



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FACTORS ON INFORMAL
LEARNING AND TRANSFER OF LEARNING OF MANAGERIAL
KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS AMONG HEAD NURSES IN TWO
GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS IN KELANTAN**

NIK HASNAA BT NIK MAHMOOD.

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By

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ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FACTORS OF INFORMAL LEARNING AND TRANSFER OF LEARNING OF MANAGERIAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS AMONG HEAD NURSES IN TWO GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS IN KELANTAN

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July 2005

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Faculty : Faculty of Educational Studies

Today more and more organizations are seeking ways to establish continuous learning environment which requires organization to extend beyond formal training program to cultivate ongoing interaction among employees and to promote learning methods that are drawn upon employees previous experience. A central ingredient of continuous learning environment is informal learning. Hospitals are among the organizations that are committed to employees' continuous learning. Nurses are encouraged to continue to learn from their mistake and increase the quality of their care and services.

The purpose of this study was to examine the role of informal learning in developing managerial knowledge and skills and transfer of learning among head nurses. Specifically, this study was undertaken to examine: (1) the learning activities mostly used by the head nurses to learn managerial skills; (2) the specific informal learning activities used by the head nurses to learn managerial skills; (3) the relationship between informal learning, motivation to learn and work environment and learning (i.e. level of knowledge and skills); (4) the relationship between informal learning, motivation to learn and work environment and transfer of learning; (5) the mediating role of learning (i.e. level of knowledge and skills) in the relationship between informal learning, motivation to learn, and work environment and transfer of learning; (6) the influence of informal learning, motivation to learn and work environment on learning (i.e. level of



knowledge and skills) and (7) influence of informal learning, motivation to learn and work environment on transfer of learning.

The theoretical framework which guides this study was Watkins and Marsick's (1990) theory of informal and incidental learning, Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory and Baldwin and Ford's (1988) transfer model. A total of 82 head nurses from two hospitals in the state of Kelantan participated in the study. Data were collected by the survey method. Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

Firstly, results of the descriptive statistics analysis revealed that head nurses gained managerial knowledge and learned managerial skills mostly from informal learning activities. Secondly, the specific informal learning activity used by head nurses to learn managerial skills were mostly learning from trial and error, learning from past experience, learning through mentoring, learning through observation, learning from interaction with others and learning through role-modeling. Thirdly, the results of the study showed a low and significant correlation between informal learning, motivation to learn, and work environment with level of learning and transfer of learning. Fourthly, level of learning was a good mediating variable for the relationship between informal learning, motivation to learn, work environment and transfer of learning. Finally, results of multiple regression analysis revealed that motivation to learn explains 15.5% variance in learning and 16.7% variance in transfer of learning whereas informal learning explains 12.2% of variance in level of learning and 13.4% of variance in transfer of learning. Theoretical and practical implications and contributions were discussed in Chapter 5.



ABSTRAK

HUBUNGAN DI ANTARA FAKTOR-FAKTOR PEMBELAJARAN INFORMAL DAN PEMINDAHAN PEMBELAJARAN PENGETAHUAN DAN KEMAHIRAN PENGURUSAN DI KALANGAN KETUA JURURAWAT DI DUA BUAH HOSPITAL DI KELANTAN

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Hari ini lebih banyak organisasi sedang mencari kaedah untuk mewujudkan persekitaran pembelajaran berterusan yang mengkehendaki organisasi untuk melampaui program latihan formal untuk menyemai interaksi yang berterusan di kalangan pekerja dan untuk mempromosi kaedah pembelajaran yang menggunakan pengalaman lepas pekerja. Intipati kepada persekitaran pembelajaran berterusan ialah pembelajaran informal. Hospital merupakan di antara organisasi yang komited kepada pembelajaran berterusan di kalangan pekerja. Jururawat di galakkan untuk sentiasa belajar dari kesilapan dan memperbaiki kualiti rawatan dan perkhidmatan mereka.

Kajian in bertujuan untuk mengkaji peranan pembelajaran informal dalam membangunkan pengetahuan dan kemahiran pengurusan dan pemindahan pembelajaran di kalangan ketua jururawat. Secara khususnya kajian ini dijalankan bertujuan untuk mengkaji: (1) aktiviti pembelajaran yang paling kerap digunakan oleh ketua jururawat dalam mempelajari kemahiran pengurusan; (2) aktiviti pembelajaran informal yang khusus yang dipaling kerap digunakan oleh ketua jururawat semasa mempelajari kemahiran mengurus; (3) hubungan di antara pembelajaran informal, motivasi untuk belajar, dan persekitaran kerja dengan pembelajaran (tahap pengetahuan dan kemahiran); (4) hubungan di antara pembelajaran informal, motivasi untuk belajar, dan persekitaran kerja dengan pemindahan pembelajaran; (5) peranan pembelajaran (iaitu tahap pengetahuan dan kemahiran) sebagai pembolehubah pencelah bagi hubungan di antara pembelajaran informal, motivasi untuk belajar dan persekitaran kerja dengan pemindahan

pembelajaran; (6) pengaruh pembelajaran informal, motivasi untuk belajar dan persekitaran kerja ke atas pembelajaran (iaitu tahap pengetahuan dan kemahiran) dan (7) pengaruh pembelajaran informal, motivasi untuk belajar dan persekitaran kerja ke atas pemindahan pembelajaran.

Kerangka teori yang menjadi asas kepada kajian ini adalah teori pembelajaran informal dan tidak sengaja oleh Watkins dan Marsick (1990), Teori jangkaan Vroom (1964) dan model pemindahan Baldwin dan Ford (1988). Sejumlah 82 ketua jururawat dari dua buah hospital di Kelantan terlibat dalam kajian ini. Data di pungut menerusi kaedah tinjauan. Data di analisis menggunakan kedua-dua statistik deskriptif dan inferensial.

Pertama, hasil analisis statistik deskriptif menunjukkan bahawa ketua jururawat memperoleh pengetahuan dan mempelajari kemahiran mengurus kebanyakannya melalui pembelajaran informal. Kedua, aktiviti pembelajaran informal khusus yang sangat kerap digunakan oleh ketua jururawat untuk memperoleh pengetahuan dan mempelajari kemahiran pengurusan ialah belajar melalui “percubaan dan kesilapan”, belajar dari pengalaman lepas, belajar melalui mentor, belajar dari pemerhatian, belajar hasil interaksi dengan orang lain dan belajar melalui model peranan. Ketiga, hasil kajian ini menunjukkan korelasi yang rendah dan signifikan di antara pembelajaran informal, motivasi untuk belajar dan persekitaran kerja dengan tahap pembelajaran dan pemindahan pembelajaran. Keempat, tahap pembelajaran merupakan pembolehubah pencelah yang baik bagi hubungan di antara pembelajaran informal, motivasi untuk belajar dan persekitaran kerja dan pemindahan pembelajaran. Kelima, hasil analisis regresi pelbagai menunjukkan motivasi untuk belajar menjelaskan 15.5% varians dalam tahap pembelajaran dan 16.7% varians dalam pemindahan pembelajaran. Manakala pembelajaran informal menjelaskan 12.2% varians dalam tahap pembelajaran dan 13.4% varians dalam pemindahan pembelajaran. Implikasi teoretikal dan praktikal serta sumbangan kajian dibincangkan di dalam Bab 5.

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TABLE OF CONTENT

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	.ii
ABSTRAK.....	.v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	.vi
APPROVAL SHEETS.....	.vii
DECLARATION FORM.....	.ix
LIST OF TABLES.....	.xiv
LIST OF FIGURES.....	.xvi

CHAPTER

I

INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	7
Objectives of the study.....	9
Hypotheses of the Study.....	10
Significance of the study.....	11
Conceptual Definitions.....	13
Operational Definitions.....	32
Limitation of the Study.....	33

CHAPTER

II

LITERATURE REVIEW.....	38
Theories Related to How Adults Learn.....	39
Theory of Informal and Incidental Learning.....	39



Self-Directed Learning.....	49
Learning from Experience.....	52
Theory Related to Motivation to Learn.....	58
Expectancy Theory.....	58
Transfer of Training.....	60
Common Elements Theory.....	62
Research Framework.....	63
Review of the literature.....	67
Informal Learning in the Workplace.....	67
Informal learning among Nurses.....	75
The Relationship between Motivation To Learn and Training Outcomes	78
The Relationship between Skills Learned Informally and Transfer of Learning	81
The Relationship between Work Environment and Transfer of Learning.....	87
The Relationship between Supervisor Support, Peer Support and Organizational Support and Transfer of Learning.....	93
The Mediating Role of Learning in the Correlation between Informal Learning and Transfer of Learning.....	106
Conclusion.....	117



CHAPTER

III

METHODOLOGY.....	120
Research Design.....	120
Research Framework.....	121
Subjects of the Study.....	124
Research Instrumentats.....	125
Pilot Testing of Instruments.....	133
Data Collection.....	134
Data Analysis.....	135

CHAPTER

IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION.....	137
Distributions of Respondents by Selected Demographic.....	139
Descriptive Statistics.....	142
Learning Activity Utilization.....	142
Motivation to Learn.....	146
Work Environment.....	148
Learning.....	152
Transfer of Learning.....	158
Normality Test.....	160
Correlation Between Variables.....	166
Analysis of the Research Findings.....	168
Discussion.....	201
Summary of the Findings.....	228



CHAPTER

V	SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	233
	Summary	233
	Conclusions.....	238
	Implication for Practice.....	240
	Recommendations.....	250
	Reccomendations to the Policy Maker and Organization.....	251
	Recommendations for Future Research.....	253
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	257
	APPENDIXES.....	277



LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1 Characteristics of Formal and Informal Learning.....	15
2 Operational Definition.....	32
3 Trainee and Work Environment Characteristics of Transfer.....	61
4. Summary of Scale Reliability.....	134
5. Demographic Characteristics.....	140
6. Mean Scores of Learning Activity Utilization.....	144
7. Frequency Distribution of Informal Learning.....	145
8. Frequency Distribution of Formal Training.....	145
9. Mean Score of Motivation to Learn.....	147
10. Frequency Distribution of Motivation to Learn.....	147
11. Mean Score of Work Environment.....	149
12. Frequency Distribution of Supervisor Support.....	150
13. Frequency Distribution of Peer Support.....	151
14. Frequency Distribution of Organizational Support.....	152
15. Mean Score of Level Learning (Past).....	153
16. Frequency Distribution of Level of Knowledge (Past).....	154
17. Frequency Distribution of Level of Skills (Past).....	155
18. Mean Score of Level of Learning (Present).....	156
19. Frequency Distribution of Level of Knowledge (Present).....	157



20. Frequency Distribution of Level of Skills (Present).....	158
21. Mean Score of Transfer of Learning.....	159
22. Frequency Distribution of Transfer of Learning.....	159
23. Normality Test for Informal Learning.....	165
24. Normality Test for Motivation to Learn.....	165
25. Normality Test for Work Environment.....	166
26. Correlation Matrix of the Variables.....	167
27. Mean Score of the Mostly Used Learning Activities.....	169
28. Frequency Distribution of Learning through Trial and Error.....	170
29. Frequency Distribution of Learning from Experience.....	173
30. Frequency Distribution of Learning through Mentoring.....	175
31. Frequency Distribution for learning from Observation.....	178
32. Frequency Distribution of Learning from Interaction.....	180
33. Frequency Distribution of Learning from Role Modeling.....	183
34. Frequency Distribution of Learning from Formal Training.....	184
35. Correlation Matrix Independence and Dependence Variables.....	189
36. Results of Multiple Regression Analyses (Model 1).....	193
37. Results of Multiple Regression Analyses (Model 2).....	193
38. Results of Multiple Regression Analyses (Model 3).....	194
39. Model Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Informal Informal Learning, Motivation to Learn and Learning.....	196



40. Multiple Regression Analysis Examining Relationship Between Informal Learning , Motivation to Learn and Level of Learning.....	197
41 ANOVA : Informal Learning and Level of Learning.....	197
42 ANOVA : Motivation to Learn and Level of Learning.....	198
43 Model Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Informal Learning, Motivation to Learn, and Transfer of Learning.....	199
44 Multiple Regression Analysis Examining Relationship Between Informal Learning , Motivation to Learn and Transfer of Learning	200
45 ANOVA : Informal Learning and Transfer of Learning.....	200
46 ANOVA : Motivation to Learn and Transfer of Learning.....	201



LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE		PAGE
1	Informal and Incidental Learning Model.....	47
2	Model of Reflective Thought and Action.....	54
3	Research Framework.....	66
4	Research Framework.....	123
5	Scatterplot Matrix of Correlation Among Variables.....	161
6	Normal Probability Plot.....	162
7	Deterrended Normal Plot.....	163
8	Scatterplot of Regression Analysis.....	164
9	Transfer of Learning in the Informal Setting.....	230



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In today's high performance organizations, employees must be prepared for continuous on-the-job growth and development. Given the increased age, variety of experience and diverse life style and culture of working population it is understandable that the adult education practices must be beyond the traditional model of teacher as purveyors of knowledge and learners as passive recipient (Lankard,1993). In fact the banking approach to education need to be replaced with a liberating approach that Freire (1970) calls conscientization. Methods and technique that draw upon workers previous experience, link concepts and practices and encourage reflection and transfer of knowledge from one situation to another are vital to the learning process.

Today's high performance organizations foster learning for continuous improvement, a practice congruent with total quality management. Those organizations that can learn faster than their competitors and deploy the knowledge asset that is their people more effectively will achieve competitive advantage (Nonaka & Takeuchi 1995, Pamberton & Stonehouse 2000)



According to Wenger and Snyder (2000), today's economy runs on knowledge. For this reason, more and more organizations are seeking ways to establish continuous learning environments (Meister, 2000). Sculpting a continuous learning environment requires organizations to extend beyond formal training program to cultivate ongoing interactions among employees in area of decision making, thinking and information sharing. A culture that supports this dynamic is necessary for continuous learning organizations to exist (Watkins & Marsick, 1992).

A central ingredient of a continuous learning environment is informal learning (Enos, 2001). Informal learning is spontaneous, immediate-task and specific (Day, 1998). It is not classroom-based and also not determined or designed by the organization. Despite increasing allocations of time and money for formal training over the past decade, researchers discovered that up to 70 percent of learning actually took place informally. Eventually, harnessing it could save billions of dollars for the government and industry (Day, 1998).

Examples of informal learning practices are talking to a maintenance personnel at work about operation of the machine or mentor shows a new employee how to use a machine through an actual demonstration rather than through classroom presentation. Organizational theorists believe that



organizations that are able to foster continuous learning environments that nurture informal learning will enhance their overall effectiveness (Crossan, Lane & White, 1999).

Hospitals are among organizations that are committed to employees continuous learning. Nurses need to display competence to achieve their organizations goals. One way to meet this demand is for every nurse to engage in continuous learning. The profession of nursing has a long history of recognizing the need for continuous learning. It was Florence Nightingale (1859) who first wrote that “we should be learning all our lives”.

Nurses must continue their advance in continuous quality improvement. They must continue to learn from their mistake and increase the quality of their care and services (Dolan, 2002). Nurses should acknowledge the value of informal or on-the-job learning within their profession. Nurses who do not continue to improve their skills and knowledge will quickly become obsolete. In fact, the rapid changes in health care, the diminished lifespan of useful information and subsequently the increasing complexity of professional nursing practice makes it essential that nurses continue to learn throughout their professional careers in order to improve knowledge, skill and attitude for the enhancement of nursing practice, thus improving healthcare to the public.

Nurses like many other professionally-trained person often fill position requiring considerable managerial understanding and skills. Nurses in too many situations are at desk with management responsibilities rather than giving care to patients (Schmidt,1996). This is particularly true to nurses who are promoted to head nurses. The head nurses more often deal with managerial responsibilities such as planning and organizing, developing people, monitoring, leading and communicating.

In Malaysia, as of June 2004, there are 39,232 trained nurses of whom 29,354 or almost 75 percent are employed by the Ministry of Health (Chua Soi Lek, 2004). The trained nurse can be promoted as head nurse after 5 years of service. According to the Minister of Health, Chua Jui Meng (2001), since 2001, there are 1,538 post allocated for head nurses in the Ministry of Health. Whenever a staff nurse is promoted as a head nurse “.... I was told that she is also required to do managerial functions besides the clinical task “ (Chua Jui Meng, 2001, pg 1).

The new position which is held by the head nurses usually require them to acquire knowledge pertaining to managerial knowledge and skills which she might has had no formal training (Schmidt, 1996). Literature also suggest that clinical nurse lack adequate preparation, relevant skill and ability to function effectively in a management role (Murray,1994). While there is

little doubt that formal education program prepares nurses in learning some aspect of management, there is general consensus that head nurses also learn through repeated practice episode in their actual daily practice of management in the hospital (Troyan, 1996).

In this fast changing world, Malaysian nurses are encouraged to continuously learn and update their knowledge and skills as well as equip themselves with the ability to practice with greater responsibility and autonomy. In other words, learning must not end on their graduation day, but must continue throughout their career. Nurses are also reminded to improve their professionalism by learning continuously either by extensive reading or by regular attendance of seminar or conference. Reading is one of the attributes found in informal learning setting and lifelong learning process. Reading can also be done outside the classroom. Thus, informal learning and lifelong learning have become an essential ingredient to prosper in a profession.

Very little is known, however, about this tacit learning process in terms of learning strategies employed such as trial-and-error, coaching and mentoring and the resources utilized namely supervisors, peers and computers. The problem of practice which this study set to examine is that not much is known about how head nurses learn while assuming the new

position in the workplace. There are strong indications that a great deal of learning takes place in the workplace, yet little appears to be known about how people learn informally particularly in a professional environment (Lohman & Woolf, 1998). In fact several studies suggest that 70 percent or more of learning occurs outside the formal classroom and this learning takes many form. If so much learning takes place outside the formal classroom, therefore the study in this area is critical (Howe,1992).

The fast change in the healthcare organizations has given an impact to head nurses both as individual and in their role as an efficient professional nurses. As a consequence, it is essential that head nurses acquire knowledge from their everyday experiences such as learning from trial and error, learning from peers, mentors, supervisor as well as gaining knowledge and skills that are readily transferable to other environment.

Examining variables related to how head nurses learn informally and factors that enhance informal learning such as motivation to learn on the job and work environment and the extent to which these factors influence the acquisition of the knowledge and skills and learning transfer is valuable because it might change the way human resource practitioners view learning in the workplace. Instead of the focus being on the acquisition of knowledge and skills through formal training, due attention should also be given to