

Chapter 6

The Transfer of Learning: Designs and Assessment

Rodney Reynolds

Independent Researcher, USA

ABSTRACT

The focus of this chapter is on insights for and evaluation of if the transfer of learning by training and development professionals will sustain the training field. The chapter begins with the need for a model of learning. Then there is a section on a proposed evaluation of the trainer presentation of a model of learning or training development. The chapter then progresses to a proposed measure of the potential for the transfer of learning and the need to assess self-efficacy with gradations of attainments on the training topic. Finally, the chapter turns to trainee engagement and to having a results orientation for a training program.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The major premise for this chapter is that training materials and training assessment should have a base in a model of long-term learning and training development. Any use of a model of learning should draw a consistent focus on how trainees are most likely to transfer their learning from their training(s) to their self-development while becoming an added-value to their profession and, thus, their employers. Evidence is essential (Reynolds & Reynolds, 2002; Reynolds, 2020) especially of post-training achievements (Kirkpatrick, 1994) Thus, any assessment of the potential for the transfer of learning must involve an evaluation of the introduction and projection of the future learning and development. The timing, method, and wording of any measure or the transfer of learning must also be based on the model of learning and training development that forms the base for the training sessions.

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Model of Learning or Training Development

Most education and learning professionals are familiar with Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1956; Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Many learning professionals prefer one of the variations and extensions of Vygotsky's (1978) Constructivist Learning Theory. Previously, I argued (Reynolds, 2017) that Training and Development professionals should be well acquainted with Donald Kirkpatrick's Model (Kirkpatrick, 1994; 1998; Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2007; 2010). Praslova (2010) adapted Kirkpatrick's thinking to curriculum development. Thus, Prasolva drew a tie between learning theory and advancements for educators as well as training and development professionals.

A Vision for Long-Term Learning

Use of an approach to learning, training, and development is essential for being able to cast a perspective for trainees on where they are starting from, what they can accomplish in the specific training sessions, and their subsequent steps for development. There is an underlying concern here about trainers who lack sufficient background in learning theories that enables their capacity to cast a vision of the long-term path(s) to trainee development. Trainers need to plan, forecast, and embed self-improvement processes that connect to later blended learning processes. In short, without a vision for their long-term learning and development 'curve', trainees cannot be expected to persist in the long-term transfer of learning. Therefore, any assessment of the transfer of learning must involve some index of the trainees' sense that they have gained a vision for their long-term development.

There are multiple potential examples of the levels and depths of learning that can illustrate how the specific training session might influence the assessment of the potential transfer of learning and development. Training for novices with survey research should probably not carry an expectation that trainees will be able to 'transfer' their early learning to address complex issues related to potential avoidance of, detection of, or corrections for measurement and sampling errors. Intermediate statistics training should surely not be expected the trainees to offer solutions for the analyses of mixed-nested experimental designs. Similarly, asking advanced and skilled public advocates to explain basic concepts of social influence and persuasion (e.g., the general concept of source credibility) would never be considered evidence of their level of the transfer of their training and development to their current practices.

Proposed Post-Training Measure of Trainer Presentation of a Model of Learning or Training Development

1. The [Training Team] provided a graph/chart of at least four stages of expected development on [Persuasive Speaking Skills].
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree
2. *2. The content of the training sessions seemed far below my prior stage of development on [Persuasive Speaking Skills].
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree
3. The [Training Team] explained that the current session[s] are at a specific stage of expected development on [Persuasive Speaking Skills].
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

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