TRANSFER OF TRAINING THROUGH PRODUCTIVE NETWORKING

TRANSFERENCIA DE CAPACITACIÓN MEDIANTE REDES PRODUCTIVAS

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Abstract

Developing strategies for successfully transferring knowledge, skills and attitudes from a training programme to the workplace continues to be a key challenge facing organisations. Studies have found that, in general, employees transfer less than 10% of the training they acquire to their workplaces (Georgenson, 1982; Kelly, 1982; McGuire, 2014). Fitzpatrick (2001) and Saks (2002) argue that research regarding transfer of training could be complex because the figure of 10% has never been proven scientifically. Based on this study, we propose that the transfer of training models limit the transfer process because they focus solely on the whys and the why nots of the 10%, limiting the discussion to only the transfer of knowledge, skills, and attitudes from a training programme to a job. We contend that if the transfer of training research and discussion is broadened to include the remaining 90%, which is viewed as a lost job efficiency, one might discover some additional determinants contributing to the transfer of training. Therefore, this study is based on a new determinant called productive networking. In the study, interviews were used as a research instrument to investigate the significance of productive networking in the transfer of training process. Two bodies of literature were reviewed for the study. They were the frameworks of the transfer process set forth by Baldwin and Ford (1988) and Holton (2008), and the theories that support training transfer in organisations. The study determined that productive networking among trainees was a critical factor in the successful transfer of training.

Keywords: Transfer of training, productive networking, human resource development, training and development, qualitative research.

Resumen

El desarrollo de estrategias para la transferencia exitosa de conocimientos, habilidades y actitudes de un programa de capacitación al lugar de trabajo sigue siendo un desafío clave al que se enfrentan las organizaciones. Los estudios han encontrado que, en general, los empleados transfieren menos del 10 % de la formación que adquieren a sus lugares de trabajo (Georgenson, 1982; Kelly, 1982; McGuire, 2014). Fitzpatrick (2001) y Saks (2002) sostienen que la investigación sobre la transferencia de formación puede resultar difícil porque la cifra del 10 % nunca ha sido probada científicamente. Con base en este estudio, propongo que la transferencia de modelos de capacitación limita el proceso de transferencia porque se centran únicamente en los porqués y por qué no del 10 % limitando la discusión a solo la transferencia de conocimientos, habilidades y actitudes de la capacitación al trabajo. Sostengo que si la transferencia de la investigación y el debate sobre la formación se amplía al 90 % restante, lo que se considera una pérdida de eficiencia laboral, se podrían descubrir algunos determinantes adicionales que contribuyen a la transferencia de la formación. Por tanto, este estudio se basa en un nuevo determinante denominado *networking* productivo. En el estudio, utilicé las entrevistas como el instrumento para investigar la importancia del trabajo en red productivo en el proceso de transferencia de formación. Se revisaron dos cuerpos de literatura para el estudio. Fueron los mar-

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cos del proceso de transferencia de Baldwin y Ford (1988) así como de Holton (2008), y las teorías que sustentan la transferencia de formación en las organizaciones. La conclusión del estudio fue que la creación de redes productivas entre los aprendices era un factor crítico para la transferencia exitosa de la capacitación.

Palabras clave: Transferencia de formación, redes productivas, desarrollo de recursos humanos, formación y desarrollo, investigación cualitativa.

Introduction

Over the past few decades, extensive research has been carried out regarding the transfer of training in order to increase the transfer of knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired in a training context to the job. Transfer of training is defined as the degree to which trainees effectively apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired in a training context to the job (Baldwin et al., 2009; Blume et al., 2010). Productive Networking can be defined as a network of relations created with people or companies during training sessions and related to one's job or business and which benefits one's job or business (Rahman & Shiddike, 2019). Training is utilised in every discipline. Therefore, researchers in the ambits of management, education, human resource development, psychology, performance management, organisational behaviour, adult training, and nursing have explored the transfer problem in those fields. This diversity among researchers has resulted in inconsistent measures of transfer of training and substantial variations in the findings (Blume et al., 2010).

This qualitative study endeavoured to explore productive networking as a factor in the transfer of training process. Furthermore, the study investigated the extent to which organisations delivered training activities that facilitated the transfer of training before, during, and after training sessions as well as how the relationship between these three phases influenced the transfer of training in these organisations. The research questions explored in this study were; (i) what contextual factors influenced the trainees' transfer of training back to their jobs before, during and after the training sessions? Moreover (ii) how does current research influence the development of an overall conceptual/theoretical framework for the transfer of training? While exploring the effects of contextual factors regarding the transfer of training, we discovered an interesting phenomenon, namely productive networking. We found that knowledge, skills, and attitudes were not the only factors responsible for the transfer of training, given that productive networking together with knowledge, skills, and attitudes also influenced the transfer of training. This paper focuses solely on the transfer of training through productive networking.

Theoretical Background

The literature review for this paper begins with discussing Baldwin and Ford's (1988) transfer of training framework. The literature review then surveys Holton's transfer of training framework and the theories supporting the transfer of training. This paper develops a conceptual framework to guide the presentation and discussion of the study's findings based on the literature review.

A Framework of the Transfer of Training Process

Baldwin and Ford (1988) developed a framework in 1988 that explained the transfer of the training process. They affirmed that it was imperative to understand the transfer of training and the factors that affect the transfer process and to address the 'transfer problem' in organisations. They described the transfer process in terms of training inputs, training outcomes, and transfer conditions. Training inputs comprised of training design (incorporation of the learning principles, the sequencing of training material and the job relevance of the training content), trainee characteristics (ability, motivation and personality traits), and work environment characteristics (supervisory or peer support as well as constraints and opportunities to perform learned behaviour). Training outcomes consisted of the actual learning that occurred during the training and the retention of that material following the completion of the programme. Transfer conditions included the

Figure 1. A framework of the transfer process
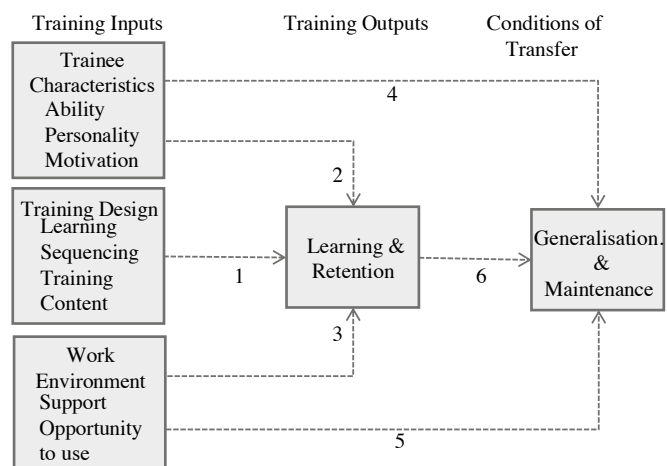
Source: Adapted from Holton (1996, p. 17); Yamnill and McLean (2001, p. 196). Used with Permission.

generalisation of the material learned in training sessions applied to the job context and the maintenance of learned material over a period of time on the job.

The framework indicates that training inputs and training outcomes have a direct or indirect impact on transfer conditions. The six linkages shown in the foregoing model are critical in understanding the transfer process. For example, linkage 6 represents how training outcomes (learning and retention) can directly affect transfer conditions (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). Trainee characteristics and work environment characteristics described by linkages 4 and 5 also directly influence the transfer conditions regardless of their immediate effect on the training outcomes of learning and retention (linkages 2 and 3). For example, well-learned skills might not be maintained on the job due to the lack of supervisory or peer support (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). Finally, the three training inputs of trainee characteristics, training design, and work environment directly impact the training outcomes of learning and retention (linkages 1, 2 and 3) and indirectly impact transfer conditions (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).

Holton's Framework of Transfer of Training
Holton (1996) proposed a conceptual framework of transfer of training in which he argued that there are three primary outcomes of training: learning, individual performance, and organisational results. He also highlighted the implications of theories regarding training design, theories supporting transfer climate, and theories concerning the motivation of transfer on individual performance and organisational results. Holton's framework of transfer of training is presented below in figure 2:

Figure 2 illustrates Holton's framework of transfer of training. The framework indicates that learning occurs due to training intervention because of training design, training climate, and transfer motivation. Thereupon the learning translates into individual performance owing to the transfer of knowledge, skills, and attitudes on the job ensuing in organisational results.

## Theories Supporting the Transfer of Training

There are three categories of theories supporting the transfer of training: theories of training design (identical elements theory, principles theory, and near & far transfer theory), theories supporting transfer climate (transfer climate framework theory and organisation theory), and theories concerning transfer motivation (goal-setting theory, expectancy theory, equity theory, and need theories) (Rahman, 2020).

Theories of training design

One of the significant issues regarding the transfer problem is that the transfer of training design does not provide for the transfer of training. Trainees do not have the opportunityh to apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes gained during training to a job, or they do not know what to do with the acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes (Holton, 1996). Thus, the training itself can be directly responsible for the transfer problem. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss, analyse and understand the theories responsible for the transfer of training design. These theories can help achieve a positive transfer. This section discusses three transfer of training design theories: the identical elements theory, the principles theory, and the near and far transfer theory.

According to the identical elements theory, if the training environment, training interactions, and training material match the performance expectations, transfer of training is likely to occur (Saks & Belcourt, 2006; Thorndike & Woodworth, 1901a, 1901b, 1901c). The more the physical and psychological factors of the real world (trainees' expectations regarding the training versus actual implementation of the training on-the-job) mimic each other, the greater the likelihood of transferring that training to their jobs (Jaidev, 2014; Yamnill & McLean, 2001). Holding (1965) presents three possible scenarios of identical elements for the transfer of training. First, a positive transfer occurs when the material taught during the training is precisely what the trainee expects to transfer to the job. Secondly, when the train-

Figure 2. Holton's framework of transfer of training
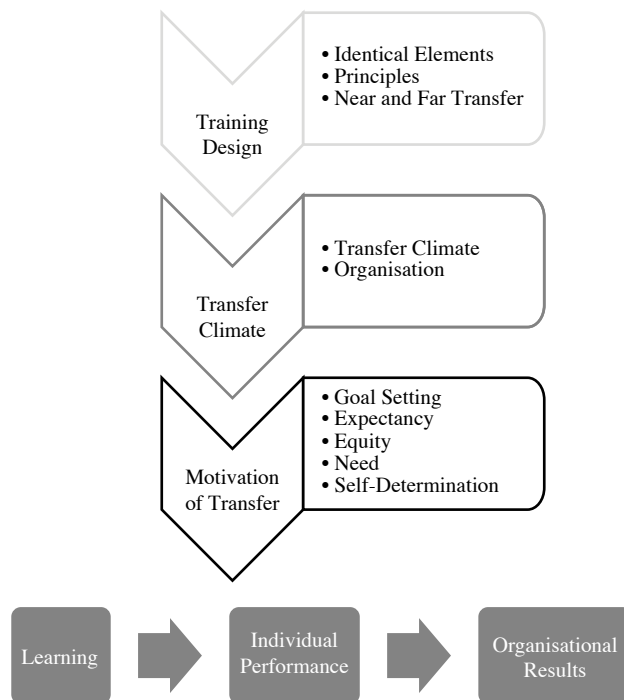
Source: Baldwin and Ford (1988, p. 65). Used with Permission.

ing material taught during the training session is somewhat different from what the trainee is likely to transfer to the job, some transfer of training can occur. Third, if the material taught during the training is entirely different from what the trainee is likely to transfer to the job, a negative or zero transfer of training would occur.

While the identical elements theory suggests that the physical and psychological elements of the trainees' real world (the trainees' expectations with regard to the training versus actual implementation of the training on-the-job) match, the principles theory focuses on the most critical elements that should be matched. Because of the principles theory, the trainees' ability to solve problems can be enhanced in the transfer environment by focusing on the essential elements in training (Sprouse et al., 2010). The principles theory proposes that training should be carried out based on the principles that underlie the necessary task for completion in the transfer environment (Goldstein & Ford, 2002).

Additionally, Laker (1990) has discussed the near and far transfer theory. According to him, near transfer refers to the ability of trainees to apply directly on the job what has been learned in training with little or no adjustment or modification. Far transfer refers to the trainee's ability to expand upon or use what was acquired in training in new or creative ways. Therefore, the near and far transfer theory appears to combine the identical elements theory and the principles theory.

Theories Supporting Transfer Climate

The transfer climate combines the training environment as perceived by the trainee and the trainees' attitude, behaviour, and motivation level (Schneider et al., 2013; Schneider & Rentsch, 1988). The transfer climate can directly influence how a trainee learns the skills on a job (Yamnill & McLean, 2001). Therefore, transfer climate can promote or hinder training (Rouiller & Goldstein, 1993). Thus, it is essential to understand the theories supporting the transfer climate. Two transfer climate theories are discussed in this section, the transfer climate framework theory and the organisation theory.

The transfer climate framework theory was set forth by Rouiller and Goldstein (1993). They suggested a transfer climate framework that had two types of workplace cues and eight distinct dimensions. The first set of cues are *situational cues*. Situational cues remind the trainees of the opportunities for applying the skills they have learned in training to their jobs. Four kinds of situational cues are associated with the workplace, namely: goal cues, social cues, task cues, and self-control cues. With regard to the goal cues, the trainees are reminded of

the goals of the training they participated in and how they could be achieved by applying the skills learned during the training to their workplace. Social cues remind trainees to use socially accepted behaviour learned during the training and its application to the workplace.

Similarly, the task cues and the self-control cues are reminders to the trainees to apply the task, and self-control-oriented skills learned during the training to the workplace. The second set of cues are the *consequence cues*. The consequence cues are the trainees' feedback after applying the knowledge, skills, and attitudes learned in training to the job. There are four kinds of consequence cues: positive feedback, negative feedback, punishment, and no feedback (Yamnill & McLean, 2001). Positive feedback refers to the positive reaction manifested to an employee in response to a productive behaviour learned during training, as for example, a salary increase in response to good work done by that employee. Negative behaviour refers to negative consequences generated in response to behaviour not learned during training, as in the case of supervisors being made aware of the employees who are not following operating procedures. Punishment means employees are punished for using behaviours analysed in training, such as when more experienced managers ridicule the use of learned behaviours by the junior managers. No feedback means that the trainees are not provided with any feedback at all regarding the service or benefits of learned behaviour. Managers are too busy to note whether trainees use learned behaviours (Yamnill & McLean, 2001). Therefore, eight distinct dimensions in two workplace cues play an instrumental role in the positive or negative transfer of training.

In addition, the organisation theory explains the support of the organisational climate for the transfer of training (Yamnill & McLean, 2001). According to Kozlowski and Salas (1997), the need for change, the transfer of knowledge, skills, and attitudes from training to a job and the application of the training interventions are all embedded at the individual, group and organisational levels. Since the organisation theory is based on systems-oriented theories, the fundamental concepts that underlie the organisation theory are that organisations are prone to internal and external environmental influences and a network of relations. Therefore, it is not possible to understand the organisation theory without understanding the organisational whole or reducing it to its elements. According to Kozlowski and Farr (1988), the organisation theory enhances stable work environment characteristics (organisational structure, reward systems, and decision making). The contextual factors of these work environment characteristics can have a direct influence on individual responses to training. Thus producing, the

transfer of knowledge, skills and attitudes learned during training to a job.

## Theories On the Motivation of Transfer

Motivation to transfer training can be defined as a desire to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes from a learning environment and then use them on a job to achieve maximum efficiency (Noe & Schmitt 1986). To understand what makes trainees transfer training in a given situation, it is essential to understand the motivation behind the transfer of training (Yamnill & McLean, 2001). Several behavioural theories explain the motivation to transfer. The theories of goal setting, expectancy, equity, and needs help to explain the motivation for the transfer of training. These theories are reviewed in the paragraphs below.

The first theory of motivation for transfer is the goal-setting theory. The goal-setting theory is a theory related to the development of a plan of action set into motion by an individual or a group to achieve specific goals. The goal-setting theory concerns intentions and values. According to Locke (1968), there are two cognitive elements of behaviour: intentions and values. Intentions are the immediate precursor to human actions, while values manifest as incentives for achieving the goals set

in performing a particular task. The goal-setting theory has been considered one of the most potent motivation theories in the specialised literature of management, psychology and human resources. In theory, Locke identified a relationship between the level of difficulty of a goal and the quality of performance in a specific task. According to him, the more complex the goal is, the better the task performance is and vice versa.

The goal-setting theory has significant implications for the practice of the transfer of training in organisations. Tannenbaum et al. (1991) discussed intervention fulfilment to explain employees' motivation to transfer training based on goal setting and expectancy theories. According to Tannenbaum et al., training fulfilment is significant in explaining training motivation. The motivation for training is similar to the motivation for the transfer of training because it measures the perception of trainees regarding the relationship between training success and future job performance (Yamnill & McLean, 2001). If trainees consider the intervention fulfiling or, in other words, if participating in appropriate training would help them get rewards in their jobs, they would be fulfiled or motivated to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes from their training. Thus, a positive transfer of training would occur due to the motivation fulfilment of employees.

Figure 3. Theories supporting transfer of training
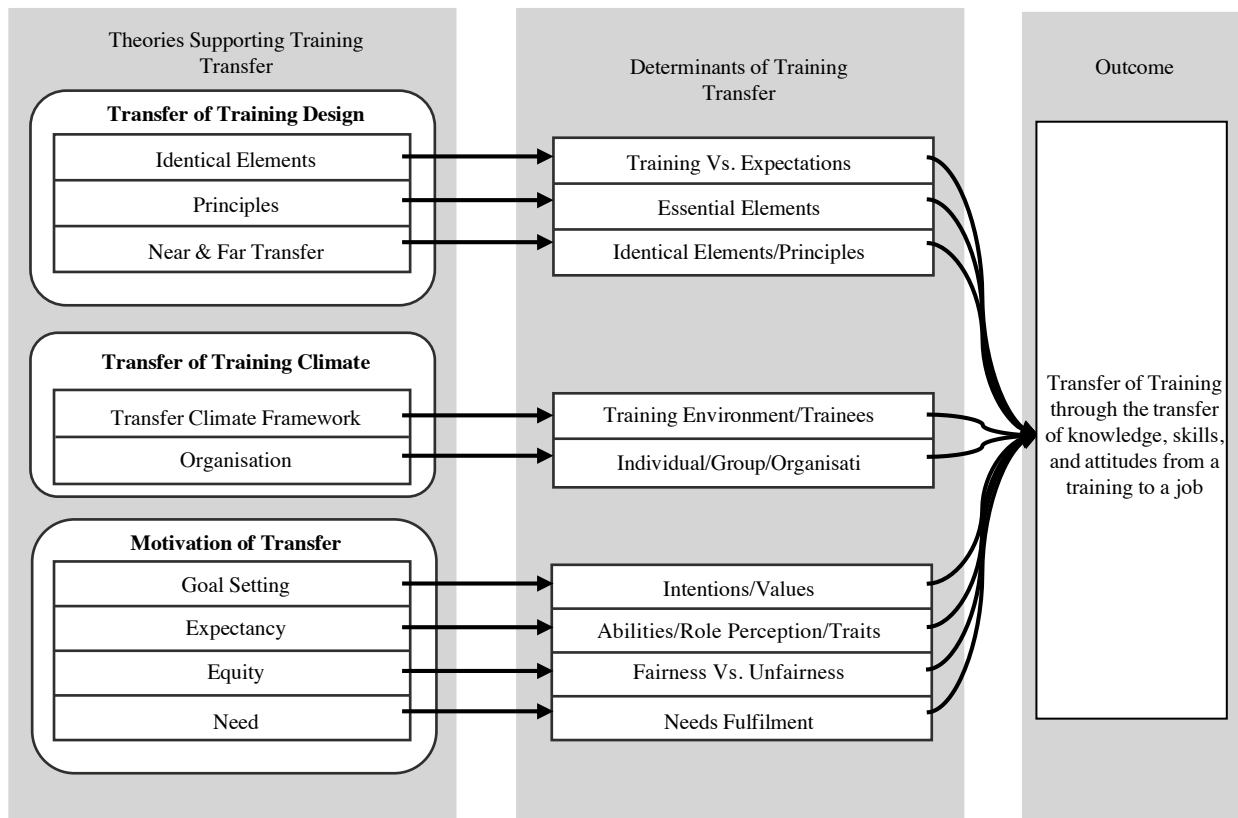
Another motivation theory is Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory. He defined expectancy as a "momentary belief concerning the likelihood that a particular act will precede a particular outcome" (p. 17). Lawler III (1973) and Kilgore (1997) expressed the expectancy theory mathematically as $P = f(F \times A)$, where there are two variables F = Force and A = Ability. The interaction between these two variables produces the result P (Performance). According to Yamnill and McLean (2001), Vroom's model emphasises ability rather than willingness.

The expectancy theory can also have significant implications for the practice of the transfer of training in organisations. The expectancy theory is based on rewards. If there are enough rewards, there might be a high level of satisfaction and therefore performance. Because the expectancy theory is linked to rewards, excellent job performance and job satisfaction, it is likely to motivate employees to be enthusiastic about training and the transfer of training to their jobs. In other words, good job performance cannot occur without some positive transfer of training.

Moreover, Tannenbaum et al. (1991) found an independent link between performance during training and post-training motivation. In their view, employees who perform better in their training are more motivated to transfer the knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired to a job. Similarly, employees who perform poorly in training are likely to be less motivated to transfer the knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired to a job.

The third theory is the equity theory. The equity theory can be defined as a theory that determines whether the distribution of resources is equitable among the contractual partners. People describe equity as being treated fairly (Yamnill & McLean, 2001) or unfairly (Vroom, 1964). Vroom also states, "The greater the difference between these two amounts, the greater the tension or disequilibrium experienced by the person" (p. 168). The equity theory is based on three assumptions. First, employees develop their own beliefs about what comprises a fair or equitable return for their job contributions. Secondly, employees compare the rewards and benefits they receive at their jobs to that of their colleagues. Third, a belief in inequity or unfairness creates a specific disequilibrium or tension in employees that motivates them to reduce that disequilibrium or tension (Carrell & Dittrich, 1978; Ilgen & Klein, 1988; Yamnill & McLean, 2001). Methods for lowering inequity might involve changing one's performance on the job or changing the person with whom the comparison is being made (Yamnill & McLean, 2001).

The equity theory has significant implications for the practice of the transfer of training in organisations. According to the equity theory, employees are expected to participate and perform more enthusiastically in training if they believe that they will receive more equitable pay or rewards after they complete the training and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes learned during the training to their jobs to enhance their performance. Therefore, it is essential to analyse what employees believe to be equitable (Kilgore, 1997; Noe et al., 2014; Noe & Schmitt, 1986; Yamnill & McLean, 2001).

The fourth and final theory of motivation transfer is a group of need-based theories, which can be found in management literature. The three need-based theories reviewed are Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Alderfer's ERG (Existence, Relatedness, and Growth) theory of motivation, and McClelland's need theory. Maslow discussed different levels of needs. For example, physiological needs such as food and shelter come at the first level because they are the basic needs and self-actualisation and self-esteem needs come at higher levels. People are motivated to satisfy needs at lower levels first before they seek to satisfy them at higher levels (Acevedo, 2018). However, if they cannot satisfy the higher-level needs, they refocus on meeting them at lower levels. Alderfer further developed Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs into his existence, relatedness, and growth (ERG) theory of motivation. He categorised Maslow's physiological and safety needs into the 'Existence' category of his ERG theory.

Similarly, he added Maslow's social and esteem needs into his 'Relatedness' Category. Lastly, he took Maslow's desire for personal growth and self-actualisation and added them to his 'Growth' category. McClelland's needs theory focused on the needs for achievement, affiliation and power. McClelland argued that each individual has one of the three driving motivators; achievement, affiliation, and power. These three motivators are not inherent but learned through environment, culture, and experience (Noe & Peacock, 2008).

The need-based theories play a significant role in motivating employees. Employees identify their training needs: self-fulfilment, knowledge acquisition, rewards acquisition, achievement, affiliation, pay increase, job promotion, etc. and explain how the training fulfils these needs. Moreover, if specific basic needs such as physiological or safety needs are not fulfiled, employees are likely to be demotivated, resulting in a negative transfer of training (Noe & Peacock, 2008; Rasskazova et al., 2016). Therefore, the need-based theories remind researchers and practitioners of the workers' needs that must be fulfiled in order to keep them motivated and thus achieve a positive transfer of training.

Methodology

A qualitative research design was used to investigate the transfer of training through productive networking. The qualitative research instrument employed was semi-structured interviews. The average time for each interview was one hour. The interviews were conducted in the form of a discussion between the interviewer and the interviewee. A cordial and friendly atmosphere was created so that the issues could be discussed in detail. The interviews were scheduled according to the convenience of the interviewees. The study was carried out in eight media organisations of Lahore, which is a major Pakistani city. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with two employees from each organisation. Employees who had participated in at least one training programme over the last three years were interviewed for the study.

A random convenience sampling was chosen in this study. Random convenience sampling is a nonprobability sampling in which participants are selected because they are conveniently accessible to the researchers. The only criterion for random convenience sampling was that the participants were willing to participate in the study (Creswell, 2014). The main reason for choosing random convenience sampling in this study was that Pakistan was embroiled in a military conflict with neighbouring India and the media organisations were busy 24 hours a day broadcasting news. Therefore, it was necessary to choose convenient random sampling for this study. The media organisations were identified based on their reputation in Pakistan. The senior manager of each organisation was contacted and requested to provide a list of employees who had attended at least one training programme in the past three years. Sixteen individuals were interviewed from eight media companies of Lahore (on average, approximately two interviewees from each media company). English is the official language of Pakistan. Therefore, almost everyone working at the organisations understood English.

Participant recruitment began immediately following ethics approval of the study, and recruitment occurred primarily by way of phone, face-to-face contact, as well as by email. If someone indicated the willingness to participate in the survey, we forwarded a letter of consent and an invitation to join to the participant. Participants received a copy of the signed consent form, and we obtained another copy of the signed consent form for our records. Consent was obtained immediately prior to the interview. The consent form and an invitation to participate were made available in person or by email to the participant at least two days before the interviews in order to give them time to read, understand, and ask any questions regarding the form. Participants were asked to sign the consent form prior to the interview, and the participants signed the consent form voluntarily. Fieldwork for this study was completed between February 2019 and March 2019. The confidentiality of the interviewees was strictly maintained. All email interactions were registered on our password-protected laptop computer. No data was collected by email, although the participants received copies of their interview transcripts by email for review to confirm the accuracy and provide additional input if they wished to do so.

Before the data analysis and interpretation could begin, data organisation and cleaning were undertaken using the computer as the first step. The data were organised in folders and sub-folders using NVIVO. The primary function of NVIVO was to organise data in different folders and sub-folders using various file types. In this study, data were mainly organised in audio files (the recorded interviews) and Microsoft Word files (the transcriptions of the recorded interviews). The audio files were then transcribed and typed using Microsoft Word. Microsoft Word files were also organised in folders and sub-folders using NVIVO, thus making the qualitative data suitable for analysis (Rahman & Shiddike, 2020, Rahman & Bockarie, 2021, 2022).

Following the completion of data analysis, the participants received a summary of the study's findings upon request. Participants were informed in that regard before the interviews. The participants were apprised of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. They were told that they could refuse to participate or withdraw their participation from the study at any time they wished. They were also informed that by April 15, 2019, data analysis and interpretation of the study's findings would be initiated. Therefore, the withdrawal of their data from the study would no longer be possible subsequent to that date. In short, the participants were given two weeks after the interviews to withdraw from research by contacting the principal investigator through email.

Findings

The findings of the study revealed that the participants considered productive networking an essential element of any training. For example, Felix explained the significance of networking activities in training as follows:

> As a journalist, I am constantly looking for networking opportunities which is one of the main reasons for attending these workshops.

Similarly, Joseph said:

> I look for participation in training programmes in my field. One of the main reasons is that I get an opportunity to meet other people from the industry. I get to know about the best practices of the industry. Implementing those best practices in my job makes me better at my job.

Like those of the other participants discussed below, Felix and Joseph's comments drew attention to networking as an essential factor in training programmes. Most of the employees indicated they participated in training programmes because of the networking. They wanted to network with other people to discuss the job market, attain knowledge concerning projects in their fields of expertise, and discover whether any job or business opportunities or project-based opportunities were available, in which they could be involved. This indicated that the trainees considered time spent on networking during coffee and lunch breaks as productive. This supports the idea that the time spent on networking and the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes by trainees during training are sources for the positive transfer of training. Time spent on networking is a source of positive transfer of training because it can result in the same job efficiency that otherwise would be expected to be delivered by transfer of training through the transfer of knowledge, skills, and attitudes from training to a job.

During the interviews, the participants also discussed various transfer strategies such as accepting new jobs or business opportunities that come their way, leaving their existing jobs or using the contacts of their new network to start a business or project. Similarly, they could utilise the connections of their new network to enhance efficiency in their existing jobs. Thus, it could be argued that these productive networking strategies can be viewed as training transfer strategies from the perspective of transfer. For example, suppose the ultimate goal of transfer of training is the attainment of job efficiency (transfer of knowledge, skills, and attitudes from training to job). In that case, the same job efficiency can be achieved if the trainees are being helped in their existing jobs, finding a new job or business opportunity, or starting a new business or project through their productive network (transfer of productive networking from training to job). Most of the participants discussed the importance of productive networking in training. For example, Carla said that productive networking could be an essential source for knowledge sharing. She explained as follows:

> We should encourage the trainees to engage in networking activities during coffee and lunch breaks. In this way, trainees can exchange ideas about their jobs and projects they are working on. This exchange of ideas and sharing of knowledge can help trainees enhance their knowledge, which they can later apply in their jobs. In a way, this is also a transfer of training.

Samantha and John also shared Carla's views. Samantha said:

> I always maintain a directory of business cards. I have collected my business cards from the workshops and training programmes I attend. This is very important. You never know who can help you in your career. Talking to all these people during workshops has constantly enhanced my knowledge.

Similarly, John explained how vital networking was for him. He said:

> Networking during tea breaks has always kept me knowledgeable about what is happening on other TV channels. I get to know new ways of doing things.

In addition, Thomas explained networking in an interesting light. He said he had spent the initial years of his career in different industries. One of those industries was the training and consulting industry. He explained networking as follows:

> Networking is one of the most important aspects of training, even more, important than the training content. My motivation to participate in training is always networking much more than the training content. Training content becomes monotonous and boring after a while, especially in those full-day workshops. But then you have those coffee and lunch breaks where you can meet people and network. During those networking sessions, you can become aware of the job opportunities on the one hand and the business opportunities on the other hand. I find networking important when people in my network can enhance my job efficiency in my current job, either by introducing me to new ways of doing things or by acting as a catalyst in improving my relations with my supervisor. Sometimes they also benefit me in monetary terms by offering to involve me in projects. This is always my takeaway from training.

Like many other participants, Thomas argued that networking was crucial in one's professional life. Although training content was valuable, time spent on networking

sessions during coffee and lunch breaks was also necessary. Trainees could use those networking sessions to connect with people throughout the industry. The trainees could benefit in terms of finding new job opportunities as well as new business opportunities. The trainees could also use the human connections made during the networking sessions for future ventures. Therefore, the statements of Thomas, Carla, Samantha, and John reiterate the fact that engaging in productive networking activities during the coffee and lunch breaks of a training programme is practical too. In a scenario where trainees are actively involved in productive networking activities and participating in a training session, the transfer of training can be explained in two ways. First, since the trainees are participating in a training session, they are attaining knowledge, skills, and attitudes from the training session that they will transfer in various degrees to their jobs resulting in negative, positive, or zero transfer of training. Secondly, the trainees participate in productive networking during the coffee and lunch breaks. They are networking with other people to discuss the job market, attain knowledge concerning projects in their fields of expertise, and learn of any job or business opportunities or any project-based opportunities in which they could be involved. Therefore, the productive network created during coffee and lunch breaks helps some of the trainees in their existing jobs by making them more efficient. In addition, the productive network can help the other trainees find better job and business opportunities by making them better in their careers. Hence, it would be logical to say that the first type is the transfer of training through knowledge, skills, and attitudes, while the second type is training through productive networking.

There is evidence in the findings that the trainees considered the concept of networking as a contributing factor in the transfer of training. Therefore, it is reasonable to include the concept of networking or, more precisely, productive networking in the transfer of training model. There is a difference between the concepts of networking and productive networking. Networking means building a network of relationships that could be useful in the future. Since job efficiency is the ultimate goal of transfer of training, productive networking refers to conducting or participating in training sessions specifically to create a productive network and utilising that network for job efficiency. Therefore, networking can be defined as a process of interacting with other individuals to develop a network of social contacts. However, productive networking can be defined as a network of relations created with people or companies during training sessions and related to one's job or business to benefit one's job or business (Rahman & Shiddike, 2019, Rahman, 2022).

A productive network is created with a specific goal in mind, while a simple network can be designed to enhance one's social interactions that may or may not be beneficial in future. A productive network can be created during training sessions. In contrast, a simple network can be established anywhere, during a training session or outside of training, during a golf tournament or a family picnic. Therefore, the concept of productive networking is more formal than the concept of networking.

Discussion

It is interesting to note that the concept of productive networking is already operational in the professional services industry. The companies involved in the professional services industry conduct specific training sessions to create productive networks. The trainees at those training sessions are more interested in creating those productive networks than they are in the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. As has been already been mentioned, if the trainees of those training sessions are successful in creating their productive networks that can be utilised successfully in their jobs and businesses, it would achieve the same result regarding job efficiency, which would otherwise be achieved through the transfer of knowledge, skills, and attitudes from training to job. Therefore, it would be logical to say that the job efficiency achieved through the transfer of knowledge, skills, and attitudes from training to job and the job efficiency achieved through productive networking created during training programmes are both types of transfer of training.

Productive Networking and Transfer of Training
Organisations conduct training programmes and measure the effectiveness of those training programmes (Neeley, 2015). Among other parameters to measure training effectiveness, one of the main criteria is the business impact or organisational impact of training (Andriotis, 2019; Brøndsted & Boston, 2015). One way of measuring business impact or organisational impact is whether training is or is not able to create a productive network (Ibarra & Hunter, 2007). We have selected the term productive networking for this study. However, different fields and subject experts have used the term productive networking in different ways. For example, Ibarra and Hunter (2007) use the term operational networking. According to them, operational networking is one of the goals of training. They define operational networking as managers building good relationships with people who can help in their jobs. These people may include super-

visors, peers, suppliers, distributors, customers, and even fellow trainees from other organisations.

Similarly, Ramirez (2018) argues that training should be perceived as a team-building tool to create networks within and outside organisations. These networks can be within the organisation or even cross-border or cross-geographical networks. In her view, such networks can be utilised for communication, problem-solving, and strategic thinking.

Milovanović, Primorac, and Kozina (2020) discuss the impact of strategic networking on the business performance of manufacturing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in a predominantly service economy. They define strategic networking as a strategic intent of a firm to develop long-term, meaningful, and sustainable business relationships with other firms and market players. Through such market relationships, the focal firm can further develop its core competencies while utilising the benefits of such a strategic market network. Vervest et al., (2009) take the entire discussion of productive networking one step further. They argue that business networks rather than individual companies are determining competitive advantages. They talk about smart business networks. They affirm that the dynamic and agile relationships between companies give birth to smart business networks enabled by smart technologies. These networks include suppliers, business partners, customers, and even competitors inter-twined to produce smart results. The smart business networks that have been established as deliberate acts of individual companies (people-to-people networking and business-to-business networking through training) play a vital role in confronting the process challenge (leading strategic organisational change), business challenge (sustaining competitive advantage), and academic challenge (bridging academia and business practice).

Hence, the concept of productive networking explains how creating a productive network (building relationships with the right kind of people/organisations at the right time) and acquiring knowledge, skills, and attitudes during training can support the transfer of training. It seems that the definition of transfer of training, "the transfer of knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired during a training to job," limits the scope of the concept of transfer of training because this definition of transfer of training is given under the premise that job efficiency can only be achieved when knowledge, skills, and attitudes are transferred from training to job. The concept of productive networking challenges the notion that only the transfer of knowledge, skills, and attitudes from training to job can result in job efficiency. As put forth in the following paragraphs and indicated by the data analysis

of this study, a training conducted where the principal goal of training is the attainment of a productive network in addition to a secondary purpose of the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes can also result in job efficiency.

Productive networking can be explained by means of a real-life example of a professional services company such as Ernst & Young. Professional services companies are global consultancies, and they thrive on unique and timely information. Unique and timely information through productive networking is their competitive advantage. The concept of productive networking is graphically presented in figure 3.

Figure 3 presents the above-mentioned example of productive networking in graphic form. In the above figure, a client (Subject 1) engages a professional services consulting firm (Subject 2) for advice regarding a merger of company A and B. Company A is operating in Canada at a loss, and Company B is operating in Germany at a profit. According to Canadian laws, if companies A and B are to be merged in Canada, the resulting merger would be prejudiced because of the mutual sharing of losses. The professional services consulting firm (Subject 2) contacts its productive network in Europe (Object) to solve this dilemma. It is important to note here that subject two conducted a training programme a year ago to build a European productive network. The European productive network (Object) informs subject two that if the merger took place in Germany instead of Canada, there would be no losses. The resulting merger would be a profit entity. Subject 2 utilises this unique information provided by the object and saves millions of dollars for the client (subject 1), thus making it all possible by means of transfer of training through productive networking (Action). It is also worth mentioning here that professional services consulting firms develop their businesses based on acquiring unique information, which they utilise as their competitive advantage (Rahman, 2021).

The concept of productive networking can be included in Baldwin and Ford's framework of the transfer of training process (Figure 1) and Holton's framework of transfer of training (Figure 2). Figure 4 presents the linkages between Baldwin and Ford's framework of transfer of training process, Holton's framework of transfer of training, the theories affecting the transfer of training, and the concept of productive networking.

Figure 4 shows how the concept of productive networking can be included in Baldwin and Ford's model of the transfer of training process. The trainee characteristics, training design, and work environment are considered training inputs and the trainees' ability to do productive networking can also be regarded as training input. Similarly,

Figure 4 Model of the Concept of Productive Networking
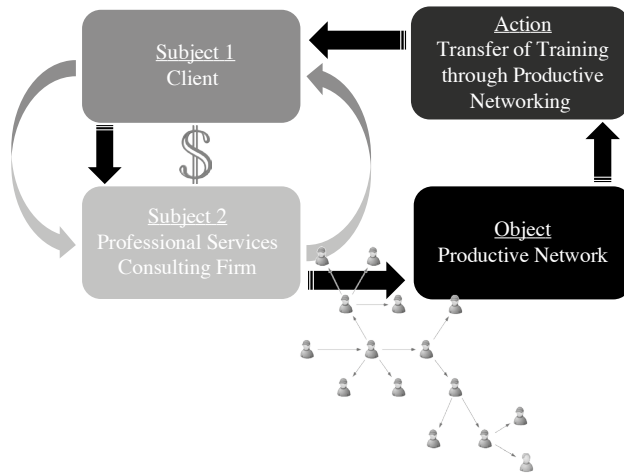
Legend

Subject 1: Client

Subject 2: Professional Services Consulting firm

Object: Productive Network

Action: Transfer of training through productive networking

in the same way that learning and retention is a training output, a productive network created at the end of a training programme is also a training output. To sum up, the training inputs of trainee characteristics, training design, work environment, and productive networking and the training outputs of learning and retention and productive network will depend upon the conditions of transfer which are generalisation and maintenance. Two new linkages are also created in Figure 4. Linkage 7 represents how training input (an ability to create a productive network) can have a direct effect on training output (productive network). Similarly, linkage 8 represents how a productive network can have a direct impact on the conditions of transfer (generalisation and maintenance). Transfer of training is graphically presented in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5 shows the transfer of training and indicates how job efficiency can be achieved through the transfer of knowledge, skills, and attitudes from training to job and also through the transfer of unique information (utilising a productive network) from training to job.

Implications

The implications regarding the concept of productive networking are many. For example, the concept of productive networking casts doubt on the unscientific belief that transfer of training is only 20 to 30%, thereby broadening the scope of transfer of training research from research on transfer of training through knowledge, skills, and attitudes to research on transfer of training through productive networking. The concept of productive network-

ing accomplishes this by explaining how the creation of a productive network (creating relationships with the right kind of people at the right time) in addition to the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes through training can have a similar outcome of attainment of job efficiency and hence the transfer of training. Moreover, since the concept of productive networking provides a different approach to the conceptualisation of transfer of training, it provides a new area for further research within the exact transfer of training parameters.

Limitations and Further Research

The study's limitations relate to the characteristics of the methodology used, which set parameters for the application or interpretation of the investigation results. One limitation of the study was the constraints on the utility of the study's findings due to the lack of generalisability. The study investigated the transfer problem in eight media organisations. Thus, the results of the study might be limited to those organisations only. However, readers of the study would be able to compare the findings to the transfer problem in similar and dissimilar organisational contexts to determine the transferability of the results to their organisations.

In addition, the views of other stakeholder groups, such as management, suppliers, clients, and policymakers, were not incorporated into the study. Further, the study was based on the experiences of participants who volunteered to participate in the research. Therefore, the views of employees who decided not to participate for various reasons were not incorporated into this study. Data for the analysis were only collected through one-on-one in-depth. There were no extensive reviews of the participants' employment documents and records because of issues of confidentiality.

Finally, only the media industry was chosen for this study. The reason was simply the accessibility to organisations. The decision to only use one industry for this research is also a delimitation of the study. There is a need to conduct similar research in other industries.

Future researchers may consider expanding the study of productive networking to investigate whether transfer of training through productive networking helps to address the transfer problem prevalent in the training industry for over three decades, which is the notion that the rate of transfer of training is 20 – 30% that has never been supported by research. Perhaps it is time to prove this scientifically. Another study can investigate whether job efficiency gained through the knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired through training equates to the job efficiency gained through productive networking acquired through training.

Figure 5. Productive Networking in the Transfer of Training Process
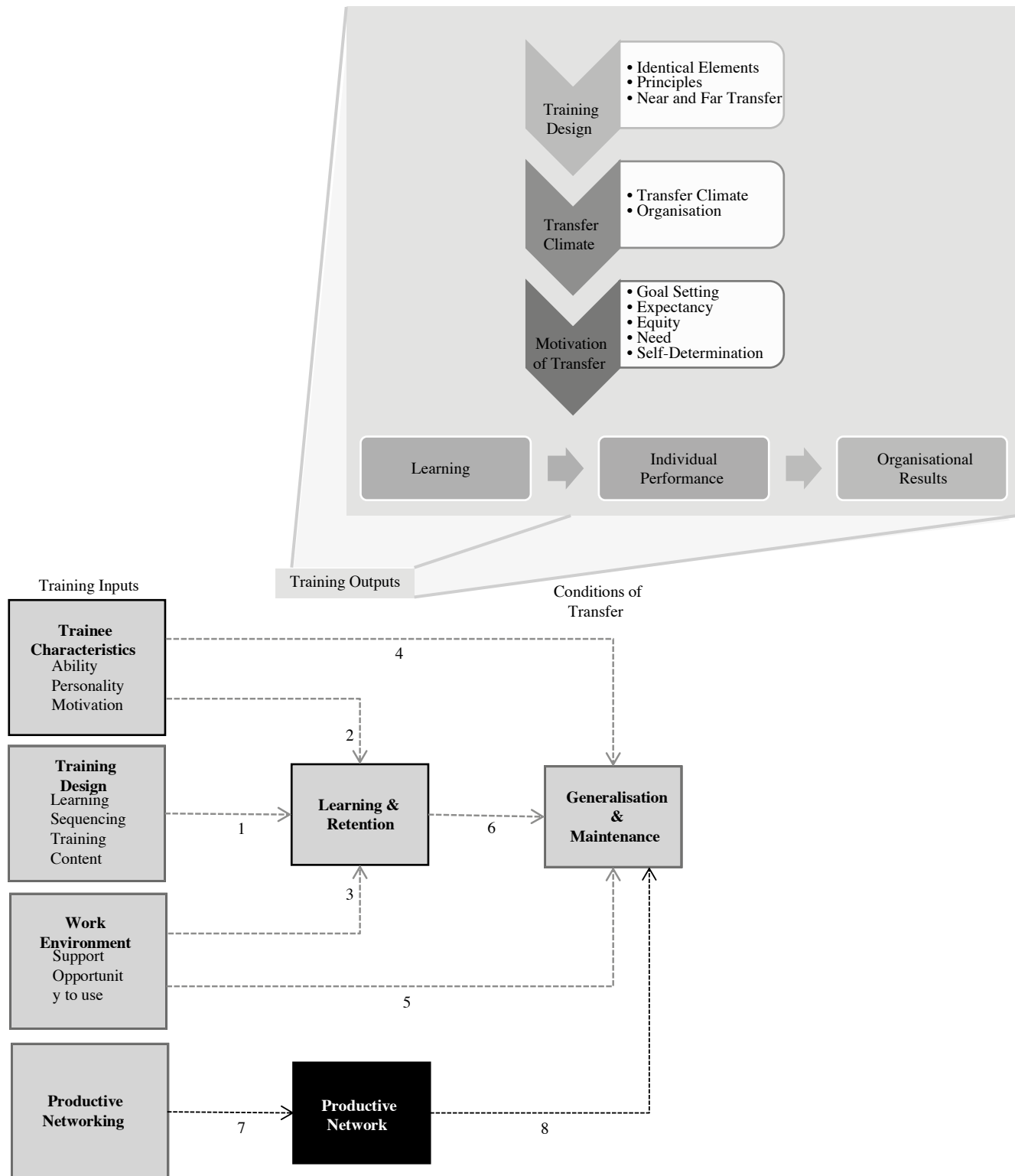
Conclusion

Transfer of training research over the past three decades has primarily focused on the notion that only 20 to 30% of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes gained from training are translated into job performance. This notion is called the transfer problem. Researchers and practitioners alike have spent decades studying this phenomenon. Because these researchers and practitioners come from diverse disciplines such as education, business, health sciences, economics, training and development

etc., a plethora of literature has been produced in the area of transfer of training and the transfer problem. The diversity in the literature has resulted in some confusion in the field.

This study enhances our understanding of the transfer of training. Based on the analysis, we offer recommendations to broaden the scope of the transfer of training. The notion (accepted worldwide but never proven scientifically) that transfer of training is only 20 – 30% is incorrect. The reason is that the remaining 70 – 80% deemed a lost job efficiency constitutes certain factors responsible for job efficiency, such as productive networking.

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