dikutip daripada 110 eksekutif yang bekerja di Korporat X. Dalam mengenalpasti pemangkin dan penghalang kepada pemindahan pembelajaran jawapan para pelatih kepada 16 pemboleh ubah LTSI mendapati 10 pemboleh ubah sebagai pemangkin dan enam (6) pemboleh ubah sebagai penghalang. Di antara pemangkin, motivasi untuk pemindahan dan reka bentuk pemindahan merupakan pemangkin utama. Kesemua penghalang yang dikenalpasti datang dari persekitaran kerja dengan sanksi dari penyelia merupakan penghalang utama. Dalam mengenalpasti faktor-faktor peramal pemindahan pembelajaran terdapat hubungan yang signifikan antara reka bentuk pemindahan dan peluang menggunakan pembelajaran dengan pemindahan pembelajaran. Tiada hubungan yang signifikan antara personality (IPIP) dan pemindahan pembelajaran. Kajian mendapati para pelatih memindahkan sebanyak 42% pengetahuan dan kemahiran yang dipelajari kepada tugas mereka.

Kajian ini merumuskan bahawa pemindahan pembelajaran dipengaruhi oleh motivasi untuk pemindahan, reka bentuk pemindahan, dan peluang penggunaan pembelajaran. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa individu membuat keputusan sendiri untuk pemindahan pembelajaran meskipun persekitaran pekerjaan pasif. Kesimpulannya, reka bentuk pemindahan, memberi para pelatih keupayaan dan keyakinan untuk pemindahan pembelajaran. Dengan adanya peluang penggunaan pembelajaran telah dapat meningkatkan pemindahan latihan. Seterusnya ciri individu iaitu motivasi untuk pemindahan, memainkan peranan utama dalam pemindahan pembelajaran.

Kajian ini mencadangkan supaya Korporat X menyediakan pengurus / penyeliannya dengan pemahaman asas tentang kepentingan peranan mereka sebagai pemimpin, fasilitator dan contoh ikutan dalam pemindahan pembelajaran kaki tangan mereka. Korporat X sepatutnya mengadakan insentif-insentif baru yang mengiktiraf dan menghargai pekerja yang memindahkan pengetahuan yang dipelajari ke tempat kerja..

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APPROVAL SHEETS

I certify that an Examination Committee has met on 7 December 2007 to conduct the final examination of Jalilah Wahidin on her Doctor of Philosophy thesis entitled “Transfer of Learning of the Business Writing Skills Program in an Organization” in accordance with Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Regulations 1981. The Committee recommends that the candidate be awarded the relevant degree. Members of the Examination Committee are as follows:

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at Universiti Putra Malaysia or other institutions.

.....
(JALILAH WAHIDIN)

Date: 8 August 2007



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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The most vital ingredient that keeps businesses and organizations going is most likely its human resource. To remain competitive in the rapidly changing environment corporations and even small businesses need to keep employees working at the top of their capabilities once they are hired. Therefore, people and the knowledge they possess is the key to gaining the cutting edge. Workers must broaden their skill base and be more thoroughly trained and retrained throughout their working lives to meet today's downsized, globalized and technologically advanced economy. Facing these challenges, organizations have been investing in training activities at an increasing rate (Gerbman, 2000; Tannenbaum, 2002). Senge (1990) says that in the long run, the only sustainable source of competitive advantage is an organization's ability to learn faster than its competition. This suggests that the practice of training by corporate bodies calls for a reconceptualized way to prepare individuals for this important role where an employee's worth to the organization is through work behavior and ultimately performance.

The success factors that will support competitiveness and performance for organizations lie in the result oriented planned training for employees where transfer of learning is made possible to the workplace. Transfer of training has been identified as the generalization of the skills required during training into the workplace (Holton & Baldwin, 2003). Training is useful if it can be translated into performance



(Kozlowski and Salas, 1997; Holton 1996). As such for training to make a difference in organizational and employees' performance, efforts must be channeled to support transfer of learning in organizations. However, this is one of the most overlooked aspects in training. This may be due to lack of expertise, budget constraints and low priority within the organization.

It is a fact then that when businesses and industries get more complex and sophisticated, human resource development becomes more crucial and urgent. The rapid development and changes in organizations have resulted in greater awareness towards training and development. Jobs have become rapidly obsolete and ever changing, until even qualified people from various learning institutions are not fully competent to perform without some form of training upon entering the labor market, let alone those who are already there. Therefore, training is not about acquiring a body of knowledge or mastering the logic, language and methods of a field endeavor. Training is about building capacity and competence to perform a specific set of tasks called a job. The essence of training is identifying what trainees are suppose to be able to do and figuring out an efficient and effective way to teach and facilitate them to do it. Training, its prime focus is to enable personnel to do their jobs and to help them to perform their roles efficiently and effectively. As such, training must be viewed as a planned learning experience designed to bring about positive changes in the individual's knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for effective job performance in order for the organization to stay afloat in this competitive world.

Progressive organizations in the world today invest large amount of money in training because they believe that this will result in higher productivity which in turn will generate higher profits. In Canada, a survey conducted by the Canadian Federation of

Independent Business, using a sample of its 102,000 members in 2002 indicated that more than half of the respondents had noted an increase in their training investment over the previous three years in terms of time and money (Dulipovici, 2003).

In 2007 overall, American organizations budgeted USD58.5 billion for training. The number is up 4.8% from 2006's figure of USD55.8 billion (Industry Report, 2007). Similar trend exists in Malaysia. In the Eighth Malaysia Plan 2001-2005 (Government of Malaysia, 2001) RM 42,372.9 million was allocated for training and in Ninth Malaysia Plan 2006-2010 (Government of Malaysia, 2006) RM 45,149.1 million is allocated. A 6.6% increase in allocation pointing to the fact that the government of Malaysian recognizes the importance of training to improve the quality of its human resource.

Despite the considerable amount of money and resources organizations spend on their training investment, it has yet to be determined to what extent such investments benefit the organization. Estimates suggest a low return on the investment in training overall. Baldwin and Ford (1988) emphasized that from the estimated USD 100 billion American industries spend on training no more than 10 percent of these expenditures typically result in transfer to the job. Other researchers have given similar estimates. Newstrom (1986) when analyzing the perceptions of HRD professionals on the transfer of content of management development programs back to the work environment, reported that the surveyed HRD professionals believed that only 40 percent of the content of the programs they conducted was transferred back to the work environment immediately after training, about 25 percent was still being applied six months later, and only 15 percent was still being used by the end of the

year. One of the conclusions of the Baldwin and Ford's (1988) study was that the effectiveness of a training intervention is contingent upon many variables, some of which fall outside the training system. Another view is that many organizational variables that can influence employee have yet to be identified and measured. Furthermore the lack of research on transfer of learning can be attributed to the difficulty in measuring such outcomes as productivity and quality which aside from the immediate training environment are also influenced by the broader organizational environment (Phillips, 1997).

Although it is a real challenge to quantify the transfer of learning to the job, it must be viewed as an opportunity instead of a threat. Indeed, transfer of learning evaluation is the best tool available to help turn training into a powerful force that is both valuable to organization and valued by the people in it. As training changes to meet the demands of today's environment, evaluation of training must keep pace with the changes in training to guide organizational efforts toward success.

Context of the Study – Corporation X

Corporation X is the national oil and gas company of Malaysia. It was incorporated under the company's act in 1974. To date it has over 25,000 staff in 52 subsidiaries spread over 34 countries around the globe. Corporation X main business is in the oil and gas industry. Its vision is to be, 'The Leading Oil and Gas Multinational of Choice'. Corporation X's investment in its staff acknowledges its central role in achieving the company's mission, vision and strategy. The continual enhancement of staff capability, confidence and commitment underlie the investment in training,

learning and development. Corporation X sets aside around 5% of its annual manpower budget for training and staff development purposes. For this year it amounts to RM 131 million. Corporation X aims to develop professional staff to their full potential to serve its growing business needs. The central purpose of training and learning in Corporation X is skills development to cater for the immediate needs of the job and the business and the secondary focus is on career and developmental needs of the individual. Although, Corporation X does not carry out detailed evaluation of its training programs, it believes in investing more RM in training. It also believes that organizations in Malaysia are the key players in the development of Malaysian economy. Therefore, they should manage and nurture their human capital to meet the increasing demand for higher and more complex skills through training, retraining and upgrading of skills. Workers who are better trained will be more knowledgeable and innovative, hence will become better workers resulting in higher productivity and efficiency (Personal interview with Corporation X's, HR development department, December, 2006).

Subsidiary Z is a fully owned subsidiary of Corporation X dedicated to training and development. Subsidiary Z is strategically oriented toward integrating the development of people as individuals with their performance as teams and ultimately as an entire organization by linking with vendors, facilitating the delivery of content, and leading the efforts to build a superior leadership team. Training is competency-based with the objective to develop specific competencies in individuals to better manage their own process of career development in the company with the aim of enhancing business performance. In terms of delivery, most activities occur in the classrooms and some are delivered through e-learning. On-the job learning is gaining

popularity especially among technical staff. With regard to trainers, they come both from the line as well as external expertise. Besides having her own pool of trainers, Subsidiary Z engages managers and executives from other Corporation X's subsidiaries to deliver key content for skill-based training. Subsidiary Z also aligns itself with business schools and other institutions and corporations within and outside Malaysia, in its pursuit to expand Corporation X's frontiers of knowledge and skill developments.

Subsidiary Z conducts many types of formal training ranging from the orientation program to management, leadership, quality, health safety and environment, organization learning and many others. To date evaluation is undertaken only at the first or reaction level of the Kirkpatrick's four levels evaluation model (Kirkpatrick, 1966). Evaluation at the reaction level is also known as the 'smile sheet' evaluation. This is adopted probably because it is relatively quick and easy to administer and inexpensive. This may also be due to the challenges post in designing the evaluation of higher order, collecting the data and analyzing them. Currently, reports from the 'smile sheets' are compiled monthly and tabled to the management of Subsidiary Z. Actions have been taken and improvements made in terms of the food served, classroom façade, and related facilities provided to the participants. In today's organizational reality, the 'smile sheet' can no longer represent an acceptable evaluation of training effectiveness (Moller, Benscoter, & Rohrer-Murphy, 2000). To stay competitive, it is imperative for Subsidiary Z to adopt a new mind-set and create a new organizational culture that supports evaluation beyond the 'smile sheet'. This study is undertaken to pave the way for Subsidiary Z to engage in program evaluation of a higher level.