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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

The Ghana Association of University Administrators (GAUA) as part of its mission to promote the advancement of Higher Education in Ghana and around the world provides policy reflective for national development. This is done through research reports, policy analysis, and reflective analysis among others. Mindful of this, the National Executive adopted this Journal from GAUA University of Education, Winneba branch in 2019 to advance this cause. The seventh edition of the journal is thus, the second edition since the adoption.

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Demographic Characteristics and Training Transfer: Evidence from Senior Staff Administrators of University of Cape Coast, Ghana

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Abstract
Few studies have been conducted on demographic characteristics of trainees and training transfer. These studies which are conducted in business organizations in the Western and Eastern countries have different demographics and also differ in conclusions. This descriptive study examines the difference between demographic characteristics and transfer of training among senior staff administrators of University of Cape Coast (UCC) by formulating and testing five hypotheses. A questionnaire is used to obtain data from 155 senior staff administrators who participated in UCC organized training following a stratified random sampling technique. The data is analyzed using Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis Tests. All the hypotheses are supported; there is no statistically significant difference between demographic characteristics (gender, age, job position, level of education and work experience) of senior staff administrators and training transfer. The study concludes that the demographic variables have no role to play in transferring training and that trainers and human resource professionals may not take into consideration, the demographic characteristics of trainees when planning for training.

Key words*: Employee training, Training transfer, Demographic characteristics, Administrators, Post-training performance, Workplace learning*

Introduction

The ability of organizations to increase productivity and remain competitive largely depends on the calibre of their human resource. Training is one of the most common forms of human resource development practices. It affords organizations the opportunity of enhancing their effectiveness and productivity through specified learning, which is geared towards performance improvement (Subedi, 2004). Without training, the competitive position of organizations could be weakened in the long term (Sanders, Damen & Dam, 2015). Training has therefore been recognized as a strategic means of increasing the competitiveness of organizations. It offers organizations a flexible and competent labor force in the wake of rapid changes in business environments, customer expectations, and technological advancements which have escalated global competition (Bhatti, Battour, Sundram & Othman, 2013; Nikandrou, Brinia & Bereri, 2009).

In recognition of this, many organizations throughout the world have increased employee training programs more than before (Yaw, 2008) with Hughes, Zajac, Spencer and Salas (2018) making an assertion that billions of dollars are invested in training yearly. In Ghana, training programs for employees, particularly in institutions of higher learning is on the increase. For instance, in Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, training programs are held for all categories of staff (Agyemang, 2012). Also, UCC has developed various policies to regulate training and development activities to ensure that the training needs of all staff are adequately met. This is in addition to increasing budgetary allocation for staff training and development from GH¢ 400,000.00 (US$ 209,920.00) in 2012 to GH¢ 1,550,000.00 (US$ 281,671.47) in 2019 (UCC Annual budget, 2012 & 2019).

Given the magnitude of investment institutions are putting in training, it behoves the leadership of organizations to ensure that training activities result in the transfer of the intended skills and knowledge of the trainees. However, training transfer remains a major conundrum of human resource practitioners given that transfer does not always take place after training regardless of the increased investment (Bhatti et al., 2013; Ford, 2009; Hughes et al., 2018). The percentage of training that is transferred to the job is usually low (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Bhatti & Kaur, 2010; Ford, 2009; Pineda-Herrero, Belvis, Moreno, Duran-Bellonch & Ucar, 2011). A study by Rutgers University showed that organizations spend between $5.6 and $16.8 billion each year on ineffective training programs (Armour, 1998). This is disturbing and makes training transfer an issue of concern to training practitioners and researchers because without it, investing in training becomes difficult to justify (Brinia & Efstathiou, 2012; Nikandrou et al., 2009). What this portends is that ensuring the transfer of training is considerably important to human resource development researchers and practitioners (Burke & Hutchins, 2008).

The training transfer problem has made training transfer an important subject matter for research, particularly in understanding the drivers of training transfer (Bhatti et al., 2013). Among others, characteristics of trainees have been identified as being among the principal factors affecting training transfer and these include demographics, abilities, skills, motivation, attitudes, self-efficacy and perceived utility (Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Grossman & Salas, 2011; Kontoghiorghes, 2002; Noe, 2010; Subedi, 2004; Warr, Allan & Birdi, 1999). Even though demographic characteristics are believed to influence human resource management practices, there is a paucity of studies on demographic characteristics of trainees and training transfer. It is worthy to note that these few studies are conducted in business organizations in Europe and Asia, where the demographic dynamics are different from what pertains to Africa and a university environment. Santos and Stuart (2003) add that researchers do not agree on whether demographic variables affect training transfer. Chen, Holton and Bates (2006) similarly assert that there is no concurrence on how demographic variables affect the transfer of training. The aforementioned necessitated this study, which examined the difference between demographic characteristics of senior staff administrators in UCC and training transfer.

Upon reviewing the studies of Cowman and McCarthy (2016); Chaubey, Kothari and Kapoor (2016); Devins, Johnson and Sutherland (2004); Ely (2004); Kanagalakshmi and Nirmaladevi (2012); Murugan (2007); Sanjeevkumar and Yanan (2011); Santos and Stuart (2003); and Tai (2006), the following hypotheses were formulated and tested:

H_1: There is no statistically significant difference between gender of senior staff administrators and training transfer.

H_2: There is no statistically significant difference between the age of senior staff administrators and training transfer.

H_3: There is no statistically significant difference between the job position of senior staff administrators and training transfer.
H_4: There is no statistically significant difference between the level of education of senior staff administrators and training transfer.
H_5: There is no statistically significant difference between the length of service of senior staff administrators and training transfer.

Significance of the Study

It is hoped that this study would aid the planning of training for particularly, administrative staff and generally all staff of the University and other universities. In addition, it is hoped that it would benefit human resource management professionals and learning development professionals especially in Africa. It is also hoped that the study would add to the existing literature on training while at the same time stimulating further research.

Conceptual Explanations

Training transfer is the effective implementation/application of the knowledge and skills learned during training to the job (Cowman & McCarthy, 2016; Foxon, 1987; Pineda-Herrero et al., 2011). Training amounts to nothing if trainees do not transfer what has been learned to the job situation (Na-nan et al. 2017). From the foregoing, training transfer may be referred as training effectiveness, post-training performance, or training impact. This stems from the fact that training becomes effective only when its purpose/objective is achieved in the real work setting.

Demographic characteristics have to do with the classification of people in terms of size, age, gender, income, occupation, education, race, and other statistics (Kotler & Armstrong, 2011). In the UCC, there are four categories of senior staff administrators. They are Chief Administrative Assistants (CAA), Principal Administrative Assistants (PAA), Senior Administrative Assistants (SAA), and Administrative Assistants (AA). A combination of competence, level of education, and or length of service determines a staff's position/rank/designation. The core responsibilities of these administrative staff include covering meetings, typing and submitting reports and minutes of meetings, and supervising subordinate staff with key responsibilities being assigned by the Head of Department/Section/Unit (Directorate of Human Resource, 2017).

Empirical Findings of Demographic Characteristics and Training Transfer

As mentioned earlier, studies conducted on demographic variables and training transfer are not much and differ in conclusions. While some conclude that demographic factors influence training transfer, others find no relationship. For instance, Devins et al. (2004) founnd in their study that demographic characteristics such as age, education level, and experience are related to training. Similarly, Cowman and McCarthy (2016) find a relationship between the educational background of trainees and training impact. Other researchers, like Chaubey et al. (2016), also have found that there is a significant difference between male and female employees for training outcomes. Furthermore, educational qualification, age, and work experience are specifically found to influence trainees' attitudes towards training while designation did not influence trainees' attitudes (Kanagalakshmi & Nirmaladevi, 2012). Besides, Murugan (2007) observes that job position/seniority is effective in performance after training and explains that this is because senior employees who have longer work experience tend to produce higher performance during and after training.

However, Sanjeevkumar and Yanan (2011) in their study found that there is no statistically significant difference between gender, age groups, marital status, educational level, and

training effectiveness even though there is a statistically significant difference in the length of work experience and training effectiveness. The study of Ely (2004) also establishes that there is no significant effect of trainees' age and gender on training outcomes. Similarly, Tai (2006) in his study revealed that age has no statistically significant effect on training effectiveness.

Theoretical Underpinning

There's no firm theory backing training transfer; researchers have not been able to develop a strong theoretical perspective on training transfer (Bhatti & Kaur, 2010; Burke & Hutchins, 2008). However, a theory that underpinned this study because it enhances training transfer is the Need Theory. A need is a deficiency one experiences at a given time and motivates the person to behave in a way to acquire what s/he lacks. Maslow and Alderfer dealt with physiological needs, relatedness needs (needs to interact with others), and growth needs (self-esteem, self-actualization) while McClelland was concerned with needs for achievement, affiliation, and power (Alderfer & Guzzo, 1979; Maslow, 1954; McClelland & Boyatzis, 1982).

Noe (2010) suggests that to motivate learning and transfer of what has been learned, organizations should identify trainees' needs, since each trainee depending on his/her characteristics may have a peculiar need. For instance, employees who have spent ten or more years on the job may have a different training need from those who have spent just about two years. The training content should, thus, relate to the needs of the trainees to enhance transfer. Organizing the same training for Chief Administrative Assistants and Administrative Assistants will be ineffective unless both groups have the same needs.

Training must necessarily fill the need gaps of employees in executing their work schedule and enhance their performance (Elangovan & Karakowsky, 1999). It is only when training meets the needs of trainees that they would be motivated to assimilate the content in the first place and go further to transfer what has been assimilated because of what Cheng and Ho (1998) term, perceived positive training value . It should, however, be noted that if certain basic needs of trainees (e.g., physiological and safety needs, and foundational skills for training) are not met prior to training, they are unlikely to be motivated to learn and transfer training.

Methods

The research design used to conduct the study was the descriptive survey design. The study aimed to describe the link between trainees' demographic characteristics and training transfer in the context of the UCC. The choice of this design was not only because of the description of the connections between trainees' demographic characteristics and training transfer, but also to generalize the findings from the study to the large population of senior staff administrators (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012; Williams, 2007).

The population of the study, the group upon which the study focused, was 311 senior staff administrators who participated in training programs provided by the Training and Development Section of the University in 2016. To obtain a sample representative enough of the population, Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for determining sample size was used. From the table, a sample of 175 corresponded with the population. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to select the respondents because as a sampling procedure, it ensured equitable representation of the various demographic variables under consideration.

The data collection instrument used was a questionnaire developed based on the literature reviewed. The instrument had two parts; demographic information about the respondents and statements regarding training transfer with a five-point Likert scale for respondents to indicate their extent of agreement or disagreement. The questionnaire was used to allow the respondents to respond at their convenience with or without the researchers' presence depending on their preference. For respondents who desired to fill the questionnaire in the absence of the researchers, there was the temptation to discuss responses before completing the questionnaire. This had the propensity of some of them, particularly those in the same office agreeing to select particular responses or willingly opting for responses because their colleagues had chosen them. The aforementioned could affect the validity of the findings. The anonymity of the questionnaire, however, was a motivation for the respondents to provide objective responses as it reduced their fear and discomfort in doing so.

Responses of 37 staff of the West End University, Accra were used to ascertain the reliability and validity of the questionnaire because of the similar characteristics it had with UCC (Sarantakos, 1998). Following the pilot test, the reliability of the instrument was calculated using Cronbach's α. A value of .839, which was considered highly reliable (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007), was obtained. The validity was calculated using Pearson's Product Moment Coefficient (*r*). The result proved that the variable, training transfer, was valid since its correlation values with the training transfer indicators were greater than the *r*-value of 0.325. The value of *r* was obtained using the formula, $DF=n-2$ at a significant value of 0.05 where *DF* is Degrees of Freedom, and *n* is the number of respondents.

The data was collected taking into account the ethical principles of informed consent, the willingness of participation, anonymity, and confidentiality. Prior to the administration of the questionnaire, we informed prospective respondents of the purpose of the study and obtained their approval to respond to the questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed based on their consent and voluntary participation. Targeted respondents who declined to participate in the study were not involved. Depending on the preference of the respondents, the researchers were either present or absent when the questionnaire was being completed. Respondents' anonymity and confidentiality of responses were strictly adhered to. One hundred and fifty-five usable questionnaires were retrieved from the respondents and analyzed.

The processing of the data was done using SPSS version 21. The Mann-Whitney U Test was used to analyze hypothesis one (gender and training transfer). Hypotheses two to five; age and training transfer, level of education and training transfer, position and training transfer, and length of service and training transfer respectively were tested using the Kruskal-Wallis Test. These tests were used because the independent variables were categorical and the dependent variable, ordinal. Also, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality conducted revealed that the data deviated from a normal distribution.

Results

The first hypothesis sought to establish the difference in training transfer concerning gender. Specifically, the hypothesis stated that 'There is no statistically significant relationship between gender of senior staff administrators and training transfer'. Results from the Mann-Whitney U Test which compares gender and training transfer as presented in Table 1 reveals that there is no statistically significant difference in the training transfer of male administrators (Median=19, N=62) and female administrators (Median=20, N=93), U= 2698, Z=-.681, p=.496.

Table 1: Difference between gender and training transfer

Gender	N	Median	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z score	Sig. (2-tailed)
Male	62	19	75.02	2698	4651	-.681	.496
Female	93	20	79.99				
Total	155	19					

Note: N=Number, Sig.=Significance (p<.05)

Research hypothesis two intended to establish the difference in training transfer in relation to the age of senior staff administrators based on the hypothesis, 'There is no statistically significant difference between the age of senior staff administrators and training transfer'. The analysis reveals in Table 2 that there is no statistically significant difference in training transfer in relation to the age of senior staff administrators because of the sig. value of .329 which is greater than the .05 threshold. Two age groups 40-49 and 50+ recorded a higher median score (20) than the 20-29 and 30-39 age groups which both recorded 19.

Table 2: Difference between age and training transfer

Age (years)	N	Median	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
20-29	39	19	78.01	3.44	3	.329
30-39	88	19	73.69			
40-49	15	20	93.07			
50 and above	13	20	89.73			
Total	155	19				

Note: N=Number, df=degrees of freedom, Sig.=Significance (p<.05)

The third research hypothesis sought to establish the difference in training transfer in relation to the job position of senior staff administrators. The specific hypothesis was 'There is no statistically significant difference between job position of senior staff administrators and training transfer'. The results, as presented in Table 3 reveals that there is no significant difference in training transfer in relation to the job position of senior staff administrators as the sig. value was .514. The position with the highest median the Chief Admin. Assistant with 20.5 and the one with the lowest median is Administrative Assistant which recorded 18.5.

Table 3: Difference in job position and training transfer

Position	N	Median	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Administrative Assistant	18	18.5	78.31	3.27	4	.514
Senior Admin. Asst.	86	19	75.24			
Principal Admin. Asst.	31	19	77.44			
Chief Admin. Asst.	6	20.5	108.25			
Other	14	19.5	82.86			
Total	155	19				

Note: N=Number, df=degrees of freedom, Sig.=Significance (p<.05)

The fourth research hypothesis was to establish the difference in training transfer in relation to the level of education of senior staff administrators. The hypothesis was 'There is no statistically significant difference between the level of education of senior staff administrators and training transfer'. The analysis, presented in Table 4 shows a sig. value, .798 which means that there is no significant difference in training transfer in relation to the level of education of senior staff administrators. With median scores of 19.5 and 18.5, Bachelors' Degree and Diploma/HND holders had the highest and lowest median scores respectively.

Table 4: Difference in the level of education and training transfer

Level of Education	N	Median	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Diploma/HND	20	18.5	75.60	.451	2	.798
Bachelors' Degree	98	19.5	79.82			
Postgraduate	37	19	74.49			
Total	155	19				

Note: N=Number, df=degrees of freedom, Sig.=Significance (p<.05)

The last research hypothesis sought to establish the difference in training transfer in relation to the length of service of senior staff administrators. Specifically, it was hypothesized that 'There is no statistically significant difference between the length of service of senior staff administrators and training transfer'. The result portrays that there is no significant difference in training transfer in relation to the length of service of senior staff administrators. Table 5 presents the results of the analysis of the hypothesis. The sig. value of .344 from the table is an indication that length of service does not significantly affect training transfer among the senior staff administrators of UCC statistically. Regarding the median, the 6-10 years and 16-20 years groups obtained 20 which is the highest score whereas the 11-15 years group had 17, the lowest.

Table 5: Difference in length of service and training transfer

Length of Service	N	Median	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	df	Sig
Below 5 years	69	19	76.15	4.488	4	.344
6-10 years	42	20	78.51			
11-15 years	15	17	61.43			
16-20 years	14	20	93.00			
21 and above	15	19	87.63			
Total	155	19				

Note: N=Number, df=degrees of freedom, Sig.=Significance (p<.05)

Discussion

Hypothesis one of the study revealed that there is no statistically significant difference between gender and training transfer. The insignificant statistical relationship between male and female staff and training transfer could mean the emphasis on equal opportunity for both males and females in all spheres of life especially in the labor market in recent times has been impactful. This implies that the fact that one is a male or female has no influence as far as transferring training is concerned. The result is in line with the findings of Ely (2004) who also finds that gender does not statistically correlate with training transfer significantly but contrasts the findings of Chaubey et al. (2016) as they discovered a statistically significant relationship between male and female employees and training transfer.

The second hypothesis assumed that the older respondents would show less mastery of the training material or they would experience more difficulty applying training to the job than the younger ones as they would lack the motivation to do so. However, it was not the case. It was found that age is not related to training transfer. The findings could be attributed to the fact that training programs do not make room for age categorizations; all age groups are lumped together during training despite the different age groups having different dynamics and so even though there are different age groups, in practice, they are treated as a homogeneous group. The results confirm the findings of Tai (2006) that age has no statistically significant effect on training transfer.

Job position (seniority), according to Murugan (2007), is assumed to be effective when it comes to training performance based on the notion that senior employees who have longer work experience tend to produce higher performance during and after training. However, the difference in job position and training transfer was not statistically significant. In UCC, a more senior employee, for instance, a Principal Administrative Assistant may not necessarily be more experienced than an Administrative Assistant in the sense that the Administrative Assistant may have risen through the ranks to the current position whereas the Principal Administrative Assistant may be an inexperienced/new employee but occupies that position because of the academic qualification held. Yet, emphasis is not placed on these differences during training. This nullifies Murugan's assumption and could be the reason why there is no statistically significant difference between job position and training transfer. It also resonates with the findings of Kanagalakshmi and Nirmaladevi (2012) that trainees' designation did not influence training.

With regards to the level of education and training transfer, the relationship was also not statistically significant. The results may be because training is not provided for staff based on their level of education and that the level of education of staff does not limit the progression of staff through the ranks such that a diploma holder could rise through the ranks to become be a Chief Administrative Assistant while a bachelor's degree holder would be an Administrative Assistant. This makes each of the administrative groups heterogeneous in terms of their educational qualification because each group has varying educational backgrounds. The findings of Sanjeevkumar and Yanan (2011), which is the absence of a statistically significant difference between educational level and training effectiveness is confirmed, hence, contradicting that of Cowman and McCarthy (2016) and Devins et al. (2004) as they found a relationship between education backgrounds of trainees and training impact.

The insignificant relationship relating to the length of service and training transfer could be attributable to putting together all staff for training programs irrespective of the length of service. No specialized training is held for staff in the various stages of their career; early years, middle and late years because they are not grouped from the onset. This contradicts the findings of Devins et al. (2004), Kanagalakshmi and Nirmaladevi (2012), and Sanjeevkumar and Yanan (2011). According to them, there is a relationship between the length of work experience and training transfer.

Evidence from this study confirms the conclusion of Santos and Stuart (2003) that, demographic factors is not statistically significant as far as training transfer is concerned, even though trainee characteristics are believed to be a contributory factor for the majority of the variability of training transfer.

Conclusions and Implications

Training transfer is as important as the training program itself in that without transfer, training becomes fruitless. Thus, there is no achievement in terms of return on investment. In this study, which examined the relationship demographic characteristics has with training transfer, all of the five hypotheses, no difference in (gender and training transfer; age and training transfer; job position and training transfer; the level of education and training transfer; and length of service and training transfer) were supported. It is concluded that the demographic characteristics of senior staff administrators have no relationship with training transfer. Thus, demographic characteristics have no place in the transfer of training. This assertion is strengthened by the fact that none of the demographic characteristics considered in this study was found to be significantly related to training transfer.

When training programs are being planned for senior staff administrators, trainers and human resource professionals do not necessarily have to take into consideration differences in terms of gender, age, position, education, and length of service since the transfer of training does not have much to do with differences in the demographic characteristics of trainees. This implies that training can be organized for all staff without having to segregate them either by gender, age, position, education, or length of service as it does not affect the training transfer of staff. In planning for staff training programs, demographic characteristics could be overlooked.

Research Limitations and Directions for Further Research

A quantitative approach was used hence, it is subject to the limitations of such an approach. These included failure on the part of some selected respondents to return their questionnaire and non-response to some items in the questionnaire. A further study could be conducted using the qualitative approach to complement this study and also provide a basis for comparative analysis. In addition, an experimental approach where one group is segregated and other group lumped and trained could provide opportunity for good comparative analysis. Also, this study is purely based on respondents' opinions; the transfer of training was self-reported (by trainees themselves). A study could be conducted using superiors and work colleagues of the trainees as participants to report on the transfer of training of their subordinates.

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